

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



CUAIRT-LITIR COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA

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The Berwickshire coast just south of the boundary with East Lothian. The landmark Old Red Sandstone cliff has given its name to the farm of Redheugh (heugh or heuch, 'precipice, crag, a steep hill', from Old English hōh 'heel'). The next distinct headland is Siccar Point, a crucial site in the early history of geology. The name is not on record till the late 18th century and it is not clear why it should be named siccar/sicker, in Scots 'secure, safe, sure'. A little inland appears a rare instance of a Gaelic name in Berwickshire, (Old) Cambus (camas 'bay'). This must refer to Pease Bay where the sandy beach is just visible in the photo. Pease is from the peths or steep tracks by which an old alignment of the coastal main route passed through the gorge of the Pease Burn. Old forms for the nearby village of Cockburnspath ('Co'path'), such as Colbrandespade 1141 x 1147 show that it was named for a man with the Scandinavian name Kolbrandr. The Berwickshire Place-Name resource <https://berwickshire-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/> has information on these and many other names in the county.

The **Scottish Place-Name Society** is a charity registered in Scotland (number SC033810)

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DRUMALBIN AND DRUMALBAN

My talk focussed on the Lanarkshire farm-name Drumalbin, setting it in its wider context and looking at its relationship with the better-known Drumalban, traditionally applied to the ridge of high hills separating Argyll from Perthshire.

Drumalbin lies in the parish of Carmichael, Lanarkshire, at a height of c.750 feet on the south-west slope of Whitecastle Hill, which rises to 885 feet. To the south of Whitecastle Hill is Chapel Hill, the northern shoulder of the higher Black Hill (1,221 feet). According to the OS Name Book entry for the nearby ruined farm of Drumalbinhill in 1858: ‘The name “Drumalbin Hill” formerly applied to the high ground attached to this farm’, going on to say that this name ‘is now disused. “Black Hill” and “Chapel Hill” are the names given to the ridge’ (OS1/21/9/45).

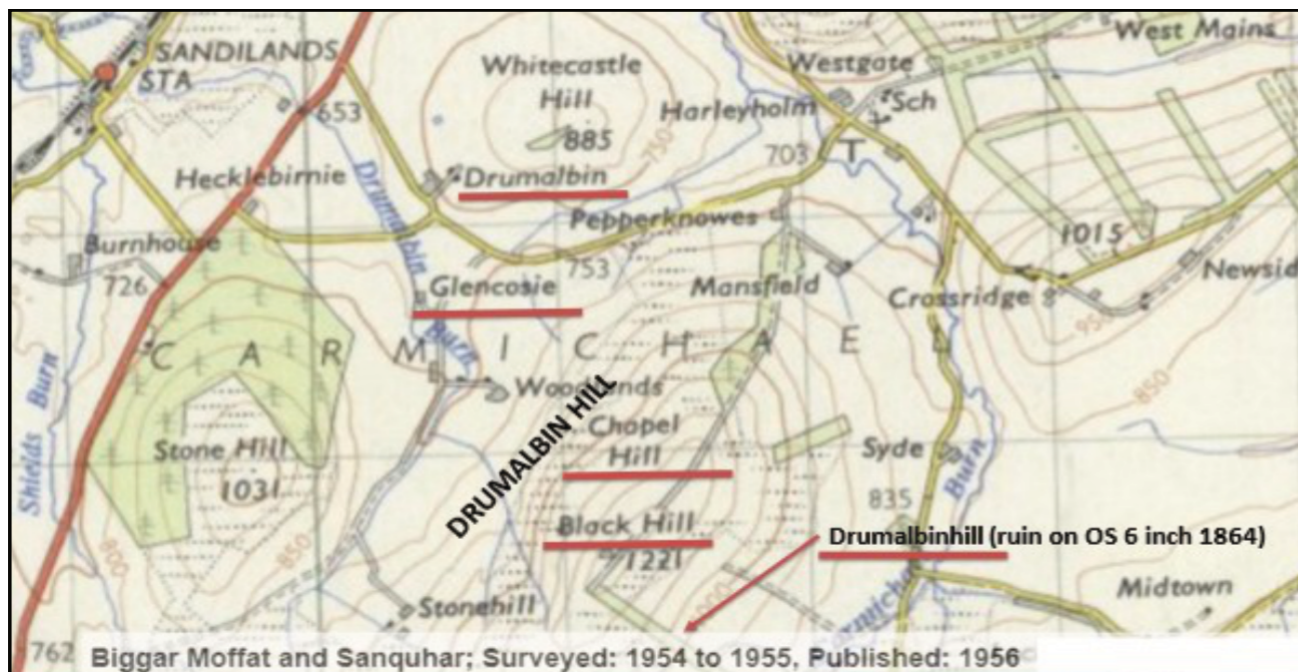


Fig. 1 OS 1 inch map showing Drumalbin and environs. Image from www.mps.nls.uk

Black Hill with Chapel Hill together form the north-eastern end of a long chain of hills separating Upper Clydesdale to the east (which includes amongst others the medieval parishes of Thankerton, Symington, Wiston and Robertson) from what may be called Douglasdale to the west, that is the valley of the Douglas Water, which in its lower course forms part of the south-eastern boundary of the parish of Lesmahagow. An eastern outlier of this ridge is Tinto Hill 2335 feet, one of the highest hills in south-central Scotland, at whose summit the three parishes of Carmichael, Symington and Wiston meet.

Our earliest forms of Drumalbin are: *Drumalbane* 1492 RMS ii no. 2102 and *Drumalbane* 1532 RMS iii no. 1243. It is a Gaelic name, the first element of which is *G druim* ‘a back; a ridge’. It is assumed that at least part of the above-mentioned chain of hills is the eponymous *druim*, an assumption strengthened by the above-mentioned OS Name Book entry. The second element of Drumalbin is the old genitive of *Alba*, today the Gaelic name for Scotland, formerly often applied to the kingdom of the Scots north of the Forth, in Latin either *Albania* or *Scotia*. The name can thus be rendered ‘(the) ridge of Alba’.



Fig. 2 Looking up Drumalbin Burn towards Glencosie and the ridge (Gaelic *druim*) formerly known as Drumalbin Hill. Copyright Mary & Angus Hogg and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons Licence.

Historical Context

In the mid- 12th century it was a policy of King Mael Coluim (Malcolm) IV (1153 – 1165) to grant lands to men of Flemish origin in contentious areas or along contentious boundaries. The implication is that not only were they skilled in up-to-date warfare, but also that they would be completely loyal to their royal patron. One such contentious boundary was that between his kingdom and the lords of Galloway, ruled by Fergus (died 1161) and his sons Uchtred and Gilbert. Upper Clydesdale lay on a major routeway between the two polities, and it was here that Malcolm settled some of his loyal Flemings. The most conspicuous evidence for this settlement today is its remarkable namescape.

At this point I want to introduce Luran Toorians, the leading scholar in the field of medieval Flemish settlement in both Scotland and Wales. The most important for Scotland is his article ‘Twelfth-century Flemish Settlement in Scotland’, in *Scotland and the Low Countries 1124-1994*, ed. Grant Simpson (1996 East Linton), 1-14.

In this chapter he makes the following observation on Upper Clydesdale:

The group of settlers in Upper Clydesdale formed a closely knit community consisting of people who both had numerous relationships of all sorts with one another, and who were actively involved in other areas with important settlements, as in Moray, Cunningham and Annandale.’

He goes on to pose the following question:

‘Do we have here [i.e. in Upper Clydesdale] an actual settlement planted into former wasteland, or did a sitting population get new lords?’

Looking at the map, I tend to opt for the former interpretation. Most of the names on the OS Landranger map of the area seem to stem from this period of 12th-century settlement or later, and Celtic names are remarkably rare. Even most of the burns running into the Clyde between Lanark and Crawfordjohn have names in Scots.’

Implied in this final sentence is that the settlers which the ‘Flemish’ incomers brought with them were speakers of Scots, and Toorians goes on to make this point explicitly by stating that, if these ‘Flemish’ settlers brought in a new population, then, since most of these Flemings came via England, and often also held lands in Lothian, it is more likely that they brought any new population from these areas. These would therefore mainly be speakers of the very closely related Older Scots and (Northern) Middle English.

Toorians's statement inspired me to investigate these names more closely, as well as to look at them in their wider context. To make the study more manageable I decided to focus on just two parishes, one in Upper Clydesdale, Wiston & Robertson, and one to the north-west, Lesmahagow.

Wiston & Robertson.

This is made up of two medieval parishes, joined together in 1772. Each name is formed with a male personal name + Older Scots *toun* 'a farm, an estate'. The eponymous men are Wizo (a characteristically Flemish name) and Robert, brother of Lambin, also a Flemish name, and the eponym of nearby Lamington.

Just as these men with Germanic names dominate the central places in Upper Clydesdale, in the same way place-names of Germanic origin completely dominate the namescape. Out of a total of 26 names in the parish, which includes all those the OS Landranger, 23 of them are unequivocally of Scots origin.

Lesmahagow

This large parish lies to the north-west, with 10 miles (16 km) separating their respective parish kirks. A lot of work has been done on this parish and its place-names.¹ Even bearing in mind that the parish of Lesmahagow was larger than that of Wiston & Robertson, with considerably more lowland suitable for cultivation and permanent settlement, the discrepancy between the two name sets is striking. Out of about 110 settlement-names in Lesmahagow, roughly 40 are of Gaelic origin. The other 70 derive from Scots, though many of these apply to smaller entities established within larger ones with Gaelic names.

Drumalban

Drumalban is far better known as the ridge or chain of hills separating Dál Riata (roughly modern Argyll) on the west from Pictland on the east, to which Adomnán refers several times in his late 7th-century Latin *Life of Columba* as *dorsum Britannie* or variations thereof, meaning 'the back or spine of Britain' a literal translation into Latin of the vernacular Drumalban.

It is important to note that Alba originally referred to the whole of the island of Britain, so in its earliest usage it was not the name of a boundary as such. However, Adomnán certainly presents it as the boundary between Dál Riata and Pictavia. It would also no doubt have continued to be seen as a boundary between the culturally and often politically divergent Argyll to the west and the kingdom of the Scots, increasingly referred to in Gaelic as Alba, with its eastern focus.

The earliest occurrence of the form Drumalban is in a Gaelic text, possibly 9th century. It is then found in the mid-15th-century Latin text *Scotichronicon* (Book 3, chapter 2) in the phrase 'beyond Drumalban that is beyond the spine of Alba' (*ultra Drumalban hoc est ultra dorsum Albanie*). Drumalban was also the name of a deanery of the diocese of Dunkeld closely linked with Atholl, which was created in the early 16th century.

It is my contention that the name Drumalbin in Lanarkshire was coined by the predominantly Gaelic-speaking population of Lesmahagow and the wider surrounding area to the north-west of the ridge of hills separating them from Upper Clydesdale. It was coined to indicate linguistic and cultural, rather than political, divisions between them and the newly settled population on the other side of the ridge.

It encapsulates these divisions as perceived by the local population. In the minds of the name-givers Alba stopped, or started, at this ridge. If this is correct, then Alba here does not refer to the kingdom of the Scots as such, but rather it is a term loosely used to describe a social, cultural and linguistic grouping beyond the ridge or *druim* perceived as being fundamentally different on all these fronts – which in fact it was.

Simon Taylor (This talk at the Autumn 2022 conference was based on my recently published article "Flemish" settlement in Upper Clydesdale in the 12th and 13th century: the evidence of place-names', *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 15, 32–62.)

¹ e.g. Taylor, Simon, 2009, 'Place-names of Lesmahagow', *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 3, 65–106; <https://clog.glasgow.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JSNS/article/view/192>

SNSBI Residential Spring Conference

The SNSBI (the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland) has arranged its residential Spring Conference for 14-17 April at Bridgend ~ Pen y Bont ar Ogwr, in South Wales.

https://www.snsbi.org.uk/2023_Bridgend.html

THE EPONYMOUS TOUN-NAMES OF BOTHWELL PARISH

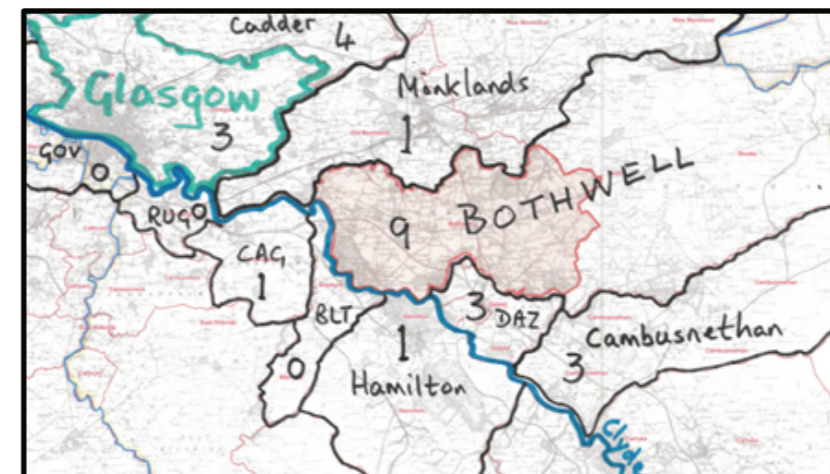


Fig. 1 Pre-1700 names with etymons and numbers of them in parishes

north had 1, Dalziel and Cambusnethan to the south had 3 each, while across the Clyde the parishes of Hamilton and Cambuslang had just 1 each and Blantyre had none.

Now both Geoffrey Barrow in the 1980s,¹ and more recently Simon Taylor,² have worked on the Flemish or Anglo-Norman eponyms of place-names in southern Lanarkshire on the upper Clyde. These settlers were 'placed' in position by means of grants of land from the Scottish Crown from David I onwards: 5 parishes bear the name of their Flemish settlers (Lamington, Robertson, Symington, Thankerton and Wiston). It therefore occurred to me that it might be worth examining whether Bothwell's *toun*-names derived from a similar settlement process.

We do know that the parish was granted to an Anglo-Norman, Walter Olifard, by David I's successor Malcolm IV – he also gave Monklands (to the immediate north) to the Cistercian monks of Newbattle, thus cementing royal control into place. Cambusnethan parish in the 12th century was under the control of William de Finemund (whom Black [1946] believes to be of a Flemish family), and who was the eponym of the place-name *Finimentoun* (1596), later *Femington* (1755, 1864), now lost. Olifard did not have his name preserved in a place-name, but it is possible that his followers may be the roots of the other eponyms.



Fig. 2 Bothwell Castle (Peter Drummond)

To investigate this I searched the PoMS database³ to see if I could find links. William de Finemunde and Walter Olifard (as Oliphant) are both there (persons no. 345 and 1285 respectively) as is Thomas Thancard (no. 1084), *floruit* 1189x1241, who held land of Olifard, and who is the eponym of **Thankerton**, one of BTW's *toun*-names. A further half a dozen eponyms may have links, in that there are people with possible connections (of varying strengths) to the names of the area, but who cannot be definitively linked to our *touns*.

Jerviston BTW (*Gervestoun* 1488) may be linked to Gervase (no. 2910), a clerk to the Bishop of Glasgow, *floruit* 1180x1230.

Orbiston BTW (*Osbernystoun* 1241) may be linked to Osbern (no. 10944), a chaplain to the Dean of Glasgow cathedral, *floruit* from 1179.

¹ *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History*, 1980

² *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* no. 15, pp32-63; <https://clog.glasgow.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JSNS/article/view/277>

³ People of Medieval Scotland 1093-1371, at www.poms.ac.uk

[New] **Stevenstoun** (*Stevinstoune* 1450) may be linked to Stephen (no. 17390), Dean of Glasgow, *floruit* early 14th century.

Riccartjohnston (*Ricart, Yongiston* 1440) may be linked to Richard Young, a royal barber (no. 22938) *floruit* 1325: but he was rewarded with land in Angus, so this seems unlikely.

Pickerstonhill (*Pickarstonhill* 1773) may be linked to the Stephen Picard (no. 5896), *floruit* 1267x1307, but he too is recorded as having links with Angus: the name appears very late.

Uddingston (*Uddingstoun* 1488) may be linked to Udding (no. 9162), *floruit* 1227, but he was Berwick-based, so this seems unlikely.

Dunsiston (*Dunceston* 1496) may be linked to the family name Duns, from the Borders, but there is no trace in PoMS of this name.

Murdostoun (*Murthoxon* 1299). There is a record of Richard le Scot de Murthoxton (no. 18908), *floruit* late 13th century, but he is not the eponym, since Murdo is from Gaelic Muredach: Barrow says Muredach was one of the few 'native' landowners in those times.

Alderston (*Aldiriston* 1441): there is a similar name Alderstone (*Aldinston* 1452) in Mid Calder parish MLO, which Dixon (1947) analysed as 'Aldwine's farm', possibly from one Aldwine (PoMS person no. 4687) whose son gave lands at Hailes MLO to the church in 1225. However, both this MLO spot and another Alderston ELO (*Aldinstoun* 1442) differ from the earliest form of the Bothwell name in having an /n/ rather than an /r/ before the possessive /s/; I am inclined to think it is derived from a family named Elder or Alder. This surname was first attested in Edinburgh in the 15th century, and is not reflected in PoMS.

So the upshot of my investigation is that while there are definite Anglo-Norman eponyms in the place-names of this part of Lanarkshire (Femington, Thankerton), and while others are strong possibilities (Jerviston, Orbiston, Stevenston), not all are evidence of a settlement of continental surnames.

Finally, as proof that the use of a name-forming pattern of generics in a particular area can have an impact further on in time, we have a 19th century example in Peggigeston by Bellshill in the parish. The Ordnance Survey Name Book observed; 'These names, *Pipers* or *Peggigeston*, apply to two rows of colliers' dwellings . . . from persons who formerly lived here. . . The proprietors or feuars are not of a class to determine or adopt one in preference to the other' (OSNB OS1/21/5/86). Peggy is of course a hypocoristic form of Margaret, and certainly did not feature in PoMS.

Peter Drummond (based on talk to Autumn 2022 conference)



The Journal of Scottish Name Studies Vol. 15 (2021)

is available to read, on:

<https://clog.glasgow.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JSNS/issue/view/23>

The journal is published only online, and the location has recently shifted. All its back issues are available to read here: <https://clog.glasgow.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JSNS/issue/archive>

The editors would like to thank Prof. Richard Cox for allowing the new publishers to provide access to the full archive.

The current editors (Prof. Thomas Clancy and Dr Maggie Scott) welcome submissions for future volumes of the journal. You can contact either of the editors in this regard (thomas.clancy@glasgow.ac.uk or M.R.Scott@salford.ac.uk), or visit the journal's webpage for more information about submissions.

<https://clog.glasgow.ac.uk/intro/index.php/j-scot-name-studies/>

ROY MILITARY SURVEY OF SCOTLAND (1747-55)

The Roy Military Survey of Scotland Gazetteer contains transcriptions of all 33,523 names on the Roy Military Survey Map of Scotland (1747-55). These names were recorded by a team of volunteers between February-July 2022. The results are of great value for local and family historians, place-name researchers, as well as all those interested in the landscape of 18th century Scotland.

- Roy Gazetteer - <https://maps.nls.uk/roy/>
- Roy Gazetteer information page - <https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/>

The sections below briefly describe the fields used in the Roy Gazetteer, how to search it, and how to download it.

Fields

The Gazetteer includes the following fields:

Field Name	Description
ID	Unique ID for the entry. Prefixed with H (Highlands) or L (Lowlands) and a running number
RoyName	The exact name on the Roy Map - see https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#royname for further details
OSName	The exact name on the OS 1st edition mapping - see https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#osname for further details
Comments	Any additional notes about the names above
Parish	The parish (or parishes) that the Roy Name was located in (1840s-1880s) - see https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#parish for further details
County	The county (or counties) that the Roy Name was located in (1840s-1880s)
Reference	The Roy Military Survey sheet part or dissection(s) the name falls on - see https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#reference for further details
Coordinates	The point coordinates of a polygon traced around the Roy Name. These coordinates are in latitude/longitude (WGS84 / EPSG:4326) format.

In addition to the **Roy name**, we also asked volunteers to record the name of a place either related to or nearby the Roy name from the Ordnance Survey one-inch and six-inch to the mile 1st edition maps (1840s-1880s). The intention behind the OS Name was particularly to make keyword searching more effective, as these OS Names are often more similar to the modern names people today may search on. The OS Name can also help to interpret the approximate location of the Roy Name as well as its form. A Comments field recorded notes about the Roy or OS Name, often to help with interpretation or for explaining the linkages between the Roy and OS Name.

Would you like a Digital copy of the SPNS Newsletter?

If any SPNS member wishes to receive a digital copy, please contact Bill Patterson:

pn.patterson3dr@btinternet.com

Searching the Gazetteer

The Roy Gazetteer can be searched using a map interface, or as an alphabetical list.

- Map Interface - <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/roy/>
- Alphabetical list - <https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/browse/a-c.html>

With the Map Interface, you can search for a place-name using the Search Panel at the top left of the screen. As with our other map viewers, this Search Panel allows you to search by modern place-names, National Grid References, and by county/parish. Below these, the **Search Roy Highlands / Roy Lowlands Names** search box allows you to search the Roy Gazetteer by keyword, name or part of a name.

The screenshot shows the 'Search Roy Highlands / Roy Lowlands Names' panel with the search term 'blair'. The results table is as follows:

Roy Name	OS Nearby Name	Parish	County
Achterblair	Achterblair	Duthil and Rothiemurchus	Inverness-shire
Ardblair	Ardblair Castle	Blairgowrie	Perthshire
Ardblair	Ardblair	Kiltarity and Convinth	Inverness-shire
Auchblair	Auchinblae	Fordoun	Kincardineshire
Baan Blair	Balmblair	Redgorton	Perthshire
Backblair	Blackblair Little Blackblair	Drumblade	Aberdeenshire
Balablair	Shandwick House Chapel Hill	Logie Easter	Ross-shire
Balblair	Cnocandarroch Coul Hill	Aliness	Ross-shire
Balblair	Balblair	Moy and Dalrossie	Inverness-shire
Ballablair	Lansher	Kilmuir Wester and Suddie	Ross-shire
Ballablair	Balblair	Creich	Sutherland
Ballablair	Craigton	Resolis	Cromartyshire

Fig. 1 Searching the Roy Gazetteer with the map interface

This will return a list of all the names on the Roy map that include your place-name or keyword, as well as a distribution map showing their locations. If you hover over a name in the list, you will see it highlighted in orange on the distribution map. Selecting a name in the list will take you to the relevant name on Roy's map. Clicking on a name on the map will bring up some more information in a popup box, including the parish, county and the nearby or equivalent name that appears on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map. The other link below the Roy name search box - **Show all names on the part of the map on screen** - allows you to view a list of names on a particular part of the map you are looking at.

You can also browse all the names that appear on Roy's map as a written list. Click on the link below the search box (**Search All Names – Highlands and Lowlands**) to see a full list of the names on both the Highland and Lowland layers. These are listed alphabetically and clicking on any of these Roy names will take you back to the name on the Roy map.

Watch the Roy Gazetteer Help video - <https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#search> - or read a transcription of it for further details.

The screenshot shows the 'Roy Gazetteer Browse Interface - All Names - A-C' page. The search results table is as follows:

Roy Name	Roy layer	OS Nearby / Related Name	Parish	County
2 Mile houSe 2 Mile house	Highlands	Fivemile House	Mains and Strathmartine Liff and Benvie	Forfarshire
3 milehouse	Lowlands	Midton	Maybole	Ayrshire
5 Mile House	Highlands	Fivemile Wood	Auchtergaven Redgorton	Perthshire
5 Shillingland	Lowlands	Auchmannoch	Sorn	Ayrshire
6 Mile House	Highlands	Drumend	Findo Gask	Perthshire
8. Mile house	Highlands	Bonnington	Dunnichen	Forfarshire
A Ford	Highlands	Conan Bridge	Urquhart and Logie Wester	Nairn-shire
A New Harbour	Lowlands	Cove Harbour	Cockburnspath	Berwickshire
A proposed Lighthouse	Highlands	Old Lighthouse (in ruins)	West Kilbride	Buteshire
A Roman Camp	Lowlands	Ad Fines Camps	Oxnam	Roxburghshire
Abachy	Highlands	Avochie House	Huntly	Aberdeenshire
Abarisco	Lowlands	Upper Rasco	Anwoth	Kirkcudbrightshire

Fig. 2 Browsing the Roy Gazetteer as an alphabetical list

Downloading the Gazetteer

The Gazetteer can also be downloaded in accessible formats for onward use and research. We have made it available as CSV files (which can be read in any text editor or Excel) and as GeoJSON files which can be opened inside a GIS, like the freely downloadable QGIS program. This allows the locations of the names to be visualised on a map backdrop, and compared to any other spatial data or gazetteers. It's also possible to bring the background Roy map layers into QGIS to visualise the names on the Roy map itself. Our Re-using georeferenced layers guides (<https://maps.nls.uk/guides/georeferencing/>) provide help on bringing any of our georeferenced layers into other software, such as QGIS, and our Re-using map datasets guide (<https://maps.nls.uk/guides/datasets/>) does the same for map datasets.

- Roy Gazetteer dataset download - <https://maps.nls.uk/roy/gazetteer/#download>

The Roy Gazetteer is a work-in-progress, and since its initial publication in July 2022, selected volunteers have continued to work on reviewing and correcting selected Roy name transcriptions, as well as the parish and county references. We were also particularly grateful to John Wilkinson who helped to correct many Roy Names in West Lothian. If other SPNS members would like to make comments or corrections to particular names, we would be very happy to hear from you - at maps@nls.uk.

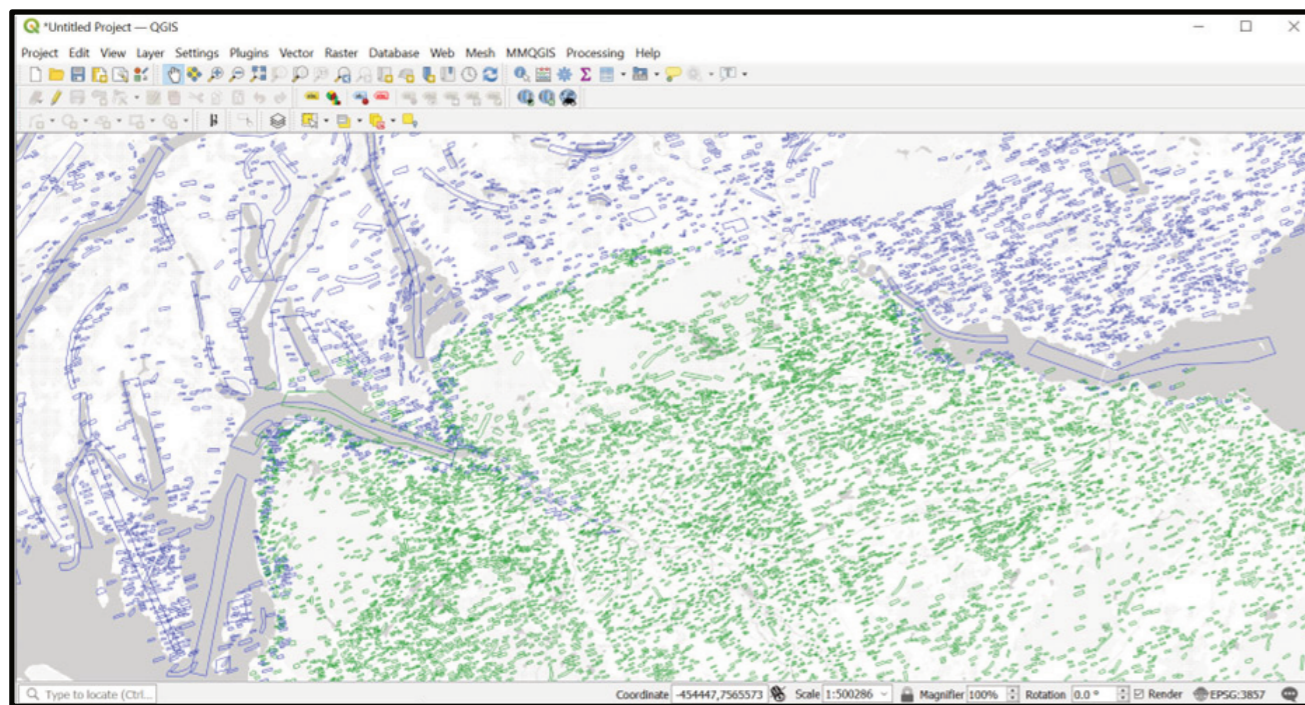


Fig. 3 Viewing the Roy gazetteer in QGIS - Highlands layer (blue), Lowlands layer (green)

Chris Fleet (Autumn 2022 Conference)
National Library of Scotland

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, PLACE-NAMES AND GAELIC

Roddy (Ruairidh) Maclean explains the motivation behind his 2021 paper for NatureScot which has already had a positive impact on toponymical research in Scotland.



My 2021 occasional paper for NatureScot – *Ecosystem Services and Gaelic: a Scoping Exercise* – was an attempt to convince academics outside the field of Celtic Studies and Onomastics (along with their institutions, funding bodies and potential post-graduate students) to pay more attention to Scotland's Gaelic heritage when they are conducting research, and nominating research topics, in their various fields of endeavour. For too long, the Gaelic language and its heritage have been, to a large degree, ignored by those working in fields as disparate as Scottish literature, history, domestic economy, geography and ecology. My intention was to make the point that any narrative, particularly of the Highlands, is incomplete if the evidence has been gleaned only from English language sources and only from an Anglophone perspective.

In particular, I was tasked with exploring how Gaelic toponymy, literature and oral tradition impinge upon an understanding of Ecosystem Services – defined as ‘the many and varied benefits accruing to human beings, individually and

collectively, from properly functioning ecosystems, and from a balanced and sustainable natural environment.’ In the current days of climate change, environmental degradation and a burgeoning human population, this is a major topic – academically, socially and politically. With a view to encouraging academic institutions and research bodies to accept the advantages of ‘thinking Gaelic’, I made twenty recommendations for future, detailed research.

For the purposes of the readers of this publication, I shall only briefly mention matters outside toponymy, although it is worth making the point that a tradition-keepers’ view of the heritage of the Gàidhealtachd is that there are no hermetically sealed dividing lines between a knowledge of place-names and an understanding of oral tradition, literature and song. Academics sometime pigeonhole themselves into narrow and fractional fields of endeavour, in which they become undoubted experts, but their outlook can differ markedly from that of tradition bearers who understand the commonality and overlap that exists between these various disciplines.

Can a toponymist, for example, truly avoid the temptation to also be a storyteller of sorts when so many of our place-names carry tales – whether they be true or not?! Our cultural narratives, which include place-names – and are sometimes based around an ‘understanding’ of a toponym or toponyms – inform and enrich our being as individuals and as a society.

In the paper I look at Gaelic traditions connecting society to the natural environment – such as shellfish and seaweed gathering, and trees as a resource. Narrative sources such as *Carmina Gadelica* and a range of Gaelic poetry from medieval until current times are explored, and I make recommendations for research on foraging traditions in Gaelic Scotland, and about historical attitudes towards, and management of, woodlands. I also suggest consideration of a multi-disciplinary study of biological and ecosystem information contained in Martin Martin’s classic account ‘*A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*’ ca. 1695 (and this could be extended to other textual information).

However, a large part of the report deals with place-names. It is in this field, across the Highlands, that Gaelic has an unimpeached authority. There are few place-names in the Gàidhealtachd which were created in English, so that much of our toponymic landscape remains semantically opaque to those who do not engage with the Gaelic language. If academics beyond the realm of Celtic and Gaelic Studies, and Place-Name Studies, choose to ignore the intellectual wealth that exists within Scotland’s Gaelic heritage, then they are missing an opportunity, and as a society we are the poorer for it.

The section on place-names considers what toponyms might indicate to us about ‘provisioning services’ such as food, water, timber, fuel, fibre and medicine. On food, it drills down to information on such matters as agriculture, fishing, hunting and foraging. I explore elements such as *baile*, *achadh*, *goirtean*, *dail*, *ceapach* and *arbhar*, and I look at the various elements (livestock, dairy products, shieling and migration names) connected to transhumance, a way of life that for centuries stood as a confirmation of seasonal productivity in (usually) upland ecosystems. One of my recommendations is that ‘an interdisciplinary study take place, to include toponymy, with the aim of assessing the productivity, in terms of cattle and dairy products, of shieling locations across the Gàidhealtachd at the height of the practice of Highland transhumance.’

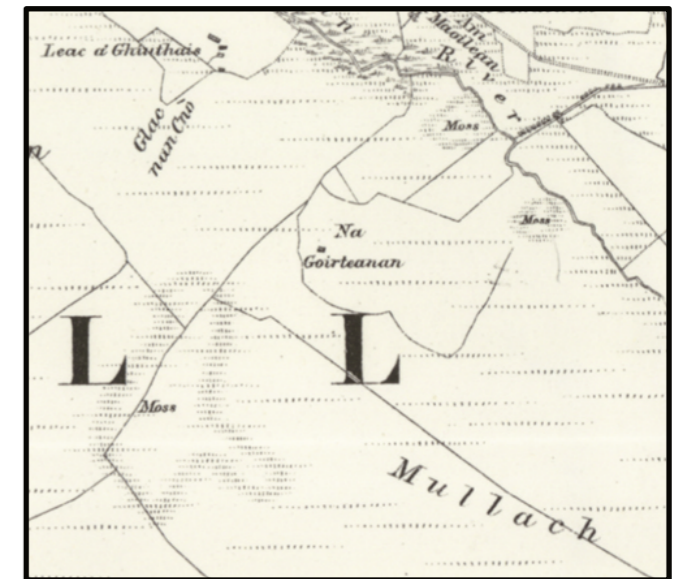


Fig. 1 The place-name Na Goirteanan near Bunessan on Mull represents historical agricultural productivity in a place which is now uncultivated. The name means ‘the cornfields’ (OS). Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>)

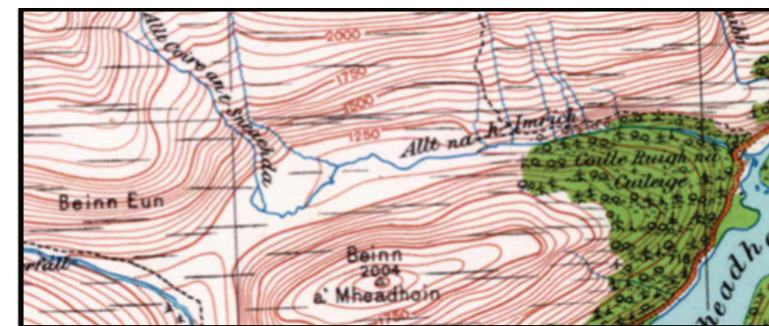


Fig. 2 Allt na h-Imrich ‘the burn of the flitting’ tells of past human activity in Glen Affric – a glen which is largely uninhabited today. It is among the evidence we have for transhumant practices in this part of the Highlands. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>)

Gaelic place-names can help to inform our approach to rewilding and to the reforestation of places that are bare of trees today. Such an approach has already been adopted in at least two Scottish studies of ‘lost’ woodlands. One of my recommendations in this paper is for ‘a major study . . . into woodland and tree toponyms across the Gàidhealtachd, and [that it be] co-ordinated with other evidence to attempt to map the historical presence of woodland of various types. This could be extended to include the whole of Scotland, and toponyms in languages other than Gaelic.’



Fig. 2 The rocky hill in the middle of the photograph is Creag a' Chait – the name being evidence for the historical presence of the wildcat close to the city of Inverness (which can be seen in the distance). One of the paper's recommendations is for a detailed study of place-name evidence of wildcats and the habitats in which these toponyms occur. Place-name evidence for the presence of animal and plant species in past times can help to inform our conservation priorities and policies today.

Photo: R Maclean

Finally, in this brief summary of the paper, I would like to mention a major recommendation – for a study on 'mountain and hill toponyms across the Gàidhealtachd, [to be] co-ordinated with other evidence, including altitude, aspect, geology, geomorphological history, dialect, region and land-use, in order to attempt to understand more fully the subtle differences between generics and the reason for their choice. This would benefit, not only the Gaelic community, but many participants and players in Scotland's burgeoning, and economically important, outdoor recreation industry.' Such a study could be inspirational and help to inform our national identity as guardians of a land that possesses great environmental and human riches, and one which increasingly embraces a holistic philosophy that champions natural and cultural conservation imperatives as two sides of the same coin.

I am pleased to say that the Ecosystem Services paper has been largely well received and that it has already borne fruit. It helped to inspire a current place-name project, in which NatureScot has partnered with Historic Environment Scotland, supported by funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, in looking at three locations in order to 'explore the extent to which Gaelic place-names shape our understanding of an area's natural and cultural heritage'. The project, known as *Teanga na Tìre* ('the language of the land') will focus on 'the impact of climate change, biodiversity, land use, resource extraction and industry on communities' sense of place in Scotland today'.

Roddy (Ruairidh) Maclean is the author of several texts on Highland place-names, including [Place-names of Inverness and Surrounding Area | NatureScot](#). His paper on Ecosystem Services is available at [NatureScot Research Report 1230 - Ecosystem Services and Gaelic: a Scoping Exercise | NatureScot](#).

SPNS Spring Conference

The **SPNS Spring conference** will be held in Berwick on Saturday 13th May. Details of this live event on separate flier.

MÌ-CHOMHAIRLE PLACE-NAMES

This is a summary of research into *mi-chomhairle* in Highland place-names. It is hoped that the full article will be published soon.

Key	Name	Location
1	Cnoc(an) na Mi-chomhairle	Ciarcabost, Bearnaraigh, Lewis
2	Cnocan na Mi-chomhairle	Lacasaigh, Lewis
3	Eilean na Mi-chomhairle	Loch an Sticir, N. Uist
4	Creagan na Mi-chomhairle	Opinan (South Erradale), Wester Ross
5	Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle	Poolewe, Wester Ross
6	Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle	Kilmaronag, nr Connel, Argyll
7	Cnoc(an) na Mi-chomhairle	Glen Nevis, nr Fort William, Inverness-shire



Fig. 1 Location of *mi-chomhairle* place-names in grid reference order.

Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle near Poolewe (fig. 1 no. 5 and fig. 2) was the site of the c.1480 murder of Allan Macleod, then chief of Gairloch.

Another *mi-chomhairle* name in Gairloch parish is Creagan na Mi-chomhairle (fig. 1 no. 4), Opinan. A tale recorded in 1988 named it after the children of the nearby school who were *mi-chomhairleach* (i.e. unable to be advised or unwilling to listen to advice). An older source has a quarrel between two men leading to the death of both.

The most northerly *mi-chomhairle* name in the Outer Hebrides is in Ciarcabost on Bearnaraigh (fig. 1 no. 1). Accounts indicate that a murder, possibly by the chief of the Clan Macaulay, c. 1600, was carried out at Cnocan na Mi-Chomhairle. No story has been found connected with Cnocan na Mi-chomhairle, Lacasaigh, also on Lewis (fig. 1 no. 2). The third example in the Western Isles is Eilean na Mi-chomhairle in Loch an Sticir, N. Uist (fig. 1 no. 3). Here the nephew of Macdonald of Sleat was captured and died of thirst in a dungeon on Skye.

The Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle, near Kilmaronag, Connel (fig. 1 no. 6 and fig. 3), is a wee tree-covered knoll beside the A85. Many were murdered when a fight broke out as a result of a misunderstanding.

The most easterly of the names, Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle, is in Glen Nevis near Fort William (fig. 1. no. 7 and fig. 4). Having been insulted, a body of men from Clan Chattan stopped at this hillock and made the decision to attack the MacSorlies at their nearby residence. More or



Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle

Fig. 2 Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle, Poolewe. NG859797, no. 5. O.S. First Edition map, surveyed 1875 (Ross and Cromarty (Mainland), sheet XLV)



Fig. 3 Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle, near Kilmaronag, Connel (Argyll). NM942342, no. 6. Photograph by permission of John Macfarlane.



Fig. 4 Approximate location of Cnoc(an) na Mi-chomhairle, the knoll of the evil counsel near Fort William. c.NN124714, no. 7. O.S. First Edition map, surveyed 1871 (Inverness-shire (Mainland), sheet CL)

less all MacSorlies were murdered or wounded.

Translation of the term

The term *mi-chomhairle* has generally been translated as *evil counsel, bad advice* or similar. This appears misleading to those interpreting it nowadays. The OED also gives *purpose* or *intention* as meanings and these seem more appropriate for both the actions carried out at these places and the decision-making. This is supported in Irish where the definition of *comhairle* includes *intent*. A clearer translation of *mi-chomhairle*, then, would be *evil intention*.

Pronunciation

It seems that *mi-chomhairle* is pronounced with stress on both elements, viz. ['mi: 'xɔ.əi]jə].

Analysis of the *mi-chomhairle* names

Fig. 5 shows that the majority of these names were connected with murder either at the location or as a result of actions there.

Key	Name	Location	GR	Event	Named by O.S
1	Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle	W. Lewis	NB188344	violent murder	yes
2	Cnocan na Mi-chomhairle	E. Lewis	NB328220	?	yes
3	Eilean na Mi-chomhairle	N. Uist	NF896776	capture leading to murder	yes
4	Creagan na Mi-chomhairle	W. Ross	NG745728	violent murder	yes
5	Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle	W. Ross	NG859797	violent murder	no
6	Cnoc na Mi-chomhairle	Lorne	NM942342	violent murder	no
7	Cnoc(an) na Mi-chomhairle	Lochaber	NN124714	decision leading to violent murder	no

Fig. 5 Summary of *mi-chomhairle* names

It is noteworthy that all but one of these names are related to an elevated location. In some cases, they may have been examples of Cnoc a' Mhòid, *the knoll of the court*, where local issues were discussed and subsequently gained the names that we have today from the notable events that occurred there and described above.

This analysis of one place-name term has hopefully served three purposes. It has shown how *mi-chomhairle* place-names have a place in the historical record; how they are distributed in northern Scotland and [in the full article] what their varied recording and appearance or otherwise on maps shows us of the reliability of OS maps as a source for place-names. It is probable that many other terms could be analysed similarly to useful effect.

[Relevant OS maps, references and acknowledgements included in full article.]

Nevis Hulme

ABAIR AINM!

We had a student placement from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in early March. As part of his placement he conducted some fieldwork in the township of Tarskavaig, Sleat in the south end of Skye where he lives. During our daily chats we would discuss some of the place-names he had collected from his neighbours. One place-name in particular jumped out at me.

On croft no. 13 (NG58850990) there is a hillock by the name of **Cnoc nam Bramannan**, 'hillock of the farts'. The precise reason behind the name has been lost, but it is thought to be connected to horses in some way. Regardless of its origins, it's a fun name bound to put a smile on a few faces.

Eilidh Scammell
Ainmean-Aite na h-Alba



PLACE-NAMES AND IDENTITY



This paper explores the sense of identity that we feel or gain from the names of the places we live in, or visit, or study. It summarises the first explorations of a Masters by Research through creative practice at the University of the Highlands and Islands, where a stage play is one of the outputs.

Within this idea of identity, it is postulated there is a rootedness or attachment or a certain something we feel that connects us to place – more so when we know what a place-name means, and which has a deeper meaning to us beyond the lexical or onomastic meaning. There is a 'something' that connects us through name to place

– either as an individual or a group – and it's deep seated, and often entrenched. Alongside this, an individual's sense of identity from a named place is likely to be different to other people's.

Place-names, as we all know, have meaning – be they descriptive (Inverness – mouth of the river Ness), or having an association with notable people (Loch Maree – the loch of St Maelrubha) or tribes (Dumbarton – the fort of the Britons); or have some mythology or stories attached (Gulbain – the snout (of the boar that Diarmaid killed in the Finn McCoul story cycle). Some are obscure, some are unknown, and some - possibly most - have a meaning that is superficially irrelevant to what people would ascribe to a place now.

This is at the heart of the MRes - the research is delving both backwards (to see what people know about the historical derivation of today's place-names) and forwards (to get a sense of people's current associations with a place), which could inform a new naming that is more relevant to today. The findings will stimulate the drafting of a stage play.

For example, Friar's Shot on Inverness' river Ness (Maclean 2021; p.178) derives from the Scots 'shot' or 'shott' (a place where nets were thrown out to catch, usually, salmon); with 'Friar' referring to the now long-gone Dominican friary whose fishing rights and original founding date from the 13th century. Whilst this is of historical significance, it's likely to only cause mild curiosity and intrigue at best to most residents and visitors today. This leads the research into several strands:

- a. that Friar's Shot is a place-name with a now non-practical and redundant meaning, which once had significance historically for the local community [i.e. it was a specific area legally ascribed to a certain body of people by charter for a specific and useful purpose]
- b. at this place today, where there's neither net fishing nor friars, what:
 - do people call Friar's Shot now? If not Friar's Shot, anything at all?
 - if people didn't know its name, would people today want to call it Friar's Shot? If so, why?
 - If not, what would people want to call Friar's Shot, and why? What significance is there now of this place-name meaning to people?
- c. To what degree do these considerations influence people's sense of identity – if at all?

These questions will be discussed in focus groups – where individuals in an area will learn about place-names



Fig. 1 Friar's Shot (Photo: Phil Baarda)

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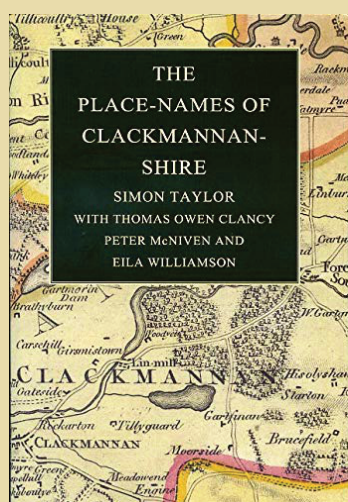
and their derivations, and then examine their own relationship to them. For some, it's expected the meaning of a place-name might be the first time it has been encountered. Irrespective of any prior knowledge, all will have individual associations with that place – and all will have a perspective of what a new, and more relevant name might be.

This research and the stories generated will inform the drafting of a stage play. James Joyce said, 'In the particular is contained the universal'; similarly, it's hoped that universal truths can be encapsulated in a creative response stimulated from individual senses of place-name identity.

Some of these ideas have already been explored in an audio drama series *Our Place Your Place* – where a grieving father and daughter make sense of their lives through naming and re-naming significant places in their locality. It's a freely available 6x 10 min series, available at: <https://www.podbean.com/pu/pbblog-bv2ib-d3d430>

Phil Baarda (Autumn 2022 conference)
philbaarda@hotmail.com

Reference: Maclean, R., 2021. Place-Names of Inverness and Surrounding Area. NatureScot, Inverness



Scottish 'County' Place-Names Volumes

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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.

The next volume in this series, *The Place-Names of Berwickshire* vol. I, covering the six parishes along the Tweed from Eccles to Mordington, will be out this year, also published by Shaun Tyas. Unfortunately it will not be in time for the SPNS Conference in Berwick in May.