

# Place-names of Ferindonald (Easter Ross)

## - A window into the past

An Interdisciplinary Project.

Scottish Cultural Studies Degree Course.

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## Contents

*Page:*

3	OVERVIEW
	METHODOLOGY
	INTRODUCTION
4	THE ANALYSIS OF PLACE-NAMES (AINMEAN ÀITE)
5	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
11	SCHOOL VISIT
13	SIX NAMES OF FERINDONALD
	Pelaig
	Katewell
	Balconie
	Swordale
	Cnoc a' Mhargaidh and Knockmartin
	Fyrish
23	CONCLUSION
24	Appendices
30	References

## **Overview**

An interdisciplinary study of selected place-names in one area of Easter Ross to investigate their Pictish, Norse, Gaelic and English origins/connections, their changes and modifications over time, and their links with evidence from material and folk culture. The study aims to show how careful study of local place-names can be a powerful way of illustrating local history.

## **Methodology**

- Collation and tabulation of local place-names; analysis and classification
- Reference to the local archaeological record
- Examination of local folklore and history
- Selection of 6 place-names for in-depth study
- Interviews with residents: pronunciation, understanding and other information
- Site visits and project diary
- Participation in ARCH Route-ways project in Evanton: Map study
- Interactive quiz and discussion with P7 pupils at Kiltearn Primary School

## **Introduction**

In discussing the phenomenology of landscape, Christopher Tilley reminds us that a sense of attachment to place is frequently derived from the stability of meanings associated with it (Tilley 1994). Place is both "internal" and "external" to the human subject, a personally embedded centre of meanings and a physical locus for action. The naming and identification of topographical features is crucial for the establishment and maintenance of their identity. Place-names are thus of vital significance because they transform the physical and geographical into something both historically and socially experienced. Naming in general bestows structure on a chaotic world, and further, place-names carry embedded within them narratives of their origin and meaning (cf. Nicolaisen 1984; Tilley 1994, 31-3) (Porter 1998).

In this study of the place-names of Ferindonald we consider to what extent such 'stabilities of meanings' exist today, and have existed over time.; also how the study and public discussion of place-names can serve as a powerful way of investigating and illustrating local historical connections; and thus of giving people today a greater sense of place.

## THE ANALYSIS OF PLACE-NAMES (AINMEAN ÀITE)

'Place-names provide us with evidence which is part linguistic, part historical and part socio-economic. In all cases they occur as a palimpsest (defined as 'a piece of writing material or manuscript on which later writing has been written over the effaced original writing' (Illustrated Oxford Dictionary 1998). These layers of onomastic material, like the palimpsest, are frequently frayed at the edges, contain substantial tears and holes, and are sometimes bonded together, so that interpretation is sometimes difficult' (Fraser 2003, 67).

The study of place-names, Professor W.J.Watson tells us, involves collections of facts and their interpretation - 'and if the interpretation is to be sound, the facts on which it is based must be accurate and adequate'. He sets out three kinds of data:

1. The names as they are now pronounced
2. Old written forms
3. Physical characteristics of the places denoted by the names  
(Watson, 1904, 1996, xxvii)

### 1. Pronunciation

In 1904 there existed, especially in **Easter Ross**, a 'sort of double nomenclature'; on the one hand the Anglified forms used by English speakers, and by Gaelic natives, too, when speaking English. These latter are the "official" forms which appear in the valuation Roll, the Post-Office Directory, and on the maps, and are often of considerable antiquity' (ibid xxvii).

'The practical value of modern English forms by themselves is small; at their best they fail to indicate the quantity or the quality of vowels, and often they have undergone changes that quite disguise the original' (ibid xxviii). By contrast, 'modern Gaelic forms of Gaelic names which have been handed down by unbroken tradition have undergone only such changes as occur regularly within the language; they are, in fact, Gaelic words, conforming to the rules of Gaelic phonetics, and form as good a starting point for the philologist as any other Gaelic words' (ibid xxviii).

As regards Norse, 'Gaelic has, on the whole, been wonderfully consistent in its treatment of the old Norse vowels and consonants'. Investigation of Norse names needs 'take careful account of the modern Gaelic forms. These forms are imitations, but they are only one degree removed from the original; the English forms are imitations of an imitation' (ibid xxviii).

Watson is less sure about how Pictish names 'have fared in Gaelic mouths', 'because practically no specimen of that language has come down to us.' He suggests, however, that 'there is no reason to suppose that they were treated differently from the Norse names'. In the cases of both Norse and Pictish, Watson suggests, 'there was a bilingual period, which gave Gaels ample time to become familiar with the names which they adopted from Pict and Norse' (ibid xxix).

## 2. Old Written Forms

In contrast to the situation in Ireland where names 'have been transmitted with great care from very ancient times by scribes who were masters of the language' ... in Scotland the great bulk of written forms do not predate the charters of the twelfth century and 'their authority is largely discounted by the fact they were written by scribes who knew no Gaelic, and consequently spelled at random.' The charter forms may be 'suggestive and helpful; as independent authorities they are unreliable' (ibid xxx).

The **Foulis Writs** provide the earliest written forms of many local names; by and large these have been anglicised – or at least written in the 'secretary hand' of Scots, 'to convey an approximation of the Gaelic sounds', as was the case with the important collection of verse from the classical Gaelic period, *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Ó Baoill 2010: 14).

Bridget Mackenzie reflects that the changes in spelling over time 'may be under the influence of incoming Scots speakers, or be map-names created by estate clerks. There is always a reason for a change' (1993, 2). Nicolaisen advises, however, to avoid the temptation of seeing the whole process of place-name stratification as an 'elaborate search for a Golden Age of naming, the further back the better .... the main point is that each stratum matters for its own sake and is not simply to be "dug" through in order to reach the lowest layer of names' (1993, 62).

## 3. Physical Characteristics

Given that names of places are usually descriptive, Watson stresses the value of on-the-ground inspections and comparisons. This allows one to differentiate between the numerous words for hill, to distinguish between a strath, a glen and a corrie; and it allows one to appreciate names which may have a metaphorical content such as *Meall an Tuirc*, Boar Hill, in Ferindonald (1904, 1986 xxxii).

### Further Guidelines

The theoretical old Indo-European language, from which Celtic branched off, had the q-sound/k<sup>u</sup>; Gaelic retained that sound until, it is thought, around 500 AD, when it was replaced by the /k/sound,

always written as *c* in Gaelic. The P-Celtic languages, by contrast, replaced the *k<sup>u</sup>* with a *p* (Ó Baoill 2010, 1).

Place-names seldom, if ever, appear in the nominative; they are usually in the dative or accusative (Watson 1904, 1986 xlv).

Bridget Mackenzie suggests that one try to apply common sense, while remembering that 'some place-names are baffling and no longer open to explanation because the evidence has been lost' (1993, 3).

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This area is a cultural and linguistic melting pot. 'From the evidence of place-names, it is clear that Pict, Norse and Gael laid down firm foundations of settlement. So we are in what was once a zone of conflict, as well as one of economic opportunity' (Ian Fraser 2003, 67). We proceed to consider historical evidence of settlement by the Picts, the Norse and the Gaels and their respective influence on local place-names.

### **Picts**

Ptolemy showed ten principal tribes inhabiting Scotland North of the Forth, with the Decantae in Easter Ross. In AD 565 King Bridei of the Picts was visited in the area of Inverness by Columba. The principal evidence of their presence, here as elsewhere, is in the carved stones, with both pre-Christian symbols and images along sometimes with Christian crosses, incised and in relief. The Tarbat peninsula is rich in such monuments and a few others stretch west to Strathpeffer. None currently stand in the area of Ferindonald itself, the closest being in Dingwall, and a copy of a symbol stone found at Nonikiln, by Alness, now lost, is lodged with the National Museum (Appendix 5). The recently excavated monastery of Tarbat points equally to an active Christian community of the Pictish era, which was the likely victim of at least one Viking raid (Carver 2008a).

Pictish place-name evidence is in relatively short supply. The Pictish *pett* was borrowed by Gaelic and treated as a Gaelic word, e.g. na Peit'chan, the places of Pits (Watson, xlvii). Pit names are commonest in Easter Ross. Pitglassie (Lea-town) is found in neighbouring Dingwall; none are evident in Ferindonald. The non-Gaelic termination *-ais* (open a), found only on Pictish ground, and referring to a proto-Celtic *vostis*, a dwelling, appears in Alness, G. Alanais, suggests Watson (xlix). Easter Ross has evidence of around 15 secondary river names ending in *-ie*. None are evident in Ferindonald but the River Averon is possibly of Pictish origin, one of a smaller group of the most important rivers, ending in *-n* (Watson

1904, 96: l). The river Peffery too is possibly a Pictish name (peofhair, from Pictish pevr, fair one - of a stream) (Cox 2010, 50); found also in Strathpeffer and Inbhir-pheofharan, the Gaelic name for Dingwall.

This study investigates two local names of possible Pictish origin: **Pelaig** and **Fyrish**.

### **Norse**

Myths and legends associated with the Norsemen are common in these parts, notably the stories of Danish Princes on the Tarbat peninsula (Watson 1904, Miller 1835). Torfaeus in 'Orcades' (ed.1866) is erroneously said by Macrae (1923) to have referred to a romance between the daughter of a Viking warrior and a Pictish chief from the slopes of Ben Wyvis. The legendary originator of the Clan Munro, Donald, son of Cathain, Prince of Fermanagh, reputedly received the lands between Dingwall and the River Averon (or Alness Water), henceforth known as Fearrainn Dòmhnuaill, Ferindonald, from King Malcolm in reward for assisting in repelling Danish invaders in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Mackenzie 1898, 6). (Danes should here be understood as a generic term to include Norsemen). The Munro clan went on to help King Alexander III of Scotland to defeat King Haakon of Norway at the Battle of Largs in 1263.

We gather from the Orkneyinga Saga that Earl Sigurd 'the Mighty' and Thorstein 'the Red' together conquered part of Moray and Ross and that Sigurd was killed by Mormaer of Ross Maelbrihte at Ekkialsbakki, understood to be the River Oykel (Crawford 1987, 57) - this in the late ninth century. The name Cyderhall, earlier known as Cydera and Syvardhoch, is taken to signify Sigurd's Howe (Mackenzie 1993), proving 'what appears to be a remarkable corroborative toponymic evidence for the location of Sigurd the Mighty's burial place' (Crawford 1987, 58). Earl Thorfinn (also 'The Mighty') is credited with chasing the Royal Army and conquering Sutherland and Ross (around 1030), defeating King Karl Hundison at Torfness, which is generally taken to be Tarbatness (Crawford 1993, 73), and may even be where Torf Einarr was the first Norseman to use turf as a building material, suggests Bridget Mackenzie (1992, pers. comm.). An alternative, though less likely, site of Knockbain/Knockfarrel is advanced by Macrae (1923) with the suggestion that King Malcolm was wounded in *Coil an Righ*, the King's Wood, below Knockbain Farm, Dingwall.

Dingwall itself (Dingwell 1227), on the western edge of Ferindonald, is of particular significance. Ian Fraser reflects that the Scandinavians left a large number of place-names in Ross and Cromarty but that only a few are indicative of permanent settlement, fewer still of habitation. Norse influence must

however have been considerable when we consider the presence of Dingwall from Old Norse (1983) - he accepts Watson's derivation from O.N. *Thing-völlr*, Field of the Thing, the Norse general court of justice (Watson, 93). Slightly further west, Scatwell too has been deemed to demonstrate Norse control, derived from *Skat völlr*, a place paying tribute or tax for the grazing privileges (Watson, 1904, 149). Crawford, however, has revised her own enthusiastic adoption of this derivation, given the absence of penny-lands or ounce-lands in Ross, instead positing a possible derivation from O.N. *scat*, tree or end and *vál*, cleared land (1995, 23).

There is a modest spread of Norse names in Easter Ross/Black Isle e.g. Shandwick, Alcaig, Assynt, Uig, Tarrel (cliffs), Geanies (cliffs), Bindal (sheaf-dale). Cadboll, Arbol and Culbo denote O.N. *bol*, farmstead names, indicating primary settlement. Tarradale, Swordale and Bindal denote *dalr*, dale names, possibly also denoting settlement (Nicolaisen 1986, 96). Sikkersund, first recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the area of Cromarty Bay may represent a safe anchorage, but Crawford reveals that the Scandinavian word 'sikker' is a late import and does not exist in Icelandic. She is tempted to link it instead with one of the earls Sigurd (1995, 27).

Mary MacDonald has tentatively identified some further local names of possible Old Norse origin: Garable, O.N. *garðar bol*; Knockbaxter (1621 Munro of Foulis Writs, no.171) O.N. *bakka staðir* or *Balka staðir*; Stonifuid (1611 Foulis Writs no. 152) O.N. *vorð*, a stone cairn used as a way mark or river crossing (Mackenzie 1986); Suanfuid - 1711 Foulis Writs (lands in Dingwall), O.N. *Sveinn vorð*; Skittercruke (1526 Foulis Writs no. 47), and a few others (MacDonald c. 1990).

Local **archaeological evidence** of the Norse presence is surprisingly thin on the ground. The National Museums hold a hoard of Viking-period silver from the kirkyard wall at Tarbat- 'the only material remains of Norse settlement to be recovered in Ross and Cromarty' (Alston 99, 30). A discovery in the 1880s of what was said to be 'Viking gold' near Nigg was unfortunately re-used in contemporary jewellery (Alston 99, 30). The burning of Tarbat Monastery suggests a Viking raid to Professor Carver (2008a).

In this local study of Ferindonald we focus on possible Norse names **Katewell**, **Swordale** and **Fyrish**. Ferindonald itself last appears on any map in 'Ferindonald Road' running through Strath Skiach, shown on the Tulloch Estate Map 1802.

## Gaels

St. Columba/Calum Cille established a monastery on Iona in 563AD. This gave the fledgling Irish colony and their language a prestige and influence which eventually succeeded in the Scots gaining complete ascendancy over the Kingdom of the Picts in material and linguistic terms. The language spread alongside the spread of Christianity; by the 11<sup>th</sup> century land of the Scots (those who spoke Gaelic) had come into being, governed by a Gaelic-speaking monarchy ruling through a Gaelic-speaking court (MacKinnon 1991, 24). This, however, was the high point and Gaelic then suffered an almost inexorable decline due to the relocation of the court to Edinburgh, the influence of the Normans and of Queen Margaret herself, and the introduction of burgh towns, whose merchants were anything but Gaelic speakers (Mackinnon 1991, 27-30). Later on Gaelic was purposefully discouraged through legislation such as the Statutes of Iona (1609), the initial work of the SSPCK and on to the Education Act of (1873) which failed to make any provision for Gaelic. After Culloden the Ferindonald area did not experience the same degree of repression as some other parts of the Highlands as the Munros had again demonstrated their loyalty to the Hanoverian crown. Nor did the area suffer the same wholesale translation of its place-names into English as happened in many parts of Ireland, as dramatised by Brian Friel in his *Translations* (1981):

*“My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King’s good English”* (Appendix 4).

In the 1790s Rev. Harry Robertson of Kiltarn wrote that ‘the language principally spoken here is the Gaelic, or Erse; but, of late years, the English begins to be more cultivated than formerly, and is understood by the generality of the inhabitants. .... The names of places seem in general to be of Gaelic origin’ (OSA). By the 1830s the language generally spoken is ‘an impure dialect of Gaelic, but it is rapidly losing ground. In the Highland parts it is better understood than English, but in the low parts and in Evantown, both languages are spoken indifferently’ (Rev. T. Munro, NSA 1839). The same minister suggests that the Gaelic schools themselves were partly the cause of people switching to English: as they became literate they found that most material was available in English.

As of 2011 the Evanton area can claim only a few native Gaelic speakers, one female in her eighties from the western mainland, several others from the islands. A few children attend Gaelic Medium Playgroup and School in Dingwall and there are a few adult learners (author included). The Church of Scotland runs a small project (an t-Oisean) to encourage the learning and appreciation of Gaelic.

For most people the rich heritage of Gaelic and other non-English place-names is largely inaccessible, except for those inquisitive enough to seek out Watson's excellent 'Place-names of Ross and Cromarty' (1904). The recent local bilingual road sign 'Tuath - a seachnadh drochaid seall' / 'North - avoiding low bridge' would be understood in the Gaelic by a tiny minority of locals.



Fig. 1 Moravia Scotiae provincia, ex Timothei Pont: Blaeu Atlas of Scotland, 1654

An analysis of the place-names of Ferindonald (Appendix 1) shows an overwhelming preponderance of names of Gaelic origin. In this study we look in-depth at names **Cnoc a' Mhargadaidh/ Knockmartin** and **Balconie**. These have been selected as examples of modification/anglicisation and for the interesting lines of enquiry that they suggest.

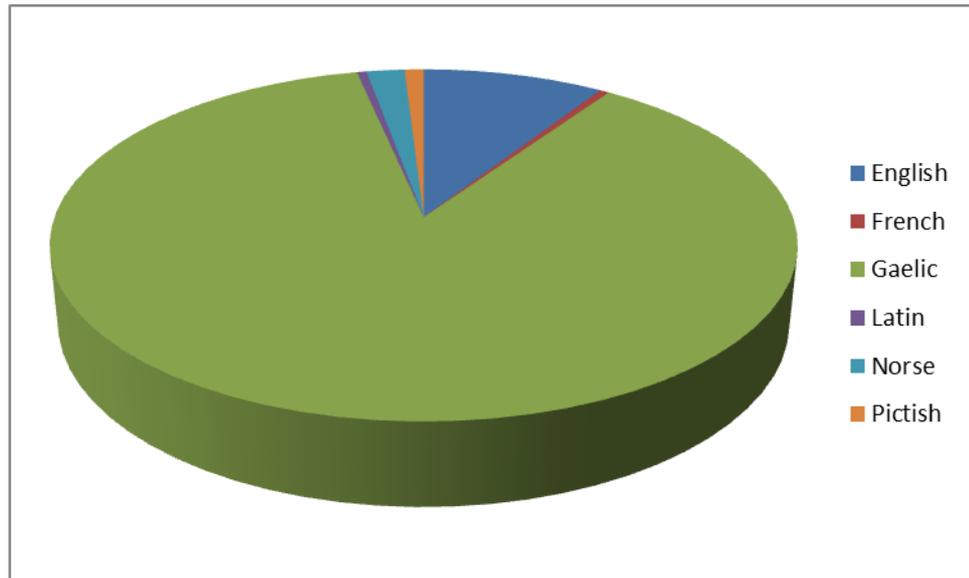


Fig. 2 - Analysis of Database of Place-names of Ferindonald

The database (appendix 1) lists some 212 names, of which around 200 are in current use. 178 are Gaelic, 26 English, with just a handful of possibly Norse or Pictish origin.

## SIX NAMES OF FERINDONALD

The following names have been selected for the insights that they offer into how places are named, their historical associations and how the names change over time.

1. Pelaig
2. Katewell
3. Balconie
4. Swordale
5. Cnoc a' Mhargadaidh and Knockmartin
6. Fyrish

### 1. Pelaig

**Context:** Pelaig (NW 564 624) lies on a south facing slope just above the Clyne Burn (Clon 1231; G. an Claon, the slope). There are known to be several springs in the location. 'It is said that old Donald Fraser spent half his life digging drains and relaying tiles' (K. Humphreys EOHP 15.10.91).

**Current Pronunciation:** Pronounced variously by local residents as (a) 'Pialaig' and (b) 'Pialick'; not usually as c) 'Pelaig'. Husband and wife in Pelaig Cottage use (b) and (a) respectively; Ken Humphreys of Pelaig Farm House uses (a), is keen to ensure 'correct' usage and is campaigning to get the name changed to the way he says it appears on the Foulis Estate papers c 200 years ago (Appendix 2, Recorded 2010).

**Early Versions:** Pellock 1583 – James V1 confirmed Charter of John Bishop of Ross to Robert Munro of Foulis of lands of Pellock, Lymlair. Pelloche 1582 (Appendix 1); Pellok (FW 110); Pellock 1583; Pallack 1589; Pallacke 1592; Pellock 1619; Pellok 1626; Pellock 1696; wadset lands of Pellock 1732/5/7/9, 1756,62,72.

**Etymology and Phonology:** Watson suggests G. Peallaig (1904), presumably from the pronunciation, rather than the written records, which do not appear to support the diphthong sound.

a) Watson rules out *peallaig*, rough garment – dimin. of *peal*, hairy skin, borrowed from Latin *pellis*, hide. 'The meaning is not satisfactory as a place-name' (1904, 96:.88).

Gaelic Dictionary: *Peall*, *pial* n.m. a hide, a skin; bunch of matted hair; a horse; v. clot, mat as wool.

Early Irish *pell*, *peall*, horse. Latin *pellis*, hide (Maclennan 1925, 1992).

b) Watson suggests the word may be non-Gaelic, as suggested by the initial 'p'. *Peallaidh* is a Pictish river-name, seen in Obair-pheallaidh, Aberfeldy. *Peallaidh* is used in Lewis as the name of a water-sprite (Watson 1904, 96: 88). C.f. German *Quell/e*, source of a river, spring; to well up, to stream, to pour (Harraps, 1982).

Watson indicates that 'no genuine Gaelic word contains a 'p', except as the result of some later combinations of consonants' (xlvii). This relates to Gaelic as a Goidelic *Q-Celtic* language, along with Irish and Manx, as distinct from Brythonic *P-Celtic* Welsh, Cornish and Breton (Ó Baoill 2010: 1).

## Discussion

Pelaig appears to be a unique name; no other 'Pel' names are found in Ross and Cromarty (Watson 1904).

'Not a single sentence written in the Pictish language survives', writes Nicolaisen (1976, 1986:149). He supports the view put forward by Kenneth Jackson as to the existence of two Pictish languages, one Celtic, the other non-Celtic. 'Pictland', he suggests, 'was one time larger than the area outlined by the scatter of so-called Pictish place-names' (1986: 150). Nicolaisen suggests, on the basis of Scottish river nomenclature e.g. Farrar, that some place-names are pre- or non-Indo European. 'When the Celts first arrived in Scotland, there were already people who, as immigrants from Europe centuries before them, had introduced an Indo-European language to the British Isles' (1976, 1986, 191).

## 2. Katewell

**Context:** NH595 655. Mainly flat area on south bank of R. Skiach/*Sgitheach* (hawthorn); downstream from Creag na Caillich (rock of the old woman).

**Early Mentions:** Catuell (Aug.9 1369): Charter by William Earl of Ross Lord of Sky to his beloved cousin ('dilecto consanguineo') Hugh de Munro, for his faithful service rendered and to be rendered during his time and also for the laudable service of his father lately killed in the defence of said earl, of the davoch of Catuell with le 'fortyre' which is called Badgarwy, under exception of mills and multures.... Said Hugh and his heirs rendering to said earl and his heirs **a pair of white gloves or one silver penny** at the said earl's castle of Dyngwale at Whitsunday, if asked, in the name of blench-farm for suits of court, ward and relief and marriage ..... (Foulis Writs no.6). (This has close resonance with the kingly tribute potentially required of the Munro chief, of one snowball from Foulis Hill/Ben Wyvis. It is said that when the Duke of Cumberland proceeded north against the Pretender after Culloden in 1746, the loyalist Munros sent him, as the royal representative, some snow to cool his wine (Mackenzie 1898, 15-6)).

Catuell 1369 (FW 6) ; Keatwell 1369 (Bishop of Ross); Cathoil 1453 (FW 19); Catoll 1479 (ER); Catell 1491 (FW 23); Katoll 1535/FW 50); Catoll 1539 (FW 53); Cattholl 1547/8 (FW 59); Catoll 1587 (FW 113); Cattoll 1590 FW 123); Katwall/Katuall 1590 (Pitcairn 195); Catoll mill 1590 (FW 127); Caitwall 1608 (FW 147); Keatoll 1608; Catwell 1617 (FW 163); the davach lands of Keatvell 1617 (FW 165); the mill at Catoll 1617 (FW 166); the mills of Catuell and Drummond 1629 (FW186); mill of Cattoll 1632 FW 193); Catwal 1632 (FW 192); Kertwall 1633 (FW 195); Catuell 1635 (FW 196); Katyuell 1643 (FW 208); Catuall 1653 (FW 217); Katwall 1658 (FW 219); Catuall 1668 (FW 240); Catuall 1671 (FW 297); Catuall with mills thereof 1668 (FW 243); Catweall 1668 (FW 244); Cattuall and mill 1674 (FW 256); Catuall 1676 (FW 262); Ketuall 1687 (FW 276); Catwell 1679 (FW 279); Caituall 1693 (FW 288); Caitwall 1699 (FW 294); Ketwal (KS 1691); Katwall 1703 (FW 298); Ketwall 1738 (FW 352); Catwall 1743 (FW 362); Catewall (KS, 1706); Ketwall KS, 1711); Katewall (KS, 1713); Cathwall (KS, 1723); Ketwell (KS, 1723); Kead Vail (OSA); Catewell (OPR, 1791).

**Etymology:** Watson suggests G. *Ciadail* from O.N. - *kvi*, fold; *dalr*, dale; cf. *kvia-bolr*, milking place; *kvia-bekkr*, fold-beck (p.87). Bridget Mackenzie recognises that *Kvi*, fold, pen, pen for cattle, sheep, goats for milking (Mackenzie 93, 14) but queries whether *kví dalr* can give Katewell. An alternative *kettu dalr* would give 'dale of the she-cat' or possibly 'the dale of the ogress', but she doubts whether it is a dale name at all (1992, pers. comm.).

Other Suggestions: The Old Statistical Account gives Gaelic - *Kead Vail*, the first possession acquired by the Earl of Ross in this parish. Frank Maclennan rightly queries this (c.1985, 94), and Bridget Mackenzie wryly notes, 'Beware of ministers and their interpretations. They had an influence disproportionate to their knowledge and spread a lot of misinformation' (1993, 4).

Maclennan also writes: 'the late Mrs Donald Mackenzie of Evanton gave the traditional explanation in 1960: - "Mary Queen of Scots while in the North of Scotland was asked where she would like to rest for the night. She decided on Katewell. So the place was called Cead Tholl or First Choice; and then after a few generations it became known as Katewell."' 'In fact, Queen Mary was at Inverness in 1562 ... where a number of Highlanders, including Munros, went to her assistance ...She may have spent a night at Katewell, but the earlier dates given 1369 and 1479, refute the Queen's responsibility for the name of Katewell' (Maclennan, p.95).

**Current:** Jim Howden (interviewed 31.10.10), resident/small farmer in Katewell since 1960s, is clear that Katewell is Norse: “‘Well’ - as in Dingwall.’ He has heard say that it is from ‘Kate’s well’ – ‘possibly the one just across the river where there was a cottage.’ Neither has he seen such an idea in print, nor does not consider it to be a serious contender.

He farms hens, pigs, sheep and cattle – it is a fertile riverine area. The New Statistical Account mentions a meal mill, two barley mills and three saw mills on the River Skiach. One William Munro, Katewell miller, died in April 1786. The first flour mill in the parish was erected by Mr. Sim of Drummond on the Skiach in 1821. The mill provided electricity to Glenskiach Distillery, which was built nearby in 1896 and wound up between 1926 and 1932.

Current place-name debate: Mrs Eppie Buist interviewed March 1991 (aged 81) at her home, Katewell House said: ‘This is Milton Katewell. This whole area is Katewell. MC is naughty calling her house Katewell – it’s West Katewell. Little Katewell is my letting house’ ... ‘Nobody quite knows what it means – but there are all sorts of nonsenses about derivations, corruptions etc. The old book about Dingwall says it is the hundredth township – I think that’s nonsense. The other one, somebody said is the Norse word meaning ‘milking area’ – I think that’s much more likely’ (EOHP).

### 3. Balconie

**Context:** Rev. Harry Robertson of Kiltarn wrote in the 1790s that ‘Balconie is a beautiful seat, situated on the banks of the River Skiack, on a fine eminence, which slopes gradually towards the sea. This was formerly one of the seats of the ancient Earls of Ross’ (OSA).

**Early Mentions:** Balkenny 1333 and 1341 (charters granted at Balkenny by Hugh, Earl of Ross, and by William Earl of Ross; Balconee 1479 (ER); Baltonye and croft, namely the vicar's croft 1576 (FW 90); the town of Balcony 1607 (FW 146); Balcony 1618 (F 167); Balconie (KS, 1708); Balcony (KS, 1710, 1728); Balkeny (Roy, 1750); Balkeny x2 1479 ER viii 261; Balconee 1479 (ER viii 261); Balkny 1550 (RMS iv no. 508); Balcony 1565 (RMS iv no. 1618); Balcony 1587 (RMS v no. 1331); Balcony 1591 (RMS iv no. 1975) (footnote); Balcony 1592 RPS (1592/4/210); Balcony 1608 (RMS v no. 2109); Balcony 1614 (RMS vii no. 1115); Balconie 1623 Retours (Ross and Cromarty) no. 183 (supplementa) Balconie 1624 (RMS viii no. 562); Balcony 1631 (RMS viii no. 1720); Balknie 1641 (RPS A1641/7/37); Balkeny 1654 Blaeu Map (Moray); Balcome (vel Balconie) 1677 (Retours, Ross and Cromarty, no. 133); Balconie 1686 (RPS 1686/4/74); Balkny 1730 (Wade’s Military Maps of Scotland); Upper Balcony 1791-1799 (OSA, Kiltarn), 467; Balconie Point 1880 (OS 6 inch 1st edn).

**Etymology and Phonology:** Johnston referred to ‘– conie’ (1297), ‘-keny’ (1333) and suggested Village of Coinneach or Kenneth, perhaps a friend of Columba; he recognised that ‘some say Gaelic now is Bailcomhnuidh – the residence. Watson is sure of *bailc*, strong and extension, as in Delny’ (1887).

Two different pronunciations are heard for Balconie: BALcony and BalCONie. The rarer emphasis on the second syllable may derive from the traditional interpretation as Baile Còmhnuidh, the Residence - supposedly erected by the 1st Earl of Ross. The Gaelic form, however, is stated by Professor Watson as *Bailcnidh*, which he interpreted as being decisive against *baile*, a town or stead. He derived it instead from *bailc*, strong (cf. Welsh *balch*, proud); thus Balconie cannot be other than 'the strong place' (1904, 87). MacLennan’s Dictionary gives: *bailc*, a) a shower, b) a ridge, a beam (1925, 1979).

Two chapels are mentioned as having been on the estate, St.Monan and St.Ninian's. Rev. Archibald Campbell used to say that Balconie derived from 'the bay of St.Ninian' and he would point out various oratories where hermits once stayed (EOHP No 5).

**Balconie - A Rich History:** An investigation of this particular place-name is a powerful way to connect with some of the major names and themes of Scottish history – **highlighted** below.

In 1297 the Castle was taken by **Andrew de Moray from** the Countess of Ross, providing him with a secure strategic base from which to harry the **English occupiers**. The castles at Avoch and Balconie provided tactical rallying and training points, also shelter for parties returning from Andrew's very effective guerrilla raids.

**Earl Hugh Ross**, on the 14th June 1333, a few weeks before his death at the Battle of Halidon Hill, discharged at Balconie/Balkenny an annuity payable to Sir William Rose of Kilravock. In 1337 the Earl of Ross granted land at Balconie to Hugh Ross of Balnagowan. In 1445 James II granted the Barony of Balconie to Beatrice, Countess of Ross. When the **Earldom of Ross**, for 200 years the most powerful house in Scotland, ceased to exist in 1476, it came into the hands of some MacDonalds and came to be referred to as Baile Còmhnuidh Mhic Dhonuill, MacDonald's habitation. Balconie became Munro property by end of that century. In 1551 **Queen Mary** presented William Munro, second son of Sir William Munro, 12th baron of Fowlis, to the Chaplaincy of Balconie, "vacated by the decease of Master John Munro." His eldest son John Mor Munro followed, as third of Coul, second of Balconie, who married a grand-daughter of **Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty**. His third son Robert became minister of Kiltearn.

John Munro, third of Balconie, was followed by his son Hugh, 3 of whose sons went to the **German wars** along with their chief Robert Munro XVIII of Fowlis. John was succeeded at his death about 1640

by his son Robert, fifth of Balconie. His only surviving son Donald Munro continued the line which was ended when his son John Munro seventh of Balconie, alienated or sold the lands (Mackenzie A, 1898).

D. Murray writes that "the estate of Balconie was known as Inchculter (Munro Writs 1586) and covered lands between the rivers Sgiach and Allt Grad. In Bishop Forbes' time it had both sides of the latter for some way up. Watson calls Balconie 'Innis a Cheltair', deriving it from culter, being pointed in shape" (OS Notes, c.1985).

The popular tale of the **Lady of Balconie** is dated by Hugh Miller to the early 17th century. Frank MacLennan relates that she appears to have been a daughter of a Lord of Balconie. "Her nurse was a witch and secretly trained the girl in the black art." Visitors to the castle, expressing their scepticism at witchcraft, were startled when the young lady magically levitated the castle several feet into the air and after some moments, deposited it safely on its base (Ferindonald Papers). Eventually the lady was taken by the Devil himself at the Blackrock Gorge, where she remains chained in a cave and surrounded by fierce hounds to this day (Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends* 1835, 171-6).

In 1722 William Robertson, Chapman (trader) in Balcony, craved admittance to the Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Dingwall Borough on payment of £3 Scots as 'scot and lot' for trading. In April 1731 Inchculter sent a letter of apology to the Dingwall Town Council concerning feu duties at the Bog and Kiln of Dingwall, being £9 6s 8d Scots. Sir George Steuart Mackenzie, Bart. wrote in 1810: "This house, with the estate of Inchculter, has been lately purchased by Mr. Fraser, who has made additions to the old building. The situation of the house is good and commands a most beautiful view of the surrounding country." The same Alexander Fraser (1759 – c1838) was responsible for laying out the village of **Evanton** which he named after his only son Evan Bailie (cf. Appendix 7). Alexander Fraser had reputedly made a fortune through trading with the West Indies and three streets in Evanton (Camden, Livera and Hermitage) are reputedly named after **West Indian Plantations**, although supporting information has yet to be found (EOHP no.5). Alternatively, Camden may be named after John Jeffreys Pratt, 1st Marquess Camden (1759–1840), Earl Camden (from 1794), Secretary of State for War and the Colonies 1804-1805; alternatively after his father, Charles Pratt, 1st Earl of Camden, after whom Camden Street, in London, was named.

**Current:** Ian MacDonald stated: 'The main street, Balconie Street, had a large beech and oak trees right along there, then there was a drive-way going for a mile to Balconie Castle. Then there were further beech trees going right along to Kenneth Mackenzie's garage. After the war that was all cut down – shame – irreplaceable. All because a timber merchant bought Balconie Castle on the demise of Mr.

George Bankes he got back what he paid for the estate in timber, but he went bankrupt and the castle went and was used in the building of the smelter' (EOHP 19.3.91).

Jessie MacDonald (born 1900), who worked at Balconie Castle in her youth, referred in recorded interview in 1991 to BALcony: '... Balconie Castle – that's not even there any more, that's burnt down. He (father) managed that and there was the dairy and the hens and my mother managed all that' (EOHP 20.3.91).

Jane Dewar, ex Lemlair, tells of being annoyed when people say BALcony (14.10.10). She always said BalCONie as a child and remembers this is how they pronounced it in Dingwall. She recognises that this may be incorrect (Informal conversation 27.10.10).

Mrs. Finlayson used to refer to BOLcny, according to daughter-in-law Shirley (informal conversation 14.10.10).

#### 4. Swordale

**Context:** Currently a small village at NH 564 656, north of River Sgitheach, with Swordale Hill to NE. Originally it would probably have applied to the whole valley/strath through which runs R.Sgitheach, below Clare. At Druim Mòr (NH 576 663) is a Neolithic chambered cairn and extensive ruins of stone houses. Carn Liath, another chambered cairn, lies one kilometre ENE at NH 589 666.

**Early Mentions:** Sweredull 1479 (ER); Swordell 1589 (Foulis Writs 120), 1609 (FW 149); Soirdell 1619 (FW 168); Swordell 1624 (FW 176); Suardell 1630 (FW 188); Soiredll 1632 (FW193); Swordell 1658 (FW 219), 1659 (FW 220), 1663 (FW 225), 1663 FW 228), 1673 (FW 251), 1674 (FW 257) 1683 FW 266); Swardell 1683 (FW 266), 1684 (FW 267,8), 1686 (FW 273); Suardalle 1686 (FW274); Suardaill 1686 (FW 275), 1687 (FW 276); Suardell 1692 (FW 286); Suiarduell 1695 (FW 290); Swordel 1707 (FW 301); Swardel 1708 (FW 302); Swardell 1708 (FW 303, 4, 5), 1717 (FW 317), 1726 (FW 326); Swardale 1744 (FW 365); Swordale 1761 (FW 382); Sowardill (Blaeu 1654); Swordale (KS 1699); Swardell (OPR, 1704); Swardel (KS 1705); Swardiel (KS, 1705); Swordiel (KS, 1705); Swordale (KS, 1705); Swardail (KS 1705); Swardell (KS, 1722); Swardhill (Roy c. 1750); Swordle (OSA).

**Etymology:** Sweredull (1479); Gaelic *Suardal*. Norse *swörðr*, sward; *dalr*, grassy dale (Watson 1904, 1996). This is a very common name in the Highlands and Islands (MacBain 1922). Bridget Mackenzie indicates that *dalr* can be confused with Gaelic *dail* 'a plain beside a river', which is usually found as a first element (1993).

## Discussion

Norse names nearby: Dingwall, N. *Þingvöllr*, Field of the Thing, the Norse court of justice; Strathrusdale, Norse *hrúts dalr*, ram's dale, with Gaelic *srath* prefixed. MacBain says that Norse names abound in Easter as well as in Wester Ross, and they can be traced south to the Beaully valley, where we have Eskidale (Ashdale), and Tarradale on the Beaully River. 'Further south we do not find any trace of the Norse power in place names' (1922, 2003, 167). He continues 'Gaelic in its re-conquest left the Norse nomenclature of the country practically intact' (p.168).

### 5. Cnoc a' Mhargadaidh and Knockmartin

**Context:** This hill is widely visible from the Black Isle and Cromarty Firth as well as from Glen Glass and Swordale. 'Knockmartin, a small hill, compared to the rest, is situated on the East side of the hill of Swordle, and is seen from the seaside. Its chief beauty consists of its shape, it tapers gradually from the base to the highest point, forming a cone' (Rev. Harry Robertson, Old Statistical Account).



Fig. 3 - Trig point on Cnoc a' Mhargadaidh (looking towards Ben Wyvis)

'A cairnfield covers about 3 hectares on the afforested South flank. There are two hut circles and the remains of a probable third. Nothing can now be seen of a 'formed roadway' and other remains recorded uphill in 1884 (1970). Charcoal was found to a depth of 0.4m. suggesting that though no remains of a fort could be found, it was a beacon hill communicating with Knockfarrel, Craig Phadraig etc.' 'Markets were held at this hill. Remains of stone and turf walls enclosed an area of over 30 acres, subdivided into stances by internal walls, and conspicuous in one place are the sorting fanks of circular form and other 4-sided enclosures. Within the same general enclosure are 5 hut circles -undoubtedly ancient - two of them joined by a passage...Around the N of the hut circles are a great number of tumuli, apparently grave-mounds' (ISSFC 1884).

‘According to Mr Munro-Fergusson (sic) (Novar House), an ornamented urn was found at NH 5568 6799 during the construction of a forestry road about 1965. It crumbled away when picked up. Fergusson didn't see it, but from a workman's description believes it was a beaker.’ Visited by OS (I S S) 29 August 1972 (Canmore, RCAHMS).

The cottage at NH 567 671 is named **Knockmartin**. The Foulis Estate papers of 1776 refer to ‘a pendicle of Swordale called Knockmartin’.

**Early Mentions:** Knokmartine 1674 (FW 257); Knokmartine 1684 (FW 268); Knockmartine 1686 (FW 273); Knokmartine 1682 (FW 286); Knokmartine 1695 (FW 290), 1707 (FW 302); Knockmartin 1708 (FW 302); Knockmartine 1708 (FW 303, 304); Knockmartine 1708 (FW 305), 1726 (FW 326); Knockmartin 1744 (FW 365); Knockmartine 1761 (FW 382) a pendicle of Swordale called Knockmartin (FE 1776).

### **Discussion**

Knockmartin is most likely to be a corruption of Cnoc a' Mhargaidh, rather than a reference to any Martin or Martine, who is otherwise unattested (surely unconnected with George Martine of Clermont, 1635-1712, author of a genealogical account of the Munros from 1673 to 1697 (Munro 1978, ii)). [By contrast another Cnoc Mhàrtuinn is attested in the traditional song ‘Fac Thu Na Feidh’, translated as Knockmartin (Appendix 8)].

Such corruptions from the Gaelic and Irish into English personal names are common – see also Katewell; (cf. Jennymount, Belfast, a corruption of Tulach Shíne, stormy hillock). Others such as Polnicol, Poll Neaceal, Nicol's Pool, are true to the Gaelic (Watson, 1904, 1996, 64). The nearby names Barbaraville, Jemimaville, Arabella are recent English names. So too is Fannyfield in Ferindonald, named after Fanny Bisset wife of John Dearg Munro. Nearby Clare by contrast, has no connection with any personal name – being from Gaelic an Clàr, commonly used in sense of a surface Clàr Mumhan (Munster), Clàr Rois (Ross), and Clàr Fionghall (Western Isles).

## **6. Fyrish**

**Context:** The name of the farm and hill; also the Fyrish Monument built in 1780s under Gen. Sir Hector Munro, Novar. People refer to ‘going up Fyrish’ to mean both the hill and the monument.

**Early Mentions:** Fyrehisch 1479 (Exchequer Rolls vii 593); Feris 1539; Fyreis 1589 (FW 120); lands of Fyris called Easter Fyres 1728 (FW 329); Fyries 1756 (FW 375); Feirish (Roy, 1750). Watson indicates

'the spelling varies almost with each appearance, and sometimes becomes even Fischerie (1904, 1996, 77).

**Etymology:** Watson initially gives Gaelic *Foireis*, probably from Norse *fura* or *fyr*, pine-tree. Fyrish was and still is noted for its wood (1904, 96:77). Later, in the appendix, he suggests the spelling Foireis is inadequate - rather Faighris, and 'I fear the name is Pictish' (p.277).

Frank Maclennan refers to the Swedish rune stone (Högby) on which is mentioned: 'at Fyris fell Asmund the unfrightened warrior' (p.101), who died at the Battle of Fýrisvellir, the battle for the throne of Sweden in the 980s (Appendix 6). This is perhaps a far-fetched connection given that the lack of connection between Scotland and Sweden at this time.



Fig. 4 Högby rune stone

### SCHOOL VISIT

As part of this study I visited the Primary 7 class, Kiltarn Primary School – 21 pupils and teacher. All but a few considered themselves as Scots, none as Gaels, and none spoke any Gaelic. Pupils were invited to choose the meanings/derivations of 10 fairly prominent local place-names, from a choice of 3 suggestions and an 'other' category for each. All but one gave the correct derivation of Evanton (non-Gaelic), but a majority missed the mark on the other 9 questions. Overall there were only 54 correct answers out of 196, some 36 per cent. Pupils tended to go for the more literal' suggestions e.g. Swordale – dale of the sword, rather than the sward; the place of fowls for Foulis; Katy's Well for Katewell, rather than the little known Norse etymology. They also favoured the more colourful

suggestions e.g. 'lair of the pine marten' for Knockmartin and 'eel point' for Alness. Most thought that Cnoc Fyrish was named after the monument rather than vice versa.



Fig. 5 – Fyrish Monument

The discussion around each possible derivation allowed for discussion of the richly varied peoples who have settled this Firthland frontier area. The children were able to recount these at the end of the session and also recognised the preponderance of Gaelic place-names. They may reflect on their discovery that the most obvious English approximation of a local place-name is often incorrect. The teacher stated that she felt the children had responded very positively to this way of introducing broader themes of local history; the children also made positive comments.

Comments received from the children a week later:

*"I enjoyed it because it told me more about Ross-shire". "There were good questions and options in the quiz". "It gave me more information about Evanton and where we live". "It helped me understand why places were given particular names". "Interesting! It told us who made up the names". "Overall an interesting lesson". "It was good to learn about the history of our village". "It helped me understand about Evanton and different place names". "It helped me understand why places are called what they are called".*

Furthermore two boys in the class decided to visit the gravestone at Swordale that was mentioned in the session.

## **CONCLUSION**

Onomastics is an intricate business, which encompasses a wide range of skills and disciplines (linguistic, literary, historical, and geographical). Shortcuts through the process of study can lead to erroneous derivations and meanings; care is therefore required to ascertain correct etymologies, including relevant topography, and to see how the written versions have changed over time. Additional complication is added in an area such as Ferindonald, where at least four languages have been in use and have interacted in the Common Era.

This should not, however, act as a disincentive to wider enquiry into local place-names. Everybody, whether born and bred locally or an incomer to an area, has a connection to local place-names. This may be as simple as the naming of a house, or adopting an existing name, choosing to refer to or pronounce a place-name in a number of alternative ways - even creating one's own names for places, or puzzling over the Gaelic name of a hill or stream. Place-names mean different things to different people and there is always a subjective element involved – including in academic study. They can contribute to a sense of community but they can also distinguish local from incomer, older generation from younger, resident from visitor.

This study has shown up the great wealth of names in one area, mainly of Gaelic origin but with examples of likely/possible Pictish and Norse origin too. It has shown how names have been changed in their written forms over time, indeed from the very first. It has also sought to demonstrate how a study of even a small number of place-names can be used to open up wide historical vistas, which can help to connect a locality with the wider world. It has shown how they can be an excellent tool in an educational setting for inspiring such enquiry and imagination.

~

## **Appendix 1 - Database: Placenames of Kiltearn and Ferindonald (attached)**

### **Appendix 2 - Recorded Interview with Ken Humpheys, Pealaig Farmhouse, 1 November 2010**

AC: Where are we?

KH: Pealaig Farmhouse in the parish of Kiltearn. I've been here now for 52 years. I'm married now to a Gaelic speaking wife from the Island of Lewis and – how do you pronounce Pealaig?

Mrs H: PIALAIG –because that's how you taught me to pronounce it

KH: I'm keen to get the spelling changed permanently from the way that it's on the Munro Foulis Estate Papers – about 200 years ago. Instead of PELAIG it was PEALAIG which covers the PiAAA-laig. It's difficult enough now because the telephone exchange is the old spelling and the maps and so on is the new spelling – the English spelling.

AC: Do you have any indication as to the meaning?

KH: No – there's a big question mark as to how it got its name. There is this assertion that the 'p' isn't in the Gaelic, is it?

Mrs H: Yes it is

Ken H: The old druid name for water sprite was peallaig and Pealaig is covered in springs of water which have cost me a fortune over the years to drain – but I have given up on the field as you come up the hill because that was just riddled with water springs.

AC: So the idea of it being named after water springs makes sense?

KH: It does make sense yes. But then there is a question-mark over the old Gaelic meaning for a pass; the road here comes up from Kiltearn over through Pealaig, the bottom of Pealaig, over the back of Drynie Farm ending up in Strathpeffer. So people walking from Evanton to Strathpeffer would traditionally have come through Pealaig and passed through Fluchlady over the back.

AC: Fluchlady is the wet slope?

KH: Yes. There's a badger colony at Fluchlady now. It's a thing I've always said - wouldn't mind a few badgers knocking around. It's nice to see them back.

AC (to Mrs H): And the Gaelic pronunciation you have come across relating to Pealaig?

Mrs H: Piulach – which is a rag.

AC: Where did you come across that?

Mrs H: I didn't

KH: Your father said to me that he thought it might come from that – he was a tweed merchant.

AC: But is that just a supposition – not a local ...?

Mrs H: Yes –No

KH: You know about the stones – Clachan Biorach – which were all ploughed out. We had a stone here which I rightly or wrongly thought was a sacrificial stone –

AC: A cup-marked stone?

KH: Yes. 'X' is not in my best books at the moment because he pulled it up and dumped it – because it was in the way ... it was in the stackyard....

Mrs H: He lifted it a couple of weeks ago – and we don't know where it is

KH: And dumped it – oh it's a load of nonsense. He had dumped it in a kind of hollow near the corner of the stackyard.

### **Appendix 3 - Foulis Writs re Katherine of Ros, No 100**

1582, October 10. 'Letters under the Signet at the instance of Alexander Ros of Ballengoun charging Robert Munro of **Foulis** to fulfil the clauses of the marriage-contract, dated at **Girriegarth** ... (destroyed) November, 1563, between him and Katherine Ros, daughter of said Alexander Ros, and especially in respect of the obligation to invest the heirs-male of the marriage during her lifetime in his conquest lands ....; and whereas the said marriage has long since been perfected and said Robert has 'conquest' (that is, acquired by purchase) the following lands, viz., the davach land of **Limlair**, the half-davoch of the lands of **Pelloche** ... and that in said marriage with said Katherine said Robert has begotten a lawful son called (blank) Monro, nevertheless said Robert fails to invest his said son in said lands as required by said contract, whereupon he is required to do so within three days after he is charged thereto, under penalty within other three days after he is charged thereto, under penalty within other three days thereafter to enter into the ward within the castle of Blaknes upon his own expenses until he be freed, and if he fail therein to be put to horn.'

#### Appendix 4 - Extracts from *Translations* by Brian Friel (1981)

Owen: Me a soldier? I'm employed as a part time, underpaid, civilian interpreter. My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue and you people persist in speaking into the King's good English' (p.29)

Lancey: (Extract from White Paper) 'Ireland is privileged. No such survey is being undertaken in England. So this survey cannot but be received as proof of the disposition of this government to advance the interests of Ireland'. My sentiments too.

Owen: The captain is the man who actually makes the new map. George's task is to see the place names on this matter are ... correct (p.31-2).

Manus: What sort of a translation was that, Owen?

Owen: Did I make a mess of it?

Manus: You weren't saying what Lancey was saying!

Owen: 'Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry' -- who said that?

Manus: There was nothing uncertain about what Lancey said: it's a bloody military operation, Owen! And what's Yolland's function? What's 'incorrect' about the place names we have here?

Owen: Nothing at all. There are just going to be standardised.

Manus: You mean changed into English?

Owen: Where there is ambiguity, they'll be Anglicised.

(p.32)

Hugh: I look at James and three thoughts occurred to me: A - that it is not in the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language. James has ceased to make that distinction..... B - We must never cease renewing those images, because once we do, we fossilise.....

Owen: And C, father - one single, unalterable fact. If Yolland is not found, we are all going to be evicted. Lancey has issued the order (p66).

Brannigan writes '*Translations* seemed to summarise, through events of local significance, the story of how one nation lost its language, culture and literature as a result of being conquered by another nation.....the play offered a parable about the fate of an insular, antiquated people when they were exposed to an adventurous and modern empire. Because they were insular and antiquated, they could not be translated into the modern world, and so were lost in the mists of time' (2000, 7).

*Translations* was both highly popular and deeply controversial. It was criticised as an inaccurate, biased version of events it purported to represent – ‘a distortion of the real nature and causes of cultural change in nineteenth century Ireland so extreme as to go beyond merely factual error’, wrote historian Sean Connolly (Brannigan, 76-7). The sappers who undertook the ordnance survey never engaged in violence in this process, however other English soldiers were indeed involved in forcible evictions. The 1830s survey is depicted as a military campaign, which was only partially true. Also Friel is criticised as having oversimplified the process of how place-names come to be changed. He does, however, highlight some of the quandaries involved in translation, exemplified in the dilemma of what to call a place called ‘Tobair Vree’, named after a man who fell down a well there. Owen asks: ‘Do we scrap Tobair Vree altogether and call it - what? – ‘The Cross? Crossroads? Or do we keep piety with a man long dead, long forgotten, his name ‘eroded’ beyond recognition, whose trivial little story nobody in the parish remembers?’ (Friel 1981, 44; Brannigan 2000, 7-8).

Friel deftly sets up his characters to portray and investigate differing responses to military and cultural colonialism, from those at either end of the scale favouring physical force to those in the middle willing to embrace other cultures and beliefs. Owen, who has been ‘civilised’ in Dublin, returns home to enthusiastically assist in the process of anglicising local place-names; meanwhile Marie is keen to learn English as the way ahead; Yolland, an English surveyor, falls in love with Irish culture, place-names and an Irish girl – for which he receives possibly fatal punishment. Friel leaves it to us to decide how we view each type, including how far the compromisers might be seen as traducers of their own culture (Friel 1981; Brannigan 2000, 40).

We are left with a range of further questions regarding cultural domination, alienation and conversion, how we might react in similar circumstances, and how these historic issues still impact on our identities today. The theme of Translation is prevalent throughout, linguistically from Latin and Greek into Irish, English to Irish and vice versa. Translation is also interpretation, as when Owen softens the meaning of the English officer to make them more acceptable to the villagers. Friel accepts George Steiner’s argument (1975) that all language and all communication are forms of translation – concealing while communicating, excluding while embracing. Friel’s *Translations* suggests, says Brannigan (2000, 42), ‘that people are being integrated with another tribe so that they can have no privacies or intimacies of their own.’

## **Appendix 5 - Pictish Monuments in Mid/Easter Ross**

Ardross Stone (in Inverness Museum): 2 fragments with a powerful and non-realistic but elegant Pictish beast.

Nonikiln (NH 662712): Symbol stone found here was lost but a copy has been lodged with the National Museum of Scotland

Eagle Stone, Strathpeffer (NH 485585): Gaelic name is Clach Tionpain ('sounding stone'). Class 1

St Clements, Dingwall (NH 549589): Class 1

Edderton (NH 708850): Class 1: A 3m Bronze Age pillar carved at top with a fish and below a double disc and Z-rod.

Clach a'Mheirleach ('Thief's stone'), Rosskeen (NH 681690): Class 1: A Bronze Age pillar, 1.8m high, later incised with a crescent and what is probably a pair of tongs.

The Nigg Stone (NH 804717): Cross Slab

Shandwick (NH 855747): Cross Slab

Hilton of Cadboll (NH873768): Cross Slab

Rosemarkie (NH 737576): Cross Slab

Tarbat (NH 914840): Cross Slab Fragments with Latin inscription IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, THE CROSS OF CHRIST IN MEMORY OF REODATIUS

Edderton (NH 719842): Cross Slab. Crosses on both sides, on E side with unarmed rider on horseback above two horse riders with shields, spears and swords.

Also 3 fragments from another slab are held by the Highland Council's Museum Service (Alston 99)

## **Appendix 6 – The Fyris rune stone**

Goðr karl Gulli

gat fæm syni.

Fioll a Føri

frøkn drængR Asmundr,

The good man Gulli

got five sons.

The brave valiant man Ásmundr

fell at Føeri.

## Appendix 7 - Email Exchange with Ainmean Àite na h-Alba

'I note that you derive Evanton from Baile Eòghainn's; actually this is a Gaelicisation. The town was named after Evan Fraser, son of Alexander Fraser, the owner of Balconie'- Adrian Clark.

Hi Adrian,

'Thanks for your interest and comments. I've looked at our entry and I agree that the meaning of "Evan's town" would fit better than the existing "Eòghainn's town" given, as you say, the original name was Evan' - Jake King, Researcher, Ainmean Àite na h-Alba.

## Appendix 8 - Fac Thu Na Feidh

Traditional song arranged by Donald Shaw and Karen Matheson. Appears on 'The Dreaming Sea'.

### Lyrics:

### English Translation:

Ruidhlidh Boireagan, dannsaidh Boireagan

*Boireagan will reel, Boireagan will dance*

Ruidhlidh Boireagan, dannsaidh Boireagan

*Boireagan will reel, Boireagan will dance*

'Fac thu na féidh gu léir, a Bhoireagain?

*Hast thou seen the deer all together, oh Boireagan?*

'Fac thu na féidh a Theàrlaich?

*Hast thou seen them, Charlie?*

'Fac thu na féidh gu léir, a Bhoireagain?

*Hast thou seen the deer all together, oh Boireagan?*

Suas gu mullach **Cnoc Mhàrtuinn?**

*Up by the top of **Knock Martin***

'Fac thu na féidh gu léir, a Bhoireagain?

*Hast thou seen the deer all together, oh Boireagan?*

'Fac thu na féidh a Theàrlaich?

*Hast thou seen them, Charlie?*

'Fac thu na féidh gu léir, a Bhoireagain?

*Hast thou seen the deer all together, oh Boireagan?*

Suas gu mullach Cnoc Mhàrtuinn?

*Up by the top of Knock Martin?*

## Figures

- 1 - Moravia Scotiae provincia, ex Timothei Pont: Blaeu Atlas of Scotland, 1654; Gordon, Robert, 1580-1661; Pont, Timothy, 1560?-1614?; Blaeu, Joan, 1596-1673. National Library of Scotland.
- 2 - Analysis of Database of Place-names of Ferindonald (author).
- 3 - Trig point on Cnoc a 'Mhargadaidh (looking towards Ben Wyvis) - Photograph by Iain Macaulay <http://www.geograph.org.uk/reuse.php?id=135288> (Creative Commons Licence).
- 4 - Högby rune stone - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runestones\\_of\\_H%C3%B6gby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runestones_of_H%C3%B6gby)
- 5 - Photograph of the Fyrish Monument by author (2010).

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