



Ulster-Scots Curriculum Development Unit  
Stranmillis University College



Funded by

Tha Boord o **Ulster**-Scotch  
Ulster-**Scots** Agency

# *Ulster-Scots Curriculum Development Unit*

*The language & its history*



## **Ulster-Scots**

- *Ulster-Scots is one of over 41 minority languages in Europe which have been recognised by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.*
- *This is a brief guide for teachers about Ulster-Scots, its historical status and its place in the Primary classroom.*

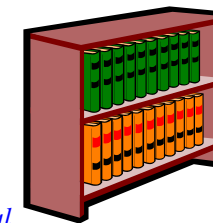
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## Bibliography for teachers



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MACAFEE, Caroline. I., *A Concise Ulster Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1996).

McCLURE, J.Derrick, *Why Scots Matters*. Rev.ed. Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1997

NIVEN, Liz and Robin Jackman (eds.) *The Scots language: its place in education*, Dundee, 1998

ROBINSON, Mairi, *The Concise Scots Dictionary*. Aberdeen, 1985

ROBINSON, Philip, *A Grammar of the Traditional Written and Spoken Language*, Ullans Press, 1997



## Useful Websites

[www.ulsterscotsagency.com](http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com)

[www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/ulsterscots/](http://www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/ulsterscots/)

[www.itchy-coo.com](http://www.itchy-coo.com)

[www.lallans.co.uk](http://www.lallans.co.uk)

[www.scots-online.org](http://www.scots-online.org)

[www.abdn.ac.uk/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/)

[elphinstone/kist/](http://elphinstone/kist/)

[www.sol.co.uk/m/](http://www.sol.co.uk/m/)

[merlinpress](http://merlinpress)

[www.scotstext.org](http://www.scotstext.org)

[www.eblul.org](http://www.eblul.org)

[www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/voices/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/voices/)

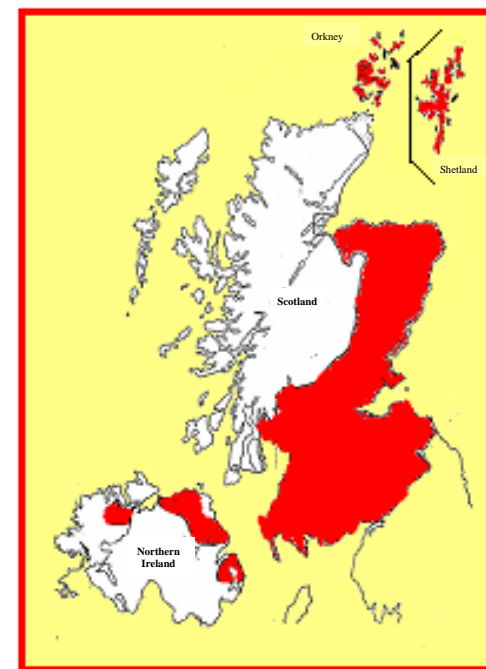
[ulsterscots/](http://ulsterscots/)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ulster\\_scots\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ulster_scots_language)



## Scots speaking areas

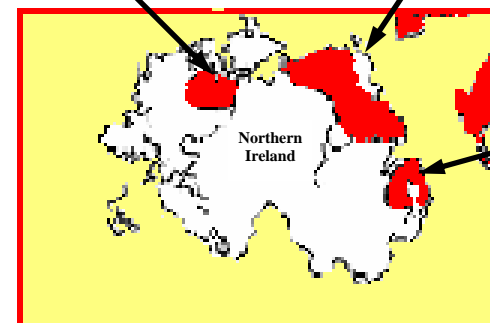
These are the main dialect areas of the Scots language (north east and lowland Scotland, the Orkneys, Shetland and Ulster-Scots).



The Scots language has been developing in Ireland for 400 years since the Plantation of Ulster.

east Donegal

north, mid & south east Antrim



north-east Down

The Ulster-Scots speaking areas were mapped in the 1960's. There are estimated to be around 100,000 speakers of Ulster-Scots today.

Ulster-Scots speaking areas

The dialect boundaries in Scotland were constructed using information contained in *Concise Scots Dictionary*. The dialect boundaries in Ulster were mapped by Professor Robert J.Gregg, "Scotch-Irish Dialect Boundaries in Ulster", in *Patterns in the Speech of the British Isles*, edited by Martyn F. Wakelin (Athlone Press, 1972)



Ulster-Scots can sound quite different depending on the text. Some poems use lots of “pure” Ulster-Scots words which we may not recognise. Other poems use words which we *have* heard before or which have been borrowed into other varieties of Ulster English. These kinds of poems are much easier to understand.

Check out some of the poems on the site and see what you think. Go to “Library” on the home page and click on poems.

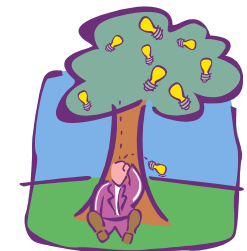
## Contact Organisations



*Ulster-Scots Agency*  
*10-12 Brunswick Street*  
*Belfast*  
*BT2 7GE*  
*028 9023 1113*  
*[www.ulsterscotsagency.com](http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com)*

*Ulster-Scots Language Society*  
*c/o*  
*Ulster-Scots Heritage Council*  
*2nd Floor*  
*218 York Street*  
*Belfast*  
*BT15 1GY*  
*028 9074 6939*

*Scots Language Society*  
*A.K.Bell Library*  
*2 York Place*  
*Perth*  
*PH2 8PE*



## The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The UK government have agreed to the principles outlined in Part II of the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**. (Article 7)

- ✓ *Facilitate and/or encourage the use of Ulster-Scots, in speech and writing, public and private life;*
- ✓ *Make provision for appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of Ulster-Scots at all appropriate stages;*
- ✓ *Provide facilities to enable non-speakers to learn Ulster-Scots if they so desire;*
- ✓ *Promote study and research on Ulster-Scots at universities or equivalent institutions.*



Those in the Primary school, should then be encouraging or at least facilitating the use of Ulster-Scots. This “facilitation” should not only be with regard to “talking and listening” but also with regard to the *written* word. Primary schools have an obligation to respect and value the language a child is bringing to school (in line with other “self-esteem” issues stressed in the Curriculum). They also have an obligation to make provision for children who wish to use Ulster-Scots.

## Varieties of Ulster speech



<i>Standard English</i>	<i>Ulster-Scots</i>
Awkward	thran
Tip over	coup
Shout	gulder
Tomorrow	the morra
Small	wee
Stroll	dander
Several	when
Stone	stane
One	yin
Eyes	een
Bright	bricht
Away	awa
From	frae
Anything	ocht
Town	toon
Give	gie
Head	heid
House	hoose
Very	gye
Go	gan

Some varieties of Ulster English use Ulster-Scots words such as “dander”, “the morra”, “wee” “thran” and “coup”. However, the vast majority of Ulster-Scots words have NOT been borrowed and these are the words which mark a *real* Ulster-Scots speaker.

(This information has been taken from [www.ulsterscotsagency.com](http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com))

## Everyday phrases!

What's your name?	Whit dae the' caa ye?
Hello, welcome! (formal)	Fair faa ye!
How are you?	Whit fittle?
Wait a moment!	Houl on a wee?
Don't upset yourself!	Dinna fash yersel
Quieten down!	Mair lown!
Settle it amongst themselves!	Amang them be it!
Stop talking!	Houl yer wheesht!
What about that then!	Eh wha!
I don't understand	Awa abain me...
Quite good...	Mair nor middlin...
Look before you leap	Keek afore ye Lowp

## Some suggestions



**Language & Literacy:** Ulster-Scots vocabulary; origin of words; Ulster-Scots and Scots stories, poets, rhymes, and songs; borrowings between English/Irish/Ulster-Scots; oral and written activities to explore the diversity of our indigenous languages; comparison between Ulster-Scots and Irish words.

**The World Around Us:** Ulster-Scots street names and place names; local studies; famous Ulster-Scots people; map work involving Ulster and Scotland; movement between Ulster and Scotland; transport links between Ulster and Scotland; landscape of Ulster and Scotland; Scots and Ulster-Scots cultural events and celebrations.

**The Arts:** Ulster-Scots and Scottish instruments e.g. pipes, drums, and fiddles; Ulster-Scots and Scottish music e.g. jigs, reels; Scottish country dance; exploring our cultural heritage through art and music; comparison between Ulster-Scots, Scottish and Irish musical traditions.

**Personal Development:** Ulster-Scots and Scottish cultural heritage, traditions and celebrations; historical and present day connections between Ulster and Scotland, Ulster-Scots recipes, Ulster-Scots and Scottish music, Scottish country dancing, Ulster-Scots and Scottish dress e.g. tartan and kilts; similarities and differences between Ulster-Scots traditions and other traditions in the community; cultural diversity.

**Physical Education:** Scottish country dancing.

(Please see [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk) for current curriculum details)



## Ulster-Scots in the School



There are “ ...3 historic, interwoven linguistic and cultural traditions in Ulster...”

*Professor Michael Montgomery*

The aim of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum is to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, where teachers should endeavour to meet the needs of all children, taking into account each child’s cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social background, as well as their gender and special educational needs. Ulster-Scots (whether language, history or culture) must then feature in the Curriculum in order that these issues are addressed.

In addition, we ought to respect whatever language experience children bring with them to school (whether this is from an indigenous minority language or not). As CCEA advise, the language experiences and skills that pupils bring with them to school from home, pre-school and the local community, should be valued and used as a starting point for further development.

Here are some (subject focused) suggestions where Ulster-Scots might feature in the Primary classroom. Some suggestions ( such as the language-based studies) may be more appropriate for schools in Ulster-Scots speaking areas. Other suggestions (eg. music) will be appropriate for schools in any geographical area.

(Please see [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk) for current curriculum details)



*From To the Potatoo*

*I ledge we’d fen gif fairly quat o’  
The weed we smoke, an’ chow the fat o’  
An’ wadna grudge to want the wat o’  
Wealth-wastin’ Tea;  
But leeze me on the precious Pratoe,  
My country’s stay!*

*Bright blooms the Bean that scents the valley,  
An’ bright the Pea; that speels the salie,  
An’ bright the Plumb tree, bolssom’t brawly,  
An’ blue-bow’t lint;  
But what wi’ straught rais’t raws can tally,  
That sun-beams tint.*

*Waeworth the proud prelatie pack,  
Wha Point an’ Prataoes downa tak!  
With them galore, an’ whyles a plack  
To mak’ me frisky,  
I’ll fen, an’ barley freely lack –  
Except in whisky.*

*Sweet in the mornin’, after dashlin’,  
Thy daigh is, pouter’t owre wi’ mashlin;  
Creesh’t scones stan’ pil’t on plates, or brislin’  
A’ roun’ the ingle,  
While a fand Wifie fast is fislin,  
An tea-cups jingle.*

*Sweet to the boons that blithely enter  
At dinner-time, the graise in centre,  
Champ’t up wi’ kail, that pey the planter,  
Beans, pa’snips, peas!  
Gosh! Cud a cautious Covenanter  
Wait for the grace?*

*By James Orr (1770—1816)*



## Ulster-Scots: language & history

### The language and its status

The last 400 years have seen Ulster-Scots used chiefly, but not entirely, as a spoken language. This means that Ulster-Scots has a well-developed colloquial style. It is often perceived as being only “slang” or as using “bad grammar”. Ulster-Scots, as with other languages, has lost a good deal of vocabulary because of the changes in our way of life (e.g. words relating to weaving which are no longer needed). There are also some difficulties in that there are no existing Ulster-Scots words for “new” technologies (such as the World Wide Web, e-mail, Game Boy, Playstation etc). Despite these difficulties Ulster-Scots does have a traceable literary and linguistic pedigree, recognition as a minority language, considerable new pride in the language and lots of new Ulster-Scots writing.

### History of Scots

Before 500 AD there were varieties of Celtic languages in Britain with Latin written and spoken by the aristocracy. From 500 AD onwards English was brought to Britain by Germanic invaders, the Anglo-Saxons. It was not a standard language by any means. The Anglo-Saxons came from different regions and brought a multiplicity of customs, vocabulary and language variations with them. At this period there were 4 Old English or Anglo-Saxon dialects: **Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon and Kentish.**

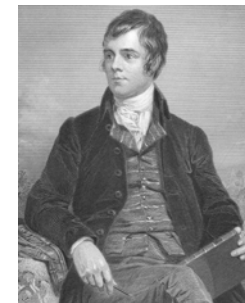
## The Decline of Scots

### The 17th century

Scots and Ulster-Scots are not valued and respected now partly because of a decline which started around 1600. The Union of the Crowns in 1603 meant that many of the Scottish nobility followed James VI to London and both nobles and gentry sent their children to England for their education. In 1611, the King James version of the Bible was published, not in Scots, but English. Scots really lost its status as the language of government, administration and church. Official documents were no longer written in Scots as they had been. English became the valued and respected language at the expense of Scots.

### The 18th Century

Of course Scots had something of a revival with Robert Burns in the late 18th century.



© Noel Collection

Some Ulster-Scots writers picked up on the traditions of Burns. They are known as the “Rhyming Weavers” as most came from weaving communities in Ulster.

*There are about 26 Ulster-Scots poets who published significant amounts of material between 1720 and 1920. (see Philip Robinson’s “Grammar”)*  
*The most famous are probably James Orr of Ballycarry, Hugh Porter of Moneyslane, Samuel Thompson of Carngranny, and David Herbison of Dunclug.*



## The Origin of Scots & Ulster-Scots

### 1400 – 1600: The “Golden Age” of writing in Scots...

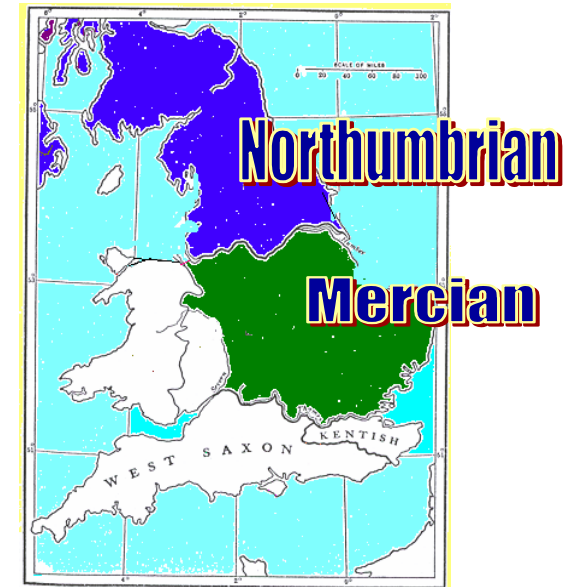
- 1375 Barbour’s “Brus”
- 1398 Statutes of Scottish Parliament in Scots
- Blind Harry’s “Wallace”
- William Dunbar
- Robert Henryson
- Andrew of Wyntoun’s “Chronykil”
- James IV “The Kingis Quair”
- Richard Holland
- Gavin Douglas
- David Lindsay

Two of these poets, Dunbar and Henryson wrote for the Court of James IV.



*Scots words used by  
them can also be found  
In Ulster-Scots today...*

*clays (clothes)  
girn (cry)  
brae (hill)  
burde (table)  
ferly (wonder)  
kist (chest)  
dreid (fear)  
slaver, slabber (dribble)  
slicht, sleekit (cunning)  
thrapple (throat).....*



500 AD+

Northumbrian is the basis of Scots.

Mercian is the basis of English.



Over the next centuries there were new influences on the language. From 800 AD the **Vikings** overran most of the Northern kingdom of Northumbria. This saw the influence of **Old Norse** on Anglo-Saxon as the Vikings settled.

1066 saw the **Norman conquest** and the influence of **Old French**.

This explains why we have Scots and Ulster-Scots words from a variety of origins.

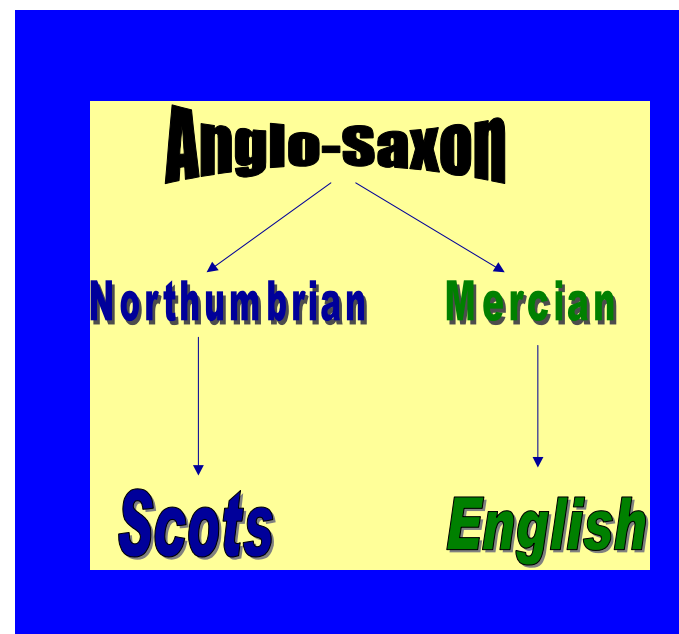


### Ulster-Scots

Aye (always)  
 Blether (talk nonsense)  
 Clabber (mud)  
 Cley (horsefly)  
 Cope, cowp (tip over)  
 Corbie (crow)  
 Duds (clothes)  
 Fash (annoy)  
 Feared (afraid)  
 Footer (fiddle about)  
 Greet (weep)  
 Hirple (hobble)  
 Hotchin (infested)  
 Keenk (sudden fit of coughing)  
 Kye (cows)  
 Margymore (disorder)  
 Neb (nose)  
 Neep (turnip)  
 Oxter (armpits)  
 Proota (potato)  
 Schune (shoes)  
 Thole (suffer)

### Origin

Old Norse "ei", "ey"  
 Old Norse "blathra"  
 Irish "clabar"  
 Old Norse "kleggi"  
 Middle English "cowp"  
 Old French "corbe"  
 Middle English "dudde"  
 Old French "fascher"  
 Old English "afeared"  
 Old French "foutre"  
 Old English "gretan"  
 Middle English "hype"  
 Middle English "hotch"  
 Old English "cincian"  
 Old English "cy"  
 Irish "margadh mor"  
 Old English "nebb"  
 Latin "napus"  
 Old English "oxta"  
 Irish "prata"  
 Middle English "shoon"  
 Old English "tholian"



From 1500 onwards Scots was recognised as being a separate diplomatic language distinct from that used in England.

### Elizabeth I spoke both English and Scots



Florio (1578)

*"...Doth she (Elizabeth I) speak many languages?...She speaketh Greeke, Latine, Italian, French, Spanish, Scottish, Flemish and English; Al these tongues shee speaketh very wel and eloquent..."*

