

Editor's foreword

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English Historical Linguistics 1994: Papers from the 8th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (8 ICEHL, Edinburgh, 19–23 September 1994)

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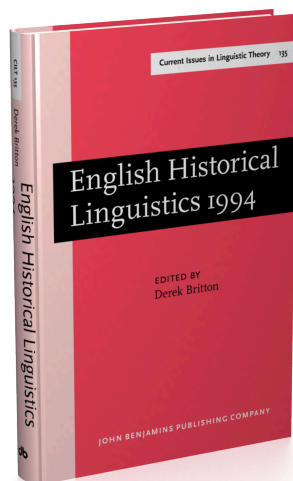
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FOREWORD

This book offers a selection of papers given at the *Eighth International Conference on English Historical Linguistics*, held at Edinburgh on 19-23 September 1994. If the general reception of an event may be accurately gauged by the level of enjoyment on the part of the organizers, then the conference must have been a very successful one, both academically and socially; and there can be little doubt that the sense of well-being was considerably enhanced by the shift of venue from the university precincts to the comforts of the Scandic Crown Hotel, set in the Old Town of Edinburgh with its numerous attractions and amenities.

In establishing a framework for the conference the Organizing Committee determined that there should be a Plenary Session of 90 minutes at the beginning of each day and that all other papers should be allocated 45-minute slots, each of these papers to run concurrently with another. This made for a relatively small number of papers – 55 in all – that could be accepted from the large number of abstracts submitted. Less than a score of the papers given at the conference appear in this book. This follows in part from the conference decision that papers submitted for publication could be of an approximate maximum of 20 pages (greater in length than in previous years) and in part, too, from the publishers' wish to have a slim, affordable volume. What has thereby been lost in diversity of topics and authors will, perhaps, have been offset by the scope given to contributors to treat of substantial issues with something like the fullness which they merit.

Each part of the selection process has been painfully difficult for the responsible committees; and it is certain and inevitable that at both stages submissions that were worthy of acceptance were not chosen – with regard to the final short-list in particular, the number of good contributions considerably exceeded the 20 or so that we were able to take. We trust, however, that those papers that do appear here are representative of current work in the field and are of high quality: for the first time in the history of the published proceedings papers have not only been vetted by a committee of staff-members of the host department, but have also been refereed by scholars of international standing from other universities.

The thematic order of presentation of papers at the conference followed in the main a division by historical period, with sessions on "Old English", "Middle

English", "English 1500-1900", "The General History of English" and "The History of Scots and Historical Lexis". In the published proceedings I have preferred largely to adopt the practices of past editors, with sections on "Phonology" (with a bias towards Old English and Old English prosodic features which seems accurately to reflect the current interests of many of the most distinguished scholars in the field of English historical phonology), "Morphology", "Lexis" (which now looks very slender, following Roger Lass's unfortunate need to withdraw at a late stage as a result of copyright difficulties) and "Syntax". I have also innovated with a section on "Sociohistorical Linguistics", which acknowledges a relatively new discipline whose practitioners frequently take account of several levels of language.

The difficulties of editors in preparing camera-ready copy for collective volumes have been well rehearsed elsewhere. At times what seems to have been the first lone editorship in the *English Historical Linguistics* series has felt like an endeavour as heroic as Dr Johnson's one-man Dictionary. But just as Johnson was backed up by five Scottish assistants, so I have had the indispensable help of one, E.S., whose word-processing knowledge, problem-solving skills and unflappable temperament made her an ideal partner in this venture. Without her help what yielded no more than a couple of troubled dreams could have been a nightmare. I cannot thank her enough.

I should also like to extend warm thanks to all those who acted as referees, especially the Manchester linguists, who took on more than their fair share of reviewing at a particularly inconvenient time for them. In this work, as in all matters, I have been helped and invigorated by every one of my Edinburgh colleagues. I owe particular thanks to Heinz Giegerich for his perennial willingness to help out and to Charles Jones, the organizer of the conference, for support and sound advice at important stages in the editorial process. My thanks, too, to Konrad Koerner, the general editor, and Anke de Looper of John Benjamins for good counsel in response to my many queries.

On behalf of the Conference Organizing Committee I should like to thank Peter Niven and his team at UnivEd Technologies and Morvyth Laidlaw of the English Language Department for patience and efficiency in their contributions towards the organization of the event. We thank, too, Lothian & Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd for a very substantial grant towards the costs of mounting the conference and Edinburgh District Council for a generous subvention to a Reception and Banquet held in the City Chambers.