

## Old Word Meanings

Meanings of unusual words or abbreviations that might be encountered in old parish registers, early censuses, rental records, or other old documents. Additions are always welcome at [email](mailto:).

[For more detail, or meanings of words not listed here, try [Dictionary of the Scots Language](#)]

**Vc, 'ic, Mhic & Mac.** When written as part of a man's name or pedigree these all mean "son of". For example, a pedigree written as *Domhnall mac Pharaic 'ic Iain 'ic Niall 'ic Chaluum* translates as *Donald, son of Peter, son of John, son of Neil, son of Malcolm*. It could have been written just as well as *Domhnall mac Pharaic Vc Iain Vc Niall Vc Chaluum*, or in more archaic Gaelic as *Dhòmhnaill Mac Pharaic Mhic Iain Mhic Niall Mhic Chaluum*.. Similarly, *Ne* means "daughter of".

Word	Meaning
<b>ae</b>	Only (e.g only son)
<b>agnate</b>	One related on the father's side
<b>air (ayr)</b>	Heir
<b>airis (ayris)</b>	Heirs
<b>ane</b>	One
<b>anent</b>	Concerning
<b>anis</b>	Once
<b>annam</b>	Weak
<b>arle</b>	Taken into service on payment of a sum of money
<b>assadat</b>	Let or leased
<b>assedation</b>	A tack or letting of land for a term
<b>Bailie</b>	Officer employed by a landowner to give <b>sasine</b> or formal possession of land
<b>bairn</b>	Child (see also <b>wean</b> )
<b>bàn (bain, bane)</b>	Fair (see also <b>bhàin</b> ).
<b>banns</b>	Notice of contract of marriage read out in the church some weeks before the marriage takes place.
<b>base-born</b>	Illegitimate, born out of wedlock.
<b>bear (bere, beir)</b>	Barley
<b>beet</b>	Flax, bundle of
<b>bhàin</b>	Fair (see also <b>bàn, bain, bane</b> ).
<b>biggen</b>	With child
<b>birlinn</b>	Large rowing boat (Western Highlands)
<b>blanter</b>	Oat-based food (e.g. porridge, bread)
<b>blind</b>	Doll.
<b>boll</b>	A volume measure of grain, meal, potatoes etc. that varied according to commodity and locality. Commonly, a boll of wheat was about 4 Imp. bushels, a boll of oats, barley or potatoes was about 6 Imp. bushels, and a boll of meal weighed about 140 lb. Smaller measures related to the boll were: <b>firlot</b> = ¼ boll, <b>peck</b> = ¼ firlot, <b>lippie</b> = ¼ peck. A <b>chalder</b> was 16 bolls. Boll was also used as a term of valuation of crop land according to the number of bolls it could produce.
<b>bone (bonday) wark</b>	Unpaid work as part of tenant service
<b>bothy</b>	A building that housed bachelor farm labourers and itinerant workers
<b>braboner</b>	Weaver
<b>brod</b>	Young child, often the youngest in the family
<b>bronnach</b>	Big-bellied
<b>buggis</b>	Lamb's wool
<b>bygottin</b>	Illegitimate
<b>Candlemas</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> February, a Scots quarter day (with Lammas, Matinmas and Whitsunday, the days on which farm contracts, leases, rents began and ended).

<b>carriage</b>	A form of servitude in which a tenant was bound to carry for the proprietor a stated quantity of coals, grain etc., or to supply him with men and horses for a stated number of days in the year.
<b>cedent</b>	An individual who assigns property to another.
<b>cessioner</b>	An individual who receives property ceded by another.
<b>chalder</b>	A measure of 16 bolls.
<b>choppin</b>	Quart measure.
<b>coir</b>	Strange.
<b>compear</b>	To appear, as before a court or kirk session.
<b>consanguinean</b>	A brother or sister who has the same father but not the same mother.
<b>cose (cosse)</b>	An exchange, usually of lands.
<b>cottar</b>	Person occupying a farm cottage in return for labouring on the farm.
<b>crofter</b>	Tenant of a small acreage of arable land, usually with a cottage.
<b>depone</b>	Give evidence, make oath.
<b>dispone</b>	Dispose of or convey land.
<b>dissenter</b>	Non-conformist, i.e. does not conform to the established church (e.g. Baptist)
<b>dou (dow, dubh, duy)</b>	Black or dark.
<b>dsp</b>	<i>Decessit sine prole</i> , died without issue.
<b>dubh (dou, dow, duy)</b>	Black or dark.
<b>eild</b>	Children of, issue
<b>ell</b>	A measure of length, varying between regions and countries, but traditionally the distance from elbow to finger tips or shoulder to wrist.
<b>eschet</b>	Forfeiture, of goods or estate
<b>executry</b>	Moveable property of a deceased person.
<b>Factor</b>	Person empowered by a proprietor to manage estate affairs.
<b>father-in-law</b>	May mean either step-father or wife's father.
<b>firlot</b>	A volume measure of grain, meal, potatoes etc. equivalent to $\frac{1}{4}$ of a <b>boll</b> . A common standard for 1 firlot was: wheat = 1 Imp. bushel; barley, oats & potatoes = $1\frac{1}{2}$ Imp. bushels; meal = 35 lb.
<b>gimmer</b>	Female sheep 1-2 years old, maiden ewe.
<b>glun</b>	Knee.
<b>grieve</b>	Overseer of a farm or estate.
<b>herd (hird, hyrd)</b>	Farm hand looking after cattle, shepherd.
<b>hog</b>	One-year-old sheep (hogget).
<b>'ic</b>	Son of, as in <i>Donald McAllen 'ic Conell 'ic Neill</i> (see also <b>Mhic, Vc</b> )
<b>kirk</b>	The Church, in particular the Church of Scotland.
<b>kirk session</b>	Church court made up of the minister and elders of the parish.
<b>Lammas</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> August, one of the quarter days (see Candlemas, Matinmas & Whitsunday)
<b>ley (lea)</b>	Unploughed land, pasture land.
<b>lippie (forpet)</b>	A volume measure of grain, meal, potatoes etc. equivalent to $\frac{1}{4}$ of a Scots <b>peck</b> . Where still used it usually means $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb by weight.
<b>lùbanach</b>	Wily
<b>maill</b>	Rent. Maills and Duties were yearly rents due in money or grain.
<b>maill-land</b>	A land measure, recorded only in Tìree, amounting to one forty-eighth of a <b>tìrung</b> . A tìrung was 6 <b>merkland</b> , and was divided into 48 <b>malies</b> or 20 <b>pennylands</b> .
<b>Matinmas</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> November, one of the quarter days (see Candlemas, Lammas & Whitsunday)
<b>merkland</b>	An ancient unit of valuation of land related to its productive capacity (a merk was a silver coin worth two-thirds of a pound Scots).
<b>Mhic</b>	Son of, as in <i>Donald McAllen Mhic Conell Mhic Neill</i> (see also <b>'ic, Vc</b> )
<b>milne</b>	Mill

<b>mòr (mhor, mhòir)</b>	Great.
<b>natural</b>	Illegitimate, born out of wedlock.
<b>neuo</b>	Nephew
<b>ocht</b>	Eight
<b>odhar</b>	Swarthy
<b>oig</b>	Young
<b>peck</b>	A Scots peck was a volume measure of grain, meal, potatoes etc.equivalent to ¼ of a <b>firlot</b> . A peck of meal was about 9 lbs in weight.
<b>pendicle</b>	A small piece of land that is a subsidiary part of a large estate; an appurtenance or minor property
<b>pennyland</b>	An ancient unit of valuation of land, used particularly in the Ross of Mull, equivalent to about half a <b>merkland</b> , the ancient unit used in Tìree and elsewhere.
<b>poffeft be</b>	Possessed (i.e occupied) by, in relation to land.
<b>presbytery</b>	Ecclesiastical court of ministers and elders of a district of several parishes.
<b>quha</b>	Who.
<b>quhilk</b>	Which.
<b>relict</b>	Widow or widower, the surviving member of a married couple
<b>roup</b>	An auction, conducted under conditions called "Articles of Roup"
<b>roy (ruadh)</b>	Red-haired
<b>runrig</b>	Narrow strips of farm land allocated to tenants.
<b>sasine (seisin)</b>	Act giving legal possession of property (land, house); deed recording the act.
<b>sett</b>	A lease.
<b>sprangach</b>	Bold
<b>stipend</b>	A regular payment made in money, grain, or both, to a parish minister.
<b>stirk</b>	Yearling heifer or bullock.
<b>stot</b>	Bullock.
<b>tack</b>	A lease.
<b>tacksman</b>	A person, often a relative of the proprietor, who had a lease of a substantial area of land and sub-let parts of it. A person of considerable power in small Highland and Island communities.
<b>teinds</b>	Scots equivalent of English tithes, a tenth part of the annual produce or income payable to the church.
<b>threttein</b>	Thirteen
<b>tìrung</b>	A land measure used in Tìree. It was equivalent to 6 <b>merkland</b> , and was divided into 48 <b>maill-land</b> (mailies) or 20 <b>pennyland</b> .
<b>umquhile</b>	Deceased, the late.
<b>uterine</b>	Children of the same mother but not the same father.
<b>Vc</b>	Son of, as in <i>Donald McAllen Vc Conell Vc Neill</i> (see also ' <b>ic</b> , <b>Mhic</b> )
<b>victual</b>	Grain of any kind.
<b>wadset</b>	A mortgage. The conveyance of land in pledge for a debt.
<b>wafte</b>	Waste (i.e unproductive) land.
<b>wean</b>	Child, bairn
<b>wedder</b>	Castrated male sheep (i.e. wether)
<b>Whitsunday</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> May, one of the quarter days (see Candlemas, Lammas & Matinmas)
<b>yeiris</b>	Years

**Acknowledgments:** [ScotlandsPeople](#), [Dictionary of the Scots Language](#), [The Wedderburn Pages](#), [Scottish Archive Network](#), Gene Lamont, Ian Phillips, Flo Straker, Nanette Mitchell.