

‘Those Having Business There’: Fairs in Scottish Almanac Lists

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The following paper is not intended to be an all-encompassing discussion of either the bibliographical history of Scottish-printed almanacs or of Scottish fairs. Instead, I hope to demonstrate how almanacs can be an important aid for furthering study of fairs known to have been extant in Scotland, through augmentation of existing information and, perhaps, as a source of new data.

Before turning to the fair lists contained in the almanacs, some points should be made about the almanacs themselves. The almanacs referred to in this paper are the ‘annual’ type, rather than the ‘everlasting’ form and, as such, these almanacs – also commonly called ‘prognostications’ – are ephemeral, generally only meant to be used for one year, then discarded. Within their pages the reader can find short discourses on the seasons, tide tables for a specific year, and mathematical and scientific information such as the dates of lunar eclipses, as well as the lists of fairs which concern this paper. Almanacs printed in the mid to late eighteenth century onwards also include information such as peer lists, House of Commons lists, University lists, and army and navy lists.

The price of these little books was relatively low. They seem to have been originally priced somewhere between 3d and 4d Scots: after the death of his wife in March 1603, the Edinburgh printer and bookseller, Robert Charteris, had an inventory of their respective goods drawn up which includes ‘fyve hundreth Prognosticatiounes, at iii s iiij d of the do’ (Dickson and Edmond 1890: 491) – that is, just under 3d ha’penny each. In 1684, James Forbes, printer of almanacs in Aberdeen, indicated that his were selling at 4d, since his publication of *The Whole Yearly FAIRS and Weekly Mercats of Scotland* was to cost ‘twelve pennies Scots more’ than his almanacs – and this fair listing sold at 16d (McDonald 1963-6: 257).

The main centres for printing were Aberdeen, Edinburgh and, to a lesser degree at first, Glasgow. In these cities, the names of several printers became closely linked with the printing of almanacs, although it should be noted that no-one made a living solely from this aspect of the trade. The earliest Scottish almanac with an identifiable printer came in 1623 from the press of Edward Raban, who introduced printing to Aberdeen, having worked previously in both Edinburgh and St Andrews.¹ However, in Aberdeen, the names of James Brown, Raban’s successor, and John Forbes, father and son, are more commonly linked to the printing and sale of almanacs through surviving material. In Edinburgh, men such as John Corss, Peter Bruce, John Reid and Andrew Anderson

and his successors (primarily his widow, Agnes Campbell, and their son James) are notable as printers, while John Mann and James Paterson are predominant as authors. Robert Sanders, a printer and bookseller in Glasgow, is most commonly associated with that city in the earlier years of almanac printing.

The printers did not always exist comfortably alongside one another. There was obviously a market for the prognostications – the matter of who the printers viewed as being their buyers will be addressed a little later on – but, in the seventeenth century especially, the market may not have been overly extensive.⁴ Thus, it was in the printer's best interests to promote his or her almanacs as being the most accurate and of better quality than those from the competition's presses. In the almanacs themselves, accusation and counter-accusation of piracy can be found, from the general – in his *Bon-Accord's Ephemeris, or New Prognostication for 1684*, Forbes printed 'If counterfit, then hang for it' on the title page (McDonald 1963-6: 256) – to the specific.

In 1685, the target for Paterson was the author of the *Aberdeen Almanack*, Duncan Lidel, described as 'professor of the mathematicks in the Coledge of Aberdeen' by Paterson, who criticises his scientific abilities – 'Note, that the *Aberdeens* Almanack for 1684 erred 2 hours in the eclipse of July from observation also he errs a whole day in the last quarter Moon of August 1685.' (NLS x.45.f.1[11], A1^r). The Andersons, especially, are commonly accused of piracy and counterfeiting activities. In his 1684 *Mariner's Everlasting Almanack*, Forbes accused Agnes Campbell of piracy: 'She . . . hath for the ensuing year 1684, caused Print an Almanack as it were set fourth at Aberdeen, and Printed in Aberdeen, which is a most notorious untrueth: impudently affixing thereto, some leynes in the End of Dogrell Rhyme, whereby she would have me to Patronise her base execrations.' (McDonald 1963-6: 259) In 1687 the Anderson press was the focus for James Paterson's anger, for he declared that their 1687 almanac was a pirated version of his own, 'As also,' he writes, 'there is a counterfit Edinburgh Almanack full of gross errors, copied by the heirs of Andrew Anderson from my last year's Almanack.' (NLS x.45.f.1[12], A7^r). This printed cross-fire was also taken up by John Man in 1702, when he attacked two other almanac authors, Merry Andrew and John What You May Call Him, for their 'bantering Advertisements in their Almanacks against me.' (NLS mf 26[14], A2^r-A3^r).

There does seem to have been a serious battle for the market. Just who the market consisted of is an interesting point. In 1625, Edward Raban printed a request for fair dates and he called upon chapmen and also upon 'who-so-ever will proove Deacon amongst you' requesting 'a Copie of these Fayres in more perfect order against the next yeare, that all confusion may be eschewed for your advantage.' (McDonald 1963-6: 260)

In Forbes' 1684 almanac, the appeal went out to 'Northern Gentlemen' and 'Magistrates of Cities and Burghs' (McDonald 1963-6: 261). In the 1689 *Edinburgh Almanack* – printed by Peter Bruce, who, incidentally, described himself as an 'enginier' rather than a printer on the title page of that almanac (NLS x.45.f.1[14]A1^r) – a horse

race is advertised and, again, 'noble men' and 'gentlemen' are called on to enter their horses. In the eighteenth century, printers were still requesting 'gentlemen in the Country' to provide them with details of any fair missing from their lists.

In view of the fact that the early almanacs gave much of their space over to fair lists and remarks on tasks for specific seasons, the readership must have been, as William McDonald has suggested, the merchants, farmers, dealers and so on – although the inclusion of tide tables also 'suggests a widespread readership amongst seafaring men' (McDonald 1963-6: 261). In his 1685 almanac, Forbes refers to both his 'vulgar' readers and also to 'noblemen, gentlemen, merchants and others', so we may presume that the readership covered much of the social strata of the country – and I believe that in establishing the printers' perceived readership for almanacs, there may be further information regarding the levels of at least basic literacy in Scottish society to be gleaned.¹

The superficial physical appearance of almanacs does not change so very much throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Most of the earliest extant examples are of the same octavo format, inclusive of illustrated title page. Commonly occurring illustrations are astronomers, the Royal Seal, and the coat of arms of the town in which the almanac was printed. However, as the eighteenth century progressed, the physical size and presentation of the almanacs grew. For example, the *New Prognostication for the year of our Redemption 1678*, printed in Aberdeen by the aforementioned Forbes, was of octavo format, giving eight leaves and sixteen sides to print on (NLS 5.2958: 3[1]). If we skip to the 1773 *Aberdeen Almanack*, printed by J. Chalmers, we find that it has fourteen pages, and, eighty-nine years on from that, the *Aberdeen Almanack and Northern Register for 1861*, printed by D. Chalmers & Co., has 308 pages, including a four-page index to the contents (University of Stirling Library, Q 41.25 ABE). Earlier almanacs lack indices. However, those Aberdeen Almanacks from the mid to late eighteenth century which I have examined contain indices which curiously omit the fair listings.

The primary, and most obvious, function of the fair list was to provide information regarding the date and location of specific fairs round the year. However, other intelligence was often included, either within the lists themselves or in advertisements, and this is the source of interesting evidence concerning the names associated with fairs, the church's relationship with fairs – geographically and theologically – and recreational activities associated with specific fairs.

Some almanacs claimed to list the 'Principal Faires of Scotland', others claimed to have a 'Correct List of Scots Fairs'. Others tried to be more specific – later Aberdeen almanacs list 'the principal North Country Fairs and the Days on which they are held'. The lists could form part of a diary, where the items of information on fairs are preceded by calendar information, such as planting times for crops and expected weather conditions. Alternatively, the fairs could be contained in specific fair lists. The fairs may be listed alphabetically, chronologically or randomly under each month.

The chronological spread of available information is impressive, but it is by no

means entire. The earliest Edinburgh almanac in existence is the 1632 *Whyte* almanac, from the press of John Wreiton. From such presses came an annual listing of fairs – although the extant material is rather fragmentary until the mid-seventeenth century.

If we turn to the *Whyte* almanac we find a fairly extensive fair list of 161 separate entries (Fig. 1). This may seem slight compared to, say, the 365 separate entries in the 1786 *Aberdeen Almanac's* list, but the earlier fair lists, such as that for 1632, are more informative, for some 367 years after it was printed and sold, the list gives us information regarding just which fair was being held on which particular day, what was the name associated with it, how long the fair lasted, and, in one or two entries, precisely where the fair was held.

If we take the entries for March and April, giving a line to each day mentioned, we have:

MARCH.

S. Monence in Aberdene, Dumfermling, and S. Marnoch kirke, the first day.
 S. Durhos in Tane of Rosse the 6 day
 In Achtertull the 10 day
 S. Cousnan the 11 day.
 S. Patricke in Dumbarton, and at the kirke of Stragreth the 16 day.
 In S. Johnston the 19 day
 S. Cuthbert in Langton of the Mers the 20 day
 Ladie day in West-weems, and Bamfe the 25 day.
 Palmsonday Even in Sainct Johnston, a Faire.

APRIL.

S. Donald at the kirke of Achteless 17 day.
 Marke Evangell in Dysert the 23 day.
 Beltan day the first, the 26 day.
 a Faire at Leeven the 29 day.
 and in Kilrenie the 30 day.

Whiles in March, and whiles in April.

Skirethursday before Pasche in Glasgow, Dumbarton, Cowper of Angus, Elgin of Murray.
 Paschmonday in Cowper of Fyfe, LANERKE, and Irwin,
 Lowsonday after Pasche in Killimure;
 and all the weeke after the Senzie [i.e., the synod] of S. Androes.

This almanac list provides an insight into the patterning of fairs throughout Scotland in 1632 – a kind of historical snap-shot – and this snap will serve well enough to evidence some points regarding the information contained in these lists.

The Faires of SCOTLAND.

IANVARY.

*Saint Mungo in Glasgow the 13 day a Faire. And at Dunkel:
Sat Kilwinning the 21 day*

FEBRVARY.

*At Abernethie the first day, On Candlemesse day in Bamse,
Dunkell, and Dingwall; the 2 day*

MARCH.

*S. Monence in Aberdene, Dumfermling, and S. Marnoch kirke,
the first day, S. Duthoc in Tane of Rosse the 6 day in Achtertwill
the 10 day S. Cousnan the 11 day. S. Patrŷke in Dumbarton, and
at the kirke of Stragreth the 16 day. In S. Johnstŷon the 19 day S.
Cuthbert in Langton of the Mers the 20 day Ladie day in West
weems, and Bamse the 25 day. Palmsonday Even in Sainŷt Iohn
stŷon a Faire.*

APRIL.

*S. Donald at the kirke of Achteles 17 day. Marke Evangell in
Dysert the 23 day. Beltan day the first, the 26 day, a Faire at
Leeven the 29 day. and in Kiltrenie the 30 day.*

Whiles in March, and whiles in April.

*Skirethursday before Pasche in Glasgow, Dumbarton, Cowper
of Angus, Elgin of Murray. Paschmond day in Cowper of Fyfe,
LANERKE, and Irwin, Lowsonday after Pasche in Killmure;
and all the weeke after the Senzie of S. Andros.*

MAY.

*Holy crosse day the second Beltan, in Montrose, Kinrocher, and
in Peebles the 3 day. At Bamse the 16 day.*

Whiles in May, and whiles in Iune.

*Whitsonmond day in Glasgow, Dumbarton, LANERKE, and
Jedburgh. Whitsontuesday, called Pardon day, in the Chanry of
Rosse, and at the kirke of S. Ninians above Kirkaldie Trinitie
mond day in Edinburgh and Brechen 8 dayes. In S. Andros 1 day.
in Bruntiland one day. Trinity thursdays in Falkland.*

IUNE.

*A faire in Aberdoure the 9 day the 10 day a faire in Fergon-
dery. S. Barnabie in Lawder & Dysert 11 day. Saint Margaret in
Dumferwiling 13 day. Midsummer on S. Iohns day in S. Johnstŷon
five dayes: in Air foure dayes: In Winton, Bamse and Arbelstŷon
14 day. In Achtertwill the 15 day. Saint Margaret in Abernethie
the*

the 19 day, Peters day in Falkland, Bruntland, Bamfe and Kelfo the 26 day.

JULIE.

Culros the 1 day. Abernethie the 2 day. S. Martin of Butcheon 4 day. S. Thomas 5 day. S. Palladius in Fordon in the Merne 6 day. S. Andrew in Glasgou 7 day. In Kilwinning the 12 day. Mary Magdalene in Linlithgow, Pettinweeme and Pethheid 22. day. In Airth 24 day. S. James in Forfave, Cowper of Fife, LANERKE, and Roxburgh, Kinghorne & in Musselburgh 25 day.

AVGVST.

Lambies day in Aturfethree dayes long: and in Ennerkeithing S. Andros, and in Dumbartan the first day. Thursday after in Falkland S. Laurence in Selkirke, & at the Kirke of Rane 10 day. In Dumblane, and in Raine, two dayes before Kilmahug: and at the burne of Campesic, Ladie day in Dundie & Bamfe 15 day. S. Bartlemew Apostle in Linlithgow, Kirkarne of Neil, and in Klakmanan the 24 day. S. Johns day in S. Johnston the 26 day.

SEPTEMBER

S. Giles in Elgin 1 day in Skirlme the 5 day. Latter Ladie day in Sterling, Dundie and Bamfe 8 day. Rood day in Carail, tedburgh, Dumfermeling, Dumfries & Athelston 14 day. in Achsertuill and Culane the 11 day. Math. Apostle in Linlithgow 21 day. Afaire at Leeven the 7 day. S. Michae in Haddington, Lesly, Aire, S. Andr. Cresse, and Kirkebright 29 day. S. Jerome in Bamfe the last day.

OCTOBER

Saint Frances in Abernethie the 4 day. S. Denis in Aiton and Peebles 9 day. Dalkeith. and Tolliboll 10 day. S. Fenduck at Dunning 13 day in Forgondeny 15 day. S. Luke in Lawder, Kinrocher and Rugland 18 day. Mary Salamin in Sterling and Kelfo 22. day. In Linlithgow 24. In Kilreny 25 day. Fowls faire in Passly, and Falkirk 26 day. Simon and Iudein Dysert Falkirke, and Kirkeiston 28 day. In Alloway 29 day.

NOVEMBER.

Hallow day in Edinburgh 8 dayes: in Falkland, Dumblane Ferdys 1 day. In Kilwinning 3 day. S. Leonard in Lanerk 6. day. S. Martin in Dumbars, S. Martin at Martinskirke in Strabogse Cowper of Fife, Hamelton; Culros; Kilmahug, 11 day. Margretmes in Dumfermeling 16 day. S. Mackcharmuch in Taine and in Achtertuisl 20 day. Bruntland 23. S. Andrew in S. Johnston, Peebles and Chirnside the 30 day.

DECEMBER.

S. Nicolas in Aberdene 7 day. Ladie day in Westweemes 8 day, S. Dunhan in Bamfe, and at the Kirke of Diere 14 day. S. Thomas in Glasgou 25 day. S. Johns day in Bamfe 27. day.

Many of the fairs listed here have saints' names associated with them, some of them Celtic which points at antiquity, but there are also references to fairs that may have been in existence long before their first mention in charter or report. To take the four quarter-days of St Bridgit/Bride, Beltane, Lammass and Samhain, the almanac provides supplementary evidence regarding the existence of fairs on these dates across the country. To start at Lammass, there are fairs recorded as being held in Aturs (a three day fair), Ennerkeithing, St Andrews and Dumbarton on the first day of August while in Falkland the date was to be the first Thursday after the first. Following the suggestion made by Ronald Black in his article 'Scottish Fairs and Fair-Names' in this issue, that St James fairs on 25 July may also conceal earlier Lammass celebrations, we can add Forfar, Coupar in Fife, Lanark, Roxburgh, Kinghorn and Musselburgh. For Samhain, we look for Hallowmass fairs or even fairs of Simon and Jude – and in the 1632 *Whyte* list we have Simon and Jude fairs in Dysert, Falkirk and Kirkliston on the 28th October and a fair in Alloway on the 29th, while Hallowday fair was an 8-day fair in Edinburgh, and a one-day fair in Falkland, Dunblane and Fordyce. Regarding St Bridgit, although the *Whyte* gives no such named fairs in this list, there is a fair in Abernethy on the first of February, which should be related to the St Bridgit fairs 'on record as early as 1727' at Abernethy, Forres and Blair Athol, taken by Black as examples of the longevity of some quarter-day fairs.⁴ The *Whyte* almanac clearly predates 1727 and it is in this context of supplementary evidence that almanacs can prove fruitful. The 1632 list also contains the known Candlemas (2nd February) fairs in Banff, Dunkeld and Dingwall. Two Beltane dates are also recorded – 'Beltan day the first' is on 26th April, and 'the second Beltane', Holycross day (3rd May), was the date for fairs in Montrose, Kinrocher and Peebles. The link between church and fairs is surely responsible for the fairs at Saint Marnoch kirk on the first of March, at the kirk of Stragreth on March 16th and the week-long fair 'after the Senzie of S. Androes'. However, this was not always a happily tolerated state of affairs, and various almanacs contain official notices regarding the changing of fair dates due to the disruption caused to church attendance, such as the advertisement from the 1697 Edinburgh almanac from the Anderson press, which noted that 'the magistrates and Council of Peebles considering, that the fairs belonging to this Burgh being upon set days of ilk Month, when the same falls upon Saturday or Munday, there is a great Profanation of the sabbath-day' (NLS Ry.IV.h.3 A7*) and goes on to assign the fairs specific week days. Likewise, John Reid's 1702 almanac for Edinburgh stated that, by Act of Parliament, 'all Fairs that falls on saturdays or Mondays are to be changed to tuesdays in all time coming' (NLS mf 26[14], A2').

I hasten to add that not all early almanacs contained lists as informative as that in the *Whyte*. Some of the lists which claim to be 'complete' are far from it, and, as the years progress, the names of the fairs are omitted, most probably mainly due to space restrictions, but perhaps a disregard for the origins of the fair days, whether pagan or Christian, also points to a greater concern with the commercial aspects of the events.

Almanacs also contained advertisements for new fairs – the Aberdeen and Edinburgh

almanacs for 1687 refer to new fairs at Beauly, Kinross, Parton Craig and those of Alexander Udny and Sir George Gordon, amongst a few others. New fairs tended to be advertised in subsequent years' almanacs, and these advertisements are not only one indication that people actually did inform the printers of new fairs, but they can also help to trace a fair's life – if I can so term it. After several years, the fair is included in the main list – any absence may suggest that it did not find favour or gain enough patronage. Advertisements do not only highlight new fairs. They also bring the reader's attention to existing fairs; for example, the 1683 Edinburgh almanac (NLS x.45.f.i[10]) contains the following:

There are also yearly fairs within the shyre of Angus, belonging to the truly Noble Erl of Airly, which are as followeth, The first is called Colm's Fair, which stands on Muirkeith near the Kirk of Cortachie, upon the 2 tuesday of June. The second is called S. Ninian's fair, which stands upon the Muir of Alith, upon the tuesday before Whitsunday. The third is called Mary Fair, which stands upon the foresaid Muirkeith, near the Kirk of Cortachy, upon the 2 tuesday of September. The 4 is called S. David's fair which stands upon the foresaid Muir of Alith, the 1 tuesday of October. These are likewise giving advertisements, that these are special Fairs, standeth each of them four compleat dayes, where all sorts of Bestail, Countrey commodities; and all other necessaries are to be found, for ready money.

And the following advertisement appeared in *Edinburgh's True Almanack for 1692* (NLS x.45.f.i [16], A7):

There are two notable Fairs at Lamington within the shire of Lanerk, where are to be had hog chap, Horse, Neat, sheep, and Corns, meal &c. The 1 on the 15 day of June, with a horse race, for a saddle, at 40 shilling starting value, set by the Laird of Lamington. The second upon the 22 day of October yearly, with a weekly mercat every Thursday.

Also there are two fairs at Penstoun, within the shire of Haddington, consisting of Horse, neat, Sheep, Wool, Cheese, Corn and meal &c. The first upon the 1 Wednesday of August, with a Horse Race for a fiddle, price as before. The Second upon the first Wednesday after Christenmass yearly, with a weekly mercat every Wednesday belonging to the Laird of Lamington.

These advertisements are of obvious interest to anyone trying to discover what was happening at the various fairs in the country, for they may provide information which confirms statements made elsewhere, or they may be the primary source of information as to what could be expected to be found at certain fairs. There are also some interesting 'asides', provided by the authors or printers of the almanacs. In Raban's almanac of 1639, we are informed that 'Good Drinke shall bee so for[s?]ible, that it shall cause manie to weare their best Cloathes everie day' (NLS H 32.e.24[1]). A more sober approach was taken by James Brown in his almanac of 1658, regarding the Andermass Fair in Strathdon, 'In which foul fair will bee heard more Execration, from some of them, in that day, than Consecration [*sic*] of themselves, unto God, in a whole year thereafter.' (NLS mf.26[14(18)]).

As can be seen from the examples given above, the almanac advertisements also listed who the fair belonged to. At times, it seems that some fair owners' names almost became a formulaic part of the fair lists, as, for example, when the Laird of Pinkell's name is included after the mention of the fair at the 'new burgh' of Girven in many of the almanacs of the 1680s and early 1690s. In the same way, entries for the March and September fairs at Kennoway tend to list both the goods which could be bought there and the owner: 'Horse, Neat &c. with a weekly Mercat every Wednesday of all flesh, fishes &c., belonging to the Laird of Balfour' (NLS x.45.f. 1[14], A3'). John Forbes' 1678 almanac even contains a list of fairs and their owners, something which I have not come across in any other almanac to date. The list comes complete with the author's obsequious compliments to those such as 'Patrick Fraser of Broadland, with my hearty Commendations to Himself & to his Vertuous, Discreet, Modest and Most Christian Lady' (NLS 5.2958 [3(1)]).

Fair lists also informed the reader as to provisions made regarding the dating of fairs: stating dates is all very well, but certain considerations could move a fair's day. For example, if we turn to the *Aberdeen Almanack* for 1786 and to the month of February, we find that the fair in Strowan Murray, two miles from Crieff, is held on the 9th day 'but if that day be Saturday, Sunday or Monday, then it holds the Tuesday after'. This was important information to have, just as the following, from the 1772 *Aberdeen Almanac*, no doubt was. The printer informs the reader that 'Marnan fair at Marnan kirk, which used to be held the first Tuesday and Wednesday Old Style, is to be held this Year, and for the future, upon the second Tuesday and Wednesday New Style'. (The difference between old and new style dating, originating from the change from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian in 1752, is usually given as eleven days, although in some almanacs, the number of days 'lost' – if I can term it so – is stated to be twelve or thirteen.)

Although this paper has been skipping back and forwards through the centuries, it should be apparent that the format and content of almanacs do not alter so very much as far as the fair lists are concerned. By the mid-eighteenth century, the name of the fair is generally absent, apart from certain notable exceptions such as Aikey Fair in Old Deer. However, the nature of the fair is more likely to be noted – as in the 1851 *Aberdeen Almanack & Northern Register*,⁶ which differentiates between the wool fair in Aberdeen in July and the timber fair in August – although the reader is left to differentiate between fairs and markets in the later lists.

Listing the fairs in a popular publication was a way to avoid confusion – it is surely a fallacy to believe that people in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries instinctively knew or remembered when all the local fairs were. An accurate almanac, listing fair dates and locations, was an important item for anyone dependent on trade of stock or goods for a living. Raban called for lists in 1625 in order to set the fairs 'in more perfect order against the next yeare, that all confusion may be eschewed' for his reader's advantage and, likewise, the requests for fair dates throughout the years,

T O T H E P U B L I C .

TO prevent all future mistakes, the FAIRS at BEAULIE, in the County of Inverness, hold on the following Days if on a Wednesday, if not, on the first Wednesday thereafter. HOLY-CROSS, 3d May, Old Stile, or 14th May, New Stile. LAMMASS, 1st August, O. S. or 12th August, N. S. MICHAELMASS, 29th September, O. S. or 10th October, N. S. HALLOWMASS, 1st November, O. S. or 12th November, N. S. MARTINMASS, the first Wednesday after Inverness Market. The Privileged Stance for Cattle, is on Rhin-Down, the Market Days.

D O G A C H N E A C H .

CHUM's nach bith mearachd 'fa Chuis bhò fo suas, 'Tha Feiltibh na Manachin ann Siuramachd Ionnar-nise, gu Seisibh mur fo.

I. FEILLE-NA-CROISSE air an treas la dhe'n Mhaidh, ann fa'n t'fean Chuntas, na'n Cearribh la deug an fa Chuntas ur.

II. AN LUNASDIN air a Cheud la, do'n Faoghmar ann fa'n t'fean Chuntas na'n dar-la-deug ann fa Chuntas ur.

III. AN FHEIL MICHAEL, air an naoibh-la-fichad do Mhias miannach an Fhaoghmar, fa'n t'fean Chuntas, na'n deichmha la do mhios deiranich an Fhaoghmar 'fa Chuntas ur.

IV. FEILE na Saunne air a cheud la do'n Gheamlhradh 'fan 't fean Chuntas, na'n dar-la-deug 'fa Chuntas ur.

V. AN FHEIL MARTINE, air a cheud diaceadoin an-deigh Feile Ionnar-nise. Tha Fheil na spreidh o fo amach gu feisibh air Rhin-Down.

Inverness,
Printed by Young & Imray.

Fig 2. Bilingual public notice concerning fairs printed by Young and Imray, Inverness (NLS APS.el.84). Photograph by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.

according to the printers, were to enable the presentation of more accurate lists.

In 1772, J. Chalmers said 'the Publishers are sensible, that the above List of the North Country [i.e. the North-East] fairs is far from being so complete as was designed, but they hope that the Gentlemen whose fairs have been omitted for want of Information, will send a Note of them any time in Summer, that they may be inserted in next year's almanac.' Even in the 1931 *Edinburgh Almanac*, the printers issued a notice waiving responsibility for any inaccuracies, although, with an echo of all the printers who had gone before, they added the request 'they will feel greatly obliged by having their attention called to any such inaccuracy' (p. 68).

That clear-cut understanding of fair dates within a parish was required is exemplified by a public notice, served in Beaully around 1800, which was printed in both English and Gaelic (see Fig. 2). With the change from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar, the listings in the almanacs may have proved to be an essential dating aid. From this time, the almanacs state whether the fair date is Old or New Style, perhaps reflecting a duality of thought processes that is paralleled today in the persistence of inches and lb weight over metric system in many sectors of contemporary British society. This mode of reference is not merely carried over for a decade or so, but for much longer. Differentiating between Old and New Style seems to have become somewhat formulaic in later almanacs, for the practice is evident into twentieth-century publications, by which time 'O.S.' has become an obsolete reference in all other aspects of society. The fair lists were a continued presence in the almanacs of the twentieth century, although the fairs are mixed with markets and gatherings, and it may be that the printing of such may have been as much a traditional part of the almanac's contents as a required service. However, there is still interesting information to be found, which harks back to the need to know not only the fair dates in your own parish, but those of the surrounding area: this is the entry under 'Keltonhill' (p. 72) in the 1931 *Edinburgh Almanac & National Repository* – from a list that runs to some 602 entries: 'As the date of this long-since obsolete fair still rules the holding of several fairs in the district, the reference to it here may prove of service.'

Finally, to return to the earlier almanacs, the inclusion of the lists is of interest for the very fact that the source is a popular publication – it is not a charter or any other type of official document. The lists have been augmented from information provided by chapmen 'and others who have business at the fairs' – people who attended, and knew the type of enterprise to be found at, specific fairs. As I have said, these lists may be primary sources of such information, or they may provide supplementary evidence, such as the years when dates or locations were altered, to substantiate other material. The very presence of the fair lists in the almanacs also forces us to consider the fairs in a different context – after all, in 1684 Forbes decided to print his list in a separate publication entitled *The Whole Yearly FARES and Weekly MERCATS of Scotland* – and to charge 16d for it. If we look at them from the printers' point of view, the fairs, irrespective of their origins, their locations or their names, are a commercial concern. A

fair list was a good commercial move – after all, with the fair lists taking up to 80% of the earlier almanacs, it had to be a prime motive for buying the publications.

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NOTES

- 1 For further information on Raban and other printers mentioned, see McKerrow (1910), Plomer (1922) and Plomer, Bushnell and McC. Dix (1932).
- 2 For information regarding literacy in Scottish society, see Houston (1985), Houston and Whyte (1985) and Marshall (1983).
- 3 See Houston (1985) and Houston and Whyte (1989).
- 4 Black 1999: 21. From current research, Forres can be predated to 1678 from Forbes' *New prognosticatioun For the year of our Redemption 1678* (NLS 5.2958 [3(1)]) and Blair Athol to 1700 from Reid's *Prognosticatioun for the year... 1700* (NLS mf.26[14(15)]).
- 5 See Blackburn and Holford-Strevens 1999.
- 6 University of Stirling Library, Q 41.25 ABE.
- 7 That the persistence of Old Syle dates may not have been the original intent is suggested in a notice contained in the *Edinburgh Almanack for 1750*, printed by Robert Fleming: 'The Courts of Session and Exchequer in Scotland, and all markets, Fairs and Marts, after the second day of September [1752], shall be held on the same natural Days they should have been holden on, as if the Act for regulating the Commencement of the Year, and correcting the Kalendar, made in the 24th George II had not been made, that is to say, Eleven Days later than the same would have happened according to the New Supputation of Time, except such fairs as depend on the moveable feasts, which must be regulated to the New Kalendar.' (p. 9)

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