

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPTS**

EPISODE 116: THE CELTIC FRINGE

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 116: The Celtic Fringe. In this episode, we’re going to turn our attention to the state of English beyond the borders of England in the parts of the British Isles where Celtic languages were traditionally spoken. The spread of English into those regions was mostly a result of military conquest, and most of those regions had experienced some sort of invasion from England over the centuries. Scotland was no exception. It had also been invaded by England, but the English language spoken in the south of Scotland had been native to that region for centuries. And there was little if any difference between the English of southern Scotland and that of northern England. But in the 1300s, that Scottish form of English started to become distinct. And the emergence of that dialect took place in a country that was fighting for its freedom. That Scots dialect is first recorded in a famous poem about that war for Scottish independence called “The Bruce.” So this time, we’ll look at rise of Robert the Bruce, the beginning of Scots literature, and the state of English in the Celtic Fringe of the British Isles.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes and transcripts at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Now this time, I want to look at the state of English outside of England in the early 1300s. This story will take us into the regions where native Celtic languages had traditionally been spoken. This includes Ireland, Wales, Cornwall and Scotland. These regions were particularly important to the English king, Edward I, because Edward felt that those regions were part of his domain. His kingdom didn’t end at the English border. He felt that he was the King of all of Britain and the overlord of Ireland. And for a brief period of time – having defeated the Welsh and the Scots – he could legitimately claim that title.

Edward’s desire to rule all of Britain ran deep, and it may have been loosely connected to his fascination with the legends of King Arthur. As we know, stories about Arthur and his knights were very popular throughout western Europe in the Middle Ages. And at the time, it was widely thought that Arthur had been a real life king at some point in the distant past. There was a very fine line between legend and fact, and it wasn’t easy to distinguish the ‘made up’ parts from the actual history.

For a king like Edward I, Arthur was the perfect role model. He was a legendary king, admired by all, the personification of chivalry, and most importantly of all, the King of All of Britain. Edward loved those popular stories and legends about King Arthur. He held grand Arthurian-themed festivals and tournaments. And one of those tournaments was held in Winchester in the year 1290. To commemorate that tournament, Edward apparently had a large round table built for the occasion. That round table can still be seen today in Winchester, and it dates to around the time of that grand tournament.

Edward held another one of those Arthurian festivals when he got married for the second time in the year 1299. And two years later, he justified his invasion of Scotland on the grounds that he was Arthur's political heir and, as such, he had a historical claim to rule all of Britain including Scotland.

He actually put this claim in writing in a letter that was sent to the Pope. Edward cited Geoffrey of Monmouth's well-known history of Britain and its version of the King Arthur legend. In the story, Arthur ruled all of Britain and even forced the Irish to pay homage, so in Edward's mind, these various Celtic regions had once been unified under Arthur's kingship. And in his letter to the Pope, Edward asserted that he was merely trying to resurrect what had once existed in the glorious past of Camelot. He wasn't really conquering any foreign nations, he was merely reclaiming what rightly belonged to him as Arthur's heir. It was a creative argument, and it didn't convince anyone beyond the English border. We often consider how history shapes literature, but this may have been a case where literature was helping to shape history.

We know from earlier episodes that Edward conquered Wales early in his reign. He imposed his army and his political will upon the Welsh, but it doesn't appear that he imposed the English language on them. There is no evidence of a Welsh form of English until the 1500s – about two centuries later. The only part of Wales where English was probably spoken as a native language was the Gower Peninsula on the south coast of Wales. An Anglo-Norman settlement had been established there shortly after the Norman Conquest, and the descendants of those local settlers probably spoke English. But otherwise, the English language didn't become widespread in Wales until the Modern English period.

South of Wales in the far southwestern corner of England was Cornwall. Now Cornwall was part of England, but the native Celtic language known as Cornish continued to be spoken there. Around the current point in our story in the 1300s, English started to become more widely spoken in the region. In the 1500s, an English writer named Andrew Boorde wrote that there were two languages spoken in Cornwall – "Cornysshe" and "Englysshe." But he added that many people in the region did not understand English. During the 1600s, English finally started to emerge as the dominant language in Cornwall. And during the 1700s, the native Cornish language finally died out. In fact, we actually know the name of the last person to speak Cornish as their native language. Her name was Dorothy Pentreath and she died in 1777. Her grave marker reads in part: "Here lieth interred Dorothy Pentreath who died in 1777, said to have been the last person who conversed in the ancient Cornish. The regular language of this county from the earliest records till it expired in the eighteenth century in this Parish of Saint Paul." So at least according to this grave marker and local tradition, Cornish died out with Ms. Pentreath in the late 1700s.

As we've seen, the spread of English into the westernmost regions of Britain was a slow and gradual process, and it didn't really become widespread until the early Modern English period. But the story was different up in Scotland.

As we know from prior episodes, English had a foothold in the south of Scotland from the late Anglo-Saxon period. In the 11th century, a Scottish military victory pushed the border with England southward several miles. When the Scottish border moved southward, it encompassed a large group of English speakers who had previously been part of Northumbria in northern England. And from that point on, those English speakers became Scots, but they held onto their native English language. And over the next couple of centuries, their dialect spread northward and westward – soon to become widespread throughout much of eastern and southwestern Scotland.

As we saw a few episodes back, most scholars believe that this English dialect of Scotland was essentially the same as the English dialect of northern England. They all constitute the so-called ‘Northern Dialect’ of Middle English. But that was about to change. A distinct Scottish dialect of English was about to emerge, and the first appearance of that dialect is directly related to the invasion and temporary conquest of Scotland by Edward I in the late 1200s. So let’s turn our attention back to Edward I – the English king who known as “Longshanks” during his lifetime and known as ‘The Hammer of the Scots’ after his death.

In prior episodes, we saw that Edward invaded Scotland after completing his conquest of Wales. He soon claimed victory, and for a while it looked like he was indeed a new King Arthur – in the sense that he could legitimately claim to be the King of All of Britain.

But a short time later, the Scots rose in rebellion under William Wallace. Wallace led his men to a major victory against the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Even though he was not a noble, he was put in charge of the Scottish forces. But a short time later, he was defeated by Edward’s forces at Falkirk. Wallace survived and continued to lead a guerilla campaign against the English, but after Falkirk, the control of the Scottish forces returned to the nobles – specifically to a nobleman named John Comyn and another nobleman named Robert the Bruce. Bruce was the grandson of the Robert the Bruce who had claimed the Scottish crown in the disputed succession a few years earlier. Comyn was the nephew of John Balliol who had won that succession dispute and became king before Edward I invaded. So both Comyn and Bruce came from noble families, and both families had their own respective bases of support in the south of Scotland. Both men were also descended from Anglo-Normans who had settled in the region, and so both men had close connections to the English nobility. That meant that they had divided loyalties. They were Scottish, but they were also of Anglo-Norman heritage. And Edward took advantage of those divided loyalties by purchasing their support with lands and titles.

Families like the Comyns, the Balliols, the Bruces and the Stewarts all had these divided loyalties, and they were all based in the southern part of Scotland where English was spoken. Thanks to the popularity of movies like Braveheart, we tend to associate the fight for Scottish independence with William Wallace. And part of the reason why William Wallace became such a folk hero in life and in death is because he wasn’t a noble. He never swore an oath to Edward, and Edward couldn’t buy him off with lands or titles. So William led his own resistance to English rule while many of the Scots nobles stood on the sidelines.

In the year 1305, all of that changed when Wallace was captured by Scottish forces who were loyal to Edward. He was turned over to the English forces and taken south to London where he was given a quick trial at Westminster Hall. Even though Wallace had never sworn an oath to Edward, he was accused of treason anyway. His conviction was a foregone conclusion. And the punishment for treason was a brutal execution. Wallace was hanged, drawn and quartered a short time later.

Wallace's execution was a major blow to the fight for Scottish independence. And it was really part of a one-two punch. Around the same time that Wallace was executed, English forces captured Stirling Castle in the south of Scotland. Control of that castle was the key to controlling most of Scotland. It was the most important and strategically-located castle in the country. It was the gateway to the Highlands further north. So with the capture of that castle and the execution of Wallace, it looked like Edward had finally reclaimed control of Scotland and re-secured his claim to the title King of all of Britain.

As I noted earlier, two of the most prominent nobles in Scotland at the time were John Comyn and Robert the Bruce. Between them, they controlled most of the Scottish military, but they were fierce rivals. They had both pledged their loyalty to Edward, but despite that show of loyalty, Bruce soon started to get cold feet. Edward set up a new government to administer Scotland, but Robert's role in the government was very limited. He also became frustrated at the treatment of the local Scots by the occupying forces from England. He started to get restless, and he considered renewing the resistance to English rule.

In February of 1306, Bruce met with his rival, John Comyn, at a church in Dumfries. The meeting is shrouded in mystery. It isn't entirely clear what the purpose of the meeting was or what they talked about. According to some later sources, Robert wanted the two men to combine their forces and take up arms against the English, but John Comyn refused to do so. There's no way to know for certain what they discussed, but what is known for certain is that it ended in a violent argument. And in the course of that argument, Robert the Bruce killed John Comyn. Now this was a big deal. Robert had just killed a nobleman who was loyal to the English king, and he had killed that nobleman in a church. So he knew that he was about to incur the wrath of both Edward I and the Church officials. At that point, he didn't really have much of a choice. His only real option was to go all in. He quickly made his way to the traditional capital at Scone, and he had himself crowned as the King of the Scots. From that point on, there was no turning back. He would either take on the English and defeat them – or he would suffer the same fate as William Wallace.

Now you may know that Robert the Bruce did in fact win the struggle for Scottish independence over the next decade or so. And I want to jump ahead here and give away the ending because Bruce's victory is directly related to the first appearance of a distinctly Scottish form of English.

The story of the Scottish war for independence under Robert the Bruce was later chronicled in a long narrative poem commonly known as “The Bruce.” This poem was completed around the year 1375, so about 60 or 70 years after the events covered in this episode. It’s an extremely important poem because it was composed in Scotland, and it is in fact the oldest significant piece of literature composed in the English dialect that became known as Scots. So this poem marks the beginning of a new literary tradition in that dialect. It is therefore the first time that we have a distinct form of English with its own literary tradition outside the country of England.

Now let me elaborate on that statement a little bit. First of all, I am calling this manner of speech an English “dialect” because that’s really what it was at this point. It was even called “Ingliss” by the early writers in Scotland who write in that dialect. It didn’t start to be called “Scots” until the late 1400s and early 1500s after it had evolved further and had become much more distinct. So even though some people consider Scots to be a separate language, I’ll reserve that debate for a future episode after the differences have become much more apparent.

Though the language of this poem is very similar to the language of northern England, the poem does have some unique features that stand out. Also, it was composed in Scotland, by a Scots poet, with the specific theme of Scottish independence. So given all of those distinguishing features, this poem marks the beginning of a new Scottish literary tradition.

The poem was composed by a man named John Barbour who was the Archdeacon of Aberdeen in Scotland. He also taught at Oxford and Paris, and he composed the poem while serving at the court of a later Scottish king.

The poem survives in two copies that were made about a century after the original poem was composed. As the title implies, the poem focuses on the life of Robert the Bruce, and it covers the Scottish war for independence in the early 1300s. The poem traces the actual events of the period, but it isn’t exactly a chronicle. Barbour occasionally embellishes the story. He begins the poem by noting a good story based on actual facts has a double claim to popularity. It has the entertainment value of a good story and educational value of a historical account. He then says that he intends to tell the story of Robert the Bruce so that Robert’s deeds will not be forgotten. The prologue contains a passage that could have been pulled straight from the movie Braveheart. Barbour declares that the Scots yearned for independence and freedom from English oppression. In Modern English, the passage reads:

Ah freedom is a noble thing
Freedom allows man to have pleasure or liking
Freedom all solace to man gives
He lives at ease that freely lives
A noble heart may have no ease
Nor else nought that may him please
If freedom fails; for free will
Is yearned over all other things.

Now here's the same passage in the original language of the poem.

A! fredome is a noble thing!
Fredome mays man to haiff liking;
Fredome all solace to man giffis
He levys at es that frely levys
A noble hart may haiff nane es,
Na ellys nocht that may him ples,
Gyff fredome failyhe: for fre liking
Is yharnyt our all othir thing.

Again the language of the poem has most of the same features that we saw in the Cursor Mundi back in Episode 112. So these dialectal features were common throughout the north of Britain. For example, the poem uses the Northern pronoun forms *they*, *them* and *their* – rather than the southern forms that began with an 'h'.

Nouns are made plural by adding an 'S' at the end, instead of the 'E-N' suffix used in the south. And verbs in 3rd person singular end with the northern 'S' rather than the southern 'TH.' So in the passage I just read, we have "He levys" – or "he lives" – rather than 'he liveth.' And the spellings in the poem indicate that the dialect used the Old English long 'A' sound (/ah/) rather than the /aw/ and /oh/ sounds that emerged in the south. So the passage I just read has *nane* rather than the Southern forms *no* and *none*.

Beyond those common Northern features, the poem has some other features that were more distinctly Scottish – and were more durable there. For example, the /x/ sound was preserved in words like *loch*. In the poem we find *mycht* instead of *might*, and *rycht* instead of *right*. Again this sound is still used in Scots and Scottish English.

Also words that begin with a 'WH' – like *where* and *when* – are almost always spelled with a 'QUH' instead of 'WH.' So *where* is spelled Q-U-H-A-R. And *when* is spelled Q-U-H-E-N. This seems odd, but it was the way scribes represented an older aspirated pronunciation which still survives in parts of Scotland. So *where* would have been more like /hwar/ and *when* would have been more like /hwen/.

The poem also expresses past tense with an 'I-T' or 'Y-T' ending rather than the modern 'E-D' ending. So instead of *lived*, it uses *lyvyt*. Instead of *coupled*, it uses *cowplyt*. Rather than *called*, the poem uses *callyt*.

As we proceed with this story, I'll return to parts of this poem. And we'll have an opportunity to hear some more of these unique features in those passages.

So let's return to the story of Robert the Bruce and the war for Scottish independence. Having killed his rival and secured the title of King of the Scots, Bruce set about gathering his supporters to help him take on the English. He established a hideout in the hills, and he attracted the support of ordinary people who yearned for freedom and independence.

A couple of months later he engaged the English army near Perth in the central part of Scotland. Bruce suffered a harsh defeat. His wife and daughter were captured by the English forces and taken as prisoners, but Bruce managed to get away. He once again went into hiding and kept moving to avoid capture.

Bruce's whereabouts during this period are not known with certainty. According to the oral tradition of the Mackenzie Clan, Bruce was welcomed by them in the Highlands of Scotland during this period. The Mackenzies were supporters of Bruce's cause, and he may have spent time under their protection. Now the reason I mention this is because the name of the Mackenzie Clan reflects how the Scots dialect of English evolved in its own direction over time. And it also shows how language sometimes takes unexpected turns.

The name *MacKenzie* is the Modern English version of an old Gaelic name. The original Gaelic version was something like *MacCoinnich* (/machk-cun-eech/). It meant 'son of the fair' in Scots-Gaelic. As the Scots dialect of English spread across southern and eastern Scotland, this name was Anglicized as *Mackaingye* (/meh-keng-yi/). So it had a 'Y' or /yee/ sound at the end.

Now in order to represent that sound in Old English, the Anglo-Saxons used that Old English letter called yogh (ȝ). It looked sort of like a number 3 with long curvy tail at the bottom. Another way to picture it is think of a lower-case 'z' written in a cursive style. So you begin with the first two straight lines of the 'z', but when you get the third straight line at the bottom, you make a long curvy tail instead. Again, in Old English, this letter could represent a hard 'g' sound, or a 'y' sound, or the /x/ sound. The Normans didn't like that Anglo-Saxon letter, so in England it was ditched in favor of either the letter G or Y or the GH letter combination for the /x/ sound.

But in Scotland, scribes held onto that old Anglo-Saxon letter for a longer period of time. And they used it to spell names like *Mackaingye*. But when the printing press was invented, printers didn't have that old Anglo-Saxon letter. They only had the normal European letters derived from the Roman alphabet. So they had to figure out what to do with those old letters. You might remember that in England they replaced the Old English letter for the 'TH' sound called 'thorn' with the letter Y. So the word *the* was often spelled 'YE' instead of 'thorn-E.' And that's how we got the word *ye* for *the* – as in 'Ye Old Shoppe.' As I've noted before, it is actually the word *the*, but since it was spelled 'YE,' people thought it was supposed to be pronounced as /yee/.

Well the same kind of thing happened in Scotland with the letter yogh. Since the yogh resembled the letter Z in many handwritten manuscripts, printers started to substitute the letter Z for the yogh. And that's what happened with the name *Mackaingye*. It started to be spelled with a Z at the end since printers didn't have a yogh. And over time, people in the south of Scotland thought the Highland clan name was pronounced with a 'z' sound at the end. So *Mackaingye* became *MacKenzie*. And another common surname *Menzies* (/MING-iz/) was also spelled with a Z and it started to be pronounced as /MEN-zeez/.

Outside of certain surnames and place names which are common in Scotland, this confusion has not had much of an impact on standard English. There are a couple of Scots words that are used in a few English dialects that also show this same change. For example, a type of chicken or cock that is native to the Scottish Highlands is called either a *capercailye* (/kæper-KAY-lee/) or *capercailzie* (/kaper-KAYL-zee/). The first pronunciation is the older pronunciation with the ‘y’ sound and the second pronunciation is the newer pronunciation with the ‘z’ sound, and that’s because it became common to spell that word with a Z at the end. Also, a somewhat obscure term for a beggar is a *gaberlunzie* spelled G-A-B-E-R-L-U-N-Z-I-E. But again, that Z was substituted for the older letter yogh, and the word is still pronounced as /gæber-lun-yee/ in some older Scots dialects.

So again, a simple decision about what letter to use actually changed the way some of these words were pronounced over time. And since this particular decision was unique to Scots, it caused a sound change there that didn’t happen to the English spoken in England.

So that word *gaberlunzie* meaning ‘a beggar’ became *gaberlunzie*. And as far as we know, Robert the Bruce was essentially a *gaberlunzie* in the later part of 1306 when he was forced into hiding to avoid the English forces that still controlled much of Scotland. At this point early on, the English clearly had the upper hand. Many of the Scottish rebels had been killed or captured, and Edward I mounted a large expedition to head north to put an end to Bruce once and for all. Edward reached Carlisle in northern England and set up camp for the winter. By this point, Edward was an old man and in very poor health, but it didn’t stop him from trying to enforce his claims to Scotland.

The tide finally started to turn in favor of the Scots in the early part of the following year. Bruce was able to assemble some supporters and claim victory against the English forces in a couple of small battles in the spring. Meanwhile, a new resistance figure emerged named James Douglas. Douglas was a Scottish knight whose father had been a supporter of William Wallace. He joined with Robert the Bruce as soon as Bruce was crowned as king, and he basically served as Bruce’s main lieutenant. He secured several key victories for the Scots early on. And Barbour’s poem is as much an ode to James Douglas as it is to Bruce himself.

Douglas was an important figure in the war because he kept the English forces contained in the south of Scotland. And that allowed Bruce to secure his position and gain supporters in the north of Scotland. Douglas was also known for surprise attacks which had a psychological impact on the English. On one occasion, he surprised an English garrison while they were attending Mass. His men killed and captured most of English soldiers even though the soldiers were in a chapel attending Church services. Douglas’s men then ransacked and burned the castle that the English garrison had been defending. They then disappeared into the moors and the countryside. This event became known as the Douglas Larder, and it showed that Douglas was a master of psychological warfare. He terrified the English forces and was therefore revered by the Scots. The English soon gave him the nickname “The Black Douglas” because the mere mention of his name invoked a sense of fear and dread among his enemies.

I said that the early part of 1307 marked a turning point in the war for Scottish independence. Not only did Robert the Bruce achieve a couple of victories and James Douglas begin his campaigns against the English, but there was also an even more significant development, and that was the death of the English king Edward I. As I noted earlier, Edward had established a base in northern England and was waiting for the winter to pass before launching his campaign into Scotland to defeat Bruce and put down the uprising. But Edward was hampered by his advanced age, very poor health, and a case of dysentery.

By July of 1307, he was moving north, and he set up camp just south of the Scottish border, but he never made it across the border. On July 7, Edward succumbed to his advanced age and illness, and he died with the border still in sight.

Edward's death is also recounted by John Barbour in his poem "The Bruce." The passage provides a sense of how much disdain there was for Edward in Scotland. The poem says that Edward was visited by several of his men while on his death bed. They had come from the castle at Kildrummy where they had taken several prisoners. They asked Edward what they should do with the prisoners, and Edward responded that the prisoners should be hanged and drawn. Even on his death bed, Edward showed no mercy. Here is the passage, first in Modern English then in the original language of the poem:

And when death was near
The folk that were at Kildrummy
came with the prisoners they had taken,
and went before the King.

And quhen he to the ded wes ner,
The folk, that at Kyldrummy wer,
Com with the presoners at thai had tane,
And syne unto the Kyng ar gane.

And to comfort him, they told
how they captured and held the castle
and how the castle's garrison was brought
before him to do with them whatever he thought.

And for to confort him thai tald
How thai the castell to thame yhald;
And how thai to his will war brocht,
Till do of thame quhat-evir he thocht;

And they asked what they should do with the prisoners.
Then he looked at them angrily
And said grinning, "Hang and draw them."
It was a great wonder that he said such words

That he, who had not long to live
Should answer in such a cruel manner,

And askit quhat thai suld of thaim do.
Than lukit he angyrly thame to,
And said gyrnand “Hangis and drawis.”
It wes gret wounder of sic sawis;
That he, that to the ded wes neir,
Suld ansuer apon sic maneir.

Without offering any mercy,
How could he confidently appeal to God
who truthfully judges all things
to have mercy on his soul
When he himself, through his felony,
At such point and time had no mercy?

Forouten menyng of mercy,
How mycht he trastly on hym cry,
That suthfastly demys all thing
To haf mercy for his crying
Of him that, throu his felony,
In-to sic poynt had no mercy?

His men obeyed his command
and he died soon thereafter.
And he was brought to his burial place
And after then, his son was king.

His men his mandment has all done:
And he deit thar-efrir sone;
And syne wes brocht till berynes:
His son syne eftir kyng he wes.

As the poem notes, Edward’s death meant that his 23 year old son then became King of England. The son was also named Edward. So the younger Edward became Edward II. Now there’s an old saying the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. But in this case, the apple fell in a completely different orchard. The younger Edward had none of his father’s political or military instincts. He was weak and indecisive, and he preferred the luxuries of court to political maneuvering and military campaigns.

If Edward I had survived for another year or so, it is very likely that the Scottish rebellion would have been crushed. Bruce faced opposition from the English army, the papacy, and half of the Scottish nobles who had been loyal to John Comyn – the rival that Bruce had killed a few months earlier. But despite those long odds, Bruce got a reprieve with the death of Edward I. The man

who became known as the Hammer of the Scots was dead, but his campaign into Scotland continued under the leadership of his son. Though the campaign continued, it was a largely symbolic effort with the son in command. The younger Edward soon turned back and headed to London to focus on his coronation. With the English retreat, Bruce and his allies took full advantage of the reprieve and consolidated their power throughout Scotland.

Now you might remember from an earlier episode that the younger Edward was the first English prince to have the title of “The Prince of Wales.” This reflected the fact that his father had conquered Wales and had bestowed that title on him as a small child.

The elder Edward has also arranged a marriage between the younger Edward and the French king’s daughter Isabella. That agreement had been made, but the marriage had never occurred. So the younger Edward quickly headed across the Channel to France for a quick marriage ceremony. He then returned to London with his bride so that they could be crowned together as king and queen. But for Edward, this may have just been a formality because the real object of his affection wasn’t his new bride. It was his male companion named Piers Gaveston.

The relationship between Edward and Gaveston has been the subject of much speculation over the centuries even during Edward’s lifetime. It is generally believed that the younger Edward was gay or bisexual and that Piers Gaveston was his lover. There is no way to know if their relationship was physical, but there is no doubt that Edward was infatuated with Gaveston and was emotionally attached to him.

Gaveston was a knight from Gascony in southern France which was the only part of France still held by the English crown. Over the prior century or so, quite a few Gascon nobles had been welcomed to the English court. They were often granted land and titles in England which angered the native English nobles. We saw this same scenario play out during the reign of Edward’s grandfather Henry III. Well, the Gascons not only received English land and titles, they also tended to be arrogant and haughty. They looked down on the English nobles as uncivilized and uncultured. And Piers Gaveston tended to fit all of those traditional stereotypes.

Gaveston and the younger Edward had a close relationship for several years before Edward I died, and the relationship was a source of friction even then. The elder Edward had sent Gaveston into exile on two different occasions. And in fact, he was still in exile at the time that Edward I died near the Scottish border.

As soon as his father died, the younger Edward immediately invited Gaveston back to England. Edward even gave Gaveston the earldom of Cornwall which was one of the more prestigious earldoms in England. So from the outset, the English nobles were suspicious of their new king. He prematurely ended the Scottish campaign, he recalled his exiled companion Gaveston, and he gave Gaveston a prestigious earldom.

And then there was the coronation. It was an elaborate ceremony at Westminster Abbey in January of 1308. Edward and his bride Isabella were crowned as King and Queen, but preceding them down the aisle was Piers Gaveston. Gaveston was given the honor of carrying the crown and

sword of Edward the Confessor. Now that was honor usually given to the highest noble in the kingdom, not some young upstart and court favorite. All of the English barons were dressed in gold colors which was traditional for a coronation. But Piers Gaveston wore purple – the color typically reserved for royalty.

After the ceremony, there was a grand banquet. Normally the king and queen would sit together at the banquet, but Edward sat with Gaveston instead. And according to some reports, Edward let Gaveston choose which of wedding presents he wanted to keep for himself.

Needless to say, the relationship between Edward and Gaveston dominated the whole ceremony. The queen's French relatives return to France and reported the events to her father – the French king Philip. They told Philip that Edward loved his male companion more than his wife. The French nobles may have been upset, but they weren't the only ones. The English nobles felt much the same way, especially given that Edward was neglecting the rise of Robert the Bruce up in Scotland.

Now in the same year that Edward II was crowned as king, an important religious scholar from Scotland passed away. His name was John Duns Scotus – often known simply as Duns Scotus. He was one of the most important theologians of this period. He taught at Oxford and later at Paris, and his writings influenced many philosophers and theologians of the late Middle Ages. In his writings, he tried to reconcile the philosophy of Aristotle with the teachings of Christianity, and he became a leader of that movement. Well, he died at this point in the year 1308, and you may be wondering why I am telling you about him. Well, his name gave us a word which we still use in Modern English. Duns Scotus was an important scholar, but ironically, his name gave us the word *dunce* – meaning someone who is stupid or can't be educated. For years after his death, the scholars and theologians who promoted his teachings were called *Dunsmen* – and later *Dunces*. The problem was that his teachings were very complicated and too difficult for many people to follow. And with the rise of humanism in the 1500s, his teachings fell out of favor because they were thought to be too technical and complex and argumentative. Those who continued to defend his teachings were ridiculed and rejected, and the term *dunce* became associated with students and teachers who refused to embrace the new learning. And that's how we ended up with the modern sense of the word *dunce* as someone who is dim-witted or uneducated.

So the word *dunce* is derived from the name of the theologian Duns Scotus, and interestingly Duns Scotus acquired his name from the Scottish town where he was born. The name of that town was Duns, Scotland, and it is located in the southeastern corner of Scotland near the English border. It was a region where English was spoken, and it was a region that was still under English control at the current point in our story in the year 1308. For much of this period, the English forces held onto the southern part of Scotland while Robert the Bruce and James Douglas were left to their own devices in the middle and northern parts of the country. Bruce slowly consolidated his power by defeating the nobles who supported his rivals.

Within a couple of years, Bruce and his men were attacking English strongholds in the west and southwest of Scotland and, one by one, they fell to Bruce's forces. His supporters actually started to carry out raids across the border into northern England, and the young English king was doing nothing to stop any of this.

Furthermore, the English barons had become even more irritated with the king's companion – Piers Gaveston. The nobles would have probably tolerated the relationship between Edward and Gaveston if it had been discreet, but it was anything but discreet. Gaveston took advantage of his favored position. He gave the barons insulting nicknames. He treated them as inferiors. And when the nobles tried to meet with Edward to offer him advice and counsel – which was their traditional role – Edward often refused to talk to them. He would only speak with Gaveston, so all communications had to go through Gaveston. The barons took their advisory role very seriously, but Edward was only taking advice from his companion.

Soon, the English barons decided that they had had enough, and they proceeded to take matters into their own hands. In the year 1311, the barons drafted a set of major political reforms, and they forced Edward to agree to it. These reforms are known as the Ordinances of 1311, and if all of this seems like *deja vu*, it should. History was basically repeating itself. The barons had tried to reign in Edward's great-grandfather John by forcing him to sign Magna Carta. Then a few years later, the barons forced Edward's grandfather Henry III to sign the Provisions of Oxford. You might remember that those reforms stripped Henry of much of his power for a period of time. And now the barons were forcing young Edward to agree to these so-called Ordinances of 1311.

The reforms required that Piers Gaveston was to be exiled. They also provided that Edward was to call a Parliament at least twice a year. Furthermore, Parliament was given the power to veto the appointment of important government officials like the chancellor, and the treasurer, and even some of the officials in Edward's own household. Parliament was also given the power to appoint a royal council to assist with governance, and the king was required to follow its advice and recommendations.

Now all of this was a major intrusion on the authority of the king, but Edward initially agreed to go along with it. Again, history has a tendency to repeat itself, and just as Edward's ancestors ultimately rejected the restrictions placed on them, Edward did the same thing. And just as the earlier restrictions led to war between the king and barons, again the same thing happened here.

The barons had forced Piers Gaveston into exile, but within a few months he had returned and he was once again by Edward's side. The barons summoned troops to force the issue, and Edward and Gaveston headed to the north of England to gather their own forces. The two men operated separately for a brief period, and Gaveston was captured by forces loyal to the barons. One of the barons took Gaveston back to his castle, and he decided to put an end to the king's companion once and for all. Gaveston was beheaded on June 13 of the year 1312.

It was a dramatic development, and it actually caused some of the nobles to back off. The hated Gaveston was dead and, for the first time, Edward was seen as a sympathetic figure by many nobles. Edward and the barons agreed to a truce. The barons largely dropped the restrictions they had tried to impose on Edward, and Edward agreed to try to recover the parts of Scotland that had fallen to Robert the Bruce.

Over the following months, Bruce continued to capture castles and secure his position throughout much of Scotland. He held his own parliaments, he issued charters, and he even established diplomatic relations with other European nations. But the English still maintained a foothold in the south of Scotland thanks to that strategically located castle called Stirling Castle which I mentioned earlier in the episode. You might recall that that castle was the gateway to the north, and whoever held that castle effectively controlled the southern part of Scotland. Bruce knew that he had to take that castle from the English forces if he wanted to be the king of all of Scotland. So in the year 1313, the siege of the castle began.

The siege lasted for many weeks, and the English garrison that held the castle finally agreed to leave and turn it over to Bruce's men if English reinforcements didn't arrive by mid-summer. That agreement essentially set a deadline. It was clear that Edward's forces would arrive by mid-summer to relieve the castle, and Robert the Bruce set a trap for them.

On the approach to the castle, there was a region full of bogs and pools called Bannockburn. The Scots forces anticipated the English approach and they took a position on the dry, high ground to the west of the boggy region. They also dug pits in the marsh and lined them with stakes to slow down the advancing English forces. Young King Edward led the English campaign, and when his troops finally reached Bannockburn, the cavalry got bogged down in the trap. The marshy land made it difficult to maneuver, and the Scots were able to target them from the higher ground. With the English cavalry neutralized, the Scots descended on them. The battle ensued, and the Scots used their advantages to rout the English forces.

John Barbour describes the carnage in several passages of his poem "The Bruce." He writes:

With swords, spears and with clubs
The battle there was so felonious and cruel
And there was such a great spilling of blood
That on the earth, pools of it stood

With swerdis, speris, and with macys.
The battale thair so felloune was,
And sua richt gret spilling of blud,
That on the erd the flus it stud.

The Scots men so well laid them bare
And such great slaughter made to them there
And from so many, the lives were taken
That all the field was left bloody

The Scottis men so weill thame bar,
And sua gret slauchtir maid thai thar,
And fra so feill the livis revit,
That all the feild wes bludy levit.

And the knights on their steeds tumbled
while wearing many rich and royal garments
defiled rudely under their feet.
Some held aloft, some losing their blood or sweat
a long while fighting they were
until noise and cries could no longer be heard.

And see tummyll knychtis and stedis,
With mony rich and ryoll wedis
Defoulit roydly under feit.
Sum held on loft, sum tynt the suet.
A long quhill thus fechtand thai wer,
That men no noyis na cry mycht her.

As the battle progressed, it soon became apparent to Edward that his forces were doomed to defeat. He fled the battlefield, and many of his men abandoned the fight when that saw him in retreat. With that, the Battle of Bannockburn came to an end. And the next day, the Scots forces took possession of Stirling Castle which gave them control of the south of the country. And that made Robert the Bruce the king of all of Scotland.

Bannockburn was the decisive battle in a war for independence that was mostly fought with guerilla and psychological warfare. It is one of the most significant battles in Scottish history because it secured Scottish independence, though the overall struggle with England would continue for several more centuries. The Scottish victory at Bannockburn also meant that the English dialect spoken in Scotland would be the dialect of an independent nation. That English dialect soon developed its own independent literary tradition beginning with John Barbour's poem about the events which I've discussed in this episode. By the early 1400s, the Scottish Parliament had begun to issue its legislation in this English dialect rather than in Latin. And again, the language was still called "Inglis" at the time. But during the 1400s, it became so distinct, that it started to be known as Scots.

Now it is tempting to end this story here, with the Scottish victory at Bannockburn, with Scottish independence secured, and with the birth of a distinct Scots dialect of English. But since this is story of the Celtic Fringe, we have to take these events one step further – to Ireland.

While Robert the Bruce's victory at Bannockburn is well-remembered, what came next is sometimes forgotten. The year after Bannockburn, Robert's brother led what was essentially a Scottish invasion of Ireland. Robert's brother was also named Edward – specifically Edward the Bruce. So we have a lot of Edwards in this story. The old English king Edward I, his son Edward II, and Robert's brother Edward the Bruce.

Now during the time that Scotland was under English rule, the old English king Edward I had used Irish forces in his army. You might remember from Episode 85 that the English had invaded and conquered large parts of Ireland back in the late 1100s. English power and influence in Ireland had decreased during the 1200s, but the English king could still muster troops from the region if he needed them. So that gave the Scots an incentive to intervene in Ireland. If Bruce's men could kick the English out of Ireland, it would ensure that Irishmen would no longer be conscripted to fight for the English king.

Robert the Bruce also had a certain appeal to the nobles of Ireland. The Scots and the Irish had a common Gaelic heritage and ancestry. And when forced to choose between an English overlord or a Scottish overlord, it seemed like an easy choice. Robert's brother Edward was invited to Ireland by local nobles, and he arrived there in the year 1315 with 200 ships. Edward was an important military leader in his own right, and he had played an essential role in the victory at Bannockburn. He began a slow and gradual conquest of Ireland, and over the next couple of years, he racked up victory after victory. His brother Robert soon joined him in Ireland, but the Bruces rapidly wore out their welcome. Their forces routinely burned crops and drove off cattle. This coincided with a famine, and the Bruces were blamed for much of the hardship and starvation. Robert saw the writing on the wall and headed back to Scotland, but his brother Edward remained behind in Ireland. The following year, Edward was defeated in battle and killed. With that, the Scottish invasion of Ireland came to an end, but that invasion did have consequences.

The departure of the Scots left a political vacuum in much of Ireland. The English still maintained a base around Dublin, but they had little influence outside of that region. Furthermore, most of the Englishmen in Ireland had adopted Irish culture over the years. That trend accelerated in the power vacuum that the Scots left behind. By the mid 1300s, most of the English settlers dressed like the Irish and spoke Gaelic. The English government tried to stem that tide in the year 1366 by passing the Statutes of Kilkenny. The law acknowledged that the English language had largely fallen out of use in Ireland. So it required all of the English settlers in Ireland to speak English. The law said that Englishmen who spoke Gaelic should have their lands forfeited until they undertook to speak English. So if they didn't speak English, they had to learn the language in order to maintain their property.

The law also outlawed marriages between the English and the Irish. It required Englishmen to wear English styles of dress. And it required legal disputes to be resolved with English law. Now to be fair, these Statutes of Kilkenny never had much legal effect. The restrictions were largely ignored, and the government was so weak that it couldn't really enforce them. So the English language continued its gradual decline in Ireland over the next few centuries.

So English had completely different trajectories in Scotland and Ireland. In Scotland, its position was secured with the victory of Robert the Bruce and emergence of an independent English-speaking court. But in Ireland, the English language declined during the same period. Many of the English settlers abandoned their native language over time.

Despite the overall failure of the Statutes of Kilkenny, there was one interesting requirement that is often overlooked, and it actually helped to preserve that English heritage in Ireland. In addition to language and fashion and law, the statutes specifically required all Englishmen living in Ireland to retain their English surnames. And if any Irishmen were living among the English, they had to acquire an English surname if they wanted to have the rights of an Englishman.

Now this is a fascinating provision because it points to the important status of surnames by this point in the 1300s. It wasn't just important to have 'a' surname. It was important to have the right kind of surname – an English surname. In other words, one based on an English place name, or an English word for an occupation, or some other English word that helped to identify and distinguish the person from other people that had the same first name.

So next time, I want to explore this aspect of English and European society in the Middle Ages. I'll examine how and why surnames became so common during the first couple of centuries after the Norman Conquest. And I'll look at the interesting origin of many common surnames that still exist today.

So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English podcast.