

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A. NOTES ON SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES

16. *The Interpretation of Name-changes*

Introduction

Human settlements, hills, rivers, islands, and other geographical features do not always preserve their names throughout the centuries. Old names are forgotten or replaced, new settlers, possibly speaking a different language, arrive and coin fresh ones, adapt, translate, or half translate old ones, in this way fitting them into their own general onomastic system. We know, for instance, that the older name of Port Charlotte in the island of Islay was Skiba, and that the Gaelic name of Campbeltown was, and still is, Kinloch(kerran). The present bilingual situation in Gaelic-speaking areas provides us with dozens of examples of this kind. If, then, similar changes could be traced to earlier historic or even prehistoric times, they would give us valuable guidance as to the interplay of linguistic strata in Scottish toponymy, at the same time serving as an effective test for any theories already advanced in connection with the chronological order of these strata, the development of morphological types, or the changing nature of the semantic aspect of our nomenclature. The advantages of such a double check are obvious, but the main danger which one has to guard against in the utilisation of these name-changes, is the circular argument in which a complete or partial change of name is used in evidence, both as the basis and as subsequent proof of a particular view. It is also to be borne in mind that individual names and name-changes, however interesting they may be in themselves, tell us very little unless seen in the wider framework and as part of a greater structured whole. It is the accumulative evidence interpreted from a comparative point of view which is of real value in toponymical research, and that not only in that aspect of it which this note is intended to cover.

Name-changes can be observed in several ways but particularly in documentary sources and in present usage. Sometimes an old document contains an earlier name of a certain feature; sometimes the replaced name can be inferred from an obvious part translation or the tautological addition of a new generic term synonymous with the older one; again,

sometimes the old name has become part of the new name, as is especially the case with river-names. There is, of course, no complete record of these changes, and any picture drawn up as a result of a study of the available evidence must necessarily remain very sketchy.

In this note, the listing of name-changes will be confined to names of water-courses. It will be by no means exhaustive as only such instances of change will be included which the present writer happened to come across in his research into Scottish river-nomenclature. This means that examples will be limited to the obvious and the accidental, and a more thorough and systematic investigation would probably reveal many more cases in point, particularly in the more recent linguistic strata. The most difficult category to establish, in this respect, is that of full translations from one language into another, as for example from Gaelic into English or from Norse into Gaelic; for it is not easy to decide whether one is dealing with, let us say, an English replica of a Gaelic name or with an English map-name which is a genuine new creation. Only current local usage and/or reference to earlier sources can help us here. The present list of names ascribed to this category below (IIIa) could, therefore, probably be considerably extended but it may also, on the other hand, contain names which do not belong here as there is no documentary evidence for their earlier Gaelic versions so that the latter must truthfully be described as plausible guesses. There is, however, no doubt that this category existed and still exists, as we have sufficient present-day evidence from bilingual communities in the Highlands and Islands to bear this out, and as it would be difficult to believe that conditions were substantially different in earlier phases of linguistic contact.

In the list which follows, detailed reference to the source of any particular information will, on the whole, not be made unless there is some special reason for it. It is merely intended to point out that name-changes do occur, to put a limited number of these on record, and to outline some of the possibilities to be reckoned with when Scottish water-courses change their names. In addition, there is to be a brief discussion of the linguistic significance of these changes. The classification will be according to the nature of the new name, with suitable subdivisions based on the language of the original name, if required. The large group of names which show a tautological addition of a hydronymic term, like *River Brora SUT*, *Avon*

Water LAN, *Calder Water* LAN, *Allessan Burn* ABD, or extended names like *Allander (Water)* DNB, *Calneburne* BWK, *de Blē-burn* SH, *Lugar Water* AYR, *Auldearn* NAI, where the defining element is an old river-name, will not be included although their common occurrence must not go unmentioned in this context. They are, however, not “name-changes” proper but rather augmented versions of the original.

Material

(I) The primary stream-name is replaced by a name containing a place-name derived from the name of the water-course:

(a) The primary stream-name is a pre-Gaelic name:

- *Alauna ROS > River Alness (Scot. *ness*).
- *Calona SLK > Caddon Water (Old Engl. *denu*).
- *Catona PER > Inverhadden Burn (Gael. *inbhir*).
- *Labara BNF > Burn of Aberlour (Celt. *aber*).
- *Labara PER > Lawers Burn (Engl. plural *-s*).
- *Leuka AYR > Lugton Water (Old Engl. *tūn*).
- *Tanara SLK > Glentanner Burn (Scot. [*<Gael.*] *glen*).

(b) The primary river-name is an early Gaelic suffixed name:

- *Branág LAN > Legbranock Burn (? Gael. *leac*).
- *Canaidh LAN > Candymill Burn (Engl. *mill*).
- *Dubhaidh ABD > Burn of Glendui (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Easaidh ROS > Allt Airdeasaidh (Gael. *àrd*).
- *Fionnaidh ABD > Glenfenzie Burn (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Fionnán PER > Inverinain Burn (Gael. *inbhir*).
- *Gealaidh PER > Invergeldie Burn (Gael. *inbhir*).
- *Gollaidh SUT > Glen Golly River (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Lòchsaidh PER > Glen Lochsie Burn (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Marcaidh INV > Glenmarkie Burn (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Neanntaidh PER > Invernenty Burn (Gael. *inbhir*).
- *Uaraidh ROS > Strathrory River (Gael. *srath*).
- *Udalan ROS > Allt Gleann Udalain (Gael. *gleann*).

(c) The primary stream-name is an early Gaelic compound name:

- *Calder INV > Aberchalder Burn (Celt. *aber*).
- *Douglas DNB > Inveruglas Water (Gael. *inbhir*).
- *Fender PER > Glenfender Burn (Gael. *gleann*).

(d) The primary stream-name is of Norse origin:

- *Bera SH > Burn of Beradale (N. *dalr*).
- *Borgá ROS > River Barvas or Abhainn Bharbhais (N. *oss*).
- *Hrossá BTE > Glenrosa Water (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Laxá ROS > River Laxdale (N. *dalr*).
- *Laxá INV > Laxdale Burn (N. *dalr*).
- *Laxá INV > Laxdale River (N. *dalr*).
- *Sandá ARG > Glensanda River (Gael. *gleann*).
- *Slika SH > Burn of Sligatu (N. *tó*).
- *Snerta SH > Sneteratu-burn (N. *tó*).
- ?*þorpá ORK > Burn of Turbitail (N. *dalr*).
- þyrsa SH > de Burn o' Trusli (N. *hl:ð*).

(e) The primary stream-name is an early Anglo-Scottish name:

- *Hl̄yde ROX > Liddel Water (Scot. *dale*).

(f) The primary stream-name is obscure:

- *-ie INV > Inverie River (Gael. *inbhir*).
- *Orth ABD > Water of Phillorth (Gael. *poll*).

II. The primary stream-name becomes the name of a human settlement and is replaced by a compound name containing it:

- *Boyndie BNF > Burn of Boyndie.
- *Carron BNF > Burn of Carron.
- *Cruden ABD > Water of Cruden.
- *Forrestburn LAN-WLO > Forrestburn Water.
- *Tonburn ABD > Burn of Tonburn.

III. The primary stream-name is translated:

(a) completely:

- Gael. Allt a' Choilich ABD > Engl. The Burn o' the Cock.
- Gael. Allt na Dabhaich ABD > Engl. Burn of Vat.
- Gael. Allt nan Albannach ROS > Engl. Scotsburn.
- Gael. *Dubh Allt or *Féith Dhubh ABD > Engl. Blackburn.
- Gael. Féith Dhearg ABD > Engl. Red Burn.

(b) partly:

- Aldeclochy (1355) ABD > Clachie Burn.
- Allt an Albanaigh AYR > Albany Burn.
- Allt a' Choire Odhair ABD > Corour Burn.
- Allt a' Mhuilinn LAN > Mullin Burn.

Allt an t-Slugain ABD > Sluggan Burn.
 Allt an t-Sluichd Leith ABD > Burn of Slock Lee.
 Allt Clach Mheann ABD > Burn of Clach Mheann.
 Allt Glas Choille ABD > Claschoille Burn.
 Allt na Ceabag ABD > Kebbuck (Burn).
 Allt na Claise Móire ABD > Clashmore Burn.
 Allt na Frithe INV > Free Burn.
 Allt na h-Annaide PER > Annat Burn.
 Allt na h-Annaide PER > Annaty Burn.
 Allt na Tuilich ABD > Tullich Burn.
 Allt Slochd Chaimbeil ABD > Burn of Slock Cammell.

IV. The primary stream-name is replaced by an etymologically completely unrelated new name:

p-Celt. †Alvan (-*uindā*) ABD > Gael. Cluny Water.
 Scot. Burn of Peeno ORK > Scot. Burn of Oldman.
 p-Celt. Calder MLO (cf. East, Mid-, and West Calder) > Scot.
 Linhouse Water (upper part Crosswood Burn).
 p-Celt. *Calona BWK > Calneburne > Scot. Hazelly Burn.
 Gael. *Carach BNF (with Invercharach) > Burn Treble.
 Early Gael. †Condie (now place-name) PER > Engl. Chapel
 Burn.
 Early Gael. *Duinnid ROS (with Inverinate) > Gael. An
 Leth-allt.
 pre-Celtic Farrar (lower course of) INV > Engl. Beaully River.
 Gael. *Garbh Allt (now place-name Garvald) ELO > Engl.
 Papana Water.
 Gael. *Garbh Allt (now place-name Garvald) MLO > Engl.
 Hope Burn.
 Early Gael. †Kelty (now place-name, also Keltybridge) FIF
 > Drumnagoil Burn.
 p-Celt. *Peffer MLO > Scot. Braid Burn.
 p-Celt. †Pefforyn ABD > Scot. Silver Burn (translation?).
 p-Celt. *Pefridh PER > Scot. Pow Water.
 Gael. Queich PER > Scot. Alyth Burn.
 Norse *Stjórn ROS (cf. Stornoway = Stjórnarvágr) > Engl.
 Bayhead River.
 Early Gael. †Struie PER (now place-name) > Engl. Slateford
 Burn.

Discussion

These name-changes are interesting for various reasons, and perhaps we should look first at the languages which have played

a part in the creation of our Scottish river-nomenclature and which are therefore likely to have been involved in changes affecting stream-names. How far do the examples listed confirm or clash with our view of the linguistic stratification of Scottish hydronymy as we summarised it at the VIIth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences in Munich in 1958 (Nicolaisen 1961)? If we analyse the first main section with this question in mind we find that the development is from the pre-Celtic and Early Celtic to the Gaelic and English (class *Ia*), from the early Gaelic to the later Gaelic and the English (classes *Ib* and *c*) from the early Norse to the later Norse, the Gaelic and the English, depending on the geographical origin of the examples (class *Id*), and from the early English to the later English or Scots (class *Ie*). The picture presented of the historical evolution of our Scottish river-nomenclature in this first of the above sections, is further filled in by examples from classes III and IV, and in group III the comparatively recent progress made by the incoming English language in formerly Gaelic-speaking parts of Scotland is clearly demonstrated (The fact that most of the examples in this group are from Aberdeenshire is of no distributional significance as it is due to the availability of the material from that county in a very sound publication [Alexander 1952]).

Not all parts of Scotland have come under the influence of the full range of languages brought to this country by the various waves of immigrants from south of the Border, across the North Sea and the Irish Sea, and so we must allow for regional differences. If we qualify our statement in this way, however, we can say that non-Gaelic Celtic names precede Gaelic ones, that Norse names in the Western Isles and in the adjacent mainland areas are always earlier than Gaelic names, and that English names are in all cases later than those of any other linguistic origin. These changes also reveal or confirm the necessity to differentiate between earlier and later hydronymic strata in the Gaelic part of our river-nomenclature, as well as in those of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon origin.¹

Not a single example points towards any development in the opposite direction, and the implications as to the chronological stratification of our river-names are therefore of the greatest value. In addition, these changes appear to indicate that linguistic borrowing in the sphere of names of water-courses must have taken place in both directions, i.e., from the substratum to the superstratum, and vice versa, and this process

must be envisaged in a period of linguistic contact when both the old and the new languages formed more or less equal adstrata. The weaker and the less influential the new language, the more chance there was that the old names were adapted and adopted by the newcomers, but when the incoming language became more powerful and dominant and the names belonging to the earlier linguistic stratum more and more meaningless, new names began to replace older ones, either with or without connection with the originals. Names of the type "Burn of —" in particular show how name patterns of the substratum language can serve as models for the linguistic superstratum, producing in this way a completely new name-type in the receiving language (cf. Nicolaisen 1959*a*), but it would be difficult to show a similar impact on the substratum of naming practices in the superstratum. This is certainly one field of research in which the formulation of hard and fast rules will be found to be most elusive.

Although our investigation is confined to names of water-courses there is very little doubt that its findings will also apply to names of other geographical features and of human settlements, possibly with slight modifications. A wider and more comprehensive examination of the whole question of name-changes might, however, throw considerably more light on such intricate problems as those of the relationship between Norse and Gaelic in the Western Isles, between Pictish and Gaelic in the North-East, and between p-Celtic and Gaelic in Central and Southern Scotland. An intriguing pointer in this respect is the fact that there is, for instance, not a single name in the above lists, especially in section *Id*, in which a Gaelic element qualifies a Norse generic term.

From a morphological point of view, the development is clearly from the uncompounded name to the composite one. Sections *Ia*, *b* and *e* contain numerous examples illustrating this fact. It looks as if, once the principle of formation by suffixing had ceased to be applied, there must have been a tendency to bring names of the older type in line with the more modern practice of name-formation; and many of the new names can be explained in this way. When, in addition, the original division between stem and suffix had become less obvious in the older names and when these could no longer be analysed in terms of the current morphological pattern as units meaningful to the speaker, the temptation to assimilate them to the system in general use, as the defining elements of

new compounds, must have become very strong. Out of all the examples given in section Ia above, only the two **Labara*-names were probably still understood by later Gaelic speakers (cf. Gaelic *labhar* "loud, noisy"), and to the modern non-Gaelic speaking Scot even these two have become just as meaningless as the other five original stream-names in that category. The more Gaelic recedes as a spoken language, the more names will share this fate, but it is significant that early Germanic names like Norse **Stjórn* in Stornoway (cf. Oftedal 1954: 392-3) and English **Hlȳde* in Liddel (see Ekwall 1928: 254) had to conform to a new morphological pattern in the same way, inside their own linguistic areas. These new morphological patterns of linguistic expression which do, of course, not only affect names, are most powerful once they have established themselves, but even if allowing for the incompleteness of the material listed above, it is still surprising that so many early names have survived the assimilating trends which come with new languages and naming habits. The names have consequently become, semantically meaningless and morphologically unanalysed, linguistic fossils on the modern map of Scotland, and it is the main task of scientific place-name research to discover their meaning and to analyse their formation and linguistic affinity (As the composite name is almost exclusively used in cases of modern naming, local inhabitants and also many of the publications on the subject are constantly trying to split an unintelligible name into two or more elements in order to arrive at a derivation; normally these elements are words belonging to the current language).

At this point it is worth mentioning that a parallel change in the semantic aspect of naming contributes to the morphological trend from the simple name to the composite one. It is difficult to say whether the semantic or the morphological innovations came first; on the whole it is probably more correct to say that these two changes frequently go together and are dependent on each other. Even the most casual examination of the above lists reveals a noticeable emphasis on references to the countryside surrounding the water-course, in the defining elements of the resulting nomenclature. In that respect, the new names differ very markedly from the earlier ones which predominantly refer to qualities of the water or of the water-course, themselves. It is difficult to say whether the above examples can form a fair basis for such a comparison, however, as older names which have gone out of use are naturally more

easily detected when they have become part of new ones, whereas full translations or replacement by unrelated names usually completely obscure older nomenclature. Nevertheless the conclusions drawn from the limited evidence of such name-changes is quite in keeping with the results of a detailed study of the semantic structure of all Scottish stream-names mentioned on the one-inch Ordnance Survey maps, which the present writer published in an earlier volume of this journal (Nicolaisen 1957).

The examples listed in group IV in which the new name is etymologically unconnected with the one it replaces, are further proof of this inclusion of totally new categories of meaning in the more recent strata of Scottish river-nomenclature. In early naming, the name of the water-course was regarded as the primary basis from which others were derived secondarily, like the name of the loch out of which it flows, the glen through which its course runs, the mountain which it passes, and the human settlement built at its mouth (Loch Tay—Glenlivet—Ben Nevis—Inverness would be representative of such derived names, and there are many more such instances in the various names serving as defining elements in group I above). The impression one gets from the later river-nomenclature is that the human settlement and the river-valley have become more important to the mind of the people creating and using geographical names, than the water-courses themselves, particularly in the case of smaller streams. The linguistic reaction to this attitude is that the burn is now no longer named after the colour of the water, the shape of the water-course, the nature of its bed, or the swiftness of its flow, but either after one of the two geographical units just mentioned—the settlement and the glen—or after some other geographical feature near its banks. The many new stream-names compounded with Gaelic *inbhir*, *gleann*, or with *dale*, etc. suggest this explanation, as they still contain the original name of the burn and bear witness to the older ways of naming. The most extreme case resulting from the application of this attitude is that of the stream which has no single name for its complete course but, from a naming point of view, is split up into various stretches which derive their names from different human settlements on its course as for instance *The Burn of Turbitail* in the Orkney island of Rousay which, as Marwick points out (1947: 92) is in its lower reaches “variously known as The Burn of Gue and The Burn of Vacquoy”. Turbitail as well as Vacquoy and Gue are names

of houses near the stream; in the latter case these no longer exist. The category "Burn of —" itself represents a fairly late stratum resulting from linguistic contact with an earlier language (see Nicolaisen 1959a).

As far as the names in class I are concerned, it is quite obvious that at least part of the defining element—*Lugton*, *Glenmarkie*, *Candymill*, etc.—originally meant the stream itself; in the five names mentioned in section II, however, the knowledge that the place-names from which these water-courses derived their names, primarily denoted the water-courses in question themselves, seems to have been lost completely. Whereas this might be stated with some reservation as regards the first three examples—Burn of Boyndic, Burn of Carron, and Water of Cruden—in which the river-name and the identical place-name based on it may have been used side by side so that the new river-name might have been derived from either of them, the last two—Forrestburn Water and Burn of Tonburn—are apt illustrations of the more modern approach to naming. Scottish *burn* is, of course, quite well understood both in Aberdeenshire and on the Lanarkshire-West Lothian border, but as the place-names were regarded as primary, their original connotations were no longer evident, and the doubling of *-burn* by *Water* in one case (Forrestburn Water) and by *Burn* (sic) in the other (Burn of Tonburn) not recognised as such. As regards the latter, it may be of interest to note that another *Ton Burn* exists in the same county, but produced the opposite, i.e., "older" result so that we find Upper as well as Nether Glenton near its course. A well-known example of modern popular misinterpretation, on the other hand, is the name of the highest mountain in these islands, Ben Nevis, which is practically always taken to be the basis from which the river-name has been derived, whereas the truth seems to be that even in this case the name of the water-course came first (cf. Nicolaisen 1959b: 218). It might also be of value to pay particular attention to the outgoing names, and here the very high incidence of formations in *-aidh* is worth mentioning. It would, however, be rash to interpret this as a certain lack of power of survival in these names, and the reasons for their disappearance in favour of other names—like place-names containing them—can hardly be of a linguistic nature, but must surely depend a great deal on accident; replacing one name by another, be it connected or unconnected, belonging to the same language or a new one, can scarcely be a conscious process. In addition, the

material collected so far is far too scanty to allow any general comment in this respect. All that can be said is that the names of smaller water-courses not known to a large community are more likely to change than those of large rivers of national or regional importance.

There can, however, be no doubt as to the usefulness of the study of these name-changes, not only when confirming conclusions regarding the linguistic stratification of our nomenclature, but particularly when contributing something new to the study of the morphological and semantic structure of our names.

NOTE

- ¹ Here we must correct a statement which we made in the above-mentioned article where we said that formation by suffixing a special ending to a word-stem "is practically non-existent in names which have to be ascribed to Norse origin". It would have been more correct to stress the important fact that names of this type do occur in the Scandinavian hydronymy of Scotland and that these must belong to the very earliest names introduced to this country by Norse settlers. How far they can be used in the dating of these settlements themselves, is another question.

COUNTY ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	Aberdeenshire	MLO	Midlothian
ARG	Argyllshire	NAI	Nairnshire
AYR	Ayrshire	ORK	Orkney
BNF	Banffshire	PER	Perthshire
BTE	Buteshire	ROS	Ross-shire
BWK	Berwickshire	ROX	Roxburghshire
DNB	Dunbartonshire	SH	Shetland
ELO	East Lothian	SLK	Selkirkshire
FIF	Fife	SUT	Sutherland
INV	Inverness-shire	WLO	West Lothian
LAN	Lanarkshire		

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W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

B. NOTES ON COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Introduction

This introduces a new regular feature in the journal: a series of notes gathered in the course of current work by members of the School of Scottish Studies. Though not always related directly to the main tasks in hand, they will to some extent reflect their range and variety.

It may be helpful to list here the subjects which the School is attempting to cover at present, and all of which are likely to be touched upon in these notes in future issues:

Scots folk-song texts, Gaelic song texts, folk-music research, the folk tale, custom and belief, material culture, the Scottish place-name survey, archiving and transcription of music and texts.

An Eighteenth-Century Representation of a Highland Boat

Surprisingly little detailed information seems to be available about the ships of the Western Clans, though they are frequently mentioned in contemporary literature and records. Allusions to "Highland boats" ("galleys" or "birlins") are often met with up to the time of the Rising of 1745, when many were destroyed, and factual descriptions or drawings of the later vessels might be expected. These should show whether the eighteenth-century use of the old terms implied the survival of old types of craft. The sixteen-oared, square-sailed vessel of Alexander Mac-Donald's long descriptive poem, *Birlinn Clann Raghnaill*, has been regarded as "a generalised type of galley", incorporating