Printers, the Press, and the Poetry of Reform in 1884

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> Joiners, tailors, and brickmen tae,
> A' marching on tae Paddie's Brae,
> Wi' mottoes o' their ain,
> A' weel forged oot in wood and clay,
> And maltster chaps wi' grain,
> The coopers wi' their staves and barrels,
> Working grand withoot hane quarrels,
> An' printers wi' their devils,
> And labourers wi' their spades and harls,
> Crushing doon a' evils.

A. Snaddon's poem 'The Franchise Demonstration at Alloa, September 13, 1884' was published in the *Tillicoultry News* on 1 October of the same year, and described the procession across eight stanzas, listing the trades that were represented.[*] In this, the fifth stanza, the printers are mentioned; the poem, of course, would have been laid in the press by some of the very printers who played a part in that contingent. The printers of Scotland were both participants in the demonstrations, and a key element in the representation of those demonstrations to the wider public. This is particularly relevant to the study of the poetry of the Reform movement, which is largely known to us through the pages of the local press. Moreover, as well as being printers of the poetry of reform, some were also writers of the poetry of reform. This nexus of protest and production can give us a rich insight into the reform movement of the nineteenth century, and this essay will seek to tease out some of the implications of that nexus through an account of the printers' involvement in '1884'.

At least 28 franchise demonstrations in 1884 featured a printers' contingent, sometimes as an incorporated trade comprising printers from different establishments, and sometimes as part of a works' contingent, such as the *Stirling Observer* office contingent at Stirling and the Messrs Collins, Sons & Co. contingent at Glasgow.[1] Often, they were part of a contingent with allied trades, such as at Aberdeen, where the letterpress printers marched with the bookbinders and the lithographers, at Montrose, where the printers marched with the

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[*] Unless otherwise stated all date references in footnotes pertain to the year 1884.
[1] *Stirling Observer*, 25 September; *Glasgow Herald*, 8 September and *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 4 September.

bookbinders and the paper rulers, and at Dingwall, where the printers and the stationers marched together.[2] Conversely, the printers were sometimes divided, as at Glasgow, where the lithographic printers and the letterpress printers marched in separate contingents, and at Bathgate, when the printers of two rival newspapers marched apart.[3] As printing was focused on the larger towns or other important provincial centres, so too were those towns the ones which hosted demonstrations including printers' contingents. They varied from the largest demonstrations in the country such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen to some of the smallest such as Tain, and stretched across the whole country, from Thurso to Dumfries.[4] The key north eastern centres of Elgin, Huntly and Banff[5] hosted printers' contingents, as did the Forfarshire towns of Montrose, Brechin, and Kirriemuir[6]; conversely, the Border counties between them only hosted two demonstrations containing printers, those of Hawick and Galashiels[7], despite being staunchly Liberal districts which saw many demonstrations. Although occasionally the printers' contingents were large (at Glasgow, there were around two hundred in the lithographic printers' contingent and three hundred letterpress printers), usually the printers' contingents were quite small, reflecting the relatively low numbers engaged in the trade compared with much larger numbers associated with the extractive, engineering, and agricultural industries which were also represented at the demonstrations. Nevertheless, they appear to have made their mark: at Wick, 'If the printers were not so numerous a body as other trades, they showed quite as much zeal on the subject of political reform as any that took part'[8]; at Falkirk, 'The Printers, although numbering only 18, made a most effective display'[9]; and at Kilmarnock, 'Their number was not large, but the printers were anything but the least popular of the processionists'[10]. At Inverness, 'the printers were

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[2] *Aberdeen Journal*, 18 August; *Montrose, Arbroath, and Brechin Review*, 10 October; *Ross-shire Journal*, 17 October.

[3] *Glasgow Herald*, 8 September; *West Lothian Courier*, 11 October.

[4] *Scotsman*, 14 July; *Invergordon Times*, 22 October; *John O' Groat Journal*, 2 October and *Northern Ensign*, 2 October; *Dumfries & Galloway Standard*, 4 October.

[5] *Elgin Courant*, 30 September; *Banffshire Journal*, 14 October and *Huntly Express*, 18 October; *Banffshire Journal*, 7 October.

[6] *Montrose, Arbroath, and Brechin Review*, 10 October; *Brechin Advertiser*, 23 September; *Forfar Herald*, 26 September.
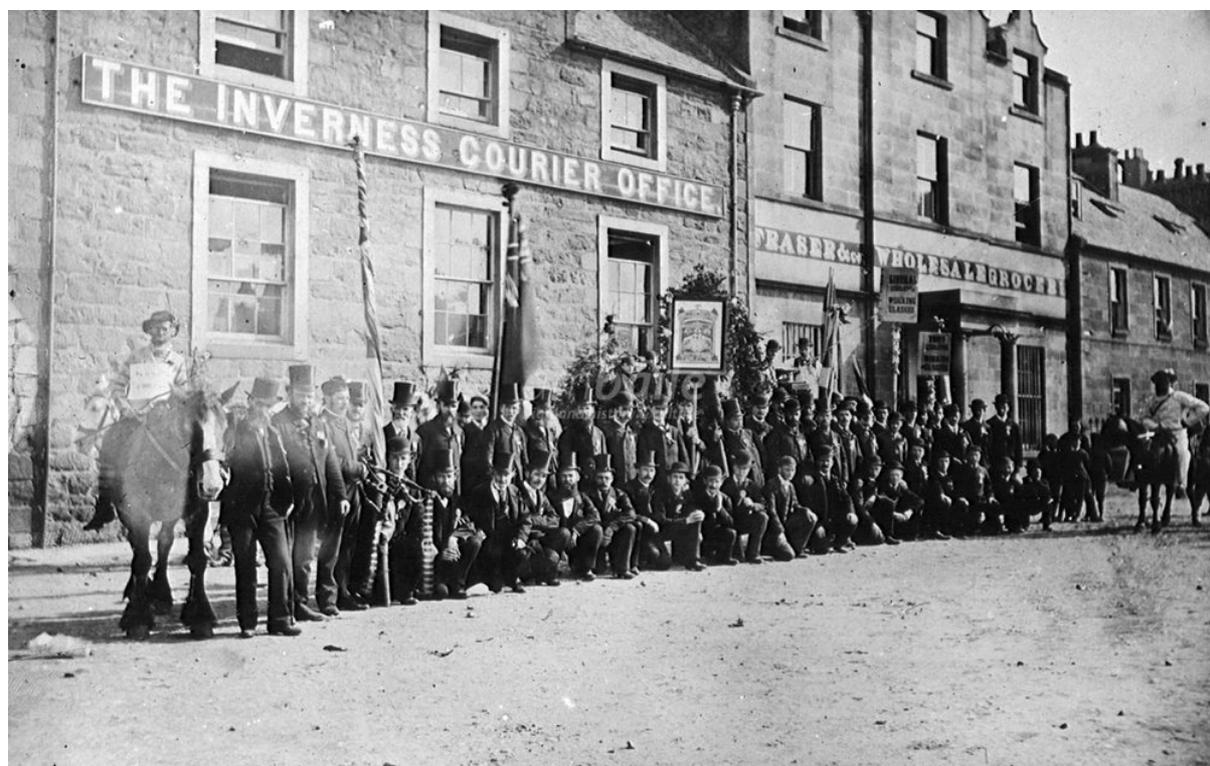
[7] *Hawick Advertiser*, 27 September; *Border Advertiser*, 13 August.

[8] *John O' Groat Journal*, 4 September.

[9] *Falkirk Herald*, 1 October.

[10] *Kilmarnock Standard*, 20 September.

photographed by Mr Clarke, High Street'; a copy of that photograph (shown below) is now held by the Highland Photographic Archive and can be viewed on the *Am Baile* website.[11]

Demonstration, Inverness Printers' section, 1884.

Source: Reproduced with the permission of the Highland Photographic Archive, High Life Highland.

It shows the contingent's muster outside the *Inverness Courier* office prior to the demonstration, and includes the editor of the *Courier*, James Barron, the 'beautifully framed copy of the emblem of the Typographical Association of Scotland' they carried, a number of banners and placards, the yellow and red rosettes worn by the whole contingent, and 'John Mackenzie, bill poster, mounted on a spirited pony tastefully decorated for the occasion' and the 'young man on horseback dressed as the "Printers' Devil"' who was whipped by Mackenzie through the streets, noted as 'not the least amusing part of the printers' display'.[12]

The printers' presence and zeal was, perhaps, as much a reflection of their wider political affiliations as their support for the immediate campaign. The periodical press, in particular the provincial newspaper press was, in 1884, largely Liberal in its political outlook. Of the 107 local newspapers in Scotland consulted for the wider 1884 franchise movement

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[11] *Inverness Advertiser*, 19 September. For further details on the photograph, see http://www.ambaile.org.uk .

[12] *Inverness Courier*, 16 September; a printers' devil was his young assistant.

project of which this essay is a part, only 17 could be said to be holding a Conservative editorial line; the remainder were Liberal and/or Radical in tone. To some extent, this is a reflection of personal attachment to Gladstone who had in 1855 abolished the stamp duties (the 'taxes on knowledge') which had been instituted to suppress a popular press seen to be politically dangerous. The repeal led to an enormous expansion in smaller newspapers, especially local newspapers selling at 1d. or 2d.. The Glasgow letterpress printers made particular reference to this, carrying two copies of the *Glasgow Herald* at the demonstration, one 'issued before the repeal of the stamp duty, containing 20 columns of matter, price 7d, and the other dated after the repeal of the duty, containing 108 columns of matter, price a penny.'[13] In addition to this personal affiliation with Gladstone's Liberals, a wider ideological affiliation was at play, reflected in some of the printers' mottoes displayed on banners and placards at the demonstrations: 'Knowledge is Power' (Dumfries, Inverness, Stirling); 'Liberty of the Press' (Dumfries, Huntly); 'Freedom and the Press' (Falkirk); and 'A Free Press makes a Free People' (Perth, Montrose, Stirling, Glasgow).[14] Liberalism/Radicalism and the popular press were natural bedfellows.

That is not to say that support for the franchise movement was universal in the provincial press. At Perth, the warehousemen of Pullar's dyeworks took aim at the local Tory newspaper. They carried a cartoon depicting the *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*, surrounded by black crepe as a sign of mourning, with the words,

> The Tory lairds in yellow gold
> To save my life did strive,
> But Gladstone spake and at his word
> The heart of recreant Perthshire stirr'd
> To bury me alive. [15]

On the reverse of the cartoon, on a buff ground with crimson ribbons (the Liberal colours), were listed the names of Liberal newspapers and the motto 'A self-supporting, independent, and free press for an intelligent people'. A second cartoon showed St John's Place with, in the centre, an old woman 'with a woebegone countenance' surrounded by the heads of three asses and the motto 'Lord Salisbury's last support in Perth: the Constitutional Gossip'. Below was the verse,

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[13] *Glasgow Herald,* 8 September.
[14] *Inverness Advertiser*, 19 September; *Perthshire Advertiser*, 13 October.
[15] *Perthshire Advertiser*, 13 October.

> The truth at no time does she tell,
> She's long deceived the masses;
> But now she wails her downward course,
> With her three master asses.

The *Constitutional* held to a strong Tory and pro-Lords editorial line in 1884. The rejection of the Franchise Bill in July had been characterised in a leader as not surprising, for, it said, 'there was not the slightest hope of its surviving the calm, judicial treatment of the Lords'.[16] Its leader and report on the demonstration in Perth had described it as 'not particularly edifying', played down the numbers present (and complained about the numbers of boys and women present), argued that 'there was an utter lack of anything like enthusiasm' and that 'too many' of the processionists 'had recourse to artificial means [i.e. alcohol] for keeping up their excitement'.[17] Throughout the events, it had acted as the voice of the county's Conservatives, alongside the farmers' newspaper, the *Perthshire Courier*. Arraigned against them on the Liberal side were the *Perthshire Advertiser*, *Strathearn Herald*, *Blairgowrie Advertiser* and the county edition of the *People's Journal*.

It may be worthwhile at this juncture to consider the possible impact the Liberal domination of the provincial press had on the production and distribution of anti-reform poetry. It is noteworthy that a very large majority of the political poetry of 1884 uncovered supports the Liberal government and calls for political reform. Finding poetry is one thing, but not finding poetry is another. Is the lack of Tory, anti-reform and pro-Lords poetry the result of it not being written, or of a dearth of opportunities for it to be distributed? It is, perhaps, a question which cannot be definitively answered, although it should be acknowledged in any study of the political poetry of the nineteenth century.

Banner verses about the *Constitutional* carried by the Pullar's warehousemen remind us that print was not the only medium for communicating words during the demonstration, and even the printers availed themselves of these other means. The printers who were part of the Crieff and Madderty contingent at the Perth demonstration carried a banner and a printer's pole. The latter was painted with the motto,

> With stick in hand,
> We'll chase the Lords
>   Or smash them into pye.

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[16] *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*, 9 July.
[17] *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*, 13 October.

> And Willie, he
> Our leader bold,
>   We press them to comply. [18]

The use of the words 'pye' and 'press' indicate the use of trades language to communicate a political message. Their banner featured the motto 'We <u>Press</u> our Claims and <u>Publish</u> our Rights' and, on the reverse,

> THE HOUSE OF LORDS
> Confound the knaves that would control
> The Independence of your soul.
> Arise in truth, and manhood's might,
> And for your country dare the right.[19]

The printers of Montrose carried four banners, each with its own verse. The underlinings are in the original newspaper report and mark some form of emphasis – possibly colour – on the banner. The underlined words and phrases are trade terms borrowed for use in the poems.

> That Tory Peers should o'er us <u>rule</u>,
>   Is one of their mad crazes;
> With <u>mallet</u> and with <u>shooting stick</u>
>   We'll knock them all to blazes.
>
> We'll break the <u>formes</u> of these proud Lords,
>   And smash them into <u>pye</u>;
> Our <u>Leader</u> to his <u>case</u> will <u>stick</u>,
>   And their foul <u>scheme</u> defy.
>
> The <u>setting up</u> of Lords
>   A <u>proof</u> of incompetency affords;
> Gladstone's <u>impression</u> we will try,
>   And knock the Tory <u>forme</u> to <u>pye</u>.
>
> And when the House of Peers withholds
>   Its legislative hand,
> And noble statesmen do not itch
> To interfere with <u>matters</u> which
>   They do not understand,
> BRIGHT then will shine Great Britain's rays
> In William Gladstone's glorious days.[20]

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[18] *Perthshire Advertiser*, 13 October.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Montrose, Arbroath, and Brechin Review*, 10 October.

At Stirling, the employees of the *Stirling Observer* carried a ream of foolscap ('the proper cap for the Lords')[21]. The employees of the *West Lothian Courier* at Bathgate carried a copy of Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship* labelled 'The British Peerage, by *Vox Populi*'.[22] The lorry of the *Border Advertiser* employees at Galashiels was decorated with portraits of Gladstone and their local MP, George Otto Trevelyan, with the mottoes 'Honour to whom honour is due' and 'The pen is mightier than the sword', with an arch of evergreens declaring 'The Border share in the Bill! – Gladstone introduced it, Trevelyan first advocated it, Elliott helped to frame it'.[23] Between 1868 and 1886 Trevelyan was MP for the Hawick District of Burghs which included Galashiels and Selkirk; since his election, he had introduced a private bill to Parliament every year putting forward, in their essentials, the provisions incorporated into the 1884 government bill. Arthur Elliot was MP for Roxburghsihre between 1880 and 1892, and later editor of the *Edinburgh Review.*

Printers' (and associated) shops on the routes of processions were often also decorated. At Hawick, the shop of Mr Goodfellow, bookseller, was decorated with the motto 'A free press and a free people.[24] The shop of Mr D. Alexander, printer, of High Street, Brechin 'was conspicuous by its decorations', which included a verse dedicated to Gladstone and drawn from Burns's 'Burlesque Lament for the Absence of William Creech, Publisher':

> May never wicked fortune toozle him
> May never wicked men bamboozle him
> Until a pow as auld's Mathusalem
>   He canty claw.[25]

Unsurprisingly, however, printed paper and the printing press played the most significant part in the printers' displays on the processions, alongside other tools of the trade. The latter included a numbering machine at Hawick, a paper guillotine at Glasgow, a stamping machine at Montrose, and composing frames at Alloa, Dingwall, Montrose, Galashiels, and Stirling. According to one newspaper report, at Alloa, the 'composing frame, with type in case, showed to the public the tediousness of type-setting, but the motto was appropriate —

> The House of Lords we will <u>set</u> right,
> Or <u>compose</u> it of a different <u>type</u>.

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[21] *Stirling Observer*, 25 September.
[22] *West Lothian Courier*, 11 October.
[23] *Border Advertiser*, 13 August.
[24] *Hawick News*, 27 September.
[25] *Brechin Advertiser*, 23 September.

The <u>News</u> has long since burst its cords,
It cares nought now for Tory Lords.'[26]

This description suggests that a compositor was sat at the machine on the lorry, setting type; that was certainly the case at Dingwall, Montrose and Galashiels.

The most common machine present in the processions was, of course, a printing machine. At least 24 franchise demonstrations in Scotland during the summer and autumn of 1884 included at least one printing press on a lorry, printing off slips. In at least one other case, inclement weather prevented the intended use of a press on a lorry, at Huntly, where a 'Champion' press was due to be used to print a poem slip. Instead, over two thousand slips were printed in advance and distributed to the crowds.[27] In some cases, we have little information about the press being displayed and used. In most, however, we know at least the type of machine and usually what was being printed. 'Arab' and 'Minerva' machines are mentioned several times in the reports (for example at Ayr and Galashiels, and at Banff and Thurso, respectively), as are 'cylinder printing machines' at Elgin and Bo'ness. At Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow, there was both a letterpress machine and a lithographic machine. In terms of what was being printed, the slips might feature cartoons (Edinburgh, Glasgow), a portrait of Gladstone or other leading reformers (Falkirk, Dingwall, Wishaw, Thurso, Paisley, Stirling, Galashiels, Alloa), the text of Gladstone's speeches on reform (Falkirk), the resolutions to be voted on at the platform meeting or a programme of events (Dundee, Hamilton, Thurso, Inverness), or an address or manifesto for the movement (Alloa, Dumfries, Inveness, Edinburgh, Wick, Brechin). By far the most common subject, however, was poetry: at least 19 slips were produced at the demonstrations which featured one or more poems, together accounting for approximately 24 different original poems.

For many of these poems, unfortunately, we know neither title nor text. From the point of view of an interest in the printers, the Kilmarnock poem slip is perhaps the greater loss, for it was 'composed by one of their number'.[28] In a few cases we know a title, but not the text, for example 'Long Life to the Chief of the Great Reform' (Wishaw) and a 'Tory Invocation' (Montrose). [29] In a few, we have a title which matches a poem printed at other

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[26] *Tillicoultry News*, 17 September.
[27] *Huntly Express*, 18 October.
[28] *Kilmarnock Standard*, 20 September.
[29] *Hamilton Advertiser*, 30 August; *Montrose, Arbroath, and Brechin Review*, 10 October.

demonstrations, which we may, or may not, presume to be the same poem. For example, the poem entitled 'The Banner of Reform' distributed at Bo'ness is certainly the same poem as that distributed at Inverness, probably the poem with the same name distributed at Edinburgh, and possibly the poem of that title distributed at Brechin. At Perth, five poems were printed, only one of which was reprinted in the press.[30] In a few cases, we have the full text reprinted in the newspapers, for example 'An Appeal to the Majority' (Huntly), 'We Are Men' (Alloa) and the three poems from Bathgate discussed below.[31] In only two cases do we have an actual surviving slip – the Stirling slip held by the National Library of Scotland and the Bo'ness slip held by Falkirk Archives.[32]

The richest resource is the *West Lothian Courier*, which ran a poetry competition announced on 20 September, offering as a prize 'a GLADSTONE COMMEMORATIVE PICTURE, in Handsome Frame' for the 'best Poem bearing upon the Great Liberal Demonstration to be held in Bathgate on Saturday, 4th Oct. next.' The conditions of the competition included the editor's 'right of first publication of all or any of the pieces sent in, either in the columns of the *Courier* or otherwise as he may determine' and the note 'Should the number of competitors and the quality of their contributions warrant, further prizes may be awarded.'[33] In the end, the editor awarded first, second and third prizes (respectively 'Call to Arms' by Jim; 'Hail Liberals, One and All' by James Wilson, Linlithgow Bridge; and 'Three Cheers Let us Gi'e to the Heroes Wha Ha'e' [anonymous]), and one 'very highly commended', one 'highly commended' and two 'commended (respectively 'As Freedom and Franchise Gang Thegether' by Alex. Watt, Drumcross Road, Bathgate; 'The People's Franchise Bill' by John Blade, Addiewell; 'Addressed to All True Liberals' by G.F.S. Shanks, Drumcross Road, Bathgate; and 'Bathgate Sons Aye to the Fore' by Ad Rem). All were reprinted in the pages of the *Courier*, as were two poems noted as arriving too late for entry in the competition ('Sir Stafford's Crusade' by Jack and 'The Auld Toon's Crack' by Auld Toon).[34] The first, second, and third prize winners were also printed on slips distributed at the Bathgate demonstration. Thus, we have

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[30] *Perthshire Advertiser*, 13 October.

[31] *Huntly Express*, 18 October; *Tillicoultry News*, 17 September; *West Lothian Courier*, 11 October.

[32] National Library of Scotland, AP.4.209.30, 'The Printers' Cry Against the Lords'; Falkirk Archives, A005.023/02.

[33] *West Lothian Courier*, 20 September.

[34] *West Lothian Courier*, 11 October, 18 October, 25 October, 1 November.

the full text of nine of the competition entries, three of which were also products of the press being operated by the printers' contingent.

Focusing on just the three leading prize poems, we can see almost all of the common features of 1884 poetry, which suggests a shared ideal of political poetry across the provincial press. 'Call to Arms' and 'Hail Liberals…' both use familiar tropes of English-language poetry of the nineteenth century, touching on both Romantic and pastoral themes. The 'burghers stout' (ll.1&7) of 'Call to Arms' are joined with the 'Strong-handed sons of toil … All who the hammer wield / And tillers in the field' (ll.17, 25-26) of 'Hail Liberals' in the movement for reform. In notably similar language, the 'noise of battle rings / O'er mountain, hill, and dale,' (ll.5-6, 'Call to Arms') and 'the voice of labour swell[s] / O'er mountain, hill, and dell' (ll.22-23, 'Hail Liberals'). These and other similarities raise the possibility that the two authors, 'Jim' and James Wilson, are the same man. 'Three Cheers Let us Gi'e to the Heroes Wha Ha'e' is more clearly inspired by the Scots poetic tradition, but contains a similar phrase: 'Re-echoed Reform owre howe, hill, and brae' (l.2). 'Three Cheers' uses phrases we might recognise from Scottish folk songs or poetry, such as 'crousely craw' (l.7; cf., eg, 'Heather Jock's noo awa'' and 'Tam Samson's Elegy'), as well as the allusion to Burns in its title ('Heroes Wha Ha'e'), but also, perhaps, allusions to Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' or Milton's 'Paradise Lost' in its close proximity of the words 'pride', 'pomp' and 'disdain' (ll.5-6).

Much of the 1884 poetry reflects on locality, perhaps due to its reliance on the local press for its dissemination. 'Hail Liberals' is highly unusual in making no reference to Scotland, let alone its more immediate location, but both 'Call to Arms' and 'Three Cheers' mention Bathgate, the former following an invocation of much of Scotland, largely through its rivers (ll.25-39):

> Come one, come all, hark to the call!
>   It ringeth far and free;
> It soundeth from Tweed's silver stream
>   To Orkney's utmost sea;
> It rings among our Highland glens,
>   It strikes on bold Braemar,
> And echoes from the rocky sides
>   Of frowning Lochnagar.
>
> It rings round Brechin's lordly towers,
>   Through far-famed Aberdeen,
> And far adown Clyde's busy banks,
>   Where stately ships are seen;

> It sounds along the banks of Tay,
>   Floats down the rushing Dee,
> And pierceth as a bugle-blast
>   Through all the Lothians three.

This focus on locality is reflected also in the other competition poems, perhaps most markedly in the seond stanza of G.F.S. Shanks's 'Addressed to All True Liberals':

> But why? just Bathgate, say,
>   When lo! from far and near
> They come in many thousands
>   To join the righteous war.
> Torphichen, Westfield, Armadale,
>   Blackburn, and Whitburn, too,
> Linlithgow and a dozen more
>   Send sons and daughters true.

Here, all of West Lothian is drawn into the cause. The editor of the *West Lothian Courier* is clearly drawn to poetry which asserts the importance and political activity of his newspapers' distribution territory.

The three prize-poems also display the two most prevalent tropes of 1884 literature, whether prose or verse. The history of the reform movement and of radicalism, as well as other elements of cultural memory such as Covenanting, Bannockburn and Wallace, are constantly referred to in 1884: older banners were carried at the processions, and special status was accorded to the 'veterans ' of 1832, 1819 (in Paisley) and Chartism (in Dundee) who were given their own carriages at the heads of the processions. Thus 'And shout to those who would oppose – / "Remember Thirty-Two."', 'How powerful is the people's voice, / The Lords have felt before' and 'let the old flag float in the air, / The old flag of REFORM' (ll.55-56, 77-78, 67-68, 'Call to Arms'), and, from 'Three Cheers':

> Ha'e the Peerage nae mind o' the year Thirty-two?
> If no, let us teach them that lesson anew;
> Let them know that the spirit that then won the fight
> Is still in the peasant that now seeks his right
> What our forefathers did we can do now again,
> And the freedom they won us no tyrant will chain (ll.25-30)

The second common trope of 1884 is that of the military: martial objects – including weapons, drums, bugles and medals – were carried in processions and military metaphors drawn upon. Hence, we see phrases such as 'Then move ye on in bold array' (l.81), 'Their gage of battle

strong;' (l.14), 'So show this in the fray;–/Be fair in fight, but strong in might,' (ll.22-23), 'And pierceth as a bugle-blast' (l.39), and both the title and the whole of the first stanza of 'Call to Arms'. 'Three Cheers' asks if 'Scotland's broad sword / Be sheathed' when it is needed to defend 'the rights of a people that dearly has bought / The deeds of Reform' (ll.19-22), combining martial imagery with a reference to the history of the reform movement.

In his final stanza James Wilson, the author of 'Hail Liberals', makes a direct plea to the press for its involvement in the movement.

> Ye lads who wield the pen,
> Come, quit yourselves like men
> The people's right to gain
>   And defend.
> Up, lads, and show your might,
> And aid us in the fight—
> The press will do the right
>   Till the end.

Wilson presumably approved of the contingent of printers and the pressmen in the demonstration, not least because the work they did for the movement as a whole included printing and distributing his poem. By addressing them as 'lads who wield the pen' he is referring to the journalists and editors, the writers whose intellectual work can 'aid' the reform movement, rather than those who carried out the labour of placing the type in the frame, perhaps. Nevertheless, it is possible to be both, as in the case of the printer-poets for whom 'composing' referred to two distinct activities.

The only surviving example of a 'printer poem' we have is that of 'The Printers' Cry to the Lords', printed at Stirling and written by 'An Old Comp.' (ie compositor). It uses the familiar tactic, more commonly associated with banner mottoes, of employing the language of the trade to attack the Lords for blocking the Bill. Occasionally, trade words are used with a simple double-meaning, such as the use of 'nonpareil' in the twelfth stanza, which is used in its general meaning of 'without equal' to describe Gladstone, but which is in the printing trade a type size. Sometimes, the double-meaning carries a slightly more complex political meaning, for example when the poem opens with 'A *LOWER CASE* was never known / Than what the Lords now show,'. The use of the term 'lower case' is both marked by italicisation, but also by its (ironic?) presentation in upper case. Elsewhere, the use of trade language is marked and accentuated solely by presenting the borrowed words in italics. For example, the fifth stanza reads,

But such is not the law, and those
    Who say it is, do *lye*,
No! Salisbury cannot thus *impose*,
    Nor Northcote *justify*.

'Lye' is the fluid used to clean type of ink residue, although here it is used as a homophone for 'lie'; to 'impose' is to arrange pages for printing on a sheet; and to 'justify' is to space the line so that it fits in the column. All three words, then, specifically refer to aspects of the compositor's work. It may not be a coincidence that their meanings – relating to cleanliness and correct arrangements – can have additional meanings within the rhetoric of anti-Lords politics, of clearing out the Chamber and making a true or proper arrangement in the State. The deliberate migration of meaning from the trade use of a term is clearer in other examples. The fourth stanza reads,

    If that's the Constitution, why,
        The Liberals would be wise
    The *rule* and *bodkin* to apply,
        And call for a *revise*.

The 'bodkin' is the tool used to pick out a letter which has been incorrectly placed in the frame. Combined with a 'rule', the tool used for ensuring correct measurement and alignment, the author here is suggesting that the government, or Commons, 'revises' (changes the composition of) the Lords to bring it into line, by removing the individual Lords who should not be members of that House. Similarly, the eighth stanza asks,

    Who *set them up*, these haughty Peers,
        The People to defy?
    We'll bring their House about their ears,
        And knock them into *pie*.

To 'set up' is to join together the work of two different printers so that there is a seamless transition from one to the other. 'Pie' refers to a jumble of letters, usually caused by the breaking up of a page. So, the author opens here asking how these Lords were brought together to constitute a whole which acts in unison, and then answers it with a call to pull the House all apart, ready to start again on a new composition. In so doing they ally with the more radical elements of the 1884 reform movement, which pushed beyond the call for a widening of the franchise through the passage of the government's bill, to a call for a more thorough reform of the state, in particular the 'mending' or 'ending' of the House of Lords. These

messages, though, are only fully exposed through the interpretation of the language of the printing trades and the meanings which they carry over into political discourse.

This brief survey of the involvement of the provincial press and the printers in the production of reform poetry in 1884 suggests that a consideration of their role must be at the centre of any wider study of nineteenth-century political poetry and song in Scotland. In some cases, they were authors, but they were always intimately associated with its distribution, and perhaps also the non-distribution of anti-reform poetry. They wrote poetry, they set it in type, they printed it, they handed it out on ephemeral slips, and they published it in surviving newspapers. They were, largely, reformers themselves, committed to a free press and a free people. Political reform, poetry, and the printers went hand in hand.