



**HISTORY TEACHING REVIEW**

**YEAR BOOK**

**2018**



**THE YEARBOOK OF THE SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF  
HISTORY**

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Professor Dauvit Broun** is Professor of Scottish History (History) at Glasgow University. He is the Editor of the Scottish Historical Review (since 2003) and the Convener of the Scottish History Society. He has been involved in a number of digital projects including **The Paradox of Medieval Scotland: The Breaking of Britain**. Dauvit has published a number of books and articles on Medieval Scottish History. These include Broun, D. and Tucker, J. *Scribes and Royal Authority. Early Charters from the National Records of Scotland.*: (2017) *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III.* (2007) Broun, D. and Harrison, J. *The Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A stratigraphic edition. Vol 1, Introduction and facsimile edition.* (2007)

**Professor Ewen Cameron** is the Sir William Fraser Professor of Scottish History and Palaeography, and Head of School at Edinburgh University. He studied History and International Relations at the University of Aberdeen before completing a PhD, on Government policy in the Scottish Highlands, c.1880-1925, at the University of Glasgow. He was appointed to a lectureship in Scottish History at Edinburgh in 1993 and was promoted to the Fraser Chair in 2012. He has published a number of works including: Ewen A. Cameron and Annie Tindley (eds), *Dr Lachlan Grant of Ballachulish, 1871-1945* (2015) *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (2013) Ewen Cameron, *Impaled Upon the Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (2010) *The Life and Times of Charles Fraser Mackintosh, Crofter MP* (2000). *Land for the People' The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c.1880-1930* (1996).

**Dr Julian Goodare** gained both of his degrees from the University of Edinburgh in the 1980s, and was a postdoctoral fellow in the University in the early 1990s. He has held lectureships in the University of Wales, Lampeter, and in the University of Sheffield, and a Visiting Fellowship in the University of London. In 1998 He was appointed Lecturer in Scottish History in the University of Edinburgh and was promoted to Reader in 2006. He was Publication Secretary of the Scottish History Society from 1989 to 2002. He was Director of the Survey of Scottish Witchcraft which went online in 2003.

**Laura Doak** is a research student at Glasgow University. She is currently researching the changes within the political culture of early modern Scotland, from the assassination of the archbishop of St. Andrews in May 1679 until the earl of Argyll's ill-fated rebellion of 1685 and its immediate aftermath

**Professor Diana Paton** is the William Robertson Professor of History at Edinburgh University. Originally from London, Diana completed her first degree at Warwick University, followed by a PhD at Yale University. In 2000 she became lecturer in history at Newcastle University. In 2015 and then Professor of Caribbean History in 2015. She has published a number of works on the Caribbean: *The Cultural Politics of Obeah: Religion, Colonialism and Modernity in the Caribbean World.* (2015.) *Obeah and Other Powers: The Politics of Caribbean Religion and Healing.* Edited with Maarit Forde. (2012.) *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World.* Edited with Pamela Scully. (2005). *No Bond But the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870.* (2004.)

**Dr Martin Macgregor** is a Senior Lecturer in Scottish History at Glasgow University. His interests lie in the history of the Scottish Highlands and Islands - to be more precise, Gaelic-speaking Scotland or 'Gaelic Scotland' - in all periods from around 1266 to the present, with special emphasis upon 1328 to 1625. He has published a number of articles and books on the subject. He is also the General Editor, with Prof Thomas Clancy, of *The History of Gaelic Scotland*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming) and the Researcher/presenter of *Bheir Dhomh Sgeul air Clann Ghriogair* ('Tell me news of Clan Gregor'): four-part radio series broadcast on BBC's Gaelic radio channel Ràidio nan Gàidheal, January/February 2014;

**Dr Joseph Smith** is a Lecturer at the University of Stirling. He moved to the Stirling School of Education in 2015, following spells at Edge Hill and Liverpool Hope Universities. Before moving into higher education, he worked for nine years as a history teacher in secondary schools, with the last five as Head of Department. He has written for a general and academic audience and has worked for the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) as the Senior Lead Practitioner in History.

## **Editorial**

### **Chris Mackay**

It has been some time since the last edition of the Year Book. For a number of reasons it was not possible to publish. It has always been my intention during my time as President of SATH to attempt a relaunch. I have always found the yearbook to be of great value for a number of reasons. It provided a valuable bridge between the classroom and the university. It allowed class teachers to access some of the research currently taking place. It also contained a number of articles that were of use in the classroom. Some of my colleagues simply read it for interest. At a time of shrinking budgets and increasing pressure in the classroom I hope that you will find the Year Book of use.

## **In Search Of Robert Bruce Without Barbour Or Barrow As A Guide: Words And Deeds.**

**Dauvit Broun**

Geoffrey Barrow found Barbour's vivid portrayal of Robert Bruce irresistible, and provided his own compellingly written vision of Robert Bruce the human being. He recognised, however, that ignoring Barbour was a legitimate option—although with inevitable consequences. As he himself put it:<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to strip away the legend surrounding some notable figure from the distant past, but clearing away the legend does not necessarily reveal the man. ... To some extent our view of Bruce will always depend on how much credence we give to Barbour. If we choose to ignore Barbour altogether, as we may, we shall be left with a jejune assortment of glimpses in record and chronicle, and a few authentic utterances. These might carry more weight than Barbour, but they would not add up to a portrait.

If you remove Barbour's account from the picture, you are, indeed, left with very little. Nonetheless, I think it is useful—indeed, essential—to set Barbour aside if we wish to attempt as historians to find Robert Bruce the person. Barbour's *Bruce* is essentially a literary work, written in 1375/6 a couple of generations after the events he describes. It is precisely because it is a piece of literature, and so well written, that characters and events are brought to life so convincingly—much as they would be in a top quality film. The discipline of history, at its most precise, however, is concerned with what ideas and insights are inspired by contemporary evidence—the texts and artefacts produced at the time, and interpreted in the light of our understanding of their immediate context. Seen in this light, Barbour's *Bruce* is still an invaluable source, but for the way Robert I was regarded in the 1370s, not for how he was as a person or what he did during his reign.

I will attempt in what follows to give a glimpse of Robert Bruce through his own deeds and words. The material to hand is, of course, hopelessly deficient if we wish to understand something as complex and wonderful as the human personality. Again, we would do much

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<sup>1</sup> G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 1st edn (London 1965), 431; 4th edn (Edinburgh 2005), 405.

better to write a work of historical fiction or some other genre that allows for the full creative range to explore the depths of human experience. History as a discipline cannot do this. In the absence of private diaries or correspondence, it is typically extremely difficult to penetrate beneath the norms and conventions of our sources, and of society itself, and bring an individual person into view in the middle ages. Thinking back to Barrow, it is striking that his book, as reflected in its title, is not a biography in the standard sense, but combines Robert Bruce with a political idea—the community of the realm—that Barrow regarded as central for understanding Bruce's life and times.

What, then, do we find if we take our cue not from Barbour or Barrow, but from 'a jejune assortment of glimpses in record and chronicle', to quote Barrow himself? You will be glad to know that I have no intention of trawling through even a small sample of these glimpses. Instead I am going to focus on one particular deed—or, rather, policy—and one particular text. Both were dramatic, and subverted convention. And it is precisely because they subverted convention that I think that, through them, we can glimpse Robert Bruce the individual. Bruce was, no doubt, much more than a daring innovator inspired by his single-minded vision of being king of Scots. The creativity, opportunism and pragmatic determination of the man, however, is what shines out—and are the only aspects of his personality that can be most clearly revealed by fixing our gaze on contemporary sources. Not only is Bruce highly unusual, allowing us to glimpse the man himself, but he faced an unprecedented situation which required him to break convention and innovate if he was to succeed. No other king of Scots seized the throne in the face of foreign occupation and strong domestic opposition; it could therefore be argued that few other people, if any, could have risen to this challenge and established their rule across the kingdom as Robert Bruce did. On the other hand, few people, if any, had such an opportunity (if we can call it that) to show their mettle.

Robert Bruce did not begin his reign by breaking the mould. Instead, he attempted to assert his kingship, in conventional fashion, on the battlefield at Methven (1306). This had disastrous consequences, of course, forcing him to flee for his life. When he returned in 1307, however, he threw out the rulebook of warfare and embarked on a policy of avoiding pitched battles and of destroying any castle he captured—except those on the western seaboard which guarded the sea-lanes to Ireland. Battles and castles were the stuff of kingship; it may seem strange, therefore, that someone attempting to assert their kingship against so much opposition should conduct so unkingly a policy. He laid himself open to a charge of acting no



differently from the leader of a band of outlaws, skulking in the countryside and striking only when it was safe to do so.

His policy, however, had a ruthlessly pragmatic logic. He knew the king of England was bound to lead an army to crush him—as indeed happened in 1307, 1310 and 1314. He knew that this invading force would be many times greater than anything he could put on the field. To give battle would be to risk probable defeat. But he also knew that large armies cannot campaign for very long before want of money and supplies would force them home. The only way that the king of England could maintain his hold on Scottish territory was by garrisoning castles and working with Bruce's Scottish enemies. If Bruce, once he had overcome his main domestic opponents, could survive each invasion and destroy castles, the infrastructure of the king of England's control would gradually be eroded, and Bruce's enemies would lose their main hope of recovery.

Bruce rode his luck. The first invasion in 1307 fizzled out after Edward I died within sight of Scotland. This gave Bruce the opportunity to destroy the powerbase of his most formidable Scottish enemies in the north. Much of Scotland south of the Tay, however, was still controlled by the king of England's forces when Edward II led an army north in September 1310. Again Bruce rode his luck: a fleet attacking him from Ireland failed to land in Ayr due to an autumn storm, leaving him with only Edward II's main army to keep a wary eye on. Edward got no further north than Linlithgow, and headed south, staying for most of 1311 in Berwick before returning to the south of England. By the time Edward II led another army north in 1314, nearly all the remaining castles had been destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

It was in 1314, however, that the unyielding determination and boldness of Bruce's policy showed no limits. It was one thing to destroy run-of-the-mill castles. It was quite another to destroy the three most powerful royal castles in the realm, steeped as they were in royal history. The significance of this is emphasised by David Cornell in a recent article:<sup>3</sup>

These three [Edinburgh, Roxburgh and Stirling] were different to all other castles Bruce had slighted, being the chief royal castles of the Scottish kingdom,

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<sup>2</sup> Colm McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland, 1306–1328* (East Linton 1997), esp. 47–53 for Edward's campaign of 1310–11.

<sup>3</sup> David Cornell, 'A kingdom cleared of castles: the role of the castle in the campaigns of Robert Bruce', *Scottish Historical Review* 87 (2008) 233–57, at 249.

formidable stone structures which were well-sited and known throughout Scotland and England. Edinburgh and Roxburgh in particular were steeped in the history of the Scottish Crown and were two of the most emphatic physical symbols of royal power. ... The would-be king of Scotland destroying the chief royal castles of his own kingdom demonstrates the great depth of his commitment to this policy.

In short, it is as if Bruce had blown up Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Holyrood House. He even had a special demolition squad ready and waiting to move in as soon as each castle was taken. In the case of Edinburgh and Stirling the wall and tower were mined, bringing the entire structure to the ground. It did not matter that kings of Scots had lived and died there. Nothing would stand in Bruce's way if he deemed it a risk to his kingship, even if that meant redefining and reshaping Scottish kingship itself.

Finally, I would like to consider Bruce as revealed by the nearest we can get to his own words. A letter by Bruce to Edward II, attempting to initiate peace negotiations, has long been known. But until recently only an incomplete copy was thought to have survived. Unfortunately the dating clause at the end was missing. This shortcoming has now been rectified by the discovery of another, more accurate copy, complete with dating clause and punctuation.<sup>4</sup> This reveals that the letter was sent from Kildrum (now part of Cumbernauld) on 1 October 1310. This was at the very moment when Bruce was facing the first serious invasion by Edward II, who had a couple of days earlier entered Clydesdale and pitched camp at Biggar. Bruce cannot have written the letter himself, of course, but it was presumably crafted according to his precise instructions. It therefore allows us to see Bruce facing his most severe test after 1307, and gauge the image he wished to present publicly while he was avoiding battle and simply hoping to weather the storm. By proposing peace, he was at least playing for time. This is what the letter says (translated from Latin):

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<sup>4</sup> London, British Library MS Cotton Titus A. XIX, f. 87r. For edition and discussion, see Dauvit Broun, 'Letter of Robert I to Edward II, 1 October 1310', at <http://www.breakingofbritain.ac.uk/blogs/feature-of-the-month/june-2013/> (accessed 5 October 2017). The only other known manuscript is Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS Brogyntyn II.7, f. 22r, edited in *The Liber Epistolaris of Richard de Bury*, ed. N. Denholm-Young, The Roxburghe Club (Oxford 1950), no. 463 (reprinted as *RRS*, v, no. 569).

To the most serene prince the Lord Edward by God's grace illustrious king of England, Robert by the same grace king of Scots, greeting in Him by whom the thrones of those who rule are governed.

When the minds of the faithful find rest under the sweetness of peace, the life of Christians, and the whole of Holy Mother Church, is adorned with good conduct because the affairs of all kingdoms are everywhere arranged more favourably. Our humility has led us, now and at other times, to beseech your highness more earnestly so that, having God and public decency in sight, you would take pains to cease from the persecution of us and the disturbance of the people of our kingdom so that there may be from now on an end to devastation and the spilling of Christian blood. Certainly, everything which we and our people will be able to do by bodily service or to bear by giving freely of our wealth for the redemption of good peace and for the grace of your good will for all time (which must be earned), we are prepared and shall be prepared to accomplish in a suitable and honest way, with a pure heart.

And if it should be agreeable to your will to hold negotiations with us on these matters, may your royal eminence send word in writing to us, by the bearer of this letter. Written at Kildrum in Lennox, the Kalends of October in the fifth year of our reign [1 October 1310].

On the face of it, the letter is a touch more obsequious than was strictly necessary. Indeed, it seems to say that Robert is prepared to do anything to secure peace. There is, however, one point on which Robert is unyielding—the fact that he is king of Scots, and is addressing Edward II king to king. This, of course, was the core issue of the war. Robert was not, in fact, offering peace on any terms. It was only on the basis that he was king of an independent kingdom. In effect, he was inviting Edward II to begin negotiations that would lead to a recognition of Bruce and Scottish independence. Edward's response is not known—there was an abortive attempt to begin negotiations in December, by which time Edward II's campaign was effectively over: Bruce did not show up, fearing treachery.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Seymour Phillips, *Edward II* (London 2010), 170.



The most surprising and daring thing about the letter is not so much Bruce's insistence on being an independent monarch, but its language. The convention would be to write a diplomatic communication like this in French. Instead it is written in the highest quality Latin prose (known as *cursus*) which was typical of documents written for and by the pope. The letter is not simply a piece of diplomatic manoeuvring; it is a full scale statement of Bruce's capacity to operate at the highest level as king. Archie Duncan was the first to notice that the letter was written predominantly using *cursus*, but as I understand it, *cursus* was used at the end of sentences, and the copy known to Professor Duncan was largely lacking in punctuation. Now that we have a manuscript copy with punctuation, it is possible to see that the *cursus* in the letter uses three of the four types of cadence, except for one instance of *cursus planus*. This is unlikely to be an accident: the *cursus planus* occurs at a key moment in the letter—Bruce's central plea to Edward II to stop attacking Scotland. (The *cursus planus* is in italics.)

Our humility has led us, now and at other times, to beseech your highness more earnestly so that, having God and public decency in sight, *you would take pains to cease* from the persecution of us and the disturbance of the people of our kingdom ...

All in all, the letter, as it was read out to Edward II and all those with him, must have been deeply unsettling. As they listened to its highly crafted prose, they would have become acutely aware that Robert Bruce, for all his spurning of kingly conduct in warfare, had at his command a highly skilled writing office that was perfectly capable of presenting him in prose to the papacy (and beyond) as a fully functioning monarch. The letter was the utterance of a king who, in adversity, had developed personal traits that made him the most pragmatically determined, opportunistic and imaginative foe Edward II had ever faced.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I am very grateful to Joanna Tucker for reading through this piece and suggesting improvements.

## In Search of Robert Bruce

### Martin MacGregor

On a radio comedy show in 2008, the historian David Starkey indulged in one of his favourite pastimes – baiting the Scottish nation – by charging the Scots with ‘adoring failure’.<sup>1</sup> To find oneself on the same side of the argument as David Starkey is usually a cause for reflection, but as far as the Scottish reception of Robert Bruce is concerned, he may have a point. A degree of ambivalence or distance in our attitude to Bruce is there in modern Scotland, from the relatively measured reaction to the discovery of what were immediately assumed to be his grave and skeletal remains at Dunfermline in 1818, to present day opinion polls inviting us to choose the greatest Scot of all. In these, the successful and blue-blooded Bruce never seems to come higher than third, with Wallace and Burns – glorious failures and ‘lads o’ pairs’ who died young – invariably above him.<sup>2</sup>

As a secondary school pupil studying the ‘Scotland and England 1100-1328’ Certificate of Sixth Year Studies option in 1978-9, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* was the first book on Scottish History I ever read. G. W. S. Barrow’s study of Robert I king of Scots, first published in 1965, inspired me, gave me a vague inkling of a future career path, and left me with an enduring fascination for its primary human subject.<sup>3</sup> In 2017 it can still lay fair claim to be the best Scottish history book ever written. That is in no sense to denigrate what Scottish historians have achieved in the intervening 50 years. It is in every sense to pay tribute to the special qualities of Barrow’s book: less the historiographical jousting in which it engages, and which has inevitably dated, and more its ability to read the primary sources to achieve an intimate understanding of the period and its protagonists, and to communicate this in concise and memorable prose. One source of that intimacy was brought home to me in my years as an undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh, where I had the good fortune to be taught by Professor Barrow at various stages, including his final-year Special Subject on *Scotland and England, 1286-1328*. Filling much of one wall of his office was a large-scale map of Scotland, dense with place-names, and in any one class this

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Starkey in “Scotland adores failure” rant’; *The Scotsman*, 18 October 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Michael A. Penman, ‘Robert Bruce’s Bones: Reputations, Politics and Identities in Nineteenth-Century Scotland’, *International Review of Scottish Studies* 34 (2009), 7-73, at 7-8, 51-2.

<sup>3</sup> G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (1965: 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Edinburgh, 1976; 3<sup>d</sup> edn. Edinburgh, 1988; 4<sup>th</sup> edn. Edinburgh, 2005). Subsequent references are to the 3<sup>d</sup> edition.

would invariably be consulted several times. It soon became clear that Professor Barrow was able to speak so knowledgeably of these points on the map because he had been there. As the Gaelic saying has it, *bha e thall 's a chunnaic*: he had been yonder, and seen. That might serve as a commentary on the sort of history which Professor Barrow was able to write; the sort of history defined by Simon Schama as ‘the archive of the feet’.<sup>4</sup> One of the hallmarks of Robert Bruce’s kingship was the intensity of his engagement with the land and sea of Scotland, which he criss-crossed over long years, in war and peace. Few if any other Scottish monarchs can have known their kingdom so well, or come into contact with as many of their subjects in the process; no other Scottish monarch, to my knowledge, has left us a charter dated at Loch Broom in wester Ross.<sup>5</sup> Their first-hand experience of the country to which they dedicated themselves is one connection between Robert Bruce and his leading biographer, and one pointer as to why both succeeded so well.

Professor Barrow’s presence in the past finds one outlet in the pen portraits he drew of some of the leading actors in the story. James the Stewart is ‘cautious and devious, possessed of a recognisably “Stewart” canniness’.<sup>6</sup> Robert Wishart bishop of Glasgow, has this sentence: ‘Agile, perhaps rather plausible, fertile of ideas, Wishart was not of the stuff of which martyrs and heroes are made, though by the close of his long life he had suffered deeply in the cause of Scottish independence’.<sup>7</sup> I would defy anyone to get closer to Wishart than this in as few words, or indeed in many more. Wishart famously performed homage or fealty to Edward I on six known occasions, and, one suspects, lost little sleep in the process.<sup>8</sup> William Wallace’s inability to follow suit even once is what defines him most for us, yet in drawing attention to Wishart’s indefatigability – ‘again and again he bent under English pressure, but he never broke’ – Barrow points to a deeper connection between two men who we know were friends and allies.<sup>9</sup> Wallace himself is ‘utterly fearless, violent but not lacking in compassion, possessed of a certain grim humour’: this last doubtless deriving from the English chronicler William Rishanger’s report of Wallace’s words to his men before the

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<sup>4</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 1995), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> A.A.M. Duncan (ed.), *Regesta Regum Scottorum V: The Acts of Robert I King of Scots 1306-1329* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 297-8.

<sup>6</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> James Primrose, *Mediaeval Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1913), pp. 46-64.

<sup>9</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 82-3.

battle of Falkirk: ‘I have browghte yowe to the ryng, hoppe gef ye kunne’.<sup>10</sup> Here Barrow seems to me to be less convincing, but perhaps in this respect he is no different from us all, in struggling to comprehend the phenomenon that was Wallace. Of Edward I, all one can say is that here there was no meeting of minds between the historian and his subject.

With Robert Bruce it was otherwise. Barrow’s portrait is the product of empathy, respect and admiration, no more so than in his book’s short concluding chapter, ‘In Search of Robert Bruce’, which gives this paper its title. Here Barrow confronts the question: how close to a temporally distant figure like Bruce can the historical sources take us? He notes that stripping away the legend is easy, ‘but clearing away the legend does not necessarily reveal the man’.<sup>11</sup> He considers, as he must, the portrait offered by Bruce’s first biographer, John Barbour, the archdeacon of Aberdeen who wrote his epic Scots poem *The Bruce* in the 1370s. We are fortunate to possess Barbour in the form of a splendid modern edition produced by the late Archie Duncan, Professor of Scottish History at Glasgow from 1962 to 1993, and whose own contribution to the scholarship on Robert Bruce and the First War of Scottish Independence is as immense as that of Geoffrey Barrow.<sup>12</sup> Duncan and Barrow’s deep knowledge of the period left them both in no doubt of the essential historicity and reliability of Barbour: in Barrow’s words, ‘that he must be reckoned a biographer, not a romancer’.<sup>13</sup> But there is still a need to ask how far Barbour’s unquestionable strength in matters of detail extends to his representation of human conduct and personality. When Barbour, uniquely, tells us that with the Scots on the retreat and vulnerable while campaigning in southern Ireland in 1317, Bruce brought his entire army to a standstill to allow a poor laundry woman to give birth, do we believe him?<sup>14</sup> His is a work of chivalric literature, casting a romantic and optimistic glow over an era which brought death, destruction, terror and horror to Scotland, northern England and parts of Ireland. The quit claim of York of 1 March 1328, by which the young Edward III accepted English responsibility for the war, says that ‘a grievous burden of wars has long afflicted the realms of Scotland and England ... killings, slaughters, crimes, destruction of churches and ills innumerable ... so often befell the inhabitants of each

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 102; Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani Willelmi Rishanger* (London, 1865), p. 187. Barrow’s translation: ‘I have brought you into the ring: now see if you can dance’; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 102.

<sup>11</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 312.

<sup>12</sup> A.A.M. Duncan (ed. and trans.), *John Barbour. The Bruce* (Edinburgh, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 312.

<sup>14</sup> Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, pp. 592-5.

realm, by reason of these wars'.<sup>15</sup> From a solely Scottish perspective, and with an eye to its intended recipient, Pope John XXII, The Declaration of Arbroath speaks of 'the deeds of cruelty, massacre, violence, pillage, arson, imprisoning prelates, burning down monasteries, robbing and killing monks and nuns, and yet other outrages without number which he [Edward I] committed against our people, sparing neither age nor sex, religion nor rank'.<sup>16</sup> Robert Bruce lost his four brothers to the war, while his sister Mary was imprisoned, for how long we know not, in a latticed cage of timber and iron at Roxburgh Castle.<sup>17</sup> Bruce did not die in war, but waging it broke his health at points, and may have been the primary factor, or a contributory factor, in his death. *Gesta Annalia*, a Scottish chronicle compiled around 1363, speaks of 'his mishaps, flights, and dangers; hardships, and weariness; hunger, and thirst; watchings, and fastings; nakedness, and cold; snares, and banishment; the seizing, imprisoning, slaughter, and downfall of his near ones and – even more – dear ones (for all this had he to undergo, when overcome and routed in the beginning of his war) – no one, now living, I think, recollects, or is equal to rehearsing, all this'.<sup>18</sup> The Declaration of Arbroath is at once more concise and vivid: 'He, that his people and his heritage might be delivered out of the hands of our enemies, met toil and fatigue, hunger and peril, like another Maccabeus or Joshua and bore them cheerfully'.<sup>19</sup> Yet of Barbour it cannot be said that his subject is war and the pity of war; in Barrow's phrase, 'he touches on the miseries, but he dwells on the splendours'.<sup>20</sup>

Barrow's estimation of Barbour's estimation of Bruce is of 'a man at once humane and kingly, generous and firm of purpose'.<sup>21</sup> He notes the rarity of moments in the poem when the halo slips, and we see Barbour fumbling for explanations for his hero's failings, as confirmation of Bruce's 'essential goodness'.<sup>22</sup> Barrow himself had given his own verdict on Bruce's defects in his penultimate chapter, as follows: 'a conservatively feudal prince, an exponent of a particularly brutal and destructive form of warfare, a dynast prepared to defend

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<sup>15</sup> E.L.G. Stones (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328: some selected documents* (London, 1965; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Oxford, 1970), pp. 362-3.

<sup>16</sup> James Fergusson, *The Declaration of Arbroath* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 6-9.

<sup>17</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> William F. Skene (ed.) and Felix J.H. Skene (trans.), *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* (Edinburgh, 1872), p. 333. For the Latin original see William F. Skene (ed.), *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 341.

<sup>19</sup> Fergusson, *The Declaration of Arbroath*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 312.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

his inherited claim to the throne on occasion at the expense of national unity, and use his country's resources in furtherance of family aggrandizement in Ireland, an accessory, if not a principal, in a deed of plain assassination'.<sup>23</sup> This last, of course, is with reference to the murder of John Comyn before the high altar of the Greyfriars kirk in Dumfries on 10 February 1306: what Michael Brown has called 'the defining political act of fourteenth-century Scottish history',<sup>24</sup> and whose reverberations in truth extended far beyond 1400. It is notable that between the second edition of *Robert Bruce* in 1976 and the third edition of 1988 Barrow had deleted an item from that list: that Bruce was –and these are Barrow's words – 'a begetter of bastards'. Robert Bruce was married firstly to Isabel of Mar, who died young, and then in 1302 to Elizabeth de Burgh daughter of the earl of Ulster; and we know of five sons and daughters he had to other women.<sup>25</sup> Some of them were born in the eight years when Bruce was separated from his second wife, who was captured by the English in 1306 and confined to a manor house in Yorkshire – with two female companions who Edward I stipulated were to be 'elderly and not at all cheerful' – and then released after Bannockburn in 1314.<sup>26</sup> The point is relevant to the discussion of Bruce's appearance and medical history below, because it has sometimes been suggested that he may have suffered facial disfigurement and then death because of a sexually transmitted disease rather than the more usual explanation offered, that of leprosy.<sup>27</sup>

Barrow qualified his list of Bruce's failings with one of his book's most memorable phrases: 'that the feet only seem to be made of clay if we choose to idolize the man'.<sup>28</sup> I have no wish to see Bruce as other than he was, but would suggest that there are other items in the list whose presence can be questioned. In the preface to his first edition Barrow said that the Scottish invasion of Ireland 'was largely a digression as far as Bruce himself was concerned', and although by 1976 he was to modify that stance in the wake of the work of Robin Frame, he made no response to the further work of Séan Duffy, and his persuasive argument that the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Brown, *The Wars of Scotland 1214-1371* (Edinburgh, 2004), p. 200.

<sup>25</sup> Archibald H. Dunbar, *Scottish Kings: A Revised Chronology of Scottish History 1005-1625* (Edinburgh, 1906), pp. 141-2.

<sup>26</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 162, 231.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Penman, *Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots* (New Haven and London, 2014), p. 304.

<sup>28</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 262.



Bruce brothers, Robert and Edward, ‘sought [a Celtic league] wholeheartedly’.<sup>29</sup> As an undergraduate student of Professor Barrow’s, this was the issue on which I saw reason to disagree most with him. One of the qualities he ascribes to Bruce is imagination, ‘which allowed him to be revolutionary in more than just the political sense’.<sup>30</sup> I would agree, but wonder if it was not in the political sense that Bruce was most revolutionary of all. Might his vision have extended to contemplate a fundamental realignment of political relationships among the constituent nations of the British archipelago, as the best means of securing Scottish sovereignty in the long term? Seán Duffy’s paper to a symposium at Trinity College Dublin in September 2015, and soon to be published, brought out how close to success the Scottish enterprise came, and that there is still more to say on Robert Bruce and Ireland.<sup>31</sup>

Robert Bruce was indeed an exponent of a destructive form of warfare,<sup>32</sup> and an outstanding one at that. But that is not to say that he was a warmonger. After 1306 and his seizure of the throne, war was literally the only means available to Bruce to achieve his objectives. Before 1306 the Scots had used diplomacy, initially with great success, to try to free their kingdom and their king, John Balliol.<sup>33</sup> Bruce, by contrast, had no formal French support available to him until 1326, and faced entrenched Scottish opposition in addition to an intransigent English king in Edward II, operating in close alliance with an equally intransigent papacy. For Robert Bruce the unpalatable truth was that he had to wage war to win peace. We see this in the approach he took in northern England, where major Scottish raids were invariably followed by interludes in which Bruce sought to open negotiations with Edward II, leading eventually to the 13 year truce made in 1323.<sup>34</sup> On the very night of Edward III’s coronation on 1 February 1327, Bruce sent the boy-king his calling card by sending his men over the ramparts of Norham Castle in Northumberland, a prelude to a

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<sup>29</sup> Robin Frame, ‘The Bruces in Ireland 1315-8’, *Irish Historical Studies* 19 (1974), 3-37, revised in Robin Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450* (London, 1998), pp. 71-98; Seán Duffy, ‘The Bruce Brothers and the Irish Sea World, 1306-29’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 21 (1991), 55-86, at 85, reprinted in Seán Duffy, *Robert the Bruce’s Irish Wars: The Invasions of Ireland, 1306-1329* (Stroud, 2002), pp. 45-70, at p. 70.

<sup>30</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 313.

<sup>31</sup> Seán Duffy and Peter Crooks (eds), *The Irish-Scottish World in the Middle Ages: Trinity Medieval Ireland Symposium 2* (Dublin, forthcoming).

<sup>32</sup> For the fate of the tenants of Easingwold and Huby in the Vale of York, attacked by the Scots in 1319 and 1322, see Colm McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, Ireland and England, 1306-28* (East Linton, 1997), p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 109-31.

<sup>34</sup> McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 77-8, 104-5.

summer and autumn of sustained Scottish pressure in the region.<sup>35</sup> Fittingly, it was before the walls of Norham, where the Scots had bowed the knee to Edward I in his prime in 1291 – a failure of nerve they could never get over – that English envoys came to Bruce to open the negotiations concluded by the Treaty of Edinburgh in March 1328, which ended the war.<sup>36</sup> For Bruce, war was a surrogate for diplomacy and the means to bring peace, but he displayed his imaginative powers in using it for other ends. The northern English communities which paid protection money to buy off Robert Bruce helped him to finance the war – no small consideration given the devastated economic condition of much of his kingdom.<sup>37</sup> Most importantly of all, war was the means by which Bruce legitimised his right to the throne in the eyes of his own people and others, acting as one of the kings of Scots of old in restoring by the sword a kingdom which had been deformed and lost, to use the language of the Declaration of the Scottish Clergy in his favour in 1309.<sup>38</sup>

War shed its own peculiar and penetrating light on the virtues of Robert Bruce: the courage which doubtless was always there; the patience that he had to acquire; the willingness to learn from mistakes and adapt accordingly; tactical and strategic intelligence; coolness in decision-making; born leadership. Humour may not be a quality automatically associated with the battlefield, but Bruce had his own moment at Bannockburn to rival Wallace at Falkirk when he slew Sir Henry de Bohun in single combat, and then used humour and self-deprecation to deflect the anger of his generals at the risk he had taken, as he rued the loss of his favourite battle-axe, shattered in the act of cleaving Bohun's helmet and skull.<sup>39</sup> The aftermath of Bannockburn showcased Bruce's generosity and magnanimity: returning to Edward II the shield and privy seal abandoned on a field from which he barely escaped with his life; returning the bodies of the earl of Gloucester and Sir Robert Clifford to their loved ones without condition.<sup>40</sup> These same qualities were again present in the Treaty of Edinburgh, in the stipulation that Scotland would pay England £20,000 sterling over three years as part of the peace.<sup>41</sup> This has sometimes been seen as compensation for damage done

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<sup>35</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 251-4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-8, 254-61.

<sup>37</sup> McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 131-40.

<sup>38</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp. 284-5.

<sup>39</sup> Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, pp. 448-53; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 218.

<sup>40</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 230-1.

<sup>41</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp. 336-9.

to the north of England,<sup>42</sup> but that is surely ruled out by Edward III's quit claim of York, issued shortly before the final treaty, by which he unambiguously accepted English responsibility for the war and all its dreadful consequences, along with Scottish independence from English overlordship, and the legitimacy of Bruce's kingship.<sup>43</sup> Already at Stanhope Park in early August of the previous year, after the Scots had run rings around a numerically superior English army and then slipped away northwards into the night, Bruce had caused the young Edward to shed tears of mortification.<sup>44</sup> At York on 1 March 1328, as Edward surveyed the contents of this devastating document and set his seal to it, one suspects that he may well have felt the urge to shed some more. Bruce, surely, was seeking to sweeten this bitterest of pills, and to demonstrate good faith as a means of starting to rebuild peace and goodwill between the kingdoms.<sup>45</sup> By January 1331, the monies promised had been paid in full.<sup>46</sup> Before 1286 and the start of it all, and for several years thereafter, the Scots had not helped their relationship with Norway by failing to honour the annuity promised when they gained the Isles from Man to Lewis by the Treaty of Perth of 1266, along with the dowry payments promised when Alexander III's daughter Margaret married the Norwegian king Eric IV in 1281.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, Robert I always paid on time.<sup>48</sup> This was a mark of his integrity, the quality without which his 'protection for payment' strategy in the north of England would have been still-born. The Scottish raids here may have been destructive, but they were also highly disciplined, and northern English communities and chroniclers developed an intriguing attitude towards Bruce: deploring what he visited upon them even as they acknowledged that here was the genuine article, a king who was protecting his people in way in which their own king manifestly was not, and who would treat them as they treated him.<sup>49</sup> The *Chronicle of Lanercost* is particularly revealing in this regard, describing Robert Bruce as king of Scotland as early as 1312, and saying that after Bannockburn Bruce 'was

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<sup>42</sup> Jean Scammell, 'Robert I and the North of England', *English Historical Review* 73 (1958), 385-403, at 402.

<sup>43</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp. 322-7.

<sup>44</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 253.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>46</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, p. 337.

<sup>47</sup> Knut Helle, 'Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway', *Scottish Historical Review* 69 (1990), 142-56, at 145-6, 148-50, 152-4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>49</sup> Herbert Maxwell (trans.), *The Chronicle of Lanercost 1272-1346* (Glasgow, 1913), pp. 197, 210; c.f. *ibid.*, pp. 194-5, 199-200, 203, 205-6, 210-11, 213, 216-17, 221, 237-42; McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 75, 79, 138-9, 154-5.

commonly called King of Scotland by all men, because he had acquired Scotland by force of arms'.<sup>50</sup>

The *Chronicle of Lanercost* reminds us that sometimes the best insights into human character come not from those who are well-disposed towards us – Barbour in Bruce's case – but from those whose standpoints are sceptical or downright antagonistic. It is hostile English sources which are most forthcoming about Bruce's conduct after Bannockburn. It is one of our most astonishing sources for the period, the breathless English newsletter written in March 1306 only a few weeks after John Comyn's murder, that records for us what must surely be an authentic Bruce utterance: that if Edward I would not accede to his claim to the throne, then Bruce 'would defend himself with the longest stick that he had'.<sup>51</sup> It was a Scot on the English side, writing a few days after Bruce's important victory at Loudon Hill in Ayrshire in May 1307, who wrote: 'I hear that Bruce never had the good will of his own followers or of the people generally so much with him as now. It appears that God is with him, for he has destroyed King Edward's power both among English and Scots'.<sup>52</sup> That same sense of being confronted with someone more than flesh and blood, someone irresistible, is present in letters written by two other Scottish opponents, the earl of Ross and the lord of Argyll, as Bruce bore down upon their respective territories in late 1307 and – probably – March 1308.<sup>53</sup> All these sources bear witness to how Bruce's army grew exponentially within two years – from 60 men-at-arms in early 1306 to 10 or 15, 000 by the time of the Argyll campaign<sup>54</sup> – and for all the likely major exaggeration of that last figure, this surge of support as Scots actively chose to join Bruce gives substance to the Declaration of the Clergy's claim in 1309 that the 'faithful people of the realm' accepted his right, and 'with him the faithful people of the realm wish to live and die'.<sup>55</sup>

It is another hostile source that provides us with what the eighteenth-century historian Lord Hailes believed was 'the best original portrait of Robert Bruce which has been preserved to our times';<sup>56</sup> by which he meant a character portrait in words. This is the first-

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<sup>50</sup> *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, pp. 197, 210.

<sup>51</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, p. 266-7.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Bain (ed.), *A Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, 5 vols (London, 1881-1970), vol. 2, no. 1926; trans. Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 172.

<sup>53</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 175, 179.

<sup>54</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp. 266-7; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 179.

<sup>55</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, p. 282-3.

<sup>56</sup> David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, *Annals of Scotland from the accession of Malcolm III to the accession of the House of Stewart*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1797), vol. 2, p. 84. For the original

hand testimony of the papal legates who came to Scotland in 1317 to try and persuade Bruce to abide by the will of Pope John XXII and accept a two-year truce between Scotland and England. An impasse had been reached because in writing to Bruce, the pope refused to address him as king of Scots. Bruce in turn refused to read anything which did not address him as king, explaining his position to the legates as follows:

Among my barons, there are many of the name of Robert Bruce, who share in the government of Scotland; these letters may possibly be addressed to some one of them; but they are not addressed to me, who am King of Scotland; I can receive no letters which are not addressed under that title, unless with the advice and approbation of my parliament. I will forthwith assemble my parliament, and with their advice return my answer ...<sup>57</sup>

The legates then made the fatal mistake of arguing that the pope did not want to address Bruce as king in case it left him open to the charge of favouring one side over the other in the ongoing dispute between Scotland and England. Bruce's retort, as Barrow notes,<sup>58</sup> was unanswerable:

Since, then, my spiritual father [the pope] and my holy mother [the church] would not prejudice the cause of my adversary, by bestowing on me the appellation of King during the dependence of the controversy, they ought not to have prejudiced my cause by withdrawing that appellation from me. I am in possession of the Kingdom of Scotland; all my people call me King; and foreign Princes address me under that title; but it seems that my parents are partial to their English son. Had you presumed to present letters with such an address to any other sovereign Prince, you might, perhaps, have been answered in a harsher style; but I reverence you as the messengers of the holy see'.<sup>59</sup>

There is here, one feels, much of the real Bruce: courtesy and humour alongside uncompromising firmness and clarity of purpose, and above all else the desire to uphold the *regia dignitas*, the 'royal dignity', of the kingdom of Scotland. We can never know how much of Bruce is in the most famous document of his reign, and the most famous Scottish

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Latin text discussed and in part translated by Lord Hailes see Thomas Rymer, *Foedera*, 17 vols (London, 1727-9), vol. 2, pp. 340-1.

<sup>57</sup> Hailes, *Annals*, vol. 2, p. 85.

<sup>58</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 247.

<sup>59</sup> Hailes, *Annals*, vol. 2, p. 85.

document of all, the Declaration of Arbroath sent by the barons and whole community of the realm of Scotland to John XXII in 1320, but in its attitude to the pope it is very close to the Bruce of 1317. Pope John is reminded that his predecessors protected the Scots, who had long been the special charge of Andrew, Peter's brother; and that 'with Him whose vicegerent on earth you are there is neither weighing nor distinction of Jew and Greek, Scotsman or Englishman'.<sup>60</sup> The Declaration is rightly regarded as a masterpiece of literature and rhetoric, but overlooked by comparison is the compelling logic of its argument which places *libertas* or freedom upon a pinnacle, and judges all parties by their behaviour towards that high ideal. From the first, the argument runs, the Scots had been free. They were protected in their freedom by their kings, and by the pope. Edward I took away that freedom. Bruce restored it, and set his people free. People and king were now bound together in the maintenance of that freedom. We have now reached the famous 'deposition clause', where it is said that if Bruce reneged, and agreed to English overlordship, the Scots would 'exert ourselves at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own rights and ours, and make some other man who was well able to defend us our King',<sup>61</sup> because the Scots fought for freedom alone, and valued freedom more than life itself. The 'deposition clause' is often seen as a precocious and indeed revolutionary contribution to political thought – in Ted Cowan's words, 'the first national or governmental expression, in all of Europe, of the contractual theory of monarchy which lies at the root of modern constitutionalism'.<sup>62</sup> That may be so, but viewed purely in terms of the stance adopted towards Scottish freedom down to this point in the text, the 'deposition clause' is where the argument must naturally go. The other dimension of the 'deposition clause' I would highlight is its relationship to 1306 and the key act of Robert Bruce's life, his taking of the throne, in effect deposing King John Balliol in the process. Professor Barrow has noted that Balliol was never formally deposed by his subjects,<sup>63</sup> but it could be argued that by defining the primary responsibility of a king of Scots as keeping Scotland free from English overlordship – which Balliol had signally failed to do, and Bruce had conspicuously done – the 'deposition clause' effectively endorsed Bruce and deposed Balliol. It adds to the richness of the Declaration of Arbroath that a clause ostensibly subverting Bruce's authority in fact does quite the reverse. The choice was serfdom and Balliol – now in 1320 in the person of John's son Edward, since John had died in 1314 – or

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<sup>60</sup> Fergusson, *The Declaration of Arbroath*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Edward J. Cowan, '*For Freedom Alone*': *The Declaration of Arbroath, 1320* (East Linton, 2003), p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 146, 246, 291.



Bruce and the freedom to which he dedicated his kingship, and which was his greatest legacy to the Scottish nation.<sup>64</sup>

A great strength of Professor Barrow's study is its appreciation that Robert Bruce was thoroughly conversant with Gaelic-speaking society wherever it existed, in Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland.<sup>65</sup> His mother belonged to the ruling family of the Gaelic-speaking earldom of Carrick in south-west Scotland, and Bruce and his siblings must surely have counted Gaelic as one of their spoken languages. Fosterage – the raising of children away from their own family home by foster parents, as a means of establishing or deepening social and political ties – was a prominent Gaelic social institution. Robert's brother Edward was fostered in Gaelic Ireland, probably with Domhnall Ó Néill, who was king of Tír Eoghain or Tyrone in Ulster from 1283 to 1325.<sup>66</sup> If so, it was his own foster-father who backed Edward's bid to become king of Ireland, and who may indeed have personally inaugurated him as king in 1316. We do not know if or with whom Robert was fostered, but his earliest appearances on record, including the famous Turnberry Band of 1286, situate him within a western and predominantly Gaelic world including Carrick, Arran, Kintyre, Argyll and Ulster, and rubbing shoulders with personages including the chief of the MacDonalds and his son and heir, and the bishop of Argyll.<sup>67</sup> Robert's first wife Isabel, who died before 1302, belonged to the ruling family of the earldom of Mar, to whom the Bruces were very close.<sup>68</sup> Then and long after, Mar was a Gaelic-speaking region, and Isabel must have been a Gaelic speaker.

From 1306 onwards, Bruce's personal association with Gaelic Scotland, especially the western *Gáidhealtachd* or Gaelic speech zone, was a hallmark of his kingship, frequently involving direct contact with its inhabitants, or his presence there. After initial defeat, necessity drove him to pass the winter of 1306-7 as an exile from mainland Scotland, most probably in the Hebrides in the company of a key ally, 'Christiana of the Isles', who belonged

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<sup>64</sup> On Edward Balliol's place in the conspiracy to overthrow King Robert in 1320, see Michael Penman, "'A fell coniuracion agayn Robert the douchty king': the Soules conspiracy of 1318-20", *Innes Review* 50 (1999), 25-57. On the case for seeing Edward Balliol as the intended subject of the 'deposition clause', see Dauvit Broun, '**Rereading the "deposition clause" in the Declaration of Arbroath**': <http://www.breakingofbritain.ac.uk/blogs/feature-of-the-month/july-2012/> (accessed 10 October 2017).

<sup>65</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 26, 316, 320.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 25-6.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 141.

to the ruling family of the MacRuairies, one of the most powerful of the western clans.<sup>69</sup> He spent the summer and autumn of 1309 ‘traversing the west from Loch Broom in the north to Dunstaffnage in Argyll’.<sup>70</sup> According to Barbour, the division of the Scottish army under Bruce’s personal command at Bannockburn in 1314 comprised the men of Carrick, Kintyre, Argyll and the Isles, along with men from the ‘plane land’ or Lowlands.<sup>71</sup> Returning from helping to launch his brother’s expedition to Ireland in 1315, Bruce had his fleet of *birlinnean* or west Highland galleys pulled under full sail across the narrow isthmus at Tarbert which separates Kintyre from Knapdale, thereby fulfilling the prophecy that whoever did so would rule all the Isles in the Scottish west, Kintyre included. As Barbour’s account brings out fully, Bruce must have known how such an act would resonate and inspire.<sup>72</sup> Bruce’s choice of Cardross, near Dumbarton on the north shore of the Firth of Clyde, as the site of the house where he spent what leisure time he had in his final years of life, meant that ‘he chose to die in a strongly Gaelic district,’ bearing out ‘his love of the west’.<sup>73</sup>

As king of Scots, Robert Bruce understood the immense strategic significance of the Gaelic west he knew so well: the value of its human and other resources if properly governed; the threat to national security it might present if neglected. His settlement of the west redrew the political map here as across Scotland, rewarding key allies such as the MacDonalds, MacRuairies and Campbells in return for service to the crown based upon the galley or *birlinn*.<sup>74</sup> A second staple of regional power was the coastal castle, and nothing is so revealing of Bruce as king and master strategist as his stance towards castles in the war’s different theatres.<sup>75</sup> In northern England, his aim was not to capture, occupy or build them, thereby declaring that here was no conqueror bent on annexation. Across most of Scotland he demolished the castles which had facilitated English conquest, even royal castles – but not in the west, where the likes of Dumbarton, Dunstaffnage and probably Inverlochy were left untouched, because Bruce knew that galley power depended upon its relationship to

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 166-71.

<sup>70</sup> 190.

<sup>71</sup> Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, pp. 420-3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 564-5; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 291-2.

<sup>73</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 319-21.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 288-92.

<sup>75</sup> David Cornell, ‘A Kingdom Cleared of Castles: The Role of the Castle in the Campaigns of Robert Bruce’, *Scottish Historical Review* 87 (2008), 233-57.

fortresses like these.<sup>76</sup> The aforementioned Tarbert between Kintyre and Knapdale was the site chosen for what may have been the only royal castle built during Bruce's reign.<sup>77</sup> Fleets of galleys allowed for the swift transportation and deployment of the third staple of regional power: the highly trained and skilled fighting men in whom the western Scottish *Gáidhealtachd* abounded, and who for long now had found an outlet in service in Ireland, settling permanently there as professional military castes known as *galloglaich* or 'galloglass'.<sup>78</sup>

It is well-known that the Robert Bruce who returned to the Scottish mainland in early 1307 practised a different warfare from the Robert Bruce who had departed the mainland in defeat in autumn 1306. Explanations for his abandonment of conventional medieval aristocratic warfare in favour of 'guerrilla warfare' usually have recourse to Bruce's military genius, without considering whether Gaelic warfare – characterised by speed, mobility and surprise, the avoidance of prolonged sieges and pitched battles in favour of small-scale skirmishing, and the use of the charge preceded by a missile volley and followed by hard pursuit – might not provide at least part of the answer.<sup>79</sup> It was a form of warfare with which he must have been familiar through upbringing, and was tailored both to the war he needed to fight, and the resources available to him. It would be a reasonable assumption that Hebridean soldiery recruited during his sojourn there was a conspicuous part of the army with which he renewed the war from early 1307 onwards. It was with soldiery from the Isles, perhaps MacDonalds in particular, that Edward Bruce took Galloway in summer 1308.<sup>80</sup> Barbour does not specify the soldiery with Robert when he defeated the MacDougalls of Argyll at the battle usually located in the Pass of Brander in August 1308, but his description – of lightly armed and mobile infantry outflanking the enemy, and the use of higher ground to launch a charge consisting of a volley of arrows as a prelude to the use of the sword at close quarters,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 234, 240; Martin MacGregor, 'Warfare in Gaelic Scotland in the Later Middle Ages' in Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang and Matthew J. Strickland (eds), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), pp. 209-31, at p. 213.

<sup>77</sup> Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, p. 564; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 295.

<sup>78</sup> Séan Duffy, *The World of the Galloglass: Kings, Warlords and Warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600* (Dublin, 2007); Katharine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 19, 126-8.

<sup>79</sup> MacGregor, 'Warfare in Gaelic Scotland', pp. 223-7.

<sup>80</sup> Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, p. 344; Joseph Stevenson, *Chronicon de Lanercost M.CC.I-M.CCC.XLVI*. (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 212.

turning the enemy and instigating a bloody rout – is textbook Gaelic warfare.<sup>81</sup> The same could hardly be said of Bannockburn, the full-scale pitched battle Bruce had avoided since 1307, and would continue to avoid after 1314. However, with the English archers routed by the Scottish horse and the tide turning, Bruce chose the moment to unleash his own, predominantly Gaelic soldiery, in a decisive charge, thus bringing all his infantry into a united front.<sup>82</sup> On his campaign in northern England in 1322 Bruce's army included a substantial Gaelic contingent. The climactic Battle of Old Byland on 20 October reprised elements of Brander and Bannockburn. With the outcome finely poised, Bruce deployed his men from Argyll and the Isles to scale and seize the heights, and outflank and charge the entrenched English forces, turning the battle.<sup>83</sup>

War offered a microcosm of the challenge confronting medieval and late medieval kings of Scots. As commanders-in-chief of the army of a heterogeneous kingdom, their task was to synchronise and optimise the military resources available to them. In this respect, as in others, Robert Bruce was without peer. Linguistically and in every other sense, he was a true king of all Scots. As an historian, Professor Barrow was confronted by his own version of these challenges. In the 1960s, when his book on Bruce was first published, medieval Scottish history was still understood in predominantly ethnic terms, and specifically as a clash between an older 'Celtic' Scotland on the one hand, and the rise of a 'Teutonic', 'Anglo-Norman' or 'feudal' Scotland on the other.<sup>84</sup> Evan MacLeod Barron had applied this model to the First War of Independence by arguing that it was 'Celtic' Scotland that best resisted English overlordship and conquest, 'Teutonic' Scotland that signally failed to do so.<sup>85</sup> This approach to the medieval Scottish past has been increasingly questioned and found wanting by historians of the current generation, but left its inevitable mark on Barrow's great book. His opening, scene-setting chapter analyses medieval Scotland in terms of its Celtic and anti-Celtic characteristics, and the weakest parts of the book are those in which Barrow feels compelled to address the Barron thesis.

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<sup>81</sup> Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, pp. 360-4.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 484-91; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 227-8.

<sup>83</sup> *Chronicon de Lanercost*, p. 247; Duncan, *John Barbour. The Bruce*, pp. 688-9; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 319-21.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew H. Hammond, 'Ethnicity and the Writing of Medieval Scottish History', *Scottish Historical Review* 85 (2006), 1-27.

<sup>85</sup> Evan Macleod Barron, *The Scottish War of Independence* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Inverness, 1934).

Barrow's own reading of medieval Scotland, perhaps owing much to his own training, gave centre-stage to feudalism, while hints of cultural stereotyping, even mild prejudice, can be traced in his references to certain Hebrideans who appealed their legal cases to Edward I as 'malcontents'; to the Gaels in Bruce's division at Bannockburn as 'chafing with impatience (as one may imagine)' to join the fray; to the Gaels at Old Byland as executing 'a wild highland charge', and to 'the relative lawlessness of the west'.<sup>86</sup> Yet Geoffrey Barrow was far too good an historian, far too immersed in the sources, to allow his book and its human subject to fall prey to universal paradigms and glib classifications. He could present the marriage of Bruce's father to Marjorie of Carrick as 'indeed a marriage of Celtic with Anglo-Norman Scotland', only to immediately point out the limitations of such a proposition. He cited various contexts in which historians had attempted to place Bruce in their attempts to understand him, including that of 'an Anglo-Norman unsympathetic towards a conservatively kin-based Celtic-speaking society'. Using the same lexicon, Barrow reversed the polarity and returned it with interest: to him, Bruce 'was no Anglo-Norman fish out of water, grassed on a Celtic river bank'. But the deeper point he went on to develop was that Bruce's Scotland was 'a society too complex to allow us to project into it sharp divisions of race and culture', and that 'in his own time Bruce was unlikely to have been forced into any of these categories'.<sup>87</sup> One index of Bruce's horizons was the medical expertise available to him during his final illness: 'King Robert I, in appointing his two chief physicians Gille Pàdraig (Patrick) Beaton and Maino de Maineri, looked both west, to the Isles and Ireland, to classical Gaelic learning and culture, and south, to France, and to the University of Paris'.<sup>88</sup> Bruce's background was diverse, but Barrow is surely right to conclude that what came to matter most to him was his Gaelic inheritance. In reaching that verdict – of Bruce as 'a potentate in the immemorial mould of the western Gaidhealtachd, inured since youth to a rough country and to rough warfare by land and sea'<sup>89</sup> – Professor Barrow had to go against the grain of his own understanding of the trajectory of the medieval Scottish kingdom, and, perhaps his own predilections: fit comment on his quality as an historian.

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<sup>86</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 57, 228, 244, 290.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 321-2.

<sup>88</sup> Caroline Proctor, 'Physician to The Bruce: Maino De Maineri in Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* 86 (2007), 16-26; John Bannerman, *The Beatons: A Medical Kindred in the Classical Gaelic Tradition* (Edinburgh, 1986 and 1998), pp. 10-11, 58-9, 82; John Bannerman, 'The residence of the king's poet', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17 (1996), 24-35, at 33.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321.

No contemporary or near-contemporary words survive, not even in Barbour, to give us any clue as to what Bruce looked like, and the images we see on the seals and coinage of his reign are too stylised and formulaic to be of service in this regard. All modern attempts to recreate the face of Robert Bruce trace their origin to 17 February 1818, when workmen engaged in building a new parish church to replace its ruined predecessor, situated within the ruins of the Benedictine abbey of Dunfermline, uncovered a burial vault, ‘in line with the very centre of the ancient cathedral’.<sup>90</sup> The medieval sources tell us that Bruce was buried at Dunfermline, in the middle of the choir,<sup>91</sup> and the immediate assumption made in 1818 was that this was Bruce’s burial vault.<sup>92</sup> Assumption is the appropriate word because David I king of Scots is also said to have been buried there in 1153, ‘before the high altar, under the paved part of the middle of the choir’; to be followed by his grandson King Malcolm, buried on David’s right in 1165, the location being described in one source as ‘the customary place for the burial of kings’.<sup>93</sup> This seems also to have been the burial place of Alexander III, whose untimely death in 1286 had ultimately precipitated dynastic crisis, English overlordship, and war.<sup>94</sup> Nothing further was done until 5 November 1819, by which time the roof and walls of the new parish church had been completed, and the vault was reopened. The skeleton within was exhumed and examined; a cast of the skull was made in plaster of Paris; the public was allowed to pay its respects while the skeleton lay exposed; the remains were immediately reburied where they had been found, in a vault in a lead coffin filled with melted pitch, and an official report was compiled containing the images reproduced here (see Illustration 1).<sup>95</sup>

Whose remains and skull these were is a matter of debate and probabilities rather than certainty. Various copies of the skull cast exist, including one held in Glasgow University’s Hunterian Museum (see Illustration 2), and in 2016 a joint initiative between the universities of Glasgow and Liverpool John Moores culminated in the publication of a new craniofacial reconstruction, based upon the Hunterian’s cast (see Illustration 3).<sup>96</sup> However, without the

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<sup>90</sup> *Report to the Right Hon. The Lord Chief Baron, and the Hon. The Barons of his Majesty’s Court of Exchequer in Scotland, by the King’s Remembrancer, relative to the Tomb of King Robert the Bruce, and the Cathedral Church of Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 1821), p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> D.E.R. Watt (gen. ed.), *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, 9 vols (Aberdeen, 1987-1998), vol. 7, pp. 44-5; Dunbar, *Scottish Kings*, p. 140.

<sup>92</sup> *Report by the King’s Remembrancer*, p. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Watt, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 4, pp. 250-1, 280-1; Dunbar, *Scottish Kings*, pp. 64, 73-4.

<sup>94</sup> Dunbar, *Scottish Kings*, p. 99.

<sup>95</sup> *Report by the King’s Remembrancer*, pp. 31-43.

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/visit/exhibitions/virtualexhibitions/robertthebruce/> (accessed 5 June 2018).



original skull, the bone was lacking from which to obtain the DNA which could then have been tested against those believed to be living descendants of Robert Bruce. It was alleged at the time of the exhumation that not all the bones were returned to the coffin for reburial, and various specimens claiming association with Bruce are now dispersed across Scotland and beyond. One was discovered by a student in a drawer in the Hunterian Museum in 2003, the label claiming it to be the toe-bone of Robert the Bruce. That does not inspire confidence, but as the Scotsman reported in 2004, in an article which ran under the inevitable headline, ‘Toe think again’, research by the Hunterian’s curators linked the bone to Joseph Paton, a wealthy Dunfermline industrialist who took part in the events of 1819, and would have had access to the corpse.<sup>97</sup> However, obtaining DNA is a destructive process, and since no guarantee can be given that this bone fragment would emerge unscathed, the Hunterian has thus far been unable to release it for testing. It may be that advances in technology will allow the revisiting of this avenue in the future, with this or other pieces of bone. Close comparison of the several existing skull casts might be another useful part of a future research agenda.

Michael Penman, Bruce’s most recent biographer, and director of a project investigating Dunfermline Abbey’s role as a medieval royal mausoleum, is sceptical about the association of this vault and skull with Robert Bruce, and inclines to the view that they may rather belong to David I. Part of his argument is to suggest that it was more likely that Bruce and Queen Isabella, who had predeceased him in 1327, were buried side by side not in the middle of the choir, but in its north aisle.<sup>98</sup> The case for a Bruce identification might start with the fact that the sources we have locate the burial place of Bruce and his queen in the middle of the choir.<sup>99</sup> The historian needs to have a very good reason to justify disregarding the evidence which does exist, and advancing an alternative interpretation for which no direct evidence exists. In death no less than in life, Bruce’s key objectives were to assert the legitimacy of his kingship, the independence of his kingdom, and the ‘royal dignity’ of Scotland. Burial before the high altar in the middle of the choir would unite King Robert with the previous ruling dynasty as represented by David I, Malcolm IV and Alexander III;<sup>100</sup> and it should be remembered that in terms of much of the substance of his reign, including the language of its formal diplomatic acts, Bruce looked back to ‘the time of Lord Alexander of

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<sup>97</sup> ‘Toe think again ... relic of The Bruce’; *The Scotsman*, 7 March 2004.

<sup>98</sup> Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 306.

<sup>99</sup> For Isabella’s death and burial see Watt, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 7, pp. 34-5.

<sup>100</sup> Lucinda H.S. Dean, ‘Projecting Dynastic Majesty: State Ceremony in the Reign of Robert the Bruce’, *International Review of Scottish Studies* 40 (2015), 34-60, at 44.

good memory, king of Scotland, our predecessor last deceased', as if the Balliol years had never been.<sup>101</sup> It is difficult to imagine Bruce seeing any other location within the church as befitting either his achievements, or the 'royal dignity' of Scotland. His tomb itself, which would have sat above the burial vault, but is long since destroyed, was the finest that contemporary Europe could offer. It was carved in a Parisian workshop from gilded white Italian marble which may have been offset by a black limestone plinth, in conscious imitation of the tombs favoured by the Capetian dynasty which ruled over medieval France (see Illustration 4).<sup>102</sup> From the grave, Bruce continued to affirm that the kingship and kingdom of the Scots was inferior to none other in Christendom. Unable in life to take part in a crusade as he had desired, on his deathbed he asked that his heart be removed from his body and taken towards the Holy Land. In the Declaration of Arbroath the Scots barons had declared 'how cheerfully our Lord the King and we too would go there [the Holy Land] if the King of the English would leave us in peace, He from whom nothing is hidden well knows'.<sup>103</sup> In death Bruce sought to keep those words alive, and, perhaps, to keep the claims of Scotland on the conscience of John XXII. Poignantly, it was only six days after Bruce's death on 7 June 1329 that the pope finally conceded to Scottish monarchs the rite of crowning and anointing for which they had been campaigning for over a century; proof of papal acceptance of the independence of king and kingdom, and just reward for the tenacity of Bruce's papal policy.<sup>104</sup>

The craniofacial reconstruction published in December 2016 is of a male of the appropriate age bracket who was buried in the right place; who had a very powerful physique consistent with the vanquisher of Sir Henry de Bohun, and bearing comparison to the super-athlete of today; who exhibits signs of tooth and facial bone loss which could be symptomatic of the disease – whatever it was – from which Bruce is said to have suffered;<sup>105</sup> and whose sternum or rib-cage had been sawn through from top to bottom, presumably to allow for the

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<sup>101</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 294-6; Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 270; Duncan, *Regesta Regum Scottorum V*, pp. 6-7, 48, 128, 297 and *passim*.

<sup>102</sup> Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, pp. 307-8. For the virtual reconstruction of Bruce's tomb which featured in an exhibition at the Hunterian Museum in 2014, see <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/visit/exhibitions/virtualexhibitions/robertthebruce/> (accessed 5 June 2018).

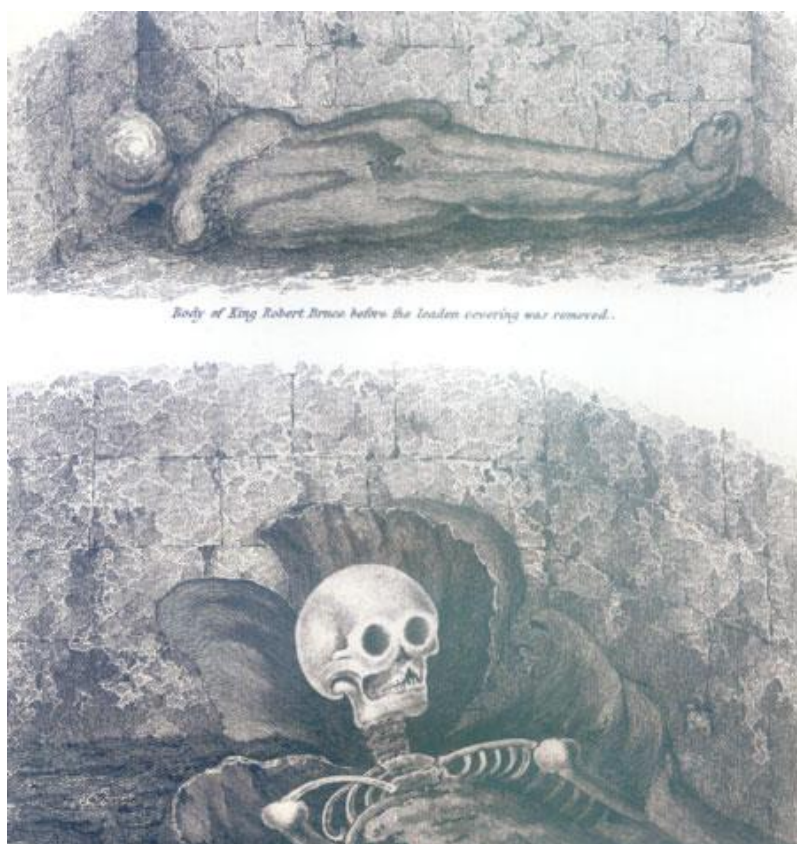
<sup>103</sup> Fergusson, *The Declaration of Arbroath*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>104</sup> Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp. xxii, 58-9, n. 1; Brown, *The Wars of Scotland*, p. 231.

<sup>105</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 322-3; Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, pp. 302-4.

removal of the heart.<sup>106</sup> Of the leading candidates, the fuller evidence available for Bruce allows him alone to be tested against all relevant benchmarks, which individually and collectively give no grounds for ruling him out, although they do not put the matter beyond reasonable doubt. On that basis, it can be said that there is a strong probability that the image created by Professor Caroline Wilkinson and her team is the nearest we have yet come to the face of Robert Bruce.

### ILLUSTRATION 1



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<sup>106</sup> *Report by the King's Remembrancer*, p. 37.

**ILLUSTRATION 2**



**ILLUSTRATION 3**



**ILLUSTRATION 4**





## **Reassessing the Age of Reformation**

### **Julian Goodare**

History always needs to be reassessed, because each generation asks its own questions about the past. I was not expecting to be phoned up by Scottish Television on 24 August 2010, but when the phone rang, I did think, ‘Ah yes, today is the 450th anniversary of the Scottish Reformation’. I was duly filmed for a television interview – though when the programme appeared, it turned out to be about declining membership in the modern Church of Scotland, with a few fragments of my interview added to justify broadcasting such a programme on the anniversary. I will come back to one or two of the things that they cut.

Still, 24 August 1560 was a dramatic date. A group of Protestant lords had seized power from the government of the regent, Mary of Guise, with the aid of an English army. They held a parliament, later known as the ‘Reformation Parliament’, that adopted a Protestant confession of faith (i.e. statement of belief), repealed earlier legislation against Protestant ‘heresy’, outlawed Catholic worship and abolished the authority of the pope. At a stroke, Scotland had been transformed from an officially Catholic country to an officially Protestant one.

This was a national event – indeed the last national Reformation in Europe. Mary of Guise ruled with the aid of a French army that the Scots had initially invited to protect them from the English, but increasingly it had come to look like an army of occupation. One of the fascinating questions about the Reformation is how far the uprising was Protestant, and how far it was anti-French.

In this article I will concentrate on the Reformation itself. There was much more in the ‘Age of Reformation’, notably the political history of the reigns of Mary queen of Scots and James VI, but I cannot cover that as well. The ‘Reformation’ was also a protracted process; 24 August 1560 was just the beginning. I will seek to end in 1603, the date of the union of the Scottish and English crowns; many recent studies of the Reformation have continued until 1640 or even later, but a focus on the early period may paradoxically have



value in focusing attention on just how long it took to implement the Reformation. The question is, then: what is recent research telling us about the Scottish Reformation?<sup>1</sup>

### Reappraisals

One influential period of reassessment was the Reformation's fourth centenary in 1960. Traditional accounts of the Reformation had been celebratory, based on an assumption that Protestantism was the correct religion (for the Scots at least), and that the Scottish Reformation was an unstoppable mass movement overthrowing a corrupt and unpopular church. Gordon Donaldson questioned much of this by pointing out the difficulties that the Protestant church faced in establishing itself after 1560, and its frustrations in being denied adequate financial support. His account of the Scottish Reformation was one of organisational and financial struggle.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, a group of mainly Catholic scholars produced a wide-ranging collection of essays revaluing the pre-Reformation period, questioning various orthodoxies and bringing much cultural and intellectual material to light.<sup>3</sup>

One of Donaldson's challenges to traditional historical scholarship was to undermine the assumption that the Church of Scotland had always been essentially presbyterian in its organisational structure. He argued that this assumption derived more from the period after 1690, when bishops had finally been abolished, and presbyteries – regional committees of ministers – became the dominant organisational force. The early church had some bishops, and also appointed 'superintendents' who, Donaldson argued, were rather like bishops. No actual presbyteries had been established until 1581, and even then, bishops continued to exercise some authority.

In the 1970s and 1980s this interpretation was vigorously challenged by James Kirk, who had initially gained his PhD under Donaldson's supervision. Kirk argued that the commanding role exercised by the general assembly – a new, national body mainly comprising ministers – meant that the church could not be hierarchical in the way that it

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<sup>1</sup> I will concentrate on recent books. There are also many articles in scholarly journals, but these are less accessible to non-academic readers. Academic books mostly contain bibliographies that can guide the reader to relevant articles.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Donaldson's influence extends well beyond this ground-breaking book, as we shall see. Gordon Donaldson, *Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), is a collection of reprinted essays, mostly concerned with the Reformation period.

<sup>3</sup> David McRoberts (ed.), *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625* (Glasgow: John S. Burns, 1962).

would have had to be with bishops in charge.<sup>4</sup> Between them, Donaldson and Kirk ended up giving the impression – perhaps intended by neither – that Knox’s church had no settled polity, and that polity itself was less important in the sixteenth century than it would become later. The controversy has been treated in a more detached manner by more recent scholars, and seems to have lost its urgency.<sup>5</sup>

Ian Cowan, in 1982, took the pre-Reformation period seriously, in a book that remains the fullest and most rounded overall study of the Scottish Reformation.<sup>6</sup> In 1994, Michael Lynch produced a vigorous and much-cited paper stressing the Reformers’ difficulties, and the need to avoid taking Protestant polemics at face value.<sup>7</sup> Two recent textbooks on sixteenth-century Scotland have much to say on the Reformation, and also on the pre-Reformation church.<sup>8</sup>

### **Towards Reformation**

The pre-Reformation church has undergone fundamental reappraisal in recent decades. After the Reformation had happened, Protestants and Catholics alike could blame the ‘corruption’ of the old clergy. Protestant polemicists gleefully reported Catholic ‘abuses’ – fornicating bishops, vacant parishes, ignorant priests. The new generation of Catholic activists, geared up to meet the challenge of the Reformation, was happy to endorse this critique and even to lay more emphasis on it (it was more convenient to blame the ‘corruption’ of the former clergy than to suggest that the Catholic church might have had the wrong doctrines). Only in recent decades have scholars been able to get beyond these devastating but misplaced critiques, and assess the late medieval church on its own terms.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform: Continuity and Change in the Reformation Kirk* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), especially chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> David G. Mullan, *Episcopacy in Scotland, 1560-1638* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986); Alan R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567-1625: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation: Church and Society in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Lynch, ‘Preaching to the converted? Perspectives on the Scottish Reformation’, in A. A. MacDonald, Michael Lynch and Ian B. Cowan (eds.), *The Renaissance in Scotland* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 301-43.

<sup>8</sup> Jane E. A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed, 1488-1587* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Maureen M. Meikle, *The Scottish People, 1490-1625* (lulu.com, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Much recent work is summed up in Audrey-Beth Fitch, *The Search for Salvation: Lay Faith in Scotland, 1480-1560* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009). For the preaching friars, one of the

Pious people in the late middle ages emphasised the importance of purgatory, the temporary resting-place of sinful souls on their way to heaven. The church in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries invested heavily in providing masses and prayers for the dead. Special churches were built for this purpose (including the architecturally-famous Rosslyn Chapel), and existing churches were converted. A massive rescue operation was under way to save the souls of the previous generation from purgatory, on the assumption that the present generation would be rescued in their turn.

What the Protestants did was to redirect the lively energy of late medieval religion into new channels. They emphasised learning and literacy – harnessing a growth in lay literacy among the propertied classes. Andrea Thomas has recently published a splendid cultural history of the Renaissance in Scotland.<sup>10</sup> The Renaissance also called for a fresh understanding of ancient texts, including the Bible. People were no longer content to accept religious traditions; they wanted a religion that demonstrated its correctness from the original texts. This stimulated a demand for intellectually-satisfying religion among newly-educated lay people.

In the early sixteenth century, all sorts of people wanted ‘reform’ of the church, not just those who were clearly Protestant. Still, Protestants were at the cutting edge of the movement. They declared that purgatory did not exist, rendering the whole ‘rescue operation’ pointless. Instead they demanded preaching, provided by educated ministers and based on the Bible. The Protestant movement had its ups and downs before 1560, and it was never remotely a mass movement, but it was swept to power with the aid of favourable political circumstances, and had the dynamism and credibility to consolidate its position.<sup>11</sup>

### Doctrine

What Protestants actually believed has not been the subject of so many historical works, but there is a good overview by Gordon Donaldson, and a detailed study of ‘puritanism’ – the beliefs of the most committed – by David Mullan.<sup>12</sup>

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more dynamic institutions, see Janet P. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: the Dominican Order, 1450-1560* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Thomas, *Glory and Honour: The Renaissance in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> The broadest survey is Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). See also Clare Kellar, *Scotland, England, and the Reformation, 1534-1561* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots* (London: Batsford, 1990); David G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

On the subject of doctrine, people often comment that the Scottish Reformation was ‘Calvinist’. Care is needed in defining this term. In popular discussion, ‘Calvinism’ can mean a dour, oppressive church intent on enforcing the commandment ‘Thou shalt not have any fun’. However, not only is this a caricature, but the term ‘Calvinism’ also has a more precise meaning: a theological insistence on ‘predestination’ as the basis for salvation. The Catholic Church had stressed the need for people to receive absolution from their sins in order to be saved, thus giving priests a mediating role between the people and God. Protestants cut out this middleman by their insistence on ‘justification’ (salvation) by ‘faith alone’: if a person truly had faith in Christ, he or she would assuredly be saved. Faith in turn was not something that a person could simply decide to have; ability to have faith was conferred by God’s grace. God chose the people who would be saved. John Calvin, an influential French Reformer, took this further by arguing that God’s choice was made at the beginning of time; God was, after all, omnipotent, and thus had foreknowledge of who would be saved. Those who were saved were ‘predestined’ to be saved.

This was in fact a liberating and empowering belief. You could not know for certain whether you were saved or not – but, if you thought you were or might be, you could at least know that your ticket to heaven was an assured one. Protestants scored debating points by pointing out that the Catholic system allowed people to lose their place in heaven by committing a sin and then dying before they had a chance to be absolved. And the best evidence that you were saved came from having godly thoughts and leading a godly life. ‘Good works’ did not cause you to be saved – instead it was the other way round: being saved caused you to do good works. Protestants who took this on board were highly motivated to act in a godly way, in the belief that godly actions showed that their place in heaven was assured.

### **Implementing the Reformation**

The Reformation’s early leaders have received several studies. John Knox, who became minister of Edinburgh, is much the most famous. Attempts are sometimes made to downplay his influence, but his inspirational leadership was recognised at the time by friend and foe alike. Jane Dawson has recently published an accessible and up-to-date biography of him.<sup>13</sup> As part of Donaldson’s effort to rehabilitate Protestant episcopacy he published a study of the three

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<sup>13</sup> Jane Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015). See also Roger A. Mason (ed.), *John Knox and the British Reformations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

pre-Reformation bishops who conformed to Protestantism and organised the Reformation in their dioceses.<sup>14</sup> There has also been a study of one of the early superintendents.<sup>15</sup>

The Reformation had to be implemented in each locality and local institution. County by county, parish by parish, burgh by burgh, even craft guild by craft guild, Protestants had to gain political control, and to persuade or force Catholics to convert or to demit office. This could be a protracted process, and local studies have shown the importance of local elites to it.<sup>16</sup>

Most first-generation Protestant clergymen were in fact the existing Catholic priests, most of whom agreed to convert. Most were not sufficiently educated to act as preaching ministers, so they were appointed as ‘readers’, able to read set forms of service. Protestant leaders themselves regarded this as a stopgap. Some revisionist accounts of the Reformation have argued that it was a slow process because in many rural parishes, financial constraints meant that qualified preaching ministers were not appointed until the 1610s.

This brings us to the topic of education. School education is discussed in some local studies and works on godly discipline. A detailed recent study by John Durkan has stressed continuities from the pre-Reformation period.<sup>17</sup> The tradition that the Reformers established a school in every parish is really just a tradition. The Reformation did, though, focus attention on the idea of parish schools, and downgrade or abolish other types of pre-Reformation school, notably monastery and convent schools. Most schools were elementary schools, mainly teaching reading and writing to boys. In larger towns there were also ‘grammar schools’ teaching Latin language and literature. Elementary education did eventually make considerable

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<sup>14</sup> Gordon Donaldson, *Reformed by Bishops* (Edinburgh: Edina, 1987). These were Alexander Gordon, bishop of Galloway, Adam Bothwell, bishop of Orkney, and Robert Stewart, bishop of Caithness.

<sup>15</sup> Linda J. Dunbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church: John Winram (c.1492-1582) and the Example of Fife* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), is a particularly influential study. See also Frank D. Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: the Reformation in Angus and the Mearns* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989); Margaret H. B. Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation: People and Change, 1490-1600* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1997); Mary Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth, 1540-1570* (Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2006); John McCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish: the Reformation in Fife, 1560-1640* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> John Durkan, *Scottish Schools and Schoolmasters, 1560-1633*, edited by Jamie Reid-Baxter (Woodbridge: Scottish History Society, 2013). This includes a long appendix with lists of schools and schoolmasters organised by parish.

strides in Scotland, but financial constraints on the early Protestant church probably prevented it from achieving much in the sixteenth century.

More has been published on universities, with the ‘reform’ of Scotland’s three medieval universities, and new, Protestant foundations in Edinburgh (1582) and in Marischal College, Aberdeen (1593).<sup>18</sup> These were necessary to provide the graduate ministry that the Reformers sought. There has also been a study of printing – an essential aspect of this text-based religion.<sup>19</sup> Literary culture was shaped in fundamental ways by Protestantism.<sup>20</sup>

One point arising from the localised nature of the Reformation is that it made little initial impact in Gaelic-speaking regions. There were few Gaelic-speaking ministers, funds were scarce, there were hardly any religious writings in Gaelic, and institutions of the state – including kirk sessions – were more often absent than present. Protestantism was a Bible-based religion, stressing that the Bible should be available in people’s everyday language, but the Scottish Reformers failed to produce a Bible in Gaelic. Certainly in the sixteenth century, Protestantism was no more than a nominal presence in much of the Highlands. Fiona Macdonald’s recent book on religion in the Highlands covers the period 1560-1760, but even her opening chapter has more material from the seventeenth century than the sixteenth.<sup>21</sup>

Was there much opposition to all this? Opposition to the Reformation is discussed piecemeal in works discussing its local implementation, and perhaps we still await an overall assessment of this. Popular resistance to godly discipline has also been discussed in works on godly discipline (on which more in a moment). However, there was also some organised Catholic resistance. The early years were something of a Protestant walkover, but eventually the Catholic Church managed to organise a missionary effort to assist the few remaining Catholic aristocratic families. This was often led by Jesuits.<sup>22</sup> There were rarely serious

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<sup>18</sup> David Stevenson, *King’s College, Aberdeen, 1560-1641* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990); Robert D. Anderson, Michael Lynch and Nicholas Phillipson, *The University of Edinburgh: an Illustrated History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); Steven J. Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism: Andrew Melville and the Universities of Scotland, 1560-1625* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Alastair J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade, 1500-1720* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Crawford Gribben and David G. Mullan (eds.), *Literature and the Scottish Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Fiona A. Macdonald, *Missions to the Gaels: Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Ulster and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1560-1760* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Michael J. Yellowlees, *‘So strange a monster as a Jesuiste’: the Society of Jesus in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Colonsay: House of Lochar, 2003).



prospects of reversing the Reformation, and one effect of Jesuit missionary work may have been to consolidate the Protestant image of Catholicism as an external bogeyman against which true Scots should unite.

### **Godly discipline**

What of the commandment ‘Thou shalt not have any fun’? Was the Reformation really dour and joyless? On the whole, the answer seems to be that it was – but perhaps only indirectly. The Reformers were not against fun, but they were against sin and against ‘superstition’ – the latter concept meaning religious practices that they felt were not authorised in the Bible. Such practices were ultimately inspired by the Devil, who was thus a live force in Protestant ‘discipline’. Once parishes had ministers, they also established kirk sessions – parish committees that acted as local church courts. Kirk sessions explicitly set out to enforce ‘discipline’ on their congregations.<sup>23</sup>

In practice this especially meant punishing extra-marital sex – fornication and adultery. Women were targeted here because it was women who became pregnant outside marriage, though the church tried to punish the male partner too. It also meant enforcing the sabbath by punishing any work or celebration that occurred on a Sunday. Magical healing practices were also punished. This was mostly a thou-shalt-not business, but kirk sessions gained legitimacy by also providing more popular services, punishing assault and slander, and providing poor relief.

The authority of the kirk session in its parish can be seen as the sharp end of a system of power that stretched all the way up to the general assembly. Indeed parliament was also concerned with religion – and not just on 24 August 1560; parliaments thereafter regularly enacted Protestant legislation. Finally, local secular courts could be called in to enforce the authority of the kirk session and presbytery; the presbytery could excommunicate someone, but, if they defied this, the authority of the sheriff might be needed to banish them from the area. From this point of view, we are not just looking at a godly church or a godly society, but

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<sup>23</sup> The standard works here are Michael F. Graham, *The Uses of Reform: ‘Godly Discipline’ and Popular Behavior in Scotland and Beyond, 1560-1610* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002). There are relevant chapters in John McCallum (ed.), *Scotland’s Long Reformation: New Perspectives on Scottish Religion, c.1500-c.1660* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). Many of the ‘local studies’ cited above also discuss the topic.

also a godly state.<sup>24</sup> The godly state was also underpinned by complex forms of religious and intellectual ideology.<sup>25</sup>

Witch-hunting was a small but spectacular aspect of godly discipline. Scotland criminalised witchcraft in 1563, and overall it executed five times as many witches *per capita* as the European average. This was not just about godly discipline, since witches were often created in their communities, identified through quarrels and curses that were seen to be followed by misfortune. But witchcraft was also a crime against God, and the local courts of the church were often in the front line of arresting and interrogating witches. Many witches, perhaps most, did not have reputations in their community, but were convicted on the basis of their own confessions to a relationship with the Devil. To the extent that this was (for women) often a sexual relationship, the prosecution of witchcraft could even be seen as an extension of the Scottish Reformation's crackdown on women's sexuality.<sup>26</sup>

## Worship

What actually happened in a Protestant church on a Sunday? The importance of new forms of worship has recently been emphasised by scholars.<sup>27</sup> The Reformers sought to emphasise

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<sup>24</sup> Julian Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Julian Goodare, *The Government of Scotland, 1560-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For a detailed study of this topic in the Aberdeen burgh court see J. R. D. Falconer, *Crime and Community in Reformation Scotland: Negotiating Power in a Burgh Society* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Arthur H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979). Works cited above on universities are also relevant here.

<sup>26</sup> The classic study is Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: the Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London: Chatto, 1981), which should now be read alongside more recent works, including: Stuart Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife: Witch-Hunting in a Scottish Shire, 1560-1710* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2001); Julian Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller (eds.), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion* (New York, 2008); Julian Goodare (ed.), *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Liv Helene Willumsen, *Witches of the North: Scotland and Finnmark* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Lizanne Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief in the Age of Enlightenment: Scotland, 1670-1740* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). The online Survey of Scottish Witchcraft <<http://www.shc.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>>, accessed 9 August 2017, is a useful resource.

<sup>27</sup> One standard work is Duncan Forrester and Douglas Murray (eds.), *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* (2nd edn., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996); the relevant chapters were written by Donaldson. William McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church, 1550-1638* (London: James Clarke, 1931), remains valuable despite its date. For references to other recent work see Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed*.

preaching, in sermons that would be at least weekly; progress was slow, because of financial constraints, but ministers were eventually found. They aimed for frequent communion services but had usually to settle for annual services at Easter; still, the new services, based on an attempt to replicate the Last Supper, were unlike anything seen in Catholic times, and became popular. As statues were removed and murals whitewashed over, the spoken and printed word replaced the image. Music, too, gained importance. The polyphonic choral music of the pre-Reformation church, heard only in the cathedrals and larger churches, was replaced by congregational singing of psalms, either in unison or in parts.<sup>28</sup>

### Primary sources

It may help to mention some of the more accessible primary sources used by historians. The church's organisational blueprint, the *First Book of Discipline* of 1561, has always been a fascinating document.<sup>29</sup> Care should be taken not to assume that it was implemented, for much of it was not. The best approach to it is to ask questions about how far the Reformation proceeded – or indeed could ever proceed – according to a pre-arranged plan.

The interaction between church and people can best be studied through the minutes of kirk sessions. Not many of these survive for the sixteenth century, but several have been published.<sup>30</sup> All these are of urban kirk sessions, however, and the rural experience is not so clear. Many rural parishes did not gain ministers (and thus kirk sessions) until the 1610s. There are also early minutes of presbyteries and synods, and of the general assembly itself.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> D. James Ross, *Musick Fyne: Robert Carver and the Art of Music in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1993); John Purser, *Scotland's Music* (Edinburgh: Mainstream and BBC Scotland, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. James K. Cameron (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1972).

<sup>30</sup> *Register of the Minister, Elders and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St Andrews, 1559-1600*, 2 vols., ed. D. Hay Fleming (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1889-90); *The Buik of the Kirk of the Canagait, 1564-1567*, ed. Alma B. Calderwood (Edinburgh: Scottish Record Society, 1961); *The Perth Kirk Session Books, 1577-1590*, ed. Margo Todd (Woodbridge: Scottish History Society, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> *Stirling Presbytery Records, 1581-1587*, ed. James Kirk (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1981); *Records of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, 1589-1596, 1640-1649*, ed. James Kirk (Edinburgh: Stair Society, 1977); *Minutes of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, 1648-1659*, ed. Chris R. Langley (Woodbridge: Scottish History Society, 2016); *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, 1560 to 1618*, 3 vols., ed. Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: Scottish Record Society, 2004).

There are some readable early histories, such as those by John Knox himself, and (in the next generation) by Archbishop John Spottiswoode.<sup>32</sup> Knox's political works have also received a modern edition.<sup>33</sup> It is sometimes suggested that Knox achieved undue prominence simply by writing a history and giving himself a starring role – but in fact he did not give himself a starring role, and his biases should be sought in other ways.

Worship has produced further sources. The main Gaelic document is a translation of the *Book of Common Order* from 1567.<sup>34</sup> The popular song collection known as the 'Good and Godly Ballads' contains many religious lyrics, often adapted from secular songs.<sup>35</sup> The Wode Psalter project at the University of Edinburgh has images and downloadable music.<sup>36</sup> Some of the most remarkable documents from the Scottish Reformation are sound recordings of the psalms and other Reformation music.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusions

From 24 August 1560, up to 1603 and beyond, the Scottish Reformation was an epoch-making event. As for the 'beyond', one of the things I told Scottish Television on 24 August 2010 was that a longer perspective on the Reformation would entail asking questions about religious pluralism and toleration. The early Reformers did not intend to split Europe into warring Catholic and Protestant camps, but to reform the Catholic church from within. There followed a phase in which both Catholics and Protestants attempted to enforce their national monopoly within each country that they controlled – a Protestant monopoly in Scotland's

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<sup>32</sup> John Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, 2 vols., ed. William Croft Dickinson (Edinburgh, 1949); John Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, 3 vols., eds. Mark Napier and Michael Russell (Edinburgh: Spottiswoode Society, 1847-51). The biases of these works have been discussed in a pair of chapters by Maurice Lee, 'John Knox and his *History*', and 'Archbishop Spottiswoode as historian', both in his *The 'Inevitable' Union, and Other Essays on Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> John Knox, *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh: John Carswell's Gaelic translation of the Book of Common Order*, ed. R. L. Thomson (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1970). The introduction and notes, taking up more than half the book, are in English.

<sup>35</sup> *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, ed. Alasdair A. MacDonald (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> <<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/divinity/research/projects/wode-psalter>>, accessed 9 August 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Edinburgh University Renaissance Singers, *Psalms for the Regents of Scotland: Scottish Kirk Music, 1567-1578* (2000, CD no. EURS 003). Jamie Reid-Baxter, Michael Lynch and E. Patricia Dennison, *Jhone Angus: Monk of Dunfermline and Scottish Reformation Music* (Dunfermline: Dunfermline Burgh Survey, 2011) is a book with attached CD.

case. But Protestant churches themselves tended to split into different branches, and eventually repression had to be replaced by toleration. We still have much to learn about how to live with people of different faiths, and the Reformation still has lessons to teach us.

**The Covenants and ‘The Killing Times’: Reclaiming the Restoration  
Covenanters, 1660-1688**



**Laura I. Doak**

The history of seventeenth century Scotland is dominated by the ideological struggles between the Stuart monarchs and ‘the Covenanters’. These men and women took their name from their adherence to the 1638 National Covenant, issued against the ecclesiastical innovations of King Charles I, and the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant, which represented an Anglo-Scottish agreement to pursue Presbyterian Church government across



the British Isles. The covenants, in particular that of 1638, placed limitations upon the swearers' obedience to any monarch who failed to rule according to the laws and aims that were claimed as part of Scotland's constitutional foundation. This has recently been underscored in an important new book by Laura Stewart on Scotland's experience of revolution between 1637 and 1651. Stewart demonstrates that the revolutionary, 'covenanted' state established in this period was as much about constitutional rebalance as religious concerns. Stewart also concludes that these ideas "seeped indelibly" into Scotland's conscience.<sup>1</sup> After Charles I was executed by the English Parliament in 1649, his son and heir, Charles II, returned to Scotland where he was crowned by the covenanting regime at Scone in a ceremony that placed both the covenants and a conditional coronation oath center-stage. These ideas could not, and did not, simply vanish when Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army overthrew Scotland's covenanting regime later that year or when the Stuart dynasty was once again restored to the thrones of the British Isles in 1660.

This article discusses the ideological heirs of this Covenanting regime: the Covenanters of the Restoration era (1660 – 1688). Popular conceptions of the Restoration Covenanters portray them as motivated by purely religious reasons. Previous generations presented these Scots as a pantheon of heroes or, to borrow the title of one such work, by eighteenth-century biographer John Howie of Lochgoin, 'Scots Worthies'. In the Covenanters, according to Howie, the Scots had, "a mirror, exemplifying and setting forth all the virtues and duties of a religious and domestic life"<sup>2</sup>. Centuries later, the sight of large tourist groups in Edinburgh being told tales of persecuted martyrs who were brutally executed for their religious beliefs, suggests that such sanctification remains largely unchallenged. In Scottish literature from John Galt to John Buchan, and from Sir Walter Scott to James Robertson - whether cherished or derided - the Covenanters of the Restoration era are popularly remembered as motivated exclusively by anti-Episcopal sentiment and other ecclesiastical concerns.<sup>3</sup> Ian Cowan's 1976 *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660-88* opened with the words, "religious persecution"<sup>4</sup>. Cowan's book justly remains a key work for studying the

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<sup>1</sup> L. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland* (Oxford, 2016) pp.2-4, 303.

<sup>2</sup> J. Howie of Lochgoin, *The Scots Worthies*, ed., W. H. Carlaw (Edinburgh, 1870) p.xix.

<sup>3</sup> W. Scott, *Old Mortality* (1816); J. Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize; or, The Covenanters* (1823); J. Buchan, *Witch Wood* (1927); J. Robertson, *The Fanatic* (2000).

<sup>4</sup> I. B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660-1688* (London, 1976) p.11.

Covenanters of this era but this also regrettably remains the dominant vantage point from which they are approached.

The later Covenanters are memorialized on hundreds of gravestones and other monuments across Scotland as the hunted victims of cruel and tyrannous Stuart kings, during a persecution known as ‘the Killing Times’. Arguably, this highly emotive physical presence is one key reason why their image as martyrs endures. Yet these posthumous monuments, often erected centuries later, pay little heed to either the complexities of contemporary events or to the full range of ideas and motives that drove the Covenanters into conflict with the Stuart regime. It is suggested here that the ability to look past the myths that surround these monuments, and toward the arguments of the Covenanters themselves, is vital if this ideologically rich and radically charged era of Scotland’s history is to be fully appreciated.

### **The Covenants after 1660**

The Restoration Covenanters presented themselves as the ‘remnant’ of the earlier covenanting movement of 1638-1660. However, the vast majority of later Covenanters, especially by the 1680s, were far too young to have taken either the National Covenant or Solemn League and Covenant the first time around. Notably this included both Richard Cameron, the outlawed minister that led and lent his name to the extremist group known as the Cameronians, who was born in 1648 and James Renwick, a leading figure among militants following Cameron’s death, who was not born until after the Restoration in 1662. As Caroline Erskine has demonstrated, there were major ideological and motivational differences between the Covenanters of 1660 – 1688 and those of earlier decades.<sup>5</sup> The covenants were not dead. Indeed, they were publicly sworn by Pentland rebels in 1666 and boldly ‘owned’ upon the scaffold by condemned Covenanters throughout the period. These oaths were, however, mobilized against a new set of challenges and, as set out below, as the symbolic cornerstone of what was in fact an evolving ideological framework.

The restoration of the Stuart monarchy involved more than the re-establishment of Episcopacy and the consequential flux of anti-Episcopal sentiment. It occasioned the systematic destruction of virtually all innovations made to both church and state by the covenanting regime. The Covenants sworn by Charles II at Scone in 1651 were condemned, implying also the refutation of the coronation oath he had sworn alongside them. The Stuarts’

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<sup>5</sup> C. Erskine, ‘The Political Thought of the Restoration Covenanters’, in S. Adams and J. Goodare, eds., *Scotland in the Age of Two Revolutions* (Woodbridge, 2014) p.155.

ideas of unfettered kingship that the Covenants themselves had sought to curtail were resurrected and restored alongside the Stuart dynasty. This was what threw those prepared to fight about it into open conflict with the Stuart monarchy. In an important article in 1980, Ian Smart demonstrated how the implicit political and contractual aspects of the National Covenant influenced covenanting ideas in the Restoration era.<sup>6</sup> As discussed further below, recent historical work follows Smart's line but these assertions have not yet been incorporated into mainstream understanding.

The Covenanters of the Restoration era were increasingly divided. The most explicit divisions developed as a consequence of the muddy cocktail of government policies served up by the Stuart regime. Waves of relative toleration, with indulgences issued to select Presbyterian preachers in 1669 and 1672, clashed with moments of vigorous repression of religious nonconformity. Throughout, the government displayed an unwavering attitude against any view that Scotland's monarchy ought to be considered contractual in origin. Those who opposed the Stuarts on more moderate ground found themselves at odds with their more militant brethren, who engaged in uncompromising pursuit of their own ideological platform. Yet even divided the Covenanters proved hard to defeat. In spite of all government efforts, Covenanters of all shades continued their practice of meeting at large and often well-armed field 'conventicles' - or "nurseries of sedition" and "rendezvous of rebellion"<sup>7</sup> as they were dubbed by the state. This was a phenomenon that would prove symptomatic of the ongoing, deep-seated opposition to Scotland's Restoration settlement and which would twice erupt into hapless risings, first at Pentland in November 1666 and then in June 1679, ending with a royalist victory at Bothwell Bridge.

The Cameronians were arguably the most prominent and militant covenanting faction in Restoration Scotland. From early 1679 this group demonstrated a readiness to act violently against the government and articulated their aims and beliefs through an increasingly extremist ideology. It was members of this faction, who on 3 May 1679, carried out the assassination of James Sharp, archbishop of St Andrews and one of the most significant members of the Scottish Privy Council. Sharp's murder is seen as part of the escalating

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<sup>6</sup> I. M. Smart, 'The Political Ideas of the Scottish Covenanters, 1638-88', *History of Political Thought*, I (1980) pp.167, 171, 193.

<sup>7</sup> For an example of this see, *A Proclamation For discovery of the horrid and sacrilegious murder of the late Arch-Bishop of St Andrews* (Edinburgh, 1679). This is a common phrase and is repeated in a great many such proclamations between 1663 and 1688.

conflict between the Covenanters and the state that led to Bothwell Bridge. However, the vehemence of the Cameronians proved unpalatable to more moderate dissidents involved in the uprising and, in consequence, Presbyterian unity was irrevocably undermined along with any hopes for the rebellion's success.

After Bothwell, on 22 June 1680, Cameron and around twenty armed followers issued a public proclamation at Sanquhar's Mercat cross. It was taken by the crown – quite rightly – as a declaration of war against the Restoration settlement and regime. Most alarmingly, the Sanquhar Declaration publicly disowned Charles II as “a Tyrant and Usurper” whose misrule had left him “denuded of being King, Ruler, or Magistrate”. Specifically, the Sanquhar Declaration contended that through his breach of the covenants Charles had “forfaulted” his right to Scotland's throne.<sup>8</sup> Following Cameron's death during a skirmish with government troops at Aird's Moss on 22 July 1680, another outlawed preacher, Donald Cargill, came to lead the faction. That September, Cargill publicly excommunicated the king and many of his officials at a conventicle in Torwood, northwest of Falkirk. Also that year, a document known as the Queensferry Paper or – as it was characterised by the government, ‘The Fanatics New Covenant’ -- was taken from the body of a follower killed protecting Cargill from government forces. This new ‘covenant’ declared the Stuart administration to be “no more called a Government, but a lustful Rage,” that “all Men ought as earnestly to labour to be free of, as of Sword, Famine, or Pestilence raging amongst us”.<sup>9</sup>

Collectively, these statements outlined a Cameronian platform: that Charles II held no legitimate claim to authority in Scotland because he had renounced the covenants and broken his coronation oath. It was an aggressive ideological stance that was overtly political, rather than one founded simply upon religious dissention, and one that stood in marked contrast to the original rhetoric of the early Covenanters’ ‘for King and Covenant’. Karin Bowie has demonstrated that, although dressed in the language of religious persecution, these statements

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<sup>8</sup> ‘The Declaration and Testimony of the true Presbyterian, Anti-Prelatick, Anti-Erastian, Persecuted Party in Scotland’ (known as The Sanquhar Declaration) reproduced in J. Renwick and A. Shields, *An Informatory Vindication of a Poor, wasted, misrepresented Remnant of the suffering, Anti-popish, Anti-prelatick, Anti-erastian, Anti-sectarian, true Presbyterian Church of Christ in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1744) p.175. An online version of this and all other declarations discussed in this article can be found here: <https://drmarkjardine.wordpress.com/declarations-1680-sanquhar/>.

<sup>9</sup> *A True and Exact Copy of a Treasonable and Bloody-Paper, Called the Fanaticks New-Covenant* (Edinburgh, 1680) quotations at pp. 5-6.

were articulated “in constitutionalist terms” against the hereditary right to rule claimed by the Stuarts. Indeed, Bowie places both the Queensferry Paper and the Sanquhar Declaration within long-term traditions of contractualism that stretched across the seventeenth century from the regal union of 1603 to the incorporating union of 1707.<sup>10</sup> Notably, the distinctive covenanting term “forfault” would feature in the constitutional settlement reached by Scots during the Revolution of 1688-89.

Cargill’s capture and subsequent execution at Edinburgh, on 22 July 1681, appeared momentarily to quiet the radical covenanting fringe. However, on 12 January 1682 members of a newly formed network of prayer groups known as the ‘United Societies’ issued the Lanark Declaration. This was a defiant statement that grew from the first collective gathering of these ‘Society People’, held at Lesmahagow the previous month, and outlined their common ideological ground. The main stated aim of the Lanark Declaration was to “Ratify and Approve” Charles II’s forfaulture of his crown and kingdom, as previously proclaimed at Sanquhar. In many ways Lanark proved a clearer articulation of this earlier declaration, describing Scotland’s monarchy as, “having been always conditional”<sup>11</sup>. Again, it is clear that Covenanters of Restoration Scotland represented a direct challenge to the Stuart state that transcended one-dimensional anti-Episcopal sentiment.

Whilst the Lanark Declaration maintained the constitutionalism visible in earlier Cameronian declarations, the Societies’ rise to prominence also involved a new and overtly aggressive turn against other groups of more moderate Presbyterians. In November 1684 copies of a document known as ‘the Apologetical Declaration’ were brazenly posted across parts of Scotland’s southwest. Its chief purpose was to (very *unapologetically*) condemn any form of collusion with the Stuart regime and appears to have formed part of a concerted effort to entrench the militant position. Violence against representatives of the state also escalated to new heights, spurred on by the Apologetical Declaration’s threat to punish, “whosoever stretcheth forth their hands against us”<sup>12</sup>. In November 1684 alone, three government soldiers

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<sup>10</sup> K. Bowie, ‘A Legal Limited Monarchy’: Scottish Constitutionalism in the Union of the Crowns, 1603 – 1707’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, xxxv (2015) p.145.

<sup>11</sup> ‘The Act and Apologetick Declaration of the True Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland, published at Lanark January 12, 1682’, reproduced in Renwick and Shields, *Informatory Vindication*, p.184.

<sup>12</sup> ‘The Apologetick Declaration and Admonitory Vindication, of the true Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland: Especially anent Intelligencers and Informers’, reproduced in Renwick and Shields, *Informatory Vindication*, pp.185-191.

were killed in Galloway whilst two more were killed near Linlithgow. Another guard was also killed at Kirkcudbright when over one hundred men and women attacked the tollbooth. It was this tense atmosphere that formed the backdrop for ‘the Killing Times’.

### **The Killing Times**

Between 1660 and 1688, over seventy Covenanters were executed in Edinburgh with perhaps over one hundred more condemned outside of the capital. The frequency of executions rose steadily from the failure of the Bothwell rebellion in 1679 but numbers both in and outside of Edinburgh spiraled to a statistical peak between the autumn of 1684 and the summer of 1685, which is popularly remembered as ‘the Killing Times’. Infamously, this also included some condemned abruptly without trial, although arguably in some cases the line between which deaths should be considered ‘summary executions’ and those resulting from antagonistic skirmishes with the government is open to contestation.

There is some uncertainty over exactly which dates and deaths are referred to by the idea of ‘the Killing Times’. Different scholars, emphasizing different factors that triggered this phenomenon, have pointed to slightly different dates. Alastair Mann’s recent biography of James VII seeks to defend James from accusations that he personally drove the persecution of nonconformist Presbyterians, both when resident in Edinburgh as the duke of York and later as King. Mann notes an escalation in execution numbers triggered by James’ final departure from Edinburgh in early 1682.<sup>13</sup> Mark Jardine considers the Society People as the sole target of this violence and interprets it chiefly as the state’s response to the ‘Apologetic Declaration’. Thus, Jardine includes only Societies members in his statistical analysis and claims that the Killing Times began in December 1684.<sup>14</sup> It can be agreed, however, that this intense moment had ended - shortly after its zenith - by mid-1685. The key exception to this was James Renwick, who was executed at Edinburgh’s Mercat Cross on February 17<sup>th</sup> 1688.

Uncertainty over the scope of the Killing Times is augmented by the fact that many of those remembered as martyrs by later covenanting tradition were not actually executed. There are 101 Scots listed near to the Covenanters’ Memorial in Edinburgh’s Grassmarket but at least seven of these can be proved not to have died at the hands of the state. One such woman, Christian Fyfe, is listed as executed on 7 April 1682 but, as the contemporary lawyer

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<sup>13</sup> A. Mann, *James VII, Duke and King of Scots, 1633 – 1701* (Edinburgh, 2014), pp. 150-152, 159.

<sup>14</sup> Jardine, ‘United Societies’, pp.60, 68, 116-117.



John Lauder of Fountainhall notes, she was never taken to execution.<sup>15</sup> Fyfe disappears from the Scottish Privy Council records after having her execution postponed for a second time in late April 1682 but reappears in the records of Edinburgh Tollbooth listed among prisoners transferred to Dunotter Castle in July 1685.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the Grassmarket memorial, erected as recently as 1954, commemorates her death as a consequence of her “adherence to the reformed religion”.

Some examples are more controversial. Margaret MacLachlan and Margaret Wilson, are believed to have been executed by drowning at Wigtown on 30 April 1685 and are infamously remembered as ‘the Wigtown Martyrs’. The deaths of these women were almost immediately the subject of open dispute and flatly denied at the time by Sir George MacKenzie of Rosehaugh as Lord Advocate in Scotland. Whilst it is most probable that MacLachlan and Wilson were indeed killed, it is now a centuries-old debate that remains, without new contemporary evidence, impossible to resolve.<sup>17</sup>

There are two key points to be raised here regarding what Edward Cowan has described as the “covenanting mythos” that surrounds the Killing Times and its monuments.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, just like the writings of Howie and Scott noted at the beginning of this piece, the vast majority of the memorials to the Covenanters are not contemporary to the Restoration era. Even those that appear oldest are mostly the work of Robert Paterson, a stonemason born in 1715.<sup>19</sup> Thus, these stones have little to say about what the Covenanters themselves stood or died for within their own immediate historic context. Secondly, and most significantly, it must be restated that in spite of a distortive veil of myth, the Killing Times remain arguably the most popularly influential moment and memory of the entire era. Clearly, there is a need to look beyond the ethereal individuals these stones commemorate and toward the ideas and actions led that led them into conflict with the Stuart state as discussed above.

A case in point is the Fife-shire laird David Hackston of Rathillet. Rathillet is best remembered as the ringleader of the militant band who assassinated the archbishop of St.

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<sup>15</sup> D. Laing, ed., J. Lauder of Fountainhall, *Historical Notices of Scottish Affairs*, i (Edinburgh, 1848) p.350-351.

<sup>16</sup> J. A. Fairley, ‘The Old Tollbooth: Extracts from Original Records’, in *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, xii (Edinburgh, 1923) p.167. These prisoners were released after the 1688-1690 revolution.

<sup>17</sup> For a good summary of the Wigtown debate see: A. E. MacRobert, ‘Were the Wigtown Martyrs Drowned? A Reappraisal’, *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire & Galloway Natural History Society* (2010).

<sup>18</sup> E. J. Cowan, ‘The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History’, in E. J. Cowan and R. J. Finlay, eds., *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), pp. 121-122.

<sup>19</sup> Paterson famously devoted his life to erecting and ‘renewing’ the markers laid at covenanters’ graves and appears as a character in Sir Walter Scott’s fictional account of the covenanters in his novel *Old Mortality*.

Andrews in 1679; arguably the most virulently anti-Episcopalian action of the era. Rathillet was - quite brutally - executed as a traitor for his crime; his head, quarters and other body parts dispersed strategically around Scotland as a warning to those of a similar ideological persuasion. He is commemorated on a gravestone in Cupar's Old Churchyard, where one of his hands was buried, along with two other local Covenanters – Andrew Pitulloch and Lawrence Hay - executed the following year.

As a confessed assassin, Rathillet might seem hard to defend but Howie nonetheless presents him as a simple, godly man with “a full resolution to stand and fall with the despised, persecuted people, cause, and interest, of Jesus Christ”.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the gravestone that remembers him at Cupar details that he was “most cruelly murdered” for “adhering to the word of GOD & Scotland[‘s] covenanted work and Reformation”. In reality, however, Rathillet’s ideas and activities transcended this narrow interpretation. Rathillet was among those who publicly proclaimed the Sanquhar Declaration in June 1680, discussed above, and was captured at Aird’s Moss, the fatal skirmish the following month in which Richard Cameron was killed. The archbishop’s murder was just one crime among many listed upon the original precept issued by the Lord Justice General for Rathillet’s trial in July 1680. The manuscript scroll containing his actual indictment, preserved in the National Archives of Scotland, is astoundingly over three meters long. Among the other treasonous charges Rathillet faced was the guarding of field conventicles held purposefully to orchestrate challenges against the state, plotting further assassinations and disseminating seditious ideas. Extant court records repeatedly demonstrate that Rathillet “Declined the Kings Majesties authoritie” before the Lords of the Justiciary, arguing that Charles and his magistrates had usurped authority in Scotland.<sup>21</sup>

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The Covenanters of the later seventeenth century are remembered in Scottish literature and popular memory as religious martyrs. Likewise, they are commemorated across Scotland as the suffering Presbyterian victims of Stuart, Episcopalian tyranny. Yet these images represent most Scots’ sole point of contact with the Restoration Covenanters. There is little acknowledgement of the constitutional roots of the original covenanting movement as

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<sup>20</sup> Howie, *Scots Worthies*, p.510.

<sup>21</sup> National Archives of Scotland, GD 26/56 Bundle 1: ‘Indyctment of Hackstoun of Rathillet, ‘Precept His Ma[jes]ties Advocat ag[ains]t David Hackstoun of Rathilet’, and ‘Hackstoun of Rathilet his treasonable declinator ag[ains]t The Kings most sacred majestie and his justices’.

explored by recent academic research, which emphasizes the contractualist and political implications of Covenanters' ideas and actions after 1660. It was these ideas that were considered so potent by the Stuart monarchy and which fired their stringent efforts to suppress them, culminating in 'the Killing Times'. The Restoration Covenanters used their ideological roots to formulate a formidable and tangible threat to the Stuart regime with far-reaching consequences. Teaching the history of this era with reference to local memorials offers an opportunity to reclaim the later Covenanters from the shibboleths and hagiography that surround them.

## **Out With the Old, In With the New? Scottish Politics in the Aftermath of the Great War.<sup>1</sup>**

**Ewen A. Cameron <sup>2</sup>**

### **Introduction**

We tend to think of the Great War as an event which produced profound changes in the Scottish political system. The franchise was radically altered compared to the last pre-war election of December 1910. In the pre-war period only around 60 per cent of adult males – substantially fewer in urban areas – were able to vote. The expansion of the Scottish electorate from 760,000 in 1910 to 2.2 million in 1918 gave politics a greater claim to the description ‘democratic’ and laid the foundations of many aspects of our modern political system.<sup>3</sup> The increase was greatest in urban industrial areas, where the expansion was of the order of 250 per cent. The achievement of full adult male enfranchisement in the Representation of the People Act 1918 may have had a disproportionate effect on Scotland since the level of enfranchisement prior to 1918 had been lower.<sup>4</sup> The impact of full adult male enfranchisement was, however, less evident in the 1918 election than in later contests due to the low turnout. The enfranchisement of most women (around 80 per cent) over the age of thirty added a new factor to elections. The retention of property qualifications for this class of voters, their definition in relation to their husbands and discrimination against unmarried women were regressive features and probably favoured the established parties rather than Labour. These problems were dealt with in 1928, when full adult female enfranchisement was granted.<sup>5</sup> The pattern of representation in Scotland was also altered

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail on the inter-war period see Ewen A. Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh, 2010), 125–74.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Blackburn, ‘Laying the Foundations of the Modern Voting System: the Representation of the People Act, 1918’, *Parliamentary History*, 30 (2011), 33–52.

<sup>4</sup> I.G.C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832–1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986), 285; Ewen A. Cameron, ‘The 1918 Reform Act, Redistribution and Scottish Politics’, *Parliamentary History*, 37 (2018), 101–15.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Dyer, *Capable Citizens and Improvident Democrats: The Scottish Electoral System, 1884–1929* (Aberdeen, 1996), 113–17.

profoundly. The pre-war system left urban industrial Scotland, where most of the population resided, considerably under-represented and the rural fringes of the country over-represented. This pattern went back to 1832, even 1707, and the anomalies had not been fully dealt with in the nineteenth century, not even by the major redistribution that took place in 1885.<sup>6</sup> The redistribution of 1918 went a considerable way to resolving these issues. If we divide the country into five electoral regions and compare the pattern in 1918 with that in 1885, we can see the shift that took place.

	Number of seats		Percentage of seats	
	1885	1918	1885	1918
North East	10	9	14.2	12.6
Highlands	9	6	12.9	8.4
Western	23	32	32.8	45.0
Eastern	19	20	27.1	28.2
Southern	9	4	12.9	5.6

The table shows a shift in representation from the rural to the urban, from east to west and from southern and northern Scotland to the industrial central belt. This brought representation into line with population to a greater extent than ever before. Although there was an attempt to use arithmetic to equalise the population of seats there was, even in this new system, recognition of older ideas of parliamentary seats as interests or communities of people with similar backgrounds. This is seen most obviously in the creation of the new Western Isles seat, with a relatively small electorate.<sup>7</sup> This redistribution was at least as important as the extension of the franchise. It changed the electoral map of Scotland in a way that clearly favoured the Labour party, by extending the number of seats in the geographical area of their greatest strength and diminishing the number of seats in the rural fringes of Scotland, where they had little support. The results of this change were seen clearly at the 1922 election. Labour won nineteen of its twenty-nine seats in western Scotland. Nearly half (48.1 per cent) of the electorate was located there and Labour's share of the vote was 44.1 per cent in this

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<sup>6</sup> Dyer, *Capable Citizens*, 11–32, 104–23.

<sup>7</sup> PP 1918, XIV [Cd. 8759], *Representation of the People Bill. Redistribution of seats. Report of the Boundary Commissioners (Scotland)*.

region. The new electoral geography seemed to favour the Labour party, at least in the 1922 election. The expansion of the electorate also changed the nature of politics in that it became more impersonal, street politics and popular protest was eclipsed in favour of more organised appeals to the electorate through printed and visual material.<sup>8</sup>

It should not be assumed, however, that all elements of the new system automatically favoured the Labour party. This has been a major area of debate among historians but among the disagreement some points seem clear.<sup>9</sup> Not all of the new voters were working class. The pre-war system had worked against the enfranchisement of other groups, including some younger middle-class men who had not yet established their own households. Further, historians are moving away from the idea that voting patterns were determined in a rigid way by class. Historians pay more attention to the way in which politics operated, the language and arguments used by politicians, the issues focused on by candidates and the effect on the electorate. In this context, therefore, we should be wary of assuming that all the new voters from the working class were potential Labour voters. There were a range of political traditions in this section of Scottish society: older Liberal traditions and working-class Unionism motivated by religious feeling, for example. The impact of female voters has been much debated but given the fact that it was older women who were enfranchised there is some evidence that they did not provide a large addition to the Labour vote.

### **A New Political History?**

Although the nature of elections had changed since the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872 there were still traces of older traditions of elections as public spectacles involving the whole community, including those sections not entitled to vote. In Edinburgh Central in 1922

*The Scotsman* reported that in

one of the districts near Simon Square, in the forenoon, a numerous jazz band, made up of small schoolboys, equipped with battered biscuit boxes, tin lids, and, in one instance, with an unstrung auto-harp, paraded, displaying one of Mr Graham's

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Petrie, 'Public politics and and traditions of popular protest: demonstrations of the unemployed in Dundee and Edinburgh, c. 1921-1939', *Contemporary British History*, 27 (2013), 490–513

<sup>9</sup> H.C.G. Matthew, R. McKibbin, and J.A. Kay, 'The franchise factor in the rise of the Labour party', *English Historical Review*, 91 (1976), 723–52; D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900–18* (Cambridge, 1990).



election bills, carried aloft as a banner, the small company being led by one of the boys manipulating a long-wand after the approved fashion of a military drum-major.<sup>10</sup>

Election meetings, especially those of the Labour party, were advertised by a variety of means, including the time-consuming, ephemeral but effective practice of ‘chalking the pavements’. Newspaper reports give a good flavour of the lively nature of election meetings, often with the contents of heckling introduced in parenthesis and detailed accounts of the ejection of those who went over the score.

The early 1920s saw the increasing use of motor-vehicles in elections: cars adorned with placards, for example. The horse, however, was not entirely eclipsed. In Edinburgh South, Willie Graham, the Labour candidate used a horse-drawn waggonette as a mobile speaking platform. Material such as this is important because political historians have recently begun to take a more inclusive approach to what constitutes the evidence for political history. If, regrettably, we cannot access the information that was chalked on the pavements we can, by careful reading of newspapers and study of collections of ephemera, use the evidence of posters and leaflets to animate our picture of the electoral process. This approach also pays more attention to the public statements and the language used by politicians and gives less emphasis to their private correspondence, once so assiduously studied by political historians.<sup>11</sup> The material culture of politics – the objects associated with it – has also become a fruitful area of study.<sup>12</sup> This is, rather grandiosely perhaps, referred to as the ‘new political history’. There is no doubt, however, that such approaches have breathed new life into the practice of political history and made it more wide-ranging.<sup>13</sup> The interactions between politicians and voters are as significant as the elite machinations of cabinet ministers. This approach is also distinct from the ‘electoral sociology’ that was common in the 1960s and

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<sup>10</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 Nov. 1922, 6.

<sup>11</sup> There is a tendency to caricature the, by implication, ‘old’ political history as being uninterested in ideas and reducing all politics merely to elite machinations. For this period the principal text is Maurice **Cowling**, *The Impact of Labour, 1920–1924: The Beginnings of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge, 1971).

<sup>12</sup> [Mark Nixon](#), [Gordon Pentland](#) and [Matthew Roberts](#), ‘The Material Culture of Scottish Reform Politics, c.1820–c.1884’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 32 (2012), 28–49.

<sup>13</sup> James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge, 1993) began the trend.

1970s.<sup>14</sup> The methods used by politicians to persuade the voters of the virtues of their arguments and policies questions the rather deterministic association of social class and voting patterns that was a characteristic of this school.<sup>15</sup>

### **Electoral Patterns**

With an awareness of these trends in the historiography, let us now turn to look at the political history of the early post-war period. The 1918 election was a curious event. It was held immediately after the end of the war with the country still in chaos, demobilisation proceeding slowly and uncertainly and neither society nor the political parties in a state of readiness for an election. Indeed, senior Cabinet Ministers were informed of the widespread opposition in the country to the idea of holding a general election at this time. The Chairman of the Conservative Party was highly frustrated:

It is, I presume, useless to point out under what difficulties an election must be held; lack of paper, the atrophied condition of organisation; the impossibility in many places of securing halls for meetings, those being already in the occupation of the military or other government department, and the difficulties of obtaining the necessary staff.<sup>16</sup>

On the Liberal side, Arthur Murray was even more worried and informed Donald MacLean:

I am afraid a general election may somewhat unsettle the French. The French soldier is much more of a politician than the British soldier and hundreds of thousands of Britishers voting in the trenches, and in France, must inevitably give rise to a desire on the part of the French for elections. The Boche agent will then get pretty busy.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Neal Blewett, 'The franchise in the United Kingdom, 1885–1918', *Past and Present*, 32 (1965), 27–56.

<sup>15</sup> Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867–1914* (Cambridge, 1998) is an important book in this context.

<sup>16</sup> London, House of Lords Records Office [HLRO], Andrew Bonar Law Mss, 95/2, George Younger to Andrew Bonar Law, 20 Sep. 1918.

<sup>17</sup> Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland [NLS], Murray of Elibank Mss, Ms 8004, f. 182, Murray to Donald MacLean, 7 Aug. 1918.

Nevertheless, it was a useful political moment for the leading ministers in the coalition. The jingoism that was such an important part of the atmosphere of the election was directed as much at Bolshevism as Kaiserism and this worked to isolate the Labour party on the left.<sup>18</sup>

As a consequence of these difficulties the election produced a result which is difficult for the historian to read alongside the outcomes of the other elections of the 1920s. The following table gives the state of the parties in Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole in the 1920s.

Election		Cons		CL/NL		Lib		Lab	
		Seats	Vote	Seats	Vote	Seats	Vote	Seats	Vote
1918	Sco	28	32.8	25	19.1	4	15.0	7	22.9
	UK	332	38.5	127	12.6	36	13.0	57	20.8
1922	Sco	13	25.1	12	17.7	15	21.5	29	32.3
	UK	344	38.5	53	9.9	62	18.9	142	29.7
1923	Sco	14	31.6			22	28.4	34	35.9
	UK	258	38.0			158	29.7	191	30.7
1924	Sco	36	40.8			8	16.5	26	41.1
	UK	412	46.8			40	17.8	151	33.3
1929	Sco	20	35.9			13	18.1	36	42.3
	UK	260	38.1			59	23.6	287	37.1

An important feature of the 1918 election was the very low turnout. Since the extension of the franchise of 1885 elections had been characterised by high turnouts. In 1918 only around 60 per cent of the population cast their ballot. This was partly due to the serious failures in the organisation of the soldier vote for many of the men still in uniform and they were disenfranchised, much to their anger and resentment. There were enormous difficulties in finding the correct addresses for many absent voters and the electoral registration officials could not overcome deficiencies in the register used in the 1918 election. Candidates' agents,

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<sup>18</sup> Gordon Brown, 'The Labour Party and political change in Scotland, 1918–1929: the politics of five elections', PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982, 89–90.

including that of Andrew Bonar Law in Glasgow Central, drew attention to the problem.<sup>19</sup> In some seats the turnout was very low: less than 40 per cent in Aberdeen North, Aberdeenshire East, and Inverness for example.

An additional factor in the election was the continuation of the wartime coalition. The Conservatives and the Coalition Liberals, under the leadership of Lloyd George, did not stand against each other. They decided which party was likely to have the greatest chance of success in any given seat and the candidate of that party was granted the coalition's 'coupon' to contest the seat. Within the coalition this slightly favoured the Conservatives in terms of the MPs returned but its principal effect was to make it extremely difficult for the Independent Liberals, under the leadership of the former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, and the Labour Party to make electoral headway. Organs associated with the labour movement viewed the election as little more than a conspiracy against the interests of the workers.<sup>20</sup> The disproportional nature of the relationship between votes and seats for these parties can be seen from the table. With over a fifth of the popular vote the Labour party won around a tenth of the seats and the Liberals gained only 6 per cent of the seats with 15 per cent of the vote.

This was an especially bad election for the Liberals. It is important to recall that this was the party that had dominated Scottish politics since 1832, with only a slight and short-lived blip in 1900. In December 1910, they had won 58 of the 70 Scottish seats with over 55 per cent of the popular vote but in 1918 they were despatched to the margins and their leader lost his seat in East Fife and had to re-enter Parliament at a by-election at Paisley in 1920.<sup>21</sup> Although there were better Liberal performances in the 1920s, notably when the party achieved a greater degree of unity around free trade in 1923, and in 1929, when there was a better financial foundation, the long-term trend was one of decline. The establishment of the National Government in 1931 led to further Liberal divisions and by the general election of 1945 the party, which had once dominated Scottish politics, was left with no representation

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<sup>19</sup> HLRO, Andrew Bonar Law Mss, 21/6/64(93), Robert Stewart to J.C.C. Davidson, 19 Dec. 1918.

<sup>20</sup> *Forward*, 30 Nov. 1918, 1; 7 Dec. 1918, 1.

<sup>21</sup> S. Ball, 'Asquith's decline and the general election of 1918', *Scottish Historical Review*, 61 (1982), 44–61; R. Kelley, 'Asquith at Paisley: the content of British Liberalism at the end of its era', *Journal of British Studies*, 4 (1964–5), 133–59; C.M.M. MacDonald, *The Radical Thread. Political Change in Scotland: Paisley Politics, 1885–1924* (East Linton, 2000), 225–66.

north of the border. There were often particular reasons for poor election results – divisions, opposition by powerful coalitions – but there were deeper reasons for decline. Put bluntly, the Liberals seemed old fashioned and their policies anachronistic. Although the debates around the land question remained important in the highlands this issue no longer had the potency that it had in 1910. Fiscal policy was very important in the election of 1923 and the Conservatives pushed the idea of protection, although perhaps without a great deal of conviction in Scotland.<sup>22</sup> This provided the Liberals with an opportunity to rally around the traditional flag of Free Trade but this was no longer capable of delivering salvation for the party, as it had in the aftermath of the 1900 election. The Liberals seemed to have few convincing ideas to deal with the major issues that dominated Scottish politics, especially unemployment and housing.

The coalition governed for a further four years until it broke up at Westminster just before the 1922 election. On the ground, however, that election saw 43 seats in which only two parties entered the contest and there is much evidence that local arrangements between the Conservative and the Lloyd George wing of the Liberals continued to operate as these parties sought to defeat the Labour threat. This was not successful.

### **Labour Breakthrough**

The 1922 election saw the Labour party make a very significant breakthrough in Scotland. They gained nearly a third of the vote and returned 29 MPs to Westminster. This was a very important change. Although Scottish Labour organisation had been precocious as far back as the 1880s, the period before the Great War was one that saw the party perform very poorly in Scotland. The Liberals felt the need to engage in a pact with Labour in England before the 1906 election but this did not operate in Scotland and the party gained less than 4 per cent of the vote in December 1910 and returned only three MPs, none of whom were in the vanguard of Socialism. Indeed, one of them, George Barnes (Glasgow Blackfriars), entered the wartime coalition cabinet, received the ‘coupon’ in 1918 and was returned as a ‘Coalition Labour’ MP. After the war it was a different story. Although the radicalism of the new Labour intake can be overstated there was no doubt that many of the activists who had developed high profiles during the war – John Wheatley, James Maxton, David Kirkwood, Thomas Johnston – profited from their notoriety and were sent to Westminster in a blaze of publicity.

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<sup>22</sup> NLS, Acc. 12198/1, Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 23 Nov. 1923.

The reasons for Labour's breakthrough in 1922 can be found in the changing nature of Scottish politics and the way in which they were able to direct the terms of discussion to suit their own interests and those of their supporters. A number of issues demonstrate this point but the evidence is most clear when one considers housing. This had been an important issue in Scottish politics for many years but it was during the Great War that Labour was able to carve out a clear and identifiable message. The Rent Strikes of 1915 were the central event in this process. At the beginning of the war the supply of housing was severely restricted as building largely ceased. The situation was exacerbated by the increase in demand in urban areas affected by the munitions industries. The high wages paid to munitions workers gave them considerable bargaining power in the market. Labour pointed to house owners profiteering through increased rents at the expense of weaker players in the market, especially the families of serving soldiers. This allowed campaigners to assert that it was the house owners, not the rent strikers, who were being unpatriotic. Cartoons in the Labour newspaper *Forward* drove home the message. The rent strikes led to legislation that restricted the ability of house owners to raise rents in identified munitions areas for the duration of the war. This was very important because it shifted the balance of property relations towards the tenants. Further, it created an awkward problem for the coalition government who found it difficult to withdraw the legislation and restore the power of house owners over rent. This was still a very important issue in post-war general elections.<sup>23</sup>

Labour's argument that state intervention was the key to solving Scotland's chronic housing problems gave them a political identity on this question which distinguished them from the other parties. This narrative can be followed through to Labour's first period in office as a minority government under Ramsay Macdonald in 1924. MacDonald appointed John Wheatley, MP for Shettleston in the east end of Glasgow, and a prominent leader of the rent strikes in 1915, as the Minister for Health with responsibility for steering through a Housing Act. Wheatley succeeded in this task and delivered an act that saw the central state subsidise local authorities to build houses. Although this act applied to the whole UK it had a

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<sup>23</sup> HLRO, ABL Mss, 21/6/64(72), James Steel to Archibald Craig, 7 Dec. 1918; NLS, Acc. 12198/1, Walter Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 9 Nov. 1922.



significant effect in urban Scotland where – whether measured by levels of amenity, extent of overcrowding, or physical conditions – conditions were appalling.<sup>24</sup>

The organisation of the Labour movement in Scotland is worthy of some comment. The Labour party was an overarching organisation to which other organisations, to a greater extent than individuals, affiliated. According to a leading organiser of the period ‘there was practically no Labour Party in Scotland ... the real drive was in the ILP’, with which the original Scottish Labour Party had affiliated in 1894.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the growth of the ILP as a mass-membership party was an important reason for Labour’s improved organisation in the post-war period. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War the ILP, relatively weak in Scotland before 1914, had 192 branches with over 9000 members, a figure which amounted to a third of its membership in the UK.<sup>26</sup> The ILP was the main force behind some the vehicles that projected their point of view to an audience wider than its membership. The principal means for this was the newspaper *The Forward*, edited by Thomas Johnston and, later, Emrys Hughes. This journal, aimed at the skilled working class (Johnston was proud that it was not read in the ‘slums’), was a vital intellectual focal point for debates on a wide range of political and ideological issues in the 1920s.<sup>27</sup>

Labour’s breakthrough in 1922 was coincident with the ‘solution’ – for that is how it was viewed by the political class at the time – of the Irish question. This has led to the suggestion that voters of Irish extraction or birth were now released from their commitment to the Liberal party on the grounds of its support for Irish home rule and that they could now vote according to their economic and class interests and support the Labour party. Although it was referred to in the attempt by Unionist newspapers to try to understand the improved Labour performance in Glasgow at the election of 1922, this view has little substance.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> PP 1917–18 XIV, *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population of Scotland*; Ian Wood, *John Wheatley* (Manchester, 1990), 131–45.

<sup>25</sup> NLS, Arthur Woodburn Mss, Acc.7656/4/1, f. 68.

<sup>26</sup> R. J. Morris, ‘The ILP, 1893–1932’, in Alan McKinlay and R.J. Morris (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside, 1893–1932: From Foundation to Disintegration* (Manchester, 1991), 5.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Johnston, *Memories* (London, 1952), 35–9.

<sup>28</sup> *Scotsman*, 17 Nov. 1922, 9.

The association of Socialism with the Irish was also part of the view of those who were hostile to the Irish presence in Scotland and saw it as a threat to Scottish nationality.<sup>29</sup> Labour had a good record on the Irish question as far as Scotland's Irish community was concerned, having opposed the excesses and irregularities of the final phase of British rule in Ireland. Labour was also in tune with the Irish vote on issues like temperance and, especially, education. The support of the Independent Labour Party for denominational education for Roman Catholics funded from local taxation was very popular among the Irish community in the west of Scotland. Nevertheless, we should be wary of assuming that the Irish voters were uniquely susceptible to clerical influence or were fodder for crude machine politics. The influence of the Irish vote can be exaggerated. Even in Glasgow, where Labour was very strong, the Irish vote amounted to only around 25 per cent of the electorate and there were few seats in which it was sufficiently concentrated to affect election results. Prior to the Great War, the Scottish working class was sceptical of Labour and largely loyal to the Liberals. Labour's appeal on social and economic issues was as likely to be popular among Irish voters. This community was afflicted by bad housing and the attractiveness of a more spacious house with an indoor toilet was not conditional on ethnic background.<sup>30</sup>

A final point to discuss about the Labour party is the extent of their recognition of the 'Scottish' dimension of politics. Labour's roots were strongly Scottish. The Scottish Labour Party, formed by Keir Hardie and others after the Mid Lanark by election of 1888, has some claim to be the first attempt at an independent Labour party in the UK. It merged with the Independent Labour Party in 1894 but that organisation had strong Scottish representation among its leaders throughout its history. Labour figures were prominent in organisations in favour of Scottish home rule, both before and after the Great War, especially in the version of the Scottish Home Rule Association revived in 1918. There was, however, also a very centralist strand in the history of the Labour party. Although this became more prominent in the 1930s there was some evidence of it in the 1920s. Labour had little truck with Scottish Home Rule in this period. Two Labour MPs, George Buchanan and James Barr, sponsored

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<sup>29</sup> Richard J. Finlay, 'Nationalism, race, religion and the Irish question in inter-war Scotland', *Innes Review*, 42 (1991), 46–67; Richard J. Finlay, 'National identity in crisis: politicians, intellectuals and the "end of Scotland", 1920–39', *History*, 79 (1994), 242–59.

<sup>30</sup> John F. McCaffrey, 'Irish issues in the nineteenth and twentieth century: radicalism in a Scottish context', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), 116–37.

Private Member's Bills on the subject – in 1924 and 1927, respectively – but they sank without trace.<sup>31</sup> Individual Labour MPs, such as James Maxton, retained an interest in the subject but by the 1930s the party regarded it as a dangerous anachronism.<sup>32</sup>

The breakthrough of the Labour party seems to be an unambiguously new feature of the inter-war scene but even here can be found some echoes of the days when the Liberals dominated Scottish politics. Some recent historiography, although it does not carry unanimous approval, sees the Labour party as an outgrowth from radical Liberalism rather than a root and branch rejection of it. Some of Johnston's themes in *The Forward*, land reform for example, were redolent of the Edwardian period. Further, the personal outlook of many of the new Labour MPs from Scotland had much in common with an earlier period. Indeed, their essential social conservatism has been noted. The teetotalism of many harks back to elements of the Chartist tradition in Scotland.<sup>33</sup>

### **Progressive Unionism?**

The essential unionism of the Labour movement in this period serves as a reminder that there was a strong consensus around the United Kingdom in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. Scottish nationalism was a marginal force at this time. Although there were nationalist movements, such as the Scots National League, the National Party of Scotland was not formed until 1928 and the Scottish National Party followed only in 1934. It might be argued that the most consistent force in Scottish politics in the inter-war period was on the right. The Scottish Unionist Party was formed in 1912 after a merger of the Liberal Unionists, originating with those Liberals who had opposed Irish home rule in 1886, and the Conservatives. From that date until 1965 the word 'Conservative' was not part of the formal political lexicon in Scotland. In 1955 the Unionists gained 50.1 per cent of the vote in Scotland, the only party to achieve a majority of the popular vote in the age of full enfranchisement. This was no fluke and its roots can be found in the inter-war period.

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<sup>31</sup> *Hansard*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 173, cols 789–874 (9 May 1924); vol. 206, cols 865–78 (13 May 1927).

<sup>32</sup> Ian S. Wood, 'The ILP and the Scottish national question', in D. James, T. Jowitt and K. Laybourn (eds), *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party* (Halifax, 1992), 63–74.

<sup>33</sup> William Knox, 'The Red Clydesiders and the Scottish political tradition', in Terry Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History* (Aberdeen, 1989), 92–103.

Although the Unionist results were erratic in the 1920s and their real electoral success in the inter-war period came when they could shelter in the coalition arrangements of 1918 to 1922 and after 1931, they should not be neglected in a consideration of Scottish politics following the Great War. As the principal historian of Scottish politics in this period has pointed out, the Unionists, rather like Labour, had had a good war. Unionists had been prominent in the voluntary recruiting effort in the first part of the war and many of the businessmen in sectors important in the war effort were Unionists. As one would expect of a party prone to wrapping itself in the flag, as it had done in its successful 1900 campaign during the Boer War, there was a strong streak of militarism in the post-war Unionist party. Indeed, thirteen of the Unionist MPs elected in 1918 had a military background, a much higher number than either the Liberals or Labour.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the most effective politicians of the period were from the Unionist party. Indeed, Andrew Bonar Law, the leader of the party, was a Glasgow MP from 1918 until his death in 1923 (as he had been from 1900 to 1906). His successor, Stanley Baldwin, often considered quintessentially English, had a deep affinity with a romantic idea of Scotland through his family background.<sup>35</sup> Other leading Unionists, including John Gilmour, Secretary of State for Scotland and Home Secretary (Pollok), and the ‘debonair’ Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Robert Horne (Hillhead), known as ‘Beaming Bert the incorrigible flirt’, also sat for Glasgow seats.<sup>36</sup> Walter Elliot and Noel Skelton were among the more intellectually creative politicians of this period. They both produced important publications and Skelton, in particular, had a lasting influence.<sup>37</sup> He is often credited with coining the phrase a ‘property-owning democracy’, which was taken up by later Conservative leaders as different as

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<sup>34</sup> I.G.C. Hutchison, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2001), 44–5.

<sup>35</sup> Gabrielle Ward-Smith, ‘Baldwin and Scotland: more than Englishness’, *Contemporary British History*, 15 (2001), 61–82.

<sup>36</sup> Roy Jenkins, *The Chancellors* (London, 1998), 236–44 and Phillip Williamson, ‘Horne, Robert Stevenson, Viscount Horne of Slamannan (1871–1940)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33991>] are practically the only studies of Horne.

<sup>37</sup> Noel Skelton, *Constructive Conservatism* (London, 1924); Walter Elliot, *Toryism and the Twentieth Century* (London, 1927).

Anthony Eden and Margaret Thatcher.<sup>38</sup> Very recent ‘red Tory’ thinkers, such as Phillip Blond, have seen him as the originator of their line of thinking.<sup>39</sup> As early as 1922 Skelton stressed the progressive tone of his party’s outlook. In a speech in his Perth constituency he argued:

Conservative principles put into practice offered the solution to national problems for which Socialism was groping vainly. Socialism performed a function in showing up the troubles and difficulties of our national life, but it was wrong when it tried to suggest remedies, and it was hopelessly wrong, utterly foolish, and wanton in its folly. ... Unionism was based upon fair play between all classes and the desire of each to farther the general weal.<sup>40</sup>

Skelton did not achieve high political office before his untimely death in 1935, an appointment as under-Secretary of State at the Scottish Office during the National Government being his only government job. Such characters as John Buchan, who represented the Scottish Universities seat from 1927 to 1935, and Robert Boothby, who represented East Aberdeenshire from 1924, were less conventional and not easily categorised but they provide evidence that the Scottish Unionist party was a broad church in the 1920s. Indeed, in these figures, one might find a survival of elements of the pre-war Liberalism that, at first sight, was eroded by the election results of the inter-war period. In the case of east Aberdeenshire the Liberals did not bother to field a candidate after Boothby’s initial victory in 1924. The other element of his success, in what appeared an unlikely seat for him, was his utter devotion to the fishing and farming interests of his constituents.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond a roll call of prominent individuals, the party had deep roots in Scottish society and culture in the inter-war period. The Presbyterian churches were strongly Unionist, exemplified by such leaders as John White of the Barony Kirk in Glasgow, and Alexander

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<sup>38</sup> David Torrance, *Noel Skelton and the Property-Owning Democracy* (London, 2010); Philip Williamson, ‘Skelton, (Archibald) Noel (1880–1935)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40226>].

<sup>39</sup> Matthew Francis, ‘Cameron and the renewal of the “property-owning democracy”’, [http://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion/opinion\\_25.html](http://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion/opinion_25.html)

<sup>40</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 Nov. 1922, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Rhodes James, *Bob Boothby: A Portrait* (London, 1991), 54–63.

Martin of the United Free Church. White was the architect of the union of these denominations in 1929 and, less positively, the leader of an egregious anti-Irish campaign that used tendentious statistical arguments, as well as outright racism, to suggest that the Irish represented a political, economic and eugenic threat to Scottish society. Despite his background in the Orange Order and the party's links with the Kirk, Gilmour had little sympathy with such arguments.<sup>42</sup> In private, however, other ministers, including Walter Elliot, displayed a strong streak of anti-Irishness.<sup>43</sup> There was a great deal of sensitivity on this point. When the Coalition government broke down in 1922 and a new Conservative government was being set up, there was a proposal to appoint Lord Lovat, a Roman Catholic Highland landowner, to be Secretary for Scotland. George Younger, the Chairman of the Party, warned the Prime Minister that this would be unwise on the grounds that it 'would greatly inflame Scottish feeling if a catholic occupied this position ... we must not add to our difficulties in the North'.<sup>44</sup> In an example of relying too heavily on single items of political correspondence, however, it is worth noting that only the day before Younger had written to John Gilmour about the appointment in the following terms: 'if you refuse, I think we should give it to Lovat and risk the consequences of the Catholic business'.<sup>45</sup>

The Scottish press was also a strong supporter of the Unionist party. The main national newspapers, *The Scotsman* and the more commercially-oriented *Glasgow Herald* had turned away from their traditional Liberal roots at the time of Gladstone's first home rule proposals in 1886 and had remained Unionist in outlook ever since. Many local newspapers had a similar political outlook. The days when the Liberals had dominated Scotland's exceptionally vibrant newspaper culture were a distant memory. The legal profession was also dominated by Unionists. This was true of leading judges and the political lawyers who

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<sup>42</sup> David Ritchie, 'The civil magistrate: the Scottish Office and the anti-Irish campaign, 1922–1929', *Innes Review*, 63 (2012), 48–76; Stewart J. Brown, "'Outside the covenant": the Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish immigration 1922–1938', *Innes Review*, 42 (1991), 19–45.

<sup>43</sup> Alvin Jackson, *The Two Unions: Ireland, Scotland, and the Survival of the United Kingdom, 1707–2007* (Oxford, 2012), 257.

<sup>44</sup> HLRO, Andrew Bonar Law Mss, 109/1/26a, George Younger to Law, 21 Oct. 1922.

<sup>45</sup> Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland [NRS], Gilmour of Montrave Mss, GD383/17/16, Younger to Gilmour, 20 Oct. 1922.



sought government offices. Indeed, Labour found it difficult to fill the legal posts when they entered government in 1924.<sup>46</sup>

A strong characteristic of the Unionist outlook in the inter-war period was the way in which they emphasised anti-Socialism and conscripted other parties, especially the Liberals, into sharing this outlook. This was seen most obviously at the local government level where euphemistic labels, such as ‘Progressive’ or ‘Moderate’, were used to organise pacts designed to keep Labour out of power. This was successful. In Glasgow, where Labour had been very successful at Parliamentary elections, they were unable to take control of the City Chambers until 1932 and even then only because the anti-socialist vote was split by the success of the Scottish Protestant League.<sup>47</sup> The language used by Conservative candidates was characterised by anti-socialism. For example, here is Sir John Gilmour’s election address in Glasgow Pollok in 1922: ‘I shall oppose all measures of socialism, and in particular any proposals of the Labour party which would lead to the abolition of private property or its confiscation ...’.<sup>48</sup> This theme extended to some of the political posters used at the election. In Glasgow Central, the seat of the Prime Minister, Andrew Bonar Law, a poster depicted a ‘bearded Russian’ and bore the legend ‘He Wants You to Vote Socialist. Don’t!’. In Hillhead Sir Robert Horne’s posters declared: ‘Nationalisation means Higher Taxation and Less Employment’.<sup>49</sup>

Despite this evidence, Scottish Unionism has a historical reputation for being much more moderate than its English counterpart. The Scots were certainly more amenable to the continuation of the coalition and to ongoing cooperation with the Liberals after the breakdown of the formal arrangement. In policy terms this may have been more evident during the 1930s. One of the key elements of the Unionists’ appeal in the 1920s was the emphasis on protectionism at the general election of 1923. In Scotland, where so much of the output of the economy was exported, this had never been a very popular policy and the

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<sup>46</sup> Hutchison, ‘Scottish Unionism between the two world wars’, 73–99.

<sup>47</sup> James J. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow, 1896 to 1936: Socialism, Suffrage, Sectarianism* (East Linton, 2000), 95–124.

<sup>48</sup> NRS, Gilmour of Montrave Mss, GD383/15/2.

<sup>49</sup> *Scotsman*, 16 Nov. 1922, 6.

dangers of economic nationalism were profound. Leo Amery, coming to speak at Clydebank, had to reassure leading Scottish Unionists that he had

no intention of using the words protection or general tariff in my speeches in Scotland but naturally I shall develop the need both for Empire Preference and for safeguarding our industries against unfair competition. I do not think your friends need be alarmed.<sup>50</sup>

An attempt to sweeten this pill was found in the emphasis on the imperial dimension, through preference to imports from the Dominions in the scheme of tariff reform. Sir John Gilmour's 1923 address was a good example:

To meet the present abnormal and, we hope temporary, conditions, and after careful enquiry into individual trade conditions, I am prepared to support a policy which will include: (1) a tax on foreign manufactured goods, with special regard to those markets that cause the greatest amount of unemployment in this country. (2) to give a substantial preference to our Dominions and lay the foundations of Free Trade within the Empire.<sup>51</sup>

Elliot's sardonic comment that he had 'constructed a speech on tariff reform which almost makes me believe that there must be something in it', indicates something of a lack of commitment to tariff reform among Scottish unionists.<sup>52</sup> As the election results showed, this approach was not a conspicuous success in Scotland and some historians argue that this was an important moment in the turn of the Unionists towards a more progressive approach.<sup>53</sup>

### **Other Political Traditions**

This discussion has focused on the main parties. This partly ignores the existence of other political traditions that were evident in Scotland in this period, especially Communism. This approach can, however, be justified in that, despite widespread fears of political instability

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<sup>50</sup> NRS, Gilmour of Montrave Mss, GD383/20/2, Amery to Gilmour, 3 October 1924.

<sup>51</sup> NRS, Gilmour of Montrave Mss, GD383/15/5; Walter Elliot's address in Lanark took a similar line, see NLS, Acc.12198/1.

<sup>52</sup> NLS, Acc. 12198/1, Elliot to Blanche Dugdale, 23 Nov. 1923.

<sup>53</sup> I.G.C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832–1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986), 322.

and the effect of a generation brutalised by the experience of war, the political system of the inter-war period was remarkably stable.<sup>54</sup> This was seen most clearly in the essential failure of Fascism to develop in Scotland in the 1930s. In the early 1920s there were tangible sources of concern. The effect of Irish revolutionary politics on the Scottish scene was something that worried Conservatives in the west of Scotland who were prone to scare stories of Sinn Féin drilling. In the Hebrides the land raids undertaken by ex-servicemen, who were disappointed at the relatively slow process of making more land available for the creation of new crofts, also seemed to indicate that trouble was afoot. The threat of the former was exaggerated and although the land raiders posed real problems for local and national government they did not pose a wider threat. They referred in their rhetoric to older traditions of protest from the 1880s rather than to contemporary political ideology of a revolutionary nature.<sup>55</sup> In the early part of the post-war period Labour took a more inclusive attitude to candidates of other left-wing parties than they would later in the decade. Although John Maclean and William Gallacher (Communist MP for West Fife from 1935 to 1950) are well remembered, the flag bearer for the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1920s in Scotland was the eccentric journalist J.T. Walton Newbold who was briefly MP for Motherwell in 1922–3.<sup>56</sup> Care must be taken even here, however. Newbold profited in 1922 from the failure to find a suitable Labour candidate and was defeated in 1923 when such a person was found, in the shape of United Free Church clergyman and popular historian of the Covenanters, Rev James Barr. It has even been suggested that the Presbyterian clergyman was a more amenable candidate for

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<sup>54</sup> Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a peaceable kingdom: war, violence, and fear of brutalization in post First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003), 557–89; Jon Lawrence, 'The transformation of British politics after the First World War', *Past and Present*, 190 (2006), 185–216.

<sup>55</sup> Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1880–1925* (East Linton, 1996), 166–90.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Duncan, 'Motherwell for Moscow: Walton Newbold, revolutionary politics and the labour movement in a Lanarkshire constituency, 1918–22', *Scottish Labour History Journal*, 28 (1993), 47–70; Kevin Morgan and Robert Duncan, 'Loitering on the party line: the unpublished memoirs of J. T. Walton Newbold', *Labour History Review*, 60 (1995), 35–51; Robert Duncan, 'The revolutionary in parliament: Walton Newbold as Communist MP (November 1922–November 1923)', *Scottish Labour History*, 44 (2009) 56–73.

the Roman Catholic voters than the Communist and there is little evidence, despite partisan historiography, that Motherwell had been, even briefly, converted to Marxism-Leninism.<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

It would be stretching the evidence to breaking point to suggest that Scottish politics in the 1920s showed little change from the Edwardian period but we should not be blind to the forces of continuity. The Liberal party declined as an electoral force but its legacy survived in a number of aspects of post-war Scotland. The progressive Unionism that was such a feature of the Scottish scene in the 1920s and 1930s owed more than a little to elements of Liberalism from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Labour party, which broke through into the mainstream of Scottish politics in 1922, can be seen as an outgrowth of radical Liberalism, rather than an alternative to it. Towards the end of the decade, Scottish nationalism began to emerge in partisan form. Although it was not until the Second World War that it had any electoral effect, its central demand for Scottish home rule was one that would have been recognisable to pre-war Liberals who had been involved in the 'Young Scots Society' or a slightly older generation who had founded the Scottish Home Rule Association in the 1880s. Nevertheless, there were novel elements in the political system of the 1920s. New forms of politics were required in order to appeal to a truly mass electorate, organised into constituencies of a type quite different from those that date from the redistribution of the 1880s. The electoral geography of Scotland caught up, at last, it might be said, with the demographic geography of the nation. The urban-industrial western region punched its weight and this made an important contribution to the changed nature of politics in the post-war period.

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<sup>57</sup> Hutchison, *Political History*, 290–3; Colin Fox, 'Motherwell is won for Moscow and socialist revolution': John Turner Walton Newbold and the story of Britain's first Communist MP (Glasgow, 1992). I am grateful to Mr John Swinburne, James Gillespie's High School, Edinburgh, for information on this point.

# **The Challenge of Performativity in the Certificated History Classroom**

**Chris O'Hanlon**

Recent analysis of the Scottish education system has identified a perceptible shift towards an ethos of performativity, whereby the success of teachers is based almost entirely upon exam results (Priestly et. al. 2012). The negative effects of a performance based schooling system have been widely recognised, ranging from skewed target setting to the complete abandonment of the goal of delivering 'good' education (Priestly et. al. 2012). Ultimately, it has been argued that 'we end up valuing what is measured' rather than measuring what is valuable (Biesta, 2009, p.43). This outcome has profound effects when viewed in the context of the certificated history classroom. Primarily, as will be demonstrated, the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) exam questions fail to effectively develop or assess historical understanding. As a result, the progression of historical understanding is largely reliant upon the approach taken by the classroom teacher. However, a consequence of the culture of performativity in Scotland is that any departure from the processes required to pass the exam is in danger of being viewed as precious classroom time wasted. Considering the pressure on teachers from senior managers and parents, a focus on the exam may well be seen as the most pragmatic pedagogical approach in the certificated history classroom. However, passing an exam and being good at history are two entirely separate objectives. The culture of performativity makes it likely that passing an exam will become the primary goal at the expense of genuine historical understanding. However, as will be demonstrated below, the two need not be mutually exclusive.

As teachers, we have a responsibility to equip the pupils in front of us with the knowledge to pass exams. However, such an obligation can become a straightjacket. Priestley's research has demonstrated that the focus on improving exam results leads to 'anxiety, lack of confidence and even ontological insecurity' amongst practitioners (2012, p.14). The implication here, is that teachers will adopt a 'teaching to the test' approach to some degree. For example, a common tactic in history classrooms is to 'practice' exam questions, repeating the different source activities to ensure our pupils can confidently identify the type of question and remember how to answer it. The problem with this approach is that it casts historical activities such as source interpretation as a 'skill', and in doing so, displays a poor understanding of how historical understanding is actually developed. Thinking of history in

terms of 'skills' leads to the false premise that through repeated 'exposure' to an activity or question type, learners will improve in their abilities (Counsell 2000, p.55). On the contrary, research into the progression of historical understanding in school children has shown that without some understanding of the procedural concepts that underpin what they are being asked to do, pupils rarely improve their written responses (Lee 2011, p.64; Counsell 2000, p.55). Whilst the efforts to improve exam results through repeatedly practicing past paper questions can improve exam technique, it is unlikely to result in pupils getting better at history. The work of Lee has identified just how pivotal explicitly addressing the procedural concepts that form the basis of our discipline is in developing historical understanding. In Scotland, however, doing so necessitates a move away from the exam paper. The increased anxiety and decreased confidence identified as a side effect of performativity makes this departure less likely. However, detailed research into how historical understanding progresses can be used to ease apprehension. Lee and Ashby (2000) found that, in both written and verbal responses to questioning, pupils with limited understanding of procedural concepts performed poorest, often misunderstand what is being asked of them. This would suggest that pupils who understand the conceptual basis of the exam questions are likely to perform better than those that merely rely upon a memorised process.

If analysis is centred upon the Higher question paper, it is clear that the SQA have attempted to ground the source questions in the procedural concepts of our discipline. This should be applauded, especially as it suggests a desire to ensure the historicity of the qualification. Moreover, the exam enjoys some success in assessing historical understanding as is the case with the 'how fully' question, which provides a useful benchmark for measuring pupil understanding of accounts. By requiring learners to identify omissions in a source, the implication is that sources are not true accounts of the past and they will not convey a complete story or image. Thus, the 'how fully' question effectively tackles commonly held preconceptions pupils hold about the past, particularly that there is a 'correct' story of the past and that it is the job of historians to uncover it. Despite the sound ontology of this question, there remains room for practitioners to improve the way it is taught. By explicitly addressing the procedural concept that forms its foundation, it is possible to encourage a more sophisticated understanding of historical accounts than that afforded implicitly through learning the required exam technique.

Despite the relative success of the 'how fully' question, the problem remains that pupils who can pass an exam are not necessarily good at history in any quantifiable way. It is



unfortunate that the other source questions do not share the value of the ‘how fully’ question in assessing historical understanding. Take the ‘comparison’ question. Although demonstrably based in the concept of evidence, and displaying an acute awareness that primary sources can present conflicting information about the same event, the way the marking instructions allow credit to be given means this question amounts to little more than spotting the differences, with nothing distinctly historical about it. In improving the way we teach this question, an alternative can be found in a comparable question set by the AQA in England. Although identifying differences between the two sources will achieve some credit under the AQA, it is only part of an answer, with the higher marks being reserved for pupils who can explain the reasons for the differences. This extra step affords the pupil real scope for interpreting the sources and asking worthwhile questions of them. Although this explanation may seem like a pointless step in the context of the current SQA exam structure, it is a worthwhile exercise in the classroom nonetheless. Not only does it encourage the development of historical understanding, but it transforms an ahistorical activity into one which holds disciplinary value.

Similarly, the ‘evaluate the usefulness’ question also has its basis in the procedural concept of evidence. However, it is once again limited in its efficacy for assessing historical understanding because of the manner in which the exam presents it. The required technique implies to students that good source evaluation boils down to reductive comments on the author, timing, purpose and accuracy of the source. The significant problem here is that dialogue and discussion are shut down. For example, it becomes legitimate to argue that an English source commenting on the Battle of Stirling Bridge must be ‘biased’ through virtue of being written by the opposing side, and therefore cannot be useful. So long as this argument is linked to a comment on the author or purpose of the source, marks can be credited. Although this is clearly a ludicrous statement to the eyes of a trained historian since even ‘biased’ sources are intrinsically useful in revealing attitudes and interpretations, it is one based on a class discussion held with a group of Fifth and Sixth year pupils. The work of LeCoq (2000) and Counsell (2011) has identified that asking pupils to evaluate a source in the context of an event usually results in such constrained thinking. It is necessary then, to place source evaluation in the context of a question, and to teach our pupils that sources are never inherently useless: just because they have no use for one enquiry does not mean they will not be useful for another. Once again, it is necessary to depart from the process stipulated by the SQA to garner any genuine historical worth from this question type, and this presents

the danger that it may be viewed as a waste of time. However, as suggested by research, by increasing historical understanding we are effectively increasing the ability of our pupils to perform at a higher standard.

How we approach the teaching of historical concepts in the classroom has the potential to benefit our pupils that are sitting exams by increasing the awareness of what they are being asked to do. However, the procedural concepts of history have a wider relevance than the certificated classroom. Given the autonomy granted to teachers in the BGE phase, it would make sense to begin developing the understanding of these concepts throughout the junior phase. Research conducted by Lee and Ashby (2000) found that, although older pupils are often utilising different ideas in history, pupil age should not be taken as an indication of ability to implement sophisticated concepts. It was identified that teaching was the essential aspect of developing historical understanding, not age. The benefits of introducing procedural concepts in the junior phase are two-fold. Firstly, those pupils that continue their study of history after subject choices will have a better base of knowledge from which to work, meaning the mitigation of the less effective exam questions will require less intensive work. Secondly, it would ensure that those pupils who choose to abandon history as they progress through their school career will still have received a meaningful induction to the discipline, and thus be better equipped to deal with the representations of the past that occur in everyday life.

The purpose of this article is not to define a pedagogical model that teachers can adopt in the classroom. Rather, it seeks to contribute to the discussion surrounding how we can improve history education in Scotland. What should be clear is that simply teaching the exam processes to improve attainment only results in pupils able to perform the exam technique required by the SQA. It does nothing to ensure meaningful progression in historical understanding and consequently leads to the questionable historicity of their education. Considering the conclusions drawn by studies surrounding historical understanding, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is possible to improve exam results whilst simultaneously developing historical understanding. To achieve this goal, educators must take confidence from the findings of research and explicitly address the procedural concepts that form the basis of the questions students are asked to answer. Relatively minor pedagogical adjustments can ensure pupils are aware of the processes required to pass the exam, whilst allowing participation in activities that promote the long-term development of genuine historical thinking and understanding. We are in the fortunate position that publications exist in which

history teachers share their ideas and approaches, allowing the propagation of effective techniques throughout the country. *Teaching History*, for example, contains many articles concerned with teaching approaches that are grounded in research which could easily be adapted to the Scottish curriculum. The main force for change, however, must be the SQA. With minor tweaks to the exam questions, and a move away from the much criticised prescriptive marking schemes (ESC 2016), it is possible for the history exam to actually reward sound disciplinary knowledge. Until such time, however, it is my hope that practitioners will be forthcoming with their own ideas and approaches to ensuring that disciplinary rigorous history is being taught in schools.

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## **Freedom to Believe: A Caribbean Social and Religious History Resource**

### **Diana Paton**

Africans who were enslaved and brought to the Americas could not bring material goods with them, but they brought their memories, their creativity, and their relationships with gods, ancestors, and the spiritual world. In the Americas, such relationships informed the development of religious beliefs and practices, which often helped to sustain people through the catastrophic loss entailed in enslavement. African-oriented religion could also inspire enslaved people to rebel against slavery, as happened in Jamaica in 1760 in a major rebellion led by Tacky, an enslaved man from the Gold Coast, today's Ghana. Tacky was said to have been advised by 'obeahmen', religious leaders who used spiritual power to embolden and protect the rebels. In response to this rebellion, slaveholders clamped down on what they perceived as dangerous African religious practice, creating a new crime called 'obeah'. Obeah is a term that probably comes from what is today Nigeria, but became a general word that was applied to all kinds of spiritual beliefs and practices that were perceived as African, especially those related to healing. Obeah's illegality helped to create stigma about African religions which has persisted in the Caribbean to this day. Obeah remained illegal until the end of slavery, and laws against it were renewed after emancipation in 1838.

The enforcement of laws against Obeah provides historians with an opportunity to research spiritual beliefs and practices that were often kept secret. The records that prosecutions for obeah left behind provide a wealth of information about everyday encounters during and after slavery, as people tried to use spiritual power to protect themselves, to heal the sick, and sometimes to rebel. This material, which I and other scholars have located through years of research in archives and newspapers, could be used in history classrooms to provide a broader context for teaching about slavery and its aftermath, and to encourage students to think about the cultural consequences of slavery.

Working with Carol Dixon, Talawa Theatre Company, The Windrush Foundation, and The National Archives, I have recently developed teaching resources about Obeah and its suppression in the Caribbean. 'Freedom to Believe: A Caribbean Social and Religious History Resource', available at <https://www.freedomtobelieve.info/>, includes an education pack with multiple lesson plans and schemes of work to enable teachers to incorporate discussion of Caribbean religion and its suppression into their teaching about slavery, as well as into other areas of the curriculum, such as citizenship and drama. Alongside teaching

resources, the accompanying website includes a wealth of stories about individuals and groups of people who were prosecuted for Obeah and other religious crimes in the Caribbean from 1760 to the late twentieth century.

The stories include:

- Sarah, one of the first people known to be prosecuted for obeah, described in 1772 as ‘having in her possession, cats teeth, cats claws, jaws, hair, beads, knotted cloths, and other materials relative to the practice of obeah to delude and impose on the minds of the negroes’
- Graman Quacy of Suriname, an African whose skills in healing enabled him to gain his freedom and become well off
- Brutus of Jamaica, who was imprisoned for obeah in 1788, escaped from the prison in which he was held, and led a band of others who had liberated themselves from slavery
- Pierre, a free African healer in Grenada who was prosecuted for obeah on the eve of the end of slavery, and transported first to London and then to Australia
- Rose Ann Forbes, known as ‘Mammy Forbes’, who founded a healing ‘balm yard’ in Jamaica in the early twentieth century, and was repeatedly prosecuted, along with her husband, for obeah and for ‘practicing medicine without a license’

Exploring these resources will enable students to develop a fresh understanding of an important aspect of the cultural life of the Caribbean region, during and after slavery.

Teachers and students who want to go deeper can also examine transcripts and summaries of the original documents on a companion website, Caribbean Religious Trials <https://www.caribbeanreligioustrials.org/>. There are currently more than 750 individual trial records on the site, which can be searched by date, place, name, or by a large number of thematic categories, as well as through keyword full text searching. More will be added over the coming months. They could provide the basis for independent or supported project work by older students, who could, for instance use them to write their own summaries of the trials, developing students’ understanding of historical method as well as of the specific content related to Obeah and religious prosecutions.



The education pack is available free to download from the project website. Printed and bound copies are also available by contacting [diana.paton@ed.ac.uk](mailto:diana.paton@ed.ac.uk). I'd be delighted to respond to queries from teachers about using the materials, and to hear how they work in the classroom.

Resources:

Freedom to Believe: <https://www.freedomtobelieve.info/>

Caribbean Religious Trials: <https://www.caribbeanreligious.trials.org/>

Diana Paton, *The Cultural Politics of Obeah: Religion, Culture, and Modernity in the Caribbean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Email: [diana.paton@ed.ac.uk](mailto:diana.paton@ed.ac.uk)

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### **ROCK, ALIAS VENTURE, JAMAICA, 1791**

Many enslaved people resisted enslavement by escaping from slave owners and living in Maroon communities or hiding in small groups nearby plantations. One way we know about them is through the advertisements placed by slaveholders in newspapers, offering rewards to others if they captured the runaways. One such advertisement, for two men including 'Rock, alias Venture' appeared in both the Royal Gazette and Daily Advertiser in 1791. The advertisement ran as follows:

**Williamsfield in Portland, Jan 1, 1791.**

**Twenty Dollars Reward.**

**ABSCONDED from the above Plantation, the property of the Rev. Mr. Henry Williams, ... some time ago, an elderly negro man of the Papaw country, named ROCK, alias VENTURE, marked as above, stout made and corpulent, passes amongst the negroes for a great obeah man, and is supposed to be harboured in the neighbourhood of Kildare estate in St. George's, having some time ago been taken up there, by a negro belonging to the Hon. Henry Shirley, Esq. and made his escape from Spring-Garden stocks. A reward of Ten Dollars each will be given for securing said negroes, on applying to Mess. John & William Bridgman, merchants, in Kingston; or in Portland, to the subscriber.**

**HENRY RUSSELL.**

This is one of only a small number of sources that identify individuals as Obeah men or Obeah women in the eighteenth century. Russell, the estate manager, states that Venture ‘passes amongst the negroes for a great Obeah man’, suggesting that to be an ‘Obeah man’ was thought of positively by enslaved people at that time. Venture, described as ‘elderly’, was relatively unusual as a runaway. Those who escaped from slavery were more commonly young men.

The ‘Papaw country’, Venture’s place of origin, refers to the region near the ports of Little Popo and Great Popo’ near the modern border between Togo and Benin. Captives from this area generally spoke Fon and were often sent into the Atlantic slave trade as part of the expansion of the Dahomey Empire. Venture’s Obeah would have drawn on practices learned in his youth in the Dahomey area, although this source doesn’t give us any details. Scholars who discuss Obeah have often seen it as derived from the practices of Akan-speaking people from the Gold Coast (today’s Ghana), or those of Igbo speakers from today’s southern Nigeria, and there is lots of evidence for those origins. But the description of Venture as a ‘great Obeah man’ suggests the diversity of origins of the practices that came to be known as Obeah.

Like many of those who ran away from slavery, Venture had support from other enslaved people. Russell believed that Venture was ‘harboured’ at another estate, Kildare in the neighbouring parish of St George, about twenty miles away. Details of the ownership and location of both Williamsfield and Kildare are available at Legacies of British Slave-ownership.

The advertisement for Russell incidentally reveals a particularly brutal aspect of slave society. Venture is described as ‘marked as above’. This refers to the advertisement immediately before this one, which was for another man, York, who is described as ‘marked WW’. Both Venture and York had been branded with hot metal with the letters WW to mark their ownership by the Williamsfield estate. This procedure, inflicting great pain on its victims, was common in many slaveholding societies.

We don’t know if Venture was captured, or managed to maintain his freedom.

Sources:

Royal Gazette (Jamaica), 22 January 1791

The Daily Advertiser (Jamaica), 13 January 1791

## SLAVE COURTS

### THE CASE OF PIERRE, GRENADA 1833-34.

Most people prosecuted for obeah during slavery were enslaved. Their trials took place in special ‘slave courts’, which only tried slaves. Few records remain of these trials. However, from the 1820s, Caribbean colonies sought to transport people convicted of serious crimes to the penal colonies in Australia. In order to implement such sentences, the colonial governments had to write to the British imperial government with details of the evidence presented in court. As a result, we have information about a few people who were sentenced to transportation, including some who were transported for obeah.

A Grenadian man called Pierre was one of those sentenced to transportation for obeah. Pierre was not enslaved but was a ‘free black man’, born in Africa, and around fifty years old.

It was unusual for an African-born enslaved person to become free in the British Caribbean colonies; Pierre may have acquired the money to buy his freedom through spiritual work. In 1833, shortly before the abolition of slavery, he was sentenced to 14 years to be served in the hulks in Woolwich, England and thereafter 14 years to be served in New South Wales. This sentence was extremely unusual. Most transportees were sentenced to seven years penal labour. The long sentence indicates that his crime was understood to be particularly serious.

The case notes sent to the Colonial Office suggest that Pierre worked as a healer, seeking to cure illnesses and other problems perceived to be caused by Obeah. He must have been widely respected, since he was described as ‘entirely dependent on the precarious earnings of his nefarious arts’. The prosecution seems to have come about when enslaved individuals living on La Sagesse estate complained that Obeah was being practised by others, rather than by Pierre. Pierre was prosecuted for his work in relation to two sick children. In the first case, an enslaved witness called Joseph said that:

*He went to Prisoners house [i.e. Pierre’s house] for remedies for sick child of this witness. Prisoner scraped some alligator’s teeth, put in a little sugar and rum and warm water and gave it to the child – he told witness the child had been poisoned.*

Joseph also stated that Pierre:

*Cupped Susan's foot with a small part of a calabash, into which he held a piece of lighted and greased paper; first having cut the foot some slight cuts with a razor: he brought blood into the calabash, which he threw into a plate – and there was a scorpion in the blood: Prisoner said Louis Pierre had put the Scorpion in the woman's foot. Susan had lived with Louis Pierre, and had left him.*

*Pierre gave Joseph a piece of paper containing a brown powder, and told him to give it to the child in a mixture of rum, water, and sugar. Joseph stated that the medicine did neither good nor harm, and that he paid Pierre with a fowl and a quarter dollar.*

Further witnesses called Pierre Marie and Lydia:

*Gave evidence to the same fact of cupping on the back of Lydia's neck from which he drew, or took out, a live frog – which was killed, as Lydia swore by holy water – Pierre Marie said one frog;- Lydia said two*

In addition, Pierre Marie

*Said he went to Pierre's house with Florentine to get a remedy for child's sickness – it was the scraping of the stag's horn, rum – honey and water and that many black people go to Pierre.*

*Lydia said that she heard Pierre was a doctor. She had paid him with half a bottle of rum, a candle, and a yam.*

The jury, finding Pierre guilty on this count, noted that he 'is proved by all the evidence to have pretensions to cure diseases'; and that 'these are obeah Practices – and the pretence of secret knowledge, as to Obeah practiced by others is a wicked charge of crimes to others, which excites fear, and makes dangerous impressions on the minds of credulous persons like negroes.'

The second charge was similar to the first. A witness called Charles visited Pierre with his sick son, referred to in the documents simply as 'boy'. Pierre 'looked into a book – said David had made Boy sick – scraped stags horn in rum and sugar and water.' Charles stated that Pierre's actions helped his son, so he took him back on a second occasion, on which Pierre gave him wood to boil in water and 'more stags horn and rum to be given to the child.' Pierre then cupped the child's head and stomach and removed fish bones from his body. He said; the child would die if he did not take the medicine'. The boy's mother,

Jennette, also described the incident, stating that ‘much blood came from his ear – Prisoner gave him stags horn & rum and cupped him – she did not see the bones taken from the head and stomach – she was too much distressed and crying.’ As Lydia had done earlier, Charles described Pierre as ‘a Doctor.’ Drawing on a creolized religious framework that employed African spirits within a Christian idiom, he added that Pierre ‘could not have done what he has done without assistance of good spirits – that all he has done is by permission of God – that God gives him the sense to do what he has done.’

The evidence in this second case suggests that Pierre and others living on La Sagesse believed that a man called David had been using spiritual power to hurt others. One witness stated that ‘his fellow servants have great fear of Obeah – means Obeah by David’ and said that he had asked the estate’s attorney to ‘send for a Catholic Priest to drive Obeah away’ because of his and the other slaves’ ‘great fear.’ This witness described a divination process, stating that Pierre looked into his little book, and ‘called a bad name – examined the book well before he called the name – it was David.’ Pierre, he said, ‘is able by the book to tell who hurt the Child.’

On cross examination the witness claimed they were ‘not afraid of prisoner, nor are the slaves – believes an Obeah man can do harm but not good – believes prisoner acts as a Doctor.’ Joseph, who had testified in the earlier case, stated that Pierre had told him and other slaves that ‘they had poisoners on that Estate – and they required a Roman Catholic Priest to say prayers against them.’ For this incident Pierre also received a fourteen year sentence of transportation, making a total of twenty-eight years.

Pierre was unusual for a black defendant at this time in that he was represented by a lawyer. This lawyer petitioned the Grenadian authorities on the 30th January 1834, arguing against his conviction. James Stephen, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, responded to the petition with some sympathy, questioning the length of the sentence and arguing that Pierre’s ‘real crime is nothing more or less than that of having practised as a Quack Doctor.’ In contrast, the Governor General of the Windward Islands, Lionel Smith, said he could not reduce the unusually severe sentence because the ‘Attorney of one of these Estates having represented, if Pierre was restored to liberty he felt certain many of his Slaves would abscond and destroy themselves through dread of the supernatural powers he had long pretended to and practiced.’ There is a gap in the evidence here. None of

the testimony of the enslaved people suggests that they feared or ‘dreaded’ Pierre; rather, they trusted him and considered him to be a ‘Doctor.’

Despite Stephen’s disapproval of the sentence, he allowed it to be implemented. Pierre was sent to England in March 1834. Although he was supposed to spend the first fourteen years of his sentence in England, he only spent one year on the Woolwich hulks. He was transported to Australia on 26 August 1835, as one of 269 convicts sent from England to Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania) on a ship called the Layton, arriving in December 1835. He died just over two years later, on 22 March 1838, having lived on four continents: Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and Australia.

### **Sources:**

#### Archival

Petition from a ‘free Black man’ called Pierre, together with judges notes. George Middlemore, forwarded by Sir Lionel Smith, Governor of Windward Islands, The National Archives, CO 101/78/5, Grenada No. 5, Folios 13 – 30.

State Library of Queensland, Convict Transportation Register: Australian Joint Copying Project. Microfilm Roll 90, Class and Piece Number HO11/10, Page Number 135 (70) and HO 11/10 [Australian Convict Transportation Registers – Other Fleets & Ships, 1791-1868 – Ancestry.com database] Tasmanian records digitised as part of the UNESCO Memory of the World, Archives Office of Tasmania, CON18-1-13\_00111\_L

Tasmanian records digitised as part of the UNESCO Memory of the World, Archives Office of Tasmania, CON 31 (the conduct registers of male convicts arriving in the period of the assignment system, from 1803 to 1843), CON31-1-35\_00223\_L

Polydore, Jamaica 1831

## The Girvan Riots of 1831

Chris Mackay



Just outside Girvan beside the busy A77 sits a memorial stone. Ignored by many of the passing travellers it reads:

On this spot

Alexander Ross

Special Constable

Was shot dead

While in execution of his duty

12<sup>th</sup> July 1831



The stone itself gives the bald facts. However it does not make any mention of the events surrounding the shooting. These reveal a set of circumstances and factors which would eventually lead to what many of the newspapers of the time referred to as an ‘Orange Riot in Girvan’ and the murderer, Samuel Waugh, being hanged in Ayr in January 1832. The riot left a large number of the Girvan population seriously injured. It would also lead to a cannon being prepared for use on the streets of a Scottish town.<sup>1</sup> The disturbances at Girvan have also been described as a turning point.<sup>2</sup> After 1831 some contemporary observers believed that it marked a change in the relationships between Protestants and Catholics within Scotland. Violent clashes would become more common.

The victim, Alexander Ross, was described on the memorial stone as a special constable. However he had held this position for less than a day. He was in reality a fisherman in Girvan. He had responded to a call from the local council to help keep the public order. This was a reaction to an imminent Orange Walk which was due to enter the town on the Twelve of July. Ostensibly to celebrate William the Thirds victory at the Battle of the Boyne these had developed into demonstrations, which by 1831, had become common in some areas of Scotland as well as Ireland.

Events prior to the march in 1831 had heightened the tension. The passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 had led many to believe that radical change was coming. It had removed some of the restrictions placed upon Catholics. They were now allowed to sit as MPs in Westminster and also seek high office. The Act had been passed with the support of the Duke of Wellington who had previously been regarded as opponent of any reform. Wellington saw the Act as a necessary evil. This had resulted in a number of Orange Lodges disbanding in protest<sup>3</sup>

The success of Daniel O’Connell in winning the County Clare by-election in 1828 had brought to head the problems which existed in Ireland. As a Catholic, O’Connell would not have been allowed to take his seat in Parliament. The threat of unrest in Ireland had forced Wellington’s hand. The potential of violence in Ireland had been combined with a fear that Catholic tenants would fail to pay rents to landlords. This fear and a lack of support for using force led Wellington to support repeal. Although this removed one issue there were others that could ignite trouble. The Anglican Church was entitled to collect tithe payments

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<sup>1</sup> JC26/1831/517

<sup>2</sup> Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the origin nature, extent and tendency of Orange Institutions (1835)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

from the Irish population. These tithes were to provide a major source of discontent and in the 1830's were to lead to what has been referred to as a 'Tithe War'.

Debate surrounding the Great Reform Bill throughout 1831 was also a factor in increasing tension. Many sections of the population anticipated that it could lead to a greater number of electors receiving the vote. In Ireland surveys of houses had revealed that a large number of their owners would satisfy the property qualifications being proposed. This would have resulted in an increase in the number of Catholic voters.<sup>4</sup> This was a major concern to Orangemen. It was also a factor behind the events in Girvan in July 1831.

The town council of Girvan feared that the proposed Orange walk would lead to violence. These walks had happened previously as both Maybole and Girvan had sizable Irish communities. Traditionally, large numbers of Irish immigrants had settled in Scotland due to its close proximity. Many had come seeking employment and better living standards. The New Statistical account for Girvan reported unsympathetically that the population increase in the town had been caused '*by the building of small houses in the town, which are soon filled with the lowest orders of the people from Ireland, who had come over with the view of obtaining employment in the weaving of cotton.*'<sup>5</sup> To many Scots the Irish were perceived as troublemakers.

In 1831 the councillors had reason to believe that the forthcoming walk could be fuelled by a desire for revenge. One newspaper reported that:

*It seems that so long ago as the 25<sup>th</sup> April, on the second reading of the Reform Bill, the Scotch inhabitants of Girvan had a procession in honour of that event – they were attacked by a body of cotton weavers from Ireland, mostly Orangemen, who constitute nearly two thirds of the population of the town. Maybole and other manufacturing villages are also filled with Orangemen from Ireland, who assisted on the occasion. Several other encounters took place afterwards, in which the Orangemen were intimidated but not entirely subdued by the native residents; and a good deal of bad feeling consequently existed between them.*<sup>6</sup>

The town councillors of Girvan believed that to allow any procession to go ahead would have serious repercussions. They issued a Proclamation on the 9th of July which stated that

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<sup>4</sup> Politics, the law, and the nature of the Irish electorate 1832-1850 – English Historical Review Vol 92 No 365

<sup>5</sup> P397 Girvan New Statistical account 1837

<sup>6</sup> (The Belfast News-Letter Tuesday July 26 1831)

*‘Being anxious to preserve the public peace of the town at all times and having information that a breach of the peace is likely to be committed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July in the event of an Orange procession’*

*Furthermore call upon the Burgesses, Constables and other peaceable well-disposed inhabitants to give their assistance to the civil authority in maintaining the peace ‘<sup>7</sup>*

The council also requested assistance from the Sherriff Depute of Ayr who they hoped would supply a military force that would help maintain order. They were disappointed to discover that instead of soldiers the Sherriff Depute of Ayrshire, a Mr William Eaton, arrived with 150 Batons and the intention of swearing in local citizens who would help keep the peace.<sup>8</sup> This did not sit well with the local population. They argued strongly that the march should not take place. Eaton felt that he could prevent any procession through the town as he had *“neither instruction nor authority to prevent a procession”* furthermore *“there was no law for putting it down if the parties were peaceable.”<sup>9</sup>*

The Sheriff Depute found himself in a difficult position. He felt that he could not prevent the procession and this led him into confrontation with the local magistrates. Two of them, Bailie Hunter and Anderson discussed the matter with Eaton. They insisted that he should ban the march as they had originally issued a proclamation doing so. Furthermore if he did ban the walk then he would have the support of the respectable citizens of Girvan. The Sheriff Deputes response was uncompromising. He stated that he would hold the Magistrates responsible if they did not cooperate with him.

This stance caused the Eaton to spend a very uncomfortable night in Girvan. A crowd of locals gathered outside his lodgings and threw stones at the windows and shouted “Turn him out”.<sup>10</sup> At 6am the next morning he left his rooms to discover that the townspeople were waiting for him. Their mood had not improved. The Sheriff Depute returned to his rooms and wrote a letter to Sheriff of Ayr outlining his action and complaining of his treatment.

Later that morning Eaton had another meeting in which he hoped to win over the townspeople. They repeated their position that the march was unacceptable. The strength of feeling was such that the Sheriff was convinced to go to the local Orange Lodges and urge

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<sup>7</sup> JC26/1831/517

<sup>8</sup> (The Manchester Times and Gazette Saturday July 23 1831)

<sup>9</sup> AD14-31-424

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

them not to march. The Master of the Girvan Lodge eventually agreed that the local lodge would not join in the march and would cooperate to the extent of sending out a delegate with the magistrates and sheriff depute to stop the march from going through the town. A compromise was agreed that the march would enter the town through a bye road. This it was hoped would prevent trouble.

Unfortunately events did not turn out as the authorities had hoped. At around 12 o'clock the Orange Procession was seen heading towards town. It comprised of Lodges from Maybole and Crosshill. The local population began heading out in an attempt to prevent them entering the town. At the junction of the road to Dailly the march halted. According to witnesses it stayed there for some time. It was met by a group of constables led by a Girvan Councillor called Henderson. The constables had been followed by around 400 townspeople who were showing a keen interest in the affair. The two parties faced each other outside the town. Henderson spoke with Ramsey, the leader of the Orange lodges in the procession. The evidence indicates that Ramsey was in agreement with plan to go around the town. However, *'some of the body were armed and they refused to alter their course.'* Matters quickly took a turn for the worse.

*A few stones were, thrown by some women and boys seemed the signal for attack and the Orangemen poured in volleys of stones upon both constables and people. While the constables were using every exertion to prevent the throwing of stones, the Orange party drew their swords – three shots were fired.*<sup>11</sup>

One of the shots struck Alexander Ross who collapsed and died. Two others were wounded. At this point *'The constables and people scattered and ran like sheep before a colly dog'*.

*The Glasgow Herald of July 25 stated that 'The Orangemen now rushed as a body into the town, firing their pistols, brandishing their pikes and swords, cutting down those they met, knocking in windows and the like, and crying triumphantly, 'the town is ours!'*

The Orangemen proceeded through the town. They left behind one man dead, four clinging to life and another eight seriously injured. Many others were also left battered, bruised and nursing a sense of grievance.

While the riot continued, the Sherriff found himself within a local Inn where he was joined by a number of the local town's people. They were in no doubt as to who was to blame

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<sup>11</sup> Dumfries and Galloway Courier 19 July 1831

for the trouble. They felt that if they had been allowed to gather outside the town and carry weapons they would have stopped the procession before it had entered the town. The miserable Sherriff was warned not to leave the Inn as his life would be in danger. This was from the aggrieved locals rather than rioting Orangemen.

The Sherriff spent his time in the Inn taking gathering evidence about the events of the day. He was able to gather the names of several individuals who had played a role in the unfolding events. He also considered sending a letter to Ayr asking for party of Yeomanry to be sent to restore order. Despite the rather desperate circumstances he decided against this action. Instead he called for his carriage. He was going to head to Maybole and there arrest some of the ringleaders of the disturbances.

The locals did not miss his departure. John Nelson his colleague stated *“Immediately on setting off it was assaulted with stones which were continued to be thrown until it reached the end of the town, during which the chaise was considerably damaged and the driver complained of being hurt”*<sup>12</sup>

The next day the Sheriff, helped by the Yeomanry arrested some of the individuals and had them confined in the Tolbooth at Ayr. The individuals arrested included Samuel Waugh, John Ramsay, Alexander Goldie a Girvan Weaver, John Moffat, Andrew Forsyth a Maybole weaver, and John Scott a labourer from Girvan. They were charged with murder, mobbing and rioting and assault. Their trial did not take place until December 1831.

Samuel Waugh was identified as the man who fired the musket at Ross. He gave his statement two days after the events while under arrest in Ayr. For a man whose life was on the line it does not make convincing reading. He did not know the names of many of the other marchers. Nor did he know the name of the man in a white coat who passed him a musket. He admitted that he had replaced one of the men beside the colours and but “had heard no order for those with guns to go to the front.”<sup>13</sup>

He claimed that he had not fired his gun as it had no flint. Furthermore he had not seen anyone else fire a weapon. Waugh also indicated that he in some respects was a victim as “he was hit by sticks and stones which broke his jaw and cut his face”

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<sup>12</sup> AD14/31/424

<sup>13</sup> JC26/1831/516

The authorities appeared to have placed little weight upon Waugh's evidence. The indictment against him stated that he had levelled "a gun or fouling piece with which you were then armed loaded with powder and with one or more leaden bullets or slugs .... And did wickedly and feloniously fire the same at Alexander Ross."

The evidence against Waugh was strong. One witness Andrew Lennox, saw Waugh and James Farrell with guns at each side of the colours. He indicated that he had not seen Waugh fire his gun. Another statement, Hugh Black's, recorded that when Waugh fired his gun "he pointed the gun directly up the road and not over the hedges." Furthermore "immediately after Waugh's gun was discharged the Girvan people retreated into the town"

John Waddle a weaver from Stranraer, had been one of the marchers. He described the incidents outside the town and then claimed that the march "Went to the green of Girvan where they partook of some refreshment." They stayed there for about two hours before leaving Girvan by an alternate route. They had heard that the local population had rallied and produced a cannon, which they had charged and placed on the expected route of the march.<sup>14</sup>

Ramsay, Goldie, Moffat, Forsyth and Scott were put on trial accused of mobbing, rioting and assault. The defendants pleaded guilty on all charges with the exception of Ramsay who denied the charge of assault. There appeared to be little evidence that he had actually taken an active part in any assault. As a result the plea was accepted. Ramsay and Forsyth were sentenced to nine months in Ayr jail. The others received twelve months all were bound to keep the peace for five years. Waugh was found guilty and sentenced to be executed.

The Caledonian Mercury of December 31 1831 reported that the Judges at the trial had been concerned at the troubles at Girvan. They believed "*That however common such scenes might unhappily be in a sister country, they were new in Scotland.*" Furthermore the events were so serious that they "*called for the attention and consideration of all the highest authorities of the land. Two towns appeared in hostile array against each other; and the one was attacked as if by a foreign enemy. The streets swept, and a great number of persons wounded to the effusion of blood and danger of life*".

These views were echoed in many of the pages of the papers who had reported the events. The Glasgow Herald of January 1832 made their views on the subject clear. The

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<sup>14</sup> AD14/31/424

Orange walks were “*silly politico religious displays*” which were composed of marchers who were “*chiefly from Ireland*” Worryingly “*they had brought their prejudices with them which have caused divisions hitherto unknown, divisions which seem to have changed the very character and dispositions of the people*”

The Herald was also clear that these marches should not be allowed if there was a threat of disturbance. They felt that although “*the processions are legal when properly conducted; but we have frequently questioned whether any good resulted from such pageants.... Our opinion is that they frequently lead to the worst of consequences, and every lover of peace and good order should use his utmost endeavours to prevent them.*”

The Government was also concerned and set up a Royal Commission in 1835 to look at the spread of the Orange Lodge. It was perceived as a threat and a potential source of unrest. One of the key issues was its connections to the British army. Within Ireland the Orange Order had been used as the basis for the formation of militia and yeomanry units during the struggle with France. This was due to their perceived loyalty.<sup>15</sup> For the British Government of 1835 the idea of serving soldiers swearing an oath to anything other than the monarch was seen as a problem. A possible military uprising was not entirely discounted.

Samuel Waugh in his evidence stated that he had been a member of the South Down Militia. It is also interesting to note that the marchers were described in the contemporary reports of the Girvan riot as marching in ranks and files while carrying colours and drums. Many of the marchers in July 1831 had possessed a military background.

In Scotland the links with the military had developed along similar lines. The uprising of 1798 had led to some Scottish units being sent to Ireland. Members of an Ayrshire Militia unit gained a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Ireland to set up a Lodge in Maybole around 1798/1799. They were regarded as the first. Others followed in the South West and Central Scotland.

The Commission reported that the evidence it gathered

*Is ample sufficient to prove the existence of an organised institution, pervading Great Britain and her Colonies to an extent never contemplated as possible; and which Your Committee*

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<sup>15</sup> The Orange Order 1795-1995 Andrew Boyd History Today, 45:9 1995:Sept.p16



*consider highly injurious to the discipline of His Majesties Army, and dangerous to the peace of His majesties subjects.*<sup>16</sup>

The report itself indicated not only the seriousness of the events at Girvan. It also regarded 1831 as a turning point for Scotland and the Orange Lodge. One of the witnesses' called in front of the Commission was a Cosmo Innes. He was an Advocate who had been responsible for investigating violence and unrest involving the Orange Lodges in Airdrie and Port Glasgow. He stated that

*'There is considerable animosity at present existing in all towns and places where there are Orange Lodges, between Catholics and Orangemen.'*<sup>17</sup> He also indicated that he had not *'occasion to observe it previous to the riots in 1831, at Girvan, which was the beginning of this mischief in Scotland'* Innes was of the opinion that the actions of the Lodges had provoked reactions from Catholics. This was certainly true in Girvan. In October 1831 the Caledonian Mercury of Edinburgh reported that a number of the participants in the Orange March had been attacked and forced to leave Girvan.

The Girvan riot of July 1831 has become an almost forgotten episode in Scotland's history. The death of Special Constable Alexander Ross perhaps deserves to be remembered as it reveals a great deal about the difficulties and attitudes which surrounded Irish immigrants. Unrest in Ireland had resulted in tensions in areas of Scotland. This on occasion burst into violence which in turn led to retaliatory attacks. The Scots newspapers appear to have regarded this as an Irish problem. This may be regarded as a failure to accept the involvement of Scots. What is also of interest is the contemporary view of the Orange Order. Very few of the commentators of the period appear to have much sympathy for the marchers. They were regarded as bringing the problems of Ireland to this country. Furthermore, the authorities were concerned at the spread of the Orange Order and its influence on the loyalty of the Army.

The final act in this tragedy took place in Ayr on the 19th January 1832. After a final meeting with his wife, Waugh was hanged in front of a large crowd. The Caledonian Mercury reported that he stated that *"his blood and the blood of Alexander Ross lay upon the people of Girvan."* After his execution his body was handed over for dissection. The Dublin

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<sup>16</sup> PIV Report from Select Committee on Orange Institutions in Great Britain and the Colonies

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p143

newspaper, the Freemans Journal and Daily Advertiser suggested that “*This is one of the fruits of Orangeism*”.

## **Results of National History Teachers Survey**

### **Dr Joe Smith**

Between September 2016 and March 2017, the University of Stirling and the Scottish Association of History Teachers conducted a survey of practising history teachers working in Scotland. The survey was launched at the 2016 SATH conference and was promoted through personal and online networks. In all, 101 history teachers responded to the survey across the experience range and working in a range of locations. This paper covers some of the more striking emerging findings, but the data will be subjected to a more forensic analysis in the coming months.

#### **History Teachers and their subject**

85% of respondents described their knowledge of history in general as ‘thorough or very thorough’. Similar levels of confidence were seen when respondents were asked specifically about Scottish and UK history, though this dropped to 57% when asked about the history of the world beyond Europe. In one sense, these figures are entirely unsurprising – one is likely to be less secure in one’s knowledge of world history because there is so much more of it to know (or rather not know) however the difference may also reflect the limited emphasis on world history in SQA syllabi.

Scottish History teachers are also keen to develop their knowledge of the past. Over 90% of history teachers had visited a historical site or museum in the last 12 months and a similar number had watched a historical documentary. Fully 70% of respondents had attended a lecture on history or history teaching, while over half had engaged in historical research. This last statistic is particularly encouraging, showing that many history teachers are not just teachers, but historians too. This perspective is reflected in the high proportion of teachers who defined history as the act of investigating the past.

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed with a range of statements about the importance of history in schools. The least controversial justification (99%) was the statement that history conferred skills of critical and historical thinking. Far less popular was ‘it teaches children something about the historical method’ (81%). Teachers were also particularly wary of history’s capacity to socialise children with only half saying that history was important because it ‘makes children proud of the country they live in’. Those agreeing with this statement were not, however, spread evenly across the sample: seven in ten teachers

under the age of thirty thought it was important to make children proud of their nation's history while only 43% of those over 30 agreed. Unfortunately, respondents were not asked whether they saw Scotland or the UK as 'their nation', but these figures do seem to be at odds with the received wisdom that patriotism is more common among the older generation.

### **History Teacher Pedagogy**

History teachers in Scotland clearly support a pedagogy rooted in pupils enquiring about the past. When teachers were asked the value of different pedagogic approaches over 80% thought pupils asking questions, forming their own opinions, and debating those opinions was 'very valuable'. In the junior phase of high school, seven in ten teachers encouraged their pupils to form their own ideas about the past in every lesson, while nine in ten made use of primary sources with children at least once a month.

However, the time constraints at certification level have militated against more active forms of learning in the senior phase. While three-quarters of teachers said that their children took part in role-plays and simulations at least once a term during the BGE phase, this fell to just over half for certification courses. Conversely, while 48% of BGE teachers reported that their students made notes from the board every week, this leapt to 87% in the senior phase. While no one would dispute the importance of note-taking in certificate classes, these figures do imply that teachers are struggling to balance their instincts for pedagogical innovation with the demands of examination preparation.

### **Teachers and the curriculum**

Perhaps the most troubling findings from the survey relate to teachers' perceptions of the school curriculum. While 74% of teachers described themselves as 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the history Higher, this dropped to 44% at National level. Complaints were varied but some were heard repeatedly: excessive content, the low status accorded to National Four and a prescriptive examination mark scheme at National 5.

It also seems that the assessment burden of examination syllabi have led to a squeeze on the putative 'Broad General Education' phase of schooling. The survey revealed that over two-fifths of schools teach history for less than an hour a week and that, in three-quarters of schools, pupils can choose to discontinue their study of history at the end of second year. This does not compare well with much of Europe, where the study of history is compulsory until the age of 15.

These squeezing of history in the curriculum might explain why just 52% of teachers described themselves as ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the coverage of history offered by Curriculum for Excellence. Only a minority (45%) agreed that the ‘aims of history in the curriculum are clear’ and a still smaller minority (35%) agreed that the curriculum ‘makes it clear what I should be doing’. Respondents highlighted excessive bureaucracy and a lack of time as the principal problems with the curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

The SATH/ UoS survey presents a predictable mixed picture of the landscape of history education in Scotland. As a group, Scottish history teachers are committed to professional updating and doing their best for their students, but it seems teachers perceive considerable structural barriers to working how they would wish to.

## **Data by major identity markers**

Gender self-description

Male=30

Female=70

Not disclosed = 1

## **Years of service**

<5=36

6-10=24

11-15=19

16-20=9

>20=11

## **Job role self-description**

Probationers = 10

Mainscale teachers = 64

History Coordinator/ PT – 18

Other = 6

Did not disclose = 3

**Method of training**

Degree followed by post graduate diploma = 73

Undergraduate degree = 26