

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A. SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES

24. *Slew-* and *sliabh*

In his *History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926:184), W. J. Watson stated that "*Sliabh*, a mountain, is common in Ireland, very rare in that sense in Scotland; it does not seem to occur in Dumfries or Galloway". To anybody studying the relationship between Irish and Scottish Gaelic place-names, and therefore naturally concentrating on the few but striking differences rather than the many obvious similarities, such a statement is a compelling invitation to further study. If rare, where does this element *sliabh* occur in Scottish place-names? Does it turn up sporadically all over those areas of Scotland in which other Gaelic place-names are to be found in plenty; or has it a limited distribution? If so, what does this signify? Does it, for instance, allow us to assign to this element a place in the relative chronology of Gaelic place-names in Scotland, i.e. is it of any value in the study of the historical stratification of such names? Which word (or words) have replaced it in the regions in which it does not occur, and what other meanings does it have apart from "mountain"? Is it still alive in present-day Scottish Gaelic dialects, and if so, in which meaning?

It is obvious that it cannot be in the nature of a "Note" to answer all these questions exhaustively. For this, a full-scale article would be required taking into account all the available material, both Scottish and Irish, and also Manx, and linking *sliabh* with other elements rare in Scotland but prolific in Ireland. Such a comprehensive examination is clearly needed if we ever want to exploit our toponymic material to the full in our quest for more light on those very dark first centuries of Gaelic settlement in Scotland, but in this context it is only possible to touch on some aspects of the problem, with particular emphasis on the geographical distribution of our element in Scottish place-names, and some hints of answers to the other questions raised. Other "Notes" might follow at a later date to fill in and improve the sketchy picture which emerges.

As a first step in this direction we might profitably re-examine that part of Scotland in which, according to Watson,

sliabh “does not seem to occur”; Dumfries and Galloway. One glance at Sir Herbert Maxwell’s *Studies in the Topography of Galloway* (1887) and his later *Place Names of Galloway* (1930) shows that the assumption of such absence is justified only if *sliabh* is in fact taken in the meaning of “a *high* mountain” and not if applied to slightly lower geographical features; for Maxwell (1887:288-90, and 1930:245-7) has a list of about three dozen names which apparently contain *sliabh* as a first element. In the great majority of them it takes the written form *Slew-*, and Maxwell’s geographical references—with three possible exceptions, the names concerned are all said to be in the parishes of Kirkcolm, Leswalt, Portpatrick, Stoneykirk and Kirkmaiden—make it quite clear that their distribution is practically limited to the most westerly part of Galloway, the *Rinns* peninsula. Maxwell consistently translates *Slew-* (<*sliabh*) as “moor”¹ but does not give any other indication of the nature of the features to which the names in question apply. However, as this set of names has recently been used in an investigation of the history of Gaelic settlement in Galloway (MacQueen 1955 and 1961)² and as it is undoubtedly of the greatest importance in that respect, I have compiled from the relevant Ordnance Survey sources³ a detailed list of the data with regard to the exact position, a description of the feature concerned, alternative spellings, etc. In this list, the Ordnance Survey evidence is linked to, and frequently corrects, the information given by Maxwell—where Maxwell differs from the Ordnance Survey, his material is marked (M.)—and will, it is hoped, provide a more reliable basis for a discussion of this group of names (Table I).

A few comments are necessary with reference to the information contained in this table. Not every name mentioned by Maxwell is found on the most recent Ordnance Survey six-inch series, although practically all of them are included in the first edition of the county series and consequently also in the name-books. Names which I have not been able to locate at all are *Slewbarn*, *Slewcairn* and *Slewtennoch*. As it is possible that they were taken down from oral tradition by Maxwell, they are here included but only with the one item of information which Maxwell supplies, the name of the parish in which they are situated. Maxwell’s *Slewspirn*, on the other hand, has been omitted because it is quite clear from the variant spellings in the O.S. name-book WIG 4A, p. 28—*Slough Spirn*, *Slouch Spirn* and *Slock Spirn*—that the first element is not *Slew-* (<*sliabh*)

but possibly *sloc* "a hollow". The present O.S. form is *Slouch Spirn Hill*. Of other names which are given the same etymology by Maxwell, I have included *Slacarnochan*, *Slamonia* and *Sluneyhigh* although none of these can definitely be said to belong to this category; *Slacarnochan* is particularly doubtful. Not taken into account are *Slaeharbrie* and *Slannievannach*, possible candidates both but not very convincing ones. Additions to Maxwell are a fourth *Slewdown*, *Meikle* and *Little Slewfad*, *Little Slewmuck* and *Lewtemple*⁴ which, because of the alternative spelling *Slew Cample* and the similarity of the geographical feature involved appears to belong here. *Lew-* does not suggest any plausible derivation for a hill-name anyhow.

In the seven cases in which the names concerned no longer appear on the most recent O.S. editions, the grid references have had to be estimated from the first edition of the County series and are therefore prefixed by an asterisk. In these instances the O.S. sheet reference is also to the first edition of the County series for Wigtownshire of 1847-9 and not to the National Grid edition of 1957.

It will be seen from the name-book description of the geographical features to which the names apply that, with two exceptions, all *Slew-* names are hill-names. Only *Slewgulie* and *Slew-whan* are points of rock on the coast. Whether they were named from hills nearby or whether some other etymology should be considered for the first element is difficult to say. As far as all the other names are concerned, they are descriptive of hills varying in height between 150 and 500 feet, mostly between 200 and 400 feet (other common words for the same type of feature in the Rinns are *Knock-* < Gaelic *cnoc*, and *Hill*, the latter frequently added pleonastically to names containing *Slew-* or *Knock-*). The shape of the hill does not seem to have determined whether it could be called a *Slew-* or not, more or less any elevation might have been referred to in this way. It is noteworthy that only two of the "uncertain" examples bear the epithet "heathy" whereas many of them are expressly stated to have *arable* soil.

There is therefore scarcely any doubt that *Slew-* means "hill" rather than "moor" in the Rinns of Galloway, although some of the features so designated may be moorland elevations. It is also hardly necessary to prove that *Slew-* does in fact represent *sliabh*, as implied above. The nearest modern relative in both spelling and pronunciation appears to be Manx *slieau*

TABLE I

Name	Alternative spellings if any	Description in U.S. name-book	Height in feet	Position	O.S. 6-in. sheet reference	O.S. name-book ref.
?Slacarnochan	Slackcarnochan, Slacarnochan	A heathy hill	525	NX 179668	NX 16 NE	WIG 11A, 14
Slamonia Slew barn (M.)		A heathy hill	500	NX 157657 Kirkcolm par. WIG Colvend par. KCB	NX 16 NE	WIG 11A, 25
Slewcairn						
Slewcart Hill	Slewcarte Hill, Mid-hill of Glengyre	A moderate sized hill . . . of a moundlike shape rather tabular on top	325	NW 992647	NW 96 SE	WIG 9B, 51
Slewscreen	Slockeen	A small hill	350	NX 133 338	NX 13 SW	WIG 35A, 56
Slewcroan Plantation	Slewcroan Planting	A considerable wood or plantation	325	NW *992 635	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 33
Slewdonan	Slew Donan	A considerable hill of a circular shape	450	NX 123 356	NX 13 NW	WIG 35A, 18
Slewdown Hill	Slewdown	A low hill nearly of a moundlike shape but tabular on top	325	NW 987 645	NW 96 SE	WIG 9B, 50
Slewdown Hill		A hill of slight elevation of a ridge like shape	150	NX 096 483	NX 04 NE	WIG 27A, 37
Slewdown	Slew Down	A moderate sized hill	425	NS 123 332	NX 13 SW	WIG 27B, 35
Slewdown	Slew Down Slec Doon Hill Fort Hill	A considerable hill	150	NX 082 436	NX 04 SE	WIG 31A, 3
Slewfad	Slew Fad	Low hill or portion of high ground of a ridgelike shape	250	NS *975 655	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 13
Little Slewfad		A small hill	200	NW *998 634	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 40
Meikle Slewfad	Mickle Slewfad, now Drumlochart Wood	A considerable wood	325	NW *997 637	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 33
Slewgulie	Slew-gulie Slewgalie (M.)	A point of rock [on the coast]		NX 088 341	NX 03 SE	WIG 35A, 35

Name	Alternative spellings, if any	Description in U.S. name-book	Height in feet	Position	O.S. 6-in. sheet reference	O.S. name-book ref.
Slewhable		A large hill	475	NX 116 334	NX 116 13 SW	WIG 36A, 20
Slewhenry		A considerable hill	400	NW 996 604	NW 96 SE	WIG 15A, 33
Slewhigh Hill		A tolerable large hill	250	NW *988 649	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 50
Slewintoo Hill	Slew High Slewintoo (M.)		325	NW 995 641	NW 96 SE	WIG 9B, 32
Slewkennen Hill	Slewkennan	A small hill	250	NW 974663	NW 96 NE	WIG 9A, 31
Slewlán Hill	Slewleen	A low hill or portion of elevated ground (or small hill)	375	NX 048 535	NX 05 SW	WIG 22C, 8 and 22A, 24
Slewlea	Slew-lea	A large hill	500	NX 118 353	NX 13 NW	WIG 35A, 47
Slewmag	Kildonan Hill	A considerable hill	355	NX 126 327	NX 13 SW	WIG 36A, 27
Slewmallie		A small hill	275	NX 127 322	NX 13 SW	WIG 36A, 45
Slewmeen Hil	Sleivemcín Hill	A small hill	250	NW *978 637	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 27
Slewmuck	Slowmuck	A small low hill	275	NW *979 687	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9A, 14/63
Little Slewmuck	Little Slowmuck	A small hill	200	NW *981 686	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9A, 14/63
Slewnagle Hill	Slewagle Hill Slewnagles (M.)	A low hill nearly ridgelike	275	NS *985 636	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 29/97
Slewnain	Slewnanc	A small hill	300	NW *980 645	WIG (1st ed.) 9	WIG 9B, 14
Slewnark	Slewnark Hill Clanark	A small hill	350	NX 017 537	NX 05 SW	WIG 21A, 60
Slewnassie Hill		A considerable hill	500	NX *024 567	WIG (1st ed.) 15	WIG 15B, 36
Slewsack Hill	Slew Sack	A low hill or portion of slightly elevated ground nearly ridgelike	325	NW 996 651	NW 96 NE	WIG 9B, 51
Slewscinnie Hill		A considerable hill	500	NX 014 606	NX 06 SW	WIG 15A, 37
Slewsmirroch		A considerable hill	275	NX 074 481	NX 04 NE	WIG 27A, 29
Slewtammock		A considerable hill	450	NW 998 621	NW 96 SE	WIG 15A, 17
Slewtennoch (M.)				par. Leswalt, WIG		
Slewtorran	Slew-torran	A considerable hill	425	NX 114 346	NX 13 SW	WIG 35A, 45
Slewtrain Hill		A considerable hill	500	NX 021 597	NX 05 NW	WIG 15A, 38
Slew-whan Point		A small rocky point [on the coast]		NX 097 332	NX 03 SE	WIG 36A, 8
Sluncyhigh		A considerable hill	475	NX 004 606	NX 06 SW	WIG 15A, 19
Lewtemple	Slew Cample	A small hill	300	NX 099 352	NX 03 NE	

[Sl'u:] as in *Slieau Chiarn*, *Slieau Ruy*, *Slieau llean*, *Slieau veg*, *Slieau Whallian*, *Slieau Doo*, *Slieau Freoaghane*, *Slieau Curn*, *Slieau Karrin*, *Slieau Managh*, *Slieau Ouyr*, *Slieau Volley*. Kneen (1925) from whom these examples are taken, consistently translates *slieau* as "mountain". At least *Slieau llean* and *Slieau Karrin* have identical equivalents in the Galloway *Slewlán* and *Slewcairn*. The phonological process involved is set out by Jackson (1955: 73) who postulates the following development: *iav (= -iabh) > *iuu > *(j)uv > (j)u:. As Manx Gaelic pronunciations of *slieau* he has recorded both [sl'ju:] and [sl'u:] (*ibid.*: 73 and 126). Presumably one can take it that the background to Galloway *Slew-* is similar and that this its post-Gaelic Anglicised form [slu] is a further development of the latter, with initial [s] for [ʃ] perhaps due to transference from Gaelic to English which has initial /sl/- but lacks initial /ʃl/-. In this connection it is of interest to note that the Manx Manorial Roll has *Slew whellin* for *Slieau Whallian*, *Slewvolly*, *Slieau Volley*, and *Slew oure* for *Slieau Ouyr* in 1703, as well as *Slewmanagh* for *Slieau Managh* in 1643. These are in all probability Anglicised spellings which occur at a time when the linguistic Anglicisation was also just about complete in Galloway (see Lorimer 1951:42; also Jackson 1962:5).

Only in one of the three dozen or so Galloway instances do we seem to get a glimpse of an earlier (?) form, i.e. in the alternative spelling *Sleivemein* for *Slewmeen*. On the surface this is much closer to the Irish material than the rest of our examples, for *Slew-* is not at all evident on modern or recent Irish maps where *Slieve* is the normal Anglicised spelling. That this has not always been so, however, is shown by some sixteenth and seventeenth century documents. One only has to glance through the *Topographical Index of the Parishes and Townlands of Ireland in Sir William Petty's MSS. Barony Maps* (c. 1655-9) and *Hiberniae Delineatio* (c. 1672) to become aware of this (Goblet 1932:355). Amongst the townlands in both these sources we find such spellings as *Slewbog*, *Slewcorka*, *Slew(c)ulter*, *Slewduffe*, *Slewena*, *Slewgole*, *Slewmon*, *Slewmore* and many others. In cases where the two sources differ, the Barony Maps have the *Slew-* form, the *Hiberniae Delineatio* something else, as in *Slewfellinie/Sleaufelline*, *Slewnaman/Sleaucanaman*, *Slewnamuck/Sleavenamuck*, *Slewvaneuer/Sleinanever*, *Slewroe/Sleroagh*, and *Slewgullen/Slugullin*. If one wants to determine the phonetic value of *Slew-* in these documents, a certain ambiguity must remain unresolved for both *Sleave-* and *Slu-* (apart from some others) appear as

alternative spellings. In cases for which we have diachronic documentation as in *Price's Place-Names of Co. Wicklow* (1945-58), *Slew-* seems to have persisted until the seventeenth century anyhow; cf. *Church Mountain* which is *Slewecod* in 1590, *Slewcod* in 1596, *Slewgod* in 1610, *Slewcod* in 1613, but *Slievegad* in 1760 (Price 1945-58:186). The complete disappearance of *Slew-* may, on the other hand, "be at least partly due to the standardising influence of the Ordnance Survey in the past century" (so de hÓir in a letter of 16/9/64).

As his published Survey of Irish Dialects has so far only covered Munster (Wagner 1964), Professor Wagner of Belfast has very kindly summarised for me (in a letter of 20/1/65) the total evidence for the whole of Ireland, in respect of *sliabh* which appears as item 957 in his word-list (the plural forms which he also lists are not here included):

"Munster: nom. sg. ʃl'iəv, gen. sg. ʃl'e:
 Connaught: nom. sg. ʃl'iəv, gen. sg. ʃl'e:v'ə
 Ulster: nom. sg. ʃL'iuw, gen. sg. ʃl e:v'ə

In Connaught and Ulster the diphthong is normally half-long to long (ʃL'i·əv, ʃL'i·uw or ʃL'i:uw), and I hear mostly ʃL'-, occasionally also ʃl'- . . . In Ulster the diphthong varies in the nom. sg., i.e. -iu-/-i:u-/-iə-/-i:ə-."

This naturally tallies with earlier individual accounts of Irish dialects (by Quiggin, Sommerfelt, Holmer, Sjoestedt-Jonval, Ó Cuív, de Bhaldraithe, R. B. Breatnach and others), and it would appear that, if the map-spellings *Slew-* and *Slieve-* have any significance at all, a form more appropriate to Munster and Connaught has replaced one more suitable for more northern Irish dialects. It would also suggest that the affinities of Galloway *Slew*⁵ are not with the Isle of Man alone but also with parts of the Irish North. In any case, there is no doubt about it that our Galloway evidence is convincingly paralleled in Ireland in the records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As far as Scottish Gaelic is concerned, the published studies cover the various dialects only very sporadically. Some of them do not contain the word *sliabh* at all, either because the word is not known or because it (or its nominate singular) does not happen to have been part of the recorded texts. In these cases, words like *cliabh* "basket" and *riamh* "ever, before", have had to be taken into account. This is the picture which emerges: Arran (*cliabh* [kliav] with labiodental [v] (Holmer 1957:110);

Kintyre (*riamh*) [riav] (Holmer 1962: 114); Glengarry [s'l'i:əv] with labiodental [v] (Dieckhoff 1932: 151a); Ross-shire (*cliabh*) [k'l'iu], (*riamh*) [r'iu] (Borgstrøm 1941:130 and 131); Skye (*riamh*) [r'iəv] (*ibid.* 80); Barra (*cliabh*) [k'l'iəv] (Borgstrøm 1937:93, 114, 224a); Bernera-Lewis (*cliabh*) [k'l'iəv] with [v] between bilabial and labiodental articulation (Borgstrøm 1940:42, 87).⁶

All three words have, of course, been much more comprehensively and uniformly covered by the collections of the Gaelic Section of the Linguistic Survey of Scotland, but as this is not a detailed study of the pronunciation of *sliabh* or *-iabh* in Scottish Gaelic, I have only made limited use of Professor Kenneth Jackson's kind permission to refer to the extensive manuscript material, and have primarily checked on the printed accounts and filled in some gaps. The Survey's collections corroborate the impression gained from the published sources that the geographically nearest surviving Scottish Gaelic dialects, those of Arran and Kintyre, differ considerably from our Gallovidian form, as do the Hebridean dialects. The closest connection appears strangely enough to be with Ross-shire and the northern mainland as can also be seen from Borgstrøm 1941. This resemblance, however, must not be regarded as an isogloss, as *-v* is also dropped in the Ross-shire pronunciation of such words as *craobh* "tree" [k'r'iu':] and *taobh* "side" [t'u:] (Borgstrøm 1941:132), and as, quite apart from the time factor involved, *-iəβ > -iəw > -iu(w)* is a development which can occur independently in any language or dialect. One might therefore conclude that, as far as this particular feature, the pronunciation of *-iabh*, is concerned, the dialect association appears to be much closer with Man and the northern parts of Ireland than with the surviving dialects of the Scottish *Gaidhealtachd*. This may, although not of necessity, imply an ancient connection, but it could also simply be the result of geographical proximity.

From the point of view of individual etymologies, the range is from the easily discernible to the utterly obscure. The three *Slewfads*⁷ obviously contain the Gaelic adjective *fada* "long", and the four *Slewdowns* the colour adjective *donn* "brown" (despite the "Fort hill" on the Royal Engineers' Map of 1819 which apparently equated *-down* with Gaelic *dùn*). The second element in *Slewlea* is another colour adjective, Gaelic *liath* "grey", and *Slewlán* is probably an Anglicisation of *Sliabh Leathann* "broad hill"; whereas *Slewmeen* is most likely *Sliabh*

Mìn "smooth, or level, hill". If *Slewmuck* is *Sliabh (na) Muice* "hill of (the) pig" or *Sliabh (na) Muc* "hill of (the) pigs" (cf. Irish *Slievenamuck* [Goblet 1932:355; Joyce 1869:478; 1902:83; Hogan 1910:610b]), then *Slewhabble* is almost certainly *Sliabh a' Chapuill* "Mare, or Colt, Hill". The unidentified *Slewcairn* must contain a form of Gaelic *carn* "cairn", possibly the genitive plural, and for the second element of *Slamonia* one might think of *mòine* "moss, bog" or its derivative *mòineach* "mossy, boggy" (cf. *Slewmon* in Goblet 1932:355). *Slewdonan* will have to be linked with *Kildonan* = Gaelic *Cill Donnain*, "Donnan's church" (Watson 1926:165, 283; MacQueen 1956:143) whereas *Slewbarn* probably derives from Gaelic *bearn* "breach, gap". *Slewgreen* could be *Sliabh Crìon* "dry hill" or perhaps rather *Sliabh Cruinn* "round hill". In other cases etymologies are much less certain, and although speculation as to the derivation of some of these less definite examples would be an interesting exercise, there is not room for it in this context.⁸ What is much more important for the present discussion is that a number of *Slew-* names in the Rinns of Galloway has identical equivalents in Ireland (apart from those in the Isle of Man, see p. 96 above).⁹ On the whole, this is simply due to a common vocabulary of words likely to enter into Gaelic hill-nomenclature but the mere fact that these words, and names, are shared by Irish and Rinns of Galloway Scottish Gaelic is nevertheless significant and speaks of a fairly close connection, not at all unexpected because of the geographical proximity of this part of Galloway to Ireland and because of the already established rather similar development in the pronunciation of our word.

Such a link might have existed from the very first years of Gaelic speaking settlements in Galloway right to the time when Gaelic ceased to be the linguistic medium of daily communication in S.W. Scotland. Some of the easier etymologies of *Slew-* names would indicate a later date, some of the more obscure an earlier one. We must now examine whether our group of names does not merely represent a localised usage of *sliabh* in a peninsula with a long coastline facing Ireland (see the distribution map, Fig. 1), and it is therefore necessary to look at place-names containing this element in Scotland as a whole. The first result of a search in the Ordnance Survey Name Books for names of this kind is the realisation of how rare—in any meaning—this word is in Scottish place-names, for there are hardly as many examples in the rest of Scotland as there are

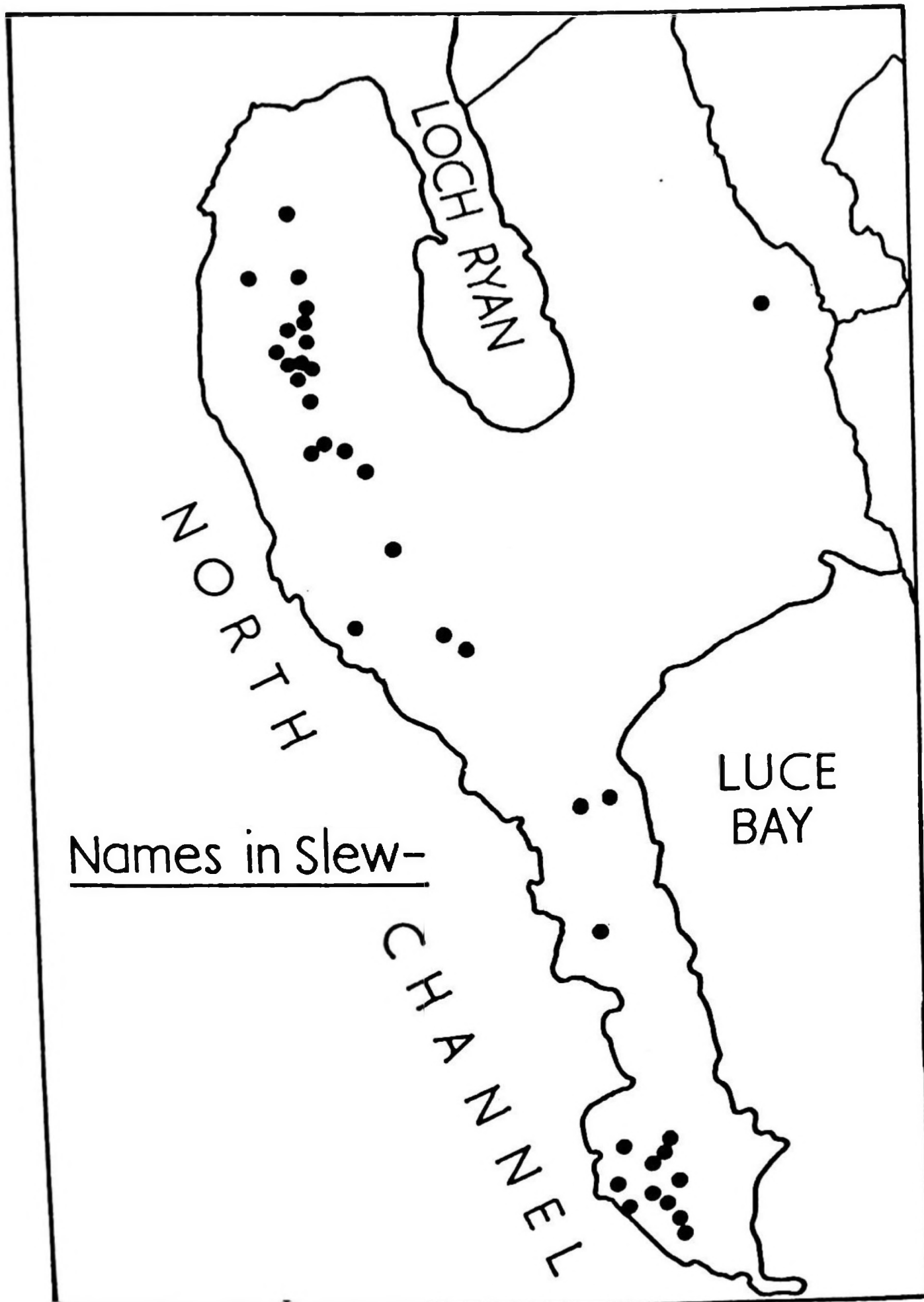


FIG. 1.

in the Rinns of Galloway alone. The second conclusion is that these few names, when plotted, occupy a very limited area (see Fig. 2) with Islay and Jura particularly well covered. There are

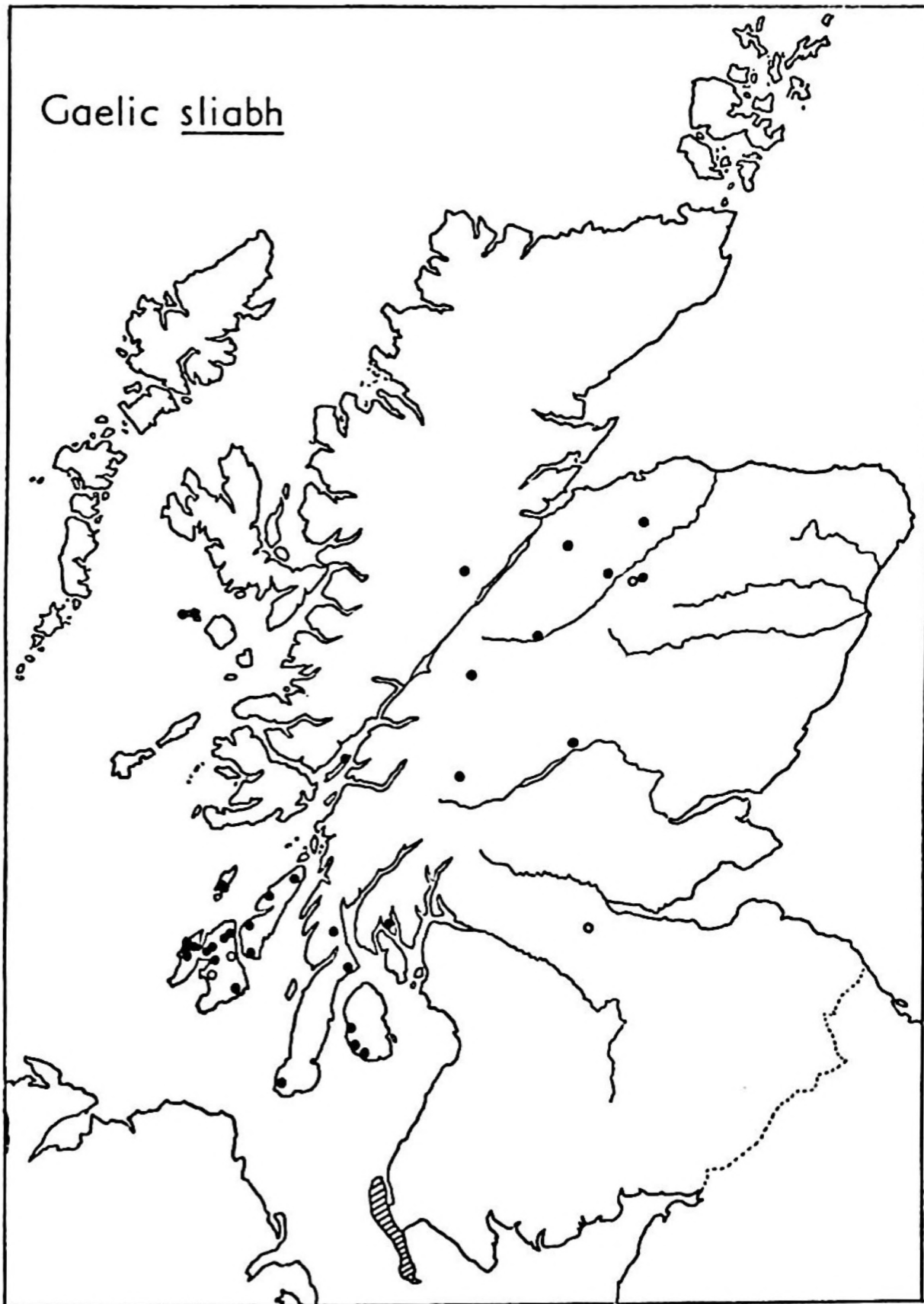


FIG. 2.

also examples in Colonsay and Lismore, Kintyre, Mid Argyll and in Arran, the remainder of a very thin distribution mainly taken up by mainland Inverness-shire and two outliers in the

Island of Canna. The example south of the Forth is *Slamannan* which, as it appears as *Slefmanyn* in 1275 (Theiner) is usually interpreted as "hill or moor of Mann" (see Watson 1926:103, who thinks that in this name "Gaelic *sliabh* is probably a translation of Welsh *mynydd*"). A very large part of the distribution pattern is therefore astonishingly identical with that of the early Dalriadic settlement of Gaelic speakers in Scotland from the middle of the fifth century onwards, although *sliabh* was obviously still a creative place-name element when the Gaelic settlement movement spread further north-east. That it did not remain productive for very long is shown by its absence in the major part of what once was, and partly still is, Gaelic speaking Scotland (and that includes those areas in which the present-day pronunciation of *-iabh* most closely approximates that which must be underlying Galloway [*Sl*]ew-). In these areas it was of course—at least in the meaning of "mountain"—replaced by Scottish Gaelic *beinn*.

As far as I am aware there is no instance of *sliabh* meaning "mountain" amongst all the names shown although it sometimes refers to hills of considerable height. In this respect, a few quotations from the Ordnance Survey Name Books demonstrate quite clearly what the range of the word *sliabh* was when these names were given:

Islay: *Sliabh a' Mheallaidh* "a ridge", *Sliabh Mòr* "hill", *Sliabh na Sgáile* "hill", *Sliabh nan Coiseachan* "a large tract of moor", *Sliabh nan Grainnseag* "a piece of moorland", *Sliabh a' Chatha* "a low moorland ridge", *Sliabh Bhirgeadain* "tract of heathy ground".

Jura: *Sliabh na Moine* "large mossy declivity", *Sliabhan Riabhach* "a plot of rough heathy pasture", *Sliabh Aird na Sgitheich* "stretch of moorland", *Sliabh Allt an Tairbh*, "piece of moorland", also *Sliabh a' Chlaidheimh*.

Arran: *Sliabh Fada* "low flat strip of muirland", *Sliabh Meurain* "low flat heath hill".

Canna: *Sliabh Meodhanach* "large hill", *Sliabh na Creige Airde* "heathy hill".

Mainland: *Sliabh Gaoil* (South Knapdale), "large hill", *Sliabh nan Dearc* (Saddell and Skipness) "hillside", *Sliabh Bàn* (Laggan), "small moor", *Sliabh Lorgach*, now *S. Loraich* (Kilmonivaig) "extensive range of moorland", *Sliabh a' Chuir* (Duthil & Rothiemurchus) "large plain or muir", *Sliabh an Ruighe Dhuibh* "large, heathy clad hill".

The other descriptions not mentioned here all come within this range of meanings which, apart from its Biblical usage, also reflects the semantic range of our word in Modern Scottish Gaelic, given by Dwelly (1949:852*b*) as "Mountain of the first magnitude [Bible—W.N.W.N.] 2. Extended heath, alpine plain, moorish ground. 3. Extensive tract of dry moorland. 4. Mountain grass, moor bent grass. 5. Face of a hill.¹⁰ I have been able to confirm all these meanings, with regional variations, from native speakers of Scottish Gaelic. *Sliabh*, then, is still alive in some areas, although not as a very common geographical term, long after it ceased to be productive in place-names.

Returning to our original questions, at least some of the answers now suggest themselves: apart from the Rinns of Galloway, *sliabh* is found in a very limited area more or less identical with that of the Dalriadic settlement and the first few centuries of expansion which followed it on the mainland. It is an early element which, although still alive in Scottish Gaelic in general, is no longer productive in naming and probably has not been so for a number of centuries. Its survival in the Rinns of Galloway, if it is not a later localised infiltration due to geographical proximity (which is less likely),¹¹ therefore apparently bears witness of another early Irish colony outside the Scottish Dalriada (and the Isle of Man), and *Slew-* <*sliabh* may well be assignable to a pre-Norse stratum of Gaelic speakers in the area (see Nicolaisen 1960:63 and 67).¹² If this is correct or even probable, it would be an important early item in the stratification of Gaelic names in Galloway. Whether, however, many or any of our *Slew-* names go back to "Cruithnian settlers" (MacQueen 1961:47)¹³ is another question which the place-names themselves do not answer, and it must suffice at this stage to regard them simply as potential evidence of a pre-Norse Gaelic-speaking settlement in the Rinns of Galloway.

NOTES

- ¹ In his Introduction he states that "*Sliabh* is a common word in Ireland for a mountain and is pronounced Slieve. In Galloway it is sounded Slew, and signifies moorland" (Maxwell 1930:XXVII; see also 1887:24, and 1894:141).
- ² Both these accounts (1955:90-91; 1961:45-7) are almost identical in their wording, and I shall normally refer to the latter, very slightly revised, version. Prof. MacQueen at one point mentions that he intends to make a closer study of these names beginning with *Slew-* but I have his assurance that my own examination in no way anticipates, or runs counter to, any such future investigation.

- 3 These consist of (a) The First Edition of the six-inch maps of Wigtownshire (surveyed 1847-9, published 1849-50); (b) The National Grid six-inch sheets (Provisional Edition) of the Rinns of Galloway (Revised for major changes only in 1951); (c) the original Name Books as stored in the Scottish Regional Office, Edinburgh, where I was given every facility to consult them.
- 4 On the National Grid six-inch sheet NX 03 NE this appears erroneously as *Lewtemp*. The inadvertent loss of the last two letters is probably due to the fact that it is situated close to the junction of four sheets.
- 5 Professor MacQueen tells me that in those instances in which he has heard the modern pronunciation of Galloway names beginning with *Slew-*—and these names are not known very widely nowadays—he heard it approximately as [slɛ·]. Whether this is a late Anglicised development in an unstressed syllable or originates in one of the oblique cases—like the genitive or dative—of the word is difficult to say, although it is just possible that names in *Sla-* and *Slae-* indicate this pronunciation. When seen together with the Manx and the Irish evidence, however, it is obvious that *Slew-* is not likely to stand for this pronunciation, and it is therefore assumed for the purposes of this “Note” that *Slew-* represents something like [slju·], possibly with a final bilabial fricative. That this is justified is, I think, shown by the early forms in which a now apparently “lost” name in the parish of Kirkinner is recorded in the *Wigtownshire Charters* (Reid 1960). It appears as *Sleweubert* in 1457, *Slouhoabert* in 1470-1, *Slewebert* in 1498 and 1584-5, *Slewhyrbyrth* 1542-3, and *Slewhibbert* in 1551-2. *Slou-* is here obviously meant to represent the same sound as *Slew-*.
- 6 The transcriptions have been copied faithfully from the authors, apart from Borgström’s [iə] which I have simply written iə without the square brackets. The obvious confusion arising from a number of slightly varying systems of phonetic notation employed, fortunately does not affect the sounds with which we are particularly concerned in this context, to the degree of uselessness.
- 7 See also *Sliabh Fada* (a) in the Island of Arran, (b) in the parish of Dull, Perthshire.
- 8 Some of Maxwell’s suggestions are worth following up, others must be rejected. The difficulty in any definitive interpretation lies in the complete absence of early documentation for these minor names, none of which has found its way on to the one-inch maps, and some of which are even disappearing from the modern six-inch maps (see p. 93). Maxwell’s attempt to show that *sliabh* was still a neuter noun when first used in Galloway, is not convincing, as his analysis of *Slewmag* as *Sliabh m-beag* is unacceptable.
- 9 Particularly instructive in this connection is a comparison with the relevant entries in Hogan 1910: 604b-612b (s.v. *sliab*).
- 10 For Irish Gaelic, Dinneen (1927:1055a) gives the following similar range of meanings for *sliabh*: “a mountain or mount, a range of mountains; a mountainous district, a heathy upland or plain, a moor, a piece of moorland, oft low-lying . . .”
- 11 Similarly the names themselves do not indicate that they are of Irish-Norse origin or that they have reached Galloway from further north. There is no obvious Norse influence on them, on the one hand, and

both meaning and pronunciation of *Slew*- surely argue against the second alternative.

- ¹² On the basis of the evidence here presented it would follow that the rest of Galloway did not share in this early stratum to any noticeable extent and that the early Gaelic settlement in question was more or less confined to the Rinns. Perhaps it should also be made clear that the vast majority of Gaelic place-names in the Rinns, as in the rest of Galloway, do not belong to this early phase but are centuries younger.
- ¹³ On nineteenth century "Kreenies" and sixth century *Cruithnigh* see also Professor Jackson's comments in MacQueen 1955:89-90. Professor Jackson doubts the identification.

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B. COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

"Evening in a Scots Cottage"

The unsigned watercolour drawing reproduced on Plate VI is one of the more convincing of early representations of a Lowland interior, a subject which first became popular during the latter part of the eighteenth century, largely owing to the influence of Allan Ramsay and Burns. This example, assigned to Alexander Carse, who worked in this genre in the 1790s and the earlier years of the following century, shows a Lowland family enjoying a tune played on the "stock-and-horn". Carse's subjects were usually drawn from the Lothians and the Border country, and occasionally from Ayrshire. Mr. R. E. Hutchison, Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery,