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# EDINBURGH GOLDSMITHS AND RADICAL POLITICS, 1793–94: THE CASE OF DAVID DOWNIE

WILLIAM IRVINE FORTESCUE

ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1794 a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer sitting in Edinburgh found David Downie, an Edinburgh goldsmith, guilty of the crime of High Treason. Downie and his accomplice Robert Watt were sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered. The Downie case is well known. It is referred to, not always accurately, in several general works of the period; it has been the subject of two articles in the *Innes Review*, from a Catholic perspective; and it was even recently cited in a writ of Habeas Corpus brought against Donald Rumsfeld in the Supreme Court of the United States.<sup>1</sup> This article attempts to shed new light on the Downie Case, using contemporary newspapers, published court proceedings, and the Minutes of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the City of Edinburgh. Downie's transition from respectable craftsman to participant in treasonable activities will be examined within the context of the world of the Edinburgh goldsmiths from the 1770s to the 1790s.

## JACOBITE ASSOCIATIONS

While eighteenth-century Scottish Jacobitism differed significantly from the British political radicalism of the 1790s, they did at least share an opposition to the Hanoverian Establishment.<sup>2</sup> It is not clear whether or not David Downie was a Jacobite sympathiser, but he certainly had Jacobite associations, which emerged at the time of his marriage. Before then his early life was unremarkable. He was probably born around 1736, the son of John Downie, an Edinburgh watchmaker. His mother was a former housekeeper to Lady Gray of Kinfauns Castle, Perthshire. Apprenticed (21 November 1753) to William Gilchrist, then Deacon of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths, on

29 May 1770 he was assigned his essay (a plain silver vase and a plain gold ring).<sup>3</sup> His essay was accepted on 20 November 1770, whereupon he qualified as a Freeman of the Incorporation, with Mitchell Young, 'Painter in Edinburgh', as his Cautioner.<sup>4</sup> Established as an Edinburgh goldsmith, he married, probably in 1773, Mary Drummond, who had been a servant to the Duchess of Perth.

The Drummonds, titular Dukes of Perth, were amongst the most prominent Jacobite families in Scotland. The first Duke served King James VII as Lord Chancellor in Scotland and died at the exiled Court of Saint-Germain. The second Duke joined the 1715 Rising, commanded the Jacobite cavalry at Sheriffmuir, and also died in exile. The third Duke commanded the left flank at Culloden, while the fourth Duke had commanded the left flank at Falkirk. This astonishing record of service may have impressed Mary Drummond. At any rate, her first son (born 24 March 1774, baptised 31 March 1774), was given the names Charles Stewart. Remarkably, the witnesses at his baptism were Charles, Lord Linton, son and heir of the Earl of Traquair, and Linton's aunt, Lady Barbara Stewart. The Stewarts of Traquair were staunch Roman Catholics and Jacobites, and socially far removed from an Edinburgh goldsmith and son of a watchmaker. However, the Drummonds and the Stewarts were connected by marriage, since Lady Mary Stewart, a sister of Lady Barbara, had married John Drummond, titular fifth Duke of Perth. The Downies had another son, James Drummond (born 15 January 1787, baptised 18 April 1787), possibly named after the third Duke of Perth. The Downies also had two daughters: Mary-Anne (born 18 December 1776, baptised 31 December 1776) and Peggy (born 27 January 1781, baptised 31 January



Fig. 1. Painting of the south side of St Giles and the Parliament Close or Square, as it would have been c. 1790, attributed to David Wilkie, John Kay and others. Goldsmiths' Hall is on the left, between the turreted Parliament House and St Giles. Downie's shop was beneath Goldsmiths' Hall. The goldsmiths' shops of William Auld, Peter Mathie, Patrick Robertson and Alexander Gardner were in the buildings in front of St Giles, which were swept away in 1829 during the restoration of the church. (Photograph courtesy of City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries.)

1781). Downie's Jacobite associations may not have had a lasting impact. He certainly swore an oath of allegiance to King George III, thus enabling him to vote in the elections for office-holders of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths.<sup>5</sup>

#### EARLY CAREER

Evidence on David Downie's working career as an Edinburgh goldsmith is patchy. He was first employed as a clerk to Alexander Gardner, a leading Edinburgh goldsmith and Deacon of the Incorporation from September 1772 to September 1774. Gardner served as one of the witnesses to James Drummond Downie's baptism in 1787, long after Downie had ceased working for Gardner, so clearly their relations remained friendly. The earliest

newspaper reference to Downie is to be found in the *Caledonian Mercury* for 29 May 1772 (p. 3):

FOUND. FIVE years past in April, betwixt the Two-penny Custom and Lochrin, near Edinburgh, an OUTER CASE of a GOLD WATCH. – Any person proving their right to said case, may have it on demand, by applying to David Downie, Goldsmith.

This suggests that by May 1772 Downie had become an independent goldsmith, though no work address is given for him. A similar notice, however, appeared in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 8 February 1773 (p. 1), giving the address 'at the corner of the Luckenbooths, opposite to Forrester's wynd'.

By 1775 David Downie had entered into partnership with his elder brother, William. Probably born around 1731, William had been

apprenticed on 20 February 1745 to a watchmaker, James Geddes, had become a freeman clock and watchmaker on 2 November 1756, and had been admitted a burgher of Edinburgh on 21 January 1767, some six months after the admission of his brother (10 July 1776).<sup>6</sup> The Downie brothers described themselves as watchmakers and goldsmiths, a practical association, since watchmakers worked in gold and silver and might order watch chains from goldsmiths. At the head of the Luckenbooths on the north side of St Giles they had a shop, which they advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 19 August 1776 (p. 3):

**BULLION WANTED.** At the shop of W. and D. DOWNIE, north west corner Luckenbooths, Edinburgh, Highest prices will be given for OLD SILVER and FOREIGN COINS, SILVER and GILT LACE, etc . . .

N.B. There are at said shop a collection of ROMAN COINS, (valuable to the curious) lately found in digging the ground, mostly all of them different; and, after the verdigreese and rust being taken off, are clean and legible, as if only of a dozen year's coinage, although betwixt seventeen and eighteen hundred years old.

Edinburgh goldsmiths were probably experiencing difficulties in securing adequate supplies of gold and silver bullion, perhaps partly due to the American War of Independence. The brothers' partnership did not last long, because William died prematurely, aged about forty-five, on 10 October 1776.<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterwards, the following notice appeared in the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 1–5 November 1776 (p. 295).<sup>8</sup>

THE CREDITORS, or their agents, of the deceased WILLIAM DOWNIE watchmaker in Edinburgh, are entreated to lodge their claims at the shop of his brother David Downie goldsmith, north-west corner of the Luckenbooths, Edinburgh, on or before the second day of December first, on which day they will please attend at John's Coffee-house at 12 o'clock noon, when a state of his affairs will be laid before them, in order to have a settlement.

In January 1778 David Downie began renting from the Incorporation a shop under the Goldsmiths' Hall for an annual rent of sixteen pounds (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> He proceeded to spend the considerable sum of eleven pounds repairing the shop. When he submitted the repair bill to the Incorporation, the latter agreed to pay only 6s 3d for a new hearthstone, 16s 5d to the glazier's account, and 2s 6d for a key to the shop's door.<sup>10</sup>

The Minutes of the Incorporation give a mixed impression of Downie. On the one hand, he regularly



Fig. 2. Sauce boat by David Downie, Edinburgh, 1783–84, engraved with crest and motto for the Earl of Stanhope. (Photograph courtesy of the National Museums of Scotland.)

attended Incorporation meetings; he was chosen one of eight quartermasters (September 1782 to September 1784); and he was elected Treasurer for a four-year term (1784–88), during which he was specifically thanked for his supervision of repairs to the Goldsmiths' Hall after a fire.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, by September 1780, he had identified himself with the Incorporation's awkward squad; and he early developed an antagonistic relationship with his future nemesis, Peter Mathie. In the bad-tempered Incorporation meetings of 14 and 16 September 1780, Downie and Mathie were on opposite sides; and the following year Downie, together with Alexander Aitchison and James McKenzie, challenged, and refused to approve, the Treasurer's accounts submitted by Mathie.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in September 1786 when James McKenzie and William Dempster acrimoniously contested the post of Deacon, Downie backed McKenzie while Mathie prominently supported Dempster.<sup>13</sup>

Very little silver bearing the maker's mark of David Downie has been recorded. The Dietert *Compendium of Scottish Silver* lists just four items: a teaspoon of c. 1775, a toasting fork of 1781–82, a sauce boat of 1783–84, and a mustard pot of 1786–87 (figs 2 and 3).<sup>14</sup> Although apparently producing relatively little silver, Downie had three apprentices: Thomas Edward (apprenticed 1776); Charles Stewart Downie, his elder son (apprenticed 1788); and William Marshall (apprenticed c. 1791, Freeman 1802). Amongst Downie's contemporaries, several had comparable numbers of apprentices, such as George Beech (1), Archibald Ochiltree (2),





Fig. 3. Mustard pot by David Downie, Edinburgh, 1786–87. (National Museums of Scotland.)

Peter Mathie (2), Alexander Aitchison junior (3), and Daniel Ker (4), the exceptions being James McKenzie (6), William Cunningham (8), and Patrick Cunningham senior (10).<sup>15</sup>

Downie must have produced considerably more silver than has so far been recorded. According to Christine Johnson, Downie, ‘a Catholic goldsmith’ and ‘well-known member of the Scottish Catholic community’, ‘received commissions for the making and mending of silverware, particularly sacred vessels such as chalices, from priests living as far away as Braemar’.<sup>16</sup> He must also have received commissions from Catholic families, notably the Stewarts of Traquair. As has already been noted, Lord Linton, son and heir of the Earl of Traquair, and Lady Barbara Stewart, were the two witnesses at the baptism of his first-born son, and examples of Downie silver can reportedly ‘still be seen at Traquair House’.<sup>17</sup> In addition, his old master Alexander Gardner seems to have continued to give him work, and Downie, like most Edinburgh goldsmiths, may have produced and or sold jewellery.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Downie was probably not very successful as a goldsmith. Perhaps his Catholicism, while bringing him Catholic clients, cut him off from Protestant clients. However, Downie may well have had other sources of income. Like several Edinburgh goldsmiths during the eighteenth century, he acted as a money-lender. Amongst the Traquair manuscripts there is a document, dated 1773, which indicates that he had lent ‘one hundred pound sterling’, a considerable sum at that time, to Lady Lucy Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Traquair.<sup>19</sup> Also, Downie seems to have earned money from the sale of Roman Catholic publications.

#### A ROMAN CATHOLIC IDENTITY

David Downie was an active and committed Roman Catholic. He had important links with the Catholic Drummonds, Dukes of Perth, and the Stewarts of Traquair; Catholic priests regularly visited his house; a close friend, the Rev. Dr Alexander Geddes, was a Catholic priest, cousin of the Catholic bishop, John Geddes, and possibly related to the watchmaker James Geddes, to whom William Downie had been apprenticed; and, from his shop in the Parliament Close, he sold Catholic devotional works, such as John Austin’s *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1789) and Father James Robertson’s new edition of the Liturgy.<sup>20</sup> Alexander Geddes was perhaps a surprising friend for an Edinburgh goldsmith.<sup>21</sup> For years Geddes worked on a new translation of the Bible, eventually published in two volumes in 1792 and 1797, while at the same time publishing works such as *Cursory Remarks on a Late Fanatical Publication [by John Williams] entitled A Full Detection of Popery* (London 1783), and a commentary on the *Encyclical Letter . . . to all the Faithfull . . . on the Bill for obtaining relief for the English Catholics* (1791).<sup>22</sup> As a close friend David Downie may have shared this Catholic identity, and this may have set him apart from the other Edinburgh goldsmiths, all of whom on becoming Freeman had sworn an oath that they adhered to ‘the True Religion presently professed within this Kingdom’ and that they would ‘abide therein to [their] life’s end’.<sup>23</sup>

Downie was probably the only Catholic member of the Edinburgh Incorporation of Goldsmiths; and he was certainly the only member who had a close friend who publicly campaigned for Catholic emancipation.<sup>24</sup> In September 1778 at a meeting of the Incorporation James Dempster required that Downie should take the Oath of Abjuration. Downie refused to abjure his Catholic faith, declaring that this was an unprecedented demand, and he was consequently debarred from voting in Incorporation elections.<sup>25</sup> Downie did not take this disqualification lying down, demanding that various other goldsmiths should swear the Oath of Abjuration (they all did), and protesting at the next Incorporation meeting against his disqualification from voting.<sup>26</sup> By September 1780 he was back on the list of qualified voters, despite objections from William Dempster, supported by Peter Mathie.<sup>27</sup>

Faced with the need for national unity and the recruitment of Catholics into the army and navy during the American War of Independence, the British government introduced into Parliament a bill for the repeal of the Penal Laws against Roman Catholics. This provoked anti-Catholic riots in Edinburgh in January 1779, when Bishop Hay's chapel, home and library in Blackfriars Wynd were destroyed. On 12 January 1779 the Incorporation of Goldsmiths met and drew up a statement which was published the next day in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (p. 3):

The Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the city of Edinburgh ... resolved to concur with the other incorporations and societies in this city, and with the royal burghs, parishes and other societies throughout Scotland, in every constitutional measure for opposing any bill that may be brought into Parliament for repealing the laws against Popery in every stage of such bill, in both Houses of Parliament, and to contribute from their public funds a proportion of the expence necessary for carrying forward such opposition.

Twelve of the fourteen Incorporated Trades of the city of Edinburgh (not the Surgeons or the Baxters) issued similar protests; and opposition to the repeal of the Penal Laws was widespread throughout Scotland.<sup>28</sup> Downie presumably felt alienated from his colleagues as a result of this initiative, particularly as his fellow-goldsmiths had agreed to use Incorporation money to help fund the anti-Catholic campaign. Downie's Catholicism continued to be an issue. A second attempt to disqualify him from voting in Incorporation elections, on the grounds of his Catholicism, was made by Patrick Cunningham and Francis Howden on 12 August 1788.<sup>29</sup>

#### THE IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

While David Downie's religious situation was probably unique for an Edinburgh goldsmith at that time, the economic changes and challenges he faced were common to all Edinburgh goldsmiths during the last decades of the eighteenth century. The Industrial Revolution affected goldsmiths along with everybody engaged in almost any form of manufacturing. A commercially viable process of fusing a layer of silver on to a copper base was developed in the early 1740s, but it was not until the 1760s that Sheffield Plate, as it came to be known,

was produced in significant quantities. Sheffield Plate thereafter constituted a cheaper alternative to silver, which was between three and five times more expensive. Sheffield rapidly developed as the principal centre for the manufacture of knives, many of which had silver handles. In 1773 assay offices were established in Sheffield and Birmingham, where large workshops were soon producing every type of silver article. The products of the silver workshops of Sheffield and Birmingham, as well as of London, were likely to be cheaper and more fashionable than those of Edinburgh goldsmiths. At approximately the same time, silver became available in thin sheets of a uniform thickness, which could be made into silver articles more cheaply and more easily than by the traditional process of hammering out a lump of silver into the required shape.

Associated with these changes was the spread of retail jewellery, silver and hardware shops. On 30 June 1768 a committee of the Incorporation reported that 'Peter Forrester at the foot of the Castle Wynd in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh makes and sells Gold and Silver work of different kinds though he is not a Freeman of this Incorporation'. Legal proceedings against Forrester were instituted.<sup>30</sup> Yet in November 1773 'sundry reports were going that some [goldsmiths] had of late traffick'd with Peter Forrester'; and in December 1774 Forrester placed an advertisement in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* for his jewellery and hardware shop, now located opposite the Cross in the High Street.<sup>31</sup> Thereafter he advertised regularly, announcing that he had for sale an expanding range of goods – jewellery, silver items of every description, swords, buckles, watches, snuff boxes, 'picktooth cases', guns and pistols, spurs, pocket and memorandum books, canes, whips and sticks, silk and linen umbrellas, backgammon tables, playing cards and dice. Similar establishments soon followed.<sup>32</sup> Besides these hardware stores, Edinburgh watch-makers were also engaged in the 'Jewellery and Goldsmith Business'.<sup>33</sup>

Forrester's advertisement in 1784 clearly indicates how these goods were sourced: 'One of the partners has just returned from London, and all the other manufacturing towns in England, where he has been for six weeks, looking out and buying from the best makers, with ready money, a very large, complete, and elegant assortment of goods'.<sup>34</sup> His

stock was extensive and his prices low. An advertisement in March 1785 boasted that 'no shop in town' could undersell him.<sup>35</sup> Another Forrester advertisement offered for sale 'a second hand silver bread basket, which will be disposed of for very little above the value in silver'.<sup>36</sup> Thus Edinburgh goldsmiths even had to compete with the retailers in the market for second-hand silver. Moreover, the retailers were not confined to the Old Town. From the 1770s the construction of the New Town meant that the majority of Edinburgh's more prosperous inhabitants migrated from the Old Town to the New. Whereas Edinburgh's goldsmiths remained in the Old Town, John and Andrew Bruce announced in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 2 July 1785 (p. 1) that they had opened a new shop at No. 10 Princes Street, selling 'a complete, elegant, and fashionable assortment of jewellery, silver, plated, japanned, and hardware goods'. Fashion in Scottish domestic silver, as in so much else, now originated in England, and fashions now changed more rapidly than previously, disadvantaging the Edinburgh goldsmiths.

The Edinburgh goldsmiths tried to fight back. While remaining in the Old Town, some of them were beginning to leave the Parliament Close and the Luckenbooths, where they had traditionally congregated, for new addresses: William and Patrick Cunningham moved to the foot of Lady Stair's Close, facing the Mound, in 1789; Francis Howden had moved to Hunter Square by 1791 and William McKenzie to 39 South Bridge Street by 1793.<sup>37</sup> William Robertson, son and successor to Patrick Robertson, moved from 6 Parliament Close to 3 South Bridge Street, West Side, in July 1794.<sup>38</sup> Presumably the new addresses offered more spacious and attractive premises in these new streets. However, this gradual dispersal must have affected the cosy, clustered environment which the Edinburgh goldsmiths had enjoyed for so long around St Giles Cathedral; and the goldsmiths who moved to, for instance, South Bridge or Hunter Square, could find themselves in close proximity to at least one jewellery, silver and hardware retailer.

Another strategy for survival was to attempt to assert a monopoly right to sell silver in Edinburgh. The *Caledonian Mercury* reported on 12 November 1791 (p. 3):

We hear that the Incorporation of Goldsmiths in Edinburgh are about to raise a process against several jewellery merchants in Edinburgh, for selling silver work, which they apprehend their Charter empowers them to prohibit. The Charter of the Incorporation is drawn in more strong terms than any in town.

This was wishful thinking. The very next Saturday (19 November 1791), the *Caledonian Mercury* carried on its front page an advertisement by Fraser and Wilson, 2 Hunter Square, for 'silver plate, jewellery and hardware', listing their new stock. The retailers were here to stay, with their wide range of fashionable and competitively priced goods sourced from English manufacturers, and with their offers of high prices for second-hand gold and silver.

Edinburgh goldsmiths could, of course, try to imitate the retailers by keeping in stock a wide range of goods purchased in England. Patrick Robertson followed this course. Early in 1775 he announced: 'Just arrived, and to be sold cheap . . . a very large and fine assortment of paste ear rings, necklaces, and pins'.<sup>39</sup> By July 1778 his stock had expanded to include, besides silver and jewellery, different kinds of watches, 'fine Toys', 'plated Work of all kinds', 'Dolland's Refracting Achromatic Telescopes', and 'Opera and reading Glasses'.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, he announced in February 1784 the arrival from London of:<sup>41</sup>

BALLOON EAR-RINGS, quite new,  
 Pearl Ear-rings and Pins, elegantly strung, as they are now wore  
 in London,  
 Brilliant Paste ditto, with gold beaded tops and borders,  
 Patent, Paste, Pearl Drop Ear-rings, with gold beaded tops,  
 Pearl and Beaded Top and Drop ditto,  
 A fine assortment of Velvet Girdles, mounted in different  
 fashions . . .  
 Ladies and Gentlemen's fashionable Silver Buckles, new patterns,  
 A great variety of Embroidered and Turkey Pocket-books, Silk  
 quilted Wallets, etc., etc., with all kinds of jewellery Work and  
 silver Plate; also every kind of Plated Work.

This was a brave attempt, catering even for those anxious to have their ear-rings reflecting the current enthusiasm for ballooning. However, Patrick Robertson was an exceptionally successful goldsmith, who took on seven apprentices during the course of his career. Most Edinburgh goldsmiths lacked his resources and his enterprise.

The Industrial Revolution had social as well as economic consequences, including the rapid increase in the population of many urban centres, which tended to promote a more volatile situation in towns

and cities. Strikes, riots, and violence against persons and property became more common. In Edinburgh, the New Year and King's Birthday celebrations could take the form of gratuitous violence and vandalism. According to the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 3 January 1788 (p. 3):

We have frequently with concern remarked this increasing tumultuous disposition on the last night of the year. Whether this proceeds from an increase of folly or whisky, it is hard to say; for there was no such thing some years ago, and the few people who happened to be abroad, on the coming of the new year, were peaceable, good-humoured, and civil to all they met. – It is certainly a very savage way of expressing joy on the new year, to break lamps and people's heads, and destroying innocent persons' property. Parents and masters are much to blame who allow their children or apprentices to be abroad at night.

In the Canongate, a sedan-chair carrier 'received a blow, on the back of his head, from some of the riotous people who infested the streets, in consequence of which he died soon after'. Further, 'Among other pieces of ingenious mischief committed on Tuesday morning, all the green stalls in the High Street were overset'.

Similarly, the same newspaper reported on 5 June 1788 (p. 2) that 'the mob last night, as usual on the anniversary of the King's birthday, were exceeding riotous. It is astonishing that citizens, servants, and apprentices, should find any entertainment in maltreating the City Guard, one of whom was so much hurt that his life is in danger.' Such drunken and riotous behaviour continued, for in July 1789 the *Edinburgh Advertiser* reported:<sup>42</sup>

On Saturday night, (always the worst in the week), the streets were more riotous than they have been known for many months. The journeymen of various trades, are daily combining for a rise of wages, yet, Saturday and Sunday many of them contrive to pass in drunkenness and debauchery, and are idle on Monday. The riots of Saturday night last were all of the complexion, aided by some notorious blackguards who have often been banished.

The newspaper added: 'The bad effects of whisky are evident on every examination of these riotous people'.

Five years earlier, the violence had taken the form of an attack on Haig's distillery at Canonmills, near Edinburgh. This prompted the Incorporation of Goldsmiths to issue a public proclamation on 10 June 1784.<sup>43</sup>

They unanimously resolved to do every thing in their power to support and strengthen the exertions of the civil power in suppressing riots and disorders, which are a disgrace to this

country, and so injurious to private property; and for that purpose, they resolved to keep their journeymen and apprentices at home, and under the eye of their respective masters, in order to prevent them from taking any concern in such mobs or riots.

Only the Goldsmiths, out of the fourteen Incorporated Trades of the city of Edinburgh, issued such a public declaration. With their shops full of valuable gold and silver items, they doubtless felt uniquely threatened by mobs and riots. The Edinburgh goldsmiths certainly exhibited an extreme political conservatism, and an ardent enthusiasm to support the authorities.

#### THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE SCOTTISH BURGH REFORM MOVEMENT

The American War of Independence (1776–83) was another important influence on the world of the Edinburgh goldsmiths. Enlightenment ideas on liberty and democracy were given a significant boost, as the Edinburgh goldsmiths could easily appreciate, since they could consult a range of English and Scottish newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets in the city's coffee houses, where the war must have been a major topic of conversation for years. The war itself brought a disruption to trade, increased taxation, and military and naval recruitment at unprecedented levels. Edinburgh goldsmiths might rally to the flag. At the beginning of 1778 Robert Clark was appointed a Lieutenant in the Regiment of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers; and in 1780 a public subscription for the raising of nine companies of the Royal Edinburgh Volunteers attracted contributions from William Davie (£3), William Dempster (£10. 10s), Alexander Gardner (£20), and Patrick Robertson (£20).<sup>44</sup> However, the disastrous outcome of the war encouraged a new questioning of the British Constitution and a new enthusiasm for reform. The difficult trading conditions suffered by Edinburgh goldsmiths towards the end of the war doubtless explains why, between June 1780 and March 1784, the Edinburgh goldsmith Alexander Aitchison junior advertised the sale of his stock of silver and jewellery by means of a series of public subscription lotteries. Two other Edinburgh goldsmiths advertised similar lotteries,



James Wemyss in April 1783 and Archibald Ochiltree in February 1784.<sup>45</sup> Aitchison also proposed a motion at an Incorporation meeting on 13 March 1782 that James Hunter Blair, MP for Edinburgh, should be thanked for voting in the House of Commons 'against the further prosecution of the war with America'.

Before the American War of Independence had ended, the movement for reform had begun in Scotland. In August 1782 a general meeting of delegates from twenty-three out of the thirty-three Scottish counties was held in Edinburgh to organise and promote constitutional reform. Scotland's forty-five representatives in the House of Commons were elected by a system which was clearly unsatisfactory and which was open to blatant and systematic corruption. In the counties, voters were restricted to a narrow range of property owners and elections were invariably distorted by 'nominal and fictitious votes' cast for ministerial candidates by those who had no right to vote. In the burghs, members of local councils effectively selected the MP. Also, the rapid expansion of industrial centres, such as Glasgow, Paisley and Dundee, meant that the distribution of parliamentary seats did not reflect the distribution of population. Local government was similarly unsatisfactory and corrupt. Councillors were elected by merchants and by members of the trade incorporations, rather than by an electorate composed solely of all the burghesses. Thus the Deacon of the Goldsmiths was always a member of Edinburgh City Council, the membership of which was largely self-perpetuating. Small burgh councils might even be run by members of the same family for generations. Magistrates were not elected and, like councillors, were not publicly accountable for their management of public property or for their expenditure of public funds.

These issues were discussed in March 1784 by a Convention, held in Edinburgh, of delegates representing thirty-six of the sixty-six royal burghs in Scotland. A standing committee was appointed to draft a reform bill for presentation to Parliament. A second Convention of delegates, held in Edinburgh on 19 and 20 October 1785, discussed and amended this draft bill. Thereafter annual Conventions met in Edinburgh in August. In the House of Commons, the Anglo-Irish playwright and

MP, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, proposed, and Sir Thomas Dundas seconded, a bill to reform the electoral system of the Scottish burghs on 30 May 1787, but, after a brief debate, consideration of the bill was adjourned. The reformers tried to keep up the pressure. On 7 April 1788 the Committee appointed by the Convention met in London; and burghesses from forty-six of the Scottish burghs were by now petitioning Parliament for reform. 'In the last session of Parliament', the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* commented on 5 June 1788 (p. 2), 'the flower of burghal patriotism danced attendance in London'. Agitation for reform continued and extended to other issues. More delegates than previously attended the Convention of August 1788; and campaigns for the abolition of the right of lay patrons to appoint ministers in the Church of Scotland, for the abolition of religious tests for public office, and for the abolition of the African slave trade, generated meetings, speeches, petitions, societies, pamphlets, and widespread public debate.<sup>46</sup>

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE

While in Scotland there was a mounting ferment for reform, the French Revolution broke out in July 1789.<sup>47</sup> Many Scots initially associated the French Revolution with the spirit of liberty, with the ideals of the Enlightenment, and with national reform and regeneration. Such views were held by several distinguished figures, including Henry Erskine and Archibald Fletcher, leaders of the Scottish burgh reform movement, Professor Dugald Stewart, the eminent philosopher, and the Rev. Dr William Robertson, Principal of Edinburgh University (1762–93) and eldest brother of the Edinburgh goldsmith, Patrick Robertson. When an Edinburgh debating society, the Pantheon, on 11 February 1790 considered the question, 'Will the revolutions on the Continent, if established, promote the interests of Europe?', a majority voted in the affirmative.<sup>48</sup> In June 1790 the Whig Club of Dundee sent a congratulatory address to the French National Assembly, welcoming 'the triumph of liberty and reason over despotism, ignorance, and superstition', and offering 'sincere congratulations' and 'warmest

wishes'.<sup>49</sup> On 14 July 1791 about eighty gentlemen celebrated the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille at Fortune's, 'the most fashionable tavern in town', and a similar event was held in Glasgow.<sup>50</sup>

Agitation for reform received a new impetus. 'The meeting was numerous and respectable' at the annual Convention for Burgh Reform held in Edinburgh on 4 and 5 August 1790, with Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, playing a prominent role.<sup>51</sup> Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (first published in two parts in 1791 and 1792), a defence of liberal and democratic ideas, became the ideological Bible for many reformers.<sup>52</sup> In January 1792 Thomas Hardy, a native of Falkirk, founded the London Corresponding Society; and on 11 April 1792 Charles Grey (later Earl Grey), Henry Erskine, Sheridan, the Earl of Lauderdale (a leading Scottish Whig, opponent of the Dundas political dynasty, and Rector of the University of Glasgow, 1781–83) and other Whigs founded the Society of the Friends of the People in England. On the annual meeting of the Scottish Burgh Reform Convention, held in Edinburgh on 10–11 August 1791 and chaired by Sir William Hamilton of West Port, the Edinburgh Evening Courant commented: 'The meeting was numerous and very respectable ... Their cause is just and their demands moderate'.<sup>53</sup> As late as 14 July 1792, 'a numerous meeting at Fortune's' again celebrated Bastille Day.<sup>54</sup>

By this date, though, the tide of opinion in Britain had begun to turn. In November 1790 Edmund Burke's enormously influential critique of the French Revolution, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, was first published.<sup>55</sup> The French Revolution became increasingly radical, with the confiscation without compensation of all Church property (November 1790), the overthrow of the monarchy (August 1792), the proclamation of the French Republic (September 1792), the execution of King Louis XVI (January 1793), the coming to power of the Jacobins (June 1793), and the subsequent Reign of Terror. Attitudes in Britain towards the French Revolution, certainly amongst most members of the propertied classes, changed from enthusiasm to, progressively, disenchantment, revulsion, fear, and, finally, extreme hostility. Moreover, on 1 February 1793 the French Republic declared war on Great Britain, thus beginning a twenty-year titanic armed conflict.

The Scottish Society of the Friends of the People was formed at a meeting in Fortune's Tavern, Edinburgh, on 26 July 1792, when a gathering of burgh reformers, religious dissenters and radical artisans agreed to set up an organisation similar to, though independent of, its English counterpart.<sup>56</sup> Delegates of the Burgh Reform Society continued to meet and to recruit, one of its earliest members being Alexander Aitchison junior, who joined on 9 August 1792.<sup>57</sup>

Besides attempting to sell silver by a series of lotteries (1780–84), Aitchison had become a ticket-seller for the Edinburgh Debating Society, the Pantheon, by December 1782.<sup>58</sup> By the mid 1780s Aitchison seems to have been making little or no silver.<sup>59</sup> At a meeting of the Incorporation on 12 August 1788, Alexander Gardner complained that Aitchison had not been attending Incorporation meetings, that he had received 'above £25' from the Incorporation, and that he now described himself as a 'Student of Physic'. A subsequent meeting on 8 April 1789 was informed that Aitchison's daughter 'was in a very destitute situation owing to the straitened circumstances of her father' and that 'there was great reason to fear that she might be entirely ruined'. The meeting agreed to try to secure her admission to the Trades Maiden Hospital and to grant her a guinea 'for her Relief and to prevent her from falling into bad hands'.<sup>60</sup> Eventually, on 25 May 1790, Alexander Aitchison was struck off the roll of the Goldsmiths. At the same time, as he appeared to be 'in very calamitous circumstances', the Treasurer was allowed 'to lay out Three Guineas for relieving his household furniture from the distress threatened by his Landlord'.<sup>61</sup> In the case of Aitchison, at least, financial hardship may have been a factor in his political radicalism.

Societies of the Friends of the People were also formed during the summer and autumn of 1792 in various centres, including Dundee, Perth, Glasgow, and Montrose. On 31 August 1792 Robert Watt wrote a letter to Henry Dundas of Arniston, MP for Edinburgh and Secretary of State for the Home Department, warning him of the existence of a dangerous political association in Perth.<sup>62</sup> Subsequently the accomplice of David Downie, Watt had been born in about 1760, the illegitimate son of a gentleman in Angus, and had taken his

mother's surname. Educated at Perth Academy and apprenticed to a lawyer, in 1786 he had moved to Edinburgh, where he had become a 'shopman' to a bookseller near the Cross, Elphinston Balfour. With money from his father, he had subsequently engaged in the wine and spirit trade until his business had crashed due to the French Revolution.<sup>63</sup> Watt sent Dundas further letters, reporting on meetings of the Society of the Friends of the People in Mather's Tavern, Edinburgh; and he even saw Robert Dundas, the Lord Advocate, 'at night once or twice' at his house in George Square during February 1793.<sup>64</sup>

Popular violence (such as the disturbances in Edinburgh on and following the King's birthday, 4–6 June 1792), the republican onslaught against the Old Regime in France, and the spread of radical agitation in Britain, caused much alarm.<sup>65</sup> Immediately responding to the King's birthday disturbances, on 7 June, the Edinburgh Goldsmiths declared 'their utter abhorrence of all mobs and riots stirred up by seditious and mischievous persons' and pledged 'to give every aid and assistance in their power effectually to put an end to the said mobs and Tumults'.<sup>66</sup> The Convener of Trades on 6 December 1792 called a meeting in the Merchants' Hall of the city's fourteen Incorporations to rally them against political subversion and the Friends of the People. According to the *Caledonian Chronicle*, 'Mr William McKenzie, goldsmith and jeweller, who appears to be averse to political reformation, at least in its present shape, got up, and, in an emphatic tone, said, put in, instead of *Friends of the People*, MOVERS OF SEDITION'.<sup>67</sup> Sharing this view, those attending the meeting agreed to declare 'their firm and inviolable attachment to the excellent Constitution of their country', and resolved to co-operate with the authorities 'in maintaining and supporting the peace and good order of this city'.<sup>68</sup> The following day, a meeting of local wealthy townspeople and gentry, held in Goldsmiths' Hall and chaired by Sir John Inglis of Cramond, passed a series of resolutions declaring that 'the subscribers would stand by the constitution with their lives and fortunes', and would use 'their utmost endeavours to counteract all seditious attempts, and in particular, all associations for the publication or dispersion of

seditious or inflammatory writings, as tending to excite disorders and tumults within this part of the kingdom'. It was further agreed to circulate pamphlets in defence of the Constitution, and the resolutions were left for signature at the Goldsmiths' Hall. The signatories were mostly lawyers and landowners, with a sprinkling of bankers, booksellers, merchants, professors, surgeons, and army and naval officers. Alexander Gardner was the only Edinburgh goldsmith recorded as having signed. Also, an executive committee was appointed for what became known as the 'Goldsmiths' Hall Association'. Once again, the Edinburgh goldsmiths were identified with conservatism and reaction.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, between 11 and 13 December 1792 the first General Convention of the Delegates from all the Societies of the Friends of the People throughout Scotland met in Lawrie's Rooms, James's Court, Edinburgh. The delegates numbered about 170, representing eighty societies from thirty-five towns and villages. The principal figures were Lieutenant-Colonel Dalrymple of Fordell (President of the Glasgow Society), Lord Daer (eldest son of the Earl of Selkirk), and Thomas Muir of Huntershill (an Edinburgh lawyer and the son of a Glasgow merchant).<sup>70</sup> At the Convention Muir, anticipating the demands of the Chartists, advocated manhood suffrage and annual parliaments. The majority of the delegates were less radical. They agreed that the Friends of the People would defend the Constitution, assist the civil magistrates in suppressing riots, and campaign for an equal representation of the people, and a frequent exercise of their right to vote, by the proper and legal method of petitioning Parliament. Aitchison attended the Convention as a delegate for the Canongate and contributed to the debates, maintaining that in 'the days of King Alfred, every free man had a vote in choosing his representatives, and that in those days Parliaments were annual'.<sup>71</sup>

The administration felt beleaguered, as well it might. Agitation for reform was intensifying in England, Scotland and Ireland (where Wolfe Tone founded the Society of United Irishmen in October 1790). The clearances and forced emigration in the Highlands, the harsh attitude of the authorities towards workers' combinations and strikes, and the

excise duties on whisky and imported corn, all contributed to the government's unpopularity. The war against France engendered more popular resentment, with the disruption of trade, increased taxation, the banning of French imports, and the press-ganging of men into the Navy. Pitt responded with a series of repressive measures – a proclamation against seditious writings (May 1792), an Aliens Act (December 1792), the trial of Thomas Paine (December 1792), the Traitorous Correspondence Act (March 1793), and the suspension of Habeas Corpus (March 1793). In Edinburgh, between January 1793 and March 1794 some twenty people were put on trial charged with producing and distributing seditious material. They were invariably found guilty, and the punishments were severe.

In this climate of repression, the nation mobilised for war. In Scotland, the Duke of Gordon, Colonel Montgomerie, the Earl of Hopetoun, Sir James Grant of Grant and the Earl of Breadalbane all set about raising Fencible regiments in March 1793. Nevertheless, between 30 April and 3 May 1793 a second General Convention of Delegates representing Societies of the Friends of the People met in Edinburgh. The repression and the war deterred moderates from attending, so the second Convention was more radical than the first. Alexander Aitchison was again a delegate for the Canongate, but it is not clear whether or not Robert Watt or David Downie participated. The view of the authorities of such proceedings was soon made clear. At the end of August 1793 Thomas Muir was brought to trial, charged with having publicised Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, with having played a major part in the first Friends of the People Convention (11–13 December 1792), and with having presented to that Convention an Address from the Society of the United Irishmen. A lawyer, Muir unwisely conducted his own defence, making impassioned speeches, which the conservative judges and the packed jury inevitably considered provocative. When he finally sat down in court, 'an unanimous burst of applause was expressed by the audience', but the jury (all members of the 'Goldsmiths' Hall Association') found him guilty.<sup>72</sup> He was sentenced to suffer the remarkably severe punishment of fourteen years' transportation to New South Wales.

DAVID DOWNIE AND  
POLITICAL RADICALISM

At this critical juncture, David Downie finally emerged from obscurity. His personal political evolution can only be guessed at. He may at first have harboured Jacobite sympathies, influenced by his wife's connections with the Duchess of Perth and the Stewarts of Traquair. His active Catholicism must have set him apart from most of his fellow goldsmiths. His brother and business partner's premature death, his Catholicism, and all the difficulties associated with the Industrial Revolution and the American War of Independence, may have made his life a constant financial struggle. In August 1788 he was accused of not having paid his dues to the Incorporation; and he was still paying back money to the Incorporation, and disputing the sum owed by him, in 1791.<sup>73</sup> The burgh reform movement may have attracted him while the extreme conservatism exhibited by the Incorporation of Goldsmiths may have repelled him. He may also have welcomed the French Revolution. His friend, Alexander Geddes, in 1790 published *Carmen saeculare pro Gallica tyrannidi aristocratices erepta*, a secular ode on the French Revolution, which has been described as 'an ecstatic paean to the French National Assembly, celebrating the triumphs of liberty'.<sup>74</sup> The Incorporation's failure in November 1792 to consider his 'scheme for increasing the Widows' fund' may have intensified his sense of bitterness and alienation.<sup>75</sup> At any rate, Downie joined the Society of the Friends of the People, and the prospect of another war certainly appalled him. Thomas Muir's unfair trial and excessive punishment may have finally pushed him over the edge.

Muir had chaired a meeting in Edinburgh on 4 January 1793 which had passed an anti-war resolution, so even before the outbreak of war between Britain and France, strong anti-war sentiment existed in Edinburgh.<sup>76</sup> A group of Edinburgh goldsmiths comprising, at least initially, William Auld, James Douglas, David Downie, Francis Howden, James McKenzie and Robert Swan, and possibly also William McKenzie and Samuel Ker, decided to ask the Deacon of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths, Peter Mathie, to hold a meeting to discuss a proposal to submit, with the other City Incorporations, a petition to King



George III to end the war. On Saturday 12 October, Mathie received a note, signed by William Auld, Downie and James McKenzie, requesting that a meeting of the Incorporation be summoned for Monday 14 October, but with no indication of the purpose of the meeting. According to Downie, Mathie promised to send out invitations, but did not act on his promise. Downie returned with a second note requesting a meeting, signed by himself, James Douglas and Robert Swan. Again, the purpose of the meeting was not indicated. After consulting other members of the Incorporation, Mathie decided that he would not summon a meeting the purpose of which had not been declared.<sup>77</sup>

Thwarted by Mathie's refusal, the supporters of the meeting had the following notice published in 'the main Scottish radical [news]paper of this period', the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*, on 15 October 1793 (p. 3):<sup>78</sup>

A CONSIDERABLE Number of the Members belonging to the Goldsmiths Company of this City, meaning to support the following Resolutions, and, having, according to the rule and practice of the said Company, sent notice on the 14th instant to their Deacon, Peter Mathie, to summon a Meeting for the day following; which request he positively refused, and which refusal they are determined shall be the subject of after discussion; but, in the mean time, they consider it their duty to present to the Public the above mentioned RESOLUTIONS.

I. That being impressed with a heartfelt grief at the loss of life of so many brave men, – relations, friends, and countrymen; and also for the waste of the treasures necessary for carrying on the present war, which has already had the direful effects of diminishing credit in general, and materially injuring the trade and manufactures of this kingdom, and if persisted in, must inevitably end in the ruin and destruction of the whole.

II. That for these, and many other dreadful consequences to be apprehended, the foresaid meeting, conscious of the rectitude and purity of their intention, and disregarding all party censure, or the suggestions and threats of self interested men, do consider it their urgent duty; and hereby resolve, in conjunction with the other incorporated trades of this city, and all good men friends to the constitution, and their country, to petition his Majesty, to adopt such measures, as will put a speedy period to this ruinous and bloody war, which will be the only sure means of alleviating the distress of this nation, restoring confidence and credit betwixt man and man, and sparing the further effusion of human blood.

The dispute within the Incorporation of Goldsmiths had now gone public and had begun to be aired in the Edinburgh newspapers. Presumably Mathie felt obliged to set the record straight by having the following notice inserted in the *Caledonian Mercury* of 17 October (p. 3):

Some Members of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths in this city being desirous to have the opinion of that body respecting a motion to petition his Majesty for peace, they applied, a few days ago, to their Deacon to call a meeting; but not having intimated to him the business to be brought before the Society, he refused their request.

Very foolishly, Downie chose to regard this brief, factual and arguably innocuous statement as provocative. He replied with the following letter, published anonymously in the *Edinburgh Gazetteer* on 29 October (p. 4):

I SEE in the Caledonian Mercury of the 17th instant, an attempt to palliate the unwarrantable conduct of Peter Mathie, Deacon of the Goldsmiths, for not calling a Meeting in consequence of the determination of a considerable number of the Members of that Company, published in your paper of the 15th; and I now beg leave to offer a few remarks on the behaviour of Mr Mathie on the occasion alluded to.

I am, Mr Printer, a Member of the Company of Goldsmiths, and may be allowed to have some knowledge in what concerns their affairs in general, as I have, for the space of twenty years and upwards, duly attended all their public meetings and casual determinations. While I am proud to acknowledge that I have, during the above period, been honoured with the friendship of the most respectable part of the Corporation, may, at the same time, observe, that I have frequently, *on account of principles*, experienced some illiberality from individuals, which I have viewed with the contempt such conduct merits, and had the late abuse been pointed at me alone, I perhaps should have passed it over in the same manner, but when the principal of a society breaks through the solemn engagements entered into at his election, and violates the laws of that society, from motives of caprice or interest, I consider it my duty, not to remain silent, and therefore, submit to the Public the following detail of facts relative to that transaction.

A considerable number of Members of the Goldsmiths' Company, being desirous to summon a meeting of their brethren for the purpose of soliciting their opinions respecting the propriety of joining with other Incorporated Bodies in this city, in a Petition to his Majesty for the restoration of Peace; lodged, on Saturday the 12th current, a written order in the hands of their Deacon, desiring him to call a Meeting on the Monday following, the order being agreeable to the usual practice, signed by three of their Members. The Deacon begged to be excused for Monday, but promised positively to send billets on that day (Saturday) summoning the Meeting to be held on the next Tuesday. This promise, however, our Deacon did not fulfil, and he knows best what reasons induced him to commit such a flagrant breach of faith.

On the Monday morning we understood, that one of the Gentlemen who subscribed the order [William Auld] had caused his name to be erased, upon which a second order was sent, subscribed by other three, whom we knew to be proof against any threats or alarms whatever.

At a late hour on Monday, the Deacon called the three who signed the second order and told them that he would not summon the Meeting desired, assigning, as reasons for this extraordinary

refusal, that the object of the Meeting was not specified in the order, and that the Depute Clerk of the Incorporation was not in town.

As to the first of these reasons, I can assure you, Sir, that the uniform practice, from time to time immemorial, of the Corporation, was exactly observed in the form of both the orders lodged with the Deacon; and I, for my part, can declare that for 23 years past, there never was any other method used for calling a Meeting, than by delivering an order, either written or verbal, to the Deacon, without assigning any cause whatever.

The story of the Clerk being out of town, was soon discovered to be a falsehood; for two of the Members immediately went in quest of him, and found him at his lodgings, and when informed of the business, he declared the refusal to be totally unprecedented, and went instantly to call upon the Deacon, that billets might be lodged at the houses of the different Members that night, though it was then near nine o'clock; but as the Deacon could not then be found, it was impossible to call the Meeting as intended for the next day.

The Members had it still in their power to oblige the Deacon to call a Meeting; but as the measures necessary to be adopted for that purpose would occupy some time, they thought it proper, in the first place, to publish their intended Resolutions for Peace, and also some account of the unprecedented conduct of their Deacon in your paper.

It is hoped, that the preceding facts will operate as a caution to the Incorporate Bodies of this city to chuse for their Deacons disinterested men, and not mere machines who, for the last resource, *a bunch of keys*, are ready at any time to violate the rights and privileges of their constituents.

Mathie responded by summoning a meeting of the members of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths, who duly gathered in Goldsmiths' Hall on 2 November 1793. The minutes of this meeting were later published in the *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 November 1793 (p. 1):

THE which day, the INCORPORATION of GOLDSMITHS in Edinburgh having met, and being duly constituted, the Deacon informed them, That the purpose of calling this meeting was to lay before them a letter which appeared in the Edinburgh Gazette of Tuesday the 29th of October last, signed *A Member of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths*, reflecting upon his conduct for not calling a meeting of the Incorporation, when required by three members so to do – which letter having been read to the Incorporation, Mr Alexander Zeigler begged to know if any member present would acknowledge himself to be the author of this letter – upon which Mr David Downie acknowledged himself to be the author of it – and at the same time made the following motion for the opinion of the Incorporation, ‘Whether has the Deacon acted according to the laws and regulations of this Society, in refusing to three of their members (not only calling but delivering a written order) to call a meeting?’ Which motion was seconded by Mr James Douglas – but, previous to putting this question to the vote, Mr Alexander Gardner made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr William Cunningham – ‘That as the Deacon and Mr Patrick Cunningham had been sent on Monday evening to acquaint Mr David Downie, Mr Robert Swan, and Mr James Douglas, that there was still time for calling the

meeting, providing they would mention the cause, either verbally or in writing, which was refused; and upon the two Gentlemen being examined as to this fact, in presence of the Incorporation, they declared upon their honour that was the answer they received – therefore Mr Gardner moved, that the Deacon had acted properly and consistently, and ought to receive the thanks of the Incorporation for his conduct.’ And the above two motions being read to the meeting, Mr Downie insisted, that his motion should be first put to the vote, and protested, That, by not doing so, the meeting was an arbitrary meeting.

Thereafter it was moved, that the meaning of the meeting should be taken, whether to adopt Mr Gardner's motion or Mr Downie's motion; and upon the question being put, the meeting approved of Mr Gardner's motion; and at the request of the meeting, the thanks of the Incorporation were returned to the Deacon by Mr Gardner.

The following Gentlemen declined giving their vote, viz. Mr Francis Howden and Mr James McKenzie, for the following reason: ‘Because it depended upon the veracity of the Deacon and Mr Patrick Cunningham, opposed to that of Mr David Downie and Mr Robert Swan’; and the following members declined giving their vote for Mr Gardner's Motion, viz. Mr William McKenzie, Mr James Douglas, Mr Robert Swan, and Mr Samuel Keer [Ker], for the following reason: ‘That the question appeared to them to depend upon the laws of the Incorporation respecting the calling of meetings’; and Mr Howden and Mr James McKenzie gave this as an additional reason for their not voting: And the meeting defer the further consideration of Mr Downie's letter to an after meeting; and ordain the minutes of sederunt of this day to be published in the Edinburgh newspapers.

This was a massive personal and public humiliation for Downie.<sup>79</sup> His attack on Mathie had completely misfired; his potential supporters had deserted him, with William Auld absenting himself from the meeting and with the others abstaining on the crucial vote; the text of the minutes recording his defeat was published not just in the *Caledonian Mercury*, but also in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* (8–12 November 1793, p. 306) and in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (7 November 1793, p. 1); and, above all, Alexander Gardner, his first employer and one of the two witnesses at the baptism of his son James Drummond, had led the attack against him. Moreover, a triumphant Mathie arranged for his version of events to be published in the Edinburgh newspapers along with the minutes of the meeting, a version which concluded that ‘the ill-natured sarcasms of Mr Downie, or his friends’, would not ‘receive any further notice’ from himself.

It was perhaps significant that on 29 October 1793, the day on which the *Edinburgh Gazetteer* published Downie's ill-judged letter, a third Convention of Delegates of Societies of the Friends of the People opened in Edinburgh.<sup>80</sup> About 187 delegates, mostly from Edinburgh and

Glasgow, attended, including Alexander Aitchison (Canongate) and David Downie (Bridge Street). Aitchison contributed to the debates and Downie presented a string of resolutions, the discussion of which was deferred.<sup>81</sup> The Convention agreed on 30 October to press for manhood suffrage and annual parliaments, which Muir had advocated but which the previous Convention had failed to endorse, and on 1 November 'to call upon the people of Scotland to unite, as one man, to petition the King against the war'. Virtually the last act of the Convention was 'to express its ardent desire for a more close union with England'.

The next Convention, which assembled in Edinburgh on 19 November, described itself as the 'British Convention of the Delegates of the People associated to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments', and the delegates included prominent English radicals such as Joseph Gerrald and Maurice Margarot. Aitchison, as previously, represented the Canongate and took notes for William Skirving, one of the leading figures in the British Convention, while Downie was also present and proposed at least two resolutions.<sup>82</sup> Responding to what they considered to be speeches and resolutions 'of a most inflammatory and seditious tendency', during the evening of 5 December the Lord Provost and magistrates of Edinburgh, accompanied by thirty constables, went to the masonic lodge in Blackfriars Wynd where the British Convention was meeting, and forcibly compelled its dispersal. The following evening, members of the British Convention tried to meet in the suburbs of Edinburgh, but again their meeting was forcibly dispersed, by the Sheriff-substitute of the county of Edinburgh, backed up by the Lord Provost, city magistrates and constables. On 7 December the Lord Provost and the Sheriff-substitute issued a proclamation banning any future meeting of the British Convention. William Skirving, Maurice Margarot and Joseph Gerrald were subsequently arrested, tried, found guilty of sedition, and each sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. Aitchison and Downie appeared in court as witnesses, the former in the trials of Skirving, Margarot and Gerrald, the latter just in the trial of Skirving.<sup>83</sup>

The Incorporation of Goldsmiths responded in a predictable manner, publishing the following resolution on the first pages of the *Caledonian*

*Mercury* and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 12 December 1793:

AT a MEETING of the INCORPORATION of GOLDSMITHS of this city, held here this day, it was unanimously resolved that the sincere and warm thanks of this Incorporation be delivered to the Right Hon. the Lord Provost and Magistrates of Edinburgh, and the Hon. Sheriff-depute and Sheriff substitute of the county of Edinburgh, for their united, active, and spirited exertions upon the evenings of Thursday and Friday last [5 and 6 December 1793]. And the Incorporation also unanimously resolved to give their utmost assistance, not only as individuals, but also to exert every influence in their power to preserve and maintain peace and good order in the city, and to support the present constitution, as by law established.

Francis Howden, clearly a timid man, was evidently by now thoroughly rattled and anxious to disavow publicly any taint of radicalism.<sup>84</sup> Two days later, on the front pages of the same Edinburgh newspapers, he had the following notice inserted:

F. HOWDEN takes this opportunity of notifying to his friends, in answer to a letter which lately appeared in the Edinburgh newspapers, signed *Peter Mathie*, that, although in an accidental meeting with some of the members of the corporation to which he belongs, he may have unwarily expressed his opinion against the present war from a mistaken notion of its consequences upon trade, he does most solemnly avow, and he hopes his friends, and those who know him will do him the justice to believe, that that opinion arose from no principle of a seditious tendency, or factious spirit.

He also considers it as his duty, as a loyal subject, (and particularly after his conduct has been, by some interested individuals, attempted to be misrepresented,) thus publicly to declare, that he at no time was a member of, or in any shape connected with, any Societies of the Friends of the People; on the contrary, that he all along reprobated and abhorred the seditious principles upon which they proceeded, principles, which he, and every good citizen, must acknowledge to be equally destructive of the happiness of the People, and the freedom of the Constitution.

The proceedings of the Incorporation had not escaped the attention of the authorities. When Joseph Gerrald was put on trial for sedition in March 1794, the Edinburgh goldsmiths Alexander Gardner, Peter Mathie and Alexander Spence were listed as possible jurors. Clearly, they had all been identified as loyal to the *status quo*. In the event, only Gardner and Mathie served on the jury, of which the wealthy Edinburgh banker, Sir William Forbes, was the chancellor. On 14 March this jury took just twenty minutes to find Gerrald guilty, leading to the inevitable sentence of fourteen years' transportation.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, at the earlier trial of three soldiers, accused of having proposed a

toast to 'George the third and last, and damnation to all crowned heads', one of the defence witnesses was William Grierson, described as an 'apprentice to Mr James McKenzie, goldsmith in Edinburgh'. Despite Grierson's testimony, the accused were found guilty and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment and three years on probation.<sup>86</sup>

As packed juries found a series of defendants guilty of sedition, and as biased judges imposed draconian punishments, tensions and divisions ran high in Edinburgh. This was demonstrated on 7 April 1794 at an evening performance at the Theatre Royal of a play entitled 'The Royal Martyr, or the Life and Death of Charles I'. In the circumstances, this was a controversial subject, which provoked vocal audience reaction: 'During the performance, while the sentiments of loyalty were warmly applauded by the far greater part of the audience, those speeches which favoured republicanism met with approbation from the minority'.<sup>87</sup> 'Several gentlemen called to the band in the orchestra to play *God save the King*, and from respect to his Majesty the audience were to stand, and the gentlemen take off their hats during its performance'. Inevitably, some members of the audience refused to stand, and some gentlemen put on their hats. When this disrespect to the National Anthem and to the monarch was persisted in, 'High words ensued, blows followed, and, for a short time, the scene was tragical'.<sup>88</sup>

#### DAVID DOWNIE, CONSPIRACY AND TREASON

Meanwhile, David Downie was making the fateful transition from radical politics to treasonable activities. After the dispersal of the British Convention, about a hundred delegates and sympathisers continued to meet, in a school-room in Simon Square. Robert Watt soon emerged as the leading figure. In January 1794 he drew up a new set of rules, or 'Fundamental Principles', which included the appointment of a Committee of Union, of which Aitchison, Downie and Watt were members.<sup>89</sup> On 5 March Watt proposed the formation of a secret permanent committee of seven members, known as the Committee of Ways and Means, which would meet once a week. Again, Aitchison, Downie and Watt were members, though Aitchison eventually withdrew, presumably alarmed at Watt's plans.<sup>90</sup> By the beginning of April 1794, Downie had become

treasurer of this new association, collecting contributions from various radical individuals and groups. In this capacity, Downie wrote the following letter on 9 April 1794 to a Mr Walter Miller, a letter which subsequently featured in Downie's trial.<sup>91</sup>

I would have wrote you yesterday on receipt of yours, containing the bill of 15 l. sterling on the Bank of Scotland; but by your omitting to send me your address, was prevented; and finding nobody here who could inform me, as there are so many of your name at Perth, I direct this letter to the care of a person who, I was informed, would not neglect the first opportunity of transmitting it to you.

The committee, to whom I showed your's and its contents last night at their meeting, empowers me to transmit to you, and all their friends, their hearty thanks for so liberal a remittance; and to assure you, it will be applied to the most proper ends in view.

There are no letters from L. as yet, but you will see in the London papers mention made of holding the Convention.

We have had here an affray of a very grave serious nature at the Theatre, on Monday last, the occasion of which was this:

There was a tragedy to be performed of the name of Charles the first. The play began, and was going on with the greatest harmony and decorum, when some furious Aristocrats, wanting, no doubt, to try the disposition of the people, called out for the tune of *God save the King*. The tune was just beginning, when an universal hiss, mixed with lamentable murmurs, pervaded all over the house; and the sons of the fiddle were obliged to desist, and they played the tune of *Maggy Lauder*, which met with universal applause. The discomfited Aristocrats, not knowing what to do, in order to effect their purpose, called in the Fencibles in the Castle, with their officers, and then desired the royal song to be again attempted, when, meeting with the same treatment as before, the officers drew their swords, and the soldiers their instruments of death, to deter the unarmed multitude from opposing the song of their royal master; and these heroes went to such a length as to cut and maim several people in the pit, who refused to take off their hats as the tune was going on. I am sorry to say that some of our best friends have been bruised very severely. After the tune was over, the play went on as if nothing had happened; – none of the newspapers here take any notice of this. We have also a report that the Fencibles just now in the Frith have been very turbulent, and that an armed boat was sent to overawe them, and to reduce them to subjection; and that the Sans Culottes fired some balls into the boat, when it thought proper to sheer off. We have received news this day of orders being given to stop the recruiting, and we have some reason to believe it, as it came from one of our baillies.

We propose to send you a parcel by the carrier. Will you be pleased to send us your address as this comes to hand. I am, your very humble servant, DAVID DOWNIE.

P.S. We are happy to have it in our power to assure you from our information from England, and different parts of Scotland, that the late prosecutions, instead of retarding have accelerated the general cause of freedom.

They have in all ranks created the desire of knowledge, of course increased the number of friends. If we can, therefore, judge from our assurances, the day is not far distant, when the people shall, as they should, be triumphant over the enemies of our country.



The Edinburgh newspapers did report the disturbances at the Theatre Royal on 7 April 1794, though not in such dramatic terms as Downie. Perhaps Downie was beginning to live in a world of exaggeration and even fantasy. His comments on the Fencibles may well have been imagined, but explain the first treasonable act on the part of Watt and Downie. They had printed an address, copies of which were distributed to soldiers of the 7th Regiment of Fencibles, commanded by the Earl of Hopetoun, while they were passing through Dalkeith on their way to England on 12 May 1794. The address reminded the soldiers of the massacre of Glencoe and urged: 'No invasion has yet happened. – You cannot be compelled to go – leave not your country – assert your independence'.<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile, Watt organised the so-called 'Pike Plot'.<sup>93</sup> The plan was to start a number of fires in different parts of Edinburgh (including near the Excise Office), to lure members of the military garrison out of the Castle to put out the fires, to overpower the soldiers, to arrest magistrates, judges and other public officials, to occupy the Post Office, banks and other public buildings, to seize the Castle, and to demand from King George III the dismissal of the government and Parliament, the establishment of a democratic constitution, and the ending of the war. To secure the weaponry necessary for this bold undertaking, Watt commissioned forty-seven pikes from two blacksmiths, one of whom was paid by Downie. However, by chance on 15 May 1794 Watt's house was searched for goods hidden by a bankrupt. Sixteen pikes and the type-face used for the printing of the Address to the Hopetoun Fencibles were found there. A further thirty-three pikes were found in the house of one of the blacksmiths who had made them. Watt and Downie were rapidly arrested and detained. Following his arrest, on 22 May Downie wrote a letter to Alexander Gardner:<sup>94</sup>

My good friend in my present confinement every avenue is shut for procuring any help to my family and as I know they will be much harassed at present by sundries wanting money will you be so good as to present my duty to the Deacon and the other members of the Incorporation to inform them that their assistance at this time will be most acceptable to my family to stave off for the present any taking in pieces my house or shop – there is owing for Bread £10 and above – other small things with ½ years rent – other things may lye over until I shall have my liberty . . . please see to keep my boy at work by any means you may see best. Dear Sir allow me to

consider you as a husband and a father until such time as I again can act that part, I have done so all along with approbation of the [blank] and hope to go on to the end in the same course. I am etc. You'll have no doubt of my honesty in repaying what you may advance at this time how soon I can with interest.

Gardner presented this letter to a meeting of the Incorporation the following day. The Minutes recorded: 'The Meeting were unanimously of opinion that they should not at present grant Mr Downie any pecuniary aid until he should clear himself from any cullumny or aspersion under which he lies; and therefore delay the consideration of his Letter till Tuesday the Quarter day'. The Incorporation were not, however, totally lacking in humanitarian sentiment, as the Minutes for 1 July 1794 reveal:

The Deacon [still Peter Mathie] then presented to the Meeting a Letter from Mrs Downie to him craving relief from the Incorporation, in her present unfortunate situation, during her husband's confinement. The Meeting after considering the request, and hearing the opinion of several of the Members, agree to give Mrs Downie a gratuity of Ten shillings and sixpence until the next quarter's meeting, and appoint the Treasurer to pay her the same weekly. And in the event of Mrs Downie being distressed by her Landlords using diligence the Meeting further authorises their Treasurer to call a Meeting of the Quartermasters in order to consider whether she should have a relief on that account; and if they think to allow her a sum not exceeding Five pounds.

This humanitarian gesture did not mean any change in the political sentiments of the Goldsmiths. They took care to demonstrate this at their meeting of 1 July, when William Robertson proposed that the Freedom of the Incorporation should be presented to Lord Provost Elder, a proposal unanimously accepted.<sup>95</sup> Alexander Zeigler, then suggested that the Freedom should be presented to the Lord Provost 'in a handsome Silver Box'. This proposal was also unanimously accepted, 'and the Box ordered to be made by the Deacon'.<sup>96</sup>

Help for Downie also came from his Roman Catholic friends and contacts. Lady Barbara Stewart and Catholic bishops Geddes and Hay busied themselves in support of him.<sup>97</sup> By this time, Downie's Catholicism may have been an asset rather than a liability. The onslaught against the Roman Catholic Church by the French revolutionaries had alienated Catholic opinion, while the plight of Catholic clergy exiles in Britain had attracted public sympathy and assistance. Thus in Edinburgh an assembly, under the patronage of

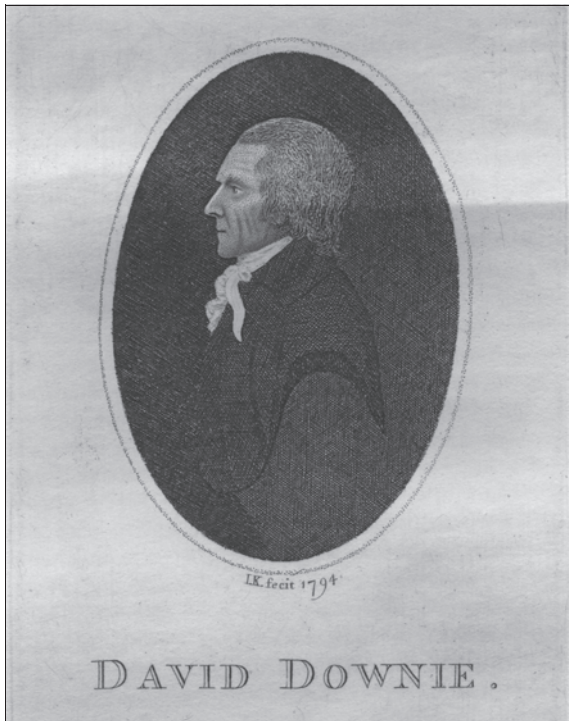


Fig. 4. Print of portrait engraving of David Downie, by John Kay, 1794, presumably sketched during Downie's trial. (*National Museums of Scotland.*)

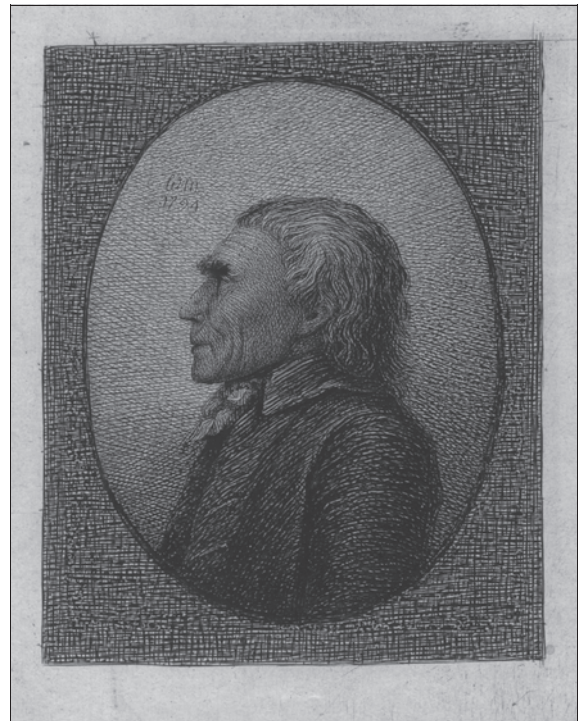


Fig. 5. Print of portrait engraving of David Downie by William Murray, 1794. Presumably also sketched during Downie's trial, and possibly a deliberately unflattering portrait. (*National Museums of Scotland.*)

the Duchess of Buccleuch and Mrs Dundas of Arniston, was held in the George Street Assembly Rooms on 10 December 1793 'for the relief of the French clergy now in this country'; and in the same month Bishop Hay raised sixteen guineas from the Catholic clergy and laity 'in and about Edinburgh' for a voluntary subscription to supply flannel waistcoats to the British Army in Flanders.<sup>98</sup> Equally, the British Government was more concerned than it might otherwise have been with Catholic opinion. As during the American War of Independence, the Government wanted to recruit Catholics into the army and navy and to reduce Catholic disaffection in Ireland. In April 1793 the Lord Advocate had introduced a parliamentary bill for the extension of Catholic Relief to Scotland. Both Houses of Parliament rapidly passed the bill, which became law the following month. Significantly, 1795 was to witness the formation of the Glengarry Fencibles, the first Scottish Catholic regiment since the Reformation.

While others appreciated the desperate nature of Downie's situation, Downie himself apparently did not. The phrase, 'until I shall have my liberty', in his letter to Gardner of 22 May, suggests he believed that he might be released in the not too distant future. When Watt and Downie were formally charged, and counsel for the prosecution and the defence appointed (14–15 August 1794), Downie thought fit to hand to the Clerk of Court a slip of paper containing four queries:

1. Whether the Court was a Court of Record?
2. Whether he was entitled to lead evidence in exculpation, and how they should be summoned?
3. Whether he could have access to the evidence laid before the Grand Jury, as he was informed the witnesses were upon oath?
4. Whether an appeal lay from any interlocutor of judgement the Court might pronounce?

The judges dismissed these questions as impertinent.<sup>99</sup>

Watt's trial began on 3 September and Downie's on 5 September (figs 4 and 5). The trials, the first in

Scotland for High Treason since 1709, became major Edinburgh events. The Lord President of the Court of Session presided over a panel of senior judges; the Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas, led the prosecution; and members of the public packed the court room, including Walter Scott, the future author.<sup>100</sup> In Downie's trial, Peter Mathie obligingly identified the handwriting and signature in the letter to Walter Miller as those of Downie, though Alexander Gardner did testify that he had 'always found him [Downie] to be an industrious, diligent, and honest man'.<sup>101</sup> The trial established that Downie had helped to circulate the Address to the Hopetoun Fencibles, had not opposed Watt's plan, and had paid for some of the pikes. On the other hand, no pikes were found in Downie's house. Margaret Whitecross, 'formerly a servant to Mr Downie', did claim that she had seen a pike in Downie's house. However, her recollections were imprecise and she had left the service of the Downies without receiving all the wages allegedly owed to her, so she was not a reliable witness.<sup>102</sup> Council for the defence tried to pin on Watt exclusive responsibility for the plot, itself described as 'a scheme so whimsical and romantic' and as 'this wild and ridiculous plan'.<sup>103</sup> The trial lasted until four in the morning of 6 September. After deliberating for about forty minutes, the jury found Downie guilty of High Treason, though 'upon account of certain circumstances', they unanimously added a recommendation to mercy. Watt had already been found guilty with no such recommendation. Downie had played a less prominent part in the plot than Watt; and, since he had kept a shop in the Parliament Close of Edinburgh since the 1770s, the jurors, all city merchants, craftsmen or tradesmen, must have known him at least by sight, and would probably have been reluctant to condemn him to suffer a terrible death.<sup>104</sup>

With the guilty verdicts secured, the Lord President then pronounced the following chilling judgement:<sup>105</sup>

The Court doth adjudge, that you, and each of you, be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution; that you be there hanged by the neck, but not until you are dead; and that being alive, you, and each of you, be cut down, and your bowels taken out, and burnt before your face. That each of your heads be severed from your bodies; and your bodies divided into four parts; and that your heads and quarters be disposed of as the King shall think fit; and so the Lord have mercy on your souls!

'Mr Watt appeared very much affected; Mr Downie heard the dreadful sentence with composure.'<sup>106</sup> The date and time of execution were fixed for Wednesday 15 October, 'between the hours of twelve o'clock noon and four o'clock afternoon'. Just three days before they were due to be executed, Downie received a month's reprieve and 'all the parts of the sentence against Robert Watt' were remitted, 'except hanging and taking off the head'.<sup>107</sup> Watt's execution duly took place on 15 October on a platform at the west end of the Tolbooth in the High Street, close to the Luckenbooths, which had replaced the Grassmarket as the site for public executions in Edinburgh.<sup>108</sup> Walter Scott, a lawyer and High Tory with a professional and political interest in the fate of Watt and Downie, whom he branded 'the Edinburgh Traitors', came to Edinburgh just 'to witness the exit of the ci-devant Jacobin Mr. Watt'. In a private letter to an aunt, having described the 'very solemn scene' and 'the pusillanimity of the unfortunate victim', he commented: 'It is a matter of general regret that his [Watt's] Associate Downie should have received a reprieve which I understand is now prolonged for a second month – I suppose to wait the issue of the London trials'.<sup>109</sup> In fact, the severity of Watt's punishment had an unintended consequence. Juries were now extremely reluctant to find defendants guilty of High Treason, knowing the fate awaiting the condemned. Thus in November 1794, in the Old Bailey trials of Thomas Hardy and John Horne Tooke, 'not guilty' verdicts were returned. At any rate, Downie received monthly reprieves until April 1795, when he was granted 'his Majesty's pardon, on condition of being imprisoned for a year, and afterwards banishing himself from Great Britain for life'.<sup>110</sup>

#### EXILE AND DEATH

Downie remained imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle until 12 March 1796, after which he had to leave the country within ten days. With debts, and a wife and four children to support, his financial situation was dire; and his wife, Mary Drummond, died in May 1795. On 9 October 1795 Downie resorted to the astonishing expedient of petitioning King George III:<sup>111</sup>



*To the KING'S Most Excellent MAJESTY, the Petition of David Downie, Prisoner in the Castle of Edinburgh.*

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

THAT in virtue of a commission of Oyer and Terminer, held at Edinburgh in September 1794, the petitioner was arraigned of the crime of high treason, found guilty, and condemned to suffer death; but your Majesty, according to your accustomed clemency, was most graciously pleased to alter and remit this sentence, on condition that the petitioner should remain a prisoner in the castle of Edinburgh, from 12th March 1795, to 12th March 1796, at which time to be liberated therefrom, and to banish himself from your Majesty's kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland within the space of ten days thereafter, with this certification, in case of failure, that the former sentence would be carried into execution: That from various losses and disasters, the petitioner is reduced to the most indigent circumstances; besides, his family now consists of two sons and two daughters, who will naturally accompany their father in his exile, on which account, the petitioner is not possessed of the means of putting your Majesty's pleasure into execution, and he also runs the risk of suffering death, merely on account of his poverty, unless your Majesty shall be graciously pleased to assist the prisoner and his family, in defraying the expence of their passage beyond seas. May it therefore please your Majesty, to take into your royal consideration the petitioner's case, and to order such a sum to be paid to him, as to enable the petitioner to fulfil your Majesty's pleasure, or otherwise to give relief to the petitioner and his family, as your Majesty, in your most gracious wisdom, shall seem meet. And the petitioner will ever pray, etc.

This petition was sent to the King via the Duke of Portland, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to whom Downie addressed a letter of the same date:<sup>112</sup>

My Lord Duke, my inclosed petition to his Majesty, is craving to be assisted in transporting myself and family from these realms, agreeable to his Majesty's pleasure, of date 12th March last. It would be intruding on your Grace's time, to enlarge on my disastrous situation since May 1794. Suffice it to say, in short, what has rendered this petition absolutely necessary: My creditors have got my whole effects; my valuable wife died in May last, of a broken heart, and for want of the common support of nature; there remains to me two sons and two daughters, not one of them in the way of making any support for me, or themselves. From 19th May 1794, to June 14th, I had an allowance from the Sheriff of three-pence per day; from 14th June to 5th September, one shilling per day; from September 5th to April 1795, the gaoler was appointed to feed me; so that from May 1794 to April 1795, eleven months, were my family in a most starving situation: The consequence was, my good woman's death, and two of the children pending as from a thread, in doubt whether to stand or fall. Since April last, I have had an allowance of one shilling and sixpence per day. [*Footnote:* Since the 10th November last, I have been allowed 2s. 6d. per day.] Upon this small pittance, at a time so singularly distinguished by the exorbitant price of every article of the first necessity, have five of us been not living, but breathing, on peas and barley bread, and often deprived of that same, although I am informed by many, that the allowance to prisoners in my situation is six shillings and eight-

pence per day. From the above statement your Grace will see, that my petition to his Majesty is in fact from the purest of hardship necessity, and trust your Grace will be a friend to real distress, I have the honour to be, etc.

Unsurprisingly, neither the King nor the Duke of Portland responded, so Downie sent the Duke a second letter, dated 9 November 1795.<sup>113</sup> After the Duke had again failed to respond, Downie turned to the Sheriff of the county of Edinburgh, in a letter dated 7 December 1795.<sup>114</sup>

Sir, It is full time for me now to have some knowledge by what means I and the remaining part of my family are to be conveyed from his Majesty's dominions, all my effects being secured in my creditors' hands, and happy am I, that if my whole are honestly managed, every person will be paid to the full, principal and interest, notwithstanding what I have lost, (over and above the irreparable loss of my valuable wife, the only cause of grief in all my sufferings), since you laid your hands on me, on the 19th May 1794. Nothing remains but our five persons, and the rags on our bodies. I sent a petition to his Majesty on the 9th of October last, praying to be assisted to that effect, together with a letter to his Grace the Duke of Portland, explanatory of my situation, and the necessity of such an application; again, on the 9th November, I wrote to his Grace, begging to have an answer to my petition. To all which I have had none. It now remains to me, to apply to you, to know what I am to do in this affair; as I have been told by their Lordships to make my needful applications known to you, and as time will not permit a long delay, I sincerely request you will do me the favour to set me at ease on this head, as soon as possible, that then I may be determined what other method to take, which must be (if I am not supplied by government) a public application to my country. This last would be much against my inclination, and very much unbecoming the dignity of government, I well know they will assist me, and already have done it in part, or we would have all perished through mere want of the first necessities of life.

The tone of this letter, unanswered by the Sheriff, is not what might have been expected from someone in Downie's position; and, while deferential to the King and polite to the Duke of Portland, Downie did not reveal any contrition for his treasonable activities or any gratitude for having narrowly escaped the gallows. Instead, there is an assumption that he had a right to financial assistance from public funds. Apparently convinced of the justice of his cause, he even had the text of the letters published, to publicise his appeal 'for some little assistance to transport myself and family, from this our ungrateful country, to some propitious shore in North America, the asylum of oppressed innocence'. In his brief commentary, he stressed his 'innocence of the crimes imputed to me, or of any evil intentions whatever', how much he and his family had suffered from 'the



dreadful calamities of misery and want', and how his repeated applications for public financial assistance had been ignored.<sup>115</sup>

Presumably, Downie somehow managed to scrape together enough money to pay for his passage to the United States, though his children may not have accompanied him. Settled in Augusta, Georgia, he practiced once more as a goldsmith, taking at least two apprentices. His death occurred on Christmas Day 1816.<sup>116</sup> There is a remarkable postscript to the Downie story. Downie's daughter, Peggy, married in 1807 at Castlehead Church, Paisley, Claud Wilson, a weaver and a radical. One of their descendants was President Ronald Reagan.<sup>117</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The case of David Downie is a reminder that the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the city of Edinburgh, and its individual members, were often politically engaged at both a local and a national level. The Incorporation was one of the fourteen Incorporated Trades of the city and was therefore involved in civic business and commercial affairs. Its Deacon on occasion served as Convener of the Trades and always sat on Edinburgh City Council. There were also two Trades Councillors, one of whom might be a goldsmith – exceptionally, between September 1751 and September 1754 both Trades Councillors were goldsmiths. Goldsmiths elected to the City Council, with their fellow councillors, administered the city, helped to oversee city institutions, participated in City Council ceremonies and social functions, and helped to elect Edinburgh's Member of Parliament.<sup>118</sup>

While seeking political influence, the Goldsmiths almost always supported the political establishment. Care was taken to cultivate Scottish political grandees, such as the Duke of Argyll (August 1740) and Sir Lawrence Dundas (October 1767 and August 1774).<sup>119</sup> Similarly, on 5 March 1746, six weeks before the Duke of Cumberland's victory over the Jacobite army at Culloden, the Incorporation voted to present the Duke with the Freedom of the Incorporation in a gold box.<sup>120</sup> At their meetings,

the Goldsmiths discussed the poor rate, turnpikes, public works projects in Edinburgh, new city tax proposals, the presentation of ministers to Edinburgh parishes, legislation regulating the import and export of corn, military conscription, the public subscription for the new college of Edinburgh University, and the building of the new Bridewell.<sup>121</sup> Occasionally, the Incorporation issued public political statements on matters of both local and national importance. This practice continued into the early nineteenth century, with protests against inadequate policing in the city of Edinburgh (January 1812), against a more restrictive application of the Corn Laws (June 1813), and against a continuation of the war-time tax on income and property (December 1814).<sup>122</sup> However, after the Downie case Edinburgh newspapers never again devoted so much space to the politics of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths.

Politics could also play a prominent part in the life of an individual Edinburgh goldsmith.<sup>123</sup> At the time of the '45 Robert Gordon and Ebenezer Oliphant supported the Jacobite cause, while Adam Tait and James Rutherford even joined the Jacobite army.<sup>124</sup> In contrast, Robert Hope, a Hanoverian, gave evidence against his Jacobite colleagues; and James Ker, another Hanoverian, served as a pro-ministerial MP for the city of Edinburgh, 1747–54.<sup>125</sup> After the '45, it was not until the 1790s that political divisions among the Edinburgh goldsmiths again became so bitter, so personal and so public.

Supplying silver and jewellery to the wealthy, proud of their ancient charters, privileges and status as the second most senior Incorporation, represented by at least one member on Edinburgh City Council, and connected, in some instances, to the gentry and even the nobility, individually and institutionally the Edinburgh goldsmiths were naturally conservative and pro-Establishment. At the same time, though, the case of David Downie shows that an Edinburgh goldsmith could still succumb, like so many other skilled craftsmen in Britain and France, to the political radicalism of the 1790s.

I would like to thank George Dalgleish, Principal Curator, Scottish History, National Museums of Scotland, for his encouragement and support; Henry Steuart Fotheringham OBE, for his corrections and for information about the ultimate fate of David Downie; and Professor John Barrell FBA, for generously sending me a photocopy of *D. Downie, to his Fellow Citizens of Great Britain*. The *Caledonian Mercury (CM)*, *Edinburgh Advertiser (EA)*, and *Edinburgh Evening Courant (EEC)* were consulted in the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), while the *Edinburgh Gazetteer (EG)* was consulted in the Mitchell Library (Glasgow). The Minutes of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the City of Edinburgh (hereafter 'Minutes') were consulted in the National Archives of Scotland (Edinburgh), GD1/482/1–9. The staffs at these institutions were invariably helpful. I would also like to thank Dr Andrew Fraser for his patient and painstaking editing of this article.

- 1 General accounts include: M. Cosh, *Edinburgh: The Golden Age* (Edinburgh 2003), pp. 80–81; T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700–2000* (London 1999), p. 209; W. Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh 1977), pp. 259–260; A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London 1979), pp. 334–336; P. S. Hogg, *Robert Burns: The patriot Bard* (Edinburgh and London 2008), pp. 288–289. J. Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793–96* (Oxford 2000), pp. 252–284, critically examines the trials of Watt and Downie, with special reference to concepts of treason. For a Catholic perspective see Rev. W. J. Anderson, 'David Downie and the Friends of the People', *Imnes Review*, 16 (1965), pp. 165–179; C. Johnson, 'David Downie: A Reappraisal', *Imnes Review*, 31 (1980), pp. 87–94. See also M. Goldie, 'The Scottish Catholic Enlightenment', *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (1991), pp. 20–62; G. Pentland, 'Patriotism, Universalism and the Scottish Conventions, 1792–1794', *History*, 89 (2004), pp. 340–360. For the US Supreme Court see No. 03–1027, In the Supreme Court of the United States, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Petitioner, p. 11, n. 52.
- 2 On Jacobitism and radicalism see C. Duffy, *The '45* (London 2003), pp. 542–543.
- 3 William Gilchrist was apprenticed to James Tait in 1718, became a Freeman in 1736, and served as Deacon, September 1752 to September 1754. He lived in lodgings in Carrubber's Close, north side of the High Street, Edinburgh, and died in 1776. Gilchrist may have had Jacobite sympathies. He attended the Episcopalian Chapel in Carrubber's Close, and he initially refused to swear the oath of loyalty to King George II: Minutes, 13 November 1746.
- 4 Minutes, 29 May and 20 November 1770.
- 5 Minutes, 12 September 1771.
- 6 C. B. Boog Watson (ed.), *Register of Edinburgh Apprentices, 1701–1755* (Edinburgh 1929), p. 27, and *idem.*, *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild-Brethren, 1761–1841* (Edinburgh 1933), p. 49. William Downie married Sarah Morrison (15 October 1752) and had a son, David, who became a burghess on 30 October 1812 (*ibid.*, p. 49), and a daughter, Sarah, who in turn married (10 September 1782) John McKnight, a lawyer: F. J. Grant (ed.), *Register of Marriages of the City of Edinburgh, 1751–1800* (Edinburgh 1922), pp. 210, 490. John McKnight was the other witness at the baptism of James Drummond Downie. William Downie took three apprentices, Charles Stewart (21 January 1767), John Black (17 July 1771) and George Skelton (28 April 1773), who became a watchmaker and an Edinburgh burghess (2 November 1786). See M. Wood, *Register of Edinburgh Apprentices, 1756–1800* (Edinburgh 1963), pp. 63, 7, 60. P. Williamson, *Williamson's Directory for the City of Edinburgh . . . 25 May 1773–25 May 1774* (Reprint Edinburgh 1889), p. 23, lists 'William Downie, watch-maker, west end of Luckenbooths'.
- 7 *Edinburgh Evening Courant (EEC)*, 12 October 1776, p. 3, commented: 'a gentleman endowed with great natural abilities, and an uncommon fund of humour, which, joined to a benevolent disposition, render his death much regretted by his acquaintance'.
- 8 A similar notice appeared in *EEC*, 13 November 1776, p. 3.
- 9 Minutes, 31 January 1778. Robert Clark had previously rented the shop. Downie's annual rent was subsequently reduced to £11. 1. 4: Minutes, 18 August 1789.
- 10 Minutes, 5 March 1778, 10 August and 6 September 1779. Downie was still disputing this bill years later: Minutes, 13 September 1791.
- 11 Minutes, 23 May 1786.
- 12 Minutes, 12 September 1781. Peter Mathie served as Treasurer of the Incorporation, September 1778 to September 1782.
- 13 See Minutes, 7, 12 and 14 September 1786.
- 14 R. R. and J. M. Dietert, *Compendium of Scottish Silver*, 2 vols (Cornell University 2006), I, pp. 269, 205; II, pp. 417, 338. The toasting fork is also listed in Sir Charles Jackson, *English Goldsmiths and their Marks* (Antique Collectors' Club 1989), p. 550. For a description and photograph of the sauce boat, see G. Dalgleish and H. Steuart Fotheringham (eds), *Silver made in Scotland* (Edinburgh 2008), pp. 71–72.
- 15 This is based on R. and J. Dietert, *The Edinburgh Goldsmiths. 1. Training, Marks, Output and Demographics* (Lightning Source 2007). William Marshall, 'after David Downie's leaving this Kingdom served out his time with Mr. Alex Zeigler' and was admitted a Freeman on 7 September 1802: Minutes, 8 September 1798, 10 August and 7 September 1802.
- 16 Johnson, 'Downie: A Reappraisal' (note 1), p. 87.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 90. A 1788 table spoon, engraved with the Earl of Traquair's crest and coronet, is displayed in the Museum Room, Traquair.
- 18 At Downie's trial, Gardner stated that Downie 'has been doing business for me since 1768', and that 'I have often employed him in my own trade': *Trial of David Downie for High Treason, Before the Court, Under the Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer, Held at Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1795), p. 123. Williamson's *Directory* for 1782–84 (Edinburgh 1783), p. 23, lists 'Downie and Aitken, jewellers, Parliament Square'.
- 19 Notes of Stuart Maxwell, National Museums of Scotland.
- 20 Anderson, 'Downie and Friends of the People' (note 1), p. 170; Johnson, 'Downie: A Reappraisal' (note 1), p. 87; Goldie, 'Scottish Catholic Enlightenment' (note 1), p. 58.

- 21 On Alexander Geddes, see G. Carruthers, 'Scattered Remains: the literary Career of Alexander Geddes', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series (2004), pp. 181–200; R. C. Fuller, *Alexander Geddes, 1737–1802* (Sheffield 1984).
- 22 Geddes also published the texts of his letters to Joseph Priestly on religion (1787 and 1789) and to a Member of Parliament on 'the expediency of a general repeal of all penal statutes that regard religious opinions' (1787). Besides engaging in public debate on religious topics, Geddes was interested in poetry. He published his own poems, such as *Linton, a Tweeddale Pastoral* (Edinburgh 1791), as well as translations of French and Latin poetry; and he owned an Edinburgh 1787 edition of Robert Burns, *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*.
- 23 J. Colston, *The Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1891), pp. 38–39.
- 24 William and Patrick Cunningham 'objected to Mr Oliphant having a vote in the Incorporation in respect he is a Roman Catholic': Minutes, 12 August 1788. This was almost certainly a deliberate and malicious misrepresentation. The Minutes of 14 November 1746 indicate that he was an Episcopalian; and, according to E. Maxtone Graham, *The Oliphants of Gask: Records of a Jacobite Family* (London 1910), p. 173, 'For many years Ebenezer was an office-bearer in the Episcopal church of Old St Paul's, Carrubber's Close'. The baptismal register of Old St Paul's records the baptisms of Ebenezer Oliphant's son James Lawrence (15 January 1743), twins John and Emilia (24 April 1746), and son Anthony (20 February 1748): Old St Paul's Register of Baptisms, 1735–65, Edinburgh City Archives, ED10/2/1.
- 25 Minutes, 10 September 1778.
- 26 Minutes, 10 and 12 September 1778.
- 27 Minutes, 14 and 16 September 1780. On 14 September 1786 Downie and James Wemyss were briefly 'struck out of the qualified List', probably because they owed the Incorporation money.
- 28 *Caledonian Mercury* (*CM*), 13 January 1779, p. 2. In general see R. K. Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland, 1778–1783* (New York 1987).
- 29 Minutes, 14 September 1780 and 12 August 1788.
- 30 Minutes, 22 July 1768.
- 31 *Edinburgh Advertiser* (*EA*), 27–30 December 1774, p. 422. Cf. *EA*, 1–5 November 1776, p. 295, and *EEC*, 30 December 1776, p. 1. See also Minutes, 30 June 1768, 10 February and 23 November 1773.
- 32 Others advertised in the *EEC* include: Mr Johnson's shop at the front of the Exchange (26 July 1780); McKain and Anderson, middle of Bridge Street, east side (25 January 1783); James Cooper, Bridge Street, opposite the General Post Office (11 and 26 April 1783); Lerchen and Stewart, shop above the Old Bank Close, Lawnmarket (29 May 1784); White and Mitchel, opposite the Tron Church (9 March 1785); Fraser and Wilson, 2 Hunter Square (15 October and 12 December 1789); John White, South Bridge Street (11 June 1791).
- 33 See advertisements by Laurence Dalgleish, *EEC*, 7 June 1783, p. 3, and W. Drysdale, *EA*, 20–23 April 1790, p. 259.
- 34 *EEC*, 27 November 1784, p. 1.
- 35 *CM*, 19 March 1785, p. 3. Cf. *CM*, 9 May 1789, p. 1.
- 36 *CM* and *EEC*, 2 January 1787, p. 3.
- 37 *EEC*, 4 May 1789, p. 1; *CM*, 9 May 1789, p. 1; *CM*, 29 January 1791, p. 1, and 20 May 1793, p. 1.
- 38 *CM*, 5 July 1794, p. 3.
- 39 *EA*, 24–28 February 1775, p. 133.
- 40 *CM*, 23 July 1778, p. 3.
- 41 *EEC*, 16 February 1784, p. 3.
- 42 *EA*, 3–7 July 1789, p. 14.
- 43 *EA*, 8–11 June 1784, p. 373; *EEC*, 12 June 1784, p. 1. See also Minutes, 11 June 1784. For earlier examples of such concerns, see Minutes, 6 May 1740, 30 March 1756, 8 February 1765, 3 December 1766, 6 February 1783.
- 44 Minutes, 28 March and 16 July 1778; *EA*, 8–11 August 1780, p. 94. See also Minutes, 9 January 1778. Edinburgh goldsmiths may also have had friends and/or relations personally involved in the war. For instance, Captain Charles Kerr of Calderbank (1753–1813), son of the prominent Edinburgh goldsmith James Ker, was wounded at Bunker Hill in 1775 while serving in the 43rd Monmouthshire Regiment of Foot.
- 45 *EEC*, 23 April 1783, p. 1; *EA*, 13–17 February 1784, p. 109, and 8–11 June 1784, p. 373; *EEC*, 12 June 1784, p. 1. For comparable Irish silver lotteries, see E. J. Law, 'Some Provincial Irish Silver Lotteries', *Silver Society Journal*, 7 (1995), pp. 412–415.
- 46 For a report on the Convention of 20 August 1788, see *EEC*, 8 September 1788, pp. 1–2, and 11 September 1788, p. 3. See also *EA*, 19–22 August 1788, p. 125. The anti-slavery campaign in Scotland climaxed in early 1792. The Goldsmiths discussed the abolition of slavery but decided by a majority of eight that they were not competent to judge the issue: Minutes, 14 and 22 February 1792. In contrast, other Edinburgh Incorporations did organise anti-slavery meetings and protests, including the Skinners and Furriers, Bonnetmakers and Dyers, Masons, Hammermen, Websters, Candlemakers, Waukers and Hatters, and also the Incorporated Trades of Leith. In general see I. Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756–1838* (Edinburgh 2007).
- 47 See, in general, B. Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (London 2008).
- 48 *EEC*, 13 February 1790, p. 3.
- 49 *CM*, 2 September 1790, p. 3; *EA*, 31 August–3 September 1790, p. 150.
- 50 *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, Minister of Inveresk* (Edinburgh and London 1860), p. 421. Established and run by John Fortune, the tavern was in the Stamp Office Close. For Glasgow, see *EEC*, 16 July 1791, p. 3.
- 51 *EEC*, 7 August 1790, p. 3.
- 52 See Harris, *Scottish People and French Revolution*, pp. 79–80.
- 53 *EEC*, 13 and 27 August 1791, p. 3.
- 54 *CM*, 16 July 1792, p. 3.
- 55 Cf. *CM*, 6 November 1790, p. 3: 'The first edition of Mr Burke's Pamphlet on the French revolution, consisting of five thousand copies, were all sold on Monday and Tuesday before three o'clock'. See also *EEC*, 4 and 6 November 1790, p. 3.
- 56 The Annual Convention for Burgh Reform was meeting in Edinburgh, 25–27 July 1792. See *EEC*, 28 July and 6 August 1792, p. 3. In general see J. Brims, 'From Reformers to 'Jacobins': The Scottish Association of the Friends of the

- People', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society, 1700–1850* (Edinburgh 1990), pp. 31–50.
- 57 T. B. and T. J. Howell (eds), *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period . . . to the Present Time*, 34 vols (London 1809–28), 23 (1817), p. 582.
- 58 Aitchison, with two other leading members of the Society, tried to change the rules so that the profits of each meeting were distributed equally among those who spoke in the debates, instead of being donated to charity. The members rejected this proposal, and Aitchison and his two associates resigned and proceeded to found a rival debating society, the Lyceum. This apparently failed: see *EEC*, 8 and 15 March 1783, p. 1, and 10 March 1783, p. 3. On the Pantheon Debating Society, see J. A. Fairley, 'The Pantheon: An old Edinburgh debating Society', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 1 (1908), pp. 47–75. Aitchison's behaviour at this time may have been influenced by the death of his widowed mother, Anne Pringle, on 4 February 1783: *EEC*, 5 February 1783, p. 3.
- 59 The Dietert *Compendium*, vol. 1, lists only a soup ladle of 1780–81 (p. 217) and five tablespoons of 1778–79 (p. 270). A soup ladle of 1780–81 by Alexander Aitchison featured in Lyon & Turnbull's Sale, 17 August 2009, lot 317.
- 60 Minutes, 8 April 1789. The Incorporation decided to grant Aitchison's daughter an annuity of £4. 15. 6 on 20 November 1792 and to pay her 'school dues' on 28 May 1793. Aitchison married Ann Aikenhead, a farmer's daughter, on 1 October 1776: Grant, *Register of Marriages, 1751–1800*, p. 7. On Ann's death, Aitchison asked for 'some allowance from the funds of the Incorporation for burying her', and was granted four guineas: Minutes, 19 September 1786. He subsequently married (29 September 1787) Jean Anderson, 'relict of Richard Boyle, late manufacturer in Perth': F. J. Grant (ed.), *Parish of Holyroodhouse or Canongate. Register of Marriages, 1564–1800* (Edinburgh 1915), p. 8 and p. 415. His daughter by his first marriage may then have been neglected.
- 61 Minutes, 25 May 1790. On 18 July 1789, Aitchison, 'in great want', had been granted three guineas.
- 62 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), pp. 1322–1324. See also V. Honeyman, 'A very dangerous Place?: Radicalism in Perth in the 1790s', *Scottish Historical Review*, 87 (2008), pp. 278–305.
- 63 Scottish Book Trade Index, National Library of Scotland; R. Watt, *By Authority. The Declaration and Confession of Robert Watt* (Edinburgh 1794); *Gentleman's Magazine*, 64 (1794), p. 967; *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), p. 1397; *A Series of Original Portraits and Caricature Etchings, by the late John Kay*, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1838), I, p. 354. See also the entry for Robert Watt in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 57 (2004), pp. 705–706.
- 64 National Archives of Scotland (NAS), Home Office Correspondence (Scotland), RH 2/4/64, ff. 318–319, Robert Watt to Robert Dundas, Edinburgh, 21 September 1792; *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), p. 1327.
- 65 See K. J. Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1780–1815* (Edinburgh 1979), pp. 128–154; and E. Hughes, 'The Scottish Reform Movement and Charles Grey, 1792–94: Some fresh Correspondence', *Scottish Historical Review*, 35 (1956), p. 31.
- 66 Minutes, 7 June 1792.
- 67 *Caledonian Chronicle*, 4–7 December 1792, p. 4.
- 68 *EEC*, 10 December 1792, p. 4.
- 69 See *ibid.*, p. 1. The *EEC*, 3 January 1793, p. 3, commented: 'The GOLDSMITHS thought that those who bore the Sterling Stamp of the pure and unalloyed love of the Constitution were called upon to give due weight to the laws of their country. That some Bullion on the present occasion could not stand the test, for it was little better than base Bell metal, and that under the pretence of refining the Constitution they hoped the Sterling would never be lowered to the Standard of equality with such dross as had been coined in France.'
- 70 On Muir, see C. Bewley, *Muir of Huntershill* (Oxford 1981).
- 71 NAS, RH 2/4/66, ff. 356–357; H. W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Glasgow 1912), p. 251.
- 72 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), p. 228.
- 73 Minutes, 12 August 1788, 24 May, 16 August and 13 September 1791.
- 74 *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (1991), p. 58.
- 75 Minutes, 16 November 1792.
- 76 *Edinburgh Gazetteer (EG)*, 11 January 1793, p. 3.
- 77 For Downie's account, see *EG*, 29 October 1793, p. 4. For Mathie's account, see *CM*, 9 November 1793, p. 1.
- 78 Harris, *Scottish People and the French Revolution* (note 47), p. 48. See also *idem.*, 'Scotland's Newspapers, the French Revolution and Domestic Radicalism (c. 1789–1794)', *Scottish Historical Review*, 84 (2005), pp. 52, 58.
- 79 Minutes, 2 November 1793.
- 80 See *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), pp. 391–471.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 23 (1817), pp. 393–394, 411–412, 441.
- 82 *Ibid.*, pp. 528, 534–535. On 30 November Downie proposed that those members of the Friends of the People who did not attend their sections should be fined: *Trial of David Downie for High Treason* (note 18), p. 61. He also tabled the following long-winded resolution: 'Seeing that the enemies of the Constitution and of the People have ungenerously combined together to withdraw their employment and assistance from the friends of Reform, knowing that self preservation is the first law of nature, we the Friends of the People do think it a duty incumbent on us to assist one another in our different employments and in whatever concerns procuring assistance for support of ourselves and families and also that every one in particular who is or may be persecuted for their laudable principles in the cause of reform shall be supported by the whole mass of the People conjoined for the Purpose of Parliamentary Reform': NAS, JC 26/280. Workers, tradesmen and craftsmen suspected of, or identified with, radicalism, were evidently already experiencing a politically motivated boycott. On 21 January 1794 the Conventry of Trades of Edinburgh, meeting in the Magdalen Chapel, 'unanimously resolved, to give no employment or support to such deluded and seditious persons, until they show a due sense of their error, and become peaceable members of Society': *EEC*, 23 January 1794, p. 1.
- 83 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), pp. 528–532, 534–535, 653–659, 922–927.
- 84 He was already an Establishment figure, having been appointed 'goldsmith and medallist for Scotland to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales' (*EA*, 2–5 October 1792, p. 221); and he later served as Deacon of the Goldsmiths (September



- 1811–September 1813). His full-length portrait, recalling David’s portrait of Napoleon as First Consul, hangs in the Edinburgh Assay Office, Broughton Street. Ironically, he served his apprenticeship under Alexander Aitchison junior.
- 85 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), pp. 826, 901, 1003, 1012.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 23 (1817), pp. 17, 25.
- 87 *EEC*, 10 April 1794, p. 3.
- 88 *CM*, 10 April 1794, p. 3.
- 89 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), p. 1243; *Trial of David Downie for High Treason*, pp. 177–179.
- 90 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 23 (1817), p. 1273, and 24 (1818), p. 62. Following the discovery of the Pike Plot, Aitchison was confined in the Edinburgh Tolbooth and required to serve as a witness in the subsequent Edinburgh and London trials. See *EA*, 21–24 October 1794, p. 270.
- 91 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 24 (1818), pp. 82–83.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 24 (1818), pp. 98–100.
- 93 The details of the Pike Plot are well documented and are to be found in the reports of the trials of Watt and Downie.
- 94 Minutes, 23 May 1794.
- 95 Minutes, 1 July 1794. Mathie’s election as a Captain in the Edinburgh Trained Bands on 4 June 1794 had reinforced his Establishment credentials: W. Skinner, *The Society of Trained Bands of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1889), p. 148.
- 96 Minutes, 15 July 1794. Mathie, as Deacon, presented the silver box containing the Freedom of the Incorporation to Thomas Elder, the Lord Provost, on 4 September 1794, the day before Downie’s trial was due to begin. Hugely embarrassed by Downie’s treason and trial, the Goldsmiths also put on record their appreciation of Elder’s ‘ardent zeal, in maintaining unsullied the liberties and laws of the Constitution, and his spirited, manly, and prudent conduct in preserving the peace of the city, by suppressing the tumults and disorders which have lately threatened a subversion of the highly esteemed Government of our country’: *EA*, 2–5 September 1794, pp. 159–160.
- 97 Anderson, ‘Downie and the Friends of the People’ (note 1), pp. 171–172, 175–176; and Johnson, ‘Downie: A Reappraisal’ (note 1), pp. 89, 91. Lady Barbara Stewart was now probably in her eighties, and she died on 15 November 1794. Her will, and that of her sister Lady Mary Stewart, were registered on 3 August 1795: F. J. Grant (ed.), *The Commissariat Record of Edinburgh. Register of Testaments, 1701–1800* (Edinburgh 1899), p. 260. Downie’s sister-in-law may also have helped. She advertised for sale by lottery an eight-day clock made by her late husband, William Downie: *EEC*, 19 January 1795, p. 3.
- 98 *CM*, 7 and 30 December 1793, p. 1.
- 99 *Trials of Robert Watt and David Downie, for High Treason . . .* (Edinburgh 1794), pp. 15–16.
- 100 See Walter Scott to his aunt, Miss Christian Rutherford, 5 September 1794: H. J. C. Grierson (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1787–1807*, I (London 1932), pp. 34–35.
- 101 *Trials of Watt and Downie*, p. 68.
- 102 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 103 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 24 (1818), p. 150.
- 104 Johnson, ‘Downie: A Reappraisal’, p. 93. The jury comprised three merchants (including William Fettes), two upholsterers, two painters, a tin smith, a wine merchant, a wright (joiner/carpenter), a seal engraver and a candle maker.
- 105 *State Trials and Proceedings*, 24 (1818), p. 198. A slightly different wording is to be found in *Trials of Watt and Downie*, p. 83.
- 106 *EEC*, 6 September 1794, p. 3.
- 107 *CM*, 13 October 1794, p. 3.
- 108 For descriptions of Watt’s execution, see *ibid.*, 16 October 1794, p. 3; *EEC*, 16 October 1794, p. 3; *EA*, 14–17 October 1794, p. 254; *New Annual Register*, 1794, p. 58.
- 109 Scott to Miss Rutherford, October/November 1794: *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, I, p. 37.
- 110 *EA*, 31 March–3 April 1795, p. 214; *CM* and *EEC*, 4 April 1795, p. 3. The Incorporation did not forget Downie. On 23 May 1797 his name was struck off the Roll ‘in respect of certain misdemeanours and improper conduct’.
- 111 *D. DOWNIE, to his Fellow Citizens of Great Britain* (n.p., 1796), dated 2 January 1796. I am most grateful to Professor John Barrell for supplying me with a photocopy of this publication, the original of which is in the British Library, Francis Place Papers, vol. 37, Add. MS. 27825. Downie sent a copy of the publication to the English radical Francis Place, with a covering letter dated 29 February 1796, in the hope of raising money for his voyage to America. The publication also refers to a letter by Downie to David Ramsay, printer of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, declaring his innocence of the crimes imputed to him, ‘or of any evil attention whatever’. This letter was published in the *Telegraph* (London), 20 October 1795 (an issue which I have failed to track down in any library).
- 112 *Ibid.*
- 113 *Ibid.*
- 114 *Ibid.*
- 115 *Ibid.* The address of Charles Stewart Downie, Downie’s elder son, is also revealed: ‘No. 5, Rose Street, west of Frederick Street, New Town, Edinburgh’.
- 116 *Augusta Chronicle*, 1 January 1817: ‘DIED, in this place, on the 25th ult. Mr David Downie, aged eighty years – A native of Scotland, but for 20 years past a resident of Augusta. In the various departments of life, Mr Downie discharged their duties with promptitude and faithfulness. – As a citizen he was patriotic – as a man, he was useful – and as a Christian, he was pious, benevolent and just. With the grave that covers the last remains of mortality, charity also deposits its foibles – but there, the virtues of the good cannot be hid – they burst its awful cerements, and sanctify the memory of their possessor.’ For this reference, I am indebted to Ian Steuart Fotheringham, and to his father, Henry Steuart Fotheringham.
- 117 See *Scotsman*, 7 June 2004, which describes Ronald and Nancy Reagan attending a service at Castlehead Church.
- 118 As early as 1710, just three years after the union of parliaments, the Incorporation tried to influence the election of Edinburgh’s representative in the House of Commons: see Minutes, 17 October and 16 November 1710, and 12 September 1711. Kenneth Mackenzie, Deacon of the Goldsmiths, in March 1722 unsuccessfully challenged the re-election of the MP for Edinburgh by proposing the candidature of a fellow goldsmith, George Main: Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Town Council Minutes (TCM), 21 March 1722. In 1741 the

## EDINBURGH GOLDSMITHS AND RADICAL POLITICS

- Goldsmiths tried unsuccessfully to secure the election of a craftsman, rather than a merchant, as the city's parliamentary representative: see Minutes, 11 and 12 May 1741, 11 August 1741, and 24 November 1741. They again tried in 1761 to influence the outcome of Edinburgh's parliamentary election: Minutes, 3 April 1761.
- 119 See *EEC*, 12 August 1740, pp. 2–3; *EA*, 23–27 October 1767, p. 269; *EEC*, 10 August 1774, p. 3. See also Minutes, 7 and 12 August 1740, 21 October 1767, and 9 August 1774.
- 120 Minutes, 25 March 1746. Subsequently, Edinburgh City Council presented the Duke of Cumberland with the freedom of the city in a gold box, for which its maker, James Ker, was paid £107.17.7½d: *ECA*, *TCM*, 3 January, 8 April and 20 May 1747. The Earl of Buchan, one of the principal founders of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, was also presented with the Freedom of the Incorporation, 'in a box made from Sir William Wallace's tree ... mounted with silver': Minutes, 2 October and 18 November 1782.
- 121 See Minutes, 24 February and 4 March 1749, 21 November and 13 December 1749, 27 July 1752, 12 April 1760, 29 November 1762, 17 October 1775, 20 December 1777, 5 June 1782, 3 December 1789, 8 March 1790.
- 122 See *CM*, 18 January 1812, p. 1, 3 July 1813, p. 1, and 22 December 1814, p. 1; *EEC*, 18 January 1812, p. 3, and 22 December 1814, p. 1. See also Minutes, 31 March 1812, 28 June 1813, 20 December 1814, and 14 February 1815. The Incorporation of Goldsmiths petitioned the House of Commons against the property tax and the House of Lords against a bill regulating the police of Edinburgh: Minutes, 24 February and 30 April 1816.
- 123 At the beginning of the century, Robert Inglis, a member of the Scottish Parliament, had 'strenuously opposed the Union'. See his obituary notice in *CM*, 25 July 1734, p. 16039, and M. D. Young (ed.), *The Parliaments of Scotland: Burgh and Shire Commissioners*, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1992–93), I, p. 367. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several Edinburgh goldsmiths represented Edinburgh in Scottish Parliaments, including James Dennistoun (1643), George Foulis of Ravelston (1604–21), Michael Gilbert (1585), Edward Heriot (1586), and Gilbert Kirkwood of Pilrig (1633).
- 124 On Gordon, see J. Rock, 'Robert Gordon, Goldsmith and Richard Cooper, Engraver: A Glimpse into a Scottish Atelier of the eighteenth Century', *Silver Studies*, 19 (2005), pp. 49–63. For Tait and Rutherford: Minutes, 5 December 1752; H. S. Fotheringham, 'Scottish Goldsmiths' Apprenticeships', *Silver Society Journal*, 14 (2002), p. 82. James Gedd, son of the Edinburgh goldsmith William Ged, served in the Duke of Perth's Regiment and was captured at Carlisle.
- 125 *Ibid.*, 14 (2002), p. 82.