

## **Lallan Scots**

In the case of those present, in our daily lives we speak English, mostly the Canadian version and with some accent. Many come by their Canadian accent honestly and even most of those with an original Scottish accent have acquired some degree of Canadian modification. (There is nothing, however, that could possibly diminish Jim's 'Aberdonian', while Tony's 'English' is slowly leaning more and more to the Canadian side.)

At this time, of the native Scots among us there is none from the Gaelic-speaking communities and, though a few come from the perimeter, none comes from within the area of the Borders. All then are from the regions where Lowland Scots was the Language spoken before 1707 when, for official purposes, all Scottish language was to be replaced by English in the Union which established Great Britain.

The area west of a line from John o' Groats through Inverness, bulging out to the east to meet the West side of the Grampian Mountains on the way to Glasgow and including the islands off the west coast has essentially all of the Gaelic-speaking Scots. East of that line and north of the Forth was the historical land of the Picts. South of the Forth was where the Angles settled in the east, Britons in the west. All of Scotland south and east of the Grampian mountains is where versions of Lowland Scots dialect have been used.

Lowland Scots, which later was named Lallans in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century has been divided into sub-divisions; Aberdeenshire, neighbouring counties both west and south as well as southeast Perthshire are referred to as North Midland-Lallans, while the remainder of the Lallan area is divided into south-, east- and west- Midland, except for the counties of Berwick, Roxburgh and Selkirk which have sufficient dialectic difference to be addressed separately from the main group and are classed as South-Lallans.

There are scattered appearances of historic events and archaeological discoveries throughout Scotland and the Isles. Tying these occurrences together has been difficult because there is very little evidence prior to the Roman period of the timing and correlation of these events and little of what there is comes from a firsthand source since neither the Picts themselves nor the early Gaels left any writings.

While Pictish Kingdoms occupied Eastern Scotland, nearly all the farms, villages and towns acquired the Gaelic names they retain and the Gaels did likewise in the west. Norse language had a major influence on coastal communities round Scotland, particularly in the north, west and western Isles where their presence remains today in many of the placenames. It was after the Norwegians had troubles 'at home' and relinquished their tenancy of Scottish lands in 1263 that Scotland was truly united and it was around this time, in the thirteenth Century that the first signs of another language were appearing.

Gaelic became the language of Government of Scotland after a lengthy period of Post-Roman rule. Gaelic in Government lasted until the unification when it was decided to have Lowland Scots (Lallans) as the official language of government. Lallans lasted until the government was unseated and rule by Westminster established.

From Roman sources, we see that when the Roman Empire was growing there was at the same time a large and growing number of tribes occupying all of the land across central Europe. Racially these tribes were Celtic and their language was Germanic with a relationship to the central strip of European languages of today, including those in Scandinavia. Their language may have been presented in many variations but is still considered to have been a common tongue. These tribes stretched from Britain through Flemish Belgium to Western Poland in the east. During the existence of the Roman Empire these tribes had marauded and plundered along the front of the Empire. They were known by the Romans as Galli which meant 'barbarian' and their language was 'Gallic'. While the Empire was collapsing in the fifth century AD, the Barbarians raided and sacked Rome and invaded much of the Roman territory including the British Isles.

After the Romans left Britain, for the millennium following, the linguistic east-west connection throughout Europe grew even stronger with the dispersal of Celtic tribes. To a large part, in Britain, from the time of the Roman departure in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD there had been raids from the Jutes (Denmark), Angles (German part of the Danish Peninsula) and Saxons (from North-Western Germany). In Scotland, gradually, as more and more raids lead to settlement, it was the Jutes, Angles and Norsemen displacing to some degree the Celtic-speaking inhabitants westwards. The Gallic-German of the invaders, carried the roots of formative English and later, also of Lallans.

Lallans has Germanic root sentence structure and wisely did away with the 'genderising' of nouns. A variety of terms and vocabulary were adopted from French but mainly the language has Gallic-German and Gaelic history.

For three hundred and thirteen years following the Union of 1707, education, legal service, all formal government service, the professional class, banking; business and even the clergy have functioned in English. It became the language of many homes where parents had to learn and yielded to the necessity of encouraging their children to be proficient in English so that their opportunities in the workplace would not be hampered. (today 98 % of the Scottish population can speak English). Social activity was different and a mix of English and Lallans was common where friends met; when the school bells rang for the end of classes, English gave way to the dialect; children were still growing up bilingual as they found it easy either to mix languages or to use one at a time. In the last hundred years the expansion of radio and libraries, the introduction of television and the burgeoning film industry, along with the introduction of slang, had large parts to play in the reduction of dialect. Since the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the decline in Lallans use has been steady and concerning.

Scotland has for some time now recognised Gaelic as an official second language, completely functional in the Northwest, with daily to annual publications, at least one radio station and one television station. In the southern peninsula of Sleat in the Isle of Skye there is an exclusively Gaelic university. A total of six Scottish Universities have now added Gaelic to their language classes. Very many more Scots still speak Lallans than the 1% who speak Gaelic so perhaps there are measures that can be made to save the dialect. Recently, a third language is being added to school curricula in the northeast along with other steps to satisfy the need expressed there by the number of Doric speakers. This distinct version of Lallans has reached the University of Aberdeen which now offers classes in this dialect.

While the generalisations in Lallans disposition are valid to a degree, there are numerous deviations that can easily be heard and frequently indicate some historical root. No matter what part of the country a Lallan-speaking Scot comes from, he will have no difficulty in identifying those from Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow after a few moments of conversation. Each of the three is from a different part of the Lowland belt and, as examples, would speak in a different dialect of Lowland Scots and with a different accent.

An influence in furthering English speech arrived with a small flood of English settlers coming north of the border from the 1960s to the end of the 1990s, encouraged by a number of reasons but mostly because of the large imbalance in the value of real estate. At one point it was reported that at least 17% of the Scottish population was born in England. Almost all of this influx arrived in the Lallan-speaking area, further diluting the Lallan-speaking community.

In Fife, the East Neuk has a Lallan dialect that is Doric while the rest of the county speaks Middle-Lallan with a similarity to the Edinburgh dialect. The corner developed in comparative isolation; it was not really on the road to anywhere. The only notable historic raiders were Monks from the Isle of May and Cromwell's brutal army. Variations were introduced through trade with the Continent and often were received differently in each community. Even where a common influence from the fishing industry spread dialectic variety from Yarmouth to Peterhead, the Neuk version like some others in the Lallan belt withstood the dominance of English. There is little flourish or pride remaining today since the herring left. Struggling to make a living by accommodating the tourist leaves little place for the old Doric dialect and it has become difficult to find. Part of this communication loss is being filled now with the incredible development of cell phone messaging and the abbreviated 'youngspeak' with its OMG, LOL, WTF and so on.

The language loss is common throughout the Lallan belt of Scotland while the northwestern stalwarts are holding on bravely to their Gaelic activities. Some of the adverse effect on Lallans is due to the arrival of some wealthy Europeans who are buying their way into property and businesses, using English to Lallan- and Gaelic-speaking residents.

Very similar observations were made in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, following the Union, when Ramsay, Thomson and Ferguson led the fight to restore and maintain the Scottish Lallan tongue through poetry, their efforts being later so wonderfully expanded by Robert Burns. Even now they are few who can read many of the works of Burns without help from a dictionary of Scottish Lallan words. While this serves tolerably well, the finesse of the language is often lost as a phrase easily can be mistranslated by usage of the direct meaning of a word instead of its less common, subtle use.

Gentlemen, unless we make a concerted effort to maintain or even greatly expand our knowledge and use of Scots, as well as to encourage others to do likewise, coming generations will lack the ability to enjoy the masterwork of literary excellence prepared by Scottish writers, particularly our bard, who loved and wrote, though not exclusively, in the Lallans. If we do not then it may not last as it should, *till a' the seas gang dry.... an' the rocks melt wi' the sun.*

For the Carnie Group

Ron Budd

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