

Harpers in Scotland's Outlying Communities in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries¹

Introduction:

Modern clanship historiography tends to view harpers within the broader estate economy as integral members of the chiefly retinue. Within this historiography, these musicians, like pipers, belonged to hereditary families who possessed a holding on the estate on a rent-free or reduced basis in return for performing their musical services.² Moreover, studies of harps and harpers have been prone to privilege the Western Highlands and Islands or the Lowlands.³ The present short note will briefly examine these strings players in the shires of Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, and the Outer Isles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Methodologically, the integration of the musical scene within landholding households enables the emergence of trends even if these are present *sotto voce* rather than *voce forte*. The study will underline a more interactive and open group of musicians at various levels opening up the cultural corset in which they had been restricted. It will further reflect on additional extra-musical dimensions repositioning the harper fully within his own society and period.

The context:

Up to the second half of the seventeenth century, there were two different harps, one wire-strung and the other gut. The gut-strung harp is commonly connected with courtly circles whereas the wire-strung clarsach is usually associated with Gaelic Scotland. However, harp playing did not adhere to a clear division between the Highlands and Gaelic on the one side and the Lowlands and Scots on the other side. Indeed, the spread of the clarsach had at its epicentre the centre and east of the country, areas not usually associated with a strong

¹ Gratitude is expressed to both Keith Sanger and Prof. Colm Ó Baoill for kindly reading a draft of this article and making insightful comments upon it. Keith Sanger is further duly acknowledged for making available copies of material. The notion of 'outlying', and correlated ones throughout the text, are here taken not as value-laden but rather in a geographical sense as defining these areas distant from the geographical and political centre of Scotland.

² R. A. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c. 1493-1820* (Edinburgh, 1998), 88-9; F. J. Shaw, *The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland: Their Economy and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1980), 148-9; K. Sanger, 'The McShannons of Kintyre: Harpers to Tacksmen', *The Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society Magazine*, xxviii (1990), 9-15.

³ C. Ó Baoill, 'Some Irish Harpers in Scotland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness [TGSi]*, xlvii (1971-2), 143-71; C. Ó Baoill, 'Highland Harpers and Their Patrons', in J. Porter (ed.), *Defining Strains: The Musical Life of Scots in the Seventeenth Century* (Bern, 2007), 181-96; J. Bannerman, 'The Clàrsach and the Clàrsair', *Scottish Studies*, xxx (1991), 1-17; K. Sanger, 'From Taynish to West Meath, a Musical Link?', *West Highland Notes and Queries*, ser. 3, no. 4 (August 2002), 15-20; K. Sanger and A. Kinnaird, *Tree of Strings, Crann nan Teud: A History of the Harp in Scotland* (Temple, Midlothian, 1992), is a more comprehensive study.

tradition of bardic poetry. Instead, these clarsachs or Gaelic harps would have been used to accompany non-Gaelic material. In other words, both instruments and their patronage did not divide along neat geographical or linguistic lines.⁴

Harp music and its players have a long recorded presence in Ireland and Scotland and, in terms of regional studies, with an emphasis on the Highlands and Islands or Gaels in general.⁵ This tradition appears even in the region's fringes areas such as Easter Ross with its late eighth- or early ninth-century stone depicting a basic instrument.⁶ Their histories have received scholarly treatment including the slow decline of the status of the harp and its player over the course of the seventeenth century.⁷ Early-modern writers through qualitative statements assisted in casting the instrument's association with Highlanders into a literary pastoral trope in line with the wider projection of the fabricated image of the Gael.⁸ In a parallel development, Gaelic oral and poetic traditions at times relied first and foremost on the harp to feature in their productions with their image of the highly esteemed harper and quasi-sacredness of the instrument.⁹ The harp and its sweet music appears regularly across many

⁴ K. Sanger, 'Lost Chords', available online at http://www.wirestrungharp.com/music/lost_chords.html, accessed 8 Jun. 2013; K. Sanger, 'The Forgotten Harp', in J. Sáinz, *Silva Caledonia* [sound recording]: *Scottish Harp Music of the 17th Century* ([Glasgow], 2008), booklet, p. 36. Evidence for this paper failed to uncover any reference to the most common musical instrument by far, namely the Jews' harp or Jews' trump.

⁵ S. Chadwick, 'The Early Irish Harp', *Early Music*, xxxvi (2008), 521-31; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*; K. Sanger, 'Myth and Mist', unpublished paper presented at the Edinburgh Harp Festival in Apr. 2005; C. Ó Baoill, 'Respecting Gaelic Harpers', in Sáinz, *Silva Caledonia*, 44-54; *The Earls of Cromartie*, ed. W. Fraser, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1876), ii, 320-1. Symbolically, despite the fact that only three harps are carved on the late medieval West Highland petrean monuments, this should not detract from the instrument's centrality in Gaelic culture of the late medieval and early-modern period: K. A. Steer and J. W. M. Bannerman, *Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1977), 20, 58, 146, 185; with the addition of the 15th century grave-slab at Kilchoan burying ground on Skye: http://www.wirestrungharp.com/harps/other_images/glasphein_skye.html, accessed 27 May 2013. In comparison, Ireland has only one surviving carving for the same period, that of Jerpoint Abbey. Keith Sanger is warmly thanked for the last two references.

⁶ R. B. Armstrong, *Musical Instruments, Part I: The Irish and the Highland Harps* (Edinburgh, 1904), 154 and facing page; <http://www.scran.ac.uk/>, Scran ID 000-299-999-322-C, accessed 19 Mar. 2013.

⁷ Ó Baoill, 'Highland Harpers', 181-96; K. Sanger, 'Final Chords', *West Highland Notes and Queries*, ser. 3, no. 14 (Dec. 2009), 12-5; M. Newton and H. Cheape, 'The Keening of Women and the Roar of the Pipe: From Clarsach to Bagpipe, ca. 1600-1782', *Ars Lyrica*, xvii (2008), 75-95.

⁸ J. Major, *A History of Greater Britain as well England as Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1892), 50; G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland* (London, 1690), 24; M. MacGregor, 'Gaelic Barbarity and Scottish Identity in the Later Middle Ages', in D. Broun and M. MacGregor (eds.), *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall, 'The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander'?: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern* (Glasgow, 2009), 7-48.

⁹ Ó Baoill, 'Respecting Gaelic Harpers', 44-9, 52; J. W. Benedict, 'References to Pre-Modern Music and Performing Arts Culture in the Irish Annals: A Survey of Common Themes', *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, v (2011), 95, 110-1; K. MacLeod, 'Note on Musical Instruments in Gaelic Folk-Tales', *Celtic Review*, viii (1913), 341-7; W. Gillies, 'Music and Gaelic Strict-Metre Poetry', *Studia Celtica*, xlv (2010), 113.

genres in medieval and early-modern Gaelic poetry, although as a motif, it remains to be appraised following such investigation for the bagpipe.¹⁰

The decompartmentalization of harp music: cultural brassage

The prevalence of the harp and its potent symbol is revealed in its selection by families from the far north, including from the eastern seaboard like the Urquharts on the Black Isle and the Mackenzies of Kilcoy, as a visual motif on carved lintels and fireplaces.¹¹ At Kilcoy Castle, the hall mantelpiece is carved with three well-preserved coats of arms and initials of the Mackenzies and bears the date 1679. There are three round panels flanked by two mermaids playing on harps, one at either end.¹² Sir Thomas Urquhart's 1651 carved sandstone overmantel found at Urquhart is flanked by comparable melomaniac mermaids.¹³ This repositions the harp and its artistic qualities and symbolism within the wider contemporary heraldic context and as part of a family's interior decoration, in this mixture of the intimate and the ostentatious. There is a need to combine the various artistic strands coexisting at the time in this outlying society and see their developments not only *per se* in their musical isolation but at least in parallel if not in their interactions. The interconnections between the visual, aural, written, and oral media need to be highlighted, albeit not being *sui generis*.¹⁴

The dynamic of harp music did not operate in a vacuum or compartmented social milieu. As will be seen below, the boundaries between players and patrons were blurred. Besides, landed chiefs did not have the monopoly on artistic largesse. The omnipotent and omnipresent medieval Church lefts its imprints on the musical scene of the early-modern

¹⁰ *Duanaire na Sracaire, Songbook of the Pillagers: Anthology of Scotland's Gaelic Verse to 1600*, eds. W. McLeod and M. Bateman (Edinburgh, 2007), e.g. pp. xxxiii, 115, 153, 237, 267, 315, 359, 429, 439, 459; *Gàir nan Clàrsach: The Harps' Cry*, eds. C. Ó Baoill and M. Bateman (Edinburgh, 1994), e.g. 64-5, 104-5, 126-7, 142-3, 160-5, 174-5, 202-3; *Poetry and Revolution: An Anthology of British and Irish Verse, 1625-1660*, ed. P. Davidson (1998, Oxford, 2001), 23-4. The motif of the bagpipe is incisively analysed in Newton and Cheape, 'Clàrsach to Bagpipe', though in fact the harp did not necessarily precede the bagpipe in a chronological sense. There is an argument to favour conterminous developments: Sanger, 'Lost Chords'. The literary imagery of the harp is present in Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, ch. 1. These harp references are less present in the classical poetry compared to the 17th-century vernacular Gaelic poetry: Gillies, 'Music', 120-1.

¹¹ Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 125-6.

¹² W. R. Macdonald, 'The Heraldry in Some of the Old Churchyards between Tain and Inverness', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland [PSAS]*, xxxvi (1902), 702-4.

¹³ <http://www.scran.ac.uk/>, Scran ID 000-100-000-368-C, accessed 27 Apr. 2010; Tayler, *Family of Urquhart*, 54.

¹⁴ Some of these linkages with poetry within the pan-Irish-Scottish Gaeldom are explored in Gillies, 'Music', 111-34; Benedict, 'References to Pre-Modern Music', 99-105; S. Chadwick, 'The Clarsach: Material Context for MacMhuirich Poetry', unpublished paper given at the First MacMhuirich Symposium, Edinburgh, 23 Jul. 2011; Simon Chadwick is duly thanked for kindly providing a copy of his paper. Different interconnections are pursued in T. Brochard, 'The Integration of the Scottish Upland Communities, 1500-1700: The Evidence of Visual Culture', unpublished paper.

period. In their beneficence, church dignitaries actively supported harpers, such as the bishops of Ross and of Caithness both in 1506.¹⁵ John Campbell, Bishop of the Isles (d. 1592x1594), was one of the last ecclesiastics to do so.¹⁶ Associated with the Church was the fermenting milieu of urban music as both Inverness and Tain dedicated monies from their common good fund to pay music masters. This musical environment was conducive to a better knowledgeable appreciation of music in general even if on a limited scale.¹⁷ Harp music thus received financial support from socially diverse upper echelons of society. Albeit geographically confined, these urban schools educated the progeny of a number of local and regional landlords, nurturing a more knowledgeable appreciation of music in the process.¹⁸

The uplanders' personal participation in native and extraneous arts combined with their appreciation and support of them modifies a long-held view of these men. It dismissed the reduction of far northerners and Highlanders in general to a quintessentially warlike people and presents rounder figures involved in more diversified lifestyles. Moreover, it removes the distinction between the musicians and their landlord patrons. A number of the clan élite were themselves amateur musicians with both the families of Mackenzie of Gruinard and of Applecross being celebrated performers of the instrument whilst some Macleod lairds had a practical knowledge of it.¹⁹ Donald Ross of Shandwick (fl. 1551-Aug. 1589) was known for playing well on the clarsach, an instrument traditionally associated with high status.²⁰

This Easter Ross connection with the harp counterbalances and complements studies emphasizing the Western and Southern Highlands and the Isles as the instrument's preferred home.²¹ This tradition of harp-playing was still present on the Balnagown estate in Easter

¹⁵ *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland [TA]*, eds. T. Dickson *et al.*, 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877-1978), iii, 190, 342. The subject of ecclesiastical patronage in Gaelic Ireland is treated in Benedict, 'References to Pre-Modern Music', 105-8.

¹⁶ Society of West Highland and Island Historical Research [SWHIHR], *Notes and Queries*, xxvii (Aug. 1985), 26, whether as his employee or not. Bishop John belonged to the Cawdor family whose castle, Cawdor Castle, also possesses a fire-place lintel depicting a mermaid playing the harp. Many thanks to Keith Sanger for this last point.

¹⁷ National Records of Scotland [NRS], Edinburgh, Exchequer Records, Common Good Accounts, E82/31/2-3; E82/56/3-4.

¹⁸ This attraction of urban and parochial schools on the Highlands as a whole was underscored in E. M. Barron, *The Scottish War of Independence: A Critical Study* (2nd ed., Inverness, 1934), pp. xlii-xlvi; and *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, eds. K.M. Brown *et al.* (St Andrews, 2007-2010), online at <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1661/1/399>, accessed 12 Mar. 2010. On the connections between the Church, towns, and schools, consult D. E. R. Watt, 'Education in the Highlands in the Middle Ages', in L. Maclean (ed.), *The Middle Ages in the Highlands* (Inverness, 1981), 81-5.

¹⁹ H. Rose, 'Highland Minstrelsy', *TGSI*, v (1875-6), 76-7. Rose does not provide references.

²⁰ Edinburgh University Library [EUL], Laing Collection, La. III. 666, p. 67; Bannerman, 'Clàrsach', 1, 5-6; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 2, 39; Gillies, 'Music', 113-4.

²¹ This western and southern highlight is not voluntary but merely reflects a selection of sources.

Ross in the first decade of the sixteenth century.²² It actually lasted in the district until at least the early seventeenth century with the mention of John Munro in 1602 either contracted by or visiting Hector Munro, apparent of Assynt.²³ That presence of clarsach players on the east coast is reinforced in 1607 with another player, Donald Ross, possibly employed by Nicholas Ross of Pitcalnie at his house in Arbol.²⁴

However, the presence of the harp should not be appreciated merely through the lens of a musical monoculture. Instead, a musical melting-pot is clearly identifiable. On his return from Buchan to Balnagown in 1663, the eponymous Ross chief was entertained by the ‘violer’, or fiddler, John White at the Chanonry.²⁵ Only three miles southwestward, William Robertson of Kindeace was a patron of the ‘viol’ in the first half of the 17th century.²⁶

Among other things, the notion of court and noble culture exogamous to the far-northern environment of the *fine*, or clan élite, gradually altered their behaviour and state of mind to some extent. Yet, their home milieu was one steeped in Gaelic, oral culture, which can be described as traditional communal culture. For the élite, this meant a patronage of the arts which was visible not just in the Western Highlands and Islands. Their musical munificence was seen first and foremost with the Scottish chieftains’ prominent entertainment of Irish and Scottish harpers.²⁷ A hereditary family of harpers played for the Skye chiefly

²² R. W. Munro and J. Munro, *Tain through the Centuries* (Tain, 1966), 30, quoting TA, ii, 125 (1501), 464 (1504). Interestingly, family and business connections with Easter Ross have been analysed as a possible pointer for the technical knowledge of the harp professed in J. Monipennie’s *Certayne Matters concerning the Realme of Scotland, Composed Together* (London, 1603), sig. Kv, through Kentigern/Mungo Monipennie, dean of Ross (fl. 1545-1575x1576): Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 66. The fact that the laird of Balnagown and the Bishop of Ross still patronized a harper in 1502-6 or that the royal train was entertained in this stringed music in Dingwall at that time added to this possibility: Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 86, 220-1, 223-4; Rose, ‘Highland Minstrelsy’, 78. Toponymic references and petrean sculptures are instructive on the connections between the harp and the area under consideration, including Easter Ross which features relatively less prominently in other types of records: Rose, ‘Highland Minstrelsy’, 78-80; Armstrong, *Musical Instruments*, 154 and facing page, 155-6; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 122, 126, 220-1, 236.

²³ NRS, Particular Register of Hornings and Inhibitions, Inverness, 1st ser., DI62/2, fos. 49v-50v.

²⁴ NRS, Ross of Pitcalnie Muniments, GD199/327/10.

²⁵ *Old Ross-shire and Scotland As Seen in the Tain and Balnagown Documents*, ed. W. MacGill, 2 vols. (Inverness, 1909-11), i, no. 530. One should bear in mind that up until the mid-17th century the term ‘viol’ in England was used especially by non-musicians to describe the violin but also as a generic word for all types of stringed instruments, plucked or bowed, prior to the later distinction between the viol and the violin. In England, the patronage of the violin by the nobility developed from the 1530s. The instrument found its way into Scotland possibly around 1670: P. Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540-1690* (Oxford, 1993), 18-9, 74, 87-8, 124, 136-8, 168, 182; K. Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture: Aspects of the Tradition* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. xiii-xiv. In the north of Scotland and the Highlands, the term ‘viol’ seems to have denoted a fiddle well into the 17th century: *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, eds. W. A. Craigie *et al.*, 12 vols. (Chicago, Ill., *et al.*, 1937-2002), online at <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>, s.v. ‘viol’, accessed 14 Mar. 2013; *The Blind Harper: The Songs of Roderick Morison and His Music*, ed. W. Matheson (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 1; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 151.

²⁶ NRS, Robertson of Kindeace Papers, GD146/10, inventory of the bonds and contracts belonging to the late Gilbert Robertson, Jun. 1656, inventory dated 12 Mar. 1647. The player’s name was Martin Macpherson.

²⁷ Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, chs. 9-10; Rose, ‘Highland Minstrelsy’, 76-8. The time-honoured employment of Irish harpers in Scotland is the subject of study in Ó Baoill, ‘Some Irish Harpers’; C. Ó Baoill,

household of the Macleods by the early sixteenth century, with Fearchar, son of Richard, succeeded by his son Gillecillum.²⁸ If the list of thirty-two names found in the Book of the Dean of Lismore (compiled between 1512 and 1542) do indeed represent *clàrsairean* from the area north of the Forth-Clyde line, then other harpers were found in the Isles at the time, with at least one in Uist and another one in Lewis.²⁹ Harp music continued to reverberate within the walls of Dunvegan at least until the mid-eighteenth century.³⁰ Within the Hebridean milieu, Gaelic poetry extols the musical joys of the harp to be had during family merriment, like a wedding *chez les Macleods*.³¹ Likewise, in the Mackay household the harp would fête its residents under John, Second Lord Reay.³² The Mackay household thus sustained its patronage of Gaelic arts. Actually, John typified the hybridized combination of a late Renaissance education on the continent with the investment in some elements of the native Gaelic culture.³³

In both Macleod and Mackay cases, the stringed instrument shared the household musical stage with other instruments, like the bagpipes or the ‘viol’.³⁴ This musical polyphony

‘Two Irish Harpers in Scotland’, in Porter, *Musical Life of Scots*, 227-43. Such was the prevalence of travelling musicians that the Irish Franciscan priest Cornelius Ward whilst on an evangelizing mission in Scotland in 1624 travelled disguised as a poet with a harper and singer in attendance ‘as was the custom’: Ó Baoill, ‘Highland Harpers’, 183, quoting *Irish Franciscan Mission to Scotland, 1619-1646*, ed. C. Giblin (Dublin, 1964), 54.

²⁸ National Library of Scotland [NLS], Edinburgh, Book of the Dean of Lismore, Adv. MS 72.1.37, pp. 91-2; Bannerman, ‘Clàrsach’, 7, and 12-3.

²⁹ NLS, Adv. MS 72.1.37, p. 92 (a ‘mccawl skir’ in Uist and ‘warryt’ or ‘Ay mcevin warryt’ in Lewis). The compiler further recorded a ‘Eone mc Kinlay’ in Strathglass and David ‘Dawle’ in ‘ferne’. The statement that these were harpers is found in Bannerman, ‘Clàrsach’, 7.

³⁰ I. F. Grant, *The MacLeods: The History of a Clan* (1959, Edinburgh, 1981), 375-7, 489. Rentals for Harris stretching from the late 1670s to 1700s are inconclusive at first sight as professional occupations are rarely mentioned: A. Morrison, ‘Early Harris Estate Papers, 1679-1703’, *TGSI*, li (1978-80), 114-72; *A Selection of Source Documents from the Isle of Harris, 1688-1830*, ed. B. Lawson (Northton, 1992), 3-4.

³¹ A. Cameron, *Reliquiae Celticae*, eds. A. MacBain and J. Kennedy, 2 vols. (Inverness, 1892-4), ii, 286-7; also Newton and Cheape, ‘Clàrsach to Bagpipe’, 81, 83-4.

³² A. Mackay, *The Book of Mackay* (Edinburgh, 1906), 156. There has been some mistaken assumptions concerning the employment of at least two pipers by Mackay in 1612 from the reading of a royal letter of remission. In fact, as the letter makes clear, the pardoned party actually comprised Mackays and Gordons. As Donald MacCrimmon was employed by the Gordon earl of Sutherland by at least 1617, as seen below, Donald was much more likely to have accompanied the Gordons on that occasion. The alternative would be for him to have been initially in Mackay’s service prior to securing another patronage with the Gordons. He was unlikely to have served both magnates at the same time: Mackay, *Book of Mackay*, 126; I. Grimble, *Chief of Mackay* (London, 1965), 55; *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum: The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland [RMS]*, eds. J. M. Thomson *et al.*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1882-1914), vii, no. 976.

³³ Donald, Lord Reay, while in martial occupation under King Christian IV of Denmark-Norway, requested the admission of his sons John, later 2nd Lord Reay, and Angus, later of Melness, first to a Dutch school and then to Sorø Academy in Sep. 1628: Historical Manuscripts Commission [HMC], *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1877), 685; Grimble, *Chief of Mackay*, 94-5; T. Riis, *Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot...: Scottish-Danish Relations c. 1450-1707*, 2 vols. (Odense, 1988), ii, 92.

³⁴ Morrison, ‘Harris Estate Papers’, 94, 152. In the case of the ‘violer’, the Dunvegan estate may well have recruited the service of a non-native given that his name was James Glass alias Munro, a surname not prominently associated with the island ruler. The Hebridean chiefly élite certainly did not restrict their musical patronage to the sole employment of professional players from hereditary families: *Clan Macleod Magazine*, x, no. 68 (1989), 263-5.

was a *fait accompli* in the Macleod household in northern Skye by the late seventeenth century within the broader movement of the evolution of musical tastes and social expectations, notably musical skills of genteel ladies.³⁵ Allan Macdonald, Captain of Clanranald, boasted such musically versatile court at Caisteal Ormacleit on South Uist at the beginning of the eighteenth century.³⁶ Sir Norman Macleod of Berneray (died 1705) served as patron to harpers, pipers, and fiddlers and was described as *Tuigsear nan teud*, ‘Fine judge of musicians’.³⁷ Under William, Fifth Earl of Seaforth (1701-1740), the family employed a number of pipers living across its vast estate. Besides, it remunerated itinerant musicians on an *ad hoc* basis, such as a harper and a fiddler in 1710.³⁸ Albeit much confined these strands add to a multi-layered picture and the dynamics of the musical scene in the far north at the time.

This musical interchange opened up Gaelic and northern culture to external influences which though detrimental in the long run can be conceived more positively within a flourishing musical scene for a period of time.³⁹ In the residence of Sir Donald Macdonald of Sleat, the guests were melodiously treated to a hybrid repertoire if they so wished as *Foirm nam pìoban 'S orghain Liteach*, ‘there can be heard the roar of pipes and Leith organs’.⁴⁰ John, Twelfth Earl of Sutherland, still employed a harper at the beginning of the seventeenth century but whose life was cut short while on a journey in a snowstorm in 1602.⁴¹ Most significantly, the detailed accounts of the comital House under the tutorship of Sir Robert Gordon covering the years 1615/6 to 1630 do not mention harpers. The Sutherland accounts

³⁵ *The Book of Dunvegan*, ed. R. C. MacLeod, 2 vols. (Aberdeen, 1938-9), i, 251; ii, 92; *The Blind Harper*, ed. Matheson, pp. l-liii; K. D. MacDonald, ‘The Mackenzie Lairds of Applecross’, *TGSI*, liv (1984-6), 418. The subsequent 18th century musical evolution within the Highlands and Islands can be perused in S. Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury: The Highland Gentry in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2007), 50, 54, 61, 63, 129, 195.

³⁶ NLS, Delvine Papers, MS 1105, fo. 143r-v; J. A. Stewart, ‘The Clan Ranald: History of a Highland Kindred’, 2 vols. (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982), i, 273, 314. Keith Sanger has tentatively identified the harper, ‘Neill Baine’, as the then incumbent poet in South Uist, Neil Macmhuirich, doing his own accompaniment. Poet Neil certainly conducted financial business in Edinburgh on behalf of the widowed Lady Clanranald: Keith Sanger, personal communication, 9 May 2013; D. S. Thomson, ‘The Macmhuirich Bardic Family’, *TGSI*, xliii (1960-3), 295-300. It is very unlikely that ‘Baine’ might simply have been the harper’s name (‘Neill Baine’) as opposed to a mere epithet attached to Neil.

³⁷ A. Morrison and D. MacKinnon, *The MacLeods: The Genealogy of a Clan*, 5 vols. (1968-76, Edinburgh, 1986-1999), ii, 27; *The Harps’ Cry*, eds. Ó Baoill and Bateman, 142-3; Morrison, ‘Harris Estate Papers’, 103.

³⁸ Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Seaforth Papers, MS 591705, a view of the estate of Seaforth, 1707-1715; accounts, 1709-10.

³⁹ Sanger and Kinnaid, *History of the Harp*, 126-8, 132-3.

⁴⁰ *Orain Iain Luim: Songs of John MacDonal, Bard of Keppoch*, ed. A. M. Mackenzie (Edinburgh, 1964), 18-9; D. [S.] Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1990), 50. The assumption is that poets simply used the already adopted word ‘organ’ to cover a number of stringed keyboard instruments. Many thanks to Keith Sanger for this suggestion. Whichever instrument is referred in this particular case does not detract from the musical hybridity present within Sleat’s dwelling.

⁴¹ R. Gordon, *A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland* (Edinburgh, 1813), 246. His name was Donald MacIain (‘Donald Mackean’).

revealed the employment of pipers, including a member of the renowned Maccrimmon family of pipers, Donald Maccrimmon (by 1617 to 1628), and of a ‘bard’ as well by the name of Donald Macchlery (‘mcclearache’).⁴² Moreover, the Dunrobin household cultivated an appreciation of fiddle music.⁴³ Musical variety was on offer to the family. In 1615, the children of the Sutherland household were learning to play musical instruments and sing, hence the request made by the earl for two of the ‘fynest’ double virginals to be sent by the tutor of Sutherland from London. The earl was fond of the music of the virginals and could ‘not want the lyik out of my hous in Dornach’.⁴⁴ The virginal is indeed a case in point. It was played in both the Dunvegan and Sutherland households and as seen below its music found an auditor in Sir Donald Mackay.⁴⁵ The cultural sensibilities of the comital family of Caithness emulated those of its Sutherland rival. The Caithness earls certainly availed themselves of the musical services of a harper at least until the early sixteenth century, in return of which the harper enjoyed lands in Duncansby.⁴⁶ The family retributed the musical aptitude of Donald Reach (‘Reoch’), a piper, prior to 1616.⁴⁷ As a result of Donald’s employment, too much

⁴² NLS, Gordons of Gordonstoun and Cummings of Altyre Papers, Acc. 10824/3, Robert Gordon’s 1617-8 account book, 1617, fos. 3v, 8v, 11r (bard); 1618, fos. 20v, 22v, 24v; memorandum of such things suspended between the tutor and the chamberlain; the account of £200 disbursed as follows; William Innes’ accounts to some of the earl’s curators, 1624, fo. 4r (and bard); Sir Robert Gordon’s accounts, 1624-5, 1624, fo. 2r (and bard); 1625, fo. 2r (and bard); part of 1626 account book, fo. 1r (and bard); Sir Robert Gordon’s account book, 1627, (loose sheet) fo. 2r (and bard); an account between the tutor and the chamberlain, 1627, fo. 3r; loose sheet, 1628; discharge of victual crop 1627 (and bard). The patronage of piping within the Sutherland household certainly predated Sir Robert’s tutorship: NLS, Sutherland Papers, Dep. 313/3313, no. 18, 3 Dec. 1610 (Gilbert MacAlaster); and probably erroneously in oral tradition: North Highland Archive [NHA], Wick, Sage-Gunn MS, P200, p. 9, Gail Inglis deserves our gratitude for this transcript. These accounts thus go a long way to perhaps partly elucidating one of piping’s conundrums, namely the presence of a John Maccrimmon as piper to the earl of Sutherland in 1651 and composer of the famous tune ‘I got a kiss of the King’s hand’. The erratic spelling of the surname (including ‘makgrymen’, ‘mckrymund’, ‘mckrymen’, ‘Maccrommin’) identifies Donald Maccrimmon as one of John’s potential relatives: R. Cannon, ‘Who Got a Kiss of the King’s Hand?: The Growth of a Tradition’, in Porter, *Musical Life of Scots*, 197-226. One can conjecture that Macchlery might have been related to the Irish Ó’Cléirigh family of historians and poets. Keith Sanger is duly thanked for this last point.

⁴³ It could well be that the comital family enjoyed the performance of a female musician as a ‘margrat fidler’ received an annual pension for some years until her death by 1626: NLS, Acc. 10824/3, William Innes’ accounts to some of the earl’s curators, 1624, fo. 4r; Sir Robert Gordon’s accounts, 1624-5, 1624, fo. 2r; 1625, fo. 2r; part of 1626 account book, fo. 1r; an account between the tutor and the chamberlain, 1627, fo. 5v. The Sutherland collection further records the killing of Duncan Grant ‘alias fidler’ in Delny prior to Jul. 1609: NLS, Dep. 313/2981, Alexander Gordon of Achindean, 8 Aug. 1609.

⁴⁴ *The Sutherland Book*, ed. W. Fraser, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1892), ii, 121. A double virginal was a rectangular harpsichord with two independent keyboards, set side by side, as well as two independent sets of strings. A good introduction to the topic is provided in D. J. Smith, ‘Keyboard Music in Scotland: Genre, Gender, Context’, in Porter, *Musical Life of Scots*, 97-125.

⁴⁵ Dunvegan Castle, Dunvegan Muniments, 3/2/16, undated voucher but the hand is 17th century. £2 10s spent on ‘wirginel stringes’.

⁴⁶ NRS, Caithness and Berwickshire Writs, GD1/945/2; Miscellaneous Papers, documents found in the reference room ante-room, RH15/35/1. The harper, Donald Gibson, son of Hutcheon/Hugh Gibson, is on record from Feb. 1502 to Mar. 1516.

⁴⁷ *Miscellany of the Maitland Club, Consisting of Original Papers and Other Documents Illustrative of the History and Literature of Scotland*, eds. A. Macdonald and J. Dennistoun, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1840-7), ii, 187. Toponymy further attested to the employment of a piper in the earl’s household with the piece of land called

should not be read into the testament of George, Earl of Caithness, written in August 1582. Although detailed in its listing of domestics, no musician appears in the record.⁴⁸ The hearth tax returns for both Assynt and Strathnaver in 1691 do not contain any apparent harper listed as such, except perhaps from the extrapolation of the presence of ‘Katharin Nein Wm Chruter’ in Rhinovie. Significantly, these lists mention a number of pipers.⁴⁹ Musical patronage of chiefly households reveals an interconnected ensemble of players even though these links are sometimes tenuous. Highland households reverberated with polyphonic music, if only in the presence of different instruments. A cultural brassage was at work in these musical ensembles composed of instruments with an already long-established presence in the area, such as harps, fiddles, and bagpipes, and other (relatively) new ones, such as virginals and keyboard instruments in general.⁵⁰

Even in the military environment of the Thirty Years’ War, Sir Donald Mackay found time in early 1627 to listen to a ‘clarsocher’ at both Rotterdam (‘unnamed’) and The Hague (called ‘Magnus’). His purchase of ‘clarsoch strings’ at the Meuse port was presumably intended as a gift to the said harper. In Arnhem, he paid to see ‘the virgenells’ (the virginal). This seems to point to Mackay’s appreciation of a music reminiscent of home but also of a greater openness to musical styles and genres of a continental nature.⁵¹ The phenomenon of musical borrowings between genres can thus be commented upon from the angle of not only the interaction between musicians but also from these patrons. They were instrumental in employing different categories of musicians and so facilitated this influence and absorption through their own personal musical tastes and aspirations dictated by genteel society.⁵²

An entry in the Kintail accounts under the date 15 March 1571 tends to point towards more free-flowing interactions between musicians of different chiefs as opposed to between players of a single household. On that day, as Colin Mackenzie of Kintail was on his way to the Mounth, he was accompanied by Lachlan Bayne, ‘clarsear’, and the laird of

Piper’s croft: *Northern Ensign*, 7 Oct. 1902, p. 2. The patronage of piping by Caithness Sinclairs continued well into the 19th century: *Clan Gunn Society Magazine*, xi (1974/5), 18.

⁴⁸ NRS, Sinclair of Mey Papers, GD96/200.

⁴⁹ *Population Lists of Strathnaver, Strathy and Strath Halladale, 1667-1811*, ed. M. Bangor-Jones (Dundee, 2000); *Population Lists of Assynt, 1638-1811*, ed. M. Bangor-Jones ([Dundee], 1997). Onomastic analysis is clouded by the fact that surnames were not fully crystallized by then. As a result the name Harper could apply either to the profession or the actual surname: E.g. *Sutherland Book*, ed. Fraser, iii, 61; *Calendar of Writs of Munro of Foulis, 1299-1823*, ed. C. T. McInnes (Edinburgh, 1940), no. 34.

⁵⁰ Styles and repertoires should be taken into account rather than just instruments *per se*.

⁵¹ *Social Life in Former Days: Second Series, Illustrated by Letters and Family Papers*, ed. E. D. Dunbar (Edinburgh, 1866), 181-2.

⁵² Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 87.

Glenmoriston's piper.⁵³ When Donald MacIan, harper to the Sutherland earl, died in 1602, he was part of the earl's 'ordinary train' who had set up on their way from Golspie Tower to visit the chief of clan Gunn in Kilearnan (in Strath Ullie).⁵⁴ So, the inclusion of harpers in magnates' entourage as part of their travelling retinue emphasizes the opportunity given to them to interact with other fellow musicians if not harpists. It presents harp music in an inter-regional and dynamic flux. Secondly, it sets opportunities certainly for musical interactions and possible borrowings, as demonstrated in stylistic similarities and other commonalities, and broadly speaking for cultural relations.⁵⁵ Thirdly, there has commonly been a strong link between the Gaelic professional orders and traditional schools. Yet, this accounting entry locates additional opportunities outwith these schools to be found in more informal ways notably in travels and visits.⁵⁶

The gradual demise of the status of the harp and its player cannot be equated singly with the corresponding ascendancy of the bagpipes, albeit it being an important factor. Rather, this additionally lies in the patronage of musical diversity as seen with the earlier references to virginals for instance and the patronage of a wider spectrum of musical instruments, repertoires, and influences within the households of the far-northern élite. The underlying rationale behind this transformation lies in the evolution of the wider cultural tastes and expectations. Coming into contact with these diverse musical influences, Scottish, British, and indeed European, opens up the cultural world in which the Gaelic harper evolved, including an element of bilingualism.⁵⁷ Such cultural and musical contacts however did not necessarily

⁵³ British Library [BL], London, Mackenzie Papers, Legal Papers, 1530-1670, Add. MS 39210, fo. 15r. If Lachlan Bayne was the son of Duncan Bayne of Tulloch, then he was still alive in Sep. 1596: J. L. Cairns-Smith-Barth, *The Scottish Clan Chiefs. Volume One: The Chiefs of Clan Mackay and Their Cadets* (Fitzroy, Australia, 1999), 51; NRS, Commissariat of Edinburgh, Register of Testaments, CC8/8/35, p. 47. Kintail also retributed itinerant players. In early Mar. 1570, a payment of 6s 8d is recorded to 'ane classr callit mc anragan' and 12d to 'his boy': BL, Add. MS 39210, fo. 12v.

⁵⁴ Gordon, *Earldom*, 246. Roderick Morison, the blind harper discussed below, was a member of a cynegetic party in Reay most likely in the 1690s: *The Blind Harper*, ed. Matheson, pp. lxiv-v.

⁵⁵ For example, the similarities between pibroch and harp music in their techniques of ornamentation are scholarly studied in F. Buisman, 'A Parallel between Scottish Pibroch and Early Welsh Harp Music', *Hanes Cerddoriaeth Cymru/Welsh Music History*, vi (2004), 1-23; also R. D. Cannon, *The Highland Bagpipe and Its Music* (Edinburgh, 1995), 99-104; Newton and Cheape, 'Clàrsach to Bagpipe', 78; C. Ó Baoill, 'Moving in Gaelic Musical Circles: The Root *lu-* in Music Terminology', *Scottish Gaelic Studies [SGS]*, xix (1999), 183-4; Chadwick, 'Early Irish Harp', 527-8. A more cautious approach as to the issue of bagpiping taking over or copying harp music is adopted in Sanger, 'Lost Chords'.

⁵⁶ On traditional schools, consult Newton and Cheape, 'Clàrsach to Bagpipe', 84-5 (pipers); W. McLeod, *Divided Gaels: Gaelic Cultural Identities in Scotland and Ireland, c. 1200-c. 1650* (Oxford, 2004), 83-5 (poets); Benedict, 'References to Pre-Modern Music', 111-4 (minstrels).

⁵⁷ Ó Baoill, 'Two Irish Harpers', 235; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 150-1. The English and North European courtly influence comes to the fore in S. Donnelly, 'A Cork Musician at the Early Stuart Court: Daniel Duff O'Cahill (c. 1580-c. 1660), 'The Queen's Harper', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, cv (2000), 2-4. Much gratitude is expressed to Seán Donnelly for making available a copy of his article. The European influence and bilingual aspect are briefly touched upon in Ó Baoill, 'Respecting Gaelic Harpers',

denote an openness to them on the part of harpers.⁵⁸ These musicians appear to have been more hermetic to these compared to their patrons.

Integrating the harper into wider society:

The oral tradition of the Highlands richly records the travel of isolated clarsach players.⁵⁹ In 1501, a travelling harper by the name of Macrae happened to be staying at the Munro chief's residence of Fowlis.⁶⁰ Similarly, Rory Mackenzie of Applecross (died 1646) and his son, John, second laird of Applecross (died x1685), enjoyed a reputation for generously rewarding visiting harpers, such as the earl of Antrim's musical protégé.⁶¹ In October 1505, King James IV was entertained in Dingwall by an unnamed harper, probably during the harper's own peregrinations. In this particular instance, it is pertinent to reflect on the fact that Dingwall was on the pilgrimage route to the shrine of St Duthac in Tain. Financially speaking, travelling harpers may well have exploited this expected presence and convergence of pilgrims.⁶² In the vicinity, further south at Tarradale, an itinerant harper of the sixteenth century was murdered by a pilfering party of Mackenzies of Ord for fear he would raise the alarm.⁶³ The renowned Irish harper, Ruairi Ó Catháin, travelled widely in Scotland but his stay in the house of Sir James Macdonald of Sleat (died 1678) appears unfounded.⁶⁴ William, Fifth Earl of Seaforth, made a one-off payment of £1 1s 6d to the Scotsman Daniel Melville 'the harper' in June 1710. The gut-strung player Melville certainly travelled the country as he is also found in Edinburgh in 1709, as a Catholic, and had recently arrived from Ireland with his wife Helen. Yet, given the large scale migration of predominantly Lowland Scots to Ireland at the time, migrating Scots would largely have found themselves living in a Scottish cultural environment.⁶⁵

51, and also p. 55. Regrettably, little is known about the tunes and the composition of harp music at that period: Sanger, 'Lost Chords'.

⁵⁸ Sanger, 'Final Chords', 15.

⁵⁹ The useful distinction between visiting and maintained harpers is articulated in Ó Baoill, 'Highland Harpers'.

⁶⁰ A. Mackenzie, *History of the Munros of Fowlis* (Inverness, 1898), 32. The after-described William Cadell was seemingly another of these itinerant players.

⁶¹ MacDonald, 'Lairds of Applecross', 415-9, 449-50; see *Gaelic Songs of Mary MacLeod*, ed. J. C. Watson (Edinburgh, 1965), 14-21; *The Harps' Cry*, eds. Ó Baoill and Bateman, 174-5.

⁶² TA, iii, 167. The alternative, though unlikely, was that the harper was a local resident of the Easter Ross burgh. This association between religious pilgrims and travelling artists is also found in Gaelic Ireland: Benedict, 'References to Pre-Modern Music', 107-8, 117-8.

⁶³ Rose, 'Highland Minstrelsy', 78-9.

⁶⁴ Ó Baoill, 'Some Irish Harpers', 153, 159-61.

⁶⁵ Mitchell Library, MS 591705, accounts, 1709-1710; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 110, 225; Sanger, 'Forgotten Harp', 38. M. Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 2009), 50. Keith Sanger is warmly thanked for this last reference.

These itinerant or visiting harpers should not merely be viewed as musicians. All the above were by their mere journeys *de facto* bearers of news and gossip. They clearly had access to local and regional power-holders. Besides, they performed other functions as entertainers, chroniclers, agent or right-hand man, and newsbearers.⁶⁶ These itinerant Irish harpers undoubtedly have assisted in the dissemination of a pool of tunes shared between Scotland and Ireland and played by musicians from both countries. They accounted for a common musical repertoire within a pan-Gaelic world.⁶⁷

The unidimensional view of harpers in their restrictive musical role does not fully reveal the broad range of activities which they undertook as individuals. Like other members of the Gaelic professional orders, they took on other activities in the service of their patrons or outside it.⁶⁸ In October 1602, John Munro ‘clarsar’, either employed by or visiting Hector Munro, apparent of Assynt, witnessed Hector being legally charged to pay his debts to John, Master of Orkney. Not only would John thus be fully aware of Hector’s financial predicament but also presented with an opportunity of being informed about current news through the messenger-at-arms delivering the summons.⁶⁹

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the famous harper Roderick Morison, brought up in Bragar in Lewis attended school in Inverness and went to pursue his musical studies in Ireland. On his return to Scotland he made his way to Edinburgh in late spring and early summer of 1681 where he met his future patron, Iain Breac Macleod of Dunvegan. Roderick went on to live near Dunvegan, in Glenelg, and then Lochaber but continued making ‘excursions’ to chiefly households across the Highlands and Islands.⁷⁰ These peregrinations across the land likely accounted in part for the harper’s broad cultural vision. He witnessed first-hand the cultural tensions within the clan élite so much commented upon in late seventeenth-century Gaelic poetry, including his own compositions. As a result, harpers could

⁶⁶ J. Mackenzie, ‘The Clàrsach’, in L. Maclean (ed.), *The Middle Ages in the Highlands* (Inverness, 1981), 101; Ó Baoill, ‘Highland Harpers’, 196; Rose, ‘Highland Minstrelsy’, 78-9; Bannerman, ‘Clàrsach’, 6; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 142-4, 149; Donnelly, ‘Cork Musician’, 6, 9-11.

⁶⁷ Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, ch. 9.

⁶⁸ D. S. Thomson, ‘Gaelic Learned Orders and Literati in Medieval Scotland’, *Scottish Studies*, xii (1968), 66-70; and J. Bannerman, ‘Literacy in the Highlands’, in I. B. Cowan and D. Shaw (eds.), *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1983), 217-20, 225-8, for additional positions held by members of the Gaelic professional learned orders. This combination of professional activities was also present in Gaelic Ireland: Benedict, ‘References to Pre-Modern Music’, 99-105.

⁶⁹ NRS, DI62/2, fos. 49v-50v. The same would apply to Donald Ross whether as a mere visiting harper or employed by Nicholas Ross of Pitcalnie. Donald witnessed an order of removal served by a messenger-at-arms in the presence of a notary. These officials could impart news, whether local or further afield, to their audience. The harper directly experienced local/regional political events and tensions: NRS, GD199/327/10.

⁷⁰ *The Blind Harper*, ed. Matheson, pp. xxxix and ff. The presence of harpers outside their normal residential area, for maintained harpers, but also away from their native area or in Edinburgh and London is further attested in Ó Baoill, ‘Highland Harpers’, 187-9.

well have been one of the sources for these bardic mordant verses of this *fin de siècle* compositions or at least had a direct awareness of a cultural transformation within the community.⁷¹

A highly visible instance of such multiple functions performed by harpers within their wider community can be found in Morison. Within the regional estate economy, the famous harpist and poet to the Macleods of Dunvegan and Harris in the late seventeenth century served as a tacksman in both Skye and Glenelg.⁷² Indeed, such professional diversification within the estate economy was not uncommon, as experienced by the McShannons of Kintyre and others.⁷³ Other harpers still were made burgesses, as Irishman Thomas O Connellan possibly was by the town council of Edinburgh.⁷⁴ Recent scholarship has shown divisions between the poets of Ireland and those in Scotland as well as separate identities within this pan-Gaeldom.⁷⁵ As a result the poet harper connection seen in the Kintyre McShannons' relationship to the MacMhuirichs was in fact not typical in Scotland as a whole. With the demise of the Lordship of the Isles, its 'Irish' poets took up residence in what were peripheral lands in Uist whilst harpers changed occupation and became conventional tacksmen as opposed to merely shift their allegiances to other powerful families like the Campbells.⁷⁶ Hence, the combination of professional activities does not solely reflect the adaptability of harpers, and other members of the Gaelic professional orders, but also the evolution of the broader socio-economic context and a constrained labour market.

Identifying the patron of these harpers can at times be difficult. Although he left behind his testament, William Cadell ('caddell') 'harper' leaves us little clue as to his potential employer and so might have been an itinerant musician.⁷⁷ The son of a Dunnet (in Caithness) resident, William at the time of his death in December 1593 left few belongings. He had ready money – rose nobles and half merks among others – left in his purse worth £108 12s 2d plus his clothing valued at £6 13s 4d. William was clearly a man of financial means.⁷⁸ He had no recorded debts of his own. Interestingly enough, at least two individuals officially

⁷¹ *The Harps' Cry*, eds. Ó Baoill and Bateman, 198-207.

⁷² *The Blind Harper*, ed. Matheson, pp. xlv-xlix, lvi-lix; A. I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996), 18.

⁷³ Sanger, 'Harpers to Tacksmen'; Sanger and Kinnaird, *History of the Harp*, 120-1.

⁷⁴ Ó. Baoill, 'Two Irish Harpers', 238-40.

⁷⁵ McLeod, *Divided Gaels*; M. Pía Coira, *By Poetic Authority: The Rhetoric of Panegyric in Gaelic Poetry of Scotland to c. 1700* (Edinburgh, 2012).

⁷⁶ Keith Sanger, personal communication, 9 May 2013; also Sanger, 'From Tainish to West Meath', 17-8.

⁷⁷ NRS, CC8/8/26, pp. 125-6.

⁷⁸ In 1593, Edinburgh skilled workers like masons and wrights earned 6s 6d and 7s 6d per day respectively. In Aberdeen, the day rate for master masons and master wrights was 6s. 8d. On a rough average of 4 days of work a week, this meant that the higher range of skilled workers were paid in the region of £78 annually: A. J. S. Gibson and T. C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 1995), 283-5, 305, 319.

owed William money. James Cadell in Tibberchindy (Aberdeenshire) was most likely a relative. The other, William Hoppringle, was the son of an Edinburgh apothecary. Whatever their nature, these debts actually underline the geographical spread of a harper's connections. Although these might be partly kin-based, they were nonetheless of a non-local nature, spread across the country. This is reinforced by the fact that William was almost certainly killed by a nameless Ogilvie, fiddler, in Edinburgh.⁷⁹ Cadell's testament broadens the vision of the harper beyond the sphere of the musician and into the wider society, in this case probably as a moneylender. Given the location of these debtors, Cadell must have travelled relatively extensively, adding to the picture of a provincial musical scene in a flux in terms of its players.

More details of employment are available for Malcolm Groat, harper to Queen Anne of Denmark (1574-1619), consort of James VI. Malcolm had served the queen ever since the Union of the Crown in 1603 and her resettlement at the London court in 1603. He received mourning liveries at the funeral of his patroness. Shortly afterwards, he petitioned the English Privy Council as 'Musicon to the late Queenes Ma[jes]tie for the Scottes Musicke' in order to secure a royal 'reward' as 'his fortunes are quite overthrown, and himself is left miserably w[i]t[h]out meanes'. His royal clientship, however, did not end with the death of the royal personage as Malcolm, then 'musitian for the harpe', was appointed to attend the children of King Charles I in that quality at £30 sterling per annum between 1638 and 1641. He was dead by 1650 when his widow Elizabeth received £8 sterling in arrears due to Malcolm as his wages with similar payments made in 1652.⁸⁰

A very informative letter in the Sutherland collection throws some additional light on the influence which a harper could wield, in this case the said Groat.⁸¹ In February 1616, in the investigation surrounding the testament of a Marcus Gibson, tailor to the queen, John Davidson contacted Sir Robert Gordon, a gentleman of the king's privy chamber and brother to the earl of Sutherland. Davidson pressed Sir Robert to try the matter with Malcolm Groat, harper, one of Gibson's 'familiaris', so as to recover the shares bequeathed to Gibson's sisters

⁷⁹ K. Sanger, 'For the Scottes Musicke', *Kilt and Harp*, xxvi, no. 3 (2009), 34-6, quoting *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, A. D. 1589 to 1603*, eds. M. Wood and R. K. Hannay (Edinburgh, 1927), 120. Ogilvie was convicted and executed for the slaughter.

⁸⁰ *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians, 1485-1714*, eds. A. Ashbee *et al.*, 2 vols. (Aldershot, 1998), i, 526-7; *Records of English Court Music*, ed. A. Ashbee, 9 vols. (Snodland and Aldershot, 1986-1996), iv, 49; v, 18, 22, 24; viii, 79. In fact, Malcolm Groat's period of employment meant that he served the queen alongside the Irish Daniel Duff O'Cahill, though not in an official capacity in the case of O'Cahill: Donnelly, 'Cork Musician'.

⁸¹ NLS, Gordons of Gordonstoun and Cummings of Altyre Papers, Dep. 175/65, no. 17. The same applied to the aforementioned travelling harper Macrae: Mackenzie, *Munros*, 32; and p. 11 above.

and mother and prevent Gibson's wife from squandering the inheritance. Davidson's son, James, and the rest of the legatees had written to Groat along these apprehensive lines. Clearly Groat was perceived as a person of influence and leverage as a harper to Queen Anne who could get things done as having access and means.⁸² There is clearly a need to reposition the harper within society at large to appreciate his socio-economic function more fully beyond a musical sphere.

Conclusion:

The picture of harp music in the far north of Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the end presents a multifaceted and interactive trait at various levels. The region synecdochically encapsulates the musical developments of the country at large. In harpers such as Donald Gibson, Daniel Melville, William Cadell, and Malcolm Groat, the scene of harp music within the far north of Scotland, and more specifically its eastern seaboard, is set within the context of players who were likely non-Gaelic speakers or playing a wire-strung harp, nor for that matter would they have much connection to Gaelic verse. As a result the region boasted a rich musical diversity even within the single instrumental field of harp music.

Overall, there is an element of cross-breeding between musicians and musical genres but also a cultural one in the mere location of these harpers found travelling across the countryside or in an urban environment. Despite the harpers' reluctance to broaden or adapt their repertoire, this dynamic encourages facets of polymusicality and multiculturalism to develop within an area long considered as static and unconnected. The decompartmentalization of harp music has enhanced our understanding of the musical scene in these outlying lands with its greater vibrancy and its openness to cultural exchanges and evolutions. Moreover, harpers should not be regarded purely in a restricted musical capacity but rather as individuals combining multiple professional activities. The repositioning of harpers within their society at large has unravelled their greater presence and socio-economic role within these communities. There is a need to expand future studies on these corollary contributions to understand more fully the nature of early-modern harpers within a musical milieu in a flux set amidst a wider cultural world which was also evolving.

Thomas Brochard, honorary research fellow, University of Aberdeen. June 2013.

⁸² This leverage was clearly seen in the case of O'Cahill: Donnelly, 'Cork Musician', 9.