# ‘Damage to trees’: Performing Ramsay’s *The Gentle Shepherd*at Haddington Grammar School

## A Theory and its Scholarly Impact

Allan Ramsay’s (1684-1758) seminal work *The Gentle Shepherd; A Scots Pastoral Comedy* was initially penned as a comedic play in 1725, only to be later revised and published as a ballad opera in 1729. To date, there is no recorded evidence that the play was performed between 1725–1728.[[1]](#endnote-1) Evidence for the first recorded performance appears as a note attached to an Epilogue printed in the 1730 edition of Ramsay’s *The Tea-Table Miscellany.* The note states that *The Gentle Shepherd* was performed at ‘Taylors-hall by a set of young Gentlemen, January 22, 1729’ (189). In the 1974 edition, *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, which was the first attempt at editing Ramsay’s corpus of manuscripts and printed works, editors Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law posed three theories about the performance at Taylors-hall (or Tailors’ Hall) (vol. 6, 141).[[2]](#endnote-2) Firstly, that this was the very first performance of *The Gentle Shepherd*; secondly, that the ballad opera was performed on this occasion; and thirdly that the Haddington Grammar schoolboys were the performers. The third theory was drawn from additional archival evidence, namely drafts of a Prologue found in two different manuscripts written in Ramsay’s hand, that named both the Haddington Grammar schoolboys and their rector, John Lesley (or Leslie) (*fl.* 1729–*d.* 1739).[[3]](#endnote-3) With this evidence, Kinghorn and Law stated that:

The Prologue to *The Gentle Shepherd,* in S.T.S. III. P. 123 was probably delivered on the same occasion. The Prologue contains a reference to John Lesley, Rector of Haddington Grammar School […]. We can take it that this Epilogue and its Songs were delivered by the Haddington schoolboys in January 1729 (Kinghorn and Law, vol. 6, 141).

While a performance taking place on 22 January 1729 is not in question, Kinghorn and Law’s theory that on this occasion the prologue was performed by the Haddington Grammar schoolboys is up for debate. The Prologue under discussion was not printed by Ramsay in any of his publications, and there is no evidence to suggest that it was performed on the same time as the Epilogue*.* There are also other details about the Prologue and Epilogue that point to them being performed on separate occasions. The Haddington Grammar schoolboys did give a performance of *The Gentle Shepherd* on 27 August 1729 in Haddington, and there are specific details in the Prologue that points to it being penned for this production and not the performance given on 22 January (*Caledonian Mercury* 19 August 1729). Such details will be analysed later in this article.

Additionally, it is unclear whether it was the play, or the ballad opera was performed at Haddington. Kinghorn and Law suggested it was the ballad opera because the schoolboys had just seen a performance of John Gay’s (1685–1732) popular ballad opera *The Beggar’s Opera* in October 1728 and were so inspired by it, they wanted to perform their own ballad opera (Kinghorn and Law, vol. 6, 67-68). Ramsay also released a new edition of the *Tea-Table Miscellany,* which included the songs ‘to be sung in their proper Places on the acting of the *Gentle Shepherd*’ in 1729, when both recorded performances took place (169). However, as highlighted by Peter Holman in his 2007 book chapter ‘A Little Light on Lorenzo Bocchi’, there is no contemporary evidence that Ramsay transformed his play to a ballad opera at the request of Haddington Grammar School (77). Indeed, the Haddington Grammar schoolboys typically performed plays including *Julius Caesar, Aurenzebe, Jane Shore,* and *Flora*, or, *The Country Wake.* Jack McKenzie noted in his article “School and University Drama in Scotland, 1650-1760”, that school boys performing dramatic productions was ‘not meant to amuse but primarily to instruct’ (103-104). Performing plays provided opportunities to practice public speaking, to improve elocution, gain experience in carrying the body, and gesture, and as such, there was a sound pedagogical reasoning for their being part of the boys’ school activities.While the twenty-two songs in the ballad opera were not particularly complex, mainly consisting of tunes in circulation at that time, it is important to consider if the boys were receiving a musical education while at the school. If so, performing a ballad opera would have a pedagogical reasoning, as opposed to simply indulging the boys because they liked the satirical *Beggar’s Opera*.

 Posing a theory that bridges a gap created by a lack of evidence in the historical archive is no crime against scholarship, but since the release of Kinghorn and Law’s edition in 1974, their theory has been cited by other scholars with little scrutiny. For example, Holman concluded that the first performance of *The Gentle Shepherd* took place at Tailors’ Hall on the 22 January 1729 and that the performers were the boys from Haddington Grammar School ‘because the prologue used on that occasion mentions John Leslie, the school’s Rector’ (76). In his 2011 book, *Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama,* Ian Brown states that:

Local school-masters’ roles could be significant: Haddington’s master from 1720 to 1731 was Allan Ramsay’s friend, John Leslie. This may explain why *The Gentle Shepherd,* first published in 1725, was revised into a ballad opera for Haddington Grammar School pupils’ performance in Edinburgh’s Taylor’s Hall on 22 January 1729 (24).

Why would Leslie ask his friend Ramsay to revise his 1725 five-act play into a ballad opera, and why were grammar schoolboys performing it at Tailors’ Hall, which from 1727 onwards was a theatre that typically hosted performances by itinerant theatre troupes (Chambers 322). Unfortunately, Brown does not provide the answers, though these questions having inspired much of the following discussion. Barbara Bell and Murray Pittock have similarly stated that the Haddington Grammar schoolboys gave the first performance at Tailors’ Hall, with references made to Holman and Brown’s work (Bell 228; Pittock 171). Steve Newman, who is co-editing a new edition of *The Gentle Shepherd* with David McGuinness*,* acknowledges in his 2020 article, “Some Pastoral Improvement' in The Gentle Shepherd: Mediation, Remediation, and Minority”, that a performance prior to 1729 was likely, though he remains sceptical of that possibility (90).

The new edition of *The Gentle* *Shepherd* is one of many of Ramsay’s works due to be published with Edinburgh University Press as part of the University of Glasgow’s AHRC-funded project *The Collected Works of Allan Ramsay*.[[4]](#endnote-4) Through this project, extensive new research is being carried out on Ramsay publications, including *The Gentle Shepherd,* and it has provided an opportunity to relook at the evidence for the first performances of what would arguably become Ramsay’s best-known work (McGuinness and Newman). Under specific consideration in this article is whether the Haddington Grammar schoolboys gave the performance at Tailors’ Hall in January 1729 and which version of *The Gentle Shepherd* was performed at Haddington in August 1729. To address these questions, one must first re-examine the Prologues and Epilogues spoken at these performances.

## Re-examining the Evidence: Prologues and Epilogues

There are two versions of the Prologue that specifically mention Haddington Grammar School rector, John Leslie and both are written in Ramsay’s hand. A draft is at Egerton 2023 held by the British Library, while a more complete version is found in the Laing MSS, held by the University of Edinburgh (La.II.212\*). Indeed, the Laing MSS also includes an early draft *The Gentle Shepherd,* before Ramsay prepared his ‘fair copy’ (NLS MS.15972), which was used to produce the 1725 print*.* The text from the Laing MSS is as follows:

Now Brav’ry fierce – plots – Politicks & pride

we’ve with the Roman Buskin Laid aside

and Straight intend to shew in softer strains

how love & virtue looks on Scotias Plains

wher Inocence unpolished goodness guards 5

and fully the low state of life rewards

with easy sleep, health, joy, and rich content,

and open truth fair friendship best cement

Tho they’re but Shepherds that we’r now to act

yet gentle Audience we’d not ha’ ye mistake 10

and think your entertainment will be rude

most men – and all the Ladys think it good

our Pastoral Author, Allan thinks so to – but fears

the Diction may offend some nicer Ears

this we regard not therefore will proceed 15

to act the blythsome life that shepherds lead

thus we read mankind of all different stations

of various ages & of various nations

Happy the youth, the Son of Lord or Knight

Too much his Lady-mother’s fond delight 20

Who’s wean’d in proper time from these embraces

That often Stupifie the manly graces

were he hid from himself and have the fate

Of good Sir Williams son our Gentle Pate

More nervous & more prudent he would bring 25

For Service of his countrey & his King

This give us leave to pass our none-age time on

wee’ll a’ be Pates and Lesley’s be our Symon (37r)

Ramsay specifically mentions characters in *The Gentle Shepherd,* namely Sir William, Patie and Symon, in addition to mentioning Leslie in the final line, and himself as the ‘Pastoral Author’. The very first two lines spoken ‘Now Brav’ry fierce – plots – Politicks & pride | we’ve with the Roman Buskin Laid aside’, may appear at a first glance to be irrelevant to a performance of *The Gentle Shepherd*. However, an advertisement printed in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 19 August 1729 reveals that alongside Ramsay’s pastoral comedy, as *The Gentle Shepherd* was often described*,* the boys also acted the tragedy, *Julius Caesar*:[[5]](#endnote-5)

On Wednesday 27th Instant, will be acted by the young Gentleman of the Grammar-school of Haddington, the Tragedy of *Julius Casar,* and the celebrated ALLAN RAMSAY’s *Pastoral Comedy.* To begin precisely at 9 in the Morning (*Caledonian Mercury* 19 August 1729).

For this occasion, Ramsay prepared for the boys two bespoke Prologues, one which was performed before *Julius Caesar* and one that accompanied *The Gentle Shepherd.* Both Prologues appear in Egerton 2023 immediately after one another, with *The Gentle Shepherd* prologue making specific reference to putting the ‘Roman Buskin’ aside in favour of work set in ‘Scotias Plains’ (115r, 116r).

However, the Laing MSS dates to 1724, five years before the Haddington Grammar School performance took place and, as such, it is unlikely that Ramsay and Leslie were already planning to mount a production of both *Julius Caesar* and *The Gentle Shepherd* at the time the manuscript was created. Newman poses a solution to this issue, arguing that the Prologue in the Laing MSS was misplaced (90). Firstly, the Laing MSS draft of *The Gentle Shepherd* names the knightly character Sir Colin, only to later rename him Sir William in the ‘fair copy’ manuscript (Laing MSS, La.II.212\*; NLS MS 15972). However, in the Prologue, Ramsay already refers to this character as Sir William, a strong indication he prepared it after producing the Laing MSS draft. Secondly, there is no text written on the verso of the page, which perhaps points to the Prologue being penned separately to *The Gentle Shepherd* and inserted at a later date*.* It is possible that the leaf with the written Prologue was assumed to have been written at the same time as the Laing MSS draft, thus the two were bundled together. Indeed, in the upper right-hand corner, marked in pen, appears ‘112’, a folio mark that is unique to the Prologue, which suggests it was once part of a different gathering of texts.[[6]](#endnote-6) Given the *Caledonian Mercury* advertisement and the references to *Julius Caesar*, it is far more likely that the Prologue was written for the production given at Haddington Grammar School on 27 August 1729. Even so, this does not account for the Epilogue, which Kinghorn and Law theorised was performed on the same occasion (vol. 6, 141). I have included the Epilogue text and the note attached, which was printed in the 1730 edition of the *Tea-Table Miscellany*:

*Part of an Epilogue sung after the acting of the* Orphan *and* Gentle Shepherd *in* Taylors-hall, *by a Set of young Gentlemen,* January 22, 1729. Tune of, *Bessy Bell.*

THUS let us study Night and Day,

To fit us for our Station

That when we’re Men we Parts may play

Are useful to our Nation.

For now’s the Time, when we are young 5

To fix our Views on Merit,

Water its Buds, and make the Tongue

And Action suit the Spirit.

This all the Fair and Wise approve,

We know it by your Smiling, 10

And while we gain Respect and Love,

Our Studies are not toiling.

Such Application gives Delight,

And in the End proves gainful,

Tho’ mony a dark and lifeless Wight 15

May think it hard and painful.

Then never let us think our Time

And Care, when thus employed,

Are thrown away, but deem’t a Crime,

When Youth’s by Sloth destroyed; 20

Tis only active Souls can rise

To Fame and all that’s splendid,

And Favour in these conquering Eyes,

‘Gainst whom no Heart’s defended (Ramsay 292-293).

The complete Epilogue was published in *The Eccho, or Edinburgh Weekly Journal* on 29 January 1729 and with it was attached a letter stating that the author had ‘been most agreeably entertain’d on Wednesday last in the Taylors Hall, by a Party of young Gentlemen, who acted the ORPHAN and the GENTLE SHEPHERD’ (*The Eccho,* 29 January 1729).[[7]](#endnote-7) The Epilogue consistently references ‘youth’ and ‘studies’, themes that are prevalent in *The Gentle Shepherd* and it is possible that these references led Kinghorn and Law to the conclusion that the Haddington Grammar schoolboys were the performers on 22 January 1729. However, neither Leslie, nor the Haddington Grammar schoolboys are specifically mentioned in the Epilogue, which deviates from Prologues and Epilogues Ramsay penned for other school productions. In 1727, he wrote a Prologue and Epilogue for the Haddington Grammar School production of *Aurenzebe* by John Dryden (1631–1700) and *The Drummer* by Joseph Addison (1672–1719), where Leslie, the school, and the boys who performed the Prologue and Epilogue were explicitly mentioned in the notes that accompanied the printed texts as well as in the body of both the Prologue and Epilogue texts (Ramsay 292-293).

Moreover, Ramsay’s use of the phrase a ‘Set of young Gentlemen’ was not an exclusive reference to the Haddington Grammar schoolboys. Another Prologue, ‘spoke by one of the young Gentlemen, who, for their Improvement and Diversion, acted *The Orphan,* and *Cheats of Scapin*’ was delivered on 31 December 1719 (Dauchin 281-282). McKenzie speculated that this was a private performance, likely delivered by students at the University of Edinburgh (107). Indeed, Ramsay’s friend, Joseph Mitchell (1684–1738) also penned an Epilogue spoken ‘By a Boy in the UNIVERSITY’ at a private performance of *The Orphan,* though the date of that performance is listed as 9 December 1719 (NLS 1.22(206)). It is possible that either Ramsay or Mitchell misremembered the date of the performance, or that two separate private performances of *The Orphan* were given at Edinburgh in December 1719, one with a Prologue written by Ramsay and the other with an Epilogue written by Mitchell. In any case, the evidence points to students at the university giving this performance and demonstrates that the reference to ‘young Gentlemen’ could also refer to students other than the Haddington Grammar schoolboys. It is also possible that university students performed *The Orphan* and *The Gentle Shepherd* at Tailors’ Hall on 22 January 1729. Tailors’ Hall was situated between South and George IV Bridges, Cowgate in Edinburgh city centre, which was only a short walk from the main university buildings in Canongate. It was certainly more convenient for students at the university to perform at Tailors’ Hall than the eighteen-mile trip the Haddington Grammar schoolboys would need to take to get to the city.[[8]](#endnote-8)

 Even the months when these early productions of *The Gentle Shepherd* took place, that is December and January, do not align with the typical timeline of the Haddington Grammar School productions. Leslie and the Haddington Grammar schoolboys staged annual performances of plays, often requesting permission from the town council to erect an outdoor stage. On 8 March 1724, the Haddington council minuted that:

Thereafter there was a petition given in to ye Counsill by Mr John Lesly Master of the Grammar School presumably following that sometime ago his having [asked to] Erect a stage for His Schollars acting a play which was done with a generale applause, he was obliged to give his bill to Mr Anderson for the Damage to trees (Haddington Council Minutes 1718-1727 HAD|2|1|2|13, 128v).

Considering the reference explicitly notes the performance took place ‘some time ago’ it is likely the performance was given in August 1723. In effect, in the following years, productions regularly took place in August. An advertisement in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* states that a performance of John Hughes’s (1677–1720) *Siege of Damascus* was given in August 1725. Based on his printed note, the Prologue and Epilogue Ramsay penned for the 1727 Haddington Grammar School productions were also mounted in August (*Poems* 292-293). Another record in the Haddington Council Minutes 1728-1736 from the 5 August 1729, states that Leslie asked the council to erect a stage so the boys could perform a ‘commady’ (HAD|2|1|2|14, 21r). Even after Leslie departed from Haddington, to take up a post in Dalkeith, the annual productions continued to take place in the month of August. A review printed in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 24 August 1731 noted that on the 19 August and ‘under the Direction of Mr. David Young, their present Master, the Grammar school boys publicly acted ‘the Trajedy of *Jane Shore,* and the Farce called *Flora*, or, *The Country Wake;* to […] great Satisfaction’ (*Caledonian Mercury* 24 August 1731).There is no record that the boys performed in any other month other than August. Even a letter from Sir John Clerk of Penicuik dated 30 October 1730 suggests the Haddington Grammar School productions took place once a year, a method of which he very much approved (transcribed in Kinghorn and Law, vol. 3, 214).

 There can be no doubt that two performances of *The Gentle Shepherd* took place in 1729, the first taking place on 22 January at Tailors’ Hall and the second taking place on 27 August on a stage erected outside Haddington Grammar School. On the latter occasion, the Haddington Grammar schoolboys were the performers. As for the players who performed at Tailors’ Hall, it almost certainly was not the Haddington Grammar schoolboys. Not only does this performance sit outside the calendar of annual performances that the boys regularly gave, but Ramsay’s Epilogue does not mention the grammar school or Leslie, a departure from other Prologues and Epilogues he penned for the school productions. As for the versions of *The Gentle Shepherd* that were performed on these two occasions, that is the ballad opera or the play, the Prologue and the Epilogue yields even more clues.

## The Ballad Opera or the Play?

On 29 January 1728, John Gay’s satirical ballad opera *The Beggar’s Opera* premiered at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, London (Kidson 92). The ballad opera was a success accumulating sixty-three consecutive performances in London, as well as performances ‘in all the great towns of England’, Dublin, and Glasgow (Pittock 172). It was also performed by ‘Mr Phipps and the rest of the company of comedians’ at Haddington Grammar School in late October 1728 (Dibdin 42). Law argued that it was this performance that inspired Leslie to ask Ramsay to convert *The Gentle Shepherd* into a ballad opera for the use of the Haddington Grammar schoolboys (Law 247). However, Ramsay’s son (also Allan Ramsay) told a different tale, claiming that his father, ‘a great admirer of Gay, especially for his ballads,’ was so ‘carried away by the torrent’ of praise for The Beggar’s Opera’ he added ‘many songs’ to *The Gentle Shepherd* (Laing MS 212).[[9]](#endnote-9) There was no mention of Haddington Grammar School or Leslie, rather Ramsay the younger claimed that his father had simply added songs in the same manner as *The Beggar’s Opera* after hearing of Gay’s success. As the ballad opera version of *The Gentle Shepherd* was performed at Tailors’ Hall on 22 January 1729, Ramsay (the elder), certainly had to work quickly to produce it.

There is substantial evidence to corroborate this thesis. Firstly, the note from the 1730 edition of Ramsay’s *Tea-Table Miscellany* about this performance stated that the Epilogue was sung to the tune of *Bessy Bell* (189)*,* and the letter printed in *The Eccho* confirms the epilogue was performed by three young gentlemen (29 January 1729).Ramsay specified the tune in this manner throughout *The Gentle Shepherd* ballad opera.In transforming the play into a ballad opera, he provided no music notation and instead replaced spoken text that did not significantly progress the plot with song texts sung to a tune that was already in circulation during the period, for example ‘O’er Bogie’ and ‘Corn Riggs’ (see McGuinness and Newman). There was only one exception –the duet as performed by Patie and Peggy in Act II with the first line ‘By thy delicious warmness of thy mouth’– which appears to have been composed specifically for the ballad opera. Even the music for this duet was not printed in *The Gentle Shepherd*, but instead was printed in Alexander Stuart’s *Musick for Allan Ramsay’s Collections Scots Songs* (150-153). However, this duet is a one-off deviation and Ramsay more commonly indicated the tune. Indeed, he used this same method when publishing his popular collection of songs, the *Tea-Table Miscellany* first printed in 1723.

However, ascertaining the version performed at Haddington Grammar School on 27 August 1729, it is much more difficult. Ramsay provides no instruction that suggests the Prologue performed on that occasion was sung. If the ballad opera version of *The Gentle Shepherd* was performed by the boys, then there are, as yet no archival records that provide details about the instrumentation or accompaniment used on that occasion. Indeed, it is unlikely the boys would have sung the songs unaccompanied, particularly if *The Beggar’s Opera* had served as inspiration. Though the songs in *The Beggar’s Opera* were also sung to tunes in circulation during the period, composer Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752) provided full orchestral arrangements including an instrumental overture (Pepusch). While the printed librettos for London ballad operas do not typically include full musical arrangements, in performance, they were most certainly accompanied by an orchestra.As such, if the aim of the Haddington Grammar School production was to perform *The Gentle Shepherd* in the same manner as *The Beggar’s Opera,* then the boys would have needed some amount of musical knowledge in singing and playing.

There is evidence that Leslie was keen to provide just such an education, having requested on 12 December 1724 that the town council hire ‘Mr Dyre, Master of the School at Aberfeldy’ further noting that he ‘is well skilled in Musick and Capable to teach it’ (Haddington Council Minutes 1718–1727, HAD|2|1|2|13, 130v). He even requested that Dyre be appointed the ‘sole Teacher and Master of Musick in this Burgh with power to him to Reap what benefite and profites he can’ (130v). Rectors carefully selected their Doctors, based on their reputation and education, since a Doctor was expected to serve in an elevated position akin to that of a deputy Rector (Gardner 74-76; Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Stirling 85). Dyre was never appointed, as David Young (*fl.* 1730–*d.*1758) was employed instead as the first Doctor of the Grammar School in 1730, with his duties designated as teaching ‘Vocall & Instrumental Musick’ (Haddington Council Minutes 1728–1736, HAD|2|1|2|14, 57v). After Leslie’s departure, Young was appointed as Rector.

The boys appeared to have some form of musical instruction from the town musician, Patrick Begbie (*fl.* 1729–1730), though he was ill-equipped for the job with his removal triggering Young’s appointment. On the 8 December 1730, the Haddington Council minutes recorded that:

one hundred pounds Scot had been misapplied [as it was] granted to unqualified persons for teaching music, disposed Mr Patrick Begbie, and appointed Mr. David Young, first doctor of the grammar-school, and his successors, keepers of a music school, provided they appointed proper persons (Haddington Council Minutes 1728-1736, HAD|2|1|2|14, 57v; Miller 460).

The sum of money paid to Begbie was the standard annual salary for a music master in the town, with Walter Gray being appointed music-master and granted a salary of ‘L.100 Scots’ in 1677 (Miller 460). Indeed, this would suggest that Begbie had been teaching music long enough to have received his salary, only to later be deemed unsuitable for the position. However, this may have had very little to do with his musical skill and instead was the result of council bureaucracy. In October 1729, Begbie, described as the ‘Town Musician’, had opposed the election of the town provost, Archibald Millar (Miller 458). The election was sustained, which presumably put Begbie out of favour with the town council. As such, this may account for his dismissal just a few months later.

It is unclear if Begbie was teaching music to the boys as early as August 1729 as there is no record of when he was initially appointed. Indeed, the month in which *The Gentle Shepherd* was performed is a black spot in terms of which musicians were serving in the town. Prior to Begbie, Charles May, who was recorded as playing the ‘hautboy, violin, base, German flute, and other instruments’ was appointed as ‘town musician’ for one year by the Haddington town council on 1 July 1728, after the town piper, John Oswald, had left the position (Miller 460). There is no indication he was reappointed in July 1729 or that he had ever instructed the Haddington Grammar schoolboys.

Begbie’s dismissal and Young’s appointment in 1730, six years after Leslie’s initial request to employ a skilled musician in this position, suggests there had been a period of turbulence when it came to music instruction at the grammar school. Leslie and the boys may have been inspired to perform a ballad opera of their own after seeing *The Beggar’s Opera*, but it is unlikely such a production would have been feasible considering the regular turnover of music masters between 1727-1730. Even after Young, a skilled music master who could have supported the performance of a ballad opera, was appointed, the boys continued to perform plays. Indeed, in all the years the boys are recorded as having mounted staged performances, they typically performed a tragedy immediately followed by a comedy. In 1727, they performed Dryden’s 1675 tragedy *Aurenzebe,* followed by Addison’s 1716 farce *The Drummer.* In 1729, they performed the tragedy *Julius Caesar* followed by Ramsay’s comedy *The Gentle Shepherd,* and in 1731, under Young’s direction, they performed Nicholas Rowe’s 1714 tragedy, *Jane Shore,* and John Hippisley’s 1729 comedy *Flora, or, the Country Wake*. If *The Gentle Shepherd* had slightly deviated from this model, in that it was delivered in its ballad opera form, then surely there would have been some reference to it, either in the *Caledonian Mercury* advertisement, the council minutes or, indeed, Ramsay’s Prologue. Given the uncertainty surrounding music instruction, it is more likely the play was performed on this occasion.

## Conclusion

When it comes to the early performance history of *The Gentle Shepherd,* there are several gaps in the historical archive, so it is to be expected that past scholars have taken a few logical leaps to based on the available evidence*.* However, this also means that the evidence needs to be consistently revisited and questioned, particularly if new information comes to light. When it comes to examining the Prologues and Epilogues connected to the early performances of *The Gentle Shepherd,* Ramsay has provided either explicit references or useful clues as to when they were delivered. Re-examining these clues has led this discussion to a different conclusion to what was proposed by Kinghorn and Law, notably that the Prologue and Epilogue were performed on separate occasions. Similarly, the turnover of music masters in Haddington between 1728-1730 introduces reasonable doubt that the ballad opera version of *The Gentle Shepherd* was performed by the schoolboys.

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Stuart, Alexander, and Kirsteen McCue. *Musick for Allan Ramsay’s Collection of 71 Scots Songs*. University of South Carolina Libraries, 2017.

1. A database of eighteenth-century performances of *The Gentle Shepherd* will be available with the publication of the new edition, edited by Steve Newman and David McGuinness in late 2022/early 2023. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The site of the old theatre is now ‘Tailors’ Hall’; however, Ramsay refers to it as ‘Taylors-hall’. For consistency, I am using the modern spelling. For more on the history and location of Tailors’ Hall see Pittock 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ramsay consistently refers to Leslie as ‘Lesley’ in his handwritten prologues. However, in the Haddington Council Minutes 1718-1727, HAD|2|1|2|13, the rector signs his name ‘John Leslie’. As such, this spelling will be used throughout the article unless Ramsay’s texts are directly quoted. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Details about how the project is progressing and when the new editions are due for publication are available via the ‘The Collected Works of Allan Ramsay’ project website. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *Julius Caesar* was likely the 1599 play by William Shakespeare. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Many thanks to Steve Newman for kindly alerting me to this anomaly. Also, as will be discussed in Rhona Brown’s edition of Ramsay’s *Poems,* Ramsay’s manuscript material has been, over time, broken up and scattered across multiple archives. As such, it is not uncommon to find material from earlier and later dates bundled together. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. I am grateful to Rhona Brown for sharing this information. A full note on the Epilogue as printed in *The Eccho* will appear in her new edition of Ramsay’s *Poems* (forthcoming, Edinburgh University Press)*.* [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The digital output for the Edinburgh's Enlightenment, 1680-1750 project provides a digital map of Edinburgh with specific locations connected to Ramsay marked. See Pittock, Edinburgh Enlightenment, ND. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. This is from an autobiography attributed to Ramsay’s son found in the Laing MS. 212, Edinburgh University Library. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)