

15th September 2020

Sounds

**“The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils.”**

William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice

I love language. The use of words, the sounds they make, the way they can create pictures, stir emotions, create enthusiasm, fills me with joy. I love language, especially when I'm "moved with concord of sweet sounds".

Shakespeare, of course, is renowned for his use of English – and he contrived to add a few new words to our vocabulary in the process. So I love the English language. But being a Scot, I also love my native tongue, the sounds and intricacies of "Guid Braid Scots". How apt is the word *sleekit* to describe someone who's cunning, sly, smooth-tongued? How onomatopoeic is *tapsalteerie* to tell us something is topsy-turvy or upside down? And is *chuffie-cheekit* not a nicer way of describing someone's appearance rather than saying they're fat-faced? Sadly, there are fewer Scots words in common usage than there once were, though *stramash*, *wabbit*, *dreich* and several others still pop up from time to time. But, however it's used, I never fail to derive pleasure from the sounds of the Scots tongue. My "Scots Dialect Dictionary" is a constant companion.

But beware! I had a poster when I was a student that said:

Make sure you engage your brain before you put your mouth into gear.

No matter what language you use or words you speak, if your brain isn't working correctly, the sounds just won't be right! Lewis Carol in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* puts it this way:

Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.

Get the attitude right; make sure your brain is engaged; take care of the sense, the mindset, the approach, or your sounds will never be right. "Think before you speak," my Scots Granny would say, "or you'll turn out to be a right *numptie!*" Now, that sounds like good advice to me!

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to speak aright, that I might make sense to you. Amen.

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