

## **The lives of Scottish Book traders, 1500 to 1800**

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From the arrival of the printed book in Scotland in the late fifteenth century, the advent of the press in 1508 and to the great flowering of print culture in the Scottish Enlightenment, the progress in Scottish intellectual culture depended on a diverse band of book merchants and book makers. This group, varied in wealth, capacity for inventiveness, political and religious beliefs and links with the establishment, nevertheless had much in common. Not least of these common bonds was the requirement to ply their trade in the same 'national crisis' of Scotland's early modern period. From Flodden in 1513 to Culloden in 1745 warfare, religious revolution, civil war and economic collapse battered Scottish society. These political and religious upheavals presented a rigorous challenge for the Scottish printer and book trader before the outstanding successes of the Scottish Enlightenment. After all, print merely precipitated and reflected the qualities of national history. But even before the Enlightenment we should marvel at the success and resilience of Scottish print culture and its mediators.<sup>1</sup>

Printing itself arrived in Scotland in 1507-8, a few decades after England but before Russia and some of Scandinavia. Walter Chepman (c.1473-c.1528) and Andrew Myllar (fl.1503-8) began printing in Edinburgh in 1508 under a license provided by James IV. Nothing survives of their press after 1510 and though there are a few significant productions from a scattering of other presses, notable by Thomas Davidson (fl. 1532-42) (see figure 1 below), printing was not firmly established in Edinburgh until after 1560. As print slowly expanded in the capital, before some faster growth in the early seventeenth century, presses were established in Aberdeen (1622) and Glasgow (1638).<sup>2</sup> Slow economic growth and slow local patronage explain this tardiness outside Edinburgh, there being no government or trade restrictions on press proliferation. In its first century the small Aberdeen press proved remarkably innovative in music publishing and almanac printing, but the eighteenth century also saw the coming of age for the Glasgow press which looked to supply the demand of the Americas and Ireland. Glasgow also supplied

Europe and in particular the press of Robert and Andrew Foulis (fl.1746-76) became famous throughout the Continent for quality editions of Latin and Greek classics.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the 'golden age' of the Enlightenment was not merely an Edinburgh event and the press throughout Scotland played its part. Nonetheless, although printing spread out to other burghs during the eighteenth century, the domestic press was never able to meet domestic demand. For this reason booksellers were more important mediators than printers to the development of Scottish print culture before 1800.

Who were these mediators, these early modern book traders of Scotland? They regarded themselves variously as book merchants, stationers, printers, booksellers and bookbinders. Essentially, however, there were two types of book trader: the printer who may also have been a bookseller, and the bookseller who may also have been a bookbinder. The only complete specialists were some printers. In Scotland the term 'stationer' was always synonymous with bookseller until the mid-eighteenth century when it began to take on its modern meaning. In fact it was one of the quirks of the Scottish trade that from the 1670s to 1690s 'stationer' became a fashionable label. This fashion reflects the self-conscious and polite intellectualism that developed in the Restoration period and supports Houston and Allen's views on the early foundations of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>4</sup>

The detailed accumulation of references from testaments, inventories, wills, council registers and burgess and apprentice rolls, supplemented with bibliographical and biographical data, has enabled estimates of the numbers of book traders active in Scotland between 1500 and c1750.<sup>5</sup> The numbers of traders in the sixteenth century was small but growing, rising from half a dozen throughout the century to over 20 in the 1580s and 1590s, with most expansion being in the number of booksellers rather than the more expensive business of printing. The first period of take off in numbers was the 1630s and 1640s where the printing of scripture and religious controversy fueled trade expansion. Further dramatic increases in numbers took place after the Cromwellian period, but growth was by no means constant. Following the Restoration boom from the late 1660s to 1680s, the number of Scottish printers more than doubled from 20 to 45,

while over the same period the number of booksellers rose from about 40 to 70. The number of printers was slight before the 1650s but bookselling, whether by printers or specialist vendors of books, was obviously well established. The 1650s represented an interesting watershed. While this was a period of contraction in the book trade of Edinburgh, we see from the 1650s the expansion of bookselling into the corners of the kingdom. In as much as there was a Cromwellian recession it was based in the capital as far as the book trade was concerned. New booksellers were to be found in many burghs reaching a high-point in the 1670s. They were operating in the likes of St. Andrews and Perth, and for the first time appear in Dundee, Ayr, Dumfries, Lanark and Kilmarnock, and even the northerly outposts of Banff and Forres. The spread of domestic bookselling, along with slowly increasing literacy, was the great catalyst for the demand side of the book trade of Scotland when the domestic press could not meet the needs of the Scottish reader. This all sounds very promising from a commercial point of view, and yet the activity figures show that the recession of the 1690s hit the book trade throughout Scotland and in both printing and bookselling, even though a recovery set in after the union of 1707.

These figures confirm that the scale of the Scottish book trade was greater than pessimists would have us believe. In fact in total over 200 printers and press partnerships and 500 booksellers and bookbinders were active from 1500 to 1730.<sup>6</sup> The Scottish book trade of 1707 was about four times the size it was in 1603, while surviving editions recorded by Aldis in his pre-1700 catalogue show press output to have increased by perhaps eight times, a factor created by the poor survival rate of earlier productions but also resulting from increased productivity.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, before the late eighteenth century the geographical spread of booksellers and book makers differed: the former increasingly spread throughout the country, the latter mostly focused on the printing burghs of Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow.

Were these book traders book specialists? In fact many were merchants of other goods and products. Specialist or 'permanent' booksellers did not emerge until the late sixteenth century, where in Edinburgh the likes of Robert Gourlaw (fl.1580s) and Andro Hart

(fl.1587-1622), later a major printer, were very active.<sup>8</sup> However, many were related to other trades. The Edinburgh bookseller Edward Cathkin (fl.1585-1601) was formerly a skinner, a link to the related trade of bookbinding, and so also was another Edinburgh bookseller Richard Lawson (fl.1603-22). Lawson clearly saw the commercial prospects of bookselling, as did Cathkin's brother James (fl.1601-22) who took over from Edward after the latter's death in 1601. Specialisation in specific genre appeared in Edinburgh from the 1630s trade expansion, as seen with Andrew Wilson (fl.1634-54) and John Vallange (fl. 1678-1712), school and law book specialists respectively.

Booksellers from the smaller burghs and towns were more likely to diversify. In Perth the bookseller Andrew Watt (fl. 1678-85) was also a barber and the other Perth booksellers James and Patrick Black (fl.1680-90s) were glaziers. The Kelso bookbinder Robert Cathcart (fl.1694) sold medicines as well as books. Even in the eighteenth century trade diversity was a feature. The Glasgow bookseller John Greig (fl.1730-41) was also a saddler. The testament of the Aberdeen printer and bookseller James Nicol (fl.1710-49) reveals a large quantity of haberdashery, cloth and household goods indicative of a general store. Nicol's widow auctioned his book stock in 1749/50, and auctioneering also became associated with some book traders, including the Edinburgh booksellers John Tennant (fl.1690-1718), David Freebairn (fl.1689-1714) and James Davidson (fl.1719-40), and the Aberdeen bookseller David Angus (fl.1739-48). Book stock auctions, mostly in the capital, became common from the 1690s.<sup>9</sup>

Another eighteenth century diversification was in paper making or paper sales, but only for the most wealthy of book traders. Paper making, a natural cousin of book making, took time to develop as a viable industry in Scotland. Indeed, Scottish paper making was primitive until the 1690s, even though Scotland's first paper mill, located at Dalry in Edinburgh, was set up in 1590 by Mungo and Gideon Russell.<sup>10</sup> Foreign labour and expertise became essential. After the Restoration Scotland was indebted to the German Peter Breusch (Bruce), who became a printer as well as paper-maker, and to Frenchmen like Nicolas Dupin who, in 1694-5, brought financial and practical expertise to the establishment of the Society of the White-Writing and Printing Paper Manufactory.<sup>11</sup> The

granting of a charter to this joint stock company was a deliberate attempt by the government to put domestic paper production on an economically viable and qualitative footing. Nonetheless, most Scottish press papers still had to be imported. In spite of these unpromising circumstances some printers entered into paper making in the early eighteenth century, including the wealthy royal printer Agnes Campbell (fl.1676-1716), who in 1709 acquired land from Sir John Clerk of Penicuik and there established the Valleyfield Mill on Esk water. Five years after her death in 1716 the mill, now run by her daughter, was in financial trouble, a clear sign of the risks in such enterprises.<sup>12</sup> A more common diversity was paper wholesaling where some larger printers held stock to supply smaller and provincial presses. The Edinburgh printers John Moncur (fl.1707-29) and Gavin Hamilton (fl.1730-64) both acted as paper wholesalers, though they also became partners in various paper mill schemes.

These book traders had to be educated to a degree, literacy being a requirement, even though the level of learning ranged from the likes of Henry Charteris (fl.1568-99), the most important printer and bookseller of the sixteenth century and publisher of George Buchanan, down to the simple necessities for the humble press journeyman.<sup>13</sup> Some book traders were very proactive over education and the Foulis brothers in Glasgow went as far as establishing an academy of fine arts within Glasgow university in 1753, though it had to close in 1776.<sup>14</sup> Robert Foulis began his working life as an apprentice barber, although individuals usually entered the book trade either through family ties or through apprenticeships. The apprenticeship system was maintained by the burghs at a level beneath their control over burgess and guild membership. Both booksellers and printers practiced the system, mostly over seven or five years. Although the general relaxation in the use of apprenticeships was a feature of the freeing-up of trade in the Post-Restoration period, the apprenticeship system was surprisingly resilient. When, in 1725, the Stirling merchant guild set out new and strict rules for apprenticeships, they were reflecting the approach of most burghs.<sup>15</sup> Some of the book trade apprentices were the sons of baxters, shoemakers, tailors, maltmen and gardeners, but many came from educated families (see table). The apprentice rolls do not always site father's occupations, and some fathers are merely described as indwellers or appear to be lairds, but the Edinburgh rolls from 1583

to 1800 show at least twenty sons of ministers apprenticed to the book trade, including successful individuals such as the Edinburgh printer John Wreittoun (apprenticed 1609) and Edinburgh bookseller Alexander Ogstoun (apprenticed 1651). Strangely the last minister's son in the roll is George Meikle, apprentice in 1748 to Gideon Crawford bookseller of Edinburgh, and son of Alexander, minister of Langholm. Sons of clergy seem by 1750 to have regarded a life in trade as below their station. However, the book trade continued to attract the educated. The second largest identifiable occupation group are the sons of writers, and these sons of notaries and clerks continued to be attracted by a career in the book trade throughout the eighteenth century, a century in which the sons of schoolmasters and army officers also joined the world of books.<sup>16</sup>

Although the burgh magistrates controlled trade matters, sometimes the privy council and court of session had to step in to regulate trade apprenticeships. Agnes Campbell used the courts and council to restrict the activities of her Edinburgh apprentices. In 1680 Patrick Ramsay and John Reid, senior, were prevented by Campbell, via the privy council, from setting up their own press as they had not completed their full apprenticeships. James Watson, the younger, (fl.1695-1722) used the court of session in 1714 to prevent the premature departure of two apprentices. Although in 1633 the young bookbinder David Robeson was supported by the privy council, and freed from forced servitude with the bookbinder Monases Vautrollier, it must have seemed to the apprentices of early modern Scotland that very little 'freeing-up' was taking place.<sup>17</sup>

Entering the trade as part of the family business was very common and various family dynasties existed from the 1590s onwards. For example, in Edinburgh Henry Charteris was succeeded in 1599 by his son Robert (fl.1599-1610); in Glasgow the burgh printer Robert Sanders (fl.1661-94) was succeeded in 1694 by his own son Robert (fl.1695-1730), the younger, and in Aberdeen the printer/bookseller John Forbes (fl.1650-75) was succeeded in 1675 by his son John (fl.1662-1704), the younger, though in this case the son printed for a period while the father sold books and edited and reissued his famous musical collection *Cantus, songs and fancies*, first published in 1662. Sometimes sons were sent elsewhere to learn the trade as when in 1667 William Kerr, the Aberdeen

journeyman printer, sent his son Andrew to be apprenticed to Joseph Storie, printer in Edinburgh. We have no knowledge of a connection between William Kerr and Storie, but contact by marriage, time served in apprenticeship or business partnership would be typical linkages across the trade as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

The Edinburgh presbyterian book trade network that existed from the 1580s to the 1640s provides us with the best illustration of that combination of business and personal relationships. This was a group of men and women committed to trade yet also to strongly felt religious beliefs. This network can be traced from the clerical subscription crisis of 1584-5, when there was controversy over the imposition of an oath of obedience to the so called 'Black Acts' (1584) sustaining crown supremacy over the church, to the covenanting revolution of 1638-39.<sup>19</sup> The key participants in this line were Andro Hart (fl.1587-1621), the most wealthy and most significant bookseller and printer/publisher before the Restoration, and his third wife Janet Kene. However, the first book traders to appear in the nonconformity movement were the brothers Edward and James Cathkin from the 1580s. These 'Melvillians', presbyterian followers of the divine Andrew Melville, were banished in the summer of 1584 for refusing to subscribe to James VI's episcopalian policies. Also both, along with Hart, were arrested in the Edinburgh presbyterian riots of December 1596. It was after these riots that King James cowed the Edinburgh town council into giving up presbyterian clergy and its own overt opposition following his threat to move the capital elsewhere. But King James's victory over Edinburgh prebyterianism, and his re-emphasis on the importance of bishops, did not end the activities of the nonconformist clergy and their associated printers. The historian David Calderwood (1575-1651) became a champion of presbyterianism and employed presses at home and abroad, especially out of Leiden and Amsterdam, from whose presses over a dozen of his presbyterian tracts were produced from 1619 to 1624. In Scotland in June 1619 there was a detailed investigation into the printing and distribution of Calderwood's anonymously published *Perth Assembly*, a tract which riled against the Five Articles of Perth, the new and quasi-Anglican ritual forced through the general assembly that met in Perth in 1618. The presbyterian book traders of Edinburgh were the prime suspects and the houses and booths of Hart and Richard Lawson, the Edinburgh

bookseller, were searched and ransacked, and both were arrested. The bookseller James Cathkin, happening to be in London, was interrogated by the king himself. In the end, for lack of evidence, little action was taken against these merchants, but undoubtedly the presbyterian network had distributed Calderwood's works and much else of a presbyterian hue.<sup>20</sup>

These book traders were connected by religion and ink, yet the linkages provided by their wives was of special significance. After James Cathkin died in 1631, his wife Janet Mayne, sister-in-law to Richard Lawson, continued bookselling until her death in 1639. Janet Kene (fl.1621-41), Hart's widow, with the help of her sons actively maintained her husband's press until it passed to James Bryson in 1639. On her death her bookshop fell into the hands of John Threipland who had been apprenticed to and worked for James Cathkin. In addition, Janet's sister Margaret Kene married the printer John Wreittoun who had been operating a press from at least 1624. This extensive and expanding range of book trade and nonconformist connections provided the print lubrication for dissent leading up to the revolution of 1638/9. Furthermore, when the covenanting government required to justify its policies and actions to the parliament of England and the wider world, it turned to the presses of Bryson (see figure 2) and Wreittoun, along with, from 1638 to 1640, a new flood of tracts imported from the presses of Amsterdam and Leiden. Therefore, this distinct book trading community was held together by the five families, Hart, Cathkin, Bryson, Kene and Mayne. Two sets of sisters, Mayne and Kene, straddled the bookselling and printing branches of Edinburgh book commerce. In political terms they also bridged the gap between the old Melvillian religious nonconformity and the robust declarations of the National Covenant. This coincidence of political and social connections went beyond mere links arising from normal trade intermarriage, yet nonetheless underscores the character of book trade networks in the early modern period.<sup>21</sup>

Marriages were not necessarily especially political and, no different from other trades in the social mixture of peers and fellow craftsmen, marriages were frequently within trade. For example, Elizabeth Brown, daughter of the Edinburgh printer, bookseller, bailie and

council treasurer Thomas Brown (c.1658-1702), married the Edinburgh law bookseller John Vallange. In addition, Thomas Brown's first wife was Marian Calderwood, a relative of the stationer John Calderwood (fl. 1676-82), and Brown himself entered into a series of deeds and contracts with his son-in-law and Agnes Campbell in the 1680s and 1690s. Also, Campbell's eldest daughter Issobel married the Edinburgh bookseller William Cunningham in 1676. In a common act in the book trade, the following year Issobel facilitated her husband's elevation to a burghess of Edinburgh 'by right of his spouse Issobel, daughter to umquhyle [late] Andrew Anderson'.<sup>22</sup> These family networks were complex and interwoven, and the dowry of a 'burghess ticket', allowing an individual to trade as a burghess, was an added attraction to prospective husbands.

The contribution of wives, daughters and especially widows to the Scottish early modern book trade has only recently received much needed attention.<sup>23</sup> There are two major figures. Janet Kene, as we have already noted, continued Andro Hart's press, and was a formidable operator in her own right. It was she and not the king's printer who was chosen by the magistrates of Edinburgh to produce the special edition of poems *Escodia Musarum Edinensium in Carole* presented to Charles I to commemorate his coronation visit in 1633, and her appeal to the lords of exchequer in 1632, against the license as Scotland's royal printer being granted to the Englishman Robert Young and not a Scot, was respectfully listened to if not successful.<sup>24</sup> Agnes Campbell would become not only royal printer but early modern Scotland's most wealthy female merchant in any trade not having inherited significant wealth. Her husband Andrew Anderson's legacy was his patent as royal printer and not a strong financial position – he was in debt to the tune of nearly £7,500 at his death in 1676. Campbell went on to develop a large trading network supplying book stock, paper and capital to the printers and booksellers of Glasgow, Aberdeen, Belfast, Londonderry and Newcastle and trading extensively with the London trade. At her death she had accumulated a fortune of £78,000 scots (wealthy in English as well as Scottish terms) and operated a print shop with many presses and apprentices. She became notoriously litigious in defence of her privileges and patent.<sup>25</sup> She also fought a bitter war of words and printed slanders against her trade enemy James Watson, the younger, author of the first print history published in the British Isles *A History of the Art*

*of Printing* (1713). Eventually this dispute reached the court of session in the case *Watson, the younger, v Freebairn, Basket and Campbell* (1713-18) concerning the validity of co-partnerships over the gift of king's printer.<sup>26</sup> However, as women in the book trade the high-profile Kene and Campbell are more representative than we might think.

It would be wrong to think that women were merely a cheap, 'informal' labour force in Scotland's book or print shops. From 1600 to 1750 perhaps up to thirty Scottish women were professional book traders. Women printers traded in the names of fathers, husbands and sons, although some booksellers did so under their own names.<sup>27</sup> Before 1600, very few are known to have actively joined the family businesses but post-1600 the list is dominated by widows, with some exceptions such as the daughters of the bookseller James Harrower (fl.1638-51), and Janet Hunter (sometimes Mrs Brown) (fl.1722-35), a co-printer with a number of partnerships of Glasgow printers in the 1730s who, along with the booksellers Martha Stevenson (fl.1690-1732), Anne Edmonstoun (fl.1733-44) and Jean Smith (fl.1722-31), traded before widowhood. Those widows or relatives who, after their husbands' deaths, kept printing and bookselling businesses turning over for a short period before sale by auction, before sons coming of age or until a suitable second marriage was agreed, make up an expanding list of book trade 'professionals'. Second marriages were frequently sought to carry on the family business and to transfer assets into competent hands for the greater benefit of the family. For example, Beatrix Campbell, widow of the bookseller and printer Archibald Hislop (fl.1670-78) and sister to Agnes Campbell, maintained her husband's bookselling business for at least twelve months following his death and until her marriage in 1679 to the 'wryter', turned stationer Robert Currie. Issobel Haring (Herron), widow of the printer Robert Bryson (fl.1637-45) acted in a similar manner to Beatrix Campbell before her second and judicious marriage to the printer Gideon Lithgow. Issobel printed as the 'Heirs of Robert Bryson' in 1646. These women together represent perhaps ten per cent of Scotland's identifiable book traders in the early modern period. Interestingly, the numbers of these participants, full-time and part-time, major or minor, suggests women book traders were more common in Scotland than in England. This activity is highlighted by the

independent Margaret Reid (fl.1712-20), daughter of the Edinburgh printer John Reid, senior (fl.1680-1712). After the death of her father in August 1712, Margaret took over the use of some of her father's type, acquired the printing office of the deceased Andrew Symson and then set up on her own. This appears to be the only example of a Scottish woman setting up a printing press without the 'partnership' of a male, dead or alive, and accounts no doubt for the anonymity of her printings. The last we know of her printing activity is a dispute with the famous poet and bookseller Allan Ramsay (1686-1758). Her printing of one of his poems without permission led him to mock her in his 'Elegy on Lucky Read'. However, in spite of such highlights, female involvement declined in the second half of the eighteenth century as the onset of joint stock companies and business partnerships, along with new social attitudes about correct female behaviour, saw women leave the stage. Before then the daughters of book men came with added value: useful book trade experience.

Levels of profit from the business of books and the value of estates passed on to widows fluctuated enormously. An analysis of nearly 100 surviving notorial testaments and inventories of printers and booksellers from 1577 to 1766, coming from the 'traditional' book burghs of Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow as well as the smaller towns of Perth, Lanark and Dumfries, confirms an interesting and varied picture. There were a few 'super rich', such as Andro Hart (d.1621) and Agnes Carmbell (d.1716) with estates of £20,000 and £78,000 scots respectively. However, Scotland's wealthy book merchants were not wealthy individuals in English terms. Hart, and other Scottish printers such as Robert Bryson (d.1642) and James Watson, the younger (d.1722) would be placed in the lower reaches of the middling wealthy, perhaps £1,000 to £5,000 sterling (using £12 scots to £1 sterling). Only the royal printer Agnes Campbell would fall into the £5,000 to £10,000 sterling band for substantial London merchants. Earlier merchants, and in particular the great vernacular publisher Henry Charteris (d.1599, estate worth £7,000), were also of substantial means before the last formal devaluation of the pound scots in 1601. Charteris's estate located him amongst his contemporary merchant elite, while his status as a bailie of Edinburgh placed him above some of greater wealth. Having both become printers after earlier careers as booksellers and commissioners of print, the careers of

Charteris and Hart show that printing was the more profitable career path. Two of Scotland's most successful specialist booksellers, the Edinburgh pair Andrew Wilson (d.1654, estate worth £15,000), and John Vallange (d.1712, estate worth £12,500), were some way behind major individuals who focused more on printing. The phenomenon of wealthy copyholding booksellers did not develop in the prominent way it did in England.<sup>28</sup> There it was encouraged by the patenting system managed by the Stationers' Company of London, the merchant guild that tightly controlled the English press from its Elizabethan foundation.<sup>29</sup>

The book trade was not merely the preserve of the most wealthy. Excluding the large estate of Agnes Campbell, the surviving testaments reveal an average estate value of £2,500 scots. Including Campbell, less than one in ten had estates of over £10,000, a third had estates of very small value, but a large middling group existed, consisting of about 13 per cent, with between £2,500 and £5,000 stock and personal wealth. A great number of book traders within and without of Edinburgh, over a third of the total, had estates under £500 in value. The wealth of book traders, craftsmen or merchants, did not in fact differ greatly from other trades, such as the wealth of apothecaries and surgeons as revealed in MacMillan's study. However, a higher incidence of bankruptcy is found in the book trade, at a level of almost double that of craftsmen as a whole. At death over one in ten book traders were bankrupt, and there is a clear impression that a considerable sector of the book trade was engaged in very marginal activity with small binders and occasional vendors making very little money indeed. Also, debt fell especially heavily on the poorest third (with estates valued up to £500), and over half of these poorest book traders were in debt, while close to half of the same group were owed money by customers and smaller suppliers. The middling wealthy (£2,500 to £5,000) were more likely to be creditors themselves while the more wealthy book merchants, with estates over £5,000, were as inclined to be in debt as the middling group but were much less likely to be victims of customer bad debt. These aspects of indebtedness confirm the grim financial position of the poorest sector, often in debt but having difficulty retrieving money owed to them, the consignment trading methods of the larger merchants and their ability to retrieve debts, and also the necessity of middling booksellers to allow credit to customers. That so much

of the book trade survived on shaky credit explains the trade's fragility during the economic recessions of the 1650s and 1690s and before the more sure nationwide growth from the 1730s.<sup>30</sup>

Bankruptcy could have grim repercussions for some desperate book vendors. The town councils did what they could to help the needy in such cases, but the lack of guildry for booksellers or printers, even in Edinburgh, reduced the prospects for group assistance. Edinburgh's magistrates intervened on various occasions, and in 1597 alms were given to the poor Edinburgh bookseller James Brown and in 1649 a sum of 200 merks (£135) was provided for the destitute printer William Marshall, a fall indeed for a former apprentice to Andro Hart. The tides of political fortune had a direct impact on the welfare of printers as the Edinburgh presbyterian printer James Glen would discover in the 1680s. In November 1687 Glen was arrested for printing *The Root of Romish Rites*, an anti-Catholic pamphlet offensive to James VII. Although Glen gave a spirited defence, asking provocatively if he could now sell the Bible as it was patently 'anti-papist', he was ruined by the case. However, after the revolution of 1688/9 Edinburgh town council, in view of Glen's great poverty, awarded him a small pension.<sup>31</sup> Yet desperation could take on levels beyond the reach of any authority, and in the winter of 1674 the bankrupt Edinburgh bookseller John Mason committed suicide by drowning himself. Days later Mason's Scottish, English and Dutch creditors coldly lodged their rights with the privy seal in Edinburgh.<sup>32</sup>

The authorities provided financial assistance but also policed book traders in a range of other areas. The bailie courts, especially that of Edinburgh, resolved small level debt disputes between printers and booksellers. Occasionally the magistrates also imposed sanctions for unacceptable personal behaviour. In 1639 Aberdeen's first printer Edward Raban (fl.1622-50) and his wife were imprisoned for a drunken brawl with their neighbours, and in 1663 the Edinburgh bookseller Robert Lindsay (fl.1655-63) was arrested for keeping a 'baudie house'. Book traders appeared in their share of petty offence cases. In 1721 Edinburgh bailie court heard the extraordinary case of an assault on the famous grammarian and printer Thomas Ruddiman (fl.1712-57) by James

Freebairn, brother of the Jacobite printer, and friend and publisher of Ruddiman, Robert Freebairn (fl.1701-47) (see figure 3). The cause of the dispute is not clear though it was unlikely to be politics given the Jacobite sympathies of both families.<sup>33</sup>

From the governments point of view censorship mattered more than disputes over debt, and this had been the case from the banning of the works of Martin Luther in the 1530s to the arrest for sedition of the republican, Edinburgh bookseller Alexander Irvine in 1798.<sup>34</sup> Before 1707 a system of licensing existed yet it was loosely policed to the point where a licence was only sought where a product was controversial though legal, or worthy of copyright protection. No licences were sought for seditious material, of course. We might expect censorship to increase as press output grew though it was not so. After a brief flurry in the 1620s a definite increase in book proscription occurred from the 1660s, followed by particular peaks in the 1680s and the first decade of the eighteenth century. The years 1680 to 1690, a period of anti-covenanting measures and of James VII's unconvincing authoritarianism, and 1700 to 1705, years of anxiety over the succession with the death of William and James VII, were the busiest years for banning books. As the supply of books expanded, both imported and home produced, so the early notions of licensing the entire press were replaced by a targeted effort at printings dealing with specific offensive topics. This produced at the end of the seventeenth century a more targeted government effort. Indeed, censorship under William and Mary and Queen Anne was the most comprehensive of the early modern period, even though by now punishments were less severe. For book merchants sentences which impeded the ability to trade hit hard at the commerce that supported themselves and their families. The closure of the booth of the bookseller John Calderwood in 1680 and the shutting of the press of John Reid in 1691 were dramatic examples.<sup>35</sup> All stock was confiscated. However, the fact that not a single printer was executed for illegal printing from the arrival the press in 1508 shows that the authorities were not excessive in their zeal. It is true, nonetheless, that a few authors paid the ultimate price.

The privy council and court of session also became involved in other aspects of trade regulation, although sometimes trade and family disputes came together. Two of the main

book cases before the court of session from the 1670s to early eighteenth century exhibited that mixture of commercial and family crisis. The case *The Heirs of Hislop v Robert Currie and Agnes Campbell* (1678-90) arose after the Hislop press was, according to James Watson, sold off to John Cairns on Hislop's death. Thereafter the Hislop children and what had been a large family bookselling business went on to suffer hereditary injustice and protracted litigation. Hislop's widow Beatrix Campbell married Currie, a writer, but she died soon afterwards, and the case was brought against Currie for failing to manage the bookselling business in the interests of his two young step-children, and against Agnes Campbell for failing to deliver a bond her sister Beatrix had passed to her for the benefit of these children. The whole affair dragged on until 1690 at great legal cost and there is a strong suggestion of collusion between step-father and aunt.<sup>36</sup> The case *Robert Sanders, the younger, v Bessie Corbett*, his mother (1694-1705) was also a family squabble where Robert Sanders, senior and younger appear to have fallen out over the implementation of a marriage contract the father agreed to not long before his death in 1694. Subsequently the son sued his own mother and sisters for disposing irresponsibly with some stock and print materials, and not handing over others. In addition, they had made alterations to the family home in way such as to reduce its value and his inheritance. The bitterness of the dispute is highlighted by the fact that not once did Robert refer to Corbett as his mother, and the dispute only ended with her death in 1705.<sup>37</sup>

If Scotland's book traders were occasionally disunited within their families they were also inclined to commercial wrangling. These disputes were carried out through both legal and illegal means. As early as 1509 the privy council upheld a complaint from the 'king's printer' Walter Chepman to prevent other merchants from illegally importing the Salisbury breviary. A century later in 1618 the council prosecuted the presbyterians Andro Hart, Richard Lawson and James Cathkin for breaching the right to print a catechism licensed to the episcopalian bookseller Gilbert Dick.<sup>38</sup> Until 1708 the Scottish privy council was the main copyright granting agency in Scotland and so it took seriously its duties to protect literary property. However, the legal and practical complexities over patents and licences increased markedly after the Restoration. Much of this arose from

the wide and unprecedented monopoly powers granted to the king's printer Andrew Anderson in 1671 and taken up by his widow Agnes Campbell in 1676. Extra-legal behaviour became a feature from 1671. In October of that year the Glasgow printing house of Robert Sanders, the elder, was raided and looted, and his workmen driven off by Anderson and his partners. Anderson claimed that Sanders was printing without authority, but the privy council ordered the immediate release of Sanders and his men, and that the case should be heard before the council. In the end, in spite of a petition by Sanders and other outraged printers attacking the Anderson monopoly, Anderson and his partners had their rights confirmed, even though the rights of other printers and booksellers to import bibles was asserted. In fact over the next decade the council gradually eroded Anderson's rights in favour of greater freedom of trade, although in 1681 Anderson's widow was still the most litigious of book merchants. In January of that year the privy council ordered the magistrates of Edinburgh to release from prison John Reid, senior, following his incarceration on Campbell's initiative. Again his 'crime' was apprenticeship absenteeism and although he was released the judgement of the lords of council was that he should return to toil at the widow's printing house. However, when two years later Campbell had Reid's premises searched without legal authority, accusing him of stealing her type, the council gave her a severe reprimand.<sup>39</sup>

Some printers could call on their burghs for commercial protection. An example of this is found in the copyright history of the Aberdeen almanac, first published by Edward Raban in 1623 and the most successful Scottish almanac of the seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup> In October 1667 the magistrates of Aberdeen responded to a petition from the burgh printer/bookseller John Forbes, the elder, protesting at the activities of the chapman Alexander Gray who had brought into Aberdeen 1000 copies of an 'alien' almanac, breaching the market for Forbes's own edition. The council upheld Forbes's complaint.<sup>41</sup> However, it was John Forbes, the younger, who, in the 1660s and 1670s, developed the reputation of the 'Aberdeen almanac' as the most prestigious edition in Scotland. The jealousy from Edinburgh was considerable. Andrew Anderson, having acquired his wide-ranging royal licence in 1671, went on to deliberately attack the printing rights of Forbes in early 1672 with a view to strangling Forbes's most valuable asset the

'Aberdeen almanac'. The threat of legal action by Anderson and his Edinburgh cartel had to be taken seriously by Forbes who knew that only a few weeks before Sanders' press in Glasgow had been ransacked. Anderson argued the same case, that Forbes had printed without permission, but he failed to take account of the strong views of Aberdeen town council who were outraged at this attack on their independence and right to license within their own environs. The magistrates were prepared to start a book trade war with Edinburgh, yet before Aberdeen took their case to the privy council, Anderson realised he had pressed matters too far, and in February 1672 he conceded Forbes's right to print under license of the town, universities and bishop of Aberdeen.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, such was the success of the 'Aberdeen almanac' that various pirated editions were subsequently produced in Glasgow and Edinburgh.<sup>43</sup> Whatever can be said about the early modern book trade of Scotland, it was not averse to illegal activity in search of profit, even at the wealthy end of the market.

Religious prejudice was a constant backdrop to the book trade before the 1720s and helped foster social cleavage. During the Marian Civil War (1567-73) the printer Robert Lekpreuik took the side of the King James and the Reformation, while the episcopalian Thomas Bassandyne printed for Mary, Queen of Scots and her party, though when peace was declared and their peripatetic presses settled in Edinburgh, the two men came to terms. During the reign of Charles I the Edinburgh trade was split between presbyterians led by Hart and episcopalians led by Gilbert Dick. Yet the book trade became a more serious focus for religious rivalry and illegal behaviour after the accession of James VII. Incidents of printers' premises being attacked resulted from a combination of hatred of foreign workers and fear of 'papists', the former relatively uncharacteristic in Scottish print history, the latter all too common. In 1684 the magistrates of Edinburgh closed the press of the Dutchman Jan Colmar and his partners. Colmar claimed that the bookseller Charles Lumsden and others had obtained a warrant from the magistrates of the burgh 'without any ordor or law or proces against the petitioner'. The privy council reversed the decision of the burgh magistrates in October 1685, and ordered all stock and materials to be returned to the Dutchmen, who unfortunately soon went bankrupt.<sup>44</sup> By February 1686 the Dutchmen's press had been bought by James Watson, senior, a Catholic printer and

father of the James Young we have already met. The Dutchmen were now employed by Watson, but a few days later they were assaulted at Watson's rented premises by a crowd of 50 or so rioters. The government believed that anti-Catholic elements in the capital were responsible. Only two weeks before, the home of Peter Bruce, the German and Catholic engineer, and future 'household printer' to the king, had been attacked by a crowd, even led by some soldiers of the burgh. In spite of a privy council investigation, Bruce's house was again under siege a few weeks later, and the printer John Reid, the younger, was accused of involvement.<sup>45</sup> The hopes of James VII and his government of maintaining good order in the book trade were hampered by the religious politicisation of all aspects of public and commercial life. This continued into the eighteenth century as the Edinburgh trade split into Hanoverians and Jacobites, though the number of committed, book trade Jacobites was few by the 1745 rebellion.<sup>46</sup>

The 'brotherhood' of the book trade was clearly not always cohesive and internal burgh commercial disputes often set one group of tradesmen against another. In a group action by the Edinburgh booksellers, a petition was put before the town council in December 1683 complaining of the bookselling of 'cramers' (stall salesmen) throughout the city, most of whom were 'not in the leist frie aither as burgess or gild breither', charged low prices that 'undersold the said stationers' and, while paying only a little for their stalls, were not subject to the burgh taxes as were free burgesses.<sup>47</sup> The decision of the bailies was that cramers should open proper shops, and that straightaway those 'unfree' should become paid-up freemen of the burgh. However, in September 1710 the council was forced to concede that the erection of the 'paper cryers' or chapmen into a society had failed, with many printers complaining of the cryers' scandalous manipulation of prices. As a result, the council then agreed to dissolve this society, and to allow anyone to sell in the streets printed papers, pamphlets, ballads and story books.<sup>48</sup>

But if the paper cryers were allowed to form a society, why not printers and booksellers? Why did Edinburgh not establish an equivalent of the Stationers' Society in London? Partnerships existed from the sixteenth century and Andrew Anderson gathered a larger group of partners between 1671 and 1675, though this was never a society as such.

Indeed, even though by the 1680s over 60 book traders operated in Edinburgh, there are several reasons why they were not incorporated. Firstly, like the hammermen, the guild that caused the burgh most difficulties, the book traders were a disparate group. They consisted of wealthy stationers, moderately comfortable printers and booksellers, small and large bookbinders, journeyman printers, and street traders and chapmen. The hammermen, a mixture of metal workers of all kinds from blacksmiths to goldsmiths, were a similar divided group, and therefore difficult to control. Secondly, by the Restoration, clear indications were emerging of specialisation between printers and booksellers and, as a result, what was in the interests of one, was not always to the benefit of the other. For example, import controls would benefit printers not booksellers. Lastly, for those book traders who were ambitious to become members of the council or magistrates, there were opportunities without the need for a specific society, and for these wealthy traders membership of the merchant guild was near automatic, such as Henry Charteris, council member of Edinburgh, and William Dickie, bookbinder, a council member of Glasgow before the Union of 1707.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of this, book makers made some efforts to establish a society. In 1681 the printers Patrick Ramsay, John Reid and Hector Aysoun incorporated themselves into the hammermen without permission of the Edinburgh town council, and as punishment all three were instructed to give up their burgess tickets. A more co-ordinated effort was made in 1722, when fifteen printers petitioned the council to form a society. The proposal was shelved, although by 1759 the journeyman printers had formed their own benevolent society, and in 1758 an Edinburgh letterpress printers' society was incorporated.<sup>50</sup> But always the most basic control of commercial activity exercised by the burghs were the keys to craft burgess or merchant guild membership. The 'ticket' was a badge of merit as well as of trade and if necessary a means of coercion. More importantly for the history of the book in Scotland, the lack of an equivalent of the Stationers' Company, or an Edinburgh society, provided Scotland with a loose and decentralised system of book trade regulation. Essentially, the smaller scale of the Scottish press and the tradition of burghs having equal status and rights to develop commerce independently, prevented the formation of such a centralising society in Edinburgh.

Scottish printers and booksellers before 1800 were indeed a diverse group, but as book demand became intoxicated with the Enlightenment age they were able to meet Scotland's expanding need for book supply. The brothers and sisters of the book were not a homogenous grouping with necessarily shared commercial, private, religious and political interests. They were, however, all in trade and all in families, and each of them struggled in some unpromising economic circumstances until the trade benefits of union with England emerged from the 1730s. In fact, the Anglo-Scottish book trade began badly in the eighteenth century, marred as it was by a clash between the booksellers of Scotland and England over copyright. This concerned 'illegal' reprinting by Scotland, and culminated in the infamous *Donaldson v Becket* case, and final judgment of the House of Lords in 1774, which mostly favoured the Scottish interpretation of limited copyright in the interests of freedom of trade and wider access to learning.<sup>51</sup> This case is a metaphor for the life of Scotland's book traders in the early modern period: argumentative to the last but equally conscious of the contribution their trade could make to the welfare of the Scottish people.

## Notes

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1. For an overall account of the early modern book trade in Scotland see Mann, 2000a; and for a summary: Mann, 2001.
  2. Mann, 2000a, 7-33.
  3. Murray, 1913; Napier, 1991, 40-44.
  4. Allan, 2000; Allan, 1993, 9; Houston, 1993; Houston, 1994.
  5. For details of sources and method see Mann, 2000a, 214-24.
  6. Mann, 2000a, 219; Mann, 2001, 198
  7. Aldis, 1970.
  8. For Hart see Mann, 2000a; New DNB by Mann and Cowan, 1896.
  9. Mann, 2000a, 261-69; National Library of Scotland (NLS), SBTI, 2005
  10. National Archives of Scotland (NAS), PS/1, 61, 84v.
  11. The society and its antecedents continued paper making until the 1830s. Thomson, 1974, 18.
  12. NAS, Clerk Muniments, GD/18, 889, 1317, 1320, 1323; Thomson, 1974, 120.
  13. For Charteris see Mann, 2000a; Dickson and Edmond, 1975, 348-76 and MacDonald, 1998, 93-5.
  14. Murdoch and Sher, 1988, 134-5.
  15. Cook and Morris, 1916, 90.
  16. Grant, 1906; Watson, 1929a; Watson, 1929b; Wood, 1963. For the print culture of clergy see Mann, 2005.
  17. Mann, 1998, 142-3; Fountainhall, 1759-61, I, 104; Register of the Privy Council [RPC], iii, 7, 3-4 and 31-2; NAS, Court of Session (CS)/29, box 443 (Mackenzie); RPC, ii, 5, 174-5, 182, 580.

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18. Dickson and Edmond, 1975, 490-508; Couper, 1914; Edmond, 1886; Watson, 1929a.
  19. MacDonald, 1994.
  20. Mann, 1999, 142-3; Mann, 2000a, 69, 86, 88-9, 171; Calderwood, 1842-9, iv, 78-9, v, 510-2 and 520-1, vii, 348-9 and 382-3; *Calendar of State Papers*, vii, no. 171; *Bannatyne Miscellany*, i, 199-215; *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh [EBR]*, 7, 109.
  21. Mann, 1999, 142-3.
  22. NAS, Commissary Court Records, CC8/8/82, CC8/8/88 and CC8/8/85; Paton, 1905, 93; NAS, Registers of Deeds, 3/77, 297; Fairley, 1925, 19.
  23. Mann, 1999.
  24. Aldis, 1970, no.802; Maidment, 1845; Cowan, 1896, 6; Wood, 1936, 109; *The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland [APS]*, v, 52.
  25. For an updated summary of Campbell see Mann, 1998; Fairley, 1925
  26. Mann, 1998, 140-1; NAS, CS/29, box 436.1 (Mackenzie); *Journals of the House of Lords*, 21, London, 1891, 609-10; Couper, 1910.
  27. Mann, 1999, appendix, 146-7.
  28. For the statistics, testaments and methodology see Mann, 2000a, 193-200, appendix 3, 262-69.
  29. Myers and Harris, 1997.
  30. Mann, 2000a, 196-7; MacMillan, 1992, 107, 115, 289
  31. *EBR*, 5, 178; *EBR*, 8, 206; *EBR*, 12, 22.
  32. NAS, PS/3, 2, 493.
  33. Aberdeen Council Archives (ACA), Burgh Court Book, 52 (2), 178; *EBR*, 9, 317; Edinburgh City Archives, Bailie Court Processes, box 1, bundle 2 (July 1721). For Raban and Freebairn see Mann, 2002, 266-7 and 278.
  34. NAS, Justiciary Court Papers JC/26, 293. *Glasgow Courier* 29 May 1798. For censorship see Mann, 2000a, 163-91.
  35. Mann, 2000a, 173 and 175.
  36. NAS, CS/157, 166/2 and CS/96, 306; Grant, 1925.
  37. NAS, CS/138, 5219 and CS/158, 445; Couper, 1914, 46-9.
  38. For copyright see Mann, 2000a, 95-124 and in summary Mann, 2000b, 11-25
  39. *RPC*, iii, 7, 3-4 and 31-2; *RPC*, iii, 8, 250-1; Fountainhall, 1848, ii, 464-5; Mann, 2000b, 22-23.
  40. For almanacs see McDonald, 1966.
  41. ACA, Aberdeen Council Records, 55, 58-61; Edmond, 1886, iv, xlv; Taylor, 1942, iv, 321-2.
  42. *RPC*, iii, 3, 424; ACA, Aberdeen Council Records, 55, 362-3; Edmond, 1886, iv, xlvi; *RPC*, iii, 3, 596-9.
  43. Mann, 2004, 46-52.
  44. *RPC*, iii, 11, 196; Mann, 2000a, 132.
  45. Watson, 1713, preface, 10-24; *RPC*, iii, 12, 19-25, 23, 30, 143, 159 and 210; Mann, 2000a, 132-3.
  46. Mann, 2002, 276-80.
  47. *EBR*, 11, 96; Mann, 2000a, 17.
  48. *EBR*, 13, 199-200; Mann, 2000a, 17.
  49. Mann, 2000a, 17-18.
  50. *EBR*, 11, 18; Edinburgh City Archives, Moses Bundles (MB), 152, 5952 ( 5 June 1722); Houston, 1994, 99; Gillespie, 1953, 18,
  51. Mann, 2000b, 11-13; Feather, 1994, 64-96.

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Figure 1

A woodcut of the Crucifixion from Thomas Davidson's fine printing of Hector Boece's *The History of the croniklis of Scotland* (c.1536-41), translated from Latin to Scots by John Bellenden. This high quality early domestic printing shows that Scotland's relatively late start and uncertain establishment of the press did not necessarily mean poor workmanship.



**H**ow kyng Dauld past to the  
hunis on the Croce day in heruest,  
How he vvas doung fra his hors be  
ane vvyld hart, And how he foundit  
the abbay of Halyrudhous be myracle  
of the haly Croce Ca. xvi.



**A**t the tyme of kyng  
Alexander the Cum  
myngis take that  
begynnyng be Johne  
Cummyng, quhill be  
his syngulare man  
heid and biter

Figure 2

The title page from James Bryson's *The Remonstrance of the Nobility, Barrones, Burgesses, Ministers and the Commons of Scotland* (1639), one of the printings commissioned by the covenanters explaining their rebellion against the king to their brethren in the parliament of England. Bryson was part of the presbyterian print network so important to the spread of covenanting propaganda. (Reproduced courtesy of St Andrews University Library)

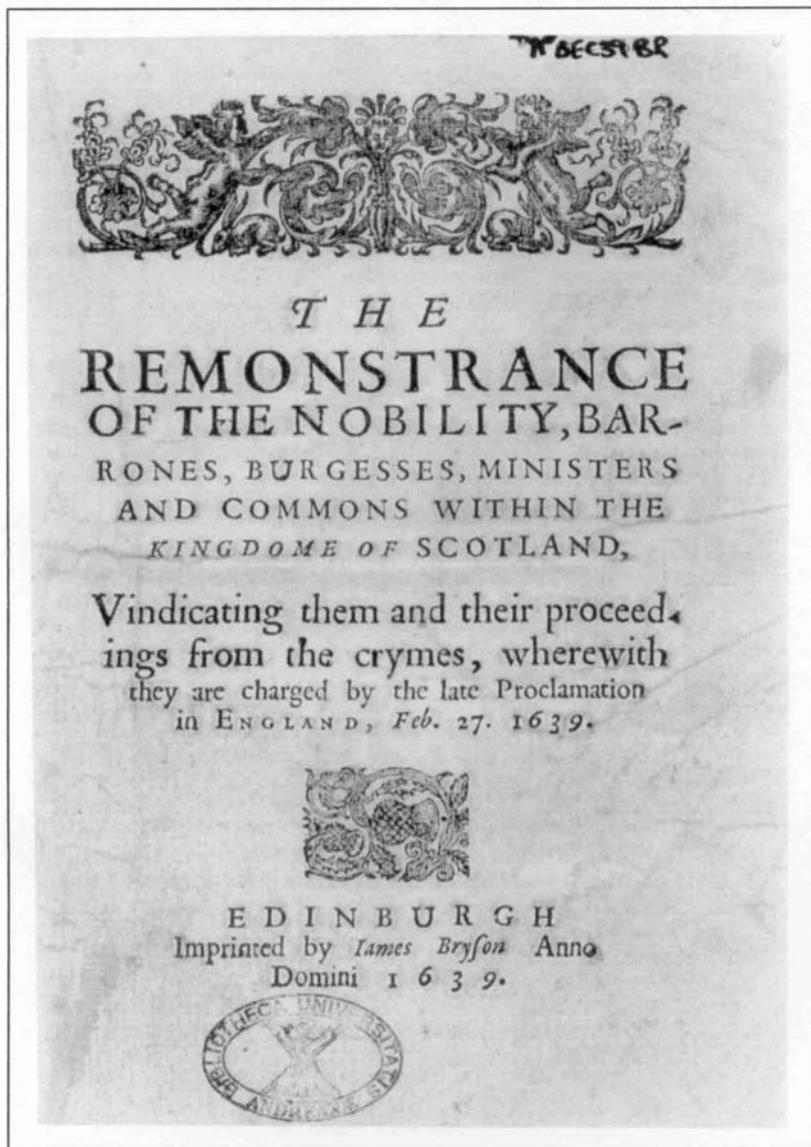


Figure 3

The title page of Ruddiman's *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue* (1714) printed by Robert Freebairn only months before he joined the Jacobite rebellion and so lost his position as king's printer. Ruddiman and Freebairn were political as well as publishing bedfellows and so the violent confrontation between Ruddiman and Freebairn's brother remains something of a mystery.

