

# Scots songs and proverbs

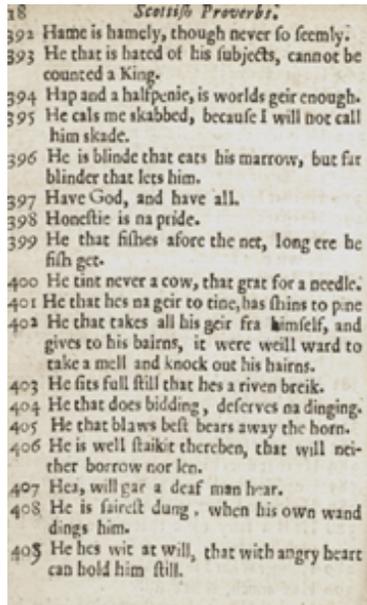
Posted At : September 23, 2008 7:34 PM | Posted By : Helen Vincent

Related Categories: exhibition items, events

Tonight sees an important debate at NLS's Causewayside building on **Scots language today**.

Does Scots matter and why? Should Scots be revived? Does it matter if people only use a few words of Scots in English conversation or should we try to develop a range of registers and enhanced capacities? Guests at this panel event include Rab Wilson, Gillian Munro, Professor John Corbett, Professor James McGonigal and David Purves. Chaired by Michael Hance. With special guest Linda Fabiani, Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture. Organised in partnership with the [Scots Language Centre](#).

To mark this event, here are two of the many Scots books in our exhibition.



Firstly, a page from David Fergusson's *Nine Hundred & Fourty Scottish Proverbs*. Fergusson's collection, first published in 1641, some forty years after his death, was the first book which collected traditional Scots sayings, some of which are still familiar today. This page is from the second edition of 1659. If you have access to [EEBO](#), you can read [the full text of the first edition](#).

Secondly, an early collection of Scots songs. The first major published collection of Scots songs was [Allan Ramsay's \*The Tea-table Miscellany\*](#) (1723-27). This is the second, *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads, etc.* (Edinburgh, 1776) compiled by [David Herd](#) (1732-1810). Born as a farmer's son in Kincardineshire, he became a collector of folksongs and a member of the [Cape Club](#). His book provides a scholarly collation of previously unpublished material drawing on manuscripts as well as performance, but also is itself part of a living tradition. Herd's Cape Club associates such as the poet [Robert Fergusson](#) and could well have sung this comic drinking song at their meetings.

## Fumbler's Rant

Come carles a' of fumbler's ha',  
 And I will tell you of your fate,  
 Since we have married wives that's bra,  
 And canna please them when 'tis late;  
 A pint we'll tak our hearts to chear;  
 What fau'ts we hae our wives can tell;  
 Gar bring us in baith ale and beer,  
 The auldest bairn we hae's oursell.  
 Chr'st'ning of weans we are redd of,  
 The parish priest this he can tell;  
 We aw him nought but a grey groat,  
 The offring for the house we in-dwell.

You can read the rest of this book online at the [Internet Archive](#) and [Google Books](#)