



Dictionaries of the Scots Language
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The Point o Tinsal

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1.

The Mirry Dancers skyran high abune
the fields an hills, the lochs, glims i the land,
aer ferly owerpooered the skelf o moon,
thir curteens trimsan fae an unkan hand.
A cattyface sits waatchan on the fence,
as moose an shrew, aal fleggid, rin tae hide.
No wan o them the chuffsy widna flense,
he tirls his heid tae fix them, beady-eyed.
In the faer haaf a wave maks for the geo,
whaar a fisheen bott stotters in the swaa.
The tide will ebb afore shae'll can tae go
tae sea again – shae'll no resist the draa.
In the hoose up by, lamp slockid, mirk is deep;
the fokk lie moored tae thir baeds, wuppid in sleep.

2.

Sittan in the waarmth o central-haeteen,
keepan oot the cowl'd an the howlan gale
air-source haet pump an double glazeen
I mind on a yarn me mither's brither telt –
Hid wis a story fae me grandfeyther,
thir feyther, handed tae him, or
rether, he wid moothed hid, lovan the soond
o the owld wirds, hoo they wir delivered.

His neebour fae the next ferm ower,
stannan drookid be the fire, sirpan weet,
on a day o hellyeifers an skrekan skreever,
sayan: *Whit waether, min, whit waether!*
(his kep in a kruil in his hans, wae jalouse),
Rashy bulder efter rashy bulder
an no a dry paet in the hoose.

3.

The Orkney lexicographer, Hugh Marwick, travels tae the North Isles in search o wirds for his dictionary o The Orkney Norn.

Tinsal – *noun*

“Wance I geed tae Sanday whaar I heard this wird.

Hid wis an owld Sanday wife that telt me
o an Eday buddy that shae haed heard
usan the word, and as hid wis strange
tae her she haed remembered hid.

The Eday buddy spaekan o a coo
aboot tae calf, said the baest wis

– *at the point o tinsal* –

that is, delivery, givan birth. Compare

Owld Norse: Number Wan – a burden; Twa –

haevy affliction. The Scots wird is a

derivative o *tyna*, verb, tae lose,

etcetera.”

Settan doon a burden,
sufferan loss... Aer they the sam thing?
Furtivver, hid’s fine tae hear twathree owld tongues
at the back o wan wird, aal addan
heft tae the meaneen.

Commissioned by Dictionaries of the Scots Language in celebration of Scots and its extensive history as a lasting tribute to *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and all those involved in its making. For further background, see <https://dsl.ac.uk/aitken100/>.