John Davidson, â??A Scots Poetical Shop Billâ?•

Description

[JOHN DAVIDSON]

â??A Scots Poetical Shop Billâ?•

My customers, of different ranks,
To you I do return my thanks
For all your former favours granted;
A grateful sense I never wanted.
That you may be better suited,
Iâ??ve bought my goods the last imported;
And what I sell, that you may know,
Is noted in the bill below:
Hereâ??s lint and tow, both white and blue,
All sorts of cards, both old and new;
Powder-sugar, starch, and soap,
Garden seeds of last yearâ??s crop;
Fine pearl ashes, corks, and spice,
Sugarcandy, cards, and dice;
White iron mugs, to hold your drink,
Writing-paper, pens, and ink.
Barley here, instead of grotts,
Honey-canes, and chamber-pots;
Napkins, made at Aberdeen,
Ginger too, both white and green;
English wool, and factory backs;
Wafers, also sticks of wax.
Brimstone, and the flour of such,
With other things to cure the itch.
Tar and iron, salt and lead,
Raisins, allum, gingerbread;
Rock-indigo, thatâ??s good and true,
Brazil, and verdigrease, for blue;
Snuff-boxes, bibles, Carlisle hooks,
New testaments, and good prayer-books;
Fine Epsom here, and Glauber salts,
With other physic, free from faults.
Senna for children, rhubarb, pills,
Rosin, birse, and timber heels;
Oxycrotion, wax of bees,

Empty casks, and dry-ware trees;
Garters, tapes, bone combs and horn,
Fine tobacco, twist or shorn;
Story books, of uncoâ?? stuff,
And I sell John Cushnieâ??s snuff.
New English hops, none better grows,
Fine pickâ??d ropes, and other tows.
Hereâ??s good salt butter in whole kitts,
Horses girths and sniffle bits.
Turpentine oil, and fine sweet sack,
Burgundy pitch, and good lampblack:
Metal pots, both great and smaâ??;
And Carron hoops, just fit to caâ??;
Train oil I have, and also green
Spectacles to fit your een;
Sleeve Buttons, needles, pins, and awls,
Copperas, and Aleppo galls;
Molasses, cinnamon, and glue,
Saddle-tacks, and saffron too;
Black beer, vinegar, and honey;
Goods for trust, or ready money;
Fresh rye grass, and clover seed,
Buckram, cords, and colourâ??d thread;
Metal buttons, hair and horn,
All sorts thatâ??s in the country worn;
Earthen plates, and small brown mugs,
White iron mills, and bigger jugs;
White soap, gunpowder, flints, and shot,
And timber cats, theyâ??re but a groat;
Dram glasses, vials, wheeling wire,
Tobacco-pipes, and other geer:
Fine white thread, and cambric knitting,
Good cheque to sell, thatâ??s fit for metting;
A foreign herb, they often drink it,
Wiâ?? many other useful trinket;
All sorts of gun-stones here enew,
White iron cakes, and button blue;
Of liquorish I have a share,
And weavers brushes, several pair;
Leather points of good sheeps hides,
With twenty other things besides;
All sorts of nails and stobs I keep,
Wiâ?? gude wooâ?? sheers to clip your sheep;
Most kind of stone ware here youâ??ll see,
Wiâ?? cups and saucers fit for tea;
Large white bowls, and quart decanters,
Tea-pots too for those whoâ??re wanters;
Gimblets here of any size.

Of chamber-pots Iâ??ll tell you twice;
Youâ??ll may be think I doâ??t for sport,
But I can shew you any sort;
Glasgow napkins, great and small,
Button molds and vitriol;
Nutmegs and sugar, alloâ?? grease,
Fine ground mustard and Scots cheese;
For want of good if you should fret,
I sell at any time dry skate;
The best wheel-bands I eâ??er did handle,
Wiâ?? mustard boxes, and white candle;
Iâ??ve finest flour, of English make,
And, if you please, the same Iâ??ll bake;
That is a branch I still pursue;
Hereâ??s loaves and biscuits always new;
Likewise your meal, bear, rye, or oat,
I bake a firlot for a groat:
I keep an oven always warm,
But with your meal pray send me barm:
And wives and lasses far and near,
For you Iâ??ve other sorts of geer;
And I may swear, and not be cheated,
That aâ?? the parish could noâ?? beat it;
Itâ??s factory lint from Gordonâ??s mills,
Whose character the mearns fills;
And my advice I give you aâ??,
Come take it eâ??er the prices faâ??.
Quick-silver, different kinds of saw,
Amang the rest, one for the claw;
Brazilicon, dipalme, hemp,
Harvest gloves for those that kemp;
More usefuâ?? things I might advise;
Troth, hereâ??s gude ointment for the eyes!
Now, if youâ??ll be so very gude
As come to me, (I think you should)
If youâ??ve but little for to spend,
Iâ??ll thank you kindly, come or send;
And, though I have some things forgot,
What goods I have are aâ?? new bought;
Iâ??m at a word, I like nae prigging,
My nameâ??s John Davidson, at Newbigging.

NOTES:

9 *lint and tow, both white and blue* A coarse linen cloth made from flax that was typically bleached or dyed.

11 *Powder-sugar* A refined form of sugar that, throughout the eighteenth century, was made by hand.

13 *Fine pearl ashes* Pearl ash (potassium carbonate) was an early chemical leavener used in baking from about 1780 to 1840.

17 *grotts* Oats, considered a less refined grain than barley at the time.

18 *Honey-canes* Raw sugar cane.

19 *Napkins, made at Aberdeen* Aberdeen was known for its fine linen products, including handkerchiefs, in this period.

20 *Ginger too, both white and green* Ginger root in its natural state was known as â??green ginger,â?• while ginger root â??from which the skin was removed prior to drying or preservingâ?• was known as â??white gingerâ?• (*OED*).

21 *backs* â??A large shallow vessel; a tub, trough, vat, cistern,â?• probably in the context of wool dyeing here (*OED*).

22 *Wafers* Small discs made of flour, gum, and a coloring agent; largely used to seal letters in the period (*OED*).

23 *Brimstone* â??Vernacular name for sulphurâ?• (*OED*); *flour of such* Fine sulphur powder, known as â??flowers of sulphurâ?• in the period, and used medicinally for a wide range of maladies, including itchy skin infections (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1820*).

26 *allum* â??An astringent mineral salt;â?• used in the eighteenth century as a dye fixative and in various medicinal applications (*OED*).

27 *Rock-indigo* A corruption of â??rich indigo,â?• a term that indicates the high quality of the blue dye (Eastaugh, et al, *Pigment Compendium*, p. 200).

28 *Brazil* A red dye derived from brazilwood (Eastaugh, et al, p. 66); *verdigrease* Variation of â??verdigris,â?• a blue-green pigment derived from the corrosion products formed when copper is exposed to various organic acids (Eastaugh, et al, 391).

29 *Carlisle hooks* Popular light wire fishing hooks made in Carlisle, Cumbria.

31 *Epsomâ?¦and Glauber salts* Epsom salt, or magnesium sulfate, was discovered in a spring in the town of Epsom, Surrey, in the early seventeenth century; its medicinal properties quickly turned Epsom into a spa town. Glauber salt, or sodium sulphate, was first discovered by the seventeenth-century chemist and apothecary Johann Rudolf Glauber (1604-1670); it was primarily used in dyeing and as a laxative in the eighteenth century (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1820*).

32 *physic* Medicine.

33 *Sennaâ?¦rhubarb* Both plants were widely available purgatives in the eighteenth century.

34 *Rosin* â??A kind of resin, a solid form obtained as a residue after the distillation of oil of turpentine from crude turpentineâ?• (*OED*), used for waterproofing boats, an ingredient in soaps, and, as an ingredient in ointments, for treating coughs, arthritis, and wounds; *birse* Bristles (typically from a hog or boar) (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*); *timber heels* Wooden heels used in shoemaking.

35 *Oxycrotion* Variant spelling of oxycroceum, a preparation â??which [is] composed of bees wax, black pitch, myrrh and olibanum,â?• and applied as a remedy for colds â??by being spread on leather and used as a plaster for the chestâ?• (*Scottish Notes and Queries*, June 1888, p. 16).

36 *dry-ware trees* Barrels for packing goods that were commonly transported by sea (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

37 *tapes* Woven textile strips that were essential components of clothing (e.g. providing ties or binding for pockets) and upholstery in the period; *horn* Horn combs were made from ox or cow horns and were cheaper than bone combs (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1820*).

38 *twist* A length of tobacco that has been made into a â??thick cordâ?• (*OED*); *shorn* Tobacco leaves cut into fine threads for smoking.

39 *uncoâ??* â??Unknown, strange, unusualâ?• (*OED*).

40 *John Cushnieâ??s snuff* Probably snuff imported or made by John Cushnie, an active merchant of Montrose in the late eighteenth century. The port of Montrose was located on the northeast coast of Scotland, half way between Aberdeen and Dundee.

42 *tows* â??A rope, cord, length of strong twine, stringâ?• (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

43 *kitts* Circular wooden vessels, used for carrying or holding a variety of commodities, including butter (*OED*).

44 *girths* â??A belt or band of leather or cloth, placed round the body of a horse or other beasts of burdenâ?• (*OED*); *sniffle bits* Scottish variation of snaffle-bit, â??A simple form of bridle-bit, having less restraining power than one provided with a curbâ?• (*OED*).

45 *Turpentine oil* â??A volatile oilâ?¦prepared by distilling crude turpentine,â?• typically sourced from fir trees; frequently listed as a drug in this period from which many other products were derived (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1800*); *sweet sack* â??A kind of sweet wine, now bought chiefly from the Canariesâ?• (Johnson).

46 *Burgandy pitch* â??The resinous juice of the spruce fir;â?• *lampblack* â??A pigment consisting of almost pure carbon made by collecting the soot produced by burning oilâ?¦used primarily to make printerâ??s inkâ?• (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1800*).

48 *Carron hoops* Metal hoops used in the construction of hoop petticoats, or panniers, that extended sideways in the fashion of the day to exaggerate a womanâ??s hips. The hoops Davidson is hawking were apparently produced by the Carron Ironworks, established in 1759 and located near Falkirk, Stirlingshire, on the banks of the river Carron.

49 *Train oil* â??Oil extracted from the carcasses of sea animals, esp. that obtained by boiling the blubber of the right whaleâ?• (*OED*).

50 *een* Eyes.

52 *Copperas* â??A name given from early times to the protosulphates of copper, iron, and zinc (distinguished as blue, green, and white copperas respectively)â?• used in a wide variety of applications and products in this period (*OED)*; *Aleppo galls* â??A hard nut-like gall that forms on any of several oaksâ?¦in response to the developing

larva of the gall wasp;â?• highly sought after in this period for dying textiles and making inks (*OED*).

54 *Saddle tacks* â??A small nail of iron or brass, usually characterised by a large, flat head;â?• *saffron* â??The most expensive drug in the early-modern periodâ?¦used in medicine as a cordial and sudorificâ?• (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1800*).

55 *Black beer* â??A dark and syrupy beer, traditionally made using the leaves and branches of the spruce treeâ?• (*OED*).

56 *Goods for trust* That is, goods provided on credit, without immediate payment.

58 *Buckram* By the eighteenth century, buckram invariably indicated cheap, coarse linen or cotton cloth, sometimes stiffened with gum or paste (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1800*); *cords* Various forms of twine or rope.

59 *hair and horn* In this context, probably a reference to the raw materials for making wigs and combs of various kinds.

62 *White iron mills* Snuff boxes made from tin plate (iron coated with tin), commonly known as â??white ironâ?• in Scotland, in which dried tobacco leaves could be ground and stored.

63 *White soap* â??This soap is made with one part of the Lees of Spanish Pot-ash and Quick-lime, to two parts of Oil of Olives or Oil of Almondsâ?• (*The Toilet of Flora* [London, 1779], p. 199). A common soap in the period used for laundry, personal hygiene, and medicinal purposes because it could be safely ingested.

64 *timber cats* [Unable to trace]; *groat* Originally a fourpenny piece whose circulation was suspended in 1662; likely taken to mean â??a very small sumâ?• here (*OED*).

65 *Dram glasses* Small glasses used for taking medicines, cordials, or spirits (*OED*); *wheeling wire* Fine wire used in eighteenth-century needlework and embroidery (*OED, Encyclopedia Britannica*).

66 *geer* Moveable goods; specifically something like â??odds and ends lying aboutâ?• in this context (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

67 *cambric knitting* Cotton tape (see note for line 37 above).

68 *cheque* By the eighteenth century, the term â??checkâ?• likely referred to more complex patterned fabric like â??plaidâ?• or â??tartanâ?• (*Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550*-1800); *metting* That is, measuring or apportioning (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

69 *A foreign herb* Probably a reference to tea.

71 *gun-stones* Bullets (*OED*); *enew* â??Sufficient in number or quantityâ?• (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

74 *weavers brushes* A tool used, esp. in linen weaving, to pack the weft firmly in place (more commonly known as a weaving comb).

77 *stobs* Probably a reference to wooden pegs or stakes.

78 *gude* Good, as in â??of good quality.â?•

83 *Gimblets* A gimlet was â??a kind of boring-toolâ?• (*OED*).

87 *Glasgow napkins* Glasgow was known for its extensive handkerchief and neckerchief manufacture in this period (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

88 *Button molds* â??A small disc which is covered in fabric, thread, etc., to make a buttonâ?• (*OED*), or, possibly a reference to a hand tool used for making metal buttons in the period; *vitriol* Sulphuric acid.

89 *alloâ?? grease* That is, tallow grease, animal fat used for making candles, soap, and other products.

92 *dry skate* A kind of flatfish that, when cured and dried, was a common foodstuff in (and export from) Scotland in this period.

93 *wheel-bands* â??A band or strap that goes round a wheel;â?• for example as the driving band of a spinning-wheel (*OED*).

99 *bear* â??A kind of barley hardier than the ordinary kind but of inferior quality,â?• common in Scotland (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

100 *firlot* â??A measure of capacity for grainâ?• or meal, â??the amount varying in different districts for different commoditiesâ?• (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

102 *barm* Yeast (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

107 *factory lint* Flax; *Gordonâ??s mills* A textile mill was at this location in Aberdeen by 1703.

108 *mearns* The Mearns is another name for Kincardineshire, an historic county on the northeast coast of Scotland, north of Dundee and south of Aberdeen.

111 *Quick-silver* Liquid mercury; *saw* Ointment (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

112 *claw* As a verb, â??to clawâ?• meant â??to scratchâ?• (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*). By turning this word into a noun, Davidson appears to mean â??an itch.â?•

113 *Brazilicon* A misspelling of â??basilicon,â?• â??name given to several ointments supposed to possess â??sovereignâ?? virtuesâ?• (*OED*); *dipalme* Alternate spelling of diapalma, a medicinal plaster â??composed originally of palm oil, litharge [white or red lead], and sulphate of zincâ?• (*OED*).

114 *kemp* â??To contend or strive in doing a piece of workâ?• (*OED*).

123 *nae prigging* No haggling (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

124 *Newbigging* A village located two miles north-east of Dundee. It appears that as Davidsonâ??s business grew, he became associated with the larger town of Dundee. Notice of the dissolution of â??John Davidson and Companyâ?• appeared in *The Edinburgh Gazette* (20 December 1831) naming his son, â??Robert Davidson,â?• as the successor to a â??John Davidson, Clothier and Iron Merchant in Dundee.â?• According to this source, John Davidson died on 19 July 1831 (p. 345).

Source: â??A Scots Poetical Shop Billâ?• [single sheet], (c. 1790?). [ECCO]

Edited by Bill Christmas