

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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



The Cobbler', or Ben Arthur (884 metres), a favourite weekend destination for hillwalkers living in and around Glasgow. It is one of the 'Arrochar Alps' to the west and north-west of Loch Long, puny in height compared with the continental mountain chain but rocky and rugged, and especially imposing in winter conditions. The Cobbler was so named because of a fancied outline of a cobbler (shoe-repairer) bent over his last, in the central of three tops. According to John Stoddart in 1800 it had a Gaelic name, An Greasaiche Crom 'the crooked shoemaker', of which the usual modern name is a simplified translation. There is no clear provenance or explanation for the alternative name of Ben Arthur (Beinn Artair). Speculative connections include the legendary King Arthur; a historically attested son of the 6th-7th century Dalriadan king Áedán mac Gabráin; and the MacArthur clan which was prominent in later medieval Argyll. (Photo by Peter Drummond)

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Membership Details: Annual membership £6 (or £15 for three years), to be sent to Peter Drummond, Apt 8 Gartsherrie Academy, Academy Place, Coatbridge ML5 3AX. (See page 12 for information on Life Membership.)

Scottish Place-Name Society web site:
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COMMENT

The Kinraddie of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's classic novel 'Sunset Song' seems to have been a name of his own invention. Yet it perfectly encapsulates the rhythm, and thus the Gaelic origins veiled behind Mearns Scots, in many of the district's place-names. If you roamed around the country lanes of the Mearns (former Kincardineshire, now the southernmost part of Aberdeenshire), preferably on a bicycle, it would scarcely surprise if you saw a Kinraddie on a local signpost among such places as Drumlithie, Meikle Fiddes, Cotbank of Barras and Upper Pitforthie.

Linkumdoddie looks like a more obvious concoction, faintly ridiculous and conveniently rhyming with 'onie bodie' (anybody) in a comic poem by Robert Burns. Yet some have maintained that it was a real cottage in Upper Tweeddale, its site still proclaimed in a sign by the A701 road. The jury is still out.

For a place supposedly in a remote part of the Highlands, in a TV thriller a few years ago, 'Braeston' was not a good omen for any sense of real Highland character. As it turned out about the only thing 'Highland' rather than Home Counties was the plot's need for the community to be isolated by extreme weather. 'Kirkdarroch' for the location of a forthcoming series sounds like a more promising effort, using two elements found in real names, yet scarcely a plausible combination. Perhaps SPNS should offer an advice service for the invention of more realistic Scottish place-names?

I have been editing this Newsletter for more than a few years, and I would not like to think that I am bogging this privilege while someone else would be interested in trying out a share of the work with a view to taking over when ready. If you are interested, please e-mail, or we could discuss informally at the conference on 2nd November.

Bill Patterson

THE ORDNANCE SURVEY NAME BOOKS: A 'TREASURE-TROVE' FOR TOPONYMISTS

At the end of 2013, ScotlandsPlaces launched a new online resource containing images of the Ordnance Survey Name Books along with crowd-sourced transcriptions of their contents.¹ Press releases to mark the occasion described the Name Books as a 'treasure-trove', thus providing the inspiration for the title of the talk. This paper sought to introduce the Name Books themselves, give examples of the types of place-name material they contain, indicate what they reveal about people as well as places, and highlight some issues that researchers should take into account when using the Name Books in their research.

The 1,831 volumes are the surveyors' records compiled during the surveying process to produce the first edition Ordnance Survey maps for Scotland. The volumes cover the length and breadth of the country – although there are a few gaps in Perthshire – with over 297,000 'places', or rather distinct entries, listed on the ScotlandsPlaces website. These 'places' include post offices, banks and entries relating to archaeological discoveries (sometimes accompanied by sketches in the Name Books), as well as the names of settlements, water features and topographical features more typically contained within a place-name survey. The Name Books are not a uniform source. For example, there is not a correlation between the numbers of volumes and 'places' for each county; the structure of the books differs, with variation from six columns to five columns; and some books provide names of surveyors while others do not.

In line with the 'treasure-trove' theme of the paper, several place-names on a map of a Treasure Island found on the internet were used as prompts to search for similar names in the Name Books, by deploying the powerful search engine on the ScotlandsPlaces website. While an exact match for Pirate's Retreat cannot be found, a close parallel might be *Dickmont's Den* in St Vigean's parish,

¹ <https://scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/ordnance-survey-name-books>

Forfarshire (ANG), described as, ‘A Very remarkable natural Valley, east from The Blowhole, Inclosed within rugged steep Cliffs, and said to have been once a favourite resort of a Celebrated Pirate named Dickmont’ (OS1/14/80/124). Blue Lake can be found in a few instances as a translation from a Gaelic name; e.g. *Linne Ghorm* INV (OS1/17/10/122), *Loch Gorm* INV (OS1/17/57/33) and *Loch Gorm* ROS (OS1/28/25/26). Hangman’s Tree led to the discovery of names such as *Cnoc a’ Chrochadaire* (‘The Hangman’s Knoll’, ARG), described as, ‘A Commanding eminence, immediately north west of “Cretshengan.” Tradition says nothing as to the origin of the name. Sig [Signification] “The hangman’s Knoll”’ (OS1/2/10/9) and *Hangman’s Well* in Perth, which we are told received its name because the ‘hangman’s house formerly stood close to this well’ (OS1/25/63/12).

The Name Books are also a good source for those researching people, providing information not only about the surveyors and other Ordnance Survey staff and the authorities whom they questioned in the course of the surveying process, but also about people who are mentioned in the descriptions accompanying the names. A further category which can be included is that of place-names containing personal names or ‘anthropotonyms’ to use the term recently adopted and promoted by Sofia Evemalm.²

The final section of the paper addressed some issues that are worth considering by researchers using the name books as a source for toponymical research. These included the reliability of names (raising questions about authenticity, such as the extent of anglicisation and Gaelic orthography); alternative names; and missing or omitted names.

Eila Williamson, University of Glasgow (summarising a talk to the joint SPNS and Scottish Records Association conference at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, 17 November 2018. Dr Williamson is Research Fellow on the *Recovering the Earliest English Language in Scotland: Evidence from Place-Names* project, which is funded by the Leverhulme Trust. <www.gla.ac.uk/reels>.

‘WHY?’ IS THE HARDEST QUESTION TO ANSWER

I started looking at why streets were so named

² Sofia Evemalm, ‘*Theory and practice in the coining and transmission of place-names: a study of the Norse and Gaelic anthropotonyms of Lewis*’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2018); available online at <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/8751/>

with the history of my home town, Dundee. What I found was that some street names changed, often because the largest property in the street had changed hands, but others had kept the same name for centuries. Councils, police commissioners and landowners often failed to explain their choice of name. A council named a street after a councillor. But there are two with the same surname. Which is the lucky man!

A street may be referred to in a document as “an unnamed street”; then appear named a short time later, with no explanation. When was it named and why? We may think we know the reason, but it is just a guess, educated or not.

Charters and Chartularies are a source of old names for land and books and newspaper articles may come up with some interesting stories, but are they true? Searching for the answers can lead to fascinating side tracks. But it is also very frustrating.

Many street names are directional – the road to Edinburgh or the castle for example. Rivers and burns provided another source of names – Clyde, Dee, Tay, etc. Drinkable water is a highly desirable commodity. During a cholera epidemic in the nineteenth century many Dundonians preferred the water from the well reached by the Wellgait. They liked its sweet taste. What they did not know was that the taste was caused by the impurities in the water.

The streets where fairs and markets were held give us names such as Butcher’s Row, Greenmarket, Merkdaily and Cheapside. Hospital Street may indicate the site of a 14th century Leper house or a street built on land gifted to a Maison Dieu or almshouse.

Religious orders, churches and churchmen provide the inspiration for many names, like Blackfriars, Carmelite and all the saints. Glebe is a common street name – 10 Glebe Street, Dundee was known locally as Broons’ Land after the DC Thomson comic strip family.

Two streets may have the same name but not necessarily from the same source. For example Bernard Street in Leith is named after an innkeeper, while Bernard Crescent in Arbroath commemorates Bernard, Chancellor of Scotland and Abbot of Arbroath.

Farmers and their farms would be well known locally. Hence names like Kellyfield, Johnfield, Maryfield and Janefield. But beware lest you fall into the trap of imposters such as Downfield – thought up by a Feather merchant’s wife.

Landmarks give us names such as Bath Street in Glasgow (which gets its name from the public baths), sugar-houses, Post Box Road and Steam Loom Lane. Estate owners tended to name streets after their properties, themselves, their family and friends: Mains of Fintry once owned by the Graemes of Claverhouse; Clepington and Tannadice the town and country estates of William Neish. Both give Dundee many street names.

Trade and industry give us names such as Weaver, Sailmaker, Glover, Tureen and Candlemaker Row. Dundee may once have been known as “Juteopolis”, but if you want a Jute Street you have to look to Aberdeen. But although there is no Jute Street there are many streets named after jute barons, their mills and their mansions. Viceroys of India are also well represented. The tobacco merchants of Glasgow, sugar, whaling, shipbuilding and the trade with the Baltic states are all commemorated in our streets.

Naming streets after provosts and bailies was popular and I am sure you can all think of several examples from your home towns. One bailie refused to have a street named after him and objected to another possible name for the street – Athole Brose – after a nearby property. The bailie said he understood that there was whisky in this mixture – and he had always thought that alcohol had a deteriorating effect on the morality of this country.

Goosedubs Street comes from a Provost’s flock of geese waddling through the dubs or puddles. Puddock Row got its name from the mass of frogs in the area. Both names like the frogs and geese are no more.

The wonderfully named Crossmyloof was a former village in Renfrewshire. According to the Ordnance Survey Gazetteer the name is explained by a folk etymology. Mary Queen of Scots, on the morning of the Battle of Langside, laid a small crucifix on her hand, saying “As surely as that cross lies on my loof, I will this day fight the Regent”.

Another source of street names was royalty. This for a while was fashionable. Of Georges, Victorias and Alberts we have a positive surfeit. But you cannot just assume. George Square in Edinburgh was seemingly named after the architect’s brother, George Brown.

Politicians are also well represented – Fox, Peel, Pitt, Derby, Beaconsfield, Bright and Cobden. The anti-Corn Laws and electoral reform campaigns were very popular. Dempster Street in

Glasgow was named in honour of George Dempster of Dunnichen MP for his opposition to the repeal of the duty on French cambrics.

British victories were also a great source of street names – Cadiz, Waterloo, Havannah, Corunna, Waterloo and St Vincent, this after the battle of Cape St Vincent in 1797.

Dundee is especially proud of the victory of Dundee-born Admiral Adam Duncan over the Dutch at Camperdown in the same year – as any street map of Dundee will confirm. Dundee also has a street celebrating Nelson’s victory at the Battle of the Nile – “Fort Street”. The name was originally Fort Abukir Street, but was shortened due to the way the locals pronounced “Abukir”. Lord Nelson is remembered in many street names throughout Britain. However, in the case of Dundee the street was named 37 years after Trafalgar. Perhaps they were hedging their bets.

Poets and writers, and especially the lives and works of Robert Burns and Walter Scott, have given birth to many street and house names. I doubt if Cartley Hole would have had the same popularity as “Abbotsford”³. However, Byron, Shelley, Keats are also represented. And there is the odd female poet or writer in the mix. In 1960 the city engineer submitted a list of possible names for new streets. The suggested names commemorating the writers Blake and Bunyan. However, one councillor stated that you could not have a street named Bunyan as the people would think only of their feet.

As burghs grew and took over neighbouring villages street names were duplicated or in some cases there might be four or five streets with the same name. In the suburbs the habit of naming houses instead of numbering them was growing. All this caused much delay in the delivery of post and also gave message boys and visitors a real headache. The postal officials pleaded with the councils to do something. This was dealt with by renaming some streets and making all house names unofficial. People complained about their street having its name changed and the councils compromised.

With the 1900s came the call for better housing for the working classes. Dundee led the way with its Logie housing scheme. This was started in July 1919 and the original intention was to call the streets after prominent WWI generals. However, this did not meet with the approval of the full

³ Still less in the unmetathesised form of the name that Scott rejected: *Clarty Hole* (*clarty*, ‘filthy, muddy’, a Scots word still widely used). Ed.

council and the streets were eventually named after trees. Trees, rivers, lochs, mountains, glens, golf courses, and forests were a safer bet. Atlases were scoured for possible names. And it is thanks to this society and its members that we are able to explain what these names mean.

As the cities regenerate many of the old names are retained. However, some are not acceptable to developers or home buyers. When it was suggested that a new street should be named “_____” Close, one irate buyer stated that she hadn’t paid all that money to live in a close. To her the name close meant a covered entry through a tenement, not a very exclusive cathedral precinct.

The practice today seems to be for developers to choose a name after consultation with the local community, or to ask for suggestions with a prize for the winning suggestion. Another popular way is to ask the local schoolchildren to choose a name. I just hope someone is recording WHY the name was chosen.

Gillian Molloy, author of ‘Street Names of Old Dundee’ (available from City Archives*), from her conference talk at Dundee, 11 May 2019)

* archives@dundeeccity.gov.uk

Journal of Scottish Name Studies

The latest issue of this peer-reviewed online journal, *JSNS 12*, is available free at <http://www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS/JSNS12.html>. Previous issues are also accessible through the clanntuirc website.

AWARDS FOR STUDENTS!

Details of grants available to students from the Thomas Marcus Huser Fieldwork Fund and the Cultural Contacts Fund, as well as of the Nicolaisen Essay Prize, are available on the SPNS website, <<http://spns.org.uk/>>.

MUDDY WATERS AFTER THE RAIN: ARBROATH ABBEY CHARTERS, A MAJOR SOURCE FOR ANGUS PLACE-NAMES

The Abbey of Aberbrothoc, now Arbroath, was founded by William, King of Scots in 1178. It was dedicated to the murdered archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, who had been

sanctified by then. Becket was allegedly a friend of William’s, but the dedication may have been designed to curry favour with the Pope, or embarrass the English, or both! The Abbey was William’s only major ecclesiastical foundation, and it was here that he was buried before the high altar on the 10th of December 1214. The dedication still gives rise to names today, and other than being known as “Reid Lichties”, older Arbroathians will consider themselves natives of St Tammas. Only a few hundred yards from the Abbey (now in the care of Historic Environment Scotland), is the St Thomas Bar – an essential watering point for any visiting pilgrim, with a whole wall inside depicting a 1960s map of Arbroath.

At our November 2018 conference, Joanna Tucker spoke on Scottish monastic chartularies, which included Arbroath. As far as I can tell, no fewer than seven of these collections survive which contain charters from here. These are the *Registrum Vetus* (1178-1329) and the *Registrum Nigrum* (1329-1526), both donated to the Advocates Library and now in the National Library of Scotland; the Regality Register, comprising three bound volumes (1288-1530); the Ethie M.S., now in Dundee City Archives; and the British Library’s Add. M.S.33245.

The Regality Registers were donated to Arbroath Town Council by Lord Maule who, the inscription relates, had been given them by John Smith of Bathary and James Smith, Writer to the Signet, whose son had been clerk to the Regality of Aberbrothoc at the abolition of heritable jurisdictions in 1748. When I was appointed District Museums Curator for Angus in 1977 they were in a bank vault, but they are now in the safekeeping of Angus Archives at Restenneth.

The Bannatyne Club published the *Registrum Vetus* in 1848 and the *Registrum Nigrum* in 1856, edited by the respected duo of Cosmo Innes and Patrick Chalmers. The latter being the local added considerably to the publication, but sadly he died in 1854. He had previously produced the impressive tome on the Sculptured Monuments of Angus and the Brechin Cathedral Charters. The Bannatyne editors were aware of the other chartularies, with the exception of the one in the British Library. It remains the only unpublished monastic chartulary in Britain!

For my place-name studies in Angus I have used, in the main, the Bannatyne publications, but I would caution against anyone doing so by being reliant on either index; both are full of errors and omissions!

Grants during William's lifetime to the abbey of churches and lands were considerable, especially in Angus (and Aberdeenshire), making the Abbey the most powerful landowner in the county. No fewer than nineteen parish churches in Angus became its property, being Arbirlot, Barry, Dunnichen, Ethie, Guthrie, Glamis, Inverkeillor, Kingoldrum, Kirriemuir, Lunan, Monifieth, Monikie, Murroes, Newtyle, Panbride, Ruthven, St. Vigeans and Strathmartine. These are our current names for the churches, but the 12th-16th century spellings in the charters is extremely valuable. For example, Barry was originally Fethmures, changed by Alexander II, and Maryton had been Veteri Munros, so named when William changed the name of his burgh of Sallorch to Munros (now Montrose), around 1165.

Land grants in Angus included four shires – Arbroath (then St. Vigeans), Ethie, Dunnichen and Kingoldrum, as well as two ploughgates in Rossie, a davoch in Bolshan, a toft and croft in Stracathro, thirteen acres at Barry, and tofts and tenements in the royal burghs of Dundee, Forfar and Montrose. Fishings on the Northesk at Montrose and in the Tay at Portincraig (now Broughty Ferry) and the right to charcoal in the wood of Edzell were also given. After William's death, grants were fewer, but important were the lands of Conon in 1223, South Gardyne in 1283 and Letham Grange in 1449.

The original grants, and later confirmations and leasing of these lands reveal many place-names, including the "lesser" names, especially when disputes with neighbours and perambulations of the marches are recorded. I have walked three of the shire boundaries of Arbroath, Dunnichen and Ethie – but so far not Kingoldrum!

The perambulation of the lands of Dunnichen (not then recorded as either a shire or a parish), in an undated charter of c. 1280-1300, begin at a tree of the forest nearest the head of the corn lands of Hochterlony (now Lownie). Walter of Ochterlony exchanged his lands with the Abbey for those of Kenny in Kingoldrum sometime between 1226 - 39. (The Abbey incorporated Ochterlony into the parish of Dunnichen.) We then continue to the King's highway leading to Forfar until opposite the head of a *rivulum nigrum* = the black burn, on the east of Auchterforfar. I have identified the black burn which long defined the boundary of Auchterforfar farmlands. Next mentioned is the Fyschergate, the road from Arbroath to Forfar along which fish was delivered to the Royal Court. We then skirt the southern shore of the loch of *Roskolby* (now Rescobie), past

the well of *Tubirmanyn* (now lost), crossing the moor by a *lapidum grav* – a grey or engraved stone? This stone was used as a march with the lands of *Balmadych* (now Balmadies), and also as a parish boundary marker. It is known as the Girdle Stone, its Bronze Age cup and ring marks suggesting a girdle for making scones! I helped move it to its present location just down from the junction to give it protection from heavy farm traffic which was passing over it! The perambulation is then completed when we return to the forest of Ochterlony "as oxen move in carts". Andrew Jervise translated this charter and published it in his "Epitaphs and Inscriptions" in 1879.

In the SPNS Newsletter No 32 I wrote an article on the Cardyn's well on Lownie Hill, and this appears in a charter regarding the lands of Ochterlony in 1457, when a dispute occurred between Forfar Town Council and the Abbey over the King's moor, now Kingsmuir. The Provost and baillies consulted their charter chest and confirmed their grant "under the King's wax", which proves that the burgh charter was not taken by Edward in 1296 and survived until Cromwell's destruction of the tolbooth and its contents in 1651.

In the shire of Aberbrothoc there is a lengthy charter in Scots concerning the myre of Balnamoon, on the north, bounding with the barony of Redcastle. Although drained in the late 18th and early 19th centuries I have reconstructed the myre using place-name evidence which confirms that it spread over the upper reaches of the Keillor Burn around the 70 feet contour. Whether this is a lost *baile* place-name or the myre belonged to the lord of Balnamoon I am still pondering.

Kinblethmont was also a barony, like Redcastle, erected from the more extensive thanage of Inverkeillor. Several charters mention the grant of a chapel, hereabouts, by Melville of Kinblethmont around 1189/99, named as *Konanmoorcappel* in 1260. This was wrongly located by local historians as being at Grange of Conon, but the charters confirm that this chapel, dedicated to St Lawrence was at Backboth, to the north in the parish of Inverkeillor. The chapel is long since gone, but a small consecration cross survived until the 1960's, built into an old steading, now also gone. The site is still known as the Chapel field.

William Shaw, Keeper of the Register of Sasines, presented to Arbroath Library a very fine large map (over 6 feet tall!) of Arbroath in 1599 when James VI granted its Burgh Charter. Shaw mapped all the lands mentioned with their original

spellings and dates in the burgh charters which results in a wonderful picture of the medieval town. The *Cunynghill* is recorded in three charters – 1500, 1508 and 1531 – and these are the earliest mentions of cunegars (Rabbit Warrens) in Angus.

I was fortunate to have been a pupil at Arbroath High School (1962-8), when William Forbes Ritchie was Depute Rector and Classics Master. He loved the charters and long after he had retired happily helped me with translations until his death in 1998. My Geography Master was David Alistair Gardner (DAG), who was also Provost of Arbroath 1957-64. He was keen on place-names, and participated in the Royal Scottish Geographical Society's survey of Angus Place-Names in the 1930s. He was the observer for the parishes of Carmyllie, Inverarity and Panbride. John T. Ewen of Pitscandly who chaired the group published a slim volume around 1940, but the card index is lost!

DAG's theory of the meaning of Aberbrothoc was the mouth of the muddy stream, referring to the Brothock water especially in spate. Hence the title of my talk!

In 1969 the North American bluesman, Muddy Waters released the LP "After the Rain"!

Norman Atkinson (from his talk at the Dundee conference)

THE NAME HAWICK: AN EARLY ETYMOLOGICAL ESSAY

The *Times Literary Supplement* 26 July 2019 carried an interesting article by journalist and editor Alan Taylor (*The Scotsman*, *Sunday Herald*, *Scottish Review of Books* etc.), lately retired to the Borders, in which he tells how he tracked down a report in the Hawick Advertiser (7 April 1860, see Murray 1977, 357 n19) of a paper delivered to the Hawick Archaeological Society by a promising young schoolmaster from Denholm, 'On the Origin of the Name of Hawick'.

One of the two etymologies proposed, Old English **haga-wīc* 'hedge-hamlet', is probably correct: May Williamson 1942 and Jessie Macdonald 1991, each probably independently, put forward the same explanation. One or two of the speaker's reported assertions would be queried today. Scots *haugh*, suggested as an alternative to *haga*, is unrelated to 'heath' - *haugh* actually occurs in some place-names Lancashire and Yorkshire as a reflex of *haga*, Smith 1956, 221, but in Scotland it is a piece of land in a river-bend, from Old English *h(e)alh* 'corner, nook' (I suspect *healh* has been miscopied as 'heath' at some stage in

transmission); and *wīc* in place-names generally indicates some specialised status or function, not simply 'a town or hamlet' (Coates 1999). But in 1860 it was an impressive piece of toponymic investigation, by a young enthusiast (aged 23) seeking out the detailed stories behind individual names and other words, but with a clear overview of the distinctiveness of place-names and the problems they present - witness the dictum quoted by Alan Taylor:

'Names of places are much oftener used than the names of many other things, they, therefore, are more likely to shew the effects of the wear and tear of time; besides, when other words do alter, in their altered form they are still applied to the objects for which they stood; but names of places oft-times cease to be of appropriate application, and, when corrupted have little chance of being re-instated.'

The lad o pairts who delivered this address (and others on philological matters to the same Society) was none other than James Murray, who went on to become the patriarch of the *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, that we now know as *The Oxford English Dictionary*. The entry for *haugh* in the OED (from a fascicule completed March 1898) is almost certainly Murray's own, mature, work: it gives a reliable derivation from Anglian Old English *halb*, West Saxon *healh*, and a very characteristic explanation for the benefit of southrons, 'A piece of flat, alluvial land by the side of a river forming part of the floor of the river-valley. The original sense was perh. "corner or nook (of land) in the bend or angle of the river". A northern stream normally crosses and recrosses the floor of the valley striking base of the slope on each side alternately, and forming a more or less triangular "haugh" within its bend on each side in turn'.

Alan James

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<http://www.spns.org.uk/MayWilliamsonComplete.pdf>



Heather Wilkinson stands beside a rather famous signpost in Strathdon, Aberdeenshire, looking appropriately puzzled. Without early forms no secure etymology can be suggested. But topographically the setting of Lost farm is a Gaelic losaid 'kneading trough' rather than pointing to a Pictish cognate of Cornish lost 'tail', which is a significant place-name element although Welsh llost is not. (Photo by John Garth Wilkinson)

Life Membership of SPNS

SPNS has a membership category, Life Membership of the Society, for £80. If you would like to become a Life Member, please contact the Treasurer Peter Drummond, addresses below. If you have already paid for a 3-year membership, any outstanding credit balance can count against the £80 fee. peter.drummond@btinternet.com; 8 Academy Place,

Coatbridge ML5 3AX

A PLACE-NAME, WITH ITS EARLY FORMS, INSCRIBED IN STONE

Cairnhead, formerly Conrick, (Glencairn parish, Dumfriesshire) was once an important settlement, recorded as early as 1507. Now deserted and remote, it lies at the upper end of a long glen near the headwaters of the Dalwhat Water, a tributary of the Cairn Water, in the uplands north-west of Moniaive. Its one remaining building, the Byre, has been turned into a memorial for its once thriving pasts, as well as serving as the starting point for the Striding Arches walk. This is a remarkable landscape project featuring, amongst others, Andy Goldsworthy's Striding Arches themselves, as well as Alec Finlay's Hill of Streams, a celebration of the small burns feeding into the upper reaches of the Dalwhat Water. For full details of these and other associated works, see the website <http://www.stridingarches.com/>

At the Byre, four forms of the place-name, along with dates of occurrence, are beautifully engraved into a dyke, the earliest form being from the year 1547. An interpretation board at the site explains the background to this toponymist's delight:

After copious and painstaking research into local history and many conversations with the local community, letter carver Pip Hall has celebrated in her work at the Byre [the one remaining building at the site] the generations of people who lived and worked at the steading Incorporated into the gateway leading to the Byre are four sandstone blocks bearing a selection of the names by which Cairnhead has been known over the centuries, and a stone slab has been carved with the names of students on a summer camp in 2004 who worked on the reconstruction of some of the drystone walling around the Byre.



Four forms of the name Conrick (now Cairnhead) going back to 1547, engraved at The Byre, Cairnhead, by Pip Hall. Featuring Toby the dog. (Photo: Simon Taylor)



Close up of the left-hand side of the opening, showing forms of the name going back to 1547. (Photo: Simon Taylor)



Close up of the right-hand side of the opening, showing more modern forms of the name. (Photo: Simon Taylor)

Analysis of the name so far:

CAIRNHEAD Glencairn parish (GLC), Dumfriesshire (DMF) Settlement NX701971

2 mercatas cum dimedia (terrarium) nuncupate *Conraich* 1507 RMS ii no. 3025 [Crichton of Sanquhar; '2½ merklands called Conrick'; the charter includes other lands nearby such as Craiglearnan with Fingland GLC (*Craglereane cum Fynglane*).]

Conraicht 1547 Cairnhead Dyke [engraved into a new drystane dyke at the Byre there; so far the source not identified.]

Conrach 1549 RMS iv no. 372 [earl of Glencairn; *Powrane, Conrach et Mynneisgeill* (Minnygryle GLC) sheriffdom of Dumfries.]

Konrick 1600 Cairnhead Dyke [engraved into a new drystane dyke at the Byre; so far the source not identified.]

Canrick c.1750 Roy

Conrig 1804 [engraved into a new drystane dyke at the Byre there; so far the source not identified.]

Conrick 1848 x 1858 OS1/10/21/18 [‘A farm house slated without offices thatched the former is in good repair the latter in bad repair. The house is occupied by a shepherd.’ Note that one of the five informants, David Morine, gives *Cornick*.]

Conrick c. 1860 OS 6 inch 1st edn

Conrick 1945 x 1948 OS 1 inch

Cairnhead 1956 OS 1 inch 7th series

existing name Cairn + SSE *head*

‘(Place at the) head or source of the Cairn (Water)’. The burn it is at the head of what is now the Dalwhat

Water (taking its name from the farm of Dalwhat), one of two large burns that meet south-east of Moniaive to form the Cairn Water, the other being the Castlefairn Water. However, the name Cairnhead suggests that the Dalwhat Water was formerly called the Cairn, although already on Roy (c.1750) this water-course is called *Dalwhatt Water*, with *Dalwhatt head* [*sic*] near its source around OS Blackcraig Hill.

Cairnhead is a relatively modern name, the place appearing on OS maps up until the late 1940s as Conrick. This is a Gaelic name, the etymology of which is as yet obscure. The reason for the change of name from Conrick to Cairnhead is also obscure.

Still on modern OS maps are: Conrick Craig, Conrick Hill, Conrick Burn and Conrick Hass (all also on OS 6 inch 1st edn).

Simon Taylor

‘Gairloch village history and place-name trails’

A 50 page A5 sized booklet has recently been published to help visitors explore the history of Gairloch in Wester Ross and learn about its place-names. Proceeds go to the upkeep of Gairloch Museum. Within its small compass the booklet not only sets out the place-name trails and much general information on local history, but includes several maps and concise but valuable background on the Gaelic language, local dialect, and the history of Ordnance Survey mapping. To aid pronunciation there are provided for Gaelic words and phrases both IPA versions and representations in a less technical phonetic format – presumably for the benefit of non-rhotic-speaking visitors rather than non-Gael Scots, as for instance *raon* is represented by ‘rern’. This will be an essential pocket guide for tourists with inquiring minds, and is available by post through Nevis Hulme, 6 Allt Grisean, Gairloch, Ross-Shire IV21 2DZ.
(note by Bill Patterson)

The Place-Names of Fife,

by Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus

Vols II-V still available; normally £24 each, but £22 incl. UK p&p* to SPNS members. Most recent volume on

Kinross-shire – special offer to SPNS members £28 incl. UK p&p*.

*E-mail Shaun Tyas at Paul Watkins Publishing, shaun@shauntyas.myzen.co.uk, to arrange overseas postage or Paypal payments; or telephone 01775 821542 for credit card payments; or send cheques to 1 High Street, Donington, Lincs., PE11 4TA.

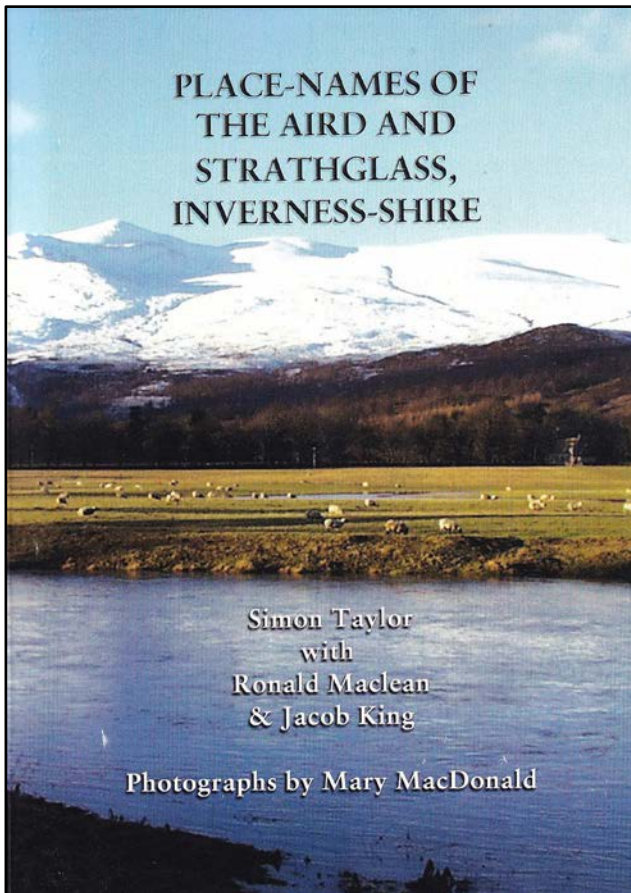
Please see website for details of

BOOKS FROM SPNS:

In the Beginning was the Name, selected essays by Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen;

Cultural Contacts in the North Atlantic Region: The Evidence of Names, edited by Peder Gammeltoft, Carole Hough and Doreen Waugh; and

The Place-Names of Midlothian, Dr Norman Dixon's previously inaccessible and still important PhD study of 1947, with Introduction by Simon Taylor.



This book covers the place-names of eastern Inverness-shire comprising the modern parishes of Kilmorack, Kiltarlity & Convinth and Kirkhill, a large swathe of countryside, both lowland and highland, stretching from the Beaully Firth to the border with Kintail.

Several years ago Ron MacLean secured funding from Highland Council's Aird and Loch Ness Discretionary Budget and from Kiltarlity Community Council to publish the place-name data which had been collected as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB)-funded 'Norse-Gaelic Frontier Project' 2000-2001. This project was based at the University of St Andrews, the team consisting of Barbara Crawford and Simon Taylor, with local support provided by Mary MacDonald. The place-name data itself was put on line by Swithun Crowe, IT Services, St

Andrews, and is available on <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/beaully/>. However, this publication offered an opportunity to refine and correct the original data, adding more names and pronunciations, parish introductions and important 19th- and early-20th-century forms collected from local Gaelic-speakers by scholars such as Charles Robertson and F. C. Diack, and supplied by Jacob King. It was also an opportunity to enhance and illustrate many of the name-analyses by Mary MacDonald's photographs.

The book retails at £12 and will shortly be available on Amazon.co.uk (NB not Amazon.com). If there are any difficulties with this, it can also be obtained from Ron MacLean for £12 + p & p on rdmaclean5@berisay.co.uk. There will be a launch of the book at the SPNS conference in Arrochar on 2nd November, where it will be on sale to those attending at £10.

Simon Taylor

'BLITON' UPDATED

An updated version of Alan James's 'The Brittonic Language in the Old North' (a Guide to P-Celtic place-name elements to be found in northern England and southern Scotland) has been uploaded, in downloadable pdf form, at <https://spns.org.uk/resources/bliton>. This revision adds to the Bibliography and references in the Guide publications that have appeared, or come to the author's notice, over the past three years. In a few cases, these, along with helpful feedback from several users, have prompted small amendments to, or modifications to the discussion of, various elements or individual place-names within the Guide. A number of, mostly minor, errors and inconsistencies within the Index, and between the Index and the Guide, have been corrected. In particular, the location of places within the complicated and often-changed county boundaries in central Scotland should now be more reliable.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The **SPNS autumn conference** will be held on Saturday 2nd November 2019 at the Three Villages Community Hall, Arrochar. Details at SPNS website and on flier with paper copies of this Newsletter. The **spring 2020** conference and AGM will be held at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Skye, on Saturday 2nd May. The possibility of an

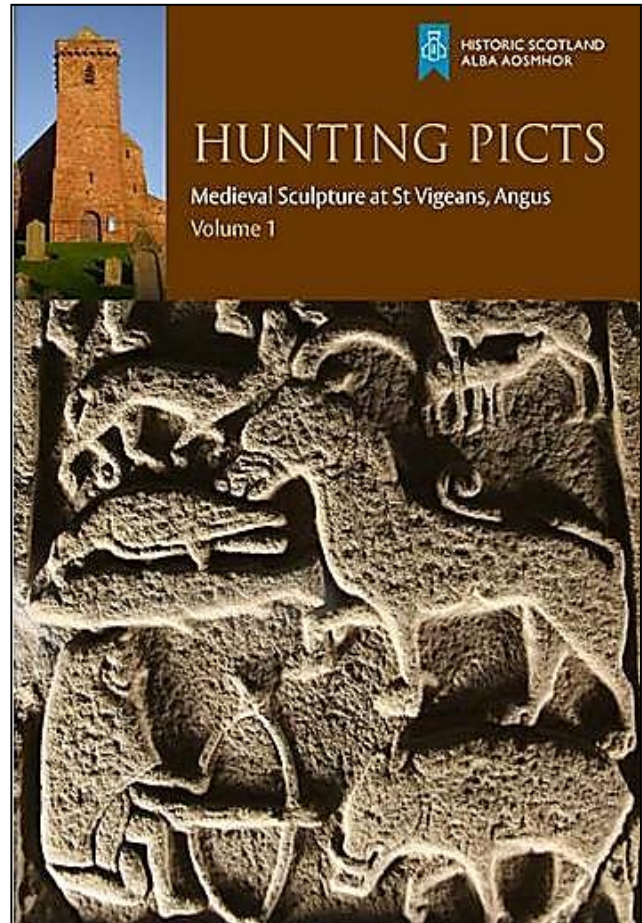
organised field trip on the following day is being investigated.

SNSBI (Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland) holds its autumn day conference, on ‘Vikings and Names’ at York, on Saturday 19th October. SNSBI’s **spring 2020 conference** will be at Bridgend, South Wales, on 17-20 April.

SSNS (Scottish Society for Northern Studies) meets for its **autumn 2019 conference** on 23rd November at the A K Bell Library in Perth (NB: not, as has been customary, in Edinburgh).

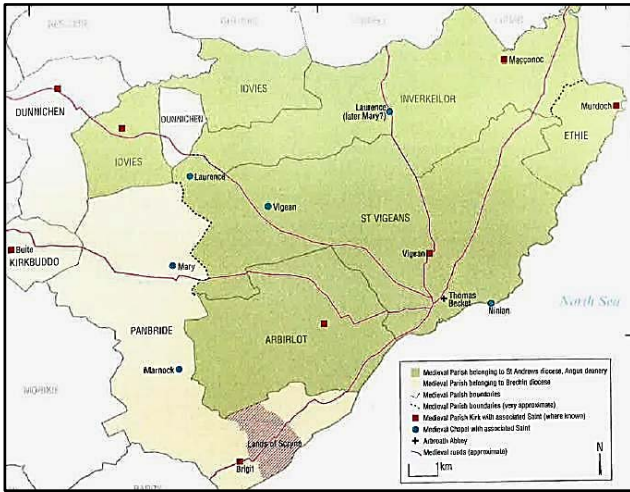
ST VIGEANS: SAINTS AND PLACES

My talk drew heavily on the research I did for a chapter which appeared in the 2017 Historic Scotland publication *Hunting Picts: Medieval Sculpture at St Vigean, Angus* by Jane Geddes et al. (Please note that I was not responsible for the dreadful title!). The chapter was called ‘St Vigean: Place, Place-names and Saints’ (pp. 38-51), and it looked at what the place-names of St Vigean area could tell us about a medieval landscape, above all an ecclesiastical landscape, to better understand the wider context for the magnificent collection of Pictish stones at St Vigean itself. The area was defined through the medieval parishes of south-east Angus, namely St Vigean itself (including Arbroath), Inverkeilour, Ethie, Arbirlot, Panbride and Kirkbuddo.



There can be no doubt that some of the most important place-names in this area are of Pictish origin, and were therefore probably already in place before the carving of many of the stones at St Vigean. For example the names of both Arbroath and Arbirlot are formed with Pictish **aber* ‘burn- or river-mouth’, followed by the name of the water-course as a specific element, also we can assume Pictish, here the Brothock Burn and the Elliot Water respectively.

Another Pictish name is Panbride (along with the related names of Panmure and Panlathy), which contains a Pictish word cognate with Welsh *pant* ‘hollow, valley bottom, den’. The most distinctive features of the immediate area around these three contiguous or near-contiguous places are the deep gorge-like valleys known as Panmure Den and Sticky’s Den (probably formerly Panlathy Den). According to the Poppleton MS king-list, there were 30 kings called Brude, who ruled Ireland and Scotland (*Albania*) for the space of 150 years. Each of these Brudes is given an epithet, the second of which repeats the first but adds the prefix *Ur-*. The list begins: ‘**Brude Pant. Brude Urpant.** B<rude> Leo. B<rude> U<r>leo, B<rude> Gant. B<rude> Urgant’ etc. There is evidence that at least some of these epithets contain place-names, and it can be tentatively suggested that *Pant* here refers to this area in Angus. I will return to Panbride later.



Medieval St Vigeans and environs, with parishes and the names of saints commemorated there, chiefly in place-names. From Simon Taylor's chapter 'St Vigeans: Place, Place-names and Saints' in Geddes et al. 2017. Map drafted by Taylor and drawn by Heather Stoddart.

What about the saints? The first question has to be: who was St Vigean? Whoever he was, he is mentioned in the earliest written records from the area, namely the *Arbroath Liber*,⁴ a collection of charters of the Tironensian abbey of Arbroath founded in the 1170s. Here he appears as Sanctus Vigianus (Vigian with a Latin ending) in the grant of 'the church of St Vigean of Arbroath' to the abbey (*ecclesiam Sancti Vigiani de Aberbrothoc*) c.1200. He is generally held to be the Irish saint Féchín of Fore (Fabhar), Co. Westmeath, whose cult was wide-spread in Ireland and who, according to the Annals of Ulster, died of the plague in 665, and after carefully weighing the evidence I could see no good reason to reject this identification. If he is indeed Féchín of Fore, he is not the only Irish saint to be found in the immediate area.

Quite remarkably the names of two of the parishes immediately west of St Vigeans refer to Irish saints, namely Panbride (Brigit, 6th century) and Kirkbuddo (Buite of Monasterboice, Co. Louth, a contemporary of Brigit). The first element in Kirkbuddo, it should be remarked, is either Pictish **cair* or a similar word borrowed from Pictish into Scottish Gaelic, cognate with Welsh *caer* 'fort, castle, fortified town'. In Scotland it is found so often in conjunction with sites of Roman forts that I have no doubt it was applied to forts of a certain type which we now identify as Roman. There are in fact the visible remains of such a fort at Kirkbuddo, which seems even to appear in a medieval Life of Buite written in Ireland.

⁴ Published as *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc*, 2 volumes, Bannatyne Club, 1848–56

Homage to an early Scottish toponymist

I ended my talk with a celebration of the man who I think should be considered the founder of modern place-name studies in Scotland, namely Robert Maule who in 1611 wrote a history of his family and their lands of Panmure.⁵ Maule writes at some length about the local place-names and their etymology, and I cannot recommend it strongly enough.

There is no room to go into these in any detail here, but here is a brief overview of his approach to place-names:

1. A personal name in a place-name is that of the first settler (e.g. Balhousie).
2. Names indicate former land-use (Carnegie).
3. Names describe land before it was settled (Auchrennie).
4. He has an awareness of a sequence of languages, and of the importance of Gaelic in and around Panmuir.

In the light of modern toponymics some readjustment is required, especially in relation to no. 1, as well as in some of his individual etymologies, but overall Maule presents us with a remarkably sensible treatment of place-names which shines out when compared with so much nonsense offered us in later works: I am thinking especially of many of the outlandish etymologies offered by the ministers writing the Old and New Statistical Accounts. But that is another paper.

Simon Taylor (summarising his talk at the conference in Dundee)

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

Carolyn Anderson and Christopher Fleet, *Scotland: Defending the Nation: Mapping the Military Landscape*, Birlinn, £30 hardback.

Not really a place-name book, but informative and beautifully illustrated and produced. From the wide range of maps from the 16th century onwards you can learn, for instance, that Soviet military map-makers of the Cold War took their ФУТАН, for a former village by Aberdeen harbour, straight from the Footdee of British

⁵ Published in the *Registrum de Panmure*, ed. J. Stuart, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1874).

maps rather than having had informants to pass on the knowledge that locals call it Fittie.
(note by Bill Patterson)

Event notice

On 17th January 2020 a workshop at the University of Glasgow will explore **cognitive, cultural and social aspects of places and place-names**. The workshop is part of a project producing a special issue of *The Journal of Scottish Name Studies* (to be published in 2020). The contributors all share an interest in social onomastics and cognitive toponymy. Their research covers a variety of topics such as coastal place-names in Berwickshire (Dr Leonie Mhari), field name research in North-Eastern Scotland (Dr Alison Burns), elusive place-names in stories and romances (Dr Jake King), place-

lore on the *Cailleach Bheur* (Dr Alasdair Whyte), and the Columban landscape of Glen Lyon (Dr Sofia Evemalm and Dr Anouk Busset). Between 10 am and 1 pm, the six authors will present lightning talks on their articles, after which the audience is encouraged to join the debate. As places are limited please register by emailing Sarah.Kuenzler@glasgow.ac.uk before 14 January 2020. Please also email this address if you would like more information about the workshop or the special issue.



Autumn in Glen Lyon, a 'Columban landscape' - see Event Notice above.