

Gaelic and Norse in the Landscape

Place names in Caithness and Sutherland

A' Ghàidhlig is Lochlannais air Aghaidh na Tìre

Ainmean-àite ann an Gallaibh, Cataibh is Dùthaich MhicAoidh

Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Roddy Maclean



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Gaelic and Norse in the Landscape

Place names in Caithness and Sutherland

A' Ghàidhlig is Lochlannais air Aghaidh na Tìre

Ainmean-àite ann an Gallaibh, Cataibh is Dùthaich MhicAoidh

Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Roddy Maclean



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Text/Teacs: Ruairidh MacIleathain

Design/Deilbh: Pelican Design Consultants

Production/Foillseachadh:

Photography/Dealbhan:

Steven Moore/SNH: Cover **Iain Sarjeant:** opposite Contents, 11, 23/24, & 29 **Iain Sarjeant/Sutherland Partnership:**

opposite Neil Gunn quotation, 16, 17/18 & 19/20 **George Logan/SNH:** 2, 13 **Glyn Satterley:** 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, & 15

Lorne Gill/SNH: 4, 21/22, 25, 26 & 28 **Shutterstock.com:** 5/6 & 27 **John Charity:** 8

Gaelic and Norse in the Landscape

Place names in Caithness and Sutherland

A' Ghàidhlig is Lochlannais air Aghaidh na Tìre

Ainmean-àite ann an Gallaibh, Cataibh is Dùthaich MhicAoidh

Scottish Natural Heritage

17 Pulteney Street

Ullapool

Wester Ross

IV26 2UP

Tel: 01854 - 613418

Fax: 018545 - 613419

Email: pubs@snh.org.uk

Website: <http://www.snh.org.uk>

Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

17 Sràid Pholtanaidh

Ullapul

Ros an Iar

IV26 2UP

Fòn: 01854 - 613418

Facs: 018545 - 613419

Post-d: pubs@snh.org.uk

Làrach-linn: <http://www.snh.org.uk>

Cover photograph/Dealbh còmhdaich:

Blanket bog near Ben Griam Mor/Boglach

faisg air Beinn Ghriam Mhòr



This is the northland, the land of exquisite light. Lochs and earth and sea pass away to a remote horizon where a suave line of pastel foothills cannot be anything but cloud. Here the actual picture is like a picture in a supernatural mind and comes upon the human eye with the surprise that delights and transcends memory. Gradually the stillness of the far prospect grows unearthly. Light is silence. And nothing listens where all is of eternity.

- Neil M. Gunn, Highland River 1937

The Neolithic chambered cairns at Camster in Caithness are of enormous archaeological significance. Camster is Norse, probably meaning "ridge farm". The word cairn originates in the Gaelic càrn; it can stand for a hill or mountain as well as a structure made of stones.

Buinidh na barpaichean ainmeil ann an Camster ann an Gallaibh do Nua-linn na Cloiche. Tha Camster a' tighinn bhon Lochlannais; thathar an dùil gu bheil e a' ciallachadh "baile-fearainn an droma".



Contents/Clàr-innse

Some Further Reading	1
A Note on Place Names	3
Tuigse Ainmean-Àite	4
Introduction / Ro-Ràdh	5
A Multilingual Heritage	7
Tìr nan Iomadh Cànan	8
Vikings Become Farmers	11
Lochlannaich mar Thuathanaich	12
Linguistic Interaction	13
Cànanan ag Obair air a Chèile	14
Among the Skerries and Geos	15
Am Measg nan Sgeirean is nan Geodhachan	16
Land of the Bogs	17
Tìr nam Boglaichean	18
Hills and Mountains	19
Cnuic is Beanntan	20
Colours and Inflections	21
Dathan is Buadhairean	22
Plant Names in the Landscape	25
Craobhan is Lusan	26
Animal Names in the Landscape	27
Ainmean Ainmhidhean	28
History and Folklore	29
Eachdraidh is Beul-Aithris	30
A Guide to Pronunciation	31

Some further reading

General:

Cox, Richard A V 'Descendants of Norse Bólstaðr? A Re-examination of bost & Co.' in J R Baldwin (ed) *Peoples and Settlement in North-West Ross*, Edinburgh, 1994: 43-67
Dwelly, Edward *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary*
MacBain, Alexander *Place Names in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. Stirling, 1922
Nicolaisen, W F H *Scottish Place-Names: Their Study and Significance*. London, 1976
Watson W J *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* 1926

Caithness:

Nicolaisean, W F H 'Scandinavians and Celts in Caithness: The Place-Name Evidence' in J Baldwin (ed) *Caithness: A Cultural Crossroads*, Edinburgh 1982: 75-85
Nicolson, D B 'Place-Names' in J Horne (ed) *The County of Caithness*, Wick 1907: 31-43
Waugh, Doreen 'A Detailed Account of some Caithness Place-Names' in *Scottish Language*, No.4, Aberdeen, 1985: 37-90
Waugh, Doreen 'The Place-Names of Canisbay, Caithness' *Northern Scotland*, Vol.7, No.2, Aberdeen, 1987: 99-111
Waugh, Doreen 'Place Names' in D Omand (ed) *The New Caithness Book*, North of Scotland Newspapers 1989:
Waugh, Doreen 'The Place-Names of Stroma' in: D A Young (ed.), *Stroma*, Wick, 1992: 35-40
Waugh, Doreen 'Settlement names in Caithness with particular reference to Reay Parish' in B. E. Crawford (ed.), *Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain*, Leicester University Press, 1995: 64-79.
Young, Donald *The Book of Lybster*, Norland, Lybster, 1998: 49-58

Sutherland:

Fraser I A 'The Norse Element in Sutherland Place Names', *Scottish Literary Journal*, supplement No. 9 (1979): 17-27
Gunn, Adam & John Mackay *Sutherland and the Reay Country*, Glasgow, 1897: 141-171
Macaulay, D 'Place Names' in D Omand (ed) *The Sutherland Book*, Golspie, 1982: 278-292
Watson, W J *Scottish Place-Name Papers* Steve Savage 2002: 56-75
Waugh, Doreen 'A Scatter of Norse Names in Strathnaver' in J Baldwin (ed) *The Province of Strathnaver*, Golspie 2000: 13-23

Dornoch Beach
An tràigh, Dòmach

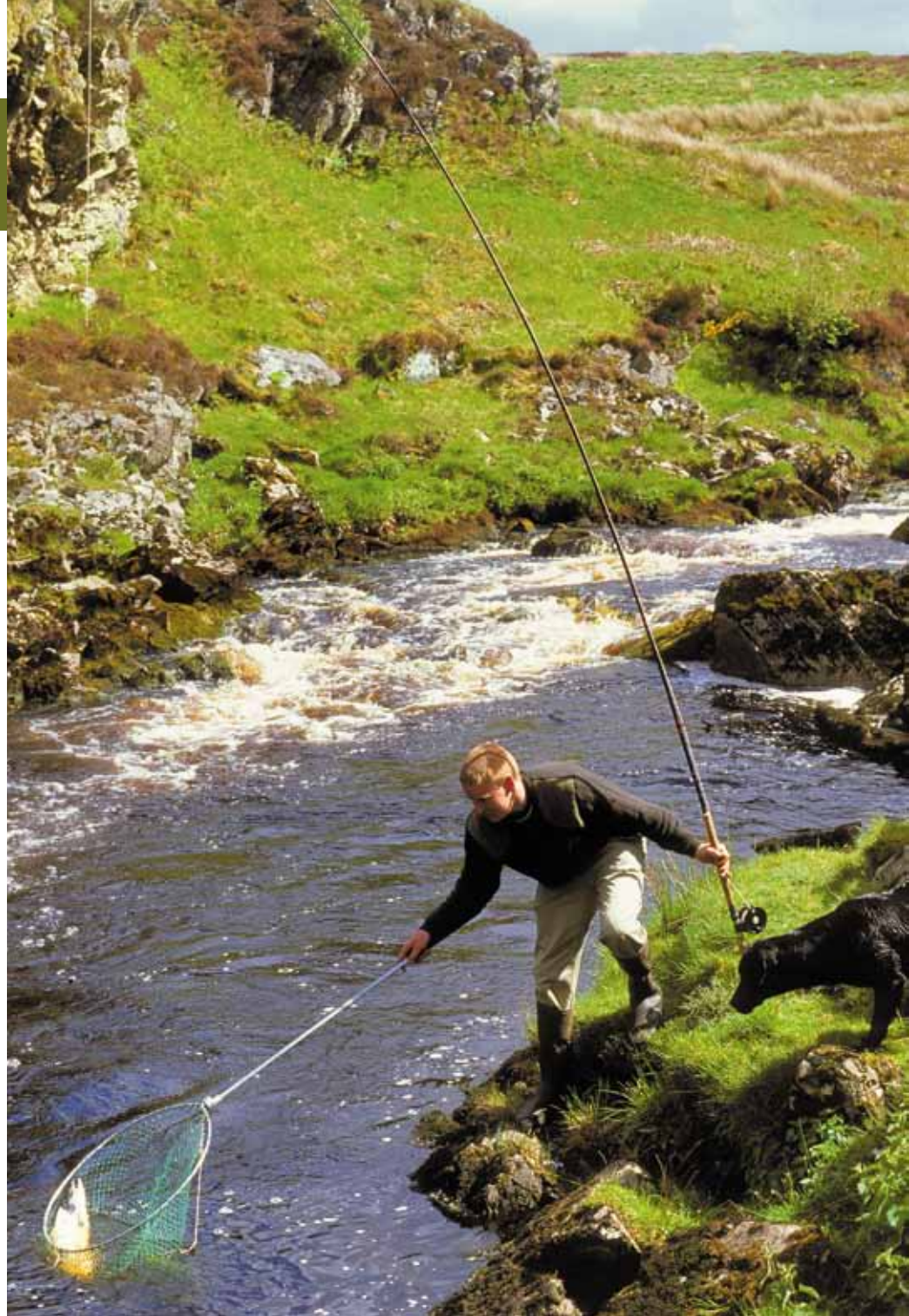


A note on place names

Gaelic place names coined in recent centuries are, in general, readily understood but names which have undergone modification through linguistic change can pose problems of interpretation, particularly where the historical record is scanty. In general the author has followed interpretations given by place name scholars such as William J Watson, Doreen Waugh and Ian Fraser. He wishes to thank the following people for their advice and help: Doreen Waugh, Richard Cox, Jim Johnston, Iain Sutherland, Nan Bethune, staff of the North Highland Archives in Wick and staff of the public libraries in Wick, Thurso and Brora.

Any opinions in the text are the author's and are not necessarily shared by Scottish Natural Heritage.

**Landing a salmon on the River Thurso
Glacadh bradain air Abhainn Theòrsa**



Tuigse ainmean-àite

Ged a thuigeas sinn math gu leòr ainmean-àite Gàidhlig a chaidh a chruthachadh anns na beagan linntean a dh'fhalbh, chan eil an fheadhainn ann an sgìrean far an robh atharrachadh cànan thar ùine cho soilleir, gu h-àraidh nuair nach eil cus fiosrachaidh mun deidhinn ann an clàr na h-eachdraidh. Anns an fharsaingeachd, tha an t-ùghdar air leantainn air beachdan sgoilearan leithid Uilleim MhicBhàtair, Doreen Waugh agus Iain Fhriseil. Bu mhath leis taing a thoirt don fheadhainn a leanas airson na taice a thug iad dha: Doreen Waugh, Richard Cox, Jim Johnston, Iain Sutharlanach, Nan Bethune, luchd-obrach Tasglann a' Chinn a Tuath ann an Inbhir Ùige agus luchd-obrach nan leabharlannan poblach ann an Inbhir Ùige, Inbhir Theòrsa agus Brùra.

'S ann an urra ris an ùghdar, seach Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, a tha beachd sam bith anns an teacsa.

**Bell heather
Fraoch a' Bhadain**



Introduction

The place names of Caithness and Sutherland were coined, to a very large extent, by speakers of two languages which dominated this part of the world for centuries – Gaelic and Old Norse. However, Norse disappeared from our homes and hearths a long time ago and Gaelic has come perilously close to a similar fate. Sadly, Scotland's education system has failed to take full advantage of the rich opportunities that an understanding of these languages would provide with regard to the history, heritage and ecology of our country. This booklet is written in the hope that people throughout Caithness, Sutherland and beyond will be stimulated to engage with all the languages that are a fundamental part of their heritage, and that they might come to be inspired anew by their beautiful and precious landscape.

Ro-ràdh

'S iad Gàidheil is Lochlannaich a bu mhotha a chruthaich ainmean-àite Ghallaibh is Chataibh. Ach dh'fhalbh an Lochlannais o chionn fhada agus chrion a' Ghàidhlig gu mòr thar a' cheud gu leth bliadhna a dh'fhalbh. Agus chan eil siostam foghlaim na h-Alba air feart gu leòr a thoirt do na cànanan sin, a dh'aindeoin 's gun toireadh iad dhuinn barrachd tuigse air an dualchas againn – cultarach is nàdarach. Tha mi an dòchas gun cuidich an leabhran seo ann a bhith a' brosnachadh dhaoine air feadh Ghallaibh, Chataibh is shiorrachdan eile, rudeigin ionnsachadh mun a h-uile cànan a tha bunaiteach do dh'eòlas-tìre na dùthcha aca, gus an tuig iad nas fheàrr cho prìseil 's a tha an dualchas àraidh.

Duncansby Head
Ceann Dhunngain



A multilingual heritage

Prior to the arrival of the Gaels and Norse, it is certain that northern Scotland's landscape carried place names coined by its inhabitants. However, few of these remain today, and scholars disagree as to whether the survivors are Celtic or pre-Celtic. Examples are the river names *Nabaros* and *Ila*, recorded by Ptolemy of Alexandria in around 120AD, which are today the *Naver* and *Ilidh*. The latter is the Gaelic name for the Helmsdale River, the English being derived from Norse at a later date.

When the Norse came to Scotland in the 9th Century they encountered Picts and Gaels already settled here. Both of these peoples spoke a Celtic language, quite unlike the Germanic Norse tongue (although some scholars maintain that the Picts of the far north spoke a non-Celtic language). The Picts are recorded in the Norse name for the strait between Orkney and Caithness – *Péttlandsfjörðr* 'Pictland Firth', today's *Pentland Firth*. In south-east Sutherland there are a handful of place names containing the characteristic Pictish element *pit-* 'settlement'. *Pittentrail*, for example, is thought to be 'the place of the slaves/serfs', the second element, *tràill*, being Gaelic (although the word originated in Norse). The *Oykel* (River, Strath, Glen, Bridge) probably gets its name from a Pictish word meaning 'high territory' (cf Ochil Hills).

In Caithness and East Sutherland the pre-Norse inhabitants were known as the 'Cat People'. This has given us the name *Caithness*, from the Norse *Katanes* 'Promontory of the Cat People'. The Norse called the country to the immediate south *Suðrland* 'Southland', anglicised as *Southerland*, later *Sutherland*. This name properly applied only to the eastern part of the current county, as did the Gaelic name for Sutherland – *Cataibh* 'among the Cats'.

A surfer catches a ride near Castle Sinclair Girnigoe north of Wick. Long a seat of the Sinclairs, the castle's original name Girnigoe is Norse, probably meaning "green geo (inlet)". A place named for its powerful waves is Brims Ness on the north coast west of Thurso; the original Norse means "surf point".

Tha surfair air bhàrr nan tonn faisg air Caisteal Girnigoe a bha uaireigin na phrìomh àros do Chloinn na Ceàrdaich. 'S ann bhon Lochlannais a thàinig Girnigoe; thathar a' smaoineachadh gu bheil e a' ciallachadh "geodha uaine". Chaidh Brims Ness, siar air Inbhir Theòrsa, ainmeachadh airson cumhachd na fairge; tha ainm a' ciallachadh "rubha nan tonn".

Tìr nan iomadh cànan

Mus do ràinig na Gàidheil is na Lochlannaich Alba, tha fhios gun robh ainmean-àite ann oir bha sluagh ann. Ach 's e glè bheag de na h-ainmean sin a th' air fhàgail anns a' cheann a tuath, agus tha diofar bheachdan aig na sgoilearan air co-dhiù tha an fheadhainn sin Ceilteach no ro-Cheilteach. 'S iad eisimpleirean dhiubh na h-ainmean aibhnichean *Nabaros* agus *Ila* a chaidh a chlàradh le Ptolemy timcheall air 120AC; tha iad againn fhathast mar *Nabhar* (*Srath Nabhair*) agus *Ilidh* (*Bun Ilidh*).

Nuair a thàinig na Lochlannaich a dh'Alba anns an 9mh linn, bha Cruithnich agus Gàidheil ann mu thràth. 'S e cànanan Ceilteach a bh' aig an dà shluagh sin, gu math eadar-dhealaichte bho theanga nan Lochlannach (ged a tha cuid de sgoilearan dhen bheachd gur e cànan neo-Cheilteach a bh' aig na Cruithnich anns an fhìor cheann a tuath). Tha na Cruithnich a' nochdadh anns an ainm Bheurla airson a' Chaoil Arcaich – *Pentland Firth* – a thàinig bhon Lochlannais *Péttlandsfjörðr* 'caolas nan Cruithneach'. Ann an ceann an earra-dheas Chataibh tha grunn ainmean-àite anns a bheil *pit-*, stèidhichte air eileamaid Chruithneach a tha a' ciallachadh 'baile', agus thathar a' smaoineachadh gu bheil *Oiceall* (me *Srath Oiceill*) a' tighinn bho chànan nan Cruithneach, a' ciallachadh 'àite àrd'.

Bhiodh na Gàidheil fad linntean ag ainmeachadh slòigh sgìre air ainmhidh no iasg (me b' iad muinntir Ratharsair 'Na Saoidheanan' agus muinntir Latharna 'Na Losgannan'). 'S dòcha gun do dh'èirich an cleachdadh sin o chionn fhad an t-saoghail, oir b' iad 'Muintir nan Cat' a bh' air na daoine ann an Cataibh (a thug an ainm don sgìre). Tha an dualchas sin air a ghlèidheadh ann am *Machair Chat* (talamh iosal air taobh an ear na siorrachd), *Bràigh Chat* (talamh àrd air cùl sin) agus *Dithreabh Chat* (an dùthaich cha mhòr gun sluagh ann am meadhan na siorrachd). 'S ann bhon Lochlannais a thàinig *Caithness* (*Katanes* 'Rubha Muinntir nan Cat') agus *Sutherland* ('Dùthaich Deas').

Chan eil e soilleir dè cho farsaing 's a bha a' Ghàidhlig ann an Gallaibh 'Dùthaich nan Gall' mus tàinig na Lochlannaich. Tha *Duncansby/Ceann Dhunngain* clàraichte ann an Orkneyinga Saga (900–1200) mar *Dungalsboer* 'Tuathanas Dhungail' agus 's e ainm pearsanta Ceilteach a th' ann an Dungal (sgriobhamaid e mar 'Donnghal' san latha an-diugh).

**Winter feeding, Latheronwheel
Biathadh nan caorach, Latharn a' Phuill**



Hunting the grouse near Berriedale with the highest hill in Caithness, Morven (706 m), providing a shapely backdrop. Gaelic names predominate here but they share the landscape with Norse, Scots and English. South-eastern Caithness has a rich heritage of old legends, originally told in Gaelic.

Sealg nan cearc-fraoich faisg air Bearghdal, leis a' bheinn as àirde ann an Gallaibh, A' Mhòr-bheinn (706 m) anns an fhad-shealladh. 'S iad ainmean-àite Gàidhlig as cumanta anns an sgìre seo, ged a tha feadhainn à Lochlannais, Albais is Beurla ann cuideachd. Tha dualchas làidir de bheul-aithris Ghàidhlig anns an sgìre seo.

The Gaelic for Caithness is *Gallaibh* 'among the strangers'. The local Scots term for a native of the area – *Gollach* – derives from the Gaelic *Gallach* 'Caithnessian'.

It is not certain how far Gaelic had penetrated into today's Caithness before the Norse arrived. *Duncansby* appears in Orkneyinga Saga (900 to 1200 AD) as *Dungalsboer* 'Dungal's farm'; Dungal is a name of Celtic origin. But there are few Norse names in Caithness which incorporate what appear to be pre-existing Gaelic elements.

There are, however, Gaelic place names in central Caithness which incorporate pre-existing Norse elements, suggesting that Gaels expanded their territory, taking over Norse settlements following the breakdown of Norse power in the 13th Century.

While Norse place names were formed between the 9th and 13th Centuries, Gaelic nomenclature arose in some parts before the 9th Century and continued to be created until the 19th Century, *Baile an Òir* 'the town of the gold' in the Strath of Kildonan being a late example.

Scots-speaking immigrants arrived in coastal towns like Wick and Thurso, probably in the late 14th Century, adding to the linguistic mix. In the north-eastern part of Caithness, Scots probably replaced Norn, the Scandinavian speech which developed from Old Norse (and which survived for a considerable time in Orkney and Shetland), without an intermediate phase of Gaelic; in other parts of the county Scots replaced Gaelic. All three languages interacted, borrowing significantly from each other and, even today, the Caithness Scots lexicon boasts many words of Gaelic or Norse origin.



Panning for gold near Baile an Or (properly Baile an Òir, "the township of the gold") in the Strath of Kildonan near Helmsdale – the site of a famous but short-lived gold rush in 1869. The newly created village was named in Gaelic, one of the most modern coinings of a settlement name in that language in the northern Highlands.

A' coimhead airson òr faisg air Baile an Òir ann an Srath Ildh, Cataibh, far an deach gnìomhachas òir a stèidheachadh ann an 1869. 'S e ainm a' bhaile seo fear de na h-ainmean-àite as ùire a chaidh a chruthachadh ann an Gàidhlig, co-dhiù airson àite còmhnaidh, ann an ceann a tuath na Gàidhealtachd.

Ach tha ainmean Gàidhlig ann am meadhan Ghallaibh a tha a' gabhail a-steach ainmean Lochlannach a bh' ann am bith romhpa. Thathar dhen bheachd gun do sgaoil na Gàidheil nuair a shearg cumhachd nan Lochlannach anns an 13mh linn. Chaidh na h-ainmean Lochlannach a chruthachadh eadar na 9mh agus 13mh linntean ach tha ainmean Gàidhlig ann a tha an dà chuid nas sine agus nas òige na sin. Chaidh *Baile an Òir* ann an Srath Chill Donnain, mar eisimpleir, a chruthachadh anns an 19mh linn.

Timcheall air deireadh an 14mh linn nochd Albais bhon Ghalltachd ann am bailtean mar Inbhir Ùige is Inbhir Theòrsa. Ann an ceann an ear-thuath Ghallaibh tha dùil gun do ghabh i sin thairis mar chainnt an t-sluaigh bhon Lochlannais gun a' Ghàidhlig a bhith ann eatarra. Air feadh na sgìre thug gach cànan buaidh air a chèile agus, an-diugh, tha mòran fhaclan le tùsan Gàidhlig is Lochlannach ann an Albais nan Gallach.

Vikings become farmers

While Norse settlement names are common throughout Caithness and Sutherland, it is only in the north-eastern half of Caithness that Norse dominates the landscape. This area and neighbouring Orkney were under Norse control from the 9th Century until 1266, when the Treaty of Perth placed Caithness – but not Orkney – under Scottish sovereignty. Some Norse names are little altered from their original form. For example, *Wick* derives from *vík* 'bay', *Keiss* is from *keis* 'rounded ridge', and (the island of) *Stroma* is *straum-ey* 'current-isle' – a very apt name, as the tidal flows in the Pentland Firth are some of the strongest in the world.

Other names, however, are heavily modified by linguistic change and require interpretation. Settlement names like *Scrabster*, *Lybster*, *Camster* and *Brabster* betray their origins as Norse farms, as they incorporate the characteristic element *bólstaðr* 'farm', now usually abbreviated to *-bster* or *-ster*. However, the first part of the name is sometimes difficult to interpret. *Scrabster* is recorded as *Skarabólstaðr* in Orkneyinga Saga but explanations for *skara-* vary from 'gull' to 'Skári' (a personal name) to 'jutting out' to 'cliff edge'. In the case of *Lybster*, the Gaelic form – *Liabost* – is instructive. It suggests an original *Hlíð-bólstaðr* 'slope-farm'. *Camster* is *Kambr-bólstaðr* 'ridge-farm' and *Brabster* is probably 'broad farm'.

In Sutherland the Norse element *-ból* ('resting place for cattle, steading, farm') appears here and there, but the meanings of these names are not always clear. The Gaelic names for *Embo*, *Skibo* and *Skelbo* suggest that these places originated as Norse farms; they are, respectively, *Euraboll* (perhaps 'Eyvind's farm'), *Sgiobol* 'firewood farm' and *Sgeireabol* 'shell farm'. In the north, *Kirkiboll* might well be 'church steading' but there is a school of thought that *Eriboll* derives its name from the Norse element *pollr* 'pool, enclosed water', with the first part of the name referring to a 'gravel beach'. The meaning of *Arnaboll* (Loch Hope) is not clear but it is likely connected to the man's name *Árni*.

Other farm- or possibly shieling-names contain the elements *setr* and *sætr* – *Helshetter* 'flat rock farm' and *Roster* 'horse farm' being examples. Under Gaelic influence these elements have been anglicised as *-side*, providing modern names like *Sandside* 'sand farm', *Cunside* 'women's shieling' and *Linside* 'flax farm'. *Linsidemore* (E Sutherland) is an anglicised form of the Gaelic *Lianasaid Mhòr* 'big flax farm', but *Lianasaid* originated as the Norse *lín-setr*.

Field of barley near Halkirk
Eòrna faisg air Hàcraig

Lochlannaich mar thuathanaich

Tha ainmean-àite Lochlannach cumanta air feadh Ghallaibh is Chataibh, ach 's ann anns an leth an ear-thuath de Ghallaibh a-mhàin a tha prìomhachas aca. Bha an dùthaich sin, agus Arcaibh gu tuath oirre, fo riaghladh nan Lochlannach bhon 9mh linn suas ri 1266 nuair a chaidh na sgìrean Lochlannach an Alba (ach na h-Eileanan a Tuath) fo smachd Rìoghachd na h-Alba. Tha cuid de na h-ainmean an-diugh car coltach ris an dreach a bh' orra bho thùs. Mar eisimpleir, tha *Ùige* ann an *Inbhir Ùige* a' tighinn bho *vík* 'bàgh', tha *Cèis/Keiss* bho *keis* 'druim leth-chruinn' agus tha *Stròma* bho *straum-ey* 'eilean an t-sruth-mhara'.

Ach tha ainmean Lochlannach eile ann nach eil cho furasta a thuigsinn. Tha fhios, mar eisimpleir, gun do thòisich àiteachan mar *Sgrabastal/Scrabster*, *Liabost/Lybster*, *Camster* agus *Brabster* mar bhailtean-fearainn oir tha iad a' gabhail a-steach na h-eileamaid *bólstaðr* 'tuathanas', a tha mar as trice air a giorrachadh (ann an dreach na Beurla) gu *-bster* no *-ster*.

Sheltering cattle near Halkirk
Crodh a' gabhail fiasgadh faisg air Hàcraig

Uaireannan, ge-tà, chan eil a' chiad eileamaid soilleir idir. Tha *Sgrabastal/Scrabster* a' nochdadh mar *Skarabólstaðr* ann an Orkneyinga Saga, ach thathar a' mineachadh *skara-* ann an diofar dhòighean, eadar 'faoileag', 'oir bearraidh' is '-Skári' (ainm pearsanta). Tha an t-ainm Gàidhlig air *Lybster* – *Liabost* – a' cur nar n-inntinn gum b' e *Hlíð-bólstaðr* 'tuathanas leathaid' a bh' air an àite bho thùs. 'S e *Kambr-bólstaðr* 'tuathanas droma' a th' ann an *Camster* agus tha dùil gur e 'tuathanas leathann' a th' ann am *Brabster*.

Ann an Cataibh, tha an eileamaid Lochlannais *-ból* 'àite-tàmh do chrodh, tuathanas' a' nochdadh an siud 's an seo; chan eil ciall nan ainmean sin an-còmhnaidh soilleir. Tha eisimpleirean air an taobh an ear ann an *Euraboll/Embo* ('s dòcha 'tuathanas Eyvind'), *Sgioboll/Skibo* 'tuathanas fiodh-teine' agus *Sgeireabol/Skelbo* 'tuathanas sligeach'. Anns a' cheann a tuath tha grunn ainmean le *-bol/boll* aig an deireadh. Tha dùil gur e *Circeabol/Kirkiboll* 'tuathanas eaglaise' ach tha beachd ann gur e an eileamaid Lochlannais *-pollr* 'poll, lòn' a nochdas ann an *Euraboll/Eriboll*, leis a' chiad eileamaid a' ciallachadh 'mol'. Chan eil ciall *Arnaboll/Arnaboll* cinnteach ach tha dùil gu bheil e co-cheangailte ris an ainm fhìreannaich *Árni*.

Tha ainmean le *setr* and *sætr* annta a' riochdachadh bhailtean-fearainn no 's dòcha àirighean, agus tha eisimpleirean dhiubh ann an *Helshetter* 'tuathanas lice' agus *Roster* 'tuathanas each'. Gu tric tha *-said* orra ann an Gàidhlig agus, fo bhuidhe na Gàidhlig, side ann am Beurla, me *Sanndasaid/Sandside* 'tuathanas gaineimh', *Caonasaid/Cunside* 'àirigh nam boireannach' agus *Lianasaid/Linside* 'tuathanas lìn'.

Linguistic interaction



Helmsdale Harbour
An Cala, Bun Ilidh

The historical extent of Gaelic/Norse bilingualism is uncertain but we do have evidence of considerable interaction between the two languages. Several Norse place names contain the element *ærgi*, 'shieling/summer pasture', modified to *-ary* or *-ery*. This was borrowed from Gaelic, *àirigh* being the modern form in that language. Examples include *Halsary*, *Shurrery* and *Dorrery*. In Gaelic *àirigh* names, such as *Àirigh Leathaid* 'slope shieling', *àirigh* comes at the beginning.

This difference in word order is obvious in the ubiquitous *dall dale* names, based on the Norse *dalr* 'dale', which entered the Gaelic language as *dail*. Norse names end in *-dal* whereas Gaelic names start with *dal-*. Norse examples are *Berriedale* 'rocky dale', *Helmsdale* 'Hjalmund's dale' and *Halladale* 'holy dale'. Gaelic examples include *Dalnawillan* (*Dail a' Mhuilinn* 'the dale of the mill') and *Dalchork* (*Dail a' Choirce* 'the dale of the oats').

We also see a similar situation with words for 'field', with the Norse *völlr* (anglicised as *-al* or *-well*) in a terminal position, and the Gaelic *ach-* or *achadh-* in an initial position. Norse examples are *Rossal* and *Rosehall* (both 'horse field'), *Brawl* and *Braal* (both

'broad field') and *Langwell* 'long field'. Among the dozens of *Ach/Achadh*-names are *Achavanich* (*Achadh a' Mhanaich* 'the monk's field') and *Achiniver* (*Achadh an Inbhir* 'the field at the river mouth'). Sometimes *ach-* is prefixed to an older Norse name, as in *Achvarasdal* and *Achscrabster*, and this element also explains *The Achin* (Sutherland) and *(The) Achins* (Caithness) which both mean 'the fields'.

Occasionally, probably because of Gaelic influence, we see an unexpected word order in a seemingly Norse name, as in *Toftgunn* 'Gunn's homestead', south-west of Wick, reputedly named for a chief of Clan Gunn who was banished there after he caused the ship carrying his wife to be wrecked (he was more concerned with the dowry than his bride). The Norse *topt* 'a grassy place, homestead, enclosure' became the Gaelic *tobhta* 'ruin', sometimes *tota*, as in the dilapidated broch to the north of Loch Shurrery, the delightfully named *Tota an Dranndain* 'the ruin of the whistling wind'.

The Scots and English languages borrowed the Gaelic word *loch* throughout Scotland, so all major water bodies in Caithness and Sutherland are 'lochs'. But *Loch Watten* (*Bhatan* in Gaelic) retains echoes of an older name, as the second element is the Norse *vatr* 'loch'.

Cànanan ag obair air a chèile

Chan eilear cinnteach dè an uiread de dhà-chànanas Gàidhlig-Lochlannais a bh' ann ach tha fianais gu leòr againn de na dòighean anns an robh an dà chànan a' toirt buaidh air a chèile. Tha an eileamaid Lochlannach *ærgi* a' nochdadh ann an grunn ainmean-àite, air a h-atharrachadh gu *-ary* no *-ery* ann am Beurla. Tha e a' ciallachadh *àirigh* agus tha e a' tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig bho thùs. Tha eisimpleirean de dh'ainmean dhen t-seòrsa sin ann an *Halsary*, *Shurrery* agus *Dorrery*. Tha *àirigh a'* nochdadh cuideachd ann an ainmean Gàidhlig, leithid *Àirigh Leathaid* is *Cnoc Àirigh Mhic Leòid*.

Thàinig am facal Lochlannach *dalr* 'gleann' a-steach don Ghàidhlig mar *dail*, facal a chithear ann an grunn àiteachan, leithid *Dail a' Mhuilinn/Dalnawillan* agus *Dail a' Choirce/Dalchork*. Nuair a bhios *-dal a'* nochdadh aig an deireadh, tha e a' ciallachadh gur e ainm Lochlannach a bh' ann bho thùs. Chithear sin ann am *Bearghdal/Berriedale* 'dail chreagach' agus *Healadal/Halladale* 'dail naomh'.

Tha suidheachadh car coltach ri sin ann am faclan cumanta airson 'achadh' anns an dà chànan. Bidh an eileamaid Lochlannach *-völlr* aig deireadh ainm a' nochdadh mar *-ail* no *-al* ann an Gàidhlig agus *-al* no *-well* ann am Beurla, me *Rasaill/Rossal* 'achadh each', *Breitheal/Brawl/Braal* 'achadh leathann' agus *Langail/Langwell* 'achadh fada'. Thig a' Ghàidhlig *ach-* no *achadh-* aig toiseach an ainm, me *Achadh a' Mhanaich/Achavanich* agus *Achadh an Inbhir/Achiniver*. Uaireannan chuir Gàidheil *ach-* ri seann ainm Lochlannach, mar a chithear ann an *Achadh Bhàrrasdail/Achvarasdal* agus *Achadh Sgrabastail/Achscrabster*, agus tha e a' nochdadh ann an riochd simplidh anns na h-ainmean iolra *Na h-Achaidhean* (*The Achin*, Cataibh agus *The Achins*, Gallaibh).

Uaireannan tha ainmean Beurla ann leis na faclan anns an òrdugh Ghàidhlig ('s dòcha a' dearbhadh buaidh na Gàidhlig orra). Tha eisimpleir ann an *Toftgunn/Tobhta a' Ghunnaich* faisg air Inbhir Uige. Thathar ag ràdh gu bheil an làrach seo air ainmeachadh air ceann-cinnidh nan Gunnach a chuireadh a dh'fhuireach an sin an aghaidh a thoil às dèidh

At the peats, Achavanich
Air a' pholl-mhònach, Achadh a' Mhanaich



dha adhbharachadh gun deach an long anns an robh a bhean ùr fodha (oir bha e a' miannachadh an tochraidh seach a' bhoireannaich). Dh'èirich am facal *tobhta*, uaireannan air a litreachadh *tota*, bhon Lochlannais *topt* 'tuathanas, àite-taighe, làrach taighe'. Tha eisimpleir laghach ann an seann dùn ann an Gallaibh air a bheil *Tota an Dranndain* 'tobhta anns a bheil a' ghaoth a' feadaireachd'.

Chaidh am facal Gàidhlig *loch* a-steach don Bheurla Shasannaich is Albais air feadh na rioghachd agus, mar sin, 's e 'loch' a th' air a h-uile rud de a leithid ann an Gallaibh is Cataibh. Ach tha *Loch Bhatan* (*Watten* ann am Beurla) a' cuimhneachadh an ainm Lochlannaich thùsail, *Vatr* 'loch'.

Among the skerries and geos

Two Norse words epitomise the links between that language, Gaelic and Scots along the coast of Caithness and Sutherland – *sker* ‘a sea rock’ and *gjá* ‘an inlet of the sea with steep cliffs on either side’. They have been borrowed into Gaelic and Scots as *sgeir* and *geodha*, and *skerry* and *geo*, respectively. Another borrowing is the Norse *skarfr* ‘cormorant’ which has become the Gaelic *sgarbh* and the Scots *scarf*. We find *Scarfskerry* ‘cormorant skerry’ on the north coast and *Rubha nan Sgarbh* ‘the point of the cormorants’ in the Dornoch Firth. Two skerries off the shore of Stroma carry Gaelic names – *Sgeir Bhàn* ‘fair skerry’ and *Sgeir Gut* (possibly ‘skerry of the hole’), although it is not known how they came to be coined in such a Norse-dominated environment.

Geos are numerous along the north coast and down the east coast as far as Lybster. From Dounreay westwards, they carry Gaelic names, such as *Geodh’ Ruadh* ‘red-brown geo’ and *Geodh’ an Fhuarain* ‘the geo of the spring’. East of Dounreay, the geos carry Scots or Norse names. Scots examples like *Chapel Geo*, *Sow’s Geo* and *Broad Geo* are self-explanatory, but the Norse ones are more obscure. *Selly Geo* near Freswick is *sela-gjá* ‘seal geo’, *Fullie Geo* near Keiss is *fugl-gjá* ‘bird geo’ and *Whaligoe*, with its famous steps leading down to the harbour, is ‘whale geo’; this was an ideal place to butcher whales that had stranded themselves on the nearby coast. The villages of *Papigoe* ‘priest’s geo’ and *Staxigoe* ‘rock stack geo’ near Wick derive their names from adjacent coastal features.

Three other unusual Scots terms of Norse origin, found in a few coastal locations in Caithness, are *thirl* ‘opening’, *gloup* ‘blowhole’ and *clett* (from *kleitr* ‘upstanding rock’). *Kleitr* became the Gaelic *cleit* eg *Cleit an t-Seabhaig* ‘the rock of the falcon’ near Whiten Head and *Cleit Mhòr* ‘big rock’ near Dunbeath. *Tang* ‘reef or low rocky point’ derives from a Norse original, and *ness* ‘promontory’ is common and well known. A Gaelic equivalent to *ness* is *rubha*, and this appears on a number of headlands west of Dounreay.

Some coastal features carry alternative names that derive from different linguistic traditions. An example is *The Gizzen Briggs*, a bar of shifting sands at the mouth of the Dornoch Firth which, according to tradition, is the site of an ancient land bridge that once connected Ross to Sutherland. The name is Scots and means ‘leaky bridge’. In Gaelic the feature is *Drochaid an Obh* ‘the bridge of the malicious water sprite’. *Dornoch* is Gaelic (*Dòrnach*) and means ‘pebble place’.

Whaligoe Steps
Na steapaichean ainmeil, Whaligoe



Am measg nan sgeirean is nan geodhachan



Tha dà fhacal Lochlannach a’ comharrachadh nan ceanglaichean eadar Lochlannais, Gàidhlig is Albais air cladaichean Ghallaibh is Chataibh: *sker* agus *gjá*. Chaidh iasad a dhèanamh orra agus tha iad ann an Gàidhlig an-diugh mar *sgeir* is *geodha*, agus ann an Albais mar *skerry* is *geo*. ‘S e facal eile de a leithid *skarfr*: *sgarbh* ann an Gàidhlig agus *scarf* ann an Albais. Tha àite air a bheil *Scarfskerry* ‘sgeir nan sgarbh’ air a’ chosta a tuath agus tha *Rubha nan Sgarbh* ann an Caolas Dhòrnaich. Cha bhiodh dùil air ainmean-àite Gàidhlig air cladach Stròma oir chan eil e clàraichte gun robh Gàidhlig a-riamh ga bruidhinn ann, ach chruinnich an Suirbhidh Òrdanais dà ainm Ghàidhlig far cladach an eilein: *Sgeir Bhàn* agus *Sgeir Gut* (‘s dòcha ‘sgeir an tuill’).

‘S iomadh geodha a lorgar air a’ chosta mu thuath agus air a’ chladach an ear cho fada deas ri Liabost. Gu siar air Dùnrath, tha ainmean Gàidhlig orra, me *Geodh’ Ruadh* agus *Geodh’ an Fhuarain*. Gu sear air Dùnrath, ‘s iad ainmean Albais no Lochlannach a th’ air na geodhachan. Tha *Chapel Geo*, *Sow’s Geo* agus *Broad Geo* nan deagh eisimpleirean dhen fheadhainn Albais, agus tha iad furasta a thuigsinn, ach chan eil ciall na feadhna Lochlannach cho soilleir. ‘S e *sela-gjá* ‘geòdha ròn’ a th’ ann an *Selly Geo*; ‘s e *fugl-gjá* ‘geòdha eun’ a th’ ann am *Fullie Geo*; agus tha *Whaligoe* a’ ciallachadh ‘geodha nam mucan-mara’ oir b’ e sin àite far am bite, bho àm gu àm, a’ toirt greallach is feòil à mucan a rachadh air a’ chladach faisg air làimh. Agus tha *Papigoe* is *Staxigoe* faisg air Inbhir Ùige a’ ciallachadh ‘geodha an t-sagairt’ agus ‘geodha an staca’.

Tha corra fhacal Albais aig a bheil tùs Lochlannach a’ nochdadh ann an ainmean air cladach Ghallaibh, me *thirl* ‘fosgladh’, *gloup* ‘toll-sèididh’ agus *clett* (bho *kleitr* ‘creag a tha a’ stobadh an-àirde’). Thàinig *kleitr* a-steach don Ghàidhlig mar *cleit* agus chithear eisimpleirean ann an *Cleit an t-Seabhaig* agus *Cleit Mhòr*. Tha *tang* ‘bodha’ no ‘rubha creagach iosal’ a’ tighinn bhon Lochlannais, agus tha *ness* ‘rubha’ cumanta is aithnichte air feadh ceann a tuath na h-Alba.

Tha cuid de dh’fheartan-tìre a’ giùlan dà ainm, a’ comharrachadh dà dhualchas chànanach. ‘S e bac-gainmhich ann am beul Caolas Dhòrnaich eisimpleir de a leithid. Ann an Albais ‘s e *The Gizzen Briggs* ‘drochaid aoidionach’ a th’ air; ann am beul-aithris bha drochaid nàdarrach an sin uaireigin a bha a’ ceangal Ros ri Cataibh. Ann an Gàidhlig ‘s e *Drochaid an Obh* a th’ air; tha ‘obh’ a’ ciallachadh ‘droch bhòcan’. ‘S e ainm Gàidhlig a th’ ann an *Dòrnach* agus tha e a’ ciallachadh ‘àite nan dòirneagan’.

Geo near Whiten Head
Geodha faisg air a’ Cheann Gheal (Dùthaich MhicAoidh)

Land of the bogs

The internationally famous blanket boglands of south-western Caithness and northern Sutherland are known in English as *The Flow Country*, employing a Scots word for 'bog' or 'morass'. The English word *bog* comes from Gaelic and is still to be found in its original form in *Bog na Gaoithe* 'bog of the wind' in central Caithness.

A characteristic of Gaelic is its use of words for body parts in naming landscape features. In the boglands, such a term is *fèith*, originally (and still) a 'vein' or 'sinew', which has come to stand for a bog channel or stream. The meaning of the word has also extended to include bogs themselves. Examples include *Fèith Chaorainn Mhòr* 'big bog channel of the rowan' and *Fèith a' Chreagain* 'the bog channel of the small crag'.

Even in the Flow Country, however, the archetypal Gaelic word for a burn or stream – *allt* – is common eg *Allt nan Sgalag* 'the burn of the workers'; the diminutive *alltan* also appears here and there, as in *Alltan Ruadh* 'red-brown streamlet'. The village of *Altnaharra*, famed for its cold winters, derives its name from *Allt*

Peatland near Forsinard
Talamh fliuch faisg air Fors na h-Àirde

na h-Eirbhe 'the burn of the dyke' (the nearby *Allt na h-Aire* is erroneous). *Ùidh* means a slow running stream connecting two lochs, as in *Ùidh Loch na Gaineimh* 'the burn of the sandy loch' and *Ùidh Rabhain* 'burn of water grass', or a stream as it leaves a loch before breaking into a current, as in *Ùidh nan Con Luatha* 'the burn of the fast dogs'.

The area abounds in lochs and lochans (small lochs) and the Gaelic *dubh loch* 'black loch', referring to the peaty darkness of its water, has made the transition into Scots and English. But the great boglands, while less mountainous than most of the Highlands, are not flat, and waterfalls occur here and there; these are *eas*, as in *Coir' an Eas* 'the corrie of the waterfall' or *fors* (a Norse loanword), as in the paired *Fors na h-Àirde* 'the waterfall of the high ground' and *Fors an Fhàine* 'the waterfall of the low ground', anglicised as *Forsinard* and *Forsinain*. *Fors* is also to be found in the *Forss Water* in Caithness.

Rivers generally appear on the map in an anglicised form, although some in Sutherland retain the Gaelic *abhainn* eg *Abhainn Gleann na Muic* 'the river of the glen of the pig' near Lairg. Brora and Thurso, which are named after their rivers, carry echoes of the Old Norse á 'river'. The Gaelic for Brora is *Brùra* (earlier *Inbhir Bhrùra*), strongly suggesting Norse *brúará* 'river of the bridge'. *Thurso*, locally pronounced '*Thursa*', was given as *Pórsá* (Thor's River) in Orkneyinga Saga but the Gaelic name *Inbhir Theòrsa* suggests *Pjórsá* (bull river), a name shared by an Icelandic watercourse.

Tìr nam boglaichean

Tha na boglaichean mòra farsaing ainmeil ann an ceann an iar-dheas Ghallaibh is ceann a tuath Chataibh aithnichte ann am Beurla mar *The Flow Country*. 'S e 'boglach' a th' ann am *flow* – facal Albais a tha dlùth-chàirdeach don fhacal Lochlannach *flói* 'mòinteach fhliuch'. Ach 's ann aig a' Ghàidhlig a tha prìomhachas mar chànan tìre anns an sgìre seo, agus tha am facal *bog* fhèin fiù 's a' nochdadh ann an ainmean-àite, me *Bog na Gaoithe* ann am meadhan Ghallaibh.

Tha iomadh facal Gàidhlig a tha a' riochdachadh buill bhodhaig me *druim*, *sròn*, *ceann*, air a dhol a-null gu briathrachas na tìre. Anns na boglaichean, 's e facal dhen t-seòrsa sin a th' ann am *fèith*. Tha e a' ciallachadh 'cuisle' no 'fèith bodhaig' ach cuideachd 'sruthan ann am boglach', agus uaireannan am boglach fhèin. Tha eisimpleirean dheth ann am *Fèith Chaorainn Mhòr* agus *Fèith a' Chreagain*.

Eadhon ann an dùthaich nam boglaichean, tha am facal *allt* cumanta, me *Allt nan Sgalag* agus *Allt na Muic*. 'S e a' Ghàidhlig cheart a th' air *Altnaharra* – *Allt na h-Eirbhe* 'allt a' ghàrraidh' (tha 'Allt na h-Aire', a nochdas air na mapaichean, mearachdach). Tha *ùidh a'* ciallachadh allt a tha a' ceangal dà loch ri chèile mar *Ùidh Loch na Gaineimh* agus *Ùidh Rabhain* 'ùidh feur-uisge', no allt nuair a dh'fhàgas e loch mus tig sruthadh làidir air, leithid *Ùidh nan Con Luatha*.

Tha an sgìre làn lochan agus chithear *dubh loch* ann an grunn àiteachan, eadhon ann am Beurla is Albais. Ach chan eil na boglaichean uile-gu-lèir còmhnaid agus tha *eas a'* nochdadh an siud 's an seo, me *Coir' an Eas* is *Achaness Burn (Allt Ach an Eas)*. Tha *fors* 'eas' ann cuideachd, leithid *Fors na h-Àirde/Forsinard* is *Fors an Fhàine/Forsinain*, agus *Forss Water*.

Bidh aibhnichean gu tric air na mapaichean againn le dreach na Beurla orra, ged a bhios feadhainn ann an Cataibh a' gleidheadh *abhainn* me *Abhainn Gleann na Muic*. Tha an t-Seann Lochlannais á 'abhainn' air a gleidheadh ann am *Brùra* – 's e *Inbhir Bhrùra* a bh' air a' bhaile gu h-eachdraidheil; tha an t-ainm a' tighinn bhon Lochlannais *Brúará* 'abhainn na drochaid'. Bha *Inbhir Theòrsa/Thurso* air a mhineachadh mar *Pórsá* 'abhainn Thor' ann an Orkneyinga Saga ach tha cuid dhen bheachd gur e *Pjórsá* 'abhainn tairbh' a bh' ann bho thùs, ainm a th' air abhainn ann an Innis Tìle.

Hills and mountains

A Gaelic place name in the Mackay Country of North Sutherland (which gained its name from the area's dominant clan) has achieved international fame in the geological world. *A' Mhòine* 'the peat moss' is where Melness folk would cut fuel (some still do). But, as the northernmost extent of a massive geological overthrust, where old rocks now lie on top of younger ones, and which helped us to understand the forces that created our landscape, it has given its name to both the *Moine Rocks* and the *Moine Thrust*.

In the rocky, loch-studded land to the east and south of this point, the lower and intermediate hills are almost entirely Gaelic. *Cnoc* 'hill' is ubiquitous; examples include *Cnoc na h-Iolair* 'the hill of the eagle' and *Cnoc nan Imrichean* 'the hill of the (shieling) flittings'. *Cnoc* is occasionally anglicised as *knock*, as in *Knockglass* (*Cnoc Glas* 'green hill'), a name that crops up near Embo, Halkirk and Thurso. *Creag* 'rock, crag, cliff' is another hill name characteristic of this landscape. An example is *Creag an Lochain* 'the crag of the small loch'.

The characteristic Gaelic mountain name *beinn* (sometimes anglicised *ben*) is common. Examples are *Beinn an Eòin* 'the mountain of the bird' and *Ben Armine/Beinn Àrmainn* 'hero's mountain'. *Ben Vraggie* near Golspie is *Beinn Bhracaidh* 'speckled mountain' and *Ben Hee* is *A' Bheinn Shìth* 'the fairy mountain'.

Sometimes *beinn* combines with a Norse element, as in *Ben Hope/Beinn Hòb* 'bay mountain', and on occasions it is added to a pre-existing Norse mountain name. Examples of the latter are

Ben Klibreck/Beinn Clibric (the Norse has been explained as *Hlíð-brekk* 'hillslope') and the beautiful *Ben Loyal/Beinn Laghail* near Tongue which was probably originally *Laga-fjall* 'law mountain'; interestingly, that meaning is preserved in the Gaelic name, along with local folklore which tells us that laws were once promulgated there.

Caithness's mountains might be diminutive but they are attractive and culturally diverse. *Morven* is Gaelic *Mòr Bheinn* 'big mountain', but it is suspected that the non-standard word order (it would more commonly be *Beinn Mhòr*) is due to Norse influence; neighbouring *Scaraben* might have originated as *Skora-fjall* 'incised mountain'. *Maiden Pap* was recorded by Timothy Pont in the late 16th Century as '*Binn Kyach na hinnoin or Hills of Mayden Papes*', demonstrating equivalent names in Gaelic and English; *Small Mount*, on the other hand, bears only an English name, although *mount* might derive from the Gaelic *monadh* 'hill, upland area'.

Cnuic is beanntan

Ben Loyal
Beinn Laghail

Tha iomadh eisimpleir ann de *beinn* (uaireannan *ben* le dreach na Beurla air), leithid *Beinn an Eòin* agus *Beinn Àrmainn/Ben Armine* 'beinn a' ghaigich'. Tha *Ben Hee* a' tighinn bho *A' Bheinn Shìth* 'beinn nan sìthichean' agus 's e a' Ghàidhlig thùsail air *Ben Vraggie* faisg air Goillspidh *Beinn Bhracaidh* 'beinn bhreac'.

Uaireannan chithear beinn ceangailte ri eileamaid Lochlannach mar ann am *Beinn Hòb/Ben Hope* 'beinn a' bhàigh' agus air uairean tha e air a chur ri ainm-beinne Lochlannach a bh' ann roimhe me *Beinn Clibric/Ben Klibreck* (*Hlíð-brekk* 'leathad cnuic'). Tha dùil gur e *Laga-fjall* 'beinn lagha' a bh' air *Beinn Laghail/Ben Loyal* bho thùs. Tha a' chiall sin air a glèidheadh anns an ainm Ghàidhlig agus, a rèir beul-aithris na sgìre, bhathar uaireigin a' dèanamh laghan air a' bheinn sin.

Chan eil beanntan Ghallaibh ro àrd ach tha iad tarraingeach agus eugsamhail. Thàinig *Morven* bhon Ghàidhlig *A' Mhòr Bheinn*, ach thathar a' smaoineachadh gur e buaidh na Lochlannais as coireach ri òrdugh nam faclan. Thathar a' dèanamh dheth gur e *Skora-fjall* 'beinn na sgrìoba' a bh' air *Scaraben* bho shean. Bha *Maiden Pap* air a chlàradh le Timothy Pont aig deireadh an 16mh linn mar '*Binn Kyach na hinnoin or Hills of Mayden Papes*', a' sealltainn ainmean ann an Gàidhlig is Beurla. Air an làimh eile, 's e ainm Beurla a-mhàin – *Small Mount* – a nochdas air beinn eile faisg air làimh, ged a tha *mount* 's dòcha stèidhichte air a' Ghàidhlig *monadh*.

Colours and inflections

Gaelic words undergo a variety of inflections – a change in the form of a word according to grammatical rules – which are observed regularly in landscape names. One inflection is *lenition*, where an initial consonant is softened, shown in writing by the intrusion of an 'h' immediately after the inflected consonant. This explains examples like *Cadha Buidhe*, 'yellow slope' but *Fèith Bhuidhe* 'yellow bogland' (so called perhaps because of sphagnum mosses); the 'bh' is pronounced like an English 'v'. The lenition is caused by *fèith* being a feminine noun, whereas *cadha* is masculine. We also see the lenited form in the possessive ('of') inflection eg *Meall a' Choire Bhuidhe* 'the hill of the yellow corrie'. The common adjective *breac* 'speckled' undergoes similar inflection, seen in names like *Creagan Breac* 'small speckled crag' and *Beinn Bhreac* 'speckled mountain'; *creagan* is masculine and *beinn* is feminine.

Another inflection is slenderization of the final vowel, as in *Bealach na Creige Riabhaich* 'the pass of the brindled crag' near Ben Hope; *riabhaich* is the slenderised form of *riabhach*. *Cnoc na Claise Brice* 'the hill of the speckled gorge' demonstrates a slenderised form of *breac*, while *Coille na Leitire Bige* 'the wood of the small slope', shows a similar form of *beag* 'small'. In *Cnoc a' Choire Bhig* 'the hill of the small corrie', *beag* is slenderised and lenited.

There are several words for lighter colours found in the landscape. *Liath* is 'grey' (eg *Sithean Liath* 'grey [fairy] hillock'), *geal* is 'white' (eg *Loch nan Clach Geala* 'the loch of the white stones') and *bàn* is 'fair', as in *Cnoc an Fhuarain Bhàin* 'the hill of the fair spring'. *Odhar* is 'dun', as in *Am Blàran Odhar* 'the dun field', the Gaelic for *Bettyhill*. The English name was reputedly coined for Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, although this explanation is not universally accepted.

Dunnett Head
Ceann Dùnaid



Dathan is buadhairean

'S iomadh buadhair a nochdas air mapa na sgìre, gu h-àraidh anns na h-ainmean Gàidhlig. Tha *buidhe* gu tric a' dèanamh aithris air dath feòir no còinnich. Tha *Cadha Buidhe*, *Coire Buidhe* agus *Fèith Bhuidhe* nan eisimpleirean (ann an Gàidhlig bhiodh an t-alt ann gu nàdarrach, ach chan eil altan anns a' chuid as motha de dh'ainmean air na mapaichean). Corra uair bidh *buidhe* co-cheangailte ri ainmhidh, leithid *Loch nam Breac Buidhe*, no ris an loch fhèin mar a tha ann an *Loch Buidhe Beag* is *Loch Buidhe Mòr*.

Tha ruadh a' dèanamh tuairisgeul air dath lusan no dath creige, me *Beinn Ruadh*, *Cnoc a' Mhaoil Ruaidh*, no dath uisge, me *Alltan Ruadh*, agus tha *glas* a-mach air dath feòir, me *Beinn Ghlas Choire* agus *Creag a' Choire Ghlais*. Tha *breac* cumanta mar bhuadhair, me *Creagan Breac*, *Beinn Bhreac* agus *Cnoc na Claise Brice*. Chithear *riabhach* gu tric cuideachd, me *Cnoc Riabhach*, *Cnoc nam Bò Riabhach* agus *Bealach na Creige Riabhaich*. Tha *garbh* cumanta cuideachd – agus na dheagh chuideachadh do luchd-coiseachd a' mhonaidh! Tha *Ceann Garbh* agus *Sròn Gharbh* nan eisimpleirean.

Tha grunn dathan soilleir a' nochdadh ann am feartan-tìre na sgìre. Tha *liath* ann an *Sithean Liath*, *geal* ann an *Loch nan Clach Geala*, *bàn* ann an *Cnoc an Fhuarain Bhàin* agus *fionn* ann am *Fionn Bheinn Bheag* is *Fionn Bheinn Mhòr*. Chithear *odhar* ann *Am Blàran Odhar*, a' Ghàidhlig air *Bettyhill* – thathar ag ràdh gu bheil 'Betty' a' seasamh airson Ealasaid, Bana-mhorair Chat, ach chan eil a h-uile duine a' gabhail ris a' mhineachadh sin.

In some very old Gaelic names, the normal word order is reversed and the adjective precedes the noun. Thus we get *Garbh Choire* 'rough corrie' (rather than *Coire Garbh*) – the English/Scots *corrie* being a derivative of the Gaelic *coire*. An adjective preceding the noun is the natural word order in Norse and Scots but the anglicization of some place names has rendered their meanings

opaque. *Bighouse* in Strath Halladale is thought to be Norse *bygg-hus*, 'barley house' – perhaps a storehouse for grain. *Bloody Moss* near Halkirk is reputed to have gained its name from being the site of a duel in 1710, where Innes of Sandside killed Sinclair of Orlig. But, in fact, bloody is a corruption of the Norse *blautr* 'wet' and appears in another *Bloody Moss* near Dunnet, *Blood Moss* near Latheron and *Bloodyquoy*s 'wet farms' near Watten.

Tha an dòigh san tàinig dreach Beurla air cuid de dh'ainmean-àite Lochlannach air ciall thùsail an ainm a chur an cleith. Mar eisimpleir, thathar a' smaoineachadh nach e 'taigh mòr' a tha *Bighouse* (Srath Healadail) a' ciallachadh ach 'taigh eòrna', bhon Lochlannais *bygg-hus*. A rèir beul-aithris, fhuair *Bloody Moss* faisg air Hàcraig a h-ainm leis gun robh còmhrag-dhithis oirre

ann an 1710, nuair a mharbh MacAonghais Shanndasaid Mac na Ceàrdaich Oilrig. Ach, airson an fhirinn innse, tha *bloody* a' riochdachadh an fhacail Lochlannaich *blautr* 'fliuch'. Tha e a' nochdadh a-rithist ann am *Bloody Moss* (Dùnaid), *Blood Moss* (Latharan) agus *Bloodyquoy*s 'tuathanasan fliucha' faisg air Bhatan.

Loch Watten / Loch Bhatan

Plant names in the landscape

An understanding of place names often gives us clues to local ecology – current or past – and enhances our appreciation of an area's natural heritage. The native Scots pine is rare in the far north but its historical presence is recorded in *Loch a' Ghiubhais* 'loch of the pine' near Lairg. The aspen is similarly uncommon but is recorded in *Allt Crithinn* 'aspen burn' near Ben Armine. The alder tree is more numerous and is found in several place names eg *Alltan Feàrna* 'alder streamlet' and *Lochan na Feàrna* 'the small loch of the alders'; as befits its ecological preference, it is almost always associated with water bodies.

Sutherland and Caithness are not noted for their extensive woodlands, and tree species names in the landscape are scarcer than in many other parts of the Highlands. Even the ubiquitous birch is not common; the clearance village of *Badbea* (*Bad Beithe* 'place of birches') is the best known. *Dunbeath* is often given as 'hill/fort of the birches' but it is more likely to be 'fort of Beth', a pre-Norse Celtic leader (the name predates Norse settlement). *Seileach*, the modern Gaelic word for willow, is poorly represented, but an older form, *salach*, is to be found in *Loch Salachaidh* and *Bad Salach*, suggesting their presence in more distant times.

Heather – *fraoch* in Gaelic – is relatively common. In *Bailanfhraoich* (*Baile an Fraoich*) near Bonar Bridge it suggests a township that was once on moorland, despite being almost surrounded by forest today. *Baile*, 'a permanent settlement', is found in place names everywhere in Scotland settled by Gaels. *Balnacoil* near Loch Brora is *Baile na Coille* 'the settlement of the wood', another name that provides us with ecological information.

Other examples of plant species in place names are *Loch a' Chaoruinn* 'the loch of the rowan', *Leathad na Seamraig* 'the slope of the clover', *Lochan na Cuilce* 'the small loch of the reeds' and *Loch an Fheòir* 'the loch of the grass'. Grasses also appear in the Norse names *Melness* and *Melvich* which are 'bent-grass point' and 'bent-grass bay', and in *Swordly* 'grassy slope' and *Swordale* 'grassy valley' (although *Sordale* near Halkirk is more likely to be 'wet' or 'muddy' valley).



Rowan berries
Caoran

Craobhan is lusan

Faodar fiosrachadh fhaighinn air an àrainneachd – mar a tha i no mar a bha i – le bhith a' toirt sùil air ainmean-àite, agus tha sin gu sònraichte fìor nuair a bheir sinn sùil air ainmean lusan air na mapaichean. Chan ann tric a chithear craobhan-giuthais anns a' cheann a tuath ach tha a leithid clàraichte ann an *Loch a' Ghiubhais* faisg air an Luirg. Tha a' chraobh-chrithinn air an aon dòigh ach tha e air a' mhap ann an *Allt Crithinn* faisg air Beinn Àrainn. Air an làimh eile, tha a' chraobh-fheàrna mòran nas cumanta. Chithear sin ann an àiteachan mar *Alltan Feàrna* agus *Lochan na Feàrna*; mar a bhiodh dùil, tha cha mhòr a h-uile eisimpleir de feàrna co-cheangailte ri loch no allt.

Chan eil Cataibh is Gallaibh cliùiteach airson an cuid choilltean, agus chan eil ainmean chraobhan air an tìr cho pailt 's a tha iad ann am mòran sgìrean eile dhen Ghàidhealtachd. Chan eil eadhon a' chraobh-bheithe pailt; 's e an eisimpleir as aithnichte dheth baile beag fàs air a bheil *Bad Beithe/Badbea*, a chaidh a stèidheachadh aig àm nam fuadaichean air cladach Ghallaibh. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gu bheil am beithe ainmichte ann an *Dùn Bheithe/Dunbeath*, ach tha e nas coltaiche gur e 'an dùn aig fear Beth (ceannard Ceilteach)' ciall an ainm; bha an t-ainm ann am bith mus tàinig na Lochlannaich. Chan eil *seileach* cumanta, ach tha dreach nas sine air an ainm – *salach* – ri lorg ann an *Loch Salachaidh* agus *Bad Salach*, a' cur nar n-inntinn gun robh craobhan-seilich a' fàs anns na h-àiteachan sin anns an fhìor sheann aimsir.

Tha *fraoch* cumanta gu leòr. Ann am *Bailanfhraoich* (*Baile an Fraoich*), faisg air Drochaid a' Bhanna, tha e ag innse dhuinn gun robh am baile, a tha a-nise air a chuirteachadh le coille, uaireigin anns a' mhonadh fhosgailte. 'S e *Baile na Coille* a th' ann am *Balnacoil*, faisg air Loch Brùra, ainm eile a tha a' toirt fiosrachadh dhuinn mun àrainneachd o shean.

Tha eisimpleirean eile de chraobhan no lusan ann, me *caorann* (*Loch a' Chaorainn*), *seamrag* (*Leathad na Seamraig*), *cuilc* (*Lochan na Cuilce*), *copag* (*Cnoc Ruigh nan Copag*) agus *feur* (*Loch an Fheòir*). Tha *muran* a' nochdadh anns na h-ainmean Lochlannach *Mealainis/Melness* agus *Mealabhaich/Melvich*, a tha a' ciallachadh 'rubha a' mhurain' agus 'camas a' mhurain', agus tha *feur* air ainmeachadh ann an *Swordly* 'leathad feurach' agus *Suardall/Swordale* 'dail fheurach', ged as e 'dail fhliuch' a tha *Sordale* faisg air Hàcraig a' ciallachadh.

Aspen
Craobh-chrithinn



Animal names in the landscape

Red deer are a big part of the ecology and they are recorded in *Creag nam Fiadh* 'the crag of the deer', *Cnoc Damh* 'hill of stags' and *Cnoc Lòn nan Èildean* 'the hill of the wet meadow of the hinds'. *Coire nam Mang* 'the corrie of the fawns' on Ben Hee gives a clue about deer behaviour in that area and *Bad na h-Earba* suggests the presence of roe deer near Ben Armine.

Wild goats are recorded in a few names, an example being *Creag a' Ghobhair* 'the rock of the goat', and hares are mentioned in places like *Creag nan Geàrr* 'the rock of the hares' and *Sithean na Geàrra* 'the hillock of the hare'. *Sithean* names often refer to places reputedly inhabited by fairies, and hares themselves were often seen as animal representations of *cailleachs*, evil female spirits of the hills, who could only be subdued by a silver bullet.

Càrn a' Choin Deirg is 'the hill of the red dog', and wild dogs, either wolves or foxes, are represented in *Loch a' Mhadaidh*. *Sròn an Tuirc* near Altnaharra recalls the wild boar and *Creag an Taghain* near Helmsdale notes the presence of the pine marten. Several wild bird species are recorded in place names. Examples are *Cnoc na h-Iolaire* 'the hill of the eagle', *Creag na Speireig* 'the crag of the sparrow-hawk', *Loch nan Ealachan*, 'the loch of the swans', *Blàr nam Faoileag*, 'the plain of the seagulls' and *Creag Leac nam Fitheach* 'the crag of the slab of the ravens'. Ravens also appear in some Norse or Norse/Scots names; (*Cnoc*) *Ramascaig* near Lairg is *hramn-skiki* 'ravens' strip' and *Ramscaigs* near Dunbeath is 'raven's rocks'. And *Loch Lomashion* near Duncansby commemorates the loon or red-throated diver; *Lomashion* (sometimes *Lomishan*) comes from *lómr-tjörn* 'loon tarn'.

The native brown trout (*breac* in Gaelic) is named in several water bodies. *Altnabreac* Station in Caithness, for example, is *Allt nam Breac* 'the burn of the trout'. This burn and *Loch nam Breac* 'the loch of the trout' would be expected to provide good fishing, as opposed to the unfortunately named *Loch an Aon-bhric* 'the loch of the one trout' near Loch Loyal!

The main animal to receive a mention in coastal place names is the seal, eg *Eilean nan Ròn* 'the island of the seals' and *Uamh Ròn* 'seal cave'. It has been suggested that *Latheron* is *làthair-ròn* 'place of seals' but this ignores the village's Gaelic name which is *Latharn*, probably meaning 'muddy place'. *Latheronwheel* is thought to derive its unusual name from *Latharn a' Phuill* 'the muddy place of the pool'.

Fox
Sionnach

Ainmean ainmhidhean

Tha fèidh – a tha pailt anns an sgìre – air an ainmeachadh ann an àiteachan mar *Creag nam Fiadh*, *Cnoc Damh* agus *Cnoc Lòn nan Èildean*. Tha *Coire nam Mang* air a' Bheinn Shith a' toirt fiosrachadh dhuinn mu fhèin-ghiùlan nam fiadh anns an sgìre sin, mar a tha *Allt nan Ruadhag* faisg air *Allt na h-Eirbhe*, agus tha *Bad na h-Earba* faisg air Beinn Àrmann ag innse dhuinn gum faighear earbaichean a bharrachd air fèidh ruadha anns a' cheàrnaidh sin.

Tha *gobhar* a' nochdadh ann an àiteachan mar *Creag a' Ghobhair* agus tha geàrran air an ainmeachadh ann an *Creag nan Geàrr* agus *Sithean na Geàrra*. Tha *sithean* pailt gu leòr ann an Gallaibh is Cataibh.

Tha cù a' nochdadh ann an *Càrn a' Choin Deirg* agus tha madaidhean – madaidhean-allaidh no madaidhean-ruadha – air an comharrachadh ann an *Loch a' Mhadaidh*. Faisg air Allt na h-Eirbhe tha *Sròn an Tuirc*, a tha a' cuimhneachadh nan torc a bh' ann uaireigin, agus tha *Creag an Taghain* faisg air Bun Ilihd a' cuimhneachadh ainmhidh a tha cumanta gu leòr fhathast.

Tha grunn eun air an comharrachadh air a' mhapa, leithid *Cnoc na h-Iolaire*, *Creag na Speireig*, *Loch nan Ealachan*, *Blàr nam Faoileag* agus *Creag Leac nam Fitheach*. Nochdaidh am fitheach cuideachd ann an ainmean Lochlannach no Lochlannach/Albais mar (*Cnoc*) *Ramascaig* (*hramn-skiki* 'stiall an fhithich') faisg air an Luirg, agus *Ramscaigs* 'creagan an fhithich' faisg air Dùn Bheithe. Agus tha *Loch Lomashion* faisg air Ceann Dhunnagain a' comharrachadh an learga-mhòr; tha *Lomashion* (uaireannan *Lomishan*) a' tighinn bho *lómr-tjörn* ('loon tarn').

Nochdaidh *breac* ann an grunn ainmean-àite. Is cinnteach gur e am fear as ainmeile (Stèisean-rèile) *Allt nam Breac/Altnabreac* ann an Gallaibh. Bhiodh dùil air deagh iasgach anns an allt làimh ris an stèisean, mar a bhitheadh ann an *Loch nam Breac*. Ge-tà, chan eil *Loch an Aon Bhric* faisg air Loch Laghail a' coimhead cho fàbharach airson an iasgair!

'S e *ròn* am facal as motha a chithear ann an ainmean-àite stèidhichte air ainmhidhean air cladach na sgìre, me *Eilean nan Ròn* agus *Uamh Ròn*. Chaidh a ràdh gur e 'làthair-ròn' a th' ann an *Latheron*, ach chan eil sin a' coimhead coltach. 'S e a' Ghàidhlig air a' bhaile *Latharn* agus tha dùil gur e 'àite na làthaich' a tha sin a' ciallachadh; 's e *Latharn a' Phuill* a th' ann an *Latheronwheel*.



Golden Eagle
Iolair-bhuidhe

History and folklore

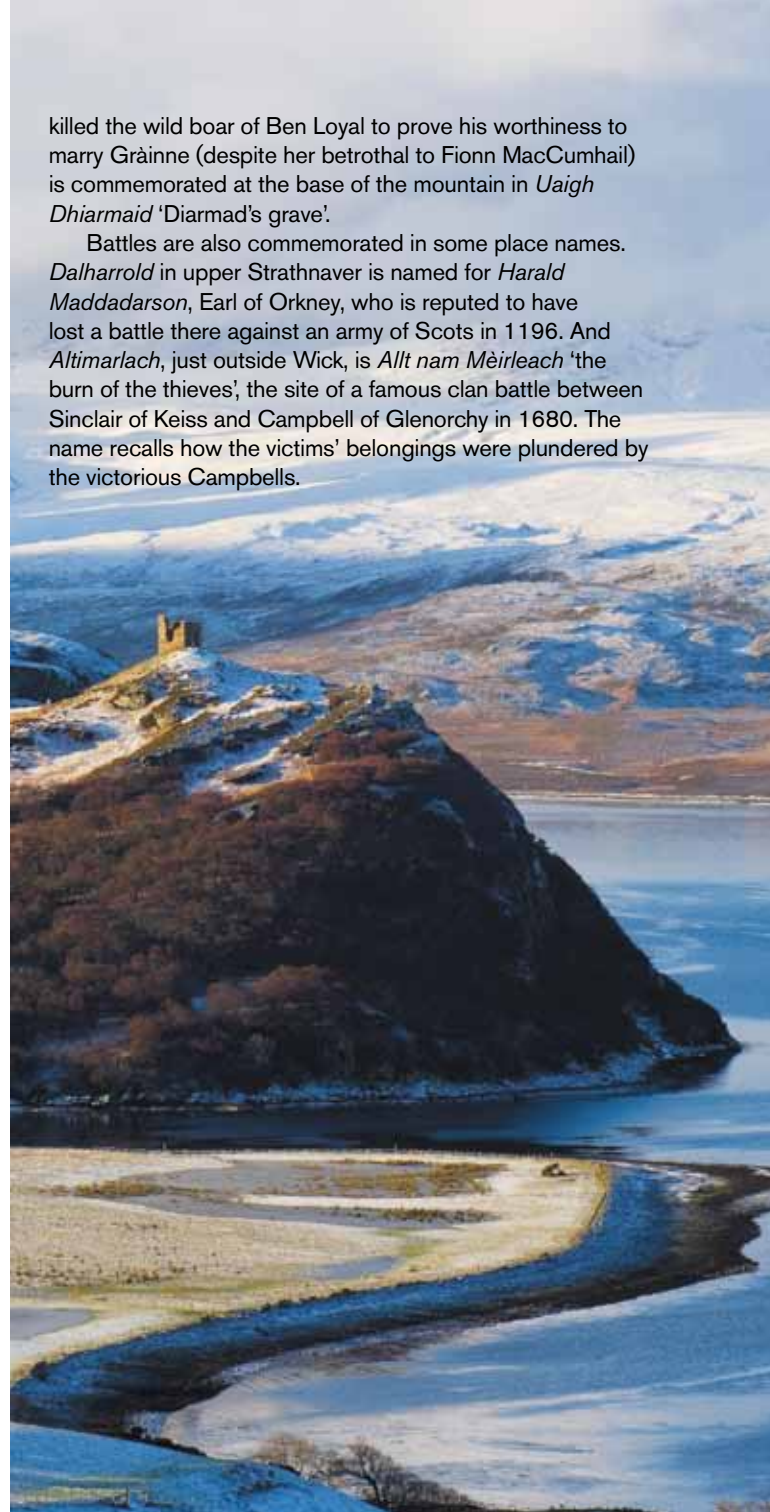
Caitness and Sutherland have a rich history and folklore, and sometimes human activities and events – real or imagined – are recorded in landscape names. Church names are frequent, and usually associated with the elements *cill* (Gaelic) or *kirk* (Norse). The Strath of Kildonan (*Cill Donnain* 'St Donnan's Church') and Strath Brora boast a considerable number of *cill* names (anglicised *kil*-), while *Halkirk* (*Hàcraig* in Gaelic) is *há-kirkja*, 'high church'. *Halladale* 'holy valley' appears to have been of spiritual importance in Norse times, and *Neave* or *Coomb Island* off the north coast (it carries both names) originated as *Eilean na Neimhe* 'island of the sacred place', probably indicating pre-Christian significance. A chapel on the island was dedicated to Columba (hence Coomb) and it was associated with *Loch Cormaic* on the nearby mainland, reputedly named after an early missionary.

St John's Loch at Dunnet and Loch ma Nàire in Strathnaver were famous places of pilgrimage for the ill who were seeking cures. The name of the second may stretch back into ancient times, the *Nàire* representing *Nabhair/Naver* and linked to belief in a pagan goddess, later Christianised. However, folk etymology has delightfully linked it to the Gaelic expression 'mo nàire' (my shame) in a legend about a woman who possessed charmed pebbles which were coveted by others. She was pursued to the loch and, realizing there was no escape, she flung the pebbles into the water (bestowing to the loch its curative powers), crying 'Mo nàire, mo nàire!'

The Fiann or Fingalians – the great legendary warriors of Gaelic tradition whose leader was Fionn MacCumhail (Fingal or Finn MacCoul in English) – appear in *Cnoc nam Fèinn* 'the hill of the Fingalians' in the Strath of Kildonan. Fionn's grandson (son of the legendary Oisean/Ossian) was Oscar, whose name might be represented in *Buaille Oscar* 'Oscar's fold', a prehistoric hill fort on *Beinn Freiceadain* 'watch mountain' near Halkirk. The name is explained locally, however, as 'leap fold' and there is a tradition that a giant stepped from here and left his footprint in a rock on the next hill to the north, a spot still called *Lorg an Fhamhair* 'the footprint of the giant'. And the great legend of Diarmad, who

killed the wild boar of Ben Loyal to prove his worthiness to marry Gràinne (despite her betrothal to Fionn MacCumhail) is commemorated at the base of the mountain in *Uaigh Dhiarmaid* 'Diarmad's grave'.

Battles are also commemorated in some place names. *Dalharrold* in upper Strathnaver is named for *Harald Maddadarsen*, Earl of Orkney, who is reputed to have lost a battle there against an army of Scots in 1196. And *Altmarlach*, just outside Wick, is *Allt nam Mèirleach* 'the burn of the thieves', the site of a famous clan battle between Sinclair of Keiss and Campbell of Glenorchy in 1680. The name recalls how the victims' belongings were plundered by the victorious Campbells.



Eachdraidh is beul-aithris

Tha eachdraidh mhòr inntinneach aig Gallaibh is Cataibh agus uaireannan tha rudan a rinn mac-an-duine – co-dhiù tha e fìor gus nach eil – air an clàradh ann an ainmean-tìre. Tha gu leòr ainmean co-cheangailte ris an eaglais, le *cill* (Gàidhlig) no *kirk* (Lochlannais) annta; tha eisimpleirean ann an Cill Donnain agus *Cill Pheadair* ann an Sgìre Ildh/Strath of Kildonan agus *Cill Eathain/Killin* ann an Srath Bhrùra, agus *Hàcraig/Halkirk* (*há-kirkja* 'àrd-eaglais') ann an Gallaibh. Tha e coltach gun robh *Healadal/Halladale* 'dail naomh' cudromach a thaobh na h-eaglaise ri linn nan Lochlannach. Agus thòisich *Neave* or *Coomb Island* (tha an dà ainm air an eilean), far cladach a' chinn a tuath, mar *Eilean na Neimhe* 'eilean an àite naoimh', ag innse dhuinn gur dòcha gun robh e naomh eadhon mus tàinig Crìosdachd. Bha caibeal anns an eilean air a choisrigeadh do Chalum Cille (às an tig 'Coomb'), agus bha e co-cheangailte, a rèir beul-aithris, ri *Loch Cormaic* faisg air làimh air tìr-mòr, a chaidh ainmeachadh às dèidh seann mhiseanairidh aig an eaglais.

Bha *St John's Loch* ann an *Dùnaid/Dunnet* agus *Loch ma Nàire* ann an Srath Nabhair ainmeil airson eilthreachd dhaibhsan a bha tinn agus a' lorg leigheas. Tha dùil gur e fìor sheann ainm a th' ann am 'ma Nàire', a' riochdachadh Nabhar agus co-cheangailte ri ban-dia phàganach air an deach inbhe Chrìosdail a bhuileachadh. Ach tha stòiridh laghach ann mun ainm a tha ga cheangal don abairt 'mo nàire': bha boireannach ann uaireigin leis an robh èiteagan seunta a bha feadhainn eile a' miannachadh. Latha a bha seo, agus droch dhaoine ga ruagadh,

Castle Varrich, the ancient seat of the Mackay clan, sits in an imperious position on a headland above the Kyle of Tongue on the north coast. The name is Gaelic (Caisteal Bharraich) and probably incorporates the element bàrr, "top, elevation", referring to the location.

B' e Caisteal Bharraich, a tha suidhichte air àrde os cionn Caolas Thunga ann an Dùthaich MhicAoidh, prìomh àros aig Cloinn 'ic Aoidh o shean. Thathar a' smaoinneachadh gur ann às an eileamaid Ghàidhlig "bàrr" a dh'èirich an t-ainm. Tha measgachadh math de dh'ainmean Gàidhlig is Lochlannach anns an sgìre seo.

ruith i gu cladach an locha agus thilg i ann iad, ag èigheachd, 'Mo nàire, mo nàire!' 'S iad na h-èiteagan sin a thug an draoidheachd ainmeil don loch.

Tha an Fhèinn (na gaisgich Ghàidhealach aig Fionn MacCumhail) air an cuimhneachadh ann an *Cnoc nam Fèinn* ann an Sgìre Ildh. Chan eil e cinnteach an e ogha Fhinn (mac Oisein) a th' air a chomharrachadh ann am *Buaille Oscar*, seann dùn air *Beinn Freiceadain* faisg air Hàcraig. Thathar a' mineachadh an ainm gu h-ionadail mar 'buaille an lèim' agus thathar ag ràdh gun do ghabh famhair sìn-teag às gu ruige an ath chnoc gu tuath, àite a tha fhathast a' giùlan an ainm *Lorg an Fhamhair*. Agus tha sgeulachd ainmeil Dhiarmaid – a mharbh an torc nimhe air Beinn Laghail airson a dhearbhadh gun robh e airidh air Gràinne a phòsadh (ged a bha i fo ghealladh-pòsaidh do Fhionn) – air a toirt do ar cuimhne ann an Uaigh Dhiarmaid aig bonn na beinne.

Thathar a' cuimhneachadh seann chathan ann an grunn àiteachan. Chaidh *Dalharald/Dail Arailt* ann an Srath Nabhair ainmeachadh airson Harald Maddadarsen, Iarla Arcaibh, a thathar ag ràdh a chail batail an sin an aghaidh arm Albannach ann an 1196. Agus tha *Allt nam Mèirleach/Altmarlach*, air taobh a-muigh Inbhir Ùige, a' cuimhneachadh blàr ainmeil ann an 1680 eadar Mac na Ceàrdaich Chèis agus Caimbeul Ghleann Urchaidh. Rinn na Caimbeulaich a' chùis agus ghoid iad tòrr stuth bho chuirp nan Gallach às dèidh a' bhatail.

A guide to pronunciation

Place names in the text, along with a few other major settlements in the study area, are given below with both English and Gaelic forms where relevant. Grid references are provided and an approximate pronunciation guide for the Gaelic forms. Note that the simplified phonetic system used below only approximates roughly to the Gaelic pronunciation; the only sure way of acquiring the finer points of Gaelic pronunciation is to learn some of the language.

The Gaelic accent indicates an elongation of a vowel sound (à is given in the guide as AA, while ò is given as Ò). The letters OEU represent a vowel sound absent in English; the closest approximation which many English speakers will have encountered is in the French oeuf 'egg'. CH represents ch as in loch; TCH represents ch as in church. Capitals represent the stressed syllable in the name. Languages are represented as follows: G=Gaelic, N=Norse, P=Pictish, S=Scots, E=English.

Name on Ordnance Survey map	Literal meaning and origin, if known	Gaelic form of name (if different), including meaning (if different)	Pronunciation guide to Gaelic	Grid reference
Abhainn Gleann na Muic	the river of the glen of the pig (G)		av-in glown num MOOCHK	NC381134
Achaness (Burn)	the field of the waterfall (G)	Ach an Eas	ach un YES	NC800164
Achavanich	the monk's field (G)	Achadh a' Mhanaich	ach-ugh uh VAN-ich	ND176425
Achin, The	the fields (G)	Na h-Achaidhean	nuh HACH-ee-un	NC806295
Achiniver	the field at the river mouth (G)	Achadh an Inbhir	ach-ugh un IN-yur or ach-ugh un IN-i- vur	NC576644
Achins	the fields (G)	Na h-Achaidhean	nuh HACH-ee-un	NC955645
Achscrabster	the field (G) of Scrabster (N) – see Scrabster	Achadh Sgrabastail	ach-ugh SCRAB-u-stul	ND086635
Achvarasdail	the field (G) of Barr's valley (N)	Achadh Bhàrrasdail	ach-ugh VAAR-us-tul	NC985645

Àirigh Leathaid	slope shieling (G)		aa-ree LE-hitch	NC998395
Allt Crithinn	aspen burn (G)		owlt KREE-in	NC752221
Allt na Muic	the burn of the pig (G)		owlt nuh MOO-ichk	NC890382
Allt nan Ruadhag	the burn of the young deer (G)		owlt nun ROO-ugh-ak	NC471369
Allt nan Sgalag	the burn of the workers (G)		owlt nun SKAL-ak	NC907541
Alltan Feàrna	alder streamlet (G)	Alltan na Feàrna	alt-an FYAARN-uh	NC533380
Alltan Ruadh	red-brown streamlet (G)	An t-Alltan Ruadh	alt-an ROO-ugh	NC975538
Altmarlach	the burn of the thieves (G)	Allt nam Mèirleach	owlt num MYAYR-luch	ND333525
Altnabreac (Station)	the burn of the trout (G)	Allt nam Breac	owlt num BREH-uchk	ND003457
Altnaharra	the burn of the dyke (G)	Allt na h-Eirbhe	owlt nuh HIR-uh-vuh	NC567351
Arnaboll	uncertain but probably connected to the man's name Árni (N)	Àrnabol	AARN-uh-puhl	NC467578
Bad na h-Earba	the thicket/place of the roe deer (G)		bat nuh HER-uh-puh	NC758246
Bad Salach	willow place (G)		bat SAL-uch	NC583522
Badbea	birch place (G)	Bad Beithe	bat BAY-huh	ND088200
Bailanfhraoich	the settlement of the heather (G)	Baile an Fhraoich	bal un ROEU-ich	NH565913
Baile an Òr	the settlement of the gold (G)	Baile an Òir	bal un ÒR	NC915214

Balnacoil	the settlement of the wood (G)	Baile na Coille	bal-uh nuh KUHL-yuh	NC810111
Bealach na Creige Riabhaich	the pass of the brindled crag (G)		byal-uch nuh crayk-uh REE-uh-vich	NC499519
Beinn an Eòin	the mountain of the bird (G)		bayn un YÒN	NC389082
Beinn Bhreac	speckled mountain (G)	A' Bheinn Bhreac	bayn VREH-uchk	NC609564
Beinn Freiceadain	watcher's mountain (G)	Beinn an Fhreceadain	bayn FRAYCHK-it-in	ND059558
Beinn Glas-choire	mountain of (the) green corrie (G)	Beinn a' Ghlas Choire	bayn GLAS chor-uh	ND032381
Beinn Ruadh	red-brown mountain (G)	A' Bheinn Ruadh	bayn ROO-ugh	NC926631 NC844598
Ben Armine	hero's mountain (G)	Beinn Àrmainn	bayn AARM-in	NC695274
Ben Bhraggie	speckled mountain (G)	Beinn Bhracaidh	bayn VRACHK-ee	NC811010
Ben Hee	fairy mountain (G)	A' Bheinn Shith	uh vayn HEE	NC425334
Ben Hope	bay mountain (G/N)	Beinn Hòb	bayn HÒP	NC477501
Ben Klibreck	(possibly) the mountain of the hillside slope (G/N)	Beinn Clìbric	bayn KLEE-brik	NC585298
Ben Loyal	(probably) law mountain (G/N)	Beinn Laghail	bayn LUGH-il	NC577488
Berriedale	rocky dale (N)	Bearghdal	B-YER-u-dul	ND121229
Bettyhill	reputedly named for Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland (E)	Am Blàran Odhar 'the dun field'	um blaar-un OH-ir	NC707619
Bighouse	(possibly) barley house (N)	Biogas (Biogaist in Melness)	BEEK-uss (BEEK-isht)	NC890647

Blàr nam Faoileag	the plain of the gulls (G)		blaar num FOEU-lak	ND131449
Blood Moss	wet moss (bogland) (N)			ND225375
Bloody Moss	wet moss (bogland) (N)			ND115568 ND206725
Bloodyquouys	wet farms (N)			ND193588
Bog na Gaoithe	the bog of the wind (G)		boke nuh GOEU-yuh	ND156484
Bonar Bridge	the bridge at (of) the bottom ford (G/E)	Drochaid a' Bhanna	droch-itch uh VAN-ah	NH611916
Braal	broad field (N)	Breitheal	BRAY-ul	ND136606
Brabster	broad farm (N)			ND323692
Brawl	broad field (N)	Breitheal	BRAY-ul	NC810663
Broad Geo				ND354444
Brora	bridge river (N)	Brùra	BROO-ruh	NC906040
Buaile Oscar	Oscar's fold or fold of the leap (G)		boo-uh-luh OSK-ur	ND059559
Cadha Buidhe	yellow slope (G)	An Cadha Buidhe	ka-uh BOO-yuh	NH309963
Caithness	Cat People point (N)	Gallaibh 'the place of the non-Gaels'	GAL-uv	
Camster	ridge farm (N)			ND210608
Càrn a' Choin Deirg	the hill of the red dog (G)		karn uh chon JAY-rik	NH397923

Ceann Garbh	rough hill (G)	An Ceann Garbh	kyown GAR-av	NC730457
Chapel Geo				ND186728
Cleit an t-Seabhaig	the rock of the falcon (G)		klaytch un TCHEV-ik	NC522688
Cleit Mhòr	big rock (G)	A' Chlèit Mhòr	klaytch VORE	ND174300
Cnoc a' Choire Bhig	the hill of the small corrie (G)		krochk uh chor-uh VEEK	NC880638
Cnoc a' Mhaoil Ruaidh	the eminence of the red-brown brow (G)		krochk uh voeul ROO-ugh	NC477250
Cnoc Àirigh Mhic Leòid	the hill of MacLeod's shieling (G)		krochk aa-ree vichk-LÒTCH	NC683510
Cnoc an Fhuarain Bhàn	the hill of the fair spring (G)		krochk un oo-ur-in VAAN	NC953532
Cnoc Damh	hill of stags (G)		krochk DAFF	NH270962
Cnoc Lòn nan Èildean	the hill of the wet meadow of the hinds (G)		krochk lòn nun AYLD-yun	NC546575
Cnoc na Claise Brice	the hill of the speckled gorge (G)		krochk nuh klash-uh BREECHK-uh	ND004595
Cnoc na h-Iolaire	the hill of the eagle (G)		krochk nuh HYOOL-uh-ruh	NC550511
Cnoc nam Bò Riabhach	the hill of the brindled cows (G)		krochk num boe REE-uv-uch	NC905397
Cnoc nam Fèinn	the hill of the Fingalians (G)	Cnoc na Fèinne	krochk num FAYN	NC915242
Cnoc nan Imrichean	the hill of the flittings (G)		krochk nun IM-i-rich-un	NC490100
Cnoc Ramascaig	the hill (G) of the ravens' strip (N)		krock RAM-us-kik	NC526165

Cnoc Riabhach	brindled hill (G)		krochk REE-uv-uch	NC920376
Cnoc Ruigh nan Copag	the hill of the slope of the dockens (G)		krochk roo-ee nun KOHP-ak	NC638352
Coille na Leitire Bige	the wood of the small slope (G)		kuhl-yuh nuh laytch-ir-uh BEEK-uh	NC624503
Coir' an Eas	the corrie of the waterfall (G)		kor un YESS	NC715255
Coire Buidhe	yellow corrie (G)		kor-uh BOO-yuh	NC612387
Coire nam Mang	the corrie of the fawns (G)		kor-uh num MANK	NC420331
Creag a' Choire Ghlais	the crag of the green corrie (G)		krayk uh chor-uh GHLASH	NC695274
Creag a' Ghobhair	the rock of the goat (G)		krayk uh GHOE-ir	NH655939
Creag an Lochain	the crag of the small loch (G)		krayk un LOCH-in	NC752299
Creag an Taghain	the crag of the pine marten (G)		krayk un TUGH-in	NC996156
Creag Leac nam Fitheach	the crag of the slab of the ravens (G)		krayk leh-uchk num FEE-uch	NC734048
Creag na Speireig	the crag of the sparrow-hawk (G)		krayk nuh SPAYR-ik	NC608504
Creag nam Fiadh	the crag of the deer (G)		krayk num FEE-ugh	NC841237 NC647135
Creag nan Geàrr	the crag of the hares (G)		krayk nun GYAAR	NC956243
Creagan Breac	speckled hillock (G)	An Creagan Breac	krayk-un BREH-uchk	NC635557
Cunside	women's shieling (N)	Caonasaid	KOEUN-u-sitch	NC583514

Dalchork	the dale of the oats (G)	Dail a' Choice	dal uh CHORK-uh	NC570105
Dalharrold	Harald's dale (G)	Dail Arailt	dal AR-ultch	NC685384
Dalnawillan	the dale of the mill (G)	Dail a' Mhuilinn	dal uh VOOL-in	ND029408
Dornoch	pebble place (G)	Dòrnach (G)	DÒRN-uch	NH797897
Dorrery	? –shieling (N)			ND036575
Dounreay	fortified mound (G) or fort (G) of the elongated place (N)	Dùnraath	DOON-rah	NC988670
Dunbeath	fort of Beth (G)	Dùn Bheithe	doon VAY-huh	ND160298
Duncansby	Dungal's farm (N)	Ceann Dhunngain 'Dungan's headland'	kyown GHOON-uh-gun	ND406734
Dunnet	meaning unclear	Dùnaid	DOO-nutch	ND215714
Eilean nan Ròn	the island of the seals (G)		ayl-un nun RÒN	NC640655
Embo	(probably) Eyvind's farm (N)	Eurabol	AY-ru-pul	NH816928
Eriboll	(possibly) gravel beach at the pool (head of the sea loch?) (N)	Eurabol	AY-ru-pul	NC431565
Fèith a' Chreagain	the bog channel of the small crag (G)		fay uh CHRAKE-un	NC778369
Fèith Bhuidhe	yellow bogland (G)	An Fhèith Bhuidhe	fay VOO-yuh	NH685905
Fèith Chaorainn Mhòr	big bog channel of the rowan (G)	An Fhèith Chaorainn Mhòr	fay choeu-rin VORE	NC962311
Fionn Bheinn Mhòr	big fair mountain (G)	An Fhionn Bheinn Mhòr	fyoon vayn VORE	NC371041

Forsinain	the waterfall of the low ground (G)	Fors an Fhàine	fors un AAN-yuh	NC916485
Forsinard	the waterfall of the high ground (G)	Fors na h-Àirde	fors nuh HAARSD-uh	NC896435
Forss Water	waterfall (N) river (S)			ND037686
Fullie Geo	bird geo (N)			ND357616
An Garbh-choire	the rough corrie (G)	An Garbh Choire	un GAR-av chor-uh	NC485496
Geodh' an Fhuarain	the geo of the spring (G)		gyo un OO-uh-run	NC571659
Geodh' Ruadh	red-brown geo (G)	An Geodh' Ruadh	gyo ROO-ugh	NC808667 NC816687
Gizzen Briggs	leaky bridge (S)	Drochaid an Obh 'the bridge of the malicious water sprite'	droch-atch uhn OW	NH824876
Golspie	gully village (N)	Goillspidh	GEYL-shpee (eyl = 'isle')	NC830001
Halkirk	high church (N)	Hàcraig	HAAK-rik	ND135594
Halladale	holy dale (N)	Healadal	HEL-u-dul	NC893538
Halsary	? –shieling (N)			ND181491
Helmsdale	Hjalmund's dale (N)	Bun Ildh 'mouth of the River Ildh'	boon EEL-ee	ND028154
Helshetter	flat rock farm (N)			NC963628
John O' Groats	Jan de Groot's (house) (S)	Taigh Iain Ghròt	tie an GHRÒT	ND379733
Keiss	rounded ridge (N)	Cèis	KAYSH	ND347612

Kildonan	Donnan's church (G)	Cill Donnain	kil DON-un	NC906223
Killin (sometimes Killen or Killean)	(St) John's church (G)	Cill Eathain	kil YEH-un	NC855071
Kilphedir	Peter's church (G)	Cill Pheadair	kil FAYT-ir	NC988186
Kirkiboll	church steading (N)	Circeabol	KIRK-uh-bol	NC595566
Knockglass	green hill S/G	An Cnoc Glas	un krochk GLASS	NH795944 ND175534 ND056635
Lairg	the shank (G)	An Luirg	un LOOR-ik	NC585064
Langwell	long field (N)	Langail	LANK-ul	NC415134 NC415010 ND036255
Latheron	muddy place (G)	Latharn	LAH-hurn	ND199335
Latheronwheel	the muddy place of the pool (G)	Latharn a' Phuill	lah-hurn uh FOO-eel	ND190326
Leathad na Seamraig	the slope of the clover (G)		leh-ut nuh SHAM-uh-rik	NC657157
Linsidmore	big (G) flax farm (N)	Lianasaid Mhòr	lee-uh-nuh-sitch VORE	NH542992
Loch a' Chaoruinn	the loch of the rowan (G)	Loch a' Chaorainn	loch uh CHOEU-rin	NC667601
Loch a' Ghiubhais	the loch of the pine tree (G)	Loch a' Ghiuthais	loch uh YOO-ish	NC657065
Loch a' Mhadaidh	the loch of the wild dog (wolf or fox) (G)		loch uh VAT-ee	NC980418
Loch an Aon-bhric	the loch of the one trout (G)	Loch an Aon Bhric	loch un OEUN vreechk	NC551460
Loch an Fheòir	the loch of the grass (G)		loch un YÒR	NC843562

Loch Buidhe Beag	small yellow loch (G)	An Loch Buidhe Beag	loch boo-yuh BAYK	NC773593
Loch Cormaic	Cormac's loch (G)	Loch Cormaig	loch KOR-uh-mik	NC627580
Loch Lomashion	the loch (S) of the red-throated diver's tarn (N)			ND386700
Loch ma Nàire	uncertain (G)		loch muh NAAR-uh	NC726537
Loch nam Breac	the loch of the trout (G)		loch num BREH-uchk	NC692592
Loch nam Breac Buidhe	the loch of the yellow trout (G)		loch num breh-uchk BOO-yuh	NC650568
Loch nan Clach Geala	the loch of the white stones (G)		loch nun klach GYAL-uh	NC953575
Loch nan Ealachan	the loch of the swans (G)		loch nun YAL-uch-un	NC677519
Loch Salachaidh	willow loch (G)		loch SAL-uch-ee	NC759037
Lochan na Cuilce	the small loch of the reeds (G)		loch-un nuh KOOLK-uh	NC573535
Lochan na Feàrna	the small loch of the alders (G)		loch-un nuh FYAARN-uh	NC450502
Lorg an Fhamhair	the footprint of the giant (G)		lor-ok un AV-ir	ND058593
Lybster	slope farm (N)	Liabost	LEE-u-bost	ND247362
Maiden Pap	woman's breast (S/E)	Beinn Cìoch na h-Ìghne	bayn kee-uch nuh HEEN-yuh	ND048293
Meall a' Choire Bhuidhe	the hill of the yellow corrie (G)		myowl uh chor-uh VOO-yuh	NC697386
Melness	bent-grass point (N)	Mealainis	MYAL-uh-nish	NC581608

Melvich	bent-grass bay (N)	Mealabhaich	MYAL-uh-vich	NC885645
Moine, The	the peat moss (G)	A' Mhòine	uh VÒN-yuh	NC529610
Morven	big mountain (G)	A' Mhòr Bheinn	uh VORE vayn	ND005286
Neave or Coomb Island	the island of the sacred place (G/E)	Eilean na Neimhe	ayl-un nuh NYEV-uh	NC664643
Oykel	high territory (P)	Oiceall	OICHK-ul	NC385009
Papigoe	priest's geo (N)			ND384517
Pentland Firth	Pictland firth (N/S)	An Caol Arcach 'the Orcadian strait'	un koeul ARK-uch	ND280823
Pittentrail	the place (P) of the slaves/serfs (G)	Baile nan Tràill	bal-uh nun TRAAL	NC723023
Portskerra	skerry harbour (G)	Port Sgeire	porst SKAYR-uh	NC875656
Ramscraigs	raven's rocks (N/S)			ND135264
Rogart	great enclosed field (G)	Raoghard, (commonly Sgir' Raoghaird)	skeer ROEU-ard	NC724019
Rosehall	horse field (N)	Innis nan Lìon 'flax meadow'	in-ish nun LEE-un	NC479017
Rossal	horse field (N)	Rasail	RASS-ul	NC685035
Roster	horse farm (N)			ND260401
Rubha nan Sgarbh	the point of the cormorants (G)		roo-uh nun SKAR-av	NH700879
Sandside	sand farm (N)	Sanndasaid	SOWND-u-sitch	NC963653

Scaraben	(possibly) incised mountain (N/G)	Sgarabeinn	SKAR-uh bayn	ND066268
Scarfskerry	cormorant skerry (S)			ND265744
Scrabster	(possibly) gull farm (N)	Sgrabastal	SGRAB-u-stul	ND098701 NC592546
Selly Geo	seal geo (N)			ND383664
Sgeir Bhàn	fair skerry (G)	An Sgèir Bhàn	skayr VAAN	ND367778
Sgeir Gut	(possibly) skerry of (the) hole (G)		skayr GUT	ND360782
Shurrery	? -shieling (N)			ND038575
Sithean Liath	grey (fairy) hillock (G)	An Sithean Liath	shee-hun LEE-uh	NC337264
Sithean na Geàrra	the hillock of the hare (G)		shee-hun nuh GYAR-uh	ND086376
Skelbo	shell farm (N)	Sgeireabol	SKAY-ru-pul	NH790950
Skerry	skerry place (G)	Sgeiridh	SKAYR-ee	NC660631
Skibo	firewood farm (N)	Sgiobol	SKEEP-ul	NH736890
Sordale	wet or muddy valley (N)			ND149617
Sow's Geo				ND211763
Sròn an Tuirc	the ridge-end (nose) of the wild boar (G)		sròn un TOORK	NC542385
Sròn Gharbh	rough hill-end (nose) (G)		sròn GHAR-av	ND048262

St John's Loch				ND224721
Staxigoe	rock stack geo (N)			ND385524
Strathy	place of the strath (G)	Srathaidh	STRAH-hee	NC830656
Stroma	current isle (N)	Stròma	STRÒM-uh	ND354775
Sutherland	southern land (N)	Cataibh 'place of the Cat People'	KAHT-uv (KAT-oo in Sutherland Gaelic)	
Swordale	grassy valley (N)	Suardal	SOO-ur-dul	NH619912
Swordly	grassy slope (N)			NC736630
Thurso	(possibly) bull river (N)	Inbhir Theòrsa 'the mouth of the Thurso River'	in-yir HYÒRS-uh	ND115683
Toftgunn	Gunn's site (N/S)	Tobhta a' Ghunnaich	TOH-tuh uh GHOON-ich	ND275425
Tongue	tongue (of land) (N)	Tunga	TOONG-uh	NC591567
Tota an Drannain	the ruin of the whistling wind (G)	Tobhta an Drannain	TOH-tuh un DROWN-din	ND038579
Uaigh Dhiarmaid	Diarmad's grave (G)		oo-eye YEE-ur-uh-mitch	NC583515
Uamh Ròn	seal cave (G)		oo-uh RÒN	ND180306
Ùidh Loch na Gaineimh	the burn of the sandy loch (G)		oo-ee loch nuh GAN-yiv	NC740312
Ùidh nan Con Luatha	the burn of the fast dogs (G)		oo-ee nun kon LOO-uh-huh	NC841592
Ùidh Rabhain	the burn of the water grass (G)		oo-ee RAV-in (locally oo-ee RAF-in)	NC759578

Watten	loch (N)	Bhatan	VAHT-un	ND240544
Whaligoe	whale geo (N)			ND322402
Wick	bay (N)	Inbhir Ùige 'the mouth of the Wick River'	in-yir OO-ik-uh	ND365508



Pentland Firth
An Caol Arcach
Island of Stroma
Stròma
Duncansby Head
Ceann Dhunngain
John O' Groats
Taigh Iain Ghròt
Dunnet Head
Ceann Dùnaid

Eilean nan Ròn
Melvich
Mealabhaich
Thurso
Inbhir Theòrsa

Tongue
Tunga
Ben Loyal
Beinn Laghail

Wick
Inbhir Ùige

Ben Klibreck
Beinn Clibric

Latheron
Latharn
Dunbeath
Dùn Bheithe

Morven
A' Mhòr Bheinn

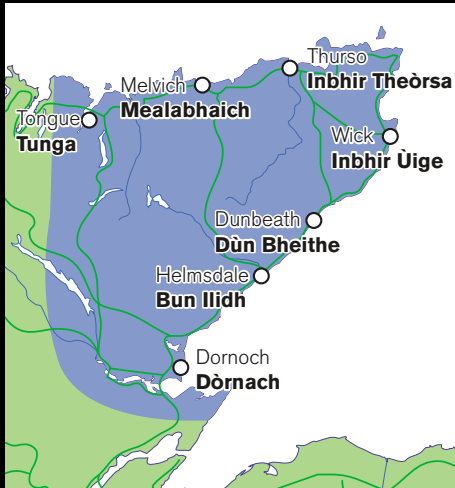
Helmsdale
Bun Iidh

Lairg
An Luirg

Brora
Brùra

Dornoch
Dòrnach

Dornoch Firth
Caolas Dhòrnaich



Gaelic and Norse in the Landscape

Place names in Caithness and Sutherland

A' Ghàidhlig is Lochlannais air Aghaidh na Tìre

Ainmean-àite ann an Gallaibh, Cataibh is Dùthaich MhicAoidh

Encompassing coastal cliffs, remote mountains, attractive towns and villages, and some globally renowned boglands, the landscape of Caithness and Sutherland is diverse and inspirational. No less inspirational is the heritage of language and culture intimately associated with that landscape. The place names were coined, to a very large degree, in Gaelic and Norse, and a thorough understanding of the landscape can only be obtained by engaging with those languages. Roddy Maclean is a Gaelic journalist and broadcaster based in the Highlands, and a regular visitor to Scandinavia. In this booklet he shares with us his enthusiasm for the Gaelic and Norse place names of the northern Highlands.

Tha tìr Ghallaibh, Chataibh is Dùthaich MhicAoidh air leth brèagha, a' gabhail a-steach creagan, geodhachan, bailtean, beanntan is boglaichean. Tha an dualchas cànanach is cultarach co-cheangailte ris an tìr sin, mar an ceudna, beartach is inntinneach. 'S ann às an t-Seann Lochlannais agus a' Ghàidhlig a dh'èirich a' chuid a bu mhotha de na h-ainmean-àite agus, airson aghaidh na tìre a leughadh is a thuigsinn, feumar gnothach a ghabhail ris an dà chànan sin. Tha Ruairidh MacIleathain na dheasaiche, sgrìobhadair is craoladair stèidhichte air a' Ghàidhealtachd, ag obair ann an Gàidhlig. Bidh e a' cuideachd a' tadhal air Lochlann gu tric. Anns an leabhran seo, tha e a' toirt dhuinn blas de dhualchas nan ainmean-àite Gàidhlig is Lochlannach ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba.