Methodology for Scottish Place-Name Studies

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Topics

- Survey of Scottish Place-Names (SSPN) protocol for research on Scottish place-names

- Coverage of Scotland using this methodology to date

- This presentation prepares you for the methodology task
  - See the handout

Recommended reading

- Simon Taylor, 'Methodologies in Place-name Research', in Carole Hough (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (Oxford, 2016), 69-86.

Place-name analysis: considerations

- Location
- Referent
  - What the name is (and was) applied to
- Language of origin
- Meaning
- Chronology
  - When the name was first recorded
  - When the name might have been coined
- The context in which it is first recorded
  - The source and its context, e.g. the mapmaker; the scribe
- Alternative names
- Pronunciation and stress

Place-name analysis: considerations

- Context in landscape (e.g. archaeology; geography; geology etc.)
- Cultural context (e.g. archaeology; folklore; history etc.)
- Use your own local and specialist knowledge from other disciplines

Location

- See the handout for detailed notes on how to determine the National Grid Reference (NGR) for different features, e.g. settlements; hills; lochs

- The main consideration is clarity for the reader

Referent

- Many settlement-names take their names from topographical features

- In these cases, the settlement-name is actually an existing name

- The NGR of the settlement is often not the same as the NGR of the topographical feature from which it takes its name

- Example
  - Settlement: Creag an Iubhair ~ Craignure ARG (NM716372)
  - Topographical feature: Creag an Iubhair ARG (NM717370)

Map Information

Map Product: [1:25 000 Scale Colour Raster](#)

Map Date: June 2024

Data Licence: [OS Digimap Licence](#)

Default Print Scale: 1:10,000

Map Projection: British National Grid (EPSG:27700)

Map Extent:

172887   738185

170072   736260

Grid Reference: NM 728 380

British National Grid: 172885, 738075

Lat/Long (Degrees): 56° 28' 47.5"N 05° 41' 23.4"W

Lat/Long (Decimal): 56.47986318 -5.68983710

Coordinate Capture:

Coordinate Capture

- Enable coordinate capture by moving slider to right.
- Click on a location on the map.
- The coordinate of the location will be displayed above.
- The button on right can be used to copy the accurate Decimal coordinates into the clipboard

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Craignure Bay

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Sruthan a' Dh'earna

Allt a' Chladha

FERRY SHIP Oban

Slipway

Craignure

Pier

Waterfall

Dam

PO

Camas Gaorsaig

Rubha na Sròin

Coille an Fhraoich Mhòir

PC

Pier

37

Guala a' Mheoraich

Pol Sta

21

Drumore

200 m

View: Neighbourho

Map Information

Map Product: OS MasterMap®

Map Date: July 2024

Data Licence: OS Digimap Licence

Default Print Scale: 1:1,250

Map Projection: British National Grid (EPSG:27700)

Map Extent:

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171528   736977

Grid Reference: NM 71880 37183

British National Grid: 171880, 737183

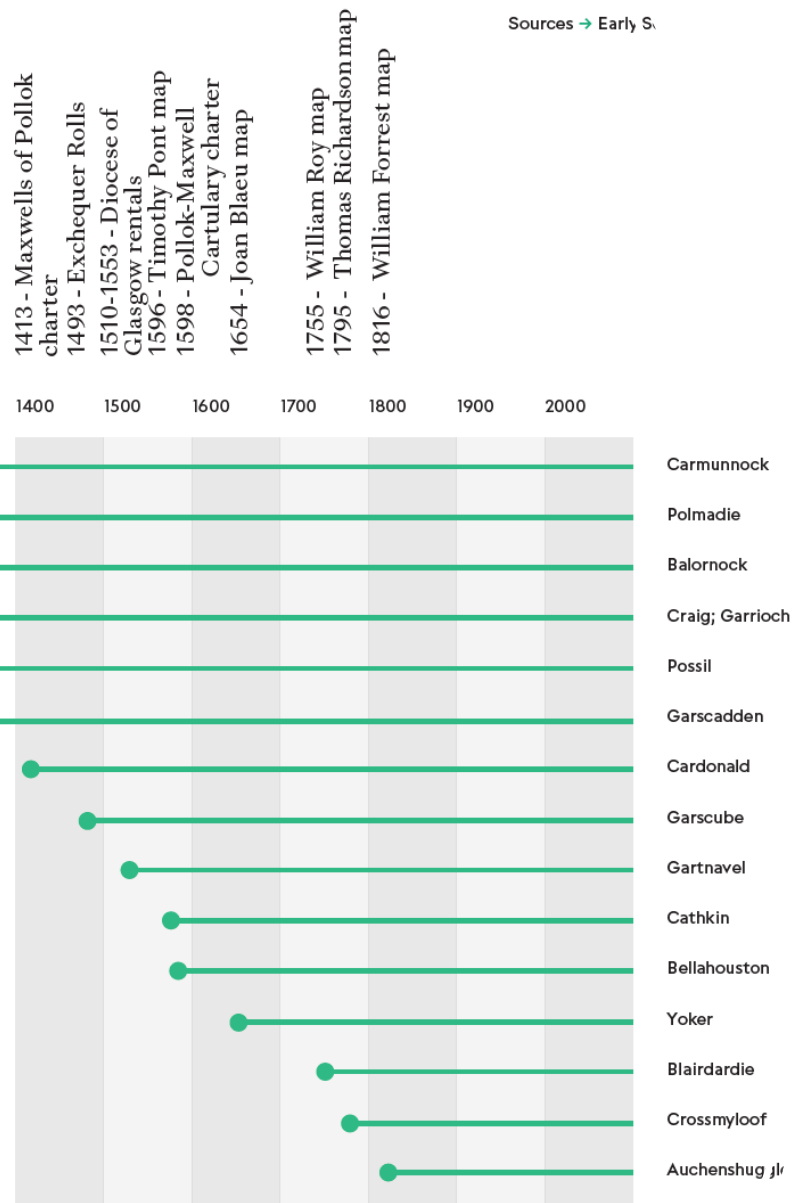**Lat/Long (Degrees):** 56° 28' 17.0"N 05° 42' 19.3"W

Lat/Long (Decimal): 56.47137716 -5.70534875

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Tourist Information Centre

PC

Car Pk

Corrylynn

An Roth Community Enterprise Centre

HM Coastguard Station

Dalriada

Creag an Lubhair

View: Plan

20 m

Sources → Early S...

Carmunnock
Polmadie
Balornock
Craig; Garrioch
Possil
Garscadden
Cardonald
Garscube
Gartnavel
Cathkin
Bellahouston
Yoker
Blairdardie
Crossmyloof
Auchenshug...

1413 - Maxwells of Pollok charter
1493 - Exchequer Rolls
1510-1553 - Diocese of Glasgow rentals
1596 - Timothy Pont map
1598 - Pollok-Maxwell Cartulary charter
1654 - Joan Blaeu map
1755 - William Roy map
1795 - Thomas Richardson map
1816 - William Forrest map

Alasdair C. Whyte, with Katherine Forsyth and Simon Taylor,
Glasgow's Gaelic Place-Names (Birlinn: Edinburgh, 2023), pp. 50–53

Chronology

- Earliest recorded place-names
- Useful for tracing which places were important during particular periods in the past
- However, other place-names used for years (sometimes centuries) before being recorded in written form in sources available to us
- i.e. earliest recorded name ≠ oldest name

Further reading:

Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Gaelic place-names in the earliest Scottish records', in Colm Ó Baoill and N. R. McGuire (eds.), *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 6* (An Clò Gàidhealach: Aberdeen, 2013), 223-245.

SSPN blueprint: survey entries

- Head-name
- Parish
- County
- Site classification code
- NGR (National Grid Reference)
- Accuracy level of NGR
- OS Explorer sheet number [no longer prerequisite]
- Altitude
- Orientation/ Aspect
- Early forms
- Etymological analysis [breakdown of elements]
- Discussion [critical analysis – discursive prose]
- Pronunciation

Parishes & Counties

- Use pre-1975 parishes and counties

- The norm for Scottish historians in general

- Why?
  - Important to analyse place-names within their earliest known administrative and territorial units
  - Pre-1975 units are starting point

Counties

- 3-letter county abbreviations can be found in at end of any volume of *The Journal of Scottish Name Studies (JSNS)*
  - 'County Abbreviations' in *JSNS* 15
- ScotlandsPlaces records presented by pre-1975 parish and county: interactive map
  - e.g. Ordnance Survey Name Books
- Statistical Accounts of Scotland also presented by pre-1975 parish and county

Parishes

- Parish recorded with head-name should be parish as shown on OS maps published after 1891 and before 1975

- Changes to parish and county boundaries in 1891 when County Councils first established; many medieval and early modern anomalies rationalised

- Source:
  - 3-letter parish abbreviations available via Scottish Place-Name Society website: https://spns.org.uk/resources/parish-list

Parishes

- Important to understand earlier parish history and analyse place-name within that context

- Note former parishes in your analysis of any given name where relevant

- Key sources:
  - *Origines Parochiales Scotiae* (Edinburgh, 1851-55)
  - Includes (part of) medieval diocese of Glasgow

Parishes: Recommended reading

- Ian B. Cowan, *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1967)

- Hay Shennan, *Boundaries of Counties and Parishes in Scotland* (1892)
  - Available via the ScotlandsPlace website: https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/dv/pdfs/hay-shennan

Parishes: NLS interactive maps

- Boundaries viewer: Interactive map showing boundaries of parishes, counties and unitary authorities in Scotland (*c.*1840s to the present)

- OS 6 inch 1st edn maps: Can view maps as seamless zoomable overlay layer on modern Google and OS maps; hovering over any given place gives us the following details:
  - Parish
  - County
  - OS 6 inch 1st edn map series sheet number
  - Date of survey
  - Publication date of map sheet
  - N.B. This is also an important source for historical forms

- Coloured parishes on OS 1 inch 2nd edn maps (1898–1904)

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Pol Sta
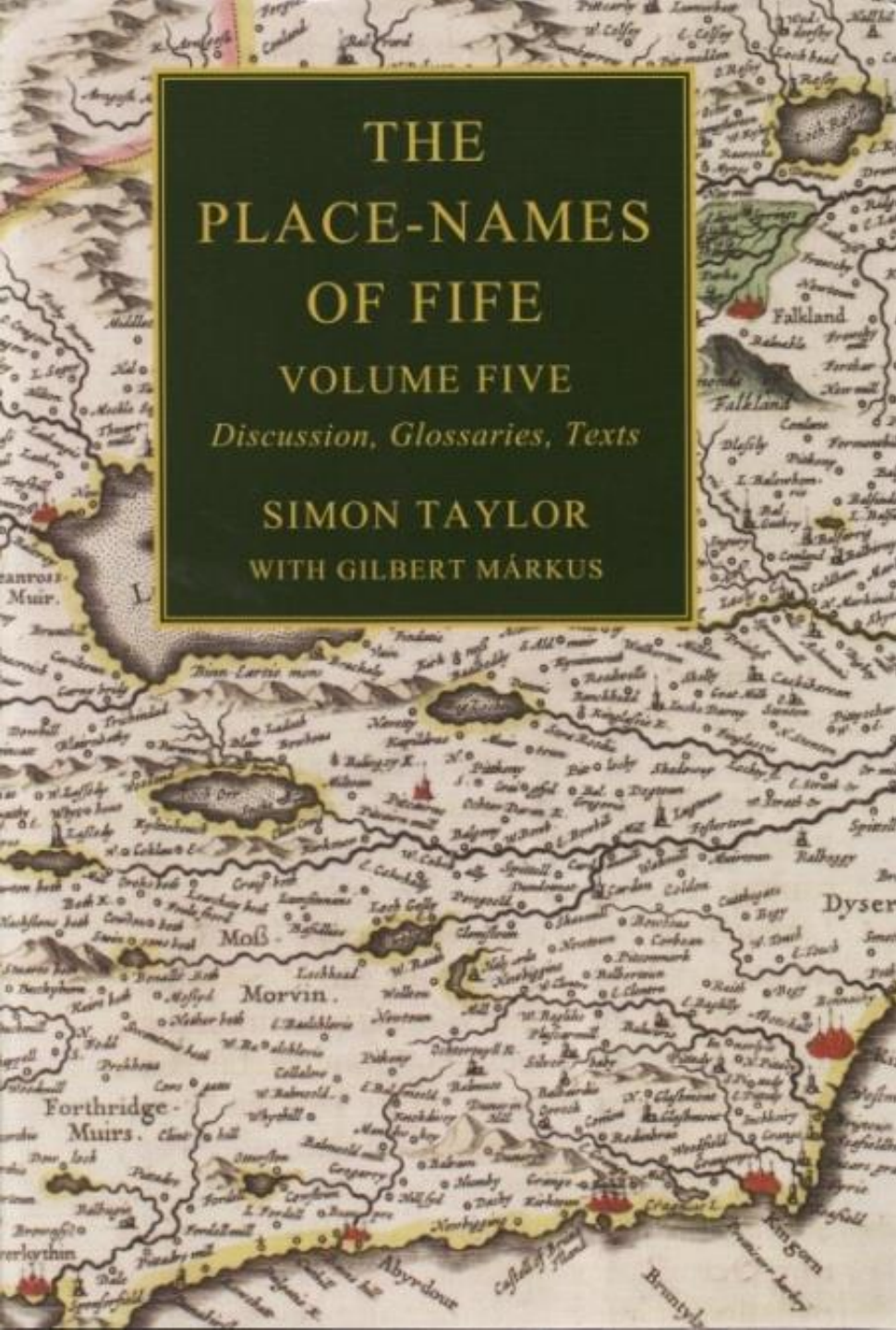
Guala a' Mheoraich

Drumore

200 m

Scottish place-name surveys: coverage to date

- [Regional Studies](#) on Scottish Place-Name Society website
  - Updated regularly

UofG Projects: establishing the blueprint

- 'The expansion and contraction of Gaelic in medieval Scotland: the onomastic evidence' (2006–10)
- Celtic and Gaelic, University of Glasgow
- Arts and Humanties Research Council (AHRC)-funded
- Project Team
  - Prof. Thomas Owen Clancy
  - Dr Peter McNiven
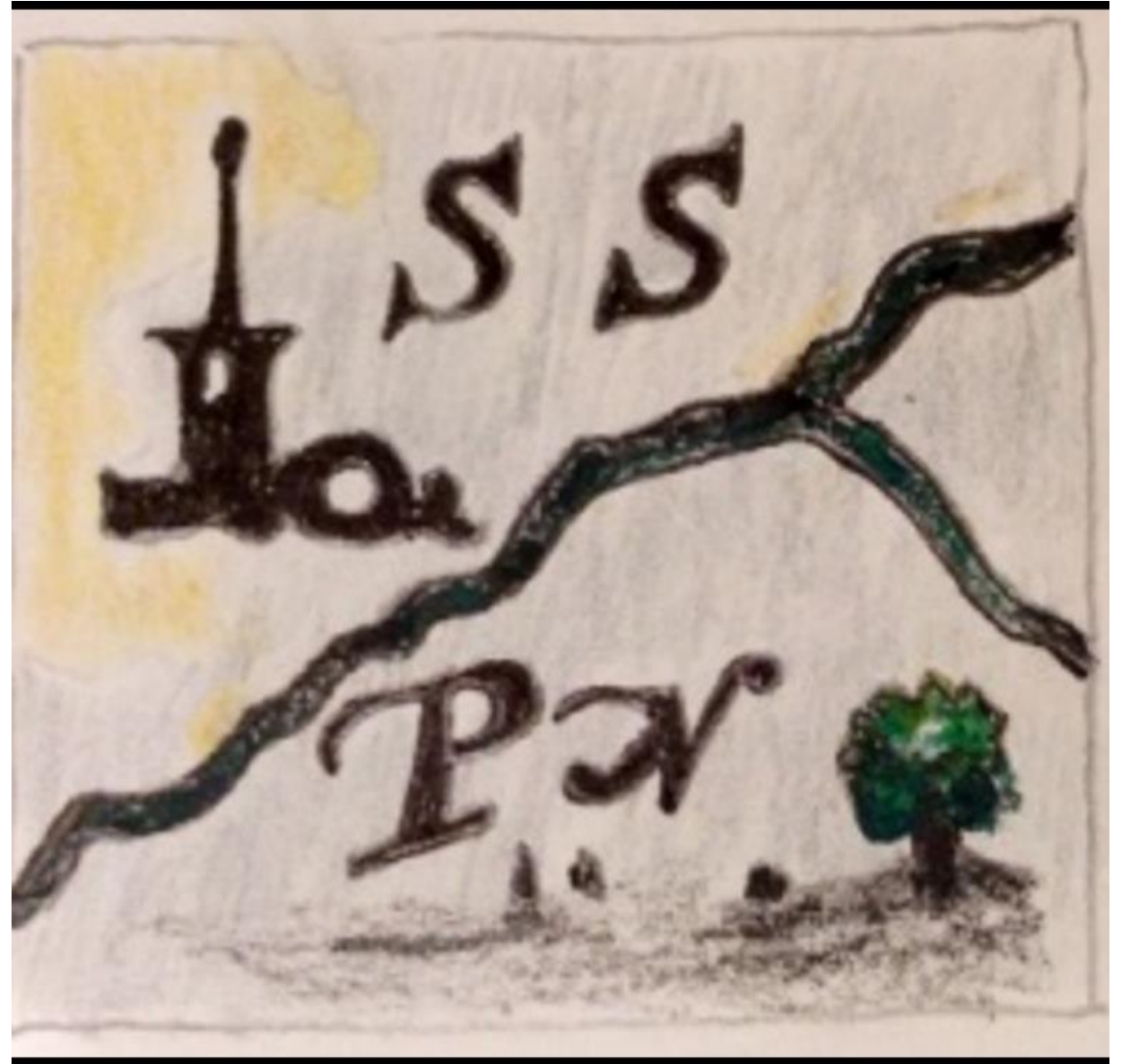 - Dr Gilbert Márkus
  - Dr Simon Taylor

Outputs

- Simon Taylor, with Gilbert Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife*, 5 vols (2006–12)
- Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: Advent and Expansion', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 167 (2010), 349–92

SSPN

- The Survey of Scottish Place-Names
  - Surveance o the Place-Names o Scotland
  - Suirbhidh Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba
- Director: Thomas Owen Clancy
- General Editor: Simon Taylor

SSPN vols

- *The Place-Names of Fife*, 5 vols (2006–2012)
- *The Place-Names of Bute* (2012)
- *The Place-Names of Kinross-shire* (2017)
- *The Place-Names of Clackmannanshire* (2020)
- Forthcoming:
  - *The Place-Names of Berwickshire*, vol. 1 (The Tweedside Parishes)
  - *The Place-Names of Iona*
  - *The Place-Names of Staffa*
  - *The Place-Names of Mull & Ulva* (4 vols)
  - *The Place-Names of Lanarkshire*, vol. 1
  - *The Place-Names of Perthshire*, vol. 1 (Menteith)

Other UofG place-name studies

- **The Berwickshire Place-Name Resource**
  - 'Recovering the Earliest English Language in Scotland: Evidence from place-names' (2016–19) (REELS)
- **Place-Names of the Galloway Glens**
  - Survey of 7 historical parishes in Kirkcudbrightshire (2018–19)
  - Part of Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership
  - Booklet published in 2023:
    - Gilbert Márkus, *Glenkens Place-Names: A Window on our Past* (Castle Douglas, 2023) [link]
- **Place-Names of the Coalfield Communities**
  - Part of Heritage Lottery-funded Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership
  - East Ayrshire

Other projects

- Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba
  - Online database
  - Authoritative information on Gaelic forms of place-names
  - Analysis and historical forms
  - Several digitised bilingual Gaelic-English publications [link]
    - e.g. Roddy Maclean, *Place-Names of Inverness and Surrounding Area: Ainmean-àite ann an sgìre prìomh bhaile na Gàidhealtachd* (Inverness, 2021) [link]

Scottish place-name surveys: coverage to date

- [Regional Studies](#) on Scottish Place-Name Society website
  - Updated regularly

Summary

- Established methodology in Scottish place-name studies

- Blueprint developed for Survey of Scottish Place-Names

- Several ongoing place-name surveys

Methodology: Task

Choose a place-name and find the following data for it:

- Head-name
- Parish
- County
- Site classification code
- NGR (National Grid Reference)
- Accuracy level of NGR
- Altitude
- Orientation/ Aspect

See the handout for detailed guidance.