

# New Online Resources for the Study of Early Scots

**By Rhona Alcorn**

Researchers and students at the University of Edinburgh have devised two new online resources for those interested in the history of Scots.

In an attempt to explain the complex history of Scots in under ten minutes, a group of University researchers have produced a short video to summarise what we know of the languages, people and events that shaped the earliest history of the language. The narrative is available in both Scots and Scottish English, with transcriptions of each included as optional sub-titles.

The video combines contributions from multiple participants. The narrative was drafted first in English by historical linguists at the University of Edinburgh and was then translated into Scots by J. Derrick McClure, Research Fellow at the University of the Highland and Islands. The Scots version is narrated by Hamish MacDonald, former Scots Scriever in Residence at the National Library of Scotland; the English version by one of the researchers, Rhona Alcorn (also Chief Executive of Scottish Language Dictionaries). The animations — creatively produced on a shoe-string budget — are the work of Laura Bowles, a member of the University of Edinburgh's Digital Innovation Team. The video also features an original recording of James Oswald's Pentland Hills, as arranged by David Johnston and Alistair Hardie and performed by Alistair himself. The Edinburgh research team is especially proud to be responsible for the University's first ever major audio-visual publication in Scots.

In January 2017, the University of Edinburgh launched a new degree-level course on the linguistic history of Scots. After the course finished, three of the post-graduate students (and not one of them Scottish!) got together with Rhona Alcorn, the course organiser, to produce an accessible guide to the language of the fifteenth-century *Buke of the Howlat*. Daisy Smith, Maddi Morcillo Berrueta and Lisa Gotthard first produced a transcription and translation of stanza 5 of the version of the poem found in the Bannatyne Manuscript. They then created

insightful and engaging descriptions of the palaeography (Daisy), spelling (Maddi), and grammar (Lisa), to which Rhona added a section on lexis and pronunciation. The material was then transformed by Daisy into a beautiful downloadable handout, which has since been published by the National Library of Scotland on their *Wee Windaes* website. The NLS have also helpfully supplied a digital copy of the stanza in question (located in the Gallery section).

Both resources have been created with the general public in mind and both owe much to *From Inglis to Scots* (FITS), a £1 million study of the linguistic origins of Scots and the largest ever study of the relationship between the spoken and written language prior to AD 1500. Their creators hope too that students and teachers of Scots past and present will find them enlightening.

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