

The Music of Angus Fitchet

VOLUME 3



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ACCORDION AND FIDDLE CLUBS

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Compiled by
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ACCORDION AND FIDDLE CLUBS

Foreword

The idea for this collection came about as a result of a throwaway remark at an Executive Meeting of the National Association of Accordion and Fiddle Clubs, when Angus Fitchet was chosen as the featured composer for our Festival.

We soon realised the difficulties some competitors were going to have in obtaining the music since, although he had been a prolific composer, very little had been published. One of our number happened to say, "Why don't we publish his music – God knows it needs to be available to everyone!" And so the seed was sown.

Angus, "The Dapper Dundonian" who was born on the 19th July 1910 and died on the 15th of May 1998, wrote a plethora of tremendous tunes which have been popular with Scottish Dance Bands for years – indeed there has hardly been a "Take the Floor" broadcast in recent years without at least one Fitchet tune to the fore.

His music is characterised by structured melodies, which invite inventive harmonies, pleasing to the listener and musician alike.

In researching Angus's music we have uncovered a total of 157 compositions, of which only 37 were ever published. There may, of course, be others around as Angus would regularly write out a new tune at, or on the way to, a gig and just give it away to someone. Many of Angus's band colleagues have said that this "giving away" of tunes was common practice with him. One example of this is the "Nameless" reel on page 22. This came to light via Gordon Pattullo, who was given a piece of manuscript paper by Angus with a newly composed tune when playing with the Andy Stewart touring show in the mid 1970s. Gordon has kept that piece ever since and I'm very grateful that he has made me aware of the tune and made it available to us. A few tunes have had two names – the "*Thrums Hornpipe*" was also discovered as "*Davie Stewart*", "*The Auchterarder VIP*" was also called "*Paddy Neary*", "*Frosty Roads*" was also "*Icy Roads*", "*Peter Straughn*" was "*A Geordie in 'Muchty*", "*Miss Jean Armstrong Milligan*" and "*Arthur Gordon Armstrong*" are the same Strathspey, but the one I failed to spot (thanks to those who did!) was "*Lament for the Matthew Hardie*" and "*The Strings will Ring No More*". I don't know which title came first or is the definitive title but the tune was written after Ian Powrie's beloved fiddle was destroyed in a car accident.

Angus wrote great melodies for some of the eminent musicians of the time – but what time? From "*Mr Michie*" (a music seller in Brechin) in 1927 to "*James Logan O.B.E.*" in 1993, Angus also wrote musical tributes to Jim Johnstone, Jimmy and Joan Blue, Bobby Crowe, Jim MacLeod, Alex MacArthur, Mickie Ainsworth, Andy Stewart and Bobby Colgan, as well as for all members of his family, and for many of the places he visited, particularly around his hometown of Dundee. Angus composed not only superb dance tunes, haunting slow airs and poignant pastorals, but also a tremendous Concert Hornpipe, again for J D Michie, and a tremendous ballad "*Those Happy Days of Summer*" written for, and recorded by, Kenneth McKellar with words by David Webster.

This project has been, for me, a wonderful exploration of a Pandora's Box of superbly melodic and harmonic refrains. Throughout his compositions Angus Fitchet maintained a phenomenally high standard of originality and musicality whilst always allowing his personality to shine through, be it compassion in slow airs and laments to his renowned "pawky" humour in his jigs and reels, to the regality of his strathspeys – not forgetting *J.B. Milne* where he purposefully "cocked a snook" at the establishment of the BBC after being told that "Scottish Dance Bands and traditional music had no place for 'jazz' chords"; Angus wrote a tune which had melody line whereby no chord other than a diminished seventh (deemed by BBC as a jazz chord) could be used. Not only that but Hugh Foss wrote a dance to go with it using the same name so that, as an Original tune for the dance, no other should be used. Game, set and match to Angus Fitchet!

Now, with the publication of this, the third volume of *The Music of Angus Fitchet*, we have a complete anthology of Angus's compositions. I hope you all enjoy playing, as much as I have enjoyed compiling, the complete works of the Legend that is Angus Fitchet.



Nicol McLaren
Chairman
National Association of Accordion and Fiddle Clubs
February 2010

Acknowledgments

This collection could not have been put together without the assistance of many people. My sincere thanks go first and foremost to Bobby Crowe for his advice and encouragement, and for providing the manuscripts of Angus Fitchet's work; to Duncan McCrone of MCPS; to Gary Blair, Gordon Pattullo and the late Sandy Tulloch for unearthing some previously undiscovered compositions; and last, but by no means least, to the Fitchet family for their help and support in this project.

Nicol McLaren
February 2010

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