

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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The Newsletter of the
SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY
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Productive arable farmland at Linkfield near Airth, in the Carse of Stirling; the Ochil Hills are on the northern horizon. In an article in this issue, the last before the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn on 24 June 1314, John Reid revisits the popular belief that the setting for the battle was conditioned by the whole of the Carse of Stirling, the stretch of low ground along the southern side of the Forth from Stirling south-east towards Falkirk, being a wild, impassable, peaty morass. The evidence of place-names and medieval charters, including royal grants to important abbeys and references to large amounts of grain being grown, shows that although there were some areas of peat moss much of the Carse by the late 13th century would in early summer have looked more like this recent scene than like any kind of untamed wetland. (Photo: John Reid)

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COMMENT

A recent source of much delight was to explore the website on 'Ghana Place Names – a tropical toponymy':-

<https://sites.google.com/site/ghanaplacenames/home>

The situation in Ghana, with its scores of distinct albeit nearly all related languages, and the later start of written recording of names, is of course vastly different from ours. Yet in this website we can instantly recognise our shared fascination for explaining the origins and history of names – though probably many of us would find it hard to follow the advice of the Ashanti proverb "One does not go to another's village and tell him its origin". Perhaps acknowledging this convention, the site is keen to invite information and suggestions from towns and villages around the country, not least in northern parts with languages least familiar to researchers based in the capital Accra.

The site, still 'under construction', is clearly organised and pleasingly presented, with ample illustrations. The data base section, divided by region, gives access to an enormous amount of information already, though many listed place-names evidently await entries on history and etymology. It is notable that as well as familiar topographical formations like 'river-name + mouth' or 'at a hill' there seems in some areas at least to be a much greater tendency than in Europe to name places with expressions like the optimistic 'all will be well', the disturbing 'the slaves died', or the memorably comic *Mayera*, 'I have got lost'. There are some amusing quirks, such as a challenge to find Ghana's longest place-name, and facts likely to surprise many of

us, like 17th century Sweden's part in the slave trade while the Brandenburg Africa Company uniquely had a trading base but forbade its use for shipping slaves; or that Ghana's seat of government, now commonly called 'The Castle', was founded by Danish colonists under the name Christiansborg; can we look forward to a Ghanaian remake of *Borgen*? In sections on historic background the many accounts of enforced or opportunistic migrations of kin groups are reminiscent of stories set in early medieval Ireland.

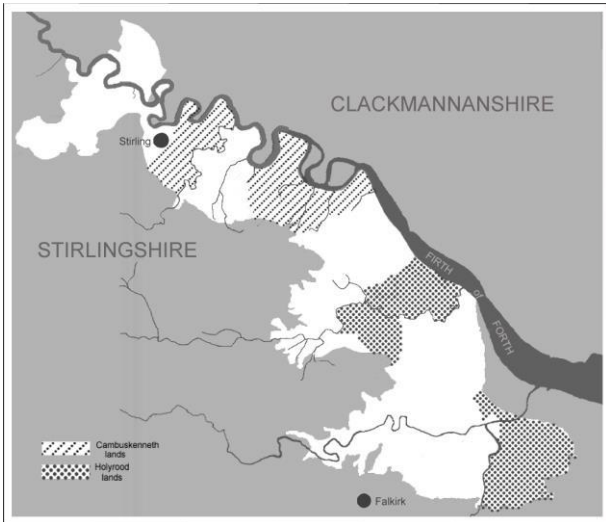
An online excursion to equatorial west Africa, by means of this very attractive site, is strongly recommended as a 'compare and contrast' foil for our more usual toponymic interests.

THE CARSE OF STIRLING IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

The year 2014 will mark the seven hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. Sixteen years earlier, and some ten miles to the south, the Battle of Falkirk was fought. Given their significance, it is remarkable that the locations of both are unknown. Bannockburn has been given the greater attention of historians, many of whom have spent a considerable amount of energy in trying to establish where it took place. In the process of doing so many seized upon details written by the chroniclers in Latin or Norman-French and then applied misleading interpretations to these. Where they have most frequently erred is in their perception of the tract of land known as the Carse which they portray as a place of wetlands interrupted only by bogs and marshes all overlain with peat moss. My recent presentation to the SPNS conference was not an attempt to locate the site of either battle; the intention was to try to create a picture of the Carse of Stirling as it was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The Carse of Stirling is an expanse of alluvial land skirting the upper reaches of the Firth of Forth. At a period prior to the thirteenth century much of that area had been Crownland. From the twelfth century onwards several monastic institutions received gifts from the crown and individual possessors of lands in the tract in question. Most prominent among these were the Abbeys of Cambuskenneth, Holyrood, Dunfermline and Newbattle. They, along with

the abbeys of Arbroath, Jedburgh and Kelso as well as the Temple of Ballentrodock, were also gifted salt pans at the southern end of the tract. This situation poses questions: why did the Scottish monarchy possess a huge tract of what, allegedly, was extremely low quality land as a source of revenue; why did several members of the nobility, landed gentry and persons of prominence choose to possess property there; why did many of them, including all of the kings from at least David I, make gifts of this supposedly grossly inferior land to the monastic institutions?



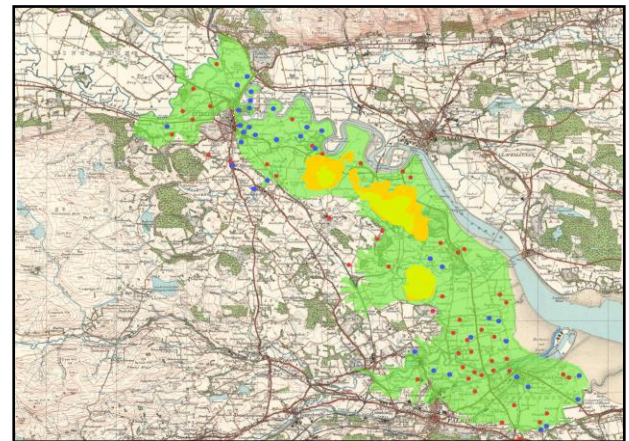
Gifts to Cambuskenneth Abbey (the two northern areas) and Holyrood Abbey (the two southern areas)

One of the tools used in this reconstruction was the study of place-names and two groups of places were identified: all of the Celtic names on record there on the assumption that they were coined prior to 1298 and place-names in English on record up to the end of the fourteenth century. These were located on a distribution map and it became evident that the pattern was uneven with some apparently unoccupied areas. The location and extent of mid-eighteenth century peat-mosses delineated on the Military Survey were inserted and these proved to correspond to the deserted areas. Even the most cursory look at any existing peat moss, such as Flanders Moss, shows that place-names do not occur within their extent.

Included within the lands of Skeoch which lies contiguous with the village of Bannockburn was a peat-moss. It was still in existence in the eighteenth century and appears on General Roy's Military Survey. There are a number of place-names on its periphery: Moss-side, Moss Neuk and two places called Risk and each of these is an indicator of the moss having been more extensive on its northern perimeter at an

earlier period. We can push the utilisation of this moss back to before the Battle of Bannockburn as, in 1317, Robert the Bruce reconfirmed to the burgesses of Stirling an ancient privilege of cutting peat there. It would seem logical to assume that the nearest peatery to Stirling would be allocated. If we take the distance from Stirling to the moss and use this length as the radius to describe a containing circle it is apparent that there are no overt indications of other mosses situated upon the lands within its compass.

There is a paucity of *baile* and *achadh* names within the tract despite the presence of a conspicuous number of Gaelic and pre-Gaelic place-names. The absence should not be taken to indicate an insignificant quantity of Gaelic speaking people but what may be inferred is that the area was already settled and occupied at the time when Gaelic began to have an influence on the naming of places there.



The Carse of Stirling with surviving areas of moss (yellow-green) and other areas of moss on the mid 18th century military survey by General Roy (orange). Red dots Celtic place-names; blue dots Scots/English

The existence of the Mains and Grange of Kerse in the middle of the fourteenth century is an unequivocal indication that grain was being produced in Abbotskerse at that time. Within an enclave in the adjoining estate of West Kerse were the Temple Lands of Dalderse granted about 1200. Later charters reveal that a privilege pertaining to this entity was pasturage for 12 cattle, 60 sheep and two horses; had the Temple lands been uncultivated with only pastoral farming being practised then there would have been no necessity for this concession. Similarly, within the lands of Bothkennar was a place called Cold Kitchen, the second element of name having originated from Gaelic *coitchionn*, 'a common pasture'. The necessity for a discreet area to herd animals implies that arable farming

was being practised in the immediate vicinity at the time Gaelic was spoken there. Certainly, by the time of the battles, we find accounts within the Exchequer Rolls that show large quantities of wheat and other grains being grown at Bothkennar. Tiends paid in kind from the produce of the land also indicate arable activity on a substantial scale in most of the holdings on the carse. In 1215, the monks of Dunfermline agreed to make an annual payment to the nuns of North Berwick of 3 chalders of oatmeal from the tiend of Cornton and the same monks were receiving corn tiends from Polmaise Weland, Polmaise Elwyn, Craigforth, Shiphrauch, Balquhiddelock and Skeoch. The abbot of Cambuskenneth received oatmeal from the tiend of Polmaise Regis. Records also exist for payments of cash from properties on the carselands and these provide a picture of a community operating well above the level of subsistence farming.

This summary is a reduced account of an article following on from the presentation and published in Calatria No. 30 (Falkirk Local History Society – <http://www.falkirklocalhistorysociety.co.uk/>).

Nevertheless, even within the present constraints, it is possible to recognise that the long held view of the mediaeval Carse of Stirling being a morass is a myth and, in view of that, the parameters in the search for the battlefields should be reviewed.

John Reid (from his talk at the autumn 2013 conference in Stirling)

SOCA DE STRUDELIN: place-names in the medieval soke or shire of Stirling

This study of the area around Stirling grew out of the *Scottish Toponymy in Transition* project at the University of Glasgow. Part of this project involves looking at the place-names of Clackmannanshire, as well as Kinross-shire and Menteith. The problem with studying a county like Clackmannanshire is that the modern day county does not match the medieval or early modern definition of Clackmannanshire. The parish of Alva, although almost completely surrounded by Clackmannanshire, was historically in Stirlingshire and only came into Clackmannanshire as part of the 1891 reorganisation of Scottish local authorities. Much more complex is the parish of Logie, just over the River Forth to the north of Stirling. Here

the parish was divided between the counties of Clackmannanshire, Perthshire and Stirlingshire, although before 1600 the vast majority of Logie can be shown to have been in Stirlingshire.

The *soke* of Stirling, mentioned in the reign of Alexander I (1107-24), was a fairly large unit of lordship, which was probably part of the king's demesne lands that stretched across both sides of the River Forth near Stirling. This is later said in the reign of Malcolm IV (1153-1165), to have been the *Castrensis Provincia* 'the castle province'. The parishes of Logie and Alva were probably a northern extension of this *castrensis provincia*, indeed it may have also included Clackmannanshire too before it became a separate sheriffdom sometime between 1141 and 1150. The evidence is not merely secular: the church of St Ninians – originally called Eccles – had a substantial parochia, which was basically the lands north of the River Carron, including the modern parishes of Dunipace, Larbert, Gargunnoch and probably Airth and Bothkennar. Cambuskenneth Abbey was granted the kirk of Eccles in the thirteenth century and it is notable that the kirks of Alva, Tullibody, Tillicoultry and Clackmannan were all granted to Cambuskenneth. This may mean that they, too, were originally chapels of Eccles. If so, then it is likely the *parochia* of Eccles was equivalent to the *soca de Striuelin* and the *castrensis provincia*.

One name that encapsulates the longevity of the time-frame from British to Scots is Bannockburn. The second element is clearly Scots *burn* 'stream' and its Gaelic form may have been *Allt Bannoch* or similar; all over Scotland a great many *allts* have become *burns*. The town of Bannockburn takes its name either from the burn or perhaps from the battle of 1314 fought in the carse just to the north. But what of the *bannock* element? Deriving from a British word meaning 'horn or peak', the word is mentioned in a medieval life of the Welsh saint St Cadoc, the saint behind Kilmadock at Doune, where it is mentioned that Cadoc on returning from a pilgrimage to St Andrews 'had come to a certain city, which is near the mountain Bannawc, and said to be situated in the middle of Scotland'. In the Latin it is called the Montem Bannauc. Looking south from the Menteith Hills, there is, in the middle of the Gargunnoch-Campsie Range, Meikle Bin, a very prominent and pointed 570 metre hill. This hill is visible from other parts of the lowlands, including Glasgow and the surrounding area – precisely the area that was British speaking for longest. The

Bannock Burn is the most prominent burn coming from the Stirling side of these hills.

The medieval church has generated a great number of place-names in Scotland and the Stirling area in no exception to this phenomenon. The earliest seems to be St Ninians or rather its former name *Eccles*. *Eccles* is a British word borrowed from Latin *ecclesia* meaning ‘church’. *Eccles* seems to have been the main church that served what are now the parishes of St Ninians, Stirling, Airth, Bothkennar, Dunipace, Larbert, Gargunnoch, Logie, and Alva. We know for sure that Dunipace, Larbert and Gargunnoch were originally chapels of St Ninians, while Alva and Logie were both originally in Stirlingshire. *Eccles* may have been a minster-type church, of the kind found in Anglo-Saxon England, that served this area until the formation of a more formal network of parish churches usually attributed to the reign of David I. The dedication to St Ninian occurs by 1242, but need not necessarily indicate that it was founded by Ninian, a 5th century holy man apparently based in Whithorn. The lateness of the dedication may mean it is actually of the 13th century.

Another early church term can be found in Logie STL. This is usually found in medieval texts as *Login Atheran*, i.e. Logie Airthrey. Logie is also found all over eastern Scotland. It was originally thought to have been a word derived from Gaelic *lag*, ‘a hollow’, developing from Old Gaelic *loc* ‘a hollow, ditch’. In most instances, Logie is sometimes assumed to be a Scots version of a Gaelic diminutive form, either from G *lagan*, OG *locán*, or sometimes from G *lagaidh*, which was perhaps a locative form of *lagach*, meaning ‘place by or in a hollow’. However, it has recently been put forward that Logie derives from Latin *locus* ‘place, consecrated place, ecclesiastical site’. Because Latin *locus* had been borrowed into all the Celtic languages as *loc* it is not at all clear whether we are dealing here with a Pictish or Gaelic origin for Logie Airthrey. Two hogback-type stones testify to its antiquity.

On the flat carselands of eastern Logie parish there are a group of at least two, possibly three, British-names – Menstrie, Gogar, and Manor. If we can accept that Gaelic was the main language of this area from say 900 AD or so, then these names are very old indeed. Menstrie first comes on record in 1178-79 when a Macbeth of Menstrie witnessed a charter of Cambuskenneth. The name appears to contain the British elements *maes* + *tref* meaning ‘hamlet on the

plain’, which more than adequately describes its situation. Gogar does not come on record until about 1538 when it is listed among the lands belonging to Culross Abbey. It seems to contain Brit. *gwo* and *cor* meaning ultimately a ‘spur’. Manor, on record from about 1479, may contain Brit. *maenor*, meaning ‘the stone built residence of the chief of a district’.

There are two *pit*-names in Logie parish – Pendreich and a now lost place-name called Pitveys. Pendreich is first known as *Petendreich* from 1393 to 1472 leave no doubt that it is a *pit*-name; the second element is Gaelic *dreach* ‘face, aspect’. Watson notes that all the places in Scotland containing this name appear on sun-facing slopes. Pendreich in Logie parish has fantastic views across the valley of Menteith over to Ben Lomond and the south-western Highlands. *Pitveys* is much more problematic. We know from charters and such documents that it lay somewhere just to the north of Logie Kirk, near the house of Broomhill. Gaelic *uamb* ‘cave’ for the second element has been suggested, but this is not an area where one would expect to find natural caves, the bedrock being lava.

I showed that the place-names around Stirling are complex, and my bias towards Logie parish demonstrated that more research is need into Stirling and its district south of the Forth. While much has been done on Stirlingshire, especially by John Reid, there remain ten parishes still to complete...!

Peter McNiven (based on his talk at Stirling)

**“HENCE THE NAME”:
*Berwickshire parishes along the
Anglo-Scottish border as described in
the Ordnance Survey Name Books***

The paper at the Stirling conference highlighted the wealth of information for place-name analysis that is contained within the Ordnance Survey Name Books (OSNBs). While its focus was on five Berwickshire (BWK) parishes along the Anglo-Scottish Border (namely Mordington, Hutton, Ladykirk, Coldstream and Eccles), it also drew on records from the OSNBs of other counties, in particular Clackmannanshire and Fife, to enable contrasts and comparisons to be made.

The OSNBs are not a uniform source: there is variation between different counties and even within counties regarding the structure of the

forms that were being completed and the information recorded by the staff of the Ordnance Survey in their work to establish the orthography of place-names for the first edition maps. For example, whereas the Fife OSNBs, compiled in the early 1850s, contain six columns, those for Berwickshire (1856–8) and Clackmannanshire (1861–2) have a more concise five-column format. There can be striking differences in cases where the same place-name overlaps county or parish boundaries; one example being that of *Foulbutts Bridge* also known as *Lilly's Bridge* straddling the parishes of Saline FIF and Clackmannan CLA. Only in the OSNB for Saline parish do we learn that the alternative name arose ‘from the circumstances of a woman named Lilly Ramsay having hanged herself near it’.

The Berwickshire OSNBs record the names of the surveyors in contrast to the Fife and Clackmannanshire name books. Nine different surveyors worked on Eccles parish; 7 in Coldstream; 3 in Ladykirk; 7 in Hutton; and 6 in Mordington, with overlap in personnel between these parishes. John McDiarmid did a lot of work on the coastal areas of Berwickshire (fairly frequently using the phrase ‘hence the name’) and seems to have made an effort to try to find out the meanings of names. John Callanan recorded all the names of the salmon pools along the Tweed but did not include many derivations, one exception being that of *Dreeping Heugh* in Coldstream parish which is described as:

A rocky precipice, and Salmon Cast, situated on the west side of Tweed. The rocks are perpendicular from which water is oozing, hence the Name.

In cases where two different surveyors used different orthography for the same name, we can sometimes get a sense of how the Ordnance Survey dealt with the issue through annotations that were made against the entries in question.

The OSNBs provide information about the local informants that were consulted. For the five BWK Border parishes these range from prominent landowners, ministers and schoolteachers (such as John Logan in Mordington) to tenants, fishermen, gamekeepers and a stud groom. What is notable is how many individual informants there are compared to parishes in Clackmannanshire where the same informants appear several times.

The written sources that are cited as evidence in

the OSNBs of the five BWK parishes along the Border include Johnston’s County Map, estate maps, Fullerton’s *Gazetteer*, Chalmers’ *Caledonia*, Ridpath’s *Border History*, Jamieson’s *Scottish Dictionary*, Burns’ *Glossary*, the Valuation and Cess Roll, title deeds, dedicatory names, sign boards (e.g. Plough Inn, Black Bull Inn), and general usage. Probably the most unusual is for *Spital House* in Hutton parish, the proprietor of which was Revd W. Compton Lundie. One of the sources cited is ‘Painted on Mr Lundie’s carts’.

For toponymists, pronunciations are important and the limitations of the OSNBs in this respect were noted. A contemporary source that is not cited in the OSNBs of the five BWK Border parishes is George Henderson’s *The Popular Rhymes, Sayings and Proverbs of the County of Berwick*, which was published in Newcastle in 1856. Rhymes contained therein can provide useful information about pronunciation and orthography, a good example being:

Ye’re like the folk o’ Kennetside Head,
[Kennetsideheads in Eccles parish]
Ye hae it a’ afore ye in ae screed. [‘screed’ in this context being a strip of ground]

The paper concluded with an investigation of the entry relating to the place-name *the Kaims* in Eccles parish, which appears twice on the OS 6 inch 1st edition – beside Hassington Mains and beside Hardacres to the north-west. It is described in the OSNB for Eccles parish thus:

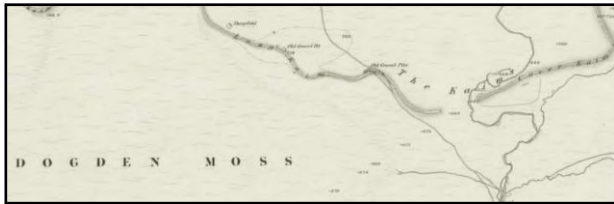
This name, the Scottish term for “the Combs” applies to a long ridge consisting chiefly of waterworn stones, raised several feet above the surface, and passing through the S W part of the parish in a NNW direction. It is evidently of no artificial construction for it varies continually in its elevation and breadth and sometimes disappears underground for several hundred yards. It is supposed that an aqueous current, setting in from the north has at one time connected the German Ocean with the Irish sea, and deposited in its course, the coarse gravel consisting of Graywacke and sometimes a very fine sand forming excellent sandpits as is found in the field south of Hardacres.

Similar and very distinct ridges have also been observed towards the north in the parish of Greenlaw and others, and a continuation of it is also traceable towards the South in the adjoining County of Roxburgh. The whole

feature offers a very interesting investigation for a Geologist.



The Kaims (Eccles), surveyed 1858, published 1862: from NLS online maps



The Kaims (Greenlaw), surveyed 1857, published 1862: from NLS online maps

Annotations on the page, in a different ink, direct us to the OSNB of Greenlaw parish ‘for some interesting correspondence relating to the derivation of this’. The letter in question, dated 27 November 1857, is from David Milne Home of Milne-Graden, an advocate whose geological survey of Berwickshire was published in 1837 and who was president of the Edinburgh Geological Society from 1874 until 1889, to Captain Burnaby, the officer who signed off the five BWK Border OSNBs and indeed others in Berwickshire. It details a visit to the Kaims in Greenlaw parish by David Milne Home, Adam Sedgwick (Woodwardian professor of Geology at Cambridge University, 1818–73) and William Buckland (reader in Geology at Oxford University, canon of Christchurch and Dean of Westminster). The letter alludes to the geological debates of the time regarding the diluvial theory whereby glacial deposits were attributed to Noah’s flood, and serves as another indication of how the Ordnance Survey was working in Scotland and the types of people who were being consulted.

Dr Eila Williamson, University of Glasgow (summarising a talk to the conference at Stirling, 2 November 2013). Dr Williamson is a Research Associate on the AHRC-funded *Scottish Toponymy in Transition* project (www.glasgow.ac.uk/stit). The Ordnance Survey Name Books have been digitised and are now available to view on the ScotlandsPlaces website: www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk.

INFLUENCES ON PERSONAL NAMES IN EARLY MODERN SCOTLAND

This paper at Stirling gave an overview of influences on personal naming in 18th-century Scotland, based on analysis of the baptismal records of four parishes: Beith (Ayrshire), Govan (Lanark), Earlston (Berwickshire), Dingwall (Ross & Cromarty). Records covered the period 1700-1800, and the parishes were chosen to represent a range of linguistic, social, and geographic variables. These results are based on 24325 baptismal records, which were collated into 7734 familial units (each comprising father, mother, and children).

The first half of the paper investigated the ‘traditional Scottish naming pattern’: there is a widespread belief (e.g. Durie 2009) that Scottish children were named in a specific pattern, especially during the early modern period. This pattern is usually stated to be as follows: first son named after paternal grandfather, second son for maternal grandfather, third son for father, with a similar pattern for daughters (Cory 1990: 68). However, evidence for this pattern was limited and purely qualitative, meaning the sources’ claims that the pattern was in widespread use were unsubstantiated.

Using quantitative, comprehensive analysis of four parishes, I demonstrated that the pattern was not in widespread use. Two methods of analysis were used. Firstly, 50 familial groups were linked to at least one set of grandparents. Of these, 62% did not follow the pattern and, for the remainder, pattern usage could not be known. Secondly, as the pattern dictated the third child of each sex should take the parent’s name, the larger families were analysed for the existence of parent-child name-sharing. After analysing 1745 families, it was estimated that 58.42% of larger families were not following the naming pattern. The number of families using the pattern is also likely to be significantly lower than the remaining 41.58%: it is possible that the presence of parent-child name-sharing is due to the relatively small name-stock and subsequent lack of choice, or to a decision to name a child for the parent but not specifically to follow the pattern.

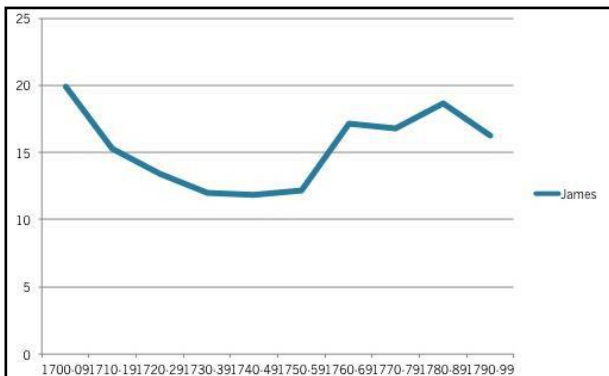
The second part of the paper discussed some of the many other possible influences on naming, including:

- naming for relatives

- substitution (naming after a deceased sibling)
- naming for godparents
- naming for important townsfolk
- significant historical events.

Although the majority of children were not named according to a specific pattern, it was rare to find a family where at least one child did not share a name with a relative, whether within the immediate or extended family. Name-sharing occurred most often between child and parent or grandparent, but name-sharing with aunts, uncles, and deceased elder siblings was also found.

In some cases, the evidence suggested that the child had been named after the godparent. Other children were named after an influential member of society, with several being baptised with the surname of a local landowner and others potentially taking the name of the minister. However, despite some children being named for godparents or influential townsfolk, the data overall suggested that it was most important to name for relatives, particularly parents and grandparents. Thus, although the specific naming pattern was not in widespread use, many children were named after family members; they were simply not named for them in the order dictated by the pattern.



The changing fortunes of James in 18th century Earlstoun

Finally, I suggested the possibility of opinion on public figures and events also having an effect on naming. In Earlstoun, the popularity of *James* dropped considerably in the 1710s and again in the 1740s, before recovering in the 1760s (see Figure 1). As these downward trends coincide with the Jacobite rebellions in 1715 and 1745-6, the decline in usage may be a reflection of local opinion on the Jacobite movement. I plan to continue in this line of research, and hopefully discover yet another influence on Scottish naming.

Alice Crook

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‘...A HUGELY INFORMATIVE AND SUPERB BOOK...’

A comprehensive field guide to the Gaelic landscape by John Murray will be published during April. This is a must for anyone interested in the Scottish Highlands and its ancient tongue and will help people read and understand the Highland landscape through place names. Places, ecology and landscape history are given a Gaelic dimension through place-naming and will enrich the experience of walkers, climbers, sailors and outdoor enthusiasts.

Readers will learn about diverse aspects of place and how these have been recorded, through a deeper understanding of a language, specific to the landscape of the Scottish Highlands, and unique in its perception of that landscape.

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BOOK REVIEW

Fife Place Name Limericks, Helena Nelson, HappenStance, Glenrothes, Fife (2013).

Poet and publisher Helena Nelson describes the background to this delightful and amusing little book on her HappenStancepress.com website as follows: ‘Back in the early 1990s, the Fife Library service launched a competition. Entrants were invited to create a limerick celebrating any local place name. I had always liked limericks. Over the next six weeks, I submitted thirty or forty entries (there was no limit), some of them cheeky, others naughty, and some extremely polite. None of them won the competition.[¹] But never mind. The seed was sown. Decades later, some of those limericks have matured into a pocket-sized booklet of whimsical rhymes, a fanfare for the towns and villages of Fife. It is a bit of fun, suitable for young and old, with a few footnote facts about the places it celebrates.’

¹ I wonder what the winning entry was?

It contains 25 limericks, each dedicated to one Fife place-name (though one limerick manages to squeeze in Ballingry, Glenraig, Lochore, Crosshill and Crossgates). The challenge of fitting names such as Inverkeithing, Cowdenbeath, Windygates and Balmerino into the tight rhyming scheme of the limerick would be daunting to many, but Nelson is fearless. The results are always amusing, though sometimes the challenge is met by some bold linguistic manipulation, as in:

A sheep-farmer grazing near Cambo
declined to say 'lamb'. He said 'lambo'.
He spoke not a lotto
but this was his motto:
Each ram, if well-bung, may be Rambo.

This is a good example of what I would term the random limerick, in which meaning is completely subordinated to rhyme, well instanced by the 'original' Fife limerick by Edward Lear:

There was an old person of Fife,
Who was greatly disgusted with life;
They sang him a ballad,
And fed him on salad,
Which cured that old person of Fife.

However, as is also pointed out in the *Happenstance* Press blurb, the bottom line is that they always serve as guide to the local pronunciation of the place-name itself, as in:

The light on the beach at East Wemyss,²
said an artist, 'is gorgeous. It seems
to grow more divine
with each bottle of wine
and after two bottles, it steams.'

Although it should be noted that in the sky-diving Freuchie limerick, nookie and stookie are not what are termed 'full rhymes' – see <http://prezi.com/dulgqbcjcf9h/fife-place-name-limericks/> for the gory details!

There is another group, however, which manages to incorporate clever rhymes with aspects of the place in question, its history and sometimes even its meaning. or example:

Sailing from South to North Queensferry
was once a most-picturesque-scenes
ferry.
It's road, air or rail
today – you can't sail.
The crossing is just a has-beens-ferry.

This reminds me of a sign which used to – and may still – grace the Strathcarron to Kyle of

Lochalsh road, on which is written: 'Stromeferry – No Ferry'.

Another of the limericks which manages to combine clever rhyme with local information is:

A saddler who lived in Lochgelly
was famous from here to New Delhi.
What was the cause?
He created 'the tawse' –
and terror turned children to jelly.

It is a small-format book, on each page one limerick with a brief note on the place itself, as well as a charming and relevant little line-drawing by Gillian Rose. It even contains on the back page a wee map of 'the kingdom of fife', showing all the places lucky enough to have received their own limerick.

Available for £3 from *Happenstance* <happenstancepress.com>

Simon Taylor

G W S BARROW,
Honorary Preses of SPNS:
A toponymic tribute by Simon Taylor

On 14th December 2013 the death occurred of Professor Geoffrey Barrow at his home in Edinburgh at the age of 89. His qualities and achievements as one of the greatest of all Scottish medieval historians have been justly praised and enumerated by David Torrance in an obituary, which appeared in the *Herald* on 20th December, and by Dauvit Broun in a warm appreciation, which appeared in the same paper on 30th January last.² Neither mentions specifically Geoffrey's remarkable contribution to the study and understanding of Scottish place-names, nor to the fact that he was Honorary preses of the Scottish Place-Name Society.

Geoffrey (often referred to affectionately as GWSB, the initials of his full name, Geoffrey Barrow) and the other great Scottish place-name scholar, W. F. H. (Bill) Nicolaisen, each generously agreed to take on the important titular role of preses when the Society was launched in 1996. *Preses* (plural *presides*), a Scots loan-word from Latin *praeses*, means 'chief, president', chosen because it was less Clan-like than the first and less formal than the second, the cognate 'president'. That both Geoffrey and

² Both of these are available online on the *Herald* website. Note that the obituary, when accessed on 2nd March 2014, had the date of death erroneously as 16th December.

Bill enthusiastically accepted this role was an important vote of confidence from the academic establishment in the Society in its still very uncertain infancy. Geoffrey spoke at the conference 'Uses of Place-Names', which was held in St Andrews in 1995, at which the decision to found SPNS was taken, and his paper 'The Uses of Place-names and Scottish History - Pointers and Pitfalls' went on to be published as one of the most important chapters in the edited proceedings of that conference in 1998 (see Bibliography, below, for full details). Over the years Geoffrey attended many of the SPNS conferences, both as part of the audience and as a speaker. His benign presence and apposite, informed and perceptive contributions enriched both formal and informal discussion. One of his last papers of all was on the lost place-names of Moray, which he delivered at the SPNS conference in Elgin in May 2008, and which appeared with this title in the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* in the same year. He declared it his last published article, which it was.

His engagement with Scottish place-names went back much further than the 1990s, however. Early on in his long career he came to realise how important place-names were in understanding the pre-documentary and early documentary period of Scottish history. Place-names were an integral part of one of his most important and influential pieces of writing, the first chapter of *The Kingdom of the Scots*, first published in 1973, 'pre-feudal Scotland: shires and thanes', singled out by Dauvit Broun as 'not only a tour de force of early medieval scholarship, but ... hugely influential on the way historical geographers and archaeologists as well as social historians have thought about early British society' (*Herald* 'Appreciation' 30 Jan. 2014). In this chapter the evidence of place-names, some of it presented in the form of place-name maps, was marshalled to great effect to throw light on early administration and administrative units, and may be seen as one of the game-changers in Scottish toponymics. GWSB 'Popular Courts in Early Medieval Scotland: Some Suggested Place-Name Evidence', 1981 and 1992); the pre-documentary history of Christianity in Scotland ('The Childhood of Scottish Christianity: a Note on Some Place-Name Evidence', 1983, and 'Religion in Scotland on the eve of Christianity', 1998),³ 'Land Routes: The Medieval Evidence'

³ This latter is a discussion and analysis of so-called *nemeton*-names, with the salient points, as well as a

1984, 1992) and fine-grained socio-linguistic history ('The Lost Gàidhealtachd of medieval Scotland', 1989, 1992). Each one of these may be regarded as the bedrock of all future scholarly investigation of these different aspects of toponymics, with each standing as eloquent and inspirational testimony for how much the careful study of place-names can bring to the wider disciplines of social, political and linguistic history.

My own personal scholarly debt to GWSB is immense. He co-supervised my PhD, which was on aspects of the place-names of Fife (1995). As part of the supervision process he provided me with a swathe of his unpublished charter transcriptions, which not only informed my thesis but also went on to enrich in multifarious ways all the volumes of *Place-Names of Fife*. He took a lively and encouraging interest in these volumes as they emerged over the period between 2006 and 2012, and I would regularly receive hand-written letters, with their hall-mark Scottish lion-rampant stamps, containing expressions of appreciation along with acute observations and difficult questions. I received the last one of these letters only two months before his death.

I will end this short tribute with a select bibliography of Geoffrey's more important toponymic works. This list is not in any way exhaustive, either absolutely or even in toponymic terms, and does not take into consideration his fundamentally important editions of royal charters (David I, Malcolm IV and William I), as well as other edited collections, relating mainly to Fife. All these provide early forms of place-names, reliably transcribed, edited and located. A complete bibliography of his work up until the end of 1992 can be found in his Festschrift *Medieval Scotland, Crown, Lordship and Community*, edited by Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh 1993), the bibliography itself compiled by his daughter, Julia Barrow. According to the Bibliography of British and Irish History (BBIH) another 32 items were written by him between 1993 and 2008.

Barrow, G. W. S., 1959, 'Trevelen, Duddingston and Arthur's Seat', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* 30, 1-9.

Barrow, G. W. S., 1980, *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History* (Oxford) [important

distribution map, contained in his 'Uses of Place-names and Scottish History' article, which appeared in the same year.

discussions of personal names in place-names, especially in Scotland south of the Forth-Clyde line; also a useful list of the earliest Scots ('Middle English') words, several embedded in place-names, from Scottish charters before c.1250, chiefly from 'non-English-speaking districts' (Appendix C)]

Barrow, G. W. S., 1981, 'Popular Courts in Early Medieval Scotland: Some Suggested Place-Name Evidence', *Scottish Studies* 25, 1-23 [see also Barrow 1983a and 1992]

Barrow, G.W.S., 1983, 'The Childhood of Scottish Christianity: a Note on Some Place-Name Evidence', *Scottish Studies* 27, 1-15.

Barrow, G. W. S., 1983a, 'Popular Courts in Early Medieval Scotland: Some Suggested Place-Name Evidence – Additional Note', *Scottish Studies* 27, 67–8 [see also Barrow 1992].

Barrow, G. W. S., 1984, 'Land Routes: The Medieval Evidence', in *Loads and Roads in Scotland and Beyond*, edd. A. Fenton and G. Stell (Edinburgh), 49-66 [also in Barrow 1992, 201-16, entitled simply 'Land Routes'].

Barrow, G. W. S., 1988, 'Tannochbrae and all that: "Tamhnach" (Tannoch etc.) in Scottish placenames as an indicator of early Gaelic-speaking settlement', in *A Sense of Place: Studies in Scottish Local History (A Tribute to Eric Forbes)*, ed. G. Cruickshank (Edinburgh: Scotland's Cultural Heritage), 1-4.

Barrow, G. W. S., 1989, 'The Lost Gàidhealtachd of medieval Scotland', in *Gaelic and Scotland/Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig*, ed. W. Gillies (Edinburgh), 67-88 [also in Barrow 1992, 105-26].

Barrow, G. W.S., 1992, *Scotland and its Neighbours in the Middle Ages* (London) [Chapter 'Popular Courts' (217-45) amalgamates Barrow 1981 and 1983a; contains also Barrow 1984 and 1989]

Barrow, G.W.S., 1993, 'The Anglo-Scottish Border: Growth and Structure in the Middle Ages', in *Grenzen und Grenzregionen; Frontières et régions frontalières; Borders and Border Regions*, edd. W. Haubrichs and R. Schneider (Saarbrücken), 197-212. [210-12 for discussion of close correlation between distribution of Ingliston and mottes, with distribution map p. 212]

Barrow, G.W.S. 1998, 'The Uses of Place-names and Scottish History - Pointers and Pitfalls', in *The Uses of Place-Names*, ed. S. Taylor (Edinburgh), 54–74.

Barrow, G. W. S. 1998a, 'Religion in Scotland on the eve of Christianity' in *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte*, ed. K. Borchart and E. Bünz, Part 1 (Stuttgart), 25-32 [nemeton-names; discussed in detail also in Barrow 1998]

Barrow, G. W. S., 1999, 'French after the Style of Petithachengon', in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland: Essays Presented to Donald Watt on the Occasion of the Completion of the Publication of Bower's Scotichronicon*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (Edinburgh), 187-93.

Barrow, G. W. S., 2008, 'The Lost Place-names of Moray', *JSNS* 2, 11–18.

The **Scottish Local History Forum** has launched 'Clish-Clash', a two-monthly e-newsletter containing news and information about forthcoming events:- <http://slhf.org/newsletter>.

Contributions are invited, through a 'Contact' link on the site.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The **SPNS Spring 2014 conference** will take place at the Town House, Dunbar, East Lothian, on Saturday 3rd May. *Details on flier with this Newsletter*. The Autumn 2014 conference will be at Coatbridge on Saturday 1st November.

The **SNSBI** (Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland) has its 2014 spring conference at Gregynog, Newtown, Powys, from Friday 4 April to Monday 7 April. Further information through <http://www.snsbi.org.uk/>.

The **Scottish Society for Northern Studies** has arranged a residential conference in Ulster, for 8-12 April 2014. Details at <http://www.ssns.org.uk/>.

The triennial **World Congress of Onomastic Sciences** will be held at the University of Glasgow from Monday 25 August to Friday 29 August 2014. Details are available online at <http://icos2014.com>.

The Place-Names of Fife, by Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus

In five volumes; normally £24 each incl. UK p&p, but £22 to SPNS members. Contact Shaun Tyas at 01775 821542, by e-mail to pwatkins@pwatkinspublishing.fsnet.co.uk, or by writing (with cheque to 'Shaun Tyas') to 1 High Street, Donington, Lincolnshire PE11 4TA.

BOOKS FROM SPNS

In the Beginning was the Name Selected Essays by Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen

393 pages; price £12.00 plus P&P.
For further information on this wide-
ranging selection of essays by a pre-
eminent scholar, and how to order it,
please see the Scottish Place-Name
Society website:

<http://www.spns.org.uk/IBWNorderform.html>

Cultural Contacts in the North Atlantic Region: The Evidence of Names

edited by Peder Gammeltoft, Carole
Hough and Doreen Waugh
To clear remaining stocks, the price of
this volume is now £5.00, plus £2.50
postage and packing (UK only). Please
send a cheque payable to SCOTTISH
PLACE-NAME SOCIETY to: Professor
Carole Hough, English Language,
University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ

ATTENTION ALL STUDENTS!

Grants of up to £125 for students of
onomastics to attend conferences are still
available from the

CULTURAL CONTACTS FUND – information from

[http://www.spns.org.uk/News09.html#Cultural
Contacts Fund](http://www.spns.org.uk/News09.html#Cultural%20Contacts%20Fund) or the current
coordinator of the steering committee,
Professor Carole Hough:
carole.hough@glasgow.ac.uk.

Some of the proceeds from sales of 'In the
Beginning was the Name' are being used to
fund an annual

NICOLAISEN ESSAY PRIZE

of £75 in honour of our Honorary President,
Professor Bill Nicolaisen. Students are
invited to submit original work of around
5,000 words on any onomastic topic by the
deadline of 31 December. Submissions
should be sent electronically to the Society's
Convener, Carole Hough, at
carole.hough@glasgow.ac.uk.

The winner will also be invited to give a
paper at an SPNS conference.

ANCIENT BATTLES, NEW LOCATIONS?

Two of the early medieval battles whose locations
are most keenly debated are *Degsastan* (603) and
Brunanburh (937). Both of these forms appear in
English sources, and both battles involved major
setbacks for kings from north of the Forth and
Clyde on military expeditions further south. –*stān*
as 'stone' (most likely a standing stone) and –*burh*
as 'fortified place' are straightforward.

Degsa- has long been taken as Celtic since it is not
intelligible in Old English. The identification of
Degsastan with a series of Dawston names in
headwaters of the Liddell Water goes back to the
late 17th century but is very far from
unchallenged, partly since the expected outcome
of the old form would be Daystone. Many see a
convincing identification as unattainable. At the
Stirling conference **Dr Andrew Breeze** (University
of Navarre, Pamplona) argued that the logical
route for a thrust by Áedán mac Gabráin of Dál
Riata against Bernician strongholds would be
through the Biggar Gap linking Clyde and Tweed.
On the Tweed side of the pass, on flat open
ground near Drumelzier, there is still a notable
standing stone. Since *Degsa-* is not English, is too
early to be Gaelic in Tweeddale, and as it stands
makes no sense in Old Welsh, there is no choice
but to see the form as corruptly transmitted by an
English scribe unfamiliar with written Old Welsh.
Accordingly Dr Breeze proposes an emendation to
Degui, which is how the later *Dewi* (David) would
have been spelled at the period; the use of *g*
being a spelling convention though the letter was
not pronounced in this context. *Dewi* is not only
well known from medieval Wales but is the
eponym of Dewsbury in Yorkshire, within
Northumbria. Hence, Dr Breeze contends,
Degsastan can be emended to *Degui*, thus
commemorating some local *Degui/ Dewi*, thus
correcting an easy misreading of the early
medieval script. The personal name would even
make a more convincing candidate in the nearby
place-name Dawyck, than OE *dá* 'doe' or *dawe*
'jackdaw'.

For *Brunanburh* Dr Breeze nominated the
speculative but formally regular *Brunan burh*
'stronghold of the (river) *Bruna*' (now Browney) as
an earlier or alternative name for Lanchester
(*Langecestre* 1196), County Durham, a large
Roman military-industrial base (then called
Longovicium) on the strategic Dere Street.
Significant remains are upstanding even today.