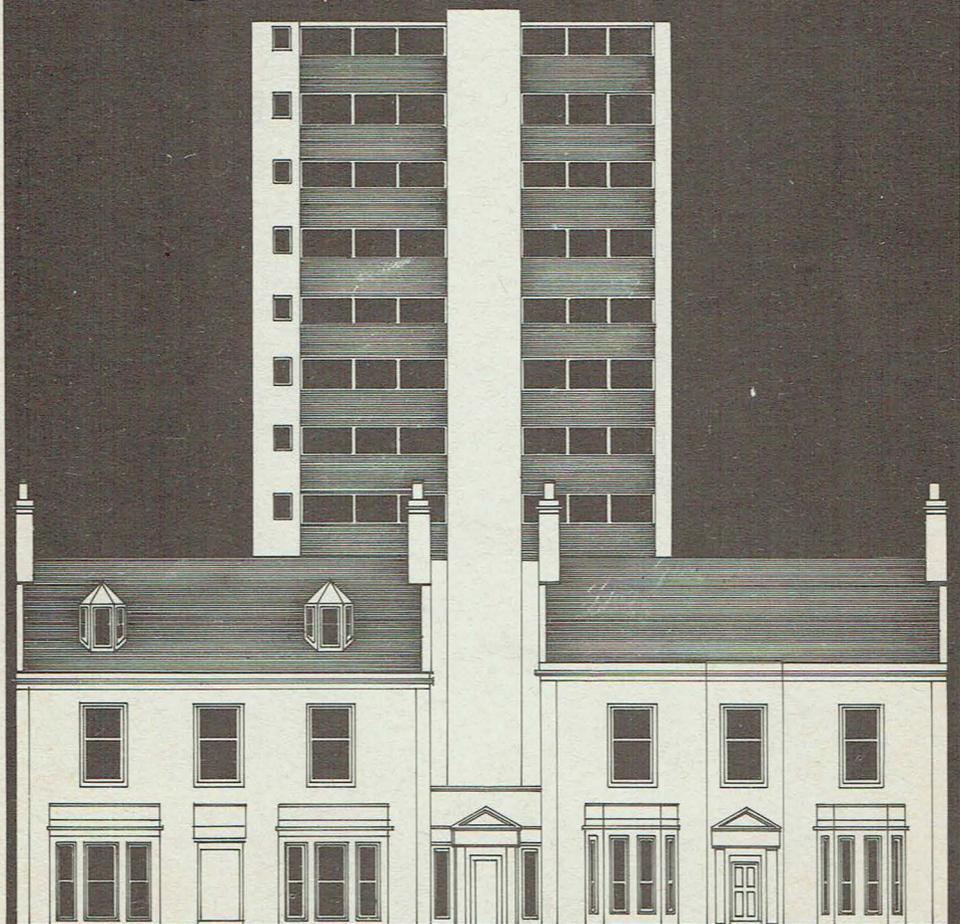


SCOTS ANTIQUARIES AND HISTORIANS

DUNDEE

ABERTAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PUBLICATION No 16 1972



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SCOTS ANTIQUARIES AND HISTORIANS

PAPERS READ AT THE SILVER JUBILEE
CONFERENCE OF THE ABERTAY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY ON 15 APRIL 1972 - BY

A.A.M. DUNCAN

T. IAN RAE

MARINELL ASH

BRUCE P. LENMAN

DUNDEE

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The cover, by Jurek A. Putter, Grafic Orzel Design Studio, St Andrews, shows University College, Dundee, where the Abertay Historical Society was founded in 1947, and the University Tower which now stands on the site, and where the Society still meets.

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HECTOR BOECE AND THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION

by

A.A.M. Duncan

The most fervid nationalist can scarcely claim that historical writing flourished in medieval Scotland. The heyday of our separate national existence, the thirteenth century, has left us only the brief and sometimes oblique Latin paragraphs of the Melrose chronicler, whose purpose seems rather to be the compilation of an annual register to which subsequent business reference might be made, than any purpose which we would recognise as historiographical. There undoubtedly were other annalistic compilations than the Melrose one since later writers incorporated their information, sometimes with, sometimes without, embroidery. One of the outstanding tasks which faces us is to analyse these later writers, Fordun and Bower, to separate the strands of information which they used and to understand how they worked. But the foundations of historical scholarship in Scotland, as distinct from the maintenance of a record, were laid not in a monastic scriptorium nor to show to other religions the workings of divine justice in the seven ages of man. They were laid in law offices both private and official to prove one case and to disprove all the others, as written pleadings to be laid before an international judge.

The first such judge was Edward I to whom in 1291 the claimants to the throne submitted not only their accounts of family genealogies but also the legal precedents from which the principles governing the succession should be drawn. In the case of Balliol, anxious to show that primogeniture among females applied in the case of a dignity, there is, or was, much research into the descent of Scottish earldoms; Bruce's claim relied on nearness of blood, on what we have come to call collateral succession, and his lawyers' research went back not merely to Kenneth mac Alpin in Scotland, but also abroad to England, France, Spain, and Savoy. I hope it will not be thought an idle professional boast if I say

that a modern historian could make a much better case for both Balliol and Bruce using the precedents from the time of David I onwards, notably two declarations on the succession in 1281 and 1284 which must have been known to them, but which are not mentioned anywhere in the pleadings presumably because in neither case was the declaration put into effect. Note then that ancient precedent is apparently more relevant than modern, but that research, probably a great deal of research, failed to turn up much factual information which could be agreed as common ground among the interested parties.

These proceedings were consigned to the English treasury whence they emerged only into the almost equal obscurity of Palgrave's printed volume. But although not preserved in Scotland they surely stirred a wide interest in history as precedent and provided a jumping off ground for the second less practically effective but more far-reaching study, presented to the pope as judge in the years 1299-1301. This time Scotland and Edward I were the protagonists, the *res judicanda* the proceedings of Edward I in relation to Scotland and his claim to overlordship there. The short histories of Scotland produced by each side are the first to present in any coherent form a prehistory as well; here in the Scottish version we meet *Scota* the daughter of Pharaoh, and her husband *Gaidheal*, the Greek prince, whose name placed after that of their son *Ere*, gives the name *Argyll*, a point none too easy to make in Latin. The Pope must have been sore perplexed to understand how *Erk* and *Gathelos* gave *Ergadia*.

Against English arguments of a common Trojan origin, the Scots produced a version of their independent origin from *Scythia* by way of Spain and Ireland and involving the destruction of the Picts and the Britons. Into the baggage of *Scota* an enterprising Scottish lawyer dropped the Stone of Scone, of which incidentally we hear nothing in any contemporary source until its removal by Edward I in 1296. How much of this and other mythology was already to hand in thirteenth century Scotland we have no means of knowing; as I understand matters it is not found in Irish literature which is the oldest in northern Europe, nor did it apparently infect the literature of Anglo-French chivalry. Unlike Sir Alexander king of Macedon riding his knightly errands, *Scota* does not float, a damoiselle in distress, into the world of the medieval roman. It seems likely that much myth was created in the troubled years after 1300 when the Scots waged a propaganda war as effective as the war of looting and rustling which they carried on in northern England. There was also continued interest, perhaps a revival of interest, in the lists of early kings which are still the framework for our knowledge of the dark

ages and which were copied in the fourteenth century sometimes with prefatory matter giving a version of the *Scota* tale.

From these two sources, the Scythian myth and the genuine king lists, came the possibility of a full-scale history in which these elements could be the mould for the version of universal history compounded of biblical, classical, patristic and dark age authors which was common European historical blancmange. Other peoples added their own froth from more recent chronicles and then set the whole in the mould of their own national myths turning out the *St Denis* chronicles in France, or the *St Albans* chronicles and the *Polychronicon* of Higden in England. John of Fordun did the same for Scotland; he had good foreign models, but his achievement nonetheless deserves the highest commendation for the width of its researches and the originality with which the most exiguous materials about Scotland are eked out to shape matter from Israel and Rome into a history of Scotland. In the most satisfactory manner possible the historical fifth century Fergus son of Ere does double duty in his own name and age, and also in 330 B.C. as Fergus son of Ferehard the first king of Scots in Scotland and ancestor of forty-five later kings, two of whom are named, while the Romans, Britons, Picts and Scots battle their way through the first two of Fordun's five books. It is a meal of other medieval chroniclers by whom Bede, Geoffrey of Monmouth and other writers whose quality lay between these two extremes, were masticated until reduced to the same unrecognizable pulp and regurgitated.

It seems that Fordun was not responsible for the premature appearance of Fergus and his Scots: that step had already been taken as part of the great search for that priority of sasine which gives better heritable right: Bede must be wrong in bringing the Picts here before the Scots and here are forty- five generations of kings to prove his error. If you find strange the lengths to which medieval diplomacy and propaganda would go in order to assert the historical priority of one nation against another, let me remind you that such arguments were still used as propaganda in the Second World War and can be heard in South Africa today over the arrival of Bantu and White. Before we are condescending about Fordun, we should recognise that he rejected other writers in favour of Bede, giving priority of arrival to the Picts and so complicating his own task. In brief, with honesty of purpose, with limited materials and with no precursors, he did use his sources to construct a coherent narrative history of Scotland appropriate to the framework of world history then generally accepted.

Much of what he wrote on the eleventh and later centuries reads as

an intelligent interpretation of narrative and documentary sources and suggests that his research and writing took time during which he developed that critical flair which is the sign by which one historian recognises another. If we excuse the legend and honour the history, we must also confess that for the period between the ninth to eleventh centuries, he allowed himself to write up the jejune annals at his disposal into circumstantial and moralistic tales.

The four lines which is all that we know of King Dubh tell us that he reigned for four and a half years, was killed in Forres and hidden under Kinloss Bridge. The sun did not appear until his body was found. In Fordun he becomes a man of kindness to the good and severity to the wicked, whom he was punishing at Forres in the fifth year of his reign. At night his watchmen played dice instead of guarding him, so that the evildoers snatched and killed him. Much more detail is given of this and of his burial under the bridge and the ensuing darkness, all of it apparently the fictitious embellishment of Fordun who yet is notably free of dreams, visions and overtly Christian miracles such as healings which usually spill over from hagiography into history in medieval authors. 'Why should a historian ply his pen in such apocrypha in which every man of sense refuses to put faith' is his concluding comment on the ability of St Cuthbert to have the ground open and swallow up the Scots in their attack on Northumbria. One may suspect that the comment would be less sharp if the Northumbrians and not the Scots had foundered, but the sceptical note is there and has presumably excluded many mirabilia which were certainly in his sources. He is, then, a writer with literary pretensions, stretching his material where it is thin to make a better story, perhaps justifying the process to himself with the arguments that if the sources do not say this, neither do they in any way contradict it, and that the tale is better balanced if told so. Anyone who has tried to write the history of tenth century Scotland will sympathise with his predicament, and will allow that the names of places and persons and the bones of the story are taken from good sources. For that reason we should examine carefully and critically and not reject out of hand the account of Macduff, thane of Fife who left the tyrant King Maccabeus after arbitrary judgment without decree of general council and of the nobles to join Malcolm (in) in England, was tested by him three times, passed with flying colours and was promised that he should be first in the kingdom after the king. This looks like a family tale of the earls of Fife to explain their pre-eminence, in which there may be a kernel of fact, eked out by the triple-test story which turns up widely and at all periods in folklore.

The 'slant' in Fordun which strikes a modern reader is his

belittlement of the English whose failures, tricks and dishonesty inform his every page. But I draw your attention also to the moralising which is a secondary characteristic: wicked kings despite their nobles by arbitrary forfeitures for imagined treasons, or despite their neighbours by unjust wars of conquest, and themselves come to a deservedly miserable end. Most of Fordun's wicked kings reign in London, plotting to conquer the Scots: the many dark age Scottish kings who died violently are shown as the innocent victims of English or Danish ambition and only rarely - Macbeth is the obvious example - as victims of the moral law which punishes the unjust. That there is such a law seems to need no argument, but it also seems to operate with a proper regard for the moral superiority of the Scot.

Fordun's work is called Chronicles of the Scottish People, but it is concerned with people only when kings fail. In the manner of the Franks or Britons coming from Troy it begins with the classical and biblical themes which made up early world history, and turns this universal history into a national chronicle by bringing the Scots from a Mediterranean home to an Atlantic one. It could properly have been called Scotichronicon. That title however was invented for the recension and completion of Fordun in seventeen books up to 1437 made by Walter Bower, abbot of Inchcolm, evidently in emulation of the Polychronicon of Ranulph Higden. These two coffee-table histories, Higden and Bower, are wholly derivative for most of their length; Bower pads out Fordun with swatches of ill-digested continental European history so that his work is far from being a Scotichronico and even where he adds to Fordun's notes on fourteenth century Scotland he tells us surprisingly little. It is not entirely unjust to Bower that for long his work was known by the hybrid title 'Fordun's Scotichronicon', though the confusion has done no good to the reputation of Fordun.

The two men who almost simultaneously rewrote that history in such strikingly different ways, John Major and Hector Boece, had superficially much in common. Each was born in an eastern town - Haddington and Dundee - probably within a decade, went to university and then to Paris, where early in the sixteenth century the Scots enjoyed in common with the Spaniards the reputation of being assiduous planters in the backwoods of learning, cultivators of the full-blown late medieval systems of philosophy and theology, indifferent to the humane Christian studies represented by the work of Desiderius Erasmus, a contemporary of our two scholars. Erasmus was pleased enough to flatter Major at the time though later he dismissed his philosophical works as 'wagon-loads of trivialities': there is no doubt that Major was indeed a dyed-in-the-wool schoolman, but with this difference - that his

works circulated not by hire in manuscript but in numerous printed copies. Whether he made money directly from sales I do not know, but undoubtedly publication would enhance his reputation and thereby his income.

It was surely the existence of the printing press and his experience of publication which turned this improbable man into a historian after his return to Scotland. Whether he wrote at Glasgow or St Andrews is one of those priority questions which we can ignore. His purpose in writing, to urge the cause of friendship and union between England and Scotland cannot be given here the full treatment it deserves: Major had to rely on Fordun and yet to reverse the whole drift of his argument. And so *Scota* and *Gathalos* and their whole tribe are at last subjected to criticism and the national myth is dismissed as without foundation: the old moralising remains but takes a subordinate place to an astonishingly impartial attempt to reinterpret the sources using the apparatus not of historical criticism but of the university logic class.

Now Major was not a lone figure. In France in the 1490s a new national history was produced by another academic anxious for promotion, Robert Gaguin, which shows how strong the influence of humanist historical principles had become there. That which is blatantly fabulous, which offends the natural order and requires belief in grossly supernatural events, has no place in our experience nor in history. And so the Trojan origin of the Franks is deflated, the tale of Roland and Oliver shown to have no good contemporary authority, and many miracles quietly omitted. The next step was the rewriting of French and English history in the full rhetorical tradition of Italian historiography by Paulo Emilio and Polydore Vergil respectively, men allowed by their royal patrons to debunk fabled origins in return for some really smart syntax, a good smattering of recondite deponent verbs, and a demonstration that the classical virtues had not remained the prerogative of Italians as successors of the Romans. In Scotland we should look for such an Italian, prepared moreover to bring the history up to his own time as Major had failed to do: by the time Giovanni Ferreri came on the scene the task, except for post-1437 chapters, had already been completed by our Dundonian Hector Boece and published in Paris in 1526.

Hector Boece had returned from Paris about 1498-1500 to Aberdeen University to become Principal at the request of its founder Bishop William Elphinstone. I am not one of those who sees in every contemporary of James IV who could sign his name an agent of Renaissance ideals or a harbinger of humanism, but there is evidence

that Boece tried to encourage fashionable humanist studies at Aberdeen and that he was familiar with the superficialities of the humanist programme - a reform of the language and style of literature. His lives of the bishops of Aberdeen was the first insurance policy taken out for his own advancement, the model for Ferreri's lives of the abbots of Kinloss and Mylne's lives of the bishops of Dunkeld, all of them reflecting the position of particular importance which the upper clergy held as patrons of scholarship in early sixteenth century Scotland. When he came to write his history of the Scots, it was without doubt to bring himself to the notice of the king and the archbishop of St Andrews and to benefit from their patronage. Armed with his text, tables of contents, indices, and all-important sycophantic prefaces, Boece visited Paris to have his work printed, and judging from the number of copies here, to see to its importation to Scotland. On 14 July 1527 he had his reward; the king added to his University salary of £27 a state pension of £50 annually.

He offered a history written in simple classical Latin and acceptable therefore to the world of scholarship and diplomacy, an account of an ancient noble kingdom whose Stoic virtues though much dimmed by modern vices are not lost sight of, and which should therefore count for much in the debates and alliances of contemporary Europe. His model was undoubtedly Livy, although in his prefaces he shows knowledge of Tacitus as well as the humanists Sabellicus and Platina, historians of Venice and the Popes. He writes in the full rhetorical tradition which the humanists imagined made a classical writer, their characters explaining actions and motives in prolix speeches about virtues and vices whose essential elements vary little from writer to writer. A historian like Boece is really engaged in engineering situations which we would call confrontations in order to put these speeches into the mouths of his protagonists, in creating situations which are dramatic in the full sense of the word in order to expound the qualities which will resolve them. It is not chance that this phase of historical writing was followed particularly in England by rapid development of drama acted in the playhouse nor that Boece found his most famous interpreter in William Shakespeare.

In common with other humanists entering the jungle of medieval historiography Boece had to make up his mind about the improbable. It might seem no easy task, for Boece, like other humanists, was conventional Catholic in his worship of Christ and the saints; but in fact he had little difficulty in omitting the miracles performed by the saints in order to make room for the most extravagant wonders: the night sky is filled with flaming swords, burning dragons, battling horsemen, and

flashing comets, the day sky rains toads, stones, blood. Children laugh in the womb, are born with a raven's head, have both male and female physique, and are fed on milk cheese and corn turned to blood. In such company, the three hags who greet Macbeth on a blasted heath for the first time in the pages of Boece may seem welcome sanity and normality; they are of course, yet more of the same trash. It is not surprising that George Buchanan in his generation had to rewrite Boece to exclude this supernatural matter since the learned world was in general opposed to the minority within it which tried to make such stuff respectable. But if it is surprising that Boece allowed himself to include it in the first place, that is a measure of how superficial the veneer of humanist learning was, and how with the decline of belief in an effectual God reached through his saints, any aberrant natural phenomena became the object of wild exaggeration to feed human fear of a universe governed by inexplicable powers.

To talk of Boece's credulity is to imply that he did believe in these figments of his own imagination; had he done so it is difficult to see why their number should fall away to virtually nothing in his fourteenth century, a fact which suggests strongly that he knew they would arouse derision if put in a nearly contemporary setting. But he also thought that his reading public imagined a world filled with wonders and monstrosities until two or three hundred years before his own time, something projected into the past in the way that modern novelists project science fiction into the future. The willingness to believe these supernatural horrors must surely be linked with the witch craze which gained wide acceptance in Europe after the publication of the Malleus Maleficarum in 1486 and led to recurrent and dreadful outbursts of persecutions for witchcraft. Belief in such practices now both stimulated and was stimulated by belief that they had always existed; even if in more recent times they had been quiescent or escaped man's notice, powers of a supernatural order were once at large and had taken a great but capricious share in framing human destiny.

In deliberately inventing such trash Boece was not like the deluded inquisitors who persecuted and burned their helpless victims in a desperate war against the devil. He was something far worse: he deliberately set out to make money from the social tensions and psychological delusions on which the witch craze was sustained, by writing his history on the assumptions of that craze. It is as though the learned authors of the Edinburgh History of Scotland filled their pages with history informed and inspired by the sex and sadism of modern pulp literature and television. Thus the appeal of Hector Boece, as it

turned out, was not to the fastidious humanists of Europe but to the semi-literate middling men of Scotland. Five years after the Latin text was published in the elegant typography of the Ascensian press, a vigorous vernacular translation paid for by James V was thrown on the market in rude native black letter. It was followed by two other translations, one in prose published only a few years ago, the other in verse filling no less than three volumes of the Rolls Series, surely the most misguided waste of paper in the whole of that questionable series. Boece did not lack a popular following.

We might forgive his credulity and that of his age but it seems harder to understand the solemn assurance of truth telling in the preface followed by the cock-and-bull story of his sources. Seeking to follow Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini and find the lost decades of Livy in Iona, Boece and the royal treasurer John Campbell secured five old books whose contents, although only a tenth legible, were in the style of Sallust rather than of Livy. The same Campbell brought to him the history of Scotland up to Malcolm III by Veremundus, archdeacon of St Andrews and this the author has followed, along with a work by bishop William Elphinstone and another by an abbot of Inchcolm whose name is unknown. Campbell himself appears as an authority in those short passages at the end of various books which indicate sources, but Veremundus is the main source there indicated and considerable ingenuity has been expended in arguing that this work really existed and was foisted upon an uncritical Boece.

Unlike the Italian historians who served the kings of France and Italy, Boece had neither time nor inclination for the weighing of sources, though he did make good use of Tacitus for the first time in a history of Scotland. There is no doubt what his main source was; the Scotichronicon of Bower to which he so coyly refers in his preface as a work by an unnamed abbot of Inchcolm and which he does not mention again so far as I can tell. The other works mentioned are as imaginary as the history of Scotland conjured up from them; Veremundus, whose name is so obviously meant to imply a truthful world, is nothing but the sub-conscious of Boece working guiltily upon the name Fordun whose sober history in its Bower recension Boece inflated not merely with wonders and portents, but in six books and two hundred and forty pages with a complete record of the forty-five kings who reigned between Fergus I in 330 BC and Fergus II in 400 AD, their councils and laws, wars and treaties. It is bad enough to confront us with such characters as King Caratak and King Congestus but surely worse to reduce later centuries to the same pantomime level, with Wallace and Bruce cutting

capers to provide rhetorical opportunities for Principal Boece.

Yet this was not how he and his contemporaries saw matters; he would I am sure be indignant at a modern suggestion that he was hoaxed by a spurious work of Veremundus and would prefer to explain that his model histories of Scotland, providing not only the events which should have happened but also the names of authorities which should have existed for those events, in order to make an essentially literary exercise the more convincing. He undertook the first history of Scotland to be printed, for an international market. Accordingly it must provide for ample Contact with the ancient world, an era for which Fordun was distressingly unspecific. It must not leave loose ends but must explain the relationship of e.g. Wallace to Bruce in a convincing manner. It must above all carry the reader along by offering a continuous narrative of men's actions and reactions explained by a little simple psychology in lofty and inspiring prose. If no one in 1526 asked to see Veremundus, that was a measure of Boece's success in the task he set himself.

Another explanation of part of his writing has been offered: a constitutional or political purpose. His bad kings are constrained by the nobles through deposition, exile or death, a view of aristocratic sovereignty which in recent times has been ascribed to the need to justify the revolution of 1488. It is quite true that for example King Dardannus showed himself a jealous tyrant with effeminate vices, whose nobles rose and first seized and hanged the low-born royal favourite although he had gathered the people to protect Dardannus, then slew the king himself. Unfortunately the resemblance of this story to that of James III arose after and not before Boece's history; contemporary sources tell only of a battle at Stirling in which James III happened to be killed and it is clear that James IV wanted nothing to do with a revolutionary interpretation of his succession involving the punishment of his father who, incidentally, was not deposed. Most of what passes now for the history of 1488 was written after the deposition of Mary Stuart and by men anxious to blacken both James III and James V; it is arguable that they used the pages of Boece to fill out the catalogue of the earlier James' vices. Boece himself, like his more critical contemporaries, Paolo Emilio and Polydore Vergil, had no grasp of organic growth, of the development of society and its institutions, was utterly unable to people his imaginary prehistoric Scotland with anything other than the men of his own time. But having put them there he could allow free reign to the lusts and brutalities which were held moderately in check around him. In this sense the death of James III may well have suggested parts of Boece's prehistory, where it is so remote that no-one can conceive of it being the

fifteenth century in disguise and where its protagonists can act out the wildest fantasies Boece cares to dream up for them without fear of consequences. If there was a sixteenth century reaction to Boece's constitutional position, it was surely not 'how relevant that is to the home life of our own dear king', but 'how differently kings and their subjects behaved in those far off times'.

Behind the narrative of Boece lies the chronicle of John of Fordun. Behind the rhetoric of Boece lies the moralising of Fordun. Boece's hostility to the English has an unconvincing second-hand air perhaps because it was borrowed from Fordun. In these ways and doubtless also in others, the Renaissance historian is debtor to the medieval chronicler. We may be surprised that it is the chronicler who is the sceptic and the historian who is a credulous old woman, that it is the chronicler who sticks to his sources and the historian who throws them to the winds. But there is an explanation: the chronicler was writing in a situation and for a controversy, writing a criticism of the opponent's claims as well as a statement of his own. He dare not lie. The historian was writing for his own sake and to impress his own kind; he had no responsibility to the facts. Indeed we may say that he had no sense that there were historical facts.

It is difficult to pass meaningful judgment now upon such a writer and I hope therefore that you will allow me to take leave of my subject with the impression which Boece made upon Desiderius Erasmus. It is the authentic comment of one humanist upon another, a tribute to the effectiveness of the international world of Latin scholarship:

non dicam mentiri, quod a tuis moribus semper fuit alienissimum.
he could not tell a lie.

THE SCOTTISH ANTIQUARIAN TRADITION

By

T. I. Rae

‘See this bundle of ballads, not one of them later than 1700, and some of them an hundred years older. I wheedled an old woman out of these, who loved them better than her psalm-book.... For that mutilated copy of the Complaynt of Scotland, I sat out the drinking of two dozen bottles of strong ale with the late learned proprietor, who, in gratitude, bequeathed it to me by his last will. These little Elzevirs are the memoranda and trophies of many a walk by night and morning through the Cowgate, the Canon-gate, the Bow, St Mary’s Wynd...’

Jonathan Oldbuck, Scott’s Antiquary, is representative of a tradition already some centuries old when Scott wrote and one which is not yet dead. Many of the methods of the antiquary have been modernized - scientific archaeology, radio-carbon dating, even the use of computers; but the dusty study of Oldbuck, lined with shelves overflowing with old books and manuscripts, the antique oak cabinet, a resting place for Roman and British pottery, thumbscrews and old coins, is not unknown today, and is even more representative of the earlier antiquary’s interests. Scott, himself no mean antiquary, treated Jonathan Oldbuck almost as a comic character; but to this he added a deep sympathy and clear understanding of the antiquary which makes him one of his most alive characters. For Scott knew, perhaps more than other men of his time, that antiquarianism was essentially an attitude of mind.

The hall-mark of the antiquary was curiosity, a deep, penetrating curiosity about the past for its own sake, a curiosity particularly (but not entirely) for the physical remains of the past. To this was added an intense feeling of fellowship for others of like interests, a brotherhood which, although it allowed for violent disagreements and vitriolic arguments on antiquarian details, cut across the lines of politics and religion which divided so many in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Robert Wodrow, a staunch presbyterian with covenanting sympathies, could discuss antiquities with men he would otherwise never have dreamed of approaching: men such as Sir Robert Sibbald, the Jacobite doctor, and William Nicolson, archdeacon and later bishop of Carlisle, were his regular correspondents;¹ and he was even drawn, in spite of his suspicions to the Roman Catholic priest, Thomas Innes, whom he met studying manuscripts in the Advocates¹ Library. The antiquary, as long as he was dealing with antiquarian matters, could in his personal relationships break the barriers of political dispute, yet retain in normal life his own sometimes intensely biased political and religious opinions.

Like so many other features of learned life, the beginnings of antiquarianism are to be found in the Italian renaissance, with its reverence for the culture of classical Rome. Petrarch wished he had lived in these times, for him a golden age, to have known the authors such as Livy he so much admired; he was forced to content himself with studying their literature, and reconstructing in his imagination the Rome in which they lived from the physical ruins of the city. He copied inscriptions, he collected coins, and used them as historical evidence; he had a true feeling, for the past, a real historical sense². He was not alone: with him were men such as Poggio Bracciolini and Flavio Biondo, and, as the influence of the renaissance spread throughout Western Europe, men of other nations French, German, English, developed this antiquarian sensibility. The French contribution, following lines suggested by Petrarch, was the study of Roman law; scholars such as Guillaume Budfè and Andrea Alciati analysed the true nature of Roman law until Francois Hotman could assert that Roman law was valueless in sixteenth-century Europe because, law being linked with the society in which it operated, contemporary society had changed so extensively from that of Rome. Hotman and Jacques Cujas also studied feudal law with the same result for medieval society.³ This feeling for the past, this realization of a sense of anachronism, of social change, was one which only an antiquary could develop, and only then on the basis of the physical remains of the past.

English antiquarianism followed up another line suggested by Biondo, that of chorographical history, the study of local history basically with reference to surviving physical remains, but also including aspects of geography (or topography) and natural history, and genealogies of the more important local inhabitants. Basing themselves on the collecting activities of John Leland, English antiquaries such as William Lambarde (in his Perambulation of Kent, 1576) and John Stow (in his Survey of London, 1598) wrote chorographical works on numerous English boroughs and counties, stimulating and in turn being stimulated by William Camden, whose Britannia, a large-scale chorographical work on the whole of Britain, first appeared in 1586, and was subsequently revised on several occasions.⁴ The chorographical antiquary of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries frequently relied on literary and documentary evidence in addition to physical remains, but some, including Stow, studied objects such as Roman pottery and nails as artifacts of historical interest in their own right. Later in the seventeenth century some antiquary members of the Royal Society developed this tendency, leading in the eighteenth century to the beginnings of scientific archaeology, a study of the past in which documentary evidence was of minimal importance.⁵

The beginnings of antiquarianism in Scotland are still obscure, and it is only when the seventeenth century is some decades old that we are on sure ground in the person of Sir James Balfour of Denmilne with his collection of old manuscripts and his collection of 'natural curiosities'.⁶ Yet many of his manuscripts show evidence that they belonged to earlier collectors, Henry Sinclair, Bishop of Ross, and his nephew, Sir William Sinclair of Roslin; these and other Scotsmen of the sixteenth century may well have had a broader interest in antiquity than the purely literary. Pinkerton, in his History of Scotland, refers to a manuscript 'Extracta ex chronicis Scotiae' at Panmure containing antiquarian notes by Henry Sinclair, or his nephew William, including transcriptions of Roman inscriptions, which suggest that this was the case.⁷ Certainly George Buchanan knew of the importance of antiquarian studies. In books i and ii of his Rerum Scoticarum Historia (published in 1582), he goes out of his way to attack Humphrey Lluyd, the Welsh antiquary, who, among other things, had cast doubts on the antiquity of the Scottish race, in one instance appealing to 'the authority of a certain old fragment which mould, dust and age have rendered sacred' and which Buchanan scathingly dismisses as 'a species of venerable antiquarian rust'; in addition Buchanan, in this passage, appears to reject documentary records, etymological evidence, and linguistic studies as totally irrelevant to historical writing.

'I shall not here remark how trifling, fallacious, and often contemptible all this method of investigating the origin of names is', writes Buchanan airily dismissing the philological work of the French humanist lawyers, some of whom had been his personal friends. Yet, when Buchanan is not concerned with criticizing Llyud, he is clearly interested in the development of language - 'its native ruggedness gradually wears off'; he uses philological methods of criticism, and possesses an antiquarian sense of historical change which does not always show itself in other parts of his History.⁸ Clearly there was an antiquarian sensibility in Scotland before the seventeenth century, although only slender traces of it have as yet been revealed.

With Balfour of Denmilne and Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet in the first half of the seventeenth century a veritable flood of Scotsmen interested in antiquities begins. To Sibbald and Wodrow, already mentioned, must be added Robert Mylne and Henry Maule; in the eighteenth century Richard Hay and Thomas Crawford, and a long line of others leading to General Hutton, interested in Scottish ecclesiastical antiquities, and Sir Walter Scott himself.⁹ With their contemporaries they formed a close-knit intellectual community, writing regularly to each other, exchanging antiquarian objects of interest, copying each other's notes, helping each other in their research. Balfour, for example, contributed to William Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum and corresponded with him, while Sibbald helped Edmund Gibson with his revision of the 1695 edition of Camden's Britannia, for the Scottish parts at least.¹⁰ At death, their notes, collections of 'remains', manuscripts, and books often passed intact to a brother antiquary; Balfour's collections were inherited by Sibbald, he in turn gifted at least one of these volumes to Robert Wodrow¹¹. All shared a common interest, a common enthusiasm, a common antiquarian attitude towards the past.

While some antiquaries, particularly these of the eighteenth century, tended to have specialized interests like George Henry Hutton, their interests were generally much wider and far-reaching. To discover what these interests were, at least for the end of the seventeenth century, one can do no better than look at the published correspondence of Robert Wodrow as a young man¹². He was interested in Roman antiquities to some extent, and collected, and in his letters gave detailed descriptions to his friends, Roman coins of Vespasian and Trajan, Roman brooches, and inscriptions from Roman buildings in Scotland especially Antonine's Wall, although he admitted to Bishop Nicolson that in Roman remains he was 'soe unskilled and need soe much help in these matters'. He was interested in language. He intended to learn Anglo-Saxon partly to help

his study of coins and of Bede's chronicle, and sought to purchase a Gaelic dictionary to extend his knowledge of that tongue. This had an essentially practical purpose; but at the same time he was also concerned to trace the roots of all language to Greek and especially Hebrew, perhaps, although his attitude is not clear here, in an attempt to find evidence for the Old Testament theory of the dispersal of language after the Babel episode¹³.

In this respect it must always be remembered that until the end of the eighteenth century antiquaries and historians were working within a biblical chronological framework, a time-scale which Joseph Scaliger and Archbishop James Ussher had worked out with some precision, using numerous national chronologies and astronomical evidence in conjunction with some biblical sources. Ussher could speak confidently of the creation of the world; 'which beginning of time... fell upon the entrance of the night preceding the 23rd day of October in the year... (before Christ, 4004)'.¹⁴ Wodrow lived in an age which, despite advances in scientific knowledge, despite the mechanistic philosophies developing from the thought of Rene Descartes and Marin Mersenne, still regarded Genesis as the fundamental textbook of cosmology. It is therefore no surprise to find that his interest in fossils and other geological specimens is directed towards an elucidation of the nature of the world before Noah's flood. Wodrow collected his specimens carefully, recording the depths at which they were found, although he does not appear to use the methods of stratigraphy already in existence; he read avidly the works of authors in this field, John Woodward, John Ray, the Dane Nils Steensen, who put forward various geological hypotheses. But Wodrow was cautious: the time was 'not ripe for raising hypotheses as yet' for 'we want observations and experiments.. to found theorys on'.¹⁵ Nevertheless he tended to favour Woodward's work which was developed completely within the biblical time-scale; he was suspicious of Ray, and Steensen, who found difficulty in reconciling their scientific observations with their religious preconceptions, and does not appear to have read Robert Hooke's books, or heard his lectures to the Royal Society, in which the author's intellectual honesty in indicating the necessity for an immensely long time-scale and more than one 'Deluge' is only partially obscured.¹⁶ It is an interesting paradox that the science of Geology, developing out of observation and practical experiments to prove the truth of the biblical scheme of chronology, should be the ultimate means of destroying that system.

Wodrow's interests in natural history, especially botany (at one time he was proposed as a suitable Keeper of the Glasgow Physic Garden), were

equally strong, and fell within the sphere of interest of other antiquaries, notably Sir Robert Sibbald. If there seems little of an antiquarian nature in such studies we should remember how even today many of our most important Societies retain in their titles phrases such as 'Antiquarian and Natural History.' If the curiosity of these men was mainly about the past it did not ignore the world around them; this, for Wodrow, was all part of the same process 'quherby observers have opportunities of contemplating the providence, wisdom, and power of our almighty creator and preserver.'¹⁷ In a God-orientated society even the most advanced thinkers could be devout, and Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton both regarded their advanced scientific observations as a study of the omnipotence of God.

It has already been suggested that by the end of the eighteenth century the interests of individual antiquaries had become more specialised. George Henry Hutton, Lieut-General, prominent in his military career, had as his hobby an intense interest in Scottish archaeology, though not himself a Scotsman. His ambition was to produce a complete 'Monasticon Scotiae', a picture of the medieval church in Scotland mainly in its physical aspects. He visited the sites of ecclesiastical buildings, sketching and measuring, and, when he was on campaign, a series of local correspondents all over Scotland wrote and drew on his behalf. The work itself was never completed, but there remain over 200 drawings, some of them sketches but most carefully delineated and measured, of churches with ground plans and elevations, and details of tombstones and architectural features. In technique Hutton's work shows a distinct advance on that of Wodrow's period; it is more precise, almost scientific, in its approach, and clearly the General had a more critical attitude towards his material. This is particularly shown in his notes and correspondence; his own letters and those of his correspondents show a critical concern for detail, and his notes and transcripts of documents are commendably accurate.

Hutton's intention to rely not only on physical remains but also on document sources reveals another facet of the antiquarian tradition. If so far we have emphasised those aspects of an antiquary's interests which may be termed proto-archaeological and proto-geological, it is to put into perspective the more generally received picture of the antiquary as a collector and transcribe of documents. This is very much the significance of the antiquary for many present-day historians: Balfour's manuscript collection preserved intact numerous medieval volumes which are of more importance than anything he ever wrote; Wodrow preserved vital texts which can now be quarried; Richard Hay transcribed in his

crabbed, almost illegible, hand charters the original of which may have disappeared. This is all, of course, true; but the antiquary was not primarily, even necessarily, concerned to preserve material for the historian nor to use it himself as a historian. The importance of a genuine document lay partly in itself as a relic of the past, like a Roman brooch or a ruined building, and this was perhaps the main motive in collecting and preserving it. When Bishop Nicolson published his Scottish Historical Library in 1702 with the assistance, among others, of Wodrow who provided him with descriptions of manuscripts in Glasgow University Library, he was as much concerned to draw up a catalogue of manuscript 'antiquities' as of records' which may be serviceable to the Undertakers of a General History of Scotland'.¹⁸ Nicolson and other antiquaries did recognise the value of original manuscripts as giving information about the past; for the sake of this information an antiquary lacking an original, was prepared to accept a transcript. In the seventeenth century the distinction was clear; a medieval book of hours or a cartulary was very much a physical object to the antiquary; a document collected or copied, say, by Sir James Balfour or David Calderwood or Robert Wodrow for its information was more likely to be of comparatively recent origin, except those gathered for genealogical purposes, and was of importance to the collector not so much for its antiquarian as for its value in elucidating contemporary politics.

Nevertheless, the antiquaries acquired and transcribed and exchanged documents, building up extensive collections which partly duplicated the collections of others. Some collections, such as those of David Crauford of Drumsay, which was itself based on transcripts of Scottish originals collected by Sir Robert Cotton at the beginning of the century, were copied again and again. But when the antiquary made 'use' of them it was in essentially contemporary writing, even although this writing, as practised by Balfour, Calderwood, Wodrow and others, went under the name of 'history'. It took the form of 'documentary history', in effect the stringing together of the texts of a series of original manuscript sources, linked by explanatory commentary, sometimes minimal; there was little or no attempt at interpretation of the significance of the documents - they spoke for themselves. It was the arrangement, the omissions, which ensured that they also spoke with the political or religious bias of the compiler, disguised in the feigned appearance of impartial truth. Yet by these writings many documents were published, for the enlightening of contemporaries and the benefit of future historians; others were published as single items such as the publication in 1680 by Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh of the Declaration of Arbroath, one of the most important documents for

Scottish history which, effectively hidden in the archives of the Earls of Haddington, had for centuries been ignored by historical writers. In doing this Mackenzie was acting purely from antiquarian motives although he may have felt that references to the long line of Scottish kings could do no harm to the Stuart line; only later, when it was republished in pamphlet form in 1680 and 1703, was its hidden political dynamite in supporting George Buchanan's theories of selective monarchy revealed.¹⁹

Apart from such collecting and in some instances straightforward publication, the 17th-century antiquary was in a quandary as to the useful value of documents, at least those of them who were concerned with the idea of use. They were living in an age of philosophical scepticism when standard conceptions of the nature of the universe, of religion, of society, were being questioned. 'What is truth?' wrote a perplexed Sir Francis Bacon, and William Drummond of Hawthornden complained that true knowledge (i.e. the traditional variety) had, by the intellectual activity of scientists and philosophers, 'become Opiniones, nay, Errores, and leave the Imagination in a thousand Labyrinthes'.²⁰ There was no longer any certainty. Naturally scepticism also involved the doubting of the nature of the historical past and of evidence for it. In 1685 Sir George Mackenzie insisted that documentary evidence was unreliable as the writer 'of the Manuscript might have been mistaken, or byass'd'; and he goes on to assert that any historian who had used a documentary source need not be 'curious to preserve old Manuscripts and Records, after they have form'd their Histories by them'.²¹ Descartes, beginning with his aphorism 'cogito ergo sum', had already shown how a sceptical attitude of mind could be constructive, and although his revolutionary ideas were not accepted by all, the method of constructive criticism (or 'mitigated scepticism') developed by Marin Mersenne helped elucidate many philosophical problems. The same method helped to resolve the antiquary's problems: the development of documentary criticism.

Textual criticism already had a respectable ancestry. As long ago as 1439 Lorenzo Valla had exposed the falseness of the Donation of Constantine mainly on the basis of linguistic and other anachronisms. Jean Mabillon, in his *De re diplomatica* published in 1681, extended the principle of anachronism to the document itself; the writing on the document, the form of the words, even the paper, parchment and ink could all be used to determine the authenticity of a piece of historical evidence. With textual criticism and through comparison with other evidence, especially as evolved by Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1697, a document could become a nugget of truth from the past.

Although these techniques were evolved on the continent they quickly became available to the Scottish antiquary. Mabillon's Diplomatica and Bayle's Dictionaire were purchased, borrowed, read; Harry Maule's library at Panmure contained Bayle before 1730, and Robert Wodrow purchased it (for £72 Scots) sometime between 1723 and 1733; both Mabillon and Bayle were available in the Advocates' Library before 1742; and it is worthy of note that the Dictionaire was translated into English before 1710.²² Perhaps the influence of these books was not immediately apparent, although Thomas Innes, who knew Mabillon personally, used documentary criticism in his Essay on the ancient inhabitants of Scotland, 1729,²³ but gradually Scottish antiquaries began to develop these techniques, finding in documentary evidence new facts about Scotland's past. By 1739 James Anderson had published his Diplomata²⁴ which had engaged his interest from before 1707: this large volume contained not only excellent facsimiles of Scottish documents, but also the tables of alphabets and contractions (already existing in 1707) which enabled them to be studied by Mabillon techniques.

But the techniques were not used by those of their contemporaries who were regarded specifically as historians. The attitude of the historian towards the past was entirely different from that of the antiquary, and so were his methods. We have already noted George Buchanan's dismissal of documentary sources for his work, and also the dichotomy between the attitude of Sir George Mackenzie as a historian, by which he was sceptical of the value of old manuscripts, and his attitude as an antiquary whereby he wished to preserve and publish them. Sir Walter Scott makes the same point for the end of the eighteenth century. Jonathan Oldbuck criticises the historian: 'Lack-a-day, if they had ta'en the pains to satisfy their own eyes, instead of following each other's blind guidance'; Sir Arthur Wardour, his historian antagonist, in turn resents Oldbuck's criticism which he regards as based only 'upon the authority of some old scrap of parchment which he has saved from its deserved destiny of being cut up into tailors' measures.'

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century the historian's attitude to the past was determined not by the past itself but by his own views on contemporary society; he was not curious about the past except in as much as it could illuminate, or justify, the present. History, as opposed to antiquarianism, was dominated by two interlinked factors: its character as literature, and its didactic function.

The purpose of history in renaissance thought was to teach; man, on a slippery declining slope of degeneracy, needed advice as to his moral

and political conduct from the Golden Age of the past. History was experience, an extension of an individual's personal observation. Most Scottish historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries subscribed to this belief. John Major in 1521 asserts in his dedication that James V 'may thus discern, at the expense of a little reading, the experience of centuries if it were granted you to live so long'; George Buchanan pardons his deficiency as tutor to James VI 'by sending ... faithful monitors from history, whose counsel may be useful in your deliberations, and their virtues patterns for imitations in active life'; John Spottiswood insists that 'the short life of man sufficeth not... to purchase the experience of many things, whereas in a few hours reading of a history wisely digested, we gain more instruction than twenty men living successively can acquire by their own observation.'²⁵ In the eighteenth century, too, David Hume, essentially a philosopher of human nature, used history to extend his field of observation of man before a public which had largely ignored his philosophical writings.²⁶

If a history is to have in its didacticism an effective influence on the contemporaries of the writer, it is necessary to make two assumptions. The first is that human nature and human society in the present is essentially unchanged from that of the past. Hume is specific about this in his *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*: 'The same motives always produce the same actions, the same events follow from the same causes' — a dictum perhaps philosophically satisfying but not a creed for the historian. Men in renaissance times, while perhaps not philosophizing their belief, were on the whole convinced that man and society were universal; a sixteenth-century herald, for example, had little difficulty in allocating to David and other kings of Israel pseudo-feudal armorial bearings. The second assumption, if the influence is to be of real value, is that the historian has analysed the past in an impartial search for truth. Yet both James V and James VI were repelled by the (totally different) uncongenial 'truth' of their respective mentors, suspecting their impartiality; and clearly historical writers who had firm political convictions could not but be biased — it is only necessary to compare the accounts of the same events given by George Buchanan and William Drummond to show this. Even Hume, almost completely impartial, was accused of bias by both his Tory and Whig compatriots.

Both Buchanan and Drummond were noted poets before they turned to history, and it is clear that in their minds there is a close link between the two forms of writing. Buchanan had had close relations with Sir Philip Sidney and his circle, while Drummond through his friends Michael Drayton and Samuel Daniel, also

historian-poets, had contacts with the remnants of the circle after Sidney's death. Sidney had precise ideas on the nature of history and poetry which are clearly stated in his Defence of Poesy; writers in both forms are concerned with expressing fundamental moral truth for the present day, the poet by the use of his imagination only, the historian by an analysis of the past in which the interpretation of causes also involved use of imaginative faculties. For Sidney the historian, being bound by fact, could not hope to emulate poetic flights of fancy, but he could and ought to borrow his methodology from the poets. Imaginative reconstruction of speeches and of correspondence, the imaginative blending of chronology, were all to help the historian put his message across.²⁷ Buchanan, Drummond and other Scots historians accepted this point of view and wrote literary history in which fact was blended with imagination. This literary form, if not the motive behind it, persisted through to the eighteenth century.

It is therefore abundantly clear that for these centuries under review there was no common ground between the antiquary and the historian. The antiquary approached the study of the past from the monuments themselves; the historian through historical preconceptions coloured by political, religious, or philosophical attitudes of the present. The antiquary, through his observation of physical remains, developed a historical sense of a changing past; the historian, because of the way he saw his task, was bound to an unhistorical concept of a static, unchanging human society. The antiquary wrote with dry, perhaps dull, precision, generally for his own fellows; the historian, writing for the public at large, was concerned with presentation and with style. The two attitudes were poles apart. Sir George Mackenzie could think in one way at one time and in the other at another time without giving himself schizophrenia simply because there was no point of contact. It is no wonder that eighteenth-century historians such as Hume had no time for 'research' and were scarcely interested in the techniques of the antiquary. Research is antiquarian, interpretation (in which the imagination is involved) is historical.²⁸ Today we look on the task of history as a blend between the two; we should remember with humility that our conception of history is less than a century-and-a-half old, that without the eager enthusiasm of the seventeenth-century antiquaries the more scientific fact-finding part of our operations would not exist.

The picture this survey has given of the Scottish antiquarian tradition is perhaps too sweeping and certainly far from complete. The origins of the tradition are still obscure, its methodology insufficiently

explored, the culmination of its characteristic comradeship in the foundation of the Society of Antiquaries not even mentioned. Yet, before tackling these further problems, it is perhaps right that we should be convinced of the fact that the tradition is essentially an attitude of mind; not an organisation nor a method but a particular way of looking at the past, incomprehensible to many, but capable of giving to its possessor, in the words of Jonathan Oldbuck, 'the white moments of life, that repay the toil, and pains, and sedulous attention, which our profession, above all others, so peculiarly demands.'

NOTES

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- ¹ See Early Letters of Robert Wodrow, 1689-1709, ed. L.W. Sharp, Scottish History Society, 1937 (passim).
- ² Peter Burke: The Renaissance Sense of the Past, London, 1969, pp. 21-4.
- ³ Burke, pp.33-7; for Bude, Alciati, Hotman and other humanist legal philologists, see: Donald R. Kelly: Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship, New York, 1970: and George Nuppert: The Idea of Perfect History, Urbana, 1970.
- ⁴ F.J. Levy, Tudor Historical Thought, San Marino, 1967, pp. 124-66. (chapter on 'Antiquarianism')
- ⁵ M.C.W. Hunter, 'The Royal Society and the Origins of British Archaeology' Antiquity, 1xv (1971), 113-21, 187-92.
- ⁶ Nearly all that remains of Balfour's manuscript collection (just under 200 volumes) were purchased from Sir Robert Sibbald in 1698 by the Faculty of Advocates, and are now in the National Library of Scotland. Balfour's collection of 'natural curiosities', augmented by Sibbald, was presented to Edinburgh University: see Auctarium Musae I Balfouriani e Musa e Sibbaldiano: sive Enumeratio et descriptio rerumrariorum ... quas Robertus Sibbaldus ... Acedemiae Edinburgenae donavit, Edinburgh, 1697.
- ⁷ For Sinclair's manuscripts see: H.J. Lawler, 'Library of the Sinclairs of Roslin', in PSAS, xxxii (1898), pp. 90-120. The manuscript 'Extracta' referred to by

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- Pinkerton is not among the Dalhousie muniments in S.R.O., but is listed in H.M.S.S.C.; 2nd Rep., 1874, p.186 Another Sinclair owned 'Extracta' (N.L.S. Adv. MS.35.6.13) also has additional notes.
- ⁸ George Buchanan: History of Scotland, trans. James Aikman, Glasgow 1827, vol. i, pp. 3-4, 9.
- ⁹ These are only a few of the important names. In addition to Balfour's collection and his antiquarian notes, the National Library of Scotland holds the antiquarian papers of Sibbald, Milne, Hay and Hutton. Wodrow's papers are mainly in NLS, but some volumes are in Edinburgh and Glasgow University Libraries. Maule's papers are partly in the Dalhousie muniments in SRO (ref GD45); others are apparently in Brechin Castle.
- ¹⁰ William Dugdale: Monasticon Anglicanum, London, 1655; for Sibbald and Gibson, see S. Piggott, 'William Camden and the Britannia', Proceedings British Academy, xxxvii (1951), p. 213; and A second edition of Camden's description of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1695, with which Sibbald was associated.
- ¹¹ Robert Sibbald, Memoria Balfouriana, Edin., 1699; Balfours Manuscript 'Collections in the Shires' (Adv. MS. 33.2.27) was gifted by Sibbald to Wodrow; Wodrow also inherited some of David Calderwood's manuscript collections.
- ¹² Wodrow Early Letters, *passim*.
- ¹³ cf. The attempt of Jerome Stone, schoolmaster at Dunkeld, to prove Gaelic the original world language; 'Dissertation on the ancient Celtic people, language and antiquities of Scotland'. EUL, MS. La. III 251.
- ¹⁴ J. Ussher: Annals of the World, London, 1658, p. 1.
- ¹⁵ Wodrow Early Letters, p. 237.
- ¹⁶ Ray, Steensen (or Stene), and Hooke are briefly discussed in S. Toulmin and J. Goodfield: The Discovery of Time, Penguin Books, 1967, pp. 105-13.
- ¹⁷ Wodrow Early Letters, p. 188.
- ¹⁸ William Nicolson: The Scottish Historical Library, London, 1702.
- ¹⁹ Sir George Mackenzie: Observations upon the Laws and Customs of Nations as to Precedency, Edinburgh, 1680; the text of the declaration is on pp. 20-1. Buchanan was unaware of the existence of the Declaration although a text existed in various manuscripts of the Scotichronicon.
- ²⁰ William Drummond: 'The Cypress Grove.' In ed. L.E. Kastner Poetical Works of William Drummond of Hawthornden, Scottish Text Society, 1913, ii, p.78.
- ²¹ Sir George Mackenzie: Defence of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland, London, 1685, pp. 5,8. For a brief but closer examination of Mackenzie's attitude see T.I. Rae, 'Historical scepticism in Scotland before David Hume', shortly to be published as part of the proceedings of the 2nd David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra.

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- ²² For Maule, see Registrum de Panmure, ed. J. Stuart, Edinburgh, 1874, vol. I, p. 1xxiii; Wodrow's 1723 library catalogue (NLS. Wod. 4 to 108) does not contain Bayle, but his 1733 catalogue lists it on 'Press D, in formulo luio (Wod. 4 to 109); A Catalogue of the library of the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, 1742.
- ²³ See Rae, op. cit., for a closer examination of Innes's conception of historical method.
- ²⁴ James Anderson, Diplomata et Numismata Scotiae, Edinburgh, 1739.
- ²⁵ John Major's Greater Britain, 1521, ed., Archibald Constable, Scottish History Society, 1892, p.cxxxv; Buchanan, History, (Aikman), vol. I, p. civ; John Spottiswoode, History of the Church of Scotland, London, 1655, (Dedication).
- ²⁶ J.R. Hale; The evolution of British Histography, London, 1967, p. 24-6.
- ²⁷ For a brief description of Sidney's thoughts, see F.J. Levy, op. cit., pp. 243-4. For Buchanan see: James E. Philips, 'George Buchanan and the Sidney Circle', in Huntingdon Library Quarterly, xii (1948), 23-56.
- ²⁸ For a general parallel to this situation, see A.D. Monigliano 'Ancient history and the antiquarian', in Studies in Histography, London, 1966.

SCOTT AND HISTORICAL PUBLISHING:

THE BANNATYNE AND MAITLAND CLUBS

by

Marinell Ash

Early in 1881 J. T. Gibson Lockhart handed over the minute books of the Bannatyne Club to Mr. David Douglas of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,¹ with the following letter: —

My dear Sir

I now send you three volumes, Folio, being the Minute Books of the Bannatyne Club, bound in Russia, that they may be placed in the Library of the Antiquarian Museum, an appropriate resting place. You may perceive that I am the last survivor of the thirty-one original members, and that I had the honour to be upwards of thirty years Treasurer to the Club.

The Bannatyne Club had been dissolved in 1861 although publications under its name continued to appear for several years thereafter. Gibson Lockhart was the last survivor of a remarkable group of men who in 1823 had banded together to form the proto-type Scottish historical publishing club. These associations became in effect private clubs engaged in public business:² the printing of the historical sources of a nation's history. The success which they obtained in their efforts was very much dependent on the quality and support of club membership. The Bannatyne Club was singularly fortunate, for it was founded through the influence of Sir Walter Scott and sustained during its lifetime by gifted and enthusiastic officers, including its presidents, Scott, Thomas Thomson and Henry Cockburn. Its secretary during its

entire existence was the bookseller, antiquary and bibliophile, David Laing.³

The Bannatyne Club stands at the beginning of the rather idiosyncratic history of Scottish historical publishing. Almost immediately the club produced imitators, such as the Maitland Club and the Abbotsford Club (founded 1833). By shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century the antiquarian publishing vogue reached the provinces, with the foundation of a number of local antiquarian and natural history societies, such as the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society (1862), the Hawick Archeological Society (1856) and the Grampian Club (1868). Some of these clubs still exist, but by the end of the century a new kind of historical publishing had appeared on the Scottish scene. The age of the 'professional publishers' arrived with the foundation of the Scottish Text Society (1882), the Scottish History Society (1886) and the Scottish Record Society (1898). These rather colourless latter-day publishing societies are still with us, but they cannot compete in interest with the genteel yet pioneering qualities of the first such Scottish publishing clubs.

The growth of the Scottish historical publishing clubs of the early nineteenth century was a unique phenomenon. Their history may only partially be explained as a result of such factors as Scotland's political position: a nation within a larger state. For if Scotland's political status were a determining factor, why did not Norway, a country whose political past and present closely paralleled Scotland's, show a similar development? Both countries were subject to what may be termed 'Romantic' influences, yet in contemporary Norway this impetus was largely channelled into political action, culminating in the Eidsvoll constitution of 1814. In Scotland the Romantic impetus was primarily literary and historical and, of course, it was centred on the person and activities of Sir Walter Scott.

Scott's influence — for good or bad — on the writing of history has been enormous: a fact recognised by historians such as Carlisle, Macaulay and Ranke.⁴ But the general social and economic background of Scotland also had a part to play in the growth of the publishing clubs. Again a comparison with Norway may heighten the point. Like that country Scotland by the early nineteenth century may be described as an essentially middle-class society, but there the similarity ends, for Norway had a more widely scattered population and the capital, Christiania, was not the self-contained intellectual capital which

Edinburgh was — or imagined it was. In the eighteenth century this Scottish urban middle class of lawyers, ministers, professors and merchants did not look elsewhere for stimulus; they generated their own intellectual activities, often based on the 'institution' of the club.⁵

The Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs can only be properly appreciated if they are seen as the product of over a century of such intellectual conviviality. Scottish clubs of this period were, by and large, clubs with a purpose. Even convivial clubs often felt it necessary to claim (if only with tongue in cheek) some sort of intellectual *raison d'être*: an example being the Harveian Society of Edinburgh founded in 1782 and known popularly as the 'circulation'. This club met annually on Harvey's birthday 'to commemorate the discovery of the circulation of the blood by the circulation of the glass', and members were awarded a 'Doctorate of Mirth or Merriment' in recognition of 'the zest with which they joined in the festivities.'⁶

There is a further social contrast between Norway and Scotland which may help to emphasise the uniqueness of the historical club in Scotland. Eighteenth century Scotland had witnessed a gradual anglicization of her aristocracy and nobility, but the real or imagined relationships between the middle classes and the aristocracy remained close. The Scottish feeling for family helps to explain this curious and anomalous bond. In Norway the aristocracy was by and large an absentee or alien one. Furthermore, by the end of the eighteenth century, Scotland was experiencing the early stages of the industrial revolution, an experience which Norway would be spared. In Norway the pre-eminent amateur and middle class historical activity of the nineteenth century was the recording and preservation of the country's living folk-culture. In Scotland, with two traditional ways of life in the process of destruction, historical activity was backward-looking and largely aristocratic in its subject matter: perhaps an unconscious reaction to the rapid social and industrial change which was taking place. This is not to say that there were not persons interested in recording folk-traditions for there were; among whom was Scott himself, but the activity was primarily a literary one concerned with antiquarian preservation rather than active cultural transmission. In short, the overwhelming historical interest of the Scottish people became fixed in a seemingly remote past and centred on certain heroic or tragic figures, such as Bruce, Mary Queen of Scots, Montrose and Prince Charles.

The Scots owe their conception of their past in large measure to the literary genius of Scott. But Sir Walter was not just a gifted story-teller

in a new fictional dimension; he was, of course, much more. His attitude towards the past may have been romantic but it was a romanticism combined with practicality and a strong sense of historical continuity. It was this sense of the continuity of historical experience that he failed to transmit to his fellow countrymen. The past he created was a precondition of the present; a present which Scott rightly saw as being threatened by the obliteration of Scotland as a distinctive society. It is only necessary to recall the famous scene on the Mound in Edinburgh, when after speaking out with uncharacteristic vehemence against proposed legal reforms, Scott was moved by the levity of Jeffrey and his friends on the subject, to say,

No, no, — 'tis no laughing matter; little by little, whatever your wishes may be you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain. and turned his face away to hide his tears.⁷

The position of Scottish society and intellectual life in the early nineteenth century forms the general background to the founding of the Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs, but there was a more immediate catalyst. On 17 June 1812, the day following the sale of the Duke of Roxburghe's library, the Roxburghe Club was founded in London. The membership, divided between bibliophile aristocrats and more humble book lovers, scarcely exceeded thirty and the somewhat erratic and exotic publications of the club were initially paid for by individual members.⁸ The exclusiveness of the Roxburghe Club — its editions never exceeded forty copies — made it subject to a number of attacks on its character and publishing policy.⁹

In 1823 Scott was elected a member, to represent the 'author of Waverley'¹⁰. In Scott's letter of 25 February 1823 to Thomas Dibdin accepting membership he wrote that he and a group of friends were about to establish a fraternity similar to the Roxburghe:

called the Bannatyne Club, from the celebrated George Bannatyne, who compiled by far the greatest manuscript record of old Scottish (sic) poetry. Their first meeting is to be held on Thursday, when the health of the Roxburghe Club will not fail to be drank.¹¹

There had been a number of Scottish precedents to the Bannatyne Club, notably the long though intermittent history of the publication of Scottish historical documents and texts by individuals, such as

Anderson's *Diplomata Scotiae* (1739) or Goodall's edition of Bower's continuation of Fordun's chronicle, which appeared in 1759. Scott and a group of his friends, which included James Maidment and Robert Pitcairn, had already printed and circulated in 1822 a collection of eighteenth century antiquarian material called *Nugae Derelictae*.¹² There was also the background of the government-sponsored publication of Scottish records, notably the Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, which since 1804 had been under the editorship of another of Scott's close friends and later a fellow member of the Blair-Adam club, Thomas Thomson.¹³

The immediate genesis of the Bannatyne Club had been a chance conversation between Scott, Archibald Constable, David Laing and Pitcairn in an Edinburgh bookshop, when it was decided to form a society and to include Thomson, then Deputy Clerk Register, in the project. It was Thomson who perhaps more than any other member, was to shape the success of the club and ensure the generally high standard of its publications. As Scott said in a postscript to a note sent to Thomson, announcing a club committee meeting, 'Without you we are a tongueless trump'.¹⁴ Thomson's family connections and legal training in Edinburgh had brought him to the attention of Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, who encouraged the young man's interest and aptitude for record scholarship.¹⁵ Thomson, therefore, was an intellectual descendent of one of Scotland's greatest eighteenth century antiquaries, and he continued in this tradition of personal encouragement to younger men in record studies, when he in turn trained Cosmo Innes¹⁶. Thomson served as vice president of the club between 1823 and 1832, and succeeded Scott as president until his own death in 1852.

From the first there were marked differences between the Bannatyne Club and its dilettante parent society. Membership was initially limited to thirty-one, but eventually had to be increased to one hundred. In addition to the annual subscription members, or groups of members, were expected to produce a volume in a uniform series at their own expense for presentation to the members of the club and selected libraries. The first publication, Alexander Myln's *Lives of the Bishops of Dunkeld* (1823), edited by Thomson, was printed at the general expense of the club.¹⁷

The members of the club were well aware of the serious object of their society, and were in no doubt as to Thomson's contribution in this respect. Scott wrote in his journal for 10 March 1827:

I got to a meeting of the Bannatyne Club ... Thomson is superintending a capital edition of Sir James Melville's Memoirs. It is brave to see how he (Melville) wags his Scots tongue and what a difference there is in the force and firmness of the language, compared to the mincing English edition in which he had been hitherto known.¹⁸

This assessment of Thomson's worth was echoed by Henry Cockburn, upon succeeding Thomson as vice president of the Bannatyne Club in 1832:

Thomson was this day chosen President of the Bannatyne Club... They have got the best possible president for such an association and nearly the worst possible vice... Though Scott was its official head and did it much good, not only by his name but by his knowledge and exertions, yet Thomson had all along been its chief support. It is he who has suggested and elected most of its publications, and if he could last twenty years more he would bring to light most of our hidden treasures in our libraries.¹⁹

Like its parent body the Bannatyne also occasioned critical comment for its exclusiveness of membership and publication, but it was never so restricted or so dilettante as the Roxburghe Club. As an historian of the learned societies of the 'age of clubs' has said, 'Scott received the dilettante club idea and converted it into something more generous and practical.'²⁰ This underlying seriousness of purpose is reflected in the wide-ranging nature of its membership. There can be no doubt that the legal fraternity dominated the club, so that its annual dinners had to be timed to occur before the rising of the Court of Session.²¹ From the first, however, Scott and his circle were concerned to include 'working' historians and record scholars such as Pitcairn, Patrick Fraser Tytler, the Rev. Dr. Lee ecclesiastical historian and from 1840 Principal of the University of Edinburgh,²² Francis Palgrave,²³ Philip Bliss,²⁴ and Cosmo Innes,²⁵ among the Club's members and editors. They spread their net widely to find suitable editors for club publications, which included Joseph Stevenson,²⁶ Professor P.A. Munch of Christiania, who made several contributions to the Third Bannatyne Miscellany of 1855,²⁷ and John Hill Burton.²⁸

There was obviously a strongly utilitarian bent to the club's publishing activities. Scott confided to his journal that he was, in great hopes that the Bannatyne Club by the assistance of Thomson's wisdom,

industry and accuracy will be something far superior to the dilettante model on which it started.²⁹

Cockburn claimed that, ‘very few of us can read our books, and fewer can understand them, yet type, morocco, and the corporation spirit make us print on’³⁰ It was generally felt that the club’s publications should have a use beyond satiating the prevalent disease of bibliomania. In June 1826 Scott, in urging an increase in membership for the ‘last’ time, said,

we might abate a little of the exclusive idea proper to all collectors of rarities and give the productions of our labours a very little more publicity in order to enable us to render them more extensive and to increase their real utility.³¹

There remained, however, the social side of the club’s activities: indeed its convivialities were a major feature of its existence under the presidency of Scott, ‘founder and Grand Master of the order of St. Bannatyne’.³² The first annual meeting of 18 November 1823 set a high standard of jollity for future gatherings to emulate. A feature of the evening was a drinking song, the ‘First Bannatyne Garland,’ composed by Scott:

Assist me, ye friends of old books and old wine,
I’m singing the praises of sage Bannatyne,
Who left such a treasure of old Scottish lore,
As enables each age to print one volume more.
One volume more, my friends’, one volume more.:
We will ransack old Banny for one volume more’.³³

The evening ended with a member of the legal profession stumbling as he left the dinner, which inevitably led to ribald remarks anent his lordship falling upon Stair.³⁴

Scott, that ‘clubman of genius’, valued these evenings and his journal contains numerous references to Club gatherings. The only thing marring his continued unalloyed pleasure in the Bannatyne was an increasingly political tone in the election of new members. In June 1830 the priority of the waiting list of candidates for membership was overset by the Whigs securing the election of one of their number. Scott was troubled by this event:

The whigs made a strong party to admit Kennedy of Dunure which set aside Lord Medwyn, who had been longer on the roll of candidates. If politics get into this Club it will ruin the

literary purpose... and the general good humour with which it had gone on... If it come to party-work, I will cut and run.³⁵

Despite such incidents the general spirit of the Bannatyne Club in its early years is one of good humour and good times against a background of solid historical achievement. In the nine years during which Scott was president, the club produced forty-three volumes of historical and literary texts, ranging from Scott's own productions of Auld Robin Grey (1825) and the Trial of Duncan Terig (1831), to Henry Cockburn's contribution of Boece's Lives of the Bishops of Aberdeen (1825), David Laing's Buke of Howlat (1823) Robert Pitcairn's Holyrood Chronicle (1828) and Thomson's edition of The Historie and Life of King James the Sext (1829). Increasingly ambitious projects were undertaken which required joint or aristocratic sponsorship, such as the extracts from the household books of James V, published in 1836 under the sponsorship of four members, or the two volume Melrose Chartulary (1837) which Scott had persuaded the Duke of Buccleuch to undertake. Other editions represented a form of local pietas, such as Cosmos Innes' edition of the Moray Register (1837) and O. Tyndall Bruce's presentation of the St. Andrews Liber (1843).

It is on the basis of these accurate and beautiful editions that the club's historiographical reputation rests. The financial arrangements which were made to obtain specially watermarked club paper, printing costs, engraving and binding are amply recorded in the club's accounts.³⁶ These records also shed some light on the altogether more obscure question of the editorial methods of the club. It seems likely that much of the work of transcribing was done by legal clerks or clerks and young lawyers working under Thomson in Register House. Cosmo Innes' first connection with Thomson had been as the compiler of an index of matters for the Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland.³⁷ Another Thomson clerk, Alexander MacDonald, the transcriber of the Lives of the Bishops of Dunkeld (for which he was paid £10),³⁸ was in 1838 elected a member of the club.³⁹ A certain William Whytelock (or Whittock) was paid £21 for transcribing Melville of Halhill's memoirs, published in 1827, and the Rev. William MacGregor Stirling received £25 for transcribing 550 closely written pages in folio of the Pollock MS of Pitscottie's history,⁴⁰ which Thomson said was 'executed much to my satisfaction'.⁴¹ The rate of payment in the early years of the club's activities was on average 6d to 7d per folio page.⁴²

The success of the Bannatyne Club was such that it in turn produced its imitators in other parts of Scotland, of which the first was the Maitland Club of Glasgow, founded in that clubable city in 1828. In September 1829 a Glasgow paper the Scots Times, reported:

Our excellent fellow-citizens have hitherto regarded clubs as sacred to conviviality, oddity or gambling... Be it known, then gentle readers'... that in this city of rum puncheons and sugar hogsheads, a club does exist, the objects of which are neither, drinking, nor gaming, nor fun! The monster, in club history is denominated the Maitland Club.⁴³

From the first the Maitland Club displayed certain differences from the Bannatyne, which were consistent with the character of its city of origin. Its interests and membership were more local and its original membership complement of fifty was strongly mercantilist. A memoir on the founding of the club by J. Kerr says that this commercial streak was at first a disadvantage:

Antiquarian pursuits are by no means congenial to the spirit of a mercantile population. Instead places were eagerly taken up by gentlemen residing in Edinburgh.⁴⁴

The club's founder members included the Earl of Glasgow who became President, Lord John Campbell, Sir Walter Scott, Henry Cockburn, J.G. Lockhart and a number of local country gentlemen, and merchant princes including James Ewing and the former provost of Glasgow and laird of Castle Toward, Kirkman Finlay.⁴⁵ Many of the Edinburgh members were Bannatyne stalwarts, such as Laing, Maidment and Pitcairn. There was a certain rivalry between the two clubs, which was encapsulated in the words passed by an Edinburgh connoisseur about the Maitland's first publication, History of the House of Seytoun (1829), that there was 'nothing Glasgowish about it'.⁴⁶

The early history of the Maitland Club was to be bedevilled by its implied secondary status and by tensions between its Glasgow and Edinburgh members. In March 1829 J. Hill, a Glasgow lawyer, wrote to James Maidment, the Edinburgh lawyer and antiquary:

I really have no love of so many Edinburgh gentry getting in. There are too many and you'll be wanting to make us an appendage presently. You are like the Roman Catholics, you want to overthrow the Constitution.⁴⁷

There were, moreover, financial problems which led shortly to a demand for an increase in club membership to seventy-five, a move approved of by such Whigs as Henry Cockburn,⁴⁸ and strenuously opposed by another group of Edinburgh members as being against the constitution and 'done for funds rather than worth of candidates'.⁴⁹ Yet another Edinburgh member, R. Bell, sensibly remarked that he did not think it 'proper in the members at a distance to interfere with the management of the gentlemen in Glasgow'.⁵⁰

This financial crisis had been partially precipitated by the malpractices of the club's first treasurer, J. Eadie, who had apparently paid Club funds into his business account, from which they had been unilaterally withdrawn by his business partner.⁵¹ The club was also unfortunate in the choice of their first secretary, John Wylie, who was described by the irascible Robert Pitcairn as a 'good-natured but indolent tradesman'.⁵² By 1832 the club had found the man they needed as an active secretary in the person of John Smith, bookseller, who remained in office until 1848.⁵³ He had already been assiduous in hunting out MSS for publication in the university and Hunterian libraries,⁵⁴ and in building up a close working relationship with the Bannatyne Club which would result in a number of joint publications such as Pitcairn's Criminal Trials (1831), Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis (1843), Scone Liber (1843) and the Aberdeen Breviary (1854).⁵⁵

The Maitland Club, like the Bannatyne, was a reflection of the society which gave it birth. It was an extension of the civic pride of Glasgow in the early nineteenth century, and as such membership became a prized social and political achievement. If elections to the Bannatyne Club had had political overtones, those to the Maitland Club became in themselves high politics. Canvassing for votes was a necessary prerequisite for admission, as the Rev. Hew Scott, minister of Anstruther Wester and future compiler of the *Fasti* of the reformed Church of Scotland, discovered to his cost in 1843, when he only secured twenty-three votes and failed to gain membership.⁵⁶ He began serious canvassing immediately after his defeat and was eventually admitted.⁵⁷ Electoral success brought spoils. In 1838 James Lucas, a Linlithgow lawyer, eventually gained election with the help of James Maidment, to

whom in thanks he sent several gallons of licensed whisky.⁵⁸

It is possible to follow the career of one such aspirant to membership, in the career of William Euing (1788-1874) a wealthy insurance broker, bibliophile, music lover and philanthropist.⁵⁹ In 1843 Euing sought membership in the Club: a draft survives of his canvassing letter to William Lockhart of Milton Lockhart, M.P.:

Dear Sir

Presuming on an acquaintance formed in our early years when we were fellow students in the Grammar School and afterwards in the University here, I request your attention to the enclosed circular in which I solicit your vote for my admission to the Maitland Club, which had been for some time a great object of my ambition. Providence has called us to fulfill separate duties in society; but I should feel much gratified by having my name again connected with those of any of the friends of my youth by a literary bond however slight. The study of the History of our Country and the possession nearly a complete set of the books published by the Club will I hope in the estimation of the present members be considered in some degree qualifying me for support (small as may be my merits in other respects).⁶⁰

Euing obtained sixty-seven votes in the May 1843 election which saw Hew Scott go down to ignominious defeat. The signed election tickets were promptly added to Euing's collection of autographs.⁶¹ Euing became an active and knowledgeable member of the club and within two years had been elected a member of its council.⁶²

The politics of election were paralleled by the politics of publication: an art which John Smith raised to a high level of urbanity and blandishment. The history of the publication of the Glasgow Registrum may serve as a representative case study. This two volume set was an expensive production, which was jointly undertaken by the Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs. Cosmo Innes was the editor and was paid £150 for his services. The cost of publication was estimated to be £600; in fact it was £676.18.7d.⁶³ Three hundred pounds were to be paid out of general funds of the two clubs and the remainder was to be made up by the presenter of the volume, James Ewing.⁶⁴ Ewing was a wealthy man, but on 27 March 1843 he wrote to Smith that he 'had only contemplated paying up to £200'.⁶⁵

Smith's reply was a model of persuasion:

You can appreciate the value of such a work and it would

add another to the acts of liberality, combined with utility, that have distinguished you as a benefactor of the City of your nativity.⁶⁶

Secretly the secretary was rather less confident that his blandishments would work, for in a letter to Mr. MacDonald at Register House, he suggested that two joint sponsors might have to be found 'failing Mr. Ewing.'⁶⁷ This contingency plan was not necessary, for within a few weeks Ewing had been persuaded to support the volume and was engaged in the more pleasurable and less expensive activity of designing his presentation plate to be bound in the front of the first volume, worrying over punctuation, the proper spelling of 'c(h)artulary', and what public institutions were to be the fortunate recipients of his volumes.⁶⁸

Beyond the labour and diplomacy required to produce the volumes of the Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs it is possible to lose sight of the general purpose of these societies, and the others like them which grew up in Scotland. The personalities and incidents involved are such that they may blind us to the real and serious nature of these clubs. Superficially the whole enterprise has an air of unreality about it: for these clubs existed to publish obscure texts often in a typeface which Lockhart described as 'those horrid contractions (which) no human being, always excepting a dozen adepts' could read.⁶⁹ yet the clubs were suffused with a sense of purpose which sustained them through political and personal differences, the failure of publishing houses and spiralling costs. This purpose was patriotic yet strongly utilitarian and pragmatic: to make available to present and future generations the sources of Scotland's history. In 1842 a member of the Maitland Club, John Richardson, put this feeling in a nutshell when he wrote to the secretary on receipt of the most recent club publication:

It is surprising how much private associations are now doing for the public history of the country - and very creditable I think to our character and taste for intelligence and research. I do not know that the government of any country has done so much on the whole for their records and literature as our bodies of intelligent individuals have done for our own - what stores Hume and Robertson would have had to aid them had they written at this latter period.⁷⁰

Whatever one may think about this somewhat smug assertion of historical laissez-faire individualism, there can be no doubt that this view was sincerely and widely held and that this letter gives a fair

assessment of the achievement of the Scottish historical clubs of the early nineteenth century.

In the end the clubs not only performed a vital and unique historiographical service, they are themselves of considerable historical interest. In one sense they are an expression of the self-sufficiency felt by certain groups of Scottish society in the early nineteenth century. Against this practical side there is the almost transcendental worship of the past for its own sake which from being a prerogative of the lone eighteenth century antiquary was now an almost respectable middle class attitude. Not everyone could actively study the past, but many could at least engage in the worthy and patriotic activity of conserving the nation's history by joining the club, and as an added dividend, acquire handsome volumes to adorn the shelves of the family library.

It is in this curious mixture of practicality and idealism that we come back to Scott, for quite apart from his decisive role in the founding of the historical club in Scotland, he is the quintessence of the divergent themes apparent in the history of the clubs themselves. He was antiquary, preserver, collector, bibliophile, romantic, patriot, and businessman (if a bad one). Scott has often been criticised for being divorced from the realities of nineteenth century life, but he is very much a nineteenth century figure. The tensions of his own character are the reflection in personal terms of the Janus-like society which was early nineteenth century Scotland and which produced the historical clubs.

But Scott was more than this. As a serious historian his influence was not backward looking and reactionary but revolutionary, especially in his attitude towards documentary evidence. As Hugh Trevor Roper has recently written:

For all his accuracy of detail, he was not a scholar: he was an imaginative historian who used his evidence not to document, but to re-create the past.⁷¹

The source was the springboard to the writing of history, the essential precondition to the creative and intuitive act of history itself. Scott's service to Scottish history through the historical clubs was this: he used an old Scottish institution, the club, in the service of a new almost scientific concept of the nature and use of historical evidence. The conservative nature of the club should not blind us to the radical nature of the service it performed. The mixed motives of the club members, their curious blend of practicality and idealism, is a further

contradiction. The men who formed these associations were north British, and increasingly caught up in the economic and political life of Great Britain, but they were also Scots. As an apologist for this contradictory state of historiographical affairs Sir Walter Scott must be allowed to have the last word. His last piece of criticism, which appeared in the Quarterly Review of February 1831, was a review of Robert Pitcairn's Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland, a joint Bannatyne and Maitland publication. In the review Scott felt called upon to offer a final justification for the club movement which he had initiated. The justification is brief and simple:

We were Scotsmen before we were bibliomaniacs.⁷²

NOTES

¹ These volumes are now in the National Library of Scotland, NLS. MS. 2046-8.

² NLS. MS. 2046, p.1.

³ T.G. Stevenson, Notices of David Laing, L.L.D., Edinburgh, 1878, pp. 6, 28-33. Laing was involved in editing over thirty years of the Club's volumes, mostly unanimously. C.P. Finlayson, 'David Laing and his Friends', University of Edinburgh Journal, xxiii, 146-7.

⁴ C.f. H.R. Trevor Roper, 'The Romantic Movement and the Study of History', John Coffin Memorial Lecture, University of London, London. 1969.

⁵ D.D. McElroy, Scotland's Age of Improvement, A Survey of the eighteenth-century Literary Clubs and Societies, Pullman, Washington, 1969, provides the most up to date survey of these clubs.

⁶ J. Cohen, C.E.M. Hansel, E.F. May 'The Natural History of Learned and Scientific Societies,' Nature 174, 1954, pp. 328 ff.

⁷ J.G. Lockhart, Life of Sir Walter Scott, abridged ed., Edinburgh 1871, p.189.

⁸ H.R. Steeves, Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship, New York,

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- 1913, pp. 98 ff. See also D.J. Withrington, "Aberdeen Antiquaries: the founding of the Spalding Club in 1839", Aberdeen University Review, xlv no. 145, 1971, pp. 42-5.
- ⁹ Steeves, Societies, p.100 n.3.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p.105.
- ¹¹ Notices Relative to the Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1836, p. xiii.
- ¹² Bannatyne Notices, p. vi.
- ¹³ J.T. Gibson Craig and C. Innes, Memoir of Thomas Thomson, Edinburgh, 1854, pp. 57 ff.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 178.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 15 ff, 40.
- ¹⁶ Thomson Memoir, pp. 181-7 (which contains Innes' own assessment of Thomson's own character). See also the anonymous Memoir of Cosmo Innes, Edinburgh, 1874, p. 15.
- ¹⁷ C.S. Terry, A Catalogue of the Publications of the Scottish Historical and Kindred Clubs and Societies 1780-1908, Glasgow, 1909, p.26.
- ¹⁸ W. Scott, Journal, Edinburgh, 1891, p. 370.
- ¹⁹ H. Cockburn, Journal, I, Edinburgh, 1874, pp. 38-9.
- ²⁰ Steeves, Societies, p. 157.
- ²¹ NLS. MS. 2046, p.123.
- ²² NLS. MS. 2046, p.5.
- ²³ Ibid., P.65, A hundred extra copies of Palgrave's Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland (1837) were ordered to be printed for club members in 1835. Ibid. pp. 215-15.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p.98.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p.100.
- ²⁶ Stevenson edited the Chronicle of Melrose (1835) and the Chronicle of Lanercost (1839), which was jointly published with the Maitland Club. Terry, Catalogue. Pp. 36, 38.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.30.
- ²⁸ Steeves, Societies, p.112.
- ²⁹ Scott, Journal, p. 351.
- ³⁰ Cockburn, Journal, i., p. 39.
- ³¹ NLS. MS. 2046, p.52.
- ³² Bannatyne Notices, p. 161.
- ³³ Ibid., p.4.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Scott, Journal, pp. 752-3. The election is minuted in NLS. MS. 2046, pp. 121-3.
- ³⁶ NLS. MS. 9306 – 2.

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- ³⁷ Thomson Memoir, p.184.
- ³⁸ NLS. MS. 9360, no.7.
- ³⁹ Thomson Memoir, p.215. ‘... I believe that Macdonald will be elected by a large majority. He is the same person who was long my clerk, has been a remarkable useful assistant in bringing forward various works presented to the club...’ Letter of Thomson, 19 May 1838.
- ⁴⁰ NLS. MS. 9360, nos. 26, 62, 118, 141-2.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., no.65.
- ⁴² Ibid., no.62. The Maitland Club paid between 2/2 and 2/6 for four folio sides in 1832. Glasgow University MS. Gen. 295, pp. 63, 68, 71.
- ⁴³ Bannatyne Notices. P.120.
- ⁴⁴ Mitchell Library, Moir Collection, SR. 215, G.347620, no.4.
- ⁴⁵ Bannatyne Notices, pp. 122-3.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 128.
- ⁴⁷ Mitchell Library, Moir Collection, SR. 215, G.347623, no.4. For a memoir and bibliography of Maidment, see T.G. Stevenson, The Bibliography of James Maidment, Edinburgh, 1883.
- ⁴⁸ Glasgow University MS. Gen. 294. P.24.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p.31. Letter signed, among others, by Laing, Maidment and Pitcairn. Pitcairn later dissociated himself from this group, perhaps due to the imminent publication of his many volumed Criminal Trials. Ibid., p.33.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p.32.
- ⁵¹ Mitchell Library, Moir Collection, SR. 215. G.347620, nos. 11-12.
- ⁵² Ibid., no.19.
- ⁵³ Ibid., no.22.
- ⁵⁴ Glasgow University MS. Gen 294. i., p.3.
- ⁵⁵ For joint publications with other clubs, see Terry, Catalogue, pp. 102-3, 113, 114.
- ⁵⁶ Glasgow University MSS. Euing 27, Packet A.
- ⁵⁷ Glasgow University MS. Gen. 308, xv, p.153.
- ⁵⁸ Mitchell Library, Moir Collection, SR. 215, G.347627, p.80.
- ⁵⁹ A brief biography of Euing is given in ‘Three Glasgow Book Collectors: an exhibition of books and manuscripts held in the Hunterian Library, University of Glasgow, November 1969.
- ⁶⁰ Glasgow University MSS. Euing, Packet A. Euing had second thoughts about the modest last phrase (parentheses mine) and scored it through.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., Packet C.
- ⁶² Ibid., Packet A.
- ⁶³ Glasgow University MS. Gen. 308, xv, p.195.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., P.87.

⁶⁵ Glasgow University MS. Gen. 308. xv, p.87.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.88.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.90.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 103, 106-9, 112, 144.

⁶⁹ Letter dated 23 January 1842 in Glasgow University MS. Gen. 307, xiv, p.9.

⁷⁰ Glasgow University MS. Gen. 307, xiv, p.159.

⁷¹ Trevor-Roper, 'Romantic Movement', p.7.

⁷² Bannatyne Notices, p.232.

ALEXANDER WARDEN AND THE LOCAL HISTORY OF

DUNDEE AND ANGUS

by

Bruce Lenman

Since the early nineteenth century, and especially since 1840, Dundee has tended to wear an air at once shabbier and more proletarian than Aberdeen or Edinburgh.¹ Though it is difficult to conceive of an urban environment more proletarian than parts of Victorian Glasgow, it would also be fair to say that that city in its nineteenth-century hey-day possessed a large cultured and wealthy middle class on a scale for which there was no parallel in Dundee. Such differences in social balance were bound to affect the contemporary study and writing of local history. There is a natural tendency to think of the great Scots historical clubs of the nineteenth century as embodying a very significant part of the Scots achievement in the field of local history studies. It is a remarkable fact that none of these clubs had a Dundee affiliation. Many Dundonians belonged to the father of all Scots, historical clubs, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, which was founded in 1780, published its first volume in 1792, and is still going strong. Yet, though the Bannatyne Club, in which Sir Walter Scott was so active, was overwhelmingly Edinburgh-based, and the Maitland Club was very much a Glasgow rejoinder to it, there was no Dundee equivalent. From 1839 Aberdeen had its famous Spalding Club. There were clubs with literary and antiquarian interests at an early stage in the nineteenth century in Inverness and Elgin,² but never in Dundee.

The fact has always been considered something of a lack by those in Dundee interested in local history, and it is significant that when the

Abertay Historical Society was founded in 1947, some of those involved were thinking of the Third Spalding Club of Aberdeen as an example and guide. Thus, General Douglas Wimberley, Principal of University College, Dundee and an early and generous supporter of the Abertay wrote in a letter to Geoffrey Seed, the first Honorary Secretary, in April 1948:

I would like to put forward for the consideration of the Council, the question of whether we could not start next year getting some transactions printed. I feel that our long term goal is a society on the lines of the Spalding Society (sic) of Aberdeen, which as you know produces a handsome volume every year.³

All honour to the General; gallant soldier; distinguished principal; and good friend of the Abertay. However, he advanced his ideas just when the cost of Spalding Club publications was becoming more and more of a problem for that Club. It is to Mr. S.G. E. Lythe, subsequently Professor Lythe of Strathclyde University, that we owe the suggestion that a more modest format of publication might be wiser.⁴ The Abertay thrives. The Third Spalding Club is dead.

The major Scots historical clubs of the nineteenth century usually grew out of a group of prosperous middle-class men, laced with local aristocrats. Dundee had virtually no resident aristocracy, while due to the peculiar nature of its staple trade, the local middle class was relatively small. Perth and St. Andrews between them drew off many of the functions of a regional capital — Dundee could never be an Aberdeen. It is perhaps significant that Perth did have a Literary and Antiquarian Society as early as 1784. It was especially interested in the history and antiquities of that part of Scotland 'of which the city of Perth may still be considered as the capital.'⁵

However, one can exaggerate the significance of these clubs as an index of interest in local history. The Roxburghe Club is an extreme example. It was founded in London in 1812 and had a great influence on early Scots historical clubs, but it itself remained essentially a gathering of big eaters and bigger drinkers until at least 1827. Its meetings were known as 'Roxburghe Revels', and one of its early publications was distributed to members disguised as a napkin roll.⁶ As late as 1861, when the first great wave of enthusiasm for historical clubs was beginning to fade, Cosmo Innes said in his preface to Sketches of Early Scotch History:

'The matter of some of the chapters has been prefixed to works printed for the Bannatyne Club; that of others to Maitland Club and Spalding Club works.... They did not thereby achieve anything to be called publicity. The Societies I have named... undertake chiefly the printing of books which cannot be popular but which it is desirable to preserve and make accessible to the student ... Of the members who receive the Club works, perhaps a dozen of the first two — it may be twenty of the last — turn over the books, cut a few leaves (though this is rather avoided) and then the large quartos sleep undisturbed on the library shelf....'⁷

If Dundee never had a historical club like those of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, it certainly did have people who were interested in reading and writing local history. The first version of the first known attempt to write a consecutive history of Dundee was completed on 23 December 1775. This particular effort remained in manuscript until it was edited and published by A.H. Millar, then Chief Librarian of the Albert Institute, Dundee, in 1923. The Reverend Doctor Robert Small's section in the Statistical Account of Scotland on the parish and town of Dundee was reprinted in Dundee in 1793. In 1804 John Berwick's history of Dundee to 1804 appeared, to be followed by Robert Mudie's better-known Dundee Delineated in 1822. In 1836 Charles Mackie's Historical Description of the Town of Dundee was published, while in 1842 James Thomson's History of Dundee appeared.⁸ Now it is true that L. J. Saunders in his distinguished work on Scottish Democracy stigmatised the works of Mackie and Thomson as unsatisfactory,⁹ and so they are to a modern historian. The very fact that they existed, however, is highly significant.

Alexander Warden was already a man of thirty-two when Thomson's history appeared, for he had been born in 1810. He passed his early years in Kinnettles in Strathmore, being educated at the parish school there. At the age of fifteen, he moved to Dundee to enter the office of P.H. Thoms, then agent for the National Bank in Dundee. After completing his apprenticeship Warden secured an appointment with Balfour and Meldrum, one of the big Dundee merchant houses. Alexander Warden was obviously a very ambitious man, for in 1833, at the age of only 23, he set up in business as a linen manufacturer in a factory in Wellington Street. He also had in his employ many hand-loom weavers in the Glamis district. He was active in the installation of new machinery, and it was later said that:

‘To the improvement and development of the trade Mr. Warden gave great attention, and in this connection it may be stated he was among the first to manufacture jute carpets, and in 1851 he took out a patent for printing designs on the cloth.’

The Cox family in Lochee were also pioneers in this field, and they ended up very wealthy. Warden was less fortunate. In 1852 there was a disastrous fire which resulted in heavy loss to him. Perhaps it was posterity's gain, for it turned his mind more to literary pursuits.¹⁰

Warden was a member of a social stratum which is today largely forgotten — the moderately well-off manufacturing and trading bourgeoisie of Victorian Dundee. There were never, relatively speaking, very many of them, but for certain purposes there were enough. They tended to dominate the Kirk Sessions of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches, and one Free Church minister who held a Dundee charge in the late nineteenth century once said:

I question if there is any city in Scotland more distinguished than Dundee for its body of active, able, public-spirited laymen, most of them office-bearers in the Church and all of them in full sympathy with its aims.’¹¹

Perhaps St. John's was lucky, but certainly the Kirk Session of another thriving Free Church, McCheyne Memorial, was dominated throughout much of the late nineteenth century by two remarkable elders, one of whose fortunes was based on textiles, the other on tar products¹². The fact that the local textile trade came to be more and more dominated by a few very large firms meant that the class of moderately well-off manufacturers, which was recurrently thinned by bankruptcy, was not being continually reinforced by the rise of new men.¹³ Warden was rather an anachronism. He had entered the linen trade early. He played a significant role in the introduction of jute on a large scale. He never went out of business, and yet he never became very rich. In a sense, he was an early Victorian to the end.

In 1851 a Dundee Trade Report Association had been formed, for the purpose of issuing a weekly report on the trade of the locality, particularly in regard to the raw materials used in the textile manufactures of Forfarshire and the neighbouring counties, and also for collecting statistics important to the Linen Trade generally. In 1855 the association published a very substantial volume of import and export

figures and prices entitled Statistics of the Linen Trade.¹⁴ Its weekly newsletter was entitled Prices Current and Trade Report. It first appeared on the 26 March 1851, being edited by Alexander J. Buist, Secretary of the Trade Report Association. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the most complete surviving set of these reports, extending from 1856 to 1870, by which date Alexander Warden had replaced Alexander Buist. One can only surmise that Warden, who must have been very interested in the Trade Report Association from the start, succeeded Buist in the late 1850s or early 1860s. Whatever the truth, there is no doubt that the mass of statistical material made available through Prices Current was the essential background to Warden's first and probably his greatest work, The Linen Trade Ancient and Modern. Incidentally Warden went on to turn Prices Current into a private company about October 1887. His son John Warden succeeded him in control in 1888, subsequently taking a partner in 1906. Mr. W.M. Peter, the son of that partner, was in control of the business in 1972.¹⁵

Warden's Linen Trade is a remarkable book. Its first edition which appeared in 1864 during the American Civil War boom in the Dundee textile trade, sold out fast enough to call for a second edition which appeared in 1867. It is a fact that Warden's Linen Trade remained in 1972, over a hundred years after it was published, the last authoritative survey of the linen trade in Europe, taking the linen trade in the Dundee sense as including textiles derived from flax, hemp, or jute. Its historical introduction, which starts with the Hebrews and Ancient Egyptians is necessarily of little value now, but the hard core of the book is firmly based on the statistical material with which Warden was intimately familiar because of his association with Prices Current. It is predictably at its best for the period of Warden's own active involvement with the trade. On the other hand, he did do a great deal of work on the historical sources for the period from the late eighteenth century. Nor was this just a question of looking up the relevant parishes in the old Statistical Account, though he certainly did that. He tells us in his original preface that his friend John Leng, (later Sir John), proprietor of the Dundee Advertiser placed the entire file of that newspaper at his disposal from its commencement in 1801. Many of Warden's earlier statistics are drawn from this source. Charles Alexander of the Courier (commenced in 1815), and Robert Park of the Northern Warder (begun in 1841), also gave him access to their files. The Linen Trade is dedicated to the members of Dundee Chamber of Commerce, and it is clear that the library of that chamber was another source of material for Warden.¹⁶

It is, however, as much in its conception as in its execution that

Warden's book is great. The linen trade was a very odd one in that it was at once extremely parochial and thoroughly cosmopolitan. Warden died in Mona Villa, Strandtown, Belfast in 1892. At one stage in the nineteenth century Leeds, Dundee and Belfast must have more closely resembled one another than any other part of England, Scotland, or Ireland, for these were the three capitals of the British linen trade. By the mid 1850s Dundee was well embarked on its massive adoption of jute. What happened in Belfast or Leeds, Riga or Calcutta mattered in Dundee. On the other hand, the Dundee textile industry remained a very local world calling on virtually no outside financing until the twentieth century. Even the Dundee and Newtyle Railway as early as 1837 was complaining that:¹⁷

‘hostile measures had lately been taken against the Railway Company by some of the English creditors, which, if allowed to go on, would operate to the prejudice of the Company, as well as the Mortgagees and the General Creditors, and ultimately be destructive of the property invested on the Road.’

Notoriously a very great deal of the share capital for subsequent Scottish railways came from England, especially Lancashire. Nothing like this happened in Dundee textiles. It was one of Warden's strengths that he was acceptable in the closed family circles that controlled the industry. At the same time, he had a breadth of vision as wide as the industry, stretching from Russia through Germany and France to England and Ireland as well as Scotland. Warden was an authority of European stature. He still is.

Warden had 1500 copies of his book printed. The first issue of these consisted of a thousand copies, which were bound and published as the first edition in July 1864. Such was the pressure on Warden to publish that he subsequently admitted that he had not had time to read the proofs as carefully as he might have. He tried to compensate for this by means of a long list of Errata in the second edition, which appeared at the end of 1867.¹⁸ This edition also incorporated an extremely valuable supplement on developments in the industry between 1864 and 1867. The 500 copies remaining from the first printing were turned into the second edition by simply binding up with them a new Preface, the Supplement, and the additional Errata. This accounts for the relative scarcity of the second edition, though it can scarcely be said to excuse the decision of the London publishers, Messrs. Cass, when they reprinted The Linen Trade in their 'Library of Industrial Classics' in

1967, to reprint the 1864 edition. Their edition is not cheap, nor does it run to a scholarly introduction. From the point of view of the scholar, the 1867 edition is much the more valuable of the two. A good deal of the additional material assembled in the Supplement was used by Warden in a paper he read to the British Association when it visited Dundee in 1867 but the published version of the paper is very rare.¹⁹

As well as being a businessman and economic historian, Warden was always an antiquarian. He was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, contributing a paper to their proceedings on stone cists and cairns on Barnhill Links near Broughty Ferry.²⁰ He almost certainly felt no conflict between these two facets of his personality. The one merged into the other at all times, as his next book after The Linen Trade shows. As an active and respected member of the business community, it was natural that Warden should be a member of the Guildry and Nine Trades Incorporation of Dundee. He held honorary office in these organisations, and represented them on outside bodies like the Gas Commission. Warden first became a member of the Guildry Incorporation in 1840, but even in his time the Guildry and Incorporated Trades were fast becoming exclusive dining clubs for the local business community. At earlier periods, however, they had been a very important part of municipal self-government, as their voluminous records attested. In his Burgh Laws of Dundee With the History, Statutes, And Proceedings of Merchants And Fraternities Of Craftsmen, published in 1872, Warden was able to make available a host of extracts from important primary sources bearing on the internal history of Dundee from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. He was avowedly much influenced by the distinguished record scholarship embodied in the contemporary publications of the Scottish Burgh Records Society.²¹ Anyone who has tried to follow Warden's steps into the Records of the Nine Incorporated Trades in particular must envy his power of access, but then he was Convenor of the Trades, and it must have been difficult to keep him out.

In any case, there was a contemporary surge of interest in municipal records. Christopher Kerr, who was for a long period Town Clerk of Dundee, set in hand the organisation and transcription of the older burghal records. It proved a lengthy task. Kerr intended to publish, but died in 1869 before he had done so. It was only under the Town Clerkship of William Hay in 1880, that a volume called Charters, Writs and Public Documents of The Royal Burgh of Dundee was printed for the Town Council.²² One cannot see many working men buying this substantial work, but William Hay certainly wanted working men to

share his own municipal patriotism, for he did lecture to them on the history and development of Dundee.²³

In terms of sheer weight of effort and material, Warden's Angus or Forfarshire is his most substantial work. It was also his last. The first volume appeared in 1880, being dedicated to the Earl of Strathmore. In his preface Warden spoke of completing the work in two more volumes, both of which were to appear in 1881. In the event the work expanded to five substantial volumes, the last of which appeared in 1885. As the work was published by subscription, and Warden tells us that he barely covered his costs, we owe a great debt to Warden's subscribers. Indeed, they would have borne with him further, for in his Preface to the fourth and fifth volumes he tells us that he had meant to publish a sixth volume on the Royal Burghs in the county and on its textile industry. The subscribers were ready to take it, but Warden could not face the work required, partly because he was by now a very old man. The lost volume would have been a priceless complement to The Linen Trade.

Even as it stands, Angus or Forfarshire is a massive feat.²⁴ It reproduces such rare maps as Edward's late seventeenth-century map of Angus. In the second volume Warden reprinted the rare seventeenth-century accounts of the shire by Edward and Ochterlony — both virtually unobtainable elsewhere until the recent very welcome reprints by the Forfar Historical Society. The extensive accounts of botany, zoology, flora and fauna were a direct response to subscribers' opinions but most valuable of all for the historian is the mass of detailed material, much of it organised on a parochial basis, concerning antiquities, and above all landownership. In the pages of Angus or Forfarshire it is possible to trace in immense detail the changing patterns of landholding in Angus from the earliest feudal charters to changes occurring in Warden's own lifetime. Warden not only gained access to the papers of nearly all the significant landed families, but also persuaded their heads to check the proofs. We can therefore rely on his facts more than normal, though the scholarly historian will always want to check Warden's statements, if he can, against the original documents. There are degrees of carelessness in nineteenth-century historians. The palm is held by Cardinal Gasquet who referred to Gibbon's Decline and Fall, in a famous aberration, as Gibbon's Rise and Fall.²⁵ Warden is not in that league, but he could be careless in minor matters.²⁶ For all that, his five volumes stand as an irreplaceable compendium for the local history of Angus, indispensable for the student of anything from Stone-Age monuments to Victorian landowning. It is interesting that in recent

years a comprehensive index to the entire work has been prepared.²⁷

In Warden's pages we can see the Baxters, Carmichaels, and Grimonds moving out to their country estates. But for that 1852 fire one suspects Warden might have joined these textile dynasts as they turned into lairds.

As it was, he left no real successor. His near contemporary Alexander Maxwell, was the son of a mill manager, an inveterate lecturer to the Working Men's Club on Old Dundee, and author of a volume bearing that title which appeared in 1884. Maxwell, one of whose brothers was librarian at the office of the Dundee Advertiser, published a companion volume on Dundee Prior To The Reformation in 1891, but by then he was an old man, having been born in 1821. He died in 1895 leaving a literary record which is not in the same class as Warden's works, but which is firmly based on the Dundee burgh records.²⁸ Both belonged to a group of solid middle-class men with their roots in the staple trade, and yet with time for scholarship. J.G. Orchar, head of a Dundee engineering firm and Provost of Broughty Ferry, was another of the same stamp, though he funnelled his scholarly interests into painting, and perpetuated his name in the Orchar Art Gallery.²⁹ They were a dying breed. By 1900 local history in Dundee and Angus was dominated by A. H. Millar, a pure litterateur. He wrote voluminously and was both careless, and intellectually rather a disaster, like his better-known correspondent Andrew Lang.

Both were at heart inhabitants of the Kailyard,³⁰ and that school of sentimentality went far to blight Scottish History, just when England was producing its first recognisable modern historians in Stubbs and Maitland.

The real greatness of Warden died with him. His tradition began to develop in a worthy manner only after 1947, when University College, Dundee, through the agency of the Abertay Historical Society, began to blow on the embers of local history in Dundee.

NOTES

¹ B. Lenman, 'The Curious Consequences of Jute'. Scottish International. 5 no.1, 1972, pp. 9-12.

² D.J. Withrington, 'Aberdeen Antiquaries: The founding of the Spalding Club in 1839', Aberdeen University Review, XLIV no. 145, 1971, pp. 42-55.

³ Wimberley to Seed, 12 April 1948, Abertay Historical Society Council Minutes,

Vol.1, pp. 15-16.

- ⁴ For this information I am grateful to Professor S.J. Jones of the Chair of Geography in the University of Dundee, a long-standing member of the Abertay Historical Society and an early Member of Council.
- ⁵ C.S. Terry, A Catalogue of the Publications of Scottish Historical and Kindred Clubs and Societies 1780-1908, Glasgow, 1909, pp. vii-viii.
- ⁶ J.H. Burton, The Book Hunter, New ed., London 1898, pp. 274-9.
- ⁷ Quoted in F.F. Mackay, Macneill of Carskey: His Estate Journal 1703-1743, Edinburgh, 1955, pp. 14-15.
- ⁸ A.H. Millar, (ed), The First History of Dundee: 1776, Dundee 1923. There is a bibliography of histories of Dundee at the back of this volume.
- ⁹ L.J. Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-1840, London, 1950, p.400.
- ¹⁰ See the obituary of A.J. Warden in the Dundee Year Book, 1892, pp.71-73.
- ¹¹ A. Gammie, Dr George J. Morrison: The Man and His Work, London, 1928, p.74.
- ¹² Private information.
- ¹³ For the general development of the Dundee Textile Trade 1850-1914 see B. Lenman et al., Dundee and its Textile Industry 1850-1914, Dundee, Abertay Historical Society Publication No.14, 1969.
- ¹⁴ The Dundee Trade Report Association, Statistics of the Linen Trade, Dundee, 1855.
- ¹⁵ I am very grateful to Mr J.W. Peter for giving me access to the file of Prices Current preserved in the office of J.W. Warden and Company, Panmure Street, Dundee, and for his kindness in discussing the history of the business with me.
- ¹⁶ A.J. Warden, The Linen Trade. Ancient and Modern, London, 1864, p.vi.
- ¹⁷ The quotation is extracted from the printed part of a document, partly printed and part manuscript, summoning a special meeting of the Committee of the Dundee and Newtyle Railway Company to be held at the Railway Office in Dundee on Friday, the 15 December, 1837. I am greatly indebted to Mr. J. Carmichael of Greencrook, Dunkeld, Perthshire, for access to this document which was originally sent to his ancestor Mr Charles Carmichael of the Ward Foundry, Dundee. I am also grateful to Mr. Charles Tennant of Greymount, Alyth, for his good offices in this matter.
- ¹⁸ A.J. Warden, The Linen Trade, 2nd ed., London, 1867, preface to the second edition.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., (3rd ed., Cass Library of Industrial Classics No.6, London, 1967). Warden's paper on 'The Linen Manufacture of Dundee' was reprinted in a volume entitled Meeting Of The British Association For The Advancement of Science In Dundee September 1867, Dundee, 1868.
- ²⁰ A.J. Warden, 'Notice of Stone Cists, etc., Found on Barnhill Links, Near Broughty Ferry', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries Of Scotland, 11, 1874-6, pp. 310-12.

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- ²¹ A.J. Warden, Burgh Laws of Dundee, With The History, Statutes, And Proceedings Of The Guild Of Merchants And Fraternities Of Craftsmen, London, 1872.
- ²² Charters, Writs, And Public Documents Of The Royal Burgh Of Dundee, The Hospital and Johnston's Bequest 1292-1880, Dundee, Printed By Order of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council, 1880, For Christopher Kerr's long career and antiquarian interests see W. Norrie, Dundee Celebrities, Dundee, 1873, pp. 333-5.
- ²³ vide W. Hay, Ancient Dundee And Its Progress To The Present Time: A Lecture Delivered To The Working Men's Association, Tay Street, In The Winter Of 1877, Dundee, 1886.
- ²⁴ A.J. Warden, Angus of Forfarshire, 5 vols., Dundee, 1880-85.
- ²⁵ M.D. Knowles, Cardinal Gasquet As An Historian, London, 1957, p. 17.
- ²⁶ For example, in The Linen Trade he quotes on p.584 of the first edition from a geographical dictionary by Brice, a tour by Pennant, and the first Statistical Account. In every case he has either a wrong date or a wrong title for his source. None of these errors is very significant, but none was picked up in the extended Errata for the 1867 edition.
- ²⁷ The comprehensive index to all five volumes has been compiled by Miss G. Russell of the staff of the Library of the University of Dundee. Each individual volume was published with its own index, but Miss Russell's index would constitute a major help to researchers if it could be duplicated and made available in libraries which possess Angus or Forfarshire. At present the index is in typescript.
- ²⁸ A. Maxwell, The History of Old Dundee narrated out of the Town Council Registers, Edinburgh, 1884; Old Dundee, ecclesiastical, burghal and social, prior to the Reformation, Edinburgh, 1891. I am most grateful to Mrs. Edith Maxwell Hill of 'Glenlyon', 14 Clayton Park, Dairsie, by Cupar, for help with the Maxwell family connections. These are most conveniently pursued in A. Reid, The Bards of Angus And The Mearns, Paisley, 1897, pp. 309-15, where brief bibliographical sketches of Alexander Maxwell, his father, and his brothers will be found. Mr. Eric Maxwell, a former treasurer of the Abertay, formed in 1972 a living link between the Abertay Historical Society and his Victorian kinsman, Alexander Maxwell, historian and contemporary of Alexander Warden.
- ²⁹ There is a convenient brief biography of Orchar, who served as President of the Dundee Chamber of Commerce in Dundee Chamber of Commerce Centenary Souvenir 1936, Dundee, 1936, p.47.
- ³⁰ Eight letters by Andrew Lang to A.H. Millar, dealing with literary matters ranging from Omar Khayyam to Lives of Mary Queen of Scots are preserved in the National Library of Scotland, MSS. 344. Millar is now perhaps best remembered for his Haunted Dundee, 1923, and if this is a little hard on an

author who did some useful, if not technically satisfactory, editorial work for the Scottish History Society, it is not unfair to his general historical outlook. Anyone who doubts his 'Kailyard' affinities should read his book Gregarach, London, n.d., which is a history of Rob Roy's sons, complete with long imaginary dramatic dialogues in broad Scots.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF THE ABERTAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The following publications are still in print and may be obtained through booksellers or by post from the Honorary Publications Secretary, Mrs. J. Jones, Caegarw, Main Street, Monikie, Angus.

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