

NOTES

- 1 J.G. Simms, 'The Restoration and the Jacobite war' in T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, eds, *The Course of Irish History* (Dublin, 1967), 216.
- 2 M. Wall, *The Penal Laws 1691-1760* (Dublin, 1961); J. Brady and P.J. Corish, *The Church under the Penal Code* (Dublin, 1971); Anon., *A Statement of the Penal Laws which aggrieve the Catholics of Ireland*, 2 pts (Dublin, 1812).
- 3 C. Gibblin, *Irish Exiles in Catholic Europe* (Dublin, 1971).
- 4 This and subsequent county references in brackets relate to the Ordnance Survey of Ireland 6":1 mile County series.
- 5 P.S. Dineen, *Foclóir Gaeilge agus Béarla* (Dublin, 1927), 744, defines *mín* as 'a smooth green spot on a mountain or amid rough land', while N. Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (Dublin, 1977), 861, describes it as a 'tract of grassland in mountain'.
- 6 *General Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland* (Dublin, 1861), 53.
- 7 Dineen, *ibid.*, 272, defines *cruach* as 'a symmetrically-shaped mountain'.
- 8 Dineen, *ibid.*, 1110, equates *srath* with 'a valley bottom, a holm', while Ó Dónaill, *ibid.*, 1154, defines it as 'river valley, low-lying land along river, strath'.
- 9 Dineen, *ibid.*, 978, defines *scoilt* as 'a cleft, a slit, a crack, a fissure', while Ó Dónaill, *ibid.*, 1058, equates it with 'fissure'. This term is very commonly employed to describe small rock-bounded fissures along the Donegal coast.
- 10 *General Alphabetical Index*, 764.
- 11 P.W. Joyce, *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, 4th edn (Dublin, 1875), 117-19.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 119.
- 13 Dineen, *ibid.*, 988, equates *screig* with 'rocky ground'. Ó Dónaill, *ibid.*, 1064, claims that it is a variant of *creig* which he defines (p.315) as 'stony barren ground'.
- 14 M. Wall, *The Age of the Penal Laws*, in Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, 228.

Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga: Place-name Study in the West of Scotland

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THROUGH the example of the name *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga*, by using it as a spring-board, this paper hopes to do some justice to the subject of the study of place-names in the west of Scotland.¹ The intention is to discuss what is involved in place-name study in this area, and to highlight some of the problems and questions which arise.

Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga: it may be apparent to many, if not most, readers, that the element *allt* is the Gaelic (G.) for 'stream', *loch* the Gaelic for 'lake' and that the remainder refers to a village on the west of Lewis, in English written *Dalbeg*. By virtue of the syntax, which is Gaelic, *allt* governs the element *loch*, as *loch* governs the remainder of the name, in the genitive. The rules of Gaelic syntax also imply that the elements *allt* and *loch* are definite, although no article is used, since the remainder of the name is itself grammatically definite. We should then translate the name into English as 'the stream of the lake of Dalbeg', although a more Germanic-sounding rendering would be 'Dalbeg-lake-stream'.

Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga then seems a rather obvious or transparent place-name. When we look at the names of a particular area it is of course good policy to deal with obvious names first. On the one hand, the work is relatively easy at this stage; on the other one can build up a profile of idiosyncratic features in the nomenclature. It is also best to air at the outset, so to speak, any immediate conclusions we may have an inclination to provide. At this point, homonyms provide potential danger. For example, the name *Cnoc an Allt* NB2145 looks suspiciously like 'the hill of the stream'. We should normally expect **Cnoc an Uillt*, however, with the genitive of masculine *allt*. One might consider the form was a corrupted **Cnoc nan Allt* with genitive plural of *allt*, but the local pronunciation and the occurrence of an identical name-form about 3km along the coast militate against such a consideration. Another solution might be that *allt* here is a *u*-stem noun, but there is no way of supporting such a view except to add that elements do survive in more than one declensional form in place-names. For example, *dùn* 'hill; fort' survives as an *s*-stem in *Beinn na Dúine* NB1941, as a *u*-stem in *Càrnán Dùn* NB2444, and as an *o*-stem in *Loch an Dùin* NB3954.² Similarly, we have to watch out for possibilities of variation in gender, although neither *allt* nor *loch* in

our name gives any indication of this. For example G. *beinn* 'mountain, hill' which one expects to be feminine, is apparently neuter, a gender lost in modern Gaelic, in the names *Beinn Cloich* NB2444 'the hill of the stone' and *Beinn Feusaig* NB2742 'the lush, or grassy mountain'. Returning to the name *Cnoc an Allt*, while both folk etymologies and maps interpret its final element as 'stream', it seems in fact most probable that we in fact have a borrowing here from Old Norse *holt* nt. 'knoll, hill (often stony and uneven)'.³ This derivation is suitable topographically. The element *holt* was certainly used by Norsemen, and occurs in the (now Gaelicised) names *Sgianailt* NB2037 and *Rathailt* NB2443 (both from an ON dative *-holti*).

The initial element in *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga*, however, no doubt means 'stream', although the one implied is a very small stream leading from a lake through a portion of raised beach to the sea. *Allt* can of course be found applied to a whole range of watercourses, both in terms of width and length. It is perhaps worth mentioning that we cannot assume either that a place-name element has only one application, or that any particular application will be relevant in every area. By way of illustration we have only to look at the example of G. *gàrradh* m. which could be found used of either a stone or turf dyke, an enclosure or the modern garden; of *achadh* m., used of a meadow, an enclosed field or homestead; or of *baile* m., used of a share of land, village or township. The same question arises with regard to name-forms derived from Old Norse. ON *vík* f. is found of a bay in the name *Uig* NG3963, of a bend in a river in *Uigseadar* NG4246, and in a form identical with the latter of a bend in a mountain-range (NG3649). ON *pollr* m. also seems to survive in three senses in the nomenclature: of the head of a sea-loch or bay, of a pool in a river, and of a fresh-water lake or pool.⁴ The same is true for words borrowed from Old Norse; for example G. *cleit* or *cleite* (feminine, though earlier masculine) from a dative masculine ON *kletti*. In Lewis the element is broadly speaking restricted to use in hills, in Arran to cliffs, while in St Kilda to the storehouses which still dot the slopes above Village Bay. Such evidence then should make us wary of sweeping assumptions with regard to the application of individual name-elements; etymologically and phonetically identical forms may turn out to have more than one application.

While it is understandable then that we should first tackle apparently easy, more transparent names in the nomenclature, we should always keep in mind questions regarding mistaken identity, declension, gender and application. Identifying more obscure elements

is fraught with difficulties, but we can return to some of the problems involved here at a later stage.

At the outset we briefly passed over the question of the syntax of the name, *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga*. This is straightforward, as we have seen. It is worth noting however that the number of syntactic structures found in Gaelic place-names in the west of Scotland is considerable. The basic unit we are dealing with is the simple noun phrase: a noun with or without adjectival forms, with or without an article. Examples of such simple structures are *Crodhair Mhòr* NB2749 'large *Crodhair' (to which we will come later) with noun plus adjective; *A' Bheinn Leathainn Mhòr* NB2137, literally 'the large broad mountain', with article plus noun plus two adjectives; and *An Glas Allt Beag* NB2445 'the little green stream' with article plus adjective plus noun plus adjective. More complex name-forms occur also where two or more simple noun phrases are juxtaposed, each in genitival relationship to the one preceding it. The natural limit to the number of noun phrases occurring here seems to be four. For example, we have *Cnoc Biorach Lochan Tioram* NB2645, literally 'the pointed hillock of the dry lake'; *Airigh Beinneachan nan Sgalag* NB2237, literally 'the shieling of the mountain of the servants'; and *Loch Dubh Druim Airigh nan Sithean* NB2637, literally 'the black lake of the ridge of the shieling of the knolls'.

The syntax of a name like *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* is of course fortuitously acquired. Furthermore, the syntactical analysis of a name only allows a synchronic approach based on the form of the name as we find it. If we wish to look at how the name has been put together, how it has developed, what the relationships between its various elements are, we have to analyse it from an onomastic point of view, we have to study its onomastic structure. Syntactically, *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* reads noun + noun + noun + adjective. From an onomastic point of view, an initial analysis distinguishes only two items, *allt* which is the generic or generic element, and the remainder which is the specific or specific element. In this case --*Loch Dhaile Beaga* is treated as a single specific unit. This will be appreciated once it is known that our stream runs into the sea out of a lake called *Loch Dhaile Beaga*. In effect, our name should be rendered 'the stream of *Loch Dhaile Beaga*', or '*Loch Dhaile Beaga*-stream'. We have the same onomastic structure in a name like *Loch a' Bhaile* NB1840 'the lake of the village', with generic (*loch*) + specific (*a' bhaile*). In the name *Loch a' Bhaile Tholstaidh* NB1938, however, we have a further qualifier (the genitive of the village-name *Tolstaidh*--a form borrowed from ON)

which modifies an already specified generic; more accurately we should say that the modifier qualifies the generic and specific as a unit. Here we might initially translate 'Tolstadh's Loch a' Bhaile'. Modifying elements in fact frequently have a contrastive function, and there are instances where the development of names in this way causes syntactical anomalies, for example in the name *Loch a' Bhaile na Dùine* NB1840, with genitive of the village-name *An Dùn* NB1840 'the fort', where two articles occur. This name we could similarly render as '*An Dùn's Loch a' Bhaile*'. There is a great deal more to the study of the onomastic structure of names, but suffice it to say that it is not always fully recognized in the analysis of names. This is a grave omission especially since such an analysis can reveal so much about chronology.

We can study not only the syntactical and onomastic structures of names, but also their semantic structure. We have already discussed some problems concerning the meaning of names. From dealing with the lexical meaning of elements we touch upon what Nicolaisen called associative meaning.⁵ This is really the semantic contour with which an element is imbued when it begins to be used in the onomasticon. The onomasticon can be defined either broadly, as the total sum of elements occurring in the place-nomenclature of a particular area, or more narrowly, as that core of the total number of elements which is most essential, i.e. most productive, in the naming process. With the narrower definition we run into all sorts of difficulties: does one distinguish between different parts of speech; what of lost names; and when was a particular element productive? Similar questions also arise with regard to the concept of associative meaning. It is one thing to accept that a range of elements applied to elevations, for example, could to some extent be represented on a semantic spectrum; it is another to try to build a model which would show not only the two-dimensional aspect of the interrelationship between elements, but also the third dimension of chronology.

The most important aspect here, however, is that of onomastic meaning. This may be entirely different from a name's lexical meaning, of course, but the etymologist in tackling place-names often ignores this. We could define onomastic meaning most succinctly by saying that it is what a place-name conveys through its function of denoting feature within location; onomastic meaning is to lexical meaning what onomastic structure is to syntactical structure. When we consider the name *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* from a lexical point of view, we arrive at a translation 'the stream of the lake of the little valley'. On an onomastic level, we can represent more or less

of the history of the development of the name as we please, translating 'the stream of *Loch Dhaile Beaga*, the lake of *Daile Beaga*, the little valley'. This not only allows us to recognise the onomastic significance of *--Loch Dhaile Beaga* and *--D(h)aile Beaga* in our name, but prevents us from ignoring the chronology of its development.

Closely allied to questions of semantic structure are aspects of place-name study associated with the use and users of place-names. In recognising restrictions, for example, on the use of name-forms or, say, a set of aliases, we can begin to identify sections of the community which do employ them. Here we are dealing with the status of place-names. A place-name's status depends on the degree of acceptance afforded it by a particular group of people, which is variable according to the function it has with regard to the group concerned. *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* is primarily restricted to a crofter user-group.

From this we come to the factors of reference and utility with regard to the function of names as they are created (with the finished article being the syntactical, onomastic and semantic structure of the place-names themselves). The reference factor is inherent in a name by virtue of its onomastic meaning; utility (revealing the function of the place concerned) is neither inherent nor obligatory.⁶ Here we may contrast our name, *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga*, with names such as *Cnoc na h-Athadh* NB1937 'the hillock of the kiln' and *Sloc na Braich* NB1842 'the hollow of the malt', which tell us something of the socio-economy of the area concerned. Self-evidently, borrowed names, e.g. *Laimiseadar* NB1842 from ON *Lamb-sætr* 'Lamb-shieling', can have no utility factor as the secondary (as opposed to primary) creations of the receiving user-group.

A link is often made here, between Gaelic and Old Norse user-groups, if only on a straightforward lexical level. In looking for Norse-derived forms commentators have frequently used the term tautology. Indeed, it crops up so often that it almost acquires a mystical quality. However, in considering a name like *Loch Bacabhat* NB2135, if we were to strike out the Gaelic element *Loch* because it is tautologous with the second part of the final element (which derives from ON *vatn* nt., cognate with Eng. *water*), we should be making a number of errors. In the first place, we should be making the implicit assumption that *vatn* was comprehensible to Gaels. We should, secondly, be imbuing the etymologically distinct parts of *--Bacabhat* with a life of their own. We should, thirdly, be treating the name from a semantic point of view merely on the level

of its lexical meaning; and, lastly, from the point of view of its onomastic structure, we should be treating it synchronically.⁷

Though it amuses to talk of names like *Allander Water* (Stirlingshire) as meaning 'water water water' and *Clach Eilistean* NB1942 as 'stone stone stone', it does little to promote our understanding of the development of names. If anything, it should prompt the question of how such forms arise. The answer to this question reveals how in fact names move, or can move, onomastically as well as geographically, and leads us to the concept of transference. Here the feature is considered a notion with temporarily free distribution within its location, with onomastic meaning consequently available for redefinition. The process implies a temporary loss of onomastic meaning, and since this concerns function we find the answer to why transference takes place by inquiring into the practices, or changes in them, of the user-group concerned. Just as the name *Am Both* NB2243, which means 'the bothy' on the level of lexical meaning, could not onomastically mean a hill (which in fact it does) if both lexical and onomastic meaning were the same; so the name *Loch Bacabhat* could not be coined by some user-group or other of the lake in question while a name **Bacabhat* survived of the same lake within the name corpus of the same group. We should view the name *Loch Bacabhat* then as meaning 'the lake of **Bacabhat*' and as consisting of generic + specific, with the specific an erstwhile name, or *ex nomine* unit, for the same feature, and one which must have been transferred, onomastically at least, before the creation of our name. Although the form **Bacabhat* developed phonologically from an ON nominative or accusative *Bakkavatn* lexically meaning 'the lake of the slopes' which was borrowed by Gaels, it was used in the formation of the name *Loch Bacabhat* for the purpose of reference alone.

Fortunately or not, the name *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* has not undergone transference. At this point, however, we should note an important difference between the names *Loch Bacabhat* and *Loch Dhaile Beaga* (the latter, of course, at some point being used as a specific in the creation of the name *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga*). This is that initial mutation of the specific in these two names is not consistent.

Examples of place-names where initial mutation, or lenition, may occur are with radical (i.e. nominative or accusative) singular feminine nouns after the article, e.g. *A' Pheithir* NB1743 'the rift'; genitive singular masculine nouns after the article, e.g. *Loch an Fhraoich* NB2336 'the lake of the heather'; dative singular masculine and feminine nouns after the article, e.g. *A' Bhàir* NB 2542

'the cattle-track'; nouns constituting the second element of a grammatical compound, e.g. *An Cùl Phort* NB2132 'the rear landing-place'; nouns after certain prepositions; genitive plural nouns with no article;⁸ genitive singular nouns (with no article) with an adjectival function after feminine nouns, e.g. *Airigh Choinhead* NB2140, literally 'the shieling of looking'; and genitive singular masculine personal names—to deal only with nouns. In some cases, of course, we also have to deal with exceptions to the rule. These are normally for phonetic reasons, but some apparent anomalies are in fact due to names surviving in oblique case-forms only, or to specifics derived from names surviving in radical case-forms.

ON borrowed forms are also generally lenited when used as specifics of new names, except in very early forms like *Loch Bacabhat*. It appears that, in the west of Lewis at least, *ex nomine* units created by Gaels are unlenited except in more recent names and, considerably earlier, for a period of time on the analogy of the treatment of *ex nomine* units created by Norse speakers. The lenition of *Daile Beaga* in *Loch Dhaile Beaga* appears to indicate a fairly recent name.

Though different forms of analysis in studying place-names and collating the evidence they afford us must often be carried out concurrently, even simultaneously, we have now moved on from questions of structure and entered the realms of morphology and phonology. Building up a profile of either common or uncommon features here helps not only in the verification of interpretation, but may also be of significance later on with regard to the question of etymology.

Along with questions of lenition, we briefly mentioned case-forms; we should also be interested in inflexion, plural terminations, suffixes and the use of prepositions. Aspects of these may prove useful in several ways. Of prepositions, their use to denote spatial relationships has been entirely superseded by the use of the genitive case. For example, instead of names such as *Eadar Dhà Loch* NB2133 'between two lakes' and *Cnocan Ma Lèig* NB2135 'the hillock by the brook', we have *Bealach Caol a' Bhalla Ghuirm* 'the narrow pass ABOVE (lit. of) *Am Balla Gorm*' and *Cnoc na Crìch* NB1941 'the hill BESIDE (lit of) the boundary'. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* could be rendered 'the stream FROM (lit. of) *Loch Dhaile Beaga*'. Names which include prepositions are rare in Scotland, and generally point to an archaic stratum of names. On the other hand, the name *Lian' air na Shuidh an Duine* NB2644 'the meadow the person sat on', as a polite alias for *Liana Sgàrd* which is popularly etymologised as 'the

meadow of diarrhoea', seems likely to be relatively late. (In fact, the sense of *sgàrd* here is more likely to have been 'scree, or shingle'.⁹

On the phonological front we have to consider interchange, dissimilation, projection and metathesis etc. of consonants; the reduction, intrusion and loss of vowels; as well as the development of sounds from one language to another. Of particular interest with regard to the last point is the development of sounds from Old Norse to Gaelic. Much work has been carried out here, and that of scholars such as Magne Oftedal has proved invaluable.¹⁰ In many instances, in reconstructing Old Norse forms from modern Gaelic pronunciations, we can be comfortably confident of success. The pitfalls, however, are many, not least because long Old Norse forms of four or more syllables have usually been pared down to just three in modern Gaelic.

Just a couple of examples should suffice to illustrate some of the difficulties involved. The name *Ceadraised* NB2137 [k'h^hɛdrɪ,ʃɑL] applies to a small range of mountains in the township of Tolstadh a' Chaolais in Lewis. The documentation, the little there is, is of no help. The form probably derives from ON *Ketilsfjall* with genitive singular of the man's name, and nominative or accusative of *fjall* nt., 'Ketill's mountain'. While ON orthographic *k*, *sfj* and *ll* in this context could be expected to yield an aspirated palatalised velar plosive [k'h^h], a palato-alveolar fricative [ʃ] and a velarised dental lateral [L] respectively, we still have to accept metathesis of *il*, and the subsequent change of *l* to *r* after the dental.

The village and township-name *Barbhas* NB3649 [bàrà,vas] also comes from Lewis. In the documentation the initial is on one occasion *p*; in some instances the svarabhakti vowel is represented orthographically, by *a*; and the bilabial fricative is either rendered according to Gaelic orthography as *bh*, or as *v* or *u*. Oftedal suggests a derivation from ON *Borgóss* 'the mouth of *Borga*' with masculine *ass* and genitive of a river-name *Borga* (probably a derivative of *borg* f.).¹¹ The sense of *borg* here is not clear: it might refer to a hill-fort or to a hill used for such a fort, or simply 'hill, mountain'.¹² However, regarding the phonological development, the bilabial fricative [v] for ON *g*, here a voiced velar fricative [ɣ], is not very satisfactory. A plausible alternative is ON *Hvarf-ós* acc. 'the outlet of the bend' with the stem-form of ON *hvarf* nt., a derivative of the verb *hverfa* 'to turn, swing'. *Hvarf* is found frequently in stream-names in Norway, e.g. *Bækkevar* ON *Bekkarhvarf*, but it is also used of headlands around which a sail

would gybe.¹³ There is no suitable promontory here, but there is a candidate for *hvarf* in the sense of 'bend' in the river flowing into the north end of a lake in the village. In light of this, we might also consider a derivation from ON *Hvarf-ós* 'Hvarf-ó-outlet' with a river-name in final -*ó* f. 'a river, or stream'. ON *hvarf* is also found in the Gaelic name for Cape Wrath, *Am Parbh*, where the Old Norse initial *hv-* [Φ] has been treated slightly differently. In the name *Am Parbh* we have the initial Old Norse voiceless bilabial fricative [Φ], via a voiceless labio-dental fricative [f], being delenited to an aspirated bilabial plosive [ph]; in the name *Barbhas*, on the other hand, we have the voiceless bilabial fricative [Φ], either via a voiceless labio-dental fricative [f] or a voiced bilabial fricative [β], yielding a voiced labio-dental fricative [v], in turn delenited to an unaspirated plosive [b].

Ultimately we have to anticipate all sorts of eventualities in the interpretation of name-forms or their individual elements. For example, the form **Crodhair* referred to earlier is derived from a disyllabic plural ON form, *Króar* 'the folds, or pens', its radical form *kró* f. itself a loan from Early Irish *cró*. The form *-D(h)aile-* in our name is also a loan-word, and despite the fact that the final part of the name has so far been lexically interpreted, for convenience, as 'the little valley', it is also a plural form.

Oftedal in fact took the element *daile* to be a loan-name from Old Norse,¹⁴ but in doing so it is impossible to reconcile the lenition and inflexion of the following adjective (*beag*) in radical and genitive forms: *Daile Beag*, genitive and lenited *Dhaile Beaga*. Similar questions are raised with the adjacent village-name, *Daile Mòr*. In fact the evidence points to the following development: ON *dali*, dative of *dalr* m. 'a valley', is borrowed into Gaelic as an appellative (and this is attested independently); the adjacent valleys are named collectively, in Gaelic, **Daile* 'the valleys', with archaic vocalic plural ending (survivals of which are also attested elsewhere); and at length the two parts of the area were distinguished by use of the adjectives *mòr* and *beag*, 'large' and 'small', respectively, i.e. **Daile Mòra* and **Daile Beaga*, both of which retained plural forms. Subsequently, however, a later plural form was used to refer to the two parts collectively, i.e. *Na Dailean*—which is still in use today—while the archaic **Daile Mòra* and **Daile Beaga* came to be treated as if they were singular. Today, however, in the genitive, they still retain traces of their older plural forms.

Once we have analysed the structure of our names and identified their elements, we have to deal with the body of borrowed material, whether from Norse, Gaelic, English or any other language.

On the one hand we have loan-words, i.e. items borrowed as appellatives (and here we can include personal-names), and on the other we have loan-names, i.e. borrowed place-names already created and used by members of another user-group (here definable by language) which, as we have seen, can themselves be analysed and stripped for their elements. What we are approaching is the classification of elements. Until now, the significance of forms or features of the nomenclature or of items in it has been almost exclusively linguistic. However, at this point onomastics takes us into direct contact with other disciplines.

If the nomenclature of a particular area is defined, say, as Gaelic, we cannot willy-nilly include in a classification of the onomasticon, for reasons discussed already, items found exclusively in loan-names; these will have to be treated separately. On the other hand, loan-words are an integrated part of the onomasticon. They have to be dealt with as part of the onomasticon and also as evidence of external influence, whether in purely linguistic, socio-economic or any other terms. In tackling the Gaelic onomasticon of an area on the west of Lewis, I used a number of divisions or sections for the purpose.¹⁵ After treating elements either identifying or descriptive of natural features, the following were used: flora and fauna; anthroponomy; settlement; cultivation; husbandry; fishing; trades, crafts and other occupations; law, custom and belief; and, lastly, political history and institutions. We can, of course, expect different results from different areas in the west of Scotland. For instance, on the west of Lewis, in a sub-category for trees, there were the elements *craobhag* and *daireag*, both with the sense of 'copse'; possibly also *sprumhag* with similar sense; *gasan* of a thicket, and possibly *buinneag* in the sense of 'sapling, or shrub'; finally, the one tree-name, *giuthas* 'pine', in the name *A' Choille Ghiuthais* NB1944 'the pine wood'. This name onomastically means a certain part of a bay called *Loch nan Geàrrannan*; here, at low spring-tides, the roots of pine trees can be seen. In and around Glen Orchy in Argyllshire, however, we have of tree-names alone *beith* 'birch', *calltainn* 'hazel', *caorann* 'rowan', *critheann* 'aspen', *cuileann* 'holly', *darach* 'oak', and *feàrn* 'alder', as well as *giuthas* 'pine'.

In due course we turn to the question of chronology. The dating of names is notoriously difficult—understandably so, especially when we are dealing with the pre-historical period. The dating of names or groups of names may be absolute or relative. Absolute dating is arrived at by supplying *termini ante* and/or *post quem* deduced from documentary, traditional or linguistic sources, etc.

Relative dating is a process whereby a name or group of names can be seen as early or late in relation to some other. Frequently name-forms are dated using these techniques in tandem: form α is relatively earlier than form β ; and since β is datable to post n , α must date from n or before.

The type of criteria involved in the dating process can most practicably be described as external or internal. Of the former, we might have documentary evidence from maps and other sources showing early citations. We should also include historical events, political or ecclesiastical, features of demographic movement, local tradition and mythology, etc. On the other hand, internal dating criteria are all of a linguistic nature and involve aspects of name-structure (onomastic, syntactical, and semantic) and of morphology, lexis, and phonology. Some of the broadest criteria (broader criteria giving correspondingly broader dating bases) will include questions of *ex nomine* units, i.e. erstwhile names employed as specifics in the creation of new names, and the occurrence of loan-names and loan-words; while the narrowest criteria are frequently of a morphological or phonological nature. Indeed, some criteria can prove to be entirely useless in either absolute or relative dating terms. For instance, with regard to a name whose onomastic meaning has been transferred, in the absence of any other dating criteria, we can only say that it is older than yesterday; but while this merely states the obvious, the fact that transference has taken place does at least prove it.

In developing a chronology for a nomenclature, it is logical to begin with those criteria which affect the most names the most consistently. An obvious starting-point in much of the west of Scotland would be with loan-names, particularly those from Old Norse. The dating process here is partly absolute, partly relative. If we use the example of Old Norse loan-names, name-forms consisting wholly of ON loan-names can be dated to a period of Norse name-productivity; while those merely containing loan-names, among other elements, would be datable either to this period or to any of the following centuries. Although the criterion allows us no more precise a dating, the results can be of considerable value and significance. For example, on the west of Lewis, just over a fifth of the nomenclature comes into one of these two categories. The same process could then be carried out with regard to loan-words. On the west of Lewis the final result of this exercise shows over a third of the nomenclature to be datable with certainty to the centuries after the first Norse settlement of the area: out of nearly 3000 names nearly 1300 contain ON loan-names and/or loan-words.

Yet while the figures are at first sight impressive, the names involved are nominally still only datable to within a millenium or more: only unqualified names consisting wholly of Norse loan-names could be accurately dated to a period during which the Norse language was being spoken in the area: and there are only 128 of these.

Continuing to draw 'chronological isoglosses', the same technique could be used on the nomenclature with respect to its loan content from other linguistic groups. This, particularly with English loans, would not necessarily prove to be as straightforward a task as in the case of Norse loans. External criteria may be essential here in helping to define a chronological marker. A further way, however, in which to deal with the nomenclature as a whole is by applying the criterion of the *ex nomine* unit. The onomastic structure of names reveals the history of their development: thus the name *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* is younger than the name *Loch Dhaile Beaga*, which in turn is younger than the name *Daile Beag*. Using this criterion, however, the initial result gained is a profile of the individual name, or pairs of names where contrastively modified name-forms are concerned, rather than a series of chronological periods into which groups of names clearly fall.

Continuing to use the example of the west of Lewis, in order to give an appreciation of the effects of these techniques, we find nearly a third of the nomenclature, almost 1000 names, contains *ex nomine* units. Combining this result with that of the analysis of the loan content of names, nearly 700 of these are shown to contain loans. Although the dependent name, i.e. a name created by using another name as specific, was no doubt plausible and productive as a name-structure prior to the advent of Norse settlers, the bulk even of those that do not contain loans is likely to post-date the Norse settlement period. On the other hand we can be certain that those that are modified or contrasted forms, like *Loch a' Bhaile na Dp̄ine*, are relatively late.

At this point, in superimposing these various chronological fields upon the nomenclature, we can begin to isolate potentially earlier name-structures; at the same time, it becomes less appropriate to speak in terms, say, of pre- and post-Norse chronological values.

Forms which remain unaffected by the use of those dating techniques so far employed potentially belong to the earliest chronological strata represented in the nomenclature. A next logical approach, still affording a fairly broad dating base, is to analyse this remaining group of names according to onomastic and, secondly, syntactic structure. The relative chronology established here is for

name-structures rather than for the names themselves—an important distinction.

Of the earliest strata we have structures exemplified by the name *Bratag* NB1843 'steep place' (consisting of a loan from the ON adjective *brattr* and the suffix *-ag*), *Glas Allt* NB2346 'the grassy-banked stream', and *An Cùl Phort* NB2132 'the rear landing-place'; potentially as early but continuing in productivity are those exemplified by *An Abhainn* NB1840 'the river', *Beinn Riabhach* NB2832 'the tawny mountain', and *Aird Fhraoich* NB2547 'the heathery headland'; there are early examples of the type shown by *Loch nan Leac* NB2739 as well, but it can generally be considered, by virtue of the use of the article, as gaining ground later in the day. While a number of other structures can be seen as variations of and following upon the last, finally we have the development of the modified and, later still, the contrastive name-form.

Criteria used for dating purposes have so far been broad. Examples of narrower criteria are the survival of neuter forms; archaic plural and case-forms; instances of, or the absence of initial mutation; and phonological phenomena. Finally, here, we could add the locational distribution of identical or related name-forms or elements; but with the caveat that we must be very sure of our linguistic ground before carrying out such an exercise. In this regard, I have argued elsewhere that, on purely linguistic grounds, the overall picture of the chronological distribution of the ON elements *staðr*, *setr* and/or *sætr*, and *bólstaðr*, as put forward by Nicolaisen in his *Scottish Place-names*,¹⁶ is invalid.¹⁷ However, while we should recognise the conjectural element in conclusions drawn from locational distribution patterns, the question of distribution seems to be no less valid than any other narrow criteria.

From lexis to chronology then. A simple entry for the name *Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga* might read as follows:

Allt Loch Dhaile Beaga
NB2245

Township: Na Dailean, Isle of Lewis

[₁ aL̄t̄, L̄ox̄, ɣalə'beɣə]
'the stream of L.'

Documentation: OS 1848 Allt Loch Dhaile Béaga.

In conclusion, I hope it has been shown how even the easier, more transparent place-names are part of a complex whole—a nomenclature

whose study will continue to yield dividends if only we have the resources to pursue it.

BUCHLYVIE, STIRLINGSHIRE

NOTES

- 1 This paper was read at a symposium of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies at Govan, May 1989.
- 2 R.A.V. Cox, 'Place-names of the Carloway Registry, Isle of Lewis' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1987), I, 272 n. 2.
- 3 The locations and map-forms are as follows: NB2447 OS 1848 and 1974 Cnoc nan Allt; NB2145 OS 1848 and 1974 Cnoc an Uillt.
- 4 R.A.V. Cox, 'Descendants of bólstaðr? A re-examination of the lineage of bost & Co.', in *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, Ullapool 1988* (forthcoming, 1993).
- 5 W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'Words as names', in *Proceedings of the 12th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences 1976 (= Onoma XX [1977])*, 142-63, at 155-62.
- 6 R.A.V. Cox, 'Place-nomenclature in the context of the bilingual community of Lewis: status, origin, and interaction', in *Gaelic and Scots in Harmony: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Languages of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1988), 43-52, at 46-7.
- 7 See also the discussion of 'hybrids' in R. Cox, 'Questioning the value and validity of the term "hybrid" in Hebridean place-name study', *Nomina* XII (1988-89), 1-9, at 3-5.
- 8 R.A.V. Cox, 'Norse-Gaelic contact in the west of Lewis: the place-name evidence', in P.S. Ureland and G. Broderick, eds, *Language Contact in the British Isles: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on Language Contact in Europe, Douglas, Isle of Man, 1988*, Linguistische Arbeiten CCXXXVIII (Tübingen, 1991), 479-93, at 482-3.
- 9 Compare Bealach an Sgard and Bealach na Sgairde [*sic*] (A.R. Forbes, *The Place-names of Skye* [Paisley, 1923], 60, 63).
- 10 For example, see M. Oftedal, 'The Village-names of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides', *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* XVII (1954), 363-409.
- 11 Oftedal, 'Village-names', 376.
- 12 J. Sandnes and O. Stemshaug, *Norsk Stadnamleksikon* (Oslo, 1980), 76.
- 13 O. Rygh, *Norske Gaardnavne* (introductory volume) (Kristiania, 1898), 58.
- 14 Oftedal, 'Village-names', 374, 377.
- 15 Cox, 'Place-names', I, §11.
- 16 W.F.H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-names, their Study and Significance* (London, 1976), 87-94.
- 17 See R.A.V. Cox, 'The origin and relative chronology of shader-names in the Hebrides', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XVI (1990), 95-113, and Cox, 'Descendants of bólstaðr?'

1. The main activity of the past year has been the implementation of the recommendations approved by the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales to computerize the place-name material in the Melville Richards Archive at Bangor.

A feasibility study was undertaken and draft specifications considered following tests on a final selection of two software package systems. Unfortunately, progress has been delayed for a longer period than was anticipated by a fault in the equipment ordered. This developed when it was placed with a computer programmer who was to write the programme under which the place-name database is to run. Because the manufacturer failed to provide a replacement within a reasonable time, alternative equipment to the same specification had to be procured. The time which has had to be taken to test and programme the new equipment has meant that its installation at Bangor has not been achieved by the beginning of 1992 as had been hoped. It now appears as if it will be September/October 1992 before this can occur.

The structure of the Melville Richards Archive database has been tailored to function as the core of an all-Welsh (in geographical terms) national place-name database which will enable current and future collected material to be fed into the system.

The delay is regretted by all concerned, particularly as details of organisation, administration and financing cannot be adequately determined until the Bangor centre is operational.

2. The preparation for publication of Dr Hywel Owen's *The Place-Names of Clwyd*, Vol. 1, is virtually complete.

3. The Director and Associate Director have been assisting the Board of Celtic Studies in the preparation of a revised edition of the Board's *Gazetteer* (1957) edited by the late Dr Elwyn Davies.