*COMPLETING THE RECORD OF SCOTS**

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From about the sixth century in Southern Scotland and since the twelfth century throughout the eastern and southern Lowlands from the Moray Firth southwards there has been in use a northern variety of Anglo-Saxon speech which is now known as Lowland Scots. This language reached its zenith between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries. During this period, which was almost exactly the time-span of the Stewart dynasty, it was not only the universal spoken language of all ranks of the Scottish nation from the kings downward, but also, in a fairly standard form, the chief literary, official and legal language—the language of poetry, of narrative, didactic and polemical prose and of all sorts of official records. This is the stage of the language recorded by the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST).[1]

By the early eighteenth century, as a result of the Unions of the Crowns and the Parliaments and certain other factors, many of the functions that Scots had had in the older period were usurped by its near relative, standard English. Thereafter Scots remains chiefly as a group of mainly working-class and rural regional dialects, and also of course as the vehicle of a considerable vernacular literature. This is the period which falls to the *Scottish National Dictionary* (SND).[2]

It appears from one or two recent books and articles on aspects of general and legal Scottish history which bypass not only the new Scottish dictionaries but also the *Oxford* and the *English Dialect Dictionary* that for some Dr. John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* may still hold the field as the principal Scottish dictionary.[3] Jamieson, a Secession Church minister, produced his dictionary in two sections of two large volumes each in 1808 and 1825, and for

* A slightly modified version of a paper on the Scottish dictionaries read at a meeting of Section H (Anthropology) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, in Aberdeen on 3rd September 1963. A summary of this paper has also appeared in *Folklore* 75 (1964) 34-6.

more than a century his work remained the chief support of Scottish philology. To this day it continues to be useful as a source of the language and folklore of Jamieson's time.

But as a general dictionary of Scots it had of course been wholly superseded by 1928. In that year the *Oxford English Dictionary*,[4] which had been begun some fifty years previously by one of the greatest of Scottish philologists, James Murray, was completed by another great Scottish philologist, William Craigie. Among many other things the Oxford Dictionary is by far the fullest and most reliable dictionary of Older Scots to date, and a great improvement on Jamieson. It is thus the chief predecessor of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*.

It is also an important predecessor of the *Scottish National Dictionary*, since it contains a good deal of modern literary Scots. The other and more important of the *National Dictionary's* predecessors, however, is Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*,[5] completed in six large volumes in 1905, which has as its field the English and Scottish regional dialects from about 1700 onwards. Among the outstanding features of this work, in which the Scottish element is prominent, are the arrays of illustrative quotations, full of information and interest, which it provides for each word, and the clear picture it often gives of a word's geographical distribution. As a dictionary of modern Scots it is in almost every way superior to Jamieson.

Between Jamieson's time early in the nineteenth century and the appearance of the *Oxford* and the *English Dialect Dictionaries* at the end of the century, philological knowledge and theory had advanced by the largest stride they have ever made, and this naturally results in the later dictionaries in incomparably sounder philological treatment, including far more trustworthy etymologies. Again, there are the many new and improved editions of earlier literature and records produced in the nineteenth century by the great publishing clubs, such as the Bannatyne, Maitland and Spalding Clubs and the Scottish Text and Scottish History Societies. Both the *Oxford* and the *English Dialect Dictionaries* were based on vast reading-programmes which employed hundreds of voluntary readers. Between them they multiply by about four the coverage of Scottish sources which Jamieson, working largely on his own and really only in his spare time and with far fewer adequate editions, was able to achieve. Hence they disposed of a much larger volume of Scottish evidence and this is of course the

secret of the impressive advance in all-round informativeness which, in fact, they make over Jamieson.

The lexicography of Scots has had three principal eras—the age of Jamieson succeeded by that of Murray and Wright, which I have just been discussing, and the age of Craigie, to which I now turn. William Craigie, a native of Dundee and alumnus of St. Andrews, who died just over six years ago at the age of ninety, was co-editor of the *Oxford Dictionary* from 1901. In 1907 he gave an address to the English Association in Dundee in which he suggested that members should collect surviving examples of Scottish words, ballads, legends and traditions. Out of this suggestion was born the Scottish Dialects Committee with William Grant, Lecturer in Phonetics at Aberdeen Training Centre, as its Convener,[6] and it was Grant's and the Committee's collections which some twenty years later went to provide the nucleus of the *Scottish National Dictionary*. Then on 4th April 1919, in an address to the Philological Society, Craigie propounded his historic plan for following the *Oxford Dictionary* with a series of separate, specialist, large-scale dictionaries, one for each of the main stages or periods in the history of English and Scots.[7] These "period dictionaries", as they came to be called, would then supplement and to some extent supersede the *Oxford Dictionary* itself. Only in this way, Craigie insisted, could each period be fully documented and properly treated from the point of view of its own special problems and peculiarities.[8] So far the "period dictionary" scheme has realised as its practical outcome two large historical dictionaries of American English,[9] one of which had as its first editor Craigie himself, a huge and immensely detailed dictionary of Middle English,[10] now published to the letter F, and the two big Scottish dictionaries. A great amount of preparatory work was also spent, at the University of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on a large-scale dictionary of English of the Tudor and Stuart periods, until unfortunately funds ran out just before the last War.

Each of these "period dictionaries" is important first as the completest record of its own period. Each is also important as an indispensable unit in this grand scheme to survey in detail the whole history of English and Scots. The Scottish dictionaries also have a key position in the survey of Scottish language and traditions in which they complement the work of Edinburgh University's School of Scottish Studies and the same University's Linguistic Survey of Scotland. And they also

take their place alongside the similar large studies of the languages of the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries and because of our early linguistic and historical relations with these lands they have some importance to scholars of these countries.

On the Scottish side of his scheme Craigie's eventual idea was to have two dictionaries, one of Older Scots from the earliest records in the twelfth century until about the year 1700, and this he decided to undertake himself, and one of modern Scots, bringing the record down from 1700 to the present, and as is mentioned above, this in due course came out of the work and enthusiasm of William Grant and the Scottish Dialects Committee. As early as 1919 Craigie had begun enlisting helpers for his Older Scots Dictionary, in 1921 he appointed his first full-time assistant and in 1931 the first part of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* was published by the University of Chicago Press, as Craigie was then in Chicago editing his American dictionary. Meantime in 1928 William Grant retired from his post as Phonetics Lecturer and began assembling the material for the modern Scots dictionary which he entitled the *Scottish National Dictionary*. With the backing of many distinguished Scots, a non-profit-making limited company, the Scottish National Dictionary Association Ltd.,[11] was formed as manager and publisher of this dictionary and the *Scottish National Dictionary's* first part also appeared in 1931. Both dictionaries are now approximately halfway through the alphabet in publication under Mr. Murison and myself as successors to the original editors.

The *Oxford* and the *English Dialect Dictionaries* are more informative than Jamieson as a result of their fuller coverage of the sources. The "period dictionary" scheme provides for a still more exhaustive coverage of sources, by much more intensive cultivation of a number of separate limited fields. The figures are something like this: the Oxford Dictionary's cohort of readers examined some 16,000 titles, over the whole range of English. Of these I estimate some six or seven hundred as Scottish works and the *English Dialect Dictionary* adds about another 600. In contrast, the two modern Scottish Dictionaries between them draw on upwards of 8000 volumes for a total of one and a half to two million quotations.[12] This covers virtually everything of consequence so far in print and also some hundreds of manuscript volumes which were read for the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, whereas the *Oxford*

Dictionary relied exclusively on printed editions. In addition, the *Scottish National Dictionary's* coverage of oral material depends on a well thought out and productive system much superior in its results to Joseph Wright's for the *English Dialect Dictionary*.[13] Where this improved coverage is probably least is in the well-known standard literary classics—such as Barbour, Henryson and Dunbar for Older Scots, and Burns and Scott for Modern—for of these reasonable texts were always available, and they were naturally always the first target of lexicographers from Jamieson onwards. If all that is wanted is a mere crib of these writers or the likes of them, then this will often, though by no means always, be just about as well supplied by the older as by the new dictionaries. On the other hand the latter are far ahead in their coverage of the more obscure literary works and also of a great variety of official and private record sources such as the parliamentary and legal records, local records such as burgh court books and kirk session records from every corner of the land, the account books of, for example, coal-mine managers, skippers and farmers, and such things as private correspondence, wills and diaries.

Inasmuch as this very exhaustive coverage of the sources is resulting in a quite striking and measurable improvement in the record they give of the language, the new Scottish dictionaries are fully vindicating Craigie's "period dictionary" thesis. This naturally includes philological and literary matters, but I propose now to itemise only certain features of this improved record which seem to me of some relevance to historians, antiquarians and other students of, so to speak, non-linguistic aspects of the past and present life of Scotland.

The most obvious improvement which a dictionary can show over a predecessor is of course in wholly new entries—in words which it now registers that have entirely escaped its predecessors. In fact, the new Scottish dictionaries have large numbers of these, mostly from the record sources which they explore so much more thoroughly. Between pages 500 and 540 of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue's* volume III, I counted at least 25 words or important compounds which had hitherto never appeared as Older Scots in a dictionary at all.[14] Certainly some of these are pretty rare words, attested by only one or two examples each. Yet others are not so rare. For example, in this particular stretch of the alphabet, the word *ladegallon* or *lagallon*, which was the name of a sort of ladle-bucket used by

brewers and others, is attested in a variety of Older Scots forms by no fewer than 21 occurrences, and similarly *laich hous* in its various senses by 26 and *landmercat*, the name in certain burghs for the countrymen's meat-market, by 19, yet none of these had been recorded at all before this.

As well as whole new entries like these many other words appear in the new dictionaries with some newly recorded meanings and uses. This is true of virtually every word which has to be treated at some length, including therefore many common words of major cultural importance. One important instance is the noun *lord* which, with its innumerable special senses, many of them new to the record, occupies as many as 20 pages of the two dictionaries between them. Sometimes, too, new evidence such as the uncovering of an older form of the word will cast quite a different light on its origins. We can now see, for example, that *jackteleg* or *jockteleg*, the old Scots word for a clasp-knife, had nothing to do, as was previously thought, with an imaginary Flemish cutler *Jacques de Liège*. Its original form is *Jack the leg*, and it is a nickname-word, paralleled in its formation by the modern Scots *Jock the leear* (Jack the liar), an almanac. Like the seventeenth-century French name for this sort of knife, *jambette* "little leg", *jack the leg* doubtless alludes either to the leg-like folding action of the knife or possibly to the fact that some early examples had their hafts shaped to look like legs, some of them at any rate elaborately carved feminine ones —but this of course may have come after the name not before it. At any rate its connections are no doubt with legs rather than with Liège.

The new dictionaries' more abundant evidence also makes possible a more precise and reliable account of the distributions of words and word-uses in time and space. Many words now have their histories extended by up to four centuries in one or both directions. Also, since these now follow on a more nearly exhaustive examination of the sources, far more reliance can be placed on first and last recorded dates as time limits than was possible with the *Oxford* or indeed any previous dictionary. Thus from the fact that the dressing of agricultural land with *lime* is recorded half a dozen times of places in the south of Scotland during but not before the seventeenth century one can now draw at least a tentative historical conclusion. *Leith axe*, the name of one type of sixteenth century Scottish pole weapon, is another of those words which have not hitherto appeared in any dictionary. It was common enough, however,

between 1512 and 1546, after which it never appears, whereas the similar *Jedburgh staff* and *Lochaber axe* survived into modern times. I would think then that anyone interested in the history of such weapons would now be justified in trusting these two dates as genuine limits of the common currency of this term.

These are examples of the thousands of words which the new dictionaries more precisely delimit in time. As a result of their wide coverage of localised texts such as burgh and local court records, many words are also being much more precisely located in place. *Landimer*, a word of Anglo-Saxon origin for a boundary, which survives in Lanark's march-perambulation festival known as *lanimer-day*, not only has its history carried back 400 years in time from the nineteenth century occurrences which are the only ones noted by the *Oxford Dictionary*, but is also shown to have had from the beginning a fairly restricted local currency, namely to the north-east, in an area bounded by Aberdeen, Kintore and Elgin, and the south-west, between Lanark, P isley and Ayr, though isolated early examples do turn up in other places. In earlier times certain Scottish burghs levied a petty custom known as the *ladle*—as its name suggests, it was a ladleful taken from every sack of certain goods brought into the burgh market for sale. The single quotation for this provided by the *Oxford Dictionary* tells us that this duty was being levied in Glasgow in 1574. With some fifty-odd quotations the modern dictionaries carry on the history of this word to its final obsolescence in Glasgow in the nineteenth century and also define those burghs, which are all in the southern half of Scotland, from Dundee southwards, which used it. Other words are yet more narrowly localised: the expression *lowand-ill*, literally "lowing-disease", as the name of a certain disease of cattle, is exclusive to the records of Haddington and the writings of John Knox, another small item of evidence to confirm that he hailed from that area.

Some of even these very few instances already illustrate the truism, as I suppose it is, that the chronological and geographical distribution of the name of a thing and of course its etymology can often throw light directly or indirectly on such matters as the sources and directions of its contacts, dates of innovation and obsolescence, and directions of drift, of the object or concept itself. Another example of this that occurs to me that has already received some attention from scholars is the terminology of early land-divisions in Scotland, the Gaelic *davach* only in the north-east, the Northumbrian

husband-land only in the south-east, and so on. I believe that the dictionaries' improved account of this aspect of the language may therefore prove useful in various historical and anthropological fields. More often than not, I dare say, they will prove to be the only sources of this sort of distributional information. Nor am I forgetting Edinburgh University's Linguistic Survey of Scotland which will in due course be publishing extremely precise and detailed information on the regional distributions of modern Scottish words, but of course only of a fairly limited number.

In this matter of geographical distribution the *Scottish National Dictionary* especially is a powerful tool, since for every single word it provides a clear indication of the area the word or its use or its pronunciation occupy. Partly because the visible evidence of Older Scots is that of a fairly standard literary and official language which tended to exclude some of this local or provincial material and partly perhaps because the language was less regionally differentiated anyway, the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* contains fewer localisations of words and its main strength lies in the other direction, that of defining accurately chronological distribution; even so, it too is providing for the first time a great deal of information on the regional distribution of scores or hundreds of words.

Already the *Oxford* and the *English Dialect Dictionary* had devoted the larger part of their space to setting out within each subdivision of each word-article considerable numbers of illustrative quotations. How much more copious is the new dictionaries' provision of quotations my examples will have shown you. Though these quotations are there primarily to establish the word's forms, meanings, range of usage and so on, they can hardly fail to convey also as a sort of secondary by-product a great deal of descriptive information of a historical or encyclopaedic kind about the idea or thing each word denotes. This is something to which we naturally give some attention in the editing.

A recent example of this is the word *lockman*. This name for the burgh hangman probably originated in Edinburgh in the fifteenth century as a result of the hangman's having a perquisite of a *lock* or small quantity of meal from every sack brought into the burgh market—in some towns apparently he simply took over the *ladle* dues that I mentioned a little while ago. From Edinburgh this name for a hangman spread to other south Scots burghs and finally to Orkney. The articles

on this word in both dictionaries provide in fifty-odd quotations from the original sources, as against seven in the *Oxford Dictionary*, an abundance of information which I do not think can be got anywhere else on this functionary's duties, remuneration, perquisites, uniform and status, as well as odd facts such as which burghs had their own hangman and which merely borrowed from their neighbours as the occasion arose. There is also a reminder that it was by no means unheard of, in fact as well as in fiction, to fill this unpopular post by promoting the next condemned man. In Haddington in 1545, for example, it was statute "that quha ever first servis the punishment of deid be remittit to be comon lokman wythin this toun". Another informative quotation about Haddington given this time by the *National Dictionary* is a Situations Vacant advertisement which appeared in an Edinburgh newspaper of 1772, which begins: "Wanted immediately for the town of Haddington A Lockman who will meet with all due encouragement". The advertisement then goes on to detail his money wages (£3 a year), free house, and perks.

In the half million or so quotations which are already printed in the two dictionaries to the letter M there exists an almost inexhaustible supply of similar detailed information on innumerable other objects and institutions and concepts. On, to specify a few more instances, *aldermen*, *grieves*, *baillies*, *deans of gild*, *deacons* and *kirkmaisters*, on *callers* and *gadmen*, *lairds* and *louns*, *hielandmen* and *lawlandmen*, *dyvours* and *baremen*, *hallanshackers* and *gaberlunyies* and all *Jock Tamson's bairns*, on *horologes* and *knocks*, *kirtles* and *kells*, *jawholes* and *langsettles*, *harrows* and *heuks*, *hose-nets* and *herrywaters*, *creels*, *cruves*, *halves*, *kists* and *loups*, on *futefalls* and *lentrinware*, *dinmonts*, *gimmers* and *harvest hogs*, on *the branks*, *the cuckstule* and *the jowgs*, *blackmail* and *bangstrie*, *bludewite* and *hamesukkin*, *last heirs* and *lesing-making*, *assythment*, *kinbute* and the *law of clan Macduff*, on *forpets* and *haddishes*, the *Linlithgow firlot* and the *Stirling joug*, on *Aitchesouns*, *auld Geordies*, *bagchekes*, *bodles*, *crookies*, *demies*, *doits*, *auld Harries* and *hardheids*, on *Black Monday* and *Flitting Friday*, *blythemeats*, *bridal lawings* and *lykewakes*, *baps*, *bannocks*, *fadges*, *farls* and *kebbocks*, *crowdie*, *hattit kit* and *lappered milk*. My point is that this represents a vast amount of handily accessible and potentially valuable source-material for students of innumerable aspects of Scottish life, history and traditions. Since the quotations are accurately referenced and since we sometimes give several references to occurrences of the word in

addition to the quotations we actually print, the dictionaries can also be used as indexes to a body of text larger no doubt than any one student on his own could command. The dictionaries are indeed already being used as detailed source-books in this sort of way by one or two scholars whom we know of—students, namely, of agricultural history, of rural crafts, of mediaeval arms and armour, and of old weights and measures—but they could, and doubtless ultimately will, be similarly used for many other purposes.

The collection from thousands of books and manuscripts and from current dialect speech of the quotations and references which have realised these results has been carried out in the main by some hundreds of volunteer workers, mostly not specialist philologists or historians but people of various trades and professions, from University professors and civil servants to engineers and housewives. Their sole reward has been the interest of the work and the satisfaction of carrying out a patriotic task. Many of them have given thousands of hours of painstaking and skilled work. Several have excerpted well over a hundred printed volumes each, supplying many thousands of quotations. Another, the late Professor Mark Anderson, read over 50 large volumes in manuscript—a contribution of very special value.

There have been other contributions, of a different nature, but equally indispensable, to this very large co-operative enterprise. I mean, of course, that of the trusts, above all the Carnegie but also the Pilgrim, Macrobert and other Trusts, the University of Chicago Press, the Scottish Universities, the British Academy, many public corporations, business firms and hundreds of private persons, all of whom between them have contributed the funds which have carried the dictionaries thus far. Nor could the dictionaries have survived but for the many hours of hard work given by the members of the Council of the Scottish National Dictionary Association and the Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council.

The Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council consists of representatives of the Scottish Universities, of the Carnegie Trust and of the Scottish National Dictionary Association. It was set up in 1952 by the Courts of the Scottish Universities to secure the future of both dictionaries when Sir William Craigie was about to retire at the age of 85 from the editing of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and the *Scottish National Dictionary* was in one of its recurrent financial crises. Following the

establishment of the Council, the two dictionaries were brought together from Oxfordshire and Aberdeen respectively into their present quarters in the same building, 27 George Square, Edinburgh, along with the School of Scottish Studies and the Linguistic Survey of Scotland. Thanks to the generosity of the Trusts, the Universities and the many other donors, the Joint Council was enabled to provide for the editor of each dictionary a small trained staff of two or three assistant editors. These staffs are just now being enlarged to four assistant editors and one clerical assistant, in an effort to complete the dictionaries in under fourteen years, something which would not otherwise have been conceivable. Even so, these staffs will still be smaller than those of, I should say, any other dictionaries on a similar scale known to us. Indeed, what the Scottish dictionaries have already achieved has been done on a shoe-string compared with the resources of similar national dictionaries in other countries, many of which have been or are being directly and generously maintained by the state on the same footing as the national museums and institutes of academic research. We hope that, if we can reach and maintain a high rate of output, the Carnegie Trust and the Universities will continue their very generous support, but they are insisting that this help be matched with gifts from a wide public such as we have had in the past.

A moment ago I hinted at a comparison of dictionaries of this sort with the national museums. It has always seemed to me that these dictionaries fulfil the same sort of purpose, the collection, ordering and setting out on display of data—in this case in the form of words, quotations and references—which throw light on the past and to some extent the present life of the country. I believe they too are a valuable cultural asset to the nation and worth the effort they have and will cost.

NOTES

[1] *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue from the Twelfth Century to the end of the Seventeenth.* Edited by Sir William A. Craigie, LL.D., D.LITT., F.B.A. (1925-55) and A. J. Aitken, M.A. (1955-). Chicago and Oxford 1931- .

[2] *The Scottish National Dictionary, designed partly on regional lines and partly on historical principles, and containing all the Scottish words known to be in use or to have been in use since c. 1700.* Edited by William Grant, M.A., LL.D. (1929-46) and David D. Murison, M.A., B.A. (1946-). Edinburgh 1931- .

[3] See, e.g., S. G. E. Lythe *The Economy of Scotland, 1550-1625* (Edinb. 1960) 148 and note 30; V. Gaffney, *Scottish Historical Review* 38 (1959) 31.

[4] Originally entitled: *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles founded mainly on the materials collected by The Philological Society.* Edited by James A. H. Murray, Henry Bradley, William A. Craigie, C. T. Onions. Oxford 1888-1933. Re-issued (1933) as: *The Oxford English Dictionary.*

[5] *The English Dialect Dictionary being the Complete Vocabulary of all dialect words still in use, or known to have been in use during the last two hundred years.* Edited by Joseph Wright, M.A., PH.D., D.C.L. London 1898-1905.

[6] See the prefaces to the various issues of *Transactions of the Scottish Dialects Committee* (Aberdeen 1914-21).

[7] "New Dictionary Schemes presented to the Philological Society, 4th April 1919," in *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1925-30 (London 1931) 6-11. See also Leonard C. Wharton, "Footnote to Sir William Craigie's paper of 1919 and its Addendum of 1925," *ibid.* 12-14.

[8] Among the numerous progress reports by Craigie on the dictionaries the most important are "The Value of the Period Dictionaries" in *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1936 (London 1937) 53-62, and *Completing the Record of English*, Society for Pure English Tract No. 58 (1941). In the latter he refers to a lecture he first gave to the English Association "more than 25 years ago" (i.e. *circa* 1916) advocating his scheme for new dictionaries. It seems however that it was the 1919 Philological Society address which first stimulated really active interest.

[9] *A Dictionary of American English* (Chicago 1936-44), and *A Dictionary of Americanisms* (Chicago 1951).

[10] *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1954-).

[11] Incorporated 8th April 1929.

[12] A "Combined Register of Titles of Works Quoted" will appear with Part XXI of DOST. SND's register of titles will appear when the work is completed.

[13] A draft version of each part of the dictionary is circulated to a small body of voluntary sub-editors, who serve as authorities on the usage of the regional dialects, so that their comments and suggested additions may be incorporated in the published version. With each published part is issued a questionnaire on the local forms, occurrences and usages of words due for inclusion in the following part and these briefer comments from a larger circle of contributors are also considered before the part is sent to the press.

[14] viz. (in addition to words mentioned in the text) *ladinster*, *laggerit*, *lair* n.[3], *lair-silver*, *lance-staff*, *land* n.[4], *land-baillie*, *-court*, *-flesh*, *-fleschour*, *-flesch-mercatt*, *landis-laird*, *-lord*, *land-lyar*, *landmale*, *landmarch*, *land-meither*, *-meithing*, *-mesour*, *-mett*, *landrent*, *landwine*.