

**THE PLACE NAMES
OF ELGINSHIRE.
PP.1-205**

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The Place Names of Elginshire. pp.1-205 by D. Matheson

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D. MATHESON

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ELGIN.



The Royal Burgh of Elgin bears Argent, Sanctus Egidius habited in his and myrtred holding in his dexter hand a pastoral staff and in his left hand a book all proper : supported by two angels proper winged or volant upwards : motto " Sic itur ad astra " upon ane compartment suitable to a Burgh Roy: their colours red and white : recorded in terms of an interlocutor of Lyon Arms of 28th November, 1888, and agreeably to the blazon of James Ske Depute of Date 9th October, 1678.

St. Egidius, or Giles, was an abbot of the seventh century, and an Af birth. He is said to have migrated to France, and to have spent several y life in the wild desert near the mouth of the Rhone, and subsequently in the diocese of Nismes, where the hunted animal with the arrow in its le came up to him for refuge. St. Egidius died in the beginning of the eight and his remains were removed to Toulouse, where they were deposited in of St. Saturnius.

THE PLACE NAMES
OF
ELGINSHIRE.

BY
D. MATHESON, F.E.I.S.,

Late Headmaster Anderson's Institution, Elgin.

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DEDICATION.

This work is respectfully dedicated to ANDREW CARNEGIE, LL.D., Esquire of Skibo, as a small but sincere recognition and esteem of his noble work towards the cause of education in Scotland, of his munificence to the Scotch Universities, and the spread of knowledge throughout the country, with the fervent hope that he may be long spared to see the seeds he has so generously sown grow more and more into full fruition. •

D. M.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE aborigines of Scotland were clans of the same Gaelic origin as those who in early ages settled in England, and at the time of the Roman invasion under Agricola, they were in a similar condition to those of England. Scotland, from the Tweed and Eden on the south, to the Pentland Firth on the north, was divided among twenty-one tribes. Those on the east coast, owing to the greater fertility of the soil and drier climate, were more numerous and powerful than those on the west coast; but all of them, in accordance with Celtic customs, were independent of one another, and only co-operated under pressure of outward danger. Of these, the *Vacomagi* occupied the country from the Deveron on the east to the Beaully river on the west, comprehending Banffshire, Elginshire, Nairnshire, and the eastern portion of Inverness-shire, or the territories on the south of the Moray Firth or *Sinus Vararis* of the Romans. Their towns were:—*Ptoroton*, the *Alata Castra* of Ptolemy, now Burghead; *Tuessis*—Old Fochabers on the Spey; and *Tamia*, supposed to be Cullen; and *Banatia*, supposed to be Banff. The *Vacomagi* were so denominated because they occupied these shores, from the old British word, *Vac*, a bay or firth—a word which runs through all the branches of the Aryan languages: Sanscrit, *वेषा*; Greek, *oikos*;

Polish, *wies*; Irish, *fich*; Welsh, *quic*; Gaelic, *uig*; and also the British word, *magh*, a plain. This is a root of great antiquity, and in the Latinised form, *magus*, is frequently used in the ancient place names of Gaul, as *Caesar-o-magus*, *Drus-o-magus*, *Novi-o-magus*, and *Rigio-magus*.

These tribes appear to have been little raised, at the time when history introduces them to our notice, above the condition of savages, but they were brave, alert, and had remarkable powers of enduring fatigue, cold, and famine, and Dio tells us they were literal democrats, acting as clans, and adopting any public measure only by common consent. Their vessels consisted of *currachs* or *coracles*—boats made of twigs and covered with skins. Thus they were until the year 140 A.D., when Lollius Urbicus was deputed to reduce them to obedience to Rome. It is said he reduced the country up to the Beaulieu Firth, the district from which southward to the Wall of Antoninus he called *Vespasiana*. In the year 306, while still under Roman influence, we find a new native name other than Britons given to the inhabitants of Scotland. Irish history informs us that the "Picts" were driven out of that country by the brave Milesians, when they took ships to *Cruith-an-tuath*, the old name for Scotland, and that their leader, Cathluan, obtained the sovereignty of the country, and was the first monarch of a long line of seventy kings. We can only accept this as a mere conjecture, as there is little doubt that the Picts were no other than a part of the race of ancient Caledonians under another name. Little is known of Pictish history for more than a hundred years after the Romans finally surrendered Britain, further than that some old chronicles give a list of the Pictish kings. By the accession of Bredi, the thirteenth king, in 586, to the Pictish throne, some light is let in on the darkness which