The 1692 Letter to John Aubrey Revisited (1)

> A Bard in common Irish signifies a little poet or a rhymer . . . He thats extraordinarie sharp of these bards is named *phili*, i.e. ane excellent poet, these frequent onlie the company of persons of qualitie & each of them hes some particular person whom he owns his master . . . The second degree consisted of those called *Skealichin* or *Sheanachin*, i.e., narrators of antiquitie and old historie especialie geneoligies of great persons & families . . . The third order contained [those] named *Kreahkirin*, i.e. such as could discourse on anie short & transient subject, . . . & the 4. consisted of those named *Kheahkirin*, i.e. such as proponed enigmaes & othere difficult questions . . .

The letter from which the above short extracts are taken was written in 1692 by Professor James Garden of King's College, Aberdeen, in response to a request from the Oxford antiquarian John Aubrey for information about Highland customs, the bards and so on (Gordon 1955; Gordon 1960). It has been described as 'an important account of the itinerant bards and other performers from the seventeenth century', and has been much quoted (Shaw 1992).

Garden had obtained his information from a person whom he called a divinity student, the son of a gentleman from Strathspey, describing bards in the region 'such as they are at present in these parts, & such as they were within the memory of the informers father (who is an aged man of ninetie seaven years)' (Gordon 1955, 20). Assuming that the age as given was correct, it means that the informant's father would have been born in 1595, and even if incorrect and he was actually somewhat younger, the old man would still have lived in Strathspey from the beginning of the seventeenth century. It should be possible, therefore, to compare his account against contemporary records to see if there is any written evidence which might further correlate that account. Fortunately for Strathspey the records of the Grants, the predominant local family, are both comprehensive and available (in the National Records of Scotland). Furthermore, they have been catalogued to modern standards, although like some other collections which had previously been used by Sir William Fraser, they have suffered a degree of mixing which has unfortunately eluded even the best efforts of the cataloguers to undo.

Mixed up among the material which was removed by Sir William for his history of the Grants, and which is still described as 'Sir William Fraser Bundles', is a series of 'Household Accounts' covering the period 1637–66. In fact the expenditures listed cover a wider area than just the household, and along with documents elsewhere in the collection provide a good overview of the social connections of the family. In particular, the accounts for 1637–39 are composed of a number of wide-ranging cash payments which include numerous references to musicians and songsters. It is therefore proposed to compare the records for those years, augmented where relevant by the other accounts, with the picture conveyed by Professor Garden's letter, and specifically the following:

> There were likewise 9 or 10 sometimes 11 or 12 women to travel togethere, who as they came to anie house two & two togethere sang one of those songs these *philies*

had made, they had ordinarlie a violer with them who played on his fidle as they sang, when they had done singing, then they danced, these were named *avranich*, i.e. singers.

The sources of the description have been identified as Ludovick Grant, a divinity student who graduated MA from King's College Aberdeen on 25 May 1683, and his father, Swene Grant of Gartinbeg, which lies to the north of the Spey about 1.3 kilometres due west of Tullochgorum (Williams 2015). This places the informants at the heart of both the Grant lands and Strathspey, and therefore well within the geographical area covered by these accounts. Indeed, Swene Grant's name appears in one account when 'his man' received a payment for bringing a roebuck for the laird, while on another occasion a violer received a payment of twelve shillings while the laird was at Tullochgorum.

Over the period 1637–39 there were 139 payments made to various performers. The clarsairs amounted to 28% of the total, pipers 37%, violers 22% and 'songsters' 17%. In addition to the payments to clarsairs, there were two to 'ane harper', indicating the presence of a player of the Scottish gut-strung harp, one to a 'Card' (*ceard*) for mending a clarsach and providing strings, and one to 'ane card' just for clarsach strings. The 'songsters' were mostly unnamed women and were usually in pairs, although on two occasions when male songsters appeared they were named, the first time a 'Donald Doll' and the second time a 'John Sutherland'.

Within the group of 'clarsairs', payments were made to 'ane blind clasechar' on just two occasions, the same number of times that 'ane women clasechar' also received payment. Evidence also appears for two clarsairs specifically identified as another laird's servant. The first was unnamed and described as 'my Lord Lovats clasechar', but the second appears a number of times. On the first occasion he was noted as: "Item given on the 17 day to my Lord Seaforth his clasechar do[nal]d dorratie 57sh[illings]." On two further occasions over the three-year period, what is presumably the same man is recorded simply as 'my Lord Seaforths clasechar'. Described only as 'donald o doratie', without any mention of an instrument, he also appears on two further occasions. The name is not very common, and further confirmation that he was likely to have been the clarsair comes from an earlier appearance of the name when in June 1623 a 'd[onal]d o derratie', described as a clarsair in Brahan, was a witness in the Register of Hornings for Inverness.[1]

Exactly what lies behind the name as it appears in these records is unclear. The retention of 'O' suggests an Irish derivation, and the nearest possibility is the name O'Docharty (*Ó Dochartaigh*), which has been recorded in Islay around the same period under the Campbells of Cawdor; that family would in turn provide a link to the Inverness area (Black 1962, 634–35). If a version of Ó Dochartaigh, it appears to have been considerably corrupted, although it is closer to a version of that name found in Ulster as 'Dorrity' (MacLysaght 1991, 84 and 88). Interestingly, a seventeenth-century association between a harper connected to Ulster and that same north-eastern part of Scotland can be demonstrated through the MacKenzie lairds of Applecross and a poem

which praises their largesse to a harper of the earl of Antrim's. Although Applecross itself is on the west coast, the lairds, like many of the MacKenzies, including the earl of Seaforth at Brahan, spent much of their time in Easter Ross. The Applecross family had an association with the Chanonry (Fortrose), where they were buried (MacDonald 1984–86).

Aside from the possibility that the earl of Seaforth's clarsair may have been an Irishman, and a payment to some English pipers while the laird was in Edinburgh early in 1637, all the other performers appear to have been native to Scotland, although not necessarily native to the Gaidhealtachd. It is possible, however, to subdivide them into two further groups: those who were apparently servitors of the Grant family or regular enough visitors to be known to the scribe by name, and those unnamed performers who received payments in a more casual manner – for example, the women songsters who were frequently described in the form 'Item given to two women songsters at the gate', the implication being that they did not perform in the house but sang in praise of the laird as he passed in or out of the gate to his home. This custom went back a long way in Gaelic society (MacInnes 1981, 141).

The geographical distribution of the payments is another factor which has to be taken into account, especially as the Grant family were the facilitating bridge between two different cultural worlds. The lairds of Grant had interests in Elgin, which often features among the payments. Indeed, a map of the places mentioned in the accounts would take on a funnel shape, consisting as they do of the core Grant lands along the upper Spey, then opening out to encompass Elgin and extending west to Inverness and east to Pluscardine. The relatively large number of payments to 'violers' may be a reflection of that Lowland influence, although on occasions when the lairds visited Edinburgh they showed an openness to new influences. For example, as early as 1620, when Sir John Grant younger of Freuchie made two visits to Edinburgh, his accounts show that he paid the violer Rob Scott the fairly large sum of thirty shillings (Fraser 1883, vol. 3, pp. 332–33).

Sir John Grant died in 1637, just at the start of the series of accounts being considered here, and so it is likely that they offer a view of what was already established practice in the Grant household, especially as the heir, James Grant, was not quite twenty-one years old at the time, and would therefore not have had a major influence before then. Certainly, as the accounts all fall under the new laird's tenure, they suggest that his initial approach to his role was conservative, while the fact that there are no further such accounts beyond 1639/40 reflects the wider political and military problems into which the young laird and his estate were drawn.

Although there are some further scattered references which include payments to 'performers', there is nothing which provides the same level of continuity and detail in the period between 1640 and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. However, over that period there had been some major changes involving payments to musicians. After 1660 there are far fewer casual payments to performers, and when payments or references do appear, they tend to be to retainers who fall under the headings of violer/fidler and piper. There are, as far as the Grant accounts are concerned, no further

references to any players of the clarsach or harp, nor are there any further references to 'women songsters'.

Comparing the physical evidence from these accounts with the description of the 'bards' given in the Aubrey letter, two linked observations can be made. The account given by Garden in 1692 mentions only one musical instrument, and that in the paragraph which describes the violer playing while the songsters performed. However, as shown above, it describes the specific professions of *phili* (filidh), *Sheanachin* (seanchaidhean), *Kreahkirin* (reacairean) and *Kheahkirin* (ceachdairean?) as subdivisions of 'Bard', in contradistinction to the structure of the Irish poetic orders, in which the *file* is at the top and the *bard* is much lower down the ranking. In that classical Irish format, the *file* produced the verse which was performed by the *reacaire* to a harp accompaniment.

The Aubrey letter makes absolutely no reference to the harp, or to the bagpipe for that matter, but the lack of reference to the pipes is understandable, as they were not involved in supporting the compositions of the poets. In the case of the harp, however, its primary function – and the justification of the harper's status – was due to its involvement with the performance of poetic works. Furthermore, as can now be seen from the Grant accounts, there was no shortage of harpers around during the first half of Garden's informer's father's lifetime. While it can now be argued that the mention of violers accompanying the songsters in the letter reflected current practice at the time the description was given, it still leaves the question of why there were apparently no harpers involved, considering the second part of the statement that the 'Bards' are described 'such as they are at present in these parts, & such as they were within the memory of my informers father' (Gordon 1955, 20).

When switching views to the picture as seen from the Grant accounts they also, with perhaps two possible exceptions, have a major missing element, but in this case it is the poets. There are of course the songster women plus two songster men, but there is no suggestion that they were the composers of what they were singing. Of the two exceptions one, a payment to 'ane bard woman', will be discussed below, the other merits some discussion here before an attempt is made to reconcile the two apparently contradictory views given by the letter and the Grant papers. The person with the best claim to be noted as a poet appears on only two occasions and is described as 'the songmaker'. On his first appearance he was paid the large sum of £6 13s 4d, though on his second appearance it drops to 27 shillings, closer to the usual level of payments.

On the first appearance he is also followed consecutively by a payment to his son and then by one to two violers, the only occasion when both singers and violers or clarsairs are paid in a manner which might suggest a joint performance. The songmaker's name has been written with contractions, and seems to read *fergr oig mc ergr vic corme*. The superscript *r* is fairly clear, so would tend to rule out expanding the name to *Fergus*, but the *g* presents problems with the alternative solution of *Fearchar*. However, in two name-lists of the laird of Grant's people who had given support to the Clan Gregor, thought to date to *c.* 1615, the latter forename occurs twice. In one case it is written *ferquhair* and in the other as *ferguhair*, with the *q* very closely resembling a *g*.[2] Therefore

if in the contracted forms of the songmaker's name in the accounts the *g* is interpreted as *q*, it can be expanded to read *ferq*uhai*r oig mc* [fh]*erq*uhai*r vic corme*.

On his second appearance, while still given the description of 'songmaker', the man's name is shortened to *fergr oig*, suggesting perhaps that the fuller naming of the first occasion indicates that that was his first visit. He is, excluding the 'songster women' and the two 'songster men', the only person who might be regarded as a poet or bard, which leads to the question: is it possible to reconcile the picture conveyed by the Aubrey letter with the picture conveyed by the Grant accounts? While the accounts are factual, reflecting actual payments made to performers noted according to the scribe's own understanding of who they were, the picture described in the letter is open to a wider interpretation. Under the collective umbrella description of 'Bards', most of the professional groups, with the exception of the harpers, appear to be mentioned, but not with the clarity that suggests the classic Irish structure of the *file* at the top of a number of lower poetic orders along with the verse being performed by a *reacaire* accompanied by the harper.

The question of how relevant that classic structure was to the wider Scottish Gaidhealtachd beyond the immediate confines of the lordship of the Isles has been raised before (MacInnes 1981, 147–48). It is argued that the Scottish *bard*, who had no direct equivalent in Ireland, had a more complex and wider function than the more formally trained *file*, who, when he does appear in Scotland, still retains a close Irish connection (Coira 2012, 36–37), and that someone like the Clàrsair Dall, a harper and composer of verse, would more closely fit the Scottish definition of *bard* (McLeod 2004, 66–69). Strathspey, like the rest of the Eastern Highlands, was outside the area most influenced by classically-trained poets, and at the same time in close proximity to influences emanating from Lowland Scotland rather than Ireland (MacCoinnich 2006, 50–53), a point which is relevant to musicians as well as poets.

There is one other contemporary window on our geographical area, a poem to James Grant of Grant composed shortly after the period of the accounts. The poet, a James MacGregor, is otherwise unknown, but the poem probably emerges from the Grants' sympathetic treatment of the MacGregors at the time when their name was proscribed. There is evidence of a number of MacGregor tenants who significantly remain as such and do not seem to have been pressured to adopt other names.

One verse which refers to harp-playing and gambling certainly fits with the records, although the times when cash is drawn by the laird in the accounts it is described as for playing cards, while the fair-bosomed women may have to be taken on trust (Ó Baoill and Bateman 1994, 126–27).

Dh'fhaighte an t'àras	In your house could be counted
Ceòl nan clàrsach,	music of the clarsach,
Fòirne air thàilisg,	a crowd at the gammon,
Mnà uchd-àillte	fair-bosomed women
As crùin an geall mun cuairt.	and crowns being wagered all round.

Another verse also refers to music in the lines *Bhiodh solas le cèir, Bhiodh faram nan teud nad chluais* ('there'd be candle-light, / the sound of strings in your ears'), although in this case, given the large numbers of violers, the reference to strings could refer to a harp or viol. Clearly there is nothing in the poem at variance with the picture presented by the accounts as far as the instruments being used are concerned, but it brings us back to the question of where in the accounts the poets are hiding. For a possible answer we return to the nature of a *bard* in a Scottish context, especially in a part of the Gaidhealtachd which was far from Ireland, which had never been subject to the lords of the Isles, and which had a foot in both the Highland and Lowland worlds. If, like the later Clàrsair Dall, some or all of those 'clarsairs' that received payments in the accounts were self-accompanied poets, the problem of reconciling them with the letter to Aubrey is resolved.

If the term *bard* can be extended to include self-accompanied poets, the references (if the 'songster women' are excluded) to female 'performers' can also be brought under the same generic label. Although it is not clear if it reflects the actual prevalence of professional female performers, references to them in the extant records for that period are rare, which makes the entries in these accounts twice involving 'ane woman clasechar' and twice involving 'ane bard woman' remarkable. It is in fact so unusual that it is safe to suggest that not only do the two payments to a woman clarsair represent the same person, but also that she was probably the 'woman clarshochar who usit ye house in my Lord his tyme' who appears in 1642 receiving a payment of 12 shillings in an entry in the Household Book of Lady Marie Stewart, Countess of Mar (Sharpe 1815). Although perhaps a little less certain, it is also possible to suggest that the 'clarshochar woman' and the 'bard woman' were one and the same, simply viewed from a different perspective.

The question of perspective is probably the key to reconciling the Aubrey account with the view drawn from the entries in the Grant papers. In the case of the letter it was a response to a specific question, and therefore to some degree a reply shaped by the form of the question. Furthermore, the reply had been modulated through oral transmission from the Gaelic-speaking Swene Grant and his son Ludovick to James Garden, whose own knowledge of Gaelic is unclear. In the case of the Grant accounts, while their scribe was likely to have been a Gaelic speaker, the picture they present is through written Scots. Like all such written material, it is factual in that the people noted as receiving payments undoubtedly existed, but we do not know how they would have actually described themselves, or in their own view, fitted into the picture conveyed by Professor Garden.

[To be continued]

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Notes

1 National Records of Scotland [NRS] DI62/7/79v. My thanks to Thomas Brochard for drawing my attention to this reference.

2 NRS GD248/14/4/14 and GD248/14/4/15.

The Turkish General

The 1692 Letter to John Aubrey Revisited (2)

The Grant of Grant accounts quoted in the first part of this article were written for only one reason – to keep track of expenditure, not to provide an accurate picture of the structure of the Gaelic professional orders. But it is possible to use them to shed some light on the transformation that those orders, especially the musicians, were undergoing during the seventeenth century.

The wire-strung clarsach and the remaining Scottish gut-strung harps were facing a future of decline, with first the gut-strung harp and then the wire-strung instruments being replaced by the spread of the viol, or as it was often colloquially referred to, 'the fiddle'. The ubiquitous use of both names can obscure exactly what instrument lies behind the term 'fiddle'. For example, close to the period of our accounts and within the overall geographical area covered by the Grant family interests, at Elgin around 1649 there was a musician mostly referred to as a violer, but in one Kirk Session entry he was noted as 'Alexander Glass, fidler, for playing on the viol'. However, in the Grant accounts the attributions are always to violers, not fidlers.

This in turn raises the question of exactly what instrument was being referred to as a viol. References to viols at the Scottish Court start to appear *c.* 1530, by which point the earlier medieval 'fiddle' was already being relegated to less prestigious music-making circles. The viol, along with many of its players, had probably arrived from the continent through connections between the Stuart monarchs and other royal courts. Like the 'fiddle' before it, there seems to have been little standardisation of the instruments, but they presumably continued to evolve until superseded by the violin family towards the end of the seventeenth century (Alburger 2007, Pepper 2006, Remnant 1986).

By the end of the sixteenth century and the start of the seventeenth, the violers have begun to bear predominantly Lowland Scots names, and where it is possible to find some further background information, they appear to be relatively affluent. Although mainly based in Edinburgh and other large urban centres, like Thomas Devotie or Dovertie (d. 1618) 'indweller in the Canongate' and Robert Scott the elder (d. 1645), a burgess of Edinburgh, they also appear on occasions as visiting musicians in the household accounts of the aristocracy. In the case of Robert Scott the elder,[1] who had so impressed Sir John Grant in 1620, his patrons included the earl of Buccleuch, and he also had financial dealings with the Edinburgh lawyer Andrew Hay of Haystoun WS and his family. The latter connection is possibly of some significance, as the only two named violers in the Grant accounts not bearing 'highland' names were a John Hay in 1637 and an Andrew Hay in 1639.

While there is no evidence that the medieval 'fiddle' ever reached the Gaelic heartland, it is clear that the viol eventually did, and this is consistent with the suggestion that, unlike the Irish word *fidil*, the Scots Gaelic *fidheall* derives from 'viol' rather than 'fiddle' (Bruford 1994, 73). The Grant papers now seem to provide the

earliest evidence for the viol crossing over into that Gaelic world, and would suggest that it was the patronage of violers by Sir John Grant and his son and heir James which was the catalyst. To expand further the background to these events, the discussion has to include the pipers, who were not mentioned at all in the Aubrey letter (Gordon 1955), although as it was a reply to an enquiry about bards, there was actually no reason why it should have included any references to pipers.

A branch of the Cumming family provided pipers to the chiefs of Grant, and the first of these may descend from a 'John piper alias Cuming' who first appears in Aberdeen in 1519. However it is not until the first of the series of accounts which are the subject of these articles that we move on to firmer ground with the appearance of a William Cumming, 'pyper', in the 1637 account. By 1639 he is being referred to as 'Old William Doll (*Dall*) the pyper', implying that he may have gone blind in old age, and he appears to be the senior piper around at that period. From then until John Cumming, who was sent for tuition to Donald MacArthur in Skye in 1770 and competed at the 1785 Highland Society of London piping competition, the general chronology of the family is clear, although the exact relationships are less so.

The two family members who have probably made the most impact are the piper William Cumming (died 1724),[2] whose portrait was painted in 1714, and Angus Cumming, who published a collection of music a few months before he died in 1780 (Cumming 1780). The portrait of the former as 'Piper to the Laird of Grant' is usually held to be an example of a typical 'clan piper', although the reality is somewhat different, with a much closer military involvement (Sanger 2015). Although the young Angus Cumming appeared as a piper in one of the Independent Companies raised in 1745 by Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant, he subsequently seems to have concentrated solely on the violin. In the preface to his 1780 collection he states that he 'follows the profession of his fore-fathers, who have been for many generations Musicians in Strathspey'.

The generalist description 'musicians', rather than a more specific reference to a named instrument, does certainly fit better with the picture provided by those early seventeenth-century accounts, along with the later records: for example, between 1735 and 1738 one of the Cumming family was sent to a 'music master' for instruction on the French horn. While that may have been merely an exotic diversion (which was then abandoned, the student being bought a fiddle),[3] back in 1637 the generation following Old William Dall in the piping line produced a piper called Alistair Cumming, yet contemporary with him there were also payments being made to an 'Alistair Cumming, violer'. This poses the question of whether it was the same person wearing two hats and simply noted in the accounts by whichever instrument he was using at the time.

The positions of piper and violer were later to be combined in one office when in 1653 a letter of pension by James Grant of 'Freuquhy' instructed his chamberlain for Inverallan to pay Alexander Cumming, his piper and violer, twenty merks yearly for five years (Fraser 1883, vol. 3, p. 462). However, there are also Cummings for whom there is no apparent evidence that they also doubled as pipers: these include John Cumming, violer, who appears twice in the accounts for 1639, and William Cumming,

violer, who was married in Edinburgh in 1643. Whichever way the evidence is interpreted, it appears that when the viol first made its appearance in Speyside, the Cummings, a family who were already practitioners of the indigenous bagpipe, also adopted the new instrument.

This might provide an explanation for a point made by many commentators on 'Scottish Fiddle' music, that despite the instrument and its earlier precursor the viol potentially having a very wide musical range, the traditional Scottish fiddle uses what is effectively the bagpipe's nine-note scale. Indeed, the potential for such a piping influence on the 'naturalisation' of the violin is not confined to Strathspey, but can also be found in Lowland Scotland, where in 1678 a piper entered into a contract with a patron who was to provide him with a violin in exchange for a commitment to play on either bagpipe or violin an a set number of occasions (Sanger 2018).

Any mention of Strathspey and violins also raises the question of the dance-linked Strathspey reels. This is a topic which has given rise to a series of articles debating the origins of the strathspey, published over the last few years by William Lamb and Michael Newton.[4] One aspect of these exchanges which has a bearing on the interpretation of the Aubrey letter was an exercise in mapping the titles of tunes containing an identifiable place-name from the earlier music collections (Lamb 2014). This gave rise to two maps, one covering 1700–49 and the other 1750–83, and it is the first of these which shows what its author calls an 'intercultural zone' running parallel to the Highland Line and extending roughly fifteen miles into the Gaelic-speaking side of that line. When that map is overlaid with references to viols and violins over the same timescale, there is a remarkable correlation, especially for viols. Indeed, in terms of the number of references the viols predominate, not too surprisingly, given that the violin was the more recent introduction, but moving backwards into the seventeeth century and the period before the introduction of the violin, the distribution of the viol provides an interesting picture. There is little sign of its presence west of the Highland Line except for the area around the Grant lands of Strathspey, where we have evidence of the viol being in use by 1637. This brings us back to the letter from Garden to Aubrey, based on the information provided by the two Grants, father and son, which only mentions one musical instrument, the viol. It is the instrument with which Ludovick Grant would have been most familiar during his earlier life in Strathspey and during his studies in Aberdeen, and its inclusion as the only instrument mentioned in the account suggests that Garden's letter reflects the contemporary views of the younger Grant rather than his father.

Swene Grant of Gartinbeg would certainly have been very familiar with the clarsach prior to the period *c.* 1645–60, when political events seem to have had some effect on the survival of that instrument in the Strathspey area. His son would also have been aware that the instrument existed, as one of the Gartinbeg shielings was actually known as *Ruigh nan Clàrsairean*,[5] and at that date many performers on the clarsach were still active in other parts of Scotland. For example, just a little to the south, in neighbouring Atholl, the laird of Lude was an active gentleman performer, and several professional players remained (Sanger 2009). Likewise, in Campbell country around

Loch Awe the poet Donnchadh Ó Muirgheasáin and the blind harper Donnchadh Mac an Deòir were both active.[6] Even within the wider Grant family, Alexander Grant of Shewgly (b. *c*. 1675, d. 1746) had a reputation for playing the clarsach (Sanger and Kinnard 1992, 153–55).

The number of surviving contemporary written accounts of the Gaelic arts in Scotland cannot be described as substantial, which is why the Aubrey letter has acquired a justified importance. However, while the intention is not to diminish that importance, this exercise in comparing it to the picture gained from the contemporary written accounts of payments to actual people does enable the view provided by the Aubrey letter to be placed in a wider context. This leads to the conclusion that the letter presents some problems if taken verbatim. Despite the claim that it includes testimony from Grant senior, which would have extended its overview back to the start of the seventeenth century, the fact that the only musical accompaniment it associates with the 'bards' is the viol suggests that the views mostly reflect the experiences of the younger Grant.

It is clear that from the start of the seventeenth century the chiefs of Grant straddled the Gaelic and Lowland Scots worlds, which resulted in the early adoption of the viol, followed by its later replacement the violin, in the Grants' Gaelic heartland of Strathspey. The two facts that the musical accompaniment usually connected with the dance form called the strathspey was played on the viol or violin, and that those instruments seem to have first crossed the 'Highland Line' into Strathspey, explain the geographical connection between the place-name and the dance.

The references to performers among the Grant accounts taken from National Records of Scotland GD248 are included by kind permission of the Right Hon. the Lord Seafield.

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Notes

1. Robert Scott, violer, and his wife Janet Stuart had married in Edinburgh in 1609. According to his testament, where he was described as 'Robert Scott elder, violer', he died in 1645 leaving a son Robert Scott younger, violer, who carried on the line. The son was next on record with the death of his wife Grissell Cockburn in 1659. He married a Catherine Scott in 1660, but between then and her death in 1669 they buried five children. His own death does not seem to have been recorded, but he was certainly the last of that family of violers.
2. NRS GD248/108/12/10/4. The piper's salary for the year Crop 1724 was paid to the deceased's 'relict'.
3. NRS GD248/101/1/38.
4. Some of these articles were formally published in journals, others on personal websites. The best way of finding them is through their respective listings on the public website academia.edu.
5. Variously spelt 'RignaClarsor' (1790), 'Rynaclarsarin' (1816) and 'Rynacluasarn' on the first series 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) map surveyed between 1867 and 1871. Along with the other Gartinbeg shielings it was situated in the Slochd, and from its position on the early OS maps it seems to have been where Slochd as a specific place, rather than an area, now exists on modern maps. My thanks to Michael Newton for his suggestion that 'Ry' probably represented *Ruigh,* a shieling, and to John Halliday for his information that the Gartinbeg shielings were thought to have been located somewhere in the Slochd area.
6. Contemporary records indicate that under Campbell patronage, they were both active in that area, although whether they worked together is unclear. The blind harper certainly travelled widely, including to Edinburgh, where one of his children was buried. My original article on the harper Duncan McIndeor (*WHN&Q*, ser. 1, no. 30, Feb. 1987, pp. 3–7) has been considerably expanded, along with a complete transcription of his testament and details of the reference to the poet. It can be found at https://www.wirestrungharp.com/harps/harpers/duncan_mac-in-deor/