THE PLACE-NAMES OF SIX PARISHES IN CAITHNESS, SCOTLAND

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This thesis seeks to examine the place-names of six parishes in Caithness as recorded on the 6" Ordnance Survey maps of the region. The parishes in question are Reay, Thurso, Olrig, Dunnet, Canisbay and Wick.

The two opening chapters contain a commentary on the settlement history of Caithness as seen through its place-names and an evaluation of the role of the local informant in a study of Caithness names. Chapter Three provides distribution maps which illustrate points made in the opening chapters.

The ensuing chapters contain detailed comments on each individual place-name, quoting early references to the name where available and, when possible, suggesting a derivation. Local pronunciation is recorded if the name is still in use and it is frequently of great assistance in interpreting the name.

To facilitate reference the place-names are listed alphabetically by parish under the headings "Settlement Names" and "Topographical Names" and an alphabetical index of all names is provided at the end of the thesis.

This close examination of individual names has led to various conclusions regarding the naming practices and settlement patterns of the linguistic groups who have inhabited Caithness and have left evidence of their presence in the place-names.
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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine all the names which are listed on the recent 6" Ordnance Survey maps for the parishes of Reay, Thurso, Olrig, Dunnet, Canisbay and Wick, in Caithness. The names are listed alphabetically by parish and have been further sub-divided into "Settlement" and "Topographical" names.

The individual names are referred to by the initial of the parish in which they occur, their number in the alphabetical list and either (S) = settlement or (T) = topographical. Hence the first name in the list of settlement names for Reay Parish is referred to as R1(S). In the case of Olrig Parish, the parish reference is OL to avoid confusion with zero. The island of Stroma is part of Canisbay Parish but names on Stroma have been listed separately at the end of Chapter VIII under the initial S for Stroma.

Names listed in the "Settlement" sections are those which refer to places where the landscape has been subject to some form of human activity. There is an occasional exception to this rule, when evidence of the human activity has vanished and only a stream name records its earlier existence, in which case the stream is listed in the "Topographical" section with an appropriate explanation.

It is frequently the case that several names are listed under any one number, particularly in the "Settlement" sections, and when this happens the first name listed is always a croft or farm name, unless otherwise stated in the ensuing explanation. Subsequent names frequently refer to topographical features which have been named after the settlement listed initially. Strict alphabetical order has not been maintained within these derivative names because it often seemed to give unnecessary prominence to a very minor name by placing it, for instance, second in the list of names. The names have, therefore, been very loosely organised according to their local significance.

Local pronunciation and early references to a name in written documents are listed when available, prior to the suggested derivation.
Acknowledgements

I should like to express my gratitude to the University of Edinburgh for the award of a Faculty of Arts Scholarship without which I would have been unable to embark on research for this thesis.

It would be impossible to mention by name everyone who has helped me in my research and I should like to say a general thank you to all those people who have so willingly given advice, information and hospitality. Special mention should be made of seven principal Caithness informants whose names are listed on page 37. I am deeply grateful for their invaluable assistance.

Specific thanks is also due to my two supervisors, Professor John MacQueen and Mr. Ian Fraser, who have patiently answered my innumerable queries. Mrs. Jane Davidson, who typed the thesis with such care and attention, deserves a very special word of thanks.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to my long-suffering husband and sons without whose co-operation and support this project would have foundered in its infancy.
# Abbreviations and symbols

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Olrig Parish
Old Norse
see bibliography under Origines Parochiales Scotiae
Orkney
Ordnance Survey
see bibliography under The Statistical Account
Older Scots
Old Shetlandic
Old West Scandinavian
participle
plural
Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society, Kirkwall
page/pages
Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
reference(s)
see bibliography under Register of the Great Seal
Reay Parish
see bibliography under Register of the Privy Seal
Settlement
Scots
South East Scotland
Shetland, Shetlandic
singular
Scottish National Dictionary
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CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT
A factual account of the settlement history of Caithness, using place-names as evidence of the various linguistic groups who have inhabited the area, must begin with the movement of Norse settlers into Caithness during the ninth century; c800 AD at the earliest. However, although place-name evidence relating to the period prior to the Norse is scanty and somewhat tenuous it is worth making a few observations based on the information available.

The name Pēttlandsfjôrðr (see O80(T)) which occurs in Orkneyinga Saga in the twelfth century indicates clearly that the Norse in Orkney identified the people on the opposite shore as Picts and, furthermore, the name Katanes itself, which also occurs in Orkneyinga Saga, meaning "headland of the Cats", specifies that these Picts belonged to the tribe designated Cats, an appellation which is still preserved in the modern Gaelic name for Sutherland, ie Cataibh, from the old i Cattaibh, "among the Cats". (Watson 1926, page 30)

It seems likely, given the normal range of reference of the generic ON nes n.: see T13(S), that Katanes, although subsequently more widely applied, referred in the first instance to Duncansby Head and the area behind it which would have been clearly perceived as a ness from the point of view of the Norse in Orkney. In conjunction, therefore, with what could be interpreted as a greater Norse awareness of the presence of the Cats in the hinterland of Duncansby Head it is worth giving special attention to the two place-names Canisbav (see C50) and Duncansby (see 07(S)). It is suggested in the section dealing with individual place-names that the specifics in both these names represent early Celtic personal names and that the generic in both instances is OWScand bær which, in Norway, seems to have been generally used of an isolated farmhouse and perhaps also originally of cultivated land. (Fellows-Jensen 1972, page 6)

These are the only two examples of names containing OWScand bær in the present sample, although the element is comparatively common in Orkney and Marwick suggests that it can be regarded as "the most characteristic of the primary settlement names". (Marwick 1952, page 247) While not agreeing entirely with Marwick's
premise Wainwright does accept that "most of the Orkney examples do in fact indicate areas of earliest settlement". (Wainwright 1962, page 139) It has also been argued that names in bær tend to be secondary names that had replaced an older name for a primary farm. (Fellows-Jensen 1983, page 40)

Perhaps by the time Caithness was settled by Scandinavians coming from Orkney the generic bær had come to be regarded as an appropriate description of an already established farm-settlement, whether Norse or otherwise and it could, therefore, be applied to the important single farm occupied by a Pict with a Celtic personal name in the case of Duncansby and, possibly, to a small group of farms occupied by members of another Pictish family also bearing a Celtic name in the case of Canisbay. These Norse names in -bær could perhaps have replaced earlier Pictish names for these settlements.

The fact that these Picts had Celtic personal names does not necessarily prove that they themselves spoke Celtic as Wainwright has observed (Wainwright 1962, page 110-111) and there is no firm evidence in the place-names to indicate the linguistic affiliations of the pre-Norse inhabitants of Caithness.

There are some names in the present sample which are extremely difficult to etymologise and which could, therefore, conceivably be pre-Norse (eg Dunnet: see D11(S)) and no doubt there are other place-names of similar origin which have not been recognised as such because they have been distorted by subsequent Norse or Gaelic influence. Even granted, however, that several of the pre-Norse names may not yet have been recognised, it is difficult to provide a completely satisfactory explanation to account for the paucity of place-name material from this early period.

The most convincing explanation is that the Norse settlement pattern and type of land-use differed in some fundamental respect from that of the prior settlers whose place-names were, therefore, functionally redundant as well as being linguistically obscure and would have had little chance of survival. If, in conjunction with
this, the indigenous Pictish population is seen as having been willing to blend with and adopt the way of life and ultimately the language of the Norse incomers it is not too surprising that their place-names have been lost.

Archaeological evidence for the period of Norse settlement in Caithness is regrettably scanty and is concentrated on the late Viking site of Freswick (see C9(S)) which is described in Shetelig 1954, pages 31-63 and in Batey 1982, pages 45-49. The findings of the archaeologists, however, concur with place-name evidence in suggesting that there was no lasting cultural exchange between the previous inhabitants of the area and the Scandinavian settlers. In fact, Shetelig goes so far as to say that "the general impression derived from the excavation is that the Norwegian settlers in Caithness brought with them a distinctive culture of their own, which, through the period of two or three hundred years in which they flourished in the county, remained entirely unaffected by the indigenous culture of the region." (Shetelig 1954, page 62)

It is possible that Caithness may have been settled by Orkney Scandinavians at a date slightly later than the initial period of settlement in Orkney – perhaps a generation later – but place-name evidence to this effect is ambiguous. Caithness and Orkney are very similar geologically and the Scandinavians in Orkney would certainly have seen Caithness as a very desirable area for territorial expansion. No doubt, some Scandinavians did come to Caithness via Orkney. It is also likely, however, that other settlers came direct from those parts of Norway which have been identified as sources of emigration, i.e. the coastal areas of southwest Norway, the fylker of Agder, Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Møre and Trøndelag. (Wainwright 1962, page 146)

The argument for postulating a slightly earlier date for the settlement of Orkney than that of Caithness hinges on the absence of the generic stáðir (plural of ON staðr m.: a homestead) from Caithness place-names, whereas it is comparatively common in Orkney. It does seem reasonable to argue that since Caithness and Orkney are so closely situated and so similar in their physical geography
the pattern of settlement and, therefore, the place-name generics used to define the elements within that pattern ought to have been similar, at least initially, in both areas, if they had been settled contemporaneously.

It is, however, equally possible to argue that the two areas were settled at the same time and social factors subsequently came into play to make *stadir* an inappropriate generic in the Caithness situation.

My impression is that the earliest settlement names in Caithness were, in fact, descriptions of the topography of the area in which the homestead was situated, and that the "settlement" generics such as *setr*, *bolstadr* etc. (see distribution maps pp. 15, 17) came into use when a more numerous community of farms was in the process of being established, and individual units within that community required to have their function and situation defined in relation to other farms. Some of the "topographical" settlement names are extremely well-documented by northern Scottish standards, which would tend to support the theory that they were established settlements from a very early period.

Names which might be placed in this category can be seen on the distribution map of "Topographical" settlement names (see map p. 13). The names are fairly evenly scattered along the north and east coast of Caithness but they are noticeably absent from the area behind Duncansby Head, perhaps giving added support to the idea that there was already settlement in this area and, therefore, topographical descriptions were not deemed sufficiently precise as indicators of new settlement. These topographical names are likewise absent from the area behind Dunnet Head (see D11(S)), a name which has been tentatively identified as being pre-Norse and which would, therefore, imply prior settlement in the Dunnet area as well.

As can be seen from the map the heaviest concentration of such names is between the Forss Water in Reay Parish and Warse in Canisbay Parish, although the names are also evenly spread along the coast.
from Freswick to the southern extremity of Wick Parish.

To argue that the earliest names are those containing topographical descriptions does not invalidate the argument previously expressed that the absence of stadir from Caithness names suggests later settlement of Caithness than Orkney. It seems very probable that the same initial process of naming farms after local topographical features would have taken place in Orkney, followed by the use of settlement generics during the period of consolidation of settlement.

Other settlement generics which are in common use in Orkney but comparatively scarce in Caithness are ON setr (see R33(S)), ON garðr (see OL14(S)) and ON skáli (see R67(S)). These names likewise appear to be restricted in their distribution to the area along the north coast of Caithness. Skáli and garðr are isolated occurrences in the names Skiall (see R67(S)) and Garth (see OL14(S)) and, like stadir, might be seen to indicate that by the time Caithness was settled these generics had, for some reason, waned in popularity.

There are nine examples of compound names in setr and one example of setr as a simplex name, ie Seater in Canisbay Parish (see C28(S)). (see map p. 15) This latter place-name occurs in the area behind Duncansby Head which has already been suggested as a place where there was pre-Norse settlement and where topographical names would, therefore, not be appropriate for new settlements. If the Scandinavians were attracted to this area at an early stage in the colonisation of Caithness, perhaps because it had already been subject to cultivation, a simplex settlement name would have been adequate as a distinguishing reference to an early Norse farm. Compound names in which the generic setr occurs could indicate a period of consolidation of settlement either prior to or occurring simultaneously with the major expansion which is mirrored in the distribution of the settlement generic ON bolstár: see R21(S).

The only possible example of bolstár occurring as a simplex name is in Loch of Bushta (see D42(T)) which, significantly, is
situated behind Durnnet Head, a name which may be pre-Norse. The same comments could, therefore, be made of this simplex settlement name, as were made of Seater in Canisbay Parish. Unfortunately, no trace of the settlement beside the Loch of Buhta now remains and lack of early references makes the origin of the name uncertain.

Early written references to place-names, when available, demonstrate clearly that bólstär was the most popular descriptive term for a farm during the period of Scandinavian settlement in Caithness. These bólstär names are heavily concentrated on the western and south-eastern extremities of the area at present being examined (see map p. 17), and it would appear to be the case that they also extend southwards into those Caithness parishes which are not included in the present sample, ie Halkirk, Bower, Watten and Latheron.

Without early written references it would be very easy to confuse names containing bólstär with those containing setr because the element bólstär has been subject to much greater phonological reduction in Caithness than in either Orkney or Shetland. This may, perhaps, have resulted from the fact that it was not necessary to maintain the aural distinction between setr and bólstär names in Caithness, because setr names were of very limited occurrence.

Norse generics which can be interpreted as indicators of further exploitation of a landscape already settled by Scandinavians are guøy (see T22(S)) and toft (see OL33(S)) (see map p. 23), but it is more interesting to consider these in conjunction with the movement of Gaelic speaking people into Caithness from the west and south in the twelfth or even thirteenth century which probably put pressure on the Scandinavians to utilise to greater effect the land which they already controlled on the east side of the county.

Norse influence in Caithness lasted for some centuries after the Treaty of Perth (1266) and, indeed, can still be seen in the strong Norse element in the Caithness dialect which contains many
lexical items of Norse origin. As regards place-names it is often difficult to decide whether a name is of actual Norse or of subsequent local Caithness origin, unless it has been recorded in writing at an early date. Elements such as gill, ness, skerry etc. fall into this indeterminate category and in the section relating to individual names such terms are described as Caithness (Cai) rather than Old Norse (ON) to indicate that while it is possible that they were coined by Scandinavians, it is equally possible that they may have been coined at a much later date by Caithness Scots. If both specific and generic in a compound name are of Norse origin the former may be more probable but if, as frequently happens, the generic is combined with a Scots (Sc) specific the latter must be the case.

Much has been said of the apparent linguistic confrontation between Scandinavian and Gael as evidenced in the place-names. It has been argued that "the boundary line between Gaelic and Norse Caithness must have been established before the end of the ninth century". (Nicolaisen 1982, page 80) This "boundary line" must have been roughly concomitant with the present Sutherland/Caithness boundary. Nicolaisen also argues that "the confrontation along this line can be expected to have stopped effectively both the strong north/north-eastward movement of the Gaelic-speaking Scots and the south-westerly expansion of the settlement area of the Scandinavian-speaking Norsemen, and there seems to have been very little change in that situation before the twelfth or even thirteenth century." (Nicolaisen 1982, page 80)

The movement of Gaelic-speaking people into Caithness increased in strength and spatial extent until the early years of the eighteenth century. The most obvious onomastic marker of the spread of Gaelic settlement is the generic achadh (see Rl(S)) which, within the present six parishes, is heavily concentrated on the west side of the county. There are twenty-two examples of names in achadh in Reay Parish, one in Thurso Parish and one in Wick Parish. (see map p.20)

This concentration of achadh names in Reay Parish reflects both early and continuing settlement by Gaelic-speaking people in the area.
Gaelic was, in fact, spoken in Reay Parish until the twentieth century and although the language would now appear to have died out as a means of everyday communication, there are still people who can readily offer translations of some Gaelic names.

Although it is extremely difficult to date names in achadh due to the unfortunate lack of early documentary references to Gaelic names, it seems likely that some of these names were coined at an early period when Gaels were establishing themselves in farms in previously Norse-controlled territory. Names such as Achunabust (see R21(S)) which combines G achadh with a Norse settlement name, suggest a process of secondary settlement by Gaels close to an earlier Norse farm.

It seems likely that pressure from the Gaelic-speaking west probably persuaded Norse settlers to withdraw gradually from farms in Reay Parish to establish secondary farms in the strongly Scandinavian east of the county. It was suggested earlier that the generics quoy (see T22(S)) and toft (see OL33(S)) could be seen as indicators of secondary settlement by Scandinavians on the east side of the county and it seems reasonable to argue that at least some of the quoy and toft names are contemporary with early achadh names mirroring a parallel development of secondary farms, although peopled by members of different linguistic groups.

Unfortunately, any attempt to prove conclusively that these three generics are chronologically compatible is foiled by the inadequacy of early documentary sources, particularly in the case of names of Gaelic origin as mentioned earlier.

Gaelic was, of course, spoken more widely than in Reay Parish and a very useful assessment of the extent of Gaelic at the end of the eighteenth century is given in the First Statistical Account 1791-99. Comments for the various parishes are as follows:—

Reay: The Gaelic or Erse language is chiefly spoken through this parish. Many indeed now speak both Gaelic and English.

Thurso: The language generally spoken is the English. The Gaelic
is spoken by a few, but it is yearly losing ground.

Olrig: (No comment given, but it would obviously occupy the intermediate stage between Thurso and Dunnet.)

Dunnet: The English language only is spoken by the original inhabitants. The few Highlanders remaining still partly retain the Gaelic.

Canisbay: The language spoken is the common dialect of the lowlands of Scotland.

Wick: The language spoken over all the parish is, with the exception of that of some Gaelic incomers, a dialect of the lowland Scottish.

It is interesting to note the distinction made in both Dunnet and Wick Parishes between the local Caithness person and the Gael.

In those parishes where Gaelic was spoken during the eighteenth century there are still many names containing Gaelic elements, although these tend to be more numerous in the topographical rather than the settlement sections. Incidentally, Gaelic appears to be much more minutely descriptive as a naming language than Norse and some of the Gaelic topographical names might almost be categorised as descriptions rather than names.

The major difference between Norse and Gaelic as naming languages, however, seems to be in the nature of the specifics used with settlement generics. Personal names as specifics are extremely common with Norse settlement generics but do not occur with either achadh or baile which are the major Gaelic settlement generics. This could simply reflect a difference in naming practice but it is much more likely that it reflects a fundamental difference in the nature or management of the settlements being described. A personal name as specific does suggest that the farm is a clearly defined individual unit within a system, whereas a more general specific need not necessarily indicate such precise organisation into individual units.

Both Gaelic and Norn eventually gave way to Scots, which first moved into the east side of Caithness circa 1400 and, thereafter,
spread gradually northwards and westwards, eventually superseding Gaelic in Reay Parish in the first half of the twentieth century. It is impossible to suggest a precise date for the superseding of Norn on the east side of the county because Caithness Scots, like Insular Scots, contains many lexical items of Scandinavian origin and the merging of Norn and Scots must have been a gradual process. The consequent difficulty in dating dialect items such as *gill*, *ness*, *skerry* etc. has already been mentioned.

A related difficulty is experienced in identifying the language of origin of those settlement generics which are either identical or very similar in form in both Norse and Scots. So *toun* (see R16(S))/ON *tún* (see R32(S)) and So *land* (see T19(S)) and ON *land* (see O16(S)) fall into this category and lack of early documents makes it impossible to decide when the name was coined or by whom.

Early settlement names of certain Scots origin tend to be in the vicinity of the two main towns, Thurso and Wick, reflecting the fact that Scots was the language of commerce and it was, therefore, logical that place-names of Scots origin should be clustered around the centres of commerce.

The widespread influence of Scots, however, can be most clearly seen in the use of generics which indicate the progressive subdivision and organisation of the landscape into economically viable agricultural units. The most important farm in the district, situated on the best land available, is usually referred to as *... Mains* or, alternatively, *Mains of ...* (see map p. 26) (For comments on the *Mains of ...* pattern see Nicolaisen 1976, pages 62-64.) Generics indicating lesser farms or those which infer a particular type of agricultural unit are *field*, *park*, *farm*, *smallholding* and *croft*. Names containing *Mains* have been plotted on a map (p. 26) as an illustration of the distribution of Scots generics. *Mains* farms are noticeably absent from the west side of Reay Parish reflecting partly the recent predominance of Gaelic and partly the poor quality of the soil. The generic *croft* is much more common in
Reay Parish.

Contrasting specifics can also be used to indicate the process of subdivision. Examples of these are Old../New../, East../West../, North../South../, Upper../Lower../, and Nether../Over../, although it has been suggested that this latter pair could sometimes be of Norse rather than Scots origin.

The present-day Caithness agricultural landscape gives an impression of effective land-use resulting from meticulous organisation of agricultural units. Gradual improvements, resulting in a more ordered countryside with improved access routes, were made by landlords during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and these improvements were already visible when the First Statistical Account was compiled in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In his introduction to the recent reprint of the Statistical Account, Malcolm Gray singles out Mr. Traill of Castlehill in the parish of Olrick as being particularly notable for introducing improvements on his estate (The Statistical Account, Vol. XVIII, page XIV) and mention must also be made of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, the instigator of the First Statistical Account, a man dedicated to agrarian reform on his own estates and beyond. His nickname, "Agricultural Sir John", reflects his local significance and Caithness undoubtedly benefited from his far-sighted suggestions for improvement and rationalisation of farming methods.
CHAPTER TWO: DISTRIBUTION OF PLACE-NAME ELEMENTS
Distribution of place-name generics

General comments have been made in Chapter One on the information contained in these distribution maps. I should, however, emphasise that I am well aware of the dangers of generalising from an artificially delimited sample, although the cross-section of names represented in this thesis has been carefully chosen to illustrate the merging of the various linguistic strands present in Caithness.

Ideally the whole of Caithness should be studied in depth before drawing distribution maps.
"Topographical" settlement names
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topographical settlement names</th>
<th>Reay (Reay Parish)</th>
<th>Brims (Thurso Parish)</th>
<th>Caragee</th>
<th>Forss</th>
<th>Geise</th>
<th>Sordale</th>
<th>Weydale</th>
<th>Murkle (Olrig Parish)</th>
<th>Olrig</th>
<th>Ham (Dunnet Parish)</th>
<th>Rattar</th>
<th>Auckingill (Canisbay Parish)</th>
<th>Gills</th>
<th>Harley</th>
<th>Mey</th>
<th>Rigifa</th>
<th>Slickly</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Gillock (Wick Parish)</th>
<th>Keiss</th>
<th>Noss</th>
<th>Reiss</th>
<th>Sarclet</th>
<th>Wick</th>
<th>Winless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Names containing "setr"
Names containing setr

There is one example of a simplex name in setr:

Seater  (Canisbay Parish)

The specifics in the compound names containing setr can be categorised as follows:

1) Scandinavian personal names (4 instances)

   Shalmstry  (Thurso Parish)
   Thusater   (Olrig Parish)
   Fryster    (Olrig Parish)
   Hunster    (Dunnet Parish)

2) words denoting situation as defined by some significant feature of the landscape (3 instances)

   Helshetter (Reay Parish)
   Mesters   (Dunnet Parish)
   Reaster   (Olrig Parish)

3) words denoting position of the farm in relation to a community of farms (2 instances)

   Wester    (Olrig Parish)
   Syster    (Dunnet Parish)

(Wester should possibly be included in the previous category depending on interpretation of the specific.)
Names containing "bólstað"
The specifics in the bölstádr names can be categorised as follows:

1) Scandinavian personal names (9 instances)

   - Achnabust (Reay Parish)
   - Loanscorribest (Thurso Parish)
   - Aimster (Wick Parish)
   - Scrabster (Wick Parish)
   - Bilbster (Wick Parish)
   - Humster (Wick Parish)
   - Ingimster (Wick Parish)
   - Thuster (Wick Parish)
   - Ulbster (Wick Parish)

2) Words denoting position, size, age or function of the farm in relation to a community of farms (11 instances)

   - Broubster (Reay Parish)
   - Sibmister (Olrig Parish)
   - Wester (Dunnet Parish)
   - Brabster (Canisbay Parish)
   - Stroupster (Canisbay Parish)
   - Killimster (Wick Parish)
   - Nybster (Wick Parish)
   - Sibster (Wick Parish)
   - Thrumster (Wick Parish)
   - Wester (Wick Parish)

Shebster (Reay Parish) probably also belongs to this group, although the specific is uncertain.

3) Words denoting situation as defined by some significant feature of the landscape in the vicinity (6 instances)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Parish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lybster</td>
<td>(Reay Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stemster</td>
<td>(Canisbay Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camster</td>
<td>(Wick Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haster</td>
<td>(&quot;        )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stemster</td>
<td>(&quot;        )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The two examples of Wester should possibly be included in this category, depending on interpretation of the specific.)

4) There is one possible example of bölstadr as a simplex name, which is Loch of Bushta (Dunnet Parish). The name now refers only to the Loch and there is no trace of settlement in its immediate vicinity.
Names containing "achadh"
Names containing achadh

The achadh names can be categorised as follows:

1) names in which the specific denotes some feature of the landscape, either natural or resulting from human activities (9 instances)

Achaimn (Wick Parish)
Achalone (Reay Parish)
Achanaon (Reay Parish)
Achaveilan (Reay Parish)
Achbuiligan (Reay Parish)
Achins (Reay Parish)
Achnabeinn (Reay Parish)
Achnacarich (Reay Parish)
Achrasker (Reay Parish)

2) Gaelic-Norse hybrid names in which G achadh is the specific (7 instances)

Achforsiescye (Reay Parish)
Achiebraeskiall (Reay Parish)
(This name contains 2 Gaelic specifics: see R8(S))
Achreamie (Reay Parish)
Achsteenclate (Reay Parish)
Achunabust (Reay Parish)
Achvarasdal (Reay Parish)

Achingills (Thurso Parish)

3) names in which the specific is an adjective (3 instances)

Achibegg (Reay Parish)
Achimenach (Reay Parish)
Achimore (Reay Parish)
4) names in which the specific denotes animals or humans
   (2 instances)

   Achadh na Gaodha (Reay Parish)
   Achiegullan (  "  )

5) names in which the specific is obscure

   Achiveigle (Reay Parish)
   Achreregan (  "  )
- Names containing "toft"

△ Names containing "quoy"
Names containing "toft" and "quoy"

Toft
There is one example of a simplex name in toft:

Tofts (Canisbay Parish)

Toft resembles quoy in that it can be defined by its attachment to an already established community of farms (1 instance)

Tofts of Tain (Olrig Parish)
or by its function as land which can be exploited by a particular sector within the community (1 instance)

Kirk Tofts (Wick Parish)

The specifics in the compound names containing toft appear to be invariably Scandinavian personal names, sometimes occurring as "inversion compounds" (3 instances)

Tofttranald (Canisbay Parish)
Toftcarl (Wick Parish)
Toftgun
and occurring twice in the normal Scandinavian word-order:

Thurdisstoff (Olrig Parish)

Grottistoft Moss (Dunnet Parish)

Quoy
There is one example of a simplex name in quoy:

Quoys (Canisbay Parish)

An earlier version of this name, however, defines its attachment to the farm of Seater (see C28(S)) and this is also the case in a Wick Parish name:

Quoys of Reiss (Wick Parish)

The specifics in the compound names containing quoy can be categorised as follows:

1) words denoting situation as defined by some significant feature
of the landscape (4 instances)

Clatequoy  (Thurso Parish)

Lochquoy   (Olrig Parish)

Cairnquoy  (Wick Parish)

Dallquoy   ("")

2) words denoting agricultural potential or function of the farm (4 instances)

Lyrequoy   (Canisbay Parish)

Gaultiquoy (Wick Parish)

Quoyshakes ("")

Sonsiquoy (Canisbay Parish) probably belongs to this category although the specific is doubtful.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names containing &quot;Mains&quot;</th>
<th>Parish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrowston Mains</td>
<td>(Reay Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brawlbin Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mains of Brims</td>
<td>(Thurso Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forss Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrabster Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurso East Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weydale Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borgie Mains</td>
<td>(Olrig Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durran Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilliclay Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mains of Murkle</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mains of Olrig</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenland Mains</td>
<td>(Dunnet Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrogill Mains Farm</td>
<td>(Canisbay Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freswick Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip's Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mains of Stroma</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ackergill Mains</td>
<td>(Wick Parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killimster Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirkokes Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tannach Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrumster Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuster Mains</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mains of Ulbster</td>
<td>(&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One group of names which was not referred to in Chapter One is the group containing generics denoting "shielings" and the pursuit of transhumance. These do not slot readily into a picture of settlement history in Caithness because the precise function and dating of the habitations to which they refer is so difficult to determine.

The generics in question are:

ON ærgi (see R66(S)), a borrowing into Norse from G áirigh (see R23(S)) which also occurs in Caithness place-names;

ON sestr which, it has been argued, may take the form side in Sutherland and Caithness place-names (see R33(S)); and

G ruighe (see R14(T)).

If survival of names throughout several centuries can be taken as an indicator of the relative importance of the settlement to which they refer, it would seem to be true that names containing both ON ærgi and ON sestr were applied to settlements which, at a very early stage in their development, acquired some substance, whether or not they started life as seasonal shielings.

The number of names involved is so small that it is impossible to reach any valid conclusions regarding the specific application of the Norse generics ærgi and sestr, but some observations can be made.

The sestr names are restricted to the west side of the county whereas the ærgi names are more widespread (see Map p. 30), but little useful information can be gained from an examination of the distribution patterns of these two names. There may have been, as Dr. Fellows-Jensen suggests (Fellows-Jensen 1983, page 44), something characteristic about the location or the function of the two types of shieling which may have persuaded the Norse to use sestr and ærgi in a mutually exclusive way although, in the case of the Caithness names, this suggestion would have to be restricted to a distinction in the function of the two types of shieling because there does not appear to be any obvious difference in location.
My inclination is to draw attention to the fact that there is little overlap in the distribution between ON sætr and ON setr (see Map p. 33). The sætr names are much less favourably situated than the setr names and could have been coined during the earliest period of Norse settlement to describe pastures which were initially exploited on a seasonal basis, but were soon incorporated as permanent farms during the period of Norse expansion.

The most obvious parallel for the ærgi names is ON toft (see Map p. 35) and it seems possible that these two generics were similar in function, indicating secondary settlement taking place during the establishment of a community of farms. It is significant that both ærgi and toft are very commonly combined with Scandinavian personal names as specifics.

The fact that all the examples of names containing ærgi display Norse word order may argue that these names are, in general, earlier than the toft names which afford so many examples of "inversion compounds".

Names containing G ãirich and G ruicke are all recent and, in effect, now occupy a nebulous area between settlement and topographical names. The remote moorland situations occupied by the former shielings are not desirable sites for permanent settlement and, in general, names containing ãirich or ruicke refer to topographical features. The grazing on the moors is, of course, still utilised for sheep, but sheep, unlike cattle, do not require constant supervision by human beings and the moorland bothies are, therefore, obsolete and can now only be detected as scattered heaps of stones.
Names containing "àirigh"

Names containing "ruighe"

Names containing "ærgi"

Names containing "sætr"
"Shieling" terms

ON mrgi (five instances)

Shurrery (Reay Parish)
Skirza (Canisbay Parish)
Scoolary (""
Blingery (Wick Parish)
Baggra ("

The specifics in the mrgi names are probably Scandinavian personal names, although lack of early references prevents positive identification.

ON saetr (four instances)

Brackside (Reay Parish)
Carriside ("
Sandside ("
Brimsie (Thurso Parish)

The specifics in these names refer to aspects of the soil or landscape, with the exception of Carriside which may contain a Scandinavian personal name.

G Airish (four instances)

Airigh name Bruach Dubha (Reay Parish)
Aryleive ("
Cnoc nan Airigh ("

Allt Beag-Airidhe (Wick Parish)

The specifics in these names refer to features of the surrounding landscape.
G ruighe (four instances)

Cnoc an Ruighein Duibh
   (Reay Parish)
Ruigh nan Creag  ("   ")
Cairn Reain     (Wick Parish)
Refaithy        ("   ")

The specifics in these names refer to topographical features.
* Names containing "setr"

** Names containing "sætr"
### Names containing "setr" and "satr"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>setr</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helshetter</td>
<td>(Reay Parish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalmstry</td>
<td>(Thurso Parish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thusater</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fryster</td>
<td>(Olrig Parish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wester</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>satr</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brackside</td>
<td>(Reay Parish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriside</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandside</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brimside</td>
<td>(Thurso Parish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Names containing "toft"
- Names containing "ærgi"
Names containing "toft" and "ærgi"

**toft**

- Tofts of Tain (Olrig Parish)
- Thurdistoft ("")
- Grottistoft Moss (Dunnet Parish)
- Tofts (Canisbay Parish)
- Tofttranald ("")
- Kirk Tofts (Wick Parish)
- Toftcarl ("")
- Toftgun ("")

**ærgi**

- Shurrery (Reay Parish)
- Skirza (Canisbay Parish)
- Scoolary ("")
- Blingery (Wick Parish)
- Raggra ("")
CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL INFORMANT
Principal informants

Mr David Finlayson, Kingsbarns, St. Andrews (formerly of Dunnet Parish)
Mr James Gunn, Reay
Mrs Margaret Gunn, Canisbay
Mr George McKay, Reay
Miss Henrietta Munro, Thurso
Mr James Simpson, Canisbay
Mrs Maisie Sutherland, Wick
The role of the local informant is of fundamental importance in all aspects of place-name research. This applies particularly in an area such as Caithness where written records are scanty and interpretation of a name can rest on local pronunciation and local knowledge of the situation.

I am indebted for items of information to a wide variety of people in Caithness with whom I engaged in conversation during my various field trips but my principal informants, whose names are listed on the previous page, are seven in number. Ideally, one should perhaps have conducted detailed interviews with a larger number of people but practical considerations militated against having a more numerous survey group.

My informants were, in general, recommended to me by people who are, or have been, involved in investigating aspects of traditional life in Caithness and I am particularly grateful to Dr. Alexander Fenton who provided me with an initial list of possible informants. Armed with a few introductions it proved simple to make contact with local people with a far-reaching knowledge of their environment and when an individual felt that his own knowledge of place-names was limited in some respect he always knew of another local who could bridge the gap.

My informants varied in age, sex and occupation and in the number of names they knew. On the whole, male informants had a much more comprehensive knowledge of names than females, irrespective of age. I had expected to find that the older the informant, the greater the depth and range of knowledge of local names would be, but that did not prove to be the case. Knowledge of names depended more on occupation and interests than on age. The men were, or had at some time been, crofter-fishermen and, therefore, had knowledge of both inland and coastal names, whereas the women tended to have a greater knowledge of inland names within a certain radius of their home, although the radius varied from person to person depending on mobility.

The only restriction which I imposed when choosing my primary
informants was that the person had to have been born and bred in the district. One informant now lives near St. Andrews but has maintained constant contact with Caithness, returning to visit his family and friends at least once per year. Having an informant within relatively easy reach of Edinburgh proved extremely useful to me on many different occasions.

When interviewing these seven primary informants I made use of a tape-recorder and subsequently transcribed their pronunciation of the names and extracted any information relating to the location of the name or any alternative versions of the name which were offered. I frequently experienced a sense of deep regret that these interviews could not have been conducted at the start of the twentieth century before the technological revolution had altered the local way of life so fundamentally.

Fast and efficient road systems have altered the focus of the community and few young people know the names of the remote moorland or coastal features which were so intimate a part of their predecessors' existence. The process of name loss is particularly noticeable in Reay Parish where oral transmission of names played a significant part in their preservation due to lack of written records for Gaelic names. My principal informant for Reay Parish, who has an exceptionally wide-ranging knowledge of local names, knew only 54% of the names which were first recorded in 1876 for the 6° OS maps. He knew approximately 78% of the habitative names, but only 46% of the topographical names and the average local teenager, orientated towards the employment centres of Dounreay and Thurso, would only recognise the names of those topographical features which physically dominate the landscape, such as Beinn Ràtha (see R16(T)).

The change in the focus of the community is not, of course, the only reason for this extensive name loss. Another very important factor is that English has, during this century and the last, gradually taken the place of Gaelic as the language of everyday communication in Reay Parish and, since the majority of Gaelic names are not readily comprehensible, this combines with their functional
redundancy to ensure that a large proportion of the names will be lost.

The picture is not, however, entirely negative. Reay Parish also offers a fascinating insight into the processes of onomastic adaptation which take place when the area in which a name occurs is in a state of linguistic transition. There are several instances of names having been "translated" from Gaelic into English and, in cases where this had happened, my informants were sometimes totally unaware that the name they gave me was in any way connected with the Gaelic name on the 6" OS map. The inverted commas around "translated" are used to indicate that the English version was frequently only a partial translation of the Gaelic name.

Examples of this phenomenon are as follows:

1) Adjectives such as beag and mór are almost invariably translated and the word order of the compound in which they occur is also anglicised: Beinn nam Bad Beag ⁄ Mór are rendered as Little ⁄ Big "Ben a Bad" [bɛn 'bad]. (see R15(T)) Beinn Ràtha Bheag has become Little Beinn Ràtha [ˈlɪtəl ˈbeɪn ˈræθə] and, by contrast, Beinn Ràtha has become Big Beinn Ràtha although the adjective mór is not present in the Gaelic version of the name. (see R16(T)). In this case the Gaelic adjectives would still be understood although they have been replaced by their English equivalents.

2) Cnoc an t-Samraigh - literally "Hill of the Summer" has been "translated" to "The Summeran" [ˈsʌmərən] which may possibly represent the English present participle "summering", with reference in both cases to the pursuit of transhumance.

3) Druim na Ceud has been translated as Field of the Hundred rather than Ridge of the Hundred as the original Gaelic would suggest. (see R74(T))

4) Glu-pein na Drochaide is now referred to as The Green Brig which differs from the original in that the colour "green" is introduced as a substitute for the onomatopoeic "glu-pein". (see R102(T))

5) Lochan Dubh Cül na Beinne has been abbreviated to The Black Loch.
This abbreviation is a frequent reaction to the lengthy descriptive names which occur in Gaelic, and which seem cumbersome and inappropriate in the medium of English. (see R123(T))

One final example of this process of "translation" greatly intrigued me. Two names recorded on the 1876 6" OS map as An t-Eas and Eavarasdal (see R50(S)) have now been lost, and their replacement is the anglicised form "The Esses" [sas]. My informant, however, gave an ingenious explanation of this replacement name, saying that it represented the plural of the English letter g to indicate the snaking movement of the stream. The source of the name, however, is much more likely to be the original G eas: a waterfall since the stretch of the burn to which the name applies is not particularly winding.

In some instances, the process has not been one of adaptation but of replacement of the original Gaelic name by a totally unrelated English name. This occurred in the case of Loch Achbuiligan (see R5(S)) which is now known as The Major's Loch after a well-known local piper whose ghost is reputed to haunt the area. Similarly, Geo Croiche (see R83(T)) is now referred to as The Slates, a very common Caithness description of an area of flat rock shelving down to the sea.

The substitution of one language for another in place-names is not restricted to Reay Parish, nor to Gaelic and English. There are also cases of an earlier Norse name having been replaced by its English or Scots equivalent or by a totally unrelated English name. An example of the former type can be seen in Ruther Myre (see OL21(T)) which is now known as The Mossy, and of the latter in Rae Berry (see OL19(T)) which is now much more frequently known as The Devil's Footstep.

The most fascinating example of what can happen to a name when the people who use it have been subject to a variety of different linguistic influences is undoubtedly the various forms taken by the name Dounreay. (see R49(S)) This name is frequently heard on
radio and television in the form [dun're] and my informant initially
gave me the B.B.C. pronunciation and then, fortunately, he added
that this would not be the local form of the name. He then proceeded
to give me a fascinating account of a further three possible
pronunciations which could be heard locally, depending partly on the
age of the speaker and partly on the context in which the name was
being used.

Older people who were familiar with spoken Gaelic in their
youth use the form ['dunra] with the stress on the first syllable
and the vowel in the final syllable being [a] rather than [e].
Younger people who have no familiarity with spoken Gaelic say
[dun'ra], using the stress pattern of the B.B.C. announcer, but
retaining the local vowel in the final syllable. These two usages,
dependent on the age of the speaker, are commonly heard in
conversation between local people.

A third form, however, apparently occurs in conversation with
outsiders who live locally. This third form is ['daunre], and it
is probably a spelling-based pronunciation, arising out of a
misinterpretation of the written forms commonly taken by the initial
element. The initial element is G dûn: a fortress, but it is
frequently represented as either down or down. It has obviously
been assumed that down/down represent English down and that the
local pronunciation is simply the Scots form of the English word.
In conversation with outsiders, therefore, it has obviously been
deemed polite to substitute the English pronunciation [daun].

When I cross-checked this information with another elderly
local he confirmed that he would use the form ['dunra] but he
added yet another variant when he said, "Of course, the right way
(i.e., the form appropriate for use with an outsider) is ['daunra]."

Another example of a name which varies according to the age
of the speaker and the context in which it is used is Duncansby
in Canisbay Parish. Older people say ['daunsbi] which is closer
in form to the Dungalsbær of the Orkneyinga Saga than the form
Duncansby which is favoured by younger local people and outsiders. Duncansby is likewise a form which appears to have arisen out of a mistaken interpretation of an early written form.

It is obviously very important when interviewing local people regarding pronunciation of names to state emphatically that one is interested in all the forms of a name which may exist, not just in the form which is considered by the informant to be the most socially acceptable or "correct".

Another extremely fertile area of information, in which caution proved necessary for a different reason, was that of the traditional tale purporting to explain the significance of a name. These tales were often extremely plausible and, in many cases, were probably accurate although their veracity was difficult to check. Doubt was cast by the fact that there were often two or more local stories to account for a particular name, each delivered with the utmost sincerity and appearing to bear the stamp of authenticity in the amount of detail contained in the story. An example of this can be seen in the case of Oigin's Geo (see R89(T)) for which there are two explanatory tales, actually quoting the names of the people involved. The stories are similar in form but distinct in the details given. Both tales, however, make the basic suggestion that a person used the geo as a hiding place, and this is probably the grain of truth which should be extracted.

A very similar type of tale is attached to a geo in Thurso Parish and one is very strongly inclined to believe this tale, because otherwise the name given to the geo is totally incomprehensible. The name is Pocket's Geo (see T54(T)) and the story suggests that an old lady used to collect dulse in the geo, storing it in a capacious pocket until she could sell it in Thurso. There are no variant versions of this tale which also lends it credibility.

The most famous of the tales relating to Caithness place-names must be the story of John o' Groats and his diplomatic masterpiece in the form of an eight-sided house, with eight separate entrances
which ensured that no one member of the Groat family took precedence over another. This story was first recorded in the Old Statistical Account of Canisbay Parish at the end of the eighteenth century and, having been recorded in writing, it gained a much greater substance than other traditional tales, but archaeological investigations discovered no trace of the eight-sided house and it seems that this tale too is spurious, although the Groat family obviously existed and were of considerable importance in the district. (see C18(S))

Apart from these tales relating to specific events or people, there are also numerous general references in place-names to the traditions and beliefs of the people of Caithness. For example, there are numerous Gallow Hills in Caithness and, in each case, locals tell the tale of a hanging having taken place on the hill. Whether or not such a hanging took place is very difficult to establish and, in some instances, it is possible that the hill was so named because it was of the type which could have been used as the site for a gallows.

The superstitious beliefs of the district are also very clearly apparent in the various names which refer to supernatural beings and their haunts. For instance, the various names which incorporate the Gaelic element sithean: a fairy hillock, although it is significant that a large number of these names have been forgotten. A belief in fairies does not accord well with life in the twentieth century. The trow or troll, on the other hand, has survived more effectively into the twentieth century and there are various references to this creature in Caithness place-names, and many tales are told of its depredations. These colourful local tales could, in fact, provide the basis of a very rewarding separate study but, as far as place-name research is concerned, they must remain peripheral.

The most useful information gleaned from informants was undoubtedly that based on present factual knowledge of the landscape and its exploitation. There are numerous instances throughout all
six parishes of names which were given an added dimension when local knowledge was brought to play. For instance, Cairn Hill (see S13(T)), a very prosaic name on the island of Stroma, came vividly to life when a local described how it was once used by the men of Stroma as a look-out point for ships which they could pilot through the Pentland Firth.

The permanence of the natural environment was often emphasised when, for example, locals confirmed that the numerous Scarf Rocks which dot the coastline of Caithness are still inhabited by cormorants and when a name such as Rammie Geo (see S13(T)) produced the unsolicited comment that ravens nest in the area. Local fishermen also commented on a name such as Limpet Geo (see T37(T)) where limpets have probably been gathered for centuries for use as bait in inshore fishing.

In many cases, a particular quality of the natural environment is totally obvious to the local who exploits the environment whereas, to the outsider casting a searching eye over the landscape, the quality is not immediately apparent. For instance, in the case of Yellow Moss (see R178(T)) it is only the local who has cut peats from the moor who can say with certainty that the reference is to the colour of the peat when dried.

Various agricultural processes and crops are also commemorated in place-names and farmers can still give details of these even when the process or the crop has been superseded during the twentieth century. For instance, examples can be cited of place-names indicating the various stages in the production of flax: Hempriggs (see W18(S)), where the hemp or flax was sown; Lint Lochs (see C65(T)), where the lint was steeped in the water of the lochs to separate the flax from the straw or woody fibre; Bleachfield (see T9(S)), a field which was used for the bleaching of flax.

Each one of these names elicited descriptions of the plant and of the various stages in its preparation.
Various significant events in the local calendar are also commemorated in place-names and remembered in affectionate detail by locals. Marymas Green (see D26(S)), now a disused market stance, was vividly remembered by one informant in particular as the site of a thriving market during the middle years of this century.

All these pieces of local information have been noted in the sections dealing with individual names and they contribute a great deal towards a composite picture of the onomastic history of Caithness.
CHAPTER FOUR: REAY PARISH

Introduction pp. 47 - 48
Settlement Names pp. 49 - 83
Topographical Names pp. 84 - 140
Reay Parish is situated on the west side of Caithness, bordering Sutherland. A substantial part of Reay Parish, lying roughly west of a line from Shebster to Loch Shurrery and south of the main A836, is underlain by old, hard, resistant rocks such as granite, porphyryite and metamorphosed rocks. This has given rise to the highest land in the study area in Beinn nam Bad Mòr (290 metres) and Beinn Ràtha (248 metres). The effect of the hard rock in terms of agricultural potential is to render the land unfit for anything but rough grazing and the area is consequently notably devoid of settlement.

The underlying rock on the east side of Reay Parish, in the valley of the Forss Water, is old red sandstone which underlies most of Caithness with the exception of the area mentioned above. Since this sandstone is horizontally bedded, the effect on the landscape is to produce a gently rising plateau seldom reaching more than 150 metres with drainage mostly northwards in the parishes of Reay, Thurso, Olrig and Dunnet.

The result of a fairly high rainfall on these flattish, poorly-drained sandstone plateaux has been the build-up of peat deposits, initially covering most of the study area. Over the centuries of occupation much of this peat has been removed by agricultural improvers, but it is true to say that the typical Caithness landscape presents a contrast between the improved fields of grass and arable, mostly between sea-level and 100 metres, and the higher land or the more poorly drained low-lying land which is dominated by peat-bog and heather moor.

The influence of the sandstone on the coastal landscape is very marked. It is hard enough to resist erosion by the sea and to form outstanding cliff scenery. The cliffs are interspersed with sand beaches or river estuaries.

Dounreay Atomic Establishment is the principal employer in the parish, attracting workers not only from Reay but from the whole of Caithness. Many people retain their crofts and their interest in fishing but engage in some form of paid employment to supplement what would otherwise be a meagre income.
The language spoken in Reay Parish is English, but Gaelic was spoken until the mid-twentieth century and a few older people still have a passive Gaelic vocabulary of limited extent which they can apply to place-name elements. Many of the Gaelic place-names exhibit the break-down of the inflectional system which is common in a language in decline.

Reay Parish is bounded on the south by Halkirk Parish which is not included in the present detailed survey although the place-names in this parish and in the remaining three Caithness parishes of Bower, Watten and Latheron have been taken into consideration where necessary.

The Forss Water forms the boundary between Reay Parish and Thurso Parish to the east.

Note: Names containing G mór 'big' have been recorded in the initial lists of names in the form in which they appear on the 1876 6" OS maps, ie mòr, but elsewhere in the text the form mór is used in accordance with Dwelly (Dwelly 1973, p. 670).
SETTLEMENT NAMES
ACHADH NA GAODHA : NC 96 SW: 940646
ALLT ACHADH NA GAODHA: " : 944648
Local pronunciation : [axnə'grau, .. bərn]
Early refs: Allt Achadh na Graidhe 1877 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m. : a field, a meadow
G graidh/greigh f.: a herd, flock as of horses, deer
Modern pronunciation confirms that <Gaodha> is erroneous.
G allt m. : a mountain stream
(G allit has been directly translated to Sc burn; see R4(S), in the present-day version of the name.)

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ACHALONE : ND 06 SW: 038631
HILL OF ACHALONE : " : 032631
Local pronunciation: [axələn]
Early refs: Auchlone 1560 RMS
Auchlone 1624 Sinclair (Mey)
Achalon 1672 Retours
Achinloan 1750 Roy
Achaloan 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
G achadh m.: See R1(S)
G lôn m. : a meadow, marsh
The form recorded in Roy's map (1750) preserves the original form of the article more closely: ie
Achinloan < achadh an lôn

......
ACHANAON, BURN OF : ND 06 NE: 067582
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Achinaan 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G ãthan m.: a ford, a shallow part of the river reaching from bank to bank
G achadh an ãthain
The name Achanaon originally applied to a croft house which is now in ruins and the name only survives as applied to the neighbouring Burn of Achanaon. (So burn: see R4(S))

ACHARAVHELAN BURN : ND 06 SW: 005623
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G meallan m.: a knoll, little hill
G achadh a' meallain
So burn: this word is used throughout Scotland to describe a small stream.
As in the previous example this name originally applied to a croft, but now only survives as the name of the neighbouring stream.
ACHBUILIGAN TULLOCH: NC 96 NE: 991657

LOCH ACHBUILIGAN: " : 988656

Local pronunciation: <Achbuiligan Tulloch> is not known to my informants. The Loch is always known as The Major's Loch after a renowned local piper who lived in the vicinity.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Achbuiligan Tulloch Inventory of Monuments: 1911, page 94

Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)

Comparison with Buaile Oscar: see R37(S), suggests that the medial element could be G buaille f.: a shelter, see R36(S), with reference to the remains of the broch. The final element could be a diminutive ending -gan.

G tulach m.: a mound, hillock, often, as in this case, with ruins on top

This word has been borrowed into the Caithness dialect of Scots as tulloch.

G loch : has been borrowed into Scots and is very common throughout Scotland. Dwelly comments that G loch is generally feminine in Caithness, Sutherland and most parts of Ross.

......

ACHFORSIESCYE: ND 05 NW: 023569

ALLT FORSIE: " : 022579

Local pronunciation: [ˈfɔːrsɪsai] not [ˈɛksəfɔːrsɪsai]

Early refs: Forsie 1616 RMS

Forsie 1628 Sinclair (Thurso)

Forsie Sy 1726 Macfarlane

Forsay 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)

ON fors m.: a waterfall

ON sjær m.: the sea, here applied to the large inland loch (of R117(T))

G allt m.: see R1(S)
ACHIEBEGG MOSS : ND 06 SW: 023624
Local pronunciation: [axibeg 'mos]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G beag : little, small
So moss : 1) a marsh, bog, a tract of soft wet ground
2) specifically: a bog from which peats are dug
Achibegg originally referred to a single farm but is now used to
describe a wider area.

ACHIEBRAESKAILL : ND 06 NW: 017652
ACHIEBRAESKAILL BURN: " : 017656
Local pronunciation : [axi'breskel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G bràigh m.: the upper part of a place, a bank or stretch of ground
rising with a fairly steep slope.
(Borrowed into Scots as Bra, Bray, Brae)
skiall : see R67(S)
So burn : see R4(S)
ACHIEGULLAN : NC 96 SE: 988647
ACHIEGULLAN BURN : " : 986644
Local pronunciation: [axi'julən]
Early refs: Achiegallan 1876 6" OS
Achiegallan Burn

Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
W. J. Watson records a name from the Oykel area which is very reminiscent of Achiegullan. The name is Achnagullan which he suggests is achadh na (g)cuilean: field of the whelps (Watson 1926, page 241).
There is, however, the fact of the modern pronunciation of the Reay name which is not in accordance with Watson's derivation. It suggests G giullan m.: a boy, little boy, as the source.
G achadh a' ghiullain
The 1876 reference Achiegallan does not help to clarify the issue.
So burn : see R4(S)

ACHIMENACH : ND 06 SW: 022639
Local pronunciation: This name is now lost and the whole area is known as Achibegg: see R7(S)
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m. : see R1(S)
G meadhonach: intermediate, central
Achimenach was situated approximately half-way between Achimore and Achibegg.
ACHIMORE, CROFTS OF: ND 06 SW: 023614
Local pronunciation: [krz-fts æv axi'mor]
This name is known but not used nowadays.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G mór : big
Sc croft : a small agricultural landholding.
As Donald Omand says: "Crofters, of course, were not farmers – mostly they were allowed to cultivate only second-rate land which it was scarcely worth while for big farmers to bother with, unless for rough pasture" (Omand 1972, page 145).
The fact that G croit f.: a croft, is not used here suggests that these crofts are recent, probably 19th century.

ACHINS : NC 96 NE: 958641
Local pronunciation: [də'axins]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name also appears as Achins of Dachow: see R44(S)

ACHIVEIGLE : ND 06 SW: 043642
Local pronunciation: [ax'i'vegəl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
-weigle : the meaning of this specific is obscure.
Achnabiein
Local pronunciation: This name was readily understood by my informants, but it is not in use today.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: This small croft lies in the valley of the Fors Water (see T34(S)) between Druim Calltuinneach (see R72(T)) and Multeadh Mhór (see R141(T)) which suggests that the name should be derived from
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G beinn f.: a hill
G achadh na beinne (G beinn is frequently borrowed into Scots as ben)

Achnacarich
Local pronunciation: Name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G carach : meandering
Carach fits the situation because the Allt Forsiescye turns, almost at right angles, round the croft, but it is difficult to account for the presence of the definite article with carach. Caithness Gaelic does, however, contain many such grammatical inconsistencies.

Achnacly
Local pronunciation: [axn\'klai]
Early refs: Auchinnachloy 1619 EMS
Auchinnachley 1657 Retours
Auchancloy 1726 Sinclair (Muckle)
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
The specific may be G clòimh (gen clòimhe) f.: wool, although the 1657 spelling does not fit this interpretation.
ACHRASKER : NC 96 SE: 992636
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Achafrescar 1619 RMS
Atherasker 1640 Retours
Atheraster 1640 "
Acherasker 1640 "
Achachraster 1661 RMS
Derivation: The confusion between <c>, <t> and <k> which occurs in the early references makes it impossible to suggest a derivation for this name with any degree of conviction.

W.J. Watson mentions Achafraskill in Latheron Parish which he suggests is G achadh na fraschoille: field of the shrubbery (G ras m. > fras: underwood, shrubbery + G coille f.: wood, grove) (Watson 1926, page 498).

In view of this explanation it might be feasible to suggest that Achrasker contains
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
G ras m. : a shrubbery
G car : a bend, turn
The name applied to a croft.


ACHREAMIE : ND 06 NW: 014671
ACHREAMIE MOSS : " : 006667
Local pronunciation: [ax'trimi]
Early refs: Achrimie 1750 Roy
Achrymie 1807 Arrowsmith
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
ON rimi m. : a strip of land
So moss : see R7(S)
Achreamie occurs in an area where there are several other names of Norse origin.

W.F.H. Nicolaisen comments that "... there are several names on the Caithness map [Fig. 5.1.] in which Ach- is followed by a Norse name - the Achlibster type ..." (Nicolaisen 1982, page 81).
ACHEREGAN HILL
ND 06 SW: 027622 R19(S)
LEANS OF ACHEREGAN:
" : 031615
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
The specific -reregan is obscure, but probably of Gaelic origin.
So leans: this word is used throughout Caithness to describe
grassland, often beside a stream
of G lèana m.: a meadow
obs Faeroese, Norwegian: Lón (Thorsen 1954, page 234)
The name probably applied to a croft but now refers only to land used
for grazing.

ACHSTEENCLATE
ND 05 SW: 037546 R20(S)
ACHSTEENCLATE BURN:
" : 032547
Local pronunciation: [ax'ste:nklæt]
Early refs: Achna Staneclat 1807 Arrowsmith
Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
ON steinn m.: a stone
ON klettr m.: a rock, crag
There are several rocky outcrops in the area which make the description
extremely apt.
ON klettr has been borrowed into Gaelic as cleit f. and it is an
extremely common place-name element in the Outer Hebrides, particularly
Lewis and Harris. klettr is less common as a description of an
inland feature in Caithness than it is in the Outer Hebrides.
In areas where there is Gaelic influence the modern spelling is
usually slate but ON klettr has been borrowed into the modern
Caithness dialect as clett.
So burn: see R4(S)

......
ACHUNABUST : NC 96 SE: 995645
ACHUNABUST BRIDGE : " : 988648
Local pronunciation: either [ax⁴nəbəst] or [ax⁴nəbəst]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G achadh m. : see R1(S)
ON bőlstaðr m. : a homestead

A great deal has been written on the subject of ON bőlstaðr/bůlstaðr. W.F.H. Nicolaisen (1976, page 94) states that ON bůlstaðr appears variously as "-bster, -pster, and as a bilabial nasal + -ster" in Caithness and he also mentions the form -bust as occurring in Orkney and -bost as occurring in the Hebrides under Gaelic influence.

Richard Coates (Caithness Placesnames in -bster*) points out that "bůlstaðr and bůlstaðr are both attested place-name elements, and both may be expected on phonetic grounds to fall together." He further states that "whilst [l] - loss is not a surprising change it is impossible to decide the etymology of some individual names until such documentary evidence (ie direct record of older forms with [l]) turns up." G. Fellows-Jensen (Viking Settlement in the Northern and Western Isles) endorses this viewpoint, but emphasises that bůlstaðr is the more probable original generic.

In the case of Achunabust there is no earlier record which shows the presence of [l], and this comment applies to almost all the Caithness examples of ON bůlstaðr. There are few written records dating from the initial period of Norse settlement in Caithness and [l] - loss had obviously taken place before the 16th century when records are more readily available.

The central element of Achunabust is problematical. Perhaps G achadh na + ON bůlstaðr is possible but there are objections:
1) the second syllable of the name is stressed in pronunciation which would certainly not be the case if the second syllable represented the Gaelic definite article na;
2) there is no logical reason why the Gaelic definite article should take the form na which represents either gen. sing. f. or nom. pl. m./f. before ON bůlstaðr, but the vagaries of Caithness Gaelic might account for this.

An alternative explanation is that the central element represents the
ON personal name Uni, -a m. (Lind 1915, column 1059). A.B. Taylor mentions a farm in Shetland called Unustadir from ON Unu (gen. of Una a woman's name) and stadir: farm. He comments that "It is of interest that the masculine form of the name - Uni, gen. Una - occurs frequently in place-names" (Taylor 1954, page 112).

.....

ACHVARASDAL : NC 96 SE: 995621
ACHVARASDAL BURN : " : 990627
ACHVARASDAL LEANS : " : 994615
ACHVARASDALE HOUSE : " : 983646
Local pronunciation: [ax'vərəsdəl]
Early refs: Achavaristil 1831 Thomson
Achrarasdal Burn 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G achadh m. : see R1(S)
The central element is difficult. It may possibly represent
ON marr(gen mars)m.: a steed
with lenition of the initial consonant due to Gaelic influence.
If the central element is ON marr being used as a specific in an
original Norse compound, the final element is probably the generic
ON dalr m. : a valley
The 1831 <-stil> represents the unstressed final syllable and does not suggest a different derivation.
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Sc leans : see R19(S)
Anglicisation of the name has occurred with the addition of final
<-e> in Achvarasdale House.

.....
AIRIGH NAM BRUACH DUBHA : NC 95 SE: 985504 R23(S)
ABHAINN NAM BRUACH DUBHA: " : 985505
Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants
Early refs: Airidh nam Bruach Dubha 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G Airidh/Airigh f.: a shieling, summer residence for herdsmen and cattle
G abhainn f. : bank, brim
(The plural inflection is omitted - see R7(T))
G dubh : black, dark

ARIOIVE : NC 96 SE: 991606 R24(S)
ARIOIVE MOSS : " : 990612
Local pronunciation: [air-n-lev]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G Airigh/Airidh f.: see R23(S)
The second element is very difficult. Possibly G sliabh m.: heath, moorland, with loss of initial [s].
Sc moss : see R7(S)
This name originally indicated a shieling but now refers to a small croft.
BAILLIE : ND 06 NW: 046653
BURN OF BAILLIE : " : 043654
BAILLIE HILL : ND 06 SE: 050644
STRATH OF BAILLIE : " : 053647
Local pronunciation: [beli]
Early refs: Ballze 1557 OPS
Bailzie " "
Bailie 1560-1 Sutherland (Forse)
Bailzie 1608 "
Bailie 1581 RMS
terra de Baillie 1601 "
Baillie 1605 Retours
Bailye 1635 Sinclair (Mey)
Balie 1726 Macfarlane
Bayley 1750 Roy

Derivation:
A name of some importance and it seems most unlikely that it should
be derived from G baile m.: a farm, village.
Furthermore, G baile is uncommon as a simplex name.
It seems much more probable that this name represents,
So baillie, bailie/ballze, balze
which is defined in D O S T as "An executive officer having
jurisdiction in a lordship, barony, or regality; an official
appointed by the king, a bishop or abbot, etc to discharge the
duties of a steward or bailiff."
In this case the name describes the area under the jurisdiction
of a bailiff.
So strath : a river valley, especially at its broader parts with
meadows and arable land, and frequently extending for
many miles on either side of the river to the feet of
the surrounding hills. (cf G srath m.)

BAIMORE : ND 06 NW: 010680
Local pronunciation: [bal'mor]
Early refs: Bualmore 1841 Census

Derivation:
G buaile f.: see R36(S)
G móir : see R11(S)
The name now describes a small croft.
BALNA BEINN : ND 05 NE: 063561 R27(S)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G baile m.: see R25(S)
G beinn f.: see R14(S)
G baile na beinne

BARD NA CAILLICHE : ND 05 NW: 041565 R28(S)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G bàrd m.: a park, fenced area
G cailleach (gen cailliche) f.: a single or old woman
The name may originally have applied to a croft, or it could simply have referred to the park used by the old woman for grazing her sheep or cattle.

BARDNAHEIGH : ND 06 SW: 037646 R29(S)
Local pronunciation: [bar na 'haix]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G bàrd m.: see R28(S)
The specific in this name presents difficulties in that the form of the article would suggest a feminine noun following.
There is a Gaelic word sìogh f. which describes keening, but it seems unlikely in the context. Much more probable, although masculine in gender is G each: a horse. Modern pronunciation strongly supports the latter suggestion.
BLARMORE : NC 96 SE: 997636 R30(S)
Local pronunciation: [bler 'mor]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blàr m.: a field; a peat moss or marsh
G mòr : see R11(S)
Dwelly notes that plain or field is the primary meaning of G blàr
but in Caithness blàr is more commonly used to indicate a peat moss.
However, in this instance, the name is applied to a croft.
There are several examples of names containing this element in the
Reay topographical section.

BORLUM HOUSE : NC 96 SE: 971642 R31(S)
BORLUM ROCK: "": 974636
Local pronunciation: ['borləm]
Early refs: Borlum 1619 RMS
Boirlume 1620 Retours
Borlum 1640 Retours
Borlum 1627 Sinclair (Mey)
Borlom 1726 Macfarlane
Borlum 1734 Sutherland (Forse)
Borlum 1750 Roy
Derivation:
G bòr lum m.: a strip of arable land; Royal Castle Lands in the
Highlands
The produce of the farm at Borlum must have been reserved for the
laird of the Sandside estate.
(cf Bordland, also boirland < ME Bordland: land providing supplies
for the Lord's table. This is the form which occurs in Bordland-
Murkell: see OL 26(S).)
BORROWSTON MAINS: ND 06 NW: 017691
WESTER BORROWSTON: " : 005681
Local pronunciation: [ˈˈbɔ:rstən]
Early refs: Burrostoun 1549 RSS
Borrowstoun 1604 Retours
Burrostoun 1605 "
Burrostoune 1644 "
Burrestoune 1644 "
Borrowstoun 1606 RMS
Burrestoun 1619 "
Boroughstoun 1667 "
Burrostoune 1662 Blaeu
Burrostoun 1750 Roy
Borrowston 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
ON borg (gen borgar) f.: a fortification
The ruins of a broch (cf T9(T)) are to be found 600 or 700 yards
NNW of Borrowston Mains.
ON tun n.: an enclosure
Sc mains: the chief farm in the district
Marwick mentions Burrostoun in Shapansay, Orkney and comments that
wherever this name, or variants of it occurred it applied to a small
area or tunship adjacent to the site of an old broch. He also notes
that originally the compound form must have been borgar-tun and
suggests that the presence of the <-s> is due to subsequent Scots or
English influence. (Marwick 1952, page 54.)
There is, of course, a closely related MSc noun
Borrowstoun, Borrowstoun, Burrostoun: a burgh
and the existence of this word may very well have influenced the later
development of the Norse compound.
A parallel situation can be traced in the development of the West
Lothian name Botness (Angus Macdonald 1941, pages 25, 28, 32).
Early references are to Berwardeston 1335-6, Berewardestone 1336-7,
Barwartstoun 1473 and Berwarstoun 1505-6 whereas later references
show obvious influence from MSc Borrowistoun, a burgh. For the
generic in the name Botness of T13(S).
(The specific is interpreted by Macdonald as Bearnward's farm or
possibly bearkeeper's farm.)
BRACKSIDE : NC 96 SE: 956644
BRACKSIDE BURN : " : 953634
BRAXSIDE : " : 952634

Local pronunciation: ['braksaid]

Early refs: Braxside 1876 OS

Derivation:
ON brekka f.: a slope

There is a popular Gaelic descriptive term G breac: variegated in colour, but the word order in this compound favours an ON derivation, although the phonetic development of ON brekka may have been influenced by G breac.

The generic is probably
ON setr n.: mountain pastures.

W.F.H. Nicolaisen refers to the group of Sutherland names ending in -side, -said and suggests that they may be derived from ON setr.n. rather than the closely related ON setr.n.: a residence; farm, because the [s] form seems to favour a following non-palatal vowel. (Nicolaisen 1976, page 92)

So burn : see R4(S)

---

BRAWLBIN : ND 05 NE: 070572
BRAWLBIN MAINS : " : 069579
BRAWLBIN BURN : " : 072576

Local pronunciation: ['bralb4n]

Early refs: Bravlbyn (or Brawynd) 1547 RSS
Bravilbyn 1605 Retours
Bralbeynd 1644 "
Brawlbynd 1606 RMS
Braulbind 1661 "
Braulebindskail "
Loch of Brawlbin 1628 Sinclair (Thurso)
Loch of Braulbin 1662 Blaeu
Braelbin "
Braelbin 1726 Macfarlane
L. Braelbin 1789 Ainslie
Braaluabin 1831 Thomson
Derivation: For the initial element braal of T11(S) which has the following early forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brathwelle</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>RMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadwell</td>
<td>1671</td>
<td>Retours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bredwell</td>
<td>1633</td>
<td>RMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bredwall</td>
<td>1667</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braedwall</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Omand derives this from

ON breiðr : broad
ON vǫllr m.: a field

and all the early forms support this derivation (Omand 1972, page 225).

It seems likely that this is also the source of the first element of Brawlbin, but it is strange that none of the early forms contain any hint of the dental consonant which is so prevalent in the earlier forms of braal. The explanation of this may be that when the final element was added and the word became trisyllabic this encouraged the shortening of the first two syllables Bredwall > braul rather more speedily than in the case of the disyllabic Bredwall. The final element of Brawlbin also presents difficulties.

G beinn f.: a mountain, hill

is the most likely source but it is difficult to account for the final -d which occurs in several of the earlier examples. Ben Dorrery is in the vicinity to justify derivation from G beinn.

So mains : see R32(S)
So burn : see R34(S)

......

BROUBSTER : ND 06 SW: 028612
BURN OF BROUBSTER : " : 045602
BRIDGE OF BROUBSTER: " : 036602
LEANs OF BROUBSTER : " : 037604
BROUBSTER HILL : " : 019604
BROUBSTER COTTAGE: " : 021619
BROUBSTER VILLAGE : ND 05 NW: 037594
Local pronunciation: ['brubstə]
Early refs:  Browbstar 1562  Sinclair (Mey)
       Brubster 1562-  
               64* OIM
       Bruster 1620  Retours
       Broubuster 1662  Blaeu
       Rubster 1726  Macfarlane
       Brybster 1750  Roy
       Brubist  "  "
       Brubster 1831  Thomson

*Charter of Adam, Bishop of Orkney

Derivation:
ON brú m.  :  a bridge
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Sc leann : see R19(S)

The bridge is over the Forss Water (see T34(S)). This was, as the numerous names indicate, a very populous area but the people were evicted during the Caithness clearances and the crofts are now derelict.

BUAILE NAN GOBHAR : ND 05 NW: 041553
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G buaile f.: a fold for sheep or cattle or other animals
G gobhar f.: a goat

Some buaile names developed to be croft names, but probably not in this instance.
The name apparently referred to a shieling.
BUAIIE OSCAR : ND 05 NE: 057557
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G buaile f. : see R36(S)
The final element is questionable without earlier references, but it may be a Norse personal name:
ON ösk (gen -ar) m.: Oscar (Lind 1915, column 822)
In this instance buaile is being used to indicate the oval shape of the hill fort on Ben Freiceadain (see R14(T)). (Inventory of Monuments 1915, page 95.)

BULLDOO : ND 06 NW: 002672
Local pronunciation: [bul'du]
Early refs: Bulldoo 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
G baile m.: see R25(S)
G dubh : see R23(S)
(G baile m. is more probable than G buaile f. because the adjective dubh is not lenited.)

CARRISIDE : ND 05 NE: 074589
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Carriside 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)
Caryside 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
The specific may be the ON personal name Kári m. (Lind 1915, column 675).
ON sætr n.: see R33(S)
CHAPEL POOL : ND 07 SW: 024703
ST. MARY'S CHAPEL : " : 025701
ST. MARY'S WELL : ND 06 NW: 024697
Local pronunciation:
Early refs: 1726 Macfarlane: mentions this chapel as having been earlier dedicated to St. Peter.

Derivation:
A chapel dedicated to St. Mary.
"This chapel is much the oldest ecclesiastical structure remaining in Caithness, and may possibly date from the 12th century."
(Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 89)
So well : a natural spring of water which forms a pool or stream

CLAIS BHSREAC : ND 05 NW: 009592
CNOCH NA CLAISE BHSREAC: " : 005594
Local pronunciation: [klæz 'brek]
Early refs: shealling of Clashbreik 1726 Sinclair (Murkle)
Glashbreak 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
G clais f.: a small stream, ditch
G breac : see R33(S)
G cnoo m. : a hill, hillock
Breach, as indicated in R33(S), is a favourite Gaelic place-name element and indicates the subtle blend of colours typical in moorland areas. Alternatively, if the name applies to a stream, the reference can be to the speckled trout which swim in it.
The name Clais Bhreac refers to former shielings.

CLASHACH : ND 06 SE: 053642
Local pronunciation: ['klaʃæk]
Early refs: not mentioned in 1877 6" OS
Derivation:
G claiseach: furrowed, trenchèd, full of ditches or hollows.
CLASHMORE :  NC 96 SE:  999632
Local pronunciation: not known to my informants
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R14(S)
G mor : see R11(S)

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Cnoc Dachow :  NC 96 SE:  964644
Local pronunciation: [daɪˈxau]
Early refs:  Dachow 1619 RMS
           Dachow 1640 Retours
           Dachow 1750 Roy
           Dachow 1782 Sinclair (Freswick)
           Achins of Dachow "  "
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R11(S)
Dachow only appears on the 6" OS map as a hill name, but early
records suggest that it was an important settlement until at least
the late eighteenth century. My informants only knew it as the name
of a house in Reay village.
It is difficult to suggest a derivation for this name in spite of the
uniformity of the earlier forms.
Dathow (1640) is the only variant form and it is of no assistance in
interpreting the name.

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Cnoc nan Airidhe :  NC 96 SE:  986605
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs:  Cnoc nan Airidhe 1876  6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R14(S)
G Airidhe (pl Airidhean)f. : see R23(S)
This is another example of inaccurate inflection. (cf R7(T))
CRAIGTON : NO 96 NE: 982668
Local pronunciation: [ˈkrɛɡtən]
Early refs: Craigtown 1726 Macfarlane
Derivation:
So craig : a rock, crag (G creag f.)
So toun : an area of arable land on an estate, with associated common grazing rights farmed in whole or in part on a run-rig system, common throughout Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century.

CRUIVES : ND 06 SW: 027621
Local pronunciation: [ˈkrɔːvz]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cruives may be a corruption of G craobh f.: a tree, bush
as in nearby Cuil na Craobh (see R61(T)). The croft at Cruives was probably built after the meaning of G craobh became obscure to the locals.
Alternatively, the name may derive from
So cruive : 1) a hut, hovel, cottage
2) an enclosure for animals esp. for poultry or pigs

DALCIAGGIE : ND 06 NW: 036685
Local pronunciation: [dəlˈklægi]
Early refs: Dallachlaggie 1630 Retours Dalclagie 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G dail f. : a field, meadow
The word order in these examples (generic + specific) indicates that Dal- represents G dail rather than ON dalr (see R22(S)), which would normally appear in final position.
The favourable situation occupied by this small farm suggests that the second element is
G claigionn m.: best field of arable land on a farm
DOUNREAY HOUSE : NC 96 NE: 982669
UPPER DOUNREAY : " : 998661
LOWER DOUNREAY : " : 986669
DOUNREAY QUARRY : " : 997668
DOUNREAY BURN : NC 96 SE: 990645

(See Chapter III for a detailed account of these various forms.)

Early refs:
- Dunra 1539 RMS
- Downra 1562 Sinclair (Mey)
- Donraa 1577 " "
- Dounrey 1567 OPS
- Dounra 1609 RMS
- Dunra 1654 Reay Papers
- Dounrae 1662 Blaeu
- Dunray 1726 Macfarlane

Castle of Dunray " "
- Downreay 1753 Sutherland (Forse)
- Downreay 1770 Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:
- G dún m. : a fortified house or hill; fortress
- For a detailed discussion of -reay see R63(S).
- So burn : see RH(S)

......

ESVARASDAL : NC 95 NE: 996598
AN t-EAS : " : 995595

Local pronunciation: [dɪ 'ɛsəs]
Early refs: see R22(S)

Derivation:
- G eas m. : a waterfall
- This has been anglicised in the modern version of the name by the addition of the definite article and the English plural ending.
- The waterfalls occur on the Achvarasdal Burn (see R22(S)).

......
FERANELM

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
It is very difficult to suggest a derivation for this name without earlier forms.
A local informant pointed out that there is an island in the Allt Torrigil (see R11(T)) at this point and the name may, therefore, be derived from
G fearann m.: land
G eilean m.: an island
G fearann an eilein
(G eilean can also be used metaphorically in the sense of "an island of cultivation").

GUNNSCROFT

Local pronunciation: ['guns kraft]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The name describes a croft (see R11(S)) belonging to a family named Gunn, which is a very long-established Caithness surname.

HALLAM SMALLHOLDINGS

HALLAM BURN

Local pronunciation: ['halem]
Early refs: Holme 1612 RMS
Holme 1630 Retours
Hall 1750 Roy

Derivation:
The name occurs in a very strongly Norse-influenced area of Reay Parish and is almost certainly of Norse origin. Possibly ON hólmr m. (or the weak form hólmí): an islet referring to an island in the burn, or to dry land in a marsh.
HELSHETTER: NC 96 SE: 963628
HELSHETTER STRATH: " : 963617
Local pronunciation: [ˈhelʃɛdər]
Early refs: Helsettir 1782 Sinclair (Freswick)
Helshitter " " "

Derivation:
ON hella f.: a flat stretch of rock
ON setr n.: see R33(S), with palatalisation of the initial consonant due to Gaelic influence
Sc strath: see R25(S)

ISAULD: NC 96 NE: 981653
BRIDGE OF ISAULD: " : 976651
BURN OF ISAULD: " : 974652
ISAULD COTTAGE: " : 978653
ISAULD PORT: " : 967656
Local pronunciation: [ˈɪzəld]
Early refs: Eishald 1573 Sinclair (Mey)
Isald " " "
Easeald 1619 RMS
Isould 1667 "
Easthald 1662 Blaeu
Isauld 1726 Macfarlane
Eastald 1734 Sutherland (Forse)
Eastall 1750 Roy
Isauld 1770 Sinclair (Freswick)
Issald 1807 Arrowsmith
Isauld 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
Some of the earlier spellings suggest that the initial element may be G eas m.: see R50(S)
The final element is fairly uniform throughout and probably represents G allt m.: see R1(S)
The anglicised version of G port m.: a harbour
is preferred in this area to ON hōfn f., anglicised to haven which is prevalent in the eastern parishes (see T32(T)).
KENNACHY : ND 06 NW: 031685 R56(S)
KENNACHY BURN : " : 028684
Local pronunciation: [kan'axi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
G ceann m. : top, end, limit
G achadh m. : see R1(S)
G ceann an achaidh
The word ceann always suggests an extremity, either horizontal, or
vertical in the case of hills.

KNOCK URRAY BROCH : NO 96 NE: 984663 R57(S)
Local pronunciation: [nʊk 'ʊre brɒx]
Derivation: Possibly
G cnoc m. : see R41(S); anglicised to Knock
G ãr : new
G ãth m. : a fortress, artificial mound
The initial element of Urray is uncertain because of its position in
the compound. One would expect to find ãth ãr (generic + specific).
This unusual word order suggests that it is more probably a corruption
of Cnoc an ãtha, but without earlier forms it is impossible to be
certain.
The broch is situated on a grassy mound about half a mile south of
Dounreay farmhouse. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 94.)

LOANSCORMBEST : NO 96 SE: 984640 R58(S)
Local pronunciation: [lɔn'skɔrm'bɛst]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
(cf Scorriecloit) 1661 RMS
Derivation:
G lôn m. : a meadow
-scorri- : possibly the ÒN personal name Skorri m. (Lind 1915,
column 923)
-best : probably ON bóistær m. see R21(S)
LYBSTER SMALLHOLDINGS: ND 06 NW: 025685
HILL OF LYBSTER: " : 027692
TULLOCH OF LYBSTER: " : 026694
Local pronunciation: ['laipstər]
Early refs: Lybuster 1549 RSS
Lybuster 1585 Sinclair (Mey)
Lybuster 1604 Retours
Lybuster 1606 RMS

Lybster 1661 "
Lybuster 1662 Blaeu
Lybuster 1726 Macfarlane
Leibster 1750 Roy
Layster 1763 Tain & Balnagown
Labster 1807 Arrowsmith
Liabost  Modern Gaelic

Derivation: Probably
ON hlið f.: a slope
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
Cai tulloch: see R5(S)
The same elements, though in a different order occur in a well-
known Icelandic place-name Bólstaðarhlíð.

Milton : NO 96 SE: 978643
MILTON MOSS: " : 982622
Local pronunciation: now known as [ˈmɪltən mɔs]: see R31(S) [ˈbɔrləm mɔs]
Early refs: Mylntoun de Rae 1640 Retours
Milltown 1750 Roy
Moss 1831 Thomson

Derivation: Probably
Sc miln-toun, mylitoune
: a hamlet attached to or adjoining a mill
Given the predominance of Gaelic in this area one might suggest
G mòileann m.: a mill
but the former explanation, assuming that both elements of the
compound are Scots, seems much more probable.
Sc moss : see R7(S)
PORT MÔR  :  NC 96 NE:  958655  
Local pronunciation:  [pɔrt 'mor]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
G port m. :  a harbour  
G mór :  see R11(S)  

Port Môr is situated in Sandside Bay, further in than the artificial Sandside Harbour. It was the original harbour but its approaches are now blocked with silt.

............

QUARRY SIDE  :  ND 06 NW:  007674  
Local pronunciation:  [ˈkɔri 'said]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
An English name, recently coined, rather than an example of -side as explained in R33(S).

............

REAY  :  NC 96 SE:  967647  
NEW REAY  :  " :  960645  
REAY BURN  :  " :  969632  
Local pronunciation:  [rɛ]
Early refs: 
Ra  1222-45  OLM 
Ra  1225  Bagimond's Roll, OIM 
Ra  1439  Cawdor Charters, OIM 
Raa  1507  RSS 
Ray  1554  Sinclair (Mey) 
Raa  1557  " " 
Ray  1561-6  OIM 
Rae  1612  RMS 
Rei  1619  " " 
Rhae  1640  Retours 
Rhae  1658  Caithness Presbytery Records, OIM 
Rae  1636  Reay Papers 
Rea  1649  " " 
Rheay  " " 
Rhea  1662  " " 
Town of Reay  1726  Macfarlane 
church of Rae  " " 
Reay  1750  Roy 
Reay Kirk  " " 

Derivation:
Both Watson (1926, page 117-8) and MacBain (1922, page 11) suggest that Reay should be derived from G rath m. (see R57(S)), but there are cogent reasons for questioning this derivation.
The normal distribution of P- Celtic place-name elements covers the area in the north-east between the Forth and the Moray Firth, and Reay is far to the north of this heartland of Pictish influence. (Jackson 1955, see maps 6 and 7.)
It is strange that none of the early written forms contain any hint of final <-th>, even if it were already silent in speech. (MacDonald "Caiseal, Cathair, Dùn, Lios and Ràth in Scotland", II, page 38.)
It is also strange that the apparently pleonastic Dounreay (Dùnrath according to Watson) should have been coined. Watson explains that it "may mean 'fort-rath', with reference to a broch near it" (Watson 1926, page 118), but there is no positive evidence for the existence of two neighbouring forts.
In view of these objections, it seems reasonable to suggest that the name was Norse in origin, and that G rath has crept in subsequently.
because of its phonetic similarity to the original Norse name and that names such as Beinn Ràtha (see R16(T) and Cnoc an Ràtha (see R43(T)) were coined at a later date on the mistaken assumption that the element in question was G ràth.

An appropriate Norse generic would be:

ON rá (originally vraí): a corner, nook or

ON rá f.: a pole (used metaphorically).

Magnus Olsen deals with rá in the case of a farm Re in Norway, situated on "a long stretched-out elevation" (Norske Gaardnavne X, p.140). This description would fit the situation of Caithness Reay very well indeed.

When the Gaels moved into the Reay district in either the 12th or 13th century they frequently created names based on earlier Norse settlement names, and it seems logical to assume that Dounreay (see R49(S)) could be such a name, containing G dýn and ON rá.

New Reay is so called to distinguish it from an earlier village now inundated by sand.

So burn : see R4(S)

.....

SANDSIDE: NC 96 SE: 956646
SANDSIDE BURN: " : 963624
SANDSIDE HARBOUR: NC 96 NE: 958661
SANDSIDE HEAD: " : 954664
SANDSIDE BAY: " : 962661

Local pronunciation: ['sansaid]

Early refs: Sandsid 1507 RSS
Sanstsyde 1558 "
Sandside 1554 Sinclair (Mey)
Sandseyd 1636 Reay Estate Papers
Sandyse 1640 Retours
Sandyse 1619 RMS
Sandset Head 1662 Blaeu
Sandset " "
Sanside 1726 Macfarlane
Sandside Head " "
Sandside 1750 Roy
Derivation:

ON sandr m.: sand, the sea-shore
ON sëtr m.: see R33(S)
So burn : see R4(S)

......

SHEBSTER : ND 06 SW: 017640
EAST SHEBSTER : " : 026635
WEST SHEBSTER : " : 012634
HILL OF SHEBSTER : " : 013646
LEANS OF SHEBSTER : " : 004641
BURN OF SHEBSTER : " : 012636
Local pronunciation: [ˈɪʃbɛstər]

Early refs: Schabuster 1539 RMS
Shebster 1634 Sutherland (Forse)
Shebster 1658 RMS
Shebster 1662 Blaeu
Shabster 1726 Macfarlane
Shabster 1750 Roy
Shebster 1782 Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:

Interpretation of the specific is difficult. It is probable that she-/sha- may represent an ON word which has subsequently undergone palatalisation due to Gaelic influence (of Sheater 1664 RMS).

MacBain (1922, page 108) mentions a similar name Sheshader and comments that "the interpretation is not easy, for the prefix may be variously resolved."

D.B. Nicolson suggests that the source may be ON suýr: south (Horne 1907, page 141), but the earlier references give little support to this suggestion.

Final element

ON bóstadetr m.: see R21(S)
So leans : see R19(S)
So burn : see R4(S)

......
Derivation:
The specific could be
ON sjör (gen sjóvar) m.: the sea
(with reference to Loch Shurrery which is large by Caithness standards).
However, the generic appears to be
ON ærgi n.: a shieling (borrowed into Norse from
G áirigh : see R23(s))
and, in all other Caithness examples of names with ON ærgi as
generic, the specific is invariably a personal name.
It is, therefore, probable that in this instance also the specific is
ON Sióvarr/Savarr m.: a personal name (Lind 1915, page 1011)
So loch : see R5(s)
So ben : see R14(s)
Shurrery is described as "a tenant town of about 21 families"
(Macfarlane 1726), but the area has now been virtually abandoned,
with the exception of Shurrery Lodge which is used by shooting
parties.
**SKAIL SMALLHOLDINGS:** ND 06 NW: 025669

**LOCH OF SKAIL:** " : 018674

Local pronunciation: [skæl]

Early refs:
- Skaillye 1604 Retours
- Skail 1605 "
- Skalie 1644 "
- Skail 1612 RMS
- Skeill 1619 "
- Skell 1750 Roy
- Skail 1770 Sinclair (Freswick)
- Skail 1832 Thomson

**Derivation:**
This appears to be the only Caithness example of the ON toponym skái m., which is comparatively common in Orkney (Marwick 1952). The earliest sense of this word is: a hut, shed put up for temporary use, but the Orkney examples indicate that it refers to a much more permanent and important residence, and the same comment applies to the Caithness example.

The spelling *skail* which first appears in 1876 is probably erroneous because it does not reflect local pronunciation. Unfortunately it has been retained on the recent 6" OS map.

So loch : see R5(S)

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**STEMSTER SMALLHOLDINGS:** ND 06 NW: 041658

**STEMSTER BURN:** " : 032655

**STEMSTER HILL:** " : 034663

**TULLOCH OF STEMSTER BROCH:** " : 041655

Local pronunciation: [ˈstemster]

Early refs:
- Stamster 1529 RMS
- Stambuster 1557 Book of Assumptions, OPS
- Stambusteir " "
- Stambuster 1605 Retours
- Stambuster 1606 RMS
- Stamister 1619 "
- Stamester 1662 Blaeu
- Stempster 1726 Macfarlane
Derivation: Probably
ON *steinn* m.: see R20(S), with reference to a standing-stone or perhaps to the broch itself.
ON *hólstár* m.: see R21(S)
Cai *tulloch*: see R5(S)
The persistent *<stam-*-*>* in the orthography is puzzling but modern pronunciation is consistent with derivation from ON *steinn*.

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**Tìgh a' Bheannaich** : ND 05 NW: OL42577
**Creagan a' Bheannaich**: " : OL42578
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G *taigh* m. : a house
G *creagan* m. : a little rock
R.D. Beaton suggests
G *manach* (gen *manaich*) m.: a monk (Beaton 1909, page 331)
The development of G *manach* to G *beannach* could have been influenced by
G *beannachd* m.: a blessing, benediction
"At the croft of Tìgh a' Bheannaich is a low stony mound from which a number of large stones protrude through the turf. It is said to be the site of a graveyard (ie Creagan a' Bheannaich) and the name of the neighbouring croft suggests the site of a primitive oratory or church." (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 110.)

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TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ALLT A' BHACHLAIN: ND 05 NE: 076567
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
- G allt m.: see R1(S)
The derivation of a' bhachlain is very doubtful. Possibly
- G bachall m.
  1) a shepherd's crook
  2) a little ball or lump (with reference to a nearby hillock)
If G bachall is the source one would have to assume that the form
a' bhachlain incorporates either an irregular genitive inflection
or perhaps a diminutive.

LOCH A' MHUIILLINN: ND 05 NE: 078575
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: Innis a' Mhuilinn 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
- G allt m.: see R1(S)
- G loch f.: see R5(S)
- G tòrr m.: a hill, mound
- G innis f.: a pasture
- G muileann m.: a mill
The reference is to a water mill, now disused.

ALLT BEUL A' BHOThAIN: ND 05 SW: 003537
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
- G allt m.: see R1(S)
- G beul m.: a mouth (in front of)
- G bothan m.: a bothy, hut
There is no trace of a bothy or shieling here now, and no local
knowledge of it.
ALLT CLAIS COILLE : NC 96 SW: 936633 R4(T)
CLAIS COILLE : NC 96 SW: 937633 R4(T)
Local pronunciation: [klaʃ 'kɔi'l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G clais f. : see R4(S)
In Caithness clais is used to refer to a natural feature, although the stream usually resembles a man-made ditch in being shallow and narrow.
G coille f. : a wood
There is a peculiarity here in that Clais Coille appears to refer not to the stream but to the land beside it.

ALLT CRASGACH : ND 05 NW: 016560 R5(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G crasgach: lying across, branching
The Allt Crasgach joins the Allt Forsiesye (see R6(S)) at right angles.

ALLT LONIEVERK : ND 05 SW: 011533 R6(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
The meaning of Lonieverk is very doubtful. Perhaps
G lòn m. : a meadow
G marc (gen mairc) m. : a horse
G lòn a' mhairc

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ALLT NAN SAC : NC 95 SE: 968526
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G sac m. : a bag, sack

ALM T NAN SQUABAG : NC 95 SE: 984528
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G sguabag f.: a little besom, small sheaf of corn, smart breeze of wind

The most likely interpretation of this name is that there was, at one time, a small cultivated patch beside the burn where corn was habitually grown.

Sguabag also occurs in the phrase Tri Lìa Sguabag with reference to April 7th, 8th and 9th but it is difficult to see what application this could have to a moorland stream.

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T.).)

ALLT NA SPEIREIG : NC 95 NE: 973580
Local pronunciation: [ault na 'spireig]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G speireag f. : a sparrow-hawk
ALLT RUADH : ND 06 SW: 026617
ALLTAN RUADH : NC 95 SE: 974538

Local pronunciation: [ault 'ruv]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS

Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an
G ruadh : reddish, reddish-brown

Colour adjectives are very popular in Gaelic place-names. Ruadh particularly so in moorland areas, where it describes the colour imparted to the water by the peat.

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ALLT TORRIGAL : NC 96 SW: 946640
LONE TORRIGAL : " : 945630

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: Old an Torrigill 1690 Sinclair (Muckle)

Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G lón m. : see R6(T)

Torrigal is reminiscent of Gleann Thorcaill (see R98(T)) and is similarly difficult.
The initial element could represent
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
The 1690 reference suggests that the final element could be
ON gil n. : a deep narrow glen with a stream at the bottom.
This generic has been borrowed into Caithness dialect as gill. However, it has to be remembered that the 1690 reference was recorded in a heavily Norse influenced part of the county, where gill is a frequently occurring element, but this is not the case in Reay Parish where the name occurs.
An alternative explanation is that this name, like Gleann Thorcaill could derive from the Gaelic personal name Torcull.
ALLTAN NODHA MÔR : NC 95 NE: 960592
ALLTAN NODHA BEAG : " : 958594

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an
G nodha : meaning obscure
G môr : see R11(S)
G beag : see R7(S)

BAD NAM BO : NC 95 SE: 991520
ALLT BAD NAM BO : " : 994514
MEIR NAM BO : " : 978545

Local pronunciation: [bad nam 'bo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G bad m. : 1) a piece, portion or small area
2) a thicket, clump of trees
G bó f. : a cow

G allt m. : see R1(S)
G meur m. : a branch of a river

It is possible that this name simply describes an area where cows grazed, but a local informant has argued persuasively that the name belongs to a cluster of names, all of which suggest cattle-droving activities in the area (cf R39(T), R119(T) and R121(T)).
Local pronunciation: In the first name Beinn is invariably omitted and Onoc Freiceadain is always referred to as The Sithean.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
- Beinn: see R14(T)
- Onoc: see R41(S)
- Freiceadain: a guard, watch
- Sithean: a fairy hillock

Beinn Freiceadain is the site of an Iron Age hill-fort and of a Neolithic/Bronze Age cairn. (Omand 1972, page 112/117.) It has obviously always been recognised as an important defensive site.

Beinn Nam Bad Beag:
- ND 05 SW: 012546
- NC 95 NE: 998552

Local pronunciation: [l4tl bən ə 'bad]

Early refs: Beinn nam Bad Eheag 1877 6" OS
- Binbad 1662 Blaeu
- Bin-na-mbud 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:
- Beinn: see R14(T)
- Bad: see R13(T)
- Beag: see R7(S)
- Mòr: see R11(S)

The modern versions containing little and big are direct translations of the original Gaelic beag and mòr.

Beinn Ràtha:
- NC 96 SE: 954613
- NC 95 NW: 949527
Local pronunciation:

\[\text{Beinn Ràtha} \quad : \quad ['b\text{\textsc{n}}\text{\textsc{e}} \text{\textsc{g}} \quad \text{b\textsc{n} \textsc{r}}] \]

\[\text{Beinn Ràtha Bheag} \quad : \quad ['l\text{\textsc{e}}\text{\textsc{t}}\text{\textsc{l}} \quad \text{b\textsc{n} \textsc{r}}] \]

Early refs: Bin Raw 1726 Macfarlane
Ben Ra 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

G beinn f.: see R1\textsc{4}(T)
G ràth m.: see R5\textsc{7}(S) and R6\textsc{3}(S)
G beag : see R7(S)
G allt m.: see R1(S)
G meur m.: see R13(T)

For further comments on this name see R6\textsc{3}(S).

BEINN RUADH

NC 96 SW: 927633

CNOCAN RUADH

NC 96 SE: 929628

Local pronunciation: [b\textsc{n} 'r\textsc{s}]

Early refs: Bin Roy 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:

G beinn f.: see R1\textsc{4}(S)
G cnoc m.: see R4\textsc{1}(S) + dimin -an
G ruadh : see R10(T)

BEUL AN LOCHAIN

NC 96 SE: 995639

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6\textsc{a} OS

Derivation:

G beul m.: a mouth, opening
G loch f.: see R5(S) + dimin -an

This name refers to what would once have been a marshy area between the Achaveilan Burn (see R4(S)) and the Shebster Burn (see R6\textsc{5}(S)), but the land has now been improved by drainage.
BLÀR AN T-SUIDHE : ND 05 NW: 045593
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blàr n. : see R30(S)
G suidhe m.: a seat, level shelf on a hill-side
In this case the description is of a hard ridge in surrounding boggy ground.

BLÀR DEARG : ND 05 SW: 042538
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blàr n. : see R30(S)
G dearg : vivid red, probably describing the colour of the heather.

BLÀR GEAL : ND 05 NW: 015590
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blàr n. : see R30(S)
G geal : white
In Caithness place-names the colours dearg and geal tend to be used to distinguish between heather-covered moors and grass-covered moors respectively.

BLÀR MÁIRI : ND 05 SW: 019544
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blàr n. : see R30(S)
G Mairi : Mary
The reference is to the nearby St Mary's Chapel (see R40(S)).
BORAG KNOWE  :  NC 96 SE:  974629
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:  The initial element may be
G borr m.: a knob, lumpy protuberance + dimin -ag
with tautologous Scots knowe a knoll added subsequently.
Alternatively, the initial element may be Caithness
dialect:
boorag  : a peat cut out of shallow moss, with its lower half
moss, and its upper part growing heather, used as
backing to a peat fire.

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BRAIGH FÉITH HEMIGAL:  ND 05 SW:  028533
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
G braígh m.: the upper part of any place
G féith f.: rents in moor- or bog-land made by water
Hemigal : meaning obscure without early references and
modern pronunciation

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BRUACH BHRÉAC  :  NC 96 SE:  974623
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
G bruach f.: a bank, brim
G bhréac : see R33(S)

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CAMP ROCK  :  NC 96 NW:  937661
Local pronunciation:  [kamp rɔk]
It being an insignificant topographical feature there are no earlier references to this rock, but locals think the name is old, in spite of its deceptively modern appearance.

**Derivation:** Possibly

**ON kambr m.:** a crest, with reference to the ridge formed by Cnoc na Moine (see R54(T))

The name has been further anglicised in modern pronunciation by the addition of the definite article.

**CÂRN LLATH** : ND 05 NW: 038583

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

**Early refs:** 1876 6° OS

**Derivation:**

G cârn m.: a heap of stones

G liath : grey-coloured

The word cârn does not necessarily indicate a heap of stones; it can refer to the conical shape of the hill to which it is applied, as in this instance.

G cärn has been borrowed into Scots as cairn which is a very common place-name element throughout Scotland indicating a pile of stones, especially one serving as a boundary or land-mark, or marking a grave.

**CEANN MÔR** : NO 96 SW: 947609

Local pronunciation: [kjaun 'môr]

**Early refs:** 1876 6° OS

**Derivation:**

G ceann m.: see R56(S)

G mór : see R11(S)
CLAIS AN EICH : ND 05 NW: 046583
CNOC AN EICH : NC 95 NE: 985576
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(S)
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G each (gen eich) m.: a horse

CLAIS AN FHEARCHAIR: ND 06 SW: 023619
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(T)
G Fearchar (gen Fearchair): Farquhar

CLAIS AN TUIRC:
CLACH CLAIS AN TUIRC: " : 992632
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(S)
G clach f.: a rock, stone
G torc m.: a hog, boar

CLAIS DHUBH : ND 05 NE: 066560
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(S)
G dubh : see R23(S)
CLAIS NA H-Parbaige: NO 95 NE: 998558
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6º OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(s)
G earbag f.: a young or little roe

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CLAIS NÁN CAORACH : ND 05 NE: 052556
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6º OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(s)
G caora (gen pl caorach) f.: a sheep

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CLAIS NÁN GAIRBBEAL: ND 05 NW: 049585
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6º OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(s)
G gairbheal m.: a free-stone quarry
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

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CLAPERON : NO 96 SE: 974627
Local pronunciation: [kləpən]
Derivation: Possibly
G clàbar m.: mire, mud, clay + dimin -on

———
CLETT, WESTER : NC 96 NW: 919655
EASTER CLETT : " : 927656
MIDDLE CLETT : " : 922656

Local pronunciation: [klat]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett : see R20(S)

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CNOC ALLTAN CAORUINN: NC 94 NE: 997498

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an
G caorunn m.: a mountain ash or rowan tree

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CNOC AN ARBHAI\N : ND 05 NE: 056569
Local pronunciation: [kar\nk \n 'jaru]
Early refs: Cnoc an Aireimh 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G arbh\n m. : corn
G aireim\n f.: number, quantity

Without other earlier references it is impossible to say which of
the two forms listed above is the more probable.
The hill-name is pronounced locally [kar\nk \n 'jaru] which favours
the 1876 version. It is tempting to link this to the series of
names in the vicinity which appear to refer to droving activities
and to suggest that it is a spot where cattle were counted, but
there is no firm evidence for this suggestion.

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**CNOO AN EICH**

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
- G cnoc m.: see R141(S)
- G each (gen eich) m.: a horse

**CNOO AN EIIHiCH**

Local pronunciation: [krak n ə 'fιθμ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
- G cnoc m.: see R141(S)
- G allt m.: see R1(S)
- G fitheach (gen fitheich) m.: a raven

**CNOO AN FHRAOICH**

Local pronunciation: [krak n ə 'frιθ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
- G cnoc m.: see R141(S)
- G allt m.: see R1(S)
- G meur m.: see R13(T)
- G fraoch m.: heather

The written form an fhraoich is grammatically accurate but lenition is no longer preserved in pronunciation.

**CNOO AN RATHA**

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:

G cnoc m. : see R41(S)

G ràth m. : see R57(S) and R63(S)

(Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 96)

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CNOC AN RUIGHEIN DUTRHS: ND 06 SW: 005603
Local pronunciation : name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G ruighean m.: a wool-roll ready to spin
G dubb : see R23(S)
Possibly a reference to pieces of wool caught in the heather. Another possibility is:
G riche/ruiche m.
: a hill-slope, shieling + dimin -an, although
G àiridh f. : a shieling
is more common in this area.

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CNOC AN T-SAMHRAIDH: NC 96 SE: 977620
Local pronunciation: ['sam̪ɾəm̪ən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G samhradh m.: summer
This refers to the summer flitting to the shielings. The word has been anglicised in the modern pronunciation.
CNOC GLAS : NC 96 NW: 928656
Local pronunciation: [nD 'glas]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G glas: grey
The initial word cnoc has been greatly reduced from its original form in modern pronunciation.


CNOC LIACHAIR : ND 05 NW: 011583
CLAIS LIACHAIR : " : 010590
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: Cnoc 'Luachair 1876 6" OS
Clais 'Luachair " "
The apostrophe before 'Luachair is presumably a gesture towards the missing definite article.
Derivation:
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G luachair f.: a common rush
G clais f.: see R41(S)


CNOC MAOL DONN : NC 95 NE: 979558
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G maol: bare
G donn: brown coloured
CNOC NA BANTRATCH: NC 96 SE: 979645
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G bantrach f.: a widow

CNOC NA CLAISE BRICE: NC 95 NE: 999589
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G claide f.: see R41(S)
G breac: see R33(S)

CNOC NA GAOITH: ND 06 SW: 003619
BLÂR CNOC NA GAOITH: " : 004616
Local pronunciation: [kran na g'gi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m.: see R41(S)
G blâr m.: see R30(S)
G gaoth (gen gaoithe)f.: wind
CNOC NA H-IMRICHE : NC 95 SE: 988542
ALLT NA H-IMRICHE : " : 983535
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G imrich f.: a flitting, removal
This probably refers to the summer flitting to the shielings which were plentiful in this area.

CNOC NA H-USEIG : NC 96 NE: 995677
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Cnoc na h-Uiseig 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G uiseag (gen uiseig) f.
: a lark

CNOC NA MOINE : NC 96 NW: 940652
ALLT CNOC NA MOINE : " : 932654
GEOIDH NA MOINE : " : 941657
LOCH NA MOINE : " : 937656
Local pronunciation: [krɔk ne 'mɔn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G moine f.: a moss, moor
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G gedh'/gedha m.
: see ON giá below
G loch f. : see R5(S)
ON giá f.: an inlet of the sea with steep cliffs on either side, a ravine. This has been borrowed into Gaelic as
gèrídhà and into the Caithness, Orkney and Shetland dialects as gè. It is a very common place-name element throughout Caithness.

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CNOC NA TOBAIREACH : NC 96 SW : 934614
Local pronunciation: [kroc on 'tubrex]
Early refs: Cnoc Tobair 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G tobar (gen. sing. tobair; gen. pl. tobraichean, tobraiche) m. : a spring
The form tobaireach could represent either gen. pl. tobraiche or, more probably, nom. tobar + dimin -ach.

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CNOC PREAS A' MHADAILH : NC 94 NE : 985488
ALLT PREAS A' MHADAILH: " : 981497
Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants
Early refs: Presswaddie 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G preas m. : a thicket
G madadh m. : a dog, fox, wolf — in this instance probably a fox
G allt m. : see R1(S)

......

CNOC SAOTHAIR AN ATHAICH : ND 06 NW : 001611
GLEANN SAOTHAIR AN ATHAICH: " : 003605
Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G saothair f. : labour, toil
G athach m. : a giant
G gleann m. : a valley, opening between two heights

......
Local legend attributes the depth of the glen to the efforts of a giant.

......

**CNOCAN DUBH** : NC 96 SW: 922644

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G **cnoc** m.: see R41(S) + dimin -an
G **dubh** : see R23(S)

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**CNOCAN NANN FUN** : NC 96 SE: 983614

**CNOCAN DUBH NANN FUN** : NC 96 SE: 983614

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G **cnoc** m.: see R41(S) + dimin -an
G **eun** (pl **éin**) m.: a bird
G **dubh** : see R23(S)

(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T))

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**COIRE BUIDHE** : ND 05 NE: 054563

**ALLT A' CHOIRE RHUDHE** : ND 05 SW: 004562

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

G **coire** m.: a circular hollow
G **buidhe** : yellow
G **allt** m.: see R1(S)

The lenition which occurs in the second name above is an interesting example of the grammatical inaccuracies which occur in Caithness Gaelic. **Coire** is masculine and, therefore, ought not to cause
lenition in the following adjective, but when the article is present, causing lenition in the noun, that lenition is transferred incorrectly to the adjective as well.

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CRAOIBHÉ, BLÁR NA : ND 06 SE: 032623
CRAOIBHÉ, CUIL NA : " : 030625
CRAOIBHÉ, TORR NA : " : 033603
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G blár m.: see R30(S)
G craobh f.: a tree, bush
G cùil f.: a corner
G tórr m.: see R2(T)

......

CREAGAN LOISGTE : NC 96 SW: 946647
Local pronunciation: [kɾeɡan 'loin]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an
G loisgte (past part. of loisg) : burnt, scorched
The reference seems to be to the hillside rather than to an individual rock, and probably indicates that the grass is regularly burned in order to encourage new growth.
Modern pronunciation suggests the genitive form of G léin (gen léin) m.: a meadow, but it is an uneasy partner for G creagan, although, as noted above, the reference seems to be to the whole hillside.

......
CREAGAN REAMHAR : NC 96 SE: 987617
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: R46(S) + dimin -an
G reamhar : fat, big, of great circumference

CREAGAN WELL : NC 96 SE: 977641
CRAIGAN WELL : ND 06 NW: 029697
Local pronunciation: [kreg 'kragan we1]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an
borrowed into Scots as creagan/craigan
Both names refer to springs in rocky places and both now have
the English definite article prefixed to the name in pronunciation.

CREAG BHEAG : NC 96 SE: 987629
LITTLE ROCK : " : 977636
Local pronunciation: [kreg 'beag] ['lIte] rok]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S)
G beag : see R7(S)
This is the only example of a Gaelic name and its English translation
occurring side by side, as descriptions of adjacent rocks. Locals
have often translated Gaelic place-names into English but in all
other cases the English translation replaces the Gaelic name whereas
in this case both names are retained.
CREAG BHERAC MHOR : ND 06 NW: 010661
CREAG BHERAC BHEAG : " : 007661
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S)
G breac : see R33(S)
G mor : see R11(S)
G beag : see R7(S)

CREAG LEATHAN : NC 96 SE: 983632
Local pronunciation: [kreg 'leag]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S)
G leathann: broad

CREAG LIATH : NC 96 SE: 996629
CREGANAN LIATH : " : 992629
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an
G liath : see R27(T)

CREAG MHOR : NC 96 SE: 992626
Local pronunciation: [kreg 'mor]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S)
G mor : see R11(S)
CREAG NAN UAN : ND 05 NE: 072591
CREAGAN NAN UAN : ND 05 NW: 025563

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G creag f.: see R46(S) + dimin -an
G uan (pl uain) m. : a lamb
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T))

CROCHAN GEAL : NC 96 SE: 979602
MEUR A' CHROCAIN GHAIL: " : 978602

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S) + dimin -an
This name appears to be the only example in which the spelling reflects the typical Caithness pronunciation of cnoc [knɔk]
G meur m. : see R13(T)
G geal (gen geile) : see R21(T)

DRUIM CALLTUINNEACH: ND 05 NW: 050562

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G druim m. : a ridge of a hill
G calltuinn m. : a hazel tree + adjectival ending -each
DRUM HOLLISTAN : NO 96 SW: 926640 R73(T)
DRUMHOLLISTAN MOSS : " : 928647
LOCH HOLLISTAN : " : 922646
Local pronunciation: [dr/øm 'holistən]
Early refs: Drumhellesten 1662 Blaeu
Drim-Hollistill 1726 Macfarlane
Drum-Hellister 1807 Arrowsmith
Drumhellesten 1745 Revised Mercator
Drumalestane 1855 O&PS
Drumhallesdell " "
Derivation:
G druim m.: see R72(T)
ON heilagr : see R54(S) or
ON hella f.: a flat stretch of rock
(ON hellu-steinn: a flat stone, slab)
ON steinn m. : see R20(S)
Sc mossa : see R7(S)
Sc loch : see R5(S)

This name has obviously been influenced in its development by the neighbouring name Strath Halladale. Donald Omand comments that "The 'Split Stone' is sometimes taken as the stone in question but there is nothing to support this, apart from the fact that the split stone was important enough to serve as the boundary mark between Caithness and Strathnaver." (Omand 1972, page 226).

Loch Hollistan burst its banks early this century and the water cascaded into the neighbouring geo. It is now known as The Dry Loch.

......

DRUM NA CEUD : ND 06 NW: 003662 R74(T)
Local pronunciation: known to my informants as 'Field of the Hundred'
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G druim m.: see R72(T)
G ceud : hundred
Tradition says that one hundred men were buried on this ridge after the fierce battle between the Mackays of Sutherland and the Caithness
men in 1437, known as Ruaig Shamnaid or The Chase of Sandside (Clan Gunn papers: courtesy of H. Henderson). This is also mentioned in OPS and dated c1426.

Tradition may have exaggerated the number but it is possible that there is some truth in this story, although these traditional tales have to be treated with great caution.

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DUBH-ALLTAN Mòr : ND 05 SW: 009525  R75(T)
DUBH-ALLTAN CAOL : " : 005532

Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G dubh : see R23(S)
G allt m. : see R1(S) + dimin -an
G mòr : see R11(S)
G caol : slender, narrow

......

PÉITH AN IMF : ND 05 NE: 073561.  R76(T)

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G im m. : butter

The name probably arises from the practice of placing salted butter in a barrel and burying it in a bog which helped to keep it cool in the days before refrigeration and, no doubt, was thought to enhance its flavour.

There is an improbable story which says that a horse carrying kegs of butter took fright here and the kegs fell off and were lost in the bog.

......
FÉITH BHEAC : ND 05 NW: 016593
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G breac : see R33(S)

FÉITH BHUIDHE : ND 05 NE: 056576
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G buidhe : see R60(T)

FÉITH GAMHNA : ND 05 NW: 012572
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G gamhainn (pl gamhna) m.
: stirk, steer; yearling deer

FÉITH RUADH : ND 05 NW: 028558
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G féith f.: see R24(T)
G ruadh : see R10(T)
FRESGOE : NO 96 NE: 957661
Local pronunciation: ['frɛzɡo]
Early refs: Frisk 1543 RSS
Fresko 1750 Roy

Derivation:
The specific is difficult. Possibly
ON fyrsa : to gush, stream in torrents (with metathesis of <r>)
The coastal situation suggests that the generic is
Cai geo : see R54(T)
although Sandside Harbour has now been built where Fresgoe was.
Earlier spellings are of little assistance in determining the
nature of the generic.
The spelling <goe> is used on the 6" OS 1876 map wherever this
particular generic occurs, either on the coast or inland. In more
recent OS maps, however, all inland examples are spelt <goe>,
whereas coastal examples are spelt <geo>. This may have been an
attempt at mirroring local pronunciation which, for the coastal
names, is almost invariably [gjo], whereas inland names vary between
[go] and [gjo]. The fact that Fresgoe no longer describes a geo
but a piece of ground close to the coast, may have led to its
inclusion in the inland category of names; the pronunciation being
['frɛzɡo]. Alternatively, the pronunciation could indicate that the
final element should be otherwise derived.

*****

GEO BUILA : ND 07 SW: 024703
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
In examples like the above, which display Gaelic word-order, it is
probably the Gaelic geòdha which is being used. The spelling has
been standardised and only some examples show the Gaelic orthography.
buila : as commented above, the word order in the compound
suggests Gaelic origin. Perhaps
G buille f.: a blow, knock
with reference to the pounding of the waves.

*****
GEO CROICHE
Local pronunciation: now known as [ə 'selets]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
G croiche f.: gallows, gibbet
This seems a most improbable description of a geo but without modern pronunciation it is impossible to suggest an alternative.
The area is now referred to as The Slates, which is a commonly occurring appellative in Caithness in the form def art + slates/sclaites (<ON sláttr: plain, flat, smooth).

GEO CUINGE
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
G cumhang (compar cuinge) : narrow

GEO, EDWARD'S
Local pronunciation: ['nɛd səu]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
According to one local informant, Edward Innes of Borlum fell to his death here some time in the second half of the 18th century. Another local informant describes the man as Edward Campbell who fell over the cliffs at the same spot but survived. In the modern version of the name Néd is substituted for Edward.
**GEO, GIE-UISG** : ND 06 NW: 009694  
Local pronunciation: ['gais gjo]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
The first element of *Gie-uisg* is puzzling. The second element appears to be  
G *uisge* m.: fresh water  
and it seems likely that *Gie* represents  
G *geòdh* m.: see R54(T)  
and that *Cai* *geo* was tagged on at a subsequent date, once the original name became obscure. The contracted version which appears in modern pronunciation is of no assistance in determining the source. There is a stream draining into this *geo* which would support the above interpretation.  

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**GEO, GREENY** : ND 06 NW: 005692  
Local pronunciation: ['grine gjo]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
*greeny* : probably refers to the grass-covered sides  
*Cai geo* : see R54(T)  

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**GEO, HING** : ND 06 NW: 018698  
Local pronunciation: ['he ij gjo]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
*Sco* *hing* : a downward inclination, slope, here used attributively  
*Cai geo* : see R54(T)  
The geo has steep, but not overhanging sides.
GEO, OIGIN'S  :  NC 96 NE:  996683  R89(T)
Local pronunciation:  ['Dig-enz gjo]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
There are two local stories relating to this geo. One tells of a
man named Henderson, nicknamed
G Oigean m.: lad,
who distilled whisky and stored his illicit goods in a cave here.
The other suggests that Oigean was a sheep-stealer named Sutherland
who hid in the geo to avoid retribution but, as my informant pointed
out, there is little shelter in the geo for hiding either sheep-
stealer or illicit whisky and Sutherland was caught and deported.
Traditional tales such as the above are often created to explain an
already existing place-name. Folk etymologies would make a
fascinating separate study.
Cai geo  :  R54(T)

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GEO, SANDY  :  ND 07 SW:  027702  R90(T)
Local pronunciation:  ['sandi gjo]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
sandy  :  sand-covered bottom
Cai geo  :  see R54(T)

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GEO, SCARBACH  :  NC 96 NE:  981671  R91(T)
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
scarbach  :  the word order in this compound is Norse but the
specific appears to be a variant of
G sgarbhach: abounding in cormorants
Cai geo  :  see R54(T)

......
GEO, WARE
Local pronunciation: ['wer gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So ware: seaweed
Cai geo: see R54(T)
Seaweed was carted from this geo to fertilise all the fields in the neighbouring district.

GEODH' EISGIADH
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'isg gjo]
Early refs: Geòdh Uisgidh 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G geòdha m.: see R54(T)
The 1876 uisgidh indicates
G uisgidh m. pl.: waters
but the modern form eisgiadh contradicts this. Perhaps
G iasgaidh (gen of iasgadh m. ) > easgaidh
: fishing, angling

GEODH' GRÀDA
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'grant]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G geòdha m.: see R54(T)
G gràda, more commonly grànda/grannda
: ugly, grim
It is often known today as Pigeon Geo from the rock pigeons which nest there.

GEODH' SHEUMAIS
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'hemi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
There is no local story relating to this geo or to the eponymous James.

**GOES, WHITE**

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: white could refer to birds nesting here, to the spray from the sea etc.

Cai geo: see R54(T)

(for Cai geo → goe see R81(T))

**GLAODH ODHAR**

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: glaodh very difficult without early references. Possibly a variant of G glec f.: hollow valley, defile

G odhar: dun-coloured

**GLEANN CHORCALL**

ALIT GLEANN CHORCAL: 1876 6" OS

G gleann m.: see R57(T)

G allt m.: see R1(S)
Interpretation of the specific is very difficult. Earlier spellings suggest that it may represent the Gaelic personal name Torcull.

GLEANN DUBH : NC 95 NE: 992574
GLENDU BURN : " : 992575
Local pronunciation: [glen 'du]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G gleann m.: see R57(T)
G dubh : see R23(S)
Glendu is an anglicisation of the above.

GLEN URIAN:
Local pronunciation: [glen 'urlan]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G gleam m.: see R57(T)
G urlair, -air, -an m.
: low place in the hills, (floor)
According to my informants this glen was used as a route for driving cattle to the markets further south.

GLING GLANG:
Local pronunciation: ['glæŋ 'glæŋ 'glæŋ ']
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name refers to a narrow inlet of the sea and is onomatopoeic, suggesting the sound of the waves breaking. My informant added an extra element to the name, and described the sound of the waves very poetically as a "slopping musical sound".
GLUPEIN NA DROCHAIDE:  ND 06 NW:  003688  
Local pronunciation:  now known as [ʒə grn 'bru̯g']  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:

Glupein:  Ian Fraser recorded An Gluta The Gullet in Eilean nan Rôn (Scottish Studies No22, p87) for a narrow, steep-sided gully or gullet separating two islands, and, by analogy, the above name may represent the "gulping" sound of the sea:

An Gluta < gullet  
Glupein < gulp(ing)

G drochaid f.:  a bridge
The name describes a geo spanned by a natural grass-covered bridge of rock which has given rise to the modern description The Green Brig.  
So brig:  a bridge

GREEN TULLOCHS:  ND 06 NW:  013696  
Local pronunciation:  either [grin 'tələks]  
or [ʒə 'tələks]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:
Cai tulloch:  see R5(S)

JOCK'S HILLOCK:  NO 95 NE:  967596  
Local pronunciation:  ['dʒɔks hələk]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  Self-explanatory; a recent name
There seems to be no local knowledge of Jock as a person. My local informant thought the reference was probably to a pony rather than to a person.
KEOLTAG WELL : NO 96 SE: 972644
LITTLE KEOLTAG : " : 977646
BIG KEOLTAG : " : 974647
Local pronunciation: ['kjɔltæg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: obscure

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KNOCK STANGER : NO 96 NE: 958653
Local pronunciation: ['krɔk 'stæŋgər]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G ence m. : see RL1(S)
stanger : Possibly
G s'tang m.: a pool, ditch - but this does not account for the final 

The name describes a cairn above a pool at the mouth of the Sandside Burn and the strong Norse influence in the area could suggest that the second element might originally have been
ON steinn (pl steinar) m.
: a stone
which has subsequently been Gaelicised and then Anglicised. ON Steinar occurs in local names, and as a personal name Steinarr.

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LADY'S WELL : NO 96 NE: 952655
Local pronunciation: ['lɛdis wel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A local informant has suggested that the Lady is likely to have been Mary Innes of Sandside, known locally as Lady Sandside although she was untitled. She lived during the 18th century and is buried in Reay Church.
LAMBSDALE LEANS : ND 05 SW: 018546
Local pronunciation: [lamzdale 'linz]
Early refs: Lambsdale 1784 Sinclair (Freswick)
           Lambsdale 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)
           Lambsdale 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
Lambsdale : probably a comparatively recent name containing English dale
So leans : see R19(S)

LATHACH AN LÌN : NC 96 SE: 997648
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lathach f.: a mire, swampy place
G lìon (gen lìn) m. : flax

LEATHAD BREAC : NC 96 SE: 982605
BREAC-LEATHAD : " : 972620
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G leathad m.: a slope
G breac : see R33(S)

LEATHAD MÒR : ND 05 NW: 023558
Local pronunciation: [lad'mór]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G leathad m.: see R110(T)
G mòr : see R11(S)
LEATHAD NA HOLLAG : NC 96 SW: 942616
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G leathad m.: see R110(T)
hollag : difficult without earlier spellings
Ian Fraser suggests that it may represent
G oileag f. : a flat stone, larger than a pebble, for throwing at horses, cattle etc.
The word is apparently still used in Lewis.

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LOCH CALUIM : ND 05 SW: 020520
Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'kalam]
Early refs: Loch Kelem 1807 Arrowsmith
           Loch Calam 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
G loch f. : see R5(S)
G Calum : Malcolm

......

LOCH GARBH : NC 96 SW: 941605
Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'garo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G loch f. : see R5(S)
G garbh : rough, stormy

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LOCH NÁN CLACHAN GEALA : ND 05 NW: 003585 R115(T)
UTIDH LOCH NÁN CLACHAN GEALA : " : 002581
LOCHAN DUBH NÁN CLACHAN GEALA : NC 95 NE: 998563
LOCH NÁN CIACH GEALA : " : 958574
AILT LOCH NÁN CIACH GEALA : " : 961588
CLACHGEAL HILL : " : 958576

Local pronunciation : [lɔx nəkləʃ 'gjal]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G loch f. : see R5(S)
G clach f.: see R31(T) + dimin -an
G geal : see R21(T)
G ñichead f.: a ford, slow running water between two lochs. In this case between the Loch and the Achvarasdal Burn. (see R22(S))
G ñabh : see R23(S)
G allt m.: see R1(S)

Modern pronunciation of this name has obviously been influenced by names containing G clais f.: [klaʃ].

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LOCH SAORACH : ND 06 SW: 014605 R116(T)
Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'səɾəɾəɾ]
Early refs: Loch na Seirach 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
G loch f. : see R5(S)
Possibly
G saothrach m. : labour (cf R57(T))

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LOCH SCYE : ND 05 NW: 006554
LITTLE LOCH SCYE : " : 012553
DRUM LOCH SCYE : " : 013556
Local pronunciation: [lɔx lai]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
G druim m.: see R72 (T)  
G loch f.: see R5(S)  
Possibly  
ON sjär m.: the sea (applied to the large inland loch)  
(see R6(S))

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LOCH THORMAID : ND 06 SW: 010604  
Local pronunciation: [lɔx ta:məd]  
Early refs: Loch Tormaid 1831 Thomson  
Derivation:  
G loch f.: see R5(S)  
G Tormaid : Norman  
The 6" map version Thormaid contains lenition but this is not present in modern pronunciation.

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LOCH TORR NA Cearable: NC 95 SE: 970510  
Local pronunciation : [lɔx τɔr nə 'kjadəx]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
G tɔrr m. : see R2(T)  
G cearable f.: a smithy, forge  
This name belongs to a small group of names in the vicinity which suggests the presence of cattle and drovers. The name Bad nam Bo (see R13(T)) for instance, is very close by. It is possible that this was a separate gathering place for cattle which were to be driven south, and which, therefore, required to be shod, or it may have been a resting place en route to the Georgemas Market which was a well-known tryst, connected with the drove road south to Muir of Ord. Some
of the trysts were in existence in the first half of the 18th century, but the Tryst at Muir of Ord was established about 1820. (A.R.B. Haldane 1952, page 406)

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**LOCH TUIM GHLAIS** : NC 95 SE: 978525
**UIR LOCH TUIM GHLAIS**: " : 974517
Local pronunciation: [ˈlɔx tum ˈɡlas]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

**Derivation:**
G **loch** f.: see R5(S)
G **tom** (gen tuim) m.
: a round hillock
G **glas** : see Rh6(T)
uiir appears to be a misrepresentation of
G **bidh** f.: see R115(T)
because it describes slow running water between two lochs.

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**LOCHAIN A' CHLÉIRICH**: NC 95 NE: 966551

Local pronunciation: [ˈlɔx na ˈklɛrɪx]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

**Derivation:**
G **lochan** m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G **cléireach** m.
: clerk, clergyman

A local informant suggested that this name was also connected with cattle-droving activities in the area and that the clerk was present for the purpose of tallying the cattle (cf R120(T)). Alternatively, it may refer to a clergyman who was for some reason associated with the loch, perhaps as a fisherman.
LOCHAN A' CHLINNE : NC 95 NE: 963566
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G gleann m.: see R57(T)

LOCHAN DUBH CÚL NA BEINNE: NC 95 SE: 986544
SITHEAN CÚL NA BEINNE : " : 995547
Local pronunciation: [lochən 'du cul na be-an] known to the gamekeeper as The Black Loch
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G dubh : see R23(S)
G cūl m. : back of anything
G beinn f. : see R14(S)
G sithean m.: see R14(T)

LOCHAN DUBH : ND 05 NW: 048578
Local pronunciation: [lochən 'dub] Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G dubh : see R23(S)

LOCHAN EALACH : ND 06 SW: 042602
LOCHAN EALACH BEAG : ND 94 NE: 966196
ALLT LOCHAIN EALACH BHIgh: NC 95 SE: 966504
Local pronunciation: [lochən 'elək] Early refs: 1876 6" OS

R122(T)
R123(T)
R124(T)
R125(T)
Derivation:
G lochan m.: see R5(S) + dimin -an
G ealach: abounding in swans
G beag (gen bhig)
    : see R7(S)
G allt m.: see R1(S)

LÓN BREAC : ND 05 NW: 004570
Local pronunciation: [lòn 'brika]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lón m.: see R6(T)
G breac : see R33(S)

LORG AN PHAMHAIR : ND 05 NE: 058593
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G long f.: a footprint, print
G famhair m.: a giant, champion
This is described as the hollowed out impression of a human left foot, situated on the west end of the summit of the hill of Port-
an-eilein. (Inventory of Monuments 19119 page 44) The local legend attributes it to a giant but such features were usually associated with the installation in office of a local chief. (Omand 1972, page 227)

MEALL BUIDHE : ND 05 NW: 010576
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G meall m.: a hill, mound
G buidhe : see R60(T)
NEOM GULL : NC 95 SE: 967512
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G meur (pl meur) m.: see R13(T)
G geal : see R21(T)

MEUR A' CHROCAIN CHIL: NC 95 NE: 980593
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
G onoc m.: see R41(S) + dimin -an
G geal (gen gil)
: see R21(T)

MEUR AN PHUARDIN CHIL: NC 96 SE: 975605
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
G fuaran, m.: a wellspring
G geal see R21(T)

MEUR AN PHUARDIN CHIL: NC 96 SE: 977608
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
G fuaran m.: a well, spring
G geal : see R21(T)
MEUR GADACH : NC 95 NE; 976599  R133(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
Possibly
G gad m.: withe, twisted twig + dimin -ach
Withes of birch or osier were used for halters and all the fastenings
of horse-harnesses.

MEUR LIATH : NC 95 NE; 994594  R134(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
G liath: see R27(T)

MEUR NAM BÓ : NC 95 NE; 981594  R135(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
G bó f.: see R13(T)
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

MEUR RUAIRIDH : NC 95 SE; 967594  R136(T)
Local pronunciation: [meur 'roir]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G meur m.: see R13(T)
G Ruairidh: Roderick
This name is sometimes facetiously applied to the
fox, which seems appropriate in this instance.

On the other hand, locals associate the stream with a famous fisherman
Ruairidh Fyfe, but the size of the stream does not measure up to
the size of his fame.
**MID HILL** : NC 95 NE: 977577
Local pronunciation: ['mɪd 'hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation: self-explanatory

**MONADH NAN CÂRN** : ND 05 NW: 047586
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Monocairn 1628 Sinclair (Thurso)
Derivation:
G monadh m.: mountain, moor
G cân m.: see R27(T)
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

**MULLACH UIDH MHURCHAIT** : ND 05 NE: 061554
**ALLTAN MOINE-MHURCHAIT** : ND 05 NW: 034582
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G mullach m.: a hill, summit
G uidh f.: a way, journey
G Murcadh: Murdoch
G allt m.: see R1(S) + dimin -an
G moine f.: a moss, moor

**MULTADH BHEAG** : ND 05 NW: 033570
**MULTADH MHÒR** : " : 032565
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: Meall Dubh Beag 1876 6th OS
Meall Dubh Mòr " "
Derivation: Probably as for the 1876 forms
G meall m.: see R128(T)
G dubh : see R23(S)
G beag : see R7(S)
G mòr : see R11(S)
POLL ACHAIR : ND 05 NE: 057562
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G poll m.: a hole, mire, bog
The specific appears to be
G achar (gen achar) m.
: distance
but this meaning does not fit the context. A more likely source is
G coire m.: see R60(T)
preceded by the definite article which in the 6" OS version has been
erroneously combined with the noun.
G poll a' choire

RED POINT : NG 96 NW: 934659
Local pronunciation: ['red 'pOUNT]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: a headland of red sandstone

RUBHA GAR : ND 05 NE: 069598
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
G rudha m.: a promontory, point of land
G gèarr: short
The name describes a rounded area of moorland jutting out into
Loch Calder.
RUIGH NAN CREAG : NO 95 NE: 998553
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G rìche m.: see R14(T)
G creag f.: see R16(S)
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

SCARF ROCKS : NO 96 NE: 958662
Local pronunciation: [ˈskærf ˈraʊks]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
ON skarfr m.: the green cormorant
This has been borrowed into Gaelic as sgarbh m. and into Caithness dialect as scarf. It is an extremely common place-name element in Caithness.

SITHEAN BUIDHE : ND 05 NE: 062575
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G sithean m.: see R14(T)
G buidhe : see R60(T)

SITHEAN IDUBH : ND 05 NW: 048583
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
G sithean m.: see R14(T)
G dubh : see R23(S)
SITHEAN GLAS : ND 05 NE: 066572
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G sithean m.: see R14(T)
G glas : see R16(T)

SITHEAN IOLAIREACH : ND 05 NW: 020554
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G sithean m.: see R14(T)
G iolair (gen iolarach) f.
: an eagle

SITHEAN MÔR : ND 05 NE: 058571
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G sithean m.: see R14(T)
G mór : see R11(S)

SKERRY EEL : NC 96 NW: 947662
Local pronunciation: [skəri 'iil]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON sker n.: a skerry, an isolated rock in the sea
This was borrowed into the Caithness, Orkney and Shetland dialects in the first instance and thence into Scots in general as skerry, and it has also been borrowed into Gaelic as sgeir f.
Without earlier references the specific is difficult. The word order in the compound (generic + specific) suggests a Gaelic word which has been anglicised. Possibly

G aol (gen aoil) m.: lime

......

STAILL : ND 06 SW: 034603
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
Sc stell : an open stone-walled enclosure for sheep

......

TERRIGASH : ND 05 NE: 059561
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes an outcrop of rock on the side of Beinn Freiceadain (see R14(T)) which suggests that the initial element might be
G tórr m.: see R2(T)
The final element is obscure.

......

THE BIELD : ND 06 SW: 008642
Local pronunciation: [θι 'bil]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc bield : a shelter for animals, usually cattle
(cf buaile f.: R36(S))
The name describes a freestone quarry on Issuld Hill (see R55(S)) which indicates that it is being used metaphorically to describe the hollowed-out shape of the quarry, or literally by sheep who find it offers gratuitous shelter.

......
THE CRAGGANS NC 96 SE: 953648
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kragan]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation: anglicisation of  
G creag f.: see Rh6(S) + dimin -an

THE FLOW ND 06 SW: 022633
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'flau]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So flow : a wet peat-bog, a morass, a swamp  
This word occurs frequently in place-names.  
The land here has now been extensively drained and improved, but the  
description would originally have been apt.

THE KNOWES NC 96 SE: 964643
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'nauz]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So know, also (k)nowe  
: So forms of English knoll a hillock, mound, in folklore often associated with fairies

THE SIAN ND 06 NW: 016652
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'sian]  
Early refs: Na Tri Sithean 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
G tri : three  
G sithean m.: see Rh4(T)
TORNAMEAL : ND 05 NE: 073573
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T)
G meall m.: see R128(T)

TORR A' BHATHACH : ND 05 NW: 036577
Local pronunciation: [tɔr ə 'veix]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T)
G bìthaich m.: a cowshed, byre

TORR A' CAISE : ND 06 SW: 037602
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T)
G càise m.: cheese
Perhaps the cheese was dried here.

TORR A' GHOBHAINN : ND 05 NE: 075568
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T)
G gobhainn m.: a blacksmith
TORR AN ATHAIN : NC 96 SE: 978643
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
G áthain (gen áthain) m.
: a little ford

TORR AN T-SNIOMBA : ND 06 SW: 028611
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Torr an t-Sniomha 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
G sniomh (gen sniomha) m.
: spinning

TORR BAD NAN SEANGAN : ND 05 SW: 004548
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
G bad m. : see R13(T)
G seangan m.: an ant
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

TÖRR BEAG : ND 05 NE: 062563
TÖRR MÖR : " : 062564
Local pronunciation: [tòrr 'bæg]
(<<Törr Mör>> is not used)
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
G beag : see R7(S)
G mör : see R11(S)
TORR DUBH BEAG : ND 05 SW: 018536
TORR DUBH MòR : " : 015538
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
G dubh : see R23(S)
G beag : see R7(S)
G mòr : see R11(S)

TORR PÉILLE LEATHAN: NC 96 SE: 981644
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
The second part of the name seems to represent
G fèill f.: a festival, feast
G leathann: broad
but such an interpretation would be nonsensical.
It seems more likely that the modern spelling is masking an earlier
G fèith 'Ill Leathain
  : Maclean's Burn
(G fèith f.: see R24(T))

TORR NA CRICHE : ND 05 NW: 045565
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T)
G crìoch (gen crìche) f.
  : boundary, end
There is no obvious boundary here but the tòrr is situated at the end of Loch Shurrery (see R66(S)).
TORR NAM BROC: ND 05 SW: 005544
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T)
G broc m.: a badger
(For pl. article occurring with nom. sing. noun see R7(T).)

TORR PHADRUIG: ND 05 NE: 068561
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T)
G Pàdruig: Patrick

TORRAN DUBH MEADHON A' BHLAIR: ND 05 SW: 042537
TORRAN DUBH: NO 96 SW: 966625
Local pronunciation: <Torran Dubh Meadhon a' Bhlear>
not known
[tɔɾn̪ ˈd̪u̯ɾ] Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T) + dimin -an
G dubh: see R23(S)
G meadhon: middle
G blàr m.: see R30(S)
TORRAN NA CIRCE: NC 96 SE: 963646
Local pronunciation: [dɔ 'torən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m.: see R2(T) + dimin -an
G cearc (gen circe) f.: a hen
The noun cearc is now omitted and the name is anglicised to The Torran.

TOTA AN DRANNDAIN: ND 05 NW: 038579
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tobhta f.: a ruin with walls standing and roof fallen in
G dranndan m.: a humming, whistling of the wind
This name describes a broch in an advanced state of dilapidation.

TOTA CHARBHAIG: ND 05 NW: 039599
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tobhta f.: see R174(T)
G garbh: see R114(T) + dimin -ag

TULACH CORM: ND 05 NW: 042572
Local pronunciation: [t̪ulac̪ɔm]
EarlV refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
G tulach m.: see R5(S)
G gorm : blue/green

......

WHITE WELL
: NC 96 SE: 966627
Local pronunciation: [sə hwaiˈwɛl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So well : see R40(S)
The reference is to the limestone rocks which surround the spring.

......

YELLOW MOSS
: ND 06 SW: 022646
Local pronunciation: [ˈjɛlə mɔs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
According to my informants, the peat cut on this moor has a yellowish tinge when dried.

......
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Unlike Reay Parish, which shows physical contrasts in rock type and related agriculture, Thurso Parish is uniform in its rock type which is old red sandstone.

The River Thurso which runs through the parish from south to north gives rise to a belt of good agricultural land which is fully exploited and the landward part of the parish is much more heavily populated than Reay.

The harbour at the river estuary gave an early 'raison d'être' for the town of Thurso which is now a flourishing market town with a population of 9,038, as recorded in the 1981 Census. It should be noted that the population of Thurso has been greatly boosted by the presence of the Dounreay Atomic Establishment, many of whose employees live in Thurso.

The safe and reasonably deep harbourage afforded at Scrabster, on the outskirts of Thurso, has led to the development of an important shipping link with Orkney. Thurso is also the terminus of the railway from Inverness and the south.

Gaelic probably died out in Thurso Parish in the nineteenth or, at the latest, early twentieth century and informants from the parish could not offer translations of Gaelic names.

Thurso Parish is bounded on the south by Halkirk Parish and on the east by Bower and Olrig Parishes.
SETTLEMENT NAMES
ACHINGILLS : ND 16 SE: 152631
BURN OF ACHINGILLS : " : 156631
Local pronunciation: [ək'əŋgəls]
Early refs: Achingillies 1661 RMS
           Auchingills 1749 Sinclair (Thurso)
           Achingills 1798 Book of Valuation
           Achingill 1807 Arrowsmith
           Water of Achingill " "
           Achingills 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
Cai gill : see R11(T) + Eng pl -s
The medial element appears to be the Gaelic definite article an.
Sc burn : see R4(S)
The name describes a farm in a slight valley – hardly enough to
justify gill – but the Caithness landscape is so flat that a slight
indentation is often accorded much greater significance than it would
be in a more varied landscape.

AIMSTER : ND 16 SW: 117633
AIMSTER POOL : " : 123639
Local pronunciation: [ˈemstaːr]
Early refs: Ambuster 1539 RSS
           Ambuster 1604 Retours
           Aimbuster 1605 "
           Aimstir 1616 RMS
           Amster o1680 F. de Wit
           Emster 1750 Roy
           Aimster 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:
The specific is probably a personal name although it is impossible to
determine the precise form of the name. Possibly
ON Ambi, -a m.: (Lind 1915, column 22)
or
ON Ami, -a m.: (Lind 1915, column 29)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

......
RACKLINK ND 06 NE: 082661
Local pronunciation: [ˈbækklɪŋk]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
back : either 1) being used metaphorically to indicate a slight ridge or 2) being used in the English sense of "behind" the burn (ie Tordale Burn: see T78(S))
link : either 1) being used in the sense of a joint of the body, especially one of the vertebrae and, therefore, applying metaphorically to a ridged piece of ground or 2) being used to indicate the undulating chain-like movement of the Tordale Burn which flows past the croft.

BAILLIE, STRATH O. : ND 06 NE: 052653
Local pronunciation: [strəj 'beli]
For early refs and derivation see R25(S).

BAINSTOWN ND 16 NW: 128659
Local pronunciation: [ˈbenstaun]
Early refs: Bainstown 1841 Census
Derivation:
Bain : the surname of a previous owner of the farm
town : see R46(S)
Names incorporating the surname of a previous owner are common in the vicinity of Thurso.

BARDNACLAVAN : ND 06 NE: 076653
BARDNACLAVAN FARM : ND 06 SE: 071647
Local pronunciation: [ˈbærnəkləvən]
Early refs: Bardnaclavan 1841 Census
Derivation:

G bard m.: see R28(S)

Probably

G clampan m.: a buzzard

The article na is the feminine genitive form which could suggest

G clámharg m.: sleet

Clampan, however, seems much more convincing in the context of bard.

-----

BATTERY POINT

: ND 16 NW: 112692

Local pronunciation: [batri 'point]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name is self-explanatory. It describes a cliff-top position occupied by a defensive battery, probably during the Napoleonic War. The name is very seldom used today.

-----

BLACKPATH

: ND 06 NE: 071683

Local pronunciation: [blak 'hiθ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name applies to a small farmhouse on the edge of moorland or heath.

-----

BLEACHFIELD

: ND 16 NW: 114665

BLEACHFIELD POOL

: " : 117664

Local pronunciation: [ plutʃ fild]

Early refs: Bleachfield 1831 Thomson

Derivation:

A local informant says that this area beside the Thurso River was, at one time, used for the bleaching of flax which was grown nearby. The name now refers to a small farm.

-----
BOGGY PARK CROFT  :  ND 16 NW:  138672  
Local pronunciation:  [ˈbɒɡɪ ˈpɑːrk ˈkroʊft]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
The heavy, clay soil retained water making the area difficult to cultivate. A nearby name Clayhusbandry (see T23(S)) reflects the same problem.

......

BRAAL HOLDINGS  :  ND 16 SW:  143608  
BRAAL POOL  :  "  :  139602
Local pronunciation:  [ˈbraːl ˈpʊl]
Early refs:  de Brathewelle  1375  RMS
             Braule  c1572  Sinclair (Moy)
             Bravell  1592  "
             Braull  1595  Mercator
             Brawall  1616  Sinclair (Moy)
             Bredwell  1633  "
             Bredwall  1661  "
             Braedwall  1667  "
             Braal  1662  Blaeu
             Broadwell  1671  Retours
             Prall  1750  Roy
             Castle Braal  1832  Thomson
Derivation:
ON breɪl : broad
ON vʊl : a field
The modern form is an abbreviation of the earlier name, and signs of this abbreviation were already appearing in the orthography in the latter part of the 16th century.
Holding  : an abbreviated form of smallholdings
Braal Castle is situated in neighbouring Halkirk Parish.

......

BRIDGENEND  :  ND 16 NW:  11863  
Local pronunciation:  [ˈbrɪdʒənd]
Early refs:  Brigend  1616  RMS
Derivation:
The name describes some houses at the end of a bridge which spans the River Thurso (see T75(S)).
The RMS version reflects an earlier pronunciation containing So brig : see R102(T)
Brig-end is frequent as a place-name from c1320 onwards.

......

BRIMS : ND 06 NE: 054697
BURN OF BRIMS : " : 055690
BURN OF BRIMS FARM : " : 053693
BRIMS NESS : ND 07 SW: 043717
PORT OF BRIMS : " : 044712
MAINS OF BRIMS : " : 043711
BRIMS HILL : ND 07 SE: 078706
EAST BRIMS : " : 054701
WEST BRIMS : ND 06 NW: 043698

Local pronunciation: [brems]
Early refs: Brymmes 1560 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Brymis 1564 OPS, Book of Assumptions
Brynesi Ness 1573 Ortelius
Brymmes 1576 RMS
Brymmis 1581 "
Half-Brymmes " "
Brims 1616 "
Bryminis 1605 Retours
Half-Brymmis " "
Brumes 1620 "
Browmes " "
Wester Brims 1658 Sutherland (Forse)
Brims 1662 Blaeu
Brims 1750 Roy
Brims Ness
or
Outshotthead " "
Brims Castle " "
Derivation

ON brim n.: surf
ON ness n.: a ness projecting into the sea or a lake

This is a very common place-name element in Caithness.
(Ness is duplicated in Ortelius (1573) and Roy (1750))
The variant vowels recorded in Retours (1620) are probably erroneous.
Roy (1750) records Outshotthead as an alternative to Brims Ness but
the name has now been lost.
So burn : see R4(S)
Port : see R55(S)
So mains : see R32(S)

......

BRIMSIDE TULLOCH : ND 06 NW: 048671
BURN OF BRIMSIDE : " : 048668
BRAES OF BRIMSIDE : " : 046667
Local pronunciation: [brm'said]
Early refs: see T13(S)

Derivation:

brim : see T13(S)
side : see R33(S)
Cai tulloch: see R5(S)
So burn : see R4(S)
So brae : see R8(S)

......

BUCKIES : ND 16 SW: 110633
BUCKIES HILL : " : 108627
BUCKIES POOL : " : 118643
Local pronunciation: [bukis]
Early refs: Buckies 1667 RMS
Buckas 1750 Roy
Buckies 1798 Book of Valuation
Bukkies 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
The vowel in the first syllable is consistently <u> in the orthography and [ʌ] in modern pronunciation which gives rise to speculation that the name may be derived from So buck : a lye made of cow's dung and stale urine or soapy water, in which foul linen is steeped in order to cleanse or whiten it (of G buae m.: 1) dung used in bleaching 2) unbleached linen; linen in an early stage of bleaching)
The ending -les could represent a diminutive, plus Eng pl <-s>. The neighbouring name Bleachfield (see T9(S)) also refers to the process of bleaching.

BULLIEMORE : ND 16 SW: 134642
Local pronunciation: ['balimor]
Early refs: Bulliemore 1841 Census
Derivation:
bullie : It is impossible to be definite about the derivation of this generic without earlier forms.
The modern spelling suggests G buaile f.: see R36(S)
but the pronunciation suggests G baile m.: see R25(S)
Lack of early forms, however, is an argument in favour of buaile since a baile form would almost certainly have more established early spellings.
G mór : see R11(S)

CAIRNFIELD : ND 16 SW: 149647
CAIRNFIELD QUARRIES: ND 16 SE: 153646
Local pronunciation: [karn'fild]
Early refs: Cairnfield 1841 Census
In almost all instances, as in this case, the recent 6" OS survey notes that the quarries are now disused, whereas the 1876 6" OS map
has no such indication. A sad comment on the decline of the quarrying industry in Caithness.

**Derivation:**

So cairn : see R27(T)

---

**CARGOE**

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<th>[kars-go]</th>
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<td>Carsko 1545 RMS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carske &quot; &quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carsco 1592 &quot; &quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caruskne 1619 &quot; &quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Corscoe 1667 &quot; &quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carsko 1598 Sinclair (Mey)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caskun 1662 Blaeu</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carscro 1671 Retours</td>
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<td>Cargoe 1739 Sinclair (Freswick)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Carsgo 1832 Thomson</td>
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</table>

**Derivation:** Possibly ON kjar-skógr m.: copsewood

It would have to be assumed that the early written forms of this place-name and its modern pronunciation have been influenced by G cars f. a level, fertile tract of country and by Cai goe (see R81(T)) which began to appear in the written forms in the mid-18th century.

There is a deep ravine beside the farm which, if it were coastal, would certainly merit the description geo (see R54(T)) which is probably why this word has influenced the more recent written forms and the pronunciation of the name.

The sides of the ravine are covered with brushwood.

---

**CASTLEGREEN MANSE**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>['kasal grin]</th>
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Outside references:

T17(s) (cont'd)
Derivation: Castlegreen appears to commemorate a castle which was reputedly a habitation of the early Norse earls but no trace of the building now remains. (D. Omand 1972, page 126.)

(For Sc green: see C7(S))

Sc manse : the dwelling house provided for the minister of a particular church

......

CHAPEL POINT : ND 16 NW: 109691

Local pronunciation: [tʃæpəl point]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: The name refers to a small headland close by the site of an earlier chapel, now replaced by a mausoleum.

......

CLARDON : ND 16 NE: 152694

CLARDON HEAD : ND 17 SE: 154704

CLARDON HAVEN : " : 159701

CLARDON HILL : ND 16 NW: 147691

Local pronunciation: [klerdɔn]

Early refs: Claradene 1538 RMS

Clardene 1539 "

Clareden 1604 Retours

Clarden 1605 "

Clairden 1644 "

Clairdane 1587 RMS

Clarden 1606 "

Clairdene 1633 "

Cleredene " "

Clareden 1661 "

Claredain " "

Clairden " "

Clairden Ness 1662 Blaeu

Clardene 1728 Sinclair (Freswick)

Clardine 1735 Sinclair (Dunbeath)

Clairdon 1798 Book of Valuation

Cleardane 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
This is a difficult name in spite of the relative uniformity of the numerous early forms.
The source language is probably Scots and the most likely specific is Sc *clere*, also *clair, clar*
: materially clear or bright, in various applications.
The reference may originally have been to the clear water of a small stream in the valley, but the area has been extensively drained and there is no present evidence of a stream.
Sc *den* : a narrow valley (Gen (exc. I.) Sc)
*Den* in this sense occurs in OSc c1575, but is found in place-names from 1170. The word is a variant of OSc *dene*, Mod Eng *dean* (from OE *denu*: a valley), the vowel having been shortened in unaccented position in place-names.
Both of these elements are unusual in Caithness place-names and this could be an early example of an imported name.
Sc *haven* : see R55(S)

CLATEQUOY : ND 16 SW: 104642
Local pronunciation: [*kl&tkwai]*
Early refs: Clatequoy 1841 Census
Derivation:
ON *klettr* m.: see R20(S) - becoming *clate* under the influence of G *cleit* f.
ON *kví* f.: a cattle-fold, but it was applied in a somewhat wider sense also of a place where animals were wont to assemble, or be gathered together for milking etc. (Marwick 1952, page 227)
ON *kví* in the modern form *quoy* is a frequently occurring place-name element in Caithness, and even more common in Orkney. In Orkney quoys are described as being of a relatively late date. In the early rentals quoyleand is used as a generic term for such lands as were exempt from skat, the obvious explanation being that such lands were still uncultivated when skat was imposed, although there are exceptions to this. And as a farm-name element *quoy* continued in use for many hundreds of years, even after the old Norn language
had been largely superseded by Scots. (Marwick 1952, page 228.)

Marwick's comments on the Orkney quoys are also relevant to the Caithness situation. For further comments relating to Caithness quoynames see C24(S).

CLAYHUSBANDRY: ND 16 NW: 138678
Local pronunciation: [kle'hausbændri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
A recent English name, unusual in the north, referring to the nature of the soil in the area and inferring that tillage may have been a problem before the introduction of an adequate drainage system (cf T10(S)).

(Cf OSc husbandland:
: the holding of a husband or manorial tenant, from 1481; in later use, a measure of land, from 1544)

This form of tenancy was most common in N England and SE Scotland.

CLETT COTTAGES: ND 07 SE: 097702
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Clett 1750 Roy
Clett of Holburnhead 1760 Sutherland (Forse)
Clett 1807 Arrowsmith
Clate 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
Cai clett: see R20(S)

COGBILL: ND 07 SE: 093705
COGBILL BURN: " : 095703
COGBILL LOCH: " : 093708
Local pronunciation: [kə'gɪl]
Early refs: Cogall 1750 Roy
Cogal 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:
Cogle : A surname current in Shetland derived from the lands of Cogle in the parish of Watten, Caithness. Later the name was spelled Coghill. Families of this name are numerous in Caithness today. (Black 1946, page 160.)
The ultimate source of this name is probably as in kogol, kogel: something round and unshapely; a round, lumpy stone (Icel. kogull m.: a lump). (Jakobsen 1932, page 475) The name has been anglicised by the addition of hill.

So burn : see R4(S)
So loch : see R5(S)

CROOKHEAD : ND 16 NW: 143667
Local pronunciation: [kruskhaid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: An anglicised variant of
So cruke, cruik, crewk
: a corner or nook, chiefly in the names of special portions of land
In this instance, the small farm is in a corner where roads meet.

CROSSKIRK : ND 07 SW: 031701
CROSSKIRK BAY : " : 028702
Local pronunciation: [kruskirk]
Early refs: Crosskirk 1608 Sutherland (Forse)
Crosskirk 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
The church in question is St. Mary's Chapel, Lybster, Reay (see R40(S)) which is situated on the west side of Crosskirk Bay.
So kirk : ON kirkja f. taking the place in the north of ME chirche, circe, OE circe, circe, which is itself the origin of the Scandinavian word.
CRUIVES : ND 16 NW: 117668
OLD CRUIVES DYKE : " : 114667
CRUIVE POOL : " : 116667
Local pronunciation: [kraʊvs]
Early refs: pisc. de lie 1564 RMS
Cruvis 1601 "
Cruves 1606 "
Cruiffis 1616 "
Old Cruve Dike 1877 6" OS
Cruve Well ""

Derivation:
So cruve, cruive
: a wicker or wooden enclosure for catching salmon or other fish (used chiefly in pl)
So dyke, dike
: a wall(of earth, turf or stone) made for enclosure or as a dividing line

DALCHARN : ND 06 NE: 096662
Local pronunciation: [dæl'xarn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G dail f. : see R48(s)
G cārn m. : see R27(T)
The definite article was obviously originally present in this name but it has been dropped, leaving only the lenition as a marker of its presence.
G dail a' chārn

DIXONFIELD : ND 16 NW: 137666
Local pronunciation: ['dɪksənfild]
Early refs: Dixonfield 1841 Census
Derivation:
A farm belonging at one time to a family called Dixon (cf T5(S)).
DUNBREA : ND 16 SE: 153607  
Local pronunciation: [dʌnˈbre]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
G dùn m. : see R49(S)  
G bràigh m.: see R24(T)

DUNCAN'S HILL : ND 16 NW: 137675  
DUNCANSHILL : " : 137673  
Local pronunciation: [dʌnˈkænsˈhɪl]  
Early refs: Duncanshill 1841 Census  
Derivation:  
This name appears as a farm name only on the 1877 map, but on the modern map it applies to the farm and the neighbouring hill. The reference is probably to a previous owner of the farm. (cf T5(S))

FAIRVIEW : ND 06 NE: 074672  
FERN COTTAGE : " : 087663  
IVY COTTAGE : ND 16 NW: 148683  
VIEWFIELD : ND 06 NE: 073672  
Local pronunciation: ['fɛrvɪv]  
: ['feɪrn 'kɔtədʒ]  
: ['aɪv ˈkɔtədʒ]  
: ['viufɪld]  
Early refs: 1969 6" OS  
Derivation:  
These are modern English names typical of recent settlement in the Thurso area.
FORSS : ND 06 NW: 042691
BRIDGE OF FORSS : " : 037686
FORSS WATER : " : 041676
FORSS MAINS : " : 038691
FORSS SMALLHOLDINGS : " : 034693
HILL OF FORSS : ND 06 NE: 064684
HILL OF FORSS QUARRIES : " : 073674
OLD BRIDGE OF FORSS : ND 06 NW(RP): 042675
Local pronunciation : ['fors]
Early refs: Forss 1539 Sinclair (Mey)
Force 1557 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Fors 1573 Ortelius
Fors Flu " "
Fors 1581 RMS
Forss 1661 "
Foss " "
Fors 1602 Retours
Fors 1662 Blaeu
Fors Alt 1673 Blome
Water of Force 1701 Brand
Forse 1750 Dorret
Forss 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON fors (mod foss) m.
: a waterfall
Blome's version <Fors Alt> (1673) is very interesting because it shows a combination of ON fors and G allt (see R1(S)).
Sc water : a large stream,
usually thought of as intermediate in size between a burn (see R4(S)) and a river, frequently a tributary of a main river or occasionally applied to the upper reaches of what becomes a larger river.
Sc mains : see R32(S)
GEISE : ND 16 SW: 108649 T35(S)
BURN OF GEISE : " : 105647
UPPER GEISE : ND 06 NE: 097658
MOSS OF GEISE : " : 090650
NEWLANDS OF GEISE : " : 090657
GEISELITTLE : ND 16 NW: 116655
UPPER GEISELITTLE : " : 125655
GEISE POOL : " : 111662
GEISE STREAM POOL : " : 112653
Local pronunciation: [giz]
Early refs: Geiss Mekill 1571 Sinclair (Mey)
Geis-Meikill 1619 RMS
Geis-Littill " "
Meiklegeis 1661 "
Gaislitle " "
Geese 1662 Blaeu
Geismeikle 1671 Retours
Geislitle " "
Giese or Ghies 1726 Macfarlane
Geeze 1786 Sinclair (Freswick)
Giese Mill 1832 Thomson
Giese Little " "

Derivation:
ON geysa (gías a)
: rush furiously, gush
So meikill: large (this appears as upper in the modern version of the names)

The intrusive<-t-> which appears in Retours (1671): Geislitle is an example of scribal error, probably occurring because there was a following <-tl-> combination at the end of the word.

So burn : see R4(S)
So moss : see R7(S)

GLENBURNIE : ND 06 NE: 073673 T36(S)
Local pronunciation: [glen'burni]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A "concocted" name. There is no evidence of either glen or burn in the immediate vicinity. (cf T33(S))

GLENGOLLY : ND 16 NW: 103661

GLENGOLLY COTTAGES : " : 102660

Local pronunciation: [glen'gɔli]

Early refs: Glengolly 1797 Sinclair (Freswick)
            Glengolly 1832 Thomson.

Derivation:
This name has been borrowed into Caithness from Glen Golly in Sutherland.

G gleann m.: see R57(T)

The specific is difficult to define without earlier references.
Possibly

G gobhal (gen gobhail/goibhe) m.
            : a fork, branch

The name has been subsequently anglicised.

HAIMER : ND 16 NW: 144672

CASTLE OF HAIMER : " : 142672

Local pronunciation: ['heimər]

Early refs: Hamer 1750 Dorret
            Hemar 1750 Roy
            Hemer Castle 1760 Pococke
            Hammer 1789 Ainslie
            Hemer Castle 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
The name only appears on record after the Castle of Haimer was built in the mid-eighteenth century (Omand 1972, page 161). The probable source of the name, however, is

ON heimr m.: an abode, village.

(It seems likely that although heimr means "a world" in modern Icelandic, it had the sense "a home, an abode" in Primitive Norse and would, therefore, have been a very appropriate simplex name.)
Harold's Tower: ND 16 NW: 135693
Local pronunciation: [hərəlds 'tɔːr]
Early refs: Harrold's Tomb 1832 Thomson
Derivation: The tower was built by Sir John Sinclair to commemorate the spot where local tradition says Harald Unge fell in battle against Harald Maddadson in 1196. (The Orkneyinga Saga, edit. Anderson, 1873, page 195.)

Hawkhilllock: ND 16 NW: 125675
Local pronunciation: [hɔk 'hɔldk]
Early refs: Hawkhilllock 1841 Census
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

Heathfield: ND 16 NW: 106668
Heathfield Quarry: ND 06 NE: 093666
Local pronunciation: [ˈhiθ fild]
Early refs: Heathfield 1841 Census
Derivation: A small farm on the edge of moorland.

Holborn Head: ND 07 SE: 107715
Holbornhead: " : 103707
Holborn Hill: " : 095713
Holborn Head Lighthouse: " : 106706
Holbornhead Quarries: " : 079710
Braes of Holbornhead: ND 16 NW: 103705
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɔbrɔn ˈhɔld]

The <-l-> in the modern orthography first appears in the mid-18th century and is not reflected in the modern pronunciation.
Early refs: Hoborne Head 1573 Ortelsius
Hoburneheid 1581 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Howburnhead 1605 Retours
Hawburnhead 1672 "
Hoburn Head 1662 Blaeu
Hoburneheat (farm) " "
Hoburne Head 1688 Adair
Hoburn Head 1726 Macfarlane
Howburnhead " "
Holbourn Head 1750 Roy
House of Holbournhead " "

Derivation:
ON hár (f. há)
: high
ON brún f.: brow,
used metaphorically to describe landscape
Adair (1688) is the only example which does not show metathesis
of <r>. Modern local pronunciation is invariably ['hobrən].
Sc brae : see R8(S)

HOPEFIELD
Local pronunciation: ['hopfild]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A modern name, perhaps indicating that the farmer had some doubts
about the success of cultivation in the area.

HOWE
Local pronunciation: [hau]
Early refs: Upper Howe 1841 Census
Lower Howe " "
Derivation:
Lack of early references in this instance makes it extremely difficult
to be certain of the derivation. It could be derived from
ON haugr m.: a how, mound
but an equally possible source is
Sc howe : a hollow or low-lying piece of ground; one of the
hollows of an indented or undulating surface or outline
The modern spelling of the place-name has certainly been influenced by Sc howe.

HOY : ND 16 SW: 142606
HOY POOL : " : 139608

Local pronunciation: [hoi]

Early refs:
Hoy 1636 Sinclair (Mey)
Hoy 1662 Blaeu
Hoy 1673 Sinclair (Freswick)
Hoy 1750 Roy
Hoy 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
For detailed commentary see OL19(S).
It seems probable that this name should also be derived from ON hey n. : hay

INNESDALE : ND 06 NE: 084671

Local pronunciation: [innesdæl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
This is a comparatively recent name, combining the surname Innes with English -dale. (cf T5(S))

JANETSTOWN : ND 06 NE: 084656

JANETSTOWN QUARRIES: " : 090663
LADY JANET'S WOOD : ND 16 NW: 133683
LADY JANET'S SEAT : " : 126694

Local pronunciation: [ˈdʒænts tun]

Early refs: Janetstown 1841 Census
Newlands of Janetstown " "
Janetstown Side 1867 6" OS

Derivation:
Named after Lady Janet Sinclair of Ulbster.

KIRK EBB : ND 16 NW: 121689

Local pronunciation: [ˈkɜrk əb]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:

So kirk : see T27(S)

So ebb (emE eb(b), ME ebbe, OE ebba)

: the ebb of the tide; the part of the beach left bare at the ebb

The reference is to nearby St. Peter's Church, Thurso.

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LANGLAND : ND 06 NE: 077672
LANGLAND QUARRIES : " : 079673
Local pronunciation: ['la1gland]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

So lang : long

So land : the land as used for cultivation or as divided up in some way for agricultural purposes

OSc land : arable ground (recorded in 1375)

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LYTHMORE : ND 06 NE: 054663
LYTHMORE MOSS : " : 063672
LYTHMORE COTTAGES : " : 054662
LYTHMORE STRATH : ND 06 NW: 048659
Local pronunciation: [laiGmor]
Early refs: Lythmoir 1557 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Lythmoir 1561 OPS, Book of Assumptions
Lythmoir 1581 RMS
Lightmoir 1608 "
Lythmoir 1619 "
Lythmoir 1605 Retours
Lythmore 1702 Sutherland (Forse)
Lithmore 1750 Roy
Lythmore 1832 Thomson

Derivation: Probably

ON h1f f.: see R59(S)

Lythmore is situated on sloping ground beside the Forss River (see T34(S)). (cf Lyth: Bower Parish)

G mor : see R11(S)
So moss : see R7(S)
So strath : see R25(S)

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MAYFIELD : ND 16 NE: 151662 T51(S)
Local pronunciation: ['meifild]
Early refs: May Field 1841 Census
Derivation:
Probably a name imported into Caithness from further south. John
Field describes May Field as an "ambiguous name, possibly referring
either to May festivities or to the hawthorne or may tree". (John
Field 1972, page 135.)
The Caithness name describes a farm situated in a fertile green
section in an area of quarries.

MIDDLETON : ND 06 NE: 058699 T52(S)
Local pronunciation: ['midltən]
Early refs: Middletown 1750 Roy
Middletown 1807 Arrowsmith
Derivation:
Sc -town : see R46(S)

MOSSBANK : ND 16 SW: 144648 T53(S)
Local pronunciation: [mɔs'bæk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc moss : see R7(S)
Sc bank : the place in a peat-moss from which peats are cut
The reference is not to a specific peat-bank but to an area which, in
general, is good for peat-cutting.

MOUNT PLEASANT : ND 16 NW: 126682 T54(S)
Local pronunciation: [maunt 'pleəsənt]
Early refs: Mt Pleasant 1807 Arrowsmith
Mountpleasant 1841 Census
Derivation:
The name has biblical connotations and names of this type were very
popular during the 19th century evangelical revival.
MOUNTVERNON : ND 16 NW: 116674
Local pronunciation: [maunt'vernən]
Early refs: Mount Vernon 1841 Census
Derivation: see T54(S)

MURKLE, BRIDGE OF : ND 16 NE: 153672
 Local pronunciation: ['ma:kəl]
Early refs: see OL 26(S)

MURRAYFIELD : ND 06 NE: 078674
Local pronunciation: ['mərəifild]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: A farm belonging at one time to a family named Murray. (cf T5(S))

NAVER HOUSE : ND 16 NW: 107682
Local pronunciation: ['nevər 'haus]
Early refs: 1969 6" OS
Derivation: This name has been imported from Strath Naver in Sutherland.
(For Naver see Nicolaisen 1976, page 189.)

OLDFIELD FARM : ND 16 NW: 121677
OLDFIELD HOUSE : " : 119676
Local pronunciation: ['oldfi:ld farm]
Early refs: Oldfield 1750 Roy
Derivation: A self-explanatory English name. Old is being used to differentiate one thing from its more recent replacement.
OLD GARDEN CROFT  :  ND 16 NW:  135687
Local pronunciation:  [old garden 'croft]
Early refs:  1876   6" OS
Derivation:
A croft adjoining Lady Janet's Wood, but there is no land attached to it today. A local informant says that one of the gardeners at Thurso Castle stayed here for same time.

ORMLIE  :  ND 16 NW:  107676
Local pronunciation:  ['ormli]
Early refs:  Ormellee  1538  RMS
            Ormelie  1539   "
            Ormely  1587   "
            Ormlie  1658   "
            Ormlie  1550  Sinclair (Mey)
            Ormelie  1604  Retours
            Ormlie  1644   "
            Ormlee  1662  Blaeu
            Ormley  1726  Macfarlane
            Ormlie  1807  Arrowsmith
            Newlands of Ormly  1819  Sinclair (Thruso)
            Ormly  1832  Thomson
Derivation:
ON orm m.:  a snake, serpent
Orm can also be used as a personal name: (Lind 1915, column 819).
ON hli f.:  see R59(S)
Ormlie is, in fact, situated close by a pronounced bend in the Thurso River (see T75(S)) which favours the literal interpretation.
OUST : ND 06 NE: 063656

Local pronunciation: [aust]

Early refs: Owist 1560 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Owest 1564 "
Awist 1561-6 OPS, Book of Assumptions
Owist 1581 RMS
Owst 1606 "
Oust 1638 "
Owist 1605 Retours
Oust 1750 Roy
Owst 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON austr m.: east
This is unacceptable as a simplex name but the adjacent farm in
Halkirk Parish is now known as Westfield (ND 06 SE: 064643) and
it seems possible that ON austr and ON vestr (west) were originally
specifics in compound names with a common generic which has
subsequently been lost and, in the case of Westfield alone, has
been replaced by the English generic field.

PENNYLAND : ND 16 NW: 105683

PENNYLAND HOUSE : " : 109687

Local pronunciation: ['pen-land]

Early refs: Pennyland 1562/3 Sinclair(Mey)
Penneland 1571 "
Pennyland 1658 RMS
Pennyland 1750 Roy
Penneland House 1760 Pococke
Pennyland 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
Pennyland : a unit of land on which a certain amount of skat or
tax had to be paid
At an early period Orkney was divided into eyris-lönd (ouncelands)
each of which paid to the Earl money or produce to the value of
one ounce of silver.
The ouncelands in turn were divided into eighteen parts, each of which had to pay one penny (pennylands). Neither ounce- nor pennyland was constant in size being a measure of produce, not of surface. (Marwick 1952, page 196.)

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**PENTLAND VIEW** : ND 16 NW: 102658
**PENTLAND HOUSE** : " : 113686
**SEAVIEW** : ND 06 NE: 084677
**RIVER VIEW** : ND 16 NW: 102665
Local pronunciation: ['pentland]
Early refs: 1969 6" OS
Derivation:
For Pentland see C80(T).
Names like Pentland View and River View are very typical of the 20th century, indicating a society which has enough leisure-time to appreciate the view.

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**ROADSIDE** : ND 16 SE: 153608
Local pronunciation: ['rodsaid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This is a general name for a smithy, a Post Office and a few houses, and it illustrates the importance of the road system in the life of the community.

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**SCAPA HOUSE** : ND 16 NW: 111687
Local pronunciation: ['skapa]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A name borrowed from Scapa Flow in Orkney. (Marwick 1952, page 100.)
SCRABSTER : ND 16 NW: 102704
SCRABSTER ROADSTEAD: " : 106704
SCRABSTER CASTLE: " : 107692
BRAES OF SCRABSTER: " : 103695
SCRABSTER MAINS: ND 06 NE: 096697
SCRABSTER HOUSE: " : 097698
SCRABSTER HILL: " : 076690
SCRABSTER LOCH: ND 07 SE: 087703
Local pronunciation: ['skræbster]

Early refs: Skarabóistaðr (c1200) Orkneyinga Saga
Scrabestoun 1455 RMS
Scrabister 1581 "
Scrabuster 1593 "
Scrabster 1603 "
Scrabister 1608 "
Scrabuster 1529 Sinclair (Mey)
Scrabuist 1578 "
Raid de Scrabister 1605 Retours
Scrabster Road 1726 Macfarlane
Castle of Scrabster " "
Scarbister Road 1750 Dorret
Scrabster Roads 1832 Thomson
Scrabster House " "

Derivation: Either
ON skári (gen skára) m.
: a young sea-mew
or the related Norse personal name Skári, -a m. (Lind 1915, page 909)
ON bóistaðr m.
: see R21(S)
Sc raid: a roadstead, a place where ships lie at anchor
Sc brae: see R8(S)
Sc mains: see R32(S)
Sc loch: see R5(S)
SHALMSTRY: ND 16 SW: 130646 T68(S)
TULLOCH OF SHALMSTRY: " : 133644

Local pronunciation: [Salmstri]
Early refs: Shalmistrie 1643-53 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Shalmsery 1749 Sinclair (Thurso)
Shalmstry 1798 Book of Valuation
Shelmstree 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:
ON Hálmi, -a m.
This personal name appears in the Norwegian place-name Hjelset which had earlier forms Hialmasetr and Hielmasetr.
ON hj- could become sh- [s] as a result of palatal closure. (Fenton, 1973)
(of Sjelmister in Shetland which may contain the ON personal name Hjalmr: Jakobsen 1936, page 59.)
It seems likely that the generic in the Caithness place-name is ON setr (see R33(S)), possibly in its locative form setri, although this place-name would be unique in Caithness in containing such a form.

SLATER'S LOUP: ND 07 SE: 098716 T69(S)
Local pronunciation: [Isletars laup]
Early refs: 1876 6o OS

Derivation:
A small obelisk marks this spot where Captain Slater, RN, met his death in the 19th century.
Sc looup : a leap
In place-names, of places where, traditionally, someone has leapt or jumped. There are several coastal names containing this element in Caithness.

SORDALE: ND 16 SW: 146624 T70(S)
SORDALE STREAM POOL: " : 142621
SORDALE HILL (Cnoc na Ciste) : ND 16 SE: 157619
Local pronunciation: [s'dor'del]
Early refs: Sordayle 1539 RSS
Sordell 1538 RMS
Sordaill 1576 "
Sordell 1587 "
Swordaill 1606 "
Sweirdale 1667 "
Suerdall 1564 Sinclair (Mey)
Sordall 1567 "
Sardell 1605 "
Soirdaill 1604 Retours
Swordall 1605 "
Swordell " "
Swordaill 1644 "
Sardell 1671 "
Swardel 1750 Roy
Sourdale 1807 Arrowsmith
Sordal 1832 Thomson

Derivation: Possibly

ON saurt m.: mud

of Saur-bær

: a name which is frequent in Iceland in areas where
the soil is sour or swampy

Alternatively, the spellings Suerdall (Sinclair (Mey) 1564), Swordall, Suordell (Retours 1605), Swordaill (RMS 1606), Swardaill (Retours 1644), Sweirdale (RMS 1667) and Swardel (Roy 1750) all suggest:

ON svartur : black, dark-coloured
which is also a common place-name element.

ON dalr m. : see R22(S)

The Gaelic variant Cno na Ciste is not in use today. It describes
a chambered cairn.

G cnoo m. : see R41(S)
G ciste f. : a chest, coffin
SPRINGPARK : ND 16 NW: 124678
SPRINGFIELD : ND 16 SE: 151615
Local pronunciation: [spraypaxk, -fild]
Early refs: Springpark 1841 Census
Upper Springpark " "
Springfield " "
Derivation:
The reference is to fresh water springs.

STAINLAND : ND 16 NW: 123668
BURN OF STAINLAND : " : 123662
Local pronunciation: [tsten3and]
Early refs: Staneland 1546
Stainland 1592 RMS
Staneland 1667 "
Staniland 1671 Retours
Stainland 1693 "
Stainland 1750 Roy
Stoney Lands 1807 Arrowsmith
Stainland 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc stain/stane : a stone
Sc land : see Th4(S)
Sc burn : see Rh(S)

TALDALE : ND 06 NE: 060692
Local pronunciation: [taldel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: The most likely source is
ON hallr m.: a slope, hill
with initial [h]>[t] due to Gaelic influence. (cf h6ll > t6ll: Watson 1904, page 1x)
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
THING'S VA BROCH : ND 06 NW: 081683 T74(S)
Local pronunciation: ["teysva"]
Early refs: Thing's Wa 1876 6° 05
Derivation:
ON n. the parliament, local law assembly
An element which often occurs with Thing is ON völly m.: a field (as in Tingwall, Shetland), but the only known form of that compound is Tingvöllr (without a medial s). Per Thorson suggests that, in this instance, the second element is svæð m.: a difficult, slippery slope. The compound apparently also occurs in a Norwegian local name Tingsvað-berget, applied to a hillside in Gudbrandsdalen, where an assembly is alleged to have convened in 1280. (Thorson 1965, page 5)

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THURSO CASTLE : ND 16 NW: 124688 T75(S)
THURSO BAY : " : 120700
THURSO EAST MAINS : " : 126691
RIVER THURSO : " : 117680
THURSO BRIDGE : " : 117682
Local pronunciation: ["Barstae"]
Early refs: Færð c1200 Orkneyinga Saga
Tursham c1200 OPS, Roger of Hoveden
Turschem c1200 OPS, Antiquitates Celto-Scandicae
Turishau 1287 OIM, Bagimond's Roll
Furso 1527 RMS
Water of Thuresoch 1539 RSS
Thursow 1547 "
Thorso " "
Thursow 1560 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Thurso 1561-6 OPS, Book of Assumptions
Thursoch " " "
Thursoche " " "
Thursocht " " "
Water of Thurseth " " "
Fairsok Fl 1595 Mercator
Thurso-Be-Eist 1619 RMS
Thursoch 1604 Retours
Thursocht 1605 "
Thurso 1644 "
Thursett 1645 "
Thursoe 1671 "
Thurso 1750 Roy
River Thyrso 1760 Pococke
Thyrso 1770 "

Thurso is the predominant spelling from c1750.

Derivation:
The name Thurso has been the subject of a great deal of discussion (McBain 1894, page 276; 1922, pages 6-7; Henderson 1910, page 155; Watson 1926, page 36; Brøgger 1929, page 97; Johnston 1934, page 310; Nicolaisen 1966, pages 171-176; Thorson 1965, pages 71-77; 1967, pages 84-86; Omdal 1972, pages 127, 228; Nicolaisen 1982, pages 84-5).

W.F.H. Nicolaisen in his most recent commentary on the name (1982, pages 84-5) states that "documentary evidence is complex and does not permit a clearcut answer". He draws attention to the Gaelic name of the town Inbhir-Theòrsa: mouth of (the river) Thurso, and to the variant ìòrsá: bull's river, besides ìòrsa: Thor's river, in Orkneyinga Saga.

Nicolaisen suggests that the Gaelic form Inbhir-Theòrsa indicates that the isolated Norse variant "bull's river" must, at least, be given consideration as one of the Norse names for the river "even if it is unconnected with Tarvedu(m) 'bull-fort', Ptolemy's name for one of the headlands near Thurso and, therefore, not a direct translation of an earlier Celtic *Tarvo-dubron 'bull's river'".

He further comments that "It is not difficult to imagine that such a name might easily be influenced by the better-known name of the god ìor and a doublet ìòrsa/òrsa be established at an early stage."

As regards the nature of the generic Nicolaisen states that "... at least for the town name, (we should perhaps) admit ìòsrhaugr 'Thor's mound' as yet another ingredient in the development of our name," as Per Thorson suggested. (Thorson 1965, page 2)

Certainly, with the notable exception of the Orkneyinga Saga ìòrsa
which, as Per Thorson has commented, could so easily have been influenced by the West Icelandic river-name Jörrs (Jörssø). The early forms offer more support for the theory that the generic is ON haukr m.: a mound rather than ON f.: a river.

If the generic is ON haukr a more appropriate specific would be ON ëyrrs m.: a giant and the vowel in the first syllable of the early forms is consistently <u> with the exception again of the Orkneyinga Saga form and of a single 16th century version Thorsø (RSS).

(There is a parallel element in OE place-names, ie OE ëyses : a giant, demon as in Thursford (Ekwall 1947, page 450).)

There does appear to have been another Norse name for (or perhaps description of) the river, "Skinandi 'the shining one' preserved for us in the place-name Skinnet" in Halkirk Parish. (Thorson 1965, page 3; Nicolaisen 1982, page 84) It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that in the first instance the river was described as Skinandi and the settlement at its mouth was named ëyrss-haukr which, in the course of time, was abbreviated as in the examples listed, and as the settlement grew in size and importance its name was extended to the river which flowed past it into the sea, the original description of the river possibly being restricted for a time to its upper reaches and eventually being lost as a river name.

The only other river-name in Caithness, Wick River (see W16(S)), is likewise derived from the name of the settlement at its mouth.

The modern Gaelic form Inbhir-Thörs, or Inbhir-Thòrsa as also occurs, would probably have been based on a comparatively late version of the name, by which time contraction from the original ëyrss-haukr would have occurred, and it is perfectly possibly that the Gaelic form could have been influenced by the Orkneyinga Saga form, whether Jörrs or Jörss which, in turn, could have been influenced by the identical Icelandic river-names.

So mains : see R32(S)
THUSATER : ND 06 NE: 068697
CLETT OF THUSATER : ND 07 SE: 066712
CLIFF OF THUSATER : " : 064711
THUSATER BURN : " : 165704
Local pronunciation: ['θustər]
ocasionally ['fju:stər]
Early refs:
Thursiter 1562-3 Sinclair (Mey)
Thursetter 1576 RMS
Fissater 1619 Sutherland (Forse)
Thurster 1646 Sinclair (Thurso)
Thursetter 1662 Blaeu
Thursatter 1680 Sinclair (Mey)
Clet of Thurster 1750 Dorret
Thuratther " Roy
Thuster 1796-7 Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:
Per Thorson suggests that this name is derived from ON ðjósersettr
(Thorson 1965, pages 4-5) but the earlier forms do not support this
interpretation.

More probable is another Norse personal name:
ON þjótr (Lind 1915, column 1226)
ON setr n.: see R33(S)
Cai clett : see R20(S)
So burn : see R4(S)

Modern pronunciation of this name is occasionally ['fjustər] and
the spelling Fissater (1619) appears to suggest a similar initial
fricative.

These forms could perhaps indicate that the origin of this name might
be *Þjós-setr where the first element (contracted from an earlier
form ðjós-hús) denotes a byre.

The personal name noted above, however, is a more likely specific,
particularly in view of the fact that early forms of a comparable
name in Wick Parish indicate that, on occasion, initial <th> could
be represented by <f>. (See W105(S))
TODHOLES : ND 16 SW: 127641
Local pronunciation: [t>d'hols]
Early refs: Todhole 1750 Roy
Todholes 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
So tod : a fox

TORDALE PARK : ND 06 NE: 068665
TORDALE BURN : " : 076661
Local pronunciation: [t>rdel]
Early refs: Tordaill 1619 RMS

Derivation:
The specific is uncertain but could be
ON torf n.: turf, peat
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
So 'burn : see Rh(S)

TURDALE : ND 16 NW: 135674
Local pronunciation: [t>rdel]
Early refs: Turdell-Croft 1592 RMS
Turdill 1661 "

Derivation:
The specific is problematical. It could possibly be derived from
ON jurr: dry
but the presence of Boggy Park Croft (see T10(S)) in the vicinity
makes this a doubtful suggestion, unless Boggy Park Croft is so
named by contrast with the neighbouring dry area.
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)

WAAS : ND 06 NE: 080664
NORTH WAAS : " : 082668
Local pronunciation: [wa:s]
Early refs: Waas 1841 Census
Derivation:
A very puzzling name. It also occurs in Orkney and Shetland and in both instances is derived from
ON vœgt m.: a vœ.
The Caithness Waas, however, is well inland and a direct derivation from ON vœgt m. would be inappropriate. There is, of course, a possibility that the place-name has been borrowed from Orkney but there is no proof of this.
Another remote possibility is
ON vœlgr m.: a field, + English pl -s,
but in Caithness, vœlgr usually appears as the final element in a compound name, and it normally takes the form -wel.

Westburn

Local pronunciation: ['westbArn]
Early refs: Westburn 1841 Census
Derivation:
The name describes a small farm on the west side of the Murkle Burn (see OL26(S)) opposite Burnside (see OL7(S)).

Weydale

Local pronunciation: ['ˌweɪdəl]
Early refs: Weddale 1545 RMS
Weddell " "
Wydell 1592 "
Wydall 1619 "
Wydaill 1671 Retours
Wyddale 1798 Book of Valuation
Weddle 1807 Arrowsmith
Weydale 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
There are three possibilities for the initial element

ON víaðr' wide
ON víaðr m. : a tree, timber
ON víaðr m.: willow
The most probable of these, given the situation, is
víaðr' : wide
(Icelandic Víðidalr is probably also from víaðr: wide, broad)
ON daðr m. : see R22(S)
Sc moss : see R7(S)
Sc mains : see R32(S)


Whitefield
: ND 16 NW: 106654
Local pronunciation: ['hwaitfild]
Early refs: Whytfield 1661 RM
Whitefield 1750 Roy
Whitefield 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:
White is often used in place-names to indicate a lighter shade of colour by comparison with some dark feature in the vicinity, rather than pure white. It may refer to the soil or to the vegetation.

White Moss
: ND 16 NE: 157652
Local pronunciation: ['hwait'moss]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
White : see T83(S)
Sc moss : see R7(S)

Youkil Quarry
: ND 16 NE: 155657
Youkil Hillock
: " : 153654
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON ñxì f.: the shoulder
( metaphorically, the shoulder of a hill)
(cf de Jokkel o‘ de Kuml – Muckle Roe, Shetland: Jakobsen 1901, page 169)
TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ALLTAN DOMHAIN : ND 06 NE: 057651 T1(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m.: see R1(S) + dimin -an
G domhain: deep

BACK BERRY : ND 07 SE: 109715 T2(T)
Local pronunciation: ['bakbæri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON bakki m.: 1) an eminence or ridge
2) a bank of a river
This element appears in Caithness place-nomenclature in the form
Back as above.
ON bery m.: a rock; elevated rocky ground
This element appears frequently in Caithness place-nomenclature
in the form Berry as above.

BELL MOUNT : ND 07 SE: 093703 T3(T)
Local pronunciation: ['belmaunt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Bell Mount is noted in the Inventory of Monuments as being the site
of a broch, now overgrown with turf, but there is no record which
might explain the reference to a bell.

BLACK CRAIG : ND 07 SE: 094714 T4(T)
Local pronunciation: name known only to a few very old fishermen
['blak 'krag]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc craig : see Rh6(S)
BLACK GEO : ND 07 SE: 107713  T5(T)
BLACK GEO : ND 17 SE: 155703
BLACK NESS : ND 07 SE: 109716
Local pronunciation: [blak 'gjo, 'nes]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Cai ness : see T13(S)

BLACK HILLOCK : ND 16 SW: 143613  T6(T)
Local pronunciation: [blak 'hifik]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As with G dubh, Eng black is used to indicate an indeterminate dark colour.

BLACK HOLE : ND 07 SE: 065710  T7(T)
Local pronunciation: [blak 'h2l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a small dark inlet of the sea.

BROAD SHOALS : ND 07 SE: 093714  T8(T)
NARROW SHOALS : " : 102716
Local pronunciation: ['brd shols, 'nar2 ...]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ME shoal : a place where the water is of little depth; a shallow;
a sand-bank or bar
Both names describe ledges of rock which jut out into the water making it shallow.
BROUGH, NECK OF  : ND 07 SE: 061711
Local pronunciation: [nək o 'brophy]
Early refs: Neck of Broch 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc broch, brough: a prehistoric structure found in Orkney and Shetland and the adjacent Scottish mainland, consisting of a round tower with inner and outer walls of stone. Broch is now accepted as a general archaeological term.
The Neck of Brough is a narrow section of rock jutting out from the mainland, with the remains of a broch still visible on it.

BURN MOUTH  : ND 07 SE: 105716
Local pronunciation: [barn muθ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name appears to be self-explanatory but it is rather strange in that there is no burn draining into the sea at this point and the name seems to describe a narrow section of water between the mainland and Clett (see T12(T).

CAIRNMORE HILLOCK  : ND 06 NE: 057673
Local pronunciation: [kern mor 'hʌlɔk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cărn m. : see R27(T)
G mór : see R11(S)
Cairnmore Hillock is an anglicised version of the original Gaelic.
CLEFT : ND 07 SE: 105716
Local pronunciation: [kilet]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett : see R20(T)

CLINKIN GEO : ND 17 SE: 157703
Local pronunciation: ['k1Ank4n gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So clinkin: making a clinking sound
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The name is probably onomatopoeic, referring to the sound of the waves.

CLIO : ND 16 NW: 114687
CLIO GEOS : " : 114687
Local pronunciation: ['klaio]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name is obviously imported and a local informant gave the following explanation which seems probable, although difficult to verify:
'The name describes a small rock said to be named after a "man-o'-war" called Clio which was stationed at Thurso for coastal defence during the Napoleonic war.'
According to another local informant The Clio is on the list of naval ships, from 1800 onwards, and was probably an armed sloop or cutter, as only the bigger ships are described on the list.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Cnoc na Feadaige: ND 06 NE: 072690
Local pronunciation: [mɔ́k nə ˈfɛdəɪ.ɪ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G feadaig (gen feadaige) f.
: a plover

Cnoc an Taillir: ND 16 SE: 155624
Local pronunciation: [nɔ́k ən ˈtəl.jər]
Early refs: Cnoc an Taillir 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
G tâilleir (gen tâilleir) m.
: a tailor
There seems to be no local knowledge of the identity of the tailor.

Crab Geò: ND 16 NW: 134698
Local pronunciation: [ˈkkrab ˈgjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent self-explanatory name.
Cai geò : see R54(T)

Craig Andrew: ND 07 SW: 029705
Local pronunciation: [ˈkreg ˈændru]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig : see R46(S)
There is a local story of a man named Andrew who was drowned here, but there is no written record of such a death.
CREAG BHUIDHE  :  ND 16 NW:  108707  
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
G creag f.:  see R46(S)  
G buidhe:  see R60(T)  

CREAGAN CAOL  :  ND 07 SW:  031707  
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
G creagan m.:  little rock, rocky place  
G caol:  see R75(T)  

DEVIL'S BRIDGE  :  ND 07 SE:  108715  
Local pronunciation:  ['dils 'bræg]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
The name describes a very impressive natural rock bridge on Holbourn Head (see T42(S)). As is often the case with astounding natural features, the locals have obviously assumed that the supernatural had a hand in its creation.  

EAST SLATE  :  ND 07 SW:  029707  
Local pronunciation:  ['ist slet]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
ON sléitr:  see R83(T)  
The name describes flat, sloping rocks leading down to the sea.  

......
ELLAN BRIDGE : ND 16 NW : 122683
Local pronunciation: ['elən brəg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
It is difficult to suggest a derivation without further early references.
Possibly
G àilean m.: green, plain, meadow
In local pronunciation the final element is
So brig : see R102(T)

FALCON CRAIG : ND 07 SE: 083712
Local pronunciation: ['fɔlkan krag]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Falcons still use this cliff as a nesting place.
So craig : see R46(S)

FIERCIE GEO : ND 16 NW: 142701
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The spelling suggests that the reference is to the fierce inrush of the sea at this point.
ON fyrsa : gush, stream in torrents is also a possibility but
English origin is more probable
Cai geo : see R54(T)

FISH SCALE : ND 07 SE: 107711
Local pronunciation: ['fiz skeil]
Modern pronunciation of this name has been influenced by the anglicised written form Fish Scale.
Early refs: Fischill in Thurso 1632 Retours
The Fishgill 1672 "
Fishill 1672 Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:
ON fiskr m.: a fish
ON gill m.: a deep, narrow channel in sea or river
Fishgill (1672) is probably so written by analogy with the many other names containing Cai gill (see R11(T)).

FISHY GEO : ND 16 NW: 128695
Local pronunciation: [ˈfuːsi ɡjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent self-explanatory name.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

GALLOW HILL : ND 16 SE: 153616
Local pronunciation: [ˈgɔlɔ hɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
One of several places said to have been the site of the gallows where some of those implicated in the murder of Bishop Adam in 1222 were hanged, by order of King Alexander II.
There is a chambered cairn on the hill and the tradition of the gallows probably built up around the cairn. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 120.)

GEO DIKE : ND 16 NW: 133697
Local pronunciation: [ɡjo ˈdæk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
So dike : a dry-stone wall

A dike above this geo was a well-known fisherman's mark or meith
(<ON miθ₃ n.) used to pinpoint a certain area of the sea which was
known to be an excellent fishing spot.

So meith/Cai meese, meese:
1) a fishing ground marked out with reference to the landmarks
   visible from it
2) a landmark used by fishermen when steering for home

.....

GEO HARRA : ND 07 SW: 035713
Local pronunciation: [gjo 'harrə]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The word order suggests that the second element in the compound may
be Gaelic, but it is obscure without further early references.

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GREEN SKERRY : ND 07 SB: 107712
GREEN HEAD : " : 067710
BACK GREEN SKERRY : " : 107712
Local pronunciation: ['grin 'skərri, ...'həd]
<Back Green Skerry> not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai skerry : see R151(T)
The situation of the two skerries suggests that Back is simply being
used to indicate behind.

.....
HAM BERRY : ND 07 SW: 043712
Local pronunciation: [ham 'bɛri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON hafn (hafn, hømn) f.
: a haven, harbour
This ON term occurs frequently in Caithness place-nomenclature in the form ham, as above.
The preferred description of a harbour in the eastern parishes of Caithness is the Norse-influenced Haven (of R55(S)).
Cai berry : see T2(T)


HERON CRAIG : ND 07 SE: 083713
Local pronunciation: ['hɛrən krag]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig : see R46(S)
A rock favoured as a fishing spot by herons.


HOS SKEPPIES : ND 16 NW: 109693
Local pronunciation: ['hɔs skɛri]
The local version of the name is singular rather than plural as on the 6" OS map.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
ON ðs m. : the mouth or outlet of a river
The element is common in place-names and there is a stream draining into the sea at this point.
Cai skerry: see R151(T)
JOHN LEED'S ROCK : ND 07 SE: 069712
Local pronunciation: ['d3ɔn 'lids 'l3k]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A local informant says that there have been generations of fishermen
called Leed in Thurso.
The name does not appear in Black's Surnames of Scotland, but it is
interesting to note that there is a northern So dialect word
leed : diligence

KYLE GEO : ND 07 SW: 047710
Local pronunciation: [/'kail gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc kyle : represents an approximation to the sound of
G caol : see R75(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

LIMPET GEO : ND 16 NW: 134699
Local pronunciation: [/'lɛmpet gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
An area with an abundant supply of limpets, once used for bait in
inshore fishing.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

LINTIE'S POOL : ND 06 NE: 098676
Local pronunciation: [/'lɛntis pul]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc lintie : the limnet
(General Sc except Shetland)
LIPPY GEO : ND 07 SW: 029702
Local pronunciation: ["li:pi 3jo]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Perhaps the simple explanation of a geo with a lip or overhanging edge is the correct one.  
Cai geo : see R54(T)

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LISS SKERRY : ND 07 SE: 054708
Local pronunciation: ["lies skeri]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Cai skerry : see R151(T)  
liess : obscure without earlier spellings

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LITTER, CRAIG OF : ND 07 SE: 082711  
LITTER, NESS OF : " : 078713  
Local pronunciation: ["litar]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So craig : see R46(S)  
Cai ness : see T13(S)  
Probably Eng litter indicating that the shore-line rocks were frequented by seals and their pups.  
(of ON láttr m. : the place where animals, especially seals, give birth to their young)

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LITTLE BURN : ND 16 SE: 161641
LITTLE CLETT : ND 07 SE: 107713
LITTLE EBB : ND 16 NW: 119689
LITTLE HEAD : ND 07 SE: 106705
Local pronunciation: [lɪt(ə)l'burn, 'klɛt, 'ɛb, 'heɪd]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Sc ebb : see T48(S)

LOCHAN BUIDHE : ND 06 NW: 037695
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G lochan m.: little lake, pool or pond
In Caithness G loch is feminine (cf R5(S)) but the diminutive lochan is masculine and, therefore, does not require lenition of the following adjective.
G buidhe : see R60(T)

LONG GEO : ND 07 SE: 062708
Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ gəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
LONG RIGGING : ND 07 SE: 107711
Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ 'rɪɡɪŋ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc rigging: 1) the back-bone or spine
and by analogy 2) the top, summit or highest crest of any object

......

LONG ROCK : ND 07 SE: 074712
LONG SKERRIES : ND 16 NW: 121691
Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ 'rɔk, ... 'skɛris]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

......

LOUPAG : ND 16 NW: 108709
Local pronunciation: [ˈlaʊpəɡ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Difficult without earlier spellings. One likely source is
G lùb f. : a bend, curve + dimin -ag
This description fits the situation and there are other Gaelic names
in the immediate vicinity (eg Creag Bhuidhe (see T19(T)).
On the other hand, the initial element may simply be
So loup : a leap, plus a diminutive ending
and the name may have applied to a fishing rock, but this suggestion
would have been more probable had the English definite article
appeared in the name.
LYTHE CRAIG : ND 16 NW: 107706
Local pronunciation: [ˈlaɪθ kraɪg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc lythe : the pollack
Lythe is a variant form of ON lyt-th m. with final -the from Sc saithe, another species of coal-fish.
Sc saithe : the full-grown coal-fish in its third, or, in some places, its fourth year
Sc craig : see R46(S)

MARL MOSS : ND 16 SE: 159631
Local pronunciation: [mɔl 'moʊs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
An area where marl, a limy clay, was dug for use as fertiliser on the fields.
Sc moss : see R7(S)

MURPHY'S CRAIG : ND 16 NW: 143703
Local pronunciation: [ˈmʌrfiθ kraɪg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Local legend says that a man named Murphy was drowned here but it is not verifiable.
Sc craig : see R46(S)

NEB POINT : ND 16 NW: 108693
Local pronunciation: [nɛb 'poʊnt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc neb : any pointed tip or projection. Sometimes used in place-names of a piece of land, rock etc. The tautologous Eng Point has been added subsequently.
Needle Eye

: ND 16 NW: 109692

Local pronunciation: [nidl 'i]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The name describes a pillar of rock. "Eye" suggests that it may, at some time in the past, have had a hole near the top which has since broken off.


Ness Berry

: ND 07 SW: 040716

Local pronunciation: [ˈnes ëri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Cai ness: see T13(S)

Cai berry: see T2(T)


Pocket's Geo

: ND 16 NW: 127695

Local pronunciation: [ˈpɔːkəts ˈgjo]

Early refs: Pockets Geo 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
A puzzling name, and the confusion regarding the use or otherwise of an apostrophe indicates that the map-makers found it equally puzzling. A local story says that the Geo was named Pockets after an old lady who used to collect dulse there, keeping it in a capacious pocket until she later sold it in the streets of Thurso.
POOLS ON RIVER THURSO

Boat Pool:
ND 16 SW 123642 [‘bot pul]

Cairn Pool:
ND 16 SW 125633 [‘kern pul]

Upper Commissary Pool:
ND 16 NW 109657 [‘kumər ‘koməsəri pul]

Lower Commissary Pool:
ND 16 NW 109662 [loər ‘koməsəri pul]
Apparently the commissar or commissary once lived in Whitefield farmhouse.

Corner Pool:
ND 16 SW 138617 [‘kumər pul]

Fence Pools:
ND 16 SW 117645 [‘fens pul]
Where a fence meets the River Thurso.

Finlayson's Pool:
ND 16 SW 119643 [‘fənlesəns pul]

Geise Pool:
ND 16 NW 114662 [giz pul] (see T35(S))

Geise Stream Pool:
ND 16 NW 112653 [giz .. pul] (see T35(S))

Upper Horse Pool:
ND 16 SW 140625 [‘apər hərs pul]

Lower Horse Pool:
ND 16 SW 134627 [loər hərs pul]

Jenny Jock's Pool:
ND 16 SW 142619 [tʃəni tʃəks pul]
There is no local knowledge of the identity of Jenny Jock.
John's Pool:
ND 16 NW 113672 ['tjʊns pul]
Perhaps a favoured fishing pool.

Mill Pool:
ND 16 SW 122642 ['mɪl pul]
The reference is to Buckies Mill (see T15(S)).

Red Brae Pool:
ND 16 SW 141618 ['rɛd 'bre pul]

Salmon Pool:
ND 16 NW 114670 ['sæmən pul]
The River Thurso was once renowned for its salmon - regrettably not so plentiful today.

Stone Pool:
ND 16 SW 116646 ['stɔn pul]

Sulags Pool:
ND 16 SW 137611 ['sʊlægs pul]
A puzzling name. Perhaps an alternative spelling for G suileag f. which can refer to the common sallow or willow.

Old Water Mark Pool:
ND 16 SW 136627 [old 'wɔtər mark pul]
Possibly a flood mark at the side of the pool or a wooden marker in the pool to indicate the fluctuating depth of the water.

Well Pool:
ND 16 SW 127631 ['wɛl pul]
The reference is to a spring on the river bank.

PUDDING GEO : ND 17 SE 153703
Local pronunciation: ['pʊdɪŋ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Locals have no explanation of this strange name.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
QUAY GEO : ND 16 NW: 127696
LITTLE QUAY GEO : " : 126695
Local pronunciation: ["ki gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is not to man-made quays but to rocks suitably situated for use as loading places.

RAE BERRY : ND 07 SE: 108714
EAST RAEBERRY : ND 17 SE: 151703
WEST RAEBERRY : ND 16 NW: 148703
RAEBERRY GEO : " : 145703
Local pronunciation: ['rebəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
ON ra f. : see R63(S)
Cai berry : see T2(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

RAVEN'S HILL : ND 06 NE: 069692
Local pronunciation: ['revəns hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory. Probably a recent name in that the Sc dialect word corbie is not used for raven.

RED GEO : ND 07 SW: 047708
Local pronunciation: ['ræd gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is to red sandstone.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
ROBERTSON'S HOLE : ND 07 SE: 102716  
ROBERTSON'S POINT : " : 103717  
Local pronunciation: [ˈroʊbərtson ˈpɔɪnt]  
<Robertson's Hole> not known to my informants  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
A Robertson family apparently lived in Holbornhead Farm (see T42(S)) during the 19th century and their name has lingered in the topography.

ROCK WELL : ND 16 NW: 113688  
ROCKWELL POINT : " : 113689  
Local pronunciation: [ˈrkwel]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
The Rock Well is a spring of fresh water at the foot of the cliff.

ROSSY HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 155699  
Local pronunciation: [ˈrɔsi ˈhɪlsk]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation: Possibly  
ON hross m.: a horse  
(In Shetland russ- is found as the first part in place-names of pastures or places formerly used as pastures for horses; eg Russahul, Burrafirth ON *hrossa-hóll: Jakobsen 1932, page 730.)

RUMBLING GEOS : ND 07 SE: 107716  
Local pronunciation: [ˈrʌmblɪŋ ˈgjoʊs]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
There are blow holes in the cliff at the head of this geo, and the name refers to the noise of the sea as it gushes into the subterranean caves.
SAMSON'S FOOTMARK : ND 16 NW: 114688
SAMSON'S COACH HOUSE: " : 113689
Local pronunciation: [samsɔ̃s 'futmarks, ... 'kotʃhaus]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Recent names describing rocks on the west side of Thurso sands.
Perhaps the reference is to size.

SANDY GEO : ND 07 SW: 143713
Local pronunciation: ['sandi ɐ];
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:

SCARDACH, THE : ND 16 SW: 142632
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a deep gully, dry for most of the year, with loose stones on the sloping sides. A scree slope is normally G sgàirmeach m. but Dwelly lists a variant with medial <d> from Gairloch, which probably also accounts for this name: G sgàirdeach, subsequently anglicised by the addition of the definite article.

SCARDEN GEO : ND 07 SW: 049708
Local pronunciation: ['skardɛn ɐ];
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably a variant of T67(T).
Cai geo : see R54(T)
SCARF ROCK : ND 07 SE: 109713  T69(T)
SCARF GEOS  : "    : 108714
SCARF CRAIG : "    : 079711
Local pronunciation: ['skarf rɔk, ... gjoa, ... krag]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
Cai scarf : see R145(T)
Cai geo  : see R54(T)
Sc craig : see R46(S)
The cormorants still frequent this area.

SCOTTIE GEO : ND 07 SE: 083712  T70(T)
Local pronunciation: ['skɔtti gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
There is a cave at the inner end of this geo, which might suggest
ON skɔtti m.: a cave formed by jutting rocks
On the other hand, the surrounding names are predominantly English
and recent, and the reference may simply be to a Scotsman, without
the apostrophe <'s> which one would expect.
Cai geo  : see R54(T)

SHOTTIE GEO : ND 07 SE: 077713  T71(T)
Local pronunciation: ['ʃɔtti gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
The reference may be to the violent sound of the sea as the waves
break in the geo.
Cai geo  : see R54(T)

SINCLAIR’S GEO : ND 16 NW: 108708  T72(T)
Local pronunciation: ['sɪnklɔrs gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
Sinclair is a very common name in Caithness, and there is no local
knowledge of this particular Sinclair.
SKATE BACK: ND 07 SE: 071711
Local pronunciation: [ˈsketbak]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a flat, rounded rock and the comparison is with the skate (ON skata f.), a fish which has a similarly flat shape. The final element is probably Eng back, used figuratively but it could be Cai back (see T2(T)).

SLOPING HEAD: ND 07 SE: 073711
Local pronunciation: [ˈsloʊŋ hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory

SPEAR HEAD: ND 07 SE: 097716
THE SPEARS: "": 093712
Local pronunciation: [ˈspɛr hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Spear Head: a long, tapering headland
The Spears: tapering rocks jutting out into the sea

STEINIE GEO: ND 16 NW: 131697
Local pronunciation: [ˈstaini ɡeo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc steinie: stoney
Cai geo: see R54(T)
**TANG, POINTS OF**

Local pronunciation: ['pəints ə tæŋ]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

**Derivation:**

ON *tangi* m.: a spit of land, a point projecting into the sea or river; borrowed into G as *teanga* f. and appearing in Caithness place-names in the form *tang*.

Sc *lug* : a projecting part; of Scandinavian origin, in an original sense of an appendage.

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**THE ARK**

Local pronunciation: ['a: ərk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

**Derivation:**

Sc *ark* : an arch

The sea has bored a hole through the cliff at this point, leaving an arch-shaped column of rock still attached to the land.

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**THE BINKS**

Local pronunciation: ['bɪŋks, 'lʌl bɪŋks]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

**Derivation:**

Sc *binks* : shelves of rock

(Sc *bink* is a late form of *benk*: a bench)

Known to fishermen as *The Maast Binks*: the shelves where seagulls sit.

Sc *maa* (also *maw, mawe*)

: a mew, seagull especially the common gull

Also, less commonly, the black-headed gull and the herring gull.
THE BRIGS : ND 07 SE: 106716
Local pronunciation: [ˈbriɡs]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Sc brig : a bridge  
The name appears to refer to ground which bridges over caves.

THE CROOK : ND 16 NW: 120688  
Local pronunciation: [ˈkrʊk]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So crook (a late variant of cruke) : a curve or bend  
The name applies to part of the shore visible at low water.

THE DOOCOT : ND 17 SE: 152703  
Local pronunciation: [ˈdʊkət]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So doocot : dovecote  
The name does not apply to a man-made structure, but refers to the fact that rock pigeons are plentiful here.

THE DULLS : ND 07 SE: 059711  
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation: Obscure  
The reference is to some small isolated rocks.
THE HOLMS: ND16 NW: 142701  
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
ON hólms n.: a holm, islet, especially in a bay, creek, lake or river  
The name describes points of rock which look like small islands at low-tide.  
The name is frequently anglicised in Cai place-names by the addition of the definite article and Eng pl <s>.  


THE KILN: ND07 SE: 069711  
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Eng kiln: found in place-names describing a chasm in the rocks communicating with the sea by a tunnel. So-called from its resemblance to the construction of a kiln.


THE KIST: ND17 SE: 153704  
Local pronunciation: [ɒ 'kɪst]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So kist: a chest, coffin  
In this instance the reference is to a coffin-shaped rock.  


THE LOOPS: ND07 SE: 108715  
Local pronunciation: [ɒ 'luːps]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Eng loop: describing the undulating indentation of the coastline.
THE MUIRREACHES : ND 16 NW: 145702
Local pronunciation: [ðæ 'miurəxəs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a flat stretch of rock by the shore which suggests
that it is an anglicisation of
G maorach (gen maoraich) m.
  : 1) shell-fish in general
     2) fishing-bait such as limpets
Alternatively, it could be derived from
G Murchadh (gen Murchaidh)
  : Murdoch

......

THE POWS : ND 16 NW: 144702
Local pronunciation: [ðæ 'paus]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc pow has two possible interpretations.
1) Sc pow (also powe)
   : Sc form of obsolete Eng poll - the head of a human
      being or animal, figuratively applied to the correspond-
      ing part in a variety of inanimate objects; the tip of
      a mountain top, rock or the like.
2) Sc pow : a pool of water, generally a shallow or marshy one
In Caithness place-names when Sc pow appears with the definite
article and Eng plural <-s> it is normally being used in the first
sense to describe rocks which only appear above the surface of the
sea at low tide.

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THE SHOPS : ND 07 SE: 060709
Local pronunciation: [ðæ 'ʃɔps]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a row of small caves near sea-level which are said
to resemble a row of shops, as seen from the sea.

......
THE SLATES : ND 16 NW: 125693
Local pronunciation: [ˈsɛlts]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON sléttir : see R83(T)

THE TURRETS : ND 07 SE: 092714
Local pronunciation: [ˈtərəts]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Eng turret describing small tower-shaped rocks

TORRAN DUBH : ND 06 NE: 056698
Local pronunciation: [ˈtoran ˈdu]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G tòrr m. : see R2(T) + dimin -an
G dubh : see R23(S)
The name applies to a burnt mound.

USHAT HEAD : ND 07 SW: 032712
USHAT GEO : " : 032710
Local pronunciation: [ˈuʃət həd, ... gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
So ushet (also ushat, oshit)
: dingy grey in colour
This description is normally applied to wool. The word appears in the modern Norwegian dialect as hys(k)jutt: flecked with dull colours, grey-mottled.
Gai geo : see R54(T)
WOLF BURN : ND 16 NW: 103682
Local pronunciation: ['wulf bərn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There may have been a legend of wolves in the area, but it has not survived.
This burn becomes the Burnside Burn in its lower reaches. Presumably this name variation is due to the fact that there was once a croft known as Burnside because of its proximity to Wolf Burn, and although the croft has now vanished its name has been retained for that part of the Wolf Burn beside which it was situated. (cf Wolf Gill G130(T).)
Burnside is listed as a settlement in the 1841 Census.

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Olrig is the smallest of the six parishes. It lies to the south of Dunnet Bay and is mostly improved land since few parts of the parish exceed 100 metres in height. The underlying rock is old red sandstone.

The most notable feature of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century economy was the quarrying of sandstone 'flags' for paving, building, roofing and field boundary markers. The quarrying industry caused a great expansion in the settlement of Castletown which now has a population of 956, as recorded in the 1981 Census. Most of the stone was shipped from Castletown, Thurso and Scrabster.

The remainder of the parish is similar to Thurso in that it has a dispersed farm-settlement pattern.

There is no local memory of Gaelic-speaking inhabitants in either Olrig Parish or neighbouring Dunnet Parish, which lies to the east. Olrig Parish is bounded on the south by Bower Parish.
SETTLEMENT NAMES
BIGGINS : ND 16 NE: 166683  
Local pronunciation: [ˈbɪgɪnz]  
Early refs: Biggins 1807 Arrowsmith  
Derivation:  
So biggin : a building  
(<ON bygging f.  
: habitation)  
When the word appears as a place-name element it is most frequently plural, describing a cluster of buildings; in this case a farmhouse and associated buildings with a smithy next door. It was quite common at one time in Orkney for a number of farmhouses to be grouped very closely together - perhaps for mutual assistance. Hence the term Biggings as a name applied to a group of houses. (Old Lore Miscellany, Vol VII)

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BIRKLE HILL : ND 26 NW: 204657  
BIRKLEHILL QUARRY : ND 16 NE: 199656  
Local pronunciation: [ˈbɪrkəl]  
Early refs: 1876 6th OS  
Derivation:  
ON birki, n. collective = björk f.  
: birch, in compounds  
The generic may be  
ON höll m.: a hill, hillock,  
but lack of early references makes it impossible to be certain. The English word hill would have been added, once understanding of the original Norse compound faded.

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...
BORGIE MAINS : ND 16 SE: 198649
BORGIE HOUSE : ND 16 NE: 193672
Local pronunciation: ['bɔrgi]
Early refs: Borgye 1622 Sinclair (Mey)
Borgie 1632 "
Borgy 1831 Thomson
Borguie 1841 Census

Derivation:
ON borg f.: a small dome-shaped hill + dimin ie
The reference is probably to a broch although it is not obvious today. (cf R32(S))
Sc mains : see R32(S)

BOUGHTS : ND 16 NE: 157678
Local pronunciation: ['bɔxts]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc bocht, bought, bucht
: a sheep-fold, a milking fold for ewes
(<Flem bocht, bucht
: enclosure for swine, sheep etc)
The name now refers to a small croft.

BRAE-EDGE : ND 16 NE: 177675
Local pronunciation: ['bre ˈɛdʒ]
Early refs: Brea-Edge 1841 Census
Derivation:
The name describes a small farm on the slopes of the Hill of Clindrag, and some older people refer to the farm as Clindrag ['klʌndrag]. (see OL4(T)
BROYNACH : ND 16 NE: 153673
GILL OF BROYNACH : " : 154669
DAM OF BROYNACH : ND 16 NW: 148669
Local pronunciation: [ˈbɜːrnɪnəx]

Early refs: Broynach 1549 Sinclair (Moy)
Bronoch 1612 Sinclair (Muckle)
Bronoch 1616 RMS
Broynoch 1658 "
Broynoc 1662 Blaeu
Broynach 1693 Retours
Broynack 1753 Sutherland (Forse)
Crofts of Broynach 1877 6" OS

Derivation: Of Gaelic origin. Possibly G braon (gen braoin) m.
: dew, rain + adjectival -ach
In this instance G braon is being used to indicate the wetness of the soil. The Dam of Broynach appears to have been a boggy area which retained water in wet weather, rather than a man-made structure.
The word does occur as a place-name element elsewhere, in Loch a' Braoin (Parish of Loch Broom, Ross and Cromarty).
Cai gill : see R11(T)

BURNSIDE : ND 16 NE: 153867
Local pronunciation: [bɜrn'saɪd]

Early refs: Burnesyde 1635 RMS
Burnesye 1653 Retours
Burnsyde 1696 "
Burnesye 1662 Blaeu
Burnside 1750 Roy
Murkle Burn Side 1841 Census

Derivation:
Burnside is a very popular place-name throughout Scotland, indicating the croft or dwelling beside the burn; in this case the Murkle Burn. (see OL26(S))
CASTLEHILL : ND 16 NE: 197684
CASTLEHILL HOUSE : " : 197685
CASTLETOWN : " : 195680
CASTLETOWN QUARRY : " : 193684
UPPER CASTLETOWN QUARRY: " : 187683
Local pronunciation : [kas'tIuZI ,
Early refs: Casteltown 1586 Sinclair (Mey)
Castlehill 1722 . Sinclair (Preswick)
New Town of Castlehill 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:
A puzzling factor in the interpretation of this name is that there is no trace today of the eponymous castle.

There is a broch at Castlehill (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 87), but it seems an improbable source for the name. An alternative suggestion is that the Shelly Hillock, an ancient kitchen midden, could have been mistaken for the ruins of an old stronghold. (Omand 1972, page 225)

Castletown grew into a large village in the early 19th century due to the quarrying of Caithness flagstone in the area at the institution of Sheriff James Traill, proprietor of Castlehill House. (Omand & Porter 1981, page 4)

The first shipment of stone left the newly built Castlehill Harbour in 1825, but Arrowsmith's reference to the New Town of Castle Hill in 1807 shows that the process of expansion began some years earlier.

COOMB'S KIRK, ST. : ND 26 NW: 208683
Local pronunciation: ["ku ms kARK]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The name refers to the site where a church dedicated to St. Columba is believed to have stood, on the boundary between the parishes of Olrig and Dunnet. Tradition says that the building and adjoining manse were one night overwhelmed by sand during a terrible gale.
(Mackinlay 1904, page 135)
COULAG : ND 16 NE: 199669
Local pronunciation: [tkaleg]
Early refs: Coulag 1841 Census
Derivation:
The name applies to a derelict croft and it is difficult to suggest a derivation without further early references. Possibly G cùil f.: a corner nook + dimin -ag

DRAGS MOSS : ND 16 NE: 194658
DRAGSMOSS QUARRY : " : 197655
Local pronunciation: ['drags mos]
Early refs: Dregs Moss 1726 , Macfarlane
Derivation:
The reference is probably to the "dragging" of peat by cart, or some other method, from the soft moor where it was cut, to a firmer area where it could be stacked prior to being transported home.
(Sc drèg = Eng drag)
One Sc usage of drag is defined as follows:
"A drag" is a small load which is emptied on some hard place where the horse can move freely and then the carter goes back for a second drag, and fills the load with the one taken first.
Early refs:  Deren 1559  OPS, Sutherland Charters
        Derane 1561-6 OPS, Book of Assumptions
        Diren 1564  RMS
        Diran 1581  "
        Dirane 1601  "
        Dirain 1616  "
        Dorain 1619  "
        Diren 1605  Retours
        Diren 1629  Sinclair (Mey)
        Deeren 1662  Blaeu
        Loch Deeren  "  "
        Durren 1665  Reay Papers
        Loch of Dyron 1726  Macfarlane
        Duren 1789  Ainslie
        Duran 1793-4  O S A
        Loch Duran  "  "
        Durin 1807  Arrowsmith
        Duran 1832  Thomson
        Loch Duran  "  "

Derivation:
In spite of the numerous early forms it is very difficult to suggest a derivation for this name with any degree of certainty.

Early spellings and present pronunciation suggest a front vowel in the initial syllable which, in Gaelic, would cause palatalisation of the initial consonant [d]>[d3]. Since this palatalisation is not present it would seem reasonable to argue that the language of origin is Norse and that the name may be derived from:
ON dy<n. : a bog
ON rein f. : a strip of land

The Loch of Durran has now been drained, but its earlier presence would have justified the description bog.

Sc mains  : see R32(S)
Sc ha' : hall
Sc burn : see Rh4(S)
FRYSSTER
Local pronunciation: ['fristi:zr]
Early refs: Fryster 1798 Book of Valuation
Fryster 1877 6" OS
Derivation:
Very doubtful. It is possible that the specific represents the
name of the Norse god Frey but lack of early references makes this
simultaneously difficult to prove and improbable.
ON setr n.: see R33(S)
(Olsen mentions a similar name in Norway, Frysset: *Frøsetr or
*Frøvjustr, from the name of the god Frey or the goddess Freyja.)
(Olsen 1928, page 220)
More probable, although equally difficult to prove without earlier
forms, is that the specific represents
ON Fri/li m.: a personal name (Lind 1915, column 287)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 87)

GARTH
Local pronunciation: [garθ]
Early refs: Garth 1750 Roy
Garth 1841 Census
Lower Garth " "
Derivation:
ON garth m.: a yard, enclosure
(ON garth is uncommon in the northern parishes of Caithness, by
comparison with Orkney and Shetland where it is of frequent
occurrence. Presumably it had lost its popularity as a toponymic
by the time Caithness was settled by the Norse.)
So burn : see Rhj(S)

GOTHGILL
Local pronunciation: [gɑθlɪgəl]
Early refs: Gothgil 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The initial element is doubtful without further early references. Possibly of the same origin as
Norw gota : a fissure; a narrow rent in the landscape
(<ON gata f.: a way, path)
Cai gill : see R11(T)

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HARLAND GARDENS : ND 16 NE: 197676
Local pronunciation: [ˈharland]
Early refs: Harland 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
           Harland 1565 
           Harland 1587 RMS
           Harland 1661 
           Harland 1644 Retours
           Burn of Harland 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:
Sc hard : hard, referring to difficulty of cultivation
Sc land : see T49(S)
It is impossible to be certain that this is an OSc rather than an ON name because the elements are practically identical in both languages.
ON hartr : hard (also with reference to difficulty of cultivation)
ON land : land
The final consonant of the specific would have been subject to elision in the case of either har(d) or har(ə).
(OSc has hard as an adjective from c1400)
The modern name Harland Gardens might be thought to place doubt on an interpretation which suggests that the area is difficult to cultivate, but modern drainage schemes and improved agricultural techniques have greatly altered the potential of the land.
Gardens is, of course, a recent addition to the original name Harland.

......
Hayfield 16 NE: 194665
Local pronunciation: [‘haɪfild]
Early refs: Hayfield 1841 Census
Derivation: A recent self-explanatory name.

Hillclay 16 SE:
Hillclay Mains 16 SE:
Local pronunciation: [‘hɪlkli]
Early refs: Hollaclyth 1622 Sinclair (Mey) Holloclayt 1632 " Moss of Hallyclay 1726 Macfarlane Hilly-Clay 1841 Census
Derivation:
It is impossible to suggest a derivation for this name because there is so much variation in the early spellings, but the name is almost certainly of Norse origin. The modern spelling and pronunciation of the first syllable of the name has probably been influenced by English hill, and the final syllable by English clay.
Sc mains: see R32(S)

Hoy 26 SW:
Local pronunciation: [hɔi]
Early refs: Hoy 1662 Blaeu Hoy 1750 Roy Hoy 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Given the inland situation it is most unlikely that this name should have the same derivation as Hoy in Orkney (ON háey: high island, Marwick 1952, page 178).
It is perhaps possible that the name was imported from Orkney but the fact that it occurs more than once in inland Caithness suggests that it probably has a different source, and that it describes some recurrent feature of the landscape or agriculture.
Olsen refers to Høiland (South-Western Norway) which contains ON hey n.: hay (Olsen 1928, page 237). This would seem a probable source of the Caithness name, but for the fact that ON hey rarely occurs as a simplex name. (Olaf Rygh 1898, page 59) Rygh also mentions ON haugi (dat. form of haugr: a mound) as a possible source of Hvie (Olaf Rygh 1898, page 59), and this could also be taken into consideration for the Caithness Hoy names.

KIRKFIELD: ND 16 NE: 186658
Local pronunciation: ['kArkfeld]
Early refs: Kirkfield 1661 RMS
         Kirkfield 1667 "
         Kirkfield 1671 Retours
Derivation:
Sc kirk: see T27(S)
The nearest church appears to be about three-quarters of a mile to the north of this field, but the produce of certain fields was allocated to the minister of the local church and this was probably such a field.

LOCHQUOY: ND 16 SE: 198643
Local pronunciation: [lɔx 'kwI]?
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai quoy: see T22(S)
The loch referred to is the Loch of Durran, now drained. (For Durran see OL12(S).)

LOCHSIDE: ND 26 NW: 212659
Local pronunciation: [lɔx'said]
Early refs: the Lochsyde 1661 RMS
           Lochside 1752 Sinclair (Ulster)
           Lochside 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

The presence of the definite article in the 1661 reference indicates that the name was originally more general in its application, referring to an area rather than a specific croft. Again the reference is to the Loch of Durran, now drained (see OL21(S)), but the present occupant of Lochside points out that the depression in the ground still fills up with water in wet winters and becomes a loch again.

MAYFIELD FARM: ND 16 NE: 157667
For Mayfield: see T51(S)

METHOW HILLOCK: ND 16 NE: 163699
THE METHOW: ND 17 SE: 163702
METHOW CLETT: " : 162701
Local pronunciation: ['meθoʊ ʔhuːlæk]
Early refs: Mythil 1662 Blaeu

Derivation:
Methow Hillock is "a large grassy mound which has been under cultivation and ploughed down to some extent. Beyond being artificial, its character is indefinite." (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 88)

ON mid : middle
ON haut : see T44(S)

Mythil (1662) is probably an abbreviation of Methow Hill.
The Methow: a flat stretch of rock on the coast near Methow Hillock
Cai clett: see R20(S)

MILL FARM: ND 16 SE: 192634
MILLHILL BRIDGE: ND 26 NW: 201673
Local pronunciation: ['mil ʔhaɪl]
Early refs: Milnhill 1664 RMS
Millhill 1750 Roy
Millhill 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Millhill now refers to a slight hill beside the burn which fed the mill at Castletown. There was once a farm known as Millhill.

......

MURKLE, MAINS OF : ND 16 NE: 166696
MURKLE BAY : " : 169695
MURKLE BURN : " : 157673
EAST MURKLE : " : 174687
WEST MURKLE : " : 152696 (TP)
BRIDGE OF MURKLE : " : 153682 (TP)
Local pronunciation: ['mʌrkəl]
Early refs: Myrkhol 0200 Orkneyinga Saga
Estir Murkill 1549 RSS
Murkill 1566 "
Murkyll 1566 Sinclair (Mey)
Barland of Murgill 1573 "
Murkill 1527 RMS
Eistsyde de Murkill 1579 "
Murkill 1593 "
Barland de Murkill 1593 "
Brodlandis de Murkill 1606 "
Mierkill 1609 "
Murkall 1616 "
Murkill-be-West 1658 "
Murkill-be-East 1658 "
Murkle 1661 "
Murkill 1574 Retours
Murckle 1671 "
Braidland de Murkle 1671 "
Murkle 1750 Roy
Murkle 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON myrk : dark
ON h6ll m.: see OL2(S)
The proliferation of references to this name can be partly explained by the fact that the land in the area belonged to the Sinclair Earls
and since it was good agricultural land it was used to provide supplies for their table.

Barland

Brodlandis < Bordland: see R31(S)

Braidland

(The Sinclair (Mey) 1573 reference which suggests that the final element is ON gil (see R11(T)) is an isolated variant.)

So burn : see Rh4(S)

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OLRIG, MAINS OF : ND 16 NE: 183666

OLRIG HOUSE : " : 186663

HILL OF OLRIG : " : 175656

OLRIG CEMETERY : " : 187672

NETHERSIDE : " : 194663

Local pronunciation: ['olrig]

Early refs: Olrich 1223-45 OPS, Sutherland Charters

Olric 1275 OLM, Bagimond's Roll

Olryk 1435 OLM

Olryk 1595 Mercator

Olrik 1595 RMS

Olrick 1636 "

Nethersyde of Olrick 1661 "

Oversyde of Olrick 1661 "

Olrig 1631 Sinclair (Mey)

Nethersydolrik 1644 Retours

Olrick 1671 "

Olrigg 1726 Macfarlane

Olerick 1726 "

Olirigg 1726 "

Hill of Olirgge 1726 "

Olerick Kirk 1750 Roy

Olrick 1807 Arrowsmith

Olrig 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

A difficult name in spite of the unusually early references.
Possibly ON m. : the alder tree, ON rich, in the sense
that alder trees were plentiful in this area.
The early forms seem to suggest ON riákr rather than ON hrygg rónica.
A ridge. Final<g>first appears in 1631 and possibly arises as a
result of influence from the common Sc term rig (also rögg, rögg,
rigs): a strip of ploughed land. The final consonant is invariably
[g] in modern pronunciation.
The name Oversyde of Olrick (1661) is not in use today, but Netherside
survives as a name in its own right, being no longer described as
Netherside of Olrig.
So nether: now used mainly in place-names of the lower-sited of
two roads, farms etc.
Nether is a common place-name element throughout NE Scotland but
its opposite now tends to be Upper rather than Over which is
possibly an anglicisation of ON yfir: above, over.
Nether also has a Norse equivalent, ON nátr (comparative of nádr:
down).
It is possible, therefore, that Netherside and Overside were
originally Norse names - the final element being ON saftr: see R33(S) -
and that they have been subsequently anglicised.
So mains: see R32(S)

QUARRYSIDE : ND 16 NE: 182682
QUARRYSIDE COTTAGE : ND 16 NE: 177683
Local pronunciation: [ˈkwɪrəs] 'said'
Early refs: Quarrybiggins 1750 Roy
Quarryside 1841 Census
Derivation:
A comparatively recent self-explanatory English name.
The Quarry in question appears to be the Upper Castletown Quarry.
For Roy's Quarrybiggins of OL1(S).

REDLANDS, WELL OF : ND 16 NE: 165688
Local pronunciation: [ˈrɛdlænz]
Early refs: Redbyres 1750 Roy
Redbyres 1807 Arrowsmith
Redlands 1845 2nd Stat Acc
Derivation:
Redbyres and Redlands appear to refer to the same place, a farm in Olrig parish which has disappeared and only the well now bears the name. In names of this type the reference is usually to reddish soil but the soil in this area does not appear to be particularly red, which is puzzling.

\[
\text{So } \text{land} + \text{pl } -s
\]

: see Th9(S)

So byre : cowshed (Northern emE byre, hirre (1521))

......

**SIBMISTER**
: ND 16 NE: 165662

**CAIRN OF SIBMISTER**
: " : 166663

Local pronunciation: [sibmaste]r

Early refs: Subambustar 1564 RMS

Subambuster 1581 "

Subamster " "

Subamister 1587 "

Subamuster 1661 "

Subaminster " "

Subamister 1604 Retours

Subanister 1605 "

Sibbanister 1671 "

Sebbuster 1662 Blaeu

Subamister 1632 Sinclair (Mey)

Sibmister 1753 Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:
The specific is possibly

ON sunnan : southerly, applied to direction without motion
(with [n] > [m] > [b] under the influence of the initial [b] of <bólsta> r)

(of Symbister, Whalsay, Shetland < ON sumn-bólsta: south farm/homestead. (Jakobsen 1897, page 111))

Sibmister is situated inland on a north-facing slope and the above description is very appropriate.

ON bólsta m.: see R21(S)

......
STANGERGILL : ND 16 NE: 196676
STANGERGILL BURN : " : 197678
STANGERGILL BRIDGE : " : 197677

Local pronunciation: ['stæŋəɡəl]

Early refs: Stangergill 1573 Sinclair (Mey)
Stangergill 1616 "
Staninggill 1644 "
Stangergill 1587 RMS
Stanerggill 1636 "
Strangergill 1667 "
Stangergill 1604 Retours
Stangerigill 1644 "

Burn of Stangregill 1726 Macfarlane
Stangrigill 1750 Roy
Stangergel 1793 OSA

Derivation:
The specific is possibly
ON steinn m.: see R20(S),
in its nominative plural form steinar.
The <g> which is so persistent in the orthographic representation
of the specific is absent from modern pronunciation, which is
always ['stanər ..].
The presence of the <g> in the orthography can, perhaps, be explained
by drawing attention to the Gaelic word stang m.: a ditch, trench
which might be thought an appropriate description of a shallow gill.
(Cai gill: see R11(T)) With this word in mind and with a follow-
ing<g> in the generic, duplication of the <g> would be a very
probable occurrence.
Alternatively, it is possible that this is a name which, in its
original form, had more than two components. As Magne Oftedal has
pointed out it is difficult to trace the elements in names which
have more than two components "in view of the strong reduction in
phonological bulk which long Norse names have undergone" in areas
where Gaelic has been spoken. (Oftedal 1980, page 183)
It is possible that Stangergill contains:
ON steinn m.: see R20(S)
ON gātdr m.: see OL14(S)
ON gill n.: see R11(T)

......
STONEGUN : ND 16 NE: 158656  OL32(S)
STONEGUN QUARRIES : " : 158658
Local pronunciation: ['stongUn kw-a-ris]
Early ref's: Stone Gunn 1841 Census
             Stonegunn Quarries 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
This is probably an example of an "inversion-compound" (see OL32(S))
although lack of early references makes it difficult to be certain
of the precise origin of the name. Possibly
ON steinn m.: see R20(S)
              (anglicised to stone)
ON Gunn : a personal name
          (Lind 1915, column 411)
Scots origin is perhaps more probable in view of the lack of early
references. Gunn is an extremely common surname in Caithness.
(Black 1946, page 332)

TAIN : ND 26 NW: 224661  OL33(S)
TAIN OF OLRIG : " : 227663
TOFTS OF TAIN : " : 244653
MOSS OF TAIN : " : 236655
LINKS OF OLD TAIN : " : 213683
Local pronunciation: [ten]
Early ref's: Tayne 1538 RMS
             Tane 1565 Sinclair (Mey)
             Tane 1612 RMS
             Teyn 1661 "
             Taine 1674 Retours
             Tayne 1671 "
             Tain 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
The place-name Tain is scattered in various compound forms through-
out most of the east side of Olrig Parish but, unfortunately, its
origin is obscure.
The language of origin is probably Norse, or possibly even pre-Norse.
Tofts : ON toft, toft m.
: a green, grassy place; a homestead; an enclosure
Sc moss : see R7(S)
Sc links: The sandy undulating ground, generally covered with turf, bent grass, gorse etc. which is frequently found near the sea-shore on a flat part of the coast, and is often common ground belonging to the nearest town. Very common as a place-name.

TANSFIELD : ND 16 NE: 197673
Local pronunciation: [ˈtænsfiːld]
Early refs: Tansfield 1636 RMS
Teynfield 1661 "
Tainfield 1645 Sinclair (Freswick)
Derivation:
The forms recorded in 1645 and 1661 indicate that this name belongs to the Tain group of names (see OL33(S)).

THURDISTOFT : ND 26 NW: 212676
Local pronunciation: [ˈθɜːrdɪstəft]
Early refs: Thurdeistoft 1573 Sinclair (Mey)
Thurdistoft 1606 RMS
Thurdestaff 1604 Retours
Thurdestoft 1605 "
Thurdistoft 1644 "
Thurdiscoft 1671 "
Thurdistoft 1750 Roy
Derivation:
The specific is probably the ON personal name -dr m. which has many variant spellings. (Lind 1915, column 1226)
Cai toft : see OL33(S)
There is an isolated example with Sc croft (see R11(S)) as the generic, but this is probably due to scribal misunderstanding. Croft and toft would be equally appropriate as descriptions of a small farm.
TOWS
Local pronunciation: [taus]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So too (also tu, tuo) + Eng pl -s
: a mound, hillock, small piece of rising ground.
Frequent in place-names.

TROTHANMAS HILLOCK
Local pronunciation: [tɔthəns]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Rev. D. Beaton notes that Trothan is a variant of DrostÁn, who was head of the monastic institution at Deer in Buchan in the 6th century. (Beaton 1909, page 82) There are several dedications to DrostÁn throughout Caithness.

WAITSIDE
Local pronunciation: ['weitsaid]
Early refs: Waitside 1750 Roy
: a Caithness dialect word for a mill-race, the water-course from a mill. (Norw. dial veit(a), ON veit(a): a ditch.)
Waitside refers to the ruins of a homestead beside a mill-lade.
Wester
ND 26 SW: 214664
Local pronunciation: [ˈwestər]
Early refs: Wester 1606 RMS
Wester 1661 "
Wester 1644 Retours
Westre 1662 Blaeu
Wester 1750 Roy
Wester 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
There is a high degree of uniformity in the early spellings of this name. There are two possible sources of the specific:
1) ON vestr : west
The reference being to the position of the farm in relation to other farms within the community, or to some significant feature of the landscape.
2) ON vatn n.: water, fresh water (the gen sing of vatn in old vellums is invariably spelt vatz or vaz, vazt)
The reference in this instance could be to Loch Durran (see OL12(S)).

Whitefield
ND 16 NE: 198664
Hill of Whitefield: " : 198661
Local pronunciation: [ˈkwaiˈfild]
Early refs: Quhytfield 1636 RMS
Whytfield 1661 "
Whitefield 1750 Roy

Derivation: Self-explanatory. (cf T83(S))
The present-day local pronunciation reflects the 1636 spelling, Quhyt.
WINDY HA' : ND 16 NE: 184658  
Local pronunciation: [wundi 'ha']  
Early refs: Windy Hall 1841 Census  
Derivation: Self-explanatory.  
See ha' : see OL12(S)  
For the legend of the "Piper of the Windy Ha'" see Calder 1887, page 57.

WOODRIDGE : ND 26 NW: 227661  
Local pronunciation: [wʊrdɪdʒ]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation: A recent self-explanatory name.
TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES
BERRY HILL : ND 26 NW: 238656
Local pronunciation: [ˈbɛri hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai berry : see T2(T)

BISHOP'S HILL : ND 16 SE: 193632
Local pronunciation: [ˈbɪʃɒps hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Bishop's Hill is close to a chapel site in Durran which was part of the bishopric lands granted in heritage to John, Earl of Sutherland and his wife by Robert, bishop of Caithness, in 1559. (Origines Parochiales Scotiae 1855, page 788)

BLACK CLETT : ND 16 NE: 171692
Local pronunciation: [blak 'klet]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett : see R20(S)

CLINDRAG, HILL OF : ND 16 NE: 172675
CLINDRAG TULLOCH : " : 174674
Local pronunciation: [ˈklɪndrəɡ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
clindrag : origin obscure
Cai tulloch: see R5(S)
CODLIN CRAIG : ND 16 NE: 197686 OL5(T)
Local pronunciation: [kɔdlin kreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So codlin : a codling
So craig : see R46(S)
The name describes one of the numerous shore-line fishing rocks.

......

COOPER'S HILL : ND 26 NW: 218653 OL6(T)
Local pronunciation: [kupərs 'hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There is a "rubbing stone" on the top of this hill which indicates that it was probably frequented by horses or cattle, and may have been the site of an early market:
So cooper, couper
: 1) a dealer, especially in horses or cattle.
   2) Alternatively the reference could simply be to the surname Cooper (Coupar, Couper, Cowper) which occurs in one form or other in nearly every county of Scotland.
The name was in most cases derived from Cupar in Fife, but the occupation of "cooper" has also contributed to its origin. (Black 1946, page 169)

......

CRAIG WARE : ND 17 SE: 166703 OL7(T)
Local pronunciation: [kreg 'wer]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig : see R46(S)
So ware : see R92(T)
Note the unusual word-order in this place-name, probably due to Gaelic influence.

......
DROPPING BRAE : ND 16 NE: 169692
Local pronunciation: ['dræpæn 'bre]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A local informant has suggested that the name arises from the small stalactites which have formed under an overhanging edge as the result of a steady drip of lime-filled water.
So brae : see R8(S)

FARNEHILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 157681
Local pronunciation: [erni 'hælək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So earn : the white-tailed or sea eagle (OSc ern: eagle, from 1350) + dimin -ie

FAIRY HILLOCK : ND 16 SE: 197633
Local pronunciation: [feri 'hælək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

GALLOW HILL : ND 16 NE: 177657
Local pronunciation: ['gɔlɔ 'hai]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a natural mound on the Hill of Olrig (see OL27(S)). There is a local tale of a man having been hanged on this spot, but no proof is available. Very few people remember this name today.
**GHOUL LAW**

Local pronunciation: ['gaul 15]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A hillock which must have had some association with supernatural events, although memory of this has faded.

So law : a rounded hill generally of a somewhat conical shape and frequently isolated or conspicuous among others. The word is particularly common as a place-name in the east mid and southern Sc areas.

Ghoul Law appears to contain the only example of law in Caithness and was probably named by an incomer from further south.

**GREEN KNOWS**

Local pronunciation: ['grin 'nauz]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The name describes the highest part of a coastal spur (see OL30(T)) where there is normally a deposit of green, slimy seaweed.

So know : see R157(T)

**HATTEL, CRAIG OF**

**HATTEL, CAIRN OF**

Local pronunciation: [kreg 'hatal]

[ kern 'hatal]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

So craig : see R46(S)

The reference is to an isolated rock in the sea.

So cairn : see R27(T)

The cairn is situated on the shore.

So Hattle (also Hattel, Hattle (Cai)) : a name given by fishermen to the rough stony seabottom some distance from the shore beyond the area covered with seaweed
HOUSE HEAD : ND 16 NE: 199685
Local pronunciation: [ˈhaus ˈhɛd]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent name describing the headland beside Castlehill House (see OL8(S)).

LYTHE BERRY : ND 16 NE: 177693
Local pronunciation: [ˈlaɪ bɜri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So lythe : see Th8(T)
Cai berry : see T2(T)

NEW MOSSY QUARRY : ND 16 NE: 193677
OLD MOSSY QUARRY : " : 188678
Local pronunciation: [ˈmɔsi ˈkwɔri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory. Both quarries are now disused.

QUAY GEO : ND 17 SE: 168702
Local pronunciation: [ˈki ˈgoʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A local informant says that this inlet was once used as a loading place. There is no evidence of a man-made quay.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

RAE BERRY : ND 16 NE: 176694
Local pronunciation: [ˈre ˈbɛri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON rá f. : a pole (used metaphorically)
see R63(S)
Cai berrv : see T2(T)
This rock is often referred to as The Devil\'s Footstep.

RING HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 198659
Local pronunciation: ['rʌŋ] 'hɛlɔk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory, although it is uncertain whether Ring refers to the round hillock itself or to the round cairn on top of it. Probably the latter.

RUTHER MYRE : ND 16 NE: 192676
Local pronunciation: [rʌθə] 'maɪr]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
ON rautr : see T58(T)
ON myr f. : a moor, bog, swamp
The spelling of the generic in the above name strongly indicates Scots origin (Sc myre: see C19(T)) for the compound, but there is no Scots word *ruther on record, although this element occurs more than once in Caithness place-names and appears to refer to moorland, functioning either as an adjective or as a noun (of W51(S)). According to local informants the area is now known as The Mossy (Sc moss : see R7(S))

SERPENT HILLOCK : ND 16 NE: 160683
Local pronunciation: ['sɜːpent ] 'hɛlɔk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A long, low and undulating ridge of hills, now split in two by the main road.
SHELLEY HILL : ND 16 NE: 195684
Local pronunciation: [ʃɛli 'hul]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Site of an ancient kitchen midden with a large number of sea-shells in it. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 89)

STANDSTONE GEO : ND 16 NE: 188692
Local pronunciation: [ˈstanstɔn ɡjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably named from a standing stone in nearby fields but there is no present evidence of such a stone.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

SUMMER CRAIG : ND 16 NE: 173693
Local pronunciation: [ˈsumər ˈkreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The rocky side of a geo (see R54(T)), possibly used as a landing place or a fishing place in summer.
So craig : see R46(S)

SYSA : ND 16 SE: 168647
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A natural hillock associated with the fairy lore of the district. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 89)
The name suggests that the place may at one point have been the site of a local law-court.
of So assise, assise: a judicial inquiry by a number of persons appointed for that purpose; the body of persons so appointed.
THE GILL : ND 26 NW: 202676 OL27(T)
Local pronunciation: [dʒi ˈɡil]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T)

......

THE HOLMS : ND 16 NE: 173694 OL28(T)
Local pronunciation: [dʒə ˈhɒms]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai holms : see T84(T)
The name describes underwater rocks which are exposed at low-tide.

......

THE SLATES : ND 16 NE: 180692 OL29(T)
Local pronunciation: [dʒə ˈsleɪts]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai slates: see R83(T)
The name describes a flat stretch of rock at the coast.

......

THE SPUR : ND 16 NE: 170698 OL30(T)
Local pronunciation: [dʒə ˈspər]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory; an expanse of rock shelving down to the sea.

......

TROWES GEO : ND 16 NE: 175693 OL31(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈtraʊs ɡəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ISO trow: A mischievous sprite or fairy, a supernatural being common in Scandinavian mythology from which it passed into Shetland and Orkney folklore, and thence into Caithness. They were called hill-, land- or sea-trows according to their supposed haunts or abode.

Cai geo: see R54(T)

The local story relating to this geo says that trows frequented the neighbouring reef and lured ships to their destruction at night.

TUG BERRIES: ND 16 NE: 169696
Local pronunciation: [ˈtʌɡ bɛris]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Sc tooq: also tug (Jakobsen); tuack, tui(c)k, towick: tuag
: a small knoll, mound or hillock, especially one covered with tufts of coarse grass or heather
(too + -ag, -ek, -ock suffix
: also tu, tuo of OL36(S))

Cai berry: see T2(T)

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CHAPTER SEVEN: DUNNET PARISH

Introduction p. 240
Settlement Names pp. 241 - 261
Topographical Names pp. 262 - 285
The coastal scenery of Dunnet Parish is its most notable feature. Dunnet Head, the most northerly extension of the Scottish mainland, has magnificent sandstone cliffs over 100 metres in height.

Unlike Olrig Parish, most of the land is unimproved and the Dunnet Head peninsula in particular is chiefly moorland. There are also considerable expanses of rough, poorly-drained land north of Loch Heilen and another poor quality area is the sand-dune complex which borders the extensive sand beach of Dunnet Bay.

The parish has no reasonable harbour facilities and, in consequence, it has only very small settlements such as Dunnet itself. There is a scattering of farms and crofts throughout the parish, but the economy is also partially dependent on tourism.

Dunnet Parish is bounded on the south by Bower Parish and on the east by Canisbay Parish.
BARROCK : ND 27 SE: 258712
HALL OF BARROCK : " : 254713
Local pronunciation: [ˈbærək] or [ˈbærək]
Early refs: Barrak 1563/4 Sinclair (Mey)
Baroke 1604 Retours
Barroch 1605 "
Barriak 1644 "
Barrake " "
Barrak 1606 RMS
Barack 1661 "
Barroch 1682 Sutherland (Forse)
Barrag 1750 Roy
Burrock 1752 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Barrick H 1807 Arrowsmith
Barrack 1831 Thomson
Derivation: Possibly
G bArr m. : a height or hill + variable dimin ending.
The 1752 reference with <u> in the first syllable is an isolated variant.

BRAEHEAD : ND 27 SE: 261745
Local pronunciation: [ˈbreɪhɛd]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So brae : see R8(S)

BROADLEAN : ND 27 SE: 266712
Local pronunciation: [ˈbrɔd lɛn]
Early refs: Broadleen 1830 Sinclair (Freswick)
Broadleen 1841 Census
Broadloan " "
Derivation:
The English specific broad would normally occur with an English/Scots
generic, probably in this case
So *lean(s)*: see R19(S).
So *leans*, however, does not normally appear in the singular and
the form of the generic in this place-name may have been influenced
by either
G *leána* m.: a meadow, or
G *léan* m.: a meadow.
The latter form is clearly suggested in *Broadloan* (1841).

```
BROUGH        : ND 27 SW: 221734
MOSS OF BROUGH : "    : 207735
CLETT OF BROUGH: "    : 221743
Local pronunciation: [brɔʃ]
Early refs:    Brughe 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
               Brough 1606 "
               Bruche 1592 RMS
               Brugh 1662 Blaeu
               Brugh 1750 Roy
               Burgh 1753 Sutherland (Forse)
               Brough 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON *borg* f.: see R32(S)
(The spellings of the above name have been greatly influenced by
OSc *broch*, *brogh*: a borough; a Pictish *broch*; *bruch*, *bruche*:
a borough, a ring or halo. Later Sc spellings are *broch*, *brough*,
broch, *brugh* and *bruch*.)
The foundations of a castle are still visible at Brough, but there
appears to be no history of its occupants. (Inventory of Monuments
1911, page 27)
So *moss* : see R7(S)
Cai *clett* : see R20(S).
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......
CHAPEL (remains of): ND 17 SE: 187728
CHAPEL HILL : " : 184732
CHAPEL GEO : " : 184728
Local pronunciation: [tˈʃepəl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Listed as a chapel site, but no further positive information is available. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 28)
There is a persistent tradition that a hermit once had his abode on Dunnet Head, and that he built a chapel there. (Rev. D. Beaton 1909, page 46)
Cai geo : see R54(t)

CHARLESTON : ND 27 SE: 262717
Local pronunciation: [tʃəˈlɛstən]
Early refs: Charlestown 1841 Census
Derivation:
Charles : a surname listed in Black as occurring in Orkney in 1649 (Black 1946, page 147)
The reference is to a previous owner of the farm. (cf T5(s))
Sc-ton (town) : see R46(s)

CORSBACK : ND 27 SW: 239722
MILL OF CORSBACK : " : 243725
Local pronunciation: [ˈkɔrsbæk]
Early refs: Corsbak and mill thereof
1546 RMS
Corsbalk 1592 "
Corspak 1609 "
Corsbauk 1612 "
Corsbakk 1636 "
Mill of Corsback 1661 "
Halfe Corsebauk 1667 "
Early refs (cont'd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corshak</td>
<td>1549</td>
<td>RSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corshak</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Retours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corshank</td>
<td>1644</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corshack</td>
<td>1644</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corshag</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corshacker</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Book of Valuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corshack</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Thomson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derivation:

ON kross m.: a cross (with metathesis of <r>)
This is a frequently occurring element in place-names. The wayside cross may have been a place of worship similar to the horgar of the heathen age.

The name Corse occurs in Orkney and Marwick comments that ON kross may have been applied for various reasons: (a) a wayside cross marking a praying site (e.g., at a point where a church came into view); (b) a burial site; (c) cross-roads; (d) ground pertaining to a church or chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross; (e) property boundary etc. (Marwick 19529 page 62)

In the case of Corshack, St. John's Chapel and Loch (see D34(S)) are within sight.

The most probable source of the generic is ON bakki m.: see T2(T)

COUPER HILL : ND 27 SW: 235710
LINKS OF COUPERHILL: " : 238711
Local pronunciation: [kupar 'hol]
Early refs: Cooper Hill 1841 Census

Derivation:
The surname Couper : see OL6(T)
Sc links : see OL33(S)
COURTFALL : ND 27 SW: 215739
COURTFALL HILL : " : 212741
COURTFALL LOCH : " : 214740
Local pronunciation: ['kurtfa']
Early refs: L. Courtfa 1750 Roy
L. Courtfal 1832 Thomson
Courtfa 1841 Census
Courtfa 1877 6" OS

Derivation:
This is a very puzzling name, but it is possible that it may be a northern equivalent of Court-hill: an assembly hill on which a court is held. The generic in the Caithness name could be ON fjall n.: a hill - an element which was in sufficiently common use to have been combined with a Scots specific. The tautologous English hill would have been added at a later date. SND has the following comment: "These baron bailies held a 'court of regality' at certain times of the year at a spot outside the town long known as 'Court Hillock'.''

G. Donaldson describes baron courts as follows: "In the days when tenants' strips lay intermingled with each other, the cattle and sheep of several tenants grazed together, and agricultural operations required joint action, regulations for "good neighbourhood" were made in the baron court, which did a good deal of the work done nowadays by the Land Court, and also encouraged good husbandry by rules for the care of the cultivated and pasture land." (Donaldson 1974, page 137)

So loch : see R5(S)

CROSSROADS SCHOOL : ND 27 SW: 245727
Local pronunciation: ['krosroads']
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory. Schools were frequently situated at crossroads for ease of access.
DUNNET : ND 27 SW: 221712
HALL OF DUNNET : " : 217717
MANSE OF DUNNET : " : 219711
BURN OF DUNNET : " : 221714
LINKS OF DUNNET : " : 228701
DUNNET HEAD : ND 27 NW: 204768
DUNNET HEAD LIGHTHOUSE: " : 202767
DUNNET HILL : ND 17 SE: 191737
Local pronunciation: ['dunet']

Early refs: Donotf 1223-4 OPS, Sutherland Charters
Dimosc 1275 OPS, Bagimond's Roll
Dunost 1276 " "
Dunneth 1455 RMS
Donet 1539 "
Dunnat 1575 "
Dunmot 1579 "
Dwnett 1587 "
Downet 1592 "
Dwnat 1604 "
Dunnett 1633 "
Dunatt 1636 "
Dunet 1661 "
Dunat c1535 OPS
Dunnat 1537 "
Donat 1569 "
Dunate 1549 RSS
Dwnat 1574 Retours
Dunett 1644 "
Dunitt " "
Dunnet 1662 Blaeu
Dunnett 1726 Macfarlane
Dunnet 1750 Roy

The spelling is consistently Dunnet from 1750 to the present day.

Derivation:

Dunnet, unfortunately, remains obscure in spite of the numerous early references. It may, in fact, be a name which was in use before the advent of either Norse- or Gaelic-speaking people, and
which was possibly retained because it described such a prominent feature of the landscape.

There is, regrettably, no reference to Dunnet in Orkneyinga Saga and those 13th century references which do occur are very variable in spelling although they do appear to suggest a final fricative consonant which does not occur in spelling after the 15th century and which is not obvious in present-day pronunciation. (cf Celtic dūnōs - in extract from Rivet & Smith below) From the 16th century onwards the orthographic representation of the name settles into a pattern which shows only slight variation, probably as a result of the standardisation of orthography which followed the introduction of printing.

It is possible that the clue to the origin of this name may be contained in Ptolemy's *tarvedu(m)* (bull fort) which has been equated with Dunnet Head.

Dunum has been described as "one of the most important elements in Celto-Latin toponymy. It appears un compounded, but more commonly compounded and then always in second place. In sense it seems to have developed from hill to fort. Derivatives include Welsh din-es: fortress, town and Irish dūn : fortress. The Celtic word was apparently *dūnōs*, a neuter with an -s stem; as dūnon it was regularly represented in Latin as dūnum neuter." (Rivet and Smith 1979, page 274)

Dunnet Head was also known by another name:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Map</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quinicnap Head</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Mercator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windiknop Head</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>Blaeu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy Knap</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunnet Head or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy Knepp</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Dorret</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems very probable that the specific in this name is simply windy. Certainly the description would be appropriate.

The generic is

ON knappr m.: a knob, protuberance, a word which is common to all Germanic languages and which occurs frequently in names further south in Scotland.
Mercator and Blaeu added Head due to lack of understanding of the final element.

So manse: see T19(S)
So burn: see R4(S)
So links: see OL33(S)

DWARWICK: ND 27 SW: 208712
DWARWICK HEAD: " : 205714
DWARWICK PIER: " : 206713

Local pronunciation: ['dwar-k]
Early refs: Divarrick 1660 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
           Dwrck Head 1750 Roy
           Dwarick 1813 Sinclair (Freswick)
           Dwarrick Head 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
The most probable source is
ON dvergr (gen pl dverga) m.
    : a dwarf
Dwarves preceded the trolls in northern mythology.
ON vik f.: a small creek, inlet or bay
This element occurs frequently in local names throughout the Norse-
influenced area of Scotland.

FILLOWAY: ND 27 SW: 245708

Local pronunciation: ['fail-owe]
Early refs: Filloway 1798 Book of Valuation
           Fillaway 1841 Census
           Fileaway " "

Derivation: Origin obscure
GREENLAND : ND 26 NW: 243677
GREENLAND MAINS : " : 246676
EAST GREENLAND : " : 242664
WEST GREENLAND : " : 228673
LOWER GREENLAND : " : 233678
MOSS OF GREENLAND : " : 248657
LINKS OF GREENLAND : " : 228689

Local pronunciation: ['grinländ]

Early refs: Nethirgreneland 1377 OPS
Grenland 1527 Sinclair (Mey)
Grenland 1549 RSS
Ester Greneland " "
Greneland 1527 RMS
Greinland 1592 "
Grinland 1619 "
Wester Greinland 1636 "
Greenland 1661 "
Greinland 1604 Retours
Greenland 1605 "
Greenlant 1662 Blaeu

Derivation:

ON grøenn (grøenn)
: green

ON land n.: see OL16(S)

As in the case of Harland (see OL16(S)) it is difficult to be certain of the linguistic origin of the elements in the above compound name. The fact that the name was recorded in the 14th century, however, suggests Norse rather than Scots origin as far as Caithness is concerned. (OSc does, however, have grene/grein adj: green, in place-names from 12th-13th centuries.)

Nethirgreneland (1377) contains ON nedár (comparative of niýrr: down). It has now been replaced by English Lower in Lower Greenland.

Sc mains : see R32(S)
Sc moss : see R7(S)
Sc linke : see OL33(S)
GREENVALE : ND 27 SW: 247724
Local pronunciation: ['grin 'vel]
Early refs: Greenvale 1841 Census
Derivation:
A comparatively recent self-explanatory name.
Eng vale is not common in Caithness names.

HAM : ND 27 SW: 238737
HAM BERRY : " : 242739
BURN OF HAM : " : 240730
HAM COTTAGE : " : 236733
Local pronunciation: [ham]
Early refs: Höfn c1200 Orkneyinga Saga
          Ham 1609 RMS
          Ham 1653 Sutherland (Forse)
          Hame 1659 Sinclair (Mey)
          Hum 1662 Blaeu
          Ham 1750 Roy
(Höfn was earlier identified with Huna (see C17(S)), but the recent translation of Orkneyinga Saga favours identification with Ham. (Pålsson and Edwards 1978, page 38))
Derivation:
ON höfn => Cai ham
          : see T32(T)
Cai berry : see T2(T)
So burn : see RL4(S)

HASTERS : ND 26 NW: 245665
Local pronunciation: ['hastəs]
Early refs: Hausters 1841 Census
Derivation:
Difficult without further early references.
The name now describes a row of crofts on the edge of the moor
which suggests
ON hěr : high
ON setr n.: see R3(S) + Eng pl -s
(cf Haster (W46(S)) which appears to have a different derivation.
The interpretation suggested in W46(S) does not fit the situation
of the Dunnet name.)

HEATHFIELD:
Local pronunciation: [ˈθiːθфild]
Early refs: Heathfield 1841 Census
Derivation: Self-explanatory. The name refers to land taken in from the moor
comparatively recently.
(cf Heathfield T41(S))

HILLHEAD:
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɪlθεd]
Early refs: Hillhead of Dunnet 1820 Sinclair (Freswick)
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

HOLLANDMAKE:
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɔldəndmeik]
Early refs: Hollandmake 1546 Sinclair (Mey) Holland-маik 1549 "
Hollandmaik " "
Hollandmaik 1634 "
Hallandmak 1612 RMS
Hollandmache 1636 "
Hallandmake 1644 Retours
Hallandmark " "
Holland-make 1671 "
Hallarmake 1750 Roy
Half-Hollandmaik 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
The situation of this farm on a slight eminence suggests
ON høll m.: see OL2(S)
ON land n.: see OL16(S)
The element make is obscure. It probably functions to distinguish
this place-name from the neighbouring Hollandmey (see C16(S)) and
the various forms which it takes in early written sources might suggest
OSc make, mak, maka
: an equivalent, an equally good specimen,
were it not for the fact that make is not in common use as a place-
name element.
There is a single instance of the spelling mark but it would be
unwise to deduce from this that the reference is to a markland.
It is more probable that the scribe was attempting to impose his
own interpretation on an obscure element.
(The Scottish markland was a unit of which the annual value was
reckoned to be a mark, whereas the old Orkney markland represented
land which had the capital value or purchase price of a mark.
(Marwick 1952, page 200)

HUNSPOW : ND 27 SW: 217727
Local pronunciation: ['hanspau]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Doubtful without further early references, but probably
ON hundr m.: a hound, dog
ON pollr m.: a pool
>So pow (see T39(T))
Dr. G. Fellows-Jensen refers to Hund- in place-names in her article
"Hungate, Some Observations on a Common Street-Name". She comments
that "several place-names containing Hund- in Scandinavian also
reflect a contemptuous view of the animal, for the function of the
specific seems to be to indicate that the locality in question was
insignificant ...".
This comment is probably very apt in the case of the Caithness name
which has a direct parallel in Caithness dialect

**hunnspool**: defined as "a contemptuous epithet for a worthless
person or animal, a useless specimen".

(Cai 1940 John o' Groat Journal (2 April), Cai 1957)

SND suggests that this word is perhaps a corruption of Norw
**hundsvott**: a scamp, from Du *hondsvot*, Ger *hundsfott* id, a term of
course abuse.

******

**INKSTACK**: ND 27 SE: 256703
**BURN OF INKSTACK**: ND 26 NE: 255695
**LINKS OF INKSTACK**: ND 26 NW: 243698

Local pronunciation: [ˈɪŋkstæk]

*Early refs:*
- Inkstak 1619 RMS
- Ingstak 1636 "
- Inchstak 1664 "
- Halfe Inchstak 1667 "
- Instak 1632 Sinclair (Mey)
- Ingstak 1648 "
- Enstag 1750 Roy
- Inkstag " "
- Ingstock 1761-2 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
- Inkstock " "

*Derivation:*
Possibly

**ON engi n.**: meadow-land
**ON tak n.**: a holding

(*ON Engi does appear in compounds such as engis-höfn: possession
of a meadow, or engis-maðr: the owner of a meadow.*)

Lack of medial <i> in early references may appear to argue against
this interpretation, but it would have been subject to elision
at an early stage in the phonological development of the compound.

So **burn**: see R4(S)
So **links**: see OL33(S)

******
KILLI CAIRN: ND 27 SW: 222726 D23(S)

Local pronunciation: [kdi 'kern]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The 'Inventory of Monuments' mentions this cairn which is situated at the north end of St. John's Loch. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 25) The cairn appears to have been excavated and may have contained a burial chamber which suggests that the initial element is G cill f.: a church or a burial-ground.
The Gaelic form of the whole name would have been cill a' chaim.

If this is an accurate interpretation of the name it is most unusual in Dunnet Parish and it is probable that the Gaelic was imported from further west comparatively recently.

......

KIRK OF BANKS: ND 27 SE: 251739 D24(S)

Local pronunciation: [kirk o' 'banks]
<Kirk o' Tang> not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Sc kirk: see T27(S)

ISO banks: generally pl. but sing. in meaning. A steep coast; precipitous rocks or cliffs along the seashore; also used of the seashore itself, and "of the grassy edge abutting on a flat beach". (Marwick: Orkney Norn)

Ultimately derived from
ON bakki m.: of T2(T).

In the Insular examples the Sc form banks has superseded the OSh bakk from ON bakki: edge, cognate with bank; but the word is preserved in the special Norw applications.

Cai tang: see T77(T)

These two names refer to the same chapel, the outlines of which are visible beside the sea to the east of the Burn of Rattar (see D28(S)). (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 27)

......
LOCHEND : ND 26 NE: 267682

Local pronunciation: ['lo-kə-end]

Early refs: Lochend 1778 Sinclair (Freswick)
           Lochend 1787 Sutherland (Forse)
           Lochend 1856 "
           Lochend 1782 Book of Valuation
           House of Lochend 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
The loch to which this name now appears to refer is Loch Heilen
(see D25(T)) but there is some confusion regarding its initial
application in the 18th century due to the existence of another
loch in the area, which was drained in the mid-19th century. This
loch appears to have been variously referred to as

Sueymie L (Blaeu 1662)
Swinnie Loch (Arrowsmith 1807)
Loch of Syster (Sinclair (Freswick) 1865)

This former name, although frequently recorded until the mid-19th
century, has now been lost, along with the loch which it described.
The early references to this name are as follows

Swynne 1538 RMS
Sunzie 1612 "
Swenye 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
Sunye 1573 "
Swynzie 1613 "
Sweynvie 1644 Retours
Swenye " "
Suinzie 1662 Blaeu
Swinea 1750 Roy

Lochend, formerly
called Swinzie 1778 Sinclair (Freswick)
Swinsie, now
called Lochend 1787 "
Swinnie Loch 1807 Arrowsmith
Scister or Swinxie 1831 Thomson
Swiney, otherwise
Lochend and Syster 1856 Sutherland (Forse)

It appears that the drained loch was usually referred to as

Swinnie Loch as in Arrowsmith (1807), a name which probably derives
from the very common ON appellative
Svín-øy : swine island, with reference to an island in the loch.
The farm at the end of the loch was, in the first instance, also
referred to as Swinnie (variously spelt) but once the loch had
been drained in the mid-19th century this name was replaced by the
more general term Lochend, and its reference was gradually trans-
ferred to Loch Heilen.
Thomson (1831) and Sinclair (Freswick) (1865) add to the confusion
by inferring that Syster and Swinnie were interchangeable which
does not appear to have been the case. Syster describes a
separate farm and Lochend is the replacement of Swinnie as a farm
name.

MARYMAS GREEN : ND 27 SW: 219707
Local pronunciation: [mær-mæs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name refers to a disused market stance.
Marymas : the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary
held on 15th August (old style)
The New Statistical Account notes that a "great market" took
place at Durnet "on Tuesday, after 15th August, old style, which
lasts two days, and is well attended." (New Statistical Account
1845, page 47)
A local informant remembers this market as having been on the last
Tuesday in August during the middle decades of this century.

MOUNT HALIE : ND 26 NE: 253673
Local pronunciation: [maunt 'hili] or
[mänt 'huli]
Early refs: Moundhoolie 1841 Census
Mounthoolie " "
Derivation:
This name can be found in several places in Scotland, although it
appears to be principally an east coast phenomenon. Its origin is questionable but the name probably had religious significance in spite of the fact that William Alexander, in his comment on Mounthooly in East Aberdeenshire, dismisses the popular explanation holy mount as being "worthless". (Alexander 1952, page 93)

Mount Halie is now a farm name, whatever its original application.

......

Rattar : ND 27 SE: 263730
Rattar Moss : " : 270730
Burn of Rattar : " : 272720
Rattar Bridge : " : 256736
Rattar House : " : 252732
Hill of Rattar : ND 27 SW: 2147732

Local pronunciation: [ˈrætər]

Early refs: de Ratir 1443 Black (Papal Letters)
Ratar 1538 RMS
Ratter 1592 "
Rattir 1661 "
Rattar 1549 RSS
Rattare 1604 Retours
Ratier 1605 "
Ratter 1614 "
Rattre 1662 Blaeu
Ratter 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
A name which remains stubbornly obscure in spite of the uniformity of the early references. It is possible that by the 15th century when first recorded in writing, the name had already been subject to phonological reduction (cf OL31(S)) and that it in fact represents an earlier compound, the nature of which is impossible to decipher. Alternatively, it could perhaps derive from ON rátar f. (pl rætar, later ráðir)
 : a bank, ridge, edge.

......
REASTER : ND 26 NE: 258654

Local pronunciation: ['ristər]

Early refs: Ressister 1538 RMS
Rasister 1549 "
Rassetter 1604 "
Reistir 1619 "
Reistir 1661 "
Reyster " "
Rester 1625 Sinclair (Mey)
Rasetter 1636 "
Reaster 1655 "
Reestre 1662 Blaeu
Reyster 1671 Retours
Rasiter 1798 Book of Valuation
Rester 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
The earliest recorded forms contain medial <i7 which indicates
that the most probable source of the specific is
ON hreysi n.: a heap of stones
ON setr n.: see R33(S)

ROADSIDE : ND 26 NW: 247666
ROADSIDE COTTAGE : ND 26 NE: 257666

Local pronunciation: [ro'daid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
For comment see T65(S).

ROSEGILL : ND 27 SW: 245715

Local pronunciation: ['ros̩gəl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
A comparatively recent name, probably referring to the presence of
wild roses at the side of the Burn of Inkstack (see D22(S)) which
flows past this small farm.
Cai gill : see R11(T)
SCARABEN COTTAGES : ND 26 NE: 254666
Local pronunciation: ['skarəban]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Obviously a modern name incorporating Scaraben, a well-known feature of the Caithness landscape, being one of the few high peaks on the horizon.
Scaraben is a hybrid name combining ON sk8r (gen skara) f.:
: a rim, edge, with
G beinn f.: see R14(S).
These two elements are extremely common in place-names.

SCARFSKERRY : ND 27 SE: 264743
SCARFSKERRY POINT : " : 258747
Local pronunciation: ['skæskæri]
Early refs: Scarskerry 1750 Roy
Scarskerry 1807 Arrowsmith
Scarffskerry 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai scarf : see R145(T)
Cai skerry: see R151(T)
This name would originally have applied to a shore-line rock, but it has been extended to the village by the shore.
The first syllable has been contracted in modern pronunciation.

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL : ND 27 SW: 233722
ST. JOHN'S LOCH : " : 225720
Local pronunciation: [sp dʒɔnɪ ˈtʃæpəl, ... ˈlɔk]
Early refs: St. John's Loch 1701 Brand
Derivation:
"There was anciently on the east end (of St John's Loch) a Catholic chapel dedicated to St John, and it is extremely probable that the alleged virtues of the loch may have been conferred on it by the priests and converted by them into a source of pecuniary emolument."
(Calder 1887, page 27)
Beaton comments that "There is a number of chapels in Caithness commemorating the name of John, whether these are Roman Catholic dedications to John the Evangelist or John the Baptist, or Celtic foundations of the John (Iohain) of the Tallagh List, it is difficult with our present knowledge to determine." (Beaton 1909, page 81)

The Loch is now most frequently referred to as **Dunnet Loch** ['da:nət ləx].

**SYSTER** : ND 26 NE: 271692
**SYSTER QUARRY** : " : 268692

Local pronunciation: ['sæistər]

Early refs: Sysseter 1739 Sutherland (Forse)
            Syster 1856 "
            Syster 1784 Sinclair (Freswick)
            Sister 1831 "
            Syster 1865 "

Loch of Syster " "
Scister or Swinxie 1831 Thomson
Loch of Scister " "

Derivation:
The origin of the specific is uncertain due to lack of early references but one possibility is

ON sjær m.: see R6(S) and R117(T). The reference in this instance, as in the Reay examples, is to an inland sea or loch; either Loch Heilen (see D43(T)) or possibly Swinnie Loch which has now been drained (see D25(S)).

ON setr n.: see R33(S)

**WESTER** : ND 27 SW: 231727
**LITTLE WESTER** : " : 226727

Local pronunciation: [ˈwestər]

Early refs: Westpuster 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
            Westpuster in Dunnett 1632 "
            Westbuster 1549 RSS
Derivation:

For comments on the nature of the specific see OL39(S).
The neighbouring loch in this case is St. John's Loch (see D34(S)).

ON bolstaýý m.: see R21(S)

The references such as RMS (1636) to Westbuster in Dunat are extremely helpful and were presumably intended to distinguish this place-name from the identical name in Wick Parish (see W113(S)). The names are still, in speech, referred to as Wester Wick and Wester Dunnet.

WHITEBRIDGE : ND 27 SE: 269724
Local pronunciation: [hwait 'brig]
Early refs: White Bridge 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory. Local pronunciation reflects an earlier Sc brig : see R102(T).
The bridge is over the Burn of Ratter (see D28(S)) and the name refers to both the bridge and the adjacent house.
TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ASHY GEO : ND 17 SE: 182745 D1(T)
ASHY GEO HILLOCK : " : 183742
Local pronunciation: ['aʃi ˈgeo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The most probable source is
ON assa f.: an eagle
Cai geo : see R54(T)

...

BANK HEAD : ND 27 NW: 207767 D2(T)
Local pronunciation: ['bæk ˈheid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc bank : a raised shelf or ridge of ground

...

BLACK GEOS : ND 17 NE: 185756 D3(T)
Local pronunciation: ['blak ˈgeo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The reference is to the colour of the rock and, apparently, to a
single geo in spite of the plural version on the 6" OS map.

...

BLACK LOCH : ND 17 SE: 187736 D4(T)
Local pronunciation: ['blak ˈlɔx]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc loch : see R5(S)
BLOODY MOSS : ND 27 SW: 205726
Local pronunciation: ['blʌdi mɔs]
Early refs: Bloodymoss 1819 Sinclair (Thurso)
Derivation:
The context suggests that the specific could be
ON blautr : soft, often used in the sense of wet, miry.
Sc moss : see R7(S)

BOAT POOL : ND 27 SW: 213709
Local pronunciation: ['bot 'pʊl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a small inlet with deep water which was used as
an anchorage for a boat.

BRIGA HEAD : ND 17 NE: 183754
Local pronunciation: ['brɪɡə hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
briga : obscure without further early references

BUOY STONES : ND 27 SW: 207713
Local pronunciation: ['bjuː stənz]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent name applying to boulders in the sea which were thought
to resemble buoys when half-covered with water.
BURN OF BRIGS : ND 27 SW: 203723
Local pronunciation: [bərn ə 'brigs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A shallow stream which can be crossed with ease, using the liberally scattered stepping-stones.
So burn : see Rh4(S)
So brig : see R102(T)

BURN OF HELSHIGROW : ND 27 SW: 224704
Local pronunciation: [bərn ə 'helʃigro]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Helshigrow is probably a Norse name which has been subject to reduction in phonological bulk (cf OL31(S)), and it is very difficult to suggest a derivation without further early references. (cf C17(T) for a possible derivation of the generic grow.)
The original settlement has vanished and the name now refers only to the stream.
So burn : see Rh4(S)

BURN OF HUNSTER : ND 26 SW: 246646
Local pronunciation: [bərn ə 'hunstər]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So burn : see Rh4(S)
The specific in Hunster is doubtful without early references, but a strong possibility is
ON Hundi m. : a personal name (Lind 1915, column 598)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 144)
ON setr n. : see R33(S)
(The farm of Hunster is situated in neighbouring Bower Parish.)
**Burn of Midsand** : ND 26 NW: 226683
Local pronunciation: [bərn ə mids'ands]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So burn : see Rh(S)
The burn runs between the Links of Greenland (see D14(S)) and the Links of Old Tain (see OL33(S)).
The name is invariably plural in local pronunciation.

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**Castle Foot** : ND 27 SE: 257743
Local pronunciation: [kasə 'fut]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a detached rock which appears to have ruins of some kind on it, although there is no record of a castle in this position.

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**Cat's Cleft** : ND 17 SE: 198719
Local pronunciation: ['kats 'kleft]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is probably to a wild cat which had its lair in this steep-sided geo.

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**Cave of Doonal** : ND 27 SW: 243737
Local pronunciation: [kəv ə 'dunəl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Doonal is the Caithness dialect version of G Domhnall: Donald
There is no local knowledge of the nature of Donald's association with the cave.
COWL, ONE : ND 17 SE: 197737
COWLS, THREE : " : 192736
Local pronunciation: [kau\(\text{\textumlaut}l\)s]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cowl is being used to describe the conical tops of hills and it is
not an unusual description in place-names in general.
However, it is unusual in Caithness and it is perhaps significant
that it should occur in the vicinity of Chapel Hill where the
remains of a chapel are to be found (see D5(S)), since the literal
meaning of cowl is, of course, a monk's hood.

DONALD GEAR'S GEO : ND 17 SE: 182735
Local pronunciation: [d\text{\textumlaut}nald 'gers gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The name describes a geo with very steep sides which Donald Gear
is reputed to have climbed, according to local informants.
(For the origin of the surname Gear/Gair which is common in the
north of Scotland and in Shetland, see Black 1946, page 284.)

EASTER HEAD : ND 27 NW: 204768
LOCH OF EASTER HEAD: " : 207763
Local pronunciation: ['ist\text{\textumlaut}r h\text{\textumlaut}d]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The more easterly of two places possibly by comparison with
Dunnet Head but, on the map, the two names appear to describe
the same headland and Easter Head is never used locally;
Dunnet Head being the preferred description.
So loch : see R5(S)
**FISH CRAIG** : ND 17 NE: 198767
Local pronunciation: [ʃiʃ ˈkraɪg]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
Names of this type are usually more specific, noting the species of fish caught. On the other hand Sc fish can have a specific reference to:
1) the salmon. Gen Sc in all salmon areas; includes sea-trout
2) white fish, as opposed to herrings.
Sc craig : see R46(S)

**FUESTER'S GEO** : ND 27 SW: 218747
Local pronunciation: [ˈfjuːstər ˈgəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
The apostrophe indicates that the initial element is probably a nickname for some person who was connected with the geo.
Possibly he came from Thusater (see T76(S)) because the spelling of Fuester closely mimics an occasional local pronunciation of Thusater [ˈfjuːstər].
Cai geo : see R54(T)

**FULLY GEO** : ND 27 SE: 254742
Local pronunciation: [ˈfʊli ˈgəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
The specific is probably
ON fuRl (older form fogl) m. : a fowl, bird.
This element is common in coastal names in Caithness, either in the form Fully/-ie or, occasionally, Polly/-ie.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
GEO SETTER : ND 27 SE: 259746
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A very curious name in that both elements appear to be of Norse origin
ON gjaf > Cai geo
: see R54(T)
ON setr n.: see R33(S)
but the word order in the compound is Gaelic and ON setr is totally inappropriate as a description of a geo. Perhaps the modern spelling masks an earlier specific of different origin.

GEO TRUNG : ND 27 SW: 247739
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Trung is difficult without earlier forms but it is possibly a variant of Sc trink
: a narrow channel, inlet or creek between coastal rocks.
The word order indicates possible Gaelic origin as in D22(T).

GRASSY CLETT : ND 27 SW: 224742
GRASSY LOCH : " : 204742
Local pronunciation: [grasi 'klɛt]
: [grasi 'loχ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett : see R20(S)
The Grassly Loch has a very high proportion of marsh to water.
So loch : see R5(S)
GREEN GEO : ND 27 SE: 263746  D25(T)
Local pronunciation: ['grin gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : R54(T)
A geo with grassy sides.

GROTTISTOFT MOSS : ND 27 SE: 273705  D26(T)
Local pronunciation: ['grotistoft məs]
Early refs: Grotiscroft 1636 RMS
Grotiestoft 1661 "
Grotistoft 1798 Book of Valuation
Grotiestoft " "
Derivation:
The specifics in all other toft names are either personal names
or the name of the farm or institution to which the toft was attached.
It seems likely, therefore, that the specific in the above name is
a personal name, possibly the surname of the Grot family who first
appear in a charter dated 1496. (see C18(S))
Cai toft : see OL33(S)
Toft and croft were virtually interchangeable as in RMS 1636,
but they have now diverged slightly in meaning. Toft implies
enclosure, whereas croft implies enclosure plus access to common
land.
Sc moss : see R7(S)
The settlement Grottistoft has now disappeared and the name is
only retained as a reference to an area of moorland.

GUTTERY GEO : ND 27 SW: 202719  D27(T)
Local pronunciation: ['gʌtəri gjo]
My informants weakened the medial consonant from [t] to [θ].
Early refs: Gutters Goe 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc guttery: muddy, miry, messy
Cai geo : see R54(T)
RANGY GEO
Local pronunciation: ['hangi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The name describes a small, deep geo with overhanging sides.

HASTY LOUP
Local pronunciation: [hesti 'laup]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific appears to be English although it is possible that English hasty masks an earlier ON hestr m.: a horse.
Off-shore rocks were often defined as being a horse's leap from the shore.
So loup : see Th7(T)

HEAD OF MAN
Local pronunciation: [heid 'man]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Self-explanatory, although it is not immediately apparent why this name should have been applied. Possibly someone detected a resemblance to the human head in the rock structure.

HEAD WARK
Local pronunciation: [heid 'wark]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The 6" OS map indicates a promontory fort on this headland which suggests that the specific might be
So wark : wall, stronghold, castle
but wark usually describes an imposing building which is hardly appropriate here.
HEN'S HEAD : ND 27 SW: 222744
Local pronunciation: ['hɛinz 'hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent self-explanatory name which describes a small rock visible only at low tide.

HILL OF RIVE : ND 27 SW: 202723
Local pronunciation: [hɛl a 'raiv]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Uncertain without further early references but most likely to be sc rive : a rift, rent, cleft or fissure (<ON rifa f.)
The reference would be to peat bogs in the area. Bloody Moss is a neighbouring name which suggests similar, difficult terrain (see D5(T)).

ISLES GEO : ND 27 SW: 249739
Local pronunciation: ['lails gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
There are off-shore rocks in the geo.

KERRY GEO : ND 27 SW: 235740
Local pronunciation: ['kɛri gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of the specific is uncertain, but possibly it represents ISO keerie: the native sheep of Orkney; rather goat-like in appearance, with low shoulders, high quarters and long neck.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Kirk Geo

Local pronunciation: [ˈkɜrkɪ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So kirk : see T27(S)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
This geo is near the site of a former chapel.

Kunks Hole

Local pronunciation: name always known as The Tinklers' Cove:
[ˈtɪŋklərz kov]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The Hole is a cave which was used as a refuge by tinklers or travelling people. So tinkler is the older variety of tinker.
The initial element kunks is obscure but it may simply be a misrepresentation of tinks', an abbreviated form of G Sc tinkers.

Langypo

Local pronunciation: [ˈlaŋpau]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Uncertain, but possibly
So pow : see T89(T)
used figuratively in this instance to indicate the tip of the land.
The name describes a long point of land jutting out into the sea.

Leri Geo

WELL OF LERY GEO

Local pronunciation: [ˈlɛri gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON leir n.: clay, earth, loam, but also mud, especially on the beach, as in this case
Cai geo: see R54(T)
Sc weil: see R40(S)

LITTLE CLETT: ND 27 SW: 223743
Local pronunciation: [l′t] klet]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett: see R20(S)

LOCH BURIFA: ND 27 NW: 203762
Local pronunciation: [burifa]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc loch: see R5(S)
Possibly
ON borg f.: see R32(S)
ON fjall n.: see D9(S)
(ON borg can refer either to a small dome-shaped hill or to the fortification on it.
There is no trace of a fortification on this hill now which casts doubt on the above interpretation of the specific because it is unlikely that the Norse would have felt it necessary to combine two elements, both referring to hill.)

LOCH OF BUSHTA: ND 17 SE: 194725
Local pronunciation: [lo′x ′busta]
Early refs: Loch Busta 1750 Roy
L. Busta 1807 Arrowsmith
L. Busta 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
So loch : see R5(S)
Possibly
ON bólstaðr: see R21(S)
(of Busta in Delting, Shetland. (Jakobsen 1897, page 115))
There is no trace of the settlement today – only the loch retains
the name indicating possible earlier settlement.

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LOCH HEILEN : ND 26 NE: 255683
Local pronunciation: [lx ə 'heiln]
Early refs: Loch Hallan 1750 Roy
            Loch Hallen 1807 Arrowsmith
            Loch Haellan 1831 Thomson
            Loch of Hailand 1841 Census
            Loch Hayland 1850 Sinclair (Freswick)

Derivation:
This name has been interpreted as Loch of Healing (Beaton 1909, page 8),
but it is possible that Beaton confused this loch with
St. John's Loch (see D4(S)) or, as it is more frequently known,
Dunnet Loch, because he comments with reference to Loch Heilen:
"Its reputation for miraculous cures died out before 1800, but
persons came to the Loch of Dunnet to be cured as late as 1825
or 1830." Only St. John's Loch is today referred to as Dunnet
Loch and there is no record of Loch Heilen having, at any time,
been described as such.
Unfortunately, the earliest written record of the name is dated
1750 which makes it extremely difficult to suggest a derivation
with any degree of certainty. The modern version of the name
seems to indicate that the loch was named after a neighbouring
settlement or some locally significant topographical feature
because it invariably takes the form Loch of ... [lx ə ...].
The settlement, or the land adjacent to the loch, was possibly
known as *Haðland incorporating either
ON hár : see D17(S)
ON land n.: see OL16(S) or
OSc hev(e), hei(e)
  : high
OSc land : see Th9(S)
Early spellings favour ON hár as the specific, but pronunciation
favours OSc hev(e), hei(e).

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LOCH OF MUIRS : ND 27 SW: 203734
WELL OF MUIR : " : 215725
Local pronunciation: [lɔx a 'mjurs]
Early refs: L Muir 1750 Roy
           L Muir 1807 Arrowsmith
           L Muir 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
So loch : see R5(S).
So mair (also mair)
  : a moor
So well : see R40(S)

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LONG BYRE : ND 17 NE: 193762
Local pronunciation: [lɔj 'bair]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So byre : cowshed
The name describes a long, flat stretch of rock of a uniform
shape, probably thought to resemble a byre.
As in other instances, however, this may mask an earlier
ON berg n.: see T2(T)

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LONG LOCH : ND 27 NW: 205760
Local pronunciation: [lɔx] 'lɔxi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So loch : see R5(S)
(A diminutive ending is always added in pronunciation)

LUCIFER MOSS : ND 27 SE: 264706
Local pronunciation: ['lus法人 mos]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There are two possibilities for this name.
1) The peat cut from this moss may have been of a particularly
good quality and the small "blue clods" may have sputtered
and sparked as they burned.
2) The moss itself may have been used as the flammable
substance at the tip of home-made lucifer matches.
So moss : see R7(S)

MANY LOCHS : ND 17 SE: 197746
Local pronunciation: ['mæni lɔxs]
Early refs: The Many Lochs 1750 Roy
Manny Lochs 1807 Arrowsmith
Many Lochs 1832 Thomson
Derivation: Self-explanatory.
It is possible that this series of small lochs had individual
names at one time, but there is no record of such.
The definite article which occurs in Roy (1750) is retained in
modern pronunciation.
MARRY GEO  :  ND 27 SW:  227742  
Local pronunciation:  ['mari gjo]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
So mar  :  clay, mud, mire; specifically a fine bluish or 
whitish clay. (Ork 1929. Marwick – SND)
(Here used adjectivally.)
Cai geo  :  see R54(T)

POINT OF NESS  :  ND 27 SW:  208710  
Local pronunciation:  [pɔint ɔ 'nes]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
Cai ness  :  see T13(S)
Point and Ness are similar in application but not identical.
Ness describes a long stretch of land jutting out into the sea, 
whereas Point is normally more restricted in its application, 
to the tip of the land.

POOL OF BACKWAY  :  ND 27 SW:  211709  
Local pronunciation:  [pul ɔ 'bakwe]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a shore-line pool.
Backway is difficult without earlier references, but the 
situation suggests
ON bakki m.:  see T2(T)
as the specific.
The final element is obscure.
RED GEO : ND 17 SE: 182738
Local pronunciation: ['rɛd gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Red: the reference is to the colour of the rock in the area
Cai geo: see R54(T)

REDSTONE HILL : ND 17 SE: 197727
Local pronunciation: ['rɛdsta:n 'hɛl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

ROTTEN GEO : ND 27 SE: 264748
Local pronunciation: ['rɔtən gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent name. The reference is probably to rotting seaweed in the geo.
Cai geo: see R54(T)

ROUGHY KILN : ND 27 NW: 216757
Local pronunciation: ['rʌfi 'kəl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference may be to the kiln-like (of T85(T)) shape of the geo which the name describes, and the roughness of the sea in it, although Roughy possibly masks an earlier ON rófa f.: a reef.
ROWRASH : ND 17 SE: 195722 D56(T)
ROWRAMPS : " : 183731
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: Rowramps 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The element row occurs more than once in Caithness names, always with reference to headlands. Without further early references it is impossible to suggest a derivation for this element with any degree of certainty.
One possibility is
ON rá f. : a sailyard, being used figuratively to describe a promontory jutting out at an angle from the land.
(cf Shetland ro : Jakobsen 1932, page 707)
Sc rash : form of Eng rush
Sc ramps (also ramsh)
: the wild garlic

RUTHY GEO : ND 27 SE: 256745 D57(T)
Local pronunciation: ['rʌfi gjo]
['rʌfi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is possibly ON rauðr : see OL21(T)
although modern pronunciation is variable and sometimes suggests ON rófa f.: see D55(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

SANDERS LOCH : ND 17 SE: 187747 D58(T)
NEITHER SANDERS LOCH: " : 192745
Local pronunciation: ['sandəs 1ɔx]
Early refs: Loch Sanders 1831 Thomson
Derivation:
Sander is most probably the local version of Alexander but there appears to be no traditional story relating to the name.
So neither : see OL27(S)
So loch : see R5(S)

SANDYBURN : ND 26 NW: 232686
Local pronunciation: ['sandi 'barn]
Early refs: Sandy Burn 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So burn : see R4(S)

SCARWALL : ND 27 SW: 225742
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes shore-line rocks and the first element could possibly represent
ON skarfr m.: see R145(T)
The second element is very puzzling because wall often represents
ON völlr m.: a field, but the coastal situation makes this a most improbable source.

SCORE, LITTLE : ND 27 NW: 217752
SCORE, MEIKLE : " : 217755
Local pronunciation: ['l+tl 'skor, mikl ...]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc meikle (also mikill, muckle)
: large
Sc score : a crevice, cleft or gully in a cliff face. (<ON skor f.: a notch, cut, a rift in a rock or precipice.)
SCOTHABREAK : ND 27 SW: 207714
SCOTHA CLEFT : " : 205715
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
It is impossible to suggest a derivation of the specific scotha
without either early spellings or modern pronunciation.
The generic break could represent an earlier
ON brekka f.: see R33(S)

SHIRA GEO : ND 17 NE: 194763
Local pronunciation: ['ʃira gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
Sc shire: clear, pure, unclouded – applied to liquid
Cai geo: see R54(T)

SINNIGOE, BURN OF : ND 27 NW: 212753
OUTER SINNI GEO : " : 218752
INNER SINNI GEO : ND 27 SW: 219746
Local pronunciation: ['sini gjo]
Early refs: Sinnigo 1750 Roy
Sinnigo 1807 Arrowsmith
Sinniego 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc burn: see R4(S)
There are two possibilities for the specific
1) Sc sinnie
   : a variant of English sinew
or, more probably, given the situation
2) Sc sinna
   : Also sinni-, -y; one of several kinds of seaside
      grasses. (< ON sina: a kind of rush, withered
      grass.)
Cai geo: see R54(T)
There are conflicting local stories regarding this name.
One local informant was told of the existence of a building on the edge of the cliff at this point but unfortunately, Alexander Ronaldson, who was the source of this information is now deceased.
Another informant has suggested that there was originally a rock, detached from the cliff which was known as Sir John's Castle, but this rock toppled into the sea and the name was transferred to the nearby cliff.
Sir John is reputed to have been Sir John Sinclair of Ratter.
There is no record of a castle in this position in the Inventory of Monuments.

**SMALL GEO**

Local pronunciation: ['sma gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
Cai geo: see R54(T)

**SOW'S GEO**

Local pronunciation: ['sus gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
Cai geo: see R54(T)
Presumably a sow fell to its death in this geo at a time when pigs were commonly reared in Caithness.
STONY MOUTH : ND 17 SE: 194723  
Local pronunciation: [stoni 'məθ]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
The name describes a small geo with boulders at the entrance.  
It is surprising that the local pronunciation is [stoni] rather  
than Caithness dialect [steni].


SWEERAG WELL : ND 27 SE: 261744  
Local pronunciation: ['swirag wel]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So sweerie-well or sweerag well defined in the Fife Herald (1831)  
as follows:  
"Like Sweerie-Wells, which flow plentifully for a while after rain,  
but cannot be depended on for a constant stream."


THE CAIRNS : ND 27 SW: 209729  
Local pronunciation: ['kərns]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So cairn : see R27(T)


THE HAVEN : ND 27 SE: 259745  
Local pronunciation: ['heven]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So haven : see R55(S)
THE KAME  :  ND 27 SW:  223740  D72(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈkæm]
Early refs:  1876  6"  OS
Derivation:
So kame  :  a long, narrow, steep-sided mound or ridge, a hill-ridge. Frequent in place-names.
(<ON kambr m.
  :  a crest)

THE NEBACK  :  ND 17 NE:  194764  D73(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈnɛbek]
Early refs:  1876  6"  OS
Derivation:  Probably
Sc neb + dimin -ack
  :  any pointed tip or projection, of a piece of land, rock etc.

THE NESS  :  ND 27 SW:  209713  D74(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈnes]
Early refs:  1876  6"  OS
Derivation:
Cai ness  :  see T13(S)

THE STACKS  :  ND 27 SW:  234743  D75(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈstæks]
Early refs:  1876  6"  OS
Derivation:
Cai stack  :  a tall column of rock rising out of the sea in front of a cliff, of which it had originally formed a part till separated by weathering.

v. Pennant's Tour (1769):  "Near Freswick Castle the cliffs are very lofty ... Beneath are great insular columns, called here stacks."
THE THIRL : ND 17 SE: 186727
Local pronunciation: [θɪər l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So thirl : a hole or aperture, especially in a wall.
The name describes a long and very narrow geo.

TOWERIMS CRAIG : ND 27 SW: 234742
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is obscure.
So craig : see R46(s)

TREE GEO : ND 27 SE: 259746
Local pronunciation: ['tri gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A commonly occurring name and the reference is usually to driftwood rather than natural vegetation.

WINDY GEO : ND 27 SE: 256743
Local pronunciation: ['windi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
CHAPTER EIGHT: CANISBAY PARISH

Introduction p. 286
Settlement Names pp. 287 - 313
Topographical Names pp. 314 - 348
The Island of Stroma pp. 349 - 369
(Settlement Names pp. 349 - 350
Topographical Names pp. 351 - 369)
Canisbay Parish has both an east and a north coast and, unlike any other Caithness parish, it includes a sizeable island, the island of Stroma, which lies approximately two kilometres off the north coast.

On the island of Stroma one is particularly aware of that ubiquitous coastal feature, the *geo*. The local red sandstone is prone to vertical faulting which, when subjected to wave action, is rapidly eroded into narrow, near-vertical openings in the cliffs, known as *geos* (see R54(T)). The island of Stroma was evacuated in the post-war years since its population had dwindled and it was found to be no longer viable as a community. It is, however, still farmed by a local person who lives on mainland Canisbay and travels to Stroma by boat, sometimes staying on the island in summer.

There are several small harbours on the north coast of mainland Canisbay, most notably at John o' Groats from which there is a passenger ferry to Orkney. Most settlement is concentrated on the coastal area within one kilometre of the sea both on the north and on the east coast, while the interior is still largely unimproved moor with only scattered farms.

Tourism is of considerable importance in this parish. John o' Groats, at the end of the A9 trunk road, attracts many thousands of visitors while the much more impressive Duncansby Head, the north-eastern extremity of the parish, draws a much smaller number.

There is no record of Gaelic having been spoken at any time in Canisbay Parish.

The water from the Canisbay plateau drains eastwards into the sea or south-eastwards into the Wick River in Wick Parish which borders Canisbay to the south.
AUCKINGILL : ND 36 SE: 370645
BRIDGES OF AUCKINGILL : " : 371644
LOCH OF AUCKINGILL : ND 36 NE: 353652
MILLTOWN (OF AUCKINGILL): " : 377643
Local pronunciation : ['aukængal]
Early refs: Ockyngille 1410 RMS
Ockingille " "
Ochteingill 1547 "
Otkingill 1554 "
Ockingill 1635 "
Olkingill 1601 Sinclair (Mey)
Milntoun of Olkingill " "
Okingill 1613 "
Ockingill 1653 Retours
Milntown of Ockingill " "
Ockingile 1696 "
Okengil 1662 Blaeu
Ouckingill 1683 OLM
Ockingill 1750 Roy
Oukingill Mill 1832 Thomson
B. of Oukingill " "
Milltown of Oukingill " "

Derivation:
The specific in this name presents many problems. It has been suggested (Omand 1972, page 225) that the source is
ON Håkon n. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 448)
The generic, however, is undoubtedly
ON gil n. : see R11(T),
and it would be most unusual in Caithness to find a personal name compounded with ON gil, although there is one other possible, but similarly doubtful instance (see C130(T)).
Also, although inflexional endings were subject to phonological reduction, one would expect to find some trace of the genitival ending -ar (Håkonar-gil) in early references, but there is no evidence of its presence. Initial [h] could be lost at an early
stage in the development of a compound but, in the case of a well-known name such as Hákon, its loss would have been less likely to occur.

A more probable source of the specific is ON haukr m.: a hawk.

This element occurs in place-names in Iceland in its genitive plural form hauka (e.g. Hauka-gil; Hauka-dalr).

For the Caithness name one would have to assume a genitive plural + suffixed definite article:

Hauka-nna gil.

The vowel of the initial syllable is always <o> in early references which might seem to negate the above suggestion, but <o> is used elsewhere to represent ON au (see W5(S)) and, furthermore, modern pronunciation is clearly diphthongal.

So loch : see R5(S)
So milntown: see R60(S)

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<td>1831</td>
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Derivation:
Interpretation of the specific is difficult.
It could possibly derive from
ON barr n.: barley; corn
although ON bygg n. is the common word for barley throughout
Scandinavia.

ON gil n.: see R11(T)
(For a similar name-type of W2(§).)
(Berrigill (1615) is an isolated variant. ON berg n.: see T2(T),
would not be particularly appropriate to the situation, although it
could perhaps have applied to a mound "of indeterminate character"
in a cultivated field about a quarter of a mile WSW of Barrogill
Castle (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 18).

So mains : see R32(S)

......

BRABSTERMIRE : ND 36 NW: 324695
BATTANS OF BRABSTER: " : 323678
BRABSTERMIRE HOUSE : " : 317693

Local pronunciation: [ˈbræpstər] [ɔː 'batɑns ə bræpstər]

Early refs: Brabustynyr 1519 Sutherland (Forse)
Brabstermyr 1584 "
Brabastermyre 1538 RMS
Brabistermyre 1542 "
Brabistermyir 1604 Sinclair (Mey)
Brabistermyre 1613 "
Brabistermyir 1614 "
Brabuster 1662 Blaeu
Brabstermyr 1671 Retours
Broberstermyre " "
Brabster 1726 Macfarlane
Breberster 1750 Roy
Braibster " "
Brabistermyre 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON bre4r : see RAS)

Local pronunciation preserves the vowel quality of the original
ON bre4r.
ON bòlistar m.: see R21(S)
ON nuvrr f.: see OL21(T)

The final element -mire is generally omitted in speech.

Battans/Baddens represents
ON beiti n.: pasturage + gen form of def art

BUCHOLLY CASTLE : ND 36 NE: 383658
CASTLE GEO : " : 383658
CASTLE WELL : " : 380658

Local pronunciation: [bɔ'xɔli kazl]
Early refs: Bowquholle 1549 RMS
Bouguholle 1565 Retours
Boquhollie 1653 "
Balchollie 1565 Retours
Bolquhollie 1653 "
Bucholie Castle 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:
Macfarlane describes the Caithness castle as a "residence of Mowat of Balquholly". The Mowat family having received a charter of the lands of Freswick from King Robert the Bruce, brought the present name of Bucholie with them from their estate in Aberdeenshire.
G baile m. : see R25(S)
G coille f.: a wood
(Alexander 1952, page 16)

Bucholie Castle is reputed to have been built on the site of Sweyn Asleifson's stronghold of Lambaborg as mentioned in the Orkneyinga Saga.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Sc well : see R40(S)

CANISBAY, WEST : ND 37 SW: 338724
CANISBAY, EAST : " : 344725

Local pronunciation: [ˈkanəsbɛ]
There are numerous early examples of this name but those listed here give a clear impression of the variant spellings which occur.

**Derivation:**

Various sources have been suggested for this name.

(Mowat 1931, page 3) The generic is OWScand bær (see C7(S)).

There are only two examples of names containing this generic in Caithness - Duncansby and Canisbay - and since the specific in Duncansby is certainly a Celtic personal name (see C8(S)), it seems reasonable to argue that this may also be true of the specific in Canisbay.

Canisbay Church was dedicated to the Celtic Saint Drostán whose name is associated with the founding of the monastery at Deer in Aberdeenshire and in the Gaelic notes in "The Book of Deer" mention is made of a Clann Chanann who held lands locally. The actual reference is to "taesec Clane Canan" (Jackson 1972, page 32), ie toiséch, or chief, of Clann Chanann, in which Chanann is the genitive form of the name Cano, a rare one and probably of Pictish origin. (Jackson 1972, page 111)

In the case of Canisbay it would have to be assumed that the Norse knew the occupant of the farm as a member of the Clann Chanann and,
to the Celtic name-form which was already in the genitive they added a further ON gen sing masc inflexional ending -s.

The original Celtic genitival ending had merged with the stem by the 15th century and only an intrusive [ə] remained between the final consonants of the stem and the genitival -s.

Finally it should be noted that the deviant forms recorded in Bagimond's Roll are not significant. The <r> in Cranesby never reappears and the 1276 form which lacks genitival -s is likewise an isolated instance.

Blaeu's version (1662) appears to contain the original Celtic genitival ending but it is more probable that Blaeu, or Timothy Pont, assumed that the specific represented the well-known Celtic personal name Conan, although all other early forms of the name have <a> in the initial syllable.


CRACKERSFIELD : ND 26 NE: 297699
Local pronunciation: [krakorsfield]
Early refs: Park of Crackersfield Croft 1718 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Park of Crackersfield 1771 Sinclair (Mey)
Crackersfield 1841 Census

Derivation:
The specific Crackers is obscure without further early references. It was probably an ON settlement name which has been subject to phonological reduction following the addition of the generic field. So croft : see R11(S)
DUNCANSBY : ND 37 SE: 385727
DUNCANSBY HEAD : " : 406732
BURN OF DUNCANSBY : " : 391710
BIEL OF DUNCANSBY : " : 388708
BOARS OF DUNCANSBY : " : 388743
HA' OF DUNCANSBY : " : 376732
HA' GREEN : " : 376734
NESS OF DUNCANSBY : " : 390738
STACKS OF DUNCANSBY : " : 400719
Local pronunciation: ['daʊŋsbi]

Early refs: Dungalsbær 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
Dungsby 1515 RMS
Duncasbie 1592 "
Dunkasbie " "
Dungasbie 1606 "
Dongasby 1525 OPS
Dungasbe 1573 Sinclair (Mey)
Dungsbe 1574 "
Dungysby 1573 Ortelius
The Bojer " "
Duncans Bay 1662 Blaeu

The Boers of Dungysby " "
Dungysby or
Duncans Bay Head " "
Dungsbay Head 1750 Roy
Stacks of Dungsbay " "

Derivation:
There are numerous early written references to Duncansby but remarkably little variation in its presentation which accords very closely with the pronunciation used by older local people today: ['daʊŋsbi].

The specific appears to be a Celtic personal name Dungal.
Duncan first appears as an alternative to Dungal in Blaeu (1662) and since that time, due to the powerful influence of the written form, it has gradually usurped the earlier Dungal.
At the present day the pronunciation ['daʊŋsbi] is regarded as
being archaic and younger locals invariably say ['dikɔnsbi'],
pointing to the written form on the map as their justification.

As regards the generic, the Orkneyinga Saga reference points clearly
to OWScand bær which, in Norway seems to have been generally used
of an isolated farmhouse and perhaps also originally of cultivated
land. (Fellows Jensen 1972, page 6) Both of these usages could
have been appropriate to the Caithness name.

When the generic bær occurs as the second element of a compound name
it is normally spelt -bi or -by in Orkney and Shetland, and similarly
in Caithness. When used as a simplex name it takes the forms Bay
and Be.

So burn : see R4(S)
So biel', bield: see R15(T)
So bore, boar : "used as a place-name for a bad roost (tidal
race) in the Bore of Papay (ORK 1929 Marwick)"

The Caithness name has the same derivation.

So ha' : hall
So green : a piece of grassy ground in front of a house,
frequent in combinations such as kirk-, manse-
etc.

Cai ness : see T13(S)
Cai stack : see D75(T)

The Stacks of Duncansby are three conspicuous rocks in the sea off
Duncansby Head, known locally as Muckle Stack, Peedie Stack and Tom
Thoom.

So muckle : see D61(T)
Cai peedie : small, tiny
(variant form of recent origin c1900 of peerie: origin somewhat
doubtful. The word is now current only in Shetland and Orkney)

So thoom : form of Eng thumb

EVERLY : ND 36 NE: 368689
Local pronunciation: ['iːvərli]
Early refs: Ovirlie 1549 RMS
            Ovirley 1635 "
            Overly 1653 Retours
ON yfir : upper
(of Sc over: OL27(s))
ON hlið : see R59(s)

......

FRESWICK : ND 36 NE: 372675
FRESWICK HOUSE : " : 378672
FRESWICK MAINS : " : 378671
FRESWICK LINKS : " : 376674
FRESWICK BAY : " : 385673
FRESWICK BURN : " : 373676
FRESWICK BRIDGE : " : 369677

Local pronunciation: [ˈfraʊk]

Early refs: Fresvik 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
Fresvik 13th C Njáls Saga
Freswike 1410 RMS
Freswic " "
Freschwik 1549 "
Fresoewik 1554 "
Freschwelik 1635 "
Freschewik 1579 Sinclair (Mey)
Fresyk 1595 Mercator
Fresh Wick 1662 Blaeu
Castle of Freswick 1726 Macfarlane

After 1726 the form is almost invariably Freswick.

Derivation:
Many attempts have been made to explain the specific in this name, none of them entirely satisfactory (see John Mowat 1931, page 7).
Later written forms of the name have certainly been influenced by OSc fresch(e) (also frea, frehe: fresh (of water)).
It seems likely that this familiar element, so appropriate in the context of the Freswick Burn, was substituted for an earlier unfamiliar Norse specific as recorded in both Orkneyinga Saga and Njálss Saga - Fresvik.

When attempting to provide a derivation for this Norse specific Fres it seemed that a reasonable approach would be to consider it in
conjunction with the generic ON vík f.: see D12(S), in the hope of finding a clue to its identity. The term vík, in fact, only appears in two other names within the present six parishes; it occurs once as a simplex name (see W116(S)) and once as the generic in the name Dwarwick (see D12(S)). This seemed most unpromising, but further consideration of ON dvergr m.: a dwarf, which was suggested as a possible source of the specific in Dwarwick, led to some very interesting speculation as to the possible nature of ýras.

Lind records the following name: ON ýhra (gen ýhra) as a mythological name which could be used of a dwarf as in ýhra dvergr (Lind 1915, column 1221). Could there have been some feature of the landscape surrounding these two víkar which prompted an association with the tales of the dwarves?

As mentioned in D12(S) the dwarves were the precursors of the trolls in northern mythology and there are certainly frequent references to trolls in Caithness place-names and it seems reasonable to presume, therefore, that dwarves would have been equally suitable place-name material.

So mains : see R32(S)
So links : see OL33(S)
So burn : see Rh4(S)

GIARS : ND 37 SE: 367706
GIAR HILL : " : 363705
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: Gye 1931 6" OS 1876
Gyer Hill " "
Derivation:
Interpretation is very difficult without further early written forms and modern pronunciation of the name.
It is possible that this hill was one of the many in Caithness whose name had its origin in local superstition. J.T. Calder notes with relation to Gyre, Gyar: "There was a sort of nondescript being called Gyrecarline that cut a considerable figure on the stage of our northern superstition. She assumed the appearance of an old woman
and paid her visits only at a certain season of the year - Candlemas and "Fasterneen." Perhaps Giar or Gyre Hill was traditionally a haunt of such a person. (SND: Cai 1842 J.T. Calder 'Sketches' 223)

......

GILLS : ND 37 SW: 320727  C11(S)
GILLS HAVEN : " : 327729
GILLS BAY : " : 335735
WEST BURN OF GILLS : " : 323723
UPPER GILLS : " : 325715
Local pronunciation: [gils]
Early refs: Gillis 1564 Sinclair (Mey)
Gilles 1662 
Gillis 1609 RMS
Gills 1664 
Gils 1662 
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R71(T) + Eng pl -s
Cai haven : see R55(S)
Se burn : see R4(S)
The use of the specific Upper rather than Over Gills suggests that this derivative name is of Scots rather than Norse origin (cf OL27(S)).

......

HARROW : ND 27 SE: 281741  C12(S)
FIELD OF HARROW : " : 278743
BRADS OF HARROW : " : 283742
Local pronunciation: ['haro]
Early refs: Harrow 1750 Roy
Field of Harrow 1841 Census
Derivation: Probably
ON hágur m.: 1) a cairn of stones or stony hillock
2) a heathen temple-site
In Caithness the first definition is much more probable although it
is worth noting that a rock in the sea near Harrow is known as
How Skerry (see OS4(T)), apparently incorporating the specific
ON haugr m.: see Th4(S).
(For comments on hau and hörgr see Marwick 1952, page 2: Hauga.)
Sc brae : see R8(S)

HAZELBRAKE : ND 27 SE: 281705
Local pronunciation: ['hezl] brek
Early refs: Hisselbrek 1603 RMS
            Basilbrek 1623 "
Derivation:
OSc hissill: hazel
            (first recorded c1568)
OSc hasill : hazel
            (from 1594)
Eng brake : a clump of bushes, brushwood or briers

HEMP RIGG : ND 36 NE: 378677
Local pronunciation: ['hempri]g
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
There are numerous early references to Hempriggs (see W48(S)) but
none to Hemp Rigg(sing), although the two names are obviously of
the same origin.
Derivation:
Sc hemp-rigg: a ridge of land on which hemp was sown; now only
            in farm names
            (OSc rigge : strip of arable land, occurs in place-names c1170,
            and is a Sc form of Eng ridge, possibly from
            ON hrygr m.: back, ridge
corresponding to OE hrycg.)
HILL OF HARLEY : ND 36 NE: 375659

Local pronunciation: [həl ˈhərli]
Early refs: Harlie 1635 RMS
Harlie 1653 Retours
Hairlie 1696 "
Harelie 1789 Ainslie
Harley 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON har: see OL16(S)
ON hild f. : see R59(S)

HOLLANIMEY : ND 27 SE: 294705
HOLLANIMEY MOSS : " : 283705
BURN OF HOLLANIMEY : " : 294703

Local pronunciation: [holənˈmei]
Early refs: Holandmay 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
Holandmey 1553 "
Holandmey 1561 "
Holen-Mey 1594 "
Holandmaii 1578 RMS
Holandmey 1603 "
Hole of May 1662 Blaeu
Hollandmey 1831 Thomson
Holomey 1841 Census

Derivation:
ON hɔll m. : see OL2(S)
ON land m. : see Th9(S)
-mey : see C22(S)
(Blaeu's version (1662) is probably an attempt at rendering an incomprehensible element comprehensible. It has also influenced the 1841 form.)
Sc moss : see R7(S)
Sc burn : see Rh(S)

......
HUNA
: ND 37 SE: 363733
Local pronunciation: [thuna]
Early refs: Hwnaye 1574 Retours
Hunay 1617 "
Hway 1575 RMS
Hwno 1581 Sinclair (Mey)
Hunow 1582 "
Hwana 1585 "
Hunay 1616 "
Hounay 1743 Sinclair (Freswick)
Huna 1750 Roy
Houna 1800 Ainslie

Derivation:
The specific is probably
ON Húni (gen Húna) m.
: a personal name (Lind 1915, column 599)
The generic may be
ON á f. : a river
There is a neighbouring stream, but it is diminutive and hardly seems
to merit the description á, although ON á did have a wide range of
application and could also occasionally refer to smaller streams.

......

JOHN O' GROAT'S HOUSE: ND 37 SE: 378734
JOHN O' GROAT'S MILL: " : 372734
Local pronunciation: [joh-o'groats]
Early refs: John o' Grott's House 1726 Macfarlane
Johnny Grotts House 1750 Roy
Johnny Groats House 1750 Dorret

Derivation:
The story of the famous eight-sided house belonging to John Groat
first appears in the Old Statistical Account of Canisbay but, regrett-
ably, it seems to be apocryphal. Excavations revealed the
foundations of a rectangular building, but no signs of the octagonal
structure. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 20) (For details
of the story see J.T. Calder 1887, page 12-15)
The Grot family first appear in a charter dated 1496 and there are frequent references to various members of the family after this date - mostly in Duncansby and Warse. One interesting entry in the Sinclair (Mey) papers (1564) refers to a John Grot who was in possession of lands in Stroma. It was obviously a family of some substance, and possession of these lands in Stroma gave rise to the spurious local tale that John Grot's surname was derived from his practice of charging a groat for the trip to Stroma.

Macfarlane's reference is one of the first to incorporate medial of as in John o' Grott, and it may simply have arisen due to a misinterpretation of the diminutive ending <-y> in Johnny.

The name is now frequently written John o' Groats - the final apostrophe, indicating ownership of the house, being omitted in the interests of brevity and simplicity.

KIRKSTYLE : ND 37 SW: 343728
Local pronunciation: [kark 'stail]
Early refs: Kirkstile 1841 Census
Derivation:
So kirk : see T27(S)
So kirkstyle: a narrow entrance into a churchyard closed by bars, a wicket or an arrangement of steps, common as a place of public resort, where meetings were arranged and announcements made, and where the bier was received into the churchyard at funerals. Sometimes used as the name of a house or farm near the churchyard ... as in this case.

LADYKIRK or
ST. MARY'S CHAPEL : ND 37 SW: 387735
Local pronunciation: ['ledi kark, -tʃəpəl]
Early refs: Lady Chappel, Duncansbay 1726 Macfarlane
Derivation:
The name describes the remains of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. So kirk (see T27(S)) has now been substituted for chapel.

LYREQUOY WELL : ND 37 SW: 344731
Local pronunciation: ['laer kwəi]
Early refs: Lyrrequoy 1841 Census

ON leir n.: see D39(T)
(This element is more frequent in coastal names, as in this instance.)
Cai quoy : see T22(S)
So well : see Rh40(S)

MEY : ND 27 SE: 287727
MEY HILL : ND 37 SW: 312741
EAST MEY : " : 305742
MEN OF MEY : " : 309754
TOWER O' MEN O' MEY: " : 309753
WEST MEY : ND 27 SE: 284733
LOCH OF MEY : " : 271736
MOSS OF WEST MEY : " : 278722
MILL OF MEY : " : 273746
MILL GEO : " : 272746
CAIRN O' MEY : " : 287737
CASTLE OF MEY : " : 291739
Local pronunciation: [mei]
Early refs: Mai 1250 Matthew Paris
May 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
Mey 1553 "
Maye 1616 "
Eastsyd of Mey 1698 "
The Men of Maye 1573 Ortelius
Early refs (cont'd)

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<td>RMS</td>
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<td>Mei</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maye</td>
<td>1603</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hill de May</td>
<td>1623</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>Blaeu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millton of Mey</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Roy</td>
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The name is consistently May from this date.

Derivation:

There is little variation in this name throughout the centuries but it is, nevertheless, difficult to suggest a fitting derivation. J.B. Johnston suggests that the source is

G magh (locative maigh) m.
: a field, level country. (Johnston 1934, page 252)

It is a tempting suggestion because it fits the topography but it would be most unusual to find a Gaelic appellative as a settlement name in Canisbay parish.

The obvious source, but for the fact that the description does not fit the situation, is

ON móey : seagulls' island.

It is perhaps possible that this could be an example of a commemorative name, but it would be extremely unusual for such a name, however fondly remembered, to be applied to a totally inappropriate situation in the new land.

More probable than either of these suggestions, although still doubtful, is that the source is

ON móri m. : a plain with sandy or gravelly soil.

This appellative has been recorded as a simplex name by Jakobsen in Unst, Shetland in the variant form mui. He recorded it as a common noun but notes that it has a specific reference to part of the fore-shore south of Baltasound. (Jakobsen 1932, page 576)

The early spellings of the Caithness name could possibly have been influenced by Latin Maius.
PHILIP'S MAINS: ND 27 SE: 299719
PHILIP'S HARBOUR: ND 27 SE: 282743

Local pronunciation: [ˈfɪlɪpəs 'mæns, ... 'hɑrboʊr]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS

Derivation:
Philip's Mains was apparently named after Louisa Philips, wife of the 14th Earl of Caithness and daughter of Sir George Philip. The name replaces an earlier name Nisseter, recorded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nassetir</td>
<td>1578</td>
<td>RMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nessetter</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nessiter</td>
<td>1623</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisseter</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>Thomson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probably
ON nytr: new
ON seatr n.: see R33(S)
(ON res n.: see T13(S) does not fit the situation)

Phillip's Harbour was originally known as Wester Haven according to local informants.
Cai haven: see T32(T)

NESS OF QUOYS: ND 37 SW: 349728

Local pronunciation: [kwəˈjʌs]
Early refs: Quyis 1566 Sinclair (Mey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quyis</td>
<td>1566</td>
<td>Sinclair (Mey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quyis or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seittirquyis</td>
<td>1573</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quys</td>
<td>1574</td>
<td>Retours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quyis</td>
<td>1575</td>
<td>RMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quyis</td>
<td>1575</td>
<td>Sinclair (Mey)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qwoyes</td>
<td>1581</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quis</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quyis</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoyses</td>
<td>1617</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quyis</td>
<td>1619</td>
<td>Sutherland (Forse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queys</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Roy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derivation:
Cai quoy: see T22(S)
The Sinclair (Mey) 1573 reference to Seittirquies is particularly interesting because it clearly indicates the process of secondary settlement and expansion outwards from the already established farm of Seater (see C28(S)).

Cai ness : see T13(S)

RIGIFÁ
: ND 37 SW: 304725
HILL OF RIGIFÁ
: " : 305722
Local pronunciation: [‘rigefa]
Early refs: Riggifa 1603 RMS
Rigiefall 1623 "
Rigyfah 1801 Sinclair (Mey)
Rigifold 1841 Census

Derivation:
ON hrvggr m.: see OL27(S)
Probably
ON fjall n. : see D9(S)
(This would originally have been a topographical name, subsequently adopted as a settlement name. English hill would have been added once the meaning of the original compound had become obscure.)
(The 1841 version Rigifold seems to be an isolated variant.)

SCOOULARY
: ND 26 NE: 298685
Local pronunciation: [‘skuləri]
Early refs: Scularie 1614 Sinclair (Mey)
Scularie 1619 "
Skowlarie 1616 Sutherland (Forse)
Sculairie 1619 "
Scoullary 1722 "
Skowlary 1739 "
Scullary 1739 "
Skoulery 1761 "
Scoullery 1830 "
Scullary 1697 OIM
Scoullarie 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
ON Skúli, -a m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, page 925)
(see also Fellows Jensen 1968, page 254)
ON ærgi n.: see R66(S)

......

SCOTLAND'S HAVEN : ND 37 SW: 3177144
Local pronunciation: ['skɔtlænð həvən]
Early refs: Skaitlandheavin 1603 RMS
           " 1623 "
           Scotland Haven 1750 Roy
           " 1831 Thomson
           (Orkney Ferry 1807 Arrowsmith)

Derivation:
Whatever the ultimate origin of this name it is clear that the modern pronunciation and conception of the name has been influenced by the version which is prevalent in maps from 1750. Arrowsmith gives the alternative name Orkney Ferry which is obviously based on the assumption that boats from Orkney landed on this shelving, sandy beach. It is possible that some boats may have landed here, if not from Orkney at least from Stromay, but there is no record or local knowledge of a regular ferry using this as a harbour. John o' Groats is the ferry terminal and has been regularly used as such since at least 1750.

Skaitlandheavin which is recorded in RMS has an equally puzzling specific because it is most improbable that the rough, uncultivated land around this little inlet would ever have been liable for the payment of skat, a tax levied on arable land.

The origin of the name must, therefore, remain obscure.
(For Cai haven: see T32(T).)

......

SEATER : ND 37 SE: 355726
HAVEN OF SEATER : " : 354734
Local pronunciation: ['sɛɪtər]
Early refs: Sceter 1563 Sinclair (Mey)  
Setyr 1566 "  
Setter 1573 "  
Seatter 1581 "  
Sitter 1583 "  
Seatoure 1616 "  
Seittar 1574 Retours  
Setre 1662 Blaeu  
Sheater 1664 RMS  
Syter 1750 Roy

Derivation:
ON setr n.: see R33(S)  
Cai haven : see T32(T)
(There is a suggestion of palatalisation of the initial consonant in the 1563 and 1664 references, but not in modern pronunciation.)

SHEILTON : ND 27 SE: 287202
Local pronunciation: ['ʃiltən]
Early refs: Scheiltoun 1623 RMS  
Schuletoun " "  
Sheillton 1661 "

Derivation:
So sheil (shiel)  
: a small but constructed for the accommodation of shepherds during the summer months when they reside among the mountains
So ton (town)  
: see R46(S)
In this case perhaps the shielings became established as permanent dwellings after a short initial period of seasonal use, because the element town indicates permanent settlement.

......
SKIRZA : ND 36 NE: 387684
SKIRZA HEAD : " : 394682
HAVEN OF SKIRZA : " : 387680
Local pronunciation: [skirza hedd]
Early refs: Skirsarie 1625 Sinclair (Mey)
Skersarie 1635 RMS
Skersarie 1653 Retours
Scarskerry 1750 Roy
Scar Scary 1750 Dorret
Scarsherry 1750 Dorret
Skirsay 1830 Sinclair (Freswick)
Scarsherry 1831 Thomson

Derivation:
The specific is most probably
ON Skerrir, -is m.
: a personal name (Lind 1915, page 914)
ON aerri n.: see R66(S)
Cai haven : see T32(T)
Roy's version and subsequent imitations are obviously modelled on
the Dunnet Parish name which Roy also records as Scarskerry
(see D33(S)), but modern pronunciation of the name Skirza argues
against a similar derivation for the two names.

SLICKLY : ND 26 NE: 297667
BRIDGE OF SLICKLY : " : 295661
BURN OF SLICKLY : " : 293664
HILL OF SLICKLY : " : 298681
BACK BURN OF SLICKLY: ND 36 SW: 314648
Local pronunciation: ['slākli]
Early refs: Sleiklie 1506 Sutherland (Forse)
Slecke 1539 RMS
Sloiklie 1661 "
Sleiklie 1604 Sinclair (Mey)
Sleiklie 1644 Retours
Slekkie 1695 Sutherland (Forse)
Slickly 1722 "
Slackly 1830 "

SILTMY: ND 26 NE: 297667
BRIDGE OF SILL: 295661
BURN OF SILL: 293664
BILL OF SILL: 298681
BACK BURN OF SILL: ND 36 SW: 314648

C30(S) C31(S)
Derivation:

Representation of the vowel in the specific is very variable which makes derivation difficult. One possible source is

ON slfkr : smooth
ON hif l f. : see R59(S)
So burn : see R4(S)

SONSIQUOY : ND 36 NE: 383679
Local pronunciation: ['sɔnıkwɔi]
Early refs: Sonsaquhoy 1635 RMS
Sownsquaquoy 1653 Retours
Sawsaguay 1696 "

Derivation:
The specific is very puzzling. It may possibly represent
So sonsie : of good fortune, lucky
with reference to the heavy yield from crops which could be expected in such a favourable situation.
In most Caithness quoy names the specific defines the nature of the soil or vegetation.
Cai quoy : see T22(S)

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL : ND 37 SW: 311751
ST. JOHN'S POINT : " : 311752
Local pronunciation: [st jons 'chapl, ...'heid]
Early refs: St. John's Heid 1653 Canisbay Parish Records
St. John's Chappell 1654 "
St. John's Chapel 1726 Macfarlane
St. John's Head 1750 Roy

Derivation:
A chapel dedicated to St. John which was, according to Rev. Beaton, "the centre of much superstition". (Beaton 1909, page 48)
The Parish Records state: "Alex" Cogill and Anna Barnatsone ar
ordained to be charged for their superstitious going to St. John's
Chappell".

Fires were lit on 24th June - St. John's Eve - and this practice was
also frowned upon by the Kirk Session.

The local version of the second name is usually St. John's Head
rather than Point as recorded on the 6" OS map.

ST. MADDAW'S CHAPEL:  ND 36 NE:  376672
Local pronunciation:  [æn 'madəns tʃəpəl]
Early refs:  Maddane's Chappell 1654  Kirk Session Records
St. Meddin 1654 "
St. Medon's Chappel 1726  Macfarlane

Derivation:
A chapel dedicated to St. Modan/Maddan/Medin "also the scene of
many superstitious rites". (Beaton 1909, page 49)

ST. TUSTAN'S CHAPEL:  ND 36 NW:  317694
Local pronunciation:  [æn 'tustəns tʃəpəl]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS

Derivation:
This name is apparently another variant of Drostan, head of the
monastic institution at Deer in Buchan (cf OL37(S)).
(Beaton 1909, page 82)

STEMSTER  :  ND 37 SE:  367721
BURN OF STEMSTER  :  " :  369723
Local pronunciation:  ['stemstər]

C33(s) (cont'd)
Early refs: Stamster 1606 Sinclair (Mey)
Stamister 1632 
Stemster 1635 
Staymster 1655 
Stembuster 1674 OIM
Steymster 1682 Sutherland (Forse)
Stempster 1779 Sinclair (Freswick)
Stamster 1784 

Derivation:
ON steinn m. : see R20(S)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

There may have been a standing stone here or the reference may be to the broch. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 20)

This name also occurs in Reay Parish (cf R68(S)).
So burn : see R4(S)

......

STROUPSTER : ND 36 NW: 333663 037(S)
HILL OF STROUPSTER : " : 338661
RADDENS OF STROUPSTER: " : 337667

Local pronunciation : [ˈstrʊpːster]

Early refs: Strwbister 1635 RMS
Strunbister 1661 
Stronbister 1653 Retours
Kirk of Strubster 1726 Macfarlane
Stroubster 1801 Sinclair (Freswick)
Strubster 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
The most probable source is
ON stór : big, important (with metathesis of r)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)

(The nasal consonant which appears in the 1653 and 1661 examples is puzzling, but it is probably due to scribal error. There is no hint of its presence in modern pronunciation.)

Baddens < ON beiti n.
So kirk : see C3(S)

......
THOMSONSFIELD : ND 37 SW: 331706
Local pronunciation: ['tɔmsɔnsfiːld]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A farm owned by a family of the surname Thomson (cf T5(S)).

TOPTRAWNALD : ND 26 NE: 283683
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON toft f.: see OL33(S)
ON Ragnvaldr/Ragn(v)aldr m.:
: a personal name (Lind 1915, page 861)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 213)
This is an example of an "inversion-compound" which is usually seen
as a test of specifically Norwegian influence in the colonial
territory.
The names were formed and used by Scandinavians, but the word order
in the compound indicates Celtic influence. (Wainwright 1964, page
141)

TOFTS : ND 36 NE: 368683
Local pronunciation: [tofts]
Early refs: Toftis 1549 RMS
Toftis 1563 Sinclair (Mey)
Toftes 1662 Blaeu
Toftis 1653 Retours
Tofts 1696 "
Toftes 1750 Dorret
Toftes 1800 Ainslie

Derivation:
Cai toft: see OL33(S) + variable Eng pl -is/-es/-s
This element occurs as a simplex name in other areas which have been
subject to Scandinavian influence. (cf Toftes, a lost vill in the
manor of Wombwell, Upper Strafforth. Fellows-Jensen 1972, page 89)
TRESDALE : ND 37 SW: 349715
Local pronunciation: ['trisdəl]
Early refs: Trestal 1841 Census
Derivation: Possibly
ON tré n.: a tree
ON dalr: see R22(S)

WARSE : ND 37 SW: 333723
HILL OF WARSE : " : 337716
HAVEN OF WARSE : " : 329728
ROUGH OF WARSE : " : 332729
Local pronunciation: [warəs]
Early refs: Warris 1508 Sinclair (Moy)
Werris 1563 "
Wairis 1566 "
Warse 1582 "
Waris 1583 "
Wairse 1634 "
Warres 1635 "
Werris 1539 RMS
Varis 1636 "
Wares 1726 Macfarlane
Waars 1750 Roy

Derivation:
The most probable source is
ON ár OSS m.: the mouth of a river
(The Burn of Miremuckle (see C19(T)) flows into the sea at the
Haven of Warse.)
Jakobsen comments that in Shetland place-names initial [w] occurs
in the genitive singular form of ON ð (Jakobsen 1901, page 71) and
it is likely that a similar phonetic development would be
characteristic of Caithness, ie
ON ár (gen sing) > Cai wár (in initial position in a compound).
Cai haven : see T32(T)
ON rófa f. > Cai rough
: see D55(T)

......
TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES
BARBERRY HEAD: ND 37 SW/NW: 313752
Local pronunciation: [tʰarbəɾi hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
ON bard n.: the verge, margin, edge of a hill
Cai berry: see T2(T)
(cf. Bar Berry S2(T))

BAY OF SANNICK: ND 37 SE: 397735
Local pronunciation: [tʰe bə 'sanθk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON sandr: see R64(s)
ON vik f.: see D12(s)
The tautologous English Bay would have been added at a subsequent date, once the process of phonological reduction had rendered the Norse compound incomprehensible.

BIG SKERRY: ND 37 SW: 313756
Local pronunciation: [tʰiɡ skəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

BLACKEN BERRY: ND 37 SW: 307748
Local pronunciation: [tʰlækən bəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is probably Eng black, although the suffix -en is puzzling. It could possibly be an abbreviation of Eng blackened.
Cai berry: see T2(T)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
<th>Local Pronunciation</th>
<th>Early Refs</th>
<th>Derivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLACK GEO</td>
<td>ND 27 SE: 278747</td>
<td>[blak ˈgjo]</td>
<td>1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>see R54(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK HILL</td>
<td>ND 36 NE: 385690</td>
<td>[blak ˈhɔl]</td>
<td>Early refs: Black Loch 1750 Roy</td>
<td>The reference is to the dark, peat-coloured water of the Loch. So loch: see R5(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK HOLE</td>
<td>ND 37 SW: 337728</td>
<td>[blak ˈhəl]</td>
<td>Early refs: 1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>The name describes a deep, narrow inlet of the sea, and the generic is probably perhaps being used in the specialised sense of a fishing-ground close to the shore (Jakobsen 1932, page 800).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK LOCH</td>
<td>ND 37 SW: 338708</td>
<td>[ˈblak ˈlox]</td>
<td>Early refs: Black Loch 1750 Roy</td>
<td>The reference is to the dark, peat-coloured water of the Loch. So loch: see R5(S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK SCORE</td>
<td>ND 36 NE: 382653</td>
<td>[blak ˈskɔr]</td>
<td>Early refs: 1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>The name describes a deep, narrow inlet of the sea, and the generic is probably perhaps being used in the specialised sense of a fishing-ground close to the shore (Jakobsen 1932, page 800).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUE GEO</td>
<td>ND 37 SW: 315748</td>
<td>[ˈble gjo]</td>
<td>Early refs: 1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>Cai blae: dialectal form of Eng blue Cai geo: see R5(T)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BOAT GEO : ND 37 SW: 308751
Local pronunciation: ['bot g3o]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
An inlet where a boat was commonly moored.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

BRAES OF GERSTAL : ND 27 SE: 291743
Local pronunciation: [bres → 'gærstal]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc brae : see R8(S) + Eng pl -s
The origin of Gerstal is obscure without further early reference.

BROAD EBB : ND 27 SE: 283745
Local pronunciation: [brəd 'ɛb]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc ebb : see Tl8(S)
Otherwise self-explanatory.

BROAD SOUND : ND 37 SW: 312755
Local pronunciation: ['brod sun]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON sund n.: a sound, strait, narrow passage
The name describes the stretch of water between the Men of Mey (see C22(S)) and Big Skerry (see C3(T)).
BROTHIE GRO : ND 37 SE: 378735
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Possibly Eng broth + dimin -ie, describing waves, which are constantly churning up debris from the sea-bottom.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

---

BRUNT POOL : ND 27 SE: 297748
BRUNT SKERRIES : " : 286745
Local pronunciation: [brunt ‘piul]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific in both these names appears to be So brunt : past participle of the verb 'to burn'
but it seems an odd partner for both the generics, particularly Pool. The reference could possibly be to colour, suggesting brownness.
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

---

BUGHT : ND 37 SW: 312751
Local pronunciation: [bAxt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai bught : a dialectal variant of Eng bight, a wide bay (of Danish and Swedish bucht)

---

BURN OF BOG : ND 36 NE: 358687
Local pronunciation: [bərn 'bog]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So burn : see R4(s)
The name describes a stream running through a marshy area.
BURN OF HORSEGROW : ND 27 SE: 279727
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So burn : see Rh4(S)
Given that the specific is horse, it seems likely that grow is a variant spelling of
So kro (cru(e), croo, kru(e))
: an enclosure or fold for animals
(This suggestion may also apply to Helshigrow: see D10(T) and Hatliegrow: see W47(S) in which the specifics are obscure.)

BURN OF LYNEGAR : ND 37 SE: 382703
Local pronunciation: [bArn a 'lainigar]
Early refs: Lyneaiker 1587 RMS
           Lynager 1661 "
Derivation:
So burn : see Rh4(S)
ON lin-akr m.
: a flax field
Lyneagar was possibly originally a settlement name but it now refers to the stream.

BURN OF MIREMUCKLE : ND 37 SW: 334710
Local pronunciation: [bArn a mair'mak]'
Early refs: Myremikill 1603 RMS
Derivation:
So burn : see Rh4(S)
So myre/mire : a boggy area
So mikill/muckle: see D61(T)
In Caithness (Canisbay Parish in particular) mire appears to have had a more precise application in that it frequently refers to the stream running through the marsh, rather than to the marshy ground itself.
In the above example Burn was probably added once Mire ceased to be used in the specialised local sense of stream.
BURN OF ORMIGILL : ND 27 SE: 282701  
Local pronunciation: [bAm ə 'ormgil]  
Early refs: Ormigill 1603 RMS  
Ormigill 1623  "  
Derivation:  
Sc burn : see Rh(S)  
ON ormr n.: see T61(S)  
ON gil n.: see R11(T)  

BURN OF SHELLYBRAE : ND 36 NE: 357696  
Local pronunciation: [bAm ə 'səlbre]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Sc burn : see Rh(S)  
Sc brae : see R8(S)  
Perhaps gulls and other sea-birds drop shells here or there may,  
at one time, have been a shell-midden although there is no record  
of it in Inventory of Monuments.  
(cf Shelley Hillock OL8(S))  

BURNT HILL : ND 37 SE: 397708  
Local pronunciation: ["burnt htl]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
The reference is probably to the regular practice of heather-burning.  
The form of the specific has probably been updated from an earlier  
Sc brunt (cf C1h(T)).  
(Sc bruntland  
: rough, mossy ground formerly burnt over periodically)  

BYKE YARDS : ND 36 NE: 383667  
Local pronunciation: ["baik 'yards]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
The name describes a rocky promontory and its origin is obscure.  

"
CHRISTAN HILL : ND 37 SE: 356702
Local pronunciation: [ˈkʰɾəstɔn hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There appears to be no extant local tradition regarding this name. The hill may have had some religious significance at one point, but without earlier forms it is impossible to be certain of the origin.

CLAVENAGREEN : ND 36 NE: 384681
Local pronunciation: [klavəˈɡriːn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a sloping grassy section in the cliff-face.

CRAIG HILL : ND 36 NW: 337699
Local pronunciation: [ˈkʰɾæɡ hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig : see R46(S)

(ENAG or) CROW HILLOCK: ND 36 NE: 374662
Local pronunciation: [ˈkɹəʊ ˈhɪlək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This is a rare instance of alternative names for the same feature being given on the 6" OS map. Local informants no longer know the alternative name Enag.
It seems likely that Crow Hillock is a straightforward modern
English name, while Enag is an earlier Gaelic version which does not specify a particular bird.

G eun m. : a bird + dimin - ag

The name occurs in a remote part of Canisbay parish which would have been subject to Gaelic influence from the south.

DEUBIE GILL : ND 37 SW: 323734

Local pronunciation: ['dʒubi gil]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Modern pronunciation and situation both suggest derivation from ON djúfr : deep

Cai gill : see R11(T)

DOO CAVE : ND 36 NE: 382667

Local pronunciation: ['du 'kev]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

So doo : dove

EBBSGEO : ND 27 SE: 266746

EBBSGEO SKERRIES : " : 268746

NEAR EBBSGEO : " : 268745

Local pronunciation: ['ɛbbs gjo]

Early refs: Ebisguois 1603 RMS

Derivation:

So ebb : see Th3(S)

Cai geò : see R54(T)

Cai skerry : see R151(T)

Near Ebbsgeo: This is one of the clearest Caithness examples of the description of a situation in relation to another place-name being eventually accepted as a name in its own right.

In RMS (1603) the two inlets are combined in the plural form Ebisguois.
EFFIE'S GEO : ND 36 NE: 394685
Local pronunciation: ['efis gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is probably to a female called Effie (a familiar form of Euphemia), although there is no extant local tradition connecting such a female with the geo.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

FAS BERRY : ND 37 SW: 303748
Local pronunciation: ['fais beri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of the specific is obscure.
Cai berry : see T2(T)

FAST GEO : ND 36 NE: 397699
HEAD OF FAST GEO : " : 398698
Local pronunciation: ['fas gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of the specific is obscure.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

FISH SCALE : ND 37 SE: 402724
Local pronunciation: [faiS 'skel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
There is a similar name in Thurso parish which has early forms as follows:
Fischill 1632 Retours
The Fishgill 1672 "
Fishill 1672 Sutherland (Forse)
Derivation: see T26(T)
FLUTHERAM : ND 37 SE: 396736
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a low-lying coastal reef and the form of the initial syllable suggests
ON fltër f.: low skerries or reefs flooded by the sea.

FOLLIE GEO : ND 37 SE: 367737
Local pronunciation: ['fOll gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON fsl (older form fogl) m.
: see D21(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

FULLIEGO : ND 27 SE: 288744
SILATES OF FULLIEGO: " : 289744
Local pronunciation: ['fuli gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON fsl m.: see D21(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Cai slates: see R83(T)

GANSPA WELL GEO : ND 36 SE: 380649
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Ganspa : this element is obscure without further early references
Sc well : see R40(S)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
GEO OF BEDSDALE : ND 27 SE: 283743
Local pronunciation: [gjo a 'bedsdel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R51(T)
The specific Beds- is obscure without further early references.
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
(anglicised to dale)

GEO OF SCLAITES : ND 37 SE: 406731
Local pronunciation: [gjo a 'slets]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R51(T)
Cai sclaites: see R83(T)

GIBB'S CRAIG : ND 37 SE: 405727
Local pronunciation: ['gibs 'kreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Gibb : a pet or diminutive form of Gilbert (Black 1946, page 297)
So craig : see R46(S)
(The name describes a rock at the extreme point of Duncansby Head and it has been immortalised in the following dialect rhyme:
"If Gibb's Craig fa's te'te lan'
Dungasby 'ill sink for sin.
Is lang's id stan's 'e sea
Dungasby hid spared will be.")
GIDDY KETTLE : ND 37 SE: 399724
Local pronunciation: ["giddy ketl] Early refs: 1876 6" OS Derivation:
giddy : see S27(T) kettle : the reference is to the rounded shape of this inlet which has overhanging edges and resembles the shape of a cauldron or kettle

GILL BURN : ND 36 NE: 360676
LITTLE GILL BURN : ND 36 NW: 348685
Local pronunciation: ["gil barn] Early refs: Referred to by Blaeu (1662) as Water of Freshwick (see C9(S)) Derivation:
Cai gill : see R54(T) Sc burn : see R4(S)

GINDIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 375639
Local pronunciation: ["gindie gjo] Early refs: Gindie Goes 1876 6" OS Derivation: The origin of the specific is obscure. Cai geo : see R54(T)

GIRN : ND 37 SE: 398705
Local pronunciation: ["girn] Early refs: 1876 6" OS Derivation: The origin of Girn is obscure without further early references.
GREEN GEO : ND 37 SE: 364738
GREENIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 372636
Local pronunciation: [ˈgrɪn ˈɡeɪ̯]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Recent names describing inlets with grass-covered sides.  
Cai geo : see R54(T)

GREEN HILL : ND 37 SE: 370719
GREEN MIRE : ND 36 NE: 393687
Local pronunciation: [ˈgrɪn ˈhɪl, ˈmɜːr]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Cai mire : see C19(T)  
Otherwise self-explanatory.

HANG : ND 37 SE: 374736  
Local pronunciation: [ˈhæŋ]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
The origin of this name is obscure. It describes some coastal rocks but there appear to be no overhanging edges.

HAVEN, WESTER : ND 27 SE: 283743  
HAVEN, EASTER : " : 293747  
Local pronunciation: [ˈwɛstər ˈheɪvən, ˈɛstər -]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Cai haven : see T32(T)
HAVEN OF CLETTS : ND 36 NE: 381669
HAVEN OF SAND : ND 37 SE: 357735
HAVEN SKERRY : ND 36 SE: 378643
Local pronunciation: [he̞vən a 'kle̞ts, .. 'san, 'he̞vən skər̩i]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai haven : see T32(T)
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

HAW WELL : ND 36 SE: 366639
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɔ wel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference may be to a hawthorne tree which grew beside the well.
Sc well : Rhô(S)

HEAD OF CREEKS : ND 37 SW: 320745
Local pronunciation: [ˌhɛd a 'kris]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai cree : a house for sheep (Horne 1907, page 69)

HILL OF CROGODALE : ND 37 SE: 397713
Local pronunciation: [hɪl a 'kraʊgədəl]
Early refs: Cnoc a' Dile 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
It is most unlikely that there would be a Gaelic name in the far east of Canisbay Parish. The Gaelic Cnoc a' Dile: hill of the wort plant, is certainly not known to locals and can probably be dismissed as a map-maker's invention.
On the other hand, although the name is almost certainly of Norse origin, it is not easy to suggest a derivation for the specific
without further early references.

The generic is

ON dalar m.: see R22(S)

(angularised to dale)

------

HOW SKERRY : ND 27 SE: 282746

Local pronunciation: [ˈhau skɛri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

ON haugr m.: see T44(S)

Cai skerry : see R151(T)

(for a further comment on this name see C12(S).)

------

HOWES BURN : ND 36 NE: 377677

Local pronunciation: [ˈhaus bArn]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

The situation suggests derivation from

Sc howe : a hollow or low-lying piece of ground.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

------

HULLION : ND 36 SE: 381646

Local pronunciation: [ˈhʌliən]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

Obscure without further early references.

------

JUMPAG : ND 27 SE: 269745

Local pronunciation: [ˈtʃʌmpag]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes an off-shore rock and is probably an English variant of the numerous names referring to similarly positioned rocks and incorporating So loup : see T47(T).
In this case Eng jump + dimin -ag.

******
KEALY CRAIGS : ND 37 SW: 323733
Local pronunciation: ['kili 'kregs]
Early refs: Pirley Craig 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
kealy : obscure
So craig : see R46(S)
So pirley (1876)
: anything very small

******
KILN OF FLUX : ND 37 SE: 398717
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Apparently an English name in which the word kiln (see T85(T)) suggests the shape of the geo and flux indicates the water flowing or gushing into it.

******
KINGANS GEO : ND 36 NE: 383657
Local pronunciation: ['kijans gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
(Local tradition has it that King James IV visited this geo, but it is a most improbable situation for a royal landfall.)
The specific could be
So kinnen (also kinning, kunnin)
: a rabbit
cal geo : see R54(T)

******
KNOCKING STONE : ND 37 SE: 384735 061(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈkɒknɪŋ sten]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a shore-line rock which apparently has a basin-shaped indentation similar to the stone bowl in which grain was knocked.
"The knockint stane was a large stone about 14 inches everyway with a hole of 8 or 9 inches diameter sunk 6 or 7 inches deep in it. In primitive form a pounding stone was held in the hands and by pounding on a little corn dropped into the knocking stone the husk or seed was taken off the corn." (SND)

LADY'S BROW : ND 36 NE: 376677 062(T)
LADY'S HOLE : ND 37 NE: 381678
Local pronunciation: [ˈlɛdi ˈbrɔ, ˈhɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There is no local tradition relating to the 'lady'. The reference may be to the Virgin Mary.
Eng brow : used figuratively to indicate a slight hill

LIATH SKERRY : ND 37 SW: 313754 063(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific appears to be
Eng lythe : see R27(T)
but Gaelic names of topographical features are very uncommon on this section of the coastline.
It seems more probable that this is another example of a fishing rock, and that the elements derive from
Eng skerry : see R151(T).

......
LIRKBURN : ND 26 NE: 288692
Local pronunciation: ['lark barn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So link : see T3(S)
So burn : see R4(S)

LINT LOCHS : ND 36 NE: 377698
Local pronunciation: ['lant laxs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So lint : the flax plant
So loch : see R5(S)
The lint had to be steeped in the water of the lochs in order to separate the flax from the straw or woody fibre.

LOCH LOMISHAN : ND 37 SE: 386701
Local pronunciation: ['loks 'lomisjan]
Early refs: Loch Lomashion 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So loch : see R5(S)
ON lømr m.: the loon, ember-goose or red-throated diver
ON tårn f.: a tarn, small lake
The red-throated diver always builds its nest on the edge of a lonely moorland loch.
(cf Lumisjón: Jakobsen 1901, page 157)
LONG BACK : ND 36 SE: 377641
LONG BERRY : ND 36 NE: 382671
LONG GEO : ND 37 SE: 405734
LONG GEO SKERRIES : ND 27 SE: 292748
Local pronunciation: [lɔŋ go]  Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai back : see T2(T)
Cai berry : see T2(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

MALLIE GEO : ND 37 SW: 306748
Local pronunciation: [mɔlə ɡo]  Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So malli/maalie:
the fulmar (a contracted form of Mallimoke)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

MASON'S GEO : ND 36 NE: 383661
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is probably to a personal surname, but there is no
local knowledge of such a person in connection with this geo.
(for Mason see Black 1946, page 585)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

MEALIN TANG : ND 27 SE: 294746
Local pronunciation: [mɛlən 'təŋ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Doubtful without earlier references but the situation suggests
ON melr m.: bent-grass; a sand-hill grown with bent-grass +
gen pl def art -nna
Cai tang : see T77(T)

......

MILL CLETT : ND 27 SE: 273746
Local pronunciation: [ˈmɪl klet]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The Mill is the Mill of Mey (see C22(S))
Cai clett : see R20(S)

......

MIRE OF TROWESKERRY: ND 36 NE: 362692
Local pronunciation: [ˈmaər ə ˈtrʌskəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai mire : see C19(T)
Troweskerry is a very puzzling name. The specific is most
probably
Cai trow : see OL31(T).
The generic is obscure although it seems to be identical in form to
Cai skerry: see R151(T).
Skerry, however, would be totally inappropriate in this moorland
situation, since it is restricted in its application to rocks in
the sea.

......

MOOL HILL : ND 37 SE: 365726
Local pronunciation: [ˈmʊl hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON múli m.: a jutting crag between two dales, fjords or the like
This appellative always indicates a broadly rounded hill, as in this example.
The pleonastic *Eng hill* would have been added at a later date.

---

**NESS HEAD**

: ND 36 NE: 364665

Local pronunciation: [nes 'heid]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

*Cai ness*: see T13(S)

(cf D50(T) for a further comment on the precise application of *Cai ness*)

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**OSWELL SPEIL**

: ND 36 SE: 377642

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A very strange name describing a shore-line pool. The name should possibly be written *Oswell's Peil* and be derived as follows:

So *Oswald/Oswell*:

- the water-ouzel or "dipper".

(*Oswald/Oswell* being a variant of *ouzel*, apparently influenced by the proper name *Oswald*)

*Cai Peil*: a dialectal version of *Eng pool*

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**OTTER MIRE**

: ND 36 NW: 310655

Local pronunciation: [ˈɔtr mair]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

*Cai mire*: see C19(T)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Local Pronunciation</th>
<th>EarlyRefs</th>
<th>Derivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OUT SKERRY</td>
<td>ND 37 SE: 357735</td>
<td>[ˈut skɛrɪ]</td>
<td>1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>Cai skerry: see R151(T) The name describes a rock lying at some distance from the shore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPEL</td>
<td>ND 37 SW: 342731</td>
<td>[ˈpæpl]</td>
<td>1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>Papel refers to a rock lying off-shore from the Kirk of Canisbay. The present church is listed as probably dating from the fifteenth century (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 7), but it was probably built on a much older religious site. Papar was the Norse name for the early Irish anchorites whose presence can be traced in place-names throughout the area which came subsequently under Norse control. (Macdonald 1977, Northern Studies vol.9, page 25) The name Papil is recorded by Jakobsen in three places in Shetland (North Yell, Haroldswick, and Burra Isle) and he suggests that it is a contraction of Papahólmi, ON Papýli, Papabýli: the residence of the priest. (Jakobsen 1897, page 64) In the case of the Caithness Papel the source is more likely to be Papahólmi (hólmi being a weak form of ON hólmar m.: see T64(T)) because no stretch of the imagination could induce one to accept this tiny rock as a &quot;residence&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEARL GEO</td>
<td>ND 27 SE: 277747</td>
<td>[ˈpɛrl ɡeʊ]</td>
<td>1876 6&quot; OS</td>
<td>The reference to pearls is not locally corroborated. Cai geo : see R54(T)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


PENTLAND FIRTH : ND 37 SE: 336
Local pronunciation: [pentlənd ˈfɜːθ]
Early refs: Pettlandsfjördr 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
Pithland Fyðrth 1573 Ortelius
Pentland Fyrth 1662 Blaeu
Pictland Ffirth 1726 Macfarlane

After 1726 the form is invariably Pentland Firth.

Derivation:
The Norse named this stretch of water from their northern viewpoint in Orkney:
ON Pettlandsfjördr: the firth of Pictland

The Gaels later named the same stretch of water from the opposing shore:
G An Caol Arcaibh : The Orkney Straits
(Arcaibh incorporates a tribal name in the dative plural; the older version being
i n-Orcaibh : among the Orcs (Watson 1926, page 100))

QUEENIE CLIFF : ND 37 SE: L04727
Local pronunciation: [ˈkwini klɪf]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The specific is obscure without earlier references.
It possibly represents queenie/kweenack: the female of the crab.

RED CASTLE
RED CHEEK
RED HEAD
Local pronunciation: [reɪd ˈkas], ... ˈtʃ̚ik, ... ˈhɡid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
castle : refers to a block of reddish sandstone in the sea
cheek : refers to the exposed front of a rocky promontory

......
ROBERT'S HAVEN : ND 37 SE: 388736
ROBERT'S POINT : " : 334729
Local pronunciation: [roberts 'heven, ... point]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai haven : see T32(T)
There is no local knowledge of the person named Robert.

ROCK O' GIRSAL : ND 37 SW: 301748
Local pronunciation: [rok a 'garsal]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Girsal is obscure without further early references.

ROUND GEO : ND 27 SE: 273746
Local pronunciation: ['rund g'jo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
The name describes a geo with a narrow entrance and rounded sides.

RUSHY GEO : ND 36 NE: 395684
Local pronunciation: ['ruʃi g'jo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The literal interpretation may be correct, ie the geo where rushes are plentiful. The map-form Rushy could, alternatively, be masking an earlier ON specific.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
SAILOR'S HEAD: ND 36 NE: 396689
Local pronunciation: ['seɪlərs hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A modern English name, but there is no local knowledge of the identity of the sailor.

SALT SKERRY: ND 36 NE: 399693
Local pronunciation: ['sɔlt skəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai skerry: see R151(T)
This name is frequently applied to a rock which is submerged at high tide. (cf G Sgeir an t-Salainn, Applecross)

SAMUEL'S GEO: ND 36 SE: 381645
Local pronunciation: ['sæməls ˈɡeːo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo: see R54(T)
(For comments on Samuel see Mowat 1931, page 5.)

SANDS BERRY: ND 37 SE: 395737
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai berry: see T2(T)
SCARFSKERRY POINT: ND 37 SE: 367738
Local pronunciation: ['skaskəri point]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai scarf: see R145(T)
Cai skerry: see R151(T)


SCOOR BERRY: ND 37 SW: 315746
Local pronunciation: ['skur bəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is difficult without earlier references.
Possibly
Sc skoorie: the coalfish or saithe when fully grown
(Jak. Sh. 1908)
Cai berry: see T2(T)


SCORRIE MOSS: ND 27 SE: 275741
Local pronunciation: ['skori mɔs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So scorrie, scorrie:
the young of any species of gull while still in its brown-speckled plumage
So moss: see R7(S)


SELLY GEO: ND 36 NE: 383665
Local pronunciation: ['sɛlə gə][
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So selly: where seals are plentiful (cf ON selr m.: a seal)
Cai geo: see R54(T)
SCARBACH : ND 36 SE: 374637
Local pronunciation: ['skarbax]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of this name is uncertain without further early references. Its form suggests G sgarbhach: a cormorant-covered area but a Gaelic topographical name would be most unusual on this stretch of coastline.

SHEAVIE GILLES : ND 37 SW: 321737
Local pronunciation: ['ʃivi gals]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is obscure without further early references.
Cai gill : see R11(T)

SHEEPY HILLOCK : ND 37 SW: 313748
Local pronunciation: ['ʃipi hʌlɔk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A hillock frequented by sheep.

SHINS CLEAVE : ND 37 SE: 398716
Local pronunciation: ['ʃʌns 'klɛf]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So shin : a ridge or steep face of a hill, a projecting part of a piece of high ground
Local pronunciation of the generic indicates Eng cliff.
SHORT GEO : ND 27 SE: 271745  C99(T)
Local pronunciation: [ʃɔrt ˈgjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
There are numerous Long Geos in Caithness but this appears to be
the only example of a Short Geo.

SIE SKERRY : ND 37 SW: 328729  C100(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈsi skəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So sie : a variant of Eng sea
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

SINCLAIR'S CRAIGS : ND 36 NE: 383659  C101(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈsɪnklərs ˈkraɪs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sinclair is an extremely common surname in Caithness. (Black 1946,
page 727)
So craig : see R46(S)

SKIPPIE GEO : ND 36 NE: 396688  C102(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈskɪpɪ ˈgjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So skippie, -y
: slippery, affording no firm foothold
Cai geo : see R54(T)
SLAYEL : ND 37 SW: 343731
Local pronunciation: ['sleal]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This name is obscure without further early references.

SLEAT : ND 37 SW: 324732
Local pronunciation: [slet]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON slettr : see R83(T)

SLY CRAIG : ND 36 SE: 378644
Local pronunciation: ['slaık ræg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc sly : a green slimy alga of the seashore
In Caithness sly = alga in general.
Sc craig : see R46(S)

SMALL GEOS : ND 36 NE: 384663
Local pronunciation: ['sma gjos]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)

STACKS OF MARTIN'S SOLAITE: ND 36 NE: 381652
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai stack : see D75(T)
Cai slaite: see R83(T)
Martin : a personal name, but there is no extant local legend relating to such a person

........

STRIDING MAN: ND 37 SE: 397703
Local pronunciation: ['straidin man]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A modern English name which describes a rock which is split in two at the base.

........

TANG HEAD: ND 27 SE: 277748
Local pronunciation: [taŋ 'heid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai tang : see T77(T)

........

THE CARLE: ND 36 SE: 378645
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'karl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc carle : a man or more specifically "an old man"
The reference is to an imagined shape in the coastal rocks.

........

THE GILL: ND 27 SE: 282740
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'gu:l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T)

........
THE GLUPE  
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'gliuP]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
Cai glupe/gloup  
: an onomatopoeic word, describing the noise made by the sea as it rushes into a narrow opening and is then sucked out again. (of R102(T))

THE KILNS  
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'kils]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
So kiln : see T85(T)

THE KNEE  
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ni]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
An English name describing a rounded off-shore rock.

THE ROUGH  
WELL ROUGH  
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'ruf, 'wel ruf]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:  
ON röfe f. > Cai rough  
: see D55(T)  
So well : see R40(S)
THE SHAILS: ND 27 SE: 272747
Local pronunciation: [ðə salz]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is to the shallow water covering the rocks at this point.

THE TAB: ND 36 NE: 384665
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'te]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc tae: toe
(used figuratively to describe a promontory)

THE TIPPE: ND 36 NE: 384657
Local pronunciation: [ðə 'tipst]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Possibly Eng tip + dimin -st.
The name describes a ridge of rock running out into the sea.

THICK MIRE: ND 36 NW: 315653
Local pronunciation: [θæk 'maer]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The adjective thick presumably emphasises the swampy nature of the ground, rather than the width of the stream which is not particularly significant.
Cal mire: see C19(T)
THIRLE DOOR : ND 37 SE: 402725
Local pronunciation: ['θɪəl dɔr]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc thirle: a hole or aperture, especially in a wall
The tautologous Eng door has probably been added at a subsequent date.
The name describes a long, narrow inlet the entrance of which looks like an aperture in the cliff-face.

THISTLY HILL : ND 36 NE: 377677
Local pronunciation: ['θɪsli hɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

THOMAS PEEL'S ROUGH: ND 37 SW: 326731
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON rófa f. > Cai rough
: see D55(T)
Thomas Peel appears to be a personal name but there is no local knowledge of such a person.

THISTLE GEO : ND 36 SE: 379648
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc thistle: the prickly thistle
Cai geo : see R54(T)
TOTHEL GILL  :  ND 36 NW:  348675  
Local pronunciation:  ['tæʊəl  gɪl]  
Early refs:  1876  OS
Derivation:  
The specific Tothel is obscure.  
Cai gill  :  see R54(T)

TROWES' GEO  :  ND 27 SE:  283744
Local pronunciation:  ['traʊəs  gɪə]  
Early refs:  1876  OS  
Derivation:  
Cai trow  :  see OL31(T)  
Cai geo  :  see R54(T)  
The local legend suggests that the trows frequented the nearby reef and lured ships on to the rocks in the dark.

WARTH HILL  :  ND 36 NE:  372698
Local pronunciation:  [warθ  hɪl]  
Early refs:  Warthill  1726  Macfarlane  
Wart Hill  1832  Thomson
Derivation:  
So wart  :  a lookout point on high ground, a mound, cairn, beacon or watchtower from which signals were made  
(of ON varða f.  
:  a beacon or stone cairn)

WATTY'S CRAIG  :  ND 27 SE:  267746
Local pronunciation:  [wæts  'kreg]  
Early refs:  1876  OS
Derivation:  
Watty is a common diminutive form of Walter.  
So craig  :  see R46(S)  
The name presumably describes a favoured fishing rock.
WIFE GEO : ND 36 NE: 398697
Local pronunciation: ['weif gju]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Wife is commonly used in Caithness in the more general sense of woman.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Local tradition says there is a rock in this geo which resembles a woman.

WINDY GEO : ND 37 SW: 311753
Local pronunciation: ['wendi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Otherwise self-explanatory.

WOLF GILL : ND 36 NW: 338678
Local pronunciation: ['wulf gil]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Local tradition naturally insists that the last wolf in Caithness was killed in this gully, which may or may not be true, more probably the latter in view of the extent of time involved. (of T95(T) where a similar explanation is often offered)
The specific could possibly represent
ON Úlfur m.: a personal name, or a nickname
(Lind 1915, column 1054) (Lind 1920, column 392)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 324)
Cai gill : see R11(T)
SETTLEMENT NAMES
CASTLE MESTAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 339764
Local pronunciation: [kasl 'mesteg]
The present local pronunciation of the name has probably been influenced by the written form.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The castle referred to is a small keep occupying nearly the whole summit of a detached perpendicular mass of rock. There appears to be no extant history of the structure. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 21)
The most likely source given the situation is
ON már m. : a seamew, gull (cf C22(S))
ON stakkur m.: see D75(T)

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MAINS OF STROMA : ND 37 NW/NE: 354777
STROMA LIGHTHOUSE: " : 355792
Local pronunciation: ['streimə]
Early refs: Straumey 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
Stromay 1400 OPS
Stromay 1566 RSS
Stromaye 1574 Retours
Stromail 1578 RMS
Stromey 1623 "
Stroem øy 1662 Blaeu
Stroma 1750 Roy
Derivation:
ON straunr m.: a stream, current, race of the sea
ON ey m. : island
So mains : see R32(S)

......
NEITHERTOWN : ND 37 NW/NE: 355782 S3(S)
GEO OF NEITHERTOWN : " : 358785
Local pronunciation: ['næðertaun]
Early refs: Neithirtown of Stromay 1681 OLM
Neithertoune in Stromay 1687 "
Neathertown of Stroma 1688 "
Nethertown 1750 Roy
Nethertown 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
So nether : see OL27(S) (cf Uppertown S4(S))
So town : see Rh6(S)
The name applies to the northern half of the island which belonged to the Sinclairs of Freswick.
Cai geo : see Rh4(T)

UPPERTOWN : ND 37 NW/NE: 353767 S4(S)
Local pronunciation: ['ʌpərtəun]
Early refs: Overtoun 1671 Retours
Uppertown 1750 Roy
Uppertown 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
So town : see Rh6(S)
Uppertown is the higher southern section of the island, which belonged to the Sinclairs of Mey.
Note that the earlier So over: see OL27(S), in use at the end of the 17th century, was replaced by Eng upper during the 18th century.

WHITEHOUSE : ND 37 NW/NE: 357784 S5(S)
Local pronunciation: ['hwaethaus]
Early refs: 1876 " 6" OS
Derivation:
A very literal name describing a large white house.
BACK BERRY  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  363779  S1(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈbæk bəri]
Early refs:  1876  6° OS
Derivation:
Cai back  :  see T2(T)
Cai berry  :  see T2(T)

BAR BERRY  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  363776  S2(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈbɑr boʊri]
Early refs:  1876  6° OS
Derivation:
The specific is uncertain without further early references.
Possibly
ON bard n.:  see C1(T)
Cai berry  :  see T2(T)
(In this instance the name is applied to flat rocks at the edge of
the sea rather than to precipitous rocks as in Barberry Head:  see
C1(T).)

BARNEY'S GEO  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  347779  S3(T)
Local pronunciation:  [ˈbɑrnəs ˈgoʊ]
Early refs:  1876  6° OS
Derivation:
The specific is probably a late Caithness variant of
ON Biarni m.:  a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 136)
Black lists Barnie as "a current surname in Caithness".  (Black
1946, page 56)
Cai geo  :  see R54(T)
BAY OF CAVES : ND 37 NW/NE: 357789
Local pronunciation: [be a 'kevs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A modern name describing an inlet where there are several caves.

BAY OF SLUGGS : ND 37 NW/NE: 359771
Local pronunciation: [be a 'slags]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Given the English generic bay it seems most likely that the spelling of the specific is inaccurate and that this is a recent name indicating that sea-slugs are plentiful in the bay.

BLUE HOLE : ND 37 NW/NE: 342764
Local pronunciation: [bliu 'hol]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A hole in the cliff-edge with sea-water visible at the bottom. There are several of these blow-holes in Stroma; some very dangerous indeed.

BROAD GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345771
Local pronunciation: ['broid gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Otherwise self-explanatory.
BUGHT O' CAMM : ND 37 NW/NE: 351785
CAMM : " : 351786
SCOPE O' CAMM : " : 348786

Local pronunciation: ['bɔxt z kaml]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai bucht : see C15(T)
ON kambr m.: see D72(T)
scope : obscure

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BURAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 352763

Local pronunciation: ['biurəg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Obscure without earlier references. The coastal position suggests
ON bjarg n.: precipice
especially on the sea-side.

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BURGULLION : ND 37 NW/NE: 358764

Local pronunciation: ['bɔrgələn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Obscure without earlier references. The name describes a shore-
line rock.

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BUTTON GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345774

Local pronunciation: ['ɒtn ɡəlo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Uncertain without early references.
The specific is most probably
ON botn m.: 1) the bottom, in the sense of low by comparison
with the surrounding landscape
2) the head of a bay, firth, lake, dale etc.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
BYAG : ND 37 NW/NE: 357763 S12(T)
Local pronunciation: ['baeg]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
The name describes a prominent ridge of rock in the sea, and is very
similar in pronunciation to a name which Jakobsen notes as occurring
in Shetland, applied to a ridge:
de Baag : the back. (Jakobsen 1897, page 97)
Alternatively, the situation and appearance of this rock in the sea
indicates another word still current in Shetland dialect, although
apparently not in Caithness:
Shet ba : a sunken rock in the sea + dimin -ag
(Jakobsen derives this word from
ON boði m.: a hidden shoal in the sea (Jakobsen 1932, page 23).)

CAIRN HILL : ND 37 NW/NE: 356767 S13(T)
Local pronunciation: [kern 'hul]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
So cairn : see R27(T)
There is a pile of stones marking the highest point on the island.
which, a local informant says, was once used by Stroma men as a look-
out point for ships which they could pilot through the Pentland
Firth, thus making a handsome addition to their annual earnings.

CASTLE OF GIRNIEBOFTT: ND 37 NW/NE: 342761 S14(T)
GEO OF GIRNIEBOFTT : " : 339761
Local pronunciation: ['gurni:kl:t]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
The name describes a pinnacle of rock which must have been thought
to resemble a castle.
ON grënn : green, grass-covered (with metathesis of r)
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
(For a similar name cf W21(S).)
CASTLE GEO: ND 37 NW/NE: 359771
Local pronunciation: [ˈkɑsl ˈɡɛjo]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
As in the previous example there is no castle, only a rock jutting out of the sea.
Cai geo: see R54(T)

CLEMAN HEADS: ND 37 NW/NE: 343765
Local pronunciation: [ˈkliːmən hɛdəs]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
Obscure without early references. Described by a local informant as "ragged" headlands at the entrance to Lammieclellett Geo. (see S34(T))

CLETTAG: ND 37 NW/NE: 356763
Local pronunciation: [ˈklɛtəg]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
Cai clett: see R20(S) + dimin -ag

CORBIE TUAG: ND 37 NW/NE: 343766
Local pronunciation: [ˈkɔrbi tuag]
Early refs: 1876 6th OS
Derivation:
So corbie: the raven, sometimes also the carrion crow and the hooded crow. The word is first recorded in 1420. In modern Caithness dialect corbie appears to refer invariably to the carrion crow.
So tuag: see OL32(T)

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CULLY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 356793 S19(T)
Local pronunciation: ['kɔlɛ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Jakobsen suggests that the specific in Cullivoe, Shetland could be derived from
ON kollr m.: a hill with a round top. (Jakobsen 1897, page 77)
The specific in the above name probably has a similar derivation.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

DUTHIE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345775 S20(T)
Local pronunciation: ['dʌθɛ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Referred to by local people as the Wine Cellar, although the name Duthie Geo is also known. There may have been a gentleman of the surname Duthie who was engaged in the smuggling trade, but his name is not remembered, in that connection. The name Duthie is recorded in Orkney in 1492. (Black 1946, page 234)

FALLA GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 344767 S21(T)
FALLIE GEO : " : 357788
Local pronunciation: ['fælɪ gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
These names probably have the same origin, although both are uncertain without earlier references.
One possible source is
ON foral m.: a bird
although the common Caithness version of this word is either fully or folly (cf D21(T)).
Cai geo : see R54(T)
FINNIES HAVEN : ND 37 NW/NE: 362781
Local pronunciation: ['finnis 'hevan']
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably the Scottish surname Finnie, recorded in Aberdeenshire in 1508. (Black 1946, page 265)
Cai haven : see T32(T)

FLENDIE CLETT : ND 37 NW/NE: 359765
GEO OF FLENDIE CLETT: " : 357766
Local pronunciation: ['flænd klɛt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
ON fleinn m.: a sharp-pointed dart or shaft
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

FULLIE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 358765
Local pronunciation: ['fuli gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON fogl m.: see D21(T)
(The presence of this name on Stroma casts further doubt on the tentative derivation suggested in S21(T).)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

GEOS OF BAGWA : ND 37 NW/NE: 358788
Local pronunciation: ['bagwa]
Early refs: Geos of Bagwa 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This name is difficult without early references.
The 1876 OS map invariably has the spelling Gee (see R81(T)), and
Goags is probably a combination of Geo + dimin -ag + Eng pl -s.
Bagwa is obscure without further early references.

GEO OF GOUNAN : ND 37 NW/NE: 354763
Local pronunciation: [gjo ʃv 'giugən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
 derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Gougan is obscure without further early references.

GIDDY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 342765
Local pronunciation: ['gidi ɡjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
 derivation:
This is a long, deep and very narrow geo. The shape of the geo suggests ON gióta [Dan cyde] f.: a narrow lane, as a possible source of the specific.
On the other hand, it could simply be Eng giddy, describing the sensation which one experiences when standing unwisely on the edge.
Certainly the modern spelling of the name has been influenced by Eng giddy.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

HAMMER : ND 37 NW/NE: 363775
Local pronunciation: ['hamar]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
 derivation:
ON hamarr m.: used figuratively to describe a hammer-shaped crag, a jutting-out rock or stretch of rocks.
HILLY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 353764
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɪli ˈgjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Although the map form suggests Eng hill, there is little evidence of hills in the vicinity of this geo. A more probable derivation is from
ON hellir m.: a cave.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

HILL ROW : ND 37 NW/NE: 363776
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɪl ro]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a coastal rock which again, as in S29(T), makes derivation from Eng hill most improbable.
Cai row : see D56(T)

HIMRILL : ND 37 NW/NE: 361773
Local pronunciation: [ˈhɪmrɬi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Obscure without further early references. The name describes a cave which penetrates deep under the island. Mowat suggests
ON humarr m.: a lobster
ON ál m. : a deep narrow channel in the sea.
(Mowat 1931, page 35)
HORSE GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 348763
Local pronunciation: ['hors gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably a recent name but there is no local tradition associating horses with this geo.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

KILN GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 358763
Local pronunciation: ['kln gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc kiln : see T85(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

LAMMIE CLETT : ND 37 NW/NE: 343766
LAMMIE CLETT GEO : " : 343766
Local pronunciation: ['lammi klet]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc lemmie : dimin form of Eng lamb
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Cai geo : see R54(T)
(An unusual feature is that this name does not refer to a clett in its normal sense of a rock jutting up out of the sea, and clearly separated from the land. Lemmie Clett is a tongue of land, attached to the mainland of Stroma.)
**LANGATON POINT** : ND 37 NW/NE: 349791     S35(T)

**BEACH OF LANGATON** : " : 348789

Local pronunciation: [ˈlɑːɡətən pɔɪnt]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The name describes a tongue of rock jutting out into the sea and probably, therefore, derives from

ON langr : long

ON tængi m.: see T77(T)

(The normal Caithness version of this element is *tæng* but, in this instance, it could have been subject to phonological reduction being in unstressed position.)

Eng point would have been added at a later date once understanding of the original Norse compound had faded.

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**LITTLE GLOUP** : ND 37 NW/NE: 352787     S36(T)

**THE GLOUP** : " : 352783

Local pronunciation: [ˈlɪtəl ˈɡluːp, ˈdəl ˈɡluːp]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
These names describe places where the ground has collapsed into subterranean caves.

Cai goup : see C112(T)

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**MAW SKERRY** : ND 37 NW/NE: 362782     S37(T)

**WHITEMAWS SKERRY** : " : 359770

Local pronunciation: [ˈmɔː ˈskəri]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
So maw (also *mə, məw, mar*)

: a mew, seagull

Cai skerry: see R151(T)

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MELL HEAD : ND 37 NW/NE: 339762
Local pronunciation: [mɛl 'hɛid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific could be
ON melr m.: bent grass; a sand-hill grown with bent grass,
but ON melr would not have occurred as a simplex name and it would
have to be assumed that the original Norse generic had been replaced
by Eng head, which is unlikely to have happened. Eng head is often
added to a Norse name, but not substituted for it.
It seems likely, therefore, that the original Norse name may have
been the simplex
ON milli m.: a jutting crag

MILL GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 345770
Local pronunciation: [ˈmɪl ˈdʒo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A geo where there was once a corn mill in operation, according
to local informants.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

NARROW GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 363781
Local pronunciation: [ˈnarə ˈdʒo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent self-explanatory name.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
POWE : ND 37 NW/NE: 352792
Local pronunciation: [pœu]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So powe : see T89(T)
The name describes a fishing rock.

PRONTAG'S HOLE: ND 37 NW/NE: 352764
Local pronunciation: ['prontags hol]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name was known to one of my informants, but only as a map reference. There does not appear to be a blow-hole in the cliffs in this area, and the specific Prontag is totally obscure.

RAMMIE GEO: ND 37 NW/NE: 347777
Local pronunciation: [tam gjo]
Early refs: Burn of Ramigo 1687 OIM
Derivation:
ON hrafn (often spelt hramn) m.
: a raven
Cai geo : see R54(T)
A local informant confirmed that ravens still nest in Rammie Geo.
So burn : see R4(S)

RED HEAD: ND 37 NW/NE: 345776
RED GEO: " : 349763
Local pronunciation: [rɛid 'hɛid, ... 'gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is to an outcrop of red sandstone.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
RUF OF HEBRIGG : ND 37 NW/NE: 359767
Local pronunciation: [\textipa{\textashirif a hibra}g]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is probably
ON rif n.: a reef in the sea.
Hebrigg is obscure without further early references.

SANDY GEO : ND 37 NW/NE: 347763
Local pronunciation: [\textipa{sani gjo}]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo: see R54(T)
Otherwise self-explanatory.

SAVIN SKERRIES : ND 37 NW/NW: 362774
Local pronunciation: [\textipa{\textashisav an skeri}]
(The generic skerry is always singular in pronunciation.)
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific Savin is obscure.
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

SCAR CREGGAN : ND 37 NW/NE: 346672
Local pronunciation: [sker \textipa{\textashikrojan}]
Early refs: Scar Craggan 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This is apparently a hybrid name, but it is most probably of recent
origin containing elements which have been borrowed from Norse and
Gaelic into the Caithness dialect.
The specific is uncertain and could either represent Cai scarf: see R145(T) or Cai skerry: see R151(T) (in abbreviated forms).

The generic is an anglicised version of G creagan m.: a little rock.

SCARF SKERRY: ND 37 NWNE: 346776
Local pronunciation: ['skarf skerry]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai scarf: see R145(T)
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

SCARTON POINT: ND 37 NW/NE: 359764
Local pronunciation: ['skarton point]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This name is very similar in form to Langaton Point (see S35(T)). Scarton could, therefore, be similarly derived from ON skarfr m.: see R145(T) ON tangi m.: see T77(T) The tautologous Eng point would have been added at a later date, as was suggested in S35(T).

SEAL CAVE HOLE: ND 37 NW/NE: 363778
Local pronunciation: [seal kev 'hol]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Seals are still numerous in this area today. Hole appears to refer to the inlet of the sea and Cave to the further indentation at its inner end.
SGEIR BHAN : ND 37 NW/NE: 364777 S52(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈskɛIr bjan]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G sgeir f.: see R151(T)
G bán : white
Gaelic was never spoken in Stroma and this prominent coastal rock was probably named by Gaelic-speaking fishermen for whom it served as an important landmark or, alternatively, the name could have been coined by a Gaelic speaker who may have come to the island from the Gaelic-speaking part of Caithness or Sutherland.
The present-day local pronunciation is clearly based on the written form.
G sgeir having been borrowed from Norse is clearly recognisable as Càis skerry (see R151(T)) and causes no problems, but G bán, with lenition of the initial consonant giving [va:n] in Gaelic, was unfamiliar in its written form to non-Gaelic speakers who substituted the more familiar initial sound [bj], as in [bjan]. If the name had been transmitted orally there is no reason why a native of Stroma could not have coped with initial [v].
(For a similar phenomenon see W24(T).)

SGEIR GUTH : ND 37 NW/NE: 361782 S53(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈskɛIr gʌt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As in the previous example the word order and the map spelling Sgeir suggest Gaelic origin. The second element is obscure without earlier references.
SHEEP SKERRIES : ND 37 NW/NE: 353793  S54(T)
Local pronunciation: [ʃip 'skɛris]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai skerry: see R151(T)
Many sea-rocks are given animal names and this appears to be one such example, probably with reference to the shape and colour of the rocks. The rocks are barren and could not have afforded grazing for sheep.

SKERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 342757  S55(T)
SKERRY GEO : " : 357763
Local pronunciation: ['skɛri, ... geo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai skerry: see R151(T)
Cai geo : see R54(T)

SWILKIE POINT : ND 37 NW/NE: 356793  S56(T)
Local pronunciation: ['swilki point]
Early refs: Svelgr 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
The Swell 1595 Mercator
Derivation:
ON svelgr m.: a swirl, whirlpool, current
The tides off the north-east end of the island of Stroma have been notorious for centuries.
An informant made the following interesting statement:
"There's no swilkie with the flood tide; it just swilks on the ebb," showing that swilks can still be used locally as a meaningful verb in the context of this particular tidal race.
TARRY BERRY : ND 37 NW/NE: 361772
Local pronunciation: [ˈtərɪbəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc tari- (tarri(e), tarry-)
: sea-weed, occurring only as the first element in compounds
( ON tari m.: sea-weed)
Cai berry : see T2(T)

THE ALTARS : ND 37 NW/NE: 348782
Local pronunciation: [ˈælərs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes pinnacles of rock on the cliff-face, possibly thought to resemble altars.

THE HAVEN : ND 37 NW/NE: 353763
Local pronunciation: [ˈhævən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai haven : see T32(T)

THE PEEL : ND 37 NW/NE: 357785
Local pronunciation: [ˈpi:l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai peel : a dialectal version of Eng pool
A local informant remembers this as a favourite childhood swimming pool.
TREE GEO  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  361774  
Local pronunciation:  ['tris gjo]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
The reference is probably to driftwood rather than natural vegetation. There are certainly no trees in the geo now.  
Cai geo :  see R54(T)  

WARDIE GEO  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  356791  
Local pronunciation:  ['wardi gjo]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
Possibly the modern Scots surname Ward + dimin -ie. (Black 1946, page 801)  
Or, alternatively, a spot where a beacon was lit to give warning of a ship in trouble in the tide-race (see S56(T)).  
ON warda f.:  see C126(T)  
Cai geo :  see R54(T)  

WHITE HEELY  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  362773  
Local pronunciation:  [hwait 'hili]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  Possibly  
ON hella f.:  see R54(S)  
(cf Hellyina Wheeda in Yell, Shetland (Jakobsen 1897, page 89).)  

WINNI GEO  :  ND 37 NW/NE:  350786  
Local pronunciation:  ['wini gjo]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
The specific is probably a dialectal variant of Eng windy.  
Cai geo :  see R54(T)
CHAPTER NINE: WICK PARISH

Introduction p. 370
Settlement Names pp. 371 - 423
Topographical Names pp. 424 - 459
Wick is a very elongated parish, extending more than twenty kilometres from north to south. The parish is dominated by the town of Wick which is the county town of Caithness with a population of 7,933, as recorded in the 1981 Census. The town is situated at the mouth of the Wick River and it has excellent harbour facilities.

Wick was a major centre of the east coast herring fishing industry and fishing still remains a function of the port, albeit of much reduced significance. Wick is a busy market town with good communications with the rest of Caithness and with the south via the major A9 route and the railway to Inverness. The Wick distillery is an important local employer.

Improved land in Wick Parish, as in Canisbay Parish, is close to the coast, while the interior is generally unimproved. Some of this unimproved land, particularly in the Camster area, is now being forested. Most of the small villages along the coast were bases for the herring fishing and they have consequently suffered a decline in recent years.

Gaelic was spoken in the south-west of Wick Parish until the nineteenth century and there is a cluster of Gaelic place-names around the Achairn Burn as evidence of this. Gaelic-speaking in Wick Parish was artificially boosted by an influx of Gaelic speakers from Sutherland who came to the east coast as a result of clearances.

Wick Parish is bounded on the west by Watten Parish and on the south by Latheron Parish.
SETTLEMENT NAMES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>ND 35 SW:</th>
<th>Early refs</th>
<th>Local pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACHAIRN</td>
<td>303502</td>
<td>Achern 1750 Roy</td>
<td>[aˈxɛrn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHAIRN BURN</td>
<td>303501</td>
<td>Achairn 1798 Book of Valuation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER ACHAIRN</td>
<td>275475</td>
<td>Achorn 1808 Sinclair (Freswick)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWER ACHAIRN</td>
<td>299498</td>
<td>Achaim 1841 Census</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Derivation:**

G achadh m.: see R1(S)

G cùrn m.: see R27(T)

The original G achadh aˈ chAIRn has been shortened in pronunciation to Achairn.

Sc burn: see R4(S)

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>ND 35 SE/NE:</th>
<th>Early refs</th>
<th>Local pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKERGILL</td>
<td>353534</td>
<td>Akyrgyll 1472 Sinclair (Mey)</td>
<td>[ˈækərɡɪl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER ACKERGILL</td>
<td>360536</td>
<td>Ackirgill 1520 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKERGILL HAVEN</td>
<td>358545</td>
<td>Akyrgill 1527 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKERGILL SHORE</td>
<td>358544</td>
<td>Aukirgill 1550 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKERGILL MAINS</td>
<td>354541</td>
<td>Akairgill 1560 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKERGILL TOWER</td>
<td>353547</td>
<td>Ackyrgill 1520 Sutherland (Forse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKERGILL LINKS</td>
<td>342565</td>
<td>Akergill 1538 RMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Early refs:**

1472 Sinclair (Mey)

1520 "

1527 "

1550 "

1560 "

1520 Sutherland (Forse)

1538 RMS

1587 "

1661 "

1667 "

1549 RMS
Early refs (cont'd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aikergill</td>
<td>1644</td>
<td>Retours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akergil</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>Blaeu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle of Aikergill</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>Brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akergale</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>Macfarlane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrigill</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrigill Castle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Ackergill</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Thomson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower of Ackergill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derivation:

ON akr m. : arable land, ground for tillage
ON gil n. : see R11(T)
Cai haven  : see T32(T)
So mains  : see R32(S)
So links  : see OL33(S)

      

Aikerness : ND 35 SE: 358523

Local pronunciation: ['ek̂r̂n̂s]

Early refs: Ikkernos 1520 Sinclair (Mey)

Derivation:
The modern spelling and pronunciation of this name both suggest that it is identical to Aikerness in Westray, Orkney which Marwick derives from

ON akra-nes: ness of cultivated fields.
(Marwick 1952, page 31)

Marwick comments that the specific could also represent

ON ekra f. : an acre, cornfield,
which is used in much the same sense as ON akr (see W2(S)).

In the case of the Caithness name, ON ekra would be a more convincing specific than ON akr in view of the clear phonetic distinction between ['ek̂r̂n̂s] and the neighbouring ['ak̂r̂ĝd̂l] (see W2(S)).

The generic is

ON n̂s f. : the nose
(used figuratively of a rocky point, tongue of land). (cf Noss W77(S))
The more frequently occurring Cai ness : see T13(S), which has a similar range of meaning, has been substituted for the earlier form -nos (1520).

......

ALTIMARLACH FARM : ND 35 SW: 332528
BURNT OF ALTIMARLACH: " : 332526
Local pronunciation: [anti'marləx]
Early refs: Mairloch 1750 Roy
Aultonmarlich 1771 Pennant

Derivation:
This is a Gaelic name which has been considerably distorted and it is impossible to be certain of its origin. Pennant's version is helpful in deciphering the generic G allt m. : see R1(S).
Pennant also indicates the presence of a gen sing fem definite article na, and the presence of this medial [n] could perhaps explain why, at a later date, [n] was substituted for [l] in the first syllable.
The specific is uncertain. The most probable source being G mearlach m. :
: a thief,
which does occur in place-names elsewhere, but it is masculine, not feminine as the form of the article would lead one to expect.
Roy's version Mairloch represents
So mair : see T4(S)
Cai loch : see R5(S)
which is feasible, although there is no loch visible today. The area has, however, been extensively drained and would have been marshy prior to drainage.
So burn : see R4(S)

......
AUKHORN : ND 35 NW/NE: 327597
BURN OF AUKHORNE : " : 325597
Local pronunciation: [əukɔrn]
Early refs:
- Owcorne 1619 RMS
- Ockorne 1624 Retours
- Oukorne " "
- Okorn 1650 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
- Auckorn 1750 "
- Acorn 1750 Roy
- Auckhorn 1798 Book of Valuation
- Oucorn 1832 Thomson
- Oucorn Burn " "

Derivation:
The specific may be as suggested in C1(S)
ON haukr m.: a hawk,
but in this instance it could possibly represent
ON Áki m. : a personal name (Lind 1915, column 8)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 42).
The generic is probably
ON horn m. : a corner, nook.
So burn : see R4(S)

BARROCK MILL : ND 26 SE: 295625
Local pronunciation: [ˈbærək mɪl]
Early refs:
It is very difficult to distinguish between early references to this name and those to the identical name in Dunnet Parish (see D1(S)).
The following certainly refer to the Wick Parish name:
- Barrock 1699 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
- Burrock 1752 "

Derivation:
As for D1(S).
The reference could be to Thorny Hillock close by Barrock Mill.
(see W115(T))

......
BIGGINS
Local pronunciation: ['bɪgɪns]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
See OI1(S).
This name describes a group of buildings clustered together in a square formation.

BILBSTER
Local pronunciation:
A very interesting name in that there is a clear distinction in pronunciation between it and another very similar name in the immediate vicinity, just over the border in Watten Parish.
The Wick name, spelt Bilbster on the 6" OS map, is pronounced ['bɪbстər] or occasionally ['bɪpbстər].
The Watten name, spelt Bylbster, is pronounced [bæibстər] or, more frequently, [bæipстər].
It seems very likely that the phonetic distinction between the two names is a recent spelling-based distinction.
Early refs:
It is extremely difficult to distinguish between these two names in early sources and it is only possible to be certain which name is being referred to when the parish is specified. It seems, in fact, that there was no distinction in spelling between the two names at an earlier stage.
The following appear to be references to Bilbster in Wick Parish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bylebyster</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>RMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Bulbistar</td>
<td>1541</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nethir Bulbistar</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nethir Bulbuster</td>
<td>1549</td>
<td>RSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovir Bulbuster</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early refs (cont'd)

Bulbister 1556 RSS
Nether Bulbister 1604 Retours
Over Bulbister " "
Nether Balbester 1614 "
Over Balbister 1606 Sutherland (Forse)
Over Bilbster 1624 "
Nether Bulbustar 1661 RMS
Nether Balbister 1667 "
Neth. Bilbuster 1662 Blaeu
Bilpster 1750 Roy
Bilbster 1724 Macfarlane

Bilbster House 1832 Thomson

The references to Bylbster in Watten Parish are almost identical.
The earliest certain reference to the Watten name is

Bulbuster in the
Parish of Watten 1546 Sinclair (Mey).

Derivation:
The specific is uncertain but the most probable source is

ON Bili m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 139)

ON bólstard m. : see R21(S)

The distinction made in the 16th and 17th centuries between Nether
and Over Bilbster has now disappeared. (For Nether/Over: see OL27(S)).
It is likely that Nether Bilbster is now represented in the name
Netherton (see W72(S)) while Over Bilbster has become North Bilbster.
Sc burn : see Rh(S)

......

BLACKSTOBBS : ND 34 SW: 317403
Local pronunciation: ['blak 'stabs]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The reference is not clear, but the generic here appears to be
Sc stobb : a post or stake, especially one used for fencing.

......
BLINGERY : ND 34 NW: 307492 W10(S)
BLINGERY HILL : ND 21 NE: 298488
Local pronunciation: ['blændʒəri]
Early refs: Blingere 1572 Sinclair (Mey)
Blinserie 1578 "
Blingerie 1580 "
Blingere 1582 "
Blingerie 1584 Sutherland (Forse)
Blingrie 1619 RMS
Blingerie 1650 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Blingery 1761 "
Blingrey 1841 Census

Derivation:
The specific is probably
ON Blwingr m.: a personal name
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 58)
ON ærgi n. : see R66(S)

BORROWSTON : ND 34 SW: 329438 W11(S)
BORROWSTON COTTAGE : " : 328437
Local pronunciation: ['brɔːrstən]
Early refs: Borrowstoun 1606 RMS
Borrowstoun 1640 Retours
Borrowstown 1750 Roy
Borrowstoun 1815 Sinclair (Thurso)
Borrowston 1832 Thomson
Borrowstoun 1841 Census

Derivation:
As for Borrowston in Reay Parish
: see R32(S).
BRAEHFAD

Local pronunciation: [bre’heid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
See brae: see R8(S)

BRIWEND

BRIWEND

Local pronunciation: [bre’dend]
Early refs: Bridgend 1761 Sinclair (Freswick)
Bridge End 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
These identical names refer to two different places. Bridgend is a very popular name in Caithness.

BROADHAVEN

BROADHAVEN

BROAD HAVEN

Local pronunciation: [braid havan]
Early refs: Broad Haven 1750 Roy
Broad Haven 1832 Thomson
Broadhaven 1841 Census
Derivation:
This is obviously a name which applied in the first instance to a topographical feature and was subsequently adopted as a village and farm name.
Cai haven: see T32(T)
BROUGH : ND 34 NE: 363482
THE BROUGH : " : 367482
TAIL O' BROUGH : " : 366482
STACK O' BROUGH : " : 368483
BRIG O' STACK : " : 369486
BROUGH HEAD : ND 36 SE: 371633

Local pronunciation: [brɔx]
Early refs: Brugh 1750 Roy
Stacks of Burgh " "
Brough 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
For Brough: see D4(S) and T9(T)
So tail : used as in Eng, to indicate a projecting section of land
Cai stack : see D75(T)
So brig : see R102(T)
(Stack o' Brough refers to a detached column of rock as its name suggests and Brig o' Stack to a column attached to the land by a natural rock bridge.)
It is extremely puzzling that, in spite of this cluster of names, no broch is listed for this area in Inventory of Monuments 1911. The names must surely indicate its earlier presence.

BROWNABAN : ND 34 SW: 323434

Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Browneban 1841 Census
Brounaban 1911 Inventory of Monuments

Derivation:
This is probably a Gaelic name which has been heavily influenced by English, in its written form.
The generic is totally obscure.
The specific could be
G bān : white
BRUAN : ND 33 NW: 314396
Local pronunciation: [ˈbruːn]
Early refs: Browen 1726 Macfarlane
Brun 1750 Roy
Brewin 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:
The similarity between this name and the previous name, as well as
the situation of both names, suggests Gaelic origin but the actual
source is obscure.

BUINSIDE : ND 34 SW: 321445
Local pronunciation: [ˈbaɪmsaid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Sc burn : see R4(S)
The reference is to a croft beside the Burn of Thrumster (see
W104(S)).

CAIRNQUOY : ND 34 NW: 331473
CAIRN HILL : " : 328494
Local pronunciation: [ˈkɜrnkɔi]
[ˈkɜrn hɔl]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Sc cairn : see R27(T)
Cai guoy : see T22(S)
CANSTER, LOWER : ND 24 NE: 253456  
CAMSTER BURN : " : 257454  
LOCH OF CANSTER : ND 24 SE: 264442  
GREY CAIRNS OF CANSTER: " : 260441  
Local pronunciation : ['kamster]  
Early refs: Camster 1541 RMS  
Campster 1552/3 "  
Campbaster 1549 RSS  
Campster 1578 Sinclair (Mey)  
Campster 1655 "  
Campbuster 1604 Retours  
Campster 1644 "  
Campster 1724 Macfarlane  
Camster 1832 Thomson  
Derivation:  
ON kambr m.: a crest, a ridge of hills  
ON bóistaír m.: see R21(S)  
Sc loch see R5(S)  
So cairn : see R27(T)  

CASTLE GIRNIEGO : ND 35 SE: 377549  
Local pronunciation: [kasÍ 'g-arn<go]  
Early refs: Gyrnego 1508 Sinclair (Mey)  
Grenewg 1516 "  
Girmego 1518 "  
Girmigo 1547 RSS  
Girmigo 1661 RMS  
Girmigo or Gro<ngho 1662 Blaeu  
Girlingo 1671 Retours  
Girmigo 1701 Brand  
Castle Girmigo 1750 Roy  
This castle, and the neighbouring Castle Sinclair (see W22(S)), is extensively described in Inventory of Monuments 1911, pages 139-143. The date suggested for the erection of Castle Girnigoe is towards the end of the 15th century and the date for the desertion of both
Castle Girniegoe and Castle Sinclair is about the year 1679.

**Derivation:**

The castle takes its name from the neighbouring geo, above which it is perilously perched.

ON **green** : see D14(S)

Cai **geo** : see R54(T)

(For a similar name cf S14(T))

......

**CASTLE SINCLAIR** : ND 35 SE: 378548

**CASTLE HAVEN** : " " : 379550

Local pronunciation: [ˈkasəˈsɪklər]

**Early refs:**

- Castell-Sinclair 1616 RMS
- Castell-Sincler 1662 Blaeu
- Castle Sinclare 1671 Retours
- Castle Sinclair 1701 Brand
- Castle Sinclair 1750 Roy

This castle was probably built about the year 1606 when there was no room for further extension on the Girniegoe ward. Its life, however, was limited because the Rev. John Brand, who visited the castles in 1700, describes them as being in ruins. (cf W21(S))

**Derivation:**

The castle takes its name from the Sinclair family who occupied it.

Cai **haven** : see T32(T)

......

**CHARITY** : ND 34 NE: 356491

Local pronunciation: [ˈtʃərəti]

**Early refs:**

- Charitie 1661 RMS
- Charitie 1671 Retours
- Charity 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
This name indicates that the Presbyterian ethic was well-entrenched by 1661.
The most probable explanation of the name is that fields in the area were allocated to the poor of the district.

......

CORRIDGE:  - ND 34 SW:  35443
CORBIE GEO:  - " :  35444
Local pronunciation:  ['kɔrbi gjo]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
So corbie:  see S18(T)
Cai geo:  see R54(T)
The above two names clearly illustrate the peculiar distinction made by map-makers between the spellings goe and geo. (of R81(T))

......

COTTAGES, CLIFF HEAD:  - ND 35 SB:  358545
Local pronunciation:  ['klf'heid kɔ\r'adz]
Early refs:  1960  6" OS
Derivation:
A recent self-explanatory name. The cottages are situated above Ackergill Haven (see W2(S)).

......

COTTAGE, DORRAN:  - ND 35 SW:  336507
Local pronunciation:  ['dɔrn kɔ\r'adz]
Early refs:  1960  6" OS
Derivation:
Apparently a very recent name. Dorran was a firm which specialised in "kit" houses in the 1960s.
COTTAGES, DUNBAR : ND 35 SE: 353532  W27(S)
Local pronunciation: [dʌn'bʌr k΄rɪdʒ]
A local informant explained that there is now only one cottage and, therefore, the plural is no longer applicable.
Early refs: 1960 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably named after the Dunbar family of Hempriggs who first appear in Calder's list of proprietors and wadsetters in 1668. (J.T. Calder 1887, page 302)

COTTAGES, FOUNTAIN : ND 35 SW: 325513  W28(S)
Local pronunciation: ['faʊntən k΄rɪdʒəs]
Early refs: 1960 6" OS
Derivation:
There is no evidence of a 'fountain' in the immediate vicinity, but perhaps some feature in the neighbouring Achairn Burn (see W1(S)) gave rise to the name.

COTTAGE, GAS : ND 35 SW: 316506  W29(S)
Local pronunciation: ['gæs k΄rɪdʒ]
Early refs: 1960 6" OS
Derivation:
A somewhat prosaic name describing a cottage near Stirkoke House which must have been notable as a pioneer of gas lighting.

COTTAGE, SANDEND : ND 35 SW: 343541  W30(S)
Local pronunciation: [sæn'dend k΄rɪdʒ]
Early refs: 1960 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent name referring to situation and nature of soil in the vicinity.
CROFT OF NORTHFIELD: ND 34 NW: 348482
Local pronunciation: [krɔft əv 'nɔθfild]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A name indicative of progressive subdivision of the land into smaller agricultural units.
So croft: see R11(S)

DALLQUOY ND 34 SW: 344435
Local pronunciation: [dəl'kwɔi]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
There are no other early references which can, with certainty, be identified with this name, but there is a similar name with elements in reverse order which disappears at the end of the eighteenth century.
Quoysdaile 1650 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Quoysdale 1798 "
Derivation:
ON dail m.: see R22(S)
Caí quoy: see T22(S)

DRUMDRY: ND 35 SW: 337513
Local pronunciation: [dram'draɪ]
Early refs: Knokdry 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
Knokdry 1558 "
Knokdry 1565 "
Knockdry 1798 Book of Valuation
Drumdriy 1845 NSA
Drumdry 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
It is impossible to be certain that there were not originally two places, one known as Knokdry which has now disappeared, and one
known as Drumdry which has survived, but it seems more probable that, for some reason, Drum was substituted for the earlier Knock.

Knock and Drum were quasi-borrowings into Scots from Gaelic at a fairly early date, probably 16th century. (G cnoc m.: see R41(S); G druim m.: see R72(T))

The specific appears to be Eng dry, which would describe a slight hill very accurately because the drainage would be better than on the surrounding flat ground.

---

ELZY HOUSE : ND 35 SE: 385523
ELZY FARM : " : 385521
CAIRN OF ELSAY : " : 387519
TAILS OF ELSAY : " : 388523
ELSAF GEO : " : 387518

Local pronunciation: [*'Elzigjo]

Early refs: Elzy 1832 Thomson
Elzy 1841 Census
Elsary's Cairn 1845 NSA
Elsay 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The version given in the New Statistical Account which suggests that the cairn was built where an Earl Alexander was slain is obviously an attempt at explaining an obscure name (NSA 1845, pages 136-139) but it is not based on any factual evidence. Without earlier references it is impossible to suggest a derivation for the specific, which is probably a Norse topographical term. When asked about place-names in this area locals invariably give the form [*'Elzigjo], including the generic <geo>, which would tend to suggest that the other names are all derived from the name of the geo.

Cai geo : see R54(T)
Sc cairn : see R27(T)
Sc tail : see W15(S)

---
GANSCLET : ND 3¼ SW: 336½45
Local pronunciation: [ˈɡansk steward]
Early refs: Gansclett 1708 Sinclair (Thurso)
Gansclate 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
The specific in this name is obscure.
ON klett rm.: see R20(S) - becoming clate (1832) under the influence of G cleit f.

GARRYWHIN : ND 3¼ SW: 313¼14
BROUGHWHIN : " : 313¼13
Local pronunciation: [gari 'hwain]
[brox 'hwain]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
These are probably 19th century names.
Garry is a common anglicisation of G garbh : rough, of unequal surface
So whin : the common gorse or furze
So brough : see T9(T)

Gaultiquoy : ND 35 NW: 345507
Local pronunciation: [ˈɡɔltiquéi] 
Early refs: Galtiglay 1573 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Galtiquoy 1841 Census
Guoltiquoy 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The specific is probably
ON galti m.: a boar, hog
(of Galtines: a local name in Iceland)
Ci quoy : see T22(S)
(Galtiglay (1573) is an example of scribal error. Modern pronunciation clearly confirms that the generic is quoy.)
GILLFIELD : ND 35 SW: 346533
GILLFIELD COTTAGE : " : 348533
Local pronunciation: ['gɪlfɪld]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T)
Gillfield is very close to Gillock (see W39(S)) and is obviously a derivative name, originating as a field name and becoming a separate farm name when the farm of Gillock was divided up into smaller units.

-----

GILLOCK : ND 35 SW: 343532
BURN OF GILLOCK : " : 342535
BRIDGE OF GILLOCK : " : 343529
LOWER GILLOCK : " : 343525
UPPER GILLOCK : ND 35 SE: 350527
Local pronunciation: ['gilək]
Early refs: Gillak 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
         Gillock 1550 "
         Gillak 1565 "
         Gillak 1644 Retours
         Gillock 1671 "
         Gillack 1750 Roy
Derivation:
Cai gill : see R11(T) + dimin -ək/-ək/-əck
So burn : see R4(S)

-----

GRAIGMILLAN : ND 34 NW: 343454
Local pronunciation: [kreg mɪˈlən]
My informant gave this name a very pronounced stress on the final syllable.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
This name is uncertain without further early references.
It is probably a name of Gaelic origin which has been imported from elsewhere and has been distorted in the process. The initial element is probably

G creag > So craig: see R46(S)

The final element could be

G muileann m.: see R60(S)

GRAYSTONES

Local pronunciation: ['grestons]

Early refs: Graystones 1761 Sinclair (Dunbeath)

Derivation: Self-explanatory.

GREENIE GEO

Local pronunciation: ['grini gjo]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The hamlet takes its name from the neighbouring geo, which is a more recent equivalent of Girmiegoe: see W21(S).

Eng green + dimin -ie

Cai geo: see R54(T)

(For the distinction between roe and geo see R81(T).)

GRUDGEHOUSE

Local pronunciation: ['gridz 'haus]

Early refs: Grudges 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Obscure without further early references. D.B. Nicolson lists the name as Grudjes and derives it from ON grjot-ас: the stony ridge,

but the link between the name and this derivation is very tenuous.

(Horne 1907, page 36)
HARDEN : ND 34 NE: 366493
Local pronunciation: ['harden']
Early refs: Hardie 1807 Arrowsmith

Derivation:
Lack of early references, and the fact that Arrowsmith’s reference does not accord with either modern spelling or pronunciation, makes derivation of the generic at least, impossible.
The specific is almost certainly
So hard : see OL16(S).

........

HARLAND : ND 35 SW: 328536
HILL OF HARLAND : " : 326537
EAST HARLAND FARM : " : 337544
Local pronunciation: ['harland']
Early refs: Harland 1538 RMS
Harland 1606 "
Harland 1612 "
Harland 1633 "
Harland 1549 RSS
Harlin 1750 Roy

Derivation:
For Harland see OL16(S)

........

HASTER : ND 35 SW: 327505
BRIDGE OF HASTER : " : 327513
UPPER HASTER : ND 34 NW: 331498
Local pronunciation: ['hastər']
Derivation:
The most likely source of the specific is
ON háls m. : the neck,
with reference to a narrow part of the Achairn Burn (see W1(S)).
("This word occurs frequently in Orkney, applied to a 'col' over
a hill-ridge, or to a narrow channel, or to the narrowest part of
a valley. This term is also Scots in the form halse or hause."
Marwick 1952, page 139)
ON bólstadr m.: see R21(S)

HATLIEGROW : ND 36 SW: 347606
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876  6" OS
Derivation:
The specific Hatlie- is obscure.
The generic is probably
Sc kro : see G17(T)
HEMPRIGGS : ND 34 NE: 352474
HEMPRIGGS HOUSE : " : 355473
HEMPRIGGS MAINS : " : 357471
BARNS OF HEMPRIEGGS : " : 358473
LOCH HEMPRIEGGS : ND 34 NW: 343472

Local pronunciation: ['hemprigs]

Early refs:
- Hempriggs 1575 RMS
- Hemprigis 1645 Sinclair (Mey)
- Hempriggis 1657 Sutherland (Forse)
- Hempricks 1676 Retours

Derivation:
For Hempriggs: see C14(S)
Sc mains : see R32(S)
Sc loch : see R5(S)

HERRINGLASS : ND 34 NW: 313474

Local pronunciation: ['hɛrɪŋgлəs]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
A very strange name, particularly given the inland situation.
The most likely explanation is that it was originally the name of a fishing boat, whose owner subsequently applied it to his small farm.

Individual house names in Caithness are frequently of this type.

HILLHEAD : ND 34 SW: 343437

Local pronunciation: ['hɪl'hед]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation: Self-explanatory.
HOWE : ND 36 SW: 302622
HILL O' HOWE : ND 34 SW: 353433
RUTHERS OF HOWE : ND 36 SW: 302632
Local pronunciation: [hau, r_ut_ers ɔv 'hau]
Early refs: Howe 1592 RMS
            How 1592 "
            Howe 1633 "
            Howie 1661 "
Derivation:
As for Howe in Thurso Parish: see T44(S)
Earlier spellings suggest a diminutive ending -ye but there is
no trace of this in modern pronunciation.
For Ruthers cf OL21(T).

umber

HUMSTER : ND 34 NE: 351476
CAIRN OF HUMSTER : " : 351485
Local pronunciation: [ˈhamstər]
Early refs: Humbister 1541 RMS
            Humbster 1555 RSS
            Humster 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
The specific is likely to be
ON hundi m. : a personal name
            (Lind 1915, column 598)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 144)
ON boldstad OK m.: see R21(S)
Sc cairn : see R27(T)

INGIMSTER : ND 25 SE: 296535
Local pronunciation: [ˈɪnɡɪmstər]
Early refs: Ingimster 1841 Census
            Ingster 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Lack of early references again causes problems.
Possibly

ON ingi m. : a personal name

(Lind 1915, column 625)

(see also Fellows-Jensen pages 149-150)

ON bólstær m. : see R21(S)

(with the initial [b] of bólstær > [m] under the influence of the preceding nasal consonant)

......

IRESGÖE : ND 34 NE: 356452
IRES GEO : " : 357456
MOSS OF IRESGÖE : ND 34 SW: 352449

Local pronunciation: ['airz gjo]

Early refs: Erixgo 1646 Sinclair (Thurso)
Eirisgo 1708 "
Iresgo 1841 Census

Derivation:
The specific is uncertain, but Erixgo (1646) strongly indicates

ON Eirfl= m. : a personal name

(Lind 1915, column 223)

(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, page 76)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

(For the distinction between geo and goe see R81(T).)

Sc moss : see R7(S)

......

JANETSTOWN : ND 35 SE: 353509

Local pronunciation: ['djanets tan]

Early refs: Janetstown 1841 Census

Derivation:
A village on the suburbs of Wick Burgh which was named after
Lady Janet Sinclair of Ulbster.

......
JUBIDALE : ND 34 SW: 332421
BURN OF JUBIDALE : " " : 331417
Local pronunciation: ['d3upidel']
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:

The most probable source is
ON dthr : see C28(T)
ON dalr m.: see R22(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

----

KEISS : ND 36 SW: 348613
KEISS CASTLE : ND 36 SE: 354617
KEISS LINKS : ND 35 NW: 337590
Local pronunciation: [kis]
Early refs: Keiss 1543 Sinclair (Mey)
Keith 1527 RMS
Mylinand-Keis 1592 "
Keiss 1661 "
Keiz 1667 "
Keece 1662 Blaeu
Keis 1671 Retours
. Kees 1724 Macfarlane
E. Keiss 1750 Roy
Westertown Keiss " "
Keiss C. " "

Derivation:
Keiss is situated on a very pronounced ridge with a rounded summit,
which possibly prompted the Norse to apply an appellative, often
used as a by-name, to the place.
ON keis f.: a round belly
(akin to ON keikr (adj): bent backwards, the belly jutting forwards)
**KETTLERURN BROCH** : ND 35 SW: 349518

Local pronunciation: [ˈkɛtəbɛrn brox]

Early refs: Kettleburn Tofts 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:
Kettle also appears in C42(T) where it suggests a rounded shape, as in a cauldron. In this instance, the reference may be to deep, rounded pools in the stream.

Sc burn : see R4(S)

Sc broch : see T9(T)

Cai toft : see OL33(S)

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**KILLIMSTER** : ND 35 NW/NE: 313566

NORTH KILLIMSTER : " : 327556

LOCH OF KILLIMSTER : " : 308560

BURN OF KILLIMSTER : " : 307565

KILLIMSTER MAINS : ND 35 SW : 324547

KILLIMSTER MAINS COTTAGES : " : 322544

MOSS OF KILLIMSTER : ND 25 NE : 293561

KIRK O' MOSS : " : 293564

Local pronunciation: [ˈkɪlɪmɪstər]

Early refs: North Killumister 1557 OPS

South Killumister " "

North Kilmister " "

South Kilmister " "

Kyllamister 1574 Sinclair (Mey)

South Killamester 1580 "

North Kilmister 1581 RMS

South Kilmister " "

South Kilmister 1601 "

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Sc links : see OL33(S)

Sc nvlnd: see R60(S) and Th9(S)

Sc town/(town) (as in Westertown 1750) : see R46(S)
Early refs (cont'd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
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<td>South Kilmister</td>
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<td>1605</td>
<td>Retours</td>
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<td>South Kilmister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyllemster</td>
<td>1662</td>
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<td>Kilminster</td>
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<td>Killomster</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilmster</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Census</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derivation:

ON *kylina* f.: a kiln

The reference is probably to a corn-drying kiln, this being an extremely productive grain-growing area.

ON *bólstaðr* m.  
: see R21(S)

(the initial [b] of *bólstaðr* having become [m] under the influence of the preceding nasal consonant which, in turn, merged with the [m])

Sc loch  : see R5(S)
Sc burn   : see R4(S)
Sc mains  : see R32(S)
Sc moss   : see R7(S)
Sc kirk   : see T27(S)

KINLOCHY  : ND 34 NW: 335473  
Local pronunciation: [kɪn'loxɪ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

A name which is common throughout those areas of Scotland which have, at one time, been Gaelic speaking.

It is an anglicisation of a Gaelic original

G *ceann* m.: see R56(S)
Cai G *loch* f.
: see R5(S)

Kinlochy is situated at the head of Loch Hempriggs (see W48(S)).
KIRK TOPTS : ND 36 SW : 348615  W61(S)
KIRK BURN : " : 332645
BURN OF KIRK : ND 35 NW/NE : 305586
FORD OF THE MEETINGS: " : 306593
Local pronuciation: ['kirk 'tɔfts]

My informants were unfamiliar with the name Ford of the Meetings.

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
Sc kirk : see T27(S)
Cai toft : see OL33(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

These names refer to three separate churches, with Burn of Kirk
and Ford of the Meetings referring to the same church or, alternatively,
the latter could have referred to conventicles held in the open air.

Sc meeting: the actual religious ceremony conducted by a minister

LADYSMITH : ND 35 SW : 342534  W62(S)
Local pronuciation: ['ledismθ]
Early refs: 1960 6" OS

Derivation:
This farm is named after a battle in the Boer War; the 'Relief
of Ladysmith' 1899.

LOCHEND : ND 34 SW : 318407  W63(S)
Local pronuciation: [lɔχ'ɛnd]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
The name refers to a small farm situated at the south end of
Loch Watenan (see W110(S)).
LOCHSHELL : ND 35 SE: 353526
LOCHSHELL FARM : " : 353528
Local pronunciation: [lɔxʃɛl]
Early refs: Lochshale 1667 RMS
Lashel 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc loch : see RS(S)
Sc shell (also shale, shail, shaal) : shallow
The loch is no longer in existence due to extensive drainage. As its name suggests it was probably a marshy area which flooded during wet weather.

LONG GREENS : ND 34 NW: 346453
LONGREEN : ND 36 SW: 333613
Local pronunciation: [lɔŋgrɪn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc green : see OS(S)

MARKET HILL : ND 35 SE: 353526
Local pronunciation: [mɑrkət 'hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A very popular local market was held on the Hill of Wick or Market Hill as it came to be known.
Horne comments, with reference to the 19th century, that "To miss the Hill Market was to have the backbone knocked out of the social year," but he also comments that in 1907 the market was already a shadow of its former self. (Horne 1907, page 140)
The Hill Market apparently petered out about the time of the Second World War.
MARKWELL : ND 34 SW: 324414
Local pronunciation: [marked 'wel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The derivation is uncertain without further early references.
Possibly
So mark : a boundary
So well : see R40(S)

McCOLE'S CASTLE : ND 34 SW: 316434
Local pronunciation: [m'kols 'kasl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a dilapidated chambered cairn near the Loch
of Yarrows. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 174)
There appears to be no extant local tradition regarding the person
whose surname was McCole. (see Black 1946, page 473)

Mervyn Tower : ND 36 SE: 370633
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There is a broch marked on the 6" OS map at this point but the
name Mervyn Tower is not recorded in the Inventory of Monuments,
1911 and there does not appear to be any traditional tale
regarding the name.
MILTON : ND 35 SW: 346509
UPPER MILTON : " : 342508
LOWER MILTON : " : 349513
BURN OF MILTON : " : 347513
BRIDGE OF MILTON : " : 349508
MILTON COTTAGE : " : 345510

Local pronunciation: ['milton]
Early refs: Miltoun 1602 Sinclair (Mey)
            Miltoune 1630 "
            Myltoun 1662 Blaeu
            Miltoune 1667 RMS
            Millton 1750 Roy

Derivation:
Sc mil(n)-toun: see R60(S)
Sc burn : see R44(S)

MIRELAND : ND 36 SW: 317605
MYRELAND HORN : ND 25 NE: 282584
BURN OF MYRELANDHORN: " : 289568

Local pronunciation: ['mairland]
Early refs: Myrellandnorne 1549 RSS
            Mirelandnorne 1549 Sinclair (Mey)
            Myrlandnorne 1553 "
            Myrland-Northin 1558 "
            Myrlandnorn 1561 "
            Myrlandnorne 1585 "
            Myrlandhorne 1685 "
            Myrelandhorn 1772 "
            Myreland-Norm 1578 RMS
            Myrelandnorthand 1623 "
            Myreland Noran 1667 "
            Myrele norne " "
            Mireland 1750 Roy
            Myrelandnorne 1798 Book of Valuation
Derivation:
Myrelzlandhorn is a very interesting and extremely well-documented name; the above examples being a representative selection from the numerous references available.

Mireland derives from
ON myrr f.: see OL21(T)
ON land n.: see OL16(S)
but the final element of Myrelzlandhorn presents many problems.

Logic prompts one to expect that Myrelzlandhorn is a derivative of Mireland but early documentary references are all to Myrelzlandhorn and Mireland does not appear until 1750. This, of course, does not prove that Myrelzlandhorn was the earlier of the two settlements but that it was the more important of the two.

Another puzzling factor is that all the earliest examples seem to suggest that the final element of Myrelzlandhorn is a form of
ON norr: the north,
but Myrelzlandhorn lies to the southwest of Mireland.
These facts, taken in conjunction with modern pronunciation [... horn] suggest that the final element is the generic
ON horn: see W5(S).

One can easily accept that a farm on land of superior quality at the corner or edge of the moor would be more important than a farm in the centre of the moor.

The earlier forms such as ...norme, ...northin, ...norm can be explained as follows:
the nasal consonant at the end of Mireland would have been transferred to the beginning of the next syllable, particularly when such a transference apparently enabled the scribe to interpret the meaning of the word in the next syllable, and having written norm, the next step to northin is to be expected.

It is, in fact, surprising that the written form has not in this instance influenced the spoken form.

So burn : see Rh(S)

NETHERTON : ND 25 SE: 292529
Local pronunciation: [næ^hɔrtn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So nether : see OL27(S)
Sc town : see RH6(S)
(For further comments relating to this name see W8(S).

NEWFIELD : ND 35 SW: 338515
NEWLANDS : ND 34 NW: 321496
Local pronunciation: [ˈniufild]
[ˈniulæ ndz]
Early refs: Newfield 1841 Census
Derivation:
Both these names refer to comparatively recent enclosures;
late 18th or early 19th century.

NEWTON : ND 34 NW: 347496
HILL OF NEWTON FARM: " : 349489
NEWTON MOSS : " : 345494
BURN OF NEWTON : ND 34 NE: 357486
Local pronunciation: [ˈniutən]
Early refs: Neutoun 1555 RSS
Newtoune Mill 1661 RMS
Newton 1662 Blaeu
Newtoun 1761 Sinclair (Freswick)
Newton 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc town : see RH6(S)
Sc moss : see RH7(S)
Sc burn : see RH4(S)
NORDWALL : ND 35 SW: 330544
Local pronunciation: ['nordw4l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
D.B. Nicolson suggests derivation from
ON nördr völlr: north field (Horne 1907, page 39)
which seems probable, in spite of the fact that there are no early
references in sources such as RMS and Retours.

NORTHFIELD : ND 34 NE: 353483
Local pronunciation: ['nɔrfild]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Originally an outlying field to the north of Hempriggs Mains (see
W76(S)), which eventually became a small farm in its own right.

NOSS : ND 35 SW: 375543
NOSS HEAD : " : 388551
FIELD OF NOSS FARM : " : 383528
Local pronunciation: [nɔs]
Early refs: Nos 1456 OPS (Bannatyne Miscellany)
           Nos 1476 Sinclair (Mey)
           Nos 1546 RSS
           Nos 1548 RMS
           Nos 1574 Sinclair (Mey)
           Noiss 1575 
           Nois 1617 "
           Nos 1626 Sutherland (Forse)
           Noss Head 1662 Blaeu
           Noss 1750 Roy
           Noss Head " "
Derivation:
There are innumerable early references to this name, all pointing to
ON nös f. : the nose (here used figuratively of a rocky point or
tongue of land).

NYBSTER : ND 36 SW: 363633
HAVEN OF NYBSTER : " : 372632
Local pronunciation: [ˈnaɪbster]
Early refs: Nybistir. 1619 RMS
            Nybster 1633 
            Nybster 1748 Sinclair (Freswick)
            Neibster 1750 Roy
            Nibster 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
ON nytr : new
ON nbístar m. : see R21(S)
Cai haven : see T32(T)

OLDHALL : ND 34 SW: 348441
Local pronunciation: [ˈold ˈhɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

PAPIGOE : ND 35 SE: 383516
PAPI GEA : " : 386515
PAPIGOE BRIDGE : " : 380514
Local pronunciation: [ˈpæpiɡe]
Early refs: Papygo 1547 RSS
           Papigo 1561 OPS
           Papigo 1581 RMS
           Papingo 1667 
           Papingo 1605 Retours
           Pappigo 1671 
           Pappigo 1750 Roy
Derivation:
It has been suggested that this place-name contains the Norse word
Papi (gen -a) m.
           : a priest.
(Macdonald 1977, Northern Studies Vol 9, page 25) (cf C78(T))
(The 1667 and 1671 references could possibly contain ON papi in its genitive plural form + suffixed definite article: papanna.)

It seems, however, equally possible that the specific should be Sc pap : the breast, used figuratively to describe a more or less conical hill + dimin -i, -in.

(cf The Pap (W112(T)) which is in the neighbourhood of Papisoe)

Cai geo : see R56(T)

(For the distinction between geo and geo see R81(T).)

......

FULDAGON : ND 34 NW: 325487
UPPER FULDAGON : " : 322492
Local pronunciation: [bål'degən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:

Puldagon is situated in a loop of the Achairn Burn (see W1(S)) at a point where there is a small cluster of names of Gaelic origin. It seems likely that Puldagon belongs to this group but it has been so distorted that it is impossible to decipher its origin accurately without further early references.

The generic is likely to be G buaile f.: see R36(S)

......

QUINTFALL : ND 36 SW: 308613
HILL OF QUINTFALL : " : 314624
MOSS OF QUINTFALL : " : 315625
Local pronunciation: [kwəntfal]
Early refs: Quintfa 1592 RMS
            Quintfauld 1619 "
            Quintfield 1650 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Derivation:

The origin of the specific Quint- is obscure.

The generic is of uncertain origin. It could represent ON fjall n.: see D9(S)
or possibly
**Sc fauld** : 1) an enclosure for cattle, sheep or other domestic animals
2) an enclosed piece of ground used for cultivation

**Sc moss** : see R7(S)

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**QUOYSHAKES** : ND 25 SE: 295524
Local pronunciation: [ˈkwɔɪʃəks]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai quoy : see T22(S)
The specific is probably shake as in So shake-cole
: one of the first small shocks of hay which are tossed and turned to dry in the sun before being built into a rick.
The word order in this compound is unusual, suggesting Gaelic influence.

---

**RAGGRA** : ND 34 SW: 317446
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: Raggery 1708 Sinclair (Thurso)
           Ragra 1841 Census
Derivation: Possibly
ON Ragi : a personal name (Lind 1915, column 837)
ON ærgi : see R66(S)

---

**REDGOE** : ND 33 NW: 315396
RED GEO : " : 314393
RED HOUSES : ND 35 SE: 354533
Local pronunciation: [ˈrɛd ˈgoʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)
Redgoe is a cottage situated beside the geo.
(For the distinction between goe and geo see R81(T).)

......

REFAITHY : ND 34 NW: 313487
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
This place-name is also from the vicinity of the Achairn Burn
(see W1(S)) and is likely to be of Gaelic origin.
The generic is almost certainly
G ruighe m.: see R44(T)
The form of the specific suggests that it is an anglicisation of
G féith f.: see R24(T)

......

REISS, HILLHEAD OF : ND 35 NW/NE: 335554
LOWER REISS : " : 337553
QUOYS OF REISS : " : 333572
REISS LODGE : ND 35 SW : 338547
Local pronunciation: [ris]
Early refs: Reiss 1469 Sinclair (Mey)
Ress 1472 "
Reyss 1546 "
Reis 1550 "
Reise 1538 RMS
Reis 1549 RSS
Reis 1644 Retours
Ryce 1662 Blaeu
Reiss 1750 Roy

There are numerous other early references to this name but little
variation in spelling.
Derivation: Probably
ON hreyal n.: a heap of stones (cf Reaster D29(S))
but another possibility could be
ON hris n.: shrubs, brushwood.
Cai quoy : see T22(S)

ROADSIDE : ND 35 SW: 342543
ROADSIDE COTTAGES : ND 35 SE: 377544
Local pronunciation: ['rædsaid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

ROCKHILL : ND 34 NE: 362489
Local pronunciation: ['rɒkɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A comparatively recent English name for a farm.

SANDYGATE : ND 36 SW: 338608
Local pronunciation: [sandi 'get]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So gate /'geit/: a way or road
(This occurs as a street-name in OSc from c1220 onwards.)
In this instance it describes a path to a small farm.
SARCLET : ND 34 SW: 349435 W91(S)
SARCLET HEAD : " : 354432
LOCH SARCLET : " : 343428
LOCHSIDE : " : 345432
Local pronunciation: ['særklɛt]
Early refs: Sarolet 1541 RMS
Sarcoletht 1552 "
Sarcleith 1549 RSS
Sarclaithe 1644 Retours
Sarclett 1646 Sinclair (Thurso)
Sarclet 1662 Blaeu

Derivation:
The origin of the specific is obscure.
The generic is probably
ON klettir m.: see R20(S),
although the 1549, 1552 and 1644 forms might indicate
ON hlíthr f.: see R59(S).
Modern pronunciation favours the former suggestion.
So loch : see R5(S)

SHORELANDS : ND 35 SE: 365541 W92(S)
Local pronunciation: ['ʃɔrlænds]
Early refs: Shorelands 1841 Census
Derivation:
The name refers to a farm near Ackergill Shore (see W2(S)).

SIBSTER : ND 35 SW: 324530 W93(S)
SIBSTER FARM : " : 315532
SIBSTER COTTAGES : " : 326529
LOWER SIBSTER : " : 308534
CROFT OF SIBSTER : " : 312538
Local pronunciation: ['ʃɪbstər]
Early refs: Subister 1538 RMS
    Substerweik 1549 Sinclair (Moy)
    Schabuster 1560 "
    Subister 1614 "
    Subuster 1644 Retours
    Shebbuster 1662 Blaeu
    Sibster 1740 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
    Simpster 1750 Roy

Derivation: Probably

ON suð n.: the south

ON bólstór m.: see R21(S)

(The 1560 and 1662 references - Schabuster and Shebbuster - are very similar in form to early references to Shebster (see R65(S)), and if, as appears to be the case, these forms can be used for Subuster they may give additional weight to Nicolson's suggestion that the specific in Shebster, Reay is ON suð. The palatalisation of the initial consonant of Shebster both in writing and in speech, could be due to the strong Gaelic influence in Reay Parish, a trace of which is present in the early written forms of the Wick name.)

Sc croft : see R11(S)

STAXIGOE : ND 35 SE: 385524

Local pronunciation: ['staksgo] [939x1264]

Early refs: Creek of Staxigo 1726 Macfarlane
    Staxigo 1750 Roy
    Staxigoe 1799 Sutherland (Forse)

Derivation:
The place derives its name from the prominent rock in the harbour around which the village is situated.

Cai stack : see D75(T) + dimin -i-

Cai roe : see R81(T)

(Macfarlane's reference to a creek is certainly his own choice of word. Creek is a term which is alien to Caithness place-nomenclature.)
ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH: ND 35 SW: 328503
ST. MARTIN'S CHAPEL : ND 34 SW: 336417
ST. MARY'S CHAPEL : ND 35 SW: 324524
ST. TEARS CHAPEL : ND 35 SE: 367545

Local pronunciation: These names were only recognised as map references and they are not in regular use today.

Early refs: St. Cuthbert's Church 1726 Macfarlane
St. Martines Chappell " "
Marykirk " "
St. Tears " "

Derivation:
These are all sites of earlier ecclesiastical buildings dedicated to various saints.
St. Tear's could possibly represent St. Teresa.
(For further information regarding these saints see Rev. D. Beaton 1909, Index entry for Chapels and Churches page 339.)

HILL OF STEMSTER : ND 35 SW: 337506
STEMSTER : " : 342505

Local pronunciation: ['stemstə]'

Early refs: Stemmistar 1541 RMS
Stambustar 1552 "
Stambuster 1549 RSS
Stemster 1750 Roy

Derivation:
ON steinn m. : see R20(S)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
(of R68(S) and C36(S))
**STIRKOKE HOUSE** : ND 35 SW: 317506
**STIRKOKE MAINS** : " : 321508
**CAIRNS OF STIRKOKE** : ND 34 NW: 333486
**CAIRN OF STIRKOKE** : " : 336491
**HALL HOUSE** : ND 35 SW: 317508
**HOUSEQUAY** : " : 310504

Local pronunciation: ['stɪrkək]

Early refs: Stirkok 1548 Sinclair (Mey)
Stirkok 1549 "
Stirkaik, Stirkacke 1619 RMS
Stircock 1661 "
Stirock 1776 Sinclair (Dunbeath)
Stirooke 1821 Sinclair (Mey)
Stirkike 1841 Census
Stirkoke "

**Derivation:**
The origin of this name is obscure. The only possibility which occurs to mind is that the initial element could be

Sc *stirk*: a young bovine animal after weaning, kept for slaughter at the age of two or three, not for breeding, and usually referring to a steer or bullock, less frequently to a heifer.

OSc *stirk* is first recorded in 1329.

The final element could possibly be a diminutive – the reference being to a place where stirks were penned.

This is, however, not a very convincing derivation.

Sc *mains* : see R32(S)
Sc *cairn* : see R27(S)

**Hall House** is a house situated near **Stirkoke House**.

******

**SUMMERBANK HOUSE** : ND 36 SE: 368636
**SUMMER BANK** : " : 372635

Local pronunciation: ['sʌmər bæŋk]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

**Derivation:**
The house appears to take its name from a coastal area referred to as Summer Bank.

Sc *bank* : see D2(T)

******
SWANSIGREW : ND 26 SE: 298627 W99(S)
BURN OF SWANSIGREW : " : 296625
BRIDGE OF SWANSIGREW: " : 298626
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is uncertain without further early references. It may be as it seems, ie Eng swan.
The generic could represent another variant spelling of Sc kro (see C17(T), where it has been suggested that -grow represents Sc kro).

SWARTHOUSE : ND 34 NW: 327466 W100(S)
BURN OF SWARTIGILL : " : 321457
Local pronunciation: ['swartus]
['barn ëv 'swartigil]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Probably
Sc swart : black, swarthy
Cai gill : see R11(T)
The name could, on the other hand, derive from
ON svartr : black
ON gil n. : see R11(T)
but lack of early references makes derivation from Scots more probable.
So burn : see Rh(S)

TANNACH : ND 34 NW: 314472 W101(S)
TANNACH MAINS : " : 325473
TANNACH HILL : " : 306471
Local pronunciation: ['tanax]
Early refs: Litill Tannoch 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
Tannachtan 1548 RMS
Tannoch 1661 RMS
Tannach 1664 RMS
Tannach 1739 Sinclair (Freswick)
Derivation:
Another Gaelic name belonging to the cluster in the vicinity of the Acharn Burn (see W1(S)).

Probably
G tana : thin, shallow
(with reference to the depth of the soil)
G achadh m.: see R1(S)
(The 1548 spelling Tannachtan could either contain an unusual diminutive ending -tan or, more probably, it could be erroneous.)
Sc mains : see R32(S)

TAYFIELD  :  ND 35 SW:  336533  
Local pronunciation:  [ˈte fild]
Early refs:  1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably a recent imported name.

THORNYBUSH  :  ND 34 SW:  326415  
Local pronunciation:  [ˈθɔrnɪ 'buʃ]
Early refs:  1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A recent self-explanatory name applied to a croft.
THRUMSTER : ND 34 NW: 336453
THRUMSTER MAINS : " : 330451
UPPER THRUMSTER : " : 339455
THRUMSTER LITTLE : " : 338459
BURN OF THRUMSTER : " : 332462
THRUMSTER MILL : ND 34 SW: 326449

Local pronunciation: ['thrʌmstər]

Early refs: Thrumbister 1541 RMS
Thrombuster Litill 1545 "
Thrbaster 1546 Sinclair (Mey)
Thrombester 1549 RSS
Thrbuster 1552 RMS
Thrombuster 1604 Retours
Over Thrumbaster 1662 Blaeu
N. Thumsbuster " "

Derivation:
ON þruma f.: a borderland, outskirts
ON bolstaýý m.: see R21(S)
Sc mains : see R32(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

THUSTER : ND 25 SE: 290518
THUSTER MAINS : ND 35 SW: 302518

Local pronunciation: ['θʌstər]

Early refs: Furesetter 1541 RMS
Tuspuster 1661 "
Thuspuster " "
Thuresetter 1549 OFS
Thuster Wick 1662 Blaeu
Thurster 1726 Macfarlane

Derivation:
There are similarities between early references to this name and early references to Thusater (see T76(S)).
The specific in Thuster is probably also
ON þur[t] m.: a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 1226)
The generic could be either

ON setr n. : see R33(S) or
ON bóistárr m. : see R21(S)
Sc mains : see R32(S)

TOFTCARL : ND 34 NW: 346463
MOSS OF TOFTCARL : ND 34 NE: 356461
HILL OF TOFTCARL : " : 356462
Local pronunciation: [tøft'karl]
Early refs: Toftcauld 1750 Roy
Toftcarle 1832 Thomson

Derivation:
ON toft f. : see OL33(S)
ON Karl m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 676)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, pages 161-162)
For comments on "inversion-compounds" see C39(S).
Sc moss : see R7(S)
Roy's version of the specific (Sc cauld: cold) is probably erroneous.

TOFTGUN : ND 24 SE: 278427
HILL OF TOFTGUN : " : 270428
Local pronunciation: [tøft'gan]
Early refs: Toftgun 1664 RMS
Toftgune " "
Toftgun 1841 Census

Derivation:
Cai toft : see OL33(S)
ON Gunni m. : a personal name
(Lind 1915, column 411)
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, pages 116-117)
For comments on "inversion-compounds" see C39(S).
ULBSTER : ND 34 SW: 325410  W108(S)
MAINS OF ULBSTER : " : 336421
HILL OF ULBSTER : " : 332425
STACK OF ULBSTER : " : 339416
Local pronunciation: [ˈAulbstaː]  
Early refs: Ulbister 1538 RMS  
            Ulbistar 1664 "  
            Ulbister 1549 RSS  
            Wolbuster 1640 Retours  
            Ulbester 1644 "  
            Ulbister 1662 Blaeu  
            Ulbister 1726 Macfarlane
Derivation:
ON Ulfr m. : a personal name  
           (Lind 1915, Column 1054) (Lind 1920, column 392)  
(see also Fellows-Jensen 1968, pages 321-324)
ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)  
So mains : see R32(S)  
Cai stack : see D75(T)

WARD : ND 34 SW: 325412  W109(S)
Local pronunciation: [ˈwɜːrd]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS.
Derivation: Probably
ON varða f.: see C126(T)
The name now refers to a small farm.

WATENAN : ND 34 SW: 317413  W110(S)
LOCH WATENAN : " : 318413
Local pronunciation: [ˈwatənən]  
Early refs: Watnen 1640 Retours  
            L. Wattin 1750 Roy  
            Waitnean 1832 Thomson  
            Loch Waitnean " "

00ae00
Derivation: Probably

*vatn* n.: fresh water

The form of the above name suggests that it may contain a non-mutated plural form of *vatn* + suffixed definite article *-ýin*.

The normal plural form is *vótn*.

So *loch* : see R5(S)

\*

**WATERLOO** : ND 35 SW: 333513

Local pronunciation: [waʔrul]

Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:

There are several farms, or farm fields, of this name scattered throughout Scotland, commemorating the Battle of Waterloo.

\*

**WATHEGAR** : ND 25 SE: 283512

Local pronunciation: ['waθagər] [waθgar] [waθgar]

Early refs: Wathegar 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

Obscure without further early forms.

\*

**WESTERLOCH** : ND 35 NW: 328585

**LOCH OF WESTER** : " : 327593

**HILLHEAD OF WESTER** : " : 325570

**HILL OF WESTER** : " : 320580

**WATER OF WESTER** : " : 335580

**BRIDGE OF WESTER** : " : 331586

**MOSS OF WESTER** : " : 310589

**WESTERSEAT** : ND 35 SE: 356519

Local pronunciation: ['westər] [westər] [westərseat] [westərseat]

Early refs: Westbister 1545 RMS

Westbister 1549 RSS

Westbuster 1604 Retours

Wastbuster 1644 "
Early refs (cont'd)

Westre 1662 Blaeu  
L. Westre 1726 Macfarlane
Loch of Wester 1798 Book of Valuation

Derivation:

For comments on the nature of the specific in Wester see OL39(S).

The neighbouring loch in this case is actually referred to as the Loch of Wester.

ON bólstaðr m.: see R21(S)
So loch : see R5(S)
So water : see T34(S)
So moss : see R7(S)

Westerseat is an interesting name and it is unfortunate that the earliest reference to it is 1798.

The final element could be Eng seat, although there are no other instances of seat in the present survey material.

Alternatively, it could be

ON setr n. : see R33(S),

but there are no other examples of Norse names of the form (specific + generic) + generic.

......

WHALIGOE : ND 34 SW: 320404  
WHALE GEO : " : 322403  
WESTER WHALE GEO : ND 33 NW: 320399
WALEM'S BACK : ND 34 SW: 348427

Local pronunciation: [ˈhʊlɪɡoʊ]

Early refs: Qualigeo 1619 RMS
Quhalogw 1640 Retours
Whelligo 1724 Macfarlane
Whalligo 1815 Sinclair ( Thurso)
Whalegoe 1832 Thomson

Derivation:

So whaal (also whaul, wholl, hwal; archaic quhall)

: So forms of Eng whale

(OSc has quhall from c1568)

Cai geo : see R54(T)

......
WHITEBRIDGE : ND 35 SE: 354502
WHITEFIELD : ND 35 SW: 335536
WHITEROW : " : 335536

Local pronunciation: [\textit{ythwaɪt} bridʒ, ...fild, ...ro]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
These names are all recent and self-explanatory.
Whiterow simply refers to a row of white houses.

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WICK BURGH : ND 35 SE: 360510
WICK RIVER : ND 25 SE: 275543
OLD WICK : ND 34 NE: 370494
OLD MAN OF WICK (castle remains)
CASTLE WALK : " : 372488
CASTLE GEO : " : 372489

Local pronunciation: [wik/weɪk]

Early refs: Vik 12th C Orkneyinga Saga
Weke 1457 Sinclair (Mey)
Uek 1472 "
Weyk 1508 "
Uyk " "
Weik 1548 "
Wiek 1549 "
Auld-Wik 1526 RMS
Wick 1603 "
Wiek 1667 "
Water of Weik " "
Week 1667 "

Derivation:
There are innumerable early references to Wick, the above being a representative selection. The original form of the name appears in the Orkneyinga Saga reference:
ON \textit{vik} f. : see D12(S).
RMS (1526) cites Auld-Wik in which the specific is So \textit{auld} : old.
The Old Man of Wick is described as "The Castle of Old Wick whose ruins are now known to the sailors as Old Man of Wick."
(Macfarlane's Geographical Collection 1726)

WINLESS : ND 35 SW : 306542
NORTH WINLESS : " : 303541
BURN OF WINLESS : " : 302534
BRIDGE OF WINLESS : ND 25 SE : 295541
LOCH OF WINLESS : " : 292547
WINLESS MAINS : " : 299537
Local pronunciation: [ˈwɪnləs]

Early refs: Wyndeles 1557
Vindles 1581
Windles " "
Weyndles 1661 "
Windlayes 1667 "
Windles 1671 Retours
Windlass 1750 Roy
Windless 1832 Thomson
Loch Windless " "

Derivation:
This name appears to contain
ON vind-lauss adj
: windless, calm, smooth.
The cluster of names containing this descriptive element occur in a reasonably sheltered situation in the valley of the Wick River.
A parallel adjectival formation
vatn-lauss: waterless,
occurring more frequently in place-names.
(see Watlass in Fellows-Jensen 1972, page 107)
So burn : see R4(S)
So loch : see R5(S)
The original reference could have been to the waters of the loch.
YARROWS, SOUTH : ND 34 SW: 307433
NORTH YARROWS : " : 310443
WEST YARROWS : " : 304441
CAIRNS OF YARROWS : " : 308434
LOCH OF YARROWS : " : 310435
HILL OF YARROWS : ND 24 SE: 296428

Local pronunciation: [†jaros]
Early refs: Yarous 1750 Roy
Warrors 1832 Thomson
Hills of Yarrows

Derivation:
Lack of early references makes derivation extremely difficult.
The name refers to a ridge of hills and may possibly contain
ON jābarr m.: the edge
(usually of cloth, but it can be used figuratively to indicate
the horizon: himin-jābarr)
ON áss m.: used metaphorically to indicate a rocky ridge
Sc cairn : see R27(T)
Sc loch : see R5(S)

......
TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ALLT BEAC-ÁIRTIDHE : ND 24 NE: 270477
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G beag : see R7(S)
G áiridh f. : see R23(S)
This burn forms part of the boundary between Wick and Watten Parishes, in an area where there is a strong Gaelic influence.

AILLT NA BAN-TIGEARN: ND 24 SE: 262435
CNOC NA BAN-TIGEARN: " : 263437
Local pronunciation : names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G allt m. : see R1(S)
G ban-tighearn f.
: Lady, gentlewoman
G cnoc m. : see R41(S)
This burn forms part of the boundary between Wick and Latheron Parishes, and is also in a strongly Gaelic-influenced area.

AQUAVITAE MEADOW : ND 35 SE/NE: 352508
Local pronunciation: [akwə'viti]
Early refs: Aquavitae Meadow 1798 Book of Valuation
Aquivita Meadow 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
There are no extant local tales of illicit stills or smuggling activities to explain this colourful name.
(This name should perhaps have been included in the settlement section in the form Aquavitae because, although originally a field name, it now refers to a small farm and the word Meadow is no longer included in the name.)
ASHY GEO : ND 34 NE: 357451
Local pronunciation: [ˈaʃi ɡe̞] W4(T)
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As for Ashy Geo in Dunnet Parish: see D1(T).

BATTLE MOSS : ND 34 SW: 316437 W5(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈbaːl muːs] Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably so named because of the parallel stone rows which are situated on the Moss between the cultivated land and the Loch of Yarrows (see W118(S)). The Inventory of Monuments states that there are eight rows in all, six of which are fairly complete for a distance of about 138 feet. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 185-186) These stones may have been thought to resemble soldiers in battle array.
So moss : see R7(S)

BEAL HILL : ND 25 NE: 297556 W6(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈbiːl hɪl] Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Perhaps a variant of So bield : see R154(T)
although it is impossible to be certain without further references.

BIRKLE HILLS : ND 35 NW/NE: 340580 W7(T)
Local pronunciation: [ˈbɪrkəl hɪl] Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As for Birkle Hill in Olrig Parish: see OL2(S).
BLACK HILL  :  ND 34 SW:  302442
BLACK LOCH   :  " :  303437
BLACKFOLD BURN :  " :  328417
Local pronunciation: [blak 'h4l, ... '1>lx]
[blakfald burn]
Early refs:  Blackfaulds  1750  Roy
Derivation:
So loch :  see R5(S)
The name Blackfaulds (1750) was probably originally applied to some
shielings, or at least to the herding and penning of sheep.
So fauld :  a fold
As is typical with many such names, it now only applies to the burn.
So burn :  see R4(S)

BLACK POINT  :  ND 35 SW:  363546
BLACK ROCKS  :  " :  375508
WELL OF CAIRNDHUNA :  " :  374502
CAIRNDHUNA ROCK :  " :  375502
Local pronunciation: [blak 'point, ... 'roks]
[wel 2 kern'dume, kern'dume r3k]
Early refs:  1876  6" OS
Derivation:
This is a particularly interesting set of names in that the English
name Black Rocks co-exists with the name Cairndhuna which is
probably a quasi-borrowing into Scots of
G c̄Arn dubh: black rock.
Cairndhuna is lexically opaque to its present users and the
tautologous Eng rock has been added.
It seemed most unusual that the Gaelic name should have survived
in any form, no matter how corrupt, in this particular position
and, in fact, it transpired that the name has been artificially
preserved as a street name in Wick Burgh.
So well :  see R4(S)
BLIND BURN : ND 34 NW: 348488
Local pronunciation: [‘blaind bArn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A stream which is so overgrown with grass and heather as to be invisible to the unsuspecting walker.
Sc burn : see R4(S)

BRAID HELL : ND 34 SW: 354436
Local pronunciation: [‘bred ‘hɛl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name refers to a broad inlet of the sea, but the form of the generic is obscure without earlier references.

BRICKIGOE : ND 34 SW: 302444
BURN OF BRICKIGOE : " : 304442
LOCH BRICKIGOE : " : 302440
Local pronunciation: [‘brɪkɪˈgoʊ]
Early refs: L. Brakegoe 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
These names refer to moorland features and the present form of the generic which seems to suggest Cai goe: see R81(T) may be masking an earlier generic of a different origin. The stream does, however, run through a particularly deep gully as it flows into the loch, which may have prompted the description goe, even inland. The specific is possibly
Sc brick/brake
 : Eng break, a hollow in the hills
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Sc loch : see R5(S)
BROAD GEO : ND 34 SW: 354444
Local pronunciation: ['brod djo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Cai geo : see R54(T)

BROWN HILL : ND 25 NE: 299567
Local pronunciation: [braun 'h̃l]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

BULLREST : ND 21 NE: 267453
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: This name is a description of a hill-slope in an area where Gaelic influence is strong.
Its origin is obscure without further early references and modern pronunciation.

BURN OF HOBBIEHILL : ND 35 NW/NE: 314597
Local pronunciation: [bərn a 'hɔbɪkɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: So burn : see R4(S)
The specific is possibly
So hobbie : a kind of basket-work fish-trap used in a trout stream.
Cai gill : see R11(T)
BURN OF RIOOA : ND 35 NW: 316586  W17(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc burn : see R4(S)
Otherwise obscure without further early references or pronunciation.

CAIRN REA-IN : ND 34 SW: 312444  W18(T)
Local pronunciation: [kern 'ren]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Also referred to as Càrn Righ, a chambered cairn to the north of the Loch of Yarrows. (Inventory of Monuments 1911, page 171)
Derivation:
G càrn : see R27(T)
The specific is difficult without further early references, but possibly represents
G rìche (gen -an) m.
   : 1) a slope
      2) a shieling

CIASH-AN-DAM : ND 34 SW: 312403  W19(T)
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G clais f.: see R41(S)
Possibly
G damh m. : a stag
COOLHILL : ND 36 SW: 348618
Local pronunciation: ['kul 'hul]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Probably an anglicised version of
G oIl m.: the back of anything, which is often applied to hills
in the sense of ridge.

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COVE OF BARBERRY : ND 35 SE: 388547
Local pronunciation: [kov 'ba:bərri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As for Bar Berry on Stroma: see S2(T).

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CRAIG HAMMEL : ND 34 NE: 363463
Local pronunciation: [kreg 'hæməl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig: see R46(S)
So hummel/hamel:
: used figuratively to describe anything which presents
a flat, level appearance

......

CRANE ROCK : ND 35 SE: 374503
Local pronunciation: ['kren rək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
As for the many examples of Scarf Rock (see R145(T)). The bird,
in this instance, being a crane.

......
DHU LOCH : ND 34 NW: 339485
DHULOCH CROFT : " : 342486
Local pronunciation: [dju lɔx]
Early refs: Doo Lochs 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
G dubh : see R23(S)
G loch : see R5(S)
G loch is generally feminine in Caithness (see R5(S)), hence presumably the lenition which appears in the adjective, although the compound assumes Norse word-order.
For comments on the pronunciation [dju] for <dhu> cf S52(T).
Thomson (1832) records no lenition in the adjective and loch + Eng pl -s.
Sc croft : see R11(S)

DIAS GEO : ND 36 SW: 370629
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is obscure without earlier forms or modern pronunciation.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

DOG'S HAVEN : ND 34 NE: 377495
Local pronunciation: ['dɔɡs hevən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A modern self-explanatory name.
Cai haven : see T32(T)
DUNBAR'S STACK : ND 34 NE: 366474
Local pronunciation: [dunn'bars 'stak]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai stack : see D75(T)
The personal name belonged to a member of the Dunbar family of Hempriggs. (cf W27(S))

EASTER BILL : ND 34 SW: 355445
Local pronunciation: [istar 'hål]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A hill above the cliffs on the east coast.

ELLENS GEO : ND 34 SW: 327408
Local pronunciation: ['èlens 'gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc Ellen : Helen
Cai geo : see R54(T)
There is no local knowledge of Ellen's identity.

FAIRY HILLOCK : ND 35 SW: 344517
Local pronunciation: ['feiri 'hältok]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.
There are several examples of Fairy Hillock in Caithness (eg OL10(T)), the Gaelic equivalent being Sithean (see R14(T)).
FASBERRY  :  ND 34 NE:  365468  
FAS SKERRY  :  ND 35 SE:  386514  
Local pronunciation: [ˈfæsˌbəri]  
[ˈfɑskərri]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
The specific is obscure (of C32(T)).  
Cai berry :  see T2(T)  
Cai skerry:  see R151(T)  

FULLIE GEO  :  ND 36 SE:  357616  
Local pronunciation: [ˈfɔli ˈgjo]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
ON fugl m.:  see D21(T)  
Cai geo :  see R54(T)  

GEARTY HEAD  :  ND 34 SW:  347426  
Local pronunciation: [ˈgərti ˈhɛid]  
Early refs:  1876  6" OS  
Derivation:  
The specific Gearty is obscure.  
The modern form perhaps suggests  
ON gerdi n.:  a fenced piece of ground,  
but it seems unsuitable in the context of Head.
GIRSTON : ND 34 NE: 364474
Local pronunciation: [ˈgarstn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes a broad bay sheltered from the sea by Dunbar's Stack (see W27(T)) and South Stack (see W100(T)). Its origin is obscure without further early references.

GOLDAIN : ND 33 NW: 318397
Local pronunciation: [ˈgəldən]
One of my informants knew this name, but commented that it was a long time since she had heard it being used.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Obscure, without further early references, although the initial element is probably indicating the colour gold because the neighbouring Gaelic name Leacan Oir (see W59(T)) contains a similar reference.

GOTE A' SLY : ND 33 NW: 317395
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So gote : a narrow rocky inlet of the sea, a creek
(of Norw dialect
: gota, a cut-out channel)
So sly (also sligh)
: see G105(T)

GREEN HILL : ND 35 SW: 327544
Local pronunciation: [ˈgrɛn hɪl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.
GROAT'S LOCH : ND 34 SW: 314408
Local pronunciation: [ˈgroʊt ˈlɔx]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is the surname Groat (see Black 1946, page 330)
So loch : see R5(S)
In this instance the name describes a marshy area rather than a loch.

HARRIL HEAD : ND 33 NW: 314392
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is obscure without further early references.

HAWKHILL : ND 36 SE: 355625
Local pronunciation: [ˈhæk ˈhɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

HELBERRY : ND 36 SE: 373635
Local pronunciation: [ˈhelbəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
ON hella f.: a flat stone
Cai berry : see T2(T)

......
HELMAN HEAD : ND 34 NE: 365467
Local pronunciation: ['helmon 'heid]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific Helman is obscure.

HERRING CRAIG : ND 34 SW: 352428
Local pronunciation: ['hɛrɪŋ 'kreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig : see Rh6(s)
Apparently one of the many fishing rocks, but the type of fish is very surprising inshore.

HILTHE : ND 34 SW: 343418
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Obscure without modern pronunciation and early references.

HILL OF CLAYTON : ND 36 SW: 341635
GREEN HILL OF CLAYTON: " : 334634
Local pronunciation : ['kletən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name survives only as a hill-name, but probably, in the first instance, referred to a farm where there was a heavy clay soil.
So toun : see Rh6(s)
HILL OF MAN : ND 34 NE: 373498
Local pronunciation: [hədə 'man]
Early refs: 1876 6'' OS
Derivation:
The name describes a hill on the outskirts of Wick Burgh and it is probably related to the nearby castle ruins, known as Old Man of Wick. (see W116(S))

HILL OF O LICLET : ND 34 NE: 293461
OLIQUEY : ND 34 SW: 321441
Local pronunciation: [hədə 'oliklet]
<Oliquoy> was not known to my informants.
Early refs: Oliclate 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
The specific is obscure. (Possibly ON ólr m. : see OL27(S))
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Cai quoy : see T22(S)

HOBBIE GEO : ND 36 SE: 367626
Local pronunciation: ['hɔbi gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6'' OS
Derivation:
So hobbie/(huvie)
: a basket woven from plaited straw or dried stalks of the dock, varying in shape and use, creel-shaped for carrying fish, of a squarer form with a cross handle for holding bait, or like an inverted beehive for holding salt. Also, a small basket scoop with a wooden handle used for landing fish.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
HOLE OF TROUPE  :  ND 34 SW:  353432  
Local pronunciation:  name not known to my informants  
Early refs:  1876  6“ OS  
Derivation:  
The origin of Troupa is obscure.

HORNYBACH  :  ND 24 SE:  263448  
Local pronunciation:  ['hornubær]  
Early refs:  1876  6“ OS  
Derivation:  
This strange name refers to a moorland area and possibly describes a spot where cattle were habitually penned. 
Sc horny  :  a cow of a horned breed, or a general term for a cow  
Sc bach  :  a cow-pat  
(cf G buachar m.  
:  cow-dung)

HORSE GEO  :  ND 36 SE:  372634  
Local pronunciation:  ['hors gjo]  
Early refs:  1876  6“ OS  
Derivation:  
There is no local tradition relating to the fate of the horse.  
Cai geo  :  see R54(T)

ISEBERRY HEAD  :  ND 35 SE:  383513  
Local pronunciation:  ['taisbærı̃ heid]  
Early refs:  1876  6“ OS  
Derivation:  
Sc ise  :  ice, in this case slippery rocks  
Cai berry  :  see T2(T)

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ISLEYS GEO : ND 35 SE: 366546
Local pronunciation: [\textit{tailz gjo}]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Local pronunciation suggests that this is simply Isle's Geo.
There is a detached rock resembling a small island in the geo.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

JUPE : ND 35 SE: 387523
Local pronunciation: [\textit{t[up]}]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes an off-shore rock.
Possibly
ON djup : the deep sea off the shore,
with reference to the depth of the water around the rock.

KETTLE GEO : ND 34 NE: 364473
Local pronunciation: [\textit{'kæləl gjo}]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes the deep rounded shape of the geo, which is like
a kettle or cauldron. (of Ch2(T))
Cai geo : see R54(T)

KNAPPERBUSS WELL : ND 25 NE: 290552
Local pronunciation: [\textit{'napərbus wel}]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific in Knapperbuss is probably
So knap : a knob, hillock.
(In the context of Sc well: see H40(S) it is interesting to note that in Orkney knappy is a familiar name for a troll or water-spirit. The specific in this instance may have a similar reference.)

So buss: a bush, a clump or tussock of grass, rushes etc.

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LADY'S HOLE : ND 36 SE: 367627
RUSSELL HOLE : ND 34 NE: 367478
Local pronunciation: names not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Both are coastal names.
There is no local tradition to explain the reference in either case.
(For the surname Russell see Black 1946, page 704.)

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LAND COVE : ND 34 SW: 337415
SEA COVE : " : 334414
Local pronunciation: ['land kov]
[si' kov]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
These two names are juxtaposed and both describe small bays or coves. Land Cove is sheltered by a rocky promontory whereas Sea Cove is exposed to the sea.

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LEACAN OTR : ND 33 NW: 318396
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G leac (pl leacan) f.
: a slab, flat stone
G 6r (gen 6ir) m.
: gold
The name refers to coastal rocks which possibly contain iron pyrites or fool's gold.
LINE GEO : ND 35 SE: 387516
Local pronunciation: [ˈlain ˈgjo]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:
Cai geo : see R54(T)  
Possibly a geo which was popular for fishing with rod and line.

LOBSTER ROCKS : ND 36 SE: 357614  
Local pronunciation: [ˈlɒbster ˈrʌks]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:
Rocks bordering deep water where lobster creels could be placed.

LOCH CARNLIA : ND 24 SE: 264447  
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:
G loch m. : see R5(S)  
G càrn m. : see R27(T)  
G liath : see R27(T)

LONG BERRY : ND 34 NE: 373491  
LONG GEO : ND 35 SE: 373546  
LONG TAIL : " : 387533  
Local pronunciation: [ˈlɒŋbəri, ˈgjo, ˈtel]  
Early refs: 1876 6" OS  
Derivation:
Cai berry : see T2(T)  
Cai geo : see R54(T)  
Sc tail : see W15(S)
LORD OLIPHANT'S LEAP: ND 34 NE: 371487
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
One of many such names applying to a detached rock lying close to the shore. There is apparently no local tradition relating to Lord Oliphant.

LUMMERS GEO: ND 34 SW: 343423
Local pronunciation: ['lummarz gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So lummer (lum) : a long funnel-like passage worn by natural forces through a cliff; a vertical fault or joint in a mass of rock
Cai geo : see R54(T)

MAN ROCK: ND 35 SE: 376501
MANEY GEO: " : 382551
Local pronunciation: ['man röck] ['mani gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Both names probably indicate an imagined resemblance to the human face in the rock formations.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

MAY BERRY: ND 34 NE: 368485
Local pronunciation: ['me bari]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific could perhaps be literally interpreted as in the
parallel name May Flood and could refer to the fact that the rock is only covered by the particularly high tides which occur in May.

Cai berry: see T2(T)

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MIDDLE POINT: ND 36 SE: 355611
Local pronunciation: [mʊd] 'point'
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory

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MUCKLE ROBERRY: ND 33 NW: 321398
Local pronunciation: [mʌk] 'robəri'
Early refs: Roberry 1750 Roy
Rowberry 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
Sc muckle: see D61(T)
Possibly
ON rauðr: see OL21(T)
Cai berry: see T2(T)

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MUIRI GEO: ND 34 SW: 354434
Local pronunciation: ['miuri gəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc muiri: of a moorland nature
(of D44(T))
Cai geo: see R54(T)

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MUSLEY : ND 35 SE: 387551
Local pronunciation: [ˈmæzli]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes an inlet of the sea near Noss Head (see W77(S)).
Its origin is obscure; the only possibility which occurs is that it may have been a favourite spot for gathering mussels.

NEW CRAIG : ND 34 SW: 340417
Local pronunciation: [ˈniu ˈkreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So craig : see R46(S)
The section of coastline to which this name applies may have been altered within the last century by erosion.

NORTH HEAD : ND 35 SE: 384507
NORTH TAILS : " : 386526
Local pronunciation: [ŋɔrθ ʰeɪd, ... ˈtelz]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So tail : see W15(S)

OILY GEO : ND 34 SW: 345424
Local pronunciation: [ˈɔɪli ˈgəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The oil oozes out of the rotting seaweed in the geo.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
OSTIES HILL  : ND 34 SW: 316407
Local pronunciation: ['östis həl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of the specific is obscure.
It may possibly represent
Sc ost/oist(e):
1) an armed company  
2) the assemblage or assembling of armed men
   summoned by the Scottish crown for military
   service, usually on a specific occasion or for
   a specific campaign.

OTTER GEO  : ND 35 SE: 384515
OTTER'S CAVE  : " : 385551
Local pronunciation: [ˈɔtər gəʊ, ... kɛv]
Derivation:
Cai geo  : see R54(T)
Otherwise self-explanatory.

POWE  : ND 35 SE: 386516
POWFEET  : " : 376548
POWMAD  : " : 385536
Local pronunciation: [pau, 'pau'fet, 'pau'mad]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc powe/pow: see T89(T)
The specific in Powfeet is singular in sense, indicating at the foot
of. The apparently plural map form probably came about in the
following way:
Sc fit is a common later variant of OSc fute: the foot, and in
Wick Parish the vowel in Sc fit would have been prone to narrowing
and raising, ie [fɪt] would become [fit], which would naturally
have been understood by the 19th century map-maker as Eng plural feet.
Powmad describes a coastal pool; the specific mad is obscure.


PROUDFOOT : ND 35 SE: 383508
Local pronunciation: [ˈprʊdfuːt]
Early refs: Proudfoot 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
The name describes a rocky promontory or foot. There are various idiosyncratic Scottish usages of proud, and the following could possibly apply in this instance:
So proud : when applied to the sea - running high, in spate, swollen.


RAMS GEO : ND 35 SE: 382513
Local pronunciation: [ˈræms ɡeʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is probably Eng ram + gen -s + dimin ending in pronunciation. However, there is an alternative possibility:
So rams (deriv ramsie)
  : apparently a reduced form of n.Eng dial.
ramisch : acid, pungent, rank, from Eng dial ram (of Scandinavian origin)
Cai geo : see R54(T).


RED BRAES : ND 26 SE: 298647
RED FORD : ND 35 SW: 329524
RED MIRE : ND 36 SW: 333625
Local pronunciation: [ˈrɛd ˈbres, ... ˈfɔrd, ... mɛr]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So brae(s): see R8(S)
Cai mire : see C19(T)

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RIERA GEO : ND 34 SW: 354439
Local pronunciation: ['iriː gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of the specific is obscure.
Cai geo : see R54(T)

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ROBBIE'S CRAIG : ND 35 SE: 376502
Local pronunciation: ['robbie kreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So Robbie : a common diminutive for Robert
So craig : see Rh6(S)
There is no local tradition relating to Robbie.

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STAIN, ROUGH OF : ND 36 SW: 345603
Local pronunciation: [stain]
Early refs: Stane 1832 Thomson
Derivation:
So stain : see T72(S)
Cai rough : see D55(T)

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ROW, HEAD OF : ND 34 SW: 326405
THE ROWANS : " : 329412
Local pronunciation: ['roʊ]
The Rowans> not known to my informants.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS

Derivation:
In this parish and in the context Head of..., Row possibly represents an earlier
G rudha m.: point of land, promontory
with tautologous Eng head added at a later date.
(of also D56(T) for an alternative explanation)
So rowan: the mountain ash

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SALMON ROCK : ND 35 SE: 373504
Local pronunciation: ['samən rək]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
A rock where sea-trout were caught.

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SANDY CAVE : ND 34 SW: 323403
SANDY GEO : ND 36 SE: 372634
Local pronunciation: ['sandi kev, ... gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Caı geo : see R54(T)
Otherwise self-explanatory.

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SCARF'S CRAIG : ND 34 NE: 376498
Local pronunciation: ['skarfs 'kreg]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Caı scarf : see R145(T)
So craig : see R46(S)

......
SCARTANS GEO : ND 36 SE: 368628
Local pronunciation: ['skartzns gjol]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The specific is probably a metathetic form of
So scrat : a scratch + gerundive ending + Eng pl -s.
The reference could be to grooving on the rock due to natural weathering.

SCHOLL : ND 35 SE: 388543
Local pronunciation: [skjɔl]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The origin of this name, which refers to a rock in the sea near the shore, is obscure without further early references, but a likely source is
ON skj6l n.: a shelter.
When faced with recording this name the map-maker, uncertain of its linguistic origin, may have used Sgeir Bhan (see S52(T)) and Dhu Loch (see W24(T)) as exemplars and introduced the letter h to signify the glide in pronunciation [skjɔl].

SCLAITY FACE : ND 34 NE: 364472
Local pronunciation: ['sklɛiti fɛis]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes an area of flat, layered rock on the seashore.
Cai solaity: see R83(T)
Eng face : unusually applied to flat rather than vertical rocks
SEALKY HEAD : ND 35 SE: 388529
SEALS ROCK : " : 358545
LITTLE SEAL SKERRY : ND 36 SE: 361617
SEAL SKERRY : " : 362618
Local pronunciation: [ˈsɔalki ˈhaid]
[ˈsɪls ˈrɔk]
[ˈsil ˈskəri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
These names all describe parts of the coast frequented by seals.
Sc sealky (variant form of Sc selch)
: the common or grey seal
Cai skerry: see R151(T)

SELLIFAR : ND 34 SW: 335414
Local pronunciation: [ˈsɛliˌfær]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
ON selr (gen pl selæ) m.
: a seal
ON fjara f.: the ebb-tide, the fore-shore

SGOIMUIRN : ND 35 SE: 387528
Local pronunciation: [ˈskiɔɪdˌmɔrn]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Obscure.
SHALTIEGEO ROCK : ND 35 SE: 371504
Local pronunciation: [ˈʃaltɪɡeʊ rʊk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference is probably to a Shetland pony which is known in Caithness as a shaltie.
Cai geo : see R54(T)


SHEPHERD'S CAIRNS : ND 24 SE: 280423
Local pronunciation: [ˈʃɛpərdz kærns]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name applies to the ruins of a broch on the moors, probably used as a marker or guide by a shepherd in the same way that prominent coastal features were used as markers by fishermen.
Sc cairn : see R27(T)


SÌTHEAN FAUR : ND 24 SE: 272413
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
G sìthean m.: see R114(T)
G faur : cold


SKEPS GEO : ND 34 SW: 333414
Local pronunciation: [ˈskæps ɡəʊ]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Perhaps
ON skip n.: a ship
or possibly
So skep : a clumsy wide-mouthed vessel of any kind, also used figuratively of a boat
SKERHARDIES : ND 36 SE: 357613
Local pronunciation: [skər'hardis]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
The word order in this compound indicates possible Gaelic origin.
G seoir f.: see R151(T)
The following specific is, however, totally obscure.

SOUND SKERRY : ND 35 SE: 387525
Local pronunciation: [ˈsun̥ skəri]
Derivation:
Cai skerry: see R151(T)
The specifics Heim and Skarvel are obscure without further early references. As in the previous example the word order indicates Gaelic influence.
ON sund n.: a sound (Cai [sun̥d])

SOUTH HEAD : ND 34 NE: 377496
SOUTH POINT : " : 371487
SOUTH STACK : " : 365473
Local pronunciation: [ˈsuθ ˈheid, ...ˈpoint, ...ˈstak]
Early refs: 1876 6° OS
Derivation:
Cai stack: see D75(T)
STANE BERRY : ND 35 SE: 357545
Local pronunciation: ['stenbo:ri]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So stane : see T72(S)
Cai berry : see T2(T)
This is probably a recent compound coined when people were no longer aware that the two elements are virtually synonymous. Perhaps the specific was originally the So adjective staney.

STUPACH : ND 35 SE: 373504
Local pronunciation: ['stup:ax]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Possibly
So stowp + dimin -ach
: a wooden pail or bucket, generally used for carrying water from a well, and usually narrower at the mouth than at the bottom to prevent spilling. The reference may be to the shape of the geo to which the name refers.

SWALLACH : ND 34 SW: 332413
SWALLOW GEO : ND 35 SE: 388542
Local pronunciation: ['swal-ax, 'swalu gjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Swallach describes a coastal inlet and is obviously related to the English word swallow, which appears as specific in the following name, with reference to the motion of the sea as it surges and recedes.
Cai geo : see R54(T)
**TANG HEAD** : ND 36 SE: 354608
Local pronunciation: ['tag, 'hid]
Early refs: 1876, 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai tang : see T77(T)
Tautologous English Head would have been added at a later date.

**THE BUNNS** : ND 34 SW: 348426
Local pronunciation: ['bju:nz]
Early refs: 1876, 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes some coastal rocks. Its origin is obscure.

**THE CLETT** : ND 35 SE: 385552
**THE COVE** : ND 34 NE: 377497
Local pronunciation: ['klert, 'kov]
Early refs: 1876, 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai clett : see R20(S)
Sc cove : a recess in a rock; a cave

**THE DICKY** : ND 35 SE: 371508
Local pronunciation: ['dik]
Early refs: 1876, 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai dick, dik: Cai variants of
Sc dyke : a wall; (a ditch)
The reference seems to be to the pier in the harbour.
THE HAVEN : ND 34 SW: 352434
Local pronunciation: [də 'hevən]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Ca haven : see T32(T)

THE KISTS : ND 35 SE: 374508
Local pronunciation: [də 'kist]
My informants always used the singular form.
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So kist : a chest, coffin-shaped box
The name describes coastal rocks which are rectangular in shape.

THE LOUP : ND 36 SE: 365624
THE LOUPS : ND 34 SW: 354435
Local pronunciation: [də 'laup(s)]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So loup : see T69(S)

THE NEEDLE : ND 34 NE: 358452
Local pronunciation: [də 'nidel]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name applies to a pointed rock.
THE PAP: ND 35 SE: 376514
Local pronunciation: [jæ 'pap]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc pap: see W30(S)
This is a very common hill-name throughout Scotland.

THE SHOALS: ND 34 NE: 372489
Local pronunciation: [æ 'səls]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The Shallows. (cf G116(T))

THE SISTERS: ND 35 SE: 373508
Local pronunciation: [æ 'scəstars]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The name describes two parallel channels of water.

THE STACK: ND 34 SW: 354433
Local pronunciation: [æ 'stak]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai stack: see D75(T)

THE VOUTE: ND 34 SW: 343421
Local pronunciation: name not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
So voute: form of Eng vault

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THORNY HILLOCK : ND 26 SE: 296624
Local pronunciation: [ˈθɔrnɪ ˈhɪlk]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation: Self-explanatory.

TOD'S GOTE : ND 34 SW: 357477
Local pronunciation: [ˈtɔdz ˈgɔt]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Cai tod : a small species of crab not identified (Cai 1905 EDD)
This is perhaps a different word from tod, a fox. No satisfactory etymology has been propounded for tod.
So gote : see W36(T)

Torry Geo : ND 36 SE: 371633
Local pronunciation: [ˈtori ˈgjo]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Difficult without earlier forms. Possibly the same word which Jakobsen records in Shetland in the form tori, meaning dried (ON purr: dry). Of a geo this would indicate that the sea only penetrates the geo at high tide.
Alternatively, this geo is immediately below Mervyn Tower and it may simply be a dialectal adjective derived from the noun Tower.
Cai geo : see B54(T)

TRAM, BRIG O' : ND 34 NE: 367478
TRAM, GOTE O' : " : 367481
Local pronunciation: [brig ə 'træmz]
<Got e o' Tram> not known to my informants
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc brig : see R102(T)
Sc gote : see W36(T)
The generic is possibly
Sc tram : a long beam, bar or shaft
(usually of wood, but in this instance being used figuratively
to describe the long narrow inlets of the sea to which these
names refer).

TURRIE GDO ND 34
TURRIGOE HILL : " : 345126
Local pronunciation: ['tari gjo 'hal]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Turrie is possibly of the same origin as Torry (ie ON /ærr/: of
W119(T))
Cai geo : see R54(T)

WAREHOUSE HILL : ND 34 SW: 308412
CAIRNS OF WAREHOUSE: " : 307423
LOCH OF WAREHOUSE : " : 302424
Local pronunciation: ['werhaus]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Lack of early references makes derivation extremely difficult.
The situation prompts the suggestion that the generic could be
ON áss m. : see W118(S)
Sc cairn : see R27(T)
Sc loch : see R5(S)
WHALE'S HOLE : ND 35 SE: 387514
Local pronunciation: [ˈhwelz ˈhol]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
The reference may be to a school of pilot whales beaching at this spot. This was a common occurrence in the past, enthusiastically welcomed by the locals who made use of the carcases.

WHITELEEN : ND 34 SW: 324427
Local pronunciation: [ˈhwit ˈlin]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc lean : cf D3(S)
Sc burn : see R4(S)

WHITE RASHES : ND 36 SW: 345631
Local pronunciation: [ˈhwit ˈræʃəz]
Early refs: 1876 6" OS
Derivation:
Sc rash : form of Eng rush
APPENDIX

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

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Appendix

When endeavouring to work backwards in time from the modern Caithness pronunciation of a name to its original form I made use of the section relating to phonology, which is section V, in the Introduction to Jakob Jakobsen's "An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland".

Jakobsen's opening comment in this section is perhaps even more true of Caithness than of Shetland due to the further phonological complication resulting from the presence of Gaelic in Caithness. He states that "The phonology of the Norn words handed down is on the whole somewhat confused, largely owing to the strong Scottish influence, an influence which has made the vowel system very diversified."

He further comments that "In a large number of cases, different forms of a word exist side by side (differing in different districts, but sometimes differing in one and the same district), frequently representing different stages of development. This alternation is due partly to non-uniform purely local development (especially in respect of the consonantal system), and partly to foreign (Scottish) influence, stronger or weaker in the different cases." This comment is also very appropriate to Caithness.

Another text which has proved extremely helpful when attempting to identify Norse lexical items which have been subject to subsequent Gaelic influence is the Introduction to W.J. Watson's "Place Names of Ross and Cromarty" (Section VI: The Norse Element).

Where different phonetic forms of a name exist side by side in the same parish in Caithness these different forms have been recorded in the sections dealing with individual names but no attempt has been made to indicate that, for instance, someone living in Wick Parish might give a different pronunciation of a Reay Parish name from that given by the local Reay person.

Only a very broad phonetic transcription is given, using the
phonetic symbols listed in "The Principles of the International
Phonetic Association" to indicate vowel and consonant quality and
the stressed syllable in a compound name. Occasionally, particularly
on the east side of the county, the two elements in a compound name
are equally stressed which I found surprising and which may have been
due to the fact that the name was being reproduced in a somewhat
artificial interview situation.

No pronunciation has been given for minor auxiliary elements
in Scots and Gaelic names, such as Sc burn, loch, moss, or G allit,
beinn, gleann etc. The pronunciation of these terms is not vital
for their interpretation and it, therefore, seemed unnecessary to
list those minor variations which do occur.

An examination of all the Scandinavian elements occurring in
stressed syllables in Caithness names has produced the following
results:
A. Consonants
The consonants have, for the most part, retained their original
quality with only a few changes occurring as listed below:
1) medial d is almost invariably lost after n, in names such as
Sandside ['sunsaid] (see R64(S)).
2) h is always lost when it occurs in initial position before l
and r, as in Lybster (see R59(S)) and Reaster (see D29(S)). h is
sometimes lost initially before vowels, as in Aukingill (see
C1(S)).
3) the form of a consonant is often influenced by other surrounding
consonants and this applies particularly in the case of [n] in final
position in a stressed syllable which becomes [m] under the influence
of a bilabial consonant in the following unstressed syllable. This
bilabial consonant is usually also subsumed in the resultant [m], as
in Stemster (see R68(S)).
4) metathesis of r is very common, as in Girniegoe (see W21(S)).
5) the bilabial consonant v or w is represented in the orthography
as w or sometimes u or y, as in Wick (see W116(S)), Dwarwick
(see D12(S)).
The presence of this bilabial consonant frequently influences the form taken by a following front vowel, as in Quoys (see C24(S)).

6) $\theta$ is usually preserved as [θ] but occasionally it takes the form [t], as in Thing's Va Broch (see T47(S)).

7) $\tilde{\eta}$ usually occurs as [θ], as in Garth (see OL14(S)), but it also takes the form [t] as, possibly, in Ratter (see D28(S)) and [d] as in Ward (see W109(S)).

B. Vowels

1) $\hat{a}$ is retained both in the orthography and in pronunciation as [a]. There is no such uniformity regarding $\tilde{a}$ which takes a variety of forms both in the orthography and in pronunciation. The suggested instances of $\tilde{a}$ are listed below:

*Ani : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [e]$ (see T2(S))
áir-óss : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [(w)ɔ:]$ (see C42(S))
gejá : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [o]$ (various examples)
háls : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [a]$ (see W46(S))
hár : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [a]$ (see D17(S))
máir : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [e]$ (see S1(S))
xá : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [e]$ (see R63(S))
skáli : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [e]$ (see R67(S))
skári : $\hat{a} \rightarrow [ε]$ (see T67(S))

* a doubtful example

2) $\hat{e}$ is usually represented by e in the orthography, but occasionally by i or a. It appears most frequently as [ɛ] in pronunciation but it does also take the forms [ɛ, ɛi, a].

$\tilde{e}$ occurs very infrequently and is invariably [e] in pronunciation although the orthographic representation of the sound can vary.

3) $\hat{i}$ is usually represented by i in the orthography and is normally [ɛ] in pronunciation, although it can also take the forms [i] or [ɛ].

$\tilde{i}$ takes a variety of forms in the orthography and is frequently diphthongised in pronunciation. The suggested examples of $\tilde{i}$ are listed below:

hlíð : i > [ai] (see R59(S))
*hrifs : i > [i] (see W87(S))
kvi : i > [ i ]  (see C24(S))
lfn : i > [ai]  (see C18(T))
slikr : i > [i]  (see C31(S))
vfk : i > [i/i]  (see W116(S))
vidr : i > [ei]  (see T82(S))

4) δ is represented as either o or u in the orthography. It is most frequently [ɔ] in pronunciation but it also takes the forms [ʌ] and, very occasionally [a].

δ is variously represented in the orthography and in pronunciation, and the suggested examples are listed below:

*bólstaðr : δ > [u]  (see D42(T))
hól : δ > [ɔ]  (see D20(S))
hólmi : δ > [a]  (see B53(S))
lómfr : δ > [ɔ]  (see C66(T))
ðss : δ > [ɔ]  (see T34(T))
rófa : δ > [ʌ]  (see D55(T))
óstrr : δ > [u]  (see C37(S))

5) û is almost invariably represented by u in the orthography, the only exception being the doubtful example listed in S31(T). It is most frequently [ʌ] in pronunciation, although it does also take the forms [u] and, on one occasion, [au] (see C7(S)).

û is invariably u in the orthography and [u] in pronunciation, with the exception of Thurdistoft (see OL35(S)).

6) ý is represented in the orthography by i, e or u. In pronunciation it takes the forms [i], [e], [u] and [ʌ].

ý only occurs in three examples. In two of these it is represented by ý or i in the orthography and by the diphthong [ai] in pronunciation. This must cast further doubt on the third example which is listed in OL12(S).

The Scandinavian diphthongs au, eu and ei occur and are variously represented both in the orthography and in pronunciation. Suggested examples are listed below:

au
austur : au > [au]  (see T62(S))
blautr : au > [ʌ]  (see D5(T))
haul : au $\rightarrow$ [au] (see C1(S))
raur : au $\rightarrow$ [o] (see W69(T))
*saarr : au $\rightarrow$ [o] (see T70(S))
straumr : au $\rightarrow$ [ø] (see S2(S))

ey
geysa : ey $\rightarrow$ [i] (see T35(S))
hey : ey $\rightarrow$ [œi] (see OL19(S))
heysa : ey $\rightarrow$ [i] (see D29(S))

ei
breitr : ei $\rightarrow$ [ɛ] (see C3(S))
*fleinn : ei $\rightarrow$ [ɛ] (see S23(T))
heimr : ei $\rightarrow$ [œ] (see T38(S))
keis : ei $\rightarrow$ [i] (see W57(S))
kleif : ei $\rightarrow$ [a] (see C25(T))
leir : ei $\rightarrow$ [ɛ] (see D39(T))
leir : ei $\rightarrow$ [æ] (see C21(S))
steimm : ei $\rightarrow$ [ɛ] (see R68(S))

Other vowels occur singly and are dealt with in the section relating to individual names.

......

A similar examination of Scandinavian elements occurring in stressed syllables in Caithness Gaelic names was undertaken but the sample of names was found to be so small that generalisations could not be usefully made. The study area would need to encompass the whole of Caithness before a local survey of Norse-Gaelic phonetics could be attempted.

Meanwhile the phonetic interchanges listed in Place Names of Ross and Cromarty (Watson 1904, pp. lvii-lx) provide an adequate guide when taken in conjunction with an awareness that vowels in Caithness Gaelic, as well as in Caithness Scots, were prone to narrowing and raising.
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