THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 77: RIVAL RELATIVES AND THE LAND OF THE SCOTS

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast - a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 77: Rival Relatives and the Land of Scots. In this episode, we're going to continue to look at developments following the death of Henry I. Henry intended for his daughter Matilda to succeed him, but that didn't happen. Instead, the story of Britain shifted to several of her relatives. Her cousin Stephen quickly seized the throne. But Matilda found support from her uncle David in Scotland, who happened to be the king of Scotland. So, this time, we'll look at those political developments. And along the way, we'll look at the emergence of a unique offshoot of Old English called 'Scots'. So, we'll look at the first variety of English spoken outside of England.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can always reach me directly by email at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com. And I'm also on twitter at englishhistpod.

And last time, I mentioned that I recently established a supporter's page at Patreon.com. And first of all, let me thank those of you who have pledged to support the podcast there. I didn't really go into detail about the Patreon page last time, but let me mention a couple of things about it this time before we begin. First of all, the way Patreon works is that the artist, or podcaster in this case, sets a specific goal and asks supporters to pledge a monthly amount. The pledge is charged monthly so be aware of that, but you are free to change or stop the pledge at any time. In exchange, those who make donations receive certain rewards. And in this case, anyone who pledges $5 or more will receive access to the bonus episodes posted there.

Now the goal I have set there is designed to ensure that the podcast continues on the same schedule that I have used over the past four years and that it remains ad-free. If I should happen to exceed the fundraising goal, then that would actually allow me to dedicate even more time to the podcast, and, perhaps, release episodes even more frequently. And I'd be happy to do that if the donations permit it.

By the way, the bonus episodes can be streamed directly from Patreon. And you can also download the patreon app and listen via that. And you can also download the episodes if you prefer. The next bonus episode will be posted in a couple of days. It covers some recent research and developments concerning the Indo-Europeans. Again, that's at Patreon.com. And you can just go to my website historyofenglishpodcast.com and link from there.

So, with that, let's turn to this episode. And let's explore the fallout following the death of Henry I. This time, I want to look at the events immediately following Henry's death. We'll see how Henry's nephew quickly seized the throne. And we'll also see how some prominent barons remained loyal to Matilda. That included her uncle David, who was both an English baron and the King of Scotland. So, we'll trace developments north of the border as well.

But let's begin down in England, with the death of Henry I. As we know, Henry was the last son of William the Conqueror and his death marked a passing of a generation. The focus now turned

to the grandchildren of William the Conqueror, specifically his granddaughter Matilda and his grandson Stephen. For much of the next 20 years, they would fight each other for control of the throne.

Now, we are very familiar with Matilda by the point. She was Henry's daughter and she had been designated by him as his heir. But as I noted last time, Henry really set her up to fail. She had been sent away to marry the Holy Roman Emperor when she was little more than a child. She spent many years in Germany as the Empress until the Emperor died. Henry then brought her back to England to be declared his successor. But then he immediately turned round and sent her to France to marry Geoffrey of Anjou. So, she had spent very little time in England, and she really lacked the personal connections on the ground which she needed to secure the throne, especially given that she would have been the first woman to rule England.

With Henry's death, the real power passed to his prominent barons and church officials. And most of those people were related to Matilda is some way. Two of the most prominent land holders were Matilda's cousin Stephen and her uncle David. And before we can make some sense out of what happened next, we need to become familiar with these two characters.

Stephen was Matilda's cousin, and he was another grandchild of William the Conqueror. As we know, all of William's sons were now dead. None of them had a legitimate son who was living to inherit the throne. But beyond those sons, William the Conqueror had several daughters. Most of them had been married to prominent nobles in Western Europe. One of those daughters was named Adela, and she had this son Stephen. So, Stephen and Matilda were both grandchildren of William the Conqueror. And they quickly emerged as the primary rivals for the throne. So why was Stephen so important?

Well, it was because he was largely raised in his uncle Henry's court and he was one of Henry's favorites. Stephen's mother Adela had married the Count of Blois – a region south of Normandy. She later gave birth to Stephen. Then her husband – the count – went off to fight in the Crusades and got himself killed. So, that left young Stephen without a father. Adela felt that Stephen needed a strong male figure in his life, so she decided to send Stephen to her brother Henry's court. Henry took a liking to the boy. As Stephen grew older, he acquired numerous land holdings in southeastern England. So, while Henry's daughter Matilda was away in Germany married to the Holy Roman Emperor, his nephew Stephen was growing up in the Anglo-Norman court, and he was making all of the connections which turned out to be very important when his uncle Henry died.

As I noted, Stephen acquired significant land holdings in southeastern England, especially around Kent. And this is kind of important. This was the part of England that was closest to the French coast. If you were a trader or other traveler passing between France and England, you probably went through Kent. And Stephen's landholdings in the region meant that he controlled those trade routes on the English side of the Channel and that made him the most prominent baron in that region. That trade extended up the Thames to London. So, Stephen was also very prominent in London.

But then Stephen did something that enhanced his regional power even further. He married the daughter of the Count of Boulogne. Now, her name was also Matilda, and this is one of those cases where everyone having the same name creates lots of confusion. This marriage was important because Boulogne is the region of northern France that is located directly across the Channel from Kent. So, after that marriage, Stephen effectively controlled both the English and the French side of that major crossing point between England and France.

Stephen clearly had a desire to succeed Henry, but, of course, Henry had named his Matilda as his heir. Nevertheless, Stephen had a lot of things going for him. He was a prominent landholder in England, and Matilda wasn't. He was close to many of the prominent government and church officials in England, and Matilda wasn't. He was a man, and Matilda was a woman, and there had never been a female monarch. He also had no complicated ties to the rival region of Anjou, unlike Matilda who was married to the ruler of Anjou. And Matilda and her husband Geoffrey had been at war with Henry when he died, but Stephen had remained loyal to his uncle Henry. For all of these reasons, Stephen had a strong claim to make when Henry died.

As it turned out, neither Matilda nor Stephen were in England when Henry passed away. Matilda was far away in Anjou in western France, but Stephen was in Boulogne – right across the channel from Kent. So, he promptly crossed over to England and headed to claim the throne before Matilda could get there.

Now, you may be thinking that Matilda was Henry's heir and she had the stronger blood claim to the throne. But that didn't matter as much as you might think. In fact, it had been a long time since the person with the best blood claim had actually become the king. If we go back to the time of Edward the Confessor, his nearest relative was the young Edgar the Aetheling. And when Edward the Confessor died, Edgar the Aetheling was so young that he was rejected in favor of Harold Godwinsson who wasn't even related to Edward the Confessor by blood. And then, when Harold was killed at Hastings, William the Conqueror took the throne by force. And when William died, his eldest son Robert was given Normandy, but he gave England to his second son William Rufus, even though Robert was older and had the better claim. William Rufus then rushed across the channel to claim his inheritance while his father lay on his deathbed. He knew that it was most important to get there first.

When William Rufus was later killed in the New Forest, his elder brother Robert was still living, and he still had the best blood claim to the throne. But as we know, young Henry left his brother lying on the ground in the New Forest, and he headed straight to Winchester to claim the throne. Once again, the person who got there first got the crown, even if he didn't have the best blood claim.

So, all of this had established the basic gameplan by which a successor was chosen. If you wanted to claim the English throne when the king died, you knew what to do. You had to get there first, you had to secure the treasury, and you had to get the support of the prominent barons and church officials. And once you were in place, any rival claimants would have to dislodge you. And that was difficult to do, especially if the other claimants were out of the country.

So, as soon as Henry died, Stephen made that dash across the Channel and headed for London. Once he was in London, Stephen secured the support of the London merchants. He then got most of the prominent barons on board. But he still needed the support of the Church. So, he headed down to Winchester, where he had an important inside connection. He brother was the bishop of Winchester. So, he got his brother's blessing – both figuratively and literally. That allowed Stephen to take control of the treasury, just as his uncles William Rufus and Henry had done. His brother then helped him to get the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Not all of the barons supported Stephen's claims – some continued to support Matilda. But for now, they saw the writing on the wall. Stephen was making all the right moves to position himself as king, and it was better to go ahead and side with the apparent winner in this succession struggle. If they chose the wrong side, they risked losing all of their land holdings in England. So, Stephen was soon crowned as the new King of England in Westminster Abbey. To this day, he remains the only king named 'Stephen.'

Up in Peterborough, the final scribe recorded these events in the Peterborough Chronicle. After noting the death of Henry, the scribe wrote:

Meanwhile was his nephew come to England, Stephen of Blois.
Enmang þis was his nefe cumen to Englelande Stephne de Blais

And came to London, and the people of London received him,
7 com to Lundene. 7 te Lundenisce folc him underfeng.

. . . and hallowed him to king on midwinter day
. . . 7 halechede him to kinge on midewintredæi.

This passage is really traditional Old English, showing very few outside influences. Note that the scribe referred to Stephen as Henry's ***nefe***. That's actually the Old English version of the word ***nephew***. Old English had ***nefe*** and Norman French had ***nevu*** – both were cognate going back to common Indo-European roots. The French version came in about a century later, and over time that French version ***nevu*** gave us the modern word ***nephew***. So, the Old English ***nefe*** was replaced by the French term over time.

And this actually raises an important point about English words for family members. The terms for our immediate family members mostly come from Old English – ***mother, father, son, daughter, child*** and ***brother***. The only small exception is ***sister*** which came in from Old Norse, but it was very similar to the Old English word for sister and both were actually cognate. So, the Norse form replaced the English form over time.

But when we look beyond those immediate family members, almost all of the words for other relatives come from French and ultimately from Latin. So, ***nephew, niece, uncle, aunt*** (or ***ant***) – they all come from French, as does the word ***cousin***. And all of those words came into English during the first century or so of Middle English.

So, this sheds some light on the relationship of French and English during this period. The French influence on English was so great that it even provided the words for many family members, but it wasn't great enough to push out the words for our immediate family – our words for parents, children and siblings.

Now, speaking of family members, Henry's family members were soon to be at war with each other. The succession struggle that he had hoped to avoid was now inevitable. Matilda was the designated heir, but his nephew has claimed the throne before she could there. Over time, the nobles would have to decide whether to remain loyal to Stephen or to throw their support to Matilda. And the unity that Stephen tried to forge was soon broken.

In the final portion of the entry for 1135, the Peterborough scribe alludes to the problems that were soon to come. A local baron in the west of England soon rebelled against Stephen. His name was Baldwin, and he held Exeter against Stephen, but he was no match for the new king's forces. Stephen promptly sent forces to the town. The Peterborough Chronicle says that "the king be-sat it" – "te king it besæt." "And then Baldwin surrendered" – "7 siððan Balduin acordede."

So, Stephen defeated Baldwin, and Baldwin actually fled the country and headed to Anjou, where he joined Matilda's retinue there. What's so interesting about this passage is that the scribe says that Baldwin ***acordede***. This is the word ***accorded***, but it meant 'submitted' or 'agreed to stop fighting.' It's a French word and this is one of the earliest words borrowed from the Normans. The prior scribe also used variations of the same word.

You might notice that the word ***accord*** contains the Latin word ***cor*** meaning 'heart.' The word ***accord*** literally meant to 'be of one heart.' But more generally, it meant an agreement or reconciliation. We still use the word ***accord*** in that sense. Think of the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel. If you find yourself 'in accord' with someone, you're 'in agreement' with them. And if you act in 'accordance' with someone's instructions, you're acting in 'agreement or compliance' with those instructions. By the end of the Middle English period, the term had been extended to a situation where one person expressed agreement with or acceptance of someone else's statement. So, I might acknowledge something as fact 'according' to someone else. So, 'according' to the Peterborough scribe, Baldwin 'accorded' after his battle with King Stephen. So, in this sense, the word ***accorded*** implies that Baldwin agreed to stop fighting.
Now, around the same time that Baldwin rebelled in the west, Stephen faced a separate challenge – this time from the north. This northern challenge came from David – the King of Scotland. A few weeks after Stephen became king, David launched a raid into northern England to capture several castles there.

David's raid into England was noted by the Peterborough scribe. The scribe wrote that David went to war against Stephen. He wrote

David King of Scotland took to warring against him.
Dauid king of Scotland toc to uuerrien him.

Now, this is an interesting turn of phrase – 'took to warring.' It sounds quaint and colloquial, but we have it here in the 1130s. You might remember that ***take*** is actually an Old Norse word. The English word was ***niman***. But this Norse word ***take*** or ***took*** is very prominent in almost all of the early Middle English texts, especially those from the Midlands and further north. So, it was one of those Norse words that was in very common use by this time.

Now, this initial conflict between David and Stephen was soon resolved, but the resolution was only temporary. The Peterborough scribe wrote that soon after the conflict:

they came together, and were settled
hi togædere comen 7 wurðe sæhte

though it little availed.
þoþ it litel forstode

So, the entry for the year 1135 concludes on an ominous note. A peace was made with David of Scotland, but it was only temporary.

Now, these references to King David in Scotland are actually very important to our story. David had an important connection to Matilda. He was actually her uncle on her mother's side. So, David had two motivations to invade northern England. One was to support his niece's claim to the throne, and that was his official reason for the invasion. But there was another reason. David wanted to control the northern part of Northumbria, now known as Northumberland.

So, this is a good place to digress and look at the Scottish claims to that region. This is an important part of our story because those claims not only shaped the relationship between Scotland and England, it also shaped the future of the English language in northern Britain. You might have noted that I haven't had much to say about Scotland so far in the podcast. And there's a reason for that. The English language has been confined to England. Almost all of Scotland spoke Gaelic or other related Celtic languages. And the Scottish Kings also spoke Gaelic. I should note that the Viking influence also meant that Old Norse was being spoken in parts of northern Scotland. But English wasn't generally spoken north of the English border. And that was certainly the case up to the 11th century, but then something happened that changed all of that. Scotland acquired its first community of English speakers, and those speakers shaped the future of English in Scotland.

In order to understand what happened, we have to consider the complicated history of Northumbria and Scotland. As we know, Northumbria was the northernmost Anglo-Saxon kingdom, so it bordered Scotland on the northern side. But the border between Northumbria and Scotland was a matter of constant dispute for many years.

When the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms became the unified nation of England, the Northumbrian border became the English border with Scotland.

In the late Anglo-Saxon period, that border had become more or less fixed at the Firth of Fourth. ***Firth*** is a Norse word meaning estuary, so the 'Firth of Fourth' is the 'Estuary of Forth.' And the estuary eventually turns into the River Forth. Since Northumbria extended all the way up to the Forth, that meant that Old English was spoken all the way to that river. So, that border became a political border and a linguistic border. Old English was spoken south of the river and Gaelic was spoken north of the river. Now, Edinburgh was actually located south of the River Forth, so it was part of Northumbria – part of England, not Scotland. And that also meant that Old English was spoken in Edinburgh.

Now, here's the thing about a political borders and linguistic borders. Linguistic borders tend to be very conservative. They don't change overnight. But political borders can shift with any given battle or war. So, they can change overnight. And that's what happened to this border in the year 1018 – about 50 years before the Norman Conquest.

This takes us back to the messy period of Viking invasions from the reign of Aethelred the Unready through Canute. During that period, the King of Scotland was named Malcolm – specifically Malcolm II – and he invaded Northumbria. He defeated the Northumbrian earl at the Battle of Carham. And as a result of that victory, the northernmost tip of Northumbria then became part of Scotland. After that battle, the political border shifted down to the River Tweed south of Edinburgh. And that became the more-or-less permanent border between England and Scotland going forward, and it is still the border today. As we'll see, future Scottish kings still had their eyes on Northumbria and the region remained disputed, but that border at the Tweed has remained the default border for most of the past millennium.

This shift of the border south had major linguistic consequences. It meant that those English-speakers in the northernmost part of Northumbria were now part of Scotland. And overnight, they became the only English-speaking part of Scotland. Of course, this was Old English and initially it was part of the Northumbrian dialect. But once those speakers became separated from the English speakers south of the border, their form of speech started to become more and more distinct. Now again, this shift of the political border occurred back in 1018 – about 50 years before the Norman Conquest.

The Scottish king Malcolm II was succeeded by several other kings, including the real-life Scottish king Macbeth. Then the Norman Conquest of England occurred in 1066. After the Conquest, the Normans generally recognized the existing border with Scotland. That was the southern border at the Tweed. It was around this time that the Normans divided Northumbria, with the northernmost part now being called Northumberland. So, as far as the border is concerned, the English side now became known as Northumberland.

At the time of the Norman Conquest, the Scottish king was once again named Malcolm – specifically Malcolm III. I actually mentioned Malcolm way back in Episode 63. After the Conquest, Edgar the Aetheling down in England fled to Scotland with his sisters. And one of those sisters named Margaret married Malcolm. Like her brother Edgar the Aetheling, Margaret was a direct descendant of the Wessex kings. And she and Malcolm had several children, which

meant that all of those children were half Scottish and half West Saxon. And those children included a daughter named Edith and a son named David.

Now, I alluded to all of this a few episodes back, because when Henry became King of England he wanted to secure his positions with the Anglo-Saxons. And Edith up in Scotland was available for marriage. She was descended from the traditional Wessex kings on her mother's side, so Henry married her in part to make that connection back to the Wessex kings.

When Edith came to Henry's court, her younger brother David was still very young. And David also came down and spent a great deal of time in Henry's court in England, and he was actually educated there. He became another one of Henry's favorites. Again, keep in mind that Edith and David were half-English and half-Scottish. So, they both felt a close connection to the English court. David eventually married the daughter of a prominent English noble who had been the Earl of Northumberland and who had controlled a great deal of land in northern England. And through that marriage, David gained control over his wife's vast estates in England. He also used that marriage to make his own claims to Northumberland.

Through that marriage, David also received a separate earldom – the earldom of Northampton. So he actually became an English earl, but he still coveted Northumberland – that border region with Scotland.

At this point, David wasn't the king of Scotland. He was merely an English earl. His older brothers succeeded each other as kings of Scotland. But finally, in 1124 – after his brother Alexander died – David succeeded him as the King of Scotland.

So. at this point, David was King up in Scotland, and he was also the Earl of Northampton, and he was a prominent landholder in England, and his sister Edith was married to Henry I of England. So, he had become one of the most important figures in all of northern Britain. But there was one thing he wanted that he didn't have, and that was Northumberland.

For now, David chose to bide his time and wait. He maintained close connections to the English court. And he established a form of Norman feudalism in southern Scotland.

David's connections to the English court turned out to be very important to the ultimate history of Scotland because David brought many Anglo-Norman aristocrats up to Scotland. One of those nobles was Robert Bruce – the ancestor of the later Robert the Bruce who founded a line of Scottish kings in the 1300s.

Another Anglo-Norman noble who settled in Scotland during David's reign was Alan Fitz Flaad. His son Walter entered David's service and he was made royal steward. That produced his surname Stuart, and these were the same Stuarts who later became kings of Scotland and then Kings of England. So, the future of Scotland and England was being shaped by these moves and these connections.

David's connections to the English court meant that he was close to Henry. And he was also close to Henry's children, who were his niece and nephew. So, when Henry named Matilda as his successor, David was a strong support of the decision. So, when Henry died, he expected Matilda to become the Queen. But as we now know, the throne was usurped by Stephen. And David was not pleased with that development. Meanwhile, David had been waiting for an opportunity to assert his claims to Northumberland. And now, David saw that opportunity open up before him. This takes us back to that entry in the Peterborough Chronicle that I mentioned earlier. As I noted, shortly after Stephen seized the English throne, David invaded Northumberland and took control of several castles there. And we now know what is motivations were. He wanted to support the claims of his niece Matilda and he wanted to weaken Stephen's rule. But he also wanted to seize control of northern England, specifically the region of Northumberland.

As I noted earlier, that initial conflict between the David and Stephen was quickly settled. But the Peterborough Chronicle alluded to more conflict between the two sides. We'll look at the rest of the story next time, but to summarize the upcoming events, David did eventually get indirect control over Northumberland. It was ceded to David's son who held the region as a vassal of Stephen. David himself didn't want to swear an oath of loyalty to Stephen, so he let his son hold the region for him. But he ultimately held it as a vassal of Stephen. So, the region formally remained part of England.

So, for now, I want to leave the political developments there and focus on the linguistic developments. Ultimately, Northumberland never became a formal part of Scotland. It remained English and its inhabitants remained subjects of the English king. And they continued to speak a northern dialect of English.

But what about that region north of the Tweed that had passed to Scotland over a century earlier? Well, it remained a part of Scotland, and it was the only English-speaking region outside of England. Those English-speakers were a small linguistic minority among a nation of Gaelic speakers. The Scottish nobility spoke Gaelic, and Scottish charters were written in Gaelic. And those charters continued to refer to the language of these former Northumbrians as "Inglis" or English.

Even the scribes who composed the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle saw these people as distinct from their Scottish neighbors – as essentially Englishmen who were living under Scottish rule. But by the time we get to the 1100s, these distinctions start to disappear. And it became generally accepted that this English-speaking region was now part of Scotland. And the residents are increasingly seen as Scottish, not just Englishmen living in Scotland. This was basically the state of things at the current point in our story.

I've noted before that English in general was heavily fractured in the period after the Norman Conquest. And here we see another fault-line emerging. South of the border in England, many French words were starting to come into the language and many Old English words were starting to disappear. And Norse words were also replacing English words.

And north of the border in Scotland, the English language spoken in this small corner of Scotland was undergoing similar changes. As the language of this region became more distinct from the language spoken in England, it started to acquire its own name. By the 1400s, this form of English was being called 'Scots.' It became so distinct, that many even considered it to be a separate language. Now, I am not going to deal with those arguments here. And since I am taking a very broad view of English, I am going to refer to Scots as a dialect of English going forward, with apologies to those who feel that it should be considered a distinct language.

And let me also make another important point. This form of speech called Scots is not the same thing as the modern Scottish accent or brogue. That's actually a later development. This earlier English dialect called Scots was much more unique. Remember it was a distinct form of Old English, and it split from the English dialects south of the border at an early date. So, it evolved in its own direction throughout the Middle English period. And that evolution occurred because the linguistic influences in Scotland were different from the linguistic influences in England.
Take French, for example. Standard English borrowed some French words that Scots didn't borrow. And vice versa. So, Scots had some French words that English didn't. For example, Scots borrowed the French word ***dour*** meaning 'stern or grim,' like a 'dour mood' or a 'dour expression.' Well, ***dour*** wasn't originally borrowed into standard English south of the border. In fact, it didn't pass into standard English until the later 1300s when it was actually borrowed from Scots. So, ***dour*** came in via Scots, not directly from French. So, the French influences were sometimes different in Scotland and England.

The same thing happened with Norse words. Scotland was a region of very heavy Viking influence. And the Norse words borrowed by the Scots dialect was sometimes different from those borrowed in England. So, a Norse word like ***braes*** meant 'hills' or 'slopes'. It passed into Scots, but it didn't survive in standard English. And a Norse word like ***stoup*** meant 'cup.' Again, it passed into Scots, but it didn't survive in standard English. And consider the word ***church***. We've seen before that ***church*** is cognate with the Norse word ***kirk***. Well, the Norse version passed into Scots, so ***kirk*** became more common there.

And then there was the Gaelic influence. Because Scots speakers were surrounded by Gaelic speakers and because Gaelic was the official language of Scotland, many Gaelic words passed into Scots. Most of those words never entered standard English. For example, standard English has the word ***daisies*** for the type of flower, whereas Scots has the Gaelic word ***gowans***.

So. the French, and Norse, and Gaelic influences started to distinguish this northernmost dialect of English. But there was another major difference between Scots and standard English. And that difference has to do with the massive loss of Old English words.

I've noted before that Modern English has lost about 85% of the words used in Old English. Well, the words that were lost in England were sometimes retained north of the border in Scotland. So, Scots had a lot of Old English words that were lost over time in standard English. That included words like ***bairn*** for 'child.' ***Bairn*** comes from the same root as the word ***born***. Scots also retained the Old English word ***gang*** for 'go.' It retained the Old English word ***wæge*** – or ***wee*** – for small. It also used the word ***muckle,*** which was an Old English variation of the word

much. The Old English word for 'much' was ***micel*** (/mee-kel/). It later became /mee-chel/ and then ***much***. But Scots retained a variation of the original form of the word as ***muckle***.
Also, consider the word ***surround***. It is a French word, and it replaced the Old English word ***umbeset***. But Scots retained the word ***umbeset***.

So, as you can see, Scots became more and more distinct throughout the Middle English period. Again, some people considered it a distinct language. Today, we can make an analogy to the situation in Scandinavia. The Old Norse language was spoken throughout Scandinavia at the same time that Old English was spoken in southern and central Britain. But as the various regions of Scandinavia become distinct from each other, the dialects of Sweden and Norway and Denmark became more distinct. Today, they're considered to be separate languages, even though they remain mutually intelligible to a certain extent.

This analogy is still applied by some scholars to Scots and English. They have the same Old English origins and they remained mutually intelligible to a certain degree, but as nationalism arose in Scotland and England, it was argued and is still argued by some that Scots was a distinct language. Again, I'm not going to resolve that debate here, and frankly the debate will continue because there is no clearly defined line between a dialect and a language.

Now as I noted, Scots remained the language of a small minority of speakers in southeastern Scotland. The language of most of the country and of the monarchy was Gaelic. But in the 1200s, Scotland fell under English control. This is a little later in our story, but let's jump ahead to follow the story of the language. Scotland eventually regained its independence under Robert the Bruce, and Robert was from the southern region where Scots was spoken. Remember that I mentioned earlier that King David had brought over Robert the Bruce's ancestor and settled him in that region. Well, after Robert the Bruce regained Scottish independence, Scots replaced Gaelic as the language of the monarchy.

As a result, Scots achieved a new level of prestige. Throughout the Middle English period, Scots writers and poets developed their own unique body of literature. In the year 1513, the Scots writer Gavin Douglas translated Virgil's Aeneid into Scots. It was titled *Eneados*. And I thought you might be interested to hear what it sounded like.

Here is a reading from Douglas's translation. The reading is from Rab Wilson, and it is available on YouTube if you want to listen to the whole piece:

[CLIP: Scots language *Eneados*]

So, I think you can see how distinct this dialect was. Not only are a lot of the words unfamiliar, so are a lot of the pronunciations. And that's because Scots retained a lot of the sounds of Old English.

Sometimes, when a person who is unfamiliar with Middle English listens to a reading in Middle English, like an excerpt from Geoffrey Chaucer or Sir Gawain and Green Knight, they often comment that is sounds a little like Scottish. Well, there's a reason for that. Both Middle English

and Scots retained a lot of the same sounds from Old English. But then, in the 1500s, English experienced the Great Vowel Shift when many vowel sounds changed. But that shift didn't really extend into Scotland at the time, so Scots retained a lot of the older sounds which were no longer being used in quite the same way in Modern English.

The retained sounds weren't limited to vowels. As you may have noticed in the clip I just played, the guttural /x/ sound. That was a common sound in Old English and, again, it was retained in Scots. That's why modern Scottish dialects have ***loch*** where standard English has ***lake***.
Also, it is generally believed that Old English uses a trilled 'R' – kind of like Spanish. And Scots also retained a trilled 'R.'

The letter 'I' had the /ee/ sound in Old English and Middle English. So, instead of ***my*** – M-Y – people said /me/ as in 'that's me son' or 'that's me daughter.' Scots speakers retained that pronunciation, as did other dialects in northern England. Along the same lines, the word ***buy*** as in 'to purchase something' was /bee/.

Similarly, words like ***now,*** and ***house,*** and ***about*** were once ***nu,*** and ***hus,*** and ***abutan***. Those pronunciations were also retained in Scots – as ***nu***, ***hus*** and ***abut***.

The word ***long*** was pronounced ***lang*** in Old English, and again that pronunciations survived into Scots.

And the word ***since*** began as ***siððan*** in Old English and then became ***synnes*** in Middle English. And it passed into Scots as ***syne*** – S-Y-N-E.

Sometimes, ***lang*** and ***syne*** were put together to create the phrase 'lang syne' – literally 'long since,' but it meant 'long ago.' The phrase 'auld lang syne' was literally 'old long since', but it meant 'old times passed' or 'times gone by.'

And by now, you have probably figured out where I'm going with all of this. In the 1700s, the Scottish poet Robert Burns came across an old song that used that phrase 'auld lang syne'. He fleshed it out. He wrote some new verses, and set it to the tune of a traditional folk song. The result was the now very famous song – 'Auld Lang Syne.' It's a song of remembrance and reflection – looking back on old times. It's now sung throughout the English speaking world and well beyond.

A lot of people who know that the song originated in Scotland assume that it is a Gaelic song or at least has a Gaelic title. But that's not the case. That odd looking title is actually derived from Old English, not Gaelic.

Most people are familiar with the first verse and chorus, which are both very similar to Modern English.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind? (By the way, there's a question mark at the end of that sentence, which a lot of people miss when they sing the song. So, it's a rhetorical question. Are we supposed to forget our old acquaintances and never think about them? Of course not.

Then

'*Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and auld lang syne?*'

Then the chorus –

For auld lang syne, my jo,
for auld lang syne,
we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

So, the lyrics describe having drinks and reminiscing about old times. Then the lyrics become a bit more difficult. Here are the original Scots lyrics read by me without the Scots accent.
And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup! And surely I'll be mine! – that's, 'And surely you'll buy you pint-stoup (there's that Norse word ***stoup*** for 'cup') and surely I'll buy mine.' So, we're each going to buy a drink.

The song continues:

And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne.
So, we'll have that drink as we reminisce about old times.

For the next couple of verses, I thought it might be interesting to hear them in the context of the song itself. So, let me play you an excerpt from a version that uses the original Scots lyrics. This version was performed by the Scottish musician Dougie McLean. So, here are the next couple of verses.

[MUSIC CIP]

Nice. So, let's break that down.

We twa hae run about the braes, and pou'd the gowans fine. 'We two have run about the braes (there's that Norse word for 'hills') and pulled or picked the gowans fine (***gowans*** is that Gaelic word for daisies).' So, this line recalls picking daisies on hills.

Then it goes:

But we've wander'd mony a weary fit, sin' auld lang syne. 'But we've wandered many a weary foot since auld lang syne.' So we've traveled far and wide since the olden times.

Then it says,

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn. 'We two have paddled in the 'burn.' ***Burn*** is an Old English word meaning 'spring or brook or stream' – so, we played in the brooks and steams.

frae morning sun till dine. 'from morning sun till dine.' ***Dine*** is a shortened from of 'dinner.' So, from morning to evening.

But seas between us braid hae roar'd sin' auld lang syne. 'But seas between us broad have roared since those olden times.'

The song then concludes with a final verse and chorus as the singer looks forward to sharing that drink and recalling the times gone by.

So, if you've wondered what 'Auld Lang Syne' was actually about, now you know. And you also know that is written in Scots – a distant dialect of English, or perhaps a sister language of English, depending on your perspective.

By the time Robert Burns composed those lyrics in the late 1700s, Scotland and England had become unified as Great Britain. In the early 1600s, King James VI of Scotland had become James I of England and that had unified the two monarchies. James relocated to London. A century later, there was formal union. Now, James was the first Stewart king of England, and remember from earlier that the Stewarts can also trace their Scottish origins back to King David who brought the first Stewart ancestors over from England. After James became King of England, he commissioned a new translation of the Bible. And that translation was rendered in the standard English of England, not his native Scots. Of course, we know that version of the Bible as the King James Bible, and it became standard in Scotland, too.

Churches throughout Scotland read from that new English version of the Bible. And when Scotland and England were formally united, the English of England soon came to dominate Scottish politics, and literature, and culture, and society. This was early Modern English. In places that still spoke Gaelic, which was still much of the country, this Modern English language gradually replaced it. But in the south and east, where Scots was still being spoken, this Modern English language took a place beside Scots. So, in those regions, Scotland had both a modern version of English and this older version of the language called Scots. But Scots was not immune to that modern English influence. Over the years, many of the old distinctions between Scots and Modern English have been blurred.

Today, there are still people who speak a variety of Scots, but it is a more modern version of the language. And it is probably not as distinct as it once was. It's mixed a lot with Modern English. So, today, there is really a continuum in Scotland. At one end you have Modern English speakers who speak standard Modern English with one of several Scottish accents. And at the other end of the continuum you have that modern version of Scots which retains a lot of those older features and is still difficult for many modern English speakers to understand. And of course, there are many, many speakers that fall somewhere in between those two extremes.

So, that's the history of Scots in a nutshell. And I wanted to present that history here at this point because the history of Scots basically runs parallel to the overall story of English. And as I move forward with the story of English, I may make occasional references to Scots. And when I do, you'll now know what I am talking about or talking aboot.

So, with that, I'm going to conclude this episode. For those of you at Patreon, I'll soon be posting the next bonus episode of the podcast. Again, it will revisit and explore some recent developments concerning the Indo-Europeans. So, check that out if you sign up to become a supporter at Patreon.com. As always, you can go to historyofenglishpodcast.com and link from there.

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