



The British Empire in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Scottish Music: Early Observations

ARTICLE

ANDREW BULL 



ABSTRACT

To date, the colonial links between Scottish music from the long eighteenth century and the burgeoning British Empire have not been analysed. Colonial elements and links have occasionally been noted, but their impact and implications have not been examined in detail. This article seeks to open this topic up to further investigation. The evidence presented here is only the beginnings of a detailed survey of this issue, and so does not focus on any one source type. Instead, it takes a variety of sources from the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to piece together a suggestive picture that requires further work, in order to fully understand this issue.

This article notes previous mentions of colonial elements within Scottish music, before moving onto the wider field of Scottish History's far more extensive exploration of this topic. It then analyses data of Scottish music publications, and compares this to available data on Scottish involvement in Empire. Evidence from Subscribers' lists to publications are drawn upon, noting both East and West Indies funding of some music books. Newspaper adverts are also utilised, with examples showing how black enslaved peoples were part of the musical world of Scotland, and also how the Empire's colonies provided employment opportunities for Scottish musicians. Several specific families and individuals are then examined, providing further glimpses into how Empire permeated throughout Scottish musical activities.

Ultimately though, this article examines just a few examples of colonial interaction with Scottish music. There is likely a far larger undercurrent of this material to be unearthed, and it is hoped that future research projects will uncover a fuller picture of the depths of involvement in colonialism that Scottish music had.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Andrew Bull

Independent Researcher, UK
andrewbullresearch@gmail.com

KEYWORDS:

colonialism; empire; Scottish music

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Bull, A. 2023. The British Empire in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Scottish Music: Early Observations. *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 11(1): 7, 1–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57132/jiss.214>

To date, the colonial links between Scottish music from the long eighteenth century and the burgeoning British Empire have not been analysed.¹ Colonial elements and links have occasionally been noted, but their impact and implications have not been examined in detail.² This article seeks to open this topic up to further investigation. The evidence presented here is only the beginning of a detailed survey, and so does not focus on any one source type. Instead, it takes a variety of sources from the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to piece together a suggestive picture that requires further work, in order to fully understand this issue.

Scottish participation in many aspects of the British Empire has recently received much attention in the works of Stephen Mullen, Andrew Mackillop, T. M. Devine, and others, but as yet there has been no formal scholarly exploration of the role British colonialism played in Scottish music.³ This lack of engagement is not surprising given that studies of Scottish music tend to lag behind other disciplines and clues to colonial ties can be less obvious in music, although clear and obvious links to colonial activities such as service in the British East India Company (EIC) is obvious in the subscribers' lists to several Scottish music publications of the latter eighteenth century. This article examines just a few examples of colonial interaction with Scottish music. There is likely a far larger undercurrent of this material to be unearthed, and it is hoped that future research projects will uncover a fuller picture of the depths of involvement in colonialism that Scottish music had.⁴

MUSIC PUBLISHING IN SCOTLAND

It is remarkable that during the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, music publishing in Scotland skyrocketed. This was caused by the increasing popularity of Scottish music over this period in general, the greater ease and access to printing technology during the Enlightenment, and increasing public literacy. Table 1 provides data on the number of publications of Scottish

1 My thanks are due to my colleagues Kevin Leomo and Dr Elizabeth Ford for comments and proofreading of an earlier draft of this article. Any faults are, of course, the author's own.

2 The few areas of particular note have been the work of John Purser and Elizabeth Ford on General John Reid, and by Karen MacAulay on Joseph Macdonald. See John Purser, *Scotland's Music: A History of the Traditional and Classical Music of Scotland from Early Times to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 2007), 225–7; Elizabeth C. Ford, *The Flute in Scotland from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Studies in the History and Culture of Scotland 11 (Oxford, 2020), 118, 148; Karen E. McAulay, *Our Ancient National Airs: Scottish Song Collecting from the Enlightenment to the Romantic Era* (Farnham, 2013), 11, 13, 22, 26–7. The original piping manuscript treatise of Joseph Macdonald (created whilst he had the luxury of free time whilst voyaging to serve in the East India Company) is now stored in the University of Edinburgh, as La.III804, with digitised images available at: <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEwmm~2~2~77099~164515>. A modern edition is available: Roderick D. Cannon (ed.), *Joseph Macdonald's Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe (c.1760)* (Glasgow, 1994).

3 For an overview of slavery-related historiography, see Stephen Mullen, 'Centring Transatlantic Slavery in Scottish Historiography', *History Compass*, 20, no. 1 (2022), 1–14. The work of Stephen Mullen has identified slavery-derived wealth in the University of Glasgow, and the links between the city of Glasgow and Atlantic slavery. See Stephen Mullen and Simon Newman, 'Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow' (Glasgow, 2018) and Stephen Mullen, *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery* (Edinburgh, 2009).

The work of Andrew Mackillop on the East Indies, and how extractive colonialism created huge profits for certain Scottish individuals, which they then essentially laundered through charitable works and land purchases, similarly highlights how inextricably linked Scotland's wealth and development was linked to colonialist enterprise. See Andrew Mackillop, *Human Capital and Empire: Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British Imperialism in Asia, c.1690–c.1820* (Manchester, 2021) and Iain MacKinnon and Andrew Mackillop, 'Plantation Slavery and Landownership in the West Highlands and Islands: Legacies and Lessons' (Community Land Scotland, 2020), 12, <https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Plantation-slavery-and-landownership-in-the-west-highlands-and-islands-legacies-and-lessons.pdf> accessed 14 January 2022.

It is to be hoped that, as public awareness of these sorts of issues increases, further scholars of Scottish music will consider these questions in relation to our own field of study. Certain issues, such as around the Dundas statue plaque in Edinburgh, and the City of Edinburgh Council's 'Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review' have brought such questions into public focus. Similarly, more accessible popular history books have aided in this endeavour, such as Alex Renton, *Blood Legacy: Reckoning with a Family's Story of Slavery* (Edinburgh, 2021).

4 With this article's focus on Scottish music and its links to colonialism, the obvious counterpart is the music of those they oppressed. This article cannot encompass this, and so I acknowledge that it still retains a colonial viewpoint, presenting a distorted view of the music of many peoples that were subjugated under the British Empire at this time. Whilst the specific focus of Scots' direct impact on the musical cultures of those brought into the British Empire has not been studied, wider histories regarding these areas and peoples are available. A small list of these is Eileen Southern, (ed.), *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York, 1971); Katrina Dyonne Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana, 2014); Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton, 2015); Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield (eds), *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India* (Cambridge, 2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0062>; Katherine Butler Schofield, "'Words Without Songs': The Social History of Hindustani Song Collections in India's Muslim Courts c.1770–1830" in Rachel Harris and Martin Stokes (eds), *Theory and Practice in the Music of the Islamic World: Essays in Honour of Owen Wright* (London, 2017), 173–98.

music during this period.⁵ These data show a noticeable boom in music publishing in Scotland during the 1780s through to the 1810s. This raises questions over the potential that the colonial profits seeping into Scottish society more generally played a part in this publishing boom.

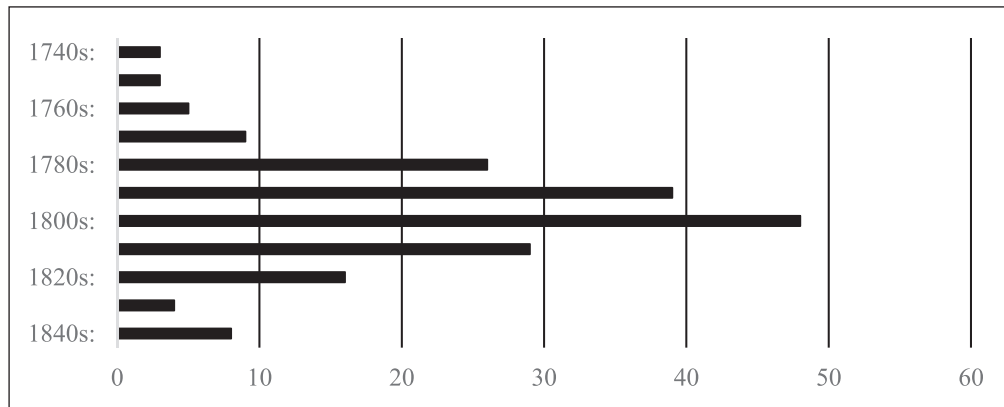


Table 1 Approximate dates of publications listed on HMS.scot.

These music printing statistics match well against other data available for colonial involvement by Scots, such as data collected by Andrew Mackillop, shown in Table 2.⁶ This shows a notable increase in Scottish involvement in the East India Company, just before and during the same period that saw a boom in Scottish music publishing.

SCOTS IN ASIA:	1730–49	1750–69	1770–89	1790–1813
Civil servants	22	96	74	227
Military officers	30	225	560	1245
Surgeons	25	58	99	174
Free merchants and mariners	26	85	228	290
Merchant marine officers	11	46	205	163

Table 2 Scots in Asia, primarily EIC employment.

Though this table shows a clear increase in numbers of Scots in Asia from the second quarter of the eighteenth century through to the early nineteenth century, it does not indicate how the Scottish involvement compares to the wider numbers of British personnel in Asia. A few percentages will help make the increasing overabundance of Scots in Asia apparent. For civil servants, the 1730–49 figures show that Scots were 6.3 per cent of the total number of people employed in these positions. This increases to 12.2 and 13.5 in the next two columns, before rising to 21.2 per cent in 1790–1813.⁷ A similar result occurs within the data for military officers, which rises to 22.9 per cent in the final period presented.⁸ For surgeons, these numbers consistently show that between one-fifth to one-quarter of all Company surgeons were Scottish during these periods.⁹ Data for the last two employment types is a little less easily definable against the wider British population in Asia. The total of Scottish merchant marine officers between 1690–1813 is likely 20.9 per cent of the overall total.¹⁰ Meanwhile the percentage

⁵ Where dates are an approximate over a decade range, the mid-point is taken between the two end dates; this is not the case for clear series, such as Oswald Pocket, where the earliest date is taken. This is not every single Scottish music publication from the period but is gleaned from HMS.scot's 'over 200 printed sources of vernacular violin music from before 1850', with only Scottish publications being included. The majority are collections, but a few are single- or few-piece printings. HMS.scot is an online resource of historical sources of Scottish music, providing resources, bibliographies, and digitised copies of primarily eighteenth-century material.

⁶ Data pulled from Mackillop, *Human Capital and Empire*, 90, 105, 131, 170, and 196. However, as Mackillop notes, we should be aware that data was better recorded in the latter periods, so the increases in numbers may not be as pronounced as it seems here.

⁷ Ibid., 90.

⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁹ Ibid., 171.

¹⁰ Ibid., 105.

of Scots free merchants and mariners in Madras never drops below 20 per cent throughout 1778–1810 and rises to 29.4 per cent in 1810.¹¹ Taken as a whole, these percentages show an increasing involvement by Scots in the EIC and wider trading in Asia during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the start of the nineteenth. This increasing wealth of Scots will have had an impact on the Scottish economy, and therefore indirectly contributed to the music publishing boom (we will see later how specific Scots in the East Indies directly contributed to this as well). It is a striking dynamic indeed that an increase in EIC employment for Scots occurred while Scottish music publishing greatly increased as well.

Data from the West Indies is not yet so fine-grained, and so only general comparisons between Scottish music publishing trends and the involvement of Scots in the Caribbean can be made.¹² Claims that Scots represented up to 30 per cent of all landowners in Jamaica have been shown to be based on flawed data.¹³ The likely percentage lies somewhere lower than this, though we cannot know for sure. In Antigua between 1730 and 1775, thirteen of the sixty-five 'leading families' identified by Richard Sheridan were from Scotland.¹⁴ Whatever the exact number of Scots involved in the West Indies, it is clear that Scotland's transformation into an industrial economy was partly based on the profits from North American and Caribbean plantations. As Stephen Mullen puts it, 'Scotland was built on shrewd investment, venture capital – and the blood and sweat of slaves.'¹⁵

This economic view including not just the profits directly from the transatlantic slave trade but also profits derived from the products of their labour, and the economic systems built on the backs of those enslaved, is following what is now known as 'the Williams thesis'. This is named after its proponent, Eric Williams, the first prime minister of a newly independent Trinidad and Tobago.¹⁶ The simple explanation provided here does not do true justice to Williams' work, however the approach he took has become the *de jure* approach that many historians of Scotland follow to questions of slavery, and this article will follow suit.¹⁷ As T. M. Devine has argued, 'the Scottish engagement with empire ... affected almost every nook and cranny of Scottish life'.¹⁸ Economically speaking, Scottish music publishing will have also gained from this engagement; as Scotland's economy was boosted by empire, so too was music publishing, swept along by the influx of colonially-derived money into every aspect of Scotland's life. We will come to more specific examples of this later in the article.

The impact that empire had on all aspects of Scotland cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the great boom industries of Scotland during this period – sugar, tobacco, linen – all have colonial links. Whilst many Scottish merchants did not directly own slaves, their involvement in such trades left them only one step removed from the horrific labour processes of the plantations.¹⁹ And not only were those Scots in the West Indies implicit in this economy – those remaining at home provided the linens, foodstuffs, manufactured goods and luxury items that the colonies required and desired.²⁰ Materials sent out to those colonies in the West Indies amounted for 65 per cent of Scottish exports by 1813; already by the 1790s nine-tenths of Scottish linen production was being

11 Ibid., 196 Table 6.2.

12 On the cultural activities of Gaels in the West Indies, including music, see Sheila M. Kidd, 'Gaelic Books as Cultural Icons: The Maintenance of Cultural Links Between the Highlands and the West Indies' in Carla Sassi and Theo van Heijnsbergen (ed.), *Within and without Empire: Scotland across the (Post)Colonial Borderline* (Cambridge, 2013), 46–60; Nigel Leask and Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh, "'Co-Ainm Na Taca Seo an-Uiridh": Dugald MacNicol's Caribbean Lament for Argyll', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 47 (2022), 43–68.

13 Stephen Mullen and Simon P. Newman, 'Scotland and Jamaican Slavery: The Problem with Numbers', *Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery*, 2021, <https://lbsatucl.wordpress.com/2021/11/12/scotland-and-jamaican-slavery-the-problem-with-numbers/>, accessed 14 January 2022.

14 R. B. Sheridan, 'The Rise of a Colonial Gentry: A Case Study of Antigua, 1730–1775', *The Economic History Review*, 13 (1961), 345.

15 Mullen, *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow And Slavery*, 7.

16 Originally published in 1944, a new edition has just been released: Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (3rd edition, Chapel Hill, 2021).

17 For discussions of the Williams thesis, see Cedric J. Robinson, 'Capitalism, Slavery and Bourgeois Historiography', *History Workshop Journal*, 23 (1987), 122–40; Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (2nd edition, London, 2013), 101–20; T. M. Devine, 'Did Slavery make Scotia Great? A Question Revisited' in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh, 2015), 225–6.

18 T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600–1815* (2nd edition, London, 2004), xxvii.

19 MacKinnon and Mackillop, 'Plantation Slavery and Landownership', 12.

20 David Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders: Silenced Histories of Scotland and the Caribbean* (Edinburgh, 2021), 214.

exported to North American and Caribbean plantations.²¹ The financial well-being of Scotland, and its implications on the musical life of the country, are entwined with that of colonial trade.

Several recent reports have highlighted the links between the transatlantic slave trade and Scotland. In all of these, what strikes the reader is the level of permeation that profits from the slave trade had into many aspects of Scottish life. The report *Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow* found that sixteen out of approximately 200 gifts to the university had clear connections to the profits from slavery, and that twenty-three of the approximately 2,500 donors to its Gilmorehill relocation campaign also demonstrated links to the slave trade.²² Similarly, the *Plantation Slavery and Landownership in the West Highland and Islands* discussion paper found:

that at least 1,834,708 acres of the west Highlands and Islands – more than half of the area’s total landmass, and approaching ten percent of the total landmass of Scotland – has been owned by families that have benefitted significantly from slavery.²³

In a similar vein, the National Trust for Scotland’s similar investigation into its properties found direct links to slavery for nineteen of the forty-eight properties surveyed.²⁴ Ten more properties benefitted from indirect links, such as trading in importing/exporting slave colony goods or benefitting from the financial systems supporting slavery economies. Finally, intergenerational links, where slavery derived wealth has percolated through familial fortunes and thereby benefited the later generations both financially and societally, account for a further thirteen properties.²⁵

All of this shows how deeply imperial wealth seeped into the social structure of Scotland. But, as David Hunter argues, ‘[t]he artifacts of slavery are not only the manacles, branding irons, and whips, or the slaves’ own possessions, but also the musical scores and instruments funded by slavery’s profits.’²⁶ We must turn to the more ephemeral world of music to ascertain how deeply Scots’ colonialism affected Scottish music. It is no coincidence that Simon Fraser in the ‘Letter and Prospectus’ to his 1816 *Airs and Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland and the Isles* notes that for ‘our countrymen abroad, in India, settled in the Continent of America, or resident in the West Indies’ this music in particular has a strong draw, due to their absence from home.²⁷

SUBSCRIBERS’ LISTS

This absence from their homeland did not only manifest in the simple purchasing of collections of music, but also in subscribing to them before they had been made. This was an increasingly used method of publication in the British Isles more generally, which allowed composers and publishers to mitigate the impact of publishing on their own finances.²⁸ Via the promise from a large list of subscribers for payment (often at a reduced rate compared to the main selling

21 Ibid., 212, 220.

22 Mullen and Newman, ‘Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow’, 12.

23 MacKinnon and Mackillop, ‘Plantation Slavery and Landownership’, 10.

24 These direct links were classified as the trafficking or ownership of enslaved people; the ownership of both the property and a plantation; or the presence of an enslaved person on the property.

25 Jennifer Melville, *Facing Our Past* (National Trust for Scotland, 2021). I have summarised the findings – many properties have evidence of a mix of these differing links to slavery. In these instances, I have simply noted the closest relation to a slave-based economy that a property has.

26 David Hunter, ‘Handel Manuscripts and the Profits of Slavery: The “Granville” Collection at the British Library and the First Performing Score of Messiah Reconsidered’, *Notes* 76 (2019), 37.

27 Simon Fraser, *The Airs & Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland and the Isles* (Edinburgh, 1816), 3.

28 On music publishing funded by subscription in the British Isles, see David Hunter, ‘The Publishing of Opera and Song Books in England, 1703–1726’, *Notes*, 47 (1991), 673; David Hunter and Rose M. Mason, ‘Supporting Handel through Subscription to Publications: The Lists of “Rodelinda” and “Faramondo” Compared’, *Notes*, 56 (1999), 27–93; Jenny Burchell, ‘“The First Talents of Europe”: British Music Printers and Publishers and Imported Instrumental Music in the Eighteenth Century’ in Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (eds), *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 2004), 93–113; Margaret Seares, ‘The Composer and the Subscriber: A Case Study from the Eighteenth Century’, *Early Music*, 39 (2011), 65–78; Simon D. I. Fleming, ‘Avison and his Subscribers: Musical Networking in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 49 (2018), 21–49; Simon D. I. Fleming, ‘The Gender of Subscribers to Eighteenth-Century Music Publications’, *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 50 (2019), 94–152; Simon D. I. Fleming, ‘The Patterns of Music Subscription in English, Welsh and Irish Cathedrals during the Georgian Era’, *Early Music*, 48 (2020), 205–23; Simon D. I. Fleming and Martin Perkins (eds), *Music by Subscription: Composers and Their Networks in the British Music-Publishing Trade, 1676–1820* (Abingdon, 2022). For evidence of subscriptions lists being used for music in other European countries, see Anita Breckbill, ‘Music Publishing by Subscription in 1820s France: A Preliminary Study’, *Notes*, 69 (2013), 453–71.

price), a publisher could have the collection printed, both for those subscribers and copies for sale more generally. Scottish tune books' subscribers are a resource that are yet to be fully mined for information in general, though Karen McAulay does note the 'spasmodic appearances of subscribers from Jamaica, the East Indies or elsewhere in the colonies.'²⁹ This, however, is not the focus of her chapter, instead looking at the far more copious data available in terms of other subscribers. It is true that colonial subscribers are not always clearly seen in the lists; not everyone has an obvious geographical marker advertising their position in the colonies, but a deeper prosopographical analysis of these lists may well uncover colonially-derived wealth in the banks of many well-to-do subscribers that as yet are unrecovered.

Those 'spasmodic' entries are evidence of individuals in the British colonies subscribing to Scottish music publications.³⁰ The following two sections of this article will explore just a few of these entries. Not only do the individuals listed show clear colonial financial support of Scottish music publishing, they are also a statement on the connectivity of the Empire and how advertisements (or other forms of knowledge such as family letters) about planned publications travelled the world.³¹

WEST INDIES SUBSCRIBERS

In the subscribers' list for Malcolm McDonald's *A Second Collection of Strathspey Reels &c* of ca. 1789 is one Mrs Macglashan of Jamaica, who ordered two copies of the publication.³² Who precisely Mrs Macglashan was is unclear; lacking a first name it is hard to be certain of who in the records she might be.³³ One possibility is that she is the same person as the 'Mrs J. McGlashan' that left Jamaica in 1793.³⁴ This J. McGlashan is potentially identifiable as one Jean McGlashan, who is given the similar 'Rights and Privileges' as an English subject in 1766 by an act of the Jamaican Assembly.³⁵ Her maternal grandmother was Frances Willey, 'a free mulatto woman' from the parish of St Andrews. Her daughter Mary then had both Jean and her brother Charles, with their father being one 'Duncan McGlashan, practitioner in physic'.³⁶

This familial link to Frances Willey would quite possibly make Jean McGlashan the first known mixed-race subscriber to a publication of Scottish traditional music. However, if this genealogical theory is correct, then her family was also deeply involved in slavery, which raises questions over where her money to support McDonald's publication came from. Her father Duncan Charles MacGlashan/McGlashan, aside from being one of the doctors on the island, was owner or co-owner of two plantations on the island during 1774–5: the Blackheath plantation in Westmoreland and the Rhine plantation in the parish of St Thomas in the East, totalling 283 enslaved people.³⁷ Jean's brother Charles seems to have followed in his father's footsteps, being listed as both a doctor and plantation-owner in several of Jamaica's almanacs during the 1790s onwards. Despite their

29 Karen E. McAulay, 'Strathspeys, Reels, and Instrumental Airs: A National Product' in Fleming and Perkins (eds), *Music by Subscription*, 190.

30 For an example of how subscription lists can provide a basis for exploring the slavery implications in the funding of other music, see David Hunter, 'Profiting from the Slave Economy and Subscribing to Music: The British Experience in the Eighteenth Century' in Fleming and Perkins (eds), *Music by Subscription*, 198–220.

31 Exchanges of letters to India and back would take at least a year; to the American colonies slightly quicker. See H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge, 2005), 154–5; T. M. Devine (ed.), *A Scottish Firm in Virginia 1767–1777 W. Cuninghame and Co.*, *Scottish History Society* vol. 20, 4 (Edinburgh, 1984), 52, 91.

32 Malcolm McDonald, *A Second Collection of Strathspey Reels With a Bass for the Violoncello or Harpsichord* (Edinburgh, ca. 1789), <http://hms.scot/fiddle/copy/18/>.

33 On these such difficulties facing a prosopographical study of subscribers, see Hunter, 'Profiting from the Slave Economy and Subscribing to Music', 201–2. A later generation of female McGlashans dominate searches, due to their receiving compensation after the abolition of slavery, but there is no clear evidence for their descent from our subscriber. See Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, 'Eliza Jane McGlashan (Née Turner)', 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/761648377>.

34 'Passengers Leaving the Island', *Royal Gazette*, 29 June 1793, <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Members/g/g6-29-93.htm>.

35 Edward Crawford, 'Individuals of Part-African or African Descent Named in Acts of the Jamaican Assembly 1760–1810', *Jamaican Family Search* (blog), n.d., <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Samples/acts.htm>. This is a transcription from the original document CO 139/22 (89) held at the National Archives in Kew.

36 Ibid.

37 Vere Langford Oliver (ed.), *Caribbeana: Being Miscellaneous Papers Relating to the History, Genealogy, Topography, and Antiquities of the British West Indies* (6 Vols, London: Mitchell Hughes and Clarke, 1914), III, 295–7; Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, 'Blackheath Estate', 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/3011>.

mixed heritage, this family clearly had no problem with plantation slavery. Frustratingly, we have not found any record of who Jean McGlashan married, nor of where her ship landed, and so our trail goes cold as to this potential identity of our subscriber Mrs Macglashan.

Even if this is not the same Macglashan family, whatever her position in Jamaica was, it nonetheless placed her in a slavery-based economy.³⁸ Estimates of the profits of British slave-trading around 1770 are £115,000 at the time; aggregate West Indies planting profits were £2.5 million.³⁹ Whilst the trade in slaves was a comparatively small part of the West Indies' total profit-making, it is impossible to remove these people from the understanding of the wider transatlantic economy.⁴⁰ In 1770, just under 90 per cent of the exports of Jamaica to Great Britain and Ireland were sugar and rum, both products that required extensive use of slave labour.⁴¹ It is undeniable then that Jamaica, and by extension the other West Indies colonies who present similar statistics, had economies entirely reliant upon the production of goods by enslaved peoples.⁴² It is this economic backdrop that enabled Mrs Macglashan's support for McDonald's *Strathspey Reels*, no matter her familial background.

A further example from Jamaica comes from Archibald's Duff's 1794 *A Collection of Strathspey Reels &c*.⁴³ Here we find 'Mr John Alexander, Surgeon, Jamaica' as the first subscriber listed. Medical practitioners were particularly necessary for the West Indies, due to the effects of the climate on the white colonists and the need to treat the worst excesses of punishments meted out to the enslaved.⁴⁴ Scots or Scots-trained doctors were a common sight in the West Indies, and often acquired a great deal of wealth.⁴⁵ As we have seen with the McGlashan doctors, they could also be owners of plantations. With this in mind, it can be suggested that this John Alexander is the same John Alexander who in 1792 owned twelve enslaved people in St Ann, Jamaica.⁴⁶ If this is the case, then there is a clear link between the ownership of enslaved people, and thereby the profits of their labour, and the financial support of a publication of Scottish music.⁴⁷

EAST INDIES SUBSCRIBERS

Angus Cumming's 1780 *A Collection of Strathspey or old Highland Reels* provides ample evidence for the presence of East India money in Scottish music publishing. Among the extensive list of Grants subscribing to the publication, are entries such as 'Grant, Capt. Charles, East-India Company's Service'; 'Grant, Capt. Ludovick, East Indies'; and 'Grant, Charles, Esq; Calcutta',

38 Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis (eds), *Women and Slavery in America: A Documentary History* (Fayetteville, 2011); Christine Walker, *Jamaica Ladies: Female Slaveholders and the Creation of Britain's Atlantic Empire* (Williamsburg, 2020).

39 Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, 106.

40 George Shepperson, 'Comment' in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese (eds), *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, 1975), 101.

41 R. B. Sheridan, 'The Wealth of Jamaica in the Eighteenth Century: A Rejoinder', *The Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), 48–9.

42 For statistics of sugar plantations on Antigua, see Sheridan, 'The Rise of a Colonial Gentry', 342–5.

43 Archibald Duff, *A Collection of Strathspey Reels &c for the Piano Forte Violin and Violoncello* (Edinburgh, 1794), <https://digital.nls.uk/special-collections-of-printed-music/archive/102743150>.

44 On Scottish doctor's roles in slavery economies, see Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750–1820* (Manchester, 2005), 112–35; Suzanne Schwarz, 'Scottish Surgeons in the Liverpool Slave Trade in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries' in Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*, 145–165.

45 Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World*, 112.

46 John Ridley, 'A List of Slaves and Stock in the Parish of St Ann Taken the 28th March 1792 Pursuant to Order of the Honourable House of Assembly' (1792), <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Members/m/mstann1792.htm>.

47 Further potential matches to John Alexander suggest an increase in wealth, jointly owning eighty-three enslaved people in 1802: 'Inventory and Appraisal of the Goods Chattels and Rights and Credits of DONALD McINTOSH Late of the Parish of Saint Ann Planter' (1802), Jamaica Archives, <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Members/minvent1.htm> f. 193–4; Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, 'John Alexander', 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146639633>. Sadly, the Jamaica Almanac entries listed on the LBS database do not include titles, frustrating our ability to confirm this is the same man as the subscriber. A lady that may be identified as his wife, listed as she is as 'Mrs Jean Cunningham, wife of John Alexander, Esq. surgeon' died in Edinburgh on the 19th May 1827 – *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 22 (1827), 265. This would be contemporary with John Alexander the plantation owner's death around 1823, with the Alexandria plantation now '[i]n the possession of Isaac Higgin, George McKay, Charles Rob and Francis Rob as executors and trustees of John Alexander' – Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, 'John Alexander', 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146639633>.

amongst others similarly located in the East Indies.⁴⁸ Similarly, one ‘Lieutenant Macdonald, Bengal’ is found in John Bowie’s 1789 *A Collection of Strathspey Reels & Country Dances*.⁴⁹ Finally, another Grant can be found in Duncan Macintyre’s 1795 *A Collection of Slow Airs, Reels & Strathspeys*, as ‘Lieutenant A. Grant, East India Company’s Service, Madras’. Macintyre himself went on to emigrate to India, possibly becoming the master of ceremonies for the Governor-General of Bengal.⁵⁰

The presence of so many military men in EIC employment is no surprise – the territorial conquest of India required soldiers, and was so quick that in half a century it controlled the entire subcontinent with its private army of 200,000 men.⁵¹ This was supported by the British military as well. Bengal is an early example of the level of looting and extortion that occurred under the auspices of the EIC. This was one of the first areas hit hard by the EIC’s extortionate taxations, and its treasury was simply emptied and transferred to Fort William, the Company’s headquarters in Calcutta.⁵² Between 1765 and 1815, approximately £18,000,000 was taken a year from India, bankrolling Britain at the expense of India.⁵³ Into this land of financial opportunity came the Scots, whose ability to mobilise human capital allowed them to benefit greatly from empire.⁵⁴ In these three subscribers’ lists there is perhaps some of the most obvious evidence that East Indies wealth was being used to generate cultural capital for the wealth owner by laundering their colonial profits into a more acceptable form. MacKinnon and Mackillop, in the context of slavery-derived wealth being used to fund land purchases, note that this was a method to turn this wealth into something more ‘culturally respectable, non-threatening, and even “traditional”’.⁵⁵ These lists of subscribers suggest a similar impulse, turning East and West Indies money into a form of cultural wealth, creating respectability by association with the traditional music of Scotland.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspaper advertisements provide occasional snapshots of the impact of Scotland’s colonial activities into the country’s musical framework. Found through the *Runaway Slaves in Britain* project database, we find in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* on the 2nd of May 1772 this advertisement:

RUN AWAY from his MASTER, upon MONDAY laft,

A BLACK SERVANT:

He is about five feet ten or eleven inches high, strong made, short hair, about 23 years of age: – His name is ANTHONY, had a dark coloured coat on when he went away, and can play a little upon the fiddle. — Whoever will secure him in any jail in Britain, shall be properly rewarded upon giving proper intimation to the Publisher of this Paper.⁵⁶

48 Angus Cumming, *A Collection of Strathspey or Old Highland Reels* (Edinburgh, 1780), <https://hms.scot/prints/copy/3/>. As HMS.scot notes, the ‘list contains a very extensive list of Grants from around the globe’, with New York, Grenada, and Jamaica also all listed. For further on the Grants and their links to slavery, see Melville, ‘Facing Our Past’, 46; Anthony Lewis, ‘Lady Jean Grant and Caribbean Slavery’, *Legacies of Slavery in Glasgow Museums and Collections*, 2020, <https://glasgowmuseumsslavery.co.uk/2020/04/02/lady-jean-grant-and-caribbean-slavery/>, accessed 12 January 2022. Lady Jean Grant subscribed for four copies of Cumming’s collection, as ‘Grant, Lady, of Grant’.

49 John Bowie, *A Collection of Strathspey Reels & Country Dances &c., with a Bass for the Violoncello or Harpsichord* (Edinburgh, 1789), 2, <https://digital.nls.uk/special-collections-of-printed-music/archive/102743144>.

50 Duncan Macintyre, *A Collection of Slow Airs, Reels & Strathspeys* (London, 1795), 2, <https://digital.nls.uk/special-collections-of-printed-music/archive/102743145>; HMS.scot, ‘Duncan Macintyre’, *Historical Music of Scotland*, <https://hms.scot/prints/author/89/>, accessed 12 January 2022.

51 William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (2nd edition, London, 2020), xxxi.

52 *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

53 Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (2nd edition, London, 2017), 9.

54 Mackillop, *Human Capital and Empire*, 16.

55 MacKinnon and Mackillop, ‘Plantation Slavery and Landownership’, 14.

56 ‘RUN AWAY from His MASTER’, *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 2 May 1772, 3, <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/display/?rid=22>, accessed 13 January 2022.

Of particular interest to this article is the statement that he ‘can play a little upon the fiddle’ – Anthony’s musical abilities raise numerous questions here. Was Anthony’s fiddle playing a colonial imposition upon him, as part of his role in the household? Or was it something he himself had freely taken up? Had he been able to play similar instruments before his life as a ‘servant’, back in his own homeland? And who had paid for this fiddle that he had played upon? Was this something that he himself had managed to acquire, or was it provided by his enslaver? Frustratingly, all these questions, including what happened to Anthony, remain unanswered. What this advertisement does show, though, is that in Edinburgh in the later eighteenth century, there was at least one black violinist.

Despite the term ‘servant’ being used, it is clear that Anthony was enslaved. We know that enslaved black people were kept in Scotland, at least until the result of the Knight vs Wedderburn case in 1777.⁵⁷ We even find members of the Buchanan family involved in the sale of a ‘stout young NEGROE MAN, bred a failor and cook’ in Greenock in 1766.⁵⁸ Another example comes from 1772, the same year as Anthony fled his enslaver. Robert Cunninghame Graham and his wife Ann returned from their Jamaican plantation with two enslaved domestic servants, one named Martin, the other’s name unrecorded. A year later Martin was then returned to Jamaica to be sold, a clear indicator of his status as a slave rather than a true ‘servant’.⁵⁹ Despite Anthony’s musical abilities, a similar fate may have befallen him as punishment for his supposed transgressions.

A further piece of evidence for the entanglement of empire and the colonies in Scotland’s musical landscape is a 1758 advertisement for musicians needed for a ship bound for Jamaica:

For Kingston in Jamaica,

The St ANDREW

Captain Hugh Wyllie,

IS now to take on board goods at Greenock, and be clear to fail against the first of March. For freight or passage apply to James Douglass or George Anderson merchants in Glasgow, or the master at Greenock. The vessel is a prime sailer, burthern 270 tons, mounts 16 carriage-guns, 4 and 6 pounders, 14 swivels, and will have 50 hands and a latter of marque.

N.B. A surgeon, a French-horn-man, a drummer, and an armourer are wanted for said ship, and will meet with good encouragement by applying as above. Any joiners, bricklayers, or blacksmiths, that are willing to indent for four years will also meet with due encouragement.⁶⁰

This notice also ran the following week, but the sentence about the surgeon, French horn man, drummer, and armourer was removed – evidently these positions had already been filled.⁶¹ If indeed there were enough French horn players and drummers in Glasgow willing to relocate to Jamaica, it can be concluded that the colonies were providing income for Scottish musicians.

57 ‘Slavery, Freedom or Perpetual Servitude? – The Joseph Knight Case’, *National Records of Scotland*, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/slavery/slavery-freedom-or-perpetual-servitude-the-joseph-knight-case>, accessed 20 January 2022.

58 ‘To Be SOLD by Public Roup’, *Glasgow Journal*, 1 May 1766. The full text of the advert is:

To be SOLD by Public ROUP
At William Johnston’s vintner in Greenock, on Friday the 16th inst. between the hours of 12 and 2 mid day.
The Snow PEGGY. burden about 90 tons, (lying at Greenock). The inventory to be seen in the hands of
George Buchanan junior in Glasgow, or John Buchanan merchant in Greenock.

Also will be fold a stout young NEGROE MAN, bred a sailor and cook. Any person wanting to make a private purchase may apply as above.

59 Mullen and Newman, ‘Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow’, 9–10.

60 ‘For Kingston in Jamaica’, *Glasgow Journal*, 13 February 1758.

61 Throughout the *Glasgow Journal*, adverts are not altered unless the requirement is met; this author has seen numerous instances of requests for skilled labourers for the West Indies continue for multiple weeks, with no alteration to their numbers required. The most logical conclusions from this is that all the positions had been filled.

THE GLASSFORD FAMILY PAINTING

Perhaps the most famous painting linking Glasgow's wealthy merchant class to their colonial endeavours, the Glassford family painting (originally painted by Archibald McLauchlan between 1764–6), has been the recipient of a certain amount of unwarranted controversy.⁶² The uncovering of a black enslaved servant in the left hand of the image, obscured by years of grime, caused some to claim that it had intentionally been covered, although it is far more likely this was a result of normal deterioration.⁶³ The painting also includes coded messages flaunting the family's overseas holdings (including tobacco plantations in Virginia and Maryland) and purchasing power, such as a bowl of exotic fruit and a parrot. However, the eldest daughter, Jean, is the focus of this discussion because of her playing of a musical instrument in the scene.



Figure 1 Jean Glassford, with her father to the left, and a black servant just visible at the left edge of the image (Image: Glasgow Museums).

Jean stands to the right of her father, playing an instrument that is identifiable as an English guittar.⁶⁴ This instrument was just coming into fashion at the time of painting, and was already known in Scotland, with advertisements for the instruments themselves, tutors, and music

62 An image of the painting can be seen here <http://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=1177;type=101>. The reproduction in Figure 1 is thanks to Glasgow Museums licensing the work under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

63 Tom Devine, 'The Glassford Portrait', *How Glasgow Flourished*, 2016, <https://howglasgowflourished.wordpress.com/2016/09/28/the-glassford-portrait/>, accessed 13 January 2022; Anthony Lewis, 'John Glassford's Family Portrait', *Legacies of Slavery in Glasgow Museums and Collections*, 2018, <https://glasgowmuseums.slavery.co.uk/2018/08/14/john-glassfords-family-portrait/>, accessed 13 January 2022.

64 This instrument will be referred to throughout this article as a 'guittar', both in order to differentiate it from the more common guitar, to which it bears only a partial relation to, and to follow the common spelling of the instrument's name during this time. For a history of the instrument, see Philip Coggin, "'This Easy and Agreeable Instrument": A History of the English Guittar', *Early Music*, 15 (1987), 204–18. Previous literature on the painting have identified this instrument as a lute, however this would be rather anachronistic given the date of the painting; furthermore, the instrument would be bulging away from Jean more than it does, and would be slightly larger, if it were a lute.

books all appearing in newspapers.⁶⁵ The instrument also enjoyed great popularity further afield, in both America and India, partly due to its utility for solo performance, a boon for women whose husbands were away working.⁶⁶

Jean's guittar subtly points out the window, past the parrot to the large garden of their estate, viewable perhaps as a stand-in for the family's plantations in America, all of which function as an advertisement for her eligibility for a suitor. This guittar is another example of the family's wealth – not just in monetary terms that allowed them to import exotic fruits and animals – but in terms of cultural capital. Jean has been clearly raised and tutored to be the daughter of a wealthy man, and musical skill was part of the expected skillset of a wealthy young lady.⁶⁷ Her training on this instrument would have been funded by her father's colonial wealth, as was much else of her life. Whilst her position here is a relatively passive one, receiving the benefits of her father's colonial investments rather than actively participating in the family business, her training still stands as a testament to the importance of such money in the musical cultures of Scottish families.

The marriage of Jean, as the eldest of the Glassford children, would have been of great importance to the continuation of the family business.⁶⁸ Her position here, as a young musical woman with the wealth of her father's colonial investments behind her, is a powerful one. Her marriage to the Glasgow merchant James Gordon on 18 August 1768, would have been aided, even if only slightly, by her proficiency on a musical instrument.⁶⁹ James Gordon was another West India merchant, an investor in John Glassford and Co. and Glassford, Gordon and Co., along with other companies, tobacco and otherwise.⁷⁰ By this marriage, the family continued its entanglements in colonial trades. The Glassford painting stands as another testament to the cleansing of colonial wealth by its re-investment into cultural activities such as music.

ELIZABETH ROSS

Elizabeth Jane Ross's biographical details are well-documented in an edition of the important music manuscript she left in the library of Raasay House, where she was raised by her uncle James MacLeod, the laird of Raasay.⁷¹ Her father had served in the EIC, and it was to India that Ross returned, having spent the early years of her childhood there. Here, she and her sister had one primary objective – the finding of suitable husbands. With her match to the baronet Charles D'Oyly, they settled in Patna, around whom a circle of artistic creativity flourished.

Of particular interest, however, is that during her time in India, Ross had a set of bagpipes made by a local craftsman, as a gift to the piper John MacKay, who had served her uncle.⁷² MacKay was likely the source of some of the material in her music manuscript, and Ross reportedly worked hard to be able to play these pipe pieces on the piano.⁷³ Her gift has two interesting

65 Panagiotis Pouloupoulos, "'Wha Sweetly Tune the Scottish Lyre': A Guittar by Rauche & Hoffmann and Its Connection to Robert Burns", *Galpin Society*, 67 (2014), 161–2.

66 Art Schrader, 'Guittars and Guitars: A Note on a Musical Fashion', *The American Music Research Center Journal*, 11 (2001), 6–11; Ian Woodfield, *Music of the Raj: A Social and Economic History of Music in Late Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Indian Society* (Oxford, 2000), 90, 121.

67 McAulay, 'Strathspeys, Reels, and Instrumental Airs: A National Product', 181–2; Ford, *The Flute in Scotland from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, 47–9, 54–5.

68 The importance of marriage for Scottish merchant families is highlighted in Stephen Mullen, 'The Great Glasgow West India House of John Campbell, Senior & Co.', in Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*, 127–8.

69 'John Glassford – Tobacco Lord (1715–1783) Part 1.', *Glasgow's Benefactors*, 2018, <https://glasgowbenefactors.com/2018/09/06/john-glassford-tobacco-lord-1715-1784-part-1/>, accessed 13 January 2022.

70 T. M. Devine, 'An Eighteenth-Century Business Élite: Glasgow-West India Merchants, c. 1750–1815', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 57 (1978), 60; Rebecca Quinton, 'Glasgow Merchants' Investment in Purple', *Legacies of Slavery in Glasgow Museums and Collections*, 2019, <https://glasgowmuseumsslavery.co.uk/2019/12/03/glasgow-merchants-investment-in-purple/>, accessed 13 January 2022.

71 This is the first known manuscript of piping music in staff notation. Peter Cooke, Morag MacLeod, and Colm Ó Baoill (eds), *Original Highland Airs Collected at Raasay in 1812 by ELIZABETH JANE ROSS*, Editions of Early Scottish Music, VII (Glasgow, 2016), 11–13, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/cultural-heritage-collections/school-scottish-studies-archives/archive-pubs/eliza-ross-manuscript>.

72 *Ibid.*, 12.

73 *Ibid.*, 12, 14.

implications: first, that Highland bagpipe making was a skill that could be found in India, with craftsmen working to a standard that would be acceptable to a highly capable player such as MacKay.⁷⁴ Second, that colonial wealth (her husband worked for the EIC) could still impact the musical culture of her home, with patronage and friendship being expressed in Scottish terms, despite the two people being halfway around the world from each other.⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

These Scottish music publications and other interactions shows music not necessarily as a directly related field to slavery, such as the production of tobacco, sugar, cotton, and rum, but rather as a cultural by-product of a nation flush with imperial money. The increase in Scottish musical publications is by no means just down to the prevalence of slavery and violently extractive economic policies throughout the British Empire. The increasing availability of musical printing throughout Europe, the cheapening of paper, the rise of the middle class and other factors will have played their part too. However, these other factors likely have their own roots in colonialism, too. It will never be possible to determine the full influence of slavery and coloniality-derived wealth on Scottish music, but the evidence presented here shows that we should consider Scottish music as a cultural artefact that is tinted, at the very least, by colonialism.

The financing of musical activities allowed colonial wealth to be transformed into more societally acceptable forms, thereby increasing the cultural capital of those laundering their fortunes.⁷⁶ In 1975, George Shepperson wrote

I hope that we shall not forget that there are elements associated with the Atlantic slave trade – and, indeed, with its ramifications into other trades and industry in eastward and other directions – which cannot at the moment – and probably never will – be measured. I refer to its effects on white culture.⁷⁷

Whilst we may never be able to truly ‘measure’ the impact colonial wealth had on music, Scottish or otherwise, we can now begin to acknowledge the moments more deeply where it becomes clear that Scottish music is a cultural artefact of colonialism.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Andrew Bull  orcid.org/0000-0002-6096-8844
Independent Researcher, UK

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Bull, A. 2023. The British Empire in late Eighteenth- and early Nineteenth-Century Scottish Music: Early Observations. *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 11(1): 7, 1–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57132/jiss.214>

Submitted: 20 January 2022

Accepted: 17 May 2023

Published: 27 July 2023

COPYRIGHT:

© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Aberdeen University Press.

⁷⁴ The continuing use of bagpipes within Indian army regiments to the present day is a stark reminder of the colonial impact Scottish music has had on the world. We know that bagpipes were brought over in the eighteenth century; they are listed in the possession of one Charles Connell in 1785, in the Bengal Inventories. See Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 245.

⁷⁵ The bard Duncan Ban MacIntyre penned a verse that shows West Indies involvement in pipe-making as well: ‘Proud Pipe of polished joints and bone-mounted tops/Of hardwood that comes from Jamaica, the best that grows there’. Quoted in Iain MacDonald, *I Piped, That She Might Dance* (Charleston, 2021), 49.

⁷⁶ MacKinnon and Mackillop, ‘Plantation Slavery and Landownership’, 11–12; Melville, ‘Facing Our Past’, 6.

⁷⁷ Shepperson, ‘Comment’, 106.