

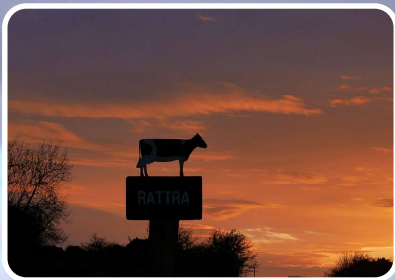
# FINDING FIELD-NAMES IN BORGUE 1

Cuddlecosy, Double Drum, Hill of Health, Cushie Wood, Rashy, Hac Noose, Doonyeard and Tank Field - these names have been passed down by generations of farmers. Although the meaning has sometimes been lost, a little investigation can tell us about how people in the past viewed the place they farmed. Field-names can help us understand changes in the countryside, past farming practices and notable wildlife or landscape features.

Fields enclosed by drystone dykes, hedges or post and wire fences are a familiar part of our countryside. They are an integral part of the modern agricultural landscape but are a relatively recent phenomenon on land that has been farmed for thousands of years.

When fields were created, they were given names in a very practical way to identify them for the farmer and farm labourers. The names were relevant at the time that the field was christened with a reference to one of many elements, perhaps its size or shape, the ground conditions or wildlife, where it was in relation to the farm house or a prominent landmark. Sometimes an ancient place-name description derived from a language used in the past was adopted for the new field. Many of these names were never written down so that the names used today are the result of a largely oral tradition. The original name may have stuck to the field or evolved and changed over many years so that it becomes hard to decipher the meaning.

300 years ago the landscape was scattered with small clachans or fermtouns, usually collections of three or four dwellings, where the inhabitants farmed the surrounding open countryside. Strips of land close to the fermtoun were cultivated while cattle and sheep were herded to prevent them straying too far or eating the crops. By the 1750s the way the land was farmed began to change as landowners saw the benefits of removing tenants of fermtouns and replacing them with a single leasehold tenant with a new farmstead consisting of a farmhouse, barns and stables. The landowner usually enclosed the farm with a boundary or march dyke and the new tenant was expected to subdivide the land into fields. While some fields retain names that have remained current for hundreds of years, the boundaries of most, and the names of many, reflect changing agricultural practices from the eighteenth century onward.



A farm, field and bridge are named Ratra, a word derived from the ancient Brittonic language for the main farm of a chieftain's estate.

As part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund Great Place Scheme the PLACE in the Biosphere project the Borgue Field Name project has successfully combined traditional survey and research techniques with modern media to help tell the story of the countryside and create resources for future generations to use.

