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SOME PLACE-NAMES IN THE CAIRNGORM  
REGION.

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AT the request of the Editor, who has provided me with a copy of the July issue, I have undertaken to write a few notes on this subject, which is naturally of interest to the members of the Club. It would not be very difficult, if the thing were gone about in the right way, to form an approximately complete list of the names within the Club's sphere of operations, in alphabetical order, in orthodox Gaelic spelling, and with authoritative interpretation of their meanings. For this there is one condition necessary, and that is that the names, so far as possible, shall be checked from the mouths of Gaelic speakers native to the surrounding districts, especially Badenoch and Braemar. This is not a piece of work that can be done by any chance man who can read and write Gaelic; it is work for an expert, and one who would do it with authority is the Rev. C. M. Robertson, U.F. Church, Kilchoman, Islay. If the Cairngorm Club can persuade Mr. Robertson to spend a summer holiday in Braemar and Badenoch, it will have done a good work. Once the data have been secured, the process of interpretation would not, I believe, in this particular case offer much difficulty. At present, however, there are by no means sufficient data as to the true forms of the

names, and it should be obvious that a discussion that does not start from firm data is futile. Yet this, if I may say so with respect, is exactly the character of the discussions in the number before me. The one thing needful, the native pronunciation in Gaelic, is the one thing that nobody thinks of ascertaining.

The name of the pass from Badenoch to Braemar is a case in point. All Gaelic speakers who have the native tradition call it *Làirig Dhrù*, and there is no doubt whatever that the name is connected with the stream Druie, at its Badenoch end. It seemed good, however, to some Ordnance Survey man to write it down not as it was, but as he thought it ought to be, and so we got the official *Làirig Ghruamach*, as we got thousands of "official" names besides. Dr. MacBain, our greatest authority on Gaelic philology, compared the river Druie with the Gaulish stream Druentia, and would connect both with the root of Gaelic *drùdhadh*, oozing, soaking. Those who follow Dr. MacBain will not, as a rule, find themselves far wrong.

The *Beinn Iutharn* problem proceeds on the same lines: data not ascertained. Here, however, the question is complicated by dialect. The native pronunciation is difficult to reproduce, but may be written *Beinn (Fh)ìùbharainn*, which is dialectic for *Beinn Fhaobharainn*, based on *faobhar*, edge. The dialectic peculiarity is that both in Braemar and on the south side of the Grampians, *faobhar* is palatalised into *fyaobhar*, which becomes in common speech *fiùbhar*. The same sort of palatalisation is heard in the dialectic pronunciation of "smooth" as "smyooth." *Faobhar na beinne*, the edge of the hill, is a well-known Gaelic expression, applied to the sloping part of the outline or sky-line of a hill, as opposed to the flat outline or sky-line of the top, which is *fàire*. The termination in *Beinn Fhiùbharainn* is not clear; it may be *roinn*, a point, spit, yielding the meaning "edge-point."

*Allt na Bienne* is truly an impossible form for Scottish Gaelic, whatever it might be for a possible

French variety. On the other hand, it does not follow that *Allt na Beinne* is right, though it is unquestionably good Gaelic. The question here again is—What do the Gaelic people call the stream? The best authority available to me assures me that it is called *Beanaidh* (Bennie) simply, without the addition of *allt* or *abhainn*. If so, the name belongs to the large class of stream names with the ending (*a*)*idh*, common in the North and East of Scotland—that is, in Pictland—e.g., Tromie, Geldie, Divie. The root may be that of old Irish *ben-im*, I smite.

Burn o' Vat is a correct translation of *Allt na Dabhaich*, which is the original. The term *dabhach* (davoeh) was applied to any large vat, but it is familiar to me only as applied to the vat used in connection with distilling, especially of a private nature. There is another *Allt na Dabhaich* at Dunvally, Ledaig. The secondary use of *dabhach*, as applied in Scotland to a measure of land, is well known.

Cairntoul has been often discussed. It is surely simply *Carn an t-sabhail*, Barn-cairn. What and where is the barn? *Carn Sabhail* in Ross means Cairn of Barns (plural) and it is noted for its grass. But among the Cairngorms, the term *sabhail* is used to denote, fancifully, wild rocks—e.g., *Sabhalan* Bynack, the barns of Bynack. I think Cairntable, in Galloway, is the same as Cairntoul, but whether the barn was real or metaphorical, I do not know here either.

The Devil's Point is known to be a euphemistic translation of *Bod an Deamhain*. To judge from the place-names, the Devil had quite a connection in Aberdeenshire—e.g., Bogenjohn, for *Bog an Deamhain*, the Devil's morass; and other places which I refrain from naming.

In Braeriach, "brae" is *bràigh*, upper part; seen in Braemar, Braemoray and many other instances, followed by a genitive case—"upper part of Mar," and so on. Here, however, it is qualified by the adjective *riabhach*, brindled, the name meaning "the brindled upland."

Derry is known in Gaelic as *an Doire*, the copse. The old name of Londonderry in Ireland is *Doire Calgaich*, Calgach's (= Calgacus) oak-copse, mentioned in Adamnan's "Life of Columba" (circ. 700 A.D.) as *Roboretum Calgaci*. But *doire* now means any kind of copse, not oak only. There is another Derry on the north side of Loch Earn, Perthshire, also *an Doire* in Gaelic.

Of Loch Etchachan I can say nothing, for I do not know whether the initial vowel is long or short as the word is pronounced in Gaelic.

Loch Avon takes its name from the stream that issues from it, and this is well named *Athfhinn*, the very white one, from the clearness of its water. Avon elsewhere usually represents *abhainn*, a river, but not here.

Loch Callater is in Gaelic pronounced *Loch Caladair*, and *Caladar* becomes in Scotch Cawdor. It is a stream name, a compound of *cal*, call, and *dobhàr*, water. It ought to be a sounding stream, like the *Calair* of Balquhiddy. The idea of "calling" is quite common in river names. Any one who has fished a pool below a little rapid at dead of night knows how the stream talks.

The same idea is seen in Lochnagar, in Gaelic *Loch na Gàire*, the loch of the outcry, with reference to the howling of the wind among the rocks. It is hardly necessary to say that now the name has been transferred from loch to mountain.

Glen Giusachan, or in Gaelic spelling *Giùthsachan*, means Glen of the little fir wood, the term *giùthsachan* being a diminutive of *giùthsach*, a fir wood, seen in *Cinn a' Ghiùthsach*, Kingussie, "at Firwood Head."

The name Corriemuillie occurs twice in Ross-shire as well as in Aberdeenshire. It means "Mill Corry," from *muileann*, mas. or fem., a mill; genitive, *muilne*, fem. The mills in question would have been, doubtless, of the old type with horizontal wheel connected directly by a rigid vertical shaft with the millstone above it; in fact, a water-driven quern. This kind of mill is still in active use in Lewis, where I saw one last year.

I have taken the above place-names at random from the July number of the *Journal*.