

## THE ORCADIAN DIALECT

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The Orkney Islands are located off the northeast coast of Scotland. There are about 70 islands of which 20 are inhabited. The first people on Orkney would have spoken a Pictish language which disappeared when the Norse settlers arrived in the 900s. The Norsemen brought their own language with them and for many centuries Norse was spoken throughout Shetland and Orkney, where it became known as Norn. In 1472 Orkney was handed over to Scotland. Scots became the official language and the Norn eventually died out.

In Orkney today the people speak a distinctive dialect of Scots that they call Orcadian. It is a mixture of words deriving from the Norn and Lowland Scots, with many unique terms which people from mainland Scotland would not recognise.

*The Orkney Dictionary*, by Margaret Flaws and Gregor Lamb (2nd Edition, 2001), contains a treasury of Orkney Islands language. Here is a short A-Y selection. The dictionary contains no entries for X or Z.

**AIKELSPECKLED** mouldy  
**BOOICK** a large pimple  
**CORINOY** a worried frenzy  
**DOONSITTEEN** a property which a person gets but has not worked for  
**EKSIE- PEEKSIE** evenly, equally  
**FEEFLY** foolishly clumsy  
**GAFSE** a deep bite in an apple  
**HUNDERSGRUND** a plot in which it is possible to plant a hundred and twenty cabbages  
**IPER** midden ooze  
**JENIE- FAE- THE- NEEPS** an old-fashioned or badly-dressed woman  
**KLOWJUNG** sheep, or people's, normal living territory  
**LADEBERRY** a rocky shelf used as a pier  
**MOOGILDIN** an ungutted coalfish roasted on hot embers  
**NUTHERAN** humming or trying to sing  
**ODDLER** the channel running through the middle of a cowshed  
**PURGAS** a disgusting lump of something  
**QUEEBECK** the call of the grouse  
**RUDGE** the rattle of pebbles on a beach  
**SKAOOWAOO** twisted, off the straight  
**TIRLICK** a little windmill made for a child  
**URM** small useless potatoes  
**VANDIT** of a cow, having stripes on the side  
**WHASSIGO** a person who creates a fuss over unimportant things  
**YULE- SKREP** a smack on the bottom