

The circulation of Scottish agricultural books during the eighteenth century

by Heather Holmes

Abstract

This paper focuses on aspects of the circulation of Scottish agricultural books in the eighteenth century to 1790. In viewing the books as an object of material culture, it considers a range of factors which affected their circulation: the progress of agricultural development, the rise of the Scottish book trades (and the demand for books), the methods that were available to publish books, the ability to read, the cost of books and their reputation. It concludes with a survey of the subscribers to a selection of agricultural books. These show that the range of people who purchased and read agricultural books widened, especially between the 1760s and 1790s.

Agriculture, it might be thought, is a practical business. Much agricultural knowledge though has been book learning; and there has been much interest from the pioneering accounts of George Fussell onwards in the role of print in spreading innovation and good practice. Although a number of agricultural historians have provided comprehensive surveys of the contents of eighteenth-century Scottish agricultural books, and the surveys of James E. Handley have become classic accounts, few scholars have examined the circulation of these books.¹ J. A. Symon, Alex McCallum and Charles W. J. Withers refer to a range of channels available to disseminate agricultural information and record a number of the more important agricultural books.² For English books, Nicholas Goddard discusses aspects of the circulation and readership of books in a survey of the period 1750 to 1850.³ Other authors have suggested their influence. In an investigation of the agents of agricultural change in Scotland, Ian H. Adams suggests the impact which they had on the diffusion of agricultural innovations.⁴ In England, their role has been briefly considered by J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay as well as Pamela Horn.⁵

¹ James Handley, *Scottish farming in the eighteenth century* (1953).

² J. A. Symon, 'Diffusion of agricultural knowledge', *Trans. Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland* (hereafter *THASS*), fifth ser., 1 (1956), pp. 5–7; Alex McCallum, 'The diffusion of scientific knowledge to farmers – Scotland', *Scottish J. Agriculture* 17 (1934), pp. 372–80; C. W. J. Withers, 'William Cullen's agricultural lectures and writings and the development of agricultural science in eighteenth-century Scotland', *AgHR* 37 (1989), pp. 145–7.

³ Nicholas Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, 1750–1850 (1989), pp. 361–70.

⁴ Ian Adams, 'The agents of agricultural change', in M. L. Parry and T. R. Slater (eds), *The making of the Scottish countryside* (1980), p. 174.

⁵ J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The agricultural revolution, 1750–1880* (1966), pp. 74–5; Pamela Horn, 'The contribution of the propagandist to eighteenth-century agricultural improvement', *Historical J.*, 25 (1982), pp. 313–29.

This paper focuses on aspects of the circulation of Scottish agricultural books in the eighteenth century until 1790. Viewing the books as an aspect of material culture, it considers a range of factors which affected their circulation: the progress of agricultural development, the rise of the Scottish book trades (and the demand for books), the methods that were available to publish books, their cost and reputation. It concludes with a survey of the purchasers and the readers of a small number of the agricultural books. For the purpose of this survey, the 'agricultural book' is defined in accordance with the bibliographical list of J. A. S. Watson and G. D. Amery who provide a handlist of Scottish agricultural literature to 1790. This is wider in its range than the bibliography of W. Frank Perkins which excludes a number of types of books such as those on beekeeping.⁶

I

Scottish agriculturalists and others interested in agriculture and rural affairs had access to, and could purchase, a wide range of agricultural books. (Agricultural information was also available in a wide range of general newspapers and journals, though these have not been included in this survey.⁷) These books varied in appearance, having a number of forms: the duodecimo (12mo), the octavo (8vo), the quarto (4to) and the folio (fo). The duodecimo was the format of seven books recorded by Watson and Amery.⁸ Used for 'small and cheap books', these included some of the earliest books such as James Donaldson's *Husbandry anatomized* (1697), as well as others that were published at a much later date, such as James Bonner's *The bee-master's companion and assistant* (1789). The majority of the books (61 of the first editions noted by Watson and Amery), were published as octavos. These generally comprised a few hundred pages of text and sometimes a number of plates, encased in blue papers, boards or leather bindings. This format was well-suited to the production of scholarly books 'intended for general use and popular sale'.⁹ The quarto, used for six first editions, was employed for 'relatively expensive works intended mainly for gentlemen's libraries' and to create an impact.¹⁰ Although utilized for the *Overture for establishing a Society to improve the Kingdom* of 1698, it was rarely used before the late 1770s, when it was the format for two of James Anderson's books; Anderson's reputation could sell books in this format.¹¹ The folio was confined to one book, David Young's *The farmer's account book* (1790) which is not, however, noticed in Watson and Amery's list. Although such books were generally 'large, prestigious, and extremely expensive', his book was intended as an inexpensive publication.¹²

⁶ J. A. S. Watson and G. D. Amery, 'Early Scottish agricultural writers', *THASS*, fifth ser., 43 (1931), pp. 60–85; W. Frank Perkins, *British and Irish writers on agriculture* (third edn, 1939), 'Introduction to the first edition'.

⁷ For example *The Scots Magazine* frequently carried articles on agricultural subjects, as did the short-lived *Edinburgh Weekly Review* and newspapers such as the *Caledonian Mercury*.

⁸ Richard B. Sher, 'Science and medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment: the lessons of book history', in Paul

Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: essays in representation* (2000), p. 135.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 138; *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 Jan. 1777.

¹⁰ Sher, 'Science and medicine', p. 135.

¹¹ James Anderson, *Observations on the means of exciting a spirit of national industry; chiefly intended to promote the agriculture, etc. of Scotland* (1777); *id.*, *An enquiry into the causes that have hitherto retarded the advancement of agriculture in Europe* (1779).

¹² Sher, 'Science and medicine', p. 134; *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 Aug. 1790.

During the eighteenth century, the publishing of agricultural books expanded at a great rate. Pamela Horn asserts that 'there is no doubting the rapid increase in the number of agricultural books that appeared during the second half of the eighteenth century'.¹³ Writing of English agricultural books between the publication of Jethro Tull's *Horse-hoeing husbandry* in 1733 and the formation of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement in 1793, Fussell observed that 'many more books on farming, horticulture, and farriery came off the press than ever before in a similar space'.¹⁴ Large scale developments were also recorded in Scotland, although the publication of agricultural books was on a smaller scale. In 1697, James Donaldson observed that 'many large and learned treatises on husbandry' were available to the Scottish farmer.¹⁵ Bibliographical evidence reveals that the books to which Donaldson refers to were written by English authors and were published in England: English books continued to be available to Scottish farmers throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁶ Amery and Watson confirm that few books were published before 1697. They record only five authors who published their books in Edinburgh. These included a reprint of a popular English book, Thomas Tusser's *Five hundredth pointes of good husbandrie*, published in 1599, as well as books written by Scottish authors such as John Reid's *The Scots gard'ner* of 1683.¹⁷ By 1795, James Donaldson refers to the 'abundance' of agricultural books that were available in Scotland.¹⁸ Between 1697 and 1790 Watson and Amery list a total of 46 authors who published their books in Scotland. During this period, and into the early nineteenth century, they published a total of 77 books and pamphlets.¹⁹

In Scotland, this development had a distinct pattern. Amery and Watson record that few books were published until the 1730s and only three in the 1740s. In 1743, Robert Maxwell, the Secretary of the first national Scottish agricultural society, the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland, could assert that 'there are few Scots books wrote upon husbandry'.²⁰ It was not until the second half of the 1750s that their numbers started to increase, a trend that is reflected in the number of English authors that were publishing their first book in England.²¹ There was a further marked increase in their numbers in the 1760s and 1770s, though the number of new authors fell. During these two decades, agricultural writers of

¹³ Horn, 'Contribution of the propagandist', p. 317.

¹⁴ G. E. Fussell, *More old English farming books from Tull to the Board of Agriculture, 1731-1793* (1950), p. 1. See also id., *The old farming books from Fitzherbert to Tull, 1523 to 1730* (1947); id., *The old English farming books, 1793-1839* (1983).

¹⁵ James Donaldson, *Husbandry anatomized, or an enquiry into the present manner of tilling and manuring the ground in Scotland* (1697), author's introduction.

¹⁶ During the course of the eighteenth century, such books continued to be advertised in Scottish newspapers and were also sold by Scottish booksellers. For examples of advertisements for English agricultural books in Scottish newspapers, *Caledonian Mercury*, 26 Feb. 1776, 19 Aug. 1778, 14 Nov. 1778.

Examples of the buying of English books are noted. For example, John Paton wrote from Edinburgh to the Fife landowner Sir James Cheape of Rossie about a book

order on 20 Oct. 1738. He asks 'as for gardening or husbandry, have you Miller's Gardener's dictionary or Tull's Husbandry. These are the latest, or Ellis' Practical farmer?'. Quoted in R. A. Houston, 'Literacy, education and the culture of print in Enlightenment Edinburgh', *History* 78 (1993), p. 381.

¹⁷ Handley, *Scottish farming*, p. 117; Watson and Amery, 'Early Scottish agricultural writers', p. 79.

¹⁸ James Donaldson, *Modern agriculture; or, the present state of husbandry in Great Britain* (1795), p. 325.

¹⁹ Watson and Amery, *Scottish agricultural writers*, pp. 80-5.

²⁰ Robert Maxwell, *Select transactions of the Honourable The Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland* (1743), p. xvi.

²¹ For comparative statistics see Horn, 'Contribution of the propagandist', p. 318.

enduring importance such as Adam Dickson, Henry Home (created Lord Kames in 1752) and James Anderson, started to publish their books. Additionally, an agricultural journal emerged, though this was only short-lived: *The Scots Farmer* of 1773 and 1774, which was reprinted and reissued as *The Northern farmer* in 1778.²² At least one local agricultural society – the Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture within the counties of Dumfries and Galloway – also published its transactions; other regional, county or local societies may have also published books or pamphlets. The 1780s built on these earlier developments. Watson and Amery record that a further seven Scottish writers – Alexander Bald, Archibald Campbell of Fraser, James Small, David Young, Banffshire Farming Society, and two anonymous ones – started to write and publish agricultural books.²³ In the 1790s, there was a rapid increase in the number of new books that were published and authors who were publishing their books for the first time.

II

This expansion in the numbers of agricultural books is reflected in the growing number of genres of books. These evolved at distinct times of the eighteenth century, reflecting developments in agriculture and rural affairs. They highlight the increasing demand for different types of agricultural knowledge and for a widening availability of information. The first genre, which is noted from the earliest books onwards, were books that focused on a specific aspect of agricultural or rural affairs such as a particular crop, implement, or type of livestock. They include James Donaldson's *Husbandry anatomized* (1697) and Thomas Hope of Rankeillor's *A treatise concerning the manner of fallowing of ground, raising of grass seeds, and training of lint and hemp for the increase and improvement of the linen manufactories in Scotland* (1724). Aspects of husbandry are also recorded in a range of early edited collections of agricultural correspondence, notably those of Robert Maxwell, in the *Select transactions of the Honourable the Society of Improvers* (1743) and his *The practical husbandman* (1757) which was 'partly made up of papers chosen out of these transactions, revised and consequently improved'.²⁴ The second genre examines the scientific basis of agriculture. It was influenced by developments in the sciences, especially from the 1750s onwards. The most important book in this genre is Francis Home's *The principles of agriculture and vegetation* (1756), written for a competition held by the Edinburgh Society for the Improvement of Arts and Manufactures 'for the best dissertation on vegetation and the principles of agriculture'.²⁵ Such concerns are also recorded in the work of later agricultural writers such as Lord Kames in *The gentleman farmer* (1776) and James Anderson in *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* (1775). Some of these books also belonged to a third genre: books which describe a complete agricultural system. These were not published until the earliest phases of agricultural improvement had been completed

²² For a discussion of the English journals see G. E. Fussell, 'Early farming journals', *ECHR*, first ser., 3 (1931–2), pp. 417–22; Watson and Amery, 'Early Scottish agricultural writers', p. 83.

²³ Although most of the texts which Watson and Amery list were first published in Scotland, a number were first published in London. They list 11 texts

which had first editions published in England, usually London.

²⁴ Robert Maxwell, *The practical husbandman: being a collection of miscellaneous papers on husbandry &c* (1757), 'To the reader'.

²⁵ Francis Home, *The principles of agriculture and vegetation* (1757), 'The design'.

and agriculturists could show the steps they had taken to undertake their improvements. They reflected the increased knowledge of agriculture by specific practitioners such as Sir John Dalrymple of Cowsland, Lord Kames and Adam Dickson. They also wrote their books with a view to filling a niche in the available agricultural literature. They acknowledged that few books were specifically written for the Scottish agriculturist. Anderson wrote his *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* (1775) as he 'strongly felt the inconvenience here complained of, in the early part of his life, and would be glad if he could in any way contribute to prevent others from suffering in the same way'.²⁶ In addition, they wrote to provide Scottish agriculturists with books that would be useful to them.²⁷ Dickson points out that English books on husbandry 'were ill calculated to the soil and climate of Scotland'.²⁸ Their books, which often comprised more than one volume, provide comprehensive accounts of agricultural practices. Lord Kames' *The gentleman farmer* (1776) covers aspects such as the practice of agriculture (including implements, livestock and carriages, the preparation of land for cropping, plant cultivation for a range of plants, crop rotations, reaping, the feeding of livestock, the buying and selling of farm produce, manures, fences, and the size of a farm) and the theory of agriculture (preliminary observations, food of plants, the fertility of the soil, and means of fertilising soils).²⁹ In later years, David Young developed a system of agriculture in 27 essays.³⁰

A fourth genre are books that comprise extensive extracts from others. This was not widely utilized until the 1760s when a sufficiently large body of books and other agricultural literature had become available for editors to draw upon and edit. The most important of these were collected essays and periodicals such as *Select essays on husbandry extracted from the Museum Rusticum and Foreign essays on agriculture* (1767) which were drawn from these two English periodicals, and *The Scots Farmer*.³¹ The first of these collections included essays suited to Scottish conditions that would be of use to Scottish farmers. Scottish periodicals were established at a much later date than in England where Goddard suggests that they were pioneered at the end of the seventeenth century.³² A fifth genre, which emerged in the 1770s, are books of farming tours in different regions of the country, or throughout it, published as agricultural surveys. These were largely undertaken or commissioned by national bodies that sought to improve Scottish agriculture. For Scotland, the first major survey was commissioned by the Board of Commissioners and Trustees for the Annexed Estates. Undertaken by Andrew Wight, it was published as *Present state of husbandry in Scotland extracted from reports made to the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates, and published by their authority* in four volumes between 1778

²⁶ James Anderson, *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* (1775), p. ix.

²⁷ Late Sir John Dalrymple of Cowsland, *An essay on the husbandry of Scotland, with a proposal for the further improvement thereof* (1745); Adam Dickson, *The husbandry of the ancients* (2 vols, 1788), I, p. xi; Lord Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (fourth edn, 1798), p. xx.

²⁸ Adam Dickson, *Husbandry of the ancients* (2 vols, 1788), I, p. xi.

²⁹ Lord Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (1796 edn), contents page.

³⁰ David Young, *National improvements upon agriculture, in twenty-seven essays* (1785), contents page.

³¹ Goddard notes that as the 'body of agricultural knowledge increased a number of attempts were made to compile volumes that brought the best advice together under one cover'. For him, this led to the development of the farming dictionary and encyclopaedia (Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', p. 362); Watson and Amery, 'Early Scottish agricultural writers', p. 83.

³² Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', p. 366.

and 1784. Further ones for each county were commissioned as part of the Board of Agriculture's wider British survey, and were published from 1793 onwards, and again in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Wight points out that these surveys could not be conducted before the latter part of the eighteenth century:

Fifty years ago a survey of this kind would have been of no avail; because our practice, cramped by custom, was the same everywhere; and there was nothing to be learned. Fifty years hence, the knowledge and practice of husbandry will probably be spread everywhere and nothing will remain to be learned.³³

Although some individuals undertook extensive surveys in England, no one similar emerged in Scotland. However, individuals recorded tours within books which had a wider focus. For example, David Young included the observations of two tours, one from Glasgow to Ayr in January 1787 and the other from Edinburgh to Ruthven of Badenoch via Fort William and Fort Augustus in October 1787 in his *Agriculture, the primary interest of Great Britain* (1788) so that he could show how the theories which he discussed in *National improvements on agriculture in twenty-seven essays* (1785) could be applied.

A sixth genre, emerging in the 1770s and the 1780s, encouraged the development of agriculture in the Scottish, British and European economies. Such books could only be written when agricultural development was being undertaken on a wide scale and with great progress, and its importance to the national economy was being acknowledged and recognised. The most notable books in this genre were those of James Anderson: his *Observations on the means of exciting a spirit of national industry; chiefly intended to promote the agriculture etc of Scotland* (1777) and *An enquiry into the causes that have hitherto retarded the advancement of agriculture in Europe* (1779). A seventh genre is the contemporary comment on the current state of agriculture and rural affairs which sometimes offered advice to the agricultural community. Such books were published from the 1770s onwards. They were short publications such as the anonymously published *A letter to the west country farmers, concerning the difficulties and management of a bad harvest* (1773) and James Anderson's *An enquiry into the nature of the corn laws* (1777). An eighth genre is the reference book, usually presented in tabular form, which provides farmers and others with a guide to prices, so they could undertake their daily, weekly, monthly and yearly activities in purchasing and selling their commodities. These appear to have been published from the 1770s onwards. They include John Thomson's *Tables, shewing, both in Scots and in sterling money the price of any quantity of grain &c from one lippy or one fourth part of a peck, to a thousand bolls* (1771)³⁴ and Alexander Bald's *The farmer and corndealer's assistant* (1780). Finally, accounting books were available to farmers from the second half of the 1770s, though estate managers had already been able to obtain these for a number of years. The first appears to have been John Rose's *The transactions of the British farmer accomptant, adapted to the four seasons of the year* (1776)³⁵ followed by David Young's *The farmer's account book of expenditure*

³³ Andrew Wight, *Present state of husbandry in Scotland, extracted from reports made to the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates, and published by their authority* (4 vols, 1788–84), I, pp. ix–x.

³⁴ This text is not noted by Watson and Amery. See *Caledonian Mercury*, 6 Mar. 1771.

³⁵ Reviewed in *The Monthly Review* 55 (1776), p. 74. This book is not noted in Watson and Amery.

and produce for each day, month, and year (1790).³⁶ Although Scottish agricultural books fall into a larger range of genres than those listed by Goddard (reflecting the wider definition of 'agricultural books' employed by Watson and Amery), they do not include the category of dictionaries or encyclopaedias which attempted 'to bring the whole body of farming knowledge under one cover', and which had been available in England from at least 1669.³⁷ However, a number of these were published in later years.

III

The circulation of agricultural books in their different genres was shaped by the market for them. This can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is changes in agriculture and rural economy which in turn shaped the demand for agricultural knowledge and the different genres of books. The second is the development of the Scottish book trades which allowed and facilitated the publication and circulation of the agricultural books, as well as books in general. In essence, this provided the vehicle through which agricultural information could be conveyed and thereafter circulated. Each will be discussed in turn.

Throughout the eighteenth century, agricultural and rural development played important roles in the demand and circulation of agricultural books. The major developments and innovations that took place during this period of change are already well known, though these have not been viewed in relation to the circulation of agricultural books.³⁸ The timing of these developments is especially important for the evolution of these books. Agricultural change did not take place at the same rate over the century. Indeed, there has been 'a good deal of scholarly controversy about the timing, scale and effect of agrarian change in eighteenth-century Lowland Scotland. Some see the process as essentially evolutionary in nature with acceleration in the later decades, while others view the movement towards an improved agriculture as more cataclysmic and dramatic'.³⁹ Nevertheless, there has been some agreement that the pace of change was slow during the first half of the eighteenth century. Ian H. Adams suggests that 'the agricultural depression of the 1690s, followed by years of glut at the beginning of the eighteenth century, did little to nurture economic conditions favouring the long-term reorganisation of agriculture'.⁴⁰ If these factors did not foster agrarian change, then two events in the 1720s, the foundation of the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland in 1723 and the establishment of the Board of Manufacturers in 1727, were important for stimulating

³⁶ David Young, *The farmer's account book of expenditure and produce for each day, month and year, stating the profit and loss per year upon each article in the farm, containing a register of the whole work and transactions done upon the farm each day* (1790); Michael J. Mephram, *Accounting in eighteenth-century Scotland* (1988), p. 502.

³⁷ Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', p. 362; G. E. Fussell, 'Eighteenth-century agricultural dictionaries', *Bull. Institute of Historical Research* 7 (1929-30), p. 144.

³⁸ For example, Adams, 'Agents', pp. 155-75; T. M. Devine, *The transformation of rural Scotland: social*

change and the agrarian economy (1994); G. Whittington, 'Was there a Scottish agricultural revolution?', *Area* 7 (1975), pp. 204-06; id., 'Agriculture and science in Lowland Scotland, 1750-1870', in G. Whittington and I. D. Whyte (eds), *An historical geography of Scotland* (1983), pp. 141-64; R. H. Campbell, 'The Scottish improvers and the course of agrarian change in the eighteenth century', in L. M. Cullen and T. C. Smout (eds), *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history, 1600-1900* (1977), pp. 204-15.

³⁹ Devine, *Transformation*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ Adams, 'Agents', p. 155.

agricultural development. In Adam's words, they 'gave sufficient impetus to encourage several landowners to embark on the improvement of their estates'.⁴¹ Such bodies also published agricultural books and there was a 'revival of interest in agrarian development' in the 1730s. However, the 1740s was a period of economic difficulty with 'underlying political uncertainties' and the large majority of landowners showed a 'low plateau of development'.⁴² Such circumstances ensured that the publication of agricultural books was kept at a low level. Nevertheless, T. M. Devine suggests that this decade was an important one, with much agricultural activity starting to take place, especially within the four counties he surveys.⁴³ Adams considers the Rebellion of 1745 as a key event in influencing agricultural change. After it, he believes that 'Scottish landowners went about improving their estates with a verve that reached fever pitch'.⁴⁴ Devine suggests that there was a 'modest increase' in the rate at which improvement was undertaken, with some parishes in the counties which he surveys beginning that process during the 1750s.⁴⁵ For Adams, 'the great changes' took place in the period 1748 to 1770, a period that was also a significant one for the expansion of agricultural books.⁴⁶ Within these decades, Devine regards the 1760s as a 'key decade' for initiating changes in a significant number of the parishes in his survey: the 'economic euphoria' of that decade led to 'the launching of so many schemes' with 'no less than 47 per cent of reporting parishes tracing the origins of improvement to these years and, in particular, the period after the end of the Seven Years War in 1763'.⁴⁷ As has been shown, a number of significant developments took place in agricultural book publishing during this decade. However, by the 1770s and 1780s, there was 'a good deal of evidence' that 'improvement was running into difficulties and that only in the later 1790s and the first few years of the nineteenth century did better times return'.⁴⁸ But this agricultural and rural development was also influenced by wider social and economic changes such as a growing population and urban and industrial expansion which have 'been acknowledged as among the fastest in western Europe'. That expansion stimulated the demand for raw materials for textiles, agricultural produce, and horsepower, and affected the trend in grain prices and settlement patterns.⁴⁹ By the 1790s, parish ministers 'were fully aware that they had witnessed revolutionary advances in their own lifetimes'.⁵⁰ At the end of the century, the transformation of the rural economy 'was really set in motion', though it was by no means complete.⁵¹ The character and nature of their changes were summed up in an advertisement to the 1815 edition of Lord Kames's *The gentleman farmer*:

Since the first publication of this work in 1776, the progress of Agriculture has been very great in almost every part of Britain, and particularly in Scotland. The improvements, so judiciously recommended by the practice and writings of Lord Kames, which were then in their infancy, have long since been firmly established and widely diffused. New varieties of the different crops, and of the several species of live-stock, have been introduced; a more correct

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 155; Withers, 'William Cullen's agricultural lectures', p. 145.

⁴² Adams, 'Agents', pp. 155, 173.

⁴³ Devine, *Transformation*, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Adams, 'Agents', p. 155.

⁴⁵ Devine, *Transformation*, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Adams, 'Agents', p. 157.

⁴⁷ Devine, *Transformation*, pp. 43, 74.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 165.

system of management generally prevails; and some valuable additions have been made to agricultural machinery.⁵²

IV

The circulation of agricultural books was also shaped by the market for books. In 1700 the Scottish book trade was small, with around half a dozen printing establishments in Edinburgh, and some booksellers in the major burghs and a few more minor ones. It employed less than 90 people.⁵³ The Scottish Enlightenment, which was focused in Edinburgh, gave an impetus towards learning and the obtaining of knowledge.⁵⁴ Indeed, Nicholas Phillipson suggests that 'by the 1760s Scotland had become a centre of learning and letters of international importance'.⁵⁵ This international renown gave the impetus for a greater number of books to be published there. By 1774, the printing and reprinting of books in Edinburgh gave employment to hundreds of paper mill workers, printers and binders. Hugh Arnot has estimated that in 1740, there were four printing houses, but by 1778 this had grown to 27, though this figure may have included enterprises outside the burgh.⁵⁶ So impressive was the development of the book trades in Edinburgh that it was to become one of the four leading centres of book production and distribution in the English-speaking world by the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ Indeed, the majority of the agricultural books were printed, published and distributed by figures in this centre, and booksellers are noted on the imprints of 48 first editions of agricultural books.

From the 1740s onwards, a number of important developments took place in the book trades which had an important impact on the circulation of agricultural books. Printers and booksellers (and bookselling partnerships) emerged that were to have enduring importance into the early nineteenth century and beyond. Some of the most notable ones were involved in the production and circulation of agricultural books. These included Gavin Hamilton, bookseller, printer, paper maker and auctioneer from 1737 to 1764, Alexander Kincaid, bookseller, printer and stationer from 1739 to 1777, Alexander Donaldson, bookseller, publisher, printer and auctioneer from 1748 to 1794 and William Auld who had a printing business in Edinburgh between 1761 and 1776. There was also a steady growth in the book trades outside Edinburgh. This expansion allowed books, including agricultural ones, to be printed and distributed from a larger number and a wider geographical distribution of print centres; these developments were also recorded in England especially after the late 1760s.⁵⁸ However, these centres played a

⁵² Henry Home, *The gentleman farmer* (sixth edn, 1815), 'Advertisement to the present edition'.

⁵³ Alastair Mann, *The Scottish book trade, 1500–1720: print, commerce and print control in early modern Scotland. An historiographical survey of the early modern book in Scotland* (2000), pp. 219–23, estimates 29 printing workers, 54 booksellers, stationers and bookbinders.

⁵⁴ Nicholas Phillipson, 'Culture and society in the eighteenth century province: the case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *The university in society* (2 vols, 1975), II, pp. 407–8.

⁵⁵ Nicholas Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds), *The Enlightenment in national context* (1981).

⁵⁶ Hugo Arnot, *A history of Edinburgh: from the earliest accounts to the present time* (1788), p. 383.

⁵⁷ Richard B. Sher, 'Corporatism and consensus in the late eighteenth-century book trade: the Edinburgh Booksellers' Society in comparative perspective', *Book Hist.*, 1 (1988), p. 33.

⁵⁸ C. J. Mitchell, 'Provincial printing in eighteenth-century Britain', *Publishing Hist.*, 21 (1987), pp. 18–19.

relatively small role in the production of agricultural books. Four were printed and published in Aberdeen between 1757 and 1766, followed by a further one in 1788.⁵⁹ In Glasgow, these activities were spread over a longer period, with the first one being recorded in 1756, followed by others in 1757 (a joint publication with a number of Edinburgh booksellers), 1768, 1771, 1784 and 1791. Other centres emerged from the 1770s onwards, with Paisley being noted in 1773, Dumfries in 1776 and Berwick in 1789.

V

The extent to which agricultural books were circulated is revealed through aspects of their production. The nature of the book trade and the range of methods that were available to publish the books shaped the ease with which authors could publish their writing and the ways in which it was circulated. Publishing was expensive and not always remunerative for either author and bookseller. As Alexander Murdoch and Richard B. Sher note, the eighteenth-century Scottish booktrade 'was fraught with risk and uncertainty'.⁶⁰ The publication of a book required heavy financial outlays which were not always recovered. Indeed, after publishing three agricultural books, David Young could comment that he had 'incurred very heavy expenses; and it will be easily be conceived, that the sale of publications of this nature cannot be a lucrative business'.⁶¹ The financial difficulties of James Small around 1788 were attributed to the cost of publishing his book, *A treatise on ploughs and wheel carriages*.⁶²

Such difficulties shaped the options that were available for authors to publish their work. Throughout the eighteenth century, agricultural (and other books) were published in two ways. It was general for an author to use one or other of these, though a small number used both. First, a book could be printed for booksellers who distributed it. In this method, the printer and bookseller (which could be the same business) had control over the printing and publishing process and the distribution of the book.⁶³ The majority of agricultural books were published in this way. They included the most significant ones written by the most prominent authors, who were also members of the professions such as Francis Home, Lord Kames and James Anderson. By the time they published their agricultural books, they had established reputations in their own fields; others were members of the nobility and prominent landowners, some of whom also had a reputation as agricultural improvers which could be relied upon to sell their books. Second, authors could publish by subscription. Subscription was an:

Agreement between an author or a bookseller on the one hand and a number of individuals

⁵⁹ See for example, Iain Beavan, 'The book trade in Aberdeen and area, 1700–1830', in David A. Stoker (ed.), *Studies in the provincial book trade of England, Scotland, and Wales before 1900* (1990), p. 58.

⁶⁰ Alexander Murdoch and Richard B. Sher, 'Literary and learned culture', in T. M. Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, 1760–1830* (1988–90), I, p. 135.

⁶¹ David Young, *Address to the landed gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain to the town councils of the Royal*

boroughs in North Britain and to societies for promoting agriculture to which are added hints for lowering the price of provisions, and a memorial lately presented to the Convention of Royal Boroughs (1791), p. 7.

⁶² Michael J. H. Robson, *An ingenious mechanic of Scotland. James Small (c. 1740–1793) of Berwickshire and Midlothian* (1989), p. 16.

⁶³ A. T. Hazen, 'On the meaning of the imprint', *The Library*, fifth ser. 6 (1951), p. 120.

on the other; the author or the bookseller agrees to produce a book of specified content, size, and quality, whose publication is financed by the individuals, or subscribers, each of whom receives in return a copy or copies of the book.⁶⁴

Eight authors who published eleven agricultural books between the 1750s and 1790 published their books in this way.⁶⁵ They were either agricultural societies and individuals who were members of the agricultural community, or had agricultural experience within it, sometimes for a considerable period of time. However, they were not always the most prominent authors or agricultural improvers. In essence, this method enabled them to have a means to publish their writing. They did not always use it for publishing all their books or their editions. Two authors, Adam Dickson and David Young, published a number of their books in this way. The first editions of Dickson's *A treatise on agriculture* and *The husbandry of the ancients* appeared by subscription. The later editions of *A treatise* were printed by booksellers. This can be attributed to the success which this book had and to the need to reprint it less than two years after it was first published. David Young used it for all four of his agricultural books, though not his non-agricultural ones. Each of the editions of Charles Varlo's *The modern farmer's guide* were also published in this way.

Subscription was also a popular method of publishing books in provincial areas of England. Wallis suggests that during the eighteenth century a total of 2073 books were published in this way, with some 1397 being issued before 1781. Between 1781 and 1791 there was a significant rise in their numbers, with 224 books being published between 1771 and 1781, and 319 in the 1780s.⁶⁶ Publication by subscription could help to alleviate some of the financial problems encountered in publishing. Subscriptions were collected before a book was published: in some cases, half of its cost was required to be paid at the time when a subscription was made and the remainder was due on publication. This let the author and bookseller know the amount of finance that was available to them and provided them with a source of income to print and publish the book before it was made available for sale. It also allowed them to ascertain the demand for a book and thus the size of the print run – some were only 'put to the press ... as soon as a sufficient number of subscriptions are procured'.⁶⁷ However, as the evidence of Young shows, this process could still pose difficulties for their authors.

The extent of the circulation of agricultural books is also seen in the size of their print runs. Some books had a large demand. William Auld, the publisher of *The Scots Farmer*, comments that: 'So great has been the demand for this work, that the Publisher is obliged to print a second

⁶⁴ P. J. Wallis suggests that in Britain between 1701 and 1801, a total of 2073 books were published by this method. Between 1721 and 1781 an average of 211 books were published in each decade, a figure that increased to 319 books between 1781 and 1791. (P. J. Wallis, 'Book subscription lists', *The Library*, fifth ser., 29 (1974), p. 273); Sarah L. C. Clapp, 'The beginnings of subscription publication in the seventeenth century', *Modern Philology*, 29 (1931–2), p. 204.

⁶⁵ Watson and Amery also include the London published book [Anon], *The laird and farmer. A dialogue*

upon farming, trade, cookery, and their method of living in Scotland, balanc'd with that of England (1750) in their list. This was published by subscription and was 'printed for the author, and sold by R. Griffiths' in 1750. These authors were Robert Maxwell, Adam Dickson, Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture within the Counties of Dumfries and Wigtown, Charles Varlo, Alexander Bald, James Small, David Young and James Bonner.

⁶⁶ Wallis, 'Book subscription lists', p. 273.

⁶⁷ Young, *Address*, p. 7; *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 Dec. 1760, 25 Jan. 1768.

edition of the first volume'.⁶⁸ However, evidence for the size of editions, including first editions, reprints and reissues, is fragmentary and only exists for a few editions; such a pattern is also noted for the English agricultural books.⁶⁹ Warren McDougall suggests that Francis Home's *The principles of agriculture and vegetation* had a first edition of 500 copies.⁷⁰ The discussions between Lord Kames and his publishers for the first edition of *The gentleman farmer* reveal that it was to have an impression of 1,000 copies.⁷¹ These sizes of editions were common to other books. Some evidence also exists for journals. In 1793 James Anderson asserts that he could 'insure the sakes at 2000' copies for each issue of *The Bee* which included a large number of articles on agriculture and rural affairs. He believes that the 'lowest number that could allow the publication to go on' was not under 1,000 copies of each issue.⁷² A number of books published by subscription include a list of their subscribers. Although this generally records the number of copies subscribed before a book was published, rather than the total number that were sold, for some books this was the actual total number. An advertisement for *The modern farmer's guide* of 1768 indicates that 'such booksellers as subscribe shall have the usual allowance; but no more will be printed than is subscribed for'; this policy is also noted in the proposals for Adam Dickson's *The husbandry of the ancients*.⁷³ Some of the books published by subscription had extensive lists of subscribers. David Young's *National improvements* records 308 individuals and organisations that subscribed 497 copies. The list in his *Agriculture*, which also recorded the names of subscribers to his *National improvements*, had 576 subscribers who subscribed 956 copies. His third book, *The farmers account-book*, had 196 subscribers who subscribed 310 copies. The list for Charles Varlo's *Modern farmer's guide* had 121 subscribers who subscribed 138 copies. These figures are comparable to other books published in this way. An analysis of 686 eighteenth-century books by Wallis, shows an average of 248 subscribers.⁷⁴ Although circulation figures are useful in suggesting the number of copies that were printed, and the extent of their availability, it should be considered that books could be distributed among a number of readers, and a copy could be read by a number of people. These included family groups, friends and neighbours as well as work colleagues. Further, a range of libraries which included agricultural libraries or those of agricultural societies also allowed copies of books to be circulated.

As in England, a number of agricultural books were reprinted and reissued, suggesting that there was a continuing demand for the most important ones and a demand for up-to-date information. Some of the earliest books, such as those of John Hamilton and Lord Belhaven, were reprinted two or three times during the 1710s and 1720s; Belhaven's *The countrey-mans*

⁶⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 Dec. 1774.

⁶⁹ For example, Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', p. 362.

⁷⁰ Warren McDougall, 'A catalogue of Hamilton, Bal-four and Neill publications, 1750–62', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds), *Spreading the word: the distribution networks of print, 1550–1850* (1997), pp. 216–17.

⁷¹ Sher, 'Science and medicine', p. 138.

⁷² Aberdeen University Archives, MS 2787/4/4/10, dated 16 Aug. 1793.

⁷³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 Jan. 1768; the *Proposals for printing by subscription, an inquiry into the husbandry of the ancients by Adam Dickson late Minister of Dunse*, notes that the text 'will be put to the press as soon as there are a proper number of subscriptions, and there will be printed no more copies than are sufficient to answer these' (copy in National Library of Scotland, R. 234.6(1–30)).

⁷⁴ Wallis, 'Book subscription lists', p. 260.

rudiments also had a third edition in 1761.⁷⁵ However, it was not until the 1750s that reprinting became more frequent. Between the 1750s and 1770s the most important books were reprinted at frequent intervals and in some instances, over a number of decades. Francis Home's *The principles of agriculture and vegetation* had its second, third and fourth editions in 1759, 1762 and 1776, respectively; another issue was also made in 1757. Adam Dickson's *A treatise on agriculture* of 1762, had its second edition in 1765 and its third one in 1766. The second and third editions of Lord Kames' *The gentleman farmer* were published in 1779 and 1788 respectively; its sixth edition was issued in 1815. Alexander Bald's *The farmer and corndealer's assistant* of 1780 was reprinted in 1807.⁷⁶ This reprinting ensured that the most important books were available for a number of years and in some cases for several decades.

A number of books were also revised and updated at frequent intervals to reflect changing developments in agricultural theories and practices. These revisions were made to the general agricultural books such as those of Adam Dickson and Lord Kames, especially during the 1770s and 1780s. The title pages of the second and third editions of Dickson's *A treatise of agriculture* were published with 'large additions and amendments'. The fourth and fifth editions of Lord Kames' *The gentleman farmer* of 1798 and 1802 had the 'author's last corrections and additions'. Although they are not documented in the sixth edition, that edition included a supplementary 'account of the present state of agriculture, and of the improvements recently introduced', intended to bring it up to date. The title page of the second edition of James Anderson's *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* (1777) asserts that it was published 'with large additions'. No such changes are noted for the third edition of 1784, though the fifth edition of 1800 was published 'with corrections and additions'. Authors also added a second or third volume to one of their books. This was primarily undertaken for the agricultural books of Adam Dickson and James Anderson. However, the publication of a second volume was not always undertaken within a short time of the first one. For James Anderson, there was only a gap of two years between the first and second volume of his *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs*, though the third volume followed some nineteen years after the second. Authors also undertook further work on their books after they were published, and issued supplements to them. Alexander Bald's *The farmer and corndealer's assistant* was published on 24 July 1780. Between then and 4 November, he compiled additional tables 'representing the conformity of the wheat measure of the several counties of Scotland have with each other, and the same with the barley measure'. Although they were not inserted in copies sold between these dates, the publishers made them available to these purchasers who 'may be supplied with them gratis, by applying to the above booksellers, or to the Author'.⁷⁷

The distribution patterns of the books played an important role in their circulation. Their distribution was primarily undertaken by booksellers. Some, such as Archibald Constable of Edinburgh, stocked the most up-to-date books as well as older and second-hand copies, allowing them to be available for purchase for many years. In 1808 his sale catalogue included a

⁷⁵ *The Scots Magazine* (1761), p. 487.

⁷⁶ Bald had a further edition in 1807. See *Catalogue of books, ancient and modern, including the valuable library of the late William Fullarton, esq, of Carstairs,*

on sale at the shop of Constable, Hunter, Park and Hunter, 10 Ludgate Street, London, May 1 1809 (1809), item 2384.

⁷⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 Nov. 1780.

broad range of Scottish agricultural books and the most important English ones published in the 1720s, 1760s and from the 1770s onwards.⁷⁸ However, a small number of books were distributed by a number of other businesses. The imprint of David Young's *The farmer's account book* (1790) notes that it could be purchased from Messrs Alston and Austin, seedsmen in Glasgow, and Mr Adams, seedsman in Aberdeen. His pamphlet, *Address to the landed gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain* (1791) also includes the name of a seedsman in Glasgow as a distributor. James Bonner's *The beemaster's companion and assistant* (1789) was also sold by a seedsman.⁷⁹

The main centre of book distribution (as also publication) for Scottish agricultural books (and books in general) was Edinburgh. The imprints of 26 first editions of these books record the names of booksellers located in this centre alone. Some had extensive partnerships with other booksellers in this hub, though not all of their distribution networks were stated on the imprints of the books which they distributed. The *Essay on the husbandry in Scotland* (1735) was 'sold at Mrs Dunning's shop and by other booksellers in town'. Some books had an extensive distribution in Edinburgh and with other booksellers in the principal burghs throughout Scotland. Some of the earliest books were distributed over a wide geographical area. Hugh Graeme's *A letter to a gentleman in Edinburgh, concerning Mr Graeme of Argomery's improvements of moss, and the benefits of these improvements to the nation*, published in Edinburgh in 1754, was sold by a number of booksellers in Edinburgh and others in Perth, Glasgow and Stirling. Robert Maxwell's *The practical husbandman* (1757) was sold in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Dumfries. *Thoughts respecting the proposed new corn bill* (1777) was sold by booksellers in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, Ayr, Greenock, Perth, Dundee, Montrose and Aberdeen. Some of the smaller books, and especially pamphlets, had very wide distribution networks. For Sir Archibald Grant's *A dissertation on the chief obstacles to the improvement of land and introducing better methods of agriculture throughout Scotland* (1760) this was Aberdeen, London and 'all the booksellers in Scotland'.

There is evidence that the bookselling networks extended in a range of ways during the second half of the eighteenth century. With the increase in the number of provincial printing centres, booksellers were able to establish a wider range of distribution networks. These did not always include booksellers in Edinburgh. Bonner's *The bee-master's companion and assistant* was printed in Berwick in 1789 and was sold by the author, Mr Nesbitt, and Mr Neelson of Haddington. Other networks were more extensive. *A dissertation on the chief obstacles to the improvement of land*, published in Aberdeen in 1760, was sold at the shop of Francis Douglas and 'by all the booksellers in Scotland'. After the middle decades of the eighteenth century, Edinburgh booksellers also sold their books to other booksellers in England. As Warren McDougall observes for the 1760s: 'certain kinds of books were becoming not so much Edinburgh published or London published as British published'.⁸⁰ This trend is especially noted for agricultural books which placed agriculture in a scientific framework. Francis Home's

⁷⁸ In Edinburgh, Archibald Constable had sale catalogues which included agricultural books. These survive for 1799, 1801 and 1814 (e.g. *Catalogue of books, consisting of nearly thirty thousand volumes, and including the valuable classical library of the late Professor Hensler of Kiel, in Holstein, on sale at the shop of Archibald Constable and*

Co. Edinburgh, January 1 1808 (n. d.); *Catalogue of books printed for Archibald Constable & Co* (1814)).

⁷⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 May 1789.

⁸⁰ Warren McDougall, 'Gavin Hamilton, bookseller in Edinburgh', *British J. eighteenth-century studies* 1 (1978), p. 1.

The principles of agriculture and vegetation had its third and fourth editions published in London in 1762 and 1776 respectively. George Forsyth's *Elements of agriculture*, published in Edinburgh in 1765, had its second, third, fourth and fifth editions published in London between 1771 and 1796. The later editions of James Anderson's *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs*, and his *A practical treatise on peat moss* (1794) were also published in that centre. Edinburgh booksellers also established branches in London.⁸¹ David Young's *Agriculture* was sold by Charles Elliot in Edinburgh and Thomas Kay, his London partner. A number of books were also jointly published by Edinburgh and London publishers. Such enterprises emphasized the strong business relationships between these two bookselling centres. They were especially important for some of the most prominent writers such as James Anderson whose *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* was printed for Thomas Cadell in London and William Creech in Edinburgh. Lord Kames' *The gentleman farmer* was also printed for these two booksellers. Anderson was the only Scottish agricultural writer whose books, including all of his first editions, were extensively published in this way.

VI

The demand for agricultural books, which in turn affected their circulation, was influenced by a number of factors. These include the ability to read, the cost of the books and their reputation. The ability to read had an important impact on their circulation. Throughout Scotland there were social, occupational and geographical differences in the participation of this activity.⁸² In the agricultural community, it was most widely undertaken among the higher classes, especially the landowning ones, the leaders in agricultural improvement who were crucial in stimulating and implementing the first stages of agricultural change. It was more patchy among the tenant farmers who had varying degrees of wealth and education. In 1765, Adam Dickson observed that the tenants of large farms were 'men of greater wealth and more liberal education' than those of smaller ones.⁸³ Devine suggests that levels of education and literacy among the tenant farming elite in Lowland Scotland played an important role in the progress of agrarian change. As he suggests, 'an educated peasantry more readily turns its back on immemorial tradition because it finds on the printed page an alternative form of authority, and much of the new farming technology was disseminated in books and articles'. Although there were variations in the levels of reading throughout this class, Devine believes that 'some tenants received a fuller education than most of the rural population'.⁸⁴

The price of the agricultural books generally reflected book formats – duodecimos, octavos, quartos and folios – with the first usually having the lowest price and the latter one the highest; the number of pages, plates and types of bindings also had an impact on this pattern. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, duodecimos ranged in price from 1s. 8d. in boards for

⁸¹ id., 'Charles Elliot's medical publications and the international book trade', in Charles W. J. Withers and Paul Wood (eds), *Science and medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment* (2002), p. 216.

⁸² See R. A. Houston, 'Scottish education and literacy, 1600–1800: an international perspective' in T. M. Devine

(ed.), *Improvement and enlightenment: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1987–88* (1989), pp. 43–61.

⁸³ Adam Dickson, *A treatise on agriculture* (sec. edn, 1765), p. xxx.

⁸⁴ Devine, *Transformation*, p. 68.

A treatise on the manner of raising forest trees (1761), to 3s. for a sewed copy of *The beemaster's companion and assistant* (1789).⁸⁵ Octavos varied from 3s. for a copy of *The principles of agriculture and vegetation* (1756), to 6s. for a bound copy of the second edition of *A treatise on agriculture* (1765), or 7s. for the second volume of that book in 1769.⁸⁶ A bound copy of the third edition of *The gentleman farmer* could be purchased for 7s.⁸⁷ Books that had more than one volume were more expensive. The first volume of *The Scots Farmer* cost 7s. 6d. in boards and the two volumes, some 15s.⁸⁸ There was a great variation in the price of quartos. Some of them such as *An essay on the question, what proportion of the produce of arable land ought to be paid as rent to the landlord?* (1776) which comprised a small number of pages were inexpensive, costing 1s. 6d., though others such as James Anderson's *An inquiry into the causes that have hitherto retarded the advancement of agriculture in Europe* was 13s.⁸⁹ The only folio, a book published by subscription, cost 6s. to non-subscribers.⁹⁰ While printing and publishing costs for the mid-eighteenth century were stable, they increased during the second half of the century, especially in the 1790s.⁹¹ Although the price of agricultural books varied considerably, the most important ones, such as those written by Lord Kames, Adam Dickson and Francis Home, cost between 3s. and 6s. per volume.

The price could be varied further by altering the materials from which they were made and the processes used to publish them. Particular books were made more prestigious and expensive or inexpensive and cost effective. The practice of issuing a number of copies of an edition on different qualities of paper 'was not uncommon'.⁹² *The Bee* was printed on two qualities of paper, ordinary and fine, which each had a different subscription rate.⁹³ A few copies of *Select essays on husbandry* (1767), which were usually sold for 5s., were printed on fine paper, and sold at 6s. for a 'neatly bound and lettered' volume.⁹⁴ Books were also advertised for sale with different bindings, some of which were more expensive than others. James Anderson's *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* (1777) cost 11s. in boards or 13s. bound in calf and lettered.⁹⁵ *A proposal for the uniformity of the weights and measures in Scotland* (1779) was 3s. in boards and 3s. 6d. when it was 'plain bound'.⁹⁶ The price of books also varied according to processes used to publish them. This was especially noted for books published by subscription. They cost less for subscribers who subscribed or showed their support for a book before it was published, than for non-subscribers who purchased it after that time. The advertisements for David Young's books indicate a price difference of one shilling.⁹⁷

A number of authors complained that agricultural books were expensive to purchase. William

⁸⁵ McDougall, 'Catalogue', p. 227; *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 May 1789.

⁸⁶ *The Scots Magazine* (1765), p. 320; (1769), p. 155; *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 Dec. 1756.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 15 Jan. 1789.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 25 June 1774, 8 July 1775.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 13 July 1776, 17 July 1779.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 9 Aug. 1790.

⁹¹ James Anderson (ed.), *Recreations in agriculture, natural-history, arts, and miscellaneous literature* (6 vols, 1799–1802), II, pp. 240, 320.

⁹² Philip Gaskell, *A bibliography of The Foulis Press* (1964), p. 18.

⁹³ *Prospectus of a new work to be entitled The Bee, or literary weekly intelligencer, consisting of original pieces, and selections from performances of merit, foreign and domestic. A work calculated to disseminate useful knowledge among all ranks of people at a small expence* (1790).

⁹⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 Feb. 1767.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 8 Feb. 1777.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 23 June 1779.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1785, 24 July 1788, 9 Aug. 1790.

Lorrimer considered that Tull's *Horse-hoeing husbandry* (1733) was 'too expensive. A rational husbandry may be carried on for less'.⁹⁸ Criticisms such as these continued to be made even until the end of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century when James Donaldson condemned the 'extraordinary price' of the publications of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement.⁹⁹ The price of books was considered to be prohibitive for a number of groups in the agricultural community. In 1697 Lord Belhaven observed that 'these books are either so dear and ill to be had, that they cannot be easily got by ordinary farmers'.¹⁰⁰ The editors of *The Scots Farmer* noted that 'few' books 'can fall into the hands of common farmers: They either cannot afford money to purchase, or have not leisure or inclination to read them'.¹⁰¹ James Anderson held that farmers did not have 'money to spend in buying many books'.¹⁰²

Authors suggested that the format and production of books could be altered so that they would be more widely circulated. James Anderson proposed that they should be available at 'a moderate price as to be within the reach of every one'. Lord Kames also shared this belief.¹⁰³ Anderson, the editors of *The Scots Farmer* and James Donaldson suggest that inexpensive pamphlets and journals should be made available for farmers; this suggestion continued to be made into the early nineteenth century by authors such as James Trotter.¹⁰⁴ Lord Kames recommended that Philip Millar's *Gardener's dictionary*, which was 'beyond the reach of working people in two volumes folio', should be printed in a cheaper format, 'on a very small type and very coarse paper', so that it could be purchased by 'common gardeners'. He considered that this would allow 'knowledge in gardening [to be] spread much to the benefit of the public'.¹⁰⁵

While these comments show that a number of authors recognised that there was a need to make agricultural books more widely available, some of them and their publishers took steps to reduce the production costs of their books. Sir Archibald Grant published two of his books as duodecimos so that landowners would make them available to their tenants. In *The practical farmer's pocket-companion* he asserts that:

Tho' it contains matter enough to have made an eighteen pence pamphlet, it is sold at three pence, that Gentleman at a very small expense may put numbers of them into the hands of

⁹⁸ Jethro Tull, *Horse-hoeing husbandry: or, an essay on the principle of tillage and vegetation. Wherein is shewn a method of introducing a sort of vineyard-culture into the cornfields, in order to increase their product, and diminish the common experience; by the use of instruments described in cuts* (1733). The first edition of this text may have been as expensive as it was a folio. By the third edition of 1751 it was published as an octavo (see Adams, 'Agents', p. 173). For Lorrimer, Adams, 'Agents', p. 173.

⁹⁹ Donaldson, *Modern agriculture*, p. 326. In 1815, one farmer noted that it 'is much to be regretted' that the *Communications of the Board of Agriculture* 'are sold at a price which obstructs their extensive circulation among farmers, the greater part of whom never look into their pages' (Lord Kames, *The gentleman farmer*, sixth edn, 1815, p. 538).

¹⁰⁰ John Hamilton, Baron Belhaven, *The countryman's rudiments; or advice to the farmers of East Lothian* (1699), p. 1.

¹⁰¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 3 Oct. 1772.

¹⁰² James Anderson, *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* (fifth edn, 3 vols, 1800), III, pp. 183, 185.

¹⁰³ *ibid.* Kames is quoted in Warren McDougall, 'Copyright litigation in the Court of Session, 1738–1749, and the rise of the Scottish book trade', *Trans. Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* 5 (1985–7), p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Donaldson, *Modern agriculture*, p. 327; James Trotter, *General view of the agriculture of the county of West Lothian* (1811), p. 222.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in McDougall, 'Copyright litigation', p. 7.

their tenants. Those who incline to bestow them in this way, may order them from the publisher by their carriers. They who order fifty copies, will have them at the rate of one Guinea per Hundred.¹⁰⁶

The publishers of David Young's *The farmer's account book* suggest that it was a cost effective book. An advertisement for it recommends that 'every gentleman who does not reside upon his farm, should have, at least, two copies, one for himself, and another for his overseer. The expense of ruling one copy of these tables would cost three times the sum that the whole if this book will cost'.¹⁰⁷ The publishers of *Select essays on husbandry* (1767) 'made the price very low, that it may come within the compass of every purchaser to whom it may be useful'. This 'neatly bound' book had a price of five shillings.¹⁰⁸ Charles Elliot, the publisher of *A proposal for the uniformity of the weights and measures in Scotland* (1779), used a format that allowed him to 'put [the text] into the smallest compass possible, that it might be afforded at a low price'.¹⁰⁹ Alexander Bald endeavoured to make the cost of *The farmer and corn-dealer's assistant* 'as low as possible' and omitted a number of tables of weights, measures and fair prices so that its production costs could be reduced.¹¹⁰ Publishers made new editions and additional volumes attractive to customers who had bought earlier ones. The 'large additions' that were made to the second edition of James Anderson's *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* were 'printed by themselves, and sold in a separate volume with 18 new plates'.¹¹¹ Publishers of multiple volume books encouraged purchasers of their earlier volumes to procure later ones by reducing their price. Charles Varlo's three volume *A new system of husbandry* cost 15s. to non-subscribers. This third volume, which 'consists of his latest inventions', was sold at 5s. to customers who had purchased his 'former works'.¹¹² When the second volume of Adam Dickson's *A treatise on agriculture* was published in 1768, it sold for 7s. in bindings. The publishers advertised 'complete sets' of the two volumes for 13s.¹¹³ New forms of agricultural books were developed to provide inexpensive publications. The editors of *The Scots Farmer* launched their journal, a monthly magazine, as an inexpensive publication that could be read by all members of the agricultural community, including farmers. It cost 6d. per month, stitched in blue covers; the two volumes cost 15s.¹¹⁴

The reputation of the agricultural books was an important factor in their circulation. Central to that reputation was the character of their authors. They belonged to a number of occupational groups and had a range of connections with agriculture and the land, including landowning and tenant farming. A significant number were members of the professions, some of which were not immediately associated with agriculture or rural development. Francis Home was a physician who was appointed the first Professor of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh in 1768.¹¹⁵ George Fordyce, author of *Elements of agriculture* (1765), was a licentiate

¹⁰⁶ Sir Archibald Grant, *The practical farmer's pocket-companion, or a brief account of the husbandry that now prevails in Scotland* (1766), back page.

¹⁰⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 Aug. 1790.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 14 Feb. 1767.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 23 June 1779.

¹¹⁰ Alexander Bald, *The farmer and corn-dealer's assistant, or, the knowledge of weights and measures made easy*

by a series of table (1780), preface, p. v.

¹¹¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 Jan. 1777.

¹¹² *ibid.*, 20 Mar. 1771.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 12 Dec. 1768.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 3 Oct. 1772, 25 June 1774, 8 July 1775.

¹¹⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *DNB*), 'Francis Home'.

of the College of Physicians and later a physician at St Thomas's Hospital.¹¹⁶ Lord Kames, the author of two books, was an ordinary lord of session and one of the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment.¹¹⁷ John Swinton, whose *Proposal for uniformity of weights and measures in Scotland* was published in 1779, was appointed an Ordinary Member of the Board of Commissioners and Trustees for the Annexed Estates in 1761 and was elevated to the bench as Lord Swinton, on 21 December 1782.¹¹⁸ Patrick Lindesay, author of *The interest of Scotland considered* (1733), was one of the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh.¹¹⁹ William Thom, Adam Dickson and William Barron were ministers. Thom, author of *Seasonable advice to the land-holders and farmers in Scotland* (1770), preached at Govan until his death in 1790. Dickson, whose books included *A treatise on agriculture* (1762), preached at Dunse, Berwickshire, then at Whittinghame, East Lothian, and Barron, author of *An essay on the mechanical principles of the plough* (1774), at Whitburn, West Lothian.¹²⁰ David Young, who published his agricultural books between 1785 and 1791, was a merchant in Perth.¹²¹ James Hamilton, author of *Virgil's pastorals* (1742), was a schoolmaster in East Calder, Mid Lothian.¹²²

Because of the role and importance of landowning in Scottish society, a number of these authors were also landowners, tenant farmers or held land. Lord Kames was an improving landlord in Berwickshire who, after he married, undertook extensive improvements on Blairdrummond Moss.¹²³ Adam Dickson 'had the management of a considerable farm for many years' and lost 'no opportunity of gathering experience from the conversation of the neighbouring farmers, and the duties of his holy office'.¹²⁴ David Young was a tenant farmer at Woodhead, near Perth, from 1763 to 1778.¹²⁵ William Barron was a practising farmer who had 'a growing crop on the foot and some horses and cows and instruments of husbandry, farming utensils and other goods' at the time of his death.¹²⁶

While these authors had a plurality of occupations, others were primarily members of the agricultural community. They were drawn from throughout its ranks. The largest numbers were from its upper ranks – the landowning classes (the landed aristocracy, wealthy landlords and lairds) – through which early agrarian developments and changes were first initiated and took place. Three of them were well known improving landlords: John Hamilton, second Baron Belhaven (author of *The country-mans rudiments*), Thomas Hamilton, sixth Earl of Haddington (author of *A short treatise on forest-tress ... and grass seeds* of 1756) and Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk (author of two books published in 1757 and

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 'George Fordyce'.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 'Henry Home, Lord Kames'.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 'John Swinton, Lord Swinton'; Annette M. Smith, *Jacobite estates of the Forty-five* (1982), p. 240.

¹¹⁹ Watson and Amery, 'Early Scottish agricultural writers', p. 80.

¹²⁰ *DNB*, 'Adam Dickson'; William Thom, *Seasonable advice to the land-holders and farmers of Scotland: a sermon on Exod. iii 7,8 preached to a congregation of farmers (1770)*, title page; William Barron, *An essay on the mechanical principles of the plough (1774)*, title page; National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS), CC10/5/12/66 (Testament of Rev. William Thom).

¹²¹ Young, *The farmer's account book*, appendix. He refers to his 'business in Perth'. The appendix to *The farmer's account book* indicates that he was offered a lease of the farm of Huntingtower in Perthshire. In 1789 that farm was tenanted by a Thomas Young.

¹²² Handley, *Scottish farming*, p. 127.

¹²³ *DNB*, 'Henry Holme, Lord Kames'.

¹²⁴ Adam Dickson, *A treatise on agriculture* (1762), p. iii; *id.*, *Husbandry of the ancients*, I, p. ix; *DNB*, 'Adam Dickson'.

¹²⁵ Young, *The farmer's account book*, appendix.

¹²⁶ NAS, CC10/5/12/67, Testament of Reverend William Thom.

1766).¹²⁷ Another one was from the lower ranks of this group – either the wealthy landowners or the laird classes. The ‘Laird and farmer’ was the author of *A dialogue upon farming, trade, cookery, and their method of living in Scotland, balanc’d with that of England* (1750).¹²⁸ Others were tenant farmers. Robert Maxwell ‘engaged in agriculture, and about 1723 took on a lease of four periods of nineteen years a farm of 130 acres, all arable, at Cliftonhall, near Edinburgh’.¹²⁹ Andrew Wight was a farmer at Ormiston, East Lothian, and son of Alexander Wight and a grandson of Robert Wight, improving tenants under the Cockburns of Ormiston.¹³⁰ James Anderson ‘undertook a farm which had long been in his family’ at Hermiston, Midlothian, and later entered the tenancies at Cobbinshaw, also in that county, and Monkshill in Aberdeenshire.¹³¹ Other farmers included James Donaldson, William MacIntosh of Borlum, Thomas Hope of Rankeillor, and Charles Varlo. One author was from the agricultural labouring class. *A friendly address to the farmers of Scotland* was written by ‘an old ploughman’.¹³² Another one was from the agricultural service industry. James Small, whose *A treatise on ploughs and wheel carriages* was published in 1784, was the son of a tenant farmer who set up a business making ploughs and other agricultural equipment at Blackadder Mount in Berwickshire and then moved to Rosebank in Midlothian.

Another group of authors was the agricultural institutions in Scotland that had a range of roles in promoting and undertaking agrarian and rural development. The first of these were institutions that sought to promote agriculture. The only one which was itself an author was the Commissioners and Trustees for Improving Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland (Great Britain), which published and reissued two books which promoted flax growing. The Commissioners and Trustees for the Annexed Estates of 1755 to 1784 commissioned and published Andrew Wight’s survey of the corn farms of the Annexed Estates and many of the agricultural districts throughout Scotland.¹³³ The second type of institution was the agricultural societies that had an increasing role in agrarian and rural development, especially during the second half of the eighteenth century when they appeared in increasing numbers throughout the country.¹³⁴ They wrote and published a small number of books. The earliest ones were primarily the national societies such as the Edinburgh-based Honourable the Society for Improving the Knowledge of Agriculture and the Dublin Society, which published its *Weekly observations for the advancement of agriculture and manufactures* in 1756; its other publications were published in Dublin. The *Prize Essays* (later the *Transactions*) of the Highland Society of Scotland, established in 1784, was issued from 1799 onwards. The city societies inspired a ‘great number of smaller local clubs’ in their activities, including the publication of their transactions.¹³⁵ The

¹²⁷ See Handley, *Scottish farming*, pp. 145–6; Henry Hamilton, *An economic history of Scotland in the eighteenth century* (1963), p. 59.

¹²⁸ ‘The Laird and Farmer’, *A dialogue upon farming, trade, cookery, and their method of living in Scotland, balanc’d with that of England* (1740); Watson and Amery, ‘Early Scottish agricultural writers’, p. 81.

¹²⁹ DNB, ‘Robert Maxwell’.

¹³⁰ Handley, *Scottish farming*, p. 141.

¹³¹ DNB, ‘James Anderson’.

¹³² ‘An old ploughman’, *A friendly address to the*

farmers of Scotland: wherein are set forth some heavy grievances under which the farmers presently labour; the causes of them; with some plausible methods to curb their growth and prevent them from spreading further (1759).

¹³³ Smith, *Jacobite estates*, p. 239.

¹³⁴ For their development see R. C. Boud, ‘Scottish agricultural improvement societies’, *ROSC: Review of Scottish culture*, 1 (1984), pp. 70–90.

¹³⁵ Hugh Cheape, ‘For the betterment of mankind: Scotland, the Enlightenment and the Agricultural Revolution’, *Folk life* 40 (2001–02), p. 19.

most notable of these were the Buchan Society or A Small Society of Farmers in Buchan, formed around 1730, and the Dumfries and Wigtown Society which published two volumes of transactions in 1776.¹³⁶

A number of these authors were enthusiastic about agriculture and rural affairs and in advancing them, not only on their estates and farms, but also nationally throughout Scotland. Some were highly regarded as agricultural improvers. Sir Archibald Grant was considered to be 'one of the foremost agricultural pioneers' in the country and was the 'greatest planter of his time', planting more than 3,000 acres, chiefly of fir. Wight confirms that 'there never existed a man of more zeal for promoting husbandry and manufactures' than him.¹³⁷ David Young was regarded by some of his contemporaries as a notable improver. Lord Kinnoull encouraged his tenants to 'go and see what David Young is doing, and follow his example'.¹³⁸ Robert Maxwell was an active and enthusiastic Secretary of the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture which Handley believed 'perhaps did more than any other to introduce or encourage the practices and new methods'. He also delivered a series of public lectures on agriculture in 1756 which may have been the first in Great Britain.¹³⁹ Lord Kames was 'probably the most important improver among several in the College of Justice'. He was recognised for his improving work and as an 'amateur agriculturist he acquired considerable reputation'. Kames was a significant figure in advancing and diffusing agricultural developments and was involved in the development of national agricultural and rural policies.¹⁴⁰ He was appointed a member of the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Fisheries, Arts, and Manufactures of Scotland in 1755 and as one of the Ordinary Members of the Board of Commissioners and Trustees for the Annexed Estates in 1761. He also played an important role in promoting surveys of existing agricultural and rural conditions that would help and promote improvements. Two extensive surveys resulted from his suggestions: the first was Dr John Walker's survey on the herring fishery, agriculture and pastoral farming of the Western Isles; the second was Andrew Wight's survey which was published by the Board of Commissioners and Trustees for the Annexed Estates.¹⁴¹ The importance of Kames in this work is recognised and acknowledged by Arthur Young who asserts that 'we owe so much, not only for the public spirit with which he labours to promote the agriculture, manufactures, and general interest of his country'.¹⁴² Wight refers to his 'vast abilities, and indefatigable exertions for the good of his country'.¹⁴³ He also describes in favourable terms another of the agricultural writers, James Anderson, as 'a young gentleman of a good stock, and addicted to husbandry', he 'could not have any doubt of finding a farm [Anderson's] in the very best mode of cultivation and highly improved'.¹⁴⁴ Anderson was also 'devoted to communicating

Present state of husbandry, I, pp. 378–90.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹³⁷ Hamilton, *Economic history*, p. 59; Wight, *Present state of husbandry*, III (ii), pp. 696, 697.

¹⁴¹ DNB, 'Henry Home, Lord Kames'; Alex McCallum, 'A great agricultural improver – Lord Kames', *Scottish J. Agriculture*, 18 (1935), pp. 337, 338; Smith, *Jacobite estates*, p. 240.

¹⁴² Quoted in Wight, *Present state of husbandry*, IV (ii), pp. 690.

¹³⁸ Young, *The farmer's account book*, appendix.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 612.

¹³⁹ Handley, *Scottish farming*, pp. 151, 152.

¹⁴⁰ R. H. Campbell, *Scotland since 1707. The rise of an industrial society* (1965), p. 29; DNB, 'Henry Home, Lord Kames'; William C. Lehmann, *Henry Home, Lord Kames and the Scottish Enlightenment: a study in national character and the history of ideas* (1971), p. xxiii; Wight,

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, III (ii), pp. 606–07.

ideas'.¹⁴⁵ He was highly regarded throughout the agricultural and the academic communities for his agricultural and economic writing. He was awarded LL.D from the University of Aberdeen in 1782, elected FRSE and FASS in the following years and became a corresponding member, honorary member and member of a number of agricultural and learned societies in Britain as well as in Europe and America, such as those in Dijon, St Petersburg, Berlin, Paris and Philadelphia.¹⁴⁶ He was considered to be one of the most important figures in British agricultural writing. Shortly after his death in 1808, *The Farmer's Magazine* suggested that he was one of the pivotal authors in the agricultural book trade. In 1793, it reflected, 'the book-trade of agriculture was almost entirely possessed by him [William Marshall] and Mr [Arthur] Young, there being no other opponent in the field than the late Dr James Anderson, who was then attracting the public notice'.¹⁴⁷ The tradesman James Small combined the design of the old Scots plough with features of the Rotherham plough and patented it as a new swing-plough. For Lord Kames, this was 'a capital improvement' which became extensively used throughout Scotland by the 1790s. Writing of its impact, Alexander Fenton believes that it 'had a deep influence on Scottish farming'.¹⁴⁸ The Commissioners and Trustees for the Annexed Estates had a range of roles in the development of the agriculture and rural economy of the estates that were under its control. Its work was summed up as being 'a potentially important, influential and dramatic experiment'.¹⁴⁹

The Scottish authors, as also a number of English ones, took great efforts to emphasize their connections with agriculture and the extent of their agricultural experience and knowledge in their books. Lord Kames, the Earl of Haddington, James Donaldson, David Young and 'An Old Ploughman' noted their experience, its duration and nature.¹⁵⁰ This could be central to their books and authors emphasized its contribution and role. James Anderson comments that his *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* were 'chiefly the result of his own experience'.¹⁵¹ They intended that this experience and knowledge would demonstrate that their writing could be trusted by other agriculturists. It also emphasized that it was based on personal observation, and not only theory alone, a major criticism of agricultural books in general. Some authors also noted that they could also draw upon their experiences from reading a range of agricultural books. They could make extensive use of these, quoting the most well-known and acclaimed

¹⁴⁵ Charles F. Mullett, 'A village Aristotle and the harmony of interests: James Anderson (1739–1808) of Monks Hill', *J. British Studies* 7 (1968), p. 95.

¹⁴⁶ Peter John Anderson, *Records of the Marischall college and University of Aberdeen fasti academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis, II, officers, graduates and alumni* (1898), p. 99; Sheila Devlin-Thorp (ed.), *Scotland's cultural heritage, I, One hundred medical and scientific fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, elected from 1783 to 1832* (1981), 'James Anderson'; See title page, *The Bee, or literary weekly intelligencer* 1 (1791).

¹⁴⁷ *The Farmer's Magazine*, Dec. 1808, p. 503.

¹⁴⁸ James Small, *A treatise on ploughs and wheel carriages, illustrated by plates by James Small, plough and*

cart wright, formerly at Blackadder-mount now at Rose-bank, near Foord, Mid Lothian (1784), title page; Alexander Fenton, *Country life in Scotland. Our rural past* (1987), pp. 99–100. The county surveys of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement record the wide extent of the adoption of Small's plough.

¹⁴⁹ Annette M. Smith, 'The administration of the forfeited annexed estates, 1752–84', in G. W. S. Barrow (ed.), *The Scottish tradition: essays in honour of Ronald Gordon Cant* (1974), p. 210.

¹⁵⁰ 'Old ploughman', *A friendly address*, p. 6; Donaldson, *Modern agriculture*, p. ii; Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (1776 edn), p. 17; David Young, *Agriculture, the primary interest of Great Britain* (1788), p. vii.

¹⁵¹ Anderson, *Essays* (fifth edn, 1800), p. x.

authors in Scotland, England as well as Europe. Adam Dickson and James Donaldson had a wide knowledge of agricultural literature, with the latter noting that he had ‘read almost all the books which this age had produced on that subject’.¹⁵² However, others would not refer to other agricultural books. In *The modern farmers guide*, Charles Varlo states that he had not referred to any as he believed that they would have introduced inaccuracies and misguided theories into his book.¹⁵³

Although these authors were well qualified to write about agriculture and rural affairs, a range of commentators note that agricultural books – Scottish and English – were not always favourably looked upon. Pamela Horn is critical of the English books.¹⁵⁴ Writing of English books between 1750 and 1850, Nicholas Goddard remarks that ‘books which proclaimed some great advance in method, but which were written by authors with insufficient knowledge of their subject, cast suspicion upon the whole body of farming literature in the minds of many agriculturists’.¹⁵⁵ His conclusion can be applied to the opinions of a number of agricultural authors in Scotland, especially those who published their books from the 1760s when the publishing of agricultural books expanded and books that were to have lasting importance were being published. Lord Kames who had an extensive knowledge of Scottish, British and European agricultural books, was especially critical of individual ones and the character of the agricultural book trade. His comments were also echoed in the later criticisms of other agricultural authors.¹⁵⁶ He acknowledges that ‘the commerce of books is carried on with no great degrees of candour: those of husbandry with very little.’¹⁵⁷ In his preface to *The gentleman farmer*, he records the character of the agricultural book trade:

Behold another volume on husbandry! exclaims a peevish man on seeing the title page: how long shall we be pestered with such trite stuff? ‘As long, sweet Sir, as you are willing to pay for it: hold out your purse, and wares will never be wanting’.

He was aware of the consumer demand for books at a time when agriculture received increasing attention. He observes that ‘everything is made welcome on that subject’.

Other Scottish authors were also critical of the books and the character of their authors. They commented on their suitability to write books and the reputation of their books. Authors with agricultural experience complained that some of them had none or pretended to have some. According to Lord Kames: ‘writers on agriculture, very few excepted, deliver their precepts from a study lined with books, without even pretending to experience’.¹⁵⁸ David Young believed that

¹⁵² ‘A Real Farmer’ [C. Varlo], *The modern farmers guide. A new system of husbandry, from long experience in several kingdoms; never before made public. With tables shewing the expence and profit of each crop, how to stock farms to the best advantage; how the crops are to follow each other, by way of rotation, and how to maintain the poor well, and lower the poor-cess. Likewise some hints humbly offered to the legislature, on inclosing commons and open town fields, with several plans of new invented machines; some valuable receipts for the cure of cattle etc etc, to which is prefixed a short abstract of the author’s life and travels* (2 vols, 1768), I, p. 26; Donaldson, *Modern*

agriculture, p. ii.

¹⁵³ ‘A real farmer’, *Modern farmers guide*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁴ Horn, ‘The contribution of the propagandist’, pp. 319–20.

¹⁵⁵ Goddard, ‘Agricultural literature and societies’, p. 361.

¹⁵⁶ See for example, the textual references throughout *The gentleman farmer* (1776).

¹⁵⁷ Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (fifth edn, 1802), preface, p. vii.

¹⁵⁸ Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (fourth edn, 1798), preface, p. viii.

'it has been a frequent complaint against writers on agriculture, that they were too little acquainted with real business; that from hence their theories were often without foundation, and many of their proposed improvements absolutely impracticable'.¹⁵⁹ James Anderson suggested that the 'most conspicuous writers on that subject, having been themselves entirely unacquainted with the practice of that art, and of consequence unable to select with judgement from the works of others, have frequently copied their errors with the same scrupulous nicety as the most valuable parts of their works'.¹⁶⁰ This led authors to make imaginative and fanciful plans of improvements which were rendered 'much more perfect than anything that really takes place in practice'. However, these plans would 'catch the attention of an inexperienced compiler' who would 'persuade his readers to adopt these particular practices'.¹⁶¹ As a result of this situation, Anderson concluded that:

Books of that kind [copied from other ones] contain observations that may be of very great utility to an experienced farmer, who may be able to distinguish between the good and the bad; yet to those who have most need of instruction, and who oftenest consult them, these books frequently prove the source of very capital errors: so that it would usually be better for such farmers that no such books had ever been written.¹⁶²

The 'harm' which books could do was also observed by David Young who criticised the writing of theoretical rather than practical agricultural books: 'And it is a question whether a great many books that have been written upon Agriculture, by persons who write from theory alone, have not done more hurt than good'.¹⁶³ For him, 'some' books had been 'rather apt to mislead than to instruct'.¹⁶⁴ Charles Varlo was distrustful of books and refers to 'the precarious information of others'.¹⁶⁵

However, the authors who made these comments do not specifically state whether they applied to English or Scottish books. Similarly, although agricultural authors – both Scottish and English – were critical of the extant agricultural books and noted their defects, sometimes at great length, they did not always indicate whether they were referring to books from these different parts of Britain. Although this situation makes it difficult to assess the reputation of the Scottish books, the relatively small number of them published suggests that it is likely that the Scottish authors were commenting on English ones. This is supported by the character of the Scottish authors, many of whom had agricultural experience and to the evidence of one author who suggests that he was referring to the 'most conspicuous writers on that subject', who, in the mid-1770s, continued to be English.¹⁶⁶ However, it must be remembered that Scottish authors and other readers bought and read these books and were influenced by them.

While these comments apply to books in general, specific comments were also made about individual ones. Authors evaluated specific books throughout their writing, noting both their agreement and disagreement with the observations contained in them. Although books were reviewed in general journals such as *The Scots Magazine* and *The Monthly Review*, as well as

¹⁵⁹ Young, *Agriculture*, p. 173.

¹⁶⁰ Anderson, *Essays* (1775 edn), p. vii.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, pp. vii–viii.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, pp. viii–ix.

¹⁶³ Young, *National improvements*, p. vi.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. vi.

¹⁶⁵ 'A real farmer', *Modern farmers guide*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁶ Anderson, *Essays* (1775 edn), p. vii.

agricultural journals such as *The Scots Farmer*, very few reviews gave a critical evaluation of their merit. They largely reported their contents and quoted extensive extracts from them or simply recorded their publication details. Where they offered criticism, their comments generally affected relatively minor aspects of the books. For example, the review of Young's *Agriculture* which appears in *The Monthly Review* notes that it contains 'agricultural knowledge buried among heaps of rubbish, which greatly tend to diminish the intrinsic value'. However, although his writing style and language were commented upon, that reviewer suggests that it contained 'several interesting facts, and important observations, on agricultural subjects' and quoted these at length.¹⁶⁷ The printing quality of the books was also commented on. The first edition of Anderson's *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs*, which was described as 'a valuable publication', was 'uncommonly correct in the printing and exhibits many grammatical errors, which must be the effect of carelessness alone'.¹⁶⁸

However, Scottish agricultural books in general, as well as specific ones, were also highly praised and approved of by other authors, the wider agricultural community and other readers. Especially from the 1750s onwards, some authors record that their books were well received. James Anderson notes the 'favourable reception' which the first edition of his *Essays relating to agriculture and rural affairs* received.¹⁶⁹ In *Agriculture, the primary interest of Great Britain*, David Young inserted a testimonial to his *National Improvements* which was signed by sixteen farmers who praised it for being 'general, plain, practical' and 'extremely useful for the improvement of the nation in general, and of many farms in particular'; they also believed that it was 'suited to the capacities of Farmers'.¹⁷⁰ Authors were encouraged by the reception of their books and as a result, wrote further ones. In the first volume of *A treatise of agriculture*, Adam Dickson suggests that if that book was favourably received, he would write a second volume: this was published in 1769.¹⁷¹ So encouraged was David Young by the 'favourable' reception which 'the most eminent practitioners of agriculture' gave his *National improvements* that he too wrote further ones.¹⁷² Some books were highly regarded for many years after they were published. In 1829 George Robertson refers to Robert Maxwell's *The practical husbandman* as 'a work of great merit, in which more knowledge of the subject is displayed than could have been expected at such an early period'.¹⁷³ Sir John Sinclair regards James Small's *Treatise on ploughs and wheeled carriages* as 'certainly one of the best and most useful, as well as one of the earliest publications, on this interesting subject'.¹⁷⁴ Some books were considered to make an important contribution to the dissemination of agricultural knowledge. Adam Dickson's *A treatise on agriculture*, which continued to be published for many years after the author's death, retained a lasting importance until at least 1788. The editor of Dickson's manuscript of *The husbandry of the ancients* commented on its significance:

¹⁶⁷ *The Monthly Review*, 81 (1789), p. 20.

¹⁶⁸ *The Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, III (May 1775), p. 326.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, *Essays*, (fifth edn, 3 vols, 1800), I, dedication.

¹⁷⁰ Young, *Agriculture*, pp. xi–xii, x.

¹⁷¹ Dickson, *A treatise on agriculture* (first edn, 1762), II, p. liii.

¹⁷² Young, *Agriculture*, preface, p. vi.

¹⁷³ George Robertson, *Rural recollections; or, the progress of improvements in agriculture and rural affairs* (1829), p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Sir John Sinclair, *An account of the systems of husbandry adapted in the more improved districts of Scotland: with some observations on the improvements of which they are susceptible* (2 vols, 1813), I, p. 42.

The first volume of this treatise was published in the year 1764; and the second some years afterwards; and has ever since been held, not only to be the book best adapted to the practice of the Scottish farmer, but, upon the whole, one of the most judicious and practical treatises on the subject, that has ever been published in Britain.¹⁷⁵

Almost a decade after the first volume and three or four years after the second volume of that book were published, the editors of *The Scots Farmer* published extensive extracts from it. These played a central role, being the leading and opening article in each issue, as well as the largest one.¹⁷⁶ Even in the second decade of the nineteenth century, Sir John Sinclair could regard Lord Kames as ‘one of the ablest writers on agriculture in modern times’.¹⁷⁷ So important was *The gentleman farmer* that when its sixth edition was published in 1815, some 41 years after it was first issued, a supplement, written by an unnamed editor, commented on the validity of Kames’ theory and practice in relation to the present state of agriculture and recent agrarian improvements, noting that it ‘correctly displayed’ ‘both the principles and practice of the art’ of agriculture and ‘confirm[s] the justness of his Lordship’s views, and enhance the value of his work, instead of superseding its utility’.¹⁷⁸ That editor considered that Kames had few inaccuracies or misjudged opinions throughout that book and that many of his predictions on agricultural development were fulfilled.¹⁷⁹ The importance of Kames’s book was noted even as late as 1829 when George Robertson believed that it ‘was the best treatise on husbandry then extant, and is still justly held in high expectation’.¹⁸⁰

VII

Who bought and read the Scottish agricultural books? Books had an intended and an actual readership. A number of authors note the character of the intended readers. Some books looked for a readership that was restricted to particular groups of the agricultural community. These could be the landowning classes. Lord Kames’ *The gentleman farmer* was to be read by ‘gentlemen of land-estates’.¹⁸¹ David Young and the editors of *The Scots Farmer* consider that their books were more suitable for the landowning classes than other groups.¹⁸² As Young points out: ‘They may, indeed, do very well for the amusement of a gentleman in his country-retirement, and be the means of inciting him to try experiments, from which some new discovery may be made that may tend to the general good’.¹⁸³ The readership of some books was also extended to tenant farmers. In *A treatise of agriculture* Adam Dickson refers to his intended readers as ‘gentlemen or tenants’.¹⁸⁴ The Honourable Society for Improving the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland describes them as ‘the Common Farmers’ and Robert Maxwell notes that ‘care has been taken to make the Book instructing and useful to every

¹⁷⁵ Dickson, *Husbandry of the ancients*, I, pp. xi–xii.

¹⁷⁶ *The Scots farmer: or select essays on agriculture adapted to the soil and climate of Scotland* (2 vols, 1773–4).

¹⁷⁷ Sir John Sinclair, *An account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland* (1812), p. 408.

¹⁷⁸ Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (sixth edn, 1815), ‘Advertisement to the present edition’, p. vi.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Robertson, *Rural recollections*, p. 557.

¹⁸¹ Kames, *The gentleman farmer* (fourth edn, 1796), p. xiv.

¹⁸² *The Scots Farmer*, I, p. 9.

¹⁸³ Young, *National improvements*, p. vi.

¹⁸⁴ Dickson, *A treatise on agriculture* (new edn, 1770), I, p. lxxv.

farmer'.¹⁸⁵ Further ones included other sectors of the agricultural community. The readers of William Thom's *A letter of advice to the farmers, land labourers and country tradesmen in Scotland concerning roups of growing corn, and of tacks* were to be 'the farmers, land-labourers, and country tradesmen in Scotland'.¹⁸⁶ Charles Varlo intended that *The modern farmer's guide* should be read by 'my farming-readers' who included 'Farmers and Country Gentlemen' and also the 'simple and unlearned'.¹⁸⁷ Some were specifically intended for the least educated members of that class. *The Scots Farmer* was to be read by 'our lowest class of farmers'.¹⁸⁸ David Young 'mostly intended' his *National improvements* 'for those who have little knowledge in improvements'.¹⁸⁹

Although these authors state that their books were to have a range of readerships throughout the agricultural community, there is relatively little evidence to show who actually purchased and read them. For the eighteenth century, almost no records of booksellers have survived. However, some evidence can be gleaned from other sources. A few of the books which were published by subscription include a list of the individuals and organisations that gave their patronage to the book before it was published. In addition, the *Select Transactions of the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland* (1743) contains a list of the members of the society. Although the readership of a society's transactions and its membership are likely to differ, it is very likely that each member received a copy of the transactions. That publication may have been more widely distributed outwith the society to people who were interested in the society's activities. The evidence from these sources provide glimpses into the purchase and readership of agricultural books at different times of the eighteenth century.

The membership list of the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland, in *Select Transactions*, records the names of 301 members.¹⁹⁰ As has been noted, this was the first national agricultural society in Scotland, and was based in Edinburgh. Its members represented 'the greatest, wisest, and most learned of a Nation' and were restricted to specific social classes. They include three dukes, 20 earls, 21 lords, two marquis, one Lord Viscount, 48 who have the title 'Sir', five with military or naval ranks and 56 who have the designation 'Mr'; the remaining ones did not have a title, though other contemporary evidence suggests that they were landowners. They extended from the great landowners – the landed aristocracy and the wealthy landlords – who held large tracts of land across Scotland and included the most important agricultural improvers, to others that belonged to the lower classes of this group, the lairds, who played an important part in agricultural improvements on a more local level within a county and a parish.¹⁹¹ Their occupations are sometimes recorded. A significant number of members were from the law profession: nine were Senators of the College of Justice, 49 advocates and 10 writers to the signet. The presence of large numbers of members of the legal profession in this

¹⁸⁵ *A treatise concerning the manner of fallowing of ground* (1724), p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ William Thom, *A letter of advice to the farmers, land-labourers, and country tradesmen in Scotland, concerning roups of growing corn, and of tack* (1771), p. 6.

¹⁸⁷ Charles Varlo, *A new system of husbandry, from long experience of several kingdoms* (1768), p. 25, 'Advertisement'.

¹⁸⁸ *The Scots Farmer*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ Young, *National improvements*, p. 96.

¹⁹⁰ Maxwell, *Select transactions*, p. xvi.

¹⁹¹ Loretta R. Timperley, 'The pattern of landholding in eighteenth-century Scotland' in M. L. Parry and T. R. Slater (eds), *The making of the Scottish countryside*, p. 142; id., (ed.) *A directory of landownership in Scotland, c. 1770* (1976).

society has been observed by Adams who suggests that they had an important role to play in agricultural developments: 'in their role of *doers*, commissioners and factors for estates all over Scotland', they 'were in a unique position to disseminate both knowledge and action'.¹⁹² They also acted as a source of funds for investments and gave financial advice and steered funds.¹⁹³ Other members held central positions in Scottish public administration: they included two Barons of the Exchequer, the Lord President of the Session (and a former one), three Principal Clerks of Session, and the Lord Provost of Edinburgh (and two former ones). Four members were Professors at the University of Edinburgh: two were professors of law and the others were professors of mathematics and anatomy. Only a few merchants were recorded, and there was also one bookseller. They resided or were employed across a wide geographical area of Scotland, both Highland and Lowland. However, because of the role which Edinburgh had as a legal and administrative centre, and the Lothians as a progressive agricultural district, a significant number were from these areas. Some burghs, smaller settlements and districts had a number of members. These formed communities of members. Members were also well known to one another and also created further networks through their acquaintance and contact.

Charles Varlo's *The modern farmer's guide* (1768), a two volume book, was 'a new system of agriculture' which largely dealt with crop husbandry and contained a biographical account of the author's life as a farmer in which he had 'long experience in several kingdoms'. The two volumes cost 12s. to subscribers.¹⁹⁴ The subscribers in the subscription list, which lists 121 names, had a character that contrasts with those recorded on the membership list in *Select transactions*. The distribution of their social classes is greatly altered. One of the subscribers had the title 'The Most Notable', four had 'The Right honourable', three the title of 'Sir', 14 had 'esq.', 14 had 'gent.', and one each had 'Colonel' and 'MD'; a further 70 had 'Mr'. With the exception of three female subscribers, two of whom were married, all were males. The occupations of very few subscribers is recorded in their subscription entries, and these are all confined to the occupation of rector. Their geographical extent reflects aspects of Varlo's life. By the time he published *The modern farmer's guide* he had been a labourer and a farmer in a number of counties in England, Ireland and Scotland. In 1767 he moved from Ireland to Scotland where he farmed in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. Shortly afterwards, he moved to Richmond in Yorkshire where he wrote and published this book.¹⁹⁵ Only four of the subscribers were Scottish, all of whom were members of the landed gentry, including noted agricultural improvers, scattered throughout Lowland districts of the country: the Earl of Eglintoun, the Earl of Errol, the Earl of Haddington and the Earl of Cassilles. The remaining subscribers were English and came from a relatively restricted geographical locality. Eighty three settlements are named in the addresses of subscribers. Sixty one subscribers came from 23 of them: two came from sixteen settlements, three each came from Eastwood and Cortlingstoke, four came from Epperston, six from Westerfield and seven from Mansfield. The remaining settlements each had

¹⁹² Adams, 'Agents', p. 171.

¹⁹³ Alastair J. Durie, 'Lairds, improvement, banking and industry in eighteenth-century Scotland: capital and development in a background economy: a case study', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Lairds and improvement in the Scotland of the Enlightenment* (1979), pp. 21–2.

¹⁹⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 Jan. 1768.

¹⁹⁵ Desmond Clarke, *The unfortunate husbandman. An account of life and travels of a real farmer in Ireland, Scotland, England and America by Charles Varley or Varlo with a preface of his life and times* (1964), pp. 16, 17, 19.

a single subscriber. Place-name evidence suggests that their subscriptions were primarily drawn from Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. A small number of subscribers subscribed more than one copy of the book, and were multiple subscribers. With the exception of Sir Clement Trafford of Dunston-Hall, all were members of the Scottish nobility. The Earl of Eglintoun subscribed 10 copies, and the Earl of Errol some five; each of the remaining ones subscribed two copies. These statistics suggest that they were not using all of the copies for their own personal use and were distributing some of their copies to others. The subscription list in Varlo's book clearly demonstrates that it was initially distributed throughout a limited area of England. However, on publication, it was advertised in Scottish newspapers and it is likely that further copies were sold to purchasers in Scotland, though evidence for their sales is not available from booksellers' records.¹⁹⁶

Extensive subscription lists are included in three of the agricultural books of David Young, published between 1785 and 1790: his *National improvements, Agriculture* and *The farmer's account book*.¹⁹⁷ Young, a merchant, and a former farmer near Perth, who had 'pondered upon the subject of national improvements of agriculture for "many years"', had 'at different times, laid before the public, in different shapes, the result of my own knowledge and experience, and proposed plans of improvement and advantage to the country'.¹⁹⁸ He was enthusiastic about disseminating his ideas. This is reflected in the large numbers of subscriptions which he collected for his books. These were secured from personal contacts of neighbouring farmers and members of the Perthshire farming community where he had been a farmer, the business community in Perth, individuals whom he encountered during the course of his agricultural surveys, and by directing his proposals at specific individuals who occupied a range of posts in public administration. In addition to these activities, booksellers in Edinburgh who were involved in the production of the books, as well as other distributors such as other booksellers and seedsmen in Glasgow and Aberdeen also collected additional subscribers.¹⁹⁹ The three books had similar prices. A copy of *National improvements* in boards cost 5s. to subscribers and 6s. to non-subscribers. *Agriculture* cost 5s. in boards or 6s. bound. For non-subscribers, *The farmer's account book* cost 6s., a sum that was also noted after its publication.²⁰⁰

Although Young's three books each belonged to different genres of agricultural books, there is a good deal of overlap in the subject matter of *National improvements* and *Agriculture*. Indeed, Young continually refers to the same ideas in both books and his second book essentially shows how the improvements which he suggests in the first one could be applied and put into practice. He regarded his third book, *The farmer's account book*, as a separate project. This is reflected in the subject matter of the book (an analysed account book for farmers to record a year's agricultural activity), and its format (a folio rather than an octavo), which also primarily comprises tables rather than written prose. However, this book also has connections with his earlier ones, and these are extensively referred to in an appendix. These relationships are

¹⁹⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 Jan. 1768.

¹⁹⁷ These have been discussed in detail in Heather Holmes, 'For the encouragement of agricultural improvement in Scotland in the 1780s: subscribers to the agricultural books of David Young', *ROSC: Review of Scottish culture* (2004–05), pp. 22–56.

¹⁹⁸ Young, *National improvements*, p. viii; Young, *The farmer's account book*, Appendix.

¹⁹⁹ Holmes, 'Encouragement'.

²⁰⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 Oct. 1785, 9 Mar. 1789, 9 Aug. 1790.

also seen in the subscription lists in the books. A total of 256 of the 576 subscribers in *Agriculture* are also recorded in *National improvements*. Indeed, this list was a composite list of subscribers to the two books. In addition, a further 27 subscribers who subscribed to both of these books are also recorded in the list in *The farmer's account book*; 27 also appear in the list in that book as well as in *Agriculture*.

As I have shown elsewhere, the subscribers in the three lists came from a wider range of social classes than those in either *Select transactions* or *The modern farmer's guide*.²⁰¹ Their extent is clearly demonstrated in the list in *National improvements*. It lists one duke, two earls, five lords, one lady (the only female subscriber), 101 subscribers who had the designation 'esq.', and 154 who had the title 'Mr'. In addition, a further 20 had occupational titles such as 'Dr', 'Provost' or 'Bailie' and 11 had military titles. These subscribers, and those in Young's other books, had a wide range of occupations. The largest occupational group came from the agricultural community. This included the most important and extensive classes of landowners: the landed aristocracy, wealthy landowners, wealthiest lairds, middle lairds and lesser lairds. Some of these were the most prominent landowners in the country, as well as their factors, some of whom subscribed on behalf of their employer, or as well as them. Others were important over a smaller geographical area which encompassed counties and parishes. Farmers were another large group of subscribers: 46 were recorded in *National improvements* and 67 in *Agriculture*. Andrew Wight's surveys, which referred to a number of the farms and estates owned and tenanted by subscribers, stressed that many of these subscribers were attentive and interested in agricultural improvement.²⁰² Some were also agricultural authors, a small number of whom wrote county surveys for the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement.²⁰³ Another group from the agricultural community, who comprised seven subscribers to the three books, were employed in its ancillary trades: seedsmen, nurserymen and corn factors; three agricultural societies, at both local and national levels, were also represented.

A significant number of subscribers were also drawn from the professional classes, especially law, public administration, finance and the Ministry; smaller groups were medicine and education (usually the rank of Professor). The law was an especially important group, with some 52 subscribers recorded in the list in *Agriculture*, of which 31 were writers, six were Senators of the College of Justice and five were writers to the signet. A number of public administrators held key posts in the British government and public service in Scotland: the Commissioner of Customs, the Postmaster-General for Scotland, the Treasurer to the Navy, and the provosts of burghs such as Edinburgh, Dundee and Stirling (a total of nine were recorded on the three lists). Another significant group, comprising 42 subscribers to the three books, was the military, of whom 18 were designated as being landowners. Although a very small number of merchants were recorded in *Select transactions*, their number increased to 49 subscribers throughout the three of Young's books; they included some of the most important Glasgow merchants.²⁰⁴ A total of 21 booksellers were also recorded in the three lists. For the first time, trades were also represented including vintners (some 16 subscribers to the three books) a coachmaker, coppersmith, founder, wright, saddler, plumber, plasterer, engineer and marble-cutter.

²⁰¹ Holmes, 'Encouragement'.

²⁰² *ibid.*, pp. 36–8.

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 32.

The size of these occupational groups varied between the three lists. Each was shaped by the extent of the subscription lists, with the largest ones being noted in *Agriculture* and the smallest ones in *The farmer's account book*. The different subject matter and genres of the books, especially between Young's first two books and his *The farmer's account book*, also had an impact. A number of distinct changes are highlighted in the occupations of the subscribers of these books. First, *The farmer's account book* had a relatively small agricultural community which comprised 16 nobles, three estate factors, ten farmers and three landowners who had military titles. Second, a number of occupational groups were more prominent. A total of 21 subscribers were from the law profession and there were nearly as many merchants (some 14 in number) as in *National improvements* (some 15). Third, some groups increased significantly in size. This is especially noted for the MPs who included six of the eight MPs and 11 of the 21 booksellers recorded on the three lists.

As in *The modern farmer's guide*, the subscription lists in Young's books also record the place of residence or occupation of the subscribers and reveal their location and the geographical distribution of his books. Throughout the three lists, the subscribers were scattered from Shetland to Galloway and Fort William to Aberdeen. Within this area, large concentrations were recorded in east central Scotland, especially Perthshire, Fife, Angus, and Kincardineshire, the counties nearest Perth, where Young resided and was a merchant. Extensive numbers were from Edinburgh and the Lothians, as well as Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Dumbartonshire. Their distribution reflected the methods used by Young, his booksellers, and other businesses to collect subscriptions.

The geographical location of the subscribers changed significantly between the three books. Although the core area for subscribers in all of the lists continued to be east central Scotland, especially Perthshire, they also became drawn from a wider geographical area. In *Agriculture* additional subscribers were gathered from Stirling, Dundee and Fort William and there was also a sharp increase in the numbers from Aberdeen and Glasgow. Glasgow became an important place for the collection of subscriptions for *The farmer's account book*: a total of 27 of the 196 subscribers came from this centre alone; further ones also resided in the neighbouring counties. This widening distribution is also reflected in the increased number of subscribers from England, though their numbers are small. Two are recorded in *National improvements*, six in *Agriculture* and one in *The farmer's account book*.

The subscribers to the three books had a broad rural and urban divide. *National improvements* records that 136 of the 308 subscribers were employed or resided in villages and burghs. For *Agriculture*, the corresponding number is 330 of the 576 subscribers and for *The farmer's account book*, some 113 of the 196 subscribers. Edinburgh was an especially important centre with a total of 97 subscribers to the three books being recorded there, followed by Glasgow with 41 and Perth with 22. These settlements, as well as many others, had communities of subscribers, a feature that was also noted in the subscribers to *The modern farmer's guide* and the membership list in *Select transactions*. Some counties also had small communities of subscribers, with Fife having some 47 burghs and villages with this character. Other communities were also found in rural areas. Especially around Perth and in the Carse of Gowrie, these included neighbouring farmers and landowners.

As in *The modern farmer's guide*, a number of subscribers to Young's three books also

subscribed a number of copies of each one and were multiple subscribers. Each book had a significant number of them: *National improvements* had 51, *Agriculture* had 98 and *The farmer's account book* some 33; a total of 110 individuals and organisations had this character. They accounted for a significant number of the total copies of the books that were subscribed, some 238, 496 and 165 copies of each book, respectively. Each subscriber requested between two and 13 copies, with one organisation subscribing for 40 copies of *Agriculture*. Some occupations had large numbers of these subscribers, who also subscribed a significant number of copies. The landowners, their factors and farmers had the largest numbers: 52.7 per cent of the nobles had this character; 21 per cent of the factors; 24 per cent of the other landowners in 1788 and 8.4 per cent of the farmers to the three books. Some subscribed large numbers of copies: the Duke of Athol and Archibald Kidd, farmer at Queensburgh, Alexander Mitchell, farmer at Carriston, each subscribed six copies of both *National improvements* and *Agriculture*, and William Forbes of Callander and Charles Kinnear, farmer in the Carse of Gowrie, eight copies of each. Another group had a range of roles in Scottish society, combining public duties with landowning ones. They included five MPs, the Board of Trustees for Manufacturers and Fisheries, the Lord Chief Baron and the Postmaster General for Scotland.

The membership list in *Select transactions* and the subscription lists in the books of Charles Varlo and David Young reveal that each had a number of communities of readers. They comprised a range of different social and occupational groups who were located throughout a number of geographical areas of the country. This is confirmed for England by Goddard, who points out that English agricultural books showed 'many indications' of readership patterns.²⁰⁵ These groups of readers were shaped by the methods used by authors and their booksellers and other distributors to collect subscriptions. As has been demonstrated for Young's books, they could be enterprising and use a wide range of methods to secure them.²⁰⁶ The subscription lists show the full extent of the distribution of a book while their imprints on their title pages show the main centres from which they were distributed. These distribution centres were primarily urban, though authors who collected subscriptions also went into rural areas. Subscribers who subscribed more than one book, and who were located in a rural area, also created further distribution networks which may have extended further throughout this area.

The readers and subscribers were drawn from a range of social and occupational groups. These were not restricted to the agricultural community, or all classes of it, and extended to a wide range of occupations, some of which were not immediately associated with it. Some groups were more prominent than others. These patterns also applied to the multiple subscribers, with some occupational groups being more prominent than others. Young's books clearly demonstrate that patterns of subscribers varied even for the books of a single author. These differences are especially highlighted in the subscription lists in *Agriculture* and *The farmer's account book*. There also appears to be wider differences in readership patterns between Scotland and England. Goddard quotes the opinion of Lord Somerville that farmers were 'not a reading class of people'.²⁰⁷ However, the subscription lists in Young's books from the 1780s shows that they were indeed an important group.

²⁰⁵ Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', p. 366.

²⁰⁷ Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies', p. 366.

²⁰⁶ Holmes, 'Encouragement', pp. 27–8.

The membership list and the subscription lists reveal that the books were being purchased and read by key figures in the agricultural community, the people through whom agricultural changes were introduced, facilitated and took place. Landowners played a critical role in these developments. Indeed, the role of landowning was pivotal in Scottish society, and landowners had a range of roles in social and economic development. Landowners encompassed a wide range of people. As Smout observes, 'such a life and such prestige were so desirable that everyone of lower rank bought land if they could'.²⁰⁸ Not only did this group include the landed gentry, but also the professional classes such as 'lawyers, Ministers, private gentlemen, noted generals and admirals', manufacturers and colonial careerists.²⁰⁹ Devine sums up their role, asserting that 'in Scotland, apparently, agrarian change had often to be encouraged from above. It did not simply develop autonomously from below'. For him, 'landowners, through their factors, played a very important role, especially in the initial phases of agrarian improvement in the later eighteenth century'.²¹⁰ Adams considers that they undertook a range of roles: as pioneers, they introduced 'novel ideas in the face of hostility', as generators, 'who recognised the benefits of improvement', as adopters who emulated the ideas of the generators, as implementers, largely land surveyors and principal estate officials 'who had a firm grasp on the new methods', and as managers, 'mostly commissioners and factors, who nurtured the new system to its full potential'.²¹¹

Although landowners were critical to the changes that took place, another group also played an important role in bringing these about. Adams suggests that the 'revolutionaries', the 'Improvers', also 'occasionally included tenants'.²¹² For Devine, the 'existence of a pool of tenants within the existing social order with the capital resources and the commercial expertise to respond rapidly and energetically to the new opportunities', became 'even more crucial over time'.²¹³ These ranged in social and economic status and character, making some more important than others in initiating changes. There were more substantial, prosperous and forward looking tenants who were 'even beginning to engage the interest', in the mid-eighteenth century, but also smaller ones that did not have the necessary capital to act as revolutionaries; some 'showed little enthusiasm for these new ways of farming'. Henry Hamilton suggests that 'tenants generally had neither the knowledge nor the capital to make improvements'.²¹⁴

As the membership list of *Select transactions* and the subscription lists were published at different times of the eighteenth century, they are able to show changes to the character of the people who purchased and read agricultural books. They clearly demonstrate that as the eighteenth century progressed, these activities were undertaken by a widening range of classes and occupational groups. As agricultural developments became more widespread, and undertaken at a rapid rate, and as tenant farmers played a greater role in these, they started to make a wider use of agricultural books, which were also starting to consolidate the broad range of knowledge that was available. By the end of the period of this survey, the subscription lists of Young's

²⁰⁸ T. C. Smout, 'Scottish landowners and economic growth, 1650–1850', *Scottish J. political economy* 11 (1964), p. 218.

²⁰⁹ *ibid*; James E. Handley, *The agricultural revolution in Scotland* (1963), p. 9; J. A. Symon, *Scottish farming, past and present* (1959), p. 146.

²¹⁰ Devine, *Transformation*, p. 60.

²¹¹ Adams, 'Agents', pp. 159–60.

²¹² Adams, 'Agents', p. 155.

²¹³ Devine, *Transformation*, p. 165.

²¹⁴ William Ferguson, *Scotland: 1698 to the present* (1977), p. 170; Hamilton, *Economic history*, p. 73.

books were not confined to the members of the agricultural community and its stakeholders such as the legal profession, but were also purchased and read by members of the wider Scottish society for whom agricultural and rural development were subjects of interest. These broadening patterns are also reflected in a number of general comments about the readership of Scottish agricultural books. In 1760 Sir Archibald Grant observed that ‘common farmers do not read’.²¹⁵ A decade later a similar observation was made by the editors of *The Scots farmer* who suggest that ‘it may be safely said, that the inferior class of our Farmers (and they comprise the greatest part) are not yet in a condition to use these books with judgment, so as to profit by them’.²¹⁶ However, these comments contrast with a remark made by Alexander Bald in 1780 who points out that ‘books on agriculture are now so universally read’.²¹⁷ Indeed, in 1816 Sir John Sinclair could note the ‘ample provision’ that was made for the education of ‘all ranks’ of the Scottish population, and he commends Scottish farmers for their habit of reading.²¹⁸ By the time Sinclair made his comments, agricultural books were being more widely purchased and read throughout the agricultural community. However, even until the mid-nineteenth century, attempts continued to be made to make them, and other printed media such as newspapers and journals, accessible throughout the agricultural community, especially to farmers.²¹⁹ The circulation of agricultural books in the eighteenth century can be considered to represent the earliest stages in the use of the printed word to circulate agricultural information to the wider agricultural community.

²¹⁵ Sir Archibald Grant, *A dissertation of the chief obstacles to the improvement of land, and introducing better methods of agriculture throughout Scotland* (1760), p. 91.

²¹⁶ *The Scots Farmer*, I, p. 10.

²¹⁷ Bald, *The farmer and corn-dealer’s assistant*, preface, p. vii.

²¹⁸ Sir John Sinclair, *General report on the agricultural state, and political circumstances of Scotland* (5 vols, 1814), III, p. 395; id., *An account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland*, p. 2.

²¹⁹ Heather Holmes, ‘Scottish agricultural newspapers and journals and the industrialisation of agriculture, 1800–1880’, *Folklife*, 40 (2001–02), pp. 25–39.