

FIRST NAMES

We can sometimes use a person's first name to find out some things about them: what language they spoke, where they came from, who they were named after and how they liked to be known by other people.

Languages

In medieval Scotland, there was a mixture of languages (Gaelic, Latin, Scots and French). As each language had its own distinctive 'sounds', we can usually see from the spelling what language a name has come from. For example, *Donnchadh* is a Gaelic name because of the 'dh' sound, whereas *Benedictus* is a Latin name because they nearly always end in 'us'.

Spellings

Identifying the language of medieval names is, unfortunately, not as straight forward as this. The first issue is spelling. Because there was no standard way of spelling a name, the same person could see their name spelt a number of different ways. For example, *Kineth*, *Kyneth*, *Cinadius* and *Cináed* were all ways of spelling the same name!

Translations

A second issue is translating names. Because different languages were used for different things, people often changed their names depending on what they were doing. Latin was used for writing important documents, Scots in the burghs, French in the daily lives of the aristocracy, and Gaelic in the daily life of common people.

Here is an example of a name that was translated according to the context: *Gilla Brigte* was a man's name in Gaelic. The same man could use the French equivalent, *Gilbert*, or the Latin equivalent, *Gilbertus*.

Another example is the Gaelic *Lochlainn*, which in French became *Roland*, and Latin *Rolandus*.

TRANSLATIONS

Here are some names of real people from medieval Scotland. You can see what their name would have been in Gaelic, French and Latin.

Gaelic form	French form	Latin form
Éogan	Eugene	Eugenius
Gilla Brigte	Gilbert	Gilbertus
Muiredach	Maurice	Mauricius
Níall	Nigel	Nigellus
Níall	Nicholas	Nicholas
Ragnall	Reginald	Reginaldus
Eachann	Hector	Hector
Lochlainn	Roland	Rolandus

GAELIC SPELLINGS

Here are some Gaelic first names of real people from medieval Scotland. Because their names are in Gaelic, we know that they probably lived in a Gaelic-speaking community.

This table shows you how the spellings of Gaelic names have changed. You can see how each name would have been spelled in medieval times, how it is spelled today, and what today's English form would be.

Medieval Gaelic form	Modern Gaelic form	English form
Ailpín	Ailpean	Alpin
Áengus	Aonghas	Angus
Amalgaid or Amlaíb	Amhlaidh	Aulay
Bláán	Blathan	Blane
Coilín	Cailean	Colin
Conall / Gilla Congail	Conall / Gille Conghail	Conall
Deirdriu	Deirdre	Deirdre
Díarmait	Diarmaid	Dermot
Derb Forgaill	Dearbhaill	Dervorguilla
Domnall	Dòmhnall	Donald
Dubgall	Dùghall	Dougal
Dub	Dubh	Duff
Donnchad	Donnchadh	Duncan
Éogan	Eòghann	Ewen
Fergus	Fearghas	Fergus
Finnláech or Finnlóeg	Fionnlagh	Finlay
Gilla Críst	Gille Crìosd	Gilchrist
Gilla Andréis	Gill' Anndra	Gillanders
Gilla Escoip	Gill' Easpaig	Gillespie
Gilla Ísu	Gill' Ìosa	Gillies
Ceinnéitig	Cinneidich	Kennedy
Cináed	Cionaodh	Kenneth
Lochlainn	Lachlann	Lachlan
Léot	Leòd	Leod
Mac Bethad	Mac Beatha	Macbeth
Mac Duib	Mac Duibh	MacDuff
Mac Gilla Eoain	Mac Gill' Eathain	Maclean
Máel Coluim	Maol Caluim	Malcolm
Máel Ísu	Maol Ìosa	Malise
Morcunn	Morgann	Morgan
Muiredach	Muireach	Murdoch
Níall	Niall	Níall
Naímín	Naoimhean	Niven
Rúaidrí	Ruairidh	Rory

MALE FIRST NAMES

Here is a table with the most common male first names found in Scotland between 1093 and 1314 (numbers taken from the PoMS database).

Name	Number of people
William	2,025
Robert	1,191
John	1,637
Richard	781
Thomas	740
Adam	735
Walter	643
Henry	526
Hugh	465
Roger	413
Ralph	366
Gilbert	334
Simon	319
Alan	308
Alexander	294
Patrick	245
David	228
Geoffrey	224
Andrew	189
Malcolm	166
Michael	161
Duncan	157
Stephen	148
Reginald	128
Elias	125
Matthew	104

FEMALE FIRST NAMES

Here is a table with the most common female first names found in Scotland between 1093 and 1314 (numbers taken from the PoMS database).

Name	Number of people
Margaret	71
Matilda	55
Christiana/Christina	51
Agnes	50
Isabel	46
Alice	45
Joan	34
Mary	33
Ada	28
Helen	25

Emma	23
Elizabeth	14
Beatrice	13
Euphemia	10