

Document

<TITLE>The Financial Accounts of Provost Andrew Alanson of Aberdeen for the year 1470–1, held in the Beinecke Library, Yale

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The financial records of medieval Scottish urban government do not survive in any great quantity and the accounts of civic officials are rare and fragmentary.¹ The following document is the only detailed financial record prior to the sixteenth century of a Scottish provost (also known as an alderman).² The burgh in question is Aberdeen, although this document is not part of Aberdeen’s main council register series which has in recent years been the subject of major research grants and in 2019 was published in a digital edition, the *Aberdeen Registers Online: 1398–1511* (hereafter ARO).³ As financial matter, the next most comparable records are partial lists of expenditures by provost and bailies *c.* 1399,⁴ and summary accounts of bailies, and two provosts, in the 1430s.⁵ Thereafter are the earliest

¹ For early burgh accounts, see G. S. Pryde (ed.), *Ayr Burgh Accounts 1534–1624* (Edinburgh, 1937), 1, for the ‘commoun compt of the burgh’ of Ayr in 1536–7; see also xcv and 11 on the provost and his accounts in this burgh; and see 71 for an abstract of the account of 1534–5. Ayr’s accounts which were rendered by the bailies to the crown are presented in G. S. Pryde, ‘Ayr Burgh Accounts, 1428–29’, *SHR* 3 (1952) 139–46. The earliest ‘cont of the burgh’ among the Peebles records, by the bailies and customars, appears in November 1457, in W. Chambers (ed.), *Charters and Documents Relating to the Burgh of Peebles* (Edinburgh, 1872), 122. The earliest ‘cownt’ of the ‘rentmaister’ (burgh treasurer) of Lanark in 1488 is printed in R. Renwick (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Lanark: With charters and documents relating to the burgh, A.D. 1150–1722* (Glasgow, 1893), 2–3.

² Aberdeen Accounts 1470–1, held in Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University: Osborn Collection, Gordon of Gordonstoun Papers, box II, folder 41.

³ The project *Law in the Aberdeen Council Registers, 1398–1511: Concepts, Practices, Geographies* was funded principally by a Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grant, 2016–19, led by J. Armstrong. Its major digital output is E. Frankot, A. Havinga, C. Hawes, W. Hepburn, W. Peters, J. Armstrong, P. Astley, A. Mackillop, A. Simpson and A. Wyner (eds), *Aberdeen Registers Online: 1398–1511* [ARO], University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, 2019, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/aro> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023). The project *Finance, Law and the Language of Governmental Practice in Late Medieval Towns: Aberdeen and Augsburg in Comparison*, jointly funded by the AHRC and DFG and co-led by J. Armstrong and J. Rogge, ran 2020–3 (AHRC grant ref. AH/T012854/1).

⁴ Lists of provost and bailie expenditures appear in the following entries: ARO-1-0054-01 (‘expense prepositi’), ARO-1-0055-01 (‘compotus ballivorum’). Extracts are printed in J. Stuart (ed.), *Miscellany of the Spalding Club* (Aberdeen, 1852), v, 39–40. The date assigned in the ARO is 1399, but the officers’ identities are unclear and, given details including travel to a council at Linlithgow, the year 1404 under Provost Laurence de Leth is plausible. See also C. Judge, S. Nicol and J. Armstrong, ‘Working list of provosts, bailies and sergeands in the Aberdeen Registers Online: 1398–1511’, Version 1.0 (2020), available at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/aro> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

⁵ In 1437 copies of accounts delayed from recent years appear in a more final summary form: ARO-4-0112-03, ARO-4-0112-04 (bailies’ accounts, *c.* 1433); ARO-4-0113-01, accounts of Provost Thomas

surviving guildry accounts from 1452–3 (after which date these do not survive until 1548), and the treasury accounts which survive only from 1559.⁶ Whereas the council registers contain a range of financial material, including the details of annual rentals of burgh properties in the earlier volumes,⁷ records of a number of tax levies raised from inhabitants (known as stents),⁸ and more indirectly the levying of fines as a pervasive form of punishment and the details of countless commercial transactions and disputes, they do not (with the partial exceptions just noted) include the financial accounts associated with burgh officers. Arrangements for the administration of burgh finances were set out in 1437–8,⁹ further amended in 1442,¹⁰ and again changed by practice in 1480, leading to royal and conciliar scrutiny in 1487 and 1492.¹¹ The record presented here contains the provost's receipts and his expenditures pertaining to his official capacity during his twelve months in post. Those who were to act as auditors of these accounts, and of the accounts of certain other civic officials, were elected by the burgesses as the provost's term of service came to a close

de Camera year one (dated September 1433); ARO-4-0113-02, accounts of Provost Thomas de Camera year two; ARO-4-0114-01, ARO-4-0114-02 accounts of Provost Thomas de Camera year three (with auditors acting in the time of Provost John de Fife, c. 1437); ARO-4-0115-01, ARO-4-0116-01, accounts of Provost Thomas de Camera year four; ARO-4-0117-01, ARO-4-0118-01 accounts of Provost John de Scroggis (1435). Extracts are printed in Stuart (ed.), *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, v. 40–7.

⁶ Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives [ACAA]: CA/7/2 Guildry accounts, and CA/6/1 Treasury accounts, printed in Stuart (ed.), *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, v, 39–181. See ARO-5-0783-01, for audit of the dean of guild's accounts in 1451 and 1452.

⁷ For rentals, see ARO-1-0056-01 to ARO-1-0057-07 (1398); ARO-1-0144-01 to ARO-1-0147-01 (1399); ARO-1-0160-01 to ARO-1-0162-04 (1400); ARO-1-0299-01 to ARO-1-0302-09 (1405); ARO-2-0075-01 (1409); ARO-2-0093-01 (1410); ARO-2-0154-01 (1412); ARO-2-0162-01 (1411); ARO-2-0215-01 (1413).

⁸ Stents appear in the ARO on the following occasions: (1448) ARO-4-0512-02, ARO-4-0517-01; (1448–9) ARO-5-0037-01, ARO-5-0037-02; (1451) ARO-5-0112-01; (1452) ARO-5-0141-01; (1452) ARO-5-0158-01, ARO-5-0158-02; (1454) ARO-5-0203-01; (1456) ARO-5-0257-01; (1457) ARO-5-0313-05, ARO-5-0314-01; (1458) ARO-5-0332-12, ARO-5-0333-01; (1459) ARO-5-0353-01, ARO-5-0353-02; (1460) ARO-5-0386-01, ARO-5-0386-02; (1460) ARO-5-0404-01, ARO-5-0404-02; (1465) ARO-5-0551-01.

⁹ ARO-4-0119-01 to ARO-4-0119-07, setting out a series of ordinances with reference to a letter under the burgh's common seal, then some forty years old.

¹⁰ ARO-5-0658-01: '... Swa that the aldirman that beis for the tyme sal entromet with na commoun gude bot anerly it that cummys of his office of the quhilk he sall mak lele and trew acompt to the Commounes'.

¹¹ A burgh treasurer first appears among elected officials in 1480 (ARO-6-0653-01). This resulted in tensions requiring external intervention: ARO-7-0026-06 (1487), a letter from the king; ARO-7-0449-01 (1493), recording the effect of a decision by the lords of council.

and his successor was chosen.¹² The burgh's regulations were that a provost should submit his accounts within forty days of leaving office.¹³

The document is not unknown to scholarship. Lyall first identified the text in the early 1980s, and it was cited by him in an essay published in 1989.¹⁴ A transcription was made at some point for *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST).¹⁵ The document resides in the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. The Osborn Collection was assembled by James Marshall Osborn in the twentieth century and was gifted to Yale following the opening of the Beinecke Library in 1963.¹⁶ Within the Osborn Collection, the document is the earliest item among the Gordon of Gordonstoun papers, which are predominantly of the seventeenth century and later.¹⁷ These family papers originated with the baronet Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun (1580–1656), courtier of James VI and Charles I, who was also an active historian and genealogist.¹⁸ How the Aberdeen accounts made their way into the Gordonstoun papers is a mystery. Gordonstoun's own historical researches on Gordon family history may be suggestive that he (or someone working for him) obtained the accounts as an item of curiosity when digging in the papers of the Huntly line, or the records of another set of Gordon cadets. That they might previously have ended up in the hands of someone working for the earls of Huntly in the late fifteenth century or early sixteenth century is also reasonably plausible, for the earls were closely associated with Aberdeen in this period (and

¹² The eight auditors of the accounts of the provost, dean of guild and the master of the kirk works for the preceding year were elected on 30 Sep. 1471 (ARO-6-0160-07).

¹³ ARO-4-0119-03 (1437–8), a rule presumably prompted by delayed accounts in the 1430s; see in the notes above.

¹⁴ Roderick J. Lyall, 'The lost literature of medieval Scotland', in J. D. McClure and M. R. G. Spiller (eds), *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the language and literature of medieval and renaissance Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1989), 33–47, 45 n. 7.

¹⁵ *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* [DOST], now part of *Dictionaries of the Scots Language* [DSL], <https://www.dsl.ac.uk> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023). See bibliography cited at <https://dsl.ac.uk/bibliography/dost/db2>, recording (with mistaken date) 'Aberd. Acc. [1471–2] Aberdeen Account. MS Yale Univ., Beinecke Library, Gordonstoun Papers, box II. (Transcr. DOST Lib.)'.

¹⁶ Stephen Parks, 'The Osborn Collection', *The Yale University Library Gazette* 48 (Apr. 1974) 277–83. See also 'The Osborn Collection', <https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/osborn-collection> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

¹⁷ For a digitised letter of 1648 in the same collection, see Beinecke Library Digital Collections, <https://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:3673510> (accessed 18 Sept. 2023).

¹⁸ David Stevenson, 'Gordon, Sir Robert, of Gordonstoun, first baronet (1580–1656)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [ODNB], <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11075> (accessed 1 Jul. 2023).

indeed the second earl himself, amongst other noblemen, is mentioned in the document).¹⁹ However, we are left to speculate in this regard.

The accounts are written on two leaves of paper folded into four folios. The paper is in reasonably good condition, but the ink has faded in various places and this makes parts of the text difficult to decipher. The dimensions of the folded folios are 30.0 cm in length by 19.3 cm in width, comparable to the dimensions of the bound paper folios of the Aberdeen council registers at about this time period (the range of 29.1–29.5 cm in length by 19.5–22.0 cm in width is typical in volume six). The paper of the accounts bears a watermark of a gothic letter ‘P’ with quatrefoil. The closest analogy is Briquet 8602, dated to Leiden in 1469.²⁰ Inspection of the quires bound into this part of volume six for the corresponding time period reveal a number of watermarks, none of which match.²¹ It is thus not the case that the accounts were written on the same load of paper that the town clerk used to produce the registers. Neither does the hand which wrote the accounts resemble the hand of Robert Gillespy, the burgh’s common clerk at this time.²² The language of the accounts is primarily Middle Scots, although with some Latin, and plenty of ‘code switching’ at different structural levels, a linguistic usage entirely familiar from the council register volumes.²³ The writer includes a number of first-person assertions such as ‘ye som of al my rassait is’, but also at certain points refers to the provost in the third person, naming him as Andrew Alanson. This suggests the writer was someone working for the provost himself, acting at least in capacity as a receiver.

We benefit from knowing a good deal about Andrew Alanson. Simpson has shown that following his first appearance in the Aberdeen records in 1439, Alanson pursued a career as a bailie and council member, as a procurator and a forespeaker in the burgh courts, and in other roles. He was elected and served as provost of Aberdeen in 1470–1 and again in 1473–4. In 1470–1 he also served as a burgh commissioner at parliament, where he acted as a lord

¹⁹ Notably, the burgh bound itself to the earl of Huntly in 1463 (ARO-5-0467-01). See S. Boardman, ‘The burgh and the realm: medieval politics, c. 1100–1500’, in E. P. Dennison, D. Ditchburn and M. Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen Before 1800: A new history* (East Linton, 2002), 203–23, at 218–23.

²⁰ Briquet analogy 8602, *Briquet Online* (v. 2.1, 23 January 2021) <http://briquet-online.at/> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023). I inspected the accounts in the Beinecke Library on 24 Oct. 2018.

²¹ I am grateful to Graeme Small for sharing his notes on the watermarks in the volumes. I inspected volume six (ACAA: CA/1/1/6) on 17 May 2021.

²² For Robert Gillespy, see ARO-6-0090-06 (1469), ARO-6-0051-06 (1471), ARO-6-0168-08 (1471).

²³ Joanna Kopaczyk, ‘The language of medieval legal record as a complex multilingual code’, in Jackson W. Armstrong and Edda Frankot (eds), *Cultures of Law in Urban Northern Europe: Scotland and its neighbours c. 1350–c. 1650* (London, 2020), 58–79; Anna D. Havinga, ‘The vernacularisation of the Aberdeen Council Registers (1398–1511)’, in Armstrong and Frankot (eds), *Cultures of Law in Urban Northern Europe*, 80–102.

auditor of causes and complaints. (The accounts presented here include Alanson's costs in attending parliament, which dates the document to his first term as provost.) He was dead by January 1476.²⁴ Alanson appears to have gained early experience in noble service during the difficult minority of James II. In October 1446 he was identified as a member of the earl of Crawford's household, which family of magnates were hereditary sheriffs of Aberdeenshire. David, third earl of Crawford, had died earlier that year of wounds suffered while unsuccessfully attempting to prevent a violent Lindsay–Ogilvy clash at Arbroath. Thus, it was Alexander, fourth earl of Crawford, 'the Tiger Earl', whom Alanson served.²⁵ Two years later, in 1448, Alanson began his civic career upon his first election as one of the burgh's bailies.²⁶ There is no further evidence of a link with the Crawford earls.

The contents of the accounts are structured as follows. Folios 1r–1v list receipts. Folios 2r–2v list expenditures. Folio 3r lists receipts expected but still outstanding. Folio 3v lists further receipts. Folio 4r lists further expenditures. All this would inform a 'charge and discharge' accounting method, as was normal in this period. No final closing balance is given. This adds to the impression that this was a 'working' record kept by Alanson, rather than a finished document, let alone the formal submission that had undergone examination and validation by auditors. The same impression is given by the tallies of sums made by the writer at various points: these appear to include amounts listed in pounds, shillings and pence, but (usually) to exclude amounts given in merks. Thus, two sets of totals may be calculated. One is based on the sums given in the accounts, plus the items listed on folio 4r (Table 1). The other is a projection based instead on all the items listed which have been added up (Table 2). In both cases, the total *expected* amount of receipts (the charge) exceeds the total expenses (the discharge). The accounts do not specify any amounts carried over from previous years, so it would seem that the provost retained all the receipts due to him and that, in practice, he would incur personal cost if enough receipts could not be collected.

<Insert table 1 near here>

²⁴ A. R. C. Simpson, 'Men of law in the Aberdeen Council register? A preliminary study, circa 1450–1460', *Juridical Review* (2019) 136–59; A. R. C. Simpson, 'Andrew Alanson: man of law in the Aberdeen Council Register, c. 1440–c. 1475?', in Armstrong and Frankot (eds), *Cultures of Law in Urban Northern Europe*, 247–66.

²⁵ ARO-5-0715-03. Christine McGladdery, *James II* (Edinburgh, 2015), 63; M. Lynch and Helen M. Dingwall, 'Elite society in town and country', in Dennison, Ditchburn and Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen Before 1800*, 181–200, at 188; A. Cathcart and D. Ditchburn, 'Lindsay family (*per. c.* 1380–1495)', *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/54265> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

²⁶ ARO-5-0017-01. Judge, Nicol and Armstrong, 'Working list'.

<Insert table 2 near here>

<CAP>**Table 1** Sums as written in the accounts (fols 1r–3r), plus all items on fol. 4r

Receipts collected	Receipts outstanding	Expenses
£97 9s. 0d.	£39 6s. 4d.	£92 10s. 8d.
fol. 1r = £72 15s. 8d.	fol. 3r = £26 0s. 0d., plus	fols 2r–2v = £72 17s. 2d.
fol. 1v = £0 13s. 4d.	£13 6s. 4d.	fol. 4r = all items £19 13s.
fol. 3v = £24 0s. 0d.		6d. (including 25 merks)

<CAP>**Table 2** Projected sums with all items added on fols 3v and 4r

Receipts collected	Receipts outstanding	Expenses
£104 15s. 9d.	£39 6s. 4d.	£95 16s. 2d.
fol. 1r = £70 6s. 8d.	(as above)	fol. 2r = £71 6s. 10d.
(including 49 merks)		(including 53 merks)
fol. 1v = £0 13s. 4d.		fol. 2v = £4 15s. 10d.
fol. 3v = £33 15s. 9d.		fol. 4r = all items £19 13s.
(including 19 merks)		6d. (including 25 merks)

The scale of costs and expenditures recorded in these is substantial, but still lesser than that of the amounts for which accountable officials were scrutinised at the royal exchequer, including the accounts presented by bailies, customars and sheriffs of Aberdeen as they made their reckoning with the crown.²⁷ The bailies of Aberdeen in July 1471, for instance, had a charge of £213 13s. 4d. (the amount owing to the king) and a discharge of the same sum (the amount allowed for various costs and expenses).²⁸ For the provost and his own accounts of office, which underwent audit in the burgh rather than in the royal exchequer, the receipts paid to him were taken from the annual rentals of various burgh properties which

²⁷ Although the accounts recorded in the exchequer were ‘based on charges and allowances, not on receipts and payments ... The framers of the accounts were not interested in actual receipts, but in the individual accountant’s liability towards the king in respect of office, lease or feu’: Athol Murray, ‘The procedure of the Scottish exchequer in the early sixteenth century’, *SHR* 40 (1961) 89–117, at 100.

²⁸ John Stuart *et al.* (eds), *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 23 vols (Edinburgh, 1878–1908), viii. 30–33 (account of the sheriff of Aberdeen, 1469–71, owing £396 14s. 1d., allowances £168 2s. 5d.); viii. 114–16 (account of the bailies of Aberdeen, for July 1470–July 1471, owing £213 6s. 8d., allowances £213 13s. 4d.); viii. 133–34 (account of the customars of Aberdeen, for July 1470–July 1471, owing £331 15s. 4d., allowances £331 15s. 4d.); viii. 197–8 (the account of the customars of Aberdeen, for July 1472–July 1473, owing £454 1s. 2d., allowances £447 17s. 5d.).

included adjacent common lands (also known as the ‘freedom lands’), mills and, of greatest importance, the salmon fishings on the Dee and Don which were accorded much attention in the council registers.²⁹ The expenses which he incurred were miscellaneous, including, for instance, costs of the common minstrels’ gowns, of repairs to the town clock, of payment to the ‘wyff yt dycht ye causa by ye kyrk stall’, and for a large amount of wine bought for noblemen and prelates.

These accounts do not mention among the expenditures any payments made by Alanson towards the amount owing from Aberdeen for the national taxes levied in 1468 or 1471.³⁰ Nevertheless, on 6 and 8 August 1474, towards the end of his second term as provost, the burgh made over to Alanson a lease of a certain Dee fishing—the first to become available of a half net of the Raik or of Midchingle following the expiry of their current leases. The ‘appointment’ and letter granting this lease were copied into the council register. This grant was made because Alanson had

<EXT>pait thankfully the day of the making of thir lettres in hande to freith the tounne of certane dettis and taxis aucht til oure soueran lorde the king fourty pundis of the vsuale payment of scotland and for the Releisching of diuers pur folkis that war taxit and nocht of power to pay.³¹</EXT>

It seems that Alanson’s payment to the king had been made in August 1474 and not during his earlier tenure as provost; thus we would not expect to find any record of this payment included among his expenditures in 1470–1.

As it happens, the occasion of Alanson’s later payment to the king on behalf of the burgh, and the grant of a fishing in his favour in return, brings to light the intermixing of the personal and the official in a provost’s financial affairs. The main council register series does not usually include specific mention of the annual accounts of burgh officials, only the fact of the election of auditors. It is thus interesting that the accounts presented here *are* mentioned specifically in the ARO. Following after Alanson’s second term as provost had finished, an entry in the registers in January 1474/5 mentions the ‘compt of his office of aldirmanship’, relating to the last time he served as provost. This arose because of a concern lodged by David Colinson, one of the auditors of Alanson’s 1470–1 accounts (who was also a bailie the following year). The entry records that Colinson appeared before the burgh council and

²⁹ On the administration of town property, see Elizabeth Gemmill (ed.), *Aberdeen Guild Court Records 1437–1468* (Edinburgh, 2005), 21–5.

³⁰ K. M. Brown *et al.* (eds), *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* [RPS], <https://www.rps.ac.uk> 1468/1/2; RPS 1471/5/2 (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

³¹ ARO-06-0313-01 (6 August 1474); ARO-06-0315-01 (8 August 1474), quoted text.

provost, and stated that he ‘was haldyn suspect be Androw Alanson’ over his account as provost, and over Robert Culan’s ‘compt’ as dean of guild in 1470–1, for which he was also an auditor. Colinson complained that Alanson had given no reason for removing him ‘fra the saidis commptis’, and claimed that when he had sat with the other auditors ‘apone the deliuerence of the saidis acomptis that the toune was fundyn free and oute of det’. Colinson then claimed that Alanson together with the bailies in 1470–1 should have ‘dischargit the toun of baith the last taxis’ (presumably the taxes just mentioned of 1468 and 1471). Colinson’s stated concern was that the lease that had since been granted to Alanson in recompense for the payment of the taxes was thus contrary to ‘the common proffit of this toun’.³² Colinson’s particular stake in the matter appears not to be so much one of high principle and regard for the ‘common proffit’, but rather that he was an incumbent leaseholder of a half net of Midchingle. Alanson’s gain of the fishing rights may have posed a risk to Colinson’s expected renewal of his own lease.³³ It seems from two subsequent entries that the solution reached was simply to give Alanson a half net at the Raik, rather than at Midchingle.³⁴ As for Colinson’s wider claim, that Alanson had not ‘dischargit the toun of baith the last taxis’ as he should have done, we hear nothing further. The impression given is that this implicit accusation of financial impropriety was disregarded, and the payment for the taxes had in any case been made in 1474, not in 1470–1. All the same, that some cause was given to scrutinise the provost’s accounts of 1470–1 may be part of the reason why these records were preserved at all, and thus why in due course they remained extant somewhere to be acquired by Gordonstoun.

These accounts are significant in part for the information they reveal about town life which is not regularly included in the council registers. For instance, they give details about the powerful figures who visited the burgh who were sent gifts; about gatherings of the burgh council not in the tolbooth but in taverns; and about civic cultural life including payment for the writing of a play. They are also significant for what they tell us about the financial responsibilities of a fifteenth-century provost, in terms of the manner in which income linked to the office was raised, and the wide range of legitimate expenses for which he might be

³² ARO-6-0331-02 (14 January 1474/5). In 1470–1 Robert Culan was dean of guild (ARO-6-0121-09). In 1473–4, during Alanson’s second provostship, Andrew Scherar was dean of guild (ARO-6-0273-09). For David Colinson as a bailie in 1471–2, see ARO-6-0160-02; Judge, Nicol and Armstrong, ‘Working list’.

³³ ARO-6-0046-01: an incomplete entry *c.* 1470 with only the heading ‘copia littere assedacionis concessa Daud colyson de dimidia Reth de le mydchingle et cetera’.

³⁴ ARO-6-0417-01; ARO-6-0437-04.

liable, and on which he had discretion to spend. These included Alanson's own costs for travel to attend parliament, but also many payments made to others for a range of goods and services, only some of which were concerned with upkeep of the fabric of the town. The accounts and more significantly their context also offer insight into the auditing process. From David Colinson we learn that a provost had the authority to remove an auditor if he held him to be suspect in some way. Still, it was before a new provost and burgh council that a disgruntled figure like Colinson, couching his claims in terms of the common good, had recourse. Here we see a 'written culture of accountability' which (among other normative frameworks), functioned at a local level for the negotiation of competing claims, and in particular the scrutiny of civic financial affairs.³⁵

<A>Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Diane Ducharme, archivist at the Beinecke Library, for her assistance in locating the documents, and later measuring them; to Phil Astley and the Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Archives team; to Roderick Lyall and Graeme Small; to the journal editors and reviewers; and to all my LACR and FLAG project colleagues for discussion at various stages, in particular Edda Frankot for advice with some of the transcription. All errors are my own responsibility.

<A>Method

Contractions which have been expanded are indicated in italics. Abbreviation marks which have been retained are indicated with [¯]. Drawn lines are indicated with [—].

<A>Text

Aberdeen Accounts 1470–1, held in Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University: Osborn Collection, Gordon of Gordonstoun Papers, box II, folder 41.

<Typesetter: Please lay out text exactly as given>

fol. 1r

ye rental of ye watteris of deyn extendis tyll̄ xlvij lib̄ in ye 3eir̄

³⁵ Maurits den Hollander, 'Comparative cultures of accountability: the Scottish exchequer and the audit chamber of Holland between 1477 and 1515', *Comparative Legal History* 6 (2018) 158–83, at 158.

thair of I haff rassavit fre davyt symson — viij lib⁻

Item fra will blyndsell — v li⁻ vj s viij d

Item fra Adam kynor of ye witsonday term — viij s iiij d

Item fra Sandris mar of ye witsonda term — xl s

Item fra Sandris hodeson — iiij lib⁻

Ye Som⁻ of my rassait is — xx ij lib⁻

Sa rest xxvj lib⁻ on ye personis effter wrytyn se payit

be yaim til ye aldirman Androw allanson

Item ye hail wattir maillis of ye cruffis³⁶ extendis till xix lib⁻

heir of I haff rassavit fra Jhon of panton — xlvij s vj d

Item a nent Jamys menzes — xlvij s vj d

Item fra gilbert of kyntor — ~~xl~~ ij lib⁻ iij s et iiij d

Item fra Jhon moyses — iij lib⁻ iij s et iiij d

Item be Thom of Schawmyr — iij lib iij s et iiij d

Ye Som of my rassait is xiiij li⁻ et v s

Swa rest iiij lib⁻ et xv s on ye personis efftir wrytyn

Item ye maillis of ye towyn of ye cruffis drauis iij lib⁻ be 3eir⁻

Item ye maillis of rebyslaw³⁷ drauis v ~~lib~~ merkis be 3eir⁻

Item ye maillis of ye hessilheid³⁸ extendis to iiij merkis be 3eir⁻

Item ye twa boythis in frehald[?] in rassait — xiiij s iiij d

Item rassat ye maillis of ye iij myllis quylk extendis to xl markis

Item fra Sande rolland of his 3arde — iij s

Item for Duncan allen⁻is 3arde — xij d

Item for Symson is land of fiste[?] xij d

Ye Som of yis is xxx vj lib xi s et viij d

Ye Som of al my rassait is iii^{xx} et xij lib⁻ xv s et viij d

fol. 1v

Item rassavit fra William gra [two or three letters obscured] Schawmyr[?] et fra Sandris Schawmyr[?] of xiiij s et iiij d

³⁶ Modern spelling 'Cruives', a fishing on the Don.

³⁷ Modern spelling 'Rubislaw', part of the common lands or 'freedom lands' of the burgh.

³⁸ Modern spelling 'Hazehead', also part of the common lands.

[iii^{xx}] xiiij lib _ s

fol. 2r

In discharge *et expensis*

In ye first to ye Abot *et ye priour*³⁹ — x markis

Item till[̄] lytill *ser Androw* — x markis

Item to ye comown clark — x markis

Item til mastir Jhone wrycht — v lib[̄]

Item to ye lyster for ye orgaynis playin — v lib[̄]

Item to ye byscheop of sanct Androis departis s[̄] xx s

Item to ye blak frerris — xxvj s *et viij d*

Item til cowchis ayr — xiiij s *et iiij d*

Item to ye scharplayeris of ye queir[̄] — iiij lib[̄]

Item to *ser henre herwe* — x lib[̄]

Item till mastir Jhone badynew[?] — vij markis

Item til mastir willeam wocat for ye gra freris awail — xxvj s vi[?] d

Item til *ser Andro* wrycht for kepyn off ye westementis — xxvj s viij d

Item till my feeis for ye gaddyrin of sanct nycolaswerk — x merkis

Item for ye ij menstrall is gowinis — xl s

Item gyffyn to ye Schipbrokyn merchandis of edynburgh — xx s

Item til Jhon croykschand for ye blawlryn or ye organis vj markis

Item for ye causa *et ye lang gutter besyd stewyn Jhonson is housis makyn* — vj s *et vj d*

Item for al costis of ye mendyn of ye stepill of ye towboytht xl s

Item til Jon Sclattir for iiij Sclayttis to lay on ye towboyth xx d

Item for burdis *et al costis* to mend ye draucht of ye key vij s

Item for xii laid of Staynis to ye bowbryg — xij d

Item for a cobill fow of clay — iiij d

Item to ye men yt maid Scafald to ye candilmes play — xvj d

Item to ye wyff yt dycht ye causa by ye kyrk stall — xij d

Item for a taw to ye knok — iij s *et vj d*

³⁹ The abbot and prior of Bon Accord (also the civic motto) were annually elected lords of misrule. See Gemmill (ed.), *Aberdeen Guild Court Records*, 16, 24; Murray G. H. Pittock, 'Contrasting cultures: town and country', in Dennison, Ditchburn and Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen Before 1800*, 347–73, at 350–1.

Item to ye kyngis mair for ye cruffis be panton — xij d *et*[?] til hym[?]

Item for ye burdis beryn to ye braidfurd on auld sanct nycolasda — viij d

Item for ye clossyn in of ye louch — iij s

Ye som off yis *debet* leff⁴⁰ is iij^{xx} *et* vij lib[̄] xiiij s viij d
teneth

fol. 2v

Ye *expensis* [in] wyne

[left margin: *nota*] *Item* to my lord of hontly⁴¹ ye first tym ~~yt~~ he com[̄] till abyrdelyn
efftir mycheilmess a gallown of malwesy cost x s *et* viij d

at Jhon of marr Schuld Send wt ye sergeand[̄]

Item Send wytht philp of dunbrek⁴² to my lord of hwntly
debet gallon of reidwyn cost xxxij d at Thome Symson *et* in[?]
malwese — xxxij d fra Jamys kyntorris wyff

Item Send to my lord of Abyrden ye first tym yt he com
fra hedyinburgh a gallown of malwesy cost x s *et* viij d

Item Send to my lord of Abyrden in lentyrn a gallown
of reid wyn cost — v s iij d fra Jhone of Marris chist⁴³

Item send to my lord of hersskyn ye first tym he com[̄] till
abyrden ij quartis of wyn tyr *et* ij quartis of reid wyn viij d

Item Send to my lord of forbas a gallown of reidwyn *et*
qwhit wyn cost — iij s *et* viij d fra Jhone moyses

Item Send to my lord of heroll a gallown of reidwyn *et* of
qwyt wyn cost — iij s *et* viij d fra Jhone moyses

Item *debet* gallon of wyn [blank space] xxxij d til alexandrum[?] lesly

[left margin: *nota*] *Item* to my lord of herskyn ye last tym he wass in[̄] abyrdyn
debet gallown of wyn — xxxij d

Item Spendit be ye *common* counsail in Jon of marris tawarn
in wyn — iij s vj d

⁴⁰ The characters transcribed as ‘*debet leff*’ here and below are unclear. They may be a contraction of ‘*deliveranss*’.

⁴¹ Presumably this refers to the first visit of George Gordon as (second) earl of Huntly, after succeeding to the earldom in July 1470.

⁴² One of the sergeands for 1470–1, see ARO-6-0121-04; Judge, Nicol and Armstrong, ‘Working list’.

⁴³ Possibly ‘child’.

Item Send to my lord of crafurd a lib⁻ of Scortzatis⁴⁴ iiij s

Item boucht fra Thom wat of herwe iii^{xx} foytis of Regyn stayn⁴⁵

to ye towboytht cost — xl [word deleted] s [‘s’ deleted]

ye Som off yis *debet* leff is v[?] lib⁻ *et* iij s ij d *teneth*

ye Som of al my deliueranss is iij^{xx} *et* xij li⁻ xvii s ij d le3⁻

teneth

[Between two ~~or~~ and four words obscured at bottom of folio]

fol. 3r

ye ar ye *personis* yt hass noth payit to [one or two words obscured] ye *wattir maillis*

In ye first

Henre ruthirfurd for deyn *demi*[?] *net*[?] viij lib⁻

Jhon Woid — *debet* — viij mark *in* yat 3eir

Adam of Kynnor — liij s iiij d

Jhon of Kyntor — iiij lib⁻

Sandrys mar⁻ — xl s

Recherd of Kyntor — iiij lib⁻

ye Som is xxvj lib⁻

ye *Cruffis*

Recherd of Kyntor *et* Dawit *men3es* iiij lib⁻ v s *in* ye 3eir⁻

Item ye said Recherd sa sall mak cownt for ye Smaw

casting *et* ye *wattir* . bow . x markis *in* ye 3eir

Item ye said Recherd sal mak cownt for ye seid *maillis*

quylkis extendis to v⁻ li⁻ *et* x s *in* ye 3eir

ye Samyn is on ye said Recherd to mak

cownt is . xx lib⁻ xviiij s iij d *yeroff* he

hass payit *in* xij harkyn tres to ye

towboyth — xx s

Item he gaff to ye *aldirman* xl s anent Jon Sclatir

⁴⁴ DSL, s.v. ‘scorchet’.

⁴⁵ DSL, s.v. ‘rigging stane’.

Item till his *costis* to rys to ye parlement
iiij lib[̄] *et* xij s ye Som is vij li[̄] xij s
Sa *restis* ye said reherd of kyntor
awand is xiiij lib[̄] vj s *et* iiij d

fol. 3v

yar ar ye *personis* yt ye *aldirman* Androw allanson hass
rassawit ye *rentallis et* entiryt wych in ye first
fra Jhon of kyntor — iiij lib[̄]
Item fra Sandrys mar[̄] — xl s
Item fra henre rutherfurd — viij lib[̄]
Item anent Jhon woid — viij markis
Item be Adam kynneir — liij s *et* iiij d
Item fra Reherd of kyntor be Jone Sclattir — xl s
ye Some of yis is xxiiij lib[̄]
Item ye forsaid *aldirman* Andro allanson hass rassawit
ye *feleis* of al ye *burgis* yt wass maid yis 3eir
In ye first fra Jon of torreleitht — xl s
Item fra wat auchneiff is cusyn — v markis *yerof* v fra [two words obscured]
Item fra will watson off gowill — vj markis j d *debet in* trow[?]
Item fra ye Skynar of Jon ye Wouss is land xv s *in* trow
Item Sande *coutis*
Item iij Skynarris *et* Jon *glenmalwyn* is *partenans*[?]
et oder yt J wat *anothir* off *yis* makyn Syk als wille *gra*[?]
is anently[?]

fol. 4r

Item ye of awande for ye *aldirman* is sone xx markis
Item anent ye *bail3eis* for ye *maillis* of ye *gardyn* iiij markis
Item anent ye common clerk of his fee xxvj s viij d
Item for ye *wrytyn* off ye play a mark
Item for wade is gown — viij s vj d

Item for iij reseffais⁴⁶ to ye corront⁻ — v s [?]

Item for ye aldirman is costis til ij parliamentis [two words obscured]

til ye kyng for ye Schip yt was tayn in hyngland⁴⁷

et for costis he maid in ye kyngis letteris

Item to ye freir of ye triniteis x s

Item for wyn gyffyn in syndre tyrmis to my lord

of hontly *et* till oder Syndre lordis be ye aldirman

Item a causay mendit ^herow[?]^ at ye town x s[?]

fol. 4v

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⁴⁶ Possibly as in DSL, s.v.v.. ‘resait’, ‘resave’ (various forms); however, the characters here may also resemble ‘s^eeffeis’.

⁴⁷ Translated as ‘the ship that was taken in England’: This is probably too early in date to refer to the late Bishop Kennedy’s barge the *Salvator*, wrecked and seized near Bamburgh in the early 1470s.