Ulster-Scots poems for weans!
Some information about Ulster-Scots....

Why are there so many different ways of spelling the same words? Why are some words so like English but others are so different?

Many Scots people moved to Ulster in the 17th century and brought their language with them. We now call this language Ulster-Scots. Some of the words are very close to English because both Scots and English came from Anglo-Saxon hundreds of years earlier. Both Scots and English were sister languages in the same way that Gaelic in Ireland and Gaelic in Scotland are closely related.

People today are beginning to realize that it is important not to lose some of these really interesting words. People also think that although it is really important to learn English we can also listen to Ulster-Scots poems and enjoy using Ulster-Scots words when they are appropriate.
Vocabulary and dialect

There are different Ulster-Scots words used in different parts of the country. A person from one area might not always know the words used in another area. You might hear words that you are very familiar with and others which you have never heard before.

Spelling

There is no strongly agreed method of spelling for many Ulster-Scots words. Some people think it is best to look to the way words were spelled in the past, others think we should spell them the way they sound.
Oor Wee Scuil Poems

Contents Page

1. Yin Tae A Hunner  Page 5
2. The Prootsa Gaitherin  Page 6
3. The Scunger  Page 7
4. Me An Me Da  Page 8
5. Medley O Burns: Readings  Page 9
   a. Selkirk Grace  Page 9
   b. Address To A Haggis  Page 10
   c. Tae A Louse  Page 11
   d. Tae A Mouse  Page 12
   e. Epistle To Davie A Brother Poet  Page 13
   f. Ye Banks and Braes (O’ Bonnie Doon)  Page 14
6. Whun A’ the Kye Had Names  Page 15
7. Rabbie  Page 17
8. To the Potatoe (Tae the Proota)  Page 18
9. A’ it taks  Page 19
10. Fifty Nine  Page 20
Yin Tae A Hunner

by Willie Drennan

Yin twa an three
Coontins nae bother tae me
Fower, fiver an sax
A’l coont ocht at ye a
Seiven echt an nine
Aa the nummers A hae mine
Ten, eleiven, twal
Cud coont fae a cud cral
There’s thirteen, fowerteen an fifteen
Sixteen, seiventeen an echteen
There’s nineteen, twonty an mair
But shair A dinnae care
Thrifty, fowerty an fifty
Hi, am I naw quare an nifty
But at saxty, seiventy an echty
It’s getting a weethin wechtie
At ninety an a hunner
A’ll stap-efore A scunner.
The Proota Gaitherin

By William Livingstone

Dae ye mine the times in hairvest climes
When we gaed gaitherin prootas
Me, mae ma an whiles mae da
An the neighbours roon aboot us

Ben yer bak an dinnae slak
Heid doon an dinnae stap
The wunter’s naw sae far awa
An we cannae loas the crap

Then pert o yer wage at the bak o a hedge
Was yer tay frae a gellon can
A loaf o breid wae butter weel spreed
An a coatin o hame-made jam

An thon coul sits by the proota pits
As they thatched an shovelled soil
Then a fire o peat, an a bite tae eat
At the enn o hard days toil.
Tha Scunger
by Richard Archibald

Up fae tha screich an oot as weel
Scho runs aroun tha moss an fiel.
Her Ma an Da the gie a gulder
Quhan her tae's on tha taible bot naeb' die's funn her.

Quhan in scho cums it's aye gan lait
Her tae 'aes stuck on tae tha plait.
Scho then'll waant tae g'oot again Bot scho's juist toul
"Git up abain !"
"Tae bed wi ye, wee scunger !"

Scunger—
someone who prowls or rummages about...
Me an Me Da

I'm livin in Drumlister,  
An' I'm gettin' very oul'  
I have to wear an Indian bag  
To save me from the coul'.  
The deil a man in this townlan'  
Wos claner raired nor me,  
But I'm livin' in Drumlister  
In clabber to the knee.

Me da lived up in Carmin  
An kep' a savant boy  
His second wife wos very sharp  
He birried her with joy  
Now she wos thin, her name was Flynn  
She come from Cullentra  
An' if me shirt's a clatty shirt  
The man to blame's me da.

So I'm livin in Drumlister,  
An' I'm gettin' very oul'  
I creep to Carmin wanst a month  
To thry an’ make me sowl:  
The deil a man in this townlan'  
Wos claner raired nor me,  
An I'm dyin' in Drumlister  
In clabber to the knee.

By "The Bard of Tyrone”  
The Reverend W.F. Marshall
Selkirk Grace

Some hae meat and canna eat
And some wad eat that want it,
But we hae meat and we can eat
Sae let the Lord be thankit.

Robert Burns
from **Address To A Haggis**

Fair fa’ your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o’ the puddin-race!
Aboon them a’ ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy of a grace
As lang’s my arm.

*by Robert Burns*
Tae A Louse

Ha! Whare ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie?
Your impudence protects you sairly,
I canna say but ye strunt rarely
   Owre gauze and lace,
Tho’ fiath! I fear ye dine but sparely
   On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creppin, blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn’d by saunt an’ sinner,
How daur ye set your fit upon her—
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

O Jenny, dinna toss your head,
An’ set your beauties a’ abread!
Ye little ken what cursed speed
The blastie’s makin!
Thae winks an’ finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin!

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
An’ foolish notion:
What airs in dress an’ gait wad lea’e us,
An’ ev’n devotion!

an extract from “Tae a Louse” by Robert Burns

Note: Not all of the verses in this piece feature on the CD
Tae A Mouse

Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim’rous beastie,
O, what a panic’s in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty
  Wi’ bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an’ chase thee,
  Wi’ murdering pattle!

I’m truly sorry man’s dominion
Has broken nature’s social union,
An’ justifies that ill opinion
  Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion
  An’ fellow mortal!!

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
  Gang aft agley,
An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,
  For promis’d joy!

Still thou art blest, compared wi’ me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But och! I backward cast my e’e,
  On prospects dreaer!
An’ forward, tho’ I canna see,
  I guess an’ fear!

—an extract from
“Tae a Mouse” by Robert Burns

Note: Not all of the verses in this piece feature on the CD
from ‘Epistle To Davie, A Brother Poet’.

It’s no in titles nor in rank;
It’s no in wealth like Lon’on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It’s no in makin’ muckle, mair:
It’s no in books, it’s no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest:
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart aye’s the part aye
That makes us right or wrang.

by Robert Burns
Ye Banks and Braes
(O’ Bonnie Doon)

Ye banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
   How can ye chant, ye little birds,
      And I sae weary fu’ o’ care?
Thou’lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro’ the flowering thorn:
   Thou minds me o’ departed joys,
      Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov’d by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
   And ilka bird sang o’ its love,
      And fondly sae did I o’ mine.
Wi’ lightsome heart I pu’d a rose,
Fu’ sweet upon its thorny tree;
   And my fause lover stole my rose,
      But ah! He left the thorn wi’ me.

by Robert Burns

Note: Not all of the verses in this piece feature on the CD
Whun A’ The Kye Had Names
by Charlie Gillen

Whut heppin’t tae the countryside, since you an’ me wus wains,
Whun folk had time tae tak’ tae ye an’ al’ the kye had names,
The Clydesdales stud abane the men, as gentle as a lamb,
The oul’ men proud o’ whut they dane, they know’d aboot the lan.

The wather it wus better then, och! Mebbe that’s joost me,
An’ burds noo naw as plentifu, they sung fae ivery tree,
Spring rowl’t intae simmer an’ it seem’t tae g’on for iver,
An’ nae such thing as silage seep polluted ony river.

Wee yella fleurs that hugg’t the grun, an’ grew wile up the rodden
Wur guid for soos that wur in pig an’ min’ ye I’m naw coddin’
I hae mine o’ ginger mix’t wae stuff an’ doses geen tae coos,
I cannæ min’ whut it wus for but I think it wus the hoowse.

An’ weeds that luk’t lake churnstaffs, an’ grew on heidrigs wile,
They cure’t the warts ye got fae kye, on wummin man or chile,
Ye only got the warts of coorse whun milkin’ wae yer’e han,
It wus odd the wye that Flossie an’ oul Daisy knowed thoor stan’.

All coorse machines dae al’ that noo, an’ cans nae langer clink,
I lake’ t the blue rimm’t buckets an’ the strainers mair, I think,
Och! The worls in sich a hurry noo, its chane’t since we wur wains,
Och! Al’ the sime I lake’ t it whun al’ the kye had names.

An’ they say tabacca’s bad for ye, och! I’m sure they lakely know
But boys the pipe wus pairt o’ them, them oul’ boys lang ago,
Noo I’m naw on for smokin’ but tae mae min’ a vision creeps,
O’ Jamie sittin’ on the dake in a cloud o’ blue pipe reek.
Whun A’ The Kye Had Names

Continued

A gentle dacent quate wee man, wae thrupp’ny bits for wains,
A man wha knowed the fermin’ trade, an’ al’ his kye had names,
He dinnae need a helter for his geldin’ or his mere,
He set his han’ on the oul’ gate post an said as quate “c’mere”,

He swung the gate an’ danner’t on at his leisure up the trak’,
An, big Darkie he catch’t up wae him an dunch’t him on the bak,
Joost a dunt tae let him know, that him an hir wus comin’
He had a wye wae bastes an’ things, but ye niver hard him bummin’.

Noo life slips by for all o’ is, gye quick, I’ll hae ye know,
But always theres a crocus kookin’ through the snow,
What I mane bae that is simple for I am far fae smert,
The fermers noo al’rip an’ tear I think they loast the airt.

Ye shud be mair lake Jamie, an’ love the lan’ that’s lent ye,
An’ keep it richt for yer’e ain wains the Lord in wisdom sent ye,
An think o’ that wee crocus, an she’ll mine ye o’ the Spring,
An life anew anither time, an’ life’s a precious thing.

Noo if ye’d ax me whut I’d lake, if ye only had the power,
Cud I go bak an’ tak’ tae Jamie, if only for an hour,
For I dinnae lissen first time roon, well naw as weel’s I shud,
But noo I’m ouler, wiser an’ as sure as God I wud.

For I hae waste’t mony years on things that daenae metter,
There is nae price I wudnae pye for a chance tae dae it better,
But Jamie dee’t lang years ago, an’ if richt is richt I mane,
He’s fermin’ up in Heaven whur al’ his kye has names.

Note: Not all of the verses in this piece feature on the CD

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Reproduced with permission from Charlie Gillen, Tha Wizard’s Quill,
Rabbie
By John Erskine

Yin an twa
Rab’s on the waa
Thrie an fower
Rab’s gan owre!
Five an sax
Rab’s in a fax
Sevin an echt
Wull Rabbie fecht?
Nine an ten
Na.
Tha enn!
To The Potatoe
(Tae the Proota)

By James Orr (1770—1816)

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, blossom’t brawley,
An’ blue-bow’t lint;
But what we’ straught rais’t raws can tally,
That sunbeams tint.

Thou feeds our beasts o’ ilka kin’,
The gen’rous steed, and grov’lin’ swine;
An’ poultry tribes; the doves ay fine,
An’ ducks besmear’d ay.
Dear was the man, an’ half divine,
Wha here first rear’d ye.

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!
A' it taks
By James Fenton

A whap's far, half-hard ca'in
ower Strangford;
A stane-daked fiel o huttaed coarn
in Derry;
The rugh face o a hannyaed peat
on Vogey;
The wat lint hoag frae a seeplin bing
at Doagh;
The teng o pakaged soordook bocht
in Tesco's:
Thon's a' it taks.
Bak in fifty echt or nine,
I milk’t kye wae a sister o’ mine,
Rid Roan, Blue Roan Ayrshire
maybe,
Polly Meg an the Bridgit lady.

Polly stud weil Meg wud fidgit,
Only Mae cud milk oul Bridget,
Somethin in mae sisters manner,
Soothed an made oul Bridgit calmer.

In the byre lang afore seven,
Bed at six had seem’t like heaven,
All the same the best o times,
Bak in fifty echt or nine.
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Oor Wee Scuil

References

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