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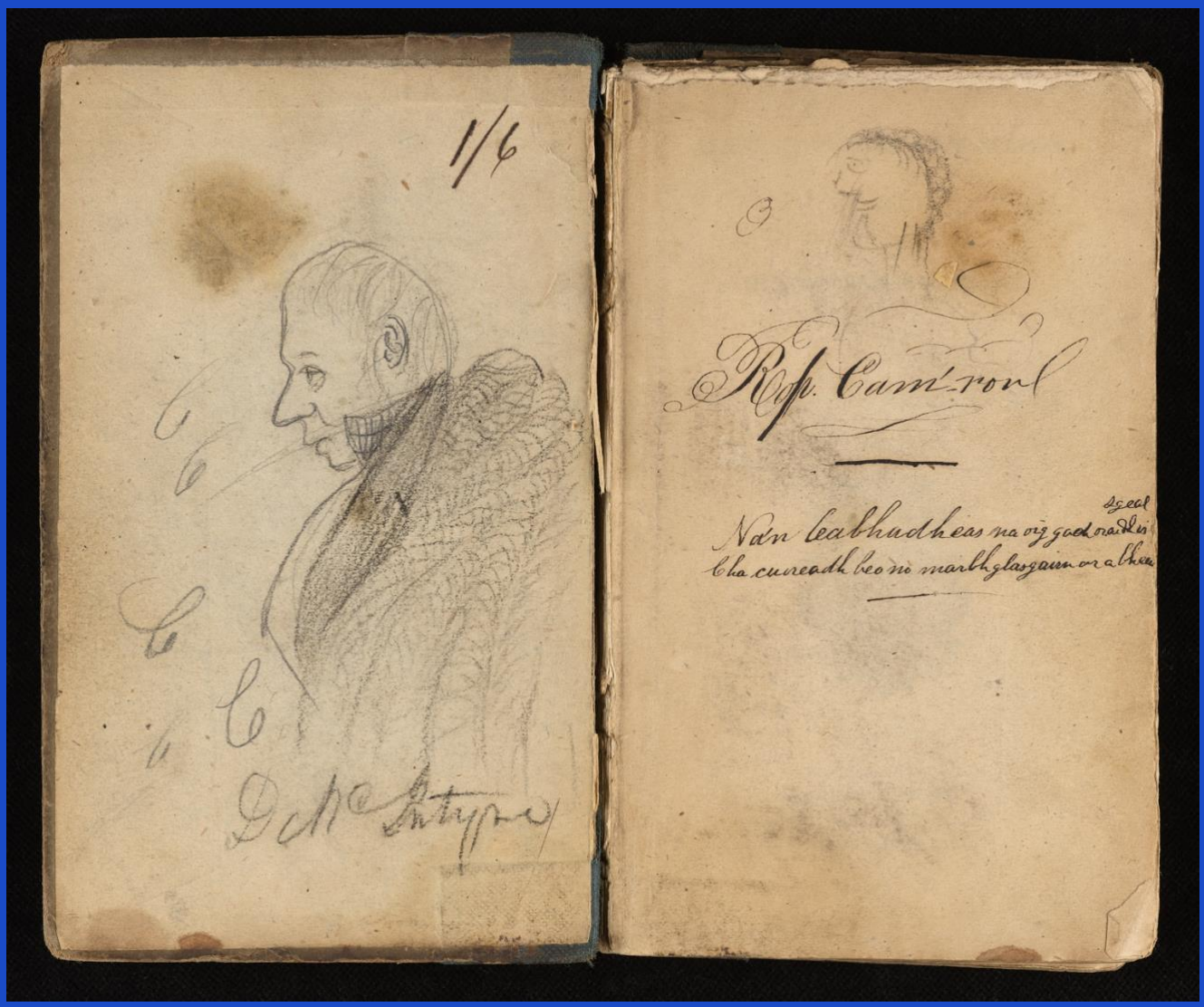

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About the journal

First published in 1957, *Scottish Studies* has striven to reflect the mission of the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, founded in 1951 to preserve and explore Scotland's rich and diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. Research topics have included archaeology and pre-history; demographics; ethnography and ethnology; history; land use and distribution; fishing and seafaring; material culture; onomastics; oral culture and traditions; and spiritual beliefs, customs and observances. Today, in addition to these topics, we welcome research centering on Scotland's evolving landscapes, physical and social, and the peoples who call Scotland home in the twenty-first century.

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Submissions

Scottish Studies encourages submissions of original research, in English or Gaelic, from affiliated and independent scholars worldwide. Prior to submitting, researchers should contact the editor directly to request the Author Guidelines. Following initial editorial scrutiny, articles are subject to double-blind peer review.

Reviews are normally commissioned, but we welcome readers' suggestions of works that they would like to see reviewed.

Please note that all communication should be addressed by email directly to the editor, Virginia Blankenhorn, at virginia.blankenhorn@ed.ac.uk., using the subject-line 'Scottish Studies'.

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Cover photograph: Pencil sketch of a gentleman. Reproduced courtesy of Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University Libraries.

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Editor's Note

Readers familiar with the first seventeen volumes of this journal will recall that, in its early days, *Scottish Studies* appeared semi-annually. This year, for reasons that will eventually become clear, we shall briefly return to a two-part publication. Part 1, published here, contains all of the articles submitted to the journal in 2025.

As usual, our authors have covered a lot of territory, both geographical and temporal. Andrew Fleming, whose article on the last of the great auks appeared in volume 40, argues that despite the likelihood that the population of St Kilda suffered a number of 'catastrophes' from the Viking era to the twentieth century, the islanders nonetheless maintained a degree of cultural continuity and stability that reflected both their powers of endurance and their value to other regional powers. Peter Freshwater examines the student song-books compiled at the suggestion of Professor John Stuart Blackie for Scotland's 'ancient' universities, and describes how organised singing remained an important part of student life from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Hamish Telfer and Jonathan Thomas explore the role of a variety of sports – not just football – in encouraging military enlistment at the approach of the Great War. Shelley Williams writes about Agnes Randolph, famous for her defence of Dunbar Castle in 1338, and asks why she was given the nickname 'Black Agnes'. Grace Wright uses a material culture approach to analyse the symbolism and historical importance of medals awarded by Sheriff William Ivory to police in the Isle of Skye for their involvement in the arrest of land agitators during the Crofters' War of the 1880s. Finally, Donnchadh Sneddon describes his discovery in Edinburgh University Library of a pencil sketch inside the cover of an 1834 edition of the poems of Donnchadh Bàn MacIntyre, and asks: Could this possibly be a portrait of the bard himself?

Works reviewed here include the third volume of Professor Richard Oram's environmental history of Scotland, *Standing on the Edge of Being: Scotland 1850 to COP 26*; Simon McKerrell and Gary West's collection of essays on Scottish traditional music, *Understanding Scotland Musically: Folk, Tradition and Policy*; and *Gun Sireadh, Gun Iarraidh: The Tolmie Collection,* Kenna Campbell and Ainsley Hamill's re-edition of Frances Tolmie's seminally-important collection of Gaelic songs first published in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* in 1911.

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN
Editor, *Scottish Studies*
February 2026

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Catastrophe at St Kilda: Vulnerability and Resilience in an Island Community

ANDREW FLEMING

Abstract

A 'sea of islands' approach to the history of the Hebrides increases the possibility that aspects of St Kilda's relatively well-recorded ethnography may be productively extrapolated to the wider and less well documented Hebridean region. However, cultural continuity in the archipelago may have been affected by two 'catastrophes', after which depleted populations were augmented by people from throughout the MacLeods' domains. Island communities had low immunity to introduced diseases and were exposed to regionally endemic violence. In economic and political terms it made sense for chiefs (lairds) to re-populate islands demographically damaged by catastrophes, in order to continue the uplifting of food renders and other exports and to provide their travelling retinues with activities such as hunting, fishing and fowling; St Kilda would have presented abundant opportunities in this respect. In recent centuries, re-population may have introduced widespread Hebridean folklore and stories. The perpetuation of Norse words for seabirds and words connected with boats, and of toponyms particularly relating to the most important seascape features, may relate to the development of a *lingua franca* which would have aided cultural continuity during episodes of major population renewal.

Writing the history of Scottish Hebridean islands presents a series of interesting challenges for historians and archaeologists. One of these is the need to do justice to the history of individual islands and archipelagos while simultaneously recognising their membership of a wider cultural community integrated by traditions of maritime competence and connectedness. The latter perspective, originally developed by archaeologists working in the Pacific Ocean, is sometimes called the 'sea of islands' approach[1]; it is rarely deployed explicitly in a Hebridean context. Being located within a 'sea of islands' has arguably made Hebridean coastal and island communities more historically 'mainstream' than many inland communities in the Highlands and Islands. By the same token, however, exposure to approach by sea may well also have made island communities more vulnerable to external visitations of various kinds, and thus demographically more fragile in certain respects, as compared with their mainland counterparts. Although it may look like an uncompromising 'natural' boundary, the coast of an island is far from impermeable. The historian also needs to be alert to the possibility of past episodes of re-colonisation and cultural discontinuity of varying degrees of severity, including total 'wipeout', followed by the resetting of the local historical clock. In such circumstances, cultural change did not only arrive through the initial colonisation of a previously uninhabited island, or piecemeal in a 'sea of islands' context', but also by way of occasional re-colonisation after a

[1] E. Hau'ofa. 'Our sea of islands', in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, ed. E. Waddell et al. (Fiji: University of the South Pacific Press, Fiji, 1993), 2–16.; H. Kucklick, 'Islands in the Pacific: Darwinian Biogeography and British Anthropology', *American Ethnologist* 23 (1996): 611–38; Paul Rainbird, *The Archaeology of Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

catastrophe, often followed by cultural hybridisation. In this article, I examine some issues of Hebridean continuity and discontinuity with reference to the community which once inhabited the small archipelago of St Kilda, some 60 km west of the Western Isles of Scotland.

In formal terms, the prehistory of Hirta, the archipelago's only seriously habitable island, lasted a long time, from the era when Neolithic pottery was made on the island (if not before) to the time when it was mentioned for the first time, in an Icelandic saga, and then occasionally and without much detail in the years before Martin Martin's visit in 1697. The archipelago contains numerous upstanding archaeological features, most of which have been mapped and documented.[2] In the settlement zone at Village Bay on Hirta there are noteworthy absences. There is a souterrain, but little or no trace of the high-status Iron Age building which should have accompanied it. There are three early Christian crosses carved on slabs in low relief, but no sign of the six (?) chapels which may once have been present. Two Norse burials and perhaps a large coin hoard were unearthed a long time ago. There are Norse elements in toponyms – but seemingly no surface traces of a Norse presence.[3] At Village Bay the archaeological landscape will have been seriously affected by the frequent recycling of constructional stone and of stone artefacts, and the re-use of structures and cultivation areas. Almost unbroken turf cover makes 'field-walking' virtually impossible. Furthermore, the restriction of excavation to threatened or peripheral sites has inevitably constrained research agendas. Thus many features and categories of features are still largely undated.

That said, the cultural history of St Kilda is illuminated by Martin's eloquent description of the lifeways and ethnography of the Hirta community which he encountered in 1697.[4] His characterisation of the people as pre-lapsarian innocents, and the growing quest for Sublime landscapes,[5] would guarantee that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries St Kilda became an iconic travel destination. After steamship trips began in 1877 the fame and name of the archipelago spread more widely throughout Britain, as various collectors' items and souvenirs were sought by visitors; St Kilda tweed and the keeping of St Kilda sheep became fashionable among the higher echelons of society.[6] At the same time, discerning visitors were dismayed by the islanders' eager embrace of the tourist trade, and the decadence, as they saw it, of the St Kilda community. Many expressed concern for the wellbeing of a community largely *incommunicado* for eight months of the year, beset by the ravages of infantile tetanus and depleted by an ill-advised emigration to Australia in 1852. However, despite various reforms and improvements, the population, diminished by emigration after the First World War, declined to the point where the evacuation of the community's last 36 members became inevitable, and took place in 1930.

The fact that St Kilda was in the public eye for some two hundred years generated a mass of literature. In the latter half of the twentieth century, interest in St Kilda's history was stimulated by Tom Steel's highly accessible *The Life and Death of St Kilda*, first published in 1965. Several accounts of St Kilda's history have subsequently appeared, based to varying extents on documentary sources

[2] See Geoffrey Stell and Mary Harman, *Buildings of St Kilda* (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 1988); Angela Gannon and George Geddes, *St Kilda: the last and outmost isle* (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 2015).
[3] For the archaeological and toponymic detail, see Gannon and Geddes, *St Kilda;* also Mary Harman, *An Isle called Hirte: History and Culture of the St Kildans to 1930* (Waternish: Maclean Press, 1997).
[4] Martin Martin, *A Voyage to St Kilda* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1986 [1698]).
[5] Fraser MacDonald, 'St Kilda and the Sublime', *Ecumene* 8 (2001): 151–74.
[6] Andrew Fleming, *The Gravity of Feathers: Fame, Fortune and the Story of St Kilda* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2024), 148–68.

and archaeological research.[7] In 2005 the cultural landscape of the archipelago was designated a World Heritage site. For historians, the persistence of St Kilda as an iconic place begs an important question: existentially, in terms of Hebridean history and culture, how 'special' *was* St Kilda? If the archipelago's exceptionality has been exaggerated – as a 'sea of islands' approach encourages us to believe – how far may St Kilda's remarkable ethnographic record[8] be extrapolated to other Hebridean communities where records are much scarcer - and indeed to the Hebridean sea area as a whole?

The disruption of cultural tradition

Martin depicts a culturally rich and lively culture shared by close on two hundred people, the maximum figure recorded for St Kilda. His account is of high historical importance, in that it portrays the community *before* the occurrence of a 'catastrophe' (in the old-fashioned sense of the word) which may have generated significant cultural change. St Kilda's historians need always to bear in mind that most of the archipelago's documentary record post-dates this episode. What happened was this. In 1720-1, a not very well documented epidemic of disease occurred, reducing the population by one third, to around one hundred and twenty. In 1727–8, two-thirds of the surviving population perished in another epidemic, which may well have been chickenpox.[9] Only nine men and ten women remained alive, along with twenty-three children and adolescents – 42 people in total.[10] The community was now no longer demographically viable; as Moisley noted, Hebridean islands have usually been abandoned when their populations fell to around this level.[11] In the case of St Kilda, Norman MacLeod of Dunvegan, the 23rd chief of the clan, sent in new settlers around 1730. In 1764 Hirta's population numbered ninety.[12]

The colonists included people convicted of crimes and misdemeanours in MacLeod's courts – and presumably in some cases their dependents. When John Sands later referred to St Kilda as 'MacLeod's prison', he used the phrase as a metaphor – shorthand for the exploitation of the islanders by their laird, as he saw it.[13] However, in Sands's time the MacLeods of Dunvegan were well aware of the origins of some of their tenants' ancestors, and were unabashed about referring to the means which their ancestor had used to re-populate Hirta.[14] By the 1920s, the canard was that every family was on the island 'for their sins' (though not that of Neil Ferguson, the holder of the hereditary post of ground officer, who was said to descend from the mate of a boat which brought the new settlers[15]).Thus the MacDonalds had been guilty of murder, the MacQueens of sheep-stealing and

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[7] Charles Maclean, *Island on the Edge of the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987 [1972]); Andrew Fleming, *St Kilda and the Wider World: Tales of an Iconic Island* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2005); Jill Harden & Olivia Lelong. *Winds of Change: The Living Landscapes of Hirta, St Kilda* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011); Gannon and Geddes, *St Kilda*; Fleming, *The Gravity of Feathers*.

[8] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte*.

[9] Peter Stride, 'Limited biodiversity and the defects of the immune system in the inhabitants of the isles of St Kilda', in *Biodiversity loss on a changing planet*, ed. Oscar Grillo and Gianfranco Venova, 221–40. Rijek, Croatia: InTech, 2011.

[10] Fleming, *The Gravity of Feathers*, 48. Harman, *An Isle called Hirte,* 88–90; Michael Robson, *St Kilda: Church, visitors and 'natives'* (Balallan, Isle of Lewis: Islands Book Trust, 2005), 138, 140.

[11] H. Allan Moisley, 'The Deserted Hebrides', *Scottish Studies* 10 (1966): 44–68.

[12] Alison Rosie, 'An Island in Time: St Kilda and the 1764 census', https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CoffeeTime6.pdf. Not dated.

[13] John Sands, *Out of the World: Or, life in St Kilda* (Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart, 1878), 122.

[14] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte,*130.

[15] David Quine, *St Kilda Portraits* (privately published, 1988), 249.

shebeening (distilling illicit whisky), and the Gillieses of various crimes.[16] Doubtless visitors found such tales entertaining. The 'convict' past of the islanders' ancestors was regarded as historical fact; there seems no reason to question it today. The resettlement of Hirta took place in the same decade as the kidnapping of Rachel Erskine, née Chieseley (Lady Grange), an Edinburgh lady kidnapped and transported to Hirta in 1734 with the connivance of Norman MacLeod; she remained there for six or seven years.[17] MacLeod is also believed to have been implicated in the affair of the *William*, alias *Soitheach nan Daoine* (The Ship of the People), which put into Donaghadee (Co. Antrim) in 1739; she had evidently been commissioned to sail to America with a cargo of ninety-six Hebrideans, evidently to serve as slaves or perhaps indentured workers.[18]

Mary Harman has discussed the likely origins of the St Kildan families, noting that survivors of the 1720s epidemics included MacDonalds, MacQueens, and Morrisons – whose ancestors probably came respectively from South Uist, Ireland (according to oral tradition), and Lewis.[19] Following Lawson,[20] Harman suggested that the ancestors of the 19th century MacQueens probably came from North Uist, the Fergusons from Berneray (Harris), the Gillieses from Skye, and the MacCrimmons and MacKinnons also probably from Skye (though possibly from Harris). That the ancestors of the post-1730 islanders came from all over the domain of the MacLeods of Dunvegan would be entirely consistent with the 'convict' story. Those who survived the epidemic (eleven of whom were stranded on Stac an Armin and not rescued for nine months) presumably instructed the immigrants in certain local traditions, and more importantly the skills required to live in this particular archipelago. Such a major repopulation episode must have affected the cultural continuity of the Hirta community.

A late medieval catastrophe?

There may well have been a catastrophe in earlier times. In the light of the events of the 1720s, it is perhaps surprising that commentators seem not to have reacted to a statement made by Martin, which reads as follows:

> 'The inhabitants here are originally descended of those of the adjacent isles, Lewis, Harries, South and North Uist, and Sky: both sexes are naturally grave [heavy or ponderous? an archaic usage] and of a fair complection; such as are not fair are natives only for an age or two; but their off-spring proves fairer than themselves'.[21]

This implies, it seems to me, that St Kilda had probably undergone an earlier re-population episode comparable to that of 1730, in that the new colonists came from all parts of the lands controlled by the MacLeods (which included Lewis until 1597). From this perspective, it may be significant that the late 19th century *Hiortaich* believed that their island had been 'depopulated *more than once* and planted anew' (my italics).[22] The implication of Martin's statement may be that some traumatic event (or events) had occurred at St Kilda, such that (as in 1730) re-settlement was

[16] Anonymous, 'Island's desolation: quaint life of St Kilda', *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 May 1923.
[17] Margaret Macaulay, *The Prisoner of St Kilda: The true story of the unfortunate Lady Grange* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2010), 11.
[18] James Hunter, *Scottish Exodus: travels among a worldwide clan* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2005), 67–9.
[19] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte*, 130.
[20] Bill Lawson, 'Families of St Kilda', *St Kilda Mail* 5 (1981): 38–43.
[21] Martin, *A Voyage to St Kilda*, 37.
[22] Sands, *Out of the World,* 20.

necessary if the population was to maintain its demographic vitality (and viability), and Hirta its fiscal value. This was evidently achieved by 'crowd-sourcing' (also as in 1730) rather than colonisation from a single locality. Martin's comment on the emergence of 'Nordic' features from the gene pool implies that the re-population episode post-dated Norse settlement of the region, and took place after its 'Gaelicisation', probably at a time too early to have been highlighted as a recent event by sixteenth-century sources.

Are there alternative explanations for Martin's statement? Could the diverse origins of the islanders have resulted from piecemeal immigration by individual families at different dates, or the augmentation of the population in the *absence* of catastrophe? To accept this idea, one has to argue that such families must have had good reasons for leaving their present homes on their own initiative. One must also assume that, even in terrains as large as Lewis or Skye, and as distant from St Kilda as Skye, joining the St Kilda community would have seemed a more viable option for the discontented or dispossessed than moving to a more local site. Organising a transfer to St Kilda would have presented unusual difficulties for such people. There is also the question of the 'consent' or agreement of the laird and/or of the existing Hirta community – which in the 1830s was said to have killed two incomers (on different occasions) after believing them guilty of being the laird's spies or informers.[23] For these reasons I am reluctant to believe that Martin's statement related to piecemeal colonisation.

Another interpretation of Martin's text might be that the *Hiortaich* of his day were recalling the origins of ancestors imported in the Viking era as slaves, or people of dependent status. Alex Woolf has observed that the compliance of slaves is more easily secured if they have been transplanted; cut off from their homelands, they have to create a new 'community' with fresh social connections and loyalties.[24] In any case, by the later Middle Ages, the regional gene pool must have been seriously affected by the consequences of Norse settlement, including the sexual exploitation of female slaves, and various kinds of sexual relationships between people of varying ancestry – not to mention those which may have occurred during the annual visits of a sub-chief's retinue (see below).

If a late medieval 'catastrophe', followed by an organised re-population episode, is a plausible interpretation of Martin's statement, what kind of catastrophe might be envisaged? If we rule out the kind of sectarian strife which developed in the 1840s over which version of Christianity should prevail on Hirta, and which led to the emigration of one-third of the population, we may speculate that the *Hiortaich* were decimated by disease, or by a violent attack from overseas, or the abduction of people into slavery (the third event perhaps following the second). We will probably never know. What follows does not depend on the historical veracity of this apparent earlier catastrophe. Rather, I discuss St Kilda and comparable communities in relation to their vulnerability to catastrophe, the effects of re-colonisation, and related issues of cultural continuity.

Vulnerability to disease

At St Kilda, the islanders had reason to fear the arrival of strangers, especially in numbers. They maintained a lookout post, *Tigh an fhir faireadh* (The Watchman's House),[25] and had constructed

[23] James Mackenzie, *Episode in the life of Rev. Neil Mackenzie at St Kilda from 1829 to 1843* (privately published, 1911), 30.

[24] Alex Woolf, 'At home in the Long Iron Age: A dialogue between households and individuals in cultural reproduction', in *Invisible people and processes: writing gender and childhood into European archaeology*, ed. Jenny Moor and Eleanor Scott (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1997), 68–74.

[25] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte*, 50.

hiding-places in the screes of Mullach Sgar, on the south-western side of Village Bay. Some of these have been archaeologically investigated, without however providing usable dating material.[26] Martin recorded the notorious outbreaks of coughing (later known as the 'boat cold') which 'always' affected the islanders when the tacksman visited in early summer. Despite his scepticism, the *Hiortaich* insisted that it was an infection, noting that 'infants at the breast' picked up the cough from 'such as lodged in their houses'.[27] Kenneth Macaulay (who spent more time at St Kilda than Martin) once thought that the boat cold was brought on by exertion, but later deduced that it must be an infection.[28] Martin also noted a case of a man infected with smallpox 'on the arrival of the steward's retinue, who had not been well recovered of it'; he also claimed that smallpox had otherwise been unheard of 'for several ages'.[29]

Doubtless visitors sometimes introduced dangerous epidemics. In the final decades of the community's existence, tourists and visiting trawlermen were potential carriers of infectious diseases. There were serious bouts of influenza on Hirta in 1913, 1920 and 1926.[30] The 1920 infection was probably a late manifestation of the highly lethal pandemic which erupted after the First World War. However, the most damaging import by far was that of the bacillus *Clostridium tetani*, which was responsible for the demographically disastrous infantile tetanus. Since Martin does not mention this disease, we may infer that the bacillus was introduced during the 1730 re-colonisation,[31] possibly from Skye, where it has been argued that during the latter half of the nineteenth century infantile tetanus, though not mentioned in registers, was probably responsible for a death rate among newborn infants worse than that which prevailed in Glasgow's most disadvantaged districts.[32]

A potential cause of a late medieval catastrophe on Hirta would have been one of the epidemics of plague which erupted in the fourteenth century, including the so-called 'Black Death' in 1349–50. In Scotland, following the latter, there were further epidemics in 1361–2, 1379–80, possibly 1392, and 1401.[33] It has been argued that the Black Death was a form of viral pneumonia, described as 'transmitted from person to person without the need for an intermediary' and 'over 95 per cent fatal within a couple of days'.[34] Jillings has suggested that throughout Europe, 'the Black Death affected those living in rural areas to a far greater degree than did subsequent epidemics'.[35]

The tacksman's custom of 'sorning' – travelling and arriving with a retinue of several dozen (mostly) men – would also have substantially increased the risk of transmission of infections and viruses to the islanders. According to Martin, the tacksman's retinue numbered some forty to sixty persons; he described this figure as 'much retrenched'.[36] If not actually made 'illegal' by the Statutes

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[26] Jill Harden, 'Smaller Structures in the Mullach Sgar Screes' in *Winds of Change: The Living Landscapes of Hirta, St Kilda*, ed. Jill Harden and Olivia Lelong (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011), 55–69.
[27] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 39–41.
[28] Kenneth Macaulay, *The History of St Kilda* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1974 [1764]), 206–9.
[29] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 39.
[30] Fleming, *The Gravity of Feathers*, 207, 213, 220.
[31] In 1764 Macaulay expressed his surprise at Martin's failure to mention infantile tetanus; see Macaulay, *History of St Kilda*, 200.
[32] Eilidh Garrett and Ros Davies, 'Birth spacing and infant mortality on the Isle of Skye, Scotland, in the 1880s: a comparison with the town Ipswich, England', *Local Population Studies* 71 (2003): 53–74; Alice Reid and Eilidh Garrett, 'Doctors and the causes of neonatal death in Scotland in the second half of the twentieth century', *Annales de Démographie Historique* 1 (2013): 149–79.
[33] Karen Jillings, *Scotland's Black Death: The Foul Death of the English* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), 34–5.
[34] Jillings, *Scotland's Black Death,* 17– 24.
[35] Jillings, *Scotland's Black Death,* 31–2.
[36] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 48.

of Iona in 1609 and/or subsequent official decrees, by 1697 sorning was officially banned.[37] In practice, however, the tacksman's galley and any accompanying boats would have required a minimum number of crewmen to take to the oars when necessary – as on the trip described by Martin.[38] However silent our sources, no Hebridean community – including 'the last and outmost isle' – was immune from the spread of plague. The 'sailing season' for St Kilda was short, no longer than about four months, and Hirta may well have been less frequently visited than most other Hebridean islands. However, in terms of the potential spread of infectious diseases over the *longue durée*, 'isolation' was less salient than lack of immunity. Probably Hirta and the catchments from which its tacksman's boat crews/retinues were recruited (such as Pabbay in the Sound of Harris[39]) were more or less equally isolated, and thus relatively lacking immunity to those diseases which *did* arrive. Even when they were aware of the nature and potentially dangerous consequences of infectious diseases, the inhabitants of small islands would, by definition, have been less able to avoid them than those who lived on larger land masses.

From a world historical perspective, the spread of infectious disease has frequently had serious consequences.[40] Outcomes have often been affected by local circumstances, such as the degree of immunity (innate or developed) both in the recipient community and among those who spread the infection. Cultural practices, including standards of hygiene and cleanliness, have made a considerable difference; so also have population density, settlement patterns, and the frequency and timing of social intercourse. Before the establishment of separate crofts in the 1830s, the inhabitants of Hirta lived in a clachan, sharing close-packed and highly insalubrious houses with their cows in winter[41] – conditions which must have greatly favoured the spread of infectious disease, especially when the islanders accommodated visitors. The origin date of the clachan described and sketched by visitors in the early nineteenth century is unknown. By contrast, older dwellings – both the corbelled houses at Village Bay exemplified by 'Calum Mór's House' and the structures of the 'Amazon's House' type in Gleann Mór – display a more dispersed distribution.[42] Perhaps the 'hidey-holes' in the screes of Mullach Sgar may also have allowed their occupants to avoid being infected by imported diseases.

Tacksmen necessarily arrived mob-handed. At the end of the seventeenth century the members of their retinues came into daily contact with members of a community numbering some 180–200 persons. This was during 'King William's lean years', and the Little Ice Age, when the health of the islanders was apparently not at its best;[43] during the Climatic Optimum earlier medieval populations are unlikely to have been lower. All in all, it seems highly likely that over the long term many Hebridean coastal and island communities were seriously affected by catastrophic (if occasional) interventions of infectious

[37] Julian Goodare, 'The Statutes of Iona in Context', *Scottish Historical Review* 77, no. 203, part S (1998): 31–57; Alison Cathcart, "The Statutes of Iona: The Archipelagic Context", *Journal of British Studies* (2010): 4–27.
[38] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 6–7.
[39] Gannon & Geddes, *St Kilda: the Last and Outmost Isle*, 95–8; George Geddes, 'Ultima Thule? Reconnecting St Kilda and Pabbay', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 154 (2025): 149–171.
[40] Jonathan Kennedy, *Pathogenesis: How Germs Made History* (London: Penguin Books, 2023).
[41] Mackenzie, *Episode in the life of Rev. Neil Mackenzie*; Andrew Fleming, 'St Kilda: the pre-Improvement *clachan', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland* 133 (2004), 375–89.
[42] Stell and Harman, *Buildings of St Kilda*, 21–3, 25–6; Andrew Fleming, 'The Islandness of St Kilda', in *Land and People: Papers in honour of John Evans,* ed. Michael Allen, Niall Sharples and Terry O'Connor (Oxford: Oxbow/The Prehistoric Society, 2009), 136–46.
[43] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte*, 128.

disease. According to oral tradition, the entire population of Mingulay, in the Western Isles, was once wiped out by plague.[44] Such catastrophes had the potential to damage such communities demographically, socially and culturally, even sometimes destroying them completely – though the survival of those stranded on Stac an Armin in 1727 over a very long 'winter' is a potent reminder of the resilience and tenacity of Hebrideans in the most severe circumstances imaginable.

Violence and slave-raids

One well-known downside of maritime connectivity was the vulnerability of island and coastal communities to seaborne attack. Recent explorations of the concepts of 'hydrarchy' and of diaspora in the Viking era have refined our views of the nature and consequences of maritime connectedness.[45] For the Vikings, slave-raiding was not only relatively commonplace but may also have been structurally necessary in order to supply the workers required by Viking lifeways – as has been argued, for example, in relation to the considerable amounts of labour required for the construction and fitting out of ships and their crews.[46] It has also been argued that the polygyny and concubinage practised by elite men 'motivated [lower status] men to obtain status, wealth, and captives, and to engage in 'risky behaviour' such as raiding in order to do so'.[47] To put it in the strongest terms:

> 'because polygynous marriage increases male–male competition by creating a pool of unmarried men, its occurrence within a society is predicted to increase risky status-elevating and sex-seeking behaviours among men, potentially leading to increased rates of murder, theft, rape, social disruption, kidnapping (especially of women), sexual slavery, prostitution, and – among high-status men – risky bids for political power…. for some young men, serving in a retinue would have allowed them to secure the wealth and reputation they needed to marry and achieve social advancement'.[48]

Neil Price, noting the scholarly literature on piracy, has argued that Viking raiders essentially constituted a 'hydrarchy', a term coined in the seventeenth century.[49] Like pirates of the early modern era, they developed distinctive forms of predatory organisation, unstable yet also fluid and resilient, operating outside the control of states. Although the St Kilda archipelago would not have constituted a convenient base for groups of Viking raiders, it might well have served as an occasional refuge, or a location where a force might re-group after a setback. The Hirta community would have represented a vulnerable target, especially for slave-raids.

In subsequent centuries, predatory behaviour and attitudes of clan chiefs meant that inter-clan disputes and rivalries could all too easily affect wider territories. Martin tells us that the St Kildans

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[44] Ben Buxton, *Mingulay: An Island and its People* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1995), 49–50.
[45] Neil Price, *Children of Ash and Elm: a History of the Vikings* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), 357–60; Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015).
[46] See, for example, Ingvild Øye, *Tracing Textile Production from the Viking Age to the Middle Ages: Tools, Textiles, Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2022), x, 24.
[47] Ben Raffield, Neil Price and Mark Collard, 'Male-biased operational sex ratios and the Viking phenomenon: an evolutionary anthropological perspective on Late Iron Age Scandinavian raiding', *Evolution and Human Behavior* 38 (2017): 315.
[48] Raffield, Price and Collard, 'Male-biased operational sex ratios', 318, 320.
[49] Neil Price, 'A matter of competitive control: negotiating landscapes of predation in the Viking Age', in *Landscapes of movement and predation: perspectives from archaeology, history and anthropology*, ed. Brenda Bowser and Catherine Cameron (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2024), 57–80.

had a rule which limited the number of visitors to ten unarmed persons; they would oppose those in breach of it 'with all their might'.[50] He recorded a recent case of visiting seamen offering money for sex with the island women. Although he asserted that there had been no instance of fornication or adultery in the community for many years, the men were 'reputed jealous of their wives'[51] and that the islanders had 'great prejudices…against seamen in general'.[52] It seems highly likely that their attitude was influenced by the community's historical experience of such visitors' behaviour. Right up to the end of the nineteenth century, the islanders had recourse to their hiding-places in the screes of Mullach Sgar.[53]

Incentives for re-population

The inclusion of the St Kilda archipelago within the economic and socio-political activity sphere of the Hebrides is illustrated by the re-population episodes under discussion here, where 'crowd-sourced' re-settlement reflected the possibilities created by the size and extent of the MacLeods' maritime domain. Robert Dodgshon has pointed out that dense and well-distributed local populations were essential to the maintenance of Hebridean chiefdoms:

> The reason why the increased labour value of food production increased its social value for chiefs lay in how they used their control over subsistence to build status. They did so in four inter-connected ways. First, the more tenants that could be settled by a chief, the more he could extend the number of his clansmen. Second, the more that could be settled, the more food could be gathered in as rent. Third, in a marginal environment, the more people that could be settled and the more pressure exerted on resources, the more a chief's control over food and subsistence acquired an ideological value. Fourth, the more food gathered in as rent by a chief, the more potential he had for translating it into status via various forms of display behaviour. Reduced to a strategy, these various sources of value meant chiefs had a vested interest in packing their estates, 'cultivating men as much as land'.[54]

From this perspective, the re-population of even 'the last and outmost isle' after a demographic disaster becomes highly likely, not to say inevitable. The annual summer visit of the tacksman and his large retinue is an indication of the value attached to St Kilda by external elites. Martin provided a list of 'exports' which they took away at the end of the season: down (feathers), wool, butter, cheese, cattle, horses, fowl (dried seabirds), oil, and barley.[55] The sorning of a retinue of several dozen or more from May to August – that is, from the season of early dairying and the gathering of seabirds' eggs to the harvesting of young birds fattened for their upcoming migrations[56] – was a considerable imposition on the islanders. However, it is also an indication of the amounts of surplus extractable

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[50] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 66.
[51] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda,* 38, 46.
[52] Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 66.
[53] Jill Harden, 'Hovels or hidey-holes – the scree structures of Mullach Sgar', in *Winds of Change: The Living Landscapes of Hirta, St Kilda,* ed. Jill Harden (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011), 56–69.
[54] Robert Dodgshon. *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c. 1493–1820* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 55–6
[55] Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1981 [1703], 289–90.
[56] I.e., for the duration of the retinue's visit; see Martin, *Voyage to St Kilda*, 48.

food potentially available at St Kilda. Though the documentary evidence on the subject is scanty, members of the retinue must have spent a good deal of their time hunting, fishing and fowling. The archipelago is well known for possessing the most diverse list of breeding seabirds in the region, mostly in very high numbers.[57] It would also have been possible to hunt feral sheep on the isle of Soay, and seals in the caves on the west coast of Hirta. In the later Middle Ages, several annual hunting expeditions, led by chiefly or sub-chiefly figures, evidently took place on far-flung offshore islands. The best-documented of these involved the Flannan Isles, some thirty kilometers off the west coast of the Western Isles. In the early sixteenth century, the MacLeod sent men and dogs at certain times in the year to hunt the 'infinite wild scheip' there.[58] When on the islands, the men were required to observe a prescribed set of rituals and taboos; they took away not only sheep but also fish, fowls, eggs, down, feathers and quills.[59]

Feeding such a large retinue would have involved the mass conservation of eggs and the wind-dried meat of sheep and seabirds. On the island of Hirta there are about 1260 cleits – mostly small sheds made of stone, their corbelled or slabbed roofs topped with turf.[60] There are also numerous 'boat-shaped structures', best known in the zone above the 1830s head dyke at Village Bay, which are thought to represent dismantled cleits.[61] Although the cleits are for the most part undated, Martin's account indicates that 'hundreds' of them had apparently been constructed on Hirta by 1697.[62] All things considered, sustained efforts made in the past to re-populate St Kilda after a catastrophe are entirely understandable. The determination to maintain the island as a rich resource tends to give the lie to the miserabilist view of St Kilda as eternally 'marginal'.[63]

Catastrophe and cultural continuity

Catastrophes present historians with challenging issues of cultural continuity. In the case of St Kilda, the historian has to ponder the legitimacy of reconstructing the island's traditional culture by supplementing Martin's account of the community's lifeways in 1697 from documentary sources post-dating the 1730 re-settlement. Although most of St Kilda's superabundant literature describes the culture of the island after 1730, commentators concerned with ethnography have rarely addressed issues of cultural continuity and hybridisation. And now anyone seeking to reconstruct or re-imagine 'Norse' St Kilda needs to consider the possibility that most of the ethnographically relevant literature is separated from the era of interest by *two* post-catastrophe re-settlements. Any cultural institution recorded by Martin which went back to the age of the Vikings is likely to have survived a phase of change and partial discontinuity. Such a statement is interesting in the light of Niall Sharples' view

[57] John Morton Boyd and Ian Boyd. *The Hebrides: A Natural History* (London: Collins, 1990), 202 and table 11.1.
[58] Robert Munro, *Munro's Western Isles of Scotland and genealogies of the clans* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961), 81.
[59] Martin, *Western Isles,* 16.
[60] Stell & Harman, *Buildings of St Kilda,* 29.
[61] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte,* 60, figures 24 and 25.
[62] Martin, *Western Isles*, 281.
[63] Best exemplified by M. Barry Cottam, 'Archaeology', in *A St Kilda handbook*, ed. Alan Small (Edinburgh: National Trust for Scotland, 1979), 36–61.

that: 'the evidence suggests a gradual development of a regional economy and culture that evolves organically from the Scandinavian culture introduced in the ninth century.'[64]

St Kilda was not subject to clearance, a process which created many abandoned settlement sites in other parts of the Hebrides in the nineteenth century. Clearances apart, however, Hebridean communities other than St Kilda's may well have suffered earlier, often undetected, episodes of catastrophe and re-settlement. Perhaps a few of these may eventually be discerned from pollen analysis. In the meantime, however, we may ask some questions. What kind of continuities or discontinuities, hybridisation or cultural merging, increments or losses, might we expect following a catastrophe? How far did survivors succeed in persuading new arrivals to learn and adopt time-hallowed lifeways and traditions? In which areas of activity and perception was it important for 'local' beliefs and practices to be maintained? Some tentative answers to these questions may emerge from Martin's account of his visit, and from the rich documentation available for St Kilda after the catastrophe of the 1720s.

The most obvious point to make in relation to St Kilda is that good stories are highly infectious. New storytellers change the settings of their tales for the benefit of local audiences. Versions of several St Kildan traditional stories and legends recounted by Harman have been current in other localities.[65] Some may be based on real historical events which happened elsewhere, but as accounts of local history they are largely irrelevant. Such dramatic stories stand in contrast to tales of real events which took place at St Kilda, a few of which Martin re-tells in their largely credible detail. It is easy, then, to imagine survivors of catastrophes enjoying and accepting new stories told by immigrants, perhaps to the detriment of historical truths preserved in the tales which they may have replaced. The difficulty of deciding which story to believe is exemplified by uncertainties over the historical veracity of, for example, newspaper accounts of the killing of a great auk (or auks) at St Kilda in the mid-nineteenth century.[66] As we know, oral history is subject to various caveats; perhaps especially on islands, its veracity would have been compromised by major episodes of re-settlement. At the same time, we should note that around 1900 Rachael McCrimmon (1832–1914) could recount the history of the epidemic of the late 1720s, recalling 'all the names of the youthful survivors of the plague..,how the plague came, and at what season of the year'.[67] Oral history, then, could constitute a collective memory bank of considerable value, supplementing and augmenting experience and understanding gained by an individual during the brief span of his or her life, and sometimes at least transcending the rupture created by a catastrophe.

Colonists brought up in most parts of the MacLeod domains, whether they arrived in the eighteenth century or the fourteenth, would have relatively little experience of seabird fowling. Thus perhaps it should cause no surprise that significant elements of the fowling-related vocabulary of the Hirta community in its final decades were of Norse derivation. By my reckoning these words survived *two* catastrophes, and presumably formed part of the crash course in St Kilda speech and lifeways taken by new immigrants. Roderick MacDonald has noted the presence of 460 Old Norse loanwords in Irish (Old, Middle and Modern), Scottish Gaelic and Manx, along with a further 170 possibles.

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[64] Niall Sharples, 'Discussion', in *The economy of a Norse settlement in the Outer Hebrides: excavations at Mounds 2 and 2A at Bornais, South Uist,* ed. Niall Sharples (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2021), 466.
[65] Harman, *An Isle called Hirte,* 230–6.
[66] Andrew Fleming, 'The Last of the Great Auks: Oral History and Ritual Killings at St Kilda', *Scottish Studies* 40: 29–40.
[67] Christina MacDonald MacQueen, *St Kilda: My Island Home* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2025), 29.

These include twenty-four loanwords for seabirds (twenty-one of which only occur in Scottish Gaelic), twenty-two for fish and fish products (fourteen in Scottish Gaelic alone) and thirty-five for the marine environment (twenty-one in Scottish Gaelic).[68] He proposes that the these loanwords probably date mostly from 'the earlier period when the Scandinavian settlers were present', and that the specific bird types indicated by the loanwords were 'of some cultural or economic importance to those who were settling and living in the Hebrides and coastal regions of western Scotland'. He continues:

> The rich vein of sea-bird loanwords in Scottish Gaelic indicates a strong likelihood that the harvesting of these birds became more significant in the presence of the Scandinavians, for whom these resources can be expected to have been highly valued, and who may have been more systematic in their fowling activities. It is noteworthy that many of the sea-bird loanwords that I include here have been specifically attested from St Kilda.[69]

MacDonald also notes that the word 'cleit' is derived from Old Norse *klettr* (a rock). When John Sands stayed on Hirta in 1875 and 1876–7, he was trying to improve his Gaelic, and so was interested in the local lexicon. In a newspaper article written later, he noted that:

> a boat is called a *Baad* in the Norse, and a *bata* in St Kilda, where the word *Sko* is also used. The latter is the Norse for shoe, but it may mean a boat in some northern dialects. The sail is called the *seòl* in St Kilda, which is probably a defective pronunciation of *seil*. The helm is called the *stivir*, which is from the Norse *styr-aare* or steering-oar….The sheet in St Kilda is called the *sgòd* (the g in Gaelic having the sound of k) and *skjod* in the Norse. *Pyntelhage* is a fish-hook in Danish, and *Pynter* is the name of the rope (armed with horse-hair nooses) with which the girls of St Kilda catch the coulter-nebs [puffins].[70]

Kenneth Macaulay, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, described St Kildan Gaelic as having been 'adulterated' 'with a little mixture of the Norvegian tongue', since it included 'many words and cant phrases quite unintelligible to their neighbours'.[71] If so, his comment suggests not only that the language had once had more Norse content, but that much of that local lexicon had survived the re-settlement of Hirta c. 1730, after the population had been reduced to a demographically unviable forty-two. Perhaps old ways of speech had a good chance of survival as the *lingua franca*, given that the new settlers came from diverse parts of the MacLeod realm. In Macaulay's day the linguistic persistence of Norse words was also seen in the recorded names of 'fields', or different zones of land use.[72]

In the Sound of Harris (the 'portal' for St Kilda) and adjacent islands, preserved Norse or part-Norse toponyms may be regarded as relics of a former Norse hegemony. However, they are also reminders of sea-oriented communities' need for an agreed and unchanging vocabulary for marine

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[68] Roderick McDonald, 'Vikings in the Hebridean Economy: Methodology and Gaelic language evidence of Scandinavian influence," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 62/1 (2015): 107–8.
[69] McDonald, 'Vikings', 110–11.
[70] John Sands, 'Norse echoes in St Kilda', *The Glasgow Herald*, 5 December 1885.
[71] Macaulay, *History of St Kilda*, 215.
[72] Mary Harman, *An Isle called Hirte,* 53; Alexander Taylor, 'The Norsemen on St Kilda', *Saga Book of the Viking Society* 17 (1967): 127–9; Richard Coates, *The Place-names of St Kilda* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 149–52.

features which might be regularly discussed throughout an extensive sea zone. Such names were the geographical currency of a voyaging maritime community; it was important for them to survive linguistic change and the arrival of new colonists relatively unscathed. Sea-lore needs continuity: MacKillop has noted that the 'local system' of naming every shoal, rock and island is vital in matters of life and death ('no national grid reference can improve on it').[73] Thus most islands have kept their Norse names, ending in 'ay' or 'um/am' (*holmr*) and with the adjective before the noun. On Scarp, an island just off the west coast of Harris, some thirty-five Norse names have been detected, thirteen of which relate to marine and coastal features, including 'pure' Norse names such as *sandr* + *vik* (sandy bay) and *hlao-berg* (natural pier). Several indicate potential hazards, such as *bodi, sker, rif,* and *brim* (respectively a usually submerged rock, skerry, reef, and sea rock).[74] Such (international) names have usually been qualified by Gaelic adjectives. It has also been argued that toponyms which contain two (or occasionally even three) elements which mean the same thing, such as *Tobar Childa* ('Wellwell') on Hirta, are not tautologous, but rather pleonasms – components of a hybrid language.[75] Such pleonasms stand as metaphors for cultural hybridisation. Cultural renewal following catastrophe and recolonisation will intensify and complicate the local language, which may already contain more multiple meanings than the innocent outside researcher may realise.[76]

Past episodes of catastrophe and re-population may have been far from uncommon in the Hebrides, even if their historical visibility is a difficult issue. Apparent gaps, discontinuities, and eccentricities in the archaeological record may be better explained by catastrophes and their variable consequences than by 'marginality'. The study of Hebridean ethnography often involves the accumulation of information derived from various dates and contexts, an essential procedure which, however, may privilege the construction of a kind of 'ethnographic present', and the strengthening and embellishment of the concept of 'cultural tradition' – possibly at the cost of recognising change and discontinuity. Hebridean islands, however 'remote', were probably particularly vulnerable to catastrophe and its consequences; in cultural evolution, equilibrium was always liable to be 'punctuated'. Whatever happened in the St Kilda archipelago in the later Middle Ages, I suggest that episodes of discontinuity and the effects of differential survival may be of greater significance than historians and archaeologists have hitherto assumed.

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[73] D. MacKillop, 'Rocks, skerries, shoals and islands in the Sounds of Harris and Uist and around the island of Berneray', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 56 (1991): 443.
[74] J. MacLennan. *Place-names of Scarp* (Stornoway: Stornoway Gazette, 2001).
[75] MacKillop, 'Rocks, skerries, shoals and islands', 465–6.
[76] Kevin J. Edwards, Rolf Guttesen, Petur Jacob Sigvardsen and Steffen Stummann Hansen, 'Language, Overseas Research and a Stack of Problems in the Faroe Islands', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 126:1 (2010), 1–8.

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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 Golias 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 Oakley 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.

> '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

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.

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

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

Eggeling, Professor of Sanskrit, whose song 'The crocodile' ('A famous Scotch professor was walking by the Nile…'), based on an older German song, com-memorated 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.

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

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

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.

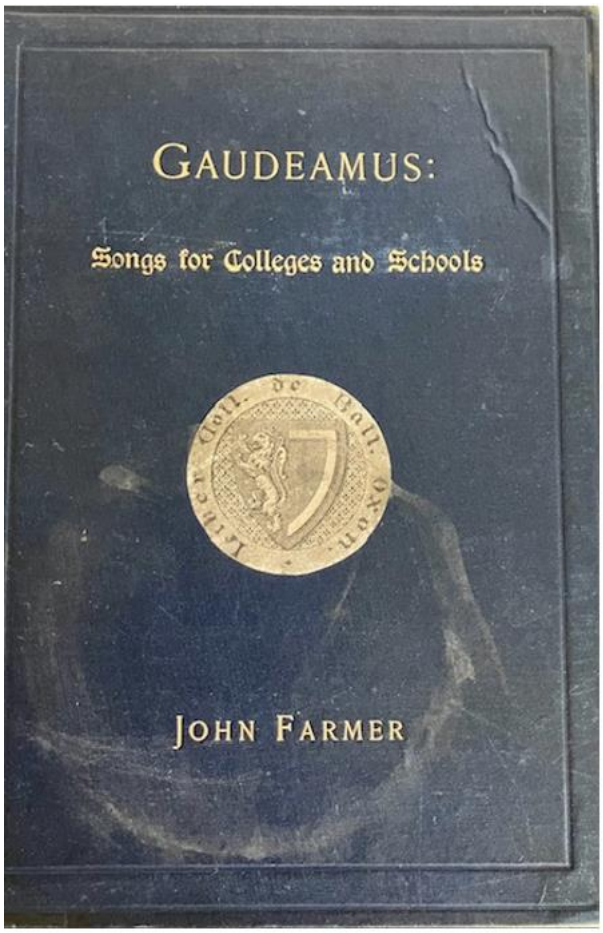

Fig. 3. Cover design for *Gaudeamus*. This copy bears a label indicating that it was the property of Balliol College, Oxford.

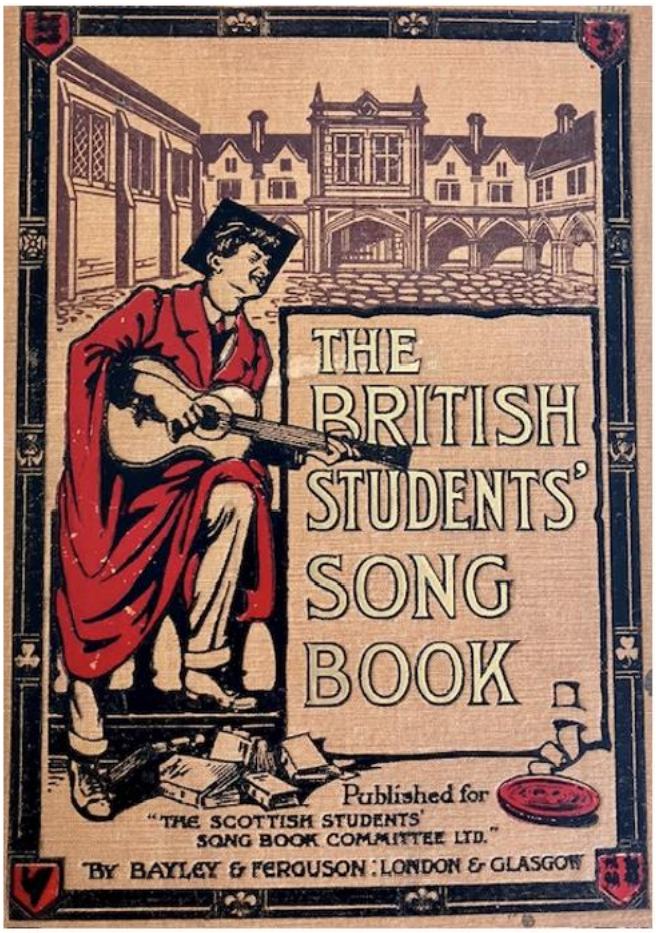

Fig. 4. Cover design of the *British Students' Song Book* by J. C. Borland.

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

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.

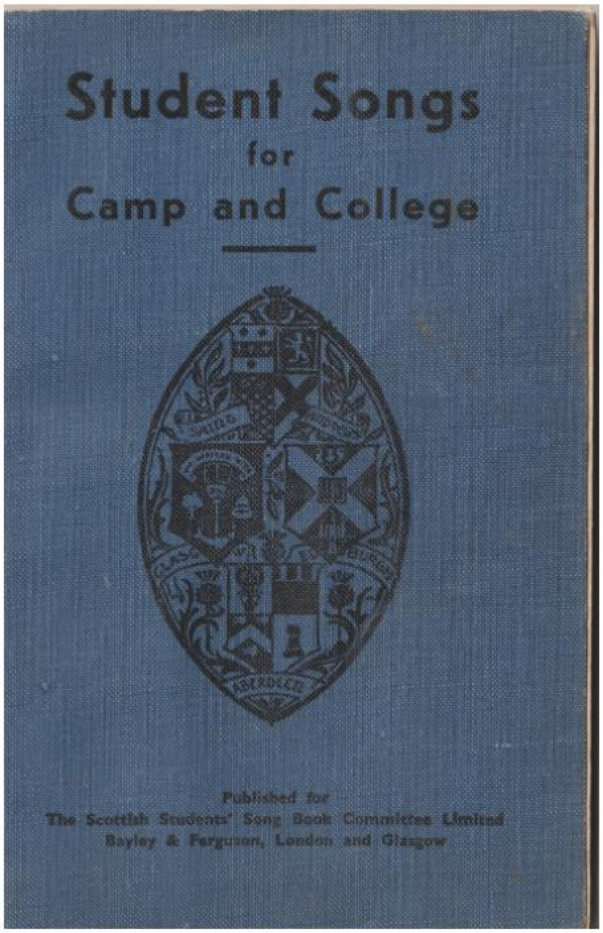

Fig. 5. Cover of *Student Songs for Camp and College*.

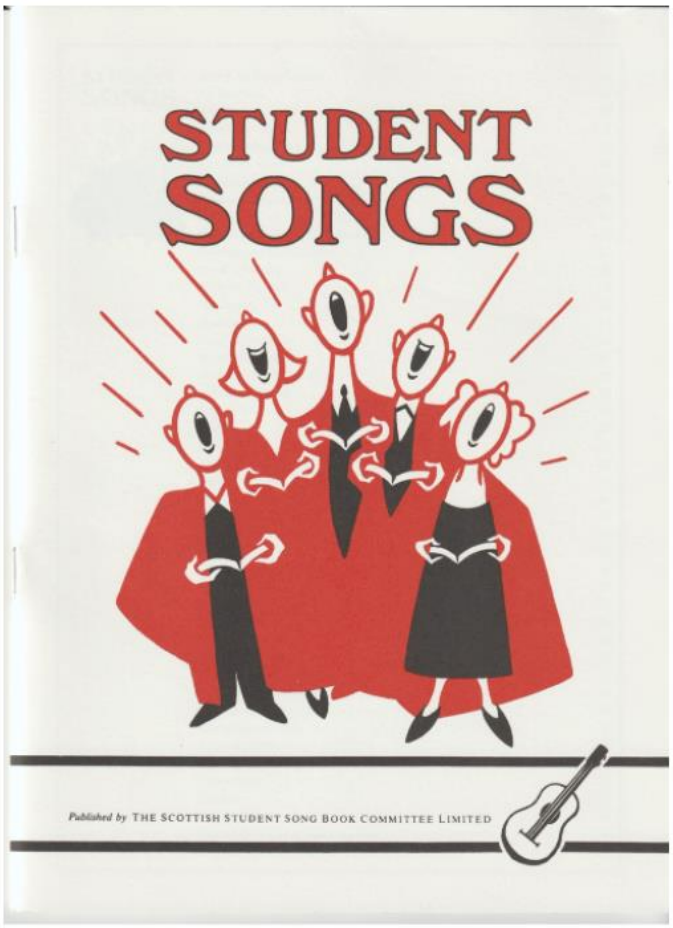

Fig. 6. Cover design of *Student Songs* by John Mackay

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

(*Figure 6*). This collection which, according to the memories of the Directors (most of whom by this time were well retired and in their 'anecdotage') 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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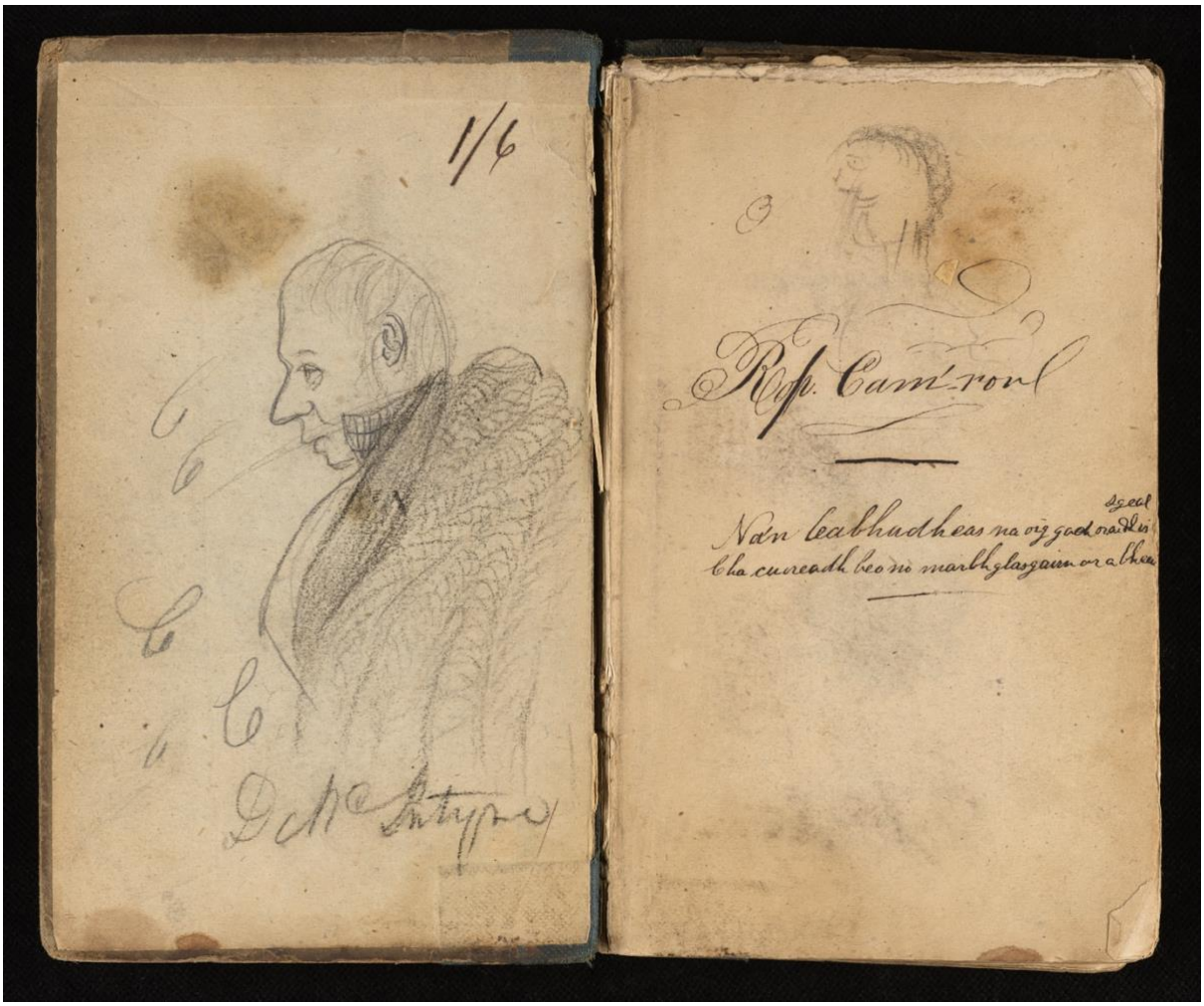
Scottish Studies 42/1 (2026): 30–34

Portraid Dhonnchaidh Bhàin?

DONNCHADH SNEDDON

Abstract

A copy of the fourth edition (1834) of the poems of Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir (1724 – 1812) held in the Centre for Research Collections at the University of Edinburgh has a pencil-drawn portrait of a man on the inside front cover. Although Donnchadh died in 1812, over twenty years before this edition was printed, there is some circumstantial evidence to indicate that this may be a portrait of the poet himself. If so, it would be the only extant portrait of the bard.



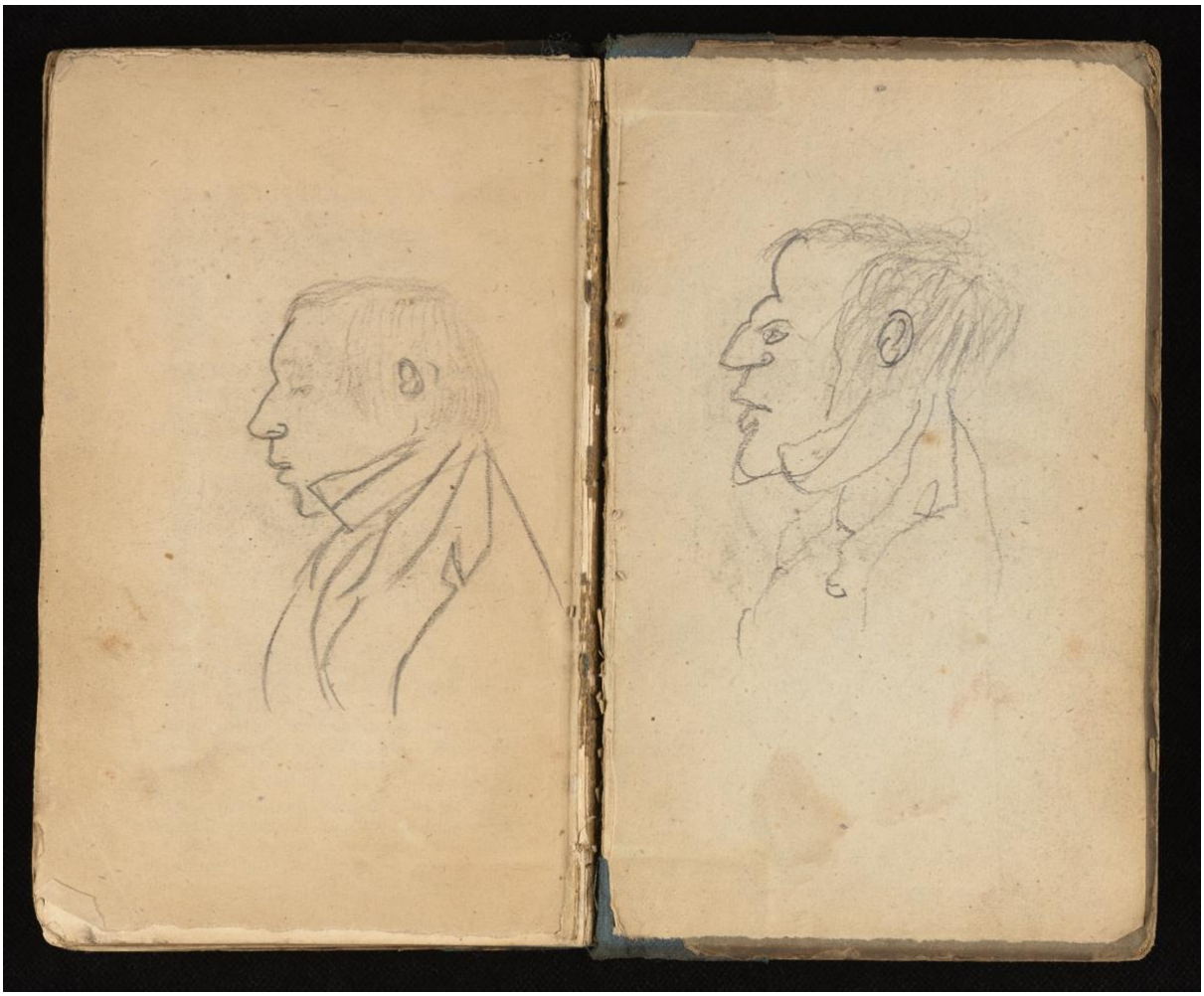
Dealbh 1: An còmhdach a-staigh, toiseach an leabhair.

Ann an 1972 chuir cuideigin a bha a' fuireach ann an Siorrachd Derby ann an Sasainn màileid do Sgoil Eòlas na h-Alba. Bha a' mhàileid làn de phàipearan agus leabhraichean, a' chuid as motha dhiubh a bhuinneadh dhan bhàrd spioradail, Pàraig Grannd nan Òran (1783 – 1867) agus dha theaghlach. Chan eil sgeul air a' mhàileid fhèin an-diugh, ach tha na pàipearan agus leabhraichean a-nis ann an trì bocsaichean aig an Centre for Research Collections, Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann. Chan eil clàr-innse ceart ann airson nam bocsaichean fhathast, le mineachadh air gach rud fa-leth a tha annta,

ach tha ainm air gach bocsa. Ann an aon dhiubh, ris an canar “Grant, Peter/ Printed Works and other books”, tha leth-bhreac dhen leabhair *Gaelic Poems and Songs, by Duncan Ban MacIntyre* a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an 1834. B’ e sin an ceathramh deasachadh de na h-òrain aig Donnchadh Bàn (1724 – 1812), agus a’ chiad deasachadh às dèidh a bhàis. Tha an leabhar a-nis ann an stàid gu math robach: tha an còmhdach air tighinn cha mhòr uile gu lèir far ceangladh nan duilleagan, agus tha tdd. 55 – 76 a-nis a dhìth, gun sgeul idir orra sa bhocsa.

Air a’ chòmhdach a-staigh aig toiseach an leabhair, tha portraid fir, air a dhèanamh le peansail, mar a chithear ann an *Dealbh 1*. Tha dealbh eile, gu math lùireach (air a dhèanamh le pàiste òg?), air an duilleig air an làimh dheas.

Anns a’ chòmhdach a-staigh aig ceann an leabhair, tha dà phortraid eile (*Dealbh 2*).



Dealbh 2: An còmhdach a-staigh, ceann an leabhair

Chithear gu bheil coltas rud beag eadar-dhealaichte air na trì dealbhan, ach o nach eil an dà dhiubh aig ceann an leabhair idir cho mionaideach no crìochnaichte ’s a tha an dealbh aig toiseach an leabhair, ar leam gur e dreachdan a th’ annta, mus deach an dealbh “ceart” a dhèanamh a chithear ann an toiseach an leabhair. Tha an “triùir” uile ri aghaidh taobh clì na duilleige, tha an aon seòrsa coileir àird orra uile, agus chan eil iad cho eadar-dhealaichte on a chèile ’s gu bheil, mar eisimpleir, feusag no speuclairean no fiù ’s falt eadar-dhealaichte air gin dhiubh. Theirinn-sa gu bheil e reusanta cinnteach gur e trì dealbhan (no trì oidhirpean, no dà oidhirp agus dealbh crìochnaichte) dhen aon duine a tha againn an seo.

Ach cò an duine? Tha coltas gu math aosda air, beagan lùbte, le falt tana air agus cleòca no breacan-guaille uime. A bheil e comasach gur e portraid a' bhàird fhèin a tha seo? Chan urrainn dhuinn sin a dhearbhadh gu dìreach, oir cho fad 's as aithne dhomh, chan eil dealbh idir againn a nochdas dhuinn coltas Dhonnchaidh Bhàin (m.e. aig John Kay, ged a rinn e dealbhan eile dhe fir ann an Geàrd Dhùn Èidinn nuair a bha Donnchadh Bàn an sàs ann). Beachdaicheamaid air an fhianais.

An toiseach, chithear gu bheil *D M^cIntyre* sgrìobhte fon dealbh. Mur an robh dad eile sgrìobhte, bhiodh sin gu math dearbhte, ach tha againn ri bhith faiceallach, oir tha am facal *le* ann cuideachd, còig (!) tursan. Mar sin tha e comasach gun robh an neach a sgrìobh e a' ciallachadh "'s e òrain le Donnchadh Mac an t-Saoir a th' anns an leabhar seo." Fiù 's mas fìor sin, ged-tà, cha bhiodh e idir annasach dealbh a' bhàird a bhith ann sa cho-theacsa sin. "'S e bàrdachd Dhonnchaidh Bhàin a tha seo, agus seo agad am bàrd fhèin," mar gum biodh.

Tha coltas gu math aosda air an fhear san dealbh, agus tha fios againn gun robh Donnchadh 88 bliadhna a dh'aois nuair a fhuair e bàs ann an 1812. A bharrachd air fhar-ainm, chan eil mòran fiosrachaidh againn air coltas Dhonnchaidh. Tha e ag innse dhuinn mar a "bhuail an aois" e ann an "Cead Deireannach nam Beann", a rinn e ann an 1802:

Nis on bhuail an aois mi
Fhuar mi gaoid a mhaireas domh,
Rinn milleadh air mo dheudach,
'S mo léirsinn air a dalladh orm;
Chan urrainn mi bhith treubhach
Ged a chuirinn feum air,
'S ged bhiodh an ruaig am dhéidh-sa
Cha dèan mi ceum ro-chabhagach.

Ged tha mo cheann air liathadh
'S mo chiabhagan air tanachadh...[1]

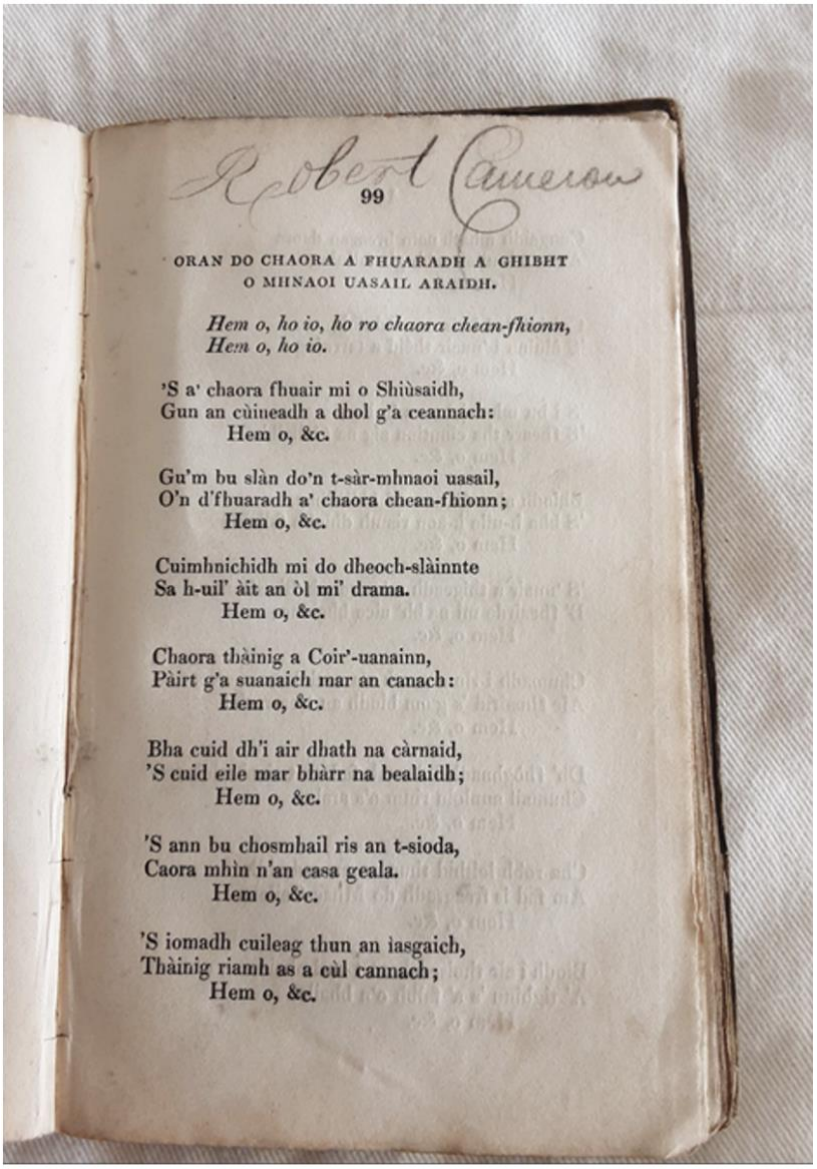
Chan e tuairisgeul ro mhionaideach a tha seo, ach mas ann mar seo a bha Donnchadh na sheann aois, bhiodh sin air a riochdachadh san dealbh. A bharrachd air a seo, chan eil mòran ann am bàrdachd Dhonnchaidh a dh'innseas dhuinn ma choltas. Ma dh'fhaoidte gum b' urrainn dhuinn a ràdh gu bheil an loidhne, *Thug i dhìomh am beul 's an t-sròn* anns an òran "Aoir Anna" a' nochdadh gun robh stròn fhada air, mar chithear air an duine san dealbh, ach cha bhithinn airson cus a thogail air bunait dhen leithid sin.[2] Bhiodh aodaich agus stoidhle-fuilt an fhir san dealbh uile gu lèir co-chòrdail ri nòsan tràth san 19mh linn, agus tha e coltach gun robh ciabhagan air a ghruaidh, ged nach eil sin uile gu lèir soilleir – a-rithist, tha sin na rud a bhiodh uile gu lèir cumanta agus fasanta aig toiseach an 19mh linn.[3]

Tha tuairisgeul dhen bhàrd na sheann aois againn anns an leabhar *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach*: 'The Rev. Mr McCallum, of Arisaig, "saw him travelling slowly with his wife. He was dressed in the Highland garb, with a checked bonnet, over which a large bushy tail of a wild animal hang [sic]; a badger's skin fastened by a belt in front, a hanger [.i. claidheamh beag] by his side, and a soldier's

[1] "Cead Deireannach nam Beann", ann an Aonghas MacLeòid (deas.), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin* (Dùn Èideann: Comann Litreachas Gàidhlig na h-Alba, 1978), td. 388, ll. 5544 – 5553.
[2] "Aoir Anna", *Òran Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*, td. 324, l. 4693.
[3] Tha mi taingeil do Joan NicDhòmhnaill airson fiosrachaidh mun fhacal *ciabhagan* san t-seadh "sideburns".

wallet was strapped to his shoulders.' Chan fhaic sinn claidheamh no bonaid aig an duine anns an dealbh, ach 's e "the Highland garb" a tha air, co-dhiù.[4]

Mar sin, ma tha dealbh againn a' sealltainn fear aosda, le aodaich Ghàidhealach air, coltas fear aig toiseach an 19mh linn air, an t-ainm *D M^c^Intyre* sgrìobhte fon dealbh agus an dealbh fhèin a' nochdadh aig toiseach leabhar bàrdachd Dhonnchaidh Bhàin, ann an àite far a bheil e cumanta portraid ughdair a bhith, nach b' urrainn dhuinn dìreach a ràdh gur e portraid Dhonnchaidh Bhàin a th' ann? Cò eile a bhiodh ann?


Robert Cameron

99

ORAN DO CHAORA A FHUARADH A GHIBHT O MHNAOI UASAIL ARAIDH.

Hem o, ho io, ho ro chaora chean-fhionn,
Hem o, ho io.

'S a' chaora fhuair mi o Shiùsaidh,
Gun an cùineadh a dhol g'a ceannach:
Hem o, &c.

Gu'm bu slàn do'n t-sàr-mhnaoi uasail,
O'n d'fhuaradh a' chaora chean-fhionn;
Hem o, &c.

Cuimhnichidh mi do dheoch-slàinnte
Sa h-uil' àit an òl mi' drama.
Hem o, &c.

Chaora thàinig a Coir'-uanainn,
Pàirt g'a suanaich mar an canach:
Hem o, &c.

Bha cuid dh'i air dhath na càrnaid,
'S cuid eile mar bhàrr na bealaidh;
Hem o, &c.

'S ann bu chosmhail ris an t-sioda,
Caora mhìn n'an casa geala.
Hem o, &c.

'S iomadh cuileag thun an iasgaich,
Thàinig riamh as a cùl cannach;
Hem o, &c.

Dealbh 3: td. 99.

Feumar aideachadh, ged-tà, gu bheil cnap-starra nach beag ann: chaochail Donnchadh Bàn ann an 1812 agus chaidh an leabhar seo fhoillseachadh ann an 1834. Mar sin, tha beàrn de 22 bliadhna aig a' char as lugha eadar a bhàs agus an dealbh seo. Faodaidh e bhith nas fhaide na sin, oir chan eil fhios againn cuin a chaidh an dealbh a dhèanamh, agus chan eil adhbhar math againn airson smaoineachadh gun deach a dhèanamh ann an 1834 seach bliadhna air choireigin eile às a dèidh. Mar sin, mas e dealbh Dhonnchaidh Bhàin a th' ann, chaidh a dhèanamh (a) a rèir cuimhne an neach a rinn e, ma chunnaic iad Donnchadh nuair a bha e fhathast beò; air neo (b) ag obair bho dhealbh eile, nach eil aithnichte dhuinn a-nis; air neo (c) bho mhac-meanmna an neach-ealain, gun fhios aca cò ris a bha Donnchadh coltach anns an fheòil ann an da-rìreadh, ach a bha a' feuchainn ri *an seòrsa duine a bhiodh ann* a chuir an cèill, mar gum biodh. Chan urrainn dhuinn na roghainnean seo a dhearbhadh leis an fhianais a tha againn aig an ìre-sa. On a tha an dealbh a' nochdadh dhuinn fear na sheann aois, ma dh'fhaoidte gu bheil roghainn (a) nas coltaiche, oir nam b' aithne do dhuine Donnchadh agus nan robh iad fhèin fhathast beò co-dhiù fichead bliadhna às dèidh a bhàis, bhiodh e na bu choltaiche gum b' aithne dhaibh e nuair a bha e suas ann am bliadhnaichean, seach na dhuine òg.

[4] John MacKenzie, *Sar-Obar nam Bard Gaelach: or, The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, and Lives of the Highland Bards* (Dùn Èideann: MacLachlan & Stewart, 1877), td. 217.

Donnchadh Bàn ann no às, cò rinn an dealbh fhèin? Chithear ann an *Dealbh 1* gu bheil coltas gu math eadar-dhealaichte air an làmh-sgrìobhadh air an duilleig air an làimh chlì agus na th' againn air an làimh dheas, a tha fada nas grinne. A dh'aindeoin sin, shoidhnich an Camshronach ainm a-rithist air td. 99 le peansail (*Dealbh 3*), agus chithear gu bheil sin nas coltaiche ris an làmh-sgrìobhadh fon dealbh, agus mar sin tha mi gu ìre mhòr cinnteach gur e am fear seo Raibeart Camshron a rinn an dealbh. Tha e comasach gur e fèin-phortraid a' Chamronaich a th' ann, ach bhiodh e caran annasach a leithid a dhèanamh ann an leabhar mar seo.

'S e ainm gu math cumanta a tha seo. A rèir cunntas-sluaigh 1841, bha 30 duine ann an Albainn air an robh "Robert Cameron" mar ainm agus a bha os cionn 39 bliadhna a dh'aois (.i. a' cunntadh na feadhna a-mhàin a bha 10 bliadhna a dh'aois aig a' char as òige ann an 1812, nuair a chaochail Donnchadh Bàn – cha bhithinn an dùil gum biodh cuimhne ro mhath air a choltas aig duine a bha na b' òige na sin, ma chunnaic iad timcheall air Dùn Èideann e nuair a bha e beò).[5] Chan eil na nòtaichean san leabhar ag innse dhuinn dad a bharrachd ma dheidhinn, mar eisimpleir far an robh e a' fuireach, no dè an dreuchd a bh' aige (m.e. le tiotalan airm, no tiotal clèireachail no a leithid), agus mar sin chan urrainn dhomh barrachd a ràdh ma dheidhinn aig an ìre-sa. Tha mi taingeil do dh'Anja Gunderloch, a tha air innse dhomh nach eil duine sam bith leis an ainm seo air liostaichean nam fo-sgrìobhaiche do na deasachaidhean a chaidh fhoillseachadh nuair a bha Donnchadh beò (ann an 1768, 1790 agus 1804).

Bhon fhianais a tha againn aig an ìre-sa, chan urrainn dhuinn a bhith uile gu lèir cinnteach cò am fear a chì sinn anns an dealbh a tha seo, gun teagamhan sam bith. Ach tha e làn chomasach gur e portraid Dhonnchaidh Bhàin a th' ann, on a bhiodh coltas agus aodaich an fhir mar a bhithear an dùil air sean duine Gàidhealach aig toiseach an 19mh linn, on a tha an t-ainm *D M^{c}Intyre* fon dealbh agus on tha e far a bheil e, aig toiseach leabhar a chuid bhàrdachd fhèin. Chan urrainn dhuinn a bhith dearbhte, ach cha bhiodh e idir annasach mas e seo sealladh, an aon shealladh a tha againn a-nis, air gnùis Dhonnchaidh Bhàin Mhic an t-Saoir.

Buidheachas

Bu toil leam buidheachas a thoirt dhan Oll. Anja Gunderloch agus dhan Àrd-Oll. Rob Dunbar agus do mo charaid Bria Mason airson na comhairle agus a' chuideachaidh a thug iad dhomh fhad 's a bha mi a' dèanamh an rannsachaidh seo, agus do luchd-obrach Leabharlann Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann.

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[5] Cunntas-sluaigh 1841 air làrach-lìn Scotland's People: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk (chleachdte 08.05.2025).

Scottish Studies 42/1 (2026): 35–55

Join together, fight together, die together: Scottish Sportsmen, the Great War and Enlistment

HAMISH McD. TELFER and JONATHAN M. THOMAS

Abstract

Significant numbers of amateur sportsmen in all sports enlisted, and their sacrifice had an effect on sporting engagement and sporting communities across Scotland for many years. The Pals Battalions of The Great War have been the subject of increasing research in recent years. Within this research into enlistment the Sportsmen's Battalions have been less of a focus, despite sport being an embedded social and cultural presence in Scottish communities. While the main focus in Scotland has been the professional footballers of McCrae's Battalion, few have examined the contribution of other sportsmen to the war effort. This paper explores the nature of enlistment and experiences from other sports such as athletics, rugby and shinty, as well as amateur football, through media representations by drawing on contemporary sources and archive material of various clubs. In addition to considering the narratives prevalent at the time regarding the contribution of sportsmen and enlistment, the paper also examines the competing discourses associated with social norms associated with signing up, and the wider need to preserve morale during a time of national crisis.

In the aftermath of the Great War of 1914–1918, the impact on all sections of Scottish society was clear to see. The toll on young men in particular was evident, and nowhere more so than at all levels of Scottish sport, since sport was where young males interacted and played together in their communities, and turned up in their thousands on weekends to watch their teams. It was the subsequent scale of loss in this young male demographic that led to an almost complete rebuilding of some community and professional sports clubs following the war. Many clubs disappeared entirely as there were not enough young men enrolled as members. This paper examines how young Scotsmen involved in sport were encouraged to join the war effort, and seeks to broaden the scope of existing literature, much of which is Anglo-centric and related to football.[1] By the early twentieth century, sport in Scotland was a broadly embedded cultural practice, both as an expression of community as well as of national pride, and participation in sport extended far beyond professional football. In drawing on newspaper accounts as well as existing research, the paper explores more fully the nuanced and complex narratives that influenced enlistment among Scottish sportsmen.

The universal call to arms in 1914 struck a chord with young men who had been brought up in a society where notions of duty, honour and patriotism were a cornerstone in their lives. Scotland's long-standing affiliation with the army reserves of the Volunteers and Territorials revealed much about a

[1] See for example Alexander Jackson, *Football's Great War: Association Football on the English Home Front, 1914–1918* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2022).

self-identity which carried inherent respect for the military way of life, a fact which made Scots natural recruits in the early years of the Great War.[2] These values were never more clearly exemplified than at local and fraternal levels. Recruitment patterns often emphasised the bonds – community, occupation, cultural attachments – that cemented these young men together. Recruitment to the so-called 'Pals Battalions' relied heavily on the view that if men lived, worked and played together, they would also fight better together. Friendships and connections would enhance morale, thus ensuring that orders were swiftly and efficiently carried out within a well-oiled military machine.

While trades and professions were often targeted for enlistment in the Pals Battalions, recruiters in Scotland also recognised the importance of community affiliations, as exemplified by participation in sport and by loyalty to local sports clubs. This particular Scottish variant of the martial tradition therefore brought different experiences of recruitment in support of the war effort.

The narratives most often associated with Scottish sport and enlistment involve association football – in particular, the well-documented enlistment of certain football clubs in the 16th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Scots, known variously as 'McCrae's Battalion', 'McCrae's Own' and the 'Heart of Midlothian Battalion'. This battalion received significant recruitment from football clubs in the east of the country. Virtually the whole of Edinburgh's Heart of Midlothian team joined up, as did many players from Raith Rovers FC of Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline Athletic FC, Falkirk FC and Hibernian FC. Significant numbers of former team members also enlisted, and it is estimated that at least five hundred Hearts supporters did so as well.

McCrae's battalion saw action on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, where it lost almost three-quarters of its strength that day alone. Heart of Midlothian FC ultimately lost sixteen members, three of whom died that first day. While some members of the other four clubs joined different regiments apart from McCrae's, various accounts estimate that Raith Rovers lost four of nine team members who had enlisted; Falkirk FC listed seven killed plus two wounded; Dunfermline Athletic FC lost three; and Hibernian FC lost nine former and current team members.

The circumstances surrounding McCrae's battalion, their combat record and their loss and sacrifice has understandably focused research in this area on the enlistment of Scotland's professional football players in the Pals Battalions. In addition to stories of the famous Christmas truce, in which football matches were played between the opposing armies, the wartime narratives involving Scottish football have influenced our understanding and contemporary views of those events.[3] Then as now, the media played a key role in shaping the public mood, primarily by focusing on the response of the professional football teams and their supporters, and advancing a narrative of non-enlisted, high profile sportsmen as cowards, at least in the early days of the war. Their reporting has influenced much of the subsequent research on the contribution of sportsmen to the war effort.

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[2] For further development of the influence of the Volunteer movement see Matthew L. McDowell, *A Cultural History of Association Football in Scotland 1865–1902: Understanding Sport as a way of Understanding Society* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013).

[3] See James Walvin, *The People's Game. The History of Football Revisited* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1994), 118; also John Bailey, *Not Just on Christmas Day: An Overview of Association Football in the First World War* (Upminster: 3-2 Books, 1999).

Importantly, the power dynamics at play between sports clubs and their governing bodies, their players, participants and their clubs at the outbreak of war significantly influenced public opinion regarding what was both patriotic and morally decent, and generated debate concerning what would be deemed socially acceptable and appropriate in the national interest. So, while initial recruitment strategies involving sport focused on the more visible national game of football at the professional level, those early efforts also aimed to reach amateur players and supporters. As recruitment efforts widened from late 1914 until 1916, the role and place of sport became of increasing importance not only in recruiting men but also in providing a visible example of patriotic duty to the general public.[4] Indeed, the growing popularity of sport was crucially important as a focus for early recruitment efforts.

Scotland's socio-martial tradition

By the turn of the twentieth century, industrial central Scotland had a strong and reliable reputation as a fertile recruiting ground, based mainly on recruitment to the British army for the Boer and South African Wars in addition to other military requirements for the rapid expansion of colonial interests. Many in Scotland had answered the call of Empire, including Sir George McCrae, who had fought in those colonial outposts from South Africa and Sudan to Crimea.[5] A newspaper article of 21 November 1914, referring to a forthcoming address by McCrae at the Synod Hall organised by the Highland Societies of Edinburgh, appealed to the importance of the Scottish Imperial tradition in military recruitment. It suggested companies be 'localised' and referred directly to the importance of sport: 'Thousands of men have a common bond of comradeship at Tynecastle. Under the auspices of the Heart of Mid-Lothian Club half a battalion of excellent soldiers could be raised with ease …'. [6] Many who would serve in the Great War thus already had some military experience. A number of sportsmen were amongst them.

Recruitment to the armed forces through fraternal bonds was never more fertile than in Scotland in 1914 and 1915. In both the industrial heartlands of the central belt as well as the more remote rural areas, communities were often structured around mutual help and support that exemplified their civic and community pride. It was these close ties that enabled recruiters to enlist men, often in significant numbers. The rate of recruitment for the new battalions in Scotland at the outbreak of the war thus exceeded that of the rest of the UK.[7] Elaine McFarland writes that

> Although the martial race ideology was hardly unique in 1914, the Scottish variant was particularly effective not only as a practical junction point between local patriotism, national identity and imperial destiny, but also as a bond between the

[4] National Registration Act 1915 https://derbyscheme.wordpress.com/. On 15 July 1915 the National Registration Act 1915 was passed, requiring that all men and women aged 15 – 65 register at their residential location by 15 August 1915. The registration was to be undertaken in a similar way to a census. However, unlike a census each person would complete their own form. Some twenty-nine million forms were issued across England, Scotland and Wales.

[5] Jack Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion: The Story of the 16th Royal Scots* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2003), 48–50.

[6] 'Sir G. McCrae Raises the Flag', *Edinburgh Evening News,* 21 November 1914, 4.

[7] Lord Rosebery speech, 'The Spectre of Conscription', *Edinburgh Evening News,* January 11, 1915, 2.

> various disparate components of a rapidly expanding military establishment. In Scotland it was more about civic rather than Pals identity.[8]

In the early stages of the war, much of the enlistment effort was driven by the need to recruit quickly and effectively. To this end, the War Office put considerable resources into the recruitment of young men from affiliated groups, since they saw such affiliations as creating the possibility of enlisting large numbers in an efficient manner.[9] In Scotland, they were able to build upon the history of the Volunteer movement and its traditional linkages with sport.

Formed in 1859, the Volunteer Forces appealed to young men at a time when media accounts were full of the exploits of soldiers in far-flung outposts of the Empire. Michael Paris has described how 'men from all social classes eagerly donned the often outlandishly flamboyant uniforms...of the Volunteers and basked in the reflected glory of Victoria's heroes with none of the discomfort or danger of the professional soldier'. [10] Eventually reorganised as the Territorial Force in 1908, the Volunteers – essentially what today we would call the army reserves – were often celebrated in local news reports, with the activities of Volunteer groups and individual Volunteers becoming widely known.

As members of these reserve forces, young men not only gained a proto-social military experience by serving King and country, but also increased their standing in their communities and thus their ability to get on in life. Association with the Volunteer movement (as, later, with the Territorial Force) was not only a social marker in its own right, but also facilitated social networking, opening doors to advancement both socially and occupationally for many young men, especially in the more remote areas of Scotland. The Volunteers operated, in effect, as a fraternal organisation, with all the status markers that went with it. Consequently, when war broke out, the 'spirit of the Volunteers' had so shaped the identity of many young men that they readily responded to Sir George McCrae's message: 'The Empire has responded splendidly to the call ... It is up to the men of the martial city to defend what they have builded (sic) – the Imperial edifice broad based on freedom'.

Part of the success of the Volunteer movement was undoubtedly due to its involvement of sporting activity in its training regimen. Sport was embedded in many local forces, and not only provided a means of getting young men fit for service through shared endeavour, but also for boosting morale and nurturing a sense of belonging among recruits. Indeed, some of the earliest football clubs emerged from the Volunteer movement. The Third Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers, established by the temperance campaigner John Hope in 1874, eventually became the first association football club in Edinburgh; the Third Lanark Rifle Volunteers, founded two years earlier in Glasgow, was one of the Scottish

[8] Elaine McFarland, 'The Great War', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History 1500–2000,* eds. Tom Devine and Jenny Wormald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 557.

[9] The justification for this view has, however, been challenged by Vamplew, who questions the influence of middle class ideologies of athleticism by rightly pointing out that most working-class men came from schools where few such notions would have featured in their experience of elementary education. See Wray Vamplew, 'Exploding the Myths of Sport and the Great War: A First Salvo,' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31/18 (April 2014): 2297–2312.

[10] Michael Paris, 'The Pleasures of War: War and Popular Culture in the Age of Victoria,' in *Unrespectable Recreations*, ed. Martin Hewitt. Leeds Working Papers in Victorian Studies 4: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies (2001): 130.

Football League's founding members.[11] For the Volunteers, sports days became a core part of their activities, with the result that sport, militarism and nationalism had already fostered a heady mix of emotions and affiliations prior to the outbreak of the Great War. When the call to arms came, the fact that many sportsmen were already experienced reservists may explain the eagerness with which a large proportion of Pals Battalions were formed.

Beyond the visible involvement of national league clubs, the power of sport also proved crucial in encouraging enlistment at the local level by emphasising the importance of 'doing one's duty'. The efforts to recruit sportsmen in late 1914 and early 1915 re-cast the existing public perception of sports authorities, clubs and sportsmen, and the eventual enlistment of a range of sportsmen helped to nurture a sense of patriotic commitment among the populace at large – commitment which became increasingly vital as the nation sought to build a fighting force able to stand up to the German Army.

Various authors have explored the reasons why military recruitment was so successful in Scotland. In considering the outsize role Scots played as soldiers of the Empire, Thomas Devine described how 'Enlightenment' values celebrating legend and clanship became associated with British military service in Scotland.[12] Mason and Reidi considered the importance of sport, reminding us that military ideology reflected the ideals of 'sportsmanlike' behaviour not just in its recruitment methods but also in how it expected soldiers, once enrolled, to conduct themselves.[13] What is not in doubt was the response in Scotland at the outbreak of war. Partly guided by the view that 'it would be over by Christmas', enlistment was initially substantial as men signed up for what they probably considered the latest 'adventure' of the Empire. What they could not know, of course, was that over the next four years they would witness – and participate in – devastation on an industrial scale.

The Role of Sports Authorities and Clubs in recruitment

While sport in Scotland was becoming an increasingly important part of community identity, different sports were perceived differently by the public. As it gained in popularity, professional football was viewed as particularly lucrative and essential to community display; but to suggest that the game's governing authorities were benign stewards of such growth is to overstate their role, as in most cases they were reactive at best to the structural strains that arose. By contrast, the governance of amateur sports such as rugby union and harriers was better organised and more effective, with clubs' ability to act independently giving clearer direction to the decision-making of their respective governing bodies.[14] When it came to recruitment rates, the differences between amateur and professional or team and individual sports became apparent, with patterns often reflective of class, occupation, and type of sport.

The organisational structure and methods of governance of the amateur and semi-professional football clubs as well as other non-professional sports were, by today's standards, quintessentially

[11] J. D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war: Sport and the transformation of the British Army (1860–1914),' *International Journal of History of Sport* 17/4 (December 2000): 27.
[12] T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (London: Penguin, 2004), 290–319.
[13] Tony Mason and Eliza Reidi, *Sport and the Military. The British Armed Forces 1880–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 80–111.
[14] See for example John Coltman, *First Hundred: The Teviotdale Harriers Centenary (1889–1989)* (Hawick: Teviotdale Harriers, 1988), 51.

local, reflecting the embryonic nature of transport links, the need for players to meet the demands of employment, and the nature of local ties. As we have noted, the homosocial nature of the male sports club fostered a strong attachment to place and locale, with local culture, work and recreation likely more influential in binding young men together than loyalty to a particular professional club.[15]

When the football authorities decided to encourage professional league play in late 1914 and into 1915, they did so in the belief that the competitions would boost the nation's morale. This turned out to be a serious public relations miscalculation on their part, as the decision failed to acknowledge the suspension of local games and even training owing to players and supporters deciding to enlist. While professional football authorities considered their position and sought guidance from government, sharply declining gate revenues had forced many junior clubs to suspend their activities by early December 1914.[16] Other sports were likewise affected. Athletics authorities quickly decided that athletic meetings and cross-country running should be suspended; and the governing bodies of shinty and Scottish rugby also effectively suspended fixtures as whole teams chose to enlist.

The inherent confusion of this situation – with sporting bodies deciding one thing and government directives saying another – meant that the portrayal of sportsmen as defenders of the nation was not a straightforward matter, especially given the initial reluctance of the football authorities to suspend league play. Between the outbreak of war and late 1915, the Scottish Football Association in collaboration with the (English) Football Association sought official clarification from the War Office as to whether football should continue. Government appears to have delayed providing such clarification out of the belief that the war would soon be over, and that it was important to keep up morale at home.[17] The confusion meant, however, that many sportsmen had to make their own decision about joining up, with little guidance from their clubs or from sports' governing bodies. Unfortunately, the confusion also led to a widespread perception of professional sportsmen as selfish, as shirking their duty – a view well illustrated by the examples of sportsmen being handed a white feather in the street.[18]

The focus on professional football in existing scholarly literature has led to a particular view of recruitment that masked wider trends. In fact, many of those playing at lower levels had already enlisted, and once the authorities had decided to suspend league competitions, players and supporters provided a steady flow of largely enthusiastic and confident recruits. Military recruiters tended to favour

[15] Deborah Baldwin and Hamish Telfer, 'Urban Sport and Rural Consumption: Paradoxical Pleasures? A case study of the growth of cross country running in nineteenth century Scotland.' *International Sports Studies* 33/2 (December 2011): 15–25; and Hamish Telfer, 'Ludism, Laughter and Liquor: Homosocial Behaviour in Late-Victorian Harriers Clubs' in *Disreputable Pleasures: Less Virtuous Victorians at Play,* eds. Mike Huggins and J. A. Mangan (London: Routledge, 2004), 185–203.

[16] 'International and Cup Matches Abandoned', *Northern Chronicle and General Advertiser for the North of Scotland,* 23 December 1914, 5. Local matches tended to continue, but at a meeting of the Scottish Football Association in Glasgow on Tuesday 22 December 1914 it was decided to abandon all international and cup competitions.

[17] 'Patriotic Concert in Edinburgh,' *Edinburgh Evening News,* May 6, 1915, 2.

[18] Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion*, 72.

candidates involved in those sports that they viewed as most useful in getting young men fit.[19] Both football and cross-country running met those criteria, with football, as a team sport, providing the added benefit of fostering attachment and loyalty – qualities that reinforced morale, and that were nurtured in the military context through the inter-regimental matches played in training camps.[20] Eventually, all sorts of sportsmen – athletes, amateur footballers, boxers, cricket players, golfers, rugby players, shinty players, wrestlers – responded to the unprecedented recruiting drive, while supporters participated wholeheartedly in community fund-raising efforts – the Prince's Fund was a popular beneficiary – and in preparations to assist in the effort on the home front.[21]

Depiction of war in the press and popular culture

Throughout the Victorian era, press reports represented warfare as heroic, allowing readers to feel safe in the knowledge that the fields of conflicts were usually far from British shores. Michael Paris has described this vicarious enjoyment as a 'pleasure culture of war' which had long 'provided popular and enthralling entertainment for the Victorians'. By the end of the nineteenth century the public had developed a strong appetite for such stories, and war correspondents obliged them, producing even more exciting rhetoric in reports of the Boer and South African wars.[22] Whether in European battles or imperial engagements, nineteenth-century press reports painted the actions of British troops as heroic, especially when they faced considerable odds. Even in defeat there was triumph of a sort which elevated the British soldier to the position of hero. Notably, when sportsmen were involved in such actions the press were quick to draw an explicit link between sport and heroism – as in the case of Andrew 'Trader' Dick at the hands of Masai warriors in 1895. A member of Clydesdale Harriers and Rangers FC, Dick was reported to have killed between seven and 100 tribesmen in defending himself.[23]

This 'pleasure culture' largely still existed by the outbreak of the Great War, and was part of a broader expansion of literacy and popular culture that included the embryonic cinema industry, which enthralled audiences with short narrative films bearing titles such as 'The Sneaky Boer' and 'The Attack on the Red Cross Tent'.[24] Visual and highly engaging, cinema became widely popular in the early years of the twentieth century, attracting large audiences and helping to instil images of patriotism and duty in the minds of young men. Paris correctly observes that 'August 1914 was simply the fulfilment of the expectation of war; it was what young men had been prepared for and they rejoiced in the opportunity to take part in the 'great adventure.'[25]

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[19] F.A.M. Webster, 'War and the Sports of the Nations,' *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* 42 (1915): 71.

[20] These were widely reported and in particular McCrae's battalion with its recruits drawn from at least four professional clubs was particularly strong.

[21] Fundraising efforts were a particular focus for sporting engagement such as athletics meetings and friendly local football fixtures after formal fixtures were to a great extent abandoned. Proceeds invariably went hardship funds for dependents and other charitable sources.

[22] Paris, 'The Pleasures of War', 131.

[23] Hamish Telfer, Trader Dick. Rangers Football Club and Clydesdale Harriers. Unpublished article. See also 'Andrew Dick', Anent Scottish Running, http://www.anentscottishrunning.com/andrew-dick/.

[24] Paris, 'The Pleasures of War', 129–131.

[25] Paris, 'The Pleasures of War', 140.

The press were, of course, duty bound to report the war in a patriotic manner. In the early years of the conflict, newspaper proprietors themselves and the War Propaganda Bureau essentially controlled content and drove output. The relative lack of immediacy of reports (often with up to three days before the report appeared) further enabled control of the flow of information to the public. Soon enough, however, the War Propaganda Bureau was established to counter German mis-information and propaganda, and newspapers became subject to official control in the form of Regulation 27 of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) 1914, which mandated that the press ensure that reporting did not prejudice recruitment efforts. With press self-censorship strengthened by the implementation of other direct government controls, the press now had to act at all times in the national interest. Thus it came about that, by depicting warfare as heroic, exciting and romantic, and British troops as gallant and honourable, the media of the day shaped the expectations of people at home, for whom information about how British troops were faring on the battlefields of Europe was filtered through a rose-coloured lens.

It is little wonder then that the relationship between sport and its 'manly' muscular Christian virtues of courage, selflessness and duty – all essential requirements of the soldier – caused recruiters to see sport as fertile ground for recruitment. It is worth noting, however, that during the early years of the twentieth century, sport was still widely viewed 'as an unruly recreation'. Football in particular was seen as a working-class 'evil' and a 'problem' for 'right thinking middle-class legislators.'[26] Sections of the press decried football as a useless and detrimental pastime for the working classes, and reflected an attendant belief that only rational gentlemanly pursuits such as shooting, golf and rugby union were socially desirable, thus establishing in the public mind the perceived social division within certain sports and social groups.

Press owners and the governing classes had an inherent distrust of the working classes and their organisations, especially those that were starting to express an embryonic working-class identity and associated political ideologies. Socialist journals were marked out for scrutiny and opprobrium, as were the newspapers popular with the working classes. The Anti-German Union (later the British Empire Union), formed in 1915, and the Fight for Right Movement, both of which were anti-socialist, reflected the brand of traditional patriotism favoured by the middle and upper classes.[27] Consequently, working class responses to the war effort were required to fit a particular mould in order to be seen as acceptable. The Edinburgh Trades Council's support of recruitment efforts was an important step in making service and 'doing one's duty' acceptable to the conscience of the socialist working class.[28]

Within the notion of acceptability, however, there also existed notions of identity, one of which viewed militarism as an expression of 'Scottishness'. This idea became evident in recruitment in the Highlands, where shinty players enlisted in considerable numbers not only in proportion to the

[26] Callum G. Brown, 'Sport and the Scottish Office in the twentieth-century: The control of a social problem' in *Sport in Europe; Politics, Class, Gender, European Sport History Review, v*ol.1*,* ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 165.

[27] John Foster, 'Red Clyde, Red Scotland' in *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, eds. Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992), 116–117.

[28] 'The New Edinburgh Regiment – Still they Come', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 30 November 1914, 3. McCrae sought recruits from four trade companies for his new Edinburgh Battalion.

population but also in relation to the sport, since they were regarded as 'sons of a fighting race, imbued with the spirit of loyalty and patriotism.'[29] (In the event, shinty was to suffer considerable losses, with estimates that the equivalent of nearly fifteen teams were killed. Skye and Tighnabruaich lost the strength of two teams each, and took years to recover.)

Even so, the general public's view of sportsmen, footballers in particular, as unpatriotic shirkers persisted widely throughout the autumn and winter of 1914. In the Edinburgh press, daily reporting of recruitment was often framed to identify those accused of tardiness in signing up to serve. In the absence of a decision by the football authorities about whether to continue playing, frequent press reports described the Heart of Midlothian club's attempts to form a complete company from amongst their players, members and supporters, reporting that the club was promising a free season ticket to the grandstand and ground at the end of the war.[30] The importance of visible examples of the enlistment of popular sportsmen was therefore elevated when subjected to press scrutiny.

Apart from accounts involving Heart of Midlothian FC, much of the literature relating to enlistment of Scotland's professional footballers relates to the 'Old Firm' of Rangers and Celtic football clubs.[31] While the issue of ethno-religious affiliations in relation to Scottish football is now accepted as being more complex and nuanced than much of the earlier literature suggests, there was a strong public interest in the responses of the major clubs of the day. The example of Celtic FC forward James Quinn provides a flavour of the press response in 1915 to a professional player who had yet to enlist. The *Edinburgh Evening News* opined that

> At a time when an endeavour is being made to bring the big fish of football into the military net in the hopes they might attract millions of little fishes, in this James Quinn is a catch. Whatever military instinct Quinn may have once possessed has been choked by the cares of football and other business and by the deceitfulness of popular favour. But popular favour is short lived. [32]

However, what the media saw as a black and white issue – a simple choice between cowardice and 'doing one's duty' – for the professional sportsman was his livelihood. Because breaking a club contract was not an option, professional players sought clarification from the clubs and authorities as to their position before they enlisted. Throughout late 1914 and early 1915, professional sportsmen were caught between the increasingly negative view of their perceived inaction, and the lack of clarity, support and leadership from governing bodies.

It is worth considering the view of those already serving at the front regarding the continuance of sport. In a letter home to Robert Mercer, a Heart of Midlothian player, a friend serving with the Royal Scots made his feelings, and those of his fellow soldiers, clear. The letter was printed in the *Edinburgh Evening News* in January 1915:

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[29] *Constitution and the rules of play. (1935–1936): Roll of honour of players killed in the Great War,* Inverness: Camanachd Association, 1936, 33.
[30] 'Sir George McCrae's Battalion,' *Edinburgh Evening News,* 1 December 1914, 3.
[31] See Bill Murray, *The Old Firm. Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000).
[32] 'The Idol of Parkhead,' *Edinburgh Evening News,* 6 February 1915, 8.

> I want to tell you all how disappointed the boys out here are, that the cup-ties are abandoned. Football comes before the war out here. When a paper is received the shouts go up of what's the results of so and so, or how did they get on? When they are satisfied they then ask what the Russians are doing. If there is any protest being made, you can make what you like of this.[33]

Meanwhile, establishment religious and cultural commentators were focused on promoting a working-class response to the problem of 'shirkers'. The Rev. William Grieve, writing in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, called upon the working class to make an equal sacrifice:

> The titled and landed classes have responded magnificently. The wealthier professions and business people have also done well, and so it is up to us, the tradesmen and the working class, to show that if the upper classes can do without fishing, hunting, golf, shooting, polo and rugby, we too can sacrifice the interest and pleasure we have been accustomed to get from football.[34]

The public outcry, led by the press, that would have shamed all sportsmen into enlisting ignored the reality that many sportsmen had already answered the call. While the press focus may have been on those clubs and followers at the most visible end of the sport, evidence suggests that amongst those clubs and members at a more local level the response had been generous and sustained. The most visible part of the sport did not represent sport more generally; and in any case, the explanation of why professional sportsmen may have appeared slow to enlist were more nuanced than readers were led to believe.

But whatever popular ideas may have encouraged young sportsmen to enlist, and whatever constraints restricted press reporting about the reality of war, eventually some of that reality began to seep out. Letters sent home in late 1914 began to include accounts from sportsmen, and these did not always accord with patriotic sentiment. Patrick Crossan, a soldier in McCrae's Battalion, mentioned in letters home that rats were a daily hazard;[35] and Jim Carroll, a lightweight wrestler from Bo'ness in Midlothian, was quoted in the *Daily Record,* saying that 'We have had some heavy casualties and our company has lost nearly all its officers'.[36]

Recruitment of Sportsmen: Football and the professional and amateur game

The fact that 'doing your duty' had now become a focus of public attitudes about the war effort undoubtedly helped the government increase troop strength. By encouraging people to sign up with friends and as part of a particular organisation, recruiters saw the Pals battalions begin to take shape, one recruit then encouraging his friends, workmates and social contacts to enlist. Sporting clubs and associations provided an obvious starting point for such efforts.

If one person can be credited with encouraging mass recruitment in central Scotland at this time it would be Sir George McCrae, a hero of past Empire campaigns and a local man. McCrae played a crucial

[33] 'A Royal Scots Protest. Letter to Robert Mercer,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, January 8,1915, 3.
[34] Rev. William Grieve, 'Stop Football' *Edinburgh Evening News,* 7 December 1914, 4.
[35] Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion,*123.
[36] 'Scottish Wrestler's Opinion of the Germans', *Daily Record*, 13 November 1914, 2.

role in building momentum and persuading men to enlist, and his Edinburgh recruits thought of themselves as 'a cut above' the rest of the British Army.[37] Skilled at using the press, McCrae sought to tap into men's pride in their local identity to fuel what could almost be called 'competitive patriotism'. By regularly updating the press, McCrae supported a running tally of enlistment figures in the print media. But in addition to publicising the number of recruits, McCrae extolled their fitness, with his unwavering emphasis on physical preparation feeding the battalion's confidence. Indeed, press reports recognised the men's athleticism and physicality, with one doctor reverently observing, 'I have never seen anything like these men. They are beautiful men, well developed and fit to stand any strain.'[38] Many of McCrae's men had sporting links, including players drawn from senior football clubs across Scotland's central belt – notably thirteen Heart of Midlothian FC players and staff. Consequently, the battalion's football team was considered as good as any international side, and the army inter-regimental football cup became a focus not just for the trainee recruits themselves but also, through press reports, for the wider public.[39]

One of McCrae's recruits is worth special mention, as he not only exemplified the values McCrae sought to instil in his men, but managed to avoid the awkward situation in which professional footballers found themselves at this time. Annan Ness, a Heart of Midlothian player, was already an army reservist prior to the outbreak of war. A trainee mining engineer from Kirkcaldy, he had served three years in the Royal Army Medical Corps when, at the age of twenty-two, he joined McCrae's battalion in August 1914.[40] Ness came from a working-class background, and was a relatively minor professional footballer, but his prior service as an army reservist placed him in a position where the obvious step was to enlist, and he was one of the first professional football players to do so – perhaps because, unlike many of the others, he was not solely dependent upon football for his livelihood, as his training as a mining engineer testified. Although he was a natural leader, Ness refused a commission early in the war in order to remain with his friends in the ranks. During the war, however, his leadership qualities were recognised by successive promotions within the regiment. Having distinguished himself as the battalion's regimental sergeant-major during the spring 1918 offensive at Ypres, he was rewarded with a battlefield promotion to lieutenant.[41] As one of his colleagues wrote, 'He was the sort of chap you'd want to follow for the sake of not letting him down'.[42] Twice wounded in action, he survived the war.

But as we have noted, it was not just the professional sportsmen who signed up. Recruiters in Edinburgh and Midlothian enjoyed remarkable success among junior (amateur) football clubs, with some clubs providing up to eighty percent of their members; and the attendant numbers of club supporters who also enlisted swelled the ranks considerably. By the end of 1914, reports in the

[37] Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion*, 35.
[38] 'Footballers' Meeting, Sir George's 'Beautiful Men', *Edinburgh Evening News,* 5 December 1914, 5.
[39] Tom Gracie, a Hearts player feted as 'an exemplar of football's sacrifice' had a valid reason not to enlist, yet did so with others from his club. Tragically, he died of leukaemia – a condition which had been kept secret from others at the club – before he joined the Army. See 'Death of Tom Gracie,' *Coatbridge Leader*, 30 October 1915, 4.
[40] Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion,* 73.
[41] McCrae's Battalion Trust: Remembering Scotland's Sporting Battalion. http://www.mccraesbattaliontrust.org.uk/aftermath/.
[42] Alfred Briggs, letter home, in Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion,* 98.

Edinburgh Evening News were suggesting that, due to the high numbers enlisting, the army was running short of uniforms and kit for new recruits.[43]

In the west of Scotland, recruitment from professional football clubs was initially less visible, and some sections of the press regarded professional players as less willing to enlist than their counterparts in the east of the country. The enlistment rate among junior footballers, however, was robust, even if was under-reported in the press. Because amateur players were not financially dependent upon their clubs it was, as we have noted, a more straightforward matter for them to enlist, as they did not need to break an employment contract to do so; and junior clubs in the west of Scotland even offered financial inducements to their players to enlist.[44] One amateur club, Queen's Park FC, contributed some 227 of their members, players and former members to the war effort; thirty-four of them did not survive.[45]

One aspect of 'competitive patriotism', however, complicated the challenge of recruitment among Scotland's football players. Many writers have noted how conflicting loyalties – religious, cultural, ethnic – resulted in unfortunate rivalries. The complexities and nuances of this mixture relate in particular to rivalries still seen today between Celtic and Rangers in Glasgow, Hibernian and Heart of Midlothian in Edinburgh, and the Dundee clubs today represented by Dundee United and Dundee FC, in all of which the dual identities of the Irish in Scotland have been a factor. To some extent the discourses surrounding sectarianism have overshadowed the broader debates regarding 'Scottishness', patriotism, and identity, especially in relation to enlistment in the Great War – tensions that have been well documented.[46] Gerry Finn has described the struggles of the Irish Scots in forming and developing their own sports clubs in response to social prejudice and the long-running political debate about Irish Home Rule.[47] With regard to enlistment, Joseph Bradley has pointed out that significant numbers of Irish in Scotland did sign up – many of them, perhaps, in order not to be seen as 'the other'– and many were killed in the conflict.[48] The conundrum facing Scots of Irish descent – seeking assimilation while maintaining a sense of a cultural identity in the face of socio-religious hostility – was exacerbated by the advent of war, which required them to negotiate a difficult path among conflicting claims on their loyalty. If Unionism can be described as 'the special brand of nationalism/patriotism that was obviously a dominant motivator among the likes of Hearts, Rangers, Dundee, and any football club which the man

[43] 'Recruiting for Edinburgh Territorials, The Number Short,' *Edinburgh Evening News,* 30 November 1914, 3.
[44] 'The Footballers in the West,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, 12 December 1914, 8.
[45] *Queen's Park and the Great War 1914 to 1918. 2018 Project Report. The 227 Men who Enlisted and the 34 who Died* (Glasgow: The Club, 2018). The project was recognised by Early Day Motion (EDM) No. 1812, tabled 6 November 2018 in the House of Commons.
[46] See Ian McCallum, *The Celtic, the Glasgow Irish and the Great War. The Storm Breaks* (Glasgow: Ian McCallum, 2014); also Mike Cronin, Mark Duncan, & Paul Rouse, *The GAA. A People's History* (Cork: Collins, 2017).
[47] Gerry PT Finn, (1994). 'Faith, hope and bigotry: Case studies of anti-Catholic prejudice in Scottish soccer and society,' in *Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation. Ninety Minute Patriots?* eds. Grant Jarvie and Graham Walker (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994), 91-112.
[48] Joseph Bradley, *Sport, Culture, Politics and Scottish Society.* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998).

on the street typically refers to as "Protestant"',[49] then players, members and supporters of Celtic, Hibernian, and Irish-dominated clubs in Dundee had to find a different justification for signing up.[50]

Recruitment of Sportsmen: The response of other amateur sports

While football was considered a working-class game, the enlistment of sportsmen from sports other than football often relied on the image of the 'gentleman amateur'. In many cases, these individuals were products of the rigid, amateur-determined environment of the public school, where education emphasised the cultivation of manly virtues including physical vigour and leadership qualities. As recruits, gentlemen-sportsmen were viewed not only as potential candidates for military leadership roles, but as role-models for all social classes in the enlistment effort.

Rugby union

The image of the gentleman amateur found a ready response among rugby union players, who began to join up early in autumn 1914. Nearly 500 men, the majority from clubs in the west of Scotland, had enlisted by October, and many others from teams across central Scotland and the Borders had signed up by the end of the year.[51] Glasgow Academicals alone contributed nearly 100 members in the first four weeks of the war.[52]

Unfortunately, attrition among these young men was high. Six out of the first team of Edinburgh Academicals were killed, with a further four wounded; and Glasgow Academicals fared no better, with eight of their first team killed and six wounded. Overall, thirty-one Scottish international rugby union players lost their lives in the war, more than any other union.

Harriers

Harriers' clubs also encouraged their members to sign up for the war effort. By August 1915, Clydesdale Harriers had enlisted seventy of its members, sixty of whom were listed as 'other ranks'; and eventually the club saw over 200 men from its substantial membership join different Army regiments.[53] From Edinburgh Northern Harriers, some fifty-one members – half of its membership – signed up; and a joint run between Waverley Harriers and Heriots Cross-Country Club in early December 1914 had to be abandoned as only one member turned up, others having decided to enlist.[54] At a meeting held in March 1915, the Scottish Borders Amateur Athletic Association suspended its

[49] Passage quoted from comments on this article shared by an anonymous reviewer.

[50] For a more detailed consideration of Catholicism and specifically the Irish Catholics and the historical religious tensions and identities see Irene Maver, 'The Catholic Community,' in *Scotland in the 20th Century*, eds. T.M Devine and R.J. Finlay, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996); also John Kelly, 'Sectarianism' and Scottish Football: Critical reflections on dominant discourse and press commentary,' *International Journal for the Sociology of Sport* 46/4 (December 2011): 418–435.

[51] C.D.S., 'Scotland's Little Lot,' *The Scottish Referee,* 11 September 1914, 3. Some 470 Rugby Union players from Scotland were already enlisted by January 1915. Of these, 294 (62.5 percent) were from the west of Scotland, 85 (18 percent) were from the Borders and 91 (19.5 percent) were from east of Scotland.

[52] A report in *The Scottish Referee* included the names and regiments of men from ten of the clubs in the west of Scotland, noting that 296 men enlisted in the first four weeks of hostilities. *The Scottish Referee,* 11 September 1914, 4.

[53] 'On Active Service. Clydesdale Harriers Club,' *Evening Times,* 21 August 1915, 6.

[54] J. T. Wright, 'The Harriers,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, 7 December 1914, 4.

affairs, recording that between 500–600 members of affiliated clubs had joined up – some eighty-five percent of active members and fully half of total membership.[55] Press reports supported such actions, and the clubs' decisions were also supported by athletes, club members and supporters as they enlisted.[56]

Like rugby union, harriers' clubs paid a heavy price in the war. On 19 September 1914, the West of Scotland Harriers suspended all organised running during the crisis.[57] According to its records, the club eventually saw ninety-seven men enlist – almost half of its total membership of 212; sixty three of them were listed as 'other ranks'.[58] Of these ninety-seven, sixteen men were killed and a further fifteen wounded, almost one third of those who had signed up.[59] Of the ten athletes on the Scottish athletics team who had competed against Ireland in 1913, eight had enlisted by early 1915. Private James Duffy of the 16th Battalion Canadians, runner-up in two Scottish cross country championships, died of wounds in April 1915 – the fifth Scottish International athlete to do so.[60]

While sports meetings continued throughout most of the war, they generally had the central aim and function of raising funds for organisations such as military dependents and the Red Cross.[61] Shettleston Harriers, for example, travelled to the racecourse at Bogside, Ayr, for a race for military personnel organised by the National Cross Country Union; the event was intended as an effort to keep their membership involved, boost morale and support the war effort. In another example, a programme for the Great Athletics and Military Gala held at Cappielow Park, home of Greenock Morton FC, on 31 July 1915, featured a Roll of Honour containing the names of all seventy-seven members of Greenock Glenpark Harriers who had enlisted. The Gala featured events with a military theme, including a Military Marathon that involved thirteen twelve-man teams racing over a ten-mile course in military equipment. All proceeds from the Gala went to a Dependents of the Fallen fund.

In addition to the amateur harriers clubs in central Scotland, however, athletics also supported small numbers of professional athletes, especially in the sprints and in the Highland Games circuits. As in the case of professional football, these athletes faced pressure to suspend activities and do their duty. Despite occupying a much lower profile than football, professional athletics drew significant crowds, thereby attracting the attention – and criticism – of the press. An *Edinburgh Evening* News report of racing on New Years Day, 1915, at Powderhall quoted comments from Scottish Conservative politician and judge Lord Kingsburgh :

> 'There were many tall, strong young men who frequented the Powderhall crowd for the racing so I asked how it was at this juncture in our affairs all these fellows were

[55] Coltman, *First Hundred,* 16.
[56] See John Cairney, *One hundred years of Shettleston Harriers. An East End Odyssey* (Glasgow: Shettleston Harriers, 2004), 26-32 and Colin Shields, *Runs will take place whatever the weather: The centenary history of the Scottish Cross Country Union 1890-1990* (Edinburgh: Scottish Cross Country Union, 1990), 46.
[57] *West of Scotland Harriers Club Handbook* (1914-15) The author. 9.
[58] Archives of the West of Scotland Harriers, The author.
[59] *West of Scotland Harriers Club Ledger.* The author. 27.
[60] Anonymous, 'Scoto-Canadian Athlete Dead,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, April 30, 1915, 4.
[61] One athletics meeting at Tynecastle, home of Heart of Midlothian FC, raised £270 from 11,000 spectators for the Red Cross in 1915.

> able to go down to the races and enjoy them, thinking nothing of their country. These were the people they wanted to stir up.'[62]

Other significant responses

The recruitment of sportsmen in Scotland differed significantly depending on the particular sport and its status. Public pressure on amateur sportsmen to 'do their bit', particularly those participating in individual competition in lower-profile sports, was minimal compared to that facing professionals, as it was recognised that enlistment was indeed strong among them. But while the continued lack of guidance from sports authorities allowed individual sportsmen in many sports to decide for themselves, players in team sports faced greater pressure to enlist, as the numbers of men involved could significantly reward recruitment efforts.

Shinty responded significantly to the call, with the Cameron Highlanders, Seaforth Highlanders and Gordon Highlanders recruiting many players to their ranks. Some 126 shinty players enlisted, and many clubs suffered significant losses. Twenty-five men from the Beauly Club died; Kyles Athletic lost twenty of the forty-nine who enlisted from the local area; and Skye Camanachd lost eighteen members. Of the sixty men from the Kingussie area who enlisted, the Kingussie Club lost five, with a further two wounded and another gassed.[63]

Other lower-profile sportsmen were also ready to join up. The cricket club associated with Edinburgh Academicals saw some seventy-five percent of its members joining Edinburgh regiments. Boxing and golf provided notable recruits, including amateur and professional champions such as Ralph Erskine. A superb all-round athlete, Erskine was world amateur fly weight boxing champion as well as a silver medallist at the Scottish Amateur Athletic Championships over 880 yds. He died in an air crash in 1918.[64] Competitive marksmanship and shooting, skills of obvious value to the war effort, brought some of the earliest recruits. The death of one of marksman, well-known Bisley shot Lt Kerr Gulland of the London Scots club, was reverently reported in the *Edinburgh Evening News* at the end of November 1914.[65]

The attachments and bonds of sport

Due to the perceived importance of the Sportsmen's battalions, it is useful to consider what constituted a 'sportsman' within such battalions. While many were clearly the star players of their generation, other members of the same battalions would have been club staff or supporters, men perhaps motivated to enlist out of a vicarious identification with the players, drawn by the chance to belong to an elite group and bask in its reflected glory – or perhaps just motivated to preserve the sense of fellowship that their club affiliations had already given them. Press reports left no doubt regarding the importance of sport in forging a sense of comradeship and solidarity as men fought together at the front, as shown in the following from the *Glasgow Herald* of 19 November 1914: [66]

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[62] 'Famous Royal Scots. Rosebery Recruiting Campaign. Criticism of the Powderhall Crowd,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, 6 January 1915, 2.

[63] *Constitution and the rules of play. (1935-1936). Roll of honour of players killed in the Great War.* (Inverness: Camanachd Association, 1935), 34-40.

[64] Brian McAusland, email message to authors, 19 November 2024.

[65] 'Well-Known Bisley Shot Killed,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, 23 November 1914, 3.

[66] 'Report from the Front,' *Glasgow Herald*, 19 November 1914, 10.

> Those who condemn football would not say a word against the game if they had seen and heard what I have in passing to and from the trenches and firing line...when the Black Watch were ordered to charge in an engagement, they commenced to shout 'On the ball, Highlanders' and 'Mark your men!'. They continued yelling to one another until they had driven the Germans back.

The concept of the 'muscular Christian' sportsman as epitomising selflessness and courage is evidenced in the number of gallantry awards made to Scottish sportsmen. Of the seventy-four Scots awarded the Victoria Cross in the Great War, it is known that at least four had direct links with football clubs: Lance Corporal William Angus (1st Lancashire Fusiliers) and Sergeant Robert Downie (Royal Dublin Fusiliers) both of Celtic FC; Sapper Adam Archibald (Royal Engineers) of St Bernards FC; and Cpl David Hunter (HLI) associated with Dunfermline Athletic FC.[67] Amongst the members of the West of Scotland Harriers there were awards of two Military Crosses, one Military Medal, three Distinguished Service Orders and one Distinguished Conduct Medal.[68]

The need for conscription had been anticipated with the passage of the National Registration Act 1915, and while identity was a central element to recruitment practices in the first eighteen months of war, an element of compulsion became necessary from early 1916. By that stage in the conflict not even patriotic sportsmen could encourage people to enlist, and those who had avoided the recruiters up to then could no longer do so.

Conclusion

At the onset of war, the enormous task of matching Germany's armed forces man-for-man fell to policymakers and military men like Sir George McCrae and Lord Kitchener, whose efforts were loyally supported by the press. Many of their early recruitment initiatives have become part of the lore of the British experience of the First World War. Recruitment posters provide some of the most familiar images of domestic propaganda: the famous one of Lord Kitchener with his magnificent moustache and his pointing finger ('Your country needs you!') not only encapsulated the nation's consciousness at the time, but has remained iconic ever since. As an element of these initiatives, sport-focused mass enlistment efforts saw significant results across Britain, particularly in late 1914 and early 1915.

While the enlistment of workmates and sporting comrades in the Pals battalions was crucial to this process across Britain, recruitment practices in Scotland also acknowledged the importance of men's loyalties to place and community. The composition of McCrae's battalion vividly illustrates the importance of both principles, with 'A' Company made up of students, teachers, solicitors, bankers, civil servants and clerks; 'B' Company recruited from the Edinburgh artisans and trades, including printing & publishing; 'C' Company composed of thirty professional football players, more than sixty top-class junior footballers, and around 170 Hearts supporters (other supporters being widely distributed among the other battalions); and 'D' Company made up of Dunfermline and

[67] Graham Fraser, 'Scotland's Heroes: The 74 Victoria Cross winners from World War One,' BBC Scotland, 9 November 2014. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-29951136.
[68] *West Of Scotland Harriers, Club Ledger*, 27–29.

Penicuik men, mainly coal miners, linen workers and printers.[69] As casualties took their toll, however, the integrity of these units began to suffer. The Pals battalions were often amalgamated with other battalions with the aim of preserving the Pals and Sportsmen's battalion ethos; but by the time conscription was introduced in early 1916, the common identity and shared purpose that had bound members of the Pals and Sportsmen's battalions together had largely dissolved as ties to certain locales or workplace organisations had been diluted.

By targeting men based on their affiliations and other markers of identity, recruiters succeeded in enlisting enough fighting men, at least initially, to meet the challenge facing Britain. We now recognise, however, that while the Pals battalions drew strength from the men's shared sense of comradeship and commitment, the flaw in the system was revealed when friends who had enlisted together, and had fought together, so often died together. Indeed, as the scale of human destruction was revealed, it became clear that many rural communities across Britain now faced an existential challenge. Some rural communities in central Scotland lost so many of their local men that their future was put in doubt. The village of Spott in Midlothian, for example, had no young men left between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, as they had all enlisted. Tranent, a mining village in East Lothian, saw more than 450 men enlist out of a total population of two thousand; 120 names are listed on war memorials in the village, of whom the most noted casualty was Lt Burt of the Royal Scots.[70]

The recruitment of sportsmen as a discrete group provided a highly visible and useful example of war propaganda. While much research has focused on the response of professional football players and the often negative coverage of their response in the press, the success of such recruitment among junior and amateur footballers and those involved in other sports – success largely unreported in the newspapers – has received much less scrutiny. Once the authorities governing professional football recognised the will of the nation, suspended league play, and released players from their contractual obligations, men who had been labelled cowards for failing to enlist became heroes when they were free to do so.

The contribution of junior and amateur football organisations has certainly been underestimated. Many Midlothian clubs, for example, saw revenues drop severely when they were unable to complete their fixtures owing to the mass enlistment of players. When some clubs proactively chose to suspend activities, their decisions to do so went largely unreported in the press, or were mentioned only as a footnote. What further complicates the picture is that sources do not agree about how many men enlisted from the junior ranks of football. In early 1915, some commentators suggested that as many as 100,000 men affiliated with junior football clubs had enlisted from central Scotland. On balance, the figure is more likely to have been around 50,000. Yet this is still a significant figure given that the total number of professional footballers in the whole of Scotland was around 300.[71]

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[69] Alexander, *McCrae's Battalion,* 92.

[70] 'Tranent Officer Killed,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 December 1914, 5; see also John Gray Centre: Tranent World War One Memorials. https://www.johngraycentre.org/ east-lothian-subjects/war-battles-military/war-memorials/tranent-world-war-one-memorials/.

[71] See 'Scottish Footballers and the War,' *Edinburgh Evening News,* 17 April 1915, 8; also 'Football 'Roll of Honour. The Lothian Juniors,' *Edinburgh Evening News*, 20 March 1915, 8.

Reporting was inevitably partial as it focused on those professional sportsmen who were well known to the public, a fact that may explain why press coverage of leading figures in amateur sports such as rugby, athletics, cricket and golf was far less than that devoted to professional football players. But contractual obligations meant that professional sportsmen, unlike amateur players, faced a difficult situation unless their clubs agreed to release them from their contracts. The fact that the press chose to target (and often shame) the players rather than their clubs meant that a relatively small number of professional sportsmen received greater attention in the press than their actual importance warranted.

Sports authorities, government and the press influenced the public perception of professional sportsmen by conflating, deliberately or otherwise, issues arising from the notion of professionalism in sports. The 'professional' sportsman was seen at this time as a journeyman, whereas the status of the amateur sportsman was still high, and reflected an ideology – embedded deep within most sports organisations – that valued the amateur as a more moral character. So while press coverage of the enlistment of amateur sportsmen was scanty, that devoted to professional players focused on what came to be seen as their moral failings in not joining up.

The recruitment efforts in central Scotland succeeded in many instances because individual sportsmen and clubs defied the inaction of sports governing bodies and enlisted in large numbers. Many of these men, like Annan Ness, were already reservists. While Pals battalions were drawn from a wide variety of affiliations across society (and they were more prevalent in Wales and England), it was the recruitment of sportsmen that captured the public's imagination in Scotland. Allied with notions of Scottish identity, the recruiters' focus on sportsmen – especially the renowned McCrae's Battalion – not only encouraged enlistment, but also enabled people more readily to identify with those serving at the Front. As soldiers, Scottish sportsmen gave the press engaging subjects for news stories about individuals with whom the public were already familiar. The experiences and impact of the First World War on different sports, individual sportsmen, supporters, clubs and governing bodies illustrates the full complexity of the social and cultural situation in Scotland. In the stories we tell ourselves about our cultural experiences, Scottish sport makes a significant contribution to our socio-political landscape.

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Why was Agnes Randolph 'Black'?

SHELLEY MORWENNA WILLIAMS

Abstract

This study focuses on Agnes Randolph (1312–1369), famous for her defence of Dunbar Castle in 1338, and the origins of her nickname, 'Black Agnes'. Nearly without exception, authors of the last two centuries explain the name as a reflection of her physical appearance, stating that she had a dark complexion. But is this explanation anachronistic? This article argues that the nickname 'Black Agnes' would have had significantly different connotations in the fourteenth century, with 'black' carrying political, literary, and even folkloric nuances. Arguing from detailed analyses of evidence adduced from literary sources, contemporary chronicles, medieval agnominal practices, and overlooked manuscripts, this article casts new light on the many shades of meaning that combine to constitute Agnes's 'Black'.

In the recent blockbuster exhibition at the British Library, 'Medieval Women: Voices & Visions', a folio from Andrew Wyntoun's fifteenth-century *Orygynale Cronykil* was featured with the verse account of the defence of Dunbar Castle in 1338 by 'Black Agnes'. This was a reference to the Scottish woman, Agnes Randolph, Countess of Dunbar (1312–1369).[1] In the exhibition catalogue, four paragraphs outlining her famous story begin with this sentence: 'Agnes, countess of Dunbar (known by the sixteenth century as "Black Agnes", perhaps on account of her dark complexion or her fierce reputation) held a strategic key castle on the coast of south-east Scotland'.[2] The account continues by describing her efforts to thwart the English siege of the coastal castle of Dunbar, mounted from January to June 1338 on the orders of Edward III in his efforts to subdue Scotland.[3] Agnes was alone without a significant military presence to defend the keep, and her husband was absent. The English forces were led by Sir William Montagu, the first Earl of Salisbury (1301–1344), who mounted attacks with war engines and siege tactics.[4] Through creative countermoves and no small amount of flair, drama, and grit, Agnes managed to keep her small castle from falling to the English.

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[1] Rory MacLellan, 'Black Agnes and the Siege of Dunbar', in *Medieval Women: Voices & Visions,* ed. Eleanor Jackson and Julian Harrison (British Library, 2024), 110–111. Andrew Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil*: Royal MS 17 D XX f. 238v.

[2] MacLellan, 'Black Agnes', 110.

[3] For more on Edward III's motivations and a detailed analysis of this moment in military history, see Iain A. MacInnes, *Scotland's Second War of Independence, 1332–1357* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2016); and Ranald Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots: the Formative Years of a Military Career, 1327–1335* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[4] R. J. M. Pugh, *A History of Dunbar: Swords, Loaves and Fishes* (Balerno: Harlaw Heritage, 2003, repr. 2015). Putting this siege in historical perspective, Pugh writes (107): 'The siege of Londonderry in 1689 lasted 105 days and the population was reduced to eating cats, dogs and even rats; Dunbar had held out for an incredible 155 days, bettered only by another famous siege – Baden-Powell's 187 days at Mafeking during the Boer War in 1899–1900. The defenders of Dunbar appear to have been well-fed throughout most of their siege however.'

The British Library's spotlight on Agnes Randolph exemplifies how Agnes and the Siege of Dunbar are discussed across publications and other media. However, remarkably little scholarship exists in publications to date, and there is much more to uncover about Agnes and the Siege of Dunbar. The aim of my larger project is to critically reconsider the chronicles' accounts, to reframe the discussions around the Siege of Dunbar, and to highlight not only the extraordinary courage of this singular woman but also place her within her historical moment. But to begin, let us start with her nickname, which is the sole focus of this article. Why is Agnes Randolph 'Black'?

Introductions to Agnes printed in the last two hundred years invariably explain her nickname with a description of her hair, eyes, skin, or complexion as 'dark'.[5] Her description in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* reads: 'Dunbar, Agnes, Countess of Dunbar and March (1312?–1369), known from her swarthy complexion as Black Agnes, is celebrated for her spirited defence of Dunbar Castle in January 1337–8'.[6] Nearly 130 years later, *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* describes her in virtually identical language: 'Known as "Black Agnes" because of her dark complexion, Agnes Randolph was a member of a family active in the cause of Scottish independence'.[7] Reina Pennington's biographical dictionary of women in military roles, *Amazons to Fighter Pilots,* includes this description: 'Agnes of Dunbar…also known as Agnes Randolph, "Black Agnes" because of her dark complexion'.[8] The explanation given in *The Story of Scotland* is a bit shorter: 'She was called Black Agnes because she was so dark'; and Mairi Kidd takes a little imaginative license in her *Warriors and Witches*: 'Black-haired, black-eyed Agnes was born around 1312 to Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray and Isabel Stewart of the Stewarts of Bonkyll'.[9] Finally, in Goring's *Scotland, Her Story*: 'Known as Black Agnes because of her dark hair and complexion, she is an inspiration and not just to those of us raised in Dunbar'.[10]

That Agnes was 'black' because of her personal appearance is universally taken for granted, but what does it really mean to call a fourteenth-century woman 'black'? Are we interpreting this nickname correctly? What evidence supports the idea of a dark complexion? Was this nickname given in her lifetime, and by whom? What does it mean? This paper will argue that, in the case of Agnes, 'black' does *not* primarily refer to her appearance. It will demonstrate that the idea that she was 'swarthy' likely comes from a single source written two hundred years after her death, from what appears to be an arbitrary comment by the author. This idea – not only unfounded, but also unbalanced

[5] See the British Library's blogpost on Agnes here: https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2025/01/black-agnes-and-the-siege-of-dunbar.html.

[6] Alsager Vian, 'Dunbar, Agnes, Countess of Dunbar and March', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888).

[7] Elizabeth Ewan and Rose Pipes, *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 359–60.

[8] Elizabeth Ewan, 'Agnes of Dunbar', in *Amazons to Fighter Pilots: A Biographical Dictionary of Military Women*, ed. Reina Pennington (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 7.

[9] Henrietta Marshall, 'David II. – The Story of Black Agnes' in *The Story of Scotland* (Moorestown, NJ: Perennial Press, 2018). Mairi Kidd, *Warriors and Witches and Damn Rebel Bitches: Scottish Women to Live Your Life By* (Edinburgh: Black & White Publishing, 2020), 15.

[10] Rosemary Goring, *Scotland, Her Story: The Nation's History by the Women who Lived it* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2020), 20.

and anachronistic – is overdue for closer analysis. Even if Agnes had dark hair, eyes, and skin, it seems clear that 'black' in this case carries political, literary, and even folkloric nuances, and that these are far more significant.

This article will offer a new approach to Black Agnes and her nickname, framing the discussion with a fresh consideration of medieval agnominal practices, primary sources, and the literature informing our understanding of the events in Agnes's life. It will offer a new perspective not only on her nickname but on how she may have been perceived by her contemporaries and beyond, and it will forge new trails into frustratingly enigmatic texts, in order to consider the many shades of meaning that combine to constitute Agnes's 'Black.'

Medieval *agnomina*

From Æthelred the Unready to Richard III 'Crookback' and everything between, the annals of medieval British history do not suffer from a lack of creative or intriguing nicknames. These include *cognomina* and epithets (appended to someone's name, 'William the Conqueror') and sobriquets (typically names given to someone by others, or an 'exonym', such as Queen Victoria, 'Grandmother of Europe'). The creation and use of nicknames is a nearly universal human phenomenon, but naturally there are no hard and fast rules about nickname formation – it is an organic and evolving process. P. H. Reaney writes that nicknames can be simply 'bynames that emphasise a notable characteristic or experience of an individual'.[11] Nicknames can refer to personal qualities or specific events; they can quantify public feelings toward an individual or a group of people; and some suggest no logical reasoning whatsoever. Thus the significance of nicknames is slippery, and doubly so for people who lived hundreds of years ago. It is not aporetic to attempt to tease out possible interpretations of nicknames, however, because they carry valuable fragments of history.

Determining culturally specific 'meanings' of medieval nicknames is hardly straightforward. Nicknames (or *agnomina*) must be carefully handled when they concern historical figures of all stripes. In particular, the colour black is one of the most common *agnomina* in the British Middle Ages, and carries an enormous variety of potential 'meanings.' But while the origin and 'meaning' of historical nicknames may be difficult to pin down, how nicknames function in society is easier to assess. Social historians of the last century have constructed working theories about the roles of nicknames in social networks.[12] In his recent doctoral thesis, Tristan Alphey formulates a compelling socio-onomastic approach to medieval agnominal practices.[13] His work focuses primarily on early medieval Britain (400–1000 CE), but his methodology can be successfully applied to the later Middle Ages as well. Alphey proposes three primary ways in which nicknames may function in medieval social networks:

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[11] P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames* (London: Routledge, 1967), 218.

[12] See Terhi Ainiala and Jan-Ola Östman, *Socio-Onomastics: The Pragmatics of Names* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2017), introduction; Carole Hough, *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); A. G. Akselberg, 'Socio-onomastics – A Critical Approach', *Namn og Nemne* 29/1 (2012): 107–18.

[13] Tristan K. Alphey, 'Nicknames in early medieval England: a socio-onomastic study of *agnomina* before the twelfth century' (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2025).

1. Nicknames may play a role in the active construction and deconstruction of power or reflect social status.[14] Positive nicknames may praise those in power, or conversely, impugn them.[15] Nicknames may empower or belittle and, in this way, they carry social currency.
2. Nicknames play a role in defining, and enforcing, group membership.[16] They can be a method of delineating familial relationships or social positions.
3. Nicknames are also a method of reinforcing social norms, attitudes, and values of a specific group.[17]

These concepts will help shape this discussion about Black Agnes, particularly because they lend a guiding vocabulary to the social functions of nicknames. In some ways, nicknames are a type of artefact which come to us decontextualized and 'silent' in their modern forms; but in an historical era where women were universally and almost exclusively defined by their relationships with men, a nickname can be a powerful artefact indeed.[18]

Nicknames and sobriquets are most often attached to men in history's written chronicles, with far fewer women by comparison. Cecily Clark's scholarship has shown that, while given names were bestowed by a daughter's parent(s), women's second names were most often dictated by marriages, birthplace, titles by inheritance, or sometimes their occupation.[19] A review of available sources (which by their nature cannot be comprehensive) suggests that there were no other records of a 'Black Agnes' before Agnes Randolph in Scotland or England, although other women carried the name after her, as we shall discover.[20]

As mentioned earlier, 'black' is a common sobriquet in medieval Britain, but it did not carry a uniform meaning. The particulars matter. For example, let us compare two men known as 'Black': Edward the Black Prince (or Edward of Woodstock, 1330–1376), and 'The Black Douglas' (Sir James Douglas, 1286–1330). It is perfectly acceptable to refer to Edward of Woodstock as 'The Black Prince' in publications today, but he may not have been referred to as such in his lifetime at all.[21] Chronicles

[14] Alphey, 'Nicknames', 39.
[15] M. Adams, 'Power, Politeness, and the Pragmatics of Nicknames', *Names* 57/2 (2009): 81-91.
[16] Alphey, 'Nicknames', 40; also 27–28.
[17] Alphey, 'Nicknames', 40. See also Eyo Mensah, 'Proverbial Nicknames among Rural Youth in Nigeria', *Anthropological Linguistics* 59/4 (2017): 414.
[18] Alphey, 'Nicknames', 42. See also L. R. Binford, *For Theory Building in Archaeology: Essays on faunal remains, aquatic resources, spatial analysis, and systemic modeling* (New York: The Academic Press, 1977), 7; M. Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin: Nicknames at York and at the Carolingian Court', in *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court: Proceedings of the Third Germania Latina Conference held at the University of Groningen, May 1995*, ed. L. A. R. J. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald, (Groningen: University of Gronigen, 1998), 59.
[19] Cecily Clark, *Words, names and history: selected writings of Cecily Clark,* ed. Peter Jackson (Martlesham: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 66–67.
[20] One peculiar instance, and likely entirely unrelated to Agnes of Dunbar, is 'Black Annis' of Leicester. She is a mythical witch with a misty provenance, and most likely a kind of folk memory of a late medieval anchorite, Agnes Scott, demonised after the Reformation. See: Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 274–275.
[21] A decade after the Prince's death an epic biography was commissioned and written by Chandos Herald, the *Life of the Black Prince*, but it was titled thus at a later date, and nowhere in the text is Edward called 'the

contemporary with the prince only refer to him as Edward IV (anticipating his succession) or Edward of Woodstock (referring to his birthplace).[22] After his death, however, these references became confusing, and he needed a new name. He was first called 'the Black Prince' in print in John Leland's *Collectanea* written in the first half of the sixteenth century.[23] Richard Barber suggests that the true origin of the 'black' for Edward may be in pageantry, 'in that a tradition had grown up of representing the prince in black armour'.[24] Edward's famous heraldic shield is also a likely reason (sable, three ostrich feathers argent), in which sable (a black field) symbolises bravery.[25] 'Black' in his case is a positive nickname, one that promotes his social status, stresses his martial strengths and victories, and helps delineate the line of succession.

The 'Good' Sir James Douglas (1286–1330) also carries the nickname 'Black' ('The Black Douglas'). He is usually introduced in texts first as a knight of great renown, Robert the Bruce's right-hand man.[26] About his 'black,' most authors in the last century described it firstly as a fearsome monicker given by his English enemies, and secondly as a description of his hair colour.[27] His entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* reads: 'The women of the English borders silenced their children with the threat that mewling would bring the Black Douglas upon them. The name is not derived from his coat of arms, so presumably refers to the colour of his hair.'[28]

Almost without doubt James Douglas was black-haired, but his nickname accrued different meanings for different groups of people. John Barbour describes him as black-haired in *The Brus* (c. 1375, at I.381–4): [29]

Bot he was nocht sa fayr that we	But he was not so good-looking that we
Suld spek gretly off his beauté.	should say much of his beauty. His face
In vysage wes he sumdeill gray,	was somewhat pale, and, as I heard it,

Black Prince'. See: Mildred K. Pope and Eleanor C. Lodge, *The Chandos Herald: Life of the Black Prince* (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, Middle French Series, 2000).

[22] Richard W. Barber, *Edward, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine: a biography of the Black Prince* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 1996), 243.

[23] John Leland, *Collectanea*, vol. 2, 3rd edn, ed. Thomas Hearne (London: Apud Benj. White, 1774), 307, 479.

[24] Barber, *Edward*, 242.

[25] For more on Edward's heraldry, see William Hunt, 'Edward the Black Prince' in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 17, ed. Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1889), 92.

[26] See, for example, A. A. M. Duncan, 'Douglas, Sir James [called the Black Douglas]', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), where the introduction to the entry reads: 'Douglas, Sir James [called the Black Douglas] (d. 1330), soldier, was the son of Sir William Douglas…and of Elizabeth, daughter of Alexander, the steward of Scotland; she had died by 1289'.

[27] David Ross does not immediately discuss his hair colour: 'Sir James the Good, one of the finest soldiers Scotland ever produced, is better known by the name given to him by the English – the "Black Douglas". And they gave him this name with some justification. He terrified the northern shires of England throughout the King Robert the Bruce years of the Wars of Independence.' David R. Ross, *James the Good, the Black Douglas: Robert the Bruce's champion and Scotland's fiercest Warrior – the Man of England's Nightmares* (Glasgow: Bell & Bain, 2008; 2010), Preface.

[28] Duncan, 'Douglas, Sir James'.

[29] John Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. & trans. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), 64–65.

And had blak har, as Ic hard say,	he had black hair, but he was well made
Bot off lymmys he was weill maid,	in his limbs, with strong bones and
With banys gret and schuldrys braid;	broad shoulders. His body was well
His body wes weyll maid and lenyé	made and lean, as those who saw him
As thai that saw hym said to me.	told me.

This description seems straightforward: those who had seen the Black Douglas described him to the poet as broad-shouldered, strong, with black hair and a grey complexion, and of course this description may have been accurate.[30] There is no reason to doubt that Barbour may have consulted with living witnesses to the events he recounts. Rhiannon Purdie describes Barbour's primary audience as 'a Scottish court of the 1370s composed of people a mere generation or so away from the events narrated, and even a few elderly eyewitnesses'.[31] Douglas's own illegitimate son, the powerful Archibald Douglas 'the Grim', was a member of Barbour's audience and perhaps one of Barbour's eyewitnesses.[32]

In describing Douglas, Barbour consciously invokes the image of the romantic hero, consistently presenting Douglas as a legendary chivalric knight – a politically advantageous representation for Barbour's contemporaries in the 1370s.[33] The driving purpose for *The Brus,* as Michael Brown describes it, was to create

> the image of an heroic age for the Scottish nobility, serving their king in defence of Scotland, which...acted as an ideal of loyalty to the crown which the new Stewart king must have sought to encourage.[34]

Because the Scotland in which Barbour's audience lived had been formed directly by the previous generation and by the actions of Robert I, *The Brus* provided a sort of founding legend, casting James Douglas as a type of Lancelot to Robert's King Arthur, or Hector to Robert's Priam.[35] The text

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[30] On instances when Barbour reports statements with the caveat 'as was said to me', see Duncan's discussion in his edition of Barbour, *The Brus*, 14.

[31] Rhiannon Purdie, 'Medieval Romance and the Generic Frictions of Barbour's *Bruce',* in *Barbour's Bruce and its Cultural Contexts: Politics, Chivalry and Literature in Late Medieval Scotland,* ed. Steve Boardman and Susan Foran (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), 52.

[32] Archibald apparently earned his nickname on the basis of his military successes; see Michael Brown '"Rejoice to Hear of Douglas": The House of Douglas and the Presentation of Magnate Power in Late Medieval Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* 76/202 (1997): 174. See also Michael Brown, 'Archibald the Grim (1358–1388)', in *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland, 1300–1355* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998); and S. Vathjunker, 'A Study of the Career of Sir James Douglas: the Historical Record versus Barbour's *Bruce*' (PhD diss., Aberdeen University, 1990).

[33] The dual focus of *The Brus* on both Robert I and James Douglas is one of the most significant aspects of the text; see discussion in Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, 25.

[34] Brown, '"Rejoice to Hear,' 166.

[35] Duncan writes, 'There can be no doubt that Barbour wrote to please Robert II, about the deeds of his grandfather[.]'; see Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, 14. Also Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England ii, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), 81–83; and James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 141–2.

[35] Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, 65.

confirms the justice of their cause, and shines a highly favourable light on the Scottish side of the Wars of Independence. Barbour's comparison of James Douglas to the Trojan champion Hector (I.395–406) begins with a physical description:[36]

To gud Ector of Troy mycht he	He could be likened to good Hector of Troy
In mony thingis liknyt be.	in many respects. Hector had black hair, as
Ector had blak har as he had,	he had, and strong well-made limbs
And stark lymmys and rycht weill maid	

By likening James Douglas to Hector of Troy, Barbour's lines reflect the prevailing popularity of connecting British history to a fabled Greco-Roman past, a feature of many late fourteenth-century texts.[37] This passage, however, is less directly influenced by classical texts than it is by twelfth-century romances. Purdie persuasively argues that this description is derivative of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (c. 1165), and perhaps 'buttressed' by 'Les voeux du paon' in *The Buik of Alexander*.[38] In this instance, then, Barbour bolsters Douglas's role as the chivalrous knight by comparing his appearance to that of Hector – even if no other sources describe Hector as dark-haired.[39]

What goes mostly unnoticed, however, is that Barbour never refers directly to James as 'The Black Douglas' in the poet-narrator's voice. Throughout the text, Barbour calls him "gud Schyr James off Douglas" (I.29), or "lorde (of) Dowglas" or only "James" or "Douglas(s)." James the "blak Dowglas" is only spoken in the voice of others obliquely in quotation, as in this famous passage:

The drede of the lord of Douglas	…fear of the lord Douglas, and his
And his renoune sa scalit was	reputation was so spread throughout
Throu-out the marchis of Ingland	the marches of England that those who
That all that war tharin wonnand[40]	dwelt therein feared him like the devil
Dred him as the fell devill of hell,	[out] of hell. Even now I have heard it
And yeit haf Ik hard otfsys tell	often said that he was so greatly feared
That he sa gretly dred wes than	then that when women wanted to scold
That quhen wivys wald childer ban	their children, they would consign them
Thai wald with rycht with ane angry face	with a very angry face to the Black
Betech thaim to the blak Douglas.	Douglas, for in their story, he was more
*For, with thair taill he wes mair fell	dreadful than was any devil in hell.
*Than wes ony devill in hell.	Because of his great valour and courage
Throu his gret worschip and bounté	he was so feared by his foes that they

[36] Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, 65.
[37] See Marion Turner, 'New Troy' in *Chaucer: a European Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).
[38] Purdie, 'Medieval Romance', 60.
[39] Matthew P. McDiarmid and J. A. C. Stevenson, *Barbour's Bruce: A fredome is a noble thing!* 3 vols (Scottish Texts Society, 1980–85), 45. Purdie comments, 'McDiarmid and Stevenson observe in their note to these lines that black hair does not feature in any other known description of Hector: it almost certainly describes Douglas's real appearance'; see Purdie, 'Medieval Romance', 63, fn 42.
[40] Mackenzie's edition reads 'duelland' here.

Sua with his fayis dred wes he That thaim growyt to her his name.[41]	were terrified by the mention of his name.

Here we see evidence that the 'Black Douglas' was coined by the English to reflect James's terrifying reputation along the border country. James is as black as a "devill of hell," with folkloric dimensions in the image of a mother warning her child against a bogeyman, underscored by rhyming "with ane angry face" with "the blak Douglas." Later in *The Brus*, another Englishman, quaking in terror, calls James 'the Black' in a conversation with his host of fellow soldiers: "For I dred sar for the blak Douglas."[42] These passages build the image of James as the ultimate knightly figure: among his own he is the 'Good' Sir James, but to his enemies he is 'the Black Douglas.'[43] His reputation is upheld elsewhere in history; it is evident that he was a cunning guerilla fighter and loyal to Robert I.

'Black' could thus carry positive or negative connotations when used as a nickname. Edward of Woodstock's 'black' is generally positive, connected to his coat of arms, military achievements, and pageantry. Negative examples of 'black,' however, generally outnumber the positive in medieval accounts.[44] Specifically, in Barbour's *Brus*, the evidence suggests that James Douglas indeed may have been black-haired, but that this is not the primary reason for his agnomen, and neither is it explicitly connected to it.[45] Rather, 'the blak Douglas' is a fearful nickname in the mouths of the opposition, and in this way it increases James's martial prestige and functions in the text to reinforce the values of a specific group – in this case the Scottish nobility of 1370s.

Both 'The Black Prince' and 'The Black Douglas' were roughly contemporary with Agnes Randolph, but can their nicknames illuminate how hers was formed and perceived? Was Agnes Randolph's 'black' a positive, negative, or a neutral agnomen? Did 'black' carry specific social valence, as in the case of Edward and James? How does gender inflect meaning on a nickname? To approach these questions, the following section outlines where the name 'Black Agnes' appears chronologically in the textual record, and examines the authors who wrote about her.

Who says what when?

The first mention of Agnes Randolph in connection with the siege of Dunbar Castle occurs in *The Chronicon de Lanercost*, compiled before 1346.[46] This is a history of Scotland 1201–1346, written by an anonymous (but probably Franciscan) cleric during Agnes's lifetime. The oldest manuscript copy (BL Cotton Claudius D. vii, folio 230) records that in 1338 the Castle of Dunbar was soundly

[41] Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, ll. 542–556, p. 578–9. Mackenzie's edition, Book XV.555–565, p. 579. Lines indicated with an asterisk (*) appear only in St. John's College, Cambridge, MS G.23, not in Advocates' Library, Edinburgh: Adv.MS.19.2.2(i).

[42] Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, 19.556, p. 727.

[43] The Gaelic meaning of 'Douglas' itself may have influenced the nickname 'black': the family name derives from the Valley of Douglas with a tributary of the Clyde: Gael: *dubh glas*, 'black water'. Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Mackenzie, 408.

[44] For other examples from early medieval Britain, see Alphey, 'Nicknames', 195–7.

[45] Ross, *James the Good*, introduction.

[46] Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon de Lanercost* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1839). This document, the product of many writers, was appended to the work of Roger of Hoveden.

defended by the 'comitissa de Dunbar, quæ fuit principalis custos castri'.[47] Here Agnes is noted only as the countess of Dunbar, principal defender of the castle. None of the details that embellish later accounts appear here. The only other extant historical source from the fourteenth century mentioning the siege is John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, written before 1384.[48] Fordun does not mention Agnes at all, stating only that William of Montagu employed huge siege engines and other 'contrivances of warcraft', and that he left his 'task undone'.[49] Fordun's is a delicately short and dry version of the events which spares Montagu and the English from embarrassment.

The fifteenth century saw the production of three important sources for medieval Scottish history: Andrew Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* (1420–24), Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (1440s, building upon John of Fordun's work), and the *Liber Pluscardensis* (c. 1461, an abridgement of Bower).[50] Andrew Wyntoun's *Cronykil* includes the work of an anonymous contributor writing c. 1390, whom Stephen Boardman describes as probably a secular cleric passing on well-known oral tales, working for an aristocratic lord.[51] Agnes plays a pivotal role in the anonymous contributor's account of 1332–1338; in fact, her defence of the castle at Dunbar is the climax which leads the Scots to victory. David J. Parkinson notes that, remarkably, 'a woman [is] depicted taking the crucial role in resisting the English, not so much by force as by wit and watchfulness'.[52]

Neither Wyntoun, nor presumably the anonymous contributor, describes Agnes as 'Black'. Rather, she is referred to as: 'gud Dame Agnes of Dunbar'.[53] In this way the narrator's voice is like that of Barbour, who refers to James as 'gud Schyr James'.[54] Also like Barbour's account of Douglas,

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[47] Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 296.

[48] Thomas Gray's *Scalacronica* covers the periods between 1066–1363, and was written in the fourteenth century, but the Siege of Dunbar does not appear meaningfully in the chronicle, and Agnes is not mentioned; see Herbert Maxwell, *The Scalacronica of Thomas Gray,* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, James Maclehose & Sons, 1907), 104.

[49] Mentioned in 'Andrew of Moray besieges Strivelyn (Stirling) Castle', in William F. Skene, ed., *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 354.

[50] Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, A. B. Scott and D. E. R. Watt, eds (Aberdeen University Press, 1996). Andrew of Wyntoun, *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: Edmonton and Douglas, *Historians of Scotland Series*, vol. II, III IX, 1872–79); Felix J. H. Skene, ed., *Liber Pluscardensis / The Book of Pluscarden* (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1880).

[51] Stephen Boardman, 'Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland: Robert the Steward, John of Fordun and the "Anonymous Chronicle"', *The Scottish Historical Review* 76/201, part 1 (1997): 28. See also: Rhiannon Purdie, 'Malcolm, Margaret, Macbeth and the Miller: Rhetoric and the Re-Shaping of History in Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*.' *Medievalia et Humanistica* 41 (2015): 45–63.

[52] David J. Parkinson, 'The *Carping* of Wyntoun's Anonymous Contributor: Episodic Recovery in 1330s Scotland', *The Mediaeval Journal* 10/1 (2020): 35.

[53] Wyntoun, *Orygynale Cronykil*, ch. 32, ll. 4845–4856, folia 238r-v, 431: 'Bot gud Dame Annes off Dwnbare'. F. J. Amours, ed., *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, (Scottish Text Society, 1903–14), Ch. CLXVIII, 80: 'gud Dame Agnes of Dunbar', and Ch. XXVIII, 80: 'Dame Annes of Dunbar'.

[54] On Barbour's influence on Wyntoun, see David Coldwell, 'Wyntoun's Anonymous Contributor', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 58/1 (1959): 39–48. On Wyntoun's favourable view of the Dunbar family, see Elizabeth Ewan, 'The Dangers of Manly Women: Late Medieval Perceptions of Female Heroism in Scotland's Second War of Independence', in Sarah M. Dunnigan, C. Marie Harker, and Evelyn S. Newlyn, eds, *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing* (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3–18, esp. 9.

it is the English who give Agnes a derogatory name, as witnessed in a song reputedly sung by the retreating English soldiers:

> I wöwe to God, scho [mais gret stere]
> The Scottis wenche ploddere
> Come I are, [or] come I late,
> I fand Annot at the yhate.'[55]

Here, as recorded in the Cotton manuscript, Agnes is derided as 'the thieving Scots wench' and certainly not a 'gud Dame', as David Parkinson notes.

In the history chronicles, it is not until Walter Bower's account that 'Black Agnes' appears. On fol. 288v of Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 171, it states: 'Quod quidem castrum viriliter defendebat comitissa**,** Black Annes vulgariter / However, the countess, who was commonly called 'Black Agnes,' defended this castle courageously'.[56] And then later he refers to her as 'Blak Annot comitissa / Countess Black Agnes'.[57] There is no mention whatsoever of the reasoning for the appellation 'Black,' only that is 'vulgariter', or commonly used. Whether it was commonly used in Bower's time or Agnes's is not specified. The footnote provided by the editors, however, states without supporting evidence: 'The appellation "Black" was probably derived from the countess's appearance'.[58]

A 1461 abridgement of Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* by an anonymous writer, the *Liber Pluscardensis*, copies Bower's comment that the countess is 'commonly called Black Annes of Dunbar'.[59] Hector Boece, in his mid-sixteenth century history of Scotland, includes nothing new; he refers to Agnes as 'Contes of Marche, calht Blak Anna', as does his translator, John Bellenden.[60] In summary: no extant source written before Bower in the 1440s mentions the nickname 'Black Agnes'; and there are no fourteenth- or fifteenth-century sources that explicate the 'meaning' of the nickname or connect it to her appearance.

The first chronicle-writer to include anything about Agnes's physical appearance is Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie (d. 1580).[61] His *Cronicles of Scotland* (written 1576–1579?) covers the years 1436–1565, but he naturally also refers to earlier episodes in Scottish history.[62] He writes about the

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[55] Wyntoun, *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland*, ll. 4997–5000, 436. This is as it is recorded in the Cotton MS Nero D XI, British Library, London. Elsewhere it is recorded as the Scottish wench *and* her 'ploddeill,' a band of robber-thieves, see Parkinson, 'The *Carping*,' 51.
[56] Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol VII, book XIII, 127–131.
[57] Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol VII, book XIII, 128.
[58] Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 230.
[59] Skene, *The Book of Pluscarden*, 216; also Christine McGladdery, 'Liber Pluscardensis', in *Encyclopaedia of the Medieval Chronicle*s (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2016).
[60] Hector Boece, *Scottorum Historiae* published for King James V in 1527, and translated into Scots by John Bellenden in 1533. John Bellenden, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland: written in Latin by Hector Boece, Canon of Aberdeen*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: W. and C. Tait, 1821), vol. 2, 433.
[61] Robert Lindsay, *The Chronicles of Scotland, by Robert Lindsay, of Pitscottie. Published from Several Old Manuscripts*, vol. 1 (London: Printed by G. Ramsay for A. Constable, 1814).
[62] Francesca L. Mackay, 'Reading Pitscottie's *Cronicles*: a Case Study on the History of Literacy in Scotland, 1575–1814'. (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2016). Æ. M., 'Robert Stewart, Bishop of Caithness, and the

Randolph family, and about Thomas Randolph he states: 'He had also dochteris: The oldest was called Blak Annas, be reason of hir skine. This Annas was ane voman of gritt spirit, more nor came ane woman to be; quho was married upoun Patrick, earle of Merch'.[63] There is no clear reasoning for Pitscottie's comment that Agnes was 'black' because of her skin, and as we have shown, there are no extant precedents for such a description.[64] The evidence suggests that this is the author's own observation.

It is of course possible that Pitscottie was working from sources that are lost to us. For example, it is likely that there once existed a 'Life' of Thomas Randolph, Agnes's father and nephew to Robert I, which may have included information about his daughter, but it has been lost to time.[65] However, because no other text notes anything about Agnes's 'skine', this seems unlikely. All that can be stated is that Pitscottie is the first to discuss her appearance in textual record, and he offers no basis for it.

Despite the dubious nature of Pitscottie's comment, nearly without exception later writers follow his example and state that Agnes is called 'Black' because of her appearance.[66] This is likely an example of how nicknames have shifted through time, rather than a valid explanation of her nickname's origin. As we saw with the example of James Douglas in *The Brus*, he was not nicknamed 'Black Douglas' because of his hair colour – Barbour never suggests such an explanation – but rather because he was devilishly terrifying to the English. Pitscottie may therefore be viewing Agnes's agnomen through the lens of his own time, re-etymologizing it within a different cultural framework. Pitscottie's comments have thus altered the interpretation of Agnes's nickname and given it a different meaning than it would have had in its original medieval context. We should, therefore, beware of how we interpret her nickname today.

To contextualize Agnes's nickname to this point we have only considered texts that self-identify as historical chronicles – those texts allegedly recording historical events in Latin, Middle English and Old Scots, in verse and prose. However, there is another medieval source that mentions Black Agnes of Dunbar by name, but does so in the context of fairy tales, romances, and prophecies. These are the texts, extant in three manuscripts, associated with Thomas of Erceldoune (or Ercildoun/ Astledowne, alternately Thomas the Rhymer/Rymour/Rimmer, True Thomas, Thomas Learmont, or Tòmas Rèumair).[67] Like most recorded prophecies tied to specific places, times, and people, those of

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date of Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Chronicle*', *The Scottish Antiquary, or, Northern Notes and Queries* 12/45 (1897): 1–4.

[63] Lindsay, *The Chronicles of Scotland*, 65.

[64] The interpretation of the word 'skine' in sixteenth-century Scots is generally the same as how 'skin' is used today. See the entry for 'Skin n.' in *The Dictionary of the Scots Language*, (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd., 2004). https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/skin_n.

[65] Bower, *Scotichronicon,* 69.

[66] On the impact on Pitscottie's history on later writers generally, see Grace G. Wilson, 'History and the Common Reader? Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Cronicles*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 29/2 (April 1993): 97–110.

[67] On Thomas's name, see Victoria Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England: from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Thomas of Erceldoune* (Martlesham: D.S. Brewer, 2016), 112–113. On the relationship between 'Thomas the Rhymer' and 'Thomas of Erceldoune,' see Emily Lyle, *Fairies and Folk: Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007), section 1.5. For scholarship on texts associated

Thomas of Erceldoune are nearly impenetrable to all but experts in the field. Vatic texts by their nature are opaque and strange, which may partially explain why this source has been largely overlooked by scholars considering Black Agnes. Even so, within this Gordian knot of peculiar language and obscure allusions there are relevant and potentially useful clues that may shed light on the social valence of Agnes's 'Black.'

The Thomas of Erceldoune texts and authorship

Someone named Thomas of Erceldoune (today's Earlston, on the Scottish borderlands) lived approximately 1225–1297, and was popularly regarded as a poet in his own time or at least within thirty years of his death.[68] What he may have actually authored is uncertain and a matter of debate.[69] Thomas of Erceldoune enters the manuscript record decisively in the 1330s, specifically in a prophecy titled 'Thomas de Essedoune's Reply', which is preserved in British Library MS Harley 2253 (compiled *c*. 1340).[70] This prophecy records a dialogue between Thomas and 'La countesse de Donbar', who asks him when the Anglo-Scottish wars will end.[71] Thomas then offers what Helen Cooper terms 'a cheerfully contradictory mixture of the inevitable and the impossible'.[72] This Countess of Dunbar is not Agnes Randolph, however, but a predecessor from the end of the thirteenth century. Most scholars tend to think that an earlier form of this text existed in which Thomas addresses the *Earl* of Dunbar, but that his interlocutor was named as the Countess in this manuscript, perhaps

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with Thomas of Erceldoune, see Helen Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune: Romance as Prophecy,' in Corinne Saunders, ed., *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2005), 171–187; Ingeborg Nixon, *Thomas of Erceldoune* (Copenhagen: Akademisk forlag, 1980); Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', in *A Manual of Writings in Middle English 1050-1550,* ed. Albert R. Hartung, 5 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 1524–8; Josephine M. Burnham, 'A Study of Thomas of Erceldoune', *Periodical of the Modern Language Association* 23 (1908): 375–420; Rupert Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), 65–72; and Alois Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880). On the significance of the Gaelic Tòmas, see Diarmad Macpherson, "Tòmas Rèumair." *An Gàidheal* 5/58 (1876), 295–8.

[68] See Hugh Cheape, 'Evidence and artefact: utility for protohistory and archaeology in Thomas the Rhymer legends', in *Ancient Lives: Object, people and place in early Scotland. Essays for David V Clarke on his 70th birthday,* Fraser Hunter and Alison Sheridan, eds (Leiden: Sidestone, 2016), 152; Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,* ed. T. F. Henderson (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1932); J. Geddie, *Thomas the Rymour and his Rhymes* (Edinburgh: The Rymour Club, 1920); James A. H. Murray, *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, *Printed from Five Manuscripts* (Early English Texts Society 61. London: Trübner, 1875), xxiii; and Henry Richard Tedder, 'Erceldoune, Thomas of' in *Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. Leslie Stephen, vol. 17 (London: Smith & Elder, 1889).

[69] Thomas of Erceldoune may have authored a version of *Sir Tristrem*, but this could also be the work of the Anglo-Norman 'Thomas'; see G. P. McNeill, *Sir Tristrem [ascr. To Thomas of Ercildoune]* (Scottish Text Society, William Blackwood and Sons, 1886); also the introduction to *Sir Tristrem* in Alan Lupack, *Lancelot of the Laik and Sir Tristrem* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994).

[70] Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', 174. Susanna Fein, *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2000), 8.

[71] Murray, *The Romance and Prophecies*, xviii–xix. See also the excellent discussion in Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place*, chap. 3.

[72] Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', 174.

because of the later fame of Black Agnes.[73] We are likely missing several episodes from the Thomas stories, which will also become apparent later.

Beyond this first example in Harley 2253, five imperfect manuscripts and one printed version of a poetic fairy tale followed by prophecies are attached to Thomas of Erceldoune's name.[74] These were first collated in James Murray's 1875 edition, *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Ercildoune*. The fairy tale in fytt 1[75] enjoyed many later adaptations, most famously 'The Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer' in Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1803), later included in Francis James Child's 1857 collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* as 'Thomas Rhymer', ballad number 37.[76]

The earliest manuscript versions of the Thomas of Erceldoune texts were written not in Scotland but in the north of England, based on Scottish traditions.[77] Nevertheless, many twentieth-century writers have considered Thomas of Erceldoune to be Scotland's first high medieval 'poet'. *The Oxford Book of Scottish Verse* of 1966, for example, presents Thomas's romantic narrative as the first instance of homegrown Scots poetry.[78] By the end of the twentieth century this view had shifted to include a greater number of poetic examples of Scots before the thirteenth century, embedding them within a wider Celtic context.[79] Today, our view of medieval poetry in Scotland is even more comprehensive, reflecting a more complex view of literature; Thomas is, however, still included as a key figure.[80]

Each extant manuscript begins with the 'romance' portion, the tale of the narrator, Thomas, who meets a fairy queen along the banks of the Huntley River. They embark on a fiery love affair and subsequently Thomas leaves the world of men behind and travels to the subterranean realm of the fae.[81] He is forbidden to speak or eat anything in the fairy realm, and he is eventually forced to leave. Before they part forever, the character Thomas pleads for a boon from his lover to prove to his neighbours that he was indeed absent on a supernatural excursion. The Queen grants him the gift of prophecy, along

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[73] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, from 128: 'The addressee of the Harley prophecy, the countess of Dunbar, suggests a modification of the Scottish legend involving the earl of Dunbar…During this period, the reference to the countess potentially also suggests another more contemporary frame of reference. During the 1330s Dunbar was an infamous Bruce-faction centre of resistance. The substitution of the earl by the countess might allude to the role played by an equally infamous countess of Dunbar, known as Black Agnes (d. 1369), during the late 1330s.' See also Murray, *The Romance and Prophecies*, xi.

[74] Murray, *The Romance and Prophecies*, introduction; also Burnham, 'A Study', 375–377.

[75] 'Fytt' or 'fytte' is an obsolete form of 'fit', meaning a section of a poem or ballad.

[76] Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1803); Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1882–1898). This romance is also possibly the inspiration for works such as John Keats's *La belle dame sans merci* and Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle*. Scott built Abbotsford near the very spot where Thomas reportedly had his first encounter with the Elf queen, on the banks of the Huntley River.

[77] Lyle, *Fairies and Folk*, 7; also Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'The metrical chronicles and non-alliterative romances', in *The History of Scottish Literature. Volume I: Origins to 1660*, ed. R. D. S. Jack (Aberdeen, 1989), 27–38.

[78] John MacQueen and Tom Scott, eds, *The Oxford Book of Scottish Verse* (Clarendon Press, 1966).

[79] For example, David McCordick, *Scottish Literature: an Anthology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996).

[80] Robert Crawford and Mick Imlah, *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).

[81] Richard Utz, 'Medieval Philology and Nationalism: the British and German Editors of *Thomas of Erceldoune*', *Florilegium* 23/2 (2006): 27–45.

with the inability to tell a falsehood.[82] In the final part of the text, Thomas asks a series of questions, generally political enquiries into the outcomes of battles in the Wars of Independence.

The prophecies which follow this narrative revolve around the crisis of Scottish kingship.[83] They were likely written later than the romance, and most scholars place their composition in the early fourteenth century.[84] Victoria Flood argues that the *Romance and Prophecies* 'were composed in northern England between the 1310s and the 1380s or 1390s, although they draw on Scottish background traditions that potentially go back as early as 1286'; Ingeborg Nixon suggests they were written between 1338–1369.[85] The vatic portions were evidently well-known in the fourteenth century, as they are mentioned in passing in Barbour's *Brus*, Wyntoun's *Cronykil*, Fordun's *Scotichronicon*, and Gray's *Scalacronica*.[86] Whatever a living Thomas may have written at the end of the thirteenth century, and whoever authored and copied the fourteenth-century texts, their attribution to 'Thomas of Erceldoune' lent the prophecies a kind of legendary authority that may have little to do with authorship as we define it today.[87]

The narrative portion of the Thomas of Erceldoune texts has been the subject of excellent scholarship since Murray's edition. The relationship between the narrative and the prophecies is a subject of debate, as is the relationship between the manuscripts and the later ballads, and whether the narrative can be termed a 'romance' at all.[88] Altogether this is an unwieldy, compilatory text, with many unanswered questions and avenues of research. For the purposes of this article, however, our concentration is singly on the final prediction made by Thomas, where Black Agnes of Dunbar is mentioned at the conclusion of fytt 3.

She will die in a ditch: the false prophecies of True Thomas

Omens and prophecies swirled around the Wars of Independence, likely as a reaction to the trauma of war, famine, and uncertainty of the time, in what Flood calls a 'genuinely pan-insular literary-political phenomenon'.[89] Cheape points out that prophecy was 'a cultural resource in an

[82] Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', from 184: 'The fairy narrative of *Thomas of Erceldoune* offers a sexually active woman as its heroine, but she bears no offspring: instead, it is as if the encounter begets the prophecies, a verbal continuation into the future – a pattern of future history rather than the people of future history.'
[83] Murray, *The Romance and Prophecies*, xxiii; Taylor, *The Political Prophecy*, 65–66. Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place*, 116. See also the prophecy in Bower, *Scotichronicon*, V; and in Barbour, *The Brus*, ed. Duncan, II. 86–90, p. 83.
[84] Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place*, 112. Murray, *The Romance and Prophecies*, xxiv; and Howard C. Miller, 'A Study of Thomas of Erceldoune' (PhD diss., Lehigh University, 1965), who discusses 'Evidence that Fytte I once Existed as a Romance Separate from the Prophecies'.
[85] Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place*, 110. Nixon, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, 40.
[86] E. B. Lyle, 'Thomas of Erceldoune: the Prophet and the Prophesied', *Folklore* 79/2 (1968): 114.
[87] Cheape, 'Evidence and artefact', 152: 'In the context of conventional scholarship and sustained separation of disciplines, Thomas the Rhymer seems to be marginal or invisible on the cusp of history and prehistory or times beyond documentation'.
[88] Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', 172–182.
[89] Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place*, 111; see also Taylor, *The Political Prophecy*, 48; Utz, 'Medieval Philology', 27–45.

uncertain world.[90] Prophecies as a genre also provided a conduit for political commentary and a response to social and cultural angst.[91] About Thomas's prophecies, Flood writes that their primary concern is with the balance of power along the Anglo-Scottish border, and that they are 'highly topical'.[92] She further writes that the 'Countess of Dunbar' is a 'notable point of accretion to the Erceldoune legend', and the prophecy concerning Black Agnes is one of these accretions.[93]

What, then, do the Erceldoune prophecies say about Black Agnes? In short, they predict that she will never prosper despite her worldly wealth, that nothing good comes from her, and that she will die a violent, ignominious death, specifically in a ditch in London. The fact that none of the prophecies came to pass supports the idea that they were written down before she died, likely soon after 1338. The prophecy is recorded in three of the five extant manuscripts [*Fig. 1–3*].[94] In each of the transcripts we have, for clarification, included a space and quotation marks separating Thomas's question and the Lady's answer, although the source texts make no such clear distinction beyond virgules and line breaks. The italics in the primary texts are Murray's, and the translations in the right column are ours.

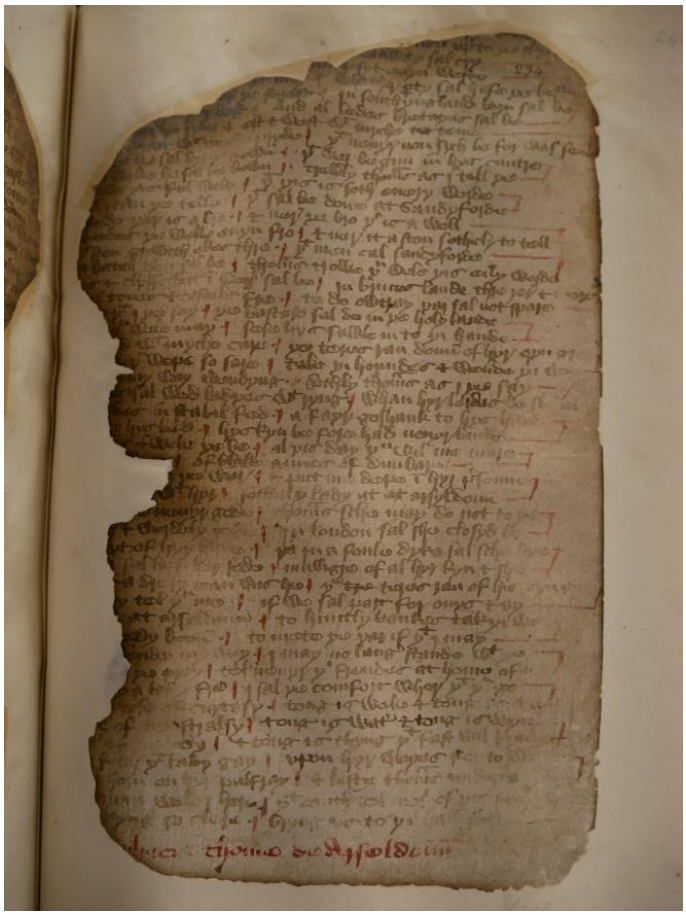

Figure 1a. **British Library: Cotton MS Vitellius E. X, p. 24** [310 × 250 mm], Thomas of Erceldoune portion written c. 1450. The prophecies appear in two columns of thirty lines each. That this document probably existed for a time as an independent booklet is evident both from the evidence of wear and from the type of paper it is written on, which differs from the paper in adjoining sections. Fire damage was caused in 1731. (Photo: Author)

[90] Cheape, 'Evidence and artefact', 154. See also E. J. Cowan, 'The discovery of the future: prophecy and second sight in Scottish history', in *Fantastical Imaginations: the Supernatural in Scottish History and Civilisation*, ed. L. Henderson (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009), 1–28.
[91] John of Bridlington's *Prophecies,* written before 1379, provide another example; see Michael J. Curley, 'Versus Propheciales, Prophecia Johannis Bridlingtoniensis: an Edition', (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1973); Thomas Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, Rolls Series (London 1859), I.123–215; and A. G. Rigg, 'John of Bridlington's Prophecy: a New Look', *Speculum* 63/3 (1988): 596–613.
[92] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, 128.
[93] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, 128.
[94] The Thorton and Landsdowne MS include the romance and prophecies, but the sections about Agnes of Dunbar have been excised or lost.

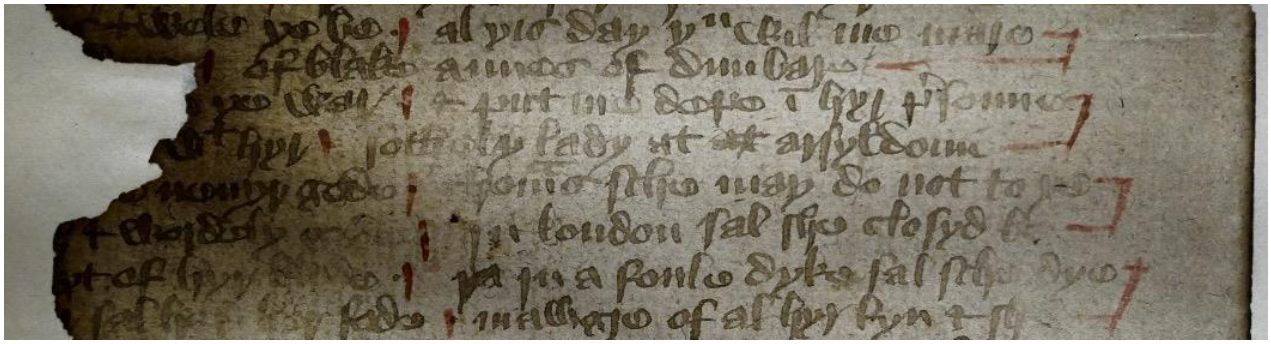

Figure 1b. **British Library: Cotton MS Vitellius E. X, p. 24** [310 × 250 mm], Thomas of Erceldoune portion written c. 1450, detail of lines 659–672, significant portions of which are missing. (Photo: Author)

'al þis day þou wil me mare	'All this day you tell me more
…of blake aunes of Dunbare	…of Black Agnes of Dunbar
…þe war & put me depe in hyr prisoune	…? and put me deep in her prison
…with hyr	…with her
sothely lady at arsyldoun.'	truly the lady at Arsyldoun [Erceldoune].'
'…e] neuyr gode	'…never good
thomas sche may do not to þe	Thomas she may do naught to thee
…& wordely gode	...and worldly good
In London sal she closyd be	In London shall she be enclosed
…xt of hyr blode	…of her blood
In a foule dyke sal sche dye	In a foul dike shall she die
…r sal hafe her fode	…shall have her for food
mawgre of al hyr kyn & she.'	Despite of her and her kin.'

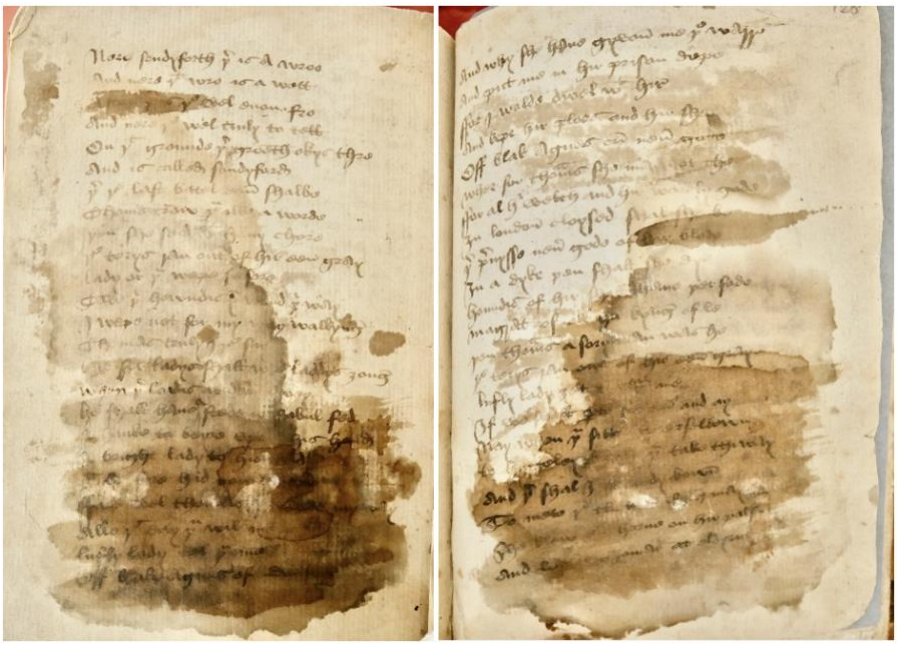

Figure 2a. **Cambridge University Library MS Ff. 5.48, p. 127b-128a [215 x 149 mm]**. Thomas of Erceldoune portion written c. 1450s. The prophecies appear in a single column, approx. 23 lines each. These pages are badly damaged by water and an infusion of galls. (Photo: Author)

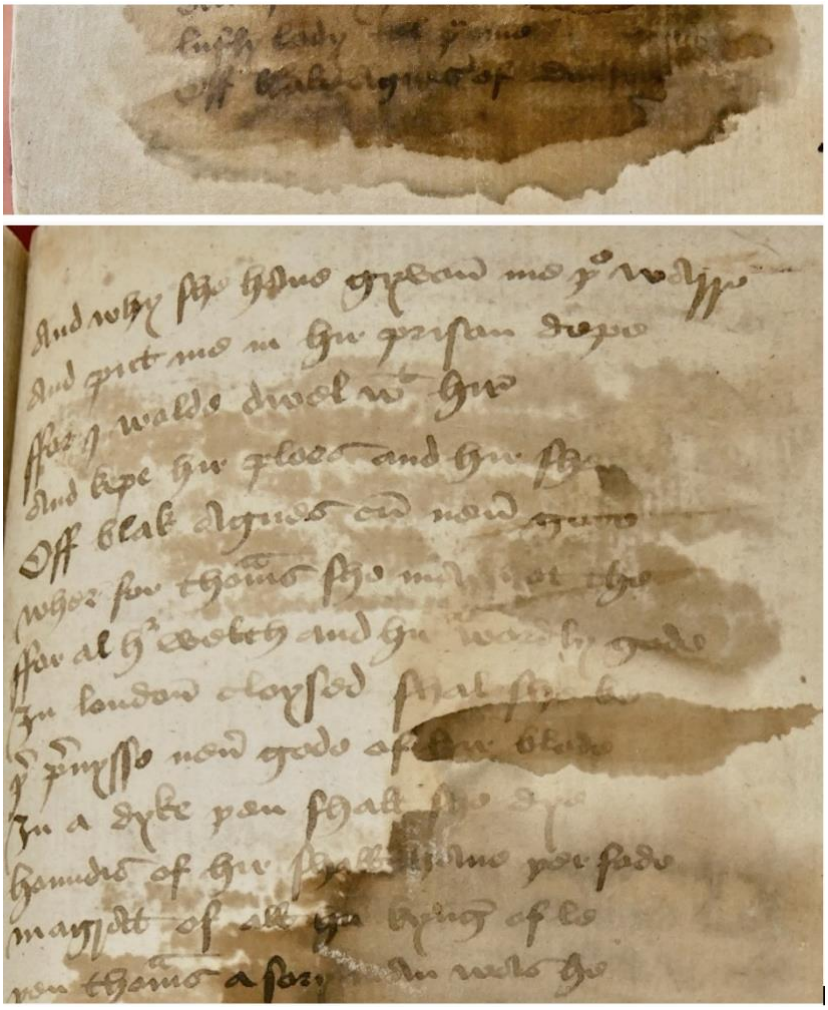

Figure 2b. **Cambridge University Library MS Ff. 5.48, p. 127b-128a [215 x 149 mm].**[95] Detail of lines 659–672. (Photos: Author)

‘Lufly lady, tel þou me,
Off blake Agnes of Don[bar];
And why she haue gyven me þe warre,
And put me in hir prison depe ;
ffor I wolde dwel wit*h* hir,
And keep hir ploos and hir she[pe].’

‘Lovely lady, tell thou me,
of Black Agnes of Dunbar
and why she has set her face against me
and put me in her deep prison,
for I would dwell with her
And keep her [horses?][96] and her sheep’

[95] For more on this manuscript, see J. Y. Downing, ‘A Critical Edition of Cambridge University MS Ff.5.48’, (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1969); and T. H. Ohlgren, ‘*Robin Hood and the Monk* and the Manuscript Context of Cambridge University Library MS Ff.5.48’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 48 (2004), 80–108.

[96] ‘Ploos’ does not seem to appear in Middle English or Scots. There is evidence, however, that it may be a Scots term for a type of horse; see George Brice Cumming, *A’anside Lilts and Other Poems* (Banff: *Banffshire Journal*, 1925). This evidence comes five centuries later, however, so clearly the translation is problematic. ‘Ploos’ could also possibly refer to a plough, but this is uncertain.

'Off blak Agnes cu*m* neue*r* gode:
Wher for, thom*a*s, she may not the
ffor al h*ir* welth and h*ir* wordly gode,
In london cloysed shal she be.
þ*er* p*re*uisse neue*r* gode of hir blode ;
In a dyke þen shall she dye ;
Houndis of hir shall haue þer fode,
Magrat of all hir kyng of le.'

'Of Black Agnes comes never good,
wherefore, Thomas, she will not prosper
despite all her wealth and her worldly goods.
In London she shall be enclosed [and]
there perish; never good [comes] from her
blood.[97]
In a dyke then shall she die,
Hounds shall have her for food
Despite of her and all her kin.'

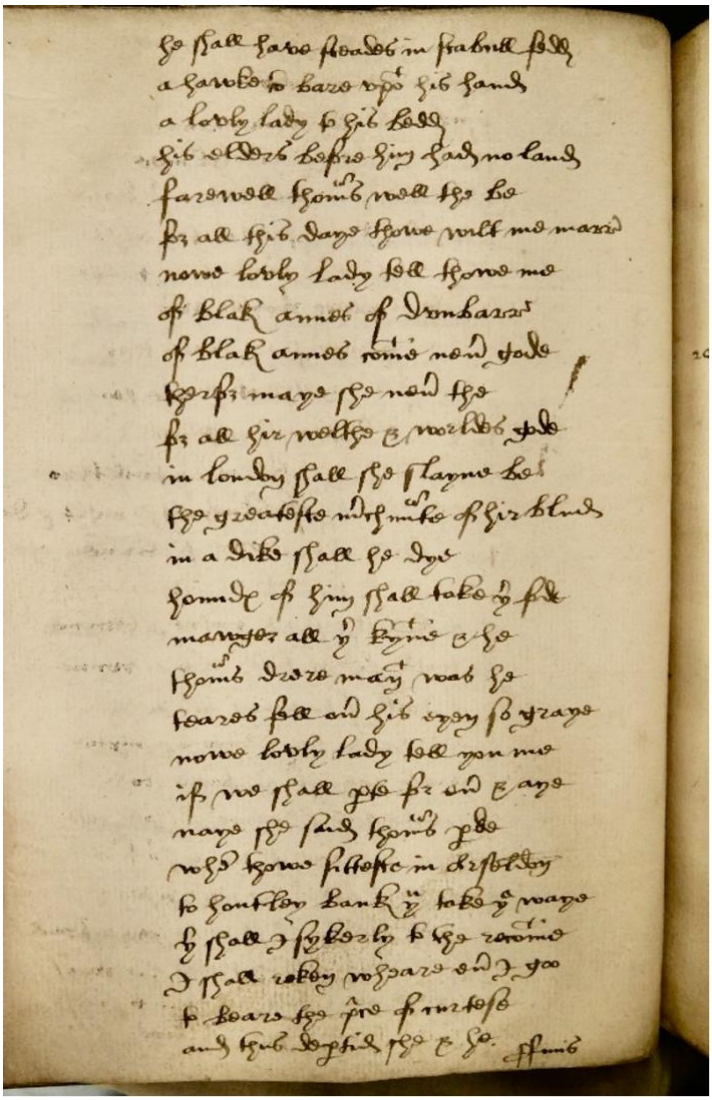

Figure 3a. **British Library: MS Sloane 2578, p. 11b [203 x 152 mm].**[98] Thomas of Erceldoune portion written c. 1547. The prophecies appear in one column, approximately twenty-eight lines each. (Photo: Author)

[97] Murray records 'p*re*uisse' here, but another look at the text in the MS shows a word closer to 'peruysse,' which we may interpret as a Middle English form of the verb *perishen*, to perish.
[98] For more on this MS see Sharon L. Jansen Jaech, 'British Library MS Sloane 2578 and Popular Unrest in England, 1554–1556', *Manuscripta: a Journal for Manuscript Research* 29/1 (1985): 30–41.

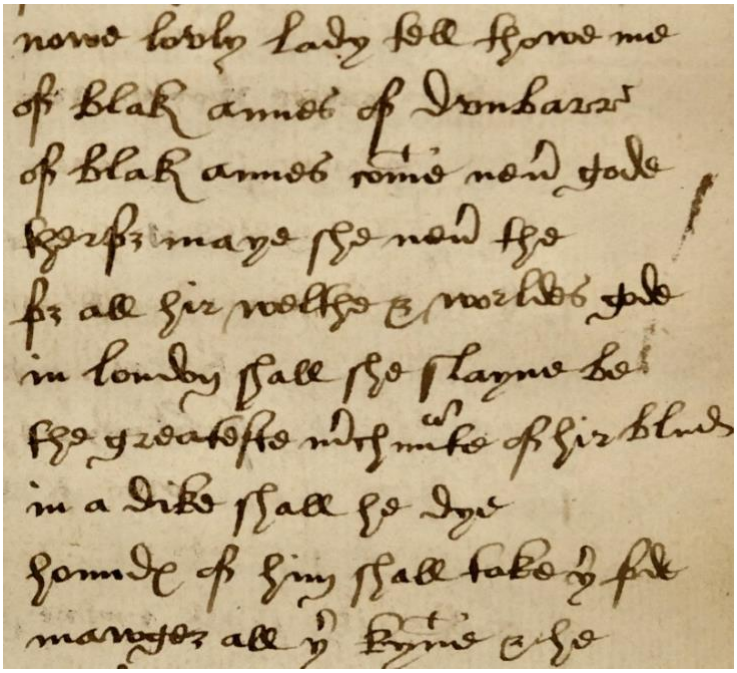

Figure 3b. **British Library: MS Sloane 2578, p. 11b** [203 x 152 mm]. Detail of lines 660–672. (Photo: Author)

‘nowe, lovly lady, tell thowe me	‘Now, lovely lady, tell thou me
of blak annes of Dvnbarr.’	Of Black Agnes of Dunbar.’
‘of blak annes co*m*me neu*er* gode,	‘Of Black Agnes comes never good,
therfor, maye she neu*er* the :	therefore may she never thrive
for all hir welthe, & worldes gode,	despite all her wealth and worldly goods
in london shall she slayne be.	in London shall she be slain.
the greateste merch*a*unte of her blud.	The greatest merchant of her blood
in a dike shall he dye ;	in a ditch shall he die.
hound*es* of him shall take þ*er* fode,	Hounds will take him for their food,
mawger all þer kyn*ne* & he.’	Despite of him and all their kin.’

There is much to unpick here, especially because the three manuscripts do not entirely agree and there are different ways of interpreting what is written. This article, however, will focus only on her nickname, and will suggest that this text is key to a better understanding of it. It is important first to note that Thomas asks pointedly about Black Agnes of Dunbar by name, and it is not contested among scholars that he is referring to Agnes Randolph.[99] She is ‘blak annes of Dvnbarr’ / ‘blake aunes of Dunbar*e*’ / ‘blake Agnes of Don[bar]’ as written by an English author during her lifetime, perhaps very soon after the Siege of Dunbar. These examples thus predate Bower’s use by nearly a century.

It seems likely that ‘black’ is not a positive nickname here: ‘of blak annes co*m*me neu*er* gode’ / ‘Off blak Agnes cu*m* neu*er* gode’. In fact, it rings with vitriol. The term ‘prophecy’ is perhaps inaccurate here; ‘curse’ is closer to the truth. The language in the text is vicious: ‘in london shall she slayne be…In

[99] The Cotton and Cambridge manuscripts are likely conflating Black Agnes with the Countess mentioned in the Harley MS, which itself is an alteration from a lost source, as mentioned earlier, which accounts for the phrases about imprisonment, sheep, etc.

a dyke þen shall she dye ; / Houndis of hir shall haue þer fode.' This is not Wyntoun's heroic 'gud Dame Agnes of Dunbar', or Bower's 'countess…commonly called "Black Agnes", [who] defended this castle courageously.' Thomas of Erceldoune's Black Agnes will lose whatever worldly goods she gained and she will be taken to the English capital and slain. Even worse, her body will be hideously dishonoured in a 'foule dyke' where hounds will feast upon her.[100] A 'dyke' in Middle English refers to a ditch or trench beyond a wall, or even something like a moat; disposal of her remains in such fashion would thus exclude her from any basic dignity after death.[101]

If Thomas's account is evidence for the infamy of Agnes's reputation amongst the English, it in turn reflects the true achievement of Agnes's defeat of William Montague's forces. A curse such as this serves a social function by defining the enemy and directing anger toward a single individual.[102] The successful defence of Dunbar castle was a humiliating defeat and indeed the last of Edward III's efforts in that campaign to conquer Scotland; afterward he turned his martial energies toward France. Considering the scope of her victory, R. J. M. Pugh wrote that if Agnes had lost, 'England would have won a victory of immeasurable propaganda value and allowed their continued occupation of the south-east'.[103] Edward III was aware of this twenty five year-old Scottish Agnes and her defiance at Dunbar, and even monitored her letters to her brother John. During the siege, John Randolph was imprisoned in the Tower of London and Edward had his communications with his sister observed for anything 'sinister'.[104] Some chronicles show that Edward III travelled to Whitekirk for a meeting with the Earls of Salisbury and Arundel specifically to determine what was going awry with their straightforward siege attack of Dunbar.[105] After the Siege was called off on 16 June 1338, efforts were made to save face for the pride of the English, and Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecies about Agnes were likely part of this effort.

In a sense, then, this curse was an effort to 'blacken' Agnes's reputation, although how far Thomas's prophecies circulated is uncertain. Agnes unsettled conventional ideas of femininity and

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[100] The phrase in the Sloane MS 'the greateste m*er*ch*a*unte of her blud' may refer to her sister's children, her husband, or possibly another male descendant. Murray writes, p. lxxxi: '[Agnes's] husband's [Patrick, Earl of March] career was marked by much oscillation between Scotland and England, and his son finally took the English side, which may account for the hostility to the family here displayed. Thomas of Erceldowne lived a whole generation earlier than Black Agnes, and it is probable that traditions of his relation with an earlier Countess of March, who was "sothely lady at arsyldone"…were transferred to her more famous successor.'

[101] See entry for 'dǐch(e' in Robert E. Lewis, et al., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001); online edition: Frances McSparran, et al., *Middle English Compendium* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000–2018). https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/.

[102] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, 154.

[103] Pugh, *A History of Dunbar*, 107.

[104] J. Bain, G. G. Simpson and J. D. Galbraith, eds., *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, vol. 3, no. 1233, dated 3 June 1337 (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1887), 225: 'The K[ing] commands Nicholas de la Beche constable of the Tower of London, to allow Adam de Cailly, lately released from Dunbar castle by the Countess of March, to deliver a letter from her to her brother John Randolf earl of Murrey, examining it in his presence; and to send it to the K[ing] or Council if it contains anything sinister or noteable.'

[105] Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1974), 136.

subverted prevailing gender norms.[106] The curse was used to vilify her and reinforce power structures. For instance, when the Earl of Salisbury grew frustrated with his failed attempts to break the siege, he turned to blackmail, as recorded in an episode of the *Chronicon de Lanercost* for 12 April 1338.[107] When he threatened to take the life of her captured brother, John, she refused to surrender, even to secure her brother's rescue, reportedly stating, 'If you do this, then I will be the sole heir of Moray'.[108] In other words, if were John to die, then she stood to inherit his lands – a response that flouts expectations of sisterly devotion. She successfully exposed the hollowness of Salisbury's threat; her brother was spared and she never surrendered. Her actions were strikingly unconventional, effectively placing her outside the bounds of normative feminine behaviour. Her byname thus marks her as separate, and in Thomas's prophecy Agnes is not celebrated for her courage but damned for her defiance.

This interpretation comes to the fore particularly when we consider this prophecy within the whole text. For example, fytt 2 is written from a demonstrably Scottish point of view, but the third is demonstrably pro-English.[109] Flood situates the prophecy concerning Black Agnes among other contemporary English, jingoist, anti-Scottish writings, such as the song sung by English soldiers concerning Agnes recorded by Wyntoun.[110] Regarding the incorporation of anti-Scottish prophecies with the rest of the Thomas of Erceldoune material, Flood writes, 'Transplanted to Dunbar in the 1330s, Thomas became a contemporary prophet of Agnes's downfall, and with her, the Bruce faction. And yet in this new historical framework, Thomas is a prophet not of the 1280s but the 1330s, opening up a vision of continued suffering that was English as much as it was Scottish'.[111] This prophecy is thus the work of a politically informed author engaged in Anglo-Scottish affairs, and Black Agnes represents a dangerous threat to the English, and perhaps even existentially to social order.[112] Capturing the castle at Dunbar was supposed to be a straightforward siege, but Agnes made sure it was not so.

Conclusion

It seems probable, therefore, that the 'Black' of 'Black Agnes' did not relate to her appearance. In the Erceldoune prophecies Agnes's 'Black' is derisive, a malediction as much as a nickname. In Bower's

[106] Possibly not among her Scottish peers and relatives, for whom there was the precedent of Christina Bruce, sister to Robert the Bruce and her great aunt, who successfully withstood an English siege at Kildrummy Castle in 1335. See Elizabeth Ewan's excellent 'The Dangers of Manly Women: Late Medieval Perceptions of Female Heroism in Scotland's Second War of Independence', in *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing,* ed. Sarah M. Dunnigan, C. Marie Harker, and Evelyn S. Newlyn (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3–18.

[107] Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 296–298.

[108] Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 297: 'si hoc feceritis tunc ego ero heres comitatus Moraviæ'.

[109] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, 114: 'Although the genesis of the legends associated with Thomas were almost certainly Scottish, the earliest recorded prophecies are not.'

[110] *The Cronykil of Scotland*, Book 33, lines 4995–5000: 'Of this assege in thare hethyng / The Inglis oysid to mak karpyng / "I wowe to God, scho [mais gret stere] / The Scottis wenche ploddere. / Come I are, [or] come I late, / I fand Annot at the yhate."

[111] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, 129.

[112] Flood, *Prophecy*, *Politics and Place*, 139.

text 'Black' is noted as her common nickname, but we cannot know when or why it became common. Where James Douglas's 'Black' was related to his hair colour, the same cannot be said about its application to Agnes. There is, however, a similarity between them, in that the adjective 'black' was used derogatively by their enemies but proudly adopted by later kin. Gender seems to play a significant role in the generational dissemination as, for example, in the case of Agnes Randolph's goddaughter, Margaret of Dunbar, whose nickname 'White Annays' likely derived from that of her famous godmother.[113] This could be an inversion of black with white as an informal act of heraldic cadency, as if a black field was swapped for a white with the next generation of 'Agnes'. Whiteness, however, is more often explained as relating to physical attractiveness. For example, Dorothy Owen comments about Margaret of Dunbar, 'Her nickname White Annays suggests that she had some personal attractions, and, perhaps, some force of character: it seems unlikely that she waited for things to happen to her'.[114]

Owen's comment may reflect the influence of medieval romance literature, where fairness and whiteness are usually aspects of a heroine's beauty, as when Florippe from *Sir Ferumbras* (1380s) is described as 'fair': 'Sche was a mayde fair & swet' (She was a maid fair and sweet), 'þat maide fair & gent' (that maid fair and gentle), 'þat mayde fair and hende' (that maid fair and refined).[115] Similarly, the wife of Sir Lord Bredbeddle in a version of *The Greene Knight* is portrayed as 'both blyth and blee', glossed as cheerful and of white complexion.[116] We should also mention Iseult of the White Hand from *Tristan*, and Eric's golden-haired Enide with skin 'clearer and more delicate than the lily'.[117] It seems there is an inexhaustible supply of white, fair, virginal maidens gracing the folia of romances, providing ample material for scholarship.[118]

Whereas Douglas's nickname came to represent an entire clan of 'Black' Douglases, prominent until 1455, only two generations of women were named for Black Agnes, and thereafter the nickname seems to have been dropped. It is even possible that there was a conflation of two 'Blacks' in later generations.[119] In 1372 Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith, an indirect descendant of James 'the Black' Douglas, married a second-generation Agnes of Dunbar (niece and ward of Black Agnes, and daughter of Isobel Randolph).[120] Because James Douglas was described as 'black' partly for his

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[113] Dorothy M. Owen, 'White Annays and Others', in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 332.
[114] Owens, 'White Annays', 334.
[115] Sidney J. Herrtage, *The English Charlemagne Romances, part I. Sir Ferumbras* (The Early English Text Society, London: Trubner & Co., 1879), ll. 1201, 1204, 1260, 3319, 5035.
[116] Thomas Hahn, *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Middle English Texts Series. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), l. 45.
[117] Chrétien de Troyes, *Eric and Enide*, ed. & trans. W. W. Comfort (Ontario: In parentheses Publications, Old French series, 1999), 7.
[118] Naomi Wolfe, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), 300.
[119] On the connections between the Dunbars and Douglases in later generations, see Michael Brown, *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland, 1300–1355* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 99–105.
[120] Brown, *The Black Douglases*, 66.

appearance and partly for his reputation, it is possible that later writers such as Pitscottie assumed the same was true for Agnes. But, as noted previously, 'black' is a dynamic byname, and in this case gender must be considered. For the Douglases, the appellation 'Black' played an active role in the construction of their social power and delineated dynastic membership; but for Agnes Randolph, 'Black' set her apart as unique, distinguished her from other women, and marked her as a fierce opponent. In conclusion, it seems clear that the idea that Agnes Randolph was 'black' because of her physical appearance should be dropped. There is simply not enough evidence to support this interpretation, and furthermore it distracts from the significance of her role in British history. Put simply, her 'black' is more than skin-deep.

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‘The Order of the Elephant’ Symbols and Power in the Policing of Land Agitation in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland

GRACE WRIGHT

Abstract

The Crofters’ War of the 1880s saw widespread protest at the unequal and exploitative modes of land management used in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. In this article, a study is made of medals awarded by William Ivory, the Sheriff of Inverness-shire, to police in the Isle of Skye for their involvement in the arrest of land agitators. Using a material culture approach, the medals are analysed in terms of their symbolism and placed in the context of the Highlands and Islands, Britain and its Empire. The main source is a memorandum on the medals compiled by Sheriff Ivory, encompassing letters and statements intended to defend them, as well as an extant medal awarded by Sheriff Ivory and communication on the design of a second. The biases of the memorandum are balanced with primary source material from newspapers and Gaelic songs that reveal contemporary views on the issues discussed. The discussion offers insight into the power dynamics involved in the policing of land agitation, and how the role of the police was perceived at the time.

> [Ivory] would himself, in his own way, show his appreciation of the services of his “angels”; and he did it. He had a medal struck off, and had it forwarded to several of the Skye policemen in commemoration of their retreat before the children and old women of the island.[1]

The article from which this excerpt is taken, printed in the *Scottish Highlander* on 2 September 1886, announced that William Ivory, the Sheriff of Inverness-shire, had awarded medals to policemen involved in the prevention of land agitation in the Isle of Skye. These awards were made at the height of what has popularly become known as the ‘Crofters’ War’, a period of intense unrest which saw various forms of protest and resistance, including rent strike, land raids and deforcements, deployed against land management practices across the Highlands and Islands.[2] This article will explore, through the lens of material culture, how the symbolism of Ivory’s medals was interpreted differently by various groups, and how the awards affected policing and power dynamics at the time.

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[1] ‘Sheriff Ivory’, *Scottish Highlander*, 2 September 1886, 4.

[2] T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters’ War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 218–19.

While the material culture focus is selective, the medals and the issues surrounding them were well documented and therefore offer a valuable opportunity for insight. Land agitation in the Highlands and Islands was not isolated or unique. During the late nineteenth century, many instances of popular protest such as the Irish Land Wars and the New Unionism movement resulted in the breakdown of law and order. Charles Townshend has argued that the 'British way' of policing such uprisings was to 'work out arrangements for each case on a trial-and-error basis', meaning that the response to each new case was informed by previous successes or failures in restoring order.[3] Thus interrogating the construction of meaning and power in individual instances of protest policing – such as through the material medium of Ivory's medals – may offer vital insight into concurrent and contiguous social movements and the evolution of state responses to them.

Writing in 1992, M. A. Crowther described Scotland as 'a country with no criminal record' due to the lack of research conducted into the history of its law enforcement and justice system.[4] While some gaps have more recently been addressed by writers such as Mark A. Mulhern, David G. Barrie, Anne-Marie Kilday, and David G. Barrie and Susan Broomhall, extensive gaps remain.[5] Little attention has been paid to the policing of the Highlands and Islands or, specifically, of land agitation, despite extensive research into the subject of the Crofters' War generally. An essay by Ewen A. Cameron, 'Internal Policing and Public Order, c.1797–1900', has contributed to progress in this area, although Cameron focuses on the use of the military as support for the civil power.[6] Specific research is still needed into the contemporary police, vitally important to the justice system as the 'public face of the law', to understand the symbolic construction of their authority and its perception by the public.[7]

An emerging field of enquiry into medals as material culture has begun to explore their significance as symbols.[8] However, as Craig P. Barclay argues, its energy has largely stemmed from the 'interests and needs of collectors and armchair warriors', meaning that much of the research has concentrated on military awards and individual recipients.[9] Civilian medals have received little attention, despite the fact that, through the course of the nineteenth century, organisations such as first-aid groups centred on the expanding railway, the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Lifesaving

[3] Charles Townshend, 'Martial Law: Legal and Administrative Problems of Civil Emergency in Britain and the Empire, 1800–1940', *The Historical Journal* 25/1 (1982): 194.
[4] M. A. Crowther, 'Scotland: A Country with No Criminal Record', *Scottish Economic & Social History* 12 (1992): 82.
[5] Mark A. Mulhern, ed., *The Law. Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, vol. 13 (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2012); David G. Barrie, 'Anglicization and Autonomy: Scottish Policing, Governance and the State, 1833 to 1885', *Law and History Review* 30/ 2 (2012): 449–94; Anne-Marie Kilday, *Crime in Scotland 1660-1960: The Violent North?* (London: Routledge, 2018); David G. Barrie and Susan Broomhall, *Police Courts in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Magistrates, Media and the Masses*, (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014); David G. Barrie and Susan Broomhall, *Police Courts in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Boundaries, Behaviours and Bodies* (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014).
[6] Ewen A. Cameron, 'Internal Policing and Public Order, c.1797–1900', in *A Military History of Scotland*, ed. Edward M. Spiers et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).
[7] Kenneth B. Scott, 'Policing in Scotland', in *The Law. Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, vol 13, ed. Mark A. Mulhern (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2012), 599.
[8] See, for example, Matthew Richardson, *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (London: Routledge, 2014); Jody Joy, 'Biography of a Medal: People and the Things They Value', in *Matériel Culture: The Archaeology of Twentieth-Century Conflict*, ed. John Schofield et al. (London: Routledge, 2002); Craig P. Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace: The Royal Humane Society and the Award of Medals in Britain, 1774–1914' (PhD thesis, University of York, 2009).
[9] Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace', 16.

Society began to issue members with medals for long service or particular proficiencies.[10] The Ivory medals, as awards for civilian policemen, fall into this latter group. Despite being mentioned in several texts, they have never been critically examined.[11] It is this research gap that this article seeks to address by examining the Ivory medals.

Anne E. Kane, writing on the role of meaning construction in social movements, argues that symbols are important in signifying social relationships and experiences, providing the basis of shared understandings which in turn foster alliances, camaraderie, and mobilization.[12] At the same time, she emphasises the importance of considering how these types of symbols are viewed by those who interact with them outside such movements.[13] Jody Joy explores this principle in the context of medals specifically by examining the layered meanings of a medal awarded to her grandfather for his military service, pointing out that such objects must be 'socially constituted' to acquire meaning.[14] She goes on to argue that the symbolism of objects means that they can 'act to create and maintain particular social relationships' and therefore that 'things play an active role within our society, just like human beings.'[15] Following this argument, we shall explore the Ivory medals as symbols both belonging to and imposed on the police. We shall do so from various perspectives, including that of the crofters and cottars who were themselves subject to policing, that of the Scottish press who publicised the medals, that of key political figures who utilised them in their campaigning, and that of the institution of the police itself. In following this process, we shall demonstrate how the symbolism of the medals shaped social relationships, fostering both alliances and divisions.

Sheriff William Ivory

Despite his foundational role in the policing of land agitation and his presence in scholarship on the subject, relatively little research has dealt with Sheriff Ivory specifically. To understand the provenance and purpose of the medals, we must first learn something about the person who created and awarded them.

By the 1880s, Sheriffs rarely took an active role in quelling unrest.[16] Ivory, by contrast, became personally involved in the policing of land agitation, and was often present in Skye to oversee matters himself. The *Celtic Magazine*, established by Alexander Mackenzie with the goal of 'stripping away the romantic view of life in the Highlands and presenting the realities of the situation', reflected on Ivory's personal involvement in an article printed in March 1885.[17] Titled 'Terrorism in Skye: Sheriff

[10] Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace', 95–96.
[11] I. M. M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway: Acair, 1989), 122; Ewen A. Cameron, 'Communication or Separation? Reactions to Irish Land Agitation and Legislation in the Highlands of Scotland, c.1870–1910', *The English Historical Review* 120/487 (2005): 647; Laurence Gouriévidis, *The Dynamics of Heritage: History, Memory and the Highland Clearances* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 84; Ewen Cameron, *The History of Gaelic Scotland: The Highlands since 1880* (School of History, Classics and Archaeology Website, 2013), 34, https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/the-history-of-gaelic-scotland-the-highlands-since-1880.
[12] Anne E. Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning Construction in Social Movements: Symbolic Structures and Interpretation during the Irish Land War, 1879–1882', *Sociological Theory* 15/3 (1997): 250, 252.
[13] Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning', 256.
[14] Joy, 'Biography of a Medal', 134.
[15] Joy, 'Biography of a Medal', 142.
[16] Elspeth Reid, 'The Sheriff in the Heather: Beaton v. Ivory', University of Edinburgh, School of Law, *Working Papers*, no. 35 (2013): 3, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2330752.
[17] Ewen A. Cameron, 'Poverty, Protest and Politics: Perceptions of the Scottish Highlands in the 1880s', in *Mìorun Mòr Nan Gall? ('The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander?'): Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern*, ed. Martin MacGregor and Dauvit Broun (Antony Rowe Ltd., 2007), 220.

Ivory's Latest Folly', the article claimed that 'that gentleman would appear to be very fond of figuring at the head of military expeditions' for his personal involvement in exercises and arrests.[18] Ewen Cameron describes Ivory's behaviour as having 'descended to the pursuit of personal vendettas' against certain individuals.[19] Ivory's involvement in policing land agitation made him generally disliked in his district, especially by the tenantry, to the extent that MacPhail describes him as 'almost certainly the most unpopular man in the Highlands and Islands' for his conduct during the 1880s.[20]

Though he held the office of Sheriff for nearly forty years from 1862–1900, it was for his policing of land agitation in the 1880s that Ivory was largely remembered.[21] Obituaries published following his death on 20 October 1915 are revealing. The *Edinburgh Evening News* took a comparatively neutral position, noting simply that Ivory was 'prominent in quelling crofter disturbances'.[22] By contrast, the *Inverness Courier* portrayed a more complicated figure, touching on Ivory's controversial conduct, describing him as not having had 'the peculiar gifts which bring forensic success' and remarking that his tenure was 'made remarkable by the crofter disturbances', through which he was 'brought into some sharp conflicts and had to be assisted both by naval and by military forces.' The same article even mentioned one of the most contentious moments in Ivory's career: his attempt to seize access to telegrams sent by and to land agitators by confronting a telegraph clerk, Mary Jane MacKenzie, in the Portree Post Office in May 1885. As the *Courier* reported, this incident was discussed in the House of Commons, though ultimately the Lord Advocate at the time, John MacDonald, defended Ivory from punishment.[23] Interestingly, the obituary published by *The Scotsman* – a strong supporter of the landlord cause – omitted to mention Ivory's involvement in the policing of land agitation at all.[24] Examining the power dynamics around Ivory's medals can offer insight into a figure who is central, though under-examined, in the literature on Highland and Island land agitation of the 1880s.

The Medals

The main archival record of the medals is a memorandum comprising a series of letters and statements that was compiled by Sheriff Ivory himself for Arthur Balfour, the Secretary for Scotland at the time. In this document, Ivory is defending himself in the face of criticism from the Chief Constable of the Inverness-shire police, Alexander McHardy, and other, unspecified 'County Gentlemen'. In a framing letter sent with the memorandum, Ivory directly accuses McHardy of mishandling the matter of the medals, and states that his intention in compiling the memorandum is to 'enable [Balfour] rightly to understand the conduct of the Chief Constable' which, he argues, was 'insubordinate', and had been encouraged 'in no small degree' by the unnamed 'County Gentlemen'.[25] In what follows, we shall examine the biases inherent in Ivory's memorandum in light of contextual information about events surrounding the records, contemporary newspaper reports, and evidence discerned from Gaelic song and poetry.

[18] 'Terrorism in Skye: Sheriff Ivory's Latest Folly', *The Celtic Magazine* 10/113 (1885): 203.
[19] Cameron, 'Communication or Separation?', 646–47.
[20] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, 194.
[21] 'Resignation of Sheriff Ivory', *Elgin Courant and Morayshire Advertiser*, 16 March 1900, 4.
[22] 'Father of the Faculty of Advocates', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 21 October 1915, 4.
[23] 'The Late Sheriff Ivory', *Inverness Courier*, 22 October 1915, 4.
[24] 'The Late Sheriff Ivory', *The Scotsman*, 23 October 1915, 8.
[25] Sheriff William Ivory to Arthur Balfour, 16 December 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161.

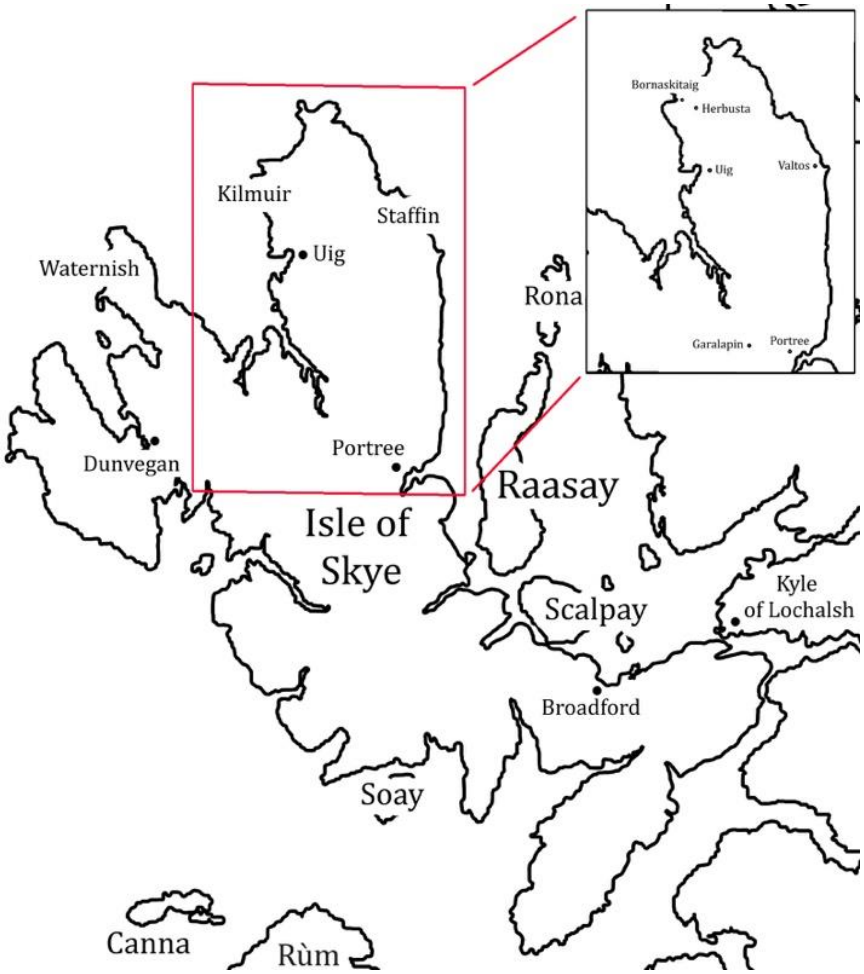

Figure 1. The Isle of Skye

The first of the Ivory medals was awarded in connection with the arrest of Norman Stewart, a crofter from Valtos on Major William Fraser's Kilmuir estate in the Isle of Skye who was president of the branch of the Highland Land Law Reform Association there.[26] On 26 December 1884, a sheriff officer serving summonses in Kilmuir was 'deforced'[27] by a group of the tenants from the surrounding area.[28] Three men – Norman Stewart, Alexander Stewart, and Murdo MacDonald – were subsequently tried for this offence, with only MacDonald being found guilty.[29] During the trial, Norman Stewart successfully defended himself against charges of mobbing and rioting by bringing forward witnesses who testified that he had tried to prevent violence during the confrontation.[30] Ivory's medal, however, was specifically attached to the arrest of Norman Stewart, potentially due to his belief that Stewart was a key figure in the organisation of unrest in the district – an opinion which became the source of a libel case which will be described in more detail below.

[26] James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010), 159.
[27] 'Deforcement' is defined as 'the crime of opposing a public officer, as a messenger in the execution of his duty, or an officer of the revenue'; see Robert Bell, *Dictionary of the Law of Scotland Intended for the Use of the Public at Large, as Well as of the Profession*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: John Anderson & Company, 1815), 1:241.
[28] Hunter, *Making*, 289.
[29] 'Sheriff Ivory's Mountain and Mice: Trial of the Men of Glendale and Valtos', *The Celtic Magazine* 10/115, (1885): 326.
[30] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, 120–21.

The Deputy Chief Constable for Inverness-shire, Donald Aitchison, wrote a report about the arrest of Stewart in which he described how a group of police and marines landed in Staffin Bay at 8am on 30 January 1885. They marched to Valtos where they unsuccessfully searched several houses before Stewart was seen walking across a moor about 500 yards away. Aitchison then described how four of the policemen accompanying him chased Stewart, apprehending him as he tried to cross a dyke. The response by the township population indicates their anger at Stewart's arrest, and gives an idea of the opposition faced by the police:

> Seeing that he was apprehended the natives who were looking on ran towards them, some of the men flourishing short sticks which they carried, and using threatening language, and seemed ready to fight. At this time the marines doubled towards the crowd and they kept back.[31]

After Stewart's arrest, Ivory insisted that the four policemen responsible deserved a reward for their service. He suggested medals to both the Police Committee and the Commissioners of Supply of the County of Inverness, who were responsible for the day-to-day management of the police force and its resources.

Ivory's medals were not, however, a popular idea, and he was rebuffed for various reasons. There was a concern that they would sow dissent within the ranks of the police force itself, causing jealousy between individual officers. Chief Constable McHardy, who was directly accountable for the management of the police, wrote to Ivory that he believed the four policemen responsible for the arrest deserved 'some special mark' but that he did not know how this could be done 'without leaving the others out, who I believe would have acted similarly had they been equally placed.'[32] These sentiments were later echoed by Hugh Davidson, the County Convener and a member of the Police Committee, who wrote to Ivory that the medals were 'calculated to excite feelings of jealousy among the members of a force all equally willing and ready to perform whatever duties are entrusted to them.'[33] Another reason given for opposing the idea was that there were already rewards in place for the police. McHardy pointed out in a memorandum in October 1885 that good service resulted in promotions, and listed several examples from within the police force in Skye specifically.[34] At a meeting on 9 April 1886, the Police Committee insisted that the police did not need a reward because 'they have not been unmindful of the comfort of the force', and argued that increases in pay and allowances, as well as improvements made to police accommodation, had already constituted a bonus.[35] There was also fear that the medals would serve as a provocation to the already-restless tenantry of the island, with Convener Hugh Davidson writing to Chief Constable McHardy that 'every effort ought to be made by the police to avoid irritating the people.'[36] Finally, Davidson argued that 'it is contrary to the practice among the Police Force in Scotland to bestow medals for the performance of Police duty.'[37]

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[31] Donald Aitchison, 'Report of Mr Aitchison Regarding Arrest of "Parnell" at Valtos, 4 February 1885', National Records of Scotland, 1885, HH1/161/1.
[32] Alexander McHardy to Sheriff William Ivory, 27 March 1885, National Records of Scotland, HH1/161/5).
[33] Hugh Davidson to Sheriff William Ivory, 9 December 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161/29.
[34] 'Memorandum by Chief Constable anent Special Service of Police in Skye, 14 October 1885', National Records of Scotland HH1/161/6.
[35] 'Minutes of Meeting of the Police Committee of the County of Inverness, 9th April 1886', n.d. National Records of Scotland HH1/161/11.
[36] Hugh Davidson to Alexander McHardy, 1 December 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161/26..
[37] Davidson to Ivory, NRS, HH1/161/29.

In response, Ivory's memorandum included statements from Inspector Malcolm MacDonald and Alexander Boyd, Portree, noting that policemen from Glasgow were given rewards for 'special apprehensions.'[38] He also stated that the Police Committee itself had voted for rewards for the Glasgow police involved in an 1882 confrontation between law enforcement and land agitators, known in English as the 'Battle of the Braes'.[39] In all of these cases, however, the reward took the form of money or a certificate of acknowledgement. There was no cited example of medals previously having been awarded. While research conducted by Inspector C. W. Tozer in 1950 shows that police medals were not unheard of in Great Britain in this period, those of the later nineteenth century were usually awarded for a span of good service. Examples include a bronze medal awarded to Liverpool policemen with '20 years' service free from punishment as laid down in Police Regulation', or in connection with service at a particular event, such as the Queen Victoria's Police Jubilee Medal of 1887.[40] Medals attached to specific moments of courageous service, broadly construed, were introduced later, with the Cardiff City Police Bravery Medal introduced in 1908 'for acts of bravery', and the Aberdeen Constabulary Medal in 1909 for 'members of the Force who specially distinguish themselves in the execution of their duty.'[41] There does not seem to have been a precedent for the awarding of medals in connection with a specific arrest.

Nonetheless, Ivory decided in July 1886 to take matters into his own hands and 'give [the policemen] a small present himself' in the form of a 'small silver ornament'.[42] This first Ivory medal will be referred to as the Norman Stewart Medal in this article. The second Ivory medal, which will be referred to as the Garalapin Medal, was awarded to seven policemen involved in making arrests on 26 October 1886 following a deforcement in Garalapin near Portree on Lord MacDonald's estate, when a sheriff officer was prevented from serving writs by a crowd of men and women from the surrounding townships.[43]

For unknown reasons, neither of these medals was awarded at a formal ceremony. They were, instead, sent by registered post, with letters written by Sheriff Ivory. The lack of ceremony could be interpreted as Ivory's attempt to avoid negative attention, but it is also significant in constructing the symbolic meaning of the medals. In examining civilian medals issued during the Second World War, Ellena Matthews emphasises the importance of the presentation ceremony both as acknowledgment of an individual's actions and as 'establishment of the medal as a meaningful object' in the eyes of the general public.[44] Jody Joy argues that 'without the performance associated with medal-giving the recipient is given an "object" rather than a "thing"'.[45] This distinction is based on social status: 'objects' are static and defined by their purpose, while 'things' are dynamic, their interpretation based on their interactions and relationships both with other 'things' and with people. Both Matthews and Joy argue that the lack of a presentation ceremony

[38] 'Statements by Chief Constable Aitchison, Inspector MacDonald, Portree, Sergeant Boyd, Dunvegan, William MacLeod, Constable, Colbost, Angus MacDonald, Constable, Waternish, William MacDonald, Constable Lochend & Hugh Chisholm, Constable, Uig, in Regard to the Silver Ornaments Presented to 4 Constables for Apprehension of Norman Stewart (Alias "Parnell") at Valtos in January 1885', National Records of Scotland HH1/161/32, NRS.
[39] 'Memorandum in Regard to the Silver Ornaments Presented by Him to Four Constables for Apprehending Norman Stewart ("Parnell") at Valtos on 30 January 1885 – with Relative Correspondence Contained in 33 Original Documents', 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161.
[40] Inspector C.W. Tozer, 'Provincial Police Medals', *Police Journal* 23/4 (1950): 298.
[41] Tozer, 'Police Medals', 301.
[42] 'Memorandum in Regard to the Silver Ornaments', 1886. NRS HH1/161.
[43] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, 197.
[44] Ellena Matthews, *Home Front Heroism: Civilians and Conflict in Second World War London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024), 169.
[45] Joy, 'Biography of a Medal', 135.

to establish a social meaning for medals means that they do not take on the meanings and associations intended by the presenter. Instead, as in the case of the Ivory medals, meanings and associations must be derived from the symbolism of the objects themselves and the social dynamics at play around them.

Figure 2. Front (L) and back (R) of the Norman Stewart Medal. Image © National Museums Scotland.

A Norman Stewart Medal (Figure 2) is now held by the National Museums of Scotland. Cast in the shape of a shield surrounded by a circle and topped by an elaborate crown, it is inscribed with the words, 'Arrest of Parnell, Valtos, 30 Jan. 1885' on one side and 'For Zeal & Activity, From Sheriff Ivory' on the other.[46] 'Parnell' was a nickname given to Norman Stewart for his role in leading agitation on the Kilmuir estate, beginning with rent strikes from 1877.[47] The nickname referred to Charles Stewart Parnell, the president and parliamentary spokesperson of the Irish National Land League, who also led the pro-Home Rule Irish Party.[48] However, the name 'Norman Stewart' would have been fairly well-known within the social networks surrounding land agitation and beyond, thanks to the extensive newspaper coverage of his arrest and trial. Thus, the decision to have the medals engraved with 'Parnell' as opposed to 'Norman Stewart' is interesting and would be received differently by the various groups interacting with the medals.

According to the *North British Daily Mail,* the nickname 'Parnell' may have been bestowed by Sheriff Ivory himself: 'Norman Stewart, of Valtos, *alias* (according to Sheriff Ivory) "Parnell."'[49] Elspeth Reid writes explicitly that it was Ivory who had 'dubbed' Stewart 'Parnell.'[50] Indeed, an article printed in *The Scotsman* on 12 February 1885 consisted of a report written by Sheriff Ivory

[46] With thanks to Ewen A. Cameron for this information.
[47] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, 31; *Ornament, Watch Chain*, 1885, K.1997.1133, National Museum of Scotland.
[48] Hunter, *Making*, 188.
[49] 'Bringing Sheriff Ivory to His Knees', *North British Daily Mail*, 1 July 1887, 4.
[50] Reid, 'Sheriff in the Heather', 7.

about his activities in the Isle of Skye earlier in the year, in which he described the arrest of Norman Stewart: 'We had apprehended Norman Stewart, *alias* "Parnell", the leading ringleader of the mob, and the principal promoter of the former lawless proceedings in the district.'[51] This article became the subject of a libel case in 1887, in which Norman Stewart received £25 in damages to his reputation from Sheriff Ivory for having the report, which was written for the Lord Advocate, printed in the newspaper.[52]

However, references to Norman Stewart as 'Parnell' predated the report, with the nickname appearing in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* on 12 November 1884: 'Norman Stewart, crofter, Valtos (local Parnell, as he is termed by his brethren, because of his appearances at these meetings, where he used to take up and expound the doctrines of the "uncrowned king").'[53] The 'uncrowned king' is a reference to Parnell's own nickname, 'the uncrowned king of Ireland', which he carried throughout his political career.[54] The use of the word 'brethren' suggests that the nickname was given to Stewart by other agitators in the region, though this information is not given a source. The article was credited as 'From our special correspondent', implying that the newspaper had an employee in Skye who collected the details from the region itself, lending the claim some credence. [55] While this account does not ultimately prove that the nickname came from within Stewart's own community, it does show that, at the least, the nickname predated Ivory's libelous article, disproving the idea promoted by the *North British Daily Mail* and Reid that the Sheriff was the source of the label. Regardless of its origin, Ivory adopted and deployed the 'Parnell' label for Stewart to varying effect.

Given the symbolism of Parnell's name within the Irish land movement, its substitution for Stewart's real name on the Norman Stewart Medal played into emotions surrounding the perceived spread of land agitation into the Highlands and Islands. The minutes of a meeting of the Police Committee of the County of Inverness in April 1886 effectively demonstrate a belief in this link by mentioning the rising use of incendiarism in the Highlands and Islands: 'There is evidently springing up a desire to imitate the Irish peasantry.'[56] For Ivory, who made public his desires to suppress the crofters' revolt through militaristic means and his belief that Stewart was central to organising the unrest, his use of the medal to reinforce an association between Stewart and fears of increasing violence is perhaps unsurprising.[57]

For those who viewed land agitation in a positive light, however, the use of 'Parnell' on the Norman Stewart Medal may have had the opposite effect, lending official endorsement to Norman Stewart as a symbolic leader of land agitation in the Highlands and Islands. This interpretation is supported by the way he is portrayed in *Oran Beinn Lì* ('Song on Ben Lee'), composed by the Skye bard and outspoken supporter of the crofting cause Màiri Mhòr nan Òran ('Big Mary of the Songs') to celebrate the awarding of the grazing of Ben Lee to the Braes crofters by the Land Court in 1887.[58] The dispute over the Ben Lee grazing was the root cause of the 'Battle of the Braes', a confrontation

[51] 'The Recent Expedition to Skye', *The Scotsman*, 12 February 1885, 7.
[52] 'Bringing Sheriff Ivory to His Knees', *North British Daily Mail*, 1 July 1887..
[53] 'Causes of the Rebellion', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12 November 1884, 5.
[54] F. S. L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London: HarperCollins, 1977), 114.
[55] 'Causes', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 5.
[56] 'Minutes of Meeting of the Police Committee of the County of Inverness, 9th April 1886', NRS HH1/161/11.
[57] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, 113–14.
[58] Hunter, *Making*, 223; Donald E. Meek, *Tuath Is Tighearna/Tenants and Landlords: An Anthology of Gaelic Poetry of Social and Political Protest from the Clearances to the Land Agitation* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1995), 165.

between the crofters and cottars of Braes in the Isle of Skye and a group of over fifty policemen led by Sheriff Ivory.[59] In the song, Mairi Mhòr thanks the supporters of the crofting cause who have supported them in reaching this point, dedicating one verse to Norman Stewart specifically: [60]

Thugaibh beannachd gu 'Pàrnell',	Take a blessing to 'Parnell'
Thug a' bhuaidh air an 't-Sàtan',	who vanquished the 'Satan',
Air chor 's nach faicear gu bràth e	so that he will never be seen
Tighinn air àrainn na tìr.	coming near to the land.

The 'vanquishing' described in this verse is interpreted by Donald Meek (1995) as a reference to the libel case between Stewart and Ivory in 1887, with Ivory portrayed as 'Satan' in contrast with Stewart, or 'Parnell', who is deserving of 'a blessing.' Clearly, the nickname was not regarded negatively by supporters of the crofting cause. On the contrary, it enhanced Stewart's standing as a worthy opponent for the Sheriff, and its use in the medal would reflect this meaning when viewed by someone within the land movement, lessening the sense of power imbalance. In designing the Norman Stewart medal, Ivory sought to emphasise a negative link between the land movements in Ireland and in the Scottish Highlands and Islands; and for those opposed to such movements the meaning of the medal was as Ivory intended. But for other groups, the 'Parnell' nickname was interpreted differently, depending on their perception of Irish land agitation, and their interpretation would shape their view of Stewart's place and power in the land reform movement.

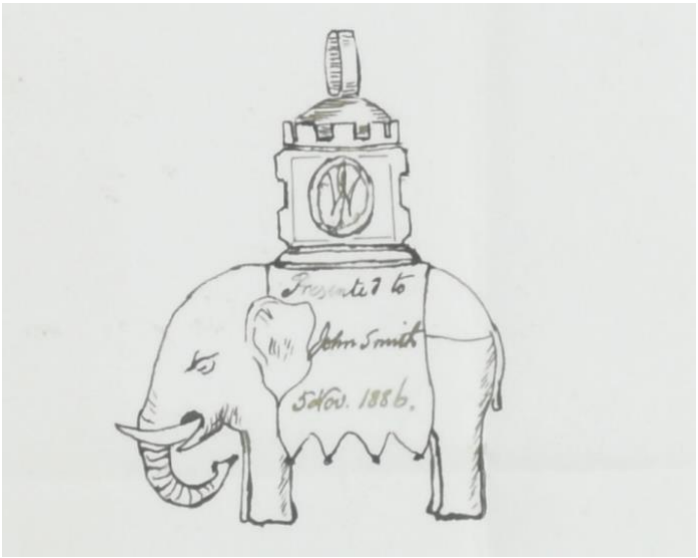

Figure 3. The Garalapin Medal design by Sheriff-Substitute Patrick Blair. National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/45/22.[61]

Much less is known about the design of the Garalapin Medal. A letter to Ivory from his direct subordinate, Sheriff-Substitute Patrick Blair, on 5 November 1886 hints at a possible design: 'A simple plain cross will not look so well as one with a little engraving on it. The engraving gives it a richer look, and would please the men better.'[62] Two days later, on 7 November, Blair sent a letter

[59] T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000: A Modern History* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), 428.
[60] Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, 163, and translation, 264.
[61] Sheriff Blair to Sheriff Ivory, NRS, GD1/36/1/45/16.
[62] Sheriff Blair to Sheriff Ivory, NRS, GD1/36/1/45/16.

enclosing a sketch of a design showing an elephant with an elaborate decoration mounted on its back, bearing a symbol which could be interpreted as based on Ivory's initials: W. I (*Figure 2*). Below the design, Blair wrote the caption: 'The Order of the Elephant, or an adaptation of your crest!'[63]

Though it is unclear which design was ultimately chosen, the idea that Ivory would mark the public police force with his own crest is significant and echoes the Sheriff's use of his own name on the reverse of the Norman Stewart Medal. Ivory's symbolic linking of himself to the arrest of the Garalapin crofters and especially of Stewart, whom he clearly regarded as his opponent, justifies Cameron's assertion that Ivory pursued 'personal vendettas' in his work. Ivory's centrality in the design of the medals also ties them to his own reputation among the Skye tenantry, as borne out in Mairi Mhòr*'s 'Oran Cumha an Ibhirich'* ('Elegy Song on Ivory'), a mock-elegy printed in the *Scottish Highlander* on 6 January 1887, in which the bard pretended that the Sheriff had died and described him thus: [64]

Saighdear, mas fhìor,	A soldier, supposedly;
Chan fhacas a ghnìomh	he was to be seen in action
Ach air siteig no liath òtraichean,	only on a dung-hill or on grey muck-heaps;
'S e 'na bhòcan air cloinn	he was a spectre haunting children
'S air mnathan san oidhch',	and women at night,
Gus na sgreamhaich e'n Roinn Eòrpachail.	until he disgusted Europe.

The use of '*mas fhìor'* ('supposedly') in the first line of the verse throws doubt on his military credentials, an idea mirrored in the imagery of his battle-grounds being *siteig no liath òtraichean* ('a dung-hill or grey muck-heaps'). This is taken further by the imagery of him as a *bòcan* ('spectre') frightening women and children rather than opponents more capable of defending themselves. The idea that Ivory would particularly identify the medals he awarded to the police with himself by marking them with his name or crest created an association between the medal's wearers – the police – and this perception of him as an antagonist with military associations, albeit dubious ones.

By comparison, the King's Police Medal was established in 1907 to recognise the service performed by both police officers and firemen.[65] The regulations specifically mentioned that to qualify, individuals had to display 'conspicuous gallantry in saving life and property.'[66] The medal bore a portrait of King Edward VII on one side and, on the other, a 'clothed and helmeted watchman standing outside the walls of city...armed with a sword and with a lamp at his feet'.[67] The use of the watchman and the inscription 'TO GUARD MY PEOPLE' emphasised the protective role of the police and the fire brigade and their commitment to maintaining the common good. [68] Ivory's medals, by contrast, were seemingly more about him than about the recipients. The symbolism of the 'Order of the Elephant' design for the Garalapin Medal implied that the loyalty of the wearer was to Ivory himself. The inscription on the Norman Stewart Medal celebrated the apprehension of one individual and exaggerated his supposed crimes – crimes of which he was ultimately proven to be innocent.

[63] P. Blair to Sheriff William Ivory, 7 November 1886, NRS, GD1/36/1/45/22.
[64] Meek, *Tuath Is Tighearna*, 168, and translation, 268.
[65] Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace', 237–38.
[66] P. E. Abbott and J. M. A Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards* (Nimrod Dix, 1981), 118.
[67] Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace', 238.
[68] Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace', 238.

Ivory of Khartoum

The symbolism of these medal designs can be read in conjunction with R. I. Mawby's model of policing, in which it may be seen on a continuum from 'control-dominated' to 'community-oriented' practice. The main priority of the police in a control-dominated system is to 'maintain order', and in a community-oriented one is to 'provide a public service that addresses the wider needs of the community.'[69] Mawby argues that a control-dominated system is closely associated with the modes of law enforcement in the British colonies, where the police 'provided the key instrument of government in imposing order on a reluctant population'.[70] The design symbolism of Sheriff Ivory's medals clearly identifies his policing priorities as lying within the 'control-dominated' model, prioritising the imposition of law and order rather than responding to the needs of the community being policed.

The link implied here between the management of the British colonies and that of the Highlands and Islands is not without significance in relation to Ivory's medals. In March 1885, the *Oban Times* printed a song by Niall MacIll'-Leathain with the title '*Òran Aighearach* [A Humorous Song]: A New Expedition to Khartoum', satirising Ivory's leadership of the policing of the Highlands and Islands.[71] The song referred to the Mahdist War, which involved British forces in Khartoum under the leadership of the British Governor-General of Sudan, Charles Gordon, from March 1884. On 26 January 1885, the Mahdist army entered Khartoum and slaughtered 10,000 people, including Gordon, seizing control of the city in a move that was seen as threatening the British Empire itself.[72] MacIll'-Leathain's *Òran Aighearach* was presumably written once the British public had learned of the fall of Khartoum from newspaper articles in columns published adjacent to those covering land agitation in the Highlands and Islands.[73] While this juxtaposition could be explained by the newsworthy nature of events in both places, it nonetheless would allow readers to draw a mental association between the two conflicts – especially readers of newspapers like the *Oban Times* and the *Glasgow Evening Post*, for whom the issue of land agitation was significant. According to Kane, 'associations of similarity and difference' are key in constructing the meaning of symbols, and so this proximity in reporting and MacIll'-Leathain's use of the Sudan conflict in his parody of Ivory is significant in understanding how the Sheriff was perceived by the readers of these newspapers.[74]

The song portrays Ivory as leading an expedition to Khartoum in HMS *Plover,* a ship which between 1848 and 1854 had been involved in the unsuccessful search for the Franklin Expedition, lost in 1845 while attempting to map the North-West Passage.[75] Two verses mention medals:

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[69] R. I. Mawby, 'Models of Policing', in *Handbook of Policing*, ed. Tim Newburn (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2008), 37.
[70] Mawby, 'Models of Policing', 37.
[71] Niall Mac Ill'-Leathain, 'Oran Aighearach (A New Expedition to Khartoum)', *Oban Times*, 21 March 1885, 7. Thanks to Sìm Innes for bringing this item to my attention; see Innes, '*An Curaidh gun Mheang*? Gaelic Song and Poetry on Sir Eachann MacDhòmhnaill (Sir Hector MacDonald, 1853 –1903)' [forthcoming].
[72] Christopher Szabla, 'Civilising Violence: International Law and Colonial War in the British Empire, 1850–1900', *Journal of the History of International Law* 25 (2023): 92.
[73] See, for example, 'Presentation of Medals to Soudan Heroes', *Glasgow Evening Post*, 2 February 1885, 3; 'The Crofters' Agitation: Excitement in Skye', *Glasgow Evening Post*, 2 February 1885, 3; 'A General Order', *Oban Times*, 10 October 1885, 2; 'More Land to Crofters', *Oban Times*, 10 October 1885, 2.
[74] Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning', 250.
[75] W. Gillies Ross, 'The Type and Number of Expeditions in the Franklin Search 1847–1859', *Arctic* 55/1 (2002): 63.

Sann bheir iad dha medal *nuair thilleas e dhachaidh,*
Air dheannadh le creidhe le òrdugh a chruin,
Bidh iomhaigh a Mhadi air a ghearradh gu h-àrd ann
'S bithidh cuimhne gu brath air a bhlàr aig Khartoum.

[They will give him a medal when he returns home,
Made out of clay by order of the Crown,
The image of the Mahdi will be inscribed into it,
And the battle at Khartoum will be remembered forever.]

Ach sgriobhaidh e 'n toiseach a dhionnsaidh a' Scotsman*,*
Dh-innseadh gu'n do choisainn e onair us cliù,
'S thig ordugh a Sasunn o Office *a chogaidh,*
Victoria Cross *thoirt do* Bhobbies *nam* Mule.[76]

[But first he'll write to *The Scotsman*,
To inform that he earned honour and fame,
and an order will come from the War Office in England,
To give the Victoria Cross to the bobbies of the Mullahs.]

MacIll'-Leathain's song was printed just over a month after Ivory's report about the arrest of Norman Stewart appeared in *The Scotsman*, and the second verse quoted here makes an oblique reference to that report in suggesting that Ivory would write to the same paper about his success in Khartoum in an attempt to claim '*onair us cliù*' ('honour and fame'). MacIll'-Leathain's suggestion that Ivory's medal would be made of '*creidhe*' ('clay'), a cheap, plentiful material lacking permanence, clearly reveals his satirical intent, as such a medal would be as worthless as the claim it recognised. The song reflects failure onto Ivory in two ways: first, by referring to the *Plover* as part of the failed search for Franklin; and second, by linking Ivory's activities in Skye to the fall of Khartoum and the failure of the expedition sent to prevent it.

During the siege, there had been intense public outcry for the government to send assistance to Gordon's forces in Khartoum. Eventually, the Gordon Relief Expedition, led by Field Marshal Garnet Wolseley, was launched.[77] Adrian Preston has described the expedition as a 'patchwork of muddle and confusion' that arrived in Khartoum only to find that the city had already fallen and Gordon was dead – an outcome that earned the British government intense criticism from a public which had come to idolize Gordon during his defence of Khartoum.[78] Interestingly, medals were a contentious issue during the Mahdist War: British troops complained because those who had previously served in the Egyptian leg of the conflict were exempt from receiving medals for their service in Sudan, despite having been given the lower honour of a 'clasp' as opposed to a proper medal.[79] Preston blamed this discontent on rampant nepotism in the appointment of staff on the Gordon Relief Expedition: 'when news came of the fall of Khartoum a general desertion of disappointed medal-hunters took place.'[80]

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[76] Mac Ill'-Leathain, 'Oran Aighearach (A New Expedition to Khartoum)', *Oban Times*, 21 March 1885, 7.
[77] Cynthia F. Behrman, 'The After-Life of General Gordon', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 3/2 (1971): 48.
[78] Adrian Preston, 'Wolseley, the Khartoum Relief Expedition and the Defence of India', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 6/3 (1978): 256; Behrman, 'Afterlife', 49.
[79] Edward M. Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 109.
[80] Preston, 'Wolseley', 256.

For readers aware both of the fall of Khartoum and of Ivory's activities in Skye, the mention of medals in MacIll'-Leathain's song would imply that Ivory's Skye medals were similarly ill-deserved. MacIll'-Leathain underlines this point by describing Ivory's fictional Khartoum medals as bearing the image of the 'Mahdi', Mohammed Ahmed, who led the Mahdists in their rebellion.[81] This reference suggests that, from the perspective of the British public, the inept management of the Gordon Relief Expedition gave the Mahdist forces an easy victory. In picturing Ivory as a failed defender of Khartoum, MacIll'-Leathain suggests that the Sheriff has become a danger to the British empire, enabling the perceived 'regressive threat' of the Mahdist forces to take hold.[82] While the song does not claim that Ivory was actually a proponent of the British colonial project or a supporter of the Mahdists, it does portray him as wearing a medal made of clay and inscribed with the image of the Mahdi – an image that reflects the internal corruption of the British army which is damaging the empire from within.

While MacIll'-Leathain's *Òran Aighearach* was published before Ivory issued either of his medals, it may have coloured how they were received. In his discussion of medals and their meaning, Kane emphasises how the inter-reliance of symbols in 'relationship to other symbols in a symbolic structure' shapes how those symbols are received by a particular audience.[83] We must, therefore, consider that where MacIll'-Leathain's imagined medal, bestowed on Ivory by the Crown, bears the image of the Mahdi – the 'enemy' of the British at the time – the medals Ivory himself bestowed on his policemen eventually bore his own name and possibly, in the case of the Garalapin Medals, his crest.

Police authority in the Highlands and Islands

Relations between police and tenantry in the Highlands and Islands were tense well before the Crofters' War. David Barrie and Susan Broomhall describe the nineteenth-century police as an 'instrument of coercion' for the lower classes throughout Scotland, with much of their time devoted to policing the working class, suppressing political activities and trade unions.[84] This tension increased throughout the century as new legislation sanctioned the policing of everyday life in relation to drinking habits and popular pastimes.[85] In the Highlands and Islands specifically, the police were particularly mistrusted for their perceived loyalty to the landed class. Ewen Cameron has described how they were viewed as 'agents of the landlords' by the crofters' movement, not only for their role in suppressing land agitation, but also for the fact that management of the police force lay with committees predominantly composed of commissioners of supply, local justices, and county councillors.[86] Before the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1889 mandated that local county councils be elected by the people, appointments to such bodies tended to be dominated by landed interests.[87] This perceived loyalty of the police force to the landed class meant that the symbol of the uniformed policeman was a loaded one in and of itself.

In the 1880s, the police uniform in the Isle of Skye consisted of a tunic and trousers, with either a cap or a helmet, depending on the officer's rank, bearing the ornament of the police. Whistles were worn on a chain in a specified way, allowing for individuals to draw attention or call for assistance when

[81] Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier*, 99.
[82] Szabla, 'Civilising Violence', 92.
[83] Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning', 250–51.
[84] Barrie and Broomhall, *Police Courts*, 1:24.
[85] Barrie, 'Anglicization and Autonomy', 480.
[86] Cameron, 'Communication or Separation?', 648.
[87] Barrie, 'Anglicization and Autonomy', 488.

required.[88] Daniel Donnelly and Kenneth Scott have described the uniformed police officer as a 'visible symbol of the link between the state and society, expressing a continuing and unspoken guarantee of the maintenance of law and order which is the first duty of the state towards its citizens.'[89] Uniforms, however, also create a sense of shared identity and cohesion among the wearers. Frances Heidensohn describes the police as 'bands of brothers, bound to each other by the nature of the dangers they confront and their consequent need for solidarity and protection', and the wearing of a uniform would have served as a visual reminder of this bond.[90] While some police were recruited from within the communities in which they served, the wearing of the uniform separated them from the general population, creating a conflict of identity and loyalty for those who belonged to both groups.[91]

Ramya Kasturi, in discussing the wearing of uniforms in a military context, argues that a uniform 'confers legitimacy upon its wearers' by implying that those wearing it are subject to the control of an organisation and will face consequences for misconduct.[92] In the Highlands and Islands, the Commissioners of Supply who managed the police force were deeply unpopular, described by *The Celtic Magazine* in 1885 as a 'close conclave of lawyers, landlords, and factors.'[93] In the eyes of many in the crofters' movement, the Commissioners could not be trusted to serve the best interests of the tenants; and because the police uniform symbolised their association with the Commissioners, the police could not be trusted, either. Instead of the uniform conferring legitimacy, as implied by Kasturi, what was bestowed was suspicion as to the loyalties of the police.

This suspicion would only have been compounded by the wearing of medals. Because it was important that the police be a civilian body, 'not greatly different from members of the general public' and thus able to create and sustain relationships with communities, they were not intended to be seen as military personnel.[94] Medals, however, had already begun to carry the connotation of war, as it became normal practice, from the 1840s onwards, for British soldiers and sailors to publicly display their service in military campaigns, and 'it became commonplace for medals to be seen gracing military chests.'[95] The linkage between medals and the battlefield is significant, given that Ivory awarded his medals during what eventually became known as the 'Crofters' War.' Though the nickname was adopted much later, the military symbolism of the uniformed police officer wearing one of Ivory's medals highlights how these events would have been perceived by land agitators themselves.[96]

Interestingly, this perception of the police as the enemy did not extend to the military itself, despite the presence of marines in the Highlands and Islands at several points during the 1880s and their involvement in the suppression of unrest. Hunter describes the marines as having been 'very cordially received' when they arrived in the Isle of Skye in mid-November of 1884.[97] An explanation

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[88] Alexander McHardy and Inspector Malcolm MacDonald, 28 May 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161/13.
[89] Scott, 'Policing', 599.
[90] Frances Heidensohn, 'Gender and Policing', in *Handbook of Policing*, 2nd ed., edited by Tim Newburn (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2008), 643.
[91] Cameron, 'Communication or Separation?', 649.
[92] Ramya Kasturi, 'Stolen Valor: A Historical Perspective on the Regulation of Military Uniform and Decorations', *Yale Journal on Regulation* 29/2 (2012): 428.
[93] 'Terrorism in Skye', *The Celtic Magazine*, 208.
[94] Scott, 'Policing', 601.
[95] Barclay, 'Heroes of Peace', 94.
[96] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, vii.
[97] Hunter, *Making*, 210.

may lie in the longstanding relationship between Highlanders and military service. In her exploration of male identity in the nineteenth-century *Gàidhealtachd*, Elizabeth Ritchie describes how the military provided an important source of employment in the Highlands and Islands, with individuals often enlisting as 'young impressionable men, so the military shaped their personal and public identities.'[98] Men from the Highlands and Islands may consequently have identified with the marines in a way that they did not with the police, possibly explaining why, in June 1885, it was reported that 'the crofters believe the Marines were sent [to Skye] to protect them from the police.'[99] This idea is upheld by '*Na Croitearan Sgiathanach*' ('The Skye Crofters'), a poem composed by Niall MacLeod from Glendale in the Isle of Skye, which contrasts the heroism shown by Highlanders in the British military with the failure of those in power to protect their interests in the land:[100]

Gun chuimhn' air na fiùran	Forgotten those heroes
A dhìon dhuinn ar dùthaich,	who protected our country,
Le an airm-chogaidh rùisgte	with their weapons bared ready,
Thug cùis dhe gach nàmh.	who taught tyrants to heed.

Donald Meek argues that this poem was likely composed in the aftermath of the Battle of the Braes, an idea supported within the text when MacLeod describes an episode of police brutality: *Mo dhaoine gan sgiùrsadh, aig ùmaidhean Ghall* ('My kinsfolk being battered, by daft Lowland men'). Although Meek translates the word *Gall* as 'Lowlander', reflecting the fact that many of the policemen involved in the Braes confrontation had been brought from Glasgow to supplement the police force in Skye, the word can also mean 'stranger' or 'foreigner', and its use here emphasises the sense of separation between the police and the people in Skye, notwithstanding MacLeod's assertion of an identification with the military, through the forgotten heroes who have served in the forces in the past.

Interestingly, due to the constraints of the English meter, the translation of the line *A dhìon dhuinn ar dùthaich* omits the word *dhuinn* ('for us'), which would make the more literal translation 'who protected for us our country', portraying the military service of Highlanders and Islanders as guardians of the community, rather than as collaborators in oppressing it. If MacLeod's poem can be taken as an indication of public sympathies, it seems clear that the marines, despite being overtly military in a way the police were not, were not viewed with the same animosity as the constabulary.

An eyewitness account of police misconduct, printed in the *North British Daily Mail*, further illustrates how Ivory's medals played into the negative perception of the police in Skye. In this account, 'Widow Hector MacDonald' describes how, while searching the township of Garalapin for those implicated in the deforcement, five or six policemen entered her house and demanded entry into a locked room. When she refused, one of the officers went outside, broke a window, and thus gained entry to the chamber. Concluding her complaint, she said 'I don't think a policeman, even although wearing an Ivory medal, should be allowed to break one of my windows with impunity.'[101] The widow's description of the policeman makes clear that he was one of the four who received medals following the capture of Norman Stewart earlier that year, demonstrates that the public were aware of the medals, and illustrates their association with destructive behaviour. The fact that she referred

[98] Elizabeth Ritchie, 'Men and Place: Male Identity and the Meaning of Place in the Nineteenth-Century Scottish Gàidhealtachd', *Genealogy (Basel)* 4/4 (2020): 15.
[99] A. Davidson and Sheriff William Ivory, 9 June 1885, NRS (GD1/36/1/27/4).
[100] Meek, *Tuath Is Tighearna*, 102, and translation, 224.
[101] 'Searching Houses Without Warrants', *North British Daily Mail*, 6 December 1886, 2.

to it explicitly as 'an Ivory medal' highlights the public association of the medals and their wearers with Sheriff Ivory. The words 'even although' suggest that she viewed the medals as giving the policeman the right to behave as he wished, even if his actions should not have gone unpunished. While the wearing of uniform should have encoded an expectation of consequences for misconduct, the expectation here was that the 'band of brothers' would protect their own, and their actions would not be regarded as misconduct, but rather be rewarded by the awarding of an 'Ivory medal.'

Additionally, the medals had a direct impact on how land agitators conducted themselves. On 25 October 1886, attempts were made to arrest a group charged with a deforcement in Herbusta, on the Kilmuir estate. The *Glasgow Herald* reported that

> In one of the intervals between his more active exertions his Lordship [Ivory] produced one of the medals distributed to the police who were engaged in the last expedition to the island, and declared that he would require to get some more so that there might be one for every man who effected a capture that day.[102]

The reference to 'the last expedition' was, presumably, to the events leading to the capture of Norman Stewart the preceding January, which resulted in medals for the policemen involved. Most of those implicated in the Herbusta deforcement, however, managed to escape, with only two people – Anne MacMillan and John Beaton – arrested at the time. The rest of the men, according to James Hunter, 'fled to the hills in a manner reminiscent of the aftermath of Culloden.'[103] They remained on the run for several weeks, evading capture despite repeated 'raids' on the township in efforts to apprehend them.[104] In the end, they presented themselves at the police station in Portree over the course of several days, from 23 November to 3 December.[105]

In narrating these incidents, Hunter states that the 'November weather forced [Ivory's] elusive quarries to surrender.'[106] An additional explanation, however, is offered in a letter from Ivory himself to the Under Secretary for Scotland, Francis Sandford, in which he asserts that the Herbusta men gave themselves up because 'they wished to prevent the Police getting any special mark of recognition for their capture.'[107] Explicit mention of the Ivory medals in the *Glasgow Herald* report – and, as we shall see, in subsequent reports across the country – leads to the conclusion that they are the 'special mark of recognition' referenced, and suggests that the Herbusta men were strongly reluctant to be arrested and provide a pretext for further medals being awarded. In other words, the medals had real-world implications for the ways in which land agitators interacted with the police and justice system. In addition, Ivory's letter to Sandford may be interpreted as an attempt to defend the medals; from his perspective, the eventual surrender of the Herbusta crofters was a success. The fact that the medals were key in their decision to do so would suggest that awarding them was having a positive effect on the maintenance of law and order in the district.

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[102] 'The Crofters. The Skye Expedition. Further Arrests for Deforcement.', *Glasgow Herald*, 28 October 1886, 7.
[103] Hunter, *Making*, 233.
[104] MacPhail, *The Crofters' War*, 197.
[105] P. I. Malcolm MacDonald, 'Copy Weekly Report at Skye. 27 Nov. 1886.', National Records of Scotland AD56/5; 'Copy Weekly Report at Skye. 6th December 1886.', National Records of Scotland AD56/5, NRS.
[106] Hunter, *Making*, 348.
[107] Sheriff William Ivory to Francis Sandford, 8 December 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/153.

Press and public reaction to Ivory's medals

In his memorandum, Ivory sought to highlight the press reaction to his medals.[108] Specifically, he referenced an article printed by the *Scottish Highlander* on 2 September 1886, discussing the Norman Stewart Medals which had been sent to their recipients in July 1886. The *Scottish Highlander* was established in 1885 by Alexander Mackenzie, one of the founders of the Highland Land Law Reform Association, and it became one of the foremost pro-land reform papers in Scotland.[109] The article described the Norman Stewart Medal as commemorating the police's 'retreat before the children and old women of the island' and therefore as an 'insignia of their glorious discomfiture.' It recommended that Sheriff Ivory himself should wear one 'in commemoration of the wisdom and redoubtable bravery exhibited by him on his various visits to Skye' and concluded that the medals would be 'held specially suitable, not only for his Lordship, but for all concerned' if they were made of brass.[110] In describing medals awarded for police action against 'children and old women' and in noting Ivory's 'wisdom and redoubtable bravery', the article's satirical intent is clear, justifying its suggestion that the medals be struck from brass – a less valuable material.

The *Scottish Highlander* article was reprinted, either verbatim or nearly so, in at least seven other papers between 3 September and 11 September 1886.[111] Six of these used the headline '"War" Medals for the Skye Police', reinforcing the idea that such awards normally carried military, as opposed to civilian, connotations. These articles were significant in generating huge publicity for the incident, in raising wider questions about the symbolism of Ivory's medals, and ultimately in building on the mockery Ivory was already subject to for his conduct. While W. Hamish Fraser highlights how 'notoriously difficult' it is to get accurate circulation figures for newspapers at any time, it seems probable that readership of this article would have spanned Scotland.[112] It was published in provincial papers like the *Dunfermline Saturday Press,* as well as in national media like the pro-crofter *North British Daily Mail*. If they had not been so already, readers in major metropolitan centres including Edinburgh and Aberdeen became aware of Ivory's medals and the controversy surrounding them. Interestingly, however, in all of these articles the recipients themselves remained anonymous: the police were presented as a united front, with Ivory's the only name mentioned.

The issue of the medals surfaced again following the arrests in Garalapin and Herbusta. The *Oban Times*, another dependable advocate of the crofting cause, stated that Ivory was 'so well pleased' with the arrest of Herbusta cowherd John Beaton that he 'ordered a special medal to the constable who had apprehended him.'[113] The *Oban Times* article went on, however, to report that 'Beaton has instructed

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[108] 'Memorandum in Regard to the Silver Ornaments', NRS HH1/161.

[109] W. Hamish Fraser, *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Newspapers, 1850-1950* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 240.

[110] 'Sheriff Ivory', *Scottish Highlander*, 4.

[111] A full tally of reprints has been limited here by the titles available on the British Newspaper Archive. 'Sheriff Ivory Is Evidently a Man', *Dunfermline Saturday Press*, 11 September 1886, 2; '"War" Medals for the Skye Police', *Northman and Northern Counties Advertiser*, 11 September 1886, 2; '"War" Medals for the Skye Police – Ivory Again Distinguishes Himself', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 3 September 1886, 2; '"War" Medals for the Skye Police – Ivory Again Distinguishes Himself', *North British Daily Mail*, 3 September 1886, 5; '"War" Medals for the Skye Police', *Aberdeen Free Press*, 4 September 1886, 6; '"War" Medals for the Skye Police', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 4 September 1886, 2; '"War" Medal for the Skye Police', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 September 1886.

[112] Fraser, *Edinburgh History*, 15.

[113] Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People?: The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c.1880–1925* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), 14.

a solicitor in Glasgow to take immediate proceedings against the parties who had put him under arrest.'[114] Thus began a protracted legal struggle in which Beaton sought justice for unlawful arrest; and although Beaton was ultimately unsuccessful, the proceedings significantly damaged Ivory's reputation.[115] The *Oban Times*'s decision to draw an association between these events and Ivory's medals was calculated to undermine both Ivory and the symbolism of the medals themselves. On the same day, an article in the *Highland News* took a similar line, noting that Ivory had sent a written reprimand to a sheriff officer guilty of misconduct during a series of poindings in Skye earlier in the year: 'surely it is the irony of fate that it should have been penned by the same judicious hand which bestows a medal upon the policeman for capturing an innocent crofter herd-laddie.'[116] The *North British Daily Mail* drew the broad conclusion that Ivory's medals had 'demoralised the police and outraged every idea of discipline.'[117]

Newspapers also reported on how Ivory's medals were received within government circles. In November 1886, Dr Charles Cameron, Liberal MP for the Glasgow College constituency and proprietor of the *North British Daily Mail*, presided over a public meeting in City Hall, Glasgow, that aimed to encourage action 'to curb the illegal and inhuman conduct of Sheriff Ivory and his band of moonlighters'. Dr Cameron argued that the institution of the medal for police involved in the apprehension of crofters demonstrated Ivory's 'desire to entrap crofters'.[118] Later that month, at a meeting at the Literary Institute, Edinburgh, Cameron again argued that 'when a judge gratuitously superseded the chief constable and issued a medal for the capture of crofters, he thought a probable cause of persecution was made out', and stated that he had sent to Skye for further information so the matter could be presented to the Court of Session.[119]

The medals were also discussed at a meeting that same month between the Secretary for Scotland, Arthur Balfour, and a deputation of representatives of the Land League, Celtic and Gaelic associations from London and Bristol, and a group of sympathetic MPs. While the meeting's overall aim was to address the disturbances in the Highlands and Islands and their policing, Dr Roderick MacDonald, the Crofters' Party MP for Ross and Cromarty, raised the issue of the medals directly. The *Aberdeen Press and Journal* reported the following exchange between MacDonald and Balfour:

> Dr MacDonald said it was a fact that the Sheriff was so enthusiastic that the year before last he, at his own expense, gave medals to the police for catching crofters, as he called them. (Laughter.) He talked about—
>
> Mr Balfour said that the personal peculiarities of Sheriff Ivory were scarcely relevant.
>
> […] Dr MacDonald said he has seen the medals but if it was thought that this had no bearing on the question he would not pursue the point. The medals, however, had been

[114] 'A Special Medal', *Oban Times*, 4 December 1886, 2.
[115] Reid, 'Sheriff in the Heather', 8.
[116] 'Poinding' is the seizing of an individual's goods against their debt. It was frequently used to address rent and rate arrears in the Highlands and Islands in the 1880s. 'On Thursday Morning', *Highland News*, 4 December 1886, 2.
[117] '"General" Ivory's Recall', *North British Daily Mail*, 24 November 1886, 4.
[118] The matter does not seem to have made it to the Court of Session, 'Dr Cameron, M.P., and Sheriff Ivory', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 November 1886, 2.
[119] 'The Imprisoned Crofters – Meeting of Sympathisers in Edinburgh', *Invergordon Times and General Advertiser*, 1 December 1886, 3.

> given last year, and the Commissioners refused to allow the police to wear them, and this year again the police were promised medals by Sheriff Ivory to catch crofters.[120]

It was noted during the meeting that this was the first contact the MPs involved had had with Balfour in his new governmental position as Secretary for Scotland – a fact that demonstrates the importance, to them, of the matter of Ivory's medals. By specifying that Ivory funded the medals himself, MacDonald strengthened his point that they could be interpreted as proof of Ivory's enthusiasm for 'catching crofters'. Then, despite Balfour's interruption and dismissal of the issue as one of Ivory's 'personal peculiarities', MacDonald asserted the importance of having it on record that, despite the Commissioners of Supply having prevented the police from wearing the medals, Ivory had promised to award more. MacDonald clearly implied that Ivory had allowed his enthusiasm to outweigh what was appropriate both to his position as Sheriff and to the delicate situation in which he was operating.

Thanks to MacDonald and Cameron discussing Ivory's medals at political meetings, the issue was adopted by those promoting the crofting cause within parliament as a symbol of Sheriff Ivory's misconduct and his mistreatment of the tenantry of the Highlands and Islands. In September 1886, the pro-crofter *Scottish Highlander* printed an article condemning *The Scotsman*'s approach to Highland and Island land agitation, describing the paper as 'always the unscrupulous enemy of the Celtic race' for its pro-landlord leanings.[121] Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, *The Scotsman* printed one of very few defences of the medals. Significantly, this came in the form of a letter to the editor, lending distance from the opinion of the publication itself while implying that it came from a member of the general public who was not personally involved. The missive described the medals as a 'meritorious' acknowledgement of the 'efficient discharge of the trying duties' in which the police were engaged, and concluded by calling for a reward for Ivory himself:

> But I think the time has now arrived when Scotia's law-abiding sons, and especially those of the extensive county over which he so ably presides as his Sovereign's chief officer of justice, should adopt steps with the view of recognising the worthy Sheriff by presenting him with a suitable memorial in commemoration of the daunting yet forbearing spirit which he displayed in carrying out the laborious and hazardous work which faced him so frequently and so long in that turbulent part of his country.[122]

The idea of distinguishing 'Scotia's law-abiding sons' who recognise the service carried out by Ivory from those who do not is strengthened when the anonymous writer signs off as 'A Law-Abiding Highlander'. The publication of this letter clearly implies that the writer's stance aligns with *The Scotsman's* coverage of land agitation throughout the period, and supports the symbolism of the Norman Stewart Medal in suggesting an association between the tenantry of the Highlands and Islands and lawlessness.

Ivory's defence

That the press coverage had a direct impact on how the medals were used by the policemen themselves was made clear in Ivory's memorandum, which contained statements elicited from those who had received them. Police Constable William MacLeod stated that he did not receive any instructions from his superiors on whether he ought to wear his medal, but 'observed in the newspapers that the Chief

[120] 'The Condition of Skye: Deputation to the Secretary for Scotland', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 19 November 1886, 5.
[121] 'The "Scotsman" and the Highlanders', *Scottish Highlander*, 2 September 1886, 4.
[122] 'Sheriff Ivory and the Highlanders of Skye', *The Scotsman*, 22 December 1886, 5.

Constable had given instructions we were not to wear it.' Thereafter, he removed it from his watchchain and stopped wearing it.[123] The newspaper in question is not named, but it is likely that it was either the *Scottish Highlander* article or one of its reprints, which read: 'it is said that Mr McHardy, Chief-Constable of the County, has prohibited the men from wearing the Sheriff's medals.'[124]Another of the recipients, Angus MacDonald, stated that his attention was drawn to the article by Reverend Donald MacCallum, the strongly pro-crofter Church of Scotland minister for the Waternish parish.[125]

The question of whether the constables were allowed to wear the medals, and whether they had been prevented from doing so, was one which occupied much of Ivory's memorandum. Seeking to downplay their potential impact as symbols, the memorandum included several statements from the recipients which were similar in structure to 'precognitions', preliminary statements from witnesses prepared in the course of investigating a crime. In their statements, it is clear from the frequency and order in which specific topics arise that the constables were responding to prescribed questions, albeit ones that were omitted from the final statement. Their responses were clearly heavily edited, like precognition statements, not just to achieve brevity and uniformity, but also to give prominence to information Ivory wished to highlight.[126] Thus, it is not insignificant that three of the four recipients stated that they had worn their medals under their uniform where they could not be seen, supporting Ivory's assertion, in a statement framing the memorandum as a whole, that this is what he had intended them to do. Two recipients further stated that they did not believe the medals were designed to be worn outside the uniform.[127] The implication is that the question of where the medals were worn and where their recipients believed they were intended to be worn was one of the prompts in the construction of the statements, and thus clearly significant in Ivory's defence of the medals.

One recipient, Hugh Chisholm, reflected that 'The pendant had a ring on it and I understood it was meant to be attached to my watch chain & not worn on the breast of my uniform like a medal.'[128] Chisholm's seeming differentiation between his award and 'a medal' is an important one in Ivory's memorandum, and it appears frequently in the Sheriff's own commentary on the documents within it. He specifically refers to the objects as 'silver ornaments' and, on three separate occasions, directly rejects the label of 'medal'. In the margins of a letter written by Hugh Davidson, Ivory rebuts Davidson's use of the word 'medal' by writing: 'No "<u>medals</u>" were ever presented by him to the constables' (emphasis in original).[129] On another occasion, he refers to a letter written by Chief Constable McHardy, objecting to the fact that, though McHardy had had access to the letters of acknowledgement from the recipients of the awards which did not use the word 'medal', McHardy had used the word himself.[130] In another of McHardy's letters included in the memorandum, Ivory has highlighted McHardy's line, 'On the occasion when you showed the medal to me in my office', and added, in the margin: 'I showed no

[123] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[124] *Scottish Highlander*, 'Sheriff Ivory'.
[125] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[126] Robert S. Shiels, 'The Crown Practice of Precognition in Mid-Victorian Scotland', *Law, Crime and History* 5, no. 2 (n.d.): 35.
[127] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[128] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[129] Davidson to Ivory, NRS, HH1/161/29.
[130] 'Letters of Acknowledgement from PC A. MacDonald, William MacDonald, William MacLeod, and Hugh Chisholm', 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161/18.

"medal" to the C.C.'[131] Ivory's constant objection to the word 'medal' in these documents shows a desire to avoid the usual symbolism a 'medal', but clearly his strategy met with mixed success.

The Norman Stewart Medal held by the National Museums of Scotland is labelled in their collections as 'Ornament, watch chain' and further described as a 'silver fob for a watch.'[132] Though it is unclear how the object came to be labelled in this manner, its designation as an 'ornament' shapes public perception of the one on display today, suggesting that Ivory's campaign enjoyed some success. Laurence Gouriévidis has, however, criticised the display in which the medal is included for its 'oversimplified and archetypal vision of the Clearances', arguing that despite the 'invaluable' artefacts on display, they are framed within a narrative of 'national emigration' which does not fully portray the complexities of the era.[133] The use of 'ornament' in connection with the Norman Stewart Medal plays into this simplification, firmly eschewing the connotations associated with 'medal'.

At the time the medals were awarded, however, the 'medal' label was applied to them both by those around Ivory and by the press, thus associating these objects with the significance usually ascribed to medals. Interestingly, extant medallions produced in connection with franchise demonstrations which took place in Scotland in 1884 were also compared with medals:

> In most cases, these medallions have been holed so that they may be worn; some examples still have the pins or ribbons attached by which they were fixed to lapels and coats. They have thus taken the aspect of the medal.'[134]

Ivory's 'ornaments', as he wished them to be known, had 'a small silver ring attached to it in order that the constables, if they wished to wear it as a pendant on their watch chains […] might so wear it.'[135] Thus, as in the case of the franchise medallions, they had taken on 'the aspect of the medal', as demonstrated by the overwhelming number of contemporary sources which referred to them as such.

In using the term 'medal', Chief Constable McHardy repeatedly expressed his opposition to these objects. He asserted that Ivory had more than once demonstrated a wish that they be worn publicly. He wrote to Ivory, reminding the Sheriff that, before he had awarded the medals, he had shown one to McHardy in his office 'and placed it against Supt. Aitchison's breast, on his tunic, and made a remark that you thought it looked well there.'[136] While we have seen that Ivory denied that any such exchange had taken place, its importance does not lie solely in the truth of where Ivory intended the medals to be worn. This article has argued that the ornaments were widely perceived as 'medals', regardless of whether they were worn over the uniform or under it. Even without considering the possible role of the press in shaping their behaviour, three of the four recipients admit, in their statements, to wearing them openly on their watch chains when out of uniform.[137] The policeman would have been a familiar figure within the community he policed, and so those in direct, regular contact with him would have seen him in plainclothes. In any case, the wearing of a medal under the uniform did not guarantee that it was

[131] Chief Constable Alexander McHardy and Sheriff William Ivory, 13 December 1886, National Records of Scotland, HH1/161/28.
[132] *Ornament, Watch Chain*.
[133] Gouriévidis, *Dynamics of Heritage*, 84.
[134] Mark Nixon et al., 'The Material Culture of Scottish Reform Politics, c.1820–c.1884', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 321 (2012): 43. https://doi.org/10.3366/jshs.2012.0034.
[135] 'Memorandum in Regard to the Silver Ornaments', NRS, HH1/161.
[136] Chief Constable Alexander McHardy to Sheriff William Ivory, 8 December 1886, National Records of Scotland HH1/161/27.
[137] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.

hidden from view: Constable MacDonald admitted that his Sergeant had commented on his 'one day when the breast of my uniform was particularly unbuttoned.'[138] Thus, the circumstances in which the medals were worn, how they were worn, and what they were called – the questions Ivory focused on in his memorandum – do not appear to have influenced their power as a public symbol, and the answers given by the constables are thus of secondary importance.

Instead, the importance lies in how the questions themselves illustrate the tension that existed between Sheriff Ivory and Chief Constable McHardy regarding policing in the Highlands and Islands. The Police Scotland Act 1857 dictated that Chief Constables were to direct their forces according to the orders given to them by the Sheriff.[139] Thus, by law, McHardy fell below Ivory in the chain of command. In practice, however, interpersonal politics led to a struggle between McHardy and Ivory for control of the police force. McHardy had seemingly already challenged Ivory's authority by commanding that the medals were not to be worn. Additionally, Ivory insisted that McHardy had intentionally failed to send to him the awardees' letters of receipt for the medals, meaning that he 'never learned that the ornaments had duly reached [the recipients]' until he made 'special inquiry' into the matter himself.[140] McHardy himself had issued instructions that 'any communications from the men should be sent to him thro' [Inspector MacDonald] as regarding police duty.'[141] The recipients of the medals had clearly tried to follow this protocol, with Angus MacDonald and Hugh Chisholm stating that they had written to McHardy to ask whether to correspond with Ivory directly themselves, though they received no reply. The other two recipients sent their letters of receipt to McHardy to be forwarded, which he did not do. William MacLeod and Angus MacDonald both reported that they did not write to Ivory directly because they feared repercussions from McHardy.[142]

This breakdown in communication stemmed from pre-existing tensions within management of the police force. Minutes of a meeting of the Police Committee for the county on 2 October 1886 reveal that Ivory had asked Inspector MacDonald to send him regular 'secret' reports on the state of Skye 'without being sent through the Head Office or communicated to the Chief Constable.' On discovering this subterfuge, McHardy brought it to the attention of the Police Committee, stating that it was 'a violation of the existing rules' and 'calculated to destroy the discipline of the force.' The Committee decided to enforce the pre-existing rules on the matter, whereby communication between the police force and the Sheriff of Inverness had to pass through the Chief Constable.[143] This matter having been settled, the tension seemingly re-focused on the medals, awarded without the Chief Constable's approval, and the awardees' receipts, sent to the Chief Constable as the rules dictated but never forwarded to the Sheriff. This situation allows us to interpret the medals, from within police management, as a site for enacting and exacerbating pre-existing tensions.

We have seen how the constables were prevented from wearing the Norman Stewart Medals, as illustrated by their statements and the evidence from the press in the matter. With this controversy in mind, Ivory appears to have anticipated the same issue when he awarded the Garalapin Medals. Between 7 and 13 December 1886, Ivory received seven letters of receipt from policemen to whom

[138] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[139] Reid, 'Sheriff in the Heather', 2.
[140] 'Memorandum in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[141] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[142] 'Statements [...] in Regard to the Silver Ornaments'.
[143] 'Excerpt from Minutes' of Meeting of the Police Committee of the County of Inverness Held on 2nd October 1886', n.d., National Records of Scotland HH1/161/21.

he had awarded a 'silver ornament' – the Garalapin Medals.[144] These acknowledgements are now held in the National Records of Scotland and, while there is no record of the letter Ivory sent to accompany the awards, the contents of the responses can give us some insight into what it said. In three of the seven letters, recipients promised to inform Ivory if anyone should object to them wearing the medals.[145] In a fourth, P.C. Simon Fraser told Ivory that he would 'wear [it] as directed and adhere to the instructions in your letter.'[146] The clear implication is that Ivory wished to pre-empt protest against the medals, and instructed their recipients to tell him if anyone should try to prevent their wearing them. This reads as a challenge: Ivory expected there to be resistance against the Garalapin medals, from both within and outwith the structure of law enforcement, but still wanted them to be worn as a public symbol of the police role in subduing land agitation.

The symbolism of the medals was enduring. On the death of Inspector Alexander Chisholm in 1915, his obituary in the *Oban Times* reflected that he was 'one of those who received Sheriff Ivory's medal for meritorious service in Skye', as well as a recipient of the 'King Edward Police Medal'.[147] The latter is likely in reference to the King's Police Medal which, as we discussed previously, is a general award for distinguished service, while the former is clearly one of Ivory's medals. While Alexander Chisholm does not appear among the recipients of either the Norman Stewart or the Garalapin Medals according to the archival record of the NRS, he is repeatedly mentioned in records of the policing of land agitation. He was posted to Kilvaxter, Kilmuir, on 'special duty' in 1886, and served as a witness in the case against the Herbusta crofters.[148] He was also involved in searching Garalapin on the day of the arrests made there, when he was reported to have found 'the back part of a scythe' that one of the crofters was accused of wielding during the deforcement.[149] Other policemen involved with the Garalapin apprehensions received the Garalapin Medals, though Alexander Chisholm is not represented in the letters of acknowledgement Sheriff Ivory received for these. Whether this demonstrates an incomplete archival record with reference to the Garalapin Medals or suggests that Alexander Chisholm received a medal from Ivory on another occasion is unclear. Regardless, the inclusion of Chisholm's medal in his obituary hints at the long symbolic life of the award, as the article was printed thirty years after the medals were awarded. The medal is also described in positive terms, having been awarded for 'meritorious service.' This may seem uncharacteristic for the *Oban Times* which had been a staunch defender of the crofters' cause and opponent of Ivory's conduct in the 1880s. In the meantime, however, the paper's political stance had

[144] P.C. Farquhar Macrae to Sheriff William Ivory, 7 December 1886, National Records of Scotland (GD1/36/1/47/8); P.C. Robert Clark to Sheriff William Ivory, 7 December 1886, National Records of Scotland (GD1/36/1/47/9); P.C. Donald Macintosh to Sheriff William Ivory, 7 December 1886, National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/47/10; P.C. Alexander MacLennan to Sheriff William Ivory, 7 December 1886, National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/47/11; P.C. Angus McLaren to Sheriff William Ivory, 8 December 1886, National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/47/18; P.C. Hugh Chisholm to Sheriff William Ivory, 9 December 1886, National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/47/19; P.C. Simon Fraser to Sheriff William Ivory, 13 December 1886, National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/47/22.

[145] Macrae to Sheriff William Ivory; MacLennan to Ivory; P.C. Hugh Chisholm to Sheriff William Ivory, personal communication, 9 December 1886.

[146] Fraser to Ivory.

[147] 'The Late Inspector Chisholm, Fort William – Worthy Police Record', *Oban Times*, 16 January 1915.

[148] 'Appendix No. 66 - Book of Adjournal, 15 December 1885 – 31 January 1887', National Records of Scotland, JC4/83.

[149] 'Report Anent Samuel Nicolson & Others Deforcement', 30 October 1886, National Records of Scotland, GD1/36/1/44/35.

changed. Following the death of its radical editor Waverley Cameron in 1891, his sister Fiona Blair took over its management, and the paper adopted a 'more cautious Liberalism'; and by the early twentieth century, the newspaper was supporting Conservative electoral candidates.[150] The positive reframing of Ivory's medals could thus be viewed as a symptom of this shift in political alignment.

Conclusion

Overall, a material culture approach to Ivory's medals adds another dimension to our understanding of the policing of land agitation in the Highlands and Islands during the Crofters' War, allowing us to view it as part of the wider pattern of government responses to social movements in the late nineteenth century. The medals' association with Ivory – already unpopular among many living on the land – and their inherent military symbolism demonstrate how these awards exacerbated divisions between the police and the communities they were supposed to serve. The satirical content of Gaelic songs and poems played into those divisions, and even linked the policing of land agitation in the Highlands and Islands to wider administrative challenges within the British Empire. Contemporary newspaper reports showed how various political figures seized upon the issue of the medals as symbolic of Sheriff Ivory's mistreatment of the tenantry of the Highlands and Islands. Finally, our examination of Ivory's memorandum has allowed us to see how the Sheriff navigated the power structures in which he was embedded, and how the medals provided a practical focus for the enactment of conflict between Ivory and Chief Constable McHardy. Overall, the medals offer insight into the everyday reality of the relationships both within and outwith the police force, and show how the power dynamics within them were created and enforced on a symbolic level.

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Book Reviews

Standing on the Edge of Being: Scotland 1850 to COP 26. **Richard D. Oram. Edinburgh: John Donald, 2024. 432 pp., illus. Hardback and e-book. ISBN: 9780859767187. £75.00.**

This eagerly awaited new book by Richard Oram, *Standing on the Edge of Being*, completes his trilogy devoted to the environmental history of Scotland from the early Middle Ages to the present. With their singular chronological breadth and empirical depth, these volumes have no obvious analogue or precedent. They are all the more remarkable for being the work of a single author rather than the collective collaboration of a large team of scholars. Oram's interdisciplinary approach is also a signal achievement, combining not just traditional manuscript and printed sources but also material evidence drawn from paleoecology, climate science, archeology, and architecture. Equally crucial is the pedagogical ambition behind the engaging narrative and vivid prose style, which aims to make these books accessible to a wide audience beyond the academic world. Each of the three volumes is lavishly illustrated with many dozens of color photographs that provide rich visual evidence to support the argument. While Oram's books should preferably be read in sequence and his argument understood as a whole, given the limited space at my disposal, I will confine my review to the third volume.

Divided into fourteen chapters with an introduction and a conclusion, *Standing on the Edge of Being* covers an astonishingly broad range of topics from coal mining, hydropower, and public health to agriculture, forestry, and biodiversity. The people that populate Oram's narrative include not just politicians, scientists, and foresters but also many kinds of non-human agents, such as beavers, eagles, peat moss, and Sitka spruce. Climate change frames the book in a double sense. Oram chooses 1850 as his departure point in part because the middle of the nineteenth century marked the official end of the Little Ice Age (the focus of the second volume of the trilogy), but also because this was the moment when Britain's fossil fuel economy began to raise atmospheric carbon levels beyond the pattern of natural variability in the Holocene epoch.

The main narrative thread of the book explores how industrial society reshaped Scotland's environment and how this transformation in turn provoked defensive action to preserve the natural world from environmental damage. Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, the environmental cost of economic development was beginning to attract public attention, including the abatement of smoke pollution from coal burning and the urgent need for public investment in potable water. A growing appreciation of the value of wildlife also encouraged limited preservationist efforts, including the founding of the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds.

From these humble beginnings, Oram traces a seesaw movement between the forces of economic development and ecological awareness into the present age. Rather than a Whig story of triumphant environmental consciousness, the picture that emerges is one of high ambitions frequently followed by failure or unintended consequences. Take the ironic case of the cleansing of the Tay and Forth estuaries. By stopping the discharge of organic waste residues, environmental regulators improved water quality and restored old habitats for birds. Yet by curtailing untreated

wastewater, they inadvertently caused the collapse of migratory bird populations which had flourished thanks to the effluent. Such ironies abound in Oram's account: 'the environmental impacts of remediation and reintroduction do not follow a smooth, linear progression from "bad" to "good"' (315).

As a scholar of the historical environment, Oram's instincts are commendably sober and perspicacious, steering clear of both apocalyptic declensionism and sentimental pastoralism. He eagerly debunks commonplace myths of Scotland's history, including the widespread nostalgia for rural idylls and imaginary states of wilderness, while stressing instead the long history of complex anthropogenic and ecological factors behind landscape change. Such a fundamentally historical vision of the natural world also highlights the danger of shifting baselines which tempt the public into accepting degraded environmental conditions as the normal state of affairs. A third important feature of Oram's approach is his keen appreciation of the tensions between rural livelihoods and preservationist sensibilities, recognizing the difficult trade-offs between defending economic opportunity and the health of the land. Too often, the Scottish countryside has served as a laboratory for grandiose economic ambitions which more often than not have failed to deliver on their promise. By way of a short parable, consider the fate of the nuclear research station at Dounreay on the north coast of Caithness. Hailed as a landmark of power generation in the 1960s, it promised to revive the economy of nearby Thurso while securing the energy needs of future generations. At present, Dounreay remains the largest local employer, but only because decontamination of the two decommissioned reactors will go on until 2300.

Throughout the book, Oram adopts an uncompromisingly Scottish perspective. The economic, environmental, and political condition of Britain south of the border features mainly in so far as it impinges on Scottish affairs. Yet, Oram's environmental framework endows his findings with a significance that will make them useful far beyond Scottish shores. While Oram's historical archive and ecological evidence may be geographically limited, the main themes of the book – energy, development, climate, ecology, pollution, and biodiversity – are of universal concern.

Such a framing is most obvious at the start and end of the book, where Oram places his national history directly within a planetary context. Climate change and the threat to biodiversity now embroil Scotland in a drama with existential consequence for mankind. The planetary emergency also gives fresh meaning to the narrative. Oram's critique of sentimental myths of the wilderness, his insistence that ecosystems carry dense layers of historical significance, his concern with rural livelihood and ecological health, and his warning about the threat of shifting baselines, all carry weighty lessons for anyone interested in reshaping human relations with the Earth. In this spirit, let me end with one more parable from Oram's book. Once dismissed as a useless wasteland fit only for forest planting, the blanket bog of Caithness Flow Country, the first peatland World Heritage Site, now beckons as a haven for biodiversity and a vaunted sink for carbon. We cannot ever hope to restore nature to some imaginary primeval state, but we can repair ecological processes so that they will flourish in new and ever changing forms.

FREDRIK ALBRITTON JONSSON

***Gun Sireadh, Gun Iarraidh: The Tolmie Collection.* Kenna Campbell and Ainsley Hamill, eds. Stornoway: Acair, 2023. 351 pp., map, illus. Hardback and wire-bound. ISBN (hardback): 978-1-78907-109-2; ISBN (wire-o bind) 978-1-78907-142-9. £20.00.**

Frances Tolmie's collection of *One Hundred and Five Gaelic Songs of Occupation from the Western Isles of Scotland*, published in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* in 1911, has long been regarded as a seminal work. Whereas most anthologies of songs and music of the period consisted of arrangements designed for the parlour performer in which the melodies had been modified, modernised and provided with piano accompaniments, Tolmie's collection presented songs as she had learned and collected them from tradition-bearers in their own communities. She was the earliest to be recognised and widely praised for having done so.

Although Tolmie began collecting around 1860, it was not until 1900 that Gaelic scholar George Henderson, whom she had met at the home of Alexander Carmichael in Taynuilt, suggested publication. As Ethel Bassin has made clear, however, the process was far from straightforward, because what became known as 'The Tolmie Collection' was the work not just of Frances Tolmie herself, but of a four-strong – and strong-willed – editorial committee whose substantial notes and commentary account for over a quarter of the finished work, and whose robust opinions and diverse interests inform much of its character.[1] Its character is significant because, while the content provided by Frances Tolmie is self-effacing and modest in its presentation, it is these editorial contributions that date the work to the Celtic Revival, a period when educated, middle-class urban dwellers took an intense interest in the cultural reliquiae of rural folk.

Led by Lucy E. Broadwood of the London-based Folk-Song Society, the editorial team included English song-collector Anne G. Gilchrist, music critic J. A. Fuller Maitland, and Gaelic scholar George Henderson. The latter was tasked with overseeing the Gaelic text, Broadwood and Gilchrist provided introductory essays, and all four contributed commentary on individual songs, including historical references, philological speculation, and musicological comparisons with melodies from other traditions. This volume was clearly intended as a serious contribution to the study of folksong, especially in its melodic aspects, and it demanded the reader's full attention – even if the reader knew no Gaelic. Indeed, it was their cognizance of this last fact that apparently led the editorial committee to truncate or omit many of the Gaelic song-texts in favour of English translations, directing those wishing fuller Gaelic texts to well-known anthologies of Gaelic poetry. From a modern perspective, this was an unfortunate compromise, as Tolmie's informants were unlikely to have sung precisely what appeared in those anthologies, and it is the uniqueness and authenticity of their own versions that most interest us today.

Kenna Campbell has devoted her life to championing the Gaelic language and its musical traditions. A member of a well-known Skye family of singers and musicians, Campbell was an early trustee of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, now part of the University of the Highlands and Islands; she tutored students in Gaelic and Scottish song at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire (RSC) in Glasgow; and she was a founder member of Bannal, a group of eight female singers specialising in Gaelic waulking songs. Her achievements have been recognised with an honorary doctorate from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and, in 2017, an OBE. As Dr Priscilla Scott remarks in her introduction to the present volume,

[1] Ethel Bassin, *The Old Songs of Skye: Frances Tolmie and her Circle*, ed. Derek Bowman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 95–115.

Campbell's Skye background and her devotion to the singing traditions of the Gael meant that 'it would be difficult to find someone more uniquely placed to have undertaken this project' (44).

This was, however, no small undertaking. In deciding to re-edit Tolmie's collection, Campbell had to choose between focusing solely upon Tolmie's songs and notes, or including all of the additional material and scholarly commentary contributed by Broadwood and her editorial team. Choosing the latter course, she then needed to recruit her own editorial committee. Dr Jo Miller, a former colleague of Campbell's at the RSC and herself a traditional musician, sensibly assesses Annie Gilchrist's contribution, noting how her system of modal analysis continued to influence scholarly understanding of traditional melodic structure for a considerable time (68–70). Gaelic singer and broadcaster Mary Ann Kennedy considers the manuscript evidence and the light it sheds both upon Tolmie's fieldwork practice and upon the decisions of the original editors (71–75); she compares Tolmie's transcriptions with wax-cylinder recordings of fourteen items recorded from Tolmie's singing by the redoubtable Marjory Kennedy-Fraser – recordings that illuminate the difficulty of accurately rendering the subtlety and warmth of traditional performance in written form (75–77); and finally, she provides an inventory of those recordings, held by the Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University (Appendix 3). Dr Priscilla Scott, whose doctoral dissertation discusses Tolmie and her contemporaries,[2] provides a warmly appreciative introduction in both Gaelic and English summarising Frances Tolmie's biography and describing the logistical challenges that faced the original publication (20–44). Ainsley Hamill, co-editor of the volume and a former singing student of Campbell's at the RSC, has overseen production of the musical examples.

Following a map and a selection of photographs, the songs themselves are grouped and presented in the same order as in the original publication, the great difference being that fuller Gaelic texts of all songs are now provided. The addition of three further songs from Tolmie's manuscripts is a welcome expansion of the original project, although it would have been good to know where and from whom Tolmie noted the second and third of these items, assuming she recorded such information. The third song, 'Ailein Duinn, ó-hì, shiùbhlainn leat!' (Song 108), is one that Tolmie contributed to Keith Norman MacDonald's *Gesto Collection*, and it shares some stanzas with two others in the Tolmie Collection, 'Ailein Duinn, beul a' mhànrain' (Song 48) and 'Shiùbhlainn, shiùbhlainn' (Song 67).[3]

There are four appendices. The first of these, entitled 'Sources of Gaelic Texts' (330–334), deserves some of our attention in light of Kenna Campbell's own comments. In her preface, she praises Tolmie for collecting 'both words and music, exactly as she had heard them from the folk around her, … [noting] where she had heard them, when and from whom, together with any additional information about the songs or the singers that caught her interest' and explains that 'the prime purpose of embarking on this new edition of the collection has been to recover these Gaelic texts and to present the songs as Frances learned them and noted them' (15). These remarks set out what appears to be a clear declaration of intent, namely, that the new edition will restore Tolmie's Gaelic texts in their entirety, and that the songs will thus represent what Tolmie heard 'from the folk around her'. Appendix 1 reveals that, in addition

[2] Priscilla Scott, 'With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause': Women in the Gaelic Movement, 1886–1912 (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2014).

[3] Keith Norman MacDonald (1997 [1895]), *The Gesto Collection of Highland Music* (Southend-on-Sea: Llanerch Press, 1997 [1895]), Appendix, p. 61. The online database Tobar an Dualchais (www.tobarandualchais.org) provides at least eleven performances of 'Ailein Duinn, an nì 's an nàire' (a more common title for Tolmie's Song 48) and at least twenty-seven of 'Ailein Duinn, ó-hì, shiùbhlainn leat' (Song 108).

to those songs reprinted as they originally appeared in *JFSS*, the texts to thirty-three songs have been restored, in whole or in part, by reference to the Tolmie MSS in the National Library of Scotland, and printed sources to which Tolmie had earlier contributed the songs in question, chiefly Keith Norman MacDonald's *Gesto Collection* (1895) and his *Puirt-à-Beul* (1901).

Appendix 1 further reveals, however, that nineteen of the Gaelic texts contain at least some material which cannot be linked to Tolmie's collecting. Consequently, some of the tunes given by Tolmie in *JFSS* are now associated – despite their ascription to specific informants – with hybridized texts combining the informant's words with additional text not provided by that informant.[4] Because issues of textual integrity, authenticity and 'ownership' are today important to both scholars and potential performers, the differentiation between the textual elements that Tolmie herself collected and those added from other sources must be clearly noted, either in notes adjacent to the song-texts themselves or in footnotes. While this has sometimes been done, many of these references are found only in Appendix 1, where they are easily overlooked.

We must of course acknowledge that many scholars – never mind singers – have taken a relaxed view of such hybridization. In Tolmie's day, textual elements were likely to be regarded as fungible, as evidenced by her own hybrid versions of three of these nineteen songs.[5] Both Tolmie herself and her original editors referred readers to published sources for versions of songs in the collection, clearly believing that one version of a text would do as well as another. The Rev. William Matheson, himself an important resource for Kenna Campbell, drew upon a variety of sources in his own singing – a traditional practice, to be sure, expedited in Matheson's time by the rapidly expanding corpus of materials, printed and recorded, available to him. In our own day, many singers do not hesitate to collate texts from a variety of sources and media, perhaps (and probably correctly) assuming that their audiences will not notice or care about such interpolations. Today's singers will no doubt be glad to have these hybrid texts, which are of sufficient length to support a convincing performance. Indeed, Campbell stated her intention 'to rewrite and reprint the collection in a format that was faithful to the original, but that would also satisfy the requirements of singers, musicians, teachers and students' (16). That the work is intended both as a work of scholarship and as a source for would-be performers is underlined by the fact that it is available not just in hardback but also in a wire-bound format for easy placement on a music stand.

For scholars, however, the ability to locate a given text or tune within a particular community or even a family tradition is important, not only because it allows us to appreciate the cultural heritage of that community at a given time, but because it helps us understand the organic process of oral transmission in the years before the wide availability of sound recordings and mass media overwhelmed that process. With our greater appreciation of the social context and shared meaning of cultural phenomena within specific communities, we have gained a greater respect for the integrity of individual representations of such phenomena, however fragmentary or otherwise altered by the vicissitudes of oral tradition they may be.

Unlike Marjory Kennedy Fraser's *Songs of the Hebrides*, Keith Norman MacDonald's *Gesto Collection* and many other productions of the same era, Tolmie's collection was not originally published as a resource for performance. Rather, as Mary Ann Kennedy points out, it was intended 'purely for the preservation of what she heard, with no thought to self-promotion' (72). Although

[4] Songs 10, 21, 31, 51, 64, 65, 67, 73, 85, 86, 87, 89, 91, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99 and 104.
[5] Songs 21, 67 and 89.

many collectors and editors down to our own time have adapted, arranged and re-purposed Tolmie's material for commercial consumption, Tolmie and her editors clearly intended the 1911 *Journal* as a work of scholarship. As such, it has been a crucially important source for those investigating Gaelic song and the communities that nurtured it in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Scholarly veneration for Tolmie's work reflects the fact that her transcriptions genuinely represent the songs she collected from people she knew personally – and that, in those cases where she included material from other sources, she was careful to include references to those sources next to the items in question. The current volume, unfortunately, often requires the reader to turn to Appendix 1 in order to investigate the additional sources used by the editor in reconstructing some of these texts. While most of the necessary clues necessary for such investigation have been provided, we may wonder how many readers will take the trouble to follow them.

As for the other appendices, the second (335–37) contains George Henderson's transcription of a South Uist version of 'Cumha Sheathain' (Song 51), originally printed in *JFSS* over Tolmie's objection, and now fortunately replaced – in the main – by the version Tolmie collected from Mary Ross in Skye.[6] Appendix 3, as noted, usefully inventories Kennedy-Fraser's wax-cylinder recordings of Frances Tolmie singing fourteen of the songs in the collection. Appendix 4, however, is a mystery, consisting of a transcription of the late Rev. William Matheson's performance of 'Uamh an Òir' as found on Tobar an Dualchais.[7] While four fragments of 'Uamh an Òir' appear in Tolmie's collection (Nos. 1–4), the likely connection between these and Matheson's version is not discussed.

Technical aspects of this publication are disappointing. For a scholarly publication, which this purports to be, a sound critical apparatus is essential to future research. A general index would have been helpful, especially given the number of people involved in editing this collection over the past century and the wide variety of topics, themes, concepts, and additional sources they discussed. For the same reason, consistent and accurate citation of relevant sources, linked to a comprehensive bibliography, would have helped greatly. Unfortunately, the bibliography amounts to little more than a background reading list, as it omits many of the sources mentioned in the book itself by members of either editorial team. But while the lack of apparatus may frustrate scholars, it may matter less if the principal audience for this book was in fact imagined to be students and singers, as opposed to academics.

As regards the editor's sourcing of supplementary material, a curious question arises in connection with two of the Fenian lays that Tolmie collected from Margaret MacLeod in Portree in 1870. Of one of these, 'Laoidh Oscair' (Song 87), *JFSS* gave only two stanzas. Kenna Campbell tells us (275) that she has restored a further two stanzas from Tolmie's manuscripts, and added three more from *Leabhar na Féinne.*[8] The question arises because, if *Leabhar na Féinne* was indeed her source, she has taken

[6] The caveat is needed, because while the restored version of 'Cumha Sheathain' contains twenty-one stanzas that Tolmie recorded from Mary Ross, five additional stanzas have been interpolated from a version collected by Mary MacKellar in Lochaber, and another two from *Carmina Gadelica* – meaning that Mary Ross's stanzas account for only three-quarters of those represented here. See Mary MacKellar, 'The Waulking Day', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 13 (1886–87): 206; and Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* (Floris Press, 2006 [1900–1971], vol. 5, 66.

[7] Although stating that it was transcribed from a 1979 recording of William Matheson available on Tobar an Dualchais (Track ID 68553), the transcription in Appendix 4 is identical – apart from an obvious error in bar 4 – to that of a 1969 recording by Matheson that was printed in *Tocher*; see 'Three Fairy Songs', *Tocher* 47 (1993–94): 280–81; also Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 86909.

[8] John Francis Campbell, *Leabhar na Féinne* (London: Spottiswoode & Co, 1872.), 193. J. F. Campbell's source was the Gillies Collection (1786).

some odd liberties with it. While *LF* stanza 54 refers to an incident having taken place in Dundalk in Ireland, the corresponding stanza here relocates the incident to Dùn Sgàthaich on the Sleat peninsula – a place associated not with Oscar or any other Fenian character, but rather with the Ulster Cycle, where it is the site of Cú Chulainn's training by the female warrior Sgàthach. Comparing stanzas 6 and 7 with *LF* stanzas 63 and 62 reveals additional divergences. These editorial changes are so inexplicable that one wonders if these three stanzas (2, 6 and 7) might have come not from *LF,* but from Kenna Campbell's own Skye tradition – a legitimate source, especially given the locus of Tolmie's collecting and Campbell's own background. But if that is the case, why not say so? And might a similar explanation account for the odd change made in Donald Archie MacDonald's transcription of stanzas from 'Laoidh Fhraoich' (Song 86) as sung by the Rev. William Matheson, seven of which Campbell has added to the four stanzas recorded from Margaret MacLeod? Where MacDonald has transcribed Matheson singing 'Fraoch mac Fhiuthaich' (which he translates 'son of Fidach'), Kenna Campbell has changed the hero's patronymic to 'mac Idhaidh', while retaining MacDonald's translation.[9]

Many of the problems highlighted here can no doubt be attributed to lack of editorial support. The task Kenna Campbell set herself was a daunting one, given her two-fold objective of completing the long-wished-for restoration of Tolmie's Gaelic texts in order to 'present the songs as Frances learned them and noted them' while also creating a practical song collection that would 'satisfy the requirements of singers, musicians, teachers and students'. An experienced academic editor might have helped her navigate the difficulty of serving these two very different audiences, perhaps by suggesting a different approach to the hybridizing of some texts which, while the result may suit the practical needs of singers, creates unnecessary confusion for those who might have assumed that all of the texts were collected by Tolmie. If the work were solely intended for scholars, it would ideally have gone through a rigorous process of peer review and revision followed by professional layout, copy-editing, formatting, and proof-reading – a process that would have corrected many errors and inconsistencies and made the text easier to read. Unfortunately, even academic presses these days commonly expect authors themselves to master all of those technical skills and submit camera-ready copy – a daunting task that must have been especially challenging in this case. Acair, a commercial publisher specialising in Gaelic and in children's books, may not have been equipped to offer Campbell the sort of

Fig. 1 Advertisement for a promotional event in Skye, September 2023.

[9] Tobar an Dualchais, Track ID 17302; *Tocher* 35: 292–97. MacDonald's English translation of these seven stanzas is used without acknowledgement.

support she needed. The element of time may also have been a factor: a planned launch and concert at Celtic Connections in 2023, to be followed by a series of promotional events throughout Scotland (see *Fig. 1*), may have added pressure to bring the volume out.

Kenna Campbell and her editorial team are to be congratulated for what was undoubtedly a labour of love. Their diligence in researching Tolmie's manuscripts and the wax-cylinder recordings – research long overdue – greatly enriches our appreciation not just of the songs Tolmie recorded, but of the exemplary fieldwork practice that put her informants at ease and acknowledged them as partners in her collecting project. Frances Tolmie, honest and self-effacing, made no promises that she did not keep, and insisted to her first editors that the work represent her values. This new edition respects and honours Tolmie's industry, and provides singers and those with a general interest in Gaelic song a further resource that they will certainly welcome. Scholars, too, will find much to approve, even if the best guidance for them might be 'handle with care'.

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VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN

***Understanding Scotland Musically: Folk, Tradition and Policy*. Simon McKerrell and Gary West, eds. London: Routledge, 2019. 312 pp., maps, illus. Hardback and e-book. ISBN 9780367884192. £116.00 (hardback); £34.39 (e-book).**

Music can be used both to express community identity and to construct it – a fact clearly understood by the editors of this book. Simon McKerrell and Gary West, both of whom are bagpipers as well as academics, have studied the social impact of music in Scotland, and have written on the constitutive role of music in making and sustaining communities. Both see themselves as musical activists as well as commentators. They lay out their editorial line in the introductory essay, arguing that traditional music is the beating cultural heart that both expresses and constructs Scottish historical and contemporary identity. It also seems clear that if one had to choose between the terms 'traditional' and 'folk', the former might connect more sympathetically with the idea of 'civic' rather than 'ethnic' nationalism, a key idea in contemporary Scottish politics.

If the essays which followed simply fell into line with this set-up, this would be an interesting book about the role of traditional music in early twenty-first century Scotland, but a less interesting book than it actually is. The introductory essay provides a proposal which contributors are invited to debate, either by refining core points or by providing qualifications. *Understanding Scotland Musically* therefore opens up a conversation; and while other approaches might have yielded something different, the transparency of this approach leaves space for further discussion.

Preceded by a conference that took place in 2014, the year of the Scottish independence referendum, the book explicitly positions itself as a contribution to the debate about the place of Scotland within a changing UK and global context. Four main sections group the essays thematically into the political contexts of music making ('Policy and Practice'), defining what Scottish music comprises ('Porosity, Genres, Hybridity'), global interactions ('Home and Host'), and musical historicism ('The Past in the Present'). Of these, the sections on politics, definitions, and history provide the three main pillars of the book's argument overall.

The first section, 'Policy and Practice', deals with the political contexts and implications of traditional music. Of necessity, this discussion takes place within the long shadow of the 20th century folk revival, in which the left-leaning politics of that period contributed to a recurring unresolved tension between local Scottish cultural identity and international affinities. Simon McKerrell's essay, 'Traditional Music and Cultural Sustainability in Scotland', extends his case that traditional music is uniquely equipped to building a 'sustainable and authentic' national culture, while also pointing out that simply positioning traditional music as a kind of non-tangible cultural heritage (using this UNESCO terminology) underestimates both its popularity and economic value. He cites statistics on concert going to suggest that, in the Scottish context, traditional music is also a kind of popular music – an argument he also used in his 2016 textbook, *Focus: Scottish Traditional Music*.[1] Concert attendance figures are, however, only one index of engagement, and perhaps a rather crude one at that. What about streaming? What about those less formal places where people listen to a more diverse range of music in their everyday lives? However, this section isn't simply about description and neutral analysis; this is academic research as political intervention – the public policy decisions that support music infrastructures. McKerrell is asking the reader to consider whether all music is equally deserving of Scottish public funding. On the assumption that other kinds of popular music have a stronger marketplace infrastructure (a questionable assumption, perhaps), he implies that art music

[1] London: Routledge, 2016, 87.

has received more than its fair share of public funds. As a traditional musician, McKerrell is making a strong pitch for his corner; and although more might be said about the role of art music in a diverse national cultural scene and particularly in music education, he has a point: traditional music deserves its share of funding. He rightly points out that Tobar an Dualchais, a critical national traditional music archive, deserves long-term financial stability.[2]

Other contributions to this section include Josephine Miller ('"A sense of who we are": the cultural value of community-based traditional music in Scotland'), who writes on the social inclusivity and community-building fostered by the Glasgow fiddle workshop, a great project supported privately through fees and some charitable giving. Returning to the issue of public vs. private funding, David Francis ('The emergence of the "traditional arts" in Scottish cultural policy') examines the historic funding bias towards art music as expressed in the levels of public funding for national companies, and discusses the recent emergence of groups such as the Traditional Music Forum and TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland) to network and advocate for traditional repertoires. Further case studies consider how publicly-funded national companies have also engaged with traditional music. In her essay, '"Eun Bheag Chanaidh" – Where the Gaelic arts and non-traditional theatre meet', Fiona Mackenzie describes her collaboration with the National Theatre of Scotland to develop a project, based on Margaret Fay Shaw's collection of traditional Gaelic song in the archives of Canna House, aimed at making Shaw and her collection known to a wider public through film and music theatre. Finally in this section, Mairi McFadyen ('Referendum Reflections: Traditional music and the performance of politics in the campaign for Scottish independence') comments on the 2014 Independence Referendum and its impact on traditional music infrastructure and debates, including the TradYES movement's emphasis on civic over ethnic nationalism (63). As a whole, this section helps the reader to understand how Scotland's traditional music community is positioning itself as the preferred bidder for cultural support from the Scottish national government.

The second section, 'Porosity, Genres, Hybridity', focuses on definitions of traditional music, assuming that such definitions are at the core of what constitutes Scottish music. As flagged in the book's subtitle, the relationship of 'folk' to 'traditional' music is an important one. There is, however, a significant difference between professionalised, concert-format music and amateur community-based participatory forms, even when the latter may benefit from professional leadership. Arguably, 'folk music' can be seen as a more commercial and contemporary category, while 'traditional music' might be thought to have a more participatory and historically-orientated aesthetic. But it is not this simple, and contributors to this section understand that these are unstable categories. Joshua Dickson ('The changing nature of conceptualisation and authenticity among Scottish traditional musicians') writes from his experience redesigning the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland syllabus in a rapidly changing post-folk-revival environment. Dickson suggests that although traditional music might be thought to be 'largely inseparable from the concept of place, or ethnic or culture provenance' (89), students need skills that will allow them to engage with a wide range of creative opportunities, not simply in Scotland. Accordingly, the RCS in 2014–15 rebranded its 'Scottish' music programmes as degrees in 'traditional' music, thus downplaying the importance of one singular national identity. In her essay, Meghan McAvoy ('Slaying the tartan monster: Hybridisation in recent Scottish music') circles round the music of the fusion trad-rock group Treacherous Orchestra, discussing how the participatory, working-class aesthetic of mid-century revival 'folk' music has accommodated itself to the demands of commercial,

[2] Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o' Riches, www.tobarandualchais.co.uk.

professional performance. Folk music, she argues, 'is an increasingly upwardly mobile genre' (101), with contemporary folk music including much that is newly composed rather than traditional. In her analysis of how Scottish ballad culture is used in the National Theatre of Scotland's 2011 production of David Greig's *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*, Steph Harrop observes that, given so much that is imagined and fantastical in communities built upon ballad singing, this production's use of traditional song allows audiences to reflect upon the function of traditional music in telling and reimagining contemporary identity. These three essays all grapple, in different ways, with the complex relationship between 'folk' music and 'traditional' music. While the forum in classical Rome served the needs of both commerce and politics, in contemporary Scotland music seems to play a similar role.

The next essays in this section expand the boundaries of how traditional Scottish music is defined. David McGuiness ('The problem with "traditional"') is an academic and a historically-informed musician whose group Concerto Caledonia has transformed the recorded repertoire of 18th- and 19th-century Scottish art music. McGuiness energetically pushes against the editorial line of the book by drawing attention to the historical influences on Scottish music by wider regional art music traditions, particularly in periods when much of what is now considered 'traditional' was emerging and becoming canonical. He clearly demonstrates that there is more than one tradition in Scottish music, and that historical genre interactions give important insights not just into the culture of the past, but more generally into the fluid processes of listening and response that produce musical innovation. As if to illustrate this point, Phil Alexander's lively essay ('Salsa Celtica's Great Scottish Latin Adventure – an insider's view') considers Latin-Scottish fusion – a contemporary example of musical hybridity that reinforces the argument that music creativity is radically mobile. In what is one of the best lines in the book, Alexander asks, 'how, then, to approach the minefield of belonging and social identity surrounding a Jewish Londoner playing salsa piano in Scotland?' (149). Together, the five essays in this section show how 'tradition' in music, unconstrained by national boundaries, is constantly reconfigured by new influences and creative experiments. Understanding Scotland musically might encourage us to understand the capacity that this small nation has for imaginatively combining indigenous traditions with externally inspired innovations.

The third section of this book, 'Home and Host', is comparatively underdeveloped. While the two contributions grouped under that heading – Morag Grant's discussion of emigrant song collections and Patricia Ballantyne's exploration of Highland dance around the world – are interesting, the section as a whole would be stronger if it included consideration of how global music-making impacts Scottish music at home. Readers who feel that something more needs to be said about this global dimension – particularly, the importance of popular music forms – receive some clues from essays in other sections, as well as from Simon Frith's 'Afterword'.

The fourth and final major section in this book examines how the past is in dialogue with the present, with patterns of curation telling us about who we are, and helping to shape where we are going. Danni Glover ('Locating identity in the aural aspects of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*') discusses how the English ballad collector Thomas Percy (1729–1811) pressed the Scots to consider what the border ballad repertoire meant to their national history, thereby encouraging the transformation of a fluid, oral repertoire into a literary culture of national songs. Stuart Eydmann ('Routes, roles and folk on the edge: Scotland's instrumental music through the revival lens') muses on the methodological challenges he has encountered in studying the organology (musical instruments) habitually associated with Scottish traditional music. Because 'revival' typically involves reassessing the meaning of what is being revived, the process of such revivals has

tended to change both performance styles and repertoire across all the major 'traditional' instruments. Tracing such change in the context of a single instrument, Ronnie Gibson ('Links with the past in the present-day performance of Scottish fiddle music; or, the historicity of tradition') describes the slow consolidation of historically informed performance practice in fiddling as a gradual process in which individual intervention matters. Comparing publications by historical innovators such as the Gow family (18th and early 19th century) and James Scott Skinner (1843–1927), Gibson demonstrates the slow evolution of traditional fiddling through lineages of pedagogy. Taken together, Eydmann's and Gibson's chapters allow readers to consider how processes of evolution, whether part of a generational process or of a wider cultural reassessment, inform cultural change. Finally, Karen McAulay's chapter ('Wynds, vennels and dual carriageways: The changing nature of Scottish music') dives into MacAulay's forensic knowledge of printed music books to demonstrate that the traditional music repertoire owes as much to music literacy as it does to oral practice, and to question what is meant by the term 'authentic' – a recurring topic ever since controversies about traditional music first arose in the 18th century. Taken as a whole, this section of the book helps readers understand how what is 'traditional' encompasses a tension between innovation and a desire to fix canons – a tension that is surely also an aspect of national identity. Grasping this seeming contradiction may help us to appreciate that Scots – whether in the 18th century or today – wish to be modern and not simply the curators of the dust of their ancestors, and enable us to understand that traditional music can be both ancient and modern.

In the book's not-quite-final chapter ('Understanding Scotland musically: Reflections on place, war and nation'), Gary West offers both an editorial comment and a postscript to the section on historicism. West's essay is overtly political, asking 'what is Scotland?' (241), and wondering what modern Scots might learn about themselves from examining historical repertoires. Specifically, West examines how the Scottish piping repertoire has responded to its military role, dwelling on the music's affective power to mark and process the grief and trauma of war, and reflecting on contemporary Scottish distress at entanglements in British imperial wars. Among other sources, West cites Benedict Anderson's exploration of community historical memory in *Imagined Communities* (241);[3] but rather than drawing upon print media, as Anderson does, West demonstrates how a soundtrack of piping laments and battle-commemoration marches has contributed to Scots' shared image of themselves in relation to Britain's military engagements.

Simon Frith is a very shrewd choice for the 'Afterword', as few have written so profoundly on the sociology of popular music and its importance in modern life. Frith's seminal book *Performing Rites* analysed the construction of and apparently exclusionary categories of art, folk and popular music, suggesting that these mapped onto distinctive material realities and value systems associated with different communities of practice.[4] One might argue that ideas of 'tradition' can cross between all three categories, although this book has connected it primarily with 'folk' music. Although Frith is carefully non-political, he thinks about the role of popular music in modern Scottish identity, drawing attention to what he calls the 'historical ideology' embedded within traditional music practice (257). He generously – and correctly – expresses appreciation for the care taken by all the contributors to be transparent in their own positionality on national politics.

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[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1983.

[4] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

History does matter to national identity: we look back in order to look forward. Frith suggests that 'traditional' musicians are concerned with the past to a degree that other kinds of musicians are not. Storytelling entangles performers in questions of narrative point of view; there are events, and there is a plotline which reflects decisions to select and reject, to connect and to decouple. In performance, and clearly also in research practice, any definition of 'traditional' music requires taking a stance on what the past means to the present, and on how that meaning might shape the future of a community.

Such debates raise questions – not fully resolved in this book – about whether tradition can be exclusionary as well as inclusive. A gap in the book's discussion of identity is its lack of attention to religious and spiritual music – an omission that underestimates the historical role of that kind of music in Scottish cultural identity. The choices made by the editors, therefore, suggest how we might understand Scotland's *secular* identity: not unreasonable, but not the whole story. National histories intersect with individual histories in ways that may produce a wide variety of musical expression. In the context of debates about Scottish independence, 'traditional music' may have become a shibboleth of national belonging in ways that do not always reflect the experience of every Scot living in Scotland. This book helpfully demonstrates that there is ample room for continuing discussion, debate, and even disagreement.

JANE PETTEGREE

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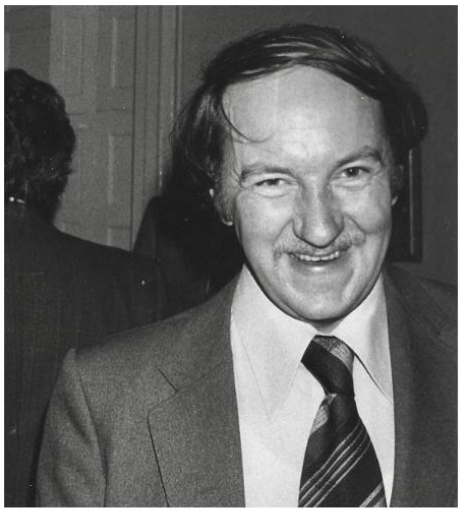
Ian A. Fraser, 1941–2025

JACOB KING

Ian Alasdair Fraser (27 November 1941 – 11 June 2025) was for many years head of the Scottish Place-Name Survey in the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, and played a central role in the development of Scottish toponymy.



Ian Fraser, School of Scottish Studies, 1980. (Photo: Virginia Blankenhorn)

Ian was born in Inverness in sad circumstances, with his mother, Lexi, dying on the day he was born. He was brought up in a croft on Mihol Hill, Gairloch, by his father Murdo and his two aunts, Mary and Johann (after whom he would name his two daughters). This was a Gaelic-speaking household and community. His early life gave him a deep familiarity with both the landscape of the west Highlands and the everyday use of Gaelic in naming and describing that landscape. At the age of twelve he went to Dingwall academy as a boarder, spending his summers in Strontian. At eighteen he went to study geography at the University of Edinburgh.

After graduating, Ian taught briefly in a high school, but in 1965 he took up duties as a lecturer and research assistant at the School of Scottish Studies, where he was attached to the Scottish Place-Name Survey. Ian was well-qualified for this task, not only for his native fluency in Gaelic and his geography degree, but also for his warm and modest demeanour and ability to put those he talked to at ease. At that time the Survey, directed by WFH (Bill) Nicolaisen, was concentrating on recording names from oral tradition in areas where Gaelic was close to extinction. Ian joined Nicolaisen on extensive fieldwork, beginning with Lewis in 1966. Over the years Ian would cover much of Highland Scotland, most notably Lewis, Wester Ross and Arran. In 1968 became assistant lecturer; and following Nicolaisen's departure in 1969, he became Director of the Survey. In 1976, Ian and his new wife Jean spent six months in Nova Scotia under the Commonwealth Scholarship programme, where Ian researched place-names in the Gaelic community of Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Ian's work was defined by rigorous field methodology. He believed that the most reliable way to collect place-names was to begin with places immediately surrounding an informant's home and work gradually outward. Ian's method was to record an interview on a reel-to-reel tape machine as he and his informant sat in front of an Ordnance Survey map. As the informant named a particular place or geographical feature, Ian would announce a number which he would then write on the map itself. Thus it is possible today, if one has the map and tape, to follow the place-name identifications in the conversation. This practice led not only to detailed repertoires of place-names but also to stories, folklore, songs and memories of traditional life. Many of these interviews can be accessed online through the Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches website, which contains some 500 of Ian's recordings.

In addition to his own collecting, Ian sent maps and exercise books out to individuals to do their own field research. Much of this concerned field-names, not just in the Highlands but in the Lowlands too. Some of this work, such as that by Nancy Dorian, is of the utmost importance, with Gaelic forms

of settlement names of the northeast coast not recorded elsewhere. Neither the maps nor the notebooks are available online, but both can be accessed in person in the School of Scottish Studies Archives at Edinburgh University.

Beyond the university, Ian promoted awareness of place-names through frequent media appearances. In the 1980s he was a regular contributor to the Gaelic radio series *Cò Cuin Càite*, and later he appeared on the BBC Alba television programme *Tìr is Teanga,* bringing scholarly insight to a wide audience.

Ian was also active in the institutional life of onomastics. He served as an early secretary of the Council for Name Studies, which later became the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland, and he was deeply involved in the Scottish Place-Name Society from its foundation in 1996, acting as its first convenor and later as editor of *Scottish Place-Name News*. He also supported the establishment of the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* as a member of its editorial advisory board. In addition, he played a central part in the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, serving as secretary, president, and editor of its journal, *Northern Studies*.

Ian's own publications reflect both detailed local work and broader historical analysis. They include studies of place-names in Gairloch, Illeray, and Eilean nan Ròn, as well as influential articles on Pictish and Norse elements, agricultural vocabulary, and the historical geography of Argyll. Most notably, in 1999 Ian worked up the research he had done in and about Arran into a short book called simply *The Place-Names of Arran* (Arran Society of Glasgow), and it is hoped that this book will one day provide the foundation of a full survey of that island. A full bibliography of Ian's output will be published in due course on the Scottish Place-name Survey website.

Ian was a dedicated teacher and mentor. He was instrumental in introducing place-name studies into the undergraduate degree in Scottish Ethnology at Edinburgh and supervised most of the postgraduate research in the subject in Scotland during the later twentieth century. His students, among them Simon Taylor, Anke-Beate Stahl, the late Doreen Waugh and myself, have gone on to make valuable contributions to the field. For a long period, Ian was the only university teacher of Scottish toponymy, and his role in nurturing a new generation of scholars was decisive.

I first met Ian in 1993, when I was eighteen. Ian was my director of studies, and his world view, his knowledge, and his understanding of the natural and linguistic landscape helped kindle my emerging interest in the riches of onomastics. I am grateful to Ian for infecting me with the place-name bug and setting my professional life on its current course.

Ian's scholarship was inseparable from his character. He possessed the Highlander's love of anecdote: he once told me of an ancestor of his who, having killed someone in a theological argument, went on the run for many years. Colleagues and students alike recall his patience, his intellectual generosity, his quiet humour – and his love of light aircraft. His ability to listen, his respect for his informants, and his encouragement of students created an atmosphere in which knowledge could be shared freely and warmly.

With Ian's passing, Scottish name-studies has lost a figure who not only safeguarded a vast body of oral tradition but also ensured that the subject became a recognised academic discipline in Scotland. His legacy endures in the archives he helped to build, in the students he guided, and in the flourishing of toponymy as an academic discipline to which he devoted his life.

A chuid do Phàrras dha.

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