

“Are You Quite Sure They Gave You Them All?” John Edward Crombie and the Personal Papers of the Rev. Walter Gregor (1825-97)

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The Rev. Walter Gregor was born in 1825, at Fogieside, in the parish of Keith in Banffshire, the son of James Gregor, a tenant farmer. Educated at King’s College in the University of Aberdeen, he graduated in 1849, and subsequently taught at Macduff Parish School in Gamrie, in Aberdeenshire, for ten years. Taking Divinity classes during that time, he was eventually licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Turriff (Aberdeenshire), in 1857, and was appointed in 1859, as the minister to the coastal parish of Pitsligo (Aberdeenshire), where he was to preside until 1891, when he went in semi-retirement and moved to Bonnyrigg, near Edinburgh, where his brother lived. He remained there until his death in 1897, and is buried there (Miller 2009b; 2011; 2017).

Gregor was a founding subscriber to the *Folk-Lore Society* founded in London in 1879; he was later to serve as its secretary for Northern Scotland. It was with the publication in 1881, by the Society of his *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland* that readily established his reputation as a folklorist of the first-rank. As his obituary by Edwin Sidney Hartland in *Folk-Lore* recounted:

To know this book is to recognise its value as a transcript of the superstitions and traditions of a district rich in remains of the past up to that time unrecorded. Its author, however, was by no means content to rest on the reputation its publication immediately won, for he was an indefatigable collector. Frequent communications to the Folk-Lore Society and to the Société des Traditions Populaires, of which he was also a member, attest his continued industry (Anon 1897).

Gregor published in a variety of spheres: regionally, for instance, in the *Transactions* of both the *Banffshire Field Club* (1880–) and *Buchan Field Club* (1887–); nationally, in the *Folk-Lore Journal* (1883–90), continued by *Folk-Lore* (1891–); and internationally, in the *Revue des Traditions Populaires* (1886–). Moreover, he also published extensively in his lifetime as his obituary notice alluded to: looking simply at the *Folk-Lore Journal*, and its successor, *Folk-Lore*, there are thirty-five pieces there alone attributable to him. He also conducted fieldwork in Galloway under the auspices of the Ethnological Survey of the United Kingdom (Miller 2009a). For a bibliography that now needs updating, see (Miller 2000).

THE NEW SPALDING CLUB AND THE REV.
WALTER GREGOR

Gregor promised the New Spalding Club in 1886, the year of its refounding, a work similar to the *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland*. Nothing happened until over a decade later, when *The Folklore of the North-East of Scotland* was announced as the subscription volume for 1897, a multi-volume affair, with the first one having the title of *The Hours of the Day, the Days of the Year, and the Months*. The year of 1897 was also—inconveniently to say the least—the year of Gregor’s death. The title was pulled from the lists as a consequence whilst correspondence was begun with Gregor’s estate by the Secretary of the Club over obtaining the manuscript. It was here that Crombie became involved, later purchasing the manuscripts (note the plural) and who with a cautionary note reported that “he is not yet able to say whether a separate volume could be made out of the material in his hands.” The Editorial Committee did reinstate Gregor’s title, one now “based on the MS. Collections of the late Rev. Walter Gregor, LL.D.” and “[t]o be edited by James E. Crombie, M.A.” This was from the annual report for 1900, and those for the subsequent years of 1901–04 simply mention that it, along with other works for the Club, were “approaching completeness in the hands of their respective editors.” No mention was made of it in the 1905 annual report or thereafter, and it was silently dropped without any comment or note of explanation being given.

Whilst Gregor’s lost publication for the New Spalding Club has already been discussed, there is

now further material to hand to be considered and a fuller story to date as a result can be told (Miller 2005). Part of his personal papers survive, which is remarkable for folklorists of this period, and they now sit at UCL amongst the collections of the *Folk-Lore Society*, but residing in the Crombie Papers. And what is there now, is not what once was in Crombie’s hands. Gregor’s papers allow us to trace an afterlife of his work, with Crombie’s attempts to edit them creating in one sense a shadow world of Gregor’s own activities.

THE CROMBIE PAPERS: “ARE YOU QUITE
SURE THEY GAVE YOU THEM ALL?”

“Dr Gregor has not gone half into the matter if all his notes have been handed over to you. Are you quite sure they gave you them all?” This was the question posed to J.E. Crombie in a letter from William Cramond dated 17 February 1900.¹ He had earlier commented, “[a]llow me to say that Dr Gregor’s collections are disappointing. They are both far too few in number and he misses several of the best.” Returning what had been sent, he asked that “[o]n receiving Dr Gregor’s MS enclosed Will you kindly send me a post card to assure me it has reached you.”

William Cramond (1844–1907), a schoolmaster at Cullen in Moray, was involved with the New Spalding Club, the Field Club covering the historic counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Kincardine (Cormack 1964; Donaldson 1965). His most prominent publications for the Club were the two-volume compilations, *The Annals*

¹ Letter from William Cramond to J.E. Crombie, 17 February 1900, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, J.E. Crombie Papers, Box T206, Folder T.

of *Banff* (Cramond 1891; 1893), and *The Records of Elgin, 1234–1800* (Cramond 1903; 1908), the last volume posthumously edited by the Rev. Stephen Ree from a nearly-complete manuscript found amongst his papers. John Edward Crombie (1862–1932) too was involved with the New Spalding Club, and was equally drawn into editing a manuscript left by another member of the Club, namely the Rev. Walter Gregor—or so he thought. And Cramond was not to be the only figure drawn into the subject of Gregor’s manuscripts.

THE CROMBIE BROTHERS: JOHN EDWARD & JOHN WILLIAM CROMBIE

Crombie’s research interests were in the fields of meteorology and seismology, with family money allowing him to build his own seismic station as well as support others working in that field. That said, he did make two contributions to *Folk-Lore*, one on “First-Footing in Aberdeenshire” (Crombie 1893), and the second on “Shoe-Throwing at Weddings” (Crombie 1895). He had earlier presented a paper to the 1891 International Folk-Lore Congress held that year in London (Crombie 1892). His brother, John William Crombie (1858–1908), also shared a passing interest in folklore and had earlier published in the *Folk-Lore Journal* in 1883, and in the following year of 1884, and elsewhere in 1886, an article on the “History of the Game of Hop-Scotch” (Crombie 1883abc; 1884; 1886). He was active in the work of the Folk-Tale Tabulation Committee of the Folk-Lore Society in the same period, and later was a member of the Council of the Society. But as seen it was to be James Edward from the

two brothers who was to become involved with Gregor.

THE REV. H.M.B. REID AND THE REV. WALTER GREGOR

Amongst the Crombie Papers is a typed copy of a “Report on Dr. Walter Gregor’s M.S.S. H.M.B. Reid, B.D., Balmaghie (January 1899).”² He was fuller Henry Martyn Beckwith Reid (1856–1927). Born in Glasgow, his family later moved to Dundee when his father took up the position of chaplain to H.M. Prison. After studying at the University of St Andrews, Reid was licensed in 1879, and served at Anderston Parish Kirk and then at Glasgow Cathedral. He was ordained as a minister in 1882, and moved to the parish of Balmaghie in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright in Dumfries and Galloway. Serving there for close on twenty years he was appointed in 1904 as the Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow (Scott 1917, 395).

It was whilst living in the manse at Balmaghie that he became acquainted with Gregor when he was conducting fieldwork in Galloway under the auspices of the *Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom* sponsored by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. He carried out two separate collecting tours, the first one during the October and November of 1895, followed by a second visit in April and May of the following year, 1896. Gregor met Reid on 29 October 1895

² Copy | REPORT | on | Dr. Walter Gregor’s M.S.S. | H.M.B. Reid, B.D., Balmaghie | [short rule] | Jan. 1899, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T165, FLS Hon. Secretary Correspondence, FLS/1/2/2/16, Folder 2, Correspondence September 1933–April 1934, Subfolder 3.

when he “was most cordially received by Mr and Mrs Reid” as he noted (Gregor 1897, 612). He was their guest again in 1896, turning up on 20 April, remarking “where I was again cordially received by Mr and Mrs Reid” (Gregor 1898, 500). Of his 1895 visit, Gregor mentioned that “Mr Reid spared no pains to meet my wishes, both by driving me for miles through the wild Galloway moors and by taking me to those he considered able to help me both in Minnigaff and in Newton Stewart” (Gregor 1897, 612).

Gregor’s death in 1897 prevented further planned fieldwork elsewhere in Scotland for the Survey, visits to Caithness, Morayshire, and Nairn having been proposed as part of his activities in 1895 and 1896, though as seen he was active only in Galloway in those years. The Survey turned then to Reid himself, “[t]he Committee has endeavoured to fill the place left vacant by the death of Dr Gregor by the appointment of the Rev. H.M.B. Reid to carry on the work initiated by him [...]” (Ethnographical Survey of the United Kingdom 1898, 454). This was the work in Galloway and not Gregor’s other proposed commitments. This was a curious move as Reid was nothing other at the time than an ordinary Church of Scotland minister. *About Galloway Folk* (Reid 1889), and his parish history, *The Kirk above Dee Water* (Reid 1895), were run-of-the-mill publications and while a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Antiquarian Society, he did not publish in its journal (Dumfries and Galloway Antiquarian Society 1896). Nothing is ever mentioned in any of the further reports of the Survey whether any fieldwork was conducted

by Reid or not. But this was not to be the end of his involvement with Gregor, as he was called upon to examine his personal papers on behalf of Crombie.

“REPORT ON DR. WALTER GREGOR’S M.S.S. H.M.B. REID, B.D., BALMAGHIE” (JANUARY 1899)
Reid’s report is dated 27 January 1899 and reporting on the manuscripts was not an easy task, as “I must add, that the lamented and distinguished observer had left his M.S.S. in some confusion, owing to his sudden death.” He continued, “[i]t has been a work of difficulty to reduce them to anything like order, and as now arranged, they would still need careful editing for the purpose in view,” and ended his overview with the observation that “I have taken the view that I was not called upon, or expected, to do more than make a rough selection of the suitable papers.” The sum asked for them was £25 (equivalent to around £2,500 in current values), “amply justified” thought Reid, “in exchange for the papers which I have tied up and sealed.” Reid was tasked with essentially finding the manuscript of *The Folklore of the North-East of Scotland* and not with producing an overview of Gregor’s papers. And, as regards that manuscript, if it was not to be found, then the next stage was in finding the working materials for it, “the suitable papers” as Reid put it. As a result we will never know what was left behind as such of Gregor’s papers and how extensive overall was his archive at the time of his death.

Reid assumed, reasonably enough, that Gregor’s planned book was going to be an enlarged version of his *Notes on the Folklore of the North-East of Scotland*: “He had actually begun the latter

at his lamented death, and his method was to incorporate his latest collections with the text of the 1881 volume under the heads there laid down.” As an example of what had been prepared, Reid mentioned the topic of Weather, Chapter 21 in the *Notes*, to which Gregor had added “a considerable mass of new matter” and “woven into a connected treatise.” Similarly treated were Riddles (Chapter 16), Marriage (Chapter 17), Place Rhymes (Chapter 18), Place and Family Characteristics (Chapter 19), Times and Seasons and Weather (Chapter 21), Christmas, New Year’s Day, &c. (Chapter 22), Countings-Out (Chapter 23), Farming (Chapter 25), Boats and Fishing (Chapter 26), Death (Chapter 27), Burial (Chapter 28). This meant that eleven out of the twenty-eight chapters that made up the *Notes* had been dealt with, effectively the second half of the book. From chapters sixteen to twenty-eight just two were seemingly unworked, namely Animal and Plant Superstitions (Chapter 20) and Washing Day (Chapter 24). If Gregor was intent on expanding all of the contents of the *Notes*, then the first fifteen chapters remained to be dealt with. Besides these chapters there were also manuscripts relating to (in Reid’s ordering), Birds, Witches, Rocks, Child, Miscellaneous, Proverbs. Two of these correspond to chapters in the *Notes*, The Child (Chapter 2) and Witches (Chapter 14).

THE HOURS OF THE DAY, THE DAYS OF THE YEAR, AND THE MONTHS

The Hours of the Day, the Days of the Year, and the Months never appeared, either authored by Gregor or edited by Crombie, but a letter by

Gregor amongst the Crombie Papers shows that he was ready to start to deliver the manuscript to the printers. Dated the 21 November 1896, and addressed to Peter Anderson, the Secretary of the New Spalding Club, Gregor shared the title he had chosen for the book and outlined its scope: “It is intended to be a record of all the customs, superstitions, rhymes &c connected with particular hours, days and months throughout the year.”³ And as regards the timescale envisaged, “I hope to be able to begin printing soon & to carry on pretty steadily.” Gregor died in 1897, early in the year on 4 February, and so little time for anything substantial to have been set by the printer. Reid does not mention any galley proofs being found amongst his papers. This letter is paperclipped to an uncompleted rough working draft of Crombie’s Introduction.⁴ As regards other introductions, the one for Chapter 1, The Calendar,⁵ is present, whereas Chapter 2, Hours of the Day,⁶ seems never to have made it beyond the first page with half of it remaining blank. None of these drafts are fair or top copies.

3 Letter from Rev. Walter Gregor to [Peter John] Anderson, 21 November 1896, paperclipped to “Introduction” to *The Hours of the Day, the Days of the Year, and the Months* in the hand of J.E. Crombie, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, J.E. Crombie Papers, Box T209/1, Folder M, Days & Hours.

4 “Introduction,” draft in the hand of J.E. Crombie, undated, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, J.E. Crombie Papers, Box T209/1, Folder M, Days & Hours.

5 Chapter 1, “The Calendar,” draft in the hand of J.E. Crombie, undated, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder K, Calendar i.

6 Chapter 2, “Hours of the Day,” draft in the hand of J.E. Crombie, undated, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, J.E. Crombie Papers, Box T209/1, Folder M, Days & Hours.

Reid in his Report wrote of Gregor having expanded chapters from the *Notes* with extra material and “woven into a connected treatise” in his own words. As regards the work for the New Spalding Club, the relevant ones were “Times and Seasons and Weather” (Chapter 21), and “Christmas, New Year’s Day, &c.” (Chapter 22). All that is now present is the material for the month of May, comprising of twenty-seven sheets held together with a brass pin, and with a cover sheet in Crombie’s hand reading “Months of the Year | May.”⁷ Gregor’s original pages (taken from exercise books) are mounted onto larger-sized sheets and Crombie has entered running titles in red ink across the top of each subsequent page. In a number of cases it is Gregor’s notes on their own that are pasted in place. Besides May, there is material for Hallowe’en, though in this case it is individual sheets of notes and left as such by Crombie.⁸

Amongst the papers are two printed questionnaires, titled *Notes on the Folk Lore of March*,⁹ and one similarly so for the month of September,¹⁰ the pair sent out in April 1900. Five questionnaires were returned as regards the one for March, and six for September. There is also a similar, but much earlier, printed questionnaire

present, one on *First-Footing*, again sent out in April, but this time from 1892.¹¹ Twelve replies were received on that occasion. Either material for March and September was missing from Gregor’s papers, or Crombie found it to be thin and wanting in depth, and so resorted to expanding Gregor’s notes to hand.

Both questionnaires were distributed by Cramond as a letter to Crombie makes clear:

I have duly received the printed Notes for the months of March and September. [...] I have already issued some & will issue the rest today with a note that they be returned to you within ten days please don’t expect too much as the months are a good deal more difficult than the days.¹²

Further on in the letter he wrote, “I enclose 3 items & will send you some Month notes very soon.” Cramond also passed on information sent to him. William Smith, the schoolmaster at Deskford in Banffshire, wrote down weather lore and proverbs in a letter to Cramond in April of 1900, which was passed on to Crombie with a note that “[i]f I can get any more about the other months I shall send them to you.”¹³ Earlier, in March 1900, another William Smith had written directly to Crombie, “I have read with much interest the Notes on the folklore and popular

7 “Months of the Year | May,” UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder K, Calendar i.

8 [Hallowe’en], in the hand of Rev. Walter Gregor, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder L, Calendar ii.

9 *Notes on the Folk Lore of March*, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder K, Calendar i.

10 *Notes on the Folk Lore of September*, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder L, Calendar ii.

11 *First-Footing*, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder K, Calendar i.

12 Letter from William Cramond to [J.E. Crombie], 31 March 1900, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

13 Letter from William Smith (of Deskford) to [William Cramond], 12 April 1900, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

sayings about the months of March & April.”¹⁴ This suggests there was a possible questionnaire for the month of April as well, but that said, Cramond’s letter does not mention it. As regards those questionnaires returned, they were received (for March) from Mrs M.H. Colville (The Castle, Banff), Alex[ander] Cramond (Auchinblae), Mr Cruickshank (Station Agent, Elgin), James Shearer (Cairnie, Huntly), and Mrs Simpson (St Helens, Banff). For September, those same names as for March, and adding that of John Yeats of Banff. Some of the questionnaires have correspondence attached to them,¹⁵ and there is one of Cramond covering notes also present, “I enclose a Contribution from Banff & another from the Mearns. I hope the bundle I posted on Sat^{dy} has reached you In haste”.¹⁶

Cramond was still in contact with Crombie in 1901. “I am glad to have a letter from you again. I was just going to write you.”¹⁷ He mentioned having come across one A. Hutcheson, who

“showed me a bundle of Folk Lore Stories, hitherto unpublished & collected a few years ago chiefly in Ross-shire. They are fairy stories & what is known as Folk-lore proper.” The search for calendar customs was still ongoing between the pair of them, and “I shall ask my old friend, Jn Graham who is now 96 but clear headed & active as ever, if he can give some Calendar rhymes & let you know soon.”

Little now remains of Crombie’s correspondence, and bar the letters mentioned above, there are just present two letters from the Rev. John G. Michie, one sent in 1892 and the other in 1897,¹⁸ one from the Rev. John Philip in 1892,¹⁹ regarding the *First-Footing* questionnaire sent out that year (the subject too of the letter from Michie that year), and finally a letter from Gregor himself dated 20 July 1894.²⁰ There he writes that “[t]he only superstition I have met with regarding the hedgehog is that it is unlucky to meet one.” He went to ask Crombie if he has joined the Italian Folk-Lore Society or not. “Italy should furnish much. I am thinking of becoming a member.” Whilst Italy was on the up, Spain was sliding. “Spain has collapsed with its Societies. At least I have not seen anything for a long time about them.” And with this comment the letter closes.

Little, equally, remains of *The Hours of the Day*, the

14 Letter from William Smith (of Aberdeen) to [William Cramond], 12 March 1900, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

15 Attached to the respective questionnaires, see letter from James Shearer to [William Cramond], 3 May 1900, and same from Mrs Simpson to [William Cramond], undated [but 1900], UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder K, Calendar i. The two letters from M.H. Colville to Cramond, dated 13 April & 8 May 1900, presently found in another folder must once have been with her questionnaire when returned. UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

16 Letter from William Cramond to [J.E. Crombie], undated [but 1900], UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/1, Folder K, Calendar i.

17 Letter from William Cramond to J.E. Crombie, 28 January 1901, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

18 Letters from Rev. John G. Michie to J.E. Crombie, 21 April 1892 & 10 May 1897, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

19 Letter from Rev. John Philip to [J.E. Crombie], 29 April 1892, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

20 Letter from Rev. Walter Gregor to J.E. Crombie, 20 July 1894, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/2, Folder E, Miscellaneous Notes.

Days of the Year, and the Months. “I hope to be able to begin printing soon” was Gregor’s statement to Anderson, in 1896. How complete the manuscript was remains unclear, if his words should be read with a note of caution on his part or not. Reid, however, was not able to find one as his Report makes clear. Nevertheless, Crombie was prepared to work with Gregor’s papers, started work on them, but why he stopped remains unclear. But this does not end his encounter with Gregor as will be seen.

THE DEATH OF J.E. CROMBIE (1932)

“I regret to inform you of the demise of Mr J.E. Crombie some weeks ago,” J.A. Ross wrote on the headed notepaper of J. & J. Crombie Limited, woollen manufacturers of Woodside, Aberdeen, the family business (of Crombie coat fame) in a letter to the Secretary of the Folk-Lore Society dated 5 October 1932.²¹ He continued: “Mr Crombie has left a number of boxes filled with notes made by himself and by others about Folk-Lore; the bulk having been collected I believe when he was so deeply interested in it many years ago.” His library was destined for the University of Aberdeen Library, “but it is not certain as to best destination for the written notes which might be of more interest to a Folk-Lore Society.” Ross ended the letter soliciting the advice of the Society. The next letter present is from 7 March 1933, by which time Crombie’s papers had been sorted by

21 Letter from J.A. Ross to the Secretary of the Folk-Lore Society, 5 October 1932, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T165, FLS Hon. Secretary Correspondence, FLS/1/2/2/16, Folder 2, Correspondence September 1933–April 1934, Subfolder 3.

his widow, Florence, “and I am to ask if you are still prepared to receive them.”²² The Society was quick to answer in the affirmative as the reply from Ross was dated 11 March 1933 (and refers to a letter of 9 March) where he wrote that “I [...] will send you early next week, the notes and papers left by the late Mr James E. Crombie.”²³ The final letter in this correspondence is from 27 March 1933, Ross offering to send on a letter of thanks from the Society to Florence Crombie for the gift of the papers, “as naturally she valued them very much, the collecting of same being the work of her husband for a great part of his life.”²⁴

THE J.E. CROMBIE PAPERS

The Folk-Lore Society in its Annual Report for 1934 reported that “[o]ther gifts of books have been above the usual average, and include valuable pamphlets from the library of the late Mr J.E. Crombie, presented by Mrs Crombie, together with some important folklore MSS. [...]” (Folk-Lore Society 1934, 3). In noting his death in the previous year’s report, Crombie

22 Letter from J.A. Ross to the Secretary of the Folk-Lore Society, 7 March 1933, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T165, FLS Hon. Secretary Correspondence, FLS/1/2/2/16, Folder 2, Correspondence September 1933–April 1934, Subfolder 3.

23 Letter from J.A. Ross to the Secretary of the Folk-Lore Society, 11 March 1933, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T165, FLS Hon. Secretary Correspondence, FLS/1/2/2/16, Folder 2, Correspondence September 1933–April 1934, Subfolder 3.

24 Letter from J.A. Ross to the Secretary of the Folk-Lore Society, 27 March 1933, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T165, FLS Hon. Secretary Correspondence, FLS/1/2/2/16, Folder 2, Correspondence September 1933–April 1934, Subfolder 3.

was mentioned as being a Trustee of the Society (Folk-Lore Society 1933, 5). The Crombie Papers now sit in six archive boxes amongst the archives of the Society,²⁵ and not, as once was reported, “in a large wooden box held among the Society’s records” (Folk-Lore Society 1959, 407). The first question to be asked is whether amongst their contents there are the manuscripts to match those papers of Gregor as listed by Reid in 1899. But for two possible exceptions, the simple answer is no. Weather (Chapter 21) had been specifically mentioned by Reid as one of the chapters from the *Notes* that been expanded and Gregor’s notes are present (though now sorted out into individual topics).²⁶ Turning to Boats and Fishing (Chapter 26), again there is a considerable mass of notes there.²⁷ But it is as notes and not “woven into a connected treatise” that the material is present and not written up ready for the press.

So how then does the current contents of these boxes come about? Margaret Aven Gardiner, Gregor’s widow, died in 1906, and the only possible conclusion is that Crombie acquired another tranche of Gregor’s personal papers, either in the period up to her death, or shortly afterwards. It is curious, to say the least, that those papers mentioned by Reid in 1899, the ones purchased by Crombie as a result, are now in large part missing.

25 UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Boxes T206, T207/1, T207/2, T208, T209/1, T209/2. The papers have recently been sorted and reboxed.

26 UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T207/1, Weather ii; Box T207/2, Folder F, Weather i, & Folder G, Weather ii.

27 UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T209/2, Folder H, Sea & Fishing, i–iii; Folder I, Fishing & Fishermen.

The first significant item is Gregor’s own Introduction (incomplete but present in fair copy) to *The Hours of the Day, the Days of the Year, and the Months*.²⁸ This is now filed with a group of seventeen manuscripts, which when first seen give the impression that these are the chapters for the New Spalding Club volume, and so what is being handled is the manuscript itself.²⁹ This is not so, and they are each best described as a *précis* or overview of a particular folklore topic to be worked up by Gregor. A number were outlined at length, for instance, “Ceremonial Customs | Birth, Marriage, Death” is twelve pages long, while some are simple running lists only. “Festival Customs | Christmas, New-Year &c” opens:

Give all the customs relating to Christmas any particular game or games played at Christmas—any weather forecasts from the day of the week on which Christmas begins Any rhymes or sayings about Christmas any proverbs, as: “A green Yeel macks a fat Kirkyard.”

And so it carries on so for another five pages before breaking off with “May-day—any customs connected with it—any rhymes—any fires kindled.” Gregor is in effect putting together a *quasi* handbook of what to collect and record of Scottish folklore. He was anticipating a handbook

28 “Introduction,” in the hand of Rev. Walter Gregor, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T206, Folder U, Questionnaire.

29 The topics are: Agricultural Customs, Ceremonial Customs, Disease Medicine, Domesticated Animals, Domesticated Birds, Festival Customs, Heavenly Bodies, Minor Superstitions, Months Days, Place Names, Reptiles, Rhymes Jingles, Tales Fables Proverbs, Trees Plants, Various Customs, Wild Animals, Wild Birds, UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T206, Folder U, Questionnaire.

such as Seán Ó Súilleabháin's *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (Ó Súilleabháin 1942), rather than the Folk-Lore Society's *The Handbook of Folklore* that appeared in 1890 (Gomme 1890). Whilst these outlines or *aide-mémoires* shows his overarching understanding of folklore genres, it is also in one sense his own Achilles heel, as he could never hope to write up his notes to this level of depth and with such a demand of detail.

“MRS CROMBIE WAS ADVISED TO BURN THESE SHEETS OF NOTES ON FOLKLORE”
The Folk-Lore Society was gifted the papers as seen in 1933, and Mary Macleod Banks published material from them as early as the next year in an article for *Folk-Lore*, drawing on in this instance here items sent to Crombie (Banks 1934). She also recognised that the papers contained extensive notes in Gregor's hand and was to make use of his manuscript material in her three volume compilation of *British Calendar Customs: Scotland* (Banks 1937; 1939a; 1941) published by the Folk-Lore Society. Banks also drew upon them for an article on fisher folklore from the North-East of Scotland in 1939, and she recounted how they very nearly went up in smoke:

Most of these notes come from the collection of Mr Crombie. At his death Mrs Crombie was advised to burn these sheets of notes on folklore as of no value; fortunately she judged differently and offered them unsorted to the Folk-Lore Society together with a few unpublished notes made by the Rev. W. Gregor. It was a surprise to find among them notes of customs which had escaped the notice of other collectors (Banks 1939b, 348).

This is a common trope, manuscripts consigned to the fire and plucked at the last minute from the flames to be saved—however, in this case, it is not scorch marks but the appropriate *dreich* of the Scottish clime that is to be seen in the damp spots and blemishes on the pages.

Gregor had an interest in children's folklore, and published a number of articles on the topic (Gregor 1886; 1891b; 1893; 1895), one of which on counting-out rhymes (Gregor 1887), was so lengthy it was later to be reprinted as a book (Gregor 1891a). He made one hundred and sixty-five contributions alone to Alice Gomme's monumental two volume set of *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Gomme 1894; 1898b). The second volume appeared in 1898, and Gomme wrote appreciatively of Gregor (now deceased) and his role in her work:

The completion of the second volume of my Dictionary has been delayed from several unforeseen circumstances, the most important being the death of my most kind and learned friend the Rev. Dr Gregor. The loss which folk-lore students as a body sustained by this lamented scholar's death, was in my own case accentuated, not only by many years of kindly communication, but by the very special help which he generously gave me for this collection (Gomme 1898a, v).

Crombie acquired a remarkable collection of children's folklore from Macduff School collected from the pupils there in their own hands by the schoolmaster, M. Simpson in 1885, and this is the

second major item of note amongst the papers.³⁰

“[P]rint is much safer than MS,” wrote the Manx folklorist A.W. Moore (1853–1909) in 1893, and the loss of his own personal papers made the point well (Miller 2018). Gregor’s papers survive only in part, but survive they do, and were acquired from his widow after his death by Crombie, and the Folk-Lore Society then obtained them from Crombie’s own widow when they were so nearly lost. And then as seen, what is now held by the Folk-Lore Society is a second set of Gregor’s papers, the ones obtained first now gone. Crombie’s own actions are a narrative of recovery to sit alongside Gregor’s own one of collecting. As Moore recognised, recording was just that, and not in itself a safeguarding of what was collected. Even if the New Spalding Club had published his work, there still would have been material left unpublished in his hands. The Folk-Lore Society lacked any permanent premises of its own and so could offer no home for his papers. “Are you quite sure they gave you them all?” was Cramond’s query to Crombie in 1900. The answer is not, but even amongst those he was given, there are still more than “a few unpublished notes” by the Rev. Walter Gregor sitting amongst the J.E. Crombie Papers waiting to be brought to “the notice of other collectors.”

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30 UCL Special Collections, Folk-Lore Society, Box T206, Folder O, [Games]. See too, letter from M. Simpson to Walter Gregor, 27 November [1885], present here.

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