Sutherland place-names

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itself for solution; to take every help we can get from every quarter in arriving at our conclusions; and to let the name that our work goes by take care of itself.

SUTHERLAND PLACE-NAMES.

By JOHN MACKAY, As. Inst. C.E.

LOCAL names are usually descriptive, historic, or personal. They are not to be regarded as arbitrary signs. They have a meaning and a history, though, owing to the absence of early documents, the history may be lost and the meaning may not be accurately ascertained.

Physical features, such as the names of mountains and rivers, are frequently the memorials of extinct or ancient races. Not only is this the case in Sutherland, but it is the same all over Europe, where local names are met with bearing witness of races departed or absorbed.

In Sutherland, place-names are chiefly descriptive; a few there are, historic and personal, recording battlefields and the names of commanders that were slain and interred where they fell. The stone and the cairn were raised to commemorate the event and the men. We also find that a religious spirit has actuated the inhabitants in causing places to bear the name of a local hermit or a saint, as we find in other parts of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and France. Even in India a large number of towns take their names from the temple of some deity.

The names of places, like those of the streets of towns, are endowed with extraordinary vitality, frequently surviving the race or the nation that imposed them, and often defying the accidents of conquest and even of time, while furnishing information of an unexpected character. In Sutherland they disclose the existence, extinction, or absorption of four different races and four different languages,—Iberian or Basque, Caledonian Pictish, Norwegian, and Gaelic.

Of the first, few footprints remain, only two river names—the Ilich and the Naver. Of the second, there are several records in river and place names, proving that the Brythonic language had been spoken in that region previous to the commencement of the Christian era. Of the third, there are many all around the west, north, and south coasts, and even for some miles inland, along some of the valley rivers, and on the frontiers adjoining Caithness on the east; while in the interior Gaelic holds undivided dominion over mountain, lake, river and place names, and the preponderance all round.

Sutherland itself may be termed a name of position, given it by the Norsemen: "Sudrland," the land to the South. From the eighth to the twelfth century that portion of Scotland north of the Dornoch Firth and the Oyckell river formed only one province under the name "Catenes." On the expulsion and subjection of the Norsemen by William the Lion, the province of Cateness was divided into three districts. Caithness, east of the Ord and the ridge of mountains extending from it to the Northern Ocean, was left to the Norse Earls of Caithness, while the

northern portion, from the river Halladale to Kylescow on the west, was called Strathnavernia, and became "the territory" of the Mackays, styled in the native language "Duthaich Mhic-Aoidh," granted to their first chief for services rendered to William in subduing the Norsemen, 1196-98. The southern portion, or the Norse Sudrland, was conferred by the same monarch upon Hugh Freskyn, a Morayshire proprietor, who also assisted William in the same expedition. This territorial name was adopted by Freskyn's successors as the family title and surname.

To keep this Paper within reasonable limits, only names supposed to be of Iberian origin, Pictish, and Norwegian can be adverted to.

The river names,—Abona (the Dornoch Firth or the estuary of the Oyckell), Il-a (the Iligh), Nabar-os (Naver)—of Ptolemy's map are the most ancient records we have of geographical names in Sutherland which have come down to us from remote times, and which for eighteen centuries or more have as nearly as possible preserved their primitive forms and pronunciations to this day. The Abona, being so evidently of Pictish origin, will be alluded to hereafter in that class.

The Il-a, or Iligh, has been referred to an Iberian origin, from the Basque word *lli*, water, owing to its resemblance to the first syllable in Il-a. It may be right to show that the term given by Ptolemy has as great similitude to a word in the language then spoken by Northern Caledonians, now generally admitted to have been a dialect of the Brythonic, of which we have still the living remains in Welsh, Cornish, and Armoric; Welsh, *lli*, *llif*, stream, flood; Cornish, *lif*, flood; Armoric, *liv*, flood. The Welsh pronounce *lli*, *llif*, as if written *thli*, *thliv*. The Gaelic equivalent is *lighe*, flood or fulness of water, and pronounced nearly similarly to the Welsh. This river is subject to floods from its extensive watershed, and the numerous lakes round about its sources form reservoirs which give it abundance of water and regulate its flow.

The Nabar-os or Naver is also presumed to be Iberian from the Basque words *nava*, *naba*, high table-land, and *erri*, country—high table-land country; cognate is Navarre, a province of Spain, a Celto-Iberian territory. It may apply to this river as rising in and flowing through high lands.

PICTISH PLACE-NAMES.

Abona—this name is Pictish or Brythonic. Its form in Welsh would be Y-bwn-aw. *Y*, the; *bwn*, head or end; and *aw*, flowing water; the end or head of the flowing water or tide. We have this name still preserved in modern Bon-ar. At the lower end of Loch Ness is Bun-aw, or Bon-aw, with the same signification. Awe, a lake in Assynt; Welsh, *aw*, flowing water; Gaelic, *ath*, ford; a place where water is shallow and flows fast.

Esc—stream, running water; Welsh, *wysg*, stream; Cornish and Armoric, *isge*, stream; Gaelic, *uisge*, stream, water. There are several Eskes in Scotland. The same word appears as river-names in England, as Esk, Exe, Axe, Ax, and Usk. Several hamlets and townships in Sutherland, situated on small streams, are named from their situation, Aber-esc-ag, Over-esc-ag, Shiber-esc-ag; the terminal syllable is a Gaelic diminutive.

Ochtow—a place-name in Strath Oyke, situated on high ground above the river, means high side; Welsh, *Uch*, high, and *tu*, side, *Uchtu*; Gaelic, *Uachdar*, upper part; Welsh and Armoric, *Uchder*, upper part; Cornish, *Uch*, above. Here we have in the far north a remnant of the Caledonian language similar to place-names in Pictavia from the Forth to the Spey, and similar to Welsh, Cornish, and Armoric. The Ochil Hills, Auchterarder, etc., are cases in point.

Pit.—This is a prefix met with throughout Pictland, meaning a small portion of cultivated land, a hollow, frequently a sheltered hollow. In Assynt, where arable land is very scarce, the natives enclose and cultivate patches of land in dry hollows; they call such an enclosure *poot*; Welsh, *put*, a short part or portion, also *peth*, a small part; Cornish, *pyth*, a small part.

Pitfure—*pit*, a small cultivated plot of land; *for*, *fur*; Welsh, *ffor*, *fur*; Cornish, *for*, a way, a road. *Pitfur* would therefore mean a plot of cultivated land near a roadway.

Pittentrail.—Welsh and Cornish, *pit-yn-trai*; *pit*, enclosed land; *yn*, at or near; and *trai*, ebb tide; the enclosed land or habitation at or near the ebb of the tide. W. *trai*; Corn. *traith*; Arm. *traez*; Manx, *traih*; Irish, *traigh*; Gael. *traigh*; shore at ebb tide.

Pitgrudie—*pit* and *grut*; W. *grit*; the gritty or stony enclosure.

Oykell, river, the Eccial of the Norsemen, probably the same as Ochil; Welsh, *Uchel*; Corn. *uchel*; Arm. *uchel*; high, lofty. This river is flanked on both sides by lofty mountains, and possibly it derived its name, like the Naver, from the high lands in which it has its source and through which all its course runs.

Proncy.—This place is situated on a protuberance of a long acclivity facing the Dornoch Firth; near it on a higher site are the ruins of a Pictish tower. In Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany a great number of place-names begin with *bron*, signifying breast, pap, protuberance: *b* and *p* being labials frequently interchange; *b* becomes *p* and *p* becomes *b*. Here we have *p* adopted for *b*, and the *bron* becomes *pron* for the first syllable; the *cy* is the *sedd* of the Welsh, seat; the *sedh* of the Cornish, seat, habitation. *Proncy* may be of the same origin, signifying the habitation on the elevated ground. On the same acclivity are two other Proncies—*Proncy-cruaidh* (G. adj. hard or sterile) and *Proncy-mhan* (Lower Proncy). Old forms: 1360 Proncey, 1448 Pronnsy, 1525 Pronnse, 1536 Spronnse, 1562 Pronsie, 1563 Pronnse, 1566 Prompse, 1616 Pronsie.

Rogart—old form *Roth-gorthe*—purely a Brythonic name, from *rhoth*, circular hollow, and *gorthe* or *gorthir*, high lands, signifying the circular hollow flanked by high lands, perfectly descriptive of the township of Rogart. The old church is situated high up on one of the flanks of these slopes looking down on the circular basin below, once a marsh frequented by herons, now drained and called the “Lon-mor” (big meadow).

Rhi—slope, declivity, is a common prefix in Sutherland local names; W. *rhiw*, pro. *rioo*, slope, declivity. Gaelic, *ruigh*, run, also slope. The affinity of the Welsh word with the Gaelic, the near similarity of pronunciation, the position of the *i* before the *w* in the Welsh, and after

the *u* in the Gaelic word marks the difference in the pronunciation, the one being phonetically *rioo*, the other *rooi*. The Sutherland form, *rhi*, pro. *ree*, would indicate its Brythonic or Pictish descent. On the Ordnance maps of Sutherland this prefix is given as *reidh*, Gaelic, plain, level. This is a mistake for *rhi*, or *ruigh*, slope, declivity. The old form should be adopted, as *Rhi-inn*, slope to the pool; *Rhi-lochan*, slope to the little lake; *Rhi-an-daggie* = *Rhi-an-dach-aidh*, slope to the homestead, etc.

Uidh.—This is a word commonly applied in W. and N. Sutherland to a stretch of a river where the flow is scarcely perceptible, and to that part of a stream which leaves a lake before breaking into a current. Welsh, *gwy*, water gently moving; Cornish, *gy*, water, river: hence the Wye in Hereford and Derby, Surrey, Sussex, and Dorset, all of them rivers smoothly flowing. May we not infer that this too is a remnant of the British or Brythonic language in the far north? It is also the terminal syllable, as *ie* or *y*, in several place-names, as Strath-*uidh*).

NORSE PLACE-NAMES.

Parish of Assynt.—Old forms of this parish name, 1445 Assend, 1509 Assint, 1600 Assyin, 1640 Assynt, modern form. Various definitions of this word have been hazarded. The *Statistical Account*, 1795, states that two brothers in remote times, named Unt and As-unt, contended for the mastery of the district. Unt was slain, and As-unt, proving victorious, obtained the mastery, and thenceforth gave the district his name. Another is from two Gaelic words, *as* (out), and *inn* (in), "out and in," in reference to its sea-coast line being very much out and in. The words certainly represent the native pronunciation of this parish name, but a more probable origin of the term may be assigned to the Norse word, *Asynte*, "seen from afar," as the Norse rovers would see and regard it from the Northern Ocean or the Minch when sailing past the coast, or viewing it from Lewis and Skye. Its mountains towering aloft into the skies would be very conspicuous objects on the horizon, especially the Canisp, Suilven, Glasven, Quinag, and Stack.

Canisp, from *kenna*, well-known, and *ups*, house-roof shape; the well-known roof-shaped mountain; *isp* is simply a change in the position of *s* to ease pronunciation.

Kirkaig—church, from *Kirkja*; here was a church founded by the Culdee monk Maolrubha, a disciple of Columba, destroyed by the Norse pirates in the eighth century.

Traligill—the devil's ravine; from *träll*, a fiend, and *gil*, ravine. This ravine is near Inch-na-damph. The depth and narrowness of it excludes the light; the stream running through disappears in the lime-stone caverns, and issues out in some places to be lost to view again in others. The Norsemen, although very brave, were very superstitious, believing in evil spirits, goddesses and gods. The name they gave this ravine represents their opinion of it.

Cleit.—G. rugged height; N. *klettr*, rock; Arm. *clet*, rock. This rugged, rocky island stands out in the sea from Lochinver, and is 120 feet high.

In studying Icelandic it is interesting to find many words very similar to the Gaelic of N.W. Sutherland, leading to the inference that they were introduced into Icelandic literature from that region. From the dissertation of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* it might be inferred that, at least, parts of Iceland had been colonised by the N.W. inhabitants of Scotland when the Druids were persecuted and probably expelled after the diffusion of Christianity, or that Norsemen, who had lived in Assynt and districts round about it, had returned to Iceland and Norway, carrying with them tales, legends, and terms peculiar to the N.W. of Scotland. The Norse pirates were given to capturing women and carrying them home.

Soyea.—An island in the bay of Lochinver, forming a breakwater to it, 100 feet high; from *sae*, sea, and *ey*, isle; the sea isle.

Crona.—The three isles, from *threunn*, triple, and *ey*, isle; *threunn-ey*, throna, eventually pronounced Crona.

Oldany.—The old island, from *aldinn*, old, and *ey*, isle, from being the largest in size on the coast. In the English Channel we have Alderney, old island; Guernsey, rugged island; Jersey, grassy island; Sark (Sercque), temple isle; Herm, serpent isle.

Rafn.—A place where sea-weed accumulates.

PARISH OF EDDRACHILIS.

Kylestrome—compound word; G. Kyle, *caolas*, strait; *strom*, N. from *stromr*, stream, in reference to the rapidity of the water rushing in and out through the strait at the flow and ebb tides.

Beinn Strome—takes its name from its proximity to the strait.

Laxford—Salmon Firth; from *lax*, salmon; and *fjord*, firth; as celebrated now for salmon as the Norsemen found it.

Sandwood—sandy lake, from *sandr*, sand; and *vatn*, fresh water. The lake gives the place adjoining its name.

Gisgil—roaring ravine; from *gjosa*, gushing, noisy; and *gil*, ravine.

Handa—the sandstone island; from the oblique case of *sandr*, sandstone; and *ey*, island.

Scourie—a place where birds resort to; from *skorrie*, bird; and *ey*, island; as Chels-ea, Cherts-ey.

PARISH OF DURNES.

Durness, *dyr-nes*—the deer promontory; from *dyr*, deer; *nes*, promontory.

Keol-dale—the hinds-dale; from *kollu*, hind, or hornless deer; and *dalb*, dale. The genius of the Norse or Scandinavian language puts the substantive word last, the adjectival word first, while the Gaelic puts the adjectival word last and the substantival first, as in Dal-more, Dal-beag.

Parph—a turning away, in reference to a promontory; the land

receding in rounding it, from Hvarf, Cape Wrath. Cape Farewell in Greenland was named by the Norse navigators *Hvarfs-gnipa*, meaning the peak of the receding land.

Hope, N. Hop—a lake of fresh water into which the sea comes in at high tides and goes out at the ebb. This lake is only a few feet above sea-level. The lake gives its name to the adjoining noble mountain.

Erribol—an arm of the sea running eleven miles inland; from *eyrri*, gravelly, shingly banks; and *böl*, habitation, hamlet, township; the township on the shingly banks; *böl* has the same signification as the Gaelic *baile, bal*.

Arn-bol—the eagle township; from *arnar*, belonging to an eagle, and *böl*.

A-Chleit—the rugged rocky height, in Bal-na-cill bay, G. and N.

I-Ghoil—*I, ey*, isle; *ghoil*, oblique case of *goil* (G.), boiling; the isle of the boiling, in reference to the boiling of the waves meeting around it from different directions.

Hoan—the plant island; from *hvoan*, the plant angelica, esteemed by the Norsemen for flavouring their ale.

Choarie—corruption of the Norse word *Kviar-ey*, the fold island; cattle were wont to be swum to this isle for keep and protection. It grows excellent grass, being entirely composed of limestone. It is only a score yards from shore. It is sometimes called in modern maps, An-coir-eilean; this should be An-curra-eilean, the heron isle.

Far-out Head—corruption of the N. word *forad*, a dangerous place or precipice.

Heilim, oblique of *hölmr*—an islet or peninsula in a river, lake, or bay; here it is a very small peninsula in Loch Erribol.

Sango-mor, Sango-beag—sandy bay, from *sandr*, sand; and *gjá, geo*, creek; *mor* and *beag* are Gaelic adjectives.

Musal—mossy land, from *mosi*, moss; and *fial* or *fell*, rough land; *mosi-fell*, moss-fell. Musal is in Strathmore, or anciently Strath-Urradal, so named from a Norse commander, said to be one of Haco's captains, who was there slain with several of his men when on a plundering expedition on the return of the fleet from Largs in the autumn of 1263.

The Parish of Tongue—from *tunga*, a spit of land jutting out into the bay in the shape of a tongue. The natives to this day pronounce this word, like the Norsemen, phonetically—*toong-a*.

Borgie—a fort; from *borg*, a fort.

Lamigo—the lamb's creek; from *lamb*, lamb; and *gjá, geo*, creek.

Blandy—place of meeting; from *blanda*, meeting.

Coldbacky—cold ridge; from *kaldr*, cold; *bakki*, ridge.

Conasaid—the lady's residence; from *kvenna* and *sida*.

Falside—the fell or hill, residence; from *fial*, fell; and *sida*.

Hysbackie—the house-back; from *husa-bakki*.

Kirkiboll—church township, *kirkju-böl*.

Melness—benty grass promontory; from *melr*, benty grass, and *nes*, promontory; so it is to this day, no change, no alteration, for seven centuries.

Modsary—muddy moorland ; from *moda-seyra*.

Ribigill—spelled in ancient charters *Riga-bol*, *Rege-bol*; from *ryggjar-böl*, the lady's house and farm. In its modern form the letters *b* and *g* have been transposed, not an unusual circumstance, to favour pronunciation.

Scrabster—outlying homestead ; from *skara-böl-stadr*.

Skerray—isolated rock in the sea, covered at high tides ; *skerja*.

Skinnid—bleached, withered ; in reference to the grass grown on it ; from *skinni*. In charters this name is written *Sgianaid*, phonetically.

Scullomie—a court or place or hall in which rents, fines, rates, taxes, or dues were wont to be paid ; from *skulda-mot*, *skulda-domr*.

Slettel—flat, smooth land ; from *slett lendi*, flat land.

Talmine—toll free ; from *tollr*, toll, and *minnr*, less or free. Contracted to *Talminn*, *Talmine* ; the terminal *r* changed to *e* for Gaelic euphony.

Torrisdale—Thor's dale, the *dal* of Thor.

PARISH OF FARR.

Boursay—the wall isle ; from *bjarr*, wall, and *ey*, isle, in reference to its perpendicular sides. It is quite close to the mainland. There is a *Birsay* in Orkney.

Baligil—the township near the ravine ; *böligil*.

Dal-langal—long meadow. Here is a confusion. *Dal* is G. meadow ; *langal* is a G. contraction of N. *langa-dalr*, long dale. From both languages we have tautology in *Dal-langdal*. The Norsemen called the dale *Langdale* ; the natives, in retaking possession on the expulsion of the Norsemen, named it after their own way from the Norse, *Dal-langdal*. The same thing occurs in *Strath-Halla-dale*.

Dal-harald—This place-name is G., and was so named by the natives to commemorate the battle fought upon this *Dal* in 1196, when Harald Maddadson, Earl of Caithness and Sutherland, was severely defeated by Reginald of the Isles, son of the redoubtable Somerled, ancestor of the MacDonalds. The field of battle is on the east or right bank of the Naver, two miles below Lochnaver. It was a fair field for the contest of heroes. Judging from the numerous tumuli and cairns still to be seen on this field of strife, the contest was one of great severity and slaughter. A pillar of stone called "*Clach-an-righ*" commemorates the victory and Harald's position in the battle, and several smaller ones, reared, no doubt, where commanders fought, fell, and were interred.

Kirtomy—place of thin scrub or brushwood ; from *kjor*, copse-wood, and *tomr*, valueless.

Leac-biurn—G. and N. compound word ; *leac*, G. flagstone ; *Biurn*, the name of a Norse noble buried where he fell after the battle of Dalharald. His name being Björn, this place-name should be *Leac-Björn*.

Langdale—long dale ; from *langa*, *langi*, long, and *dalr*.

Mudale—moorland dale ; from *mosa*, moorland, and *dalr*.

Skail—a hall, or a better than ordinary dwelling, from *Skali*, hall ; a pretty place in Strathnaver. Here the "*Sagairt Ruadh*" (red priest) officiated in his day. He was regarded as a prophet.

Swordley—place of mowing grass; from *swordr*, sward, and *lja*, mown grass.

Syre—sour or swampy land; from *saur*, swampy land.

Armadales—the bay dale; from *armor*, an arm of the sea or bay, and *dalr*, dale.

PARISH OF REAY.

Bighouse—a barley or bigg store in Norse times; *bigg hus*. In Strath-Halla-dale there are two places of this name, Lower and Upper Bighouse.

Forsinard—N. and G. *fors*, N. torrent, *an airde*, G., in the height; in contra-distinction to

Forsinain—*forsamhan*, the torrent below, or lower torrent.

Melvich—benty grass bay; from *melr*, benty grass, and *vik*, bay.

Port Skerra—port of the hidden rocks; from *port*, opening, and *skerja*, isolated rocks in the sea, hidden at high tides.

PARISH OF KILDONAN.

Rimistal—from Raumsdalr in Norway, a dale and district in that country.

Borroboll—barley township; from *barr*, barley, and *böl*.

Dalial—small meadow; from *daela*, small dale.

Duible—bog township; from *dy*, bog, and *böl*. Old forms, Daypoll, Doweboll, Dweboll.

Eldrable—the beacon township; from *eldr*, beacon, and *böl*. The adjoining beacon mountain gives its name to the township.

Gearsary—pasture upon which cattle are grazed at so much per head.

Grodsary—pasture round ruined buildings.

Helmsdale—terrace at the mouth of the dale; from *hjalli*, terrace at a mountain foot, *munn*, mouth, and *dalr*, dale. N. form, Hjalmundal.

Learable—muddy township; from *leir*, muddy, and *böl*.

Lerwick—muddy bay.

Marril—farm or township near the sea. N. form, Marbaeli, contracted in pronunciation to Marril.

Suisgill—the noisy ravine; from *suis*, roaring like the sea, and *gil*, ravine.

Ulbster—Ull-bol-stadr, the homestead of Ulli.

PARISH OF LOTH.

This parish name is of great antiquity. The tribe that inhabited the district is named "Logi" by Ptolemy. The inhabitants are called by their neighbours "Lo-aich," as those dwelling in Helmsdale are called "Il-aich." The most remarkable feature in the parish is its principal river, which falls 1500 feet in its short course of six miles. When in flood it flows with amazing rapidity; hence it would deserve the Gaelic appellation of *luath*, swift.

Slet-dale—small dale or glen; from *slet*, small, and *dalr*.

Rimisdale—Raumsdalr; province and dale in Norway, signifying “dale of giants.”

PARISH OF CLYNE—has no place-name of Norse origin.

PARISH OF GOLSPIE.

Backies—N. *bakki*, eminence, ridge, bank. This township is situated on a terrace 500 feet above sea-level, overlooking the Golspie river.

Golspie—1570, old form Gospye, 1581 Golspe, 1682 Golspie, its present form; native pronunciation, Goysbie, Goilsbie. The name is evidently of Norse origin, from *geil*, *gil*, narrow valley, and *bu* or *by*, village—village at the narrow glen.

Uppat—high part, pronounced Oopait; from *upp*, high, and *att*, quarter or part.

Unes—*u-nes*, not a promontory. It refers to the land between Golspie and Littleferry. The form of this land is more like a peninsula than a promontory; from *u*, a negative prefix, and *nes*, promontory.

ROGART PARISH.

Fleet river—from *fljot*, estuary; has the Latin signification of *ostium*. Compare the Fleets in Kent and Middlesex.

[LAIRG PARISH—has no Norse place-names.

CRIECH PARISH.

Migdale—*myg-dalr*, moist dale.

Ospisdale—Ospis, name of a Norse commander slain and interred here. An obelisk by the roadside records the event.

Spinningdale—*spenja-dalr*, attractive dale.

PARISH OF DORNOCH.

Cyderhall—corruption of *sudrha'*, the south hall, 1222-45. *Siwardhoch* (*Sigurd-hangr*)—Siward's grave. Here the redoubtable Sigurd Eysteinson, who subdued Caithness, Sutherland, and parts of Ross (875), was interred, and a great cairn raised over his grave. Native pronunciation, Shee-er-a, 1557, Sytheva.

Embo—native pronunciation, Erribol; shingly banks.

Skelbo—native pronunciation, Skerribol, 1222-45 Scelleboll, 1529 Skailbo; from *skerja*, rock in the sea, and *böl*, the township near the sea rock. Here was a Norse castle or fortress, situated quite close to south shore of the Fleet estuary, near the present Littleferry, which, after the expulsion of the Norsemen (1196-8), became the property of Hugh Freskyn and his successors, and of the Duffus family, a junior branch. The Norsemen were great in castle-building wherever they went, in Normandy, Sicily, England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, to protect

themselves from the native population, as we are now doing in Matabeleland.

Skibo—1222-45 Sceitheboll, 1275 Schytheboll, 1548 Skebo; from *skipa*, ship, and *böl*. From the Dornoch Firth runs a narrow bay right up to Skibo Castle. Into this arm of the sea the Norse rovers came in their long galleys, and at Skibo built a fort, which gradually extended to a castle with a deep moat all round it. Hugh Freskyn granted this castle, with several davachs of land, to Bishop Gilbert for his residence, and it continued to be the residence in Sutherland of the bishops of the diocese for several centuries.

GEOGRAPHICAL EDUCATION.

By A. J. HERBERTSON, F.R.S.E., F.R.G.S.

(Continued from p. 422.)

II. THE USE OF MAPS IN EDUCATION.

It is not enough to teach a child to see what is around him. He should also be trained to express the results of his observations, so that others may understand them. Of course this can be done by verbal accounts of them and records of such descriptions. But geographers have long ceased to be contented with mere verbal descriptions, indispensable as these are. There are many symbols much more comprehensive and direct in meaning than our alphabetical ones. Even the ideographs we commonly use, such as the Arabic numerals, are not so readily intelligible as diagrams whose proportions are relative to the values of these numerals. For instance, it is much more graphic to compare different distances by drawing lines and making the length of each proportional to a distance, than to express this difference in arithmetical symbols. The proportion between the length of the line and the actual distance is called the *scale* of the drawing. This method of drawing to scale gives exceptionally valuable results when applied to geographical description. By taking note of directions and making various combinations of lines drawn on the same scale, the relative positions of places are fixed, and what we call a plan is produced. A map may be regarded as an elaborated plan.

These diagrams or maps are the most evolved form of geographical record, and are of all degrees of complexity. They cannot be read without any instruction, as many people seem to imagine. It is just as absurd to expect a child, without any training, to decipher the hieroglyphs on some old Egyptian monument, or a page of print, as it is to expect him to understand an ordinary political map at first sight. The child must begin with the simplest plans and gradually proceed to the use of maps of increasing complexity.

Professor de Lapparent has recently delivered a most instructive address on the "Art of Map Reading," which every teacher should