

Crack About Politics



Document 6

Hey, Johnnie Cope 1745

Historical Background

In 1688 when Catholic King James VII & II was forced to flee from England his crown was offered to his daughter Mary and her husband William Prince of Orange, both Protestants. They were succeeded in turn by Mary's sister Queen Anne who died childless in 1714 when her supporters brought over her cousin George of Hanover from Germany to be the next Protestant king. Scotland had also accepted Mary, William and Anne, but many in Scotland still regarded old King James and his exiled son, James Francis Stewart, as the rightful heirs. Supporters, known as Jacobites (from the Latin for James), were strong in North East Scotland (centred on Aberdeen) and parts of the Highlands. Scotland in the mid-18th century was divided between pro-Hanover and pro-Jacobite opinion. When Charles Edward Stewart (son of James Francis) landed and captured Edinburgh in 1745 he issued a proclamation in name of his father – King James VIII to Jacobites – which declared that the Union with took place with England in 1707 was now ended. But those who supported Hanover – for whom the king was George II – wanted continued political union with England.

The Jacobite Song

Adam Skirving (1719-1803) was a tenant farmer in East Lothian at the time of the Jacobite Uprising of 1745-6. He was also a song writer – though little of his work survives – and wrote *Hey, Johnnie Cope* in 1745 which describes the battle at Prestonpans (21 September 1745) between the Jacobite forces under Charles Edward Stewart (1720-1788), and the Hanover forces under John Cope (1690-1760) who was then Commander-in-Chief of forces in Scotland. The song is pro-Jacobite and highly satirical, mocking John Cope (an Englishman) as a coward who fled from the battle and left his men to suffer defeat. A satirical print of the time – *A Race from Preston Pans to Berwick* – showed Cope being the first to deliver the news of his own defeat. Cope was later court-martialled but in 1749 was exonerated of the charges of cowardice and desertion.

Language and Style

The political union with England in 1707 had confirmed English as the *de facto* language of official use, and Scots was often now branded 'provincial dialect', so the fact that broadsheets, pamphlets, and songs continued to appear in Scots, or at least Scotticised versions, is often evidence of cultural and other allegiances, particularly when the subject was of a religious or political matter. In 18th century Scotland most people spoke Scots as their mother tongue and ballads of this kind, in their own language, had a wide appeal. This is the earliest known version of the ballad – of which there are several – as composed by Adam Skirving. The ballad is a good example of the writing of this period, combining distinct Scots words, forms and even spelling conventions with a general system of spelling which conforms to English usage. In particular we should note the following:

Anglicisms

That is, forms or words either English, or more usual to English. In stanza three, lines 1 and 2, Skirving uses the English *from* to rhyme with *upon*, though otherwise he uses Scots *frae*. In the 18th century it was a relatively new tradition to write poetry and song which employed English forms for the sake of rhyming schemes, but which often left a poem looking neither clearly Scots nor clearly English.

Apologetic Apostrophe

This is the name given to the tradition which began in the 18th century of adding an apostrophe to the middle and ends of words where the writer imagined a letter was 'missing'.

This grew out of the confusion caused by the adoption of English conventions for writing. For example, in Older Scots we find the forms *gangand* (going) or *makand* (making) but because of English influence in always writing *-ing*, people now thought that the correct way to write these words was *gangin'* and *makin'* to show a sound was 'missing'. That is why today we would still write *gangin* and *makkin*, though the 'apologetic apostrophe' is avoided by writers except where a word is abbreviated, such as *intil't* (in til it) or *ye'll* (as Skirving does for *ye will*) or to usefully show a difference in pronunciation, such as *dee'd* (the verb, died) rather than *deed* (the noun, act or document). In Skirving's song we find *a'* (all), *an'* (unstressed and), *de'il* (devil), *i'* (in), *mak'* (make), *o'* (unstressed of) and *wi'* (with) which would simply be *aa/aw*, *an*, *deil*, *i* (or *in*), *mak*, *o*, and *wi* in Scots today.

Cognates

These are a class of words that clearly spring from a common origin with another related language. In the case of Skirving we find the standard Scots forms *ain* (own), *awa* (away), *baith* (both), *bluidie* (bloody), *brak* (break/broke), *frichted* (frightened), *gang* (go/walk), *hale* (whole), *ken* (know), *sae* (so), *sic* (such), *tae* (to, but unusual before the 19th century), *thocht* (thought), *wad* (would), *waukin* (waking), and *ye* (you).

Forms to watch

Skirving uses spellings that are easily misread as English, though the rhyming scheme usually shows otherwise. As in Older Scots, the letters u/v/w could be interchanged in Scots without altering the pronunciation, so Skirving's spellings *confound* and *now* would have been read as *confoond* and *noo* by Scots speakers. This explains why we can find spellings such as *cou/cow* or *toun/tovn/town* in Scots, but all pronounced with an 'oo'. Skirving uses the spelling *Highland*, but this was (and is) pronounced in Scots as 'hee-lan' and usually written as either *heilan* or *hielan*. We also find the spelling *defeat*, but this is pronounced in Scots (and generally written) *defait* (rhymed with hate) clear from the rhyming scheme.



Particular Words

A number of words particular to Scots appear in Skirving's song. These include *blate* (shy), *claymores* (big swords, from Gaelic), *flegs* (frights), *gin* (if), *philabegs* (little kilts, from Gaelic), and *speired* (enquired).

Scots negatives

Skirving uses the usual Scots forms for negatives, such as *dinna* (do not), *werena* (were not) and *wouldna* (would not). Note that in Central Scots these are pronounced as 'dinny', wirny' and 'widny' while in Northern Scots they are 'dinn-ah', 'wirn-ah' and 'wid-nah'.

Cope sent a challenge frae Dunbar,
Sayin Charlie meet me an' ye daur;
An' I'll learn ye the art o' war,
If ye'll meet me in the morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

When Charlie looked the letter upon,
He drew his sword the scabbard from
Come, follow me my merry men,
And we'll meet Johnnie Cope in the morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

Now Johnnie be as good as your word,
Come, let us try baith fire and sword,
And dinna flee like a frichted bird,
That's chased frae its nest i' the morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

When Johnnie Cope he heard o' this,
He thocht it wouldna be amiss,
Tae hae a horse in readiness,
Tae flee awa in the morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

Fye now, Johnnie, get up an' rin,
The Highland bagpipes mak' a din,
It's better tae sleep in a hale skin,
For it will be a bluidie morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

When Johnnie Cope tae Dunbar cam,
They speired at him, "Where's a' your men"
"The de'il confound me gin I ken,
For I left them a' in the morning."

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

Now Johnnie, troth ye werena blate,
Tae come wi' news o' your ain defeat,
And leave your men in sic a strait,
Sae early in the morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

In faith, quo Johnnie, I got sic flegs
Wi' their claymores an' philabegs,
Gin I face them again, de'il brak my legs,
So I wish you a' good morning.

*Hey! Johnnie Cope, are ye a-waukin' yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were waukin' I wad wait,
Tae gang tae the coals in the morning.*

Source: Version as in 'Scotland's Songs' on the *Education Scotland* website.