William Shaw, Controversial Gaelic Lexicographer

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1 Introduction

I can do no better to begin this short account of William Shaw, his Dictionary and his connections with Samuel Johnson, than to quote from the 1970s article on Shaw by Kenneth MacDonald in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*; it ends thus:

> By the time of Shaw's death in 1831, Scottish Gaelic lexicography had been advanced considerably by the two substantial works of Armstrong and the Highland Society. Had circumstances not brought Shaw to the notice of Samuel Johnson, it is unlikely that his *Analysis* or his Dictionary would ever have been published. It cannot in all honesty be said that their non-appearance would have greatly impoverished Gaelic scholarship, but it would have deprived the two-centuries-long history of Gaelic dictionary-making of a colourful opening chapter.

It neatly encapsulates Shaw's anomalous position in this history. He is probably best remembered outside the field of Gaelic lexicography for his part in the Ossian controversy. This has strong connections with his Dictionary, most importantly as it was the reason for his connection with Samuel Johnson, who provided the spur to his dictionary-making. How did a not particularly gifted young man from an island in the Firth of Clyde come to play a significant role in an international controversy?

2 William Shaw: Background

William Shaw was born in 1749 at Clachaig in the island of Arran.[1] He went to school in Ayr and studied at Glasgow University. While still a student, he taught

[1] Coincidentally, and interestingly, given Shaw's involvement in the Ossian controversy, an ancient burial mound, known for some reason as Ossian's Mound, is found near Clachaig.

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in a school in Argyll but left after a short time, apparently under something of a cloud; it was reported that 'from whence he thought prudent to decamp after a few weeks residence' (Clark 1781:55). This was not the only occasion in his life on which he was forced to decamp.

In the 1770s he did some tutoring for wealthy families, first in Ireland and later in London. In 1774, the year after Johnson's visit to the Hebrides, he was introduced to Johnson (by James Elphinston, the Scottish educationist and spelling reformer). In 1779 he became a Church of Scotland minister at Ardclach near Nairn, but left in 1780 after numerous complaints from parishioners; one of the many charges against him was that he was away far too much; another was that they couldn't understand his Arran Gaelic dialect, regarded as a barbaric aberration in other parts of Scotland.[2] Later, with Johnson's help, he became an Anglican priest, first as a curate in Kent; and he spent the last 36 years of his life as rector of Chelvey in Somerset. His involvement in Gaelic matters seems to have come to an end soon after 1780.

He published some sermons, for example those preached in Bristol in 1809 and in Bedminster Church in 1810 (Cram 1996: 273-4). But he later appears in the record mainly as a violent opponent of the religious writer and educationist Hannah More, notably in what became known as the Blagdon controversy (1802-03). More's school in the village of Blagdon in Somerset came under attack, and she was accused of being in favour of Methodism and of lack of support for the Church of England; she was particularly criticised for her plans for Sunday Schools, aiming to educate adults as well as children 'of the lower orders'. This was seen as socially subversive. She was violently attacked by several clergymen, including Shaw mainly under the pseudonym of the Rev. Sir Archibald MacSarcasm, Bart, especially in *The Life of Hannah More, with a Critical Review of her Writings* (Shaw 1802).

3 Analysis of the Galic Language

But to return to our focus on Shaw and his Dictionary, what connected him to the great lexicographer? Clearly Johnson thought this Gaelic-speaking young Highlander might be a help in finding evidence in the dispute over the

(Ordnance Survey Name Book No.3 p.157. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monument of Scotland Canmore ID 3964).

[2] Described as 'the very worst dialect of the Gaelic tongue ...' (Clark 1781:34).

authenticity of James MacPherson's Ossian poems. He encouraged Shaw to publish his *Analysis of the Galic Language* (1778), the first grammar of Scottish Gaelic, but a very basic one. It was followed a few years later by the much more comprehensive and authoritative *Elements of Galic Grammar* (1801) by the Rev. Alexander Stewart, minister of Moulin in Perthshire. In his introduction Stewart notes that he had consulted 'such Irish philologists as were accessible to me'; he found only 'one publication professedly on the subject of Galic grammar.* I have consulted it also: but in this quarter I have no obligations to acknowledge'. The asterisked footnote identifies Shaw as the author.

3.1 The Ossian Controversy

Shaw was further encouraged by Johnson in his plan to produce a Gaelic dictionary and for this purpose he undertook a long journey in the Highlands and Islands and also in Ireland, from the spring of 1778 till February 1779, to collect data from both written and oral sources. As well as collecting for his Dictionary, he hoped to find material relevant to the Ossian poems, at first possibly to prove their authenticity and to convert Johnson to a more positive view, but he later joined the other side of the dispute. In 1781 he published *An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems Ascribed to Ossian.* This publication and the ensuing rejoinders, in particular from John Clark, earned him lasting ill feeling from his fellow countrymen; at this time support for MacPherson remained high in the Highlands. It is thought that Johnson had a considerable hand in the writing of the *Enquiry,* and especially of Shaw's *Reply* to Clark's *Answer,* published with the second edition in 1782 (Curley 1987: 375-431).

3.2 Word Collection

The *Enquiry* and Clark's *Answer* are interesting not only in their contributions to the Ossian controversy, but also for the light they shed from time to time on the production of the Dictionary and the methods used by Shaw, including Shaw's attitude to Scottish and Irish Gaelic, and Clark's criticism of his collection methods. According to Shaw's own account, his word-hunting journey covered 3000 miles and he collected nearly 30,000 entries for the dictionary. As well as in the Dictionary preface and in the *Enquiry*, he described his journey and its aims in his *Memoirs of Dr. Johnson,* published anonymously in 1785. This was the earliest biography of Johnson and, though of modest length, it predictably

contains a great deal about Johnson's relations with Shaw and especially about the support he gave to Shaw.

The journey of 1778-9 was not as productive as it might have been, and indeed as Shaw made it out to be. Since there were, as he claims in the Preface to the Dictionary, 'few books, and still fewer MSS', in the Highlands, he collected mainly from oral sources: 'the language in the living voice was the only source from which I could glean vocables'. He further observed that 'the better class of the people' imparted knowledge very willingly but 'the common people, who are generally possessed of whatever narration remains in the country, must all be bought'. Although he was thus aware or the vital importance of oral material for his collection, he nevertheless seems to have despised it, probably on class grounds. His collection methods were criticised in that he spent too much time with the upper classes, remaining on 'post roads' and failing to go into the interior' to find Gaelic, he 'ought to have preferred the cottage of the bard, to the palace of the chief', Clark (1781: 7). John Stewart (Shaw's companion on his journey in the Highlands) could remember only two instances of 'creeping on all fours into houses in the Highlands' and one was 'Mr Shaw's father's in the isle of Arran', Clark (1781: 74). Apparently one reason for the withholding of information was antipathy to Shaw because of his connections with Johnson and his anti-Ossian views and this also affected his appeals for subscribers.

3.3 'Irish' language

Among the many complaints about the published Dictionary was the amount of Irish as opposed to Scottish Gaelic it contained. It is not always easy to know what is meant by 'Irish' in a Scottish context. Irish was often used in the 18th century by non-Gaels to refer to Scottish Gaelic and the Highland way of life, mainly in a derogatory way, as we shall see. But Gaelic speakers could have used it to refer to peripheral dialects, such as Shaw's Arran dialect, regarded as uncouth, though this accusation would probably apply more to Arran forms in Shaw's sermons than to his Dictionary. 'Erse', which is actually a variant form of 'Irish', was used to refer to Scottish Gaelic, though in Ireland it referred to the Irish language, i.e. Irish Gaelic. Shaw makes his usage clear in the *Enquiry*: '...but when I am conscious, that without a knowledge of Irish learning, we can know nothing of the Earse as a tongue, (the Irish being the studied language, and the Earse only a distant provincial dialect). ...', Shaw (1782: 121).

Shaw refers here to the fact that 'Irish' also designated the literary (or 'classical') language which Irish and Scottish Gaelic had shared up to the 17th century and it is possible that it was the presence in Shaw's Dictionary of items proper to this upper-register archaic language that was being objected to. Shaw did indeed have greater success in Ireland than in Scotland in his search for written material. He had access to the library of Trinity College Dublin, including its distinguished MSS collection, and in addition he was greatly indebted to Charles Vallancey whose MSS collection was also made available to him. Vallancey was a military engineer who had worked on a military survey of Ireland; this aroused in him a keen interest in Irish antiquities and language, which he continued to study, albeit rather eccentrically, after he retired from the army. He was considered but, perhaps fortunately, not appointed as the first Professor of Irish in Trinity College Dublin. His *Grammar of the Irish Language* (1773) is likely to have been an influence on Shaw's *Analysis*: Shaw notes in his introduction that he found 'that published by the indefatigable Major Vallencia ... the most satisfactory that has appeared' (Shaw 1778: xix). Another of the sources for Irish language was the Irish-English Dictionary which formed part of Edward Lhuyd's *Archaeologica Britannica* (Lhuyd 1707)

One of Shaw's main providers of written material in Scotland was Sir James Foulis of Colinton, a Lowland laird who had a keen interest in Scottish antiquity and had learned Gaelic to a considerable level; he also had the leisure to develop these interests and had made a large collection of Gaelic MSS, which he put at Shaw's disposal.

3.4 Publishing by Subscription

With great difficulty Shaw set up a subscription scheme to finance the publication of the Dictionary with 'payment only on delivery of the book'. In fact it was said that his journey in Scotland was aimed partly to raise subscriptions! His ambivalent attitudes were noted: 'Where men were no strangers to his situation, he became a suppliant for subscriptions to his Dictionary; thus assuming the character of gentleman and beggar, as best suited his vanity or his necessities' (Clark 1781: 73). Overall the search was not as successful as he had hoped, partly it seems for the same reasons as applied to his word search. The list of subscribers does however contain some prominent names, listed in the Dictionary, following its dedication. As well as the Duke of Gordon, the dedicatee, and Shaw's early

patron the Earl of Eglinton, it includes many other members of the aristocracy, as well as several clan chiefs, reflecting his predilection for the upper classes. Only one woman, Lady Mary Walker, is listed. Alongside predictable names such as Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, as well as numerous ministers, it includes some, such as Robert Adam, Joseph Banks, Edmund Burke, and Allan Ramsay, who are not obvious supporters of a Gaelic dictionary. Shaw was by this time established in the London-Scottish cultural world; he became a member of the Society of Antiquaries in 1781. His efforts to find funding also included an application for help to the Gaelic Society in London, but without result (MacDonald 1979:7).

The subscription scheme later led to trouble when the book appeared as many subscribers were not satisfied with the quality of the work and refused to pay. Shaw raised an action against these subscribers in the Court of Session in Edinburgh, which, as Kenneth Macdonald has pointed out, 'took longer to settle than the *Dictionary* did to produce' (MacDonald 1979: 17). Above all, the defenders, led by Duncan MacDonell of Glengarry, complained that the published work fell far short of the promises in a Proposal[3] sent out with the appeal for subscriptions. The complaints were fully justified, as we shall see: few of the promised features were actually fulfilled, and the Proposal became the key piece of evidence in the case. In spite of evidence to this effect, Shaw eventually won the case on the grounds that the defenders were bound by contract. There was of course no Trades Description Act as such in those days. (Whether the recalcitrant subscribers duly paid is not recorded.) Shaw claimed that, as in the case of withholders of information on his journeying, many of the defenders were against him because of his part in the Ossian controversy. There may be some truth in this especially as some of them were from the Inverness/Badenoch area and thus likely to be close associates of Macpherson. But the poor quality of the Dictionary remains.

Shaw's court case was by no means unique at a time of subscription publication. For instance, in 1822 James Robertson, a Shetlander who had successfully produced the first adequate map of Jamaica, published by subscription a map of north-east Scotland, after he had returned to Scotland. It was not well received: subscribers complained not just about its accuracy but

[3] A copy is contained within the papers of the Court of Session case May 1783-Feb 1786 NRS CS238/S/10/38 (under Petition).

about his failure to honour his promise to conduct original surveys. This led to litigation in the Court of Session.[4]

4 *A Galic and English Dictionary*

Shaw's ***A Galic and English Dictionary*** was published in 1780 in two volumes (Gaelic-English and English-Gaelic); it is often regarded as the first published dictionary of Scottish Gaelic (a reprint was published recently by Ulan Press and is available from Amazon); it is indeed the first in conventional alphabetical order (though it has to be said that Shaw's alphabetical order was eccentric to say the least). It was not however the first separately published dictionary: in 1741 there had appeared a lexicographical work very different in both aim and in structure. *Leabhar a Theagasc Ainminnin* (literally 'book to teach names' [of things]) or *A Galick and English Vocabulary.* It was published under the auspices of the SSPCK (the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge) for the ulterior purpose of helping children to get rid of their Gaelic, and move to English in order to become good Protestants and complaisant citizens. It was compiled by Alexander MacDonald, the great Gaelic poet Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, although he was unlikely to have been in sympathy with its aims. It is arranged under thematic headings, in lists mainly of nouns, to provide children with a route from Gaelic to English.[5]

The SSPCK's dictionary was thus part of their aim, as they put it, 'of extirpating the Irish language out of Scotland'[6]. To his credit, Shaw's was certainly to preserve Gaelic. He supports it in his Preface:

> Observing with regret the indolence and inactive zeal of my compatriots in the cause of their expiring language, with the most ardent enthusiasm I was impelled to attempt snatching from oblivion, and in her last struggles for existence preserve in a Dictionary, as much as possible of

[4] *Cairt: Newsletter of the Scottish Maps Forum* Issue 27, July 2015, p.4.
[5] It closely follows the structure of *A New Vocabulary English & Latin, for the use of Schools* (1720), with Gaelic replacing the Latin (Gillies and Pike 2012: 204).
[6] In a Memorial addressed to members of Parliament in 1723, quoted in (Campbell 1937:52).

> the greatest monument of antiquity perhaps now in the world: for the Galic is the language of Japhet, spoken before the Deluge, and probably the speech of Paradise.

Such ideas of course remained prevalent in some quarters even after scientific study of language had found Gaelic its place in the Indo-European family of languages. (And it is still sometimes referred to as 'the language of the Garden of Eden'!)

4.1 Content and Structure

The Dictionary has about 750 pages (unnumbered); the Gaelic-English section, estimated to have about 30,000 headwords, is longer than the English-Gaelic, with about 15,000. These statistics, and the short time from conception to publication, give the lie to the promises set out in his Proposal, and to his claim in his Preface that it contains 'nearly every word in both the Scotch and Irish dialects.' One of the first things one notices, or indeed looks for, is connection with Johnson, and one does not look in vain. Even in the typeface and page layout his influence is detectable, not so surprising perhaps as, like Johnson's, it was printed by William Strahan in the Strand. He follows Johnson in small details such as a full stop at the end of the headword and a capital letter to begin the equivalents. Gaelic–English headwords use initial caps while the English-Gaelic headwords are capitalised fully. Neither follows Johnson who has large and small caps throughout.

Another shared typographical feature is the use of a brace <}>: , usually to link different forms of a word; see BLEIT below.

There is further sign of Johnson's influence on the English-Gaelic side, where occasionally he more or less translates Johnson's definition where there is no obvious Gaelic equivalent:

> LASSLORN. Treigte le a leannan.
> [forsaken by his lover/sweetheart].

Johnson has:

> 'Forsaken by his mistress'.

(Like the OED, this word has only one citation in Johnson, from *The Tempest*, which makes it a very doubtful inclusion in Shaw's Dictionary; see below.)

> MUFF. Folach croicuin do na lamhan anns a' gheamhradh
> [a hide covering for the hands in winter]

Johnson has:

> A soft cover for the hands in winter.

> SALMAGUNDI. Feol phronnte, sgadan, uile, fiongeur, peubar, & uinnina, coimeasgte.
> [minced meat, herring, oil, vinegar, pepper, and onions, mixed]

an even closer translation of Johnson, who has

> SALMAGUNDI. *n.f.* ... a mixture of chopped meat and pickled herrings with oil, vinegar, pepper, and onions.

(It might not have been a bad idea to make more use of Johnson's definitions!)

In spite of his claim on the title page of Part 2 that it contains 'The most useful and necessary words in the ENGLISH LANGUAGE explained by the correspondent Words in the GALIC', Shaw's English word list contains numerous rare words which seem to be beyond the needs of a rather modest dictionary, for example: GEASON, LATITANT, OBLIQUATION, SALTATION. Unsurprisingly the great majority of them are found in Johnson (where their presence is of course more justifiable on his scale).

The Dictionary is very short on analysis, and probably its main defect is lack of meaning discrimination, in spite of the fact that the Proposal had stated that: 'the different acceptations and uses of words [would be] explained by a variety of examples from what books there are in the language...'. Instead many entries on both sides have long lists of equivalents in the target language and no indication of their different meanings or appropriateness for a context. His successors improved on this aspect but it has to be said that, even now, this charge could be laid at the door of many bilingual dictionaries. Shaw states in his Preface that '... Opposite every English word there are as many different Galic words as I could collect. The most common are first, and the more ancient or obsolete last ...' The second sentence gives a little help (if one can rely on it) but not a lot. In

contrast to the SSPCK dictionary, the users of Shaw's Dictionary would be mainly English speakers trying to understand Gaelic, including scholars of the Celtic languages, at home and abroad. Some Gaelic speakers however used it to check Gaelic words: this was reported of ministers, highly literate bilinguals, checking the Gaelic of their sermons, which they normally wrote in English and translated into Gaelic (Shaw 1778: xvi).

The lack of meaning discrimination is thus much more damaging on the English-Gaelic side. For example GENUS has 20 equivalents with no indication of their different meanings. An extreme example is HILL, HILLOCK, with 54 equivalents, and not even a semi-colon to separate different meanings, and they are not even in alphabetic order. Gaelic is of course very rich in words for different types of hill but the types are not indicated. Many certainly don't mean anything as small as a hillock: for example *bein* (in modern Gaelic *beinn,* anglicised as 'ben'), is usually translated as 'mountain', and never refers to a small eminence. Some of the equivalents certainly do refer to a hillock, including a few with diminutive endings, for example 'dunan' which the Gaelic-English, more helpfully than usual, gives as 'a little hill or fort'. But the Gaelic-English often fails to clarify; in some cases the word doesn't appear at all ('carruig') or the 'hill' meaning is omitted: maol (noun, though not distinguished from the adjective) is defined simply as 'A promontory, cape'; no mention of 'a bare, rounded hill'. Thus few of the distinctions are clarified by consulting the Gaelic-English section, and indeed there seems to have been little or no effort to link the information on the two sides of the Dictionary.

Shaw gives no information on Gaelic pronunciation, apart from a few hints in his entries for letters of the alphabet:

> **F** Is the sixth letter of the alphabet, and is called Fearn, the alder-tree. It has the same power and sound as in other languages, but is silent before H.
> **S** Is the fifteenth letter of the Irish alphabet. Before and after E and I, it sounds like sh, in other respects as in the English language. The Irish have called it Suil. Vide Analysis.

Admittedly the problems of explaining Gaelic pronunciation to the general user have not yet been solved by modern lexicographers.

There are no etymologies and grammar is scantily treated. He does use occasional labels either for plurals or for parts of speech; sometimes these are given as headwords for example Taght. Chosen. Vide Tagham, which has its own entry. On the English-Gaelic side, he does distinguish verbs by adding ‘To’:

To GAMBOL

again following Johnson. Rarely, he adds an article to indicate the noun:

A CHANGE.

or an abbreviation to indicate adjective or noun:

LEVEL, a.
To LEVEL
LEVEL, s.

He gives no indication of the gender of Gaelic nouns, on either side of the Dictionary, although the short word list at the end of his *Analysis* had used the conventional m. and f. for this purpose.

The Proposal promised that the Dictionary would have ‘a Glossary of Proper Names of men and things; i.e., accounts of battles, warriors, affinities and feuds ... and descriptions of mountains, vallies, islands etc in Scotland ...’ In fact there are no lists, only a scattering of proper names throughout the text, mainly on the Gaelic English side and most of these seem to be Irish or Irish-related:

Leim (Cuchullin). Loop’s head at the mouth of the Shannon.
Moinmhor. A mountain in Ireland.
Ossruidhe. Ossory in Leinster.
Tailgean. Name for St Patrick.

Exceptional Scottish referents include:

Gaoidbhein. A mountain in the isle of Arran.

This is Goatfell, the hill above the main town of Brodick, from Old Norse *geita-fjal* 'goat mountain' of which the modern English name is a translation. The usual meanings of 'gaoid' are 'fault; disease', though Shaw in the Gaelic English section translates it as 'wind, blasts, flatulence'; but it is thought that this Gaelic name is probably a corruption of the Old Norse.

The dictionary has very few references to Shaw's native island, but another reveals a disarming honesty:

> Muca-meala. Something vegetative, which I do not know; the words I met with in a descriptive poem of the island of Arran.

Although this is still the period when Scots, especially Scots in London, studiously avoided Scottish features in speech and writing, he occasionally uses Scots words, probably unconsciously, and on the Gaelic-English side they may well be:

> Colam**.** To plaister
> [plaster].
> Tacaid. A tacket
> [a small nail; hobnail, as in 'tackety boots' in modern Scots].

But many of the examples of Scots in the English-Gaelic word list are found in Johnson, for instance GLEAD, (a kite; a buzzard, in modern Scots *gled*):

English-Gaelic:

> GLEAD croman, clamhan.

Gaelic-English:

> Croman. A kite.
> Clamhan. A buzzard.

Johnson has

> GLEAD *n. s.* a buzzard hawk; a kite. It retains that name in Scotland.

> BLEIT. } Narach, oiglidh, faitach.
> BLATE. }

Gaelic-English:

Narach. Shameful, bashful.
Faiteach. Fearful, timorous, shy.

Johnson has

BLEIT. *adj.* } Bashful. It is used in Scotland, and the bordering counties.
BLATE. }

The first form is not recorded in the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*; 'bleat' and 'bleet' do occur, but much less commonly than 'blate.' The *English Dialect Dictionary* has more for these forms from northern England. Thus it seems that Shaw has taken this entry straight from Johnson without much heed to currency in Scotland.

5 Conclusion

While it might be said that Shaw had no Scottish Gaelic dictionary tradition to draw on, he certainly wasn't living in a lexicographic vacuum, with Johnson, and his Dictionary, available for consultation; he was indeed fortunate to have had such generous support from Johnson and the failings of the Dictionary must be laid at his own door. Probably the only person who thought highly of him as a lexicographer was himself. Possibly Shaw shouldn't be blamed too much for his inclusion of dead wood and lack of meaning discrimination, practices which alas continue to this day, but he does take these to absurd lengths. He fails on most counts, not least in the lack of fulfilment of his original intentions, as set out in his Proposal. His estimate of time was of course wide of the mark but the history of lexicography is not short of compilers who have bitten off more than they could chew. His Dictionary was however a mark of the need for Gaelic dictionaries and it was of use to some people for a short time when no other such work was available. Today it is no more than a historical curiosity and a relic of the Ossian controversy, without which it would almost certainly never have been written.

Appendix: Shaw's Successors

To some extent Shaw may be regarded as a trailblazer in the production of conventional Gaelic-English dictionaries, for the decades following his Dictionary saw considerable development in Gaelic lexicography, with several dictionaries of increasing sophistication published by 1830 (Gillies and Pike 2012: 207-16).

Only one more was published in the 18th century, in 1795**,** *Nuaidh Fhoclair Gaidhlig agus Beurla* (new Gaelic and English Dictionary) by **Robert Mac Farlan**. Unlike Shaw's, this dictionary was supported by the Highland Society, who had elected him their first (and only) 'Professor of Gaelic'. In spite of this accolade the Dictionary is not really an advance on Shaw's, either in content or in structure.

Peter MacFarlane, a translator of religious texts into Gaelic and a schoolmaster in Appin; in 1815 published *A New and Copious English and Gaelic Vocabulary*. A great improvement on its predecessors, it responds to the increased number of translations and other texts published in Gaelic at the time, and to the larger numbers of learners of the language.

Robert Armstrong's *A Gaelic Dictionary* (1825) may be regarded as the first substantial dictionary of Gaelic. Armstrong, a schoolmaster from Dull in Perthshire, had a good grasp of modern methods in lexicography and includes grammatical information, etymology and, for the first time, literary quotations. The last is marred by over-emphasis on the poems of 'Ossian', though one must remember that this accorded with the attitudes of the time. An innovative feature is the inclusion of meaning discrimination in the English-Gaelic section, rather than lists of equivalents from which the user had to choose at random.

Just three years after Armstrong, in 1828, appeared the *Dictionarium Scoto-Celticum: A Gaelic-English Dictionary*, produced by the Highland Society, and often referred to as **'the Society's Dictionary'**. It is aimed not only at scholars and learners of Gaelic in Scotland, but also at wider use furth of Scotland, and particularly in Europe. An unusual feature is therefore the inclusion of Latin in two of its three parts: Gaelic-English, with equivalents in English and Latin,

English-Gaelic and Latin-Gaelic. Also unusually at the time, it was edited by a committee, led by the Rev Dr John Macleod, along with four others, mainly also ministers. It concentrated on Gaelic words still in use and cited their cognates in other Celtic languages, and in other languages where they could at the time, including Hebrew. Even more than Armstrong it helps to differentiate meanings, especially in the English-Gaelic and Latin-Gaelic sections. It includes helpful grammatical information and adds a shortened version of Stewart's *Elements of Gaelic Grammar*. With several innovative aspects, it marks an important move forward in Gaelic lexicography which was not to be surpassed for almost a century.

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