

## *An Eighteenth-Century Record of 'The Laird o Logie'*

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The Reverend James Scott, minister of the East Church of Perth from 1771 to 1807 (Scott 1923:232), had at one time in his possession a traditional text of the ballad *The Laird o Logie* (Child No. 182), and, although the text itself may not be extant, two accounts of it have fortunately been preserved. These accounts provide a record of this ballad which is of particular interest as it is the first contemporary evidence that the 'Laird of Logie' form was being sung in the eighteenth century as well as the 'Laird of Ochiltree' form printed by David Herd (Herd 1769:240-2).

Events like those in the ballad took place in the reign of James VI, and the hero was John Wemyss of Logie, in Fife (Child 1882-98:3.449-51), but the ballad had evidently become attached locally to Logie, or Logicalmond, in Perthshire, and so Scott did not associate it with the Fife family. Instead, he linked it tentatively with the John of Logie who was executed by Robert Bruce in 1320 (Dalrymple 1779:96; Barrow 1965:430), thinking that this actual execution might have been converted in the ballad narrative into a sentence of death which was not carried out. Of the two paragraphs from Scott's writings quoted below, (a) is from a letter to Lord Hailes dated 3 December 1781,<sup>1</sup> and (b) is from notes to Perth charters, where the account of the ballad is introduced in connection with a Richard Broun who suffered execution along with John of Logie (James Scott:430):

(a)

I see you have taken Notice of the Charter to the Blackfriars which mentions Sir John of Logy.<sup>2</sup> I had some years ago, tho' I have now lost it, a Copy of a traditionary Ballad which is sung by severals [*sic*] of the poor People on the Estate of Logie - It's story is of a young Laird of Logy who having used some Familiarity with a Court Lady, called in the Ballad "the Queen's Mary", which I take to be a common Designation given to the Queen's Gentlewomen or Maids of Honour, was imprisoned & sentenced to Death by the King; But the Queen by counterfeiting the King's Mandate deceived "Clerk Michael", & "the ranting Laird the young Logy" being thereby set at Liberty made his Escape beyond Sea. I recollected the Ballad upon observing a Note about "Matildis",<sup>3</sup> & will again procure a Copy of it. And yet it cannot relate to a Laird of Logy in the Time of Robert Bruce, unless the People on the Estate thought it more honourable to give a happy Turn to the Adventure.

(b)

A young Woman, a Native of the Estate of Logy, was lately singing an old historical Song concerning one of the Lairds of Logy; & I procured a Copy of it to be obtained from

her. It contains a Story of Logy having greatly offended the King by being in too great Favour with a Lady called in the Ballad "the Queen's Mary": That a "Lady Margaret" also took it much amiss; & that the King passed Sentence of Death upon him. According to the Ballad however the Queen by counterfeiting the King's Handwriting, & by sending the King's Glove as a Token to Michael the Justice Clerk, obtained his Release. Whether the Story of this Song was founded on some traditionary Remembrance of what happened in Robert Bruce's Time to the Laird of Logy Sir John Logy, may appear uncertain; but if it was so founded it may point out one Cause why he & some others with him suffered Death, different from any of the Causes now generally mentioned.

All the elements in the ballad narrative outlined by Scott can be traced in other variants except for the note in (b) 'That a "Lady Margaret" also took it much amiss'. Possibly Scott misapplied a stanza of lament and, failing to realise that 'Lady Margaret' was 'the Queen's Mary', thought she was a rival. The only printed text to use the expression 'the queen's marie' is the Perthshire one taken from the Harris MS (Child D 2.4). This text is also among those variants that include the order forged by the queen and the king's glove sent as a token (D 9):

She counterfieted the king's hand-write,  
An stole frae him his richt hand gloe,  
An sent them to Pitcairn's wa's,  
A' to let Young Logie free.

The 'Clerk Michael' to whom the false message and the token are sent is reminiscent of the historical Carmichael mentioned at this point in Child A (Child 1882-98:4.515, unrevised form of A, 7.3-4):

And she has sent it to Carmichaell,  
To cause Young Logie come by life.

The equivalent of the line 'the ranting Laird the young Logy' quoted in (a) occurs in the Harris text as 'The rantin young laird o Logie' (D 13.4). The shape of the line as given by Scott may well lie behind the odd form found in a number of variants where the adjective 'young' is applied to the place and not the man, as in 'The wanton laird of Young Logie' and 'The winsom laird of Young Logie' (Child 1882-98:4.516). The escape beyond sea referred to in (a) is not present in the Harris text, but does occur in other variants, e.g. the one printed by Herd where both of the lovers leave the country (B 17.1-2):

The tane was schippit at the pier of Leith,  
The ither at the Queen's Ferric.

#### NOTES

- 1 Newhailes MSS 472 (see NRA(S) Survey No. 909, p. 37). I am very grateful to Dr Rosalind K. Marshall for drawing my attention to this letter, and to the trustees of Sir Mark Dalrymple for granting

- me permission to publish this extract from it. For permission to print paragraph (b) I am indebted to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.
- 2 'Litera Concessionis Roberti Regis petarum de Logy' (Milne 1893:10). The 'Logy' of this document is also called 'Logyalmond' (Milne 1893:274, No. 27).
  - 3 Perhaps Matilda, daughter of Robert Bruce, who is called 'Matildis' by Lord Hailes in his *Annals* (Dalrymple 1779:132-3).

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