

Lake as a stream-name in southern Scotland

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LAKE in Scottish place-names

“With the exception of the much-discussed Lake of Menteith PER (McNiven 2014, Aitchison 2016), all *lakes* in Scotland are artificial bodies of water.”

"Berwickshire place-name 299: 'Hirsel Lake'." *Recovering the Earliest English Language in Scotland: evidence from place-names.*

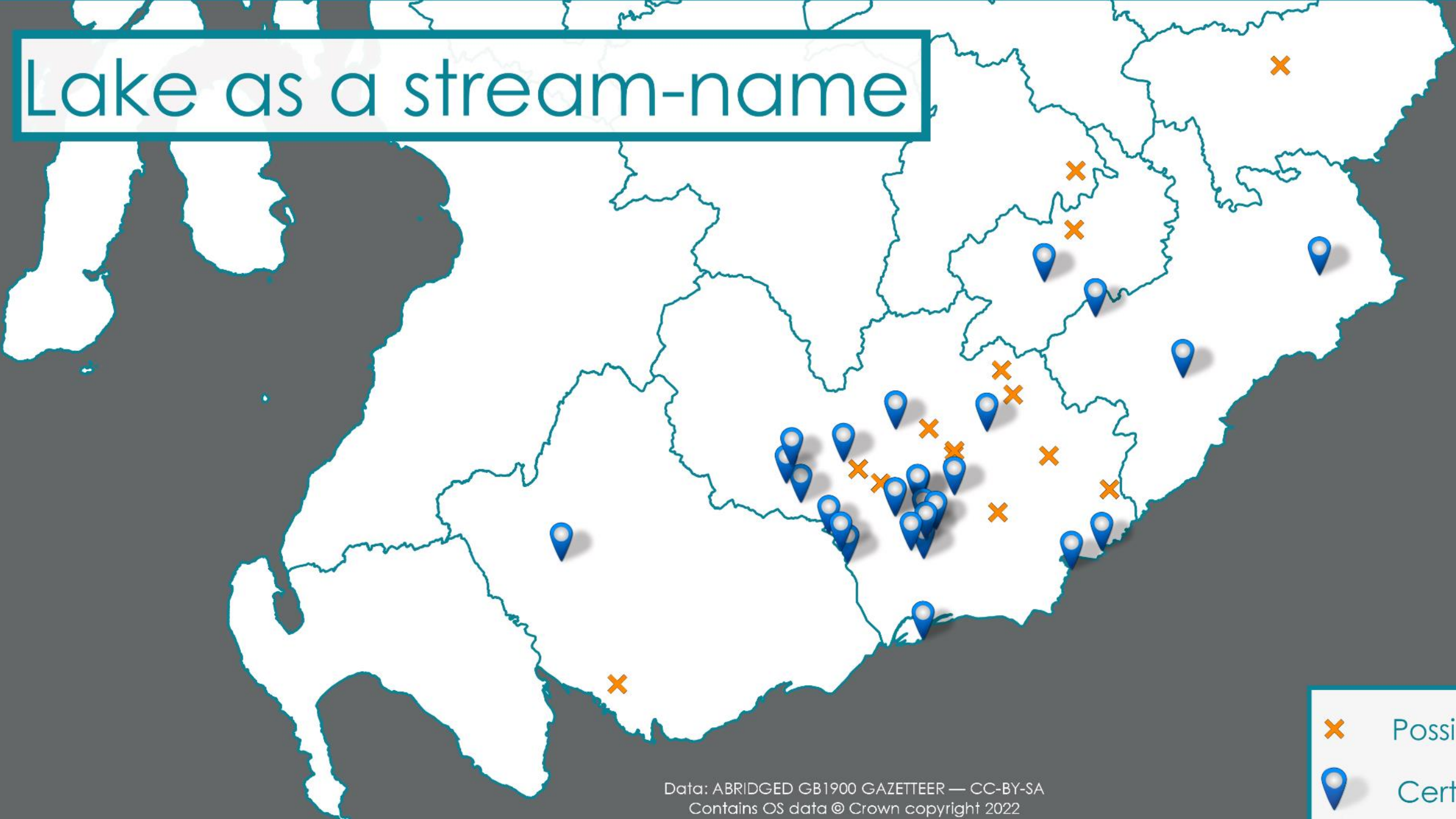
Lake & laik in Scottish place-names

- Artificial bodies of water: 18
- Natural bodies of water: 10
- Rocks [Scots LECK < Gaelic *leac* ‘a flat stone, a slab, a ledge of rock’]: 7
- Streams, burns: 27 (secure); 15 (probable to possible)
- Unclassified: 4

Ordnance Survey six-inch 1st edition | Ordnance Survey Name Books [<https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/>]

Ordnance Survey six-inch 2nd edition | GB1900 GAZETTEER [<https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/data/>]

Lake as a stream-name



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✕	Possible
📍	Certain



The Lake (Kirkmahoe),
DMF

“A large stream the
continuation of Duncow
& Pennyland Burns bears
the name from the
junction of the
abovementioned streams
to the River Nith.”

OS1/10/31/122



The Lake, ROX

“A small stream, having its source on the farm of Lurdenlaw in the parish of Sprouston, and flowing in a southerly direction, till it falls into the Kale Water near Caverton Mill; for some part of its course, it divides the parishes of Sprouston and Eckford; and Eckford and Linton.”

OS1/29/25/12

8 previously identified place-names

- Edward Johnson-Ferguson (1935) *The Place-Names of Dumfriesshire*: **Marlake** (DMF), **Roughlake** (DMF), **Poldivan Lake** (DMF)
- May G. Williamson (1942) *The Non-Celtic Place-Names of the Scottish Border Counties*: **Altrieve Lake** (SLK), **The Lake** (DMF), **Lakehead** (DMF)
- W. F. H. Nicolaisen (1962) *Further Minor Elements in Scottish River-Names*: **Altrieve Lake** (SLK), **Poldivan Lake** (DMF), **Earshaig Lake** (DMF)
- Colin F. Brown (2015) *Watercourse Synonyms*: ND4484 [**Graemston Laik** (ORK)], NX9595 [**Poldivan Lake** (DMF)]

LAKE in southern Scottish stream-names: 27 secure examples

DMF: Archwood Lake · Calf Lake · Comleys/Cum Lake [Garrel Water] · Crook Lake · **Earshaig Lake** · Eppie's Lake · Fishbeck Lake · Gamerigg Lake [Kirkland Burn] · Hawknest Lake · Janical Lake · Lake Burn [Blindhillbush Burn] · **Marlake Burn** · **Poldivan Lake** · Rainshaw Lake · The Lake (Applegarth) · The Lake [Barrows Burn] · The Lake (Canonbie) · The Lake [Drumbreck Lake] Closeburn · The Lake (Holywood) · **The Lake** (Kirkmahoe) · **The Lake** [Waterside Lake] · The Lake (Morton)

KCB: Beggar's Lake

ROX: Berryfell Lake · The Lake

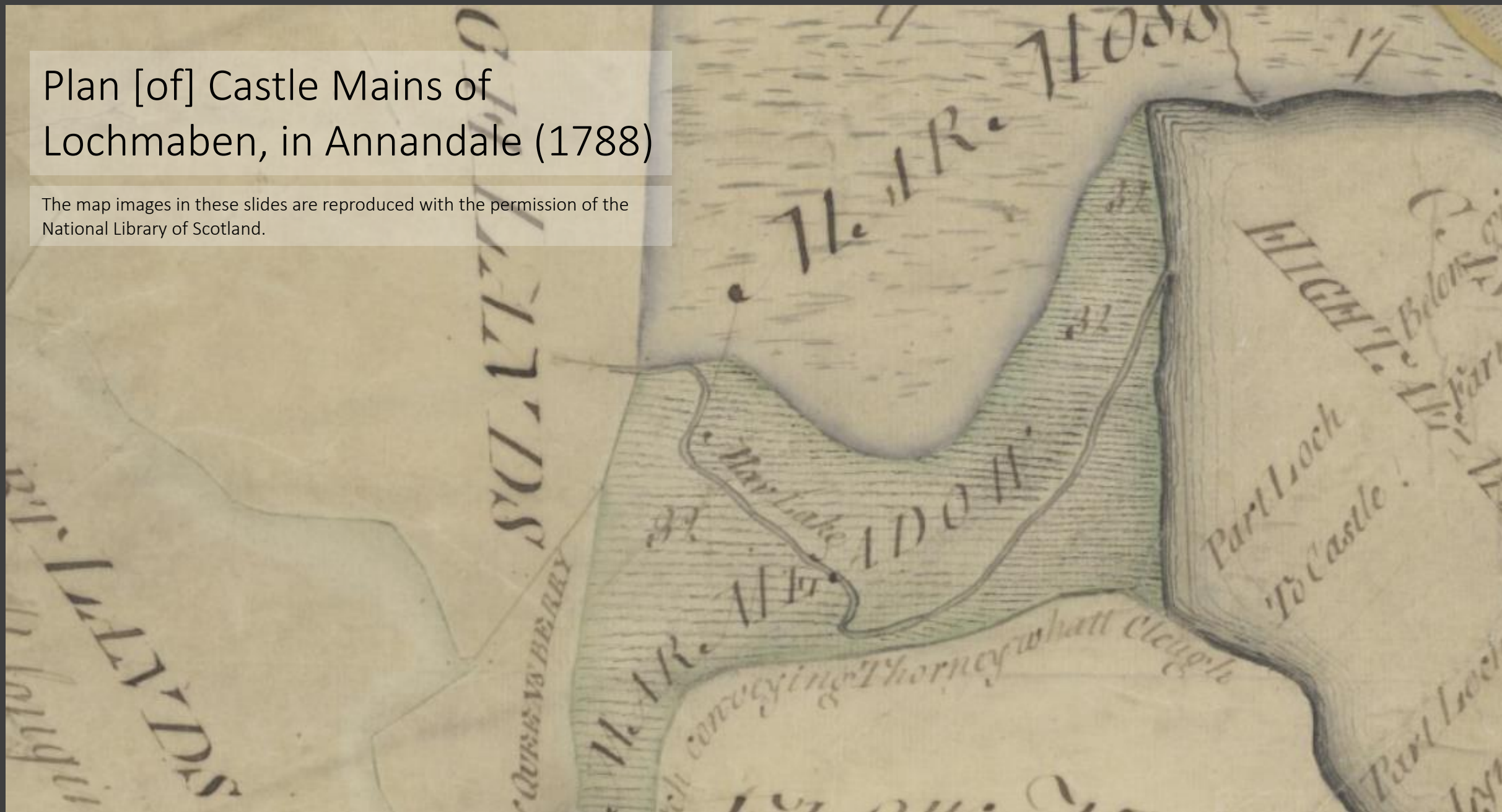
SLK: **Altrieve Lake** · The Lake [Blind Lake]

Comments in the Ordnance Survey Name Books

- “...the word "Lake" is generally used in the locality for streams or drains having little or no fall.” OS1/10/3/45 [The Lake (Applegarth), DMF]
- “As the word Lake instead of Burn is sometimes applied to a stream, I think this should be written, Mar Lake instead of Burn.” OS1/10/36/104 [Marklake Burn (Lochmaben), DMF]

Plan [of] Castle Mains of Lochmaben, in Annandale (1788)

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LAKE in southern Scottish stream-names: 14 probable to possible examples

BWK: The Lake (Longformacus)

DMF: Clifton's Lake · Lake Burn (Tinwald) · Lakehead (Kirkmichael) · Lake Well · **Roughlake** · Shawlake · The Lake (Eskdalemuir) · The Lake (Hutton & Corrie) · The Lakes · Yade Moss Lake

KCB: Mill of the Lake

PBL: Kirnie Lake

SLK: Dead Lake

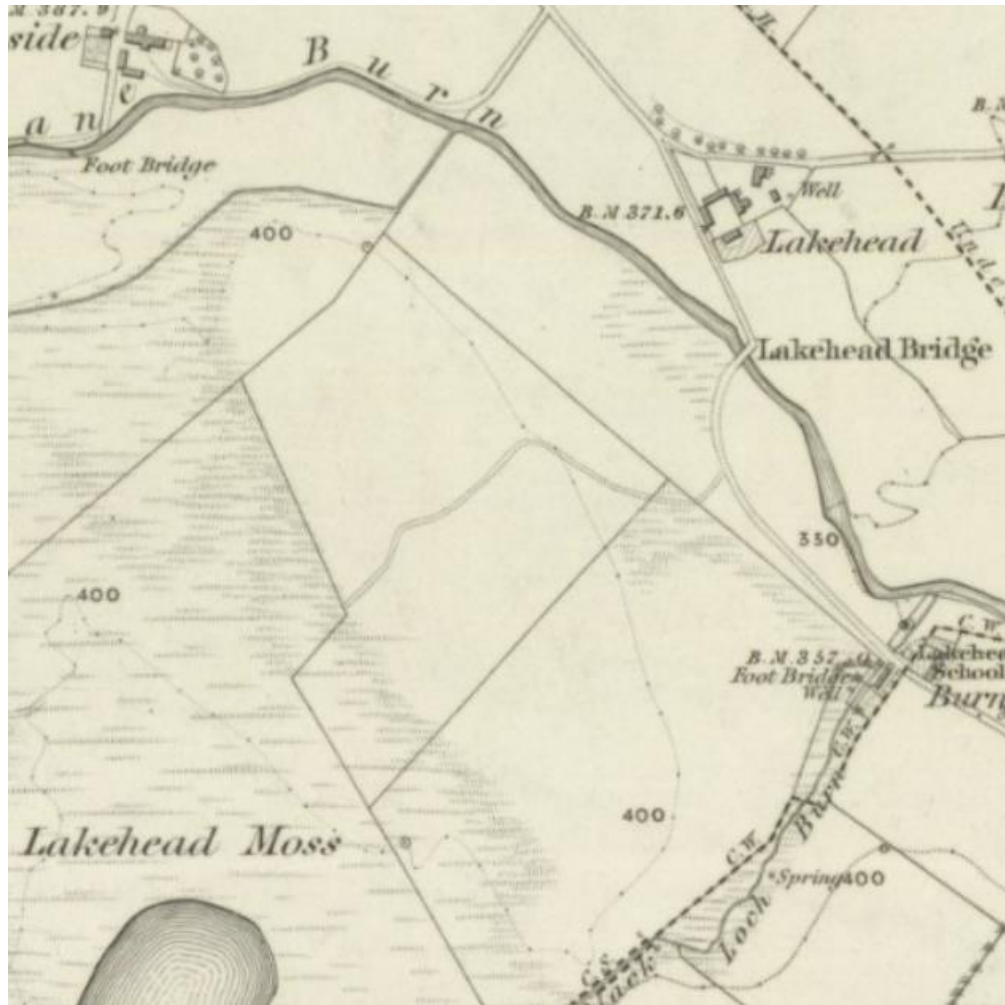
Kirnie Lake, PBL



The Lake (Eskdalemuir), DMF



Lakehead (Kirkmichael), DMF



Roughlake (Wamphray), DMF



Lake Well (Middlebie), DMF



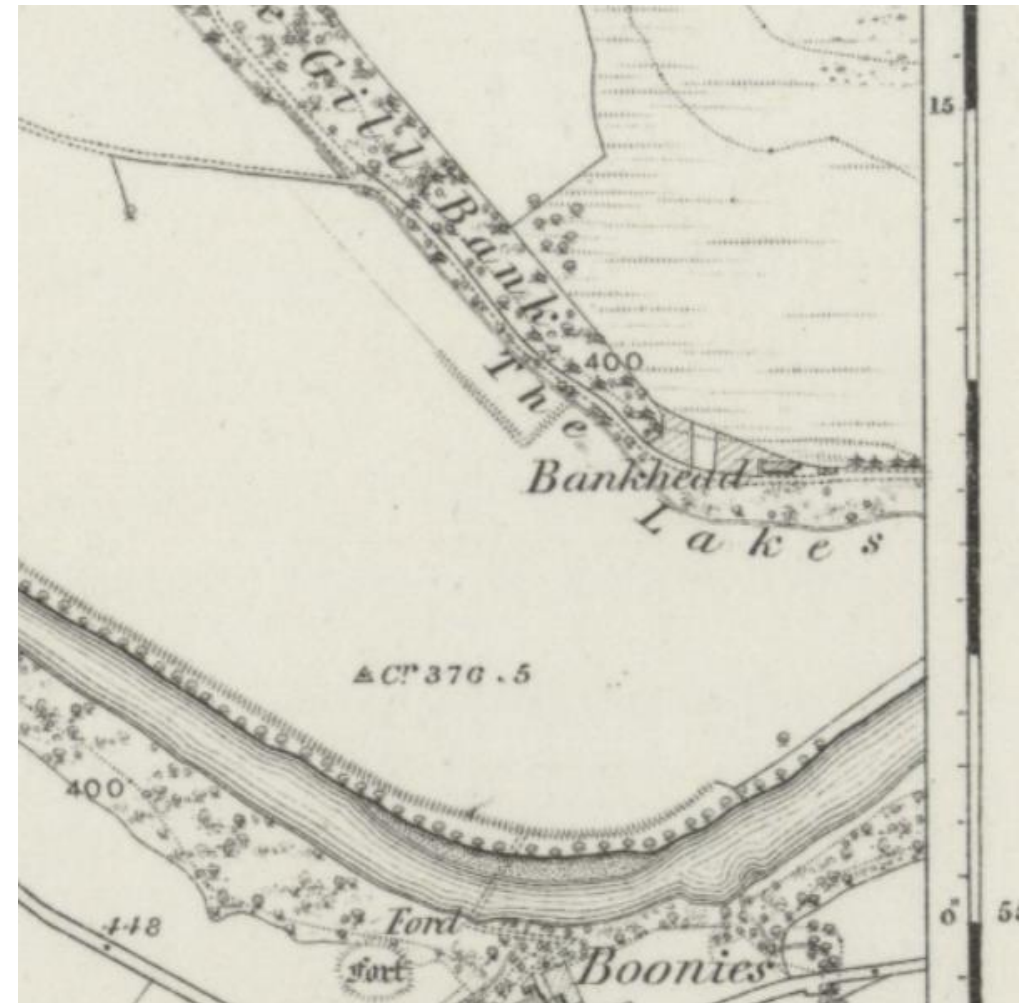
Lake Burn (Tinwald), DMF



The Lake (Longformacus), BWK



The Lakes (Westerkirk), DMF



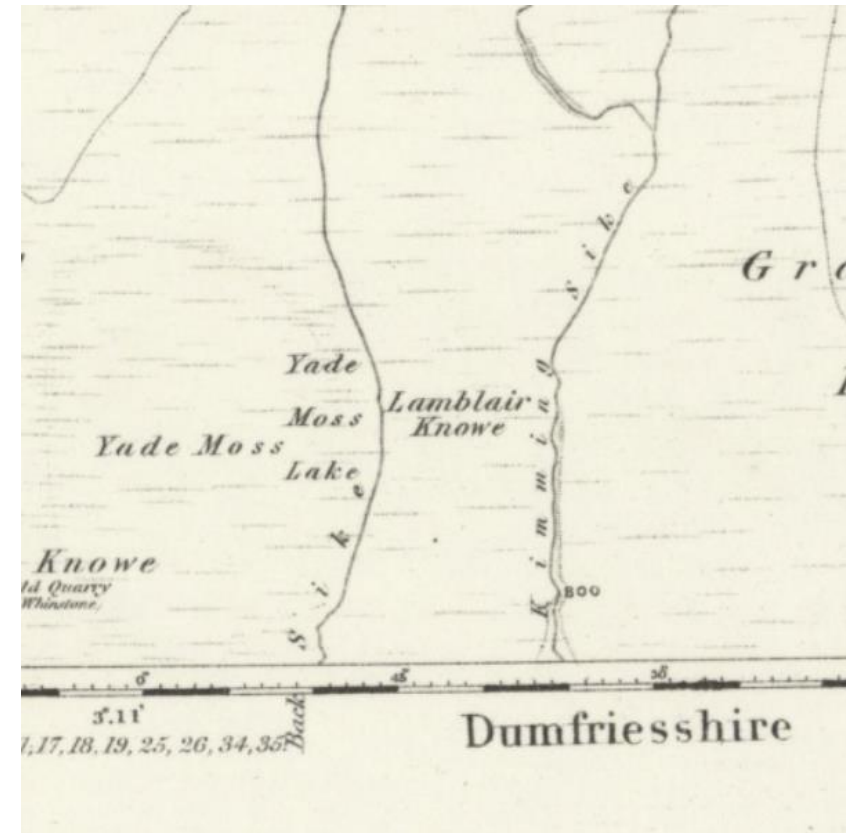
Dead Lake (Site of), SLK: “The real tradition simply bears, that here a deadly feud was settled by dint of arms; the upright stones mark the place where the two lords or leaders fell, and the bodies of their followers were thrown into a marshy pool called the Dead Lake, in the adjoining haugh.” OS1/30/14/93



ESRI World Image via maps.nls.uk

Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Mosses? Laichs?



The Lake (Hutton & Corrie), DMF

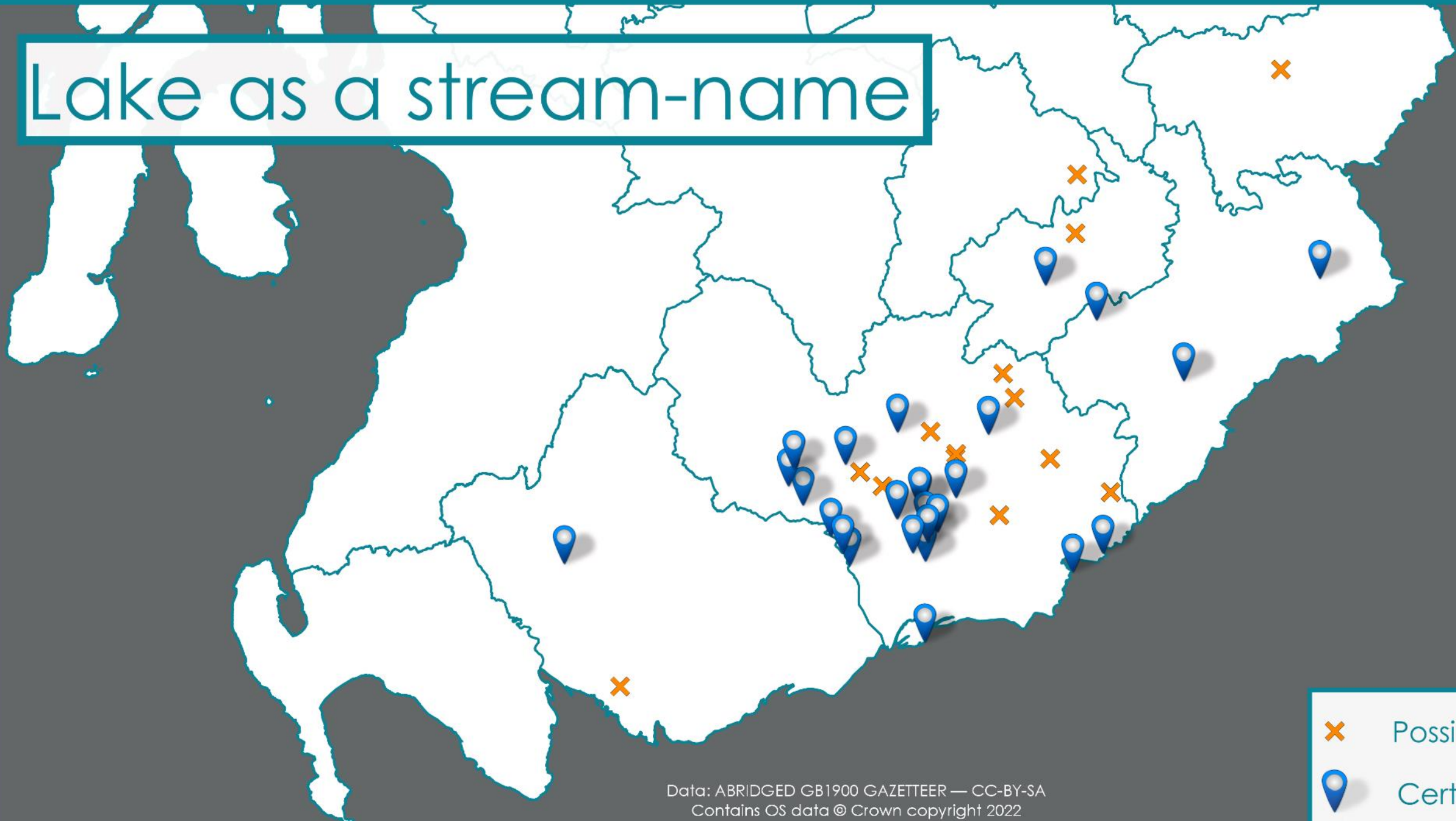


Mill of the Lake or Mill of Girthon, KCB



- terras de Laik et Ardbigland, cum molendinis, 1509
- Millne of Laik, 1682
- Mill of lake, 1753
- Miln of lake, 1799
- Miln of lake, 1803
- Miln of Laick, 1819
- The Mill of lake, 1819

Lake as a stream-name



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- ✕ Possible
- 📍 Certain

LAKE (n.3) in the OED (955-1885)

- A small stream of running water; also, a channel for water.
Obsolete exc. dialect.
- **Etymology:** Old English *lacu* strong feminine; the sense shows that it is not < Latin *lacus* (see lake n.4) but a native word, from a Germanic root **lak-* denoting moisture; compare Old English *leccan* to moisten, *leach* v.2, also *leak* n., *leak* v.
The Old High German *lahha* (German *lache*) pond, bog, is formally coincident, but is perhaps of Latin origin.

LAKE (n.4) in the OED (c.1200-)

- A large body of water entirely surrounded by land *etc.*
- **Etymology:** Early Middle English *lac*, < Old French *lac*, < Latin *lacus* basin, tub, tank, lake, pond; the popular form of the word in Old French was *lai*. The present English form *lake* (recorded from the 14th cent.) may be due to confusion with LAKE n.3, or perhaps rather to independent adoption of Latin *lacus*.

A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue (up to 1700): LAKE

- Occas. applied (in verse) appar. to the flowing water of a river or stream. OED. accepts the first quot. below as going with west and southwest midl. ME. lak, lake, mod. south-western Eng. dial. lake, leak (and common in midl. and south. Eng. place-names), OE. lacu a stream, watercourse (cf. Lech(e n.)), **but as there appears to be no other evidence of the existence of this topographical word in north. Eng. or Sc.**, it seems unlikely that it is in fact intended in the following quots. (unless, conceivably. by imitation of ME. verse).

A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue (up to 1700): LAKE (Supplementary entry)

- In Scottish Studies VI. (1962) 211, three examples in south Sc. place-names are given **where lake appar. = stream**, so that deriv. f. OE. lacu (which is cognate with Lech(e n.3) here seems likely and the note in Dict. should be modified accordingly.

Holland's *The Buke of the Howlat* (ll. 12-21)

I raikit till ane **reveir**
That ryally [rei]rd.

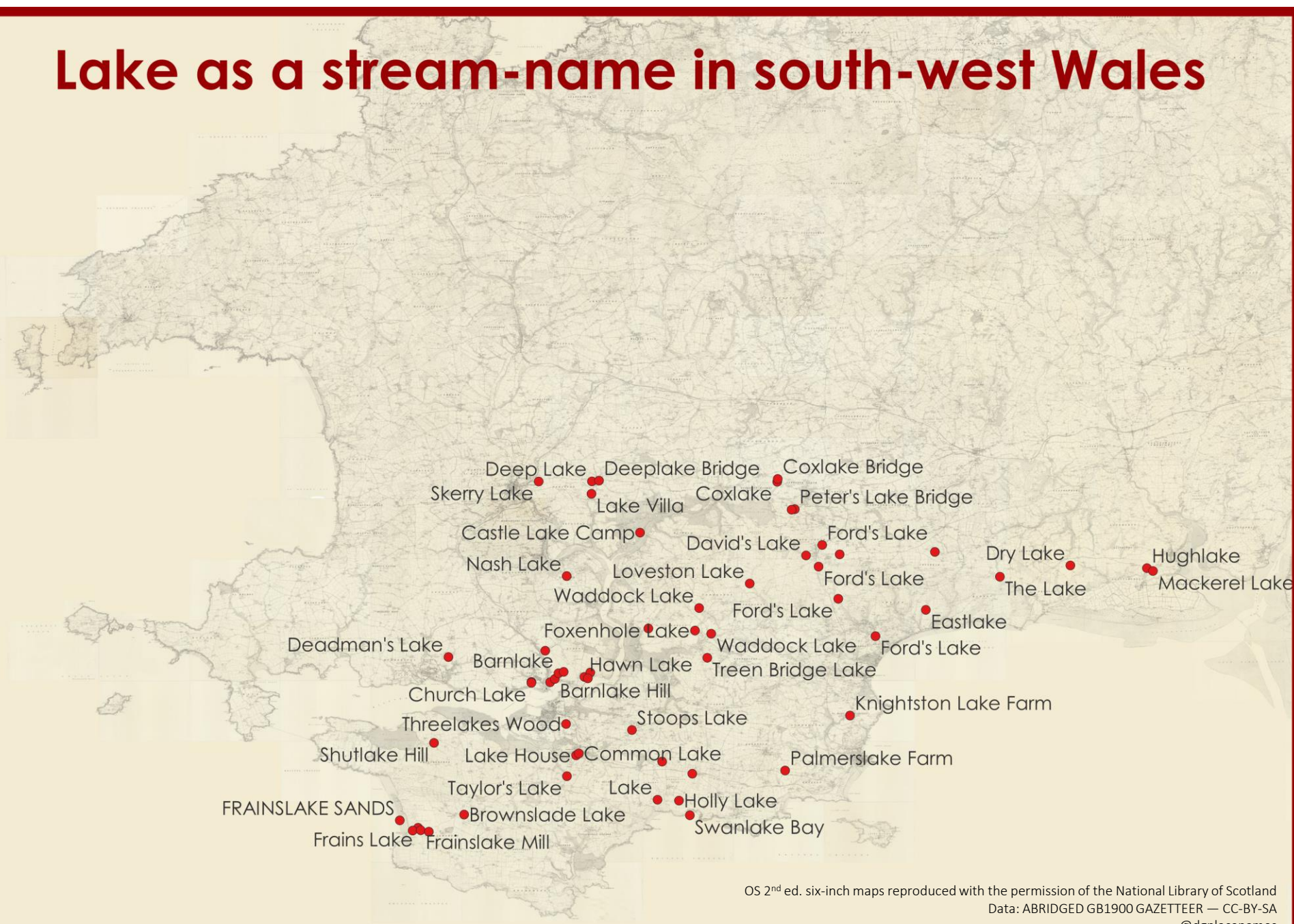
This riche **rever** down ran, but resting or ruf,
Throwe ane forest on fold þat farly was fair.
All þe brays of þe brym bair branchis abuf,
And birdis blythest of ble on blossomes bair.
The land lowne was and le, with lyking and luf,
And for to lende by þat **laike** thocht me levar
Beclus þat þir hartes in heirdis couth huf,
Pransand and prunzeand be pair and be pair.

Dunbar's *The Golden Targe* (ll. 28-31)



Doun throu the ryce a **ryvir** ran
wyth stremys,
So lustily agayn thai lykand lemys,
That all the **lake** as lamp did leme
of licht,
Quhilk schadowit all about wyth
twynkling glemis.

Lake as a stream-name in south-west Wales



Conclusions

- ‘Stream, burn’ is the most common meaning of LAKE in Scottish place-names.
- This meaning of LAKE in Older Scots poetry reflects Scots toponymic usage; it is unlikely to be an imitation of Middle English verse. There is some evidence that LAKE = ‘stream’ continues into early modern Scots.
- We should expect to find place-names of this type elsewhere.