Scottish place-names
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CHAPTER 2

Scottish Place-names

Margaret Scott

INTRODUCTION

Place-name studies can be approached through a variety of different disciplines. Geography, history, archaeology, sociology and cultural studies have all contributed to our understanding of how names are formed and changed, and conversely, place-names have had an illuminating effect on many aspects of these subjects. This chapter aims to illustrate some of the linguistic approaches to place-names, and to provide a general background to the place-names of Scotland.

Scotland has been influenced by many different languages throughout its history, and any attempt to unravel the complexities of its place-names is not without its challenges. The current map of names can be likened to a palimpsest; earlier sketches have been partly erased, but new layers still allow a glimpse of the past. ‘Language’ is used in this chapter to refer to any identifiable linguistic layer represented in Scotland’s place-names, and each of the major strata is considered in chronological order below. It has often been said that there is no linguistic means of determining what constitutes a ‘language’, and the application of the term is largely dependent on historical, political and cultural factors. There are at present many different public and academic opinions regarding the precise applications of the labels Scots, English and Scottish Standard English, and so a modern Scottish place-name element such as hill may acquire any of the above labels in accordance with the subjective views of the individual commentator.

PLACE-NAME STRUCTURE

A place-name is most commonly composed of two elements, one which is a generic term identifying the type of place described (farm, estate, hill, valley, and so on), and one which is a specific term, qualifying the generic by providing
additional information. With the exception of a small number of folk-names, generics are either habitative or topographical. The order in which the elements are arranged differs depending on the linguistic influences underpinning the compound. In Germanic languages like English and Scots, this order is commonly expressed as ‘specific + generic’. For example, the habitative name Fishwick BWK ‘dwelling where fish were sold or cured’ is composed of the Old English elements *fisc* ‘fish’ and *wíc* ‘dwelling’.¹ In Celtic languages from about the ninth century onwards, however, this order is reversed, so that the qualifying element is preceded by the generic term.² Gaelic place-names which typically demonstrate this Celtic structure include the topographical name Auchenbeg LAN, a compound of an anglicised form of *achtadh* ‘field’ and *beag* ‘small’. It would be an over-simplification, however, to say that the distinction between Germanic and Celtic word-order is always rigidly maintained.

Name formations may include a number of different components, but many names are also simplex, consisting of one element, such as Dale SHE from Old Norse *dalr* ‘valley’. Tautologous compounds are sometimes formed as a result of one language replacing another, as in Knockhill FIF, where *Knock* is an anglicised form of Gaelic *cnoc* ‘hill’, with the same meaning as *hill*, derived from Old English *hyll*.³ This type of name can also be formed as a result of speakers of one language moving into new territory and re-naming, or partially re-naming, the settlements there. Such constructions help to illustrate the semantic opacity which a place-name can acquire over time, and this developmental feature often allows place-name evidence to contribute to the study of sound-change, as discussed below.

Place-names can also reveal the interaction of different languages over time. Contact between Scandinavian, Anglian and Gaelic in the south-west of Scotland is illustrated by place-names which have been affected by all three influences. In Kirkcudbright KCB, Old Norse *kirkja* ‘church’ has been combined with ‘Cuthbert’, the name of an English saint, following the pattern expected for Celtic word-order.⁴ This type of construction is sometimes referred to as an ‘inversion compound’, because the elements are Germanic although the morphology is not.

Place-names can arise from surnames which are historically associated with a particular area. Hamilton LAN and Melville MLO derive from personal names, and are discussed in the following chapter. In both of these cases there is sufficient evidence to trace the development of the anthroponymic form to the toponymic form, but there are many other instances in which it is very difficult to know which was the original usage.

The reinterpretation of place-names by folk-etymology, or ‘analogical reformation’, is another common development, reflected in the historical spellings of Cassock Hill DMF.⁵ This name is recorded as *Cowsowgill* (c.1481), *Coschogill* (1526, 1538, 1590, 1619), *Cashogill* (1654) and *Cowshogill* (1646), and Williamson establishes that the original sequence of Middle Scots elements was *cow* ‘cow',
schaw 'small woodland, thicket', gill ‘ravine, gully’ (Williamson 1941: 301). When these elements were combined to form a place-name, their individual semantic significance became obscured. The name may have been reinterpreted first as *Coshog hill, and then later as Cassockhill, with a more descriptive ‘meaning’ providing an erroneous but plausible explanation. This folk-etymology is very different from the historical derivation, and so provides a valuable illustration of some of the changes which can fundamentally affect a name’s structure.

Analysis of historical spellings is key to the unravelling of any place-name’s etymology. This is illustrated by the example of the lost name Wheatacre(s) WLO (Macdonald 1941: 105). The first element is wet, derived from Anglian wēt, and later spellings in Wheat- appear to have been introduced by folk-etymology. However, in order to establish this interpretation, it is necessary to examine the history of the name in some detail.

The earliest recorded forms of the name date from the Early Middle Scots period: Weytakre and Weyt Akyr (both 1426), in which the vowel is represented as <ey>. In the Later Middle Scots period, we find the spellings Weitacre (1567), Weitaker (1573 and 1667), Weitaiker (1687), (Lie) Weitaikeris (1588), and Weitacres (1644), in which the vowel is consistently represented as <ei> (Macdonald 1941: 105). The Older Scots spellings <ey>, <ei> and <ee> represented Middle Scots [i:] which derived from Early Scots [ie:] and [ei:] (Aitken 1977: 3; cf. Chapter 7 this volume). In the Anglian dialect of Old English, ē is often changed to ē when it is followed by a dental consonant, as exemplified by hwēte for hwēte ‘wheat’, in the Mercian Rushworth Gospels (Campbell 1959: 124). The use of <ei>, where <i> functions to indicate that the preceding vowel is long, is thought to have been introduced to the British Isles through the influence of Norman French orthographic practices, and there are many examples of <ei> for Old English ē and ē in the Domesday Book (Knieza 1989: 443). Thus it is possible to trace the development of Old English ē and ē to Middle Scots <ey> and <ei>. The commonest orthographic form for Middle Scots ‘wet’ was weet [wit] (Robinson 1985: s.v. WEET¹). In the Middle Scots period, the reflexes of hwēte and wēt would have differed only in the pronunciation of the initial consonant. Old English hw would have become quh in Middle Scots, at which time the Scots word for ‘wheat’ is recorded as quhete, quwt and quhite, most commonly representing [hwit] (Robinson 1985: s.v. WHITE²). Contemporary historical spellings for the place-name show an initial w- preceding the vowel, demonstrating that the first element of Wheatacre(s) WLO cannot be derived from OE hwēte.

Detailed analysis is an essential part of the study of place-names, but that can only begin after all possible linguistic influences have been identified. A brief discussion of each of the languages which has had a significant impact on the place-names of Scotland is therefore outlined below.
‘OLD EUROPEAN’ HYDRONYMY

The earliest identifiable linguistic layer in the place-names of Scotland is found in a number of river-names, or hydronymy. The names of major rivers are often very old, particularly when the river in question has been significant for travel or trade. Hans Krahe published a number of influential papers on the subject of European hydronymy during the 1950s. He developed the theory of ‘Old European’ hydronymy, identifying these names as belonging to an extinct Indo-European language. Over the years, his work has been supported and embellished by the efforts of subsequent scholars, notably W. F. H. Nicolaïsen. Alternative interpretations, however, have also been suggested. One of the most recent challenges to the ‘Old European’ construct was put forward by Theo Venneman in 1994, who argued that this stratum of river-names represents a non-Indo-European language with many similarities to Basque (Venneman 1994). Nevertheless, the prevailing opinion of the scholarly community favours the Indo-European stance taken by Krahe and his followers (Kitson 1996; Trask 1997: 365–7).

Several of the river-names in Scotland and other parts of Britain have parallel formations which can be found across continental Europe. The river Ayr AYR is one possible member of this ancient linguistic layer, and Nicolaïsen has argued that it is phonologically plausible for the early spellings to indicate an original short a, suggesting a pre-Celtic Indo-European origin for the name. If so, it would be possible to consider this name together with the Oare Water SOM, recorded as Ar in 1279, the Ahr and the Ahre in Germany, the Aar in Belgium and the Ara in Spain. The reconstructed form *Arā ‘water-course’ can then be assumed to be derived from *orā ‘flowing movement’, from the Indo-European root *er-/*or- ‘to cause to move, to stimulate’ (Nicolaïsen 2001: 241). The speakers of this pre-Celtic Indo-European language therefore appear to have left a linguistic imprint in the river-names of Europe which can still be observed to this day.

PICTISH

Pictish evidence survives largely in the form of images, symbols and ogham inscriptions carved on stones which have been found in the north-east and far north of Scotland, and in the records of non-Pictish commentators. The Picts are thought to have been active from approximately AD 200 until the unification of the eastern kingdom of Pictland and the western kingdom of Dalriada under Kenneth mac Alpin in the mid-ninth century (Nicolaïsen 1996: 4–5; Duncan 1975). However, scholars are divided as to whether the Pictish period ended suddenly or gradually (Lynch 1991: 21; Barrow 1998; Duncan 1975: 101–16).

The language spoken by the Picts is thought to have been P-Celtic, although other suggestions have been made, including the idea that they spoke two
different languages, only one of which was Celtic (Jackson 1955: 152). Many questions remain unanswered regarding these people, and the puzzling inscriptions on a number of ‘Pictish’ ogham stones continue to inspire controversial explanations. However, current scholarly opinion holds that Pictish was a P-Celtic language (Nicolaisen 1996: 32; Forsyth 1998), and therefore related to Cumbric, Cornish, Welsh and Breton.

There is a striking correspondence between the location of place-names in Pit- and Pictish archaeological evidence (Nicolaisen 2001: 197–9). The element Pit- is recorded in the majority of the oldest available spellings of the relevant place-names as Pet-, from which it is possible to postulate a P-Celtic *pett, cognate with similar P-Celtic terms with the meaning ‘thing’, as in Welsh peth and Cornish peth, or ‘piece’ as in Breton pez. As a name-forming element Pit- has been translated as the more literal ‘portion, share, piece of land’ (Nicolaisen 1996: 6–7), although a more recent interpretation as ‘holding’ has also been proposed (Taylor 1997: 10). This word is associated specifically with the Picts because it is not found outside the known ‘Pictish’ region. A large number of names in Pit- contain Gaelic elements, and this is thought to indicate either that Gaelic speakers borrowed the term and used it to coin new names after the unification of the eastern and western kingdoms of Scotland in the mid-ninth century, or that there was contact between the Picts and Scots prior to this time.

Jackson identified a group of place-name elements which he regarded as Pictish: carden ‘thicket’, pert ‘wood’, lanerc ‘glade’, pevr ‘radiant’ and aber ‘river-mouth’ (Jackson 1955: 149). Carden- names have a largely similar distribution to those in Pit-, with Cardenden and Kincardine in Fife and Cardno and Cairney in Aberdeenshire. Pert is found in Perth PER, lanerc in Lanrick ANG, pevr in Strathpaffer ROS and aber in Aberdeen ABD. However, the geographical distribution of these elements is not limited to the areas of Scotland which historical and archaeological evidence has identified as subject to Pictish influence. P-Celtic cognates may easily be confused with these ‘Pictish’ elements in areas south of the Forth-Clyde line, and therefore some commentators have chosen to follow Jackson’s suggestion by labelling the southern P-Celtic forms ‘Cumbriac’, and the people who used this language ‘Cumbrians’.

CUMBRIC

Having identified Cumbric in the previous section as a P-Celtic language found south of the Forth-Clyde line, it may be useful to consider a number of examples which fall into this category of place-nomenclature. The distribution of the element cair ‘fort, stockaded farm’ has been used to delineate the territory of speakers of the Cumbric language, which includes parts of northern England as well as southern Scotland. These people are thought to have lived in this area from before the
beginning of the first millennium until about the year 1100 (Nicolaisen 2001: 206). Cair is found in the name Cramond MLO, 'fort on the river Almond' where the second element is the river-name, and in Caerlanrig ROX, where it is combined with lanerc to form a habitative name. As stated above, Jackson included lanerc 'glade' in his group of Pictish place-name elements, but this element is found in a small number of names in central and southern Scotland, as well as in areas of the north-east. Lanark LAN shows the use of this word in a simplex name.

In the south of Scotland P-Celtic penn 'end, head' is found in Pennygant Hill ROX, Penvalla PEB, Penicuik MLO and Penpont DMF, and is thought to have been used to refer to a prominent natural feature. Pren 'tree' is found in the lost simplex name Pirn PEB, showing metathesis, and in the compounds Primside ROX and Pirny Braes ELO.11 Another element in this group is tref 'homestead, village', which is found in southern names including Traprain ELO and Traquair PEB, but there are also a significant number of names in tref north of the Forth.12

Gaelic

Gaelic speakers are thought to have begun to arrive in the west of Scotland in about the fifth century, and the language spread across Scotland, taking hold in the east following the ninth-century union of the two kingdoms of Pictland and Dalriada. It became the language of the entire country with the exception of the far north and parts of the south-east, which were Norse and Anglian respectively, and its decline did not begin until the aftermath of the Norman Conquest of England altered the political framework of the British Isles. This decline did not occur instantaneously, but gradually over many centuries, with Gaelic place-names being coined up to the present day. Gaelic is still spoken in parts of the north-west, and in these areas the place-names and street-names usually appear on road signs in both Scottish Standard English and Gaelic, not simply for the sake of clarity, but as a testament to cultural identity and heritage. The intimate connection between place-names and culture is not surprising when place-names are viewed as a component of language, and it is interesting to note that Gaelic ballad tradition is closely related to dindshenchas 'the lore of famous places', a form of folk-etymologising recorded in medieval verse and prose (Meek 1998: 148).

Considering the historical importance of Gaelic in Scotland, it is unsurprising that it has had a great influence on the toponymic record. For the historical linguist, this is particularly significant in the south of Scotland, since little is otherwise known of the form of Gaelic spoken there (Nicolaisen 2001: 158–9). Ó Maolalaigh (1998) discusses a variety of issues relating to this subject, including place-name evidence from Galloway from which it can be inferred that the system of eclipsis of b- to m- found in Ireland may also have existed in the Gaelic of Galloway. Examples of this phenomenon can be seen in Knockman, from Cnoc na
mBan, and Drummuddioch, from *Druim (na) mBodach* (Ó Maolalaigh 1998: 30). The Gaelic habitative element *baile* ‘farm’ is found in Balbeg AYR, Balmagowan ARG, Balmuir WLO, Balvannich INV and Balmacnaughton PER. Another common element is Gaelic *achadh* ‘field’, often anglicised to *Auchen-* or *Auchin-*, compounded with *breac* ‘speckled’ in Auchenbrack DMF and with *ruadh* ‘red’ in Auchenroy AYR (Nicolaisen 2001: 161). Simplex forms are also found, a frequent example of which is *clachan* in Clachan ARG meaning ‘village, settlement (with a church)’ (Fraser 1999: 24). Other simplex names include Lagan BTE from *lagan* ‘little hollow’ and Dunan BTE from *dunan* ‘little fort’.

### ANGLIAN

‘Anglian’ is the dialect of Old English spoken by Anglo-Saxon settlers in the northern parts of England, many of whom began to move into southern Scotland in the seventh century. According to the currently accepted chronology, the earliest Old English names contain the element *hâm* ‘village, homestead’, found in Twynholm KCB, Smallholm DMF, Ednam ROX, Midlem ROX, Oxnam ROX, Smallholm ROX, Yetholm ROX, Birgham BWK, Edrom BWK, Kimmerghame BWK and Leitholm BWK. Slightly later are names in *-ingahâm* ‘homestead of the followers of . . .’ or ‘homestead of the settlers at . . .’, but only three Scottish examples have been securely established as containing this element: Coldingham BWK, Tynninhame ELO and Whittingehame ELO (Hough 2001a: 102). Names formed with the Old English derivational suffix *-ing* ‘of, associated with’, in the nominative plural form *-ingas* are thought to be later still, but there appear to be no instances of the use of this element in Scotland (Hough 2001a; Nicolaisen 2001: 89–92).

Other habitative generics include *wic* ‘(dependent) farm’, in compounds such as Hedderwick ELO ‘heather farm’. Topographical vocabulary includes *side* ‘side, slope of a hill or bank’, in *le Wyteside* (c.1235), now White Craig MLO and in Birkenside BWK, recorded as *Birchinside* (1153–65). Other natural features represented in Old English names include plant and tree names. *Birken-* in Birkenside is from Old English *bircen* ‘growing with birch-trees’, and the first element in Saughton MLO (*Salectuna* c.1128), is Anglian *salh* ‘willow’. Simplex names are also often topographical, as for example Dean MLO, recorded from the twelfth century, from Old English *denu* ‘valley’.

### SCANDINAVIAN

Speakers of Scandinavian languages are thought to have begun having an impact on the British Isles from the eighth century onwards. The notorious attack on the monastery of Lindisfarne, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 793, is generally taken as heralding the age of Viking invasions. Unfortunately, there
are no native Scottish records documenting the events of this era, and so it is necessary to rely on the evidence provided by neighbouring lands. The Annals of Ulster tell of great destruction caused by Norse incursions in parts of the Hebrides in 794, and in the following year, raids are said to have taken place on the islands of Rathlin and Skye, and on the monastery of Iona.\footnote{15}

Over the next few centuries, many Scandinavian speakers arrived in the British Isles. In the far north of Scotland, the islands of Orkney and Shetland, and parts of the Hebrides, many Norse names were coined as a result of primary settlement. Old Norse place-name elements in the north include \textit{vik} ‘bay’, found in the simplex Wick CAI and the compound Lerwick SHE ‘mud-bay’ from Old Norse \textit{leir} ‘mud’.\footnote{16} Scandinavian culture is reflected in Dingwall ROS, from Old Norse \textit{ping-volfr} ‘assembly-field’, a name which signifies an important administrative site (Crawford 1987: 96).

Place-names in the south of Scotland may indicate that Hiberno-Scandinavians and Anglo-Scandinavians moved there from other parts of the British Isles which were affected by primary Norse influence or control. In the south-east of Scotland it is possible to find many examples of a type of compound place-name which has become known as a ‘Grimston-hybrid’. This term arose from the study of habitative place-names in England which were formed by the addition of the Old English element \textit{tôn} to a Scandinavian personal name, the commonest of which was \textit{Grîm}.\footnote{17} Scottish examples includeolphinston ROX from \textit{Dólghînr}, Ingliston MLO from \textit{Ingjaldr} and Ravelston MLO from \textit{Hrafnkell}.

Fellows-Jensen has commented on the geographical correspondences between Norse place-names in \textit{bý} ‘settlement, village, town’ in the Central Lowlands of Scotland, and the distribution of eleventh-century Anglo-Scandinavian ‘hog-back’ tombstones. She argues that there may be a connection between the Scottish \textit{bý} names and those found in the north of England, and suggests that these names may be late ninth or tenth century in origin, representing movement of population from the Danelaw.\footnote{18} Names of this type include the lost \textit{Gudfraby} DMF and Warmanbie DMF, which may contain the names \textit{Gudfrâdr} and \textit{Vermundr} respectively (Williamson 1941: 286).

SCOTS

The Scots language, being the subject of this volume, requires no introduction at this point. However, the label ‘Scots’ has often proven problematic for the toponymist, because of two conflicting points of view. On the one hand, a very large number of the elements which were used to coin place-names in areas where Scots was spoken can legitimately be termed ‘Scots’, considering that the language can be said to ‘begin’ in the twelfth century.\footnote{19} On the other hand, there is something of a tradition of labelling Scottish place-name elements
according to their ultimate etymology, irrespective of the currency of those words in Scots. Commentators tend to drift toward either of these extremes, and while it is easy to sympathise with the second approach on the grounds that it avoids the taxonomic nightmare of the first, the simplicity of this second approach fails to do justice to the Scots linguistic stratum.

Some distinctively Scots terms refer to measurements of land. A Scots farthingland was one such measurement, although its precise dimensions varied depending on the part of Scotland in which it was used. It was equivalent to a ‘quarter-pennyland’ or ‘quarter-merkland’, and was also known as a quarter-virgate. In Dumfriesshire, there are two notable examples of the farthing-element of this term being used in place-name formations: Fardiningames, recorded as Fordinames (1523) and Fardingallan, recorded as Firdenalan (c.1450) and Ferdenalane (1451). Williamson suggests that these names denote farthinglands whose owners were ‘James’ and ‘Allan’, and notes that the order of the place-name elements follows the Celtic pattern (Williamson 1941: 206–7).

Terminology relating to land-use also includes haining ‘enclosure’, in The Haining SLK, recorded as le Hayning (1298–9) incorporating the French masculine definite article le, found in many historical forms of Scottish names in Latin contexts. The word is also recorded in the lost name Haining WLO.

Scots elbuck, elbok ‘elbow’ appears to be the first element in Elbeckhill DMF, recorded as Elbackhill (1762), describing the shape of the land. Gowk ‘cuckoo’ is the first element in Gowkshaw Burn AYR, as is paddock, paddock ‘toad’ in Pottishaw WLO. In both of these examples the generic is shaw ‘small wood, thicket’ which is found in many other place-names including Birkenshaw WLO, Blackshaw DMF, Broadshaw MLO and Friarshaw ROX. Craig ‘hill’ is also attested in many names, including Craigen WLO and Craigshields DMF, compounded in the latter name with shiel ‘(shepherd’s) temporary hut or shed, small house, pasture with a shepherd’s hut’ (Robinson 1985: s.v. SHIEL).

Whitebaulks WLO is recorded as Quhitbawkis (1531), Quhitbaukis (1541), Quhitbalkis (1552), Quhytakkis (1569), Quhytakikis (1591) and Quhitbaukis (1583), and is a compound of the Scots elements quhit ‘white’ and baik or baik ‘unploughed ridge’. Later spellings, Whytballis (1656), Whytballs (1656), Whytballis (1696), and Whiteballis (1696) show the relatively sudden impact of anglicisation and standardisation. Scots Quh- is replaced by Wh- and the representation of the vowel of the second element becomes increasingly consistent.

SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES AND HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

Place-name studies can tell us a great deal about language, in terms of early lexis, language contact, morphology and phonological development. At the same time, historical linguistics has informed toponymic studies, and each owes a debt to the
other. There is much to be gained from a consideration of both disciplines and their areas of overlap, provided that a number of important caveats are borne in mind. Sources of early place-name spellings can be unreliable, and can fail to provide comprehensive coverage of diachronic changes. In the case of Scottish names, it is also unfortunate that very little extant documentary evidence pre-dates the twelfth century. However, considering that literary Scots is dated as beginning in 1375, place-name evidence often pre-dates other written sources, and is therefore particularly valuable to the historical linguist. Tonymony can preserve lexical items or senses which are otherwise unattested, as for example in Bemersyde BWK, which has been shown to contain Anglian OE bëmäre, not with the meaning ‘trumpeter’, as attested in the literary sources, but with the meaning ‘bittern’ (Hough 1999). Phonological changes can also be traced. For example, the normal development of Old Northumbrian /ʧ/ is demonstrated by names in -chester (as opposed to -caster) in northern England and southern Scotland (Johnston 1997: 54).

Place-names form a special category of linguistic data because they do not ‘behave’ like lexical items, and are not subject to the same influences for change. They are used to identify specific locations, and this gives them a conceptual significance which is frequently very different from that of their component elements. Any semantic transparency that the naming elements may have had when the name was young may be lost or obscured over the course of time. It has been argued that ‘place names which are lexically opaque are more likely to reflect changes in pronunciation earlier than words the lexical meaning of which is well known’. While this can be supported by the historical spellings of particular names, the peculiar nature of place-names dictates that their morphological features often remain stable for longer periods of time than those of their component elements.

A good example of this phenomenon is provided by some recorded spellings containing reflexes of Old English adjectival forms which preserve the ending -e, long after this morphological distinction had fallen out of use in other linguistic contexts. Blackburn WLO is written as Blakeburn (c.1335) and Blakeburne (c.1424), and the lost name Blakebec near Howthad DMF appears in this form in the early thirteenth century (c.1218). Blackburn is also recorded in the forms Blakburne (c.1336) and Blakburn (1455), indicating that spellings without medial -e- were also acceptable during the same period, and Blakburn formations become increasingly more common from the fifteenth century onwards. The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue provides further examples, including Blakepol (c.1190), Blackedene (c.1200), Blackewel (1220, a.1227) and Blakeside (c.1270) (Craigie 1937: s.v. BLAK A, BLAKE a.).

The conservative nature of place-names means that they can be very useful as resources for the dating of sound-changes. A datable place-name or group of names can often supply a terminus ante quem or terminus post quem for a specific sound-change, or provide some insight into historical language contact. For
example, British place-name evidence has been used to calculate the likely dates of sound changes in West Norse by Eduard Kolb, who writes that ‘the forms of a language transplanted to another linguistic environment can help us to determine the chronology of historical sound change, because on colonial soil they may have preserved an earlier stage of development’ (Kolb 1969).

Place-names have been demonstrated to provide a useful supplementary source of historical data for linguistic studies, but there are fewer works which tackle the implications of the Scottish toponymic record than, for example, its Scandinavian and English equivalents. Scottish place-nomenclature remains, at present, a significantly under-used resource with the potential to yield much information which is directly relevant to the study of language change. In order to establish the areas of continuity between other sources of linguistic data and toponymic evidence, it may be useful to consider some typical examples.

In the Middle Scots period, the expected suffix of the present participle was -and, while -ing was used only for verbal nouns. The present participle hingand ‘hanging’, which may derive either from Old Norse hengj or Old English hangian, both meaning ‘to hang’, is used in place-names to indicate a sloping or steep hill-side. Hangingside WLO is written as Hingansydse (1551), Hingandsdie (1551), Hingansyd (1564) and Hingansyd (1607).\(^{26}\) Forms in -ing- only appear from the seventeenth century onwards, reflecting the more general processes of anglicisation which followed the Union of the Crowns; for example Hangingside (1667) and Hangingsydse (1691). The morphological changes in this place-name do not contradict the changes in Middle Scots lexis, and therefore support the argument that toponymic sources can be used to augment our knowledge of diachronic language change.

Similarly, developments in Scots phonology can also be traced in the historical corpus of place-name evidence. Prestonfield MLO appears as Prestisfelde (c.1375), showing the development of Old English prēost to prest. Later examples include Prestisfeld (1542, 1544, 1590), Prestisfeld (1590), Preistfeld (c.1509, 1657, 1672), and Preistfeld (1630, 1637, 1650), all of which show the development of the vowel of prest to /i/. Other later Middle Scots forms derived from Old English prēost also show pronunciations in /i/, as in Priesthaugh ROX (Preisthowch 1654). Priestinch WLO is Preistinche (c.1574) and Preistinsche (1577) but later spellings like Prestinche and Preistinshe (1642) show that pronunciations in /e/ were also available.\(^{27}\)

Nicolaisen has used place-name evidence to examine the shift from /n/ to /ŋ/ in unstressed syllables and the loss of post-vocalic -l after /ɔ/. Forms of the name Stirling STL in -lin, -line, -lyn and -lyne can be found alongside spellings in -ling and -lyng until the fifteenth century, when the -ng forms begin to become much more common, entirely replacing the -n and -ne spellings from around the late sixteenth century. Falkirk STL is derived from Old English fæg ‘speckled, variegated’ (which became Middle English fawe, fāzē) and Scots kirk ‘church’.
Forms with medial -l- do not appear in the earliest spellings such as Faukirk (1298) and Fawkirk (1391), and are only recorded from the middle of the fifteenth century. Forms in -l- may therefore represent ‘a hypercorrect spelling which only became possible or suggested itself after the -l- had been dropped in Scots, i.e. before 1458, the date of the first known Falirk spelling’ (Nicolaisen 1993: 312).

Nicolaisen notes that a similar pattern can be traced in a number of Bal- names, derived from Gaelic baile ‘homestead’. Further evidence for the introduction of this medial -l- can also been seen in historical spellings of other place-names in fāg, including Falside ROX, recorded as Faussyde (1296), but later as Falsett (1568).28 However, Fallsidehill BWK, which appears as Fassethill (1535) and Fasyde Hill (1654) has acquired its modern form through the introduction of -l- at a later stage, perhaps indicating a reshaping through folk-etymology.

CURRENT PROJECTS

In February 1996, in St Andrews, a conference on ‘The Uses of Place-Names’ saw many scholars from different disciplines explore some of the avenues open to toponymic studies. One of the outcomes of this conference was the founding of The Scottish Place-Name Society, which fosters co-operation between academics, local historians, researchers and those with a general interest in names.29 Further information can be found at the society’s web site (www.st-andrews.ac.uk/institutes/sassi/spns/).

One of the pioneers of the Scottish Place-Name Society is also the driving force behind the Scottish Place-Name Database, for which a Carnegie-funded pilot project has recently been completed. Dr Simon Taylor, of the University of St Andrews, has over the past few years, with expert technical support, been heavily involved in designing a database which is able to cope with the many different types of information associated with place-names. At present, the database contains details of about 8,000 place-names, and has the potential to become an invaluable resource for Scottish place-name research.30

DICTIONARIES, REFERENCE BOOKS AND FURTHER READING

At present, there is no comprehensive dictionary of Scottish place-names. Some attempts have been made to produce large-scale reference works, notably Johnston (1892) and Maxwell (1894), but these were written at a point when the study of Scottish place-names was very much in its infancy. The knowledge which can now be applied to the subject is much greater than it was over a hundred years ago, and many of the more exotic explanations can quickly be dismissed. However, had it not been for these early pioneers, Scottish place-name
studies would be in a much poorer condition today.

The best introduction to the subject remains Nicolaisen’s seminal work *Scottish Place-Names: Their Study and Significance*, first published in 1976 and now available in a new edition (2001). Nicolaisen has also written a substantial number of articles and chapters in books which are essential reading for any place-name student. For Celtic place-names, Watson (1926) is still regarded as a useful introductory text, even though many of the issues and etymologies he discusses have been subject to change and re-examination in more recent years. A number of general dictionaries of Scottish place-names are also available, although these are not comprehensive. Dorward (1995b) provides some introductory discussion for a large number of common elements, although he does not include historical spellings. Similarly lacking in chronological material is Darton (1994). It is axiomatic that all etymologies which are not supported by historical analysis should be treated with extreme caution.

Much raw data can be found in the archives of the Scottish Place-Name Survey, located within the Scottish Ethnology Section of the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University. Three theses written in the first half of the twentieth century also provide data in the form of geographical place-name surveys, although these are not comprehensive, and many of the etymologies would benefit from twenty-first-century scrutiny. These works are Williamson’s *The Non-Celtic Place-Names of the Scottish Border Counties* (1941), Dixon’s *Place-Names of Midlothian* (1947), and Macdonald’s *Place-Names of West Lothian* (1937). The study of Scottish place-names is not as advanced as the study of English place-names, largely because there are very few surveys of the individual counties of Scotland.31 Research students therefore have the opportunity to redress this balance, and in tackling the vast body of available material the Scottish toponymicon will be created.32

NOTES

1. As in the following chapter, the Scottish counties listed in this chapter are those used before the reorganisation of local government in 1974. A summary of the changes in the governmental organisation of Scotland is provided by the Department of Geography at Edinburgh University (www.geo.ed.ac.uk/home/scotland/localgovt.html).

2. The dating of the change in element order of Celtic place-names to the ninth century was established by Jackson (1953: 225–7).

3. This situation is further complicated by the fact that Gaelic *cnoc* was borrowed into Scots as *knock*, and so a modern spelling in *knock* may reflect either an original Scots or original Gaelic place-name.

4. See further Nicolaisen (2001: 140–1).

5. Coates (1987) looks at a number of processes relating to this form of language change.

6. In accordance with standard practice, unidentified or lost place-names are given in italics.

8. A recent example of a controversial publication on the subject is Cox (1999).

9. Confusingly, British P-Celtic place-name elements which occur in Scotland may appear in some texts with the labels 'British', 'Brittonic', 'Brythonic' (all three signifying P-Celtic spoken in the British Isles) and even 'Welsh'. For example, MacQueen (1990: 54): 'place-names provide fairly convincing proof that Welsh (Cumbriac), and therefore ultimately British, was the language of SW Scotland before the arrival of Anglian settlers in the seventh century'.

10. However, this element is also found in the north of Scotland: see Taylor (1994: 8–9) and Taylor (forthcoming) 'Place-Names of Abernethy [Perthshire]' in Pictish Reflections, to be published by the Pictish Arts Society.


12. For a recent discussion of the geographical distribution and morphological construction of place-names in tref and their significance, see Hough (2001b).

13. More accurately, the form Auchen- or Auchin- is from Gaelic achadh- plus the definite article which precedes the second element; see further Nicolaisen (2001: 161).


16. Place-names in -wick may be derived from either Old Norse vík or Old English wic, but few examples in Scotland remain ambiguous when early name-forms and known historical settlement patterns are taken into consideration.

17. While the term 'Grimston-hybrid' is still often used, many of the English places called 'Grimston' are no longer believed to derive from the personal name.

18. Fellows-Jensen (1990). She also offers the alternative view that these names may have been analogous formations, coined by Anglo-Scandinavians who travelled to Scotland in the twelfth century.

19. See the 'principal chronological periods in the history of Scots' (Robinson 1985: xiii).

20. Numerous examples can be found in early studies including Macdonald (1941), but it is also significant that while Nicolaisen (2001) has chapters on Scandinavian, Gaelic and English, the status of Scots is implied rather than stated. Part of the reason for this is the established model. For example, in Parsons, Styles & Hough (1997: xi): 'As is traditional in place-name scholarship, Old English forms are used as pegs on which to hang evidence from all dates'.

21. See further Robinson (1985), s.v. FARDEN, FARDING-LAND and PENNY-LAND.

22. As described in Adams (1976), s.v.; see further for other medieval measurements of land.

23. Early forms from Williamson (1941: 186) and Macdonald (1941: 79).


25. This theory is explored in Nicolaisen (1993).


28. Early forms from Williamson (1941: 142, 146).


30. See further in the edition of the newsletter of the Scottish Place-Name Society, Scottish Place-Name News, No. 11, Autumn 2001, p. 2.

31. County surveys have been produced by the English Place-Name Society since 1922. For a summary of the beginnings and developments in name-studies in the British Isles, see the introduction to Spittal and Field (1990).

32. I am very grateful to Philip Durkin, Anthony Esposito, Carole Hough, Joshua Pendragon, Tania Styles and Simon Taylor for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.