
Calatria

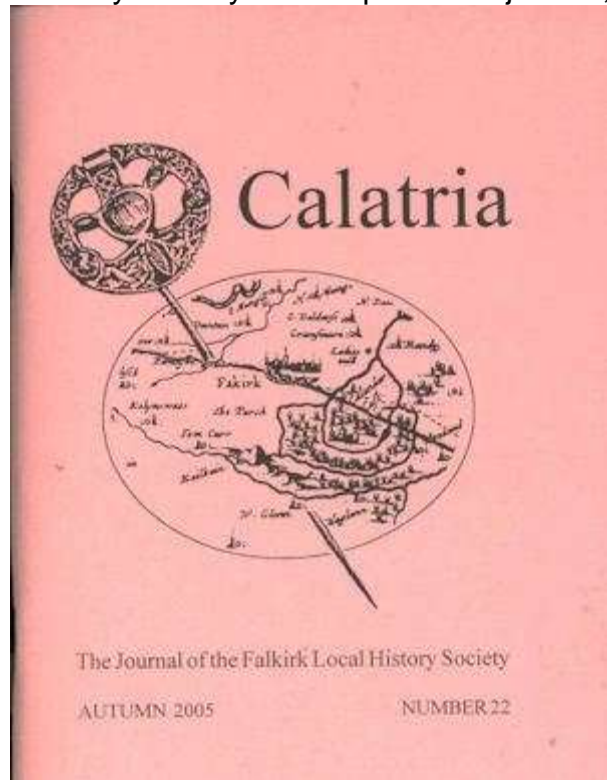
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When it was finally decided that the Local History Society should publish a journal, the biggest debate centred around what title it should be given. After considerable deliberation it has been agreed that it should be CALATRIA. The name, as it will be seen in the following discussion, has a reasonable pedigree and appears to have been used in former times to define the tract of land bounded by the rivers Carron and Avon: essentially the area we know as East Stirlingshire – if we omit the parishes of Bothkennar and Airth.

The earliest reference to the name comes from the latter part of the eleventh century when, taking advantage of the confusion following the Norman invasion and conquest of England, Malcolm Canmore led an invasion across the border. It seems to have been a half-hearted effort to which William the Conqueror did not immediately respond. However, in 1072 he raised an armada of ships which not only harried the towns and settlements between Berwick and the Forth but also supported a huge army, the greater part of which was composed of cavalry ¹. This force marched up the east coast route into Scotland and a virtually contemporaneous account describes its progress thus:

*Angliae victor Willelmus per Laodonium, Calatriam,
Scotium usque ad Abernith penetraret* ²

Two of these places mentioned are identifiable: the last one, Abernethy, is confirmed by alternative sources. It was there that William eventually caught up with Malcolm. Fortunately, it proved to be a bloodless meeting as a settlement was reached. It was to be a far reaching one which was to have a profound effect upon the political, cultural and religious spectrum of Scotland. The other patently recognisable place listed is, of course, Scotland. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that in those days such a designation was only applied to the land north of the Forth / Clyde line. Of those named it is the first two places which have been a source of controversy amongst countless scholars, but there does seem to be some consensus that the first represents Lothian, that is the combined Lothians, and the second, Calatria, a district formed by the land lying between the rivers Avon and Carron.



Calatria would appear to be a latinised form of a Celtic place-name for which we might expect to find vernacular forms in early texts or charters. The problem, as always, is that early sources are infuriatingly vague about places: they knew where they meant and therefore felt no need to expand upon locations: the live oral tradition would, presumably, provide the appropriate setting. One early text calendars a battle fought in AD634 at Calathros in which Domnall Breac, king of the Scots of Dalriada was defeated³ Just over a hundred years later, in AD736, the Battle of Cnoc Coirpri in Calathros at Eterlinddu was fought between the men of Dal Riata and those of Fortrui: that is between the Scots and the Picts.⁴ Although earlier writers have sought to promote Calitros or Calathros as being the same place as Calatria, caution must be exercised. The terminal element in the former looks decidedly like Celtic *ros*, 'a moor', while that of Calatria would seem to point to Celtic *tir*, 'land'. Later researchers have also noted that the sequence of events combined with the people involved tends to place these particular events north of the Forth / Clyde line.

Safer ground seems to be reached in the twelfth century. During the reign of David I a royal charter, which is recorded in the Glasgow Cartulary, was witnessed by Dufoter de Calateria.⁵ In 1154 'Nesius de Kaletiro' perished in judicial combat in consequence, it would seem, of involvement in a plot to betray King Malcolm.⁶ Sometime between 1173 and 1177 the Abbot and convent of Cambuskenneth Abbey exchanged their right to their tithes of the king's pleas and profits of Stirling and of 'Calithir' for lands in Perthshire.⁷ These tithes were the subject of an earlier charter confirming them to the Abbey; in that document they are described as of Stirling and of 'Calentyr'.⁸ To summarize, the dependable forms recovered for Calatria are:

Caleteria, Calateria, Kaletiro, Calathir

The only comments which may be made with some degree of certainty about the name is that it is Celtic in origin, probably Cumbric rather than Gaelic, and was probably ancient when first encountered in its earliest note of 1072. While the last syllable of the name, *-tir*, is undoubtedly Celtic *tir*, 'land', territory', any attempt to recognise a derivation must rely heavily on speculation. When we look at the initial element, several propositions are apparent, but, what may be considered one of the most attractive of these is offered here. There is a Gaelic word *callaid* meaning 'a partition, a fence', also recognisable in Welsh *clawdd*, 'ditch, barrier', which might be deemed to be a reference to the Antonine frontier, thereby giving a meaning of 'the division of land'. In the immediate post-Roman period, it has been suggested, the Roman wall formed the southern frontier of the Picts. South of the Forth the Britons named in Welsh sources as *Gwyr y Gogledd*, 'the men of the north', controlled the land and policed the wall as a means of preventing the Picts from intruding into their territory.⁹

One strange coincidence emerges from the Norman period, and comes from a Romance of the time, although it must be restated that this is offered as no more than a coincidence. Its main concern is with the voyage of Tristan through the Celtic world where he takes service with the King of Galloway, but part of the tale tells of a Norman lady who has a bower in the woods of Calitar where she lies upon a sofa covered with a cloth in a chequered pattern. There she is found by the son of one of the tenants-in-chief of the Scottish king, a young man who lives at court except when he visits his father's estate in Calitar.^{[10](#)}

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