

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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The Newsletter of the

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY
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very much on what funding will be available in the near future, something that is by no means assured.

If this looks like a gloomy picture, we can take comfort in the fact that the Society's numbers are increasing, and that interest in our subject has never been greater. The use of electronic means to gather and retrieve data will be a crucial aspect of future studies, and we look forward to further exciting developments in this field.

It is appropriate at this point to thank a number of people who have supported the Scottish Place-Name Survey over many years. Foremost among these have been Doreen Waugh and Simon Taylor, both of whom gained their PhDs in place-names topics in the School of Scottish Studies. The Society is also immensely grateful to the many individuals who have contributed new material to the Survey since its inception, from collections of field-names to parish surveys, and many other studies. The Editor thanks all those who have added to our knowledge over the years.

IAF

EDITORIAL

This issue contains news of a number of important developments in Scottish onomastics, not least the establishment of the Scottish Place-Names Database, so painstakingly finalised by Simon Taylor, Ed Dee, Terry James, and a number of others over the past few years. As Simon points out in his note, your editor is retiring from the Scottish Place-Name Survey, at a time when place-name studies is at a crossroads. Future development of the Survey, and the Database, will depend

THE FUTURE OF SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME STUDIES

A personal view by Simon Taylor

The School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, has been responsible for the Scottish Place-Name survey for more than 40 years, and for much of that time there has been a toponymist in full-time employment expanding and looking after the archive, and teaching toponymics (place-name studies) within the wider frame-work of onomastics (name-studies). This is the only such post in Scotland, and so it takes on a national importance as an authority for the many questions and problems which place-names and place-naming entail. Sadly this situation is about to change. As of autumn 2001 Ian Fraser, who has occupied this role with such dedication and kindness for more than 20 years, is retiring, and there is no provision to replace him in a full-time capacity. The School of Scottish Studies, which has immediate responsibility for the Survey, is losing two posts this year, but, due to constraints put on it by Edinburgh University, is only able to appoint one new member of staff: and one of the casualties of this has been the Place-Name Survey. It is not just the School of Scottish Studies' problem, it is not even the University of Edinburgh's problem – it is Scotland's problem. It highlights the whole question of how far the responsibility for researching and advising on a nation's nomenclature – such an integral and important part of its linguistic and cultural history, as well as of its identity – should be entrusted to the ever-changing short-term demands and financial constraints of any university.

As Ian Fraser himself pointed out in *SPNNews* 10 (Spring 2001) the School of Scottish Studies itself changed in the eighties and nineties from being primarily a research institute to a department with responsibility for the teaching of ethnology. It could be argued that a department of ethnology is in fact not the most appropriate home for place-name studies – in many countries, institutes of name-studies are more intimately

connected with language departments. Of course, in Scotland, with its unique mix of Celtic and Germanic languages, this is in itself problematical.

The teaching of toponymics is as important as research, providing as it does future scholars equipped with the necessary tools of the trade for the immense task ahead of interpreting and understanding Scotland's toponymy. As Ian wrote in *SPNNews* 9 (Autumn 2000), amongst all the other difficulties students face today 'the place-name student faces the additional problem of finding an institution where adequate supervision will be available, since there are so few scholars with an onomastic background who can act as competent supervisors.' Since this was written this situation has worsened considerably.

There is no doubt that there should be more of a public debate about how Scotland cares for, teaches and researches its rich heritage of place-names. The proverbial ill wind which has forced the School of Scottish Studies to take this retrograde step as regards the Scottish Place-Name Survey provides a good focus for such a debate.

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES DATABASE

Simon Taylor writes:

As intimated in the last issue of *Scottish Place-name News* (10), the Carnegie-funded Scottish Place-name Database Pilot Project is now complete. It has resulted in a flexible relational database in Microsoft Access, as well as a User Manual which fully describes the Database, various in-putting strategies, and the rationale behind them. The Database itself at present contains approximately 8000 place-names, with about 13,500 historical forms. These include all the place-names within the pre-1975 county of Banff which appear on the OS Pathfinder (1:25000) and OS 6 inch 1st edition, as well as a variety of historical maps going back to Pont's manuscript

maps of the 1590s. These were collected by Dàibhidh Grannd in the course of his research into the linguistic interaction between Scots and Gaelic in this area. While this valuable collection of place-names generally lacks linguistic analysis, many of the other collections in the Database are to a large extent linked to an Elements Database, which forms part of the overall Database. These other collections include: the parishes of Kilmorack and Kiltarlity and Convinth, Inverness-shire (collected under the auspices of the Arts and Humanities Research Board [AHRB] one-year Beaully and Strathglass Project), which together contain c. 350 place-names; the parishes of Old and New Deer, Aberdeenshire (i.e. the medieval parish of Deer), which together contain c. 450 place-names; the parish of Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, with c. 100 place-names; and Aberdour, Fife, with c. 50. Most of these have at least one historical form. In addition the Database contains the names, with some basic co-ordinates such as county, of all c.1300 medieval and modern (pre-1975) civil parishes; and for about half of these National Grid References, early forms and some name analyses have been entered. The Database as it stands will be kept on a machine at the Scottish Place-Name Survey, School of Scottish Studies, George Square, Edinburgh.

The Down-side

So much for the up-side. The down-side is that there is now no more money available to do any more work on the Database, to populate it with more data, to put it on the web, or to bulk-load new collections of data into it. From the two Database Days (held at Edinburgh in December 2000 and February 2001) a group of Society members has emerged who are willing to input data from different areas in Scotland. Unfortunately, at the moment, there is no infrastructure which can support this work. I myself am needing to take some time off from Database, and so for the time being I will not be taking on any co-ordinating role. Also, the lack of funds means that we cannot afford to pay for the computer expertise so vital to the development of the project. Collecting of

material can still proceed by volunteers, either by inputting directly into the Database which those who attended the December Database Day have a copy of, or laying out the material in Word, laid out in such a way that it can be automatically fed into the Database (for more details, see below).

The Future

However, this does not mean that the Database project is over. An Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) bid was put in at the end of May from the School of Scottish Studies to fund a three-year project to move the Database forward in a big way by:

- populating the Database with names and name forms from the *Register of the Great Seal (RMS)* i and ii, as well as with other collections held at the Scottish Place-Name Survey;
- populating the Elements Index with a full range of elements, using as one of its sources the digital version of Alan James' fundamental re-working and augmentation of Eric Basden's Index to the elements in W J Watson's *History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926);
- upsizing the Database and putting it on the web.

These AHRB grants are notoriously difficult to obtain, but if successful, the new project, which would employ two people full-time for three years, would start in Spring 2001.

If you would like details of how to lay out your place-name material in Word so that at a later date it can be automatically loaded into the Database, please contact Simon Taylor, Department of Medieval History, University, St Andrews KY16, or e-mail him on

st4@st-and.ac.uk.

WHO ARE YOU?

A little sociology on the SPNS membership. At the May conference, treasurer Pete Drummond gave us 5 minutes on who we were, based on his study of the membership details. By early

May, the society had 300 paid-up members, and that constituted his sample.

Residence

Not surprisingly most members lived in Scotland, but there are fair numbers of members furth of Caledonia:

Scotland	80%
England	12%
Ireland	3%
Europe	3%
USA, Aus.	2%

Within Scotland, there was a definite imbalance towards the south and east compared to the population generally:

- South-east (Edinburgh, Lothians and Fife)
45%
- North-east (Aberdeen, Grampian and Tayside) 21%
- North-west (Highlands and Islands)
12%
- South-west (incl. former Strathclyde Region) 22%

When one considers that half of Scotland's people live in Strathclyde, and that Fife with 7% of the population has 15% of our members, we see the South-East Effect!

Gender

Men make up 65% of the membership: but in the best equal opportunities mould, women comprise 45% of the committee.

Occupation

The strength of the society is its balance between academic and lay people. I grouped the members into three broad categories:

- Profs (professors, lecturers and PhD students) 21%
- Paras (para-academics – eg univ. librarians, etc) 10%
- Punters (those without ac.uk to their e-addresses!) 69%

Length of membership

We were founded in 1996. Every year a number of members fail to pay up and are cast into the outer darkness. In spite of this there's a solid base of well-established members, constantly invigorated by new blood:

5 year members	55%
4 year members	13%
3 year members	8%
2 year members	4%
1 year members	20%

Clans

The society has 8 MacDonalds amongst its members, but no Campbells! (However Ian Fraser tells us his mother was a Campbell, so we are not Glencoeist). The top ten surnames were:

MacDonald	2.6%	
Robertson		2.0%
Grant	1.6%	
Johnston	1.6%	
Fraser	1.3%	
Forsyth	1.0%	
Allan	1.0%	
Anderson	1.0%	
Smith	1.0%	
Steel/Stahl		1.0%

And, 8.3% of the membership has a Mc or Mac surname.

INTERNET NEWS

Henry Gough-Cooper writes:

The SPNS website continues to receive about 150 visits a week. Do let me have details of any events, publications etc, that you want posted there: they will be seen by several hundred people! henrywgc@cs.com. My address to the conference in May is outlined on the website: I have invited the other speakers to provide abstracts of their papers, but regrettably left it so late that they've all gone on their summer hols! Hopefully they'll respond this autumn - watch that space! Speakers at future conferences might like to consider preparing abstracts in advance so they can be posted on the website soon after the event.

Project Pont

Initiated in 1996, this has now culminated in the creation of a website at <http://www.nls.uk/pont>. Scanned images of all the maps are on display, zooming is enabled to allow examination of details, and a wealth of commentaries is also supplied. There will be a final seminar on 29 September, a travelling exhibition has started, and a book "The Nation Survey'd"

(£20.00) has been launched: details on the SPNS website at 'Project Pont' or email j.cromarty@nls.uk.

SCRAN: two projects in cartography

Project 0300 - Charting the Nation: This project comprises 434 full data sets on maps of Scotland from the period 1590-1740, including work by Pont, the Gordons and Adair.

Project 0063 - Roy's Military Survey of Scotland: this project comprises 1036 full data sets on William Roy's "Military Survey of Scotland" maps, 1747-1755, the first systematic survey of mainland Scotland. This unique snapshot of eighteenth century Scotland was commissioned immediately after the "rebellion" of 1745. Held in the Research Collection of the British Library, these maps have never been copied or published before, until now.

These records can be retrieved from the Projects page on the SCRAN website, <http://www.scran.ac.uk> or by entering "0300 in project" or "0063 in project" in the first box on the Quick Search page. **Note:** home users can access for free general material and 'thumb-nail' images, but the larger and more detailed images in the wonderful SCRAN database can be accessed only by subscribing individuals or institutions - but your local library may be one of these (or should be!).

Scotplace

The 'scotplace' forum has discussed a number of interesting topics over the year, from the etymology of 'Enterkin', 'Blairgowrie' and 'Skinflats', to discussions of 'Tuath' in Scotland, all of which can be read in the forum archive by signing on to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/scotplace>.

You can sign on without obligation, and sign off just as easily - so please don't hesitate to take a look! There are also forums for Irish <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Irish-Place-name-Studies> and English <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/EPNL> place-name studies. The latter attracts contributions from such luminaries as

Peder Gammeltoft and Gillian Fellows-Jensen; so come on, all you Scottish onomasticists - sign on to 'scotplace'!

Finally: Haggis (credibility?) Gap.

Visitors from the North might be bemused to find themselves in a street called Haggis Gap in Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire. A query on this was raised in June on the British Archaeology forum <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/britarch.html> by Gareth Talbot gtalbot@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Stephen Macaulay

Stephen.Macaulay@libraries.camcnty.gov.uk replied citing a local tradition that

"records groups or 'clans' of Haggi (plural of Haggis) living in the hills around Fulbourn (and Cherry Hinton, Shelford). Those who know of Hill Dwelling Haggis know that the two inside legs are shorter than the outside legs for ease in running around mountains (or hills in Cambs; for ref. see Beano circa 1970's). The Haggis Gap gets its name from the drove way created by local villagers to trap the haggis as they ran clockwise round the Fulbourn hills (or slight bumps as they are locally known). The last recorded sighting comes from Tim McMalim who trapped a 15lb Haggis in 1902." But continues:

"Okay actually the real story is this.... It was a small trackway and there was a gap in the field boundary (hedge) through which the local owners surnamed Haggis could access their land, hence the name." Reaney and Wilson ('A Dictionary of English Surnames', Oxford) supply Haggas, Haggis, Haggish < *del Hagghous* 1327 (Subsidy Rolls, Yorks.), etc. The place-name *hag-house*, said to be common in the Scottish Borders, indicates a woodshed (chiefly Edinburgh), or a wood-cutters hut, and the surname is one for a wood-cutter.

The original enquiry started all sorts of game from the thickets (so to speak) including this from archaeologist Andrew Nicolson

andrew.nicholson@dumgal.gov.uk "we went haggis-hunting in 1987 with our Norwegian hunting dogs many times in the Orcadian hills, but with limited success; we had no sightings, but we were

pretty sure we had one trapped in a bush one evening. Probably the one that got away from us in 1980!" Anne Brundle anne.brundle@orkney.gov.uk explained that "the Orkney Haggis is very shy." Even purification rituals involving Highland Park seem of limited efficacy in this arcane quest.

Mr James Macfadzean, butcher in Dunscore, Dumfriesshire, relates how a colleague in Castle-Douglas used to keep his haggis on two shelves, one either side of the shop, so that he could sell tourists mixed male and female braces of the wee beasties.

This one will run and run (probably in slow, ungainly circles).

DUN GUAIRE

The amateur of early Scottish history can be lured off on many a mystery tour involving place-names. Earlier this year, I examined the statement in the 11th c. 'Prophecy of Berchán' that the mother of Eochaid, joint king of Pictavia c.878x885, was *mná ó Dún Gúaire*, "the woman from (or 'of') Dun Guaire". This 'Dun Guaire' is usually taken to be Bamburgh (*Dinguayrði* or *Dinguoary* in the *Historia Brittonum*, \$61 and \$63), and that therefore Eochaid's mother, a daughter of Cinaed macAlpin, was - before (or after) her marriage to Eochaid's father, Rhun map Artghal, king of the Britons - "lady of Bamburgh". But what other 'Dun Guaire's are there?

There seem to be two in Scotland. One is on Islay, where the 1878 OS recorded a Dun Guaire (Gaelic *Dùn Guaidhre*, NGR NR389 648), associated in local tradition with Godred (or 'Godfrey') Crovan (d.1095), but the specific *guaidhre* does not seem to be a standard Gaelicisation of 'Godred' (rather, *Goraidh*, as in the place-name *Leum Gorridh*, near Beaufort Castle, Invernesshire). Nearby this Dun Guaire is *Airigh Ghuaidhre*. This is 1499 *Aregowar* which Simon Taylor suggests contains G. *gobhar* 'goat'. The second Dun Guaire is in Mull (NGR NM399 542); again, the Gaelic name is *Dùn Guaidhre*, and, from

the 15th c., the clan Macquarrie (*mac Guaire*) were associated with Mull (the islet of Ulva). But does *Guaidhre* really represent 'Guaire', one of the commonest Irish personal names, or are both places 'goat forts', or something else?

There are also two places named Dun Guaire in Ireland, both of them in Connaught. In Galway, just north of Kinvarra, 16th century Dunguaire Castle stands near the site of a promontory fort, *rath durlas Guaire* (ING 138 212), named for Guaire Aidne, a king of Connaught who died in either 663 or 666. The town of Gort, nine miles from Kinvara, is *Gort Inse Guaire* in Irish or 'the field of Guaire's meadow.' The other Irish Dun Guaire is near Killala, County Mayo (ING 120 330). It was also variously known as *Durlussium*, *Raith Durlais* ('strong fort') and *Durlus Muaide* (it is in the territory of the *Ui Fiachrach Muaide*). No traditions seem to be attached to the fort itself, but Cellach, an early bishop of Killala, is said to have been murdered at the instigation of the same Guaire Aidne. The 'Irish connection' cannot be lightly dismissed: Eochaid's daughter, Land, married Niall Glundub, high king of the Irish, who was son of Eochaid's aunt, Mael Muire, another daughter of Cinaed macAlpin. Mael Muire (d.919), was herself married to two kings of the *Ui Neill* (North and South, successively). Could Eochaid's mother have been married to a 9th c. king of Connaught?

I would be delighted to receive comments on the place-names, particularly the Scottish Gaelic forms, and their implication for the association of Eochaid's mother with Bamburgh.

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COLLECTING FIELD NAMES

Moira S Forsyth writes:

Two years ago, as a new member of the SPNS, my interest was caught by an item in the Newsletter about field-name collection. The School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh was appealing for volunteers

to help with their ongoing project to create a national record of field-names. As a 'lay' member of the SPNS with no expertise in this subject, I was hesitant to volunteer. However, some familial prodding encouraged me to respond.

I wrote to Ian Fraser at the School of Scottish Studies offering to collect in the parish of Durris in Kincardineshire and received a positive reply with advice and instructions on how to proceed. Collectors use Ordnance Survey maps, either the old '6 inch to the mile' or the new 1:10,000 (depending on the area to be covered, these can be supplied by the School), and pro-forma Collection Sheets. The collector is required to mark on the map the boundary of each farm, and to assign a number to each field. Any changes in field boundaries to those on map are to be noted, along with any other features, buildings, or ruins not marked. The Collection Sheets, to be completed for each farm are self-explanatory. The name and approximate age of each informant should be noted and the names of the fields listed along with their 8-figure OS grid reference. There is space to note any additional sources like crop books or old estate plans if these are available, and also to expand on particularly interesting names.

I had the maps and the Collection Sheets and I felt I knew what to do. All I needed now was to find a friendly farmer. Although I have lived in Banchory for over 20 years, I had no direct connection with the farming community, so I was starting 'cold'. Tentatively I approached a farmer I had met socially, explained what I was interested in, and was delighted when he expressed enthusiasm in contributing to the project. I now felt I had my foot in the door. Subsequently he gave me the name of a neighbouring farmer he thought might be happy to talk to me, and in this way I gradually made my collection of field names covering the western part of the parish. The parish of Durris lies south of the river Dee near Banchory. The old Durris estate was split up in 1960 and the majority of the farms sold to Dunecht Estates who retain ownership. I spoke to

eleven farmers and collected the field-names of fourteen farms. It took quite some time to do this, partly due to my work and family commitments, but also due to my reluctance to approach the farmers during lambing or harvest. Most of the farmers I spoke to are retired or of retirement age, but, with two exceptions, still work part-time providing family assistance on their former farms while living elsewhere.

My requests for a visit were always met with courtesy, after some initial bemusement at the interest in the names of their 'parks'. Although I indicated I would need only about half an hour of their time, none of the visits lasted less than one hour and I was often listening for much longer. The recalling of the field names seemed to unlock many more memories. On my visits I was always made welcome and often provided with cups of tea and scones. I was sometimes shown old photographs, and often told stories of a way of life very different from my own and now changed forever. The description of the five-day drive of sheep along the main road from Braemar to Durris as an annual norm fifty years ago was an amazement to me. I wish I had been able to make this collection twenty years ago as the farmers I spoke to seem to be the last generation using these names. [Nowadays, I was told, 'official' forms require that fields are referred to by number not name.] As the older farmers retire the estate policy seems to be to amalgamate the land with adjacent farms to make larger, more viable units, and to sell or rent the surplus farmhouses. Once the older generation is gone the field names will be lost – I saw no written records of these names.

What about the names themselves? Many of them were very conventional, with fields named either for their position within the farm or relative to adjacent farms, or for some topographical feature, eg 'Burnside', 'Pointed Haugh'. Some of the names described the nature of the ground – 'Clay Park', 'Waggle' (ground shook when stood on), 'Chadder' (full of small stones), 'Poverty' and the stark but

descriptive 'Bog'. Doric is alive and well in this area especially among the farming community, so the fields are known as 'parks' although occasionally when asked to name a particular park the farmer would add the suffix 'field' after its name, eg 'Cottar Hoose Field'. The use of 'haugh' in the names occurred several times. The diminutive 'parkie' also appeared, as in 'Little Parkie', 'Moss Parkie' and 'Calfies Parkie'. 'Windmill Park' is straightforward although the windmill is no longer in evidence. The farmer explained that it used to pump water from a spring up to the farm buildings but was eventually replaced by a generator. However this new introduction was deemed to be less efficient – the generator having 'less sook' than the old windmill.

The most dramatic name I encountered was 'The Chimney Pots o' Hell'. It came as a slight disappointment to learn that this was a quite recent naming, effected by the 'orra loon' who, as part of efforts to increase productivity during World War II, was having to hand-clear large stones from the previously uncultivated ground. Having been ploughed by horse, the earth in this field had revealed large quantities of boulders which seemed to him to be rising up from the nether regions.

Probably the oldest field name I came across was 'Lady's Dowry' – a name marked on the 1:25,000 map of the area. This name comes from a local legend telling of the then farmer's disapproval of his daughter's choice of husband and of his promise that her dowry would be 'all she could see' from a specified place on the farm. When she was taken there it was a large deep hollow of about an acre and, instead of the expected panorama, all she could see turning through 360 degrees, was the sky.

I found collecting these names a very rewarding experience, one I would recommend to anyone with some free time and the opportunity to make contact with older farmers.

The help and encouragement given to me by Simon Taylor was much appreciated.

MELROSE: CUMBRIC OR IRISH?

Prof Richard Coates has lately published a case for an Irish origin for the name Lindisfarne¹, suggesting that it was given by the monks from Iona who founded the monastery. I don't wish to examine his arguments with regard to Lindisfarne – his explanation is at least more more persuasive than the traditional 'travellers from Lindsey' – but am prompted to raise the question whether Melrose might likewise have been given its name by Goidelic-speaking monks.

Melrose is commonly taken to be P-Celtic mael-ros 'bare moor'; indeed Prof Nicolaisen treats it as a classic example of a 'Cumbric' name². However, Prof Jackson pointed out³ that the first element in Bede's form Mailros⁴ corresponds to the Old Irish *mail* 'bald' rather than the Cumbric *mel*, and Prof Watson observed⁵ that the site of Old Melrose matches the Irish/Gaelic usage of *ros*, 'a promontory or peninsula' (here formed by a loop of the Tweed) better than the Welsh/Cumbric 'moor'. Both scholars reckoned that the name was 'probably British' (Watson), and Bede's form was a 'Hibernicisation' (Jackson), but the reverse could be true: that the name was Q-Celtic in origin though it may well have been 'Cumbricised' at an early stage (Watson also favoured a Gaelic origin for Melrose in Gamrie, Aberdeenshire, another 'promontory'; its modern Anglo-Scots form will have been influenced by the more famous namesake).

¹ Coates R: *Un-English Reflections on Lindisfarne* in Coates R and Breeze A: *Celtic Voices English Places*, Shaun Tyas, Stamford 2000, pp. 241-59.

² Nicolaisen WFH: *Scottish Place-Names* Batsford, London 1976

³ Jackson KH: *Language and History in Early Britain* Four Courts Press, Dublin reprint 1994

⁴ *Historia Ecclesiastica III 26 etc*, Vita Cudberet: ehs.6-7

⁵ Watson WJ *The History of The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* Birlinn, Edinburgh reprint 1993.

The foundation of Melrose can be dated between 635, when Aidan founded Lindisfarne⁶, and 651, when Cuthbert first entered Melrose under the Abbacy of Eata⁷. Although noun + noun compounds were probably archaic in Irish name-formation by this time, forms like Melrose with an adjectival specifier preceding the generic were still being coined⁸, so there is no formal objection to an Irish origin. Perhaps the question should at least be left open?

Dr Alan G James

BULLION: MAKING A MINT?

At the Annual Conference of the SPNS in May 1999, Margaret (Maggie) Smith gave a paper on '*Bullion*' in *Scottish Place-Names*, which was subsequently revised and published in *Nomina* vol.23 (2000). Ms Smith was arisely cautious of offering a definitive etymology for this interesting name, thought she gave good reasons for refecting proposed associations with Irish Gaelic *bullán*, 'a little bowl, a cup', or with Scots *builyand*, 'boiling'. She pointed out the *bullion* in the sense of 'a mass of (usually precious) metal' acquired a secondary meaning in late Middle English, 'a knob or boss of metal, a convex ornament', suggesting that it might apply to a type of hill, but acknowledged that it didn't explain the number of wells and springs associated with the element.

I suggest that further examination of *bullion* in the 'mass of metal' sense may point to other possibilities. The earliest citations for this word in the Oxford English Dictionary are actually from Anglo-French statutes of Edward III, requiring that his agents 'puissent sauvement porter a les eschanges ou bullion ... argent en plate...' (9 Edw III, 1336), 'puissent sauvement porter ... plates d'argent, billetes d'or et tut autre maner d'or ... a nostre bullione ou a nos eschanges'. Later citations from 17th century dictionaries of Law French define

bullion as 'the place where gold is tryed' (Termes de la Ley, 1641), 'the Kin's Exchange or place whither such gold in the lump is brought to be tried or exchanged' (Blount, 1670). Evidently a *bullion* in mediaeval English law was initially a place, presumably a place where gold and silver would be melted and refined prior to coining: literally, a 'boiling place', *bouillon* (Old French *bouillon* <Mediaeval Latin *boullō*-). The sense 'gold or silver in the lump', recorded from 1450, is a shift of meaning by metonymy.

Now, outwith the series of Bullion names listed by Smith (*Nomina* 23 pp 44-7) from Angus south to Northumberland, there is an isolated group of three in the West Riding of Yorkshire (ibid. p47). Although they lie in three separate parishes (and in two different wapentakes), they are within a few miles of each other on the 'Brontë' moorland between Heptonstall and Keighley. Dr Mary Higham, who knows the area well, has told me that they are locally said to be places where counterfeit coins were forged. The idea of thrifty Yorkshiremen and Scots making money, literally, in out-of-the-way places is attractive, but we must be cautious of folk etymology!

Nevertheless, the idea that Bullions were places where something was boiled is worth pursuing. Possibly scrap metal was melted down for re-forging, or impure metal of some kind refined. But it should be noted that *bullion* can also be used of other substances that were prepared by boiling: salt, soap and quicksilver are mentioned by the OED, and the 'local' (but frustratingly unlocated) *bullion-coal* as a miners' name for a particular seam is worth noting.

I suggest, then, that historical or archaeological research into early (mediaeval or early modern) industrial activity in the vicinity of Bullions might help clarify the meaning of the name.

Dr Alan G James

⁶ *Historia Ecclesiastica* III 3

⁷ *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV 27

⁸ Dónall MacGiolla Easpaig, pers. comm.

**THE MAN BEHIND IONA
PLACE-NAMES STUDY
OR
COULD TOPONYMICS BE IN
THE (FRASER) GENES?**

Genetic research is repeatedly in the news these days. Perhaps it will yet reveal a gene which might explain the uncanny coincidence I discovered recently. Unbeknown to me, another member of my family had drawn up an extensive list of place-names, just as I have done for my small corner of Perthshire. Which makes one ask: does this onomastic madness run in families? And is there no cure except for us to be genetically modified?

My own sorry plight came to light by chance not long after I had set up a simple computer database holding all the place-names of topographical and other named features shown on the six-inch OS first edition (surveyed 1864) for a 100-square-mile corner of Perthshire between the county town and Birnam Hill. Along with each name is a brief description of the place-type and an eight-figure grid reference which could eventually allow the listing to be part of a Geographical Data System. My idea is to have parallel data fields giving the same place-names in the (different?) form they may have appeared on earlier maps, such as Stobie (1783), Roy (c1750) and Pont (c1600).

With my mind in such a toponymic spin, I was particularly interested to see a seven-page section on Iona place-names in an old book about the island which I purchased as stock for my business as an antiquarian bookseller. It drew my admiration for its thoroughness as could be seen quite graphically with all the names crowding an accompanying large-scale map of the island. While the accuracy of its Gaelic derivations was beyond me, nonetheless I was left feeling my own efforts were pale and puny alongside such erudition, which impressed all the more as apparently they had been checked over by that erstwhile guru of Scottish place-names William Watson.

But who had done this Iona place-names study, I puzzled? The only clue was the initials "DMF". These somehow seemed uncannily familiar from my own genealogical researches as those of my grandfather's younger brother. And yes, I reflected, he did have a holiday house on Iona between the wars. But surely he had not been so involved with island life as to have been bold enough to attempt a place-names list! It became obvious that I would not rid myself of frustrated curiosity unless I could find the identity of Iona's "DMF".

The island title is "*IONA, Past and Present, with maps*" by Alec and Euphemia Ritchie, of which I have the third edition of 1934 (the 2nd was 1930). No clues here, except that it reprints the preface to the first edition and it was in this I found what I was looking for. The Ritchies wrote:

"With the help of our neighbours we have prepared this Map of Iona in order that many of the old Place-names rapidly falling into disuse may be preserved. We owe much to Mr D. Munro Fraser, Emeritus HMCIS, for the infinite pains he has taken to make the Map a success, and also for the Appendix containing a translation of the names. He joins us in expressing thanks to Professor WJ Watson, Edinburgh, for valuable suggestions".

So my hunch had been right. It was my grand-uncle David Munro Fraser. And just in case any of you are in the least way interested in his Iona place-names study, I thought that, through the newsletter, I could offer a biographical sketch of the man.

His knowledge of Gaelic should not have surprised me, because David Munro Fraser was born into a truly Highland family in Dingwall, Ross-shire, two years after my grandfather Donald, in 1857. That his own Munro (nee MacPhail) spoke the language I know from an entry by DMF in his own "common place book", known in our family as "*Uncle Dive's Black Book*", which is kept in a drawer of the desk on which I write this piece.

Sadly I never had the opportunity of knowing him or his interests. He died in 1931 while on holiday in Iona. It was only two years ago that I learned through a distant cousin in Lincolnshire (whose own grandmother inherited many of his possessions) that he is buried on the island, not back in Edinburgh near his house in Moray Place as I had always naively assumed.

He was second in the family of two boys and two girls of Highland Railway land surveyor and civil engineer John Fraseer and his wife Ann Munro. But Ann died, aged 29, when DMF was only six and the four children were brought up in Dingwall by her own parents David and Ann Munro, while John Fraser was away from home surveying for the continuation of the Highland line through Sutherland into Caithness.

David Munro Fraser must have done fairly well at Dingwall Academy because he records leaving in July 1870 "*with my prizes*". Entering the Royal Academy, Inverness, the following February, he continued his studies, again excelling academically, taking "*6 first prizes*" in 1872. But he and his siblings were left orphans when their father died having contracted pneumonia then pleurisy while surveying, first for a projected branch line into the Black Isle, then on that particularly difficult stretch of the railway to Wick as it enters Caithness.

Despite such difficulties, David was asked to stay on at the Academy, with Rector Mr Eadie offering free education for the next year if his gifted pupil would also do some teaching. He and my grandfather were now put up in their uncle's Church Street home, while their sisters went to another uncle in Lincolnshire.

In 1874 David attended Aberdeen Grammar School (Old Barn) for a few months in the hope of going on to Aberdeen University. Despairing of gaining a bursary he remarks that his third place in the results "*completely took me by surprise*". But he also sat the bursary competition for Edinburgh University and

there came second. To add to this his uncle and another sponsor had managed to have him receive the Fraser Presentation Bursary for Edinburgh, thus he declined the Aberdeen offer in favour of Edinburgh as it gave better financial support over a longer period. Despite his own lack of confidence which is expressed in his personal journal, David Munro Fraser has been described as "*one of the outstanding students of his year*". Alongside the "Black Book" in my drawer lie not only some of his silver medals from Inverness Academy but also three bronze medals he gained at Edinburgh, including one for "*Celtic Languages and Literature*".

Education was the world he entered once graduating, and after a spell teaching classics at Ayr Academy then George Watson's College, Edinburgh, he became headmaster of Dunfermline High School in 1885. But it was not for long as, although he was there when the new school was completed the following year, in 1889 he was head-hunted for the Inspectorate. It was in this part of the service he was to see out his long and distinguished career in education.

He served first in Glasgow, then Edinburgh, but after only a few years in the Central Belt returned to his calf country as an HM Inspector covering the North. In 1903 he returned to the West of Scotland covering Renfrew and Argyll, then in 1910 became Chief Inspector for the Western Division based in Glasgow, where he had a house in Kelburne Avenue.

It was during this time that he became acquainted and enamoured with Iona and within a few years had a new holiday house built there, an idyllic bolt-hole away from the smog of Glasgow, resorted to as often as possible by himself and various relations such as his English cousins. Their descendants have now told me that in later years he was very much accepted as one of the more interesting regular visitors to the island when such characters included later-to-be-famous artists of the Glasgow School, then rather penniless,

who "paid" for accommodation with fine local landscapes.

In the last two years of his working life David Munro Fraser became Principal Chief Inspector of Schools for Scotland, top of his tree and now based in Edinburgh. Still a bachelor, he shared his house there with his sister Lilyanne as housekeeper. His retirement in 1922, after a connection with the Education Department extending over a period of 34 years, was recognised at a complimentary luncheon given by Scottish educationalists.

When he died nine years later, the "Glasgow Herald" obituary claimed that he had *"left the mark of his personality on the scholastic system in Scotland. He was a distinguished classical scholar ... but at the same time was well versed in modern languages, and a good deal of the improvement in the teaching of those subjects throughout the West of Scotland was due to his helpful and inspiring influence. He had also and expansive knowledge of Gaelic, and was an honorary member of the Edinburgh Gaelic Society."*

It must have been in these later years that he made acquaintance of William Watson, who had become Professor of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh in 1914. Although Watson was some eight years Fraser's junior, both men had not only their connection with the Capital's university in common. Watson had become Rector of DMF's alma mater Inverness Royal Academy before holding the same post at the Royal High School, Edinburgh, for five years from 1909. David Munro Fraser was of course retired by the time Watson published his seminal work on *"The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland"* in 1926, but the appearance of this important study may

have encouraged DMF to see into print – with Watson's backing – his own more specific Iona place-names project two years later.

While I may have been in jest about toponymics being in the genes, I would ask if there is a Watson among you – or Holmes, or anyone else – who could furnish us, through the Newsletter, with a fuller biographical portrait of Professor William Watson. For years I have been curious to know something of the background influences he experienced which may have led to his compiling one of our most important books to date on Celtic place-names.

Leslie Fraser, GM(Scot)

WHAT'S ON around Scotland?

- **FIFE**

4 September: 'From Calais to Dover: Place-Names of Dunfermline and environs', Simon Taylor, 14.00, **Abbot House, Maygate, Dunfermline**
25 September: 'Place-Names of Collessie', Simon Taylor, 7:30pm, **Jubilee Hall, Coaltown of Burnturk.**
21 March 2002: 'Place-Names of Dunfermline', Simon Taylor, Dunfermline Historical Society, 7:30pm, **City Hotel, Bridge Street, Dunfermline.**

- **KINROSS-SHIRE**

21 January 2002: 'Place-Names of Kinross-shire', Simon Taylor, Kinross-shire Historical Society, 7:30pm, **Masonic Hall, Kinross**

PLEASE LET THE EDITOR KNOW ABOUT ANY TALK OR OTHER EVENT WHICH WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO THE MEMBERSHIP.

Please note that back copies of Scottish Place-Name News are available from the Society for £1.50 (which includes p. & p.).

Deadline for material for next Newsletter: 5 January 2002



Scottish Place-Name Society
Comann Ainmean-Aite Na h-Alba

Day Conference
Aviemore Highlands Hotel
Saturday 10 November 2001

PROGRAMME

10.30 – 11.00	Registration and Coffee
11.00 – 11.45	Dr Seumas Grannd 'Some Place-Names of the Northern Cairngorms'
11.45 – 12.30	Ian Mitchell 'Scotland's mountain names – the view from Pont' - looking at Timothy Pont's manuscripts and maps for evidence of continuity and change in mountain nomenclature
12.30 – 1.30	Lunch
1.30 – 2.15	Dr Margaret Gelling 'Hill terms in English settlement names'
2.14 – 3.00	Peter Drummond 'Scottish mountain names – the European connection'
2.45 – 3.30	Henry Gough-Cooper (SPNS website co-ordinator) 'The Scottish Place-Name Society on the Internet'
3.00 – 3.20	Tea/Coffee
3.30 – 4.15	Dr Simon Taylor 'Sliabh/slew in Scottish hill-names: a re-assessment'

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