



Scots Language Centre

Crack Aboot Politics



Document 2

Letter fae
Sir Weelum Kirkcaldy o Grange
1570

Political Background

In 1567 a faction o the nobles heidit bi Jeems Stewart erle o Moray led a rising agin his hauf-sister Queen Mary. Mary randert hersel, wis gien the jyle at Lochleven, an syne made tae demit the croun in favour o her son Jemie VI, a bairn o ae year auld. Lord Jeems Stewart wis appyntit the governor o the kinrik but haed tae warsle yet wi Mary's pairt-takars. Mary lowsed hersel in 1568, the twa sides focht, Mary wis defeat, an she fled in Ingland whaur her kizzen Queen Leezabeth wad haud her for the neist 19 year. In Scotland the twa sides got tore intil ane anither an lookit for a hauder fae baith Fraunce an Ingland tae daunton the ither. In 23 Januar 1570 the Lord Jeems wis shot while passin ben the toun o Lithgae an for the neist five month the war nae governor.

Sir Weelum Kirkcaldy o Grange

Weelum Kirkcaldy (*ab.*1520-1573) belanged a landit Fife faimly an spent years as a sodger in Fraunce afore comin hame tae Scotland in 1559 tae help the rising agin the government o the queen dowriar Mary o Guise. In 1567 Kirkcaldy took agin Queen Mary's man, Bothwell, an jyned the rising agin her, but he didna gree that the queen shuid be gart demit the croun. Weelum haed been grantit the keeping o the castle o Embra bi the Lord Jeems an whan Jeems wis killt Kirkcaldy heidit the funeral procession on 4 Februar 1570. In his letter (see ablow) tae the weeda o the Lord Jeems, Kirkcaldy speaks aboot blethers agin him an aboot the inbringin o the Inglis tae Scotland. A puckle in Scotland, Kirkcaldy tellt her, claimed thay hae brocht the Inglis in for tae uphaud the bairn king an revenge on thaim that murdert the Lord Jeems, but Kirkcaldy thocht this haivers. Insteid, he threapit, the Inglis lichtit on fowk an brunt an herried as thay pleased. Forby the troubles in Scotland, the haed been a rising in the north o Ingland agin Queen Leezabeth, in November 1569. A wheen o thae fowk haed fled in Scotland an in Aprile 1570 the erle o Sussex haed come ben Scotland tae capture Soothron fowk on the run, an tae gie thaim that gied them beild, a paikin. In his letter Kirkcaldy tellt the coontess o Moray that he wis feart the invaders wad mak a conquest o Scotland. At the hinnerend, Kirkcaldy held the castle o Embra on behauf o Queen Mary's men until a new governor, the erle o Morton, brocht in Inglis sodgers an guns, an seigit an took the castle. In 1573 Sir Weelum Kirkcaldy wis tried an pit tae deith.

Langage an Style

The letter is wruten in Late Middle Scots (1550-1700) and is in the ordnar langage an spellings o thon time. The'r twa-three things warth takkin tent o:

Ei

For ordnar the 'ee' soond wis spellt in Scots in thae days wi the letters *-ei*. This kythes in words sic as *heirin* (herein) an *weill* (well). Note that the same soond whan it cam at the end o a word wis spellt *-ie* for ordnar, as in *grie* (tae gree). The'r words in Scots the day that's spellt this gait, whiles a wheen screivars applies thir rules conseestent like tae thair texts.

Ou

In general soondit as 'oo'. We can find *dout* (as in doot), *power* (pooer) an *without* (here meanin unless, an soondit withoot). The day in Scots baith spellings 'oo' an 'ou' can be fund, as in *oot* and *toun*, aw soondit as 'oo'.

Quh-

The spelling *quh*, that wis aince kent in norland Inglis forby, wis conseedert kenspeckle tae Scots bi this time an wad bide in the leid until the 18ct century. *Quh-* wis soondit as either 'k'

or ‘wh’ gauin bi the actual word. In Kirkcaldy’s letter we can find *quhairof* (whaurof), *quhay* (whae, or wha), *quhilk* (whilk, but nooadays that or whit) an *quhom* (‘whom’ but nooadays that). We see thir spellings yet in a puckle words an place-names, sic as *quaich*, aince *quhaich* (a drinking cup), or the village o Kilconquhar (pronoonced Kinuchar) in Fife.



U/V/W

Thir three letters cuid be interchenged wi ane anither in Scots. In Kirkcaldy’s letter we find *cowntesse* (coontess), *euery* (every, or ilka), *resauit* (received), *vnderstand* (unnerstaun), *vttermaist* (uttermaist) an *haue* (pronoonced hay-v, nooadays hae). This explains whit wey in ither Scots texts o this time we can find spelling sic as *uar* (war), *wse* (use) or *uith* (wi) an whit wey words sic as *cou* an *toun* micht be spellt as *cov/cow* an *tovn/town*.

Cognates

Cognates is words that haes a common oreeginal wi ane or mair ither leids that’s clearly sib. In Kirkcaldy we hae a hail reenge o words that haes mirras in Soothron, sic as ane (*one*), awin (*own*), bayth (*both*), brocht (*brought*), gyf (*if*), hail (whole), maist (*most*), maistres (*mistress*), murthour (*murder*), naythyng (*nothing*), ony (*any*).

Sindry

The’r twa-three words here parteeclar tae Scots uiss, sic as *spulzeit*, meanin spylt or gien tae plunder, fire an sword. Anither word is *lows* (noo lowse) that’s sib til Inglis *loose*. In Scots it can hae sindry meanings, gauin bi the context, but Kirkcaldy uses it tae mean that the war nae law or order, that the kintra wis lowse o ony owerance. The word *regiment* is used forby. This springs fae a Latin word, *regimentum*, meanin ‘rule’, an wis common tae baith Inglis an Scots in the 16t century. This is whaur the word *regime* springs fae an-aw. In the letter the’r twa-three instances o Scots eediom or graimar warth takkin tent o. Kirkcaldy says “...them that hes brocht..” that’s the same in Modren Scots, but in Inglis wad be *those who have brought*. Kirkcaldy speaks about “...the Englishmen selfis they ar..”. Nooadays we micht say the Inglis men thairsels (Inglis: *the Englishmen themselves*) while in anither pairt o the letter Kirkcaldy remarks “...the principallis hes said to me..”, or, the principal fowk haes said tae me (Inglis: *the principal people/chief people have said to me*). In thon time baith *do* an *to* wis staundart but wad gie wey tae *dae* an *tae* throu the 19t century.



To the Rycht honarabill Lady the Cowntesse of Murray

I resaut your Ladyship's lettre this xviii Maii, quhair of I maist humlye thank your Ladyship. As for ony report that is cum to your Ladyship's eares of me, I dout not in the end ye sall vnderstand the contrayrie, for albeit I haue just occasion to do as I do presently, yit with Gods grace I sall neuer leave my duetye towardis my Lord your husband quhay restis with God, but to declair my self als willyng to revenge his deathe and sett forwardis the caussis of all his weill willers to the vttermaist of my power as ony be in Scotland, but heirin the end will declare euery man part. I haue vnderstand be Walter Melvill that your Ladyship is myndit to cum to thir pairtes, to mene your caussis to the consaill, quhilk at this tyme for my awin simpill oppinion I can not fynd, for nowther is ther ony certane rull and regement, nor yit is ther ony sure part in this cuntreye to ony to traivell into, for thir haill pairtes ar sa lows that na man may traivell without he be vpon his garde. And to writ the treuth to your Ladyship, it aperis that this haill realme is lyk to be brocht to vther ruyne be the inbringin of straingers, for presently England is brocht in the bowellis of our cuntry, and them that hes brocht them in intendis to wraik quhom they pleis, for men ar spulzeit and robet bayth be England and Scotland self sway that ther is na man sure. Our Lordis says the Englismen ar cum to mentene the Knygis auctoritie and revenege me lord Regent murthour, but the Englismen selfis they ar nether cum for the ane or the vther, but onlye to seik their maistres rebellis and perseu ther mentenors, this the principallis hes said to me, and in effect the erll of Sussex hes writtin the same vnto me, Madame, I assure you gyf thyngis contineu as thay do, I see nathyng but a playne conquest to be maid vpoun our cuntreye be them that sould be the deffenderis of it, for England says planely that they wald neuer haue cum in Scotland without we haid desyret them, gyf I vnderstand ony vther thyng your Ladyship salbe aduertised thereof. Sa I humlye tak my leif of your Ladyship. At Edinburgh castell, the xx of Maii 1570.

Your Laydships to command with seruis,

W Kyrkcaldy.

Springheid: *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Part I, Report and Appendix*, (London, 1877), p.650.