Scots under the influence

an investigation into the effects of various Germanic languages on Scots

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I thank Professor Michael Martin for encouraging me to get an Advanced Study Grant to Scotland, because memories of Scotland kept my impetus for this project alive when nothing else could. Whether I should also thank Professor Martin for pushing me into writing a thesis in the first place remains to be seen.

I thank the German Department, especially Professor Michael Resler, for allowing me some leeway in terms of subject matter and for being so gemütlich; the Linguistics Department for allowing me to acquire a Linguistics major at all; and the Honors Program for background in scholarship in general.

Most importantly, I thank my parents, Anne and Robert, for simultaneously encouraging me in scholarly pursuits and letting me know that they would love me just as well without them.
Abstract

Old English, Old Norse (both Danish and Norwegian variants), Latin, Old French and various Celtic languages have influenced the development of the Scots language in different ways than they have British Standard English due to Scotland’s unique political relationships with each of these cultures.

This paper aims to explore the linguistic developments of these interactions, drawing examples from the Scottish poem *Sir Patrick Spence*, place names in Scotland, and other sources, with especial focus on the Germanic languages.
AD 900
- Pictish
- Cumbric
- Gaelic
- Norse
- Anglian

Maps
Maps courtesy of David Ross
3. Outline

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4. Abbreviations and conventions

I have attempted to adhere to linguistic conventions in the writing of this paper, inasmuch as such conventions exist. All pronunciations, which appear in square brackets [], are written according to the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) standard of 2005 (below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Postalveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Pharyngeal</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p b</td>
<td>t d</td>
<td>t d</td>
<td>c j</td>
<td>k g</td>
<td>q g</td>
<td>q g</td>
<td></td>
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<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m n</td>
<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tap or Flap</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>θ ð</td>
<td>s z</td>
<td>s z</td>
<td>ç j</td>
<td>x y</td>
<td>x r</td>
<td>h s</td>
<td></td>
<td>h h</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lateral Fricative</td>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
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<td>j</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lateral Approximant</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>k l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.*

**Figure 4.1 IPA consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOWELS</th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>i y</td>
<td>i u</td>
<td>u ü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-mid</td>
<td>e ø</td>
<td>e ø</td>
<td>ø ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mid</td>
<td>æ æ — 3</td>
<td>æ ø</td>
<td>Ø Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>a æ</td>
<td>a ø</td>
<td>a ø</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel*

**Figure 4.2 IPA vowels**

IPA symbols not included above include the following consonants:

- mw voiceless labio-velar fricative, as at the beginning of where in a snooty or Scottish accent
- w voiced labio-velar approximant, as at the beginning of wear
- tf voiceless affricate, as at the beginning of chat; sometimes written <c> in older texts
- dh voiced affricate, as at the beginning of jeer; sometimes written <j> in older texts

---

1 This phoneme does not appear in General American
Other symbols used to indicate words and pronunciations include:

- *italics* a word or form as found in a language
- ‘single quotation markers’ the meaning of a given form
- <angled brackets> a grapheme, or graphic realisation (letters or spellings)
- /brackets/ a phoneme (what people think they’re saying)
- [square brackets] phonetic realisation (what people are actually saying)
- x ≈ y x is derived from y
- *asterisk* an unattested posited form

Diacritics to indicate long vowels in the various languages:

- ā Old English
- á Irish, Old Norse
- à Scottish Gaelic

Abbreviations:

- 1st / 2nd / 3rd pers. sg./pl. 1st/2nd/3rd person singular/plural
- Bry Brythonic
- BSE British Standard English
- Fr French
- Gael Gaelic, undifferentiated
- Gmc Germanic
- Gmn German
- Ir Irish
- ME Middle English
- ModHG Modern High German
- MSc Middle Scots
- Nhbg Northumbrian
- ODan Old Danish
- OE Old English
- OFr Old French
- OIc Old Icelandic
- OIr Old Irish
- On Norse
- ONhb Old Northumbrian
- ONorw Old Norwegian
- OScGael Old Scottish Gaelic
- RP Received Pronunciation (English)
- Sc Scots
- Scand Scandinavian
- ScGael Scottish Gaelic
- SSE Scottish Standard English
- WScand West Scandinavian

References to counties in Scotland are to the pre-1974 counties.
5. Introduction

Many people consider Scots a dialect of English instead of a language in its own right. Some strong considerations support this view. Mutual comprehension between English speakers and speakers of all but very “broad” Scots, for example, argues for dialect status; the two seem no more distinct than the varied dialects we call, collectively, Modern High German (ModHG). Over the past four centuries, Scotland has not been the discrete political entity it once was, softening the argument of language based on geopolitical boundaries. And on the arguments go.

For a dialect, however, Scots has a linguistic history surprisingly discrete from that of its presumed sister dialects in England. New features have not always filtered through the medium of any standard in England, and many innovations to the Scots tongue never entered English proper. Scotland’s unique political history has offered the chance for language contact with speakers of other languages, including Danes, Norwegians and Frenchmen, that speakers of English didn’t experience in the same way (if at all). The Scots imported different words from French on account of the Auld Alliance than England did as a result of the Norman Conquest; the greater reign Celtic speakers have enjoyed in Scotland than in the England of the last millennium and a half has accorded them a correspondingly greater chance to confer loan-words, if nothing else; Anglian Old English, instead of the more southern West Saxon that formed the seed for the British Standard English of today, informed the traces of Old English in Scots; Scots adopted some features from the Vikings of the Danelaw that never migrated down to the London standard, but stayed in northeastern England and Scotland; and far more contact, both conquest-based and friendly, occurred between Norway and Scotland than Norway and England, with the result that Scots bears a far greater Norwegian stamp than English does.

This paper aims to explore in greater detail the linguistic ramifications for Scots of the relationships outlined above, particularly the influence on Scots of the various Germanic languages. Sir Patrick Spence, a Scottish text dating from the eighteenth century, provides samples to illustrate many of the developments described, while place names taken from across Scotland provide colourful
geographical evidence of the populations and tongues under discussion. I hope that when you have finished reading this paper, you will leave with a deeper appreciation of the Scots tongue as an entity in its own right with a linguistic history unique among the languages of Great Britain and the world.
6. The languages of Scotland

What is Scots?

Most English speakers can recognise a Scottish accent when they hear one. Scots, however, is more than just an accent of English; it differs from English not only phonologically, but morphologically and lexically, as well. Scots, like British Standard English (BSE), developed from Old English, but did not develop in precisely the same ways. As a linguistic entity, Scots provokes considerable debate. Scotsmen and Englishmen have contended—as often amongst themselves as against one another—the status of Scots for centuries. Is it a language in its own right, or a dialect of British English?

In 2001 the United Kingdom ratified the European charter for regional and minority languages in respect to Scots, thereby according it the full rights granted to minority languages and their speakers under the terms of the charter. (Scots Language Centre, Conseil de l’Europe) The ratification of this legislation implies more that one might immediately realise, in terms of the status of Scots as dialect or language. The Scots Language Centre explains,

The Charter defines “regional or minority languages” as languages that are traditionally used within a certain territory of a state by a group of nationals of that state that is numerically smaller than the rest of the state’s population. In addition, these languages are different from the official language(s) of the state and do not include dialects of the official language(s) or the languages of migrants.

While lexical and grammatical differences provide a framework for this stance in respect to Scots, a stronger argument lies in the fact that most speakers of Scots perceive themselves as code-switching, or at least code-drifting, between Scots and Scottish Standard English (SSE) depending on the situation. (Britain 110) This variation occurs “according to the usual socio-linguistic factors (social class, gender, age, network membership and attitudes towards Scots), as well as what degree of importance class of the ingroup/outgroup distinction has in the specific community.” (Britain loc. cit.) Additionally, the history of the Scots language diverges for several centuries from that of BSE, forming a pluricentric diasystem with separate geographic centres and separate standards.

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2 See McClure 1988 for arguments in its favour
Aitken and Macafee provide a most useful model for distinguishing between Scots and SSE, based on use of lexical items from any of five columns: columns one through three indicate use of Scots, while columns three through five indicate SSE. The shared core, three, indicates the obvious overlap between two linguistic entities occurring in such close contact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scots</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bairn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>name</td>
<td>home</td>
<td>child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brae</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>hole</td>
<td>whole</td>
<td>slope</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>kirk</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ken</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>soup</td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>know</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>darg</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>room</td>
<td>moon</td>
<td>job of work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cuit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>miss</td>
<td>use n.</td>
<td>ankle</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>kenspeckle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>raise</td>
<td>use v.</td>
<td>conspicuous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birl</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>tie</td>
<td>cold</td>
<td>spin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>girk</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>yound</td>
<td>old</td>
<td>whine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>mind</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>row (=fight)</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>remember</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sort</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>winter</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>mend</td>
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<td>ay</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>bite</td>
<td>pay</td>
<td>always</td>
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<td>gey</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>tide</td>
<td>way</td>
<td>very</td>
<td></td>
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<td>ein</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>feed</td>
<td>dead</td>
<td>eyes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>shuin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>see</td>
<td>die</td>
<td>shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deave</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>leave</td>
<td>scratch</td>
<td>deafen, vex</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>gaed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>went</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ben the hoose</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>inside the house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-na(e)</td>
<td></td>
<td>his</td>
<td>-n't</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper concentrates more on the ins and outs of the language itself than on political considerations. To this end, I will adopt the model of Charles Jones and take as my subject “the linguistic medium which represents the daily spoken and written form of the English language peculiar to Scotland, both as regards its current features and those that have typified its historical development from the time of its earliest records.” (Jones 1) In the interest of best ascertaining what effects external languages have had on Scots, I will examine features that best illustrate this influence. The

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3 After Aitken and MacAfee. (Britain 111)
4 Though, like the EU, I am going to refer to it as a language.
disappearance of phoneme [x] from the speech of young female speakers in modern Glaswegian speech, for example, does not affect the fact that the phoneme in question originated in Old English and survived in Scots long after British speakers had abandoned it. Even features now relegated to the broadest, or most marked, dialects can yield valuable historical information.

**Dialects**

Dialectically, Scotland divides into five parts, though naturally some blurriness and sharing of features occurs between neighboring areas: “Insular (the Northern Isles), Northern (Caithness and the North-East ‘shoulder’), Mid [Central] (embracing the Central Belt and Fife), Southern (the Southern Borders and Galloway area) and Ulster.” (Jones 63)
The Gàidhealtachd, dominated not by Scots but by Scottish Standard English and Gaelic, appears in white, as do parts of England and Ireland.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Aitken 110
Related tongues

Other languages spoken in and around Scotland often appear in discussions about Scots. Descriptions of relevant Anglo-Saxon languages appear below to prevent confusion.

Lallans

Many consider the quintessential Scots tongue, particularly among those who, like J.D. McClure and Hugh McDiarmid, rally for a rebirth of Scots. They advocate “the use of a standard Scots – in practice, usually Lallans, a synthetic, archaising, and somewhat artificial literary variety developed by McDiarmid and his followers for this purpose...” (Britain 107). Proponents of a more organic linguistic process protest that this literary language will prove incomprehensible to everyday speakers of Scots because of its preference for archaisms and other marked forms that McDiarmid et al regard as symbols of linguistic purity. (Britain 108)

Ullans (Ulster Lallans, Ulster Scots, Hiberno-Scots, Scots-Irish, etc.)

The Anglo-Saxon-based language spoken in the North of Ireland, Ullans descends from the Scots spoken in Scotland. Brought over by Scottish Presbyterian settlers, mostly in the seventeenth century, its own speakers regularly refer to it as Scots, Braid/Broad Scots or Scotch⁶. Ullans has also been recognised by the European Charter as a minority language.

British Standard English (BSE) / Received Pronunciation (RP)

So-called “Standard English” is merely “that variety, or set of varieties, which enjoys the highest social prestige” for any given time and location. (Kortmann 1) Those studying Scots commonly use BSE/RP as a convenient basis of comparison. I shall do the same; comparing Scots with General American, for

⁶Flom, for example, used the term Scotch in the title of his 1966 work Scandinavian influence on southern Lowland Scotch. The terms meets mixed reactions in today’s world; some find it demeaning, while others find Scottish “rather affected”. (OED ‘Scotch’, Wikipedia ‘Scotch’)
example, would provide little useable information, as American English has its roots in British English (though Scots did make its mark in the English of the United States).

**Scottish Standard English (SSE)**

SSE is the target language for many speakers of Scots in formal situations, and is the language used for school instruction.

> A compromise system between London and localised Scots norms. SSE co-exists with Scots in a sort of sociolinguistic equilibrium, and... has evolved into a continuum of types, ranging from a highly-Scotticised ('Basic') version used by working-class speakers in formal styles... to outright Standard British English with near-RP pronunciation used by some upper-middle-class members in cities like Edinburgh. (Britain 108)

**Highland English**

The English spoken in the part of Scotland where Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic), a Celtic language, remained the primary language until quite recently. Because Anglo-Saxon-based language was taught as a second language, SSE features outnumber Scots features in this region, called the Gàidhealtachd. Scots features seep in through language contact in the border areas, resulting in some cases in a watered-down Scots, but Highland English and Gaelic remain the primary languages of the Gàidhealtachd. In fact, Gàidhlig and Scots maintain a rivalry of sorts as languages representative of Scottish culture, the bastion of an old rivalry between the two geographical factions, Highlanders and Lowlanders.

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7 pronounced [ˈɡælɪk]
7. Introduction to Sir Patrick Spence

Background

The scholar seeking to explicate the Scots tongue must examine various sources, particularly the day-to-day speech of the populace and the body of literature attending it. As a genre, the ballad proves an interesting case study. A series of words often repeated and passed on, but containing a certain amount of variation, and composed in a style not much more high-flown than that of the common man whom it is to entertain, the ballad falls between speech and literature proper on a scale of formality.

A Scots ballad provides, therefore, an especially well-suited specimen for a case-study on a sample of the Scots tongue. A particularly well-known Scottish ballad, Sir Patrick Spence exhibits—especially in its older forms—numerous forms characteristic of Scots, and thus of use to this study.

Before going on to a close analysis, I would like to present some background information about the poem: its origins, the virtues and flaws of different versions and their proponents, the ways in which this particular poem proves representative of Scots in general, and a brief treatment of the poem’s narrative and historical context.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Thomas Percy, later Bishop of Dromore, rescued an old manuscript from the hands of a maid who was using its leaves to start a fire in the hearth. It contained a number of poems and ballads. This find provided the impetus for Percy to begin work on a collection of English poetry, both older and modern, which would draw on many different sources, not least Percy’s own imagination, for source material. Despite his claim that “The greater part of them [the poems] are extracted from an ancient folio MS. in the Editor’s possession,” only 47 of the songs in the finished Reliques came from the manuscript. On the subject of Percy’s faithfulness to his source material, Groom comments,
Percy has been criticised as a particularly bad and unreliable and overly imaginative editor: he compiled single texts of ballads from a variety of unacknowledged versions, and liberally rewrote these collages to suit the taste of a late eighteenth-century readership. (Groom 8)

Thus the historian meets difficulties in ascertaining the source of any piece not taken from the original manuscript, later referred to as the _Percy Folio._

With several different versions extant, and the events related varying from piece to piece, _Sir Patrick Spence_ is such a poem. Percy’s provides only the following notes on the poem’s origins: “Is given from two MS copies, transmitted from Scotland.” (Percy 80)

More than century after its appearance in _Reliques_, the poem gained further prominence as part of the Francis James Child’s collection, _The English and Scottish Popular Ballads_, now commonly referred to as the _Child Ballads_. Child’s anthology reproduces numerous different versions of the piece, ranging from a close approximation of Percy’s rendition to a number of abbreviated and loosely related narrations. (Child 20-32)

Editors generally prefer Percy’s version. Child proclaims: “This ballad is one of the many which were first made known to the world through Percy’s Reliques. Percy’s version remains, poetically, the best.” (Child 18) MacEdward Leach, editor of _The Ballad Book_, agrees: “Most students will agree that the oldest text here, the Percy, is the finest in spite of the lack of detail.” (Leach 179) And so I adopt Percy’s rendition of the poem he calls _Sir Patrick Spence_.

Percy had his own reasons for including the piece. For one, he hoped, by doing so, to gain favour with his patroness, Elizabeth Seymour, Duchess of Northumberland, to whom the _Reliques_ were dedicated. He writes in the dedication of “the heroic deeds of the Earls of Northumberland”, which suggests that he had some vested interest in showcasing the border ballads especially. (Percy vii)

Additionally, scholars consider _Sir Patrick Spence_ a ballad of no little merit. Leach goes so far as to call it “one of the finest, poetically and dramatically, of all the ballads.” (Leach 179) Northumberland

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9 other versions, and the mythos in general, devolve on a _Sir Patrick Spens_, and a few of the protagonists of the parallel narratives carry shortened forms of the moniker or none at all
and the southern regions of Scotland had long been renowned for the quality and volume of their ballads, a proud tradition in which Sir Patrick Spence plays a role.

Linguistically, a number of factors render this version ideal for analysis. It displays the most strongly marked forms, notably “quhar” where similar versions have “whar” (Child A), Whare (E, F, G, H, J) or even BSE “where” (B, C, D, I). Even in the version Child cites as being taken from Percy, the most marked features have given way to more typically English forms, presumably to avoid confusion among an English-speaking readership (Child, himself born in Boston and educated in Oxford, used publishers based in Boston, New York, and London). Only Percy’s version preserves the typically Scots typology of a “z” where a “y” would later appear, a Scottish way of dealing with a certain character from Old English. The distinctive fricatives [x] and [ç] make an appearance as well, reflected by other distinctive spellings; and an ample corpus of non-BSE spellings demonstrates vowel shifts and non-standardised orthographies, making this narrative valuable on linguistic, as well as literary, grounds.

As a narrative, Percy’s ballad focuses, on a single protagonist, referred to in Percy’s version as Sir Patrick Spence. Child gives a good synopsis:

The short and simple story in A-F is that the king wants a good sailor to take command of a ship or ships ready for sea. Sir Patrick Spens is recommended, and the king sends him a commission. This good sailor is much elated by receiving a letter from the king, but the contents prove very unwelcome... The objection... is the bad time of year. (18)

Characters raise objections to the trip – namely the fact that it is winter, which means the seas will be very dangerous, and the ill portent of the old moon in the new moon’s arms, which heralds high seas – but Sir Patrick obeys his king’s call and sails despite them. A storm sets in, and he and the Scots lords perish, nevermore to come home to their ladies.

Other versions offer more information; in these, the voyage aims either to bring a Scottish queen to Norway or convey one thence, home to Scotland. Scholars usually construe the verses to refer to one of two Queens Margaret of Scotland. The first: Margaret of Scotland, Queen of Norway, daughter of Alexander III of Scotland and Margaret of England. Historically, she successfully sailed to Norway to

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10 Child included numerous different versions of this ballad, labeled by letter A-R
11 See Chapter 7
marry King Eirik II of Norway in 1281. Her daughter provides a second possibility: the Maid of Norway, also called Margaret of Scotland, whom many considered queen regnant of Scotland from 1286 until her death. This Margaret embarked on a ship from Norway to Scotland in the autumn of 1290, but died of a fever on the way, at the age of seven.

No specific evidence argues in favour of one Margaret or the other, nor does any known historical documentation relate a man named Sir Patrick Spens/Spence to either; probably the ballad conflates diverse names and events into a single narrative. If nothing else, the presence of mermaids in some versions of the ballad provides sufficient grounds to cause the careful reader to question whether successive generations of singers and scribes have given excessive concern to historical accuracy.

A Word of Caution

One must exercise caution in approaching Sir Patrick Spence to avoid making unfounded generalisations about the Scots language in general based solely on the forms present. Even in 1765, when Percy’s Reliques appeared in print, no authority had fully standardised orthographic conventions; given Percy’s vagueness on the subject of his sources, we cannot know how long before that date Sir Patrick Spence was committed to paper. Additionally, Percy, not known for his adherence to source materials, may have altered the text, adding, changing or removing lexical, orthographical, morphological and stylistic items to suit his aesthetic tastes and the tastes of his times.

Happily, this paper does not aim to date or authenticate the source text. Whether the forms under scrutiny appeared in the original text or Percy added them because they seemed to him particularly “Scottish” does not materially impact their utility; forms perceived as Scottish can provide insight into the language whatever their origins.

Written Older Scots\textsuperscript{12} presents a particular difficulty to the linguist on account of its acceptance of alternate forms, which exceeds the acceptance in England of such variation. Macafee writes:

\textsuperscript{12} Scholars generally divide Scots into Older Scots and Modern Scots, the latter appearing after 1700. Older Scots contains the following divisions: (Northumbrian) Anglo-Saxon to 1100; Pre-literary Scots to 1375; Early Scots to 1450; Middle Scots to 1700.
Variants of this type are of course not unknown in other dialects and languages (including ME and EModE). MSc, however, seems to have been quite exceptional in possessing an extremely large number for which, at present, no regional or other specialisation of distribution is apparent - which co-existed as free variants over extensive regions and often in single, including some holograph, texts. (5.2.4)  

The linguist must therefore be wary of making statements about pronunciation based on orthographic evidence; as Macafee points out, “we cannot exclude the possibility that we are dealing with purely orthographic phenomena.” (5.2.8)

**Sir Patrick Spence**

Sir Patrick Spence  
A Scottish Ballad

The king sits in Dumferling Toune,  
Drinking the blude-reid wine:  
O quhar will I get guid sailòr,  
To sail this schip of mine?

Up and spak an eldern knicht,  
Sat at the kings richt kne:  
Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailòr,  
That sails upon the se.

The king has written a braid letter,  
And signd it wi’ his hand;  
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,  
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick red,  
A loud lauch lauched he:  
The next line that Sir Patrick red,  
The teir blinded his ee.

O quha is this has don this deid,  
This ill deid don to me;  
To send me out this time o’ the zeir,  
To sail up on the se?

Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,  
Our guid schip sails the morne.  
O say na sae, my master deir,  
For I feir a deadly storme.

---

Late late yestreen I saw the new moone
Wi’ the auld moone in hir arme;
And I feir, I feir, my deir mastèr,
That we will com to harms.

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone;
Bot lang owre a’ the play wer playd,
Their hats they swam aboone.

O lang, lang, may their ladies sit
Wi’ thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

O lang, lang, may the ladies stand
Wi’ thair gold kams in thair hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For thay’ll se thame na mair.

Have owre, have owre to Aberdour,
It’s fiftie fadom deip:
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feit.

(Percy 81)

<table>
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<th>Light annotations</th>
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<td>Sir Patrick Spence</td>
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<td>A Scottish Ballad</td>
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The king sits in Dumferling Toune,
Drinking the blude-reid wine:
O quhar will I get guid sailòr,
To sail this schip of mine?

Up and spak an eldersn knicht,
Sat at thae kings richt kne:
Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailòr,
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And signd it wi’ his hand;
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O say na sae, my master deir,  
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To weet their cork-heild schoone;  
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Their hats they swam aboone.

O lang, lang, may their ladies sit  
Wi' thair fans into their hand,  
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence  
Cum sailing to the land.

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Wi' thair gold kams in their hair,  
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,  
For they'll se thame na mair.

Have owre, have owre to Aberdour14,  
It's fiftie fadom deip:  
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,  
Wi' the Scots lords at his feit.

red: read  
lau: laugh · lauched: laughed  
teir: tear · ee: eye  
quha: who · don: done · deid: deed  
zeir: year  
mak hast(e): make haste · mirry: merry  
the morne: tomorrow  
na sae: not so · deir: dear  
feir: fear · deadlie: deadly · storme: storm  
yestreen: yesterday evening · moone: moon  
auld: old · hir: her · arme: arm  
com: come · harme: harm  
wer: were · richt: right · laith: loath/loath, unwilling  
weet: wet · heild: heeled · schoone: shoes  
bot: but · lang: long · owre: before · a’: all · playd: played  
aboone: above  

into: in  
or eir: before (ever)  
cum: come  

thair: their · kams: combs  
ain: own  
thame: them · na: no · mair: more  

have owre: halfway over  
fitie: fifty · fadom: fathoms · deip: deep  
thair: there  
feit: feet

---

14“A village lying up on the river Forth, the entrance to which is sometimes denominated De mortuo mari.” (Percy 83) Child believed it to refer to Aberdeenshire: “We may fairly say, somewhere off the coast of Aberdeenshirt, for the southern Aberdour, in the Firth of Forth, cannot be meant.” (Child 20). Other sources placing Aberdour in Fife associate it with the name Mortimer. (Electric Scotland)
Sir Patrick Spence affords a glimpse into Scottish history and politics, a poetic snapshot taken centuries ago. The poem also showcases numerous features that Old Danish, Old English, Old Norwegian, Old French, Latin and the Celtic languages have brought to Scots, from morphology and orthography to basic pronouns.
8. The Origins of Scots: Proto-Germanic, Ingvaenic and Old English

Scots, a Germanic language, derives from Proto-Germanic, as do such languages as Modern High German, Swedish and British Standard English. Scots and BSE both stem from Old English, which is most closely related to Old Frisian, while Swedish and Modern High German are more distant relatives. While Scots and BSE share many similarities, Scots developed from a more northern dialect of OE, and retains different traces of its ancestor than BSE.

History: Germanic roots and Anglo-Frisian relatives

To understand how other Germanic languages have affected Scots, one must be able to differentiate between features that the several languages share on account of their common genealogical history, and features in which they have diverged. Some features are common to all Germanic languages, and their presence in Scots clearly does not indicate influence that occurred after they became differentiated into separate languages. On the other hand, features present in other branches of the Germanic family tree, but not in those most closely related to Scots, provide better evidence of external linguistic pressures.

Many laymen, hearing English referred to as a “Germanic” language, expect it to bear a strong resemblance to Modern High German. It does, in fact, share a number of characteristics with ModHG, though not to the extent people expect. English also shares common Germanic characteristics with the modern Scandinavian languages, the various languages and dialects of Germany and the Netherlands, Afrikaans, which developed from Dutch, and other languages, such as Gothic, that are now extinct, with all of whom English shares a common Germanic ancestor: Proto-Germanic.

Genealogically, Scots developed from the Northumbrian dialect of Old English, which developed from the languages of the Angles and Saxons. These languages, called Ingvaenic or Anglo-Frisian\textsuperscript{15}, form a grouping of West Germanic, which developed from Proto-Germanic. Normally I would include here a linguistic family tree, but linguists have yet to reach a consensus on the subdivisions of Germanic.

\textsuperscript{15} These terms represent different views of the West Germanic family tree, and while similar, are not interchangeable.
While linguists have not established the exact historical relationships between English and its fellow Germanic languages, most consider Frisian and Old Saxon English’s closest relatives. (Robinson 257 et al) A set of linguistic shifts, including palatalisation of [k] and [g] before and loss of nasals before fricatives, sets English, Frisian and Old Saxon apart from other Germanic languages. A number of other languages participate less fully in the set of developments characterised as “Ingvaenic”, showing some but not all of the distinguishing characteristics, which reinforces the idea of the Ingveonic language group as more a loose linguistic federation than a closed group descended from a common ancestor. (loc. cit.)

Linguists find it difficult, in some cases, to determine which similarities between Germanic languages were inherited from a common ancestor and which developed through language contact or even through coincidentally parallel processes. Despite the obstacles inherent in this kind of research, most have reached at least some limited conclusion, and divide the Germanic languages into three basic historical categories: East (Gothic), North (Scandinavian), and West (other). Other categorisations include Northern and Southern Germanic or subdivide West Germanic, as their proponents try to account for varying degrees of differentiation. If we accept the fairly popular division into East, North and West Germanic, English usually fits in one of the following ways.

One school of thought places the forebears of English in the Anglo-Frisian, or Insular Germanic, group of West German. This theory attributes similarities between early Anglo-Frisian and Old Saxon to geographic proximity to one another and to language contact between the groups: a Sprachbund. Hans Kuhn, for example, argues that Old English and Frisian developed innovations, such as those named above, and Old Saxon merely absorbed some of them by Sprachkontakt. (Nielsen 86)

A second popular theory claims that Old Saxon, Old Frisian and Old English developed from a common ancestor, called North Sea Germanic or Ingvaenic. Robinson, in fact, divides the Germanic tribes into East Germanic, North Germanic, Irminones, Istvaeones and Ingvaeones, locating the Ingvaeones along the Frisian coast and Denmark as expected.
Whether genetic or geographic, a relationship existed among the Germanic languages once located along the northern coast of continental Europe. A series of systematic changes set the languages of the North Sea Germanic group apart from the rest of the Germanic languages. Alistair Campbell summarises these changes as follows:

Fronting of West Germanic ā except before nasals where rounding takes place; West Germanic au>ā; palatalisation of k and g before front vowels; loss of nasals before fricatives; non-participation in the High German Sound Shift; and uniform plural forms (1947:4). The languages involved are therefore English, Frisian and Old Low German (Old Saxon). (Nielsen 86)

Around the time the Roman troops withdrew from the British Isles in A.D. 410, Angles, Saxons and Jutes migrated from the northern coast of Europe to fill the vacancy, and their language became the one we know as Old English. Campbell goes on to enumerate differences that set Old English slightly apart from the other Ingvaeonic languages — “retention of Germanic u before n, absence of lowering of Germanic i and u before z... au > Old English ā (Old Frisian ā)” — reinforcing the conception of North Sea Germanic as a loose grouping of languages rather than a single, close-knit language community. (Nielsen 78) Old English, for example, shows more diphthongs than Old Saxon, such as OE eall ‘all’ [æːlː].

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16 Robinson 17
and ēare ‘ear’ [əʊər], and returns the Northern/Western Germanic ā to æ: notice Gothic sēþs ‘seed’, but OE sǣd. (Robinson 156-7)

In summation, Old English developed from Proto-Germanic, and shares ties of varying strengths with the other Germanic languages, the strongest of which are with Old Frisian and Old Saxon, as members of either the Ingvaenic branch of the Germanic language family or as members of Anglo-Frisian and the same’s Sprachbund with Old Saxon. When Northumbrian Old English spawned Scots, it transmitted many of its features, some of survive into the Scots of the present.

17 Clearly, in Gothic, ā developed into ē.
Discussion of features

Old English provides the basic framework from which Modern Scots developed, with modifications and additions from Romance, Celtic, and other Germanic languages. Because it developed under a certain amount of geographical and political separation from BSE, Scots retains some OE forms that BSE has lost, including certain phonological and morphological features.

Lexicon

Almost all of the most basic everyday words in Scots—as in BSE—stem from Old English. Exceptions appear, of course, in the form of loanwords, and the forms have undergone changes over time. No language remains static, and Scots would have undergone many such changes even if it had not been exposed to the myriad external influences it has seen over the centuries. A number of examples appear below of words from OE that have survived into Modern Scots. They represent only a small sample, however, of the words derived from OE present in Sir Patrick Spence.

Consonants

\[
O \text{quhar will } I \text{ get guid sailòr } / \text{To sail this schip of mine? (lines 3-4)}
\]

\[
O \text{quha is this has } \text{don this deid, / This ill deid don to me? (lines 17-18)}
\]

To someone unfamiliar with Scots orthography, perhaps one of the most perplexing phenomena in Sir Patrick Spence is the use of <quh> in place of modern Scots and BSE <wh> in question words. A historical usage, it has since fallen out of use. One can trace its phonological roots back through Old English *hw* to Indo-European *kʷ* via the consonant shift known as Grimm’s Law. Its typological realisation has been influenced by various external factors, including the Norman Conquest and the Union of Crowns/Parliaments, as well as internal arguments.

The roots of the phoneme represented bu <quh> lie in the Indo-European phoneme *kʷ*. The civilisation we now refer to as Indo-European (occasionally Indo-Germanic, in older texts, or Indo-Celtic) probably originated near the Black Sea, and must at one time have acted as a discrete political
entity or group of closely related entities in order to have shared a common language. This entity spread North, East and West, eventually reaching the Atlantic Ocean in the West and the Indian subcontinent in the East, and became the major ethnic group in these areas. Most of the languages spoken in modern-day Europe and the Indian subcontinent, including Slavic, Indo-Iranian, Romance and Germanic languages, developed from Indo-European.

The phoneme */kw* – indeed, most consonants – underwent a systematic shift, one that differentiates Germanic languages from other Indo-European languages. Grimm’s Law\(^{18}\) describes a chain shift, a series of related changes, in the stops of Indo-European that occurred in the first millennium BC. Relevant here is the progression of Proto-Indo-European */kʷ* to Germanic */hw*. Latin retains the [kw] of *quod* [kwɔd], while Faroese (a Scandinavian language spoken on the Faroe islands, located between Scotland, Norway and Iceland) shows *hvat* and Norwegian *hva*. (Wikipedia ‘Grimm’s Law’)

Old English preserved the [hw] yielded by Grimm’s Law; interrogatives included *hwā* [hwɑː], *hwæt* [hwæt] and *hwær* [hwæːr]. Speakers pronounced <w> as [w] in all contexts. (Hasenfratz 25). The pronunciation of <h> varied, but in this context <h> did, in fact, incur the same pronunciation as modern initial <h>, i.e. [h]: “Old English *h* is pronounced [h], as in Modern English, at the beginnings of syllables, but elsewhere it is pronounced approximately like German *ch* in *Nacht* or *ich* – that is, as a velar [x] or palatal [ç] unvoiced spirant.\(^{19}\) (Baker 15)

In Scotland, the Old English forms (below) developed, with slight variations, into the newer *quh*- interrogative and relative forms.

\(^{18}\) Also known as Rask-Grimm’s rule or the First Germanic Sound Shift. The latter is slightly misleading, however, hinting at a second major sound shift which never comes for the Germanic languages as a whole, only for High German.

\(^{19}\) *Spirant = fricative*
At this point, the Scottish and English forms diverged. In England, <hw>, <wh> and <w> struggled for precedence throughout the thirteenth century; <wh> eventually triumphed. (Bruce 97) In Scots, as the above chart shows, people began to write the <w> in interrogatives as <quh>.

The increasing influence of French and Latin in Scotland, both of which begin their interrogatives with <qu>, as in Fr qui ‘who’, brought about this change. Scotland and France established the Auld Alliance in 1295, an alliance aimed at countering the power of the countries’ mutual rival, England. This bond would last—with a few minor interruptions—until 1560. Before the early 1400s, the Scottish court used primarily Latin and French, around which time Scots returned to its position as the dominant language of court and government. The direct influence of Latin and French upon the Scots interrogatives exhibits itself clearly in the word-for-word translation implemented in the early days of <quh> interrogatives and relativisers: “At first, the definiteness of the relative as opposed to the interrogative is indicated by adding the, giving the quhilk (cf. Old French liquels).” (MacAfee 7.13.1.2)

With the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and James VI of Scotland’s (James I of England) corresponding move to London, much of the political and cultural focus of Scotland shifted to London. A trend toward anglicisation emerged, and many people began to replace <quh> forms with <wh> forms. Scribes tended to use greater consistency with regards to <quh>/<wh> forms than with most other lexical and grammatical items; with most, they mixed English and Scots forms at will, often in

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20 Even as OE was still a highly inflected language, the instrumental case was dying out, leaving OE, as Modern High German, with only four cases (of the 8 cases present in Proto-Indo-European).
21 Based on forms from Macafee 7.9.2
free variation. “Most of the texts use either 100% QUH- forms or 100% WH- forms... WH- appears to spread as more writers shift from using only quhilk to only which.” (Devitt 43)

Not everyone embraced this shift, however. Alexander Hume – Scottish author of Orthographie and Congruitie of the Britain Tongue, c. 1618 – protested, “a labial letter can not symboliz a guttural syllab. But w is a labial letter, quho a guttural sound. And therfore w can not symboliz quho, nor noe syllab of that nature…” He insisted that /ʍ/ was correctly realised as [xʍ], though his southern colleagues insisted on realising their interrogatives with [w]. The Northumbrian spelling chwa [xwa or xwa] ‘who’ found in the Lindisfarne Gospels corroborates Hume’s use of [x] in Scots; both Scots and Northumbrian often used <ch> as a graphic realisation of [x]. (MacAfee 6.31.1, 5.1, 5.2.1)

In the end, however, anglicisation prevailed, and <quh> gave way to <wh>. In Child’s versions of Sir Patrick Spence—even the version he claims to have taken from Percy’s Reliques—no <quh> forms appear. It’s possible Child thought them so outmoded as to be confusing for the BSE or American English reader, and so edited them out.

Whatever the graphic form, Scots and SSE speakers almost invariably begin question words23 with the distinct [hm], in contrast to speakers of BSE.

Speakers in the northeast of Scotland provide a notable exception to [m] pronunciation, speakers of a broad Scots beginning question words with [f] or bilabial fricative [ɸ]. Aitken gives the following example: “fa fuppit the fite fulpie?” translated ‘who whipped the white doggie?’ (Aitken 102, Jones 69)

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22 Northumbria is geographically contiguous to the Scottish Lowlands, and the border between the two has, historically, been fluid. Additionally, many settlers of the original burghs of Scotland came from Northumbria, and the common language of the speakers, whatever their nationality, was northern English. To this day, the speech of Northumbria closely resembles some dialects of Scots. Consider Peter Buchan; “But when I meet a man from Sutherland and a man from Northumberland in some foreign land I feel, I do not know why, that the Gaelic-speaking Highlander is one of my own folk, and the Northumbrian, who speaks almost with my own accent, is not.” (Buchan 53)

23 With the exception of who, because of its high back vowel
Up and spak an eldern knicht,
Sat at the kings richt kne (lines 5-6)

A loud lauch lauched he: (line 14)

In the lines above, Scots pronounces the <ch> in knicht, richt, lauch and lauched (‘knight’, ‘right’, ‘laugh’, ‘laughed’) as the fricative [ç] or [x]. Contextually conditioned, the palatal fricative [ç] appears after front vowels, the velar fricative [x] after back vowels or back consonants. (Jones 68) Modern High German shares this distribution, as did OE: “h (by itself) in the middle or at the end of a word is pronounced... as in standard German Ach! or ich.” (Hasenfratz 8) Riht [rɪçt] ‘right’ is Hasenfratz’s example for <h> pronounced [ç], in fact. (Hasenfratz 23) Neither [ç] nor [x] appears in BSE, causing Aitken to refer to their presence as “a prominent Scottish shibboleth”. (Aitken 101)

“In all dialectal areas,” however, “both fricatives are being replaced by [k]... a change led by young speakers, in particular young female speakers,” who tend to avoid what they see as stigmatised forms. (Jones 69) This change postdates Sir Patrick Spence, though, and one cannot dispute the fact that Scots retained these OE fricatives long after BSE abandoned them.

Incidentally, OE gave initial <h> the pronunciation [h], and that pronunciation remains in BSE and in dialects of Scots that do not replace it with a glottal stop. (Hasenfratz 23)

Up and spak an eldern knicht,
Sat at the kings richt kne (lines 5-6)

Any speaker of BSE or General American would assert that the words knight and knee (BSE/GenAm forms of knicht and kne) begin with [n], and that the <k> is silent. In these modern dialects, these assertions would be absolutely correct. In OE, however, they would come up one consonant short in their pronunciation: “All OE letters are sounded; there are no so-called “silent” letters.” (Hasenfratz 9) Thus OE cniht ‘boy, youth, servant, attendant, retainer, disciple, warrior’, pronounced [knɪçt], did not begin with [n] like its modern counterpart. (Hall 72) Scots retains OE pronunciation (in contrast to BSE) in the consonant clusters kn, gn, wr and wl as well, where BSE has simplified them. (MacAfee 6.31.3)
Hasenfratz’s statement that “all OE letters are sounded” applies to /r/ as well, in all contexts. Unlike BSE and most other British dialects (and the Boston dialect of the United States, which developed in imitation of upper-class British linguistic trends), which have lost their rhoticity after vowels, Scots continues to pronounce its <r>. “Historically... post-vowel or ‘post-vocalic’ /r/ was pronounced throughout the country [England], which is why it is present in spellings.” (Upton 314) In present times, “this ‘rhoticity’ is characteristic of much Scottish and Irish speech, as it is of the vast majority of the accents of North America,” but is no longer found in BSE or other accents perceived as prestigious in England. (Upton loc. cit.) Scots admits several variations of /r/, including post-alveolar, retroflex, uvular and tap, whose usage varies according to social as well as geographical factors. (Jones 70, Upton 315)

In OE, <c> and <g> became palatalised when followed by high front vowels, pronounced [ʃ] and [j] respectively, a characteristic the Ingvaemonic languages shared. This affected both the futhorc (English runic alphabet) rune gyfu <ʒ> and its Latin equivalent <g>. As OE transitioned into Middle English, Norse words containing unpalatalised <g> before a mid/ front vowel became a source of confusion. Yogh (ʒ) replaced <g> in palatalised contexts. Some English scribes, desiring to excise non-Roman letters from the script, replaced yogh with <gh> in the Middle Ages, but this spelling did not achieve widespread use in Scotland until much later (MacAfee dates its introduction to the second half of the 16th century).
(MacAfee 5.2.1) When the printing press came into use, the type sets often did not include yogh, so printers frequently substituted <z> because of yogh’s strong resemblance to a cursive zed.

This substitution has resulted in some confusion in Scottish family names, many of which show a <z> where one hears [ŋ] or [j]. For example, the well-known surname Mackenzie was originally pronounced [məkˈenjɪ], from Gaelic MacCoinnich. The modern orthography triumphed, however, and the name is now usually pronounced with [z], though according to George Black, the form with [j] still prevailed as late as the first half of the 20th century. Menzies was traditionally pronounced [mɛnˈzis], but [nz] has replaced [ŋ] among some portions of Scotland’s population. (Wikipedia ‘yogh’)

**Morphology**

*To weet their cork-heild schoone;* (line 30)

Very few nouns survive in BSE that form their plural in any other manner than by adding an -s to the end. Those that do are relics of other, older morphological systems; for example, goose/geese and mouse/mice show pluralisation by ablaut, or systematic vowel change. Robinson points out that “whereas in Old English the ending -s was just one of several productive patterns for forming the plurals of nouns, in Modern English it is the only productive one, having pushed out all its rivals.” (Robinson 5)

Scots retains another system of pluralisation from OE, namely the addition of -n to a word. Once upon a time, Old English declined nouns the same way Latin does, or as Modern German declines adjectives. The ending of a noun reflected its role in the sentence, based on case, number and gender. As with the ablaut series, -n plural endings apply only to a limited portion of the lexicon. Ee/een ‘eye/eyes’ is another such OE plural that survives in Scots, and ox/oxen represents a tiny sample that survives in both BSE and Scots. Use of OE-type plurals seems to be declining, even in Scots.

While BSE and Scots both stem from the common ancestor of Old English, they developed in different regions of Britain and, during some parts of their history, under the auspices of two separate nations.
While they did have contact with each other, the two languages nonetheless retained different features of the parent tongue.
9. The Danelaw and its impact: shaping Proto-Scots

Beginning in the late eighth century, Danish Vikings began attacking the northeastern coast of today’s England, eventually colonising that region alongside its English inhabitants. Their presence during the Danelaw period had a profound effect on the English spoken in Mercia and Northumbria, affecting even some of the most basic function words; some of these changes spread to compass English as a whole, while some remained localised. The Anglian spoken in Northumbria during this period provided the basis for Scots.

The bare bones of history and clarification of termini

The seventh and eighth centuries saw the island of Great Britain—the parts not occupied by the Celts—divided into seven kingdoms, known as the heptarchy: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Wessex.

![Map of Anglo-Saxon Britain](image)

Figure 9.1 The Heptarchy. Note that Essex (East Saxons), Sussex (South Saxons) and Wessex appear as parts of the same region.  

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24 Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology © 2006
The languages of these kingdoms fell into two major dialects: **West Saxon** and **Anglian**. Anglian subdivides into **Mercian** and **Northumbrian**, and the minor dialect **Kentish** appears in the southeast. Cultural differences among the original immigrants to Great Britain do not seem to be the cause of the dialectal differentiation. “While there is no objection to the designation of the two main Old English dialect types as Anglian and West Saxon, the distinctions between them mostly developed in England, owing to the considerable isolation of the various parts of the country from one another in early times,” says Campbell. (Townend *Language* 27) West Saxon, the written standard of the time, dominates the surviving manuscripts from the Old English period. (Freeborn 36) “We Know no English literature, worth speaking of,” writes Björkman, “written in the language of the parts of England where the Scandinavian influence has proved to have been, in later times, of such great importance, dating earlier than the 13th century.” (Björkman 4)

![Figure 9.2: The dialects of Old English.](image-url)
An entry for the year 787 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reads, “Þæt wæron þa ærestan scipu deniscra monna þe Angelcynnnes lond gesohton” (Those were the first ships of Danish men that sought the land of the English race). (Townend Language 31) The Peterborough Chronicle relates that in 793 the Vikings—a name for any Scandinavian raiders—attacked the monasteries of Lindisfarne and Jarrow in northern Northumbria. (Freeborn 39) Lockwood describes the process:

The Norwegians who colonised Orkney and Shetland were doubtless responsible for the infamous raid on Lindisfarne in 793, but England generally remained free from Viking incursions until 835. From that year on, Danish Vikings made continual assaults, after 855 increasing in severity and assuming more and more the character of invasions. Settlement proper began in 876 with large-scale land-taking in Northumbria. Within two or three years, equally impressive allotments were being made in North Mercia and East Anglia. In this way, the Danelaw came into being. (Lockwood 202)

The Danelaw consisted of “the part of England over which this [Danish] law prevailed, being the district north-east of Watling Street, ceded by the Treaty of Wedmore, 878, or perhaps the Northumbrian territory in Danish occupation.” (OED ‘Danelaw’) The word Danelaw, appropriately enough, stems at least in part from the Danes’ own tongue. The word laʒu entered Old English c.1000 from Old Norse, replacing the OE word æ, law (cf. OS. êo, OFris. ewa, èwe, è, à, OHG. èwa, êha, êa, ê > ModHG Ehe). “In sing. the word meant in OIcel. [similar to ON] ‘something laid or fixed’... the pl. had the collective sense ‘law’,” and the theme of “something laid down” represents ‘law’ in other languages as well, including Latin statutum and ModHG Gesetz. (OED ‘law’, ‘æ’)
Scots under the influence  The Danelaw and its impact

Discussion of features

Linguists often refer to the language of the Danish and Norwegian Vikings of this period as (Old) Norse (or Scandinavian). (Freeborn 46) Townend points out in an overview of language contact that “as the Scandinavian languages at this point were hardly differentiated from one another it is not much of a misrepresentation to speak of a unitary language”. (Townend ‘Contacts’ 66) Indeed, many of the characteristics that Scots gained from Scandinavian contact could stem as easily from Danish as from Norwegian Vikings. Where this is the case, I treat the words as simply “Norse” in origin.

Figure 9.3: England at the time of the Treaty of Chippenham, A.D. 878. Areas under Danish control appear in yellow.
In a more in-depth study, however, Townend describes how the forerunners of Modern Norwegian and Danish had, in fact, begun to diverge by the time of the Danelaw, and objects to the recurring scholarly assertions to the contrary: “Evidently there is something of a consensus among canonical historians of the language, and since little supporting evidence tends to be offered one suspects that this orthodoxy is rather a self-perpetuating one.” (Townend Language 9)

Flom, too, believes that the Scandinavian dialects had begun to diverge. “Until 800,” he writes, “the Northern [Scandinavian] tongue was unitary throughout the Scandinavian North. In the Viking age dialectal differentiations began to appear, especially in O. Dan.” (Flom I.6) He details the differences between Old Danish and Old Norwegian; moreover, he points out instances in which comparison clearly indicates that Old Danish would not have led to the current forms, but Old Norwegian would.

It is true that the general character of the language of the two races was at the time very much the same, but some very definite dialectal differentiations had already taken place, and I believe the dialectal provenience of a very large number of the loanwords can be determined. (Flom I.1)

In this paper, I use the term Norse (ON) (in cases in which differences between dialectal variation in the Scandinavian language play no part in the discussion) to refer to a generic Viking tongue, namely “the North Germanic language which was the immediate ancestor of the Scandinavian languages.” (OED ‘Old Norse’) Old Norwegian (ONorw) and Old Danish (ODan) denote the languages originating on Norwegian and Danish soil respectively at the time of Norwegian and Danish settlement in the British Isles.

**The character of Norse influence**

Old Danish and Old Norwegian influenced the English language of the period in several different ways, enumerated here in brief:

1. Loanwords proper, e.g. lið (‘fleet’, from ON lið; cf. Modern English lithe); also knife, fellow, sky, etc. (Townend “Conflicts” 73, 74)
2. Semantic loan, in which an OE form takes on the related meaning of a Norse cognate. For example, “modern English dream where the present meaning derives from Old Norse draumr, but the form derives from the cognate Old English dream ((sounds of) joy); the Old English word for ‘dream’ was swefni, which has since disappeared from the lexicon.” 25 (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 73)

3. Loan-translation/calque, in which each element is translated separately into the receiving language (Old English). A partial calque: “liðsmann (‘fleet-man, sailor’, ‘follower’, from Old Norse liðsmaðr).” (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 73)

4. Adoption of Norse forms of cognates in place of Old English forms. Thus we say sister instead of OE *swester and egg instead of OE *ey. (Mossé 42)

5. “Intimate” borrowing. According to Townend, “nouns and adjectives are by far the most frequently transferred word-classes, followed by verbs and adverbs, and far ahead of ‘grammar-words’ such as conjunctions and pronouns.” (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 74) Old English adopted the prepositions till and fro, the conjunction though, the pronouns some26, both, they, them, and their, and some very significant strong verbs, however, revealing the true depth to which Old Norse influenced the Anglian language—and through it, both English and Scots. (Mossé 48)

6. Levelling of endings. While Townend does not disagree with other linguists that the shift in stress toward the first syllable weakened inflectional endings, he suggests that the close contact between two language groups using similar words but mutually unintelligible (and thus, non-functional) endings contributed to the erosion of the inflectional endings. (Townend “Conflicts’ 82-83)

The two peoples could understand one another without much difficulty. But it was just such circumstances which made it natural that many nuances of grammar should be sacrificed, the intelligibility of either tongue coming to depend on its mere vocabulary. It is in harmony with this view that the wearing away and levelling of grammatical forms in the regions in which the Danes chiefly settled was a couple of centuries in advance of the same process in the more southern parts of the country. (reprinted in Björkman 13)

7. Proper names. The former kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia are riddled with place names of Norse extraction, and composites of Scandinavian and Old English elements make up much of East Anglia’s toponymy. Scandinavian suffixes for places include -by ‘village, farm’ (Derby, Rugby, Grimsby), -thorpe ‘hamlet,

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25 The OED, on the other hand, posits an unattested OE form *dréam, parallel to but not deriving from ON draum and WGer draum: the editors assert: “It is remarkable that no trace of dréam in this sense appears in OE.; yet it is clear that it must have existed, since the ME. form drém is regularly derived from it, and could come from no other source. It seems as if the prevalence of drém ‘joy, mirth, music’ had caused dréam ‘dream’ to be avoided, at least in literature, and swefni, lit. ‘sleep’, to be substituted.” (OED ‘dream’) Hall’s A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary gives swefni as ‘sleep, dream, vision’, but the related verb swefnian carries only the meanings ‘to dream, to appear in a dream’. (Hall ‘swefni’, ‘swefnian’)

26 “et surtout les pronoms same, both et they, then, their.” As same is not a pronoun, I think this is a misprint for some. The OED cites some as stemming from a common Teutonic root, while same was lost to OE, except in the specialised context swá sama, and made its way back into ME via ON. (OED ‘same’, ‘some’)
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As the quote in (6) illuminates, Old Norse did not affect all dialects of English equally. Based on geography alone, one can easily see how Old Norse would have a greater and earlier impact on Anglian than on West Saxon. Additionally,

Certain developments in certain dialects did indeed have the effect, favourable to intelligibility, of rendering that dialect more similar to Norse in some respect (for example, Back Mutation in Anglian and Kentish). Contrariwise, particular developments could have the effect of rendering a dialect less similar to Norse in some respect (for example, Palatal Diphthongisation in West Saxon). But these similarities should be regarded as either coincidental or... as a shared selection from a common variational pool. (Townend Language 28)

Of the dialects of Old English, Anglian, therefore, shows both the earliest and the most profound effects of Scandinavian language contact. The spread of the third-person pronouns they, them, and their, replacing OE hīe, him/heom, hiera/heora (Hasenfratz 35), illustrates this phenomenon. The following map shows the geographical distribution of the various third-person feminine pronouns in Middle English, in which the s(c)h- appear most manifestly in the vicinity of the former Danelaw.
Figure 9.4 The main distributions of selected forms for the pronoun 'she' in later Middle English. The areas in which restricted forms are found are defined by solid lines; the areas in greatest concentration of other forms are defined by broken lines. 27

27 Corrie 100
The figure above illustrates a change that began in the Danelaw and eventually spread to affect the English language as a whole. Other developments, however, remained localised within the Anglian dialect, or even within Northumbrian alone. The establishment of ‘burghs’ in Scotland in the 12th century whose lingua franca was northern English (Aitken 518) ensured that West Saxon forms would not eclipse these developments in Scots—at least, not for another few centuries—and sheltered a number of Old Norse forms not present in BSE.

Loanwords Proper
A full list of loanwords from Norse would be quite extensive and leave little room for lengthy explanations. The BSE words bask, beck, cast, fellow, gape, hit, ill, law, leg, loft, meek, skill, sky, and wrong all stem directly from Norse. (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 74) A plethora of Scots words, too, derive from Norse forms that never made their way into BSE, such as mirk ‘to darken, make or grow dark’, carp ‘to speak, talk, converse, discourse’, and blether ‘to stammer, to talk nonsense’. (Kries 104, 116, 113)

A full list of Scots words deriving from the Norse or ONorw would prove still less useful than a list of English words, as the (American) English reader would recognise few of them. Therefore, I confine the scope of this inquiry to words I find especially significant: commonly used verbs; conjunctions; prepositions; pronouns; and words that illustrate phonological or morphological phenomena.

Adoption of Norse Cognates
Perhaps they proved easier to say, or could be more neatly distinguished from near-homophones. Perhaps speakers of Old English simply became accustomed to the sound. For a variety of reasons, words are present in modern English and Scots that resemble their Old English forms, but whose development can’t be traced logically through systematic sound changes. We trace many of these words back to Scandinavian ancestors.
Vowel Shift

Kries explains one of the most-cited and clearest shifts that differentiated Norse from Old English.

Words containing the Norse form of the vowel instead of either a) the Old English form or b) a derivative thereof through a predictable vowel shift clearly stem from Norse. These include Sc/BSE raise < early Scand ræisa ‘to erect’, MSc fraist ‘to try’ < ON freista, Sc bait < ON beit ‘food, esp. to entice prey’ (cf. OE bát ‘food’). (OED ‘raise’, ‘fraist’, ‘bait’; Kries 88) Notice that in the case of bait, while an OE cognate also exists, the vowel and the full meaning stem from Norse.

Orthography: vowel length and transcription

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith (line 29)

Linguists can run into difficulties in determining vowel quality from written Scots texts, if only because of the sheer number of acceptable variants. Historically, Scots has accepted an even higher range of variation in its written language than English; and English itself only began to standardise its spelling within the past few centuries.

These facts not withstanding, MacAfee—drawing heavily on Kniesza’s research—feels confident enough to explain at least one system of variants. “As we have seen,” she writes, “the i-digraph spellings <ai, ei, oi, ui>, which originally belonged to diphthongs, are used in MSc also - and, in practice, chiefly - for long vowels... Kniezsza has shown, after much detective work, that the origin of the i-digraphs lies outside Scots.” (MacAfee 5.1) Specifically the digraph <ai> for [a:] arose as a result of

28 “Der Vokal erscheint als /æ:/ im Westsächsischen und als /e:/ im Anglischen und Kentischen.”
29 “The Vowel appears as /æ:/ in West Saxon and /e:/ in Anglian and Kentish.”
contact with ON. (The other <_i> digraphs stemmed either from ME or from analogy.) Thus, thanks to
Norse influence, the <ai> in laith signifies not the diphthong [ej], but the long vowel [a:].

**Palatalisation**

*O quhar will I get guid sailòr* (line 3)

Palatalisation variation between Norse /sk, k, g/ and Old English /ʃ, ʧ, ʤ/ provides another indication
of Norse influence. (see Kries 88) Recall the section in chapter seven of this paper on Anglo-Frisian
relatives; palatalisation of /k/ and /g/ before front vowels helped distinguish the Ingvaevonic languages
from other Germanic languages.

The word *get*, for example, existed in Old English in the form -ʒietan, and then only after
prefixes a-, be-, for-, ofer-, on-, and under-. The unbound morpheme *get* comes from “ON. *geta* (gat, gátum,
getenn) to get, obtain, to beget, also, to guess.” (OED ‘get’) Perhaps by analog to *get*, the palatalised Old
English forms *beʒet, forʒet* turned into *beget* and *forget* by the fifteenth century. On the past participle,
the OED writes,

> The forms of the pa. pple. retaining the original vowel (ON. *getenn*) are found in literature down
to the 16th c., and in the north midlands and Yorkshire *getten* is still the dialectal form. From the
beginning of the English history of the vb., however, it has, like most verbs with ME. open e in
the present stem, tended to assume the conjugation of vbs. of the e, a, o series (originally
confined to roots ending in a liquid); thus in the 13th c. we find *geten, gat, goten* parallel with
stelen, stal, stolen. (OED ‘get’)

While *get* has replaced *gotten* as a past participle in BSE, *gotten* remains in use in Scots and in parts of
the United States.

A quick page through the ‘ge-’ section of *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* reveals that
nearly all words starting in *ge-* begin with a palatalised form, though palatalised <g> now appears as
[dʒ] instead of Old English [j]. Exceptions include the aforementioned *get*, and tend either to stem from
non-Ingvaevonic Germanic languages, or to have entered into English at a late enough date that
speakers no longer considered—subconsciously—the allophone /g/ contextually conditioned by the
following vowel. The word *geezer* [giza], for instance, probably developed out of the Scots and northern
English *guiser* around 1885. (Webster ‘geezer’) The /u/ in *guiser*, which appears in English as early as the 15th century, ensured the non-palatalisation of the /g/ according to older rules. (OED ‘guiser’)

The Norman Conquest in 1066 only encouraged the retention of palatalisation in Scots and Middle English, as palatalisation occurs in the same contexts in French as it did in OE. For example, a French verb whose stem ends in <g> requires the addition of an <e> before suffixes that begin with back or low vowels. Whereas Fr *chanter* [ʃâte] conjugates with the regular 1st pers. pl. ending -ons to form *chantons* [ʃâtô] ‘we sing’, Fr *manger* [mâʒe] ‘to eat’ conjugates *mangeons* [mâʒô] ‘we eat’; the <e> conditions the <g> to act as [ʒ] instead of the [g] it would produce if followed directly by <o>.

*To sail this schip of mine?* (line 4)

The word *schip* ‘ship’ [ʃip] illustrates a case where the opposite has occurred; Scots retains its Ingvæonic palatalisation despite the presence of an alternative in Norse: *skip* ‘ship, boat’ [skîp]. (OED ‘ship’) The Modern English/Scots words *skirt* and *shirt* provide an example of OE and Norse cognates surviving in the same geographical area, in which the semantic function of each has become more specialised. The two forms descend from a common Teutonic ancestor meaning something to the effect of ‘short garment’. (OED ‘shirt’) The graphic representation of [ʃ] as <sch> predates the use of the grapheme <sh> in Scots, which French, via English, introduced into Scots in the late 16th century. (Macafee 5.2.1) Freeborn calls *sh* “a French convention... not adopted [into English] until after the Norman conquest”, a provenance Townend affirms. (Freeborn 47, Townend ‘Conflicts’ 81)

Writers cite Scots *brig* ‘gangway for a boat’ and *kirk* ‘church’ too often as examples of non-palatalisation to ignore; many consider them to stem from Norse *brygja* ‘landing-stage, pier, gangway, bridge’ and *kirkja* ‘church’ respectively. (Kries 349, 170) Norse itself had an alternate word for ‘bridge’: *brú*. (OED ‘bridge’)
The OED, however, suggests that [brig] developed organically from OE as the northern form of bridge: “As in other OE. words in -cg, the northern dialect has retained hard (g) against the palatalised (dʒ) of the south.” (OED ‘bridge’) Flom agrees:

The guttural character of g and k in Sco. is not to be regarded as due to Scand. influence. Thus mirk, reek, steek, streek, breek, dik, rike, sark, kirm, lig, brig, rig, etc., are to be derived from the corresponding O. Nhb. words, not from O.N. There is something of uncertainty in these words, however, as they all could come from the O.N. (Flom I.13)

As for meaning, Kries gives the definition ‘a gangway for landing, or for boarding a ship’ for the English word brig. (Kries 349) The OED, however, registers only definitions pertaining to a shortened form of brigantine, a kind of sailing vessel, whose name purports to stem from Latinate source languages, and Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary fails to include the word, despite its American meaning of ‘A place of detention, orig. on board a ship; a military or naval prison’, perhaps because of the word’s ‘slang’ status. (OED ‘brig’)

**Intimate Borrowing: Function Words**

One can see the true depth of the linguistic exchange between the Old English and the Norsemen in the kind of words that English and Scots adopted from the settlers/invaders. Nouns frequently find their way between languages in areas of casual language contact. A language only takes on foreign pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions, however, in the case of very intimate language contact; such was the case in the Danelaw.

**Verbs**

The appropriation of verbs such as hit, gape and cast seems natural enough; one could replace hit with strike, for example, without significant loss of meaning. (OED ‘hit’, ‘gape’, ‘cast’) Other words, however are harder to replace: be, take. Such commonly used words tend to emerge as irregular, or at the very least, “strong” verbs within a language, possibly due to their frequent usage. The depth of the language contact between Norse and Anglian, however, was sufficiently great that even some of these everyday
words, deeply woven into the day-to-day speech of the community, ceded their meanings to Norse non-cognate alternatives. Speakers of modern Scots and English use these forms daily.

*O our Scots nobles wer richt laith* (line 29)

“be, v. An irregular and defective verb, the full conjugation of which in modern Eng. is effected by a union of the surviving inflexions of three originally distinct and independent verbs...” (OED ‘be’) The ModE verb series *am-was-be*, referred to by its infinitive *to be*, draws forms from three discrete source verbs with slightly different meanings, sometimes in order to replace lost tenses/aspects. The 3rd pers. pl. form *are* (=ON. 1 *erum*, 2 *eruð*, 3 *eru*) spread from the northern dialect, where it shared prominence with *sind(un)*. By 1250 *sind(un)* had disappeared, replaced by *are* (with variants *earun*, *aron*, *aro*, *aren*, *arn*, *arunne*, *arne*, *are*, *ar*, *ern*, *ere*, *er*) in the north and *be* in the rest of England. By the end of the 16th century, the Norse-derived *are* was the prevalent form throughout England. (OED ‘be’)

The word *take*, also expressing a very basic concept, comes from Norse as well. ME *Takan*, *tóć, *tacen* (=Norse *taka*, *tóć*, *tekinn*) gradually superseded the OE strong verb *niman*, beginning in the Danelaw as early as 1000. “ON. *taka* was app. cognate with MDu. and mod. EFrIs. *tāken* to lay hold of, grasp, seize, catch; it was also in ablaut-relation to Goth. *tēkan*, *taitōk*, *tēkans* to touch (with the hands, etc.);” *takan* had cognates in the other Scandinavian languages, as well. (OED ‘take’) *Niman* finds cognates in many Germanic languages, including ModHG.30

The adoption of *take* excites comment because it is a “strong” verb; that is, its past tenses are formed by vowel *ablaut* instead of by the addition of -*t* or -(*e)d. “Generally speaking,” Terry Hoad explains, “the strong verb group has not increased in number but has lost members as time has gone on”, while

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30 “Cognate with Old Frisian *nima*, *nema* (West Frisian *nimme*), Middle Dutch *nēmen* (Dutch *nemen*), Old Saxon *niman*, *neman* (Middle Low German *nēmen*, *neymen*, *nemen*), Old High German *neman*, *nemman* (Middle High German *nemen*, German *nehmen*), early Scandinavian (runic) -*nam* (1st singular past indicative; in the compound *un-nam* I have learned, understood), Old Icelandic *nema*, Old Swedish *nima*, *nimma* (Swedish regional *nimma*), Danish *nemme*, Gothic *niman*” (OED ‘take’)

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the weak verb group has increased enormously in size, since verbs coming into the vocabulary... have nearly always been added to that group: English *pray*/*ed*, *rejoice*/*d*, *discover*/*ed*, *tango*/*ed*, *televise*/*d*, *compute*/*d*, etc. The same pattern can be seen in the history and development of the other Germanic languages. (Hoad 18)

**Adverbs**

As was the case with the verbs, various basic adverbs made their way from Norse into English and Scots, including *near*, *both*, *again* (at least phonetically) and Scots *ay* ‘always’.

*Or eir they see Sir Patrick Spence* (line 35)

*Eir* ‘ever’. (Craigie) The OED lists the ulterior etymology of OE *áfre* ‘ever’ as “doubtful”, as it is not found in any of the other Teutonic languages, but “connexion of some kind with OE. *á*, *AY* is probable on account of the sense.” (OED ‘ever’) *Ay* ‘always’ [ei] is resembles OE *á*, *ó* ‘ever, always’ semantically; the current form, however, derives from the Norse *aɪ*/eɪ/*eɪ*. The form now remains only in Scots and the northern dialects of English. The phrase for *ay* and *oo* ‘for ever and ever’ invariably makes an appearance in a discussion of the word, displaying alternate, if archaic, possible vowel sounds. (Kries 96, OED ‘*ay*’)

**Prepositions**

*Or eir they see Sir Patrick Spence* (line 35)

*Or* ‘before (in time)’; see also BSE *ere*. An early Scandinavian form (cf. OIcel *átr*), *or* is now used primarily in Scots and Irish English. Kries writes

Die Herkunft des Adverbs me. *átr*, *ótr* ist umstritten, denn neben Fremdeinfluß ist auch heimischer Ursprung möglich. Die altenglische Entsprechung ist *átr* ‘before, sooner, earlier’ (> ne. *ere*). Im Mittelenglischen und Mittelschottischen treten aber neben e- auch a- und o-Schreibungen auf, die nach OED ‘partly represent ON. átr’ (or an unrecorded OE *átr* without umlaut), and partly arise from átr through loss of stress’. (Kries 302)

The origin of the adverb ME *átr*, *ótr* is contested, for in addition to foreign influence, native origin is also possible. The OE equivalent is *átr* ‘before, sooner, earlier’ (> ModE *ere*). In MidE and MidSc, however, a- and o- spellings appear alongside e-, which, according to OED...
Additionally, the OED presents *or ere* under the entry ‘or’ as an obsolete phrase meaning simply ‘before’. (OED ‘or’) Such a translation does not differ significantly from the translation of the two words separately: *or eir they se* as ‘before ever they see’; the poetic quality of the passage remains unchanged.

While it does not appear in the standard Scots etymologies, OScGael *air (ear, er, ir, or, ur)* ‘before’

< Early Celtic *ári* bears both strong resemblance to the form and meaning of Sc *or* and a geographical proximity to Scots. (‘Brittonic’) However, the prevailing view holds that Scots has not derived any function words—including prepositions—from Gaelic because of the nature of the interaction between Gaelic and Scots speakers. In light of this scholarly opinion, Scots more likely derives *or* from one of the Germanic languages mentioned above than from Gaelic.

*To sail upon the se* (line 20)

Middle Scots *apon* ‘upon’ stems from Norse *upp á* with the same meaning. In its first appearances in the late 14th century, it carried a variety of semantic denotations. A more anglised version replaced the MidSc spelling, a common phenomenon.

*Up and spak an eldern knicht / Sat at the king’s richt kne:
Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor, / That sails upon the se.* (lines 5-8)

Here we see two different formations of relative clauses: one with standard BSE relativiser *that*, and one without any overt relativiser. Another form exists, perhaps a sort of middle ground between the two: Scots *at* ‘that, which, who’, corresponding to Norse *at* with the same semantic value. People often interpret the word casually as an informal, shortened variant of BSE *that*, but Kries and other linguists more often attribute the shorter form to Norse influence. (Kries 96) The fact that the form developed in the north supports this claim. (OED ‘at’)

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Conjunctions

Modern English until comes from two separate Norse roots, und ‘up to, as far as’ and til. In Norse, til “filled the place of the WGer. prep. tô, ti, te, Ger. zu, zi, ze, OE. tô,” ‘to’. (OED ‘till’, ‘until’) In its early usage in ME, til fulfilled the function of OE tô ‘to’, though only in Nhb. (Kries 99) In RP, til functions only as a foreshortened version of until. In Scots, however, till retains its original Norse meaning in many situations, replacing to word to, for example, before /h/ or a vowel. (OED ‘till’) Til appears in the northern phrase til and fra ‘to and fro’, which Chaucer used in his Canterbury Tales. Fra < Norse frá (and probably English fro, as well) is also Norse-Scots. (Björkman 100-101, Kries 97)

Similarly, while though has OE cognate þēah, þēh, it traces its phonetic roots back to Norse þó (specifically, to ON. *þóh (intermediate to þauh and þó), shortened in Ormin to þóhh, with subseq. stress-lengthening to þōu, though, thō). According to Kries, “in Middle Scots no forms that go back to the native lexeme are to be found.”31 (Kries 99) The OE senses and forms remained in use in southern and western England only until the fifteenth century, the Norse form and meaning gaining gradually in use until English form ceased to signify the OE meanings of þēah þe not included in the Norse semantic set. (Kries 99, OED ‘though’)

Pronouns

Townend ranks pronouns at the bottom of his list of lexical items commonly affected by language contact (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 74). Yet the modern English personal pronoun system draws several forms directly or indirectly from Norse, showing once more the profundity of the Norse-Anglian language contact in the Danelaw.

31 “Im Mittelschottischen finden sich keine auf das heimische Lexem zurückgehenden Formen.”
Their hats they swam aboone (line 32)

For they'll se thame na mair. (line 40)

The personal pronoun they (MSc thai < an. þeir) replaced the OE hie, hē, hī, which according to Kries, “probably for functional reasons (to preserve differentiation of number) were given up in favour of the borrowed Norse form.”32 (Kries 99) Kries suggests that the northern dialects borrowed the corresponding genitive and dative/accusative forms (MSc thair and thaim, with possible additional genitive marker -is < Norse -es forming thairis) directly from Norse þeir, þeira, þeim, while the South probably developed similar forms by analogy to the nominative. In the south, the nominative is attested earliest; it may have stemmed from the plural demonstrative þá ‘those’, with which OE hí sometimes shared its function. The Norse forms spread from north to south between 1200 and 1500, often appearing in free variation within the same text as a given author or area underwent the shift. (Kries 99-100, OED ‘they’)

The provenance of the 3rd pers. sg. personal pronoun she is murkier, but many scholars believe it owes its present form at least in part to Norse influence. (Corrie 101 et al) The OED sheds light on various aspects of the discussion:

Further, the districts in which she or sho first appears in the place of heo are marked by the abundance of Scandinavian elements in the dialect and place-names; and in Old Norse the dem. pron. (of all genders) is often used as a personal pron....It is however possible that the change from the falling to the rising diphthong in the development both of hío and sío may be due to Scandinavian influence, as in ON. the Germanic eu and iu became rising diphthongs.

Some scholars have maintained that she and its dialectal variants descend directly from the pronunciations (hje; hjoc) of HEO (referred to above); the contention being that (hj) might naturally develop into ū. This development has occurred in some Norwegian dialects, and it is illustrated by the proper names Shetland and Shapinshay from ON. Hjaltland and Hjalpandisøy. (OED ‘she’)

As with they, usage of she spread from the Danelaw southwest, eventually coming into use in all English and Scots dialects.

32 “wahrscheinlich aus funktionalen Gründen (Bewahrung der Numerusopposition) zugunsten der entlehnten altnordischen Form aufgegeben wurden.”
**Levelling of Endings**

As a highly inflected language, Old English, like Modern High German, contained three *genera*, or genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Both languages “conjugated” adjectives, articles (the, an, this, etc.) and pronouns according to four cases: nominative, genitive, accusative and dative, depending on the noun’s grammatical function in a given sentence. Additionally, in OE the nouns themselves were marked for genus, case and number, a phenomenon that is in decline in ModHG, and is even now used only with a limited number of nouns in certain declensions. N-declension nouns, for example, all masculine in *genus*, such as ModHG Bär ‘bear’, receive an –(e)n in the genitive, accusative and dative cases. Plural nouns often receive a final –n in the genitive and dative cases (e.g. den Kindern ‘to the children’). Certain words and expressions retain traces of declensions that are no longer in use, such as the –e attached to Haus ‘house’ in ModHG nach Hause ‘(toward, to) home’. Like nouns, OE verbs, too, were marked according to number, 1/2/3 person, and tense/aspect.

Grammatical endings are no longer as ubiquitous in Modern English as they were in OE. Noun endings now comprise a very small set, including the –s that marks many plural nouns; the indefinite article has only two forms, a and an, which alternate based on the pronunciation of the following word; the definite article has one form, the, for all circumstances, whose pronunciation likewise changes only to distinguish it from the word following; adjectives don’t decline at all. Only personal pronouns really decline according to “case”, with he in the nominative, his in the genitive and him in the accusative/dative.

Many linguists cite changes in stress patterns—namely, the movement of stress to the first syllable—as the reason behind English’s (and Scots’) loss of inflections.

In Indo-European the stress fell in different syllables in different words, or in different forms of the same word... Because in Germanic the stress came to be always placed on the first syllable in most words, the prominence of the syllables at the ends of words was reduced. This seems to have played a part in the gradual loss of inflectional endings which came to be characteristic of the various Germanic languages. (Hoad 20)

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33 OE also possessed a fifth case, the instrumental, but its use was declining even before the advent of the Norsemen; it was frequently replaced by the dative. Indo-European had possessed eight, of which the vocative collapsed into nominative, while the dative case often took over most of the functions of the ablative, locative and instumental.
Townend does not dispute this theory. (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 82) He suggests, however, that language contact between English and Norsemen in the Danelaw may have accelerated the levelling of endings in English. The similarity of the two “cognate”—more or less mutually intelligible—languages allowed speakers from the two groups to communicate, since their words were mostly cognates. The inflexions differed, however.

In a situation in which speakers of the two languages were repeatedly in contact with one another, on a daily or even a domestic basis, it is quite possible that these inflexional differences became eroded or ignored, as they played no role (or were even a hindrance) in effective communication between speakers of the two languages. In other words, most inflexions were probably non-functional in Norse-English communication; hence they decayed, and alternative methods of expressing grammatical relationships came to be more prominent—above all, the method of a relatively fixed word-order. (Townend loc. cit.)

Townend offers two points in support of this hypothesis. First, the levelling of endings seems to have occurred earlier in the Danelaw area of England than in the South and West. Second, the Norse spoken in the Danelaw seems to have undergone a similar decay; gravestones written in Norse runes from this period show loss of inflexions. He emphasises, however, that English would have lost at least some of its inflexions with or without Norse contact, that “the whole process was certainly not initiated by contact with Norse speakers, only encouraged or accelerated.” (Townend ‘Conflicts’ 83) Lockwood concurs, stating, “Certainly Norse influence hastened that loss of inflections which proceeded slowly from north to south during the next three centuries.” (Lockwood 203)

**Place Names**

The study of place names provides a deep well of information on the extent of Norwegian and Danish settlement in Scotland and England. Flom writes, “the distribution of certain place-names indicates that certain parts were settled more especially by Danes, others by Norsemen.” (Flom I.1) By analysing the location and frequency of various forms, linguists and historians have gleaned the information for a map that hints at the dimensions of each nation’s settlements. One must exercise caution, however, in
drawing conclusions about Scandinavian settlement based solely on the preponderance or lack of Scandinavian place names:

But where they [settlements] have taken place comparatively late, or where they have been of a more peaceful nature, the number of new names of places that result from them may not at all indicate their extent. The Scandinavians that settled in Southern Scotland probably at no time exceeded in number the native population. The place-names would then for the most part remain unchanged. (Flom I.3)

Nonetheless, Scandinavian heritage colours many of the place names of Scotland and northern England. Below is a sample of distinctly Scandinavian elements found in the names of Scotland, with examples and further discussion, where necessary. The unclear or contested status of many of the names is hardly surprising, considering the nature of place names in general and the amount of linguistic shifting in Scotland in particular.

\[a/\text{ay/ey}\] \text{= ON ey 'island'}

Examples:
- **Bernera(y)** (Western Isles) ‘Bjorn’s island’. < ON proper name Björn ‘bear-like’
- **Eday** (Orkney) ‘isthmus island’. < ON eidh ‘isthmus’
- **Harray** (Orkney) ‘high island’. < ON hár ‘high’
- **Harris** (Western Isles) ‘higher island’. Probably < ON haerri ‘higher’, to distinguish it from Lewis, technically the lower-lying part of the same island. The s is unexplained, however.
- **Raasay** (Highland) ‘Roe-deer ridge island’. < ON rar ‘roe deer’, ass ‘ridge, ey ‘island’. “This derivation is descriptive of this long ridge-formed island ling between Skye and the mainland; roe deer are still found here.” (Ross 182)
- **Rona(y)** (Highland; Western Isles) ‘rough rocky island’ < ON hraun ‘rough, rocky’
- **Sanday** (Orkney) ‘sand island’. < ON sand ‘sand’

The Norwegian Vikings occasioned Gaelic island names as well. For instance, the Gàidhlig name for the Hebrides is **Innse Gall** ‘isles of the strangers’, given when the Western Isles were under Norwegian occupation. (Ross 107)

\[bister/busta/bost\] \text{= ON bolstadr 'homestead'}

Examples:
- **Kirkbister** (Shetland) ‘church farm’. < ON kirkja or unpalatalised Scots < OE cirice ; see kirk
- **Garbost** (Western Isles) ‘Geirr’s farm’. < ON personal name Geira
br (?i) d/t/5 < ON breiðr ‘broad’

Examples:

Brodick (North Ayrshire) ‘broad bay’ < ON breiðr ‘broad’ and ON vik ‘bay’. The same etymology holds for Brittle Glen (Highland), ‘glen behind the broad bay’.

by ‘farmstead, village, place’ < ON by ‘village, place’

Examples:

Canisbay (Highland) ‘canons’ farm’. < Early Scots canane ‘canon’
Canonbie (Dumfries and Galloway) ‘canons’ village. < ME canon ‘canon’
Duncansby Head (Highland) ‘cape of Dungal’s place’ < ScGael or Pictish34 personal name Dungal

Scholars used to consider a -by ending indicative of Danish (as opposed to Norwegian) presence when looking at toponymy. Flom, however, debunks this supposition, pointing out that “by is often found in Norse settlements in Scotland and elsewhere—in Iceland, Shetland, Orkney, Man, and in the Western Isles. In fact, by seems to be the more common form outside of Iceland.” (Flom I.5)

fell is a problematic case. Flom derives it from ON fjall, while Ross derives it from OE fell ‘hill’. (Ross 106, Flom I.4)


Examples:

Auldgirth (Dumfries & Galloway)

Ross: ‘Stream of the enclosure’, from allt (Scottish Gaelic) ‘stream’ and gart (Scottish Gaelic) ‘enclosure, field’. (Ross 18)
Eyers: Old garden. (Eyers 20) Auld is the “mod.Sc. and north Eng. descendant of OE. ald, which became in midl. dial. in 13th c. OLD.” (OED ‘auld’)

gar, at least, Ross derives from ON gardr ‘enclosure’

Examples:

Biggar (South Lanarkshire) ‘barley field’ < ON bygg ‘barley’, ON gardr ‘enclosure’ or ON geiri ‘triangular plot’

34 Ross is rather unclear as to which.
hop(e) ‘bay’ < ON hop ‘bay, shelter, valley’

Examples:
- Oban (Argyll and Bute) ‘little bay’. ScGael Ob ‘bay’ < ON hop; an = ScGael diminutive suffix ‘little’
- Obbe (Western Isles) < ON hop
- Kirkhope, Hobkirk (Borders) ‘church in the valley’. See notes on kirk.

kirk ‘church’

This place-name prefix generally indicates the location of a church, with the patron’s name or some other designation, and may be from Old Norse kyrja or from Old English cirice, both giving Scots kirk. ‘Kirk’ names occur mostly in the Northern Isles, Caithness, the eastern mainland and the south-west: areas where Kil-names are rare or non-existent.35 (Ross 130)

Confusingly, kirk- also begins a number of forms deriving from Brythonic caer ‘fort’, including Kirkcaldy ‘fort on the hard hill’ and Kirkintilloch ‘fort at the head of the hill’.

Examples:
- Kirkconnel (Dumfries and Galloway) ‘Connal’s church’ < OIrish proper name Conall
- Kirkness (Orkney) ‘church on the headland’ < ON ‘nes’ headland.
- Kirkpatrick (Dumfries and Galloway) ‘church of Saint Patrick’

As one may conclude from these examples, churches were frequently named either for saints or by location.

ness/nish ‘cape, headland, point’

Examples:
- Stenness (Orkney) ‘headland of stones’ < ON stein ‘stone, cognate with ModHG Stein ‘stone’.
- Bo’ness (Ross)/Boness (Flom) (West Lothian): Ross gives the following derivation:

  The name is a contraction of Borrowstounness, Old English Bearnweard (personal name) with tun, ‘farmstead’: ‘Beornweard’s farm’, later assimilated to Borrowstoun (Scots) ‘burgh town’ or town with a charter; naes (Old English) ‘promontory’. Noted as Berwardeston, c. 1335. (Ross 31)

  Flom, on the other hand, attributes Boness to Scandinavian origin, but does not go into detail. (Flom I.3) He probably attributes to it the same etymology as the Cumbrian Bowness, “‘promontory shaped like a bow’ from ON bogi nes”. (Wikipedia ‘Cumbrian’)

The Loch Ness of serpentine fame “predates any likelihood of being from ON nes, ‘cape’. In Gaelic it is Nis,” and appears under Inverness as a “pre-Celtic river name of undetermined origin.” (Ross 164, 115)

35 The prefix Kil- comes from various sources, chief among them ScGael cill ‘church’ (Ross 121)
**sett(er)/ster/shader/sta** = ON saetr ‘farm’

Examples:
- *Melsetter* (Orkney) ‘farm of the grassy dunes’ < ON *melr* grassy sand dune
- *Grimshader* (Western Isles) ‘Grim’s farm’ < ON proper name *Grimr*, ScGael *seadair* [ʃedǝɾ] < ON saetr

**wall/way/vagh/voe** = ON *vagr* ‘creek, bay’

Examples:
- *Hamnavoe* (Shetland) ‘Harbor of the bay’ < ON *hamn* ‘harbor’
- *Stornoway* (Western Isles) possibly ‘steering bay’ < ON *stjorn* ‘steering’, or ‘star bay’ < ON *stjorna* ‘star’

**wick/vik/vig/vaig** ‘bay’ < ON *vik* ‘bay’

Examples:
- *Wick* (Highland)
- *Handwick* (Shetland) ‘sand bay’. < ON *handr* ‘sand’
- *Melvich/Melvaig* (Highland) ‘bay of sea-bent dunes’ < ScGael *mealbhan* ‘sea-bent’ [mælvʌn] < ON *melr* ‘bent grass, grassy dune’
- *Mallaig* (Highland) possibly ‘headland bay’ < ON *muli* ‘headland’ or < ON *mol* ‘shingle’, ScGael *aig* < ON *vagr* ‘bay’

The above list does not by any mean exhaust the vast well of Norse place names in Scotland. Hopefully, however, it will give the reader some insight into the general character and location of such names.\(^{36}\)

\(^{36}\) The names and origins above come from Ross and/or Eyers; where the two are not in concord, a note to that effect appears.
10. Norwegian invaders and the Isles

Norwegian Vikings settled in Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides and parts of northeastern Scotland beginning in about A.D. 800, swiftly gaining dominance in these areas and using them as bases for the exploration and raids that characterised the Viking Age. By the late 15th century, however, all of these areas had returned to Scottish control. The kind of intimate linguistic borrowing found in the wake of the Danelaw does not characterise Norwegian influence, but the Norwegians in Scotland left behind strong linguistic traces in place names, loan words and, in Orkney and Shetland, the language Norn.

Historical Facts

Toward the end of the eighth century, Norwegian Vikings established themselves in the British Isles, and around A.D. 800 (though historians contest the date) began to settle in Shetland and Orkney. (Barnes 352) In 787, England saw its first “Danish” men (now believed to have been Norwegians who had set out from Shetland and Orkney), and the same sacked Lindisfarne in 793, some forty years before the Danes posed England a serious threat. Lockwood writes,

The first invaders were Norwegians who colonised Orkney and Shetland in the last decade or so of the eighth century. They next quickly took possession of the Hebrides and large tracts of the Northern Scottish mainland, especially Sutherland and Caithness. From such strongholds, the newcomers mounted attacks on Ireland... (Lockwood 201)

The Vikings dominated the Irish Sea, and the Hebrides became a kingdom under Norse rule, their kings known as “kings of Man and the Isles.” (Lockwood 202)

The discerning reader may have noticed the geographical spread of the place-names given in the previous section: Orkney, Shetland and the Highlands figure prominently, the border regions somewhat less so. The islands and the Northeastern part of Scotland—particularly Sutherland and Caithness—offer the most toponymic evidence for Scandinavian settlement. On this matter, Kries writes,

Der Sudosten des Landes ist sprachlich gesehen englisch geprägt, und es gibt nur wenige Belege für skandinavische Besiedlung in diesem Gebiet... Die wenigen Siedlungen in Südosten Schottlands wurden zudem wahrscheinlich von Dänen gegründet. Darauf lassen zumindest die Ortsnamen mit dem Element –bý schließen; da dieses Element vor allem dänischen Siedlungen kennzeichnet. (Kries 28)

The southeast of the country is, from a linguistic point of view, shaped by Anglian, and there are only a few pieces of evidence for Scandinavian settlement in this area... Also, the few settlements in the southwest of
Scotland were probably founded by Danes. At least, this is what the place names with the element –by suggest, as this element primarily characterises Danish settlements.

Flom corroborates Kries’ claims concerning the suffix –by: that while it is present in Norwegian settlements, it is more likely to imply Danish presence. (Flom I.5) Additionally, Kries goes on to describe various attempts on the part of the Norwegians, “to penetrate into the heart of Scotland and fortify their position there” in the early 900s, but stipulates that they to not appear to have been successful. 37

For the ninth century, Kries characterises Scotland as being controlled by Scots (Gaels; Goidelic Celts, as in Ireland) in the west, Picts in the north and east, Britons (Brythonic Celts, as of modern Wales) in the southwest and Angles in the southeast. (Kries 15) By the time Norwegian control over mainland Scotland and the Western Isles (the Hebrides) ended and Norse became a moribund language (except in Orkney and Shetland, described below), the Vikings had replaced the Picts in Scotland, with the result that the area they abandoned became fully Gaelic. (Lockwood 202) The areas most heavily occupied by the Norwegians had been those characterised not by speakers of pre-Scots Anglian, but by Gaels, Picts and Britons. (see maps pp. 4-6)

Instead of the pattern of language contact through settlement only that obtained in the Danelaw, patterns of familial and political connection informed much of Scots/ONorw language contact. Kries writes of the family relationships between various Scottish and Norwegian leaders (e.g. Malcolm of Scotland’s grandson Thorfinn, Earl of Orkney), emissaries from Orkney to the Scottish king, diplomatic transactions and Scotland’s connexion to Ireland, which the Norwegians facilitated. (Kries 71)

Political ties between Scotland and Norway were strong, as the poem Sir Patrick Spence shows. Though no specific destination is named in Percy’s version, others refer either to taking a Scottish queen to Norway or to bringing one home from that country. Most believe that the poem refers to one of two Margarets of Scotland: the first the Queen of Norway, who sailed from Scotland to Norway to

37 “Nach der Niederlage der Dublin-Norweger 902 gibt es Hinweise darauf, daß diese statt dessen versuchten, in das Herz Schottlands vorzudringen und ihre Position dort zu festigen, so beispielsweise mittels des Überfalls auf Dunkeld im Jahre 903. Diese Versuche schienen jedoch nicht erfolgreich gewesen zu sein, denn die beherrschende politische Figur dieser Zeit bleibt Konstantin II.”
marry King Eirik II of Norway in 1281; the second, her daughter, the “Maid of Norway”, who sailed from Norway to Scotland in 1290 but died of a fever en route. Whichever Margaret (if either) the poem referred to, politics in Scotland and Norway remained tightly intertwined at least until the fifteenth century.

**Linguistic Results**

Because the Norwegians did not settle in large populations in Scots-speaking areas, linguistic borrowing did not take place on as intimate a level as in the Danelaw. Function words at the most basic level of Scots language remained unchanged by the contact; rather, verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs transferred from ONorw to Scots.

Distinguishing between Scots forms that obtain from ONorw and ones that obtain from ODan proves difficult, if not impossible, in many cases. Most scholars refer to the Norse of this era as a single entity, making no effort to distinguish between the two; and indeed, many publications and studies find this practice sufficient and unsuitable to their needs. Often, the ONorw and ODan forms did not differ significantly enough from each other (if at all) to allow for any judgment. In such cases, one may conjecture based solely on the presence or absence of the lexeme in other parts of Great Britain: a lexeme that appears in the South of England, if not a loanword from Scots itself, probably stems from an ODan or general ON source. A number of words of this type are covered under the Danelaw section.

Similarly, one may adduce from their location that Norwegian influence, not Danish, fostered most of the Scandinavian names given in the previous section that are found in Caithness and the Northern and Western Isles. On Scottish place-names, Ross writes, “Whilst the majority of the names given by the Scandinavian settlers are Norwegian, a number are Danish,” and refers to Scandinavian sources collectively as “Old Norse”.

In a more exacting study, Flom delves deeper into the Scandinavian provenance of many loanwords. Given the extent of the interaction between Scotland and the Norwegians in which England had
no part, Flom’s characterisation of the Scots-Scandinavian word-hoard as a whole comes as no surprise. He comments, “The general character of the Scand. loanwords in Sco. is Norse [Norwegian], not Dan. This is shown by (a) A number of words that either do not exist in Dan. or else have in Sco. a distinctively W. Scand. sense38; (b) Words with a W. Scand. form.” (Flom III.1)

Words belonging to (a) include tyne ‘to lose’ < ONorw týna; melder ‘flour’ < ONorw meldr (WScand, particularly ONorw); and ware ‘to spend’ < ONorw. verja (WScand). (Flom III.1) We identify words on this list by their presence in Scots and Norwegian word lists and absence from Danish dictionaries and texts.

In order to determine which Scots words bear distinctly WScand forms, Flom has established a list of distinguishing features, including the assimilation of nasals to stops, e.g. Sc slak < ONorw slakki, and the presence of the WScand reflexive ending sk: Sc busk ‘prepare’. (Flom III.1, Kries 88) Additionally, comparison of a Scots word with its (O)Norw and (O)Dan counterpart frequently shows that the Scots form is closer to one than the other. For example, Sc bolax ‘hatchet’ < ONorw bolöx; ODan had the vowel u, bulöx.

The presence or absence of certain diphthongs in Scandinavian loan-words in Scots, on the other hand, may not be taken as an indication of either ONorw of ODan origins. While the monophthongisation from ou to o, ai to i (e) and öy to ö took place in Denmark around A.D. 900, the Danish spoken in the British Isles was of an archaic nature and did not reflect this change. (Flom III.1)

38 Flom groups Norwegian into a West Scandinavian subgroup, Danish into East Scandinavian.
**Norn and the Northern Isles**

Orkney and Shetland, lying one above the other off the northern coast of Scotland, may well have been the first areas of Britain settled by Scandinavians. (Wainwright 132) At the end of the ninth century, Sigurd became the first earl of Orkney. Wainwright explains,

> Orkney became the centre of a semi-independent state which included Shetland, Caithness and, from time to time, Sutherland, the Hebrides and other appendages. The earls were powerful men, owing nominal allegiance to the kings of Norway and Scotland, but for the most part ruling as independent sovereigns. (Wainwright 188)

The Norse line of earls ruled until 1231, at which time the title passed to the Angus line of Scotsmen, though the earls still owed allegiance to the Norwegian crown. In 1469, under the terms of yet another treaty between Norway (now under Danish control) and Scotland, James II of Scotland married another Margaret, the daughter of Christian of Norway. As part of the dowry, the rights to Orkney were to be transferred to Scotland, and when Norway was unable to raise the rest of the dowry monies, the rights to Shetland passed to Scotland as well, signaling the end of Norwegian control in the British Isles. (Norway ceded the Hebrides and the Isle of Man to Scotland under the terms of the Treaty of Perth in 1266.)

During the reign of the Norwegian Earls, the language Norn developed from the settlers’ ONorw and acted as the language of Orkney and Shetland. While Orkney would remain under Norwegian control until 1469, Orkadian legal documents show that Scots came into widespread use there no later than the first half of the fifteenth century, though Norn survived longer in isolated Shetland. Immigration of Scotsmen to the Isles, the rise of the Scottish reformation, increasing use of Scots instead of Norn in courts, administration and the upper classes and increasing trade with Scotland all contributed to the decline and eventual extinction of Norn. A dead language, Norn’s only remaining vestiges appear in the “broad” Scots of the Northern Isles, a variety that owes many of its most marked features to the comparatively late influx of Scots to the Isles and to the population’s isolation.
Unsurprisingly, most place names in Shetland and Orkney show signs of Norwegian heritage. Most of the islands end in ey/ey < ON ey ‘island’: Rousay, South Ronaldsay, North Ronaldsay, Sanday, Stronsay, Shapinsay, Burray, etc.
11. Non-Germanic influences

In addition to the Germanic languages described above, Latin, French and Celtic languages have contributed to the development of Scots.

**Celtic**

Three groups of Celtic speakers, both Goidelic and Brythonic, made their homes in Scotland before the arrival of the Vikings; of these, only the Gaels remain. The other two groups have left their traces only in place names, while Gaelic has provided both place names and loan words. Due to social and geographical factors, however, Gaelic has not affected Scots as strongly as one might expect.

The Celtic spoken in Scotland falls into two families, Goidelic and Brythonic, also known as p-Celtic and q-Celtic, according to how each developed the Indo-European phoneme $k^\prime$. Three groups of Celtic speakers have resided in Scotland. The Gaelic (ScGael *gàidhlig* [gælɪk]) of modern Scotland's *Gàidhealtachd* ‘Gaelic-speaking area’ has developed from the language of the Gaels, Goidelic Celts whose language most closely resembles that of modern Irish (known to most Americans as Gaelic). The Cumbrians (Brythonic) form the Celtic population of modern Wales; the [Brythonic] Celtic-speaking faction of the linguistically variegated conglomerate known as the Picts provided a third group of Celtic speakers, though the Picts have since died out.

While another faction of Picts almost certainly spoke one or more pre-Celtic languages (that is to say, languages spoken in the British Isles before the arrival of the Celts, which may or may not have been Indo-European), little evidence is available to aid the linguist in reconstructing this language(s). (Ross xxi, Lockwood 18) The presence of names of waterways that have yet to be explained according to Celtic roots, such as the *Thames* in England and *Ness* in Scotland (*Loch Ness, Inverness, appearing far too early be attributed to ON *nes* ‘headland*) argues for the presence of pre-Celtic cultures, but ultimately provides little information on their language(s). (Ross 164)

Before the arrival of the Norwegian Vikings, the Cumbrians, Gaels and Picts all occupied land in the area we now call Scotland. When the Norwegians withdrew, however, Gaels filled in the area they
had left behind, establishing the Highlands (as far south as Argyll and Bute, Stirling, and Perth and Kinross) as linguistically Gaelic, while the lingua populi of the Lowlands remained Scots. Pictish and Cumbrian played no further role in Scotland.

The heaviest remnants of Brythonic influence on Scots come in the form of place names. The elements aber ‘confluence’ (Aberargie, Abercairney), lanark ‘glade’ < Bry llanerc (Lanark) and pit ‘portion, piece of land’ < Bry pett (Pitagowan, Pitlochry) all stem from Brythonic roots, either Cumbrian or Pictish.

Gaelic had a slightly heavier impact, but not to the extent that one might expect. On the fifteenth century, Jones writes,

It is important to stress that, even at this early stage in its history, the version of English spoken in Scotland was unaffected by language contact with Gaelic or the Brythonic Pictish. There is very little evidence that there was even much by way of vocabulary borrowing into the embryonic Scots from these languages and no evidence at all for effects on its syntax or morphology. (Jones 95)

Gaelic may have failed to significantly affect Scots because speakers never considered it socially equal or superior in the regions in which Scots predominated. In the Danelaw, for example, many perceived the language of the invading settlers, who controlled the land, as a language of power; thus, Northumbrians were willing to adopt its forms into their own speech. In Scotland, however, Latin and French supplanted Gaelic in a legal and court setting beginning shortly after the Norman Conquest. (Davidson VI.D) By the time courts returned to the vernacular in the fifteenth century, “by 1500 Scots had become the official language of court and governmental circles.” (Jones 96) Macafee writes,

The low status of Gaelic latterly... and its rural social basis, would not have encouraged much borrowing (by Scots speakers) apart from substratum influence (carried over by originally Gaelic speakers). Nevertheless, the numerical superiority of the Gaels over the Germanic-speaking groups might have overwhelmed these factors (as in Ireland). It may be that the prolonged period of contact allowed Gaelic-speakers to acquire perfect Scots. This is consistent with Barrow's view that there was "a very gradual loss of Gaelic from much of eastern Scotland". (Macafee 4.2.2.2)

Nonetheless, Gaelic has made contributions at the lexical level. Whisky < ScGael uisgebeatha ‘water of life’ has passed into general use in English, as have loch ‘a lake, an arm of the sea, esp. when landlocked’ and glen < ScGael gleann ‘river valley’; Scots airt ‘direction’ (cf. “the four airts”) < ScGael
àird, OIr aird ‘point, esp. compass point’ and ingle ‘hearth-fire’ < Gael aingeal have not. (OED ‘whisky’, ‘loch’, ‘airt’, ‘ingle’)

**Place names**

_The king sits in Dunfermling toune_ (line 1)

Gaelic has also contributed a large store of place names, including some to places that now speak Scots. Dunfermline is one such town. Located on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth, this town is home to a millennium-old monastary and once housed a palace of the royal Stuarts. While the latter part of the name remains unclear, possibly referring to a Pictish proper name, the first element derives from ScGael dùn ‘heap, hill, fortified house or hill, fortress’, and “is cognate with Brythonic din, with a similar set of meanings, and in some locations has replaced din.” (Ross 70) Other Scottish names with this element include

- **Dunbar** (East Lothian) ‘fort on the height’ < Bry din ‘fort, Bry barr ‘height’
- **Dunblane** (Stirling) ‘fort of St. Blane’ < OIr personal name Bláán
- **Dumfries** (Dumfries and Galloway) ‘fortress of the woodland’ < ScGael phris ‘of the woodland copse’ (Ross 70-72).

A very small sample of Gaelic place-name elements appears below. Notice that all the locations given are outside or on the fringes of the current Gàidhealtachd (naturally, place names in the Gàidhealtachd also contain Celtic elements):

- **inver** = ScGael inbhir ‘confluence (of waterways)’ < early Celtic eni-beron ‘in-bring’. Cognate with Bry aber ‘confluence’; the two occur only seldom in the same geographical region.

Examples:

- **Innerleithin** (Borders) ‘confluence of the River Leithin”. River name Leithin < ScGael leathann ‘broad’
- **Inveramsay** (Aberdeenshire) ‘confluence of the nasty rock’ < àil ‘of the rock’, musaich ‘dirty, nasty’

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39 Jones upholds this etymology. The OED hedges: “Origin obscure; usually identified with Gael. aingeal fire, light; but there are difficulties.” (OED ‘ingle”)
**Scots under the influence**

**Non-Germanic influences**

strath < ScGael srath ‘wide valley’. cf. Ir srath ‘level land by a lake-shore’; this meaning is seldom found in Scotland.

Examples:
- *Strathaven* (South Lanarkshire) ‘wide valley of the Avon’
- *Strathmiglo* (Fife) ‘wide valley of the bog-loch’ < Bry *mig* ‘bog’, ScGael *loch* ‘lake, loch’


Examples:
- *Kildrummy* (Aberdeenshire) ‘head of the ridge’ < ScGael *ceann* ‘head’, *druim* ‘ridge’

Additional Gaelic elements include *gal* < gall ‘stranger’, *gart* (often) < gart ‘cornfield’, *garv* < garbh ‘rough’, *glen, inch* < ScGael *innis* ‘island’, *loch*, and too many others to enumerate here.40

**Fricatives**

*Up and Spak an eldern knicht* (line 5)
*A loud lauch lauched he* (line 14)

Gaelic may also have prolonged the life of the Scots fricatives [x] and [ç]. “In almost all modern Scots regional varieties (including urban types) there are groups of speakers who preserve the palatal and velar fricatives [ç] and [x] as in *nicht* (‘night’) and *brocht* (‘brought’).” (Jones 68) However, other speaker groups preserve these sounds, which do not appear in BSE, only in the pronunciation of Gaelic-derived place names: *Loch Lomond, Auchtermuchty*, while young urban female speakers drop the sounds altogether from intermediate positions such as in bocht ‘bought’ and dochter ‘daughter’, and substitute [k] for <ch> in place names. (Jones 69) I would like to raise, in passing, the possibility that the continued

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40 Ross has provided all place names in this section.
presence to date of phonemes [x] and [ç] in Gaelic has contributed to their continued presence in Scots, even after they disappeared from BSE, which had no such exposure.

**Romantic Influence – Latin and French**

With the Norman Conquest, courts in both England and Scotland turned to French and Latin as languages of court and government. Their most striking contributions to Scots were on a lexical level, particularly in words used in court and law, but French also had limited morphological and phonological effects.

In 1066, William the Conqueror defeated Alfred at Hastings, marking the beginning of Norman rule in England. For some generations, Anglo-Normans dominated the English nobility. Thus, when Malcolm III MacDuncan, king of Scotland, and his successors implemented a series of anglicisations in Scotland (reinforced by Malcolm’s marriage to Margaret of England in 1067), Scotland adopted Norman customs as well as Anglo-Saxon. Under kings Alexander I and David I of Scotland,

> Norman French supplanted the Gaelic language in court circles, while English was spoken in the border areas and many parts of the Lowlands... [David I] conveyed huge grants, particularly in central and southern Scotland, to Anglo-Norman and Scottish nobles, who thereby became loyal vassals of the Crown. David I also instituted various judicial, legislative, and administrative reforms, all based on English models, encouraged the development of commerce with England, and granted extensive privileges to the Scottish burghs. (Davidson VI.D)

The abovementioned English models were, in turn, based on French models, so that French and Latin terms dominated the legal and administrative lexica. *Dominie* ‘schoolmaster’ remains in use only in Scots, but many words passed into both English and Scots.

Most Latin loans into OSc are also attested in some form in ME or EModE, whether before or after their appearance in Scots. DOST has numerous pre-datings in comparison with the dictionary record for England, e.g. *commiseratión, emedatión, immediat, intricat, locatio(u)n, metonymical, occurr and pagan(e) (Aitken, 1981a). Allocate, narrative and ticket (see tikkat) are so well established in Scots before their first appearance in texts from England, that they should probably be regarded as loans from Scots into English. (Macafee 5.2.2.5)

Similarly, Scots contains words of French origin not found in BSE. The Auld Alliance, a series of treaties and agreements between the kings of France and Scotland between 1295 and 1560, resulted in a
number of loanwords, including corbie ‘crow’ < OFr corb and fash ‘to worry’ < OFr fascher (ModFr fâcher).
(Upton 324, OED ‘fash’)

**Orthography**

*To sail this schip of mine? (line 4)*

As we see above, the OFr fascher ‘to worry’ developed into ModFr fâcher, in which a circonflex (’’) over the preceding vowel has replaced the grapheme <s>. At the time the word was borrowed into Scots, however, this had not occurred, so that <sch> became a common graphical expression of [ʃ]. The English variant <sh> did not come into use in Scots until the second half of the sixteenth century.
(MacAfee 5.2.1)

*O quhar will I get guid sailór (line 3)*

*O quha is this has don this deid (line 17)*

Chapter 7 treats the orthography <quh> in detail. Here I reiterate only that Latin and French interrogatives, both of which begin with qu, influenced the spelling of the Scots interrogatives, though the Scots pronunciation remained [m], as inherited from Old English, instead of Fr/Lat [kw]. The Romance languages affected the grammatical usage of quh-words as relativisers, as well, by word-for-word translation: “At first, the definiteness of the relative as opposed to the interrogative is indicated by adding the, giving the quhilk (cf. Old French liquels)” (MacAfee 7.13.1.2)
12. Conclusion

We have traced Scots from its pre-Common-Era origins among the Germanic tribes of northern Europe, through Old English, Danish and Norwegian settlement, and the introduction of French and Latin as languages of court. Through the vehicle of the poem *Sir Patrick Spence* we have discussed the features these tongues have contributed to the development of Scots. Northumbrian Old English provided the framework and basic vocabulary, far enough removed from the written standard of London to preserve features not found in today’s BSE. Through everyday language contact in the Danelaw, Old Danish forms penetrated Northumbrian Old English deeply enough to pass on basic pronouns, verbs and conjunctions as well as the more commonly transferred lexical items. Centuries of Norwegian dominance in the Western Isles and parts of the Scottish mainland and close political ties between the rulers of the two nations conferred numerous lexical items upon Scots, and a plethora of place names, though forms from Old Danish and Old Norwegian resemble one another to such a great extent that one cannot always determine a form’s precise Scandinavian origins. Celtic languages, despite their geographical proximity to Scots, have offered only lexical items and place-names. Latin and French, through the Norman Conquest and the Auld Alliance, provided much of the lexicon necessary for court and legal functions.

No other descendant of Anglo-Saxon has participated in the same series of cultural, political and linguistic interactions as Scots. Scotland’s unique interplay with its neighbors around Europe has resulted in a language quite distinct from the English spoken elsewhere in the United Kingdom.
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