

Pictish Place-Names as Scottish Surnames: Origins, Dissemination and Current Status

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The project on which this is an interim report¹ is a spin-off of two other undertakings, and the pilot study for a third. Of the first two, my *Concise Dictionary of Scottish Place-Names* has been in the making for eighteen years,² again and again posing the question of to what extent, and with what validity, spellings of place-names that have become surnames should be included in my inventory of early forms, especially after the fifteenth century when, in most parts of Scotland, surnames had become hereditary, and no longer reflected directly their lexical meaning—a man called *Smith* could now be a baker, someone with the name of *Wilson* could have a father named Peter, someone called *Cruikshanks* could have very straight legs, and someone answering to the name *Glasgow* could be, God forbid, from Edinburgh. It is, of course, the last of these four categories—surnames derived from place-names—which has caused problems in the selection of early spellings for my place-name dictionary and which will occupy our attention in this essay.

• It is also this class of surnames which plays a similar role in my second project, which is tangentially related to, or derived from, the first: *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Pictish Place Names*, which, still in its infancy, is intended to bring together all the available evidence that has survived concerning Scottish place-names of Pictish or partially Pictish origin.³ Here the question of the potential significance of surname spellings in the documentation and interpretation of

¹ Earlier versions of this report were read at the Annual Meeting of the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland at the University of Leicester, April 5–8, 1991, and the International Conference of 'Frontiers of European culture' at the University of Aberdeen, July 1–4, 1991, respectively.

² This was supported by a research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1983–1986.

³ Supported by a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, January 1 to August 31, 1991.

place-names becomes even more acute, because of the comprehensive nature of the project. It is also this particular, more limited, but also more intensive enterprise that has suggested the special slant of this paper.

It is, however, the third project, as yet only in its early planning stages and somewhat vague in my mind, that has provided the most immediate impetus for this exploration. It has been an old dream of mine, hardly articulated and certainly not anywhere near realisation as yet, to investigate the ways in which place-names have become, and now function as, surnames, i.e. to find out what happens when an item in one onomastic category is transferred to another onomastic category, from a toponymicon to an anthroponymicon, so to speak, losing in the process the characteristics and contents of the former, the place-name, and taking on the qualities and the contents of the latter, the surname, and this so completely that, even if its toponymic origins, its previous status as place-name, are still transparent (as in the name *Glasgow*, for example), they are not allowed to interfere with or influence the new function. Instead of identifying a place and having an unequivocal locus in a structured landscape, the name helps to identify a person as an unmistakable individual in a complex society, especially, though not exclusively, his or her allegiance to a family unit within accepted and acceptable contemporary social organisation. As someone who has dabbled in the study of names for over forty years, I have felt for some time that name scholars, if they are aware of the problem at all, tend to treat this functional transfer, this dramatic transformation of onymic contents, too lightly, presumably because what was once a name continues to be a name. When a place-name becomes a surname, or when the opposite takes place (a development which can be illustrated extensively from North American maps), such a transfer does not differ essentially from the leap a word takes from its position in a lexicon to its new status in an onomasticon, instantly and immediately on the act of naming. Employing the place-name *Glasgow*—or *Ross* or *Melrose* or *Stirling*—as a surname is, in this respect, not any different from using the words *smith* (or *miller* or *wright* or *cruikshanks* or *brown* or *shakespeare*) as surnames, or a combination of name and common noun in patronymics such as *Wilson* or *Macdonald*. The degree of opacity associated with such a transfer can be such that, when attempting to discover the origins of a surname like

Petty, we cannot normally be sure whether this is derived from a word like French *petit* or from a place-name like *Petty* in Inverness-shire or Aberdeenshire; similarly, a surname like *Whitehill* may originally have referred to someone living near a 'white hill' or to someone coming from one of several places called *Whitehill*. To some degree, the transformation of one kind of name into another, by waving the magic wand which we call naming, is an even more miraculous human intellectual act than a change of a lexical item, a word, into an onomastic one, a name.

While, therefore, I have been fascinated for a good many years by this multi-faceted relationship between names and names, not just within the same onomastic categories, but also in different ones, and particularly in the manner in which place-names and surnames inform each other, I have never regarded these questions as mere theoretical challenges. As an inveterate pattern-seeker, I have, in this context, found the prospect especially challenging that, as the result of a comprehensive survey of all Scottish surnames and of their systematic scrutiny according to certain discernible, though yet to be defined, criteria, it might one day be possible, not only to establish a system of classification, but also, more adventurously, to predict what sort of place-name has the greatest likelihood of being turned into a surname, and what groups of geographical names are least likely to cross the boundary from one kind of nomenclature to the other. If Scottish surnames are counted individually and not according to the number of their bearers, about half of them—approximately 2,500 in one major survey—are found to be derived from place names.⁴ The undertaking just described would, therefore, be a formidable task, requiring the co-operation of a team rather than the dedicated efforts of an individual.

For these reasons, a more circumscribed project is called for to test the potential viability of the ideal, larger exercise, and my current preoccupation with the Picts and the place-names they have left behind in the palimpsest of the Scottish map suggested that those Pictish place-names that have become Scottish surnames might form a more limited, and therefore also a more manageable inventory for such an investigation. In a sense, the selection of this particular class of Scottish

⁴ This count is based on the list of names included in George F. Black, *The Surnames of Scotland* (New York, 1946).

surnames can, of course, be called arbitrary or whimsical, and not very different from choosing all names beginning with *S-* or ending in *-t*, or without an *-r-* in their spelling; for by the time certain Pictish place-names in Scotland became surnames, they had ceased to be Pictish place-names in a contemporary context, because Pictish, as a spoken language, had been dead for several hundred years. The names created by the Picts had, by this time, passed through Scottish Gaelic—adapted by it, modified by it, imitated by it—and were now used by speakers of Scottish English or Scots, with appropriate phonological and graphological adjustments, as designations of places in areas in which Pictish used to be spoken. Most of them had become either completely or partially meaningless as words, and this lexical opacity or near-opacity enabled them to be filled with toponymic contents only obliquely related to their word-meaning which their generics and specifics had possessed when they had offered themselves as reasonable, maybe even perfect, choices to the original Pictish namers. For these reasons, the epithet 'Pictish', when used in conjunction with these names, implies no more than a convenient sub-section of the Scottish place-nomenclature. On the other hand, even if 'Pictishness' is a criterion that is not any better or any worse than other properties one might have chosen, it does not invalidate the names in question as suitable, indeed appropriate, evidence in our quest.

There are, however, certain benefits outside these considerations. One is a mechanical one: since the great majority of Pictish place-names begin with the generics *aber* 'a confluence' or *pit* 'a piece of land', they tend to be clustered in certain parts of the alphabet and are therefore easily detected in, and extracted from, gazetteers and indices.⁵ Also, with the exception of a very few ambiguous names, misunderstandings are rare and usually quickly resolved on the basis of medieval and early post-medieval spellings. The third benefit, however, though also largely practical, is even greater: the eponymous places of the surnames in question are to be found in a regionally well-defined

⁵ See William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), pp. 407–11 and 458–67; K. H. Jackson, 'The Pictish language', in *The Problem of the Picts*, edited by F. T. Wainwright (Edinburgh, 1955), pp. 129–66; W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names: their Study and Significance* (London, 1976), pp. 151–58 and 164–65.

distribution, i.e. in the original 'Pictland', a pre-Gaelic Celtic-speaking part of North-East Scotland, roughly from the Firth of Forth northwards to the Moray Firth and a little beyond into Easter Ross and Easter Sutherland, with the western boundary more or less identical with the northern part of the Great Glen and the Perthshire–Argyllshire border. It is not their special and undisputed linguistic origins (which, by the time some of them became surnames, had anyhow become largely irrelevant), but their remarkable regionality that highly recommends them as promising onomastic material for a pilot study. It may be argued that this severe regionality may make them unrepresentative of the whole of Scotland, that Pictish does, in fact, not equal Scottish, and may therefore introduce distortions; this may be so, but it is a small risk to take compared with the advantage of traceable origins, status and paths of dissemination.

Before the actual evidence is presented, attention should be drawn to a more general aspect of the topic under discussion: that association with a certain place, whether named or not, was one of the windows on a person's identity—the other three being parental descent (usually paternal), personal habits and qualities, and occupation—is a phenomenon which it would be thoughtless to take for granted. To establish who a person is by that person's residence or origin requires a sense of place more delicate than most of us are endowed with today. It also implies that one's current or former whereabouts may include the right to own a portion, however small, of the earth's surface. This is an assumption which is also inherent in the many place-names that contain personal names as specifics, like Johnston or Grimsetter. That this association of identifiable and recognisable personal individuality with a location is more significant than any other notable characteristics which a person may have is a further escalation of this mode of thinking, directly responsible for the large number of heritable surnames which have their origin somewhere in the landscape out there. This certainly holds true in the Lowlands, whereas the Highlands acquired a heritable system of surnames much later, one based almost exclusively based on patronymics and clanship.⁶ It is

⁶ See, for example, Alexander Macbain, 'Early Highland personal names', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 22 (1897–98), 152–68. A brief but very informative account of the subject is found in a pamphlet by William Matheson, *Highland Surnames* (Inverness and Glasgow, 1973).

usually accepted that, in Scotland, toponymic surnames were first given to owners of large tracts of land with considerable standing in society,⁷ and that this practice was later extended to the farming community and to people less settled, who had moved from one place to another and, in their new habitat, continued to be identified as incomers, strangers and outsiders; one might also say that they were branded as such, and that some of the resulting surnames therefore imply, not only awareness of outside origins, but also non-integration into, or even rejection by, the communities in which these incomers now lived, thus highlighting the very special role of the stranger in society. It is also worth remembering that, once place-names have been converted into surnames, they acquire a degree of mobility which had been almost completely denied to them before. They can go wherever a person can go; weighing their considerable anchors, so to speak, and casting their fast moorings, they become migratory.

Where does the use of Pictish place-names as Scottish surnames fit into this picture? As anticipated in a comment above, the central evidence for the propositions advanced in this paper will consist of names beginning with the generics *Aber-* and *Pit-*, as these are non-controversial, even if it has to be conceded that most of the *Pit-* names, like Pitlochry, Pittentagart, Pittenweem, and so on, are Gaelic-Pictish hybrids.⁸ By selecting these two major toponymic elements in the Pictish place-nomenclature to guide us, we are also in a position of perhaps catching two different groups of people within Pictland, from the point of view of both linguistic affinity and settlement preference. Whereas it can be said without much fear of contradiction that the element *pit* 'piece of land' occurs in place-names only within the boundaries of 'Pictland' proper, or very close to those boundaries, the element *aber* 'confluence' is, of course, also found in Wales. Whereas *pit-*, therefore, gives the impression or illusion of a separate linguistic identity within the group of Celtic people, *aber* argues for close links, not only with Cumbric south of the Forth-Clyde line, but also with Welsh, despite the absence of *aber-* names in the English west between the Scottish and Welsh borders. The somewhat tenuous and by no means automatic connection

⁷ See Black, *Surnames of Scotland*, p. xix.

⁸ See Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, pp. 389-424; Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names*, 154-56.

between onomastic evidence and its linguistic underpinnings is thus again exposed.

Similarly, whereas Whittington and Soulsby have convincingly demonstrated that the people who gave *Pit-* names to their settlements avoided coastal areas and river valleys, preferring sites at a certain altitude, with favourable southern exposure, good soil and drainage and certain slope values, the Picts who coined *Aber-* names were obviously river-dwellers, with a special penchant for confluences, whether with another water-course or the sea.⁹ These two types of Pictish settlers therefore complemented each other; how mutually exclusive they were is another question. Both types of names have become heritable Scottish surnames, although one cannot help feeling that the *Aber-* names had perhaps more status, both before and after their semantic conversion.

According to the best authorities, there are about seventy *Aber-* names in Scotland, and approximately 300 *Pit-* names. Of these, a remarkably small percentage seems to have been employed as surnames. George F. Black, in his *Surnames of Scotland*, lists only ten *Aber-* names and twenty-two *Pit-* names, including those documented only historically. What is even more astonishing, however, is the fact that only six *Aber-* names and seven *Pit-* names have survived to the present day. These are Abercorn, Abercrombie, Aberdeen, Aberdour, Abernethy and Arbuthnott, on the one hand, and Pitbladdo, Pitcairn, Pitcairns, Pitkaithly, Pitkeathly, Pittendreich, and Pittillo or Pattullo. Other promising candidates such as *Aberchirder*, *Aberdalgy*, *Aberlady*, *Abernyte* and *Arbroath*, as well as *Pitbauchly*, *Pitcarry*, *Pitcon*, *Pitlandy* and *Pitcruiue*, have apparently fallen by the wayside. Since these now seemingly-obsolete surnames are all derived from place-names in the same area as those which have survived, the overall picture of geographical or regional origins would not have changed significantly, even if the evidence had been more substantial.

Here is a brief synopsis of the names in question:¹⁰

⁹ G. Whittington and J. A. Soulsby, 'A preliminary report on an investigation into *Pit* place-names', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 84 (1968), 117-25; G. Whittington, 'Place-names and the settlement pattern of dark-age Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 106 (1974-75), 99-110.

¹⁰ The Scottish *Aber-* names have been comprehensively collected and published as part of Erskine Beveridge's *The 'Abers' and 'Invers' of Scotland*

Abercorn (NT 0878) is in West Lothian, just south of the southern boundary of Pictland proper. It is mentioned as early as the eighth century by the Venerable Bede as *Æbbercurnig*, meaning 'horned confluence'.

Abercrombie (NO 5102) was a barony and is now a village in Fife.¹¹ There are medieval references to it in the twelfth century. While *aber* is Pictish, the specific element is a genitive *-crombaidh* of Gaelic *crombadh* 'bending'. The Gaelic adjective *crom* 'bent' from which it is derived may have replaced or 'translated' a Pictish word corresponding to Welsh *crwm* 'bent'.

Aberdeen (NJ 9306) is Scotland's third-largest city, at the mouths of Don and Dee on the Scottish north-east coast. The earliest spelling on record is *Aberdon* about 1124, a clear reference to the fact that the original Aberdeen was at the mouth of the Don.

Aberdour. There are two places called Aberdour, one in Aberdeenshire (NJ 8863) and the other in Fife (NT 1985). In both instances, the name of the river which forms the confluence is a simplex *dubron*, as in Welsh *dwfr*, *dwr*, and Gaelic *dobhar*, simply meaning 'water'. It is the Fife Aberdour which matters here, although the earliest references to Aberdour as a surname appear to be to the Aberdeenshire name.

Abernethy. Although there is another Abernethy further north (NH 9918), the surname must be derived from Abernethy in Perthshire (NO 1816), where there used to be a Culdee monastery. The first reference to the place goes back to about 1100 A.D., and the first person on record so named is Hugh, who died in the middle of the following century. *Nethy* is an Anglicisation of a Gaelic genitive of *Nethech* or *Neitheach*, which itself is an adaptation of the Pictish *Neithon*, earlier *Nectona* 'the pure one'.

Arbuthnott, *Aberbuthenoth* at the beginning of the thirteenth century, is in Kincardineshire (NO 7975). The unnamed burn on which it is situated must have been the *Buadhnat* (Gaelic) 'the little one of virtue', probably designating a stream with healing power.

(Edinburgh, 1923). For the *Pit*-names there is no equivalent corpus; for an extensive but less than full listing see Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, pp. 407-10.

¹¹ It was also once the name of a parish which is now called St Monans: Beveridge, *Abers' and Rivers*, p. 9, raises the possibility of a second Fife barony called Abercrombie.

Pitbladdo (NO 3617) is a thoroughly Pictish name in Fife which contains, as its second element, a genitive *blátha*, corresponding to Welsh *blawd* 'meal, flour', and was therefore probably the miller's portion of land.

Pitcairn which gave rise to the surname is in Fife (NO 1995); another Pitcairn is in Perthshire (NO 0627).¹² The specific in the name is clearly Gaelic *carn* 'a heap of stones, a cairn', and the name may have been given by speakers of Gaelic who had adopted the Pictish toponymic element *pit* to enrich their own vocabulary. The surname Pitcairns may be of the same origin.¹³

Pitcaithly (NO 1117) is in Perthshire near Perth. It is on record as *Pethkathilin* about 1230; its second element is probably the personal name *Cathalan*, a diminutive of *Cathal*, indicating proprietorship. Black claims that Pitkethly or Pitkeathley is of the same origin.¹⁴

Pittendreich. This is another place-name which occurs in a variety of forms as a surname, especially since it not only displays various spellings for the element *-dreich*, but also has a telescoped first element in Pendreich. A major problem is caused by the fact that there are at least ten places named Pittendreich, which are found not only in the Pictish heartland—Fife, Kinross, Perthshire, Angus, Kincardine and Aberdeen—but also in Banff and Elgin in the north, in Stirlingshire, actually now Penderich (NS 7997), and in Midlothian on the southern side of the Forth.¹⁵ There is the distinct possibility of polygenesis for the surname, which may be derived from more than one location. The popularity of the place-name is undoubtedly linked with the meaning of the specific, Gaelic *dreach*, which signifies 'aspect, face, countenance', and refers to the favourable position of the places so named. Watson notes that 'the places of this name appear all to be situated on slopes, usually facing the sun'¹⁶—a kind of Pictish-Gaelic precursor of modern names like Morningside or Blinkbonny, and also toponymic proof of one major criterion isolated by Whittington and

¹² The modern map shows only Pitcairngreen; a second Fife Pitcairn is at NO 2602.

¹³ There is, however, also a Pitcairns in Perthshire (NO 0214).

¹⁴ Black, *Surnames of Scotland*, p. 664.

¹⁵ William M. Alexander, *The Place-Names of Aberdeenshire* (Aberdeen, 1952), p. 352, lists a Pittendreich and a Pittendrigh, but etymologises them both differently.

¹⁶ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, p. 413.

Soulsby in their investigation of the preferences which the coiners of *Pit*-names showed for certain favourite settlement sites.

Pittillock. Either Pittillock in Fife (NO 2705) or Pittilloch in Perthshire (NO 1310). This name, which has developed two quite different forms as a surname—Pittillo and Patullo—has, as its second element, Gaelic *tulach* 'a hill'.

As is easily demonstrated, practically all the eponymous places involved are situated in a very compact area of Pictland, mostly in Fife and Perthshire, i.e. they are outside those parts of the formerly Pictish territory which, in the crucial centuries in which surnames became essentially heritable, were still thoroughly Gaelic, both linguistically and culturally, and therefore not given to coining fixed surnames, especially not from place-names. That is why not a single *Pit*-place-name now to be found in Easter Ross or Easter Sutherland, or in the westernmost parts of 'Pictland', has produced any surname. This attempt at an explanation unfortunately does not help us to deal satisfactorily with the other side of the coin, the absence of names in the corpus of surnames which one would have expected to be there, like Aberlemno, Abergeldie, Pittarow, Pitcaple, or Pittenween, particularly the first two, since most *Pit*-names historically referred to small and medium-sized farms; many of them still do today.

So much for origins, but what about destinations? Or, where in Scotland are surnames of Pictish origin found in our time, and what are their respective strongholds (without considering names that appear in aristocratic titles)? In order to obtain a general overview of their local and regional presence and their frequency, I have consulted the relevant telephone directories in a process which I like to call telephonomatics.¹⁷ Such an approach has obvious limitations, but it is nevertheless a convenient and useful beginning, as complete street directories are no longer available.

Again, let us first look at the *Aber*-names, beginning with Abercorn and Aberdour. About the former, Black conjectured half a century ago: 'The surname is now very uncommon if not extinct'.¹⁸ Despite his gloomy prognosis, there are, almost fifty years later, still two individuals or households with the name of Abercorn at the end

¹⁷ W. F. H. Nicolaisen, 'Telephonomatics', *The Scots Magazine* (December, 1969), 243.

¹⁸ Black, *Surnames of Scotland*, p. 2.

of a telephone. If one wanted to reach them, one would have to dial a Cumbernauld number. Although Cumbernauld is situated in what used to be a small enclave of Dunbartonshire, it is not very far from Abercorn in West Lothian, and one might therefore surmise that the surviving name has travelled a short distance only; but as Cumbernauld is one of the creations of the New Town movement in the sixties, the Abercorns may have reached it via Glasgow, which provided much of the overspill. Nevertheless, Abercorn is obviously a surname on the brink of extinction. We are not much better off with the surname Aberdour, which survives in only two Scottish locations—in Burntisland, just next door to the eponymous place on the southern Fife coast, and five times in Edinburgh across the Firth of Forth. If it ever migrated any further within Scotland, there is no trace of it in the contemporary record, and our already-small corpus of Pictish place-names that have become Scottish surnames may soon be reduced even further.

The surname Aberdeen is in a much healthier position, as there are currently thirty-seven subscribers of that name; but it, too, or its bearers, do not seem to have had the itch to travel, for only one of them would answer the phone in Newtonmore (Inverness-shire), Stromness (Orkney), in Bonnyrigg, in Liston, in Auchterarder, in Fort William and in Smallholm, and two in Kirkcaldy. Of the remaining bearers of this name, eleven live in Dundee and sixteen in Aberdeen and environs. An additional curiosum is that only one of the citizens of Dundee and the one lone bearer of the name in Newtonmore spell their surnames the same way as the modern city, whereas all the others use a spelling *Aberdein*, which occurred occasionally in the twelfth, fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. What appears to have developed here is a spelling dichotomy between place-name and surname in the way in which we distinguish the word tailor from the surname Taylor. Although there are thirty-seven households of this name that have a telephone, the number of people involved is quite small, considering the size of the city.

In contrast, the migratory urge of the people who lived in Abercrombie in Fife and in Abernethy in Perthshire appears to have been quite strong, for of the 201 Abercrombies who have a telephone, at least 167 have left Pictland proper, and now have a strong representation in the Greater Glasgow area and around Edinburgh, but

are also found as far as Berwick, Dunure in Ayrshire, and the Scottish Borders. Thirty-four of them still live in former Pictish territory. The impact of this surname is inverse to the size of the place from which it stems, and the social standing of the owner has obviously been a more important factor in the creation of such a large number of Abercrombie surnames, either spelt with a final *-ie* or a final *-y*. The name is found very early in the legal profession of the capital.

The presence of the name Abernethy is almost as numerous as that of Abercrombie, but with a different distribution. Thirty-five bearers of that name still live somewhere near Tayside and on Dee- and Don-side, and there is the expected contingent of sixty-eight in the Greater Glasgow area and of fifteen around Edinburgh, but twenty-four telephone subscribers of this name live in the Northern Isles, especially in Orkney as a result of movements of Scots into that part of the world. The name has been recorded in the island of Unst at least since 1822, and its presence there is most likely to be ascribed to the emigration of one particular family.¹⁹ It would, of course, take some intensive local research to discover whether all the current Abernethys are offspring of the same prolific progenitor.

The Arbuthnotts, who originated in the Mearns, have perhaps the widest current distribution of all the names considered in this survey. Apart from the expected north-east home base and reasonable representations in Edinburgh and Glasgow, with nine and four respectively, the name occurs from Inverness to Stranraer and from Ardrossan to Tranent, although in these latter places, and in many others, only in single households.

Most of the Pit-names show a pattern of contemporary distribution that is similar to that of the Aber-names, i.e. strong continued regional presence in the area of origin and sizable numbers of bearers in the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas. This is, however, only partially true of the Fife name Pitbladdo, which seems to have stayed on the east coast—ten of them in Fife, six in Edinburgh, and one each in Aberdeen, Alloa, Dalkeith, Musselburgh and Queensferry.

Another Fife name, Pitcairn, occurs sixty-three times in the Scottish telephone directories, nineteen times in Fife and Kinross, twenty-five times in the Greater Glasgow area, fifteen times in

¹⁹ Dr Doreen Waugh informs me that in Shetland the surname is pronounced with a stress on the first syllable.

Edinburgh, and four times in the Scottish south-west. The only subscriber with the name of Pitcairns one would have to ring in Dunfermline, also in Fife. It is curious that people bearing such a durable name appear to have been reluctant to move further north.

From small beginnings near Perth, the eighty-four Pitkaithleys, Pitkeathlys, Pitcaithlys, etc., have followed the usual dissemination pattern. Forty-five of them still live in Pictland, most of them in Perthshire or on Tayside, the others in Fife and Kinross; the remaining thirty-nine have succumbed to the lures of the big cities and also moved further away. It is interesting to note that the spelling Pitcaithly predominates in Glasgow, while the spelling Pitkeathly is more common in Edinburgh.

In contrast to the Pitcairns and the Pitcaithly/Pitkeathlies, there are many Pittendreichs, forty-three of them in Aberdeenshire and the neighbouring north-east, this out of a total of fifty-nine. For them the pull of the big city lights seems to have been much less strong, for there are very few of them in Glasgow and Edinburgh. As already indicated, the picture is confused by the fact that several Pittendreichs in favourable locations vie for the honour of having spawned the current number of telephone subscribers named Pittendreich, though the more northerly examples are more likely to be the originators. The sub-set of Pendreichs are particularly numerous in the Edinburgh area, where forty-three out of a total of sixty-six live; the remaining distribution is very 'un-Pictish', and, unless a close connection with the Stirlingshire Pendreich can be established, suggests that this name-form may have developed later outside Pictland.

The Fife place-name Pittillock has produced two very different groups of onomastic offspring: the nine who spell their name Pittillo, with the exception of a Burntisland subscriber, have telephones in widely scattered locations in the Scottish south—Edinburgh, Kilbarchan, Paisley, Galashiels, Hawick and St Boswells. Those who spell their name Pattullo have largely stayed in Pictland, seventy-nine out of ninety-six, and for the rest of them, as for the Pittillos, the Glasgow area seems to have had little attraction. It might be better to put the argument the other way round, by saying that the spelling Pattullo developed mostly in the old Pictland and the spelling Pittillo elsewhere. It is nevertheless quite intriguing to observe how many of them stayed at or near home, mostly in Angus.

What, then, has happened to that comparatively small band of Scotsmen and Scotswomen who are bearers of surnames of Pictish origin and have telephones? Without being able to introduce into this discussion the hundreds of historical references, especially of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which I have on file, I would claim that a remarkable number of them have not moved very far.²⁰ Most of these surnames are, therefore, still found in former Pictish territory.²¹ This is particularly demonstrable with regard to the Pittillos/Pattullos. Otherwise, Glasgow and Edinburgh and the areas surrounding them have been particularly attractive, mostly, one would think, because they have offered employment, largely of an industrial nature, over the last 150 years. The presence of the names in question further south, i.e. in the Lothians, the Borders, and the Scottish South-West, is sporadic, and follows no particular pattern. Much more spectacular, however, is the almost complete absence of such surnames in the Highlands and the Western Isles, and, with the exception of the prolific Abernethys, also from the Northern Isles. Westward and north-westward movement, involving the penetration of another culture area or the piercing of a formidable internal Scottish cultural frontier, appears not to have been on the list of priorities of people raised in the old Pictish territory; either that, or they immediately joined the system and became Macdonalds, Campbells or Frasers.

This is the image with which we are left, apart from the observation that, if one comes across an Abercrombie, an Abernethy, an Arbuthnott, a Pitcairn, Pitcaithly or Pitkeathly, a Pitbladdo, Pittendreich or Pattullo somewhere between the north shores of the Firth of Forth and the southern shores of the Moray Firth, one is most likely in the presence of someone who, even 1,000 years after the end of the Pictish kingdom and the death of the Pictish language, still has a drop of Pictish blood in his or her veins. For a Pictophile like myself, that is quite a fascinating thought.

²⁰ The historical movements of a single surname within Scotland require diligent and detailed research; for a group of names like the ones under discussion, the task is even more formidable. I hope to present this evidence in a subsequent paper at a later date.

²¹ This limited mobility coincides with R. A. Mckinley's findings in England. See his *A History of British Surnames* (London, 1990), pp. 66-70, and also *Norfolk Surnames in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1969), pp. 21-23.

Personal-Name Studies: Bringing them to a Wider Audience

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Letters to the press—to *The Times* in particular—testify to a widespread interest in names: baptismal names, house-names, family-names, the names of the bogus 'counties' foisted on us in 1974, ships' names, nicknames, horses' names, brand-names, street-names, and so on. Topics range from political pressures affecting the naming of foreign places, thus:

The erosion of well-established names takes place only in Asia and Africa: nobody tries to bully us into calling Finland *Suomi* or Greece *Hellas*. In an English-language newspaper primarily for English-speakers, headlines should surely be about Peking, Shanghai, Burma and even (dare I suggest it?) Ceylon [from Prof. D. Webb, *The Times*, 5.ix.91, p. 17 (my italics)]

to strange quirks of the human affections, thus:

Sir, I was delighted to see the detailed account of the 1866 Tea Race in your letters column, especially the 'honourable mention' for Serica, who is usually ignored even though finishing so close to Ariel and Taiping. I would be interested to know if any other of your readers have been named after a tea clipper? [from Mrs Serica East, *The Times*, 10.iii.90, p. 13].

Such letters have, it seems to me, a bearing upon the purpose for which we are assembled today: the inauguration of a new society aiming to bring the findings, and also the principles, of scholarly onomastic studies to a wider public. They imply the existence of a [This is the text of a lecture given in Manchester in October 1991 at the inaugural meeting of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland. It was written partly in bed, owing to Dr Clark's illness from which she was not to recover, and was read out by proxy since she was unable to attend the meeting. It is less positive in tone than her other writings, and the circumstances of its composition may have affected the contents. It seems nevertheless worth publishing, though references have had to be supplied, we hope accurately. Two other posthumous articles (cited below, notes 15-16) better represent her usual tone—Editors.]