Topographical Varia: V

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TOPOGRAPHICAL VARIA—V

W. J. WATSON, LL.D.

dubron dobhar

THE term *dubron*, water, if we judge by its survivals in French names of places, must have been common in ancient Gaul. It appears in the modern names Dover, water, Douvres (repeatedly), waters, and in several compounds, more or less disguised, such as Bondoufle, Verdoube,¹ the latter of which is mentioned by Pliny as Vernodubrum, *i.e.* alder-water, or, as we should put it in modern Gaelic, an t-alltan fearna, Gaulish *vernos* becoming *fearna* in Gaelic. Doeveren, in Gelderland, was of old Dubridun from a still older Dubrodunon, water-fort. The river Douro in Spain and Portugal (called in Spanish Duero), is in Latin Durius, and therefore cannot be connected with *dubron*.

Dover, in England, is in French Douvres, representing an Old Celtic locative plural Dubris, at the waters, which actually appears on record more than once. The reference is not to the waters of the English Channel, but to the waters of two small brooks which enter the sea at, or near, Dover harbour.²

In modern Welsh *dubron* becomes *dwfr*, common in stream names; Cornish *dowr*; Breton *dour*. In Old Irish it was *dobor*; Gaelic *dobhar*, now obsolete in the spoken language, but preserved in compounds, and in many stream and place-names. The oldest Scottish instance occurs in Adamnan's *Life of Columba*, written before A.D. 700, where Columba is recorded to have baptized an aged chief in Skye named Artbranan, 'and the river of the place in which he received baptism is to this very day called by the inhabitants after his name Dobur Artbranani.' This interesting

¹ *v.* Holder s.v. Dubra.

² *British Place Names in their Historical Setting*, p. 108.

name appears to have been lost. The stream in question was probably quite a little burn.

Dobhar appears at least twice in combination with the preposition *eadar*, between, in the names Edirdovar, now Redcastle, in Ross-shire on the Beaully Firth, and Eddradour in Perthshire. In both cases the 'waters' in question are mere streamlets. It appears also in the two Aberdours (Banff and Fife), and in Aberchirder (Banff), *Ciardhobhar, Swart Water.

Terminally *dobhar* occurs in Aberarder (Strathnairn and Loch Laggan), outflow of the high water. The Loch Laggan stream-name without the 'aber' is seen in Coire Ardobhair, high-water corry, and in Uinneag Ardobhair, high-water window. Auchter-arder means high-water upland. Fe-arder, Deeside, near Balmoral is the bog-channel (*fèith*) of the high water. The popular explanation of the rivers Leader and Adder as grey water and long water respectively is more than doubtful in view of very old spellings which give no countenance to the idea. The common stream-name Calder, in Gaelic *Caladar*, may represent Caladobhar, calling water, from the root *cal*, cry, call, which gives rise to the Balquhidder Calair, notorious for its noise.¹ Dr. MacBain, however, always preferred to explain Calder as from a primitive *Calentora, calling water.

Two very interesting cases in which *dobhar* occurs in composition have, I believe, not been hitherto noted. The first is Duror, Argyll, which appears in Macfarlane's *Geographical Collections* and elsewhere² as Durgour, Durgoure, Durroure, Dorgowar. This spelling points to the confusion—common in old records—between *gh* and *dh*, the two sounds being in this position identical. Other record spellings are Durwain 1476; Duroun 1478; Durgune 1493. Durgwyn 1520.² In still older records, of which the originals are now unfortunately lost, noted in Robertson's *Index to Missing Charters*, Duror appears as Durdoman,

¹ Caldour near Kelso is Caledofre.—*Monastic Annals of Teviotdale*.

² *Reg. Mag. Sigilli*. and *Orig. Parochiales*.

Durdomon. Here there is obvious confusion between final *n* and final *r* (a confusion easily paralleled), while in Robertson's spellings *m* has been written or printed for *w*, also an error easily made. Durdoman, therefore, should be amended to Durdowar, and so on with the others, giving an old *Dùrdhobhar*, representing a primitive *Dūro-dubron. In modern Gaelic *dùr* means dull, stubborn; in the older language it meant hard; used also in O. Ir. as a noun meaning 'daingean,' a fortress. In Gaulish names *dūros* is exceedingly common (*v.* Holder), and its neuter form *dūron* meant a fortress. In Britain Duro-brivae, the name of two Roman stations, now Castor and Rochester, is taken to mean 'the bridges at the fort.' Thus Duror may mean either Hard-water (*i.e.* Rocky-water) or Fort-water. That the name is primarily that of a stream is indicated by modern usage, which still speaks of Abhainn Dùroir and Glen Duror. The district is referred to as Dùror na h-Apann, Duror of Appin. The name is Pictish doubtless.

The other instance referred to is Morar, on the west coast of Inverness-shire. The name Morar applies to a large district divided by Loch Morar into North Morar and South Morar. The waters of Loch Morar fall into the sea by way of Abhainn Mórar, a stream only a few furlongs in length. It is this stream, however, which has given its name first to the loch, then to the district. The ancient spellings (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) are Moreobyr, Mordhowar, Mordhowor, Moreovyr, Morowore, which, taken together, clearly indicate *Mórdhobhar*, great-water. In both Duror and Morar the total disappearance of *dh* after *r* is the normal thing, cf. Inbhir (Dh)ùbhghlais, Inbhir (Dh)uinnid, Obar (Dh)eathain, Inveruglas, Inverinate, Aberdeen. In Gaelic literature the spelling of Morar has been affected through folk-etymology. In the Book of Clanranald¹ there occur the curious forms 'do mhorshrón,' 'Tigherna Mhóiróin.' In *Gillies's Collection*, pp. 287, 289, there is 'Eas Mhor-oir,' which is sufficiently correct, but

¹ *Reliquiae Celticae*, vol. ii. pp. 180, 214.

John Mackenzie in the *Beauties* writes 'Eas Mor-thir,' p. 160, and elsewhere he adopts the same spelling. This confusion with *mórthir*, mainland, appears also in *Fàilte na Mórthir*,¹ 'S ann a tha 'n othail air bodaich na Mórthir,' the name of a pipe tune. Morar is not now, so far as I know, accompanied by the article, but it is just possible that the feminine forms are so far justified in that *dobhar*, originally neuter, may have been treated as feminine in Scottish Gaelic. As to that, however, no certain data seem to exist.

The diminutive *dobhrag*, feminine in form, according to modern usage,² occurs as the name of several brooks or brooklets, e.g. Dobhrag between Shandwick and Arabella in Easter Ross, now a mere ditch; and Dobhrag, the Gaelic form of the Aldourie Burn, Dore. The local rhyme is

Durus is Darus is Dobhrag,
Dores Dares and Dowrag.³

Parallel to *dobhrag* is *dobhran*, masculine in form.⁴ Above Achterneed, Strathpeffer, are Dobhran and Creag Dhobhrain, where *dobhran* means 'a wet place,' i.e. a place where the water from the hillside is apt to collect. (Cf. *braonan*, a damp place, from *braon*.) I recall no streamlet here, though there may, of course, have been one. With this goes Beinn Dobhrain in Argyll. It is hard to say whether *dobhran* is here a stream-name or a place-name. Not far from it is Inveroran, at the spot where a small burn, Allt Orain (for Allt Dòbhrain), falls into Loch Tealla. Inveroran is for Inbhir Dhobhrain, the *dh* disap-

¹ *Beauties*, p. 125.

² In the old language this ending was used also to form masculine diminutives.

³ Another rhyme runs :—

Mìl' eadar Durus is Darus,
Mìl' eadar Darus is Dà.
A mile between Dore and Dares,
A mile between Dares and Dà.

⁴ In common speech *dòbhran* means 'otter,' in which sense it is not uncommon in place-names, but is used with the article, e.g. *Rudha 'n dò(bh)rain*, 'otter point' (Colonsay), *lag an dò(bh)rain*, 'otter hollow' (Iona).

pearing after *r* as in Morar, Duror, etc. above. In the same region near Crianlarich (Gaelic Crithionnlaraich, Aspen-site) is Inverardran, where the mountain stream from Coire Ardrain enters the Dochart. In 1377 Inverardran appears as Inverhardgowrane.¹ Here *g* stands for *dh* exactly as in Durgour above, with which allowance we have an excellent phonetic spelling of Inbhir Arddhobhrain, Inver of the high streamlet.

From the above it will be seen that *dubron*, with its various modern forms, is found over the whole Celtic area, continental and insular.

The forms ·Duror from ·Dūrdhobhar; ·Morar from Mórdhobhar; ·Arder from ·Arddhobhar; Inbhir ·Ard-rain from Inbhir ·Arddhobhrain are instructive examples of the influence of the powerful stress accent in Gaelic.

mig

Mig appears as the base of many names in Pictland. Behind Bonar in Sutherland is Migdale, in the thirteenth century Miggevet and Miggeweth, now in Gaelic Migein, with an un-Gaelic *g*, like that of English pig. The precipitous rocky hill on the north side of Loch Migdale is Creag Mhigein. It is quite possible that those three—Migdale, Miggevet or Miggeweth and Migein—were once independent names of different places in the basin of Loch Migdale. Migvie in Stratherrick is in Gaelic Migeaghaidh. It lies low on the south side of Loch Garth. There are also Dal-migavie in Strathdearn, in Gaelic Dail Mhigeaghaidh, and Creag Mhigeachaidh (MacBain) behind Feshie Bridge and Laggan-lia in Badenoch. In Aberdeenshire there is the parish of Migvie and Tarland, in 1183 Migeueth, 1200 Migaveth, clearly the same to start with as the Sutherland Miggeweth. Another Migvie occurs in Lochlee parish, Forfarshire. In Aberdeenshire Midstrath (Birse) was in 1170 Migstrath; 1511 Megstrath, still Migstra in ver-

¹ *Reg. Mag. Sigilli.*

nacular Scots—a boggy strath. Midmar in the same county was written Migmar down to 1500 at least, and is still pronounced so in Gaelic. The three divisions of Marr are Bràigh Mharr, Braemar; Crò Mharr, Cromar; and Mig Mharr. Strathmiglo in Fife was in 1200 Stradimigglock. Meigle, Perthshire, was of old Migdele and Miggil, now Migeil in Gaelic. Near Comrie as one goes to Glenartney is Miggarr, in Gaelic Migear, and in Glenlyon there is Meggernie, in Gaelic Migeirnaidh. Other instances, of which, however, neither the Gaelic forms nor the old spellings are available, are Creag Meggen, in Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire (cf. Creag Mhigein above); Craigie Meg in Glen Prosen, Forfarshire; Craig Mekié in Glen Isla; Meggit Water flowing into St. Mary's Loch, whence Yarrow issues, both Old British names.

As to the meaning of this frequently occurring base, MacBain, dealing with Creag Mhigeachaidh in Badenoch, referred to *mig*, *meig*, the bleating of a goat. But this explanation, though phonetically admissible, does not suit the localities, nor yet the nature of the compounds, *e.g.* Mig Mar, Migstrath. The fact is that *mig* is the Pictish for a bog. In Wales we have Kenvig, 'a ridge above a bog,' from Welsh *mig*, bog, which appears in migwern (for mig-gwern), a boggy meadow; migwyn (for mig-gwyn), cotton grass, canach; mign, a bog, quagmire. In Old Welsh there occur Gueith Meicen and Rit Meigen¹ battle of the bog, ford of the bog. The battle of Meicen was fought in 633 A.D., and in the Saxon Chronicles is called the battle of Haethfelth, Heathfield, practically a translation of the British name. Of the places noted above, all that I know by inspection, and all of which I have information, are naturally boggy or marshy. With regard to the occurrence of such names as Creag Mhigein, Creag Mhigeachaidh, etc., it is to be noted that they are exact parallels to Creag Dhobhrain, mentioned under *dobhran* above, that is to

¹ Sir E. Anwyl, 'Wales and the Britons of the North,' *Celtic Review*, vol. iv. pp. 127, 260.

say, the meaning is Rock of Miggen, etc.; the rock is called after the boggy place near its foot.

In Migear, the base *mig* is extended by the suffix *-ar*, as in Dollar.

Migearnaidh may be an exact parallel to Welsh *migwern*, pl. *migwernydd*, a marshy meadow, which describes the place; or it may show the extensions *-ar-n-ach*.

Miglo, old Miglock, may show the suffix *-lach*, as in G. *teaghlach*, W. *teulu*.

The extension seen in Mig-vie, Mig-o-vie, Mig-eaghaidh, or Mig-eachaidh, Migg-e-weth is puzzling, partly on account of the apparent variation in the Gaelic pronunciation as compared with the old spellings, and partly because it is difficult to say what value should be attached to the *-th* or *-t* of these old forms. The Gaelic *gh* sound as against the modern and record *v* may be due in part to the fact that *gh* (and *dh*) were at one time frequently sounded *v* in Gaelic, as they still are in certain words in certain districts (e.g. *diadhaidh*, *truaghan*, *mu dheighinn*). In dealing with a Pictish word Gaelic speakers would be apt to treat the *v* as a *gh*, and level it up to *gh* by analogy. With regard to the *th* of the old forms, if it was really meant for *th* and not for *ch*, it may perhaps represent the faint sound of final *gh* (now silent). We shall probably be right in comparing Migovie with Multovie, Muckovie, Rovie, Arcavie, Rinavie, all Gaelicised Pictish names, involving the old *magos*, plain, which in the short form *-ma*, mutated into *-fa*, meaning place, spot, is a favourite Cymric ending, occurring also not uncommonly in Irish names such as Fearnmhagh, Farney, alder plain.¹

Baile Bhaodan

The old parish church of Ardchattan stood on an eminence behind the Priory 'in a pleasant place where the sun uses daily to ryse upone, when it ryseth upone one pairt

¹ The modern Welsh plural of names in *fa* of this meaning is *-feydd*, which would give Miggeweth exactly, but in old Welsh the form is *-feu*, e.g. *aerfa*, battlefield, pl. *aerfeu*.

of the countrie, and this is called Kilbedan.' ¹ Its well-built walls and gables are still standing except the south wall, which is ruinous. It is often referred to as a chapel, but it was in reality a fairly large church, the parish church of Ardchattan. Old references to it are 'the kirk of Balliebodane in Bendaraloch,' 1603; Ballebadin and Bendraloche, 1631, 1632; Ballibodan or Kilbodan in Bendaraloch, 1697.² At the present day it is always Baile Bhaodan, never Cill Bhaodan. Near the church, in the side of a ravine to the east of it, and approached by an alley of arching branches, is a well, said to have been called Tobar Bhaodan, and once reputed holy. In Glen Salach, between Loch Etive and Loch Creran, about a mile eastward of the church, there was a stone called Suidhe Bhaodan, now blasted in pieces.³ Baodan is the modern Gaelic form of Baedan, of old a very common name among the Gael of Dalriada and of Ireland, and borne by kings and saints. An old tract on the Scots of Dalriada ⁴ records that a chieftain of Lorn, Fergus Salach, son of Lorn mór, had five sons, one of whom was Baedan 'v tigi leis,' i.e. he was head of five houses. By a curious coincidence, the Ardchattan district is now and has been from time immemorial divided into five principal steads, viz. Achnaba, Ardachy, Inneon, Ardchattan and Inveresragan. Although the matter hardly admits of proof, it is not altogether fanciful to suppose that Baile Bhaodan may have been the headquarters of this Lorn petty headman the son of Fergus Salach, who may have turned cleric. The name was common: the fact that there appear on record Kilbedan in Morvern, 1509, and Kilbadan Ardgour, 1536, is clear proof that it was borne by a saint, whether that saint was the son of Fergus or not. To prevent confusion, it should be mentioned that the Kinelvadon, i.e. Cineal Bhaodan, whose habitat was

¹ Macfarlane's *Geographical Collections*, vol. ii. p. 153 (circa 1650).

² *Origines Parochiales*, vol. ii. p. 148.

³ The same fate has overtaken Suidhe Chrèunan, a block of stone behind Kilchrenan (Cill Chrèunan) on Loch Awe.

⁴ Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, p. 513.

Morvern, appear to have been named after Baedan mac Echach mhic Muredach mhic Loairn mhóir, *i.e.* a great-grandson of the eponymus of Cineal Loairn. The other Baedan, dealt with above, was Baedan mac Fergusa Salaig mhic Loairn mhoir, *i.e.* a grandson of Lorn.

Cosmo Innes in the *Origines Parochiales*, following the *New Statistical Account* of Ardchattan, states that the parish church was dedicated to St. Modan. Dr. Skene in his second volume follows Cosmo Innes in the same error, and Dr. Story following Skene dilates with poetic fervour on the connection of St. Modan with Ardchattan. There is not a scrap of evidence for such connection other than the unsupported statement of the *New Statistical Account*, which is based on a mis-spelling, viz. Bal Mhaodan for Baile Bhaodan. The Modan myth is a figment of a class unfortunately too common. The surprising thing is that Cosmo Innes and Skene should have countenanced it in defiance of the records which they knew so well. But apart from the evidence of the records, Modan is in Irish Muadan, which could by no possibility become Maodan in Scottish Gaelic.

Dùn Bhallaire

This is the name of the lofty rock beside Ledaig, Benderloch, which has been tortured by folk etymologists into Dùn Bhaile an Rìgh. The hoax is fairly old. It was not, however, originated by Pennant, who visited the place on 10th August 1772, and observed 'a range of low hills, at whose western extremity is an entrenchment called Dun-valirè.' The first edition of Anderson's *Guide* (1834) says 'this ridge is called Dun Bhail an Rìgh, the hill of the king's town.' Cosmo Innes in the *Origines Parochiales* incautiously accepts this statement, and further breaks up Pennant's spelling into Dun-val-i-re, apparently to support the fictitious etymology of the *Guide*. The myth thus accredited and advertised was further spread and popularised by Smith in his book on *Loch Etive and the Sons of Uisneach*, and by

others, till it has now become almost an article of faith. At Ledaig one is told that the name is Dun Bhaile an Rìgh. 'Did not the King of Scotland once live close by in Dùn Mac Snitheachan? No, that is not what they really call it among themselves—they call it Dun Bhallaire. But it *ought* to be Dun Bhaile an Rìgh—learned men have said so!' It is hardly necessary to point out that the broad *ll* and the stress accent on the first syllable of *Ballaire* are fatal to this pleasant theory. The *bona fide* present Gaelic pronunciation is exactly that of Pennant's time.

The most probable, if prosaic, explanation is from *ballaire*, a cormorant, 'Cormorant Dùn,' and the name may be compared with Beinn Trileachan, 'Ben of the Oyster-catchers,' on the north side of Loch Etive, about half way between Bunawe and the head of the loch.

Additions (Top. Var. iv.)

- p 72. Loch Dochfour, between Loch Ness and the river Ness, is in Gaelic *an Eadarloch*.
 p. 73. Caistealan nam Fiann, cf. Castella Brigantum, Juvenal, *Sat.*, 14, 196. The sons of Usnech had *fianbhothan*, hunting lodges, in Alba.
 p. 79. With the ending of Alltais, etc. may be compared Holder's restorations *Bebro-vaston, Beverst, Beaver-stead; *Divo-vaston, Diest; *Novio-vaston, Naoust, Newstead. Also Vasta, Vastense, Vastinum.

The Cymric equivalent perhaps appears in Gwas-moric, a place of old near Carlisle (cf. M'Clure—*British Place Names*, pp. 137, 138).

Additional examples of *fas* are:—

Fas-an-darroch, near Dinnet, Deeside, close to an old highway that crossed the Dee.

Allt an Fhaslaghairt (Rob Donn) in Sutherland; *i.e.* fas-longphort.

Fas-caple, Gaelic Fas a' Chapuill, Kirkhill, Inverness-shire; cf. for meaning Marcphasaidh.

- p. 80. Additional examples of *fasadh*:—

Am Fasadh, a level bit of land near where the Allt Mór

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(the Wester Bunloit burn) falls into Loch Ness. It is at the foot of one of the steepest and longest braes on the road between Rùsgaich and Caisteal na Sròine—Urquhart Castle.

Am Fasadh, near Foxhole School, Kiltarlity.

Am Fasadh, at the parish march, west of Bridge of Oich, north side.

Allt an Fhasaidh, on the south side of the Strontian river, with Dail an Fhasaidh by its side.

Fasadh Bradaig, presumably somewhere in Lochaber (Munro's *Gaelic Grammar*, 2nd ed., p. 223):

Rudha an Fhasaidh (on maps Rudh'an Aiseid) in Eigg. This is the only *fasadh* noted in the Western Isles so far. The last five instances are from the Rev. C. M. Robertson.

Correction

p. 74, l. 5 read 'G. fonn doimhneid.'

CLUICH NA CLOINNE—CHILDREN'S GAMES

From the MSS. of the late Rev. Father ALLAN MACDONALD of Eriska. The following were taken down from Mary Ann Morrison, Kilpheder, South Uist, aged eighteen.

DA THRIOLACH DHIAG 'S AN ATHAIR

CHÀIDH iad latha bhuain mona 's 'nuair bha iad a' buain na mona thachair bad meacain riutha. Dh'fhiach e fhein an toiseach air a spionadh 's cha deanadh e 'n gnothuch. Dh'eubh e air Triolach. Rug Triolach air athair. Thoisich iad air a thudadh a null 's air a thudadh a nall, 'g a bhuain mhoineadh ¹ 's 'g a chruaidh cheangal; ge bu dubh an ceann, 's ge bu dearg an com, cha togadh iad cluas a' mheacain bho leacan trom an talmhuinn. Thainig an sin da Thriolach 's rug e air aon Triolach 's rug aon Triolach air athair 's thoisich iad air.

¹ The word can have nothing to do with peats (*mòine*, gen. *mòna*).