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COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA

A northward view of the Tap o' Noth, a 563 metre hill in west Aberdeenshire, crowned by the remains of a massive stone-built fortification, including fused ('vitrified') blocks resulting from the firing of timbers interlaced in the stonework. Recent archaeological work reached the surprising result that the area within the surviving walls lacked evidence of medieval occupation, but the area between that and a less visible outer enclosure had intensive occupation in the late Roman and early Pictish period, broadly contemporary with the probable 'very royal place' or 'place of or associated with a great king', at Rhynie on the low ground some 2 to 3 km to the south-east. More on inside pages about how these names themselves may have been formed when the elite in this corner of the Grampian foothills had access to exotic luxury goods, or when their heyday was still in local memory.

COMMENT

It has sometimes been frustrating to observe a lack of communication between archaeologists and place-name experts, when to anyone with even a slight and casual interest in toponymy a place-name could have been highly relevant. A particular memory is of a Time Team excavation (Wikipedia says it was in 2009) when there was initial disagreement about what visible earthworks could represent. An open mind is of course a great thing, but it would not have been an intellectual crime to allow the name of the place to raise a degree of cautious expectation. The location was Dinmore Hill in Herefordshire, an English county marching with Wales. In Welsh *din mawr* is 'big fort', yet no thought seemed to have been given to asking someone knowledgeable whether local place-names might provide clues about the character of the place centuries ago.

It is arguable that such lack of interplay between place-name studies and archaeology never did apply in Scotland. It certainly is not the case with a project which has produced some of the most remarkable results of any recent work exploring Scotland's hidden past, from which some outstanding points are outlined on pages 6-8 of this issue. Without the excavations and analysis of their results, interpretations of the unusual place-names, especially Rhynie, would have been at best very tentative. Nearly a century ago the great W J Watson explained ancient *Rerigonion* in Scotland's south-west corner as 'very royal place'; had he had access to the new archaeological findings he might well have seen Aberdeenshire's Rhynie as having the same origin, not as a *roinnean*, 'little headland'. Conversely the study of the names has enriched and added a human dimension to the achievements of the spade, trowel and laboratory.

ORDNANCE SURVEY NAME BOOKS: THEIR BREADTH OF COLLECTION AND RELIABILITY

This article is a summary of the presentation given to the May 2021 conference. It develops on my study of Ordnance Survey Object Name Books (OSNBs) published in the Autumn 2020 newsletter. The analysis here is based in the parish of Gairloch in the Northwest Highlands concentrating on the Melvaig Peninsula, to the north of Loch Gairloch and the South Erradale area, to the south of the loch.

OSNBs v. recently collected names

The number and type of names collected by the O.S. was compared with those from places where a more thorough collection of names has been carried out.

On the west side of the Melvaig Peninsula, the percentage of names collected recently compared with those in the relevant name books averages 274%. 100% here would mean the same number was collected as in OSNBs. This varied, for example, from 213% for an area of coast and moorland to 532% for the crofting townships of Melvaig and Aultgrishan.

It was not the intention of the O.S. to record every name and it is known that names were deliberately omitted to reduce clutter on the map. Having said that, in crofting townships, in particular, there is poor coverage of names on O.S. maps. Rivers and burns, some hills and shore names are present but it does leave great expanses with few named features. The contrast between the O.S.'s names, collected in 1875, and those collected between 1986 and 2004 in the townships is shown on the maps here.
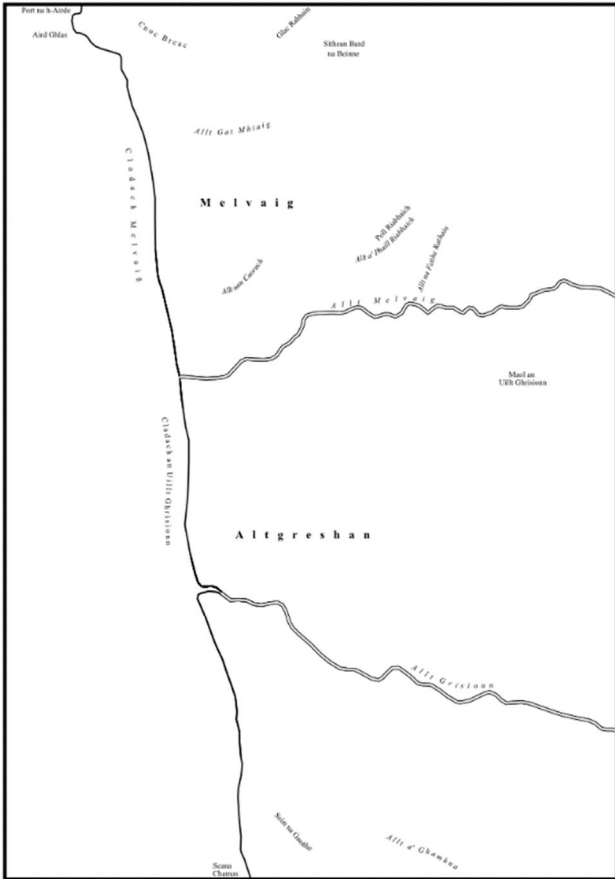
The most extreme difference between the datasets is found in grid square NG7960 of the crofting township of Lower Diabaig. Roy Wentworth collected 96 names, the highest density of names recorded locally, compared to five in the name books.

This following analysis, in the South Erradale area, was based on 50 grid squares, containing 651 distinct names, from Roy Wentworth's collection of names ('Roy's records'). In that area, there are 115 names, excluding descriptive ones, in the name books. The area analysed includes some crofting townships such as South Erradale and Port Henderson. The remainder is coast and moorland.

Names may not be readable at this scale, but the density of names recorded by the O.S. (top) as compared to Roy Wentworth (below) is very clear.

While the O.S. probably completed their work in a matter of months and had no intention of capturing all place-names, Roy's work extended from 1984 to 2001 consulting 31 informants.

Percentage of each name categories in OSNBs

The analysis of the names recorded by the O.S. revealed that burns and rivers make up more than a quarter of all of the names. Human features comprise only 10% of the names.

The same analysis was done by randomly selecting a quarter of the names from Roy's records. The variety of name categories is much greater; some either don't appear on O.S. maps in the area or have been infrequently mapped. The category classified as agricultural covers enclosures such as fanks, fields and croft names, the last being the equivalent of field names that are generally excluded from O.S. maps. Few buildings of the sort found in this area are found in OSNBs but these feature in Roy's records. They tend to be named after the occupant or a former occupant and include the names of ruins. Areas of shore appear in a greater number, as do landing places which were so important for the crofter-fishermen in the past.
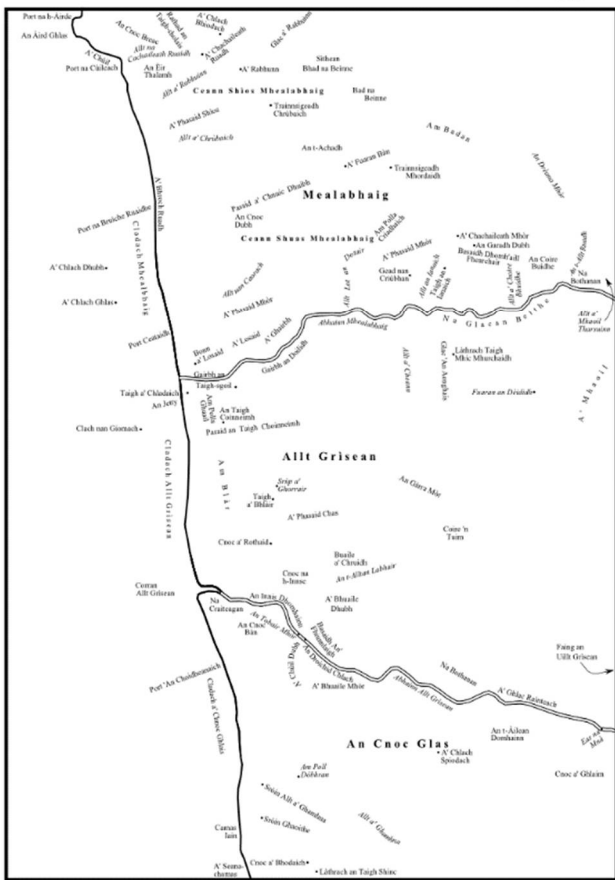
This information is shown in the tables. In the first, the hydrological features are highlighted in bold blue. The proportion recorded by the O.S. makes up 43% of the names and is far greater than the 17% from Roy's records. The difference in the burns and rivers category is striking. In contrast, other than the names of the hills, the O.S. recorded far fewer names for moorland features: the crags, rocks, slopes and areas of flat land.

If only the main categories on the O.S. are compared with Roy's records (shown in the second table), the main differences remain. Those between the two datasets become larger in the areas of flat land category; this includes names for peat bogs which tend not to be so well covered by the O.S. Their significance for the provision of fuel and grazing was of importance to the people living on the land but less so for the O.S. as a landscape feature. Similarly, crags, rocks and slopes were important identifiers when moving about the landscape and appear more frequently in Roy's records than in the name books.

An analysis of the reliability of OSNBs

The analysis was extended to cover the reliability of the contents of name books, something that Dr Eila Williamson considered in the Autumn 2019

newsletter and in Scottish Archives. She asked, 'How authentic are they?'

Comparison between O.S. names and Roy's records

(%, all categories)

Category	O.S. names	Roy's records	
Burns and rivers	27	9	red: major difference between OSNB and Roy's records
Hills	9	8	
Valleys and hollows	9	9	
Lochs	9	3	
Crags, rocks and slopes	8	16	
Bays	7	5	
Sea rocks	7	5	
Headlands	6	1	
Settlement	5	4	
Areas of flat land	4	9	
Others	9	31	

Comparison between O.S. names and Roy's records

(%, main O.S. categories)

Category	O.S. names	Roy's records	
Burns and rivers	30	13	the main differences remain when categories largely ignored by the O.S are removed
Hills	10	12	
Valleys and hollows	10	13	
Lochs	10	5	
Crags, rocks and slopes	8	23	
Bays	7	7	
Sea rocks	7	7	
Headlands	6	1	
Settlement	5	6	
Areas of flat land	5	14	

Out of the 115 names in the name books, there were three cases where no names appear in Roy's records for those locations. Of these, however, two had nearby names that could be linked to them. Six of the names were anglicised. Where there was an English name, this seems to have been preferred in OSNBs. 85 place-names were regarded as being the same or recognisably similar. This left only 21 place-names in Roy's records that were inconsistent with those in the name books. Looking at many of these, it is possible to explain away differences. For example, the generic has changed (e.g. *Achadh* to *Buaile*) or names are found that have been misplaced or become corrupted. While this analysis is open to interpretation, it was considered that only 16% or 18 out of 115 of the names on the O.S. appear to be greatly inconsistent. This suggests that the O.S. name collection was more than 84% accurate. In this study area, at least, the reliability of work performed by the O.S. appears to be extremely good.

The reliability of the authorities

It is worth briefly looking at some of the authorities in the study area because this reliability would have depended on them.

The O.S. had a clear hierarchy of who was regarded as suitable as authorities. Written sources were preferred then owners of property with long-standing ministers and schoolmasters next, followed by other gentlemen who would be those renting substantial houses in the area. In contrast, the small farmer or cottager was not to be depended on unless well educated and intelligent!

In this parish, lairds did give names but many were given by lowly crofters or keepers as it is unlikely anyone else could have helped. Those chosen would, no doubt, have been given on the recommendation of the laird or other respectable gentleman. Contrary to what the O.S. believed, the crofters and the keepers were often the most knowledgeable; they needed place-names to help keep track of cattle and sheep on the hill and, when fishing, to know where along the coast they were.

In the study area, only one name, that of a skerry, came from a written source, in this case an Admiralty chart. All but one of the rest came from long-standing residents who worked the land and are typical of authorities in Gairloch parish: crofters, gamekeepers, farmers providing the bulk of the names.

To summarise, then, the name books can be shown to be reliable in the Highlands where informants who spoke Gaelic were called on to be authorities.

Nevis Hulme (The full Powerpoint presentation is available on the SPNS website at https://spns.org.uk/presentations-from-spns-spring-conference-2021)

SMALL-SCALE PLACE-NAMES IN APPLECROSS, WESTER ROSS

The paper I read at the SPNS annual conference in May examined microtoponyms in Applecross, Wester Ross, and how they allow us to triangulate localised remnants of *beul-aithris*, cultural practices in our spatial and memorialised landscapes, and the people who are associated by deed and existence with location. I have always been drawn to stories which link people and place, and stories linking me to my grandparents and those that came before them.

My grandmother, born in 1912, talked about her places in incredible detail, about people who died before she was born as if she had known them. I collected scores of intimately local names from her and my grand aunt for Toscaig, the southernmost inhabited township in Applecross.

Examinations of toponymic change resulting from different sociocultural practices over time are fascinating, but so is the way very specific places are referred to by multiple names at the same time, sometimes by speakers in one conversation, suggesting a particularly intimate connection

between people, place, cultural practice and land use.
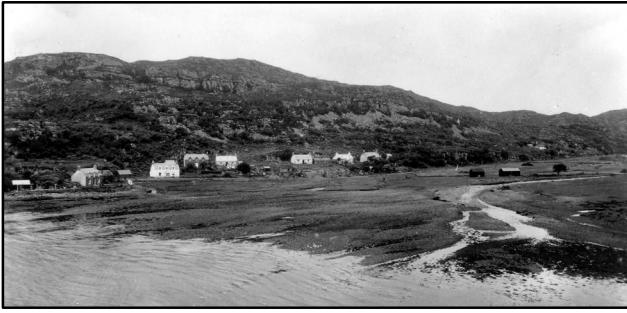
Here we see 'Toscaig, from Applecross', a culturally flattened and partially correct descriptor. The photo looks across Loch Toghsgaig from above *An Cadha Cairidh* showing *Am Baile Shìos* (or the Lower Town, now Lower Toscaig in English), but it was also known as *Baile a' Chladaich*. Drawing from this latter name, an old man my dad used to see on the pier in Kyle of Lochalsh would ask in English: 'What's doing in Shore Town?' One very small township with a rash of different names, used contemporaneously, all specifically identifying the same intimate location. In the space of a generation, however, we have seen this multiplicity reduced to the English version for all but a handful of people.

We are losing detail today: there is a peculiar, ever-decreasing locus of what Applecross is, driven particularly by the removal of nuance inherent in the marketing imperative of tourism literature, which glosses larger and more complex narratives over diverse locations. Formerly a territory stretching from Achnashellach in the east to Repoint in the north and the Falls of Glomach in the south, Applecross is effectively reduced to the commercial area around Shore Street, rather than a peninsula with many crofting townships. This is related to demographic change as older, fluent Gaelic-English bilinguals cede primacy to English-only speakers who apply their own names, for example *Taigh a' Ghrèidheir* and *An Lianag* becoming the Estate Office and the culturally-jarring Village Green.

Applecross in Gaelic has always been *A' Chomraich* (The Sanctuary), however a number of names related to Saint Maelrubha's arrival in 673AD re-emerged in the mid-19th century, after centuries of apparent abandonment. Kenneth MacRae (1903–1982), a brilliant maverick, is a pivotal figure in Applecross history, as he was the link between the early 1800s and the post-WWII era. Building on generations of family traditions and knowledge, MacRae compiled a lot of historical lore, including anecdotes and a long list of place names. It was

MacRae's grandfather who acted as guide and informant for Bishop William Reeves who arrived around 1850 and reawakened the knowledge of the Saint.

Reeves recorded that what is still known today as Applecross River had formerly been *Abhainn Ma-Ruibhe* (Maelrubha's River). This makes perfect sense as it flows just to the south of the monastic site of the now 200 year-old Clachan Church. The older name is *Apor Crosan*, which appears in the Annals of Tigearnach and the Annals of the Four Masters. According to Reeves: '... this old name of the river is locally forgotten, and, instead of it, they use the borrowed designation *Abhuin Maree*, i.e. "Maree's River", or the *Applecross River*, as is marked on the county maps.' So, process had depersonalised the name, removing both the Old British and the Celtic Christian. Today, we are left with a more generic styling, but applied somewhat carelessly as there is confusion or ambiguity as to what Applecross is.

A lovely spot we can identify using different names is *Gob nan Damh* (Point of the stag). It can be dated accurately to the mid-20th century as a mischievous homage to a former teacher who lived in the schoolhouse a couple of hundred yards away. He used to go poaching, frequently throwing the evidence of his activities into the shore from this small promontory. There remain one or two of his highly willing accomplices, who helped him out when they were at an impressionable age!

However, the little bay, even baylet, into which *Gob nan Damh* juts out, is also called *Camas na Fèidh* (Bay of the deer), for the same reasons. Previously, it was *Camas an t-Saighdeir*, but which '*saighdear*' or soldier, no-one now knows.

On the shore of Applecross Bay, four microtoponyms in the space of a few yards all commemorate John Crosby, an English coachman to the 19th century Middleton landowners. I think, apart from Saint Maelrubha, no other individual lives on in such frequency.

The older generation remember the stories of *Ruaraidh Iain Bhàin a' Mhuilleir* (Roderick MacKenzie). Allegedly a pirate, his dirk was thrown into a crevice and retrieved by Kenneth MacRae around or just after World War I, but there were no signs of his pistols which his sister apparently disposed of. After a wild and adventurous life, *Ruaraidh* settled in Camusteel at his Uncle William's former home (*Leas Uilleam a' Mhuilleir*). That site then became known as *Leas Ruaraidh* (Roderick, or Ruaraidh's, garden) and after his death the site became known as *Leas*

Harriet, after his sister who died in 1927, aged 74. Across two generations, and across one family, the name flips to commemorate one person then another then another. With no more than a ruined garden wall remaining, it is unlikely that there will be a new version, and these people will soon be lost to memory.

Everything changes, and yet everything stays the same. It is still important to salvage snapshots of these places for our generation, and to leave space for the next to create their own names.

Gordon Cameron

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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

Scottish 'County' Place-Names Volumes

The new **Clackmannanshire** *volume is normally priced at £35. Special offer to members of the Scottish Place-Name Society and/or the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland: £28 and free delivery within the UK. Contact the publisher for a price if it needs to be posted overseas.*

To order, please contact: Shaun Tyas shaun@shauntyas.myzen.co.uk Tel. 01775 821542. Postal address for cheques: 'Shaun Tyas', 1 High Street, Donington, Lincolnshire PE11 4TA.

It can also be ordered on Amazon.

N.B. Some Fife volumes and the Kinross-shire volume are also still available from Shaun Tyas.

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/>.

Ramblers Scotland on trail of hidden paths

In late August the Scottish media reported an announcement by Ramblers Scotland about its project to trace previously unmapped paths, and about its new online resource which aims to provide the public with the most comprehensive information yet about routes for walking. Entry to the website is at https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/out-there/out-there-getting-paths-on-maps/mapping-scotland-paths.aspx. Information on routes already checked or provisionally mapped should be helpful to those, for instance, wishing to study the setting of a place-name of interest. Conversely understanding of place-names could make members of this society particularly valuable as contributors to the continued work by Ramblers Scotland in identifying unmapped paths.

There could have been concern about the Ramblers treading on the toes of the long established Scotways (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society). However, the Scotways website indicates a co-operative relationship, recommending a petition set up by Ramblers Scotland and supported by other recreational and access organisations, against Network Rail's sudden closure of a level crossing at Dalwhinnie, blocking an ancient and important right of way along Loch Ericht to Loch Rannoch, now also a statutory Core Path.

RHYNIE AND NOTH: THE NAMES AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY

The 'Comparative Kingship: the early medieval Kingdoms of Northern Britain and Ireland', project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust and led by Professor Gordon Noble at the University of Aberdeen, investigates the development of power structures around key centres and their hinterlands through an interdisciplinary approach, combining archaeological, environmental, historical, and place-names analysis (see *Scottish Place-Name News*, no. 45, Autumn 2018, pp. 4-6, for an introduction).[1]

Research for the project is on-going and accelerating as restrictions on archaeological fieldwork lessen, but some striking results have been obtained so far in Scotland. At Rhynie, in addition to the symbol stones, excavations have shown that a palisaded enclosure with large internal buildings existed by the Craw Stane from the late fourth century to the mid-sixth century, with Pictish square barrows nearby to the north.

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[1] Open access SPNNews-45-Autumn-2018.pdf (spns.org.uk).

The Craw Stane is an *in situ* standing stone bearing two so-called Class 1 Pictish symbols, the fish and the Pictish beast. This site also produced imports from the Mediterranean usually found in Ireland and western Britain, as well as evidence for the manufacturing of prestige items, including moulds for brooches, mini axes and animals reminiscent of those on Pictish sculpture. The Craw Stane complex was clearly a significant elite site, possibly with a religious dimension. To understand its wider context, the project excavated at Tap o' Noth, the 563m high hill-top site which looms over Rhynie. Generally regarded as Iron Age, no medieval evidence was found inside the massive ramparts on the summit, but surprisingly platforms in the outer enclosure, as well as the outer bank itself, have produced date-ranges from the mid-third to the early seventh centuries, and Late Roman finds have been discovered at these structures. With over 800 platforms identified inside this outer enclosure, Tap o' Noth was a location, contemporary with the Craw Stane complex, presumably with a regional as well as local significance. This was a period with virtually no contemporary textual sources, but place-names do provide important evidence.

Note that the results of these place-name surveys will be available on an interactive website. Its launch will be announced in this Newsletter, as well as on the SPNS website.

Nicholas Evans, Research Fellow, University of Aberdeen.

Place-Names

A close study of place-names is an integral part of the project, not only of those place-names in the area around Rhynie but also around the other foci, namely Burghead in Scotland, Dunseverick, Northern Ireland and Cashel in the Republic. As set out in more detail in Nick Evans's above-mentioned 2018 article, in the place-name study special attention is paid to those names which throw light on such aspects as early settlement, land-use, environment and society. In Rhynie two names stand out in particular: Rhynie itself and Noth.

Rhynie

Earliest forms: (lands of) *Rynyn* 1224 x 1226 *Moray Reg.*; (church of) *Rynyn* 1226 *Moray Reg.*; (cathedral canon of) *Ryny* 1226 x 1242 *Moray. Reg.*; (a half-davach at) *Rynyn* 1227 *Moray Reg.*

In this name, toponymics and archaeology come together in an almost uncanny way, since its most likely interpretation is 'a very royal place' or 'place of or associated with a great king', adding a

'textual' dimension to the spectacular finds around the Craw Stane and on Tap o' Noth. This analysis is based on the analogy of Loch Ryan by Stranraer, one of the earliest recorded of all Scottish place-names, appearing in Ptolemy's 'Geography' (2nd century AD) as *Rerigonios kolpos* 'bay associated with the settlement called *Rerigonion*' (Grigg 2015, 85-6). This has been analysed variously as 'very royal place' (Watson 1926, 34) and 'place of the foremost great or divine king' (Isaac 2005, 202). For a fuller discussion of the name, see Noble and Evans 2019, 59. Whatever other elements these names contain, common to both of them is the early Celtic element **rīg*, Old Gaelic *rí* 'a king', Pictish **rī* (or the like).

Noth

Early forms: *Smythtoun de Noth* 1505 *RMS* ii; *Noth* 1511 *RMS* ii; *Milnetoun de Noucht* and *lie Ailhous de Noucht* 1545 *RMS* iii; *the hill of Nouth* 1546 Records of the Scottish Parliament (rps 1567/4/30); *the hill of Nocht* 1567 rps 1567/4/33; *The Hill of Noth* c.1645 Gordon MS Strathbogie and Aenzie.
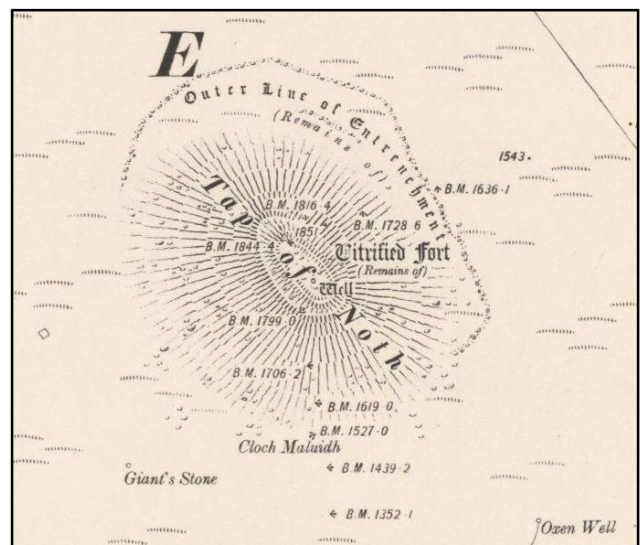
'Tap of Noth' on the OS 6 inches to 1 mile map, as surveyed in 1900 (thanks to NLS online map library). Cloch Maluidh *may be the 'stone of (Saint) Moluag'. (See 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' website, https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1348703792)*

Despite its relatively late appearance in the record, this name may well represent Pictish **no(e)th* 'bare, exposed', a word cognate with Welsh *noeth* 'naked, stripped, bare etc.', so 'a bare or exposed place'. This is a regular development of Celtic **noxtos* in Brittonic languages, of which Pictish is one. Goidelic retained the velar fricative /x/ (= *ch* as in *loch*) giving Old and Modern Irish *nocht*, Modern Scottish Gaelic *nochd*, while Brittonic did not (Jackson 1980, 164-5 and Rhys 2015, 46-7). There are other ways of explaining the occasional forms

such as *Noucht* and *Nocht*, and the predominance of forms ending simply in *th*, both early and late, support a non-Gaelic origin.

Noth referred to a territory or large unit of land almost 5km (c.3 miles) in length, its highest point being the Tap o' Noth. This territory can be reconstructed by the names of settlements and relief features containing the name. These are (on both OS 6 inch 1st edn and on OS Landranger): Bogs of Noth, Glen of Noth, Hill of Noth, Mill of Noth, Milton of Noth, Newnoth, Oldnoth, Raws of Noth, Smithston (of Noth), Tap o' Noth. Tap o' Noth itself is a Scots secondary formation meaning the top or highest point of the lands of Noth.

If Noth did originally mean 'bare or exposed place', there remains the question as to why it was so named. As mentioned above, around 800 platforms, interpreted as house-platforms, or at least building-platforms, have been found down the sides of Tap o Noth, some of them possibly still in use into the seventh century A.D. They are within an outer enclosure or rampart, which circles the hill between approximately 80 and 100m below the summit. This, along with what must have been fairly intensely farmed land lower down the hill (with the highest field boundary now at about 370m), would have given the area an especially bare or open appearance in the sense of being without woodland cover in contrast to the wider region, which may have been much more wooded or covered in thickets. Alternatively it may have been coined by those using these elevated structures, even if only seasonally, who would have felt very exposed to the snell winds of the North-East.

The National Grid Reference (NGR) is of Oldnoth, which is most likely to be the caput or chief place of the lands of Noth, at least in the later medieval and early modern period.

Simon Taylor

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TO WHERE IT MAY CONCERN

(**Leonie Mhari** and **Elinor Scarth** summarise their presentation to the online conference on 8 May 2021.)

Following toponymic threads this work which combines moving image and spoken word brings together close readings of the Scottish and Australian landscapes of Armadale, Skye; Armadale, West Lothian; Armidale, New South Wales. A narrative voice explores a sequence of landscape portraits which probe the compounded concepts of landscape within contexts of colonization, colonialism, gender, extractive industries, climate justice and ecofeminism. Beginning in the Isle of Skye and moving through West Lothian, the landscape is packed into a wardrobe trunk, unpacked and repacked in New South Wales for the return journey. In this work landscape is understood as more than a physical manifestation. The combined visual and spoken word narratives entangle to interrogate the ways in which notions of landscape are at once perceived and projected on to environments.

Originally conceived as a live performance, this multi-media work was first presented in Armidale, New South Wales in 2019. Since then the work has been adapted for a range of different in-situ performances around the UK, before returning to Scotland for the Scottish Place-Name Society's spring conference which would have been held at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, near Armadale, Skye where the project first began. For the purposes of the SPNS conference online presentation format the piece was reworked as a single screen film. In 2021, *To where it may concern* made a further journey to Armadale, Sutherland for the next and possibly final iteration of this work.

Below are three stills from the film and accompanying excerpts of the spoken word text. (The 'Niddrie Woman' is John Latham's name for a group of bings left by the oil shale industry, which lasted in West Lothian from 1859 to 1962; see also https://www.thedrouth.org/john-lathams-niddrie-woman-by-murdo-macdonald/.)

The Niddrie woman,
man's monument to man.
She joins Mother Earth
wi her Paps o Fife,
her twa tongues lapping in Skye:
Teanga Mhòr and Teanga Bheag

In the white hill — the *tor - ban* —
the hill that is white
and opaque in West Lothian,
we mined the black torbanite
of the Sydney Basin.

We found her, the fat of the land,
shed skin,
monumental waste.

FROM KNOYDART TO MOIDART

This is an impressionistic survey of a few of the more interesting place-names between Knoydart and Moidart. It is not intended to be comprehensive, rather a daunder into some local byways.

This area was known as the Rough Bounds (*na Garbh Chrìochan*) - the Highlands of the Highlands, as it was called in the eighteenth century. It is remote, rocky and desolate, with settlements confined to the shores of the sea and freshwater lochs. Access has always been easiest by sea. The *'-art'* (fjord) names left by the Norse (Knoydart, Ailort, Moidart) do it justice. But even here there is ambiguity. The sea-loch that is now Ailort was
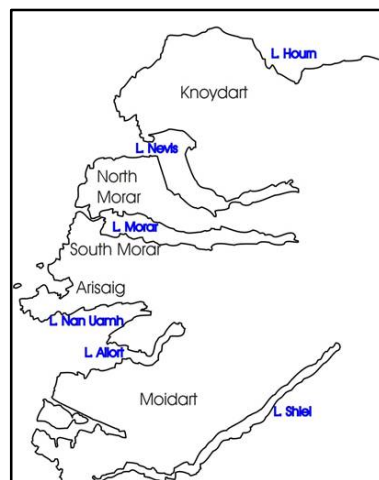
Enzord in 1573 (Ortelius), 1578 (Leslie), 1583 (Nicolay) and 1595 (Mercator). Is this actually another Loch Eynort – a fjord with an island – which indeed it has, complete with vitrified fort(s)?

There are no obviously Pictish names in the area – except in Glenelg – but what about Nostre? This has been lost, but was a farm-name in 1624, beside what is now Loch an Nostarie. The ending suggests an *àiridh* or shieling. But this seems unlikely. The shieling-grounds are 2½ kilometres to the east, below Sgurr Eireagoraidh (or Àiridh a' Choire as it appears on the nineteenth-century OS maps). The remnants of about 20 shieling huts are still visible along the north shore of Loch Eireagoraidh – with no signs of cultivation. In contrast there was extensive cultivation along the north and east shores of Loch an Nostarie, which lies much closer to sea-level.

Loch an Nostarie with possible settlement sites

It is difficult to see Nostre as secondary to either Glasnacardoch or Mallaig. What is the name derived from? It has been suggested that the first-element is from *òsda* (inn) or *òsdair* (inn-keeper). This seems unlikely since the loch is not on the direct route between the Morar estuary and the harbour at Mallaig. Might it be something to do with boat-nousts? Again unlikely. Freshwater lochs had no economic importance unless frequented by salmon. Could the ending be anything to do with Brittonic *tref* (settlement). At first sight this seems highly improbable. It would be a complete outlier. But the name still requires explanation and *tref* is not impossible.

Bourblach in Morar

Then there is Bourblach in Morar, on the north side of the estuary. Watson (CPNS p 514) says 'Buarblaig … cannot … represent Muirbolc'. I don't believe the topographical evidence supports him. There are Bourblachs in Morar, Glenelg and Ardnamurchan – all beside obvious 'sea-bags' or sea-bays. The last also neighbours an Early Christian site at Camus nan Geall which has always appealed to me as Adomnan's *Muirbolc Paradisi*. Watson (CPNS pp 80-81) offers Murlagan etc (examples at Loch Long, South end of Loch Ness, Loch Arkaig, by River Spean) – none of which I find topographically convincing.

Innis na Cuilce in the River Ailort

Another site with religious significance is Innis na Cuilce (Reedy island) which lies in the River Ailort, a river still rich in silver fish. The island is not an *eilean* (<Old Norse) but an *innis* (<Gaelic) and is an old burial ground. We have supporting evidence in local tradition and the OS map which gives a nearby stream as Allt an t-Sagairt (Priest's Burn). Burials have taken place here until within living memory but I have found no trace of a church or dedication in any historical records. We have St Comgan labouring in Ardnamurchan and Knoydart, Cumin in Morar, Maolrubha in Arisaig, Finnan in Moidart, but who worked by Loch Ailort?

As far as the Norse legacy is concerned– never underestimate the prosaic. Norse settlers used the same name again and again where it served the purpose. There are Sandaigs (sandy bays) in Knoydart and Arisaig; Scamadales (short dales) in Knoydart, South Morar and beside Loch Shiel. There is also the conundrum that there are Norse 'short dales' but no Norse 'short lochs'. The latter are always Gaelic - as in Loch Gair (Loch Fyne), Kingairloch (Loch Linnhe) or Gareloch (Rosneath). Why was that?

We have our share of lost names such as Aucholladill (South Morar). This is Gaelic Auch (<*achadh*) prefixed to something like Ulladale or Alladale (possibly referring to a clump of alder-trees)? Our best guide here is that many of the place-names given in early documents are listed in some sort of geographical order. Aucholladill probably lay just west of the railway line before it runs south across the Mointeach Mhòr towards Craigmore.

Corrie on south site of Loch Morar: Fertacorrie?

And Fertacorrie. Long lost, but there is a magnificent corrie on the south side of Loch Morar which fits with the geographical order established in the documents. Fertacorrie is also an example of name-inversion where the expected word order is reversed due to the hybrid Gaelic-Norse world such names populated. In a wholly Gaelic landscape we would expect Corrieferta. We have other examples of inversion amongst

prominent local hills: Roshven (Moidart), Ladhar Bheinn and Luinne Bheinn (Knoydart) or Blaven (Skye).

Finally, what of Castle Tioram (Moidart) – the most significant political and military site in the Rough Bounds. The name is straightforward – from *tioram* (dry), so a tidal island – but with a prestigious history. In one of his maps Matthew Paris marks 'Tyren' in the sea off the west coast of Scotland. It has no island shape and appears almost as an afterthought. It is usually taken to refer to Tiree. It is much more likely to be Tioram – the island fastness of the ancestors of the Macruari family. A family of whom Matthew wrote so eloquently, as they and their (unnamed) island were torn in the dispute between thirteenth-century Norse and Scot for hegemony over the Isles.

When wayfaring in the Highlands there are generally fewer signposts, but as much joy in discovery.

Denis Rixson (from his talk to the online conference on 8 May 2021)

NOT QUITE WHAT THEY SEEM

If you put 'Shetland Wulver' into a search engine you will be offered enlightenment about the islands' unusually benevolent species of werewolf, the 'Wulver'. You may even come upon a theory that this hairy wolf-headed creature from a rich ancient folklore was inspired by cases of a particular medical condition, Hunter Syndrome. A site that also hopes to sell you 'kilts and highlandwear', attributes the belief to the 'ancient Celts'. This account has a certain tongue-in-cheek quality; others seem much more earnest in their search for survivals of beliefs from time immemorial in quaint remote places. There seems, however, to be some uncertainty as to whether the Wulver is of Celtic or Norse heritage.

Should you add 'Shetland Museum' to the wording of your search, any excitement generated by the more enthusiastic sites may quickly be deflated; but for readers of this Newsletter the story will be no less interesting. The distinguished Faroese scholar Jakob Jakobsen spent years researching Shetland place-names and in 1901 published *Shetlandøernes Stednavne*. In his section on names with Old Norse *hóll* 'hill', he noted Wolvhul, Wolwul, Wolewul, Wolhul and Wolver(s)hul. But they were not 'wolf hills'; their specific was *álf* 'fairy', with a characteristic Shetland development of the initial vowel. Following Jakobsen, in 1905 folklorist John Spence wrote that the name in Delting parish that he spelled 'Olwil' was shortened from 'Wulver's Hool', equivalent to 'Faery Knowe'.

It seems that another folklorist, Jessie Saxby (1842-1940), did not like such a prosaic explanation. So in her book *Shetland Traditional Lore* (1933) she substituted for the common or garden fairy her totally fictitious Wulver, of the shaggy body with wolf's head, delight in fishing, home in a cave in a steep hillside, and generosity to the poor. She even named her house Wulvershool. Would she be delighted or embarrassed that her creation lives on and proliferates in the World Wide Web?

Meanwhile Wikipedia, no less, tells us about the handsome town of Stonehaven, south of Aberdeen: 'Originally the settlement of Stonehaven grew and prospered and was known as Kilwhang. With 'Kil' meaning hill and 'whang' the name, or sound of a whip, possibly, the name is derived from the cliffs above the original settlement and the sound of wind whistling around their meagre shelters.'

It is unlikely that this attempt at etymologising will have many takers among readers of an SPNS Newsletter. Scepticism is confirmed by an article, 'Why Stonehaven is called Kilwhang', in the local Stonehaven website The Bellman. Joan McCausland had found references to Kilwhang during researches in the online British Newspaper Archive. She has traced the name to 1856, and a humorous poem by one 'Andro' (really Alexander Taylor) in which fun is made of life and folk in what is plainly Stonehaven but given the name of Kilwhang. This affectionate satire and the invented place-name evidently became popular with local readers of the Aberdeen Herald and General Advertiser, to the extent that in 1870 the Stonehaven Journal published a proposal to set up a Kilwhang Athletic Club.

At some time not earlier than the late 19th century awareness of the true origin of the name must have been gradually lost. Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba's online item on Stonehaven gives a quote showing that by the time of J C Diack's *Inscriptions of Pictland* (1944) serious scholars could fall into the trap set by the plausible Kil-, common in genuine place-names: the name 'seldom seen in print but well enough known locally' was 'undoubtedly Gaelic'; and 'the conjecture might be allowed' that it was a *cill chumhang*, a 'narrow church', the local kirk of Fetteresso having been an unusually long building.

The Kilwhang Athletic Club may never have happened, but Stonehaven has two properties named 'Kilwhang', one of which is available for holiday let, and the Kilwhang Ringers (handbell) are regular performers in the town. Was it nostalgic 'Kilwhangians' who named houses 'Kilwhang' in Nairn, Peterhead, Blairgowrie (Perthshire), Killearn (Stirlingshire), and even suburban Norwich?

Bill Patterson

Settlement Names of Lewis Richard A.V. Cox Vol. I: lxxiii + 438 pp. Vol. II: v + 570 pp. Hardback; bilingual A linguistic analysis of 358 settlement names in the Isle of Lewis, the majority from Old Norse or containing an Old Norse element. Publication date 1 March 2022. Prepublication price: £28. Order before 29 February to save 30% on the full price of £40. To order and for details of the contents: https://clanntuirc.co.uk/ATLE.html	***Ainmean Tuineachaidh Leòdhais*** Richard A.V. Cox Leabh. I: lxxiii + 438 dd. Leabh. II: v + 570 dd. Còmhdach cruaidh; dà-chànanach Sgrùdadh cànanach air 358 ainmean tuineachaidh ann an Leòdhas, a' mhòr-chuid às an Lochlannais no aig a bheil eileamaid Lochlannais. Latha foillseachaidh 1 Màrt 2022. Prìs ro-fhoillseachaidh: £28. Òrdaich ro 29 Gearran gus 30% a shàbhaladh air an làn-phrìs £40. Gus òrdachadh is airson fios mun t-susbaint: https://clanntuirc.co.uk/ATL.html

CONFERENCES

This year's **SPNS Autumn Conference** will take place on Saturday 6 November, from 10.00 to 15.40, via the Zoom platform. Tickets are free of charge, but only available to members of the Society. Full details of the programme, how to book tickets and how to become a member of the Society can be found here: https://spns.org.uk/autumn-conference-2021.

SSNS (Scottish Society for Northern Studies) is offering a series of online evening talks; remaining dates are 28 October, 16 December, 27 January and 24 February; details to be given on the website https://www.ssns.org.uk.

SNSBI (Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland) holds its autumn conference online on 23 October; details at http://www.snsbi.org.uk/2021_autumn_online.html.
Depending on the situation with COVID-19, it is hoped to have the Spring 2022 residential conference at Bridgend (delayed from 2020), on 8-11 April.

The **English Place-Name Society** presents its online Cameron Lecture on 16 October; https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/events/events/2021-2022/cameron-lecture-2021.aspx.

John Reid

We are sad to pass on the news that John Reid died on 24th September. He was a tireless researcher into the history and place-names of Falkirk and environs, and author of the important *Place-Names of Falkirk and East Stirlingshire* (2009). A full assessment of his work will appear in the next issue of *Scottish Place-Name News*.

Distinguishing the Lintons

Of three Scottish villages called Linton, those in Peeblesshire and East Lothian once had railway stations, though the smaller Linton in Roxburghshire never had one. The former two are now officially West and East respectively, but were plain Linton, or older spelling variants, in early sources. **Liz Curtis** was curious to find out whether the coming of the railways, with the need to avoid confusion for passengers and ticket clerks, might have prompted the changes. She found that the East Lothian village was still just Linton in 1835 but East Linton in a gazetteer of 1842, yet the station lacked the 'East' till 1864. That was the year when a branch from Leadburn on the Edinburgh to Peebles line opened, to Dolphinton via West Linton. So it may well have been the railways rather than the other suspect, the Post Office, that instigated the distinction.