THE PLACE-NAMES OF SIX PARISHES IN CAITHNESS, SCOTLAND

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This thesis seeks to examine the place-names of six parishes in Caithness as recorded on the 6" Ordnance Survey maps of the region. The parishes in question are Reay, Thurso, Olrig, Dunnet, Canisbay and Wick.

The two opening chapters contain a commentary on the settlement history of Caithness as seen through its place-names and an evaluation of the role of the local informant in a study of Caithness names. Chapter Three provides distribution maps which illustrate points made in the opening chapters.

The ensuing chapters contain detailed comments on each individual place-name, quoting early references to the name where available and, when possible, suggesting a derivation. Local pronunciation is recorded if the name is still in use and it is frequently of great assistance in interpreting the name.

To facilitate reference the place-names are listed alphabetically by parish under the headings "Settlement Names" and "Topographical Names" and an alphabetical index of all names is provided at the end of the thesis.

This close examination of individual names has led to various conclusions regarding the naming practices and settlement patterns of the linguistic groups who have inhabited Caithness and have left evidence of their presence in the place-names.

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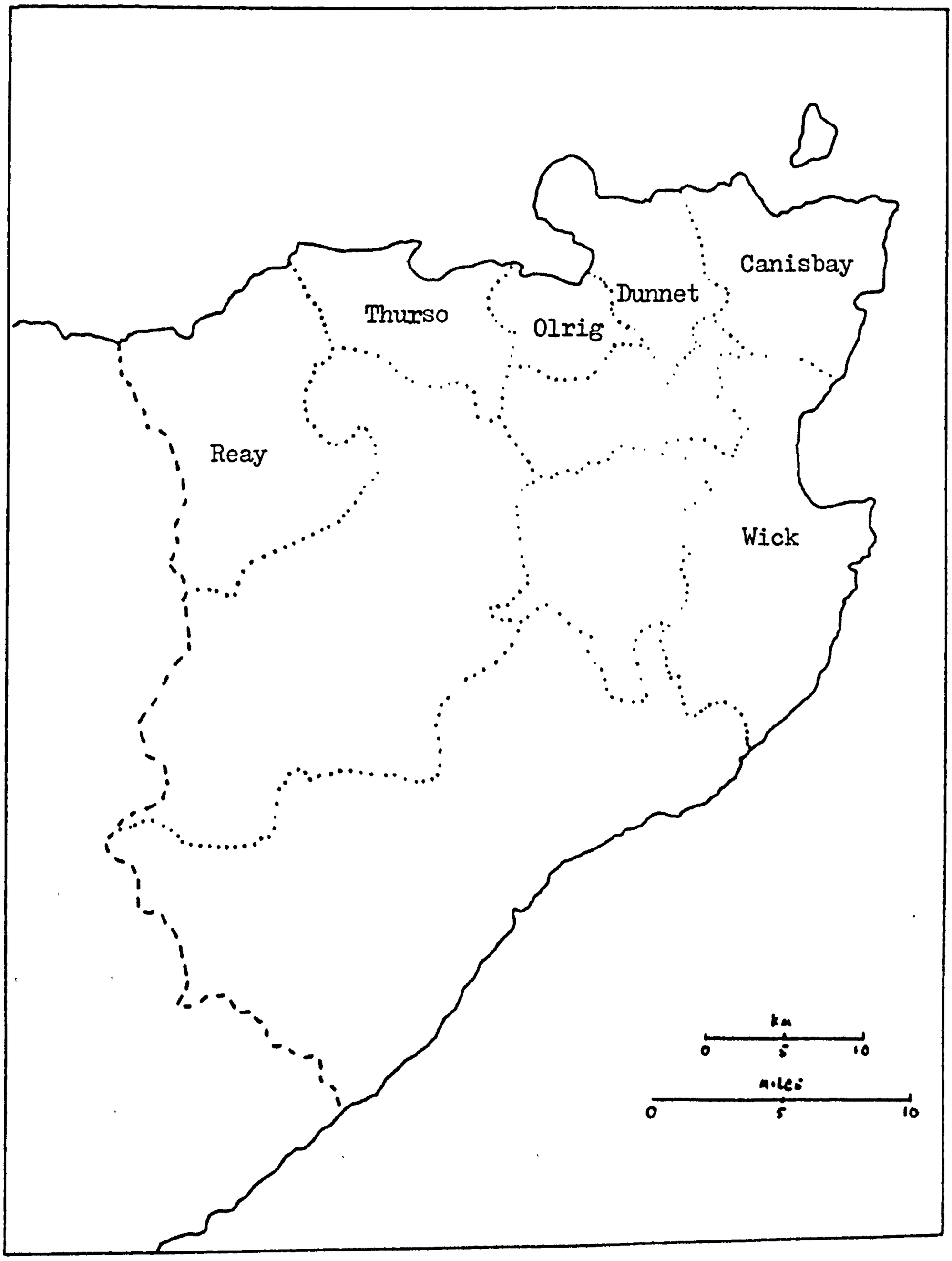

Canisbay
Dunnet
Thurso
Olrig
Reay
Wick
km
0
5
10
miles
0
5
10

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine all the names which are listed on the recent 6" Ordnance Survey maps for the parishes of Reay, Thurso, Olrig, Dunnet, Canisbay and Wick, in Caithness. The names are listed alphabetically by parish and have been further sub-divided into "Settlement" and "Topographical" names.

The individual names are referred to by the initial of the parish in which they occur, their number in the alphabetical list and either (S) = settlement or (T) = topographical. Hence the first name in the list of settlement names for Reay Parish is referred to as R1(S). In the case of Olrig Parish, the parish reference is OL to avoid confusion with zero. The island of Stroma is part of Canisbay Parish but names on Stroma have been listed separately at the end of Chapter VIII under the initial S for Stroma.

Names listed in the "Settlement" sections are those which refer to places where the landscape has been subject to some form of human activity. There is an occasional exception to this rule, when evidence of the human activity has vanished and only a stream name records its earlier existence, in which case the stream is listed in the "Topographical" section with an appropriate explanation.

It is frequently the case that several names are listed under any one number, particularly in the "Settlement" sections, and when this happens the first name listed is always a croft or farm name, unless otherwise stated in the ensuing explanation. Subsequent names frequently refer to topographical features which have been named after the settlement listed initially. Strict alphabetical order has not been maintained within these derivative names because it often seemed to give unnecessary prominence to a very minor name by placing it, for instance, second in the list of names. The names have, therefore, been very loosely organised according to their local significance.

Local pronunciation and early references to a name in written documents are listed when available, prior to the suggested derivation.

Acknowledgements

I should like to express my gratitude to the University of Edinburgh for the award of a Faculty of Arts Scholarship without which I would have been unable to embark on research for this thesis.

It would be impossible to mention by name everyone who has helped me in my research and I should like to say a general thank you to all those people who have so willingly given advice, information and hospitality. Special mention should be made of seven principal Caithness informants whose names are listed on page 37. I am deeply grateful for their invaluable assistance.

Specific thanks is also due to my two supervisors, Professor John MacQueen and Mr. Ian Fraser, who have patiently answered my innumerable queries. Mrs. Jane Davidson, who typed the thesis with such care and attention, deserves a very special word of thanks.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to my long-suffering husband and sons without whose co-operation and support this project would have foundered in its infancy.

Abbreviations and symbols

[ ]	:	brackets used to enclose a spoken form
< >	:	brackets used to enclose a written form
<	:	derived from
>	:	taking the form
AD	:	Anno Domini
adj	:	adjective
c	:	circa
C	:	century
Cai	:	Caithness dialect of Scots
cf	:	compare
compar	:	comparative
CP	:	Canisbay Parish
Dan	:	Danish
dat	:	dative
def art	:	definite article
deriv	:	derivative
dial	:	dialect
dimin	:	diminutive
docs	:	documents
DOST	:	see bibliography under A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue
DP	:	Dunnet Parish
Du	:	Dutch
EDD	:	see bibliography under The English Dialect Dictionary
ed./edit.	:	editor
emE	:	early middle English
Eng	:	English

etc.	:	et cetera
exc.	:	except
f.	:	feminine
Flem.	:	Flemish
G	:	Gaelic
gen	:	genitive
Gen Sc	:	General Scots
Ger	:	German
Icel.	:	Icelandic
id	:	idem
ie	:	id est
ISc	:	Insural Scots
Jak	:	Jakobsen
m.	:	masculine
ME	:	Middle English
mod	:	modern
Mod Eng	:	Modern English
Ms./MSS	:	manuscript/manuscripts
MSc	:	Middle Scots
n.	:	neuter
n. Eng dial	:	northern English dialect
N England	:	Northern England
no.	:	number
nom	:	nominative
Norw	:	Norwegian
NSA/2nd Stat Acc	:	see bibliography under New Statistical Account
obs	:	obsolete
OE	:	Old English

OIr	:	Old Irish
OLM	:	see bibliography under Old Lore Miscellany
OL P	:	Olrig Parish
ON	:	Old Norse
OPS	:	see bibliography under Origines Parochiales Scotiae
ORK	:	Orkney
OS	:	Ordnance Survey
OSA (Old Statistical Account)	:	see bibliography under The Statistical Account
OSc	:	Older Scots
OSh	:	Old Shetlandic
OWSc/ OWScand	:	Old West Scandinavian
part.	:	participle
pl	:	plural
POAS	:	Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society, Kirkwall
p./pp.	:	page/pages
PSAS	:	Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
ref(s)	:	reference(s)
RMS	:	see bibliography under Register of the Great Seal
RP	:	Reay Parish
RSS	:	see bibliography under Register of the Privy Seal
S	:	Settlement
Sc	:	Scots
SE Scotland	:	South East Scotland
Sh/Shet	:	Shetland, Shetlandic
sing	:	singular
SND	:	Scottish National Dictionary

SRO	:	Scottish Record Office
T	:	Topographical
TGSI	:	Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness
TP	:	Thurso Parish
Vol.	:	Volume
WP	:	Wick Parish

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT

A factual account of the settlement history of Caithness, using place-names as evidence of the various linguistic groups who have inhabited the area, must begin with the movement of Norse settlers into Caithness during the ninth century; c800 AD at the earliest. However, although place-name evidence relating to the period prior to the Norse is scanty and somewhat tenuous it is worth making a few observations based on the information available.

The name Péttlandsfjörðr (see C80(T)) which occurs in Orkneyinga Saga in the twelfth century indicates clearly that the Norse in Orkney identified the people on the opposite shore as Picts and, furthermore, the name Katanes itself, which also occurs in Orkneyinga Saga, meaning "headland of the Cats", specifies that these Picts belonged to the tribe designated Cats, an appellation which is still preserved in the modern Gaelic name for Sutherland, ie Cataibh, from the old i Cattaib, "among the Cats". (Watson 1926, page 30)

It seems likely, given the normal range of reference of the generic ON nes n.: see T13(S), that Katanes, although subsequently more widely applied, referred in the first instance to Duncansby Head and the area behind it which would have been clearly perceived as a ness from the point of view of the Norse in Orkney. In conjunction, therefore, with what could be interpreted as a greater Norse awareness of the presence of the Cats in the hinterland of Duncansby Head it is worth giving special attention to the two place-names Canisbay (see C5(S)) and Duncansby (see C7(S)). It is suggested in the section dealing with individual place-names that the specifics in both these names represent early Celtic personal names and that the generic in both instances is OWScand bær which, in Norway, seems to have been generally used of an isolated farmhouse and perhaps also originally of cultivated land. (Fellows-Jensen 1972, page 6)

These are the only two examples of names containing OWScand bær in the present sample, although the element is comparatively common in Orkney and Marwick suggests that it can be regarded as "the most characteristic of the primary settlement names". (Marwick 1952, page 247) While not agreeing entirely with Marwick's

premise Wainwright does accept that "most of the Orkney examples do in fact indicate areas of earliest settlement". (Wainwright 1962, page 139) It has also been argued that names in bǽr tend to be secondary names that had replaced an older name for a primary farm. (Fellows-Jensen 1983, page 40)

Perhaps by the time Caithness was settled by Scandinavians coming from Orkney the generic bǽr had come to be regarded as an appropriate description of an already established farm-settlement, whether Norse or otherwise and it could, therefore, be applied to the important single farm occupied by a Pict with a Celtic personal name in the case of Duncansby and, possibly, to a small group of farms occupied by members of another Pictish family also bearing a Celtic name in the case of Canisbay. These Norse names in -bǽr could perhaps have replaced earlier Pictish names for these settlements.

The fact that these Picts had Celtic personal names does not necessarily prove that they themselves spoke Celtic as Wainwright has observed (Wainwright 1962, page 110-111) and there is no firm evidence in the place-names to indicate the linguistic affiliations of the pre-Norse inhabitants of Caithness.

There are some names in the present sample which are extremely difficult to etymologise and which could, therefore, conceivably be pre-Norse (eg Dunnet: see D11(S)) and no doubt there are other place-names of similar origin which have not been recognised as such because they have been distorted by subsequent Norse or Gaelic influence. Even granted, however, that several of the pre-Norse names may not yet have been recognised, it is difficult to provide a completely satisfactory explanation to account for the paucity of place-name material from this early period.

The most convincing explanation is that the Norse settlement pattern and type of land-use differed in some fundamental respect from that of the prior settlers whose place-names were, therefore, functionally redundant as well as being linguistically obscure and would have had little chance of survival. If, in conjunction with

this, the indigenous Pictish population is seen as having been willing to blend with and adopt the way of life and ultimately the language of the Norse incomers it is not too surprising that their place-names have been lost.

Archaeological evidence for the period of Norse settlement in Caithness is regrettably scanty and is concentrated on the late Viking site of Freswick (see C9(S)) which is described in Shetelig 1954, pages 31-63 and in Batey 1982, pages 45-49. The findings of the archaeologists, however, concur with place-name evidence in suggesting that there was no lasting cultural exchange between the previous inhabitants of the area and the Scandinavian settlers. In fact, Shetelig goes so far as to say that "the general impression derived from the excavation is that the Norwegian settlers in Caithness brought with them a distinctive culture of their own, which, through the period of two or three hundred years in which they flourished in the county, remained entirely unaffected by the indigenous culture of the region." (Shetelig 1954, page 62)

It is possible that Caithness may have been settled by Orkney Scandinavians at a date slightly later than the initial period of settlement in Orkney - perhaps a generation later - but place-name evidence to this effect is ambiguous. Caithness and Orkney are very similar geologically and the Scandinavians in Orkney would certainly have seen Caithness as a very desirable area for territorial expansion. No doubt, some Scandinavians did come to Caithness via Orkney. It is also likely, however, that other settlers came direct from those parts of Norway which have been identified as sources of emigration, ie the coastal areas of south-west Norway, the fylker of Agder, Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Møre and Trøndelag. (Wainwright 1962, page 146)

The argument for postulating a slightly earlier date for the settlement of Orkney than that of Caithness hinges on the absence of the generic staðir (plural of ON staðr m.: a homestead) from Caithness place-names, whereas it is comparatively common in Orkney. It does seem reasonable to argue that since Caithness and Orkney are so closely situated and so similar in their physical geography

the pattern of settlement and, therefore, the place-name generics used to define the elements within that pattern ought to have been similar, at least initially, in both areas, if they had been settled contemporaneously.

It is, however, equally possible to argue that the two areas were settled at the same time and social factors subsequently came into play to make staðir an inappropriate generic in the Caithness situation.

My impression is that the earliest settlement names in Caithness were, in fact, descriptions of the topography of the area in which the homestead was situated, and that the "settlement" generics such as setr, bólstaðr etc. (see distribution maps pp. 15, 17) came into use when a more numerous community of farms was in the process of being established, and individual units within that community required to have their function and situation defined in relation to other farms. Some of the "topographical" settlement names are extremely well-documented by northern Scottish standards, which would tend to support the theory that they were established settlements from a very early period.

Names which might be placed in this category can be seen on the distribution map of "Topographical" settlement names (see map p. 13) The names are fairly evenly scattered along the north and east coast of Caithness but they are noticeably absent from the area behind Duncansby Head, perhaps giving added support to the idea that there was already settlement in this area and, therefore, topographical descriptions were not deemed sufficiently precise as indicators of new settlement. These topographical names are likewise absent from the area behind Dunnet Head (see D11(S)), a name which has been tentatively identified as being pre-Norse and which would, therefore, imply prior settlement in the Dunnet area as well.

As can be seen from the map the heaviest concentration of such names is between the Forss Water in Reay Parish and Warse in Canisbay Parish, although the names are also evenly spread along the coast

from Freswick to the southern extremity of Wick Parish.

To argue that the earliest names are those containing topographical descriptions does not invalidate the argument previously expressed that the absence of staðir from Caithness names suggests later settlement of Caithness than Orkney. It seems very probable that the same initial process of naming farms after local topographical features would have taken place in Orkney, followed by the use of settlement generics during the period of consolidation of settlement.

Other settlement generics which are in common use in Orkney but comparatively scarce in Caithness are ON setr (see R33(S)), ON garðr (see OL14(S)) and ON skáli (see R67(S)). These names likewise appear to be restricted in their distribution to the area along the north coast of Caithness. Skáli and garðr are isolated occurrences in the names Skiall (see R67(S)) and Garth (see OL14(S)) and, like staðir, might be seen to indicate that by the time Caithness was settled these generics had, for some reason, waned in popularity.

There are nine examples of compound names in setr and one example of setr as a simplex name, ie Seater in Canisbay Parish (see C28(S)). (see map p. 15) This latter place-name occurs in the area behind Duncansby Head which has already been suggested as a place where there was pre-Norse settlement and where topographical names would, therefore, not be appropriate for new settlements. If the Scandinavians were attracted to this area at an early stage in the colonisation of Caithness, perhaps because it had already been subject to cultivation, a simplex settlement name would have been adequate as a distinguishing reference to an early Norse farm. Compound names in which the generic setr occurs could indicate a period of consolidation of settlement either prior to or occurring simultaneously with the major expansion which is mirrored in the distribution of the settlement generic ON bólstaðr: see R21(S).

The only possible example of bólstaðr occurring as a simplex name is in Loch of Bushta (see D42(T)) which, significantly, is

situated behind Dunnet Head, a name which may be pre-Norse. The same comments could, therefore, be made of this simplex settlement name, as were made of Seater in Canisbay Parish. Unfortunately, no trace of the settlement beside the Loch of Bushta now remains and lack of early references makes the origin of the name uncertain.

Early written references to place-names, when available, demonstrate clearly that bólstaðr was the most popular descriptive term for a farm during the period of Scandinavian settlement in Caithness. These bolstaðr names are heavily concentrated on the western and south-eastern extremities of the area at present being examined (see map p. 17), and it would appear to be the case that they also extend southwards into those Caithness parishes which are not included in the present sample, ie Halkirk, Bower, Watten and Latheron.

Without early written references it would be very easy to confuse names containing bólstaðr with those containing setr because the element bólstaðr has been subject to much greater phonological reduction in Caithness than in either Orkney or Shetland. This may, perhaps, have resulted from the fact that it was not necessary to maintain the aural distinction between setr and bólstaðr names in Caithness, because setr names were of very limited occurrence.

Norse generics which can be interpreted as indicators of further exploitation of a landscape already settled by Scandinavians are quoy (see T22(S)) and toft (see OL33(S)) (see map p. 23), but it is more interesting to consider these in conjunction with the movement of Gaelic speaking people into Caithness from the west and south in the twelfth or even thirteenth century which probably put pressure on the Scandinavians to utilise to greater effect the land which they already controlled on the east side of the county.

Norse influence in Caithness lasted for some centuries after the Treaty of Perth (1266) and, indeed, can still be seen in the strong Norse element in the Caithness dialect which contains many

lexical items of Norse origin. As regards place-names it is often difficult to decide whether a name is of actual Norse or of subsequent local Caithness origin, unless it has been recorded in writing at an early date. Elements such as gill, ness, skerry etc. fall into this indeterminate category and in the section relating to individual names such terms are described as Caithness (Cai) rather than Old Norse (ON) to indicate that while it is possible that they were coined by Scandinavians, it is equally possible that they may have been coined at a much later date by Caithness Scots. If both specific and generic in a compound name are of Norse origin the former may be more probable but if, as frequently happens, the generic is combined with a Scots (Sc) specific the latter must be the case.

Much has been said of the apparent linguistic confrontation between Scandinavian and Gael as evidenced in the place-names. It has been argued that "the boundary line between Gaelic and Norse Caithness must have been established before the end of the ninth century". (Nicolaisen 1982, page 80) This "boundary line" must have been roughly concomitant with the present Sutherland/Caithness boundary. Nicolaisen also argues that "the confrontation along this line can be expected to have stopped effectively both the strong north/north-eastward movement of the Gaelic-speaking Scots and the south-westerly expansion of the settlement area of the Scandinavian-speaking Norsemen, and there seems to have been very little change in that situation before the twelfth or even thirteenth century." (Nicolaisen 1982, page 80)

The movement of Gaelic-speaking people into Caithness increased in strength and spatial extent until the early years of the eighteenth century. The most obvious onomastic marker of the spread of Gaelic settlement is the generic achadh (see R1(S)) which, within the present six parishes, is heavily concentrated on the west side of the county. There are twenty-two examples of names in achadh in Reay Parish, one in Thurso Parish and one in Wick Parish. (see map p. 20)

This concentration of achadh names in Reay Parish reflects both early and continuing settlement by Gaelic-speaking people in the area.

Gaelic was, in fact, spoken in Reay Parish until the twentieth century and although the language would now appear to have died out as a means of everyday communication, there are still people who can readily offer translations of some Gaelic names.

Although it is extremely difficult to date names in achadh due to the unfortunate lack of early documentary references to Gaelic names, it seems likely that some of these names were coined at an early period when Gaels were establishing themselves in farms in previously Norse-controlled territory. Names such as Achunabust (see R21(S)) which combines G achadh with a Norse settlement name, suggest a process of secondary settlement by Gaels close to an earlier Norse farm.

It seems likely that pressure from the Gaelic-speaking west probably persuaded Norse settlers to withdraw gradually from farms in Reay Parish to establish secondary farms in the strongly Scandinavian east of the county. It was suggested earlier that the generics quoy (see T22(S)) and toft (see OL33(S)) could be seen as indicators of secondary settlement by Scandinavians on the east side of the county and it seems reasonable to argue that at least some of the quoy and toft names are contemporary with early achadh names mirroring a parallel development of secondary farms, although peopled by members of different linguistic groups.

Unfortunately, any attempt to prove conclusively that these three generics are chronologically compatible is foiled by the inadequacy of early documentary sources, particularly in the case of names of Gaelic origin as mentioned earlier.

Gaelic was, of course, spoken more widely than in Reay Parish and a very useful assessment of the extent of Gaelic at the end of the eighteenth century is given in the First Statistical Account 1791-99. Comments for the various parishes are as follows:-

Reay: The Gaelic or Erse language is chiefly spoken through this parish. Many indeed now speak both Gaelic and English.

Thurso: The language generally spoken is the English. The Gaelic

is spoken by a few, but it is yearly losing ground.

Olrig: (No comment given, but it would obviously occupy the intermediate stage between Thurso and Dunnet.)

Dunnet: The English language only is spoken by the original inhabitants. The few Highlanders remaining still partly retain the Gaelic.

Canisbay: The language spoken is the common dialect of the lowlands of Scotland.

Wick: The language spoken over all the parish is, with the exception of that of some Gaelic incomers, a dialect of the lowland Scottish.

It is interesting to note the distinction made in both Dunnet and Wick Parishes between the local Caithness person and the Gael.

In those parishes where Gaelic was spoken during the eighteenth century there are still many names containing Gaelic elements, although these tend to be more numerous in the topographical rather than the settlement sections. Incidentally, Gaelic appears to be much more minutely descriptive as a naming language than Norse and some of the Gaelic topographical names might almost be categorised as descriptions rather than names.

The major difference between Norse and Gaelic as naming languages, however, seems to be in the nature of the specifics used with settlement generics. Personal names as specifics are extremely common with Norse settlement generics but do not occur with either achadh or baile which are the major Gaelic settlement generics. This could simply reflect a difference in naming practice but it is much more likely that it reflects a fundamental difference in the nature or management of the settlements being described. A personal name as specific does suggest that the farm is a clearly defined individual unit within a system, whereas a more general specific need not necessarily indicate such precise organisation into individual units.

Both Gaelic and Norn eventually gave way to Scots, which first moved into the east side of Caithness circa 1400 and, thereafter,

spread gradually northwards and westwards, eventually superseding Gaelic in Reay Parish in the first half of the twentieth century. It is impossible to suggest a precise date for the superseding of Norn on the east side of the county because Caithness Scots, like Insular Scots, contains many lexical items of Scandinavian origin and the merging of Norn and Scots must have been a gradual process. The consequent difficulty in dating dialect items such as gill, ness, skerry etc. has already been mentioned.

A related difficulty is experienced in identifying the language of origin of those settlement generics which are either identical or very similar in form in both Norse and Scots. Sc toun (see R46(S))/ON tún (see R32(S)) and Sc land (see T49(S)) and ON land (see OL16(S)) fall into this category and lack of early documents makes it impossible to decide when the name was coined or by whom.

Early settlement names of certain Scots origin tend to be in the vicinity of the two main towns, Thurso and Wick, reflecting the fact that Scots was the language of commerce and it was, therefore, logical that place-names of Scots origin should be clustered around the centres of commerce.

The widespread influence of Scots, however, can be most clearly seen in the use of generics which indicate the progressive subdivision and organisation of the landscape into economically viable agricultural units. The most important farm in the district, situated on the best land available, is usually referred to as ... Mains or, alternatively, Mains of ... (see map p. 26) (For comments on the Mains of ... pattern see Nicolaisen 1976, pages 62-64.) Generics indicating lesser farms or those which infer a particular type of agricultural unit are field, park, farm, smallholding and croft. Names containing Mains have been plotted on a map (p. 26) as an illustration of the distribution of Scots generics. Mains farms are noticeably absent from the west side of Reay Parish reflecting partly the recent predominance of Gaelic and partly the poor quality of the soil. The generic croft is much more common in

Reay Parish.

Contrasting specifics can also be used to indicate the process of subdivision. Examples of these are Old ../New .., East ../West .., North ../South .., Upper ../Lower .. and Nether ../Over .. although it has been suggested that this latter pair could sometimes be of Norse rather than Scots origin.

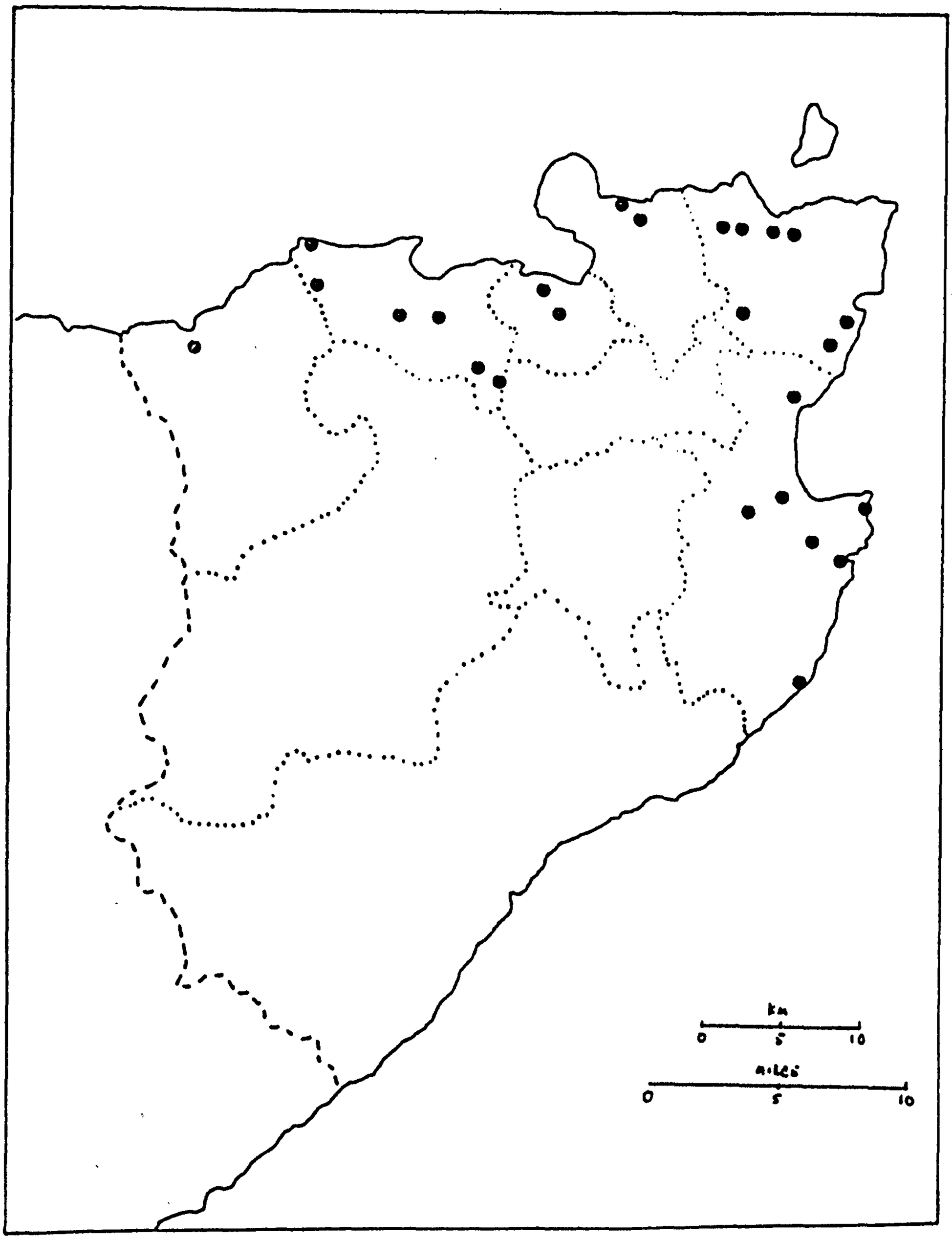
The present-day Caithness agricultural landscape gives an impression of effective land-use resulting from meticulous organisation of agricultural units. Gradual improvements, resulting in a more ordered countryside with improved access routes, were made by landlords during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and these improvements were already visible when the First Statistical Account was compiled in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In his introduction to the recent reprint of the Statistical Account, Malcolm Gray singles out Mr. Traill of Castlehill in the parish of Olrick as being particularly notable for introducing improvements on his estate (The Statistical Account, Vol. XVIII, page XIV) and mention must also be made of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, the instigator of the First Statistical Account, a man dedicated to agrarian reform on his own estates and beyond. His nickname, "Agricultural Sir John", reflects his local significance and Caithness undoubtedly benefited from his far-sighted suggestions for improvement and rationalisation of farming methods.

CHAPTER TWO: DISTRIBUTION OF PLACE-NAME ELEMENTS

Distribution of place-name generics

General comments have been made in Chapter One on the information contained in these distribution maps. I should, however, emphasise that I am well aware of the dangers of generalising from an artificially delimited sample, although the cross-section of names represented in this thesis has been carefully chosen to illustrate the merging of the various linguistic strands present in Caithness.

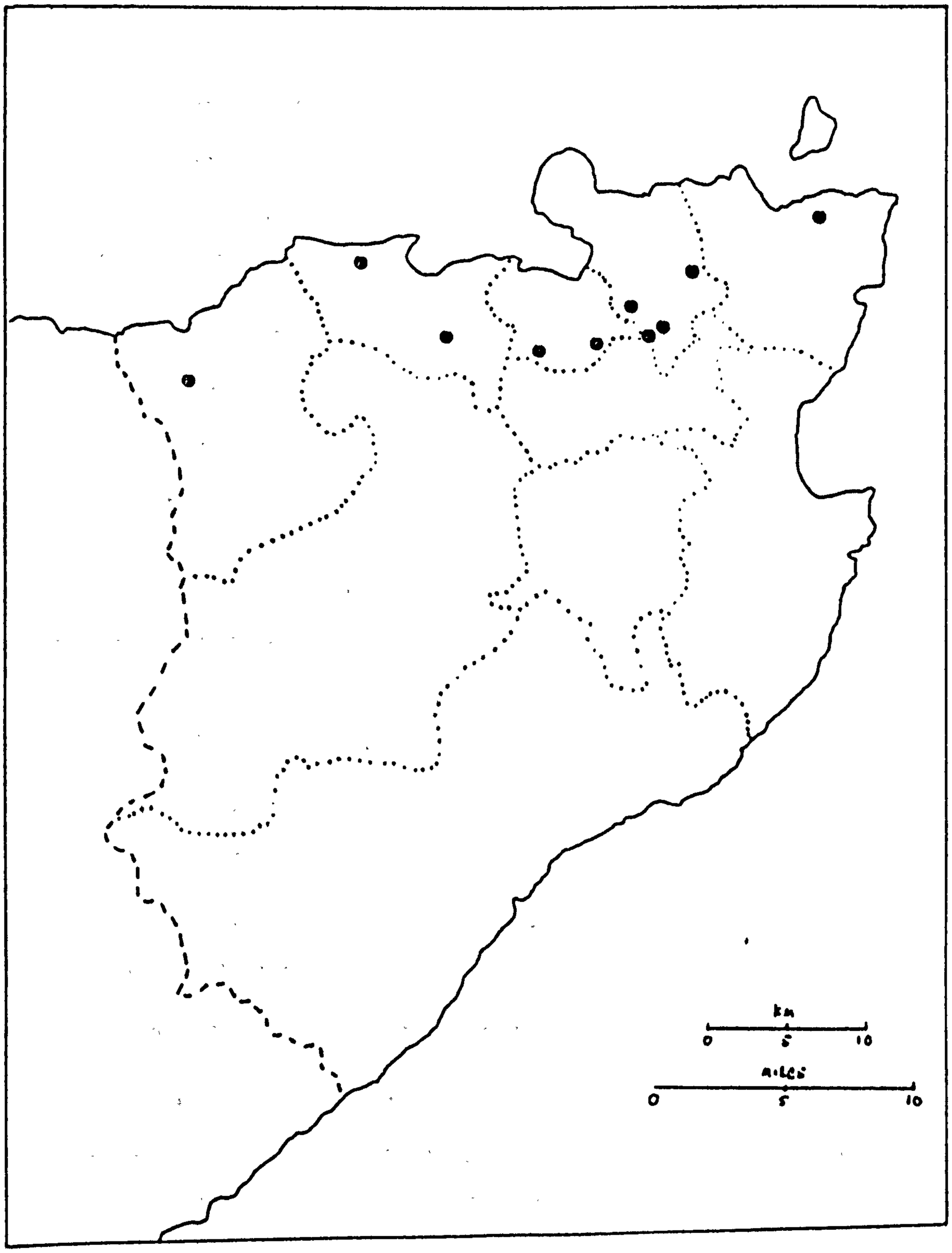
Ideally the whole of Caithness should be studied in depth before drawing distribution maps.



"Topographical" settlement names

"Topographical" settlement names

Reay	(Reay Parish)
Brims	(Thurso Parish)
Carsgoe	(")
Forss	(")
Geise	(")
Sordale	(")
Weydale	(")
Murkle	(Olrig Parish)
Olrig	(")
Ham	(Dunnet Parish)
Rattar	(")
Auckingill	(Canisbay Parish)
Gills	(")
Harley	(")
Mey	(")
Rigifa	(")
Slickly	(")
Warse	(")
Gillock	(Wick Parish)
Keiss	(")
Noss	(")
Reiss	(")
Sarclet	(")
Wick	(")
Winless	(")



Names containing "setr"

Names containing setr

There is one example of a simplex name in setr:

Seater (Canisbay Parish)

The specifics in the compound names containing setr can be categorised as follows:

1) Scandinavian personal names (4 instances)

Shalmstry (Thurso Parish)
Thusater (")

Fryster (Olrig Parish)

Hunster (Dunnet Parish)

2) words denoting situation as defined by some significant feature of the landscape (3 instances)

Helshetter (Reay Parish)

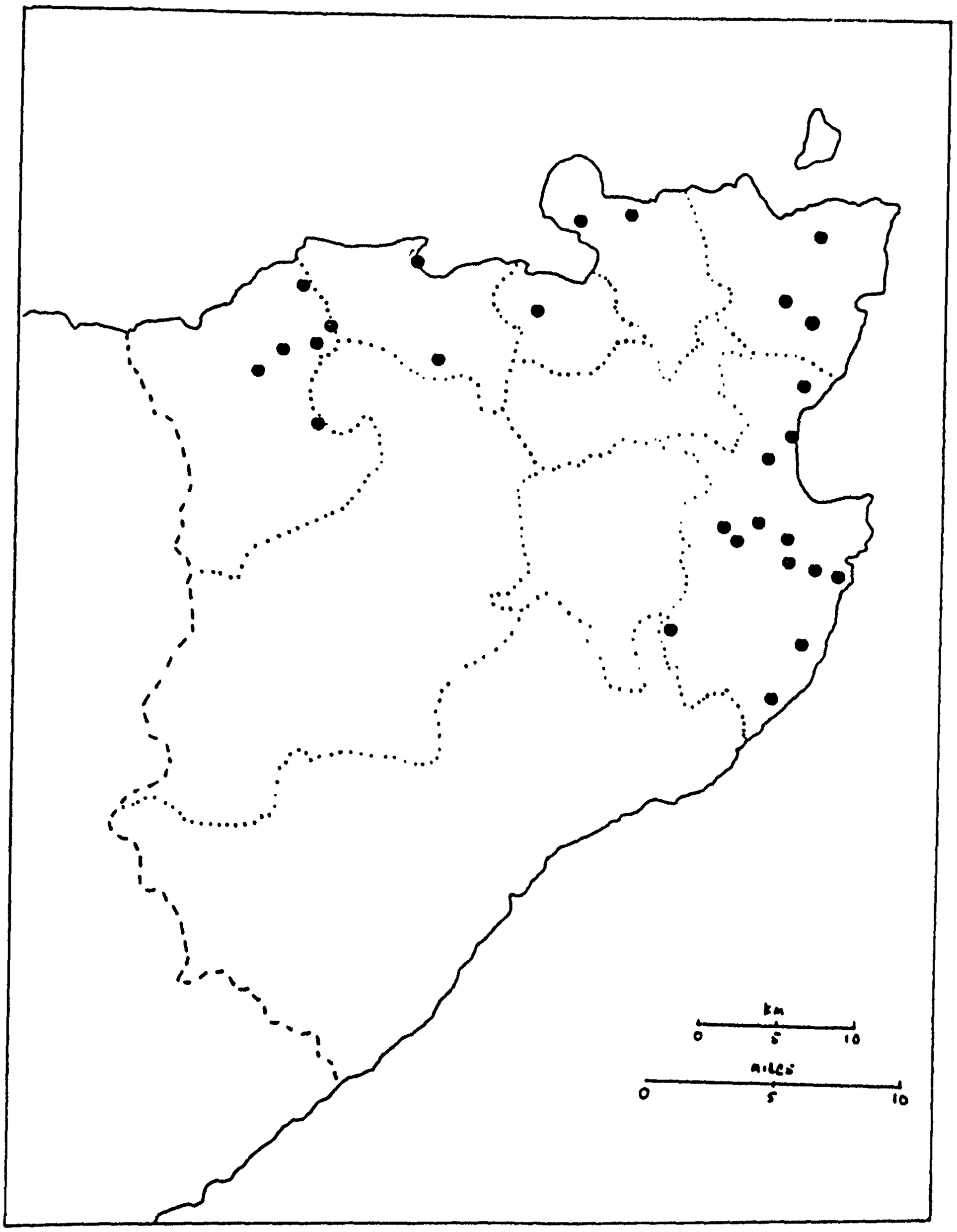
Hasters (Dunnet Parish)
Reaster (")

3) words denoting position of the farm in relation to a community of farms (2 instances)

Wester (Olrig Parish)

Syster (Dunnet Parish)

(Wester should possibly be included in the previous category depending on interpretation of the specific.)



Names containing "bólstaðr"

Names containing bólstaðr

The specifics in the bólstaðr names can be categorised as follows:

1) Scandinavian personal names (9 instances)

Achunabust	(Reay Parish)
Loanscorribest	(")
Aimster	(Thurso Parish)
Scrabster	(")
Bilbster	(Wick Parish)
Humster	(")
Ingimster	(")
Thuster	(")
Ulbster	(")

2) words denoting position, size, age or function of the farm in relation to a community of farms (11 instances)

Broubster	(Reay Parish)
Sibmister	(Olrig Parish)
Wester	(Dunnet Parish)
Brabster	(Canisbay Parish)
Stroupster	(")
Killimster	(Wick Parish)
Nybster	(")
Sibster	(")
Thrumster	(")
Wester	(")

Shebster (Reay Parish) probably also belongs to this group, although the specific is uncertain.

3) words denoting situation as defined by some significant feature of the landscape in the vicinity (6 instances)

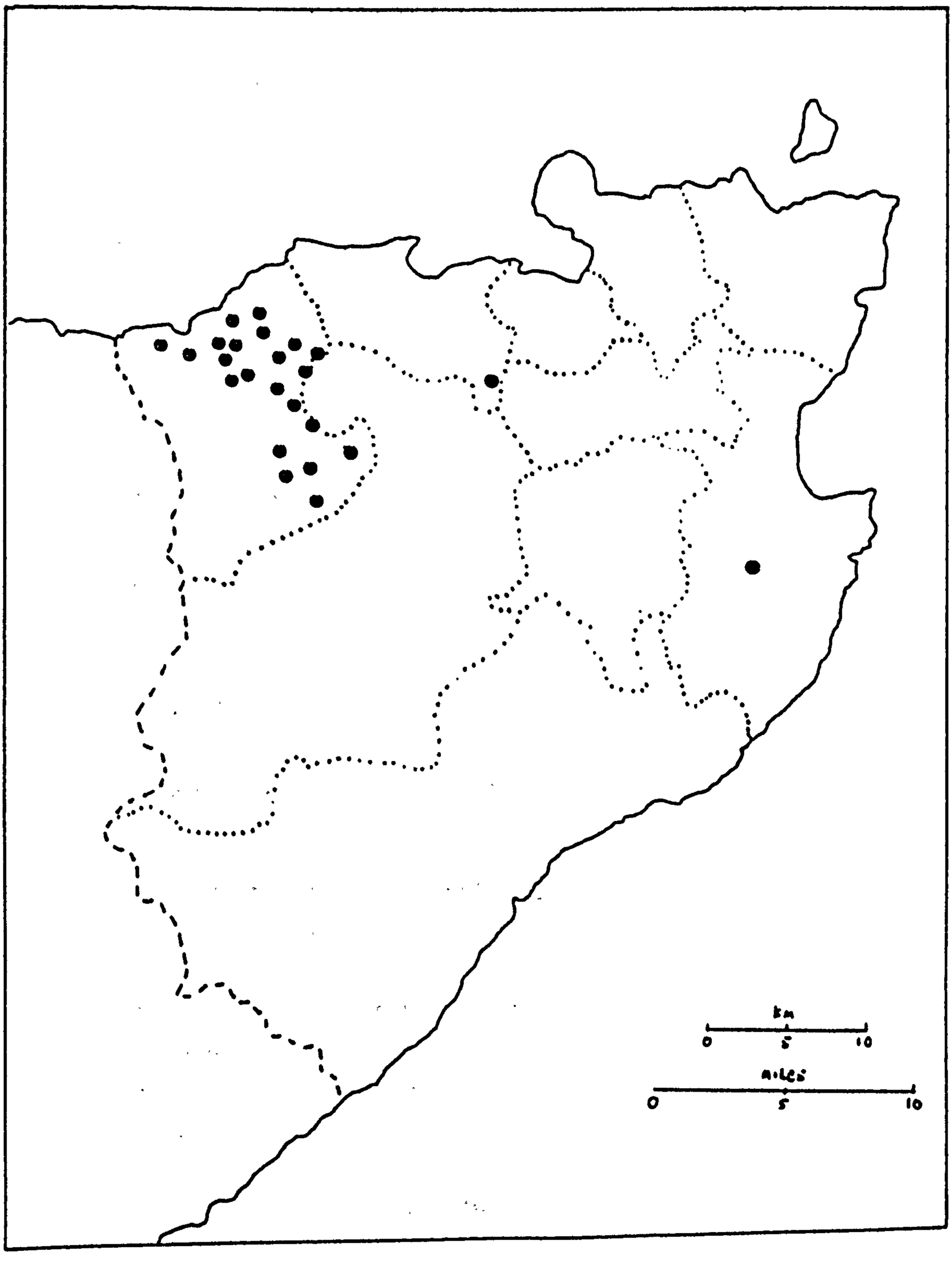
Lybster (Reay Parish)
Stemster (")

Stemster (Canisbay Parish)

Camster (Wick Parish)
Haster (")
Stemster (")

(The two examples of Wester should possibly be included in this category, depending on interpretation of the specific.)

4) There is one possible example of bólstaðr as a simplex name, which is Loch of Bushta (Dunnet Parish). The name now refers only to the Loch and there is no trace of settlement in its immediate vicinity.



Names containing "achadh"

Names containing achadh

The achadh names can be categorised as follows:

1) names in which the specific denotes some feature of the landscape, either natural or resulting from human activities (9 instances)

Achairn (Wick Parish)
Achalone (Reay Parish)
Achanaon (")
Achaveilan (")
Achbuiligan (")
Achins (")
Achnabeinn (")
Achnacarich (")
Achnacly (")
Achrasker (")

2) Gaelic-Norse hybrid names in which G achadh is the specific (7 instances)

Achforsiescye (Reay Parish)
Achiebraeskiall(")
(This name contains 2 Gaelic specifics: see R8(S))
Achreamie (Reay Parish)
Achsteenclate (")
Achunabust (")
Achvarasdal (")

Achingills (Thurso Parish)

3) names in which the specific is an adjective (3 instances)

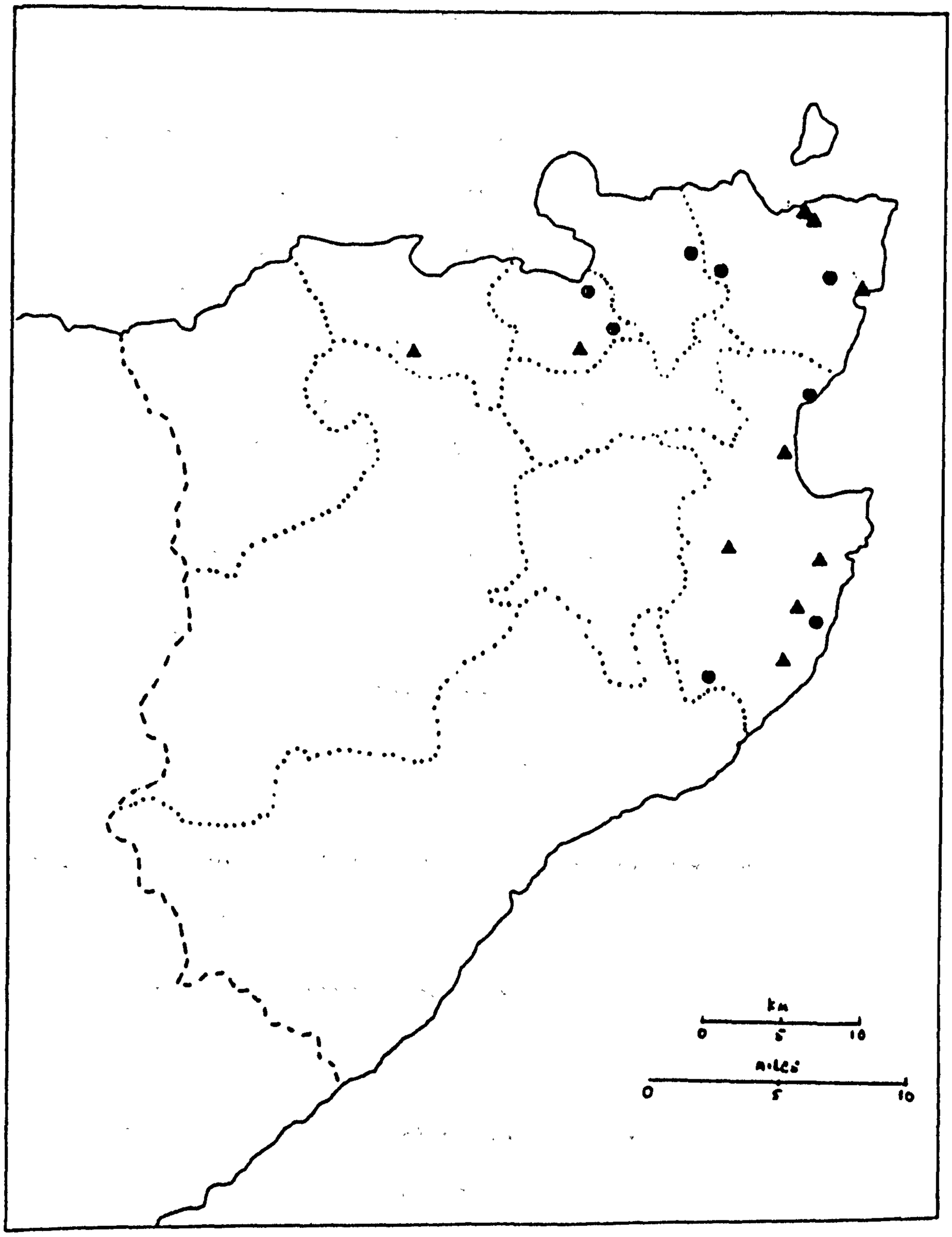
Achibegg (Reay Parish)
Achimenach (")
Achimore (")

4) names in which the specific denotes animals or humans (2 instances)

Achadh na Gaodha (Reay Parish)
Achiegullan (")

5) names in which the specific is obscure

Achiveigle (Reay Parish)
Achreregan (")



● Names containing "toft"

▲ Names containing "quoy"

Names containing "toft" and "quoy"

Toft

There is one example of a simplex name in toft:

Tofts (Canisbay Parish)

Toft resembles quoy in that it can be defined by its attachment to an already established community of farms (1 instance)

Tofts of Tain (Olrig Parish)

or by its function as land which can be exploited by a particular sector within the community (1 instance)

Kirk Tofts (Wick Parish)

The specifics in the compound names containing toft appear to be invariably Scandinavian personal names, sometimes occurring as "inversion compounds" (3 instances)

Toftranald (Canisbay Parish)

Toftcarl (Wick Parish)
Toftgun (")

and occurring twice in the normal Scandinavian word-order:

Thurdistoft (Olrig Parish)

Grottistoft Moss (Dunnet Parish)

Quoy

There is one example of a simplex name in quoy:

Quoys (Canisbay Parish)

An earlier version of this name, however, defines its attachment to the farm of Seater (see C28(S)) and this is also the case in a Wick Parish name:

Quoys of Reiss (Wick Parish)

The specifics in the compound names containing quoy can be categorised as follows:

1) words denoting situation as defined by some significant feature

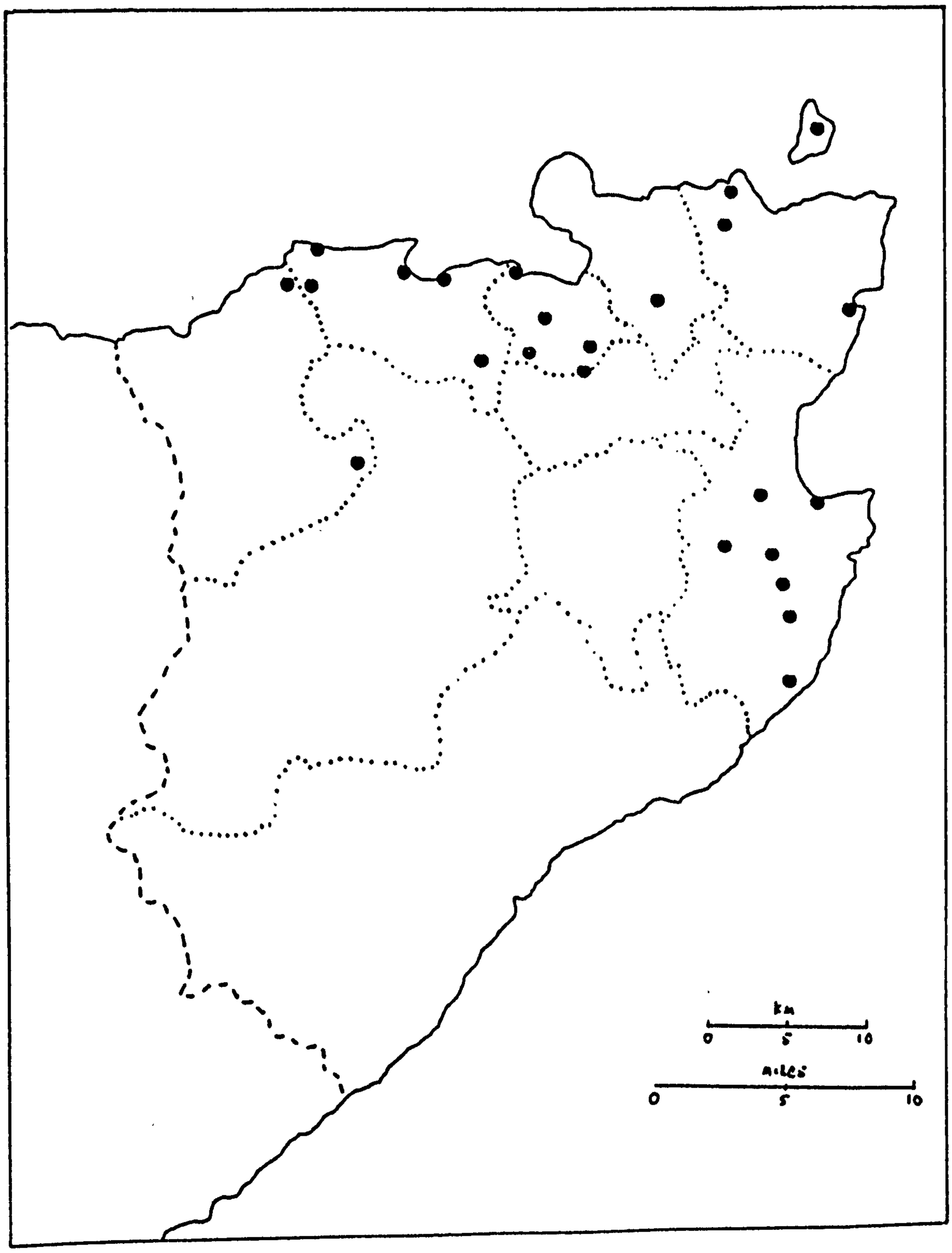
of the landscape (4 instances)

Clatequoy	(Thurso Parish)
Lochquoy	(Olrig Parish)
Cairnquoy	(Wick Parish)
Dallquoy	(")

2) words denoting agricultural potential or function of the farm (4 instances)

Lyrequoy	(Canisbay Parish)
Gaultiquoy	(Wick Parish)
Quoyshakes	(")

Sonsiquoy (Canisbay Parish) probably belongs to this category although the specific is doubtful.



Names containing "Mains"

Names containing "Mains"

Borrowston Mains	(Reay Parish)
Brawlbin Mains	(")
Mains of Brims	(Thurso Parish)
Forss Mains	(")
Scrabster Mains	(")
Thurso East Mains	(")
Weydale Mains	(")
Borgie Mains	(Olrig Parish)
Durran Mains	(")
Hilliclay Mains	(")
Mains of Murkle	(")
Mains of Olrig	(")
Greenland Mains	(Dunnet Parish)
Barrogill Mains Farm	(Canisbay Parish)
Freswick Mains	(")
Philip's Mains	(")
Mains of Stroma	(")
Ackergill Mains	(Wick Parish)
Killimster Mains	(")
Stirkoke Mains	(")
Tannach Mains	(")
Thrumster Mains	(")
Thuster Mains	(")
Mains of Ulbster	(")

One group of names which was not referred to in Chapter One is the group containing generics denoting "shielings" and the pursuit of transhumance. These do not slot readily into a picture of settlement history in Caithness because the precise function and dating of the habitations to which they refer is so difficult to determine.

The generics in question are:

ON <u>ærgi</u> (see R66(S)), a borrowing into Norse from G <u>àirigh</u> (see R23(S)) which also occurs in Caithness place-names;

ON <u>sætr</u> which, it has been argued, may take the form <u>side</u> in Sutherland and Caithness place-names (see R33(S)); and

G <u>ruighe</u> (see R44(T)).

If survival of names throughout several centuries can be taken as an indicator of the relative importance of the settlement to which they refer, it would seem to be true that names containing both ON <u>ærgi</u> and ON <u>sætr</u> were applied to settlements which, at a very early stage in their development, acquired some substance, whether or not they started life as seasonal shielings.

The number of names involved is so small that it is impossible to reach any valid conclusions regarding the specific application of the Norse generics <u>ærgi</u> and <u>sætr</u>, but some observations can be made.

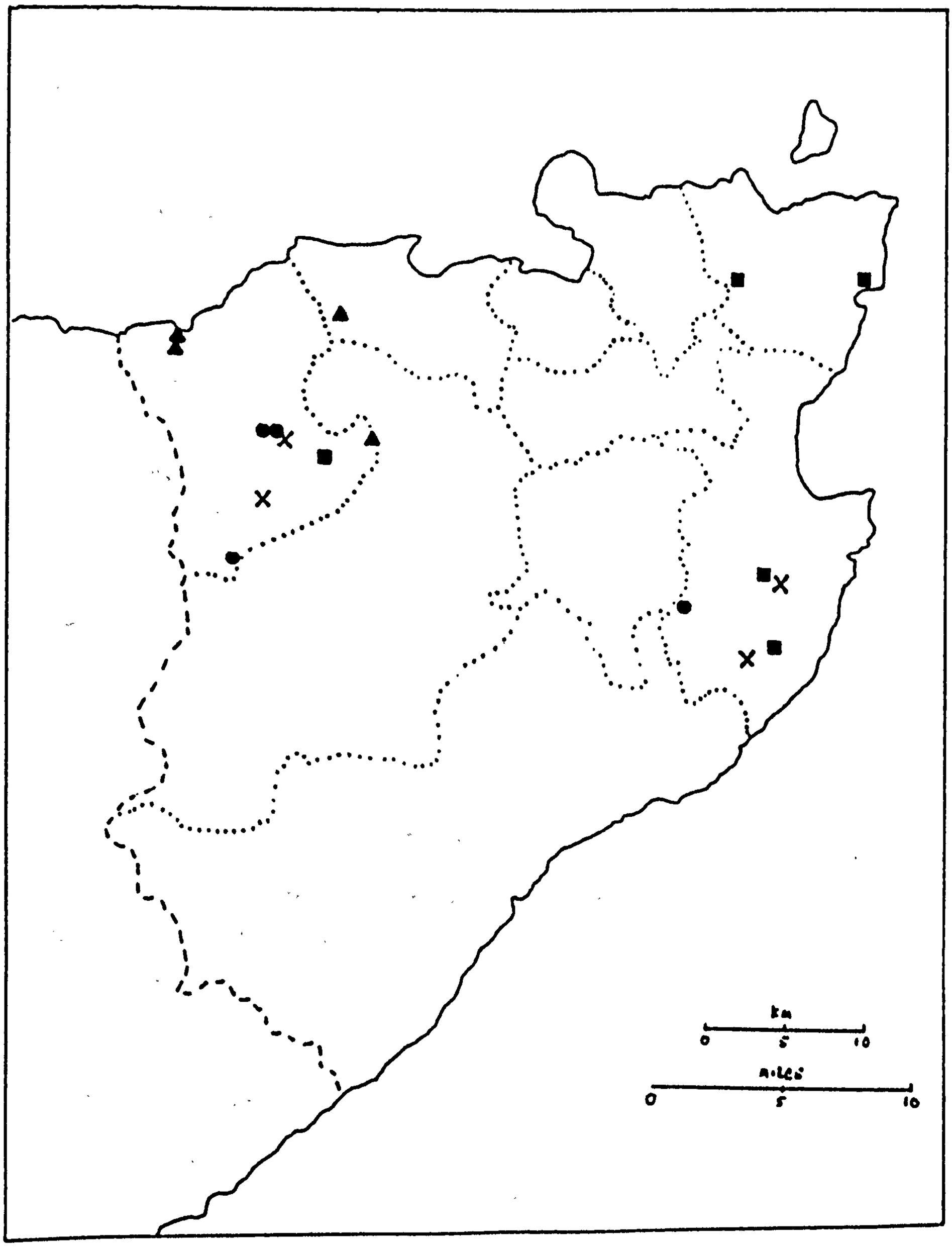
The <u>sætr</u> names are restricted to the west side of the county whereas the <u>ærgi</u> names are more widespread (see Map p. 30), but little useful information can be gained from an examination of the distribution patterns of these two names. There may have been, as Dr. Fellows-Jensen suggests (Fellows-Jensen 1983, page 44), something characteristic about the location or the function of the two types of shieling which may have persuaded the Norse to use <u>sætr</u> and <u>ærgi</u> in a mutually exclusive way although, in the case of the Caithness names, this suggestion would have to be restricted to a distinction in the function of the two types of shieling because there does not appear to be any obvious difference in location.

My inclination is to draw attention to the fact that there is little overlap in the distribution between ON sætr and ON setr (see Map p. 33). The sætr names are much less favourably situated than the setr names and could have been coined during the earliest period of Norse settlement to describe pastures which were initially exploited on a seasonal basis, but were soon incorporated as permanent farms during the period of Norse expansion.

The most obvious parallel for the ærgi names is ON toft (see Map p. 35) and it seems possible that these two generics were similar in function, indicating secondary settlement taking place during the establishment of a community of farms. It is significant that both ærgi and toft are very commonly combined with Scandinavian personal names as specifics.

The fact that all the examples of names containing ærgi display Norse word order may argue that these names are, in general, earlier than the toft names which afford so many examples of "inversion compounds".

Names containing G àirigh and G ruighe are all recent and, in effect, now occupy a nebulous area between settlement and topographical names. The remote moorland situations occupied by the former shielings are not desirable sites for permanent settlement and, in general, names containing àirigh or ruighe refer to topographical features. The grazing on the moors is, of course, still utilised for sheep, but sheep, unlike cattle, do not require constant supervision by human beings and the moorland bothies are, therefore, obsolete and can now only be detected as scattered heaps of stones.



● Names containing "àirigh"

× Names containing "ruighe"

■ Names containing "ærgi"

▲ Names containing "sætr"

"Shieling" terms

ON ærgi (five instances)

Shurrery	(Reay Parish)
Skirza	(Canisbay Parish)
Scoolary	(")
Blingery	(Wick Parish)
Raggra	(")

The specifics in the ærgi names are probably Scandinavian personal names, although lack of early references prevents positive identification.

ON sætr (four instances)

Brackside	(Reay Parish)
Carriside	(")
Sandside	(")
Brimside	(Thurso Parish)

The specifics in these names refer to aspects of the soil or landscape, with the exception of Carriside which may contain a Scandinavian personal name.

G àirigh (four instances)

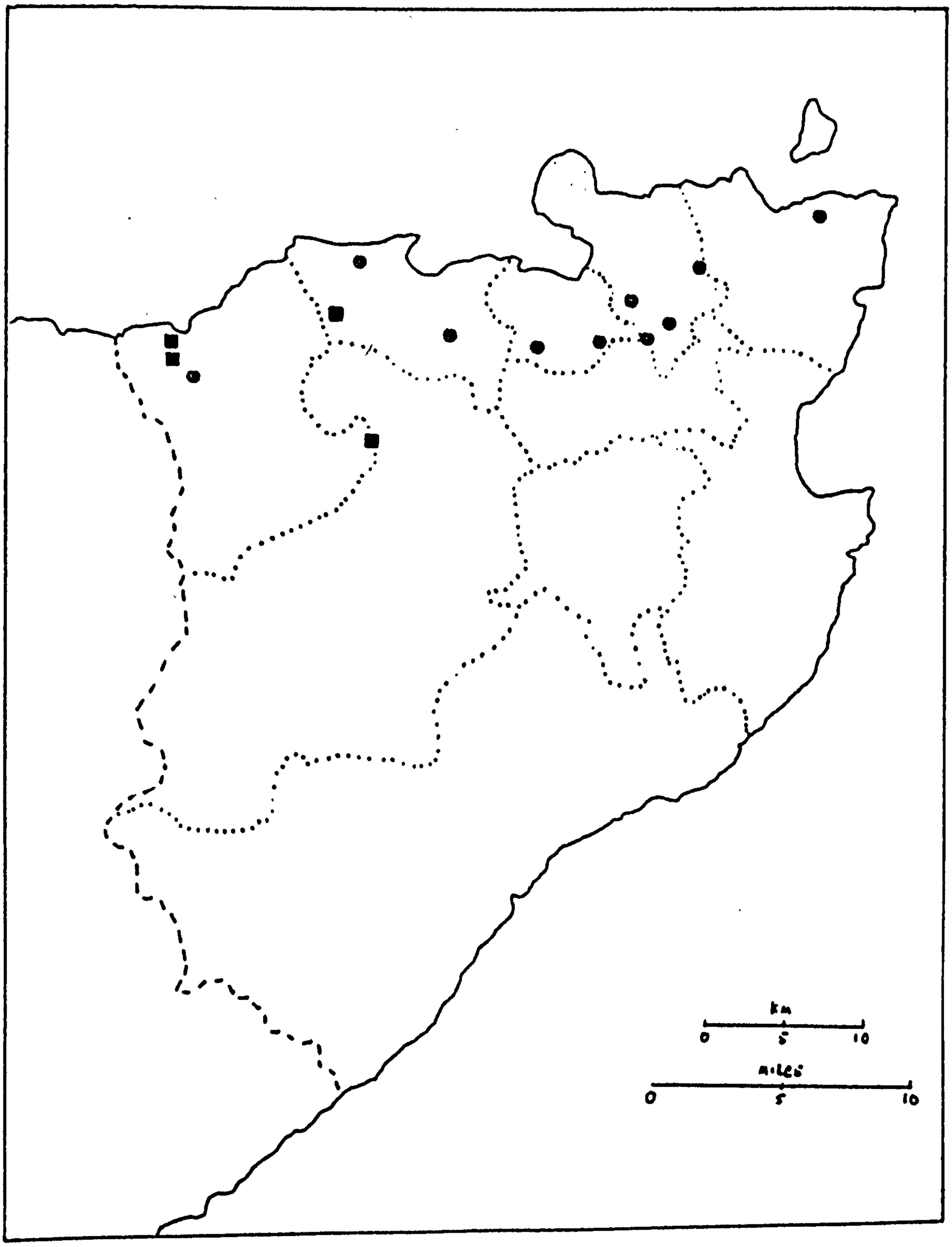
Àirigh name Bruach Dubha	(Reay Parish)
Aryleive	(")
Cnoc nan Àirigh	(")
Allt Beag-Àiridhe	(Wick Parish)

The specifics in these names refer to features of the surrounding landscape.

G <u>ruighe</u> (four instances)

Cnoc an Ruighein Duibh	(Reay Parish)
Ruigh nan Creag	(")
Cairn Reain	(Wick Parish)
Refaithy	(")

The specifics in these names refer to topographical features.



● Names containing "setr"

■ Names containing "sætr"

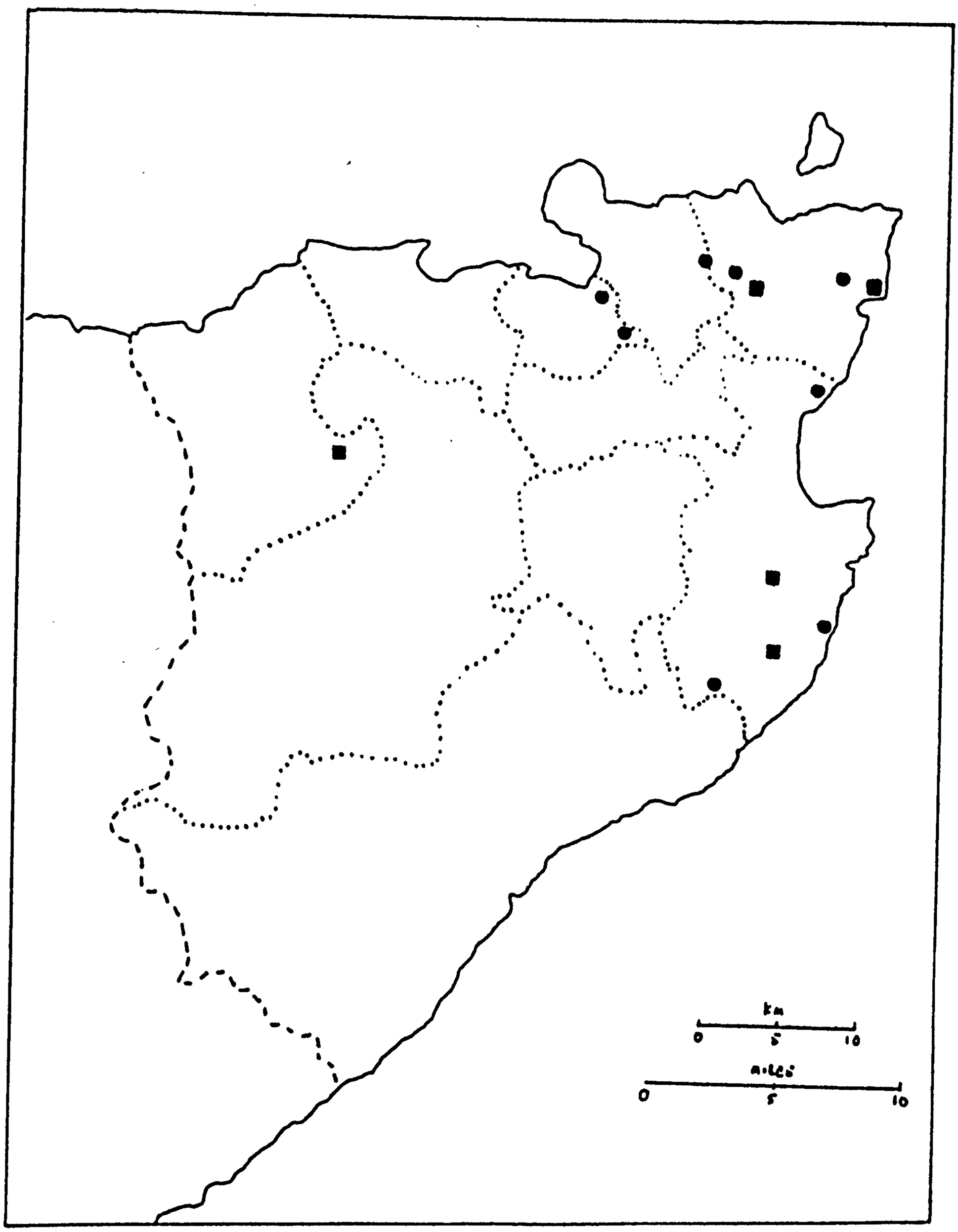
Names containing "setr" and "sætr"

setr

Helshetter	(Reay Parish)
Shalmstry	(Thurso Parish)
Thusater	(")
Fryster	(Olrig Parish)
Wester	(")

sætr

Brackside	(Reay Parish)
Carriside	(")
Sandside	(")
Brimside	(Thurso Parish)



● Names containing "toft"

■ Names containing "ærgi"

Names containing "toft" and "ærgi"

toft

Tofts of Tain	(Olrig Parish)
Thurdistoft	(")
Grottistoft Moss	(Dunnet Parish)
Tofts	(Canisbay Parish)
Toftranald	(")
Kirk Tofts	(Wick Parish)
Toftcarl	(")
Toftgun	(")

ærgi

Shurrery	(Reay Parish)
Skirza	(Canisbay Parish)
Scoolary	(")
Blingery	(Wick Parish)
Raggra	(")

CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL INFORMANT

Principal informants

Mr David Finlayson, Kingsbarns, St. Andrews (formerly of Dunnet Parish)
Mr James Gunn, Reay
Mrs Margaret Gunn, Canisbay
Mr George McKay, Reay
Miss Henrietta Munro, Thurso
Mr James Simpson, Canisbay
Mrs Maisie Sutherland, Wick

The role of the local informant is of fundamental importance in all aspects of place-name research. This applies particularly in an area such as Caithness where written records are scanty and interpretation of a name can rest on local pronunciation and local knowledge of the situation.

I am indebted for items of information to a wide variety of people in Caithness with whom I engaged in conversation during my various field trips but my principal informants, whose names are listed on the previous page, are seven in number. Ideally, one should perhaps have conducted detailed interviews with a larger number of people but practical considerations militated against having a more numerous survey group.

My informants were, in general, recommended to me by people who are, or have been, involved in investigating aspects of traditional life in Caithness and I am particularly grateful to Dr. Alexander Fenton who provided me with an initial list of possible informants. Armed with a few introductions it proved simple to make contact with local people with a far-reaching knowledge of their environment and when an individual felt that his own knowledge of place-names was limited in some respect he always knew of another local who could bridge the gap.

My informants varied in age, sex and occupation and in the number of names they knew. On the whole, male informants had a much more comprehensive knowledge of names than females, irrespective of age. I had expected to find that the older the informant, the greater the depth and range of knowledge of local names would be, but that did not prove to be the case. Knowledge of names depended more on occupation and interests than on age. The men were, or had at some time been, crofter-fishermen and, therefore, had knowledge of both inland and coastal names, whereas the women tended to have a greater knowledge of inland names within a certain radius of their home, although the radius varied from person to person depending on mobility.

The only restriction which I imposed when choosing my primary

informants was that the person had to have been born and bred in the district. One informant now lives near St. Andrews but has maintained constant contact with Caithness, returning to visit his family and friends at least once per year. Having an informant within relatively easy reach of Edinburgh proved extremely useful to me on many different occasions.

When interviewing these seven primary informants I made use of a tape-recorder and subsequently transcribed their pronunciation of the names and extracted any information relating to the location of the name or any alternative versions of the name which were offered. I frequently experienced a sense of deep regret that these interviews could not have been conducted at the start of the twentieth century before the technological revolution had altered the local way of life so fundamentally.

Fast and efficient road systems have altered the focus of the community and few young people know the names of the remote moorland or coastal features which were so intimate a part of their predecessors' existence. The process of name loss is particularly noticeable in Reay Parish where oral transmission of names played a significant part in their preservation due to lack of written records for Gaelic names. My principal informant for Reay Parish, who has an exceptionally wide-ranging knowledge of local names, knew only 54% of the names which were first recorded in 1876 for the 6" OS maps. He knew approximately 78% of the habitative names, but only 46% of the topographical names and the average local teenager, orientated towards the employment centres of Dounreay and Thurso, would only recognise the names of those topographical features which physically dominate the landscape, such as Beinn Ràtha (see R16(T)).

The change in the focus of the community is not, of course, the only reason for this extensive name loss. Another very important factor is that English has, during this century and the last, gradually taken the place of Gaelic as the language of everyday communication in Reay Parish and, since the majority of Gaelic names are not readily comprehensible, this combines with their functional

redundancy to ensure that a large proportion of the names will be lost.

The picture is not, however, entirely negative. Reay Parish also offers a fascinating insight into the processes of onomastic adaptation which take place when the area in which a name occurs is in a state of linguistic transition. There are several instances of names having been "translated" from Gaelic into English and, in cases where this had happened, my informants were sometimes totally unaware that the name they gave me was in any way connected with the Gaelic name on the 6" OS map. The inverted commas around "translated" are used to indicate that the English version was frequently only a partial translation of the Gaelic name.

Examples of this phenomenon are as follows:

1) Adjectives such as beag and mór are almost invariably translated and the word order of the compound in which they occur is also anglicised: Beinn nam Bad Beag/ .. Mòr are rendered as Little ../ Big "Ben a Bad" [bɛn ə ˈbad]. (see R15(T)) Beinn Ràtha Bheag has become Little Beinn Ràtha [ˈlɪtl̩ bɛn ra] and, by contrast, Beinn Ràtha has become Big Beinn Ràtha although the adjective mór is not present in the Gaelic version of the name. (see R16(T)). In this case the Gaelic adjectives would still be understood although they have been replaced by their English equivalents.

2) Cnoc an t-Samraidh - literally "Hill of the Summer" has been "translated" to "The Summeran" [ˈsʌməɾən] which may possibly represent the English present participle "summering", with reference in both cases to the pursuit of transhumance.

3) Druim na Ceud has been translated as Field of the Hundred rather than Ridge of the Hundred as the original Gaelic would suggest. (see R74(T))

4) Glupein na Drochaide is now referred to as The Green Brig which differs from the original in that the colour "green" is introduced as a substitute for the onomatopoeic "glupein". (see R102(T))

5) Lochan Dubh Cùl na Beinne has been abbreviated to The Black Loch.

This abbreviation is a frequent reaction to the lengthy descriptive names which occur in Gaelic, and which seem cumbersome and inappropriate in the medium of English. (see R123(T))

One final example of this process of "translation" greatly intrigued me. Two names recorded on the 1876 6" OS map as An t-Eas and Esvarasdal (see R50(S)) have now been lost, and their replacement is the anglicised form "The Esses" [ðiː ˈɛsəs]. My informant, however, gave an ingenious explanation of this replacement name, saying that it represented the plural of the English letter s to indicate the snaking movement of the stream. The source of the name, however, is much more likely to be the original G eas: a waterfall since the stretch of the burn to which the name applies is not particularly winding.

In some instances, the process has not been one of adaptation but of replacement of the original Gaelic name by a totally unrelated English name. This occurred in the case of Loch Achbuiligan (see R5(S)) which is now known as The Major's Loch after a well-known local piper whose ghost is reputed to haunt the area. Similarly, Geo Croiche (see R83(T)) is now referred to as The Slates, a very common Caithness description of an area of flat rock shelving down to the sea.

The substitution of one language for another in place-names is not restricted to Reay Parish, nor to Gaelic and English. There are also cases of an earlier Norse name having been replaced by its English or Scots equivalent or by a totally unrelated English name. An example of the former type can be seen in Ruther Myre (see OL21(T)) which is now known as The Mossy, and of the latter in Rae Berry (see OL19(T)) which is now much more frequently known as The Devil's Footstep.

The most fascinating example of what can happen to a name when the people who use it have been subject to a variety of different linguistic influences is undoubtedly the various forms taken by the name Dounreay. (see R49(S)) This name is frequently heard on

radio and television in the form [dun're] and my informant initially gave me the B.B.C. pronunciation and then, fortunately, he added that this would not be the local form of the name. He then proceeded to give me a fascinating account of a further three possible pronunciations which could be heard locally, depending partly on the age of the speaker and partly on the context in which the name was being used.

Older people who were familiar with spoken Gaelic in their youth use the form ['dunra] with the stress on the first syllable and the vowel in the final syllable being [a] rather than [e]. Younger people who have no familiarity with spoken Gaelic say [dun'ra], using the stress pattern of the B.B.C. announcer, but retaining the local vowel in the final syllable. These two usages, dependent on the age of the speaker, are commonly heard in conversation between local people.

A third form, however, apparently occurs in conversation with outsiders who live locally. This third form is ['daunre], and it is probably a spelling-based pronunciation, arising out of a misinterpretation of the written forms commonly taken by the initial element. The initial element is G dùn: a fortress, but it is frequently represented as either doun or down. It has obviously been assumed that doun/down represent English down and that the local pronunciation is simply the Scots form of the English word. In conversation with outsiders, therefore, it has obviously been deemed polite to substitute the English pronunciation [daun].

When I cross-checked this information with another elderly local he confirmed that he would use the form ['dunra] but he added yet another variant when he said, "Of course, the right way (ie, the form appropriate for use with an outsider) is ['daunra]."

Another example of a name which varies according to the age of the speaker and the context in which it is used is Duncansby in Canisbay Parish. Older people say ['dauŋksbi] which is closer in form to the Dungalsbær of the Orkneyinga Saga than the form

Duncansby which is favoured by younger local people and outsiders. Duncansby is likewise a form which appears to have arisen out of a mistaken interpretation of an early written form.

It is obviously very important when interviewing local people regarding pronunciation of names to state emphatically that one is interested in all the forms of a name which may exist, not just in the form which is considered by the informant to be the most socially acceptable or "correct".

Another extremely fertile area of information, in which caution proved necessary for a different reason, was that of the traditional tale purporting to explain the significance of a name. These tales were often extremely plausible and, in many cases, were probably accurate although their veracity was difficult to check. Doubt was cast by the fact that there were often two or more local stories to account for a particular name, each delivered with the utmost sincerity and appearing to bear the stamp of authenticity in the amount of detail contained in the story. An example of this can be seen in the case of Oigin's Geo (see R89(T)) for which there are two explanatory tales, actually quoting the names of the people involved. The stories are similar in form but distinct in the details given. Both tales, however, make the basic suggestion that a person used the geo as a hiding place, and this is probably the grain of truth which should be extracted.

A very similar type of tale is attached to a geo in Thurso Parish and one is very strongly inclined to believe this tale, because otherwise the name given to the geo is totally incomprehensible. The name is Pocket's Geo (see T54(T)) and the story suggests that an old lady used to collect dulse in the geo, storing it in a capacious pocket until she could sell it in Thurso. There are no variant versions of this tale which also lends it credibility.

The most famous of the tales relating to Caithness place-names must be the story of John o' Groats and his diplomatic masterpiece in the form of an eight-sided house, with eight separate entrances

which ensured that no one member of the Groat family took precedence over another. This story was first recorded in the Old Statistical Account of Canisbay Parish at the end of the eighteenth century and, having been recorded in writing, it gained a much greater substance than other traditional tales, but archaeological investigations discovered no trace of the eight-sided house and it seems that this tale too is spurious, although the Groat family obviously existed and were of considerable importance in the district. (see C18(S))

Apart from these tales relating to specific events or people, there are also numerous general references in place-names to the traditions and beliefs of the people of Caithness. For example, there are numerous Gallow Hills in Caithness and, in each case, locals tell the tale of a hanging having taken place on the hill. Whether or not such a hanging took place is very difficult to establish and, in some instances, it is possible that the hill was so named because it was of the type which could have been used as the site for a gallows.

The superstitious beliefs of the district are also very clearly apparent in the various names which refer to supernatural beings and their haunts. For instance, the various names which incorporate the Gaelic element sìthean: a fairy hillock, although it is significant that a large number of these names have been forgotton. A belief in fairies does not accord well with life in the twentieth century. The trow or troll, on the other hand, has survived more effectively into the twentieth century and there are various references to this creature in Caithness place-names, and many tales are told of its depredations. These colourful local tales could, in fact, provide the basis of a very rewarding separate study but, as far as place-name research is concerned,they must remain peripheral.

The most useful information gleaned from informants was undoubtedly that based on present factual knowledge of the landscape and its exploitation. There are numerous instances throughout all

six parishes of names which were given an added dimension when local knowledge was brought to play. For instance, Cairn Hill (see S13(T)), a very prosaic name on the island of Stroma, came vividly to life when a local described how it was once used by the men of Stroma as a look-out point for ships which they could pilot through the Pentland Firth.

The permanence of the natural environment was often emphasised when, for example, locals confirmed that the numerous Scarf Rocks which dot the coastline of Caithness are still inhabited by cormorants and when a name such as Rammie Geo (see S43(T)) produced the unsolicited comment that ravens nest in the area. Local fishermen also commented on a name such as Limpet Geo (see T37(T)) where limpets have probably been gathered for centuries for use as bait in inshore fishing.

In many cases, a particular quality of the natural environment is totally obvious to the local who exploits the environment whereas, to the outsider casting a searching eye over the landscape, the quality is not immediately apparent. For instance, in the case of Yellow Moss (see R178(T)) it is only the local who has cut peats from the moor who can say with certainty that the reference is to the colour of the peat when dried.

Various agricultural processes and crops are also commemorated in place-names and farmers can still give details of these even when the process or the crop has been superseded during the twentieth century. For instance, examples can be cited of place-names indicating the various stages in the production of flax:
Hempriggs (see W48(S)), where the hemp or flax was sown;
Lint Lochs (see C65(T)), where the lint was steeped in the water of the lochs to separate the flax from the straw or woody fibre;
Bleachfield (see T9(S)), a field which was used for the bleaching of flax.
Each one of these names elicited descriptions of the plant and of the various stages in its preparation.

Various significant events in the local calendar are also commemorated in place-names and remembered in affectionate detail by locals. Marymas Green (see D26(S)), now a disused market stance, was vividly remembered by one informant in particular as the site of a thriving market during the middle years of this century.

All these pieces of local information have been noted in the sections dealing with individual names and they contribute a great deal towards a composite picture of the onomastic history of Caithness.

CHAPTER FOUR: REAY PARISH

Introduction	pp.47 - 48
Settlement Names	pp.49 - 83
Topographical Names	pp.84 - 140

Reay Parish is situated on the west side of Caithness, bordering Sutherland. A substantial part of Reay Parish, lying roughly west of a line from Shebster to Loch Shurrery and south of the main A836, is underlain by old, hard, resistant rocks such as granite, porphyrite and metamorphosed rocks. This has given rise to the highest land in the study area in Beinn nam Bad Mór (290 metres) and Beinn Ràtha (248 metres). The effect of the hard rock in terms of agricultural potential is to render the land unfit for anything but rough grazing and the area is consequently notably devoid of settlement.

The underlying rock on the east side of Reay Parish, in the valley of the Forss Water, is old red sandstone which underlies most of Caithness with the exception of the area mentioned above. Since this sandstone is horizontally bedded, the effect on the landscape is to produce a gently rising plateau seldom reaching more than 150 metres with drainage mostly northwards in the parishes of Reay, Thurso, Olrig and Dunnet.

The result of a fairly high rainfall on these flattish, poorly-drained sandstone plateaux has been the build-up of peat deposits, initially covering most of the study area. Over the centuries of occupation much of this peat has been removed by agricultural improvers, but it is true to say that the typical Caithness landscape presents a contrast between the improved fields of grass and arable, mostly between sea-level and 100 metres, and the higher land or the more poorly drained low-lying land which is dominated by peat-bog and heather moor.

The influence of the sandstone on the coastal landscape is very marked. It is hard enough to resist erosion by the sea and to form outstanding cliff scenery. The cliffs are interspersed with sand beaches or river estuaries.

Dounreay Atomic Establishment is the principal employer in the parish, attracting workers not only from Reay but from the whole of Caithness. Many people retain their crofts and their interest in fishing but engage in some form of paid employment to supplement what would otherwise be a meagre income.

The language spoken in Reay Parish is English, but Gaelic was spoken until the mid-twentieth century and a few older people still have a passive Gaelic vocabulary of limited extent which they can apply to place-name elements. Many of the Gaelic place-names exhibit the break-down of the inflectional system which is common in a language in decline.

Reay Parish is bounded on the south by Halkirk Parish which is not included in the present detailed survey although the place-names in this parish and in the remaining three Caithness parishes of Bower, Watten and Latheron have been taken into consideration where necessary.

The Forss Water forms the boundary between Reay Parish and Thurso Parish to the east.

Note: Names containing G mór 'big' have been recorded in the initial lists of names in the form in which they appear on the 1876 6" OS maps, ie mòr, but elsewhere in the text the form mór is used in accordance with Dwelly (Dwelly 1973, p. 670).

SETTLEMENT NAMES

ACHADH NA GAODHA : NC 96 SW: 940646 R1(S)

ALLT ACHADH NA GAODHA: " : 944648

Local pronunciation : [axnə'grau, .. bʌrn]

Early refs: Allt Achadh na Graidhe 1877 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m. : a field, a meadow

G graidh/greigh f.: a herd, flock as of horses, deer

Modern pronunciation confirms that <Gaodha> is erroneous.

G allt m. : a mountain stream

(G allt has been directly translated to Sc burn: see R4(S), in the present-day version of the name.)

.....

ACHALONE : ND 06 SW: 038631 R2(S)

HILL OF ACHALONE : " : 032631

Local pronunciation: [axə'lon]

Early refs: Auchlone 1560 RMS

Auchlone 1624 Sinclair (Mey)

Achalon 1672 Retours

Achinloan 1750 Roy

Achaloan 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:

G achadh m.: See R1(S)

G lón m. : a meadow, marsh

The form recorded in Roy's map (1750) preserves the original form of the article more closely: ie

Achinloan < achadh an lóin

.....

ACHANAON, BURN OF : ND 06 NE: 067582 R3(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Achinaan 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G àthan m. : a ford, a shallow part of the river reaching from bank to bank

G achadh an àthain

The name Achanaon originally applied to a croft house which is now in ruins and the name only survives as applied to the neighbouring Burn of Achanaon. (Sc burn: see R4(S))

.....

ACHAVEILAN BURN : ND 06 SW: 005623 R4(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m. : see R1(S)

G meallan m. : a knoll, little hill

G achadh a' mheallain

Sc burn: this word is used throughout Scotland to describe a small stream.

As in the previous example this name originally applied to a croft, but now only survives as the name of the neighbouring stream.

.....

ACHBUILIGAN TULLOCH: NC 96 NE: 991657 R5(S)
LOCH ACHBUILIGAN : " : 988656
Local pronunciation: <Achbuiligan Tulloch> is not known to my informants. The Loch is always known as The Major's Loch after a renowned local piper who lived in the vicinity.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Achbuiligan Tulloch Inventory of Monuments: 1911, page 94

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)
Comparison with Buaile Oscar: see R37(S), suggests that the medial element could be G buaile f.: a shelter, see R36(S), with reference to the remains of the broch. The final element could be a diminutive ending -gan.
G tulach m.: a mound, hillock, often, as in this case, with ruins on top
This word has been borrowed into the Caithness dialect of Scots as tulloch.
G loch : has been borrowed into Scots and is very common throughout Scotland. Dwelly comments that G loch is generally feminine in Caithness, Sutherland and most parts of Ross.

.....

ACHFORSIESCYE : ND 05 NW: 023569 R6(S)
ALLT FORSIESCYE : " : 022579
Local pronunciation: ['fɔrsisai] not [ax'fɔrsisai]
Early refs: Forsie 1616 RMS
Forsie 1628 Sinclair (Thurso)
Forsie Sy 1726 Macfarlane
Forsesay 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)
ON fors m. : a waterfall
ON sjár m. : the sea, here applied to the large inland loch (cf R117(T))
G allt m. : see R1(S)

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ACHIBEGG MOSS : ND 06 SW: 023624 R7(S)

Local pronunciation: [axibɛg 'mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G beag : little, small

Sc moss : 1) a marsh, bog, a tract of soft wet ground

2) specifically: a bog from which peats are dug

Achibegg originally referred to a single farm but is now used to describe a wider area.

.....

ACHIEBRAESKIALL : ND 06 NW: 017652 R8(S)

ACHIEBRAESKIALL BURN: " : 017656

Local pronunciation : [axi'breskel]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G bràigh m.: the upper part of a place, a bank or stretch of ground rising with a fairly steep slope.
(Borrowed into Scots as Bra, Bray, Brae)

skiall : see R67(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

ACHIEGULLAN : NC 96 SE: 988647 R9(S)

ACHIEGULLAN BURN : " : 986644

Local pronunciation: [axi'julən]

Early refs: Achiegallan 1876 6" OS

Achiegallan Burn

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

W.J. Watson records a name from the Oykel area which is very reminiscent of Achiegullan. The name is Achnagullan which he suggests is achadh na (g)cuilean: field of the whelps (Watson 1926, page 241). There is, however, the fact of the modern pronunciation of the Reay name which is not in accordance with Watson's derivation. It suggests G giullan m.: a boy, little boy, as the source.

G achadh a' ghiullain

The 1876 reference Achiegallan does not help to clarify the issue.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

ACHIMENACH : ND 06 SW: 022639 R10(S)

Local pronunciation: This name is now lost and the whole area is known as Achibegg: see R7(S)

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m. : see R1(S)

G meadhonach: intermediate, central

Achimenach was situated approximately half-way between Achimore and Achibegg.

.....

ACHIMORE, CROFTS OF: ND 06 SW: 023644 R11(S)

Local pronunciation: [krɔfts əv axi'mor]

This name is known but not used nowadays.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G mór : big

Sc croft : a small agricultural landholding.

As Donald Omand says: "Crofters, of course, were not farmers - mostly they were allowed to cultivate only second-rate land which it was scarcely worth while for big farmers to bother with, unless for rough pasture" (Omand 1972, page 145).

The fact that G croit f.: a croft, is not used here suggests that these crofts are recent, probably 19th century.

.....

ACHINS : NC 96 NE: 958641 R12(S)

Local pronunciation: [də'axɅns]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

The name also appears as Achins of Dachow: see R44(S)

Derivation:

The definite article invariably appears in the modern spoken version of this name which indicates that it is a direct borrowing into Scots of G achadh m.: see R1(S).

.....

ACHIVEIGLE : ND 06 SW: 043642 R13(S)

Local pronunciation: [axi'vegəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

-veigle : the meaning of this specific is obscure.

.....

ACHNABEINN : ND 05 NW: 044572 R14(S)

Local pronunciation: This name was readily understood by my informants, but it is not in use today.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: This small croft lies in the valley of the Forss Water (see T34(S)) between Druim Calltuinneach (see R72 (T)) and Multeadh Mhòr (see R141(T)) which suggests that the name should be derived from

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G beinn f.: a hill

G achadh na beinne

(G beinn is frequently borrowed into Scots as ben)

.....

ACHNACARICH : ND 05 NW: 019586 R15(S)

Local pronunciation: Name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G carach : meandering

Carach fits the situation because the Allt Forsiescye turns, almost at right angles, round the croft, but it is difficult to account for the presence of the definite article with carach. Caithness Gaelic does, however, contain many such grammatical inconsistencies.

.....

ACHNACLY : ND 05 NW: 039598 R16(S)

Local pronunciation: [axnə'klai]

Early refs: Auchinnachloy 1619 RMS
Auchinnachley 1657 Retours
Auchancloy 1726 Sinclair (Murkle)

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

The specific may be G clòimh (gen clòimhe) f.: wool, although the 1657 spelling does not fit this interpretation.

.....

ACHRASKER : NC 96 SE: 992636 R17(S)

Local pronunciation: Name not known to my informants

Early refs:

Achafrescar	1619	RMS
Atherasker	1640	Retours
Ateraster	1640	"
Acherasker	1640	"
Achachraster	1661	RMS

Derivation: The confusion between <c>, <t> and <k> which occurs in the early references makes it impossible to suggest a derivation for this name with any degree of conviction.

W.J. Watson mentions Achafraskill in Latheron Parish which he suggests is G achadh na fraschoille: field of the shrubbery (G ras m. > fras: underwood, shrubbery + G coille f.: wood, grove) (Watson 1926, page 498).

In view of this explanation it might be feasible to suggest that Achrasker contains

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G ras m. : a shrubbery

G car : a bend, turn

The name applied to a croft.

.....

ACHREAMIE : ND 06 NW: 014671 R18(S)

ACHREAMIE MOSS : " : 006667

Local pronunciation: [ax'rimi]

Early refs:

Achrimie	1750	Roy
Achrymie	1807	Arrowsmith

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

ON rimi m. : a strip of land

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Achreamie occurs in an area where there are several other names of Norse origin.

W.F.H. Nicolaisen comments that "... there are several names on the Caithness map [Fig. 5.1.] in which Ach- is followed by a Norse name - the Achlibster type ..." (Nicolaisen 1982, page 81).

.....

ACHREREGAN HILL : ND 06 SW: 027622 R19(S)

LEANS OF ACHREREGAN: " : 031615

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

The specific -reregan is obscure, but probably of Gaelic origin.

Sc leans : this word is used throughout Caithness to describe grassland, often beside a stream

cf G lèana m.: a meadow

obs Faeroese, Norwegian: lón (Thorsen 1954, page 234)

The name probably applied to a croft but now refers only to land used for grazing.

.....

ACHSTEENCLATE : ND 05 SW: 037546 R20(S)

ACHSTEENCLATE BURN : " : 032547

Local pronunciation: [axˈstenəklɛt]

Early refs: Achna Steanclet 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

ON steinn m.: a stone

ON klettr m.: a rock, crag

There are several rocky outcrops in the area which make the description extremely apt.

ON klettr has been borrowed into Gaelic as cleit f. and it is an extremely common place-name element in the Outer Hebrides, particularly Lewis and Harris. Klettr is less common as a description of an inland feature in Caithness than it is in the Outer Hebrides.

In areas where there is Gaelic influence the modern spelling is usually clate but ON klettr has been borrowed into the modern Caithness dialect as clett.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

ACHUNABUST : NC 96 SE: 995645 R21(S)

ACHUNABUST BRIDGE : " : 988648

Local pronunciation: either [axˈʌnəbʌst]

or [axˈɤnəbʌst]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G achadh m. : see R1(S)

ON bólstaðr m.: a homestead

A great deal has been written on the subject of ON bólstaðr/bústaðr. W.F.H. Nicolaisen (1976, page 94) states that ON bólstaðr appears variously as "-bster, -pster, and as a bilabial nasal + -ster" in Caithness and he also mentions the form -bust as occurring in Orkney and -bost as occurring in the Hebrides under Gaelic influence. Richard Coates (Caithness Placesnames in -bster*) points out that "Bólstaðr and bústaðr are both attested place-name elements, and both may be expected on phonetic grounds to fall together." He further states that "whilst [l] - loss is not a surprising change it is impossible to decide the etymology of some individual names until such documentary evidence (ie direct record of older forms with [l]) turns up." G. Fellows-Jensen (Viking Settlement in the Northern and Western Isles) endorses this viewpoint, but emphasises that bólstaðr is the more probable original generic.

In the case of Achunabust there is no earlier record which shows the presence of [l], and this comment applies to almost all the Caithness examples of ON bólstaðr. There are few written records dating from the initial period of Norse settlement in Caithness and [l] - loss had obviously taken place before the 16th century when records are more readily available.

The central element of Achunabust is problematical. Perhaps G achadh na + ON bólstaðr is possible but there are objections:

1) the second syllable of the name is stressed in pronunciation which would certainly not be the case if the second syllable represented the Gaelic definite article na;

2) there is no logical reason why the Gaelic definite article should take the form na which represents either gen.sing.f. or nom.pl.m./f. before ON bólstaðr, but the vagaries of Caithness Gaelic might account for this.

An alternative explanation is that the central element represents the

ON personal name Uni, -a m. (Lind 1915, column 1059). A.B. Taylor mentions a farm in Shetland called Unustadir from ON Unu (gen. of Una a woman's name) and staðir: farm. He comments that "It is of interest that the masculine form of the name - Uni, gen. Una - occurs frequently in place-names" (Taylor 1954, page 112). R21(S) (cont'd)

.....

ACHVARASDAL : NC 96 SE: 995621 R22(S)
ACHVARASDAL BURN : " : 990627
ACHVARASDAL LEANS : " : 994615
ACHVARASDALE HOUSE : " : 983646
Local pronunciation: [axˈvarɹsdəl]
Early refs: Achavaristil 1831 Thomson
Achrarasdal Burn 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m. : see R1(S)
The central element is difficult. It may possibly represent
ON marr(gen mars)m.: a steed
with lenition of the initial consonant due to Gaelic influence.
If the central element is ON marr being used as a specific in an original Norse compound, the final element is probably the generic
ON dalr m. : a valley
The 1831 <-stil>represents the unstressed final syllable and does not suggest a different derivation.
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Sc leans : see R19(S)
Anglicisation of the name has occurred with the addition of final <-e>in Achvarasdale House.

.....

ÀIRIGH NAM BRUACH DUBHA : NC 95 SE: 985504 R23(S)

ABHAINN NAM BRUACH DUBHA: " : 985505

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: Àiridh nam Bruach Dubha 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G àiridh/àirigh f.: a shieling, summer residence for herdsmen and cattle

G abhainn f. : bank, brim

(The plural inflection is omitted - see R7(T))

G dubh : black, dark

.....

ARYLEIVE : NC 96 SE: 991606 R24(S)

ARYLEIVE MOSS : " : 990612

Local pronunciation: [airɹ'lev]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G àirigh/àiridh f.: see R23(S)

The second element is very difficult. Possibly G sliabh m.: heath, moorland, with loss of initial [s].

Sc moss : see R7(S)

This name originally indicated a shieling but now refers to a small croft.

.....

BAILLIE : ND 06 NW: 046653 R25(S)
BURN OF BAILLIE : " : 043654
BAILLIE HILL : ND 06 SE: 050644
STRATH OF BAILLIE : " : 053647
Local pronunciation: ['beli]
Early refs: Ballze 1557 OPS
Bailzie " "
Bailie 1560-1 Sutherland (Forse)
Bailzie 1608 "
Baillie 1581 RMS
terra de Baillie 1601 "
Baillie 1605 Retours
Bailye 1635 Sinclair (Mey)
Balie 1726 Macfarlane
Bayley 1750 Roy

Derivation:

A name of some importance and it seems most unlikely that it should be derived from G baile m.: a farm, village.
Furthermore, G baile is uncommon as a simplex name.
It seems much more probable that this name represents,
Sc baillie, ballie/ballze, balze
which is defined in D O S T as "An executive officer having jurisdiction in a lordship, barony, or regality; an official appointed by the king, a bishop or abbot, etc to discharge the duties of a steward or bailiff."
In this case the name describes the area under the jurisdiction of a bailiff.
Sc strath : a river valley, especially at its broader parts with meadows and arable land, and frequently extending for many miles on either side of the river to the feet of the surrounding hills. (cf G srath m.)

.....

BALMORE : ND 06 NW: 010680 R26(S)
Local pronunciation: [bal'mor]
Early refs: Bualmore 1841 Census
Derivation:
G buaile f.: see R36(S)
G mór : see R11(S)
The name now describes a small croft.

.....

BALNA BEINN : ND 05 NE: 063561 R27(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G baile m.: see R25(S)

G beinn f.: see R14(S)

G baile na beinne

.....

BARD NA CAILLICHE : ND 05 NW: 041565 R28(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G bàrd m. : a park, fenced area

G cailleach (gen cailliche) f.
: a single or old woman

The name may originally have applied to a croft, or it could simply have referred to the park used by the old woman for grazing her sheep or cattle.

.....

BARDNAHEIGH : ND 06 SW: 037646 R29(S)

Local pronunciation: [bar nə 'haix]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G bàrd m.: see R28(S)

The specific in this name presents difficulties in that the form of the article would suggest a feminine noun following.
There is a Gaelic word éigh f. which describes keening, but it seems unlikely in the context. Much more probable, although masculine in gender is G each: a horse. Modern pronunciation strongly supports the latter suggestion.

BLARMORE : NC 96 SE: 997636 R30(S)

Local pronunciation: [bler 'mor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G blàr m.: a field; a peat moss or marsh

G mór : see R11(S)

Dwelly notes that plain or field is the primary meaning of G blàr but in Caithness blàr is more commonly used to indicate a peat moss. However, in this instance, the name is applied to a croft.

There are several examples of names containing this element in the Reay topographical section.

.....

BORLUM HOUSE : NC 96 SE: 971642 R31(S)

BORLUM ROCK : " : 974636

Local pronunciation: ['bɔrləm]

Early refs:

Borlum	1619	RMS
Boirlwne	1620	Retours
Borlum	1640	Retours
Borlum	1627	Sinclair (Mey)
Borlom	1726	Macfarlane
Borlum	1734	Sutherland (Forse)
Borlum	1750	Roy

Derivation:

G bòrlum m.: a strip of arable land; Royal Castle Lands in the Highlands

The produce of the farm at Borlum must have been reserved for the laird of the Sandside estate.

(cf Bordland, also boirland < ME Bordland: land providing supplies for the Lord's table. This is the form which occurs in Bordland-Murkill: see OL 26(S).)

.....

BORROWSTON MAINS : ND 06 NW: 017691 R32(S)

WESTER BORROWSTON : " : 005681

Local pronunciation: ['bɔrʉstən]

Early refs:

Burrostoun	1549	RSS
Borrowstoun	1604	Retours
Burrowstoun	1605	"
Borrowstoune	1644	"
Burrestoune	1644	"
Borrowstoun	1606	RMS
Burrestoun	1619	"
Borroustoune	1667	"
Burrowstoun	1662	Blaeu
Burrowstoun	1750	Roy
Borrowston	1831	Thomson

Derivation:

ON borg (gen borgar) f.: a fortification

The ruins of a broch (cf T9(T)) are to be found 600 or 700 yards NNW of Borrowston Mains.

ON tún n. : an enclosure

Sc mains : the chief farm in the district

Marwick mentions Burrowston in Shapansay, Orkney and comments that wherever this name, or variants of it occurred it applied to a small area or tunship adjacent to the site of an old broch. He also notes that originally the compound form must have been borgar-tun and suggests that the presence of the <-s> is due to subsequent Scots or English influence. (Marwick 1952, page 54.)

There is, of course, a closely related MSc noun

Borowstoun, Borrowstoun, Burrowstoun: a burgh

and the existence of this word may very well have influenced the later development of the Norse compound.

A parallel situation can be traced in the development of the West Lothian name Bo'ness (Angus Macdonald 1941, pages 25, 28, 32).

Early references are to Berwardeston 1335-6, Berewardestone 1336-7, Barwartstoune 1473 and Berwarstoun 1505-6 whereas later references show obvious influence from MSc Borrowistoun, a burgh. For the generic in the name Bo'ness cf T13(S).

(The specific is interpreted by Macdonald as Bearnweard's farm or possibly bearkeeper's farm.)

BRACKSIDE : NC 96 SE: 956644 R33(S))
BRACKSIDE BURN : " : 953634
BRAXSIDE : " : 952634
Local pronunciation: ['braksaid]
Early refs: Braxside 1876 OS
Derivation:
ON brekka f.: a slope
There is a popular Gaelic descriptive term G breac: variegated in colour, but the word order in this compound favours an ON derivation, although the phonetic development of ON brekka may have been influenced by G breac.
The generic is probably
ON sætr n. : mountain pastures.
W.F.H. Nicolaisen refers to the group of Sutherland names ending in -side, -said and suggests that they may be derived from ON sætr n. rather than the closely related ON setr n.: a residence; farm, because the [s] form seems to favour a following non-palatal vowel. (Nicolaisen 1976, page 92)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

BRAWLBIN : ND 05 NE: 070572 R34(S)
BRAWLBIN MAINS : " : 069579
BRAWLBIN BURN : " : 072576
Local pronunciation: ['bralbɐn]

Early refs:			
	Bravlbyn (or Brawynd)	1547	RSS
	Brawilbyn	1605	Retours
	Bralbeynd	1644	"
	Brawlbynd	1606	RMS
	Braulbind	1661	"
	Braulebindskaill		"
	Loch of Brawlbin	1628	Sinclair (Thurso)
	Loch of Braulbin	1662	Blaeu
	Braalbin		"
	Braalbin	1726	Macfarlane
	L. Brualbin	1789	Ainslie
	Braaluabin	1831	Thomson

R34(S) (cont'd)

Derivation: For the initial element

braal : cf T11(S) which has the following early forms:

Brathwelle	1375	RMS
Broadwell	1671	Retours
Bredwell	1633	RMS
Bredwall	1667	"
Braedwall	"	"

D. Omand derives this from

ON breiðr : broad

ON völlr m.: a field

and all the early forms support this derivation (Omand 1972, page 225). It seems likely that this is also the source of the first element of Brawlbin, but it is strange that none of the early forms contain any hint of the dental consonant which is so prevalent in the earlier forms of Braal. The explanation of this may be that when the final element was added and the word became trisyllabic this encouraged the shortening of the first two syllables Bredwall>Braul rather more speedily than in the case of the disyllabic Bredwall.

The final element of Brawlbin also presents difficulties.

G beinn f. : a mountain, hill

is the most likely source but it is difficult to account for the final<-d>which occurs in several of the earlier examples. Ben Dorrery is in the vicinity to justify derivation from G beinn.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

R35(S)

BROUBSTER	:	ND 06 SW:	028612
BURN OF BROUBSTER	:	" :	045602
BRIDGE OF BROUBSTER	:	" :	036602
LEANS OF BROUBSTER	:	" :	037604
BROUBSTER HILL	:	" :	019604
BROUBSTER COTTAGE	:	" :	021619
BROUBSTER VILLAGE	:	ND 05 NW:	037594

Local pronunciation: ['brubstər]

Early refs:	Browbstar	1562	Sinclair (Mey)	R35(S) (cont'd))
	Brubster	1562-64*	OLM	
	Brouster	1620	Retours	
	Broubuster	1662	Blaeu	
	Brubster	1726	Macfarlane	
	Brybster	1750	Roy	
	Brubist	"	"	
	Brubster	1831	Thomson	

*Charter of Adam, Bishop of Orkney

Derivation:

ON brú m. : a bridge

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc leans : see R19(S)

The bridge is over the Forss Water (see T34(S)). This was, as the numerous names indicate, a very populous area but the people were evicted during the Caithness clearances and the crofts are now derelict.

.....

BUAILE NAN GOBHAR : ND 05 NW: 041553 R36(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G buaile f.: a fold for sheep or cattle or other animals

G gobhar f.: a goat

Some buaile names developed to be croft names, but probably not in this instance.

The name apparently referred to a shieling.

.....

BUAILE OSCAR : ND 05 NE: 057557 R37(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G buaile f. : see R36(S)

The final element is questionable without earlier references, but it may be a Norse personal name:

ON Ósk (gen -ar) m.: Oscar (Lind 1915, column 822)

In this instance buaile is being used to indicate the oval shape of the hill fort on Ben Freiceadain (see R14(T)). (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 95.)

.....

BULDOO : ND 06 NW: 002672 R38(S)

Local pronunciation: [bʌl'du]

Early refs: Bulldoo 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Probably

G baile m.: see R25(S)

G dubh : see R23(S)

(G baile m. is more probable than G buaile f. because the adjective dubh is not lenited.)

.....

CARRISIDE : ND 05 NE: 074589 R39(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Carriside 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)

Caryside 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

The specific may be the ON personal name Kâri m. (Lind 1915, column 675).

ON sæ tr n.: see R33(S)

.....

CHAPEL POOL : ND 07 SW: 024703 R40(S)
ST. MARY'S CHAPEL : " : 025701
ST. MARY'S WELL : ND 06 NW: 024697
Local pronunciation:
Early refs: 1726 Macfarlane: mentions this chapel as having been earlier dedicated to St. Peter.

Derivation:
A chapel dedicated to St. Mary.
"This chapel is much the oldest ecclesiastical structure remaining in Caithness, and may possibly date from the 12th century."
(Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 89)
Sc well : a natural spring of water which forms a pool or stream

.....

CLAIS EHREAC : ND 05 NW: 009592 R41(S)
CNOC NA CLAISE ERICE: " : 005594
Local pronunciation : [klaʃ 'brek]
Early refs: shealling of Clashbreik 1726 Sinclair (Murkle)
Glashbreak 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
G clais f.: a small stream, ditch
G breac : see R33(S)
G cnoc m. : a hill, hillock
Breac, as indicated in R33(S), is a favourite Gaelic place-name element and indicates the subtle blend of colours typical in moorland areas. Alternatively, if the name applies to a stream, the reference can be to the speckled trout which swim in it.
The name Clais Ehreac refers to former shielings.

.....

CLASHACH : ND 06 SE: 053642 R42(S)
Local pronunciation: ['klaʃəx]
Early refs: not mentioned in 1877 6" OS
Derivation:
G claiseach: furrowed, trenched, full of ditches or hollows.

CLASHMORE : NC 96 SE: 999632 R43(S)

Local pronunciation: not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G *clais* f.: see R41(S)

G *mór* : see R11(S)

.....

CNOC DACHOW : NC 96 SE: 964644 R44(S)

Local pronunciation: [da'xau]

Early refs: Dachow 1619 RMS
Dathow 1640 Retours
Dachow 1750 Roy
Dachow 1782 Sinclair (Freswick)
Achins of Dachow " "

Derivation:

G *cnoc* m. : see R41(S)

Dachow only appears on the 6" OS map as a hill name, but early records suggest that it was an important settlement until at least the late eighteenth century. My informants only knew it as the name of a house in Reay village.

It is difficult to suggest a derivation for this name in spite of the uniformity of the earlier forms.

Dathow (1640) is the only variant form and it is of no assistance in interpreting the name.

.....

CNOC NAN AIRIGH : NC 96 SE: 986605 R45(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Cnoc nan Airidhe 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G *cnoc* m. : see R41(S)

G *àiridh* (pl *àiridhean*)f.: see R23(S)

This is another example of inaccurate inflection. (cf R7(T))

.....

CRAIGTON : NC 96 NE: 982668 R46(S)

Local pronunciation: ['kregtən]

Early refs: Craigtoun 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

Sc craig : a rock, crag (<G creag f.)

Sc toun : an area of arable land on an estate, with associated common grazing rights farmed in whole or in part on a run-rig system, common throughout Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century.

.....

CRUIVES : ND 06 SW: 027621 R47(S)

Local pronunciation: [krøvs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cruives may be a corruption of

G craobh f.: a tree, bush

as in nearby Cuil na Craoibhe (see R61(T)). The croft at Cruives was probably built after the meaning of G craobh became obscure to the locals.

Alternatively, the name may derive from

Sc cruive : 1) a hut, hovel, cottage

2) an enclosure for animals esp. for poultry or pigs

.....

DALCLAGGIE : ND 06 NW: 036685 R48(S)

Local pronunciation: [dəl'klagi]

Early refs: Dallachlaggie 1630 Retours

Dalclagie 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G dail f. : a field, meadow

The word order in these examples (generic + specific) indicates that Dal- represents G dail rather than ON dalr (see R22(S)), which would normally appear in final position.

The favourable situation occupied by this small farm suggests that the second element is

G claigionn m.: best field of arable land on a farm

DOUNREAY HOUSE : NC 96 NE: 982669 R49(S)
UPPER DOUNREAY : " : 998661
LOWER DOUNREAY : " : 986669
DOUNREAY QUARRY : " : 997668
DOUNREAY BURN : NC 96 SE: 990645
Local pronunciation: ['dunra] [dun'ra] ['daunre] [dun're]
(See Chapter III for a detailed account of these various forms.)

Early refs:

Dunra	1539	RMS
Downra	1562	Sinclair (Mey)
Donraa	1577	" "
Dounrey	1567	OPS
Dounra	1609	RMS
Dunra	1654	Reay Papers
Dounrae	1662	Blaeu
Dunray	1726	Macfarlane
Castle of Dunray	"	"
Downreay	1753	Sutherland (Forse)
Downreay	1770	Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:
G dùn m. : a fortified house or hill; fortress
For a detailed discussion of -reay see R63(S).
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

ESVARASDAL : NC 95 NE: 996598 R50(S)
AN t-EAS : " : 995595
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ɛsəs]
Early refs: see R22(S)
Derivation:
G eas m. : a waterfall
This has been anglicised in the modern version of the name by the addition of the definite article and the English plural ending.
The waterfalls occur on the Achvarasdal Burn (see R22(S)).

.....

FERANELAN : ND 05 NW: 035588 R51(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

It is very difficult to suggest a derivation for this name without earlier forms.

A local informant pointed out that there is an island in the Allt Torrigil (see R11(T)) at this point and the name may, therefore, be derived from

G fearann m.: land

G eilean m. : an island

G fearann an eilein

(G eilean can also be used metaphorically in the sense of "an island of cultivation".)

.....

GUNNSCROFT : NC 96 NE: 981659 R52(S)

Local pronunciation: ['gʌns krɔft]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a croft (see R11(S)) belonging to a family named Gunn, which is a very long-established Caithness surname.

.....

HALLAM SMALLHOLDINGS: ND 06 NW: 033672 R53(S)

HALLAM BURN : " : 036676

Local pronunciation : ['halɐm]

Early refs: Holme 1612 RMS

Holme 1630 Retours

Hall 1750 Roy

Derivation:

The name occurs in a very strongly Norse-influenced area of Reay Parish and is almost certainly of Norse origin. Possibly ON hólmr m. (or the weak form hólmi): an islet referring to an island in the burn, or to dry land in a marsh.

.....

HELSHETTER : NC 96 SE: 963628 R54(S)

HELSHETTER STRATH : " : 963617

Local pronunciation: ['hɛlʃɛdɔr]

Early refs: Helsettir 1782 Sinclair (Freswick)

Helshitter " " "

Derivation:

ON hella f.: a flat stretch of rock

ON setr n. : see R33(S), with palatalisation of the initial consonant due to Gaelic influence

Sc strath : see R25(S)

.....

ISAULD : NC 96 NE: 981653 R55(S)

BRIDGE OF ISAULD : " : 976651

BURN OF ISAULD : " : 974652

ISAULD COTTAGE : " : 978653

ISAULD PORT : " : 967656

Local pronunciation: [ɛz'ald]

Early refs:

Eishald	1573	Sinclair (Mey)
Isald	"	" "
Easeald	1619	RMS
Isould	1667	"
Easthald	1662	Blaeu
Isauld	1726	Macfarlane
Eastald	1734	Sutherland (Forse)
Easall	1750	Roy
Isauld	1770	Sinclair (Freswick)
Issald	1807	Arrowsmith
Isauld	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

Some of the earlier spellings suggest that the initial element may be

G eas m. : see R50(S)

The final element is fairly uniform throughout and probably represents

G allt m. : see R1(S)

The anglicised version of

G port m. : a harbour

is preferred in this area to ON höfn f., anglicised to haven which is prevalent in the eastern parishes (see T32(T)).

KENNACHY : ND 06 NW: 031685 R56(S)

KENNACHY BURN : " : 028684

Local pronunciation: [kɤn'axi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Probably

G ceann m. : top, end, limit

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G ceann an achaidh

The word ceann always suggests an extremity, either horizontal, or vertical in the case of hills.

.....

KNOCK URRAY BROCH : NC 96 NE: 984663 R57(S)

Local pronunciation: [nɔk 'ure brɔx]

Derivation: Possibly

G cnoc m. : see R41(S); anglicised to Knock

G ùr : new

G ràth m. : a fortress, artificial mound

The initial element of Urray is uncertain because of its position in the compound. One would expect to find Ràth ùr (generic + specific). This unusual word order suggests that it is more probably a corruption of Cnoc an ràtha, but without earlier forms it is impossible to be certain.

The broch is situated on a grassy mound about half a mile south of Dounreay farmhouse. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 94.)

.....

LOANSCORRIBEST : NC 96 SE: 984640 R58(S)

Local pronunciation: [lɔn'skɔrəbɛst]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

(cf Scorriecleit) 1661 RMS)

Derivation:

G lón m. : a meadow

-scorri- : possibly the ON personal name Skorri m. (Lind 1915, column 923)

-best : probably ON bólstaðr m. see R21(S)

.....

LYBSTER SMALLHOLDINGS: ND 06 NW: 025685 R59(S)
HILL OF LYBSTER : " : 027692
TULLOCH OF LYBSTER : " : 026694
Local pronunciation : ['laipstər]
Early refs: Lybuster 1549 RSS
Lybstar 1585 Sinclair (Mey)
Lybuster 1604 Retours
Lybuster 1606 RMS
Lybster 1661 "
Lybuster 1662 Blaeu
Lybster 1726 Macfarlane
Leibster 1750 Roy
Laibster 1763 Tain & Balnagown
Labster 1807 Arrowsmith
Liabost Modern Gaelic
Derivation: Probably
ON hlíð f. : a slope
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Cai tulloch : see R5(S)
The same elements, though in a different order occur in a well-known Icelandic place-name Bólstaðarhlíð.

.....

MILTON : NC 96 SE: 978643 R60(S)
MILTON MOSS : " : 982622
Local pronunciation: now known as [ðə mʌl]: see R31(S) ['bɔrləm mʌl]
Early refs: Mylntoun de Rae 1640 Retours
Milltown 1750 Roy
Moss 1831 Thomson
Derivation: Probably
Sc miln-toun, myltoune
: a hamlet attached to or adjoining a mill
Given the predominance of Gaelic in this area one might suggest
G muileann m.: a mill
but the former explanation, assuming that both elements of the compound are Scots, seems much more probable.
Sc moss : see R7(S)

PORT MÒR : NC 96 NE: 958655 R61(S)

Local pronunciation: [p>rt 'mor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G port m. : a harbour

G mór : see R11(S)

Port Mòr is situated in Sandside Bay, further in than the artificial Sandside Harbour. It was the original harbour but its approaches are now blocked with silt.

.....

QUARRY SIDE : ND 06 NW: 007674 R62(S)

Local pronunciation: [k>ri 'said]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

An English name, recently coined, rather than an example of -side as explained in R33(S).

.....

REAY : NC 96 SE: 967647 R63(S)

NEW REAY : " : 960645

REAY BURN : " : 969632

Local pronunciation: [re]

R63(S) (cont'd)

Early refs:	Ra	1222-45	OLM
	Ra	1225	Bagimond's Roll, OLM
	Ra	1439	Cawdor Charters, OLM
	Raa	1507	RSS
	Ray	1554	Sinclair (Mey)
	Raa	1557	" "
	Ray	1561-6	OLM
	Rae	1612	RMS
	Rei	1619	"
	Rhae	1640	Retours
	Rhae	1658	Caithness Presbytery Records, OLM
	Rae	1636	Reay Papers
	Rea	1649	" "
	Rheay	"	" "
	Rhea	1662	" "
Toun of	Reay	1726	Macfarlane
church of	Rae	"	"
	Reay	1750	Roy
Reay	Kirk	"	"

Derivation:

Both Watson (1926, page 117-8) and MacBain (1922, page 11) suggest that Reay should be derived from G ràth m. (see R57(S)), but there are cogent reasons for questioning this derivation.

The normal distribution of P- Celtic place-name elements covers the area in the north-east between the Forth and the Moray Firth, and Reay is far to the north of this heartland of Pictish influence. (Jackson 1955, see maps 6 and 7.)

It is strange that none of the early written forms contain any hint of final<-th>, even if it were already silent in speech. (MacDonald "Caiseal, Cathair, Dùn, Lios and Ràth in Scotland", II, page 38.)

It is also strange that the apparently pleonastic Dounreay (Dùnrath according to Watson) should have been coined. Watson explains that it "may mean 'fort-rath', with reference to a broch near it" (Watson 1926, page 118), but there is no positive evidence for the existence of two neighbouring forts.

In view of these objections, it seems reasonable to suggest that the name was Norse in origin, and that G ràth has crept in subsequently

because of its phonetic similarity to the original Norse name and that names such as Beinn Ràtha (see R16(T) and Cnoc an Ràtha (see R43(T)) were coined at a later date on the mistaken assumption that the element in question was G ràth. R63(S) (cont'd)

An appropriate Norse generic would be:

ON rá (originally vrá) f.: a corner, nook or

ON rá f.: a pole (used metaphorically).

Magnus Olsen deals with rá in the case of a farm Re in Norway, situated on "a long stretched-out elevation" (Norske Gaardnavne X, p.140). This description would fit the situation of Caithness Reay very well indeed. When the Gaels moved into the Reay district in either the 12th or 13th century they frequently created names based on earlier Norse settlement names, and it seems logical to assume that Dounreay (see R49(S)) could be such a name, containing G dùn and ON rá.

New Reay is so called to distinguish it from an earlier village now inundated by sand.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

SANDSIDE : NC 96 SE: 956646 R64(S)

SANDSIDE BURN : " : 963624

SANDSIDE HARBOUR : NC 96 NE: 958661

SANDSIDE HEAD : " : 954664

SANDSIDE BAY : " : 962661

Local pronunciation: ['sansaid]

Early refs:

Sandsid	1507	RSS
Sanstsyde	1558	"
Sandside	1554	Sinclair (Mey)
Sandsyd	1636	Reay Estate Papers
Sandsyde	1640	Retours
Sandsyde	1619	RMS
Sandset Head	1662	Blaeu
Sandset	"	"
Sanside	1726	Macfarlane
Sandside Head	"	"
Sandside	1750	Roy

R64(S)
(cont'd)

Derivation:

ON sandr m.: sand, the sea-shore

ON sætr m.: see R33(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

R65(S)

SHEBSTER : ND 06 SW: 017640

EAST SHEBSTER : " : 026635

WEST SHEBSTER : " : 012634

HILL OF SHEBSTER : " : 013646

LEANS OF SHEBSTER : " : 004641

BURN OF SHEBSTER : " : 012636

Local pronunciation: ['ʃɛbstər]

Early refs:

Schabuster	1539	RMS
Shebster	1634	Sutherland (Forse)
Shebster	1658	RMS
Shebster	1662	Blaeu
Shabster	1726	Macfarlane
Shabster	1750	Roy
Shebster	1782	Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:

Interpretation of the specific is difficult. It is probable that she-/sha- may represent an ON word which has subsequently undergone palatalisation due to Gaelic influence (cf Sheater 1664 RMS).

MacBain (1922, page 108) mentions a similar name Sheshader and comments that "the interpretation is not easy, for the prefix may be variously resolved."

D.B. Nicolson suggests that the source may be ON suðr: south (Horne 1907, page 41), but the earlier references give little support to this suggestion.

Final element

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

Sc leans : see R19(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

SHURRERY	:	ND 05 NW:	042577
SHURRERY LODGE	:	" :	037563
LOCH SHURRERY	:	ND 05 SW:	046549
BEN SHURRERY	:	ND 05 NE:	052565

R66(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃurari]

Early refs:	Sovre	1549	RSS
	Showrarne	1558	"
	Sower	1606	RMS
	Schourari	1619	"
	Sowre	1661	"
	Schurarie	1640	Retours
	Shureri	1662	Blaeu
L. of	Shureri	"	"
Loch	Shurrey	1726	Macfarlane
	Shurary	1749	Sinclair (Freswick)
	Sourary	1750	Roy
Ben	Sourary	"	"
Loch	Sourary	"	"
	Shurery	1831	Thomson

Derivation:

The specific could be

ON sjór (gen sjóvar) m.: the sea

(with reference to Loch Shurrery which is large by Caithness standards).

However, the generic appears to be

ON ærgi n. : a shieling (borrowed into Norse from

G àirigh : see R23(S))

and, in all other Caithness examples of names with ON ærgi as generic, the specific is invariably a personal name.

It is, therefore, probable that in this instance also the specific is

ON Sióvarr/Sævarr m. : a personal name (Lind 1915, page 1011)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

Sc ben : see R14(S)

Shurrery is described as "a tennent toun of about 21 families" (Macfarlane 1726), but the area has now been virtually abandoned, with the exception of Shurrery Lodge which is used by shooting parties.

.....

SKIALL SMALLHOLDINGS: ND 06 NW: 025669 R67(S)
LOCH OF SKIALL : " : 018674
Local pronunciation : ['skeɹl]
Early refs: Skaillye 1604 Retours
Skaill 1605 "
Skalie 1644 "
Skaill 1612 RMS
Skeill 1619 "
Skell 1750 Roy
Skaill 1770 Sinclair (Freswick)
Skail 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
This appears to be the only Caithness example of the ON toponym skáli m., which is comparatively common in Orkney (Marwick 1952). The earliest sense of this word is: a hut, shed put up for temporary use, but the Orkney examples indicate that it refers to a much more permanent and important residence, and the same comment applies to the Caithness example.
The spelling <skiall> which first appears in 1876 is probably erroneous because it does not reflect local pronunciation. Unfortunately it has been retained on the recent 6" OS map.
Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

STEMSTER SMALLHOLDINGS : ND 06 NW: 041658 R68(S)
STEMSTER BURN : " : 032655
STEMSTER HILL : " : 034663
TULLOCH OF STEMSTER BROCH: " : 041655
Local pronunciation : ['stɛmstər]
Early refs: Stamster 1529 RMS
Stambuster 1557 Book of Assumptions, OPS
Stambusteir " " "
Stambuster 1605 Retours
Stambuster 1606 RMS
Stamister 1619 "
Stamester 1662 Blaeu
Stempster 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation: Probably R68(S) (cont'd)

ON steinn m. : see R20(S), with reference to a standing-stone or perhaps to the broch itself.

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

Cai tulloch : see R5(S)

The persistent <stam-> in the orthography is puzzling but modern pronunciation is consistent with derivation from ON steinn.

.....

TIGH A' BHEANNAICH : ND 05 NW: 042577 R69(S)

CREAGAN A' BHEANNAICH: " : 042578

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G taigh m. : a house

G creagan m. : a little rock

R.D. Beaton suggests

G manach (gen manaich) m.: a monk (Beaton 1909, page 331)

The development of G manach to G beannach could have been influenced by

G beannachadh m. : a blessing, benediction

"At the croft of Tigh a' Bheannaich is a low stony mound from which a number of large stones protrude through the turf. It is said to be the site of a graveyard (ie Creagan a' Bheannaich) and the name of the neighbouring croft suggests the site of a primitive oratory or church." (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 110.)

.....

TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES

ALLT A' BHACHLAIN : ND 05 NE: 076567 R1(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

The derivation of a' bhachlain is very doubtful. Possibly

G bachall m.

: 1) a shepherd's crook

2) a little ball or lump (with reference to a nearby hillock)

If G bachall is the source one would have to assume that the form a' bhachlain incorporates either an irregular genitive inflection or perhaps a diminutive.

.....

ALLT A' MHUILINN : ND 05 NE: 078575 R2(T)

LOCH A' MHUILINN : " : 059568

TORR A' MHUILINN : ND 05 NW: 037576

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: Innis a' Mhuilinn 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G loch f. : see R5(S)

G tòrr m. : a hill, mound

G innis f. : a pasture

G muileann m.: a mill

The reference is to a water mill, now disused.

.....

ALLT BEUL A' BHOTHAIN: ND 05 SW: 003537 R3(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G beul m. : a mouth (in front of)

G bothan m.: a bothy, hut

There is no trace of a bothy or shieling here now, and no local knowledge of it.

.....

ALLT CLAIS COILLE : NC 96 SW: 936633 R4(T)

CLAIS COILLE : NC 96 SW: 937633

Local pronunciation: [klaʃ 'kʌl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G clais f.: see R41(S)

In Caithness clais is used to refer to a natural feature, although the stream usually resembles a man-made ditch in being shallow and narrow.

G coille f.: a wood

There is a peculiarity here in that Clais Coille appears to refer not to the stream but to the land beside it.

.....

ALLT CRASGACH : ND 05 NW: 016560 R5(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G crasgach: lying across, branching

The Allt Crasgach joins the Allt Forsiescye (see R6(S)) at right angles.

.....

ALLT LONIEVERK : ND 05 SW: 011533 R6(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

The meaning of Lonieverk is very doubtful. Perhaps

G lón m. : a meadow

G marc (gen mairc) m.

: a horse

G lón a' mhairc

.....

ALLT NAN SAC : NC 95 SE: 968526 R7(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G sac m. : a bag, sack

.....

ALLT NAN SGUABAG : NC 95 SE: 984528 R8(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G sguabag f.: a little besom, small sheaf of corn, smart breeze of wind

The most likely interpretation of this name is that there was, at one time, a small cultivated patch beside the burn where corn was habitually grown.

Sguabag also occurs in the phrase Tri Là Sguabag with reference to April 7th, 8th and 9th but it is difficult to see what application this could have to a moorland stream.

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

ALLT NA SPEIREIG : NC 95 NE: 973580 R9(T)

Local pronunciation: [ault nə 'spireg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G speireag f.

: a sparrow-hawk

.....

ALLT RUADH : ND 06 SW: 026617 R10(T)

ALLTAN RUADH : NC 95 SE: 974538

Local pronunciation: [ault 'ruə]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an

G ruadh : reddish, reddish-brown

Colour adjectives are very popular in Gaelic place-names. Ruadh particularly so in moorland areas, where it describes the colour imparted to the water by the peat.

.....

ALLT TORRIGAL : NC 96 SW: 946640 R11(T)

LONE TORRIGAL : " : 945630

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: Old an Torrigill 1690 Sinclair (Murkle)

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G lón m. : see R6(T)

Torrigal is reminiscent of Gleann Thorcaill (see R98(T)) and is similarly difficult.

The initial element could represent

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

The 1690 reference suggests that the final element could be

ON gil n. : a deep narrow glen with a stream at the bottom.

This generic has been borrowed into Caithness dialect as gill. However, it has to be remembered that the 1690 reference was recorded in a heavily Norse influenced part of the county, where gill is a frequently occurring element, but this is not the case in Reay Parish where the name occurs.

An alternative explanation is that this name, like Gleann Thorcaill could derive from the Gaelic personal name Torcull.

.....

ALLTAN NODHA MÒR : NC 95 NE: 960592 R12(T)

ALLTAN NODHA BEAG : " : 958594

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an

G nodha : meaning obscure

G mór : see R11(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

.....

BAD NAM BO : NC 95 SE: 991520 R13(T)

ALLT BAD NAM BO : " : 994514

MEUR NAM BO : " : 978545

Local pronunciation: [bad nam 'bo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G bad m. : 1) a piece, portion or small area
2) a thicket, clump of trees

G bó f. : a cow -

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G meur m. : a branch of a river

It is possible that this name simply describes an area where cows grazed, but a local informant has argued persuasively that the name belongs to a cluster of names, all of which suggest cattle-droving activities in the area (cf R39(T), R119(T) and R121(T)).

.....

BEINN FREICEADAIN : ND 05 NE: 059558 R14(T)
CNOC FREICEADAIN : ND 06 NW: 012654
Local pronunciation: In the first name Beinn is invariably omitted and Cnoc Freiceadain is always referred to as The Sithean.
['frɛkəden]
[ə 'ʃiən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G beinn f. : see R14(S)
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G freiceadain m.: a guard, watch
G sithean m. : a fairy hillock

Beinn Freiceadain is the site of an Iron Age hill-fort and of a Neolithic/Bronze Age cairn. (Omand 1972, page 112/117.) It has obviously always been recognised as an important defensive site.

.....

BEINN NAM BAD BEAG : ND 05 SW: 012546 R15(T)
BEINN NAM BAD MÒR : NC 95 NE: 998552
Local pronunciation: [lɤtl bɛn ə 'bad]
[bɤg bɛn ə 'bad]

Early refs: Beinn nam Bad Bheag 1877 6" OS
Binbad 1662 Blaeu
Bin-na-mbud 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

G beinn f.: see R14(T)
G bad m. : see R13(T)
G beag : see R7(S)
G mór : see R11(S)

The modern versions containing little and big are direct translations of the original Gaelic beag and mór.

.....

BEINN RÀTHA : NC 96 SE: 954613 R16(T)
BEINN RÀTHA BHEAG: " : 954619
ALLT BEINN RÀTHA : " : 957627
MEUR BEINN RÀTHA : NC 95 NW: 949527

Local pronunciation: R16(T) (cont'd)

<Beinn Ràtha> : ['bɛg bɛn ra]

<Beinn Ràtha Bheag>: ['lɛtl bɛn ra]

Early refs: Bin Raw 1726 Macfarlane

Ben Ra 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G beinn f.: see R14(T)

G ràth m. : see R57(S) and R63(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G meur m. : see R13(T)

For further comments on this name see R63(S).

.....

BEINN RUADH : NC 96 SW: 927633 R17(T)

CNOCAN RUADH : " : 929628

Local pronunciation: [bɛn 'rɔi]

Early refs: Bin Roy 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

G beinn f.: see R14(S)

G cnoc m. : see R41(S) + dimin -an

G ruadh : see R10(T)

.....

BEUL AN LOCHAIN : NC 96 SE: 995639 R18(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G beul m. : a mouth, opening

G loch f. : see R5(S) + dimin -an

This name refers to what would once have been a marshy area between the Achaveilan Burn (see R4(S)) and the Shebster Burn (see R65(S)), but the land has now been improved by drainage.

.....

BLÀR AN T-SUIDHE : ND 05 NW: 045593 R19(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G blàr m. : see R30(S)

G suidhe m.: a seat, level shelf on a hill-side

In this case the description is of a hard ridge in surrounding boggy ground.

.....

BLÀR DEARG : ND 05 SW: 042538 R20(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G blàr m. : see R30(S)

G dearg : vivid red, probably describing the colour of the heather.

.....

BLÀR GEAL : ND 05 NW: 015590 R21(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G blàr m. : see R30(S)

G geal : white

In Caithness place-names the colours dearg and geal tend to be used to distinguish between heather-covered moors and grass-covered moors respectively.

.....

BLÀR MÀIRI : ND 05 SW: 019544 R22(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G blàr m. : see R30(S)

G Màiri : Mary

The reference is to the nearby St Mary's Chapel (see R40(S)).

.....

BORAG KNOWE : NC 96 SE: 974629 R23(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: The initial element may be

G borr m. : a knob, lumpy protuberance + dimin -ag with tautologous Scots knowe a knoll added subsequently. Alternatively, the initial element may be Caithness dialect:

boorag : a peat cut out of shallow moss, with its lower half moss, and its upper part growing heather, used as backing to a peat fire.

.....

BRAIGH FÉITH HEMIGAL: ND 05 SW: 028533 R24(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G bràigh m.: the upper part of any place

G féith f. : rents in moor- or bog-land made by water

Hemigal : meaning obscure without early references and modern pronunciation

.....

BRUACH BHREAC : NC 96 SE: 974623 R25(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G bruach f.: a bank, brim

G breac : see R33(S)

.....

CAMP ROCK : NC 96 NW: 937661 R26(T)

Local pronunciation: [ə 'kamp rɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS R26(T) (cont'd)

It being an insignificant topographical feature there are no earlier references to this rock, but locals think the name is old, in spite of its deceptively modern appearance.

Derivation: Possibly

ON kambr m.: a crest, with reference to the ridge formed by Cnoc na Moine (see R54(T))

The name has been further anglicised in modern pronunciation by the addition of the definite article.

.....

CÀRN LIATH : ND 05 NW: 038583 R27(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G càrn m. : a heap of stones

G liath : grey-coloured

The word càrn does not necessarily indicate a heap of stones; it can refer to the conical shape of the hill to which it is applied, as in this instance.

G carn has been borrowed into Scots as cairn which is a very common place-name element throughout Scotland indicating a pile of stones, especially one serving as a boundary or land-mark, or marking a grave.

.....

CEANN MÒR : NC 96 SW: 947609 R28(T)

Local pronunciation: [kjaun 'mor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G ceann m.: see R56(S)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

CLAIS AN EICH : ND 05 NW: 046583 R29(T)

CNOC AN EICH : NC 95 NE: 985576

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f. : see R41(S)

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G each (gen eich) m.

: a horse

.....

CLAIS AN FHEARCHAIR: ND 06 SW: 023619 R30(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f.: see R4(T)

G Fearchar (gen Fearchair)

: Farquhar

.....

CLAIS AN TUIRC : NC 96 SE: 991627 R31(T)

CLACH CLAIS AN TUIRC: " : 992632

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f. : see R41(S)

G clach f. : a rock, stone

G torc m. : a hog, boar

.....

CLAIS DHUBH : ND 05 NE: 066560 R32(T)

Local pronunciation name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f. : see R41(S)

G dubh : see R23(S)

.....

CLAIS NA H-EARBAIGE: NC 95 NE: 998558 R33(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f. : see R41(S)

G earbag f.: a young or little roe

.....

CLAIS NAN CAORACH : ND 05 NE: 052556 R34(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f.: see R41(S)

G caora (gen pl caorach) f.

: a sheep

.....

CLAIS NAN GAIRBHEAL: ND 05 NW: 049585 R35(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f. : see R41(S)

G gairbheal m.: a free-stone quarry

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

CLAPERON : NC 96 SE: 974627 R36(T)

Local pronunciation: ['klɛprən]

Derivation: Possibly

G clàbar m.: mire, mud, clay + dimin -on

.....

CLETT, WESTER : NC 96 NW: 919655 R37(T)

EASTER CLETT : " : 927656

MIDDLE CLETT : " : 922656

Local pronunciation: [klɛt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

CNOC ALLTAN CAORUINN: NC 94 NE: 997498 R38(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an

G caorunn m.: a mountain ash or rowan tree

.....

CNOC AN ARBHAIR : ND 05 NE: 056569 R39(T)

Local pronunciation: [krɔxk ən 'jaru]

Early refs: Cnoc an Àireimh 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G arbhar m. : corn

G àireamh f.: number, quantity

Without other earlier references it is impossible to say which of the two forms listed above is the more probable.

The hill-name is pronounced locally [krɔxk ən 'jaru] which favours the 1876 version. It is tempting to link this to the series of names in the vicinity which appear to refer to droving activities and to suggest that it is a spot where cattle were counted, but there is no firm evidence for this suggestion.

.....

CNOC AN EICH : NC 95 NE: 985576 R40(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G each (gen eich) m.: a horse

.....

CNOC AN FHITHICH : NC 95 NE: 978585 R41(T)

ALLT AN FHITHICH : " : 977582

Local pronunciation: [krɔk nə 'fidəx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G fitheach (gen fithich) m.

: a raven

.....

CNOC AN FHRAOICH : NC 95 NE: 985585 R42(T)

ALLT CNOC AN FHRAOICH: " : 991584

MEUR AN FHRAOICH : " : 983595

Local pronunciation : [krɔk nə 'frix]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G fraoch m.: heather

The written form an fhraoich is grammatically accurate but lenition is no longer preserved in pronunciation.

.....

CNOC AN RÀTHA : ND 95 NE: 053576 R43(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: R43(T) (cont'd)

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G ràth m. : see R57(S) and R63(S)
(Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 96)

.....

CNOC AN RUIGHEIN DUIBH: ND 06 SW: 005603 R44(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G ruighean m.: a wool-roll ready to spin

G dubh : see R23(S)

Possibly a reference to pieces of wool caught in the heather.

Another possibility is:

G righe/ruighe m.
: a hill-slope, shieling + dimin -an, although

G àiridh f. : a shieling

is more common in this area.

.....

CNOC AN T-SAMHRAIDH: NC 96 SE: 977620 R45(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sʌmərən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G samhradh m.: summer

This refers to the summer flitting to the shielings. The word has been anglicised in the modern pronunciation.

.....

CNOC GLAS : NC 96 NW: 928656 R46(T)

Local pronunciation: [nɔ 'glas]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G glas : grey

The initial word cnoc has been greatly reduced from its original form in modern pronunciation.

.....

CNOC LUACHAIR : ND 05 NW: 011583 R47(T)

CLAIS LUACHAIR : " : 010590

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: Cnoc 'Luachair 1876 6" OS

Clais 'Luachair " "

The apostrophe before 'Luachair is presumably a gesture towards the missing definite article.

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G luachair f.
: a common rush

G clais f.: see R41(S)

.....

CNOC MAOL DONN : NC 95 NE: 979558 R48(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G maol : bare

G donn : brown coloured

.....

CNOC NA BANTRAICH : NC 96 SE: 979645 R49(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G bantrach f.: a widow

.....

CNOC NA CLAISE BRICE: NC 95 NE: 999589 R50(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G clais f.: see R41(S)

G breac : see R33(S)

.....

CNOC NA GAOITH : ND 06 SW: 003619 R51(T)

BLÀR CNOC NA GAOITH: " : 004616

Local pronunciation: [krɔk nə ˈgi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G blàr m. : see R30(S)

G gaoth (gen gaoithe)f.

: wind

.....

CNOC NA H-IMRICHE : NC 95 SE: 988542 R52(T)

ALLT NA H-IMRICHE : " : 983535

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G imrich f.: a flitting, removal

This probably refers to the summer flitting to the shielings which were plentiful in this area.

.....

CNOC NA H-USEIG : NC 96 NE: 995677 R53(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Cnoc na h-Uiseig 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G uiseag (gen uiseig) f.

: a lark

.....

CNOC NA MOINE : NC 96 NW: 940652 R54(T)

ALLT CNOC NA MOINE : " : 932654

GEODH' NA MOINE : " : 941657

LOCH NA MOINE : " : 937656

Local pronunciation: [krɔk nə 'mɔn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G mòine f.: a moss, moor

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G geòdh'/geòdha m.

: see ON gjá below

G loch f. : see R5(S)

ON gjá f. : an inlet of the sea with steep cliffs on either side, a ravine. This has been borrowed into Gaelic as

geòdha and into the Caithness, Orkney and Shetland dialects as geo. It is a very common place-name element throughout Caithness. R54(T) (cont'd)

.....

CNOC NA TOBAIREACH : NC 96 SW: 934614 R55(T)

Local pronunciation: [krɔk ən 'tubrəx]

Early refs: Cnoc Tobair 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G tobar (gen. sing. tobair; gen. pl. tobraichean, tobraiche) m.
: a spring

The form tobaireach could represent either gen. pl. tobraiche or, more probably, nom. tobar + dimin -ach.

.....

CNOC PREAS A' MHADAIDH: NC 94 NE: 985488 R56(T)

ALLT PREAS A' MHADAIDH: " : 981497

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: Presswaddie 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G preas m. : a thicket

G madadh m.: a dog, fox, wolf - in this instance probably a fox

G allt m. : see R1(S)

.....

CNOC SAOTHAIR AN ATHAICH : ND 06 NW: 001611 R57(T)

GLEANN SAOTHAIR AN ATHAICH: " : 003605

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G saothair f.: labour, toil

G athach m. : a giant

G gleann m. : a valley, opening between two heights

.....

Local legend attributes the depth of the glen to the efforts of a giant. R57(T) (cont'd)

.....

CNOCAN DUBH : NC 96 SW: 922644 R58(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S) + dimin -an
G dubh : see R23(S)

.....

CNOCAN NAN EUN : NC 96 SE: 983614 R59(T)
CNOCAN DUBH NAN EUN: " : 982617
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S) + dimin -an
G eun (pl eðin) m.
: a bird
G dubh : see R23(S)
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T))

.....

COIRE BUIDHE : ND 05 NE: 054563 R60(T)
ALLT A' CHOIRE BHUIDHE: ND 05 SW: 004542
Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G coire m.: a circular hollow
G buidhe : yellow
G allt m.: see R1(S)
The lenition which occurs in the second name above is an interesting example of the grammatical inaccuracies which occur in Caithness Gaelic. Coire is masculine and, therefore, ought not to cause

lenition in the following adjective, but when the article is present, causing lenition in the noun, that lenition is transferred incorrectly to the adjective as well. R60(T) (cont'd)

.....

CRAOIBHE, BLÀR NA : ND 06 SE: 032623 R61(T)
CRAOIBHE, CUIL NA : " : 030625
CRAOIBHE, TORR NA : " : 033603
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blàr m. : see R30(S)
G craobh f.: a tree, bush
G cùil f. : a corner
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

.....

CREAGAN LOISGTE : NC 96 SW: 946647 R62(T)
Local pronunciation: [krɛgən 'lɔin]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an
G loisgte (past part. of loisg)
: burnt, scorched
The reference seems to be to the hillside rather than to an individual rock, and probably indicates that the grass is regularly burned in order to encourage new growth.
Modern pronunciation suggests the genitive form of G lón (gen lóin) m.: a meadow, but it is an uneasy partner for G creagan, although, as noted above, the reference seems to be to the whole hillside.

.....

CREAGAN REAMHAR : NC 96 SE: 987617 R63(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: R46(S) + dimin -an

G reamhar : fat, big, of great circumference

.....

CREAGAN WELL : NC 96 SE: 977641 R64(T)

CRAIGAN WELL : ND 06 NW: 029697

Local pronunciation: [ə 'kragən wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an

borrowed into Scots as creagan/craigan

Both names refer to springs in rocky places and both now have the English definite article prefixed to the name in pronunciation.

.....

CREAG BHEAG : NC 96 SE: 987629 R65(T)

LITTLE ROCK : " : 977636

Local pronunciation: [kreg 'bɛg] ['lɪtl̩ rɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

This is the only example of a Gaelic name and its English translation occurring side by side, as descriptions of adjacent rocks. Locals have often translated Gaelic place-names into English but in all other cases the English translation replaces the Gaelic name whereas in this case both names are retained.

.....

CREAG BHREAC MHÒR : ND 06 NW: 010661 R66(T)

CREAG BHREAC BHEAG : " : 007661

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S)

G breac : see R33(S)

G mór : see R11(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

.....

CREAG LEATHAN : NC 96 SE: 983632 R67(T)

Local pronunciation: [kreg 'lɛŋ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S)

G leathann: broad

.....

CREAG LIATH : NC 96 SE: 996629 R68(T)

CREAGAN LIATH : " : 990640

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an

G liath : see R27(T)

.....

CREAG MHÒR : NC 96 SE: 992626 R69(T)

Local pronunciation: [kreg 'mor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

CREAG NAN UAN : ND 05 NE: 072591 R70(T)

CREAGAN NAN UAN : ND 05 NW: 025563

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an

G uan (pl uain) m.

: a lamb

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T))

.....

CROCHAN GEAL : NC 96 SE: 979602 R71(T)

MEUR A' CHROCAIN GHIL: " : 978602

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S) + dimin -an

This name appears to be the only example in which the spelling reflects the typical Caithness pronunciation of cnoc [krɔxk]

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G geal (gen gile)

: see R21(T)

.....

DRUIM CALLTUINNEACH: ND 05 NW: 050562 R72(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G druim m.: a ridge of a hill

G calltuinn m.

: a hazel tree + adjectival ending -each

.....

DRUM HOLLISTAN : NC 96 SW: 926640 R73(T)

DRUMHOLLISTAN MOSS : " : 928647

LOCH HOLLISTAN : " : 922646

Local pronunciation: [drøm 'hɔlɪstən]

Early refs:

Drumhellesten	1662	Blaeu
Drim-Hollistill	1726	Macfarlane
Drum-Hellister	1807	Arrowsmith
Drumhellesten	1745	Revised Mercator
Drumalestane	1855	OPS
Drumhallesdell	"	"

Derivation:

G druim m. : see R72(T)

ON heilagr : see R54(S) or

ON hella f. : a flat stretch of rock

(ON hellu-steinn: a flat stone, slab)

ON steinn m. : see R20(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

This name has obviously been influenced in its development by the neighbouring name Strath Halladale. Donald Omand comments that "The 'Split Stone' is sometimes taken as the stone in question but there is nothing to support this, apart from the fact that the split stone was important enough to serve as the boundary mark between Caithness and Strathnaver." (Omand 1972, page 226).

Loch Hollistan burst its banks early this century and the water cascaded into the neighbouring geo. It is now known as The Dry Loch.

.....

DRUIM NA CEUD : ND 06 NW: 003662 R74(T)

Local pronunciation: known to my informants as 'Field of the Hundred'

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G druim m.: see R72(T)

G ceud : hundred

Tradition says that one hundred men were buried on this ridge after the fierce battle between the Mackays of Sutherland and the Caithness

men in 1437, known as Ruaig Shannsaid or The Chase of Sandside (Clan Gunn papers: courtesy of H. Henderson). This is also mentioned in OPS and dated c1426. R74(T) (cont'd)

Tradition may have exaggerated the number but it is possible that there is some truth in this story, although these traditional tales have to be treated with great caution.

.....

DUBH-ALLTAN MÒR : ND 05 SW: 009525 R75(T)

DUBH-ALLTAN CAOL : " : 005532

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G dubh : see R23(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an

G mór : see R11(S)

G caol : slender, narrow

.....

FÉITH AN IME : ND 05 NE: 073561 R76(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G féith f.: see R24(T)

G ìm m. : butter

The name probably arises from the practice of placing salted butter in a barrel and burying it in a bog which helped to keep it cool in the days before refrigeration and, no doubt, was thought to enhance its flavour.

There is an improbable story which says that a horse carrying kegs of butter took fright here and the kegs fell off and were lost in the bog.

.....

FÉITH BHREAC : ND 05 NW: 016593 R77(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G breac : see R33(S)

.....

FÉITH BHUIDHE : ND 05 NE: 056576 R78(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G buidhe : see R60(T)

.....

FÉITH GAMHNA : ND 05 NW: 012572 R79(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G gamhainn (pl gamhna) m.
: stirk, steer; yearling deer

.....

FÉITH RUADH : ND 05 NW: 028558 R80(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G ruadh : see R10(T)

.....

FRESGOE : NC 96 NE: 957661 R81(T)

Local pronunciation: ['frɛzgo]

Early refs: Frisk 1543 RSS

Fresko 1750 Roy

Derivation:

The specific is difficult. Possibly

ON fyrsa : to gush, stream in torrents (with metathesis of <r>)

The coastal situation suggests that the generic is

Cai geo : see R54(T)

although Sandside Harbour has now been built where Fresgoe was. Earlier spellings are of little assistance in determining the nature of the generic.

The spelling <goe> is used on the 6" OS 1876 map wherever this particular generic occurs, either on the coast or inland. In more recent OS maps, however, all inland examples are spelt <goe> , whereas coastal examples are spelt <geo> . This may have been an attempt at mirroring local pronunciation which, for the coastal names, is almost invariably [gjo], whereas inland names vary between [go] and [gjo]. The fact that Fresgoe no longer describes a geo but a piece of ground close to the coast, may have led to its inclusion in the inland category of names; the pronunciation being ['frɛzgo]. Alternatively, the pronunciation could indicate that the final element should be otherwise derived.

.....

GEO BUILA : ND 07 SW: 024703 R82(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

In examples like the above, which display Gaelic word-order, it is probably the Gaelic geòdha which is being used. The spelling has been standardised and only some examples show the Gaelic orthography.

buila : as commented above, the word order in the compound suggests Gaelic origin. Perhaps

G buille f.: a blow, knock

with reference to the pounding of the waves.

.....

GEO CROICHE : ND 06 NW: 014697 R83(T)

Local pronunciation: now known as [ə 'slets]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

G croiche f.: gallows, gibbet

This seems a most improbable description of a geo but without modern pronunciation it is impossible to suggest an alternative. The area is now referred to as The Slates, which is a commonly occurring appellative in Caithness in the form def art + slates/ sclaites (<ON sléttr: plain, flat, smooth).

.....

GEO CUINGE : NC 96 NE: 97668 R84(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

G cumhang (compar cuinge)

: narrow

.....

GEO, EDWARD'S : NC 96 NE: 957663 R85(T)

Local pronunciation: ['nɛds gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

According to one local informant, Edward Innes of Borlum fell to his death here some time in the second half of the 18th century. Another local informant describes the man as Edward Campbell who fell over the cliffs at the same spot but survived.

.....

In the modern version of the name Ned is substituted for Edward.

.....

GEO, GIE-UISG : ND 06 NW: 009694 R86(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gais gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The first element of Gie-uisg is puzzling. The second element appears to be

G uisge m.: fresh water

and it seems likely that Gie represents

G geòdh m.: see R54(T)

and that Cai geo was tagged on at a subsequent date, once the original name became obscure. The contracted version which appears in modern pronunciation is of no assistance in determining the source. There is a stream draining into this geo which would support the above interpretation.

.....

GEO, GREENY : ND 06 NW: 005692 R87(T)

Local pronunciation: ['grinɹ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

greeny : probably refers to the grass-covered sides

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEO, HING : ND 06 NW: 018698 R88(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛŋ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc hing : a downward inclination, slope, here used attributively

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The geo has steep, but not overhanging sides.

.....

GEO, OIGIN'S : NC 96 NE: 996683 R89(T)

Local pronunciation: [ˈɔigɛnz gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There are two local stories relating to this geo. One tells of a man named Henderson, nicknamed

G Òigean m.: lad,

who distilled whisky and stored his illicit goods in a cave here. The other suggests that Òigean was a sheep-stealer named Sutherland who hid in the geo to avoid retribution but, as my informant pointed out, there is little shelter in the geo for hiding either sheep-stealer or illicit whisky and Sutherland was caught and deported. Traditional tales such as the above are often created to explain an already existing place-name. Folk etymologies would make a fascinating separate study.

Cai geo : R54(T)

.....

GEO, SANDY : ND 07 SW: 027702 R90(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sanə gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

sandy : sand-covered bottom

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEO, SCARBACH : NC 96 NE: 981671 R91(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

scarbach : the word order in this compound is Norse but the specific appears to be a variant of

G sgarbhach: abounding in cormorants

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEO, WARE : ND 07 SW: 027701 R92(T)
Local pronunciation: ['wer gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc ware : seaweed
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Seaweed was carted from this geo to fertilise all the fields in the neighbouring district.

.....

GEODH' EISGIADH : NC 96 NW: 921654 R93(T)
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'iʃg gjo]
Early refs: Geòdh Uisgidh 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G geòdha m. : see R54(T)
The 1876 uisgidh indicates
G uisgidh m. pl: waters
but the modern form eisgiadh contradicts this. Perhaps
G iasgaidh (gen of iasgadh m.) > easgaidh
: fishing, angling

.....

GEODH' GRÀDA : NC 96 NE: 955664 R94(T)
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'grant]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G geòdha m.: see R54(T)
G gràda, more commonly grànda/grannda
: ugly, grim
It is often known today as Pigeon Geo from the rock pigeons which nest there.

.....

GEODH' SHEUMAIS : NC 96 NW: 949661 R95(T)
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'hemi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: R95(T) (cont'd)

G geòdha m.: see R54(T)

G Seumas : James

There is no local story relating to this geo or to the eponymous James.

.....

GOES, WHITE : NC 96 NE: 968662 R96(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

white : could refer to birds nesting here, to the spray from the sea etc.

Cai geo : see R54(T)
(for Cai geo > goe see R81(T))

.....

GLAODH ODHAR : ND 06 NW: 008653 R97(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

glaodh : very difficult without early references. Possibly a variant of

G glac f. : hollow valley, defile

G odhar : dun-coloured

.....

GLEANN CHORCAILL : NC 95 NE: 967573 R98(T)

ALLT GLEANN CHORCAILL: " : 968573

Local pronunciation : either [ðə 'glɛn]
or [glɛn 'kɔrkail]

Early refs: Allt Gleann Thorcaill 1876 6" OS
Gleann Thorcaill " "
Glenloch Horquil 1726 Macfarlane
Loch Horquil " "

Derivation:

G gleann m.: see R57(T)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

Interpretation of the specific is very difficult. Earlier spellings suggest that it may represent the Gaelic personal name Torcull. R98(T) (cont'd)

.....

GLEANN DUBH : NC 95 NE: 992574 R99(T)
GLENDU BURN : " : 992575
Local pronunciation: [glɛn 'du]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G gleann m.: see R57(T)
G dubh : see R23(S)
Glendu is an anglicisation of the above.

.....

GLEN URLAN : NC 95 SE: 978508 R100(T)
Local pronunciation: [glɛn 'urlɐn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G gleann m.: see R57(T)
G urlar, -air, -an m.
: low place in the hills, (floor)
According to my informants this glen was used as a route for driving cattle to the markets further south.

.....

GLING GLANG : NC 96 NE: 997687 R101(T)
Local pronunciation: ['glɛŋ 'glɔŋ 'glaŋ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name refers to a narrow inlet of the sea and is onomatopoeic, suggesting the sound of the waves breaking. My informant added an extra element to the name, and described the sound of the waves very poetically as a "slopping musical sound".

.....

GLUPEIN NA DROCHAIDE: ND 06 NW: 003688 R102(T)

Local pronunciation : now known as [ə grin 'brɪg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

glupein : Ian Fraser recorded An Gluta The Gullet in Eilean nan Ròn (Scottish Studies No22, p87) for a narrow, steep-sided gully or gullet separating two islands, and, by analogy, the above name may represent the "gulping" sound of the sea:

An Gluta < gullet

glupein < gulp(ing)

G drochaid f.: a bridge

The name describes a geo spanned by a natural grass-covered bridge of rock which has given rise to the modern description The Green Brig.

Sc brig : a bridge

.....

GREEN TULLOCHS : ND 06 NW: 013696 R103(T)

Local pronunciation: either [grin 'tʌləxs]

or [ə 'tʌləxs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai tulloch: see R5(S)

.....

JOCK'S HILLOCK : NC 95 NE: 967596 R104(T)

Local pronunciation: ['dʒɔks hɪlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory; a recent name

There seems to be no local knowledge of Jock as a person. My local informant thought the reference was probably to a pony rather than to a person.

.....

KEOLTAG WELL : NC 96 SE: 972644 R105(T)

LITTLE KEOLTAG : " : 977646

BIG KEOLTAG : " : 974647

Local pronunciation: ['kjɔltɛg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: obscure

.....

KNOCK STANGER : NC 96 NE: 958653 R106(T)

Local pronunciation: [krɔk 'staŋgar]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

stanger : Possibly

G stang m.: a pool, ditch - but this does not account for the final <-er>

The name describes a cairn above a pool at the mouth of the Sandside Burn and the strong Norse influence in the area could suggest that the second element might originally have been

ON steinn (pl steinar) m.

: a stone

which has subsequently been Gaelicised and then Anglicised. ON Steinar occurs in local names, and as a personal name Steinarr.

.....

LADY'S WELL : NC 96 NE: 952655 R107(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ledis wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A local informant has suggested that the Lady is likely to have been Mary Innes of Sandside, known locally as Lady Sandside although she was untitled. She lived during the 18th century and is buried in Reay Church.

.....

LAMBSDALE LEANS : ND 05 SW: 048546 R108(T)

Local pronunciation: [lamzdəl 'linz]

Early refs: Lambsdale 1784 Sinclair (Freswick)
Lambsdale 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)
Lamsdale 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

Lambsdale : probably a comparatively recent name containing English dale

Sc leans : see R19(S)

.....

LÀTHACH AN LÌN : NC 96 SE: 997648 R109(T)

Local pronunciation:- name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G làthach f.: a mire, swampy place

G lìon (gen lìn) m.
: flax

.....

LEATHAD BREAC : NC 96 SE: 982605 R110(T)

BREAC-LEATHAD : " : 972620

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G leathad m.: a slope

G breac : see R33(S)

.....

LEATHAD MÒR : ND 05 NW: 023558 R111(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɛd'mor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G leathad m.: see R110(T)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

LEATHAD NA HOLLAG : NC 96 SW: 942616 R112(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G leathad m.: see R110(T)

hollag : difficult without earlier spellings

Ian Fraser suggests that it may represent

G oileag f. : a flat stone, larger than a pebble, for throwing at horses, cattle etc.

The word is apparently still used in Lewis.

.....

LOCH CALUIM : ND 05 SW: 020520 R113(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'kaləm]

Early refs: Loch Kelem 1807 Arrowsmith

Loch Calam 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G loch f. : see R5(S)

G Calum : Malcolm

.....

LOCH GARBH : NC 96 SW: 941605 R114(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'garo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G loch f. : see R5(S)

G garbh : rough, stormy

.....

LOCH NAN CLACHAN GEALA : ND 05 NW: 003585 R115(T)

UIDH LOCH NAN CLACHAN GEALA : " : 002581

LOCHAN DUBH NAN CLACHAN GEALA: NC 95 NE: 998563

LOCH NAN CLACH GEALA : " : 958574

ALLT LOCH NAN CLACH GEALA : " : 961588

CLACHGEAL HILL : " : 958576

Local pronunciation : [lɔx nəklaʃ 'gjal]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G loch f. : see R5(S)

G clach f.: see R31(T) + dimin -an

G geal : see R21(T)

G ùidh f.: a ford, slow running water between two lochs. In this case between the Loch and the Achvarasdal Burn. (see R22(S))

G dubh : see R23(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

Modern pronunciation of this name has obviously been influenced by names containing G clais f.: [klaʃ].

.....

LOCH SAORACH : ND 06 SW: 014605 R116(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'sorəx]

Early refs: Loch na Seirach 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G loch f. : see R5(S)

Possibly

G saothrach m.

: labour (cf R57(T))

.....

LOCH SCYE : ND 05 NW: 006554 R117(T)

LITTLE LOCH SCYE : " : 012553

DRUIM LOCH SCYE : " : 013556

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'sai]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G druim m.: see R72 (T)

G loch f. : see R5(S)

Possibly

ON sjár m.: the sea (applied to the large inland loch)
(see R6(S))

.....

LOCH THORMAID : ND 06 SW: 010604 R118(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'tɔramɐd]

Early refs: Loch Tormaid 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G loch f. : see R5(S)

G Tormaid : Norman

The 6" map version Thormaid contains lenition but this is not present in modern pronunciation.

.....

LOCH TORR NA CEÀRDAICH: NC 95 SE: 970510 R119(T)

Local pronunciation : [lɔx tɔr nə 'kjardɐx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G cèardach f.: a smithy, forge

This name belongs to a small group of names in the vicinity which suggests the presence of cattle and drovers. The name Bad nam Bo (see R13(T)) for instance, is very close by. It is possible that this was a separate gathering place for cattle which were to be driven south, and which, therefore, required to be shod, or it may have been a resting place en route to the Georgemas Market which was a well-known tryst, connected with the drove road south to Muir of Ord. Some

of the trysts were in existence in the first half of the 18th century, but the Tryst at Muir of Ord was established about 1820. (A.R.B. Haldane 1952, page 406) R119(T) (cont'd)

.....

LOCH TUIM GHLAIS : NC 95 SE: 978525 R120(T)

UIR LOCH TUIM GHLAIS: " : 974517

Local pronunciation : [lɔx tum 'glas]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G loch f. : see R5(S)

G tom (gen tuim) m.

: a round hillock

G glas : see R46(T)

uir appears to be a misrepresentation of

G ùidh f. : see R115(T)

because it describes slow running water between two lochs.

.....

LOCHAIN A' CHLÉIRICH: NC 95 NE: 966551 R121(T)

Local pronunciation : [lɔx nə 'klerix]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an

G cléireach m.

: clerk, clergyman

A local informant suggested that this name was also connected with cattle-droving activities in the area and that the clerk was present for the purpose of tallying the cattle (cf R120(T)). Alternatively, it may refer to a clergyman who was for some reason associated with the loch, perhaps as a fisherman.

.....

LOCHAN A' GHLINNE : NC 95 NE: 963566 R122(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G gleann m.: see R57(T)

.....

LOCHAN DUBH CÙL NA BEINNE: NC 95 SE: 986544 R123(T)
SÌTHEAN CÙL NA BEINNE : " : 995547
Local pronunciation : [lɔxən ˈdu cul nə ˈbeʌn]
known to the gamekeeper as
The Black Loch.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m. : see R5(S) + dimin -an
G dubh : see R23(S)
G cùl m. : back of anything
G beinn f. : see R14(S)
G sithean m.: see R14(T)

.....

LOCHAN DUBH : ND 05 NW: 048578 R124(T)
Local pronunciation: [lɔxən ˈdɛu]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G dubh : see R23(S)

.....

LOCHAN EALACH : ND 06 SW: 042602 R125(T)
LOCHAN EALACH BEAG : ND 94 NE: 966496
ALLT LOCHAIN EALAICH BHIG: NC 95 SE: 966504
Local pronunciation : [lɔxən ˈɛlʲəx]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: R125(T) (cont'd)

G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an

G ealach : abounding in swans

G beag (gen bhig)

: see R7(S)

G allt m. : see R1(S)

.....

LÒN BREAC : ND 05 NW: 004570 R126(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔnɹ 'brɛk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G lón m. : see R6(T)

G breac : see R33(S)

.....

LORG AN FHAMHAIR : ND 05 NE: 058593 R127(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G lorg f. : a footstep, print

G famhair m.: a giant, champion

This is described as the hollowed out impression of a human left foot, situated on the west end of the summit of the hill of Port-an-eilein. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 44) The local legend attributes it to a giant but such features were usually associated with the installation in office of a local chief. (Omand 1972, page 227)

.....

MEALL BUIDHE : ND 05 NW: 010576 R128(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meall m.: a hill, mound

G buidhe : see R60(T)

.....

MEOIR GEALA : NC 95 SE: 967512 R129(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur (pl meòir) m.

: see R13(T)

G geal : see R21(T)

.....

MEUR A' CHROCAIN GHIL: NC 95 NE: 980593 R130(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G cnoc m. : see R41(S) + dimin -an

G geal (gen gil)

: see R21(T)

.....

MEUR AN FHRAOICH : NC 96 SE: 975605 R131(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G fraoch m.: heather

.....

MEUR AN FHUARAIN GHIL: NC 96 SE: 977608 R132(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G fuaran m.: a well, spring

G geal : see R21(T)

.....

MEUR GADACH : NC 95 NE: 976599 R133(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

Possibly

G gad m. : withe, twisted twig + dimin -ach

Withes of birch or osier were used for halters and all the fastenings of horse-harnesses.

.....

MEUR LIATH : NC 95 NE: 994554 R134(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G liath : see R27(T)

.....

MEUR NAM BÒ : NC 95 NE: 981554 R135(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G bó f. : see R13(T)

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

MEUR RHAIRIDH : NC 95 SE: 967541 R136(T)

Local pronunciation: [mɛʌr 'rori]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G meur m. : see R13(T)

G Ruairidh: Roderick

This name is sometimes facetiously applied to the fox, which seems appropriate in this instance.

On the other hand, locals associate the stream with a famous fisherman Ruairidh Fyfe, but the size of the stream does not measure up to the size of his fame.

.....

MID HILL : NC 95 NE: 977577 R137(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mɪd 'hɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: self-explanatory

.....

MONADH NAN CÀRN : ND 05 NW: 047586 R138(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Monocairn 1628 Sinclair (Thurso)

Derivation:

G monadh m.: mountain, moor

G càrn m. : see R27(T)

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

MULLACH UIDH MHURCHAI: ND 05 NE: 061554 R139(T)

ALLTAN MOINE-MHURCHAI: ND 05 NW: 034582

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G mullach m.: a hill, summit

G uidh f. : a way, journey

G Murchadh : Murdoch

G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an

G mòine f. : a moss, moor

.....

MULTEADH BHEAG : ND 05 NW: 033570 R140(T)

MULTEADH MHÒR : " : 032565

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: Meall Dubh Beag 1876 6" OS

Meall Dubh Mór " "

Derivation: Probably as for the 1876 forms

G meall m.: see R128(T)

G dubh : see R23(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

POLL ACHAIR : ND 05 NE: 057562 R141(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G poll m. : a hole, mire, bog

The specific appears to be

G achar (gen achair) m.

: distance

but this meaning does not fit the context. A more likely source is

G coire m.: see R60(T)

preceded by the definite article which in the 6" OS version has been erroneously combined with the noun.

G poll a' choire

.....

RED POINT : NC 96 NW: 934659 R142(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rɛd 'pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: a headland of red sandstone

.....

RUBHA GAR : ND 05 NE: 069598 R143(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

G rudha m.: a promontory, point of land

G gèarr : short

The name describes a rounded area of moorland jutting out into Loch Calder.

.....

RUIGH NAN CREAG : NC 95 NE: 998553 R144(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G righe m.: see R44(T)

G creag f.: see R46(S)

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

SCARF ROCKS : NC 96 NE: 958662 R145(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skarf rɔks]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON skarfr m.: the green cormorant

This has been borrowed into Gaelic as sgarbh m. and into Caithness dialect as scarf. It is an extremely common place-name element in Caithness.

.....

SÌTHEAN BUIDHE : ND 05 NE: 062575 R146(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

G buidhe : see R60(T)

.....

SÌTHEAN DUBH : ND 05 NW: 048583 R147(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

G dubh : see R23(S)

.....

SÌTHEAN GLAS : ND 05 NE: 066572 R148(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

G glas : see R46(T)

.....

SÌTHEAN IOLAIREACH : ND 05 NW: 020554 R149(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

G iolair (gen iolarach) f.

: an eagle

.....

SÌTHEAN MÒR : ND 05 NE: 058571 R150(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

SKERRY EEL : NC 96 NW: 947662 R151(T)

Local pronunciation: [skɛri 'il]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON sker n.: a skerry, an isolated rock in the sea

This was borrowed into the Caithness, Orkney and Shetland dialects in the first instance and thence into Scots in general as skerry, and it has also been borrowed into Gaelic as sgeir f.

Without earlier references the specific is difficult. The word order in the compound (generic + specific) suggests a Gaelic word which has been anglicised. Possibly R151(T) (cont'd)

G aol (gen aoil) m.: lime

.....

STAILL : ND 06 SW: 034603 R152(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Probably

Sc stell : an open stone-walled enclosure for sheep

.....

TERRIGASH : ND 05 NE: 059561 R153(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes an outcrop of rock on the side of Beinn Freiceadain (see R14(T)) which suggests that the initial element might be

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

The final element is obscure.

.....

THE BIELD : ND 06 SW: 008642 R154(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'bil]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc bield : a shelter for animals, usually cattle
(cf buaile f.: R36(S))

The name describes a freestone quarry on Isauld Hill (see R55(S)) which indicates that it is being used metaphorically to describe the hollowed-out shape of the quarry, or literally by sheep who find it offers gratuitous shelter.

.....

THE CRAGGANS : NC 96 SE: 953648 R155(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kragənz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: anglicisation of

G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an

.....

THE FLOW : ND 06 SW: 022633 R156(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'flau]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc flow : a wet peat-bog, a morass, a swamp

This word occurs frequently in place-names.

The land here has now been extensively drained and improved, but the description would originally have been apt.

.....

THE KNOWES : NC 96 SE: 964643 R157(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'nauz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc know, also (k)nowe

: Sc forms of English knoll a hillock, mound, in folk-lore often associated with fairies

.....

THE SIAN : ND 06 NW: 016652 R158(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ʃian]

Early refs: Na Tri Sìthean 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tri : three

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

.....

TORNAMEAL : ND 05 NE: 073573 R159(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G meall m.: see R128(T)

.....

TORR A' BHÀTHAICH : ND 05 NW: 036577 R160(T)

Local pronunciation: [tɔr ə 'veix]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G bàthaich m.: a cowshed, byre

.....

TORR A' CHAISE : ND 06 SW: 037602 R161(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G càise m.: cheese

Perhaps the cheese was dried here.

.....

TORR A' GHOBHAINN : ND 05 NE: 075568 R162(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G gobhainn m.: a blacksmith

.....

TORR AN ATHAIN : NC 96 SE: 978643 R163(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G àthan (gen àthain) m.

: a little ford

.....

TORR AN T-SNIOMBA : ND 06 SW: 028611 R164(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Torr an t-Sniomha 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G sniomh (gen sniomha) m.

: spinning

.....

TORR BAD NAN SEANGAN: ND 05 SW: 004548 R165(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G bad m. : see R13(T)

G seangan m.: an ant

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

TÒRR BEAG : ND 05 NE: 062563 R166(T)

TÒRR MÒR : " : 062564

Local pronunciation: [tɔr 'bɛg]

(<Tòrr Mòr> is not used)

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G beag : see R7(S)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

TORR DUBH BEAG : ND 05 SW: 018536 R167(T)

TORR DUBH MÒR : " : 015538

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G dubh : see R23(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

TORR FÉILLE LEATHAN: NC 96 SE: 981644 R168(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

The second part of the name seems to represent

G féill f.: a festival, feast

G leathann: broad

but such an interpretation would be nonsensical.

It seems more likely that the modern spelling is masking an earlier

G féith 'Ill Leathain

: Maclean's Burn

(G féith f.: see R24(T))

.....

TORR NA CRÌCHE : ND 05 NW: 045565 R169(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G crìoch (gen crìche) f.

: boundary, end

There is no obvious boundary here but the tòrr is situated at the end of Loch Shurrery (see R66(S)).

.....

TORR NAM BROC : ND 05 SW: 005544 R170(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G broc m. : a badger

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

.....

TÒRR PHADRUIG : ND 05 NE: 068561 R171(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T)

G Pàdruig : Patrick

.....

TORRAN DUBH MEADHON A' BHLAIR: ND 05 SW: 042537 R172(T)

TORRAN DUBH : NC 96 SW: 966625

Local pronunciation : <Torran Dubh Meadhon a' Bhlair>
not known
[tɔren ˈdu]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T) + dimin -an

G dubh : see R23(S)

G meadhon : middle

G blàr m. : see R30(S)

.....

TORRAN NA CIRCE : NC 96 SE: 963646 R173(T)

Local pronunciation: [ə 'tɔran]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T) + dimin -an

G cearc (gen circe) f.

: a hen

The noun cearc is now omitted and the name is anglicised to The Torran.

.....

TOTA AN DRANNDAIN : ND 05 NW: 038579 R174(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tobhta f. : a ruin with walls standing and roof fallen in

G dranndan m.: a humming, whistling of the wind

This name describes a broch in an advanced state of dilapidation.

.....

TOTA GHARBHAIG : ND 05 NW: 039599 R175(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tobhta f.: see R174(T)

G garbh : see R114(T) + dimin -ag

.....

TULACH GORM : ND 05 NW: 042572 R176(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tʌləx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS R176(T) (cont'd)

Derivation:

G tulach m.: see R5(S)

G gorm : blue/green

.....

WHITE WELL : NC 96 SE: 966627 R177(T)

Local pronunciation: [ʊə hwait 'wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc well : see R40(S)

The reference is to the limestone rocks which surround the spring.

.....

YELLOW MOSS : ND 06 SW: 022646 R178(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'jɛlə mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

According to my informants, the peat cut on this moor has a yellowish tinge when dried.

.....

CHAPTER FIVE: THURSO PARISH

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Unlike Reay Parish, which shows physical contrasts in rock type and related agriculture, Thurso Parish is uniform in its rock type which is old red sandstone.

The River Thurso which runs through the parish from south to north gives rise to a belt of good agricultural land which is fully exploited and the landward part of the parish is much more heavily populated than Reay.

The harbour at the river estuary gave an early 'raison d'être' for the town of Thurso which is now a flourishing market town with a population of 9,038, as recorded in the 1981 Census. It should be noted that the population of Thurso has been greatly boosted by the presence of the Dounreay Atomic Establishment, many of whose employees live in Thurso.

The safe and reasonably deep harbourage afforded at Scrabster, on the outskirts of Thurso, has led to the development of an important shipping link with Orkney. Thurso is also the terminus of the railway from Inverness and the south.

Gaelic probably died out in Thurso Parish in the nineteenth or, at the latest, early twentieth century and informants from the parish could not offer translations of Gaelic names.

Thurso Parish is bounded on the south by Halkirk Parish and on the east by Bower and Olrig Parishes.

SETTLEMENT NAMES

ACHINGILLS : ND 16 SE: 152631 T1(S)

BURN OF ACHINGILLS : " : 156631

Local pronunciation: [axən'gɛls]

Early refs: Achingillies 1661 RMS
Auchingills 1749 Sinclair (Thurso)
Achingills 1798 Book of Valuation
Achingill 1807 Arrowsmith
Water of Achingill " "
Achingils 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

Cai gill : see R11(T) + Eng pl -s

The medial element appears to be the Gaelic definite article an.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

The name describes a farm in a slight valley - hardly enough to justify gill - but the Caithness landscape is so flat that a slight indentation is often accorded much greater significance than it would be in a more varied landscape.

.....

AIMSTER : ND 16 SW: 117633 T2(S)

AIMSTER POOL : " : 123639

Local pronunciation: ['emstər]

Early refs: Ambuster 1539 RSS
Ambuster 1604 Retours
Ainbuster 1605 "
Aimstir 1616 RMS
Amster c1680 F. de Wit
Emster 1750 Roy
Aimster 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:

The specific is probably a personal name although it is impossible to determine the precise form of the name. Possibly

ON Ambi, -a m.: (Lind 1915, column 22)

or

ON Áni, -a m. : (Lind 1915, column 29)

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

.....

BACKLINK : ND 06 NE: 082661 T3(S)

Local pronunciation: ['baklɪŋk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

back : either 1) being used metaphorically to indicate a slight ridge or 2) being used in the English sense of "behind" the burn (ie Tordale Burn: see T78(S))

link : either 1) being used in the sense of a joint of the body, especially one of the vertebrae and, therefore, applying metaphorically to a ridged piece of ground or 2) being used to indicate the undulating chain-like movement of the Tordale Burn which flows past the croft

.....

BAILLIE, STRATH OF : ND 06 NE: 052653 T4(S)

Local pronunciation: [straθ 'beli]

For early refs and derivation see R25(S)

.....

BAINSTOWN : ND 16 NW: 128659 T5(S)

Local pronunciation: ['benstaun]

Early refs: Bainstown 1841 Census

Derivation:

Bain : the surname of a previous owner of the farm

town : see R46(S)

Names incorporating the surname of a previous owner are common in the vicinity of Thurso.

.....

BARDNACLAVAN : ND 06 NE: 076653 T6(S)

BARDNACLAVAN FARM : ND 06 SE: 071647

Local pronunciation: [barnə'klavən]

Early refs: Bardnaclavan 1841 Census

Derivation: T6(S) (cont'd)

G bàrd m. : see R28(S)

Probably

G clamhan m.: a buzzard

The article na is the feminine genitive form which could suggest

G clàmhuin m.: sleet

Clamhan, however, seems much more convincing in the context of bàrd.

.....

BATTERY POINT : ND 16 NW: 112692 T7(S)

Local pronunciation: [batri 'pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name is self-explanatory. It describes a cliff-top position occupied by a defensive battery, probably during the Napoleonic War. The name is very seldom used today.

.....

BLACKHEATH : ND 06 NE: 071683 T8(S)

Local pronunciation: [blak 'hiθ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name applies to a small farmhouse on the edge of moorland or heath.

.....

BLEACHFIELD : ND 16 NW: 114665 T9(S)

BLEACHFIELD POOL : " : 117664

Local pronunciation: ['blitʃ fild]

Early refs: Bleachfield 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

A local informant says that this area beside the Thurso River was, at one time, used for the bleaching of flax which was grown nearby. The name now refers to a small farm.

.....

BOGGY PARK CROFT : ND 16 NW: 138672 T10(S)

Local pronunciation: ['bɔgi 'park 'krɔft]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The heavy, clay soil retained water making the area difficult to cultivate. A nearby name Clayhusbandry (see T23(S)) reflects the same problem.

.....

BRAAL HOLDINGS : ND 16 SW: 143608 T11(S)

BRAAL POOL : " : 139602

Local pronunciation: ['brɔl 'pul]

Early refs:

de Brathewelle	1375	RMS
Braule	c1572	Sinclair (Mey)
Bravell	1592	"
Braull	1595	Mercator
Brawall	1616	Sinclair (Mey)
Bredwell	1633	"
Bredwall	1661	"
Braedwall	1667	"
Braal	1662	Blaeu
Broadwell	1671	Retours
Prall	1750	Roy
Castle Braal	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON breiðr : broad

ON völlr m.: a field

The modern form is an abbreviation of the earlier name, and signs of this abbreviation were already appearing in the orthography in the latter part of the 16th century.

Holding : an abbreviated form of smallholdings.

Braal Castle is situated in neighbouring Halkirk Parish.

.....

BRIDGEND : ND 16 NW: 118683 T12(S)

Local pronunciation: [brɹdʒ'ɛnd]

Early refs: Brigend 1616 RMS

Derivation: T12(S) (cont'd)

The name describes some houses at the end of a bridge which spans the River Thurso (see T75(S)).

The RMS version reflects an earlier pronunciation containing

Sc brig : see R102(T)

Brig-end is frequent as a place-name from c1320 onwards.

.....

BRIMS	:	ND 06 NE:	054697	T13(S)
BURN OF BRIMS	:	"	: 055690	
BURN OF BRIMS FARM	:	"	: 053693	
BRIMS NESS	:	ND 07 SW:	043717	
PORT OF BRIMS	:	"	: 044712	
MAINS OF BRIMS	:	"	: 043711	
BRIMS HILL	:	ND 07 SE:	078706	
EAST BRIMS	:	"	: 054701	
WEST BRIMS	:	ND 06 NW:	043698	

Local pronunciation: [brɛms]

Early refs:			
Brymmes	1560	OPS, Sutherland Charters	
Brymis	1564	OPS, Book of Assumptions	
Brynesi Ness	1573	Ortelius	
Brymmes	1576	RMS	
Brymmis	1581	"	
Half-Brymmes	"	"	
Brims	1616	"	
Bryminis	1605	Retours	
Half-Brymmis	"	"	
Brumes	1620	"	
Browmes	"	"	
Wester Brims	1658	Sutherland (Forse)	
Brims	1662	Blaeu	
Brims	1750	Roy	
Brims Ness or Outshotthead	"	"	
Brims Castle	"	"	

Derivation T13(S) (cont'd)

ON brim n.: surf

ON nes n. : a ness projecting into the sea or a lake

This is a very common place-name element in Caithness. (Ness is duplicated in Ortelius (1573) and Roy (1750)) The variant vowels recorded in Retours (1620) are probably erroneous. Roy (1750) records Outshotthead as an alternative to Brims Ness but the name has now been lost.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Port : see R55(S)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

BRIMSIDE TULLOCH : ND 06 NW: 048671 T14(S)

BURN OF BRIMSIDE : " : 048668

BRAES OF BRIMSIDE : " : 046667

Local pronunciation: [brɪm'said]

Early refs: see T13(S)

Derivation:

brim : see T13(S)

side : see R33(S)

Cai tulloch: see R5(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc brae : see R8(S)

.....

BUCKIES : ND 16 SW: 110633 T15(S)

BUCKIES HILL : " : 108627

BUCKIES POOL : " : 118643

Local pronunciation: ['bʌkis]

Early refs:

Buckies	1667	RMS
Buckas	1750	Roy
Buckies	1798	Book of Valuation
Bukkies	1832	Thomson

Derivation: T15(S) (cont'd)

The vowel in the first syllable is consistently <u> in the orthography and [ʌ] in modern pronunciation which gives rise to speculation that the name may be derived from

Sc buck : a lye made of cow's dung and stale urine or soapy water, in which foul linen is steeped in order to cleanse or whiten it

(cf G buac m.: 1) dung used in bleaching
2) unbleached linen; linen in an early stage of bleaching)

The ending -ies could represent a diminutive, plus Eng pl <-s>.
The neighbouring name Bleachfield (see T9(S)) also refers to the process of bleaching.

.....

BULLIEMORE : ND 16 SW: 134642 T16(S)

Local pronunciation: ['balimor]

Early refs: Bulliemore 1841 Census

Derivation:

bullie : It is impossible to be definite about the derivation of this generic without earlier forms.

The modern spelling suggests

G buaile f.: see R36(S)

but the pronunciation suggests

G baile m.: see R25(S)

Lack of early forms, however, is an argument in favour of buaile since a baile form would almost certainly have more established early spellings.

G mór : see R11(S)

.....

CAIRNFIELD : ND 16 SW: 149647 T17(S)

CAIRNFIELD QUARRIES: ND 16 SE: 153646

Local pronunciation: [kern'fild]

Early refs: Cairnfield 1841 Census

In almost all instances, as in this case, the recent 6" OS survey notes that the quarries are now disused, whereas the 1876 6" OS map

has no such indication. A sad comment on the decline of the quarrying industry in Caithness. T17(S) (cont'd)

Derivation:

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

.....

CARSGOE : ND 16 SW: 139633 T18(S)

CARSGOE POOL : " : 142622

Local pronunciation: ['karsgjo]

Early refs:

Carsko	1545	RMS
Carske	"	"
Carsco	1592	"
Carskune	1619	"
Corscoe	1667	"
Carsko	1598	Sinclair (Mey)
Caskun	1662	Blaeu
Carscro	1671	Retours
Carsgoe	1739	Sinclair (Freswick)
Carsgo	1832	Thomson

Derivation: Possibly

ON kjarr-skógr m.: copsewood

It would have to be assumed that the early written forms of this place-name and its modern pronunciation have been influenced by

G cars f. : a level, fertile tract of country

and by Cai goe (see R81(T)) which began to appear in the written forms in the mid-18th century.

There is a deep ravine beside the farm which, if it were coastal, would certainly merit the description geo (see R54(T)) which is probably why this word has influenced the more recent written forms and the pronunciation of the name.

The sides of the ravine are covered with brushwood.

.....

CASTLEGREEN MANSE : ND 16 NW: 113681 T19(S)

Local pronunciation: ['kasəl grin]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: T19(S) (cont'd)

Castlegreen appears to commemorate a castle which was reputedly a habitation of the early Norse earls but no trace of the building now remains. (D. Omand 1972, page 126.)

(For Sc green: see C7(S))

Sc manse : the dwelling house provided for the minister of a particular church

.....

CHAPEL POINT : ND 16 NW: 109691 T20(S)

Local pronunciation: ['tʃapəl pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name refers to a small headland close by the site of an earlier chapel, now replaced by a mausoleum.

.....

CLARDON : ND 16 NE: 152694 T21(S)

CLARDON HEAD : ND 17 SE: 154704

CLARDON HAVEN : " : 159701

CLARDON HILL : ND 16 NW: 147691

Local pronunciation: ['klerdən]

Early refs:

Claradene	1538	RMS
Clardene	1539	"
Clareden	1604	Retours
Clarden	1605	"
Clairden	1644	"
Clairdane	1587	RMS
Clarden	1606	"
Clairdene	1633	"
Cleredene	"	"
Claredein	1661	"
Claredain	"	"
Clairden	"	"
Clairden Ness	1662	Blaeu
Clardane	1728	Sinclair (Freswick)
Clardine	1735	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Clairdon	1798	Book of Valuation
Cleardane	1832	Thomson

Derivation: T21(S) (cont'd)

This is a difficult name in spite of the relative uniformity of the numerous early forms.

The source language is probably Scots and the most likely specific is Sc cler(e), also clair, clar

: materially clear or bright, in various applications.

The reference may originally have been to the clear water of a small stream in the valley, but the area has been extensively drained and there is no present evidence of a stream.

Sc den : a narrow valley (Gen (exc. I.) Sc)

Den in this sense occurs in OSc c1575, but is found in place-names from 1170. The word is a variant of OSc dene, Mod Eng dean (from OE denu: a valley), the vowel having been shortened in unaccented position in place-names.

Both of these elements are unusual in Caithness place-names and this could be an early example of an imported name.

Sc haven : see R55(S)

.....

CLATEQUOY : ND 16 SW: 104642 T22(S)

Local pronunciation: ['klɛtkwɔi]

Early refs: Clatequoy 1841 Census

Derivation:

ON klettr m.: see R20(S) - becoming clate under the influence of G cleit f.

ON kví f. : a cattle-fold, but it was applied in a somewhat wider sense also of a place where animals were wont to assemble, or be gathered together for milking etc. (Marwick 1952, page 227)

ON kví in the modern form quoy is a frequently occurring place-name element in Caithness, and even more common in Orkney. In Orkney quoys are described as being of a relatively late date. In the early rentals quoyland is used as a generic term for such lands as were exempt from skat, the obvious explanation being that such lands were still uncultivated when skat was imposed, although there are exceptions to this. And as a farm-name element quoy continued in use for many hundreds of years, even after the old Norn language

had been largely superseded by Scots. (Marwick 1952, page 228.) T22(S) (cont'd

Marwick's comments on the Orkney quoys are also relevant to the Caithness situation. For further comments relating to Caithness quoy-names see C24(S).

.....

CLAYHUSBANDRY : ND 16 NW: 138678 T23(S)

Local pronunciation: [kle'hʌzbəndri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent English name, unusual in the north, referring to the nature of the soil in the area and inferring that tillage may have been a problem before the introduction of an adequate drainage system (cf T10(S)).

(cf OSc husbandland

: the holding of a husband or manorial tenant, from 1481; in later use, a measure of land, from 1544)

This form of tenancy was most common in N England and SE Scotland.

.....

CLETT COTTAGES : ND 07 SE: 097702 T24(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs:

Clet	1750	Roy	
Clett of Holburnhead	1760	Sutherland (Forse)	
Clet	1807	Arrowsmith	
Clate	1832	Thomson	

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

COGHILL : ND 07 SE: 093705 T25(S)

COGHILL BURN : " : 095703

COGHILL LOCH : " : 093708

Local pronunciation: [kɔgl]

Early refs: Cogall 1750 Roy T25(S) (cont'd)
Cogal 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

Cogle : A surname current in Shetland derived from the lands of Cogle in the parish of Watten, Caithness. Later the name was spelled Coghill. Families of this name are numerous in Caithness today. (Black 1946, page 160.)
The ultimate source of this name is probably as in kogl, kogel: something round and unshapely; a round, lumpy stone (Icel. köggull m.: a lump). (Jakobsen 1932, page 475) The name has been anglicised by the addition of hill.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

CROOKHEAD : ND 16 NW: 143667 T26(S)

Local pronunciation: [kruk'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: An anglicised variant of

Sc cruke, cruik, crewk

: a corner or nook, chiefly in the names of special portions of land

In this instance, the small farm is in a corner where roads meet.

.....

CROSSKIRK : ND 07 SW: 031701 T27(S)

CROSSKIRK BAY : " : 028702

Local pronunciation: ['krɔskʌrk]

Early refs: Croskirk 1608 Sutherland (Forse)
Crosskirk 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

The church in question is St. Mary's Chapel, Lybster, Reay (see R40(S)) which is situated on the west side of Crosskirk Bay.

Sc kirk : ON kirkja f. taking the place in the north of ME chirche, circe, OE cirice, circe, which is itself the origin of the Scandinavian word.

.....

CRUIVES : ND 16 NW: 117668 T28(S)

OLD CRUIVES DYKE : " : 114667

CRUIVE POOL : " : 116667

Local pronunciation: [krœvs]

Early refs: pisc. de lie 1564 RMS
Cruvis 1601 "
Cruves 1606 "
Cruiffis 1616 "
Old Cruve Dike 1877 6" OS
Cruve Well " "

Derivation:

Sc cruve, cruive

: a wicker or wooden enclosure for catching salmon or other fish (used chiefly in pl)

Sc dyke, dike

: a wall(of earth, turf or stone) made for enclosure or as a dividing line

.....

DALCHARN : ND 06 NE: 096662 T29(S)

Local pronunciation: [dal'xarn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G dail f. : see R48(S)

G càrn m. : see R27(T)

The definite article was obviously originally present in this name but it has been dropped, leaving only the lenition as a marker of its presence.

G dail a' chàirn

.....

DIXONFIELD : ND 16 NW: 137666 T30(S)

Local pronunciation : ['dɪksənfild]

Early refs: Dixonfield 1841 Census

Derivation:

A farm belonging at one time to a family called Dixon (cf T5(S)).

.....

DUNBREA : ND 16 SE: 153607 T31(S)

Local pronunciation: [dʌn'bre]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G dùn m. : see R49(S)

G bràigh m.: see R24(T)

.....

DUNCAN'S HILL : ND 16 NW: 137675 T32(S)

DUNCANSHILL : " : 137673

Local pronunciation: [dʌnkəns'hʌl]

Early refs: Duncanshill 1841 Census

Derivation:

This name appears as a farm name only on the 1877 map, but on the modern map it applies to the farm and the neighbouring hill. The reference is probably to a previous owner of the farm. (cf T5(S))

.....

FAIRVIEW : ND 06 NE: 074672 T33(S)

FERN COTTAGE : " : 087663

IVY COTTAGE : ND 16 NW: 148683

VIEWFIELD : ND 06 NE: 073672

Local pronunciation: ['ferviu]

: ['fern 'kɔtədʒ]

: [aivi 'kɔtədʒ]

: ['viufild]

Early refs: 1969 6" OS

Derivation:

These are modern English names typical of recent settlement in the Thurso area.

.....

FORSS	: ND 06 NW:	042691	T34(S)
BRIDGE OF FORSS	: " :	037686	
FORSS WATER	: " :	041676	
FORSS MAINS	: " :	038691	
FORSS SMALLHOLDINGS	: " :	034693	
HILL OF FORSS	: ND 06 NE:	064684	
HILL OF FORSS QUARRIES	: " :	073674	
OLD BRIDGE OF FORSS	:ND 06 NW(RP):	042675	

Local pronunciation : ['fors]

Early refs:

Forss	1539	Sinclair (Mey)
Force	1557	OPS, Sutherland Charters
Fors	1573	Ortelius
Fors Flu	"	"
Fors	1581	RMS
Forss	1661	"
Foss	"	"
Fors	1602	Retours
Fors	1662	Blaeu
Fors Alt	1673	Blome
Water of Force	1701	Brand
Forse	1750	Dorret
Forss	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON fors (mod foss) m.

: a waterfall

Blome's version <Fors Alt> (1673) is very interesting because it shows a combination of ON fors and G allt (see R1(S)).

Sc water : a large stream, usually thought of as intermediate in size between a burn (see R4(S)) and a river, frequently a tributary of a main river or occasionally applied to the upper reaches of what becomes a larger river.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

GEISE : ND 16 SW: 108649 T35(S)

BURN OF GEISE : " : 105647

UPPER GEISE : ND 06 NE: 097658

MOSS OF GEISE : " : 090650

NEWLANDS OF GEISE : " : 090657

GEISELITTLE : ND 16 NW: 116655

UPPER GEISELITTLE : " : 125655

GEISE POOL : " : 114662

GEISE STREAM POOL : " : 112653

Local pronunciation: [giz]

Early refs:

Geiss Mekill	1571	Sinclair (Mey)
Geis-Meikill	1619	RMS
Geis-Littill	"	"
Meiklegeis	1661	"
Gaislitle	"	"
Geese	1662	Blaeu
Geismeikle	1671	Retours
Geislitle	"	"
Giese or Ghies	1726	Macfarlane
Geeze	1786	Sinclair (Freswick)
Giese Mill	1832	Thomson
Giese Little	"	"

Derivation:

ON geysa (gjósa)

: rush furiously, gush

Sc meikill: large (this appears as upper in the modern version of the names)

The intrusive <-t-> which appears in Retours (1671): Geistlitle is an example of scribal error, probably occurring because there was a following <-tl-> combination at the end of the word.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

GLENBURNIE : ND 06 NE: 073673 T36(S)

Local pronunciation: [glɛn'bʌrni]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

T36(S) (cont'd)

Derivation:

A "concocted" name. There is no evidence of either glen or burn in the immediate vicinity. (cf T33(S))

.....

T37(S)

GLENGOLLY : ND 16 NW: 103661

GLENGOLLY COTTAGES : " : 102660

Local pronunciation: [glɛn'gɔli]

Early refs:

Glengolly	1797	Sinclair (Freswick)
Glengolly	1832	Thomson.

Derivation:

This name has been borrowed into Caithness from Glen Golly in Sutherland.

G gleann m.: see R57(T)

The specific is difficult to define without earlier references.

Possibly

G gobhal (gen gobhail/goibhle) m.

: a fork, branch

The name has been subsequently anglicised.

.....

T38(S)

HAIMER : ND 16 NW: 144672

CASTLE OF HAIMER : " : 142672

Local pronunciation: ['hemər]

Early refs:

Hamer	1750	Dorret
Hemar	1750	Roy
Hemer Castle	1760	Pococke
Hammer	1789	Ainslie
Hemer Castle	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

The name only appears on record after the Castle of Haimer was built in the mid-eighteenth century (Omand 1972, page 161). The probable source of the name, however, is

ON heimr m.: an abode, village.

(It seems likely that although heimr means "a world" in modern Icelandic, it had the sense "a home, an abode" in Primitive Norse and would, therefore, have been a very appropriate simplex name.)

.....

HAROLD'S TOWER : ND 16 NW: 135693 T39(S)
TOWERHILL : " : 139689
Local pronunciation: [harəlds 'taur]
Early refs: Harrold's Tomb 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
The tower was built by Sir John Sinclair to commemorate the spot where local tradition says Harald Ungi fell in battle against Harald Maddadson in 1196. (The Orkneyinga Saga, edit. Anderson, 1873, page 195.)

.....

HAWKHILLOCK : ND 16 NW: 125675 T40(S)
Local pronunciation: [hɔk 'hʌlək]
Early refs: Hawkhillock 1841 Census
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

HEATHFIELD : ND 16 NW: 106668 T41(S)
HEATHFIELD QUARRY : ND 06 NE: 093666
Local pronunciation: ['hiθ fild]
Early refs: Heathfield 1841 Census
Derivation:
A small farm on the edge of moorland.

.....

HOLBORN HEAD : ND 07 SE: 107715 T42(S)
HOLBORNHEAD : " : 103707
HOLBORN HILL : " : 095713
HOLBORN HEAD LIGHTHOUSE: " : 106706
HOLBORNHEAD QUARRIES : " : 079710
BRAES OF HOLBORNHEAD : ND 16 NW: 103705
Local pronunciation : [hɔbrʌn 'hɛid]
The <-l-> in the modern orthography first appears in the mid-18th century and is not reflected in the modern pronunciation.

Early refs:	Hoborne Head	1573	Ortelius	T42(S) (cont'd)
	Hoburneheid	1581	OPS, Sutherland Charters	
	Howburnheid	1605	Retours	
	Hawburnheid	1672	"	
	Hoburn Head	1662	Blaeu	
	Hoburneheat (farm)	"	"	
	Hobrune Head	1688	Adair	
	Hoburn Head	1726	Macfarlane	
	Howburnhead	"	"	
	Holbourn Head	1750	Roy	
	House of Holbournhead	"	"	

Derivation:

ON hár (f. há)

: high

ON brún f.: brow,

used metaphorically to describe landscape

Adair (1688) is the only example which does not show metathesis of <r>. Modern local pronunciation is invariably ['hɔbrʌn].

Sc brae : see R8(S)

.....

HOPEFIELD : ND 06 NE: 072675 T43(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hopfild]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A modern name, perhaps indicating that the farmer had some doubts about the success of cultivation in the area.

.....

HOWE : ND 06 SE: 094635 T44(S)

Local pronunciation: [hau]

Early refs:	Upper Howe	1841	Census
	Lower Howe	"	"

Derivation:

Lack of early references in this instance makes it extremely difficult to be certain of the derivation. It could be derived from

ON haugr m.: a how, mound

but an equally possible source is

Sc howe : a hollow or low-lying piece of ground; one of the hollows of an indented or undulating surface or outline

The modern spelling of the place-name has certainly been influenced by Sc howe. T44(S) (cont'd)

.....

HOY : ND 16 SW: 142606 T45(S)

HOY POOL : " : 139608

Local pronunciation: [hɔi]

Early refs: Hoy 1636 Sinclair (Mey)
Hoy 1662 Blaeu
Hoy 1673 Sinclair (Freswick)
Hoy 1750 Roy
Hoy 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

For detailed commentary see OL19(S).

It seems probable that this name should also be derived from

ON hey n. : hay

.....

INNESDALE : ND 06 NE: 084671 T46(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ɪnəsdel]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This is a comparatively recent name, combining the surname Innes with English -dale. (cf T5(S))

.....

JANETSTOWN : ND 06 NE: 084656 T47(S)

JANETSTOWN QUARRIES: " : 090663

LADY JANET'S WOOD : ND 16 NW: 133683

LADY JANET'S SEAT : " : 126694

Local pronunciation: ['dʒenɪts tun]

Early refs: Janetstown 1841 Census
Newlands of Janetstown " "
Janetstown Side 1867 6" OS

Derivation:

Named after Lady Janet Sinclair of Ulbster.

.....

KIRK EBB : ND 16 NW: 121689 T48(S)

Local pronunciation: ['kɪrk ɛb]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: T48(S) (cont'd

Sc kirk : see T27(S)

Sc ebb (emE eb(b), ME ebbe, OE ebba)

: the ebb of the tide; the part of the beach left bare at the ebb

The reference is to nearby St. Peter's Church, Thurso.

.....

LANGLAND : ND 06 NE: 077672 T49(S)

LANGLAND QUARRIES : " : 079673

Local pronunciation: ['laŋlənd]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lang : long

Sc land : the land as used for cultivation or as divided up in some way for agricultural purposes

OSc land : arable ground (recorded in 1375)

.....

LYTHMORE : ND 06 NE: 054663 T50(S)

LYTHMORE MOSS : " : 063672

LYTHMORE COTTAGES : " : 054662

LYTHMORE STRATH : ND 06 NW: 048659

Local pronunciation: [laiθ'mor]

Early refs:

Lythmoir	1557	OPS, Sutherland Charters
Lythmoir	1564	OPS, Book of Assumptions
Lythmoir	1581	RMS
Lichtmoir	1608	"
Lyithmoir	1619	"
Lythmoir	1605	Retours
Lythmore	1702	Sutherland (Forse)
Lithmore	1750	Roy
Lythmore	1832	Thomson

Derivation: Probably

ON hlíð f.: see R59(S)

Lythmore is situated on sloping ground beside the Forss River (see T34(S)). (cf Lyth: Bower Parish)

G mór : see R11(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc strath : see R25(S)

.....

MAYFIELD : ND 16 NE: 151662 T51(S)

Local pronunciation: ['mefild]

Early refs: May Field 1841 Census

Derivation:

Probably a name imported into Caithness from further south. John Field describes May Field as an "ambiguous name, possibly referring either to May festivities or to the hawthorne or may tree". (John Field 1972, page 135.)

The Caithness name describes a farm situated in a fertile green section in an area of quarries.

.....

MIDDLETON : ND 06 NE: 058699 T52(S)

Local pronunciation: [mɛdl̩tən]

Early refs: Middletown 1750 Roy

Middtown 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

Sc -town : see R46(S)

.....

MOSSBANK : ND 16 SW: 144648 T53(S)

Local pronunciation: [mɔs'baŋk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc bank : the place in a peat-moss from which peats are cut

The reference is not to a specific peat-bank but to an area which, in general, is good for peat-cutting.

.....

MOUNTPLEASANT : ND 16 NW: 126682 T54(S)

Local pronunciation: [maunt 'plɛsənt]

Early refs: Mt Pleasant 1807 Arrowsmith

Mountpleasant 1841 Census

Derivation:

The name has biblical connotations and names of this type were very popular during the 19th century evangelical revival.

.....

MOUNTVERNON : ND 16 NW: 116674 T55(S)

Local pronunciation: [maunt'vɛrnən]

Early refs: Mount Vernon 1841 Census

Derivation: see T54(S)

.....

MURKLE, BRIDGE OF : ND 16 NE: 153672 T56(S)

WEST MURKLE : " : 152696

Local pronunciation: ['mʌrkəl]

Early refs } : see OL 26(S)

Derivation }

.....

MURRAYFIELD : ND 06 NE: 078674 T57(S)

Local pronunciation: ['mʌrifild]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A farm belonging at one time to a family named Murray. (cf T5(S))

.....

NAVER HOUSE : ND 16 NW: 107682 T58(S)

Local pronunciation: ['nevər haus]

Early refs: 1969 6" OS

Derivation:

This name has been imported from Strath Naver in Sutherland.

(For Naver see Nicolaisen 1976, page 189.)

.....

OLDFIELD FARM : ND 16 NW: 121677 T59(S)

OLDFIELD HOUSE : " : 119676

Local pronunciation: ['oldfild farm]

Early refs: Oldfield 1750 Roy

Derivation:

A self-explanatory English name. Old is being used to differentiate one thing from its more recent replacement.

.....

OLD GARDEN CROFT : ND 16 NW: 135687 T60(S)

Local pronunciation: [old gardən 'krɔft]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A croft adjoining Lady Janet's Wood, but there is no land attached to it today. A local informant says that one of the gardeners at Thurso Castle stayed here for same time.

.....

ORMLIE : ND 16 NW: 107676 T61(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ɔrmli]

Early refs:

Ormellee	1538	RMS
Ormelie	1539	"
Ornely	1587	"
Ormlie	1658	"
Ormlie	1550	Sinclair (Mey)
Ormelie	1604	Retours
Ormlie	1644	"
Ormlee	1662	Blaeu
Ormley	1726	Macfarlane
Ormilie	1807	Arrowsmith
Newlands of Ormly	1819	Sinclair (Thruso)
Ormly	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON ormr m.: a snake, serpent

Ormr can also be used as a personal name: (Lind 1915, column 819).

ON hlið f.: see R59(S)

Ormlie is, in fact, situated close by a pronounced bend in the Thurso River (see T75(S)) which favours the literal interpretation.

.....

OUST : ND 06 NE: 063656 T62(S)

Local pronunciation: [aust]

Early refs:

Owist	1560	OPS, Sutherland Charters
Owest	1564	"
Awist	1561-6	OPS, Book of Assumptions
Owist	1581	RMS
Owst	1606	"
Oust	1638	"
Owist	1605	Retours
Oust	1750	Roy
Owst	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON austr m.: east

This is unacceptable as a simplex name but the adjacent farm in Halkirk Parish is now known as Westfield (ND 06 SE: 064643) and it seems possible that ON austr and ON vestr (west) were originally specifics in compound names with a common generic which has subsequently been lost and, in the case of Westfield alone, has been replaced by the English generic field.

.....

PENNYLAND : ND 16 NW: 105683 T63(S)

PENNYLAND HOUSE : " : 109687

Local pronunciation: ['penɛland]

Early refs:

Pennyland	1562/3	Sinclair(Mey)
Penneland	1571	"
Pennyland	1658	RMS
Penyland	1750	Roy
Pennyland House	1760	Pococke
Pennyland	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

Pennyland : a unit of land on which a certain amount of skat or tax had to be paid

At an early period Orkney was divided into eyris-lǫnd (ouncelands) each of which paid to the Earl money or produce to the value of one ounce of silver.

The ouncelands in turn were divided into eighteen parts, each of which had to pay one penny (pennylands). T63(S) (cont'd)
Neither ounce- nor pennyland was constant in size being a measure of produce, not of surface. (Marwick 1952, page 196.)

.....

PENTLAND VIEW : ND 16 NW: 102658 T64(S)
PENTLAND HOUSE : " : 113686
SEAVIEW : ND 06 NE: 084677
RIVER VIEW : ND 16 NW: 102665
Local pronunciation: ['pɛntlənd]
Early refs: 1969 6" OS
Derivation:
For Pentland see C80(T).
Names like Pentland View and River View are very typical of the 20th century, indicating a society which has enough leisure-time to appreciate the view.

.....

ROADSIDE : ND 16 SE: 153608 T65(S)
Local pronunciation: ['rodsaid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This is a general name for a smithy, a Post Office and a few houses, and it illustrates the importance of the road system in the life of the community.

.....

SCAPA HOUSE : ND 16 NW: 111687 T66(S)
Local pronunciation: ['skapə]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A name borrowed from Scapa Flow in Orkney. (Marwick 1952, page 100.)

.....

SCRABSTER	:	ND 16 NW:	102704	T67(S)
SCRABSTER ROADSTEAD	:	" :	106704	
SCRABSTER CASTLE	:	" :	107692	
BRAES OF SCRABSTER	:	" :	103695	
SCRABSTER MAINS	:	ND 06 NE:	096697	
SCRABSTER HOUSE	:	" :	097698	
SCRABSTER HILL	:	" :	076690	
SCRABSTER LOCH	:	ND 07 SE:	087703	

Local pronunciation: ['skrɛbstər]

Early refs: Skarabólstaðr (c1200) Orkneyinga Saga

Scrabestoun	1455	RMS
Scrabister	1581	"
Scrabuster	1593	"
Scrabster	1603	"
Skrabister	1608	"
Scrabuster	1529	Sinclair (Mey)
Scrabuist	1578	"
Raid de Scrabister	1605	Retours
Scrabster Road	1726	Macfarlane
Castle of Scrabster	"	"
Scarbster Road	1750	Dorret
Scrabster Roads	1832	Thomson
Scrabster House	"	"

Derivation: Either

ON skári (gen skára) m.

: a young sea-mew

or the related Norse personal name Skári, -a m. (Lind 1915, page 909)

ON bólstaðr m.

: see R21(S)

Sc raid : a roadstead, a place where ships lie at anchor

Sc brae : see R8(S)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

SHAIMSTRY : ND 16 SW: 130646 T68(S)
TULLOCH OF SHAIMSTRY: " : 133644
Local pronunciation : ['ʃalmstri]
Early refs: Shalmistrie 1643-53 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Shalmsery 1749 Sinclair (Thurso)
Shalmstry 1798 Book of Valuation
Shelmstree 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:
ON Hiálmi, -a m.
: a personal name (Lind 1915, column 535)
This personal name appears in the Norwegian place-name Hjelset which had earlier forms Hialmasætr and Hielmasætr.
ON hj- could become sh- [ʃ] as a result of palatal closure. (Fenton, 1973)
(cf Sjolmister in Shetland which may contain the ON personal name Hjalmr: Jakobsen 1936, page 59.)
It seems likely that the generic in the Caithness place-name is ON setr (see R33(S)), possibly in its locative form setri, although this place-name would be unique in Caithness in containing such a form.

.....

SLATER'S LOUP : ND 07 SE: 098716 T69(S)
Local pronunciation: ['sletərs laup]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A small obelisk marks this spot where Captain Slater, RN, met his death in the 19th century.
Sc loup : a leap
In place-names, of places where, traditionally, someone has leapt or jumped. There are several coastal names containing this element in Caithness.

.....

SORDALE : ND 16 SW: 146624 T70(S)
SORDALE STREAM POOL: " : 142621
SORDALE HILL : ND 16 SE: 157619
(Cnoc na Ciste)
Local pronunciation: ['sɔrdel]

T70(S) (cont'd)

Early refs:	Sordayle	1539	RSS
	Sordell	1538	RMS
	Sordaill	1576	"
	Sordell	1587	"
	Swordaill	1606	"
	Sweirdale	1667	"
	Suerdall	1564	Sinclair (Mey)
	Sordall	1567	"
	Sardell	1605	"
	Soirdaill	1604	Retours
	Swordall	1605	"
	Swordell	"	"
	Swordaill	1644	"
	Sardell	1671	"
	Swardel	1750	Roy
	Sourdale	1807	Arrowsmith
	Sordal	1832	Thomson

Derivation: Possibly

ON saurr m.: mud

cf Saur-bær

: a name which is frequent in Iceland in areas where the soil is sour or swampy

Alternatively, the spellings Suerdall (Sinclair(Mey) 1564), Swordall, Suordell (Retours 1605), Swordaill (RMS 1606), Swardaill (Retours 1644), Sweirdale (RMS 1667) and Swardel (Roy 1750) all suggest:

ON svartr : black, dark-coloured

which is also a common place-name element.

ON dalr m. : see R22(S)

The Gaelic variant Cnoc na Ciste is not in use today. It describes a chambered cairn.

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G ciste f. : a chest, coffin

• • • • • •

SPRINGPARK : ND 16 NW: 124678 T71(S)
SPRINGFIELD : ND 16 SE: 151615
Local pronunciation: ['sprɪŋpark, -fild]
Early refs: Springpark 1841 Census
Upper Springpark " "
Springfield " "
Derivation:
The reference is to fresh water springs.

.....

STAINLAND : ND 16 NW: 123668 T72(S)
BURN OF STAINLAND : " : 123662
Local pronunciation: ['stenlənd]
Early refs: Staneland 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
Stainland 1592 RMS
Staneland 1667 "
Staniland 1671 Retours
Stainland 1693 "
Stainland 1750 Roy
Stoney Lands 1807 Arrowsmith
Stainland 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc stain/stane
: a stone
Sc land : see T49(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

TALDALE : ND 06 NE: 060692 T73(S)
Local pronunciation: ['taldel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: The most likely source is
ON hallr m.: a slope, hill
with initial [h]>[t] due to Gaelic influence. (cf hóll>tóll: Watson 1904, page lx)
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)

.....

THING'S VA BROCH : ND 06 NE: 081683 T74(S)

Local pronunciation: ['tɨŋsva]

Early refs: Thing's Wa 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON þing n.: the parliament, local law assembly

An element which often occurs with þing is ON völlr m.: a field (as in Tingwall, Shetland), but the only known form of that compound is þingvöllr (without a medial s). Per Thorson suggests that, in this instance, the second element is svað m.: a difficult, slippery slope. The compound apparently also occurs in a Norwegian local name Tingsva(d)-berget, applied to a hillside in Gudbrandsdalen, where an assembly is alleged to have convened in 1280. (Thorson 1965, page 5)

.....

THURSO CASTLE : ND 16 NW: 124688 T75(S)

THURSO BAY : " : 120700

THURSO EAST MAINS : " : 126691

RIVER THURSO : " : 117680

THURSO BRIDGE : " : 117682

Local pronunciation: ['θʌrsə]

Early refs: Þórsá c1200 Orkneyinga Saga

Turseham c1200 OPS, Roger of Hoveden

Turschem c1200 OPS, Antiquitates Celto-Scandicae

Turishau 1287 OLM, Bagimond's Roll

Furso 1527 RMS

Water of Thuresoch 1539 RSS

Thursow 1547 "

Thorso " "

Thursow 1560 OPS, Sutherland Charters

Thurso 1561-6 OPS, Book of Assumptions

Thursoch " " "

Thursoche " " "

Thursocht " " "

Water of Thurseth " " "

Fairsok Fl 1595 Mercator

Thurso-Be-Eist 1619 RMS

T75(S)
(cont'd)

Early refs (cont'd)

Thursoch	1604	Retours
Thursocht	1605	"
Thurso	"	"
Thursett	1644	"
Thursoe	1671	"
Thurso	1750	Roy
River Thyrso	1760	Pococke
Thyrso	"	"

Thurso is the predominant spelling from c1750.

Derivation:

The name Thurso has been the subject of a great deal of discussion (McBain 1894, page 276; 1922, pages 6-7; Henderson 1910, page 155; Watson 1926, page 36; Brøgger 1929, page 97; Johnston 1934, page 310; Nicolaisen 1966, pages 171-176; Thorson 1965, pages 71-77; 1967, pages 84-86; Omand 1972, pages 127, 228; Nicolaisen 1982, pages 84-5).

W.F.H. Nicolaisen in his most recent commentary on the name (1982, pages 84-5) states that "documentary evidence is complex and does not permit a clearcut answer". He draws attention to the Gaelic name of the town Inbhir-Theòrsa: mouth of (the river) Thurso, and to the variant Þjórsá: bull's river, besides Þórsá: Thor's river, in Orkneyinga Saga.

Nicolaisen suggests that the Gaelic form Inbhir-Theòrsa indicates that the isolated Norse variant "bull's river" must, at least, be given consideration as one of the Norse names for the river "even if it is unconnected with Tarvedu(nu)m 'bull-fort', Ptolemy's name for one of the headlands near Thurso and, therefore, not a direct translation of an earlier Celtic *Tarvo-dubron 'bull's river'". He further comments that "It is not difficult to imagine that such a name might easily be influenced by the better-known name of the god Þór and a doublet Þjórsa/Þórsa be established at an early stage."

As regards the nature of the generic Nicolaisen states that "... at least for the town name, (we should perhaps) admit Þórshaugr 'Thor's mound' as yet another ingredient in the development of our name," as Per Thorson suggested. (Thorson 1965, page 2)

Certainly, with the notable exception of the Orkneyinga Saga Þórsá

which, as Per Thorson has commented, could so easily have been influenced by the West Icelandic river-name Þórsó (Þórsá). the early forms offer more support for the theory that the generic is ON haugr m.: a mound rather than ON á f.: a river. T75(S) (cont'd)

If the generic is ON haugr a more appropriate specific would be
ON Þurs m. : a giant
and the vowel in the first syllable of the early forms is consistently <u> with the exception again of the Orkneyinga Saga form and of a single 16th century version Thorso (RSS).

(There is a parallel element in OE place-names, ie
OE Þyrs : a giant, demon
as in Thursford (Ekwall 1947, page 450).)

There does appear to have been another Norse name for (or perhaps description of) the river, "Skínandi 'the shining one' preserved for us in the place-name Skinnet" in Halkirk Parish. (Thorson 1965, page 3; Nicolaisen 1982, page 84) It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that in the first instance the river was described as Skínandi and the settlement at its mouth was named Þursa-haugr which, in the course of time, was abbreviated as in the examples listed, and as the settlement grew in size and importance its name was extended to the river which flowed past it into the sea, the original description of the river possibly being restricted for a time to its upper reaches and eventually being lost as a river name.

The only other river-name in Caithness, Wick River (see W116(S)), is likewise derived from the name of the settlement at its mouth.

The modern Gaelic form Inbhir-Theòrsa, or Inbhir-Thòrsa as also occurs, would probably have been based on a comparatively late version of the name, by which time contraction from the original Þursa-haugr would have occurred, and it is perfectly possibly that the Gaelic form could have been influenced by the Orkneyinga Saga form, whether Þòrsà or Þjòrsà which, in turn, could have been influenced by the identical Icelandic river-names.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

THUSATER	:	ND 06 NE:	068697	T76(S)
CLETT OF THUSATER	:	ND 07 SE:	066712	
CLIFF OF THUSATER	:	" :	064711	
THUSATER BURN	:	" :	165704	

Local pronunciation: ['θusɐtər]
occasionally ['fjustər]

Early refs:		
Thursiter	1562-3	Sinclair (Mey)
Thursetter	1576	RMS
Fissater	1619	Sutherland (Forse)
Thurster	1646	Sinclair (Thurso)
Thursetter	1662	Blaeu
Thursatter	1680	Sinclair (Mey)
Clet of Thurster	1750	Dorret
Thursther	"	Roy
Thuster	1796-7	Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:

Per Thorson suggests that this name is derived from ON Þjóðrekssetr (Thorson 1965, pages 4-5) but the earlier forms do not support this interpretation.

More probable is another Norse personal name:
ON Þúríðr (Lind 1915, column 1226)

ON setr n.: see R33(S)
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

Modern pronunciation of this name is occasionally ['fjustɐr] and the spelling Fissater (1619) appears to suggest a similar initial fricative.

These forms could perhaps indicate that the origin of this name might be *Fjós-setr where the first element (contracted from an earlier form fé-hús) denotes a byre.

The personal name noted above, however, is a more likely specific, particularly in view of the fact that early forms of a comparable name in Wick Parish indicate that, on occasion, initial <th> could be represented by <f>. (See W105(S))

.....

TODHOLES : ND 16 SW: 127641

Local pronunciation: [t>d'hols]

Early refs: Toddhole 1750 Roy

Todholes 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc tod : a fox

.....

TORDALE PARK : ND 06 NE: 068665

TORDALE BURN : " : 076661

Local pronunciation: ['t>rdel]

Early refs: Tordaill 1619 RMS

Derivation:

The specific is uncertain but could be

ON torf n.: turf, peat

ON dalr m.: see R22(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

TURDALE : ND 16 NW: 135674

Local pronunciation: ['tʌrdel]

Early refs: Turdell-Croft 1592 RMS

Turdill 1661 "

Derivation:

The specific is problematical. It could possibly be derived from

ON þurr: dry

but the presence of Boggy Park Croft (see T10(S)) in the vicinity makes this a doubtful suggestion, unless Boggy Park Croft is so named by contrast with the neighbouring dry area.

ON dalr m.: see R22(S)

.....

WAAS : ND 06 NE: 080664

NORTH WAAS : " : 082668

Local pronunciation: [wa:s]

Early refs: Waas 1841 Census

T80(S) (cont'd)

Derivation:

A very puzzling name. It also occurs in Orkney and Shetland and in both instances is derived from

ON vágr m. : a voe.

The Caithness Waas, however, is well inland and a direct derivation from ON vágr m. would be inappropriate. There is, of course, a possibility that the place-name has been borrowed from Orkney but there is no proof of this.

Another remote possibility is

ON vǫllr m.: a field, + English pl -s,

but, in Caithness, vǫllr usually appears as the final element in a compound name, and it normally takes the form -wel.

.....

WESTBURN : ND 16 NE: 155688 T81(S)

Local pronunciation: ['westbʌrn]

Early refs: Westburn 1841 Census

Derivation:

The name describes a small farm on the west side of the Murkle Burn (see OL26(S)) opposite Burnside (see OL7(S)).

.....

WEYDALE	:	ND 16 NW:	143652
WEYDALE MOSS	:	" :	135655
WEYDALE QUARRIES	:	" :	145653
WEYDALE MAINS	:	ND 16 SW:	142645
SOUTH WEYDALE	:	" :	147637

T82(S)

Local pronunciation: ['weidʌl]

Early refs:

Weddale	1545	RMS
Weddell	"	"
Wydell	1592	"
Vydaill	1619	"
Wydaill	1671	Retours
Wyddale	1798	Book of Valuation
Weddle	1807	Arrowsmith
Weydale	1831	Thomson

Derivation: T82(S) (cont'd)

There are three possibilities for the initial element

ON víðr : wide

ON viðr m. : a tree, timber

ON víðir m.: willow

The most probable of these, given the situation, is

víðr : wide

(Icelandic Viðidalr is probably also from víðr: wide, broad)

ON dalr m. : see R22(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

WHITEFIELD : ND 16 NW: 106654 T83(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hwaitfild]

Early refs: Whytfield 1661 RMS

Whitefield 1750 Roy

Whitefield 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

White is often used in place-names to indicate a lighter shade of colour by comparison with some dark feature in the vicinity, rather than pure white. It may refer to the soil or to the vegetation.

.....

WHITEMOSS QUARRIES : ND 16 NE: 157652 T84(S)

WHITE MOSS : ND 16 SE: 161646

Local pronunciation: [hwait'mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

White : see T83(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

YOUKIL QUARRY : ND 16 NE: 155657 T85(S)

YOUKIL HILLOCK : " : 153654

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

T85(S)
(cont'd)

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON *ðxl* f. : the shoulder

(metaphorically, the shoulder of a hill)

(cf de Jokkel o' de Kuml - Muckle Roe, Shetland: Jakobsen 1901, page 169)

.....

TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES

ALLTAN DOMHAIN : ND 06 NE: 057651 T1(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an

G domhain : deep

.....

BACK BERRY : ND 07 SE: 109715 T2(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bakbɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON bakki m.: 1) an eminence or ridge

2) a bank of a river

This element appears in Caithness place-nomenclature in the form Back as above.

ON berg m. : a rock; elevated rocky ground

This element appears frequently in Caithness place-nomenclature in the form Berry as above.

.....

BELL MOUNT : ND 07 SE: 093703 T3(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bɛlmaunt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Bell Mount is noted in the Inventory of Monuments as being the site of a broch, now overgrown with turf, but there is no record which might explain the reference to a bell.

.....

BLACK CRAIG : ND 07 SE: 094714 T4(T)

Local pronunciation: name known only to a few very old fishermen

['blak 'krag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

BLACK GEO : ND 07 SE: 107713 T5(T)
BLACK GEO : ND 17 SE: 155703
BLACK NESS : ND 07 SE: 109716
Local pronunciation: [blak 'gjo, ..'nɛs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Cai ness : see T13(S)

.....

BLACK HILLOCK : ND 16 SW: 143613 T6(T)
Local pronunciation: [blak 'hɫlək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As with G dubh, Eng black is used to indicate an indeterminate dark colour.

.....

BLACK HOLE : ND 07 SE: 065710 T7(T)
Local pronunciation: [blak 'hɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a small dark inlet of the sea.

.....

BROAD SHOALS : ND 07 SE: 093714 T8(T)
NARROW SHOALS : " : 102716
Local pronunciation: ['brɔd ʃols, 'narə ...]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ME shoal : a place where the water is of little depth; a shallow; a sand-bank or bar
Both names describe ledges of rock which jut out into the water making it shallow.

.....

BROUGH, NECK OF : ND 07 SE: 061711 T9(T)

Local pronunciation: [nɛk ə 'brɔx]

Early refs: Neck of Broch 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc broch, brough: a prehistoric structure found in Orkney and Shetland and the adjacent Scottish mainland, consisting of a round tower with inner and outer walls of stone. Broch is now accepted as a general archaeological term.

The Neck of Brough is a narrow section of rock jutting out from the mainland, with the remains of a broch still visible on it.

.....

BURN MOUTH : ND 07 SE: 105716 T10(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bʌrn muθ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name appears to be self-explanatory but it is rather strange in that there is no burn draining into the sea at this point and the name seems to describe a narrow section of water between the mainland and Clett (see T12(T).

.....

CAIRNMORE HILLOCK : ND 06 NE: 057673 T11(T)

Local pronunciation: [kern mor 'hɬlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G càrn m. : see R27(T)

G mór : see R11(S)

Cairnmore Hillock is an anglicised version of the original Gaelic.

.....

CLETT : ND 07 SE: 105716 T12(T)

Local pronunciation: [klɛt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

CLINKIN GEO : ND 17 SE: 157703 T13(T)

Local pronunciation: ['klɛnkɛn gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc clinkin: making a clinking sound

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The name is probably onomatopoeic, referring to the sound of the waves.

.....

CLIO : ND 16 NW: 114687 T14(T)

CLIO GEOS : " : 114687

Local pronunciation: ['klaio]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name is obviously imported and a local informant gave the following explanation which seems probable, although difficult to verify:-
'The name describes a small rock said to be named after a "man-o'-war" called Clio which was stationed at Thurso for coastal defence during the Napoleonic war.'

According to another local informant The Clio is on the list of naval ships, from 1800 onwards, and was probably an armed sloop or cutter, as only the bigger ships are described on the list.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

CNOC NA FEADAIGE : ND 06 NE: 072690 T15(T)

Local pronunciation: [nɔk nə 'fɛd-ɛxi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G feadag (gen feadaige) f.

: a plover

.....

CNOC AN TEILLIR : ND 16 SE: 155624 T16(T)

Local pronunciation: [nɔk ən 'taljɾr]

Early refs: Cnoc an Taillir 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G tàillear (gen tàilleir) m.

: a tailor

There seems to be no local knowledge of the identity of the tailor.

.....

CRAB GEO : ND 16 NW: 134698 T17(T)

Local pronunciation: ['krab gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent self-explanatory name.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

CRAIG ANDREW : ND 07 SW: 029705 T18(T)

Local pronunciation: [kreg 'andru]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

There is a local story of a man named Andrew who was drowned here, but there is no written record of such a death.

.....

CREAG BHUIDHE : ND 16 NW: 108707 T19(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creag f.: see R46(S)

G buidhe : see R60(T)

.....

CREAGAN CAOL : ND 07 SW: 031707 T20(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G creagan m.: little rock, rocky place

G caol : see R75(T)

.....

DEVIL'S BRIDGE : ND 07 SE: 108715 T21(T)

Local pronunciation: ['dils 'brɪg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a very impressive natural rock bridge on Holbourn Head (see T42(S)). As is often the case with astounding natural features, the locals have obviously assumed that the supernatural had a hand in its creation.

.....

EAST SLATE : ND 07 SW: 029707 T22(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ist slet]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON sléttr : see R83(T)

The name describes flat, sloping rocks leading down to the sea.

.....

ELLAN BRIDGE : ND 16 NW: 122683 T23(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ɛlən brɪg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

It is difficult to suggest a derivation without further early references.

Possibly

G àilean m.: green, plain, meadow

In local pronunciation the final element is

Sc brig : see R102(T)

.....

FALCON CRAIG : ND 07 SE: 083712 T24(T)

Local pronunciation: ['falkən krag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Falcons still use this cliff as a nesting place.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

FIERCIE GEO : ND 16 NW: 142701 T25(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The spelling suggests that the reference is to the fierce inrush of the sea at this point.

ON fyrsa : gush, stream in torrents is also a possibility but English origin is more probable

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FISH SCALE : ND 07 SE: 107711 T26(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fɪʃ 'skel]

Modern pronunciation of this name has been influenced by the anglicised written form Fish Scale.

Early refs: Fischill in Thurso 1632 Retours T26(T) (cont'd)
The Fishgill 1672 "
Fishill 1672 Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:

ON fiskr m.: a fish

ON áll m. : a deep, narrow channel in sea or river

Fishgill (1672) is probably so written by analogy with the many other names containing Cai gill (see R11(T)).

.....

FISHY GEO : ND 16 NW: 128695 T27(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fɛʃi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent self-explanatory name.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GALLOW HILL : ND 16 SE: 153616 T28(T)

Local pronunciation: ['galə hɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

One of several places said to have been the site of the gallows where some of those implicated in the murder of Bishop Adam in 1222 were hanged, by order of King Alexander II.

There is a chambered cairn on the hill and the tradition of the gallows probably built up around the cairn. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 120.)

.....

GEO DIKE : ND 16 NW: 133697 T29(T)

Local pronunciation: [gjo 'daik]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: T29(T) (cont'd)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Sc dike : a dry-stone wall

A dike above this geo was a well-known fisherman's mark or meith (<ON miðr n.) used to pinpoint a certain area of the sea which was known to be an excellent fishing spot.

Sc meith/Cai meese, meeze:

1) a fishing ground marked out with reference to the landmarks visible from it
2) a landmark used by fishermen when steering for home

.....

GEO HARRA : ND 07 SW: 035713 T30(T)

Local pronunciation: [gjo 'harə]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The word order suggests that the second element in the compound may be Gaelic, but it is obscure without further early references.

.....

GREEN SKERRY : ND 07 SE: 107712 T31(T)

GREEN HEAD : " : 067710

BACK GREEN SKERRY : " : 107712

Local pronunciation: ['grin 'skɛri, ...'hɛid]

<Back Green Skerry> not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

The situation of the two skerries suggests that Back is simply being used to indicate behind.

.....

HAM BERRY : ND 07 SW: 043712 T32(T)

Local pronunciation: [ham 'bɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON höfn (hafn, hamn) f.

: a haven, harbour

This ON term occurs frequently in Caithness place-nomenclature in the form ham, as above.

The preferred description of a harbour in the eastern parishes of Caithness is the Norse-influenced Haven (cf R55(S)).

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

HERON CRAIG : ND 07 SE: 083713 T33(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛrən krag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

A rock favoured as a fishing spot by herons.

.....

HOS SKERRIES : ND 16 NW: 109693 T34(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɔs skɛri]

The local version of the name is singular rather than plural as on the 6" OS map.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Probably

ON óss m. : the mouth or outlet of a river

The element is common in place-names and there is a stream draining into the sea at this point.

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

JOHN LEED'S ROCK : ND 07 SE: 069712 T35(T)

Local pronunciation: ['dʒɔn 'lids 'rɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A local informant says that there have been generations of fishermen called Leed in Thurso.

The name does not appear in Black's Surnames of Scotland, but it is interesting to note that there is a northern Sc dialect word

leed : diligence

.....

KYLE GEO : ND 07 SW: 047710 T36(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kail gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kyle : represents an approximation to the sound of

G caol : see R75(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

LIMPET GEO : ND 16 NW: 134699 T37(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lʌmpət gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

An area with an abundant supply of limpets, once used for bait in inshore fishing.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

LINTIE'S POOL : ND 06 NE: 098676 T38(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lʌntis pul]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lintie : the linnet

(General Sc except Shetland)

.....

LIPPY GEO : ND 07 SW: 029702 T39(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lɻpi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Perhaps the simple explanation of a geo with a lip or overhanging edge is the correct one.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

LISS SKERRY : ND 07 SE: 054708 T40(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lɻs skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

liss : obscure without earlier spellings

.....

LITTER, CRAIG OF : ND 07 SE: 082711 T41(T)

LITTER, NESS OF : " : 078713

Local pronunciation: ['lɻtər]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

Cai ness : see T13(S)

Probably Eng litter indicating that the shore-line rocks were frequented by seals and their pups.

(cf ON láttr m.

: the place where animals, especially seals, give birth to their young)

.....

LITTLE BURN : ND 16 SE: 161641 T42(T)

LITTLE CLETT : ND 07 SE: 107713

LITTLE EBB : ND 16 NW: 119689

LITTLE HEAD : ND 07 SE: 106705

Local pronunciation: [lɪt] 'bʌrn,..'klɛt,..'ɛb,..'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Sc ebb : see T48(S)

.....

LOCHAN BUIDHE : ND 06 NW: 037695 T43(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G lochan m.: little lake, pool or pond

In Caithness G loch is feminine (cf R5(S)) but the diminutive lochan is masculine and, therefore, does not require lenition of the following adjective.

G buidhe : see R60(T)

.....

LONG GEO : ND 07 SE: 062708 T44(T)

Local pronunciation: [l>ŋ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

LONG RIGGING : ND 07 SE: 107711 T45(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ 'rɤgiŋ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc rigging: 1) the back-bone or spine

and by analogy 2) the top, summit or highest crest of any object

.....

LONG ROCK : ND 07 SE: 074712 T46(T)

LONG SKERRIES : ND 16 NW: 121691

Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ 'rɔk, ... 'skɛris]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

LOUPAG : ND 16 NW: 108709 T47(T)

Local pronunciation: ['laupəg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Difficult without earlier spellings. One likely source is

G lùb f. : a bend, curve + dimin -ag

This description fits the situation and there are other Gaelic names in the immediate vicinity (eg Creag Bhuidhe (see T19(T)).

On the other hand, the initial element may simply be

Sc loup : a leap, plus a diminutive ending

and the name may have applied to a fishing rock, but this suggestion would have been more probable had the English definite article appeared in the name.

.....

LYTHE CRAIG : ND 16 NW: 107706 T48(T)

Local pronunciation: ['laiθ 'krag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lythe : the pollack

Lythe is a variant form of ON lý-r m. with final -the from Sc saithe, another species of coal-fish.

Sc saithe : the full-grown coal-fish, in its third, or, in some places, its fourth year

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

MARL MOSS : ND 16 SE: 159631 T49(T)

Local pronunciation: [marl 'mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

An area where marl, a limy clay, was dug for use as fertiliser on the fields.

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

MURPHY'S CRAIG : ND 16 NW: 143703 T50(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mʌrfis krag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Local legend says that a man named Murphy was drowned here but it is not verifiable.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

NEB POINT : ND 16 NW: 108693 T51(T)

Local pronunciation: [nɛb 'pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc neb : any pointed tip or projection. Sometimes used in place-names of a piece of land, rock etc. The tautologous Eng Point has been added subsequently.

.....

NEEDLE EYE : ND 16 NW: 109692 T52(T)

Local pronunciation: [nidl 'i]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a pillar of rock. Eye suggests that it may, at some time in the past, have had a hole near the top which has since broken off.

.....

NESS BERRY : ND 07 SW: 040716 T53(T)

Local pronunciation: ['nɛs bɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai ness : see T13(S)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

POCKET'S GEO : ND 16 NW: 127695 T54(T)

Local pronunciation: ['pɔkəts gjo]

Early refs: Pockets Geo 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A puzzling name, and the confusion regarding the use or otherwise of an apostrophe indicates that the map-makers found it equally puzzling. A local story says that the Geo was named Pockets after an old lady who used to collect dulse there, keeping it in a capacious pocket until she later sold it in the streets of Thurso.

.....

POOLS ON RIVER THURSO

T55(T)

Boat Pool:
ND 16 SW 123642 ['bot pul]

Cairn Pool:
ND 16 SW 125633 ['kern pul]

Upper Commissary Pool:
ND 16 NW 109657 [ʌpər 'kɔmɹsəri pul]

Lower Commissary Pool:
ND 16 NW 109662 [loər 'kɔmɹsəri pul]
Apparently the commissar or commissary once lived in Whitefield farmhouse.

Corner Pool:
ND 16 SW 138617 ['kɔrnər pul]

Fence Pools:
ND 16 SW 117645 ['fens puls]
Where a fence meets the River Thurso.

Finlayson's Pool:
ND 16 SW 119643 ['fɪnlesəns pul]

Geise Pool:
ND 16 NW 114662 ['giz pul] (see T35(S))

Geise Stream Pool:
ND 16 NW 112653 ['giz .. pul] (see T35(S))

Upper Horse Pool:
ND 16 SW 140625 ['ʌpər hɔrs pul]

Lower Horse Pool:
ND 16 SW 134627 ['loər hɔrs pul]

Jenny Jock's Pool:
ND 16 SW 142619 [tʃɛni 'tʃɔks pul]
There is no local knowledge of the identity of Jenny Jock.

T55(T)
(cont'd)

John's Pool:
ND 16 NW 113672 ['tʃɔns pul]
Perhaps a favoured fishing pool.

Mill Pool:
ND 16 SW 122642 ['mɫl pul]
The reference is to Buckies Mill (see T15(S)).

Red Brae Pool:
ND 16 SW 141618 [rɛd 'bre pul]

Salmon Pool:
ND 16 NW 114670 ['samən pul]
The River Thurso was once renowned for its salmon - regrettably not so plentiful today.

Stone Pool:
ND 16 SW 116646 ['ston pul]

Sulags Pool:
ND 16 SW 137611 ['sulags pul]
A puzzling name. Perhaps an alternative spelling for G sùileag f. which can refer to the common sallow or willow.

Old Water Mark Pool:
ND 16 SW 136627 [old 'wɔtər mark pul]
Possibly a flood mark at the side of the pool or a wooden marker in the pool to indicate the fluctuating depth of the water.

Well Pool:
ND 16 SW 127631 ['wɛl pul]
The reference is to a spring on the river bank.

.....

PUDDING GEO : ND 17 SE 153703 T56(T)
Local pronunciation: ['pudiŋ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Locals have no explanation of this strange name.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

QUAY GEO : ND 16 NW: 127696 T57(T)
LITTLE QUAY GEO : " : 126695
Local pronunciation: ['ki gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is not to man-made quays but to rocks suitably situated for use as loading places.

.....

RAE BERRY : ND 07 SE: 108714 T58(T)
EAST RAEBERRY : ND 17 SE: 151703
WEST RAEBERRY : ND 16 NW: 148703
RAEBERRY GEO : " : 145703
Local pronunciation: ['rebɔri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
ON rá f. : see R63(S)
Cai berry : see T2(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

RAVEN'S HILL : ND 06 NE: 069692 T59(T)
Local pronunciation: ['revɔns hɯl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory. Probably a recent name in that the Sc dialect word corbie is not used for raven.

.....

RED GEO : ND 07 SW: 047708 T60(T)
Local pronunciation: ['rɛid gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is to red sandstone.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

ROBERTSON'S HOLE : ND 07 SE: 102716 T61(T)
ROBERTSON'S POINT : " : 103717
Local pronunciation: ['rɔbəɹtsəns pɔint]
<Robertson's Hole> not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A Robertson family apparently lived in Holbornhead Farm (see T42(S)) during the 19th century and their name has lingered in the topography.

.....

ROCK WELL : ND 16 NW: 113688 T62(T)
ROCKWELL POINT : " : 113689
Local pronunciation: ['rɔkwɛl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The Rock Well is a spring of fresh water at the foot of the cliff.

.....

ROSSY HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 155699 T63(T)
Local pronunciation: ['rɔsi hʌlək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
ON hross m.: a horse
(In Shetland russ- is found as the first part in place-names of pastures or places formerly used as pastures for horses; eg Russahul, Burrafirth ON *hrossa-hóll: Jakobsen 1932, page 730.)

.....

RUMBLING GEOS : ND 07 SE: 107716 T64(T)
Local pronunciation: ['rʌmblɪŋ gjos]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There are blow holes in the cliff at the head of this geo, and the name refers to the noise of the sea as it gushes into the subterranean caves.

.....

SAMSON'S FOOTMARK : ND 16 NW: 114688 T65(T)

SAMSON'S COACH HOUSE: " : 113689

Local pronunciation : [samsəns 'futmarks, ... 'kotʃhaus]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Recent names describing rocks on the west side of Thurso sands. Perhaps the reference is to size.

.....

SANDY GEO : ND 07 SW: 143713 T66(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sandi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SCARDACH, THE : ND 16 SW: 142632 T67(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a deep gully, dry for most of the year, with loose stones on the sloping sides. A scree slope is normally G sgàirneach m. but Dwelly lists a variant with medial <d> from Gairloch, which probably also accounts for this name:
G sgàirdeach, subsequently anglicised by the addition of the definite article.

.....

SCARDEN GEO : ND 07 SW: 049708 T68(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skardən gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably a variant of T67(T).

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SCARF ROCK : ND 07 SE: 109713 T69(T)
SCARF GEOS : " : 108714
SCARF CRAIG : " : 079711
Local pronunciation: ['skarf rɔk, ... gjos, ... krag]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai scarf : see R145(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Sc craig : see R46(S)
The cormorants still frequent this area.

.....

SCOTTIE GEO : ND 07 SE: 083712 T70(T)
Local pronunciation: ['skɔti gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There is a cave at the inner end of this geo, which might suggest
ON skúti m.: a cave formed by jutting rocks
On the other hand, the surrounding names are predominantly English and recent, and the reference may simply be to a Scotsman, without the apostrophe <'s > which one would expect.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SHOTTIE GEO : ND 07 SE: 077713 T71(T)
Local pronunciation: ['ʃɔti gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference may be to the violent sound of the sea as the waves break in the geo.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SINCLAIR'S GEO : ND 16 NW: 108708 T72(T)
Local pronunciation: ['seŋklɔrs gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sinclair is a very common name in Caithness, and there is no local knowledge of this particular Sinclair.

.....

SKATE BACK : ND 07 SE: 071711 T73(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sketbak]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a flat, rounded rock and the comparison is with the skate (ON skata f.), a fish which has a similarly flat shape. The final element is probably Eng back, used figuratively but it could be Cai back (see T2(T)).

.....

SLOPING HEAD : ND 07 SE: 073711 T74(T)

Local pronunciation: ['slopən hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory

.....

SPEAR HEAD : ND 07 SE: 097716 T75(T)

THE SPEARS : " : 063712

Local pronunciation: ['spir hɛid]

[ðə 'spirs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Spear Head: a long, tapering headland

The Spears: tapering rocks jutting out into the sea

.....

STEINIE GEO : ND 16 NW: 131697 T76(T)

Local pronunciation: ['staini go]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc steinie: stoney

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

TANG, POINTS OF : ND 16 NW: 138700 T77(T)
EAST LUG OF TANG : " : 139702
WEST LUG OF TANG : " : 135699
THE TANG : ND 07 SW: 045712
Local pronunciation: ['pɔints ə taŋ]
['lʌg ə taŋ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON tangi m.: a spit of land, a point projecting into the sea or river; borrowed into G as teanga f. and appearing in Caithness place-names in the form tang.
Sc lug : a projecting part; of Scandinavian origin, in an original sense of an appendage.

.....

THE ARK : ND 16 NW: 108708 T78(T)
Local pronunciation: [ði 'ark]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc ark : an arch
The sea has bored a hole through the cliff at this point, leaving an arch-shaped column of rock still attached to the land.

.....

THE BINKS : ND 07 SE: 099715 T79(T)
LITTLE BINKS : " : 100715
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'biŋks, 'lɪl biŋks]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc binks : shelves of rock
(Sc bink is a late form of benk: a bench)
Known to fishermen as The Maas' Binks: the shelves where seagulls sit.
Sc maa (also maw, mawe)
: a mew, seagull especially the common gull
Also, less commonly, the black-headed gull and the herring gull.

.....

THE BRIGS : ND 07 SE: 106716 T80(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'brɪgs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc brig : a bridge

The name appears to refer to ground which bridges over caves.

.....

THE CROOK : ND 16 NW: 120688 T81(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kruk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc crook (a late variant of cruke)

: a curve or bend

The name applies to part of the shore visible at low water.

.....

THE DOOCOT : ND 17 SE: 152703 T82(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'dukət]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc doocot : dovecote

The name does not apply to a man-made structure, but refers to the fact that rock pigeons are plentiful here.

.....

THE DULLS : ND 07 SE: 059711 T83(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Obscure

The reference is to some small isolated rocks.

.....

THE HOLMS : ND 16 NW: 142701 T84(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON hólmr m.: a holm, islet, especially in a bay, creek, lake or river

The name describes points of rock which look like small islands at low-tide.

The name is frequently anglicised in Cai place-names by the addition of the definite article and Eng pl <-s>.

.....

THE KILN : ND 07 SE: 069711 T85(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Eng kiln : found in place-names describing a chasm in the rocks communicating with the sea by a tunnel. So-called from its resemblance to the construction of a kiln.

.....

THE KIST : ND 17 SE: 153704 T86(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kɪst]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kist : a chest, coffin

In this instance the reference is to a coffin-shaped rock.

.....

THE LOOPS : ND 07 SE: 108715 T87(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'lups]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Eng loop describing the undulating indentation of the coastline.

.....

THE MUIREACHIES : ND 16 NW: 145702 T88(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə ˈmiurəxis]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a flat stretch of rock by the shore which suggests that it is an anglicisation of

G maorach (gen maoraich) m.

: 1) shell-fish in general

2) fishing-bait such as limpets

Alternatively, it could be derived from

G Murchadh (gen Murchaidh)

: Murdoch

.....

THE POWS : ND 16 NW: 144702 T89(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə ˈpaus]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc pow has two possible interpretations.

1) Sc pow (also powe)

: Sc form of obsolete Eng poll - the head of a human being or animal, figuratively applied to the corresponding part in a variety of inanimate objects; the tip of a mountain top, rock or the like.

2) Sc pow : a pool of water, generally a shallow or marshy one

In Caithness place-names when Sc pow appears with the definite article and Eng plural <-s> it is normally being used in the first sense to describe rocks which only appear above the surface of the sea at low tide.

.....

THE SHOPS : ND 07 SE: 060709 T90(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə ˈʃɔps]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a row of small caves near sea-level which are said to resemble a row of shops, as seen from the sea.

.....

THE SLATES : ND 16 NW: 125693 T91(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'slets]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON sléttr : see R83(T)

.....

THE TURRETS : ND 07 SE: 092714 T92(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'tʌrəts]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Eng turret describing small tower-shaped rocks

.....

TORRAN DUBH : ND 06 NE: 056698 T93(T)

Local pronunciation: [tɔrən 'du]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G tòrr m. : see R2(T) + dimin -an

G dubh : see R23(S)

The name applies to a burnt mound.

.....

USHAT HEAD : ND 07 SW: 032712 T94(T)

USHAT GEO : " : 032710

Local pronunciation: ['uʃɐt hɛid, ... gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

Sc ushet (also ushat, oshit)

: dingy grey in colour

This description is normally applied to wool. The word appears in the modern Norwegian dialect as hys(k)jutt: flecked with dull colours, grey-mottled.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

WOLF BURN : ND 16 NW: 103682 T95(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wulf bʌrn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There may have been a legend of wolves in the area, but it has not survived.

This burn becomes the Burnside Burn in its lower reaches. Presumably this name variation is due to the fact that there was once a croft known as Burnside because of its proximity to Wolf Burn, and although the croft has now vanished its name has been retained for that part of the Wolf Burn beside which it was situated. (cf Wolf Gill C130(T).)

Burnside is listed as a settlement in the 1841 Census.

.....

CHAPTER SIX: OLRIG PARISH

Introduction	p.209
Settlement Names	pp.210 - 230
Topographical Names	pp.231 - 239

Olrig is the smallest of the six parishes. It lies to the south of Dunnet Bay and is mostly improved land since few parts of the parish exceed 100 metres in height. The underlying rock is old red sandstone.

The most notable feature of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century economy was the quarrying of sandstone 'flags' for paving, building, roofing and field boundary markers. The quarrying industry caused a great expansion in the settlement of Castletown which now has a population of 956, as recorded in the 1981 Census. Most of the stone was shipped from Castletown, Thurso and Scrabster.

The remainder of the parish is similar to Thurso in that it has a dispersed farm-settlement pattern.

There is no local memory of Gaelic-speaking inhabitants in either Olrig Parish or neighbouring Dunnet Parish, which lies to the east. Olrig Parish is bounded on the south by Bower Parish.

SETTLEMENT NAMES

BIGGINS : ND 16 NE: 166683 OL1(S)

Local pronunciation: ['bigiŋz]

Early refs: Biggins 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

Sc biggin : a building

(<ON bygging f.

: habitation)

When the word appears as a place-name element it is most frequently plural, describing a cluster of buildings; in this case a farm house and associated buildings with a smithy next door. It was quite common at one time in Orkney for a number of farmhouses to be grouped very closely together - perhaps for mutual assistance. Hence the term Biggings as a name applied to a group of houses. (Old Lore Miscellany, Vol VII)

.....

BIRKLE HILL : ND 26 NW: 204657 OL2(S)

BIRKLEHILL QUARRY : ND 16 NE: 199656

Local pronunciation: ['birkəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON birki, n. collective = björk f.

: birch, in compounds

The generic may be

ON hóll m.: a hill, hillock,

but lack of early references makes it impossible to be certain. The English word hill would have been added, once understanding of the original Norse compound faded.

.....

BORGIE MAINS : ND 16 SE: 198649 OL3(S)

BORGIE HOUSE : ND 16 NE: 193672

Local pronunciation: ['bɔrgi]

Early refs: Borgye 1622 Sinclair (Mey)
Borgie 1632 "
Borgy 1831 Thomson
Borguie 1841 Census

Derivation:

ON borg f.: a small dome-shaped hill + dimin ie

The reference is probably to a broch although it is not obvious today. (cf R32(S))

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

BOUGHTS : ND 16 NE: 157678 OL4(S)

Local pronunciation: ['bɔxts]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc bowcht, bought, bucht

: a sheep-fold, a milking fold for ewes

(<Flem bocht, bucht

: enclosure for swine, sheep etc)

The name now refers to a small croft.

.....

BRAE-EDGE : ND 16 NE: 177675 OL5(S)

Local pronunciation: [bre 'ɛdʒ]

Early refs: Brea-Edge 1841 Census

Derivation:

The name describes a small farm on the slopes of the Hill of Clindrag, and some older people refer to the farm as Clindrag ['klʌndræg]. (see OL4(T)

.....

BROYNACH : ND 16 NE: 153673 OL6(S)

GILL OF BROYNACH : " : 154669

DAM OF BROYNACH : ND 16 NW: 148669

Local pronunciation: ['brɔinæx]

Early refs:

Broynach	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Bronoch	1612	Sinclair (Murkle)
Bronoch	1616	RMS
Broynoche	1658	"
Broynoc	1662	Blaeu
Broynach	1693	Retours
Broynack	1753	Sutherland (Forse)
Crofts of Broynach	1877	6" OS

Derivation: Of Gaelic origin. Possibly

G braon (gen braoin) m.

: dew, rain + adjectival -ach

In this instance G braon is being used to indicate the wetness of the soil. The Dam of Broynach appears to have been a boggy area which retained water in wet weather, rather than a man-made structure.

The word does occur as a place-name element elsewhere, in Loch a' Bhraoin (Parish of Loch Broom, Ross and Cromarty).

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

BURNSIDE : ND 16 NE: 158687 OL7(S)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn'said]

Early refs:

Burnsyde	1635	RMS
Burnesyde	1653	Retours
Burnsyde	1696	"
Burnesyde	1662	Blaeu
Burnside	1750	Roy
Murkle Burn Side	1841	Census

Derivation:

Burnside is a very popular place-name throughout Scotland, indicating the croft or dwelling beside the burn; in this case the Murkle Burn. (see OL26(S))

.....

CASTLEHILL : ND 16 NE: 197684 OL8(S)
CASTLEHILL HOUSE : " : 197685
CASTLETOWN : " : 195680
CASTLETOWN QUARRY : " : 193684
UPPER CASTLETOWN QUARRY: " : 187683
Local pronunciation : [kasɬ'hʌl]
Early refs: Casteltoun 1586 Sinclair (Mey)
Castlehill 1722 Sinclair (Freswick)
New Town of Castle Hill 1807 Arrowsmith
Derivation:

A puzzling factor in the interpretation of this name is that there is no trace today of the eponymous castle.

There is a broch at Castlehill (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 87), but it seems an improbable source for the name. An alternative suggestion is that the Shelly Hillock, an ancient kitchen midden, could have been mistaken for the ruins of an old stronghold. (Omand 1972, page 225)

Castletown grew into a large village in the early 19th century due to the quarrying of Caithness flagstone in the area at the institution of Sheriff James Traill, proprietor of Castlehill House. (Omand & Porter 1981, page 4)

The first shipment of stone left the newly built Castlehill Harbour in 1825, but Arrowsmith's reference to the New Town of Castle Hill in 1807 shows that the process of expansion began some years earlier.

.....

COOMB'S KIRK, ST. : ND 26 NW: 208683 OL9(S)
Local pronunciation: ['kums kʌrk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:

The name refers to the site where a church dedicated to St. Columba is believed to have stood, on the boundary between the parishes of Olrig and Dunnet. Tradition says that the building and adjoining manse were one night overwhelmed by sand during a terrible gale. (Mackinlay 1904, page 135)

.....

COULAG : ND 16 NE: 199669 OL10(S)

Local pronunciation: ['kulɐg]

Early refs: Coulag 1841 Census

Derivation:

The name applies to a derelict croft and it is difficult to suggest a derivation without further early references. Possibly

G cùil f. : a corner nook +dimin -ag

.....

DRAGS MOSS : ND 16 NE: 194658 OL11(S)

DRAGSMOSS QUARRY : " : 197655

Local pronunciation: ['drags mɔs]

Early refs: Dregs Moss 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

The reference is probably to the "dragging" of peat by cart, or some other method, from the soft moor where it was cut, to a firmer area where it could be stacked prior to being transported home.

(Sc dreg = Eng drag)

One Sc usage of drag is defined as follows:

"A drag" is a small load which is emptied on some hard place where the horse can move freely and then the carter goes back for a second drag, and fills the load with the one taken first.

.....

DURRAN : ND 16 SE: 192637 OL12(S)

DURRAN MAINS : " : 198628

HA' OF DURRAN : " : 197634

WESTER DURRAN : " : 193641

EASTER DURRAN : " : 194644

BURN OF DURRAN : ND 26 NW: 208657

Local pronunciation: ['dʌrɐn]

OL12(S) (cont'd)

Early refs:	Deren	1559	OPS, Sutherland Charters
	Derane	1561-6	OPS, Book of Assumptions
	Diren	1564	RMS
	Diran	1581	"
	Dirane	1601	"
	Dirain	1616	"
	Dorain	1619	"
	Diren	1605	Retours
	Diren	1629	Sinclair (Mey)
	Deeren	1662	Blaeu
	Loch Deeren	"	"
	Durren	1665	Reay Papers
	Loch of Dyron	1726	Macfarlane
	Duren	1789	Ainslie
	Duran	1793-4	O S A
	Loch Duran	"	"
	Durin	1807	Arrowsmith
	Duran	1832	Thomson
	Loch Duran	"	"

Derivation:

In spite of the numerous early forms it is very difficult to suggest a derivation for this name with any degree of certainty.

Early spellings and present pronunciation suggest a front vowel in the initial syllable which, in Gaelic, would cause palatalisation of the initial consonant [d] > [dʒ]. Since this palatalisation is not present it would seem reasonable to argue that the language of origin is Norse and that the name may be derived from:

ON dý n. : a bog

ON rein f.: a strip of land

The Loch of Durran has now been drained, but its earlier presence would have justified the description bog.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc ha' : hall

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

FRYSTER : ND 16 SE: 184638 OL13(S)

Local pronunciation: ['fristər]

Early refs: Fryster 1798 Book of Valuation
Frister 1877 6" OS

Derivation:

Very doubtful. It is possible that the specific represents the name of the Norse god Frey but lack of early references makes this simultaneously difficult to prove and improbable.

ON setr n. : see R33(S)

(Olsen mentions a similar name in Norway, Frøset: *Frøssetr or *Frøyjusetr, from the name of the god Frey or the goddess Freyja.)

(Olsen 1928, page 220)

More probable, although equally difficult to prove without earlier forms, is that the specific represents

ON Friði m.: a personal name (Lind 1915, column 287)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 87)

.....

GARTH : ND 26 NW: 203674 OL14(S)

MIDDLE GARTH : " : 204674

BURN OF GARTH : " : 203676

Local pronunciation: [garθ]

Early refs: Garth 1750 Roy
Garth 1841 Census
Lower Garth " "

Derivation:

ON garðr m.: a yard, enclosure

(ON garðr is uncommon in the northern parishes of Caithness, by comparison with Orkney and Shetland where it is of frequent occurrence. Presumably it had lost its popularity as a toponymic by the time Caithness was settled by the Norse.)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

GOTHIGILL : ND 16 NE: 173671 OL15(S)

Local pronunciation: [gʌθi'gɹl]

Early refs: Gothegil 1876 6" OS

OL15(S) (cont'd)

Derivation:

The initial element is doubtful without further early references.

Possibly of the same origin as

Norw gota : a fissure; a narrow rent in the landscape

(<ON gata f.: a way, path)

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

HARLAND GARDENS : ND 16 NE: 197676 OL16(S)

Local pronunciation: ['harlən]

Early refs:

Harland	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Harland	1565	"
Harland	1587	RMS
Harland	1661	"
Harland	1644	Retours
Burn of Harland	1726	Macfarlane

Derivation:

Sc hard : hard, referring to difficulty of cultivation

Sc land : see T49(S)

It is impossible to be certain that this is an OSc rather than an ON name because the elements are practically identical in both languages.

ON harðr : hard (also with reference to difficulty of cultivation)

ON land : land

The final consonant of the specific would have been subject to elision in the case of either har(d) or har(ð).

(OSc has hard as an adjective from c1400)

The modern name Harland Gardens might be thought to place doubt on an interpretation which suggests that the area is difficult to cultivate, but modern drainage schemes and improved agricultural techniques have greatly altered the potential of the land.

Gardens is, of course, a recent addition to the original name Harland.

.....

HAYFIELD : ND 16 NE: 194665 OL17(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛifild]

Early refs: Hayfield 1841 Census

Derivation: A recent self-explanatory name.

.....

HILLICLAY : ND 16 SE: 165642 OL18(S)

HILLICLAY MAINS : " : 172643

Local pronunciation: ['hɩlikle]

Early refs: Hollaclyth 1622 Sinclair (Mey)

Holloclayt 1632 "

Moss of Halyclay 1726 Macfarlane

Hilly-Clay 1841 Census

Derivation:

It is impossible to suggest a derivation for this name because there is so much variation in the early spellings, but the name is almost certainly of Norse origin. The modern spelling and pronunciation of the first syllable of the name has probably been influenced by English hill, and the final syllable by English clay.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

HOY : ND 26 SW: 212639 OL19(S)

Local pronunciation: [hɔi]

Early refs: Hoy 1662 Blaeu

Hoy 1750 Roy

Hoy 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Given the inland situation it is most unlikely that this name should have the same derivation as Hoy in Orkney (ON há-ey: high island. Marwick 1952, page 178).

It is perhaps possible that the name was imported from Orkney but the fact that it occurs more than once in inland Caithness suggests that it probably has a different source, and that it describes some recurrent feature of the landscape or agriculture.

Olsen refers to Høiland (South-Western Norway) which contains ON hey n.: hay (Olsen 1928, page 237). This would seem a probable source of the Caithness name, but for the fact that ON hey rarely occurs as a simplex name. (Olaf Rygh 1898, page 59) Rygh also mentions ON haugi (dat. form of haugr: a mound) as a possible source of Høie (Olaf Rygh 1898, page 59), and this could also be taken into consideration for the Caithness Hoy names. OL19(S) (cont'd)

.....

KIRKFIELD : ND 16 NE: 186658 OL20(S)

Local pronunciation: ['kɛrkfild]

Early refs: Kirkfield 1661 RMS
Kirkfield 1667 "
Kirkfield 1671 Retours

Derivation:

Sc kirk : see T27(S)

The nearest church appears to be about three-quarters of a mile to the north of this field, but the produce of certain fields was allocated to the minister of the local church and this was probably such a field.

.....

LOCHQUOY : ND 16 SE: 198643 OL21(S)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'kwɛi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

The loch referred to is the Loch of Durran, now drained.
(For Durran see OL12(S).)

.....

LOCHSIDE : ND 26 NW: 212659 OL22(S)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx'said]

Early refs: the Louchsyde 1661 RMS
Lochside 1752 Sinclair (Ulbster)
Lochside 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation: Self-explanatory. OL22(S) (cont'd)

The presence of the definite article in the 1661 reference indicates that the name was originally more general in its application, referring to an area rather than a specific croft. Again the reference is to the Loch of Durran, now drained (see OL21(S)), but the present occupant of Lochside points out that the depression in the ground still fills up with water in wet winters and becomes a loch again.

.....

MAYFIELD FARM: ND 16 NE: 157667 OL23(S)

For Mayfield : see T51(S)

.....

METHOW HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 163699 OL24(S)

THE METHOW : ND 17 SE: 163702

METHOW CLETT : " : 162701

Local pronunciation: ['mɛʤo 'hʌlək]

Early refs: Mythil 1662 Blaeu

Derivation:

Methow Hillock is "a large grassy mound which has been under cultivation and ploughed down to some extent. Beyond being artificial, its character is indefinite." (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 88)

ON miðr : middle

ON haugr m.: see T44(S)

Mythil (1662) is probably an abbreviation of Methow Hill.

The Methow : a flat stretch of rock on the coast near Methow Hillock

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

MILL FARM : ND 16 SE: 192634 OL25(S)

MILLHILL BRIDGE : ND 26 NW: 201673

Local pronunciation: ['mɪl 'hɪl]

Early refs: Milnhill 1664 RMS

Millhill 1750 Roy

Millhill 1876 6" OS

Derivation: OL25(S) (cont'd)

Millhill now refers to a slight hill beside the burn which fed the mill at Castletown. There was once a farm known as Millhill.

.....

MURKLE, MAINS OF : ND 16 NE: 166696 OL26(S)
MURKLE BAY : " : 169695
MURKLE BURN : " : 157673
EAST MURKLE : " : 174687
WEST MURKLE : " : 152696 (TP)
BRIDGE OF MURKLE : " : 153682 (TP)

Local pronunciation: ['mʌrkɹl]

Early refs:

Myrkhol	c1200	Orkneyinga Saga
Estir Murkill	1549	RSS
Murkill	1566	"
Murkyll	1566	Sinclair (Mey)
Barland of Murkgill	1573	"
Murkill	1527	RMS
Eistsyde de Murkill	1579	"
Murkhill	1593	"
Barland de Murkill	1593	"
Brodlandis de Murkill	1606	"
Mierkill	1609	"
Murkall	1616	"
Murkill-be-West	1658	"
Murkill-be-East	1658	"
Murkle	1661	"
Murkill	1574	Retours
Murckle	1671	"
Braidland de Murkle	1671	"
Murcle	1750	Roy
Murkle	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON myrkr : dark

ON hóll m.: see OL2(S)

The proliferation of references to this name can be partly explained by the fact that the land in the area belonged to the Sinclair Earls

and since it was good agricultural land it was used to provide supplies for their table. OL26(S) (cont'd)

Barland
Brodlandis } < Bordland: see R31(S)
Braidland

(The Sinclair (Mey) 1573 reference which suggests that the final element is ON gil (see R11(T)) is an isolated variant.)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

OLRIG, MAINS OF : ND 16 NE: 183666 OL27(S)
OLRIG HOUSE : " : 186663
HILL OF OLRIG : " : 175656
OLRIG CEMETERY : " : 187672
NETHERSIDE : " : 194663

Local pronunciation: ['ɔlrig]

Early refs:

Olrich	1223-45	OPS, Sutherland Charters
Olric	1275	OIM, Bagimond's Roll
Olryk	1435	OIM
Olryk	1595	Mercator
Olrik	1595	RMS
Olrick	1636	"
Nethersyde of Olrick	1661	"
Oversyde of Olrick	1661	"
Olrig	1631	Sinclair (Mey)
Nethersydolrik	1644	Retours
Olrick	1671	"
Olrigg	1726	Macfarlane
Olerick	1726	"
Olirigg	1726	"
Hill of Olirgge	1726	"
Olerick Kirk	1750	Roy
Olrick	1807	Arrowsmith
Olrig	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

A difficult name in spite of the unusually early references.

Possibly ON ǫlr m.: the alder tree, ON rfkr: rich, in the sense

that alder trees were plentiful in this area. OL27(S) (cont'd)

The early forms seem to suggest ON rîkr rather than ON hryggr m.: a ridge. Final <g> first appears in 1631 and possibly arises as a result of influence from the common Sc term rig (also rigg, ryg, rige): a strip of ploughed land. The final consonant is invariably [g] in modern pronunciation.

The name Oversyde of Olrick (1661) is not in use today, but Netherside survives as a name in its own right, being no longer described as Netherside of Olrig.

Sc nether: now used mainly in place-names of the lower-sited of two roads, farms etc.

Nether is a common place-name element throughout NE Scotland but its opposite now tends to be Upper rather than Over which is possibly an anglicisation of ON yfir: above, over.

Nether also has a Norse equivalent, ON neðar (comparative of niðr: down).

It is possible, therefore, that Netherside and Overside were originally Norse names - the final element being ON sætr : see R33(S) - and that they have been subsequently anglicised.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

QUARRYSIDE : ND 16 NE: 182682 OL28(S)

QUARRYSIDE COTTAGE : " : 177683

Local pronunciation: [kwɔri 'said]

Early refs: Quarrybiggins 1750 Roy

Quarryside 1841 Census

Derivation:

A comparatively recent self-explanatory English name.

The Quarry in question appears to be the Upper Castletown Quarry.

For Roy's Quarrybiggins cf OL1(S).

.....

REDLANDS, WELL OF : ND 16 NE: 165688 OL29(S)

Local pronunciation: ['rɛdlənz]

Early refs: Redbyres 1750 Roy

Redbyres 1807 Arrowsmith

Redlands 1845 2nd Stat Acc

Derivation: OL29(S) (cont'd)

Redbyres and Redlands appear to refer to the same place, a farm in Olrig parish which has disappeared and only the well now bears the name. In names of this type the reference is usually to reddish soil but the soil in this area does not appear to be particularly red, which is puzzling.

Sc land + pl -s : see T49(S)

Sc byre : cowshed (Northern emE byre, bire (1521))

.....

SIBMISTER : ND 16 NE: 165662 OL30(S)

CAIRN OF SIBMISTER : " : 166663

Local pronunciation: ['sɪbmɪstər]

Early refs:

Subambustar	1564	RMS
Subambuster	1581	"
Subamster	"	"
Subamister	1587	"
Subamuster	1661	"
Subaminster	"	"
Subamister	1604	Retours
Subanister	1605	"
Sibbanister	1671	"
Sebbuster	1662	Blaeu
Subamister	1632	Sinclair (Mey)
Sibmister	1753	Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:

The specific is possibly

ON sunnan : southerly, applied to direction without motion (with [n]>[m]>[b] under the influence of the initial [b] of <bólstaðr>.)

(cf Symbister, Whalsay, Shetland < ON sunn-bólstaðr: south farm/homestead. (Jakobsen 1897, page 111))

Sibmister is situated inland on a north-facing slope and the above description is very appropriate.

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

.....

STANGERGILL : ND 16 NE: 196676 OL31(S)
STANGERGILL BURN : " : 197678
STANGERGILL BRIDGE : " : 197677
Local pronunciation: ['stanərgʌl]
Early refs: Stangergill 1573 Sinclair (Mey)
Stangirgill 1616 "
Stanirgill 1644 "
Stangergill 1587 RMS
Stannergill 1636 "
Strangergill 1667 "
Stangirgill 1604 Retours
Staingergill 1644 "
Burn of Stangregill 1726 Macfarlane
Stangrigill 1750 Roy
Stangergel 1793 OSA

Derivation:
The specific is possibly
ON steinn m.: see R20(S),
in its nominative plural form steinar.
The <g> which is so persistent in the orthographic representation of the specific is absent from modern pronunciation, which is always ['stanər ..].
The presence of the <g> in the orthography can, perhaps, be explained by drawing attention to the Gaelic word stang m.: a ditch, trench which might be thought an appropriate description of a shallow gill. (Cai gill: see R11(T)) With this word in mind and with a following <g> in the generic, duplication of the <g> would be a very probable occurrence.
Alternatively, it is possible that this is a name which, in its original form, had more than two components. As Magne Oftedal has pointed out it is difficult to trace the elements in names which have more than two components "in view of the strong reduction in phonological bulk which long Norse names have undergone" in areas where Gaelic has been spoken. (Oftedal 1980, page 183)
It is possible that Stangergill contains:
ON steinn m.: see R20(S)
ON garðr m. : see OL14(S)
ON gil n. : see R11(T)

.....

STONEGUN : ND 16 NE: 158656 OL32(S)
STONEGUN QUARRIES : " : 158658
Local pronunciation: ['stongʌn kwɔris]
Early refs: Stone Gunn 1841 Census
Stonegunn Quarries 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This is probably an example of an "inversion-compound" (see C39(S)) although lack of early references makes it difficult to be certain of the precise origin of the name. Possibly

ON steinn m.: see R20(S)
(anglicised to stone)

ON Gunni : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 411)

Scots origin is perhaps more probable in view of the lack of early references. Gunn is an extremely common surname in Caithness. (Black 1946, page 332)

.....

TAIN : ND 26 NW: 224661 OL33(S)
TAIN OF OLRIG : " : 227663
TOFTS OF TAIN : " : 244653
MOSS OF TAIN : " : 236655
LINKS OF OLD TAIN : " : 213683
Local pronunciation: [ten]
Early refs: Tayne 1538 RMS
Tane 1565 Sinclair (Mey)
Tane 1612 RMS
Teyn 1661 "
Taine 1644 Retours
Tayne 1671 "
Tain 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

The place-name Tain is scattered in various compound forms throughout most of the east side of Olrig Parish but, unfortunately, its origin is obscure.

The language of origin is probably Norse, or possibly even pre-Norse.

Tofts : ON topt, toft m. OL33(S) (cont'd)

: a green, grassy place; a homestead; an enclosure

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc links: The sandy undulating ground, generally covered with turf, bent grass, gorse etc. which is frequently found near the sea-shore on a flat part of the coast, and is often common ground belonging to the nearest town. Very common as a place-name.

.....

TANSFIELD : ND 16 NE: 197673 OL34(S)

Local pronunciation: ['tansfild]

Early refs:

Tansfield	1636	RMS
Teynfield	1661	"
Tainfield	1645	Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:

The forms recorded in 1645 and 1661 indicate that this name belongs to the Tain group of names (see OL33(S)).

.....

THURDISTOFT : ND 26 NW: 212676 OL35(S)

Local pronunciation: ['θʌrdɪstəft]

Early refs:

Thurdeistoft	1573	Sinclair (Mey)
Thurdistoft	1606	RMS
Thurdestaff	1604	Retours
Thurdestoft	1605	"
Thurdistoft	1644	"
Thurdiscroft	1671	"
Thurdistoft	1750	Roy

Derivation:

The specific is probably the ON personal name Þúríðr, -dr m. which has many variant spellings. (Lind 1915, column 1226)

Cai toft : see OL33(S)

There is an isolated example with Sc croft (see R11(S)) as the generic, but this is probably due to scribal misunderstanding. Croft and toft would be equally appropriate as descriptions of a small farm.

.....

TOWS : ND 16 SE: 187633 OL36(S)

Local pronunciation: [taus]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc too (also tu, tuo) + Eng pl -s

: a mound, hillock, small piece of rising ground. Frequent in place-names.

.....

TROTHANMAS HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 193663 OL37(S)

ST. TROTHAN'S CHURCH: " : 186671

Local pronunciation : [sn̩ 'trɔθəns]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Rev. D. Beaton notes that Trothan is a variant of Drostán, who was head of the monastic institution at Deer in Buchan in the 6th century. (Beaton 1909, page 82) There are several dedications to Drostán throughout Caithness.

.....

WAITSIDE : ND 26 NW: 203672 OL38(S)

Local pronunciation: ['wet'said]

Early refs: Waitside 1750 Roy

Waitside 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

wait : a Caithness dialect word for a mill-race, the water-course from a mill. (Norw. dial veit(a), ON veit(a): a ditch.)

Waitside refers to the ruins of a homestead beside a mill-lade.

.....

WESTER : ND 26 SW: 214646 OL39(S)

Local pronunciation: ['wɛstər]

Early refs:

Wester	1606	RMS
Wester	1661	"
Wester	1644	Retours
Westre	1662	Blaeu
Wester	1750	Roy
Wester	1831	Thomson

Derivation:

There is a high degree of uniformity in the early spellings of this name. There are two possible sources of the specific:

1) ON vestr : west

The reference being to the position of the farm in relation to other farms within the community, or to some significant feature of the landscape.

2) ON vatn n.: water, fresh water (the gen sing of vatn in old vellums is invariably spelt vatz or vaz, vazt)

The reference in this instance could be to Loch Durran (see OL12(S)).

ON setr n. : see R33(S)

There are three examples of Wester (see D36(S) and W113(S)) and my inclination is to favour ON vestr as the specific in all three cases, but it is incontrovertible that the names occur beside lochs, although in the Olrig case the Loch of Durran has now been drained.

.....

WHITEFIELD : ND 16 NE: 198664 OL40(S)

HILL OF WHITEFIELD : " : 198661

Local pronunciation: ['kwaitfild]

Early refs:

Quhytfield	1636	RMS
Whytfield	1661	"
Whitefield	1750	Roy

Derivation: Self-explanatory. (cf T83(S))

The present-day local pronunciation reflects the 1636 spelling, Quhyt.

.....

WINDY HA' : ND 16 NE: 184658 OL41(S)

Local pronunciation: [wɪndi 'ha]

Early refs: Windy Hall 1841 Census

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

Sc ha' : see OL12(S)

For the legend of the "Piper of the Windy Ha'" see Calder 1887, page 57.

.....

WOODRIDGE : ND 26 NW: 227661 OL42(S)

Local pronunciation: ['wud'rɪdʒ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: A recent self-explanatory name.

.....

TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES

BERRY HILL : ND 26 NW: 238656 OL1(T)
Local pronunciation: ['bɛri hɹl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

BISHOP'S HILL : ND 16 SE: 193632 OL2(T)
Local pronunciation: ['bɹʃɔps hɹl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Bishop's Hill is close to a chapel site in Durran which was part of the bishopric lands granted in heritage to John, Earl of Sutherland and his wife by Robert, bishop of Caithness, in 1559. (Origines Parochiales Scotiae 1855, page 788)

.....

BLACK CLETT : ND 16 NE: 171692 OL3(T)
Local pronunciation: [blak 'klɛt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

CLINDRAG, HILL OF : ND 16 NE: 172675 OL4(T)
CLINDRAG TULLOCH : " : 174674
Local pronunciation: ['klɹndræg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
clindrag : origin obscure
Cai tulloch: see R5(S)

.....

CODLIN CRAIG : ND 16 NE: 197686 OL5(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kɔdlɹn kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc codlin : a codling

Sc craig : see R46(S)

The name describes one of the numerous shore-line fishing rocks.

.....

COOPER'S HILL : ND 26 NW: 218653 OL6(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kupərs 'hɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There is a "rubbing stone" on the top of this hill which indicates that it was probably frequented by horses or cattle, and may have been the site of an early market:

Sc cooper, couper

: 1) a dealer, especially in horses or cattle.

2) Alternatively the reference could simply be to the surname Cooper (Coupar, Couper, Cowper) which occurs in one form or other in nearly every county of Scotland.

The name was in most cases derived from Cupar in Fife, but the occupation of "cooper" has also contributed to its origin. (Black 1946, page 169)

.....

CRAIG WARE : ND 17 SE: 166703 OL7(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kreg 'wer]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

Sc ware : see R92(T)

Note the unusual word-order in this place-name, probably due to Gaelic influence.

.....

DROPPING BRAE : ND 16 NE: 169692 OL8(T)

Local pronunciation: ['drapən 'bre]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A local informant has suggested that the name arises from the small stalactites which have formed under an overhanging edge as the result of a steady drip of lime-filled water.

Sc brae : see R8(S)

.....

EARNEYHILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 157681 OL9(T)

Local pronunciation: [ɛrni 'hʌlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc earn : the white-tailed or sea eagle (OSc erne: eagle, from 1350) + dimin -ie

.....

FAIRY HILLOCK : ND 16 SE: 197633 OL10(T)

Local pronunciation: [feri 'hʌlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

GALLOW HILL : ND 16 NE: 177657 OL11(T)

Local pronunciation: ['galə 'hʌl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a natural mound on the Hill of Olrig (see OL27(S)). There is a local tale of a man having been hanged on this spot, but no proof is available. Very few people remember this name today.

.....

GHOUL LAW : ND 16 NE: 174652 OL12(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gaul lɔ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A hillock which must have had some association with supernatural events, although memory of this has faded.

Sc law : a rounded hill generally of a somewhat conical shape and frequently isolated or conspicuous among others. The word is particularly common as a place-name in the east mid and southern Sc areas.

Ghoul Law appears to contain the only example of law in Caithness and was probably named by an incomer from further south.

.....

GREEN KNOWS : ND 16 NE: 168697 OL13(T)

Local pronunciation: ['grin 'nauz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes the highest part of a coastal spur (see OL30(T)) where there is normally a deposit of green, slimy seaweed.

Sc know : see R157(T)

.....

HATTEL, CRAIG OF : ND 16 NE: 189692 OL14(T)

HATTEL, CAIRN OF : " : 191689

Local pronunciation: [kreg ə 'hatəl]

[kern ə 'hatəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

The reference is to an isolated rock in the sea.

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

The cairn is situated on the shore.

Sc Hettle (also Hattel, Hattle (Cai))

: a name given by fishermen to the rough stony sea-bottom some distance from the shore beyond the area covered with seaweed

.....

HOUSE HEAD : ND 16 NE: 199685 OL15(T)

Local pronunciation: ['haus 'hɛd]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent name describing the headland beside Castlehill House (see OL8(S)).

.....

LYTHE BERRY : ND 16 NE: 177693 OL16(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lai bɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lythe : see T48(T)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

NEW MOSSY QUARRY : ND 16 NE: 193677 OL17(T)

OLD MOSSY QUARRY : " : 188678

Local pronunciation: ['mɔsi 'kwɔri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Self-explanatory. Both quarries are now disused.

.....

QUAY GEO : ND 17 SE: 168702 OL18(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ki gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A local informant says that this inlet was once used as a loading place. There is no evidence of a man-made quay.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

RAE BERRY : ND 16 NE: 176694 OL19(T)

Local pronunciation: ['re bari]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: OL19(T) (cont'd)

ON rá f. : a pole (used metaphorically)
see R63(S)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

This rock is often referred to as The Devil's Footstep.

.....

RING HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 198659 OL20(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rɪŋ 'hɪlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Self-explanatory, although it is uncertain whether Ring refers to the round hillock itself or to the round cairn on top of it. Probably the latter.

.....

RUTHER MYRE : ND 16 NE: 192676 OL21(T)

Local pronunciation: [rʌðər 'mair]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

ON rauðr : see T58(T)

ON mýrr f.: a moor, bog, swamp

The spelling of the generic in the above name strongly indicates Scots origin (Sc myre: see C19(T)) for the compound, but there is no Scots word *ruther on record, although this element occurs more than once in Caithness place-names and appears to refer to moorland, functioning either as an adjective or as a noun (cf W51(S)). According to local informants the area is now known as The Mossy

(Sc moss : see R7(S))

.....

SERPENT HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 160683 OL22(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sɛrpənt 'hɪlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A long, low and undulating ridge of hills, now split in two by the main road.

.....

SHELLEY HILL : ND 16 NE: 195684 OL23(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃɛli 'hɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Site of an ancient kitchen midden with a large number of sea-shells in it. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 89)

.....

STANDSTONE GEO : ND 16 NE: 188692 OL24(T)

Local pronunciation: ['stanstɔn gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably named from a standing stone in nearby fields but there is no present evidence of such a stone.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SUMMER CRAIG : ND 16 NE: 173693 OL25(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sʊmər 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The rocky side of a geo (see R54(T)), possibly used as a landing place or a fishing place in summer.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

SYSA : ND 16 SE: 168647 OL26(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A natural hillock associated with the fairy lore of the district. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 89)

The name suggests that the place may at one point have been the site of a local law-court.

cf Sc assise, asyse: a judicial inquiry by a number of persons appointed for that purpose; the body of persons so appointed.

.....

THE GILL : ND 26 NW: 202676 OL27(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'gɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

THE HOLMS : ND 16 NE: 173694 OL28(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'hɔms]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai holms : see T84(T)

The name describes underwater rocks which are exposed at low-tide.

.....

THE SLATES : ND 16 NE: 180692 OL29(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'slets]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai slates: see R83(T)

The name describes a flat stretch of rock at the coast.

.....

THE SPUR : ND 16 NE: 170698 OL30(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'spʌr]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Self-explanatory; an expanse of rock shelving down to the sea.

.....

TROWES GEO : ND 16 NE: 175693 OL31(T)

Local pronunciation: ['traus gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: OL31(T) (cont'd)

ISc trow : Eng troll, a mischievous sprite or fairy, a supernatural being common in Scandinavian mythology from which it passed into Shetland and Orkney folk-lore, and thence into Caithness. They were called hill-, land- or sea-trows according to their supposed haunts or abode.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The local story relating to this geo says that trows frequented the neighbouring reef and lured ships to their destruction at night.

.....

TUG BERRIES : ND 16 NE: 169696 OL32(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tʌg bɛris]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc toog : also tug (Jakobsen); tuack, tui(c)k, towick: tuag

: a small knoll, mound or hillock, especially one covered with tufts of coarse grass or heather

(too + -ag, -ek, -ock suffix

: also tu, tuo cf OL36(S))

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

CHAPTER SEVEN: DUNNET PARISH

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The coastal scenery of Dunnet Parish is its most notable feature. Dunnet Head, the most northerly extension of the Scottish mainland, has magnificent sandstone cliffs over 100 metres in height.

Unlike Olrig Parish, most of the land is unimproved and the Dunnet Head peninsula in particular is chiefly moorland. There are also considerable expanses of rough, poorly-drained land north of Loch Heilen and another poor quality area is the sand-dune complex which borders the extensive sand beach of Dunnet Bay.

The parish has no reasonable harbour facilities and, in consequence, it has only very small settlements such as Dunnet itself. There is a scattering of farms and crofts throughout the parish, but the economy is also partially dependent on tourism.

Dunnet Parish is bounded on the south by Bower Parish and on the east by Canisbay Parish.

SETTLEMENT NAMES

BARROCK : ND 27 SE: 258712 D1(S)

HALL OF BARROCK : " : 254713

Local pronunciation: ['bareg] or ['barək]

Early refs:

Barrak	1563/4	Sinclair (Mey)
Baroke	1604	Retours
Barrok	1605	"
Bariak	1644	"
Barrake	"	"
Barrak	1606	RMS
Barack	1661	"
Barrok	1682	Sutherland (Forse)
Barrag	1750	Roy
Burrock	1752	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Barrick H	1807	Arrowsmith
Barrack	1831	Thomson

Derivation: Possibly

G bàrr m. : a height or hill + variable dimin ending.

The 1752 reference with <u> in the first syllable is an isolated variant.

.....

BRAEHEAD : ND 27 SE: 261745 D2(S)

Local pronunciation: [bre'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc brae : see R8(S)

.....

BROADLEAN : ND 27 SE: 266712 D3(S)

Local pronunciation: [brɔd'lin]

Early refs:

Broadleen	1830	Sinclair (Freswick)
Broadleen	1841	Census
Broadloan	"	"

Derivation:

The English specific broad would normally occur with an English/Scots

generic, probably in this case D3(S) (cont'd)

Sc lean(s): see R19(S).

Sc leans, however, does not normally appear in the singular and the form of the generic in this place-name may have been influenced by either

G lèana m.: a meadow, or

G lón m. : a meadow.

The latter form is clearly suggested in Broadloan (1841).

.....

BROUGH : ND 27 SW: 224734 D4(S)

MOSS OF BROUGH : " : 207735

CLETT OF BROUGH : " : 221743

Local pronunciation: [brɔx]

Early refs:

Brughe	1546	Sinclair (Mey)
Brough	1606	"
Bruche	1592	RMS
Brugh	1662	Blaeu
Brugh	1750	Roy
Burgh	1753	Sutherland (Forse)
Brough	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON borg f.: see R32(S)

(The spellings of the above name have been greatly influenced by OSc broch, brogh: a borough; a Pictish broch; bruch, bruche: a borough, a ring or halo. Later Sc spellings are broch, brough, brogh, brugh and bruch.)

The foundations of a castle are still visible at Brough, but there appears to be no history of its occupants. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 27)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

CHAPEL (remains of): ND 17 SE: 187728 D5(S)
CHAPEL HILL : " : 184732
CHAPEL GEO : " : 184728
Local pronunciation: ['tʃapəl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Listed as a chapel site, but no further positive information is available. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 28)
There is a persistent tradition that a hermit once had his abode on Dunnet Head, and that he built a chapel there. (Rev. D. Beaton 1909, page 46)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

CHARLESTON : ND 27 SE: 262717 D6(S)
Local pronunciation: ['tʃarlstən]
Early refs: Charlestown 1841 Census
Derivation:
Charles : a surname listed in Black as occurring in Orkney in 1649 (Black 1946, page 147)
The reference is to a previous owner of the farm. (cf T5(S))
Sc -ton (toun)
: see R46(S)

.....

CORSBACK : ND 27 SW: 239722 D7(S)
MILL OF CORSBACK : " : 243725
Local pronunciation: ['kɔrsbek]
Early refs: Corsbak and mill thereof 1546 RMS
Corsbalk 1592 "
Corspak 1609 "
Corsbauk 1612 "
Corsbakk 1636 "
Mill of Corsback 1661 "
Halfe Corsebauk 1667 "

D7(S)
(cont'd)

Early refs (cont'd)

Corsbak	1549	RSS
Corsbak	1605	Retours
Corsbank	1644	"
Corsback	"	"
Corsbag	1750	Roy
Corssback	1798	Book of Valuation
Corsback	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON kross m.: a cross (with metathesis of <r>)

This is a frequently occurring element in place-names. The way-side cross may have been a place of worship similar to the hörgar of the heathen age.

The name Corse occurs in Orkney and Marwick comments that ON kross may have been applied for various reasons: (a) a wayside cross marking a praying site (eg at a point where a church came into view); (b) a burial site; (c) cross-roads; (d) ground pertaining to a church or chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross; (e) property boundary etc. (Marwick 1952, page 62)

In the case of Corsback, St. John's Chapel and Loch (see D34(S)) are within sight.

The most probable source of the generic is

ON bakki m.: see T2(T)

.....

COUPER HILL : ND 27 SW: 235710 D8(S)

LINKS OF COUPERHILL: " : 238711

Local pronunciation: [kupar 'hɪl]

Early refs: Cooper Hill 1841 Census

Derivation:

The surname Couper

: see OL6(T)

Sc links : see OL33(S)

.....

COURTFALL : ND 27 SW: 215739 D9(S)

COURTFALL HILL : " : 212741

COURTFALL LOCH : " : 214740

Local pronunciation: ['kurtfa]

Early refs: L. Courtfa 1750 Roy

L. Courtfal 1832 Thomson

Courtfa 1841 Census

Courtfa' 1877 6" OS

Derivation:

This is a very puzzling name, but it is possible that it may be a northern equivalent of Court-hill: an assembly hill on which a court is held. The generic in the Caithness name could be ON fjall n.: a hill - an element which was in sufficiently common use to have been combined with a Scots specific. The tautologous English hill would have been added at a later date. SND has the following comment: "These baron bailies held a 'court of regality' at certain times of the year at a spot outside the town long known as 'Court Hillock'."

G. Donaldson describes baron courts as follows: "In the days when tenants' strips lay intermingled with each other, the cattle and sheep of several tenants grazed together, and agricultural operations required joint action, regulations for "good neighbourhood" were made in the baron court, which did a good deal of the work done nowadays by the Land Court, and also encouraged good husbandry by rules for the care of the cultivated and pasture land." (Donaldson 1974, page 137)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

CROSSROADS SCHOOL : ND 27 SW: 245727 D10(S)

Local pronunciation: ['krɔsrods]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Self-explanatory. Schools were frequently situated at crossroads for ease of access.

.....

DUNNET	:	ND 27 SW:	221712	D11(S)
HALL OF DUNNET	:	" :	217717	
MANSE OF DUNNET	:	" :	219711	
BURN OF DUNNET	:	" :	221714	
LINKS OF DUNNET	:	" :	228701	
DUNNET HEAD	:	ND 27 NW:	204768	
DUNNETHEAD LIGHTHOUSE	:	" :	202767	
DUNNET HILL	:	ND 17 SE:	191737	

Local pronunciation : ['dʌnət]

Early refs:

Donotf	1223-4	OPS, Sutherland Charters
Dimosc	1275	OPS, Bagimond's Roll
Dunost	1276	" "
Dunneth	1455	RMS
Donet	1539	"
Dunnat	1575	"
Dunnot	1579	"
Dwnett	1587	"
Downet	1592	"
Dwnnat	1604	"
Dunnett	1633	"
Dunatt	1636	"
Dunnet	1661	"
Dunat	c1535	OPS
Dunnat	1537	"
Donat	1569	"
Dunate	1549	RSS
Dwnat	1574	Retours
Dunett	1644	"
Dunitt	"	"
Dunnet	1662	Blaeu
Dunnett	1726	Macfarlane
Dunnet	1750	Roy

The spelling is consistently Dunnet from 1750 to the present day.

Derivation:

Dunnet, unfortunately, remains obscure in spite of the numerous early references. It may, in fact, be a name which was in use before the advent of either Norse- or Gaelic-speaking people, and

which was possibly retained because it described such a prominent feature of the landscape. D11(S) (cont'd)

There is, regrettably, no reference to Dunnet in Orkneyinga Saga and those 13th century references which do occur are very variable in spelling although they do appear to suggest a final fricative consonant which does not occur in spelling after the 15th century and which is not obvious in present-day pronunciation. (cf Celtic dūnŏs - in extract from Rivet & Smith below) From the 16th century onwards the orthographic representation of the name settles into a pattern which shows only slight variation, probably as a result of the standardisation of orthography which followed the introduction of printing.

It is possible that the clue to the origin of this name may be contained in Ptolemy's *tarvedu(nu)m (bull fort) which has been equated with Dunnet Head.

Dunum has been described as "one of the most important elements in Celto-Latin toponymy. It appears uncompounded, but more commonly compounded and then always in second place. In sense it seems to have developed from hill to fort. Derivatives include

Welsh din-as: fortress, town and
Irish dun : fortress.

The Celtic word was apparently *dūnŏs-, a neuter with an -s stem; as dunon it was regularly represented in Latin as dūnum neuter." (Rivet and Smith 1979, page 274)

Dunnet Head was also known by another name:

Quinicnap Head	1595	Mercator
Whindiknop Head	1662	Blaeu
Windy Knap	1750	Roy
Dunnet Head or		
Windy Knep	1750	Dorret.

It seems very probable that the specific in this name is simply windy. Certainly the description would be appropriate.

The generic is

ON knappr m.: a knob, protuberance,

a word which is common to all Germanic languages and which occurs frequently in names further south in Scotland.

Mercator and Blaeu added Head due to lack of understanding of of the final element. D11(S) (cont'd)

Sc manse : see T19(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc links : see OL33(S)

.....

DWARWICK : ND 27 SW: 208712 D12(S)

DWARWICK HEAD : " : 205714

DWARWICK PIER : " : 206713

Local pronunciation: ['dwarʌk]

Early refs:

Divarrick	1660	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Dwark Head	1750	Roy
Dwarick	1813	Sinclair (Freswick)
Dwarrick Head	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

The most probable source is

ON dvergr (gen pl dverga) m.

: a dwarf

Dwarves preceded the trolls in northern mythology.

ON vík f. : a small creek, inlet or bay

This element occurs frequently in local names throughout the Norse-influenced area of Scotland.

.....

FILLOWAY : ND 27 SW: 245708 D13(S)

Local pronunciation: ['failəwe]

Early refs:

Fyloway	1798	Book of Valuation
Fillaway	1841	Census
Fileaway	"	"

Derivation: Origin obscure

.....

GREENLAND	:	ND 26 NW:	243677	D14(S)
GREENLAND MAINS	:	" :	246676	
EAST GREENLAND	:	" :	242664	
WEST GREENLAND	:	" :	228673	
LOWER GREENLAND	:	" :	233678	
MOSS OF GREENLAND	:	" :	248657	
LINKS OF GREENLAND	:	" :	228689	

Local pronunciation: ['grinlænd]

Early refs:

Nethirgreneland	1377	OPS
Grenland	1527	Sinclair (Mey)
Greneland	1549	RSS
Ester Greneland	"	"
Greneland	1527	RMS
Greinland	1592	"
Grinland	1619	"
Wester Greinland	1636	"
Greenland	1661	"
Grenland	1604	Retours
Greneland	1605	"
Greenlant	1662	Blaeu

Derivation:

ON grænn (grœnn) : green

ON land n.: see OL16(S)

As in the case of Harland (see OL16(S)) it is difficult to be certain of the linguistic origin of the elements in the above compound name. The fact that the name was recorded in the 14th century, however, suggests Norse rather than Scots origin as far as Caithness is concerned. (OSc does, however, have grene/grein adj: green, in place-names from 12th-13th centuries.) Nethirgreneland (1377) contains ON neðar (comparative of niðr: down). It has now been replaced by English Lower in Lower Greenland.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc links : see OL33(S)

.....

GREENVALE : ND 27 SW: 247724 D15(S)

Local pronunciation: ['grin 'vel]

Early refs: Greenvale 1841 Census

Derivation:

A comparatively recent self-explanatory name.

Eng vale is not common in Caithness names.

.....

HAM : ND 27 SW: 238737 D16(S)

HAM BERRY : " : 242739

BURN OF HAM : " : 240730

HAM COTTAGE : " : 236733

Local pronunciation: [ham]

Early refs: Höfn c1200 Orkneyinga Saga

Ham 1609 RMS

Ham 1653 Sutherland (Forse)

Hame 1659 Sinclair (Mey)

Hamm 1662 Blaeu

Ham 1750 Roy

(Höfn was earlier identified with Huna (see C17(S)), but the recent translation of Orkneyinga Saga favours identification with Ham. (Pálsson and Edwards 1978, page 38))

Derivation:

ON höfn >Cai ham

: see T32(T)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

HASTERS : ND 26 NW: 245665 D17(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hastərs]

Early refs: Hausters 1841 Census

Derivation:

Difficult without further early references.

The name now describes a row of crofts on the edge of the moor

which suggests D17(S) (cont'd)

ON <u>hár</u> : high

ON <u>setr</u> n.: see R33(S) + Eng pl -s

(cf <u>Haster</u> (W46(S)) which appears to have a different derivation. The interpretation suggested in W46(S) does not fit the situation of the Dunnet name.)

.....

<u>HEATHFIELD</u> : ND 27 SW: 243733 D18(S)

<u>Local pronunciation</u>: ['hiθfild]

<u>Early refs</u>: Heathfield 1841 Census

<u>Derivation</u>:

Self-explanatory. The name refers to land taken in from the moor comparatively recently.

(cf <u>Heathfield</u> T41(S))

.....

<u>HILLHEAD</u> : ND 27 SW: 230713 D19(S)

<u>Local pronunciation</u>: [hɛl'hɛid]

<u>Early refs</u>: Hillhead of Dunnet 1820 Sinclair (Freswick)

<u>Derivation</u>: Self-explanatory.

.....

<u>HOLLANDMAKE</u> : ND 26 NE: 264695 D20(S)

<u>Local pronunciation</u>: [hɔlənd'mek]

<u>Early refs</u>:

Hollandmake	1546	Sinclair (Mey)
Holand-maik	1549	"
Hollandmaik	"	"
Holandmaik	1634	"
Hallandmak	1612	RMS
Hollandmache	1636	"
Hallandmake	1644	Retours
Hallandmark	"	"
Holland-make	1671	"
Hallanmake	1750	Roy
Half-Hollandmaik	1798	Book of Valuation

Derivation: D20(S) (cont'd)

The situation of this farm on a slight eminence suggests

ON hóll m.: see OL2(S)

ON land n.: see OL16(S)

The element make is obscure. It probably functions to distinguish this place-name from the neighbouring Hollandmey (see C16(S)) and the various forms which it takes in early written sources might suggest

OSc make, mak, maik

: an equivalent, an equally good specimen,

were it not for the fact that make is not in common use as a place-name element.

There is a single instance of the spelling mark but it would be unwise to deduce from this that the reference is to a markland. It is more probable that the scribe was attempting to impose his own interpretation on an obscure element.

(The Scottish markland was a unit of which the annual value was reckoned to be a mark, whereas the old Orkney markland represented land which had the capital value or purchase price of a mark. (Marwick 1952, page 200)

.....

HUNSPOW : ND 27 SW: 217727 D21(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hʌnspau]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Doubtful without further early references, but probably

ON hundr m.: a hound, dog

ON pollr m.: a pool

>Sc pow (see T89(T))

Dr. G. Fellows-Jensen refers to Hund- in place-names in her article "Hungate, Some Observations on a Common Street-Name". She comments that "several place-names containing Hund- in Scandinavian also reflect a contemptuous view of the animal, for the function of the specific seems to be to indicate that the locality in question was insignificant ...".

This comment is probably very apt in the case of the Caithness name which has a direct parallel in Caithness dialect D21(S) (cont'd)

hunnspoo : defined as "a contemptuous epithet for a worthless person or animal, a useless specimen".

(Cai 1940 John o' Groat Journal (2 April), Cai 1957)

SND suggests that this word is perhaps a corruption of Norw hundsvott: a scamp, from Du hondsvot, Ger hundsfott id, a term of coarse abuse.

.....

INKSTACK : ND 27 SE: 256703 D22(S)

BURN OF INKSTACK : ND 26 NE: 255695

LINKS OF INKSTACK : ND 26 NW: 243698

Local pronunciation: ['ɪŋkstak]

Early refs:

Inkstak	1619	RMS
Ingstak	1636	"
Inchstock	1664	"
Halfe Inchstock	1667	"
Instak	1632	Sinclair (Mey)
Ingstak	1648	"
Enstag	1750	Roy
Inkstag	"	"
Ingstock	1761-2	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Inkstock	"	"

Derivation: Possibly

ON engi n.: meadow-land

ON tak n. : a holding

(ON Engi does appear in compounds such as engis-höfn: possession of a meadow, or engis-maðr: the owner of a meadow.)

Lack of medial <i> in early references may appear to argue against this interpretation, but it would have been subject to elision at an early stage in the phonological development of the compound.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc links : see OL33(S)

.....

KILLI CAIRN : ND 27 SW: 222726 D23(S)

Local pronunciation; [kɫli 'kern]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The 'Inventory of Monuments' mentions this cairn which is situated at the north end of St. John's Loch. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 25) The cairn appears to have been excavated and may have contained a burial chamber which suggests that the initial element is

G cill f. : a church or a burial-ground.

The Gaelic form of the whole name would have been

cill a' chairn.

If this is an accurate interpretation of the name it is most unusual in Dunnet Parish and it is probable that the Gaelic was imported from further west comparatively recently.

.....

KIRK O' BANKS : ND 27 SE: 254739 D24(S)

KIRK O' TANG : " : 252741

Local pronunciation: [kɫrk ɔ 'banks]

<Kirk o' Tang> not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kirk : see T27(S)

ISc banks : generally pl. but sing. in meaning. A steep coast; precipitous rocks or cliffs along the seashore: also used of the seashore itself, and "of the grassy edge abutting on a flat beach". (Marwick: Orkney Norn)

Ultimately derived from

ON bakki m.: cf T2(T).

In the Insular examples the Sc form banks has superseded the OSh bakk from ON bakki: edge, cognate with bank; but the word is preserved in the special Norw applications.

Cai tang : see T77(T)

These two names refer to the same chapel, the outlines of which are visible beside the sea to the east of the Burn of Rattar (see D28(S)). (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 27)

.....

LOCHEND : ND 26 NE: 267682 D25(S)

Local pronunciation: ['lɔx'ɛnd]

Early refs: Lochend 1778 Sinclair (Freswick)
Lochend 1787 Sutherland (Forse)
Lochend 1856 "
Lochend 1782 Book of Valuation
House of Lochend 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

The loch to which this name now appears to refer is Loch Heilen (see D43(T)) but there is some confusion regarding its initial application in the 18th century due to the existence of another loch in the area, which was drained in the mid-19th century. This loch appears to have been variously referred to as

Sueymyie L (Blaeu 1662)
Swinnie Loch (Arrowsmith 1807)
Loch of Syster (Sinclair (Freswick) 1865)

This former name, although frequently recorded until the mid-19th century, has now been lost, along with the loch which it described. The early references to this name are as follows

Swynne	1538	RMS
Sunzie	1612	"
Swenye	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Sunye	1573	"
Swynzie	1613	"
Sweynyie	"	"
Swenyie	"	"
Suinzie	1644	Retours
Suemyie L	1662	Blaeu
Swinea	1750	Roy
Lochend, formerly called Swinzie	1778	Sinclair (Freswick)
Swinsie, now called Lochend	1787	"
Swinnie Loch	1807	Arrowsmith
Scister or Swinxie	1831	Thomson
Swiney, otherwise Lochend and Syster	1856	Sutherland (Forse)

It appears that the drained loch was usually referred to as Swinnie Loch as in Arrowsmith (1807), a name which probably derives

from the very common ON appellative D25(S) (cont'd)

Svín-ey : swine island, with reference to an island in the loch. The farm at the end of the loch was, in the first instance, also referred to as Swinnie (variously spelt) but once the loch had been drained in the mid-19th century this name was replaced by the more general term Lochend, and its reference was gradually transferred to Loch Heilen.

Thomson (1831) and Sinclair (Freswick) (1865) add to the confusion by inferring that Syster and Swinnie were interchangeable which does not appear to have been the case. Syster describes a separate farm and Lochend is the replacement of Swinnie as a farm name.

.....

MARYMAS GREEN : ND 27 SW: 219707 D26(S)

Local pronunciation: ['mɛrɹməs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name refers to a disused market stance.

Marymas : the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary held on 15th August (old style)

The New Statistical Account notes that a "great market" took place at Dunnet "on Tuesday, after 15th August, old style, which lasts two days, and is well attended." (New Statistical Account 1845, page 47)

A local informant remembers this market as having been on the last Tuesday in August during the middle decades of this century.

.....

MOUNT HALIE : ND 26 NE: 253673 D27(S)

Local pronunciation: [maunt 'hili] or [maunt 'huli]

Early refs: Moundhoolie 1841 Census

Mounthoolie " "

Derivation:

This name can be found in several places in Scotland, although it

appears to be principally an east coast phenomenon. Its origin is questionable but the name probably had religious significance in spite of the fact that William Alexander, in his comment on Mounthooly in East Aberdeenshire, dismisses the popular explanation holy mount as being "worthless". (Alexander 1952, page 93) Mount Halie is now a farm name, whatever its original application. D27(S) (cont'd)

.....

RATTAR	:	ND 27 SE:	263730
RATTAR MOSS	:	" :	270730
BURN OF RATTAR	:	" :	272720
RATTAR BRIDGE	:	" :	256736
RATTAR HOUSE	:	" :	252732
HILL OF RATTAR	:	ND 27 SW:	247732

D28(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ratər]

Early refs:			
	de Ratir	1443	Black (Papal Letters)
	Ratar	1538	RMS
	Ratter	1592	"
	Rattir	1661	"
	Rattar	1549	RSS
	Rattare	1604	Retours
	Rateir	1605	"
	Ratter	1644	"
	Rattre	1662	Blaeu
	Ratter	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

A name which remains stubbornly obscure in spite of the uniformity of the early references. It is possible that by the 15th century when first recorded in writing, the name had already been subject to phonological reduction (cf OL31(S)) and that it in fact represents an earlier compound, the nature of which is impossible to decipher. Alternatively, it could perhaps derive from ON rǫð f. (pl raðar, later raðir)

: a bank, ridge, edge.

.....

REASTER : ND 26 NE: 258654 D29(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ristar]

Early refs:

Ressister	1538	RMS
Rasister	1549	"
Rasseter	1604	"
Reistir	1619	"
Reistir	1661	"
Reyster	"	"
Rester	1625	Sinclair (Mey)
Rasetter	1636	"
Reaster	1655	"
Reestre	1662	Blaeu
Reyster	1671	Retours
Rasiter	1798	Book of Valuation
Rester	1831	Thomson

Derivation:

The earliest recorded forms contain medial <i> which indicates that the most probable source of the specific is

ON hreysi n.: a heap of stones

ON setr n. : see R33(S)

.....

ROADSIDE : ND 26 NW: 247668 D30(S)

ROADSIDE COTTAGE : ND 26 NE: 257666

Local pronunciation: [rod'said]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

For comment see T65(S).

.....

ROSEGILL : ND 27 SW: 245715 D31(S)

Local pronunciation: ['rosgɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A comparatively recent name, probably referring to the presence of wild roses at the side of the Burn of Inkstack (see D22(S)) which flows past this small farm.

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

SCARABEN COTTAGES : ND 26 NE: 254666 D32(S)

Local pronunciation: ['skarəbən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obviously a modern name incorporating Scaraben, a well-known feature of the Caithness landscape, being one of the few high peaks on the horizon.

Scaraben is a hybrid name combining

ON skör (gen skara) f.

: a rim, edge, with

G beinn f.: see R14(S).

These two elements are extremely common in place-names.

.....

SCARFSKERRY : ND 27 SE: 264743 D33(S)

SCARFSKERRY POINT : " : 258747

Local pronunciation: ['skaskəri]

Early refs: Scarskerry 1750 Roy

Scarskarry 1807 Arrowsmith

Scarffskerry 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai scarf : see R145(T)

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

This name would originally have applied to a shore-line rock, but it has been extended to the village by the shore.

The first syllable has been contracted in modern pronunciation.

.....

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL : ND 27 SW: 233722 D34(S)

ST. JOHN'S LOCH : " : 225720

Local pronunciation: [sn dʒɔns 'tʃapəl, ... 'lɔx]

Early refs: St. John's Loch 1701 Brand

Derivation:

"There was anciently on the east end (of St John's Loch) a Catholic chapel dedicated to St John, and it is extremely probable that the alleged virtues of the loch may have been conferred on it by the priests and converted by them into a source of pecuniary emolument." (Calder 1887, page 27)

Beaton comments that "There is a number of chapels in Caithness commemorating the name of John, whether these are Roman Catholic dedications to John the Evangelist or John the Baptist, or Celtic foundations of the John (Iohain) of the Tallagh List, it is difficult with our present knowledge to determine." (Beaton 1909, page 81) D34(S) (cont'd)

The Loch is now most frequently referred to as Dunnet Loch ['dʌnət lɔx].

.....

SYSTER : ND 26 NE: 271692 D35(S)

SYSTER QUARRY : " : 268692

Local pronunciation: ['saistər]

Early refs:			
	Sysseter	1739	Sutherland (Forse)
	Syster	1856	"
	Syster	1784	Sinclair (Freswick)
	Sister	1831	"
	Syster	1865	"
Loch of	Syster	"	"
Scister or	Swinxie	1831	Thomson
Loch of	Scister	"	"

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is uncertain due to lack of early references but one possibility is

ON sjár m.: see R6(S) and R117(T).

The reference in this instance, as in the Reay examples, is to an inland sea or loch; either Loch Heilen (see D43(T)) or possibly Swinnie Loch which has now been drained (see D25(S)).

ON setr n.: see R33(S)

.....

WESTER : ND 27 SW: 231727 D36(S)

LITTLE WESTER : " : 226727

Local pronunciation: ['wɛstər]

Early refs:			
	Wesbuster	1546	Sinclair (Mey)
Westpuster in	Dunnett	1632	"
	Westbuster	1549	RSS

D36(S) (cont'd)

Early refs (cont'd)

Wester	1606	RMS
Westbuster in Dunat	1636	"
Westbustar	1661	"
Westbuster	1604	Retours
Westre	1662	Blaeu
Wester	1750	Roy
Waster	"	"
Westers	1761	Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:

For comments on the nature of the specific see OL39(S).

The neighbouring loch in this case is St. John's Loch (see D34(S)).

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

The references such as RMS (1636) to Westbuster in Dunat are extremely helpful and were presumably intended to distinguish this place-name from the identical name in Wick Parish (see W113(S)). The names are still, in speech, referred to as Wester Wick and Wester Dunnet.

.....

WHITEBRIDGE : ND 27 SE: 269724 D37(S)

Local pronunciation: [hwait 'brig]

Early refs: White Bridge 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Self-explanatory. Local pronunciation reflects an earlier Sc brig : see R102(T).

The bridge is over the Burn of Ratter (see D28(S)) and the name refers to both the bridge and the adjacent house.

.....

TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES

ASHY GEO : ND 17 SE: 182745 D1(T)

ASHYGEO HILLOCK : " : 183742

Local pronunciation: ['aʃi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The most probable source is

ON assa f.: an eagle

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BANK HEAD : ND 27 NW: 207767 D2(T)

Local pronunciation: [baŋk 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc bank : a raised shelf or ridge of ground

.....

BLACK GEOS : ND 17 NE: 185756 D3(T)

Local pronunciation: ['blak gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The reference is to the colour of the rock and, apparently, to a single geo in spite of the plural version on the 6" OS map.

.....

BLACK LOCH : ND 17 SE: 187736 D4(T)

Local pronunciation: [blak 'lɔx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

BLOODY MOSS : ND 27 SW: 205726 D5(T)

Local pronunciation: ['blʌdi mɔs]

Early refs: Bloodymoss 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)

Derivation:

The context suggests that the specific could be

ON blautr : soft, often used in the sense of wet, miry.

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

BOAT POOL : ND 27 SW: 213709 D6(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bot 'pul]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a small inlet with deep water which was used as an anchorage for a boat.

.....

BRIGA HEAD : ND 17 NE: 183754 D7(T)

Local pronunciation: ['brigə hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

briga : obscure without further early references

.....

BUOY STONES : ND 27 SW: 207713 D8(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bui stens]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent name applying to boulders in the sea which were thought to resemble buoys when half-covered with water.

.....

BURN OF BRIGS : ND 27 SW: 203723 D9(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'brigs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A shallow stream which can be crossed with ease, using the liberally scattered stepping-stones.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc brig : see R102(T)

.....

BURN OF HELSHIGROW : ND 27 SW: 224704 D10(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'hɛlʃigro]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Helshigrow is probably a Norse name which has been subject to reduction in phonological bulk (cf OL31(S)), and it is very difficult to suggest a derivation without further early references. (cf C17(T) for a possible derivation of the generic grow.)

The original settlement has vanished and the name now refers only to the stream.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

BURN OF HUNSTER : ND 26 SW: 246646 D11(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'hʌnstər]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

The specific in Hunster is doubtful without early references, but a strong possibility is

ON Hundi m.: a personal name (Lind 1915, column 598)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 144)

ON setr n. : see R33(S)

(The farm of Hunster is situated in neighbouring Bower Parish.)

.....

BURN OF MIDSAND : ND 26 NW: 226683 D12(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə mɪd'sands]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

The burn runs between the Links of Greenland (see D14(S)) and the Links of Old Tain (see OL33(S)).

The name is invariably plural in local pronunciation.

.....

CASTLE FOOT : ND 27 SE: 257743 D13(T)

Local pronunciation: [kasɫ 'fut]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a detached rock which appears to have ruins of some kind on it, although there is no record of a castle in this position.

.....

CAT'S CLEFT : ND 17 SE: 198719 D14(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kats 'kleft]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is probably to a wild cat which had its lair in this steep-sided geo.

.....

CAVE OF DOONAL : ND 27 SW: 243737 D15(T)

Local pronunciation: [kev ə 'dunəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Doonal is the Caithness dialect version of

G Domhnall: Donald

There is no local knowledge of the nature of Donald's association with the cave.

.....

COWL, ONE : ND 17 SE: 197737 D16(T)
COWLS, THREE : " : 192736
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kauəls]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cowl is being used to describe the conical tops of hills and it is not an unusual description in place-names in general.
However, it is unusual in Caithness and it is perhaps significant that it should occur in the vicinity of Chapel Hill where the remains of a chapel are to be found (see D5(S)), since the literal meaning of cowl is, of course, a monk's hood.

.....

DONALD GEAR'S GEO : ND 17 SE: 182735 D17(T)
Local pronunciation: [dɔnəld 'gers gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The name describes a geo with very steep sides which Donald Gear is reputed to have climbed, according to local informants.
(For the origin of the surname Gear/Gair which is common in the north of Scotland and in Shetland, see Black 1946, page 284.)

.....

EASTER HEAD : ND 27 NW: 204768 D18(T)
LOCH OF EASTER HEAD: " : 207763
Local pronunciation: ['istər hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The more easterly of two places possibly by comparison with Dunnet Head but, on the map, the two names appear to describe the same headland and Easter Head is never used locally; Dunnet Head being the preferred description.
Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

FISH CRAIG : ND 17 NE: 198767 D19(T)

Local pronunciation: [fɪʃ 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Names of this type are usually more specific, noting the species of fish caught. On the other hand Sc fish can have a specific reference to: 1) the salmon. Gen Sc in all salmon areas; includes sea-trout

2) white fish, as opposed to herrings.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

FUESTER'S GEO : ND 27 SW: 218747 D20(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fjustərs gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The apostrophe indicates that the initial element is probably a nickname for some person who was connected with the geo. Possibly he came from Thusater (see T76(S)) because the spelling of Fuester closely mimics an occasional local pronunciation of Thusater ['fjustər].

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FULLY GEO : ND 27 SE: 254742 D21(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fuli gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably

ON fugl (older form fogl) m.

: a fowl, bird.

This element is common in coastal names in Caithness, either in the form Fully/-ie or, occasionally, Folly/-ie.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEO SETTER : ND 27 SE: 259746 D22(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A very curious name in that both elements appear to be of Norse origin

ON gjá > Cai geo

: see R54(T)

ON setr n.: see R33(S)

but the word order in the compound is Gaelic and ON setr is totally inappropriate as a description of a geo. Perhaps the modern spelling masks an earlier specific of different origin.

.....

GEO TRUNG : ND 27 SW: 247739 D23(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Trung is difficult without earlier forms but it is possibly a variant of Sc trink

: a narrow channel, inlet or creek between coastal rocks.

The word order indicates possible Gaelic origin as in D22(T).

.....

GRASSY CLETT : ND 27 SW: 224742 D24(T)

GRASSY LOCH : " : 207742

Local pronunciation: [grasi 'klɛt]

[grasi 'lɔx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S)

The Grassy Loch has a very high proportion of marsh to water.

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

GREEN GEO : ND 27 SE: 263746 D25(T)

Local pronunciation: ['grin gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : R54(T)

A geo with grassy sides.

.....

GROTTISTOFT MOSS : ND 27 SE: 273705 D26(T)

Local pronunciation: ['grɔtɹstɔft mɔs]

Early refs: Grotiscroft 1636 RMS
Grotiestoft 1661 "
Grotistoft 1798 Book of Valuation
Grotiestoft " "

Derivation:

The specifics in all other toft names are either personal names or the name of the farm or institution to which the toft was attached. It seems likely, therefore, that the specific in the above name is a personal name, possibly the surname of the Grot family who first appear in a charter dated 1496. (see C18(S))

Cai toft : see OL33(S)

Toft and croft were virtually interchangeable as in RMS 1636, but they have now diverged slightly in meaning. Toft implies enclosure, whereas croft implies enclosure plus access to common land.

Sc moss : see R7(S)

The settlement Grottistoft has now disappered and the name is only retained as a reference to an area of moorland.

.....

GUTTERY GEO : ND 27 SW: 202719 D27(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gʌθəri gjo]

My informants weakened the medial consonant from [t] to [θ].

Early refs: Gutters Goe 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc guttery: muddy, miry, messy

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

HANGY GEO : ND 27 SE: 255742 D28(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hangi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The name describes a small, deep geo with overhanging sides.

.....

HASTY LOUP : ND 27 SE: 266746 D29(T)

Local pronunciation: [hesti 'laup]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific appears to be English although it is possible that English hasty masks an earlier ON hestr m.: a horse.

Off-shore rocks were often defined as being a horse's leap from the shore.

Sc loup : see T47(T)

.....

HEAD OF MAN : ND 27 SW: 202721 D30(T)

Local pronunciation: [hɛid ə 'man]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Self-explanatory, although it is not immediately apparent why this name should have been applied. Possibly someone detected a resemblance to the human head in the rock structure.

.....

HEAD WARK : ND 27 SW: 230742 D31(T)

Local pronunciation: [hɛid 'wark]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The 6" OS map indicates a promontory fort on this headland which suggests that the specific might be

Sc wark : wall, stronghold, castle

but wark usually describes an imposing building which is hardly appropriate here.

.....

HEN'S HEAD : ND 27 SW: 222744 D32(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛinz 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent self-explanatory name which describes a small rock visible only at low tide.

.....

HILL OF RIVE : ND 27 SW: 202723 D33(T)

Local pronunciation: [hɫl a 'raiv]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Uncertain without further early references but most likely to be

Sc rive : a rift, rent, cleft or fissure
(<ON rifa f.)

The reference would be to peat bogs in the area. Bloody Moss is a neighbouring name which suggests similar, difficult terrain (see D5(T)).

.....

ISLES GEO : ND 27 SW: 249739 D34(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ails gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

There are off-shore rocks in the geo.

.....

KERRY GEO : ND 27 SW: 235740 D35(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kɛri gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is uncertain, but possibly it represents

ISc keerie: the native sheep of Orkney; rather goat-like in appearance, with low shoulders, high quarters and long neck.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

KIRK GEO : ND 27 SW: 237740 D36(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kʌrki gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kirk : see T27(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

This geo is near the site of a former chapel.

.....

KUNKS HOLE : ND 27 SW: 233740 D37(T)

Local pronunciation: name always known as The Tinklers' Cove:
[ðə 'tɪŋklərz kov]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The Hole is a cave which was used as a refuge by tinklers or travelling people. Sc tinkler is the older variety of tinker.

The initial element kunks is obscure but it may simply be a misrepresentation of tinks', an abbreviated form of G Sc tinkers.

.....

LANGYPO : ND 27 SW: 228743 D38(T)

Local pronunciation: ['laŋʌpau]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Uncertain, but possibly

Sc pow : see T89(T)

used figuratively in this instance to indicate the tip of the land.

The name describes a long point of land jutting out into the sea.

.....

LERI GEO : ND 27 SW: 204716 D39(T)

WELL OF LERY GEO : " : 206717

Local pronunciation: ['lɛri gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: D39(T) (cont'd)

ON leir n.: clay, earth, loam, but also mud, especially on the beach, as in this case

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

LITTLE CLETT : ND 27 SW: 223743 D40(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɪt] 'klɛt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

LOCH BURIFA' : ND 27 NW: 203762 D41(T)

Local pronunciation: ['burifa]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc loch : see R5(S)

Possibly

ON borg f.: see R32(S)

ON fjall n.: see D9(S)

(ON borg can refer either to a small dome-shaped hill or to the fortification on it.

There is no trace of a fortification on this hill now which casts doubt on the above interpretation of the specific because it is unlikely that the Norse would have felt it necessary to combine two elements, both referring to hill.)

.....

LOCH OF BUSHTA : ND 17 SE: 194725 D42(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx ə 'buʃta]

Early refs: Loch Busta 1750 Roy

L. Busta 1807 Arrowsmith

L. Busta 1831 Thomson

D42(T)
(cont'd)

Derivation:

Sc loch : see R5(S)

Possibly

ON bólstaðr: see R21(S)

(cf Busta in Delting, Shetland. (Jakobsen 1897, page 115))

There is no trace of the settlement today - only the loch retains the name indicating possible earlier settlement.

.....

LOCH HEILEN : ND 26 NE: 255683 D43(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx ə 'helɛn]

Early refs:

Loch Hallan	1750	Roy
Loch Hallen	1807	Arrowsmith
Loch Haellan	1831	Thomson
Loch of Hailand	1841	Census
Loch Hayland	1850	Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:

This name has been interpreted as Loch of Healing (Beaton 1909, page 8), but it is possible that Beaton confused this loch with St. John's Loch (see D34(S)) or, as it is more frequently known, Dunnet Loch, because he comments with reference to Loch Heilen: "Its reputation for miraculous cures died out before 1800, but persons came to the Loch of Dunnet to be cured as late as 1825 or 1830." Only St. John's Loch is today referred to as Dunnet Loch and there is no record of Loch Heilen having, at any time, been described as such.

Unfortunately, the earliest written record of the name is dated 1750 which makes it extremely difficult to suggest a derivation with any degree of certainty. The modern version of the name seems to indicate that the loch was named after a neighbouring settlement or some locally significant topographical feature because it invariably takes the form Loch of ... [lɔx ə ...].

The settlement, or the land adjacent to the loch, was possibly known as *Halland incorporating either

ON hár : see D17(S)

ON land n.: see OL16(S) or

OSc hey(e), hei(e) D43(T) (cont'd)

: high

OSc land : see T49(S)

Early spellings favour ON hár as the specific, but pronunciation favours OSc hey(e), hei(e).

.....

LOCH OF MUIRS : ND 27 SW: 203734 D44(T)

WELL OF MUIR : " : 215725

Local pronunciation: [lɔx ə 'mjurs]

Early refs: L Muir 1750 Roy

L Muir 1807 Arrowsmith

L Muir 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc loch : see R5(S)

Sc muir (also mair)

: a moor

Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

LONG BYRE : ND 17 NE: 193762 D45(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ 'bair]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc byre : cowshed

The name describes a long, flat stretch of rock of a uniform shape, probably thought to resemble a byre.

As in other instances, however, this may mask an earlier

ON berg n.: see T2(T)

.....

LONG LOCH : ND 27 NW: 205760 D46(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ 'lɔxi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc loch : see R5(S)

(A diminutive ending is always added in pronunciation.)

.....

LUCIFER MOSS : ND 27 SE: 264706 D47(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lusɾfər mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There are two possibilities for this name.

1) The peat cut from this moss may have been of a particularly good quality and the small "blue clods" may have sputtered and sparked as they burned.
2) The moss itself may have been used as the flammable substance at the tip of home-made lucifer matches.

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

MANY LOCHS : ND 17 SE: 197746 D48(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'mɛni lɔxs]

Early refs: The Many Lochs 1750 Roy
Manny Lochs 1807 Arrowsmith
Many Lochs 1832 Thomson

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

It is possible that this series of small lochs had individual names at one time, but there is no record of such.

The definite article which occurs in Roy (1750) is retained in modern pronunciation.

.....

MARRY GEO : ND 27 SW: 227742 D49(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mari gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc mar : clay, mud, mire; specifically a fine bluish or whitish clay. (Ork 1929. Marwick - SND)

(Here used adjectivally.)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

POINT OF NESS : ND 27 SW: 208710 D50(T)

Local pronunciation: [pɔint ə 'nɛs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai ness : see T13(S)

Point and Ness are similar in application but not identical. Ness describes a long stretch of land jutting out into the sea, whereas Point is normally more restricted in its application, to the tip of the land.

.....

POOL OF BACKWAY : ND 27 SW: 211709 D51(T)

Local pronunciation: [pul ə 'bakwe]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a shore-line pool.

Backway is difficult without earlier references, but the situation suggests

ON bakki m.: see T2(T)

as the specific.

The final element is obscure.

.....

RED GEO : ND 17 SE: 182738 D52(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rɛid gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Red : the reference is to the colour of the rock in the area

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

REDSTONE HILL : ND 17 SE: 197727 D53(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rɛdstən 'hɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

ROTTEN GEO : ND 27 SE: 264748 D54(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rɔtən gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent name. The reference is probably to rotting seaweed in the geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

ROUGHY KILN : ND 27 NW: 216757 D55(T)

Local pronunciation: [rʌfi 'kɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference may be to the kiln-like (cf T85(T)) shape of the geo which the name describes, and the roughness of the sea in it, although Roughy possibly masks an earlier

ON rófa f.: a reef.

.....

ROWRASH : ND 17 SE: 195722 D56(T)

ROWRAMPS : " : 183731

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: Rowramps 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The element row occurs more than once in Caithness names, always with reference to headlands. Without further early references it is impossible to suggest a derivation for this element with any degree of certainty.

One possibility is

ON rá f. : a sailyard, being used figuratively to describe a promontory jutting out at an angle from the land.

(cf Shetland ro

: Jakobsen 1932, page 707)

Sc rash : form of Eng rush

Sc ramps (also ramsh)

: the wild garlic

.....

RUTHY GEO : ND 27 SE: 256745 D57(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rʌfi gjo]

['rʌθi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is possibly

ON raudr : see OL21(T)

although modern pronunciation is variable and sometimes suggests

ON rófa f.: see D55(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SANDERS LOCH : ND 17 SE: 187747 D58(T)

NETHER SANDERS LOCH: " : 192745

Local pronunciation: ['sandəɾs lɔx]

Early refs: Loch Sanders 1831 Thomson

Derivation: D58(T) (cont'd)

Sander is most probably the local version of Alexander but there appears to be no traditional story relating to the name.

Sc nether : see OL27(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

SANDYBURN : ND 26 NW: 232686 D59(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sandi 'bʌrn]

Early refs: Sandy Burn 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

SCARWALL : ND 27 SW: 225742 D60(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes shore-line rocks and the first element could possibly represent

ON skarfr m.: see R145(T)

The second element is very puzzling because wall often represents

ON völlr m. : a field, but the coastal situation makes this a most improbable source.

.....

SCORE, LITTLE : ND 27 NW: 217752 D61(T)

SCORE, MEIKLE : " : 217755

Local pronunciation: [lɪtl 'skor, mikl ...]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc meikle (also mikill, muckle)

: large

Sc score : a crevice, cleft or gully in a cliff face. (< ON

skor f. : a notch, cut, a rift in a rock or precipice.)

.....

SCOTHABREAK : ND 27 SW: 207714 D62(T)
SCOTHA CLEFT : " : 205715
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
It is impossible to suggest a derivation of the specific scotha without either early spellings or modern pronunciation.
The generic break could represent an earlier
ON brekka f.: see R33(S)

.....

SHIRA GEO : ND 17 NE: 194763 D63(T)
Local pronunciation: ['ʃirə gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
Sc shire : clear, pure, unclouded - applied to liquid
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SINNIGOE, BURN OF : ND 27 NW: 212753 D64(T)
OUTER SINNI GEO : " : 218752
INNER SINNI GEO : ND 27 SW: 219746
Local pronunciation: ['sɪni gjo]
Early refs: Sinnigo 1750 Roy
Sinnigo 1807 Arrowsmith
Sinnegoe 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc burn : see R4(S)
There are two possibilities for the specific
1) Sc sinnie
: a variant of English sinew
or, more probably, given the situation
2) Sc sinna
: Also sinni-, -y; one of several kinds of seaside grasses. (< ON sina: a kind of rush, withered grass.)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SIR JOHN'S CASTLE : ND 27 SW: 242736 D65(T)

Local pronunciation: [sɪr dʒɔns 'kasl̩]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There are conflicting local stories regarding this name.
One local informant was told of the existence of a building on the edge of the cliff at this point but unfortunately, Alexander Ronaldson, who was the source of this information is now deceased.
Another informant has suggested that there was originally a rock, detached from the cliff which was known as Sir John's Castle, but this rock toppled into the sea and the name was transferred to the nearby cliff.
Sir John is reputed to have been Sir John Sinclair of Ratter.
There is no record of a castle in this position in the Inventory of Monuments.

.....

SMALL GEO : ND 27 SE: 261747 D66(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sma gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SOW'S GEO : ND 27 NW: 213764 D67(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sus gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)
Presumably a sow fell to its death in this geo at a time when pigs were commonly reared in Caithness.

.....

STONY MOUTH : ND 17 SE: 194723 D68(T)

Local pronunciation: [stoni 'muθ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a small geo with boulders at the entrance. It is surprising that the local pronunciation is [stoni] rather than Caithness dialect [steni].

.....

SWEERAG WELL : ND 27 SE: 261744 D69(T)

Local pronunciation: ['swirag wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc sweerie-well or sweerag well defined in the Fife Herald (1831) as follows:

"Like Sweerie-Wells, which flow plentifully for a while after rain, but cannot be depended on for a constant stream."

.....

THE CAIRNS : ND 27 SW: 209729 D70(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kerns]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

.....

THE HAVEN : ND 27 SE: 259745 D71(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'hevən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc haven : see R55(S)

.....

THE KAME : ND 27 SW: 223740 D72(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kem]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kame : a long, narrow, steep-sided mound or ridge, a hill-ridge. Frequent in place-names.

(< ON kambr m.

: a crest)

.....

THE NEBACK : ND 17 NE: 194764 D73(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə'nɛbɐg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Probably

Sc neb + dimin -ack

: any pointed tip or projection, of a piece of land, rock etc.

.....

THE NESS : ND 27 SW: 209713 D74(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'nɛs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai ness : see T13(S)

.....

THE STACKS : ND 27 SW: 234743 D75(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'stacks]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai stack : a tall column of rock rising out of the sea in front of a cliff, of which it had originally formed a part till separated by weathering.

v. Pennant's Tour (1769): "Near Freswick Castle the cliffs are very lofty ... Beneath are great insular columns, called here stacks."

cf. Faeroese: stakkur: a high, insulated rock.

.....

THE THIRL : ND 17 SE: 186727 D76(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə'θɛrl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc thirl : a hole or aperture, especially in a wall.

The name describes a long and very narrow geo.

.....

TOWERIMS CRAIG : ND 27 SW: 234742 D77(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is osbscure.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

TREE GEO : ND 27 SE: 259746 D78(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tri gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A commonly occurring name and the reference is usually to driftwood rather than natural vegetation.

.....

WINDY GEO : ND 27 SE: 256743 D79(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wɛndi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

CHAPTER EIGHT: CANISBAY PARISH

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Canisbay Parish has both an east and a north coast and, unlike any other Caithness parish, it includes a sizeable island, the island of Stroma, which lies approximately two kilometres off the north coast.

On the island of Stroma one is particularly aware of that ubiquitous coastal feature, the geo. The local red sandstone is prone to vertical faulting which, when subjected to wave action, is rapidly eroded into narrow, near-vertical openings in the cliffs, known as geos (see R54(T)). The island of Stroma was evacuated in the post-war years since its population had dwindled and it was found to be no longer viable as a community. It is, however, still farmed by a local person who lives on mainland Canisbay and travels to Stroma by boat, sometimes staying on the island in summer.

There are several small harbours on the north coast of mainland Canisbay, most notably at John o' Groats from which there is a passenger ferry to Orkney. Most settlement is concentrated on the coastal area within one kilometre of the sea both on the north and on the east coast, while the interior is still largely unimproved moor with only scattered farms.

Tourism is of considerable importance in this parish. John o' Groats, at the end of the A9 trunk road, attracts many thousands of visitors while the much more impressive Duncansby Head, the north-eastern extremity of the parish, draws a much smaller number.

There is no record of Gaelic having been spoken at any time in Canisbay Parish.

The water from the Canisbay plateau drains eastwards into the sea or south-eastwards into the Wick River in Wick Parish which borders Canisbay to the south.

SETTLEMENT NAMES

AUCKINGILL	: ND 36 SE:	370645	C1(S)
BRIDGES OF AUCKINGILL	: " :	371644	
LOCH OF AUCKINGILL	: ND 36 NE:	353652	
MILLTOWN (OF AUCKINGILL)	: " :	377643	

Local pronunciation : ['aukəngɹl]

Early refs:			
	Ockyngille	1410	RMS
	Ockingille	"	"
	Ochtingill	1547	"
	Otkingill	1554	"
	Ockingill	1635	"
	Olkingill	1601	Sinclair (Mey)
Milntoun of	Olkingill	"	"
	Okingill	1613	"
	Ockingill	1653	Retours
Milntoun of	Ockingill	"	"
	Ockingile	1696	"
	Okengil	1662	Blaeu
	Ouckingill	1683	OLM
	Ockingill	1750	Roy
	Oukingill Mill	1832	Thomson
B. of	Oukingill	"	"
Milltown of	Oukingill	"	"

Derivation:

The specific in this name presents many problems. It has been suggested (Omand 1972, page 225) that the source is

ON Hâkon m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 448)

The generic, however, is undoubtedly

ON gil n. : see R11(T),

and it would be most unusual in Caithness to find a personal name compounded with ON gil, although there is one other possible, but similarly doubtful instance (see C130(T)).

Also, although inflexional endings were subject to phonological reduction, one would expect to find some trace of the genitival ending -ar (Hákonar-gil) in early references, but there is no evidence of its presence. Initial [h] could be lost at an early

stage in the development of a compound but, in the case of a well-known name such as Hâkon, its loss would have been less likely to occur. C1(S) (cont'd)

A more probable source of the specific is

ON haukr m.: a hawk.

This element occurs in place-names in Iceland in its genitive plural form hauka (eg Hauka-gil; Hauka-dalr).

For the Caithness name one would have to assume a genitive plural + suffixed definite article:

Hauka-nna gil.

The vowel of the initial syllable is always <o> in early references which might seem to negate the above suggestion, but <o> is used elsewhere to represent ON au (see W5(S)) and, furthermore, modern pronunciation is clearly diphthongal.

Sc loch : see R5(S)

Sc milntoun: see R60(S)

.....

BARROGILL MAINS FARM: ND 27 SE: 295738 C2(S)

BARROGILL COTTAGE : " : 296738

Local pronunciation : ['barəgʌl]

Early refs:

Baregil	1606	Sinclair (Mey)
Barregill	"	"
Barragill	1608	"
Barrogil	1609	"
Barrogill	1611	"
Barigill	1613	"
Berrigill	1615	"
Barrigile	1681	"
Barrigill	1603	RMS
Barriegill	1623	"
Barrogil Castle	1793	OSA
Baragil Castle	1803	Sutherland (Forse)
Barrogill Castle	1831	Thomson

Derivation:

Interpretation of the specific is difficult.

It could possibly derive from C2(S) (cont'd)

ON barr m.: barley; corn

although ON bygg n. is the common word for barley throughout Scandinavia.

ON gil n. : see R11(T)

(For a similar name-type cf W2(S).)

(Berrigill (1615) is an isolated variant. ON berg n.: see T2(T), would not be particularly appropriate to the situation, although it could perhaps have applied to a mound "of indeterminate character" in a cultivated field about a quarter of a mile WSW of Barrogill Castle (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 18).

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

BRABSTERMIRE : ND 36 NW: 324695 C3(S)

BATTANS OF BRABSTER: " : 323678

BRABSTERMIRE HOUSE : " : 317693

Local pronunciation: ['brɛpstər] [ðə 'batəns ə brɛpstər]

Early refs:

Brabustyrmyr	1519	Sutherland (Forse)
Brabstermyir	1584	"
Brabastermyre	1538	RMS
Brabistermyre	1542	"
Brabustermyir	1604	Sinclair (Mey)
Brabistermyre	1613	"
Brabstermyir	1614	"
Brabuster	1662	Blaeu
Brabstermyre	1671	Retours
Brobustermyre	"	"
Brabster	1726	Macfarlane
Brebster	1750	Roy
Braibster	"	"
Brabstermire	1832	Thomson
Baddens of Brabstermire	1877	6" OS

Derivation:

ON breiðr : see R34(S)

Local pronunciation preserves the vowel quality of the original ON breiðr.

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S) C3(S) (cont'd)

ON myrr f. : see OL21(T)

The final element -mire is generally omitted in speech.

Battans/Baddens represents

ON beiti n. : pasturage + gen form of def art

.....

BUCHOLLY CASTLE : ND 36 NE: 383658 C4(S)

CASTLE GEO : " : 383658

CASTLE WELL : " : 380658

Local pronunciation: [bə'xɔli kasl̩]

Early refs: Bowquholle 1549 RMS

Bouguholle " "

Boquhellie " RSS

Balchollie 1565 Retours

Bolquhollie 1653 "

Bucholie Castle 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

Macfarlane describes the Caithness castle as a "residence of Mowat of Balquholly". The Mowat family having received a charter of the lands of Freswick from King Robert the Bruce, brought the present name of Bucholie with them from their estate in Aberdeenshire. (Omand 1972, page 153-154) William Alexander in his book "The Place-Names of Aberdeenshire" derives Balquholly from

G baile m. : see R25(S)

G coille f.: a wood

(Alexander 1952, page 16)

Bucholie Castle is reputed to have been built on the site of Sweyn Asleifson's stronghold of Lambaborg as mentioned in the Orkneyinga Saga.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

CANISBAY, WEST : ND 37 SW: 338724 C5(S)

CANISBAY, EAST : " : 344725

Local pronunciation: ['kanəsbi]

C5(S) (cont'd)

Early refs:	Cananesbi	1222-45	OLM
	Canenisbi	"	"
	Cranesby	1275	Bagimond's Roll
	Cananby	1276	"
	Canysby	1437	OLM
	Canesbi	1445	"
	Cannasby	1455	RMS
	Kanesby	1539	"
	Cannesbie	"	"
	Kannesbie	1508	Sinclair (Mey)
	Cannisbe	1554	"
	Canespie	1582	"
	Canesbey	1631	"
	Canesbay	1640	"
	Canisby	1547	RSS
	Kirk of Canesbie	1653	Retours
	Conansbay	1662	Blaeu

There are numerous early examples of this name but those listed here give a clear impression of the variant spellings which occur.

Derivation:

Various sources have been suggested for this name. (Mowat 1931, page 3) The generic is OWScand bǽr (see C7(S)). There are only two examples of names containing this generic in Caithness - Duncansby and Canisbay - and since the specific in Duncansby is certainly a Celtic personal name (see C8(S)), it seems reasonable to argue that this may also be true of the specific in Canisbay.

Canisbay Church was dedicated to the Celtic Saint Drostán whose name is associated with the founding of the monastery at Deer in Aberdeenshire and in the Gaelic notes in "The Book of Deer" mention is made of a Clann Chanann who held lands locally. The actual reference is to "taesec Clande Canan" (Jackson 1972, page 32), ie toiséch, or chief, of Clann Chanann, in which Chanann is the genitive form of the name Cano, a rare one and probably of Pictish origin. (Jackson 1972, page 111)

In the case of Canisbay it would have to be assumed that the Norse knew the occupant of the farm as a member of the Clann Chanann and,

to the Celtic name-form which was already in the genitive they added a further ON gen sing masc inflexional ending -s. C5(S) (cont'd)

The original Celtic genitival ending had merged with the stem by the 15th century and only an intrusive [ə] remained between the final consonants of the stem and the genitival -s.

Finally it should be noted that the deviant forms recorded in Bagimond's Roll are not significant. The <r> in Cranesby never reappears and the 1276 form which lacks genitival -s is likewise an isolated instance.

Blaeu's version (1662) appears to contain the original Celtic genitival ending but it is more probable that Blaeu, or Timothy Pont, assumed that the specific represented the well-known Celtic personal name Conan, although all other early forms of the name have <a> in the initial syllable.

.....

CRACKERSFIELD : ND 26 NE: 297699 C6(S)

Local pronunciation: ['krakɔrsfild]

Early refs: Park of Crackersfield Croft 1718 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Park of Crackersfield 1771 Sinclair (Mey)
Crackersfield 1841 Census

Derivation:

The specific Crackers is obscure without further early references. It was probably an ON settlement name which has been subject to phonological reduction following the addition of the generic field.

Sc croft : see R11(S)

.....

DUNCANSBY	:	ND 37 SE:	385727	C7(S)
DUNCANSBY HEAD	:	" :	406732	
BURN OF DUNCANSBY	:	" :	391710	
BIEL OF DUNCANSBY	:	" :	388708	
BOARS OF DUNCANSBY	:	" :	388743	
HA' OF DUNCANSBY	:	" :	376732	
HA' GREEN	:	" :	376734	
NESS OF DUNCANSBY	:	" :	390738	
STACKS OF DUNCANSBY	:	" :	400719	

Local pronunciation: ['dauŋkəsbi]
['dʌŋkənsbi]

Early refs:

Dungalsbær	12th C	Orkneyinga Saga
Dungsby	1515	RMS
Duncasbie	1592	"
Dunkasbie	"	"
Dungasbie	1606	"
Dongasby	1525	OPS
Dungasbe	1573	Sinclair (Mey)
Dungusbe	1574	"
Dungysbȳ	1573	Ortelius
The Boȳer	"	"
Duncans Bay	1662	Blaeu
The Boers of Dungysby	"	"
Dungysby or Duncans Bay Head	"	"
Dungsbay Head	1750	Roy
Stacks of Dungsbay	"	"

Derivation:

There are numerous early written references to Duncansby but remarkably little variation in its presentation which accords very closely with the pronunciation used by older local people today: ['dauŋkəsbi].

The specific appears to be a Celtic personal name Dungal.

Duncan first appears as an alternative to Dungal in Blaeu (1662) and since that time, due to the powerful influence of the written form, it has gradually usurped the earlier Dungal.

At the present day the pronunciation ['dauŋkənsbi] is regarded as

being archaic and younger locals invariably say ['dʌŋkənsbi], pointing to the written form on the map as their justification. C7(S) (cont'd)

As regards the generic, the Orkneyinga Saga reference points clearly to OWScand bǽr which, in Norway seems to have been generally used of an isolated farmhouse and perhaps also originally of cultivated land. (Fellows Jensen 1972, page 6) Both of these usages could have been appropriate to the Caithness name.

When the generic bǽr occurs as the second element of a compound name it is normally spelt -bi or -by in Orkney and Shetland, and similarly in Caithness. When used as a simplex name it takes the forms Bay and Bea.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc biel', bield: see R154(T)

Sc bore, boar : "used as a place-name for a bad roost (tidal race) in the Bore of Papay (ORK 1929 Marwick)"

The Caithness name has the same derivation.

Sc ha' : hall

Sc green : a piece of grassy ground in front of a house, frequent in combinations such as kirk-, manse- etc.

Cai ness : see T13(S)

Cai stack : see D75(T)

The Stacks of Duncansby are three conspicuous rocks in the sea off Duncansby Head, known locally as Muckle Stack, Peedie Stack and Tom Thoom.

Sc muckle : see D61(T)

Cai peedie : small, tiny

(variant form of recent origin c1900 of peerie: origin somewhat doubtful. The word is now current only in Shetland and Orkney)

Sc thoom : form of Eng thumb

.....

EVERLY : ND 36 NE: 368689 C8(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ivərli]

Early refs:

Ovirlie	1549	RMS
Ovirley	1635	"
Overly	1653	Retours

ON yfir : upper C8(S) (cont'd)

(cf Sc over: OL27(S))

ON hlíð : see R59(S)

.....

FRESWICK : ND 36 NE: 372675 C9(S)

FRESWICK HOUSE : " : 378672

FRESWICK MAINS : " : 378671

FRESWICK LINKS : " : 376674

FRESWICK BAY : " : 385673

FRESWICK BURN : " : 373676

FRESWICK BRIDGE : " : 369677

Local pronunciation: ['frɛzɪk]

Early refs:

Þrasvík	12th C	Orkneyinga Saga
Þrasvík	13th C	Njáls Saga
Freswike	1410	RMS
Freswic	"	"
Freschwik	1549	"
Frescewik	1554	"
Freschweik	1635	"
Freschewik	1579	Sinclair (Mey)
Fresyk	1595	Mercator
Fresh Wick	1662	Blaeu
Castle of Freswick	1726	Macfarlane

After 1726 the form is almost invariably Freswick.

Derivation:

Many attempts have been made to explain the specific in this name, none of them entirely satisfactory (see John Mowat 1931, page 7).

Later written forms of the name have certainly been influenced by OSc fresch(e) (also fres, freshe: fresh (of water)).

It seems likely that this familiar element, so appropriate in the context of the Freswick Burn, was substituted for an earlier unfamiliar Norse specific as recorded in both Orkneyinga Saga and Njáls Saga - Þrasvík.

When attempting to provide a derivation for this Norse specific Þras it seemed that a reasonable approach would be to consider it in

conjunction with the generic ON vík f.: see D12(S), in the hope of finding a clue to its identity. The term vík, in fact, only appears in two other names within the present six parishes; it occurs once as a simplex name (see W116(S)) and once as the generic in the name Dwarwick (see D12(S)). C9(S) (cont'd)

This seemed most unpromising, but further consideration of ON dvergr m.: a dwarf, which was suggested as a possible source of the specific in Dwarwick, led to some very interesting speculation as to the possible nature of Þras.

Lind records the following name: ON Þrar (gen Þras) as a mythological name which could be used of a dwarf as in Þrar dvergr (Lind 1915, column 1221). Could there have been some feature of the landscape surrounding these two víkr which prompted an association with the tales of the dwarves?

As mentioned in D12(S) the dwarves were the precursors of the trolls in northern mythology and there are certainly frequent references to trolls in Caithness place-names and it seems reasonable to presume, therefore, that dwarves would have been equally suitable place-name material.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc links : see OL33(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

GIARS : ND 37 SE: 367706 C10(S)

GIAR HILL : " : 363705

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: Gyres Mowat 1931 6" OS 1876

Gyer Hill " "

Derivation:

Interpretation is very difficult without further early written forms and modern pronunciation of the name.

It is possible that this hill was one of the many in Caithness whose name had its origin in local superstition. J.T. Calder notes with relation to Gyre, Gyar: "There was a sort of nondescript being called Gyrecarline that cut a considerable figure on the stage of our northern superstition. She assumed the appearance of an old woman

and paid her visits only at a certain season of the year - Candlemas and "Fasterneen"." Perhaps Giar or Gyre Hill was traditionally a haunt of such a person. (SND: Cai 1842 J.T. Calder 'Sketches' 223) C10(S) (cont'd)

.....

GILLS : ND 37 SW: 320727 C11(S)
GILLS HAVEN : " : 327729
GILLS BAY : " : 335735
WEST BURN OF GILLS : " : 323723
UPPER GILLS : " : 325715
Local pronunciation: [gɫls]
Early refs: Gillis 1564 Sinclair (Mey)
Gilles 1662 "
Gillis 1609 RMS
Gills 1664 "
Gils 1662 "

Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T) + Eng pl -s
Cai haven : see R55(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

The use of the specific Upper rather than Over Gills suggests that this derivative name is of Scots rather than Norse origin (cf OL27(S)).

.....

HARROW : ND 27 SE: 281741 C12(S)
FIELD OF HARROW : " : 278743
BRAES OF HARROW : " : 283742
Local pronunciation: ['haro]
Early refs: Harrow 1750 Roy
Field of Harrow 1841 Census

Derivation: Probably
ON hörgr m.: 1) a cairn of stones or stony hillock
2) a heathen temple-site

In Caithness the first definition is much more probable although it

is worth noting that a rock in the sea near Harrow is known as How Skerry (see C54(T)), apparently incorporating the specific C12(S) (cont'd)

ON haugr m.: see T44(S).

(For comments on haugar og hörgr see Marwick 1952, page 2: Harga.)

Sc brae : see R8(S)

.....

HAZELBRAKE : ND 27 SE: 281705 C13(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hezl brek]

Early refs: Hisselbrek 1603 RMS

Hasilbrek 1623 "

Derivation:

OSc hissill: hazel

(first recorded c1568)

OSc hasill : hazel

(from 1594)

Eng brake : a clump of bushes, brushwood or briers

.....

HEMP RIGG : ND 36 NE: 378677 C14(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛmprig]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

There are numerous early references to Hempriggs (see W48(S)) but none to Hemp Rigg(sing), although the two names are obviously of the same origin.

Derivation:

Sc hemp-rigg: a ridge of land on which hemp was sown; now only in farm names

(OSc rigge : strip of arable land, occurs in place-names c1170, and is a Sc form of Eng ridge, possibly from

ON hryggr m.: back, ridge

corresponding to OE hrycg.)

.....

HILL OF HARLEY : ND 36 NE: 375659 C15(S)

Local pronunciation: [hɪl ə 'harli]

Early refs:

Harlie	1635	RMS
Harlie	1653	Retours
Hairlie	1696	"
Harelie	1789	Ainslie
Harley	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

ON harðr : see OL16(S)

ON hlíð f.: see R59(S)

.....

HOLLANDMEY : ND 27 SE: 294705 C16(S)

HOLLANDMEY MOSS : " : 283705

BURN OF HOLLANDMEY : " : 294703

Local pronunciation: [hɔlən'mɛi]

Early refs:

Holandmay	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Holandmey	1553	"
Hollandmey	1561	"
Holen-Mey	1594	"
Holandmaii	1578	RMS
Hollandmey	1603	"
Hole of May	1662	Blaeu
Hollandmey	1831	Thomson
Holomey	1841	Census

Derivation:

ON hóll m.: see OL2(S)

ON land m.: see T49(S)

-mey : see C22(S)

(Blaeu's version (1662) is probably an attempt at rendering an incomprehensible element comprehensible. It has also influenced the 1841 form.)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

HUNA : ND 37 SE: 363733 C17(S)

Local pronunciation: ['huna]

Early refs:

Hwnaye	1574	Retours
Hunnay	1617	"
Hwnay	1575	RMS
Hwno	1581	Sinclair (Mey)
Hunow	1582	"
Hwna	1585	"
Hunay	1616	"
Hounay	1743	Sinclair (Freswick)
Huna	1750	Roy
Houna	1800	Ainslie

Derivation:

The specific is probably

ON Húni (gen Húna) m.

: a personal name (Lind 1915, column 599)

The generic may be

ON á f. : a river

There is a neighbouring stream, but it is diminutive and hardly seems to merit the description á, although ON á did have a wide range of application and could also occasionally refer to smaller streams.

.....

JOHN O' GROAT'S HOUSE: ND 37 SE: 378734 C18(S)

JOHN O' GROAT'S MILL : " : 372734

Local pronunciation : [jɔnɔ'grots]

Early refs:

John o' Grott's House	1726	Macfarlane
Johny Grotts House	1750	Roy
Johny Groats House	1750	Dorret

Derivation:

The story of the famous eight-sided house belonging to John Groat first appears in the Old Statistical Account of Canisbay but, regrettably, it seems to be apocryphal. Excavations revealed the foundations of a rectangular building, but no signs of the octagonal structure. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 20) (For details of the story see J.T. Calder 1887, page 12-15)

The Grot family first appear in a charter dated 1496 and there are frequent references to various members of the family after this date - mostly in Duncansby and Warse. One interesting entry in the Sinclair (Mey) papers (1564) refers to a John Grot who was in possession of lands in Stroma. It was obviously a family of some substance, and possession of these lands in Stroma gave rise to the spurious local tale that John Grot's surname was derived from his practice of charging a groat for the trip to Stroma. C18(S) (cont'd)

Macfarlane's reference is one of the first to incorporate medial <u>of</u> as in <u>John o' Grott</u>, and it may simply have arisen due to a misinterpretation of the diminutive ending <-y> in <u>Johny</u>.

The name is now frequently written <u>John o' Groats</u> - the final apostrophe, indicating ownership of the house, being omitted in the interests of brevity and simplicity.

.....

<u>KIRKSTYLE</u> : ND 37 SW: 343728 C19(S)

<u>Local pronunciation</u>: [kʌrk 'stail]

<u>Early refs</u>: Kirkstile 1841 Census

Derivation:

Sc <u>kirk</u> : see T27(S)

Sc <u>kirkstyle</u>: a narrow entrance into a churchyard closed by bars, a wicket or an arrangement of steps, common as a place of public resort, where meetings were arranged and announcements made, and where the bier was received into the churchyard at funerals. Sometimes used as the name of a house or farm near the churchyard ... as in this case.

.....

<u>LADYKIRK</u> <u>or</u>

<u>ST. MARY'S CHAPEL</u> : ND 37 SW: 387735 C20(S)

<u>Local pronunciation</u>: ['ledi kʌrk, -tʃapəl]

<u>Early refs</u>: Lady Chappel, Duncansbay 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation: C20(S)
(cont'd

The name describes the remains of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Sc kirk (see T27(S)) has now been substituted for chapel.

.....

LYREQUOY WELL : ND 37 SW: 344731 C21(S)

Local pronunciation: ['laer kwɛi]

Early refs: Lyrrequoy 1841 Census

Derivation:

ON leir n.: see D39(T)

(This element is more frequent in coastal names, as in this instance.)

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

MEY	:	ND 27 SE:	287727	C22(S)
MEY HILL	:	ND 37 SW:	312741	
EAST MEY	:	" :	305742	
MEN OF MEY	:	" :	309754	
TOWER O' MEN O' MEY	:	" :	309753	
WEST MEY	:	ND 27 SE:	284733	
LOCH OF MEY	:	" :	271736	
MOSS OF WEST MEY	:	" :	278722	
MILL OF MEY	:	" :	273746	
MILL GEO	:	" :	272746	
CAIRN O' MEY	:	" :	287737	
CASTLE OF MEY	:	" :	291739	

Local pronunciation: [mɛi]

Early refs: Mai	1250	Matthew Paris
May	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Mey	1553	"
Maye	1616	"
Eastsyd of Mey	1698	"
The Men of Maÿe	1573	Ortelius

Early refs (cont'd)

Maii	1578	RMS
Mei	1592	"
Meye	1603	"
Hill de May	1623	"
May	1662	Blaeu
Millton of Mey	1750	Roy

The name is consistently Mey from this date.

Derivation:

There is little variation in this name throughout the centuries but it is, nevertheless, difficult to suggest a fitting derivation. J.B. Johnston suggests that the source is

G magh (locative maigh) m.

: a field, level country. (Johnston 1934, page 252)

It is a tempting suggestion because it fits the topography but it would be most unusual to find a Gaelic appellative as a settlement name in Canisbay parish.

The obvious source, but for the fact that the description does not fit the situation, is

ON má-ey : seagulls' island.

It is perhaps possible that this could be an example of a commemorative name, but it would be extremely unusual for such a name, however fondly remembered, to be applied to a totally inappropriate situation in the new land.

More probable than either of these suggestions, although still doubtful, is that the source is

ON mór m. : a plain with sandy or gravelly soil.

This appellative has been recorded as a simplex name by Jakobsen in Unst, Shetland in the variant form mui. He recorded it as a common noun but notes that it has a specific reference to part of the fore-shore south of Baltasound. (Jakobsen 1932, page 576)

The early spellings of the Caithness name could possibly have been influenced by Latin Maius.

.....

PHILIP'S MAINS : ND 27 SE: 299719 C23(S)

PHILLIP'S HARBOUR : " : 282743

Local pronunciation: [fʌləps 'mens, ... 'harbər]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Philip's Mains was apparently named after Louisa Philips, wife of the 14th Earl of Caithness and daughter of Sir George Philip. The name replaces an earlier name Nisseter, recorded

Nassettir	1578	RMS
Nessetter	1603	"
Nessiter	1623	"
Nisseter	1831	Thomson

Probably

ON nýr : new

ON setr n.: see R33(S)

(ON nes n.: see T13(S) does not fit the situation)

Phillip's Harbour was originally known as Wester Haven according to local informants.

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

QUOYS : ND 37 SW: 349728 C24(S)

NESS OF QUOYS : " : 345734

Local pronunciation: [kwɛis]

Early refs:

Quyis	1566	Sinclair (Mey)
Quhyis or Seittirquyis	1573	"
Qwys	1574	Retours
Qwyis	1575	RMS
Queyis	1575	Sinclair (Mey)
Qwoyes	1581	"
Queis	1582	"
Quoyis	1616	"
Quoyes	1617	"
Quyis	1619	Sutherland (Forse)
Queys	1750	Roy

Derivation:

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

The Sinclair (Mey) 1573 reference to Seittirquyis is particularly interesting because it clearly indicates the process of secondary settlement and expansion outwards from the already established farm of Seater (see C28(S)). C24(S) (cont'd)

Cai ness : see T13(S)

.....

RIGIFA' : ND 37 SW: 304725 C25(S)

HILL OF RIGIFA' : " : 305722

Local pronunciation: ['rigɪfa]

Early refs:

Riggifa	1603	RMS
Rigiefall	1623	"
Rigyfah	1801	Sinclair (Mey)
Rigifold	1841	Census

Derivation:

ON hryggr m.: see OL27(S)

Probably

ON fjall n. : see D9(S)

(This would originally have been a topographical name, subsequently adopted as a settlement name. English hill would have been added once the meaning of the original compound had become obscure.)

(The 1841 version Rigifold seems to be an isolated variant.)

.....

SCOOLARY : ND 26 NE: 298685 C26(S)

Local pronunciation: ['skuləri]

Early refs:

Scularie	1614	Sinclair (Mey)
Scoularie	1619	"
Skowlarie	1616	Sutherland (Forse)
Scoulairie	1619	"
Scoulary	1722	"
Skowlary	1739	"
Scullary	1739	"
Skoulery	1761	"
Sculery	1830	"
Scoullary	1697	OLM
Scoullarie	1798	Book of Valuation

Derivation: C26(S)
(cont'd)

ON Skúli, -a m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, page 925)
(see also Fellows Jensen 1968, page 254)
ON ærgi n. : see R66(S)

.....

SCOTLAND'S HAVEN : ND 37 SW: 317744 C27(S)
Local pronunciation: ['skɔtləns hevən]
Early refs: Skaitlandheavin 1603 RMS
" 1623 "
Scotland Haven 1750 Roy
" 1831 Thomson
(Orkney Ferry 1807 Arrowsmith)

Derivation:
Whatever the ultimate origin of this name it is clear that the modern pronunciation and conception of the name has been influenced by the version which is prevalent in maps from 1750. Arrowsmith gives the alternative name Orkney Ferry which is obviously based on the assumption that boats from Orkney landed on this shelving, sandy beach. It is possible that some boats may have landed here, if not from Orkney at least from Stroma, but there is no record or local knowledge of a regular ferry using this as a harbour. John o' Groats is the ferry terminal and has been regularly used as such since at least 1750.

Skaitlandheavin which is recorded in RMS has an equally puzzling specific because it is most improbable that the rough, uncultivated land around this little inlet would ever have been liable for the payment of skat, a tax levied on arable land.

The origin of the name must, therefore, remain obscure.
(For Cai haven: see T32(T).)

.....

SEATER : ND 37 SE: 355726 C28(S)
HAVEN OF SEATER : " : 354734
Local pronunciation: ['sɛitər]

Early refs:	Sceter	1563	Sinclair (Mey)	C28(S) (cont'd)
	Setyr	1566	"	
	Setter	1573	"	
	Seatter	1581	"	
	Sitter	1583	"	
	Seatoure	1616	"	
	Seittar	1574	Retours	
	Setre	1662	Blaeu	
	Sheater	1664	RMS	
	Syter	1750	Roy	

Derivation:

ON setr n.: see R33(S)

Cai haven : see T32(T)

(There is a suggestion of palatalisation of the initial consonant in the 1563 and 1664 references, but not in modern pronunciation.)

.....

SHEILTON : ND 27 SE: 287202 C29(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃiltən]

Early refs:	Scheiltoun	1623	RMS
	Schuletoun	"	"
	Sheillton	1661	"

Derivation:

Sc sheil (shiel)

: a small hut constructed for the accommodation of shepherds during the summer months when they reside among the mountains

Sc ton (toun)

: see R46(S)

In this case perhaps the shielings became established as permanent dwellings after a short initial period of seasonal use, because the element toun indicates permanent settlement.

.....

SKIRZA	:	ND 36 NE:	387684	C30(S)
SKIRZA HEAD	:	" :	394682	
HAVEN OF SKIRZA	:	" :	387680	

Local pronunciation: [skɹrzə 'hɛid]

Early refs:

Skirsarie	1625	Sinclair (Mey)
Skersarie	1635	RMS
Skersarie	1653	Retours
Scarskerry	1750	Roy
Scarscary	"	"
Scarsherry	1750	Dorret
Skirsay	1830	Sinclair (Freswick)
Scarskerry	1831	Thomson

Derivation:

The specific is most probably

ON Skerrir, -is m.

: a personal name (Lind 1915, page 914)

ON ærgi n.: see R66(S)

Cai haven : see T32(T)

Roy's version and subsequent imitations are obviously modelled on the Dunnet Parish name which Roy also records as Scarskerry (see D33(S)), but modern pronunciation of the name Skirza argues against a similar derivation for the two names.

.....

SLICKLY	:	ND 26 NE:	297667	C31(S)
BRIDGE OF SLICKLY	:	" :	295661	
BURN OF SLICKLY	:	" :	293664	
HILL OF SLICKLY	:	" :	298681	
BACK BURN OF SLICKLY	:	ND 36 SW:	314648	

Local pronunciation : ['slɹkli]

Early refs:

Sleiklie	1506	Sutherland (Forse)
Slecle	"	"
Sleiklie	1539	RMS
Sloiklie	1661	"
Sleiklie	1604	Sinclair (Mey)
Slieklie	1644	Retours
Slecklie	1695	Sutherland (Forse)
Slickly	1722	"
Slackly	1830	"

Derivation: C31(S) (cont'd)

Representation of the vowel in the specific is very variable which makes derivation difficult. One possible source is

ON slíkr : smooth

ON hlíð f.: see R59(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

SONSIQUOY : ND 36 NE: 383679 C32(S)

Local pronunciation: ['sɔnsikwɛi]

Early refs: Sonsaquhoy 1635 RMS

Sownsaquoy 1653 Retours

Sawsaguay 1696 "

Derivation:

The specific is very puzzling. It may possibly represent

Sc sonsie : of good fortune, lucky

with reference to the heavy yield from crops which could be expected in such a favourable situation.

In most Caithness quoy names the specific defines the nature of the soil or vegetation.

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

.....

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL : ND 37 SW: 311751 C33(S)

ST. JOHN'S POINT : " : 311752

Local pronunciation: [sn̩ jɔns 'tʃapəl, ...'hɛid]

Early refs: St. John's Heid 1653 Canisbay Parish Records

St. John's Chappell 1654 "

St. John's Chapel 1726 Macfarlane

St. John's Head 1750 Roy

Derivation:

A chapel dedicated to St. John which was, according to Rev. Beaton, "the centre of much superstition". (Beaton 1909, page 48)

The Parish Records state: "Alex^{r}. Cogill and Anna Barnatsone ar ordained to be charged for their superstitious goeing to St. John's Chappell". C33(S) (cont'd)

Fires were lit on 24th June - St. John's Eve - and this practice was also frowned upon by the Kirk Session.

The local version of the second name is usually St. John's Head rather than Point as recorded on the 6" OS map.

.....

ST. MADDAN'S CHAPEL: ND 36 NE: 376672 C34(S)

Local pronunciation: [sn̩ 'maðəns tʃapəl]

Early refs: Maddane's Chappell 1654 Kirk Session Records
St. Meddin 1654 "
St. Medon's Chappel 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

A chapel dedicated to St. Modan/Maddan/Medin "also the scene of many superstitious rites". (Beaton 1909, page 49)

.....

ST. TUSTAN'S CHAPEL: ND 36 NW: 317694 C35(S)

Local pronunciation: [sn̩ 'tʌstəns 'tʃapəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This name is apparently another variant of Drostán, head of the monastic institution at Deer in Buchan (cf OL37(S)).
(Beaton 1909, page 82)

.....

STEMSTER : ND 37 SE: 367721 C36(S)

BURN OF STEMSTER : " : 369723

Local pronunciation: ['stɛmstər]

Early refs:	Stamster	1606	Sinclair (Mey)	C36(S) (cont'd)
	Stamister	1632	"	
	Stemster	1635	"	
	Staymster	1655	"	
	Stembuster	1674	OLM	
	Steymster	1682	Sutherland (Forse)	
	Stempster	1779	Sinclair (Freswick)	
	Stamster	1784	"	

Derivation:

ON steinn m. : see R20(S)

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

There may have been a standing stone here or the reference may be to the broch. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 20)

This name also occurs in Reay Parish (cf R68(S)).

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

STROUPSTER : ND 36 NW: 333663 C37(S)

HILL OF STROUPSTER : " : 338661

BADDENS OF STROUPSTER: " : 337667

Local pronunciation : ['strupstər]

Early refs:	Strowbister	1635	RMS
	Strunbuster	1661	"
	Stronbister	1653	Retours
	Kirk of Strubster	1726	Macfarlane
	Stroubster	1801	Sinclair (Freswick)
	Strubster	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

The most probable source is

ON stórr : big, important (with metathesis of r)

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

(The nasal consonant which appears in the 1653 and 1661 examples is puzzling, but it is probably due to scribal error. There is no hint of its presence in modern pronunciation.)

Baddens < ON beiti n.

: see C3(S)

Sc kirk : see T27(S)

.....

THOMSONSFIELD : ND 37 SW: 331706 C38(S)

Local pronunciation: ['tɔmsənsfild]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A farm owned by a family of the surname Thomson (cf T5(S)).

.....

TOFTRANALD : ND 26 NE: 283683 C39(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON toft f.: see OL33(S)

ON Rǫgnvaldr/Ragn(v)aldr m.

: a personal name (Lind 1915, page 861)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 213)

This is an example of an "inversion-compound" which is usually seen as a test of specifically Norwegian influence in the colonial territory.

The names were formed and used by Scandinavians, but the word order in the compound indicates Celtic influence. (Wainwright 1964, page 141)

.....

TOFTS : ND 36 NE: 368683 C40(S)

Local pronunciation: [tofts]

Early refs:

Toftis	1549	RMS
Toftis	1563	Sinclair (Mey)
Toftes	1662	Blaeu
Toftis	1653	Retours
Tofts	1696	"
Toftes	1750	Dorret
Toftes	1800	Ainslie

Derivation:

Cai toft : see OL33(S) + variable Eng pl -is/-es/-s

This element occurs as a simplex name in other areas which have been subject to Scandinavian influence. (cf Toftes, a lost vill in the manor of Wombwell, Upper Strafforth. Fellows-Jensen 1972, page 89)

.....

TRESDALE : ND 37 SW: 349715 C41(S)

Local pronunciation: ['trɛisdəl]

Early refs: Trestal 1841 Census

Derivation:

ON tré n. : a tree

ON dalr : see R22(S)

.....

WARSE : ND 37 SW: 333723 C42(S)

HILL OF WARSE : " : 337716

HAVEN OF WARSE : " : 329728

ROUGH OF WARSE : " : 332729

Local pronunciation: [wɔ:rs]

Early refs:

Warris	1508	Sinclair (Mey)
Werris	1563	"
Wairis	1566	"
Warse	1582	"
Waris	1583	"
Wairs	1634	"
Warres	1635	"
Werris	1539	RMS
Varis	1636	"
Wares	1726	Macfarlane
Waars	1750	Roy

Derivation:

The most probable source is

ON ár-óss m.: the mouth of a river

(The Burn of Miremuckle (see C19(T)) flows into the sea at the Haven of Warse.)

Jakobsen comments that in Shetland place-names initial [w] occurs in the genitive singular form of ON á (Jakobsen 1901, page 71) and it is likely that a similar phonetic development would be characteristic of Caithness, ie

ON ár (gen sing) > Cai wár (in initial position in a compound).

Cai haven : see T32(T)

ON rófa f. > Cai rough

: see D55(T)

.....

TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES

BARBERRY HEAD : ND 37 SW/NW: 313752 C1(T)

Local pronunciation: ['barbəri hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

ON barð n.: the verge, margin, edge of a hill

Cai berry : see T2(T)

(cf Bar Berry S2(T))

.....

BAY OF SANNICK : ND 37 SE: 397735 C2(T)

Local pronunciation: ['be ə 'sanɪk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON sandr : see R64(S)

ON vík f. : see D12(S)

The tautologous English Bay would have been added at a subsequent date, once the process of phonological reduction had rendered the Norse compound incomprehensible.

.....

BIG SKERRY : ND 37 SW: 313756 C3(T)

Local pronunciation: ['big skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

BLACKEN BERRY : ND 37 SW: 307748 C4(T)

Local pronunciation: ['blakən bɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably Eng black, although the suffix -en is puzzling. It could possibly be an abbreviation of Eng blackened.

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

BLACK GEO : ND 27 SE: 278747 C5(T)

BLACK HILL : ND 36 NE: 385690

BLACK HOLE : ND 37 SW: 337728

Local pronunciation: [blak 'gjo, ... 'hɤl, ... 'hɔl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BLACK LOCH : ND 37 SW: 338708 C6(T)

Local pronunciation: ['blak lɔx]

Early refs: Black Loch 1750 Roy

Derivation:

The reference is to the dark, peat-coloured water of the Loch.

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

BLACK SCORE : ND 36 NE: 382653 C7(T)

Local pronunciation: [blak 'skor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a deep, narrow inlet of the sea, and the generic is probably

Sc score : see D61(T)

perhaps being used in the specialised sense of a fishing-ground close to the shore (Jakobsen 1932, page 800).

.....

BLAE GEO : ND 37 SW: 315748 C8(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ble gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai blae : dialectal form of Eng blue

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BOAT GEO : ND 37 SW: 308751 C9(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bot gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

An inlet where a boat was commonly moored.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BRAES OF GERSTAL : ND 27 SE: 291743 C10(T)

Local pronunciation: [bres ɔ 'gɛrstəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc brae : see R8(S) + Eng pl -s

The origin of Gerstal is obscure without further early reference.

.....

BROAD EBB : ND 27 SE: 283745 C11(T)

Local pronunciation: [brɔd 'ɛb]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc ebb : see T48(S)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

BROAD SOUND : ND 37 SW: 312755 C12(T)

Local pronunciation: ['brod sun]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON sund n.: a sound, strait, narrow passage

The name describes the stretch of water between the Men of Mey (see C22(S)) and Big Skerry (see C3(T)).

.....

BROTHIE GEO : ND 37 SE: 378735 C13(T

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Possibly Eng broth + dimin -ie, describing waves, which are constantly churning up debris from the sea-bottom.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BRUNT POOL : ND 27 SE: 297748 C14(T

BRUNT SKERRIES : " : 286745

Local pronunciation: [brʌnt 'piul]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific in both these names appears to be

Sc brunt : past participle of the verb 'to burn'

but it seems an odd partner for both the generics, particularly Pool. The reference could possibly be to colour, suggesting brownness.

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

BUGHT : ND 37 SW: 312751 C15(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌxt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai bught : a dialectal variant of Eng bight, a wide bay

(cf Danish and Swedish bugt)

.....

BURN OF BOG : ND 36 NE: 358687 C16(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'bɔg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

The name describes a stream running through a marshy area.

.....

BURN OF HORSEGROW : ND 27 SE: 279727 C17(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Given that the specific is horse, it seems likely that grow is a variant spelling of

Sc kro (cru(e), croo, kru(e))

: an enclosure or fold for animals

(This suggestion may also apply to Helshigrow: see D10(T) and Hatliegrow: see W47(S) in which the specifics are obscure.)

.....

BURN OF LYNEGAR : ND 37 SE: 382703 C18(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'lainigar]

Early refs: Lyneaiker 1587 RMS

Lynager 1661 "

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

ON lín-akr m.

: a flax field

Lynegar was possibly originally a settlement name but it now refers to the stream.

.....

BURN OF MIREMUCKLE : ND 37 SW: 334710 C19(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə mair'mʌkɫ]

Early refs: Myremikill 1603 RMS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc myre/mire : a boggy area

Sc mikill/muckle: see D61(T)

In Caithness (Canisbay Parish in particular) mire appears to have had a more precise application in that it frequently refers to the stream running through the marsh, rather than to the marshy ground itself.

In the above example Burn was probably added once Mire ceased to be used in the specialised local sense of stream.

.....

BURN OF ORMIGILL : ND 27 SE: 282701 C20(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'ormə$\text{g}_{\text{ɹ}}$l]

Early refs: Ormigill 1603 RMS

Ormigill 1623 "

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

ON ormr m.: see T61(S)

ON gil n. : see R11(T)

.....

BURN OF SHELLYBRAE : ND 36 NE: 357696 C21(T)

Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'ʃɛlə$\text{b}_{\text{ɹ}}$e]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc brae : see R8(S)

Perhaps gulls and other sea-birds drop shells here or there may, at one time, have been a shell-midden although there is no record of it in Inventory of Monuments.

(cf Shelley Hillock OL8(S))

.....

BURNT HILL : ND 37 SE: 397708 C22(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bʌrnt hɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is probably to the regular practice of heather-burning. The form of the specific has probably been updated from an earlier Sc brunt (cf C14(T)).

(Sc bruntland

: rough, mossy ground formerly burnt over periodically)

.....

BYKE YARDS : ND 36 NE: 383667 C23(T)

Local pronunciation: ['baik 'y$\text{ɛ}_{\text{ɹ}}$ds]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a rocky promontory and its origin is obscure.

.....

CHRISTAN HILL : ND 37 SE: 356702 C24(T)

Local pronunciation: ['krɛstən hɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There appears to be no extant local tradition regarding this name.
The hill may have had some religious significance at one point,
but without earlier forms it is impossible to be certain of the origin.

.....

CLAVENAGREEN : ND 36 NE: 384681 C25(T)

Local pronunciation: [klavn̥ə'grin]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a sloping grassy section in the cliff-face.

ON kleif f.: a ridge of cliffs or shelves in a mountainside +
gen pl def art -nna

ON grœnn : see D14(S)

.....

CRAIG HILL : ND 36 NW: 337699 C26(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kreg 'hɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

(ENAG or) CROW HILLOCK: ND 36 NE: 374662 C27(T)

Local pronunciation : [kra 'hɪlɐg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This is a rare instance of alternative names for the same feature
being given on the 6" OS map. Local informants no longer know the
alternative name Enag.
It seems likely that Crow Hillock is a straightforward modern

English name, while Enag is an earlier Gaelic version which does not specify a particular bird. C27(T) (cont'd

G eun m. : a bird + dimin -ag

The name occurs in a remote part of Canisbay parish which would have been subject to Gaelic influence from the south.

.....

DEUBIE GILL : ND 37 SW: 323734 C28(T)

Local pronunciation: ['dʒubi gil]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Modern pronunciation and situation both suggest derivation from

ON djúpr : deep

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

DOO CAVE : ND 36 NE: 382667 C29(T)

Local pronunciation: ['du 'kev]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc doo : dove

.....

EBBSGEO : ND 27 SE: 266746 C30(T)

EBBSGEO SKERRIES : " : 268746

NEAR EBBSGEO : " : 268745

Local pronunciation: ['ɛbs gjo]

Early refs: Ebisguois 1603 RMS

Derivation:

Sc ebb : see T48(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

Near Ebbsgeo: This is one of the clearest Caithness examples of the description of a situation in relation to another place-name being eventually accepted as a name in its own right.

In RMS (1603) the two inlets are combined in the plural form Ebisguois.

.....

EFFIE'S GEO : ND 36 NE: 394685 C31(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ɛfis gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is probably to a female called Effie (a familiar form of Euphemia), although there is no extant local tradition connecting such a female with the geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FAS BERRY : ND 37 SW: 303748 C32(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fa:s bɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is obscure.

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

FAST GEO : ND 36 NE: 397699 C33(T)

HEAD OF FAST GEO : " : 398698

Local pronunciation: ['fas gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is obscure.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FISH SCALE : ND 37 SE: 402724 C34(T)

Local pronunciation: [faiʃ 'skel]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

There is a similar name in Thurso parish which has early forms as follows:-

Fischill 1632 Retours

The Fishgill 1672 "

Fishill 1672 Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation: see T26(T)

.....

FLUTHERAM : ND 37 SE: 396736 C35(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a low-lying coastal reef and the form of the initial syllable suggests

ON flúð f.: low skerries or reefs flooded by the sea.

.....

FOLLIE GEO : ND 37 SE: 367737 C36(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fɔlɹ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON fugl (older form fogl) m.

: see D21(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FULLIEGEO : ND 27 SE: 288744 C37(T)

SLATES OF FULLIEGEO: " : 289744

Local pronunciation: ['fuli gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON fugl m.: see D21(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Cai slates: see R83(T)

.....

GANSPA WELL GEO : ND 36 SE: 380649 C38(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Ganspa : this element is obscure without further early references

Sc well : see R40(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEO OF BEDSDALE : ND 27 SE: 283743 C39(T)

Local pronunciation: [gjo ə 'bɛdsdel]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The specific Beds- is obscure without further early references.

ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
(anglicised to dale)

.....

GEO OF SCLAITES : ND 37 SE: 406731 C40(T)

Local pronunciation: [gjo ə 'slets]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Cai sclaites: see R83(T)

.....

GIBB'S CRAIG : ND 37 SE: 405727 C41(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gɪbs 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Gibb : a pet or diminutive form of Gilbert (Black 1946, page 297)

Sc craig : see R46(S)

(The name describes a rock at the extreme point of Duncansby Head and it has been immortalised in the following dialect rhyme:

"If Gibb's Craig fa's te'e lan'
Dungasby 'ill sink for sin.
Is lang's id stan's 'e sea
Dungasby hid spared will be.")

.....

GIDDY KETTLE : ND 37 SE: 399724 C42(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gidi kɛtl̩]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

giddy : see S27(T)

kettle : the reference is to the rounded shape of this inlet which has overhanging edges and resembles the shape of a cauldron or kettle

.....

GILL BURN : ND 36 NE: 360676 C43(T)

LITTLE GILL BURN : ND 36 NW: 348685

Local pronunciation: ['gɹl 'bʌrn]

Early refs: Referred to by Blaeu (1662) as Water of Freshwick (see C9(S))

Derivation:

Cai gill : see R54(T)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

GINDIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 375639 C44(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gɹndi gjo]

Early refs: Gindie Goes 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is obscure.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GIRN : ND 37 SE: 398705 C45(T)

Local pronunciation: [gɹrn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of Girn is obscure without further early references.

.....

GREEN GEO : ND 37 SE: 364738 C46(T)

GREENIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 372636

Local pronunciation: ['grin 'gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Recent names describing inlets with grass-covered sides.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GREEN HILL : ND 37 SE: 370719 C47(T)

GREEN MIRE : ND 36 NE: 393687

Local pronunciation: [grin 'hɨl, ... 'mair]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai mire : see C19(T)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

HANG : ND 37 SE: 374736 C48(T)

Local pronunciation: [haŋ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of this name is obscure. It describes some coastal rocks but there appear to be no overhanging edges.

.....

HAVEN, WESTER : ND 27 SE: 283743 C49(T)

HAVEN, EASTER : " : 293747

Local pronunciation: [wɛstər 'hevən, ɛistər -]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

HAVEN OF CLETTS : ND 36 NE: 381669 C50(T)

HAVEN OF SAND : ND 37 SE: 357735

HAVEN SKERRY : ND 36 SE: 378643

Local pronunciation: [hevən ə ˈklets, .. ˈsan, ˈhevən skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai haven : see T32(T)

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

HAW WELL : ND 36 SE: 366639 C51(T)

Local pronunciation: [ˈhɔ: wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference may be to a hawthorne tree which grew beside the well.

Sc well : R40(S)

.....

HEAD OF CREES : ND 37 SW: 320745 C52(T)

Local pronunciation: [hɛid ə ˈkris]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai cree : a house for sheep (Horne 1907, page 69)

.....

HILL OF CROGODALE : ND 37 SE: 397713 C53(T)

Local pronunciation: [hɪl ə ˈkraugədel]

Early refs: Cnoc a' Dile 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

It is most unlikely that there would be a Gaelic name in the far east of Canisbay Parish. The Gaelic Cnoc a' Dile: hill of the wort plant, is certainly not known to locals and can probably be dismissed as a map-maker's invention.

On the other hand, although the name is almost certainly of Norse origin, it is not easy to suggest a derivation for the specific

without further early references. C53(T)
(cont'd

The generic is

ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
(anglicised to dale)

.....

HOW SKERRY : ND 27 SE: 282746 C54(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hau skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON haugr m.: see T44(S)

Cai skerry : see R151(T)

(for a further comment on this name see C12(S).)

.....

HOWES BURN : ND 36 NE: 377677 C55(T)

Local pronunciation: ['haus bʌrn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The situation suggests derivation from

Sc howe : a hollow or low-lying piece of ground.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

HULLION : ND 36 SE: 381646 C56(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hʌliɔn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without further early references.

.....

JUMPAG : ND 27 SE: 269745 C57(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tʃʌmpag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: C57(T) (cont'd)

The name describes an off-shore rock and is probably an English variant of the numerous names referring to similarly positioned rocks and incorporating

Sc loup : see T47(T).

In this case Eng jump + dimin -ag.

.....

KEALY CRAIGS : ND 37 SW: 323733 C58(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kili 'kregs]

Early refs: Pirley Craig 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

kealy : obscure

Sc craig : see R46(S)

Sc pirley (1876)

: anything very small

.....

KILN OF FLUX : ND 37 SE: 398717 C59(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Apparently an English name in which the word kiln (see T85(T)) suggests the shape of the geo and flux indicates the water flowing or gushing into it.

.....

KINGANS GEO : ND 36 NE: 383657 C60(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kɨjans gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

(Local tradition has it that King James IV visited this geo, but it is a most improbable situation for a royal landfall.)

The specific could be

Sc kinnen (also kinning, kunnin)

: a rabbit

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

KNOCKING STONE : ND 37 SE: 384735 C61(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'nɔkin sten]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a shore-line rock which apparently has a basin-shaped indentation similar to the stone bowl in which grain was knocked.

"The knockin' stane was a large stone about 14 inches everyway with a hole of 8 or 9 inches diameter sunk 6 or 7 inches deep in it. In primitive form a pounding stone was held in the hands and by pounding on a little corn dropped into the knocking stone the husk or sid was taken off the corn." (SND)

.....

LADY'S BROW : ND 36 NE: 376677 C62(T)

LADY'S HOLE : " : 381648

Local pronunciation: ['ledi brau, ... hɔl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There is no local tradition relating to the 'lady'. The reference may be to the Virgin Mary.

Eng brow : used figuratively to indicate a slight hill

.....

LIATH SKERRY : ND 37 SW: 313754 C63(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific appears to be

G liath : see R27(T)

but Gaelic names of topographical features are very uncommon on this section of the coastline.

It seems more probable that this is another example of a fishing rock, and that the elements derive from

Sc lythe : see T48(T)

Cai skerry: see R151(T).

.....

LINKBURN : ND 26 NE: 288692 C64(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lɪŋk bʌrn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc link : see T3(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

LINT LOCHS : ND 36 NE: 377698 C65(T)

Local pronunciation: [ə 'lɪnt lɔxs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lint : the flax plant

Sc loch : see R5(S)

The lint had to be steeped in the water of the lochs in order to separate the flax from the straw or woody fibre.

.....

LOCH LOMISHAN : ND 37 SE: 386701 C66(T)

Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'lɔmʌʃən]

Early refs: Loch Lomashion 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc loch : see R5(S)

ON lómr m. : the loon, ember-goose or red-throated diver

ON tjörn f.: a tarn, small lake

The red-throated driver always builds its nest on the edge of a lonely moorland loch.

(cf Lumisjøn: Jakobsen 1901, page 157)

.....

LONG BACK : ND 36 SE: 377641 C67(T)
LONG BERRY : ND 36 NE: 382671
LONG GEO : ND 37 SE: 405734
LONGGEO SKERRIES : ND 27 SE: 292748
Local pronunciation: ['lɔŋ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai back : see T2(T)
Cai berry : see T2(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

MALLIE GEO : ND 37 SW: 306748 C68(T)
Local pronunciation: ['malə gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc mallie/maalie
: the fulmar
(a contracted form of Mallimoke)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

MASON'S GEO : ND 36 NE: 383661 C69(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is probably to a personal surname, but there is no local knowledge of such a person in connection with this geo.
(for Mason see Black 1946, page 585)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

MEALIN TANG : ND 27 SE: 294746 C70(T)
Local pronunciation: [mɛlən 'taŋ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: C70(T) (cont'd)

Doubtful without earlier references but the situation suggests

ON melr m.: bent-grass; a sand-hill grown with bent-grass + gen pl def art -nna

Cai tang : see T77(T)

.....

MILL CLETT : ND 27 SE: 273746 C71(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mɛl klɛt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The Mill is the Mill of Mey (see C22(S))

Cai clett : see R20(S)

.....

MIRE OF TROWESKERRY: ND 36 NE: 362692 C72(T)

Local pronunciation: [maer a 'truskɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai mire : see C19(T)

Troweskerry is a very puzzling name. The specific is most probably

Cai trow : see OL31(T).

The generic is obscure although it seems to be identical in form to

Cai skerry: see R151(T).

Skerry, however, would be totally inappropriate in this moorland situation, since it is restricted in its application to rocks in the sea.

.....

MOOL HILL : ND 37 SE: 365726 C73(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mul hɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON múli m.: a jutting crag between two dales, fjords or the like

This appellative always indicates a broadly rounded hill, as in this example. C73(T) (cont'd)

The pleonastic Eng hill would have been added at a later date.

.....

NESS HEAD : ND 36 NE: 384665 C74(T)

Local pronunciation: [nɛs 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai ness : see T13(S)

(cf D50(T) for a further comment on the precise application of Cai ness)

.....

OSWELL SPEIL : ND 36 SE: 377642 C75(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A very strange name describing a shore-line pool. The name should possibly be written Oswell's Peil and be derived as follows:

Sc Oswald/Oswell

: the water-ouzel or "dipper".

(Oswald/Oswell being a variant of ouzel, apparently influenced by the proper name Oswald)

Cai Peil : a dialectal version of Eng pool

.....

OTTER MIRE : ND 36 NW: 310655 C76(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ɔtər mair]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai mire : see C19(T)

.....

OUT SKERRY : ND 37 SE: 357735 C77(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ut skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

The name describes a rock lying at some distance from the shore.

.....

PAPEL : ND 37 SW: 342731 C78(T)

Local pronunciation: ['papɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Papel refers to a rock lying off-shore from the Kirk of Canisbay. The present church is listed as probably dating from the fifteenth century (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 7), but it was probably built on a much older religious site.

Papar was the Norse name for the early Irish anchorites whose presence can be traced in place-names throughout the area which came subsequently under Norse control. (Macdonald 1977, Northern Studies vol.9, page 25)

The name Papil is recorded by Jakobsen in three places in Shetland (North Yell, Haroldswick, and Burra Isle) and he suggests that it is a contraction of Papa-bǿl, ON Papýli, Papabýli: the residence of the priest. (Jakobsen 1897, page 64)

In the case of the Caithness Papel the source is more likely to be Papahólmi (hólmi being a weak form of ON hólmr m.: see T84(T)) because no stretch of the imagination could induce one to accept this tiny rock as a "residence".

.....

PEARL GEO : ND 27 SE: 277747 C79(T)

Local pronunciation: ['pɛrl gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference to pearls is not locally corroborated.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

PENTLAND FIRTH : ND 37 SE: C80(T)

Local pronunciation: [pɛntlɔnd 'fʌrθ]

Early refs: Péttlandsfjörðr 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
Pithland Fÿrth 1573 Ortelius
Pentland Fyrth 1662 Blaeu
Pictland Ffirth 1726 Macfarlane

After 1726 the form is invariably Pentland Firth.

Derivation:

The Norse named this stretch of water from their northern viewpoint in Orkney:

ON Péttlandsfjörðr: the firth of Pictland

The Gaels later named the same stretch of water from the opposing shore:

G An Caol Arcaibh : The Orkney Straits

(Arcaibh incorporates a tribal name in the dative plural; the older version being

i n-Orcaibh : among the Orcs (Watson 1926, page 100))

.....

QUEENIE CLIFF : ND 37 SE: 404727 C81(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kwini klʌf]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is obscure without earlier references.

It possibly represents queenie/kweenack: the female of the crab.

.....

RED CASTLE : ND 27 SE: 275747 C82(T)

RED CHEEK : ND 36 NE: 396699

RED HEAD : ND 37 SW: 340728

Local pronunciation: [rɛid 'kasl̩, ... 'tʃik, ... 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

castle : refers to a block of reddish sandstone in the sea

cheek : refers to the exposed front of a rocky promontory

.....

ROBERT'S HAVEN : ND 37 SE: 388736 C83(T)
ROBERT'S POINT : " : 334729
Local pronunciation: [rɔbərts 'hevən, ... pɔint]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai haven : see T32(T)
There is no local knowledge of the person named Robert.

.....

ROCK O' GIRSAL : ND 37 SW: 301748 C84(T)
Local pronunciation: [rɔk ə 'gɪrsal]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Girsal is obscure without further early references.

.....

ROUND GEO : ND 27 SE: 273746 C85(T)
Local pronunciation: ['rund gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The name describes a geo with a narrow entrance and rounded sides.

.....

RUSHY GEO : ND 36 NE: 395684 C86(T)
Local pronunciation: ['rʌʃi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The literal interpretation may be correct, ie the geo where rushes are plentiful. The map-form Rushy could, alternatively, be masking an earlier ON specific.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SAILOR'S HEAD : ND 36 NE: 396689 C87(T)

Local pronunciation: ['selərs hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A modern English name, but there is no local knowledge of the identity of the sailor.

.....

SALT SKERRY : ND 36 NE: 399693 C88(T)

Local pronunciation: ['salt skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

This name is frequently applied to a rock which is submerged at high tide. (cf G Sgeir an t-Salainn, Applecross)

.....

SAMUEL'S GEO : ND 36 SE: 381645 C89(T)

Local pronunciation: ['samɛls gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(For comments on Samuel see Mowat 1931, page 5.)

.....

SANDS BERRY : ND 37 SE: 395737 C90(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

SCARFSKERRY POINT : ND 37 SE: 367738 C91(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skaskəri pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai scarf : see R145(T)

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

SCOOR BERRY : ND 37 SW: 315746 C92(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skur bɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is difficult without earlier references.

Possibly

Sc skoorie: the coalfish or saithe when fully grown (Jak. Sh. 1908)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

SCORRIE MOSS : ND 27 SE: 275741 C93(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skori mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc scorrie, scorie

: the young of any species of gull while still in its brown-speckled plumage

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

SELLY GEO : ND 36 NE: 383665 C94(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sɛlɾ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc selly : where seals are plentiful (cf ON selr m.: a seal)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SGARBACH : ND 36 SE: 374637 C95(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skarbax]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of this name is uncertain without further early references. Its form suggests

G sgarbhach: a cormorant-covered area

but a Gaelic topographical name would be most unusual on this stretch of coastline.

.....

SHEAVIE GILLS : ND 37 SW: 321737 C96(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃivi gɪls]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is obscure without further early references.

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

SHEEPY HILLOCK : ND 37 SW: 313748 C97(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃipi hɪlɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A hillock frequented by sheep.

.....

SHINS CLEAVE : ND 37 SE: 398716 C98(T)

Local pronunciation: [ʃɪns 'klɪf]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc shin : a ridge or steep face of a hill, a projecting part of a piece of high ground

Local pronunciation of the generic indicates Eng cliff.

.....

SHORT GEO : ND 27 SE: 271745 C99(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃɔrt gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

There are numerous Long Geos in Caithness but this appears to be the only example of a Short Geo.

.....

SIE SKERRY : ND 37 SW: 328729 C100(T)

Local pronunciation: ['si skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc sie : a variant of Eng sea

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

SINCLAIR'S CRAIGS : ND 36 NE: 383659 C101(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sʌnklərs 'kregs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sinclair is an extremely common surname in Caithness. (Black 1946, page 727)

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

SKIPPIE GEO : ND 36 NE: 396688 C102(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skʌpi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc skippie, -y

: slippery, affording no firm foothold

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SLAYEL : ND 37 SW: 343731 C103(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sleəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This name is obscure without further early references.

.....

SLEAT : ND 37 SW: 324732 C104(T)

Local pronunciation: [slet]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON sléttr : see R83(T)

.....

SLY CRAIG : ND 36 SE: 378644 C105(T)

Local pronunciation: ['slae kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc sly : a green slimy alga of the seashore

In Caithness sly = alga in general.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

SMALL GEOS : ND 36 NE: 384663 C106(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sma gjos]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

STACKS OF MARTIN'S SCLAITE: ND 36 NE: 381652 C107(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: C107(T) (cont'd)

Cai stack : see D75(T)

Cai sclaite: see R83(T)

Martin : a personal name, but there is no extant local legend relating to such a person

.....

STRIDING MAN : ND 37 SE: 397703 C108(T)

Local pronunciation: ['straidən man]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A modern English name which describes a rock which is split in two at the base.

.....

TANG HEAD : ND 27 SE: 277748 C109(T)

Local pronunciation: [taŋ 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai tang : see T77(T)

.....

THE CARLE : ND 36 SE: 378645 C110(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'karl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc carle : a man or more specifically "an old man"

The reference is to an imagined shape in the coastal rocks.

.....

THE GILL : ND 27 SE: 282740 C111(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'gɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

THE GLUPE : ND 37 SE: 404735 C112(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'gliup]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai glupe/gloup

: an onomatopoeic word, describing the noise made by the sea as it rushes into a narrow opening and is then sucked out again. (cf R102(T))

.....

THE KILNS : ND 36 SE: 381647 C113(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kɫls]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kiln : see T85(T)

.....

THE KNEE : ND 37 SE: 406728 C114(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ni]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

An English name describing a rounded off-shore rock.

.....

THE ROUGH : ND 36 SE: 379644 C115(T)

WELL ROUGH : ND 37 SE: 361738

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'rɔf, 'wɛl rɔf]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON rófa f. > Cai rough

: see D55(T)

Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

THE SHALLS : ND 27 SE: 272747 C116(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ʃals]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is to the shallow water covering the rocks at this point

.....

THE TAE : ND 36 NE: 384665 C117(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'te]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc tae : toe

(used figuratively to describe a promontory)

.....

THE TIPPET : ND 36 NE: 384657 C118(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'tɪpət]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Possibly Eng tip + dimin -et.

The name describes a ridge of rock running out into the sea.

.....

THICK MIRE : ND 36 NW: 315653 C119(T)

Local pronunciation: ['θɪk 'maer]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The adjective thick presumably emphasises the swampy nature of the ground, rather than the width of the stream which is not particularly significant.

Cai mire : see C19(T)

.....

THIRLE DOOR : ND 37 SE: 402725 C120(T)

Local pronunciation: ['θʌrl dor]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc thirle : a hole or aperture, especially in a wall

The tautologous Eng door has probably been added at a subsequent date.

The name describes a long, narrow inlet the entrance of which looks like an aperture in the cliff-face.

.....

THISTLY HILL : ND 36 NE: 377677 C121(T)

Local pronunciation: ['θʌsli hʌl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

THOMAS PEEL'S ROUGH: ND 37 SW: 326731 C122(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON rófa f. > Cai rough

: see D55(T)

Thomas Peel appears to be a personal name but there is no local knowledge of such a person.

.....

THRISTLE GEO : ND 36 SE: 379648 C123(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc thristle: the prickly thistle

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

TOTHEL GILL : ND 36 NW: 348675 C124(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tɔθəl gɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific Tothel is obscure.

Cai gill : see R54(T)

.....

TROWES' GEO : ND 27 SE: 283744 C125(T)

Local pronunciation: ['traus gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai trow : see OL31(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The local legend suggests that the trows frequented the nearby reef and lured ships on to the rocks in the dark.

.....

WARTH HILL : ND 36 NE: 372698 C126(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'warθ hɹl]

Early refs: Warthill 1726 Macfarlane

Wart Hill 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc wart : a lookout point on high ground, a mound, cairn, beacon or watchtower from which signals were made

(cf ON varða f.

: a beacon or stone cairn)

.....

WATTY'S CRAIG : ND 27 SE: 267746 C127(T)

Local pronunciation: [watɹs 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Watty is a common diminutive form of Walter.

Sc craig : see R46(S)

The name presumably describes a favoured fishing rock.

.....

WIFE GEO : ND 36 NE: 398697 C128(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wɛif gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Wife is commonly used in Caithness in the more general sense of woman.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Local tradition says there is a rock in this geo which resembles a woman.

.....

WINDY GEO : ND 37 SW: 311753 C129(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wɛndi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

WOLF GILL : ND 36 NW: 338678 C130(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wulf gɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Local tradition naturally insists that the last wolf in Caithness was killed in this gully, which may or may not be true, more probably the latter in view of the extent of time involved. (cf T95(T) where a similar explanation is often offered)

The specific could possibly represent

ON Úlfr m.: a personal name, or a nickname
(Lind 1915, column 1054) (Lind 1920, column 392)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 324)

Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

SETTLEMENT NAMES

CASTLE MESTAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 339764 S1(S)

Local pronunciation: [kas] 'mɛstəg]

The present local pronunciation of the name has probably been influenced by the written form.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The castle referred to is a small keep occupying nearly the whole summit of a detached perpendicular mass of rock. There appears to be no extant history of the structure. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 21)

The most likely source given the situation is

ON *már* m. : a seamew, gull (cf C22(S))

ON *stakkr* m.: see D75(T)

.....

MAINS OF STROMA : ND 37 NW/NE: 354777 S2(S)

STROMA LIGHTHOUSE : " : 355792

Local pronunciation: ['strœmə]

Early refs:

Straumey	12th C	Orkneyinga Saga
Stromeay	1400	OPS
Stromay	1566	RSS
Stromaye	1574	Retours
Stromaii	1578	RMS
Stromey	1623	"
Stroem øy	1662	Blaeu
Stroma	1750	Roy

Derivation:

ON *straumr* m.: a stream, current, race of the sea

ON *ey* m. : island

Sc *mains* : see R32(S)

.....

NETHERTOWN : ND 37 NW/NE: 355782 S3(S)

GEO OF NETHERTOWN : " : 358785

Local pronunciation: ['nɛðərtaun]

Early refs: Nethirtoun of Stromay 1681 OLM

Neithertoune in Stromay 1687 "

Neathertoun of Stroma 1688 "

Nethertown 1750 Roy

Nethertown 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc nether : see OL27(S) (cf Uppertown S4(S))

Sc toun : see R46(S)

The name applies to the northern half of the island which belonged to the Sinclairs of Freswick.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

UPPERTOWN : ND 37 NW/NE: 353767 S4(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ʌpərtaun]

Early refs: Overtoun 1671 Retours

Uppertown 1750 Roy

Uppertown 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc toun : see R46(S)

Uppertown is the higher southern section of the island, which belonged to the Sinclairs of Mey.

Note that the earlier Sc over: see OL27(S), in use at the end of the 17th century, was replaced by Eng upper during the 18th century.

.....

WHITEHOUSE : ND 37 NW/NE: 357784 S5(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hwaethaus]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A very literal name describing a large white house.

.....

BACK BERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 363779 S1(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bak bəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai back : see T2(T)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

BAR BERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 363776 S2(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bar bəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is uncertain without further early references.

Possibly

ON barð n.: see C1(T)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

(In this instance the name is applied to flat rocks at the edge of the sea rather than to precipitous rocks as in Barberry Head: see C1(T).)

.....

BARNEY'S GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 347779 S3(T)

Local pronunciation: ['barnis gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably a late Caithness variant of

ON Biarni m.: a personal name

(Lind 1915, column 136)

Black lists Barnie as "a current surname in Caithness". (Black 1946, page 56)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BAY OF CAVES : ND 37 NW/NE: 357789 S4(T)

Local pronunciation: [be ə 'kevs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A modern name describing an inlet where there are several caves.

.....

BAY OF SLUGGS : ND 37 NW/NE: 359771 S5(T)

Local pronunciation: [be ə 'slʌgs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Given the English generic bay it seems most likely that the spelling of the specific is inaccurate and that this is a recent name indicating that sea-slugs are plentiful in the bay.

.....

BLUE HOLE : ND 37 NW/NE: 342764 S6(T)

Local pronunciation: [bliu 'hol]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A hole in the cliff-edge with sea-water visible at the bottom. There are several of these blow-holes in Stroma; some very dangerous indeed.

.....

BROAD GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345771 S7(T)

Local pronunciation: ['brɔd gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

BUGHT O' CAMM : ND 37 NW/NE: 351785 S8(T)

CAMM : " : 351786

SCOPE O' CAMM : " : 348786

Local pronunciation: ['bɔxt ɔ kam]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai bught : see C15(T)

ON kambr m.: see D72(T)

scope : obscure

.....

BURAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 352763 S9(T)

Local pronunciation: ['biureg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without earlier references. The coastal position suggests

ON bjarg n.: precipice

especially on the sea-side.

.....

BURGULLION : ND 37 NW/NE: 358764 S10(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bʌrgʌlɔn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without earlier references. The name describes a shore-line rock.

.....

BUTTON GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345774 S11(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bʌtn̩ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Uncertain without early references.

The specific is most probably

ON botn m.: 1) the bottom, in the sense of low by comparison with the surrounding landscape

2) the head of a bay, firth, lake, dale etc.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BYAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 357763 S12(T)

Local pronunciation: ['baæg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a prominent ridge of rock in the sea, and is very similar in pronunciation to a name which Jakobsen notes as occurring in Shetland, applied to a ridge:

de Baag : the back. (Jakobsen 1897, page 97)

Alternatively, the situation and appearance of this rock in the sea indicates another word still current in Shetland dialect, although apparently not in Caithness:

Shet ba : a sunken rock in the sea + dimin -ag

(Jakobsen derives this word from

ON boði m.: a hidden shoal in the sea (Jakobsen 1932, page 23).)

.....

CAIRN HILL : ND 37 NW/NE: 356767 S13(T)

Local pronunciation: [kern 'hɑl]

Early ref : 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

There is a pile of stones marking the highest point on the island which, a local informant says, was once used by Stroma men as a look-out point for ships which they could pilot through the Pentland Firth, thus making a handsome addition to their annual earnings.

.....

CASTLE OF GIRNIECLETT: ND 37 NW/NE: 342761 S14(T)

GEO OF GIRNIECLETT : " : 339761

Local pronunciation : ['gɹrnəklɛt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a pinnacle of rock which must have been thought to resemble a castle.

ON grœnn : green, grass-covered (with metathesis of r)

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(For a similar name cf W21(S).)

.....

CASTLE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 359771 S15(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kasl̩ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

As in the previous example there is no castle, only a rock jutting out of the sea.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

CLEMAN HEADS : ND 37 NW/NE: 343765 S16(T)

Local pronunciation: ['klɛman hɛɹds]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without early references. Described by a local informant as "ragged" headlands at the entrance to Lammieclett Geo. (see S34(T))

.....

CLETTAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 356763 S17(T)

Local pronunciation: ['klɛtəg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S) + dimin -ag

.....

CORBIE TUAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 343766 S18(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kɔrbi tiuəg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc corbie : the raven, sometimes also the carrion crow and the hooded crow. The word is first recorded in 1420. In modern Caithness dialect corbie appears to refer invariably to the carrion crow.

Sc tuag : see OL32(T)

.....

CULLY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 356793 S19(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kʌlɹ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Jakobsen suggests that the specific in Cullivoe, Shetland could be derived from

ON kollr m.: a hill with a round top. (Jakobsen 1897, page 77)

The specific in the above name probably has a similar derivation.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

DUTHIE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345775 S20(T)

Local pronunciation: ['dʌθɹ gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Referred to by local people as the Wine Cellar, although the name Duthie Geo is also known. There may have been a gentleman of the surname Duthie who was engaged in the smuggling trade, but his name is not remembered, in that connection. The name Duthie is recorded in Orkney in 1492. (Black 1946, page 234)

.....

FALLA GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 344767 S21(T)

FALLIE GEO : " : 357788

Local pronunciation: ['fali gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

These names probably have the same origin, although both are uncertain without earlier references.

One possible source is

ON fogl m.: a bird

although the common Caithness version of this word is either fully or folly (cf D21(T)).

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FINNIES HAVEN : ND 37 NW/NE: 362781 S22(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fʌnəs 'hevən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably the Scottish surname Finnie, recorded in Aberdeenshire in 1508. (Black 1946, page 265)

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

FLENDIE CLETT : ND 37 NW/NE: 359765 S23(T)

GEO OF FLENDIE CLETT: " : 357766

Local pronunciation : ['flʌnə klɛt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

ON fleinn m.: a sharp-pointed dart or shaft

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

FULLIE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 358765 S24(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fuli gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON fogl m.: see D21(T)

(The presence of this name on Stroma casts further doubt on the tentative derivation suggested in S21(T).)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEOS OF BAGWA : ND 37 NW/NE: 358788 S25(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bagwa]

Early refs: Goags of Bagwa 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This name is difficult without early references.

The 1876 OS map invariably has the spelling Goe (see R81(T)), and

Goags is probably a combination of S25(T) (cont'd)
Goe + dimin -ag + Eng pl -s.
Bagwa is obscure without further early references.

.....

GEO OF GOUGAN : ND 37 NW/NE: 354763 S26(T)
Local pronunciation: [gjo ɔv 'giugɔn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Gougan is obscure without further early references.

.....

GIDDY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 342765 S27(T)
Local pronunciation: ['gɹdi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This is a long, deep and very narrow geo. The shape of the geo suggests ON gjóta [Dan gyde] f.: a narrow lane, as a possible source of the specific.
On the other hand, it could simply be Eng giddy, describing the sensation which one experiences when standing unwisely on the edge. Certainly the modern spelling of the name has been influenced by Eng giddy.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

HAMMER : ND 37 NW/NE: 363775 S28(T)
Local pronunciation: ['hamɔr]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON hamarr m.: used figuratively to describe a hammer-shaped crag, a jutting-out rock or stretch of rocks.

.....

HILLY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 353764 S29(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɹli gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Although the map form suggests Eng hill, there is little evidence of hills in the vicinity of this geo. A more probable derivation is from

ON hellir m.: a cave.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

HILL ROW : ND 37 NW/NE: 363776 S30(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɹlro]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a coastal rock which again, as in S29(T), makes derivation from Eng hill most improbable.

Cai row : see D56(T)

.....

HIMRIL : ND 37 NW/NE: 361773 S31(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɹmrɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without further early references. The name describes a cave which penetrates deep under the island. Mowat suggests

ON humarr m.: a lobster

ON áll m. : a deep narrow channel in the sea.

(Mowat 1931, page 35)

.....

HORSE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 348763 S32(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɔrs gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably a recent name but there is no local tradition associating horses with this geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

KILN GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 358763 S33(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kɹɪlən gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kiln : see T85(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

LAMMIE CLETT : ND 37 NW/NE: 343766 S34(T)

LAMMIECLETT GEO : " : 343766

Local pronunciation: ['lamɘklɛts]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lammie : dimin form of Eng lamb

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(An unusual feature is that this name does not refer to a clett in its normal sense of a rock jutting up out of the sea, and clearly separated from the land. Lammie Clett is a tongue of land, attached to the mainland of Stroma.)

.....

LANGATON POINT : ND 37 NW/NE: 349791 S35(T)
BEACH OF LANGATON : " : 348789
Local pronunciation: ['laŋətən pɔint]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a tongue of rock jutting out into the sea and probably, therefore, derives from
ON langr : long
ON tangi m.: see T77(T)
(The normal Caithness version of this element is tang but, in this instance, it could have been subject to phonological reduction being in unstressed position.)
Eng point would have been added at a later date once understanding of the original Norse compound had faded.

.....

LITTLE GLOUP : ND 37 NW/NE: 352787 S36(T)
THE GLOUP : " : 352783
Local pronunciation: ['lɪtl̩ gliup, ðə 'gliup]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
These names describe places where the ground has collapsed into subterranean caves.
Cai gloup : see C112(T)

.....

MAW SKERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 362782 S37(T)
WHITEMAWS SKERRY : " : 359770
Local pronunciation: [mɔ: 'skɾri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc maw (also maa, mawe, mar)
: a mew, seagull
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

MELL HEAD : ND 37 NW/NE: 339762 S38(T)

Local pronunciation: [mɛl 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific could be

ON melr m.: bent grass; a sand-hill grown with bent grass,

but ON melr would not have occurred as a simplex name and it would have to be assumed that the original Norse generic had been replaced by Eng head, which is unlikely to have happened. Eng head is often added to a Norse name, but not substituted for it.

It seems likely, therefore, that the original Norse name may have been the simplex

ON múli m.: a jutting crag

.....

MILL GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345770 S39(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mɪl gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A geo where there was once a corn mill in operation, according to local informants.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

NARROW GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 363781 S40(T)

Local pronunciation: ['narə gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent self-explanatory name.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

POWE : ND 37 NW/NE: 352792 S41(T)

Local pronunciation: [pæu]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc powe : see T89(T)

The name describes a fishing rock.

.....

PRONTAG'S HOLE : ND 37 NW/NE: 352764 S42(T)

Local pronunciation: ['prɔntægs hol]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name was known to one of my informants, but only as a map reference. There does not appear to be a blow-hole in the cliffs in this area, and the specific Prontag is totally obscure.

.....

RAMMIE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 347777 S43(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ramə gjo]

Early refs: Burn of Ramigo 1687 OLM

Derivation:

ON hrafn (often spelt hramn) m.

: a raven

Cai geo : see R54(T)

A local informant confirmed that ravens still nest in Rammie Geo.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

RED HEAD : ND 37 NW/NE: 345776 S44(T)

RED GEO : " : 349763

Local pronunciation: [rɛid 'hɛid, ... 'gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is to an outcrop of red sandstone.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

RIFF OF HEBRIGG : ND 37 NW/NE: 359767 S45(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rif ə hibrəg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably

ON rif n. : a reef in the sea.

Hebrigg is obscure without further early references.

.....

SANDY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 347763 S46(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sani gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

SAVIN SKERRIES : ND 37 NW/NE: 362774 S47(T)

Local pronunciation: ['savən 'skɛri]

(The generic skerry is always singular in pronunciation.)

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific Savin is obscure.

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

SCAR CREGGAN : ND 37 NW/NE: 346672 S48(T)

Local pronunciation: [skɛr 'krɛgən]

Early refs: Scar Craggan 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This is apparently a hybrid name, but it is most probably of recent origin containing elements which have been borrowed from Norse and Gaelic into the Caithness dialect.

The specific is uncertain and could either represent S48(T) (cont'd)

Cai scarf : see R145(T) or

Cai skerry : see R151(T)

(in abbreviated forms).

The generic is an anglicised version of

G creagan m.: a little rock.

.....

SCARF SKERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 346776 S49(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skarf skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai scarf : see R145(T)

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

SCARTON POINT : ND 37 NW/NE: 359764 S50(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skartən pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This name is very similar in form to Langaton Point (see S35(T)).

Scarton could, therefore, be similarly derived from

ON skarfr m.: see R145(T)

ON tangi m. : see T77(T)

The tautologous Eng point would have been added at a later date, as was suggested in S35(T).

.....

SEAL CAVE HOLE : ND 37 NW/NE: 363778 S51(T)

Local pronunciation: [sɛil kev 'hol]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Seals are still numerous in this area today.

Hole appears to refer to the inlet of the sea and Cave to the further indentation at its inner end.

.....

SGEIR BHAN : ND 37 NW/NE: 364777 S52(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skɛrə bjan]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sgeir f.: see R151(T)

G bàn : white

Gaelic was never spoken in Stroma and this prominent coastal rock was probably named by Gaelic-speaking fishermen for whom it served as an important landmark or, alternatively, the name could have been coined by a Gaelic speaker who may have come to the island from the Gaelic-speaking part of Caithness or Sutherland.

The present-day local pronunciation is clearly based on the written form.

G sgeir having been borrowed from Norse is clearly recognisable as Cai skerry (see R151(T)) and causes no problems, but G bhàn, with lenition of the initial consonant giving [va:n] in Gaelic, was unfamiliar in its written form to non-Gaelic speakers, who substituted the more familiar initial sound [bj], as in [bjan]. If the name had been transmitted orally there is no reason why a native of Stroma could not have coped with initial [v].

(For a similar phenomenon see W24(T).)

.....

SGEIR GUT : ND 37 NW/NE: 361782 S53(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skɛr gʌt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

As in the previous example the word order and the map spelling Sgeir suggest Gaelic origin. The second element is obscure without earlier references.

.....

SHEEP SKERRIES : ND 37 NW/NE: 353793 S54(T)

Local pronunciation: [ʃip 'skɛris]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

Many sea-rocks are given animal names and this appears to be one such example, probably with reference to the shape and colour of the rocks. The rocks are barren and could not have afforded grazing for sheep.

.....

SKERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 342757 S55(T)

SKERRY GEO : " : 357763

Local pronunciation: ['skɛri, ... gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SWILKIE POINT : ND 37 NW/NE: 356793 S56(T)

Local pronunciation: ['swɹlki pɔint]

Early refs: Svelgr 12th C Orkneyinga Saga

The Swell 1595 Mercator

Derivation:

ON svelgr m.: a swirl, whirlpool, current

The tides off the north-east end of the island of Stroma have been notorious for centuries.

An informant made the following interesting statement: "There's no swilkie with the flood tide; it just swilks on the ebb," showing that swilks can still be used locally as a meaningful verb in the context of this particular tidal race.

.....

TARRY BERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 361772 S57(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tarbəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc tari- (tarri(e)-, tarry-)

: sea-weed, occurring only as the first element in compounds

(ON þari m.: sea-weed)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

THE ALTARS : ND 37 NW/NE: 348782 S58(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'altərs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes pinnacles of rock on the cliff-face, possibly thought to resemble altars.

.....

THE HAVEN : ND 37 NW/NE: 353763 S59(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'hevən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

THE PEEL : ND 37 NW/NE: 357785 S60(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'pil]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai peel : a dialectal version of Eng pool

A local informant remembers this as a favourite childhood swimming pool.

.....

TREE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 361774 S61(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tris gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is probably to driftwood rather than natural vegetation. There are certainly no trees in the geo now.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

WARDIE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 356791 S62(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wardi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Possibly the modern Scots surname Ward + dimin -ie. (Black 1946, page 801)

Or, alternatively, a spot where a beacon was lit to give warning of a ship in trouble in the tide-race (see S56(T)).

ON varða f.: see C126(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

WHITE HEELY : ND 37 NW/NE: 362773 S63(T)

Local pronunciation: [hwait 'hili]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

ON hella f.: see R54(S)

(cf Hellyina Wheeda in Yell, Shetland (Jakobsen 1897, page 89).)

.....

WINNI GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 350786 S64(T)

Local pronunciation: ['wɛni gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably a dialectal variant of Eng windy.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

CHAPTER NINE: WICK PARISH

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Wick is a very elongated parish, extending more than twenty kilometres from north to south. The parish is dominated by the town of Wick which is the county town of Caithness with a population of 7,933, as recorded in the 1981 Census. The town is situated at the mouth of the Wick River and it has excellent harbour facilities.

Wick was a major centre of the east coast herring fishing industry and fishing still remains a function of the port, albeit of much reduced significance. Wick is a busy market town with good communications with the rest of Caithness and with the south via the major A9 route and the railway to Inverness. The Wick distillery is an important local employer.

Improved land in Wick Parish, as in Canisbay Parish, is close to the coast, while the interior is generally unimproved. Some of this unimproved land, particularly in the Camster area, is now being forested. Most of the small villages along the coast were bases for the herring fishing and they have consequently suffered a decline in recent years.

Gaelic was spoken in the south-west of Wick Parish until the nineteenth century and there is a cluster of Gaelic place-names around the Achairn Burn as evidence of this. Gaelic-speaking in Wick Parish was artificially boosted by an influx of Gaelic speakers from Sutherland who came to the east coast as a result of clearances.

Wick Parish is bounded on the west by Watten Parish and on the south by Latheron Parish.

SETTLEMENT NAMES

ACHAIRN : ND 35 SW: 303502 W1(S)
ACHAIRN BURN : " : 303501
UPPER ACHAIRN : ND 24 NE: 275475
LOWER ACHAIRN : " : 299498
Local pronunciation : [a'xern]
Early refs: Achern 1750 Roy
Achairn 1798 Book of Valuation
Achorn 1808 Sinclair (Freswick)
Achairn 1841 Census
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G càrn m. : see R27(T)
The original G achadh a' chàirn has been shortened in pronunciation to Achairn.
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

ACKERGILL : ND 35 SE/NE: 353534 W2(S)
UPPER ACKERGILL : " : 360536
ACKERGILL HAVEN : " : 358545
ACKERGILL SHORE : " : 358544
ACKERGILL MAINS : " : 354541
ACKERGILL TOWER : " : 353547
ACKERGILL LINKS : ND 35 NW/NE: 342565
Local pronunciation: ['akɪrgɪl]
Early refs: Akyrgyll 1472 Sinclair (Mey)
Ackirgill 1520 "
Akyrgill 1527 "
Aukirgill 1550 "
Akairgyll 1560 "
Ackyrgill 1520 Sutherland (Forse)
Akergill 1538 RMS
Aikergill 1587 "
Acregill 1661 "
Acrigill 1667 "
Aikirgyll 1549 RMS

Early refs (cont'd)

Aikergill	1644	Retours
Akergil	1662	Blaeu
Castle of Hakergil	1701	Brand
Akergale	1724	Macfarlane
Acrigill	1750	Roy
Acrigill Castle	"	"
Upper Ackergill	1832	Thomson
Tower of Ackergill	"	"

Derivation:

ON akr m. : arable land, ground for tillage

ON gil n. : see R11(T)

Cai haven : see T32(T)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc links : see OL33(S)

.....

AIKERNESS : ND 35 SE: 358523 W3(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ekɹnɛs]

Early refs: Ikkernos 1520 Sinclair (Mey)

Derivation:

The modern spelling and pronunciation of this name both suggest that it is identical to Aikerness in Westray, Orkney which Marwick derives from

ON akra-nes: ness of cultivated fields.

(Marwick 1952, page 31)

Marwick comments that the specific could also represent

ON ekra f. : an acre, cornfield,

which is used in much the same sense as ON akr (see W2(S)).

In the case of the Caithness name, ON ekra would be a more convincing specific than ON akr in view of the clear phonetic distinction between ['ekɹnɛs] and the neighbouring ['akɹgɹl] (see W2(S)).

The generic is

ON nǒs f. : the nose

(used figuratively of a rocky point, tongue of land). (cf Noss W77(S))

The more frequently occurring W3(S) (cont'd)

Cai ness : see T13(S),

which has a similar range of meaning, has been substituted for the earlier form -nos (1520).

.....

ALTIMARLACH FARM : ND 35 SW: 332528 W4(S)

BURN OF ALTIMARLACH: " : 332526

Local pronunciation: [anti'marləx]

Early refs: Mairloch 1750 Roy

Aultnamarlich 1771 Pennant

Derivation:

This is a Gaelic name which has been considerably distorted and it is impossible to be certain of its origin.

Pennant's version is helpful in deciphering the generic

G allt m. : see R1(S).

Pennant also indicates the presence of a gen sing fem definite article na, and the presence of this medial [n] could perhaps explain why, at a later date, [n] was substituted for [l] in the first syllable.

The specific is uncertain. The most probable source being

G mèarlach m.

: a thief,

which does occur in place-names elsewhere, but it is masculine, not feminine as the form of the article would lead one to expect.

Roy's version Mairloch represents

Sc mair : see D44(T)

Cai loch : see R5(S)

which is feasible, although there is no loch visible today. The area has, however, been extensively drained and would have been marshy prior to drainage.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

AUKHORN : ND 35 NW/NE: 327597 W5(S)

BURN OF AUKHORNE : " : 325597

Local pronunciation: ['aukarn]

Early refs:

Owcorne	1619	RMS
Ockorne	1624	Retours
Oukorne	"	"
Okorn	1650	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Auckorn	1750	"
Acorn	1750	Roy
Auckhorn	1798	Book of Valuation
Oucorn	1832	Thomson
Oucorn Burn	"	"

Derivation:

The specific may be as suggested in C1(S)

ON haukr m.: a hawk,

but in this instance it could possibly represent

ON Áki m. : a personal name (Lind 1915, column 8)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 42).

The generic is probably

ON horn m. : a corner, nook.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

BARROCK MILL : ND 26 SE: 295625 W6(S)

Local pronunciation: ['barak mɹl]

Early refs:

It is very difficult to distinguish between early references to this name and those to the identical name in Dunnet Parish (see D1(S)). The following certainly refer to the Wick Parish name:

Barrock	1699	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Burrock	1752	"

Derivation:

As for D1(S).

The reference could be to Thorny Hillock close by Barrock Mill. (see W115(T))

.....

BIGGINS : ND 35 NW/NE: 321558 W7(S)

Local pronunciation: ['bɹgiŋz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

See OL1(S).

This name describes a group of buildings clustered together in a square formation.

.....

BILBSTER : ND 25 SE: 280531 W8(S)

BILBSTER BURN : " : 280526

BRIDGE OF BILBSTER : " : 281531

BILBSTER HOUSE : " : 282534

NORTH BILBSTER : " : 285537

Local pronunciation:

A very interesting name in that there is a clear distinction in pronunciation between it and another very similar name in the immediate vicinity, just over the border in Watten Parish.

The Wick name, spelt Bilbster on the 6" OS map, is pronounced ['bɹlbstər] or occasionally ['bɹlpstər].

The Watten name, spelt Bylbster, is pronounced ['baibstər] or, more frequently, ['baipstər].

It seems very likely that the phonetic distinction between the two names is a recent spelling-based distinction.

Early refs:

It is extremely difficult to distinguish between these two names in early sources and it is only possible to be certain which name is being referred to when the parish is specified. It seems, in fact, that there was no distinction in spelling between the two names at an earlier stage.

The following appear to be references to Bilbster in Wick Parish.

Bylebyster	1527	RMS
Ouir Bulbistar	1541	"
Nethir Bulbistar	"	"
Nethir Bulbuster	1549	RSS
Ovir Bulbuster	"	"

Early refs (cont'd)

Bulbister	1556	RSS
Nethir Bulbuster	1604	Retours
Over Bulbuster	"	"
Nethir Balbester	1644	"
Over Balbuster	1606	Sutherland (Forse)
Over Bilbster	1624	"
Nether Bulbustar	1661	RMS
Nether Bylbister	1667	"
Neth. Bilbuster	1662	Blaeu
Bilpster	1750	Roy
Bilbster	1724	Macfarlane
Bilbster House	1832	Thomson

The references to Bylbster in Watten Parish are almost identical.
The earliest certain reference to the Watten name is

Bulbuster in the Parish of Watten	1546	Sinclair (Mey).

Derivation:

The specific is uncertain but the most probable source is

ON Bili m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 139)

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

The distinction made in the 16th and 17th centuries between Nether and Over Bilbster has now disappeared. (For Nether/Over: see OL27(S).)

It is likely that Nether Bilbster is now represented in the name Netherton (see W72(S)) while Over Bilbster has become North Bilbster.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

BLACKSTOBBS : ND 34 SW: 317403 W9(S)

Local pronunciation: ['blak 'stabs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is not clear, but the generic here appears to be

Sc stobb : a post or stake, especially one used for fencing.

.....

BLINGERY : ND 34 NW: 307492 W10(S)

BLINGERY HILL : ND 24 NE: 298488

Local pronunciation: ['blɪndʒəri]

Early refs:

Blingere	1572	Sinclair (Mey)
Blinserie	1578	"
Blingerie	1580	"
Blingere	1582	"
Blingerie	1584	Sutherland (Forse)
Blingrie	1619	RMS
Blingerie	1650	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Blingery	1761	"
Blingrey	1841	Census

Derivation:

The specific is probably

ON Blæingr m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 149)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 58)

ON ærgi n. : see R66(S)

.....

BORROWSTON : ND 34 SW: 329438 W11(S)

BORROWSTON COTTAGE : " : 328437

Local pronunciation: ['bɔrɪstən]

Early refs:

Borrowstoun	1606	RMS
Borroustoun	1640	Retours
Borrowstown	1750	Roy
Borrowstoun	1815	Sinclair (Thurso)
Borrowston	1832	Thomson
Borrowstoun	1841	Census

Derivation:

As for Borrowston in Reay Parish

: see R32(S).

.....

BRAEHEAD : ND 34 SW: 318403 W12(S)

Local pronunciation: [bre'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc brae : see R8(S)

.....

BRIDGEND : ND 34 SW/SE: 322406 W13(S)

BRIDGEND : ND 34 NW : 323490

Local pronunciation: [brɪdʒ'ɛnd]

Early refs: Bridgend 1761 Sinclair (Freswick)

Bridge End 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:

These identical names refer to two different places. Bridgend is a very popular name in Caithness.

.....

BROADHAVEN : ND 35 SW: 378513 W14(S)

BROADHAVEN FARM : " : 379514

BROAD HAVEN : " : 382513

Local pronunciation: [brɔd 'hevən]

Early refs: Broad Haven 1750 Roy

Broad Haven 1832 Thomson

Broadhaven 1841 Census

Derivation:

This is obviously a name which applied in the first instance to a topographical feature and was subsequently adopted as a village and farm name.

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

BROUGH : ND 34 NE: 363482 W15(S)

THE BROUGH : " : 367482

TAIL O' BROUGH : " : 368482

STACK O' BROUGH : " : 368483

BRIG O' STACK : " : 369486

BROUGH HEAD : ND 36 SE: 371633

Local pronunciation: [brɔx]

Early refs: Brugh 1750 Roy

Stacks of Burgh " "

Brough 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

For Brough: see D4(S) and T9(T)

Sc tail : used as in Eng, to indicate a projecting section of land

Cai stack : see D75(T)

Sc brig : see R102(T)

(Stack o' Brough refers to a detached column of rock as its name suggests and Brig o' Stack to a column attached to the land by a natural rock bridge.)

It is extremely puzzling that, in spite of this cluster of names, no broch is listed for this area in Inventory of Monuments 1911. The names must surely indicate its earlier presence.

.....

BROWNABAN : ND 34 SW: 323434 W16(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Browneban 1841 Census

Brounaban 1911 Inventory of Monuments

Derivation:

This is probably a Gaelic name which has been heavily influenced by English, in its written form.

The generic is totally obscure.

The specific could be

G bàn : white

.....

BRUAN : ND 33 NW: 314396 W17(S)

Local pronunciation: ['bruən]

Early refs: Browen 1726 Macfarlane

Bruen " "

Brewin 1750 Roy

Bruan 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:

The similarity between this name and the previous name, as well as the situation of both names, suggests Gaelic origin but the actual source is obscure.

.....

BURNSIDE : ND 34 SW: 324445 W18(S)

Local pronunciation: ['bʌrnsaid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

The reference is to a croft beside the Burn of Thrumster (see W104(S)).

.....

CAIRNQUOY : ND 34 NW: 331473 W19(S)

CAIRN HILL : " : 328494

Local pronunciation: ['kernkɔi]

['kern hʌl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

.....

CAMSTER, LOWER : ND 24 NE: 253456 W20(S)
CAMSTER BURN : " : 257454
LOCH OF CAMSTER : ND 24 SE: 264442
GREY CAIRNS OF CAMSTER: " : 260441
Local pronunciation : ['kamstar]
Early refs: Camster 1541 RMS
Cambustar 1552/3 "
Campbuster 1549 RSS
Campistar 1578 Sinclair (Mey)
Cempster 1655 "
Cambuster 1604 Retours
Cambuster 1644 "
Campster 1724 Macfarlane
Camster 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON kambr m. : a crest, a ridge of hills
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Sc loch : see R5(S)
Sc cairn : see R27(T)

.....

CASTLE GIRNIEGOE : ND 35 SE: 377549 W21(S)
Local pronunciation: [kas] ['gʌrnɪgo]
Early refs: Gyrnego 1508 Sinclair (Mey)
Grenegew 1516 "
Girnego 1518 "
Girnigo 1547 RSS
Girnigo 1661 RMS
Girnigho or Groëngho 1662 Blaeu
Giringo 1671 Retours
Girnego 1701 Brand
Castle Girnigo 1750 Roy

This castle, and the neighbouring Castle Sinclair (see W22(S)), is extensively described in Inventory of Monuments 1911, pages 139-143. The date suggested for the erection of Castle Girnigoe is towards the end of the 15th century and the date for the desertion of both

Castle Girniegoe and Castle Sinclair is about the year 1679. W21(S) (cont'd)

Derivation:

The castle takes its name from the neighbouring geo, above which it is perilously perched.

ON grœnn : see D14(S)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(For a similar name cf S14(T))

.....

CASTLE SINCLAIR : ND 35 SE: 378548 W22(S)

CASTLE HAVEN : " : 379550

Local pronunciation: ['kasl̩ 'sɪŋklɛr]

['kasl̩ hevən]

Early refs:

Castell-Sinclair	1616	RMS
Castell-Sincleer	1662	Blaeu
Castle Sinclare	1671	Retours
Castle Sinclair	1701	Brand
Castle Sinclair	1750	Roy

This castle was probably built about the year 1606 when there was no room for further extension on the Girniegoe ward. Its life, however, was limited because the Rev. John Brand, who visited the castles in 1700, describes them as being in ruins. (cf W21(S))

Derivation:

The castle takes its name from the Sinclair family who occupied it.

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

CHARITY : ND 34 NE: 356491 W23(S)

Local pronunciation: ['tʃarɪʔi]

Early refs:

Charitie	1661	RMS
Charitie	1671	Retours
Charity	1798	Book of Valuation

Derivation: W23(S) (cont'd)

This name indicates that the Presbyterian ethic was well-entrenched by 1661.

The most probable explanation of the name is that fields in the area were allocated to the poor of the district.

.....

CORBIEGOE : ND 34 SW: 352443 W24(S)

CORBIE GEO : " : 354444

Local pronunciation: ['kɔrbi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc corbie : see S18(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

The above two names clearly illustrate the peculiar distinction made by map-makers between the spellings goe and geo. (cf R81(T))

.....

COTTAGES, CLIFF HEAD: ND 35 SE: 358545 W25(S)

Local pronunciation : ['klɛf'hɛid kɔʔɛdʒas]

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent self-explanatory name. The cottages are situated above Ackergill Haven (see W2(S)).

.....

COTTAGE, DORRAN : ND 35 SW: 336507 W26(S)

Local pronunciation: ['dorən kɔʔədʒ]

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

Apparently a very recent name. Dorran was a firm which specialised in "kit" houses in the 1960s.

.....

COTTAGES, DUNBAR : ND 35 SE: 353532 W27(S)

Local pronunciation: [dʌn'bar kɔʔədʒ]

A local informant explained that there is now only one cottage and, therefore, the plural is no longer applicable.

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably named after the Dunbar family of Hempriggs who first appear in Calder's list of proprietors and wadsetters in 1668. (J.T. Calder 1887, page 302)

.....

COTTAGES, FOUNTAIN : ND 35 SW: 325513 W28(S)

Local pronunciation: ['fauntn kɔʔʌdʒəz]

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

There is no evidence of a 'fountain' in the immediate vicinity, but perhaps some feature in the neighbouring Achairn Burn (see W1(S)) gave rise to the name.

.....

COTTAGE, GAS : ND 35 SW: 316506 W29(S)

Local pronunciation: ['gas kɔʔədʒ]

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

A somewhat prosaic name describing a cottage near Stirkoke House which must have been notable as a pioneer of gas lighting.

.....

COTTAGE, SANDEND : ND 35 SW: 343541 W30(S)

Local pronunciation: [sa'nɛn kɔʔədʒ]

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent name referring to situation and nature of soil in the vicinity.

.....

CROFT OF NORTHFIELD: ND 34 NW: 348482 W31(S)

Local pronunciation: [krɔft ɑv 'nɔrθfild]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A name indicative of progressive subdivision of the land into smaller agricultural units.

Sc croft : see R11(S)

.....

DALLQUOY : ND 34 SW: 344435 W32(S)

Local pronunciation: [dɑl'kwɔi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

There are no other early references which can, with certainty, be identified with this name, but there is a similar name with elements in reverse order which disappears at the end of the eighteenth century.

Quoysdaile	1650	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Quoysdale	1798	"

Derivation:

ON dalr m.: see R22(S)

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

.....

DRUMDRY : ND 35 SW: 337513 W33(S)

Local pronunciation: [drʌm'drai]

Early refs:

Knokdry	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Knokdry	1558	"
Knokdry	1565	"
Knockdry	1798	Book of Valuation
Drumdriy	1845	NSA
Drumdry	1876	6" OS

Derivation:

It is impossible to be certain that there were not originally two places, one known as Knokdry which has now disappeared, and one

known as Drumdry which has survived, but it seems more probable that, for some reason, Drum was substituted for the earlier Knock. W33(S) (cont'd)

Knock and Drum were quasi-borrowings into Scots from Gaelic at a fairly early date, probably 16th century. (G cnoc m.: see R41(S); G druim m.: see R72(T))

The specific appears to be Eng dry, which would describe a slight hill very accurately because the drainage would be better than on the surrounding flat ground.

.....

ELZY HOUSE : ND 35 SE: 385523 W34(S)
ELZY FARM : " : 385521
CAIRN OF ELSAY : " : 387519
TAILS OF ELSAY : " : 388523
ELSAY GEO : " : 387518

Local pronunciation: ['ɛlzigjo]

Early refs: Elxy 1832 Thomson
Elzy 1841 Census
Elsher's Cairn 1845 NSA
Elsay 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The version given in the New Statistical Account which suggests that the cairn was built where an Earl Alexander was slain is obviously an attempt at explaining an obscure name (NSA 1845, pages 138-139) but it is not based on any factual evidence. Without earlier references it is impossible to suggest a derivation for the specific, which is probably a Norse topographical term. When asked about place-names in this area locals invariably give the form ['ɛlzigjo], including the generic <geo>, which would tend to suggest that the other names are all derived from the name of the geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)
Sc cairn : see R27(T)
Sc tail : see W15(S)

.....

GANSCLET : ND 34 SW: 336445 W35(S)

Local pronunciation: ['gansklεt]

Early refs: Gansclett 1708 Sinclair (Thurso)

Gansclate 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

The specific in this name is obscure.

ON klettr m.: see R20(S) - becoming clate (1832) under the influence of G cleit f.

.....

GARRYWHIN : ND 34 SW: 313414 W36(S)

BROUGHWHIN : " : 313413

Local pronunciation: [gari 'hwιn]

[br$\circ$x 'hwιn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

These are probably 19th century names.

Garry is a common anglicisation of

G garbh : rough, of unequal surface

Sc whin : the common gorse or furze

Sc brough : see T9(T)

.....

GAULTIQUOY : ND 35 NW: 345507 W37(S)

Local pronunciation: ['galtιk$\circ$i]

Early refs: Galtiglay 1573 Sinclair (Dunbeath)

Galtiquoy 1841 Census

Guoltiquoy 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably

ON galti m.: a boar, hog

(cf Galtnes: a local name in Iceland)

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

(Galtiglay (1573) is an example of scribal error. Modern pronunciation clearly confirms that the generic is quoy.

.....

GILLFIELD : ND 35 SW: 346533 W38(S)
GILLFIELD COTTAGE : " : 348533
Local pronunciation: ['gɹlfild]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T)
Gillfield is very close to Gillock (see W39(S)) and is obviously a derivative name, originating as a field name and becoming a separate farm name when the farm of Gillock was divided up into smaller units.

.....

GILLOCK : ND 35 SW: 343532 W39(S)
BURN OF GILLOCK : " : 342535
BRIDGE OF GILLOCK : " : 343529
LOWER GILLOCK : " : 343525
UPPER GILLOCK : ND 35 SE: 350527
Local pronunciation: ['gɹlək]
Early refs: Gillak 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
Gillok 1550 "
Gillok 1565 "
Gillak 1644 Retours
Gillock 1671 "
Gillack 1750 Roy
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T) + dimin -ak/-ok/-ock
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

GRAIGMILLAN : ND 34 NW: 343454 W40(S)
Local pronunciation: [kreg mɹ'lan]
My informant gave this name a very pronounced stress on the final syllable.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This name is uncertain without further early references.

It is probably a name of Gaelic origin which has been imported from elsewhere and has been distorted in the process. W40(S) (cont'd)

The initial element is probably

G creag > Sc craig: see R46(S)

The final element could be

G muileann m. : see R60(S)

.....

GRAYSTONES : ND 35 SW: 314501 W41(S)

Local pronunciation: ['grestons]

Early refs: Graystones 1761 Sinclair (Dunbeath)

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

GREENIEGOE : ND 35 SE: 383516 W42(S)

GREENIE GEO : " : 383514

Local pronunciation: ['grini gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The hamlet takes its name from the neighbouring geo, which is a more recent equivalent of Girniegoe: see W21(S).

Eng green + dimin -ie

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(For the distinction between goe and geo see R81(T).)

.....

GRUDGEHOUSE : ND 34 NW: 325480 W43(S)

Local pronunciation: ['grʌdʒ 'haus]

Early refs: Grudges 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without further early references. D.B. Nicolson lists the name as Grudjes and derives it from

ON grjot-áss: the stony ridge,

but the link between the name and this derivation is very tenuous. (Horne 1907, page 36)

.....

HARDEN : ND 34 NE: 366493 W44(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hardən]

Early refs: Hardie 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:

Lack of early references, and the fact that Arrowsmith's reference does not accord with either modern spelling or pronunciation, makes derivation of the generic at least, impossible. The specific is almost certainly

Sc hard : see OL16(S).

.....

HARLAND : ND 35 SW: 328536 W45(S)

HILL OF HARLAND : " : 326537

EAST HARLAND FARM : " : 337544

Local pronunciation: ['harlənd]

Early refs: Harland 1538 RMS

Harland 1606 "

Harland 1612 "

Harland 1633 "

Harland 1549 RSS

Harlin 1750 Roy

Derivation:

For Harland see OL16(S)

.....

HASTER : ND 35 SW: 327505 W46(S)

BRIDGE OF HASTER : " : 327513

UPPER HASTER : ND 34 NW: 334498

Local pronunciation: ['hastər]

Early refs:	Housbustyr	1519	Sutherland (Forse)	W46(S) (cont'd)
	Hasbister	1537	Sinclair (Mey)	
	Hasbuster	1549	RSS	
	Hasbuster	1606	RMS	
	Haisbister	1616	"	
	Hasbuster	1661	"	
	Hasbuster	1605	Retours	
	Halbester	1644	"	
	Haulster	1726	Macfarlane	
	Hauster	1726	"	
	Hauster	1798	Book of Valuation	
	Haster	1832	Thomson	

Derivation:

The most likely source of the specific is

ON háls m. : the neck,

with reference to a narrow part of the Achairn Burn (see W1(S)). ("This word occurs frequently in Orkney, applied to a 'col' over a hill-ridge, or to a narrow channel, or to the narrowest part of a valley. This term is also Scots in the form halse or hause." Marwick 1952, page 139)

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

.....

HATLIEGROW : ND 36 SW: 347606 W47(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific Hatlie- is obscure.

The generic is probably

Sc kro : see C17(T)

.....

HEMPRIGGS : ND 34 NE: 352474 W48(S)

HEMPRIGGS HOUSE : " : 355473

HEMPRIGGS MAINS : " : 357471

BARNS OF HEMPRIGGS : " : 358473

LOCH HEMPRIGGS : ND 34 NW: 343472

Local pronunciation: ['hɛmprigs]

Early refs: Hempriggs 1575 RMS

Hemprigis 1645 Sinclair (Mey)

Hempriggis 1657 Sutherland (Forse)

Hempricks 1676 Retours

Derivation:

For Hempriggs: see C14(S)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

HERRINGLASS : ND 34 NW: 313474 W49(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛrəŋ'las]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A very strange name, particularly given the inland situation. The most likely explanation is that it was originally the name of a fishing boat, whose owner subsequently applied it to his small farm.

Individual house names in Caithness are frequently of this type.

.....

HILLHEAD : ND 34 SW: 343437 W50(S)

Local pronunciation: ['hɪl'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

HOWE : ND 36 SW: 302622 W51(S)

HILL O' HOWE : ND 34 SW: 353433

RUTHERS OF HOWE : ND 36 SW: 302632

Local pronunciation: [hau, rʌθɔrz ɔv 'hau]

Early refs: How 1592 RMS
Howy 1592 "
Howe 1633 "
Howie 1661 "

Derivation:

As for Howe in Thurso Parish: see T44(S)
Earlier spellings suggest a diminutive ending -y/ie but there is no trace of this in modern pronunciation.
For Ruthers cf OL21(T).

.....

HUMSTER : ND 34 NE: 351476 W52(S)

CAIRN OF HUMSTER : " : 354485

Local pronunciation: ['hʌmstər]

Early refs: Humbister 1541 RMS
Humbuster 1555 RSS
Humster 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:

The specific is likely to be
ON Hundi m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 598)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 144)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Sc cairn : see R27(T)

.....

INGIMSTER : ND 25 SE: 296535 W53(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ɪŋɪmstər]

Early refs: Ingimster 1841 Census
Imgster 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Lack of early references again causes problems.

W53(S)
(cont'd)

Possibly

ON Ingi m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 625)

(see also Fellows-Jensen pages 149-150)

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

(with the initial [b] of bólstaðr > [m] under the influence of the preceding nasal consonant)

.....

W54(S)

IRESGOE : ND 34 NE: 356452

IRES GEO : " : 357456

MOSS OF IRESGOE : ND 34 SW: 352449

Local pronunciation: ['airəz gjo]

Early refs: Erixgo 1646 Sinclair (Thurso)
Erisgo 1708 "
Iresgo 1841 Census

Derivation:

The specific is uncertain, but Erixgo (1646) strongly indicates

ON Eiríkr m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 223)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 76)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(For the distinction between geo and goe see R81(T).)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

W55(S)

JANETSTOWN : ND 35 SE: 353509

Local pronunciation: ['dʒanəts tən]

Early refs: Janetstown 1841 Census

Derivation:

A village on the suburbs of Wick Burgh which was named after Lady Janet Sinclair of Ulbster.

.....

JUBIDALE : ND 34 SW: 332421 W56(S)
BURN OF JUBIDALE : " : 331417
Local pronunciation: ['dʒupidel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The most probable source is
ON djúpr : see C28(T)
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

KEISS : ND 36 SW: 348613 W57(S)
KEISS CASTLE : ND 36 SE: 354617
KEISS LINKS : ND 35 NW: 337590
Local pronunciation: [kis]
Early refs:

Keiss	1543	Sinclair (Mey)
Keis	1527	RMS
Mylnland-Keis	1592	"
Keiss	1661	"
Keiz	1667	"
Keece	1662	Blaeu
Keis	1671	Retours
Kees	1724	Macfarlane
E. Keiss	1750	Roy
Westertown Keiss	"	"
Keiss C.	"	"

Derivation:
Keiss is situated on a very pronounced ridge with a rounded summit, which possibly prompted the Norse to apply an appellative, often used as a by-name, to the place.
ON keis f.: a round belly
(akin to ON keikr (adj): bent backwards, the belly jutting forwards)

Sc links : see OL33(S) W57(S) (cont'd)
Sc mylnland: see R60(S) and T49(S)
Sc town/(toun) (as in Westertown 1750)
: see R46(S)

.....

KETTLEBURN BROCH : ND 35 SW: 349518 W58(S)
Local pronunciation: ['kɛʔlˌbʌrn brɔx]
Early refs: Kettleburn Tofts 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
Kettle also appears in C42(T) where it suggests a rounded shape, as in a cauldron. In this instance, the reference may be to deep, rounded pools in the stream.
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Sc broch : see T9(T)
Cai toft : see OL33(S)

.....

KILLIMSTER : ND 35 NW/NE: 313566 W59(S)
NORTH KILLIMSTER : " : 327556
LOCH OF KILLIMSTER : " : 308560
BURN OF KILLIMSTER : " : 307565
KILLIMSTER MAINS : ND 35 SW. : 324547
KILLIMSTER MAINS COTTAGES: " : 322544
MOSS OF KILLIMSTER : ND 25 NE : 293561
KIRK O' MOSS : " : 293564
Local pronunciation : ['kɪlɪmstər]
Early refs: North Killummister 1557 OPS
South Killummister " "
North Kilmister " "
South Kilmister " "
Kyllamister 1574 Sinclair (Mey)
South Killamester 1580 "
North Kilmister 1581 RMS
South Kilmister " "
South Kilmister 1601 "

Early refs (cont'd)

South Kilmister	1608	RMS
North Kilmister	1605	Retours
South Kilmister	"	"
Kyllemster	1662	Blaeu
Kilminster	1726	Macfarlane
Killomster	1750	Roy
Kilmster	1841	Census

Derivation:

ON kylna f.: a kiln

The reference is probably to a corn-drying kiln, this being an extremely productive grain-growing area.

ON bólstaðr m.

: see R21(S)

(the initial [b] of bólstaðr having become [m] under the influence of the preceding nasal consonant which, in turn, merged with the [m])

Sc loch : see R5(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc kirk : see T27(S)

.....

KINLOCHY : ND 34 NW: 335473 W60(S)

Local pronunciation: [kʌn'lɔxi]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A name which is common throughout those areas of Scotland which have, at one time, been Gaelic speaking.

It is an anglicisation of a Gaelic original

G ceann m.: see R56(S)

Cai G loch f.

: see R5(S)

Kinlochy is situated at the head of Loch-Hempriggs (see W48(S)).

.....

KIRK TOFTS : ND 36 SW : 348615 W61(S)
KIRK BURN : " : 332645
BURN OF KIRK : ND 35 NW/NE: 305586
FORD OF THE MEETINGS: " : 306593
Local pronunciation : ['kɹrk 'bʌrn]
['kɹrk 'tɔfts]

My informants were unfamiliar with the name Ford of the Meetings.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kirk : see T27(S)
Cai toft : see OL33(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

These names refer to three separate churches, with Burn of Kirk and Ford of the Meetings referring to the same church or, alternatively, the latter could have referred to conventicles held in the open air.

Sc meeting: the actual religious ceremony conducted by a minister

.....

LADYSMITH : ND 35 SW: 342534 W62(S)
Local pronunciation: ['ledismɹθ]

Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:

This farm is named after a battle in the Boer War; the 'Relief of Ladysmith' 1899.

.....

LOCHEND : ND 34 SW: 318407 W63(S)
Local pronunciation: [lɔx'ɛnd]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name refers to a small farm situated at the south end of Loch Watenan (see W110(S)).

.....

LOCHSHELL : ND 35 SE: 353526 W64(S)
LOCHSHELL FARM : " : 353528
Local pronunciation: [lɔx'ʃɛl]
Early refs: Lochshale 1667 RMS
Lashel 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc loch : see R5(S)
Sc shell (also shale, shail, shaal)
: shallow
The loch is no longer in existence due to extensive drainage. As its name suggests it was probably a marshy area which flooded during wet weather.

.....

LONG GREENS : ND 34 NW: 346453 W65(S)
LONGREEN : ND 36 SW: 333613
Local pronunciation: ['lɔŋ'grinz]
['lɔŋgrin]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc green : see C7(S)

.....

MARKET HILL : ND 35 SE: 353526 W66(S)
Local pronunciation: [markət 'hʌl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A very popular local market was held on the Hill of Wick or Market Hill as it came to be known.
Horne comments, with reference to the 19th century, that "To miss the Hill Market was to have the backbone knocked out of the social year," but he also comments that in 1907 the market was already a shadow of its former self. (Horne 1907, page 140)
The Hill Market apparently petered out about the time of the Second World War.

.....

MARKWELL : ND 34 SW: 324414 W67(S)

Local pronunciation: ['mark'wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The derivation is uncertain without further early references.

Possibly

Sc mark : a boundary

Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

McCOLE'S CASTLE : ND 34 SW: 316434 W68(S)

Local pronunciation: [mɔ'kols 'kasl̩]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a dilapidated chambered cairn near the Loch of Yarrows. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 174)

There appears to be no extant local tradition regarding the person whose surname was McCole. (see Black 1946, page 473)

.....

MERVYN TOWER : ND 36 SE: 370633 W69(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There is a broch marked on the 6" OS map at this point but the name Mervyn Tower is not recorded in the Inventory of Monuments, 1911 and there does not appear to be any traditional tale regarding the name.

.....

MILTON	:	ND 35 SW:	346509	W70(S)
UPPER MILTON	:	" :	342508	
LOWER MILTON	:	" :	349513	
BURN OF MILTON	:	" :	347513	
BRIDGE OF MILTON	:	" :	349508	
MILTON COTTAGE	:	" :	345510	

Local pronunciation: ['mɔltən]

Early refs:

Miltoun	1602	Sinclair (Mey)
Miltoune	1630	"
Myltoun	1662	Blaeu
Miltoune	1667	RMS
Millton	1750	Roy

Derivation:

Sc mil(n)-toun: see R60(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

MIRELAND	:	ND 36 SW:	317605	W71(S)
MYRELAND HORN	:	ND 25 NE:	282584	
BURN OF MYRELANDHORN	:	" :	289568	

Local pronunciation : ['mairland]

[mairland 'hɔrn]

Early refs:

Myrellandnorne	1549	RSS
Mirelandnorne	1549	Sinclair (Mey)
Myrlandnorne	1553	"
Myirland-Northin	1558	"
Myrlandnorn	1561	"
Myirlandnorne	1585	"
Myrlandhorne	1685	"
Myrelandhorn	1772	"
Myreland-Norn	1578	RMS
Myrelandnorthin	1623	"
Myreland Noran	1667	"
Myrelenorne	"	"
Mireland	1750	Roy
Myrilandnorn	1798	Book of Valuation

W71(S)
(cont'd)

Derivation:

Myrelandhorn is a very interesting and extremely well-documented name; the above examples being a representative selection from the numerous references available.

Mireland derives from

ON mýrr f.: see OL21(T)

ON land n.: see OL16(S)

but the final element of Myrelandhorn presents many problems. Logic prompts one to expect that Myrelandhorn is a derivative of Mireland but early documentary references are all to Myrelandhorn and Mireland does not appear until 1750. This, of course, does not prove that Myrelandhorn was the earlier of the two settlements but that it was the more important of the two.

Another puzzling factor is that all the earliest examples seem to suggest that the final element of Myrelandhorn is a form of

ON norðr : the north,

but Myrelandhorn lies to the southwest of Mireland.

These facts, taken in conjunction with modern pronunciation [... hɔrn] suggest that the final element is the generic

ON horn : see W5(S).

One can easily accept that a farm on land of superior quality at the corner or edge of the moor would be more important than a farm in the centre of the moor.

The earlier forms such as ...norne, ...northin, ...norn can be explained as follows:

the nasal consonant at the end of Mireland would have been transferred to the beginning of the next syllable, particularly when such a transference apparently enabled the scribe to interpret the meaning of the word in the next syllable, and having written norn, the next step to northin is to be expected.

It is, in fact, surprising that the written form has not in this instance influenced the spoken form.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

NETHERTON- : ND 25 SE: 292529 W72(S)

Local pronunciation: ['nɛðərtən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

W72(S)
(cont'd)

Derivation:

Sc nether : see OL27(S)

Sc toun : see R46(S)

(For further comments relating to this name see W8(S).

.....

NEWFIELD : ND 35 SW: 338515 W73(S)

NEWLANDS : ND 34 NW: 321496

Local pronunciation: ['niufild]

['niulə nds]

Early refs: Newfield 1841 Census

Derivation:

Both these names refer to comparatively recent enclosures; late 18th or early 19th century.

.....

NEWTON : ND 34 NW: 347496 W74(S)

HILL OF NEWTON FARM: " : 349489

NEWTON MOSS : " : 345494

BURN OF NEWTON : ND 34 NE: 357486

Local pronunciation: ['niutən]

Early refs: Neutoun 1555 RSS

Newtoune Mill 1661 RMS

Newton 1662 Blaeu

Newtoun 1761 Sinclair (Freswick)

Newton 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc toun : see R46(S)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

NORDWALL : ND 35 SW: 330544 W75(S)

Local pronunciation: ['nɔrdwɑl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

D.B. Nicolson suggests derivation from

ON norðr vǫllr: north field (Horne 1907, page 39)

which seems probable, in spite of the fact that there are no early references in sources such as RMS and Retours.

.....

NORTHFIELD : ND 34 NE: 353483 W76(S)

Local pronunciation: ['nɔrθfild]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Originally an outlying field to the north of Hempriggs Mains (see W48(S)), which eventually became a small farm in its own right.

.....

NOSS : ND 35 SW: 375543 W77(S)

NOSS HEAD : " : 388551

FIELD OF NOSS FARM : " : 383528

Local pronunciation: [nɔs]

Early refs:

Noss	1456	OPS (Bannatyne Miscellany)
Nos	1476	Sinclair (Mey)
Noss	1546	RSS
Noss	1548	RMS
Noss	1574	Sinclair (Mey)
Noiss	1575	"
Nois	1617	"
Nos	1626	Sutherland (Forse)
Noss Head	1662	Blaeu
Noss	1750	Roy
Noss Head	"	"

Derivation:

There are innumerable early references to this name, all pointing to

ON nǫs f. : the nose (here used figuratively of a rocky point or tongue of land).

.....

NYBSTER : ND 36 SW: 363633 W78(S)

HAVEN OF NYBSTER : " : 372632

Local pronunciation: ['naibstər]

Early refs: Nybistir 1619 RMS
Nybster 1633 "
Nybster 1748 Sinclair (Freswick)
Neibster 1750 Roy
Nibster 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

ON nýr : new

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

OLDHALL : ND 34 SW: 348441 W79(S)

Local pronunciation: ['old 'hal]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

PAPIGOE : ND 35 SE: 383516 W80(S)

PAPI GEO : " : 386515

PAPIGOE BRIDGE : " : 380514

Local pronunciation: ['papigo]

Early refs: Papygo 1547 RSS
Papigo 1561 OPS
Papigo 1581 RMS
Papingo 1667 "
Papigo 1605 Retours
Papingo 1671 "
Pappigo 1750 Roy

Derivation:

It has been suggested that this place-name contains the Norse word

Papi (gen -a) m.

: a priest.

(Macdonald 1977, Northern Studies Vol 9, page 25) (cf C78(T))

(The 1667 and 1671 references could possibly contain ON papi in its genitive plural form + suffixed definite article: papanna.) W80(S) (cont'd)
It seems, however, equally possible that the specific should be
Sc pap : the breast, used figuratively to describe a more or less conical hill + dimin -y, -i, -in.
(cf The Pap (W112(T)) which is in the neighbourhood of Papigoe)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
(For the distinction between goe and geo see R81(T).)

.....

PULDAGON : ND 34 NW: 325487 W81(S)
UPPER PULDAGON : " : 322492
Local pronunciation: [bʌl'degən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Puldagon is situated in a loop of the Achairn Burn (see W1(S)) at a point where there is a small cluster of names of Gaelic origin. It seems likely that Puldagon belongs to this group but it has been so distorted that it is impossible to decipher its origin accurately without further early references.
The generic is likely to be
G buaile f.: see R36(S)

.....

QUINTFALL : ND 36 SW: 308613 W82(S)
HILL OF QUINTFALL : " : 314624
MOSS OF QUINTFALL : " : 315625
Local pronunciation: ['kwɛntfɛl]
Early refs: Quyntfa 1592 RMS
Quintfauld 1619 "
Quintfield 1650 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Derivation:
The origin of the specific Quint- is obscure.
The generic is of uncertain origin. It could represent
ON fjall n.: see D9(S)
or possibly

Sc fauld : 1) an enclosure for cattle, sheep or other domestic animals
2) an enclosed piece of ground used for cultivation

W82(S) (cont'd)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

QUOYSHAKES : ND 25 SE: 295524 W83(S)

Local pronunciation: ['kwɔi'ʃeks]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

The specific is probably shake as in

Sc shake-cole

: one of the first small shocks of hay which are tossed and turned to dry in the sun before being built into a rick.

The word order in this compound is unusual, suggesting Gaelic influence.

.....

RAGGRA : ND 34 SW: 317446 W84(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: Raggery 1708 Sinclair (Thurso)
Ragra 1841 Census

Derivation: Possibly

ON Ragi : a personal name (Lind 1915, column 837)

ON ærgi : see R66(S)

.....

REDGOE : ND 33 NW: 315396 W85(S)

RED GEO : " : 314393

RED HOUSES : ND 35 SE: 354533

Local pronunciation: ['rɛid 'gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: W85(S) (cont'd)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Redgoe is a cottage situated beside the geo.

(For the distinction between goe and geo see R81(T).)

.....

REFAITHY : ND 34 NW: 313487 W86(S)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This place-name is also from the vicinity of the Achairn Burn (see W1(S)) and is likely to be of Gaelic origin.

The generic is almost certainly

G ruighe m.: see R44(T)

The form of the specific suggests that it is an anglicisation of

G féith f. : see R24(T)

.....

REISS, HILLHEAD OF : ND 35 NW/NE: 335554 W87(S)

LOWER REISS : " : 337553

QUOYS OF REISS : " : 333572

REISS LODGE : ND 35 SW : 338547

Local pronunciation: [ris]

Early refs:

Reiss	1469	Sinclair (Mey)
Ress	1472	"
Reyss	1546	"
Reis	1550	"
Reise	1538	RMS
Reis	1549	RSS
Reis	1644	Retours
Ryce	1662	Blaeu
Reiss	1750	Roy

There are numerous other early references to this name but little variation in spelling.

W87(S) (cont'd)

Derivation: Probably

ON hreysi n.: a heap of stones (cf Reaster D29(S))

but another possibility could be

ON hrís n. : shrubs, brushwood.

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

.....

ROADSIDE : ND 35 SW: 342543 W88(S)

ROADSIDE COTTAGES : ND 35 SE: 377544

Local pronunciation: ['rɔdsaid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

ROCKHILL : ND 34 NE: 362489 W89(S)

Local pronunciation: ['rɔk'hɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A comparatively recent English name for a farm.

.....

SANDYGATE : ND 36 SW: 338608 W90(S)

Local pronunciation: [sandi 'get]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc gate/gait: a way or road

(This occurs as a street-name in OSc from c1220 onwards.)

In this instance it describes a path to a small farm.

.....

SARCLET	:	ND 34 SW:	349435	W91(S)
SARCLET HEAD	:	" :	354432	
LOCH SARCLET	:	" :	343428	
LOCHSIDE	:	" :	345432	

Local pronunciation: ['sɑrklət]

Early refs: Sarclet 1541 RMS
Sarcleytht 1552 "
Sarcleith 1549 RSS
Sarclaithe 1644 Retours
Sarclett 1646 Sinclair (Thurso)
Sarclet 1662 Blaeu

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is obscure.

The generic is probably

ON klettr m.: see R20(S),

although the 1549, 1552 and 1644 forms might indicate

ON hlið f. : see R59(S).

Modern pronunciation favours the former suggestion.

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

SHORELANDS	:	ND 35 SE:	365541	W92(S)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃorlənds]

Early refs: Shorelands 1841 Census

Derivation:

The name refers to a farm near Ackergill Shore (see W2(S)).

.....

SIBSTER	:	ND 35 SW:	324530	W93(S)
SIBSTER FARM	:	" :	315532	
SIBSTER COTTAGES	:	" :	326529	
LOWER SIBSTER	:	" :	308534	
CROFT OF SIBSTER	:	" :	312538	

Local pronunciation: ['sɪbstar]

Early refs:	Subister	1538	RMS	W93(S) (cont'd)
	Substerweik	1549	Sinclair (Mey)	
	Schabuster	1560	"	
	Subister	1644	"	
	Subuster	1644	Retours	
	Shebbuster	1662	Blaeu	
	Sibster	1740	Sinclair (Dunbeath)	
	Simpster	1750	Roy	

Derivation: Probably

ON sudr n.: the south

ON bólstadr m.

: see R21(S)

(The 1560 and 1662 references - Schabuster and Shebbuster - are very similar in form to early references to Shebster (see R65(S)), and if, as appears to be the case, these forms can be used for Subuster they may give additional weight to Nicolson's suggestion that the specific in Shebster, Reay is ON sudr. The palatalisation of the initial consonant of Shebster both in writing and in speech, could be due to the strong Gaelic influence in Reay Parish, a trace of which is present in the early written forms of the Wick name.)

Sc croft : see R11(S)

.....

STAXIGOE : ND 35 SE: 385524 W94(S)

Local pronunciation: ['staksɪgjo]

Early refs:	Creek of Staxigo	1726	Macfarlane
	Staxigo	1750	Roy
	Staxigoe	1799	Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:

The place derives its name from the prominent rock in the harbour around which the village is situated.

Cai stack : see D75(T) + dimin -i-

Cai goe : see R81(T)

(Macfarlane's reference to a creek is certainly his own choice of word. Creek is a term which is alien to Caithness place-nomenclature.)

.....

ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH: ND 35 SW: 328503 W95(S)
ST. MARTIN'S CHAPEL : ND 34 SW: 336417
ST. MARY'S CHAPEL : ND 35 SW: 324524
ST. TEAR'S CHAPEL : ND 35 SE: 367545
Local pronunciation : These names were only recognised as map references and they are not in regular use today.

Early refs: St. Cuthbert's Church 1726 Macfarlane
St. Martines Chappell " "
Marykirk " "
St. Tears " "

Derivation:
These are all sites of earlier ecclesiastical buildings dedicated to various saints.
St. Tear's could possibly represent St. Teresa.
(For further information regarding these saints see Rev. D. Beaton 1909, Index entry for Chapels and Churches page 339.)

.....

STEMSTER : ND 35 SW: 337506 W96(S)
HILL OF STEMSTER : " : 342505
Local pronunciation: ['stɛmstər]

Early refs: Stemmistar 1541 RMS
Stambustar 1552 "
Stambuster 1549 RSS
Stemster 1750 Roy

Derivation:
ON steinn m. : see R20(S)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
(cf R68(S) and C36(S))

.....

STIRKOKE HOUSE	:	ND 35 SW:	317506	W97(S)
STIRKOKE MAINS	:	" :	321508	
CAIRNS OF STIRKOKE	:	ND 34 NW:	333486	
CAIRN OF STIRKOKE	:	" :	336491	
HALL HOUSE	:	ND 35 SW:	317508	
HOUSEQUAY	:	" :	310504	

Local pronunciation: ['stɹrkək]

Early refs:

Stircok	1548	Sinclair (Mey)
Stirkok	1549	"
Stirkaik, Stirkacke	1619	RMS
Stirkock	1661	"
Stircock	1776	Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Stircoke	1821	Sinclair (Mey)
Stirkike	1841	Census
Stirkoke	"	"

Derivation:

The origin of this name is obscure. The only possibility which occurs to mind is that the initial element could be

Sc stirk : a young bovine animal after weaning, kept for slaughter at the age of two or three, not for breeding, and usually referring to a steer or bullock, less frequently to a heifer.

OSc stirk is first recorded in 1329.

The final element could possibly be a diminutive - the reference being to a place where stirks were penned.

This is, however, not a very convincing derivation.

Sc mains : see R32(S)

Sc cairn : see R27(S)

Hall House is a house situated near Stirkoke House.

.....

SUMMERBANK HOUSE	:	ND 36 SE:	368636	W98(S)
SUMMER BANK	:	" :	372635	

Local pronunciation: ['sʌmər baŋk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The house appears to take its name from a coastal area referred to as Summer Bank.

Sc bank : see D2(T)

.....

SWANSIGREW : ND 26 SE: 298627 W99(S)
BURN OF SWANSIGREW : " : 296625
BRIDGE OF SWANSIGREW: " : 298626
Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is uncertain without further early references. It may be as it seems, ie Eng swan.
The generic could represent another variant spelling of Sc kro (see C17(T), where it has been suggested that -grow represents Sc kro).

.....

SWARTHOUSE : ND 34 NW: 327466 W100(S)
BURN OF SWARTIGILL : " : 321457
Local pronunciation: ['swartus]
[bʌrn əv 'swartigɹl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
Sc swart : black, swarthy
Cai gill : see R11(T)
The name could, on the other hand, derive from
ON svartr : black
ON gil n. : see R11(T)
but lack of early references makes derivation from Scots more probable.
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

TANNACH : ND 34 NW: 314472 W101(S)
TANNACH MAINS : " : 325473
TANNACH HILL : " : 306471
Local pronunciation: ['tanəx]
Early refs: Litill Tannoch 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
Tannachtan 1548 RMS
Tannoch 1661 RMS
Tannach 1664 RMS
Tanach 1739 Sinclair (Freswick)

W101(S)
(cont'd)

Derivation:

Another Gaelic name belonging to the cluster in the vicinity of the Achairn Burn (see W1(S)).

Probably

G tana : thin, shallow
(with reference to the depth of the soil)

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

(The 1548 spelling Tannachtan could either contain an unusual diminutive ending -tan or, more probably, it could be erroneous.)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

TAYFIELD : ND 35 SW: 336533 W102(S)

Local pronunciation: ['te fild]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably a recent imported name.

.....

THORNYBUSH : ND 34 SW: 326415 W103(S)

Local pronunciation: ['θɔrni 'buʃ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A recent self-explanatory name applied to a croft.

.....

THRUMSTER : ND 34 NW: 336453 W104(S)
THRUMSTER MAINS : " : 330451
UPPER THRUMSTER : " : 339455
THRUMSTER LITTLE : " : 338459
BURN OF THRUMSTER : " : 332462
THRUMSTER MILL : ND 34 SW: 326449
Local pronunciation: ['θrʌmstər]
Early refs: Thrumbister 1541 RMS
Thrombuster Litill 1545 "
Thrumbaster 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
Thrumbuster 1549 RSS
Thrumbustar 1552 RMS
Thrumbuster 1604 Retours
Over Trumbuster 1662 Blaeu
N. Trumbuster " "

Derivation:
ON þruma f. : a borderland, outskirts
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Sc mains : see R32(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

THUSTER : ND 25 SE: 290518 W105(S)
THUSTER MAINS : ND 35 SW: 302518
Local pronunciation: ['θʌstər]
Early refs: Furesetter 1541 RMS
Tuspuster 1661 "
Thuspuster " "
Thuresetter 1549 OPS
Therster Wick 1662 Blaeu
Thurster 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:
There are similarities between early references to this name and early references to Thusater (see T76(S)).
The specific in Thuster is probably also
ON þuríðr m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 1226)

The generic could be either W105(S) (cont'd)

ON setr n. : see R33(S) or

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

Sc mains : see R32(S)

.....

TOFTCARL : ND 34 NW: 346463 W106(S)

MOSS OF TOFTCARL : ND 34 NE: 356461

HILL OF TOFTCARL : " : 356462

Local pronunciation: [tɔft'karl]

Early refs: Toftcauld 1750 Roy

Toftcarle 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

ON toft f.: see OL33(S)

ON Karl m.: a personal name

(Lind 1915, column 676)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, pages 161-162)

For comments on "inversion-compounds" see C39(S).

Sc moss : see R7(S)

Roy's version of the specific (Sc cauld: cold) is probably erroneous.

.....

TOFTGUN : ND 24 SE: 278427 W107(S)

HILL OF TOFTGUN : " : 270428

Local pronunciation: ['tɔft'gʌn]

Early refs: Toftgun 1664 RMS

Toftgune " "

Toftgunn 1841 Census

Derivation:

Cai toft : see OL33(S)

ON Gunni m.: a personal name

(Lind 1915, column 411)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, pages 116-117)

For comments on "inversion-compounds" see C39(S).

.....

ULBSTER : ND 34 SW: 325410 W108(S)
MAINS OF ULBSTER : " : 336421
HILL OF ULBSTER : " : 332425
STACK OF ULBSTER : " : 339416

Local pronunciation: ['ʌlbstər]

Early refs:

Ulbister	1538	RMS
Ulbistar	1664	"
Ulbuster	1549	RSS
Wolbuster	1640	Retours
Ulbester	1644	"
Ulbuster	1662	Blaeu
Ulbster	1726	Macfarlane

Derivation:

ON Ulfr m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, Column 1054) (Lind 1920, column 392)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, pages 321-324)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Sc mains : see R32(S)
Cai stack : see D75(T)

.....

WARD : ND 34 SW: 325412 W109(S)

Local pronunciation: [ward]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Probably
ON varða f.: see C126(T)
The name now refers to a small farm.

.....

WATENAN : ND 34 SW: 317413 W110(S)
LOCH WATENAN : " : 318413

Local pronunciation: ['watɛnjən]

Early refs:

Watnen	1640	Retours
L. Wattin	1750	Roy
Waitnean	1832	Thomson
Loch Waitnean	"	"

Derivation: Probably W110(S) (cont'd)

ON vatn n.: fresh water

The form of the above name suggests that it may contain a non-mutated plural form of vatn + suffixed definite article -in.

The normal plural form is vötn.

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

WATERLOO : ND 35 SW: 333513 W111(S)

Local pronunciation: [waʔər'lu]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There are several farms, or farm fields, of this name scattered throughout Scotland, commemorating the Battle of Waterloo.

.....

WATHEGAR : ND 25 SE: 283512 W112(S)

Local pronunciation: ['waθɹgar]

Early refs: Wathegar 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Obscure without further early forms.

.....

WESTERLOCH	:	ND 35 NW:	328585	W113(S)
LOCH OF WESTER	:	" :	327593	
HILLHEAD OF WESTER	:	" :	325570	
HILL OF WESTER	:	" :	320580	
WATER OF WESTER	:	" :	335580	
BRIDGE OF WESTER	:	" :	331586	
MOSS OF WESTER	:	" :	310589	
WESTERSEAT	:	ND 35 SE:	356519	

Local pronunciation: ['wɛstar]

['wɛstarsɹt]

Early refs:

Westbister	1545	RMS
Wesbuster	1549	RSS
Westbuster	1604	Retours
Wastbuster	1644	"

Early refs (cont'd) W113(S) (cont'd)

Westre	1662	Blaeu
L. Westre	"	"
Loch of Wester	1726	Macfarlane
Westerseat	1798	Book of Valuation

Derivation:

For comments on the nature of the specific in Wester see OL39(S).
The neighbouring loch in this case is actually referred to as the Loch of Wester.

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Sc loch : see R5(S)
Sc water : see T34(S)
Sc moss : see R7(S)

Westerseat is an interesting name and it is unfortunate that the earliest reference to it is 1798.
The final element could be Eng seat, although there are no other instances of seat in the present survey material.
Alternatively, it could be
ON setr n. : see R33(S),
but there are no other examples of Norse names of the form (specific + generic) + generic.

.....

WHALIGOE : ND 34 SW: 320404 W114(S)
WHALE GEO : " : 322403
WESTER WHALE GEO : ND 33 NW: 320399
WHALE'S BACK : ND 34 SW: 348427

Local pronunciation: ['hwaligjo]

Early refs:

Qualigeo	1619	RMS
Quhalogw	1640	Retours
Whelligo	1724	Macfarlane
Whalligo	1815	Sinclair (Thurso)
Whalegoe	1832	Thomson

Derivation:

Sc whaal (also whaul, wholl, hwal; archaic quhail)
: Sc forms of Eng whale
(OSc has quhall from c1568)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

WHITEBRIDGE : ND 35 SE: 354502 W115(S)

WHITEFIELD : ND 35 SW: 335536

WHITEROW : " : 335536

Local pronunciation: ['hwait bridʒ, ...fild, ...ro]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

These names are all recent and self-explanatory.

Whiterow simply refers to a row of white houses.

.....

WICK BURGH : ND 35 SE: 360510 W116(S)

WICK RIVER : ND 25 SE: 275543

OLD WICK : ND 34 NE: 370494

OLD MAN OF WICK (castle remains) : " : 368487

CASTLE WALK : " : 372488

CASTLE GEO : " : 372489

Local pronunciation: [wik/wɛik]

Early refs:

Vík	12th C	Orkneyinga Saga
Weke	1457	Sinclair (Mey)
Uek	1472	"
Weyk	1508	"
Uyk	"	"
Weik	1548	"
Wik	1549	"
Auld-Wik	1526	RMS
Wick	1603	"
Wiek	1667	"
Water of Wiek	"	"
Week	1667	"

Derivation:

There are innumerable early references to Wick, the above being a representative selection. The original form of the name appears in the Orkneyinga Saga reference:

ON vík f. : see D12(S).

RMS (1526) cites Auld-Wik in which the specific is

Sc auld : old.

The Old Man of Wick is described as "The Castle of Old Wick whose ruins are now known to the sailors as Old Man of Wick." (Macfarlane's Geographical Collection 1726) W116(S) (cont'd)

.....

WINLESS	: ND 35 SW:	306542	W117(S)
NORTH WINLESS	: " :	303541	
BURN OF WINLESS	: " :	302534	
BRIDGE OF WINLESS	: ND 25 SE:	295541	
LOCH OF WINLESS	: " :	292547	
WINLESS MAINS	: " :	299537	

Local pronunciation: ['wʌnləs]

Early refs:		
Wyndeles	1557	OPS
Vindles	1581	RMS
Windles	"	"
Weyndles	1661	"
Windlayes	1667	"
Windles	1671	Retours
Windlass	1750	Roy
Windless	1832	Thomson
Loch Windless	"	"

Derivation:

This name appears to contain

ON vind-lauss adj

: windless, calm, smooth.

The cluster of names containing this descriptive element occur in a reasonably sheltered situation in the valley of the Wick River.

A parallel adjectival formation

vatn-lauss: waterless,

occurs more frequently in place-names.

(see Watlass in Fellows-Jensen 1972, page 107)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

The original reference could have been to the waters of the loch.

.....

YARROWS, SOUTH	:	ND 34 SW:	307433	W118(S)
NORTH YARROWS	:	" :	310443	
WEST YARROWS	:	" :	304441	
CAIRNS OF YARROWS	:	" :	308434	
LOCH OF YARROWS	:	" :	310435	
HILL OF YARROWS	:	ND 24 SE:	296428	

Local pronunciation: ['jaros]

Early refs: Yarous 1750 Roy
Warrows 1832 Thomson
Hills of Yarrows " "

Derivation:

Lack of early references makes derivation extremely difficult. The name refers to a ridge of hills and may possibly contain

ON jaðarr m.: the edge
(usually of cloth, but it can be used figuratively to indicate the horizon : himin-jöður)
ON áss m. : used metaphorically to indicate a rocky ridge
Sc cairn : see R27(T)
Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES

ALLT BEAG-ÀIRIDHE : ND 24 NE: 270477 W1(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G beag : see R7(S)

G àiridh f.: see R23(S)

This burn forms part of the boundary between Wick and Watten Parishes, in an area where there is a strong Gaelic influence.

.....

ALLT NA BAN-TIGHEARNA: ND 24 SE: 262435 W2(T)

CNOC NA BAN-TIGHEARNA: " : 263437

Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G allt m. : see R1(S)

G ban-tighearn f.

: Lady, gentlewoman

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

This burn forms part of the boundary between Wick and Latheron Parishes, and is also in a strongly Gaelic-influenced area.

.....

AQUAVITAE MEADOW : ND 35 SE/NE: 352508 W3(T)

Local pronunciation: [akwɐ'viti]

Early refs: Aquavitae Meadow 1798 Book of Valuation

Aquavita Meadow 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There are no extant local tales of illicit stills or smuggling activities to explain this colourful name.

(This name should perhaps have been included in the settlement section in the form Aquavitae because, although originally a field name, it now refers to a small farm and the word Meadow is no longer included in the name.)

.....

ASHY GEO : ND 34 NE: 357451 W4(T)

Local pronunciation: ['aʃi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

As for Ashy Geo in Dunnet Parish: see D1(T).

.....

BATTLE MOSS : ND 34 SW: 316437 W5(T)

Local pronunciation: ['baʔɬ mɔs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably so named because of the parallel stone rows which are situated on the Moss between the cultivated land and the Loch of Yarrows (see W118(S)). The Inventory of Monuments states that there are eight rows in all, six of which are fairly complete for a distance of about 138 feet. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 185-186) These stones may have been thought to resemble soldiers in battle array.

Sc moss : see R7(S)

.....

BEAL HILL : ND 25 NE: 297556 W6(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bil hɤl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Perhaps a variant of

Sc bield : see R154(T)

although it is impossible to be certain without further references.

.....

BIRKLE HILLS : ND 35 NW/NE: 340580 W7(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bɤrkəl hɤlz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

As for Birkle Hill in Olrig Parish: see OL2(S).

.....

BLACK HILL : ND 34 SW: 302442 W8(T)
BLACK LOCH : " : 303437
BLACKFOLD BURN : " : 328417
Local pronunciation: [blak 'hɛl, ... 'lɔx]
['blakfəld bʌrn]
Early refs: Blackfaulds 1750 Roy
Derivation:
Sc loch : see R5(S)
The name Blackfaulds (1750) was probably originally applied to some shielings, or at least to the herding and penning of sheep.
Sc fauld : a fold
As is typical with many such names, it now only applies to the burn.
Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

BLACK POINT : ND 35 SW: 363546 W9(T)
BLACK ROCKS : " : 375508
WELL OF CAIRNDHUNA : " : 374502
CAIRNDHUNA ROCK : " : 375502
Local pronunciation: [blak 'pɔint, ... 'rɔks]
[wɛl ə kern'dunə, kern'dunə rɔk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This is a particularly interesting set of names in that the English name Black Rocks co-exists with the name Cairndhuna which is probably a quasi-borrowing into Scots of
G càrn dubh: black rock.
Cairndhuna is lexically opaque to its present users and the tautologous Eng rock has been added.
It seemed most unusual that the Gaelic name should have survived in any form, no matter how corrupt, in this particular position and, in fact, it transpired that the name has been artificially preserved as a street name in Wick Burgh.
Sc well : see R40(S)

.....

BLIND BURN : ND 34 NW: 348488 W10(T)

Local pronunciation: ['blaind bʌrn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A stream which is so overgrown with grass and heather as to be invisible to the unsuspecting walker.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

BRAID HELL : ND 34 SW: 354436 W11(T)

Local pronunciation: ['bred 'hɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name refers to a broad inlet of the sea, but the form of the generic is obscure without earlier references.

.....

BRICKIGOE : ND 34 SW: 302444 W12(T)

BURN OF BRICKIGOE : " : 304442

LOCH BRICKIGOE : " : 302440

Local pronunciation: ['brɛkigjo]

Early refs: L. Brakegoe 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

These names refer to moorland features and the present form of the generic which seems to suggest Cai goe: see R81(T) may be masking an earlier generic of a different origin. The stream does, however, run through a particularly deep gully as it flows into the loch, which may have prompted the description goe, even inland. The specific is possibly

Sc brick/brake

: Eng break, a hollow in the hills

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

BROAD GEO : ND 34 SW: 354444 W13(T)
Local pronunciation: ['brɔd gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

BROWN HILL : ND 25 NE: 299567 W14(T)
Local pronunciation: [braun 'hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

BULLBREST : ND 24 NE: 267453 W15(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This name is a description of a hill-slope in an area where Gaelic influence is strong.
Its origin is obscure without further early references and modern pronunciation.

.....

BURN OF HOBBIEGILL : ND 35 NW/NE: 314597 W16(T)
Local pronunciation: [bʌrn ə 'hɔbigɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc burn : see R4(S)
The specific is possibly
Sc hobbie : a kind of basket-work fish-trap used in a trout stream.
Cai gill : see R11(T)

.....

BURN OF RIROA : ND 35 NW: 316586 W17(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Otherwise obscure without further early references or pronunciation.

.....

CAIRN REAIN : ND 34 SW: 312444 W18(T)

Local pronunciation: [kern 'ren]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Also referred to as Càrn Righ, a chambered cairn to the north of the Loch of Yarrows. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 171)

Derivation:

G càrn : see R27(T)

The specific is difficult without further early references, but possibly represents

G righe (gen -an) m.

: 1) a slope

2) a shieling

.....

CLASH-AN-DAM : ND 34 SW: 312403 W19(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G clais f.: see R41(S)

Possibly

G damh m. : a stag

.....

COOLHILL : ND 36 SW: 348618 W20(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kul 'hɹl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Probably an anglicised version of

G cùl m. : the back of anything, which is often applied to hills in the sense of ridge.

.....

COVE OF BARBERRY : ND 35 SE: 388547 W21(T)

Local pronunciation: [kov ə 'barbəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

As for Bar Berry on Stroma: see S2(T).

.....

CRAIG HAMMEL : ND 34 NE: 363463 W22(T)

Local pronunciation: [kreg 'haməl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

Sc hummel/hammel

: used figuratively to describe anything which presents a flat, level appearance

.....

CRANE ROCK : ND 35 SE: 374503 W23(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kren rɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

As for the many examples of Scarf Rock (see R145(T)). The bird, in this instance, being a crane.

.....

DHU LOCH : ND 34 NW: 339485 W24(T)

DHULOCH CROFT : " : 342486

Local pronunciation: ['dju lɔx]

Early refs: Doo Lochs 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

G dubh : see R23(S)

G loch : see R5(S)

G loch is generally feminine in Caithness (see R5(S)), hence presumably the lenition which appears in the adjective, although the compound assumes Norse word-order.

For comments on the pronunciation [dju] for <dhu> cf S52(T).

Thomson (1832) records no lenition in the adjective and loch + Eng pl -s.

Sc croft : see R11(S)

.....

DIAS GEO : ND 36 SW: 370629 W25(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is obscure without earlier forms or modern pronunciation.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

DOG'S HAVEN : ND 34 NE: 377495 W26(T)

Local pronunciation: ['dɔgs hevən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A modern self-explanatory name.

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

DUNBAR'S STACK : ND 34 NE: 366474 W27(T)

Local pronunciation: [dʌn'bars 'stak]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai stack : see D75(T)

The personal name belonged to a member of the Dunbar family of Hempriggs. (cf W27(S))

.....

EASTER HILL : ND 34 SW: 355445 W28(T)

Local pronunciation: ['istər hʌl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A hill above the cliffs on the east coast.

.....

ELLENS GEO : ND 34 SW: 327408 W29(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ɛlənz gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc Ellen : Helen

Cai geo : see R54(T)

There is no local knowledge of Ellen's identity.

.....

FAIRY HILLOCK : ND 35 SW: 344517 W30(T)

Local pronunciation: ['feri hʌlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

There are several examples of Fairy Hillock in Caithness (eg OL10(T)), the Gaelic equivalent being Sìthean (see R14(T)).

.....

FASBERRY : ND 34 NE: 365468 W31(T)

FAS SKERRY : ND 35 SE: 386514

Local pronunciation: ['fasbəri]

['faskəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is obscure (cf C32(T)).

Cai berry : see T2(T)

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

FULLIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 357616 W32(T)

Local pronunciation: ['fʌli gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON fugl m.: see D21(T)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

GEARTY HEAD : ND 34 SW: 347426 W33(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gɛrti 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific Gearty is obscure.

The modern form perhaps suggests

ON gerði n.: a fenced piece of ground,

but it seems unsuitable in the context of Head.

.....

GIRSTON : ND 34 NE: 364474 W34(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gɛrstən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a broad bay sheltered from the sea by Dunbar's Stack (see W27(T)) and South Stack (see W100(T)). Its origin is obscure without further early references.

.....

GOLDAIN : ND 33 NW: 318397 W35(T)

Local pronunciation: ['gol'den]

One of my informants knew this name, but commented that it was a long time since she had heard it being used.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure, without further early references, although the initial element is probably indicating the colour gold because the neighbouring Gaelic name Leacan Oir (see W59(T)) contains a similar reference.

.....

GOTE A' SLY : ND 33 NW: 317395 W36(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc gote : a narrow rocky inlet of the sea, a creek
(cf Norw dialect
: gota, a cut-out channel)
Sc sly (also sligh)
: see C105(T)

.....

GREEN HILL : ND 35 SW: 327544 W37(T)

Local pronunciation: ['grin 'hɫl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

GROAT'S LOCH : ND 34 SW: 314408 W38(T)

Local pronunciation: ['grots lɔx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is the surname Groat (see Black 1946, page 330)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

In this instance the name describes a marshy area rather than a loch.

.....

HARRIL HEAD : ND 33 NW: 314392 W39(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is obscure without further early references.

.....

HAWKHILL : ND 36 SE: 355625 W40(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hak 'hɪl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

HELBERRY : ND 36 SE: 373635 W41(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛlbəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON hella f.: a flat stone

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

HELMAN HEAD : ND 34 NE: 365467 W42(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɛlmən 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific Helman is obscure.

.....

HERRING CRAIG : ND 34 SW: 352428 W43(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɹaŋ 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

Apparently one of the many fishing rocks, but the type of fish is very surprising inshore.

.....

HIETHE : ND 34 SW: 343418 W44(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without modern pronunciation and early references.

.....

HILL OF CLAYTON : ND 36 SW: 341635 W45(T)

GREEN HILL OF CLAYTON: " : 334634

Local pronunciation : ['kletən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name survives only as a hill-name, but probably, in the first instance, referred to a farm where there was a heavy clay soil.

Sc toun : see R46(S)

.....

HILL OF MAN : ND 34 NE: 373498 W46(T)

Local pronunciation: [hɤl ə 'man]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes a hill on the outskirts of Wick Burgh and it is probably related to the nearby castle ruins, known as Old Man of Wick. (see W116(S))

.....

HILL OF OLICLETT : ND 24 NE: 293461 W47(T)

OLIQUOY : ND 34 SW: 321441

Local pronunciation: [hɤl ə 'ɔliklɛt]

<Oliquoy> was not known to my informants.

Early refs: Oliclate 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

The specific is obscure. (Possibly

ON *ǒlr* m. : see OL27(S))

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Cai quoy : see T22(S)

.....

HOBBIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 367626 W48(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hɔbi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc hobbie/(huvie)

: a basket woven from plaited straw or dried stalks of the dock, varying in shape and use, creel-shaped for carrying fish, of a squarer form with a cross handle for holding bait, or like an inverted beehive for holding salt. Also, a small basket scoop with a wooden handle used for landing fish.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

HOLE OF TROUPA : ND 34 SW: 353432 W49(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of Troupa is obscure.

.....

HORNYBACH : ND 24 SE: 263448 W50(T)

Local pronunciation: [ˈhɔrnɹbɐx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

This strange name refers to a moorland area and possibly describes a spot where cattle were habitually penned.

Sc horny : a cow of a horned breed, or a general term for a cow

Sc bach : a cow-pat

(cf G buachar m. : cow-dung)

.....

HORSE GEO : ND 36 SE: 372634 W51(T)

Local pronunciation: [ˈhɔrs gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There is no local tradition relating to the fate of the horse.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

ISEBERRY HEAD : ND 35 SE: 383513 W52(T)

Local pronunciation: [ˈaisbəri hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc ise : ice, in this case slippery rocks

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

ISLEYS GEO : ND 35 SE: 366546 W53(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ailz gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Local pronunciation suggests that this is simply Isle's Geo.

There is a detached rock resembling a small island in the geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

JUPE : ND 35 SE: 387523 W54(T)

Local pronunciation: [tʃup]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes an off-shore rock.

Possibly

ON djúp : the deep sea off the shore,

with reference to the depth of the water around the rock.

.....

KETTLE GEO : ND 34 NE: 364473 W55(T)

Local pronunciation: ['kɛɪəl gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes the deep rounded shape of the geo, which is like a kettle or cauldron. (cf C42(T))

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

KNAPPERBUSS WELL : ND 25 NE: 290552 W56(T)

Local pronunciation: ['napərbʌs wɛl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific in Knapperbuss is probably

Sc knap : a knob, hillock.

(In the context of Sc well: see R40(S) it is interesting to note that in Orkney knappy is a familiar name for a troll or water-spirit. The specific in this instance may have a similar reference.) W56(T) (cont'd)

Sc buss : a bush, a clump or tussock of grass, rushes etc.

.....

LADY'S HOLE : ND 36 SE: 367627 W57(T)

RUSSELL HOLE : ND 34 NE: 367478

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Both are coastal names.

There is no local tradition to explain the reference in either case.

(For the surname Russell see Black 1946, page 704.)

.....

LAND COVE : ND 34 SW: 337415 W58(T)

SEA COVE : " : 334414

Local pronunciation: ['land kov]

[si' kov]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

These two names are juxtaposed and both describe small bays or coves. Land Cove is sheltered by a rocky promontory whereas Sea Cove is exposed to the sea.

.....

LEACAN OIR : ND 33 NW: 318396 W59(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G leac (pl leacan) f.

: a slab, flat stone

G òr (gen òir) m.

: gold

The name refers to coastal rocks which possibly contain iron pyrites or fool's gold.

.....

LINE GEO : ND 35 SE: 387516 W60(T)
Local pronunciation: ['lain gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Possibly a geo which was popular for fishing with rod and line.

.....

LOBSTER ROCKS : ND 36 SE: 357614 W61(T)
Local pronunciation: ['lɔbstər rɔks]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Rocks bordering deep water where lobster creels could be placed.

.....

LOCH CARNLIA : ND 24 SE: 264447 W62(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G loch m. : see R5(S)
G càrn m. : see R27(T)
G liath : see R27(T)

.....

LONG BERRY : ND 34 NE: 373491 W63(T)
LONG GEO : ND 35 SE: 373546
LONG TAIL : " : 387533
Local pronunciation: ['lɔŋbari, ... gjo, ... tel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai berry : see T2(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Sc tail : see W15(S)

.....

LORD OLIPHANT'S LEAP: ND 34 NE: 371487 W64(T)

Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

One of many such names applying to a detached rock lying close to the shore. There is apparently no local tradition relating to Lord Oliphant.

.....

LUMMERS GEO : ND 34 SW: 343423 W65(T)

Local pronunciation: ['lʌmərz gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lummer (lum)

: a long funnel-like passage worn by natural forces through a cliff; a vertical fault or joint in a mass of rock

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

MAN ROCK : ND 35 SE: 376501 W66(T)

MANEY GEO : " : 382551

Local pronunciation: ['man rɔk]

['mani gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Both names probably indicate an imagined resemblance to the human face in the rock formations.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

MAY BERRY : ND 34 NE: 368485 W67(T)

Local pronunciation: ['me bəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific could perhaps be literally interpreted as in the

parallel name May Flood and could refer to the fact that the rock is only covered by the particularly high tides which occur in May. W67(T) (cont'd)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

MIDDLE POINT : ND 36 SE: 355611 W68(T)

Local pronunciation: [mɛdl 'pɔint]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory

.....

MUCKLE ROBERRY : ND 33 NW: 321398 W69(T)

Local pronunciation: [mʌkl 'robəri]

Early refs: Robery 1750 Roy

Rowberry 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc muckle : see D61(T)

Possibly

ON rauðr : see OL21(T)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

.....

MUIRI GEO : ND 34 SW: 354434 W70(T)

Local pronunciation: ['miuri gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc muiri : of a moorland nature

(cf D44(T))

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

MUSLEY : ND 35 SE: 387551 W71(T)

Local pronunciation: ['mʌzli]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes an inlet of the sea near Noss Head (see W77(S)). Its origin is obscure; the only possibility which occurs is that it may have been a favourite spot for gathering mussels.

.....

NEW CRAIG : ND 34 SW: 340417 W72(T)

Local pronunciation: ['niu 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc craig : see R46(S)

The section of coastline to which this name applies may have been altered within the last century by erosion.

.....

NORTH HEAD : ND 35 SE: 384507 W73(T)

NORTH TAILS : " : 386526

Local pronunciation: [nɔrθ 'hɛid, ... 'telz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc tail : see W15(S)

.....

OILY GEO : ND 34 SW: 345424 W74(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ɔili gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The oil oozes out of the rotting seaweed in the geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

OSTIES HILL : ND 34 SW: 316407 W75(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ɔistis hɫ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is obscure.

It may possibly represent

Sc ost/oist(e): 1) an armed company

2) the assemblage or assembling of armed men summoned by the Scottish crown for military service, usually on a specific occasion or for a specific campaign.

.....

OTTER GEO : ND 35 SE: 384515 W76(T)

OTTER'S CAVE : " : 385551

Local pronunciation: ['ɔʔəɾ gjo, ... kev]

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

POWE : ND 35 SE: 386516 W77(T)

POWFEET : " : 376548

POWMAD : " : 385536

Local pronunciation: [pau, 'pau'fit, 'pau'mad]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc powe/pow: see T89(T)

The specific in Powfeet is singular in sense, indicating at the foot of. The apparently plural map form probably came about in the following way:

Sc fit is a common later variant of OSc fute: the foot, and in Wick Parish the vowel in Sc fit would have been prone to narrowing and raising, ie [fɪt] would become [fit], which would naturally

have been understood by the 19th century map-maker as Eng plural feet. W77(T) (cont'd)

Powmad describes a coastal pool; the specific mad is obscure.

.....

PROUDFOOT : ND 35 SE: 383508 W78(T)

Local pronunciation: ['prud'fut]

Early refs: Proudfoot 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

The name describes a rocky promontory or foot. There are various idiosyncratic Scottish usages of proud, and the following could possibly apply in this instance:

Sc proud : when applied to the sea - running high, in spate, swollen.

.....

RAMS GEO : ND 35 SE: 382513 W79(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ramzi gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably

Eng ram + gen -s + dimin ending in pronunciation.

However, there is an alternative possibility:

Sc ramsh (deriv ramsie)

: apparently a reduced form of n.Eng dial.

rammisch : acrid, pungent, rank, from Eng dial ram (of Scandinavian origin)

Cai geo : see R54(T).

.....

RED BRAES : ND 26 SE: 298647 W80(T)

RED FORD : ND 35 SW: 329524

RED MIRE : ND 36 SW: 333625

Local pronunciation: ['rɛid 'bres, ... 'fɔrd, ... mair]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: W80(T) (cont'd)

Sc brae(s): see R8(S)

Cai mire : see C19(T)

.....

RIERA GEO : ND 34 SW: 354439 W81(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rirə gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of the specific is obscure.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

ROBBIE'S CRAIG : ND 35 SE: 376502 W82(T)

Local pronunciation: ['rɔbis kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc Robbie : a common diminutive for Robert

Sc craig : see R46(S)

There is no local tradition relating to Robbie.

.....

STAIN, ROUGH OF : ND 36 SW: 345603 W83(T)

Local pronunciation: [rʌf ə 'sten]

Early refs: Stane 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Sc stain : see T72(S)

Cai rough : see D55(T)

.....

ROW, HEAD OF : ND 34 SW: 326405 W84(T)

THE ROWANS : " : 329412

Local pronunciation: [hɛd ə 'ro]

<The Rowans> not known to my informants.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS W84(T) (cont'd)

Derivation:

In this parish and in the context Head of..., Row possibly represents an earlier

G rudha m.: point of land, promontory

with tautologous Eng head added at a later date.

(cf also D56(T) for an alternative explanation)

Sc rowan : the mountain ash

.....

SALMON ROCK : ND 35 SE: 373504 W85(T)

Local pronunciation: ['samən rɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A rock where sea-trout were caught.

.....

SANDY CAVE : ND 34 SW: 323403 W86(T)

SANDY GEO : ND 36 SE: 372634

Local pronunciation: ['sandi kev, ... gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai geo : see R54(T)

Otherwise self-explanatory.

.....

SCARF'S CRAIG : ND 34 NE: 376498 W87(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skarfs 'kreg]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai scarf : see R145(T)

Sc craig : see R46(S)

.....

SCARTANS GEO : ND 36 SE: 368628 W88(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skartəns gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The specific is probably a metathetic form of

Sc scrat : a scratch + gerundive ending + Eng pl -s.

The reference could be to grooving on the rock due to natural weathering.

.....

SCHOLL : ND 35 SE: 388543 W89(T)

Local pronunciation: [skjɔl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The origin of this name, which refers to a rock in the sea near the shore, is obscure without further early references, but a likely source is

ON skjól n.: a shelter.

When faced with recording this name the map-maker, uncertain of its linguistic origin, may have used Sgeir Bhan (see S52(T)) and Dhu Loch (see W24(T)) as exemplars and introduced the letter h to signify the glide in pronunciation [skjɔl].

.....

SCLAITY FACE : ND 34 NE: 364472 W90(T)

Local pronunciation: ['slɛiʔi fɛis]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes an area of flat, layered rock on the seashore.

Cai sclaity: see R83(T)

Eng face : unusually applied to flat rather than vertical rocks

.....

SEALKY HEAD : ND 35 SE: 388529 W91(T)

SEALS' ROCK : " : 358545

LITTLE SEAL SKERRY : ND 36 SE: 361617

SEAL SKERRY : " : 362618

Local pronunciation: ['sɹlki 'hɛid]

['silz 'rɔk]

[lɹl̥ 'sil skɑri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

These names all describe parts of the coast frequented by seals.

Sc sealky (variant form of Sc selch)

: the common or grey seal

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

.....

SELLIFAR : ND 34 SW: 335414 W92(T)

Local pronunciation: ['sɛlɹfər]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

ON selr (gen pl sela) m.

: a seal

ON fjara f.: the ebb-tide, the fore-shore

.....

SGODMUIRN : ND 35 SE: 387528 W93(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skjɔd'mʌrn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Obscure.

.....

SHALTIEGEO ROCK : ND 35 SE: 371504 W94(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃaltigjo rɔk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference is probably to a Shetland pony which is known in Caithness as a shaltie.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

SHEPHERD'S CAIRNS : ND 24 SE: 280423 W95(T)

Local pronunciation: ['ʃɛpərds kerns]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name applies to the ruins of a broch on the moors, probably used as a marker or guide by a shepherd in the same way that prominent coastal features were used as markers by fishermen.

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

.....

SÌTHEAN FUAR : ND 24 SE: 272413 W96(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G sìthean m.: see R14(T)

G fuar : cold

.....

SKEPS GEO : ND 34 SW: 333414 W97(T)

Local pronunciation: ['skɛps gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Perhaps

ON skip n.: a ship

or possibly

Sc skep : a clumsy wide-mouthed vessel of any kind, also used figuratively of a boat

.....

SKERHARDIES : ND 36 SE: 357613 W98(T)

Local pronunciation: [skʌr'hardis]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The word order in this compound indicates possible Gaelic origin.

G sgeir f.: see R151(T)

The following specific is, however, totally obscure.

.....

SKERRY HEIM : ND 35 SE: 387528 W99(T)

SKERRY SKARVEL : ND 34 SW: 354438

SOUND SKERRY : ND 35 SE: 387525

Local pronunciation: ['sund skɛri]

<Skerry Heim> and <Skerry Skarvel> were not known to my informants.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

The specifics Heim and Skarvel are obscure without further early references. As in the previous example the word order indicates Gaelic influence.

ON sund n.: a sound (Cai [sund])

.....

SOUTH HEAD : ND 34 NE: 377496 W100(T)

SOUTH POINT : " : 371487

SOUTH STACK : " : 365473

Local pronunciation: ['suθ 'hɛid, ...'pɔint, ...'stak]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai stack : see D75(T)

.....

STANE BERRY : ND 35 SE: 357545 W101(T)

Local pronunciation: ['stenbɔri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc stane : see T72(S)

Cai berry : see T2(T)

This is probably a recent compound coined when people were no longer aware that the two elements are virtually synonymous. Perhaps the specific was originally the Sc adjective staney.

.....

STUPACH : ND 35 SE: 373504 W102(T)

Local pronunciation: ['stupəx]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Possibly

Sc stowp + dimin -ach

: a wooden pail or bucket, generally used for carrying water from a well, and usually narrower at the mouth than at the bottom to prevent spilling. The reference may be to the shape of the geo to which the name refers.

.....

SWALLACH : ND 34 SW: 332413 W103(T)

SWALLOW GEO : ND 35 SE: 388542

Local pronunciation: ['swalɹx, 'swalu gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Swallach describes a coastal inlet and is obviously related to the English word swallow, which appears as specific in the following name, with reference to the motion of the sea as it surges and recedes.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

TANG HEAD : ND 36 SE: 354608 W104(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tay 'hɛid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai tang : see T77(T)

Tautologous English Head would have been added at a later date.

.....

THE BUINNS : ND 34 SW: 348426 W105(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'bjuɹnz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes some coastal rocks. Its origin is obscure.

.....

THE CLEIT : ND 35 SE: 385552 W106(T)

THE COVE : ND 34 NE: 377497

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'klɛt, ðə 'kov]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai clett : see R20(S)

Sc cove : a recess in a rock; a cave

.....

THE DICKY : ND 35 SE: 371508 W107(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'dɹki]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai dick, dik: Cai variants of

Sc dyke : a wall; (a ditch)

The reference seems to be to the pier in the harbour.

.....

THE HAVEN : ND 34 SW: 352434 W108(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'hevən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai haven : see T32(T)

.....

THE KISTS : ND 35 SE: 374508 W109(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kɪst]

My informants always used the singular form.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc kist : a chest, coffin-shaped box

The name describes coastal rocks which are rectangular in shape.

.....

THE LOUP : ND 36 SE: 365624 W110(T)

THE LOUPS : ND 34 SW: 354435

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'laup(s)]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc loup : see T69(S)

.....

THE NEEDLE : ND 34 NE: 358452 W111(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'nidəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name applies to a pointed rock.

.....

THE PAP : ND 35 SE: 376514 W112(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'pap]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc pap : see W80(S)

This is a very common hill-name throughout Scotland.

.....

THE SHOALS : ND 34 NE: 372489 W113(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ʃols]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The Shallows. (cf C116(T))

.....

THE SISTERS : ND 35 SE: 373508 W114(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'sʊstərs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes two parallel channels of water.

.....

THE STACK : ND 34 SW: 354433 W115(T)

Local pronunciation: [ðə 'stak]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai stack : see D75(T)

.....

THE VOUTE : ND 34 SW: 343421 W116(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc voute : form of Eng vault

.....

THORNY HILLOCK : ND 26 SE: 296624 W117(T)

Local pronunciation: ['θɔrni 'hɤlək]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

.....

TOD'S GOTE : ND 34 SW: 357447 W118(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tɔds 'got]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Cai tod : a small species of crab not identified (Cai 1905 EDD)

This is perhaps a different word from tod, a fox. No satisfactory etymology has been propounded for tod.

Sc gote : see W36(T)

.....

TORRY GEO : ND 36 SE: 371633 W119(T)

Local pronunciation: ['tɔri gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Difficult without earlier forms. Possibly the same word which Jakobsen records in Shetland in the form tori, meaning dried (ON þurr: dry). Of a geo this would indicate that the sea only penetrates the geo at high tide.

Alternatively, this geo is immediately below Mervyn Tower and it may simply be a dialectal adjective derived from the noun Tower.

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

TRAM, BRIG O' : ND 34 NE: 367478 W120(T)

TRAM, GOTE O' : " : 367481

Local pronunciation: [brig ə 'tramz]

<Gote o' Tram> not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

W120(T)

Derivation:

Sc brig : see R102(T)

Sc gote : see W36(T)

The generic is possibly

Sc tram : a long beam, bar or shaft

(usually of wood, but in this instance being used figuratively to describe the long narrow inlets of the sea to which these names refer).

.....

W121(T)

TURRIE GEO : ND 34 SW: 347426

TURRIGOE HILL : " : 345426

Local pronunciation: ['tʌri gjo 'hʌl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Turrie is possibly of the same origin as Torry (ie ON Þurr: cf W119(T))

Cai geo : see R54(T)

.....

W122(T)

WAREHOUSE HILL : ND 34 SW: 308412

CAIRNS OF WAREHOUSE: " : 307423

LOCH OF WAREHOUSE : " : 302424

Local pronunciation: ['werhaus]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Lack of early references makes derivation extremely difficult. The situation prompts the suggestion that the generic could be

ON áss m. : see W118(S)

Sc cairn : see R27(T)

Sc loch : see R5(S)

.....

WHALE'S HOLE : ND 35 SE: 387514 W123(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hwelz 'hɔl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The reference may be to a school of pilot whales beaching at this spot. This was a common occurrence in the past, enthusiastically welcomed by the locals who made use of the carcases.

.....

WHITELEEN : ND 34 SW: 324427 W124(T)

BURN OF WHITELEEN : " : 328434

Local pronunciation: ['hwait 'lin]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc lean : cf D3(S)

Sc burn : see R4(S)

.....

WHITE RASHES : ND 36 SW: 345631 W125(T)

Local pronunciation: ['hwait raʃəs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Sc rash : form of Eng rush

.....

APPENDIX

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

MAP SOURCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INDEX

Appendix

When endeavouring to work backwards in time from the modern Caithness pronunciation of a name to its original form I made use of the section relating to phonology, which is section V, in the Introduction to Jakob Jakobsen's "An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland".

Jakobsen's opening comment in this section is perhaps even more true of Caithness than of Shetland due to the further phonological complication resulting from the presence of Gaelic in Caithness. He states that "The phonology of the Norn words handed down is on the whole somewhat confused, largely owing to the strong Scottish influence, an influence which has made the vowel system very diversified."

He further comments that "In a large number of cases, different forms of a word exist side by side (differing in different districts, but sometimes differing in one and the same district), frequently representing different stages of development. This alternation is due partly to non-uniform purely local development (especially in respect of the consonantal system), and partly to foreign (Scottish) influence, stronger or weaker in the different cases." This comment is also very appropriate to Caithness.

Another text which has proved extremely helpful when attempting to identify Norse lexical items which have been subject to subsequent Gaelic influence is the Introduction to W.J. Watson's "Place Names of Ross and Cromarty" (Section VI: The Norse Element).

Where different phonetic forms of a name exist side by side in the same parish in Caithness these different forms have been recorded in the sections dealing with individual names but no attempt has been made to indicate that, for instance, someone living in Wick Parish might give a different pronunciation of a Reay Parish name from that given by the local Reay person.

Only a very broad phonetic transcription is given, using the

phonetic symbols listed in "The Principles of the International Phonetic Association" to indicate vowel and consonant quality and the stressed syllable in a compound name. Occasionally, particularly on the east side of the county, the two elements in a compound name are equally stressed which I found surprising and which may have been due to the fact that the name was being reproduced in a somewhat artificial interview situation.

No pronunciation has been given for minor auxiliary elements in Scots and Gaelic names, such as Sc burn, loch, moss, or G allt, beinn, gleann etc. The pronunciation of these terms is not vital for their interpretation and it, therefore, seemed unnecessary to list those minor variations which do occur.

An examination of all the Scandinavian elements occurring in stressed syllables in Caithness names has produced the following results:

A. Consonants

The consonants have, for the most part, retained their original quality with only a few changes occurring as listed below:

1) medial d is almost invariably lost after n, in names such as Sandside ['sansaid] (see R64(S)).

2) h is always lost when it occurs in initial position before l and r, as in Lybster (see R59(S)) and Reaster (see D29(S)). h is sometimes lost initially before vowels, as in Aukingill (see C1(S)).

3) the form of a consonant is often influenced by other surrounding consonants and this applies particularly in the case of [n] in final position in a stressed syllable which becomes [m] under the influence of a bilabial consonant in the following unstressed syllable. This bilabial consonant is usually also subsumed in the resultant [m], as in Stemster (see R68(S)).

4) metathesis of r is very common, as in Girniegoe (see W21(S)).

5) the bilabial consonant v or w is represented in the orthography as w or sometimes u or v, as in Wick (see W116(S)), Dwarwick (see D12(S)).

The presence of this bilabial consonant frequently influences the form taken by a following front vowel, as in Quoys (see C24(S)).

6) ⱷ is usually preserved as [θ] but occasionally it takes the from [t], as in Thing's Va Broch (see T47(S)).

7) ⱨ usually occurs as [θ], as in Garth (see OL14(S)), but it also takes the form [t] as, possibly, in Ratter (see D28(S)) and [d] as in Ward (see W109(S)).

B. Vowels

1) ă is retained both in the orthography and in pronunciation as [a]. There is no such uniformity regarding á which takes a variety of forms both in the orthography and in pronunciation. The suggested instances of á are listed below:

*Áni	:	á > [e]	(see T2(S))
ár-óss	:	á > [(w)ɔ:]	(see C42(S))
gjá	:	á > [o]	(various examples)
háls	:	á > [a]	(see W46(S))
hár	:	á > [a]	(see D17(S))
már	:	á > [ɛ]	(see S1(S))
rá	:	á > [e]	(see R63(S))
skáli	:	á > [eɹ]	(see R67(S))
skári	:	á > [ɛ]	(see T67(S))

* a doubtful example

2) ĕ is usually represented by e in the orthography, but occasionally by i or a. It appears most frequently as [ɛ] in pronunciation but it does also take the forms [ɹ, ɛi, a].

é occurs very infrequently and is invariably [e] in pronunciation although the orthographic representation of the sound can vary.

3) ĭ is usually represented by i in the orthography and is normally [ɹ] in pronunciation, although it can also take the forms [i] or [ɛ].

í takes a variety of forms in the orthography and is frequently diphthongised in pronunciation. The suggested examples of í are listed below:

hlíð	:	í > [ai]	(see R59(S))
*hrís	:	í > [i]	(see W87(S))

kvíf	:	f > [i]	(see C24(S)
líf̀n	:	f > [ai]	(see C18(T))
slíf̀kr	:	f > [ɹ]	(see C31(S))
víf̀k	:	f > [i/ɛi]	(see W116(S))
víð̀r	:	f > [ɛi]	(see T82(S))

4) ŏ̲ is represented as either o̲ or u̲ in the orthography. It is most frequently [ɔ] in pronunciation but it also takes the forms [ʌ] and, very occasionally [a].

ó̲ is variously represented in the orthography and in pronunciation, and the suggested examples are listed below:

*ból̀staðr	:	ó > [u]	(see D42(T))
hóll	:	ó > [ɔ]	(see D20(S))
hólmi	:	ó > [a]	(see R53(S))
lómr	:	ó > [ɔ]	(see C66(T))
óss	:	ó > [ɔ]	(see T34(T))
rófa	:	ó > [ʌ]	(see D55(T))
stórr	:	ó > [u]	(see C37(S))

5) ú̲̆ is almost invariably represented by u̲ in the orthography, the only exception being the doubtful example listed in S31(T). It is most frequently [ʌ] in pronunciation, although it does also take the forms [u] and,on one occasion,[au] (see C7(S)).

ú̲ is invariably u̲ in the orthography and [u] in pronunciation, with the exception of Thurdistoft (see OL35(S)).

6) y̲̆ is represented in the orthography by i̲, e̲ or u̲. In pronunciation it takes the forms [i], [ɹ], [ɛ] and [ʌ].

ý̲ only occurs in three examples. In two of these it is represented by y̲ or i̲ in the orthography and by the diphthong [ai] in pronunciation. This must cast further doubt on the third example which is listed in OL12(S).

The Scandinavian diphthongs au̲, ey̲ and ei̲ occur and are variously represented both in the orthography and in pronunciation. Suggested examples are listed below:

au̲

austr	:	au > [au]	(see T62(S))
blautr	:	au > [ʌ]	(see D5(T))

haukr : au > [au] (see C1(S))
raudr : au > [o] (see W69(T))
*saurr : au > [o] (see T70(S))
straumr : au > [œ] (see S2(S))

ey
geysa : ey > [i] (see T35(S))
hey : ey > [>i] (see OL19(S))
hreysi : ey > [i] (see D29(S))

ei
breidr : ei > [ɛ] (see C3(S))
*fleinn : ei > [ɾ] (see S23(T))
heimr : ei > [e] (see T38(S))
keis : ei > [i] (see W57(S))
kleif : ei > [a] (see C25(T))
leir : ei > [ɛ] (see D39(T))
leir : ei > [ae] (see C21(S))
steinn : ei > [ɛ] (see R68(S))

Other vowels occur singly and are dealt with in the section relating to individual names.

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A similar examination of Scandinavian elements occurring in stressed syllables in Caithness Gaelic names was undertaken but the sample of names was found to be so small that generalisations could not be usefully made. The study area would need to encompass the whole of Caithness before a local survey of Norse-Gaelic phonetics could be attempted.

Meanwhile the phonetic interchanges listed in Place Names of Ross and Cromarty (Watson 1904, pp. lvii-lx) provide an adequate guide when taken in conjunction with an awareness that vowels in Caithness Gaelic, as well as in Caithness Scots, were prone to narrowing and raising.

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