

# Tartan

George Mackay Brown, 1969  
Dictionary section

**anchor** *n.* 1. *Nautical.* A heavy object attached to a vessel by a cable or rope and cast overboard to keep the vessel in place either by its weight or by its flukes, which grip the bottom.

**shallow** *adj.* **shallower, shallowest.** 1. Measuring little from bottom to top or surface; lacking physical depth. 2. Lacking depth of intellect, emotion, or knowledge. See Synonyms at **superficial**. 3. Marked by insufficient inhalation of air; weak: *shallow respirations*.

**horn** *n.* 1. One of the hard, usually permanent structures projecting from the head of certain mammals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, or antelopes, consisting of a bony core covered with a sheath of keratinous material. 2. Something having the shape of a horn.

**helmsman** *n.* *Nautical.* A person who steers a ship.

**skipper** *n.* 1. *Nautical.* The master of a ship. 2. A coach, director, or other leader.

**bide** *v.* **bided or bode , bided, bidding, bides.** --*intr.* 1. To remain in a condition or state. 2. **a.** To wait; tarry. **b.** To stay: *bide at home*. **c.** To be left; remain. --*tr.*, *past tense. bided.* To await; wait for. --*idiom. bide (one's) time.*

**wade** *v.* **waded, wading, wades.** --*intr.* 1. To walk in or through water or something else that similarly impedes normal movement. 2. To make one's way arduously: *waded through a boring report*.

**ashore** *adv.* 1. To or onto the shore: *driven ashore by the wind*. 2. On land: *spent the day ashore*.

**ax or axe** *n., pl. axes.* 1. A tool with a bladed, usually heavy head mounted crosswise on a handle, used for felling trees or chopping wood. 2. Any of various bladed, hand-held implements used as a cutting tool or weapon.

**belt** *n.* **1.a.** A flexible band, as of leather or cloth, worn around the waist to support clothing, secure tools or weapons, or serve as decoration.

**crag** *n.* A steeply projecting mass of rock forming part of a rugged cliff or headland.

**gull** *n.* Any of various chiefly coastal aquatic birds of the family Laridae, having long wings, webbed feet, a thick, slightly hooked beak, and usually grey and white plumage.

**lean** *v.* **leaned, leaning, leans.** --*intr.* 1. To bend or slant away from the vertical. 2. To incline the weight of the body so as to be supported: *leaning against the railing*.

**tether** *n.* 1. A rope or chain for holding an animal in place, allowing it a short radius in which to move about.

**burn** = Scottish word for stream (torrent, ruisseau)

**turbid** *adj.* 1. Having sediment or foreign particles stirred up or suspended; muddy: *turbid water*.

**bank** <sup>1</sup> *n.* 2. A steep natural incline. 3. An artificial embankment. 4. Often **banks.** The slope of land adjoining a body of water, especially adjoining a river, lake, or channel.  
**graze** *v.* **grazed, grazing, grazes.** --*tr.* 1. To touch lightly in passing; brush. See Synonyms at **brush**. 2. To scrape or scratch slightly; abrade. --*intr.* 1. To scrape or touch something lightly in passing.

**backbone** *n.* 1. The vertebrate spine or spinal column.

**howl** *v.* **howled, howling, howls.** --*intr.* 1. To utter or emit a long, mournful, plaintive sound. 2. To cry or wail loudly, as in pain, sorrow, or anger. 3. *Slang.* To laugh heartily.

**broth** *n., pl. broths.* 1. The water in which meat, fish, or vegetables have been boiled; stock. 2. A thin, clear soup based on stock, to which rice, barley, meat, or vegetables may be added. [Middle English, from Old

**nostril** *n.* Either of the external openings of the nose; a naris.

**raw** *adj.* Uncooked: *raw meat*.

**blanket** *n.* 1. A large piece of woven material used as a covering for warmth, especially on a bed.

**chest** *n.* 1. The part of the body between the neck and the abdomen, enclosed by the ribs and the breastbone; the thorax. 2. A sturdy box with a lid and often a lock, used especially for storage.

**hovel** *n.* 1. A small, miserable dwelling. 2. An open, low shed.

**berserk** *adj.* 1. Destructively or frenetically violent: *a berserk worker who started smashing all the windows*. 2. Mentally or emotionally upset; deranged: *berserk with grief*. 3. *Informal.* Unrestrained, as with enthusiasm or appetite; wild: *berserk over chocolates*. --**berserk** *n.* 1. One that is vi

**shepherd** *n.* 1. One who herds, guards, and tends sheep. 2. One who cares for and guides a group of people, as a minister or teacher.

**poach** *v.* **poached, poaching, poaches.** --*intr.* 1. To trespass on another's property in order to take fish or game. 2. To take fish or game in a forbidden area.

**slink** *v.* **slunk also slinked, slinking, slinks.** --*intr.* 1. To move in a quiet, furtive manner; sneak: *slunk away ashamed; a cat slinking through the grass toward its prey*.

**brae** *n.* *Scots.* A hillside; a slope.

**cairn** *n.* A mound of stones erected as a memorial or marker.

**loom** *n.* An apparatus for making thread or yarn into cloth by weaving strands together at right angles.

**web** *n.* **1.a.** A woven fabric, especially one on a loom or just removed from it. **b.** The structural part of cloth.

**throat** *n.* 1. The anterior portion of the neck. 2. *Anatomy.* The portion of the digestive tract that lies between the rear of the mouth and the oesophagus.

**weave** *v.* **wove, woven, weaving, weaves.** --*tr.* 1. **a.** To make (cloth) by interlacing the threads of the weft and the warp on a loom. **b.** To interlace (threads, for example) into cloth.

**snovelly snotty** *adj.* **snottier, snottiest.** *Vulgar. Slang.* 1. Dirtied with nasal mucus.

**settle** *v.* **settled, settling, settles.** --*tr.* 1. To put into order; arrange or fix definitely as desired.

**stagger** *v.* **staggered, staggering, staggers.** --*intr.* 1. To move or stand unsteadily, as if under a great weight; totter.

**cloth** *n., pl. cloths.* *Abbr. cl.* 1. Fabric or material formed by weaving, knitting, pressing, or felting natural or synthetic fibres.

**stripe** <sup>1</sup> *n.* **1.a.** A long narrow band distinguished, as by colour or texture, from the surrounding material or surface.

**cleft** *n.* **1.** A crack, crevice, or split. **2.** A split or indentation between two parts, as of the chin.

**lamb** (*l<sup>2</sup>m*) *n.* **1.a.** A young sheep, especially one that is not yet weaned. **b.** The flesh of a young sheep used as meat.

**lee** (*lē*) *n.* **1.** *Nautical.* The side away from the direction from which the wind blows; the side sheltered from the wind. **2.** Cover; shelter. --**lee adj.** **1.** *Nautical.* Of or relating to the side sheltered from the wind: *the lee gunwale*.

**snore** *intr.v.* **snored, snoring, snores.** **1.** To breathe during sleep with harsh, snorting noises caused by vibration of the soft palate. --**snore n.** **1.** The

**mare** *n.* A female horse or the female of other equine species. [Middle E]

**utter** *tr.v.* **ut-tered, uttering, utters.** **1.** To send forth with the voice: *uttered a cry*. **2.** To articulate (words); pronounce or speak.

**wisdom** *n.* **1.** Understanding of what is true, right, or lasting; insight: "One cannot have wisdom without living life" (Dorothy McCall). **2.** Common sense; good judgment: "It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things" (Henry David Thoreau). **3.a.** The sum of scholarly learning through the ages; knowledge: "In those homely sayings was couched the collective wisdom of generations" (Maya Angelou). **b.** Wise teachings of the ancient sages. **4.** A wise outlook, plan, or course of action. **5. Wisdom.** *Bible.* Wisdom of Solomon.

**coin** (*kōin*) *n.* **1.** A small piece of metal, usually flat and circular, authorized by a government for use as money.

**Corn hook = sickle** *n.* An implement having a semicircular blade attached to a short handle, used for cutting grain or tall grass.

**fork** *n.* **1.** A utensil with two or more prongs, used for eating or serving food. **2.** An implement with two or more prongs used for raising, carrying, piercing, or digging.

**awkward** *adj.* **1.** Not graceful; ungainly. **2.a.** Not dexterous; clumsy. **b.** Clumsily or unskillfully performed: *The opera was marred by an awkward aria*. **3.a.** Difficult to handle or manage: *an awkward bundle to carry*. **b.** Difficult to effect; uncomfortable: *an awkward pose*.

**ditch** *n.* **1.** A long narrow trench or furrow dug in the ground, as for irrigation, drainage, or a boundary line.

**bereaved** *adj.* **1.** Suffering the loss of a loved one: *the bereaved family*. --**bereaved n.** One or those bereaved: *The bereaved has entered the church*. *The bereaved were comforted by their friends*.

**sail** *n.* **1.** *Nautical.* **a.** A piece of fabric sewn together and fitted to the spars and rigging of a vessel so as to convert the force of the wind into forward motion of the vessel. **b.** The sails of a ship or boat. **c.** The superstructure of a submarine.

**blade** *n.* **1.** The flat-edged cutting part of a sharpened weapon or tool.

**lucent** *adj.* **1.** Giving off light; luminous. **2.** Translucent; clear.

**tattered** *adj.* **1.** Torn into shreds; ragged. **2.** Having ragged clothes; dressed in tatters. **3.a.** Shabby or dilapidated. **b.** Disordered or disrupted.

**trull** *n.* A prostitute; a harlot.

### George Mackay Brown (1921 - 1996)

Scottish poet, novelist, playwright, and short story writer, born and brought up in Orkney, educated at the University of Edinburgh. Although versatile in the variety of its literary forms, all his work springs from a deep local source, and is rooted in Norse saga, island folklore, and the cycle of rural life. His volumes of poetry include *Loaves and Fishes* (1959), *The Year of the Whale* (1969), and *Selected Poems* (1977 and 1991). He also published several collections of short stories, including *A Calendar of Love* (1967) and *A Time to Keep* (1969). His first novel, *Greenvoe* (1972), was set on an imaginary northern island, Hellya, which becomes the site for a military project called Operation Black Star. The story describes the resulting destruction of the village of Greenvoe against the unchanging and self-renewing backdrop of nature. This was followed by *Magnus* (1973), and in 1994 he published *Beside the Ocean of Time*, set on another fictitious Orcadian island, Norday. It evocatively describes the imaginings of Thorfinn Ragnarson, a crofter's son, and was short-listed for the Booker prize. Other works include *An Orkney Tapestry* (1969), a medley of prose and verse, history, legend, and anecdote.

*The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Oxford University Press 1995

Around the 8th century, the Vikings, being the masters of the seas thanks to their longships, were firmly established in the Orkney Islands and raided the Scottish coasts.

Orkney Islands:  
- Westray  
- Stroma  
- Rousay  
- etc.

