DRUMMOND's

TOPONYMY

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.

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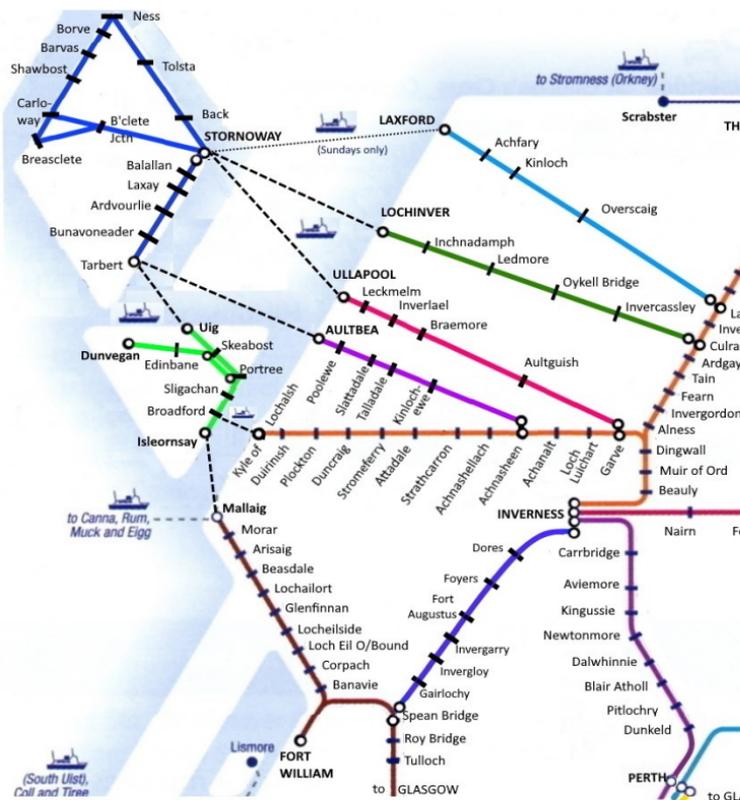
The reader is referred to the cartographic diagram overleaf, in order that he (or indeed, in these modern times, as we believe, she) might with ease trace the routes of the railways lines and locations of the railway stations in question.

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

<div align="right">

P.J.Drummond
May 1899
Gartsherrie Lodge

</div>

The Plan *or* Network
of the
Highland Railway Company

Ness
Borve
Barvas
Shawbost
Tolsta
Carlo-way
B'clete
Jcth
Back
Breasclete
Balallan
Laxay
Ardvourlie
Bunavoneader
Tarbert
STORNOWAY
(Sundays only)
LAXFORD
Achfary
Kinloch
Scrabster
to Stromness (Orkney)
TH

Overscaig
LOCHINVER
Inchnadamph
Ledmore
ULLAPOOL
Leckmelm
Inverlael
Braemore
Oykell Bridge
Invercassley
La
Inve
Culra
AULTBEA
Aultguish
Ardgay
Tain
Fearn
Invergordon
Alness
Uig
Skeabost
Dunvegan
Edinbane
Portree
Sligachan
Broadford
Isleornsay

Kyle of Lochalsh
Duirinsh
Plockton
Poolewe
Slattadale
Talladale
Kinloch-ewe
Duncraig
Stromeferry
Attadale
Strathcarron
Achnashellach
Achnasheen
Achanalt
Loch Luichart
Garve
Dingwall
Muir of Ord
Beauly
INVERNESS
Nairn
F

to Canna, Rum,
Muck and Eigg
Mallaig
Morar
Arisaig
Beasdale
Lochailort
Glenfinnan
Locheilside
Loch Eil O/Bound
Corpach
Banavie

Dores
Foyers
Fort Augustus
Invergarry
Invergloy
Gairlochy
Spean Bridge
Roy Bridge
Tulloch
to GLASGOW

Carrbridge
Aviemore
Kingussie
Newtonmore
Dalwhinnie
Blair Atholl
Pitlochry
Dunkeld
PERTH
to GL

Lismore
FORT WILLIAM
(South Uist),
Coll and Tiree

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'.

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.

~4~

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. [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 Oykell, 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. [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. [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 righ*, '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'.*

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 shore-line 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'.

Lenition in the Gaelic Language: a Guide to the Rules and Customs of Adverbial and Adjectival Placement and Alteration.
Cloth, 574 pages. 8/6d.

Adverbs of Direction: where they go and how they get there. A playful *Misdirection* upon some of the Lesser-Known Corners of the Scotch Language.
Moleskin cover, 8vo, 24 pages. 1/-

Beinn Mhòr or Mòr Bheinn ? A Most Careful Consideration.
Handsome Coloured Cover, Paper Boards with Cloth Back,144 pages. 3/1½d

A Summer Spent at Tollie Bay; or, Waiting for the Ferryman. An Amusing Romance.
Of Thick Crown 8vo. 320 pages. Many Illustrations, including Maps. Cloth Boards. 6/6d

Any of the titles above may be obtained by writing to the publisher, whose address is given overleaf.

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHERS

All the volumes below may be procured from the publisher **Dobie & Mackintosh** at **11, Comiston Road, Edinburgh** on remittance of a postal-order for the correct amount, *plus* 6d for postage and packing. Please ensure you provide the correct title of the volume, and your own address, as mistakes cannot be rectified at a later date.

Geographical Illustrations of Scottish history, containing the names of places mentioned in chronicles, histories, records, &c. with corrections of the corrupted names. David Macpherson. 3/6d

The Atlas of Scotland: containing maps of each county, on a scale so large as to exhibit the features of the country, and places of importance; the boundaries of the shires, attested with **respectable** names to verify their accuracy. John Thomson. 7/6d

Enquiry into the Origin and Meaning of Some Names of Places in Scotland, and Particularly in Clydesdale, Alexander Galloway. 1 guinea.

An Essay on the Philosophical Construction of Celtic Nomenclature ... to which is added a vocabulary of Celtic names of places in Scotland, *etc*, J.James. 16/-

The Tourists' Atlas-Map of Scotland : with an easy reference index to the 12,000 names of places shown on the map. Alexander Keith Johnston. 10/6d.

The Highland Railway Company

is pleased to announce that

frequent travellers on its trains will now benefit
from discounted fares when purchasing
a season ticket or a holiday travel-permit.

~

THE

'PRUDENT SERVANT'

ticket allows the school student to travel daily from
home to place of education, or the businessman to
'commute' to and from his work,
at a considerable reduction.

~

For sportsmen, poets and the modern tourist,
the weekly, fortnightly or monthly

'MERRY IDLER'

ticket permits travel on any of the Highland
Railway's trains for the fixed period.

APPLY, USING FOOLSCAP PAPER AND WRITING ON ONE SIDE ONLY, TO:

Highland Railway Co. offices, shore street, Ullapool

WHAT YOU WANT IS PROTECTION

Nothing is more injurious to the health, particularly the health of children, than wearing Boots with Insoles composed of Brown Paper or Card-board.

THERE IS DEATH IN THE BOOT.

A celebrated London doctor said in Court a few days ago — "Many children owe their death to Card-board Insoles in Boots, which soak up rain like sponges."

Protect the health of yourselves and children by purchasing your Footwear at the

KELTIC BOOT WAREHOUSE.

Every pair guaranteed ALL SOLID LEATHER, specially made up to suit the requirements of the district. No "Foreigners" kept in Stock.
The Largest Stock in the North to select from.

Note the address—

John Maclennan
Keltic Warehouse,
Dingwall.

(444P)

Highland Railway Company.

'MERRY IDLER' TRAVEL-PASS

Valid on the North Lewis Circular (widdershins) route.

Valid from : **Monday, 1 June 2020**

Until : **Monday, 30 November 2020**

Fare paid: **One penny Scots**

Passenger : **Any respectable person, being of sound mind**

A Question ? Scan the QR code !

H R

The 'Merry Idler' travel-pass printed above may be carefully excised and used by the reader of this volume, on payment to the guard of the amount shown. Please ensure that your idling is completed before the ticket lapses.

ERRATA & CORRIGENDA