SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA

*Colourful boulders on the shore at Rackwick on the south side of Hoy (*Há ey, *'high island'), the most south-westerly and most rugged of the Orkney islands. Hugh Marwick, in* Orkney Farm-Names, Kirkwall, 1952, *notes that recorded early forms are* Rakwic 1492; Rakwik 1500; Rackwick 1595. *Orkney also has a Rack Wick near Stromness (Mainland) and two on Westray. In* Orkneyinga Saga *('History of the Men of Orkney') a 12th century chieftain called Þorliotr lived at* Rekavik *or* Recavic, *but it is not certain that Þorliotr's hall was at the place on Hoy, rather than at Rack Wick near Stromness or at one of the Westray Rack Wicks.*

There is no reason to doubt Marwick's explanation of the name as Old Norse reka-vík, *'bay of jetsam'. In the Northern Isles, lacking trees for building, driftwood (still called 'rack wid' in Shetland) was a valued resource.*

EDITORIAL

At a time when cuts and retrenchment and a general sense of economic foreboding are in the air, it is pleasant to reflect that progress is still being made in Scottish place-name studies.

Edinburgh was host to the fourth international *Trends in Toponymy* conference on 28 June to 2 July. Subjects of particularly Scottish interest were to the fore, and were showcased to delegates from as far as Australia, Singapore, Canada, USA and South Africa, as well as many places elsewhere in Europe.

With the completion of the four-year AHRC-supported project *Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: the Evidence of Names* in April this year, it is good to report that another major investment in Scottish place-name research is about to begin at Glasgow University: the Leverhulme-funded *Saints in Place-Names* project.

The BLITON database (Brittonic In The Old North) nears completion as an online resource made available through the SPNS website. In this it accompanies transcripts of two important 1940s PhD theses, and other valuable resources.

Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba / Gaelic Place-names of Scotland has recently launched the National Gazetteer of Gaelic Place-names, starting with 1,000 entries, at www.ainmean-aite.org.

As to the near future, the online database for the 'Paradox of Medieval Scotland' project is imminent; and preparation, enabled by SPNS, is well under way for a book compilation of articles on widely varied topics from the life's work of Prof W F H (Bill) Nicolaisen, often referred to as the 'doyen of Scottish place-name studies'.

GAELIC LETH 'HALF' IN PLACE-NAMES

The presence of 'half' in Scottish place-names is intriguing. In Scots, apart from examples like *Half-Morton* in Canonbie, DMF, the term is scarce. But in Gaelic, the use of *leth* 'half' is widespread, and deserves wider scrutiny.

The group of 'fiscal' place-names, especially those containing *leth-pheighinn* 'halfpenny', have been well considered in other studies, and there are other compounded examples, such as *leth-dabhach,* 'half-dabhach', which are not all fully documented, and which are listed below. The group of names in *leth-* which I found most interesting are in those toponyms which describe features in the landscape which are themselves characteristic. Dwelly lists a number of definitions for *leth,* including:

>(1) half
>(2) side, share, interest
>(3) charge *(chuir iad sin as a leth,* 'they charged him with that')
>(4) one of a pair
>(5) apart, in the form of *air leth*

Topographic terms which include *leth* are listed in Dwelly as:

>(1) leth-bhruthach, 'gentle slope or declivity'
>(2) leth-cheann, 'half-head, temple'
>(3) leth-innis, 'peninsula'
>(4) leth-oir, 'one side', 'edge'
>(5) leitir, 'half-slope', 'side of a hill', 'place on the seashore', 'sloping land on one side of a burn'

To these I would add four other topographic terms not found in Dwelly

>(1) leth-chreag, 'half-rock'
>(2) leth-bheinn, 'half-mountain'
>(3) leth-ghleann, 'half-glen'
>(4) leth-chearcall, 'half-circle', (or half-corrie)

The most prolific of these is *leitir,* which Watson defined as follows: 'The traditional meaning was given me in my boyhood, as it always slopes towards water, stream or loch, literally half-land, i.e. with land on one side or as Cormac had it: *leitir; leth-tirim agus leth-fliuch* (leitir is half-dry and half-wet).' (W.J.Watson, Scottish Place-Name Papers, 185)

I recently attempted a very rough categorisation of *leitir* sites, since I found that many of the place-names involved featured very similar kinds

of specifics, but the primary factor was one of slope. All *leitir*-names occur on or near steep slopes, or at least slopes that are relatively steep compared with the adjacent landscape. Some of these names have acquired the status of settlement names, depending on a range of factors. The majority of the *leitir*-names can be divided into three categories.

I On, or at the base of steep slopes in U- or V-shaped valleys, which in Scotland would have mostly been once glaciated. There are examples of *leitir* in Ireland, however, especially in the more mountainous areas. Examples in Scotland include *Leitters* PER Balquhidder, *Letterpin* AYR Girvan, *Letter* BTE Kilmory, Arran, *Leiteraitten,* INV, Braes of Abernethy, *Upper Letters* ROS Kincardine, etc.

II On steep slopes overlooking inland lochs:

Letterfinlay INV (L. Lochy); *Letterfearn* INV (L. Oich); *Leiterchuilin* INV L. Duntelchaig; *Letterewe* ROS (L. Maree); *Lettermore* SUT (L. Loyal); *Letterbeg,* ARG, Mull (L. Frisa) and *Arrieleitrach* ROS (L. Luichart).

III On steep situations overlooking the sea coast:

Letters ROS (L. Broom); *Druim na Leitire* ROS (Kyle Rhea); *Guala na Leitreach* and *Rubha na Leitreach* ARG (Sound of Mull).

These clearly find *leitir* in a wide range of hill-slope situations, and it would be helpful to analyse further the various factors which have led to coinage of the term.

As a final *leth*-name it is worth considering what seems to be a genuine settlement term - *leth-dabhach*. The majority of these are now names which have standardised to Lettoch, and a list of these is as follows:-

    PER Moulin NN 940590
    PER nr. Aldclune NN 907642
    INV, E. of Nethy Br. NJ 024194
    BNF Braes of Glenlivet NJ 220214
    BNF Glen Rinnes NJ 309378
    ROS Killearnan NH 627485

There is also Leddach, ABD Skene NJ 813070.

The Killearnan example is well documented (W.J. Watson, *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty*, 1907, 145) as a genuine half-davach, with an early form of 1527, but W. M. Alexander questions the Leddach in Skene, suggesting that it is *leth-taobh* 'half-side' (PNs of Aberdeenshire,

319). A number of these Lettochs are smallish holdings today, although they may have been of more importance in the past. Obviously, more digging is required for these 'half' names, especially those whose early forms can be exhumed.

Ian Fraser, summarising his talk at the Spring 2010 conference at Birnam

KIRRIEMUIR – A NAME OF MANY FORMS

To begin, let us look at all the 36 forms of the place-name, from the volumes of the Register of the Great Seal:-

Keirmure, Kelimur, Kerymure, Kerymore, Kermor, Kerimure, Keremure, Kerremure, Kylymure, Kyrymure, Killemure, Kerimure, Keremur, Kyrremure, Kirmure, Kerimore, Keremore, Kerrymur, Kermure, Kyremure, Kyrimure, Kiliemore, Kerymur, Kerymor, Kermuir, Killemuir, Killemur, Kyrimor, Kyrrymure, Killemoor, Killemoore, Kiremoor, Kirriemoore, Kirimore, Kyrymuir, Kirymure.

When Pont was drawing his maps around 1590 he used both "*K. of Kellymuir*" and "*K. of Kellymoore*" as denoting the Kirkton of Kirriemuir.

In Sasines from 1620 up to the year 1700, the versions used are *Keremuir*; *Kerremure*; *Kerrymuir* and *Kyriemuire*. Robert Edward on his 1678 map simply shows the town as *Milltown*. John Ainslie in his map of Angus in 1794 uses the form

Kirrymuir. Sir J M Barrie contributed to the mix by inventing the name *Thrums* for the town.

The list may seem mystifying because it is so varied and it shows two contradictory outward appearances of the name. The difference lies between the prefixes Ker and Kil, and the commonly accepted explanations of the name shift from one style to another. As both are present in this list it is fairly certain that in one of these spellings lies the oldest and accurate designation of the town's name.

In toponymy the oldest form is, of course, often the most authoritative and most useful in reaching the derivation of a name. Here this was the <u>Keri</u>more, <u>Keri</u>mure, <u>Ker</u>mure or <u>Keir</u>more of twelfth and thirteenth century documents.

James R. Johnston in his study *Place-names of Scotland* in 1903 says that Kirriemuir "was in 1229 Kerimure, and is probably Gaelic *ceathramh* (pron. carrou) *mor*, 'big quarter' or 'division'. Kerimor (*sic* 1250) was one of the quarters of Angus." The civil divisions of the Sheriffdom of Angus during the twelfth century took in "the Quarter of Dundee; the Quarter of Kerrymure; the Quarter of Abirbrothic and the Quarter of Brechin". Kirriemuir was easily the largest of these divisions and 'Carrow-More' its natural designation.

C.P. Will in his book *Place names of Northeast Angus* agrees that Kirriemuir as it stands is the big quarter, *ceathramh mòr*, presumably in relation to the early divisions of Angus and this would include a considerable portion of the outlying uplands.

Adam Watson has reminded me that Kirriemuir is a case where incomers and 'well-educated' local people pronounce muir as *mjur*, not the indigenous dialect *-mer* that they heard in childhood and can still hear from older local folk who are strong dialect speakers.

Bill Nicolaisen notes in *Scottish Place-Names* that "*Kil*-names are not dedications by missionaries, but commemorations by people to whom *cill* was the natural word for a church-like structure".

W J Watson, in his *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* of 1926, explains the first part of the name as the Gaelic *ceathramh*, meaning quarter, and goes on in an article of 1930 *Some Place-Names of the North* to state that Kirriemuir may be for *Ceathramh Muire*, '[the Virgin] Mary's quarter-churchland', but that *Cill Mhoire*, 'Mary's Church', is also possible.

There is ample evidence to support Watson's opinion. There was a well dedicated to Mary which survives in the street name Marywell Brae, close to the east of the Parish Church, itself dedicated to the Virgin Mary. One of the Pictish cross slabs discovered in the foundations of the old church in 1797 has an image of an enthroned Mary on it. The image is possibly a copy of the one in the book of Kells. This stone is now on display in Forfar. The Kirriemuir throne has a dog headed terminals similar to the Kells one, and Mary is flanked by a mirror and comb, a device symbolizing an important lady as well as the earliest depiction of a weaver's loom.

David Dorward in his book *The Glens of Angus* notes that Kirriemuir was created a Burgh of Barony in 1459, one of the first places in Angus to attain that distinction. Roy's mid-18th century military survey was made for political and security reasons and one might be tempted to take offence at the appearance of his spelling *Killiemuir*. But this is not an example of the carelessness of officialdom, for the rogue spelling *Kylymure* appeared in 1845 and 'Auld Killamuir' remained an affectionate name for the town until comparatively recent times. It is of further interest to note that residents of Kirrie are known as Kirriemarians and not Kirriemuirans.

David G Orr, from his talk at the Birnam conference. (A fuller discussion of the name Kirriemuir and information about numerous local place-names and street names can be found in his booklet *Kirriemuir – Its Streets and Place Names* published by Friends of Kirriemuir Gateway to the Glens Museum.)

TARBAT – JUST WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN?

The name 'Tarbat' usually indicates a portage – a place where boats and/or goods can be carried overland between two stretches of water. Whether there was a portage on the Tarbat peninsula is not immediately clear. I will suggest that there was indeed such a portage, in use in Early Christian times and placed approximately along the line of the present Portmahomack to Rockfield road.

Speakers of Pictish, Gaelic, Norse, Scots and English have all left their mark on place-names here. Some Gaelic names almost certainly date from Early Christian times. These include Tarbat and Tarrel – both discussed below – and also Portmahomack. This combines *port* (meaning 'landing-place' or 'haven', from Latin *portus*) with

mo-Cholmác (meaning 'of my little Colm or Colmán'). *Mo-Cholmác* is a pet-name for St Colmán, to whom the Tarbat church is dedicated.
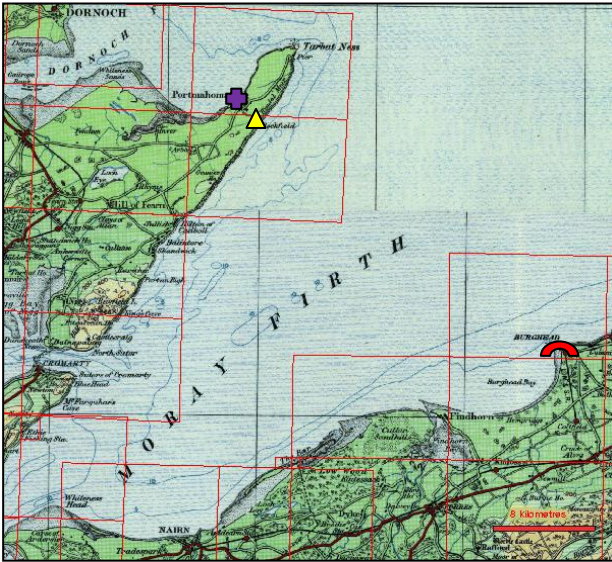
🟪 Portmahomack 🔺 Rockfield 🔴 Burghead

The setting of Tarbat and its Ness in the context of the Moray Firth seaways. Rosemarkie is a little off the map near its south-west corner. Another important coastal early church site was at Kinneddar east of Burghead.
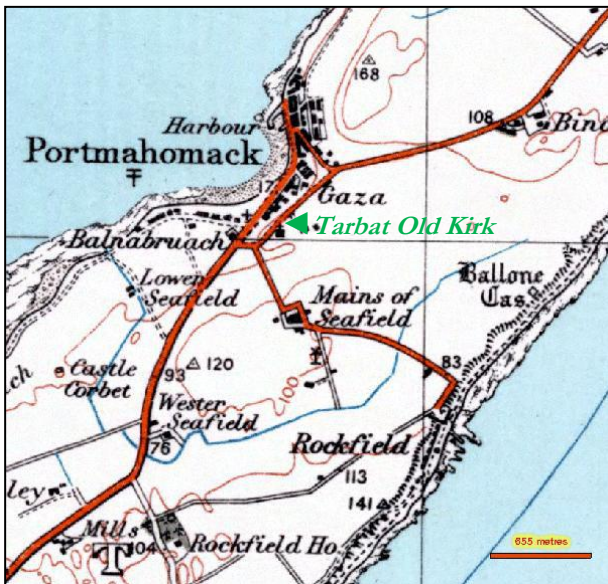
The 1920s OS map (with heights in feet) shows a more modern version of the suggested routeway between Tarbat Old Kirk and Rockfield. (Thanks to NLS for maps)

The Tarbat peninsula shares its name with some fifteen districts in the Western Isles and along the west coast of Scotland, and two on the east coast. The earliest recorded 'tarbert' name is *Tairpirt Boiter*, noted in the *Annals of Ulster* in 712 and 731, probably Tarbert, Loch Fyne.

Etymologists trace the various 'tarbert' names to Old Gaelic *tairm*, 'over' or 'across', and *bert*, 'carry'. The place-name **Tairbert* thus meant a

place where things could be carried over, i.e. a portage.

With most of Scotland's 'tarbert' names, the topography reveals where the portage was. Also, the 'tarbert' often gives its name to nearby features, so that a string of 'tarbert' names occurs along the portage route. With the Tarbat peninsula, however, the situation is less clear, and we need to look at past place-names for clues.

Today the Tarbat name is used in five main ways. It names the peninsula, the headland (Tarbat Ness), the parish, the parish church (old and new), and finally a settlement on the Bay of Nigg. This settlement is a 'red herring', as it was brought here by a 17th-century landlord.

In the past, the Tarbat name also applied to a specific site, an estate, a castle, and a barony. It also served as a landlord's designation and a viscount's title.

The first known reference was recorded in 1226, when *'Andreas vicarius de Arterbert'* (Andrew vicar of Arterbert) signed a church document. Watson wrote that Arterbert was the equivalent of Tarbat Ness, with Ar(t) 'for áirde, promontory'.

Tarbat Old Kirk, now a museum. (Liz Curtis)

In two church documents, both in Latin, Tarbat (spelt Terbert) refers to a specific site, an estate and a parish. The *Martyrology of Aberdeen* (c.1500) records for 18 February: 'The burial of St Colmann bishop and confessor in the diocese of Ross at Terbert.' A papal bull dated 1529 confirms grants to Fearn Abbey which included 'the vicarage of the church of St Colman situated in the place called Terbert' – clearly the site of Tarbat Old Parish Church. The bull also confirms two grants 'in the estate called Terbert', and mentioned Terbert as the parish name.

Pont's map 'Rosse' (c. 1583-96) shows 'Kirck of Terbart' and 'Cast. Terbart' (today called Ballone

Castle), and also the headland, 'Tarbartness'.

The Tarbat estate appears in documents from January 1350/51 in relation to a grant of annual rent made by the Earl of Ross, who held the estate from the Crown. From 1507 this land, by now known as Easter Tarbat, was held by lesser landlords. The remainder of the Tarbat estate was held by the Bishop of Ross: it was known as 'Wester Tarbart' or Seafield. Mains of Seafield is now called Fairfield.

So where was the Tarbat estate? Legal documents and an estate plan reveal its position.

At the top of the peninsula was the estate of Easter Aird. Below this, extending across the peninsula, was Easter Tarbat, which included Castle Tarbat. The boundary between Easter and Wester Tarbat stretched across the peninsula just north of today's Portmahomack to Rockfield road. To the east, Wester Tarbat adjoined Little Tarrel (later named Rockfield). To the south, Wester Tarbat was probably bounded by the lands of Arboll.

Thus the Tarbat lands ran right across the peninsula, either side of the former monastic site and encompassing the whole length of the Portmahomack to Rockfield Road.

The place-name evidence thus gives us a place called Terbert where St Colman's church was sited, and an estate called Tarbat which included the church site and traversed the peninsula. By analogy with other sets of 'tarbert' place-names, this strongly suggests that there was a portage close by.

But why would anyone want a portage just here? The obvious answer is that in the Early Christian period there was a major monastery at Tarbat, on the site of the old parish church.

While this monastery is not mentioned in written sources, discoveries and excavations have revealed its presence and importance. The archaeological evidence suggests that the monastery began life in the sixth century or before, possibly ending with a Viking raid between 780 and 830.

By the 8th century, the monastery was producing fine cross-slabs, vellum for manuscripts, and metal work perhaps for ritual items. The finest carved stone implies contacts far afield: it carries a Christian funeral inscription in Latin, with lettering similar to that in Northumbrian manuscripts.

As Adomnán's *Life of Columba* shows, early monks were incessant travellers and habitual seafarers, voyaging mainly in currachs. Might they have used a portage between Rockfield and the monastic site?

Rockfield village lies on flat ground under the cliff, where currachs could have been landed and beached. The present road across the peninsula runs from just north of Rockfield to just south of Tarbat Old Church. It enters the former monastic site through the vallum, which was revealed by a cropmark. The route is short – about 1.5 km – and easy to walk. At Rockfield, the road rises steeply up the cliff, but this is not difficult for a moderately fit person.

Ballone Castle from Rockfield (Liz Curtis)

On the shore northeast of Rockfield there is a chapel site, which might have related to a portage. Perhaps a small Early Christian community here assisted travellers.

Simon Taylor has noted that Rockfield's earlier name Tarrel (G. *tar* + *ail*) may support the idea of an ancient crossing. It could mean '(place where one goes) over a cliff' on a recognised routeway, or 'cliff which lies across' a routeway.

Why cross here rather than go round the headland? I consulted four people with relevant seafaring experience: all favoured crossing here. They explained that all headlands present problems of turbulence; that this particular headland has a reef running out from it a considerable distance; and that two tides meet at the Ness. The prevailing westerly wind could also cause problems.

Ivor Neill, an expert on traditional boats who skippers the Irish currach *Colmcille*, concluded that he probably would use the Rockfield to Tarbat portage if heading to or from the monastery, depending on the weather. If travelling from Dornoch to Burghead, however,

he would avoid the Ness, staying far out to keep away from the rough water.

Adomnán's writings reveal that in the 6th and 7th centuries a Pictish king probably had his fortress near the River Ness, while the chief Pictish bishop was almost certainly based at Rosemarkie. He would have been in contact with Tarbat, and clerics may have travelled up and down on the tide between Rosemarkie and Rockfield. Perhaps Tarbat was supplying metal-work and vellum to Rosemarkie and other churches, an additional reason for contact.

Taken together, place-names, archaeology and the evidence of seafarers are sufficient, in my view, to suggest that there was indeed a portage on the Tarbat peninsula – just as it says on the tin!

Liz Curtis (summarising her talk at Birnam)

Note: A longer version of this article, fully referenced, will appear in the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies.*

SOME PLACE-NAMES FROM MEDIEVAL STRATHORD

This short paper given at the SPNS May conference in Birnam drew on material I had prepared for a longer talk to the West Stormont Local History Society at Murthly in April. It looked at two items from the area's rich toponymic heritage: the first was a 14th-century boundary charter, with a botanical surprise; the second was a proposed solution to the whereabouts of the medieval lands of *Inchthurfin.

Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb[1]

A detailed description of the marches of the baronies of Murthly, held by John of Ireland, and Strathord, held by Duncan earl of Fife, dating from 1337 × 1342, is contained in an original Latin document from the Steuart Fotheringham muniments (NAS GD.121), first published as Fraser, *Grandtully* i no. 1, most recently as *RRS* vi no. 56.[2] It contains ten named features through which the boundary runs, seven of which are of Celtic origin (six undoubtedly Gaelic, one perhaps Pictish), and two Scots. There are, however, some clues that the language

of the compiler of the charter was Scots. Two clauses are particularly striking: 'as the burn runs as far as the linn[3] **Rucbarbium**[4] and from *Rucbarbium* going up the burn as far as the linn of **Cragtarsin**'[5] (sicut riuulus currit usque le *lyn Rucbarbium* et de *Rucbarbium* ascendentes riuulum usque le *lyn de Cragtarsin*). The name of the first linn looks remarkably like the medieval Latin *reubarbum / rhubarbarum / rubarbera* 'rhubarb'. If this is the case, then it is the earliest reference to this plant in both Scotland and England, according to *DOST*, from which the following is adapted and slightly abbreviated:

> "**Reubarb**, *n.* Also: **ru-**, **rue-**, **rha-** and **-barbe**, **-berb**, **-burb**. [Middle English and early modern English *reubarb* (**c.1400**),[6] *rubarbe*, Old French *reu-*, *rubarbe* (13th c. in Larousse), late Latin *rheubarbarum*.] Rhubarb.
>
> Reubarbe ... fortifyis the naturale hete of thy stomak ... and makis suete aynd [**1456**] HAY II 122/17; Tak thé thre byttis of ane ill hour, And rubarb [*Harl.* ruberb, *Hart* ruebarb] baich and bitter [**c.1585**] POLWART *Flyt.* 234 (T); I prayse ... the vse of cassia, and terebinthine, with rhabarb mixt or simple **1580-90** *Rules of Health.* Rubarbe [*1623* reubarb]; JAMES VI *Poems* I 175/570."

What exactly is the plant referred to in the Murthly-Strathord document? There appear to be two types of rhubarb known in medieval Europe, both imported from the East, and both used medicinally as a purgative: *Rheum rhaponticum*, which is our garden rhubarb, and *Rheum rhabarbarum*, which, according to Wikipedia, has the alternative scientific names *Rheum palmatum* and *Rheum officinale*, and which is known variously as Turkey rhubarb, Chinese rhubarb, ornamental rhubarb, and East Indian

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[1] *This has greatly benefited from the botanical knowledge of Mary MacDonald of Evanton, whose input I gratefully acknowledge.*

[2] *The same boundary description also appears in Fraser, Grandtully i no. 2 (a precept by Duncan earl of Fife to Robert Steward of Scotland 21 March 1346).*

[3] The Latin original has *le lyn*, with *le* (French definite article) indicating that the common noun following is in the vernacular. Given that *linn* is both a Gaelic and a Scots word meaning variously 'pool, waterfall, pool below a waterfall', it is not clear which language *le lyn* is taken from, although, it is probably Scots.

[4] *Ruebarbur*, Fraser, Grandtully i no. 1; *Ruebarbur*, ibid. no. 2.

[5] *For lyn, see note 3, above. This must be one of the earliest records of the common G place-name element, the adjective tarsainn (earlier spelling tarsuinn) 'lying across or athwart', used with various generics such as creag 'crag, rock' (as here), beinn, allt, 'burn', càrn, meall '(rounded) hill' etc.*

[6] *The earliest attestation in the on-line Oxford English Dictionary is ?c.1425 MS Hunterian 95 fo 197.*

rhubarb. Furthermore there is monk's rhubarb (*Rumex pseudoalpinus*), which, according to Michael Scott (*Scottish Wild Flowers*, Collins 2nd edition 2000) was introduced from central Europe 'for veterinary use', also, as the Gaelic name he gives for it, *lus na purgaid*, makes clear, used as a purgative. It is this last which is perhaps the most likely candidate for the name of the linn, and Mary MacDonald informs me that she saw it growing near the river in Birnam on the day of the conference.

*From *Inchthurfin to Inchbervis[7]*

Dunfermline Abbey possessed several lands around Dunkeld, one of which appears variously as *Inchethurfin*, *Incheturfin*, *Incheturfy* (see below for details). Clearly an important property, it seems to have completely disappeared from the modern map. But this is not the case: it has simply been the victim of a bizarre metamorphosis.

INCHBERVIS Auchtergaven NO122328

    Inchethurfin 1153 x 1161 *Dunf. Reg.* no. 123 [one of lands belonging to the church of the Holy Trinity of Dunkeld, given to Dunfermline Abbey along with that church by Andrew bishop of Caithness][8]

    Inchethurfin 1164 *Dunf. Reg.* no. 236 [papal confirmation; see also nos. 239, 272]

    Inchesturphyn' c.1250 *Dunf. Reg.* no. 332 [rubric]

    Inchesturphyn c.1250 *Dunf. Reg.* no. 332 [regulation of boundaries between Airntully and I.]

    terra de *Incheturfin* 1256 *Dunf. Reg.* no. 85 [one of lands belonging to Dunfermline Abbey]

    (land of) *Incheturfy* 1314 x 1329 *RRS* v no. 406 [= *Dunf. Reg.* no. 360]

    Inchetrewie 1539 *Dunf. Reg.* no. 534 [lying in West Stormont (*Veststarmonth*), regality of Dunfermline]

    Inchestrawe 1539 *RMS* iii no. 1950 [as preceding]

    Inchtreuye 1590s Pont MS 24 [possibly *Inchtreuy*; name attached to a drawing of a castle on the Tay, opposite Campsie (*Kampsy*), attached to a drawing of big house or small castle]

    Inchtyruy or *Inch-Tor-uny* 1590s Pont MS 25 [these two alternative names are attached to a drawing of a large castle on the Tay]

    Inchestrivie 1606 *RMS* vi no. 1857

    Inchtryve 1683 Adair/Strathearn, Stormont etc

?   *Stavey* c.1750 Roy [small settlement just north-west of *Stanley*, which latter occupies the whole peninsula]

?   *Inchrivers* 1783 Stobie [beside West Tofts (*West-tofts*), just north-west of *Stanley*]

    Inchbervis Castle 1845 *New Statistical Account [NSA]* 10, 433-4 (Auchtergaven) ['On the banks of the Tay, near Stanley, are the remains of an old castle or round tower, called *Inchbervis*, and by some, *Inverbervie*, of which nothing now is known, except a tradition that it was at one time a religious house in connection with the Abbey of Dunfermline; and to this abbey, it is said, the proprietors of Stanley grounds are still liable in the yearly tribute of a grilse {young salmon}']

    Inverstruvie 1850 Knox/Basin of the Tay [attached to a large house (Stanley House?)]

    Inchberris Castle (Remains of) 1867 OS 6 inch 1st edn 74

    Inchbervis Castle 2001 OS Explorer

- Gaelic *innis* + personal name Thorfinn

'Thorfinn's haugh or inch', a Gaelic place-name containing the male personal name derived from Old Norse Þorfinnr (Thorfinn). The name shows highly unusual development, with the final stage of *Inchberris*, *Inchbervis* or *Inverbervie* explicable only in terms of a complete break in the naming tradition, with interference from the unrelated Inverbervie in Kincardineshire. The name seems practically to disintegrate before our eyes, presumably linked to the desertion and dilapidation of the castle itself, and the re-naming of the lands as Stanley c.1700, after the countess of Atholl, Lady Amelia Stanley, daughter of the earl of Derby (see *NSA* 10, 434).

The Pont and Adair forms show standard Scots metathesis of vowel + *r* to *r* + vowel. After that, however, things start to go haywire, although Knox's form (1850) can be seen as a direct descendant of the earlier forms, except for his substitution of *Inver* for *Inch*.

The ruins of Inchbervis Castle are at NO12291 32838 (Canmore), near the point of the headland. It is possible that the eponymous *innis* lay on the south side of the headland, and near its base, where the famous Stanley Mills and Stanley House now stand. However, the

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[7] I am most grateful to Leslie Fraser of Stanley for first alerting me to a possible link between Inchbervis and *Inchthurfin, and for being my local guide.

[8] *Andrew had received the church of the Holy Trinity of Dunkeld with the lands (unnamed) belonging to it by gift of David I c.1145 x 1152 (David I Chrs. no. 255, from a confirmation to Dunfermline Abbey by Malcolm IV 1162 x 1164 RRS i no. 229).*

possibility also exists that *innis* is used more in its original sense of 'island', to refer to the whole of this remarkable peninsula (see photo).

Stanley and Inchbervis from the air. The ruins of Inchbervis Castle are in the woods at the tip of the headland. Stanley Mills and Stanley House can be clearly seen near the base of the headland. Photo: Martin Addison http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/613713

Already in 1973 Geoffrey Barrow was on the case, identifying *Inchthurfin with Stanley. Paraphrasing the *NSA* entry about Inchbervis (for which see above), he writes: "In this we have an echo, faint but recognisable, of the grant made by King David I, seven hundred years before, to Andrew bishop of Caithness, of the old church of the Holy Trinity of Dunkeld, with its lands, including 'Inchethurfin' on the Tay (where Stanley now is), and of Bishop Andrew's subsequent grant of this property to Dunfermline Abbey, where he had once been a monk' (2003 [1973], 169).

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Further Reading on the place-names of Strathord and Wester Stormont:

Taylor, Simon, in Hall, M., Henderson, I., Taylor, S., 1998, 'A sculptured fragment from Pittensorn Farm, Gellyburn, Perthshire', *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal* 4, 129-44 [section on place-names of the area of the find, 139-41]
Taylor, Simon, 2002, 'Stormont, the name and the place', *History Scotland* vol. 2 no. 5 (September/October), 44-7.

Simon Taylor (from his talk at Birnam)

RUCBARBIUM

A note by **Mary MacDonald**

The earliest known record of the use of the root of what we now know as Rhubarb is from a Chinese source of the 3rd millenium B.C., and in classical times Pliny and Dioscorides note a medicinal root (*Rhacoma* and *Rhia*/*Rheon*) thought to originate beyond the Pontus.[1,2] These would in the medieval period be described as *rhabarbarum* and *rhaponticum* (Linnaeus in the 18th century used these terms as the specific names of two distinct species of rhubarb). A related plant, native to Europe, whose root is similarly purgative but of poorer quality and which we now know as Monk's rhubarb, has been shown from soil pollen analysis to have been cultivated in certain areas of its native Alps in c.360 cal B.C.[3] Knowledge of these medicinal roots would have spread across Europe, and through time to the monastic settlements in Scotland where the cultivation of such pharmacologically active plants generally took place. This was evidenced during excavations in Paisley Abbey where pollen of *Rumex pseudoalpinus* – Monk's rhubarb – was found in a 15th century context.[4] It is likely, therefore, that there is a monastic association either for the site mentioned in the charter or one nearby (the seeds of this plant are windborne). It would almost certainly have been

recognised by whoever walked the march.

[1] Turner, D. M, 1938, 'The economic rhubarbs: A historical survey of their cultivation in Britain', J. Roy. Hort. Soc. 63, 355-370.

[2] Stearn, W. T., 1974, 'Rhabarbarologia: *Rheum rhaponticum,* an endangered species?' Garden History 2, 75-76.

[3] Maude, A. E. & Moe, D., 2005, 'A contribution to the history of *Rumex alpinus* in the Italian central Alps.' Veget. Hist. Archaeobot. 14, 171-178.

[4] Dickson, C. & Dickson, J., 2000, *Plants & People in Ancient Scotland* (Tempus), 269, 270.

CAMBUSLANG

Place-names can be challenging. Cambuslang looks fairly straightforward but research shows a multitude of options of varying credibility have been proposed.

In 1929 J A Wilson, a local historian, wrote that there were still people who said the name originated from a story about a woman combing her daughter's hair all day and a passerby remarking 'She cames lang' apparently a punning reference to the local pronunciation of the place-name for Cambuslang – 'Cams lang'. This may seem a ridiculous invention but it is a good example of how, when the language of the local population changes over time, they will try to make sense of the place-names they inherit, coined in the language of their forbears. We all have a need to shape or reshape our world and the elements contained in it so that they make sense to us.

Early forms of Cambuslang do not appear to offer much help but importantly they do provide the early context in which the name existed and perhaps the environment in which it originated:

Camboslanc (Connel persone del Eglise de) 1296 Ragman Roll.
Cambuslank (Conevallus, psona ecclie de) 1296 Rotuli Scotiae Vol. 1, 25b.
Cameslong (The King presents …. to the following churches….). 1319 Bain's Cal. Vol. 3, 653.
Cambuslange (capella S. Marie) 1379-81 RMS Vol.1, entry 645.
Cambuslang (prebend de) 1429 Glas. Reg. Vol. 2, entry 335.
Kambuslang (eccle de) 1458 Glas. Reg. Vol. 2, entry 382.

From the earliest recorded examples there is a consistent association with ecclesiastical institutions.

Although at times highly speculative, even imaginative, a good place to find some of the earliest attempts to explain the origin of a place-name is with parish ministers in the First Statistical Account. Cambuslang's Dr. James Meek wrote in 1793:-

> For several centuries, however, it has been known by its present name; which it appears to have received from the place where the kirk has stood for time immemorial, and from the saint to whom it was dedicated. *Cam-eas*, now changed into *Camus* or *Cambus*, in the Gaelic language, signifies a crooked torrent or rivulet; and *Lan* or *Launus*, now changed into *lang*, was the name of the saint, famous for being the founder of many monasteries.

He went on to point out that the church, on the site of the old kirk, is "situated on the bank of a remarkably rapid and crooked rivulet" – the Kirk Burn. His successor, the Reverend John Robertson, in the New Statistical Account of 1845, disagreed with the interpretation of the *lang* element and offered it as being derived from "*glan* which in composition becomes *lan,* denotes a bank or bank of water; - thus Cambuslang appears to signify the 'water with the bending bank'". He admits that it is impossible to say if the *Cam* or *Cambus* comes from the Kirk Burn or the Clyde.


From Roy's mid 18th century Military Survey (thanks to NLS online map library). Note Kirkhill and Cambuslang Kirk to left of centre, east of the burn.

Scholars through the last century or two have come up with a variety of theories. Assumption of a 'Welsh' origin produced *cwmlanog* from *cwm,* a vale or flank of a hill and *lanog,* a priest, providing 'the vale or hill of the priest'. It was claimed that *Drumsagart* from Gaelic *druim,* a ridge and *sagart,* a priest, was the same name converted into Gaelic and then the original Welsh name was converted into Anglo-Saxon producing *comb,* a ridge and *lanog,* - meaningless - into *lang.* There is nothing like keeping things simple.

Skene gave us: "*Lintheamus* is probably meant for *Linthcamus,* the area now called Cambuslang. *Linthcamus* (W *llyn,* a deep pool, and *cam,* crooked) meaning the crooked pool, or the pool at the bend".

It has even been suggested that Cambuslang "may have been the site of Arthur's last battle and his last resting place. Camslang is etymologically nearer Camlan than is Camelon".
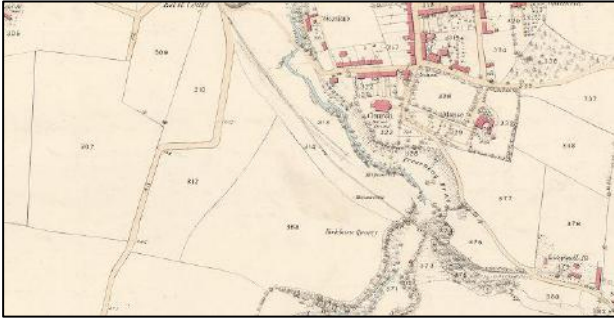
The First Edition Ordnance Survey (1859) shows the parish kirk standing above the bank by the sharp bend in the burn. The name Preaching Brae for the bank to the south-east is noteworthy; its shape recalls the natural amphitheatre associated with St Baldred beside Morham Kirk, East Lothian. (NLS online maps)

Professor Watson provides a more credible explanation of the place-name

> Cambuslang is Camboslanc, 1296 (Ragman Roll), Cameslong, 1319 (Bain's Cal.), Cambuslange, 1379/81 (RMS), etc., representing *camas long,* 'bight of ships.' There is an exceptionally fine *camas* on Clyde at the village of Cambuslang; the tide comes right up to it, and boats can come to it on a rising tide. At the period when the name was given the conditions probably permitted the light vessels of those days to come so far on a high tide and no further.

Watson was correct in that the Clyde bends sharply to the north of Cambuslang and, until a weir was built near Glasgow in the 19th century, the bend was at or near the highest point of tidal reach on the Clyde. However, only in comparatively recent times, through expansion during industrialisation, has Cambuslang extended its boundaries down to the Clyde. Writing in *Rambles Round Glasgow* as late as 1854, Hugh Macdonald wrote about "the village of Cambuslang, which lies about half-a-mile to the south of the Clyde at this point."

As the early records indicate, Cambuslang, as far back as records exist, has had an ecclesiastical association. In 1458 the Vicarland, which is still remembered near the current parish church in

Vicarland Road, was assigned to Vicar Edward de Camdorwud. It seems reasonable to assume that Cambuslang had its origin as a kirkton, closely associated with the present site of the parish church. The RCAHMS Canmore database has:-

> Cambuslang Parish (Old) Church was built in 1841 on the site of one built in 1743, which in turn succeeded one built in 1626. A church and burial ground is noted at the present site in 1458. A stone coffin was found during the rebuilding in 1743. The church is said to be dedicated to St Cadoc or Cadocus (6th century), but there is no evidence of a Culdee church having existed in this parish. OSA 1793; Orig Paroch Scot 1851; J T T Brown 1884; J A Wilson 1929; G Hay 1957'. (NMRS Number: NS65NW 12.00 Map reference: NS 6455 5996).

The site of the parish church lies above the bank of the Kirk Burn where, until the burn was buried underground to accommodate the line of the railway in the 19th century, the 'remarkably rapid and crooked rivulet' took a sharp, almost ninety degree turn.

So we have the place-name Cambuslang closely associated with the church and we have the site of the earliest church situated on a bank directly above the Kirk Burn where it forms a sharp bend before carrying on down to the Clyde which is about a kilometre away.

As I discussed in an article on Auchlyne in the Spring 2010 Newsletter, *llan/lann* as an element is common in Welsh, Cornish and Irish place-names associated with churches and religious enclosures. I would suggest the possibility that the *lang* element may derive from *llan/lann* reflecting Cambuslang's association with the church at the time when the name may have been coined and that *cambus* comes from the adjacent Kirk Burn and not the Clyde.

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A WEST LOTHIAN CROOK ENCOUNTERS WELSH MARCHES GRIT

We stumbled upon White Grit during a walking holiday in late May this year. Hardly a hamlet, it huddles under the shadow of Corndon Hill in eastern Montgomeryshire, that part shaped like a fist grabbing into Shropshire. Only yards inside Wales [SO3197], White Grit was spruced up for the World Cup, flaunting St George's Cross flags between its satellite dishes, the border being a strong line on a map marking where each country is at its weakest: The Same Most Other, striving to be More of The Same, like a recent convert (in the religious sense).

Cairn on Corndon Hill, looking north (J G Wilkinson)

What's the story behind *White Grit*? Is it too a convert (in the nominal sense)? Ignoring the happy coincidence of a conical pile of light-coloured aggregate by the roadside, the only feature of note is an old cairn close by, below tall and triple-cairned *Corndon Hill* (*Corendun* 1275, *Cornedun* 13th c., perhaps itself symptomatic: W *corn* 'horn, cairn on a mountaintop' with OE *dūn* 'hill' added later). The landscape around, though, is a living museum of past ages: tumuli, more cairns, hillforts, standing stones, a kenspeckle stone circle on an ancient drove road (*Mitchell's Fold*, where a malevolent witch milked a dun cow dry) and a memory of two others blasted to smithereens by daft farmer laddies with time on their hands and gunpowder in their pouches.

It also keeps alive English versions of Welsh place-names like *Cefn Gunthley* and *Pultheley* [SO3394]. The only map clue as to *White Grit*'s meaning is twofold: a farm called *Oldgrit*, in Shropshire but within a mile, and *Grit Hill*, a little further away [SO3398]. Still enigmatic then, and it would have remained an amusing puzzle had I not been reading Richard Morgan's excellent little *Study of Montgomeryshire Place-Names* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch 2001) at the time. He doesn't mention the name, but one of his entries includes an old spelling [*Gwamylls*] *Whitegrutte* 1540-1, with a 1263 spelling *Weidgrut* among others such as (cas.) *Wydhercruck'* 1245, *Wyrebruch* (!) 1260 and *WYDEGRUC* 1274. *Castell y Wydgruc* of 1263 (c1400) makes it obvious that the Welsh was *Gwyddgrug*, the name of the castle at *Nantcrib(h)a* SHR [SJ2301].

White Grit from Corndon Hill (J G Wilkinson)

This is of course the same as *Yr Wyddgrug*, the Welsh name of *Mold* FLI (OFr *mont hault* 'high mound') and at least two other sites, a combination of W *gŵydd* 'tomb, cairn' [gu:jð] and *crug/grug* 'mound' [SW: kri:g/gri:g; NW: kryg, gryg]. As W *gŵydd* also occurs in *Yr Wyddfa* Eng *Snowdon* 'heap, cairn, tomb' + *ma/fa* 'place', Morgan (pp. 99–100, 139) favours a meaning 'prominent' for *gŵydd*, thus 'prominent mound'. W *crug* is also 'hill': this would suit *Grit Hill*, which becomes lost twin to several *Churchill* place-names (*LOP*, 159–63). So, circumstantial evidence hints that *White Grit* is a rather spectacular instance of reinterpretation by English-speakers of a Welsh term, with roots evidently going back at least 500 years, and, strangely enough, within a bi-lingual society, or one where Welsh was never very far away.

Both elements occur in Scotland, though not in conjunction, so far as I am aware. The presence of the first (*wit* 12th c.) is complicated in written records by the existence of W *gŵydd²* (*guit*, *uyt* 12th c.) 'goose' and W *gŵydd³* (*gvyd* 14th c.) 'wild, overgrown, &c', as well as W *gwŷdd* (*guid* 10th c., *guit* 12th c.) 'tree, forest, wood' [gwi:ð] (all *GPC*, svv.). *Carnwath* LAN (*Karnewid* 1179, *Carnewithe* 1315) has been interpreted by Watson as *carn gwydd* [*sic*] 'cairn of (the) wood' (*CPNS*, 386), (probably with reference to the so-called *motte/mote/moat* on the Golf Course, which suggests either local post-Norman Brythonic or an older mound), but may now be 'eminent cairn', 'tomb cairn', or something else. Its local pronunciation **Carnwoth* [kar(ə)n'woθ] resonates a semi-identity with nearby *Quothquan* (*Law*) LAN [kwəθ'kwon] (*Cuthquen* c1210, *Knokquhan*

1275 [W *cnvc* ScG *cnoc* 'knobbed hill'], *Quodquen* 1403) which I interpret as a reflex of W **gwŷdd* (*g*)*wen* 'white or holy wood', maybe consonant with *Troquha(i)n* &c, i.e. *tref* + (*g*)*wen* 'white farmstead'. I know of no instance in West Lothian, unless *Whitockbrae* Bathgate (*Quhythokbray* 1614) is a relict of W *gwyddog* 'eminent' or maybe 'woody' rather than Macdonald's hesitantly hinted *Hwittuc* (*PNWL*, 88–9): all forms are late.

As for *crug/grug* (*cruc* 12th c.), during my ongoing updating of *PNWL* and *WLPN*, I came across another potential example to rank alongside the two suspects of 1992: *Grougfoot* Bo'ness & Carriden (*Grugfot* 1335 *Greukfute* 1573), the second element being Sc *fit*, *fute* &c 'foot' [NT027787], and (less likely) *Castle Greg*, Midcalder (*Castelgreg* 1512, *Castle Craig* 19c) [NT050593].

Gallowscrook Abercorn (*Gallouscruke* 1540/1, *Galloiscruyk* 1541, *Gallow(i)s -cruik* 1565 &c.) [NT066773] is explained by Angus Macdonald as an unstated hybrid of OE *g(e)alga* 'gallows' and ON *krókr* 'nook' (earlier 'crook, bend': Smith 1956, ii, 7), thus '[n]ook of land in which a gallows stood' (*PNWL*, 21). Both local topography and long tradition suggest a hillock or mound, a more likely site for a hanging: perhaps it was a *cruc* used for such public spectacles even in Brythonic-speaking days. Besides, as Macdonald notes (*PNWL*, 22), its alternative name was *Harelawhill*. This name has several potential meanings, mostly associated with ancient sites, so the eminence is doubly assured. The second element of *Gallowscrook* will have been assimilated to Sc *cruik* &c. 'crook' (*CSD,* qv.), the Scots vowel expressed above as *-uy-* and *-ui-* being very similar to the *-u-* of modern W *crug* [kryg].

White Grit may be a total convert, but *Gallowscrook* and *Grougfoot* are no hybrids, as if assembled Lego-like at the one time from two sources. They are in their own way as liminal as the Welsh Marches, neither Welsh nor English but both: toponyms caught in time's amber, in the process of shapeshifting from Brythonic into Scots, like trolls petrified by the rising sun. In this they are unusual: most West Lothian examples are Brythonic-Gaelic tweenwords. A span of time has to be added to the 'hybrid' equation, and for this reason I prefer to call them for the moment *mutants*. But in the twilit mutant world little is as it seems, and we intrepid toponymists should tread with care, constantly aware of White Grit.

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John G Wilkinson

PLACE-NAMES IN 'TALES FROM HIGHLAND PERTHSHIRE'

One of the daughters of the 7th Duke of Atholl, Lady Evelyn Stewart Murray was born in Blair Castle in 1860. An outstandingly talented and intellectual girl, serious illnesses in her late teens affected her physically and mentally and she began to study obsessively the Gaelic language. Evelyn's study culminated in February 1891 with her starting to note down Gaelic tales from people in Highland Perthshire, many of whom spoke Perthshire Gaelic, a rich dialect which has, sadly, now died out. Despite lengthy periods of illness, by the end of that year she had collected 241 tales.

The collection includes Atholl tales, stories involving fairies, wizards and witches, clan tales, reminiscences of old customs, snatches of ancient songs and a number of longer wonder tales. About 10% of the stories purport to explain the origins of place-names. At the start of each tale Evelyn noted the name of the teller and where he or she lived and, along with the place-names in the stories, this has resulted in a total of over 650 place-names in the collection. Some place-names appear with various spellings, probably indicating tellers' different pronunciations of names.

Evelyn wanted her stories to be published but it was not until October 2009 that this unique and

valuable collection finally appeared in print, translated and edited by Sylvia Robertson and Tony Dilworth, published by the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society. Following an introduction with brief notes on Lady Evelyn's life and on Perthshire Gaelic, each story has facing page English translations and the original Gaelic, story notes, biographical notes on the story tellers and a complete list of all the place-names with six figure map references. Some of the place-names no longer appear on modern OS maps but are shown on old estate maps or are known to people in the locality. Despite extensive research, the exact position of a handful of place-names has not been traced. The editors hope this list will be the inspiration for further research into the place-names of Highland Perthshire.

The following will give a little taste of the fascinating tales in Lady Evelyn's collection.

Place-names in Glen Lyon

A man named Duncan, from Clan MacNaughton, caused a battle to be fought because of the harm he had perpetrated. He swam the river below Invervar and a woman who was washing linen there hit him over the head with her washing mallet and killed him. The place is called Linn Dhomhuill (Donald's Pool) to this day. The Robertsons were chasing him while the Stewarts of Garth supported him and that is why the Battle of Lagganacha took place. The Stewarts unsheathed their swords at a place up from Invervar and Ruskich (unsheathing) is the name of the place still.

The Robertsons fled to the river and crossed it there and people call it Ath an t-Sluaigh (ford of the army). There is a place above there where many of the Robertsons were buried and they called it Camus nan Cearn (crooked burn of the cairns). The Stewarts returned and washed their swords in the river and there was a dirty, bloody colour in the river and thus the river and glen are called Liobhann (greasy, bloody hue).

When the Stewarts set off after the Robertsons they removed their sandals and there is a stone above Ruskich called Clach nan Cuaran (stone of the sandals). When the Stewarts returned they sorted out the shoes. One pair was extremely long and the man who was checking the shoes said, "Whose are these long shoes?" They belonged to a MacNaughton and to this day there's still a family of MacNaughtons called Cuaran Fhada (long shoes).

Convallach

When the king was staying in Logierait he would come over to this side of the River Tay and go fowling. The hunter had orders when he was at this pass to loose the dogs to follow the scent. And that is why this place is called Convallach (pass of the dogs).

How *Clais-an-deoir* (hollow of weeping) got its name.

When they used to hang people on Tom na Croiche (hanging knoll) at Logierait there would be people down there, wailing and weeping for the folk who were being executed.

How the Calmanachs came to Strathtummel

A man of clan Menzies went over the Monadh Meadhanach (middle moor) and put to flight three Calmanachs who were lairds in Appin of Dull at that time. The trio fled and sought advice from the laird of Garth but he told them that since they were such cowards, the three of them not facing a solitary Menzies, he wouldn't give them any advice. Then they came over the Dun Coillich moor and settled in Brae Foss in the place called Braclach. After cultivating that place for a time, they looked across to the north side of the river and the first man said, "I'll take that sunny place (Grenich)," and the second said, "I'll take the yellow place over yonder (Blairbuie)," and the third said, "I'll take the third place (Tressait)." And thus the Calmanachs settled in Strathtummel and are here to this day and that's what gave the names to the places.

Sylvia Robertson (from her talk at Birnam)

BOOK REVIEWS

In Newsletter 28 Pete Drummond reviewed **The Place-Names of Falkirk and East Stirlingshire**, by John Reid. Pete is anxious to acknowledge and apologise to the author for an error, spotted by him too late to prevent its publication in the paper version, though corrected in the online version. He inadvertently stated that the book had translated Old Norse *skammr* as 'flat', when in fact it was correctly explained as meaning 'short'.

The Pocket Guide to Scottish Place-Names by **Alison Grant,** published by Richard Drew Ltd. (ISBN 9781899471003. Price £3.99)

This is a book that members of the Society might well ignore, on the bookstall at our conferences: for it is indeed a 'Pocket' guide, marginally bigger than an iPhone (for older

readers, just over 3 by 6 inches), and has but 96 pages; indeed the publisher probably aimed it at the intelligent end of the Scottish tourist market. But we should be grateful to it for two reasons: one, that these tourists will finally get a little book that is accurate, unlike many previous tourist tartanalia tomes which are usually lifts from J B Johnston's error-strewn work of a century ago; but also, while we await the oft-promised but yet-unsighted definitive dictionary of Scottish place-names, here is a handy little compendium based on the most recent research. Alison is after all a recent Ph.D. graduate, and an editor of the Scottish Language Dictionaries, and the book's compilation is in safe hands.

After a brief introduction on the study of Scottish place-names, it begins with a list of over 200 place-name elements that crop up in many names, from *aber* and *bal* to *wick* and *yett*, all in both original language and anglicised forms, for easy tracking down. It ends with a bibliography of books and on-line resources. In between these 'book-ends', the bulk of the book is taken up with the dictionary of 'General Place-names' (mainly settlements) from Aberchirder to Wishaw. My litmus test for such books is my residence town of Coatbridge: they tend to churn out Johnston's wild speculation about a root in Cumbric *coed*, 'wood', or suggest that it is *cotts* (cottages) by the bridge; this book correctly etymologises it as the bridge on the Coats (or Colts) estate, the family being long-standing landowners of Anglo-Norman origin. For each of the place-names listed (about 600) Alison gives the modern local authority area, one or more old forms to assist with the etymology, and suggestion for the meaning, and a pronunciation. As an example, of her home town, she writes:

"**Inverness** (Highland) *Invernis* a.1300, 'mouth of the River Ness' from Gaelic *inbhir* 'river mouth, confluence' and an obscure Celtic or pre-Celtic river name from the root **ned* meaning 'wet, to flood'. [*in-vir-***ness**]".

The section on General Place-names is followed by a ten-page section on hill names. I cannot quibble with the etymologies, since she has referred to the latest source, but I do not fully understand why these names were not merged with the General section. After all, some lochs and glens (such as, respectively, Lomond and Affric) are in the General section, so why not the bens? Some non-Highland hills are in the General section – the Ochils, and Traprain Law – but all the Highland hills are in this separate

list, and the only southern hill in it - admittedly the highest - is The Merrick. Maybe tourists in the capital might want the explanation for Arthur's Seat, and the Pentlands, and Tinto, too. The other omission is of major river names, although, to be fair, by their onomastic nature they are very difficult to etymologise briefly: however, Clyde can be found under Clydebank, Tay under Tayport, the Spey under Grantown, and the Don under Aberdeen, although this would take a fair bit of searching by our intelligent tourists!

But these are minor quibbles, and I have no hesitation in commending this fine little reference book, which in spite of its size, fills quite a gap on our metaphorical bookshelf. As used to be said in the Muppets Show, 'Never mind the **tour**-ists' (although they will now go home better educated in our toponymy), this is also a book for the Society cognoscenti.

Reviewed by **Pete Drummond**

Simpson, **Charles H**., 2010, ***Water in Burgidale: Shetland Fisheries in a Pre-Electronic Age*** (Shetland Amenity Trust, Lerwick; ☎ 01595 694688) pp.275; ISBN 978-0-9557642-6-4. £20 paperback; £25 hardback.

This is a fascinating book about Shetland fishing 'meids', or the position-fixing system used by fishermen to pinpoint their favoured fishing grounds in the time before the present electronic age or by the coastal navigator to steer a safe course away from hazards. The book records many place-names of the land features which were used by the fishermen in the process of position-fixing. Charles Simpson, himself a former Fisheries Development Officer with Shetland Islands' Council and from a long line of crofter-fishermen, interviewed sixteen Shetland fishermen who were familiar with meids and their stories are recorded in Shetland dialect. Knowing some of the men myself, it is actually possible to hear their voices through the impressively accurate and sympathetic transcription and to see them again in the accompanying photographs of men and boats. The text is very accessible to readers who do not speak the dialect and is an important record of an era which, to an extent, is in the past although meids are still very regularly used by local fishermen when fishing for their own use. It is a book which took twenty years in the making and that depth of research shows in the presentation of the material. I recommend it to all readers. The author and the Shetland Amenity Trust,

particularly their place-names officer Eileen Brooke-Freeman who assisted with the transcription of recordings, are to be highly praised.

Reviewed by **Doreen Waugh**

Ridel, **Elisabeth**, 2009, ***Les Vikings et les Mots***, (Éditions Errance, Paris) pp.351, ISBN 978-2-87772-400-5 ; paperback 35 €.

This book is the product of a doctoral thesis at the University of Caen and its scope is explained in its subtitle as 'the contribution of Old Scandinavian to the French language'. It is both a formidable work of scholarship and elegantly readable for those who can follow the French text. Having exposed the superficiality of much previous work on the subject Ridel approaches it rigorously, using criteria of 'geolinguistic', phonetic, semantic and chronological credibility for survivals of Old Scandinavian in dialect or standard 'langue d' oïl'. For instance, under the geolinguistic criterion she rejects the 'obvious' origin in *garðr* for *gord*, 'fishing place', finding a more likely origin in its Gaulish cognate **gorto-* because it is too widespread to be explained by Scandinavian influence. Analysis of elements used in place-names will be of particular interest to students of place-names in other areas where Scandinavians settled.

Newsletter 30 will include a fuller note on this important study. (WP)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The **SPNS Autumn 2010 conference** takes place on Saturday 13 November at the Royal Hotel in Bridge of Allan near Stirling. *Details on flier with this Newsletter*. The **Spring 2011 conference** will be on 7 May in Ayr or vicinity.

The **Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies** is holding a conference on 'Scotland and France – New Perspectives on an Auld Alliance', on Saturday 16th October 2010 in the Walker Halls, Troon. Speakers include Prof Thomas Clancy, on 'Petit et Beau: French in Medieval Scottish Names'. Cost £10 not including lunch; bookings (cheques payable to AFHS) to Rob Close, 1 Craigbrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr, KA6 7EN; ☎ 01292 590273.

The Third International Conference on the **Early Medieval Toponomy of Ireland and Scotland** is on Saturday, 6 November 2010, at University College, Cork: details at http://www.irishtextssociety.org/ITS%20UCC%20Seminar%202006.htm

The **Scottish Society for Northern Studies** has arranged its AGM and day conference for Saturday 27 November 2010, at the Augustine Centre, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh (note change from the usual venue). The main theme will be aspects of folklore and folktales from Iceland, Norway and Scotland. http://www.northernstudies.org.uk/forevents.php

On 19 February 2011, at Lancaster University, there will be a day conference to celebrate the scholarship of the late **John M Todd**, whose work included editing the Lanercost Cartulary, an important source for place-names on both sides of the Border. Topics include 'Cumbria in Scotland in the 11th and 12th centuries'. Enquiries to christine.wilkinson@lancaster.ac.uk.

http://www.ainmean-aite.org/Database.asp is the link to the new Gaelic place-names database of **Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba**.

*SPNS received the following request from Dr Alan V. Murray, editorial director of the **International Medieval Bibliography** (IMB), the multidisciplinary online database of Medieval Studies based at the University of Leeds.*
'The evidential nature of place-name studies means that almost all published work comes within the scope of the IMB. I am currently trying to increase our coverage of place-name studies, specifically to find a volunteer who could take responsibility for coverage of publications dealing with Scotland, such as *JSNS*, the Society's Newsletter and the various volumes of conference papers that regularly appear in its bibliography. The work involved is twofold: (a) recording the basic bibliographical details of each relevant article and (b) providing subject classifications and indexing (keywords) e.g. for location and county.
I wonder if any member of the Society would be willing to take this on. We cannot offer any financial recompense, but we can offer free access to the IMB Online (a fully searchable database of some 380,000 records of articles in Medieval Studies) plus free printed updates (c.1000 pp. per annum) as well as occasional free books. The volunteer would need to have a PC, since the indexing is done via a Web Database, and of course access to the publications themselves. The work is fairly intuitive, but I would be happy to travel to meet the contributor to provide training if required.'
If any SPNS member is interested in pursuing this, please contact Dr Murray direct at the Institute for Medieval Studies, University of Leeds, Parkinson 103, LEEDS LS2 9JT, Tel. 0113-3433615; <A.V.Murray@leeds.ac.uk>

Grants may still be available from the **Cultural Contacts Fund** – information from the current coordinator of the steering committee, Professor Carole Hough: carole.hough@glasgow.ac.uk