

Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Virtual Visit Lessons

Overview

In this lesson pupils explore the reasons for Burns' return to farming and his need to diversify further into the excise commission. His inspiration for his writing is also investigated.

Background Information

- > Burns' fame brought very little money so he leased a farm at Ellisland near Dumfries to help earn a living
- > He went there himself to begin with, and Jean and his children, joined him later
- > Jean proved to be an excellent farmer's wife
- > Ellisland, on the banks of the River Nith and surrounded by some beautiful countryside, inspired some of his most famous writing e.g. Auld Lang Syne
- > Burns wrote Tam o' Shanter here – a story inspired by the local tales and ghost stories he had heard as a boy in Ayrshire
- > The farming, however, was poor at Ellisland due to poor stoney soil, but he made good progress in dairy farming here
- > Such was the poor general state of farming at Ellisland, Burns was forced to seek other work in addition
- > He decided to train as an exciseman where he would supervise all exciseable activities over a large area – checking dealers stocks, the activities of brewers, patrolling the coastline for smugglers etc
- > The duties were dangerous, and long, hard days on horseback together with running the farm, were exhausting him
- > In 1791 he managed to get an excise job in Dumfries where the job proved to suit him better

Curricular Links

5-14 Environmental Studies (Levels C/D):

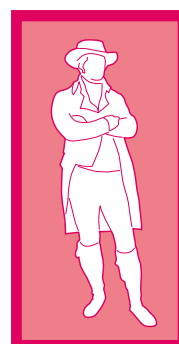
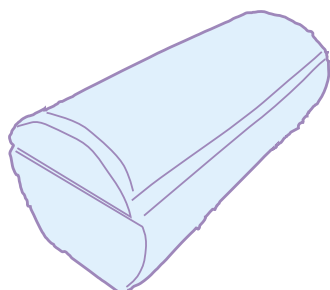
People in the Past – People events and societies of significance from the past

Change, continuity, cause and effect

Time and historical sequence

Nature of historical evidence

People in Society / Citizenship – Rules, Rights and Responsibilities in Society



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Virtual Visit Lessons

Learning outcomes

Pupils will recognise that:

- > The farming on Ellisland was poor, so he trained as an excise man
- > Excise was, and still is a tax like VAT imposed by the government on some goods produced to raise money for the country e.g. alcohol, petrol, cigarettes
- > The advances in science / technology today enable farmers to farm on many types of land
- > Ellisland inspired Burns' most famous writing

Skills

- > Plan a sequence of activities for tackling an enquiry
- > Suggest sources of information to assist in carrying out an enquiry task
- > Select known enquiry methods/equipment to access, select and record information

Resources Required

Burns House Museum, Mauchline Virtual Tour
Poem – The Wounded Hare
Poem – To a Mouse
Poem – Tam o' Shanter
Dumfries Herald – Newspaper Report Worksheet
Farming Worksheet
Map of Scotland Sheet (found in the Actual Visits section)

Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Pre Visit Activity Details

Discussion Compare And Contrast Farming Methods

The farming on Ellisland was poor, so Burns decided to train as an exciseman to make a living.

Discuss with pupils why the farming might have been poor – e.g. poor soil, lack of nutrients in the soil, poor weather conditions year on year.

Nowadays what can farmers do to counteract these issues? Discuss.

e.g. highly developed technologies in machinery, crop research, designer crops, fertilizer research, advanced greenhouses and plant coverings, animal vaccinations and scientific research.

Discussion Compare And Contrast the Excise

Ask pupils what the term excise means? [Definition: the verb to excise means to cut or to take out, i.e. the Government takes a share of profits from valuable goods for the greater good]

What types of duties might an exciseman have carried out in Burns' day?

Why was it important to monitor the amount of alcohol brewers produced?

What tricks might brewers get up to to avoid paying taxes on their goods?

Burns would occasionally be involved in patrolling the coastline for smugglers and stopping trade in smuggled goods.

What might they be trying to smuggle ashore and why?

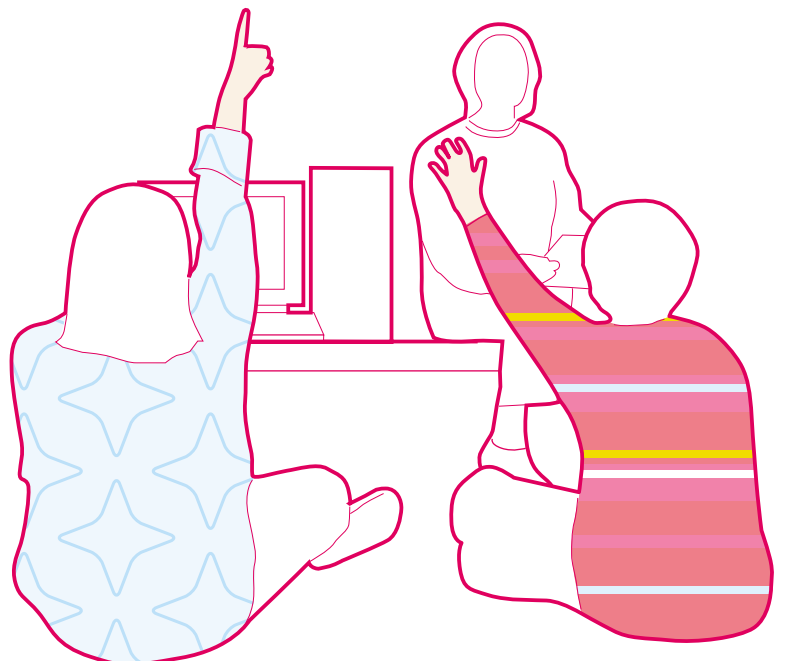
Why would smugglers want to avoid paying taxes to the government?

What protection would Burns need as an exciseman?

Nowadays what measures does a country take to prevent goods being smuggled from abroad?

Discuss with pupils airport / port controls on alcohol, cigarettes etc.

Discuss with pupils the fact that excise duty is now collected at source from producers and that it is a tax set by the government to raise funds to run the country.



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: The Virtual Visit

Virtual Tour

Now, use the virtual tour to explore the variety of historical objects situated in this venue by clicking on Learning and then the Virtual Tours Button on the website (www.burnsscotland.com) and selecting this venue.

Each object relates specifically to the learning outcomes above.

(This could be carried out with small groups at computers or as a class using an interactive whiteboard.)

Farm steading

Description: Although his poetry was very popular, Burns did not make much money from it. He decided to farm as well as to write and leased this farm called Ellisland, near Dumfries.

Scythe

Description: Corn was cut by hand in Burns' time.

This scythe was used to cut corn by swinging its long, curved blade over the stalks to cut them down.

Flail and souple

Description: After corn was cut, grain was separated from straw using a flail and souple.

Corn was beaten with this tool so the grain would come away from the straw.

Grain was ground into flour and straw would be used for food and bedding for animals.

Ripping spade

Description: This unusual shaped spade was used to clear ditches.

Plough

Description: This plough was attached to the harnesses of horses. Horses would pull the plough over the ground to make furrows for seeds.

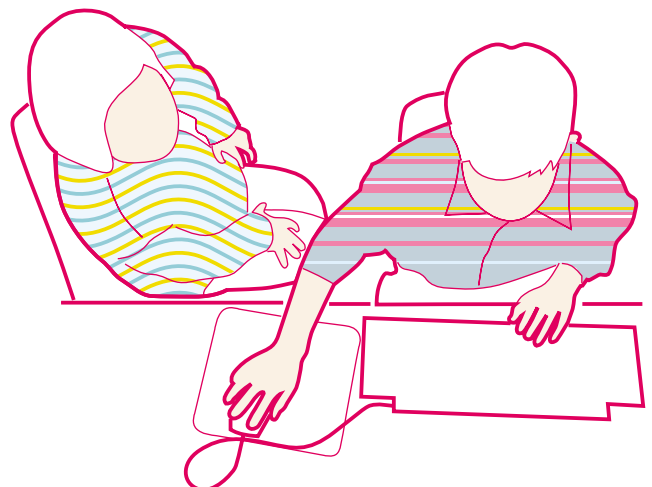
Letter from Burns to Jean Armour 'I received your kind letter...tired as a dog'

Description: To begin with, Burns went to Ellisland Farm without his wife, Jean. This letter shows how hard Burns was working on the farm.

Letter from Burns to Jean Armour. 'You must get ready for Nithsdale as fast as possible...cruel separations'

Description: When the farm was a little more organised, Burns wrote to his wife to ask her to join him there.

This letter shows how much he missed her and how excited he was that she would be joining him.



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: The Virtual Visit

White cotton mutch	<p><i>Description:</i> This hat is called a mutch. This white cotton mutch belonged to Jean Armour. It would keep her hair from the food whilst cooking or making dairy produce in the farmhouse</p>
Embroidered pillowcase	<p><i>Description:</i> One of Jean's jobs as a farmer's wife was to sew and repair clothes. In her spare time, Jean embroidered this pillowcase. The initials J.B. stand for Jean Burns.</p>
The Range	<p><i>Description:</i> Jean made an excellent farmer's wife. This was the range where she cooked. (Some newer parts have been added over the years.)</p> <p>A large pot on a moveable arm was used to heat food over a wood fire and simple tools for cooking were hung around the fire, or range, as it was called.</p>
Butter Churn	<p><i>Description:</i> One of Jean's jobs as a farmer's wife was to make butter. Milk was put into this container. Jean would use the plunger to move the milk around inside the churn until the milk fats turned into butter.</p>
Excise Dip Rod	<p><i>Description:</i> One of Burns' jobs as an excise man was to collect taxes on alcoholic drinks people had brewed.</p> <p>This rod was dipped into barrels of beer to measure the quantity. He would also check the alcohol content. He made sure the people selling it were not cheating their customers by watering it down!</p>
Excise pistol	<p><i>Description:</i> As an excise man Burns collected taxes. He also watched for people trading smuggled goods.</p> <p>This pistol was used to protect himself from people who wanted to steal his money or from angry smugglers he caught!</p>
Bark of Tree with carved initials	<p><i>Description:</i> The words R. Burns 1791 were carved on this piece of tree bark whilst Burns farmed at Ellisland</p>
Model of Burns and Jean looking at orchard view of River Nith	<p><i>Description:</i> At Ellisland Farm, Burns got many ideas for his writing. He was inspired by the River Nith that flowed nearby and the beautiful countryside which surrounded it.</p> <p>Burns wrote his most famous poem Tam O' Shanter here. He got the ideas for this poem from stories he had heard in Ayrshire as a boy.</p>
Pane of engraved glass from The Hermitage	<p><i>Description:</i> The Hermitage was a little building near the farm. Burns went there to think and got ideas for his writing there too. Have a look inside the Hermitage by taking the Virtual Tour and / or click on the Poems and Songs buton and read / listen to Burns' work entitled Lines Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage (this is the poem Burns scratched onto the Hermitage's window pane, now in the collection at Ellisland Farm).</p> <p>This is the actual pane of glass from the Hermitage window. Burns has scratched some verses in the glass.</p>

Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Suggested Post Visit Activities

Farming Methods Farmer's in his Den

Compare and contrast the design and use of the tools used for farming in Burns' time with those today by clicking on Learning and then Virtual Tours, selecting this venue and finding the selection of tools on view. Discuss as a class and then ask pupils to complete the related Farming Worksheet.

Excise Smugglers!

Look at the excise tools Burns used by clicking on Learning and then the Virtual Tours section, selecting this venue and finding the selection of tools on view. Using knowledge gained from the related pre-visit discussion (see Pre-Visit Activities), ask pupils to write a newspaper account of Burns discovering smugglers coming ashore on the Dumfries Coast. Use the Dumfries Herald Newspaper Worksheet.

Burns Inspiration

Such was the beauty and tranquility of Ellisland Farm, Burns was inspired to write some of his most famous poetry here, including the writing of Tam o' Shanter. Burns wrote this poem, inspired by the tales of ghosts and goblins told to him as a child in Ayrshire.

Click on the script of Tam o' Shanter in the Poems and Songs section of the web site. Use it as a basis for discussion. You may wish to use the online Scots Dictionary to help with translation. This can be found at www.britannia.org/Scotland/scotsdictionary/a.html

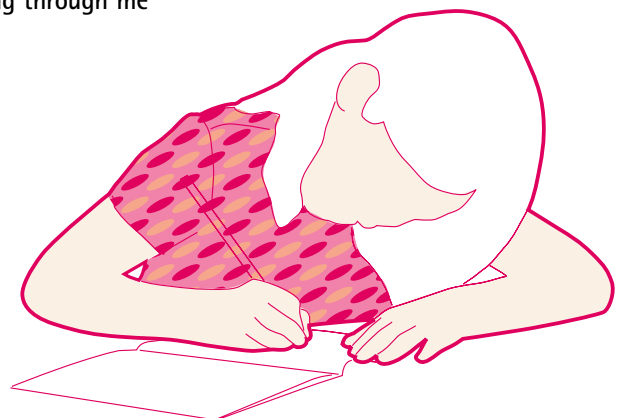
Aghhhhhhhhhhh!

Tell pupils they are going to write their own ghost story / poem. As in Tam o' Shanter, this story will be in the imagination of the person writing it. Some ideas for discussion may be:

- > Would someone be drunk, like Tam, and imagine it, or perhaps it would be imagined in a dream. Can pupils come up with any other ideas?
- > Discuss the range of scary characters that could feature in a ghost story e.g. witches, warlocks, ghouls, goblins etc. and their actions
- > What time of day would this be happening?
- > What scary noises could they add to their story / poem?
- > What horrid smells could feature?
- > What terrible sights could feature?
- > Would any spells be cast and what would be their purpose?

(If you are writing a poem you may wish to write the letters of a ghost related word in the margin of the page and start each line of the poem with this letter)

Great ghouls fall from the sky on my dreaming head
Heavy are my eyes as I drop off to sleep
Oh! No! witches dance before me, warted hands
Under my nose, offering rotting meat,
Listen to the howling wind whistling through me



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Suggested Post Visit Activities

<p>A Sad Tale</p>	<p>Burns was greatly inspired by nature. Read or listen to the poems <i>The Wounded Hare</i> and the abridged version of <i>To a Mouse</i>, by clicking on the Learning and then the Poems and Songs section of the web site (www.burnsscotland.com) and discuss.</p> <p>Both animals in these poems have been wounded / uprooted by man. Brainstorm ideas with pupils as to how this could happen today e.g. hedgehogs which have been wounded by cars, birds / animals uprooted from homes as hedgerows are cut down to make bigger fields.</p> <p>Tell pupils that they are going to write their own comic strip about a wild animal that has been wounded / uprooted. The use of speech bubbles will convey the feelings of the animal and the person who has uprooted/wounded it and pictures will illustrate the sad tale.</p>
<p>Time Capsule</p>	<p>Look at the bark of tree with Burns' initials carved into it.</p> <p>This is a piece of evidence of Burns' life captured in time. If pupils could capture evidence of their own lives now, what items would they put in a time capsule to tell of their life, their lifestyle, topical issues of the day etc?</p> <p>Make individual time capsules using shoe boxes, or make a class time capsule using a bigger box. You may even wish to bury it in the playground, but make sure its water and worm tight!</p>
<p>Time Line</p>	<p>Begin a class timeline on a long piece of paper or card. Mount this on the wall. Plot the year Burns went to live at Ellisland Farm.</p>
<p>Date-o-mania</p>	<p>Discuss with pupils any other important world events going on at the time. You may wish to have another long piece of paper or card situated below this one on the wall to enable pupils to compare relevant Burns-related dates with the other important dates you have noted</p>
<p>Plot It</p>	<p>Ask pupils to plot Ellisland on the blank Map of Scotland Sheet (found in the Actual Visit section). You may also wish to plot some other key venues in Burns' life on the map too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Mauchline (first met future wife Jean Armour here) > Alloway (birthplace) > Tarbolton (set up the Bachelors' Club here) > Edinburgh (went here to promote his Kilmarnock Edition of poetry) > Dumfries (spent final years of his life here) <p>Burns toured Scotland to both research and promote his work. Ask pupils to find out where Burns went on his tours of Scotland. Plot these on the map too.</p>

Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Poems

The Wounded Hare

On the subject of this poem, Burns said the following:

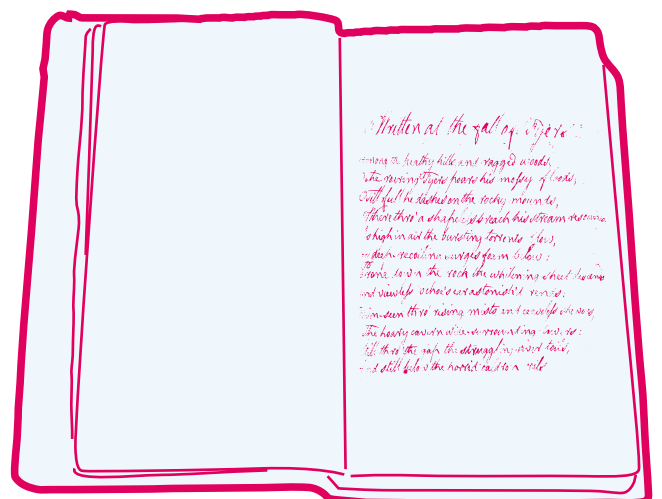
"Two mornings ago as I was at a very early hour, sowing in the fields, I heard a shot, and presently a poor little hare limped by me, apparently very much hurt. You will easily guess, this set my humanity in tears and my indignation in arms. The following was the result".

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor never pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains!
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Poems

To A Mouse

Whilst ploughing the soil in the cold winter, Burns disturbs the cosy nest of a field mouse. He sympathises with the frightened mouse, regretting that man and nature cannot live together peacefully. Burns compares the life of a mouse, thrown from the comfort of its home, to the life of the small farmer uprooted by changes in farming.

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty
Wi bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murdering pattle.

I'm truly sorry man's dominion,
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow mortal.

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's win's ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld.

Still thou are blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Poems

Tam O'Shanter

A Tale.
Of Brownie and of Bogolis
full is this book.

When Chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like a gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam O' Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae nicht did canter:
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonie lasses.)

O Tam, had'st thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied, that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon,
Or catche'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah! gentle dames, it gars me greet,
To think how monie counsels sweet,
How monie lengthen'd, sage advices
The husband frae the wife despises.

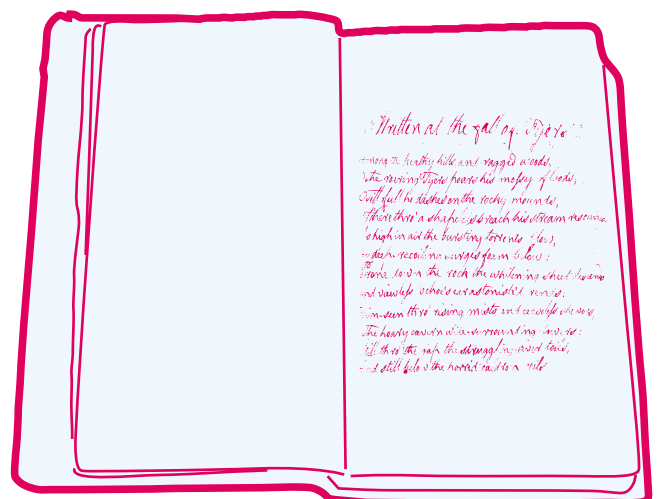
But to our tale:- Ae market-nicht,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnie,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy cronie:
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither;
The night drave on wi's sangs and clatter;
And ay the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious
Wi' secret favours, sweet and precious:
The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.
Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel among the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread:
You seize the flow'r, it's bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white-then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis, race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride:
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane
That dreary hour Tam mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling showers rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet,
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares:
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders role:
When, glimmering tho' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze,
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Poems

Inspiring, bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae, we'll face the Devil!
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle.
But Maggie stood, right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!

Warlocks and witches in a dance:
Nae cotillion, brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat Auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A tousie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And, by some devilish cantraip sleight,
Each in its cauld hand held a light:
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns;
Twa span-long, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief new-cutted frae a rape--

Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scymitars wi' murder crusted;
A garter which a babe had strangled;
A knife a father's throat had mangled--
Whom his ain son o' life bereft--
The grey- hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glower'd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious;
The piper loud and louder blew,
The dancers quick and quicker flew,
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coast her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens!
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!--
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Louping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder did na turn thy stomach!

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie:
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after kend on Carrick shore
(For monie a beast to dead she shot,
An' perish'd monie a bonie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear.)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour,
Sic flights are far beyond her power:
To sing how Nannie lap and flang
(A souple jade she was and strang);
And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even Satan glower'd, and fig'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main;
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out: 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market crowd,
When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud:
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' monie an eldritch skriech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! Ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig;
There, at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they dare na cross!
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake;
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain grey tail:
The carlin claut her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man, and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty sarks rin in your mind,
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear:
Remember Tam O' Shanter's mare.



Ellisland Farm, Near Dumfries: Farming Worksheet

Use the Virtual Tour (in the Learning section of www.burnsscotland.com) to look at a selection of farming tools Burns would have used at Ellisland Farm.

Draw the 4 items you see and describe their uses.

Item 1	Item 2
Name:	Name:
Use	Use
Item 3	Item 4
Name:	Name:
Use	Use

Now draw the items farmers would use today for the same jobs.

Today this item would be used instead of Item 1	Today this item would be used instead of Item 2
Name:	Name:
Today this item would be used instead of Item 3	Today this item would be used instead of Item 4
Name:	Name: