

Joseph Wright's English Dialect Dictionary as an electronic research tool

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The recent online release (September 2016) of Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898-1905) by Manfred Markus and his research team at the University of Innsbruck amply illustrates that a classic work of reference on English dialects can be transformed into an important database for studies in dialectology, historical linguistics and cultural history.¹ Originally, Wright's dictionary was published in six large volumes between 1898 and 1905. Its material came from the various publications of the English Dialect Society, most of which were glossaries, and dialectal data that had been collected by other dialectologists such as Skeat, Palmer and Ellis. Additionally, Wright sent 12,000 copies of a postal questionnaire, which included around 2,400 words with instructions for a phonetic transcription. He used two criteria whether a word would be included in the dictionary. First, the word must have been reported to have been in use after about 1650 and secondly there must be some written evidence of the word.

The electronic version of the *English Dialect Dictionary* is a substantial and highly advanced database that can be searched systematically for any information included in the dictionary. The paper will present a variety of – mainly lexical – examples that are closely linked to the (agri)cultural background of a large portion of the population in the 18th and 19th centuries. In particular, it is intended to discuss various lexical items of Scandinavian origin and consider their (socio)linguistic and cultural context. Moreover, the results will be compared to the findings of the *Survey of English Dialects* (Orton et al. 1962-71).

¹ *EDD Online* is accessible at: <http://eddonline-proj.uibk.ac.at>