

PLACE-NAMES
OF
ROSS AND CROMARTY

BY
W. J. WATSON
M.A., ABEED. ; B.A., OXON.
RECTOR OF INVERNESS ROYAL ACADEMY

INVERNESS
THE NORTHERN COUNTIES PRINTING AND PUBLISHING
COMPANY, LIMITED
EDINBURGH : NORMAN MACLEOD, 25 GEORGE IV. BRIDGE
LONDON : DAVID NUTT, 57-59 LONGACRE

1904

PLACE-NAMES OF ROSS AND CROMARTY.

EDDERTON.

Edderton—Ederthayn 1275; Eddirtane 1532; Eddirthane 1561; G. Eadardan, with accent on eadar. The traditional explanation is eadar-dùn, between forts. In confirmation of this view may be adduced the various brochs referred to below and the hill fort of Strathrory. The name applies especially to the part near the old church, now the U.F. Church, which stands on the left bank of Edderton Burn, and it would seem that the old name for the district as a whole was Westray; cf. below 'Dachynbeg in Westray' and Blaeu's Dunivastra.

An luachar mhòr—'The big rashes' (rushes), a large swampy tract of moor.

Cnoc an t-sabhail—Barn-hill; in the face of it, above Raanich, is *clach meadhon latha*, mid-day stone. There are two stones, some distance apart, and which of the two is the real mid-day stone is hard to say. The position is such that the sun shines on them about noon.

Raanich—G. an ràthanaich; the root is rath, a circular enclosure or fort, the rest being extensions (-n-ach), meaning 'place of raths.' South of Raanich is *baile nam fuaran*, well-town.

Ramore—G. an ràth mòr, the great rath. These raths were, probably, simply farm-houses fortified for security in troublous times. Behind Ramore is *an linne bhreac*, the dappled pool. Near it is **Galanaich**, from gallan, a standing-stone. There is a striking perched block not far off; cf. Gallanaich, Argyll; Achagallon in Arran.

An t-uisge dubh—Black water.

Gadha nan damh (O.S.M. Casandamff)—Stags' pass.

Gluich (Meikle and Little)—G. an glaothaich; Glaothaich àrd agus Glaothaich iosal; from glaoth, glue, E. Ir. glaed, with -ach suffix; hence the soft, sticky, miry place, which applies well to the lower Gluich. There is another Gluich in Altas, Sutherland, also wet, and a third in Glenconvinth. Local tradition ascribes the name to the 'glaothaich' or lamentation of the Edderton women on occasion of a battle with the Danes, and a similar origin is assigned to Raanich (*bha iad a' rànaid an sin*).

Bailecharn—G. beul-atha chàrn, ford-mouth of the cairns, a ford on the Edderton Burn, above *Eas an tairhh*, the bull's waterfall, which latter is reputed to be the haunt of a tarbh-uisge, water-bull.

Inchintaury—The Gaelic hesitates between innis an t-samhraidh and innis an t-sea'raigh, but the latter seems to be the common local form, probably for seann ruigh, old shieling. Innis an t-samhraidh means summer-mead, *i.e.*, a grassy meadow on which cows grazed in summer.

Rhibreac—G. an ruigh breac, the dappled slope.

Bogrow—G. am bogaradh, a derivative of bog, soft, wet—wet place; it is a soft place by the water side. Also *leathad a' bhogaraidh*, broad slope of the soft place. In 1634 appears on record (Reg. Mag. Sig.) 'magnus limes lapideus vocatus Clachnabogarie,' the great march stone called, etc., to the east of Edderton Burn. The stone is still there, and known by the same name, but it is no longer a march stone, the burn being now the march.

Cambuscurrie—G. camus-curaidh, bay of the curach, coracle; possibly currach, marsh. The Gaelic has certainly been affected by the modern English form. Locally said to have been the landing place of Curry or Carius (v. N. Stat. Acc), the Danish prince whose prowess caused the 'glaodhaich' and 'rànail' above referred to. Cf. Cambuschurich on Lochtayside.

Carri Blair—G. blàr a' charaidh; the farm-stead is bail' a charaidh; caraidh means 'grave-plot.' Cf. clach 'charaidh, the name of the fine sculptured stone at Shandwick, Nigg (see Nigg). There is a sculptured stone on Carri Blair also, still standing and depicted in Dr Stuart's 'Sculptured Stones of Scotland,' near which ancient graves have been excavated. According to local tradition, this stone marks the grave of Carius referred to above.

Edderton Farm—G. baile na foitheachan (final 'a' open). The formation of 'foitheachan' seems parallel with that of Guisachan, etc., and suggests as the base 'faidh,' a beech, which in Scottish Gaelic is 'faidhbhile,' beech-tree. The name would thus mean Place of beeches.

Balleigh—Ballinleich 1550, Ballinleich, *alias* Litchstoune 1666; G. bail' an ligh (also lighich), Leech's or physician's town. Locally said to have been the place where the wounded were treated after the battle of Carri Blair.

Ardmore—G. an t-ard mòr, great promontory.

Rudha nan Sgarbh—Cormorants' point; here is a large round cairn, '*càrn màthaidh*,' where mathaidh is perhaps a proper name, near *loch nan tunnag*, duck loch.

Requill—G. ruigh Dhùghaill, Dugald's slope.

Pollagarry—G. poll a' ghearraidh, pool of the 'gearraidh.' There is no pool here now, but there was once, according to local evidence, a small loch. Gearraidh is Norse gerði, a fenced field, borrowed, very common in Lewis, and meaning the strip of land between machair and monadh, plain and upland moor.

Garbad—G. an garbh-bad, the rough chump; also, coille a' gharbh-bhaid, Garbad wood.

Meikle and Little Daan—G. Dathan mhòr and Dathan bhig; ‘Dachynbeg in Vestray’ was granted circ. 1350 by Hugh of Ross to his armiger, William Marescal; Daane 1429; Little Dovane 1578. These forms may possibly point to its being a diminutive of ‘dabhach,’ the old Celtic measure of land, and at the Reformation Dathan Meikle was three-fourths of a davach, and Dathan Lytle one-fourth—a davach in all. The place, however, stands at the confluence of two streams, and as there is an O. Ir. word ‘an,’ water, the name may really be dà-an, two waters. The joint stream is called the Daan burn, and the traditional explanation of Daan is da-àthan, two fords, which is quite possibly right. Near Daan is *Torr a’ bhil*, edgehill. Also, ‘*an dòbhran*,’ which seems to be a derivative of O.G. dobur, water, meaning ‘the wet place.’

Balblair—G. bail’ a’ bhlair, plain-town; near it is ‘*an ruigh bhreac*,’ spotted slope; and east of it, ‘*leac an duine*,’ man’s flat stone; and ‘*ard mhanaidh*,’ monk’s point.

Little and Meikle Dallas—Doles 1560; G. Dalais mhòr and Dalais bhig. It is never used with the article. The old form, as compared with the modern Gaelic, shows the common transition from ‘o’ to ‘a’; cf. Culboky, G. cul-bhàicidh; -ais is the Pictish ending seen in Allt-ais, etc. (v. Introd.), and the first syllable is to be equated with ‘dol’ in dolmen, used in place-names in the sense of ‘plateau.’ Dallas is thus a Pictish word, meaning ‘place of the plateau,’ which describes its situation ; cf. Dallas, Elgin; perhaps also Dalkeith.

Dounie—from dùn, fort.

Hilton—G. Bail’ a’ chnuic.

Craigroy—a chreag ruadh, red rock.

Cartomie—G. càthar-tomaidh; càthar, a moss or bog, and torn, hillock; compounded on the same principle as Balaldie, etc. (v. Introd.)

Polinturk—G. poll an tuirc, boar’s pool.

Cnocan na goibhnidh—(O.S.M. Cnoc al na gamhainn), smithy-hillock, near Polinturk.

Muieblairie—Moyzeblary 1429. G. muigh-bhlàraidh, spotted plain; locative of magh, compounded with blàr, spotted, with the -idh ending so common in Easter Ross. Blar is not nearly so frequent in place-names as its synonyms riabhach. breac, ballach.

Alltnamain—G. allt na mèinn, burn of ore, with reference to its irony water. There are strong traces of iron in most of the Edderton burns and wells, and there are even said to have been iron-workings in Edderton burn.

Struie—G. an t-srùidh; rathad na Strùidh, the load from Aness to Bonar, which attains its highest point at Cnoc na Strùidh. Before railways this was the usual route

from the south, so John Munro of Creich in his 'Oran Ducha,' on leaving Glasgow to visit his native place, says—

O théid sinn, théid sinn le suigeart agus aoidh,
O théid sinn, théid sinn gu deónach,
O théid sinn, théid sinn thairis air an t-Srùidh
Gu muinntir ar daimh, is ar n-eòlais.

Strùidh appears to be best regarded as a contracted form of sruth-aidh, an extension of the root of sruth, stream ('t' euphonic). From the base of Cnoc na Strùidh streams flow in all directions; cf. Struy in Strathglass, which is also a place of streams. At *Lòn na Strùidh*, moist flat of Struie, *fuaran an òir*, a well strongly impregnated with iron, and reckoned to possess healing properties, but it has been insulted (*chaidh tàmailt a chur air*), and is not what it once was; so called from a gold ring having been lost in it in course of cleaning.

Lechanich—G. an leachanaich (Leachanaich àrd and L. iosal); locally interpreted as leth Choinnich, Kenneth's half, but the presence of the article does not countenance this. The place is a sloping hill-side, and the name is, most likely, Leacanaich (with 'c' aspirated), from leac, a sloping hill-face; v. Macbain's Dict., s.v. lethcheann.

Cnoclady—G. cnoc leathadaidh, hill of the 'leathad' or slope; formed like Bal-aldie. Near it is *badan binn* ('n) *eoin*, where 'eoin,' as in other cases where it occurs, seems to be the genitive singular of èun, bird.

Craggan—G. an creagan, the little rock; behind it is *allt na corrach*, burn of the places of corries; there are three small corries drained by it. Beyond this again, leading towards Fearn, is '*an cadha iosal*,' the low pass, over Struie.

Cnoc an liath bhaid—Hill of the grey clump.

Beinn clach an fheadain—Hill of the whistle stone or of the spout (of water).

Can Dubh—G. an càthar dubh, a hill; càthar, usually a moss or bog, is here used to mean 'a rough, broken surface.'

Cnoc Bad a' bhacaidh—Hill of the moss-clump.

Cnoc an Ruigh ruaidh—Hill of the red slope.

Chulash—A' chùlais, the recess.

Cnoc Thorcaill—Torquil's hill.

Cnoc 'Chlachain—Hill of the clachan, with reference to the Monastery of Fearn, the original site of which was not far off.

Meall ua siorramachd—(O.S.M. Cnoc Leathado na siorramachd)? Shire-hill, on the Kincardine boundary.

Beinn nan oighreagan—Hill of the cloud-berries; the usual plural is oighrean, implying a singular oighre, of which oighreag is diminutive.

Easter, Western, and Mid Fearn—Feàrn' àrd, Feàrn' iochdarach, literally High Fearn and Lower Fearn, and Feàrna meadhonach. Blaeu's Atlas has Faern Iera, Faern Meanach, Faern Oca; from Feàrna, alder. The Monastery of Fearn was originally founded 'near Kintarue, in Strathcharron' (Chron. of Earls of Ross), probably, therefore, at Wester Fearn, about 1225, and about twenty years later, in the founder's lifetime, 'for the more tranquillitie, peace and quietnes thereof translated' to the spot it still occupies, where it was called at first Nova Farina, New Fearn, then simply Fearn.

Allt Grùgaig—The little surly one, the burn of Wester Fearn.

According to the New Stat. Acc. (1840), "there is a complete chain of those round towers called Dunes surrounding this parish; none of them, however, in a state of even tolerable preservation. One of these, situated at Easter Fearn, and known by the name of Dune-Alliscaig (from Dùn-fair-loisgeadh, or the beacon watch-tower), was about fourteen feet in height within the last thirty years, and had vaults and a spiral staircase within the wall." It was destroyed for dykes, etc., about 1818. The site is still to be seen, and the name is still current in Gaelic as Dùn Alaisgaig. Falaisg, moor-burning, which seems hinted at in the derivation offered above, suits the phonetics exactly, but the word is probably Norse. Blaeu has it Dun Alliscaig. East of it he marks Dunivastra, *i.e.*, Dounie of Westray, now Dounie, where there are also the ruins of a broch still known as the 'càrn liath.' There is a third, nameless, at Lechanich, said to have been six or seven feet high, with chambers, within living memory. Càrn màthaidh, on Rudha nan sgarbh, may have been another.

There are no Norse names in Edderton, except the obsolete Westray, and possibly Dùn Alaisgaig.