

Student Singing and Song Books in Scotland

PETER B. FRESHWATER

Abstract

Students have always sung in the four Ancient Universities of Scotland. They were much later than German and North American universities, and a little later than England, in arranging the compilation and publication of national song books for students. These were *The Scottish Students' Song Book* and *The British Students' Song Book* and their few successors. The figure behind their creation was Professor John Stuart Blackie. Organised student singing in Scotland began in the late nineteenth century and continued until the middle of the twentieth century, when it gave way to other activities.

Background

Singing has been part of student life for as long as there have been students. At least in the West, '*Gaudeamus Igitur*' is believed to be the oldest known student song, dating from a 1287 manuscript now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The tune, a late eighteenth-century German one, was promoted by Brahms in his *Academic Festival Overture* in 1880. Germany began the practice of collecting and singing student songs in the late eighteenth century, inspiring people from other countries, including Scotland's John Stuart Blackie, to do the same. Sigmund Romberg's popular operetta *The Student Prince* (1924) is based on German students' songs, as was the long-running Dorothy Reynolds and Julian Slade operetta *Salad Days* (1954) on English ones. Other mediaeval songs have been identified in other sources, like the library at Benediktbeuren, and set to music by modern composers like Carl Orff for his cantata *Carmina Burana*.

The wandering scholars of the Middle Ages may have been the original singers of student songs, bringing their songs with them and singing wherever they went. Many were students as we think of them today, young men who travelled from university to university in search of knowledge. They were identified as the Goliardi, followers of a mythical individual called Goliath who was notorious for gluttony, drunkenness and lechery.¹ Others were wandering scholars, adult men of the cloth, disappointed by not receiving the ecclesiastical preferment that they sought, or sacked from their communities as 'spoiled priests'.² Whether any of the Goliardi came to Scotland, or whether any Scots became Goliardi, seems not to be known. Today's traditional student songs arose from and have been adopted by much later student communities, especially colleges, and were the secular songs sung during social gatherings, as distinct from the liturgical songs and chants sung during religious services, especially by college choirs.

Scotland had five ancient universities, of which only one, St Andrews (1410), was truly collegiate in providing accommodation and facilities for its students as well as for teaching and studying. Aberdeen's two universities, King's College (1500) and Mareschal College (1593) – they became one university in 1860 – were called 'colleges' but were actually teaching and studying institutions

¹ John Addington Symonds, *Wine, Women and Song*, 2nd edition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), 16–22.

² Helen Waddell, *Songs of the Wandering Scholars* (London: The Folio Society, 1982).

like the universities of Glasgow (1451) and Edinburgh (1583), whose students lodged in the city rather than in purpose-built student accommodation.

Student singing was of two kinds. Firstly, informal singing in bars, howffs, sports clubs and such venues, where the singing was of traditional songs and extempore political ballads, or of chants, often to hymn tunes, similar to the modern ones ‘Why are we waiting’ (to the tune ‘Adeste fideles’) and ‘We’re here because we’re here because we’re here because we’re here ...’ (to one of the tunes of ‘Auld Lang Syne’). Political songs such as ‘The College Snow Row’ and ‘The Battle of the Quadrangle’, written and printed as street ballad sheets, were presumably sung at dinners after events like the 1838 Snowball Battle between students and townsfolk in Edinburgh at the University gates. It was in fact the informal singing by St Andrews students in trains on their way to the University that caused one of them, Millar Patrick, to begin collecting their songs for publication.

More formally, student glee clubs and singing groups started appearing late in the nineteenth century and continued until the middle of the twentieth; it was for these organisations that college and university student song books were published in Scotland. Men’s drinking clubs had, of course, existed in Scotland as well as in England, and other communities had songs of their own – the army, the medical and the legal fraternities, and the merchant navy (shanties, etc.). The earliest recorded student societies, some dating from the eighteenth century, were debating societies. Their early records have seldom survived, but if they held occasional dinners for their members in local hostelries or howffs, they may well have continued drinking after dining; and singing, as was the custom after dinner, would have accompanied circulation of the bottles.

All of these groups were, however, separate from the formal choirs that performed as part of the official university music societies which sprang up in the late nineteenth century, notwithstanding the fact that the first concert in 1875 of the Aberdeen University Choral Society included a setting of ‘*Gaudeamus*’ by the Professor of Music at Edinburgh University, Sir Herbert Stanley Oakeley.³ Professor Oakeley would later produce, for the Edinburgh University Musical Society, a set of *Eighteen Scottish Melodies Arranged for Male Chorus for the Universities of Scotland*.⁴ Only four of his settings would find their way, acknowledged, into *The Scottish Students’ Song Book*.

Modern student singing began to emerge at the non-collegiate universities once identifiable student facilities like clubs, common rooms and students’ unions became part of the late nineteenth century student experience. Prior to the universities’ providing living accommodation in colleges and halls of residence, students lived at home or boarded with city landladies, usually on a half-board basis. Their social lives were lived in local taverns or howffs where they, with other members of the community, would sing traditional and bawdy songs. Student clubs and associations would organise dinners, often called ‘smokers’, after which singing would accompany the drinking as it did at political and professional dinners. These were regular social events in Oxford and Cambridge colleges, but of the Scottish universities only St Andrews is known to have had such functions. As Menzies Fergusson put it in *My College Days* in 1887:

³ R.D. Anderson, *The Student Community at Aberdeen 1860-1939* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 48.

⁴ Sir Herbert Stanley Oakeley, *Eighteen Scottish Melodies Arranged for Male Chorus for the Universities of Scotland*. This work is noted in footnotes the *SSSB*, but otherwise has vanished completely from the Oakeley archives.

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‘Student life at a Scotch University is not like that at Oxford and Cambridge, being a much more erratic and heterogenous kind of thing. At the English Universities the undergraduates reside within the bounds of the different Colleges, but in Scotland they provide themselves with lodgings anywhere they please. ... At St Andrews, however, a more maternal supervision is exercised ... This state of matters is against the bulk of the students ever coming into close social intercourse, and so there is a lack of that *esprit de corps* which is so characteristic of the English Universities. The tendency is to form cliques or sets, and the wider College life is undeveloped ... The Debating Societies, Athletic Clubs, and Political Associations, are generally the only common meeting ground, beside the lecture-rooms, where men of different faculties may meet and get to know each other ...’⁵

The St Andrews colleges organized regular convivial evenings at the Cross Keys Hotel: the *Solatium* was fairly free and easy, and the *Gaudeamus* ‘a more substantial affair’. Both included post-prandial singing, the songs usually led by individuals with the audience invited to join in with the choruses. These were the equivalent of the smoking concerts or ‘smokers’ enjoyed by Oxford and Cambridge colleges and adopted later in Scotland, when student unions opened in the non-collegiate universities in the late 1880s.

John Stuart Blackie and *The Scottish Students’ Song Book*

Student song books were introduced to Scotland from Germany by Professor John Stuart Blackie (1809–1895), an alumnus of Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities, who became Professor of Humanity at Aberdeen from 1841 to 1852, and Professor of Greek at Edinburgh from 1852 to 1882. A remarkable man and a charismatic lecturer, he espoused many causes, notably university reform, the education of women, Celtic studies (single-handedly he raised nearly all of the £11,000 needed to establish a chair of Celtic at Edinburgh), and Scottish song. Between his undergraduate years at Aberdeen and Edinburgh he spent two years at the Universities of Göttingen and Berlin followed by one year in Rome, which he referred to as his *Wanderjahre*, seeing himself as following the perceived tradition of the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages who travelled from one university to another to study what and with whom they pleased. He fell in love with Germany’s Romantic image of its mediaeval past, and with his memory of the *Burschen*, the senior students at German universities who seemed to him to spend their lives drinking, fighting and, above all, singing.

Blackie’s passion lay dormant for several years following his return to Scotland, and then erupted like a volcano. He wrote a series of five articles on ‘Burschen melodies’ (German student songs) which were published in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* between 1839 and 1841; two of these articles later formed the basis of a book, *War Songs of the Germans*, which was eventually published in 1870. He also wrote a collection of songs ‘for students and university men’ which was published in 1869 under the title of *Musa Burschicosa*, although there is no evidence to suggest that it was ever taken up and used by the student community. Apparently at that time you could take students to songs, but you could not make them sing! He was gratified a few years later when one or two of these songs

⁵ R Menzies Fergusson, ed., *My College Days* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1887), 60-61

were included in *The Scottish Students' Song Book*, as were several of the German songs culled from his original articles.⁶

Although Scotland had fine traditions of songs and singing as well as of universities accessible to almost every man (and later, to women) who wished to attend, it was late in the production of a national book of student songs. Actually, so was England. In his book *Scottish Song* (1889) Blackie describes the singing and songbook traditions of the German universities which he had encountered during his *Wanderjahre*. He quotes two of the great German drinking songs, 'Edite, Bibite' and 'Crambambuli' from the *Allgemeines Deutsches Commersbuch*, used in many German universities, and then notes:

Of Scottish students' songs strictly so called, I know of none: for the Academical songs that we have here in *College Songs* (Edinburgh, 1886) and *Musa Burschicosa* by J.S.B. (Edinburgh, 1869) are not by students, but by professors, or physicians ... How far the students in the English universities may have succeeded in the production of a 'Commersbuch' worthy to take rank with the German compends of convivial song, I do not know; but the musical indoctrination which they receive at Harrow and other great schools, certainly gives them an excellent start for brilliant advances in the same line at the University – see *Harrow School Songs* by John Farmer ...⁷

Blackie was probably also unaware that a group of Edinburgh University Students had, in 1876, published two *Monthly Papers for Students by Students*, the first being *Student Songs* written by themselves. Like so many student projects, this seems to have died after the second one.

Thanks to visits to Oxford to lecture and consult classics colleagues, Blackie may have indeed known that one of its colleges was about to give birth, vicariously, to 'a "Commersbuch" worthy to take rank with the German compends of convivial song'. As his comment above hints, he was aware of John Farmer's *Harrow School Songs*; subsequently Farmer, Director of Music at Harrow School, had been invited by Benjamin Jowett, classical scholar and Master of Balliol, to accept the post of College Organist there. Based on his experience of school songs and compiling songbooks for Harrow, Farmer was producing a songbook for students which would eventually be published by Cassell in 1890. Called *Gaudeamus* (see *Figure 3* below), it continued the tradition of the songbooks used by catch clubs and glee clubs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and included songs popular in the smoking concerts in college and other gentlemen's clubs – despite the fact that songs of this kind were still regarded by many outsiders as *risqué*.

By 1889 Blackie must also have known that a move was already under way to create a students' songbook in Scotland, primarily for St Andrews University, but one that could be used and enjoyed by students in all four Scottish universities. A St Andrews student, Millar Patrick, who lived in Ladybank, Fife and travelled each day to St Andrews via Leuchars Junction, was fascinated by the songs that many students sang in the trains on their way to and from the University, and often while waiting for classes to begin. In 1887 he started to collect these songs with the intention of compiling a book of them. By this time, the Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) in the Scottish Universities (there was nothing comparable in England), decided that the Scottish Universities should

⁶ Curiously, Blackie's connection with and support for the *Scottish Students' Song Book* is not mentioned in Stuart Wallace's recent biography, *John Stuart Blackie: Scottish Scholar and Patriot* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

⁷ John Stuart Blackie, *Scottish Song* (London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1889), 315

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have a song book of their own, like those in Germany and in North America. The SRCs invited Millar Patrick to set up an Editorial Committee along with representatives of the other three universities, to compile and publish a Scottish students' song book.

Patrick was glad to do so, choosing as his fellow-editors John Malcolm Bulloch (Aberdeen), William Nelson (Glasgow), and Archibald Stodart Walker (Edinburgh). Bulloch was in his final year at Aberdeen, graduating MA in 1888 and following his father into journalism; he edited the University magazine *Alma Mater*, and would later work on *The Sketch*, *The Graphic* and *The Illustrated London News*. Nelson had trained as a teacher before embarking on an MA degree at Glasgow University and then went on to train for the Church. Stodart Walker was a medical student at Edinburgh, where he served successively as Editor-in-Chief of *The Student*, as Senior President of the SRC and as President of the University Union; he graduated in 1891. Significantly, he was the nephew (and surrogate son) of John Stuart Blackie, lived with the Blackies in Douglas Crescent, and eventually became his uncle's heir and literary executor. After a few years in medical practice he abandoned

medicine for a life of letters, editing his uncle's letters and notebooks, and contributing many of Blackie's writings, as well as his own, to anthologies and fund-raising gift books, especially during the First World War. Millar Patrick later went on to train for the Church of Scotland ministry and was eventually awarded a DD degree, becoming the authority on the history of Scottish hymnody; his *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (Oxford University Press 1949) is still the authoritative work.

The Editorial Team set to work. As well as encouraging contemporary students and alumni to write new songs, they mined the riches of song collections old and new. American and Canadian college songbooks became their primary sources, and songs like 'Riding down from Bangor', 'The Gambolier', 'Tavern in the Town', 'Abdul the Bulbul Ameer' and 'Solomon Levi' crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic so many times that their origins are now in some doubt. Through his nephew Archibald Stodart Walker, Blackie put his own collections of German and Gaelic songs, often with his own translations into English, at the editors' disposal, in addition to his own songs in *Musa Burschicosa*. The inclusion of '*Fhir a bhata*' ('The boatman') and '*Ho-ro mo nighean donn, bhoidheach*' ('Ho-ro my nut-brown maiden'), with Blackie's translations, may have helped to introduce Gaelic song to a wide and receptive non-Gaelic speaking public.

At least two of the editors wrote songs of their own. Bulloch contributed 'The pocket Gray', 'The sunniest season of life' and 'A mathematical monody', and Stodart Walker, 'Cakes and ale'. Other academic songs were contributed by former students like Sir Douglas Maclagan, Director of the New Town Dispensary and author and compiler of the fund-raising songbook *Nugae Canorae Medicae*; and Julius



Fig. 1. Cover design of the sixth edition of the *Scottish Students Song Book*. Designer unknown.

Eggeling, Professor of Sanskrit, whose song ‘The crocodile’ (‘A famous Scotch professor was walking by the Nile...’), based on an older German song, commemorated Blackie’s visit to Egypt in 1879. Maclagan, Eggeling and Blackie had for many years organised the meetings of the Symposium Academicum, the dining, drinking and singing club of the Edinburgh University Senatus. Two Aberdeen songs, ‘Salve boreale lumen’, originally written for King’s College, Newcastle upon Tyne and adapted by its author John Wight Duff for Aberdeen, and ‘Shon Campbell’ by W. A. Mackenzie, became popular with Aberdeen students, and ‘Moriar Melpomene’ by W. A. A. Armstrong with Glasgow University. By comparison, David Rorie’s ‘Thistle, castle and book’ was sung at Edinburgh but never achieved quite the same popularity; but two of his other songs ‘The pawkie duke’ and ‘The lum hat wantin’ the croon’ have found their way into his native Aberdeenshire ballad tradition. They would also be included in the *British Students’ Song Book (BSSB)*.

Not all of these songs appeared in all editions of the *SSSB*. The first edition, scheduled to appear in April 1891 in good time for the end of the session in May or early June, was delayed and eventually published in July. The unexpected delay was caused in part by the editors’ having not received copyright clearance from the publisher of *The Toronto University Song Book*, who was inclined to be sticky about this. The matter was resolved by the expatriate President of the University of Toronto, the Scottish antiquary and psychologist (and good friend of John Stuart Blackie) Daniel Wilson, who intervened in favour of the *SSSB*. The editors, much relieved but fearing that students in vacation would not wish to purchase it in any quantity, need not have worried. The first edition of 1,500 copies was sold out almost immediately, and a second edition (a reprint of the first with a few extra notes) was rushed through the press for the start of the next session. A third edition, representing the first real revision and enlargement of the book, with the music properly taken in hand by W. Henry Maxfield, appeared in June the following year, 1892.

At this point the editors encountered their first backlash and needed to rethink their inclusion policy. The first and second editions had included several songs that were uncomplimentary about the arrival of women in the universities, especially women medical students and the growing number of women entering the medical professions. Moreover, all the harmonized tunes were set for men’s voices. Women were in the universities to stay, of course, but were still not admitted to all classes (parallel classes were arranged), or to the University Unions (they would in time establish their own Women’s Unions) or, as has already been noted, to smokers and other sing-songs. Nor would they purchase a songbook which opposed their being at

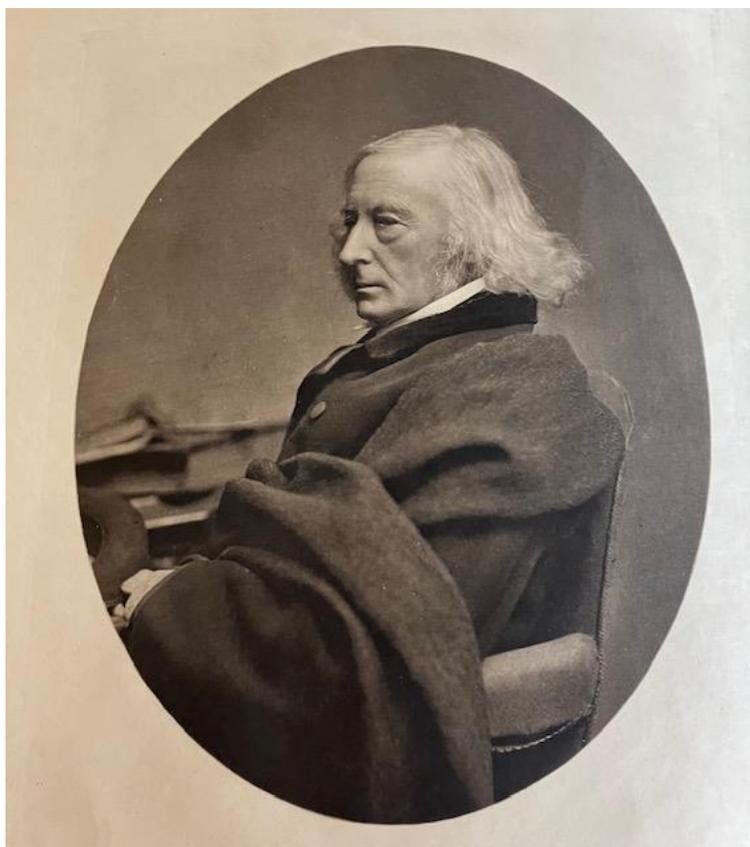


Fig. 2. Frontispiece portrait of John Stuart Blackie from the commemorative edition of the *Scottish Students’ Song Book*.

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university at all. The act had to be cleaned up: songs had to be removed, and new music editors had to revise or rewrite many of the musical settings for mixed voices. Interestingly, there seems to have been no comparable backlash against some of the spirituals and so-called ‘plantation songs’, including songs like ‘Polly Wolly Doodle’ and Stephen Foster’s ‘Uncle Ned’, to which the growing number of Afro-Caribbean students, who were coming to Scotland to study medicine, might have objected. Those objections only came much later, in 1982.

The third edition of the *SSSB*, much revised and enlarged, was reprinted as a fourth edition in April 1892 and, with changes to just one song, as a fifth edition in April 1896. The sixth edition, again much revised and enlarged, appeared in December 1897 (*Figure 1*). Two new music editors, W. August Barrett and J. Kenyon Lees were engaged, and rewrote much of the music for changing songs that no-one ever sang, and added many songs with new music as well as new words.

The publisher chosen for the *SSSB*, relatively little-known at the time, was Bayley & Ferguson, a Glasgow company with a London office. From the start they did such a good job on the *SSSB* that its publication kick-started for them a successful music publishing programme that lasted for fifty years and produced beautiful songbooks and sheet music of all kinds. William Nelson, the first Glasgow University editor of the *SSSB*, seems to have been very successful in liaising with the publisher on the editors’ behalf – possibly his main contribution to the project, as he seems to have taken relatively little part in collecting and submitting songs for consideration. St Andrews, Aberdeen and Edinburgh are better represented in the *SSSB* than Glasgow. Bayley & Ferguson’s design and layout of the *SSSB* became a distinctive house-style for their later published collections. Look at a page of any of their early twentieth-century songbooks and you can immediately say ‘Ah – Bayley & Ferguson!’

In May 1891, John Stuart Blackie contributed an Introduction which was faithfully reprinted in all editions of the *SSSB*. He welcomed the initiative and noted several German songbooks, but none from America. Surprisingly, he also omitted to mention John Farmer’s *Gaudeamus*: ‘I have in my library only a small volume of Harrow Songs ... perhaps John Bull, with all his good qualities, is not such a musical animal as the German, delighting more in strong blows than in nice sentiment’. Blackie died in 1895, and was posthumously honoured by the production of a special limited and numbered printing of the sixth edition on hand-made paper in a large format, with a photogravure portrait of Blackie as a frontispiece (*Figure 2*). With this, the original editors stood down to pursue their own individual careers, and four new ones took over.

The Scottish Students’ Songs Book Committee Ltd and *The British Students’ Song Book*

The new editors were A. G. Abbie (St Andrews), W. B. G. Minto (Aberdeen), J. Scoular Thomson (Glasgow) and J. M. Hogge (Edinburgh). Realising that, given its rising popularity, more stable management of the *SSSB* was needed, they established themselves as a limited liability company, the Scottish Students’ Song Book Committee Ltd, which continued until its dissolution in 1992. It consisted of themselves as Directors and initially four, later eight, proxy shareholders, one or two from each Scottish university.

The popularity of the *SSSB* south of the Border eventually proved greater than that of John Farmer’s *Gaudeamus* (*Figure 3*, discussed above), with the result that the *SSSB* Committee began receiving requests from English and Welsh universities for some of their songs to be included in future editions. Having considered such a revision, the Committee decided that the best way forward was to compile a second book as a companion to the *SSSB*. *The British Students’ Song Book* (*BSSB*)

(Figure 4) was a completely new book, which included only one song from the *SSSB*: the National Anthem, ‘God Save the King’. Its publication provided a connection between the Scottish and English song book traditions, which had developed on parallel but completely separate tracks since the publication of *Gaudeamus* in 1890.

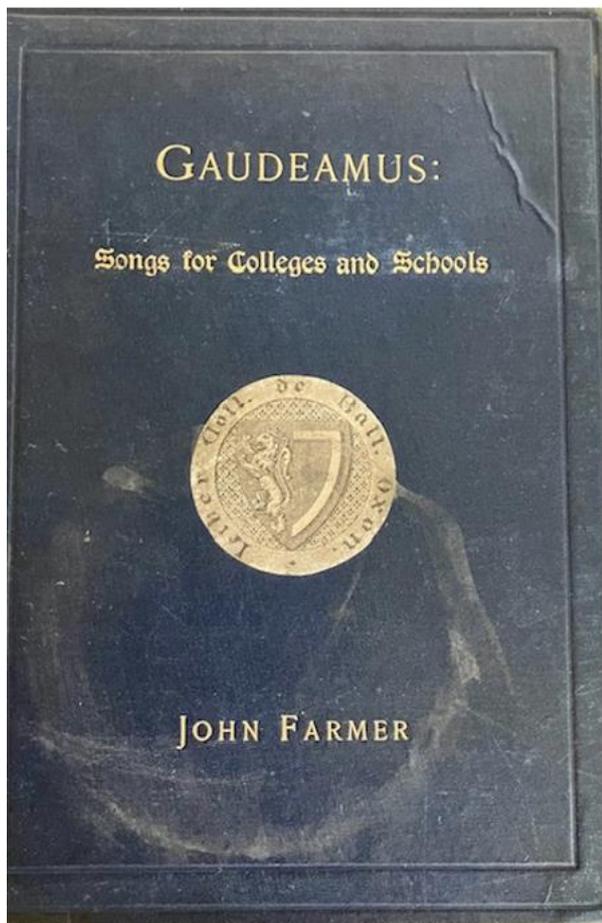


Fig. 3. Cover design for *Gaudeamus*. This copy bears a label indicating that it was the property of Balliol College, Oxford.

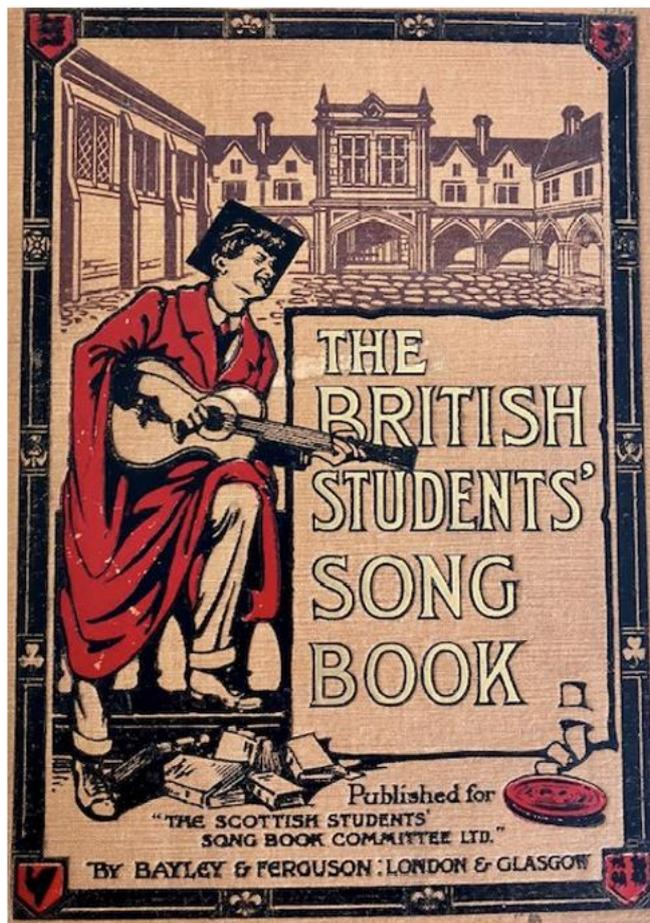


Fig. 4. Cover design of the *British Students' Song Book* by J. C. Borland.

While the original editors had been working on the *SSSB*, and stimulated by the book's arrival and general popularity, student poets had been busy in all four Scottish universities, writing poems and songs mainly for contribution to the students' and other university magazines that had sprung up and developed since the 1880s; many of their poems would later appear in collected volumes of verse. The most significant student poet in Scotland at this time was Robert Fuller Murray of St Andrews who, in 1891, had published in St Andrews and London a collection of his verses under the title of *The Scarlet Gown*. Following Murray's death in Somerset in 1893, John Burnet, Professor of Greek at St Andrews, took or sent a copy of *The Scarlet Gown* to John Farmer at Balliol College. (Burnet had studied at Balliol and knew Farmer very well, having married Farmer's daughter Mary in 1894.) He urged Farmer to set some of the poems from *The Scarlet Gown* to music. Farmer had them printed by Cassell (publisher of *Gaudeamus* and other song books) in a short print run that sold at Henderson's bookshop in St Andrews as the *St Andrews University Song Book*. With permission from John Farmer's estate (he had died in 1901), the editors of the *BSSB* included several of Farmer's and

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Murray's songs, further helping to draw together the hitherto separate strands of student singing in Scotland and England.

The first edition of the *BSSB*, published in 1913, included plenty of new songs by Scottish students and recent alumni, together with many 'very English' songs and more in the way of art songs for solo voice and piano accompaniment. Its College Song section comprised several new songs from Scottish colleges: 'St Andrews!' by R F Murray; 'Dundas Vale' (Glasgow Teacher Training College) by one W. W. A. Bell; 'Floreat Alma Mater (Glasgow University) by the journalist J. J. Bell; and songs from King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne, Leeds University, Manchester University, Reading University College, Sheffield University, Aberystwyth University College, and Cardiff University College. It sold well, and a run-on reprint was published in 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. The *SSSB* Committee's contribution to the War effort was to distribute complimentary copies of the *BSSB* to the British military commands and to the YMCA for their huts at the Front.⁸

In 1925, a second edition of the *BSSB* was included more songs of the same kind. One of these was a superb setting by Francis M. Collinson of 'The Canadian Boat Song' ('From the lone shieling, from the misty island ...'). Collinson had gained his BMus from Edinburgh University in 1923, during which time he had provided the music and conducted the orchestra for *The Students' Representative Ceenium*, Edinburgh University's annual musical review. This he did so successfully that he spent the next thirty years in the West End of London, writing and arranging for the musical theatre.⁹ The *BSSB* was not revised again but, with the *SSSB*, was reprinted many times until about 1960.

The *SSSB* Committee continued to meet and to supervise the work of producing song books. The directors as editors met as required, although it was Alistair Abbie, Editor-in-Chief, who did most of the work, as Millar Patrick had done before him. The shareholders met with the Directors once a year, usually in an Edinburgh hotel, for an annual business meeting and a good lunch or dinner followed by a convivial sing-song. For some members of the Committee, this function evidently provided them with an opportunity for something of a spree. There are tales of a clergyman indulging his normally suppressed desire for liquor, and of a Member of Parliament who on one occasion was accompanied by a barmaid from the House of Commons. The list of Directors and shareholders over the years is an impressive one, and includes the author Eric Linklater; Charles Sanford Terry, Professor of History at Aberdeen; Dr Arthur Melville Clarke, Reader in English Literature at Edinburgh; the Right Honourable Sir Ian Macpherson, 1st Baron Strathcarron PC KC JP; Neil Campbell, Professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh and friend and contemporary of Olympic medallist Eric Liddell; and Charles Oakley, Glasgow businessman and author, who served as the last Chairman of the Committee. Other members of the Committee in its last years included Dr Andrew Shivas, pathologist and percussionist; Professor Alan Lendrum and George Montgomery, also pathologists; the Reverend (later Professor) Ian Bradley, author and broadcaster; and the present author, Peter Freshwater, Deputy University Librarian at Edinburgh. The last Secretary of the Committee was Andrew Moore CA.

⁸ Peter B. Freshwater, 'Scottish Student Song and World War I', *University of Edinburgh Journal* 47/3 (June 2016): 172–174.

⁹ A founding staff member of the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, Collinson was the author of numerous works including *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (1966), *The Bagpipe—The History of a Musical Instrument* (1975), and (with John Lorne Campbell) the three-volume compilation of *Hebridean Folksongs* (1969, 1977, 1981), as well as many articles published in this journal.

As well as the folio editions of the *SSSB* and *BSSB*, the Committee and Bayley & Ferguson also published pocket-sized, words-only, and tonic sol-fa editions of the *SSSB* in several styles of binding, mostly plain cloth with the title blocked in gold. The first tonic sol-fa edition was published in a small quarto format with a reduced-size cover version of the folio 6th edition (pictured in *Figure 1*). It contained an appendix of fifteen additional songs written by various contributors including past and present editors, one of whom, J. M. Hogge, was listed as the Editor-in-Chief. A later words-only edition, pocket-sized with a soft binding, was issued with the same appendix.

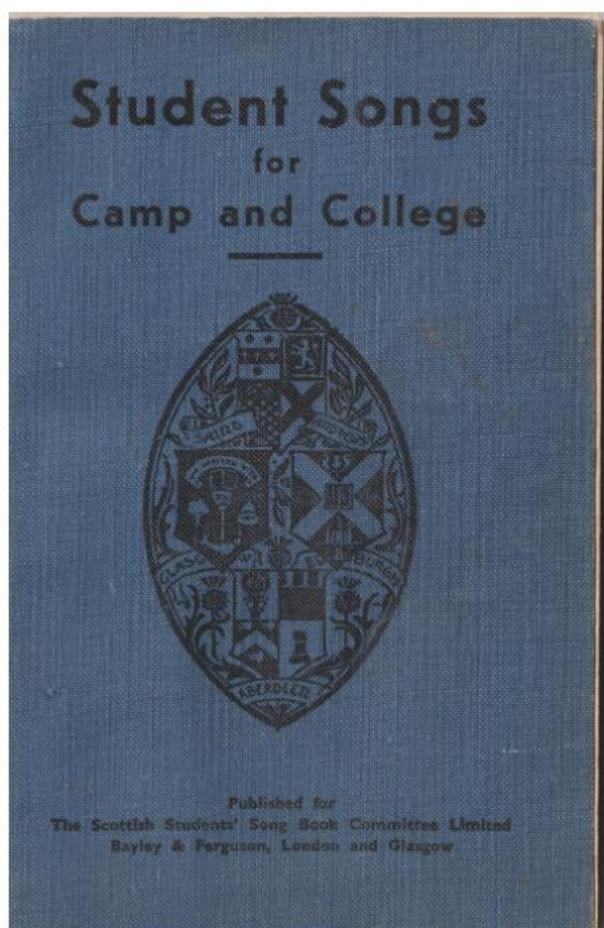


Fig. 5. Cover of Student Songs for Camp and College.

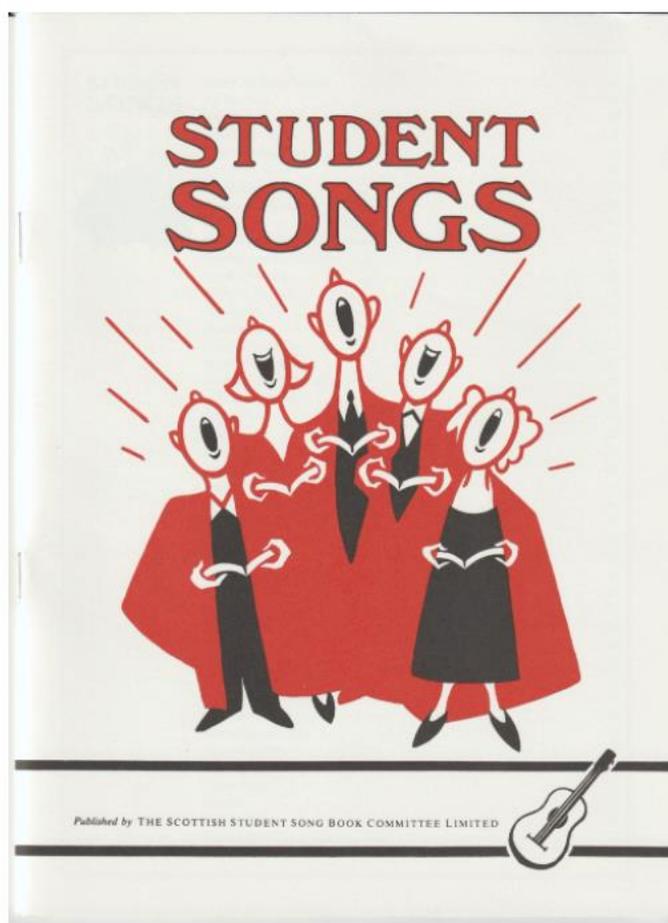


Fig. 6. Cover design of Student Songs by John Mackay

By the mid-1930s, demand for another collection of songs, appealing to a wider audience, led in 1937 to the Committee and Bayley & Ferguson producing *Students Songs for Camp and College* (*Figure 5*), a pocket-sized book of 121 pages that comprised many favourites from the *SSSB* and the *BSSB* as well as others, including eight popular hymns, two mealtime graces in Latin, and (surprisingly, given the prevailing political situation) seven German songs. They even got permission to include four songs by Sir Harry Lauder: 'I love a lassie', 'Roamin' in the gloamin'', 'It's nice to get up in the morning' and 'We parted on the shore'.

The Last Years of Student Singing in Scotland

The Committee's last publication was a slim booklet of *Student Songs (SS)* reprinted in facsimile from the parent volumes and issued with a jaunty cover by cartoonist and illustrator John Mackay

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(Figure 6). This collection which, according to the memories of the Directors (most of whom by this time were well retired and in their ‘anecdotalage’) included the most popular songs from earlier volumes, appeared in 1982. Unfortunately, these included several ‘plantation’ and similar songs by Stephen Foster and Henry C. Work: ‘Camptown Races’, ‘Polly-Wolly-Doodle’, ‘Old Folks at Home’, ‘Kingdom Coming’ and others – a decision both incautious and tactless, bearing in mind that the BBC had discontinued the still-popular *Black and White Minstrel Show* as recently as 1978. When the Committee sent copies of *Student Songs* to the SRCs of the four Ancient Universities – to which the Committee still theoretically answered – they opened Pandora’s Box, creating the second backlash some ninety years after the arrival of women students had provoked the first. Most vociferous was Glasgow University SRC which, in a challenging and indignant letter to the Scottish press, complained about the publication of these offensively racist songs. Wilfred Taylor, a well-known journalist and the St Andrews member of the Committee, took up the Committee’s cudgels in the correspondence columns and in his regular *Scotsman* column, ‘A Scotsman’s Log’. For a week or two the fur flew. Following this furore, the SRCs destroyed or quietly stashed their supplies of *Scottish Songs*, while the Committee retained copies for its own use. Its members continued to meet once a year in the Edinburgh University Staff Club to receive a formal report from the Directors, have a good lunch, and reminisce about their student days.

By 1991, when the Committee came to mark the centenary of the first publication of the *SSSB*, it realised that its day was over, and that the dinosaur had met its ice age. Ian Bradley compiled and presented a retrospective radio programme which was recorded by the BBC in the Younger Hall, St Andrews, by a combined choir of students from St Andrews, Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities (Glasgow had been invited, but declined to participate). Ian McRorie conducted the choir, and John Kitchen accompanied them on the organ. The audience, which included Committee members and guests, SRC representatives, and families and friends of choir members, thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. The hour-long programme was broadcast on BBC Radio 2 on 23 July 1991. The following year, the Committee formally dissolved itself and presented what remained of its archives to Edinburgh University Library.

It used to be said that that you could go into a Scottish home anywhere in the world and be sure of finding two volumes in the living room: the Bible and *The Scottish Students’ Song Book*. Generations of Scottish students and their families grew up with it. It was used in schools as well as colleges, universities, and students’ homes. It sold thousands of copies a year, and accompanied Scots wherever they went. It spawned hundreds, if not thousands, of song books compiled by and for other organisations as well as schools, colleges, universities and youth groups of all kinds. *The British Students’ Song Book* never quite achieved the same popularity. Spin-off publications appeared, some published by Bayley & Ferguson, such as *College Songs: 29 Songs that will never die* (c. 1932). *The People’s Friend* magazine even produced a Students’ Songbook supplement. Individual universities produced song books of their own: Aberdeen in 1956 and 1966, Glasgow in 1956 and 1960, St Andrews in 1961 and 1966. Edinburgh instead created the Edinburgh University Glee Club in 1958 to sing songs from the *SSSB*, on the advice of Dr Andrew Shivas to David Bruce, who founded it and conducted it for four years.¹⁰

¹⁰ David Bruce, ‘Sounds Reunited’, *University of Edinburgh Journal* 45/4 (December 2012): 239–240.

Student singing continued until after World War II, but almost as a kind of historical relic, by barbershop groups in St Andrews, still regarded as Scotland's singing university, and by a few male voice choirs like the Edinburgh University Glee Club, which sang from 1958 until 1975, and which was remembered in two later reunions of the Club. Students occasionally wrote new songs in the old tradition, such as the Edinburgh students' 'The Fresher's Lament' (based on the hymn 'Abide with me') in 1960, and the better-known 'Sandy Bell's man' by Stuart Macgregor in 1965. By way of commemoration, a reunion in 2012 of members of the Edinburgh University Glee Club included the production for members of one last *Students' Song Book*. By this time, however, the smoking concerts had become bar-room sessions, and the songs sung degenerated to so-called 'rugby songs', most of which were very blue in content and often very politically incorrect.

Epilogue

It is interesting that the political correctness of songs has, in Great Britain, long been a hot topic for football club supporters and those responsible for their club song books. In Europe, especially in Germany, student song is still associated with far-right politics – as I have learned the hard way. On one occasion, as I was chatting to a visiting German colleague during a conference coffee break, I mentioned my research interest in student songs and song books. He recoiled in horror, exclaiming 'but you are not a Nazi!' On another, I met with a similar reaction in an antiquarian bookshop in Göttingen: having enquired about historic student song books, I was emphatically told to 'LEAVE THE SHOP NOW, PLEASE!'

Even so, a few years later when my wife and I, on holiday in Florence, were returning to our hotel one evening along a quiet street, we encountered a couple of Italian students singing 'Gaudeamus Igitur':

Gaudeamus igitur,
Iuvenes dum sumus!
Post iucundam iuventutem
Post molestam senectutem
Nos habebit humus.

[*Let us therefore rejoice while we are young!
For after a delightful youth and a burdensome
old age, the earth will claim us.*]

To the students' astonishment, we both joined in and finished the first verse with them, word perfect and in four-part harmony. We all then went our separate, delighted ways.

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