

# Scots Word of the Season: Dingie

By Maggie Scott

**dingie** v. to snub, reject; to fail to keep a (romantic) appointment

*Dingie*, which rhymes with words like stringy, is one of the new additions to the revised *Concise Scots Dictionary* (2017) and is a comparatively ‘new’ Scots word, rarely attested in twentieth-century written sources, and more typically encountered in speech than writing. It is a good candidate for the label ‘Scots Slang’ due to its highly colloquial register. Some users of the wonderfully iconoclastic Urban Dictionary describe it as ‘Scottish Slang’, with contributor ‘Spongochild’ providing the following helpful illustrative example on December 31st, 2008:

“Claire: So guys.. Wanna go see a movie later?

Group of Claire’s friends: \*Ignores\* \*Talks about pointless things\*

Claire: Ahem..? \*Ignored\* ☐ DINGYED! :/

Group of Friends: Oh.. Sorry Claire..”

Much as the Urban Dictionary requires careful perusal and is not for the thin-skinned, it can provide insights or supporting evidence that ‘traditional’ resources cannot, and users have contributed examples of Scots *dingie* from at least 2003. The word was not included in the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, and the earliest published attestations noted by the editorial team at Scottish Language Dictionaries also date from 2003 onwards.

The word and can be spelled with either *-ie* or *-y* at the end, making it more challenging to investigate due to potential false matches with the word *dingy* ‘drab, dull, shady’. Context quickly resolves this, however, as oor Scots *dingie*, if you will, is a verb and not an adjective. That said, quite coincidentally, the two words have several things in common; although *dingy* (‘drab’) is now an unremarkable, pedestrian word, it was in fact ‘a recent word’ to the editors of the original OED. The *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for *dingy* (1896) also quotes lexicographer Charles Richardson’s observation that ‘Dingy and dinginess are common in speech, but not in writing’ (1837), reminding twenty-first century readers that language is constantly evolving. Words that seem rare, unusual or

exceptional in one time-period may be very commonplace in another. OED postulates *dingy* ('drab') as a south-eastern English dialect term of obscure (and literally messy) origin that emerged from regional usage. Agriculturalist William Ellis appears to use it in his 1749 work on lambing: 'What we, in Hertfordshire, call tagging a sheep..is cutting..away, with a pair of shears, the dingy wool from the hinder parts'.

Scots *dingie* is easier to explain in terms of its linguistic pedigree, being a derivative of *ding* 'to beat, strike', recorded in literary texts from the fourteenth century onwards. In origin it appears to be a borrowing from an Old Norse verb *dengja* meaning 'to hammer'. As it moved through time, *ding* took on a range of other meanings including 'to defeat, overcome, get the better of', recorded from the sixteenth century and foreshadowing *dingie* as a deliberate act of snubbing. In time, *dingie* may travel cross genres and become as frequent as its unrelated drab counterpart, but here in 2018 it is most visible as a Twitter hashtag—check out **#dingied!dingie** v. to snub, reject; to fail to keep a (romantic) appointment

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