

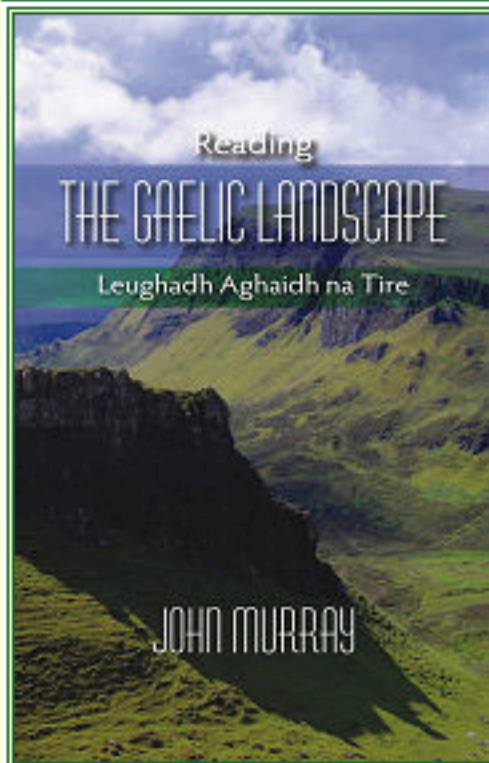
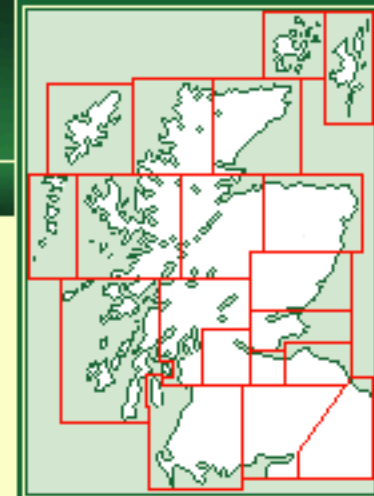


# Reading the Gaelic Landscape

Leughadh Aghaidh Na Tire by John Murray

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"Reading the Gaelic Landscape: Leughadh Aghaidh Na Tire" by John Murray is a remarkable book, and one that should be owned and consulted by everyone who had ever looked at a map of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and wondered what lies beneath the surface of the fascinating, but, to English speakers, incomprehensible and usually unpronounceable, [Gaelic](#) names.

Although the decline in the use of [Gaelic](#) as a language has slowed over the past 15 years, the level remains low and it is likely that most travellers to Scotland will never hear the language spoken. What this means in practice is that the names attaching to just about every feature of the landscape across the Highlands and Islands are the most commonly encountered reminder of a language that is central to the culture and the history of a large part of Scotland. And so long as those names remain, as we say above, "incomprehensible and usually unpronounceable", access is denied both to the depth of history and to the wealth of the culture they reflect.

That is where this book comes in. There have been efforts in the past to explain the origins and meanings of [Gaelic](#) place names, usually published by the Ordnance Survey or by the authors of books about mountains. But John Murray's book is unique in synthesising everything that has gone before and adding a great deal that is new in an attempt to allow those unfamiliar with the language a genuine insight into the name of every type of landscape and mapping feature. The result is a triumph: a book whose importance belies its relatively slight stature on the bookshelf. Just occasionally you come across a book whose lasting value is so obvious that you know people will be referring to it in 50 years' time or more. "Reading the Gaelic Landscape" is one of those books.

No-one should approach this book under any illusion they are in for an easy read: it is a book to be "owned and consulted" rather than a book that anyone is likely to read from cover to cover in a sitting. Nonetheless it is a book that amply repays the concentration needed to follow the author's discussion of the language itself and the way it is applied to every aspect of the landscape. Above all, this is a book that will not rest long on your bookshelf: we know that we will frequently be referring to ours whenever we stumble over a [Gaelic](#) place name in future.

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 Publisher Seeking  
 New Fiction  
 Submissions



Paperback: 240 pages  
 Whittles Publishing  
[www.whittlespublishing.com](http://www.whittlespublishing.com)  
 22 April 2014  
 Language: English  
 ISBN-10: 1849951004  
 ISBN-13: 978-1849951005  
 Size: 22.1 x 15.7 x 1.2 cm  
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