

4th Century

Pictish culture and language were destroyed following the fall of the Roman Empire before Scotland existed as a nation, examples of Pictish place names being Pitlochry and Pittenweem. Britain was then flooded by invading tribes from Northern Germany - the Angles and Saxons.

5th Century

The Scotti, a Celtic tribe who crossed from Ireland united with the Picts, and Gaelic became the dominant language throughout Scotland, “ay”, “loch”, “brae”, “ben”, “glen” “corrie” and “firth” being examples still in use. “Kirk”, “ken”, “hoose” and “moose” belonged originally to Germanic tribes and Scots developed from the languages spoken by successive waves of settlers from other shores. “Fu” came from Scandinavia, “flower” from France, “gadgie” from India, “stane” and “hame” from Old English.

7th Century

The Anglians moved north, their input being the first into Scots.

8th Century

The Vikings brought Old Norse, Orkney and Shetland still retaining elements of that culture in Kirkwall (church on the bay) and Thurso (river of the thunder god, Thor). Among many North-east words still in common use are “midden”, “lug” and “quine”.

1066

Roman Invasion of England

Continental influences were absorbed from French and Latin.

1295

The Auld Alliance

Military Treaty which allied Scotland and France against England.

(“Bruce” and “Stewart” are of French origin, as are “ashet”, “gigot” and “tassie”).

1314

Battle of Bannockburn

John Barbour 1320 – 1395

(Archdeacon of Aberdeen 1357 – 1395, buried in Mastrick Cathedral)

Facing domination by the English, Scotland’s struggle for independence culminated in the Battle of Bannockburn. John Barbour, Scotland’s literary equivalent of Chaucer and commonly known as “the father of Scottish literature” wrote *The Bruce*, a patriotic epic written a generation after the battle, the earliest-known work of Scottish literature illustrating that the vernacular can be used to great effect.

A! fredome is a noble thing!

Fredome mays (makes) man to haif liking (delight)

Fredome all solace to man giffis:

Le levys (lives) at ese that freely levys

1400s

Birth of a distinctive literature in Scots. William Wallace eulogised by Blind Harry in his epic poem “Wallace” in 1477 celebrating the struggle of the common man for national freedom and including the line ““till bayne an brain he gart in pieces flee”. Said to be the book, with the exception of the Bible, most commonly found in Scottish households during the eighteenth century. The novel and movie, *Braveheart*, were based on the 1722 edition which greatly influenced Burns, Wordsworth and Byron, Burns having admitted to borrowing “a couplet worthy of Homer” to include in *Scots Wha Hae*. Scotland’s literature now rich, diverse, dynamic and expressive, the language of court and legislation, its plays, satires and poems ranking alongside the literatures of continental Europe.

c 1460 – c 1513

William Dunbar

An iconic figure whose writing displayed vivid images of Scotland during the reign of James IV. The greatest stylist Scottish literature has ever produced who illustrated the great versatility of the language, the originator of a distinctive tradition which still exists in Scottish writing.

1476 - 1522

Gavin Douglas

Lived in both Scotland and England, and being aware of linguistic differences, recognised the importance of language for national identity. Introducing French and Latin words, he translated Virgil’s “Aenaid” in 1513, a pioneering work which fulfilled his ambition to transfer some of the richness of Latin to his own tongue and to communicate the great work to his countrymen. The first to refer to the language as Scots.