

Ben Jonson's 'Foot Voyage' to Scotland in 1618: Assembling the Corroborative Evidence¹

Anna Groundwater

Ben Jonson, the celebrated playwright and court poet, walked from London to Edinburgh in 1618. For centuries few details were known of this journey, until the discovery in Chester Archives and Local Studies of a manuscript account of this 'Foot Voyage' by an anonymous companion. From 2011 to 2013 an AHRC-funded project contextualised this journey, examining the manuscript itself and assembling the corroborative archival evidence. While the huge body of research that resulted has not yet uncovered the identity of its author, much has been revealed of the nature of travel in early modern Britain, and of the private households and civic communities that hosted Jonson on his journey north. This article looks at internal evidence of the manuscript, and its provenance, and in particular at the archival corroboration for Jonson's encounters in Scotland. In doing so it suggests some of the reasons for his travel, and for the silences in the manuscript that still remain.

On 8 July 1618 the celebrated writer Ben Jonson set out from London to walk to Edinburgh. He was at the height of his career, King James VI and I's court poet, and since Shakespeare's death the pre-eminent Jacobean playwright. He was a literary celebrity.² Two months later on 10 September he crossed the Anglo-Scottish Border at Berwick to a volley of shots from the garrison's musketeers; on Friday 18 September Jonson was welcomed into Edinburgh at the Mercat Cross on the High Street, where the burgh council's prosperous members 'on their knees drank the king's health, testifying in that place that he [Jonson] had performed his journey'.³

¹ The research for this article was undertaken as part of the AHRC-funded project, 'Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland, 1618', and owes much to the work of the project team, James Loxley, Julie Sanders and myself, published as James Loxley, Anna Groundwater and Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the 'Foot Voyage'* (Cambridge, 2015). I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their helpful comments.

² The fullest and most recent biography of Jonson, which includes a chapter on his Scottish adventure, is Ian Donaldson's, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford, 2012).

³ Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALS) ZCR 469/550, Manuscript account of 'My Gossip Johson [Jonson] his foot voyage and myne into Scotland' from London, [17th century]; Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 89.

For centuries, details of this epic journey were unknown; the only tantalising snippets to emerge were from Scotland in the accounts of the Edinburgh burgesses who feasted him, and in the poet William Drummond's recollections of Jonson's conversation during his fortnight's stay at Hawthornden in January 1619.⁴ That is until the recent discovery in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies of a manuscript account of the 'Foot Voyage' by an anonymous companion (ZCR 469/550).⁵ Although, frustratingly, the identity of Jonson's fellow walker remains elusive, the manuscript reveals the people Jonson met and the places he visited in three months of travelling up the Old North Road. In the last of those months in Scotland, Jonson was well entertained in houses and castles in Berwickshire, East Lothian, Fife, Dunfermline and Edinburgh. The journal tells of the playwright's boisterous reception by the crowds in Edinburgh and the hospitality offered by private households and civic communities.

The manuscript represents a major scholarly find, contributing significantly to the literary world's understanding of Jonson's contemporary reputation and character. It reveals a genial and generous man, a jolly Jonson, whose fame went before him, attracting enthusiastic crowds, substantiating Ian Donaldson's observations on his contemporary celebrity.⁶ More than this, in its documenting of the people encountered and his reception within private, public and civic arenas, the manuscript provides a snapshot of Scottish and English society in the years following the regal Union and life on the road in early Jacobean Britain.

This wealth of information was very nearly destroyed by fire. First, Jonson's own account of his journey went up in flames in his study in 1623, or at least he lamented it in his *Execration upon Vulcan*, the loss of 'my journey into Scotland sung,/With all the adventures'.⁷ Despite his apparent intention to produce a book or play arising out of his Scottish adventure, Jonson never published anything explicitly upon the walk. Echoes of it, however, remain in such later works as *The Sad Shepherd* and *The New Inn*, which contain increasingly pastoral

⁴ William Drummond, 'Informations be Ben Johnston to W.D. when he came to Scotland upon foot 1619', copied by Sir Robert Sibbald, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Adv. MS. 33.3.19, fols 25v-31; I. Donaldson, 'Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden: Textual Essay', *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online* (CWBj Online), <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/>; D. Laing, 'Notes by William Drummond, of Conversations with Ben Jonson, at Hawthornden, in January 1619', *Archaeologia Scotica* (1857), 241-70; Ben Jonson, *Conversations with William Drummond*, ed. D. Laing (Shakespeare Society, 17, 1842); D. Masson, 'Ben Jonson in Edinburgh', *Blackwood's Magazine* (Dec. 1893), 790-804; D. Masson, *Drummond of Hawthornden: The Story of his Life and Writings* (London, 1873).

⁵ An annotated and modernised transcription of the manuscript is included in Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 39-97. An old spelling version of the transcription will be included in CWBj Online.

⁶ Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 428.

⁷ D. Bevington, M. Butler and I. Donaldson (eds), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* (Cambridge, 2012) (CWBj), *Underwood*, 43; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 26.

or rural material, and characters that perhaps resemble those met on his way north.⁸ It is those ‘adventures’ that have now been recovered four centuries later.

The manuscript of the ‘Foot Voyage’ itself managed to survive a clear-out by the Alderseys of their family papers, some of which were consigned to a garden bonfire. Others were deposited with Cheshire Archives and Local Studies by Mrs Beatrice Aldersey in 1985, a large collection of papers dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries; here they were catalogued by title, but with little further detail.⁹ The entry for the Jonson MS used to read ‘Manuscript account of “My Gossip² Johson his foot voyage and myne into Scotland” from London’; the spelling of ‘Johson’ is presumably why this manuscript escaped notice in previous online catalogue searches; ‘[Jonson]’ has now been inserted into Cheshire Archives and Local Studies own online searchable catalogue.¹⁰ In a sweep of the catalogue, looking for literary manuscripts, James Loxley, Professor of Early Modern English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, spotted the tantalising entry and was on the next train down to Chester.¹¹

The mouse-bitten quarto manuscript he found does not trumpet its significance. It measures 20.2 by 15.5 cm, the better-quality central gatherings on which the journal is written surrounded by two of coarser ‘pot’ paper. It was unpaginated and unfoliated, though following the dramatic increase in viewings of the manuscript following the publicisation of the extraordinary find, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies have had to disassemble the journal for conservation and, in so doing, have now paginated it in pencil. The gatherings were bound and the original tie remained until the journal’s conservation. There are signs that the manuscript was quite well read in the pattern of folding around the spine.¹²

As for the dating of the journal, there are a number of clues. First, there is the evidence of the watermark, which on the central leaves is a Basel crozier, post horn and fleur-de-lis, incorporating the letters R, G and D. Similar watermarks have been found in correspondence dating 1615 and 1619, and on paper that was manufactured in France and Switzerland; Edward Heawood

⁸ Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 427; Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland*, 162–70.

⁹ See The National Archives, Discovery catalogue, general introduction to the Aldersey Family Collection, CR 469. The papers were calendared in an appendix to J. P. Earwaker and C. G. O. Bridgeman, *Genealogical Account of the Family of Aldersey of Aldersey and Spurstow, Co. Chester* (London, 1899), 135–6; Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland*, 3–5.

¹⁰ <http://archive.cheshire.gov.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=ZCR469%2f16%2f10&pos=10>.

¹¹ J. Loxley, ‘My Gossip’s Foot Voyage: A recently discovered manuscript sheds new light on Ben Jonson’s walk to Edinburgh’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 5554, 11 September 2009, 13–15.

¹² Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland*, 4–5, 11.

thought that such watermarked paper was 'much used in England, for both books and writing, between 1620 and 1650'.¹³

Secondly, there is the hand in which the 'Foot Voyage' was written. It is not Jonson's, nor probably that of its original author, the manuscript being, in all likelihood, a scribal copy. It is written in a relatively clear, and distinctive, secretarial hand which uses, mostly, an italic hand to highlight the names of people and places; this usage is consistent with other hands dated to the early seventeenth century, though that does not preclude it being later. There are some similarities to the hand in which the presentation copy of Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* was written, signed by Jonson and given probably to the king in or after 1604, but written by a scribe.¹⁴ Some of the elegant flourishes correspond, though not all; not enough to confirm that the two manuscripts were copied by the same scribe, but enough to help date the 'Foot Voyage' to a similar period. The principal differences between the hands are to be found in the more workaday letter formations.¹⁵

Intriguingly, the manuscript contains another hand, on the surrounding pot paper, suggesting that the unused leaves of the bound MS were subsequently used by someone keen not to waste paper. These writings are in a seventeenth-century shorthand, known as 'short writing', just decipherable by using the instruction manuals of the time to reveal the copying of the book of Job, chapters one to ten.¹⁶ The presence of such devout material in a manuscript that at some point became owned by the Alderseys, known as a 'godly' family throughout the 1600s, is not particularly surprising; lengthy sermon notes, from the second half of the century in a hand that might be Thomas Aldersey's, exist in some notebooks acquired by the Bodleian Library in 1986.¹⁷ If it is the same hand, the coexistence of such pious notes alongside the revelries of Jonson's trip to Scotland would be remarkable. In terms of dating, the shorthand's use of characters from manuals in publication from the 1630s onward would suggest that it was written some significant time after the original 'Foot Voyage', but by the mid-1600s.¹⁸

¹³ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 4–5; Edward Heawood, *Watermarks: mainly of the 17th and 18th centuries* (Hilversum, 1950), 273.

¹⁴ British Library, Royal MS 17.B.XXXI. A much fuller discussion of the provenance of the manuscript, with a detailed comparison of the two hands, appears in Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, ch. 1. See also D. Lindley, 'The Masque of Blackness, The Masque of Beauty, and The Haddington Masque: Textual Essay', in *CWBj* Online.

¹⁵ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 26–30.

¹⁶ CALS, ZCR 469/550, leaves 7.3v to 8.3v, reversed.

¹⁷ Bodleian Library, MSS Don. e. 155–63, fols 38–55; Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 13–14.

¹⁸ T. Shelton, *Short Writing: the most exact method* (London, 1630); H. Dix, *A New Art of Brachygraphy* (London, 1633); F. Henderson, "'Swifflie and Secrete Writing' in Seventeenth-Century England, and Samuel Shelton's *Brachygraphy*", *The Electronic British Library Journal* (2008), 1–13.

Finally, the content of the text itself gives some indication of when it was written. There is for instance, a scribal interjection which qualifies a reference to Sir William Cavendish (one of Jonson's greatest patrons, and longest hosts on this journey), as 'now Lord Mansfield'.¹⁹ Cavendish was ennobled in 1620, shortly after Jonson's stay at his house in Nottinghamshire, Welbeck Abbey, but he was further elevated in 1628 to the earl of Newcastle.²⁰ The original writer's constant reference to 'Cavendish' suggests that the original version was written before 1620; the scribe's interjection of 'Mansfield' suggests that this later version was probably written before 1628. The 'king' referred to, however, is not further elucidated, indicating perhaps that this king, James, was still alive at the time of the scribe's writing; James VI and I died in 1625. The correlation of this with the evidence of the reference to Mansfield, the watermark, paper and similar hands elsewhere, suggest a dating of the manuscript to the early 1620s.²¹

The exact purpose of Jonson's journey remains debated, even with the evidence of the 'Foot Voyage'.²² Contemporarily, there was some comment that Jonson's progress on foot, rather than by horse, to Scotland was monetarily motivated. As a gossip wrote, 'Ben Jonson is going on foot to Edinburgh and back, for his profit', perhaps suggesting a wager.²³ The early 1600s had witnessed several such ventures, with John Lepton, a Yorkshireman undertaking in 1604 'to ride fiue seuerall times betwixt London and Yorke in sixe dayes'.²⁴ In 1618, the 'water-poet' John Taylor also walked north to Edinburgh on the premise that this could be done without a penny in his pocket, dependent on the generosity of his hosts along the way and in expectation of monetary reward by subscribers on his completion of the journey. There is no mention in the account of Jonson's travels of any wager, though at Belvoir his host, the earl of Rutland, 'subscribed' 30 pieces, suggesting a donation to a proposed literary work or perhaps just to the fulfilment of the walk itself. But while Jonson was not a rich man, and was to die in some poverty, in 1618 his material well-being must have seemed quite established. Much of what he was given on the walk, he gave away, in Pontefract paying 41s. for the company's wine and in Leith, we know from Taylor's account, 'a piece of gold of two and twenty shillings'

¹⁹ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 50.

²⁰ William Cavendish, 1st duke of Newcastle upon Tyne, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* online, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/4/101004946/>.

²¹ For further on the dating of the MS, see Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 7, 30.

²² J. Knowles, 'Jonson in Scotland: Jonson's Mid-Jacobean Crisis', in (eds) T. Kozuka and J. R. Mulryne, *Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson: New Directions in Biography* (Aldershot, 2006), 259–77; I. Donaldson, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1992).

²³ George Gerrard to Sir Dudley Carleton, 4 June 1617, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I, 1611–1618* (London, 1858), 472.

²⁴ *The abridgement of the English Chronicle, first collected by M. Iohn Stow, and after him augmented with very many memorable antiquities, ... 1618.* by E. H. Gentleman (London, 1618), 455.

to the water-poet.²⁵ Though he probably planned to have published the tale of his achievement and to have profited from that monetarily, the fact that no such product ever appeared suggests that this was not a primary motive.

Something, however, is suggested by the nature of the journal. While this manuscript is almost certainly a scribal copy of an earlier version, that earlier journal was in itself probably a writing up of day notes taken along the way. In its faithful recording of the names of so many of the people met (over 270 names), most of whom have now been identified, the author may have been listing the witnesses who could verify that Jonson had been where he would subsequently claim. That said, his reasons for naming so many were possibly more complex: it may have been to record the way in which his famous friend was feted by the great and good, to emphasise the esteem in which he was held, or perhaps simply for his own remembrance. But in his careful detailing of the exact route taken, Jonson's companion appears to have been setting down proof that the playwright had indeed walked every step of the way. Thus on the road to Darlington he notes, 'We passed Croft bridge going two miles about because we would not pass Nysam Ferry', in other words crossing the Tees by bridge and adding considerably to their journey, perhaps so that Jonson could not be accused of using a ferry. In Edinburgh, as we have seen, the companion records the acknowledgement of the journey's completion, the burgesses 'testifying in that place that he had performed his journey'.²⁶ An element of a wager, if not necessarily for monetary gain, appears possible.

Profit, however, need not necessarily have been purely pecuniary. There was probably some element of displaying a physical achievement, the more notable given Jonson's own portrayal of his widening girth, 'my mountaine belly' as he was to write in a poem he sent to Drummond.²⁷ There was something Homeric about an arduous walk, which fitted with Jonson's immersion in classical and humanist works. He had written admiringly of Thomas Coryate's epic journeys around Europe in the traveller's published journal in 1611, and was to compare that walker's boots with his own in his conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden in January 1619. Drummond recalled: 'He went from Leith homeward the 25 of January 1619, in a pair of shoes which he told lasted him since he came from Darnton [Darlington], which he minded to take back that farr again: they were appearing like Coriats.'²⁸ Others were less laudatory:

²⁵ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 45, 64 (and on wagers, 123–33); J. Taylor, *The Pennyles Pilgrimage or The Money-lesse perambulation, of Iohn Taylor, alias the Kings Majesties water-poet* (London, 1619), sig. F3v. Taylor's description of the Scottish part of his journey, and other historical travel accounts of Scotland appear in P. Hume Brown (ed.), *Early Travellers in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1891).

²⁶ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 70, 89, 123.

²⁷ 'Informations', *CWBj*, vol. 5, 391.

²⁸ T. Coryate, *The Odcombian banquet: dished forth by Thomas the Coriat, and serued in by a number of noble wits in prayse of his Crudities and Crambe too* (London, 1611), sigs. B3r, C1r–v; 'Informations', *CWBj*, vol. 5, 389.

as Edward Terry wrote of Coryate's efforts, 'Twas fame, without doubt that stirred up this man unto these voluntary but hard undertakings, and the hope of glory which he should reap after he had finished his long travels'.²⁹ Jonson was already famous, however, as the crowds that mobbed him seem to confirm.

There was also the possibility that Jonson's journey represented a form of pilgrimage, his companion referring to it as such as they left Belvoir.³⁰ The rhetoric of pilgrimage was often used by travellers to describe and justify their journeys, sanctifying them with elevated motivation. A couple of Coryate's eulogisers alluded in this way to his travels, John Sutclin emphasising its piously pedestrian nature: 'Thye feete haue gone a painefull pilgrimage'.³¹ Had Jonson's walk perhaps been undertaken in the spirit of pilgrimage? As Drummond was to recall, Jonson was 'to writt his foot pilgrimage hither and to call it a discoverie in a poem he calleth Edinborough the hart of Scotland Britaines other eye'; it was after all back to what he claimed as the land of his recent ancestors.³² In this he was in good company, the number of English travellers to Scotland increasing hugely after the Union of the Crowns had removed the difficulties of crossing a frontier between the 'auld enemies'. There was perhaps a demand in England for descriptions of its northern neighbour, fed by antiquarian works such as Camden's *Britannia*, newly published in English with a map and details of Scotland in 1610.³³ The previous year James VI and I himself had made his 'salmon-like' return to the land of his birth, fourteen years after leaving it. Was Jonson emulating his royal patron?³⁴

But let us join Jonson as he crosses the border at Berwick, and briefly recreate his journey up the coast to Dunbar and North Berwick, into Edinburgh, then across the firth to Fife, his peregrinations there and his triumphant return into Edinburgh. As soon as he crossed the border, with the sound of the guns ringing in his ears and a glass or two of claret, Jonson was immediately absorbed into a network of hospitality that forwarded him from one Scottish house to the next. At Ayton, a glimpse is had of the merriment experienced along the way, as one Valentine West 'played his prank in drink', the deleterious effects of which caused the companion to remark of the next day's journey across the moors to Cockburnspath, 'This was the tedioussest day's journey in the whole voyage',

²⁹ E. Terry, *A Voyage to East India* (London, 1655), 72.

³⁰ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 45.

³¹ Coryate, *Odcumbian banquet*, sig. H4r.

³² 'Informations', *CWBj*, vol. 5, 371, 379.

³³ W. Camden, *Britain, or A Chorographical Description of the most Flourishing Kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland [Britannia]*. Trans. Philemon Holland (London, 1610). See R. A. Mason, 'Certain Matters Concerning the Realme of Scotland: George Buchanan and Scottish Self-Fashioning at the Union of the Crowns', *Scottish Historical Review*, 92, no. 1 (2013), 38–65 (pp. 53–4, 58–60).

³⁴ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 115; for discussion of Jonson's motivations in undertaking the walk, see especially ch. 1.

for he had not slept the previous two nights.³⁵ From there the travellers walked past Dunglass to Dunbar, where they stayed with the king's receiver of rents, then to Auldham by Tantallon Castle and the home of the favoured courtiers of the Achmoutie family, ending up with Sir John Hume at North Berwick a couple of nights later. Jonson does not appear to have been in a hurry to get to Edinburgh, enjoying the hospitality of these Lothian and Berwickshire lairds.

Even headier entertainment was on offer the next day when George, third earl of Winton, 'waylaid us', staying them at Seton Palace for dinner with him and Francis, Lord Bothwell, son of the delusional earl who had been forfeited for his raids on the king's palaces in the early 1590s.³⁶ This was elevated company, for Winton was a privy councillor and the well-connected nephew of Scotland's chancellor, Alexander, earl of Dunfermline. This powerful man was himself to play host to Jonson five days later in the grand surroundings of the queen's palace at Dunfermline, with his wife Margaret Hay, daughter of James, seventh Lord Yester. Jonson spent the following day with the family of the king's longest-serving courtier, Mr John Gibb, who had a house within the old Abbey complex. A few miles south-west of Dunfermline, Jonson was hosted by the renowned entrepreneur Sir George Bruce in his newly built house at Culross, staying perhaps in the same ornately painted bedroom that the king had occupied the previous year.³⁷ We can perhaps best recapture something of the atmosphere of these grand dwellings if one stands today in Bruce's house (now owned by the National Trust for Scotland), in the room reputed to have been the king's, its decorated panelled walls untouched since then.³⁸

Jonson's entertainment in Scotland, at least from the evidence of the 'Foot Voyage', was entirely within the houses of these lairds and nobles, and in this his experience differed from that of Taylor. This less famous poet, while passed from one highland noble's house to the next, also endured less comfortable accommodation in inns, most notably at Brechin where he was forced to resist the attentions of one woman: 'for want of a locke or a latch, I staked vp my door with a great chaire'.³⁹ Jonson's Scottish experience differed too from his journey in England, where in all the towns he stayed in an inn, often that belonging to the town's postmaster. He was entertained there by the local civic elites, and not usually within their own homes. As Felicity Heal has observed of such practices, however, this was customary and not a sign of a lack of respect. Entertaining a distinguished traveller with a 'borracho bottle' or two, as Jonson had at Tollerton, was a way in which both host and guest escaped the mutual

³⁵ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 86.

³⁶ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 88.

³⁷ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 90–3. See *ODNB* entries for Dunfermline, Winton and Bruce.

³⁸ Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Canmore ID 48021, Culross Palace; M. Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2003), 57–77.

³⁹ Taylor, *Pennyles Pilgrimage*, sigs. F3r–v.

obligations inherent in the guest's dependence on his host's private hospitality, making life easier for both. England's system of inns facilitated this, allowing the traveller greater flexibility in his movements. In Scotland, however, the network of inns was less developed and older traditions of private hospitality persisted.⁴⁰ That said, the slightly different experiences of Jonson and Taylor suggest the esteem in which Jonson was held, and perhaps something too of a desire to please his royal patron.

The apparent ease with which Jonson moved between the houses of the lowland landed elites was apparently facilitated by a number of Scottish courtiers who flit in and out of the text, accompanying Jonson onward.⁴¹ At North Berwick, one Mr William Ramsay and two more 'gentlemen' came out from Edinburgh to meet the travellers, seemingly then going ahead to arrange accommodation for the following night at Prestonpans, though Jonson chose to stop at Seton. From Seton, 'other' gentlemen 'brought' them through Prestonpans, where they briefly parted, Ramsay riding on ahead again to arrange a welcome for Jonson at Edinburgh's 'town's end' (probably the Netherbow Port). Ramsey was a kinsman of John, Viscount Haddington, a royal favourite, and Ramsay himself a groom of the king's bedchamber; the men at Netherbow included the king's carver, Mr Alexander Stewart, and two from Prince Charles's household. These men may have been among the 'gentlemen' riding with Jonson out of Edinburgh on their way to Fife a couple of days later, the playwright now mounted having completed his walk.⁴²

All of these men, and the Achmouties and Gibbises with whom Jonson stayed, were courtiers with intimate daily access to the king and his heir. King James's usual summer progress around the palatial homes of England's southern nobles will have released them temporarily from courtly duties, allowing them to rush north to their Scottish homes and kinsmen. They had probably met the playwright at court in his role as creator of royal masques; John Achmoutie had performed only that spring in *For The Honour of Wales*.⁴³ They were familiar with Jonson, with his work, and aware of the king's favour towards him, and they were aware too of his celebrated status as court laureate and London's premier playwright. They seem to have been keen to make his journey a happy one, and to leave him with a good impression of Scottish hospitality. Whether they did this at the express wish of the king is uncertain, but they will certainly not have wanted to displease him.

⁴⁰ F. Heal, *Hospitality in early modern England* (Oxford, 1990), 202–3, 208; Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 69.

⁴¹ For discussion of the composition of the royal household at Whitehall, see N. Cuddy, 'The revival of the entourage: the bedchamber of James I, 1603–1625', in (ed.) D. Starkey, *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), 173–225.

⁴² Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 87–90; The National Archives (TNA), LC 5/50, p. 36; LC 2/6, fol. 40v; LC 2/6, fols 71, 72.

⁴³ *CWB7*, vol. 5, 335.

At Netherbow Jonson was greeted by these courtiers, but swamped by a crowd who seemed to know either of his fame, or of the near completion of his epic venture. They had clearly been warned of his imminent appearance: the 'women in throngs ran to see us etc., some bringing sack and sugar, others aquavitæ and sugar'.⁴⁴ The following day, as Jonson's band of courtiers and the good burgesses of Edinburgh toasted the king's health and the writer's achievement, the crowds were 'so thick in the street that wee could scarce pass by', the people running in 'throngs to have a sight' of Jonson; others craned their heads through holes in the wooden-shuttered windows.⁴⁵ Whether such people really knew of Jonson's literary work, they had been alerted to his physical achievement.

Others were intent too to acknowledge Jonson's arrival and to give him the welcome appropriate to a man of his status. In Edinburgh the town's magistrates toasted his success, but greater entertainment was to follow on Jonson's return to the capital a few days later from Fife. As he stayed with friends in Leith, two of the town's bailiffs came in person to invite Jonson to dinner with the senior burgesses, and 'in the name of the town offered him the honour of burgesse'.⁴⁶ The following Saturday, Jonson was feasted by these men in the house of the bailiff James Ainslie at a dinner that cost an astonishing £221 6s. 4d.⁴⁷ He was with all ceremony made an honorary burgesse, an honour reserved for visiting dignitaries. For a step-son of a bricklayer, this was heady social recognition, replicating that which had been lavished upon the king's large retinue of nobles and gentlemen the previous year. The honour was accorded too by the burgesses of Dunfermline to Jonson, on this occasion also extended to his companion, at a dinner during which they 'drank hard'. The well-lubricated hospitality of these town's civic elites included Jonson within an alternative social sphere to that of the landed and courtly elites that looked after him in the country. Further sociability was demonstrated in their entertainment of Jonson in Leith a week later, when £4 7s. was spent on his entertainment.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 89.

⁴⁵ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 89–90. Sir William Brereton noted too these wooden facings in the 1630s, though not in complimentary terms: 'this face of boards, which is towards the street, doth much blemish it, and derogate from glory and beauty ... This lining with boards (wherein are round holes shaped to the proportion of men's heads), and this incroachment into the street about two yards, is a mighty disgrace unto it'. Sir W. Brereton, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland and Ireland*, ed. E. Hawkins (London, 1844), 102.

⁴⁶ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 95–6; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, 44. For discussion of Edinburgh's burgesses, see L. Stewart, *Urban Politics and the British Civil Wars: Edinburgh, 1617–53* (Leiden, 2006).

⁴⁷ Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), SL1/1/13, Burgh council book, 10 October 1617 to 26 May 1628, 85.

⁴⁸ Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 93; ECA, Baillies' Accounts Extent and Unlaws from 1564 to 1689, 617.

The payments of these sums by Edinburgh's town council were recorded in the pristine burgh council minutes and treasurer's accounts held in Edinburgh City Archives. They remain the sole documentary evidence uncovered so far, apart from Drummond's recollections and the 'Foot Voyage' manuscript itself, of Jonson's time in Scotland. This evidence was originally unearthed by the eminent Victorian historian David Masson, the writer presumably of the pencilled notes in the margins which draw attention to the entries. The reimbursement of Ainslie for the dinner, and the gilding of three burgess tickets for Jonson, were the subject of an article published in 1893.⁴⁹ Another scribbled note, however, points to an unpublished entry for Jonson's drinking in Leith, the dating of which corresponds to that in the journal for Jonson's companion's departure via Leith to catch a boat south. It provides therefore further corroboration of the authenticity of the journal itself, a welcome addition to what remains a surprisingly small pool of evidence confirming Jonson's movements in Scotland. The burgh records that would have corroborated his creation as honorary burgess in Dunfermline, kept so assiduously to at least 1613, do not survive for 1618, recommencing only after his departure in 1619.⁵⁰ This lacuna is the most frustrating for it would have recorded the name of the manuscript's still anonymous author.

Some corroboration, however, is found in other manuscript evidence, which confirms the presence of the people the travellers met in the right place and at the right time – the charters and writs that they signed or witnessed, or their attendance at privy or town council meetings that fitted with the timing of their encounters with Jonson. Letters, for instance, were sent from the privy council to Alexander, earl of Dunfermline, at Dunfermline several times in September 1618; a letter from the earl of Buccleuch whom Jonson had met at Doncaster on his way north, confirmed his presence in and intention to remain in Scotland that autumn; and alongside William Ramsay's witnessing of one of his kinsmen's charter on 1 September 1618, the inclusion of John Stewart, brother of Lord Bothwell, and almost certainly Jonson's host in Leith.⁵¹

And then there is the internal evidence of the manuscript itself in the places that they travelled to, places that seemed in vogue for travellers in 1618. Jonson, like the king, and other travellers such as John Taylor, seems to have followed a recognised circuit of attractions. This was to cross the firth to Fife to marvel

⁴⁹ 'Item ye tuentie day of Januar im vjcs and nyntene yeirs gewin at directione of ye counsell to Alexr patersone for wrytting and gilding of Benjamine Johnestounes burges ticket being thryis writtin xij lib vj s viij d', ECA, SL144/3, Edinburgh Dean of Guild: Accounts from 1568 to 1626, unpaginated; Masson, 'Ben Jonson in Edinburgh'.

⁵⁰ National Records of Scotland (NRS), Dunfermline burgh council and court books, B20/10/3 (1606–13); B20/10/4 (1619–32). There was still, however, a tradition in the nineteenth century, recorded by Ebenezer Henderson, of Jonson visiting the town in August 1618. E. Henderson, *The Annals of Dunfermline and Vicinity* (Glasgow, 1879), 277.

⁵¹ NRS, E21/85, Treasurer's Accounts, Apr 1618–Apr 1619, fols 34v–35r; ECA, SL1/1/13, Burgh council book, 10 October 1617 to 26 May 1628, 79–85; NRS, Buccleuch Muniments, GD224/906/58, GD224/308/19.

at Sir George Bruce's coal mines stretching out for a mile under the Forth, and the ingenious engines, 'the rare waterwork', that pumped water through the salt-pans; a visit to the palace and abbey of Dunfermline appeared mandatory, and the well at Pettycur was a popular side-excursion. In Edinburgh, both Taylor and Jonson viewed the massive cannon Mons Meg at Edinburgh Castle where they were told the surely apocryphal story, as the accounts recall, that the barrel 'was so big that one got a woman with child in it'.⁵² There too they viewed the violent and spendthrift earl of Crawford, then incarcerated for his misdoings. In Fife we get the most sense of Jonson the tourist, ticking off the mines, the palace, the smart houses of Fife gentry, Aberdour Castle, the isle of Inchcolm in the distance, the well at Pettycur, and Burntisland. In the detailing of his itinerary, the journal seems to have been locating Jonson in known places, adding further credibility to its account of his movements.

But given the volume of correspondence that whizzed up and down the Old North Road, between the king's court at Whitehall and Edinburgh, it seems strange that no further corroboration of Jonson's presence has yet been found.⁵³ No hint of him has been uncovered in the remaining lengthy and gossipy letters sent by privy councillors (such as Jonson's host Alexander, the earl of Dunfermline, to their contacts in James's household), nor has Jonson appeared so far in the stream of directives sent north by the king and his courtiers, not to mention the more intimate correspondence between family members separated by duty and employment.⁵⁴ It is likely, however, that this is a piece of evidence waiting to be found, a stray sentence in a letter that deals with estate or family business, or a treasurer's entry in a burgh council's records. As more records are catalogued online, and more archival work achieved, the more likely such a find becomes. Jonson's movements after all were thought lost until that chance recovery of them in an online search.

⁵² Loxley *et al.*, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 90, 92.

⁵³ The significance of this correspondence for the government of Scotland in King James's absence is discussed in A. Groundwater, 'From Whitehall to Jedburgh, the role of patronage networks in the government of the Scottish Borders, 1603 to 1625', *The Historical Journal*, 53, no. 4 (2010), 871–93. The deleterious effects of blockages in communication is expanded upon by A. R. MacDonald in 'Consultation and Consent under James VI', *The Historical Journal*, 54, no. 2 (2011), 287–306.

⁵⁴ See for instance the hundreds of such letters contained with the Denmilne collection, NLS, Denmilne MS, Adv. MS. 33.1.1, vols 1–11; 33.3.12; 33.1.3; 33.1.7.