

## REVIEWS

through the technicalities. 'What is a Scattald?' and 'Rents from the Sea' are more immediately accessible, and the short notes explain problematic terminology clearly and succinctly. Furthermore, although the contents of this book originated as discrete articles, they are sensibly arranged so that the book works well as a whole, rather than simply a collection of parts, and the theme of Shetland's unique local responses to widespread economic problems runs clearly throughout the book. All in all, I would highly recommend *Toons and Tenants* to anyone with an interest in the history of Shetland's distinctive economy and society.

*Gareth Williams*

Ian A. Fraser

*The Place-Names of Arran*

The Arran Society of Glasgow.  
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Ian Fraser is well known to members of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, both as a former President of the Society and as someone who has shared his knowledge of the place-names of Scotland at many annual and day conferences of the Society. Those who have heard Ian speak at conferences will recognise the same easy mastery of his subject in this book, the style of which echoes his relaxed oral delivery, while the content shows his understanding of the Arran people and the place-names which they use daily.

The author's long-standing interest in Arran place-names and in the wider Scottish place-name scene comes to fruition very effectively in this book, which is well organised and user-friendly. Part I of the book is an interesting introduction where the history of language in Arran and its use in the creation of a variety of Arran place-names is thoroughly explored. Following the introduction is Part II which is divided into three sections where the individual place-names are listed alphabetically under the headings: Settlement Names; Topographic Names; Field Names and Other Minor Names. Six-figure map references locate the names precisely and an indication of the pronunciation of individual

informants is given when available. Eighteen informants from various parts of the island were recorded by W. F. H. Nicolaisen in the early 1960s and it is good that he was able to record Arran Gaelic at that time when it was already dying out and to preserve it in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies where it can be tapped by place-name researchers such as Ian Fraser.

There are many fascinating individual settlement and topographical place-names on Arran which reward the researcher's close scrutiny and Fraser has collected numerous early forms to substantiate his interpretation of complicated names such as Lamlash. The language of Arran place-names is not invariably Gaelic and the resultant complications can be seen in names such as Lochranza for which Fraser suggests a hybrid Gaelic/Norse etymology. There is also the more recent linguistic complication of incoming Scottish English to be dealt with and many names such as Lambhill are direct translations from an earlier Gaelic name, Torr nan Uan. One of my personal favourites is Slidery Water which appears on Blaeu's 1654 map as Avon Sckoradel and it perfectly illustrates the difficulties of identification facing the place-name researcher on Arran. Early sources are intermittent, although Ian Fraser has been thorough in his search for documentation, and it is often difficult to bridge the linguistic gap between the centuries without reliable early forms.

Place-names included in the section entitled 'Field Names and Other Minor Names' are, not

surprisingly, mostly in Arran Gaelic with the occasional English name such as Doctor's Park speaking mute volumes about social distinction. Another English name – The Piper's Field – is associated with the commonly occurring superstitious tale about the pipes being heard before a death. The informant ends with the equally common conclusion: 'Can't say I ever heard it myself...' Ian Fraser's gentle sense of humour is evident in the background.

The book draws to a conclusion with Part III which usefully contains an Index of Elements and a Bibliography. The inhabitants of Arran must be delighted by the publication of this detailed study of the place-names of their island and the book will also be essential reading for all visitors to the island, as well as all those with an academic interest in Scottish place-names. This will please Ian Fraser who, in his years of work in the Scottish Place-Name Survey, has always stressed the importance of name-users and the need to forge a link between academic researchers and their public.

*Doreen J. Waugh*