Historical Music of Scotland website [www.hms.scot](http://www.hms.scot)

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In September 2015, I wrote about our fiddle music research, the Bass Culture project. Once I had compiled all the tunebook details, along with brief biographies of all the people associated with them, and our commentary about the books, our software developer worked with project leader Dr David McGuinness to turn all this data into a usable, searchable website.

The website is now up and running, at [www.hms.scot](http://www.hms.scot) – it’s in beta form at the time of writing, but will be launched in February. What we need now is for everyone to visit the website! Please use the link provided to give your feedback.

I talked about the project at the Scots Fiddle Festival in Edinburgh last November, but here’s a quick summary of the most exciting aspects.

The website is much more than a huge great list of books. Finding the books’ whereabouts was the first part of the plan, but equally important was our wish to enable musicians to look at the books themselves – the whole books, not just codes, or opening snippets of tunes. We weren’t trying to duplicate or replace Charlie Gore’s index, but to complement it.

While I was checking catalogues for tune-books, I was also looking to see which could already be read online. The best online collection at the moment is the National Library of Scotland’s Digital Gallery - it’s a vast collection of different kinds of historical material, and the music collection has some great Scottish material. The EFDSS at Cecil Sharp House obviously has an English focus, but there are a few Scottish gems amongst their digital offering too. (They call it *The Full English*.) IMSLP (the Petrucci Music Library) and Archive.org have patchy coverage, too. There’s talk of IMSLP introducing charges for accessing newly added data, but let’s hope they leave the existing material freely available!

**Our ‘added value’ digitized input**

People should be able to see what the original books looked like. Some collections have been republished in modern editions; this gets them back into circulation again, but there’s something special about seeing the original editions, with extra context like a particularly informative dedication, comments about playing the pieces, or their provenance. We uploaded digitized copies of 22 entire fiddle tune-books from the Special Collection at the University of Glasgow and the Local History section of the A K Bell Library at Perth. They were all published in the late 18th and early 19th century. We chose them because they looked particularly interesting from a musical point of view, or were central to the repertoire. We listed every tune in these collections, so you can compare how different compilers treated the same tune. You can look up tunes and be taken directly to the page in the book or books where they appear.

Over and above that, there are full book details and locations for the other 200+ collections that we had looked at, thumbnail biographies of those compilers or publishers too, and hyperlinks to any digitized collections that we found. If you visit our website, then even if we haven’t digitized and indexed a book as part of our own project, we provide pointers to where you can find them either as hard ­or as digitized copies, including advice as to whether they are modern transcriptions, with or without accompaniment, or genuine digitized facsimiles of the original books.

Hopefully different kinds of material will be added to the website in future, if more research funding becomes available. Meanwhile – happy fiddling!

**Social Media links**

* Twitter @BassyCulture
* Project blog <http://bassculture.info/>
* Website [**www.hms.scot**](http://www.hms.scot) There’s a link on the homepage for giving feedback. The website will be launched when David releases CDs of some of the music. (There’s a London concert planned for 11th February. David will keep us posted on social media and on the website.)