

APPENDIX II

SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

Recommendations for writers in Scots

These recommendations represent a consensus view on the spelling of Scots agreed at a meeting of Scots Makkers in the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh in 1985. The recommendations relate to specifically Scots words which are not found in English, and to words with related English equivalents which have a distinctive Scots pronunciation (e.g. *frein, ma, ir, out, pour* and *wyfe*). It is not suggested here that words used in Scots in common with English which have the same pronunciation, such as *field, sleep* and *nation*, should be altered if the English spelling system leaves no doubt as to the pronunciation.

In general, in writing Scots, it is desirable that there should be traditional precedents for the spellings employed and that writers aspiring to use Scots should not invent new spellings off the cuff. A serious problem of Scots orthography is that there are already too many spelling options for many words. For example, some current writers employ the spellings, *fer, fir* or *fur* for the word *for*, which is used in common with English. Since the vowel here is unstressed and hardly differentiated, such spellings serve no useful purpose.

If the following recommendations do not give guidance as to the spelling of any word, reference may be made to one of the Scots dictionaries, such as the Scottish National Dictionary, the Concise Scots Dictionary or the Concise English-Scots Dictionary.

A, AU, AW for the vowel sound in *awa, wha, gar; auld glaur, waur, maut, saut; aw, awbodie, brow, caw, faw* and *snaw*. The word *ca*, meaning *call*, may be distinguished from *caw* meaning *drive*. Where this sound begins or ends a word, AW is normally used.

AE, AI, A(consonant)E for the monothongal vowel sound in, *brae, faem, maen; dwaible, hain, sair, baith; hame, bane* and *vase*.

E normally represents the vowel sound in *ken, gled, ben, snek, ferm, herm, hert* and *yett*.

EE, EI, IE for the sound in *wee*. Where EE is firmly established, as in *ee* and *een*, it is retained, but EI is the preferred internal digraph and is used, for example, in *deid, reik, weill, feim, yestrein* and *seivin*. EI is also used in words (often of French and Latin origin) where this vowel is represented by 'i' in the corresponding English word. For example, *eidiot, freil, feinish, televeision, veisit, abeilitie, poseition, etc.* IE is used terminally in monosyllabic words such as *brie, die, gie, grie, hie, etc.*

TERMINAL –IE in place of final ‘y’ generally, for example, in *bonnie, clamjamfrie, cuddie, lassie, sailrie, etc.*

I is reserved for the short vowel in *brig, finnd, kist* and *shilpit*.

Y, Y(consonant)E, EY for the common diphthong in *gey* and *aye* (always), for example, in *tryst* and *wynd*; *wyfe dyke, syne, clype, styte, etc.* **EY** is used to represent this sound in words where it occurs initially or finally, for example, in *eydent, cley, stey* and *wey*.

EU for the sound in *aneuch, speug, neuk, etc.*, pronounced variously, from north to south and from east to west.

OU mainly for the sound of French ‘ou’, in *cou, fou, boul, soum, down, stour* and *flouer*. In certain words, spelt as in English, such as, *out, about* and *our*, there may be a case for using **OO** for this vowel to avoid confusion with English pronunciation.

U as in *dubs, lug, bul, wul, drumlie* and *hunder*.

U(consonant)E is employed for the ‘ou’ sound in a few words, such as *dule, bure, hure* and *wure*.

UI for the modified ‘o’ sounds as in *guid, ruif, buik, fuil, tuim, spuin, puir, uise, uiss, juist, buit* and *truith*.

OW, OWE always for the diphthong in, *growe, growthe, thowe, howf, dowie, fowk, lown, cowp, lowp, rowp, etc.*

CH is a velar fricative, except at the start of a word, as in *chap, chitter* or when it follows ‘n’, ‘r’, or ‘t’, as in *runch, airch, poutch, etc.* For example, *lauch, fecht, bricht, loch, bucht*. Use *laich* for *laigh*, *hauch* for *haugh*, *hoch* for *hough*, *souch* for *sough*. The ending, ‘-gh’ can profitably be dropped in *though* and *thouh*, to give *throu* and *tho*.

K replaces ‘-ct’ in words like, *expek, objek*. **K** is suggested in preference to ‘c’ after initial ‘s’, to give, for example, *skart, skelf, sklim, skreive* and *skunner*.

TERMINAL –IL is suggested in words commonly spelt with the endings, ‘-el’ and ‘le’ to give: *kittil, morsil, mukkil, soupil, taigil, traivil, warsil, etc.* but *kittlie*.

TERMINAL –SS is used to represent the final sound in *kiss*, except where ‘-se’ follows a consonant, as in *mense, merse*. Thus, *crouss, fauss, houss, mouss, lowss, poliss, galluss*.

TERMINAL –ND: The ‘d’ is sometimes not pronounced and there is no reason why it should be represented in many words: *an* (and), *len, staun, thousan, frein*, for example.. It may be necessary to retain ‘d’ in *haund, round, sound, stound, grund*, because the ‘d’ may be pronounced in derived forms, such as *haundit, roundit, stoundin, etc.*

VERBAL ENDINGS: ‘-in’ for present participles and verbal nouns: *be-in, giein, cairriein, swallaein. girnin, raxin; biggin, steidin, plenishin, dounsittin.*

Past tense and past participles of weak verbs ending in ‘-b’, ‘-d’, ‘-g’, ‘-k’, ‘-p’, and ‘-t’, add on ‘-it’; for example, *bebbit, gydit, biggit, howkit, flypit, rowpit, veisitit.* Verbs ending in ‘-il’, ‘-en’, ‘-er’, ‘-ch’, ‘-sh’, ‘-ss’ and ‘-f’, usually add on ‘-t’, for example, *hirpilt, fessent, foundert, laucht, fasht, blisst, dafft.* Otherwise, ‘-ed’ may be used, for example, *beiled, kaimed, hained, coloured: or ‘d’* when the infinitive already ends in silent ‘-e’: *breinged, chowed, loued, loused, etc.*

ANE is suggested for *yin, een, wan, one, etc.* *Ae* or *yae* before nouns.

PRONOUNS: *A* may be used for *I*, *ye* for *you*, except where the word is stressed; *hir* for *her*, *yeir* for *your*, *thai* for *they*, *thaim* for *them*. Use *wha, wham, whas*, interrogatively, and *that* as a relative pronoun in preference to *wha* or *whilk*. *Whatna*, rather than *whilk* as interrogative adjective.

TI, TIL, TAE, TILL: *Ti* is normally used for *to*, and invariably with the infinitive. *Til* may be used before nouns preceded by the definite or indefinite article, or more commonly, before words beginning with a vowel or the letter ‘h’. *She’s no speakin til him the-day.* *Tae* is equivalent to *too*, meaning *also*, and *toe*, and is used as a stressed form of *ti*, as in, *Pul the door tae!* *Till* means *until*.

APOSTROPHES should not be used to represent letters which would have been present if related English words had been used instead. Thus: *hert*, not *he’rt*; *wi* not *wi’*; *himsell* and *hirsell*, not *himsel’* and *hirsel’*.

NEGATIVES: ‘-na ‘ affixed to verb (*canna, isna, wesna*), or *no* used separately (*A’m no that fou*), are equivalent to English, *not*; *nae* before nouns is equivalent to English, *no* (*The’r nae luck about the hous*s).

DOUBLED CONSONANTS: In disyllabic words in which the first syllable is stressed, the consonant following the vowel in the first syllable is doubled when the vowel is short. For example, in *cokkil, fremmit, wumman, donnert, verra, blatter, dizzen*. The consonant, ‘n’ is also doubled in *blinnd, finnd*, to indicate the Scots vowel. The internal consonant is not doubled in, *telt, spelt, kent*.

AFFIRMATIVE: *Ay* is used for *yes*, and is distinguished from *aye*, meaning *always*.