

# SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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



North-westward view from the shore at **Brodick**, Arran's largest village and terminal for the car ferry from Ayrshire. **Goat Fell** is the graceful peak on the right, and at 874m the island's highest. These are among the minority of Arran names that are of Norse origin: breið-vík, 'broad bay', Brethwik 1400; and geita-fell, 'goats' mountain', Keadefelhil on Blaeu's map, 1654. Ian A Fraser's 'The Place-Names of Arran' notes a Gaelic version Gaot-bheinn, in which only the second element has been translated. The steep, serrated peak poking up just to the left of Goat Fell is **Cir Mhor**, 'great comb'. The ruggedness of these north Arran hills, despite lack of great height, is shown in another appearance of that descriptive term in **A' Chir**, 'The Comb', to the left of the lower, middle part of the horizon. To its left is **Beinn Tarsuinn**, 'transverse mountain', descriptive of its position athwart the general alignment of the ridge. **Beinn Nuis**, not satisfactorily explained, is the peak at the left or south-western end of the range. A peculiarity of Brodick is that although the Gaelic version of this anglicised name as used in notices on the CalMac ferry is Breadhaig, the settlement, originally nearer the northern end of the bay, had an entirely separate Gaelic name, **Tràigh a' Chaisteil**, 'Castle Beach'.

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## **EDITORIAL**

A neglected area of place-naming is how new housing developments get their names. Those of us who occasionally look at hoardings announcing new suburban housing estates will probably have been struck by the general usage of terms such as ‘meadows’ and ‘fields’. Possibly the marketing principle behind such namings is the expectation that by some process of double think prospective customers will imagine that the streets and buildings where farming used to take place will still, magically, be in the countryside.

Never mind that there will not be much room for poppies among the houses of ‘Poppy Fields’, Dunbar. Another device is the arbitrary adoption of names which sound vaguely upmarket – like ‘The Chesters’ for a small housing estate at Drem, also in East Lothian, too far from a multivallate ancient settlement of that name for there to be any genuine reference to it, but near enough for house-hunters and lorries with building materials for the site to turn up at the house named after and next to the ‘hill fort’. Southern English terms also seem to have, or to be believed by marketing people to have, a special kudos in Scotland; hence presumably the ‘Meadow Brook’ – or was it ‘Brook Meadow’? – estate near Kilmarnock and ‘Badger’s Brook’, a street in Broxburn, West Lothian, although that might just conceivably be a tongue-in-cheek translation of the name of the town.

The use of flattering place-names for marketing purposes is nothing new, though: few estate agents can ever have matched the name ‘Greenland’ as a device for securing more interest from potential occupiers than the characteristics of a place actually merited.

## **PLACE-NAME STUDIES IN SCOTLAND: A BRIEF HISTORY BY PROF BILL NICOLAISEN**

As far as Scotland is concerned, the threshold leading from prehistoric preoccupation to historical study in the area of place names may well have been the last decade of the eighteenth century when Sir John Sinclair planned and published the twenty-one volumes of his *Statistical Account of Scotland* based on the responses to questionnaires which he had sent to the ministers of the 938 Scottish parishes. The very first of the 166 items in that questionnaire was ‘The name, and its origin’, or, in the words of a manuscript, possibly written by Sir John himself, in the Special Collections of Aberdeen University Library, ‘1 What is the ancient and modern name of the Parish? 2 What is the origin and etymology of the name?’ One could not be criticised for wondering what an item like this, particularly at the head of a long list, is doing in the company of queries regarding the location and extent of parishes, road conditions in them, crops grown, food production, population figures, labourers’ wages, and so on. What kind of statistics, i.e. what sort of information countable, qualifiable, and therefore manageable and useful to the government might potentially be derived from an accumulation of place-name etymologies offered by ministers of the kirk?

I would like to argue that the term ‘statistical analysis’, brand new as it was at the time, should not be too narrowly interpreted in this case, and that the etymological suggestions of the divines were perhaps rather intended as the foundation for the search of patterns of various kinds, mostly linguistic. To the best of my knowledge, and in contrast to the scholarly investigation of many of the other aspects of the responses received to the questionnaire, the suggested etymologies have never been analysed as a corpus, a task that might well be worth undertaking as part of an exercise to determine attitudes to names and naming two hundred years ago, at least among those who responded to Sir John’s query no. 1. In some instances, the replies might even assist us in finding supportable etymologies for the names in question. At any rate, the *Statistical Account*, though not directly concerned with what might legitimately be called systematic toponymic research (the study of names), provides an extensive body and compatible inventory for such study, whether in any sense ‘statistical’ or

not, and I am prepared to regard its accumulation of parish names and their purported lexical meanings as one of the first steps, if not **the** first step, towards the kind of place-name research which we pursue and find acceptable today, though with more sophisticated aims and means.

Naturally, the responses received by Sir John differ considerably from each other in both length and substance. There are those respondents who ignore item no. 1 altogether, others who profess a lack of knowledge on the subject, and yet others who give it short shrift in one meagre sentence. Quite a few answers, however, are fairly full, sometimes presented with conviction, and others offered as the unsubstantiated speculation that they are. There is nothing particularly dramatic about any of the replies although it is perhaps worth noting how often the epithet 'antient' appears. The survival of the past, especially the distant past, in the present in the form of place names is obviously a fascinating facet of the chase for toponymic etymologies.

Sometimes the authors of the equivalent articles in the *New Statistical Account* in the 1840s in some way continue the discussion of the origin of a name. One example must stand here for the several offered in my actual paper: in the 1790s, the Rev. Mr. James Laurie tells us that Tinwald, supposed to be derived from the Gaelic, and signifying the *harbour*, or from the Saxon, the *house in the wood*, is situated in the country, synod, and presbytery of Dumfries. Trailflat, probably, too, of Gaelic extraction, and signifying a *sloping wet side*, was joined to Tinwald in 1650.

Fifty years later, his successor, the Rev. George Greig, Junior, quite rightly disputes this etymology of Tinwald, but having satisfactorily corrected at least part of the name *Tingwall* and having connected it rightly with cognate names in the Isle of Man and in Shetland, the writer in the *New Statistical Account* departs from his own high standards and lamely accepts his predecessor's claim that Trailflat is probably from a Gaelic etymon, which signifies a *sloping wet side*.

Seemingly Gaelic, or Celtic, will do as a convenient designation for anything that cannot easily be accounted for etymologically. As we now know, Trailflat which is recorded as *Traverflet* in the twelfth century, is a Cumbric tref-name although its second element has never been satisfactorily explained.

These stumbling beginnings of place-name study in Scotland deserve our attention not only because of the implied emphasis on matters antiquarian but particularly because both synchronically in the *First Statistical Account* and diachronically between the *First* and the *New*, a corpus of studiable and patternable parish names was built up which demanded recognition in its own right and which, frequently without any expert guidance, continued to influence later efforts in the field, building a bridge from the prehistory of Scottish toponymics to a more documentable, although yet nascent, historical phase.

At the other end of that bridge, though still within view of the prehistoric side of the divide which it spans, is James A. Robertson's *The Gaelic Topography of Scotland and What It Proves Explained; with much Historical, Antiquarian, and Descriptive Information, illustrated with Maps*. Published in 1869, this volume is, to the best of my knowledge, the first cohesive account of the Gaelic place names of Scotland, although the author had already included a section on the subject three years earlier in the second edition of his *Historical Proofs on the Highlanders (1866)*. Robertson's book is modern insofar as the author refers to 'the numerous books and records which had to be searched for the ancient forms and spellings of the names of places' (p. iii). What makes it less than modern is that it is a book with a mission, the object of which is to refute that there is a 'Kymric Element' in the topography of Scotland and to prove that the Highlanders are, in Robertson's words 'undoubtedly the descendants and representatives of the valiant Caledonian Gael, who were the first inhabitants of the land of Alban, now called Scotland, and were also of England' (p. iv).

The question of the 'Kymric Element' or of the presence of p-Celts in Scotland is, of course, one which has exercised the minds of many to this day, especially in connection with the linguistic identity of the Picts, and the arguments mustered by the two major factions have changed very little. Central to the controversy has been the derivation of the generic *Aber* in such names as Aberdeen, Abdour, and Abernethy which in form and meaning is, according to the proponents of p-Celtic identical with the *Aber-* in such place names as Abergavenny, Aberystwyth and Abdare, a view which Robertson calls unflatteringly 'ridiculous' and 'disproved',

dividing the word *Aber* into two Gaelic elements, *ath* 'ford' and *bior* 'water', so that the whole manufactured compound can be claimed to mean 'waterford'. Later proponents of the Goidelic origin of *Aber-* (like Diack and John Fraser) cite Gaelic *eabar* 'marsh' in order to circumvent a p-Celtic etymology but the real masters in the field, like William J. Watson and Kenneth Jackson have, of course, left no doubt, in spite of some dissident opinions, that *Aber-* is the same as in Wales; the real controversy goes much deeper, however, and essentially concerns the linguistic affinities of the earliest Celtic settlers in Scotland or, for our specific purposes, the Celticity of the toponymic evidence, and if we link to this a resolute design to provide an etymology, a lexical origin for every name examined, to avoid even a semblance of failure, we can expect to, and do find, in the place-name studies published in the decades just preceding or immediately following the beginning of the twentieth century, a plethora of derivations which do not stand up to closer scrutiny in their attempt to turn as many names as possible into the Gaelic words they once were or were thought to have been.

Unfortunately, competence as far as a knowledge of the Gaelic language was concerned differed greatly from author to author, and even those of them who as native speakers of the language might have been expected to offer acceptable etymologies, sometimes failed to resist the pressure to etymologise at all costs and in a contemporary context, instead of humbly admitting their ignorance in instances in which, more often than not, others had also failed before them. Thus the very determination to succeed inevitably led to speculation at best. This began to exasperate those name scholars who had been academically trained in Celtic linguistics and, abandoning their usual Highland courtesy and tolerance, boiled over into some scathing, or should I say scalding, reviews, especially by Donald Mackinnon, Alexander Macbain and W.J. Watson.

These demonstrate the contrast between the still prevailing amateurish approaches and the new professionalism which was at the point of entering Scottish name studies, especially in the Highlands, at the turn of the century. It was into this changing world of scholarship, already inhabited by Donald Mackinnon and Alexander Macbain and, as Watson would have it, Dr Alexander Cameron of Brodick, of the *Scottish Celtic Review*, that William J. Watson stepped just

over a hundred years ago when he decided to study the names of his native county, Ross and Cromarty, after many years dedicated to the classics. Through his position as rector of Inverness Royal Academy and his close association with the Gaelic Society of Inverness and the editors of *The Celtic Review* - one of them Professor Donald Mackinnon whom he later succeeded in Edinburgh, the other Ella Carmichael, his future wife, who provided a link with her father, the famous Gaelic scholar Alexander Carmichael - he had the status, the expertise, and the connections to translate his wide philological knowledge and educational ideas into sound onomastic scholarship and solid publications in this complex field of study. He was, at the time, the personification and synthesis of it all. One only has to allude to his *magnum opus*, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1926), to make this point, although it would be falsifying the picture if we were to perceive everything written by Watson on Scottish toponymy before 1926 as a prelude to the main work and everything published afterwards as a kind of postlude. In that respect it is good news that a complete collection of his place-name papers has been available since 2002.

Although Gaelic place names have continued to receive the attention they deserve, especially when used as evidence for the gradual spread of the language in Scotland since its arrival from Ireland, it is probably in the area of Pictish Studies that the emphasis on Celtic place names research in Scotland has been strongest since Watson. The scholar most responsible for this advance is the late Professor Kenneth Jackson who occupied the same chair of Celtic Studies as Watson in the University of Edinburgh from the early fifties to the late eighties. While his involvement in the detailed study of Cumbric names south of the Forth-Clyde line set our knowledge of the presence of p-Celtic in southern Scotland on a firm footing, it was his publication in 1955 of distribution maps of place names containing Pictish elements that gave us, for the first time, visual representations of the settlement area of the Celtic-speaking Picts.<sup>2</sup> Particularly his map of the scatter of names containing the element *Pit-* as a generic (like Pittenweem, Pittodrie, and Pitcaple), though perhaps depicting more an image of immediate post-Pictish Gaelic settlement in Pictland soon after the middle of the ninth century, is a very helpful aid in that respect. Jackson's view of a linguistic duality in

the face of material unity, i.e. the simultaneous presence in different parts of archaeological Pictland of Celtic and non-Celtic speaking Picts, has some merit but has not remained unchallenged. The study of place names of Pictish origin was further enriched in 1968 by two geographers, Whittington and Soulsby, in their 'Preliminary Report on an Investigation into Pit-place names'<sup>3</sup>, in which they examined the special characteristics of sites bearing names beginning with *Pit-*, such as soil quality, slope value, exposure, altitude, and so on.

It was only to be expected that W.J. Watson also felt intrigued by a different linguistic strand in the Scottish place-nomenclature, that of names of Scandinavian origin, for parts of his native county, Ross and Cromarty, especially in the Hebridean island of Lewis which at that time was administratively part of it, echo in their place names a considerable Norse presence. Scandinavian names in Gaelic territory had also interested Captain F.W.C. Thomas who, as early as 1876, asked the vexing question to which even today we do not have a completely satisfactory answer, "Did the Northmen Extirpate the Celtic Inhabitants of the Hebrides in the Ninth Century?", and a little later, in 1910, George Henderson who included in his book-length study of *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, a substantial section on Norse place names. It was, however, the interest which Scandinavian, especially Norwegian, scholars themselves took in the subject that provided this field of research with the necessary expertise and rigour. One only has to remember the activities of the Bugges (father and son), Marstrander, Christiansen, Borgstrøm, Sommerfelt, and Oftedal, and the Norwegian involvement in the Linguistic Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland; whereas the use of place names as evidence was usually incidental for that Survey, as part of the Gaelic texts recorded, Oftedal's research became dominated by them, as his monograph on the "Village Names of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides"<sup>5</sup> shows. One should, of course, add the names of Nils Holmer and A.W. Brøgger to this list, as the former, Holmer, recorded the Gaelic pronunciation of place names during his field-work on the Gaelic of Kintyre and Arran, and the latter, Brøgger, paid particular attention to the potential regional homelands of the Scandinavians who settled in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland.

The Norse place names of Orkney and Shetland have received the attention of both

Scandinavians and Scots, foremost among the Scandinavians was the Faroese scholar, Jakob Jakobsen who extended his study of Shetland dialects to the collecting of place names. The resulting volume, first published in Danish, appeared in an English translation in 1936. His book is not easy to use but when complemented by John Stewart's dictionary-like *Shetland Place Names*, published posthumously in 1982, the two volumes together form a helpful starting-point for any enquiry into the place names of Shetland, especially those of Norse origin.

Orkney produced its own eminent place-name scholar in Hugh Marwick whose *Orkney Farm Names*, published in 1952 but long out of print, is a classic. Marwick also published (mostly in the Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society) monographs on the place names of most of the major islands. Investigation of the Norse toponymy of both the Northern and the Western Isles continues from a number of perspectives, including their spatial and temporal distribution, and their relation to the homeland, their habitat-forming powers and the role of analogy in their creation.

The antiquarian instincts of most name scholars and the seduction of the detective work of linguistic archaeology are probably responsible for the fact that the top stratum of place names in Scotland has received the least attention. Perhaps so many of the English names (in the widest sense of that term) which form this uppermost chronological layer have wrongly appeared too obvious to warrant closer examination. Noteworthy exceptions to this general reluctance are the dissertations produced, in the format of the publications of the English Place-Name Society, in the 1940s by students at the University of Edinburgh. Unfortunately, only one of them, Angus MacDonald's *The Place-Names of West Lothian* was published in 1941, whereas May Gordon Williamson's *The Non-Celtic Place-Names of the Scottish Border Counties* of 1942 and Norman Dixon's *The Place-Names of Midlothian* of 1947 have remained in their original typescript format (though there seems to be some promise for their belated publication). In 2003, Margaret Scott's dissertation on the 'Germanic Toponymicon of Southern Scotland' (see below) has given us some hope that the balance might be redressed.

If, at the half-way point of the twentieth century, one had asked the question of coverage, the answer would have had to be that this was uneven, both geographically and qualitatively.



For instance, there existed, in the early fifties, only one dictionary of Scottish place names, J.B. Johnston's *Place-Names of Scotland* which, in spite of its glaring inadequacies, had received three editions between 1893 and 1954, and even in 2006 we are only a little better off in that respect, despite the publication of another two dictionaries of substance, one completely unreliable, the other, David Ross's, on the whole sound but for many of its entries lacking the documentation necessary to substantiate its proposed etymologies. Nevertheless, the post-World War II developments in and the current picture reflecting the study of Scottish place-names gives us the right to be greatly encouraged. Undoubtedly, some of the positive facets of the modern scene are the result of the formation of a Scottish Place-Name Survey as part of the School of Studies in the University of Edinburgh in the early fifties.

It is, however, significant that in the same year in which the *Scottish Place-Name Society* was founded (1996), to foster toponymic research on a national level, the triennial International Congress of Onomastic Sciences was held in Aberdeen, in recognition of Scotland's active role and progress in name studies in an international setting. It is also worth registering that, in the twenty-five years between the publication of the two editions of my book on Scottish place names (1976 and 2001),<sup>6</sup> well over two hundred quotable publications on Scottish place names appeared in print, far too many to cite and assess individually, and that that stream has not slowed down since then. Important in this surge is the central role that academic dissertations and theses have played in the promotion of place-name research in this country, involving particularly the four oldest Scottish universities. Following in Macdonald's, Dixon's and Williamson's footsteps, these are (to the best of this writer's knowledge):

Dissertations and Theses (chronologically)

**W.F.H. Nicolaisen**, Studies in Scottish Hydronymy (B.Litt. thesis, Glasgow 1956, unpublished).

**Doreen Waugh**, The Place-Names of Six Parishes in Caithness, Scotland (Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh 1985, unpublished).

**Richard A.V. Cox**, Place-names of the Carloway Registry, Isle of Lewis (Ph.D. thesis, Glasgow 1987; revised version published as *The Gaelic Place-names of Carloway, Isle of Lewis: Their Structure and Significance*. Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2002).

**Simon Taylor**, Settlement Names in Fife (Ph.D.

Dissertation, Edinburgh 1995; unpublished but integrated into the four-volume *The Place Names of Fife*, Donington: Sean Tyas, Vol. 1, 2006).

**Peder Gammeltoft**, The place-name element Old Norse *bolstaðr*: An Interdisciplinary study of the development of, and place-names which contain the generic *bolstaðr* from their origins in Norway to their dissemination in the North Atlantic area and elsewhere (Ph.D. dissertation, Aarhus 1999; published as *The place-name element bolstaðr in the North Atlantic area*. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 2003).

**Anke Beate Stahl**, Place-Names of Barra in the Outer Hebrides (Ph.D. Dissertation, Edinburgh 1998, unpublished).

**Berit Sandnes**, Fra Starafjall til Starling Hill (Dr. art. thesis, Trondheim 2002; published as a thesis by NTNU Trondheim, Norway).

**Angus Watson**, Place-Names, Land and Lordship in the Medieval Earldom of Strathearn (Ph.D. dissertation, St Andrews 2002, unpublished).

**Margaret R. Scott**, The Germanic Toponymicon of Southern Scotland: Place-Name Elements and their contribution to the Lexicon and Onomasticon (Ph.D. dissertation, Glasgow 2003, unpublished).

**Alison Grant**, Scandinavian Place Names in Northern Britain as Evidence for Language Content and Interaction (Ph.D. dissertation, Glasgow 2003, unpublished).

**Alan Macniven**, The Norse in Islay: a settlement historical case study for medieval Scandinavian activity in Western Maritime Scotland (Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh 2006, unpublished).<sup>7</sup>

There is therefore plenty of evidence that the study of place names in Scotland is flourishing and that its many practitioners are willing to make the best use of what modern technology has to offer to advance it. It has certainly come a long way from Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of just over 200 years ago.

### W F H Nicolaisen

<sup>1</sup> See: W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'A Gallimaufry of Languages'. In: Astrid van Nahl, et al. (eds.), *Namenwelten* (Berlin 2004), 233-40.

<sup>2</sup> In: F.T. Wainwright, *The Problem of the Picts* (Edinburgh 1955).

<sup>3</sup> In: *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 84 (1968) 117-25.

<sup>4</sup> In: *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (XI) (1876) 472-507.

<sup>5</sup> In: *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* 17 (1954) 363-408.

<sup>6</sup> *Scottish Place-Names: Their Study and Significance* (London 1976), new edition (Edinburgh 2001).

<sup>7</sup> We can now add **Rachel Butter**'s Ph.D. thesis of 2007 on *cill*-names in Argyll; see Bibliography (ed.).

**Note from Editor:-** The above is Professor Nicolaisen's summary, very modest about his own

distinguished contributions, of the talk that he gave to the Society's tenth anniversary conference at St Andrews in May 2006. Even since then there have been important advances in Scottish place-name studies. The first volume of Dr Simon Taylor's detailed study of all the significant place-names of Fife has appeared (and is available at advantageous terms to SPNS members – see below) and, more recently, the first issue has reached subscribers to the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies*, a peer-reviewed annual publication which will encompass personal names as well as place-names. The contents of the first issue are covered in the bibliography towards the back of this Newsletter. The SPNS is supporting the copying to modern formats, for easy public access, of the typescript 1940s PhD theses of May Williamson and Norman Dixon, which are still of great value, as well as the digitising of Alan James's work on the Brittonic Language of the Old North (see Spring 2007 Newsletter). The vigour and range of Scottish place-name studies are well shown in the Bibliography in this issue.

### SPECIAL OFFER FOR SPNS MEMBERS

The generous pre-publication offer for *Place-Names of Fife* Vol. 1 (West Fife) has been extended: £20 post-free within the UK and Ireland. Just send a cheque with your name and address to Shaun Tyas, 1 High Street, Donington, Lincs, PE11 4TA, Tel. 01775 821542 or contact him on:-  
<pwatkins@pwatkinspublishing.fsnet.co.uk>.

### THE INFLUENCE OF LAND-ASSESSMENT ON WEST COAST PLACE-NAMES

(The area of study includes the Hebrides and the west coast mainland from Cowal to Glenelg).

The Scottish unit of land-assessment was the merkland - presumably the land once reckoned as capable of producing one merk of silver rent per annum. As the power of the Scottish realm extended over the Highlands and the Kingdom of the Isles during the thirteenth century so local units such as ouncelands were converted into merklands. Essentially this was like a balancing of currencies using an exchange-rate mechanism. To some extent we can chart this process via the differing exchange rates which obtained. The Macruari possessions of the Small Isles, Uist and Barra were converted at a rate of 1 ounceland to 6 merks. Skye, Harris, Lewis and Glenelg (the northern half of the old Kingdom of the Isles) were exchanged at the rate of 1 ounceland to 4 merks. Knowledge of

this process may help us establish how and when the Highland area was incorporated within the Scottish fiscal system.

Place-names incorporating merklands are uncommon in our area but can be found in Arran (Marganish, Margrioch), Kintyre (Margmonagach) and by Loch Awe (Marginellane). We also glimpse the relationship between land-assessment and religious maintenance in the two places called Margnaheglisk (merkland of the church) in Arran.

Below (or before) the merkland assessment lies another reckoning in terms of ouncelands and pennylands. These may not have had a common origin but melded together in the west where 1 ounceland was worth 20 pennylands. Tirungs (literally land-ounce) referred to large areas of land and so do not often find their way into place-names. 'Unciatas' often feature in the documents but only occasionally do we learn of places like Ungistaffard (Mull) or Ungnacille (Skye). By charting the number of ouncelands we can establish the relative importance of the island domains. Rum (1 ounceland) was larger but considerably less important than Eigg (5 ouncelands) and no more valuable than tiny Muck (also 1 ounceland). It is clear that what is being measured is productivity not area.

Pennylands though, are very common. There are various suggestions as to their origin but I think there is a presumption in favour of an (almost) local currency system based on the Hiberno-Norse coinage produced in Dublin from about 997. Skye had about 55 ouncelands or 1100 pennylands. Ouncelands were not always sub-divided into individual pennylands but these are still very common, especially in Trotternish (Skye). However they are not found in islands like Islay, Colonsay, Gigha, Tiree, Coll and Raasay. It is probable that royal or church land was excluded from the process of subdivision to family and tenants. There are over 100 place-names in our area which include the element *peighinn* or penny - all but a handful have a clearly Gaelic second element. Often this is very prosaic such as *mòr* (big - Trotternish, Mull, N Uist, Knoydart), *caisteal* (castle - Knapdale, Arran, Craignish), *dùn* (fort - 3 times in Trotternish alone), *gobha* (smith - Skye, Kintyre, Morvern, Mull), *dubh* (black - Arran, Glassary, Kintyre) *garbh* (rough - Lorn).

Pennylands could be divided into half-pennylands so *leth-peighinn* is also a popular element. Sometimes a place is simply known as

An Leth-pheighinn (Skye, Rum) but there are also several Lephinbegs and Lephinmores. The process of subdivision did not stop there. Below the half-penny unit was the *fedirling* or farthing-land, often becoming Feorline (Cowal) or Feorling (Arran, Appin). Smaller units still have Gaelic names which have not entered the toponymy of the area.

Ouncelands and pennylands take us back to Norse times. Can we relate them to earlier units such as davachs or houses?

We are fortunate in that ouncelands and davachs are specifically equated in mediaeval charters for the west coast. The problem is that davachs seem to be absent from Argyll - the area of first Scottish settlement. Place-names such as Sruthan na dabhaich (Islay) give an indication that this absence may be more apparent than real. I have not finished my research in Argyll but suspect that davachs underlie ouncelands along the whole west coast. That said the element *dabhach* is rarely found, exceptions being 'Gargavak' (rough davach) and Doch-anassie in Lochaber. Quarterlands (*ceathramb*) and eighthlands (*ochdamh*) are common in Argyll but beg the question - a quarter or an eighth of what? Bute has at least 10 quarterland names (Kerrycro, Kerrylamont) and Tiree at least 5 (Keranokile, Kerremeanach) but in Kintyre it looks as if *ceathramb* may refer to quarters of pennylands. Eighthlands only occur in place-names in Kintyre (Ochtorag) and Islay (Octomore, Octofad).

Given the importance of the house in Dalriadic Argyll can we match pennylands to houses? Unfortunately there is no evidence that I know of which can establish a clear link between the 20-house units of the Senchus Fer nAlban and the 20-pennyland ounceland of the Norse - beyond the arithmetic parallel. The only toponymic element that might indicate the Dalriadic household unit is the element *tir* (land). *Tir* names are found throughout the area that was once Dalriada - often combined with a personal name (Tirfergus - Kintyre, Knok-tirmartin - Mull). They are particularly common in the Ross of Mull which was an early church estate and possibly not so much affected by Norse colonisation.

Finally there was a close link between the Norse land-assessment system and the maintenance of religion. Pennyland and half-pennyland units are often linked with religious establishments. There are examples of Pennykill in N Uist, Skye and Craignish, Pennycross in

Mull and Arran, half-penny 'kills' in Knapdale and Cowal. Equally several 'Kil-names' had assessments of 1d. I suspect that the Highland parochial system, from the time of first establishment, recognised the need to maintain the church - and the land-assessment system was invoked accordingly.

**Denis Rixson** (summarising a talk at the Spring 2007 Conference in Fort William)

## **THE ATHOLL EXPERIENCE**

*Simon Taylor writes: On 1 August this year, at a splendid and well-attended event at Old Blair, John Kerr launched the **Atholl Experience**, the result of forty years' painstaking research on the history of Blair Atholl. Along with Steve Connelly, the Archivist at the A.K. Bell Library in Perth, and John himself, I made a short speech at the launch, extracts of which are reproduced below. From a specifically toponymic perspective, the wealth of original and unpublished material which the **Atholl Experience** contains has prepared the way for a full-scale place-name survey of northern Atholl.<sup>1</sup>*

It is a great honour to have been asked by the Trustees of The Atholl Experience to speak at this celebration which sees the completion of this magnificent and important work. I am here in various capacities, both official and personal: official in that I am representing the University of Glasgow, where John Kerr holds a well-deserved honorary research fellowship at the Centre for Celtic and Scottish Studies. Also I am here in my official capacity as the convener of the Scottish Place-Name Society, of which John and Patricia, his wife, are amongst the earliest members.<sup>2</sup>

The work which we are here today to celebrate is important on many levels. Firstly, of course, it is important for the people of north Atholl, the area chiefly defined by the medieval parishes of Blair itself, Kilmaveonaig, Lude and Struan. John, so ably and tirelessly assisted by Patricia, has created a resource which will underpin and enrich local studies in this area for many decades if not centuries to come. However, the **Atholl Experience** is also important for all those who care about the history of Scotland in general - for example about the history of ordinary people and their relationship with the land: how they survived in and moved around the landscape, and how they articulated this relationship through their place-names. The Scotland-wide importance of the **Atholl Experience** is that it provides an inspirational model for local studies throughout



the country. There can be very few areas of Scotland which are now, thanks to the **Atholl Experience**, so well provided for in terms of local history - I am not meaning in the survival of archival material, but rather in the careful and intelligent collecting and ordering of that material, and in making it accessible and available to researchers, both lay and academic, throughout the world. Today we are celebrating not only the end of a 40-year long Project, but also the beginning of the many new projects which will use the **Atholl Experience** as a foundation, a quarry, a launching-pad, and an inspiration.

As we all know, it is not that John has been sitting on all this information for decades and today is releasing it on the world for the first time. He has explored and made publicly available many aspects of Atholl history in a series of attractively produced books, such as *Life in the Atholl Glens* (1993), *The Living Wilderness: Atholl Deer Forests* (1996), and *Church and Social History of Atholl* (1998). But the **Atholl Experience** takes these local histories to a new level by presenting in a systematic, comprehensive and user-friendly way all the documentation and sources which he has drawn on for these more popular works.

There are so many aspects to the **Atholl Experience** that you would be here till sunset were I to enumerate them all - I can only urge you to dip in and sample for yourselves some of the richness and variety. And as you do you will immediately appreciate not only the content but also how skilfully and beautifully these 42 Volumes in 93 archival boxes have been assembled and presented. The whole assemblage is an eloquent testimony to the fantastic team that is John and Patricia Kerr. And the vision and scholarship which have informed this enterprise from the very start is now harnessing technologies which were hardly even dreamt of when John began his work on Atholl in the 1960s: while these physical volumes will be housed in the A. K. Bell Library in Perth, the material is all digitised and plans are already afoot to put the whole thing on the world-wide web.”

<sup>1</sup> The event received full-spread coverage in *The Times* of 2 August, under the head-line in broadest journalese ‘Meet John Kerr, Scotland’s walking Domesday Book!’ Mention is made therein of a temporary hunting palace in Glen Tilt associated with Mary Queen of Scots in 1564. It was in fact associated with James V’s hunting expedition of 1529

(see John Kerr *Life in the Atholl Glens* (Perth, 1993), 75). I am sorry to say that I was the source of this error.

<sup>2</sup> John delivered a paper to the SPNS Conference in May 1999 entitled ‘Along an Atholl Boundary’, a summary of which can be found in *SPNNNews* 7 (Autumn 1999), 3-4 (and, of course, also on the SPNS website). A more detailed study of this boundary appeared in his article with the same title in *Nomina* 13 (1990), 73-89.

## BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS

Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba has recently completed a project researching the Gaelic forms of place-names for bilingual signs on the A82 trunk road from Glasgow to Inverness. The report, written by Jake King with Simon Taylor and Peadar Morgan acting in advisory capacities, comprises a survey of some one hundred and nine names containing old forms, consultation with informants and orthographical discussion. The research is available at:-

<<http://www.gaelicplacenames.org/A82-Lochaber-Place-Names-g.asp>>.

## THE TROUBLE WITH OUTH: DEFINING A BOUNDARY IN MEDIEVAL FIFE

*This is an extract from a paper entitled ‘Marches and Coldrain: exploring the place-names of boundaries and assembly sites in east central Scotland’, which Simon Taylor gave at the Mary Higham Memorial Day Conference held at the University of Lancaster, 3 February 2007. (Photos by author except Figs 1 and 2.)*

I want to take you on a virtual walk through the eastern Scottish countryside, which will at the same time be a walk through time - the kind of walk which Mary Higham so loved. The area I will talk about is on the border of the modern Fife Council area and Perth and Kinross Council area. Perth and Kinross is historically and geographically a very unhelpful administrative unit covering much of east central Scotland. It is much more helpful if I use for the area I am talking about the pre-1975 designation ‘Kinross-shire’ - one of Scotland’s smallest counties, which sits between west Fife and south-east Perthshire, and completely surrounds Loch Leven. Kinross-shire was historically always much more part of Fife than Perthshire.

The parishes involved are those of Cleish in Kinross-shire and Dunfermline in Fife - although in the medieval period, both Cleish and Dunfermline lay in the sheriffdom of Fife. It was not until 1685 that the small sheriffdom of

Kinross was greatly augmented by the addition of several parishes, including Cleish.

Medieval monasteries were well-known to have been punctilious neighbours when it came to boundaries. Usually in any boundary dispute we see only the final agreement, and not the years of discord which preceded it. Also, because it is often only the agreement which has survived, and everyone is trying not to ruffle feathers, it is usually difficult to decide which party, if any, was the aggressor. However, there are two boundary charters preserved in the cartulary of Dunfermline Abbey (hereafter *Dunf. Reg.*), known as the Dunfermline Register, which strongly suggest that in these 2 cases, at least, it was the monks who had orchestrated some kind of offensive on their neighbours. These two charters record perambulations which were made in the same year, 1231, and possibly even on the same day or consecutive days, along the northern and eastern marches of one land-holding belonging to the monks - that of the forest of **Outh** in the northern part of the large parish of Dunfermline. The 2 charters deal with different stretches of this boundary, and with different neighbours, but record that exactly the same settlement was made with each neighbour. That settlement required each of the secular neighbours, both confusingly called Gilbert, Gilbert of Cleish and Gilbert of Crambeth, to pay to Dunfermline Abbey 10 shillings a year in return for the abbey's quitclaiming all right which the abbot and convent of Dunfermline have had or have said that they have in the previously disputed land. So in effect the 2 secular lairds pay to stop Dunfermline hassling them along this boundary.



*Fig. 1: Modern Outh Hill is the one on the left. The small farm of Outh is in the clump of trees in the middle distance. The picture is taken from West Lethans: the lands of Lethans lay south and west of those of Outh, deriving from Gaelic leathan 'broad hill-side'. Photo: Eric Titterington.*

I want to concentrate on only one of these perambulations, *Dunf. Reg.* no. 192 (translation given in Appendix, below). It concerns the march between Outh and Cleish.

Outh comes from Gaelic *uchd* 'breast', hence 'rounded, breast-like hill' (see Fig. 1).

The lands of Outh are almost entirely upland, lying at around 300 metres above sea-level. It was royal forest until King William I gave it to his illegitimate son Robert of London around 1200, 'with the injunction that no-one was to fell timber or hunt there without Robert's permission' (RRS ii no. 463). Shortly thereafter Robert gave it to Dunfermline Abbey in return for the abbey's quitclaiming of an annual income of 6 merks from another of Robert's Fife lands (*Dunf. Reg.* 167). Its use as a hunting area, as well as a source of timber, and no doubt also peat, would have been continued by the monks. However, aerial photography has shown much activity of a pastoral and arable nature in the area round Outh Hill, the centre of the medieval lands of Outh.



*Fig. 2: Dow Loch (with Loch Leven in background). The march begins on the ridge immediately behind Dow Loch, on the left. Photo: Eric Titterington.*

For the details of the 1231 dispute between Dunfermline Abbey and Gilbert of Cleish, see Appendix below. Let me take you through the perambulation from the beginning. It starts at the outflow of Loch Glow, then goes between the 'north loch and the middle one', which must be modern Lurg Loch and Dow Loch. There is a distinctive natural ridge which divides the 2 lochs, and which is clearly the start of a medieval march.



*Fig. 3: Middle Innean, showing the anvil shape which gave rise to its name.*

The boundary continues in a pleasing symmetry: having gone between the north and middle loch, it then goes between the north and middle hills called the Inneans. This refers to a

series of elongated hills, running parallel to each other in a roughly east-west direction. The name probably derives from Gaelic *innean* ‘anvil, anvil-shaped hill’, common in Ireland. Note that in the 1232 text, already the Scots plural *-is* has replaced a Gaelic plural *inneana* or the like.

The march continues ‘and so through (or along) the summit of Dumglow’, the highest of the Cleish Hills, at 379 metres. A Gaelic name, the first element is *dùn* ‘hill, often ‘hill-fort’, and there is indeed a prehistoric fort on the top. The second element is probably derived from the nearby loch, and it is suggested that it is an old Celtic water-word meaning ‘shining’ or ‘clear’, related to modern Welsh *gloyw* (same meaning).

At the top of Dumglow you are at the very edge of the upland plateau of the Cleish Hills. From here you can look down on much of Kinross-shire. The whole flat, arable area between the Cleish and the Ochils to the north was once referred to as the Maw, from Gaelic *magh* ‘plain, fertile stretch of land’, again much better known in Ireland (e.g. Maynooth, Mayola, Mayo): Old Irish *mag* in early medieval Ireland basically represented the agricultural heart-land of a *túath* or people.

After Dumglow the march descends ‘down through the hollow way (le *holegath*) as far as *Cnocenlein*, and so by the valley as far as \*Fallowmireside’. The hollow way may be the col due west of Dumglow, shown on modern maps as Windy Gate i.e. a road for the wind or a windy road. The *gate* was probably real as opposed to figurative, as this would have been a convenient access point from the low-lands of Cleish into the hills. However, there is another possible referent of the *holegath*: down the west side of Dumglow there is a marked groove through which both a modern fence and an unofficial path now descend.



Fig. 4: The *holegath* is possibly the groove down the west side of Dumglow.

The next stage is problematical, as none of the next four land-marks are identifiable with any certainty. These are *Cnocenlein*, *Falumire*, *Dumghercloibe* and *Aldendeich*. It is most likely that

the boundary continues westward along what later became the parish and county boundary. If this is accepted, then much of it falls neatly into place.

*Cnocenlein* is probably ‘knowe of the shirt or linen tunic’, Gaelic *léine* (f.), which formerly also meant ‘linen cloth, linen’ (*DIL*). I do not know why it was so named. It is almost certainly Black Hill (see Fig.5), along the top of which runs the remains of a large embankment or fail-dyke, probably the containing embankment of the medieval forest of Outh. The hill immediately to the south (i.e. left of picture) is Park Hill, containing Scots *park*, that is an area that was emparked for the purpose of keeping in game, especially deer.



Fig. 5: Looking west from Dumglow to Black Hill, probably *Cnocenlein*, the medieval march between Outh and Cleish still clearly visible in the remains of an embankment. The later dry-stone dyke is now the Fife-Kinross-shire county boundary. In the middle distance is the peak of Mons Sithi, now *Wether Hill*, mentioned in *Dunf. Reg. no. 213* (see *Appendix, below*). The snow-capped hills on the right are the *Ochils*.



Fig. 6: Looking east from \*Fallowmire up Black Hill (*Cnocenlein*).

The march then goes ‘per uallem usque *Falumireside*’, ‘through, by or along the valley as far as *Fallowmireside*’. It is not quite clear what the valley is, unless it is a mistake for *uallum* ‘embankment’: the original ms (in NLS) needs checking at this point. But \*Fallowmire must be the large moss or bog which stretches west from the bottom of Black Hill. The specific element *fallow*, defined by *DOST* as ‘withered, sere’ is an exact description of the pale yellow colour so typical of this upland area (see foreground of



Fig. 6).

The next land-mark is ‘to the hill which is called *Dumghercloibe* ‘hill or hill-fort of the short stone’. This must be modern Scaur Hill, where there is no shortage of stones, long and short (see Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: Dumghercloibe or Scaur Hill (containing Scots scaur/score ‘cliff’ (as in *The Scores, St Andrews*).

From Dumghercloibe we are told that the march then goes as the burn descends into *Aldendeich* (probably *allt an eich* ‘burn of the horse’) and so into the Gairney (that part of the Gairney now called the Pow Burn).

In the *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, p. 415, Geoffrey Barrow has produced an excellent composite map of various boundaries in the Cleish Hills including the Outh-Cleish one. It is only in this very last stage of the march that his map needs to be adjusted. I agree with him on all parts of this march except for the last stretch, which he takes too far to the west, as far as Wether Hill, marking *Aldendeich* as the older name for the St Margaret’s Burn. In fact, this latter burn marked the boundary between the lands of Outh belonging to Dunfermline Abbey to the east and the lands of Culross Abbey to the west, as fixed in the agreement reached between the two monasteries in 1227 (*Dunf. Reg.* no. 213; see Appendix). Thus the land between the Aldendeich and St Margaret’s was a tongue of Dunfermline Abbey lands which reached down into the fertile valley of the Pow or Gairney, and in fact this tongue of land was in the anomalous position until 1891 of being in the parish of Dunfermline but the county of Kinross.

#### APPENDIX

*Dunf. Reg.* no. 192: ‘To all who will see or hear this present text Gilbert of Cleish (*Cles*) (gives) salutation. Know that I and my heirs are bound to the house of Dunfermline to pay every year to the said house of Dunfermline 10 s. .... for all time coming ... for quitclaiming the right which the abbot and convent have had or have said that they have by reason of forest or of any other claim in the land which is between Cleish and the forest of Outh (*Vueth*), as has been investigated by honest men and by precept of

Alexander [II] by the grace of God king of Scotland, in the year from the incarnation 1231. And these jurors in investigating the marches between the forest of Outh and the land of Cleish **have begun from the outflow of Loch Glow (*Lochglo*) between the north loch and the middle one<sup>1</sup> and so between the north hill and the middle one which are called Inneans (*Yneianes*),<sup>2</sup> and so through/along the summit of Dumglo (*Dunglo*) down through the hollow way as far as *Cnoclein*,<sup>3</sup> and so by the valley as far as \*Fallowmireside (*Falumireside*), and then as far as the hill called *Dumghercloibe*,<sup>4</sup> and then as the burn descends into *Aldendeich*,<sup>5</sup> and so into the Gairney (*Goruin* for *Gornin*).’ Gilbert of Cleish appends his seal to the original document, and it is witnessed by five named members of the gentry, mainly local ‘and many others’.**

*Dunf. Reg.* no. 213 Easter (11 April) 1227, at Dunfermline (part of wider agreement reached between the monasteries of Culross and Dunfermline about various disputes which had arisen between them, one of which concerned the Forest of Outh):-

‘Also it was agreed between the said abbots with the consent of their chapters that they would for the sake of peace and usefulness and perpetual quietness cut off all occasion for dissension between the said monasteries, agreeing that such may be the marches between the land of Cult and the forest of Outh as have been made by the lord Malcolm earl of Fife in the presence of the above-mentioned abbots; that is that **they should begin towards the south from the Water of Lethans (*Letheni*) along the syke which is nearer *Aldlunathan* towards the east; and so going up in a straight line by the stones as far as the standing stone on *Sithi* hill, and so going down as far as the spring beneath the hill, and so along the burn of that spring as far as the Gairney (*Gorui* for *Gornin*).** (And) that the monks of Culross will establish their ponds on the said water where they may wish lower than the mill of the monks of Dunfermline.’

<sup>1</sup> Probably Lurg Loch and Dow Loch respectively.

<sup>2</sup> G *innean* ‘anvil, anvil-shaped rock or hill?’

<sup>3</sup> Probably G *cnoc na lèine* ‘knowe of the shirt’.

<sup>4</sup> G *dùn* ‘(fortified) hill’ + G *geàrr* ‘short’ + genitive of G *clach*, ‘stone’ (genitive *cloibe*, so ‘hill of (the) short stone’.

<sup>5</sup> G *allt* ‘burn’ + G definite article + ? G *each* ‘horse’.

Sources and abbreviations: *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, edd. Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (Edinburgh 1996); *Dunf. Reg. Registrum de Dunfermelyn*, Bannatyne Club 1842; G Scottish Gaelic.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Simon Taylor** with **Gilbert Márkus**, (2006) *The Place-Names of Fife*, Vol.1, Shaun Tyas, Donington

It is a delight to welcome the publication of this first volume in *The Place-Names of Fife*, a work which indeed does what it says on the dustcover and, “sets new standards in county place-name research”. The structure and contents of this volume give Scottish place-name publications a new framework and high academic standards to meet. It is particularly welcome as the beginning of a series about one county. For anyone interested in Scottish place-names it is frustrating that there have been only two county publications: W. J. Watson’s *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty* (1904) and Angus MacDonald’s *Place-Names of West Lothian* (1941). There is a welcome body of other types of publications, but none of these draw together the history, culture and development of place-names in the way that a parish by parish approach to a county can do.

As the first volume in a series the introduction sets out clearly the areas of Fife to be covered in each volume, this covering the parishes between the Firth of Forth and the River Leven, to be followed in volume 2 by the parishes between the River Leven and the River Eden and in volume 3 the parishes those between the River Eden and the Firth of Tay. Volume 4 will contain an outline history and analysis of the place-names, with an Elements glossary. This is a series to approach as a whole, and many readers will wait anxiously for the discussion in volume 4, but in volume 1 Taylor and Márkus have shown that the text can be dipped in and out of on a number of levels and across numerous academic disciplines. The introduction itself gives a definition of Fife, explains the importance of parishes, the languages place-names were coined from, pronunciation and a glossary of place-name terms. There are 4 pages explaining the layout of each entry and the abbreviations used within them, followed by standard abbreviations, a bibliography and list of sources: all material that is normally found tucked away in the back of texts but which is it vitally important to understand and to read first. The framework established within the first 36 pages of this book provides a model for others to follow, whether with counties or individual parishes. It does however take the reader some time to become accustomed to the structure of each entry and to

remember what the different abbreviations mean. A bookmark with the key information about the different sections in each entry would have been very useful.

After the introduction the book has two sections, the first on linear features and unidentified sites, the second, much larger, contains the parish entries. The volume ends with an index which contains the place-names and some personal and saints names. The authors are to be commended not only for establishing the structure of each entry from the earlier work done in England and Northern Ireland county volumes, but also the very clear approach to the volume as a whole. The entire layout is straightforward and each part is explained so that the reader knows exactly what they can find within it. This is an important asset in a place-name text that will be used by many people for a great variety of purposes.

The parish entries open with two maps; the first are mostly from Ainslie (1775) and the second a map with the main settlements and features of the parish. This sets the historical context and current situation; it also shows the reader key geographical features. The introductions to each parish provide an astounding wealth of detail about landholding and the development of the parish. The place-names themselves follow in alphabetical order, with a list of references, the possible meaning and then a discussion about the meaning. The discussions within each entry link the place-names to comments by earlier place-name authors, similar names and to the history of the place itself. It is fascinating to follow the links made to the *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*. This volume builds on the work of W.J. Watson (1926) and later place-name research. The connections built bear across sources and analysis will be a valuable source for academic audiences across several disciplines. However, the accessibility of the language and structure means that the book will be used by many people, from those looking up an individual name, to local historians and members of the Scottish Place-Name Society.

I enjoyed reading this volume for many reasons. The first that the structure and style of writing make it an enjoyable read, the second that the discussions are easy to follow and connected across the text, so the reader gains without realising it a greater understanding of the place-names across Fife. The places themselves are well described; I particularly liked the



description of Raith Hill (p.129). I appreciated the fact that when referring to early documents a translation is given in the text, so that it flows for all readers but for those who want to see the original, it is there in the foot notes. The reader is given direct quotations from entries in the National Monuments Records Scotland cards and references to the Statistical Accounts. The authors don't always reach a conclusion but have pulled together all the relevant information the reader could possibly want. It is the detail that makes this such a wonderful volume and illustrates the vital importance of Toponymics in cultural history, bringing together people, place, landscape and history. I would urge all society members who have not already done so to take advantage of the offer from Shaun Tyas and purchase this volume. This is volume one of what will be a classic place-name text, for Simon Taylor is surely the W.J. Watson of his generation.

**Morag Redford**

### *The Journal of Scottish Name Studies*

Subscriptions to *The Journal of Scottish Name Studies* can now be made either on line at <[www.clanntuirc.co.uk](http://www.clanntuirc.co.uk)> or by post to Clann Tuirc, Tigh a' Mhaide, Ceann Drochaid, Siorrachd Pheairt FK17 8HT Alba/Scotland.

SPNS member, delivery address within UK: £12

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non-SPNS member, delivery address outwith UK: £16

*JSNS* was established in order to publish annually articles and reviews on place and personal names relating to Scotland, its history and languages. The inaugural volume, edited by Dr Simon Taylor, was published on 1 September 2007. (The contents are listed in the Bibliography below.) Contributions to future issues should be forwarded in paper and electronic (WORD or .rtf) formats to the publisher, Clann Tuirc, at [fios@clanntuirc.co.uk](mailto:fios@clanntuirc.co.uk) or at the above address; see Notes for Contributors at:-

<[www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS/notes\\_for\\_contributors.html](http://www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS/notes_for_contributors.html)>, also available from the publisher.

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

A flier and application form, with details of the programme and how to reach the venue for the Society's **Autumn 2007 Conference**, is included with this Newsletter. The conference will be held on Saturday 10 November at the Riccarton Campus of Heriot-Watt University, on Edinburgh's western

outskirts.

The SPNS **Spring 2008 Conference** will be at the Eight Acres Hotel, Elgin on Saturday 10 May. Details will be issued with the Spring 2008 Newsletter.

The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland is holding a two day conference at the Lesser Albert Hall, Stirling on 19-20 October 2007, '**Understanding the Scottish Town**'. The emphasis is on research into the development of historic towns, a subject that may be of overlapping interest to many SPNS members. Speakers include Dr Richard Oram and Professor Charles McKean, as well as contributors from Ireland and Denmark. Fees vary from £35 for both days (non-member of AHSS) to £10 single day (student). The AHSS is based at 33 Barony Street, Edinburgh EH3 6NX; e-mail enquiries <[nationaloffice@ahss.org.uk](mailto:nationaloffice@ahss.org.uk)>.

What promises to be an extremely interesting day conference of the Forum for Research in the Languages of Scotland and Ulster, '**Language, History and Place: Name Studies in Scotland and Ulster**', is to take place at the A K Bell Memorial Library, Perth, on Saturday 8 December 2007. Speakers will be Carole Hough (onomastics in historical linguistics), Maggie Scott (place-names and the Scots language), Doreen Waugh ('*Gadding* place-name *hentilagets* [in Shetland]'), Peadar Morgan (bilingual signs in Gaelic planning and research), Pat McKay (launch of *Lough Neagh Places: Their Names and Origins*) and Kay Muhr (book launch with Pat McKay, and 'Names in the north of Ireland: spelling, sound and sense'). Conference fee £35/£25 (unwaged). Bookings by 29 November to J Derrick McClure, Dept of English, University of Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen AB24 2UD.

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**Journal of Scottish Name Studies 1 is now out (see accompanying leaflet for subscription details). The contents are as follows:**

#### Articles

**Coates**, Richard, 2007, 'Yell', *JSNS* 1, 1-12.

**Cox**, Richard A. V., 2007, 'The Norse Element in Scottish Place-names: syntax as a chronological marker', *JSNS* 1, 13-26.

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#### Reviews

Peadar Morgan on Stan Beckensall *Place Names and Field Names of Northumberland* (2006), *JSNS* 1, 169-74.

Jacob King on George Broderick *A Dictionary of Manx Place-Names* (2006), *JSNS* 1, 174-5.

Margaret Scott on Susanne Kries *Skandinavisch-schottische Sprachbeziehungen im Mittelalter: Der altnordische Lehneinfluss* (2003), *JSNS* 1, 175-9.

Alison Grant on Diana Whaley *A Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names* (2006), *JSNS* 1, 179-81.





As **John G Wilkinson** notes, acoustic conditions were less than ideal for speakers and audience at the Fort William conference in May 2007.

The Committee is, however, confident that a 'Strongest Man' competition will not be taking place in a car park just outside the venue for the autumn conference at Heriot-Watt University's campus at Riccarton in the western outskirts of Edinburgh.



The Fort William venue did at least offer a good prospect to Ben Nevis and its foothill Meall an t-Suidhe, in the nearer ground of this view taken by **Jacob King**. The flat-topped, steep-sided 'hill of the seat' is clearly designed for a very large giant to sit, facing left, with legs dangling over the edge. It even appears to have armrests.



"To lenite or not to lenite?": a perennial problem for learners of Celtic languages, and apparently a difficulty even for those with the task of signing so prestigious a street as that containing Dáil Éireann and the National Museum in Dublin. One of these name plates facing each other at the northern end of Kildare Street should be right!



Three views in Upper Clydesdale. The top two illustrate productive land which must have been an incentive to continental knights in the plantation of Clydesdale by Malcolm IV (1153-1165). Tancarard the Fleming is commemorated in the name of **Thankerton**, and in Lanarkshire the surname Fleming has one of its highest frequencies. The top picture shows Quothquan Law; **Quothquan** appears to correspond to Welsh coed gwyn, 'white wood', but with devoiced consonants, and belongs to an earlier, Brittonic name stratum. The far-visible **Tinto** Hill (bottom) is from Gaelic teinteach, 'place of fire'.