

**DR DRUMMOND'S
TOPONYMY**



**A DERIVATION
OF THE
PLACE-NAMES
OF STATIONS OF
THE HIGHLAND RAILWAY
COMPANY**



BY

P. J. DRUMMOND, ESQ.

**A DERIVATION
OF THE
PLACE-NAMES
OF STATIONS OF
THE HIGHLAND RAILWAY
COMPANY,**

OR:

**A TOPONYMICAL
CATALOGUE, EXPLAINING
THE ORIGINS OF THE NAMES
OF CERTAIN LOCALITIES
IN NORTH-WEST SCOTLAND**

BY
DR. PETER J. DRUMMOND, MA, PHD.
ETC

PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF TOPONYMY,
GARTSHERRIE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY
DOBIE & MACKINTOSH, EDINBURGH

FOREWORD AND NOTES

This present slim volume represents the fruit of many years of diligent labour, during which we have been honoured to accept the linguistical assistance of sundry good and knowledgable people, and the pecuniary aid of the Board of Directors of the Highland Railway Company, to whom we will always *etc etc*.

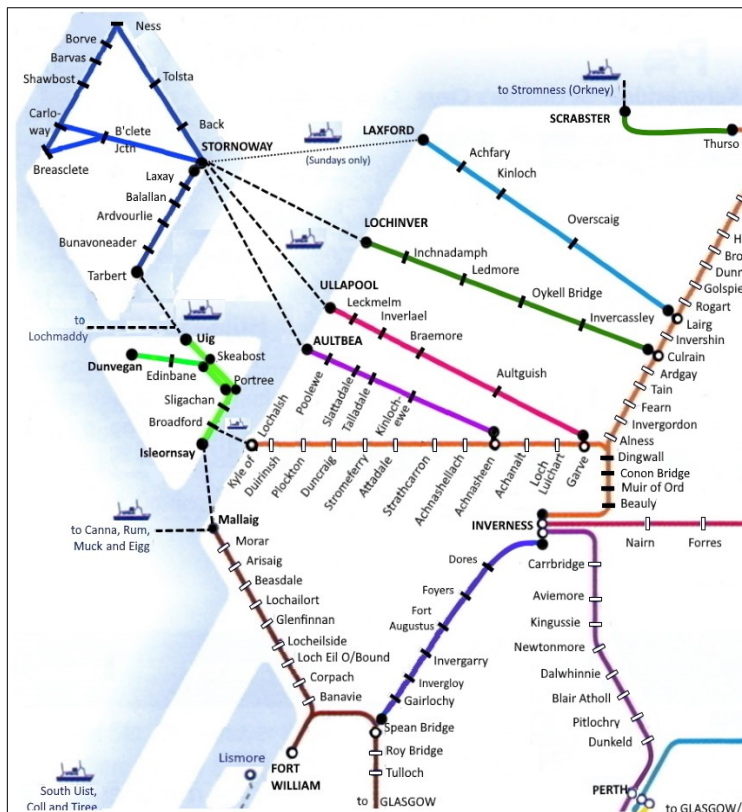
The reader is referred to the cartographic diagram overleaf, in order that he (or indeed, in these modern times, as we believe, she) might with ease trace the routes of the railways lines and locations of the railway stations in question.

In the explanations which appear herebelow, the following abbreviations are used to denote the source language:

- [Brit] - Brittonic or Pictish
- [Fr] - French
- [G] - Scots Gaelic
- [ON] - Old Norse
- [Sc] - Scots

P.J.Drummond
May 1899
Gartsherrie Lodge

THE PLAN OR NETWORK OF THE HIGHLAND RAILWAY COMPANY



The curious reader will please note that the railways to Mallaig, Fort William, Kyle of Lochalsh, Glasgow, Thurso, Perth and Aberdeen, although delineated on this map, are under the management of railway companies other than the Highland.

ACHNASHEEN TO AULTBEA



ACHNASHEEN. [G] **Achadh na Sìne** - *achadh na sìne* or *sìthean*, 'field of the stormy weather'.

KINLOCHEWE. [G] **Ceann Loch Iù** - *ceann loch Iù*, 'head of loch Ewe' which is the old name for what is now called Loch Maree. [G] *Iù* may be from [G] *iubhar*, 'yew tree'.

TALLADALE. [G] **Tealladal** from [ON] *hjalli-dalr*, 'ledge valley'.

SLATTADALE. [G] **Slèiteadal** fro, [ON] *sléttr-dalr*, 'flattish, even, valley'.

POOLEWE. [G] **Poll Iù** - *poll Ewe*, 'deep pool on the Ewe [river]'.

AULTBEA. [G] **An t-Allt Beithe** - *allt + beith*, 'birch stream'.

GARVE TO ULLAPOOL
(BUT COMMENCING AT INVERNESS)



INVERNESS. [G] **Inbhir Nis** from *inbhir* + Ness river, 'mouth of the [River] Ness'.

BEAULY. From [Fr] *Beau lieu*, given by the French-speaking monks who founded their monastery in that location in the 13th century. The Gaelic name **A' Mhanachainn** means 'the monastery'.

MUIR OF ORD. [G] **Am Blàr Dubh.** [Sc] *muir* + *ord*, which in [G] means 'hammer' and is applied to hammer-shaped hills, i.e. longer than they are broader. *Ord* is quite a common element in Highland place-names, from Speyside to Caithness, often referring to an area with hills of that shape, so this one is the 'moor in an ord (region)'. The [G] *blàr* means plain, or moor, [G] *dubh* is dark, so 'dark moor'.

CONON BRIDGE. W J Watson thinks the name of the river may derive from a Celtic root-word *con* meaning 'dog', but as with many ancient river names we do not know for sure. The [G] name **Drochaid Sguideil** appears to mean 'dirty, foul river bridge' perhaps referring to its dark, slow-flowing, peaty waters.

DINGWALL. From [ON] *þing* + *vollr*, meaning the parliament / council / assembly + field, plain. As in the Isle of Man's Tinwald, etc. The [G] name **Inbhir Pheofarain** means 'mouth of the [river] Peffer'. (Strathpeffer is just upstream). From [Brit.] perhaps, '*radiant, beautiful*'.

GARVE. [G] **Gairbh** - *garbh*, 'rough place'.

AULTGUISH. [G] **Allt Giubhais** - *allt* + *giuthais*, 'pine-tree stream'.

BRAEMORE. [G] **Am Bràigh Mòr** - *bràigh* + *mòr*, 'big brae, upland'

INVERLAEL. [G] **Inbhir Làthail** - *inbhir* + Lael river, 'mouth of the [River] Lael.

LECKMELM. [G] **Leac Mailm** - *leac* + personal name *Mailm*, the flagstone [probably gravestone] of Mailm.

ULLAPOOL. [G] **Ullapul** [ON] *ulfr* or personal name Ulli +]ON] *bólstadr*, 'Ulli's farm', or 'wolves farm'.

CULRAIN TO LOCHINVER



CULRAIN. [G] **Cùl Rathain** - *cùl* + either *rathain*, 'little wheels', or + *raineach*, 'brackeny, ferny corner'

INVERCASSLEY. [G] **Inbhir Charsla** - *inbhir* + Cassley river, 'mouth of the [River] Cassley'. Possibly the river name is from [G] *caiseal*, 'stone wall, stone fort', and there are remains of two Pictish brochs [forts] just north of the bridge.

OYKELL BRIDGE. [G] **Drochaid Oiceil** bridge over the River Oykeil, from [Brit] *uchel*, 'high place' (as in the Ochil Hills).

LEDMORE. [G] **An Leathad Mòr** - *leathad* + *mòr*, 'big slope'.

INCHNADAMPH. [G] **Innis nan Damh** - *innis nan damh*, 'water-meadow, or island, of the stags'.

LOCHINVER. [G] **Loch an Inbhir** - *loch* + *inbhir*, 'loch at the river-mouth', where the River Inver meets the sea.

LAIRG TO LAXFORD



LAIRG. [G] **Luirg** - *lorg, lurg* 'shin, shank, or hill-shoulder resembling', or [G] *learg*, 'slope'

OVERSCAIG. [G] **Àrd Sgaig.** From [Sc] *over*, 'upper' + *Arscaig*; *Arscaig* either from [ON] *a-skikki*, 'upper river strip', or from [G] *ard sgaig*, 'split promontory'. *Arscaig* (sometimes *Ascaig*) lay on the other, western, bank of Loch Shin.

KINLOCH. [G] **Ceann Loch** - *ceann* + *loch*, 'head of a loch', standing at the head of Loch More ('big loch').

ACHFARY. [G] **Achadh Fairidh** - *achadh* + *faradh*, 'field of the hen-roost'.

LAXFORD. [G] **Lusart.** From [ON] *lax* + *fjord*, 'salmon sea-loch'.

ISLEORNSAY TO UIG
& DUNVEGAN



ISLEORNSAY. [G] **Eileen Iarmain.** The [ON] name was *Örfirisey* – ebb/tidal island, or island accessible at low tide. [ON] -ey or ay, 'island'. The [G] name is a direct translation – 'tioram' meaning dry.

BROADFORD. [G] **An t-Àth Leathann** [ON] *breið fjorð*, 'broad firth' (cf Brodick, *breið vik*, Arran), anglicised to Broadford, then a later Gaelic back formation to An t-Àth Leathann.

SLIGACHAN. [G] **Sligeachan** - *sligeachan*, 'shell place'.

PORTREE. [G] **Port Rìgh** G *port rìgh*, 'port of the king' (from a visit by James V in the 16th century: however, it may originally have been *port ruighe*, 'port at the slope').

SKEABOST. [G] **Sgeitheabost** ON *skeifr?* + *bólstadr*, 'aslant, askew farm'.

UIG. [G] **Ùig** From [ON] *vik*, 'harbour'

EDINBANE. [G] **An t-Aodann Bàn** G *aodann bàn*, 'white face' (i.e. rock face).

DUNVEGAN. [G] **Dùn Bheagain** - *dùn bheagain*,
'little hill-fort'

*With easy and rapid maritime connections to and
from the ports of :-*

LOCHMADDY. [G] **Loch nam Madadh** - Loch of the
dogs / foxes / wolves'.

MALLAIG. [G] **Malaig** Perhaps from [ON] *mar*,
'seagull' + [ON] *vid* 'harbour'.

ISLE OF LEWIS
AND HARRIS



STORNOWAY. [G] **Steòrnabhagh.** From [ON] *stjórnar* + *vagr*, 'steering bay'.

BACK. [G] **Am Bac.** From [ON] *bakki*, 'slope'.

TOLSTA. [G] **Tolastadh** is from [ON] *þolfs-staðir*, the steading or farm of one Tholf.

NESS. [G] **Nis.** From [ON] *nes*, 'headland'.

BORVE. [G] **Borgh.** From [ON] *borg*, 'fort'.

BARVAS. [G] **Barabhas.** From [ON] *hvarf-óss*, 'outlet of the bend'.

SHAWBOST. [G] **Siabost.** From [ON] *saebólstadr*, 'sea farm'.

CARLOWAY. [G] **Càrlabhagh.** From [ON] *Karli* + *vagr*, 'Karl's bay'.

BREASCLETE. [G] **Brèascleit.** From [ON] *breiðaklettr*, 'broad ridge mountain'.

LAXAY. [G] **Lacasigh.** From [ON] *lax* + *ey*, 'salmon island'.

BALALLAN. [G] **Baile Ailein** - *baile* + *ailein*, 'farm at the meadow'.

ARDVOURLIE. [G] **Àird a' Mhulaidh** - Ard [G] height or headland + *muir balgan* [G] 'sack-shaped sea bags' (thus, bays), or *murlag* [G] 'canoe-shaped basket for holding wool' (thus, bay). 'Headland above the Bay'. Above both Loch Earn and Loch Lomond are two hills named Ben Vorlich, both of which stand above a shoreline farm called Ardvorlich, 'height above the bag-shaped bays' (W J Watson, 1926)

BUNAVONEADAR. [G] **Bun Abhainn Eadarra** - *bun* + *abhainn* + *eadar*, 'mouth of the in-between river'.

TARBERT. [G] **An Tairbeart** - *tairbeart*, 'portage isthmus'.



INVERNESS. [G] **Inbhir Nis** - *inbhir* + Ness river, 'mouth of the [River] Ness'.

DORES. [G] **Duras** - *dubh ros*, 'dark wood' or 'dark promontory'.

FOYERS. [G] **Foithir** - *fòir, fothair*, 'edges, shelving hollows'.

FORT AUGUSTUS. [G] **Cille Chuiméin** Cummein was the abbot of Iona, died 669. A cairn called *Suidhe Chuimein* lies nearby on the B862. There are several place-names with a link to Iona in the Great Glen, indicating a route of missionary travel. Modern name after William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, known as the butcher of Culloden: the Gaelic name for the settlement is *Cill Chuiméin*, St Chuimein's cell or church.

INVERGARRY. [G] **Inbhir Gharadh** - *inbhir* + river Garry, 'mouth of the Garry [river]'. Garry from *G garbh*, 'rough'.

INVERGLOY. [G] **Inbhir Ghlaoidh** - *inbhir* + river Gloy, 'mouth of the Gloy [river]'. Gloy is from [G] *glaodh*, glue, stickiness', so perhaps slow-flowing.

GAIRLOCHY. [G] **Geàrr Lòchaidh** - *gair* + [G] *lochaidh*, 'at the short loch place'.

SPEAN BRIDGE. [G] **Drochaid an Aonachan** - [G] 'aonachan' means 'fair' or 'market', and there may be a missing word indicating a saint (in whose honour the fair was held). As for the River Spean - perhaps from [G] *spiathàn*, 'hawthorn', or [G] *spion*, 'tearing, plucking, pulling'.