

A. J. Aitken

Sources of the vocabulary of Older Scots [1954]¹

Edited by Caroline Macafee, 2015

Editor's Introduction

Most of AJA's course handouts, including ones that circulated widely amongst his fellow scholars, were of the usual form: adjuncts to lectures providing students with details not readily taken down by hand, such as diagrams, lists of examples, and texts. The present paper, running to 14 pages in the original, was given to students as a handout, but it is written in continuous prose, as if AJA might have intended to work it up at some future date into an article for publication. However, by the nature of the material, a definitive statement could not be made ahead of the completion of the two Scots dictionaries, and, for comparative purposes, the *Middle English Dictionary*. Nevertheless, though the detailed picture was still to emerge, this paper shows that AJA already had by the early 1950s a clear overview of the structure and history of the vocabulary of Scots.

Together with David Murison, AJA helped to draw up the list of lexical questions for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland (Scots Section). The two lexicographers helped to identify concepts (such as 'earwig') that had a large number of different names around the country (*The Linguistic Atlas of Scotland* I: 10). The first postal questionnaire was sent out in 1951, and some of the early findings are mentioned here.

This article is included for its historical interest, as one of AJA's earliest papers. Readers should consult *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST) and, where relevant, *The Scottish National Dictionary* and the *Middle English Dictionary* before citing examples from this paper, as I have not attempted to check all the examples against the final dictionary articles. However, I did draw upon its insights and examples in a chapter on Older Scots lexis (Macafee, 1997) and in 'A History of Scots to 1700' (Macafee and †Aitken, 2002: §4), q.v. for an account of more recent work and further references.

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The following notes mention the main sources of the vocabulary of Older Scots of the 15th and 16th centuries. As a rule words quoted are in the Older (not modern) Scots spelling.

1 Anglo-Norman and French

Borrowings from Anglo-Norman and French into primitive Scots comprehend the great majority of the terms of administration, law, warfare, the church, social life, food, dress, handicraft and trade which were adopted from these sources into Middle English generally in

¹ Editor's note: handout, previously unpublished, dated May 1954. Edited for stylistic consistency with other Aitken papers, including the change of 'Older Scottish' to 'Older Scots' (or 'OSc'). Since DOST is now complete, I have deleted some references of the form 'see OED'. Since digital publication does not suffer the same constraints of space as hard copy, I have laid out the lists of examples more expansively, though it will sometimes be obvious that they started off as connected text in the original.

the course of the Middle Ages (Baugh, 1951: 205 ff.). Several of these are recorded in the usual way in the Latin documents of the pre-literary Scottish period. A good number of names of trades and occupations of French origin, like *baillie*, *barbur*, *botiler*, *ferur*, *lardyner*, *mercer*, *porter*, *spicer*, *taillour*, *serjaunt*, and *clerk* appear in the Ragman Roll (1296) (Black, 1962: xxii).² No doubt many other French loanwords, unrecorded before the literary records, must have been in use in Scotland by this time. Still, except in some cases in the forms of the words, there is little that is distinctive about the French element in Scots, although (as with other forms of English) in the later Middle Ages this comprised a very considerable part of the total vocabulary.

The number of words of French origin which are to be found only in Scots is relatively small,³ perhaps little if any more numerous than the words from Gaelic, but including important words like *cummer* (a female ‘gossip’ or crony, F. *commère*, fellow-godmother), *disjune* (breakfast), *dour*, *famyle* (family), *fasch*, *fascherie*, etc., *ladron* (a rascal; as an OSc term of abuse), *murdris* (to murder), *plenis* and *plenissing* (furnish, furniture), *sile* (to hoodwink, conceal), *turcas* (a smith’s pincers), *vesy* (to visit), *vevaris* (provisions), and one or two others.

Scots has, of course, its own phonetic treatment of the borrowings, which accounts for the peculiarly Scots forms of words like *ulyie* (oil), *spulyie* (spoil), *cunye* (coin), *boule* (‘bool’, originally = English *bowl*), *pouch* (‘pooch’ = English *pouch*), and many other words in which the regular Scots phonetic development differed from that of other English dialects.⁴ Other differences between Scots and English forms of the ‘same’ French word return to the period of borrowing itself, as *cerse* (search), *corbie* (ME *corbin*, a crow), *creish* (grease), *jeist* (joist); in such cases Scots has adopted different variant or dialect form from that taken by the other dialects of English.⁵

Most of the peculiarly Scots borrowings from French just mentioned, which, it will be noticed, refer mainly to popular rather than cultural or aristocratic topics, were most likely introduced in the earliest (Anglo-Norman) period of borrowing and *not*, as is often stated, in any way associated with the late medieval Franco-Scottish Alliance. Indeed, the permanent effects of the latter on the Scots vocabulary do not appear to have been very extensive at all.

2 Scandinavian

A much more distinctive element in the Older Scots vocabulary was the Scandinavian. Northern ME and OSc included in their vocabularies most or all of those Scandinavian words which were adopted also in the dialects from which Modern Standard English derives, such

² This work is full of invaluable material on the history of Scots, especially of the early period.

Editor’s note: for an online list of occupations from Scottish sources, see ‘Occupations’ (n.d.).

³ Indeed it is much smaller than earlier lists, e.g. that of Metcalfe (1910) or even of *The Scottish National Dictionary* Introduction (Grant, 1934: §17), would lead one to suppose. These lists are swelled with many words which were originally common to other English dialects and, in some cases, have happened to survive only, or chiefly, in Scots, like *arles* (hansel), *aumrie* (a cupboard), *aiver* (a cart-horse), *causey* (pavement), *geane* (the wild cherry), *gout* (taste, flavour), *grosser* (later *-et*, a gooseberry), *houlet* (the owl), *moyen* (means) and *tasse* (a cup).

Editor’s note: Görlach (1987, 1990) gives a list of words of Old English origin that have survived in Scots but not in Standard English. (However, he under-estimates the Anglo-Norman contribution.)

⁴ Editor’s note: for a full account of Older Scots phonology, see †Aitken (2002), summarised in Macafee and †Aitken (2002). For a briefer account, see AJA’s ‘How to pronounce Older Scots’ (1977, 2015), revised in Macafee and †Aitken (2003, 2015). For the development of vowels + l-mouillé and n-mouillé, in particular, see †Aitken ed. Macafee (2002: §8), Macafee and †Aitken (2002: §6.11).

⁵ Editor’s note: see Macafee (1997), Macafee and †Aitken (2002: §4.2.26).

as *egg*, *leg*, *skill*, *skin*, *take*, and the others (Jespersen, 1923: 59 ff.). On the other hand, though words of Scandinavian origin comprise a numerous and important section of the OSc vocabulary, nevertheless OSc was probably less rich in Scandinavian material than were some other Northern dialects of ME (e.g. those of *Cursor Mundi* and *Sir Gawain and the Grene Knight*).

Thus it is a fact that some of the very common ‘grammatical’ words of Scandinavian origin are never found in Scots: thus Northern ME *slike* (such; Scots *swilk*, *sic*, from OE.), *es* (is; Scots *is*), *imelle* prep. (among), *hend* pl. (Scots *handis*), and *at* prep. before infinitives.⁶ Also, whereas there exists an appreciable number of Scots adoptions from French and Low Dutch which are not found in other English dialects, not even in Northern ME, there exist *practically no Scots borrowings from Scandinavian which are not also Northern ME*.⁷ On the other hand there are, of course, many Scandinavian words in Northern ME dialects which are not Scots.⁸

The OSc words of Scandinavian origin in their semantic subject-matter range over a variety of topics, which, however, hardly coincide at all with the topics listed above in §1 for the loanwords from French. Except for a few early legal terms of Scandinavian origin, the Scots borrowings from this source do not include terms of administration, the church, dress, etc., or even of warfare. Of the more specialised Scots words of Scandinavian origin a high percentage appear to reflect the interests and activities of a farming people living an outdoor life without much in the way of aristocratic or civilised luxuries, or much interest in intellectual pursuits.⁹ Typical loanwords appear to be *gimmer* (a young sheep), *nout* (cattle), *gowk* (cuckoo), *gryse* (a young pig), *graip* (a pitchfork), *stra* (straw), *crufe* (a pigsty or fishtrap), *graith* (materials, equipment, gear, tackle, etc.), *sark* (a shirt), *low* (flame), *carl* (a

⁶ Editor’s note: apart from the fixed compound *ado* (originally *at do*), as in Standard English.

⁷ An exception to this statement must of course be made for the dialects of Caithness, Orkney and Shetland, which in the matter of Scandinavian borrowings are a case apart. What it said is true of general Older Scots (south of the Moray Firth).

⁸ The probable explanation of these facts being that the introduction of Scandinavian words into Scots was not due to the absorption of actual Norse-speaking settlers of the Viking Age into the English-speaking community of Southern Scotland, as in many parts of Northern England, but by the entry into Scotland of Northern English- (not Norse-) speaking immigrants from the parts of England just mentioned: these later English immigrants brought with them many (but perhaps not all) of the newly acquired Scandinavian words as part of their *English* speech. The introduction of Norse material into Scots was thus a sort of secondary borrowing process with rather less powerful effects than the original Northern English ones.

Place-name evidence for some isolated local settlements of Norsemen in the Viking Age may be seen in Dixon (1947) and Macdonald (1941): examples are names like *Humbie* and *Corstorphine*.

Another group of early medieval Scottish place-names have a Scandinavian or Anglo-Scandinavian personal name in the genitive governing a Northern ME noun, as *Dolphingston*, *Ormiston*, *Swinton* (i.e. Swein’s town) and *Cockburnspath* (older *Colbrandespade* i.e. Colbrand’s ‘path’). These presumably belong to a later period.

In a third group of names, mostly at first (i.e. in the early 13th c.) found in the South, but latterly, after the spread of Northern English over other parts of Scotland, in the West and North-East also, words of Scandinavian origin designating topographical features, like *brae*, *gate* (a road), *gill*, *kirk*, *mire*, *toft*, etc., are found conjoined with other Northern English words which are not distinctively Scandinavian in origin, as *Rede bra*, *Horsemangate*, *Segate*, *Ravengille*, and others.

There appears to be room for a study of all such names together, mainly from the points of view of distribution in time or space: no doubt the results of this would throw much light on the history of the Vikings in Scotland and of the later Anglo-Danish immigrants into Scotland.

Editor’s note: Barrow (1980) confirms that there was a movement of population from Yorkshire in the Anglo-Norman period, and AJA (1985, 2015) follows him in seeing the Scandinavianised speech thus introduced as a major source of what later became Scots.

⁹ This is a rough and ready impression. Systematic and complete studies of most of the topics mentioned in these notes are not to be had.

Editor’s note: for a thorough study of Scandinavian loans into Scots, see Kries (2003). For all aspects of Scandinavian settlement, including place-names, see Crawford (1987).

peasant, rustic fellow), *lass* (a girl), *harnis* (brains), and the countryman's rough and ready measures of capacity *starn* (lit. star; a pinch taken with all the fingers of one hand close together), *neve* (a fist or fistful), *gowpin* (a double handful). Besides a very large number of nouns deriving from Norse, other parts of speech are also well represented, as *ill* (evil); *louse* (loose¹⁰); *mekill* and other adjectives; verbs like *big* (build), *fyke* (fidget), *graith* (prepare, equip), *hing* (hang), *laik* (play, sport), *roup* (croak, shout), *tyne* (to lose); the auxiliary verbs *ger*, *gar* (to make *one do something*, cause *something to be done*), and *man*, *mon* (must); the preposition *fra*; and the pronouns *thai*, *thaim*, *thair*. Primitive Scots was clearly well penetrated from this direction. Scots examples of Anglo-Saxon words which may have been reinforced by their Norse cognates (see Jespersen, 1923: 61–2) are *bairn* (OE *b(e)arn*, ON *barn*), *hals* (the neck), *til* (the preposition), and possibly *ken* 'to know' (OE *cennan* to make known, ON *kenna* also 'to know'). Scots has the Scandinavian form where other dialects of English have the Anglo-Saxon cognate in *gowk* (OE *gēac*, replaced by *cuckoo* in ME), *nout* (English *nēat* cattle), *coup* an act of buying and selling (English *cheap*, OE *cēap* buying and selling), *stra* (straw), *wapin* (weapon), also Modern Scots *ain* (ON *eiginn*: cf. OSc *awin*, English *own* from OE *āzen*); perhaps also forms like *kirk* (church), *kirn* (churn), *kist* (chest), and *brig* (bridge), *rig* (ridge), are partly or wholly after the Scandinavian forms of these words.

Of the Older Scots words which first appear in the 'colloquial style' of Middle Scots literature and most probably had colloquial or slang connotations (and for this reason no doubt are not recorded earlier in writings), a number turn out to derive ultimately from Scandinavian, though often an extensive process of semantic development appears to intervene between the original borrowing of the Scandinavian word and the first recorded appearance of its Scots derivative: thus *loun* (a rogue, a lout, a fellow, etc.) is perhaps ON *lúinn* p.p. (beaten, benumbed; weary, exhausted);¹¹ *tyke* (a cur, a mongrel) is ON *tík* (a bitch).¹² Like the other Scandinavian words in Scots, most of these 'popular' words are recorded in Northern ME also, though in this case generally rather sparsely: thus *loun* and *carling* (an old woman) make (according to OED) single appearances only in Northern ME, though both are common in Scots; *lug* is at first only Scots.

Besides the words already mentioned, the Scandinavian element in the OSc vocabulary must run into many hundreds of words, including some which, like the verb *gar*, are very frequently used, and it is hardly possible to find a page of text in which several such words do not occur.

3 Middle Low Dutch

The term Middle Low Dutch is used to comprise the closely related medieval dialects Middle Flemish, Middle Dutch and Middle Low German. It is not usually possible to say that a medieval English or Scots word-borrowing comes from one of these in particular.

¹⁰ Also of Scandinavian (East Norse) origin: Scots has the older or the West Norse form *laus-s* in *louse*.

¹¹ Editor's note: DOST offers a different etymology:

Late north. ME. (c 1450) *lowen* (rh. *chenoun*) worthless person, prob. (though this is recorded only later) e.m.Du. *loen* (1544–17th c.) homo stupidus, bardus, insulsus (Kilian), un lourdaut, mome, bardus, plumbeus homo, vastus atque agrestis, idiota (Plantijn), and cf. also Du. *loen* (1642–) trick, dodge, deceit.. The Du. word is appar. conn. with Du. *loensch* squinting, crafty (cf. mod. Fris. *lúmsk*, ON. *lymsk-r*, Norw. dial. *lynsk*, crafty).

OED (s.v. *loon* n.1), however, is unconvinced by this alternative suggestion.

¹² Other words in which a process of change of meaning appears to intervene between the original Scandinavian and the Scottish words are *lug* (a colloquial or vulgar word for 'ear'; cf. literary OSc *ere*) and *lass* (a girl).

From the frequent mention of ‘Flemings’ in the charters of the 12th century Scottish Kings and in the English historical writings of the same period, and from the appearance of Flemish names among the inhabitants of the early Scottish burghs,¹³ we should expect, in addition to those medieval Low Dutch loanwords, which OSc shares with other English dialects,¹⁴ a crop of early loanwords from this source which are found in Scotland only. The following are a sample of a score or so of words peculiar to Scots, dating from the medieval period, and of Flemish and Dutch origin: *cavel* (a lot that is cast); *cute* (the ankle); *crage*, *craig* (the neck); *dub* (a puddle); *gek* (a mocking gesture); *slop* (a gap, later *slap*); and *red* v. (to clear up, set in order). It will be seen that the medieval Scots borrowings from this source are of a somewhat similar semantic character to those from Scandinavian but very different from the majority¹⁵ of the literary adoptions from Old French.¹⁶

A later (14th to 16th century) group of Low Dutch borrowings is mentioned in §10 below.

4 Gaelic

A distinctive group of Older Scots words are those which have come from Scottish Gaelic. A glance through a glossary to the poems of Burns shows the following words (from Gaelic) in general Scots use: *clachan* (a hamlet), *cranreuch* (hoar-frost), *ingle*, *messan* (a lapdog), *oy* (a grandchild), *sonsie* (buxom; OSc *sons* prosperity, good fortune), *tocher* (dowry). All of these were already in use in OSc and most of them were already adopted some considerable time before the beginning of the literary period. Besides these words of general meaning, Burns has also some more recent adoptions from Gaelic which name something specially associated with the life of the Highlanders of more recent times, e.g. *claymore* (18th c.), *philibeg* (18th c.), *spleuchan* (first recorded in Burns himself), *usquebae* (in this form first recorded in Allan Ramsay). Most of the Scots loanwords from Gaelic which, like the first of these groups, have a general and not specifically Highland application, belong to an early (how early cannot, of course, be known at present) layer of borrowing.¹⁷

A number of Scots words of Gaelic origin name topographical features and several of these are recorded very early (12th century onwards) in, surprisingly enough, documents

¹³ On these matters see Bense (1925: 18–19), Mackenzie (1949), and other works on the history of early medieval Scotland.

Editor’s note: on Dutch loans, see Murison (1971) and on Dutch loans in Shetland also Melchers (1987).

¹⁴ Like, e.g. *poll* (a head; later Scots *pow*), *kit* (a wooden vessel), *tackle*, *dote* (to behave foolishly), *hobble*, *skink* (to serve drink), and others.

¹⁵ But similar enough to the peculiarly Scottish adoptions from French mentioned above.

¹⁶ It is my impression that Scots words form a high proportion of the total number of *early* borrowings from Dutch into English: this is derived from a reading of Bense (1939), incomplete as this is for the Scottish words. But I have not made the systematic study which would be necessary to verify this. In reading Bense, also, one is struck by the number of Modern Scots local, especially North-Eastern words, which appear to be from medieval Flemish and Dutch.

¹⁷ These statements would have to be modified for such dialects as those of Kintyre or Donegal or even parts of North-Eastern Scotland where Gaelic-Lowland contacts are recent and intimate and the Scots dialects carry a rather large number of Gaelic adoptions. What is said above applies to ‘general Scots’ and Older Scots of the non-Gaelic areas.

Editor’s note: on Gaelic loans, see McClure (1986, 1995), Pödör (1995/96), Dareau (2001); on the influence of Gaelic more broadly, see Macafee and Ó Baoill (1997). For references to the Gaelic-influenced dialect of Kintyre, see the Editor’s Introduction to ‘Scottish accents and dialects’ (1984, 2015) in the present edition. The main source of information on the English of Donegal is Traynor (1953), but he does not distinguish between the Hiberno-English and Scots-speaking areas (the Scots areas are mapped by Gregg, 1972, 1985). A number of articles on the linguistic geography of Ulster take in these areas (Adams, 1956; 1966–67, 1986; 1978, 1986; Braidwood 1972; 1974; Gailey, 1972).

from Southern Scotland (e.g. Peebles and Kelso): *bog*, *cairn*, *crag*, *glen*, *inch*, *knock*, *loch*, *strath*. Other early loans include technical terms of farming and rural life, like *cane* (a tribute in kind), *capercaillze* (a wood-grouse), *cowdach* (a heifer), *davach* (a land-measure), and others. Most of the ‘general’ words used by Burns, as mentioned above, are also quite old, and some at least certainly return to the 13th century. With this group also should go the adjectives *car* as in *car-handit* (left-handed) and *cam* (twisted) which are thought to be from Gaelic. At some time before the 15th century the following words more closely associated with the Highland way of life had entered the Lowland language: *bard*, *beltane*, *clan*, *clarschach* (a Highland harp), *coronach*, and others. Some later (late 15th or 16th century) adoptions of a similar character are *brakane* (a name for tartan), *trews*, and *slughorn* (now *slogan*).

As to when and how these words entered the Lowland language and came to be used over the whole Lowland area we cannot be sure. Perhaps the conditions were most favourable and the population most linguistically intermingled in the 11th and 12th centuries. Several of the words mentioned have since, through the medium of eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish literature, been taken into standard literary English¹⁸ but in the Older Scots period all were confined to Scots (though English had *bard* and *cam* from other Celtic sources).

It will be noted that only nouns and two adjectives feature in the above list: the impact of Gaelic on primitive Scots was, in fact, much less powerful than that of French or Scandinavian or even Low Dutch.

5 Unknown origin

Many common words found only in Scots have no known etymology at all: these are the words described in the Dictionaries as of ‘uncertain’, ‘obscure’ or ‘unknown’ origin. One important section of such words first made their appearance in the popular literature of 15th and 16th century Scotland: some of these, judging from the contexts in which they invariably appear, carried vulgar or slangy connotations. No doubt a good number of them are ‘popular’ coinages of the Middle Ages which had to wait for a ‘popular’ literature before they could appear in written form. A few examples are *gully* (a large knife), *bonny*, *canny*, *glowr*, *goif* (to stare), *pawk* (a sly trick) and *scunner*; and, of abusive sense, *gukkit* (foolish), *glait* (foolish), *cufe* (a fool), *daw* (a slut), *limmer*, *smaik* and *smy* (all three ‘rascal’). The method of creation of some of these can be guessed at: *gukkit* from *guk-guk*, the OSc representation of the cuckoo’s call;¹⁹ *canny* from *can* v. (to know how to); *limmer*, perhaps from *limb*;²⁰ *scunner*, with the *-er* frequentative ending and cf. *shun* v. Others are a mystery.

6 Anglo-Saxon

These are the more important of the exotic sources of the vocabulary of Older Scots, and the last paragraph shows that it was also capable of renewing itself from its own resources. But of course by far the most important single element in the Older Scots vocabulary is the Anglo-Saxon. This part of the vocabulary includes: many words which agree approximately

¹⁸ Editor’s note: on Scotticisms in Standard English, see AJA’s ‘The extinction of Scotland in popular dictionaries of English’ (1987, 2015), and his article on ‘Scottish English’ in McArthur ed. (1992).

¹⁹ Cf. *gowkit* in the same sense, from *gowk* the cuckoo, and Modern English slang ‘*cuckoo*’ adj.

²⁰ Editor’s note: s.v. *limmar*, DOST refers specifically to “*Devillis*, *fendis lim*, also a *divelish limme*, *limb of hell*, of *Antichrist*, a limb of Satan, an agent or follower of the Devil, a reprobate” (s.v. *lim* n.3).

in form and meaning with corresponding words in the Midland dialects of Middle English,²¹ like *fire*, *bite*, *grene*, *hede* (head), *hare* (the animal), *hail*, *cole*, *before*, *bit*, *bed*, *hat*, *buk* (the animal), etc.; and still more words in which there exists between Scots and Standard English a regular phonetic correspondence which extends through a series of pairs of words, as:

mare (and English *more*),
sare (English *sore*),
hare (English *hoar*),
hale (English *whole*), etc.,

or, to take some other series:

blude, *fude*, *gude*, *mune*, *mure*
(cf. *blood*, *food*, *good*, *moon*, *moor*),

the Scots form of *do*, etc., or

aw, *caw*, *faw*, *saut*
(cf. *all*, *call*, *fall*, *salt*),

know, *pow*, *gowd*
(cf. *knoll*, *poll*, *gold*),

or the Scots pronunciations of

house, *mouse*, *town*, *down*, *cow*, etc.,

in comparison with standard English.²²

In some cases words which Scots and Standard English derive in common from Old English have diverged in meaning and application, as:

Scots *caw* (= English *call*) which in the 15th century acquired the additional Scots senses 'to urge on animals by shouting', 'to drive animals', 'to drive (a vehicle, machine, etc.)', 'to drive in (a nail, etc.)';

or *thrawn* (= English *thrown*), in Scots 'twisted, warped'. etc.

Some Old English words became obsolete in midland dialects of ME but survived in Scotland and the North, sometimes because of reinforcement from the cognate Norse words, as *bairn*, *haus* (*hals*) (cf. §2 above); also *bide* (to stay), *byre*, *deave* (to deafen, annoy), *sweir* (slothful, loath), *reek* (smoke), *glomming* (twilight), and others.²³

7 Recapitulation

What is said above may be briefly recapitulated as follows.²⁴ Much of the vocabulary of Older Scots coincides with that of ME generally, including: many words of Old English origin (sometimes, but not always, showing a divergent phonetic development) as *heid*, *hand*, *arm*, *fute*, *e(e)*, *mow(th)*; many Scandinavian words common to other ME dialects also, as *leg*; many French words which are common ME, as *face*, *panch*, *painch* (English *paunch*), *hanch*, *hainch* (English *haunch*). Some Scots words of Old English origin have new meanings in Scots, as *hairt* ('heart', but also 'belly'). Some Old English words which

²¹ I.e. which later become Standard English.

²² It will be noted that this partly recapitulates the history of the more important Early Scots sound-changes.

²³ Another example is the adj. *wee*, which is ultimately from an OE noun.

²⁴ A few illustrations, from names of parts of the body, are included.

survived in Scots and the North fell out of use elsewhere, as *hals*, *haus* (the neck), which also acquired new meanings in 15th c. Scots. The Scandinavian element forms a comparatively large section of the vocabulary of Scots, as:

Scots *neve*, *chaft*, *lufe* (all of Scandinavian origin),
cf. English *fist* (OE), *jaw* (?), *palm* (OF).

Scots has a score or two of Low Dutch borrowings dating from the early medieval period which are not found in other dialects of English, as *crage*, *craig* (the neck),²⁵ and *cute* (the ankle). In addition, Scots has a few ‘popular’ French adoptions of the medieval period, which occur only in Scots, and a number of nouns from Gaelic. A fair number of Scots words, including many which are found only in Scots and several which are ‘popular’ or slangy in connotation, have no ascertainable origin, and some of these were no doubt coined by ordinary speakers some time in the medieval period. The specially numerous Scandinavian and Low Dutch elements of Early Scots apparently reflect the social and political history of 12th and 13th century Scotland, the period of immigration of (among others) Anglo-Danish and Anglo-Flemish pioneer adventurers.²⁶

8 Latin

The above takes no account of the learned Latin and Latinate diction which is so prominent an element in the vocabulary of OSc literary verse and prose. Though the Latin words were so important to literary OSc, they seem to have made little impression on the ordinary popular speech of the OSc period, from which – and not from the learned literary language – the modern dialects derive. Consequently, the latter contain few Latinisms apart from those readopted later from Standard English, and the Latin element of Older Scots may thus be largely ignored in a *historical* account of the vocabulary.²⁷ Several of the very few Modern Scots survivors of the Older Scots Latinate vocabulary have the stamp of ‘dominie’s words’; examples of Modern Scots Latinisms are *dominie* itself, *pandie* (or *palmy*), *fugie* (to play truant), *vaik* (to be vacant), *vacance* (holidays), and *vague* and *stravague* (to wander aimlessly). One or two other Latin words appear in Modern Scots in the characteristic forms of Older Scots, as *by-ordinar* (not, as English, *by-ordinary*) (exceptional or exceptionally), and past participles like (*weel-*)*educate* (educated).

9

§§1–8 above describe the various elements of the vocabulary of Older Scots which were already included in the course of the Middle Ages, and it will be obvious from the illustrations given that all the well-known general features which set off modern Scots from other English dialects were already established by the 15th century. ‘General Scots’²⁸ in the main returns to the beginning of the Middle Scots period.

²⁵ Older Scots also has *haus* (see above), *nek* and *swire*, in various uses.

²⁶ Editor’s note: for a quantitative study of the sources of Older Scots vocabulary, see Macafee and Anderson (1997), summarised in Macafee and †Aitken (2002: §4.3).

²⁷ But it is, of course, very important in a *synchronic* study of the Older Scots of any one writer or period.

Editor’s note: see Jumpertz-Schwab (1998).

²⁸ I.e. the features which all the Modern Scots dialects have in common.

10 Later Dutch or Flemish loans

As a result of the rapid improvements in technology and material civilisation of that time, the 15th century saw many new names of things added to the Scots vocabulary, mainly from French or Dutch (or Flemish) of the same period. These novelties in the vocabulary were the names of the new inventions, e.g. of weapons and firearms and so on, and discoveries of the period. They are perhaps no more important linguistically than, and many of them certainly analogous to, the trade-names current in the modern European languages. A great number of these new 15th and 16th century words later (often by the 17th century) fell into disuse, as the objects they named were superseded by later inventions (which, by the 17th century, had Standard English names).

However, one important group of these later additions to the Older Scots vocabulary was that which resulted from the close trading connections between Scotland and the Low Countries in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Scottish Staple was, at different periods, at Bruges, Antwerp, Middelburg, and (latterly and chiefly) Campvere. In the staple towns there resided a permanent colony of Scottish merchants, who also made periodical voyages to and from Scotland with their wares. Hence it comes about that a very large part of the 15th and 16th century technical vocabulary of shipping and seafaring of Scots is from Dutch or Flemish (few of these, technical words, however, survive the OSc period) and that many terms of trade were borrowed at this period from Dutch or Flemish²⁹ (though again the survivors are not numerous). The latter include, however, such well-known Scots words as *callant* (a chap, a lad; orig. a tradesman's 'customer'), *groff* adj. (coarse, orig. applied only to merchant's wares; later generalised) and *coft* p.t. and p.p. (bought). Other 15th century Flemish borrowings include the names of the sports *cachepell* (a game similar to *tennis*³⁰), *golf*, and some other games.

11

The foregoing may perhaps serve as an outline framework of the make-up of the vocabulary of Older Scots. A more thorough analysis would no doubt add many further examples to the various categories listed but would not, I believe, add any new categories to the list. What I have written might best perhaps be used as a supplement to the standard accounts of the vocabulary of English in general in the writings of Serjeantson (1935), Jespersen (1923), Baugh (1951), and the others.

12 The Modern Dialects

Most of the words already mentioned survive in the Modern Scots dialects and are, with a very few exceptions, 'general Scots'. Older Scots provides of course the principal source of the vocabulary of modern dialect Scots.³¹

Many OSc words survive in the various modern dialects in the divergent forms which result from sound-changes since the 16th century:

byre is /bɹɪr/ in Buchan, but /baer/ in the Lothians and /bɔ̃ɪr/ in Caithness;

²⁹ The oldest recorded form of the word *orange* in Scots is the Flemish *appil-oranʒe*.

³⁰ The latter being a Standard English borrowing from French.

³¹ In this section *Modern Scots* spellings are used.

rive is /raev/ in Buchan and the Lothians, but, so far as one can learn, /rɔiv/ in Caithness; the word for ‘to annoy’ is /di:v/ in the Lothians but /dɔiv/ in Buchan; *quean* is Lothian /kwɪn/, Buchan /kwɔin/;

the following are variant derivatives of the same OSc word:

tee, *tui*, and *tae* (too, also),
peer, *puir*, and ‘*pair*, *pare*’ (poor),
speen, *spuin*, and ‘*spin*’ i.e. /spɪn/ (spoon),
gweed, *guid*, and ‘*gid*’,
skweel, *skuil* and ‘*skil*’,
kweet, *cuit* and ‘*kit*’ (ankle);
also *fat* and *whit* (what),
fa, *whaw* and *whae* (who); and so on.

On the other hand, many words agree in form (except for the minor diaphonic differences) throughout all the Scots dialects, as *dry*, *bite*, *green*, *bake*, *rain*, *hail*, *road*, *bed*, etc., etc.; as well as *mare* (more), *hale* (whole), *sae* (so), *strae* (straw), *greet* (weep), *bide* (stay), *hoose*, *moose*, *coont* (count), *fou*’ (full), *braw*, *ca*’, *fa*’, *bairn*, *gowk*, *slap* (a gap), *low* (flame), *pow* (head), and, indeed, most of the words mentioned in earlier paragraphs.

Besides these ‘general Scots’ words, in each of the Modern Scots dialect areas there exist:

(1) a certain number of local words which are not at all or not much used outside that area,

and also:

(2) a number of words which have special local *meanings* or applications.

Examples of the first of these groups are Buchan and Northern words like *littleen* (a small child), *wyver* /wɪvɪr/ a spider, *tag* (a schoolmaster’s strap), *shargar* (a weakling child, etc.), *connach* (to spoil, etc.), *byous*³² (very), and so on, all of these being more or less local. Examples of special local uses are:

gant, in Caithness only ‘to stammer’; in other dialects, and in OSc, ‘to yawn’;
and *bourach*,³³ which has a number of distinct and well-marked local uses.³⁴

How have these local elements in the Scots vocabulary arisen? It is much too early to attempt to say much on this except to provide a few examples of *some* of the ways in which the local dialects have modified their vocabularies away from ‘general Scots’.

In the above list, *shargar* – like, probably, (*hornie*-)*golloch*, a North-Eastern word for ‘earwig’, and some other local North-Eastern words – is apparently from Gaelic. In the areas mentioned in note 16, a number of local words are borrowings from this source. In Caithness, and, still more, Orkney and Shetland, there are still in use many words of Norse origin which do not belong to the general Scots stock of Scandinavian words of §2. The dialect of Roxburghshire even includes a number of quite frequently used words adopted from the Gipsy colony “long settled at Kirk Yetholm” (Watson: 1923: 344).³⁵

³² ? now obsolete.

³³ Apparently not recorded in OSc.

³⁴ The problems here touched upon are fully discussed in McIntosh (1952: especially chapters 3 and 5).

³⁵ E.g. *a barrie gadgee* (a fine, smart fellow), *a shan gadgee* (a fine fellow, used ironically) (*barrie* and *gadgee* are Gipsy words, *shan* is of cant origin, also from the Gipsy colony).

Editor’s note: on loans from Romany and cant, see Cairns Speitel (2013).

However, in the modern period, it seems improbable that word-borrowing (except in the special areas just mentioned) will have played a very large part in the changes in the vocabularies of the dialects. These have probably had to depend in the main on their internal resources for replenishing and developing their stock of words, for example:

(1) by adaptation of older words to new uses

or

(2) by the creation of new compound-words and the like, or by the coinage of entirely new words.³⁶

In these ways the Scots dialects have supplemented their vocabularies since the Older Scots period, and mostly separately, so that the operation of these processes has generally led to divergencies in vocabulary between the dialects.

Sometimes, again, an older word for something survives in one district only, and either disappears altogether or is replaced by a newer word in other places.³⁷ Sometimes, also, OSc synonyms which were once current throughout Scotland now survive individually, the one synonym, in one area, the other in another, as if the modern dialects had each made its own special selection from the common supply.³⁸

To conclude, here are some of the groups of words just mentioned. In different parts of Scotland:

the earwig is *hornie golloch*, *gavlock* and *clipshears*;³⁹

a spider is variously *spider* (also *speeder*), *ettercap* (and variants, including *nettery*⁴⁰), and *wyver*;

a boy is a *loon* or a *lad*;

various words for 'child' are *bairn*, *wean* and *littleane* (and others, of course);

the tawse is *tawse*⁴¹ or *tag*;

³⁶ In short, by the same sort of processes as produced the colloquial words of obscure origin of §5, processes which are no doubt important in colloquial dialects and slang generally (as against literary language). As in the OSc case, the dialects have been highly creative in certain specific directions, e.g. in words of abuse. Examples of (1) are *gavelock*, *gaylock* (in OSc 'crowbar', in some Modern Scots dialects 'earwig'), or Modern Scots *branks* (the mumps), which is probably the same as *branks* (a bridle, and 'a bridle and gag device used as a punishment for scolds') (chiefly OSc); *tag* (a tawse) is a special use of the general English word *tag*.

(2) would include *clipshears* (an earwig) (Lothians); *wyver* (i.e. *weaver*, 'a spider') (North-East); *wean* (earlier *wee-ane*, 'a child') (various parts of Scotland); *littleen* (originally *little-ane*) (North-East); *byous* (from the adv. *by* 'past, beyond'); as well as other more colourful and elaborate coinages like *Hairy Willie* (a Buchan name for a fish dish), *Maggie Monifeet* (a centipede, in various areas), *stooriebits* (i.e. 'dusty boots', a name for an *ootlin* or stranger in Peebles), and so on. (The Linguistic Survey's collections contain many examples of similar things.)

Editor's note: on word formation in Older Scots, see Macafee and Anderson (1997) and Macafee and †Aitken (2002: §4.2.3); on word formation in slang, see Macafee (2003).

³⁷ The OSc words for 'spider' were *spider* and *attircop*, *ettercop*, both of which survive in some areas, but in parts of the North-East have been replaced by *wyver*. Conversely, *loon* (a boy) was current in William Dunbar's Edinburgh, but is now only North-Eastern; its synonym *lad(die)* is still used in both areas.

³⁸ Thus, e.g. *til*, *intil* and *to*, *into* were general OSc: in Modern Scots *til*, *intil* are characteristically eastern and northern but little used south of the Forth, where *tae*, *intae* are characteristic (there is of course an area of overlap in Fife and ? Angus).

³⁹ Also *forkietail*, *scodgible*, *tethery erse* and others (the Linguistic Survey has a large collection).

Editor's note: see *The Linguistic Atlas of Scotland* vol. I.

⁴⁰ An *ettercap* > a *nettercap*, whence *nettery*.

⁴¹ Already OSc.

among the words for ‘extremely, very’ are *byous* (North-Eastern), *fell* (Angus), and, more generally, *gey*,⁴² *unco*,⁴³ *awfu*, and so on.

Many more examples could be added.

13

These notes⁴⁴ attempt to give some idea of the remarkable richness of the vocabulary of Scots, and of some of the more important sources out of which this has come. It may be worthwhile reminding the reader again how much of the vocabulary mentioned in the sections on Older Scots is still in common use and that, despite the remarkable creativeness of the modern dialects, especially for words for less commonly used notions, much of the staple vocabulary of Modern Scots dialects returns to Older Scots.

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⁴² From *gay*.

⁴³ OSc *uncouth* adj. (strange, remarkable). Hence ‘remarkably’.

⁴⁴ Though, of course, far from complete, especially for the previous section. It is perhaps hardly possible yet to classify the vocabularies of the Modern Scots dialects. One omission is the mention of those modern general Scots words which are not found in Older Scots, common words like *ain* (own) (but see §2), emotive words like *gomerel* (fool, blockhead), *gumption* (shrewdness), *slaister* (to bespatter, etc.; a dirty mess, etc.), *gyte* adj. (crazy), and others, new compounds like *fashionless* (the noun *fusion* ‘substance, nourishing quality’ is earlier Scots and English), and so on.

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