



Timeline of the Scots Language Since 1700

MODERN SCOTS PERIOD 1700 to Present, subdivided into:

Language scholars have not usually subdivided Modern Scots into periods, but given the differences between 18th and 21st century speech, and the various changes that have occurred over the past 300 years, we suggest the following useful subdivisions.

Early Modern Scots AD 1700-1845

In this period Scots was redefined as 'provincial dialect' for the purposes of the political union with England. The vast majority of people continued to speak, and occasionally write in Scots, but the Scottish *elite* increasingly shifted to English in order to be accepted by the new ruling class in London.

1703 Reverend James Kirkwood makes the complaint that 'in our English Bibles there are several hundred words and phrases not vulgarly used nor understood by a great many in Scotland', meaning Scot speakers.

1707 Treaty of Union ends Scottish independence. Scots-speaking politicians must now sit in a parliament in London and are mocked by the English because of their language.

1720's Introduction to Scotland of the *New Method* of teaching English based directly on English models of accent and language.

1722 William Starrat is the earliest known Ulster poet writing in Scots.

1724 Allan Ramsay's (1686-1758) *Tea Table Miscellany* sparks revival of interest among the Scottish *elite* in poetry and songs in Scots. He is the first to give Scots the alternative name Doric.

1746 Death of Lady Grisel Baillie (1665-1746) noted songwriter in Scots.

c.1750 The rise of the Moderate Party in the Church of Scotland leads to a decline in preaching in Scots in favour of English.

1754 The Select Society established in Edinburgh, which, among other things, aims to promote the reading and speaking of the English language.

1755 Population of Scotland enumerated as 1,265,380. When the counties of Argyll, Bute, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland are deducted (201,832) this leaves 1,063,548.

1768 First publication of the poems and songs of Alexander Ross (1699-1784),

schoolmaster of Lochlee in Glen Esk, Angus. A native of the North East, he is the first writer in Scots to identify explicitly with a particular dialect area.

1774 Death of the poet Robert Fergusson (1750-1774).

1786 Robert Burns (1759-1796) publishes *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* which is a bestseller. Burns chose to spell Scots using spellings more conventional to English, which also made his work popular in England.

1792 Alexander Geddes is the first to use the term Doric in reference to North East speech when referring to Buchan 'which may be called the Scottish Doric'.

1796 Death of Robert Burns (1759-1796).

1791-1799 The *Old Statistical Account of Scotland* is compiled and published. Many parish ministers describe the languages spoken in their parishes, including Scots. This is the earliest survey which provides a cross-country description of Scots and provides much evidence for language attitudes in that period.

1808 First Burns Supper held (at Alloway in Ayrshire). This establishes the modern tradition of reciting poems in Scots at annual Burns Night gatherings.

1808 John Jamieson's *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* is the first Scots language dictionary to be published.

1816 Death of James Orr (1777-1816) the bard of Ballycarry in Ulster.

1832 Death of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), whose novels often used Scots for dialogue, but established a modern tradition of excluding Scots from narrative.

1835 Death of James Hogg, 'the Ettrick Shepherd' (1770-1835), well known writer of song, poetry and prose in Scots.

1841 Decennial census of Scotland provides evidence for forms of place and personal names, and occupations, in Scots language forms, derived from both the public and enumerators of the day.

1843 The Great Disruption. The Church of Scotland splits over patronage and other issues, leading 474 ministers (out of 1200) to walk out and set up a Free Church.

Middle Modern Scots AD 1845-1925

By the 1840's a number of factors had led to the breakdown of many traditional structures in Scotland, while government was increasingly centralised in London. There was now a sustained attack on Scots, led by educationalists, directed at the population as a whole. Paradoxically journalism and other writing in Scots began to grow and flourish.

1845 Appointment of first HM Inspector of Schools in Scotland marks beginning of official attempt to encourage spoken English among the Scottish population

generally, but a growing number of teachers interpret this policy as discouraging the Scots language and banning it from education.

1845 Publication of *New Statistical Account of Scotland* provides further descriptions of, and attitudes towards, the Scots language in many parishes in Scotland.

1851 Decennial census of Scotland provides evidence of officials going through local enumerators' books and 'correcting' and Anglicising Scots forms of names.

1855 Repeal of the Stamp Act leads to growth in popular press and encourages article writing in Scots in local newspapers.

1855 introduction of state registration of births, deaths, and marriages, further encourages officials to Anglicise and 'standardise' Scots forms of names.

1871 Reverend Peter Hately Waddell's (1817-1891) *The Psalms: Frae Hebrew Intil Scots* is published.

1871 William Alexander's *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk* is published.

1872 Education (Scotland) Act ignores Scots language and confirms earlier moves towards English-only education in Scotland.

1873 Sir James Murray's (1837-1915) *The Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland* is published. Having mapped out the dialects of Scots for the first time, and a chronology, Murray founded the modern study of Scots.

1878 Creation of the Scottish Education Department.

1886 The *Scotch Code* establishes English as a subject in Scottish schools. Education policy is now to displace Scots with English.

1890s Appearance of nostalgic and sentimental style of writing known as *Kailyaird* which uses Scots for dialogue.

1900 The publication of *Hamewith* by Charles Murray (1864-1941) whose poetry in North East Scots became very popular in the early 20th century.

1901 William Wye Smith's *New Testament in Braid Scots* published, having been translated from English.

1910 *Sermons in Braid Scots* published by Reverend D Gibb Mitchell, followed by his *The Kirk i' the Clachan* in 1917.

1915 Sir James K Wilson's *Lowland Scotch as Spoken in the Lower Strathearn District of Perthshire* is published. This was followed in 1926 by his *The Dialects of Central Scotland*.

1921 Publication of William Grant and J Main Dixon's *Manual of Modern Scots*.

1922 First of Hugh MacDiarmid's (1892-1978) poems in Scots published. His work leads into a period dubbed the 'Scottish Renaissance' and inspires a generation of writers in Scots such as Robert Garioch (1909-1981), Alexander Scott (1920-1989), Sidney Goodsir Smith (1915-1975), William Soutar (1898-1943) and Douglas Young (1913-1973).

1923 First radio station established in Scotland, at Glasgow, followed by a second in Aberdeen. From the beginning, there were complaints from Glasgow about London centralisation.

1924 First radio station established at Dundee.

1925 The secretary of the Scottish Education Department reports that while it is acceptable for children to be passively taught to read and understand approved texts in Scots, it is not the place of schools to teach active speaking and writing in the language.

Contemporary Scots Since 1925

The 20th century witnessed the greatest pressures on the Scots community. Already discouraged within education, and lacking status, the advent of radio and talking cinema, from the end of the 1920's, and television, common by the 1960's, firmly established the English voice in a Scottish society that gave no corresponding provision or protection to Scots. In many places speakers were being told they spoke 'slang' and many began to lose the history, identity and traditions of the language. Some writers reacted to this situation by reviving Scots as a serious medium and, latterly, Scots has begun to receive some recognition from official quarters.

1931 The first part of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* is published.

1932 Scottish Regional radio transmitting station opened at Westerglen near Falkirk.

1936 Burghead radio transmitting station established for North East Scotland.

1946 Deaths of Violet Jacob (1863-1946) and Marion Angus (1866-1946) both noted writers of poetry, prose and song in Scots.

1947 The Makars' spelling style sheet is introduced in an attempt to limit the many variations in spelling which had emerged in written Scots. Its earliest known publication was in *Lines Review* in 1955.

1952 Television station established at Kirk O Shotts bringing TV to Central Belt and southern Lowlands.

1954 Television station established at Redmoss, near Aberdeen, bringing TV to North East Scotland.

1957 Death of Sir William Craigie (1867-1957) who planned and oversaw the publication of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*.

- 1963** RJ Gregg is the first to define and map the areas of Scots spoken in Ulster.
- 1971** The first conference on the Scots Language is held by the Association for Scottish Literary Studies.
- 1972** The Lallans Society (later renamed the Scots Language Society) is founded as a literary association for promoting poetry and prose written in the medium of Scots.
- 1973** The Lallans Society begins publishing *Lallans* journal, the only journal devoted entirely to writing in Scots.
- 1975** Death of Helen Burness Cruickshank (1886-1975) suffragette, nationalist, and poet in Scots.
- 1977** Radio Shetland established. It is one of the few radio stations to actively use and encourage the use of the local dialect for discussion and debate.
- 1983** W.L. Lorimer's *New Testament in Scots* is published, having been translated from the Greek and Latin originals in the 1950's and 1960's.
- 1985** *The Concise Scots Dictionary*, an etymological work, is published.
- 1985** *The Patter A guide to current Glasgow usage*, by Michael Munro, is published.
- 1986** Billy Kay's *Scots: The Mither Tongue* is first shown on BBC Scotland.
- 1991** The Scottish Education Department announces its intent to include Scots language material within the school curriculum.
- 1992** The Ulster-Scots Language Society is founded in Northern Ireland.
- 1993** Scots Tung and the Glesca Scots Speikers' Curn are the first campaigning Scots language groups founded to lobby the political world.
- 1993** The Scots Language Resource Centre (later renamed the Scots Language Centre) is founded at Perth with the support of Perth and Kinross Council.
- 1993** The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages is the first public body to recognise Scots as a minority European Language.
- 1994** Alasdair Allan is first university student to sit exams in Scots (Glasgow).
- 1995** Aiberdeen Univairsitie Scots Leid Quorum, founded at the end of 1994, are the first to establish Scots on the internet, closely followed by Clive Young's website.
- 1995** The campaign for a Scots language question on the census starts to become nationwide.
- 1996** The Scottish National Party becomes the first political party to adopt a policy on the Scots language.

1996 Both *The Kist* and *Scots School Dictionary* are published as part of a drive to include some Scots language content within the curriculum.

1996 The General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) *Cognitive Report* estimates 1.5 million Scots speakers in Scotland or 30% of the Scottish population.

1997 Publication of David Purves's *A Scots Grammar*.

1997 The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in Northern Ireland is the first party to publish a political manifesto in Scots in modern times.

1997 Devolution referendum. The Scottish electorate votes in favour of the re-establishment of the Scottish parliament, with power to legislate on cultural and linguistic policy in Scotland.

1998 The Royal Mile demonstration in Edinburgh is the first public demonstration held on behalf of rights for Scots speakers.

2000 The newly reconstituted Scottish Parliament allows speeches and oath-taking in Scots as long as they are accompanied by an English text translation.

2000 The first clear evidence that Scots is a political issue is demonstrated in the Scottish Parliament when Unionist parties voted to exclude it from the census while pro-independence parties voted in favour of its inclusion.

2000 The Boord O Ulster Scotch is founded to maintain and promote Scots in Northern Ireland.

2001 Establishment of the Cross-Party Group on Scots in the Scottish Parliament.

2001 The UK Government ratifies the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in respect of Scots (under the provisions of Part II) and for the first time officially recognises the status of the Scots language.

2002 Publication of L Colin Wilson's *Luath Scots Language Learner*. This is the first full language course in Scots to be published in modern times.

2002 The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue and Scottish National Dictionary Association merge to form Scottish Language Dictionaries (SLD).

2008 The Scottish Government commissions the first ever government audit of provision for the Scots language.

2011 The Scottish Census asks for the first time ever whether people are able to speak, read, write or understand Scots. A total of 1,541,693 people answer that they are able to speak Scots (30% of the Scottish population).

2011 The SNP Government announces co-ordinators for Scots in the schools as part of its proposed Scottish Studies programme.

2013 Four co-ordinators for the Scots language in the schools are appointed, with the remit for organising projects across the country.

2014 First of the Scots Toun Awards (by the Scots Language Centre) given to the community or town judged to best maintain and promote the Scots language. It is won by Keith, in Moray.

2014 Scottish Independence Referendum held on 18 September. A total of 1,617,989 (44.7% of the electorate) vote in favour while 2,001,926 (55.3% of the electorate) vote against. The regions with the highest percentages of Scots speakers (such as Shetland and Moray) are strong No voting areas, disproving the notion that speaking Scots translates into support for independence.