

## THE PLACE-NAMES ON AND AROUND LOCHNAGAR.

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THE following is a short survey of the Lochnagar area from the point of view of nomenclature. It is the outcome of a check-up made in recent years with a view to finding out the most authentic pronunciations of the names of the area as now in use. Most of the names here given will be found upon the 6-inch Ordnance Map; but with many of them some indication of the spoken sound may be useful, and nearly all call for a passing remark as to meaning or otherwise. In the notes which follow, the spoken sound is given with the stressed syllable printed in capitals (*e.g.*, LOCHNAGAR); "ch" is as in "loch," "y" as in "yet." The meanings given are those which are reasonably certain. For the sounds as here set down I am indebted to various informants, particularly to Mr James Abercrombie, Crathie, and Mr John Lamond, Braemar.

As to the name Lochnagar itself, I am unable to add anything to what previous writers have recorded. Lochnagar is presumed to have originally applied to the loch in the big corrie. It is not known when precisely it came to be applied to the hill. The syllable "gar" is in any case obscure, being capable of a number of different conjectural explanations, none of them satisfactory. It will be convenient to take the Lochnagar area in sections.

THE DIRECT ROUTE.—The path goes up the side of Allt na Giubhsaich (Alt-na-gyoosich: "burn of the fir wood"). On the right is Conachcraig, a considerable hill (ConnachCREK: no meaning). At the top of the burn is a gully called Clais Rathadan (Clash RATTEN or ROTTEN: "rat's gully"). Where the ascent of Lochnagar proper begins you have, down on the right, Coire na Ciche, where the Gelder has its source (CornaKEECH: "corrie of the



pap"). In front is the Muckle Pap (*Cioch mhor*: KEECH-vore). The Little Pap (*Cioch bheag*: KEECH-vek) is a mile to the south. On your left hand as you go up the Ladder is the slope on which is the Cuidhe Crom (COO-ie croom: "crooked snow-wreath"). The big snow-wreath which gives its name here is very conspicuous in spring, and generally lasts till the month of June. It is always nearly the same in shape, a sort of elongated oval with a humped back; being visible from many parts of Deeside, this wreath was formerly taken as an index of the lateness of the spring or otherwise. Near the summit you pass the top of the Black Spout, probably a translation of an original Sput Dubh.

THE SUMMIT.—The summit peak of Lochnagar is the Ca Carn. The Gaelic systematic spelling would be Cà Càrn; both words are stressed about equally. Half a mile to the north and lower down is the Ca Carn Beag, or Little Ca Carn. The Ordnance maps have Cac Carn Beag, which is an unjustified form; for one thing, Cac is not the sound, and for another, it is a most unlikely word to occur here. The correct name, as said, is the Ca Carn. It seems to be now only known to a limited number of people, and it would be well if climbers would keep it in use and not allow it to be distorted by the map form. No clear meaning can be given to Ca Carn. The first word sounds like *cadha*, which means "a way over a hill range"; but as there is no way over here that meaning scarcely fits.

LOCHNAGAR TO BRAEMAR.—You pass near the Queen's Well. This name dates from Victorian times. An older name recorded is Fuaran nam Balgair, "well of the foxes." For the other Fox's Well at the foot of the Ladder no Gaelic is known. On the left is the plateau, the White Mounth (*Mon-gheall*: MON-YALL, with same meaning). On the right are the cliffs overlooking Loch nan Eun (Loch-nan-YANE: "loch of the birds"; this is the same name as with the other Loch nan Eun at the head of Glen Ey). Farther over is the Sandy Loch. There are two small pools beside Loch nan Eun called by Maconochie, Lochan na Feadaige and Lochan an Tarmachain ("little loch of the plover,



ptarmigan"); but these names seem to be not known now. Prominent on the right is the well-known peak called the *Stuie*, also spelt *Stuic*. This name, much used by climbers, is good enough Gaelic; *stùc*, or sometimes *studadh*, describes such a peak. But the local people do not use it; they always call that peak the *Stob* of Loch nan Eun. The path descends and crosses a headwater of the *Muick*, *Allt na dà Craobh Bheithe* on O.S. ("burn of the two birch trees"), a name apparently unknown now. On the right are Little *Cairn Taggart* and Big *Cairn Taggart* (*Carn an t-Sagairt*, *CARN DAGGARTSH*, *Bek and More*: "little and big cairn of the priest"). After that the path goes down the side of *Creag an Loch* (*CraiganLOCH*: "craig of the loch") to *Loch Callater*.

**THE GLENMUICK SIDE.**—Going west from *Allt na Giubhsaich*, a sharpish hill on the right is the *Strone* (*sròn*: "a nose," common in the Highlands for any nose-like hill). Beyond it a stream coming down into *Loch Muick* is the *Allt Dearg* (*Allt DSHERRIG*: "red burn"). This burn drains an area called the *Moss of Monelpie* (*MONELLPIC*: the word *Monelpie* would itself mean the "moss of Elpie," whatever the latter word means). A mile farther on, the *Glassalt*, a much bigger burn, comes off *Lochnagar*, its source being near the summit (*GLASSALT*: "green burn," no doubt from the relative greenness of its banks). The cliffs above the *Glassalt Shiel* are *Creag na Sithinn* (*CREKNASHEEN*: "craig of the venison," but the name is not quite clear). Above *Loch Muick* the main stream is the *Dubh Loch Burn*, or *Allt an Dubh Loch*. It will be noticed that with *Dubh Loch*, as with *Glas Allt* and some other names here and elsewhere, the adjective comes before the noun. This may indicate that such names are of some antiquity; the modern language, if making such names afresh, would turn them the other way—*Loch Dubh*, *Allt Glas*. A mile west of the *Glassalt* the *Loch Buidhe Burn* comes off the *White Mounth*. It has its name from the small *Loch Buidhe* (*Loch Boo-ie*: "yellow loch"). Below that loch there is a waterfall called the *Stulan* (*STVOOLAN*, diminutive of *steall*, "a jet of water"). A couple of miles



west is Coire Boidheach (Cor-boyach: "bonnie corrie"), with a stream in it which rises near the Stuie and runs towards the Dubh Loch.

GLENMUICK TO CRATHIE.—The modern road is an estate one; the old road, a disused track, is not far from it and slightly more direct. From Inchnabobart you go up the side of Allt Mhaide (Allt-vatsh or vetsh: "burn of the stick"; the interpretation is uncertain, this name occurring in Glen Cluny and elsewhere). On the left is Conachraig, the north top of which has some rocks upon it called Caisteal na Caillich (Kastyelna-kalyich: "witch's castle"). Near the watershed between Muick and Girnock a large boulder is beside the road. This is the Muckle Steen of Badhabber. The Moss of Badhabber (on map, Moine Bad a' Chabair: "moss of the clump of the pole") is the moss north of that on the upper Girnock. The ridge between there and the Gelder has the following features: Conachraig, Little Conachraig, Coire an t-Slugain (Cornlookan: "corrie of the gully"), Coire na h-Oisinn (Cornahoshin: "corrie of the corner"), Craigengall ("craig of the lowlander"). Minor heights to the north terminate in Craig Gowan, near Balmoral. On the south side of Craig Gowan is the Dubh-Chlais (Doohlash: "dark ravine"), a name now inapplicable, the trees having been cut; through it a road goes towards the Gelder.

BALMORAL AND BALLOCHBUIE.—Looking across the Dee from the heights north of the Inver a series of hills stretches up towards Lochnagar. That area is the Balmoral Forest. The woods beside the river are Garmaddie (supposedly *Garadh-madaidh*: "wolf's den"). Behind that are Craig Doin (Craig Dine) and the Ripe, neither of which names have any known meaning. The Ordnance Survey has "Ripe Hill," with its common habit of putting the word "hill" after names; but this hill is called simply the Ripe. Beyond these are Druim Odhar (Drumower: "greyridge") and Cnapan Nathraichean (Cnapan-naerihen: "adders' top"), with Carn Fiaclach (Carn feeklech: "toothed cairn"). Next, farther back, are Craig Liath (Creklee-a: "grey craig") and Meall Tionail (Melt-



SHEENel, meaning uncertain, but literally a "gathering hill"). The hill close to Lochnagar is Meall Coire na Saobhaidhe on the map, but is called simply Coire na Saobhaidhe (Corn-sivvie: "corrie of the fox's den"). In Ballochbuie the Garrawalt (GARRawalt: "rough burn") collects the waters of the Blackshiel Burn, the Burn of Loch nan Eun, and the Feindallacher (Fane-DALLacher). The latter is *Féith an t-Salachair*: "burn of the muddy place." *Féith* (fae) is a mossy burn, as distinguished from *allt*, an ordinary burn. A branch of the Feindallacher comes down from what are called the Corrie Doos (Coireachan Dubh: "black corries") on Little Cairn Taggart.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the names recorded on the maps for the Lochnagar area are, with a few exceptions, still known, and are pronounced locally in a way that does not differ materially from the original Gaelic sound of them. It appears that one important correction of the map names should be made, which is that the summit of Lochnagar should be called the Ca Carn, the lesser top to the north being the Ca Carn Beag. This gets rid of the Cac Carn Beag of the O.S. maps, which has for long been questioned as a dubious form. Another item, which is more of the nature of a note than of a correction, is that the peak called the Stuie (Stuic on revised O.S.) is locally called the Stob of Loch nan Eun. In conclusion, mention may be made of two names that are extinct. In the Invercauld records there is reference to a Forest of Brecach, or Braco, located about the south side of the two Cairns Taggart. This name is not on any map and is unknown to my informants. Then there is "Bin Chichins," which Gordon of Straloch's map (1654) puts about where the White Mounth should be, and which looks like a misplacement by that excellent map-maker. That name, which has apparently been out of use for centuries, is definitely applied by other old writers to the main Grampian range to the south.