

Book Reviews by Bookworm

There has been a mini-avalanche of books this year to mark the ter-centenary of the Act of Union of 1707. Among these are:

“The Scots and the Union” by Christopher A Whatley, published by Edinburgh University Press at £25 (424 pp).

“The Union: England, Scotland and the Treaty of 1707” by Michael Fry, published by Birlinn at £20 (342 pp).

“The Price of Scotland: Darien, Union and the Wealth of Nations” by Douglas Watt, published by the Luath Press at £25 (300 pp).

I am not qualified to discuss the relative merits of these and other books but the Herald Review says of Professor Whatley’s book: “He makes a strong case for a recognition and rehabilitation of lowland Presbyterianism and Presbyterians for Scotland’s identity in the union years and afterwards”. Christopher Whatley, Allan Macinnes and others have also been prominent in TV and radio programmes on the 1707 anniversary.

“Argyll 1730-1850” by Robert A A McGeachy published by John Donald, Edinburgh at £25 (336 pp).

Robert McGeachy’s masterly thesis brings the post-Union period right to our door in Argyll. The well-trodden path of agrarian reform, clearance and emigration is viewed from an Argyll perspective. In addition Dr McGeachy’s history covers overseas trade, smuggling, quarrying, mining the beginnings of industrialisation. The only jarring note I found is that the Lochetty company of Lochetive is somehow transformed into the Lochgelly company. Robert lived in Oban for some years and it is fitting that Dr James Hunter should contribute the Foreword.