

# SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

No. 42  
Spring 2017



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



*The northern cliffs of Lochnagar, the subject of Sheila Young's article on climbers' route names. Lochnagar is properly the name of the corrie lochan: Loch na Gàire, 'loch of sound or laughter', perhaps from wind noise generated by the topography. Its Gaelic 'mountain' name is Beinn nan Ciochan, 'mountain of the breasts', referring to the Scots-named Meikle Pap and Little Pap, hidden in the fringe of cloud in this photo by Nick Bramhall (29/4/2012). Creative Commons licence: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/legalcode>*

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print the heartfelt and beautiful Gaelic poem written in tribute to *Uilleam MacNeacail* by Donald Meek.

## CLEIKHIMIN

This place-name which has about twenty variant spellings, first appears in documents in the last decade of the 17th century. It becomes a fairly common name over the next one hundred and fifty years, with a distribution running from the Northern Isles to as far south as Lincolnshire. The bulk of the names shown on the map are located in the east of the UK and this may have been an influence on those proposing a Scandinavian origin for the name.

## EDITORIAL

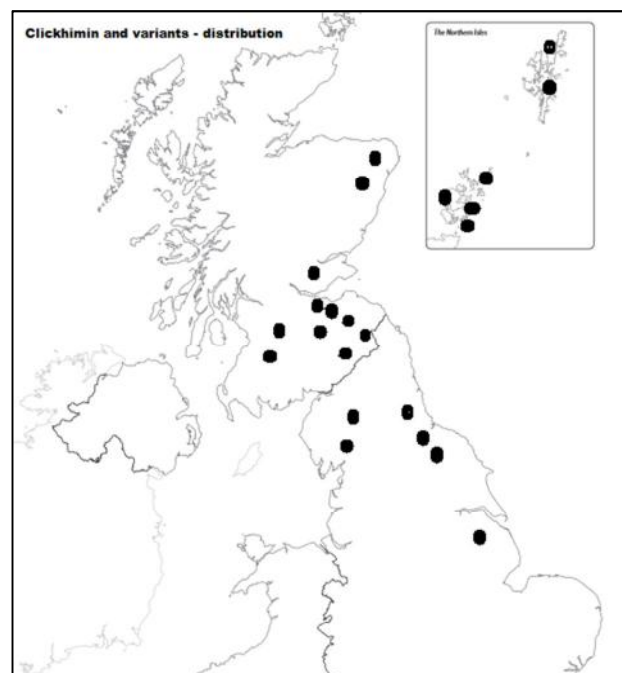
It can be very satisfying when a cogent explanation is at last offered for a place-name or group of names which has eluded anything better than tentative or far-fetched efforts for many years.

Two such instances are the focus of articles in this issue. The usual explanations for the widespread Cleikhimin have never seemed to fit all the instances, if any of them. (Old Norse or Norn in Lerwick: but at Jedburgh?) So it is very gratifying and appropriate to have as the first article in this issue a straightforward explanation in terms of period of formation, social context, meaning and dialect, summarising what Willie Waugh said at the conference in memory of his wife, Dr Doreen Waugh, a distinguished place-name scholar who is sadly missed.

As to an important but puzzling name from a much earlier period, we now also have a persuasive explanation for an origin in Viking-age Norway of the Old Irish *Laithblind*, later *Lochlann* (and Welsh *Llychlyn*), referring rather vaguely or variably to Scandinavia, Norway, or Scandinavian-ruled parts of Scotland.

It is also good to have in this issue an item of 'literary onomastics', one of the many and wide-ranging interests of Professor Bill Nicolaisen, whom we remembered especially at our regular autumn conference.

Besides a summary of Maggie Mackay's reminiscences of Bill at that event, we also



Clickhimin and variants - distribution

What the name actually means has been a subject of debate for many years. An early theory, which still has adherents, states that the name is derived from the Norn:- *Klakka Myn* meaning 'stony mouth'. At least six places in the Northern Isles have this name and Reid Tait, the originator of this theory made the assumption that like the bulk of place names in the Northern Isles, this one was of Scandinavian origin. This theory continued to hold support and both Dixon's *Place-Names of Midlothian* and Harris's *Place Names of Edinburgh* follow Reid Tait's interpretation.

The theory however has a number of flaws. First- why does it not appear till the late 17th century?

Secondly, when one examines the sites there seems to be a mismatch; often no stream is in the locality and the ground not noticeably stony. This applies to all of the Midlothian sites, so much so that Harris in his *Place Names of Edinburgh* has to take an example from near Lauder in Berwickshire to illustrate the 'Stony Mouth'- he states that "the landscape above Cleikimin Bridge vividly illustrates the meaning of the name" (page 172). He refers here to the fact that the stream is full of stones washed down from the hill. Unfortunately for his theory Roy's map of 1746 shows the stream named as Walplea Water. The name changes later in the 18th century when the stream is bridged, and both the stream and the bridge take their name from the small settlement on the south bank named Cleikimin.

So what does the name mean? The answer, I feel, has to be related to one of the meanings of the dialect word to cleik or click. Jamieson's Dictionary of the Scottish Language and the English Dialect Dictionary give about twelve meanings to this verb. Hooking, seizing, grabbing and stealing are all related meanings. Hooking is the one best known at the present day, and a widespread theory suggests that the name is a form of cleik-him-in, meaning having to bring in additional horses to help a coach over a steep hill. This theory is quoted in relation to the Cleikhimin hamlet on the outskirts of Howgate, Midlothian. Coaches did run this route and the changing point for the horses was at the old Howgate Inn 500 yards away. So this theory asks us to believe that at nine and three quarter miles out of Edinburgh extra horses were yoked up, then a short distance later all were unyoked for fifteen minutes rest. I think it highly unlikely that this ever happened.

The third theory is that it refers to a roadside inn with the meaning hook-'em-in which may be a verbal hook - e.g. "drink three pints get the fourth one free", or doubtfully, that touts literally hooked customers/victims into the inn. However there are still two inns in the UK with this name. One in Ballingry in Fife is named after Cleikum Inn in Scott's *St Ronan's Well*.

However the inn name can also relate to the final theory. The period 1690-1840 corresponds

almost exactly to the period when common land was being taken into private ownership. Most of such land was taken by wealthy landowners, but higher marginal land was taken in by dispossessed cottars and the like who reckoned often rightly that small scale activities would be tolerated. Such pieces of land were called outsets in Shetland, intakes in some other areas.

So click-him-in really means a land grab. What happened to such land varied. Sometimes it remained as a field. There are Clickhimin field names in Midlothian, Caithness and Lanarkshire.

In other places a cottage, a toll house, an inn or a school might occupy some of the land. This activity ended in the mid 19th century when free trade meant that imported food could undercut local produce, and marginal farms all over Britain went out of business.

**Willie Waugh** (summarising his talk at the special conference in memory of Dr Doreen Waugh)

### **REMEMBERING BILL NICOLAISEN**

At the November conference **Dr Margaret A Mackay** presented an account of Bill's interests and personality in a reflection which encompassed his career in a personal and affectionate way. He was Acting Director of the School of Scottish Studies in the absence of Basil Megaw when she arrived in the autumn of 1967, following her graduation from the University of Toronto, to undertake a Postgraduate Diploma in Scottish Studies.

She was the first candidate for this qualification, a forerunner of the present day MSc, and Bill co-ordinated the programme of tutorials, coursework and research in Scottish Ethnology and in English Language which led into her doctoral studies and subsequent academic career at the University of Edinburgh. Her diploma dissertation was a comparison of farm naming in Orkney, based on the published sources on names in that island group and in Møre and Romsdal in Norway, which was supervised by Bill. It was he who first called her 'Maggie', the name by which she is still known by many.

By that time Bill had been head of the Scottish Place-Name Survey in the School for a decade. Born in Halle on June 13, 1927 and named Wilhelm Fritz Hermann after his grandfathers, Bill studied subjects at university in Kiel, Tübingen and King's College Newcastle which formed the bedrock of his academic career, English, German, Comparative Linguistics and Folklore. His first dissertation was on river-names in England, his second on Scottish river-names, gained after his work as a German language lektor at Glasgow University and at University College Dublin drew him into Celtic Studies.

Bill's appointment to the School in 1956 brought him into an interdisciplinary milieu where place-name studies were undertaken alongside folklore and folklife collecting and research and major archival work in addition to the activities of the major Scottish dictionaries, the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue and the Scottish National Dictionary, which were located in the building, and the Linguistic Surveys of Scots and Gaelic.

In those postwar years of renewing academic links and making new connections Bill relished the many opportunities these offered and was the epitome of interdisciplinarity and internationalism. He was part of the School delegation to the International Society of Folk Narrative Studies conference in Athens in 1964, with Donald Archie MacDonald and Hamish Henderson. He was Associate Editor of the first nine volumes of the School's journal *Scottish Studies*, contributing articles and place-name notes from its inception.

Bill embraced the possibilities which new technology, and especially the portable tape recorder, offered to place-name studies. Fields recording added a valuable dimension to the evidence provided by documents, maps, plans and other visual sources.

In 1965 Ian A Fraser, a graduate of the Department of Geography at the University of Edinburgh, where Bill enjoyed giving lectures, joined him in the Scottish Place-Name Survey. Ian's qualifications as a geographer, added to his knowledge of Gaelic as a native speaker and his skills as a driver, made for field trips which

became legendary. Recordings and annotated maps gathered in the course of these are a vital legacy for the student and scholar.



*Bill Nicolaisen on fieldwork in Banffshire in 1960, interviewing Alexander Rattray (photographer unknown)*

Bill spent the academic session 1966-67 at Ohio State University in the USA as a visiting professor of English and Folklore and in 1969 the Nicolaisen family made the States their permanent home, when he took up a position in the English Department of the State University of New York at Binghamton.

With his colleague there, Elizabeth Tucker, he helped to develop the subject at state and national levels. He did not give up his name studies, but enjoyed associating them with other genres in research and publications which embraced narratives of several kinds, ballads and jokes, with a focus on time, space and social milieu, linking geography to the

study of folklore and language and promoting folk culture mapping in North America. He maintained his links with Scotland and scholars throughout Europe, seeing to completion the first edition of his *Scottish Place-Names: Their Study and Significance* in 1976. In 2002 the American Folklore Society awarded him its inaugural 'Lifetime Scholarly Achievement Award'.

On retirement in 1993 he and his wife May returned to Scotland, making their home in Aberdeen, where he was an Honorary Fellow and Professor at the University of Aberdeen, based in its Elphinstone Institute. He resumed regular attendance at meetings of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, founded in 1968 just as he was leaving for the USA, and the Scottish Medievalists' group, playing a leadership role in both. He was named Honorary Praeses of the Scottish Place-Name Society on its creation in 1996.

The wide interest in Scottish place-names owes much both to Bill's pioneering scholarly work and to his commitment to making scholarship widely available to the public, as he did in his columns in *The Scots Magazine*. The international reach of his influence was marked by the award in 2015 of the Sahlgren Prize by the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture.

People in many places became acquainted with Bill as an author, an editor, a teacher, an encourager, a colleague, a conference organiser. Friendships often resulted. He left a most remarkable legacy, as is well illustrated in his selected essays *In the Beginning was the Name* and its List of Publications (2011). Bill was always quick to thank others and this genial man, who took great delight in puns, will long be remembered with warmth and gratitude.

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(Following this presentation Ian A Fraser and Margaret A Mackay read the elegy composed by Professor Donald E Meek which is printed on the back cover of this issue. Later Ian received a commendation for his own long service to place-name studies and the Society.)

## **THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF SCOTTISH HYDRONYMY: FIFTY YEARS ON**

Nicolaisen's work in hydronymy was of note in two ways. It was one of the first to take a representational approach to toponymy, that is to use visualisation to represent. Secondly, he used a statistical approach to see if looking at data quantitatively rather than qualitatively could yield results. Worthy of mention here are two articles by W. F. H. Nicolaisen, which are also discussed in more detail below. The first is 'The Semantic Structure of Scottish Hydronymy'.<sup>1</sup> In this article, the author classifies a number of Scottish RNs according to their semantic content and in the final section compares this information against the linguistic strata and morphological structures to which these names belong. Whilst there are various toponymic classifications which had been previously created, this was the first time a classification had been applied to Scottish toponyms in any sort of systematic manner. Whilst this is a valuable and overlooked piece of research it necessarily has limitations.

The last chapter in Nicolaisen's *Scottish Place Names*, 'Pre-Celtic Names',<sup>2</sup> discusses the phenomenon whereby larger watercourses have names from older linguistic strata compared to smaller ones. The author here discusses this in quite some detail though even in this article, due to space, no systematic attempt was made to investigate this topic in any detail. Nicolaisen was perhaps one of the first people to realise the importance of gathering river-name data according to how the rivers themselves interact. The hierarchical nature of rivers necessarily means that extra data should be recorded for each river, in terms of tributaries and parents, that has no equivalent for settlement names or natural features.

These works inspired my own PhD: *Analytical Tools for Toponymy: Their Application to Scottish Hydronymy* (2008) which looked to

<sup>1</sup> Nicolaisen, W. F. H., 'The Semantic Structure of Scottish Hydronymy', *Scottish Studies* 1 (1957), pp. 211-240.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolaisen, W. F. H., *Scottish Place-Names*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 222-246.



take a quantitative rather than qualitative approach in examining Scottish river-names. I discuss a number of phenomena concerning semantics, the first of note here is what I called ‘**semantic distance**’. This is the concept that the larger the watercourse the stronger the tendency for the meaning of the name to be conceptually closer to the water. This was echoed much earlier by Nicolaisen himself:

“...it would appear to follow that the names of the larger rivers should go back to the earlier stratum of settlement and therefore also to the earliest language spoken, whereas the tributaries and smallest burns would preserve evidence of later linguistic invasions”<sup>3</sup>

My thesis uncovered the following hierarchy of meaning related to size of watercourse:

◀ larger water-courses                      smaller water-courses ▶  
 Adjective < Ecosystem < Topography  
 < Human < Situation  
 ‘black’ ‘deer’ ‘Benmore’ ‘gate’ ‘march’

Another concept is that of the semantic notion of **markedness**. An example of this is the word *lion*, an unmarked term in English. This can be used for a lion of any gender, but *lioness* specifically denotes a female lion and as such is marked by the suffix *-ess*. Does this exist in place-names (more specifically river-names)? Put another way, are there semantic ‘defaults’, or qualities watercourses are automatically assumed to have and thus often only named if they do not have these qualities? For example, intuitively we know a river considered always to be wet, are there other, less obvious terms like this?

The ‘non-default’ or ‘marked’ names tend to be greater in number. (e.g. there are many instances of Dry Burn but none - or very few - of Wet Burn because we all understand burns to be ‘wet’). The actual terms however that make up the non-default names tend to be less varied, for example while there are many more watercourses meaning ‘dark’ than ‘light’, the terms *dubh* (the Gaelic word for ‘black’) and *black* account for nearly all the terms for ‘dark’, whilst watercourses meaning ‘light’ (while fewer in number) have a greater variety

of terms: *bàn*, *geal*, *soilleir* (these last three are all Gaelic terms meaning ‘light’ or ‘white’), bright, white.

The following adjectives are considered unmarked or ‘prototypical’: ‘wet’, ‘quiet’, ‘light-coloured’, ‘young/fresh’, ‘calm’, ‘shallow’, ‘good’, ‘straight’, ‘small’ and ‘front’. The reason for these particular meanings is not clear, and if any reader could enlighten me I would be interested to hear from him or her. In name-pairs, there is evidence that the unmarked term need not appear in the coupling, e.g. Black Burn is far more common than White Burn.

**Jacob King** (from his talk on 5<sup>th</sup> November)

The Society bookshop no longer operates at conferences. However we have a small stock of unsold books, which can be brought to the May Galashiels conference if you pre-order them, at one-third off the standard retail price. If you are coming to Galashiels and are interested, drop an email to [peter.drummond@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.drummond@btinternet.com) and I will send you the available list, with details of how to order.



*John G Wilkinson commends a council's interest in older forms of a settlement name. 'Hurdleford' would translate the modern Irish name for Dublin, (Baile) Átha Cliath.*

## **PLACE-NAME TYPOLOGIES – JUST DOTS ON MAPS?**

There is an age-old saying which goes: “A single illustration says a thousand words”, and this is certainly true for the illustrations we place-name researchers love to make: *distribution maps*. The unleashed power of distribution maps in a Scottish context can be

<sup>3</sup> Nicolaisen 2001, 223

seen in Bill Nicolaisen's distribution maps, which were, not only very illustrative at the time they were made, but also groundbreaking. In his famed *Scottish Place-Names*, the distribution maps show us where the major place-name types are situated and allow us to e.g. explore where the various linguistic influences on Scottish toponymy were present.

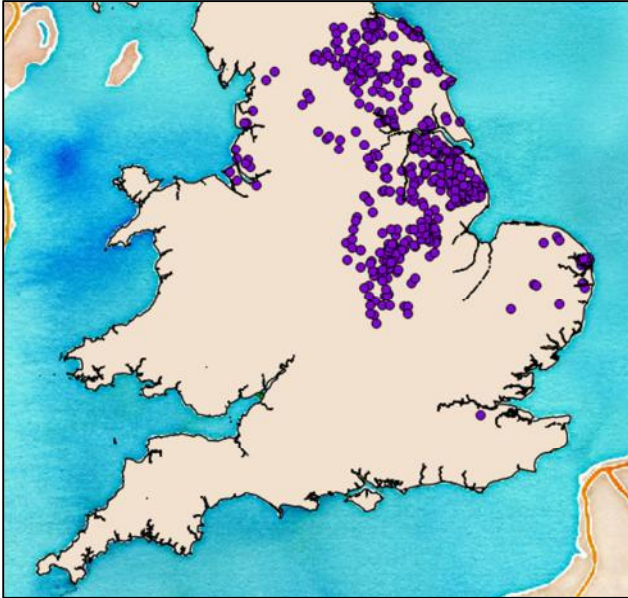


Figure 1: Place-names in -by as found in the Domesday Book

However, there is a different side to distribution maps: Namely, what do they describe and how was the data generated? Bill was very much aware of the “dangers” of distribution maps. Many years ago when I was a student attending his class in Aarhus on the Scandinavian influence on the British Isles, he was very clear that they were as much an interpretation as representing reality. This reservation came as we were looking the distribution of place-names in *-staðir*, *-bólstaðr*, *-setr/-sætr* and *-dalr*, and Bill repeated his own words to us: “If such a sequence of maps is acceptable, place-names have done their job without being pressed for information which they cannot give,” (Nicolaisen 1969, 17) “it would be risky to read any more out of or into these maps.” (Nicolaisen 1976, 96) But instead of refraining from making distribution maps, we should “...therefore keep on drawing and interpreting ever-better place-name maps” (Nicolaisen 1989, 268).

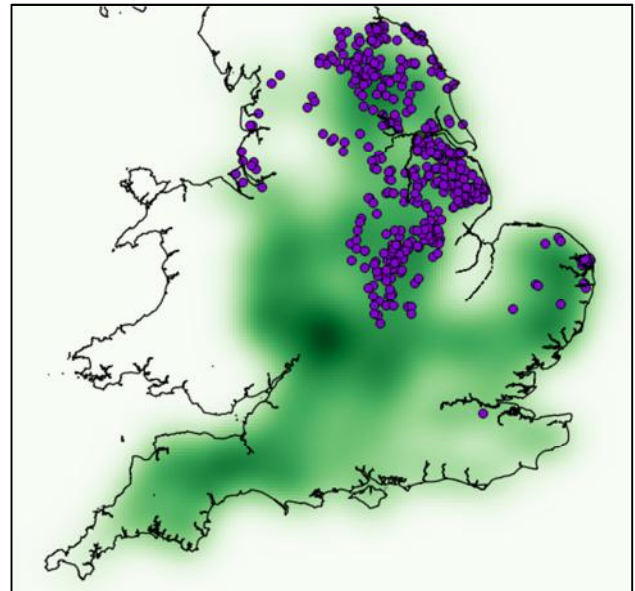


Figure 2. Place-names in -by compared with the settlement density of settlements mentioned in Domesday Book

For years, this was easier said than done, as the production of distribution maps was no easy task and one which often needed to be produced professionally by graphic designers. In recent years, however, the introduction of GIS (Geographic Information System) has moved this mode of illustration into the hands of name researchers – with a piece of GIS software, a file with coordinates and a basic knowledge of styling, and Hey presto!, a new distribution map has been created. Bill Nicolaisen would most probably have been thrilled with the idea of creating distribution maps on the fly, testing the data against different parameters, changing styles, just to get the research questions and research results exactly represented.

Now, as it was earlier, the key question remains – how reliable are they? Bill Nicolaisen himself expressed it in this way: “Place-Name Maps – How Reliable Are They?” The answer apparently is that they are as reliable as the scholarship that each new generation of researchers brings to them. What may be quite satisfactory for one generation may no longer be sufficient for the next. That is a healthy sign and worth celebrating. We should therefore keep on drawing and interpreting ever-better place-name maps, [...]” (Nicolaisen 1989, 268).

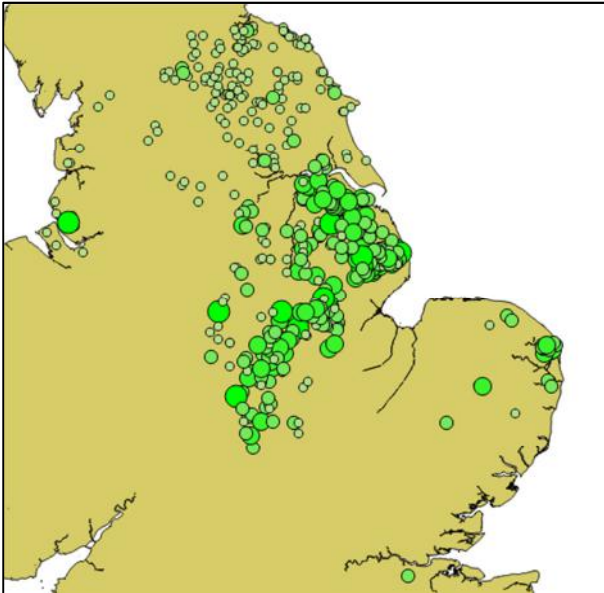


Figure 3. Domesday Book place-names in -by as measured by the number of households in the village.

As with place-name research, it is important to know how substantial and reliable the source data is and how they have been generated. If we look at the data generated by the Open Domesday Project (<http://opendomesday.org/>), we can now quickly make distribution maps of certain place-name types, e.g. place-names derived from Scandinavian *by* 'village', see figure 1. But with an additional click or two, we can also use the entire place-name material in the Domesday Book and compare the distribution of place-names in -by with density of settlement in the Domesday Book, figure 2, and see that the name type is generally found in medium to high density areas. At the same time, by making use of the figures for the number of households in each village in for the place-names in -by and see where they are of the largest size within the distribution area. And here it is clear that the largest villages are situated in the southern and eastern parts of the distribution area and that small-size -by-villages are a typical Yorkshire phenomenon. It has truly never been easier to make and interpret "ever better place-name maps". It is all at hand with GIS.

### Dr Peder Gammeltoft

#### Literature:

Nicolaisen, W.F.H.: 1969, 'Norse settlement in the northern and western Isles.' In *Scottish Historical Review* 48.

Nicolaisen, W.F.H.: 1976, *Scottish Place-Names*. London: B.T. Batsford

Nicolaisen, W.F.H.: 1989, 'Place-Name Maps – How Reliable Are They?'. In *Studia Onomastica: Festschrift till Thorsten Andersson*, ed. by Lena Peterson and S. Strandberg (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989).

### **BILL NICOLAISEN AND PLACE-NAME EXPLANATORY ELEMENTS IN LEGENDS**

Bill Nicolaisen (1927–2016) was a prominent researcher both as an onomast as well as a folklorist, and throughout his career he published a series of articles combining the two subjects.

Therefore, to pay homage to Bill Nicolaisen, my paper was set in this interdisciplinary field of research, because, as Nicolaisen himself stated in a presidential address given to The Folklore Society in 2001, "the people who give, receive and use names are the same people who tell, listen to and enjoy stories" (*Folklore* 113 (2002), p. 1).

In the folkloristic genre known as *legend* we quite often find place-name explanatory elements, commonly based in the storyteller's quick associations with living word material. Nicolaisen was much aware of this phenomenon, which, in a Danish framework, is also the main focus of my PhD project. In comparison to Nicolaisen's theoretical framework and findings on the topic, my paper presented some preliminary results from my PhD project.

Nicolaisen, like others, regarded the phenomenon of place-name explanatory elements in legends a matter of people's desire to understand the origin of weird sounding names, closely connected to the concept of *etiological* or *explanatory* legends. The assumption is that many legends, including the name-explanatory legends, emerge and are told primarily because people want to explain the origin of animate and inanimate things they do not understand.

Many place-names are, on a lexical level, unintelligible to the name-users, either owing to the names deriving from a different language than that mastered by the name-users, or



because the names have lost their original word meaning because of language historical changes. Thus some legends, Nicolaisen argued, restore meaning in what appears to be a meaningless name.

My approach to the topic is different: inspired by especially Timothy R. Tangherlini's work on Danish legends and legend tellers, I analyse legends from the synchronic perspective of the legend teller and his folkloristic repertoire. I re-contextualize the legends by consulting the original field records, notes and memoirs written by the Danish folklore collector Evald Tang Kristensen (1843–1929). Hereafter I match the information with censuses and church records in order to draw a rough map of the legend teller's life history, for instance social mobility or lack of the same.

In my analysis of the legends I use GIS (Geographic Information System) in order to locate the spatial elements of the legend within the legend teller's social, political and economic reality and his perception of his spatial environment. My results are in opposition to Nicolaisen and others' understanding of the phenomenon of place-name explanatory elements in legends.

The name-explanatory element itself often function as a spatial anchor point, being part of the rhetoric strategies that are used to add credibility to the legend, cf. Elliott Oring's notion of the rhetoric of truth in legends. Legend tellers in general do actually not care much about the origin of place-names, and legends very rarely take their primary point of departure in an urge to explain and understand things.

The categories of the etiological legend and the name-explanatory legend are wrong. When we analyse a legend with reference to such categories we have already decided what the legend's function is within the tradition community and what meaning it contains to them. Thus we completely miss the complex mixture of meaning, which is usually found in legends when they are analysed in connection to the people who actually told them and the environment they inhabited.

**Martin Sejer Danielsen** (University of Copenhagen)

## CLIMBERS' ROUTE NAMES

My paper on 5 November was entitled 'The Route Names of Lochnagar', and looked at the previously unresearched subject of the hodonyms (climbing route names) of Lochnagar. It began with a description of the protocol surrounding the registration of a new route name, and went on to discuss the function, morphological structure and semantic meaning of the 261 routes which cover the buttresses and faces of Lochnagar, from the earliest route in 1893 - 2009.

Names are chosen by those who make the first ascent of the route, usually after or during the climb, but rarely before it. The name and route description are logged with the New Routes Editor of the *Scottish Mountaineering Journal (SMJ)*, and he decides whether a name is suitable or not. Currently, eponymous, rude, or exceptionally long names are not accepted. The new route then appears in the next edition of the *SMJ*.

The function of the route names is straightforward – it is to allow orientation, to individuate, and it can also be to express the experience of the climb.

The structure of the names has changed through time. Of the 261 names, 160 are compound names, 83 are simplices and 18 are phrasal. The earliest names used a generic/specific structure, for example, *Pinnacle Gully 1*, *Shadow Buttress A*. The first simplex names appeared in 1967, *Crypt* and *Mort*, and the first phrasal names in 1985/6, *Slice of Ice*, *Diedre* [sic] *of the Sorrows*. The names are predominantly in English, only one is in Gaelic, though a few include elements of French or German. This should not surprise since climbing has its roots in the Alps. Several names display phonological devices, such as alliteration (*Pillar Perfect*, *Dyke Dastardly*), rhyme (*Slice of Ice*, *Stackattack*) and sibilance (*Slice of Ice*, *Isis*, *Eclipse*, *Solstice*). Another device to add interest to the names is the pun or play on words.

In terms of the meaning of the names, the important point was made that the meaning is not given when the route is registered with the *SMJ*, therefore it is not shared with the climbing community. While other climbers

might surmise why a particular name has been chosen they may not be right. The most striking observation regarding the meaning of the names was that of the 261 names, around half included a topographical feature (buttress, chimney, groove, rib), a climbing term (route, traverse, connection), *Pinnacle Groove*, *Twin Chimneys Route*, or a term relating to the conditions (*Katabatic Corner*, *Rolling Thunder*). The earliest routes were either eponymous, *Raeburn's Gully*, *Douglas-Gibson Gully* or included a letter or number. As the main topographical features were climbed, the climbers could become more adventurous with their naming. A change in structure – the inclusion of simplices and phrasal names – led to all manner of names, from the intellectual (*Trail of Tears*, *Steep Frowning Glories*) to the comedic (*Ham Butty*, *Dyke Dastardly*). Many climbers choose their route names to tie in with existing naming conventions, for example, *Where Eagles Dare* is beside *Eagle Buttress*.

I finished the paper by focusing on one route name – *Torquing Corpse*. Torquing is a climbing term, meaning to twist or turn ice picks. However, used here, it is also a play on words. The image conveyed is that of a body, muttering, in the throes of death. The name illustrates very well how the naming of difficult routes demands an apposite name. This route was named on the first attempt. It took many hours, involved several falls, and culminated with the two climbers having to abandon their attempt and abseil off the cliff. Unfortunately, their rope wasn't quite long enough and therefore a literal (and metaphorical) leap of faith was required. One of the climbers described the route name as an 'apt description of my mental state for some weeks after.' I felt privileged that the climbers were willing to share the stories behind the names.

Sheila Young

## LAITHLIND – PRE-UNIFIED NORWAY?

In the 9th century Irish annals the name forms *Laithlind*, *Laithlinn* and *Lothlind* occur several times in connection with the Vikings. Because

the name(s) occur in the phrase 'king of Laithlind' or similar, it is by many seen as indicative of the location of the Norse kingdom from where the early aggression on Ireland was organised. Here an attempt is made to provide this name with a semantic content, to identify the location that the name is likely to denote, and to suggest a motive behind the name.

Regarded as the most contemporary, the two entries in the *Annals of Ulster* can be seen as the most authoritative. Here we first hear the name mentioned in 848 AD when earl Tomrair (Old Norse *Pórir jarl*), 'tanist of the king of Laithlinn', fell in a battle at Sciath Nechtain, and again in 853 AD where it is said: 'Amlaíb, son of the king of Laithlind, came to Ireland, and the foreigners of Ireland submitted to him, and he took tribute from the Irish.' A king's son by the name *Amlaib* (Old Norse *Áleifr*, later *Óláfr*) appears again in *The Fragmentary Annals* (FA 239, probably again referring to the same event in the year 853 AD): 'Amlaib Conung, son of the king of Lochlainn, came to Ireland, and he brought with him a proclamation from his father of many tributes and taxes, and he departed suddenly. Then his younger brother Imar came after him to levy the same tribute.'

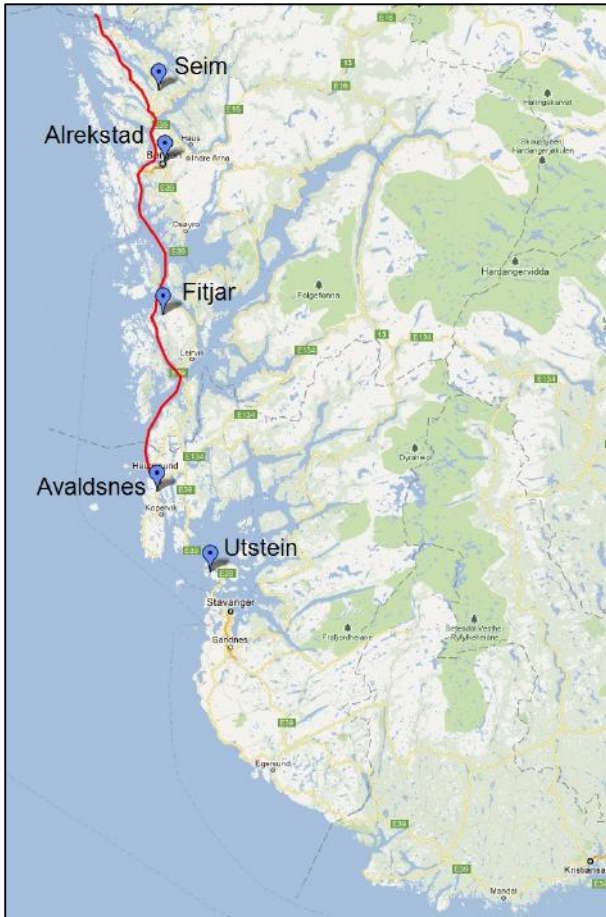
In the *Annals of the Four Masters* (M866.10), we hear the 'Goill' (the foreigners, i.e. the Vikings) from 'laith linn' are taking part in the battle at Cell Ua nDaigri in 868 AD.

Finally, in the margins of a copy of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, usually dated to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, we find this much-quoted poem:

'The wind is sharp tonight;  
he throws up the white mane on the sea;  
I have no worries that the wild warriors  
from Lothlind  
shall lay their course over a calm sea.'

Several scholars have discussed the semantic content of this name and the location it may indicate. A relatively recent and much referred etymology is by Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1998). He suggests that the first element has an origin in Old Norse *loð* ('hairy' or, more specifically, 'covered with long grass'), which he believes refers to the fertile land the Vikings found in

Orkney and the northeast of Scotland, designating a kingdom the Vikings had established on the Scottish islands before expanding further south. This is unconvincing for two reasons. No other known place name contains such a specific, and there is no historic or archaeological support for a ‘maritime centre’ in the north or west of Scotland as early as this. The archaeological evidence tells us that the contact in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century mainly was with Norway.



*The manors associated with the royalty of early unified Norway; all located near the Leif, the main sailing route along the coast, indicated by the red line.*

More convincing is Egon Wamers (1997) and Colman Etchingham (2010 and 2014) with their suggestion that the first element refers to *Hladir*, now *Lade*, near Trondheim. Although there are linguistic problems with this proposal it nevertheless finds support in archaeology which indicates Trøndelag as one of the areas with a concentration of early Viking insular finds. However, the highest concentration of insular finds from the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century is in the southwest of Norway, in the area broadly around modern Stavanger. Across the fjord to the north, on Karmøy, is a

remarkable continuation of large burial mounds from the Bronze Age onwards, and this is the only area in Scandinavia that can provide archaeological evidence for a series of large, ocean-going ships from around AD 800, i.e. the beginning of the Viking Age. This includes the famous Oseberg ship, which was interred in Vestfold by the Oslo Fjord, but was built from timber that grew in the southwest of Norway (Bonde & Stylegar 2009).

Although it only occurs once, much attention has been given to the form *Lothlind*. Here, on the other hand, the more frequent form with *Laith-* is in focus, and it is suggested that it contains the same diphthong as in the personal name *Amlaib*. The proposal put forward in this contribution is based on what *Laithlind* may have meant in Common Scandinavian (the linguistic stage of Scandinavian in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, before Old Norse). This could have been *\*Laipland*, (later, in Old Norse, *\*Leidland*) with a meaning ‘the land along the *Leid* (in Modern Norwegian *Leia*)’, denoting the important protected sailing course along the coast of Norway. In Old Norse *leid* forms compounds with *-ar-*; *leidarsteinn*, ‘lodestone, magnet’, *leidarstjarna*, ‘lodestar’, or without: *leidsagari*, m., *leidsagnarmaðr*, m., ‘lodesman’. In place names *leid* is frequently found in compounds indicating local sailing courses. Outside a local context, however, the simplex *Leia* always refer to the main sailing course along the coast.

Along the coast of Europe the normal coastline is one without protection from the open sea. The exceptions are the west coast of Scotland and the west coast of Norway, from Karmøy, just north of Stavanger, where a string of islands provide a protective barrier from the predominant westerly weather. The importance of this continuous in-shore sailing course the length of Norway is difficult to overestimate and there can be no doubt that the political control of it will have been of utmost importance.

The proposed name *\*Leidland* will have been a highly appropriate name for the pre-unification kingdom in the southwest of Norway (Nord-Rogaland and Sunnhordland) with Avaldsnes at the centre. There is general agreement that this kingdom stands out as the

most powerful in western Norway in the Iron Age, and that the basis of its power will have been the control of the *Leid*, which starts precisely here at Avaldsnes, Karmøy (Skre 2014). This kingdom will have been central in the Norwegian unification process that intensified towards the end of the 9th century, and the treasures brought back from Britain and Ireland will undoubtedly have played a crucial part in this process. Avaldsnes remained a residence for the royal house of the united Norway for several centuries.

It is likely that *\*Laipland* disappeared as a name along with the disappearance of the kingdom it denoted, when the larger polity *Norway* was formed in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century. Still, it is of course a serious fault in this argument that there is no evidence for the name *\*Laipland* in historical sources or in the form of modern place names. One may ask, however, if it is reasonable to assume that a name of this sort will be traceable in contemporary historical sources that were limited to a few formulaic runic inscriptions? We hardly know the name of any of the pre-unification chieftoms in Norway. After all, the reason why we know about the pre-unification kingdoms Dál Riata and Fortriu in Scotland is the exceptionally early Irish writing tradition.

The semantic content of the name *\*Laipland* is strikingly similar to that of the name *Norway*, which may carry two possible meanings; it either comprises the adverb *nordr* and contains the meaning the ‘northern way’, or it springs from the adjective *nór* ‘narrow’, giving the meaning ‘the narrow way’. In both cases what is referred to can hardly be anything different than the *Leid*, the coastal path northwards, starting at Avaldsnes. Both *\*Leidland* and *\*Nordveg/\*Nórveg* could have existed as compound appellatives long before they became specific names of politically defined areas, made necessary by historical developments. Both as an appellative and a name *Norway* is a semantic parallel to *\*Leidland*, and in both cases the name is based on the economic foundation for the political unit, namely the *Leid*.

**Arne Kruse** (from his talk on 5<sup>th</sup> November. A full-length article is due out soon in Christian Cooijmans, ed., 2017, *Traversing the*

*Inner Seas*, Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies (: 198-231.))

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### LYE – A RAILWAY-RELATED PLACE-NAME ELEMENT

The origin of the industrial name *Lye* is not yet known with certainty, its usage occurring in official documents only from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Coal miners were using the term informally to denote part of the underground railway from at least the same period and it was from coal mines that railways were developed.

When early railways were built they were often single track and needed passing places to allow trains to pass each other. In those days these passing places were called sidings, the name later being used for a junction with a short piece of track used for storing waggons. It seems that in order to distinguish these passing-place sidings from an area of tracks where loading and unloading took place the railways used the term *lye* for the latter. There





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## **The Thomas Marcus Huser Fieldwork Fund**

*Every community on earth is being deprived of an ancient necessary nourishment. We cannot live fully without the treasury our ancestors have left us. Without the story – in which everyone living, unborn, and dead, participates – men are no more than 'bits of paper blown on the cold wind...'. George Mackay Brown, Portrait of Orkney, (John Murray, London), 1981.*

Thomas Marcus Huser (1972-2010) was a Norwegian researcher with a great passion for Scottish place names. In 2008 he completed his MA dissertation From 'Færevåg' to 'Pier of Wall'? Early Habitative Names in Westray, the Orkney Isles, which attempted to establish the percentage of older Orkney place names of Norse origin. A full version of his work can be downloaded from the website of the University of Oslo. Although his dissertation and supporting material are in Norwegian, an English summary can be found at the end of Part 2 (Appendix) and the idea behind his work was effectively summarised in an article by Dr Ragnhild Ljosland

(<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/cultural/centre-for-nordic-studies/mimirs-well-articles/cracking-the-place-name-puzzle>).

There is no doubt that the highlights of Thomas's research were his trips to Orkney. On his first trip he carried out extensive fieldwork for his project and during the second one he presented a copy of his MA dissertation to the Westray Heritage Centre. This is why a fieldwork fund is the most appropriate way to

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The SPNS spring conference and AGM will be held in Galashiels/ Tweedbank on Saturday 6th May. The location is served by trains from Edinburgh Waverley. Details and application form with this newsletter.

Our regular autumn conference will be on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow: details with the autumn newsletter.

celebrate his memory while promoting future research in this area.

The Thomas Marcus Huser Fieldwork Fund aims to provide a small contribution of up to £100 towards fieldwork-related costs. All postgraduate students and early-career researchers working in the field of Scottish place names are eligible to apply. Applications must be made to the Scottish Place-Name Society in the form of a cover letter (detailing what the project is about and what the funds will be used for) and a CV, sent by email to the Secretary, Leonie Dunlop:

[leonie.m.dunlop@gmail.com](mailto:leonie.m.dunlop@gmail.com).

The deadline for each year's applications is 31 March. Successful applicants will be notified in May, with an announcement at the Scottish Place-Name Society's spring conference.

**'Names and Naming: People, Places, Perceptions and Power'** (edited by Guy Puzey and Laura Kostanski) is now available, through [www.multilingual-matters.com](http://www.multilingual-matters.com).

## BOOKS FROM SPNS

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## The Place-Names of Midlothian

Dr Norman Dixon's previously inaccessible and still important PhD study of 1947, with Introduction by Simon Taylor outlining more recent approaches to some of the names. (Midlothian here is the pre-1975 geographical county including Edinburgh and Musselburgh.)

515 pages. £10, 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

## THE WORST BOOK ON PLACE-NAMES – EVER?

Mere mention of the book *Gaelic Place-Names of the Lothians*, by John Milne LL.D (1912), may cause serious place-name researchers to suffer alarming shudders and palpitations. His enthusiasm for finding Gaelic etymologies in unlikely places and without the faff of systematically researching historic forms is notorious, while his fondness for translating a remarkable array of elements as 'fold' is quickly noticeable; though to be fair he does occasionally concede an English or Scotch origin for a name, as with Bankton. And some of his Gaelic etymologies could even be sound.

Convinced that Gaelic was the language of all Britain in Julius Caesar's time and long before, in his introduction he says of Stonehenge: "The oldest form of the name is Stanenges, which is a corruption of the Gaelic words *S[i]t[he]an [Fh]angan*, hill of circles, in which the letters within brackets had become silent and had been lost. Final an had normally become es." Although he can hardly not have had some notion of the historic tendency of Germanic and Romance languages to simplification he blithely remarks that, implicitly unlike them: "Modern Gaelic is cumbered with expedients for indicating gender, number, and case, but old Gaelic has few of these grammatical contrivances, and it is as a rule best to ignore them in etymology." A word with a scholar such as his contemporary W J Watson might have disabused him.

Sometimes he misses a genuine and important Gaelic etymology and invents a spurious one, as with Barba(u)chlaw in Inveresk (*Baile Bachlae*, ‘settlement of crozier’ – land belonging to Dunfermline Abbey). A couple of Milne’s proposals may give a flavour:-

BANGHOLM. Fold. Originally *Chuitail*, *cuitail* aspirated, fold, corrupted into whitehill, which

was again turned into Gaelic by *bantholm*, white hill (*ban*, white; *tholm*, *tolm* aspirated, hill). *Tolm* was aspirated because it followed its adjective. Euphonic g had been added to *ban*, and t in *tholm* had been lost.

BARBACHLAW. Point of the big hill. *Barr*, point; *bagach* bulky; *lamb* hill. G with its vowel had been dropped.

**UILLEAM MACNEACAIL**  
(1927-2016)

B’ e sibhse an t-achadh,  
Torrach, taitneach, talmhaidh,  
Gach deagh chinneas oirbh,  
Gach beairteas is brìgh,  
Diasan ur n-arbhair trom,  
Ur n-iodhlannan làn.

B’ e sibhse am baile,  
Dìonach, daingeann, deas,  
Ri cùl gaoithe ’s ri aghaidh grèine,  
Seachas mu ur cagailtean,  
Naidheachdan èibhinn,  
Na h-ainmean a’ dannsa.

B’ e sibhse an sliabh  
Os cionn nam machraichean,  
Cràiceach, leathann, làidir,  
A’ tairgsinn àirigh shamhraidh  
Am measg nan allt labhrach,  
Gucagan-fraoich an ùrachaidh.

B’ e sibhse a’ ghrian dheàlach  
Air gualainn na beinne,  
Lainnir a’ ghàire nur gathan,  
A’ cur soilleireachadh air  
Achadh is baile is sliabh,  
A’ ruaig nan sgàilean.

Is chaidh sinne fo sgòth  
On a dh’fhalbh sibh,  
Bhon a theasd sibh sa chuan,  
Ach dh’fhàg sibh againn  
Rathaidean is bealaichean  
Is lòchran iùil airson na h-oidhche.

**BILL NICOLAISEN**  
(1927-2016)

You were the field,  
Productive, pleasant, earthy,  
Growing every good crop,  
Every richness and essence,  
Your ears of corn heavy,  
Your stackyards full.

You were the township,  
Secure, solid, steady,  
Back to wind, face to sun,  
Conversation round your hearths,  
Amusing anecdotes,  
The names dancing.

You were the upland  
Above the machairs,  
Tufted, broad, strong,  
Offering a summer shieling  
Among the chattering streams,  
The heather-bells of renewal.

You were the shining sun  
On the mountain’s shoulder,  
Laughter’s gleam in your rays,  
Shedding illumination on  
Field and township and upland,  
Dispelling the shadows.

We have gone under a cloud  
Since you departed,  
Since you set in the ocean,  
But you bequeathed to us  
Roadways and passages  
And a guiding lantern for the night.