Preface

This volume was born of the enthusiasm and hard work of the participants and organisers at the First Angus McIntosh Centre Symposium on the topic of Historical Dialectology held at the University of Edinburgh on the 9th and 10th June 2016. This important event promoted the Angus McIntosh Centre for Historical Linguistics (AMC) as a new centre for the study of historical language variation and language change at Edinburgh. The Symposium, and indeed this volume, was also intended to emphasise that the AMC inherits the outlook, experience and resources developed at the Institute for Historical Dialectology, its predecessor, while expanding its remit to new historical periods and language families.

Our aim as editors was to provide a lasting record of some of the key work presented at the Symposium, alongside two additional contributions that help to give a broader overview of digital methods as applied to linguistic variation across historical texts. In its outlook, the book can trace its intellectual roots to Laing and Williamson (Speaking in our Tongues, 1994), a compilation of the proceedings from the Colloquium on Medieval Dialectology and Related Disciplines held in Edinburgh in 1992. This seminal event in the history of the field aimed specifically to promote interdisciplinary studies and wider intradisciplinary collaboration, a goal we also embrace. This new work also follows on – informally – from a series of Peter Lang volumes (Dossena and Lass 2004, 2009),¹ which in turn represent a selection of the papers given at the 2003 and 2007 iterations of the International Conference on English Historical Dialectology, held at the University of Bergamo. Nearly ten years since the last publication, the present volume provides an updated view into the state of the art for the discipline, incorporating both digital and traditional methods.