# Notes on Collection and Research

## Scottish Place-Names : 31 Falkirk

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The situation with regard to the study of individual Scottish place-names is such that, unless there exists a competent regional account of the place-nomenclature of a certain area—and there are very few such accounts—, even names of larger inhabited places, such as towns and cities, lack the kind of near-comprehensive documentation which allows a detailed analysis. Glasgow, Dundee, Paisley, Kilmarnock, Lanark, Peebles, Kirkcaldy, Banff, Nairn and many others all fall within this category. This does not mean that the etymology of these names is not known; in fact, we can fairly confidently etymologise all the names just listed. However, the gradual development of the name, both in form and application, and the ultimate emergence of the modern spelling cannot normally be followed from any printed discussion of these names. In each case it is necessary to amass one's own list of spellings by laboriously searching through the relevant records. This task should become considerably easier once the archives of the Scottish Place-Name Survey have been arranged in such a way that the hundreds of thousands of early spellings they contain are accessible in conjunction with each name, but such an arrangement cannot be expected to be available for quite a number of years to come.

It appears necessary therefore that, from time to time, the present series of place-name articles should, in addition to the discussion of broader issues such as historical stratification and geographical distribution, devote some space to the examination of individual names such as the ones listed above; this particular note is therefore concerned with the name *Falkirk* which might with justification have been added to the group of names in question. Falkirk is a fascinating name in many respects but in this context and on the basis of our present knowledge it will not be possible to touch on all of these. We are also more fortunate than with most individual names in so far as there does exist at least one quite detailed attempt at an account of the derivation and meaning of the name. This account was published almost eighty years ago (Miller 1893) and elucidates much of what we have to know about the historical background of the place called Falkirk, beyond the purely linguistic data necessary to establish a reliable etymology. Unfortunately the author of that treatise does not show the same competence

when it comes to the discussion of the meaning of the name and squanders his hard-earned documentary knowledge on an unacceptable etymology which we shall allude to below (p. 57, note 12).

First of all, it is necessary to present a list of the various forms as they occur from the eleventh century onwards (or at least from the twelfth). This list cannot be comprehensive, especially from the sixteenth century onwards, but all the relevant spellings will be shown:
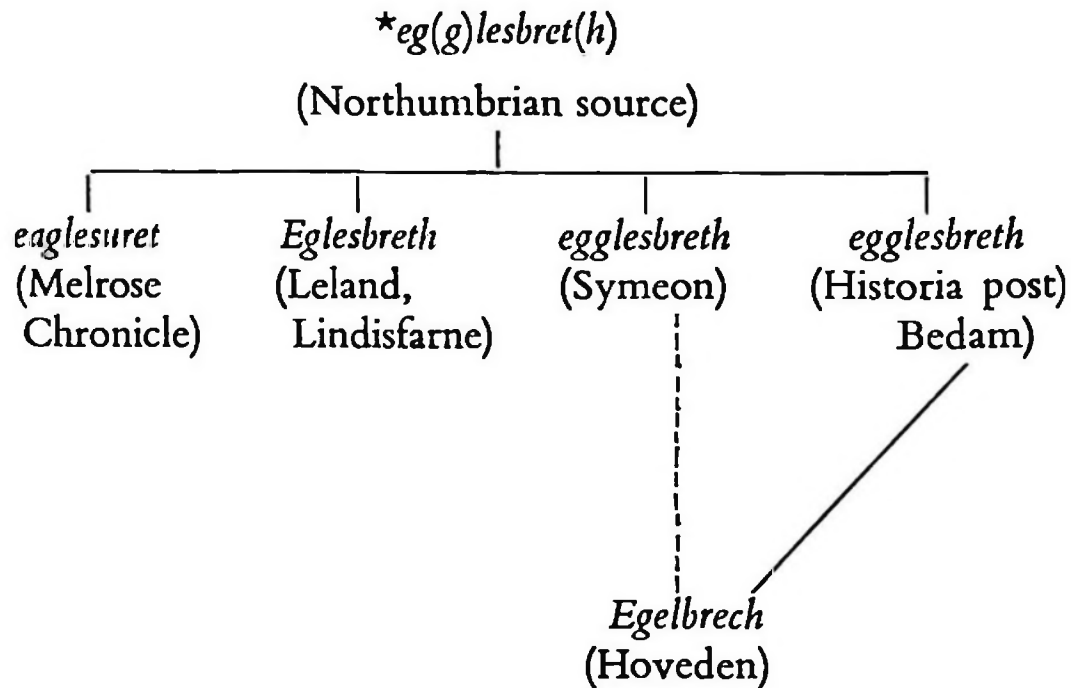
(a) *egglesbreth*   *c* 1120 (1165–70) Symeon of Durham
                      *c* 1150 Historia post Bedam
    *Eglesbreth*   ? 12th cent. (16th cent.) Leland I, 384
    *eaglesuret*   1185–98 Chron. Melrose[1]
    *Eglesbryth*   1268 Holy. Lib.

(b) *Egelilbrich*   1164 Holy. Lib.
    *Eiglesbrec*   1166 Holy. Lib.; *Egglesbrec* Stevenson, *Illustrations*
    *Egelbrech*   1190–1200 Roger de Hoveden
    *Eglesbrich*   1247 Holy. Lib.
    *An Eaglais Bhreac*   Mod. Gaelic

(c) *Varia Capella*   1166, 1240, 1247, 1319 Holy Lib.;
                 1242 Pontifical of St Andrews
    *Varie Capelle*   (gen.) 1319 Holy. Lib.; 1531 (1534), 1537 RMS

(d) *la Veire Chapelle*   1301 CDS
    *la Vaire Chapele*   1303–4 CDS
    *la Veyre Chapele*   1304 CDS
    *la Veire Chapele*   1305 CDS

(e) *la Faukirk*   1298 CDS
    *Faukirk*   s.a. 1298 1298 Chron. Lanercost; 1391, 1468 ER;
                 *c* 1460 Harding Map of Scotland; 1511 RMS;
                 *c* 1564 Nowell Map of Scotland
    *Fawkirk*   1391, 1392 Holy. Lib., 1537, 1632, 1634 RMS
    *Fawkirc*   1391, 1392 RMS
    *Fawkyrk*   1531 (1534) RMS (twice)
    *Fauskyrk*   1564 Mercator Map of British Isles
    *Fauskirk*   1570 Ortelius Map of British Isles

(f) *Falkirk* 1458, 1557 (1580), 1580, 1581, 1587, etc. RMS;
             1546 Holy. Lib., 1551, 1591–2 ER; 1594 Brech. Reg.,
             1595 Mercator Map of Scotland

A discussion of this unusually great variety of forms and spellings must of necessity be preceded by some comment on the identification of the forms listed under (a), with

Falkirk, and of their relationship to each other. The first four, as well as Hoveden's *Egelbrech* under (*b*), all occur as part of an annal for 1080 which in more or less identical terms states that 'Quo anno idem rex Willelmus autumnali tempore Rodbertum filium suum Scotiam contra Malcholmum misit. Sed cum pervenisset ad Egglesbreth, nullo confecto negotio reversus, Castellum Novum super flumen Tyne condidit.'[2] From this entry it is, of course, by no means clear where in Scotland *Egglesbreth* lies, and it is only natural that at first it should have been looked for in the most southern parts of the country. Sir David Dalrymple, for instance, equated it with Bridekirk near Annan, regarding *Eggles-* as standing for *Ecclesia* and the whole name for Latin *Ecclesia Bridgidae* (Dalrymple 1776: 19 *n*); and in his index to the works of Symeon of Durham, Arnold thinks of a possible identification with Eccles in Berwickshire (Arnold 1885 : II, 416).Whereas Egglesbre*th* led Sir David Dalrymple to Bridekirk, the reading Egglesbre*ch* suggested '*Eglesbrec*, the old name of *Falkirk*' to Chalmers who further argues (1807 : I, 419 note *h*) that 'if Robert had penetrated to *Annan*, he must have entered Scotland, from Cumberland, on the west: but, as his irruption was bounded by Falkirk, he must have come down to this well-known town, the scene of so many conflicts, through Northumberland, whether he certainly returned', to found Newcastle. Chalmers' view has become the generally accepted one, but although we are in agreement with it too, it was necessary to point out the, at least partly, extra-linguistic nature of the argument.

Although a detailed account of the history of the chronicles involved cannot be part of this discussion, it is however essential to give a brief survey of the relationship of the spellings to each other in order to assess their value and standing as the earliest, and therefore extremely important, forms of our name. The main question which arises in this respect is whether these spellings have come down to us independent of each other or have some kind of connection. The fact that they all occur in practically identical annals referring to the same year (1080) rules out the first alternative or at least makes it very unlikely; what we must determine therefore is the nature of the connection which exists between these five spellings. This in turn depends on the nature of the relationship of the sources. As far as Hoveden is concerned, both the *Historia Regum* ascribed to Symeon of Durham and the so-called *Historia post Bedam* (Stubbs 1868 : I, xxvi and xxxi–xxxiii) are considered to be among his sources, a supposition supported by the presence of the phrase *autumnali tempore* which only occurs in these three versions (see note 2 below). For the Chronicle of Melrose, the existing version of Symeon, and the *Historia post Bedam* Anderson claims that the relationship is collateral[3] and that for their Northern English and Scottish material they all go back to a Northumbrian source of which no surviving text is known and which probably included a chronicle that ended before the annal for 1130 (Anderson 1936 : xi). This would mean that the *egglesbreth* which occurs in that part of the *Historia Regum* for which Symeon himself is thought to have been responsible,[4] the *egglesbreth* of the *Historia post Bedam*, and the *eaglesuret* of the Melrose Chronicle derive

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from the same original spelling, whereas Hoveden's *Egelbrech* derives from the *egglesbreth* of Symeon and the *Historia post Bedam*. Little can be said by the present writer about the exact source of Leland's *Eglesbreth* which is said to have been extracted 'ex libro incerti autoris de episcopis Lindisfarnensibus'. It is the same annal but without the Symeon/*Historia post Bedam* addition and is undoubtedly derived from the same source as the Melrose and Symeon passages, although perhaps closer to the first. The genealogy is therefore to be taken to be something like this

$$*eg(g)lesbret(h)$$
(Northumbrian source)

| *eaglesuret* (Melrose Chronicle) | *Eglesbreth* (Leland, Lindisfarne) | *egglesbreth* (Symeon) | *egglesbreth* (Historia post) Bedam) |

*Egelbrech* (Hoveden)

Consequently we have to take all these entries as one which is rather important when it comes to the assessment of the final consonant. This is clearly *-t* in the Melrose Chronicle (see Anderson 1936:28) and *-th* in Symeon and the *Historia post Bedam*.[5] For the *-th* of the Lindisfarne spelling we have to take Leland's word for the time being. On the basis of these four independently derived forms it appears reasonable to assume that the Northumbrian source also had *-t(h)*. Curious in this respect is Hoveden's *-ch* but if *-t* and *-c* were similar in the Symeon and *Historia post Bedam* MSS (see note 5 below), then a *-ch* could easily have been misread for a *-th*. In this connection, it is interesting that Leland read the Symeon spelling as *Egglesbirch* (1770 : II, 356) and copies the Hoveden form as *Egelbereth* (1770 : III, 199) which is at least a measure of the difficulty by which readers of the respective manuscripts were confronted when trying to distinguish between *c* and *t*, or other letters for that matter, since the *eaglesuret* of the Melrose Chronicle, if found in isolation, would hardly have allowed even the most daring scholar to amend it to *\*egglesbret(h)*. With this background in mind, we have to take our starting-point as being a spelling ending in *-bret(h)*. Seeming confirmation of such a form comes from a much later and completely independent source, a charter in 1268 by Gamline, Bishop of St Andrews to the Church of Holyrood, listing amongst other possessions 'Ecclesiam de Eglesbryth que hodie varia capella

nuncupatur' (Innes 1840:66). This is in confirmation of an earlier charter of 1240 in which unfortunately our name becomes illegible after *Egl-* (Innes 1840:64). We are therefore not in a position to judge whether the *-th* is a misreading for *-ch* or an accurate copy. One is inclined, under the circumstances, to decide in favour of the former,[6] as a singular *-th* appears to be somewhat out of place in a series of charters and bulls which otherwise only show *-ch*, but certainly its existence must be taken into account in any evaluation of the *-th* spellings for the annal of 1080.

With or without support from the Holyrood charter, however, these spellings and their hypothetic source are there for us to interpret and should not be pushed aside lightly by emendation, as everybody before Watson used to do, who threw out the suggestion that Symeon's *Egglesbreth* might be a British form (1926:349), a proposal which prompted Johnston to add to his earlier derivation as Gaelic *eaglais breac*, the alternative 'or W[elsh] *eglwys brith*', 'speckled church', in the third edition of his dictionary (1934 : 176). How serious and acceptable is the notion that a spelling occurring in a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century Northumbrian (monastic) annal might represent a genuine British (=Cumbric) place-name in Central Scotland? First of all, it must be stated that, as *eglwys*<Latin *ec(c)lesia* is feminine in Welsh, the adjective would be *braith*<*breith* and not *brith* and also should show soft mutation after a feminine noun, *i.e. fraith*. Presumably a late eleventh-century form would have been something like *\*egluis breith* (Jackson 1953:330; 1954:71–3). However, as the corresponding mutation is never shown in the Gaelic form of the name (where one would have expected at least the occasional Anglicised *\*vrech*, or the like), it is perhaps not necessary to take the apparent non-lenition of the initial consonant too seriously in this context. Perhaps more difficult to accept is the representation of *-ei-* by *-e-* in *-breth* for *-breith* although this would seem to have a parallel in *Eden-*<*Eidyn* in the twelfth-century forms of the name Edinburgh (Jackson 1959 : 42), nor is it easy to understand why the alleged Cumbric name should have contained an adjective etymologically less closely related (*brith*<*\*brikt-*) to Gaelic *breac* rather than the cognate *brych* (feminine *brech*)< *\*brikk-*. In addition to these two arguments, even bearing in mind the great power of survival inherent in place-names, it is not at all plausible that, unless a Strathclyde source with a Strathclyde version of the name was involved, a Northumbrian chronicler of the late eleventh century should retain a pre-Gaelic Cumbric form of the name at a time when Gaelic must have been spoken in the Falkirk area for at least 300 years, at the most conservative estimate. In the present writer's opinion, the Northumbrian source which provided the Chronicle of Melrose, Symeon of Durham, *the Historia post Bedam*, and the Lindisfarne chronicle quoted by Leland with the spelling *\*eg(g)-lesbreth* was probably a fair copy of either a whole chronicle or, which is more likely, a number of draft annals, including the one for 1080, in which a copyist unfamiliar with the place-name misread a *-c-* in the draft version for *-t-*. We would therefore put a draft annal, perhaps not written much after the year 1080, before the fair annal in the Northumbrian source which all three (or four) chroniclers used, and assume that

*eg(g)lesbreth* was a misreading for *eg(g)lesbrech*. This would, of course, not turn it
into a Gaelic name on phonological grounds but would at least allow us not to attach
too much importance to the Northumbrian spelling as an indication of the survival,
and therefore previous existence, of a Cumbric name for Falkirk.[7] The isolated *Egles-
bryth* in the Holyrood Charters would be explained in a similar fashion (see p. 51
above).

We must now consider what are, in the light of the modern Scottish Gaelic name for
Falkirk and for historical reasons, apparently Gaelic forms of the name. Of these, the
spelling in the confirmation charter of 1166, by Bishop Richard of St Andrews to the
Canons at Holyrood, is the most straightforward for it presents us with an unequivocal
*-brec* as the second element. The fact that the editor of the Holyrood charters read
*Eigles-* whereas Stevenson has *Eggles-*, has no influence on the etymology and only
illustrates the difficulties even nineteenth-century and earlier experts encountered when
transcribing these charters.[8] Undoubtedly *Eiglesbrec* (*Egglesbrec*) stands for something
like *\*Eaglais B(h)rec* which must have been the twelfth-century Gaelic form of our
name. The charter spelling is vital when it comes to the interpretation of the respective
references to Falkirk in the Bulls of Pope Alexander III in 1164 (*Egelilbrich*) and Pope
Innocent IV in 1247 (*Eglesbrich*) as both of these, on the surface, show Brythonic rather
than Gaelic forms of the adjective 'speckled'. The final *-ch* does not seem to have
presented a problem to any other scholar discussing this name[9] but is in need of some
explanation. Everything hinges, of course, on the question as to whether it represents
an unvoiced spirant [χ] or the homorganic stop [k] in pronunciation. Unfortunately
there is nothing in these two Bulls to indicate what *ch* normally stands for but as the
names were presumably not taken down from oral dictation but copied from docu-
ments which had reached Rome from Scotland previously,[10] it is perhaps not the
orthographic habits of the scribes at the Holy See which matter here, but rather the
significance of these spellings within a Scottish context. It should, however, be noted
that Heriot appears in both Bulls as *Herth* which undoubtedly means a voiceless dental
stop (perhaps with strong post-aspiration), and that Bathgate is given as *bathcat* and
*Bathketh*, respectively, where both spellings must have the same phonetic value. It is
reasonable to assume that like *-th* and *-t-*, Anglo-Norman *-ch* and *-c-* might also be
interchangeable in final position, or at least that *-ch* does not indicate a spirant. Then
there are, if our previous arguments are acceptable, those other two spellings in *-ch*
in addition to those occurring in the Bulls, *i.e.* the *\*egglesbrech* of the Northumbrian
annal and the emended *\*Eglesbrych* of the charter of 1268 (and its predecessor of 1240).
As far as the latter is concerned, the same situation appears to have existed as in the
Bulls, *i.e.* both charters have *Herth* and *Bathketh* for Heriot and Bathgate, respectively.
The *Eglesbryth* for *Eglesbrych* (=*Eglesbryc*) sequence gains support from the spellings
which are found in the same chartulary for the name Kirkcudbright which, after being
mentioned properly as *Kyrkecuthbert* in the twelfth century, is shown as *Kyrcudbryth*
and *Kircudbrich* in the fourteenth and finally as *Kyrkcuthbryt* in the sixteenth. For Symeon's

version *egglesbreth* = *egglesbrech*, it is significant that in the same annal he has *Malchol-mum* which is rendered by Hoveden and the Melrose Chronicle as *Malcolmum*, and that elsewhere he has *Uchthredum* against Hoveden's *Uchtredum*. It is therefore not unlikely that his source had *-brec* and not *-brech* and that the ending *-et* in the *eaglesuret* of the Melrose Chronicle is a copy of an earlier *-ec*.[11] In this writer's opinion, there seems consequently little doubt that we are here dealing with various versions and developments of an original final *-c*, or rather a velar voiceless stop [k], which points to a Gaelic *-brec* as the second element in our name.

This leaves us with the presence of the vowel *-i-* (or *-y-*) in the spellings found in the two Bulls and in the charter of 1268, and presumably also that of 1240. It is difficult to think of this as a mere spelling variation as the full stress would be on this syllable, and one can only assume that this might be a reflection of a dative used as a locative, although Modern Gaelic appears to have standardised the nominative in this particular name.

Having dealt with the recorded Gaelic forms of the name, we must now look at the Latin versions which invariably are *Varia Capella* in the nominative and *Varie Capelle* in the genitive. They all occur in Latin texts, but Miller alleges (1893 : 60) that 'there are no historical documents showing the exact significance of the words *Varia Capella*, usually translated as meaning "the Spotted or Speckled Church".' His own conclusion is that 'the term "Varia Capella" is . . . a figurative form of expression in which the unsatisfactory relations subsisting between the parties interested are ascribed to the church itself' and he feels that the term 'the broken church' quoted in the First Statistical Account (vol. 19, p. 72) 'exactly expresses what took place when its status was reduced to that of a chapel in 1166' (*ibid.* : 61).[12] In contrast to Miller, it is our own contention that the existing documentary evidence provides us with a very good insight into the exact usage and meaning of *Varia Capella* which cannot be construed simply to mirror unsatisfactory ecclesiastical arrangements and developments. The first important pointer in this respect is the observation that, from the very first, *Varia Capella* almost exclusively occurs in the phrase *Eiglesbrec que Varia Capella dicitur* (1166). Sometimes the word *nuncupatur* is used instead of *dicitur* and the charters of 1240 and 1268 even add the word *hodie* 'to-day' before the Latin name. Only in the charter of 1319, the Pontifical of St Andrews (1242) quoted by Anderson (1922 : II, 522) and the reference in the Register of the Great Seal of 1531 does the term appear alone; and only in one instance, the last, is it linked with *Fawkirk* (RMS 1537 : apud ecclesiam Varie Capelle *alias* Fawkirk).

Obviously the phrase '*Eiglesbrec* which is (now) called *Varia Capella*' implies that a change of name has taken place. It does not simply mean that 'Mediaeval records use the Latin synonym' (Stirlingshire Inventory 1963 : 150, note 7). As *Varia Capella* in this phrase fills the exact slot normally allotted to the vernacular term in Latin documents of this kind, the conclusion is not that the Gaelic name has been translated into Latin but that here we have the Latin version of the new English translation of the Gaelic

name, *Faw Kirk*. It is therefore evidence of the fact that by 1166 English was already so widely spoken in the area that, in a bilingual situation, the Gaelic place-name could be translated into the incoming language, whereas there was probably very little, if any English influence in the Falkirk region in 1080.[13] After 1268, nobody seems to have used the Gaelic name anymore, and by 1319 *Varia Capella* is probably accepted scribal and ecclesiastic usage for *Faw Kirk*. That this is likely to have been the case is supported by the Norman French form *la Veire Chapelle* which, with variations, appears in Norman writs of the first decade of the fourteenth century.[14] The Latin term bows out in 1537 when *Fawkirk* is acknowledged to be the (vernacular) alternative.

Without the Latinised evidence we would not have known of the existence of the English name until 1298 when significantly it first appeared with the (French) definite article; and another century goes by before it is quite frequently found in official documents. The first element in *Faukirk, Fawkirk* is Middle English *fawe, faʒe* 'variegated, of various colours' (*Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* 2, 426) which is not unknown in Scottish place-nomenclature, one of the chief examples being a compound with *side*, as in Fallside in Lanarkshire, Falside in East Lothian, Fife (2), Roxburghshire, and West Lothian, Fawside (Berwickshire) and Fawsyde (Kincardineshire). Various forms of the English name are used right into the seventeenth century, including the curious *Fauskyrk, Fauskirk* which only occurs on maps [15] and clearly shows that the adjective *faw(e)* is no longer understood so that on the analogy of other names, it seems to have been taken to be a personal, perhaps a saint's, name.

The last important phase of the history of our name starts in 1458 when we have the first isolated instance of the spelling *Falkirk* which from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards dominates the scene although as late as 1634 it shares the references to the place with *Fawkirk* in one and the same charter. This new spelling must be understood as a result of false analogy, because the first element of our name was obviously considered to be in the same category as Scots *ba'<ball, wa'<wall, fa'<fall*, etc. An unhistorical *-l-* was therefore introduced into the 'standard', non-dialect spelling and has remained there ever since. In its turn it has produced the modern pronunciation-spelling ['fɔlkɛrk] which is now used by everybody except the inhabitants of the town itself who still call it Fawkirk ['fɔːkɛrk]. How long they will be immune to the influence of the spelling is another question.

Our name can therefore demonstrably be shown to have started out as a Gaelic *\*Eaglais B(h)rec* before 1080 (with a reasonable possibility of an earlier Cumbric name) and to have been translated into English by 1166 although there is initially only indirect evidence for this in the Latin *Varia Capella* and the Norman French *la Veire Chapelle*. This new English name is *Faw Kirk* which like the Gaelic and the Latin names means '(the) speckled church', a meaning which must have been derived from the peculiar (sand-stone?) aspect of the church,[16] unless a painted wooden church or one built in wood and stone can be envisaged. By false analogy, a new spelling *Falkirk* is produced from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards which in turn

| Century | Gaelic | Latin | Norman French | English Faw-, Fau- | Fal- |
|---------|--------|-------|---------------|-------------------|------|
| 11 | *egglesbreth* (= *egglesbrec*) (1080) | | | | |
| 12 | *egglesbreth* (?) *Eglesbreth* *Egglesbrec* *Egelilbrich* *Eglesbrich* *eaglesuret* | *Varia Capella* (1166) | | | |
| 13 | *Eglesbryth* (1268) | *Varia Capella* | | *(la) Faukirk* (1298) | |
| 14 | | *Varia Capella* *Varie Capelle* | *la Veire Chapelle* etc. (1301–1305) | *Faukirk* *Fawkirk* (1391) *Fawkirc* | |
| 15 | | | | *Faukirk* | *Falkirk* (1458) |
| 16 | | *Varie Capelle* (1531, 1537) | | *Faukirk* *Fawkirk* *Fawkyrk* *Fauskirk* *Fauskyrk* | *Falkirk* (1546, etc.) |
| 17 | | | | *Fawkirk* (1622, 1634) | *Falkirk* |
| 18 | | | | | *Falkirk* |

has given rise to a new pronunciation ['fɔlkɛrk] although this is hardly used in Falkirk itself. The Gaelic name has survived as *An Eaglais Bhreac* but because of the modern English spelling and pronunciation, the connection between *Breac* and *Fal-* is now obscured and no longer immediately discernible.

The documentary evidence reflecting this development can, in conclusion, be summarised as shown in the table on the previous page.

## NOTES

1  Wherever possible the source abbreviations are those recommended in the 'List of Abbreviated Titles of the Printed Sources of Scottish History to 1560' which was originally published as an Appendix to *The Scottish Historical Review* 42 (1963) but is also available as a separate reprint.

2  This is the Symeon of Durham version (Arnold 1885 : II, 211); in the greatly abbreviated version of the *Historia Regum* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (ms. nouv. acq. lat. 692) our passage reads (f. 35–35v):
    'quo anno idem rex Willelmus autumnali tempore Rodbertum filium suum scotiam contra Malcolmum (f. 35v) misit. Sed cum pervenisset ad egglesbreth nullo confecto negotio reversus castellum novum super flumen Tine condidit' (Communication from M. Pierre Gasnault, Conservateur, in a letter of 24 February 1969).
    The phrase 'autumnali tempore' is found here, in the *Historia post Bedam* and in Hoveden but is missing in the Melrose Chronicle and Leland's excerpt. Its presence in the *Historia post Bedam* was kindly confirmed by Mr H. M. Colvin and Miss P. M. Higgins (see note 5).

3  Earlier, however, he had stated (Anderson 1922 : I, 46 note 2) that the paragraph containing our name 'is derived from S.D., II, 211' but even then pointed out the fact that 'S.D. says that the invasion took place in the autumn time'. Stubbs was of the opinion that Hoveden's immediate predecessor was the compiler of the *Historia post Bedam* (1868 : xxx–xxxi) which 'in its turn resolves itself into two elements, the compilation known as the "History of Simeon of Durham", and the "History of Henry of Huntingdon" (*op. cit.*: xxvii).' Blair, although accepting and ably summarising most of Hoveden's arguments (1939 : 91–2), however, states quite firmly that the two versions of the joint sources as surviving in Symeon and the *Historia post Bedam* 'are not derived directly one from the other, but are laterally related', the latter in fact being a reduction of the two conjoined chronicles it incorporates rather than a faithful copy.

4  See Blair 1963 : 112 and 117. For the non-Northern and non-Scottish parts this is almost completely derived from Florence of Worcester, but our part of the annal for 1080 is not from that source. As a whole, the manuscript of the so-called *Historia Regum* was evidently 'written at Sawley in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the second half of the twelfth century, probably *c.* 1165–70' (*op. cit.*: 116).

5  Dr R. L. Page, Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, has kindly checked this spelling, at my request, in the only full MS extant of Symeon. He comments (letter of 21 January 1969): 'I have checked MS 139 new foliation 112v; the name form is *egglesbreth* as in the Rolls Series edition. There is similarity between *t* and *c* letter forms in this hand, but I think no doubt that the name form you want ends in *-th*.' The spelling is confirmed as *egglesbreth* in the abbreviated MS of the *Historia Regum* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris by M. Pierre Gasnault, Conservateur (see note 2). Similarly, Mr H. M. Colvin, Librarian of St John's College, Oxford, has kindly looked at f. 54v of their MS 97, the so-called *Historia post Bedam*, and informs me (letter of 22 February 1969) that 'the place-name is written "egglesbreth". The "t" could be read as "c", but comparison with other *t*s and *c*s makes it clear that it must be regarded as the former letter.'

In the other MS of the *Historia post Bedam* (Royal MS 13.A.6, f. 72) the name is also written as *Egglesbreth*, according to Miss P. M. Higgins, Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum.

Apart from confirming this spelling, Miss Higgins has also taken the trouble to look at the name-forms in the various Hoveden MSS in the British Museum. Her comments (letter of February 26, 1969) are as follows: 'The name is spelt "Egelbreth" in Royal MS 14.C.2, f. 62b and in Arundel MS 150, f. 30. However, the folio in the latter is a post medieval insertion by William Howard. "t" and "c" are frequently written in precisely the same way in the hand employed for Arundel MSS 69 f. 47b, moreover the word in question is smudged, but it is probably "Egelbrech" rather than "Egelbreth".'

Evidently the spelling printed by Stubbs in the Rolls Series was taken from the last MS but as it appears to be the odd one out at best, we can probably assume Egelbre*th* for Hoveden, too. In that case Leland's *Egelbereth* from Hoveden would not be so curious, as he may have seen another MS. It is interesting, however, that the, perhaps unjustified and certainly unqualified, -*ch* ending led to the identification of the name mentioned in the 1080 annal, with Falkirk.

6   Miller (1893 : 60) does not seem to see any problem here and without hesitation extends *Egl-* to *Egl[isbrich]* in the 1240 charter.

7   Skene (1887 : 36 note 75) considers our name in conjunction with the personal name *Brychan* and makes the church of Falkirk 'the chief church' in *Manau Guotodin*, although he quotes the name in the form *Ecglis Breacc*. There is no indication in any of the primary sources known to the present writer to substantiate that claim or, indeed, to show that the church at Falkirk existed in the time of the Gododdin.

8   It looks as if Stevenson transcribed the original Harleian charter, 111. b. 14 (Stevenson 1834 : 13), whereas the version printed in the *Liber Cartarum Sancte Crucis* is from a copy in the then Advocates' Library (Innes 1840: lxxx).

9   It is possible that they simply regarded it as an indication of a pre-aspirated consonant, but did pre-aspiration exist as early as the twelfth century and, if so, was it a feature of this particular dialect?

10   The obvious copyist's error *Egelil-* for *Egles-*, or the like, is probably to be attributed to the later notary's transumpt which is published in the *Holyrood Charters*.

11   In their introduction to the facsimile edition of the Chronicle, the editors particularly draw attention to the presence of 'occasional confusion between *c* and *t*; *e.g. Stoctorum* stands for *Scottorum . . .*' (Anderson 1936 : lxxix).

12   In the rest of his paper which otherwise is an excellent collection of source material, Miller goes on to argue that both *Eglesbrich* and *Fawkirk* mean 'the church at, or on the wall', a view which for many reasons is wholly unacceptable.

13   To say that 'on this showing Gaelic was still spoken in the district in 1080' as the Stirlingshire Inventory does (1963 : 150 note 7) would be applying the wrong kind of emphasis. It would be more correct to state that, on the evidence of the 1080 annal, the district of Falkirk was still largely monoglot Gaelic in that year or a little later. The peculiar function of the phrase *que (hodie) Varia Capella dicitur* also evidently rules out the theoretical possibility that *Fawkirk*, although not recorded until the medieval period, is really some centuries older and goes back to the time when the Falkirk region was part of English-speaking Northumbria, before the Scots crossed the Forth to the South.

14   Unfortunately I have not been able to trace Johnston's reference '*a.* 1300 *MS Digby* Locus qui Anglice vocatur ye fowe chapel' (1934 : 174) which shows a similar use of the definite article and points to the Norman term as being a translation of the English.

15   The map evidence was kindly supplied by Dr A. B. Taylor. Only spellings not genealogically derived from each other have been quoted in our list.

16   The *Stirlingshire Inventory* (1963 : 150) feels that the form in the annal for 1080 'suggests that the building was parti-coloured, perhaps through the use of two kinds of stone occurring in the same

quarry.' In addition, we are informed that 'in 1810–11 the whole structure was demolished, apart from some portions of the tower' and that a new church was 'added to the existing steeple'.

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# ' *The Scottish Hecate* ': *A Wild Witch Chase*

### ALISON HANHAM

When I was working for the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, the name 'Nicneven' came within my province and it was necessary to decide whether it was the personal name of one particular historical witch[1] or the more generalised title of a folklore figure.[2]

A number of writers, following Jamieson (1808), make the identification of Nicneven with the 'gyrecarlin', on extremely vague grounds. The most specific statement, which Mrs Kirsty Larner kindly drew to my notice, is that by R. H. Cromek:

'We will close our history of witchcraft with the only notice we could collect, of a celebrated personage, called the *Gyre Carline*; who is reckoned the mother of glamour, and near a-kin to Satan himself. She is believed to preside over the '*Hallowmass Rades*'; and mothers frequently frighten their children by threatening to give them to *McNeven*, or the *Gyre Carline*. She is described as wearing a long gray mantle, and carrying a wand, which, like the miraculous rod of Moses, could convert water into rocks and sea into solid land.'

Cromek goes on to recount that she so solidified Lochar Moss. T. Davidson, in re-producing this passage in *Rowan Tree and Red Thread* (pp. 8–9), omits the caveat of 'the only notice we could collect' and adds 'the Gyre Carline or Nicniven, the Hecate or Mother witch of the Scottish peasantry . . . was a mysterious divinity [*sic*] about whom there are many notices in the traditionary and legendary lore'. He also seems to ascribe Nicneven's appearance as a childish bogey to Fife in place of the Galloway area. D. A. Mackenzie moves her further: 'The Carlin was sometimes called "Nicnevin", an interesting Gaelic survival in the Lothian and Border Counties' (1935:150).

In Scott's *Abbot* (1820) Magdalen Graeme disguises herself as 'Mother Nicneven' in Kinross during Queen Mary's imprisonment in Loch Leven. To Chapter XXVI Scott appends the note: 'Mother Nicneven. This was the name given to the grand Mother Witch, the very Hecate of Scottish popular superstition. Her name was bestowed, in one or two instances, upon sorceresses, who were held to resemble her by their superior skill in "Hell's black grammar".'

Nicneven's earliest, and indeed only authentic, literary appearance is in Alexander Montgomery's *Flyting with Polwart*, written before 1585. In the Tullibardine MS of

the poem (Stevenson 1910) 'Nicknivin with hir nymphis' take the infant Polwart to nurse and teach it various feats of witchcraft, 'with chairmes from Cathnes and Chanrie of Ross'. The Hart print of 1629 (Cranstoun 1887:lines 268, 383) has the name as *Nicneuen*, but the scribe of the Harleian version puts *Nieniren* throughout, probably through an easy misreading of an unfamiliar name in the original. In fact Hecate herself also appears in this part of the *Flyting*, and Nicneven seems to be a separate figure. Montgomery gives us no more details about her.

There are some documentary references to an actual witch called Nicneven or Nic Neville, said to have been burnt at St Andrews in May 1569. *The Historie and Life of King James the Sext* (1825:40–41), of which the relevant part was written before 1597, says that in that month the Regent went to 'Sanctandrois, whare a notable sorceres callit Nic Neville, was condamnit to the death and brynt, and a Frenchman callit Paris, wha was ane of the devysers of the Kings death, was hangit in Sanctandrois, and with him William Stewart, Lyoun King of Armes, for dyvers poynts of witchecraft and necromancie'. In the later MS of this work, as printed at Edinburgh in 1804, the name is given as Nicniven. In the seventeenth century Lord Herries (1836:115) turns her into a man, perhaps confusing the feminine patronymic Nic- with the abbreviation for Nicholas. The St Andrews Kirk Session Records (Fleming 1889) have very little about witches, and no mention of any Nicneven or NicNeville at this period. Nor does there seem to be anything in the Justiciary Proceedings for the appropriate date, though Paris and Stewart appear.

The second scrap of historical evidence occurs in the record of the trial for witchcraft of John Brughe of Fossoway, 24 November 1643 (Books of Adjournal of the High Court of Justiciary, vol. 8:337–8). Brughe is said to have learnt his charms from a 'wedow woman namet Neane V^cClerith of thrie scoir of 3eirs of aidge quha was sister dochter to Nikneveing that notourous and infamous witche in Mon3ie quha for hir sorcerie and witchcraft was brunt four scoir of 3eir since or thairby.' This is very interesting, for two reasons. It ties up with the statement in the *Historie of James VI*, since 1569 is near enough to 'four scoire of 3eir since or thairby', and bears out that work in the statement that 'Nic Neville' was a notable sorceress, since she was still famous in 1643. And it introduces the village of Monzie into the story.

At this point we return to Montgomery and the realms of folklore. At line 492 in the Tullibardine copy of the *Flyting*, when Nicneven and her cronies have finished with the infant Polwart, 'Vnto þe cocatrice in ane creill they send it'. But Hart has 'To Kait of Creife in an creill soone they gard send it' (l. 473), and the Harleian version also gives 'Kait of Creif'. Cranstoun has a long and, on the face of it, thoroughly irrelevant note on Kait of Crieff, designed to show that Crieff remained notorious for witches 'long after Montgomerie's time'. He reproduces a passage from *Crieff: Its Traditions and Characters* by D. Macara, Edinburgh (1881) about one Kate McNiven of Monzie executed for witchcraft in 1715. This curious story relates that Kate was employed as a nursemaid by the Graemes of Inchbrakie in the parish of Crieff. The laird one day went

to dine at Dunning, taking his own knife and fork, as was then the custom. At dinner he was annoyed by a bee buzzing round his head, and put down his knife and fork to shoo it away. When he went to pick them up again they had disappeared. On his return home, Kate found the missing knife and fork in their usual place at Inchbrakie. It was assumed that she had turned herself into the bee and was responsible for the theft. She was condemned for witchcraft and burnt in the spring of 1715. Mr Bowie, the minister of Monzie, with other gentlemen of the neighbourhood, secured her conviction and she prophesied that

> 'so long as the Shaggie Burn ran west, there should not be a lineal descendant to the house of Monzie, nor the minister of the parish ever prosper, both of which prophecies [adds Macara] have been realised in an astonishing manner. The laird who was a means of condemning her was the only one who interposed on her behalf at the eleventh hour, and Kate in gratitude spat a bead out of her mouth, and declared that so long as that charm was preserved by the family, the house of Inchbrakie would never want a direct heir, which has been duly verified to the present time' [Macara:202].

The odd thing is that this absurd tale, pointless even by the usual standard of witch stories, is not as irrelevant as Montgomery's editor seems to believe. As we have seen, there *was* a notorious witch from Monzie called Nicneven, and as we shall shortly see, Macara's date of 1715 is nonsense, though persistent nonsense. The *New Statistical Account*, *sub* Monzie, calls the lady M'Nieven and puts the date of her execution between 1711 and 1722. According to the same source, the Monzie Kirk Session Minutes start in 1691, with a gap from 1706 to 1711, but evidently do not mention the episode.

A more systematic attempt at a history of Crieff than Macara's volume of chat is Alexander Porteous' *The History of Crieff* (1912). On pages 91–2 Porteous also relates the story of Kate and her burning on the Knock of Crieff, on what was still called 'Kate Macnevin's Craig'. Porteous, having probably seen the account of John Brughe's trial in Dalyell's *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (1834:233) or Alex. G. Reid, *Annals of Auchterarder* (1899:195 ff.), gives her name as Kate Nike Neiving, and the date as 1563, *i.e.* eighty years before 1643. He has the further details that Kate was dismissed from her post at Inchbrakie on suspicion of trying to poison the laird's son, and returned to Monzie, but fell under further suspicion and 'was dragged before the Presbytery of Auchterarder, when her guilt was apparently irrefutably proved. She was accordingly sentenced to be burned'. The young laird of Inchbrakie happened to pass just before sentence was carried out, and attempted in vain to save her. She spat a blue bead to him from a necklace she wore, 'instructing him to preserve it securely, and assuring him that so long as it was kept in Inchbrakie, the estate would never be alienated'. Porteous proceeds to give what purport to be quotations from Louisa G. Graeme, *Or and Sable: A Book of the Græmes and Grahams* (1903), but since the words he attributes to Miss Graeme are merely his own summary of her account, it is better to go to her book direct.

Miss Graeme's version of Kate's various prophecies came to her from her mother, Mrs Lawrence Graeme, wife of the third son of the George Graeme, 9th of Inchbrakie,

who succeeded in 1796. For Miss Graeme, the truth of the story is indisputably proved by the presence of the bead and another alleged relic in the family possession. In the Graeme version there is no mention of the Minister of Monzie. Kate cursed the Laird of Monzie, on whose land she was executed: 'from father to son she said Monzie shall never pass, no heir of line should ever hold the lands now held by him; then she cursed the Kirktoun of Monzie: in future year by year its size and population should decrease, no share in all the growing prosperity of the surrounding towns and villages it should hold, and ever by some hearth amidst its cottage homes should there crawl an idiot. . . .' The Laird of Inchbrakie, on the other hand, was to keep 'the dark blue bead' in his possession and on his house and lands, and so long as that was done 'Inchbrakie's Laird should never want a son nor Inchbrakie's son his lands'.[3] The bead, also described as a 'moonstone sapphire', was set in a ring, which George Graeme 9th ceremonially placed on the finger of each of his daughters-in-law to ensure a supply of heirs. But unfortunately the important part of the injunction was not observed. After the 11th laird had come of age (1870) Inchbrakie was let and Mrs Lawrence Graeme took the family charter chest into her own house for safekeeping. Her daughter and the laird were both present at the dramatic moment when it was seen that the precious ring had been removed from Inchbrakie along with the papers. 'A few years after . . . the first acres of the Aberuthven portion of the property was sold, bit by bit the land slipped from the old barony, and so far the 11th baron has no son to gather them again' (Graeme, 1903:411). According to Burke's *Landed Gentry*, Inchbrakie was in fact sold to the Laird of Abercairney in 1883, and the 11th Laird of Inchbrakie, who lived in Manitoba, died unmarried in 1926 and was succeeded as head of the family by his cousin's son David Henry Graeme, 12th of Aberuthven, of Fonthill, Devon.

Porteous concludes his account of Kate McNiven with a quotation from *The Holocaust*, a poetic epic on her execution by the Rev. George Blair, minister of Monzie (1845). The historical notes to this work explode the date of 1715, and explain the origin of some of the plausible details, such as the name of the minister, Mr Bowie, given by subsequent narrators. The poet, with a refreshing display of scholarly honesty, makes it clear that he had been unable to find any authentic account of Kate's trial or execution, and had been obliged to rely on dubious tradition for the story, and to assign a fictitious date of his own to the events.

The earliest date to which I can take Kate's story is 1818, when C. K. Sharpe, in a footnote to his Prefatory Notice to Robert Law's *Memorialls* (lxxxiii) rehearses 'a tradition current in Perthshire' about Catherine Niven, former nurse to the family of Inchbrakie, who was strangled and burnt on the Knock of Crieff. This version has the spitting out of the blue stone and the promise that it would ensure the prosperity of her foster son's house, but there is no mention of a curse on Monzie, attempted poisoning, or stolen cutlery. Sharpe cryptically remarks that the name Niven was 'probably bestowed by her neighbours from that of the Fairy Queen'. He has a similar comment (quoted in the 1825 supplement to Jamieson's *Dictionary*) about Nic Neville of St Andrews.

The name Kate, and stories about bees and beads, belong to local tradition and myth. But evidently there was a witch called Nicneven, or something like that, at Monzie in the late sixteenth century. George F. Black, in *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland 1510–1727* assigns her a date of '*c.* 1615', but gives no reason. He rejects Porteous' 1563 as due to confusion with Nic Neville of St Andrews in 1569, rather oddly, as Porteous shows no sign of having heard of Nic Neville. There are no extant records for the parishes of Monzie or Crieff as early as this, and the records of the Presbytery of Auchterarder start in 1668. No corresponding person, or story, appears in Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials* (1833).

Many other puzzles remain: not least Montgomery's 'Kait of Creif'. He appears to distinguish her, if he is indeed referring to a person, from Nicneven. Did he in fact, as Porteous suggests (p. 50) write 'Skait of Creif'—a mound about half a mile south of the town where courts were anciently held—and if so, why? Is Scott (and by implication, Sharpe) right in suggesting that Nicneven was a nickname given to several witches? Why do Cromek and Jamieson identify Nicneven with the Gyrecarlin? Was Nicneven of Monzie burnt at St Andrews in 1569, or was the chronicler of the reign of James VI perhaps slightly muddled, so that the Regent really attended the execution of Paris and Stewart at St Andrews, and the execution of a witch called Nicneven/Nic Neville elsewhere on the same journey? The repetition of 'Sanctandrois' in the passage does read a little oddly. If Nicneven of Monzie was burnt at Crieff, when did this occur, and with which Graeme of Inchbrakie was the story originally connected? If any weight can be put on the story of the dinner-party at Dunning, the Graeme concerned could be George, 2nd of Inchbrakie, served heir to his father in 1555 and died 1576, whose father-in-law was Andrew Rollo of Dunning, 6th of Duncrub. George's son Patrick, who died in 1635, acquired Monzie in 1613, having married its heiress as his second wife, and it went to their son. Miss Graeme says that it was sold again in 1666 to Colin Campbell,[4] another descendant of George Graeme 2nd of Inchbrakie. The point about these events is that either could give rise to a *retrospective* story about a prophecy concerning the failure of lineal heirs. I do not think we need worry about the fork that figures incidentally in the tale. Such an implement is supposed to have been unknown in sixteenth-century Britain, but the casual mention of one is entirely consonant with the late date of the extant versions of the story.

Cromek's evidence, since it relates to the Galloway area, is very difficult to fit into the picture, except on the assumption that there was indeed a generalised tradition. Such oral tradition is notoriously difficult to pin down. Scott may have drawn on his own knowledge of folk-lore in his portrait of 'Mother Nicneven', but he does not say so, and his note could well be derived from Jamieson and Cromek: the wording is very reminiscent of Jamieson's.

There is no reference in the admittedly scanty records of Scottish witch trials to Nicneven as a ritual nickname used by any real witches, still less to any chief witch or witch goddess so called. And it is not at all clear what significance attached to the name

Hecate in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary sources like Montgomery's *Flyting* and *Macbeth*.

If Nicneven was once pre-eminent among Scottish witches, she is so no longer. Neither Margaret Murray nor Elliot Rose (1962) even mentions her. Dalyell's *Darker Superstitions* is in the bibliography to *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Murray 1921), but Margaret Murray has no reference to the Brughe case.[5]

For the historian, the sole piece of relatively solid fact, vouched for by some kind of first-hand evidence, is that there was at least one famous witch named Nicneven before the date of Montgomery's poem. The rest, in the absence of any further documentary evidence, remains one of the minor mare's nests of Scottish history.

## NOTES

1   'NICNEVIN, *prop. n.* Also *Nicnevin* [sic]. The name of a witch well-known in medieval Sc. folklore' (*Scottish National Dictionary*. Ed. David Murison. Edinburgh 1965).

2   'NICNEVEN, *s.* A name given to the Scottish *Hecate* or mother-witch; also called the *Gyrecarlin* . . .' (Jamieson 1808).

3   This part of the prophecy failed to work in the case of George, who predeceased his father the 7th Laird in 1737.

4   A James Campbell of Monzie was concerned in another local case of witchcraft in 1683 (Law 1818: lxxxii–lxxxiii).

5   Oddly, since it has a high frequency rate among the names she lists, Miss Murray does not include Katherine in the eight personal names that she suggests, rather implausibly, were especially favoured by witches (p. 255). Had she done so, she might have noted that Hecate was a disyllable in Shakespeare, and derived the witch name Kate from Hecate, not Katherine. I throw in this suggestion as a not-unworthy parallel to her connection of *Alison* and *Marion* with a British Goddess called Anna!

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# A Reconsideration of the Place-Names in 'Thomas the Rhymer'

E. B. LYLE

The four variants of 'Thomas the Rhymer' (Child 37) which derive from the Scottish Border[1] contain three definite place-names: *Huntlie bank/banks, the Eildon tree,* and *Farnalie.* There is no doubt that the setting of the ballad is the Eildon Hills in Roxburghshire, but the nineteenth-century identification of the places mentioned are open to question.

The name that can be located with the greatest degree of certainty at present is the least well known, Farnalie, which occurs only in Child's variant *D.* This variant ends with the Queen of Elfland's parting words to Thomas:

> 'Gin ere ye want to see me again,
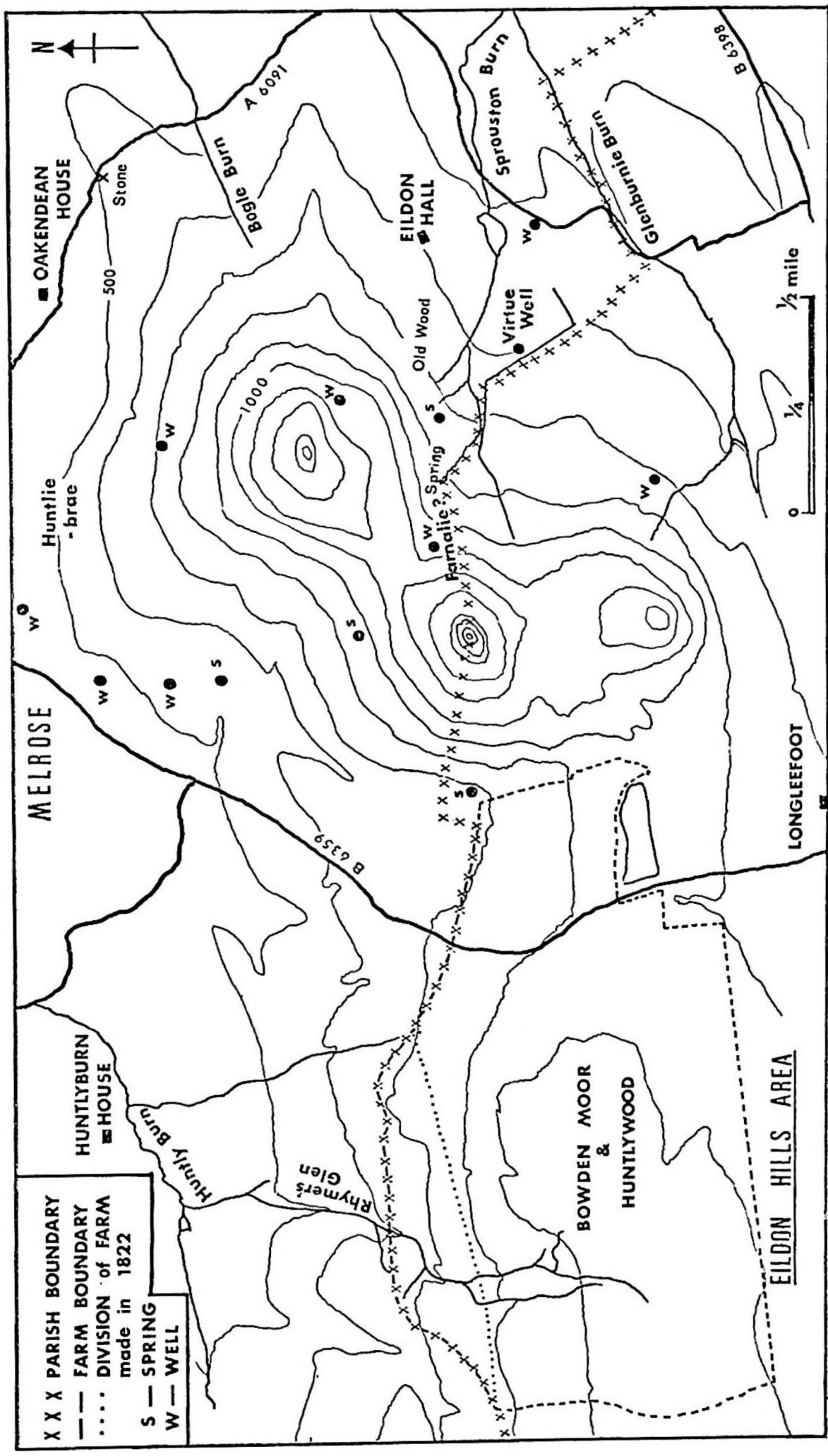>     Gang to the bonny banks o Farnalie.'

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Scott quoted these lines in the second edition of his *Minstrelsy* (Scott 1803:321), and there connected Farnalie with Fairnalie in Selkirkshire (Royal Commission 1957:43-5). He had apparently not noticed, in relation to this occurrence of the name, a *farnileie* on the Eildon Hills which appears in a document drawn up in 1208 after the settlement of a dispute about land-ownership between the monasteries of Melrose and Kelso.[2] Since the boundary described in this document has remained the southern boundary of the parish of Melrose,[3] it is possible to pin down the location of *farnileie*, which is presumably to be equated with the *Farnalie* of the ballad. The relevant section of the document runs:

> ... *et* sic *uersus* north *usque* in akedene. *et* sic ascendendo *usque* ad *crucem* iux*ta* uiride fossatu*m*. *et* *per* uiride fossatu*m* *usque* ad *crucem* que sita *est* super sprowesdene. *et* sic ascendendo *usque* ad fonte*m* iux*ta* albam spinam. sic*ut* riuulus ei*us*dem fontis descendit. Et sic p*er* farnileie usq*ue* ad salices. *et* cruces. *et* fossas q*ue* *facte* sunt i*n* medio mo*n*te usq*ue* ad su*m*mitate*m* ei*us*dem mo*n*tis.

> ... and then northwards to *akedene*, and then upwards to the cross beside the green ditch, and by the green ditch to the cross which is placed above *sprowesdene*, and then upwards to the spring beside the white thorn, as the stream comes down from that spring. And then by *farnileie* to the willows, and the crosses, and the ditches which were made in the middle hill to the summit of that hill.

The name *akedene* is at first puzzling, for the only comparable name on modern maps is Oakendean House to the north-east of the hills, well away from the boundary, but a charter granted by Robert, Earl of Roxburghe, to the feuars of Bowden in 1607, indicates that Glenburnie Burn was then called *Ekidean burn* (Jeffrey 1864:52). As shown on the accompanying map, the boundary from east to west first runs in a north-westerly direction to meet Glenburnie Burn (*uersus north in akedene*) and then goes up (*ascendendo*) along Glenburnie Burn. The boundary turns northwards again, and then follows a stream up to its source (*ascendendo usque ad fontem iuxta albam spinam. sicut riuulus eiusdem fontis descendit*). This is apparently at the point marked *spring* on the map, for this is the only source of a stream on the boundary line in this area. To the west, in the direction of the summit of the middle hill, lay *farnileie*, which reached *usque ad salices*, i.e. presumably before the point where the middle hill rises as a distinct cone, for willows are not likely to have grown on its steep slope.

Modern maps are again confusing to an attempt to locate *Huntlie banks, Huntlie bank*, or *the Huntlie bank*, as the place is named in the opening of variants *B, C* and *E*, for the name Huntlyburn House to the north-west of the Eildon Hills derives from Scott who re-named what had been called Toftfield when he bought the property (Lockhart 1837:82). He also called Dick's Cleugh the Rhymer's Glen (Grierson 1932-7, IV:539; Parsons 1964:95-8), and pointed out some place in this region as *Huntley Bank* (Irving 1835:63, 95). However, in a letter to David Laing, Scott remarked, 'There is another

Map of the Eildon Hills area, adapted from O.S. 1 : 25,000.

EILDON HILLS AREA

MELROSE

OAKENDEAN HOUSE

× Stone

Bogle Burn

A 6091

500

1000

Huntlie -brae

W

W

W

W

W

S

W

S

W Spring
Farnalie ?

S

S

EILDON HALL

Old Wood

Virtue Well

W

S

W

Sprouston Burn

Glenburnie Burn

B 6398

LONGLEEFOOT

B 6359

Huntly Burn

Rhymer's Glen

HUNTLYBURN HOUSE

BOWDEN MOOR & HUNTLYWOOD

N

0    ¼    ½ mile

X X X PARISH BOUNDARY
—— FARM BOUNDARY
· · · DIVISION of FARM made in 1822
S — SPRING
W — WELL
■ HOUSE

Huntly-Bank on the Eldon Hills nearer to the Eldon tree than mine. But I am determind
mine is the right one. It is but fair to mention this though Huntlywood is the name of
the farm seventy acres of which belong to me' (Grierson 1932–7, VII:277). Scott owned
'68 acres 3 roods & 30 poles or thereby' of 'the lands of Bowden Muir and Huntly-
wood',[4] and it appears that 'his' Huntly-Bank was evolved from the name Huntlywood,
which is found as early as 1606 in *Inquisitionum Retornatorum Abbreviatio* (III) where
there is an entry for 24 April concerning *Halydene cum manerie et Huntliewood infra
baroniam de Boldane* [*i.e.* Bowden]. To the south of the section of the estate of Abbotsford
referred to by Scott is the property which now bears the name of Bowden Moor,
but which was formerly called 'the farm and lands of Bowden Moor and Huntlywood'.[5]
The map shows the extent of the lands of Bowden Moor and Huntlywood before the
transaction in 1822 by which Scott received part of the property.

The place referred to by Scott as 'another Huntly-Bank' was actually called Huntlie-
brae. It is mentioned by John Bower in the second edition of his *Description of the
Abbeys of Melrose, and Old Melrose, with their traditions:* 'At the foot of Eildon hills,
above Melrose, is a place called Huntlie-brae, where Thomas the Rhymer and the Queen
of Fairies frequently met, according to tradition' (Bower 1822:125). The use of *Huntlie-
brae*, not *Huntlie bank*, indicates that this was a local name independent of the ballad or
of enquiries about the ballad. When Bower says 'according to tradition', however,
he is quite probably speaking of the story of the traditional ballad (possibly as amplified
by Scott), and not of an independent topographical legend. The position of Huntlie-
brae on the map is that pointed out in 1875 by James Curle of Melrose, who had heard
the place-name from his father (Murray 1875: lii, n.1).

The occurrence of two *Huntly* names, Huntlywood and Huntlie-brae, about a mile
and a half apart to the west and north of the Eildon Hills suggests that the area may
have been known as Huntly.[6] If so, *Huntlie bank* or *banks* may have been anywhere
within it, or *Huntlie banks* may have been the general name for the whole region. The
plural *Huntlie banks* is found only in variant *B* of the ballad, but it is the normal form
of the name in the fourteenth-century romance-prophecy *Thomas of Erceldoune* to which
the ballad is related (Murray 1875: lines 28 and 679).

The Eildon tree, which is mentioned in all four of the Scottish Border variants,
is named also in *Thomas of Erceldoune* (Murray 1875: *e.g.* line 84), and there is no likeli-
hood of finding on the Eildon Hills at the present day a tree which was referred to in
the fourteenth century. A stone beside the A 6091 is said to mark its site,[7] and again
Scott was the first investigator to comment on the identification: 'The Eildon Tree,
from beneath the shade of which [Thomas] delivered his prophecies, now no longer
exists; but the spot is marked by a large stone, called Eildon Tree Stone. A neighbouring
rivulet takes the name of Bogle Burn, (Goblin Brook) from the Rhymer's supernatural
visitants' (Scott 1802:249). Scott uses the name Bogle Burn as supportive evidence for
the site of the tree but the word *bogle*, as Scott shows by his translation *goblin*, could
not have been applied to the Queen of Elfland, the only 'supernatural visitant' associated

with Thomas. John Bower does not refer to the Eildon tree by name but says only, 'A little to the east of [Huntlie-brae] is the trysting-tree stone' (Bower 1822:125). The stone clearly marked the site of a trysting-tree, but it seems possible that a trysting-tree on the slope of the Eildon Hills, well known because it stood by the roadside and was within easy reach of the town of Melrose, would be identified as the Eildon tree even if there were no long-standing tradition to this effect. Scott associated the Eildon tree with the delivery of Thomas's prophecies, and its name may have been familiar to those who lived in its vicinity not so much through the ballad as through the current prophecy quoted by Scott (Scott 1802:276):

> At Eildon tree if you shall be,
> A brigg ower Tweed you there may see.

Since the evidence for the accepted site of the Eildon tree is rather thin, other traditions about trees should not be excluded from consideration. It was recorded in 1875 that 'the late James Williamson of Newstead' pointed out a spot 'a quarter of a mile higher up the base of the hill' as the site of the Eildon tree (Murray 1875: l, n. 2). There is an Old Wood to the west of Eildon Hall, and James Hogg, who in general drew on traditional material (Simpson 1962:64, 116), has a fairy transformation in 'The Hunt of Eildon' take place at a tree above Eildon Hall which he calls the Old Moss Thorn (Hogg 1837:13–15).

It seems unlikely that a tree would have been given the prominence of being called the Eildon tree unless the spot on which it grew had associations going back to pagan times. Anne Ross lists among the holy places of the Celts 'individual trees especially in proximity to grave mounds or sacred springs' (Ross 1967:40, 20–52), and it may be that the more lasting mounds and springs will suggest the whereabouts of the Eildon tree. There is a cairn on Eildon Mid Hill (Royal Commission 1956:70), and there are a number of wells and springs (marked *W* and *S* on the map) in the region of the hills. There are two records that wells on the Eildon Hills were considered therapeutic, and are therefore likely to have been of religious significance at an earlier period. Adam Milne wrote in 1743 that '*Dunstan's* and *Eldun* Wells are still made use of by the Country People as a sovereign Remedy against Cholicks' (Milne 1743:44–5), and John Bower remarked that the wells about Eildon Hall 'have been much frequented as medicinal, being a sovereign remedy against any leprous disorder' (Bower 1822:121–2). The one called Virtue Well was clearly among those considered to have healing powers. The spring on the boundary at the edge of Farnalie had a white thorn growing by it in 1208 and it is possible that this was the Eildon tree referred to in the fourteenth century. Other springs and wells in the same neighbourhood may also be within the bounds of the area called Farnalie.

There may be one further place-name in the ballad. In variant *E*, the Queen of Elfland is said to come riding down by *the lang lee* [8] and the romance-prophecy at the same point speaks of *a longe lee* (Murray 1875:line 36, Thornton MS.). This is probably

not a proper name, but it may be worth drawing attention to the Longleefoot marked on the map to the south-west of the Eildons.

## NOTES

1   The four Scottish Border variants are Child *B*, part of *C*, *D* and *E*. *B* is from a collection made 'in the Counties of Berwick, Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles'.   The other three are known to derive from places near the Eildon Hills: the local references in *C* from near Earlston (4 miles to the north), *D* from Kelso (11 miles to the east), and *E* from Longnewton (3 miles to the south). Quotations are from Child's texts (Child 1882–98, I:324–6, IV:454–5).

2   Scott knew that part of the boundary described in this document (Innes 1837:134–6) was that of Abbotsford (Morton 1832:220). The section quoted here is transcribed from the original document in the Scottish Record Office, GD.55/145. Abbreviations are expanded in italics.

3   'The present limits of the parish [of Melrose] . . . correspond with the boundaries of the earliest possessions of the monastery' (Innes 1851:284). I am indebted to Dr W. F. H. Nicolaisen for drawing my attention to this source of information.

4   Scott's acquisition of this land was recorded on 9 December 1822 (Scottish Record Office, P.R. 73, fol. 52).

5   This wording occurs in a lease, dated 1 June, 1888, between 'Henry Seton Karr Esq. of Kippielaw, M.P. and Mr George Heard of the farm and lands of Bowden Moor and Huntlywood' which is in the office of Curle, Muir & Co., Solicitors, Royal Bank Chambers, Melrose. I am much indebted to Mr J. A. Harris for locating this lease and a plan of the Karr property which showed the farm boundary.

6   There is a region of this name about ten miles to the south-west of the Eildons, which stretches for over two miles from Huntly Clints, Inner Huntly, Huntly Cleugh and Huntly Burn, by Huntly Hill, Huntly Covert, and Huntly Rig to Outer Huntly (O.S. 249415–226441). In the Eildon Hills area, the names Huntly Burn and Huntley Wood 'a small plantation which stood on the hill side above Chiefswood' near Huntlyburn House (Murray 1875:lii) seem to be derived from Scott, as otherwise Scott would presumably have mentioned them in his letter to Laing (Grierson 1932–7, VII:277).

7   Murray (1875:l–li) discusses the site, which is marked on O.S. map, scale 6 inches to 1 mile, as *Eildontree Stone Site of Trysting Tree* (336565). There is an inscription at the site.

8   The manuscript reading (NLS MS. 877, fol. 177r) is *the Lang-lee*, but no importance can be attached to the use of the capital letter since the writer, Mrs Christiana Greenwood, frequently began common nouns with capitals.

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# The Date of Pont's Survey and its Background

B. R. S. MEGAW

After more than sixty years, the current renewal of serious interest in the earliest survey of Scotland—of which many of the original manuscript drafts survive in the National Library of Scotland—is indeed welcome. Following the note in the last issue of *Scottish Studies* (Kinniburgh 1968:187–9) two points which escaped the admirable Caleb Cash (1901, 1907) may be mentioned briefly.

Unknown to Cash, a further manuscript sheet of Pont drafts had survived in the Advocates' Library; but this was not rediscovered until after 1925, when it also was deposited with those already in the National Library. Although both sides of this sheet are partially obscured by later jottings (evidently by Pont himself), the map

drafts are of much interest. One side bears the only surviving fragment of the original survey of the Hebrides (part of South Uist)—the rest being known only from the plates engraved in Holland two generations later, for Blaeu's Atlas of 1654. The other side bears an early version of part of Pont's map of Lothian—the only one of his maps to be engraved apparently during his life-time. Detailed investigations of both sides of this sheet are under way.

Apart from the welcome (but rather vague) statement in a letter of Robert Gordon of Straloch, dated 24 January 1648, that Pont 'unaided, undertook this work more than forty years ago'—*i.e.* before 1608—Cash (1901:404-10) was unable to trace any other reference to the period at which the survey was made. As one of the drawings (of Clydesdale) bore the date 'September and October 1596', Cash put forward the hypothesis that Pont's survey might be assigned to the 'blank' period of his life, between graduation at St Andrew's, in 1584, and appointment as minister of Dunnet, in Caithness, in 1601. This was truly an inspired guess, for Cash was quite unaware that the clue he sought had already been printed—in the *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland 1596-1597* (C.S.P.I. 1893:40). Nor does it seem to have been noticed since in any other study of the subject. Writing from Dublin to Sir Robert Cecil in London, on 20th July, 1596, Dionise Campbell (then Dean of Limerick, but a member of the Argyll family) reported thus, as summarised in the calendar of the original letter:

> Has lately returned into Ireland. The success of his [dis]course held with the Earl of Argyle. Is informed that one Pont, who has compassed the whole of Scotland, purposes to set forth a perfect description of that land. Has ordered a copy for Sir Robert upon the first edition . . . Left the Earl very well affected to Her Majesty's service, without prejudice of his loyalty and honour.

The Dean's meeting in Scotland with the young Earl of Argyll (which had secured a promise of armed aid against the 'rebel' O'Neill) had taken place during April 1596 (C.S.P.Sc. 1858:710). Thus we are entitled to assume that by the summer of 1596, Pont had virtually completed his basic field-surveys, and was already accepting orders for his intended atlas of the counties of Scotland—almost sixty years before its eventual posthumous appearance. Perhaps the Clydesdale drawing, of the autumn of the same year, was dated just because it marked the end of his truly astonishing labours, so vividly described by Gordon of Straloch (Cash 1901:408-10). In view of this fresh chronological evidence, however, Mr Kinniburgh's description of Straloch as 'Pont's collaborator' clearly goes too far; Straloch only graduated two years later—and then continued his studies in Paris until September 1600, when he returned to Scotland at the age of about twenty.

Pont's work was not 'supported by the favour and assistance of any person of high rank', as Straloch afterwards related, and in the absence of other evidence one can only assume that his father, Rev. Robert Pont, himself a Lord of Session and (as Provost of Edinburgh's Trinity College) the provider of his son's source of income, was the prime mover behind the project for an atlas of Scotland. The model undoubtedly was Saxton's

Atlas of England and Wales, completed in 1579—the first of its kind for the British Isles—financed by Seckford, and supported by the Queen herself. Saxton's first plates were engraved in 1574, and it may be no mere coincidence that this was the very year in which the young Pont received his first grant of an income from Trinity College lands. However that may be, the resemblance of Pont's work to that of Saxton extends even to details of style and selection of map-symbols. Although much of Pont's manuscript work looks confused and rough, one must always recall that, in an immensely difficult terrain, he had none of Saxton's advantages; and much of England had been surveyed before Saxton began. It is also probable that the Pont drawings that have survived are only his rough drafts, and that the fair copies never returned from the Dutch printing-house.

Regarding Pont's technical methods, Mr Kinniburgh is undoubtedly right to urge closer study of his manuscripts maps. In this respect (at least) Pont has proved in the end more fortunate than Saxton, none of whose original county maps have survived to our day. Moreover, light is also thrown on Pont's working methods by the very considerable body of what are evidently his field notes preserved by the Gordons, and published by Sir Arthur Mitchell (1906–8:2, 144–92, 509–613), though these must be used with discretion since changes and additions were made in the course of their transcription. Perhaps the main technical question is whether Pont used triangulation methods in his work? At first sight this may not seem very likely, but it is now established that already 'by Saxton's time the principle of triangulation was becoming known in England, and instruments for angular measurement were being made by London craftsmen. This enabled larger areas, such as counties, to be surveyed more rapidly and more accurately' (Bagrow 1964:165).

Lest it be thought that Pont's pioneer status in Scottish cartography might be explained by descent from a Da Ponte 'nobleman of Venice', the chronological impossibility of this alleged pedigree was long ago exposed (Wodrow 1834, 1:504). Moreover, right up to the Reformation his father bore the entirely native surname of Kinpont (variant, Kilpont), inherited from medieval forbears who owned the West Lothian estate of Kenpunt (Black 1946: 404). What ancestry could be more fitting for one whose work has still so much to offer to the study of the place-names of his country?

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## POSTSCRIPT

Just after this note was sent to the printer, two valuable additions to our understanding of the Pont MS. maps appeared in the December 1968 part of the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 84 (1968). Mr Jeffrey C. Stone's 'Evaluation of the "Nidisdaile" Manuscript Map by Timothy Pont' (S.G.M. 1968:160–171) is a model for further local studies based on the collection of thirty-five manuscript drafts attributed to Pont and now preserved in the National Library of Scotland. The article by Messrs D. G. Moir and R. A. Skelton (1968:149–159), based partly on the Blaeu-Scotstarvit correspondence discovered in the N.L.S. in 1967, throws new light on the history of Pont's maps and the preparation of Blaeu's printed Atlas of 1654.

B.R.S.M.