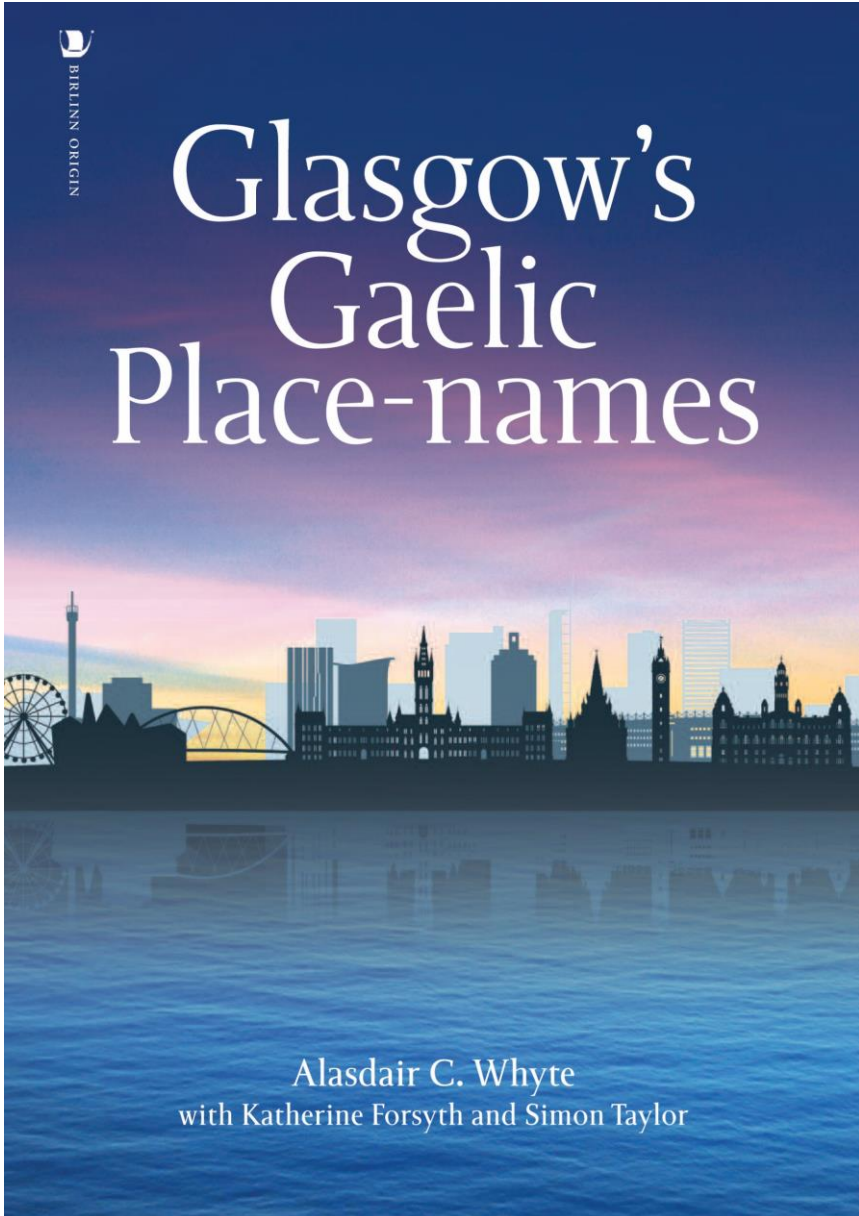




The place-names of Cathcart parish: supporting community-led research

Dr Alasdair C. Whyte (University of Glasgow)

Langside Community Heritage

March 2025

Overview of tonight's talk

- The value of place-names
- Working with place-names
- *Glasgow's Gaelic Place-Names*
- Local place-names
- Supporting community-led research

The value of place-names

- ‘to comprehensively understand a land, you have to understand the language of that land. This principle is central to the world-view and sense-of-being of native peoples who have named their landscapes in their own languages across the globe, but it seems to have been poorly appreciated in Scotland, where our children still, in general, graduate from an education system that largely ignores the toponymic riches that surround them’
 - Roddy Maclean (Ruairidh MacIlleathain), *Place-names of Inverness and Surrounding Area: Ainmean-àite ann an sgìre prìomh bhaile na Gàidhealtachd* (NatureScot, 2021)

Roddy Maclean, Roddy (Ruairidh MacIlleathain), ‘Ecosystem Services and Gaelic: a Scoping Exercise’, NatureScot Research Report No. 1230 (2021)

The value of place-names

- ‘Place-name studies and place-name researchers can do much to increase engagement with and understanding of the dynamism of local namescapes and the wide-ranging sources for place-names, as well as promoting and safeguarding local heritage.’
 - Alasdair C. Whyte, ‘The Cailleach in Place-Names and Place-Lore’, *The Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 14 (2020)

Working with place-names

- Protocol established by Survey of Scottish Place-Names (SSPN)
- Printed volumes
 - *The Place-Names of Fife*, 5 vols (2006–2012)
 - *The Place-Names of Bute* (2010)
 - *The Place-Names of Kinross-shire* (2017)
 - *The Place-Names of Clackmannanshire* (2020)
 - Forthcoming:
 - *The Place-Names of Berwickshire* (2025)
 - *The Place-Names of Lanarkshire*
 - *The Place-Names of Iona*
 - *The Place-Names of Mull & Ulva*

SSPN: Websites

- [Fife Place-name Data](#)
- [The Berwickshire Place-Name Resource](#)
- [Place-Names of the Galloway Glens](#)
- [Place-Names of the Coalfield Communities \(Ayrshire\)](#)
- [Iona's Namescape | Ainm-thìr Idhe](#)

Working with place-names

- Collect and analyse all the historical written forms of the name

Guess the name!

- *Aberbrudoc* 1189 × 1198 *Reg. Arbr.*
 - *Abirbrothoc* 1199 *Reg. Arbr.*
 - *Abberbrodoch* 1187 × 1203 *RM*
 - *Aberbrodoc* c.1202 *Chart. Lind.*
- etc.



Arbroath

Photo: kaysgeog, 'Marina: Arbroath SeaFest'; <https://flic.kr/p/6ResFa>

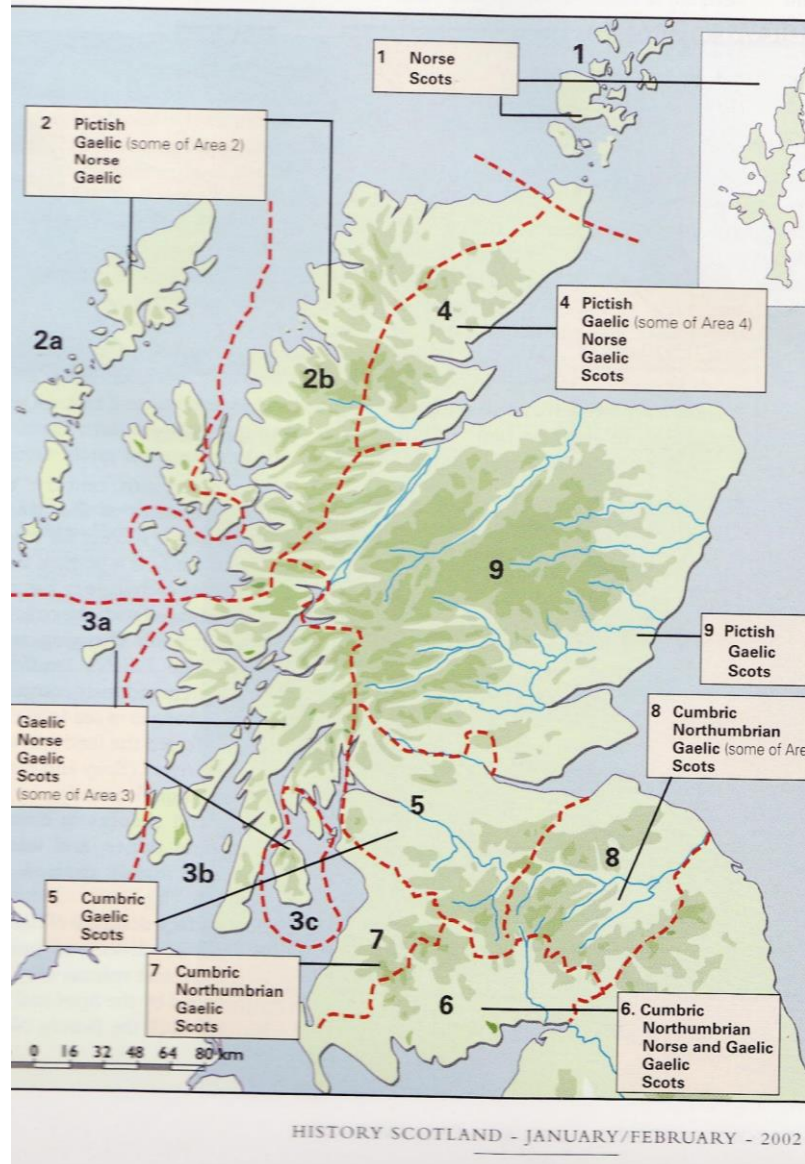
Arbroath

- *Aberbrudoc* 1189 × 1198 *Reg. Arbr.*
- *Abirbrothoc* 1199 *Reg. Arbr.*
- *Abberbrodoch* 1187 × 1203 *RM*
- *Aberbrodoc* c.1202 *Chart. Lind.*

- Meaning: ‘mouth of the Brothock’
- Origin: Pictish **aber* + existing name Brothock
 - Compare Welsh *aber* ‘river mouth, estuary, confluence’
- Brothock: Pictish **Brothoc* ‘wee hot one’
 - Compare Gaelic *bruich* ‘boil; boiled; boiling’ (as in Cail Bruich)

See William J. Watson, *The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*

The languages of Scotland



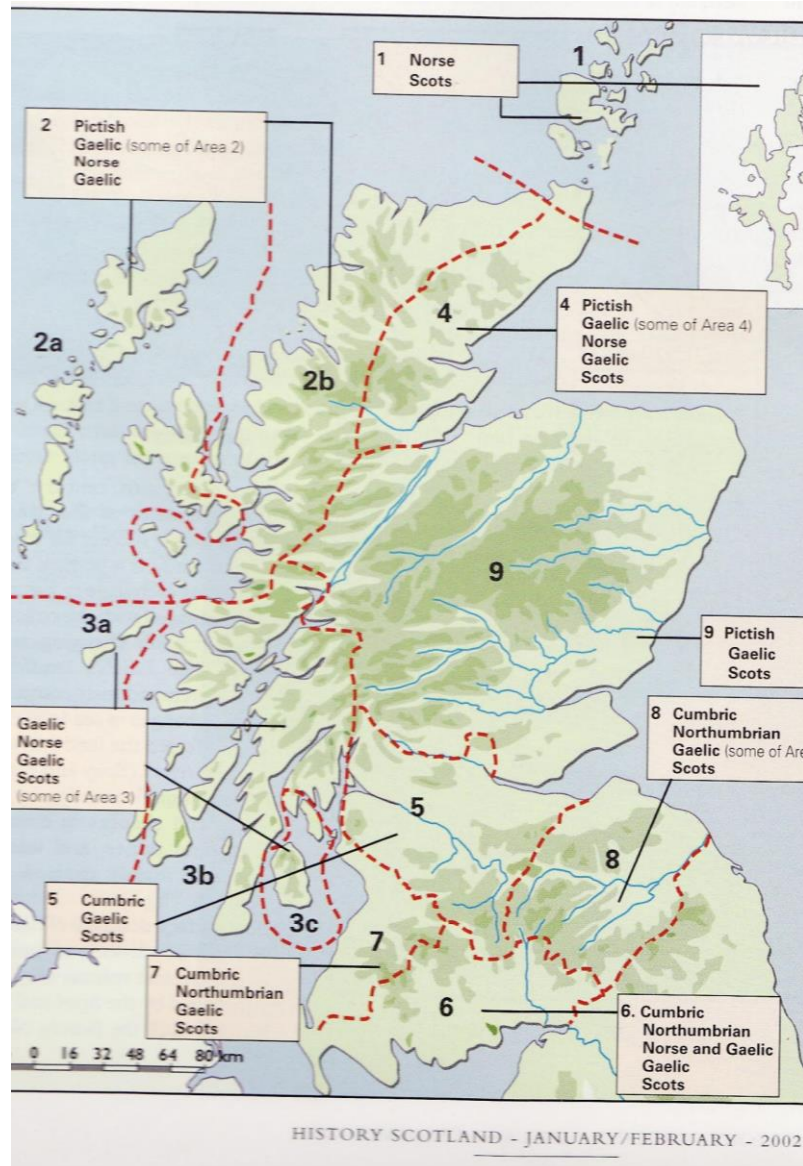
- Celtic languages
 - Pictish
 - Northern Brittonic
 - Gaelic
- Germanic languages
 - Old English
 - Scots
 - Old Norse

Simon Taylor, 'Reading the Map: Understanding Scottish Place-Names', in *History Scotland* (January/February 2002), 13.

The languages of Glasgow's place-names

- Celtic languages
 - Northern Brittonic (up to 12th century)
 - Gaelic (from 10th/ 11th century)
- Germanic languages
 - Old Norse (from 9th century)
 - Scots (from 12th century)

Simon Taylor, 'place names', in Michael Lynch (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (2001), 479–84.



Working with place-names

- Collect and analyse the historical written forms of names
- Collect and analyse local pronunciation of names (across languages where possible)

Pronunciation

- Pronunciation often more conservative than written forms – can shed light on origins
- Stress pattern in name can be indicative of origins
- Word order
 - Celtic languages: Stress typically on second element
 - Germanic languages: Stress typically on first element

Stress patterns: generics and specifics

- Generic element
 - Tells us what type of general feature the name refers to
- Specific element
 - Tells us what is special about that feature, i.e. what distinguishes one hill from another hill; one farm from another
- N.B. The specific element always carries the stress

Generics and specifics: examples

- Gaelic Baile Mòr ‘big township/ farm/ estate’
 - Gaelic *baile* ‘township; farm; estate’ + Gaelic *mòr* ‘big’ (as in Òran Mór)
- English/ Scots Newlands ‘new lands’
 - English/ Scots *new* + English/ Scots *lands*

Working with place-names

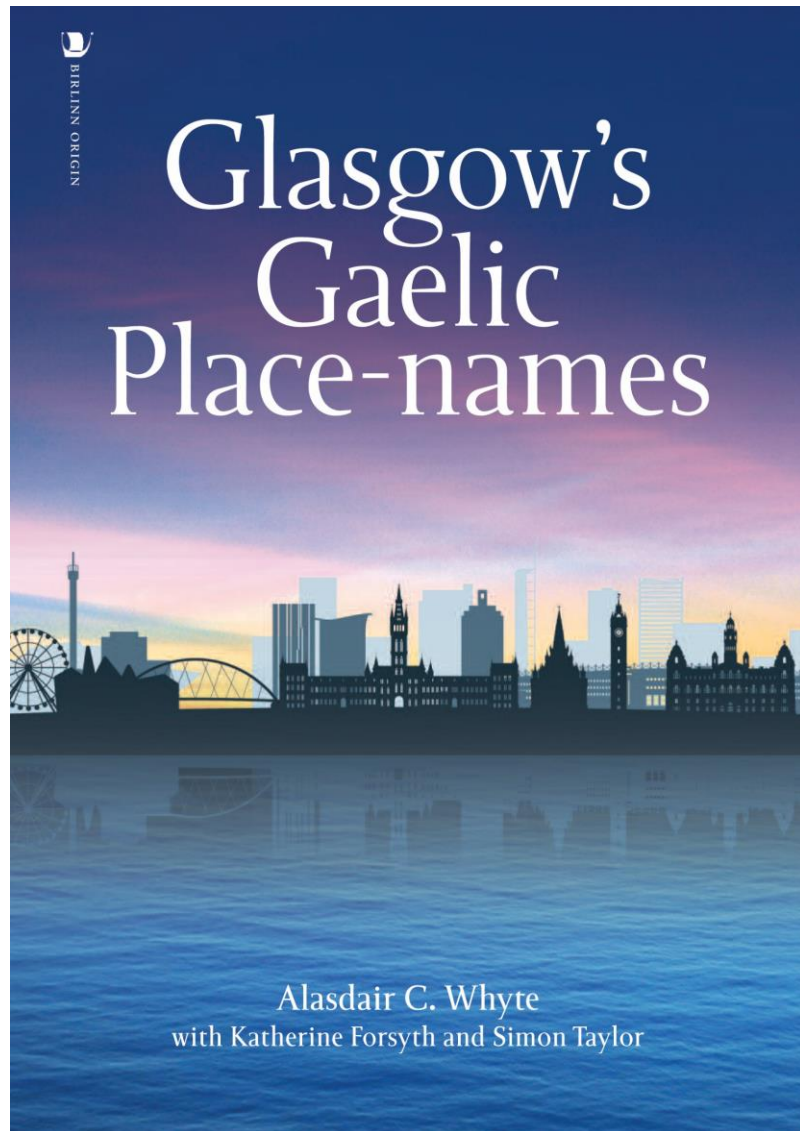
- Collect and analyse the historical written forms of names
- Collect and analyse local pronunciation of names (across languages where possible)
- Analyse local landscape

Working with place-names

- Collect and analyse the historical written forms of names
- Collect and analyse local pronunciation of names (across languages where possible)
- Analyse local landscape
- Analyse the context, e.g. history; geography; geology; archaeology; stories; songs etc.

Working with place-names: reading

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



Book sections

- Sources: Timeline
- The Place-Name Lab
- The Structure of Place-Names
- Place-Names and the Environment
- Archaeology (Katherine Forsyth)
- List of Glasgow's Gaelic place-names
- List of Glasgow's Gaelic place-name elements
- Map (Dress For The Weather)
- Analysis of 83 place-names



One Gaelic saying containing the word **gad** is **cho righinn ri gad seilich** – literally 'as tough as a willow rod'. The English equivalent is 'as tough as old boots'.

Another Gaelic saying containing the word **gad** is **cha chuirear gad air gealladh** – literally 'you cannot put a withy on a promise'. The English equivalent is 'a promise is not a handcuff'.

The Old Gaelic word **gat** (**gad** in modern Gaelic) was used of withies – the flexible, durable branches of the willow tree. It was also used of halters and fastenings made from these branches when twisted together. Later, the word **gad** came to refer not only to branches of willow but to branches of birch and heather twisted together and used in the same way. These rods were widely used in fishing and farming.

Garngad

Gart nan Gad

'enclosure or farm of the wooden rods'

Cathcart

- Historical forms
 - *Ketkert* 1161 × 1162 *RRS* i no. 184 [lands granted to Walter Stewart by David I; see also People of Medieval Scotland (PoMS) website, H1/5/60]
 - *Katkert* 1165 × 1173 *Pais. Reg.*, 5–6 [‘ecclesiam de Katkert’ (‘church of Katkert’); gift of church to Paisley Priory by Walter Stewart; see also PoMS, H3/547/13]
- Meaning: ‘woodland on the Cart’
- Origin: Northern Brittonic **cēt* + existing name Cart
- Cart: Possibly meaning ‘cleansing one’ from Old Celtic **cart*

Clincart

- Historical forms
 - *Clinkart* 1752 × 1755 *Roy* [William Roy's military survey]
 - *Clinkert* 1800 *Ainslie* [John Ainslie's *Map of the County of Renfrew*]
- Meaning: 'squinty brae of the Cart'
- Origin: Gaelic *claon* + existing name Cart
- Modern Gaelic form: *Claon Chairt

Crossmyloof

- Historical forms
 - *Crossmyloof* 1795 *Richardson* [Thomas Richardson, *Map of the town of Glasgow & country seven miles around*]
 - *Crossmyloof* 1800 *Ainslie*
- Meaning: 'cross or crossing of Saint MoLiubha'
- Origin: Gaelic *crois* + personal name MoLiubha
 - Compare Cille MoLiubha ~ Kilmalieu near Inbhir Aora ~ Inveraray
- Modern Gaelic form: Crois MoLiubha
- Lore: Scots *loof* 'palm of the hand'

Scots place-names

- Langside
 - *Langside* 1527
 - Scots *lang* + Scots *side*
 - 'long hillside'
- Merrylee
 - *Murlie* 1527
 - *Mureley* 1546
 - Scots *lea* + Scots *muir*
 - 'outfield beside/ on rough grazing land'

Research by Dr Simon Taylor (University of Glasgow)

Dripps

- Historical forms
 - *le Drep* 1161 × 1162 *RRS* i no. 184 [lands granted to Walter Stewart by David I]
 - *Haf-Threpland* 1384 *RMS* i no. 749 [King Robert II to John Lindsey of Dunrode]
 - *Drippis* 1478 *RMS* ii no. 1342
- Meaning: 'disputed land'
- Origin: Scots *threip* 'quarrel, dispute'

Future research

- Lots to be done!
- Particularly on Scots place-names
- Contact between speakers of different languages, e.g. Gaelic and Scots

Sources: collecting historical written forms

- *Origines parochiales Scotiae: the antiquities, ecclesiastical and territorial, of the parishes of Scotland*, eds. C. Innes, J. B. Brichan et al. (1851-1855)
- People of Medieval Scotland
 - <https://poms.ac.uk/>
- The Statistical Accounts of Scotland
 - <https://stataccscot.ed.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/home>
- National Library of Scotland
 - <https://www.nls.uk/>
 - Map Images
 - <https://www.nls.uk/>

ScotlandsPlaces

- ScotlandsPlaces
 - Cart Tax Rolls
 - Land Tax Rolls
 - Ordnance Survey Name Books
 - etc.
 - <https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/>

Sources: collecting historical forms - archives

- National Records of Scotland
 - <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/>
- Mitchell Library
 - <https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/venues/the-mitchell-library>
- University of Glasgow Library
 - <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/>
 - Archives and Special Collections
 - <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/collections/>

Sources: analysis

- William J. Watson, *The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926; rev. edn 2011)
 - No elements index in book but one is available via Scottish Place-Name Society
 - <https://spns.org.uk/>
- Wilhelm F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names* (1976; rev. edn 2001)
- Ordnance Survey guides
 - Gaelic
 - Scandinavian (Old Norse)
 - Scots
 - Welsh (relevant for Northern Brittonic)
 - <https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/guides/>

Methodology

- Collect and analyse the historical written forms of names
- Collect and analyse local pronunciation of names (across languages where possible)
- Analyse local landscape
- Analyse the context, e.g. history; geography; geology; archaeology; stories; songs etc.
- Analyse linguistic origins

Outcomes

- Increase our understanding of local linguistic and cultural heritage
- Safeguard local linguistic and cultural heritage
- Increase our understanding of the historical landscape
- Inform current and future land use and management
- Strengthen sense of place and community

'S bha roithean air a chliachean,
'N an sgiathan 's na chasan dheth.
Mo riaghailt, &c.

Do m' òrdugh cha stadadh e,
'S a phònair cha bhlaiseadh e;
Cha b' ionann e 's eich chòire
Le 'n connlach 's a phrasaiche.
Mo riaghailt, &c.

Bu cheudach an gearan e
Gu cliathadh 's an earrach leis,
'S thoirt dachaidh dhuinn na mònach,
'S an ròd às na cladaichean.
Mo riaghailt, &c.

ORAN

MU BHATA ARM A CHAIDH A THOGAIL ANNS AN
ACHA-BHAN, ANN AN GOVAN.

'S ann ort tha sròn na muice-bioraich,
'S toll mar uamh os cionn do shlinnein,
'S bho 'n is uabheist thu nach crionaich,
Dh' innis mi mu 'n d' fhalbh thu,

Gu 'n deachaidh t-àrach ann an *Geibhin*,
Le ùird stàinnean a's geinnean,
Tuaigh a's tàil, a's lochdair bheaga,
'S gheir iad thu le farachan.
'S ann ort, &c.

Cha chuir tàirneineach ort eagal,
Tha do chnàmhan mar an eithe,
'S thug iad stàilun dhuit mar eidinn,
Seasaidh tu air fairge.
'S ann ort, &c.

Cnàimh do bhroilich 's d' ite dheiridh,
Théid roimh sgeirean mar a bheithir.

Geibhin & An t-Acha Bàn

- Iain MacAonghais (John MacInnes)
- *Duain is Oran, le Iain MacAonghais (Earrghaidhealach) (1875)*
- 'A song about a warship built in An t-Achadh Bàn in Govan'
- HMS Invincible – launched 29 May 1869
- Melody: Ailean Dòmhnallach (Allan MacDonald), International Congress of Celtic Studies (2015)
- An t-Acha Bàn (An t-Achadh Bàn) ~ Fairfield

Geibhin

Gun deachaidh d' àrach ann an Geibhin

Le ùird stàilinnean is geinnean

Tuaigh is tàil is lochdair bheaga

'S gheir iad thu le farachan

'You were raised in Govan

with steel hammers and wedges

Axes and adzes and small planes

And they greased you with a beetle mallet'

Òran mu Bhàta Arm

**'S ann ort tha sròn na muice-bioraich
'S toll mar uamh os cionn do shlinnein
'S bhon is uabheist thu nach crìonaich
Dh'innis mi mun d' fhalbh thu**

'You have the nose of a porpoise
And a hole like a cave above your shoulder-blade
And since you are now a beast whose size will not diminish
I told your tale before you left'

Outcomes

- Increase our understanding of local linguistic and cultural heritage
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