

12-15-2015

'Epitaph' on Grizzel Grim: A Newly-Discovered Manuscript in the Hand of Robert Burns

Jonathan Henderson

University of Glasgow, j.henderson.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Pauline Mackay

University of Glasgow, pauline.mackay@gla.ac.uk

Pamela McIntyre

South Ayrshire Council

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>

 Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Henderson, Jonathan; Mackay, Pauline; and McIntyre, Pamela (2015) "'Epitaph' on Grizzel Grim: A Newly-Discovered Manuscript in the Hand of Robert Burns," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 41: Iss. 1, 253–258.

Available at: <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol41/iss1/20>

This Notes/Documents is brought to you for free and open access by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in Scottish Literature* by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact SCHOLARC@mailbox.sc.edu.

**“EPITAPH” ON GRIZZEL GRIM:
A NEWLY DISCOVERED MANUSCRIPT IN THE HAND
OF ROBERT BURNS**

Jonathan Henderson, Pauline Mackay & Pamela McIntyre

This brief article is to report the discovery, on the reverse of a note to Robert Burns (1759-96) in the Craufurdland Castle papers, of a previously unrecorded holograph source for “Epitaph” on Grizzel Grim.¹ Although distinct from Burns's ballad “Grim Grizzel is a mighty dame,” it is generally accepted that the “Epitaph” is the source for the ballad version. In his 1968 Clarendon edition, James Kinsley did not treat the “Epitaph” as authored by Burns and published it only as a note to the ballad, but the “Epitaph” was attributed to Burns in nineteenth-century editions of his works and so treated as a distinct poem.² Egerer records that the “Epitaph” first appeared in Hogg and Motherwell's *The Works of Robert Burns* (1834-6).³ Thereafter, the work was published as Burns's own in editions up to and including those of Chambers and Wallace (1896) and Henley and Henderson (1896).⁴ This article examines the “Epitaph” with reference to the published versions and accounts in these

¹ The “Epitaph” is here recorded and reproduced with the kind permission of Simon Houison Craufurd. Research for this article was undertaken in connection with the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project “Editing Robert Burns for the 21st Century.”

² James Kinsley, ed., *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), II: 818; II: 926; III: 1493.

³ J.W. Egerer, *A Bibliography of Robert Burns*, (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 167; The Ettrick Shepherd [James Hogg] and William Motherwell, eds., *The Works of Robert Burns*, 5 vols. (Glasgow: A. Fullarton, 1834-1836), II: 86.

⁴ Robert Chambers and William Wallace, eds., *The Life and Works of Robert Burns*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh and London: W. & R. Chambers, 1896), IV: 305-6; W. E. Henley and T.F. Henderson, eds., *The Poetry of Robert Burns*, 4 vols., (Edinburgh: T. C. and E.C. Jack, 1896), II: 275.

editions and to a covering note accompanying the new manuscript which provides an additional contemporary account of the work's origins.

In 2004, the Houison Craufurd family deposited twenty boxes of personal and estate papers with Ayrshire Archives.⁵ Pamela McIntyre, Project Development Officer for Libraries and Archives at South Ayrshire Council, commenced work on the collection in 2011 and found that an earlier survey of papers at Craufurdland Castle, undertaken by the National Register of Archives in 1971, had recorded papers additional to the 2004 deposit. This survey, preserved as a single typed list, had never been made public. An examination of the survey revealed several entries of interest, including a “note to Robert Burns.” Following further consultation with the family, additional papers were indeed discovered at Craufurdland Castle, and the note was located in a bundle of papers gathered together and categorised as “Letters of persons who have distinguished themselves by authorship etc etc.”

The note, dated 26th June 1792, is addressed from Mr John Hutton to “Mr Robt. Burns, Officer of Excise, Dumfries” (Pl. 1):

Mr Burns
 Sir
 I [?Bottled] yesterday 32 galls
 [?Mor] white wine.
 John Hutton
 Say thirty two gallons

$$\begin{array}{r} 596 \\ \underline{32} \\ 564 \end{array}$$

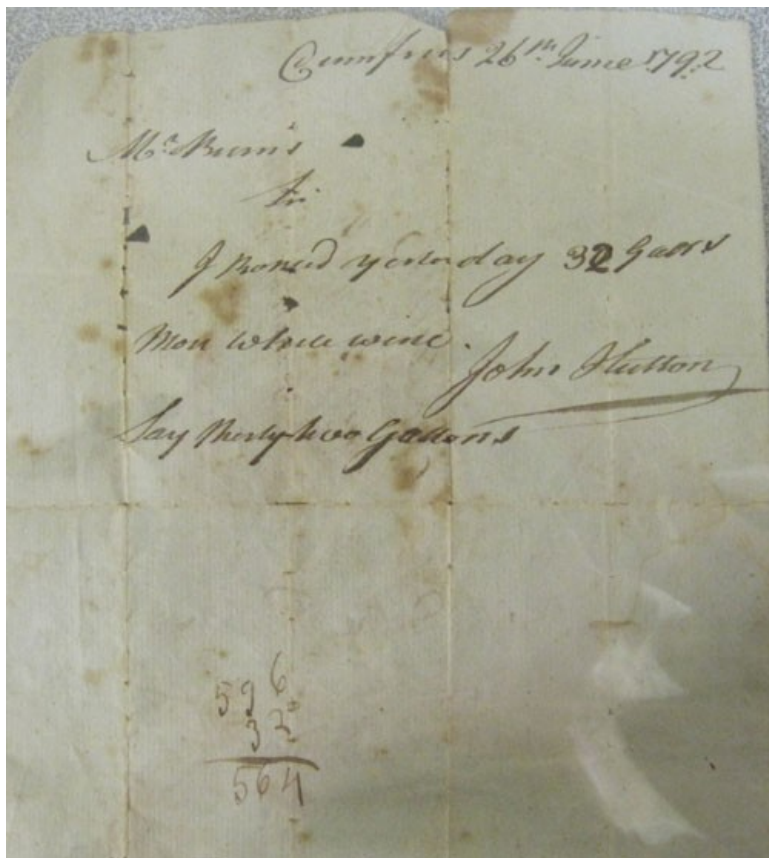
The sum, in Burns’s handwriting, is typical of the calculations often discovered on the bard’s excise papers. Little is known about John Hutton, although an excise permit drawn up and signed by Burns in 1793 records that Burns permits one Mr Harkness to purchase a cask (10 gallons) of rum from John Hutton’s stock.⁶ Further documentary evidence held at the National Records of Scotland suggests that when Burns died

⁵ The Houison Craufurd family’s estate is now at Craufurdland Castle near Fenwick, although the family have, in the past, held title to land at Braehead, Cramond, near Edinburgh.

⁶ The permit is currently held at Burns House Museum, Dumfries, with an image on FutureMuseum at: <http://www.futuremuseum.co.uk/collections/people/key-people/burns/robert-burns/excise-permit-signed-by-burns.aspx>.

"EPITAPH" ON GRIZZEL GRIM: A NEW MANUSCRIPT 255

in 1796 he owed "John Hutton merch^t" £1 8s. 8d.⁷ This would suggest, then, that Hutton was a Dumfries merchant trading in alcohol.



⁷ See, "Transcript of the State of Gilbert Burns's Acceptance to Mr Burns' Estate," National Records of Scotland, Ref CS97/Box 101/15), available at: <http://www.nas.gov.uk/documents/burnsLegacy.pdf>.

On the reverse of the letter, in Burns's holograph, is the "Epitaph" and below it, in another hand, a note of provenance (Pl. 2):

Epitaph
Here lyes withe Dethe, aulde Grizzel Grim,
Lincluden's uggely witche
O Dethe & whatt a taist haste thou
Canst lye withe suche a bitche!

*The hand writing of Burns – on Mrs Young
of Youngfield*

Archivists have identified that the author of the additional note of provenance is Janet Ester Houison Craufurd.⁸ Janet Ester elaborates on the epitaph's connection with Mrs Young of Youngfield in an accompanying paper (not illustrated here):

Mrs Young of Youngfield I know well her son Gilbert married a daughter of Ramsay Maule (Lord Panmure) by the pretty Miss Gordon of Haleaths near Dumfries. In his youth and folly he caused make a puppy-pie of which he also caused his intended fair - to eat - the forerunner of all the misery she endured in her conjugal state.

Burns had evidently taken the Excise letter, being the only paper at hand, when the lines struck him

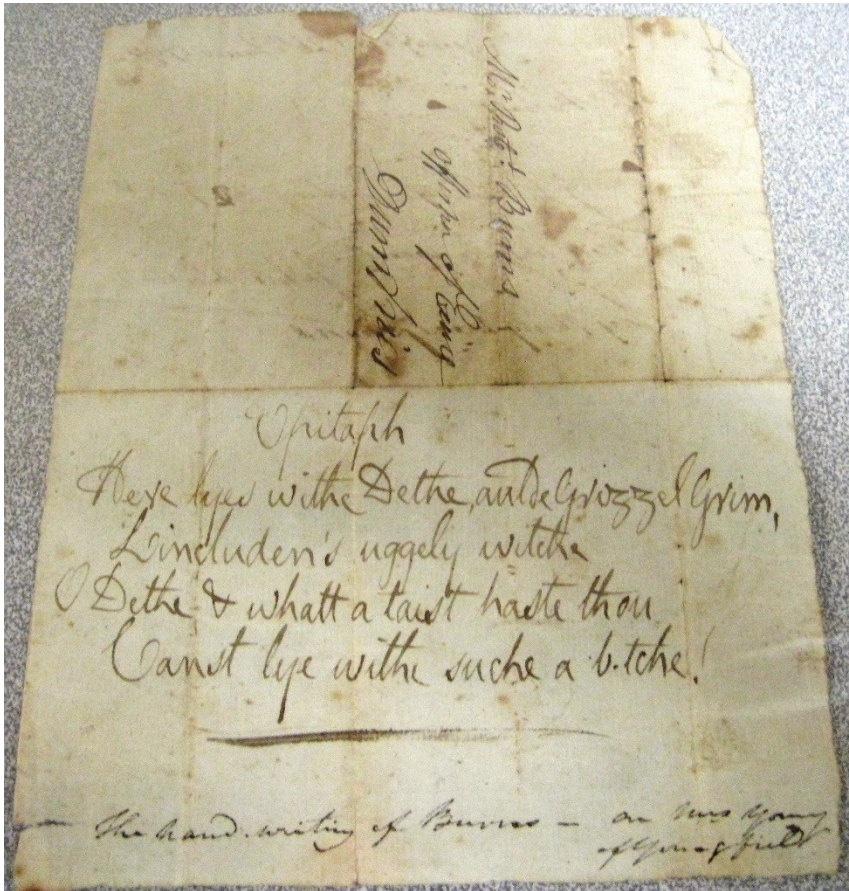
Mrs Young was certes very ugly – and the heroine of many singular anecdotes – many of which I was witness of in my childhood near Lincluden.

That "Epitaph [on Grizzel Grim]" was inspired by Mrs Young of Youngfield is in keeping with the account given by Alexander Young of Harburn who posited that the subject was "a relation of mine, Mrs. Young, formerly Mrs. Grizzel Craik, the widow of Thomas Young Esq. of Lincluden College."⁹ It is further supported by a transcription of the marriage contract between Grizel Craik and Thomas Young, sourced among the Young of Youngfield papers at Dumfries archive.¹⁰

⁸ Janet Ester Houison Craufurd (nee Whyte) married William Houison Craufurd of Craufurdland and Braehead on the 14th June 1808. Ongoing work to catalogue the collection of materials at Craufurdland has identified her as the collector of manuscripts held in the library.

⁹ Robert Tyson Fitzhugh ed., *Robert Burns: His Associates and Contemporaries: the Train, Grierson, Young and Hope manuscripts*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), 76.

¹⁰ Young of Youngfield Papers, Dumfries Archive, GGD 617.



Henley and Henderson (II: 459) record a variant of the epitaph (in Burns's holograph) transcribed from the Rosebery Manuscript where it appears in a note to the much longer ballad, "Grim Grizzel was a mighty dame." These versions are here collated:

- aulde Crauf.] auld Roseb.
- Grim Crauf.] Grimme Roseb.
- uggely Crauf.] ugly Roseb.
- & Crauf.] an' Roseb.
- whatt Crauf.] what Roseb.
- taist Crauf.] taste Roseb.

haste *Crauf.*] hast *Roseb.*
Canst *Crauf.*] Cann *Roseb.*
withe *Crauf.*] with *Roseb.*
suche *Crauf.*] siche *Roseb.*

Despite several differences in accidentals, these versions of the epitaph, both existing in or known to originate from Burn's holograph, differ considerably from the anglified variant published by Hogg and Motherwell (1834-6), and reproduced by Chambers and Wallace (1896):

Here lies with death auld Grizel Grim,
Lincluden's ugly witch;
O Death, how horrid is thy taste
To lie with such a b—? ¹¹ [ChW. bitch!]

While it is certainly the case that Burns recorded the "Epitaph", his authorship has been contested with reference to the note in the Rosebery MS, printed by Henley and Henderson, in which Burns recalls copying the lines from a tombstone in Dunblane:

Passing lately through Dunblane, while I stopped to refresh my horse, the following ludicrous epitaph, which I pickt up from an old tombstone among the ruins of the ancient Abbey, struck me particularly, being myself a native of Dumfriesshire (Henley-Henderson, II: 459).

Although scholars have identified other cases where Burns has been deliberately (and sometimes playfully) evasive as regards authorship, Kinsley takes this at face value and suggests that "It is probable that Burns picked up the epitaph as he says, and wrote the *ballad* on Mrs Young" (Kinsley, III: 1493). Whether or not Kinsley's suggestion is accepted, the discovery of the Craufurdland manuscript casts further light on the provenance of the "Epitaph" and provides valuable evidence for consideration as Burns's works are being reedited for the Oxford Edition of Robert Burns.

University of Glasgow & South Ayrshire Council

¹¹ Hogg-Motherwell, II: 86; Chambers-Wallace, IV: 305-6 (with "bitch!").