



Convener's Annual Report 2026

In June 2025 Ian Fraser died at the age of 83. Ian was one of the founder members of the Society, as well as being a key figure in Scottish place-names studies from the 1960s, when he became head of the Scottish Place-Name Survey in the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. I gave a brief tribute to him at our November conference and there is a detailed piece on his life and work in our Autumn Newsletter.

At our AGM in Montrose in 2024, Alan Macniven stood down as convener. I was vice-convener at the time, and, because no one came forward to take on the convener role, I became acting convener until such time as a 'proper' convener was appointed. I am delighted to say that Morag Redford has agreed to be our new convener and I have no doubt that the membership will approve this at the AGM.

The Society continues to flourish, since our first conference in 1996, and our first AGM in 1997. We have managed to hold 2 conferences every year apart from May 2020, when Covid took us unawares. Since then we have developed the practice of holding our November conference online and our May one with AGM in person. All our committee meetings are held on-line, our last in-person one having been held in Glasgow in December 2019. While not ideal, it does allow for a much wider geographical spread of members without involving a great deal of travelling.

The Society gets a steady stream of enquiries from all over the world, sometimes as many as 6 or 7 a month. These are fielded by various members of the Society, chiefly the committee, depending on knowledge and expertise.

The Survey of Scottish Place-Names is under the auspices of the Scottish Place-Name Society, its director, Thomas Clancy, being an ex officio member of the committee. The Society has contributed to publication costs of various volumes in the series, including Berwickshire vol. 1 published in 2025 and the forthcoming Lanarkshire vol. 1 amongst others. The Survey output now consists of 9 volumes covering Fife, Bute, Kinross-shire, Clackmannanshire and Berwickshire 1. Two volumes are in the advanced stages of preparation: the above-mentioned *Place-Names of Lanarkshire* vol. 1 and the Glasgow University-based Iona Namescape Project's volume on Iona.

In the last year there have been two important online contributions to regional place-names studies: [Iona's Namescape – Place-names and their dynamics in Iona and its environs](#) and [Place-Names of the Coalfield Communities](#) (covering the parishes of Auchinleck, Dalmellington, Old Cumnock, New Cumnock and Ochiltree).

Both these use the sophisticated interactive online database structure developed at the University of Glasgow by Brian Aitken, first of all for the [The Berwickshire Place-Name Resource](#) (Leverhulme Trust funded) then further refined for Iona's Namescape (Arts and Humanities Research Council funded).

As mentioned last year in the Newsletter Editor's Report, we are reducing the length of the summaries of talks given at our conferences. This was because some of them were so long and detailed that, with a little more work, they would be more suitable for *The Journal of Scottish Name-Studies* as articles, or at least as a Varia item (i.e. a shorter, more focussed piece). The *Journal* is actively looking for contributions. It has not appeared since 2022 but the intention is that the next issue will be out this calendar year.

I am not only standing down as acting convener but also as a committee member. I have been on the committee almost continuously since SPNS was founded 30 years ago. I was convener for several terms, as well as being for a few years the editor of *Scottish Place-Name News*, now called *SPNS Newsletter/Cuirt-litir Comann Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba*. But I am very glad that I will continue to have a formal link to the Society as its Honorary Preses or President. My role as such has never been defined – perhaps the Society should consider doing this in case I start looking across the Atlantic for a role-model.

Also leaving the committee is another long-serving member, Bill Patterson. Bill has been an absolute stalwart almost from the beginning. He was sole editor of our newsletter *Scottish Place-Name News* from 2003 till 2024, a remarkable length of time to hold the most onerous of all the tasks of the committee. He oversaw the move from a black-and-white newsletter to the splendid colour production we have today, and he continued as proofing editor right up to our most recent issue. On behalf of the Society, I would like to thank Bill for his vital contribution to its success. As you know, Eilidh Scammell took over the editorship. Some of you may have noticed an Eilidh Milroy or NicGilleRuaidh has appeared – Eilidh got married to Jack Milroy last November and the Society wishes them all the very best.

There is very little more for me to report which is not covered in the reports of the other office-bearers. It just remains for me to say a huge thank-you to my fellow committee members for their hard-work and support over the years.

Simon Taylor
SPNS Acting Convener