REID, P.H. 2023. The spik o the place: dialect and its place in the folkloric cultures and traditions in North-East Scotland. In *Hunter, J. and Ironside, R. (eds.) Folklore, people and places: international perspectives on tourism and tradition in storied places.* Abingdon: Routledge [online], chapter 4. Available from: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003374138-6

The spik o the place: dialect and its place in the folkloric cultures and traditions in North-East Scotland.

REID, P.H.

2023

‘The spik o the place’:[1] dialect and its place in the folkloric cultures and traditions in North-East Scotland

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Abstract

This chapter explores the role that the Doric dialect has in the cultural heritage and folklore traditions of North-East Scotland, as well as how visitors to the region encounter it. The chapter considers the place of dialect in folklore more generally, the twin concerns of *things lost* and *things to be preserved*, and how and why Doric represents such as strong, visceral cultural marker for North-East Scotland. The chapter goes on to address the ways in which tourism, cultural and heritage organisations have responded to this, and how the dialect is being deployed in contemporary idioms to enrich the experiences of visitors to the region. It considers how visitors come upon Doric, and the use of dialect by bodies such as Historic Environment Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland as part of their storytelling at properties. It also examines Doric in the context of the culinary heritage of the region. It concludes by considered the durability and survival of Doric and addresses the strong and prevailing belief that Doric is one of those things *to be preserved*.

Introduction: dialect as folklore

In 1946, FitzRoy Somerset, 4th Baron Raglan, President of the Folklore Society, observed ‘it seems to me, high time that we broke new ground’. He was giving his presidential address to the society and was attempting to set out what he saw as the scope of folklore. In his observations, he also noted that ‘dialect [in folklore terms] has received very little scientific study’ (Raglan, 1946, p.102). His theme was timely, for the previous year Louise Pound had also set out to explore the interconnections between dialect and folklore. She highlighted that dialect and folklore had been less closely associated than they should be and that the two subjects had, hitherto, largely been treated independently:

> ‘Dialect, in the sense in which we now ordinarily use the word, is *lore*, linguistic lore, and linguistic lore exists in tradition alongside the folk beliefs and folkways, the folk legacies that we usually term lore’. (Pound 1945, p.146).

It is true that many of the antiquarian scholars of the nineteenth century had often combined dialect and folklore in their studies. Sternberg (1851) in his *Dialect and Folklore of Northamptonshire*, Worth (1886) in his *History of Devonshire*, Brown (1891) in his *History of Nottinghamshire*, and others, cover similar ground in making connections between folkloric traditions and dialect. However, as is common of local historical writers of this period, their work essentially created little more than (eminently valuable) glossaries which, in the words of Sternberg (1851, p.iii), ‘embrace a collection of the lingual localisms; popular superstitions, fairy-lore, and other traces of Teutonic heathenism’. Few references are given beyond their own well-meaning but amateur ethnography and, certainly, modern-day notions language and dialect being central parts of cultural heritage and identity are rarely explored. Raglan and Pound

[1] Literally the ‘speak of the place’; a pun, as it usually refers to someone who is the subject of unwanted gossip.

were not, therefore, simply highlighting a truism; both were justified in their appeals for connections to be made more strongly and more explicitly between dialect as folklore, a theme which had already emerged strongly in some other countries such as Sweden where systematic research into folklore and dialect was well-established (Hedblom, 1961, p.1).

Writing forty years later, Widdowson still considered the connections between dialect and folklore traditions to be 'a neglected heritage'. He commented:

> 'By searching into the traditions practised today, and recognising their firm anchorage in history, folklorists can provide reassurance by identifying the structures and patterns which impart a sense of stability and permanence to our culture'. (Widdowson, 1987, p.41).

Those ideas of the reassurance given by traditions, the sense of stability and permanence are important because they help inform the ties that bind people, places and communities together. Widdowson's sense of a 'neglected heritage' recalls the concerns articulated by WJ Thoms in 1846 when he first coined the word *folklore*. Writing in the *Athenæum*, Thoms had two main concerns, loss and survival:

> 'No one who has made the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, &c., of the olden time his study, but must have arrived at two conclusions:— the first, how much that is curious and interesting in these matters is now entirely lost – the second, how much may yet be rescued by timely exertion'. (Merton [pseud. Thoms], 1846, p.862).

Thoms also recognised how cultural traditions and folklore shaped our understanding; all of those elements – manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs – were areas of study where facts 'which trifling in themselves, become of importance, when they form links a great chain' (Merton [Thoms], 1846, p.863). And that chain thus created is our collective cultural and folkloric inheritance.

Just as there were pleas to make connections between folklore and dialect, so too have there been appeals to understand better links between language (encompassing dialect) and tourism. Whitney-Squires (2015, p.1160) noted 'relatively few studies focus on the nexus between tourism, language, and indigenous community-based initiatives. In a Scottish perspective, Butler (1978) examined the precarious state of Gaelic on Skye and the implications of increasing visitor numbers, but there has been little since. Whitney-Gould (2018, p.1910) also notes that tourism literature 'lumps' language together with "traditions and practices' and that such a superficial approach results in underestimating the importance of language to cultural identity and heritage. The consequence is that the use of local languages and dialects is often undervalued considered and superficial (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2013).

Doric and its place in tradition of North-East Scotland

Those issues - from that initial conceptualization of the word folklore by Thoms, to the superficiality of literature addressing language (or dialect) and tourism - collide fortuitously in an examination of Doric and North-East Scotland. The definition of folklore in the Oxford England Dictionary is 'the traditional beliefs and customs of a community passed on by word of mouth'. (OED, 2001). That 'word of mouth' is mentioned is important for this chapter because, not only does it imply that spoken language is an important aspect of folklore, but because the Doric dialect itself is

principally a spoken one, without standardized orthography (although much important literature exists). It is, first and foremost, a spoken tongue.

Doric[2] is the name given to the dialect of spoken in the North-East of Scotland (see map). It is a dialect of the Scots language, similar to, yet distinctively different from, that which is spoken elsewhere in Scotland. It is a living language (Millar, 2018). The 2011 Census showed the highest concentrations of Scots speakers in the North-East and in Shetland. It is widely used, possesses a distinctively rich vocabulary and is marked by certain 'shibboleths' (McClure (2002, p.21-22) which set it apart from General Scots. The most important of these is the replacing of *wh* in words like *whit* (what) *whan* (when), *whaur* (where) with the letter *f* so that in Doric it is *fit, fan, far*.

[FIGURE_1_HERE] *

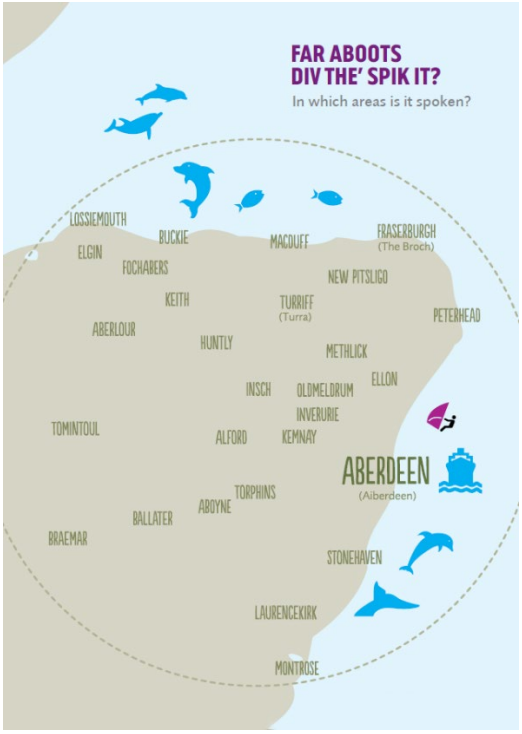

Figure 1: The area Doric is spoken. (Image: Robert Gordon University).

Doric is one of the principal ways in which people and communities in North-East Scotland are bound together. McClure noted: 'Doric defiantly exists persists as an integral part of the region's identity and self-image'. (McClure, 2002, p.15). It is fundamental to the identity of the region whether in its *Toonsers* form (associated with the City of Aberdeen itself) or in its richer and more mellifluous *Teuchter* form (spoken in the countryside and rural hinterlands). It has been described, perhaps uncharitably, as 'a significant part of an insignificant identity' (Loester, 2017, p.344). Yet, this is decidedly not an *insignificant* identity.

[FIGURE_2_HERE] *

[2] The word 'Doric' implying rustic or unsophisticated was used to describe dialects in Scotland more generally. It has come to be used specifically to refer to the version of Scots spoken in the North-East of Scotland. The name is not without its critics; many in the region still refer to it as the Buchan tongue.

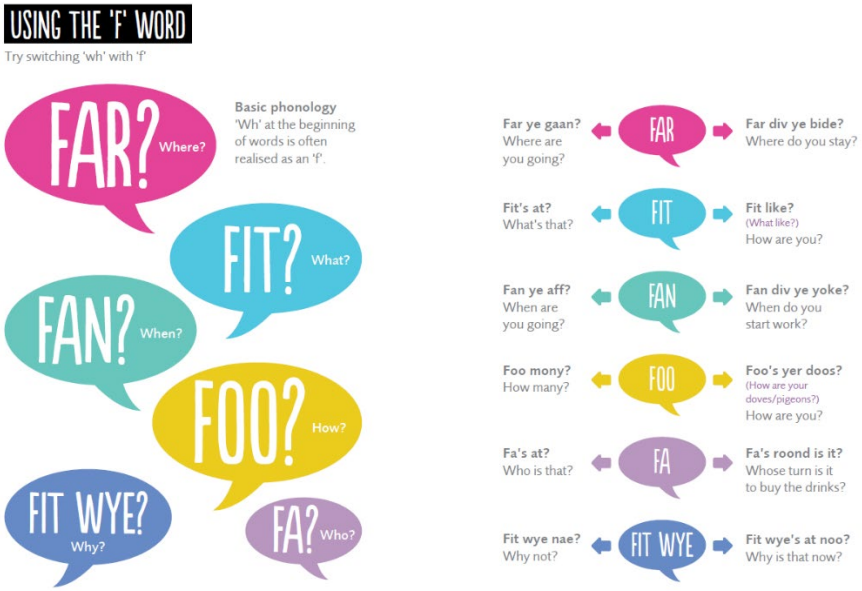

Figure 2: the 'F' words. (Image: Robert Gordon University).

The landscape of the region – particularly the affinity with the land and the mountains and the sea and coasts – represent strong cultural and folkloric markers in North-East Scotland. Much of the intangible cultural heritage of the region is evoked from an almost spiritual connection with, and sense of belonging to, the very tangible landscape. An obsessive concern for, and relationship with, the land has been at the heart of the narratives of folk traditions in the region for generations (and prevails even long after most people have ceased to have a direct connection with farming). Cuthbert Graham, a leading topographical historian of the area, described that the North-East 'has been dominated by a single theme – a single myth in the deep psychological sense – a passion for the land' (Graham, 1981). Much of the folklore, myth, legend and dialect is derived directly from this spiritual sense of, and connection to, the land. Flora Garry, one of the greatest Doric poets, said:

> 'It [land] was a sort of religion. It was the thing they lived for and thought about. It was every day that they were practising this religion. Religion, using the word in a different sense, meaning the Kirk on a Sunday, was in a way a much more superficial thing than this feeling they had about the parks and crops and the beasts.' (Garry, 1991).

A similar obsession can be observed in the relationship with the sea; a bond that has spawned a bewildering array of folklore traditions that, like those connected to the land, help define the culture, mentality and outlook of the people. Peter Anson, the leading ethnographer of North-East Scotland's fisher communities, profoundly understood the region, its folkloric traditions and culture:

> 'Folklore is still a force. While retaining ancient characteristics it is adapting itself to changes in ways of living and environment. Some customs have withered away and their memory has become romantic to us. Others have prospered to such an extent that they are ordinary, even tawdry and occasionally commercialised'. (Anson, 1965, p.7).

Landscape and sea come together as principal markers (even perhaps generators) of folklore and cultural heritage. In Doric-Land they are tied to the rhythm of the seasons, the rituals of agricultural life, the majesty of the landscape, the perils of the sea, the hardiness of the people, the simplicity of life, and expressed through the mither

tongue.[3] For centuries, fishing and farming have been central to the economic, social and cultural identity of the North-East of Scotland (Hood, 2009; Knox, 2001), and relationships with both sea and land have shaped the culture and identity of these communities, as well as underpinning its folkloric inheritance. Knox argues that sense of 'north-easterness is related to ways in which the dialect and culture have been mobilised' (Knox, 2001, p.315). Nicolaisen, a great scholar of the North-East, described folklore and dialect as the coming together of the *spatial* and the *cultural* with the 'old-fashioned notions of tradition' (Nicolaisen, 1980, p.137).

Those 'old-fashioned notions of tradition' are supported by a sense that Doric, the native voice of individuals and communities, is one of the most 'uncorrupted' and 'pure' varieties of dialects, linked to the continuation of traditional industries, the rural character of the area and its relative geographical isolation. (Loester, 2017, p.342). In addition to this obsessive concern for the landscape which shaped both dialect and folklore, two other critical factors are at very evident. As mentioned previously, Thoms emphasised two prevailing characteristics in his letter discussing folklore in 1846 and, today, these remain two of the obsessive drivers for those concerned with the folklore, traditions, culture and heritage North-East Scotland: the notions of *things lost* and *things to be preserved*. These are the fundamental preoccupations of Doric culture.

McClure has mentioned its 'defiant' survival in an increasingly fragmented and globalized world. Doric is a remarkably durable element in the cultural landscape, and there has been a long, valiant fight to keep it alive:

> 'It would be a pity indeed to sacrifice the beauty of our Doric on the altar of a fetish called gentility. There were people who were always telling us the Doric was dowie and dying, and that it was well on the way to being a 'bonnie corpse'. But, if it was a corpse it was a mighty lively one. Surely we are not to allow all this gracious and precious inheritance of ours to pass away from us. We were told it was vulgarian and more likely to prove a handicap than an asset to youth. That is utterly and completely wrong. We were bilingual. We used the English language as finely and as freely as the English did. All English literature was ours, but our literature was not theirs'. (Symon, 1932, p.4).

Symon was also an important Doric author, a Great War poet whose work has similar impact on Scots as that of Brooke or Sassoon has on the English. She emphasises the cultural place of the dialect, as well as a cultural exclusivity of which she was proud. Her belief, nearly a century ago, that reports of Doric's demise were exaggerated, still resonates today as the obsession with *things lost* and *things to be preserved* continues to be played out.

Doric and the visitor

What place, therefore, does Doric occupy for visitors and tourists coming to North-East Scotland? How does this cultural inheritance manifest itself in the twenty-first century? The region has sometimes an erroneous reputation for being insular. Historically and culturally, it was outwards facing (principally across the North Sea to the Low Countries and the Baltic), although separated by geographical barriers from the rest of Scotland. In the last sixty years, the region's more cosmopolitan feel has been due, in no small part, to the energy industry drawing people from across the world. Although globalized in this sense, it does not have the same tourist appeal as highly-visited places like Edinburgh or the Highlands and Skye, and a significant

[3] Mother tongue. Doric words and phrases in this chapter are not given in quotation marks, and nor are 'apologetic apostrophes' added where words are contracted.

proportion of tourism has hitherto been business-related. That said, tourism is important, and increasingly so in the last decade. Although not a 'hidden jewel' in the traditional sense (National Geographic (2010) rated the Moray Firth coastline number eleven in the top 99 stretches of coast on the planet), it does have capacity for further growth and diversification in tourism terms.

Anson, mentioned earlier, noted that folklore is sometimes exploited and given over to 'tawdry commercialism'. This is (still) something largely absent in North-East Scotland where the cultural experience remains authentic. In part this is due to the region not being subject to the numbers of visitors found in other Scottish tourist hot-spots, and partly because of the zealousness with which the indigenous population guard their heritage and traditions with Doric being possibly the most significant of these cultural and folkloric markers.

Chris Foy, Chief Executive of Visit Aberdeenshire, makes no bones about the importance of the dialect, believing that the region embraces the visitor 'with a warm and authentic Doric welcome' (Foy, 2019) noting:

> '[it is] tricky to understand but woven with complexities, glorious variances and brimming with the most wonderful, colourful expressions'. (Foy, quoted BBC, 2021).

Foy's comment highlights the extent to which both VisitAberdeenshire and its parent body, VisitScotland, see the dialect as a central element in the region's culturally distinctive and authentic offer to visitors.

> 'Doric … is full of fascinating words and phrases such as *loon* (lad), *quine* (girl/woman) and *fit like*? (how are you?), that you won't find elsewhere in Scotland. Taking some time to appreciate this unique language and, more importantly, the deeper cultural heritage of the North-East, will enrich any visit to this less discovered part of Scotland'. (Visit Scotland, 2021).

VisitAberdeenshire also, helpfully, give guidance on one important facet, the tendency for lavatories in many places to be indicated by signs saying 'loons' or 'quines':

> 'Loons and quines are boys and girls. You might hear these words being added on to the sayings above: "fit like, loon?" or "far hiv ye bin, quine?" These words are also useful to know as they may just be the only way for you to differentiate between the ladies and gentlemen bathrooms'. (Visit Scotland, 2022).

Visit Scotland also makes much of the rich supernatural folklore that characterizes the region and this folklore is frequently rooted in, or transmitted through, Doric. The fact that Bram Stoker, author of Dracula, holidayed on the Buchan coast at Cruden Bay features heavily. Nearby Slains Castle[4], the "inspiration for Dracula" according to Visit Scotland, is a major component in the promotion of the supernatural element to visitors. A number of Stoker's other works are set along this part of the coast including the *Watter's Mou* (a Doric title), and *The Mystery of the Sea*. In his work *Crooken Sands*, Stoker himself uses Doric liberally, and draws on the life of Jamie Fleeman (1713-1778) the Laird of Udny's Fule (the last family jester or fool in Scotland):

[4] The truth is somewhat different. The spectacular ruin of 'new' Slains Castle figures strongly in regional promotion of Stoker, Dracula and the supernatural generally. However, when Stoker visited it was an intact, and then relatively modern, country house. The roof was removed in 1925 simply to avoid taxes.

> 'Na! Na!' came the answer, 'there is nae sic another fule in these parts. Nor has there been since the time o' Jamie Fleeman – him that was fule to the Laird o' Udny'. (Stoker, 1894, p.16).[5]

Just as Stoker and Dracula are important for attracting visitors to the Buchan coast, they have also been channelled back into the cultural life of the region. In 2019, the story was reinvented as *Doricula*, a Doric retelling, mixing street theatre and highly physical circus performance, which played in locations across the North-East to locals and visitors alike, as well as at touring festivals in France and Italy.

Spikkin aboot oor heirskip[6]

Over the last decade (and particularly since the formulation of the Doric Board to promote the dialect in 2016), there has been a move to something more meaningful; rather than speaking *about* the dialect third-hand, it is now something that has visibility and audibility as part of visitors' everyday experiences in the region. Certainly, in the past, visitors encountered it as, perhaps, background noise in shops or restaurants, but recently it has come to the fore in a more deliberate and explicit way. The example above around lavatory signs is one manifestation of this but there are many others.

A particularly important facet of this has been the engagement of visitor attractions and heritage sites. For some this is nothing new. The Grassic Gibbon Centre in Kincardineshire (towards the south of the Doric-speaking lands) has had the dialect at its heart since inception. This is hardly surprising given the run-away popularity of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel *Sunset Song* (habitually voted Scotland's favourite book). Dialect is very much at the heart of Grassic Gibbon's narrative and therefore the story that the Centre tells. For other, small heritage attractions in the region (like Fraserburgh Heritage Centre or Buckie Fishing Heritage Centre), Doric is a natural element of the experience where *couthy* (friendly or comfortable) front-of-house staff greet visitors in their mither tongue. Macduff Aquarium, a popular attraction, tells stories of some of the most characterful fish in Doric with Cedric, a Flapper Skate, featuring in a range of Doric stories and storytelling events.

Perhaps more significant, however, is the embracing of Doric by Scotland's two principal heritage conservation bodies, the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) which own between them forty properties or sites across the region. NTS's rejuvenation of House of Dun completed in 2021 is an interesting example. House of Dun is a grand baroque mansion house overlooking the Montrose Basin. The Doric dialect here is often called 'Mearns' after the name of the district, and a few miles further south the vernacular shifts to that of Angus Scots (with the loss of the 'f' Shibboleth that marks out Doric at its purest).

House of Dun, an impressive property, was home to the aristocratic Kennedy-Erskine family. A member of that family, Violet Jacob (née Kennedy-Erskine), was one of the most noteworthy Scots poets of the twentieth century. Her father was Laird of Dun, her grandmother was a natural daughter of King William IV. She belonged to an elite social class and yet, as a child, she had a carefree upbringing, mixing with all of the children on the estate:

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[5] By coincidence, the legend of the Laird of Udny's Fule was well-known to Lord Raglan mentioned at the start of this chapter. Raglan's wife was an Udny, a descendant of the Laird to whom Fleeman served as Fool.

[6] Heritage.

‘she lairned the leid o the grieves, the orramen, the ploomen and the cottars fa aa warket the fairm. (Gweed Wirds, 2022).

[FIGURE_3_HERE]

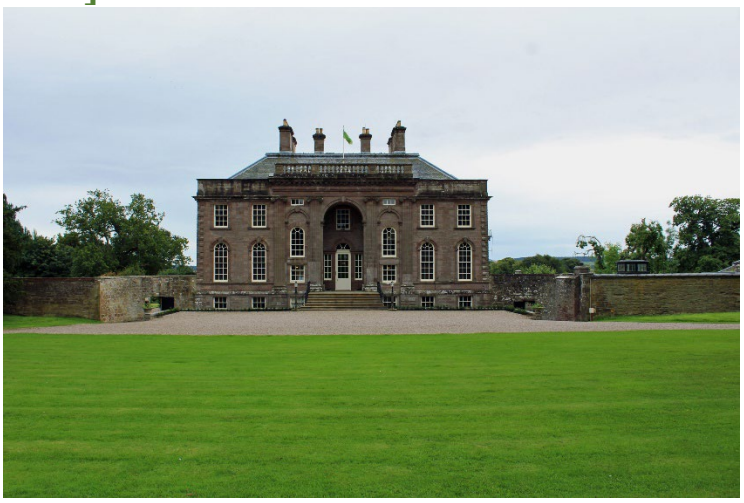

Figure 3 – House of Dun. (Image: Author).

She was not unique in this respect but, unlike the majority of her upper-class contemporaries, Jacob retained Mearns Doric all her whole life and saw it as part of her very soul. She wrote extensively, novels, prose, reviews and most particularly poetry. Her work was deeply informed by the folklore, legends and traditions around House of Dun but it owes its unique, distinctive dignity to her use of her mither tongue. John Buchan, author of *The Thirty Nine Steps*, wrote the foreword for her work *Songs of Angus* and noted: ‘she writes in Scots because what she has to say could not be written otherwise’.

Jacob now features as a costumed guide at House of Dun. Her poetry has been recorded by Alistair Heather, a leading Scots language writer and presenter, as part of the audio interpretation. Jacob’s poem *The Wild Geese*, narrated by Heather, conveys a strong sense of the place, dialect, and Jacob herself. The outbuildings at Dun have become a folk museum, giving a permanent home to the outstanding collection of objects gathered by Lady Maitland of Burnside. The National Trust for Scotland has described this as ‘reimagining’ the property, and it does so with the indigenous heritage and folklore traditions – dialect included – at its heart.

In 2019, Historic Environment Scotland in partnership with the Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen, which researches the culture of the North-East of Scotland, launched a series of children’s quizzes for some of its visitor attractions, including Huntly Castle and Spynie Palace. These quizzes were produced in both English and Doric. Digital assets have been created such as ‘Stories of Aberdeenshire’ (a collaboration between Visit Scotland and the Elphinstone Institute at Aberdeen University) which tells folklore tales across the region including many sound recordings in Doric by storytellers.

The bonnie lass o Fyvie

The ports of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire have witnessed trade across the North Sea for centuries and many ballads (and indeed stories and legends) have come from continental Europe. This, coupled with the ‘long legacy of farming, fishing … [giving] an enviable tradition of storytelling which often takes the form of song and verse’

(VisitScotland, 2022) enables tourism authorities to describe the region as 'the Ballad Capital of World'. It is a bold claim but one that is not without foundation:

> 'North-East balladry constitutes the richest regional tradition in Britain. The warrant for this assertion lies in both the quantity and the quality of the area's ballads; the tradition has more recorded ballads than any other and it includes what good authority has judged the "best ballads"'. (Buchan, 1972, p.4).

There is compelling, widely-accepted evidence that the traditional ballads of the North-East have influenced musical genres such as Bluegrass, Country, and Rock 'n' Roll. It is well-documented that the *Bonnie Lass of Fyvie*, perhaps the most-celebrated and well-loved of North-Eastern Ballads, found its way to the United States where the title was corrupted to *Fennario*. Bob Dylan's *Pretty Peggy-o*, from his 1962 debut album, has its roots in *Fennario* and is a 'skilful embroidery on the Bonnie Lass of Fyvie'. (Bold, 2021, p.37). Joan Baez recorded a version of it the following year, and Simon and Garfunkel the year after. Dolly Parton, Richard Thompson and even the Grateful Dead, share their roots with traditional ballads from the region. The musical legacy is strong, and virtually all indigenous song is in Doric.

The 'Stories of Aberdeenshire' project builds on this tradition showcasing extensively the musical and ballad heritage of the region alongside the other staples of the area, the folklore and supernatural customs. The Bothy Ballad tradition (songs sung by itinerant farm labourers, often infused with political or economic meaning, and occasionally lewd) remains extraordinarily strong with events and festivals featuring them, attracting audiences from far and wide. The sung and spoken word are cornerstones of the Across the Grain festival (successor to the Doric Festival) which runs in October each year under the auspices of Aberdeenshire Council also attracts locals and visitors.

A fly cup and a fine piece

One of the most emblematic encounters that tourists have with Doric culture is in terms of food and drink. The concept of the Fly Cup is one of the most omnipresent, and few visitors can escape this phenomenon. Various cafés around the North-East are called 'The Fly Cup' including in Portknockie and in Inverurie. A 'fly cup' (or more accurately, a fly cuppie) is technically a quick cup of tea or coffee but is imbued with much more cultural significance and is rarely a swift event. A fly cup is a lingering event, where coffee or tea is partaken, and a *newsie* is had (the exchange of news and gossip). In a private home, a fly cup can take on all the ceremony (and spread) of formal afternoon tea. A 'fine piece' is the essential accompaniment to a fly cup, being any type of rich, calorific cake or baking. In Aberdeen itself, this is sometimes named a 'funcy piece' (a term regarded with snobbish scorn as déclassé by Teuchters in the hinterland).

Another part of culinary heritage that visitors encounter is the buttery (as it is described by Teuchters) or rowie (as it is called by Toonsers). This heavily salted and fatted flaky bread roll – described, not inaptly, by *The Guardian* as 'roadkill croissants' – has its origins in the fishing industry, being created as long-lasting alternative to ordinary bread for crews at sea. It is, perhaps, the one delicacy central to North-Eastern identity:

> ‘it’s the characteristic staple of north-east Scotland, as much a part of the local identity as the lush green landscape and the Doric dialect….Loons and quines who knew that taste, and what it meant: home’. (Ross, 2018)

Over the years, the buttery ingredients have changed little but moves to replace the butter and lard with palm oil have been resisted and, with events such as the World Buttery Championships, there has been a return to traditional methods and ingredients. ‘If you visit Aberdeenshire and do not eat butteries, you haven’t visited Aberdeenshire’ (Ross, 2018).

The only other food that can rival (and it does) the buttery as being at the heart of the culinary heritage of the North-East is Cullen Skink, a thick soup made of smoked haddock, potatoes, onions and milk. It owes its name to the village of Cullen on the Moray Firth coast with *skink* being a Scots word for a knuckle or hough of beef (from Middle Dutch *schenke*). Cullen Skink meaning that instead of a beef broth, the fisher folk of Cullen had one of haddock. Cullen Skink has gone from a regional delicacy to an international one, from one made in the kitchens of fisherfolk to one made in Michelin-starred restaurants. Today, it is omnipresent on the menus of virtually every establishment a visitor to the region might eat in.

Conclusion

> ‘So, mak yer wye tae Aiberdeenshire, connect with some of the region’s couthy craiturs to learn more… ‘Fit like?’ is sure to spark a warm conversation!’ (Visit Scotland, 2022).

Thirty years ago, tourism offer for the region was very different. It focused primarily on the ‘Castle Trail’ and the ‘Whisky Trail’ and although both remain important elements, there was little that showed the indigenous intangible heritage and almost nothing that included Doric. That this has changed is undoubtedly down to a greater understanding of the value of intangible heritage such as dialect, and also perhaps due to a greater sophistication in visitors wanting to experience an authentic culture but it is also due to the dogged persistence of the people of the North-East who value the dialect so highly. This speaks to the point addressed earlier about the preoccupation with *things lost* and *things to be preserved*, points made by Thoms in 1846. Those for whom Doric means something visceral have striven to promote and protect it and, through the establishment of the Doric Board in 2016, to ensure that it is strongly visible in the everyday life of the region for locals and visitors alike. In 2022, stickers proclaiming ‘We spik Doric here’ are being offered to businesses across the region as part of the Board’s activities.

[FIGURE_4_HERE]

Figure 4: 'We spik Doric here' shop stickers (Image: The Doric Board).

That Doric is at the very heart of the cultural identity and heritage of the region is not in doubt. Neither is the fact that the region makes much of its warm unspoilt authenticity, and is largely unaffected by the tawdry commercialization that Anson warned about. This is not language tourism in the sense of students coming to learn it as a foreign language. Rather this is the language of everyday encounters in shops and restaurants, but also it is, increasingly, visible and valued in heritage and cultural attractions across the region. It is in castles, galleries, museums, heritage centres too; it is in the food and drink experiences, the craft experiences, the music and festivals. Whitney-Gould points out that language is often lumped with 'traditions and practices'. Some visitors to North-East Scotland might see it as this but they are also likely to encounter a thriving vernacular that encapsulates the culture of the region. Reports of Doric's death have been greatly exaggerated; when it was suggested to Mary Symon that it is was a 'bonnie corpse' she replied, nearly a century ago, that if it was so then it was 'a mighty lively one'. Time has not altered that. Exposure to tourism is not a threat for Doric; it is another example of its enduring vibrancy.

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