As Common as Blackberries: The First Hundred Years of the Accordion in Scotland, 1830–1930

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Despite a world-wide resurgence of interest in the accordion family there is little published material in English relating to the long history of use of the instrument in the British Isles. This paper is the first attempt to get beneath the surface of a flourishing accordion tradition and seeks to provide a social and historical context as groundwork for subsequent work by others interested in the accordion and related instruments in Scotland and elsewhere.

THAT THE ACCORDION has a special position in popular and traditional music making in Scotland is beyond question. No country dance band is without at least one 'box' and the instrument does great service at ceilidhs, weddings and traditional music events from Shetland to the Borders. There are many accordion 'stars' and a large network of amateurs and semi-professional players supported by an infrastructure of suppliers, repairers and teachers. The instrument attracts a wide body of listeners who are catered for by their own clubs, radio programmes and a healthy catalogue of gramophone recordings.

Despite its popularity, the instrument has received little attention from scholars of Scottish music and it has long been dismissed as a poor, or even foreign, relation. For example, in *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland,* published in 1966, Francis Collinson quite rightly devoted considerable space to the fiddle, bagpipe and harp traditions but failed to mention the accordion even once. Other folklorists and commentators on Scottish music have been more forthright in their dismissal of the instrument as a prop of 'tartanry', part of the kind of 'haggis and heather' music against which the agenda of the post-war folk revival is set.[1] This contrasts greatly with other European cultures where the free-reed instruments have long been recognized as components of national musical culture and legitimate subjects for study.[2] The reasons behind such attitudes are many and complex but can be partly explained by the fact that the appearance of commercially produced free-reed instruments in the British Isles in the 1830s coincided with the end of the period commonly regarded as the 'Golden Age' of Scottish fiddle music. This had been dominated by the Gow family, William Marshall and other great player-composers; and given the debt Scottish music still owes to these individuals, it is understandable that many still view the subsequent decades as a time of impoverishment and musical corruption. The introduction of new dance forms from continental Europe, the emergence of minstrelsy and music hall and the adoption of new musical instrument types are seen as diluting influences on the native traditions. To many scholars, these developments of the Victorian era are seen as causes rather than symptoms of the wider

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musical change of the industrial age, and as a consequence they are excluded from consideration. Furthermore, the images of the bagpipes, fiddle and harp as symbols of Scottish music are so strong that new instruments will always be confined to a lower caste.

In this paper I seek to redress the balance through a modest contribution towards a proper understanding of a fascinating musical instrument family within a rich musical tradition. My aim is not to offer a definitive study but to draw attention to the subject as a legitimate area of study for work by others. I am concerned less with the physical development of the instrument and its many forms and more with the contexts which allowed its adoption and use. It is hoped that the work, although limited to Scotland, will also add to a wider appreciation of the accordion in the British Isles as a whole.

The First Accordions

The 1820s saw the first commercial production of a number of new musical instruments employing the ancient free-reed principle that had attracted the attentions of European scientists and inventors since the late seventeenth century. Bellows-blown, free-reed organs of the harmonium type were made in a number of centres in Europe and North America, and small free-reed mouth organs were manufactured in Germany, France and England. By the end of the decade, the miniaturization of free-reed organs and the application of finger-keys or buttons and bellows to the early mouth-blown devices came together in the creation of hand-held, bellows-blown instruments, important milestones being the 1829 patents for Charles Wheatstone of London's 'symphonium'[3] and Cyril Demian of Vienna's 'accordion'.[4]

The first accordions had a single manual with five finger-keys which when pressed sounded fixed chords from tuned banks of up to five reeds. Opening and closing the bellows while holding the same finger-key sounded a different chord for each direction of movement (known as 'single-action'). The instrument was therefore intended for accompaniment rather than solo melodic performance and it was its production of chords that gave it its name. The accordion (or 'accordéon' in French) attracted immediate interest in London[5] and within a few years, slightly larger, more sophisticated versions such as the 'flutina', which included separate melody and bass accompaniment manuals, were being produced in Vienna and Paris and were on sale in Great Britain.[6] These instruments, with their quiet brass reeds, delicate cases with mother of pearl ornaments and highly decorative bellows were confined to the domestic setting and never challenged the popularity of existing instruments or the new English concertina which was consciously developed for professional concert use.

It is not known precisely when the accordion arrived in Scotland, but there are several references to the early use of the instrument. Mary Anne Alburger, writer on the history of the fiddle in Scotland, notes that the accordion was taught professionally in Aberdeen during the late 1830s,[7] but unfortunately she offers no details of this. There is firm evidence, however, in the accounts of Edinburgh music dealer Thomas Glen,[8] which record that the company commenced the buying in of accordions, mainly from London, in September 1838, their value based at first on the number of finger-keys on each instrument.[9] The firm also obtained instruments from private individuals, an entry in 1841 recording the acquisition of an instrument 'got from a gentleman . . . in exchange of a set of small pipes allowed for the accordion'.[10] By May 1843, tutor books were being supplied from London and a few years later spare parts (mainly buttons and reeds) were

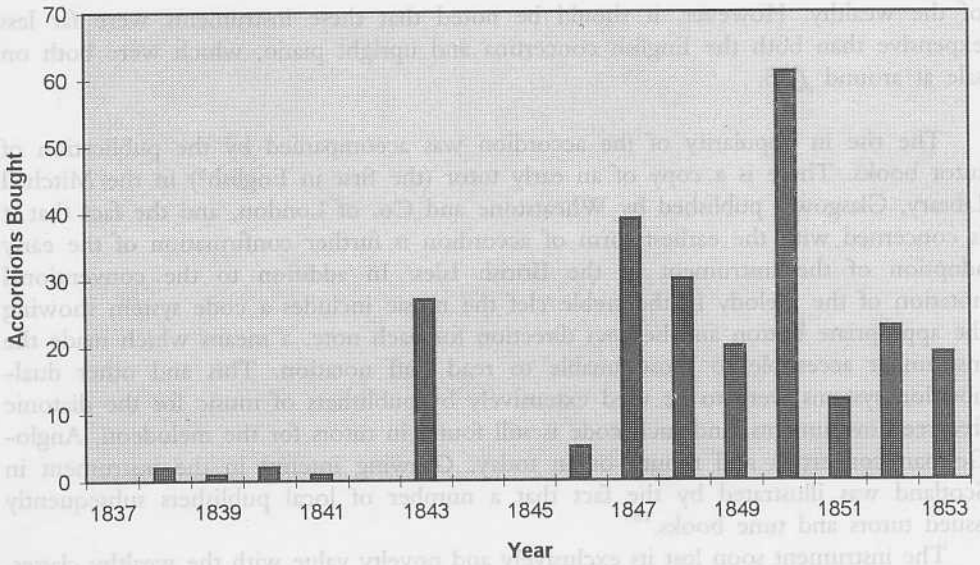


Figure 1
Accordions bought in by music dealer Thomas Glen of Edinburgh between 1837 and 1853. Based on an analysis of information in Arnold Myers, *The Glen Account Book 1838–53* (Edinburgh, 1985).

being purchased from a Glasgow importer. An examination of the records for the period 1838–53 shows a peak of purchases around 1850. (Figure 1)

In the first half of the nineteenth century middle-class social etiquette dictated that the adoption and use of musical instruments was strictly delineated by gender. David Johnson has shown how men were free to take up instruments such as the flute or violin for playing solo or in groups, while women were restricted to those like the piano, guitar and harp which were harmonically self-supporting and which did not require ungainly mannerisms in performance.[11] The inventors and promoters of the early free-reed instruments were fully aware of this division and in developing their new products openly sought to capture the widest possible market by targeting their products at both male and female users. The accordion and concertina were adopted by both sexes, although iconographic evidence would suggest that the quieter, less robust accordion was aimed mainly at genteel female players. There is a portrait by the pioneering photographers Hill and Adamson[12] showing Mrs Adamson sitting with a French accordion in a composition which closely mirrors the illustrations of elegant female players in early French tutors for the instrument.[13]

The musical potential of the early accordion was severely limited to the simple, popular tunes preferred by the amateur dilettante. This was recognized by Sir John Graham Dalyell who wrote of the instrument in 1849:

> The diminutive size of the instrument, its comparative and harmonical combinations, together with the facility of using it on little practice are strong recommendations to those who will be satisfied with moderate acquirements in the art.[14]

At a time when the typical monthly salary of an unmarried farm worker was around £1,[15] the 1843 wholesale prices of 6s for a plain 8-finger-key model and 28s for an ebony 12½-finger-key model[16] confirm that the early accordion was the preserve

of the wealthy. However, it should be noted that these instruments were far less expensive than both the English concertina and upright piano, which were both on sale at around £25.

The rise in popularity of the accordion was accompanied by the publication of tutor books. There is a copy of an early tutor (the first in English?) in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow[17] published by Wheatstone and Co. of London, and the fact that it is concerned with the earliest form of accordion is further confirmation of the early adoption of the instrument in the British Isles. In addition to the conventional notation of the melody in the treble clef the music includes a code system showing the appropriate button and bellows direction for each note, a means which made the instrument accessible to those unable to read staff notation. This and other dual-notation systems were to be used extensively by publishers of music for the diatonic free-reed instruments, and such code is still found in tutors for the melodeon, Anglo-German concertina and mouth organ today. Growing interest in the instrument in Scotland was illustrated by the fact that a number of local publishers subsequently issued tutors and tune books.[18]

The instrument soon lost its exclusively and novelty value with the wealthy classes, and by the 1860s it had been adopted by all sectors of society including street musicians and evangelists. Thomas Graham's 1864 portrait *A Young Bohemian* of a female performer at a travelling fair, which is in the collection of the National Gallery of Scotland, is an illustration of a fall in the instrument's status after the 1850s. Although accordions of the early French 'flutina' type were still being sold in Scotland as late as the 1890s,[19] the 1870s and 1880s saw many working-class musicians turn to more versatile and robust free-reed instruments which were being developed on the continent.

The German Accordion or Melodeon

Reduced import duties on luxury goods, and advances in the organization of the native instrument making industries, allowed large number of cheaply produced free-reed instruments to flood into Scotland from Germany from the mid 1860s onwards. These were eagerly bought by the expanding middle classes and those working-class musicians who were beginning to enjoy enhanced leisure time and greater disposable income. The German Concertina, a diatonic cousin of the more versatile (and expensive) English model of Charles Wheatstone, was taken up eagerly by many, but this instrument quickly lost ground to the emerging German accordion or melodeon:

> The melodion is similar in form and construction to the French Accordion, an instrument extremely popular until the introduction of the German Concertina, which came rapidly into universal favour with musicians, amateur and professional. It has one or more stops by which the tone can be varied in an agreeable manner. The instrument most commonly used is that with a single row of ten finger keys and one or more stops names 'Tremolo', 'Celestial', 'Organ' or 'Trumpet'. There are also instruments having single rows of eight and twelve finger keys, double rows with seventeen to twenty finger keys, and triple rows with over thirty keys. Such instruments have generally a variety of stops, numbering up to six, by which a skilful performer can play very complicated and difficult musical compositions. Each key produces two notes—one by opening or drawing out the bellows and the other by closing or pressing it inwards.[20]

The most prominent importer and retailer of German accordions in Scotland was Campbell and Co. of Glasgow, although there were other large concerns, such as Kohler

of Edinburgh. Campbell and Co., who claimed to have branches in London, Berlin and Dresden, offered their own 'Improved Melodion' from the late 1870s.[21] Their range of 'Universal Melodeons' with 'double acting valves'[22] on sale in the 1890s, comprised:

Gem	one row	6s 6d
Miniature	one row	10s
Paragon	one row	14s
Bijou	one row	16s
Favourite	one row	16s 6d
Excelsior	one row	23s 6d
Gothic	one row	25s
Nonpareil	one row	28s 6d
Champion	one row	37s 6d
Miniature Chromatic	two row	32s 6d
Patent Chromatic	two row	46s

By way of comparison, their Anglo-German concertinas ranged from 5s. 6d. to £5 5s and English concertinas from £3 15s to £10. All instruments were offered carriage paid to any address in Great Britain or Ireland.[23] The accessibility of the less expensive models is confirmed by the fact that the average wage of a Scottish farm servant at the time was around £27 per annum.[24]

The use of steel reeds, strong bellows, efficient finger key mechanisms and inclusion of stops to bring octave- or tremolo-tuned reed combinations into play ensured that the melodeon was more than capable of serving a noisy dance party, in or out of doors. Campbell's 'Grand Champion Melodeon' introduced in 1890 had three sets of broad reeds, two bells and four 'acting stops'. Drawing Stop 1 produced a 'fine soft Organ tone', 1 and 2 together a 'beautiful Celestial tone', 1, 2 and 3 together gave a 'rich fine Tricord tone' and 4 with any other produced a 'charming Italian Tremolo tone'. Stop 4 with 1 or 2 was said to produce a 'pleasing effect in slow music'.[25]

Scotland, as with the British Isles as a whole, never developed a native accordion making industry and remained a consumer of French, German and Italian instruments. Instruments made abroad were usually 'badged' with the name of the local retailer who often claimed to be the manufacturer. Even small dealers bought in instruments packaged as their own, such as Whyte and Co. of Dunfermline, who around 1912 offered their own range of 'International and Rosyth Melodeons' at prices between 10s 6d and 35s.[26]

During the last years of the nineteenth century, the melodeon was promoted as a medium for respectable, domestic music making. Advertisements for Campbell's products (Figure 2) carried lines such as:

MUSIC in the House Makes Cheerful Happy Homes[27]

The value of the melodeon in temperate 'rational recreation' was stressed in their catalogue:

> Possibly nothing is more conducive towards innocent and mirthful recreation in the family than music. In the present day no home may be said to be complete without a Melodeon—with a melodeon in the house, if there is no member of the family who can already play it, one or more will soon learn. It will effect the introduction of music into the household with all its benefits, helping and enticing to sing as well as play. It will make home more attractive, and thus save more expensive and dangerous amusement; consider the pleasure of familiar home songs in the evening, in which voices and hearts unite, and of the sacred songs on the Sabbath. No other instrument presents such fitness, attractiveness, and practicability for this purpose as the melodeon. Within the

compass of the instrument it is simply perfect, and so easy to play that anyone with no knowledge of music can with an hour's practice play upon it the most popular songs of the day.[28]

Testimonials published by Campbell and Co. make fascinating reading:

Rev. H. Powers, Evangelist, Author of 'Bright rays of Light', says: 'As an Evangelist, I use only Campbell's Melodeon in all my meetings, night after night; and after using a melodeon for so many years, I claim to be a judge of that instrument, and I most heartily decide in your favour'.

Rev. Robert William Dobbie, Glasgow, minister of Blochairn Church, Author of 'The Drink Traffic, the Curse of our Great Cities', says: 'Campbell's Melodeons have been known to me for many years. I am glad to see, frequently, your Melodeon in the homes of our working men. "Can the minister play?" is sometimes asked. Those that utter that question soon discover that he had a Campbell Melodeon under control before now. Men as a rule, who love music in the home are sober and industrious. May our working men hate the drink, and love the music of such instruments as yours'.[29]

Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., says: 'After duly testing the Patent Melodeon supplied to me by Messrs. Campbell and Co., I have much pleasure in saying that it is a most marvellous musical production for the money. It is got up in excellent style, the finish being superior. The tone is sweet, yet strong and can be changed from "organ" to "celestial" at will'.[30]

The melodeon was specifically targeted at those who might use it as an instrument of sacred music through advertisements in popular hymn books and religious publications:

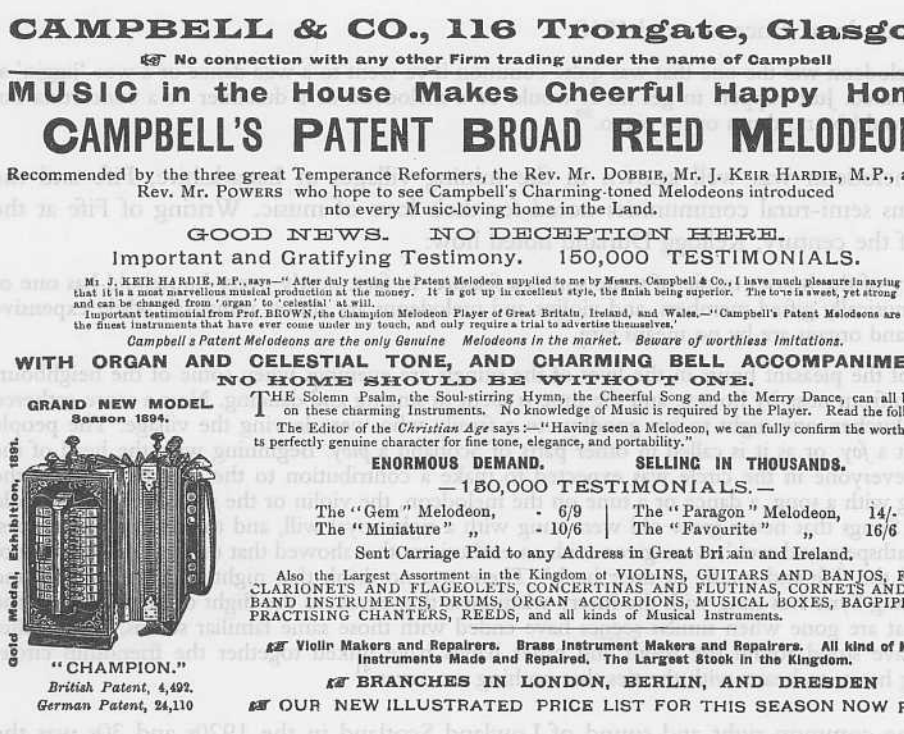
'Sacred Music for the Home.
CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS
Have Organ and Celestial Tone and Sweet Bell Accompaniments.
NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE.
The solemn Psalm, the soul-stirring hymn, the cheerful song, and the merry Dance can all be played on these charming instruments.
SPECIALLY SUITED FOR PLAYING the HYMNS in this Hymnal, and all kinds of Sacred Music.
They are often used for leading Sacred Services when a Harmonium is not Available.
NO KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC REQUIRED.'[31]

Jimmy Shand (born 1908), the influential Scottish button-accordionist, has recalled such use of the melodeon in his own family: 'In my youth, on a Sunday evening, I used to sit huddled round the blazing fire with my parents and play our favourite sacred songs on an old melodeon which I still treasure today.'[32]

The melodeon was found to be particularly suited to Scottish traditional dance music, blending well with the fiddle and loud enough to accompany dancing, as in the rural wedding described in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel *Sunset Song:*

Chae cried 'Strip the Willow', and they all lined up, and the melodeon played bonnily in Chae's hands, and Long Rob's fiddle-bow was darting and glimmering, and in two minutes in the whirl and go of strip-the-willow, there wasn't a cold soul in Blawerie barn, or cold sole either.[33]

The frequent bellows changes demanded by the single action of the melodeon matched and even emphasised the tempi and spiky, dotted rhythms of the strathspeys, schottisches, reels and marches of the traditional dance music and complemented the 'sawing' bowing style of non-'trained' fiddlers.[34] The diatonic keyboard, which facilitates the performance of successive notes in a triad using the same bellows movement, was particularly suited to the playing of traditional music displaying the so called 'double tonic', a building block of much Scottish music in which two or more consecutive triads form essential elements of the tune.[35] Although often ignored or used merely as a percussive rhythmical accompaniment in fast dance music, the bass notes allowed the performance of drones, an important component of much Scottish music. Furthermore, reed sets



CAMPBELL & CO., 116 Trongate, Glasgow.

☞ No connection with any other Firm trading under the name of Campbell

MUSIC in the House Makes Cheerful Happy Homes.

CAMPBELL'S PATENT BROAD REED MELODEON.

Recommended by the three great Temperance Reformers, the Rev. Mr. DOBBIE, Mr. J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P., and the Rev. Mr. POWERS who hope to see Campbell's Charming-toned Melodeons introduced into every Music-loving home in the Land.

GOOD NEWS. NO DECEPTION HERE.

Important and Gratifying Testimony. 150,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Mr. J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P., says—"After duly testing the Patent Melodeon supplied to me by Messrs. Campbell & Co., I have much pleasure in saying that it is a most marvellous musical production at the money. It is got up in excellent style, the finish being superior. The tone is sweet, yet strong and can be changed from 'organ' to 'celestial' at will.

Important testimonial from Prof. BROWN, the Champion Melodeon Player of Great Britain, Ireland, and Wales.—"Campbell's Patent Melodeons are the finest instruments that have ever come under my touch, and only require a trial to advertise themselves.'

Campbell's Patent Melodeons are the only Genuine Melodeons in the market. Beware of worthless Imitations.

WITH ORGAN AND CELESTIAL TONE, AND CHARMING BELL ACCOMPANIMENTS.

NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE.

GRAND NEW MODEL. Season 1894.

Gold Medal, Exhibition, 1891.

"CHAMPION."

British Patent, 4,492.

German Patent, 24,110

THE Solemn Psalm, the Soul-stirring Hymn, the Cheerful Song and the Merry Dance, can all be played on these charming Instruments. No knowledge of Music is required by the Player. Read the following:—

The Editor of the *Christian Age* says:—"Having seen a Melodeon, we can fully confirm the worth of it and its perfectly genuine character for fine tone, elegance, and portability."

ENORMOUS DEMAND. SELLING IN THOUSANDS.

—150,000 TESTIMONIALS.—

The "Gem" Melodeon,	6/9	The "Paragon" Melodeon,	14/-
The "Miniature" "	10/6	The "Favourite" "	16/6

Sent Carriage Paid to any Address in Great Britain and Ireland.

Also the Largest Assortment in the Kingdom of VIOLINS, GUITARS AND BANJOS, FLUTES CLARIONETS AND FLAGEOLETS, CONCERTINAS AND FLUTINAS, CORNETS AND BRASS BAND INSTRUMENTS, DRUMS, ORGAN ACCORDIONS, MUSICAL BOXES, BAGPIPES AND PRACTISING CHANTERS, REEDS, and all kinds of Musical Instruments.

☞ Violin Makers and Repairers. Brass Instrument Makers and Repairers. All kind of Musical Instruments Made and Repaired. The Largest Stock in the Kingdom.

☞ BRANCHES IN LONDON, BERLIN, AND DRESDEN

☞ OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED PRICE LIST FOR THIS SEASON NOW READY

Figure 2
Advertisement for Campbell and Co., Glasgow, *The Celtic Montly*, November 1900, inside back cover.

tuned (actually mistuned) to produce pronounced tremolo effects found favour with Scottish musicians, particularly in the performance of the sentimental song airs which became popular in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and has remained a central component of the national accordion 'sound'. It is therefore no surprise to find that collections of traditional music arranged for the melodeon were published in Scotland.[36] From the printed sources, which even in the early twentieth century continued to be published with a code system for non-sight-readers beneath the conventional stave, we can find evidence of tunes being adjusted or stripped down to suit the limitations of the instrument.

The wealth of photographs of rural workers displaying melodeons which survive in country life archives can give the impression that the instrument was the preserve of the farm labourer. However, while the melodeon was certainly well integrated into their musical activities, its durability and portability suiting their lifestyle and living conditions, the instrument was equally popular in the towns and cities. Writing of Dundee in the late nineteenth century W. G. Burn Murdoch recalled that 'Concertinas and melodeons were as common as blackberries and the twilight hours are filled with their melody, poured forth by the enamoured youth at the stair-foot of his senorita's seven-floor tenement'.[37]

Jimmy Reid of Edinburgh (b. 1899) recalled how as a youth he was in popular demand as a player at servants' parties in the fashionable houses of the city,[38] while Harry McIntyre of Glasgow spoke of the place of the melodeon in ad hoc bands playing for

low-status local dances around 1918:

> The melodeon was the one that was quite common if ye went to a wee dance or a wee 'jiggin' as it was called. Just coppers to get in. It would be a melodeon or a dulcimer or a concertina but there would be no drum or no piano.[39]

The melodeon was well known in the mining villages of Lanarkshire, Fife and the Lothians semi-rural communities noted for their love of music. Writing of Fife at the turn of the century, Kellogg Durland noted how:

> In many of the houses music of some sort is a feature; in fact, nearly every household has one or more musically gifted members, and violins and melodeons are almost universal, while expensive pianos and organs are by no means rare.[40]

> Some of the pleasant hours in the lives of the miners are evenings when some of the neighbours come in from near-by houses, and the time is spent in singing and dancing. Near a score gathered in our kitchen one night to say goodbye to a family who were leaving the village. The people called it a *foy*, or as it is called in other parts of Scotland a *ploy*. Beginning with the head of the family everyone in the circle was expected to make a contribution to the entertainment of the evening with a song, a dance or a tune on the melodeon, the violin or the mouth organ. The old Scotch Songs that never grow old were sung with a right royal will, and the dances, 'hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels', were given with an enthusiasm that showed that the day's work had not affected the 'life and mettle in their heels'. There was no drink that night till the very end and Auld Lang Syne was sung with the merry wistfulness that betokens the flight of memory over the days that are gone when similar scenes have ended with those same familiar strains, when other faces have stood round the room and other hands have linked together the friendship circle, binding hearts to hearts with the ties that nothing can sever.[41]

One common sight and sound of Lowland Scotland in the 1920s and 30s was the open air shows by itinerant tap and step dancers who performed on portable wooden boards to the accompaniment of a melodeon. The local history collection of Edinburgh City Library has a photograph of two such players, a Mr Macmillan and Pat Brogan, busking in the miners' rows at Newcraighall, Edinburgh during the General Strike of 1926.[42]

The widespread popularity of the melodeon saw the emergence of a number of outstanding musicians. Local and national competitions, concert parties and recording contracts led to many becoming household names with a musical influence well beyond their home areas. *Melodeon Greats,* the Topic Records re-release of 78rpm recordings of Scottish players from the period 1909–1926, gives an excellent cross-section of the styles and repertory of the recording 'stars' of the instrument.[43] The contents of this disc clearly show the developing nature of popular and traditional music of the time in the inclusion of military band and ragtime-influenced pieces and modern polkas and schottisches along with the older diet of reels, hornpipes, strathspeys and jigs. The lives and music of the featured musicians, James Brown, Fred Cameron, W. F. Cameron, 'Pamby' Dick, William Hannah, Peter Leatham, Daniel and Peter Wyper and other 'greats', have been researched in depth by Keith Chandler, and hopefully his findings will be in print before long.[44] Musical transcription, analysis and publication of such early recordings is another area which awaits attention.

Demand led to the establishment of an infrastructure of melodeon teachers, repairers and tuners. Players and makers were ever ready to develop new keyboard layouts and tunings to suit personal preferences or local cultural traditions, as with Peter Wyper of Hamilton who created his '19 Keyed International Melodeon' to meet the demand for an increased chromatic range.[45] However, the general trend was towards larger, more versatile, instruments and by the early 1920s the melodeon was being abandoned.[46] The

melodeon survived for longer away from the cities where more conservative musical environments prevailed.

The Rise of 'the Big Box'

The period after the Great War saw many changes in attitudes in popular music-making in Scotland. Mention has already been made of the rise of American-originated dance music and music from the repertory of the brass and military bands. Radio and the talkies introduced listeners to other new music, including the sound of the big bands (many of which used the chromatic piano accordion) and a whole new range of dance music and songs presented in a smooth and slick fashion. Gramophone records also introduced musicians to the repertory, style and skill of the great French accordionists of the 'bal musette' school who used double-action, 'Continental Chromatic' accordions to brilliant effect. These included Paris-based Émile Vacher (born 1883), who was highly popular and even went on to record sides of Scottish dance music.[47] Large halls offering the new music and dances arose in the cities, and there was a general falling off in the participation in music making in favour of more passive consumption.

At the local level, individual performers and dance bands were expected to provide both traditional and the new popular music forms, and during the 1920s many melodeon players turned to the more fashionable and versatile English concertina or larger button and piano accordions. In general, these instruments offered greater chromaticism, a faster action and a sound closer to contemporary taste. My informant Willie Smith of Glasgow recalled the 1920s:

> You saw the melodeon. If you remember the old sixteen (it is eighteen?) [finger-] key melodeons. I don't mean the accordion, I mean the old . . . what Dan Wyper, Peter Wyper played. They were great players. Wonderful players at their instrument but their instrument would not be tolerated today, cause they could not go into any keys. They were stuck in the sharp keys, what they call the sharp keys, Gs and Ds.[48]

Another, Alexander MacLaren of Larkhall, lamented the change, his comments referring to the fact that it was useless to continue with the smaller instruments in the face of the usefulness of the emerging larger:

> Then yer accordions came on and started. The big piano accordion; it was bloody useless![49]

During the 1920s and early 1930s larger button-keyed accordions with extended bass manuals were adopted by influential professional performers such as William Hannah, who endorsed A. H. Wilkinson and Co. Ltd. of Glasgow's twenty-one-treble and twenty-four-bass 'Excelsior' instruments (Figure 3). These accordions combined the best in up-to-date German and Italian design and technology.[50] Jimmy Shand, who started out playing a simple melodeon, recorded from the mid-1930s onwards on a two-row twenty-three-treble and thirty-six-bass button accordion made to his specification by Hohner of Germany (his version of their piano-keyed 'L'Organola'). While the early melodeons with more than one row of buttons had each row tuned a fifth apart, these new instruments were made in 'British Chromatic' tuning in which the rows were a semitone apart. This not only made the performance of certain types of traditional music rhythm easier (particularly jig time) but it also allowed the performer to tackle the sophisticated modern popular music repertory and the more 'progressive' contemporary fiddle tunes such as those by James Scott Skinner. Although the resultant music might be smoother and more flowing than with the older melodeon it still retained a button accordion 'bounce' as a

Figure 3
William Hannah playing 'Wilkinson's Excelsior Accordeon'.
Handbill for Wilkinson and Co. Ltd. (Glasgow 1925).

result of the instrument's single action. It is often found that the public continue to apply the name of earlier instrument forms to new ones and this was true of the emerging button accordions which continued to be called 'melodeons' by many players and listeners.

The new, extended bass manuals confused some musicians, particularly those who played by ear and one Glasgow music seller who published Scottish dance music with accordion bass accompaniments recognized the problem presented to players by the large range of non-standard button accordions available:

> For Melodions, these are so numerous in construction and type, it is not possible to play these arrangements as arranged, consequently, if they care to write directly to Messrs. Mozart Allan, enclosing the full range of their Left-hand keyboard and mention the pieces they would like to play I will arrange same for a nominal charge plus postage.[51]

New accordions, particularly those manufactured in Italy, were available in bright colours with decorative plastic or metal end panels or patterns outlined in gems in a

manner in keeping with the 'sophistication' of emerging modern dance culture, and as a consequence amateur musicians were tempted away from their primitive 'boxes' towards these symbols of conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, the establishment of a new internationally agreed concert pitch also encouraged musicians to abandon or trade up from the older melodeon.

At the same time, the new piano-keyed accordion became more widely available and gained recognition as a 'serious' instrument through its adoption into fashionable dance orchestras, the Hohner School of Accordion Playing which offered correspondence courses and the newly established British College of Accordionists (founded 1936). Such institutions led to a degree of standardization reinforced through examinations, competitions and the formation of accordion bands. The standard piano keyboard linked this form of accordion to a more formal, 'classical' attitude to music making which was very far removed from that of those who played the melodeon in the bothy or local dance band. Its 'double action' (playing the same note on both the press or draw of the bellows) and extensive chromatic keyboard allowed the performance of the fashionable repertory and offered a smooth playing style which differed considerably from the character of music played on the single action, diatonic instruments. The piano accordion was used by high profile professional soloists including the pianist George Scott-Wood (1903–1978), Louis Cabrelli and Myres Morrison of Paisley, who won the Murdoch McKillop Challenge Cup as 'Amateur Piano Accordeon Champion'. On the evidence of his recordings for Beltona, Morrison specialized in music from the popular brass and military band repertory.[52]

The inter-war period also witnessed the regularization of Scottish dance music by the Scottish Country Dance Society, mediated through record companies, key 'star' band leaders and the B.B.C., and the lowly melodeon had no place in their modernization of the tradition. The music hall in Scotland, which has always included elements of traditional music and song, was by then transformed into the 'variety theatre' which preferred nationally recognized stars and musical acts of a up-to-date and flashy virtuosity, which again excluded the melodeon in favour of the modern accordion. Large accordions were promoted vigorously. Forbes of Dundee, for instance, used a variety of methods to promote both their button and piano-keyed instruments, including film advertisements in cinemas, appearances at agricultural shows, concerts by 'world champions' and home demonstrations.[53]

By the 1940s, the modern accordions had found a central place in the standardized 'Scottish Country Dance Band' format of 1st accordion, 2nd accordion, fiddle and piano for the performance 'in strict tempo'. By the end of the decade Jimmy Shand had developed his three-row thirty-four-treble and eighty-bass 'Shand Morino' which was further enlarged after the war into a forty-treble, one-hundred-and-five-bass accordion. The arrival of this instrument coincided with the social change of the post-Second World War era and heralded a new phase in the history of the use of the accordion in Scotland, the history of which is still to be written.

Acknowledgements

This essay was originally conceived as the introductory chapter to a publication devoted to the early players of the melodeon in Scotland being prepared by Keith Chandler. The book in question, which is to be based on Chandler's extensive oral history and discographic work in the area, is still eagerly awaited. The essay draws on my research into

the free-reed instruments in Scotland undertaken during the 1980s with the assistance of a Glenfiddich Living Scotland Award. Aspects of my work have already found expression in my unpublished doctoral thesis *The Life and Times of the Concertina: The Adoption and Usages of a Novel Musical Instrument with Particular Reference to Scotland* (The Open University, 1995).

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Spelling

In the rapidly changing and highly competitive, international world of commercial instrument making and retail, musical instruments can assume a variety of names and spellings. Accordion can be found as accordeon (or accordéon) and melodeon as melodion and melodian at differnt times, in different places and by different players and manufacturers. Unless in a quotation or otherwise explained in the text I have adopted more conventional English spellings accordion and melodeon throughout.

Notes

[1] The low status of the accordion in Scotland is discussed in Craig Beveridge 'Accordion and Fiddle: An Undervalued Music Tradition' *Cencrastus,* 25 (Spring 1987), 28–29.

[2] For a world survey of accordion use see: François Bilard and Didier Roussin, *Histoires de l'Accordéon,* (Castelnau-le-Lez: Éditions Climats, 1991). Chapter 2, pp. 135–142 is a historical sketch of the accordion in the British Isles. Bibliographies on the accordion in other European cultures are to be found in: Phillipe Krümm, 'Bibliographie Sélective sur l'Accordéon.' *Modal,* 3 (June 1986) 47 and Birgit Kjellström *Dragspel* (Motala: Borgströms Tryckeri, 1976) pp. 163–165. Texts relating to the accordion in English are scarce but mention should be made of: Mario Conway, *The Accordion: A Study of the Instrument's Evolution and Development* (Unpublished masters thesis, University College, Cardiff, 1981), Julian Pilling, 'Accordion' in *The New Oxford Companion to Music* 2 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 1, 4–8; and G. Romani and Ivor Benyon 'Accordion' in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 20 vols, (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) I, 6–8. A bibliography relating to the history of the accordion can be found on the World Wide Web at *http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/user/pheobe/accordion/accordion-hist-texts.text.* The World Wide Web contains many other resources relating to the accordion and its history. See, for example, *The Hobgoblin Melodeon FAQ* at *http://www.hobgoblin-usa.com/molodfaq.htm, Accordion Components and History* at *http://www.sites.2c.com/accordion/history.html, The Button Box FAQ* at *http://www.willets.demon.co.uk/accord/faq/faq.html, Squeezeboxes: Names and Brands* at *http://www.hmtrad.com/wendy/sbx-name.html* and *Accordion Tuning* at *http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/user/phoebe/accordion/accordion-tuning.html.*

[3] Patent 5803, (London, 19 December 1829). Although the symphonium was intended as a keyed mouth organ, Wheatstone's patent made provision for the addition of bellows to form a primitive concertina.

[4] Patent 1757, (Vienna, 6 May 1829). The text and illustrations of the patent are reproduced in Pierre Monichon, *L'Accordéon* (Lausanne: Van de Velde, 1985), pp. 32–35.

[5] It is recorded in *A Catalogue of the Library of the London Institution* (London, 1835), p. xxxviii, that the accordion was presented by George Birkbeck at a lecture on 'some newly-invented musical instruments' delivered at the Institution in 1829. The instrument may also have been used by Charles Wheatstone and Michael Faraday in their Royal Institution lectures in 1830. For the earliest published description of the instrument in English see I. P. (John Parry) 'On the Accordion and Symphonium' *Harmonicon,* 9, (1831), 56–57.

[6] For illustrations of early forms of accordion see Monichon.

[7] Mary Anne Alburger, *Scottish Fiddlers and their Music* (London: Gollancz, 1983), p. 196.

[8] Arnold Myers, *The Glen Account Book 1838–53,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 1985, pp. 16–17.

[9] For example, on 11 September 1838 two ten-keyed instruments at 8d a key were bought from George Novra of London for 13s 4d. By May 1843 larger instruments were being purchased from Alfred Davis and Co. of London for between 21s and 28s.

[10] Myers, April 1841. It has been suggested that the introduction and rise in popularity of the free-reed instrument in Scotland contributed to the decline in the use of the domestic small-pipes. Although this reference could be taken as an illustration of such a process I would argue that there is no good foundation to support such a claim, as both instruments were considerably different and were linked to different user groups. There are references in other cultures to fights between pipers and early accordionists competing for the same market, but I have found no evidence of such conflict in Scotland.

[11] David Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the 18th Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 23–25.

[12] Sara Stevenson, *David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1981), p. 131.

[13] For example, see the covers of A. Reisner, *Méthode* (Paris, 1838) and Mce. de Raoulx, *Méthode d'Accordéon pour apprendre sans maître* (Paris, 1851).

[14] Sir John G. Dalyell, *Musical Memoirs of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1849), p. 118.

[15] T. M. Devine, 'Scottish Farm Labour in the Era of Agricultural Depression, 1875–1900', in *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland 1770–1914*, ed. by T. M. Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984) pp. 243–255.

[16] Myers, 31 May 1843.

[17] *Instructions for Performing on the Accordion to which is added a Selection of Favourite Airs* (London: Wheatstone and Co., [c. 1835]). Wheatstone and Co. also published *Instructions for performing on the French Accordion with a selection of favourite melodies* (London, 1855). The company may have been an early importer or, according to Neil Wayne ('The Wheatstone English Concertina' *Galpin Society Journal* 44 (March 1991), 117–149 (p. 126)) a manufacturer of accordions. The design of his first concertinas clearly showed the influence of French accordion construction, although by the early 1840s he had developed his own detailing.

[18] For example: *The Accordion Preceptor* (Glasgow, 1846), *The Accordion Made Easy* (Glasgow, 1851), *Cameron's Selection of Accordion and Flutina Music* (Glasgow: George Cameron, 1857). The Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, has on display a copy of the publication *The Accordion Preceptor, or Pocket Guide to the Art of playing the Accordion* (Glasgow: William Hamilton, 1849).

[19] *Privilege Price List* (Glasgow: Campbell and Co., 1890), p. 14.

[20] *Gems of Song for the Melodion* (Glasgow: Cameron and Ferguson, [c. 1880]), p. 3.

[21] Design Registered 1876, Protected 1878.

[22] The 'double acting valve' of Campbell's instruments was patented in 1884. British Patent 4492, German Patent 24110.

[23] *Privilege Price List,* p. 14.

[24] Devine, pp. 243–255. Scottish farm workers were, at the time, relatively well paid by British standards.

[25] *Privilege Price List,* p 11.

[26] Advertisement reproduced in John Hunter, *Dunfermline Athletic 1885–1985* (Dunfermline: John Hunter, 1985), p. 20.

[27] *The Celtic Monthly,* November 1900, Advertisement inside rear cover.

[28] *Privilege Price List,* p. 4.

[29] W. T. Stead, *Hymns That Have Helped* (London: Review of Reviews, 1896), Advertisement, p. viii.

[30] *The Celtic Monthly,* November 1900, Advertisement inside rear cover.

[31] Stead, p. viii.

[32] Steve Sutcliffe, 'Reeds, Jimmy!' *Folk Roots,* 59 (January 1994), 61. The reference is from the liner notes of an unspecified gramophone record issued by Jimmy Shand in 1970.

[33] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, *Sunset Song* (London, 1933; new edn, London: Pan, 1970), p. 156.

[34] For a discussion of the adoption of the melodeon into the country fiddle-playing tradition of an English region see Carole Pegg, 'An Ethnomusicological Approach to Traditional Music in East Suffolk', in *Singer, Song and Scholar,* ed. by Ian Russell (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), pp. 55–72.

[35] Alburger, pp. 37, 84 and 108–9.

[36] Examples of collections of music published in Scotland for the melodeon include: *The Melodion without a Master* (Glasgow: Cameron and Ferguson, [c. 1880]), *Sacred Songs, Hymns and Solos for the Melodion* (Glasgow: Cameron and Ferguson, [c. 1880]), *Songs and Airs Arranged for the Melodion* (Glasgow: Cameron and Ferguson, [c. 1880]), *Allan's Tutor for the Melodeon with a selection of popular melodies and*

dances (Glasgow: Mozart Allan, n.d.) and *Wyper's Melodeon Tutor for 19 Keys* (Hamilton: Peter Wyper, n.d.)

[37] W. G. Burn Murdoch, *From Edinburgh to the Antarctic* (London: Longman, 1894), p. 17. I am grateful to Mr Billy Kay for this reference.

[38] Interview by the author with Jimmy Reid, Edinburgh, 1985. Tape index: Eydmann 85.01.A1.

[39] Interview by the author with Harry MacIntyre, Galashiels, 1986. Tape index: Eydmann 86.10.04.

[40] Kellogg Durland, *Among the Fife Miners* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1904) p. 115.

[41] Durland, pp. 123–24.

[42] Nora Armstrong, *Edinburgh as it Was* (Nelson: Hendon, 1979) p. 23.

[43] *Melodeon Greats*, re-issue of original 78rpm commercial recordings by various artists with notes by Keith Chandler, (Compact Disc, TSCD601, Topic, 1994).

[44] Chandler has since published a paper on the Wypers on the internet: Keith Chandler 'Early Recordings of Traditional Dance Music: Peter and Daniel Wyper, Champion Melodeon Players of Scotland.' *Musical Traditions (http://www2.prestel.co.uk/mustrad/articles/wypers.htm)*.

[45] British Patent 7983 (1915).

[46] Pierre Monichon, *Petite Histoire de l'Accordéon* (Paris: E.G.F.P., 1958) p. 91 notes how around 1905 the Italian musician Casimir Coia, then living in Glasgow, developed a four-row button accordion which was to influence later work by continental instrument designers.

[47] Vacher recorded *Sailor's Hornpipe* (no. 1972–2) and *Miss McLeod Reel* (no. 1980) with piano and banjo for Parlophone disc E 6094. The Scottish button accordion player Will Starr was a great champion of Vacher's compositions during the 1940s and 1950s. See Bobby Harvey 'Will Starr: The Button Box King who made music go with a kick', *Scottish Memories* (January 1999), 10.

[48] Interview by the author with Willie Smith, Greenock, 1985. Tape index: Eydmann 85.07.A17.

[49] Interview by the author with Alexander MacLaren, Larkhall, 1986. Tape index: Eydmann 86.05.A11.

[50] Registered Designs 709819 and 709904. Hannah published a tutor and tune book, *Wilkinson's Accordeon Tutor for 19 and 21 Key Chromatic Melodeon* (Glasgow: Wilkinson, [*c.* 1925]).

[51] *Allan's Reels, Strathspeys and General Dance Music. Country Dances. For Piano with Concise Accordian Guide and Markings* (Glasgow: Mozart Allan, n.d.), p. 48.

[52] Beltona Electrographics. Photocopy from catalogue c. 1935. Copy in the collection of Mr Frank Bruce, Edinburgh. Morrison recorded three discs with the company, Nos. 1870, 1871 and 1872.

[53] David Phillips, *Jimmy Shand* (Dundee: D. Winter and Son Ltd., 1976). At the time of writing a new biography of Shand had just been published: Ian Cameron and Robbie Shepherd, *The Jimmy Shand Story* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1998).