SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CUAIRT-LITIR
COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA

No. 53

Autumn 2022

Loch Nibheis ~ Loch Nevis from **An Linne Shlèiteach** ~ *the Sound of Sleat (photo by Eilidh Scammell). With the hills of* **Cnòideart** ~ *Knoydart and* **Mòrar a Tuath** ~ *North Morar on either side* **Loch Nibheis** ~ *Loch Nevis is the main access route to* **Inbhir Aoidhe** ~ *Inverie, the most remote village of Mainland Scotland. By land the village is only accessable by a 17 mile hike over mountainous terrain. One of these hills is* **Ladharbheinn** *which, at a height of 1,020m, boasts Munro status and is the highest of the* **Cnòideart** ~ *Knoydart hills.*

Cnòideart ~ *Knoydart is of course of Norse origin, perhaps knút-fjörð, 'knoll fjord'. Early forms include Knodworath (1309), Cnudeworth (1343), Knodwart (1511), Knodart (1517).*

WHAT'S NOT IN A NAME!

Photo: Simon Taylor

This appeared recently in a shop-window in Burntisland in Fife. You can't argue with it today, but we know that it was once both, from early forms such as *Brunt Eland* and *Brint-iland* (1540). For more details, see *Place-Names of Fife* vol. 1 (2006).

While on the subject of Burntisland, last year Burntisland Heritage Trust published *Burntisland Streets and the Origin of their Names.* It is an updated and expanded edition of the Burntisland section of May G. Williamson's 1993 *The Origin of Burntisland and Kinghorn Street Names*, published by Kirkcaldy District Council.

OYSTER HABITATS SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

The Oyster Habitat Sustainability Project was a very short-term interdisciplinary undertaking funded by the Natural Environment Research Council under their discipline-hopping grant. The project included the departments of Celtic & Gaelic, Life Sciences, and Geographical and Earth Sciences at the University of Glasgow and Drs Anna McGregor, David Bailey, Brian Barrett, Alasdair Whyte, and Prof Larissa Naylor. A major goal of this project was to combine knowledge from different disciplines to further develop this work and to allow for knowledge transfer between the different specialities.

Dr Carolyn McNamara and Peigi MacVicar worked as Research Assistants to Dr Whyte and presented on their
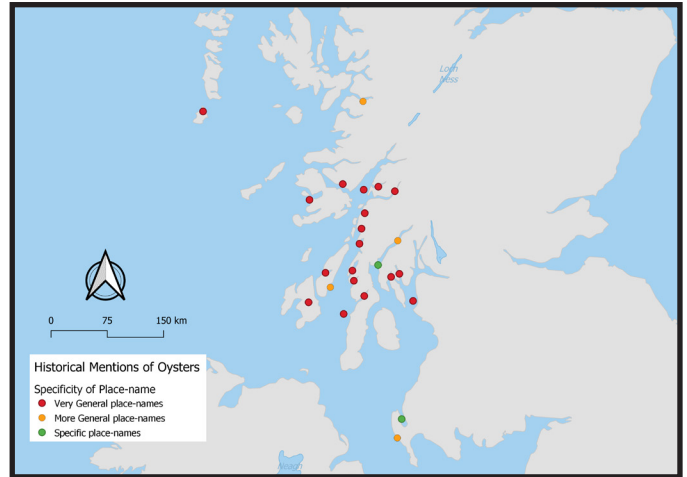
Historical Mentions of Oysters

work at the May 2022 Scottish Place Name Society Conference on Skye. This portion of the project was mostly focused on historical evidence of native oyster populations and place-name evidence that indicated or suggested the presence of oysters. The initial scope provided was 'Solway to Skye', though this was quickly recognised as far too wide an area. We began by looking for 'oyster' and 'eisir/eisirean' in the OS Name Books, and found a few names. Languages that were included are Gaelic, English, Scots, Old Norse, and Northern Brittonic. Other sources examined include the Statistical Accounts of Scotland, historical maps from the online collection of the National Library of Scotland, eighteenth-century travel diaries, and Tobar an Dualchais.

One site of high interest includes The Scar, in Loch Ryan. The OS Name Book for Wigtownshire noted
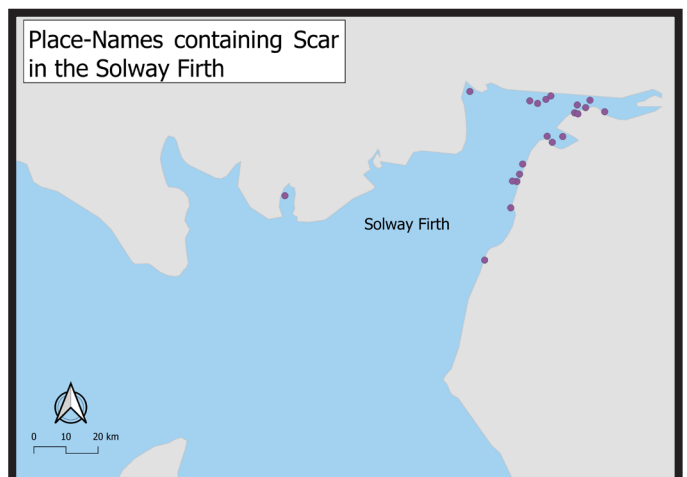
Place-names containing Scar in the Solway Firth

that it was well-known for the high quality of the oysters harvested there. This led to additional analysis of place-names including the element 'scar', of which there are many in the Solway Firth. A majority of these place-names describe locations that are sandy in nature, in contrast to the more typical usage of scar in the west and north of Scotland. This is in line with previous acknowledgement of different usages by John MacQueen in 2002 and elsewhere. Some of these sandy place-names in 'scar' in the firth were also directly associated with oysters, and thus led the project to examine place-names that indicated environments likely to be historic oyster habitat. The major place-name element that appeared here was Gaelic 'oitir', sand bank. Oitir, near Otter Ferry on Loch Fyne is specifically mentioned in the Old Statistical Account of Scotland as a sand bank which was known to locals

as a harvesting place for oysters. Place-names including the element 'oitir' are found elsewhere in Loch Fyne as well as on the coast of Islay, which could indicate a possible presence of native oyster species.

The major takeaway from this piece of research is that place-names indicating potential habitat for the species of interest are more likely to be uncovered than place-names that specifically mention the animal or species itself. Though the project ultimately did not uncover any potentially useful place-names in Brittonic or Old Norse, it's likely that this was due to the amount of time available for the project, rather than a lack of place-names, and a deeper investigation may yet reveal valuable place-names in these languages.

Dr Carolyn McNamara (Spring 2022 conference)

Aerial photograph of The Scar at The Wig, Loch Ryan as mentioned in Dr Carolyn McNamara's article on Oyster Habitats. There are still oysters here today as evidenced by the many shells found along the shoreline and on the concrete hangers of the decommissioned RAF Wig Bay seen in the photograph.
Photograph used with kind permission from David Stamp.

W & AK Johnston's
'Gazetteer of Scotland'
1882

Digitized by Alan Dix the Gazetteer is available at: https://alandix.com/gzs1882/.

This massive volume is shown as photocopy side by side with transcripts. Work is still in progress, but it should already be a very useful resource.

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PLÀTACH: AN EXAMINATION OF THIS TERM IN PLACE-NAMES

Plàtach does not appear to be a term common in place-names. It seems to be restricted to the Northwest Highlands and largely towards the west.

Two examples appear in W. J. Watson, *Place-names of Ross and Cromarty*. On p. 230, there is *Plàtach Nàst* (NG8183), *the flat place of Naast* and, on p. 235, *Plàtach Thùirneig* (NG8885), *flat of Tuirnaig, is a stretch of moor* …. Both of these appear in O.S. name books (OSNBs) and on O.S. maps. The former is given as Plàtach Naast in the OSNB (OS1/28/12/96 on Scotland's Places website) and Plàtach Thuirnaig (OS1/28/36/111). In spellings representing the local pronunciation and Gaelic orthography, these would be **Plàtach Nàst** and **Plàtach Thùrnaig**.

Searches in Gaelic dictionaries by Armstrong (1825), Highland Society of Scotland (1828), MacAlpine (1832), MacEachainn (1842), and Macleod and Dewar (1853), compiled before the O.S. surveys of the Highlands[1], do not include the term although *plàt* is found meaning *A sort of cloth made of straw* and, in Armstrong, *A plate*.

The word *plàtach* appears in Dwelly, *Gaelic Dictionary* (1902-12), with the entry taken verbatim from Rev. C. M. Robertson, *The Gaelic of the West of Ross-shire*, in Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness volume XXIV (1899-1901), p. 360. Roberston wrote *plàtach, a mat of plaited straw for putting on a horse's back under the crook saddle*. (A crook saddle is used for bearing panniers or creels.) In addition, Robertson

wrote *Hence Plaatach Naast and Plaatach Thurnaig, both near Poolewe*.

In addition to these, Roy Wentworth recorded from an informant in 1989 **Plàtach Bhùra** (NG8479) corresponding to **Blàr na Cloiche** (OS1/28/39/23) on O.S maps. The name is often shortened to **A' Phlàtaich.** From this, *plàtach* appears to be a feminine word which, when used alone as a place-name, has generalised the prepositional case. Dwelly has the word *plàtach*, with the meaning given earlier, as masculine.

These three *plàtach* examples all lie in Gairloch parish in Ross and Cromarty and within 8 km. of each other. In addition, it is noteworthy that the specific of each is a name derived from Norse: Bùra, Nàst and Tùrnaig in Gaelic.

Also in Ross-shire is **Plàtach Buidhe** (NH3256) with the related **Allt na Plàtaich Buidhe**. These lie on the north side of Strathconon, over 50 km. southeast of those already mentioned. In the OSNB (OS1/28/44/18), there is uncertainty about these names. A pencil annotation states *The same authority uses the plural in one case and the singular in the other in Examr's list of names*.[2] (See the accompanying figure).

Plàtaich Bhuidhe, as originally written in the OSNB, is given as signifying *The Yellow Plots*. This would suggest **Na Plàtaich Bhuidhe*, a feminine nominative plural or a feminine prepositional singular (**A' Phlàtaich Bhuidhe*). This was subsequently amended to *Plàtach Buidhe* (**Am Plàtach Buidhe*), a masculine nominative singular, with its meaning changed to *The Yellow Plot*. It is this

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1   This was carried out in 1875 and 1876 in the areas of Ross and Cromarty and Inverness-shire in which plàtach names are found.

2   The revelation that the annotation refers to the Examiner's list of names led me to reappraise my thoughts on this and similar references to a Gaelic list found elsewhere in OSNBs.
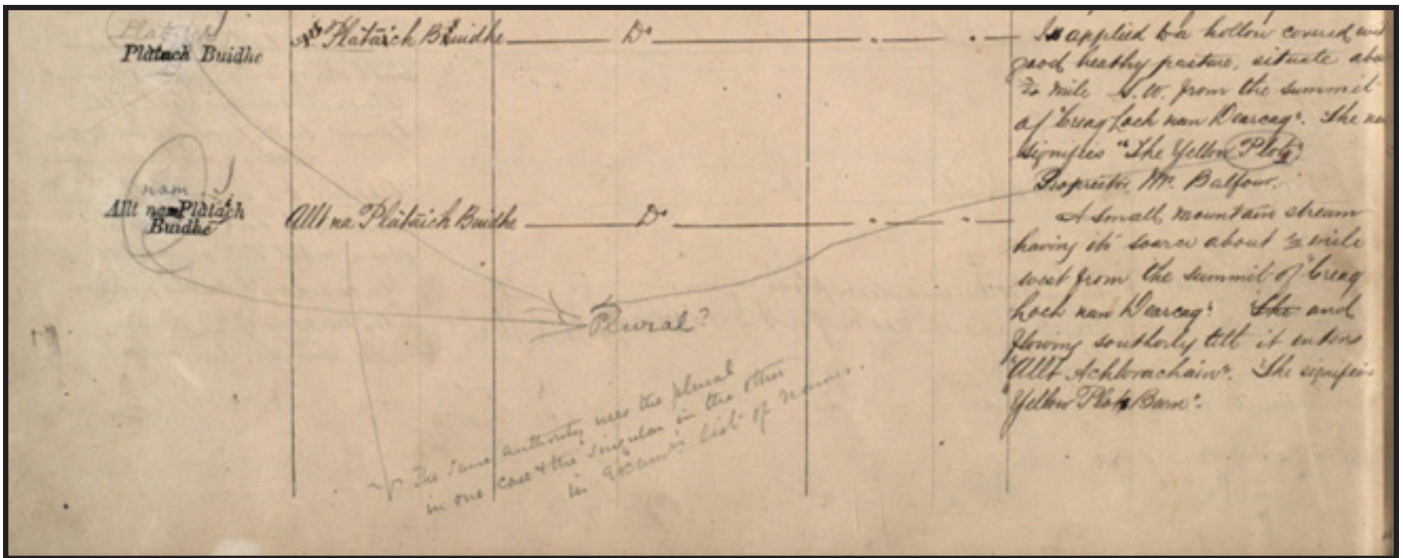
Extract from O.S. name book OS1/28/44/18, reproduced by permission of National Records of Scotland.

that was adopted for the map. The second name, originally *Allt na Plàtaich Buidhe*, has been amended in various ways in an effort to correct the inconsistency identified in the annotation. It is *Allt na Plàtaich Buidhe* that was printed on all editions of O.S. map. The singular-plural problem has been corrected in the published names but they have the first name masculine (now that it has been declared singular) and the second feminine. The meaning given is discussed above.

These locations are described by the O.S. as being a flat, mossy or extensive, or, in the case of *Plàtach Buidhe*, as being *a hollow covered with good heathy pasture.* These are areas of low gradient and could all be termed *blàr*.

One other *plàtach* name has been found in the OSNBs but, unlike the others, **Am Platach Mòr** (NG85127) east of Glenelg in Inverness-shire, 60 km. south of the original three *plàtach* names described here, is sited on a gentle hill with rocky outcrops. It is given without a grave on the first vowel of the generic; this may be an error or a reflection of the unstressed pronunciation of the term. Its OSNB description states that it is *A large moss flat* with its meaning *The Big Flat or Moss*. At NG851178, there is an area c.150 x 100 metres that would be appropriate but it is not the large area indicated by the placement of the name on the map or from the description on OSNB.

From these all examples, it could be that the term *plàtach* (or *platach*) has more than one meaning in the place-names discussed. It is consistently used to refer to a flat, mossy area in the Gairloch examples. This meaning for the Glenelg example does not fit the landscape despite being given in the OSNB; it is possible that the name has been misplaced. The remaining example, that in Strathconon where *plàtach* is recorded as meaning *plot*, may be unrelated to the others. As

suggested by Michael Bauer in a Facebook post on this topic, it could be *a fairly direct loan word of plot + ach*. Examination of the location on Google Earth, however, does show the location to be another contender for a mossy flat.

Using the search facility in OSNBs on Scotland's Places website can give misleading results: both *platach* and *plàtach* revealed the same results but only knowing about *Plàtach Thuirnaig* and searching with the specific revealed the details of that name in the OSNBs. There may, therefore, be other examples of this seemingly rare term still to be found.
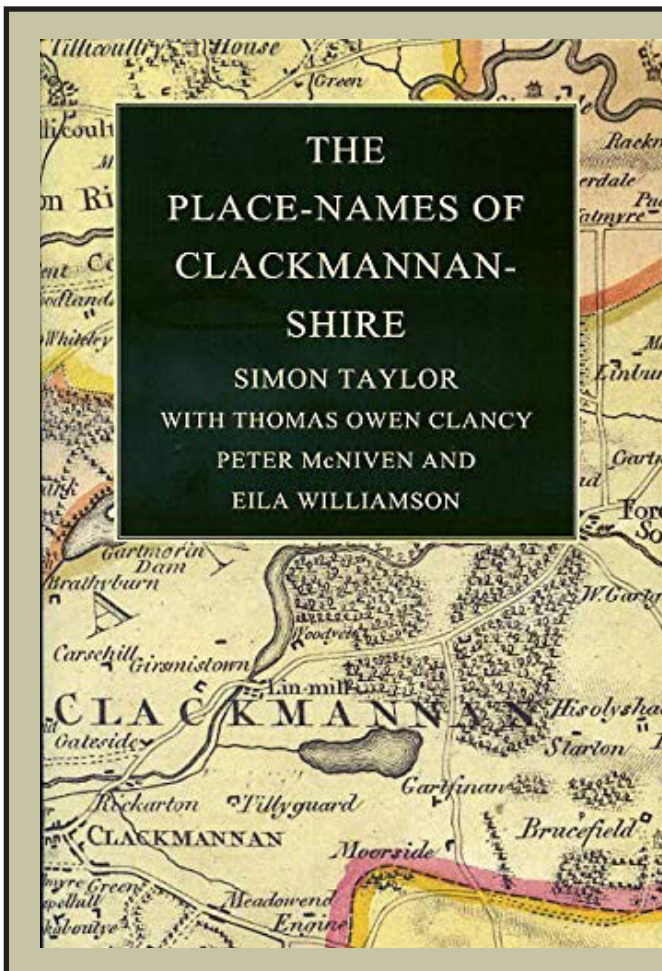
Nevis Hulme

Scottish 'County' Place-Names Volumes

The latest, **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.

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It can also be ordered on Amazon.

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.

NAMES AND LOCAL HISTORY

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland
and
The Centre for Regional and Local History

AUTUMN DAY CONFERENCE

University of Leicester
29 October 2022

In person and online

The next **SNSBI** Autumn day conference will be held at the University of Leicester in conjunction with the Centre for Regional and Local History. The conference will take place in person in Leicester, but with the option to attend online.

Further information on the SNSBI and the conference is available on our website.
www.snsbi.org.uk

Place Names of Inverness and Surrounding Area
by Roddy (Ruaraidh) MacLean

Place-Names of Inverness and Surrounding Area
Ainmean-àite ann an sgìre prìomh bhaile na Gàidhealtachd
Roddy MacLean

NatureScot
Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Bòrd na Gàidhlig
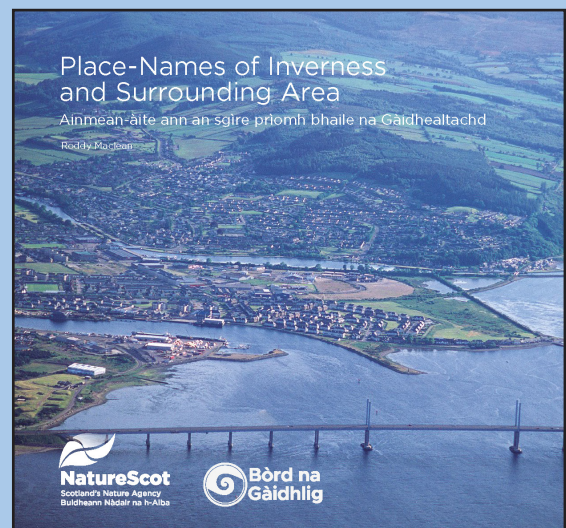
Published by NatureScot in 2021 the author endeavours to explain the interpretation that he and others have made of the area's place-names and includes much historical, environmental and topographical information.

The book is available as a free pdf download at:

https://www.nature.scot/doc/place-names-inverness-and-surrounding-area

Galloway

The Lost Province of Gaelic Scotland

edited by
Michael Ansell, Ronald Black & Edward J Cowan

Long recognised as a former part of Gaelic Scotland, but suffering from 'erasure' or 'submergence' of evidence (as the late Alistair Livingston points out in his contribution), Galloway has been largely neglected as a core area of Gaelic study. The Gaelic dimension of Galloway has been kept in view by only a few individual scholars over the last half-century, chief among them the late Professor Jack MacQueen.

This ground-breaking book addresses the challenges of salvaging the wider Gaelic dimension of Galloway, and sheds brilliant beams of light on the 'lost' Gaelic cultural heritage of the region. It offers breadth and depth, and will appeal to the general reader as well as the academic enquirer. Linguists, historians, and literary specialists will all find much to interest them.

The subjects covered include the Gaelic literature associated with Galloway (Black), the Gaelic lexis (vocabulary) embedded in the Scots dialect of Galloway (Ó Maolalaigh), the relationship of Galloway Gaelic to the Gaelic dialects of other districts of Ireland and Scotland, as well as Man (Ó Maolalaigh), residual Gaelic awareness in the written representations of surnames (Brown), Gaelic mountain toponymy (Ansell), the laws of Galloway (Hector MacQueen), land divisions (Oram), and the kindreds of Galloway (McWhannell).

This book 'catches the moment' by assembling a splendid team of present-day scholars of the highest calibre - a remarkable achievement in itself. It is an outstanding tribute to their respective abilities, as well as to the diligence of its editors and the organisers of the original conference. I would regard it as one of the most important Gaelic 'recovery projects' of my lifetime. I have learned a great deal about 'Gaelic Galloway' from its contents, and I stand in awe of the authors. The book deserves the best possible support.

Professor Donald Meek

looking south over Loch Dee towards (air a') Chorrshliabh Bhuidhe. – from the colour plate section of the book.

THE SETTLEMENT NAMES OF LEWIS: CHALLENGES IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF OLD NORSE FORMS

Ainmean Tuineachaidh Leòdhais/The Settlement Names of Lewis (https://www.clanntuirc.co.uk/ATL.html) contains 346 names in its main collection: 167 consist of an Old Norse loan-name ([3] *Adabroc* < *Oddabrokka* – nos. in square brackets refer to slides with translations and further examples @ https://spns.org.uk/richard-cox-notes); another 50 contain loan-names either as generic: [4] *Pabaigh Mhòr* < *Papøy*, or specific: *Àird Dhail* < *Dali*. Altogether, 201 loan-names occur within the collection.

The challenge of determining the syntax of Old Norse names is aided by the stress patterns of loan-names themselves. Old Norse and Scottish Gaelic share first-syllable word stress, e.g. [5] *ˈKlettar* > *ˈCleitir*, *ˈKallaðar ˌnes* > *ˈCalla ˌnis*, while Gaelic ˌBarra ˈG-lom suggests an Old Norse structure ˌgeneric + ˈspecific, perhaps a phrasal name like *Borgin á Glumm*, with suffixed article and the specific introduced by the preposition *á*.

Identifying grammatical forms of elements presents its own challenges. [6] *Borgh* may derive from either nominative or accusative singular *Borg*. [7] *Bòstadh* is likely to derive from an accusative *Bólstað*. *Dail*, however, but must be from dative *Dali*, with apocope in Gaelic. A number of plural forms are fairly easily identified, e.g. [8] *Brocair* < *Brokkur*. In the case of [9] *Na Hearadh* (specific in *Mol na Hearadh*), the etymon could be singular *Herað* or plural *Heruð*. There are several river names consisting of weak feminine derivatives from nouns, adjectives or verbs, e.g. [10] *Geardha* < *Gerða*. Loan-names from Old Norse forms with adjective + noun include [11–12] *Briacleit* < *Breið-klett* acc. Examples of Old Norse names consisting of noun + noun include [13–15] *Lunndal* from *Lund-dal* acc.

In terms of the onomastic structure of Old Norse reconstructions, the structure specific + generic, e.g. [16–17] *Briacleit* < *Breið-klett*, is the commonest. Onomastic units within Old Norse reconstructions cannot be identified with any certainty. There may have been a church called *Kirkja* whose name was used as the specific in the name *Kirkjubólstað* (> *Circeabost*), but there is no way of confirming this. However, *Hamnarvág* (which gives the settlement name *Tamnabhagh*) does seem to have been used as specific in the creation of *Hamnarvágsdal* (> *Tamnasdal*), although no trace of *vágr* has survived syncope in Gaelic.

Folk etymologies for the Old Norse loan-names in the collection were probably once more numerous than they are today. They effect phonological change through morphemic substitution and subsequently tend to defy the laws of historical phonology. For example, the personal name [18] *Sumarliði* would be expected to yield Gaelic *[ˈṣ̃ũməl̪i], but in fact yields *Somhairle*, via EG *saṁairle*, itself the result of morphemic substitution. In the absence of any other plausible explanation, then, and when all other approaches to establishing a place-name's etymology have been exhausted, folk etymology, as a strategy of last resort, may sometimes offer a conjectural solution. There are several examples of loan-names that may have been partly altered through morphemic substitution, e.g. [19–20] *Breið-ás-klett* would be expected to yield *[ˈb̪r̠ʲe-a ˌskleʰt̪ʲ] in Gaelic, but in fact yields [ˈb̪r̠ʲi-a ˌskleʰt̪ʲ], perhaps under the influence of Gaelic *brèagha* [ˈb̪r̠ʲia-a], and *Manúsarsætr* might be expected to yield Gaelic [ˈmã:ni ˌ ʃad̪ər] with long à, which was recorded by Ian Fraser for the School of Scottish Studies in 1968, but is today pronounced [ˈmãni ˌ ʃad̪ər] with short a, a pronunciation possibly influenced by folk etymologies: one that a crew from the Isle of Man (in Gaelic *Manainn* with short a) landed there and was shot by local outlaw Niall MacLeòid; two that the Old Norse name means 'the sheiling or farm of the monks', cf. Gaelic [ˈmãnɔx] with short a – it certainly has nothing to do with Old Norse *munkr*.

A particular challenge is vowel alternation, e.g. [21] *Capadal* from *Koppadal*. Vowel alternation is also found between monosyllables and disyllables: long monophthongs and diphthongs in Lewis Gaelic have a level or rising tone, e.g. [22] *Tùthair*, *Siadar*, but short monophthongs followed by hiatus have a falling tone, e.g. *Rothasgair*, *Rathanis* – in effect, what is called hiatus here is a syllabic boundary signalled by a fall in tone – so for example [23–24] [ˈb̪r̠ʲia ˌkleʰt̪ʲ] is sometimes rendered as [ˈb̪r̠ʲi-a ˌkleʰt̪ʲ], and [ˈb̪r̠ʲi-a ˌskleʰt̪ʲ] is sometimes rendered as [ˈb̪r̠ʲia ˌskleʰt̪ʲ]. There is also alternation between disyllables and long monophthongs, e.g. [25] [ˈb̪ra-a ˌg̊ər̠ʲ] becomes [ˈb̪ra: ˌg̊ər̠ʲ].

There is nothing particular in the structure of Old Norse reconstructions in the collection that help us date them, except perhaps the phrasal name [26] *Borgin á Glumm*, which may be later rather than earlier. The by-form *brokka* rather than *brekka* was usually used in Lewis (e.g. *Brocair* < *Brokkur*), suggesting the name in question may be later rather than earlier. Genitive *s* in *Kleifsgróf* suggests a derivation from a neuter rather than the attested feminine *kleif*, possibly indicating the name was created later rather than earlier. ON *fn* became mn about 1200, perhaps a little earlier, and it is likely that [27] *Tamnabhagh* (< *Hamnarvág*) was borrowed later than the loan-name *Tamhnaraigh* was.

On the other hand, the Common Scandinavian diphthong *iu* became *jú* through stress shift between c. 850–1000, and it is likely [28] *Dìobadal* was borrowed earlier rather than later. It is also likely that CSc. *øy rather than ON *ey* lies behind loan-names like *Beàrnaraigh* – because of the preceding non-palatal consonant in Gaelic – and that they were borrowed earlier than the middle of the 11th century. As initial /h/ was not an independent phoneme in Early Gaelic, ON initial *h-* seems to have been dropped in the first instance: [29] so *Hásumar-gerði > *Àsmaigearraidh*, although there was a tendency to nativise it by preceding it with a Gaelic plural morpheme: *Mol na Hearadh*. Over time, however, initial *h-* began to be retained in Gaelic: *Há-sætr > *Thàiseadar*, although there must have been pressure to delenite the initial aspirate in Gaelic, as in [30] *Há-bólstað > *Tàbost*.

For some loan-names, then, we have to accept a degree of error when reconstructing their original forms: despite demonstrable rules of historical phonology, names may have been shortened in their development to modern Gaelic; they may have been altered through folk etymology; and the relevant etymon may simply be unavailable to us. However, we can often reconstruct original forms of loan-names with some degree of confidence.

Richard A. V. Cox (Spring 2022 conference)
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, UHI

CLACHAN AGUS BLÀRAN PLACE-NAMES WITH STORIES IN INVERNESS AND ITS ENVIRONS

One of the things that motivates me, both as a Gael and also as an enthusiast for place names, is the connection that toponyms can give us to the land that we live in, and to our linguistic, cultural and historical heritage, creating a powerful sense of belonging. A strong relationship with land and landscape is good for the health of the individual and the population! In this lecture (the title means 'stones and battlefields') I have selected some such places in and around Inverness, all of which have legendary tales or historical accounts attached to them. There are fuller accounts of these and hundreds of other place names in the book.

Clach an Airm NH681366 is a prominent standing stone in Strathnairn, now surrounded by plantation forest. The local interpretation of this name is '*the stone of the weapons*', for which the OS offers the alternative *Clach nan Arm* (locals pronounce it 'Clach an Arm'). According to oral tradition, members of the Jacobite army sharpened their weapons here on their way to take part in the Battle of Culloden in April 1746. Another famous stone connected to that fateful battle is the **Cumberland Stone** *Clach Chumberland* NH 749 452, a flat-topped boulder, upon which the Duke of Cumberland was reputed to have stood to direct the government army during the battle.

Clach an Airm

The meaning of **Clachnaharry** NH 646 465, a village (now a suburb) named for a local stone, has been the subject of much debate. I favour *Clach na h-Aithrigh 'the stone of repentance*', the explanation given by the Rev. James Fraser, in the 17th century Wardlaw manuscript. **Clach na Brataich** NH 621 343 is on some maps but is far less well known to the populace. Also called 'The Banner Stone', it is a flat circular stone with a hole in the centre, reminiscent of an unfinished over-heavy millstone, in which the flagpole of the Fianna was inserted during the legendary (but historically unsubstantiated) battle against Ashie, a Scandinavian prince for whom the adjacent Loch Ashie (*Athaisidh*) is reputedly named. Professor Watson derives the name from *ath-innse* 'poor or disused meadow'. There are many reports of the sighting of phantom armies being seen in this vicinity, in which there is a knot of other features connected in tradition to the conflict.

Clach na Brataich

A relatively short distance away in Strathnairn is **Clach Cailleach nam Muc** NH 6775 3448 '*the stone of the old woman of the pigs*' which does not feature on OS maps but is noted in tradition. According to local farmer and tradition-bearer, Alasdair Forbes, the woman was a native of Stratherrick who would sell her pigs at the market in Inverness, walking them there via Strathnairn and taking two days for the journey. She would spend a night, on

both outward and return journeys, sheltering under the stone. His account concludes, as do those of other locals, with the cailleach being devoured by her swine, although this probably occurred following her death by natural causes. Inverness was always the region's mercantile centre but it is likely that transactions took place at other meeting points. One such probable location is the **Merchants Stone** (a translation of the Gaelic *Clach nan Ceannaichean*) NH 611 332, a boulder on the west side of the road between Essich and Stratherrick.

One stone for which, unusually in this area, no Gaelic form is recorded is the **Broad Stone** NH 673 449 in suburban Inverness. It is a horizontal slab, measuring some 3.6m x 2m, and bearing a rectangular sunken slot which was thought to have taken the shaft of a cross that marked the medieval burgh boundary. Its name is likely to have been coined in the Scots language which attained political dominance following the formation of the Royal Burgh. Another significant Inverness stone is **Clachnahagaig** NH 645 428. The original stone marked the south-western boundary of Inverness and the southern extent of the town's fishing rights on the Ness, according to the Golden Charter of 1591. It was removed during the construction of the Caledonian Canal and was replaced by an inscribed marker stone. The rights of Inverness anglers to the public fishings still run officially 'from Clachnahagaig Stone to the sea'. The origin of the name is possibly *Clach na h-Eagaig* 'the stone of the small cleft' but, given it has other historical forms, such as Clachnahelig, Clachnahulig and Clachnahalaig, this remains a subject of debate.

Two other stones are worth a mention in this short paper. **Clach an Àbain** NH 730 494 '*the stone of the backwater or silted up channel*', whose weight has been estimated at eight tons, sits proudly on the mud in the middle of Petty Bay, but was reportedly translocated some 260 yards on the 20th February 1799. Early OS maps show both the final and original locations. How was it moved? I shall invite you to read the book to find out! And, in the very centre of Inverness, embedded at the base of the Merkat Cross outside the Town House, there is **Clachnacuddin** *Clach na Cùdainn* NH 667 452 '*the stone of the tub*', a location where 'maid-servants were wont in ancient days to rest their water pails in passing to and from the river' (OS Name Book). It was long considered to be the 'palladium of the burgh'.

Battlefields also form a notable part of the toponymy of Inverness because of its strategic location at the end of the Great Glen. *Blàr* is the most common word for 'battlefield', although it actually means a 'plain or field' (a good place for fighting battles). **Blàr Chùil Lodair** is Culloden battlefield and here the 'n' in the English form preserves an older Gaelic 'n' in the word lodan, the name meaning 'the nook of the pool or marsh'.
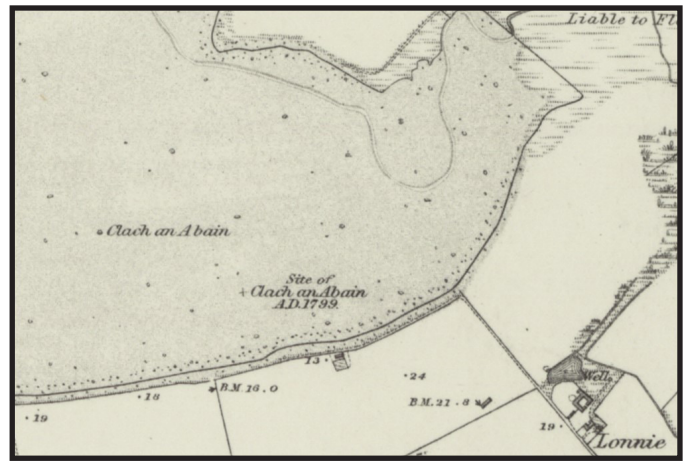
Clach an Àbain on the OS 6 inch map, first edition, showing both of its locations! (hint re the translocation: the weather was bitterly cold and very windy!) This caption must include the following: Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (https://maps.nls.uk/index.html)

Blàr nam Fèinne NH 595 432 on the Aird, west of Inverness, is '*the battlefield of the Fianna*'. Memories of such an ancient conflict became lost in local tradition, the name being connected to a later battle between the King of Scots and invading Scandinavians.

Another site of conflict, recorded on maps as **Battlefield**, derives not from *blàr* but from *innis* 'meadow'. It is *Innis a' Chatha* 'the meadow of the battle', near Dochfour at NH 608 405. Again, history gives a choice of battles which might have been fought in this place, the oldest being in May 1297 when the English Constable of Castle Urquhart (near Drumnadrochit), Sir William Fitzwarine, was attacked on his way home from Inverness by a Scottish patriot force under the command of Andrew de Moray and Alexander Pilche, a burgess of Inverness.

Battlefield/Innis a' Chatha

At **Achnagairn** NH 553 449, we see an example of historic eclipsis in Scottish Gaelic with *Ach nan Càrn 'the field of the cairns'* being pronounced as 'Ach na Gàrn'. The cairns in question, according to the Old Statistical Account, were 'small tumuli of earth

mixed with stones' which were connected with an incident in which the local people, while ploughing their land, were set upon by neighbouring clans. The locals unhitched the oxen from their ploughs and laid into their enemies with the yokes with such fury that 'numbers were killed upon both sides. The slain were buried in the field, and the tumuli mentioned were raised over their graves.' The battle was referred to as Blar-na-cui-flich i.e. *Blàr na Cuinge Fliuch* 'the battle of the wet yoke.'

I shall conclude with the 'battle that wasn't'! The skirmish, in which only one man was killed, might have brought the Jacobite rebellion of 1745-6 to a close, but failed because of subterfuge. It took place south-east of Inverness at **Stairsneach nan Gàidheal** '*the threshold of the Gaels*' NH 736 345 (a toponym which I discuss in the book). This was the site of *Ruaig na Maighe* 'The Rout of Moy' in February 1746, (now marked by an impressive cairn at NH 72968 34695), where a handful of local Jacobites turned away a government force of around 1,500 men from Inverness who had intended to capture Charles Edward Stuart as he rested at Moy. However, the Prince received a warning, reputedly given by a lass working in the town's principal Inn 'The Horns', who, having overheard Hanoverian officers discuss their plan, ran to Moy with her intelligence. In the darkness, the local men made a lot of noise and successfully pretended to be part of an army, whereas in reality they numbered only five! Their leader, the blacksmith Donald Fraser, became famous as *Caiptean nan Còig* 'Captain of the Five'. All around Inverness, in our place names and our history, in our stones and battlefields, the Jacobite

rebellion, and its bloody conclusion at *Blàr Chùil Lodair*, are remembered

Roddy (Ruairidh) Maclean. (Spring 2022 conference)

the cairn marking the site of Ruaig na Maighe/ The Rout of Moy at Stairsneach nan Gàidheal on the night 16/17 February 1746.

The new Roy Military Survey Gazetteer

Through the hard work of a team of volunteers over the last six months, all 33,523 names on the Roy Military Survey Map of Scotland (1747-55) have been recorded and made available.

The transcription workflow has also recorded related or nearby names from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition mapping from a century later in order to help with searching and provide additional context for the Roy names. The results are of huge value for local and family historians, placename researchers, as well as all those interested in the landscape of 18th century Scotland. As well as being able to find any name on the map, it is also possible to now generate distribution maps of particular name elements, or dynamically view all of the names in a particular area. The Gazetteer can also be downloaded in accessible formats for onward use and research.

View the results of the Roy Military Survey Gazetteer Project:

- Roy Gazetteer information page - https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/
- Search the Roy Gazetteer Names with a map - https://maps.nls.uk/geo/roy/
- Roy Gazetteer Help video - https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#search
- Browse all the Roy Gazetteer Names as a list - https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/browse/a-c.html

NAMING PRACTICES IN THE WORLD OF SCOTCH WHISKY

Edradour Burn with the distillery in the background. This was known as Allt Dobhar Shìos in Gaelic, whilst Edradour is from Gaelic Eadra Dhobhair 'between two burns'.

This paper discusses the names of Scotch whiskies and distilleries as covered in more depth in my book The A-Z of Whisky Place-names published by Whittles Publishing (£16.99) 978-184995-503-4.

The book discusses place-names that is concerned in some way with Scotch whisky, either as the name of the whisky itself, or as the name of a distillery. For each of these names I provide discussion of the origin, history and development of the name from a linguistic and historical perspective.

Many whisky names of course do not denote real places. Scotch whisky is named in order to sell bottles, and as such, the name is often coined to denote Scottishness or Gaelicness in particular. Many of these formations simply comprise Glen, Ben with another word added on.

For example, Glen Grant dates back to 1840, when former smuggling brothers John and James Grant decided to take out a licence to legally produce whisky. The whisky is coined from their surname. The distillery sits on a watercourse called Back Burn, but Glen Grant has become a place-name now appearing on maps, through a process of back-formation.

The name Glenmorangie is perhaps the most controversial of the invented names. 'The Glen of Tranquility' was a slogan used by the company as a translation of this name, deriving it from a Gaelic 'Gleann mor na sith'. This is alas untrue; the name derives from the place-name Morangie, with the usual 'whisky glen' added on. Morangie as a name is Gaelic in origin, being Mòraistidh in modern Gaelic, from an earlier Mòr-innisidh meaning 'big haugh place'. Haugh is a word for a dry area near water.

In other cases, the second element is part of the place-name, with the initial element swapped for Glen, such as Glenfarclas which is not a real place as such, but is from Tomfarclas. In other cases any number of other types of elements can be used, for example Glendramroc is Glen + dram + ROC which stands for the

Royal Observer Corps.

Thus we can see that the element Glen, when used for the names of whiskies, seems to simply denote Scottishness, or Gaelicness. Indeed, in 2019, the Scotch Whisky Association won a court battle with German distillery Waldhorn over their usage of the word 'glen' in the name of their whisky Glen Buchenbach. (Buchenbach is a stream in Germany.) It was proven to the court's satisfaction that the word 'glen' was sufficiently uniquely Scottish enough that the word was deemed to be misleading when used in the name of a whisky not produced in Scotland.

Another way in which Gaelicness is in the world of whisky-naming is evoked is by inserting the 'Gaelic H' into a word, to evoke a lenited consontant, a feature which is visually reminscent of Gaelic orthography to English readers. Examples include Dallas Dhu, Rhinnesdhu, Rhosdhu, Lochdhu, Knockdhu, Tamdhu, Blairmhor, Corriemhor, Dun Mhor, Glen Mhor, Tullichmhor. In all these the h is ungrammatical from a perspective of Gaelic syntax.

The earliest example of this technique I could find was in the Lady of the Lake by Sir Walter Scott in 1810. In that book is a character called Roderick Dhu. This became a whisky name, and the Dhu was later used in the name of the Dallas Dhu Distillery, which is named after the nearby settlement of Dallas.

Dr Jake King (Spring 2022 conference)
Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba
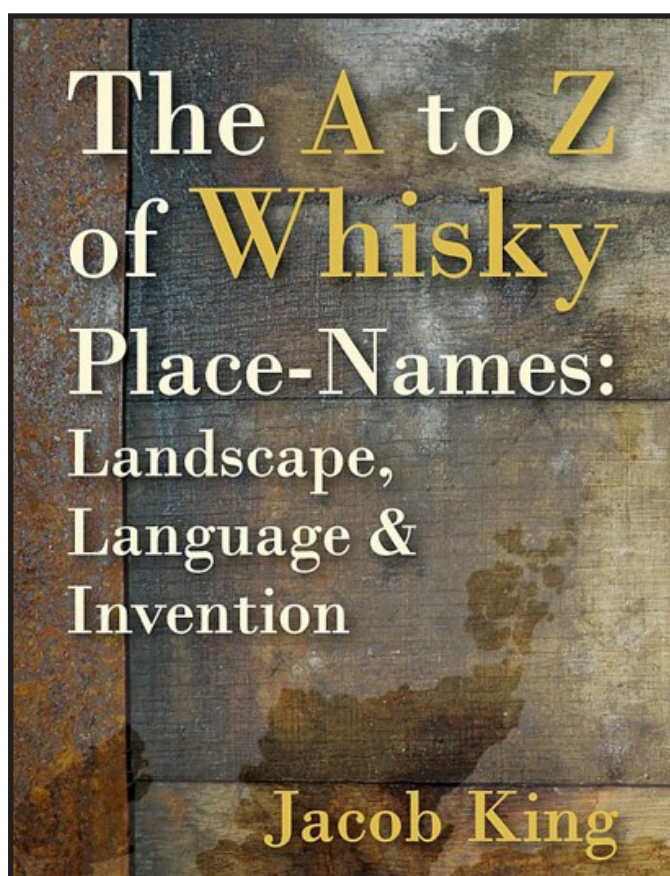
Revealing the Gaelic mountain-names of the Galloway Highlands

An unravelling of the underlying Gaelic landscape in Galloway.

An online lecture with Michael Ansell
3rd of November - hosted by the Royal Celtic Society.
Entry by PayPal donation. To participate please email info@royalcelticsociety.scot.
https://www.royalcelticsociety.scot/en/calendar-of-events.html

The Galloway Highland farm of Clenrie (A' Chlaon-Àirigh) on the slope of Meaul (Am Meall) with Craigencallie (Creag na Cailliche) and Millfore (Am Meall Feòir) in the background.

SCOTTISH SOCIETY FOR NORTHERN STUDIES

NORTH SEA ECONOMIC NETWORKS

DAY CONFERENCE / DUNFERMLINE / 19 NOV

The Society's annual Hermann Pálsson Memorial Lecture and a further three speakers will explore Scotland's ties across the North Sea. The event will also see the award of the 2022 Magnusson Prize, and the Society's AGM, as well as a visit to Dunfermline Abbey.

Tickets include lunch as well as tea/coffee during breaks. Further details can be found on our website:
https://www.ssns.org.uk/events/2022-conference/

THE SMALLEST ABER?

The name of the rural parish of Arbuthnot(t) in Kincardineshire, mostly on the north side of the Bervie Water, has early forms which confirm that as with the name of Arbroath, earlier Aberbrothoc, the initial Ar- is a contraction of Aber-. The entries in the Old and New Statistical Accounts (1790s and 1830s/40s) show that the meaning of *aber* was well understood; so much so that the writer for the OSA – unusually a '*Friend in Statistical Inquiries*' rather than a named parish minister – does not even need to explain it to his readers:

> The name of this parish was anciently written Aberbuthe-noth, as appears from several old writings extant in the neighbourhood; but whence it could be derived is uncertain, as there is no river, or rivulet, whose influx within its bounds could have occasioned it, if we except one called Fothy or Forthy, which falls into the river Bervy, on the western boundary of the parish; but that rivulet has born (*sic*) its present name above 600 years in the bounding charters of some neighbouring estates. Perhaps the river Bervy, of old, may have had another name, which occasioned the name of Aberbuthenoth, by its influx into the sea, which is about a quarter of a mile below the extremity of this parish.'

This rather tentative suggestion would now be seen as a better effort than that of the Rev. James Mylne for the NSA, acknowledging a debt to John Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, of 1808 with supplement of 1825, for his understanding of *neth*:

> *Name*. – Authentic documents in the possession of the Viscount Arbuthnott afford the most distinct evidence that, previous to the twelfth century, the name of the family and the district was Aberbothenothe: that, about 1335, it had become Aberbuthnot; and about 1443, Arbuthnott. Aber denotes the influx of a river into the sea, or of a smaller stream into a larger; *Both*, *Bothena*, a dwelling, a baronial residence, *Scotice* "The House"; *Neth*, or *Neoth-ea* … the stream that descends or is lower than something in the neighbourhood; whence the name Aberbothenothe may be understood to mean, "The confluence of the water below the Baron's house".

He does not try to identify where the confluence is.

The possibility of a replacement for an earlier river name, raised in the OSA, has some modest support in the name Inverbervie for the town at the mouth of the Bervie Water, which uses the Gaelic term *inbhir* rather than its counterpart *aber* which is an inheritance from Pictish, an earlier linguistic stratum; and the equivalence of the river name to the Barrow in Ireland, *Bearbha*, earlier *Berba(e)* in Irish as identified by W J Watson in *The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926/2004, p 469). He refers it to the root found in Irish *berbaim* 'I boil'; considers the *Allt Bruthain(n)*, Burn of Brown, in

Banffshire to be of ultimately the same origin; and notes the Welsh cognate *brwd* 'warm'. The hydronym Beuvron in France is superficially similar, but is seen by French etymologists as named from Gaulish **bebro-* 'beaver'.

Other possibilities for a very closely parallel hydronym outside Irish and Scottish Gaelic have proved elusive. However, if W J Watson's etymology for Bervie is correct it belongs to a huge family of words derived from the Proto-Indo-European root **bhreu-*. To take a useful and readily available source[1] , this has the basic meaning of 'boil, bubble, effervesce, burn', with straightforward semantic extension to the field of cooking and brewing. It is the root, besides *brew*, for the English words *barm*, *braise*, *brawn*, *bread*, *breed*, *brazier*, *broth*, *broil*, and *brood*, as well as *bo(u)rn* for a small stream and, ultimately from Latin, *effervesce*, *ferment* and *fervid*. More distant relatives include Sanskrit *bhurnih* 'violent, passionate', Greek *phrear* 'well, spring, cistern', Thracian Greek *brytos* 'fermented liquor made from barley', Russian *bruja* 'current', Old Irish *bruth* 'heat' and Old High German *brato* 'roast meat'. In continental Celtic the root was the basis of the important healing-deity name *Borvo/Bormo*, theonym derivatives such as *Bormanus* and *Bormana* (feminine), and place-names of the Bourbon/Bourbonne type in France. An outlier of this P-Celtic group in northern Britain, requiring minimal adaptation to a Gaelic form closely matching that of the Irish river,is not unthinkable. The early forms from the 12th century are always of the type *Beruyn*, with a final -n, so superficially at least not an equivalent. However the final syllable may be regarded not as intrinsic but as an instance of the common -*in* locational suffix of eastern Scottish Gaelic place-names recorded up to the 13th century, with gradual loss of the final -n thereafter.[2] Whatever the exact history of the name, a similarly ancient origin to other East Coast rivers such as Dee and Esk is most likely.

As the writer for the OSA tacitly admitted, his suggestion also comes up against the problem that Arbuthnot is not actually at the mouth of the Bervie into the North Sea, but separated from it by the parish and town of Inverbervie.

On the assumption that the OSA's idea of replacement of 'Buthenoth' by Bervie as the name for the main watercourse can be discarded, the stream in question remains to be identified. It should be reasonably near to the parish kirk, though there is none in its immediate vicinity, and preferably on the north side of the Bervie Water, with most of the parish.

A clue to the location can be found in the putative stream-name. W J Watson (*op. cit*. p 446) writes:

> 'Bothenoth', etc., is the name of the stream close to St. Torannan's church, and is for the genitive of *Buadhnat*,

1   https://www.etymonline.com/word/brew#etymonline_v_17097
2   Dr Jake King, personal communication.

'little one of virtue' … in other words, it was a holy stream possessed of a healing power.

He notes several similar names in Gaelic Scotland and in Ireland, associated with healing waters, particularly a stream called *Buadhchág* beside a church with sanctuary girth, dedicated to St Maol Rubha, at Lochcarron in Ross-shire. Unfortunately he does not actually identify the 'stream close to St. Torannan's church'. Both upstream and downstream of the church the first edition 6 inches to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map (thanks to NLS for its online maps) shows 'Site of Chapel', with wells. That upstream has a 'Chapel Well or Saint's Well', besides a Chapel Bog and a Chapelwaird Wood. But it has no stream beside it. The location downstream is closer and more promising. The 'Site of Chapel' and Chapel Well, with adjacent Chapel Croft, are beside a small stream, unnamed on any map so far found, which flows down to the Bervie through Chapel Den. Between the stream and the parish kirk lies the Kirkton. The Ordnance Survey Name Book of 1864 notes that no dedication is known for the upstream 'Saint's Well', and refers to the downstream 'Chapel Well or Holy Well' as a spring. For lack of any other credible location, this spring, with its short outflow into the Bervie through Chapel Den, already seems the most likely identification for the running water commemorated in the modern place-name.
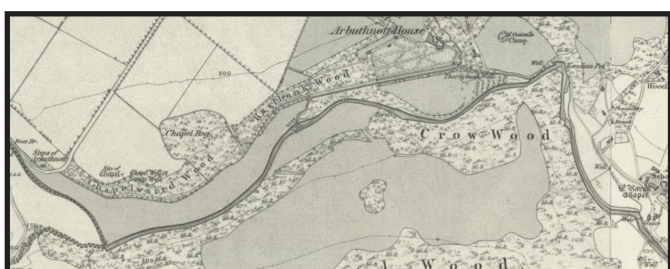
Besides having a building whose chancel dates to the 12th century and dedication to the obscure St Ternan who is regarded as an early missionary to the Picts, and being the only parish church in Scotland to preserve a pre-Reformation mass book, Arbuthnot has something even more unusual in its ecclesiastical history. An exceptionally detailed record has survived of the sworn evidence given at a synod in Perth in 1206[3] before a decision was made in favour of the Bishop of St Andrews, in a dispute involving land at the *Kirketun* and its *scolóc* (Latinised *scoloccus*) tenants, and harassment and encroachment by the magnate Duncan of *Aberbuthenoth*. Although it came to mean a landless farm labourer (Gaelic *sgalag*) *scolóc* was originally a scholar and then a term for a first son of a monastic tenant, given to the church to receive an ecclesiastical education and expected to carry out minor ecclesiastical duties, but keeping entitlement to a share of family land.[4] These ecclesiastical tenants were evidently established in a period before the introduction to this area of feudal lordship on the continental pattern, but thereafter insecure. In all there are strong hints that this is an early location for a church foundation in this part of Pictland. It would have been routine for expansionist Christianity to appropriate an established site of supernatural power involving water.

The -*nat* suffix is a Gaelic feminine diminutive, also found in the older name for Marykirk, no great distance from Arbuthnot: Aberluthnot, where Watson sees *luathnat* 'little swift one', from the stream passing through the village. Before leaving his paragraph on Arbuthnot Watson refers to something truly bizarre. In the medieval Irish *Acallam na Senórach* ('Colloquy of the Ancients') a character called *Buadnat* appears. She is a daughter of Herod and mother of a trio of evil deformed beings from hell. In their edition of 1900[5] W H Stokes and E Windisch comment: 'That Buadnat is made the daughter of Herod is, of course, due to Christian influence'. Such literal demonisation suggests indeed that a pre-Christian female deity, for whom 'little one of power' may have been a description rather than the real name, was for a time seen as an obstacle to the advance of Christianity. It is tempting to see some relationship with the character Fenella (in many variations including *Fimberhele*) of medieval chronicles and Mearns folklore, who seems to combine an actual late 10th century killer of a king in a dynastic feud with traditions of a 'witch' having supernatural powers such as flight. But it cannot be assumed that the *Buadnat* of *Acallam na Senórach* was known in medieval Kincardineshire.

It would be more realistic to envisage a scenario in which a pre-Christian Pictish name for a healing spring was adapted into Gaelic, most likely at a time of bilingualism when there was awareness of similar sounding words with similar meanings in both Insular Celtic languages. This can scarcely have been difficult, given that, cognate with Gaelic *buaidh*, Welsh has *budd* with similar meanings such as 'profit, booty (a Germanic cognate), riches, blessing, favour, advantage, benefit'.[6] This is related to ancient personal names in *Boud-*, such as that of the famous queen *Boudica*, and has numerous derivatives, among them the adjective *buddfawr* with senses including 'conferring blessings, efficacious'. The most similar to '*Bothenoth*' / '*Buthenoth*' is perhaps the noun *buddiant*,

3   1841 Spalding Club edition: https://archive.org/details/miscellanyofspal05spal/page/210/mode/1up

4   https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/scallag

5   p 326: https://archive.org/details/irischetextemite01stok/page/326/mode/2up?view=theater

6   https://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html

differing from the former by little more than a trivial metathesis, and with very similar meanings to the root word.

If this identification is correct for the *aber* of a stream now apparently too insignificant to be worth a name on maps, the survival of the place-name is testament to the former importance of this healing water in pagan and early Christian cult. There can be few *aber* place-names referring to a smaller stream than this.

W Patterson

The now nameless stream joins the Bervie
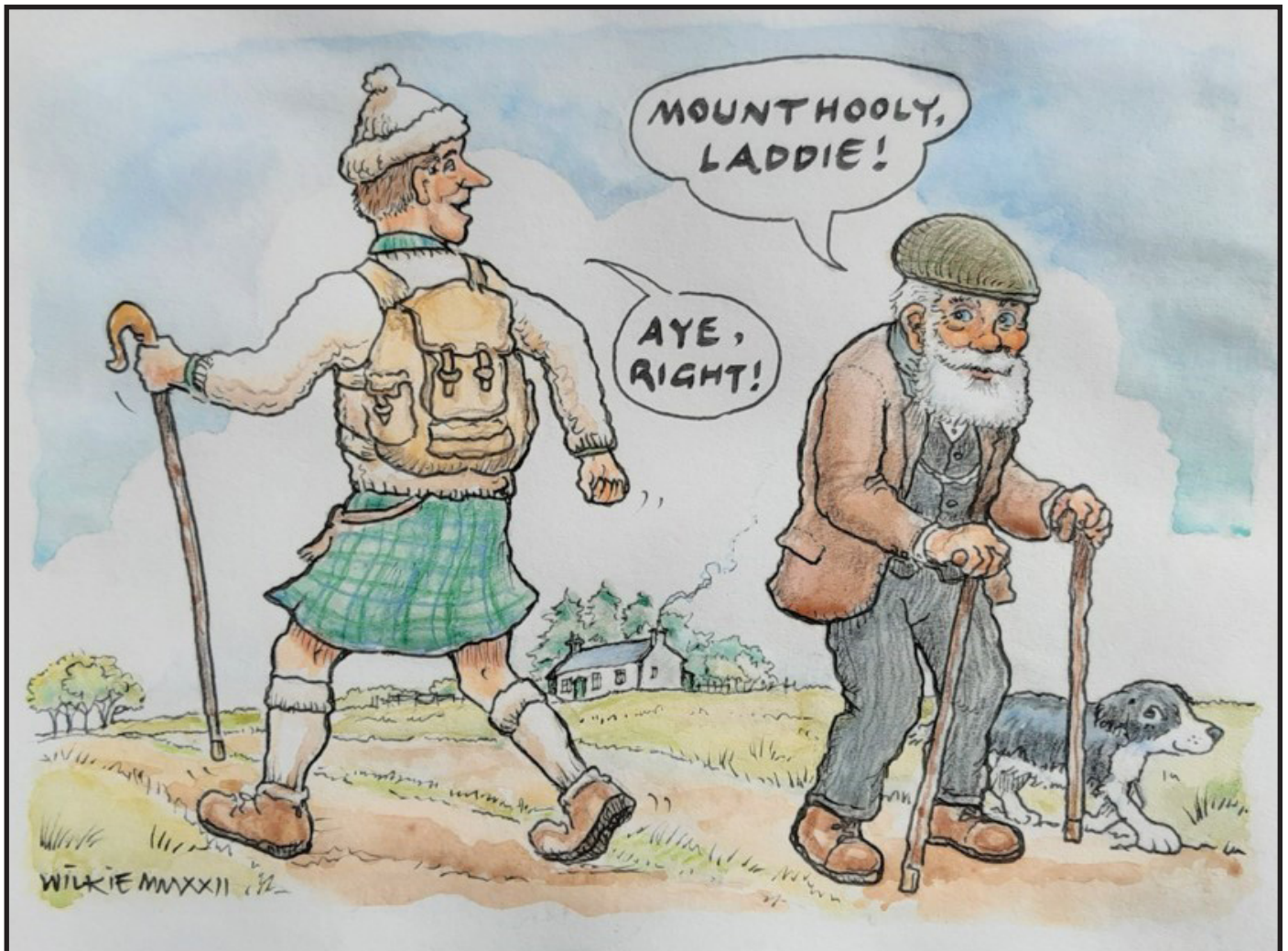
West Lothian resident John G Wilkinson's cartoon encapsulates his conclusions about the recurrent place-name Mounthooly, with particular reference to his own county. **MOUNTHOOLY, Ecclesmachan** (*Mounthoolie* 1773, sic in the first Ordnance Survey) was thought by Angus Macdonald (*The Place-names of West Lothian*, 1941, 52) to derive from 'the imperative "mount, go up, ascend" and the adv[erb] *hooly* "gently, cautiously".'

Since then it has become established as one of many 'verbal' place-names. Yet the ascription *Mount-* seems to have been granted to houses 'with airs' in the 17th and 18th centuries: *Mount Grove, Mountneedles(s), Mount Pleasant and Mountpuff* are four more from West Lothian. They can't all be 'verbal'. Besides, *Mounthooly* is on the sort of slope that would only be apparent to an East Anglian who'd been kidnapped, blindfolded and suddenly released there.

Might it refer to a slow build? At best it is a verbal pun, and, in this case, highly ironic. Cf. Mount Folly and its derogatory like as field-names (*New Dictionary of English Field-Names*, 288).