

Gaelic Place Names: 'Bodach'

By Alison Grant

The Gaelic word *bodach* (pronounced **bot**) can mean old man and also spectre, ghost. It occurs in a variety of place-names across the Scottish Isles including *Loch Bodach* loch of the old man/spectre on Lewis, *Clach Bodach* rock of the old man/spectre on Mull, *Cuach Bodach* hollow of the old man/spectre on the Isle of Colonsay, *Meadhan Bodach* the little meadow of the old men on Arran, *Uisge Bodach* stream of the spectre on the Isle of Islay and *Bodach* cattle-fold of the old man/spectre on the Isle of Barra.

It is also found in mainland names including *Coille Bodach* field of the old men in Aberdeenshire, *Beinn Bodach* the old man's path near Nigg, *Farm Bodach* farm of the old men in Inverness-shire, and *Bodach* big ridge of the old men in Kintyre. *Bodach* house of the spectre in Glen Cailleach, Perthshire, is the site of a Pagan shrine where various stones resembling human figures have been designated as the *Bodach*, the *Bodach* old woman (wife of the *Bodach*) and their various children. The stones are connected to aar *Bodach* var2 *Bodach* v *Bodach* cilb

from point of the old man but could instead be from the point of Bute .

The word was borrowed into Scots, in the same senses of old man and spectre, ghost . It was popularised in the nineteenth century by Sir Walter Scott in novels including and . In the latter, the or Grey Spectre is described by the Highland Chieftan Fergus Mac-Ivor as the ghostly gray-clad apparition of a Lowland Chief killed by one of his ancestors, who appears to members of his family when disaster is impending. The word also evolvehe into the North-East Scots dialect word , , which shares the t

Scotland. Another [Cairngorm](#) in the Cairngorms is paired with nearby [the old woman](#), in parallel with the Glen Cailleach legend. There are also two rocks off the coast of Cape Wrath which share these names, and two distinctive stones near Achamore on the Isle of Gigha which are likewise referred to as the [big old man](#) and the [little old man](#). Other mountain names containing [the old man](#) include [Cairngorm](#) and [Cairngorm](#) in the Highlands, which are the big old man and the little old man respectively. [The old man](#) rock of the old man/spectre, and [The old man](#) cliff of the old man/spectre are both located in Perthshire.

[The old man](#) on the Isle of Bute is less straightforward, in that it may be from [the old man](#) point of the old man but could instead be from [the old man](#) the point of Bute.

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