

# ETYMOLOGY OF SCOTTISH PLACE NAMES.

(REVISED BY JAS. BURGESS, C.I.E., LL.D., F.R.S.E.)

As the great majority of names of mountains, rivers, towns, and other localities in Scotland, are composed of Gaelic, Norse, and Saxon words descriptive of some special characteristic, the following glossary will be found useful for their interpretation, and may, in many cases, be interesting as a key to past physical conditions and history. The list has been compiled from the works of Dr. W. F. Skene, Sir Herbert Maxwell, Col. J. A. Robertson, the Rev. J. B. Johnston and other authorities, and gives the generally accepted meanings of the more important significant words and generic terms which enter into the composition of Scottish place names. The interpretation of Gaelic names in the Highlands will be found much simpler than in the case of Lowland names which have undergone modification in proportion as the spoken language of to-day is very different from that of a few centuries ago, when many of the names originated. Names of doubtful meaning, on which authorities differ, have been omitted.—J. G. B.

ABBREVIATIONS—A. S., Anglo-Saxon; Gael., Gaelic; O. E., Old English; Teut., Teutonic.

ABER	Welsh	A confluence of waters; at the mouth of a river.	CILL	Gael.	A cell, burying-ground, church. <i>Other and most common form</i> : Kil.	LAD	Norse	A pile or heap.
ABH, AFF, AVIE, AIVE, AV	Gael.	Water, stream.	CLACH, CLOCH	Gael.	A stone.	LAG, LOGAN, LOGIE	Gael.	A hollow in a hill, cavity.
ABHUINN, AMHUINN, AVON	Gael.	River.	CLACHAN	Gael.	Stones; hamlet.	LANG	Scotch	Long; and for (Gaelic) <i>lann</i> , q.v.
ACHADH, ACH, AUCH, AUCHEN	Gael.	Field, plain, or meadow.	CLEAN, CLOON, CLUNIE, CLUNY	Gael.	A meadow.	LANN, LAM	Gael.	Ground, enclosure, house, church.
ACKER	Old Norse	Open country; untilled land.	CLYN	Gael.	From <i>clao</i> n, squinting, hill-slope.	LAW	Scotch	A hill.
AIK	Scotch	Oak.	CNOC	Gael.	A hill, knoll, eminence, mound. <i>Other and usual form</i> : Knock.	LAX	Norse	A salmon.
AILL, AILL, AL	O. Gael.	Rock, rocky steep.	COAT	Welsh	From <i>coed</i> , a wood. Also from <i>Gael. coite</i> , a hut.	LEVEN, LOMOND	Gael.	From <i>leamhan</i> , an elm.
AILLSE	Gael.	Fairy, elf.	COCH	Welsh	Red. <i>Usual form</i> : Cook.	LINNE, LIN	Gael.	A pool, a waterfall.
AIRDE, ARD	Gael.	Height, high.	COILLE, COILL	Gael.	A wood, forest. <i>Other forms</i> : Coat, kel, kelly, kil, killie.	LIOS, LIS, LES	Gael.	A garden.
AIRIDH, AIRIE	Gael.	A shealing, or mountain pasture.	CORRIE	Gael.	From <i>coire</i> , a cauldron, dell, ravine.	LOCH	Gael.	A lake, arm of the sea.
AIT, AITE	Gael.	Place; situation; possession.	CORS	Welsh	A marsh.	LOD OR LODAN	Gael.	A wet place, swamp, puddle.
ALLTAN	Gael.	A little stream; brook.	COMAR, COM, CUM, CUMBER	Gael.	Confluence, meeting-place.	MAGH, MACHAIR	Gael.	A field, plain. <i>Other forms</i> : May, Meth.
ALLT, ALD, AULD, AULT	Gael.	A stream.	CRAIG	Gael.	A rock; <i>creagach</i> , rocky.	MAM	Gael.	A large round hill. Also a waste.
ALT	Irish	A height, cliff, glen-side.	CRAVIE, CROW	Gael.	From <i>craobh</i> , a tree.	MEALL, MEL, MIL	Gael.	A round little hill, mount.
ALUINN, ALLAN	Gael.	Beautiful; superb.	CRUACH, CROCH	Gael.	From <i>cruach</i> , a boundary, frontier.	MIN	Gael.	Smooth, small.
AN	Gael.	A diminutive suffix, Lochan.	CROAGH	Gael.	A hill of a round form. <i>Other forms</i> : Cruach, croch, crock.	MON	Gael.	From <i>monadh</i> , a hill.
AN	Gael.	Contracted form of <i>Abhuinn</i> , q.v.	CROFT	A. S.	An enclosed field.	MOR, MORE	Gael.	Great, big.
AR, ARAY, ARY	Gael.	Smooth water.	CROIS, CROCH	Gael.	A cross. <i>Usual form</i> : Cros, cross. <i>Croc</i> , another form of <i>cnoc</i> , a hill.	MUC, MUCH	Gael.	A sow, or pig.
ARN, ERN	Teut.	Place; dwelling; house.	CROM	Gael.	A bend, crooked.	MUIR	Scotch	A moor.
AROS	Gael.	A house; dwelling; abode.	CUIL, CUL, CULT	Gael.	A corner, niche, retired nook; the back, black-lying.	MULL	Gael.	From <i>maol</i> , headland, cape.
ASC, ASKR	Old Norse	An ash.	DAIL, DAL	Gael.	A field, valley, land.	NESS	Norse	From <i>Noes</i> (A. S.) <i>Naes</i> , a nose, promontory.
ATTA	Gael.	From <i>fada</i> , long.	DAMH, DUIMH	Gael.	Oxen.	NOUP	Scand.	A lofty headland.
AUCHTER	Gael.	From <i>uachdar</i> , the summit; upper. <i>Other form</i> : Ochter.	DARACH, DAR	Gael.	An oak. <i>Other form</i> : Derry.	OCHTER	Gael.	Another form of <i>Auchter</i> , q.v.
AULT	Gael.	Another form of <i>Allt</i> , q.v.	DEARG	Gael.	Red.	OE, Ö	Norse	An island.
AY	Scand.	An island.	DEN, DEAN, DENE	A. S.	Wooded hollow, or valley.	OICHE, OCK	Gael.	From <i>uisge</i> , water.
AYR		From <i>Norse eyrr</i> , the beach.	DER	Gael.	Another form of <i>dur</i> , q.v.	ORD	Gael.	A steep, rounded or conical hill.
BA	Gael.	Cows; kine.	DERRY	Gael.	From <i>daire</i> , <i>doire</i> , an oak-thicket.	ORE	Gael.	From <i>oir</i> , hem, border, edge, margin.
BADAN	Gael.	Grove; clump; thicket. <i>Badanach</i> , abounding in groves; bushy.	DROM, DRUM	Gael.	From <i>druim</i> , backbone, ridge.	PAB, PAP	Norse	Priest.
BAILE, BAL, BALLIE, BALNA, BALLIN, BEL, BELLIE	Gael.	Town; townland; village.	DUBH, DU, DEV	Gael.	Black, dark.	PEEL	Celt.	A stronghold.
BAN	Gael.	White; fair; clear.	DUN, DOON, DUM	Gael.	A stronghold, hill fort.	PEN, PIN	Welsh	A hill, head.
BARD	Norse	Extremity, point.	DUR	Gael.	Water. <i>Other forms</i> : dour, der	PIT, PITTEN	Gael.	A hollow, croft.
BARR	Gael.	Top, point, summit, extremity.	EAGLAIS, ECCLE	Gael.	From Latin <i>ecclesia</i> , a church.	POLL, PAL	Gael.	A pool, pond.
BATTLE, BOTL	O. E.	A dwelling.	EAS, ESS, ESSIE	Gael.	A waterfall, cataract, cascade.	PREST	O. E.	From <i>preost</i> , a priest.
BASS	Gael.	From <i>bathais</i> , forehead.	EDEN	Gael.	From <i>Eudann</i> , face, brow, front.	QUOICH	Gael.	From <i>cuach</i> , a cup.
BEAG, BEG	Gael.	Little.	EILEAN	Gael.	Island.	RATH, RAIT	Gael.	A fort, a town.
BEALACH, BALLOCH	Gael.	Pass; road; mountain-gorge.	EISC	Gael.	A water-channel.	REA	Gael.	From <i>reidh</i> , smooth, plain, flat land.
BEINN, BEN	Gael.	Mountain, hill.	EY, EA	A. S.	Island.	ROS, ROSS	Gael.	A promontory, headland, isthmus.
BEITHE, BEATH	Gael.	A birch-tree.	ESPIE	Gael.	From <i>Easbuig</i> , a bishop.	RIGG	Scotch	A ridge, furrow.
BER	Gael.	Corruption of <i>bir</i> or <i>bior</i> =prickle, spit, point, pin.	FADA, FAD	Gael.	Long.	RUDHA, RINN	Gael.	Cape, promontory.
BIG	Norse	From <i>Bygg</i> , barley.	FAIR	Norse	From <i>fer</i> , sheep. <i>Other form</i> : Far.	RUTH	Gael.	From <i>ruadh</i> , reddish.
BIGGING	A. S.	From <i>Byggan</i> , to build, hence a dwelling.	FAL	Scotch	From <i>faw</i> or <i>fauch</i> , dun, pale red.	SCAUR, SCUIR	Gael.	From <i>sgor</i> , sharp-pointed rock.
BIOR	Old Gael.	Well, water, fountain.	FAHR	Norse	A passage, ferry.	SCOUR, SGURR	Gael.	Other forms of <i>Scaur</i> , q.v.
BLAD	Gael.	An enormous mouth.	FEARNA	Gael.	Alder tree.	SHAN	Gael.	From <i>Sean</i> , old, aged, ancient.
BLAR, BLAIR	Gael.	A plain; originally a battlefield.	FELL	Scand.	<i>Fjeld</i> , a mountain.	SHAW	A. S.	From <i>Sceaga</i> , a wood or grove.
BO	Gael.	A cow.	FETTER	Gael.	From <i>fothir</i> , bit of land, field.	SHEAL, SHEALING	Sc.	A hut, or shed. <i>Other form</i> : Shiel.
BOD OR BO	Norse	A home, dwelling.	FIANN, FIN, FYNE	Gael.	Fair, white, clear, transparent.	SHEE	Gael.	Another form of <i>sith</i> or <i>sidh</i> , q.v.
BOG	Gael.	Soft, miry, damp.	FONS, FON	Gael.	Land, region.	SITH, SIDH, SHEE	Gael.	A fairy.
BOL, BOLD	Norse	A dwelling.	FORS	Norse	A waterfall.	SKALI, SCALE	Norse	A hut, or shed.
BON, BONN	Gael.	From <i>bun</i> , q.v.	FOTHR, FOR	Gael.	Land.	SKERRIES, SKERIR	Dan.	From <i>Skjaer</i> , cliff, rock.
BOR, BORE	O. E. & Swed.	From <i>bord</i> , a table, plank, board.	GALL	Gael.	Foreigner; low countryman, stranger.	SLEA, SLEW		From <i>Gael. sliabh</i> , moor.
BORD	Gael.	A table, board, plank.	GARBH, GAR, GARRY	Gael.	Rough, rugged, harsh.	SPITAL	Norman French	From Latin <i>hospitium</i> , hospital, or place of entertainment.
BORG	Danish	A fort, shelter-place, burgh.	GARN	Gael.	From <i>garadh</i> , enclosure, park, garden. <i>Other form</i> : Gart.	SRON, STRON	Gael.	A nose, nose-like hill or promontory.
BOST	Norse	A farm-house or dwelling.	GARTH	Norse	Enclosed place, farm.	STAF	Norse	A perpendicular, or pillar-like rock.
BOTHAN	Gael.	A hut, house.	GAIR	Gael.	From <i>gearr</i> , short. <i>Other form</i> : Gir.	STEN	Icelandic	A stone.
BRAE	Norse	Height, hill, slope.	GATE	Norse	From <i>geit</i> , a goat. Sometimes A. S., a door. Also <i>Scotch</i> , a road.	STRATH	Gael.	A broad valley, plain beside a river.
BRAIGH, BREAD	Gael.	The top, summit, upper part.	GLAS	Gael.	Grey, blue, green.	TARBH, TARF	Gael.	A bull.
BRAN, BRAC	Gael.	From <i>braon</i> , a drop, drizzling rain.	GLEN	Gael.	From <i>glenn</i> , dale, valley.	THOR	Norse	A deity of the Scandinavian mythology, god of thunder.
BREAC, BRAC	Gael.	Spotted, pie-bald.	GOE	Norse	Form of <i>voe</i> ; from <i>gja</i> .	TIB	Gael.	From <i>tobar</i> , a well, q.v.
BROC, BROX	Gael.	A badger.	GORM	Gael.	Blue.	TIGH, TAY	Gael.	A house. Also a form of <i>Tamha</i> , still quiet water.
BROOM	Gael.	From <i>braon</i> , drizzling rain. Also O. E. <i>brom</i> =broom.	GORT	Gael.	A tilled field, garden, paddock.	TILLY, TULLY	Gael.	A knoll. <i>A form of Tulach</i> , q.v.
BROUGH	Scand.	A house, <i>borg</i> , <i>brog</i> , <i>brugh</i> .	GOWER, GOWRIE	Gael.	From <i>gabhar</i> , a goat.	TIN, TINNY, TYN	Gael.	From <i>Teine</i> , fire.
BUACHAILL	Gael.	A cow-herd.	GRANGE	Scotch	A corn farm, or storehouse for grain.	TING, DING	Norse	Place where the assembly or parliament, <i>Thing</i> , met.
BUN	Gael.	Foot, bottom, base.	GRIAN, GREEN	Gael.	The sun.	TIR	Gael.	Land.
BURGH	Teut.	A fortified place, a town.	HAR, HER	O. E.	A boundary mark.	TOBAR, TOBER	Gael.	A well, or spring.
BURN	Gael.	A stream.	HAUGH, HEUGH	Scotch	A low-lying meadow on the banks of a stream, or between hills.	TOFT	Norse	An enclosure, field.
BY, BIE	Norse	Town, dwelling. Used as a suffix.	HOB, HOPE, HOW	Norse	A recess among hills. A shelter.	TOM	Gael.	A knoll, or mound.
CAIRN, CARN	Gael.	Heap of stones, rocky mound.	HOLM	A. S.	A river island.	TON	A. S.	An enclosure, town.
CAL	Gael.	From <i>coille</i> , wood.	I, INCH, INNIS	Gael.	An island, pasture land near water.	TORR	Gael.	A round hill.
CALDER	Gael.	From <i>coille dur</i> , wooded river.	INNER, INVER	Gael.	From <i>inbhir</i> , confluence, cove or creek at the mouth of a river.	TULACH, TULLOCH	Gael.	A little hill, a mound.
CAM	Gael.	Crooked, bent, winding.	KEL, KELLY	Gael.	From <i>coille</i> , a wood.	UAMH	Gael.	A cave.
CAMUS	Gael.	Bay, creek.	KEN, KIN	Gael.	From <i>ceann</i> , head, highest point, promontory.	UISGE, UISK	Gael.	Water. <i>General form</i> : Esk.
CAOL	Gael.	Narrow, a strait. <i>Other and more usual form</i> : Kyle.	KERRIE, KERRY	Gael.	From <i>coire</i> , cauldron, glen, ravine.	ULV	Danish	A wolf. Ulva.
CAR	Gael.	A turn, twist; crooked, bending. Also another form of <i>Cathair</i> , q.v.	KIL, KILLIE	Gael.	A common form of <i>cill</i> and <i>coille</i> , q.v.	VILLE, WELL	French	An abode.
CARN	Gael.	Another form of <i>Cairn</i> , q.v.	KIP	Gael.	From <i>ceapan</i> , a stump, block, cap.	VOE	Norse	A little bay, inlet; see <i>goe</i> .
CARRAIG, CARRA, CARRICK	Gael.	Headland, cliff, crag, rock.	KIRK	Scotch	A church.	VRACK	Gael.	Another form of <i>Breac</i> , q.v.
CARSE	Norse	Low alluvial land along a river.	KIRRIE	Gael.	From <i>coire</i> . See <i>Corrie</i> .	WARK	Norse	A fortress.
CATH, CAD	Gael.	A battle, struggle.	KNOCK	Gael.	The common form of <i>cnoc</i> , q.v.	WATH	A. S.	A ford.
CATH	Gael.	Other form of <i>Caer</i> , q.v.	KYLE	Gael.	A usual form of <i>caol</i> , q.v.	WICK	Norse	From <i>vik</i> , a bay; also from A. S. <i>wic</i> , a dwelling-place or town.
CATHAIR CAER, CAEL	Gael.	A fort, castle, town, throne.				WRATH	Norse	From <i>hvarf</i> , a turning-point.
CAULD	Norse	Cold.				YAB	Gael.	From <i>garbh</i> , rugged.
CEANN	Gael.	Head, point, promontory. <i>Other common forms</i> : Kin, Ken.						
CHESTER	Latin	<i>Castra</i> , camp, and <i>castrum</i> , fort.						