

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

No. 20
Spring 2006



The Newsletter of the
SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY
COMANN AINMEAN-AITE NA H-ALBA



This view over north-west Fife is from the top of East Lomond (424m), which rises steeply above the Howe of Fife, its central plain of rich farmland. The mansion straight below is the House of Falkland. The large village ahead is Auchtermuchty, with the smaller Dunsbelt to its right and nearer the camera. Part of Strathmiglo is on the extreme left and houses on the outskirts of Falkland itself appear on the right hand edge. Perthshire's farmlands and snow-capped hills lie beyond a blue sliver of the Firth of Tay. For information about the imminent availability of a major work on Fife place-names, see inside this issue.

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EDITORIAL

The Society will soon be a decade old. The first conference was in spring 1996 at St Andrews, so it is fitting that the anniversary event will also take place there. During the first ten years SPNS has not only provided much pleasure and interest to its members and, at its open events, to a wider public interested in languages or local history. At a time when the academic profile of place-name studies in Scotland has been constrained by financial stringencies and lack of full-time staff, the Society has been vital as a conduit between those who have been professionally engaged in the subject and others who may have something to contribute. It is fair to claim that without SPNS the small academic place-name community might have felt less encouragement to keep on with its researches and publications, and amateurs would not have had such ready access to constructive debate and specialist advice.

In this tenth-birthday Newsletter, it is especially gratifying to have at last some good news about the funding of a major project in Scottish place-name research. Prof Thomas Clancy gives some details immediately below.

MAJOR AWARD FOR SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME PROJECT

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)* has awarded the Department of Celtic in the University of Glasgow a project grant of nearly £400,000 for a four-year project researching Gaelic names, in particular place-names. The project, 'The Expansion and Contraction of Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: the onomastic evidence' will be headed by Professor Thomas Owen Clancy, and the chief researcher on the project will be Dr Simon Taylor; there will

be a further researcher and a doctoral student working on the project. The objective of the project is to understand better the way in which Gaelic expanded during the middle ages from Argyll across eastern and southern Scotland, and the means by which it had then receded from many of these areas by 1500. Our best, sometimes our only tools for understanding this process are place- and personal names. The project's first objective will be to complete and see into publication Dr Taylor's major 4 volume survey of *The Place-Names of Fife* (the first volume will appear this year, for which see page 3). The research will then take the findings and methods used in Fife and apply them to test areas throughout the zone where Gaelic expanded and contracted during the middle ages. This will illuminate the nature of Gaelic settlement, interaction with other languages, and regional variation, and result in a further book: *Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: The Evidence of Names*. This is a long-awaited boost for name scholarship in Scotland, and the Department of Celtic at Glasgow, along with colleagues in other departments, hope to be able to build on this in the future. The project starts on 1 May this year.

Prof Thomas Clancy

The AHRC-funded project, 'The expansion and contraction of Gaelic in medieval Scotland: the onomastic evidence' has funding for one PhD studentship, lasting 3 years. The doctoral research may focus or branch out in ways which suit the successful candidate's own research interests, but it must include an in-depth survey of the place-names of a region within the overall study area. Eligible researchers who would be interested in applying for this studentship should consult for further details (closing deadline 30 April 2006):

www.gla.ac.uk/departments/celtic/mainpages/competition.htm

The Project also has funding for a 3-year post-doctoral research assistant, to start early summer 2006 (closing deadline 31 March). For further details see: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/recruit/res.htm>

*The AHRC funds postgraduate training and research in the arts and humanities, from archaeology and English literature to design and dance. The quality and range of research supported not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, please see our website www.ahrc.ac.uk.

PLACE-NAMES OF FIFE

VOLUME 1: SPECIAL OFFER

Volume 1 of the *Place-Names of Fife* (West Fife between Leven and Forth) by Simon Taylor (with Gilbert Márkus) will be out in April or May, the first of a 4-volume survey of the Kingdom-County. The other 3 volumes are part of the major grant awarded to the Department of Celtic, University of Glasgow (see above 'Major Award for Scottish Place-Name Project'), and their publication is therefore guaranteed within the lifetime of that four-year project. Volume 1 contains a full place-name survey of all 18 civil parishes in Fife (by its modern boundaries) whose parish kirks lie south of the River Leven. The material is arranged alphabetically by parish, from Aberdour to Wemyss. Published by Shaun Tyas, 640 pp., with index, cloth-bound hardback (ISBN 1 900289 77 6), it will retail at £24, with a special offer to SPNS members of £20 including p. & p. (£22 overseas). To get this offer, simply telephone the publisher (01775 821542) to use Visa or Mastercard credit card, or send your address and cheque made out to "Shaun Tyas/Paul Watkins Publishing" for £20, to Shaun Tyas, 1 High St., Donington, Lincs. PE11 4TA. The publisher can also be contacted on e-mail on

<pwatkins@pwatkinspublishing.fsnet.co.uk>

SCOTLAND'S OLDEST PLACE-NAMES

Scotland's oldest known place-names occur in the works of Tacitus, Ptolemy, and other classical writers. The meaning of many of them has long been clear, as with *Blatobulgium* 'flour-sack', the Roman fort (with granaries) at Birrens near Lockerbie, or *Deva* 'goddess', the rivers Dee of Galloway and Aberdeenshire. Current knowledge of the subject appears in the classic *Place-Names of Roman Britain* by A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith (1979). But there is still much work to do, as many forms defy explanation, and it has been doubted if some of them are Celtic at all.

To tackle these problems linguists have two weapons in their armoury: comparison and then emendation. Comparison is with the later Celtic languages, especially Welsh, because this is the closest living relative of the British and Pictish spoken in early Scotland. Emendation here means a willingness to emend ancient texts following comparison with the later Celtic languages.

Scholars too often put blind confidence in the capacity of a scribe to reproduce accurately the ancient toponyms of Scotland, even though he was faced with (to him) strange and unfamiliar terms, where, as Americans would say, corruption was an accident just waiting to happen.

Of course, some forms are accurately preserved. Examples include Ptolemy's *Abravannus* and *Virvedrum*. Comparison of the first with the Welsh prefix *afri-* 'very' and *gvann* 'weak' provides a meaning 'very weak one', and lets us identify this stream as sluggish Piltanton Burn, in flatlands near Stranraer. Roman coins found at the mouth of this stream imply that Mediterranean traders knew it. Similarly, comparison of *Virvedrum* with Welsh *gor-* 'very' and *gweir* 'bend' offers the meaning 'very sharp cape'. *Virvedrum* is known to be Duncansby Head, by John o' Groat's, so the explanation well suits a dramatic change of direction in north-east Caithness. It means we can rule out the explanation 'very wet cape' proposed by Rivet and Smith.

Other names are harder. Here emendation is called for. One instance is Ptolemy's *Verubium*, which is Noss Head, by Wick. Nobody has made sense of it as it stands. But emendation to **Verudium*, in the light of Welsh *rhudd* 'red', gives a meaning 'very red cape', which is apt for a headland of Old Red Sandstone. A trickier instance is *Mons Graupius* (identified as Bennachie in Aberdeenshire), below which Agricola defeated the Caledonians in the September of AD 83. W. J. Watson long ago proposed an emendation here to **Craupius*, just as the *Galgacus* also given by Tacitus must be emended to *Calgacus* 'swordman' (compare Middle Irish *colg* 'sword'): a fitting name for the brave leader of the Caledonians. (Similarly, the *Boadicea* of Tacitus must be emended to *Boudica* 'victorious one', a fitting name for the brave queen of the Iceni.) Yet we can go further. **Craupius* still makes no sense. But **Mons Cripus* 'crested mountain' (compare Welsh *crib* 'bird's crest, cock's comb') does, as it aptly describes the profile of Bennachie, with its profile of five conspicuous summits in a line. There is little doubt that Agricola defeated Calgacus below a mountain that the Picts called **Cripus* 'crested one', because it looked like the comb of a cock.

Having seen what can be done with research already in print, let us look at four other names which have never been explained. These are *Bodotria*, *Boresti*, *Caelis*, and *Taexali*.

Bodotria is Tacitus's name for the River Forth.

Yet Ptolemy refers to it as *Boderia*, while the Ravenna Cosmography (a late source) calls it *Bdora*. Nobody has reconciled the forms. However, the German philologist J. K. Zeuss (d. 1856) linked *Bodotria* with Middle Irish *búaidrid* ‘disturbs; stirs up, muddies, makes turbid (of water)’ and Welsh *budr* ‘filthy, dirty’. The sense would be ‘dirty river’. It is a pity this was overlooked by Rivet and Smith, because with modification it provides an answer, as we shall see.

If we reconstruct the name as **Boudra* ‘dirty one’ (cognate with Welsh *budr* ‘filthy’), which in the first century or so AD became **Bodra*, this offers a solution. The middle part of the Forth winds through Flanders Moss, once a semi-swamp and formidable obstacle that has determined Scotland’s history; while the lower reaches of the Forth have extensive muddy tidal flats. The Forth was a dirty swampy river, difficult for armies of all ages to cross. But how do we reconcile *Bodotria* in Tacitus, Ptolemy’s *Boderia*, and the Ravenna Cosmography’s *Bdora*? Now, a name **Boudra* ‘dirty one’ would give **Bodra* ‘dirty one’. With scribal metathesis, this is what the Ravenna Cosmography actually has. So corruption in Tacitus and Ptolemy probably began with *Bodria*, proper and other nouns in *-ia* being common in Latin, but unlikely for a British hydronym. *Bodotria* and *Boderia* would result from that. As regards the Forth, therefore, editors of Tacitus may now choose to read **Bodra* ‘dirty river’ in their text, and can rule out *Bodotria*.

Nevertheless, this **Bodra* has nothing to do with the modern name *Forth*, where there is another solution. The Welsh knew the Forth as *Gweryd*, which also means ‘earth, soil; clod’. In this context *Gweryd* makes sense as a name of Flanders Moss, made up of spongy earthy humus; and the form that gives *Gweryd* in Welsh would also give *Forth*. If so, a regional name would have become a river-name, much as *Liffey*, originally meaning the plain west of Dublin, became used of its main river.

The *Boresti* have been a mysterious people and *Boresti* a problematic form. But, as we know Agricola defeated the Caledonians some eighteen miles from modern Aberdeen, we can be sure they lived on the plain beyond that, north of the Grampians. Their name is surely corrupt. The error is likely to be its unCeltic initial *B-*. If we read **Roresti*, light starts to dawn. British *Ro-* (sometimes raised to *Re-*) is a common intensive prefix. (Perhaps a scribe of Tacitus was confused by thoughts of Boreas, the North Wind.) If we then turn to dictionaries of the Celtic languages for

corresponding forms beginning with cognates of *ro-*, we find one only. This is the well-attested Old and Middle Irish *ruirthrech*, translated as ‘strong-running, impetuous’. All follow Kuno Meyer (d. 1919) in deriving this from the intensive *ro* + *reth-* ‘run’. *Ruirthrech* ‘fast runner’ was the original name of the river Liffey. The first elements of *ruirthrech* have a Middle Welsh cognate in *rhyred* ‘rush, haste; excess, presumption’.

If emended **Roresti* meant ‘hastening ones, eager ones, impetuous ones, those running forward (in battle)’, it would parallel other defiant and warlike appellations in the Celtic languages. The concept is shown in the Gaulish stem *cingo-* ‘to go, to step’, seen in *Excingus* ‘he who steps forward, warrior, attacker’, and in a derived sense in *Vercingetorix* ‘great king of warriors’. It may also be found in *Durotrages*, a warrior people of south Britain, who built Maiden Castle. Their name appears with this spelling on an inscription from Hadrian’s Wall, and apparently means ‘swift-footed ones of the stronghold, warriors of the fort’, with the element *-trag-* seen in Gallo-Latin *vertragus* ‘swift-footed one, greyhound’. The same concept may occur in Ptolemy’s *Venicones*, a people living between the Tay and the Mounth, if their name means ‘hunting hounds’, the people seeing themselves as fierce fighters, who made enemies their prey by dashing after them and rending them to pieces. The *-st-* of proposed **Roresti* ‘impetuous ones’ offers no objection to this etymology. Professor David Ellis Evans of Oxford quoted Gaulish *Atrestus* ‘good runner’ as one of many forms of *-ret(t)-* ‘run’. So there is reason to add **Roresti* to the many formations meaning ‘run’. There is also a case for taking *Begesse* in the corrupt Ravenna Cosmography as a corruption of **Roresti*, perhaps from **Reressi*. But there is no link with the town of Forres (its name of Gaelic and not Pictish origin), despite what is sometimes said.

Now for *Caelis*. Ptolemy’s ‘mouth of the river Caelis’ is Banff Bay, where the Deveron enters the sea. The forms and meaning of *Caelis* have been puzzling. Yet there appears a simple answer. Ptolemy’s original in *-ai-* indicates a link with Welsh *coel* ‘belief; omen, portent’. *Caelis* may hence be explained as a Celtic form in *Kail-* meaning ‘portentous (river), prophetic (river)’. For the Taexali, the Deveron would have been sacred. It was thus like the *Devona* ‘great goddess’ or *Don*, also in their territory, as well as the *Deva* ‘goddess’ or *Dee* just south of it. The Deveron is useless for navigation but has excellent trout and salmon fishing. If the Taexali thought it also had

prognostic qualities, it would have an equivalent in the Dee of north-east Wales. The Welsh thought that, as it shifted more towards Wales or England, it showed which nation would have success in battle. The *Taexali* may have attributed similar powers to the Deveron. When war threatened, their leaders may have thought hard on what wise men told them of the river's movements.

So we may conclude that *Caelis* is correctly given by Ptolemy; that it is purely Celtic; and that it means '(river) providing omens, portentous (river), prophetic (river)'. There may even have been a temple or ritual site on its banks. In this context may be mentioned from Scotland the cauldrons and other items sacrificed there to water deities, and from Wales the scores of bronze, iron, and wooden objects found in Anglesey at Llyn Cerrig Bach, including weapons, harness, chariot fittings, slave-gang chains, currency bars, parts of a trumpet, ornamented bronze plaques, and a shield boss. These, deliberately consigned to the lake, indicate the kinds of item that perhaps also vanished below the Deveron's waters.

Finally, *Taexali* and *Taexalorum Promontorium*, located in the north-east of modern Aberdeenshire. Form and meaning have been obscure, but a new approach may offer a solution. There are two pieces of evidence. The first is *Smertae*, the name of a people on the border of Ross and Sutherland, understood as those 'smeared' with enemy or sacrificial blood. The other evidence is Middle Irish *taesc* 'jet, spurt, flow (of blood, etc.)', *taescach* 'act of pouring, gushing', and *taescaid* 'pours out'. If the *Smertae* were known as smearing themselves with blood, the *Taexali* may have given themselves out as shedders of blood, using a proto-Pictish root with a cognate in Irish *taesc* 'jet (of blood)'. Irish saga shows the force of *taesc* and its related forms. They occur when a prophetess sees three naked men in a vision, 'their spurts of blood (flowing) through them'; when 'spurts of blood' run down warrior limbs, or blood foams and bubbles, 'welling up in spouts'; or injury means that there 'gushed out' heavy, thick blood from the body of a hero.

If the above comparison is valid, it vindicates the reading *Taexali*. The variant *Taexzali* can be rejected. We can be sure the *Taexali* 'shedders of blood, those who make blood spurt' were Celts and not some pre-Indo-European survival. We can also be sure that their ruling class delighted in battle, their name being warlike. It was this people that Agricola fought in the September of AD 83, and,

if *Taexali* is correctly understood as 'Bloodshedders; Killers', it is thus no surprise that the Romans in the end set their frontier far from the lands of this brave and ferocious people of ancient Scotland.

Dr Andrew Breeze, University of Navarre, Pamplona (a shortened version of a talk to the Dollar conference)

FROM TACITUS TO TESCO THE PLACE-NAMES OF EAST STIRLINGSHIRE

Professor Nicolaisen, in his preface to *Scottish Place-Names*, begins, 'This book has been for over 20 years in the making.' The ongoing study of the place-name of East Stirlingshire has a similar span; certainly one in excess of 25 years. Unlike 'Scottish Place-Names', it must be emphasised that this work has been undertaken by one with no formal discipline in the field of onomastics. On the plus side, a sound knowledge of the locale, both in terms of the topography and history, compensates to some degree.

The study area is an interesting one, not least in the variety of its topography. It stretches from the water-shed in the Campsie Fells on the west down to the seaboard of the Firth of Forth on the east; from the Slamannan Plateau on the south down to the carselands of Airth on the north. It contains, therefore, hill country with altitudes up to 459 metres, moorland tracts, undulating glacial deposits and rich alluvial plain. There are too several water features: the estuary, two significant rivers and a few small lochs. Historically, it was a linguistic meeting place where Cumbric, Gaelic and English seem to have existed alongside each other at one time and where each has been spoken for significant periods. There is too a rich archaeology with the kitchen middens of the hunter-gatherers along the raised beach, Roman remains, feudal fortifications along with the remnants of the Industrial Revolution. Equally notable are early settlements recognisable in the Celtic place-names, the apparent progress of Christianity, land organisation including a thanage, significant monastic, temple and crown-lands. There was too activity associated with the Wars of Independence as well as a mediaeval royal dockyard. As the title of the presentation sought to demonstrate, the natural process of naming places in the study area has continued unabated from the early years of the second century A.D.

through to the present day.

It was the name Wetshot, in the form *Weitschot* (1610), a strange name that defeated all of the resources of Falkirk Library, that led to a DIY solution which found not only the solution to that particular enigma but eventually to the confrontation with so many more. The original research, held in a ring binder, has developed to a current collection of around 4000 place-names. A prior work, 'The Place-Names of Stirlingshire', by James B. Johnston was published in 1903 in which the author remarked, 'I have not deliberately shirked any names that I have come across, and I have drawn up a list of about 350. It makes no pretence to be exhaustive; but I have omitted very few known names, unless they are either commonplace and obvious English names, or else simple Gaelic ones, readily explainable.' Unlike that work, the current study is limited to the eastern side of the county: the pre-Regionalisation administrative division known as East Stirlingshire and comprises the parishes of Airth, Bothkennar, Denny, Dunipace, Falkirk, Kilsyth, Larbert, Muiravonside, Polmont and Slamannan. It is much less selective than Johnston's: all place-names have a value and each name encapsulates something of the land or its experiences and therefore, helps us to understand how our society has developed. Even the most 'humble' has an intrinsic 'poetry' which often captivates.

Agricola's campaigns in the area and the fact that the Antonine Wall runs through it resulted in a few places from the period of the Roman occupation being mentioned by classical writers such as Tacitus, Ptolemy and the compiler of the Ravenna Cosmography. The Firth of Forth, in its ancient form of *Bodotria/Boderiae/Bdora*, is an example. A tentative derivation is that the name contains a root recognisable in Welsh *boddi*, 'to drown' with a terminal verb-noun suffix found as *-oeri* in Modern Welsh, apt for a river that created the huge alluvial plain known as the carse. The only substantiated location from the list of places across the Forth-Clyde isthmus given in the Cosmography is *Velunia/Veluniate*, now known to be Carriden in neighbouring West Lothian. We know that the list runs east to west and, given the extent of the list relative to the length of the wall, we might assume that several of the subsequent places lie in the study area.

Following Nicolaisen, the presence of elements from each of the linguistic strands found in

Scotland that appear in 'indicator' names has been sought. Distribution maps showing those that have been detected have been constructed. Those of pre-Gaelic origin recognised are: *cair*, *pert*, *pit*, *pren*, and *tref*. No examples of *aber*, *cardden*, *lanerc* or *pevr* have emerged. However, other examples of this period do exist, such as: Airth, Denovan, Eggesbrech/th (Falkirk), Morgunssete (Muiravonside), Myot and Polmont. Nicolaisen's 'indicators' for Gaelic are *achadh*, of which 9 examples exist, *baile*, also 9, and *cill*, of which no instances exist in the study area. Of interest in this strand are 3 place-names: Slamannan, Slafarquhar and Slachristock. Each has as its first element *sliabh*, uncommon on the east side of Scotland and these appear to be the most south-easterly instances of place-names containing it. There is a significant body of Gaelic names in the study area; in some instances forming large groups such as *dal*, used of the large flat meadows on the carselands. As far as the Scandinavian strand is concerned, Nicolaisen used the following elements as 'indicators': *-staðir*, *-setr*, *-bolstaðr* and *-dalr*, as well as *byr* and *fell*. No examples of any these are found although there is a very late Northby (1833). As it lay in lands owned at the time of its appearance by the Earl of Zetland the assumption is that it was introduced by one of his followers. For early English names he used two groups: *-ingtun*, *ingham*, *bōtl*, *bōðl-tun* and *wic*, *-hām*, *-word*. As we might expect, none of these emerged in the study. The earliest recovered record of a place-name in English in Stirlingshire is Stenhouse (*Stanbus* 1185x89) recognisable in the extant name Stenhousemuir. The only other twelfth century names found were Savelmesforde (*sic*), South Moss (*Suth Mossam*), Black Hill (*nigrum montem*), St Alexander's Chapel (*ecclesiam Sancti Alexandri*) and St Alexander's Hill (*collis Sancti Alexandri*). Between 1200 and 1400 only a further 15 place-names in English have been recovered. Of these all but 2 are recorded in monastic cartularies.

In the study, the processes that alter the names of places are an ongoing fascination. An example of assimilation is Palacetree (*Polwartrie* 1648), the name of a parcel of land in Muiravonside Parish. An example of what seems to be change engineered for social reasons is found in Fankerton (*the Fokkertown* 1539x62) in Denny Parish.

The last vestiges of run-rig are recognisable in names recovered of groups of rigs in records of

the same period as the birth of Carron Company and the Industrial Revolution in Scotland. It was the founding of the iron foundry on the banks of the river that made Carron both a household and an international name. This enterprise also coincided with changes in agricultural practice which led to the clearance of people from the land. Many flocked to the local area to find work in the new industries and they had to be housed. To make this provision the cheapest land available was acquired, hence new settlements such as that on Stenhousemuir. Ancillary industries, such as nail-making, were instrumental in new place-names being coined, as did the intensification of coal-mining. Transport was a huge problem and the facility of the Forth & Clyde and the Union Canals brought great advantage as well as yet more place-names.

Now, in the post-Industrial Revolution age, no iron is cast in East Stirlingshire, coal isn't mined nor are bricks made. Services have largely replaced industry; chain stores and multi-national concerns strive to create new power bases. Where once legionaries built forts across the land to enforce Pax Romana now the new empires build stores where we go to pay our tribute. And just as our ancestors gave names to such places, so too do we.

John Reid (based on his talk to the Dollar conference)

PLACE-NAMES OF CLACKMANNANSHIRE

I would like to start with a special thank-you to **Scottish History for All** (*Eachdraidh Albannach*) (SHfA) and the **Gaelic in Clackmannanshire** (GiC) Project in particular. SHfA is a voluntary body set up 3 years ago to promote knowledge of Scottish History and Gaelic. The founder members felt that there was a need for easily accessible, good quality, information about both these subjects, and the links between them. A successful bid was made to the **Local Heritage Initiative Scotland** (LHIS), part funded by the **Heritage Lottery Fund**. Clackmannanshire (hereafter CLA) is one of six pilot areas in Scotland, with two groups being supported in each area. I was employed by the GiC project to work with a small group of volunteers on the Gaelic place-names of CLA, concentrating especially on twelve local names, including those of the most important settlements. I would like to acknowledge fully the support and input of

this project. It is on this work that much of this talk is based. Another product of the project was my article 'Celtic Place-Names of CLA', *History Scotland* no. 4 (July/August, 2004), 13-17 (hereafter *HS*-article).

Apart from the work done by and for the Project, very little has ever been done on the place-names of CLA. For the Ochils we are lucky enough to have Angus Watson's *The Ochils: Placenames, History, Tradition*, published by Perth and Kinross Libraries in 1995. For the lowland part the work of collection and analysis had to start practically from scratch.

For a definition of CLA as it has changed and evolved over the centuries, I refer the reader to my *HS* article. Between 1891 and 1975 it consisted of the parishes of Alloa, Alva (formerly in Stirlingshire), Clackmannan, Dollar and Tillicoultry. Since 1996 the parish of Muckhart, formerly Perthshire, has been added to it.

It is important to bear in mind that CLA for most of the early historical period was a boundary territory - it was not until Lothian was taken into Alba in the 10th century that its boundary status changed. Before that it was where several early medieval kingdoms met: Northumbria to the south of the Forth, the kingdom of Al Clut or Dumbarton, later Strathclyde, to the south-west, and Pictland to the north and east. We have very few historical records from before 900, but from them three refer to major battles in the area, including one in Dollar itself, in 875 between the Norse and the Picts.

The survival of important medieval woodland around Clackmannan may well have established itself during a period of reduced settlement in what must have often been dangerous borderland.

The earliest language of CLA about which we have any certain knowledge is a p-Celtic (i.e. non-Gaelic Celtic) one, and we know about it chiefly from place-names. Given the boundary position referred to above, and the turbulent history this must have brought with it, I think it is probably wisest to leave the language description at that, rather than try to apply labels such as Pictish or British. For the purposes of this paper today, for Brittonic you can read either British or Pictish, or a mixture of both. These include:

Clackmannan itself - 'stone of Manau', though

it does show Gaelic influence e.g. in the genitive ending *-ann*. The kingdom or territory of **Manau** stretched on both sides of the middle Forth, and included not only Clackmannan but also Slamannan, Stirlingshire, which also contains the name Manau. The first element is G *sliabh* 'moor', so 'moor of Manau'. The Brittonic name Manau comes from the same word as Man (Isle of), and the early forms of both these place-names are identical. The root would appear to be **man-* or **mon-* 'projecting or high land'. In the case of our Manau, it would refer to the spectacular ridge of the Ochils, as viewed from the south.

Menstrie, Alva parish (*Mestryn* 1261 CDS, *Mestreth* 1266 ER, *Mestry* 1315 x 1321 RMS), 'farm or settlement on a plain or open field'. The second element appears to be Brittonic **trev* 'farm, settlement', related to Welsh *tref* 'town, village', earlier 'farm'. The first element **maes* (Welsh *maes*) is the Brittonic equivalent of Gaelic *magh*, 'plain, level land'. This Gaelic word is found as the second element in the Gaelic names Alloa and Alva, and in these two names probably refers to the same feature as **maes* in Menstrie, that is the broad stretch of lowland between the Ochils and the Forth. The first element of Alloa and Alva is *all*, *ail* 'rock, cliff', a word that occurs in both Brittonic and Gaelic, and refers here to the escarpment of the Ochils.¹ The fact that Alloa and Alva appear once to have been the same name suggests that **Al-mag* was the early Gaelic name for the whole of the above-mentioned plain, and probably (but unprovably) an adaptation of an earlier Brittonic name for the same feature.

Ochils, closely related to Welsh *uchel* 'high'.

Dollar (*Dolair*, *Dolar*), 'place of the haugh(s) or water-meadow(s)' (cf Welsh *dôl* 'meadow'). This word was borrowed from British or Pictish into Scottish Gaelic as *dail* 'water-meadow, haugh'.



Dollar from the north: from an old postcard

Aberdona, Clackmannan parish (*Aberdonie* 1652 *Retours*), 'mouth of the **Donie*'. This must refer to the junction of the Gartreilly Burn with the

Black Devon. Either Donie is a reduced or suffixed form of Devon (earlier *Douane*), or it is the former name of the Gartreilly Burn.

There are also two important place-names in Logie parish, Stirlingshire, right by the western border of CLA, which can definitely be assigned to British rather than Pictish. These are **Manor** (*Maner* 1654 Blaeu), probably deriving from a word related to Welsh *maenor* 'stone-built residence of the chief of the district', and **Gogar** (*Goger* 1218 x 1318 RRS v). This is identical to the parish- and settlement-name Gogar, Midlothian, which W. J. Watson analyses as containing British **go-gor* 'small cast, spur, bend', cf Welsh *côr* 'binding, boundary, limit' (1926, 210). At the Stirlingshire Gogar the Devon, which has been meandering south-westwards since Crook of Devon, about 20 km to the east, turns to flow southwards into the Forth, and it is probably this bend that Gogar refers to. Gogar is of especial significance linguistically, since in its first *g* it shows the Welsh (British) development of original Celtic *w*, which in Gaelic became *f*, and in Pictish remained *w* (written *u*), while in Welsh it became *gw*, with *gwo* later becoming *go*.²

GAELIC

Of all the languages spoken in CLA over the past 2000 years, Gaelic is the one which has left most trace in place-names. We do not know when exactly it was introduced into the area, nor when it died out, but a very rough time-span of 9th century until 13th or 14th century is likely, with the main focus on the good-quality low-lying land at the start of this period, while at the end of this period Gaelic will have survived longest in the upland areas.

Most of the Gaelic names will have been coined as the lands between the Ochils and the Forth became absorbed into the kingdom of Alba, the name of the kingdom which arose out of the merging of the Gaels and Picts from about 900 AD onwards, and which formed the core of the medieval kingdom of Scotland. Names such as Pittenskene (now lost, near Clackmannan) contains the element *pett* 'portion, land-holding', which is ultimately from Pictish, but was borrowed into Scottish Gaelic and used to form new place-names in the Gaelic-speaking period. *Pit*-place-names formed in Gaelic during this same period as Pittenskene are those south of the Forth such as Bantaskin by Falkirk, formerly *Pettintoscale* etc. (e.g. 1450 RMS), Gaelic *pett an t-soisgeil*, 'estate of the Gospel' i.e. church-land.

Coalsnaughton, Tillicoultry parish (*Coschenachtan* 1480 ER ix 569, *Coschnachtane* 1511 RMS ii no. 3641) ? Gaelic *cas* + personal name Nechtan. Gaelic *cas* (f.) (Old Irish *cos*), gen. sing. *Coise*, dat. sing. *Cois*, pl. *casan* ‘foot’. *An cois na fairge* ‘beside the sea’ (literally ‘at the foot of the sea’) (Watson CPNS, 241 note). This has given rise to the district name Cois Fharrage, Co. Galway, Ireland. Coalsnaughton might then mean ‘district of Nechtan’. It is possible that the eponymous Nechtan was the famous Pictish king Nechtan or Naiton, son of Dargart and Der-Ilei, who ruled in the early 8th century – I refer you to Thomas Clancy’s article ‘Philosopher-King: Nechtan mac Der-Ilei’, *Scottish Historical Review* 83 (2004), 125-49.

Other Gaelic names are **Balhearty** (Tillicoultry parish, *baile* ‘farm’ + Gaelic *àrd* ‘high’), **Muckhart** (Gaelic *muc-àird* ‘pig height’), and **Tillicoultry** itself (containing Gaelic *tulach* ‘mound, knowe’ combined with what is probably a Gaelic compound meaning ‘back land’).

There is some toponymic evidence that Gaelic endured longer in this region than in Fife to the east. **Dollarbeg** is one piece of such evidence. The use of the affix, Gaelic *beag* ‘little’, is telling: such affixes are very common in Scots and arise where there has been a division of an older estate. They can refer to size (e.g. Meikle Seggie, Kinross-shire, Little Balbaird Fife) or to direction (e.g. Wester Sheardale, Dollar parish, Easter Kinnear, Fife). It is, however, very rare to find such an affix in Gaelic in this part of Scotland, and it is therefore a clue to the fact that Gaelic was more vigorous here for longer than in the lowlands to the east.

One reason for this might be the absence of any early burgh in the area, since burghs were one of the main engines for language-change (Gaelic to Scots) in the 12th and 13th centuries. Whatever plans there had been to develop Clackmannan as a royal burgh failed early, and CLA remained in the crucial period of the later 12th century on the western edge of the huge burgh trading liberty of Inverkeithing, which stretched from the Leven in the east to the Devon in the west (RRS ii no. 250). Nevertheless Scots has left many local place-names, especially for smaller features and later settlements, such as **Ferryton** and **Birkhill** (both Clackmannan parish), and **Harviestoun** (earlier *Harviesdavocho), Tillicoultry parish. Note also **Cunninghar** in Tillicoultry, from Scots *cuningar* ‘rabbit warren’. Davie Roscoe

informs me that it is still known locally as ‘The Bunny Hill’

I have tried to show something of the complexity and richness of the place-nomenclature of the Wee County, and very much hope that the collection and analysis, which has begun under the auspices of the **Gaelic in Clackmannanshire** Project, will one day lead to a full county place-name survey, long overdue.

¹ These and other similar names are discussed by W. J. Watson (1926, 502-3). All the forms which Watson quotes there under Alloo in fact refer to Alva.

² See Watson 1926, 210 and Jackson 1955, 163.

Dr Simon Taylor (abridged from his talk at the Dollar conference)

The project team are in the process of creating an interactive CD-ROM which will be available soon free of charge as an educational and tourism package. Please contact Carol Roscoe at the address below for more details. There will be a small charge for postage only. <carol.roscoe@tiscali.co.uk>

THE GART PLACE-NAMES OF CLACKMANNANSHIRE

Clackmannanshire is home to a remarkable cluster of place-names. They all contain the element *gart*. A gaelic word related to the Welsh *garth*, meaning ‘field, enclosure’, it has cognates in many Indo-European languages, including Russian *gorod* (-*grad*), ‘town’, Old Norse *garþr*, and English *yard* and *garden*.

There are sixteen Clackmannanshire *gart* names, with four nearby in Fife and Kinross-shire. These are not the only *gart* names in central Scotland. There are two other large clusters between Lake of Menteith and Loch Lomond and between Airdrie and Glasgow, with others between Stirling and Falkirk and in the glens around Callendar. The distribution of these names is most peculiar: in the east they stop at the medieval Fife border, and are not found north of the River Devon in Clackmannanshire. In the west, they are not found west of the River Leven, nor south of the Clyde. This has led to some speculation as to whether there may be a Brittonic influence at play, but it may be that they are very early Gaelic names. Their absence further east in Fife may be due to that area being Pictish in the 9th century when many of these names might have been coined.

There are approximately 157 *gart* names in central Scotland and in my talk I said I had

found 122 looking at the maps of the area, both modern and old. I discussed some of the pitfalls involved, including misspellings and names in the area that look similar at first glance.

The distribution of the *gart* names seems to suggest that they are something quite distinctive. It is significant not only that they are largely confined to central Scotland (there are clusters in Argyll and Galloway, however, but these are for another time!), but are in fact limited to certain parts of central Scotland. Generally, this is where the land quality is not so good, i.e. forest or bog. We can probably say that *gart* names are quite different economic and social entities from other settlement names such as *achadh* or *baile*, and that they are indicative of a poorer class of tenantry, and perhaps also of a population expansion prior to the decline of Gaelic here in the 14th Century.

The precise reason for the foundation of the *gart* names may never be known, but in Clackmannanshire at least they may have acquired a specific purpose. It seems the distribution here points to them being settlements in the medieval royal forest of Clackmannan mentioned in some early charters. There was a building boom in the post-1100 period when churches, castles and monasteries sprang up all over the country. Although stone predominates in today's ruins, a huge amount of wood went into these buildings – for scaffolding as well as floors and roofs. At least seven monastic establishments has quarters in the royal *toun* of Clackmannan by the Wars of Independence, and I pointed out that these may have been given so the monks could do business with the foresters. Indeed, a charter of Holyrood Abbey dating c.1141x47 specified that David I's 'foresters' were to allow the 'abbot and convent' to take timber from the forest, and their servants engaged on timber extraction are to enjoy the 'king's peace'. As a suggestion for where to look for these foresters and servants we need look no further than the place-name *gart*.

I looked at one name Tulligarth as a case study which allowed me to go into the parochial level. Nearly all the *gart* names are either in Clackmannan parish or within metres of its border. I tentatively proposed that Tulligarth – *tulach*, 'hillock, mound, assembly place' – might be the meeting place for the *garts*. I finished the talk by hoping I had demonstrated that here was the beginnings of a project in which place-name elements like *gart* could throw original and

important light on medieval settlement and environment in central Scotland.

Peter McNiven (summarising his talk to the Dollar conference

CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES FOR THE TOPONYMY OF CLACKMANNANSHIRE AND KINROSS-SHIRE

Although they were the smallest of the former counties of Scotland, Clackmannanshire and Kinross-shire are rich in cartographic source material that sheds light on changing patterns of land use and settlement and provides the toponymist with a wealth of place names.

At the macro level, well documented surveys of Scotland by Blaeu, Roy and the Ordnance Survey offer varying levels of comparative place name detail from the 17th to the 19th century. While Clackmannan is one of the gaps in Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* (1654), only a small portion of the county appearing on plate 26 ('Sterlin-Shyr'), the county of Kinross is covered on plate 27, 'The Sherifdome of Fyfe' and plate 28, 'The West Part of Fife'. In addition to this, there exists a draft survey of 'Keanrosse-shyre' by James Gordon (1642). The place names on each of these maps are inconsistent. For example, the village of Kinnesswood, which does not appear on plate 28 of the Blaeu Atlas, is rendered as Kineskwood on plate 27 and Keaneskwood on the Gordon map.

The gap in Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* is filled in the 17th century by 'A map of Clackmanan Shire' produced c.1681 by John Adair at a scale of 2 inches to the mile. This is the first of a series of more detailed county maps completed by land surveyors between the late 17th century and the mid 19th century. Volume 2 of the *Early Maps of Scotland* (Moir 1983) lists over 20 county maps for Clackmannanshire including James Stobie's 'The Counties of Perth and Clackmannan' (1783), W. Murphy's 'Clackmannan Shire' (1832) and S.N. Morison's 'Map of the County of Clackmannan' (1848). Most of the county maps covering Kinross-shire are included with maps of Fife, one of the most notable being John Ainslie's 'The Counties of Fife and Kinross' (1775). A rare map of the Kinross-shire on its own not listed in Moir (1983) is the Edinburgh surveyor John Bell's 'County of Kinross' (1796).

The microtoponymy of Clackmannan and Kinross is revealed in manuscript plans and

associated documents, particularly those which serve to formally record landscape change such as division of runrig and division of commonty, as processes either in the Sheriff Court or the Court of Session. John Hope's 1788 'Plan of Excambion and Division of the Lands of Dalquich [Dalqueich]' (National Archives RHP 35) documents the creation of four farms from the complex system of runrig previously delineated in James Morison's 1785 'Plan of the Runridge and Rundale of Dalquigh' (National Archives RHP 44). Ebenezer Birrell's 1830 'Plan of the Whole Commonty of Portmoak Moss' (Kinross-shire Historical Society 46) records names linked to peat cutting in the Bishopshire to the east of Loch Leven.

Farm and estate plans also recording landscape change are a rich source of field names. Three consecutive plans of Blairhill Estate on the border between Clackmannan and Kinross were compiled in 1809, 1822 and 1850 to record the creation of an orchard, the building of a mansion house and farm buildings, the amalgamation of fields and the expansion of the estate. The last of these plans details over 50 farm, croft and field names including curiosities such as Egypt, Capernaum and the North and South Bella Blunt.

Plans associated with the building of roads and railways, estate sales, the supply of water, fishing rights and the lowering of Loch Loch Leven in the 1820s all add to the stock of historic names in Clackmannan and Kinross. Examples of town plans include Bernard Lens's 1710 'Plan of Alloa' for the last Earl of Mar and plans of Alloa (1825) and Kinross (1823) in John Wood's *Town Atlas*.

It is important to appreciate the context of the local maps and plans produced during the 'golden age' of land surveying in Scotland between 1720 and 1850. In searching out map sources, it is also important to be aware of the county boundary changes that have taken place in both Clackmannanshire and Kinross-shire as well as the extent to which some land surveyors and publishers copied the work of earlier surveyors.

In addition to the two volumes of the *Early Maps of Scotland* edited by Douglas Moir and published by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in 1973 and 1983, a useful source for local maps and plans in the National Archives of Scotland is the *Descriptive List of Plans in the Scottish Record Office* edited by Ian H. Adams and

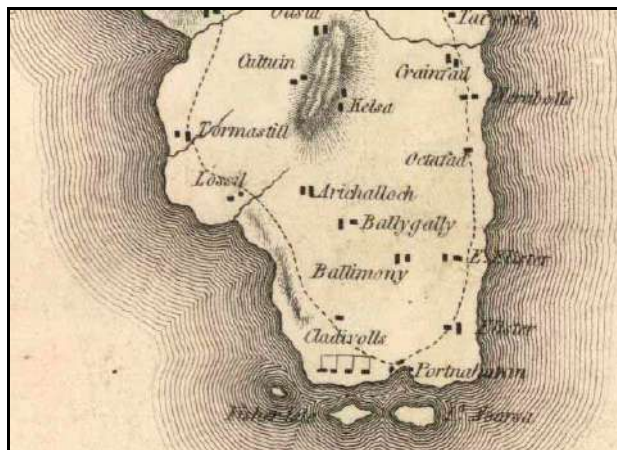
published by HMSO in the 1960s. A list of the maps and plans held by the Kinross-shire Historical Society can be obtained from David Munro (e-mail: david.munro@strath.ac.uk).

David Munro (based on his talk at the Dollar conference)

TURNING THE TIDE ON ORSAY

Orsay [ˈɔːrəsˈeɪ]¹ OS grid reference NR 163 515

oilen Eorsaigh (c1380) *Insula Sancte Columbe de Ilanorsa in Iley* (1507) *Insula Sancte Columbe* (1509) *Oversay* (1549) *Kealsa, Killaglan and Ilandoursa* (1631) *Oversa* (1654) *Elistereyrarach, Illandowrrsay, Balladalie, Corieskallag* (1686) *Wester Elister, Babygawly, Archally and Island Oversaw, Easter Elister* (1741) *Isle Noresay* (1749)



From George Langlands' map of Argyllshire, 1801

The larger of two islets lying just off the SW tip of the Rhinns of Islay is now known as Orsay. Although the majority of the early recorded forms of this name derive from a G *eilean* (m) or 'island' coinage, the initial 'oilen / Illan/ Island' etc. must be seen as a later addition to a pre-existing ON *Orsay. While the generic here is quite clearly ON *ey* (f), 'island', derivation of the specific has been a matter of some debate. The remains of a substantial medieval chapel on the island (RCAHMS 1984:255-6) led Maceacharna (1976:78) to suggest an ON rendering of the Gaelic saint's name Oran, with the terminal /s/ presumably representing the common ON masculine genitive morpheme. As can be seen from the Crown rentals of 1507 and 1509, however, the earliest and indeed only known dedication on Orsay was to Columba and not Oran. While it is not impossible that all traces of a previous dedication to Oran had been obliterated by the Norse, it seems more likely that the descriptive element is also intrinsically

Norse.

Perhaps the best known ON etymology is Thomas' (MS) offering of *örfiri* (n) – giving the compound meaning of 'ebb or tidal island' (cf. Nicolaisen 1977-80:119). Even so, this interpretation appears to confuse the early forms of Orsay with those of Oronsay which are also recorded in the Islay material in conjunction with priory land-holdings. It also fails to take proper account of local topography. While Oronsay off the SW coast of Colonsay is a tidal island, Orsay off the SW coast of the Rhinns is not and cannot therefore be an **Örfirisey* (cf. Gillies 1906:234-5). Gillies (1906:234-5) suggests a number of poorly attested alternatives including ON *odr*, 'a wood, woody', *orr*, 'a scar, a notch', and *óron*, 'mackerel'. An even better explanation, however, is provided by the name of a settlement on the adjacent mainland.



Orsay from the north, flanked by the settlements of Port Wemyss, Portnahaven and Ballymeanach. (Alan Macniven)

While the island of Orsay is small and relatively infertile by Islay standards, the farm-district of that name is nevertheless listed as a 16s. 8d. or Aughtenpart land in the early rentals. Considering the substantial 'extent' of this holding, it seems likely that at least some of it was located on the adjacent mainland. With this being the case, special attention can be drawn to the names of nearby places. While the current fishing village at Port Wemyss is comparatively recent – dating to the third decade of the 19th century (RCAHMS 1984:302) – settlement at this site is likely to be much older. Significantly, its previous Gaelic name of *Bun Abhainne* (Maceacharna 1976:122) means 'mouth of the river' – with the river in question, Abhainn Gleann na Rainich, virtually bisecting the southern end of the Rhinns. Given the local pronunciation of Orsay, with a clear vowel sound between the [r] and the [s], it is possible that the original form of the island-name was ON **Áróssey*, 'the island by the mouth of the river',

and that the name of the mainland settlement was ON **Áróss* – preserved in the Gaelic translation *Bun Abhainne*. The importance of Abhainn Gleann na Rainich in the local nomenclature is also commemorated in the name of the neighbouring settlement, Portnahaven, from G **Port na h-Abhainne* 'port of the river'.



John Thomson's more precise map of 1820 shows clearly the position of Orsay opposite the burn mouth. With thanks as ever, for these extracts, to the NLS for providing online maps.

Farm-names derived from ON **Áróss* are not uncommon in Norway (Sandnes & Stemshaug 1976:358). *Norske Gaardnavne* lists 6 examples (2 in Akershus Amt and 1 each in Bratsberg, Buskerruds, Jarlsberg og Larviks and Stavanger amt), noting that the initial vowel is often transformed to /o/ by the operation of vowel assimilation (Rygh 1989:22). As Marwick (1952:184) observed that initial ON /ár/ becomes /or/ in Orkney, and Jakobsen (1936:18) that it becomes /or/ and /wor/ in Shetland it can be assumed that the initial /o/ [ɔ] in Orsay is indicative of the same phenomenon.

Alan Macniven

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Did the Norsemen Extirpate the Inhabitants of the Hebrides in the Ninth Century? *PSAS* 11 (1876): 472-507;

On Islay Place-Names? *PSAS* 16 (1881-2): 241-76 -

kept in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in Edinburgh.

Editor's Note: Alan Macniven has recently completed a PhD at the University of Edinburgh on Scandinavian settlement on Islay. Full details will appear in the Autumn edition.

BOOK REVIEWS

Welsh Origins of Scottish Place-names, William Oxenham 2005, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, £6.50, €10.50 from 12 Iard yr Orsaf, Llanrwst, LL26 0EH, Wales (www.carreg-gwalch.co.uk).

Ó Lyon go Dún Lúiche: Logainmneacha san Oidhreacht Cheilteach, Art Ó Maolfabhail 2005, Clódhanna Teoranta, €10.00 from An Siopa Leabhar, 6 Sráid Fhearchair, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Late 2005 saw the publication in Wales and Ireland of two books of direct interest to the study of Scottish place-names. Informed interest from elsewhere is healthy and instructive. Sadly the Welsh offering, on *The Welsh Origins of Scottish Place-names*, does not fall into this category.

William Oxenham is unabashed in believing that the study of place-names can only ever be imprecise, and thus is open to free interpretation. He does recognise that there is a literature on the subject. However, he does not recognise that the authors he uses do not all enjoy equal standing.

To be charitable, the good thing about Oxenham's book is that it reminds us of the P-Celtic languages (he insists on lumping them all together as 'Welsh') which existed across Scotland and, though not as much as he would fondly wish, its toponymy. The mixed blessing about the book is its affordable price.

The bad news is that it is likely to put back the awareness and understanding of the role of the British, Pictish and Cumbric languages in Scotland's heritage and its place-names, in the same way that earlier unbridled enthusiasm for

seeing Gaelic behind every name has resulted in popular ignorance – including Oxenham's – of the language's southern and eastern distribution.

Indeed, Oxenham even detects Welsh *craig ynys* 'crag meadow/island' behind *Craignish* in Mid Argyll, as if names float in a context-less void. Likewise, it is easier to admit that *Pity Me* in northern England is an ironic name of English derivation, rather than getting involved in a discussion as to whether it is Brythonic *peth* or *pit*.

And then there is the cavalier ignoring of semantic possibility where toponymic parallels do not exist. If *Carrifran Gans* in Dumfries-shire really does represent *Caer y Fran Ganos*, 'fortress of the songful crow', then I fully expect a neighbouring hill to be called *Dùn na Muice Sgèith*, 'hill-fort of the aerial hog'.



The steep-sided Carrifran Gans, right middle distance, flanks the entrance to the short Carrifran valley off Moffatdale. Its partner on the left has, alas, the topographically apt name Saddle Yoke, not Dùn na Muice Sgèith.

But then the author admits to having but one dictionary apiece for Scots and Irish Gaelic (pp 56, 57, 62), which the bibliography shows to be neither *Dwelly* nor the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* – in fact he puts much weight on the absence of certain Gaelic elements from his copy of the *Oxford Irish Minidictionary*.

Far more enlightening is a thinner book from Art Ó Maolfabhail, former Chief Place-names Officer with the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. This takes a look at a series of elements – with examples of names, changes in nuance of meaning, and major diversionary look-alikes – found in the modern Celtic nations and in the European territories which once hosted related languages.

Scotland is relatively well treated, though inevitably in a short book of this kind reliant on a few examples gleaned from the standard authorities of Watson and Nicolaisen. Of most

value for us are perhaps the international comparisons. Each element has a European distribution map, but these are very small (and on at least one occasion slightly contradict the text) and so can only be indicative.

This book is in Irish, but if you have Scots Gaelic it is well worth persevering with gleaning what you can from it – the format of the book and bilingual presentation of names makes reading of the sister language easier than might normally be the case. But to delve into the book in depth, especially if venturing into publishing arguments based on it, it is to be strongly advised that you arm yourself with more than just a mini-dictionary.

The elements appearing in Scottish names are – in Scottish orthography – *ail, airgead, bàrr, beann, bruach, cam, camas, ceann, darach, doire, dùn, feàrn, fionn, innis, iubhar, Lugh, magh, eilean, ràth, ros* and *sruth*.

Peadar Morgan

Cultural Contacts in the North Atlantic Region: the Evidence of Names, Peder Gammeltoft, Carole Hough and Doreen Waugh (eds.), published by NORNA, the Scottish Place-Name Society and the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland, paperback, 269 pages, £10.

In April 2003 a well attended conference took place in Shetland organised by three place-name societies, NORNA, the Scottish Place-name Society, and the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland. This book publishes eighteen papers from the conference: they mainly deal with Shetland but, as the title suggests, they discuss Shetland names in the context of the wider North Atlantic region including Orkney, the Hebrides, Britain, Iceland and Norway.

Eileen Brooke-Freeman describes the Shetland Place-name Project in a paper which will gladden the hearts of all those with an interest in place-names. This ambitious project aims to establish a database of all names available from documentary and oral sources, and to link the names to digital maps. Her paper includes case studies of how local groups have been able to supplement and expand the earlier research of people such as Jakob Jakobsen and John Stewart. The value is not just in recording all these new names but in successfully engaging the enthusiasm of a wide variety of participants from Primary School pupils to elderly day care residents. One branch of the Place-name Project

has been the collection of *meads* (fishing marks and cross-bearings) and a separate paper by Gunnel Melchers provides an interesting discussion of this unusual type of place-name.

Several papers look at recurring place-name generics. Gunnstein Akselberg writes about *stadir*-names in Shetland and Western Norway, providing a close analysis of the research of Jakobsen and Stewart, and coming to the conclusion that *stadir*-names are not so exclusively combined with a personal specific as these early researchers believed. A paper by Richard Coates also deals with personal habitative compounds by examining the grammar of place-names in Scandinavian England. Inge Særheim contributes an analysis of *-land* names in Shetland, Orkney and Norway; Alison Grant broadens the geographical scope by a study of *by*-names in Ayrshire, and Svavar Sigmundsson describes the many close parallels between Shetland and Icelandic names. Diana Whaley writes about a less familiar class of names, those deriving from *stöng/stang* (a pole), and she lists the occurrence of these names in the Scandinavian countries and in the British Isles.

Since documentary sources for the Viking-age in Shetland and Orkney hardly exists, place-names play a big part in attempts to understand the nature of Norse settlement. Two interesting papers tackle the thorny ‘War or Peace?’ question. Was there continuity with the pre-Norse population, or does the evidence point to extermination, or at least displacement? Gillian Fellowes-Jensen studies the survival or otherwise of native names in the Isle of Man, Normandy and the Danelaw, and argues that the absence of pre-Norse names in the Northern Isles may be due in part to the weakness or absence of a literate Pictish administration. Arne Kruse has a similar approach to the problem, in this case by examining the relationship of Norse and Gaelic in the Hebrides, but comes to the more straightforward conclusion that the absence of pre-Norse names just indicates that there was a clean break with the Pictish past.

A paper which may or may not take us back to the Pictish past is Barbara Crawford’s contribution on the *papar*-names. Her on-going work on the ‘Papar Project’ can be found on the web-site <<http://www.paparproject.org.uk>> but here she poses a very basic question: were these pre-Norse clerics a real feature of the Viking Age

in the Northern and Western Isles, or were they 'a twelfth century myth'? She sets out the issues although a definitive answer, if there is one, may only be possible when work on the Papar Project is completed.

The question of contact between Norse and native is further explored by David Sellar who is interested in the personal names used by the great families - the earls of Orkney, the kings of Man and the Isles, the descendants of Somerled and the early MacLeods. He highlights interesting differences in the choice of Norse or Gaelic names, and variations in the practice of using royal Norwegian personal names. The interaction of Scots and Norse is also discussed by Peder Gammeltoft and Berit Sandnes: the former looks at some 200 names of islands and skerries in Shetland, and distinguishes between Scandinavian and Scots coinages, and the latter discusses how to decide whether place-names in Orkney are Norse or Scots. And, although we are accustomed to think of place-names spreading outwards from Scandinavia, cultural contacts were not all one way: Tom Schmidt lists and discusses an impressive body of onomastic evidence for a considerable presence of Faroese and Shetlanders in Norway.

Two papers provide micro-studies of Shetland names. John Baldwin presents a study of the names around *Da Burn a Ham* in Foula which builds on his many years of fieldwork in the island. Doreen Waugh, who is also one of the editors, contributes a good paper on place-names from Twatt on *da Wastside* (the West Mainland) which combines documentary sources with oral history in the form of stories gleaned from local folk. Story-telling is also the basis of Katherine Campbell's collection of names and legends gathered from all over Shetland about fiddlers who were reputed to have learned well known fiddle tunes from the supernatural creatures who lived inside the *tronie knowes*.

In a short review it is impossible to do justice to this interesting set of conference papers. All that I am able to do is to give some idea of the contents and to commend the collection, not only as a huge step forward in Shetland place-name studies, but of wider interest - and at a price of only £10 this attractive volume is excellent value for money.

William P L Thomson

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The 10th anniversary **SP-NS Spring Conference** returns to the Society's birthplace of St Andrews, on Saturday 6 May. Details and notification of booking arrangements are supplied with this Newsletter.

A reminder that the spring 2006 conference of **SNSBI** (Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland) is in Bristol, from 7 to 10 April. Details through Scotplace website (address on page 2).

A reminder also that on 12th and 13th May, 2006, a conference is to be held in Shetland to celebrate the work of the renowned Faroese philologist, **Jakob Jakobsen** (1864-1918). Brief details were included in the last Newsletter and further information can be got from Doreen Waugh at doreen.waugh@ed.ac.uk.

Dr Andrew Breeze has let us know of a conference at the Department of English, French and German Philology at the University of Málaga in Spain, and a related call for papers. This is the 18th conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature, on 5 to 7 October 2006: details on <http://web.uniovi.es/SELIM/index.html>.

OBITUARY

Many SPNS members will already have learned with sadness of the death on 24 November 2005 of **Dr Mary Higham**, who latterly played a distinguished and leading role in the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland. We shall include a fuller notice and a bibliography in the next Newsletter.

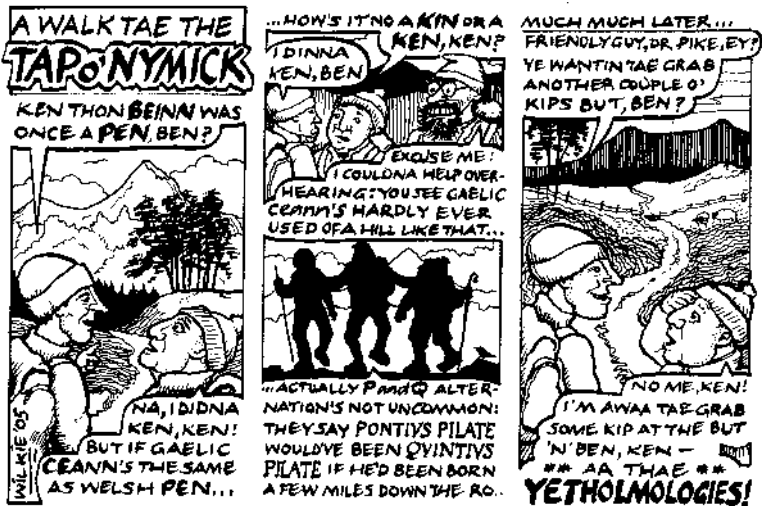
The Journal of Scottish Name Studies

Articles to be considered for publication in the inaugural volume of *JSNS*, due early Summer 2007, should be sent to the Publisher's address below. Short articles, *varia*, reviews and reports on work in progress will also be considered.

Notes for contributors are available from the Publisher, or on-line at-
www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS.html.

Editor: Dr Simon Taylor. Publisher: Clann Tuirc, Tigh a' Mhaide, Brig o' Turk, Perthshire FK17 8HT.

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Toponymist and cartoonist **John G Wilkinson** minds his Celtic Ps and Qs.



Thanks to **Andrew Ralton** for this photo of a direction sign to a new housing estate near Musselburgh. It shows a new segmentation, and perhaps a change of stress, in Barbachlaw, a name of Gaelic origin which would have begun as *baile bachlach (Balbaghloch 1336), 'farm settlement of the crozier', referring to lands confirmed to Dunfermline Abbey by David I.



Dr Simon Taylor and Prof. Thomas Clancy confront the task ahead. (See Prof Clancy's item on page 2.)



Clackmannan: a small hilltop burgh and its county are named from the ancient stone set in 1833 on top of a new standing stone beside the Cross and the Tolbooth remains. The stone's original position appears to have been on lower ground close to a once broader Forth estuary. The name is discussed on pages 7-9, in Dr Simon Taylor's article on the county's place-names.



This defile, to the north-west of Aberdeen, is in the saddle between **Elrick Hill**, facing camera, and Elrick Farm and the lower slopes of Brimmond Hill. It is within lands granted to the burgh of Aberdeen by Robert I in 1319. It is a classic eileirg or deer trap, into which deer were funnelled for mass slaughter by assembled royalty or aristocrats. Prof W J Watson's 'Celtic Place-Names of Scotland', page 489, has more on the word, including its origin as Old Irish erelec, 'ambush'.



Tobermory: not Mull but the Ettrick valley, Selkirkshire. The former Ettrick village was to the right of the house in mid picture. According to a dry-stane dyker who was at work in the fields below, the uneven foreground area, marked 'Tobermory' on the 1:25,000 Pathfinder map, commemorates a landowner's horse of that name which had to be put down after breaking a leg here.