

**Cur an Aithne  
Cànanan na  
h-Alba**

**An Innins tae  
Scotlan's Leids**

**An Introduction  
to Scotland's  
Languages**

*On the Massacre of Glencoe,*  
*Sir Walter Scott, Projection Project*  
by Double Take Projections  
Photo: Adam Robertson





His blithest notes the piper plied,

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## The Languages of Scotland

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Gaelic and Scots are the indigenous languages of Scotland. They are protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and Gaelic has official status as a 'national language' of Scotland under the Gaelic Language Act (2005).

Both languages are part of our history and culture with rich oral traditions still very much alive in song, drama and storytelling. The literature of both languages dates back hundreds of years, and today talented writers are producing excellent new books for adults and children.

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## Gaelic

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Gaelic is a Celtic language, providing Scotland with strong linguistic and cultural links to other European countries, particularly Ireland. It has an international reach and forms an important strand in the cultural heritage of Nova Scotia in Canada.

Gaelic is one of Europe's oldest languages. It came to Scotland from Ireland by the 5th century and, with the expansion of the Celtic Church, spread across the country. By the 12th century, however, its dominance in the South and East began to decline as a result of Southern influence on the Scottish court.

Today its stronghold is in the Western Isles but its use is growing in many cities and elsewhere, in part due to greater focus on Gaelic-medium schools.

### EDUCATION

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Gaelic-medium education is growing and there are dedicated Gaelic-medium primary schools. In addition, many pre-schools, secondary schools and further education colleges also provide learning through Gaelic-medium. Gaelic is taught in some universities and there are classes offered in many parts of the country.

### ARTS AND CULTURE

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There is a great range of Gaelic cultural activity at festivals and events taking place across the country and throughout the year:

#### Aros

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Aros cultural centre on Skye is home to a vibrant programme including exhibitions, cinema, live music, dance and theatre. They also host workshops, a creative learning programme and the annual Skye Book Festival.

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📶 [www.aros.co.uk](http://www.aros.co.uk)

## **Blas**

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Blas festival celebrates the culture of traditional music and Gaelic in the Highlands, with local, national and international performers. The festival has a rich programme with opportunities for young musicians, schools and communities.

📶 [www.blas-festival.com](http://www.blas-festival.com)

## **Celtic Connections**

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Celtic Connections is Glasgow's annual folk, roots and world music festival, celebrating Celtic music and its connections to cultures across the globe. Musicians from all over the world come to Glasgow for a festival comprising concerts, cèilidhs, talks, art exhibitions, workshops and free events.

📶 [www.celticconnections.com](http://www.celticconnections.com)

## **Ceòlas**

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Based on the island of South Uist, Ceòlas runs Gaelic events and activities throughout the year including symposiums, lectures, concerts and dances, and their summer school attracts students from around the world.

📶 [www.ceolas.co.uk](http://www.ceolas.co.uk)

## **Ceòl 's Craic**

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Established in 2004 Ceòl 's Craic is a year round programme of the best in contemporary Gaelic culture, with events and activities for non-Gaelic speakers as well as a fluent audience.

📶 [www.ceolscaic.org](http://www.ceolscaic.org)

## **Fèisean nan Gàidheal**

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A major voice in promoting Gaelic arts and culture, Fèisean nan Gàidheal provides learning opportunities in Gaelic music, song, dance and drama to over 13,000 young people across Scotland. Fèisean nan Gàidheal also runs the Blas Festival which celebrates Highland culture.

📶 [www.feisean.org](http://www.feisean.org)

## **Fèis Rois**

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At the forefront of high quality traditional arts education, Fèis Rois provides an extensive programme of music tuition to over 100 schools in Scotland. They also support young musicians to tour Scotland, the UK and internationally, and offer a range of music activities including cèilidh trails, after-school classes and online learning.

📶 [feisrois.org](http://feisrois.org)

## **FilmG**

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FilmG is MG ALBA's Gaelic short film competition. Launched in 2008 to develop new talent for the Gaelic channel BBC ALBA, it has since received more than 400 Gaelic short films. The project has showcased the works of talented young people across the country, many of which have begun careers in Gaelic TV broadcasting. FilmG also offers workshops, resources and video tutorials.

📶 [filmg.co.uk](http://filmg.co.uk)

## **Hebridean Celtic Festival**

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Taking place on the islands of Lewis and Harris, the Hebridean Celtic Festival (known as Heb Celt) attracts performers from all over the world. This family-friendly festival features concerts, workshops and free events, and showcases Celtic, traditional and contemporary music.

📶 [www.hebceltfest.com](http://www.hebceltfest.com)

## **An Lanntair**

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A hub for creativity in the Outer Hebrides, this inclusive and inspiring multi-arts venue comprises a contemporary art gallery, theatre, cinema, dance studio and concert hall. An Lanntair is rooted in the Gaelic culture of the Outer Hebrides and has a national and international reach, profiling local art and artists alongside international names.

📶 [www.lanntair.com](http://www.lanntair.com)

## **An Lòchran**

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This non-profit organisation develops and promotes the Gaelic arts in Glasgow, and helps to establish a Gaelic cultural centre in the city. An Lòchran aims to raise the profile of Gaelic language and culture in Glasgow by bringing them to a wider audience, and offers a range of high quality events to celebrate the rich traditions of Gaelic arts.

📶 [www.anlochran.com](http://www.anlochran.com)

## **Royal National Mòd**

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Celebrating Gaelic language and culture, the Royal National Mòd provides opportunities for people of all ages to perform and compete across a range of disciplines including Gaelic music and song, Highland dance, instrumental, drama, sport and literature. The festival fringe has top Gaelic acts every year.

The Mòd is run by An Comunn Gàidhealach, whose remit is to support the teaching, learning and use of the Gaelic language, and to develop all aspects of the Gaelic language, culture, history and heritage at local, national and international levels.

📍 [www.ancomunn.co.uk/nationalmod](http://www.ancomunn.co.uk/nationalmod)

## **Taigh Chearsabhagh**

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Taigh Chearsabhagh is a vibrant museum and arts centre on North Uist, coordinating residencies, commissions and events. Their top quality public programme brings together Scottish and international contemporary art, and island-based artists and crafts producers.

📍 [www.taigh-chearsabhagh.org](http://www.taigh-chearsabhagh.org)

## **Theatre Gu Leòr**

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This contemporary Gaelic theatre company is committed to producing high quality Gaelic theatre through the use of multi-media and digital technologies. Theatre Gu Leòr brings Gaelic theatre to a wide and diverse audience across the country, and also encourages contemporary writing and the creation of new works. In addition, the company hosts workshops and an outreach programme, and offers training and support to new practitioners.

📍 [www.theatreguleor.co.uk](http://www.theatreguleor.co.uk)

## **Tiree Music Festival**

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This award-winning festival on the Hebridean island of Tiree brings together established names and emerging talent. This sell-out event showcases local and national musicians and bands, as well as community creativity.

📍 [tireemusicfestival.co.uk](http://tireemusicfestival.co.uk)





Hebridean Celtic Festival  
Photo: Leila Angus

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## Resources For Gaelic

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There are a range of organisations in Scotland dedicated to developing and promoting Gaelic language and culture, providing support, resources and advice.

### **Bòrd na Gàidhlig**

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Bòrd na Gàidhlig is Scotland's national Gaelic language body, encouraging use and understanding of the Gaelic language, and aims to increase access to Gaelic culture. They provide funding for language projects and coordinate national plans and policies for Gaelic.

📶 [www.gaidhlig.org.uk](http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk)

### **BBC ALBA**

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BBC ALBA is a Gaelic language digital TV channel and features news, sport, drama, documentary and entertainment, as well as children's programmes.

Radio nan Gàidheal is the national Gaelic radio station. It also features Beag air Bheag (Little by Little), a series of short episodes which guides learners through the Gaelic language.

📶 [www.bbc.co.uk/alba](http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba)

### **Comhairle nan Leabhraichean**

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Comhairle nan Leabhraichean/ The Gaelic Books Council is the lead organisation for Gaelic literature in Scotland. They support Gaelic writers and publishers, and help raise the profile and widen the reach of Gaelic books in Scotland and internationally.

📶 [www.gaelicbooks.org](http://www.gaelicbooks.org)

### **Comunn na Gàidhlig**

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This social enterprise provides Gaelic services across Scotland, covering different areas including young people and events, initiatives, education and funding.

📶 [www.cnag.org](http://www.cnag.org)

## **Cuilean Craicte**

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Cuilean Craicte is a reading club for children in Gaelic-medium education, encouraging children to make the transition from reading at school to reading for pleasure. The Club sends children new translations of some of the best titles in contemporary children's fiction. This helps to support their core language skills, build confidence, and help them to develop a love for reading in Gaelic.

📄 [www.cuileancraicte.org](http://www.cuileancraicte.org)

## **Education Scotland/Stòras na Gàidhlig**

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Education Scotland/Stòras na Gàidhlig gives information on Gaelic Education, including resources, advice and support.

📄 [gaidhlig.educationscotland.gov.uk](http://gaidhlig.educationscotland.gov.uk)

## **LearnGaelic**

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This website is for anyone interesting in learning Gaelic, offering help for all ages and all stages of learning. It provides information on courses across Scotland, plus resources including videos, audio files and a free online beginners' course.

📄 [www.learnghaelic.scot](http://www.learnghaelic.scot)

## **Sabhal Mòr Ostaig**

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Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is internationally recognised as a National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture and offers high quality education and research opportunities. The College also plays a leading role in the promotion of Gaelic arts and culture, and hosts a programme of residencies for artists in music, literature and the visual arts.

📄 [www.smo.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk)

## **Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig**

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Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig coordinates the production and distribution of Gaelic educational resources throughout Scotland. Through their programme, resources are distributed free of charge to nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and lifelong learning groups.

📄 [www.storlann.co.uk](http://www.storlann.co.uk)

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## Scots

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Scots is the official name for the dialects of Scotland (such as Glaswegian, Doric, Ayrshire, Shetland and Lallans) and is recognised as a language in its own right by the Scottish and UK governments as well as the European Union.

This West Germanic language was first brought to what is now the South East of Scotland around the 7th century. It had many influences and borrowed words from French, Latin, Dutch and Gaelic. By the 12th century it was the language of the Scottish Court. However, after the Scottish Reformation, Union of the Crowns and the Union of the Parliaments, Scots began to decline and the Southern English language became the dominant written and spoken form. Despite this, Scots was retained in oral traditional storytelling and songs and its use today is widespread.

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## EDUCATION

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There is no requirement for the provision of Scots-medium education under Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and it has often been under-represented in the classroom. There are now resources available for teachers to include Scots language in their study programmes so that children who have Scots as their first language can feel included in the classroom. In addition, these resources help support and recognise the value of Scots language.

📶 [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/  
studyingScotland](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingScotland)

## ARTS AND CULTURE

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Scots language has played, and continues to play, an important role in shaping the cultural landscape of Scotland.

Lowland Scotland and the Northern Isles have their own distinctive styles in literature, dance and music from Border ballads to Shetland fiddle. Scots has a vibrant linguistic heritage and Scots poets, novelists and playwrights have received international acclaim.

## Scots Hoose

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Scots Hoose is a free online resource for children, young people and new Scots writers to inspire and support creativity in the Scots language. Here you can learn more about Scots language, improve writing skills, and discover poems, stories and songs.

📶 [www.scotshoose.com](http://www.scotshoose.com)

## Scots Radio

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Scots Radio is a monthly podcast that speaks about the culture and news of people who use Scots in their working world. The site features interviews, videos, resources and news.

📶 [www.scotsradio.com](http://www.scotsradio.com)

## Scots Scriever

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In partnership with the National Library of Scotland, Creative Scotland funds the Scots Scriever. This two-year residency has a focus on producing original creative work in Scots, and raising awareness, appreciation and use of Scots across the country.

📶 [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)

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## Resources for Scots

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### **The Elphinstone Institute**

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The Elphinstone Institute within the University of Aberdeen researches and celebrates the traditions and culture of the North East. The Institute explores how traditions and cultures are created, adapted, reinterpreted and renewed.

### **Scots Language Centre/ Centre for the Scots Leid**

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The Scots Language Centre is a hub for everything happening in the Scots-language community, with audio material, video, news, discussion, plus free classroom resources available for download. The site caters for speakers, learners and enthusiasts alike.

📡 [www.scotslanguage.com](http://www.scotslanguage.com)

### **Scottish Language Dictionaries**

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Scottish Language Dictionaries are the nation's resource for Scots lexicography and stewards of *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and the *Scottish National Dictionary*, with both resources available online. They also maintain a wider Scots language publications list and coordinate an education and outreach programme. Their online resource *Scuilwab* supports learning from infancy to adulthood.

📡 [www.scotsdictionaries.org.uk](http://www.scotsdictionaries.org.uk)

📡 [www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk)

📡 [www.scuilwab.org.uk](http://www.scuilwab.org.uk)

### **Shetland ForWirds**

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Shetland ForWirds celebrates Shetland dialect in literary and oral material, and is also home to a Shetland Dictionary, a dialect map and teaching resources. The site features poetry, prose and drama with texts and audio files, as well as oral history, stories, songs and rhymes.

📡 [www.shetlanddialect.org.uk](http://www.shetlanddialect.org.uk)



Orkney Folk Festival  
Photo: Séan Purser

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## Further Resources and Agencies

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### **The Association for Scottish Literary Studies**

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The Association for Scottish Literary Studies publishes a range of titles, including the Scottish Literary Review, ScotLit, Scottish Language, New Writing Scotland, and the Scotnotes study guides.

📶 [asls.arts.gla.ac.uk](http://asls.arts.gla.ac.uk)

### **Book Festival Scotland**

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All literature festivals in Scotland represent Gaelic and Scots writing in their programming.

📶 [www.bookfestivalscotland.com](http://www.bookfestivalscotland.com)

### **Creative Scotland**

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Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. As part of a wider remit, Creative Scotland supports Scotland's indigenous languages and the artists and organisations whose work is delivered in Gaelic and Scots.

📶 [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com)

### **Hands Up for Trad**

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Hands Up for Trad works to increase the profile and visibility of Scottish traditional music through information, education and advocacy. They promote excellence and support talent through a range of projects including Scots Trad Music Awards, BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year, Scotland Sings, Tinto Summer Schools and Folkwaves.

📶 [projects.handsupfortrad.scot](http://projects.handsupfortrad.scot)

### **Literature Alliance Scotland**

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All of Scotland's national Literature Agencies include responsibility for Gaelic and Scots in their remits.

📶 [literaturealliancescotland.co.uk](http://literaturealliancescotland.co.uk)

### **The National Library of Scotland**

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The National Library of Scotland is a major European research library, with world-class collections, and extensive collections of Gaelic and Scots in published and manuscript form. They are also the host organisation for the Scots Scriever.

📶 [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)



## **Scottish Book Trust**

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Inspiring readers and writers across Scotland, Scottish Book Trust produces a wide range of events and resources, including Book Week Scotland, literature events and awards, blogs, online resources and outreach projects. They are also a champion and advocate of both Gaelic and Scots, encouraging readers and writers, young and old, to explore these languages in poetry and prose.

📶 [scottishbooktrust.com](http://scottishbooktrust.com)

## **Scottish Poetry Library**

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The Scottish Poetry Library is a national resource and an advocate for poetry. The Library is committed to bringing poetry to as many people as possible, through a range of projects and partnerships. Their home in the centre of Edinburgh includes the library, reading rooms, and performance space. Their website showcases their collections spanning works in English, Gaelic and Scots, and also has additional learning resources including podcasts and blogs.

📶 [www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk)

## **Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches**

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Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches is a project which preserves, digitises and catalogues thousands of hours of Gaelic and Scots recordings which are then made available online. The website has a wealth of material including songs, music, history, poetry and folklore.

📶 [www.tobarandualchais.co.uk](http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk)

## **Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland (TRACS)**

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TRACS represents the traditional arts in Scotland and is a collaboration between three forums: Music, Storytelling and Dance. TRACS encourages collaboration across art forms and languages, and runs workshops, concerts and talks, as well as two festivals – the Scottish International Storytelling Festival and Tradfest Edinburgh/Dùn Èideann.

📶 [www.tracscotland.org](http://www.tracscotland.org)

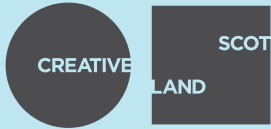
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**Creative Scotland is committed to supporting Gaelic and Scots. To find out more about the work we do, and to access resources, including our Gaelic Language Plan and our Scots Language Policy, visit [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com)**

**If you have any questions, you can email us at [enquiries@creativescotland.com](mailto:enquiries@creativescotland.com)**

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ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Waverley Gate  
2-4 Waterloo Place  
Edinburgh EH1 3EG  
Scotland UK

249 West George Street  
Glasgow G2 4QE  
Scotland UK

Reception +44 (0) 330 333 2000  
Enquiries +44 (0) 845 603 6000  
[enquiries@creativescotland.com](mailto:enquiries@creativescotland.com)

**[www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com)**

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