Series Editors' Foreword

Elizabeth Foyster and Christopher A. Whatley

The four books in this series examine the ordinary, routine, daily behaviour, experiences and beliefs of Scottish people from medieval times until the present day. Their focus is on the 'common people', that is, most of the population, the ordinary folk below the ranks of the aristocracy, substantial landowners, opulent merchants, major industrialists, bankers and financiers, even if it is true that people from relatively humble beginnings have managed periodically to haul themselves into the ranks of the nation's social elite. Contributors in each volume describe the landscapes and living spaces that formed the familiar contexts for daily life. The events and activities that determined how individuals spent their time are explored, including the experiences of work and leisure, and ranging in duration from those that affected the passage of a single day, through those that impinged on peoples' lives according to the calendar or the seasons and weather, to those that were commonly experienced over the course of the life-cycle. Scottish people made sense of their everyday lives, it is argued, through ritual and belief, by their interactions with others and by self-reflection.

As a whole, the series aims to provide a richer and more closely observed history of the social, economic and cultural lives of ordinary Scots than has been published previously. This is not to suggest that accounts and analyses of the everyday in Scotland have not been written. They have.¹ And this present series of four volumes overlaps with the publication of the fourteen volumes of the *Scottish Life and Society* series, sponsored by the European Ethnological Research Centre in Edinburgh, led by Alexander Fenton. The first volume in this series was published in 2000, with others following at intervals through to 2008. Unlike the series of which this volume is part, which is structured by chronological periods in which selected broad themes are studied, each of the books in the *Scottish Life and Society* series has been organised around a particular topic, including: farming and rural life; domestic life; boats, fishing and the sea; and religion.² They are substantial, multi-authored volumes, and eclectic in the range of subjects and sub-topics covered, entirely befitting the series subtitle, *A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*. It represents a monumental resource for future researchers.³ Where appropriate, contributors to this series *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* have drawn upon the *Scottish Life and Society* team's findings. Rather

than clashing, however, or overlapping to the point of repetition, the two series complement each other, with ours concentrating more on continuities and change, and historical explanations for this, and written, mainly but not entirely, by professional historians. Together, both series offer readers a heady mix of historical information, and an array of approaches, analytical styles and depths and insights.

The everyday had a context, or contexts. At the individual level what was everyday altered across time and often differed according to class, gender, age, religion and ethnic group. It was also shaped by national and regional surroundings, and could vary between urban and rural environments, highland and lowland, inland and coastal settings, the northern and western islands.⁴ Contributors pay attention to regional and local variations and peculiarities, especially with regard to language, dialect, practices and customs. The series reveals aspects of the everyday that were distinctively Scottish, but it also shows how the everyday lives of Scots were influenced by other cultures and nations. This resulted from travel, trading relations, or migration by Scots who lived and worked abroad, both temporarily and permanently. Indirectly, Scots read and learned of the shared or conflicting ideas and practices of everyday life in near and distant lands. Contributors to the series can point to international differences and similarities because of the pioneering work on the everyday that has been conducted by historians on other countries across a range of periods. While relatively little has been published specifically on the everyday in Scotland or even Britain, we are fortunate to be able to draw upon an extensive body of historical research for Europe and the Americas.⁵

The roots of this historical endeavour, and the approaches that this series takes, lie in a range of developments within the discipline. In Britain, the interest of social historians – often with a Marxist perspective – in writing ‘history from below’, has brought the lives of working-class people to centre stage.⁶ In Scotland the study of ‘new’ social history was pioneered by T. C. Smout, with his seminal *History of the Scottish People, 1560–1830* (1969), although Smout’s approach was liberal rather than leftist.⁷ This was followed in subsequent decades by a surge of research on a range of topics, and a plethora of publications written by a small army of historians examining different historical periods, including the same author’s *Century of the Scottish People, 1830–1950* (1986).⁸ Furth of Scotland, *Annaliste* historians, such as Fernand Braudel, focused attention on the material culture of daily life, and a later generation of French and then Italian historians narrowed the scale of study to produce ‘microhistories’. These examined in detail the history of one individual, village or incident in order to understand the wider *mentalité* of the societies of which they were a part.⁹ Historians in Germany have addressed the issue of the everyday most directly, where the concept of *Alltagsgeschichte* (‘the history of everyday life’) was conceived, and continues to be the source of lively debate.¹⁰ Preceding, running alongside and

occasionally influencing historical work has been the study of everyday life by academics in other disciplines, including ethnology, sociology, social anthropology, geography, psychology and cultural theory.¹¹ Academics from these disciplines contribute to some of the volumes of this series.

What can the reader expect from this series, and how does the content of the books that comprise it differ from other social histories of Scotland?

First, by uncovering the everyday, we provide fresh insights into a diverse range of historical topics. Whereas much social history can focus on the structures, ideals or prescriptions that were intended to govern daily living, this series examines the practices and realities of life experience. Although not the primary purpose of the series, people's experiences of major change, like wars, famine and environmental disaster, are incorporated. The result is to demonstrate how the extraordinary affected the ordinary. But as Alexander Fenton correctly observed of Scottish rural society some years ago, broad trends, big ideas and eye-catching technologies only explain so much; how they impacted on the everyday depended on local conditions and responses. As important for understanding the everyday lives of ordinary people, and the pace and nature of change, were, for example, how small-scale pieces of equipment were adopted and used, and how things were done in the home or barn or yard far from power centres that passed legislation or, from which sprang – as in the case of Edinburgh and east-central Scotland in the early eighteenth century – models for and aids to agrarian improvement. But on Orkney even in the later eighteenth century weighing machines – the pundlar and the pindlar – weights and measures, and the commonly used, one-stilt plough, had been in use since Viking times.¹² Change on the ground was invariably slow, piecemeal and indigenous rather than spectacular.¹³

Examples and case studies of aspects of everyday life in these volumes also enhance our understanding of some long-standing subjects of debate within Scottish history. Hence, readers will gain new insights about the role of the kirk in social and moral discipline, the impact of enclosure and the Clearances in the Lowlands as well as the Highlands, the struggles between popular and elite forms of culture, standards of living, and the significance of 'public' and 'private' spaces in daily life. In addition, the exploration of the everyday has allowed our contributors to cover less familiar historical territory – some of which has posed considerable challenges. We discover how Scottish people's fears, anxieties and perceptions of danger changed over time, we learn about the importance of gestures as well as forms of verbal and written communication and we begin to recover how ordinary Scots experienced their sensory worlds of taste, sound, sight and touch. The everyday enables historians to engage with important emerging topics within the discipline of history, for example, the history of the Scottish landscape and the environment. Chapters in the books in the series explore the changing relationship with and impact of Scots upon their natural environment.¹⁴ The series also demonstrates how women, whose lives were once considered

too everyday and mundane to merit serious academic study, played a central part in the negotiation and management of particularly home and family daily life.¹⁵ In addition, women could play an active role in everyday life beyond the domestic scene, as recent research has begun to reveal.¹⁶ Scottish men's gendered identities were also constructed and experienced in the context of the everyday.

The contributors to this series have been able to write these histories not, on the whole, because they have discovered vast quantities of new evidence in the archives, although much original material has been uncovered. Rather, a new history has emerged because they have asked novel questions of material with which they were familiar, and have pieced together a wide range of what was often unused information from both primary and secondary sources. Undoubtedly, writing the history of the everyday presents unique problems of evidence for the historian. These problems can vary with historical period; those researching the everyday in medieval times can face a dearth of written sources, while it is easy to be overwhelmed by the mass of information available for the twentieth century. However, there are also more fundamental issues of evidence at stake that have to be faced by all historians of the everyday. As Braudel recognised, 'everyday life consists of the little things one hardly notices in time and space'.¹⁷ Everyday life could be so banal, repetitive, tedious, boring, easily forgotten or taken for granted that our predecessors rarely bothered to record it. Sometimes this means we have to read 'against the grain' of the sources that do survive. In other words, examining the exceptional incident or object to deduce its opposite. For the most part, however, writing about the everyday necessitates the laborious sorting through and amalgamation of fragments of the past: written, visual and material. Contributors to this series have found evidence of the everyday in artefacts, archaeological sites, buildings, diaries, letters, autobiographies, polite and popular literature, trial records of church, burgh and state courts, estate papers, directories, prints, maps, photographs and oral testimony. It is the incidental comment, remark or observation, chance survival, brief glimpse or snapshot that often contains a clue to and even the core of the everyday. The historian's task is to put these details together, 'as in a jigsaw puzzle', so that we can present to readers a picture of the everyday.¹⁸

What the reader will not get from the series is a complete or comprehensive compendium of everyday life. This, as indicated earlier, is to be found elsewhere. It has not been our intention to list or describe all everyday objects and occurrences, even if this were practicably possible. Rather, our purpose is to explain and analyse the everyday as well as record it. The methodological tools used by contributors are diverse, and reflect their differing disciplinary backgrounds. This is especially the case in the twentieth century volume, where interdisciplinary approaches are most widely employed.

The second distinctive contribution of this series to our understanding of the Scottish past is concerned with what it reveals about historical change.

Across the series the reader can expect to find enduring continuities within everyday life, but also transformations, some rapid, but most long and drawn out. These can be observed by the historian; how far and in what ways they were experienced by ordinary people is harder to know. Yet it is clear that, over time, changes did occur in everyday life, as new ways of working, forms of social organisation, products, sights and sounds expanded the experiences of ordinary Scots. Even the fundamentals that comprise everyday life – what people ate and drank, where they slept, what they wore, where they worked and how they travelled from A to B – were indisputably transformed. Even so, these volumes also present evidence of elements of everyday life stubbornly resistant to change. The consecutive volumes in this series do not signify a set of breaks with the past, or a turning point in all aspects of the everyday. Hence, to take some examples: Scots continued to trust self-administered and home-made cures for illness even as medicine became professionalised and institutionalised; oral culture continued to thrive long after literacy had become the norm; and families and their communities continued to mark birth, marriage and death as significant rites of passage. Ale is still widely drunk at the start of the twenty-first century; and walking and other earlier forms of transport, the use of the bicycle, for example, are growing in popularity. The enduring qualities of everyday life have attracted comment. For the Marxist cultural theorist Henri Lefebvre, the everyday in more recent times offered a glimmer of hope in capitalist societies, because it revealed 'a corrective to the spectacularizing discourse of modernity'. Despite industrial and technological change, the humdrum and main concerns of everyday life for many people remained little altered.¹⁹ Historians have noted people's determination to maintain the routines of daily life in the face of dramatic change, such as during periods of crisis and conflict.²⁰ Our predecessors shared our need for food, drink and shelter, and our yearning for love and affection, but when other parts of their lives faced serious disruption, the relative importance of fulfilling these needs had to be adjusted. Scots could be proud of 'making do' in times of hardship, and of the fact that daily life 'went on' despite the havoc and destruction around them. This series looks more closely at why particular aspects of the everyday were so hard to disrupt.

By so doing, revealing perspective is provided upon the meaning for ordinary Scots of 'great events', such as wars, which traditionally have been seen as the key moments of change in Scottish – and other nations' – history. Arguably, it was in the context of the 'non-event-ness' of the everyday that the vast majority of Scots spent their lives.²¹ Indeed, as Dorothee Wierling has observed, 'most persons have *nothing but* . . . ordinary everyday life'.²² Studying the history of everyday life is about retrieving the history of what most people did most of the time.

The series demonstrates that the speed of change in everyday life could vary between that experienced within the space of a generation, to barely

perceptible shifts across centuries. However, the series also offers some explanations for what brought about change when it occurred. More important is how change was accommodated within the everyday; this was a social process. The seeds for change in Scottish society were frequently contained within the everyday. The everyday was often 'political'. Studying the everyday allows us to see how ordinary people could exercise power over their lives to resist, counter, accommodate or adapt to the changes they encountered. As Ben Highmore has observed, everyday life often serves in helping people to cope with 'the shock of the new'. The everyday becomes the setting:

for making the unfamiliar familiar; for getting accustomed to the disruption of custom; for struggling to incorporate the new; for adjusting to different ways of living. The everyday marks the success and failure of this process. It witnesses the absorption of the most revolutionary of inventions into the landscape of the mundane. Radical transformations in all walks of life become 'second nature'.²³

In short, it is by examining the minutiae of people's daily lives that we can uncover the significance of historical change as this affected ordinary people.

Above all – and this is our third aim – the series aims to provide an accessible history that will interest, excite and engage with the reader. This should not be difficult to achieve given the degree of public interest in the everyday. From the popularity of 'reality' TV shows where individuals are exposed to reconstructed life as their Iron Age ancestors might have lived it, for instance, to the fact that it is often the kitchens and servants' living quarters of stately homes which attract the most visitors and curiosity, it is clear that there is an appetite to find out more about the everyday. This is because the history of the everyday is one to which most people can relate, or at least with which we can empathise. It is the bread and butter of life in the past. This is not to suggest that the reader will find any straightforward or single narrative of everyday life in these volumes. The history of the everyday is complex in the extreme: the range of experience is immense, what evidence we do have is often contradictory and there are enormous black holes in our knowledge and understanding. The books in the series reflect all of this, but they have also identified patterns and processes that make some sense of the everyday life of the Scots over the centuries in all of its diversity.

Notes

- 1 A classic in its time was H. G. Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1899), while Marjory Plant's *Domestic Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1948), and Marion Lochhead's *The Scots Household*

in the *Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1948), broke new ground in revealing much about everyday life in and around the home. It was Alexander (Sandy) Fenton, however, who led the way in Scotland in modern exploration of the everyday, particularly that of rural society: see, for example, A. Fenton, *Scottish Country Life* (Edinburgh, 1976, 1977; East Linton, 1999), and *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland* (Edinburgh, 1978; East Linton, 1997).

- 2 *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, 14 vols (John Donald, in association with The European Ethnological Research Centre and The National Museums of Scotland).
- 3 Perhaps the most enduring research tool deriving from the project will be H. Holmes and F. Macdonald (eds), *Scottish Life and Society: Bibliography for Scottish Ethnology*, vol. 14 (Edinburgh, 2003).
- 4 For a fine study of the impact of environmental factors and changing international conditions upon a locality, and aspects of everyday life in the northern isles, see H. D. Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade, 1550–1914* (Edinburgh, 1984).
- 5 See, for example, C. Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London, 1994); S. Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (London, 2000); R. Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500–1800* (New Haven, 2002); R. Braun, *Industrialisation and Everyday Life*, trans. S. H. Tenison (Cambridge, 1990); S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1999); 'The Everyday Life in America series' edited by Richard Balkin; and M. Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Men, Women and War* (Albuquerque, 2000).
- 6 The work of E. P. Thompson was especially important in this regard, notably his seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1965). See also the collection of his essays in *Customs in Common* (London, 1991). Thompson pays little attention to Scotland; more inclusive – and comparative – is Keith Wrightson's *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2000), which contains much on everyday lives and how these were affected by the emergence of the market economy.
- 7 Marxist analyses of Scottish society appeared later, for example, T. Dickson (ed.), *Scottish Capitalism: Class, State and Nation from before the Union to the Present* (London, 1980); Dickson also edited *Capital and Class in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982).
- 8 Some sense of what has been achieved over the past half century or so can be seen in the bibliographies that accompany each of the chapters in R. A. Houston and W. W. Knox's *New Penguin History of Scotland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 2001).
- 9 See, for example, F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*, vol. I, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. S. Reynolds (London, 1981); E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294–1324*, trans. Barbara Bray (Harmondsworth, 1980); and C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. J. and A. Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1980).

- 10 See, for example, A. Lüdtkke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. W. Templer (Princeton, 1995).
- 11 See, for example, A. J. Weigert, *Sociology of Everyday Life* (London, 1981); J. M. White, *Everyday Life of the North American Indian* (New York, 2003); T. Friberg, *Everyday Life: Women's Adaptive Strategies in Time and Space*, trans. M. Gray (Stockholm, 1993); G. M. Davies and R. H. Logie (eds), *Memory in Everyday Life* (Amsterdam, 1993); H. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 2 vols (London, 1991 and 2002); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley, 1984); and M. de Certeau, L. Giard and P. Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, trans. T. J. Tomasik (Minneapolis, 1998).
- 12 W. S. Hewison (ed.), *The Diary of Patrick Fea of Stove, Orkney, 1766–96* (East Linton, 1997), pp. 21, 24.
- 13 Fenton, *Scottish Country Life*, p. v.
- 14 See T. C. Smout, *Nature Contested: Environmental History in Scotland and Northern England Since 1600* (Edinburgh, 2000); and for a study which looks more closely at the relationship between one element of the environment, trees, and aspects of everyday life, T. C. Smout (ed.), *People and Woods in Scotland: A History* (Edinburgh, 2003).
- 15 For discussion of the links between women and the everyday see, D. Wierling, 'The history of everyday life and gender relations: on historical and historiographical relationships', in Lüdtkke, *History of Everyday Life*, pp. 149–68.
- 16 See, for example, E. Ewan and M. M. Meikle (eds), *Women in Scotland, c.1100–c.1750* (East Linton, 1999); L. Abrams, E. Gordon, D. Simonton and E. J. Yeo (eds), *Gender in Scottish History since 1700* (Edinburgh, 2006); W. W. Knox, *Lives of Scottish Women: Women and Scottish Society, 1800–1980* (Edinburgh, 2006). A pioneering if eccentric account of women's role in popular protest was J. D. Young's *Women and Popular Struggles: A History of Scottish and English Working-Class Women, 1500–1984* (Edinburgh, 1985).
- 17 Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, p. 29.
- 18 Sarti, *Europe at Home*, p. 1.
- 19 J. Moran, 'History, memory and the everyday', *Rethinking History* 8:1 (2004), pp. 54–7.
- 20 See, for example, N. Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War* (London, 1971).
- 21 The concept of 'non-event-ness' is taken from B. Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* (London, 2002), p. 34.
- 22 Wierling, 'The history of everyday life', p. 151; the emphasis is in the original.
- 23 Highmore, *Everyday Life*, p. 2.