

# 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!**

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