

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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



*Winter sun over Shetland, 1st December 2010: view south from Hill o Gairdins, Sand, over the trees to Da Haa (The Hall) and on over the sea towards the high cliffs of Fitful. Maps usually add 'Head' to the name. Sir Walter Scott chose this headland as the residence of Norna, the witch, in his novel 'The Pirate'. Da Gairdins (Norse garðr 'a yard, or enclosure'), with two neighbouring crofts, is now a notable garden with a wide range of plants sheltered by the trees. Fitful may be Norse vita-fjall 'beacon hill' but this suggestion can be challenged. Jakob Jakobsen offers '*fitfugla-höfði = web-footed bird headland' but this can also be challenged. A skerry in the middle distance beyond Da Haa, with knuckle-like lumps, is Da Nev (Scots nieve, 'fist') and the smaller headland on the left is Foraness (Norse fornes 'a promontory'). Photo: Doreen Waugh.*

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EDITORIAL

The next section of the newsletter contains very welcome reports of research projects which will greatly advance knowledge of the history of place-names in parts of Scotland, and will set the path for future progress in other areas. We can also be pleased that, at long last, there is to be definitive listing of Scottish place-names.

An especially encouraging feature of a project based at the University of Glasgow is that it will not rely solely on academic staff, resources and knowledge. There will be an important place for local museums and local history societies, in which it is a fair guess that many members of SPNS are already involved. The involvement of local groups in exhibitions and road shows will be no bad thing for the recruitment of new members to the groups, and should encourage wider public interest in local place-names.

It is thus now possible to foresee Scotland catching up gradually with England where the English Place-Name Society has been issuing scholarly county place-names volumes since the 1920s. Congratulations to those involved in the hard work of making convincing applications for support for the projects.

Whilst we can rejoice at the current vigour of place-names studies in Scotland, our happiness has to be tempered by disappointment and unease at the dismal turn of events in Belfast. Even if the land easily in sight of our south-western shores were not so intimately bound with Scotland in its use of Gaelic and Scots in place-names, it would be distressing to learn of the waste of talent and the setback in bringing valuable work to fruition.

NEWS FROM ACADEME – CONTRASTING FORTUNES

Scottish Toponymy in Transition: Progressing County Surveys of the Place-Names of Scotland

The UK-wide Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has announced the funding of a major new project on Scottish place-names. The three-year, £850,000 project will advance the long-term aim of surveying all of Scotland's place-names, publishing survey volumes from three of its historical counties, and progressing research on other regions. It aims to build the future of Scottish place-name survey.

The project is headed by Professor Thomas Clancy (Celtic and Gaelic) and Professor Carole Hough (English Language), and draws on the University of Glasgow's considerable and growing strengths in research within Name Studies and on Scotland's history and languages. The chief researcher on the project is Dr Simon Taylor, one of Scotland's leading place-name specialists. Dr Taylor will oversee the production of two county surveys, Clackmannanshire and Kinross-shire (as they were before the 1975 local government reshaping). These surveys will build on his work in the five-volume *The Place-Names of Fife*, which is the first full county survey to have been carried out since the 1940s, when West Lothian and Midlothian were done as PhDs at the University of Edinburgh.¹ These volumes, four of which have already appeared, co-authored with Gilbert Márkus, were the primary output of Professor Clancy's previous AHRC-funded project (2006-10).

Beyond these full county surveys, three further counties will see major new place-name research: Dr Peter McNiven, the project's Research Fellow, will publish one volume of his two-volume *Place-Names of Perthshire: Menteith*, whilst building a framework for the full survey of the large county of Perthshire; Professor Clancy will initiate the survey of Ayrshire with research on Cunninghame; and Professor Hough, with a doctoral student, will begin the survey of Berwickshire and the eastern border counties.

Throughout the project, the team will be assisted by a Knowledge Exchange Liaison Group,

¹ *The former by Angus MacDonald, which was published as The Place-Names of West Lothian in 1941; the latter by Norman Dixon ('Place-Names of Midlothian', 1947), which was published in electronic form in 2009 on <http://www.spns.org.uk>*

working with county museums and local history societies to create an interactive exchange of local knowledge about place-names, through a series of exhibits and road-shows. Bringing together local knowledge and energy with academic expertise, the project hopes to find new routes of engagement between local landscapes and societies.

This AHRC grant is not the only place-name research success for the University of Glasgow this academic year. Professor Clancy was awarded a 3-year, £243,000 Leverhulme Trust research grant in October 2010, on the project 'Commemorations of Saints in Scottish Place-Names', working with researchers Dr Rachel Butter and Gilbert Márkus. And in February 2011, Professor Hough, Mrs Jean Anderson and Dr Christine Robinson were awarded a 6-month, £79,500 grant from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) for the project 'Scots Words and Place-Names', based at the University of Glasgow in partnership with Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scottish Place-Name Society.

Definitive Place Names for Scotland

Professor Bruce Gittings of the University of Edinburgh has been asked by the Scottish Government to create a definitive list of Scottish place names. Remarkably, such a list does not already exist. In 1967, the United Nations resolved that member countries should establish national place-name authorities, but the UK never acted on this resolution. In the Scottish context, the Royal Scottish Geographical Society was deeply involved in making a case for place name recording and standardisation in the 1980s. This role was later taken on by the SPNS and progress was made through the Scottish Place-Name Database. More recently, Professor Gittings lobbied the then Scottish Executive, supported by Professor David Munro, then Director of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. This led to place names being explicitly included in the 'Geographical Information Strategy for Scotland', published in 2005. In 2009 Bruce chaired a meeting convened jointly by the University of Edinburgh and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) which brought together the range of individuals interested in Scottish place names for the first time. This group included geographers, toponymists, linguists, historians, map-makers and policy-makers representing academia, local

and national government, the Ordnance Survey, the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish Place-Name Society. This meeting identified several competing and partially incompatible place name lists in use, and importantly highlighted the benefits of one consistent, freely-available, centrally-maintained database. This initiative has now come together with the requirements of the European Union's INSPIRE directive which places a duty on member governments to maintain, catalogue and make available a range of basic geographical datasets, including place names. It is in this context that Bruce and his team will create as definitive a list of place names as is possible in the five months available for the work, drawing on the existing Ordnance Survey 1:50000 gazetteer and Bruce's Gazetteer for Scotland (www.scottish-places.info). The Ordnance Survey gazetteer has a number of problems which this work will address, for example spatial inaccuracy, poor feature typing (for example, lochs are not distinguished from rivers), lack of alternative and Gaelic names, uneven coverage across the country, inability to be able to reference multiple administrative divisions. The Edinburgh team will use the Gazetteer for Scotland to correct these problems and provide many additional names where the OS gazetteer coverage is limited (for example, within towns and cities). Bruce commented "This is an important step forward, but it is a halfway-house; we need to decide how this dataset will be made available if its considerable benefits are to be realised for Scottish business and tourism, and we also need to maintain it for the future". For further information, contact

bruce@geo.ed.ac.uk.

... but Kay Muhr reports less happy tidings from Belfast

In the summer of 2010 there were serious developments in the status of place-name research in Northern Ireland. By making the two members of staff redundant [Patrick McKay and Kay Muhr], Queen's University Belfast effectively closed the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project, which for many years (since 1987) had provided professional research in pursuit of the aims of the Ulster Place-Name Society. Because the permanent status the researchers eventually achieved was made 'subject to external funding', this happened without reference to the wider community, inside or outside the university. Official replies to protests simply claimed the staff had taken

early retirement. There is no mistaking the finality of the University's decision, as management withdrew the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project's last funding application to complete townland explanations for the website, and also refused money offered by the Ministry for the Gaeltacht in Dublin, to pay for part-time work in Cavan.

Over the years a unique database and archive had been built up on the origin, language and historical development of Northern Ireland's place-name heritage, and thanks to an agreement with Ordnance Survey NI a website had been created <www.placenamesNI.org> (online since January 2010 but as yet unlaunched) to display both historical and map information, plus full explanations of the 9,600 townland-names of Northern Ireland, to complement the website in the Republic <www.logainm.ie>. Ordnance Survey, now in Land and Property Services under the NI Ministry of Finance and Personnel, have guaranteed the web site for at least the next four years.

Both online database and archive are now in danger. Co. Down townland explanations are complete, and others in draft, but progress on the website is complicated by the University's claim to copyright (despite 16 years public funding). Pressure of space in teaching departments means that the thematic archive may have to be broken up, some of it officially belonging to Irish & Celtic Studies, QUB, some of it to the Ulster Place-Name Society. Any loans in danger will be returned to the lenders. The co-operative relationship between the University and the Ulster Place-Name Society has also been weakened, although the new professor of Irish, Gregory Toner, has taken on editorship of its journal *Ainm* for the time being. The old joint email address cannot be accessed from outside Queen's, and the new address for reaching the Ulster Place-Name Society will be <townlands.nipnp@gmail.com> The place-name enquiry service will continue but answers will be slower than before.

A NEW LOOK AT THE FORTH CARSELANDS

The carselands, either side of the River Forth east and west of Stirling, consist of flat clay soils. There is a widespread belief that, prior to the eighteenth century, they were covered by a continuous peat bog several metres thick; and this great mire all but isolated the north of

Scotland from the central lowlands and was only cleared in the eighteenth century by Lord Kames and his followers, who created the landscape of regular fields we know today.

As a documentary historian, toponymics is never at the forefront of my approach – and I am not going to be lured into discussing origins and forms here! But place names do provide a key reason for questioning the existence of this 'mythic morass'. For, if the morass had existed we would expect to find a hole on the historical map, an extensive area with no place names prior to Kames beginning work. And we might also expect the settlements which now exist there to have almost entirely 'modern' names.

But a glance at Roy's map, created 20 years before Kames began work shows lots of settlements on the western carse. Many of these have names of Gaelic (or perhaps even older) origins. Few are entirely modern. And some of them are documented centuries before Kames got to work. The lands of Frew lie in the angle between the River Forth and the Goodie Water, an area where some would have us believe travellers in the 17th century needed guides to avoid drowning in the dangerous mosses. But the harvesting of the hay and oats of Frew is recorded in the Exchequer Rolls in the 15th century. Poldar and Kepdarroch are carseland sites, both well documented in the sixteenth century whilst testamentary inventories record the grains and livestock produced on the farms of Frew and others in the seventeenth century. There is no 'hole on the map'.

Modern misuse of place names has also played a part in perpetuating the 'mythic morass'. It has been commonplace to refer to Flanders Moss as though it covered the entire carse and to say that it was Flanders Moss which Kames cleared. But a second glance at Roy shows that the mosses are discrete. And as eighteenth century writers well knew, there had always been a gap of some two miles between Blairdrummond Moss (where Kames's scheme really did begin) and East Flanders Moss (which is distinct from West Flanders, Gatrennich and others). People who knew the pre-improvement mosses did not confuse them but gave each its own name.

Between the pre-improvement mosses and the rivers were many modest settlements, each nibbling away at the edge of the moss for peat and probably also using 'pare and burn' techniques to increase the arable area. From the seventeenth century these methods are

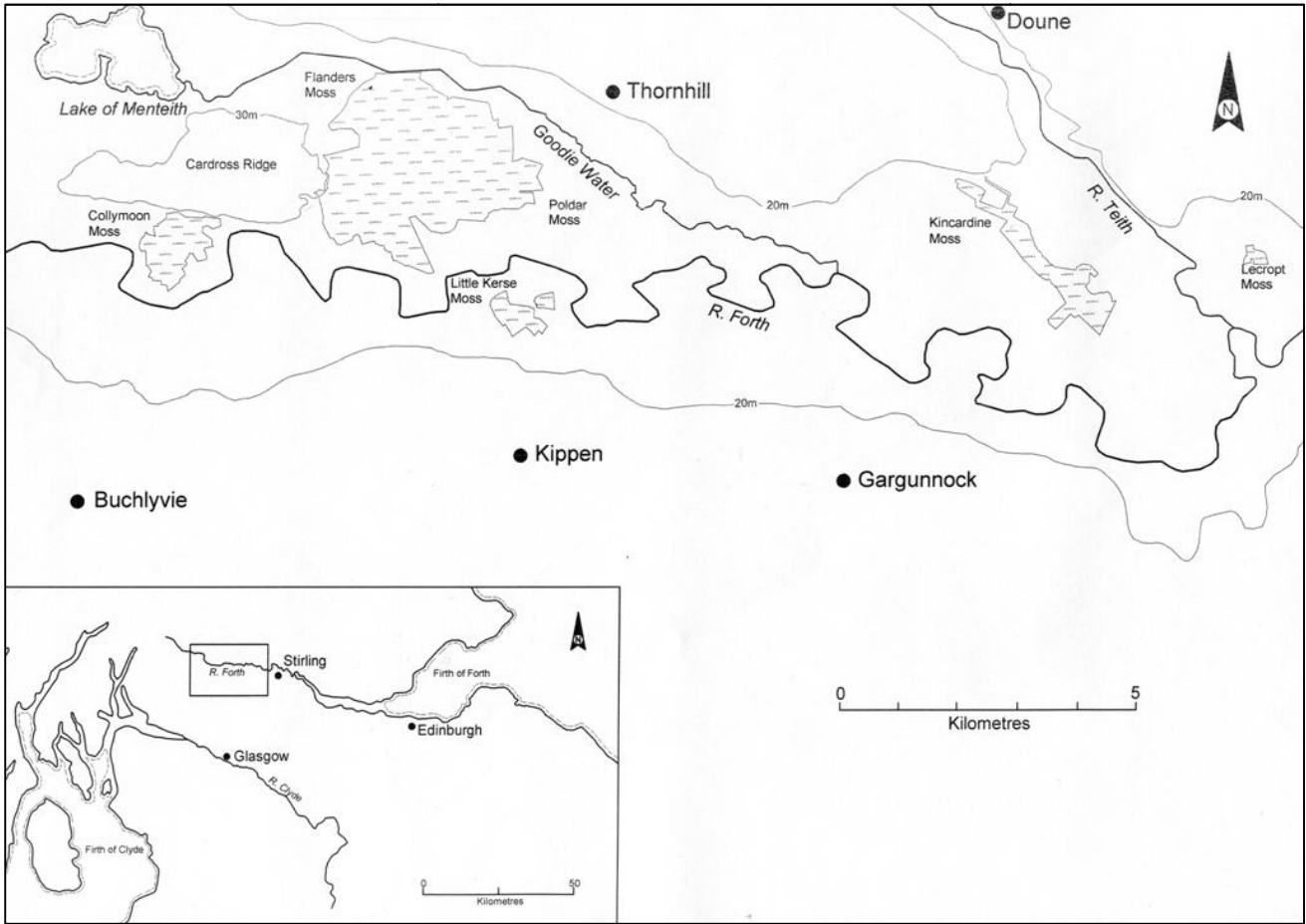


Figure 1. The Western Carselands and mosses today.

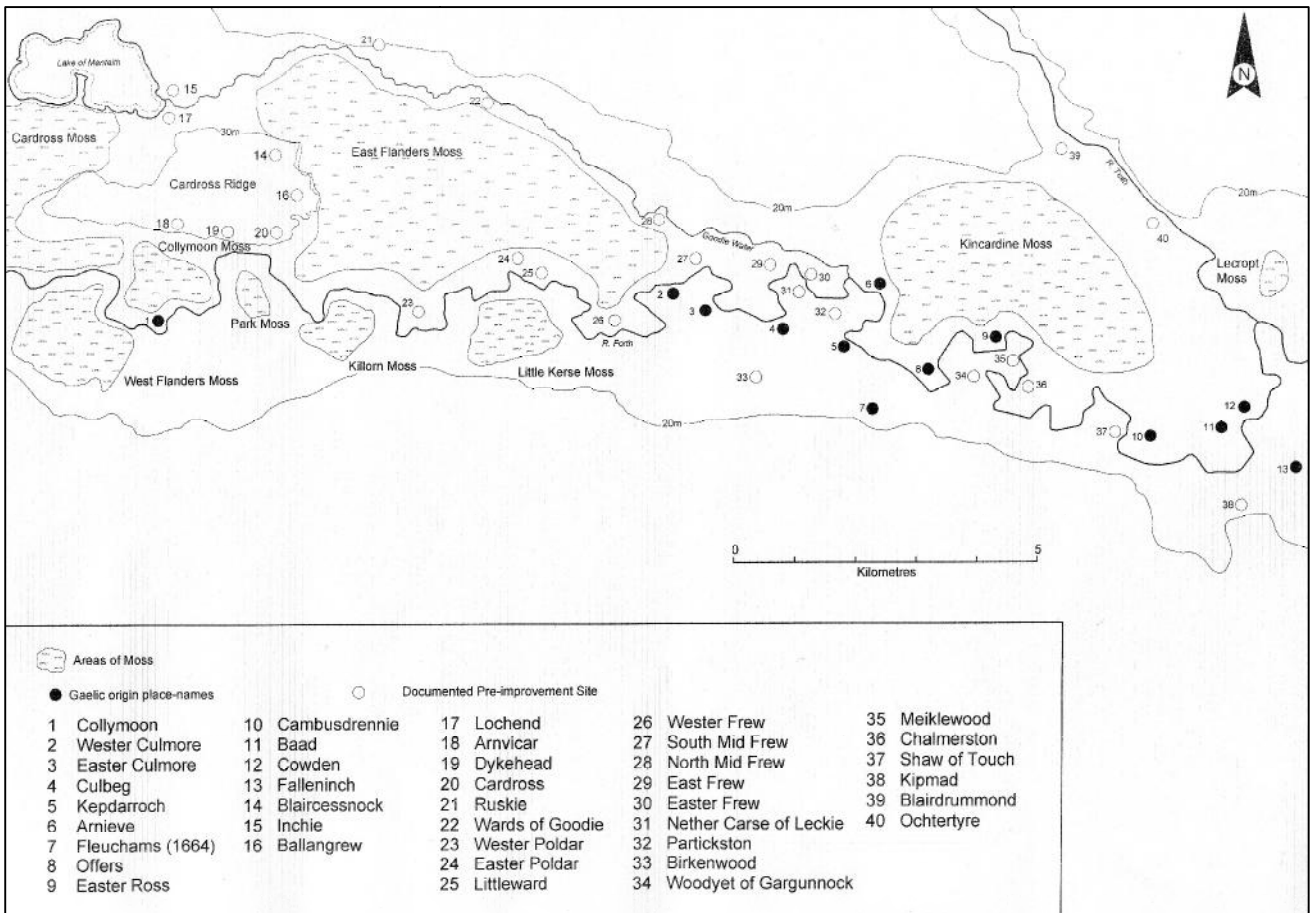


Figure 2. Mosses and settlements re-drawn from Roy's Map (1747-1755).

documented –and they are also betrayed by field names such as Bruntland and Newfoundland. Clearance was slow and labour-intensive; it was work for slack times, done by tenants who did not expect to gain much by the labour involved. But the later eighteenth century writers knew that the river banks had always been settled and farmed.

Whilst the mosses themselves might be dangerous, there was no great difficulty moving between them – indeed, there were regular north-south routes on areas of better drained soil. For example, Bridge of Goodie is documented in 1637 and there was a regular route from there to the Ford of Frew, probably the *Scotichronicon*'s Auchmore. The fords of the Forth were watched by English forces hunting for William Wallace in the early fourteenth century. Modern farmers echo the eighteenth century commentators in noting that the soils of the river banks (and of Frew in particular) are better drained than the generality of the carse soils.

The soils reflect the evolution of the carselands in the post-glacial period and, in turn, are reflected in the pattern of mosses, of older settlements and of routeways. Sites with access to hunting and peat from the mosses and transport and fishing on the rivers would have been attractive to early settlers. The pre-improvement farming pattern with low-grade grains supported by dairying was probably very ancient. And the probability is that the carselands have not been settled for centuries but for millennia.

John G Harrison

(based on a presentation to the SPNS conference, Bridge of Allan, 13 Nov 2010)

Further reading:

John G Harrison and Richard Tipping, 2007: 'Early historic settlement on the western carselands of the Forth Valley: a reappraisal', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, volume 137. 461-670.

John G Harrison, 2009. 'East Flanders Moss, Perthshire, a documentary study', *Landscape History*, volume 30, 5-19.

John G Harrison, 2009. 'East Flanders Moss – some historical myths and some historical evidence', *Scottish Local History*, issue 77, Winter 2009, pp. 18-24.

Acknowledgement: thanks to Anne Bankier who drew the maps.

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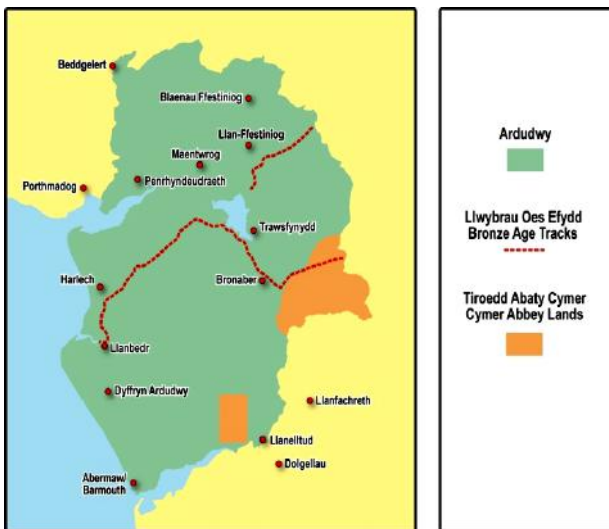
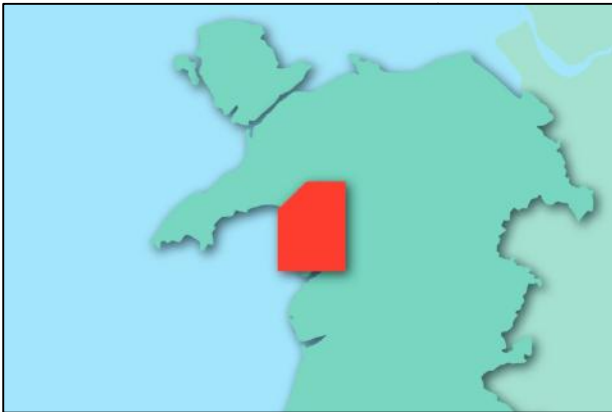
RECONSTRUCTING LANDSCAPE HISTORY IN SNOWDONIA

This paper is based on a cultural and sociological study in the medieval commote of Ardudwy in south Snowdonia.¹ The main focus of the study is the land on either side of the Bronze Age trackway which crosses the area and the paths which, for hundreds of years, connected it to small, scattered communities. The numerous monuments, archaeological sites and cultivation strips along the trackway testify to the presence of man and the continuity of agriculture for over two thousand years.

The upland commote of Ardudwy extended from Snowdonia in the north to Cader Idris in the south and from Cardigan Bay in the west to the Trawsfynydd parish boundary in the east. From the 12th century onwards it was made up of 14 ecclesiastic parishes which continued to have some administrative function up until 1974. Ardudwy became part of the newly formed county of Merionethshire in 1284 following the Edwardian Conquest.

One of the main elements of the research was an analysis of farm² and field³ names which were recorded in the Tithe Schedules of 1840. This research was not an etymological study but

rather, an investigation into the choice of names and what they reveal about the culture and history of the landscape. Landscape reconstruction requires research of a historical, sociological and archaeological nature. The need to work across subject disciplines was challenging but in practice, the complementary knowledge of each area confirmed findings and led to a better understanding of the physical and cultural landscape. The related analysis of farm and field names helped to unlock its past.



Maps of Arddudwy and the Bronze Age trackway which crosses it. Maps: Welsh Assembly Government.

The Bronze Age farmers lived in round houses, indicated in the aerial photograph by the circular shape of the outer walls of their substantial dwellings. Houses are surrounded by small irregular enclosures and a substantial trackway passes nearby. Is it by chance that a modern upland farm is located side by side with the site of a substantial agricultural community of pre-historic people? Or, do we see here, continuity of people on the same land for a period of over two thousand years? Why were they here, alongside a Bronze Age trackway which linked traders in bronze and gold from south west Ireland with early centres of metal working in the south west of Britain? The answers to such

questions remain elusive.



Pre-historic settlements alongside a modern upland farm in Arddudwy. Photograph: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW)

I had inadvertently come across an archaeological landscape of European importance and I am still captivated by it. The lands adjacent to the trackway and the ancient commote of Arddudwy gave me the context for a serious piece of research into farm and field names.

Analysis showed that there were similarities and differences between the names used in parishes. When all the names were analysed and plotted on Tithe and Ordnance Survey maps, it immediately became apparent that the names conformed to certain patterns and uses. These included obvious references to the uses made of the land, descriptors of locations and the quality of soils. One particular group of names is related to arable lands and these names are fundamental to identifying the dispersed, upland locations of free lands and the coastal bond lands of the middle ages. The ancient Welsh land measure 'Ery' and others which appear on the Tithe maps indicate where free mediaeval communities might be located. In Harlech the English name 'Acre' is clustered in fields near the castle and has strong connections to the early history of the borough. The name does not feature elsewhere in Arddudwy.

The additional documentary evidence revealed a time line for names when they were entered onto a calendared data base. All farm and field names are Welsh. The most recent names are those

which refer to the Enclosures of the 19th century. Also captured are the later *'ffriddoedd'* (mountain pastures), remnants of the common lands and the reclaimed estuarine lands.



Part of the Tithe map of the parish of Llandanwg. With the permission of the National Library of Wales and Rhian Parry. (Acre/Acra/ Accar marked by blue semi-circles)

The earliest recorded names are those found in Llywelyn the Great's Charter to Cymer Abbey in 1209. Although they appear unfamiliar in written form, the phonetical pronunciations are incredibly similar. *'Yueydyanw'* (*Y Feidiog*), *'Gwynvenyht'* (*Gwynfynydd*), *'Dolgeyn'* (*Dolgain*), *'Yrhauottanolawc'* (*Hafod Dafolog*), *'Iralltlhwyt'* (*Yr Allt Lwyd*), *'Cumbesgyn'*, (*Cwmbesgen*). These names survive in farm names to this day.

But before farms and fields were formed, lands were largely unenclosed and were either bond or free. Lands in Ardudwy were largely the latter, especially in the uplands. The bond lands owned by the Welsh princes were mainly confined to the narrow coastal strip and to two upland valleys which were largely summer grazing lands, known generically as *'hafodau'* (plural of *hafod*). Transhumance continued to be a legal requirement at least up until 1326⁴ and the topographical profile of the landscape from coast to mountain pastures were well-suited to the practice.

In 1284-6 and in 1420, two Crown surveys produced Extents which illustrate the social structure of Ardudwy. Free lands were arranged in an extended structure known as the *'gwely'* (*'gwelyau'*, plural), the kindred lands. These took on the names of founding members. There were also smaller, *'gafael'* (*gafaelion'* plural), which literally mean a holding). Only one such name appears on the Tithe schedules of 1840. After the Welsh Acts of 1536 and 1543, lands in Ardudwy could be sold and bought for the first time. This transformed land-holding and cleared the way for enterprise, a thirst for land ownership and the establishment of small estates. Many family lands were subdivided and sold to new owners. Such lands were enclosed

rapidly. New names were required. Also, many previously existing but unrecorded names within original *gwelyau* appear in estate records and land deeds. In the free parishes, several adjacent fields as seen on the 1840 Tithe maps have identical names. These indicate that ancient land was sub-divided after 1543 and often reveal the ancient name.

It has been possible to trace ancient names through documents, thereby establishing the locations of the medieval *gwely* and *gafael* lands in most of Ardudwy. Crown rentals, parish records and estate papers are useful sources for names and occasionally, both old and new names are included to clarify ownership or location.

In summary, the research showed that most farm names can be traced back to the 16th century and many to the post Edwardian conquest period in Ardudwy. As such they are valuable historical signposts and worthy of protection. Social and economic changes continue to erode names. Farms are joined up, fewer young people take over family farms and many people move into the countryside from outside the area. Unless used, names are lost. Worse, names are changed with no regard for their historical or cultural value.

It is for these reasons that we established the Adnabod Ardudwy Project (Knowing Ardudwy) on behalf of our county history society. Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled us to plan a programme of activities for adults and school pupils over a three year period. The aim was to raise people's awareness of the historical and cultural value of names and the need to preserve them, in much the same way as historic buildings, monuments and the environment are protected. The project, schools and our website⁵ were awarded the Rural Wales Award in 2009.

There is huge interest in place names of various kinds in Wales as the recent establishment of the Welsh Place Name Society indicates.

Rhian Parry (from her talk at Bridge of Allan)

¹ Parry, Rhian, PhD thesis, Bangor University, 2004 *'Yr Hen Lwybrau-* ("The old track ways")

²A total of 441 names. Continuing research has added to this number making a total of 1,000 farm names in the whole of Ardudwy.

³A total of 8,200 names in the original research and the addition of a further 5,800 field names.

⁴ E.A. Lewis, ed, 'Proceedings of the Small Hundred Court of the Commote of Ardudwy' in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, vol iv*, 162. A certain Iorwerth Gethin was fined for not removing his beasts from

the 'Hendref' (the winter dwelling) to the summer pastures with the rest of his community.

⁵<http://www.adnabodardudny.org.uk>

(Editor's note: Adnabod Ardudny had a briefer mention, with the aerial photo of a wonderfully preserved Bronze Age settlement and trackway, in issue 29, Autumn 2009. Although Ardudny is far from Scotland and no part of Scotland can have had continuity of language over such a long period, parallels to what may be feasible in upland landscapes here are close enough for further information about the Ardudny project to be of interest to many readers.)

THE QUEENSFERRY BRIDGE?

In January, John Park, a Labour MSP for Fife, ventured that the planned new road bridge over the Forth should perhaps be named 'in consultation with the Scottish people'. To start the process, he suggested the Ark Royal Bridge – presumably from the ship's association with the nearby Rosyth naval dockyard - although he also floated the idea of naming it after a prominent Fifer like Andrew Carnegie, Adam Smith or even Jennie Lee. (At least he spared us Gordon Brown Bridge!)

I find it a touch ironic that a Labour MSP should suggest a name from Britain's imperial military history, followed by that of a billionaire (albeit philanthropic), and an economist now most often claimed by the Conservatives. However the real problem is that Scottish bridges in place-names are rarely named after military hardware or famous men; the only exception I can think of being George IV Bridge in Edinburgh, essentially an early 19th century act of councillors' sycophancy to the reigning monarch, who had state-visited the town several years earlier; it is an unusual bridge anyway, since it does not cross water.

Most bridges of the 20th century, when developing technology allowed the spanning of wider stretches, are over salt water – Erskine, Ballachulish, Skye, Kylesku, Kessock, Tay, Kincardine and Forth Bridges – and with the exception of the last-named two, are named after the ferry they replaced, in turn named after a settlement on one bank – as the 1930s Kincardine Bridge was. The existing Forth Road Bridge is the exception. The 21st century 'second bridge' at Kincardine was of course the subject of a battle between councils (or their PR departments) to have it named after their shire, a contest 'won' by Clackmannan: perhaps John Park was trying to avoid another such unseemly

scrap between councils, this time those of Edinburgh and Fife, over the planned bridge. But since the Forth Road Bridge also replaced a ferry, surely the name – either for the current or the planned one – should simply be that of the ferry it replaced, i.e. Queensferry, a name with a pedigree going back to the 15th century, commemorating the 11th century Queen Margaret's establishment of a ferry allowing pilgrims to cross to Dunfermline Abbey. And if we need a Gaelic name for the bridge's signage, there is a 17th century record of *Caschilis*, from *cas chaolas*, possibly swift (for the water sweeping in or out with the tides) or steep narrows.

Pete Drummond

(Editor's note: Shortly after Pete Drummond drafted this item the Scottish Government announced that it was content for the bridge to be known as the 'Forth Replacement Crossing', the same name as had been used since early feasibility studies. Somehow we get the feeling that this may not be the last word on the subject.)

A TALE OF TWO BELLADRUMS

"Belladrum residents want sea defence breach repaired". This isn't an imaginary headline from the future when global warming has reached the point that sea defences are needed to protect Belladrum in Inverness-shire. It's a real headline and it comes from the Stabroek News, a newspaper published in the South American country of Guyana which has reported on the problems local residents have been facing in an area called Belladrum on the Atlantic coastline of the Guyanese province of Berbice. But there is more of a connection between the two Belladrums than just the name for the sea defences which are now in need of repair were first built over two hundred years ago when Belladrum in Berbice was owned by Colonel James Fraser of Belladrum, Inverness-shire. This was the first step in a process which enabled Colonel James to reclaim land from the sea and establish a cotton plantation to take advantage of the opportunity being created by the huge and ever increasing demand for cotton in the cotton mills of Scotland and Britain at the time of the industrial revolution.

Apart from owning plantation Belladrum, Colonel James owned several other plantations in Berbice and its neighbouring province of Demerara which were managed by his three sons, James, Simon and Evan. And judging by the remark made in 1801 that James Fraser had made £40,000 'from his last trip', which is worth

something like £2,287,570 in today's money, it is clear that the Belladrum Frasers' plantation enterprises were providing exceptionally good financial returns.

But it is clear from place names in Guyana today that the Frasers of Belladrum were not the only landowning family from our area who were trying to make 'very rapid and splendid fortunes' in Guyana around that time for, apart from Belladrum, there are other familiar sounding names such as the Foulis and Brahan which are mentioned in the Stabroek News report or the Alness, Dochfour, Novar, Cromarty, Tain and Inverness which are listed in a modern gazetteer of Berbice for example. And like Belladrum all of these places were once plantations and they were named by members of a tight-knit group of families from a part of the Highlands who operated together to promote their mutual interests at home and abroad.

But there can be no escaping the fact that the cotton plantation at Belladrum and all of the other plantations in Guyana at that time, whether they produced cotton or coffee or the sugar with which Demerara is synonymous, were slave plantations and that 'very rapid and splendid fortunes' were being made by exploiting Africans who had been transported across the Atlantic against their will to be bought and sold like cattle and subjected to the harsh regime and ferocious punishment that was common practice on New World slave plantations like Belladrum.

And while there is evidence of support in the Highlands from its earliest days for the campaign to abolish the slave trade, it has to be acknowledged that those with an interest in the plantation business were in principle and in practice firmly in favour of the continuation of a trade that supplied them with the slave labour they used to maintain and develop their operations on slave plantations like Belladrum. They argued that the slave trade made an essential contribution to the wealth and prosperity of the country and that its abolition would result in ruin. And when the British Parliament in 1807 finally passed the Act to abolish the slave trade plantation owners fought on for the right to maintain in opposition to those who sought to put an end to slavery and to secure the freedom of slaves throughout the British Empire.

This story of Highland involvement in the slavery business is one which has only recently

been coming to light but perhaps this unsavoury and little known aspect of Scotland's imperial past could well be a field of more than passing interest for students of Scottish place-names.

David Selkirk

ABBOTSFORD, BANNOCKBURN AND CULLODEN

Researching Scottish place names overseas for a forthcoming book has taken me on an extraordinary virtual journey from Jameson Land in Greenland to the Beardmore Glacier in Antarctica. Clearly the Scots had a penchant for exploring very cold places, marking the territory with their own names or those of their sponsors.

As one would expect, there are very significant clusters of place names in those parts of North America and Australasia populated by Scottish emigrants, such as Glengarry County, Ontario and the sheep runs of New South Wales. The story, however, begins much earlier. The Scottish merchants who grew wealthy on the Baltic and Scandinavian trade tended to stick together. Ports like Gdansk, with its districts of Szkoty Nowe and Szkoty Stare, still retain traces of their presence.

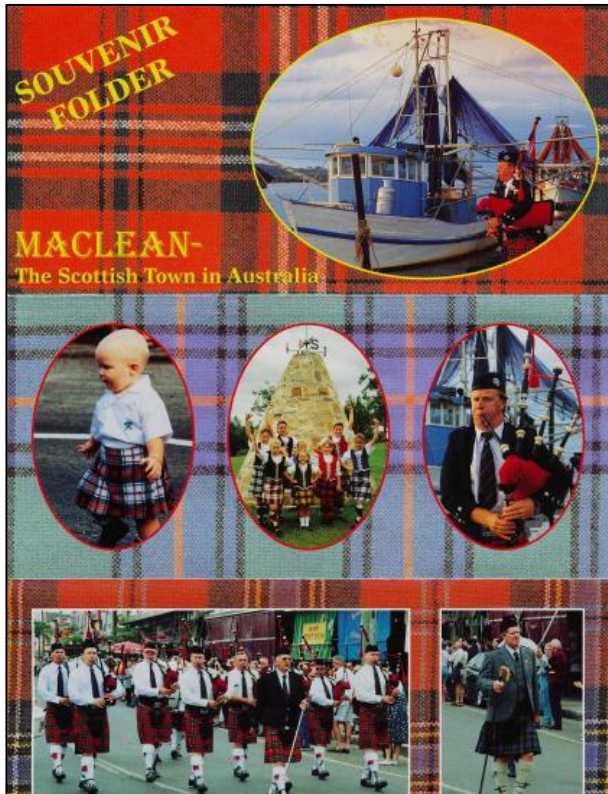


Sign in San Francisco, California

What makes the research so fascinating is the exceptions. Malenkaya Shotlandiya, Moscow's 'Little Scotland' does not reflect past trading links but the imagination of a recent property developer. He chose the name for his new suburb because of the Russians' love of all things Scottish and the reputation of the Scots for 'courage and canniness', values which he hoped the new residents would share. The town's symbol is a Scottie terrier sporting a tartan tam-o'-shanter.

Place names overseas are extensions of the

history of the home country especially post-1707. The sugar estates of the Caribbean, the tobacco plantations of Virginia, the exodus after Culloden, the impact of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, the push and pull of poverty and adventure, the opening up of new territories by entrepreneurs are all there. The names of Scots-born explorers, colonial administrators, inventors and literary giants are celebrated. Often there is a tinge of sentimentality or homesickness for the old land whether in Gretna, Louisiana or in the USA's three Aftons, all inspired by the Burns' poem.



The journey has its inevitable dead ends. The similarity between Irish and Scottish Gaelic names results in significant confusion even within local heritage societies overseas. The double emigration of the Ulster-Scots adds a further complexity. Sometimes names which appear obviously Scottish turn out to have very different connections. Abbotsford, British Columbia is a case in point. Scottish surveyor, John Cunningham Maclure, named the city but in honour of Harry Abbott, the Western Superintendent of the Canadian Pacific Railway rather than of Sir Walter Scott.

What I had not anticipated was the sheer randomness of the choice of many names. It helped if you were the postmaster, the inn-keeper or the parish minister if you wished your name to be immortalised. Settlements could change their names several times, sometimes

starting with an informal physical description like Smith's Landing or Pavott's Creek. The need finally to settle on a name often arose either with the arrival of the railway or to secure a regular postal service.

When searching, more in hope than expectation, to identify an 'X' to complete my alphabet of Scottish place names, I came across Xenia, Ohio. Xenia illustrates several themes, from the role of Scots missionaries to the part that chance plays in the naming of today's towns and villages. A year after the establishment of a settlement in 1803, land owner Joseph Vance called a town meeting to choose a name in a suitably democratic fashion. Several possibilities were debated without a consensus emerging. Then Rev Robert Armstrong, a Scottish Secession Church minister who was visiting the area looking for converts, proposed 'Xenia'. The Classical Greek word for hospitality seemed appropriate given the welcome extended to him by this friendly community. When a tie developed, Laetitia Davis was invited to cast the deciding vote. She opted for 'Xenia'. One wonders what Armstrong would have thought of the present day pronunciation— Xeen-yuh.

My virtual travels continue. I welcome any suggestions of unusual Scottish place names abroad. Write to me at 3 Browns Place, Edinburgh EH1 2HX or e-mail me at eandmwills@btinternet.com

Elspeth Wills

Gaelic PLACE-NAMES ON ROAD SIGNS IN NOVA SCOTIA AND SCOTLAND: A COMPARISON

Most readers of this newsletter will be well aware of the recent increase in the bilingual presentation of Gaelic and English forms of place-names on trunk road signs in Scotland. The roots of this lie in the successful 1960s campaign for bilingual Welsh and English road signs in Wales and later actions by Gaelic lobbyists. Notably, in exchange for a piece of land needed by the Inverness-shire road authorities in the early 1970s, the late Sir Iain Noble insisted that Gaelic place-names be used on road signs that were installed there. Since then, more bilingual signage has appeared both on road signs and on local street signs. The most recent major expansion of such signs has been since 2003, when the Scottish Executive

announced it would move to bilingualise seven trunk roads.

A review of the use of bilingual road signs in Scotland has been commissioned by Transport Scotland and is currently being carried out by Wokingham-based TRL Ltd. Bilingual road signs have come under attack in the press, as have bilingual railway signs, not to mention most recently the mere notion of bilingual signage in the National Galleries of Scotland. Nevertheless, there is a growing international consensus among sociolinguists of the great value of such initiatives in the 'linguistic landscape' (Landry and Bourhis 1997) for the promotion of regional or minority languages. In addition to their communicative functions, bi- or multi-lingual signs serve a further informational function, alerting readers to the presence of a given language in the place in question, and a symbolic function that can both reflect the sociolinguistic situation and influence individuals' perceptions of the relative status of languages.

The design of the most recent bilingual trunk road signs in Scotland represents a remarkable attempt at improving language parity, with Gaelic place-names printed above their English counterparts but in a slightly less prominent colour. Furthermore, Gaelic and English place-names otherwise appear in the same size and style of typeface unlike, for example, Irish and English forms of place-names in Ireland. The order of Gaelic followed by English is also used consistently, unlike in Wales where individual councils have been able to choose whether English or Welsh receives prominence. The standardisation of names has become the responsibility of the Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba (Gaelic Place-Names of Scotland) partnership, which represents in itself an important official recognition of the value of place-name studies.

Nova Scotia's first bilingual street signs featuring Gaelic were installed in the early 1960s, initially with significant errors in Gaelic spelling (see Puzey 2010 for a further exploration of the official use of Gaelic place-names in Nova Scotia). Bilingual street signs are still present, in for example in the university town of Antigonish, with the earlier mistakes now corrected. Recently, however, Gaelic has begun to be taken much more seriously by the provincial authorities. In May 2006, Nova Scotia's Department of Transportation and Public Works announced that bilingual English/Gaelic community boundary signs

would be allowed in seven counties, when community councils there requested them. Good contacts between the Nova Scotia Office of Gaelic Affairs and the Transportation Department have ensured that there have been no apparent problems or delays in installing these new signs, and the Minister for Gaelic Affairs, Angus MacIsaac, has said that he has not received any complaints about the signs.

Why have these signs not been as controversial? Part of the answer could lie in respect for multilingualism arising from Canada's national policy of bilingualism. French can be seen in the linguistic landscape at federal institutions in Nova Scotia and in the Acadian communities around the province. Where there has been debate, however, it has concerned the choice of which Gaelic names to use on signs, such as in the Cape Breton town of Inverness (officially *An Sithean* in Gaelic, 'the small hill' or 'the fairy hill'). A local journalist objected to this name as it did not 'translate' into *Inverness*. The town's Gaelic name is, however, by all accounts a fully authentic name used by early settlers. The settlement was known in English as *Broad Cove* until 1904, when the county name of *Inverness* was transferred to the incorporated town (Rayburn 1999: 177).



Name sign in Cape Breton

The officialisation of the Gaelic toponymicon through the linguistic landscape, both in Scotland and Nova Scotia, is certainly an indication of growing respect for the language and a recognition of the right people have to using their own place-names. Crucially, it plays a major role in raising awareness about this minority language: getting people talking more about Gaelic is a vital step towards getting more people talking in Gaelic.

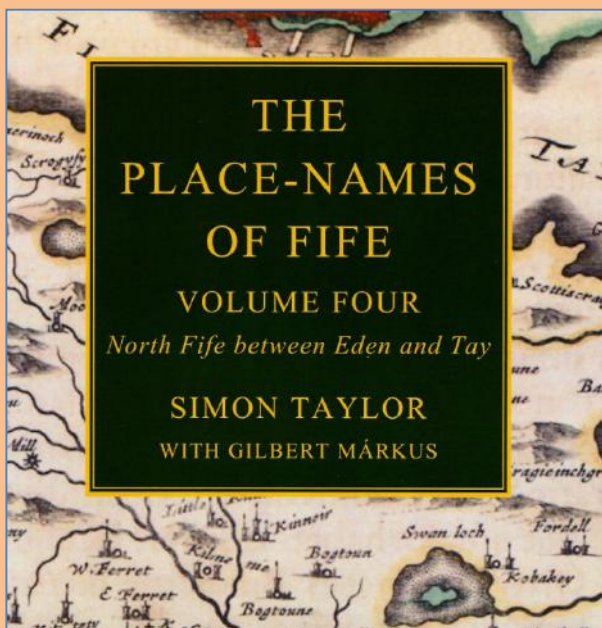
Guy Puzey, University of Edinburgh

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'The Place-Names of Fife'

has now reached Volume 4 of the set of five, completing geographical coverage with 'North Fife between Eden and Tay'. It contains xii + 748 pages, with index, and is a cloth-bound hardback. The book has been generously subsidised by the Scottish Place-Name Society and the publisher, Shaun Tyas, is pleased to offer members a special discount. The normal retail price is £24, but members can buy Volume 4 at **£22 post-free** (or £25 if buying from overseas). For your copy, send a cheque to 'Shaun Tyas', at 1 High Street, Donington, Lincolnshire, PE11 4TA, or telephone on 01775 821542 to use a Visa or Mastercard credit card. You can also email on pwatkins@pwatkinspublishing.fsnet.co.uk.

SILI NAME TO BE DUMPED

Residents of the village of Sili near Cardiff (English version: Sully) have voted for a name change because the current title leaves them exposed to ridicule.

Apparently there have been one too many jokes about the name, leading to a ballot in which locals favoured Abersili as a replacement.

Resident Andrew Marsh said: "Whoever comes to the village sees that they are coming to a place called Sili. Many people think that is just a bit silly."

In support of its successful campaign for the change the local residents' association had argued: "The Welsh name Abersili is derived from its situation at the mouth of the rivulet Sili. Sully is perhaps a corruption of Sili, hissing water; or of Sylwy (syl – *sylhi*, to gaze; and *wy*, water). Some think the word is the Norse for ploughed island, and others think it is a modified form of Sulwy or Sule, a woman's name. Support our view that the Welsh name should be changed to what it should be, Abersili not Sili."

Thanks to Simon Taylor for passing on this very serious information.

DATABASE PROJECT ON TOPONYMIC HYPOCORISMS

As part of English Language Day on 13 October last year, the English Project and Ordnance Survey launched Location Lingo, an interactive project which aims to uncover the nicknames, pet names and hate-names which people use in their daily lives for familiar places. "The name that people conjure up or create for a place forms an emotional connection", explained Winchester University's Professor Bill Lucas, a patron of the English Project. "So Basingstoke becomes Amazingstoke, Swindon is known as Swindump and Padstow, home town of chef Rick Stein, is nicknamed Padstein."

In comments on this item on a BBC website it was claimed that the more usual names for Basingstoke were less complimentary – Basingrad and Boringstoke. Similarly St Austell in Cornwall is St Awful, south London's East Dulwich is Dull Eastwich, Byfleet is Fleabite, and Eastleigh should start with a B. Weston-super-Mud is a less pretentious description of the Somerset resort than the official 'super-Mare'. Kent's Isle of Thanet is Planet Fanet, from the local accent, and South Yorkshire's not

yet world-famous Wath-upon-Deerne is Where-upon-Earth. The short form of Skelmersdale in Lancashire, Skem, has on the other hand achieved semi-official recognition in its use on motorway direction signs.

The place called in Irish Doire Cholmcille is well known as Stroke City, not from any unfortunate medical predisposition but as an ironic comment on the 'Londonderry-stroke-Derry' apocryphally spoken, out of political correctness, to avoid offence to either loyalists or nationalists. I can well believe that East Kilbride besides being EK is also called Polo Mint City from its 80 or so roundabouts (has anyone counted them?). After having to stay several days in the place my desperation to see a straight road became such that the short trip to Hamilton town centre was like entering an oasis from a desert. As for the Whirlies Roundabout in EK, is this a modern allusion to drivers who orbit round it without ever achieving escape velocity, or is it the latest disguise of an ancient place?

[WP: *thanks to Peter McNiven for drawing attention to the press release on the project.*]

Issue 31 will include details of two 12-page A5 booklets on **Fife place-name walks**, each taking about three hours, around **Markinch** and **Aberdour**. The booklets (see Bibliography, under 'Taylor, Simon') are obtainable free, by sending a stamped addressed C5 envelope to the author at 7 Seaside Place, Aberdour, Fife KY3 0TX.

IAN KEILLAR

Ian Keillar, who died on 16 October 2010 aged 85, was a member and staunch supporter of the Scottish Place-Name Society since its inception. We greatly appreciated his help in organising the Society conference held in his home town of Elgin in 2008 and were pleased that he agreed to present a paper on some of his own research into the four cathedrals in Moray and their Gaelic place-names, with the quirky title 'Speak weel o the hielands and live in the laich'.

Ian retired in 1987 and since that date spent much of his time promoting interest in the archaeology of the region where he lived, uncovering substantial evidence of human activity in the area, especially from later pre-history, as Fraser Hunter's detailed obituary published in the Scotsman (8 Nov. 2010) indicated. The Pictish monastery at Tarbat and the Iron Age power centre of Birnie received particular mention.

The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland awarded its prestigious Dorothy Marshall Medal to Ian in 2007 for his 'outstanding contribution in a voluntary capacity to Scottish archaeology'. Ian is survived by his wife, Kerstin, and their three children and we extend our deep sympathy to them.

Doreen Waugh (on behalf of SPNS Committee)

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

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The **SPNS Spring 2011 conference** takes place on Saturday 7 May in Troon, Ayrshire. *Details on flier with this Newsletter.* The **Autumn 2011 conference** will be on 5 November in Dingwall.

This year's spring conference of the **Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland** will be on 15-18 April at the University of Kent, Canterbury. The subjects of talks include 'Scottish hagio-toponyms'. To see the programme go to <http://www.snsbi.org.uk/> and click 'Future'.

