

# SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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The Newsletter of the

***SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY***

***COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA***



*The low-tide view is from the bay at Inverarish on Raasay, south-south-westward across the Sound of Raasay to the hills of Skye. The nearest of these is Glàmaig, with its peaks of An Coileach ('The Cockerel') on the left and Sgùrr Mhàiri ('Mary's Peak') on the right. If, as has been suggested, Glàmaig is a derivative of Old Norse klömbr 'smith's vice, tight place', it presumably refers to the notable cleft between the two parts. Inverarish is a fine example of a 'tautological' place-name: when the meaning of Norse Áross ('burn-mouth') was no longer transparent Gaelic-speakers treated it as the name of the burn itself and prefixed Inbhir to a form with a Gaelic inflected genitive. Inverarish is thus doubly the mouth of a stream. A further linguistic layer is added with the modern name 'Inverarish Burn'. The Society's spring conference on Skye will be a great opportunity to explore the fascinating mixed Norse and Gaelic heritage in the local place-names.*

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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 9 for information on Life Membership.)

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### COMMENT

For anyone seeking an online diversion into the less frequented areas of name studies may we recommend the wonderful world of exonyms: names used for places in other parts of the world, which are different from the names used in those places, though sometimes modified versions?

Obsolete exonyms once used in Scotland reflect trade and cultural contact centuries ago. Thus we have Danskin(e) for Danzig (now Gdańsk); Hafnia for Copenhagen; Campvere for Veere, Scotland's staple port in the Netherlands in early modern times (and appropriately freed by Scottish soldiers in 1944). The 'Three Kings of Cullen', well known in medieval Scotland, acknowledged the prominence of the cult of the Three Wise Men at *Coellen* (now Köln) in the Rhineland, rather than an origin in Banffshire; yet the small town on the Moray Firth has a Three Kings pub and Three Kings rocks, now subject of a tale that they mark the deaths in battle of a Scottish, a Danish and a Norwegian king.

The only fairly well known Gaelic exonym makes up for its rarity by its remarkable history. *Na Beirbhe* for Bergen looks as if it has a plural definite article, but it was clearly feminine genitive singular when prefixed by *cathair* ('city') or *baile* ('town'). The singular form, the gender and the <bh> are consistent with the 11<sup>th</sup> century origin of the city's name as *Bergvin* or *Björgvin*, 'mountain meadow'. But with Bergen's relative decline *Cathair na Beirbhe*, like *Lochlann* (Norway) itself where it was set, became a place of exotic adventures in medieval tales; and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century *na Beirbhe* appeared in Gaelic dictionaries

as a name for the by then more important city of Copenhagen.

The exonyms used in distant parts can also be fascinating. Without knowing already where Yunanistan is, it would be an impressive achievement to work it out. The answer is on page 12. Clue: it is not a Chinese province, nor a reclusive former Soviet republic in central Asia.

## THE COBBLER, HIS RELATIVES AND NEIGHBOURS



*Photo taken by Peadar Morgan at 16:30 on 2nd November 2019 as we left the Three Villages Hall after the conference.*

The Cobbler has a 'Sunday name', Ben Arthur, but the legions of hill-walkers who come to it every year know it by its familiar name The Cobbler. The whole peak, pictured above, is Ben Arthur, whereas one of its three peaks bears the Cobbler name.

The mountain's name was first recorded by mapmaker Timothy Pont in the 1590s (extract below) who noted it as *Craggie hill, Sny Arthire*, as well as making a surprisingly accurate sketch of the skyline profile.



*Sny* is of course a phonetic representation of Gaelic *suidhe*, 'seat', a generic used in Argyll and Bute in connection with the personal names of saints or other important people (e.g. *Suidhe*

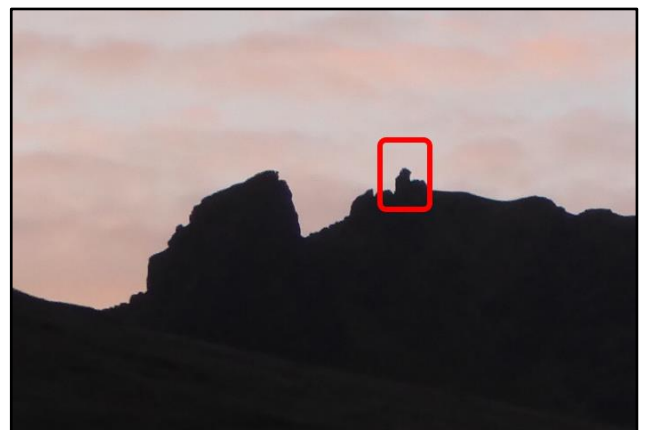
Chatain, Suidhe Fheargas, Suidhe Phadruig). So, Arthur was probably important, too: Watson (CPNS, p. 208) has no doubt that this peak, which he Gaelicises as Beinn Artair, was one of several places in Scotland bearing the name of the legendary king Arthur, including the well-known Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh. Indeed, John MacCulloch in his *Highlands and Western Islands* (1824) noted that: 'to the Highlanders this strange hill is known as Arthur's Seat'. Almost every surrounding peak has Gaelic *beinn*, 'mountain' as the generic (e.g. Beinn an Lochain, Beinn Ime, Beinn Narnain etc), so it was not surprising that over time it became a *beinn* rather than a *suidhe*, by the process of generic element substitution, amongst the local people.

But where did the name Cobbler come from? The first mention comes from 1787, when Thomas Wilkinson in his *Tours of the British Mountains* wrote: 'From [Arrochar] we have a view of a high mountain, whose remarkable summit gives the mountain its name of The Cobbler. Some people imagine an old man mending shoes. I could imagine no such thing ... [rather] the gigantic figure of a hooded man'. Two decades later John Stoddart in his *Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland*, wrote: 'This terrific rock forms the bare summit of a huge mountain, and its nodding top so far overhangs the base as to assume the appearance of a cobbler sitting at work, from whence the local people call it *an greusaiche crom*, 'the crooked shoemaker'. (The Old and New Statistical Accounts make it very clear that Gaelic was still widely spoken in this area until the mid-19th century). Both these men appear to refer to the north peak (on the right in the topmost photo) – though they may have mistaken which peak the locals referred to - and there is still some debate as to whether it or the central peak (the highest point at 884m.) is the 'cobbler'. In the late 19th century H C Boyd in the Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal noted: 'the striking resemblance of the topmost blocks [i.e. the central summit] when seen from Arrochar to a little cowered figure bending over his work'; and the present author concurs with that interpretation. (See image with a red box imposed, below the model of a cobbler at work).

The suggestion has been made in Irving's 1928 *Place-Names of Dunbartonshire* that the name Cobbler is an anglicisation of Gaelic *gobhlach*, 'forked'. However, not only is there no old record of such a form, and in any case the Gaelic would be pronounced approximately *go:lach* (/go:lax/), as in the Beinn Gobhlach near Ullapool, and not at all like English *cobbler*.



*A cobbler at his last*



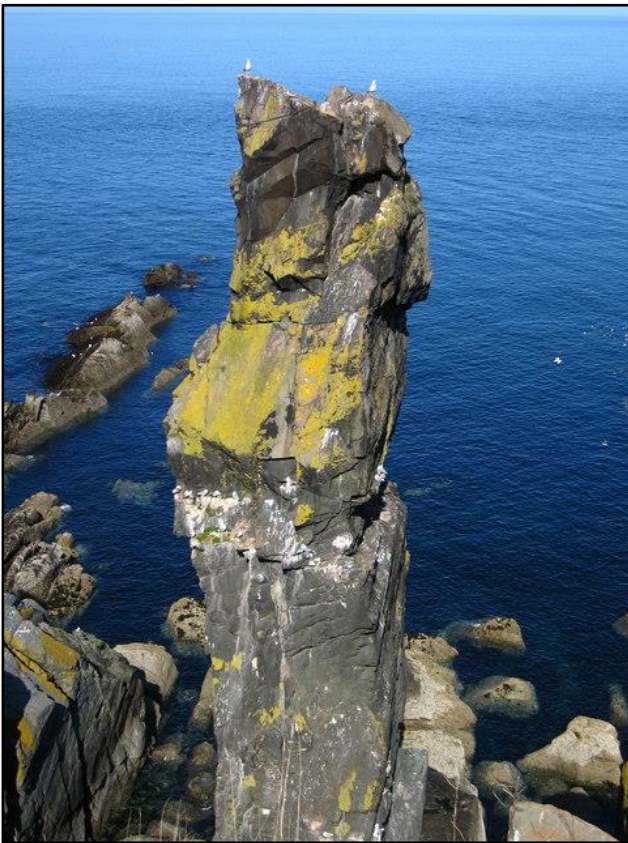
*The Cobbler at his last, on the central peak?*

Another member of the SMC, William Inglis Clark, suggested that the name had been given by a traveller returning from the eastern Alps where: 'the term *cobbler* or *Schuster* is applied to those rocky peaks whose summits terminate in perpendicular pinnacles and towers'. In fact there is really only one significant such name that I can find, the Dreischusterspitze, a 3152m Tirolean peak (pictured below) whose name means 'three cobblers' peak'; it is Cime di Tre Scarperi in Italy in whose territory it now lies.



*The main peak of the Dreischusterspitze*

The local tourist office told me, when I was there in the 1980s, that its name came from having been first climbed by three cobblers, which I suspected was cobblers of a different kind, or more correctly a folk etymology. Thirty years on, the internet allows a proper search which finds it was first climbed in 1869, certainly by three men – though none of them was a cobbler! The leader was Paul Grohmann, a gentleman of independent means, and he employed a local man Franz Innerhofer (a guide, chamois hunter and stonemason) as guide, and they were joined by Peter Salcher, who may have been the Austrian physicist of that name. It is perhaps relevant that the local people at the time apparently called it the Schusterkofel, ‘cobbler summit’, with no ‘three’. Looking at the summit, is it possible the rock pillars resemble three cobblers, or even one?



*Soutar, off the Berwickshire coast*

Closer to home, there are places containing the Scots equivalent, *soutar*, ‘cobbler, shoemaker’, including the Sutors of Cromarty (‘resembling cobblers bent over their work’, *DSL*), and the Soutar sea-stack in Berwickshire (picture on next page) which has a certain twist near its summit that might invite comparison.

But to return to Europe: I did a search for the French word for cobbler, viz. *cordonnier*, and found a 3086m mountain in the Savoie called Le Grand Cordonnier d’ Ambin, ‘the big cobbler of Ambin’, with a very distinctive summit.



*Le Grand Cordonnier d’ Ambin, Savoie; shoemaker on peak on left of the photo?*

Throughout Europe in pre-industrial societies the cobbler was a common sight, and it is hardly surprising if local people in different countries with different languages could ‘see’ and create a place-name referring to the classic image of a cobbler bent over his work. Thus The Cobbler, Arrochar, and his European cousins.

The Cobbler’s neighbours. Pont’s 1590s map (fragment 17 on NLS website) identifies a number of peaks near the Cobbler, several of which bear names still recognisable today: thus *Bin Vean* (Ben Vane), *Bin Vouyrilig H.* Ben Vorlich, and *Bin lim* (Ben Ime). But he also mapped a *Bin Chblarachan* (later *Ben Chlarachan* on Roy’s map 1755) and *Bin Tokkich*. I suggest that the former is the hill now bearing the name A’ Chrois, which stands above a Coire Laraichean (‘corrie of ruins’, OSNB), and which may have been known as \*Beinn a’ Choire Laraichean or similar, later reduced to Chlarachan. Succoth, a settlement near Arrochar at the head of Loch Long, was *Soccach* on Roy 1755, and the OSNB in the 1860s noted it as ‘*Sugach or Succoth*’. Now it may derive from Gaelic *sugach*, ‘merry, cheerful’, from the stream running down to it: or it may relate to the common Gaelic *socach*, ‘snout, hill promontory’. If the latter, the hill above it, now mapped as Creag Tharsuinn, may have been \*Beinn an t-Socach, ‘hill of the promontory’, which would be pronounced in Gaelic similarly to *Bin Tokkich*.

**Pete Drummond** (based on his talk at the November 2020 conference at Arrochar)

## ***THE PLACE BEHIND THE NAMES***

The Hidden Heritage Project was a two-year project devised and managed by members of the Arrochar and Tarbet community with the aim of getting local people involved in investigating the heritage of the important landscape joining the two villages.

The project leaders, Sue Furness and Fiona Jackson alongside Elizabeth Carmichael, a passionate volunteer interested in documentary research, provided the SPNS conference in November 2019 with an enthusiastic and informative presentation on how an interest in place names had stimulated a spin-off research project culminating in the publication of the booklet: *The Gaelic Place Names of Arrochar Parish*.

Sue and Fiona started by telling us about the activities of the Hidden Heritage Project. As amateur archaeologists, Sue and Fiona wanted to engage the local community by focussing on the archaeology and older history of the special corridor of land joining the sea in Arrochar to Loch Lomond, and from there to the rest of central Scotland. They also wanted to get more people of all ages interested in the local heritage, and in heritage in general. They used activities that were informative, varied, professional and importantly fun, so enabling a wide range of people to become involved.

The project succeeded in finding out more about the history of the landscape, and developed ways of interpreting and promoting this to both locals and visitors alike. People of all ages from the local and wider community had the opportunity to participate actively and learn through archaeological excavation, documentary research, walkover survey, art, music, food and other activities – even re-enactment of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Viking saga – leading to a better understanding and appreciation of archaeological processes, the local heritage and landscape in general, and the potential for heritage to attract people to an area to support the local economy.

Place names were integral to the project, and a one-day interactive workshop was organised to teach participants about place names and how to research and record them. The workshop led by Dr Simon Taylor from Glasgow University stimulated so much interest in the subject that four volunteers – Elizabeth Carmichael, Irene Wotherspoon, Libby King and Ann Bray - decided to pursue further investigations, with the aim of recording the place names of Arrochar Parish. Elizabeth Carmichael went on to explain how, supported by Dr Taylor, the team managed to forge a workable methodology that enabled them to record the place names and their derivations, produce a Gaelic pronunciation guide and interpret their meanings. Crucially, they were determined to ensure that the publication was not only informative, but also easy to read and accessible to the ‘wo-man on the street’. [The Gaelic](#)

[Place Names of Arrochar Parish](#) can be downloaded from the Hidden Heritage website to dip into and enjoy.

The Hidden Heritage Project was hosted by Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Argyll and the Islands LEADER.

**Sue Furness** (based on talks at Arrochar)

### Journal of Scottish Name Studies

The latest issue of this peer-reviewed online journal, *JSNS* 13, is available free at <http://www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS/JSNS13.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/>.

### PLACE-NAMES IN THE DEWAR MANUSCRIPTS

John Dewar (1802–72) was a Gaelic-speaking tradition-bearer from Arrochar, a woodsman and sawyer by trade. He never went to school, but taught himself to read and write both English and Gaelic. During 1862–72 he was paid by the duke of Argyll to go around Argyllshire, Arran, W. Dunbartonshire, W. Perthshire and Lochaber in search of oral history, which he wrote up in Gaelic in ten manuscripts now known as the Dewar MSS (7,000 pages in all). Seven of these are at Inveraray Castle, and three in the National Library (Adv. MSS 50.2.18–20). The stories contain numerous place-names (not merely settlements but also rocks, caves, fords and other natural features), including many not known from other sources. The aim of this paper is to explain the value of the material to the onomastician.

In addition to the Dewar MSS themselves we must note the existence of the Hector MacLean MSS at Inveraray (a translation of a large part of the Dewar MSS made in 1879–81), and also of the Rev. John Mackechnie’s book *The Dewar*

*Manuscripts Volume One* (1963), which consists of a small part of the Hector MacLean MSS. Unfortunately these are of little use to the onomastician. However, the Inveraray archives have gradually been opened up to the public since Mackechnie's time. In 2015 the Dewar and MacLean MSS were photographed in their entirety; in 2017 work began on transcription, and the 'Dewar Project' was inaugurated.

The work of the Dewar Project is done by volunteers world-wide. The stories have been classified into geographical areas, each of which will become a book, and we have had enthusiastic co-operation from Birlinn Ltd the publishers. Transcription and translation for Islay, Jura, Colonsay, Kintyre, Arran, the Loch Lomond area and Perthshire is well advanced, so we are now in a position to say that the first three books to appear will be *John Dewar's Islay, Jura and Colonsay* in 2021, *John Dewar's Perthshire and Loch Lomond* in 2023, and *John Dewar's Kintyre* in 2025. Each will contain Dewar's stories from the area in question with a parallel English translation, maps, a place-names gazetteer, end-notes, a biographical list of informants, a glossary and an index. *John Dewar's Islay, Jura and Colonsay* will also contain an essay on Hector MacLean and a full catalogue of the MacLean MSS with cross-references to the Dewar MSS, while *John Dewar's Perthshire and Loch Lomond* will contain an essay on Dewar and his manuscripts.

The project aims to produce a direct transcript, an edited transcript and a translation of every page of the Dewar MSS. We have worked out full guidelines for all three stages, including the treatment of place-names. Some place-name statistics are now available for Islay, Jura, Colonsay, Arran, Perthshire and Loch Lomond; these may serve as an indication of the value of the collection as a whole.

- *John Dewar's Islay, Jura and Colonsay* contains 59 texts, which have thrown up 103 Islay names, 39 Jura names and 33 Colonsay names.
- The number of Arran names is 105. Of these, 28 (i.e. 27%) are not listed by Ian Fraser in *The Place-Names of Arran* (1999). There are about 1,500 names in Fraser's book, and the Dewar MSS can add 28. But Fraser's 1,500 names are taken from documentary sources noted in English and the memories of 18 Gaelic speakers recorded in 1961–63, while Dewar's 105 names are embedded in Gaelic stories noted down 100 years earlier, which usually provide good clues to location. In many cases Fraser has had to guess the correct

Gaelic form, so sometimes Dewar's names back him up, and sometimes they contradict him. What is more, the 26 new names are not all rocks and caves – they include a church and a glen, two types of name that are usually pretty well recorded.

- For Perthshire and Loch Lomond there are 56 texts (43 for Perthshire, 13 for the Loch Lomond area). Of these 13, five are in English only in Mackechnie's *The Dewar Manuscripts Volume One*, and another five are in Gaelic and English in Michael Newton's *Bho Chluaidh gu Calasraid*. Unfortunately the editing in Newton's book is intrusive, which negates its usefulness to the onomastician.
- The Loch Lomond texts include 286 different names, many of them with multiple citations in different spellings. We could round this figure down to 250 to exclude names from outside this area (by which I mean both sides of Loch Lomond, everything between Loch Lomond and Loch Long, and everything within five miles of Arrochar). In conducting this exercise I noticed that it is very rare indeed for a page of the Dewar MSS to have no place-names in it. Sometimes one is struck by the sheer number of different place-names on a page. On one there are 24 (not a list but an itinerary, describing a raid by the MacFarlanes on the Colquhouns, which means that we can tell approximately where each place is).

John Dewar was born 6 September 1802 in Craganbreck in the parish of Rhu, about four miles south of Arrochar. Craganbreck is an elusive name, and the glen in which it appears to be located has a curious onomastic history. It is traditionally *Gleann na Callanach* ('Hazel Glen'), confirmed by Dewar, but *Gleann Cùlanach* ('Back Glen') on modern maps. As for Arrochar itself, road-signs give it in Gaelic as *an t-Archar*, universally explained as 'the ploughgate' (a land measurement). The road-sign form is perversely archaic, going back to the elements that lie behind the word rather than showing how it had begun to develop by the 13th century. Dewar routinely spells it *an t-Airbhre* but indicates that it is pronounced 'an t-ara-ar'. It is possible to show that he had got *airbhre* out of a dictionary. We must dismiss Dewar's favourite spelling and stick with his pronunciation, which could be derived from *arachar*, or equally from the Latin for a simple plough, *aratrum*, which gave French *araire*. Even if it does not mean a ploughgate, it still means a plough.

Dewar's 'comfort zone' was W. Dunbartonshire, N. Cowal, Inveraray, Glen Shira, Glen Orchy and Breadalbane. The further out he goes, the more he struggles with place-names. He tries to make sense of them as if they were Gaelic, when they may be Norse or pre-Celtic. He spells Loch Lomond or *Loch Laomainn* in 17 different ways. He clearly thought it meant 'the loch of the blaze of fire'. Likewise, he consistently turns *Asgainnis* (Asknish in Argyllshire, a name of Norse origin) into *Faichinnis* ('Parade-Ground Meadow'). He also agonises over 'Bute'. Names that occur in his two notebooks are likely to be more authentic than those in his eight more formally written manuscripts, because in the latter he unfortunately had more time to think about them. He frequently leaves gaps for names and fills them in later; many of the gaps remain to this day. It was his standard practice to listen carefully to a story, memorise it, write it down at his leisure, then go back to the informant, read out his text and note down any corrections or additions. Names did not seem to lodge in his memory in the same way as words.

Other problems for Dewar, and therefore for us, are folk etymology and simple misunderstanding. Examples of folk etymology are provided by his spellings *Coille na h-Ochanaich* ('the Wood of Lamenting') for Kilnochanoch in Mid Argyll, *Sliabh Gaoil* ('the Hills of Love') for Sliabh Guill in Knapdale, *an Carragh Sgiathach* ('the Winged Pillar-Stone') for Carskey in Kintyre, and *Cath-gu-Tuatbail* ('Anticlockwise Battle') for Catacol in Arran. (Sliabh Gaoil is not Dewar's fault – it remains the map spelling to this day.) An example of simple misunderstanding is *Cnoc nan Aighean* ('the Hill of the Heifers') in Islay, correctly *Cnoc nan Athaidhean* 'the Hill of the Fords'.

Dewar's successes far outweigh his failures, however. Simply having a huge body of place-names in Gaelic from the 1860s is a massive plus in its own right. Where there are other forms on record, Dewar's can be added very helpfully to the list of citations. As examples of names where I believe Dewar puts the record straight, I would cite his *Loch an Reast* ('the Loch of the Rest') for Loch Restil and *Dundathràgh* 'the Fort of Two Beaches' for Dundarave. Dewar was actually fascinated by place-names, constantly diverting from his narrative to explain them. And his spelling of names often provides clues to pronunciation which can supplement OS forms and lead us to the meaning, e.g. OS *Glasdair* with Dewar *Glasair* (in Glen Roy, Lochaber) suggests *Glasboire* 'Grey Thicket'. Finally we may note the recurrent formula 'X where Y happened' or 'X

where Y was' in his notebooks, presumably reflecting traditional wisdom, e.g. from Sunart and Ardnamurchan we have *Sron an tidbean far an do Chambaich Sir D an tus* ('Strontian where Sir D[onald Campbell] camped first') and *Coire mhuilean far an rov tigh MhicNiombain* ('Corryvullin where MacNiven's house was').

John Dewar died in his brother Donald's house in Dumbarton on 13 December 1872, aged 70, and was buried in the family plot in Arrochar. The gravestone is easily found in the cemetery, five minutes' walk from our conference venue, beside the ruins of the medieval church.

**Ronnie Black** (based on his talk at Arrochar)

### **'FLORY LOYNACHAN'**

This poem can be traced back to the mid-1800s and reflects the language of the people of Kintyre, which was (and to some extent still is) a mixture of Scottish and Irish Gaelic with Ayrshire Lallans. The language to this day is peppered with Gaelic idiom which can be quite confusing to the visitor. From my early years, I only knew one man who could recite the poem from memory, and I doubt if there are more than a handful today who are even aware of it. The poem is reputed to have been written by Neil Brolachan (Brodie) in order to record the local dialect which was quickly passing.

The places referred to are all familiar to me. The place-name *Achnaglach* can be found on the Campbeltown to Southend Road just north of the quarry at Killellan. The name is probably **Achadh** (field) **nan** (of the) **clach** (stones). *Kilmashenachan* is a farm on the Machariorch Road near Southend with a fantastic view over to the island of Sanda. The familiar prefix, **Cill-** (dative of *ceall*, from Latin *cella*) is followed by the typical Gaelic formula of **ma** (my) with the name of a locally culted saint, probably Senán or Senchán.<sup>1</sup> The farm of *Crockstaplemore* is also on the Campbeltown-Southend Road and the anglicised spelling shows the relatively recent development of Gaelic cn-, into a cr- sound. It thus combines **cnoc** (hillock), **stàball** (stable) and **mòr** (big), with that adjective making this *cnoc stàball* distinct from a Knockstapplebeg (*beag*, 'little'). In *Kilwheepnach*, again we have the **Cill-** prefix followed by the saint's name – in this case perhaps a little known Irish cleric,

<sup>1</sup> There is interesting information on this name on the 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' website: <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1337698342>.

**Coibhdenach**.<sup>2</sup> Kilwhipnach is the modern form. A detailed explanation is offered in ‘Kintyre Places and Place-Names’ by Angus Martin.<sup>3</sup>

**Feochaig**, grid reference NR 763 133, is contentious, however, with a variety of interpretations including one from my father, John Cameron. I am tempted by his interpretation – ‘place of the whelks or winkles’, from the Gaelic *faochag*. This farm is on the picturesque Learside road from Campbeltown to Southend. It is single track with passing places, hairpin bends and steep ascents and descents, but worth every inch of the way. Not for the faint-hearted! The name Feochaig dates back to before 1480 and so the pronunciation may have changed over the years.

**Ballochgair** (NR 775 274) is probably **Bealach** (pass) **gearr** (short or steep). *Gearr* is also used for a hare in some dialects. **Tuyinreoch** of which the modern spelling is Tonrioch might be interpreted as **Tòn** (bottom or backside) **riabhach** (brindled), though Tuyin- could be seen as representing the plural *taighean*, ‘houses’. A more romantic explanation is **Taigh** (house) **na** (of the) **Rioghachd** (kingdom), perhaps dating back to the arrival of Fergus Mòr mac Eirc in South Kintyre as King of the Scots. Close by is a farm called Tirfergus i.e. Fergus’s land. **Drumgarve** (NR 728 266) comes from **Druim** (ridge) **garbh** (rough) and **Ballochantee** (NR 662 323) is **Bealach** (pass) **an t-** (of the) **suidhe** (seat). The modern spelling is Bellochantuy but the older spelling is still the way it is pronounced. **Creishlach** (modern form Christlach) is generally regarded as Christ’s place and thus the site of a religious settlement, but I have no evidence for this. I have suggested *crèis*, ‘ravine’, as an alternative explanation. **Coeran** (NR 716 133) (modern form Kearan) is probably **caorann**, ‘rowan tree’. **Trinch** refers to Trench Point.

**Dorling**, now Doirlinn, is a raised area of shingle which allows passage on foot between the mainland and Davaar Island at low tide.

*Were I the Laird o’ Achnaglach,  
Or Kilmashenachan fair,  
Crockstaplemore, Kilwheepnach,  
Feochaig or Ballochgair,  
Did I inherit Tuyinreoch,  
Drumgarve, or Ballochantee,  
Creishlach, or Coeran – daing the bit –*

<sup>2</sup> ‘Saints in Scottish Place-Names’ notes the form *Kilcobenach(e)*, c. 1600.

<sup>3</sup> Angus Martin: *Kintyre Places and Place-Names*, The Grimsay Press, ISBN 978-1-84530-134-7; page 72.

*I’d fauchat them a’ for thee!*

*O, the Clabbydhu, it loves the Trinch,  
The Crouban, the quay-neb,  
While the Anachan and Brollochan,  
They love the Mussel-ebb.  
The Muirachbani the Dorling loves,  
And the Gleshan, and Guildee,  
They love to plouder through the loch;  
But, Flory, I love thee!*

*O, it buitie be an ogly thing  
That mougres thus o’er me,  
For I scraed at mysel’ thestreen,  
And could not bab an e’e.  
My heart is a’ to muilins minched  
Brye, smuirach, daps, and gum  
I’m a poor cruichach, spalyin’ scrae  
My borts have struck me dumb.*

*Dear Flory Loynachan, if thou  
Thro’ Saana’s sonn’ wert toss’d,  
And rouchled like a shougie-shoo  
In a veshal with one most,  
Though the nicht were makan’ for a roil,  
Tho’ ralliach were the sea,  
Though scurlins warpled my thonl pins  
My shallop would reach thee.*

*Thou’rt not a hochlan sclaurach, dear,  
As many trooshlach be;  
Nor I a claty skybal, thus  
To sclaijer after thee;  
Yet haing the meisachan, where first  
I felt love’s mainglin’ smart,  
And haing the boosach dyvour too  
Who spoong’d from me thine heart !*

*I rbane a Yolus Cronie – quick –  
Across this rumpled brain!  
Bring hickery-pickery, bring wallink,  
Drosbachs, to sooth my pain!  
Fire water – fire a spoucher full –  
These frythan stouns to stay!  
For like a sparrow’s scaldachan  
I’m gosping night and day!*

Glossary of words marked in light brown (SG = Scottish Gaelic)

*daing* – a mild curse; *fauchat* – forego; *clabbydhu* – black bivalve, a large mussel; *crouban* – crab; *quay-neb* – quay head; *anachan* / *brollachan* – black bivalves; *muirachbani* – white shellfish, SG *maorach bàn*; *gleshan* – coal fish, and *guildee* – its young; *plouder* – plunge; *buitie* – must; *mougres* – creeps; *scraed* – scratched; *thestreen* – last night; *bab an e’e* – close an eye; *muilins* – bread crumbs; *minched* – minced; *brye* – scouring powder; *smuirach* – small coal; *daps* – flounders; *gum* – coal dust; *cruichach* –



crooked; *spalyin* – flat-footed; *scrae* – skinny fellow; *borts* – hurts; *Saana* – Sanda Island off Southend; *soun'* – sound; *roubled* – tossed about, cf Scots *roch*, 'rough'; *shougie-shoo* – see-saw; *most* – mast; *roil* – storm; *ralliach* – slightly stormy; *scorlins* – cord-like seaweed; *warpled* – entangled; *thowl pins* – rowlocks; *scleurach* – untidy, slut, SG *sgluirach*; *hoclan* – clumsy; *troosblach* – worthless thing, cf trash; *claty* – dirty; *skybal* – worthless fellow, SG, *sgloball*; *sclaffer* – walk clumsily without lifting feet; *haing* – hang; *meishachan* – subscription dance; *mainglin* – crushing, mangling; *boosach* – drinking, boozing; *dylvour* – debtor; *spoonged* – stole deceitfully; *rhane* – recite; *yolus*, SG *eolas*, 'knowledge', *yolus cronie* – charm; *rumpled* – confused; *hickery-pickery* – tonic bitters; *wallink* – speedwell; *drosachs* – doctors' drugs; *spoucher*, wooden ladle for baling a boat, cf SG *spuidgear*, a baling ladle; *frythan* – cook in frying pan; *stouns* – sharp pains; *scaldachan* – unfeathered nestling, cf SG *sgallach* 'bald' from Norse *skalli*; *gosping* – gasping. 'Flory Loynachan' is a diminutive of Flora Lonie.

Alan Cameron (from his talk at Arrochar)

#### 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](mailto:peter.drummond@btinternet.com); 8 Academy Place, Coatbridge ML5 3AX

### SNEAKY SWANS: EALAI DH IN PLACE AND TRADITION

A small standing stone in a field opposite St Moluag's Church on Lismore is identified as a



'Cross' on the current OS map and as a 'Sanctuary marker (period unassigned)' by Canmore which names it 'Clach na h-Eala (the stone of the swan)'. It is very roughly in the form of a cross but it looks nothing like a swan and neither is it close to any body of water.

There is no reference to the stone in the Old Statistical account of 1791 but the New Account of 1845 mentions various 'obelisks' on Lismore including that on the glebe:

'... it has been broken, at the height of three feet from the ground, near it are the remains of ancient walls, and tradition says that they were the walls of a sanctuary, whither malefactors of every description fled for refuge, during the darkness of past ages. The stone is called in Gaelic *Clach na h'eala*, 'the stone of the swan'. And it is said that the malefactor fleeing to the sanctuary was safe, when once he laid his hand upon the horn of the altar, *Clach na h'eala*, and after remaining a year and a day within the walls, he came out absolved of his crimes'.

The OS Name Book gives the standing stone the name "Clach na h-Ealaidh", the Swan's Stone', with Clach na h-Eala as an alternative, and the extract from the NSA quoted earlier is added in red ink under General Observations. It seems a strange name to give to a cross or sanctuary but there may be another explanation.

In the Notes to Volume 5 of the Celtic Review of 1911-12, W J Watson refers to *eala(dh)* as a 'term which Mr. A Carmichael informs me is used in Lismore and elsewhere to denote the stone marking an ancient tomb presumably of a cleric'. Information provided by Carmichael is referred to again by Watson in a Topographical Varia IV published in Volume 7 of the Celtic Review that 'as is to be expected, a girth in Lismore, one of the boundaries of which was Clach an Ealadh'.

He provides further elaboration in Place-Names of Celtic Scotland mentioning that the place on Iona 'where the dead were landed before burial was called *Ealadh*, representing O.Ir. *ailad*, *elad*, a tomb. One of the boundaries of the girth of Lismore was called *Clach na h-Ealadh*. The dative case of *ealadh* is *ealaidh*, and this may be the explanation of the name Elie in Fife, called of old 'the Elie'".

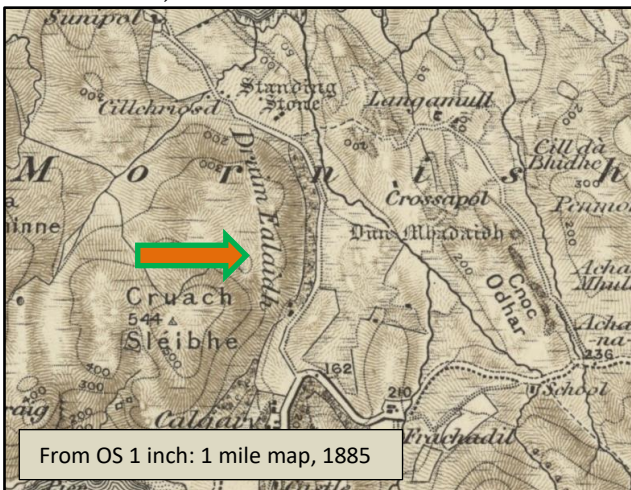
The then minister of Lismore, Ian Carmichael, attempted to provide an explanation for the 'rather puzzling' *Clach-na-h-eala* and its 'popular meaning' stone of the swan in his 1948 book 'Lismore in Alba'. He mentions that the bird was regarded in the West Highlands as a good omen

with vows made to the swan and that it was ‘generally held to be sacrilege to injure a swan’ but concludes it is not the correct meaning and goes on to mention other suggested explanations including stone of the swift, *ealamb* in Gaelic, and stone of immunity with *iolla* or *ealla* having a pronunciation very similar to *eala* and used in the phrase *gabb iola(ealla) ris*, which he translates as ‘leave him alone’.

Another local writer, Donald Black, in his 2006 book ‘A Tale or Two from Lismore’ refers to it as *Clach na h-Ealamb* or ‘stone of the quick’ and repeats the tradition given by Ian Carmichael that those found guilty at the *Cnoc nam Bretheamb* or *Cnoc na Breith*, the hill of judgement, north-west of the church, were given the chance to reach the sanctuary stone but if unsuccessful were taken to *Tom a’ Chrochaidh*, the hill of hanging, to the south of the church.

My suggestion is that the correct name should have a long ‘e’, *èalaidh*, which in Gaelic is to crawl, creep, flit or sneak, that someone might well have to do to get the safety of a sanctuary. A few place-names have this interpretation and others perhaps should have.

***Druim Ealaidh*** on Mull just to the north of Calgary Bay which the OS Name Book tells us means ‘Ridge of the Crouching’, despite not having a length mark (*fada*)<sup>4</sup> on the ‘e’. (OS 1 inch: 1 mile, 1885.)



From OS 1 inch: 1 mile map, 1885

***Abhainn Ealay*** on North Uist is a small stream that flows into Loch Hosta in North Uist with the OS Name Book giving *Abhainn Ealaidh* as an alternative ‘mode of spelling’ with A A Carmichael as an ‘authority’ for this but no meaning provided. However, an original

<sup>4</sup> In current Scottish Gaelic orthography only the ‘grave’ style of *fada* is used. Older usage for some words including *èaladh* and *féith* was an ‘acute’ style of *fada* indicating not only length but sound quality similar to French *é*.

Alexander Carmichael manuscript I came across when researching something else in the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh gives the name of the area it flows through as *Gleann-ialaidh*, or the ‘Glen of Stealth’, deriving from an incident in the ‘savage feud’ between the Siol Gorrie and the Siol Murdoch where the former broke through the bank of Loch Cletraval above Dun Hosta drowning the latter in their beds and creating Loch Hosta.

***Féith na h-Ealaidh*** above Strath Ossian between *Beinn na Lap* and *Garbh-bheinn*, for which the OS Name Book gives the meaning ‘Quagmire of the Swan’. Although the stream that runs from here to *Loch Ghuilbinn* in Strath Ossian is shown as *Allt Fèith Thuill*, earlier versions of the OS map gives it as *Allt Féith na h-Ealaidh* which passes through *Inbbireala*, with the meaning ‘Confluence of the Swan’ given in the OS Name Book, before flowing into the loch. At 529 metres above sea level, few if any swans will have ever been seen here but the glen is narrow and less obvious as a route between *Loch Ghuilbinn* and the head of *Loch Treig* and the meaning of the name here may have been confused with an original ‘to crawl or sneak’ derivation.

***Clachnelle*** north of Ballater is suggested by Adam Watson in his 2013 book on the ‘Place-Names in Much of North-East Scotland’ as ‘maybe Clach an Ealaidh, stone of the creeping to get within reach of game’ and goes on to refer to Craigellie or Creag Ealaidh near Alyth as having the same meaning.

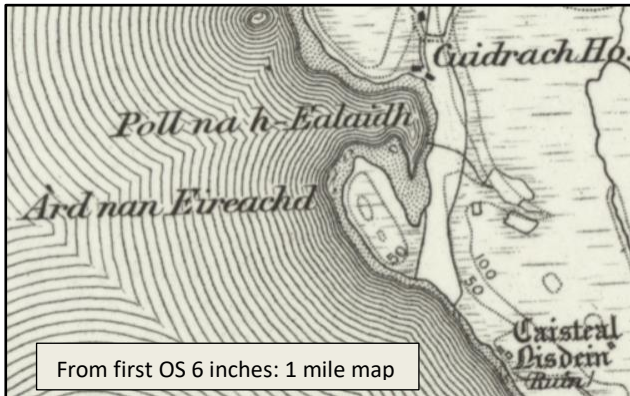
***Elie*** in Fife is proposed by Simon Taylor and Gilbert Markus to derive from *èaladh*, a verbal noun ‘creeping’ that has developed a secondary meaning ‘a passage for boats between two rocks’ referring to a large rocky tidal island where the harbour now is.

***Creag na h-eala***, some 50 metres offshore on the other side of the Tarbat Peninsula from Portmahomack, would be expected to have the same meaning but the OS Name Book calls it ‘The Swan’s Rock’.

***Seolaid na h-Eala*** is shown between the small islands of Hermetray and Groatay off North Uist in the Sound of Harris, by Hamish Haswell-Smith in his 1996 Scottish Islands book. He translates this as ‘channel of the swan’ and writes that it is named after a famous 17<sup>th</sup> century Skye-built birlinn called *White Swan*. However, it is not shown on OS maps or named on Admiralty Charts and it appears that the information comes from a 1989 paper in the Transactions of the

Gaelic Society of Inverness by Donald MacKillop, later published in a booklet, 'The Sea-Names of Berneray'. MacKillop tells us the Channel or Fairway of the Swan name comes from a story told by North Uist fisherman who said it came from a 'galley' called 'The White Swan' built on Skye 'for a dubious if not nefarious purpose'.

**Poll na h-Ealaidh** south of Uig on Skye is where the galley was supposed to have been built and anchored with the OS Name Book giving it the



meaning 'Swan's Mooring Place', subsequently scored out and replaced in red ink with 'Bay of the Swan'. *Dùn Maraig* on a tidal islet in the bay, *Ard nan Eireachd*, 'court or gathering', the southern arm of the bay, and *Caisteal Uisdein* a few hundred metres to the south all suggest 'a place of power or force', a possible meaning of *Cuidr[e]ach* at the head of the bay. The bay itself is not obvious and could well have been the base for 'dubious and nefarious purposes' with *Uistean Mac Ghilleaspuid Chlerich* reputed to have been a 'very powerful and treacherous man' and the 'wild sons of Hugh' responsible for many atrocities on North Uist in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The previously mentioned *Seolaid na h-Eala* follows the disputed boundary between the Macleods of Harris and the MacDonalds of North Uist, but is not named on the map used in the legal case finally settled in 1781, which might have been expected if this was what it was called at the time. The much later story told by a North Uist fisherman may have been just that but based on the tradition that the channel was used by Macdonald boats sailing to and from Skye all the while trying to evade Clan Macleod.

**Maoraich-éalaidh** is not a place-name but features in a 'strange mermaid song' translated by Sorley Maclean as 'I saw a girl with flowing hair, sitting on a sea rock alone; with a blue mantle as clothing, among the creeping shell-fish of the shore' (my emphasis). A recent compilation of Gaelic shellfish names produced for Scottish Natural Heritage gives *maoraich-éalaidh* the meaning

'shellfish harvested by moonlight' with the Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic providing the quotation: *Tha mi a' dol dhanan traigh a dh'iarraidh maoraich-ealaidh*. Interestingly both Sorley Maclean and SNH accent the 'e' of *ealaidh* but DASG does not.

Bearing in mind the comment made by Simon Taylor at the Spring 2019 conference in Dundee about the many 'outlandish etymologies offered by the ministers writing the Old and New Statistical Accounts' and what Eila Williamson said at last November's conference in Edinburgh about the inconsistent way in which the OS Name Books were compiled, if you think a swan features in a place-name, it may not be what it seems.

**Bill Stephens**, independent researcher, summarising his talk at Arrochar (maps from NLS maps website)

### Journal of Scottish Name Studies, Workshop 2

On Friday, 17th January, the contributors to the forthcoming special issue of the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* (14/2020) met in the University of Glasgow's Senate Room to present their research. They each gave 10-minute lightning talks of their forthcoming articles, which allowed plenty of time for discussions and feedback from the audience. Sarah Künzler introduced the event and the speakers before Alasdair Whyte presented his study of Mull place-name lore related to A' Chailleach Bheur. Sofia Evemalm-Kalamakis and Anouk Busset introduced their joint article on onomastic and archaeological perspectives on places of power in medieval Glen Lyon. This was followed by Leonie Mhari's talk on metaphor and narratives of naming on the Berwickshire coast, a contribution which raised important issues in cognitive toponymy. The morning drew to a close with Jake King talking about the origin and development of some Gaelic exonyms - Dreòlainn, Sorcha and Ioruaidh - from the medieval period to the present. Unfortunately, Dr Alison Burns was not able to join us on the day but she will contribute an article on field names based on her PhD research.

Sincere thanks also go to the audience of the event, which comprised of academics, students, and members of the Scottish Place Name Society. Their questions and comments made the event a lively yet productive affair. In the afternoon the contributors and editors retired to the Turnbull Room to discuss more general thematic and source-critical issues. The special issue will have a distinct focus on perspectives and power(s) inherent in place-making and place-naming from the medieval period to the present.

**Sarah Künzler** (guest editor for the special issue)

**Yunanistan:** the Turkish name for Greece; probably 'land of Ionians', ancient Greek settlers (Ἴωνες, *Iōnes*) on the western coast and off-shore islands of Asia Minor.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Our **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.

The Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland (**SNSBI**) has its **spring 2020 conference** at Bridgend, South Wales, on 17-20 April.

The **SSNS** (Scottish Society for Northern Studies) has arranged a conference in Inverness on 9 May 2020, on the recently found Conan stone, and has set 21 November as the date for its **autumn 2020 conference**.

## REACHING OUT: PLACE-NAMES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN DUNKELD AND CALLANDER

A recurring theme in place-names studies in recent years has been outreach. The talk I gave at Dundee was concerned with the communicating our research to the public, and some of the ways I have been doing that lately. Most of my involvement with communicating with the public was through that most common way for academics, via walks and talks. Certainly, I had done more than a few of these while working at the University of Glasgow on the *Scottish Toponymy in Transition* (STIT) project. This included working with bodies such as the Ochils Landscape Partnership to provide walks in Tillicoultry and Dollar with fellow STIT members, Professors Thomas Clancy and Carole Hough and Drs Simon Taylor, Eila Williamson and Leonie Dunlop. The level of engagement by the public at these events can be tremendous and we as place-name scholars can learn a great deal. At a recent talk I gave in Kilmadock (Doune) in Perthshire the number of questions and level of discussion afterwards meant I stayed for over an hour beyond the advertised time, learning in the process of the existence of an unrecorded *Elrig*-name!

My first involvement outside 'walks and talks' was in 2014, when I was asked by Perth and Kinross

Heritage Trust (PKHT) to take part in a Living History Fair at Blairgowrie, as part of the outreach programme for the Trust's archaeological dig at Lair in Glenshee; I had recently completed a place-names survey for the project. I set up a stall for the day, complete with my copies of Roy's and Stobie's maps and spent the rest of the day speaking to a steady stream of people showing great interest in the place-names of Glenshee and Blairgowrie, including many locals eager to give me information about their place. One of the people who spoke to me was Clare Cooper of CATERAN Commonwealth. The chat we had led to me working on the place-names of the CATERAN Trail, for which I produced 5 online booklets to help facilitate walks along the trail. Another project I became involved with through PKHT was the Tay Landscape Partnership. Unfortunately, despite putting together a bid for the project, I only became involved at the very end when the budget was found to have money left over. I feel it was a missed opportunity for some fantastic community engagement with place-names. Nevertheless, the director of PHKT, David Strachan, recognised the value of the contribution place-names made to his Glenshee project, and factored place-names into the community engagement component for the King's Seat Archaeology Project.

My part in this project, 'a place-name and intangible heritage survey', introduced a group of people to the study of place-names, including identifying sources from a range of material from historical sources, poetry, and folklore, over the course of two days. The area of the survey was small, only around 1 km square. We were greatly assisted by the fact there is an archive in Dunkeld, some of which includes copies of material from Blair Castle, which held the lands around Dunkeld, the most impressive of which was a plan of 1819, based on an earlier plan of 1759. After the study days, we gathered for a night to collate material from the archive, and at the end I produced a short report detailing our results. The link for this report can be found at: <http://www.pkht.org.uk/projects/current-projects/kings-seat/>.

In September 2018, PKHT held a Picts in the Park Living History Fair, complete with visits to the dig, Pictish combat demonstrations, and storytelling based on my research. I also held talks and drop-in sessions speaking to people about the place-names – I never got the chance to see any of the combat or the visit the dig; I was too busy with people interested in matters toponymic! It is hoped that as the project develops there will be

further opportunity to study more of the place-names of the area.

My old stomping ground of Menteith has also become the scene of a landscape partnership, this time in Callander. Run by Ross Crawford of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, place-names were added to the Callander Landscape Partnership's (CLP) programme after consultation with locals keen to 'celebrate, explore and communicate [the Gaelic] language so intricately connected to the landscape'. Various activities are planned, including the construction of a map through a community arts project, and a series of guided walks planned by locals themselves. Since the talk to SPNS in Dundee I have given a talk at a week-long introduction to Gaelic and place-names run by Roddy MacLean, and I also held a training day introducing about fifteen volunteers into the techniques and methods of place-name study. Both days were very successful, and among the feedback for the training day was the comment 'the whole day was fascinating, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world'.

During 2019, another Gaelic landscape has been the focus of my summer. The Badenoch Great Place Project, run by Oliver O'Grady and Cairngorms National Park, aims to celebrate the area's cultural heritage, including looking at the area's past and historic landscape, something a place-name study is ideal for. Over the course of the summer I delivered three training days, two to the S1 and S6 Gaelic classes at Kingussie High School, and one to a group of interested adults. I also wrote a report looking at the historic settlements of the area and a representative selection (based on John Murray's categories in his *Reading the Gaelic Landscape*) of the 1,400 landscape features that make up the place-names of Badenoch. This research will feed into other projects and output, including booklets and walks. The highlight for me was leading a guided walk in Glen Banchor near Newtonmore, where there was a highly fruitful two-way exchange between myself and those on the walk. I was greatly assisted throughout the project by SPNS member Rosemary Gibson and also by annotated maps of the area made by Peadar Morgan in the 1980s. I then touched on the issue of social media which we used as part of the Badenoch project, including its strengths and weaknesses, in particular Twitter and Facebook. Social media can be a great medium for reaching a younger audience and others who use it, but they are not nuanced and there is need to be aware of the

reputation of the organisation you are working for.

I finished my talk in Dundee by commenting on the fact that community engagement is an ideal vehicle for SPNS to reach out to interested parties, as advocated by Sections 2 c and f of the SPNS Constitution. I hoped that this could be further debated and encouraged by the Society; my recent activities indicate that there is very much a demand for tuition and support into helping people understand their local landscape and the names that showed how people used and viewed that landscape in the past.

**Peter McNiven** (based on his talk at the conference in Dundee, May 2019)

### ***The Place-Names of Fife***

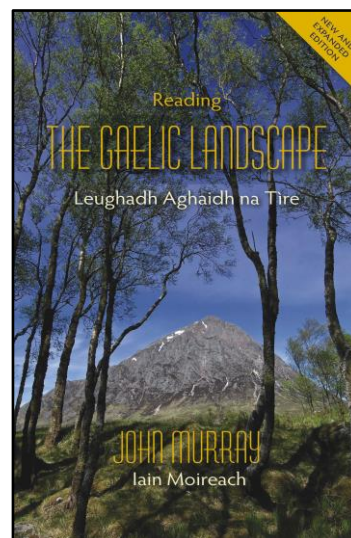
*by Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus*

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

***Kinross-shire*** – normally £35 but special offer to SPNS members £28 incl. UK p&p\*.

\*E-mail Shaun Tyas at Paul Watkins Publishing, [shaun@shauntyas.myzen.co.uk](mailto: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.

## **SECOND EDITION OF JOHN MURRAY'S READING THE GAELIC LANDSCAPE (LEUGHADH AGHAIDH NA TÌRE)**



The first edition of this book by landscape architect John Murray came out in 2014 and received a warm welcome, with some qualifications, in Newsletter 37. A more detailed review by Simon Taylor was published in *Review of Scottish Culture* 27 (2017), 164-69.

The merits of the first edition remain, and there have been substantial improvements in the second edition recently issued. There are now 264 instead of 232 pages, and the increase of price from £16.99 to £18.99, after nearly four years,

seems all the more modest in that light. An obvious advance in presentation, especially since colour is so significant in the Gaelic toponymy, is that the all-colour photographs are much more attractive than the black-and-white versions in the first edition, some of which lacked contrast. First impressions are that the binding, though it might not withstand enthusiastic flattening of an open book, should be much less likely to split or shed pages with normal careful handling. An unfortunate omission in the original version has been put right, with the addition of an 'Index of specific place-names', though the term 'specific' seems unnecessary and possibly misleading, since it has a particular meaning in place-name studies.

Because the book aims to be comprehensive and contains so much detailed information and analysis, it is inevitably open to findings that some things could have been done better. The author has acknowledged this in making changes and additions to the original version. Nearly always these are helpful, though explaining Gaelic pronunciation to the complete novice will always be a formidable task and a new explanation on page 29, dealing with lenition caused by feminine singular definite articles, uses terminology that may be baffling: 'But lenition is heard in these examples [*an leac, an nathair, an rèilig*] as a slenderisation of the initial consonant.' As a general point, a somewhat idiosyncratic approach to terminology and classification may not bother novice enthusiasts of Gaelic place-names, who will not be aware of this, but may be confusing when they broaden their reading into publications that use more standardised vocabulary.

Some typos in the first edition have been corrected, but a minor annoyance has not: initial apostrophes (') appear as openings of direct speech, as in *dè 'n sgeul ...* (page 198). (Blame MS Word!) Balquhiddar still lacks its sixth letter. More unfortunately, *Loch an Losgaimn Mòr* is still translated 'Loch of the Big Frog', when *Mòr* lacks the genitive inflection to make it agree with the inflected genitive of *losgann*; despite its remote position *Mòr* agrees with *Loch* and the name is actually 'Big Loch of the Frog'. And translations of multi-element Gaelic names still imply that they were formed on one occasion, rather than a description, like 'shoulder' or 'corrie', often being attached to an already existing name of a feature, in an '*ex nomine*' formation. A possibly partisan peeve has to be that, among the websites in the listed resources for further reading, the supremely useful <https://spns.org.uk/> has not been added.

All in all there remain flaws, omissions and ample scope for a nearer approach to perfection in a third edition in due course; but as both literature for informative reading and as a resource for future reference this book can be recommended as a unique, wide-ranging and for the most part highly readable aid to doing exactly what the title proposes.

(Published by Whittles Publishing Ltd, Dunbeath, Caithness; ISBN 978-184995-439-8)

**Bill Patterson**

### ***A DYKE AND A DITCH: TWO UNIQUELY QUALIFIED DUG MARCHES IN THE CALDERS?***

In the manuscript records of the *Baron Court of Calder Comitis* (roughly the modern parishes of Midcalder and West Calder, - both formerly in Midlothian, now in West Lothian) is this interesting entry: '1585, May 4 – It is statut be ane act of this court and expresslie commandit that na maner of persoun tak upoun hand to win fewell or pastur gudis [*'graze livestock'*] on the west muir of Calder within ye malesoun dyke fra the Blakmyre up to the merche of the Breidschall pertaining to the Laird of Calder.' (MC, 24) *The Blakmyre* is later Blackmire (*sic* OS1, West Calder) [gone but formerly at NT0464], *Breidschall* now Broadshaw (Midcalder) [NT0462] (PNML, 300): the two are ten furlongs (1.25 miles, 2km) apart, not far to walk, but a long way to dig.

While there is a contemporary surname *Malison* recorded (SOS, 578), the dyke is not *Malesounis dyke* but *ye malesoun dyke* 'the curse dyke'; < Scots *malesoun* 'a curse; an imprecation; ... the condition of being under a curse' (DSL).

Still visible on maps and aerial photographs, the tree-lined bank runs south past Westfield (formerly *Dyke, Dyk* 1608) and Canniehole down to the Murieston Water (the limit of Broadshaw lands and the parish boundary). Canniehole farm (*Cannyhole* Roy 1750s) is tucked out of sight, suiting 'snug hollow' (PNML, 250<sup>5</sup>), but Scots *canny* is also 'lucky, of good omen': cf. Scots *canny man, canny wife/woman* 'person who deals in the supernatural' (DSL). Might this have countered any curse?

<sup>5</sup> Dixon deals with *Westfield* briefly under *Dresselrig* 'dry-shiel-rig' (*Dresselrig alias Dyk in Calder Comitis* 1602, *Wester Dresselrig called the Dyik* 1619) but misplaces *Broadshaw* in West Calder parish though listing it as *Braidshaw*, again briefly, in the Midcalder section (PNML, 243-5 [original pagination throughout]).

Further west in West Calder parish an almost dead straight spade-dug ditch runs two miles from the raised bog near Pearie Law beside the shire march [NT0059] down into the Bog Burn below Coalheughhead farm [NT0361]. At a guess it is a late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century march drain between farmlands (not on Roy 1750s or the Armstrongs' 1773 map, evident but unnamed on OS1). In a natural hollow following the lie of the land SW-NE between two of the many fan-like ridges of West Lothian, it divides the lands of Har(t)wood, Broadmeadow and Coalheughhead from those of Kipsyke, Kiprig and Torphin.

In West Torphin it is called *The Ditch*, at Broadmeadow *Paddy Burn*, or more traditionally *Paddy Bit Lane*, and is of great interest not only as the sole recorded instance of Scots *lane* 'slow-moving stream' in West Lothian.<sup>6</sup>



Paddy Bit Lane, > east

This locally scarce element is common in the south-west of Scotland, where it generally refers to a dug channel, as here. Scots *Paddy* 'Irishman' (or maybe 'work-horse') may reflect the labour involved, but again there is no genitive: it is not *Paddy's Bit Lane*.<sup>7</sup> Sc *paddy* 'frog, toad' is well instanced and more likely, + Scots *bit* 'spot, place' + Scots *lane* (later *burn*): 'stream through the froggy bit', later (or also) 'frog stream'.



Paddy Bit Lane > west

<sup>6</sup> But cf. *Foslane* Colinton MLO < OE *foss* 'ditch; canalised stream', its second element wrongly associated by Dixon with OE *lanu* 'lane' (PNML, 150: see GTSS, 186), near Woodhall on the Water of Leith (suggesting a dug lade on a greatly 'improved' stretch of the river), but lost.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Paddy's River* (*sic* OS1), a tributary of Woodmuir Burn further west in the parish, in an area of mines superseded by forestry and later wind-farms [NS9658].



Padie-pip in local ditch

Yet the first two elements may be a reinterpretation of the locally defunct plant-name Scots *padie-pip* 'frog-pipe; marsh horsetail, *Equisetum palustre*' (DSL), profuse in

local ditches, in which case this long *lane* preserves another rare if not unique name.<sup>8</sup>

## John Garth Wilkinson

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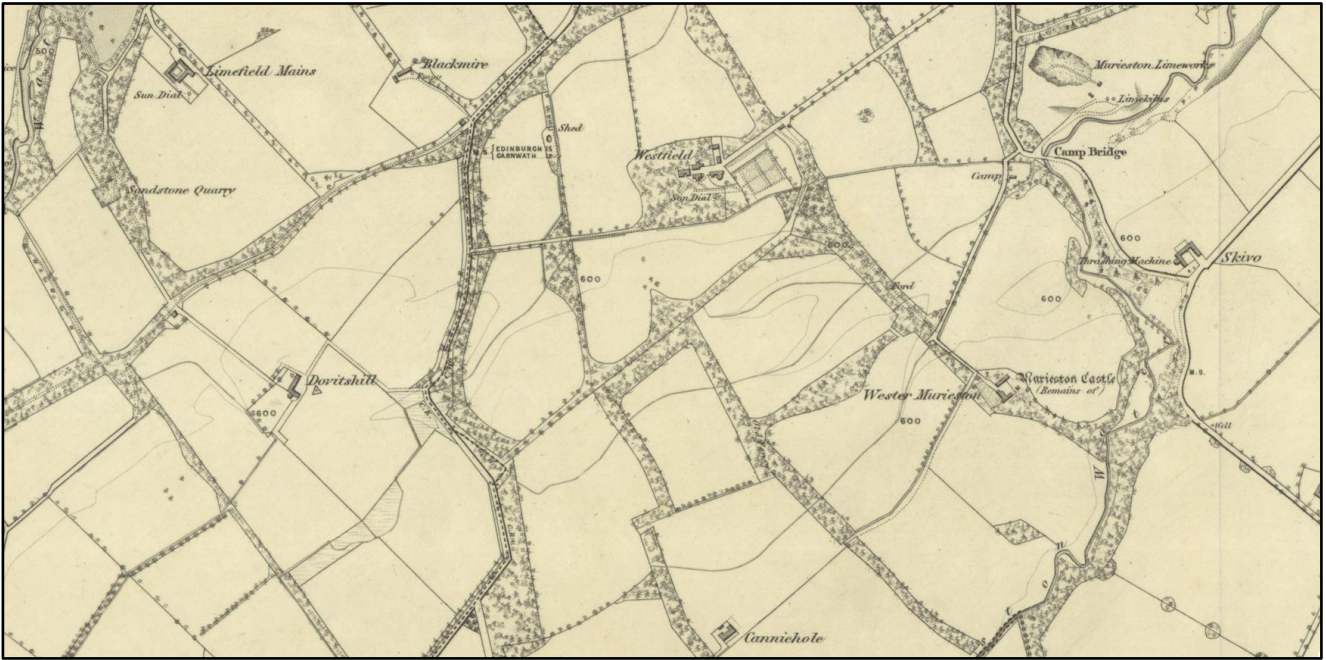
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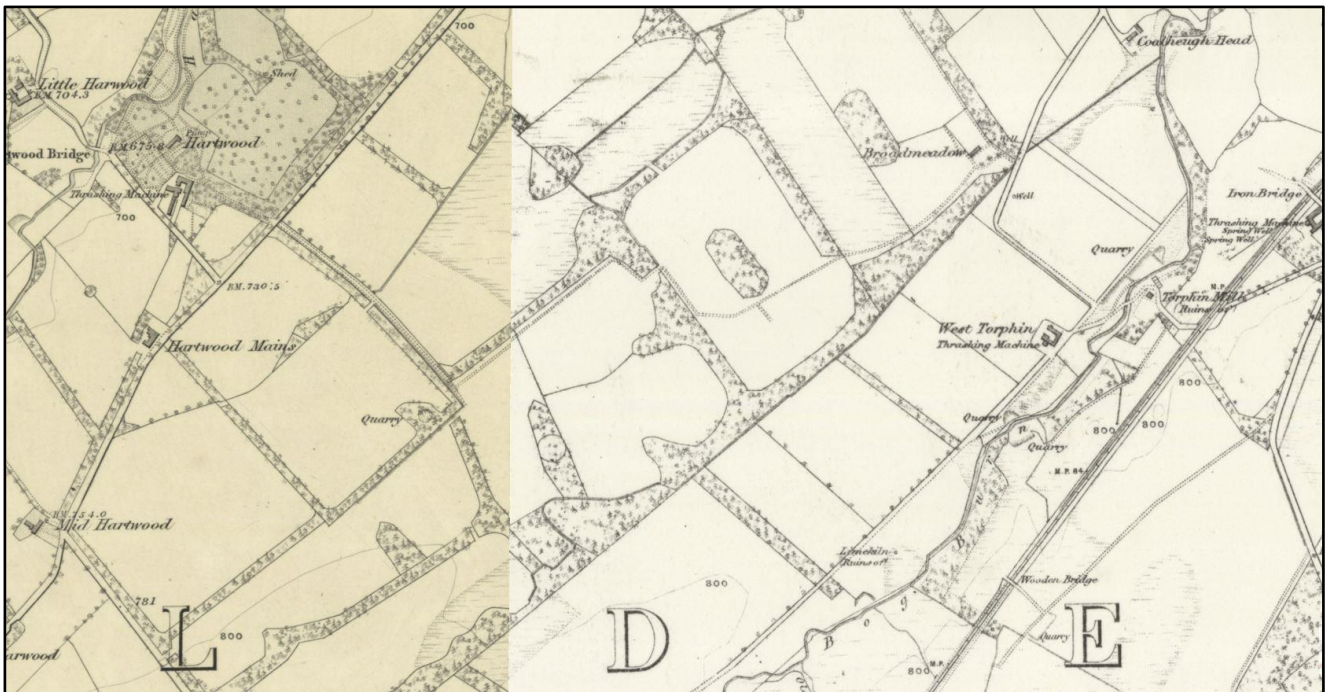
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(See also map extracts on back page.)

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Eng *toadpipe* 'field horsetail, *Equisetum arvense*' in field-names (NDEF, 429). It's not clear whether the pipe would be played or smoked. Thanks to Gavin Rennie of West Torphin, the late Matt Porter and Andy Cuthbertson for the lane-names: the earliest form was learned by Jim Porter from his great-grandfather Black at Broadmeadow c 1950. Thanks especially to Alan James for his brilliant botanical solution.



*First Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inches: 1 mile map, showing Blackmire, Westfield and Cannichole (thanks to NLS maps)*



*First edition Ordnance Survey 6 inches: 1 mile map, showing nearly straight cut from south-west to Bog Burn at 'Coalbeugh Head', passing Broadmeadow to the north and West Torphin to the south (thanks to NLS maps)*



*Amazing autumn colours greeted the conference at Arrochar*

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