



Carruthers, G. and Ingham, E. (2024) Robert Burns, Patrick Heron, and an annotated 1793 poems at Mount Stuart. *Burns Chronicle*, 133(1), pp. 82-91. (doi: [10.3366/burns.2024.0103](https://doi.org/10.3366/burns.2024.0103))

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Deposited on 21 December 2023

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*Robert Burns, Patrick Heron, and an Annotated 1793 Poems at Mount Stuart*¹

Gerard Carruthers & Elizabeth Ingham

The Bute Collection at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute holds an association copy of Burns's two-volume *Poems* (1793), annotated in Burns's hand, that has not previously been available for scholarly study.² Burns annotated the copy for Patrick Heron of Kirroughtree (c1736-1803), whose bookplate is pasted into the first volume and ownership stamp is printed in the second volume. In lieu of payment for including more recent poems, Burns had asked William Creech for 20 copies of the new edition for presentation to particularly esteemed patrons and friends, and the copy in the Bute Collection may have been one of the twenty, but it does not carry a gift inscription. In June 1794, Burns visited the Herons at Kirroughtree with John Syme, and in 1795 the poet famously wrote the 'Heron Ballads', in support of Patrick Heron's parliamentary campaign.

An acquisitions book in the Bute Collection at Mount Stuart records that the 'Burns Works with annotations in author's autograph' was originally acquired on 2nd February 1906 for £187 by John Crichton Stuart, fourth Marquess of Bute (1881-1947).³ The book had previously been sold at Sotheby's on 22nd June 1904, for £150 in one lot, along with Burns's 'slightly defective' letter to William Creech, of 16th April 1792, when the new edition was being planned. The lot was acquired by a dealer called MacMartin, who then sold the 1793 Edinburgh edition and letter on 4th September 1905 to the Edinburgh bookseller, William Brown.⁴ Lord Bute regularly acquired books from Brown at his shop on 26 Princes Street, who was his 'preferred bookseller' in Edinburgh, and just an eight-minute walk away from Lord Bute's Edinburgh residence at 5 Charlotte Square in 1905.⁵ Brown listed the "unique copy, annotated by the poet" for sale in 1905, and by January 1906 the Edinburgh edition was struck through by Brown in his privately marked sales catalogue and marked as sold.⁶

¹ Research for this article by Gerard Carruthers and Elizabeth Ingham was enabled by the AHRC-funded project "Editing Robert Burns for the 21st Century: Correspondence and Poetry" (AH/P004946/1) [Principal Investigator: Gerard Carruthers]. Our grateful thanks go to John Bute, eighth Marquess of Bute, and the Mount Stuart Trust for supporting this research and for permission to reproduce the images in this article.

² Robert Burns, *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Creech, 1793), The Bute Collection at Mount Stuart.

³ W.J. Stanley, Bute Librarian, *'Books Purchased' Catalogue MS. 263*, (1903-1911), Uncatalogued Library ETCR Box, The Bute Collection at Mount Stuart.

⁴ *Book Auction Records* Vol 1, Pt 2, 1903-1904, edited by Frank Karslake (Hampstead: William Dawson *et al.*, 1904), p.75: <https://archive.org/details/bookauctionreco03unkngoog>. See also *The Times* 23rd June 1904 for report of purchase by MacMartin. The same 1793 volumes, possibly, had been sold in 1884 at the sale of the library of Rev. William Chadwick Neligan at Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson, & Hodge for £30 (see *London Evening Standard* 14th January 1884, p.8 and *Widnes Weekly Reporter* 9th February 1884, p.6.). We are grateful to Professor Patrick Scott and Ian Riches for their assistance in tracing these sales, and to Professor Scott for sharing his ongoing research on the 1793 presentation copies.

⁵ Dr Walter de Gray Birch, Bute Librarian, *List of Booksellers.*, (1900 - 1914), Uncatalogued Miss Armet Box 2, The Bute Collection at Mount Stuart. Dr Birch lists three 'preferred booksellers' who the fourth Marquess of Bute frequented, which included Bernard Quaritch in London, William Brown in Edinburgh, and MacLehose & Sons in Glasgow.

⁶ Annotated Sales Catalogues Nos.151-160 and Nos.161-170, Acc.7926/16 (1904-5) and Acc.7926/17 (1905-7), Business Records (1879-1955) of William Brown, bookseller, Edinburgh, National

Once acquired by Lord Bute, the Edinburgh edition joined his library at 5 Charlotte Square, where he accumulated a collection of prized Burns publications, manuscripts, and relics.⁷ The fourth Marquess of Bute was a conservationist, philanthropist, and an enthusiastic collector of objects, art, manuscripts, and books relating to the Bute family and Scotland.⁸ As a keen bibliophile interested in Scottish history and literature, over the course of his lifetime, Lord Bute – along with the help of his team of librarians and transcribers - systematically acquired rare and important books and manuscripts to join his collection, which numbered over 64,000 volumes between the nine libraries in his homes by the time of his death in 1947. In the 1950s, John Crichton Stuart, sixth Marquess of Bute (1933-1993) brought the collection of rare books and manuscripts at 5 Charlotte Square to the Bute family seat of Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute. The Bute Edinburgh edition has been preserved in the Bute Collection ever since, and its counterpart letter is today held in the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum.

The Bute 1793 *Poems* provides further evidence for Burns' admiration for Heron, which is somewhat problematic for Burns biographers. On the one hand, in the 1795 parliamentary contest for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright was the 'Whig' candidate standing against the Tory candidate. On the other, we know from the research of Norman Paton, particularly, that Heron's election to Westminster was also desired by the British Tory leadership, of Prime Minister William Pitt and his Secretary of State for War, Henry Dundas. Local party politics then did not simply map on to the national version of these. Providing even more difficulty for those looking to view Burns's politics in the light of his Heron association, the latter was not long an MP when his voting record shows him standing against the abolition of the slave trade.⁹ Did Burns know of Heron's views on the issue? It may well be that he did not, but if he did was he perhaps characteristically guided in his personal preferences as he wrote the pro-Heron broadsides for the 1795 election-contest? Burns strongly disliked William Douglas, 4th Duke of Queensberry (1724-1810) sponsor of Heron's opponent, Thomas Gordon of Balmaghie (d.1806), and had written of the duke in 1790 with scathing loathing:

All hail! Drumlanrig's haughty Grace,
Discarded remnant of a race
 Once godlike, great in story:
Thy fathers' virtues all contrasted;

Library of Scotland. We are grateful to Dr Ralph McLean for his assistance in tracing the Edinburgh edition in William Brown's inventories.

⁷ Other Burns items collected by Lord Bute included his gauging rod, which was acquired in 1945, as well as two Kilmarnock editions: one purchased on 24th November 1911 for £400 (Rozelle House copy) which was kept at Dumfries House, and the other was purchased 'by exchange' in April 1937 from William H. Robinson Ltd., which was part of the 5 Charlotte Square collection that continues to be kept in the Bute Collection at Mount Stuart today.

⁸ For more on the collecting habits of Lord Bute, see: Lynsey Nairn, 'The Bute Archive and Family at Mount Stuart: Past and Present', *Art and the Country House*, (2020), online at: <https://doi.org/10.17658/ACH/MSE554> (accessed 28 November 2023).

⁹ R.G. Thorne, 'Heron, Patrick (c.1735-1803), of Heron, Kirkcudbright', in *History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*, ed. R. Thorne (1986), online at: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/heron-patrick-1735-1803> (accessed 5 November 2023). There seems no record that any of Heron's heirs received compensation in the 1830s as formerly holding enslaved people: see *Legacies of British Slavery* (University College, London), at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/> (accessed 5 November 2023). Cf. also Norman R. Paton, *Song O' Liberty: The Politics of Robert Burns* (Fareham: Sea-Green Ribbon Publications, 1994), pp.119–21.

The very name of D[ouglas] blasted;
Thine that inverted glory.—¹⁰

In the same year that Burns wrote his song, 'For a' that and a' that' ['Is there for honest Poverty'] with its famous refrain and its trope of 'the [honest] man of independent mind', Burns praised Heron in very similar terms in the first of the 1795 election ballads:

For a' that, and a' that,
Here's Heron yet for a' that;
The independent Patriot,
The Honest Man, an' a' that.¹¹

Again in 1795 in tribute to Heron Burns also wrote his 'Inscription for an Altar of Independence'.¹²

If thine an independant mind,
A soul resolved, a soul resigned;
Prepared Power's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be nor have a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear
Approach this shrine and worship here.¹³

From these lines we might also ask did Burns believe, in fact, that Heron was on the side of the abolitionist cause.

We know something of Burns's warm relationship with Heron and his family as he writes to Heron's wife, Lady Elizabeth (1745-1811), in March 1794 in delighted gratitude for an air she contributes to Burns's lyric, 'The Banks of the Cree'.¹⁴ Burns writes one letter (and perhaps another of uncertain receipt) to Patrick Heron, principally about the poet's ballad contribution to Heron's 1795 campaign. We do not, then, have enough direct evidence of the reasons underlying Burns's undoubted admiration for Heron. However, we might begin to hypothesise from Burns's 'Altar of Independence' and its rubric of the 'independent Patriot/the honest man.' We do not know if the altar was ever actually built at Kirroughtree, or was merely projected. But why at Kirroughtree, would Heron or anyone else wish such an installation? The answer most likely lies in the association of Heron's family with the seventeenth-century Covenanted movement. In 1795, Burns hostile to hardline Calvinism earlier in his career was

¹⁰ *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns II* edited by James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p.550.

¹¹ *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns II*, p.775.

¹² See Patrick Scott and Gerard Carruthers, 'Burns and the "Altar of Independence": A Question of Authenticity' in *Studies in Scottish Literature* 48:2 (2022), pp.199-206.

¹³ This is a new version of the text prepared for *Robert Burns, Poems* edited by Gerard Carruthers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁴ *The Letters of Robert Burns II* edited by J. De Lancey Ferguson and G. Ross Roy (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1985), pp.290-1.

now re-reading the Covenanters at least through a post French Revolution optic as creatures of independent conscience who should not be dismissed as fanatics

The Solemn League and Covenant

Now brings a smile, now brings a tear.
But sacred Freedom, too, was theirs;
If thou 'rt a slave, indulge thy sneer.¹⁵

Against this hypothesis, or perhaps in spite of it, Burns in his annotations in the 1793 Bute edition provides the names of those Ayrshire clerical characters (very broadly from the Covenanting tradition, we might say) that he is lampooning. However, Patrick Heron himself seems not to have been particularly interested in Covenanting history and was unlikely potentially to take offence. For Burns, the creatively imaginative writer, it is probably the case that Heron's ancestral associations along with his warm regard for the contemporary Heron family, now further confirmed by the emergence of the Bute 1793 annotated edition, guided his symbolic political and cultural investment in Patrick Heron himself as 'the man of independant mind'.

Below are the details of the annotations in the Bute Collection at Mount Stuart's 1793 Edinburgh edition in Burns' hand (in bold) and in another, unknown hand (italicised and labelled).

VOLUME 1:

Inside front board: bookplate for Patrick Heron of Heron Esq., and shelfmark 7.A.14.

p.39 I'm gaun to ***** Holy fair, **Mauchline**

p.41 Blackguarding frae K*****ck **Kilmarnock**

p.43 For ***** speels the holy door **Moodie**

p.44 ***** opens out his harangues, **Smith**

p.45 For ***** , frae the water-fit, **Peebles**

p.46 Wee ***** niest, the Guard relieves, **Miller**

p.48 Black ***** is na sparín: **Russel**

¹⁵ *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* II, p.803.

p.53 A TRUE STORY a **Schoolmaster in Tarbolton -**

p.66 THE BRIGS OF AYR, A POEM. **Ballantine**

p.86 K***** Wabsters, fidge and claw, **Kilmarnock**

p.87 Then aff to B-gb--'s in a raw, **Begbus**

p.87 But O***** after made her yell, **Oliphant**

p.87 This day M***** taks the flail **McKindlay**

p.87 the admisson of the late Reverend and worthy Mr L_ **Lindsay**

p.90 Now auld K***** , cock thy tail, **Kilmarnock**

p.91 Our Patron honest man! Gl***** , **Glencairn**

p.91 Now R***** harangue nae mair, **Robinson**

p.91 Or try the wicked town of A** , **Ayr**

p.92 M***** and you were just a match, **Mutrie**

p.94 M***** , R***** , are the boys **McKindlay, Russell**

p.108 THE DEATH AND THE DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE, THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE. AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE. *among the first of the Bard's compositions printed [AF. 23] {in a different hand}*

p.116 TO J. S***. Ja. [?] **Smith, Mauchline new in Grenada or Barbados -**

p.162 Has auld K***** seen the Deil? **Kilmarnock**

p.162 Or great M***** † thrawn his heel? **McKindlay**

p.163 Or R***** †† again grown weel, **Robison**

p.191: [long hand-drawn line next to XXV.]

p.235 WINTER A DIRGE. *The Bard's first composition printed* {different hand}

VOLUME 2:

Front board: ownership stamp for Patrick Heron of Heron with ink annotations '1 M N.9' written above.

p.1 THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT. INSCRIBED TO R. A****, ESQ. **Rob^t. Aiken, Ayr -**

p.22 Regret, remorse, >& Shame!

p.31 **D^r. Laurie, Newmills – Ayrshire**

p.48 MISS L-, **Miss Susan Logan, Ayr** {different hand}

p.57 [On A Scotch Bard,] (**himself**) {different hand}

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

This was written when I was preparing for Jamaica —

p.65 G**** H***** Esq; **Gavin Hamilton, Mauchline**

p.80 Fair B – strikes th' adoring eye, ***Burnet**

p.80 *** The late Miss Burnet of Monboddo**

p.111 J. R*****, **John Rankine** {different hand}

p.117 JOHN BARLEYCORN*. **among the first of his compositions printed** {different hand}

p.144 *This chorus is part of a song composed by a gentle-man in Edinburgh, a particular friend of the Author's. **Mr Wm Dunbar, writer to y Signet** {different hand}

p.148 Along the lonely banks of Ayr. **I composed this song on the way to Greenock, to embark for the West Indies. - I meant it as the last voice of Coila, in Caledonia. -**

p.163 Night, where dawn shall never ~~wake~~, **break**,

p.164 ODE, SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF MRS. - OF -. **Oswald Auchencruive** {different hand}

p.168 CAPT. M—H—, **Matthew Henderson**

p.181 **Rob^t. Graham of Fintry**

p.186 F*****, my other stay **Fintry** {different hand}

p.187 and bright in cloudless skies fun go down! **his** {different hand}

p.213 Here Sowter **** **Hood**

p. 215 For R. A. Esq. **R Aiken**

p.215 For G. H. Esq **Gavin Hamilton**

p.224 Miss C*****, ***Cruikshanks daughter of Mr Cruikshanks of the High School Edin'***
{different hand}

p.227 On reading, in a Newspaper, the Death of J— McL—, **ohn eod**
of the McLeods of Rassa