

Generic-Element Variation,
with Special Reference to Eastern Scotland

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The title of this article is not, I admit, the most gripping, even for dedicated toponymists. I had considered the more lurid title of 'Nightmare on Distribution Map', but I decided to go for the sober descriptive rather than the Hollywood-style alarmist. Although there are in what follows certain alarming consequences for place-name scholars everywhere, it is not, I hope, a negative contribution, and the consequences take on a nightmarish aspect only if we fail to acknowledge them.

I will start by briefly defining my terms. A generic element, or simply a generic, is that part of a place-name which tells us the general type of place we are dealing with, be it a hill, a river, a farm, a wood or any other general feature. This is opposed to what I will call the specific, the element which defines the generic, and allows us to distinguish between hundreds or thousands of other places with the same generic.

In 'Nottingham', for example, the generic is *hām*, while the specific answers the question 'Which *hām*?' The answer is 'Notting'—that is 'Snot's people's *hām*'. It is a general rule that while in the Germanic languages such as English, German or Scots, the specific comes before the generic, as in 'Nottingham', in the Celtic languages the order is usually reversed, with the generic first and the specific second. Take for example 'Inverness', where the generic is 'Inver', from Gaelic *inbhir* 'river- or burn-mouth'; while the specific is the river-name 'Ness'. In both the Celtic and the Germanic systems, it is the specific which carries the stress, which accounts for the fact that so many Scottish, Irish, Welsh and Cornish place-names have an unstressed first element: e.g. *Inverness*, *Armagh*, *Caernarvon*, and *Polperro*.

This is the text of a talk given to the Society for Name Studies at its Annual Conference in Nottingham, April 1996. Early forms of Scottish place-names throughout this article are taken from my own collections, where the sources are fully documented.

It must be emphasised that, despite the very technical-sounding title of this article, I am not here concerned with terminology. I have chosen the terms 'generic' and 'specific' as convenient descriptive terms.¹ I could have called the specific the 'defining element' or the 'qualifying element'—or I could simply have called them first and second elements.² It is possible that in the light of the phenomenon I am about to discuss it may be desirable to rethink our terminology relating to place-name elements, but such terminological redefinition is not the purpose of this article.³

I first became aware of a certain instability in generic elements while I was working on the settlement-names of Fife, a large peninsula of over 50 parishes which lies between the Firths of Forth and Tay. Appendix 2 includes the examples from Fife which started me thinking on this whole phenomenon: Balgeddie, Ballantagar, Baltilly, Bantuscall, Moncoutiemyre and Mountquhanie all provide excellent examples, showing variation between three Gaelic generics: *pett*, *baile*, *mòine*. (For the meanings of these and other elements see Appendix 4.)

Then, as I ventured furth of Fife, westwards through the Central Belt and northwards into Perthshire, Angus, the Mearns and Aberdeenshire, I became aware of a quite dizzying array of other variations, examples of which I have included in Appendices 1 and 2: variations such as (in Appendix 1) *Both-/Bal-* (Balfron); *Pol-/Bal-* (Balgownie); *Davoch-/Dal-* (Davochmaluag); and *Bad-/Pit-* (Pitfodels); and (in Appendix 2) *pett-/baile-* (Baldinny); *àth-/baile-* (Balgillo); **cair-/coid-* (Cathcart); and **dol-/cinn-* (Kinbattoch).

¹ They are taken from G. S. Stewart, *Names on the Globe* (New York, 1975), pp. 20–25, where they are fully defined. They are also used by W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names* (London, 1976).

² K. Cameron, *English Place-Names* (London, 1963) uses 'first element' and 'second element', as well as 'defining element'. A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 25–26 (Cambridge, 1956), I, liii, uses 'first element' and 'final element'. J. Field, *English Field-Names. A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. xiv, in his discussion of field-names, uses 'qualifier' for the specific and 'denominative component' for the generic.

³ Padel has suggested a more precise way of classifying usages in Celtic place-names, based on 'generic' and 'qualifier': O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, vol. 56–57 (Nottingham, 1985), pp. xiv–xvii, especially p. xvi.

Appendices 1 and 2 constitute two distinct groups. The first of these (Appendix 1) I have called 'Substitution'. In this group the variation in the generic is explicable simply by the confusion of one element with another: often a more unusual or less familiar element is confused with, and/or replaced by, a more commonly used, familiar one. This is frequently helped along by phonological factors. The shift from *Bad-* to *Pit-* would be an example. There is not a complete package of sound-changes in Gaelic or Scots which would produce this change, but they do have a general phonological similarity: both are monosyllables starting with a labial stop and finishing with a dental stop. Coupled with this is the fact that they always occur in unstressed position, thus increasing the likelihood of vowel confusion. What clinches the change from *Bad-* to *Pit-*, however, is the fact that *bad* is a relatively rare generic, while *pett* is one of the commonest. A combination of these factors means that we need look no further for an explanation of this change.

This same mix of factors is also behind the change of *Pol-* to *Bal-*, *Both-* to *Bal-*, and *Davoch-* to *Dal-*. It is probably also behind the changes from *Blair-* to *Bal-*, as in Belfatton.

There are also examples, usually purely to do with the written or printed word, where a common generic has replaced a rare one, but where phonology has played little or no part. This is a result of what can be termed onomastic assimilation. An example would be Catochil (in Abernethy parish, Perthshire), a farm in the Ochil hills on the Perthshire–Fife border. It appears as such when it is first recorded as *Cathehil* in 1295 (see Appendix 1). *Cat-* is almost unique as a generic in eastern Scottish place-names. Watson suggests it is related to the Welsh *cat* meaning 'piece, bit';⁴ however, according to the *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (s.v.), this may be a loan-word from English *cut*, which would immediately disqualify it as a candidate. It is much more likely to be from the Pictish cognate of Welsh *coed* 'a wood',⁵ which usually occurs in stressed syllables as *Keith*, but can be reduced in unstressed syllables to *Cat-* etc. (for example Cathcart, Renfrewshire, in Appendix 2) Whatever its origin its very rarity has made it prey to various substitutions, the first being in 1519, where it is written *Kintochil* with

⁴ W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), p. 209.

⁵ I am grateful to Oliver Padel for this suggestion.

the common generic *Kin-* from Gaelic *cinn* 'at the end of' substituted for *Ca-*, while the *t* from *Cat-* has been retained. And on J. Stobie's map of Perthshire of 1783, it appears as *Pitogle*. Someone involved in the making of this map thought this *Cat-* must be a mistake and put our old friend *Pit-* in its place. That these were purely literary developments is clear from the fact that the name is still *Catochil*.

Onomastic assimilation is no respecter of languages, and crosses from one language-group to another with insouciance. There is a farm in Strathmiglo parish (Fife) called *Raecruick*, a Scots name meaning something like 'sheltered land in a (river-)bend', the river in question being the Eden.⁶ On J. Ainslie's map of Fife of 1775, and only here, it appears as *Balcruick*.

This phenomenon, which I have termed 'Substitution', relates to changes which are most likely to have happened in a period after the various elements had ceased to be understood as actual words or lexical items. In fact, it can be argued that these changes could come about only when meaning was lost, or had ceased to be important. Conditions were ideal for this throughout eastern lowland Scotland in the later middle ages, when the language in which most of the place-names were coined, Scottish Gaelic, was replaced by Scots. This process began in Fife in the later twelfth century, and was complete in most of the lowland areas by 1400.

I will argue that the phenomenon of 'Variation', which supplies the title, and the main theme, for this article, can only have come about when people still understood the meanings of the elements involved. It must therefore date from a time before the loss of Gaelic, and so is a much earlier phenomenon, unrelated to 'Substitution'.

A brief comparison of the examples in Appendices 1 and 2 is enough to indicate that there are two different processes at work here, and that in Appendix 2 we are not simply dealing with the various processes of assimilation I have described above. **Moncouthy*, **Pitcouthy* and **Balcouthy* are phonologically distinct, as are *Bantuscall* and **Pittuscall*. *Ban-* is in fact an organic development from the falling together of *baile* with the following definite article of an original *Baile*

⁶ It first appears as *Raacruik* 1580, and consistently as *Re-* or *Rae-* thereafter, apart from the one occurrence of *Bal-* in 1775. The bend which gave rise to the name disappeared when the Eden was straightened in the improvements of the early nineteenth century.

an t-soisgeil 'estate of the Gospel'.⁷ Furthermore, there is no obvious chronological development perceivable from one element to another, with the variant forms coming and going in random fashion (see for example *Baltryne* and *Cathcart* in Appendix 2). This is in contrast to the chronological progression which is the more usual pattern where 'Substitution' or assimilation is concerned, with the rarer original element found in the earliest forms, and the substituted more common element in the later ones.

The question then arises as to why, in the names in Appendix 2, should there be two, or even three, parallel forms that refer to the same place. The answer I would give is that in fact they did *not* originally refer to the same place. Names such as **Balcouthy*, **Moncouthy* and **Pitcouthy* referred to different places, or at least to different parts or aspects of the same place. They ended up becoming interchangeable only after the lexical meanings had become lost or unimportant.

The process is best illustrated with names which contain Gaelic *mòine* 'bog, peat-bog'. In the parish of Monimail there is a farm called *Ballantagar* (see Appendix 2). In 1619 we have a reference to the 'glebe and kirklands of the vicarage of Monimail, commonly called *Montagart*'. We find the same variation between *mòine* and *baile* in *Mountquhanie*, also in Appendix 2. Not only is it fair to conclude from this that these two forms of the same place-name once referred to different places, or at least different parts of the same place; but also that this differentiation was a matter of the utmost importance to those using these names, since you confuse a peat-bog with a farm at your peril.

There is beside *Mountquhanie House* a large, flat area through which flows the *Motray Water*, and this is most probably the *mòine* referred to in the name. In the early sixteenth century this boggy area was called the 'Myre of Star': it had its own name, as the original Gaelic names were no longer exact enough. Having lost their lexical meaning, they were now being used indiscriminately to refer to the estate itself. By having a new name for the bog, which was at least partly in Scots, the language of sixteenth-century Fife, this meant that everyone, and not just Gaelic-speakers, would avoid ending up in the *glaur* or mud.

⁷ The meaning would be 'estate belonging to the church' or 'estate whose revenues were dedicated to the production of a Gospel'.

When it comes to *pett* and *baile* things become somewhat more problematical, since it is generally accepted that they meant roughly the same thing. It is my contention, however, that they were once as readily distinguishable to those who first coined these names as 'myre' and 'farm-steading' are to us today.

The Gaelic word *pett* was borrowed from Pictish. It is related to the Gaulish word which was taken into Low Latin as *petia* and has, through French, given us our word 'piece'. It is found in modern Welsh as *petb*, meaning 'thing'.⁸ So its basic meaning as a toponym was 'portion' or 'piece'. In the later ninth and early tenth century, Gaelic became the language of the kingdom of Alba, which had been newly formed from the kingdoms of the Picts in the east and of the Scots in the west. This new kingdom was forged by a Gaelic-speaking dynasty founded by Cináed MacAlpín (Kenneth son of Alpin) in the 840s. It is now generally accepted that the MacAlpín dynasty took over much of the administrative and fiscal machinery of Pictland, and it is no doubt in this context that the element *pett* was also borrowed. Geoffrey Barrow has argued that by the twelfth century, when the documentary record effectively begins in Scotland, *Pit*-names are borne by estates dependent on a shire- or thanage-centre,⁹ and 'dependent estate' is probably not far from its meaning already in the ninth century. It might be more useful, rather than thinking of *pett* as a piece or portion of land, to think of it as a piece of a larger administrative unit. This larger unit is usually called a 'shire', an Anglo-Saxon word, but one which was being used even in Gaelic-speaking Scotland by the eleventh century. This 'shires' were roughly parish-sized, with a shire-centre from which collection of tribute and render was organised for the king or overlord. A more neutral translation of *pett*, and one which begs fewer questions, would be 'holding'.¹⁰

As a formative place-name element *pett* seems to have been on the wane by the eleventh century, when the bulk of Gaelic settlement in Lothian and Strathclyde probably took place. This would account for its rarity in these areas, which did not become part of the Gaelic-speaking kingdom of Alba or Scotland until the late tenth and eleventh centuries.

⁸ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, p. 408.

⁹ G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973), pp. 59–60.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Dauvit Broun for this suggestion.

Baile in contrast to *pett* belongs very much to the Gaelic-Irish world. Its etymology is unclear, but when it first appears in place-names around 1100, it means 'estate, farm, vill', in both Ireland and Scotland. It has, however, in both languages, come to mean 'town' or 'village'.

It also occurs in early Irish literature, where it seems to mean 'homestead, place of habitation'. For example in the early legend *Tochmarc Emire* ('The Wooing of Emer') emissaries are sent to find a wife for Cú Chulainn 'i nnách dunad no i nnách prímbali i nHerind' ('in any fort or *prímbale* in Ireland'), where *prímbale* is translated 'superior homestead' by Flanagan. And in 1011 the Annals of Ulster record the burning of a fort (*dún*) and the breaking down or demolition of its *baile* (translated as 'town').¹¹ This also strongly suggests an actual building or buildings. These and other examples are usefully brought together by Flanagan.¹²

I would argue from this that in place-names in Alba *baile* originally had the more specialised meaning of an actual habitation, at least when it applies to a dependent estate. It referred perhaps to the main place of habitation, or a habitational nucleus. On the other hand, during the first centuries of the kingdom of Alba, from the ninth to the eleventh century, *pett* referred to the full estate as part of a wider network of lordship and administrative and fiscal organisation.

The basic model which I am proposing here can be summed up as follows. There existed originally a core simplex name, which cannot usefully be defined as either a specific or a generic. This core simplex name referred in general terms to an estate or area of land perceived as some kind of an entity. To this simplex could then be added elements defining the particular aspect of that entity which the speaker wished to single out. In this early period, **Pitcoute* would have referred to the whole estate of **Coute* as an administrative or fiscal unit; **Balcoute* would have referred to some part of it, perhaps the habitative centre, or the early equivalent of the *big house*; while **Moncoute* referred to the

¹¹ The fort was *Dun Echdach*, now Duneight, Co. Down: *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, edited by S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, I (Dublin, 1983), pp. 442–43, and E. Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum* (Dublin, 1910), p. 383.

¹² D. Flanagan, 'Common elements in Irish place-names: *baile*', *Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society*, 2nd series, 1 (1978), 8–13; see also L. Price, 'A note on the use of the word *baile* in place-names', *Celtica*, 6 (1963), 119–26.

bog-lands of the estate, source of valuable peats and heather, that part which later became known as the Myre.

It is clear from the names in Appendix 2 that such bolt-on specifics are not confined to *pett*, *baile* and *mòine*. They can involve the interchange between a range of generics such as **dol*, *cinn*, *tulach* and *dùn*.

As soon as these bolt-on specifics ceased to be understood, that is, as soon as Gaelic had been ousted by Scots, they often continued in use, but started to be used indiscriminately and at random, a randomness that is seen in the way in which the specifics waver and interchange throughout the centuries, finally coming to rest in one form or another, without any apparent underlying pattern. Some in fact still have not completely stabilised. The village of Pitroddie in the Carse of Gowrie east of Perth is still often referred to locally as Balroddie, and this fluctuation is clearly seen from its earliest occurrence in the written record in 1265, when it appears as *Baltrodi* (see Appendix 2). You can perhaps begin to see where my alternative title, 'Nightmare on distribution map', came from!

The feudalization, or, better, the 'Europeanization',¹³ of Scotland in the twelfth century brought with it further complications in this model, at least in respect to *Pit-* and *Bal-* names. I have discussed this more fully elsewhere.¹⁴ Suffice it to say here that *baile* seems to have become the indigenous word for the estate which appears in Latin documents as *villa*, with all its tenurial overtones, while *pett*, if not already obsolete or obsolescent, did not play any active role in the naming of newly formed, or re-formed, estates of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

A further implication of my basic model of core simplex with detachable generics is that the core simplex name might, in certain circumstances, be used on its own. In fact there is some evidence of this, for which see Appendix 3.

Amongst the lands given to the church of the Holy Trinity, Dunfermline, by Malcolm III and Margaret was the estate of *Lauer*, which appears in the early thirteenth century as both *Liver(s)* and *Petliuer*, and is today known as Pitliver, in Dunfermline parish (Fife).

¹³ As defined in R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* (London, 1994), pp. 269–70.

¹⁴ R. S. Taylor, 'Some early Scottish place-names and Queen Margaret', *Scottish Language*, 13 (1994), 1–17 (at pp. 3–5).

We can see how loose and detachable the element *pett* was when we consider the early thirteenth-century figure William of Pitliver. He witnessed seven Dunfermline Abbey charters: in three of them he is styled 'of *Pitliver*', in the other four 'of *Liver(s)*'.¹⁵

There is also Pittowie in Crail parish (Fife), which contains Gaelic *toll* 'hollow'. This appears from the twelfth to the fourteenth century as *Pittollie* or *Pittowie*; in the fifteenth century as *Tolly*, then in the seventeenth century as both *Tolly* and *Pittollie* (see Appendix 3).

A useful parallel from contemporary usage may be the following: the place-name Mountquhanie can today be used as a core simplex, or with such bolt-on terms as Mountquhanie Estate or Mountquhanie House. However, the name on the map, and in general local usage, is simply Mountquhanie, unless the speaker wants to stress a particular aspect of the place, or the management of the place, in the case of the word 'Estate'.

This last consideration in fact gets us further into the 'Nightmare on Distribution Map', with the thought that if there are some place-names which can exist quite happily with or without a generic, then might not, theoretically, all estates, at least of a similar status, behave the same way?

In this part of Scotland we have many farm-names which consist of a simplex only, and I would argue, on the basis of the above, that in fact these, too—at least those which formed estates dependent on a shire-centre—could equally well have survived with a generic such as *Pit-* or *Bal-*. The large estate of Cash in Strathmiglo parish (Fife) probably derives from Gaelic *càise* 'cheese'.¹⁶ In Banffshire it is probably the specific in the obsolete place-name *Pitcash* (now Georgetown) near Tomintoul, Kirkmichael parish. On the analogy with Pitliver and Pittowie there is at least the possibility that during the Gaelic-speaking period the estate of Cash could have been referred to as both **Pett a'chàise* and **Baile a'chàise*, as well as simply *Càise*. It may have been purely chance that dictated that it has come down to us without any generic. On the other hand there may have been a good reason connected with its early administrative or tenurial status. If this is the case, then we have to start thinking in terms of explaining not merely the presence of differing generics but also their complete

¹⁵ See Appendix 3; also Taylor, 'Early Scottish place-names', p. 13.

¹⁶ Barrow, *Kingdom of the Scots*, p. 278.

absence. There is much more work to be done on this idea, and at this stage I want simply to air it for consideration and comment.¹⁷

In the final part of this paper, I shall venture, with some trepidation, furth of Scotland and look briefly at some examples of generic-element variation in Wales and England.

To take Wales first: Melville Richards notes that terms such as *llan*, *merthyr*, *eglwys*, and *betws*, all religious terms which originally had differing shades of meaning, came to be regarded as interchangeable. This gave rise to various aliases such as Merthyr Caffo ~ Llangaffo (Anglesey), Merthyr Tegfedd ~ Llandegfedd (Monmouthshire), and Eglwys Geinwyr ~ Llangeinwyr (Glamorganshire).¹⁸

The specific in all these is a saint's name. In some cases the saint's name can appear on its own without a generic. This is reminiscent of the loss of generics in eastern Scotland. It also helps shed light on some puzzling Scottish place-names which appear to consist simply of a personal name, such as Aithernie, in Scoonie parish (Fife) and the parish name Madderty (Perthshire).¹⁹

Another group of names in Richards's article which has a bearing on the theme of this paper is those which he calls 'church names originally secular but given an ecclesiastical form', e.g. *Nant Carfan* > Llan-carfan (Glamorganshire), or *Nant Peris* > Llanberis (Caernarvonshire). In these examples the ecclesiastical aspect has come to overshadow the originally purely topographical.²⁰

The Book of Llandaf alleges that around 860 Engistil gave (to Bishop Nudd?) 'the castle (*castellum*) *Dinduicil*, that is *Cairduicil* with its church and three *modii* of land around the citadel (*arx*) up on the

¹⁷ Place-names which occur with or without the explanatory generic rejoice in the designation 'epexegetic' or 'non-epexegetic' respectively. For a full discussion of this phenomenon as it relates to Danish place-names, see V. Dalberg, *Stednavneændringer og Funktionalitet* (Copenhagen, 1991), pp. 47-112 (English summary, pp. 228-33).

¹⁸ M. Richards, 'Ecclesiastical and secular in medieval Welsh settlement', *Studia Celtica*, 3 (1968), 9-18 (at p. 11).

¹⁹ These both contain the name *Ethemon*, the saint to whom the monastery on the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth was dedicated. This is the same name as Welsh *Edern*, which appears both with and without the generic *llan* in *Edern* or *Llanedern* (Caernarvonshire): Richards, 'Ecclesiastical and secular', p. 11.

²⁰ Richards, 'Ecclesiastical and secular', p. 16.

hill and below the hill'.²¹ The two different Welsh generics used with the specific *Duicil* (*caer* and *din*) are echoed by the two different Latin words used in the text (*castellum* and *arx*). Despite the fact that, according to *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, *caer* and *din* can be synonymous, this careful use of different generics in both Welsh and Latin strongly suggests that they are not synonymous here. Unfortunately *Cairduicil* remains unidentified, which means that whatever distinction those who framed the charter might have wanted to make cannot be investigated on the ground.²²

After I gave this paper at the Names Studies Conference in Nottingham, I was referred to two articles by Eilert Ekwall which describe from the early English period phenomena remarkably similar to those set out above.²³

Ekwall recognises, and dismisses as irrelevant to his main theme, the many examples in English place-names of what he describes as phonetic change accompanied by association with a similar sounding element (my 'generic-element substitution'). The example he quotes is Northenden, which, although seemingly a name in *-den* 'valley' (from Old English *denu*), has in fact as its second element *worþign* 'homestead'.²⁴ Other examples would be the substitution of *-ford* for *-worth*, as in Madginford (Kent), originally **Mæghild's worth*; or of *-burh* for *-brōc*, as in Greasborough (Yorkshire, West Riding), originally **Gres brōc*.

²¹ The Latin reads: 'castellum Dinduicil id est Cairduicil cum ecclesia sua et tribus modiiis terre per circuitum arcis supra montem et infra montem': *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâu*, edited by J. Gwenogvryn Evans and J. Rhys (Oxford, 1893), pp. 226-27. Three *modii* represented approximately 125 acres; for a discussion of *modius* see Wendy Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm. Studies in the Llandaff Charters* (London, 1978), pp. 33-35. In papal confirmations of the early twelfth century this grant is always worded 'villa de *Cairduicil* cum ecclesia' (*Book of Llan Dâu*, pp. 31, 43 and 90).

²² Davies, *Microcosm*, p. 75.

²³ E. Ekwall, 'Variation and change in English place-names', *Vetenskaps-Societetens i Lund, Årsbok*, 1962, 3-49; and 'Some cases of variation and change in English place-names', in *English Studies Presented to R. W. Zandvoort on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, supplement to *English Studies. A Journal of English Letters and Philology*, 45 (Amsterdam, 1964), pp. 44-49. I am grateful to Peter Kitson and David Parsons for these references.

²⁴ Ekwall, 'Variation and change' (1962), pp. 5-6.

Ekwall divides variation in English place-names into several categories. Category I is titled 'Independent variation in English names'. Within this category it is subcategory i A(a) which is most relevant to this discussion: 'Variation between compound names with a common first element'. Andoversford (Gloucestershire) is referred to as *æt Onnanforda* in an original charter of 759, while a few decades later the same place is called *æt Onnandune*. However, that they were also considered different, but related, places can be seen from a charter from c.800, when both *Annanford* and *Annandun* are mentioned as boundary markers. Ekwall writes: 'It is quite possible that we have here not a variation between two place-names, but one between two occasional appellations, so that *Onnanford* and *Onnandun* retained their original meanings' but referred to the same piece of land.²⁵ He goes on to cite a range of variation between such elements as *-ford*, **-þrep*, *-ceaster*, *-hearg*, *-stoc*, *-tūn*, *-burna* and *wiella*. In one instance he sees chance determining the choice of one element over another in the earliest charters.²⁶ I would refine this, however, by saying that it was that aspect of the land uppermost in people's mind which determined their choice of element, at least in the early period of usage. The main difference between these English examples and those from Scotland is that the English ones stabilised at an early date, whereas those in Scotland did not stabilise until much later, with some still not fully stabilised, as noted above. No doubt the loss of the chief language of the place-names, Gaelic, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, contributed to this much longer, more drawn out period of stabilisation.

Ekwall also cites many examples of variation between habitative generics such as *hām* and *hāmstēde*; *tūn* and *wīc*; and *tūn* and *worþig*; while from what is now Scotland, but was in the eighth and ninth centuries part of Northumbria, comes Coldingham, which varies in its early forms between *-burh* and *-hām*.²⁷ Ekwall regards these as synonyms. In the light of my conclusions drawn from the Scottish evidence, however, I would suggest that different types of settlement were denoted by different habitative terms, and their different use

²⁵ Ekwall, 'Variation and change' (1962), p. 11.

²⁶ *Codestun ~ Codeswella* (Cutsdean, Worcestershire): Ekwall, 'Variation and change' (1962), p. 14.

²⁷ Ekwall, 'Variation and change' (1962), pp. 17-19.

might reflect different status or function at different times. This nuanced use of settlement-names is all the more likely given the exact and nuanced use of topographical features in Old English so clearly shown by Margaret Gelling.²⁸

Ekwall even provides examples of the alternation between generic and 'zero-generic', such as Crewkerne (Somerset), which appears as *Crucern* c.880 (11th) and *Cruche* 1086. Ekwall adds 'the shorter name continued in use as an alternative'. Another example would be Harvington (Worcestershire), which first appears as *Hereford* in 799 (11th), and later as *Herefordtun* 10th (12th).²⁹

Ekwall concludes that the variation and change he documents so fully in this monograph was a result of the fact that the place-nomenclature, especially of the western counties of England, had not had time to become altogether stabilised by the eighth or early ninth century, when most of his examples appear.³⁰ If my analysis of the Scottish evidence is correct, then this may not be the only reason. It may well have to do with a more exact way of referring to an entity depending on which aspect of that entity the speaker or writer wished to emphasise. This would have been a particularly strong feature when there was still a general understanding of the lexical meaning of all the elements involved. In his later article Ekwall does in fact allude to such nuanced name-giving in his treatment of a twelfth-century variant of Faversham (Kent), which is *Fefreshām*, etc., from 815 on, but which appears once as *Fauresfeld* in 1154. He writes, 'there is no other evidence of a variant name *Fauresfeld*, and we should not expect an old variant like that to have lived on so long. The solution of the difficulty is quite simple if we may assume that *Fauresfeld* was the name of a portion of Faversham, not of Faversham as a whole'.³¹

²⁸ M. Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984); see also M. Gelling, 'Place-names and landscape', in *The Uses of Place-Names*, edited by S. Taylor (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 75-100.

²⁹ Ekwall, 'Variation and change' (1962), pp. 24-26, especially pp. 25-26.

³⁰ Ekwall, 'Variation and change', pp. 48-49.

³¹ Ekwall, 'Some cases of variation and change' (1964) p. 44. I am grateful to Veronica Smart for recently bringing to my attention the variation of the generic element in forms of the name Southwark on certain coins from the reign of Æthelred II of England. These variations are between *-geweorc*, *-byrig* and perhaps (once) *-tūn*. For details see V. Smart, *Cumulative Index of Volumes 1-20, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles*, 28 (London, 1981), p. 105.

Cornwall offers yet more examples of variation, with strong echoes of the situation in Scotland, especially in relation to *pett* and *baile*; but in its English rather than its Cornish name-stock. Oliver Padel notes that the Old English element *land* is often used interchangeably with Old English *tūn*, to denote respectively the lands of the manor and its centre. Thus you find pairs such as Blisland and *Bliston*; and Callington and *Calilond*. This phenomenon is also found in Devon, in such pairs as Hartland and *Hertitona*. Padel adds 'It seems to be mere chance which of the pairs has survived to become the modern name, though forms with *tūn* have done so more often.'³² These words echo the randomness which may be detected in the survival of one form or another of place-names in eastern Scotland. It behoves place-name scholars everywhere to take a close look at this phenomenon and to determine whether this is indeed randomness, or whether it does in fact have a pattern behind it. If not; if it genuinely is chance alone which determines whether a place-name in certain countries or regions comes down with one generic or another, or even with no generic at all, then my 'Nightmare on Distribution Map' threatens to become a reality.

APPENDIX 1: GENERIC-ELEMENT SUBSTITUTION

Balfron (parish, Stirlingshire) *Both-* ~ *Bal-*
Buthbren 1233; *Buthbrene* 1303; *Balfran* c.1609
(? Cumbric or Pictish **pren* 'tree')

Balfunning (Drymen parish, Stirlingshire) *Both-* ~ *Bal-*
Boquhyning 1502; *Bathfynnainy*; *Batfynneing* 1549

Balgownie (Old Machar parish, Aberdeenshire) *Pol-* ~ *Bal-*
Palgoueny 1256; *pons de Polgowny* 1400; *Polgony* vel *Balgony* 1595
(Gaelic *gobha* 'smith')

Balmoral (Crathie and Braemar parish, Aberdeenshire) *Both-* ~ *Bal-*
Bou[t]h morale 1451; *Balmorain* 1481

Balquhidder (parish, Perthshire) *Both-* ~ *Bal-*

³² O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988), p. 199. I am grateful to Dr Dauvit Broun for drawing my attention to this reference; also for his comments on a draft of this article.

Bu[t]hfyder c.1268; *Buthfuder* 1275; *Buffydir* c.1275
(? St. Peter)

Belfatton (Lonmay parish, Aberdeenshire) *Blair-* ~ *Bal-*
Blairquhatoun 1588; *Belfatton* 1695; *Blairfatton* 1732

Catochil (Abernethy parish, Perthshire) *Cat-* ~ *Pit-*
Cathehill 1295; *Catoichill* 1508; *Kintochill* 1519; *Pitogle* 1783

Davochmaluag or **Dochmaluag** (Fodderty parish, Ross & Cromarty)
Davoch- ~ *Dal-*
Dalfmalawage 1497; *Dalmalook* 1584
(*Davoch* of St Moluag)

Dochcarty (Fodderty parish, Ross & Cromarty) *Davoch-* ~ *Dal-*
Dalcarty & *Davachcarty* 1541

Pitdelphin (Strachan parish, Kincardineshire) *Bad-* ~ *Pit-*
Badelphin 1592; *Badelphin* 1612
(*bad* + ? personal name *Elfin*, a by-form of *Alpín*)

Pitfodels (Peterculter parish, Aberdeenshire) *Bad-* ~ *Pit-*
Badfothel 1157 etc.; *Badfodalis* 1440; *Petfodellis* 1488

APPENDIX 2: GENERIC-ELEMENT VARIATION

Baldinny (Kettins parish, Angus) *pett-* ~ *baile-*
Petdynny 1528; *Petdynny* 1547; *Badiny* 1590s

Balgeddie (Leslie parish, Fife) *pett-* ~ *baile-*
Pitgeddy 1521; *Balgedy* 1539; *Petgeddie* 1542 et passim to 1663; *Balgeddy* 1640s
(Gaelic *gead* 'strip of arable land')

Balgillo (Monifeith parish, Angus) *ath-* ~ *baile-*
? *Hadgillin* 1173 × 1178

Balkemback (Tealing parish, Angus) *pett-* ~ *baile-*
Petkemmok 1512; *Petcammo* 1513; *Pethcammo* 1542; *Balkemmak* 1557;
Petkemmok 1561

Ballantagar (Monimail parish, Fife) *mòine-* ~ *baile-*

glebam et terras ecclesiasticas vicariae de *Monymaill*, vulgo vocatas *Montagart* et *Brewland* 1619

(Gaelic *an t-sagairt*, 'of the priest')

Baltilly (Ceres parish, Fife) *baile-* ~ *pett-*

Baltaly 1410; *Baltuly* 1474, 1497, 1510; *Bawtuly* 1490; *Baltullie* 1517; *Pittillie* 1612; *Pittullye* alias *Batullye* 1623; *Pittuloch* 1640s
(Gaelic *tulach*, 'hillock', 'mound')

Baltryne (Fordoun parish, Kincardineshire) *pett-* ~ *baile-*

Baltryne 1507; *Pitdryne* 1553; *Petrynnie* 1580; *Pitrinnie* 1603; *Baltryne* 1603, 1608; *Petreny* 1616
(second element obscure)

Bantaskin (Falkirk parish, Stirlingshire) *pett-* ~ *baile-*

Pettintoscale 1450; *Pettyntoskale* 1451; *Pettintoskane* 1546
(Gaelic *an t-soisgeil*, 'of the Gospel').

Bantuscall (obsolete, Kettle parish, Fife) *pett-* ~ *baile-*

Pettuscall 1590; *Bantuscall* 1594; *Bantuscall* 1616; *Bantuscall* 1648
(Gaelic *an t-soisgeil*, 'of the Gospel')

Barlanark (Old Monklands parish, Lanarkshire) *pett-* ~ *bàrr-*

Pethelenerke c.1120; *Barlanarc* 1172

Cathcart (parish, Renfrewshire) **cair-* ~ **coid-*

Kerkert 1158; *Katkert* c.1170; *Chatkert* 1296; *Kerthkert* 1451; *Cathcort* 1590s; *Carcarth* c.1650
(Cumbric 'fort' or 'wood' [on the River] Cart)³³

Dilspro (obsolete, Old Machar parish, Aberdeenshire) *pett-* ~ *dail-*

Petsprottis (or *-ccis*) 1157; *Petsprot* (or *-c*) 1359; *Dilspro* 1543; *Dalspro* 1594

Inchfuir (Kilmuir Easter parish, Ross & Cromarty) *innis-* ~ *pett-*

Inchfure 1463; *Petfure* 1479; *Inchfure* alias *Pitfure* 1539
(Gaelic loan-word from Pictish **púr* 'crop-land')³⁴

³³ See Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, pp. 366–67.

³⁴ See K. H. Jackson, *The Gaelic Notes in the Book of Deer* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 68–69.

Kinbattoch (former parish, now in Towie parish, Aberdeenshire) **dol-* ~ *cinn-* (~ *cill-*)

Dolbethok 1211; *Dolbethoc* c.1240; *Kybethoc* c.1250; *Kinbethoc* c.1250; *Kynbethok* c.1275; *Kynebethoc* 1366; *Kelbethok* 1507; *Kilbethok* 1513
(Pictish **dol* 'haugh, (water-)meadow'; also Gaelic *cinn* '(at the) end of' (with occasional late assimilation to *cill* 'church') + female personal (saint's?) name *Bethoc*; also the name of Malcolm II's daughter, mother of Duncan I—Duncan I died 1040)

Moncoutyemyre (obsolete, Kettle parish, Fife) *mòine-* ~ *pett-* ~ *baile-*
Moncowtymyre 1486; *Moncoutemyre* 1542; (*marresia*) *lie Pitco[u]tiemyre* 1594; *Balcutymyir* 1599; *Moncutemyre* 1608; (*marresia*) *Pitcoutie-myre* 1616; *Balcutiemyre* 1630; (*marresia*) *Pitcoutsmyre* vel *Pitcoutiemyre* 1648

Mountquhanie (Kilmany parish, Fife) *mòine-* ~ *both-* [?] ~ *baile-*
Munchany 1217, *Munfanyn* 1294; *Mo[n]wanyn* 1294–95; *Munquhany* 1465, *Buchquhane* (× 2) 1530, *Monquhany* 1541; (to Balfour of) *Balquhany* the lands and barony of *Monquhany* 1548

Pitroddie (Kilspindie parish, Perthshire) *baile-* ~ *pett-*

(Walter de) *Baltrodyn* 1259; *Baltrody* 1374, *Baltrody* 1474; (barony of) *Baltrody*, (mains lands of) *Petrody* 1559; (barony of) *Pitreddie* 16th
(Gaelic *trod* 'quarrel, combat')

Tullibody (medieval parish, now in Alloa parish, Clackmannanshire) *dùn-* ~ *tulach-*

Dunbodeuin 1147; *Dumbodelin* 1147; *Tulibodeuin* 1163; *Tulibodevin* c.1185
(Pictish or Gaelic *both* 'church' + ?)

Tullochcurran (Kirkmichael parish, Perthshire) *pett-* ~ *tulach-*
Petcarene 1232; *Tulabourene* 1232; *Tulicuran* 1470

APPENDIX 3: FORMS WITH NO GENERIC

Barevan (medieval parish, now in Cawdor parish, Nairnshire) *bàrr-*
(church of) *Evein* 1225; (lands of) *Estirewin* 1494; (church of) *Braaven* 1593

Dreggie (Cromdale, Inverallan & Advie parish, Morayshire) *cill* or *coille*

Kildreke c.1360

Pitliver (Dunfermline parish, Fife) *pett*

Lauer c.1128; *Lauer* c.1166; *Petliuer* 1227, c.1230 (× 2); *Liuer* 1230×36;

Livers c.1230; *Liuers* 1231; *Petlyuer* 1451; *Pitleuir* 1557 × 1585

(Gaelic *leabhar* 'book', in this context 'Gospel book')

Pitmurchie (Lumphanan parish, Aberdeenshire) *pett*

? *Morchory* 1250; *Pitmorche* 1470

Pittowie (Crail parish, Fife) *pett*

Petollin 1153 × 1178; *Pitolly* 1312; *Tolly* 1452; *Pittowie* 1642; *Tollie* 1646

(Gaelic *toll* 'hole, hollow')

APPENDIX 4

GAELIC, CUMBRIC AND PICTISH ELEMENTS (with approximate meanings)

àth (Gaelic) 'ford'

bad (Gaelic) 'spot, clump'

baile (Gaelic) 'estate'

bàrr (Gaelic) 'top'

blàr (Gaelic) 'field'; ? 'clearing in wood'

both (Gaelic, Cumbric and [?] Pictish) 'bothy, sheiling'; 'church'
(Gaelicisation of Cumbric and [?] Pictish **bod* 'dwelling')³⁵

**cair* (Cumbric and Pictish) 'fort'

cill (Gaelic) 'church'

cinn (Gaelic) 'head, end; (at the) end of'

**coid* (Cumbric and Pictish) 'wood'

coille (Gaelic) 'wood'

dabhach (Gaelic) 'davoch' (measurement of arable land roughly
equivalent to a carucate; probably borrowed from Pictish)

dail 'haugh, water-meadow' (borrowing into Gaelic of Pictish **dol*)

dùn (Gaelic) 'hill, fortified hill, fort'

innis (Gaelic) 'island, haugh'

mòine (Gaelic) 'bog, peat-bog'

pett (borrowing into Gaelic from Pictish) 'estate'

poll (Gaelic) 'pool, sluggish stream'

tulach (Gaelic) 'hillock; (?) habitational mound'

³⁵ For a fuller discussion of this element see S. Taylor, 'Place-names and the early Church in eastern Scotland', in *Scotland in Dark Age Britain*, edited by B. E. Crawford (St Andrews, 1996), pp. 93–110.

Ella: An Old English Name in Old Norse Poetry

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Old Norse skaldic poetry is a fruitful source for the study of Old English place- and personal names. Skaldic poetry of the Viking Age is predominantly a type of praise-poetry, providing both commemoration and eulogy, and thus the skalds tend to cite a great number of names, both as a record of peoples or territories conquered and as a form of triumphal rhetoric. Since late Anglo-Saxon England was one of the main spheres of Viking activity, it is no surprise to find English names among those most frequently cited: excluding doubtful instances, in the extant skaldic corpus twenty-nine different English place-names are found in forty-five different occurrences (including river-names), and nine personal names in thirty occurrences. The evidence of Old English names in skaldic verse is of interest for many reasons: historically, for instance, it provides often unique information on the course of the Anglo-Scandinavian wars; linguistically, it permits study of the Scandinavianisation of English names, with attendant implications for Anglo-Norse language contact and intelligibility; and onomastically, it preserves an independent tradition of early forms for a wide range of names, forms which importantly must have been transmitted from Anglo-Saxon to Scandinavian orally rather than scribally.¹

I give below a list of the Old Norse forms of Old English personal names to be found in skaldic poetry, excluding *Ella*, the name

This is a revised version of part of a paper given to the annual conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland at Nottingham in April 1996. I am grateful to members of the Society for discussion on that occasion, and to Heather O'Donoghue for comment on earlier drafts. Except where discussing philological details, I refer to well-known figures by their most familiar name-form in Modern English (e.g. Alfred, Ethelred, Cnut).

¹ I discuss all these issues at greater length in my *English Place-Names in Skaldic Verse*, English Place-Name Society (Nottingham, forthcoming).