

# SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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



*Loch Faskally in Highland Perthshire (photo by Eilidh Scammell). The loch was formed in the late 1940s as part of the Tummel Hydro-Electric Power Scheme, when the River Tummel was dammed beside Pitlochry. It is popular for angling and easy walks. Faskally (stressed on the first syllable) at the north end of the loch has a caravan park with many stances, appropriately since the first element is probably Gaelic fas, 'stance, level spot for an overnight stay'. Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is circumspect about what the second element in Fascalaidh could be. The name was on record as Fascalie in 1598, Fasklie in 1732, Faskelly in 1755.*

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### COMMENT

During the late winter and early spring of 2022 we must nearly all have learned previously unfamiliar place-names from south-east Europe – and for the worst of reasons. These weeks have also coincided with BBC2's second series on 'The Rise of the Nazis', 'Dictators at War'. The discussions of the mindset of dictators were fascinating.

In the second of the three parts it became clear that one of the pivotal events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had much to do with a place-name as well as strategic location. A town on the Volga River was named Tsaritsyn when it was founded for Russian rulers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Obviously referring to the Tsar? Apparently not: from Tatar, a Turkic language, *sary su* 'yellow river', now the Tsaritsa, a small tributary of the Volga. But there is no doubt as to why it was renamed Stalingrad in 1925; Joseph Stalin, who had been involved in Bolshevik insurgency at Tsaritsyn, had become the Soviet Union's strong man and wished to have a permanent reminder of his heroism on the map and in the mouths of his people. Conversely, for Hitler the annihilation of Stalingrad would not only remove an obstacle on the way to Russia's oil wells but be a personal humiliation of his enemy. Hence the command from both dictators to fight to the death. Hitler's Germany never recovered from the resulting disaster on the Eastern Front. In 1961, Stalin's memory now being out of favour, the city was renamed Volgograd; except that since 2013 it has reverted to Stalingrad for six days each year, for commemorations of the great battle.

It is centuries since names like Fort George or Fort Augustus were coined in Scotland, in similar manner to Stalingrad, to glorify conquest and established order. Much more numerous are place and street names redolent of exploits and exploitation overseas, in the age of imperialist competition and the subjection of native peoples.

## CEATHRAMHAN IN THE CREE AND MINNOCH VALLEYS: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS TO DATE

The Gaelic term for a quarter, quarterland is found in place-names in Ireland as *Ceathrí*, the Isle of Man as *Kerroo* and in Scotland as *Ceathramh*: in three different spellings, essentially the same Gaelic word.

Anglicisations tend to be more uniform and standardised in Ireland and the Isle of Man whereas Galloway examples display considerable variation in the anglicised form. And hence *ceathramhan* there can be somewhat disguised.

I have mapped all the examples of this place-name in the British Isles that I could locate. The *ceathramh* distribution pattern that emerges (including *leth-cheathramh*) is interesting: 815 instances in Ireland, outside the Pale, with dense concentrations in Connacht and north Donegal; Another cluster of 19 on the Isle of Man; and 105 that I have located so far in Scotland.

It is remarkable that 67 of the Scottish examples or some 65% are in Galloway - with 43 in Wigtownshire alone. There is also an interesting cluster of 9 in south/central Bute which Gilbert Márkus has noted in his book *The Place-Names of Bute*.

### *Ceathramhan in the South-West*

*Ceathramh* place-names appear to be pretty well confined to Galloway, especially Wigtownshire and the northern part of Kirkcudbrightshire. But this pattern might be a bit too neat to be true. For example Balbeg is a farm near Straiton in Carrick. In 1629 it is recorded as having an alternative name, *Carrowqubestoun* (RMS no. 1479 dated 1629). This is an intriguing name in itself, suggesting the Gaelicisation of an earlier Anglo-Norse name; thanks to Alan James for this suggestion. Another couple of examples are Corryfintock and Carwinshoch, *Corryfintoun* and *Corrivinsocht* in RMS (Register of the Great Seal) vi no. 559 dated 1597.

These farms just south of Ayr are on the bounds of the lands of Greenan. They look very like *ceathramh* place-names while **-fintoun** and **-fintock** certainly sound like reflexes of the name **Fionntán** and the hypocoristic **Fionntóg**, maybe referring to St Fintan himself. *Fuinneach* is given by Dwelly as 'enchanter's nightshade'. These places are also close to a farm today called Saughrie which earlier was *Schallachery*, possibly another *ceathramh* location.

### ***Ceathramh/Peighinn in the South-West***

If *ceathramhan* place-names are largely not present outside the borders of Galloway what takes their place? Place-names in *peighinn*, *leth-pheighinn* and *fairdean* predominate in the surrounding Carrick, Kyle and upper Nithsdale with only a few in Galloway itself.

### ***Gaelic farm-names more generally in the South-West***

Distribution maps of Galloway, Carrick and Nithsdale are well stocked with Gaelic farm-names including *baile*, *achadh*, and *earrann*. Distinctive broad patterns or zones suggest themselves – patterns we have not time to go into in detail here. For example the density of *baile* names in Carrick and the south Stewartry, the linear stripe of *earrann* names (which Gilbert Márkus has written about) and a fairly widespread distribution of *achadh*.

### ***The Cree and Minnoch Valleys***

I'd now like to focus in more on the *ceathramhan* system in the Cree and Minnoch Valleys. As mentioned earlier this constitutes probably some 20 named quarterland holdings which is a remarkably dense surviving pattern of *ceathramh* place-names in a relatively small area. Compare this distribution with that of *Inis Eoghainn* in Donegal where there are 27 that I could locate in an area double the size of our study area.

### ***The Cree and Minnoch Valleys***

Looking at the place-names themselves, they range from Corvisel in the south at sea level (*An Ceathramh Ìosal* 'the low quarterland' appropriately) to Kirriereoch or Kirrie-och as it is pronounced locally today, probably *An Ceathramh Riabhach*, 'the brindled quarterland'. All have *ceathramh* as the generic term except one, Glenkerrow which probably refers to *Ceathramh a Chapaille*, now known as Kirhobble. Three of them have the adjective-noun formation such as *An Dubh Cheathramh*, *An Caol Cheathramh* and *An Garbh Cheathramh*.

Most of the Cree/Minnoch *ceathramhan* have names that reflect their physical character, position, size or shape or colour. Some relate to trades or specialisms (Kerygown, or 'blacksmith's quarter', Kirhobble, 'quarterland of the horse', Kernachory, 'quarterland of the sheep') and a couple appear to be named for an individual (Kirkennan, Cordorcan). (The online version includes an appendix with a full list.)

### ***Spatial Extent of the ceathramhan***

Unfortunately I have not been able to find any early boundary maps or descriptions depicting the precise extents of the *ceathramhan* of the Cree/Minnoch system. However based on the locations of the farmsteads, watercourses and watersheds which may have formed the basis of natural boundaries a rough start can perhaps be made to determine the pattern. What seems to emerge is that there is no standard size for a *ceathramh*; they seem to have varied considerably, probably depending on land quality. Later valuations in merks seem to vary significantly as well. Rixonian precision in calculation of land assessment units unfortunately eludes us in Galloway! One quarterland is dealt with in some detail in an early charter, namely: grant made in 1329 of an un-named quarter to Martin McGech in RRS (Acts of the Kings of Scots) v, no. 367. This states that Martin McGech(an) received a quarterland of five individual named properties – Dinnans (*Donnan*), Larg (*Largelonan*), Calgow (*Culcgan*), Glenamour (*Clonamyrs*) and Tannoch (*Tannash Hennags*)

The overall quarterland was not named in the charter; however the area described seems to roughly correspond to the postulated quarterland called *Ceathramh Trostain*, modern form Craigdistant.

Richard Oram has suggested that quarterlands were possibly made up of 5 subsidiary units. This may have been the case in some areas but does not seem to have been universal. It has also been suggested that the *ceathramh* was a subsidiary unit of something larger in Ireland and Man. In Galloway, however, I find little evidence that it was part of a *dabbach*.

*Dabbach* is a Gaelic term for 'a tub' or 'vat'. In Galloway it appears that the sense of 'fish trap' developed from this and was also borrowed into the local Galloway Scots. An example is the Meikle Doach on the pre-hydro Dee at Tongland. Another possible example as a fish trap is the Doach Steps on the Polharrow in the Glenkens, re-imagined as stepping stones. *Dabbach* as a land unit has been seen in these Galloway place-names. But I suggest they possibly derive from the fish-trap sense rather than referring to a unit of land assessment.

### **Tentative Conclusions**

- Galloway/Isle of Man/ North and West of Ireland share a dense *ceathramh* place-name distribution



- Especially Wigtownshire and west/northern Kirkcudbrightshire
- No strong evidence for a formal hierarchical system of land assessment units in Galloway, unlike IoM/Ireland
- Probably simply meant ‘area’ ‘division’ of variable size/value
- Some indications that some quarters were composed of five smaller units but most seem to have been individual farms.
- Probably named between c. 900 and c. 1100 during a period of intensive Gaelicisation, although some of the Cree/Minnoch examples may have been considerably later when the Forest of Buchan was being converted from hunting to agricultural use.
- Relationship between *ceathramh* and other land denominations is unclear
- More questions than answers!

Michael Ansell (from talk to Autumn 2021 online conference)

## **SUNDAYWELL: THE FIELD AND FEATURE NAMES OF AN UPLAND FARM IN SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND**

Sundaywell is a hill farm of about 300 hectares in Glenesslin, the west wing of Dunscore parish, Dumfriesshire, described in a sasine of 1739 as ‘The seven merkland of Sundaywell of old extent lying within the Barony and Regality of Glencairn’. The name Dunscore appears first towards the end of the twelfth century, 1185 x 1211 *Dunescor* (PoMS 3/34/2; Holyrood charter). It is possibly Brythonic **din** + **sgor**, either tautologous ‘fort fort’ or ‘enclosure fort’, or ‘hill (of the) fort’ (BLITON). Another possibility is Gaelic **sgòr** (Scots *skur*), ‘fort of the cleft’. There is a small hillfort in the eastern wing of the parish, overlooking the Laggan Glen, a narrow gap in the Keir hills.

The farm is bounded by three watercourses, to the north-east by the Bogrie Linn, to the south by the Glenesslin burn and to the west by an unnamed cleuch running into the Shillingland Burn, which itself then meets with the Glenesslin burn. ‘Glenesslin’ is attested in various forms from middle of the fourteenth century onwards, c. 1350 x 1370 *Glenesclane* (RGS, App. 2, nos. 1105, 1154, 1209). It appears to take its name from the main watercourse, possibly Gaelic **asc-**, **esc-**, ‘a small

watercourse’, or ON **esk** + **lone** ‘ashtree burn’. Professor Hough has suggested comparing Asland, Lancs., 13<sup>th</sup> c. *Asklone*, *Eskelone*.

Situated on the north side of the glen, the land rises from flat arable fields in the east to hill pasture in the west. The hill consists of two summits, the higher, Knockoure, and the lower Little Knockoure, Gaelic **Cnoc** + **odhar** ‘dark hill’. Bogrie Hill, from which flows the Bogrie Linn, is also a Gaelic name, curiously **Bogreach**, boggy.

The name Sundaywell itself is attested from the early sixteenth century, 1511 *Soundevell* (RGS, no. 3594; Barony of Glencairn). This earliest form doesn’t appear to support the first element being the day of the week. ‘Sound’, possibly, as in a ‘healthy well?’ ‘Sound’ also has a secondary meaning as a drinking hole where game was known to gather (OED), and Simon Taylor has suggested the second element might be Old Norse **vollr**, ‘a field’. The *caput* still exists in the form of the late-sixteenth century Sundaywell Tower, a simple square peel, still occupied, and now attached to a later eighteenth-century extension. This sits below the late-prehistoric Sundaywell promontory fort, on the rising ground above which is a spring with a crudely improved well-head identified by the nineteenth-century surveyors as ‘The Sunday Well’. There is evidence of some subsidiary late medieval or early modern holdings within the ‘seven merkland’, all now extinct, including Brochloch (Gaelic **broclach**, ‘badger warren’, a settlement attested in the Hearth Tax records and recorded on Pont Map 35/1, later a field name); Cottown, (‘toun of cottars’) on General Roy’s Map; and the uncertainly identified Balcraig and Cleuchhead, both recorded in the Hearth Tax records.

Field names are recorded on Stitt’s map of 1846 (at <https://maps.nls.uk/estates/rec/8459>; the map is orientated with west at the top); few of these names are in use today. There are no parcels in ‘Field’, the principal generic being ‘Park’ but there is also a ‘Lands’ (*Auld Lands*) and a ‘Meadow’ (*Ladys Meadow*), and some parcels without a generic (e.g. the simplex *Drum*). Some of the twenty-three field names are self-explanatory (e.g. *Horse Park*), but fourteen of these are perhaps worthy of further comment.

Moving roughly from west to east, where the western most ‘Hill Pasture’ is self-explanatory:

‘Drum’ occurs twice in the survey, once as a simplex and, further up the glen as High Drum, Scots **drum** from Gaelic **druim**, a ridge. High

Drum sits just below the extinct settlement of Brochloch (q.v.) and as well-drained ground would probably have been valuable for cultivation.

Brockloch Park preserves the name of the earlier settlement, both the ruined settlement itself and the relict landscape (dykes and trackways) surrounding it.

The parcel called Auld Lands sits above Brochloch and perhaps formed part of this subsidiary holding. Curiously, the 'auld lands' is where there is the most evidence for prehistoric settlement: circular pounds and low, zig-zagging 'reaves' or fail-dykes. When there is mid-winter sun, it is noticeable that it still falls on this upper terrace until sunset.

Thom Park is possibly from a personal name, Thom, unless from Gaelic **tom**, a hillock: there are a number of small glacial mounds in the lower half of this parcel.

Bottom Park is a curiosity because it is not 'at the bottom', in fact it is halfway up the hill between the fields on the valley floor and Little Knockoure. As the settlement marked on General Roy's Map is within this parcel, could it be a corruption, either through a mishearing or mis-transcription, of 'Cottown Park'?

Shed Park is no more or less well-draining than the other parcels of this sort up the roadside, so it could refer to a field used for 'shedding' (i.e. separating) livestock. There is no sign of a physical hut or shed.

Crabtree Park: although it did not survive being copied onto the final draft of the 1846 map, the sketch map shows a tree in the centre of this field; possibly the actual crabtree itself.

Piper Park: this parcel contains the remains of a milldam and leat, and a water meadow management system associated with Sundaywell Tower and its steading. Almost certainly not a reference to a bagpiper (but who knows?!), but perhaps to the water-piping that led the water from the milldam to the millwheel.

Planting: this is slight but important evidence for active silviculture in the first half of the nineteenth century. The 'planting' is still shown on the 1855 OS 25-inch map, but has gone by the second, 1898, survey.

Ladys Meadow is now a very rough, waterlogged parcel. 'Meadow' suggests mowing, and perhaps this could have been managed for mowing in the past. The 'ladys' are either mill lades (the outflow from the Sunday Well runs down through here),

or, perhaps more likely, a type of flower: the area is now abundant in wild orchids.

Croft: situated beside Sundaywell Tower and steading, this perhaps preserves one of the oldest field names on the holding, the 'croft', the enclosed land, attached to the 'toft' of the late medieval settlement complex.

Drum (q.v.) sits just below Camp, the outer bank and ditch of which have been ploughed out here. The 'drum' would almost certainly have been exploited for cultivation by the late-prehistoric or early historic promontory fort. 'Camp' is often used to designate such monuments whether native or Roman in origin. Sundaywell Fort is of a decidedly indigenous type.



*Cairn in Cairn Park*

Finally (after which there is only the mundane Gateside Park), Cairn Park is named for an unusually large sub-circular cairn, now largely robbed-out but also re-added to, with a footprint of approximately 32 metres in diameter. The later enclosure dyke was built over the edge of the cairn, demonstrating that the cairn preceded the enclosure. Again, like the tree in Crabtree Park, the surveyor drew the cairn carefully on his sketch map, but it was not transferred to the final draft.

**Henry Gough-Cooper** (from presentation to the November 2021 Conference)

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N.B. Fife volumes II (few left) to V, and the Bute and Kinross-shire volumes are also still available from Shaun Tyas. Contact publisher for special prices for SPNS members.

### PLACE NAME EVOLUTION – CLARITY OR MADNESS?



There can be no doubt that place names are of immense importance, not only for finding and identifying a location, but also for giving indications its former uses, ownership or cultural associations. This is particularly true of the traditional Gaelic names which often contain a wealth of information in their formulation. However, so much of the accuracy can be inadvertently lost when surveying and recording of information is carried out by non-Gaelic speakers and reliance is placed on phonetic approximations. Blanket corporate policies can further worsen the situation for a few unfortunate localities.

There is a certain loch on the Isle of South Uist, within Howmore township at NF 76 36, whose name made its cartographic debut as *Loch Rigarey* on the *Plan of the Island of South Uist*, surveyed in 1805 by Wm Bald, a 17-year-old prodigy from Burntisland, Fife. By the time of the O.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, the loch had been divided into two parts by the building of the road, now the A865, and the two resultant lochs now had individual names.

The name 'chosen' by O.S. for the main loch had evolved into *Loch Rigarry* – from the Name Book options of *Loch Rigarry* (Neil McIntyre's suggestion), *Loch Rigary* (from the Admiralty Chart), *Loch Rigarey* (from Johnston's map) or *Loch Righarruidh* (suggested by A. A. Carmichael, with a note to check this spelling, so possibly *Loch Righaraidh*). The secondary, eastern loch was now called *Loch Eilean a' Ghille-ruaidh*. There was also a school marked adjacent to the township road junction, some 200 metres south of the loch.

In the 1921-30 'new' 1-inch to 1 mile survey, the names remained unchanged, but on a small promontory to the west of the main road, a 'new' building group – a small farmstead and outbuildings – are now marked, although the school has not changed its position. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the angling on South Uist became more important, and the loch began to be referred to as 'Schoolhouse Loch' – wrongly identifying the now disused farmstead as a former small schoolhouse. It is likely the name was chosen to avoid any potential Gaelic pronunciation problems. By taking this step, the loch immediately lost its provenance and past, but for this loch, things were about to get worse.

The publication of the new Explorer maps came along, and with that, the desire to reinvigorate the Gaelic names of features on the maps for their cultural importance. So, once again, the loch's name has been changed – and is now proudly (?) sporting the name of *Loch an Taigh-Sgoil*, marked against the southern portion of the loch. The position of the name *Loch Eilean a' Ghille-ruaidh* has also been now moved to the west of the main road, which itself has been straightened, widened and repositioned some 20-50 metres east, and now seems to refer to the northern section of the main loch, not the sectioned-off eastern portion.

So, clarity or madness? Should an English name, given to a loch to avoid potential embarrassment of tourists, be translated into Gaelic and gain 'official' recognition in a Crown document, erasing all mention of the original Gaelic roots? Or would it be better to retain the Gaelic name – preferably going with a version of Carmichael's suggestion *Righaraidh* (King's Hut or King's Shieling) – and give it the subsidiary English alternative of Schoolhouse Loch (even though the schoolhouse was never there!).

Were the original phonetic Gaelic suggestions true to the intended origins? The *-garry* suffix is most commonly from *Gearraidh* – a term for the intermediate land twixt *Machair* (the coastal strip of blown shell-sand cover) and *Monadh* (the peaty



marshland pasture). And what of the now anonymous eastern loch? Perhaps we should adopt a plan of simplicity and just call it 'Fred'.

**Simon M Davies** (text and photo)  
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(All maps referred to in the text are available from the National Library of Scotland at <https://maps.nls.uk/>. Edward Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary was used for referencing translations as needed. O.S.Name Books can be accessed and interrogated online at <https://scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/>.)

### Journal of Scottish Name Studies

The latest issue of this peer-reviewed online journal, *JSNS* 14, is available free at <https://clog.glasgow.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JSNS/index>. Previous issues 1 to 13 are accessible through the clanntuirc website <http://www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS/contents.html>

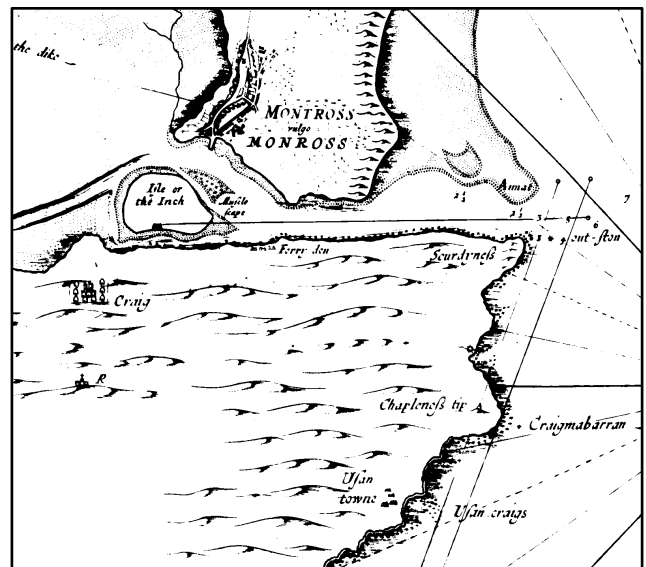
### TALES OF BRAVE ULYSSES OR PICTISH PUZZLE?

My first visit to Usan was in 1962 on a bird-watching trip, something which became a regular occurrence in the following decades. Later when my interest in place-names developed I questioned its origin and searched for an answer. Unusually James B. Johnston in his 'Scottish Place-Names' (Third Edition, 1934) under the entry Usan merely states that it is probably Pictish, but offers no explanation. Alexander Warden in his 'Angus or Forfarshire' (Vol.III 1883) makes the only attempt I could find, where he has *oisin* = a corner, presumably from the Gaelic, although he does not say so.

Usan, (Craig Parish, more anciently Inchbrayock) lies on the rocky Angus coast, a little to the south of Scurdyness whose lighthouse still guards the Southesk estuary and the entrance to Montrose, once the medieval port of Stromay. The current Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map has Usan House, Inverusan, Mains of Usan, Scotstown of Usan, Seatown of Usan and Fishtown of Usan all marked.

Sadly, the Fishtown, formerly a busy fishing community, is no longer inhabited, although there is still a salmon fishing station. In medieval times salmon from here made their way to the Royal court in Forfar, along the Cadger's Road. Stretches of this road still survive at least in name, and in 1994 I recreated this historic walk from Usan to Forfar when some 200+ people participated, to be rewarded with a plate of salmon and greeted by Provost Brian Milne.

There are so many variants of the name over the centuries that space does not permit me to list them all, so I will be selective. In documentary sources the place-name first appears in 1245 as *Hulysham*, then in 1467 as *Howsane*, with the haven suffix first appearing in 1481 when it is recorded as *Houshawin*. By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we find spellings of *Willishavin* and *Ulishawn* and these or similar spellings persist throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. By 1676 it is recorded as *Uz̄in* and it remains as that or *Uz̄on* and *Usan* to this day.



From John Adair's map of 1693



Mausoleum of the Scott and Renny families

The exception to this is, however, very interesting, as it comes close to the *Ulishaven* of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Right on the shore was a chapel, dedicated to St Fergus or possibly St Mary, and on this spot was built a mausoleum to the Renny and Scott families, owners of Usan estate. Robert Renny received the lands and barony of Ulysseshaven in 1751. One of the memorials commemorates Archibald Scott of Usan, eldest son of Robert Scott of Dunninald, and his first wife Elizabeth Renny (died 1761), heiress of the barony of Ulysseshaven. The mausoleum is a high-walled enclosure just yards from the

windswept rocky shore. Elizabeth's father, Patrick Renny (died 1736) is also buried here. Patrick's is a fine marble slab, with a barely readable Latin inscription, and both are described as 'of Ulysseshaven'.

This spelling (already as *Ulysses-haven* in a court record of 1621) doubtless reflected the local tradition that none other than the ancient Greek hero travelled to these distant Caledonian shores, an unrecorded journey perhaps? Perhaps it later inspired Eric Clapton to write his epic song 'Tales of Brave Ulysses'? I have a vision of the guitar legend playing this with the waves crashing nearby!

Unfortunately, Patrick Renny's slab is almost impossible to photograph successfully in order to share it with you.

In terms of cartography, Usan appears on a good many maps, bearing out the spellings in the documentary sources. The great cartographer, Blaeu c. 1662x5, is the first to have it appear, as *Uliszen*, doubtless taken from Timothy Pont's lost maps. Robert Edwards' account of Angus in 1678, actually drawn by Gerardus Valk and Petrus Schenk, has an identical spelling.

In 1693 John Adair published a 'Map of the Coast from Red Head to Buchan Ness', a lesser-known map which I have attached above. He adopts the current 'Usan'.

General Roy c 1747x55 has it as *Aeuson* while John Ainslie's excellent 'Map of the County of Forfar or Shire of Angus' published in 1794 records it as *Uzan* and *Uson*. Ainslie also produced a map of the Parish of Craig which was presented to Sir John Sinclair of the Statistical Account fame. Here it consistently appears as Usan on three occasions. Both of his maps record the site of the chapel as St Fergus, now the mausoleum.

Further reading on this fascinating place may be had in two difficult-to-obtain publications – D. H. Edwards' 1921 'Among the Fisher Folks of Usan and Ferryden', and David G. Adams' later, undated 'Usan or Fishtown of Ullishaven'.

In the early 1970's the row of fisher cottages was advertised for sale at the princely sum of £2,000. Sadly, I was unable to raise the necessary sum and I was unable to realise an early ambition!

### Norman Atkinson

Editor's Note: Many thanks to Norman for this response to a request to share his local knowledge about a very odd-looking name. It seems that there may be more to the Odyssean association than a random local fancy. The chorographer Solinus, writing in Latin probably in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD,

claimed that a visit by Ulysses to farthest Caledonia was proved by the presence of an altar with an inscription in Greek letters; he also placed a similar visit at what is now Lisbon, anciently *Olisipon-* (in oblique cases). This classical wonder of the far north was relayed, in somewhat less credulous fashion, by William Camden in his *Britannia*. Both this work and a translation of Solinus's 'Wonders of the World' were widely distributed around 1600, shortly before *Ulysses* appears in a spelling of the place-name. The real origin of the name could probably generate much discussion, early forms being so inconsistent. A Scandinavian formation from the personal name *Ulfir* and *höfn* 'haven' would be a rare thing on Scotland's east coast, but may not be unthinkable given the nearby *Stromay* (see Barbara Crawford's note in Newsletter no. 37, Autumn 2014).

## SETTLEMENT NAMES OF THE GALLOWAY GLENS

This talk set out to examine what we can say about settlement names in the area of the Galloway Glens, an area which has been surveyed as part of a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund under the auspices of the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership<sup>1</sup>. The bulk of the collection and analysis was carried out by my colleague Gilbert Márkus (aided by Simon Taylor and myself), and what follows is essentially a reflection on aspects of what that work has revealed.<sup>2</sup>

My interest is particularly in place-names employing the most common settlement generics, Northern Brittonic/Cumbric *trev*, Gaelic *baile* and Old English/Scots *tūn / toun*, all meaning 'farm, farming settlement'. All of these are present in the Galloway Glens area, as they are more widely in south-west Scotland, but the more we research Scottish place-names, the more it is clear that lessons learned about such elements in one region can not necessarily be replicated in another.

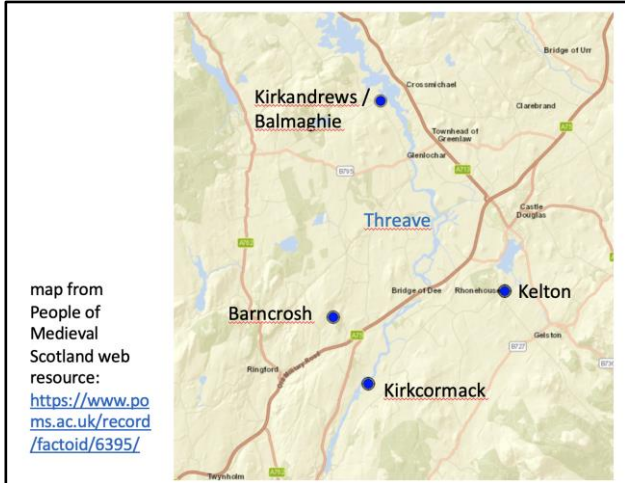
In a comparatively early document relating to our region, we find all three of these represented, even if one is only by implication. In the 1170s, William the Lion, king of Scots, confirmed the transfer of four churches in Galloway to the Augustinian abbey of Holyrood. These four churches had previously pertained to the Hebridean monastery

<sup>1</sup> See <https://gallowayglens.org/> and <https://kcb-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> See the Galoway Glens place-names website (<https://kcb-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/place-names/>) under the relevant names for early forms and analysis of most of the place-names discussed here—I won't note this each time. The exceptions are Kelton and Barncross, as these are in parishes the database did not cover.



of Iona. The grant confirmed: ‘the churches or chapels in Galloway which pertained to the usage of the abbacy of Iona with all its teinds and other ecclesiastical benefits; that is, the church which is called Kirkcormack (*Kirbecormach*), and the church of St Andrew [=Kirkandrews Balmaghie], and that of Barncrosh (*Balencros*) and that of Kelton (*Cheletun*)’. (RRS ii, 49).



The positioning of these four churches is intriguing and, as has been suggested by Gilbert Márkus, is suggestive that they may have had some relationship with the estate of Threave, later the nodal point of the Douglas lordship in Galloway, which sits at the centre of all of them (see Gilbert Márkus’s discussion at: <https://kcb-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/unpacking-balmaghie/>).

Three of these names, Barncrosh, originally given as *Balencros*; Kelton; and Threave (not mentioned in the document, but perhaps implied), contain the three most common settlement generics from each of three of the main languages historically spoken in Galloway, and more specifically, in Kirkcudbrightshire, the three mentioned earlier.

Of them, the one containing *tūn* / *toun* is in fact likely to be the earliest: **Kelton**. It can be extremely difficult to date names containing this element, because it was in such long use both in English and in Scots, even into the contemporary period.<sup>3</sup> But Kelton is likely to be early. It fulfils some crucial criteria:

- 1) It is mentioned comparatively early. The 1170s is about as early as we get detailed charters relating to the area. The context also implies a certain degree of longevity – the churches mentioned in the grant had

previously pertained to Iona. It seems unlikely that these are ‘new build’ estates.

- 2) The specific here is most likely to be the local equivalent of ON *kelda* cf OE *celde* ‘(well)spring’. The situation of Kelton church reveals it as an area where there are a number of springs and water-sources, such that ‘spring-farm’ might be an appropriate name. This element is uncommon, though not unknown in Scots; and it is found here and there in toponymy. (There are issues to do with the phonology, but no space to explore that here.)
- 3) Kelton appears to be incorporated in a later, probably Gaelic, place-name. The church appears several times on record as *Lockelleton* and variations on that. The first element here is almost certainly *G loch*, and *Lockelleton* almost certainly an earlier name for what is now Carlingwark Loch, which dominated the middle part of Kelton parish. The implication is that *Kelton* was already an extant place-name when Gaelic became the dominant language of the area.
- 4) Kelton has a further association with the Old English period, in the form of the church’s dedication. The church of Kelton was dedicated to St Oswald, the Northumbrian king and martyr, as we learn from a grant of 1210 mentioning *Ecclesia Sancti Oswaldi martiris de Kelletun*. In this it joins a number of other churches commemorating either Cuthbert or Oswald which suggest continuity of one sort or another from the Northumbrian period. And
- 5) As we can see Kelton was prominent as a church; and it is also described elsewhere as a villa. There is good reason to think this was an important early estate—and in some ways probably relates closely to the later estate of Threave, which, however, lay in the neighbouring parish.

All these give us good reason to think of Kelton as a name deriving from the period of Northumbrian rule and settlement in this part of Galloway. There are other *tūn* / *toun* names which probably come from this period also: Parton, for instance, as also the specific in Glenswinton, in Parton parish.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See discussion in T.O. Clancy (2013) ‘Many Strata: English and Scots Place-Names in Scotland’, in J. Carroll and D. N. Parsons (eds) *Perceptions of Place: twenty-first-century interpretations of English place-name studies* (English Place-Name Society: Nottingham) pp. 283-320.

<sup>4</sup> For a seminal discussion, though the material needs revisiting, see Daphne Brooke (1991) ‘The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick: an historical assessment’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*

What of our two Celtic settlement generics then? While *baile* is one of the most common Gaelic settlement elements, we know that it came into toponymic usage comparatively late – the earliest instances being the late 11<sup>th</sup> century – and in some areas to have been in active use for naming new farms as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. **Barncrosh**, originally *Balnecros*, for *baile na croise* ‘the farm of the cross’ (perhaps a reference to an ecclesiastical monument—there is a fragment of a Northumbrian cross embedded in a local cottage), is probably one of the earliest attested in south-west Scotland. Not only is *baile* a comparatively late element, but the name contains the definite article, also a sign of comparative lateness. The name is probably not much older than the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when it is first found. Other examples in the region suggest that *baile*-names are to some degree a high-medieval phenomenon, such as the two parish-names, Balmaghie (*Baile Mac Aoidh*) and Balmaclellan (*Baile Mac Gille-Fhaolain*), both of them containing the family names of kindreds which only seem to coalesce under those names in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and both names superseding earlier ones which we know. In Balmaghie’s case, that earlier name was an ecclesiastical one, Kirkandrews, a name which, though Gaelic in form, suggests an underlying Northumbrian heritage.

The second of these, Balmaclellan, seems on first record to be called by a Northern Brittonic / Cumbric name, *Treuearcou*. This name, like that of Threave, employs the common Brittonic word for a farm or settlement, *trev* (Welsh *trf*). Brittonic was of course the earliest of the languages we know of spoken in south-west Scotland, but there is ample evidence of its comparatively late use in the area as well. Alan James has made a strong case for some *trev*-names belonging to this period, and *Treuearcou* looks likely to be among them.<sup>5</sup> Like Barncrosh (*Balnecros*) in Gaelic, this name contains the definite article (the specific element is very uncertain), and in NBr/Cmb this is thought to be a later feature, belonging to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest. Although this does not apply to *Treuearcou*, a number of other local *trev*-names show linguistic features met elsewhere in the south-west, features which suggest that they

121, pp. 295-327.

<sup>5</sup> Alan G. James (2008) ‘A Cumbric diaspora?’ in Padel, Oliver J., and Parsons, David N., eds., *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling* Donington, pp. 187-203; (2011) ‘Dating Brittonic Place-Names in Southern Scotland and Cumbria’, *JSNS* 5, 57-114; (2014) ‘Cumbric *trev* in Kyle, Carrick, Galloway and Dumfriesshire’, *TDGNHAS* 3<sup>rd</sup> Series 88, 21-42.

may have either come to us through Gaelic, or perhaps even that the element *trev* has been adopted by Gaelic speakers locally. This would be no great leap since Gaelic had a directly cognate word, *treabh*. While that word is not found in use elsewhere in place-names, perhaps in the south-west language contact between Brittonic and Gaelic speakers caused it to be adopted.

The linguistic complexity of south-west Scotland has long been recognised. I have been arguing for a long time that we need to not think about this area as one where one language succeeded another, but rather think about neighbouring linguistic communities coexisting for a considerable time, evincing a fair amount of bilingualism, particularly during the period from, say, 900 to 1200. My sense is that the settlement names of the Galloway Glens bear out that scenario, and that further study would only deepen this conviction.

**Thomas Owen Clancy** (summarising his talk to the online conference, November 2021)

## **MOUNTJOY**

The name ‘Mountjoy’ when given to fields or farms, douce suburban villas or modern housing developments is commonly an optimistic, or occasionally an ironic, choice from no earlier than the later seventeenth century. The district to the south of the town centre of Linlithgow [NT007764], named from a farm that was nearby in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, might at first sight be taken as one such. However, a flurry of mentions of a Mountjoy apparently in this locality in the Register of the Great Seal in the years following the Reformation (*Mont Joy*, (*Lie*) *Montjoy* 1567, *Montjoy* 1571, *Montioy* 1586) hints at a site with former ecclesiastical associations of some importance, and may suggest an earlier and perhaps more intriguing origin for the place-name.

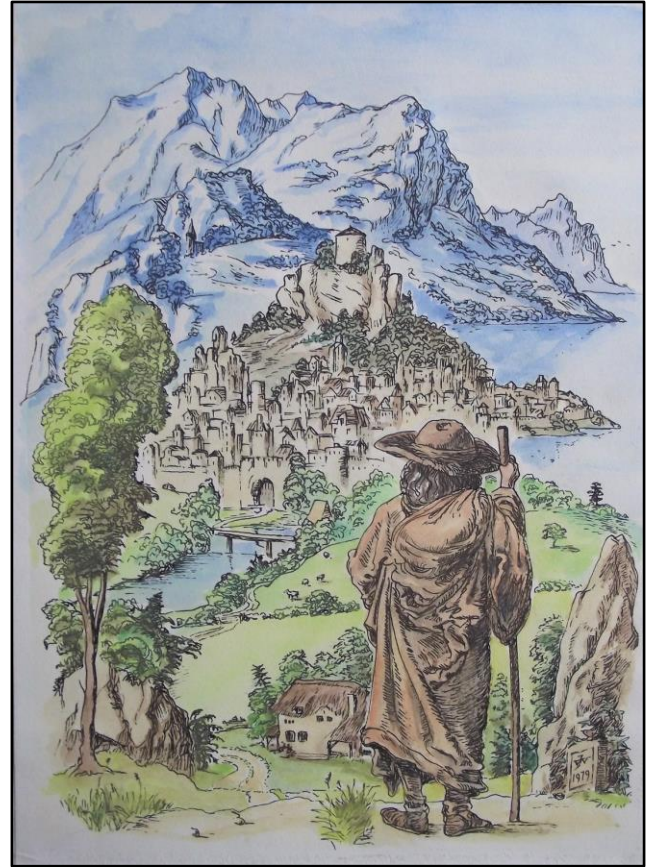
A great deal has been written on the history of *Montjoie* and associated forms as place-names throughout western Europe and beyond, the story can only be summarized very briefly here. Their origin may well be found at *Mons Jovis*, the name given by the Romans to the point just south of the summit of what later became the Great Saint Bernard Pass where travellers first get a glimpse of the Valle d’Aosta. There were other *Montes Jovis* in Imperial times in comparable locations as far afield as the Pyrenees and the Syrian hills overlooking the Euphrates, and in the Romance-speaking world some of these, including the

Alpine prototype, preserved their ‘pagan’ name in derivative forms such as *Mont Jòus*, *Montjaux* etc.<sup>6</sup>

However, in other cases this name became modified to *Mont Joie*, and that attractive appellation became popular throughout the French- and Langue d’Oc/ Provençal-speaking worlds, including Anglo-Norman England and medieval Scotland, for high places on routeways where travellers first caught sight of green and fertile country. Mount Joe, in Moffat parish but on the Dumfriesshire/ Lanarkshire watershed, though lacking early documentation, seems a tempting possibility, where travellers first glimpsed upper Clydesdale to the north, or Annandale to the south.<sup>7</sup>

But the most famous *Montjoie* was not in Europe, but in the Holy Land, being the name (first recorded in 10<sup>th</sup> century in Latin texts as *Mons Gaudii*) given by pilgrims and crusaders to the Hill of Rama, where travellers from the north first catch sight of Jerusalem. So potent was this association that ‘Montjoie’ was made, quite anachronistically, the war-cry of the forces of Charlemagne in *Le Chanson de Roland*, it was taken up as a slogan by the heralds of the Kings of France,<sup>8</sup> and so became the title of the French King of Arms. And, most significantly for our Linlithgow Mountjoy, it favoured the use of the name for sites where pilgrims got their first sight

of their destination: *Monte de Gozo* on the approach to Santiago is a famous example, but much closer to home, a ‘hill just east of Durham City, now known as Nine-tree Hill ... was also known as Munjei or Mountjoy Hill, and tradition has it that it was so-called because here pilgrims from the south got their first view of Durham’.



*John G Wilkinson envisages a pilgrim at a Mons Gaudii*

The house and small farm named Mountjoy were located on the hill overlooking Linlithgow from the south; the road approaching the burgh crosses the crest of the ridge just to the west, where any travellers coming from the south gain their first view of Linlithgow Palace and St Michael’s Kirk.

But was Linlithgow a destination for pilgrims? Pilgrims’ Hill to the east of the centre, though recorded rather late,<sup>9</sup> gives a strong hint; St Magdalene’s Hospital nearby on Edinburgh Road, first mentioned in 1335, may have provided accommodation and care for pilgrims,<sup>10</sup> though this is not certain. Moreover, the presence of a Carmelite friary close to Mountjoy on the west side of the road a couple of hundred yards down

<sup>6</sup> The Alpine summit is mentioned in LaZamon’s *Brut* lines 1198 - 1210, where Uther Pendragon has an alarming vision of a comet like a dragon, its tail stretching over to Ireland, its head across France, the light from its fiery mouth blazing as far as *Mûn [=Munt] Giu*.

<sup>7</sup> Mountjoy in Underbarrow Wml, overlooking Kentdale, is another possible candidate. There are false friends, though: Mountjoy in Co. Fermanagh is named from a tower-house built by Lord Deputy Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, in 1602; Mountjoy near St Germans in Cornwall was *Meyndi*, *Meyndy*, so Cornish \**meyn-di* ‘stone-house’ > \**meynji*, reinterpreted. Mountjoy as an Anglo-Norman surname (Gilbert de Montgaye 1219, Elias Munjoye 1243, Robert de Mountgay, Mungay 13<sup>th</sup> ct Lancs, John Mountjoye 1307) may be traced to Montjoie-St-Martin, Dept. Manche, in Normandy.

<sup>8</sup> Some examples in France which are merely prominent mounds may have been reinterpreted as pre-Christian Frankish \**mund-gavi* ‘protection of the land’, so possibly places of some pagan religious significance; such a *Mont Joie* existed near the royal abbey of St-Denis, and this may well have encouraged the extended form, ‘Montjoie St Denis’; various rivals to the Capetian dynasty adopted such phrasing, the Burgundians ‘Montjoie St André’, the Dukes of Bourbon ‘Montjoie Notre Dame’, and even the Kings of England used ‘Montjoie St George’ (which in turn could explain how Sir Walter Blount, ancestor of Charles Blount mentioned above, acquired the title of Lord Mountjoy; he was enrolled by Edward IV as a Knight of the Garter in 1472x4).

<sup>9</sup> Pilgrim-hill 1799, Pilgrim’s Hill OS1, Pilgrims’ Hill OS 1956.

<sup>10</sup> There was apparently a ‘Pilgrims’ Hall’ nearby in modern times, but by the Reformation the hospital catered for local poor folk. St Michael’s Hospital, which lay outwith the east port of the burgh, was founded by a grant by Henry de Levingston in 1496, and was an almshouse, likewise for the local poor.



from the summit, with Friars' Well close by and Friars Brae running down the hill keeping the association alive, may be no coincidence.<sup>11</sup> The house of White Friars was founded around 1401, though apparently incorporating a pre-existing chapel of St. Mary.<sup>12</sup> Mount Carmel above the port of Acre was another 'high spot' for pilgrims and crusaders; the Carmelite Order originated with a group of hermits dwelling in caves on that mountain.<sup>13</sup> And on *Mons Gaudii* in Judaea there was a religious house, following the Cistercian Rule 'modified for brethren engaged in warfare'.

The destination of any pilgrims would certainly have been St. Michael's church. The first record of a church on the site is in a charter of 1138, by which David I granted it to St. Andrews. However the surviving building began with a replacement consecrated in 1342, and substantially rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1424, following which James I initiated the grand rebuilding of the palace, and evidently had high ambitions for the church, though such scanty documentation as survives relates mainly to the devotional enthusiasms of James IV and V, and of merchants, guilds and confraternities within the burgh. By the later 15<sup>th</sup> century St Michael's had acquired an impressive range of relics, enshrined in as many as 24 altars. The most notable at that date was a phial of the Holy Blood very likely brought by some Linlithgow merchant from Bruges, where the cult was very much in vogue at that time; this would have given the burgh the status of a 'virtual Jerusalem'.<sup>14</sup>

So it seems reasonable for us to see Mountjoy as a significant location in a landscape of pious

<sup>11</sup> Other names recorded in Linlithgow but now disused include Friars' Loan, Friars' Land, Friars' Park and Friarshill, also Hermit's Well and *le hermit(e) acre*. The latter two were in Preston, an adjacent landholding belonging to the friary; the name probably pre-dates its foundation, and may have been associated with the pre-existing Chapel of St. Mary. Lost Crossflatts in the vicinity might possibly have been the site of a cross, such as are regularly present on hills named Montjoie in France. The place-name Carmilaws has apparently been influenced by the proximity of the friary, though historical records (*Carmonelawis* 1586, *Carmontlawis* 1586, *Carmelaws* 1696) imply a different origin.

<sup>12</sup> '...fr[at]ri]b[3] ordis b[ea]te Marie de Monte Carmeli in capella b[ea]te Marie virg[is] iux[ta] linlithqu' 'to the brothers of the order of blessed Mary of Mount Carmel in the chapel of the blessed virgin Mary next to Linlithgow' 1383.

<sup>13</sup> The Carmelites had, alongside Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, a particular devotion to Mary Magdalen, so St Magdalen's Hospital, served by a community of Magdalens, 'White Ladies', might have been associated with them.

<sup>14</sup> Land endowed to pay for Masses at the Altar of the Holy Blood is recorded as *land quhilk pertenis to the Haly blud mess* 1528.

pilgrimage shaped by association with the 'high places' of the Holy Land. At what date the name would have come into use is not easy to judge precisely. The new church was consecrated in the mid-fourteenth century at a time when the crusading and chivalric connotations of *Montjoie* were certainly in vogue, and some of the sacred relics would already have been housed in the building; but its attraction probably increased over the ensuing two centuries, and by time of Kings James IV and V the heavenly glory shining from its multitude of altars would have rivalled the worldly splendour of the adjacent palace.<sup>15</sup>

Alan James

## BOOK REVIEW

'LONGSHIPS ON THE SAND - Viking and later medieval settlement on the island of Tìree', 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, by John Holliday, published by An Iodhlann Press, Scarinish, Isle of Tìree (2021)

First and foremost, this book represents a towering achievement by its self-effacing author, John Holliday, the former GP on Tìree for 30 years, a fluent Gaelic learner, and the driving force behind the setting up and development of the local history society and 'An Iodhlann' heritage centre on the island.



John Holliday on Ben Hynish

It is a much extended and updated version of the first edition published 5 years previously. It sheds new and fascinating light, primarily but not

<sup>15</sup> The possibility that links may have been made consciously between places in the Holy Land and ones of significance to the Scottish Crown, nobility and urban gentry merits further investigation. The fact that the first possession of *Mons Gaudii* listed after the Hill of Rama itself was a *Turris Puellarum* in the Crusaders' coastal stronghold of Ashkelon draws our attention to *Castellum Puellarum*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's name for Edinburgh Castle. Richard Coates has argued that the latter, and subsequently the various Maiden Castles in Scotland and England, owe their names, via Geoffrey, to Haroun-al-Rashid's *Qasr al Banat* 'Castle of the Maidens' at Raqqah in Syria. Whether that or the tower in Ashkelon was the origin, some association with the Holy Land does seem plausible.

exclusively through a comprehensive investigation of island place-names, on the medieval history of Tìree. Place-name evidence is supplemented by information from documentary and literary sources, oral history, archaeological and genetic findings. The focus is particularly on the period between the ninth and sixteenth centuries during which Norse settlement and the Norn language became the overwhelmingly dominant force in naming the landscape of Tìree, even if it did not transform all aspects of Tìree society and culture, before gradually being replaced by Gaelic as the universally spoken language.

While the impact of the Vikings on place-names was sudden and almost universal (only one pre-Norse name – that of the island itself – seems to have survived), the place-name evidence suggests there was sustained contact between Norse and Gaelic language communities over several centuries before the shift to Gaelic was complete in perhaps the early sixteenth century – as Norse political control gradually reduced following Somerled's partial naval victory off the Isle of Man in 1156. The author concludes that Tìree, despite its location, may have more in common in this regard with the Outer Hebrides than with its more southerly neighbours.

Most of the over 700 pages of the book are devoted to a gazetteer containing a detailed and scholarly analysis of 453 island medieval place-names (increased from 318 in the first edition). Of these, 215 are probably and 66 possibly Norse names, 139 are Gaelic, 4 are Scots, and the remaining 29 uncertain. There is a very valuable index of Old Norse words, including personal names, which form elements of Tìree place-names (and which could of course be useful to those studying place-names in other areas which were subject to Norse influence). And, demonstrating the depth of knowledge which has contributed to the book, as well as the great respect in which the author is held by his fellow islanders, the names of 124 local informants are listed.

I regard this book as one of the best of its genre ever written. Despite John Holliday's remarks about his lack of formal qualifications in linguistics or onomastics, its scholarship stands comparison with that of classic pioneers in the field such as William Watson, Jakob Jakobsen, Magne Oftedal and Bill Nicolaisen; and also recent academic studies of island place-names (such as Richard Cox's survey of the Gaelic place-names of Carloway in Lewis, Anke-Beate's Stahl's doctoral thesis on the place-names of Barra, Alan Macniven's work on the impact of the Vikings on

Islay), and indeed Comunn Eachdraidh Nis's remarkable compendium of the place-names of North Lewis. The author is correct to emphasise that place-name studies can be a minefield for the unwary amateur, but this book is decidedly not one of those whose certainty about the derivation of place-names betrays only ignorance.

Moreover, while the book contains a huge amount of detailed source material, John Holliday has the great gift of being able to convey his overall findings in a readily digestible and easy-to-read style. It not only deserves serious attention by place-name specialists but should be read by everyone with an interest in the history of Norse and Gaelic influences on the settlement patterns, language, and wider culture of the Hebrides. As the author stresses, more studies of this kind are needed for other areas, particularly in the Outer Hebrides, so that comparisons can be made. The book can be consulted free online at [www.tireeplacenames.org/longships-on-the-sand/](http://www.tireeplacenames.org/longships-on-the-sand/) or purchased from [www.aniodhlann.org.uk](http://www.aniodhlann.org.uk) or [doc.holliday@tireebroadband.com](mailto:doc.holliday@tireebroadband.com) (price £25).

**John Randall**

If any SPNS member who receives printed Newsletters would also like an electronic copy, please e-mail [pn.patterson3dr@btinternet.com](mailto:pn.patterson3dr@btinternet.com) to arrange this.

### **PLACE NAMES IN ANGUS**

An important collection of place-names from the Kirriemuir area in Angus has come into the possession of SPNS member, David Orr, author of *Kirriemuir: Its Streets and Place Names* (Kirriemuir 2008). They were collected by Mrs Edith J. Marnie in the 1960s. The following item consists of two parts. The first part is written by Dave himself, about the collection and how they came to be in his possession; the second part is written by Simon Taylor, who thanks to the research of others, has compiled a short article on the life of the remarkable Mrs Marnie.

'Back in 2011, Mrs. Edith M. Wild, an 84-year-old lady, then living remotely in Wester Ross, who was known as the 'Wild Lady of Lochbroom', caught sight of a photo promoting Rob Sargeant's *Sir J. M. Barrie of Thrums* book in an old newspaper, which she was rolling into rings to start her coal fire. It struck a chord, so she wrote to Rob and told him of seeing a magical performance of 'Peter Pan' in the theatre starring Jean Forbes-Robertson. This chance encounter

with Rob led her back to Kirriemuir (“Thrums”) and that is how I first met her.

‘I would like to share Mrs. Wild’s story. Edith had known ‘Thrums’ all her life, having one uncle and aunt in the town, and another aunt and uncle who had a poultry farm in South Muir. Mrs Wild was a schoolteacher in Kirriemuir, but headed north to Letter, Lochbroom, in 1984. Her mother was Mrs. Edith J. Marnie, nee Rattray, who had done some considerable research into place names in the Angus Glens and the area around Kirriemuir.

‘I have since discovered that Edith J. Marnie had written an article titled “Place names in Glen Clova” for an Abertay Historical Society Publication *Aspects of Antiquity* (1966, 20-6)<sup>16</sup> and after her death, she had left the heirloom of her work to her children: to Mrs Wild, her daughter in Wester Ross, she had left her handwritten notes, showing a numbered index linking the detailed research of these place names to the numbers shown on maps; to her son in Lincolnshire the maps themselves. Following the contact Mrs Wild made with me, both notes and maps finally came into my possession.

‘It was fortunate that I had this knowledge, as ten years later – on 23 September 2021 – I was surprised by an unannounced visit from Dr Simon Taylor, Preses of Scottish Place-Name Society, who arrived without warning at my door. A bit like the SPNS version of the Spanish Inquisition!<sup>17</sup>

‘Well, what do you say to the Preses of such an eminent society?’

‘Having been in the Boy Scouts as a youth, luckily I “was prepared”, so I said, “How would you like to see my collection of 32 maps showing 2,603 place names around the Kirriemuir area”? (I know I haven’t contributed much to the Society recently, so other members should be prepared for a visit!)

‘However, I think Simon was a wee bit surprised. But he seemed keen to have a look at this project, which I had been given 10 years ago, as custodian of Kirrie’s Heritage.

‘The area included on the maps (OS 6 inch, 1927 edition) is all the way from the top of Glen Doll, down to Oathlaw and Carsegray in Strathmore. Each covers an area 3 miles wide by 2 miles and the number of names recorded on the accompanying notes for each sheet varies from 12

in Glen Finlet to 233 names in sheet 25 SE down in fertile Strathmore. There are over 2,600 place names in total, many of them names of fields and other minor features, and with comprehensive details for each name documented.

‘The Marnie fascination with names seems to have passed down from mother to daughter, as in one of her letters to me, Edith quoted her address as:

Lòn Fiodhaig means meadow of the bird cherry trees (true).

Loch Broom means Loch of mists (often true!)

‘So, having brought all these names back to Angus, the question is what to do with all these names? Surely the preses of the SPNS would have a view and of course he did. He simply said I should write a short piece for the SPNS newsletter drawing attention to this unique resource and asking if any of our members had suggestions as to the best method of recording and utilising this research.

‘And that of course is what I am now doing.’

**David G. Orr**, Denmill, Kirriemuir

(Editor’s Note: If you would like more details on Mrs Marnie’s work, place contact Dave at [dave@a2kda.com](mailto:dave@a2kda.com).)

### **EDITH J. MARNIE** **‘Memories of a Galloping Gran’**

This is the title of an article on Edith J. Marnie written by Colin Gibson, which appeared in the *Dundee Courier* 22 March 1986, shortly after her death at the age of 86. In this article Gibson paints a picture of a delightful and dynamic woman with great intellectual curiosity. Gibson writes:

She was an authority [on Gaelic place-names] and spent years gathering material. Her energy and enthusiasm were unbounded. She would take the earliest bus from Dundee to Kirriemuir, then the Glen Clova bus, then scamper for miles to various farms and outlying crofts. She had 20 large-scale maps of Glen Clova covered with numbers, and reams of notes, all meticulously written. She amassed a vast amount of information from the older glensfolk.

In later life she developed a strong interest in archaeology and took part in several excavations led by F. T. Wainwright, Horace Fairhurst and David Taylor. Being interested in archaeology and Gaelic she decided to take a course in these subjects at Glasgow University. So, at the age of 70, she matriculated as a student and went to Glasgow to stay in a bed-sit and to live the student

<sup>16</sup> [Aspects of Antiquity r.pdf \(abertay.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> Simon Taylor notes: ‘I just happened to be passing, honest!’



life! She attracted the curiosity of the press, and a reporter waited to interview her after a Gaelic class. But her next class, in archaeology, began at once in another building some distance away. So she said to the reporter: 'Well, if you want information you'll have to run beside me, because I'm in a hurry'. The article appeared under the headline 'Gallopig Gran at Glasgow University'. While at Glasgow she also did a broadcast for a programme in Gaelic about an older person learning to speak the language.

At the age of 75 she moved to Wester Ross, where she had what she called her 'dream cottage' built on the shore of Loch Broom. She lived there happily until her death 11 years later.

Her only publication seems to have been the 'Place names in Glen Clova' article, which Dave Orr mentions in his piece, above. However, to make up for this, we have all the unpublished fruits of her strenuous labours not only in the glen but in the wider area of this part of Angus. It is a story in itself how this valuable collection survived to come home to Kirrie. While her daughter in Wester Ross kept the notes, the maps went to her brother, a doctor in Lincolnshire. Following his sister contacting Dave, she alerted her brother to their significance, who sent them to his daughter in Stirlingshire, who then passed them on to Dave. We must all be grateful that they have ended up in the hands of the guardian of Kirrie's and the Glens' heritage, and are at last being appreciated for what they are.

Finally I would like to extend a big thank-you to Alice Bremner, who tracked down the Colin Gibson article, and of course to Dave Orr himself, who has been pivotal in this whole saga.

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### CONFERENCES

This year's **SPNS Spring Conference** will take place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May, at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Skye. Details on accompanying flier and on the SPNS website.

**SSNS** (Scottish Society for Northern Studies) has been busy with online Thursday evening seminars over the winter. They continue as monthly events over coming months. <https://www.ssns.org.uk/upcoming-events/>.

**SNSBI** (Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland) holds its spring conference online on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April; details at [https://snsbi.org.uk/2022\\_spring\\_online.html](https://snsbi.org.uk/2022_spring_online.html).

## JOHN REID: AN APPRECIATION

John Reid, a long-time member of the Scottish Place-Name Society, died on 24 September 2021 at the age of 81. In this short piece I want to focus on his contribution to place-name studies, both on a local and a national level. A full obituary of this many-talented man was published in the *Falkirk Herald* written by his friend Ian Scott, who, with John, was one of the founder members of the Falkirk Local History Society in 1981. To quote from that obituary: 'from that day until his last days he worked non-stop in scholarly research aimed at enhancing our understanding of our past.' Ten years later, in 1991, the Society launched its own journal, *Calatria*. John wrote the introductory article, in which he described its purpose as being 'to disseminate sound research in fields such as history, archaeology, genealogy and place-names'. John went on to explain the journal's name *Calatria*, which is one of the earliest occurrences of the modern place-name 'Callendar', formerly referring to the whole territory between the Carron and the Avon, an area now comprising the bulk of East Stirlingshire and dominated by Falkirk, John's home town. Looking through the contents of *Calatria*<sup>18</sup> John had at least one article in every single issue, sometimes more - the record, I think, being four! These were on topics as diverse as 'The Barony of Abbotskerse', 'East Stirlingshire Mills', 'The Allandale Pipers' and 'What the Papers Say (1746)'. In issue no. 35 (2019) he has an article with the strangely prescient title of 'Dr. John Corbet of Mount Vaccine'. That issue also features an index of articles in *Calatria* nos. 1-35, which John compiled. I have not seen this, but if it is indexed by author as well as title, the R section will probably be the longest of all.

Amidst the wide ranging sweep of John's historical interests, it was place-names which were especially close to his heart. This culminated in his *magnum opus*: *The Place Names of Falkirk and East Stirlingshire*, a splendid book of 430 pages published by the Falkirk Local History Society in 2009. In this way he made a huge contribution not only to the understanding of the names in his home territory but also to place-name studies in Scotland more generally. As Dr Pete Drummond wrote in his review of *The Place-Names of Falkirk*, 'you will enjoy and profit from it even if you live elsewhere, for – as so often with Scottish place-

<sup>18</sup> *Calatria* – Falkirk Local History Society up to and including no. 34, 2017.

names – you will find resonance with your own place-names'.<sup>19</sup>

The book stands on the most solid of foundations: 30 years of collecting early forms of names from charters, sasines, rentals, old maps and plans, many of these unpublished, as part of his more general research into other aspects of the history of East Stirlingshire. This means that he was able to analyse place-names not as disembodied entities for linguists to play with but within their full social, environmental, economic and geographical context, which culminated in a deeper and more meaningful understanding of their coining. It also meant that he was able to release the full potential of place-names as a historical tool. Shortly after the publication of *The Place-Names of Falkirk* John very generously agreed to make all the data on which his book was based available online on the Scottish Place-Name Society website.<sup>20</sup> This consists of a document of over 1050 pages containing around 4000 names with their full context, making it a resource for anyone studying East Stirlingshire's past, not only its place-names.

I wrote in my introduction to this online resource that, in conjunction with the analysis and discussion of many of these names in *Place-Names of Falkirk and East Stirlingshire*, John has practically produced volume one of *The Place-Names of Stirlingshire*, in the Survey of Scottish Place-Names series. Pre-1975 Stirlingshire consisted of 22 parishes, eight of which come within the scope of John's work: Airth, Denny, Dunipace, Falkirk, Grangemouth (with the pre-18th-century Bothkennar), Kilsyth, Larbert, Muiravonside and Slamannan, more than enough for any Survey volume. The production of this volume would be a fitting tribute to John, and one of which he would be immensely proud.

John was an active member of our Society, giving several talks at conferences as well as contributing to *Scottish Place-Name News*. I list his articles below. His first talk was at the Motherwell conference (November 2000). With John's signature humour it was titled 'Going Round the Bend', summarised in *SPNNews* no. 10 (Spring 2001). Both erudite and entertaining, it examined the names of the twists and turns of the rivers Carron and Avon. With the large-scale straightening of these rivers in

<sup>19</sup> Dr Peter Drummond's insightful review and appreciation of the book can be found in *Scottish Place-Name News* 28 (Spring 2010), 9-10.

<sup>20</sup> This can be found at [East Stirlingshire Place-Name Data collected by John Reid – Scottish Place-Name Society \(spns.org.uk\)](https://spns.org.uk)

their lower courses many of these names have gone or linger, often unrecognised, as witnesses to a now lost landscape and riverscape. One of his other articles was also based on a talk he gave to the Society, this time in Dollar in November 2005. It appeared in *SPNNews* issue 20 (Spring 2006) under the title 'From Tacitus to Tesco – the place-names of East Stirlingshire', and contains an excellent overview of the toponymy of the whole area. In it John also describes how he first got drawn into serious study of this toponymy. It all started with the name *Weitschof*<sup>21</sup> and ended up with his collection of some 4000 names.

Through his scholarship, insights, enthusiasm and unparalleled in-depth knowledge of one locality, John has bequeathed to the whole of our discipline a legacy of immeasurable value.

### Simon Taylor

#### John Reid's Articles in *Scottish Place-Name News*

(All back issues can be accessed on the SPNS website at <https://spns.org.uk/resources/scottish-place-name-news>)

'Stirlingshire (East)' issue 6 (Spring 1999), 8.

'Going Round the Bend', issue 10 (Spring 2001), 4-6. See Appreciation, above.

'On the Cusp', issue 17 (Autumn 2004), 2-4: carselands of the southern Forth and their names.

'From Tacitus to Tesco – the place-names of East Stirlingshire', issue 20 (Spring 2006), 5-7. See Appreciation, above.

'The Truth about Skinflats', issue 26 (Spring 2009), 2-5.

'The Carse of Stirling in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', issue 36 (Spring 2014), 2-5, with his fine cover photo of the farm and farmland of Linkfield near Airth in the Carse of Stirling.'

In issue no. 51 we announced the publication by Clanntuirc of Richard A V Cox's bilingual ***Ainmean Tuineachaidh Leòdhais / Settlement Names of Lewis***. A full review will be included in the printed version of issue no. 53, and will meanwhile be available online as an addendum to this issue.

Gus òrdachadh is airson fios mun t-susbaint:

<https://clanntuirc.co.uk/ATL.html>

To order and for details of the contents:

<https://clanntuirc.co.uk/ATLE.html>

<sup>21</sup> For which see *Place-Names of Falkirk*, 202.

