
6 Glossary of place-names

The place-names of Arran are in the main derived from Gaelic sources. Some, however, are of Norse (more exactly Old Norse) provenance and these are indicated in the following list by the letter N. Sometimes both sources contribute to the name as in Corrygills; and sometimes the Gaelic *Gleann* (Glen) has been added to the Norse names of valleys, e.g. Glen Chalmadale, Glen Ormidale, Glen Scaftigill, etc. Some names, again, are translations of the original Gaelic, like Blackwaterfoot, Birch Burn, etc. In a number of cases the etymology of the place-names is doubtful and these have been mostly omitted.

The following notes on Pronunciation are taken from "Glossary of the most common Gaelic Words (and Corrupted Forms of Gaelic) used on the Ordnance Survey Maps", published by the Ordnance Survey.

Initial Bh or Mh equals V, but after a broad vowel equals W, as in English "now".

Initial C equals K.

Initial Fh is silent.

Initial Ph equals F.

Initial Sh or Th equals H.

Initial S after An t is silent.

Finalaidh equals y as in my.

Initial idh equals y as in duty.

Th final, or when flanked with vowels, is a strong breathing.

Ch in contact with a, o, or u is a strong guttural as in *loch*.

Ch in contact with e or i is a guttural as in German *ich*.

The Article:

A' equals *the*, as in A'Chir.

Am equals *the*, as in Am Binnein

An equals *the*, as in An Cumhann.

A' equals *of the*, as in Cnoc a'Chapuill.

Na equals *of the*, as in Cnoc na Ceille.

Nan equals *of the*, as in Torr nan Gobhar.

Nam equals *of the*, as in Uisge nam Fear.

An t- equals *of the*, as in Torr an t-Sean Chaisteal.

ABHAINN BEAG: *abhainn*, a river; *beag*, small.

A'CHIR: *cir*, a crest or comb. This ridge is often referred to as "The Sleeping Warrior".

ACHAVOULIN: *achadh*, a field or piece of land; also in the forms *ach*, *auch*; *muileann*, a mill.

ACHNAMARA: *muir* (genitive *mara*), the sea.

A'CHRUACH: *cruach*, a stack or pile.

ALLT A'CHAPUILL: *alit*, a burn; *capull* (genitive *chapuill*), a horse.

ALLT BEITHE: *alit*, a stream or burn; *beithe*, a birch-tree.

ALLT CAIRN BHAIN: *cam* (genitive *cairn*), a heap of stones; *ban*, white.

ALLT DIOMHAN: perhaps from *deamhan*, a demon.

ALLT GARBH: *garbh*, rough.

ALLT GOBHLACH: *gobhai*, a fork; i.e. the forked stream.

ALLT MOR (or MHOR): *mòr*, large.

ALLT NAN DRIS: *dris*, bramble or brier bush.

AM BINNEIN: *binnein*, a pinnacle; from same source as *beinn*.

AN CUMHANN: *cumhann*, narrow; the narrow place.

AN SGRIOB: *sgrib*, a rent or cleft.

AN TUNNA: *tunna*, a cask.

ARD BHEINN: *ard*, high.

AUCHAGALLON: *galian*, a standing stone.

AUCHAREOCH: *riabhach*, dappled or bridled; see under *achadh*.

AUCHENCAIRN: the field of the cairn.

AUCHENCARR: *carr*, a rock.

AUCHENHEW: *eo*, holly.

AUCHMORE: *mòr*, large.

BALLARIE: *baile*, a dwelling; and perhaps *airidh*, a sheiling.

BALLYMICHAEL: Michael's dwelling.

BEALACH AN FHARAIDH: *bealach*, a mountain pass; *faradh*, a ladder.

BEALACH AN FHIR BHOGHA (the Archer's Pass): *fear* (genitive /Mr), a man; *bogha*, a bow.

BEINN A' CHMSTEAL: *beinn*, a mountain; *caisteal*, a castle.

BEINN A' CHLIABHAIN: *cliabh*, a basket or cradle.

BEINN (Ben): a mountain.

BEINN BHARRAIN: *bearna*, a gap or cleft; Ben Bharrain has two peaks.

BEINN BHREAC: *breac*, dappled.

BEINN CAORACH: *caora* (genitive *caorach*), a sheep.

BEINN NUIS (*Beinn nan Ois*): *os*, a fawn.

BEINN TARSUINN: *tarsuinn*, transverse or across, i.e. the crossing or joining hill.

BENNAN: a diminutive of *beinn*.

BINNEIN NA H-UAIMH: *Binnein*, a pinnacle; *uamh*, a cave.

BIRCHBURN: see Allt Beithe.

BLACKWATERFOOT (in Gaelic *bun na abhainn dubh*): *bun*, the end or mouth; *abhainn*, a river; *dubh*, black.

BLAIRBEG: *blar*, a mossy tract; *beag*, small.

BLAIRMORE: *mar*, large.

BRODICK: N. *breid-r*, broad; *vik*, a bay.

CAISTEAL ABHAIL: *caisteal*, a castle; *gobhal* (genitive *ghabhail*), a fork.

CATACOL: N. *kött-r*, a cat; *geil* or *gil*, a ravine; i.e. ravine of the wild cat.

CEUM NA CAILLICH: *ceum*, a step; *cailleach* (genitive *cailliche*), an old woman.

CIOCH NA H'OIGHE: *cioch*, a pap; *oigh*, a maiden.

CIR MHOR: a crest or comb; *mar*, great.

CLACH A'CHAIT, CLACH AN FHIONN and CLACH MHOR are large granite boulders on the Corrie shore; *cat*, a cat; *fhionn*, Fingal, and *mar*, large.

CLACHAG (the stony place): *clach*, a stone.

CLACHAN (the stone church): from *clach*, a stone; St. Molios is said to have preached here.

CLAUCHAN (Clachan) GLEN and CLAUCHLAND (Clachland) are also from the same word.

CLEITEADH NAN SGARBH: *cleiteadh*, a rocky promontory; *sgarbh*, a cormorant.

CNOC (pronounced krock) A'CHAPUILL: *cnoc*, a hillock; *capull* (genitive *chapuill*), a horse.

CNOC LEACANN BUIDHE: *leacann*, a bare hillside; *buidhe*, yellow.

CNOC NA CEILLE: *ceilidh*, a place of meeting.

CNOC NA CROISE: *Crois*, a cross.

CNOC NA GARBAD: *garbh*, rough; *bad*, a thicket.

CNOCAN DONN: *cnocan*, a diminutive of *cnoc*; *donn*, brown.

CNOCAN DONNA: *donnaidh*, a misfortune.

COILLEMORE: *coille*, a wood; *mar*, large.

COIRE AN LOCHAN, the corrie of the little loch.

COIRE NAN LARACH: perhaps from *lair* (plural *làrach*), a mare.

CORLOCH: *còrr*, a heron or crane.

CORRYCRAVIE: *coire*, a hollow or cauldron; *craobh*, a tree.

CORRYGILLS: Gaelic *coire* and Norse *geil* or *gil*, a ravine; the "s" is a later addition.

CREAG BHAN: *creag*, a rock; *ban*, white.

CREAG DUBH: *dubh*, black.

CREAG NA FEIDH: *creag*, a rock; *fiadh*, a deer.

CREAG NA FITHEACH: *fitheach*, a raven.

CREAG NA H-IOLAIRE: *iolair*, an eagle.

DERENENEACH: *doire*, a thicket; *each*, a horse.

DIPPIN: *dubh*, black; *peighinn*, a penny (land); derived from the old system of measuring land by rentals; there is a Pennyland in Kintyre.

DRUMADOON: *druim*, a ridge; *dun*, a hill-top fort; i.e. the stronghold on the ridge.

DUBH LOCH: *dubh*, black.

DUN DUBH: *dun*, a hill-top; *dubh*, black.

DUN FIONN, Fingal's Fort. DUNAN: a diminutive of *dun*.

EAS A'CHRANNAIG: *eas*, a waterfall; *crane*, a tree; the ending *aig* implies abundant.

EASAN BHIORACH: see under GLEN.

GARBAD: *garbh*, rough; *bad*, a thicket.

GARBH ALLT: *garbh*, rough; *allt*, a stream or burn.

GARBH THORR: *Orr*, a small round hill.

GLEN or GLEANN ASHDALE: *eas*, a waterfall; *dal-r*, a valley; the Gaelic descriptive term *gleann* (glen) has been added.

GLEN CHALMADALE: here again the Gaelic *gleann* has been added to a place-name of Norse origin.

GLEN CRAIGAG (glen of the little rock): *creag*, a rock.

GLEN DUBH: *dubh*, black.

GLEN EASAN BHIORACH: *eas*, a waterfall; and perhaps *biorach*, a heifer.

GLEN ORMIDALE: *N. orm-r*, a snake; *dal-r*, a valley.

GLEN ROSA: the ending "a" is the *N. a*, a river; the first part of the name is given by different authorities as *N. hross*, a horse, or Gaelic *rosach*, reddish or rosy.

GLEN SANNOX: see under SANNOX.

GLEN SCAFTIGILL: *N. skaft*, a shaft; *a*, a river; *geil* or *gil*, a ravine; here again the Gaelic *gleann* has been added.

GLEN SHANT: the charmed or blessed glen.

GLEN SHURIG: probably *searrach*, a foal.

GLENLOIG: *laugh*, a calf.

GOATFELL: probably *N. geit*, a goat; *fjall*, a mountain or "fell".

HOLY ISLAND: the old name was *Eilean Molais* (St. Molio's isle), of which Lamlash, the name now applied to the village is said to be a corruption.

IMACHAR: *iomaire*, a ridge or division of land, with reference to the old run-rig system of cultivation.

INVERCLOY: *inbhear* or *inbhir*, the mouth of a river.

IORSA: *N. Or*, a horse; *a*, river.

KILBRANNAN SOUND: *caoi*, a strait or sea passage; i.e. the Strait of St. Brendan (see p. 74). To the Gaelic name the Norsemen added their own term *sund*.

KILBRIDE, the church of St. Bridget: *ceall* (dative *cill*), a hermit's cell, or place of worship.

KILDONAN, KILMICHAEL, KILMORY: see above.

KING'S CAVE: the Gaelic name is *Uamh an Rìgh*, cave of the king.

KINGSCROSS: this name and the preceding one are associated with Bruce.

LAG or LAGG: *lag*, a hollow.

LAG A BHEITHE: *beithe*, a birch tree.

LAGGAN: a diminutive of *lag*.

LAMLASH: see under HOLY ISLAND.

LARGYBEG, LARGYMEANOCH, LARGYMORE: *iearg*, a hillside; *beag*, little; *meadhonach*, middle; *?nor*, large.

LENNYMORE: *leanach*, a wet meadow or piece of land; *mor*, large.

LEVENCORROCH: the rough halfpenny land; *leth*, half; *peighinn*, a penny (land); *corrach*, rugged.

LOCH A' MHUILLIN: *muileann*, a mill.

LOCH COIRE AN LOCHAN: see under COIRE.

LOCH GARBAD: *garbh*, rough; *bad*, thicket.

LOCH NA DAVIE: *da*, two; *abh*, (*ainn*), a river; i.e. loch of the two rivers.

LOCH TANNA: *tana*, shallow.

LOCH URIE (LOCH H-IUBHRAIDH): *iubhar*, the yew tree.

MACHRIE: *machair*, a flat plain, carse land.

MADADH LOUNIE: *madadh*, dog or wolf; lounie from (*al*)*luidh-n-aigh*, or *allaidh*, fierce or wild; *aigh*, place of.

MAOL DONN: *maol*, a bare round hill; *donn*, brown.

MEALL BHREAC: *breac*, speckled.

MEALL NAN DAIMH: *meall*, a shapeless hill; *damh*, a stag.

MERKLAND: the merk was an old silver coin; the sum paid for rental.

MONAMORE: *moine*, a moor; *mar*, large.

MONYQUIL: probably the hazel moorland; *coil*, the hazel.

MUILEANN GAOITHE (Windmill Hill): *muileann*, a mill; *gaoth*, the wind.

MULLACH BEAG and MULLACH Molt (Holy Island): *mullach*, the top.

NARATHAN (the place of snakes): *nathair*, a snake.

PENRIOCH: *peighinn*, a penny (land); *riabhach*, brindled.

PLADDA: N. *flatr*, flat; *ey*, an island.

PORT A' GHILLE: *port*, a harbour; *gille*, a lad.

PORT A' LEACACH: *leac*, a flat stone; i.e. harbour of the many flagstones.

PORT NA GAILLIN: *port*, a harbour; *gaillionn*, a storm.

RUDHA BHAN: *rudha*, a promontory; *ban*, white.

RUDHA CREAGAN DUBH: promontory of the little black rock.

RUDHA GLAS: *glas*, grey.

RUDHA SALACH: *salach*, dirty.

SAIL AN IME: *sail*, a heel; often applied to the end of a high ridge; *im*, butter.

SANNOX (the sandy bay): N. *sand-r*, sand; *vik*, a bay; the "x" is later addition; pronounced sannaig in Gaelic.

SCRIDEN: *sgrìodan*, a landslide.

SHEEANS: *sith*, a fairy; *sithean* is the fairy home.

SHISKINE: *sescem* (pronounced shesken), a marsh.

STACACH: *stac*, a steep conical hill.

STRABANE: *strath*, a strath; *ban*, white.

STRATHWHILLAN: *cuiiionn*, holly.

STRING ROAD: N. *streng*, a cord or bridle; the String must have been merely a rough track.

STRONACH: *snail*, a nose.

STRUEY: *sruth*, a stream; termination *ey* for *aidh* means the place of.

SUIDHE FHEARGHAS (the resting place of Fergus): *suidhe*, a seat.

TIGHVEIN: *taobh*, a hillside; *beinn*, great.

TORBEG: *beag*, small.

TORMORE: *mar*, large

TORR AN T-SEAN CHAISTEAL: *Orr*, a round hill; *sean*, old; *caisteal*, a fort.

TORR BREAC: *breac*, dappled.

TORR DUBH: *dubh*, black.

TORR NA BAOILEIG: *baoil*, blaeberry.

TORR NAN GOBHAR: *gobhar*, a goat.

TORR REAMHAR: *reamhar*, fat.

TRAREOCH (Traghariabhach): *traigh*, the shore; *riabhach*, speckled.

UISGE NAM FEAR: *uisage*, water; *fear*, a man.

[References](#)