

James Hogg in the Ettrick Landscape

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Introduction

James Hogg travelled widely in Scotland and beyond but spent much of his life in the Ettrick Forest of Selkirkshire. This open pastoral landscape had changed little in many hundreds of years.¹ Hogg was born at a time when that world was changing rapidly, with a much more commercial approach to agriculture, to meet the needs of a burgeoning local and Scottish population and the rapidly developing textile towns nearby. Hogg benefited from the resulting demand for skilled shepherds to look after the increasingly valuable flocks of sheep and to ready them for a larger customer base. It was sheep-droving roads that took Hogg from Ettrick to Edinburgh and the prosperous markets there for meat and literature.

This article sketches some ways in which Hogg's life and works were influenced by this changing historical landscape. Illumination is provided here by some more rarely used primary sources from the National Records of Scotland (NRS) made available through the Historic Environment Scotland archives (HES) in Edinburgh, including the extensive Buccleuch Papers, from the area's largest landlord. The Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust has kindly allowed us to study them and we acknowledge the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KT, in publishing this article. The remarkable survival of the 1694 poll tax book for Ettrick parish, also held by HES, provides a helpful census.² This material is compared here with later population records to explore a changing human landscape. The area of particular focus is shown in Figure 1, which is where James Hogg spent much of his life in the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys and which features extensively in his writing. This location is discussed in Valentina Bold and Suzanne Gilbert's 'Hogg, Ettrick and Oral Tradition',³ and the figure also follows Peter Garside's Map 4 around the scenes of Robert Wringhim's suicide and burial in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.⁴

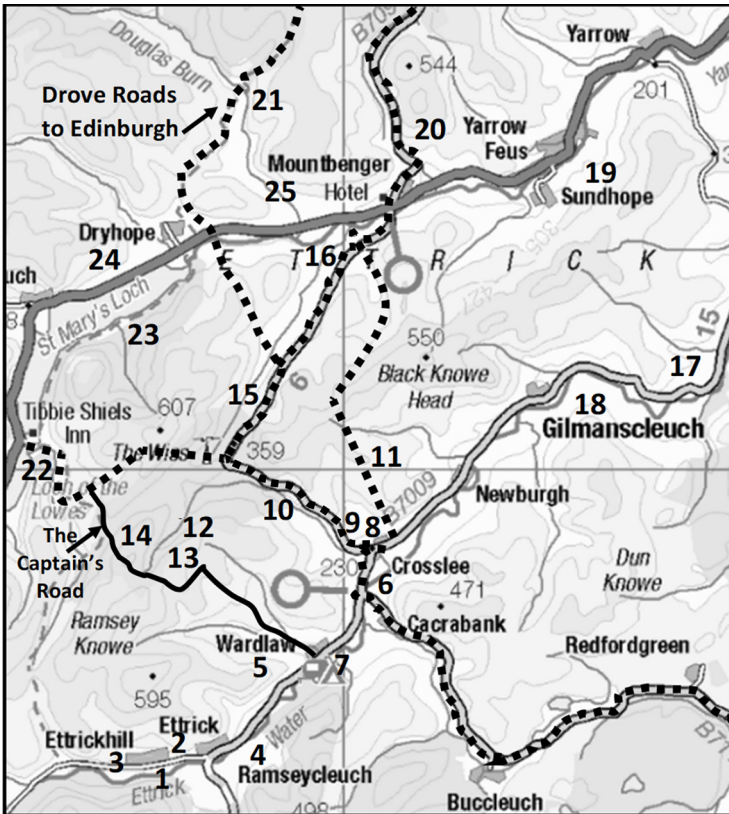


Figure 1: James Hogg's Ettrick Landscape.

Figure 1 Key: 1 Hogg's birthplace **Ettrickhall** and nearby **Ettrickhouse** where Walter Brydon leased a house for Hogg's family. 2 **James Hogg Museum** and old school house. 3 **James Hogg's grave** and **Ettrick Kirk**. 4 **Ramseycleuch** in Hogg's first meeting with Walter Scott. 5 **Thirlestane House** home of Improver Lord Napier. 6 **The Tushielaw Inn** where the Crookwelch Club met. 7 **Hopehouse** and **Thirlestane Fairground** featured in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. 8 **Crosslee** home of Walter Brydon, James Hogg's 'best friend'. 9 **Crookwelch** likely origin of the Crookwelch Club. 10 and 11 **Tushielaw Burn** and **Gowdie Kip** ancient thatched house remains. 12 **Berrybush** sheep-smearing house. 13 and 14 **Cowan's Croft**, and **Fall Law** sites linked to Robert Wringhim's burial in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. 15 **Hart Leap** ('Hart Loup') featured in *Confessions of*

a Justified Sinner. **16 Altrieve** which the Duke of Buccleuch leased to Hogg from 1815. **17 Singlie Farm** where Hogg worked and practiced the fiddle. **18 Gilmanscleuch**, *The Mountain Bard* **19 Sundhope** in *Gilmanscleuch* **20 Mountbenger** where Hogg was tenant 1824-1830 **21 Blackhouse Farm** where Hogg spent 10 years as a shepherd 1790-1800. Nearby, he first heard Burns' *Tam o' Shanter*. **22 St. Mary's Cottage** or **Tibbie Shiels Inn**. **23 Bowerhope Farm** home of Hogg's close friend Alexander Laidlaw. **24 St. Mary's Kirkyard** linked to Covenanters and blanket preaching. **25 Craig Douglas** where Hogg met William Wordsworth. Base Map: Canmore.⁵

New Opportunities and Risks

It is clear from various works, including *The Shepherd's Guide*, that Hogg well understood this new commercial landscape.⁶ The Scottish population more than doubled between 1700 and the first census of 1841, from around a million to over 2.6 million. Based on the 1694 poll tax, parish books, and censuses,⁷ the Ettrick parish population was somewhat constant until the later eighteenth century, but rose quickly from about 352 to 530 during Hogg's lifetime (Table 1), as a capable agricultural workforce arrived in the area in search of employment. There was a brief recessionary decline after the Napoleonic Wars and censuses after 1841 show a declining local population as mechanisation and competition displaced labour. Late eighteenth-century population growth and industrial and agricultural developments swelled the demand for Ettrick's agricultural produce. Better transport, improved housing, and food supply increased local longevity and fertility.

Table 1: Ettrick parish population 1694-1871⁸

1694 Poll	1755 Webster	1766/7 Parish book	1792 Survey	1821 Smith
351	397	352	470	445

1832 Parish book	1841 census	1851 census	1861 census	1871 census
530	524	477	454	433

One very early commercial development in this area was in the long-distance droving of cattle and sheep. Droving had a long history; after all, it was the only contemporary way to get stock from rural pastures to town markets. Surging urban populations in England and Scotland expanded the scale and length of droves. Records from Carlisle show just 18,574 cattle driven through the town in 1663. This increased quickly after the 1707 Act of Union to 80,000 in 1750 and over 100,000 by 1800.⁹ Some of these were bound for London's Smithfield Market and cattle required pasture on the way. Important drove routes traversed the Ettrick Forest heading 40 miles north to Edinburgh, a route Hogg knew well, and south to Carlisle (Figure 1). Hogg claimed he could still walk this Edinburgh journey late in life. Droving encouraged more sheep dealing, but this was a risky trade with volatile prices which probably explains the well-known 1776 financial ruin of Hogg's father, Robert. James Hogg left Ettrick school (Figure 1: 2) after only a short period of learning. Perhaps this calamity helped spark his startling creativity. It certainly led him to farm work and a career as a shepherd.

Hogg himself knew the drove roads well and tells us: 'I have lived beside a drove road for the better part of my life'.¹⁰ His homes at Altrive, Mountbenger, and Blackhouse were all close to such routes (Figure 1: 16, 20, and 21). An early literary adventure took place after a sheep drive to the Edinburgh market.¹¹ Because he could not sell all his flock at Monday's market, he waited until Wednesday to sell the remainder. To pass the time, he tells us, he successfully printed a collection of poems from memory. As the main routes from the Yarrow to Ettrick valleys, James Hogg would have frequently used these drove roads to visit family and friends including his 'best friend' Walter Brydon at Crosslee (Figure 1: 8).¹² One drove road features in dramatic scenes in James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, with the discovery of Robert Wringhim's suicide:

a man coming in at the pass called *The Hart Loup*, with a drove of lambs, on the way for Edinburgh, perceived something like a man standing in a strange frightful position at the side of one of Eldinhope hay-ricks. The driver's attention was riveted on this strange uncouth figure, and as the drove-road passed at no great distance from the spot, he first called, but receiving no answer, he went up to the spot, and behold it was the above-mentioned young man, who had hung himself in the hay rope that was tying down the rick.¹³

The drover is travelling from about 15 to 16 in Figure 1 when he finds the body.¹⁴ Other routes are shown in the figure including the Captain's Road, which by implication features in *Confessions*, as discussed by Garside, leading the Editor to the two burial sites linked to Wringhim at Cowan's Croft and Fall Law (Faw Law). Canmore reports a local tradition of an ancient burial site nearby at Berrybush (Figure 1: 12, 13, and 14).¹⁵ Droving declined by the mid-nineteenth century, with alternative transport routes available, but it was a very active enterprise during all of Hogg's life. Drove roads took him to Edinburgh and literary success.

Storms

Farming life in the Ettrick Forest was hard, not least because of periodic and devastating severe weather events. As stock became more valuable, through better breeding and growing eighteenth-century demand, the need for their protection became pressing. Winter weather was generally colder between late medieval times and about 1850, a period commonly called, 'The Little Ice Age'. Winter storms with heavy drifting snow threatened the lives of stock and even shepherds in a land largely denuded of trees and with little natural shelter according to contemporary surveys.¹⁶

Lord Napier in his *Treatise on Practical Store-Farming* and Hogg in his *Shepherd's Calendar* describe numerous severe winter storms.¹⁷ Thousands of sheep died in the 1674 storm and shepherds built rings of sheep corpses, called 'stinking stells', to shelter those still alive. Many farms lost all their sheep, and Phawhope, at the head of the Ettrick valley, was ruined for the next twenty years. The loss of sheep on Buccleuch farms in Ettrick and Yarrow amounted to 19,500. The 1674 accounts show a fall of 53% in farm rental payments from the previous year.¹⁸ Many farms are described as 'waiste' and are charged no rent at all. A century later, James Hogg, as a working shepherd at Blackhouse Farm, experienced a terrible snowstorm on 24 January 1794. It killed thousands of sheep in the Scottish borders and a few shepherds perished with their flocks. In Hogg's account, many turned to religion for salvation, others to wild superstition, whilst some wished to flee. Amidst the anguish, Hogg hails Walter Brydon of Crosslee as the calm voice in the storm.

The Buccleuch Papers and mid-eighteenth-century maps show that protection for sheep became an important focus with shelter provided by the planting of stands of trees, 'commonly of a square

form',¹⁹ known as tree stells. They were highly effective. Hogg says in his *Shepherd's Guide* that they 'keep the flocks safe and warm, though the tempest be ever so fierce'.²⁰ In the same text, Hogg refers to the Duke of Buccleuch's pioneering use of tree planting which tallies with the Buccleuch Papers and Figure 3, which shows tree stells on the Buccleuch farms of Crosslee, Nether Deloraine, Singlie, and elsewhere. Flocks could be taken to safety in or by the stell away from driving snow. Many old tree stells remain visible today.

Hogg preferred stells built of stone (Figure 2). Circular stone stells, 'with a door in it, at which the sheep may go in and out' away from the prevailing wind, became numerous as did other stone enclosures. Many are visible today, although it is difficult to be sure how many of those in Figure 3 (following page) were built in Hogg's lifetime and how many a little after.²¹ None features on Ainslie's detailed 1773 map,²² but they seem plentiful in Hogg's 1807 *Shepherd's Guide*. Most likely, the great majority were first constructed whilst Hogg was alive. Towards the end of Hogg's life, general tree planting had considerably advanced and the 1833 *Statistical Account* states that 'many of the farm steadings and snug cottages on the Ettrick, are fringed and skirted round with a few lovely young trees'.

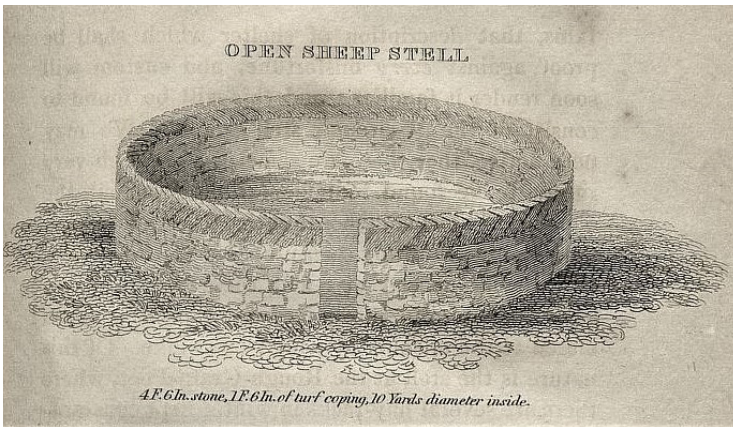


Figure 2: A stone sheep stell with a turf cap from Napier, *A Treatise on Practical Store-Farming*, facing p. 120.

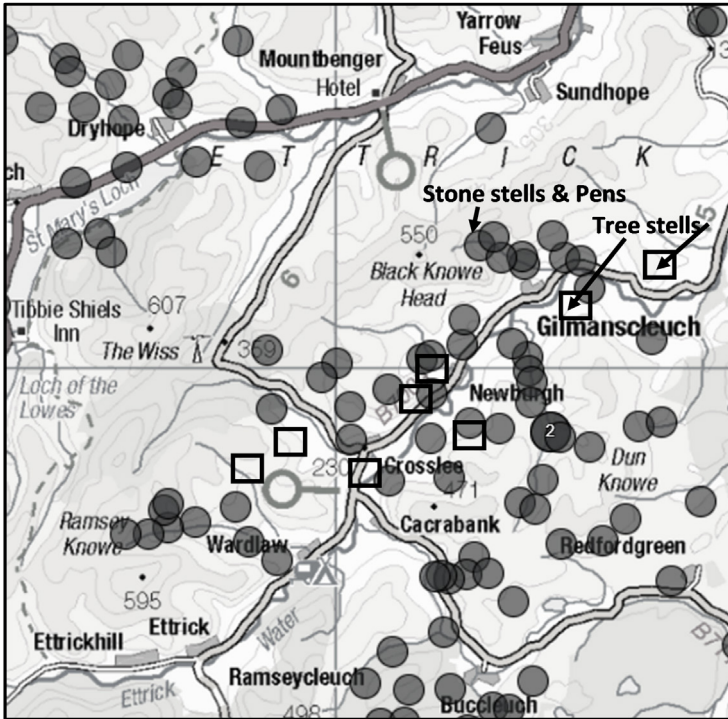


Figure 3: Tree stells (squares), and stone stells and sheep pens (gray-shaded circles) in the Ettrick Landscape (Source: Canmore).

Long and Short Sheep

Ewe, lamb, and wool prices increased significantly in the late eighteenth century as the Napoleonic Wars approached, particularly after 1780.²³ Hogg's *Shepherd's Guide* became a classic for sheep farmers and agricultural improvers. In it, he presented gathered data of mutton and wool prices in the area over decades, showing rising prices and volatility too.²⁴ Crosslee (Figure 1: 8) was reputedly the first Selkirkshire farm to introduce cheviot sheep, or long sheep, in the 1760s,²⁵ although there are significant doubts about this.²⁶ Hogg describes the 'endless contentions' by the Ettrick Forest farming community of 1785 as cheviots replaced blackface or short sheep.²⁷ If the contemporary purity of breeds is uncertain, it is clear that there was a determined move to better wool. Johnston's 1794 agricultural survey tells us: 'But the great advantage in favour of the Cheviot

sheep, is the quality of their wool, the superior value of which will, it is thought, in a few years to recommend them, as to make them the only stock in the county.²⁸

Johnston believed cheviot fleeces were twice as valuable as those of the blackface. The production of sheep's milk, butter, and cheese, mainstays of local diets for centuries, declined because traditional sheep-milking compromised cheviot wool quality as Smith observed in 1833: 'The Cheviot have superseded the black-faced sheep; and, with the breed, the management has been materially altered. There is no ewe-milking as formerly.'²⁹ Sheep smearing had been known since medieval times.³⁰ It involved rubbing sheep's bodies with a mixture of tar and butter to protect against parasites. It was replaced by dipping because smearing made wool less attractive at market. Smearing houses, often connected to workers' cottages, were still common in Hogg's lifetime and Robson records one at Berrybush (Figure 1: 12) as late as 1841, when this was a dyeing art.³¹

Not everyone understood the important differences between long sheep cheviots and short sheep blackfaces. Hogg's wonderful sense of humour emerges as he recounts a possibly fictitious discussion between Walter Scott and Walter Brydon probably taking place at Crosslee in 1801. Walter Scott jests with Walter Brydon, who would have been about 60 at the time, about the different types of sheep:

I am rather at a loss regarding the merits of this very important question. How long must a sheep actually measure to come under the denomination of a long sheep?

Mr. Brydon, who, in the simplicity of his heart, neither perceived the quiz nor the reproof, fell to answer with great sincerity, — "It's the woo, sir — it's the woo that makes the difference. The long sheep hae the short woo, and the short sheep hae the lang thing; and these are just kind o' names we gie them like." Mr. Scott could not preserve his grave face of strict calculation; it went gradually away, and a hearty guffaw followed.³²

Commercialisation

Commercialisation changed the relationship between landlords, tenants, and workers. Early seventeenth-century documents show tenants paying the Duke of Buccleuch as much in crops as in cash, but by the 1670s tenant farmers paid a set cash rental amount reflecting this commercialisation. According to the 1694 Ettrick

parish poll book, contemporary with Robert Wringhim's life in *Confessions*, thirty-nine tenant farmers held most of the land from landlords. Others had limited rights to small plots of land including some twenty-one cottars and their families, who would spend busy times working for the tenant farmers.³³ By far the largest groups were 152 hinds and farm servants, with their families, who laboured for the tenants. All of these people probably lived in cottages of thatch, earth and clay, rather like the 'Cottage in Ettrick' in Figure 4.³⁴ Such building forms had a low rectangular wall of stone and earth and would have had a thatched roof supported by a timber infrastructure. Hogg's first homes were almost certainly like this. These cottages were often clustered together housing tenants, cottars, servants, and farm animals as well. In 1694, sixteen of the parish farms, sometimes called 'fermtouns', had more than ten people living there, suggesting multiple thatched cottages as described. They were common in the Ettrick landscape throughout James Hogg's lifetime and continued to be so well into the nineteenth century.



Figure 4: 'Cottage in Ettrick', by D.O. Hill, frontispiece to volume v, *Tales and Sketches, by the Ettrick Shepherd*, 1836-7. These eighteenth-century cottages were probably similar to James Hogg's original home at Ettrickhall (Figure 1: 1), and were typical of Ettrick housing before the late eighteenth century.

Remnants of such cottages are usually buried beneath modern farms, although some foundations are still visible in the landscape, including two sites discovered by the authors (Figure 1: 10 and 11).³⁵ The first, at Tushielaw Burn, is a cluster of three parallel long rectangular foundations of late medieval or post-medieval buildings. The largest measures 17m by 5m with a wall some 2.5m thick. No doubt several people and some animals were housed here. The second site at Gowdie Bray has two similar but slightly smaller foundations. Others may still be found.

The Buccleuch Papers show that the number of tenant farmers declined over time, whilst those remaining were wealthier and held much larger parcels of land. Ettrick parish had just sixteen tenants in the 1841 census, six years after Hogg's death, a reduction of twenty-three since 1694. Tenant reduction was a process beginning in the late seventeenth century and increasing rapidly but was largely completed by the mid-eighteenth century. The Buccleuch accounts show that major building projects commenced soon after 1750 as agricultural prices started to surge. This encouraged landlords and more prosperous tenants to invest in improvements including the creation of stells, walled enclosures of land, and the building of elegant stone farmhouses with slate roofs replacing the old earth and thatch variety. Outbuildings or steadings were also built, comprising barns, stables, cow houses, and general stores. Johnston in his 1794 *General Survey* states:

The steadings on the larger farms lately built, are commodious and substantial. The dwelling house consists of two stories, built with stone and lime, covered with blue slate, and neatly fitted up and finished within. On the small farms, many of them are mean and paltry, and neither well situated or constructed; and are covered with thatch. A man that has not a spirit for a good house, has commonly as little for improvement.³⁶

The Buccleuch accounts show the Duke importing lime for mortar and slate for roofing from his own quarry at Eckford near Kelso, to allow improvements to farms some thirty miles distant in the Ettrick Forest. The earliest Ordnance Survey (OS) maps of 1858 show numerous such farmhouses and steadings, including those in Figure 1 at Mountbenger, Crosslee, Singlie, Sundhope, Gilmanscleuch, Ramscycleuch, Dryhope, Tushielaw, and Newburgh. All were probably substantially built before 1800. Further improvements

followed. Farmhouses, steadings, stone stells, and walled enclosures required substantial local building stone and fortunately, it was readily available. Canmore has identified more than 40 old quarries in the area of Figure 1 of varying sizes and mostly linked to this building boom.

New larger outbuildings created important spaces for work, lodging, and even entertainment. Like many local youths, Hogg first worked as a humble farm servant at several such places and often slept in these new attic spaces designed for accommodation, ‘my bed being always in stables and cow-hooses’. Below the attics, there was room for socialisation too, as described in *The Mountain Bard*, and these spaces created an opportunity for Hogg to have some fun of his own and practice on his violin:

When serving with Mr Scott of Singlee [Singleie, Figure 1: 17], there happened to be a dance one evening, at which a number of the friends and neighbours of the family were present. I, being admitted into the room as a spectator, was all attention to the music; and, on the company breaking up, I retired to my stable-loft, and fell to essaying some of the tunes to which I had been listening. The musician going out on some necessary business, and not being aware that another of the same craft was so near him, was not a little surprised when the tones of my old violin assailed his ears. At first he took it for the late warbles of his own ringing through his head; but, on a little attention, he, to his horror and astonishment, perceived that the sounds were real,— and that the tunes, which he had lately being playing with so much skill, were now murdered by some invisible being hard by him. Such a circumstance at that dead hour of the night, and when he was unable to discern from what quarter the sounds proceeded, convinced him all at once that it was a delusion of the devil[.]³⁷

By the late eighteenth century, skilled and experienced workers were in great demand by tenant farmers and many were given cottage homes sometimes built of stone. Tenants were equally happy to house workers’ children and relatives. As a more seasoned worker, Hogg was granted a cottage by James Laidlaw at Blackhouse. Farm machinery was improving too and required a skilled hand. The improved James Small plough was commonly in use by 1833 according to Johnston,³⁸ replacing the ‘old Scot’s plough’. The new plough was drawn by

two horses rather than oxen. The 1797 to 1798 Horse Tax rolls list thirty-six horses in Ettrick parish liable to duty no doubt used both for travel and farm work.³⁹ Johnston in 1794 also reports improving crop rotation, and notes that 'Potatoes are found everywhere and they produce early and have a very long season and are non-exhausting'.⁴⁰

After about 1750, potatoes became a hugely valuable crop in feeding the growing population of Ettrick and right across Scotland as long as disease could be avoided. Good workers profited landlords, tenants, and themselves. Lord Napier produced a remarkable early cost-and-benefit analysis of labour in his *Treatise on Practical Store-Farming* of 1822. Napier also encouraged the better provision of food and shelter for livestock in bad weather, surface drainage to protect sheep from foot rot, mole-catching, raising of march-dikes, providing enclosed spaces for sick animals, the management of breeding, improving communication between all parts of the farm, and providing suitable folds and sheep-smearing houses.⁴¹ Napier applauded spending and labour for bridges, roads, dykes, and drains and believed improvement could ensure much better profits for the benefit of both tenant and landlord. He also urged that rents should be reduced by landlords to reflect recessionary prices after the Napoleonic Wars.

The biggest change in the Ettrick parish population between the 1694 poll and the 1841 census was in the number of farm labourers and their families. There were 140 children of such workers in 1841 out of a total parish population of 524. 46% of people in the 1841 parish were born outside Selkirkshire, compared with a still substantial 37% in Yarrow. This mobility typifies James Hogg's own life as he moved to different places for work in his shepherding career. He approved this movement in 'Rob Dodds', in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, where he believes such changes are predicated on man 'raising himself frae naething to respect. There is nae very ancient name among a' our farmers now, but the Tweedies an' the Murrays'.⁴² Roads were improving, and bridges were being built over rivers and burns making transport easier. The 1858 OS map shows these improved routes in the valley and the hill road from Ettrick to Yarrow (Figure 1). Better roads could be funded by tolls. According to the 1841-1861 censuses, Tushielaw had an occupied toll house near where the current inn stands today (Figure 1: 6). Walter Elliot believes there was another tollhouse near the Crookwelcome cottages (Figure 1: 9). Good roads improved sociability too and there was an early, if short-lived, inn at Crookwelcome where the Crookwelcome Club

may have met annually from 1801.⁴³ This was a farmers' business and social club of sorts and Hogg was an early president and regular attendee. It probably moved to the new inn at Tushielaw in 1829 with Hogg in attendance.⁴⁴ The Crookwelcome Club was part of a trend as larger agricultural societies were also formed at this time including the Selkirkshire Farmers Club and the Selkirkshire Pastoral Society.⁴⁵ They were social clubs but also provided an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and local agricultural information.

Improved roads facilitated more horses and wheeled transport and this helped inns prosper with a growing passing trade. Two other local inns were open for business at this time: St. Mary's Cottage, later called Tibbie Shiels Inn, and The Gordon, promoted by Hogg (shown in Figure 1: 22 and near 20 as 'hotel'). As far as wheeled transport is concerned, Ettrick parish appears on none of the early wheeled Carriage Tax records levied between 1785 and 1798, perhaps confirming that there was little or no wheeled traffic in the parish because of very poor roads.⁴⁶ There are many tales of people crossing the Ettrick and Yarrow on stilts because bridges were so rare. The 1833 *Statistical Account* records: "I remember," says an old man of eighty, "when there was not a cart in the parish, nor above Singlie [...] They carried the manure to the fields and the peat from the hills in creels on horses backs" [Singlie, Figure 1: 17].⁴⁷ The same survey states that there were now 36 carts and 20 ploughs in Ettrick Parish. Hogg, in 1832, believed that '[t]he roads and bridges were never put into a complete state of repair till the present Lord Napier settled in the county and to his perseverance Ettrick Forest is indebted for the excellence of her roads'.⁴⁸ Hogg is here referring to when Lord Napier arrived at Thirlestane in about 1816. However, Selkirkshire records suggest that roads had improved to some degree before this. A new bridge at Ettrickbridge had been completed in 1780,⁴⁹ and according to Johnston's 1794 survey,

Two roads are now opened from Selkirk to Moffat, the one up the Etterick, and the other up the Yarrow water, and in many places formed and made. They are of great advantage to the county in general, and to the upper part of it in particular [...] They, however, stand in need of great amendment, being in many places neither formed nor made, and in wet weather almost impassable. The cross or bye roads are all in a state of nature, and are also in many places deep and dangerous. Several bridges too are wanting over the Etterick and Yarrow,

which would be of great benefit. As these waters often swell to a great height. And either obstruct the traveller, or cause him to go many miles about.⁵⁰

If farmhouses were much improved, there was also a fine house at Thirlestane which Hogg visited (Figure 1: 5). William John Napier, 9th Lord Napier, started building before 1813, and settled there in about 1816, so this mansion was very much part of Hogg's landscape.⁵¹ Hogg is also known to have visited Walter Scott's Abbotsford, built about 1824, and the Buccleuch mansion at Bowhill, built about 1812. William Napier's son became the first Baron Ettrick, which perhaps reflects family pride in their home and this landscape. By the time of the 1841 census, and probably in Hogg's lifetime, Thirlestane House had an East and West Lodge and a series of cottages attached to it with a population of 32 including staff and servants, although Napier's Factor, Walter Copland, was living at the mansion at census time.

Napier developed an area near his Thirlestane home as a fairground just north of the valley road (Figure 1: 7). It features importantly in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (see Conclusion). Napier also encouraged craftsmen and traders to come to Hopehouse, on the other side of the valley road, to supply better services to local people. The 1841 census shows Hopehouse with a smithy, a tailor, two shoemakers, a joiner, and a cattle dealer. This small community also included wives and children living in several small cottage homes visible today. Napier's Thirlestane fairground held fairs four times a year for the sale of sheep and the important hiring of workers. There were similar fairs elsewhere in Selkirkshire. Both male and female farm workers were employed via hiring fairs, most importantly at Whitsun (May) or Martinmas (November) including farm servants, ploughmen, dairymaids, shepherds, and domestic servants.

Surprisingly, neither the 1694 Ettrick parish poll book nor the 1841 Ettrick parish census describes anyone employed as a shepherd. We do not believe this indicates that shepherds were absent at either time, just that the enumerators described all those employed on farms as servants or agricultural labourers whatever their particular jobs. However, the 1841 Yarrow parish census identified 27 shepherds. All are men of various ages. Many have families and are living in cottages. The numbers include three at Berrybush, four at Eldinhope and Altrieve (Altrive), five at Blackhouse and Craig Douglas, one at Hart Leap, and one at Singlie (Figure 1: 12, 15, 16, 17, 21, and 25). When Hogg worked at Blackhouse, he was at the heart of this

shepherding landscape. Although this was a patriarchal society, many women had paid work, including over 150 servant jobs in the rural parishes of Ettrick and Yarrow. Women were in demand for the new industrial jobs in the towns of Selkirk, Galashiels, and Hawick. It was a time of opportunity for some, but hardship for others. Local people who had fallen on hard times had been helped out by the poor law in Scotland since the sixteenth century. Poor law rates were principally paid by local lords, particularly the Dukes and Duchesses of Buccleuch, according to their contemporary financial accounts. The Buccleuchs also paid Ettrick School teacher salaries, sundry taxes, and church costs among other things. Although there were only two pauper families in the 1841 Ettrick parish census, including one at Tushielaw farm (Figure 5, following page), there was an increasing mobile poor population, including 18 vagrants and three beggars, mostly living in farm outbuildings.

Hogg's local landscape of people and places features frequently in his writing. Fictional characters are sometimes based on real people he knew well, and there are many legendary tales of families close to home particularly in the *Mountain Bard*. His poem 'Gilmanscleuch' describes a feud between the Scotts of Harden and the Scott of Gilmanscleuch.⁵² The poem ends with a pledge of loyalty but not before a fierce fight at Sundhope in Yarrow (Figure 1: 18 and 19). In the poem 'Thirlestane: A Fragment', Hogg relates a rather grimmer legend about the Scotts of Thirlestane (Figure 1: 5). He also wrote sympathetically of Jacobites and the Covenanters, the latter still remembered at St. Mary's Kirkyard (Figure 1: 24).

Hogg was reliant on the prosperous tenant farmers for employment during his early life and he was grateful to many of them. After spells of work in the area of the Tweed Valley, Hogg returned to Yarrow: 'At Whitsunday 1790,' he writes, 'I left Willenslee, and hired myself to Mr Laidlaw of Blackhouse with whom I served as a shepherd ten years. The kindness of this gentleman to me it would be the utmost ingratitude in me ever to forget' (Blackhouse, Figure 1: 21).⁵³ James Laidlaw gave Hogg access to his library and Hogg became great friends with his son William. The 'worthy Mr. Brydon of Crosslee' was a saviour to his ruined father and someone with a long interest in his family's welfare.⁵⁴ Walter Brydon and William Laidlaw both feature in accounts of Hogg's first meeting or interview with Walter Scott, although there is academic debate as to their accuracy, as discussed by Peter Garside.⁵⁵ William Laidlaw also appears as a character in the closing scenes of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

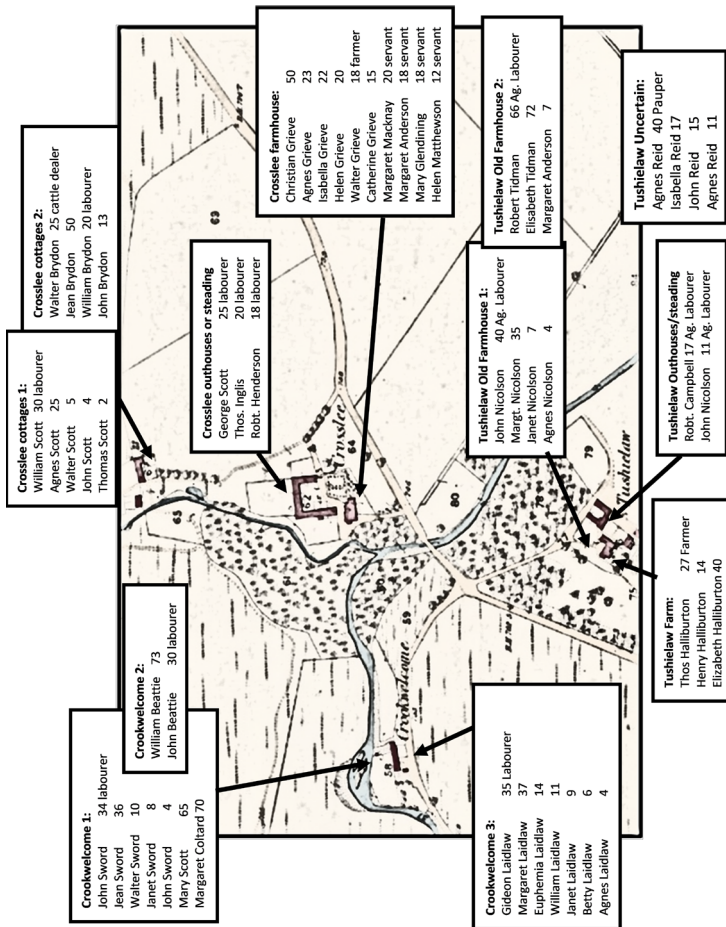


Figure 5: A crowded landscape. The names, ages, and roles of residents of Tushielaw and Crosslee farms in 1841. OS 1858 base map.⁵⁶

Hogg's closeness to the Brydons is affirmed by the 1801 poem 'A Dialogue in a Country Church-Yard'. Walter Brydon's son, also Walter, had died at Newark, in Yarrow, in an unfortunate accident, involving the stroke or breaking of a tree on 16 March 1799. Of this incident, Hogg laments, 'Crush'd by a dreadful stroke he lay, / And yielded up the sweetest soul'.⁵⁷ Hogg had a longstanding friendship with Alexander Laidlaw of Bowerhope, and in his earlier life

would write for several days at his home. Tibbie Sheils was another important friend (Figure 1: 22 and 23). It is these two close friends who were with Hogg during his final fatal illness. He also met many well-known writers and others who visited his Altrieve home. He met the Wordsworths, not for the first time, nearby at Craig Douglas in 1814 (Figure 1: 25) and William Wordsworth wrote three famous poems about Yarrow.

Hogg shows due reverence and gratitude to the better off who helped him: Prime Minister Robert Peel, the Lords Buccleuch and Napier, as well as the major local tenants, the middling and better off who comprised much of his readership. However, Hogg could also make heroes and heroines out of ordinary folk who made up the majority of the local population. Many examples could be given but 'Tibby Hyslop's Dream', in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, if not an Ettrick story, makes the point very well.⁵⁸ At the age of just 18, Tibby starts work as a byre-woman for the farmer and sexual predator Gilbert Forret. Moral Tibby is impoverished when she spurns Forret's advances, but it is the farmer himself who is ruined by Tibby's simple honesty and openness in the engrossing conclusion. This is a tale of power relations, where the powerful are undone.

Increasingly young women worked away from their families on the larger Ettrick and Yarrow farms during James Hogg's lifetime. This was a crowded landscape exemplified in Figure 5 at Crosslee and Tushielaw. Four such young female servants aged between twelve and twenty were at Crosslee and there were forty others on farms in the contemporary Ettrick parish. The 1841 census shows twenty-two people living at Crosslee in the farmhouse, outhouses, steading and cottages, six years after Hogg's death. There were also ninety-five workers including agricultural labourers on farms like Singlie, Gilmanscleuch, and Newburgh in Figure 1. Many farm servants were living in outhouses and steadings as Hogg himself had done as a teenager as in Figure 5. There were three at the Crosslee steading, aged eighteen to twenty-five. In the same census, there were four agricultural labourers, mostly young men living in the stables at Gilmanscleuch, two at Singlie, three at Newburgh, two at Tushielaw, and nine at Sundhope (Figure 1: 6, 17, 18, and 19). Figure 5 gives some idea of this crowded landscape of farmers, workers, and their families in cottages, and young workers in outhouses, sometimes with paupers and vagrants.

Dogs

Dogs were essential to shepherds in this commercial landscape. Valuable sheep needed expert care and Hogg explains that ‘Without the shepherd’s dog, the whole of the open mountainous land in Scotland would not be worth a sixpence. It would require more hands to manage a stock of sheep [...] and drive them to markets, than the profits of the whole stock were capable of maintaining’.⁵⁹ Dogs were far more than a commercial advantage. Hogg’s appreciation and love of dogs are very apparent in many works, but particularly in ‘Dogs’ in *The Shepherd’s Calendar* and ‘The Author’s Address to his Auld Dog Hector’, in *The Mountain Bard*:

An’ hear me, Hector, thee I’ll trust,
 As far as thou hast wit an’ skill;
 Sae will I ae sweet lovely breast,
 To me a balm for every ill.⁶⁰

Hogg’s tales of these loyal and brave animals in the most difficult circumstances bring out his deep compassion. He tells a wonderful tale of his dog Sirrah, in an issue of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* published in February 1818. Hogg was shepherding at Blackhouse with 700 lambs under his charge and with only one other worker to assist him. He had to watch carefully day and night for several days. One day at midnight the lambs bolted in many directions with just Sirrah after them. It was dark and they seemed to have completely vanished. In the morning ‘the indefatigable Sirrah’ had achieved a miracle all on his own: ‘But what was our astonishment, when we discovered by degrees that not one lamb of the whole flock was wanting! How he had got all the divisions collected in the dark is beyond my comprehension.’⁶¹

The Ettrick and Yarrow valleys would have been a land of dogs. As the government strove to pay for the approaching Napoleonic Wars it imposed a dog tax in 1797-98. The tax was not entirely unpopular because of fears about disease and some attacks by dogs on people and livestock. The online tax roll in *ScotlandsPlaces* lists forty-three taxed dogs in Yarrow and forty in Ettrick parish including three dogs charged to James Laidlaw at Blackhouse when Hogg worked there.⁶² According to Gillian Hughes, Hogg had to sell Sirrah because of this punitive tax, but ever the devoted dog, Sirrah would stay with no new master and returned to his erstwhile owner time and again.⁶³ Walter

Brydon also kept four dogs at Crosslee and two at Ramseyleuch (Figure 2: 8 and 4). In Figure 1 for completeness, there were three dogs at Sundhope, two at Gilmanscleuch, four at Mountbenger and Mountbenger Burn, two at Eldinhope, four at Thirlestane, and three at Newburgh.

James Hogg and Walter Scott had a lasting impact on the Ettrick Forest landscape as Smith relates in 1833: 'Now St Mary's and the Lowes, surrounded by verdant hills, and associated with many romantic legends, forms a scene alike interesting to the angler and literary pilgrim'.⁶⁴ St. Mary's Cottage, later Tibbie Shiels Inn (Figure 1: 22), according to its historic visitors' book, was able to exploit this connection to attract many distinguished visitors including Robert Louis Stevenson, William Wordsworth, Thomas Carlyle, William Gladstone, Christopher North, Robert Chambers, Ramsay MacDonald, and many more.⁶⁵ J. M.W. Turner briefly sketched Hogg's Altrieve home in 1834 on his way to St. Mary's Loch.⁶⁶ North and Chambers provided significant publicity for the inn and it prospered.

Conclusion

James Hogg's writing and the Ettrick landscape are inextricably interlinked, and the many changes occurring are reflected in his life and work. The area had been sheep pasture for many centuries, but swelling demand for mutton and wool created a time of opportunity and risk. Hogg's father was probably ruined by price volatilities in his sheep dealing activities. Young James had to leave school, but he had a passion for reading and hearing local tales that he could share. Ever-growing demand for skilled and experienced labour allowed Hogg to enjoy a decade at Blackhouse Farm shepherding valuable flocks, aided by his beloved dogs. Hogg describes harsh times and severe weather events that befell the area and devastated flocks. Change was at hand. Growing demand increased the value of sheep during Hogg's early life and it became important to protect animals with walls of stone and plantations of trees. Better prices allowed tenant farmers to build more elegant farmhouses and outbuildings of stone and lime, roofed with slates, not thatch. The lords of the land could now afford fine manor houses. Farmers had to provide homes and cottages to attract and retain good workers from far and near. Sheep droving roads took Hogg to Edinburgh's expanding markets for mutton and

literature. The shepherd from the Ettrick Forest became the Ettrick Shepherd, the writer. There was a growing middle-class keen to enjoy poems, ballads, and novels, a demand that Hogg could certainly fulfil. James Hogg's farming and writing careers were never smooth, but in his finest work, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, he is able to tell a wonderful and mysterious tale set chiefly in those two worlds of Edinburgh and Ettrick. It is amidst the Ettrick landscape and amongst its people and his friends where the penultimate scenes unfold with Hogg himself appearing as both shepherd and poet, surveying his sheep and the valley he adored.

NOTES

- 1 There is a prevalent myth that the Ettrick Forest was heavily wooded and sheep-free for much longer than it was, and even Hogg stated incorrectly that 'the forest was never occupied as a sheep country' before James IV in 1503. See James Hogg, 'Statistics of Selkirkshire', in *Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Agricultural Society of Scotland*, second series, 3 (1832), 281-306 (pp. 290-91).
- 2 1694 Poll Tax Roll, Selkirk Burgh and Parish 1694-1695, NRS GD178/6/1. See also M.J.H. Robson, 'History and Traditions of Sheep-farming in the Scottish Border Hills' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1977).
- 3 Valentina Bold and Susan Gilbert, 'Hogg, Ettrick and Oral Tradition', in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg* ed. by Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 10-20.
- 4 'Maps', in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. by Peter Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
- 5 Background Map: Ordnance Survey, 1:250 000 Scale Colour Raster™, under Open Government Licence, Canmore: National Record of the Historic Environment, <canmore.org.uk online>. This map includes part of both Ettrick and Yarrow parishes. At this time, Yarrow parish included parts of the Ettrick Valley. Broadly, on the figure only the lower right quarter is Ettrick parish; Newburgh, Berrybush, and beyond is all part of Yarrow parish.

- 6 James Hogg, *The Shepherd's Guide: Being a Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Sheep* (Edinburgh: J. Ballantyne and Co., 1807).
- 7 1694 Poll Tax Roll, NRS GD178/6/1. Other figures are from Appendix XI in Robson, 'History and Traditions of Sheep-farming', pp. 261-62, but his figure for 1694 includes farms outside the parish and is overstated. There is limited evidence in Ettrick of the types of eighteenth-century Lowland Clearances seen in South-West Scotland; after all, the population was growing (Peter Aitchison and Andrew Cassell, *The Lowland Clearances, Scotland's Silent Revolution 1760-183* [East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2003], p. 33). There is a legend that the village of Ettrick Kirkton (near Figure 1: 3) with 50 houses was cleared at this time by Laird James Anderson of Tushielaw based partly on an unsupported account by Hogg himself.
- 8 Alexander Webster, 'An account of the number of people in Scotland in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-five by Alexander Webster, one of the ministers of Edinburgh', Adv. MS.35.1.9, National Library of Scotland. James Smith, 'Parish of Ettrick', *The New Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, 15 vols (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1845), III, 59-77 (pp. 68-69). This account is dated 'September 1833'. These population numbers are best estimates for the time. There are various issues in any comparison including the seasonality of the rural workforce and what time of year the estimate was made.
- 9 Aitchison and Cassell, *The Lowland Clearances*, p. 33.
- 10 See the section on sheep in James Hogg's 'General Anecdotes', in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by D. S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. 94-117 (pp. 94-97).
- 11 Suzanne Gilbert, introduction to *The Mountain Bard*, written by James Hogg, ed. by Suzanne Gilbert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. xi-lxix (p. xxiv).
- 12 Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 11.
- 13 Hogg, 'The Editor's Narrative,' in *Confessions*, ed. by Garside, pp. 165-75 (pp. 166-67).
- 14 It is possible that the part of the drove road between Hart Leap and Eldinhope was not in use during Robert Wringhim's 'lifetime' because it only appears on maps from 1824. However, these very earlier maps are not definitive.

- 15 Peter Garside, 'Historical and Geographical Note', in *Confessions*, ed. by Garside, pp. 200-10 (pp. 208-09). Cowan's Croft and Fall Law are the alternative burial sites reported in *Confessions*. An ancient burial or 'bog burial' is reported at Berrybush (Berrybush, Bog Burial, Canmore ID 217415, <<http://canmore.org.uk/site/217415>>).
- 16 Thomas Johnston, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Selkirk, with observations on the means of its improvement* (London: W. Bulmer and Co, 1794), pp. 7 and 18. See also Smith, 'Parish of Ettrick', pp. 59-77. On p. 69, Johnston estimates in his detailed survey that only 150 acres of natural Selkirkshire woodland survived, and 76% of the county was pasture. Smith's 1833 survey records 98% of parish land as pasture or waste.
- 17 See Chapter 2 of William John Napier's *A Treatise on Practical Store-Farming, as applicable to the mountainous region of Etterick Forest, and the pastoral district of Scotland in general* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1822), pp. 15-81; Hogg, 'Storms', *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by Mack, pp. 1-21.
- 18 'Rentals of Ettrick Forest and Kirkurd [...] and Staplegordoune', NRS GD224/409/2 (1674) and 'Canabie, Liddesdale, the Forest [...] the Forest, 1661-71', NRS GD224/254/2.
- 19 Johnston, *General View*, p. 18.
- 20 Hogg, *The Shepherd's Guide*, p. 123.
- 21 Canmore shows numerous cases taken from the earliest OS map of 1858.
- 22 John Ainslie, 'Map of Selkirkshire or Ettrick Forest' (1773), National Library of Scotland, EMS.s.33A, <<https://maps.nls.uk/counties/rec/676>>.
- 23 R.A. Dodgshon, 'The Economics of Sheep Farming in the Southern Uplands during the Age of Improvement, 1750-1833', *Economic History Review*, 29 (1976), 551-59 and Figures 1-3.
- 24 Dodgshon, 'The Economics of Sheep Farming', Fig. 1.
- 25 T. Craig-Brown, *The History of Selkirkshire*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1886), I, 295-96.
- 26 Smith, 'Parish of Ettrick', p. 70. Robson, 'History and Traditions', pp. 171-77.
- 27 Hughes, *James Hogg*, pp. 23-24.
- 28 Johnston, *General View*, pp. 37-39; see also W.J. Carlyle, 'The Changing Distribution of Breeds of Sheep in Scotland, 1795-1965', *The Agricultural History Review*, 27.1 (1979), 19-29.
- 29 Johnston, *General View*, p. 57.

- 30 Robson, 'History and Traditions', pp. 298-312.
- 31 Robson, 'History and Traditions', Fig. 11b.
- 32 James Hogg, *Altrive Tales: Featuring a 'Memoir of the Author's Life'*, ed. by Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), pp. 60-63. There are doubts as to this account; see Hughes, *James Hogg*, pp. 44-45.
- 33 T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Clearances: A History of the Dispossessed* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).
- 34 See Hughes, *James Hogg*, p. 2.
- 35 Tushielaw Burn, Farmstead, Canmore ID 365440, <<http://canmore.org.uk/site/365440>>; and Gowdie Brae, Building(S), Canmore ID 365501, <<http://canmore.org.uk/site/365501>>.
- 36 Johnston, *General View*, p. 16.
- 37 James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', in *The Mountain Bard*, ed. by Gilbert, pp. 195-231 (p. 198). The loft space at Single Farm survives today. Robert Wringhim stays in a 'stable-loft where there were two beds' at Ellanshaws in *Confessions*, ed. by Garside, p. 154.
- 38 Johnston, *General View*, pp. 33-35. Six horses were exempt and not taxed.
- 39 Historical Tax Roles: Farm Horse Tax 1797-1798, vol. 5, E326/10/5/126, *ScotlandsPlaces* <www.scotlandspplaces.gov.uk>.
- 40 Johnston, *General View*, p. 22.
- 41 Napier, *A Treatise on Practical Store-Farming*, p. 115.
- 42 Hogg, 'Rob Dodds', in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by Mack, pp. 22-37 (p. 27).
- 43 Walter Elliot, *Selkirkshire and the Borders: A Personal View of the Archaeology and History*, 2 vols (Selkirk: Deerpark Press, 2009-2012), II (2012), 290-91. The precise locations of the Crookwelcome tollhouse and the Inn are uncertain. Both were probably modest cottages.
- 44 Private Papers, Crookwelcome Club Minutes, 1822 to 1833. Smith, 'Parish of Ettrick', p. 76, says the inn opened in 1831, but the Crookwelcome minutes suggest Hogg and fellow members first met 'at the inn' in 1829, but which inn? Given those attending mostly lived close by suggests this was indeed the Tushielaw Inn.
- 45 Records of the Selkirkshire Farmers Club (1806-1896) and the Selkirkshire Pastoral Society (1819-1900), Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, SC/S/69 and SC/S/71.

- 46 Historical Tax Rolls: Carriage Tax Rolls, 1785-1798, *ScotlandsPlaces*.
- 47 Smith, 'Parish of Ettrick', pp. 76-77.
- 48 Hogg, 'Statistics of Selkirkshire', p. 290.
- 49 Elliot, *Selkirkshire*, II, 293-94; Hughes, *James Hogg*, p. 153.
- 50 Johnston, *General View*, p. 36.
- 51 Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *The County of Selkirk* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1957), pp. 57-58.
- 52 The traditional home of the Scotts of Harden is only a few miles to the south of Figure 1.
- 53 Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', p. 199.
- 54 Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', p. 196.
- 55 Peter Garside, 'Hogg and Scott's "First Meeting" and the Politics of Literary Friendship', in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace. Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, ed. by Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 21-41. Garside also mentions William Laidlaw's account of the meeting.
- 56 Base map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.
- 57 James Hogg, *Scottish Pastorals, Poems, Songs, &c. Mostly Written in the Dialect of the South* (Edinburgh: John Taylor, 1801).
- 58 Hogg, 'Tibby Hyslop's Dream', *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by Mack, pp. 142-62.
- 59 James Hogg, 'Dogs', in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by Mack, pp. 57-67 (p. 57).
- 60 James Hogg, 'A Shepherd's Address to his Auld Dog Hector', in *The Mountain Bard*, ed. by Gilbert, pp. 180-83 (p. 181).
- 61 James Hogg, 'Further Anecdotes of The Shepherd's Dog', in *Contributions to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, ed. by Thomas C. Richardson, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008-2012), I (2008), 61-69 (p. 65).
- 62 Historical Tax Rolls: Dog Tax Rolls, 1797-1798, vol. 2; transcription 30 August 1797, E326/11/2/122, *ScotlandsPlaces*. The website suggests it is a non-working dog tax, but the legislation is actually broader than this. The dog tax surveyor in Selkirkshire, William Brunton, makes clear he is listing all dogs 'Used and employed by' inhabitants of the county. This would explain why Hogg had to sell his dog.

- 63 Hughes, *James Hogg*, p. 41.
- 64 Smith, 'Parish of Ettrick', p. 77.
- 65 Private Papers, St. Mary's Cottage, Visitors' Book.
- 66 Joseph Mallord William Turner, 'St Mary's Loch; and Altrive Farm (Eldinhope), Selkirkshire (1834)', *Tate*, < [https://www.tate.org.uk/art/Sartworks/turner-st-marys-loch-and-altrive-farm-eldinhope-selkirkshire -d26145](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/Sartworks/turner-st-marys-loch-and-altrive-farm-eldinhope-selkirkshire-d26145)>. Inscribed in pencil at the bottom right of the sketch: 'Hogg hill Ri[...].re'. Hogg was living at Altrieve (Altrive) at the time. Turner is not in the St. Mary's Cottage Visitors' Book.

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