

# NAMES & LANGUAGE

Place names are rooted in oral traditions. In North Antrim, they originate in Gaelic, Scots, Anglo-Norman and even Viking languages. Often their meanings have become obscure over time, as they have been recorded by officials not familiar with the language or dialect.



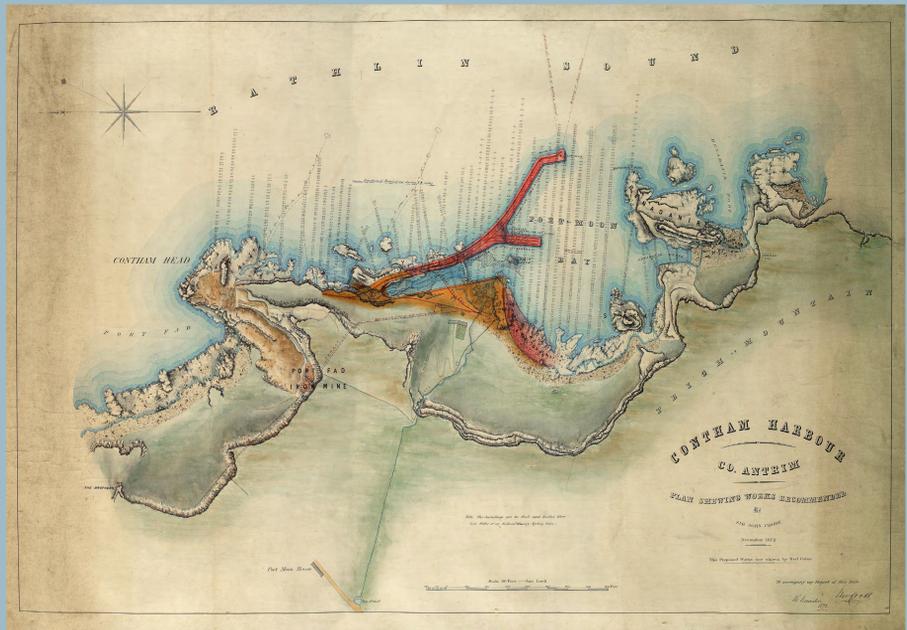
Brenther Rock, at a landing place in the bay of Portnaboe, part of the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. The name 'Brenther' may come from Scandinavian words meaning 'steep harbour'.

“ You would hardly believe how little remains of Irish history, language or customs in this part of the country. The revolutions which it has undergone... and the encroachment of the Scots, have overturned every remnant of its original state. ”

William Hamilton, 1806

Despite centuries of Scots migration to North Antrim, Scots Gaelic names are not evident here. But some places use Scots family names, such as the townland of Artimacormick, or *Ard Tí Mhic Cormaic*, 'the height of MacCormick's house'.

Benadanir and Brenther Rocks may have been named for and by Vikings. Naturally both names refer to coastal features, where Vikings first arrived and perhaps briefly settled.



Benadanir Rock, thought to come from the Irish for 'the headland of the Danes', is clearly shown on this map of Portmoon from 1872.

The map shows a proposed new harbour and railway for exporting iron ore from Portfad. These plans were never realised. Reproduced courtesy of Antony Macnaghten.

Gid Point at the western end of White Park Bay may derive from an Old Norse word for the pike or luce fish. Or it may come from Lowland Scots 'guid', meaning 'good'.

Not all place names are ancient. Sandra Hunter inherited farms at Lisserluss and Aird from her father and uncle and has renamed many fields. Though these names are recent they are still important because they show how Sandra thinks about her land.



Aerial view of some of Sandra Hunter's fields. At least one of her field names has Irish origins. Others refer to previous industrial sites, or simply the names of her neighbours.

White Park Bay, looking towards Gid Point and Portbradden beyond.

