

A BLINK ON BLINKBONNY

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Blinkbonny is an attractive place-name, found from Northumberland to Orkney. Also spelt Blinkbonnie, Blink Bonny and Blink Bonnie, it raises a number of questions. What does the name mean? Where exactly is it found, when does it date from, and what kind of sites does it refer to? Does the topography confirm that it describes places with fine views, as is generally thought? What new acts of naming have the original Blinkbonnies inspired?

First recorded in 1752–55 on Roy's *Military Survey of Scotland: Lowlands*, the Blinkbonny name has been discussed by Simon Taylor (2008), John Baldwin and Peter Drummond (2011), and John Garth Wilkinson (forthcoming). All agree that it refers to places with fine views, the equivalent of French *Bellevue* and Italian *Belvedere*, but differ on its grammatical structure and precise meaning. The name is also mentioned by Johnston (1940, 21), who notes that Blinkbonny is a common Scots name for 'a pretty spot' and cites Belle Vue.

Baldwin and Drummond (2011, 30), discussing Blinkbonny in the Pentland Hills, suggest it is 'probably an inversion of Scots *bonnie blink*, "a fine outlook or view"'. This type of structure is unusual in Scots because the noun precedes the adjective. Simon Taylor, however, has suggested that it is likely to be a verbal place-name, combining 'the Scots verb *blink* "look, take a (quick) look", with *bonny* being used adverbially.'¹ Discussing Blinkbonny in West Lothian, Wilkinson likewise considers it a verbal place-name, combining *blink* 'look fondly' with *bonny* 'pretty', and meaning 'gaze with admiration'.²

This type of structure, where the adjective is used as an adverb, is commonplace in Scots. It is found in words of advice such as 'ca' canny' and 'gan canny', both meaning 'be careful', and indeed the instruction to a dog, 'sit nice'. Place-names offering advice are not uncommon. Examples cited by Taylor (2008, 281–82) include Lookaboutthim or Lookaboutthee, the name of 'a field with good, open views', and Mounthooly, 'mount or climb carefully', 'a humorous name for a steep brae' from Scots *huilie* 'slowly, gently, cautiously'.

So how might we translate the instruction to 'blink bonny'? The verb *blink*, from Northern Middle English *blenk*, was used in both England and Scotland from the 16th century to mean, *inter alia*, 'to glance' (*OED* and *DSL*). In Scots

1. 2008, 278; *PNF* 5, 300, 560–61.

2. Wilkinson, forthcoming.

from around 1700 it meant to ‘glance kindly, to ogle, look fondly at’ as well as several more negative actions, including ‘to glance at with the evil eye’ (*DSL*).

The adjective *bonny* or *bonnie*, possibly related to French *bon*, was likewise used in England and Scotland but became uncommon in the south of England (*OED*). It has a bundle of positive meanings, including ‘pleasing to the sight, comely, beautiful, expressing homely beauty’ (*OED*; also see *DSL bonny* adj.). Charles Mackay in his *Dictionary of Lowland Scotch* (1888, 15) defined *bonnie* when applied to a woman as ‘beautiful, good-natured and cheerful’, while ‘applied to natural objects, it simply signifies beautiful’. *Bonny* could also be used as an adverb, defined by the *OED* as ‘finely, beautifully’. It also generated a second adverb, *bonnilie*. Spellings of *bonny*, both as a word and as a place-name element, are various. In their maps of Berwickshire and Lothian of 1771 and 1773, the Armstrongs use four: *Blinkbonnie*, *Blinkbony*, *Blinkbonie* and *Blinkbonny*.

To translate *blink bonny* as ‘glance (or look) finely’ does not make sense. A quotation from the Scottish poet Allan Ramsay in 1729, however, provides a possible clue to a more meaningful interpretation. Ramsay wrote, ‘On him she did na gloom, But blinkit bonnilie.’ (*OED* blink v. II a). Here contrasted with ‘to gloom’ (‘to scowl’, *DSL*), ‘to blink bonnilie’ suggests a cheerful demeanour and an attractive facial expression, and could be interpreted as ‘to look favourably on’. Perhaps, then, we might interpret ‘blink bonny’ as advice to ‘glance with pleasure’ on the view from a particular place. This interpretation is close to Wilkinson’s ‘gaze with admiration’, but ‘gaze’ implies a protracted look, while *blink* is used in Scots for ‘a glimpse, a hurried view’ (Johnston 1940, 21).

Taylor offers another possibility: that *blink bonny* is not an instruction but a description. He suggests it could be an imitation (or calque, in linguistic terms) of *Beauvoir* and *Belvedere*. Both mean ‘beautiful to see’, and the latter was adopted into English as a term for a structure specially built ‘in order to afford fine views of the surrounding scenery’ (*OED*). Thus ‘blink bonny’ would mean ‘bonny to see’. Taylor notes (pers. comm.): ‘In Scots, because *blink* is both a noun and a verb, the order was reversed to stress the verbal aspect of the name.’

The one attempt in the Ordnance Survey (OS) Name Books to interpret the name uses *blink* in a different sense: ‘to cast a sudden or momentary gleam of light’ (*OED*). The entry for Blink Bonnie in Dunfermline parish, Fife, tells us that this was ‘a Row of Cottage houses occupied by the Farm servants of Mr Deas, London’, which ‘derives its name from the Sun blinking on this place over The Dean Plantation’ (OS1/13/127/56).

Compiled in the mid-19th century, the OS Name Books record 38

Blinkbonny names in Scotland, as follows: Berwickshire 5, Clackmannanshire 1, Dumfriesshire 1, East Lothian 4, Fife and Kinross-shire 7, Forfarshire (Angus) 1, Kincardineshire 1, Lanarkshire 1, Midlothian 4, Morayshire 3, Orkney 5,³ Peeblesshire 1, Perthshire 1, Roxburghshire 2, Stirlingshire 1.⁴

Norman Dixon (2011, 397) states that Blinkbonny is a farm-name, but this needs to be qualified. Seventeen of the Blinkbonny names in the OS Name Books referred to farmhouses, most described as having a farm attached. Some were described as ‘small’, while some were clearly larger, such as those whose occupiers appeared in tax rolls between 1787 and 1802.⁵ There were also three crofts. A further seventeen were dwelling-houses or rows of dwellings, several occupied by farm labourers but one by a shepherd and some by other workers. In the latter group, a row of houses on a farm in West Calder parish, Midlothian, was occupied by ‘miners and people of the labouring classes’ and a grocer’s and spirit shop,⁶ while a joiner called Robert Crawford and his family lived in a small dwelling-house called Blinkbonnie in Tranent parish, East Lothian, owned by the Earl of Wemyss.⁷ Also in East Lothian, there was a ruined shepherd’s cottage on Longyester Farm.⁸

There was also one street with this name, in the town of Duns, Berwickshire. According to the OS Name Book, it had a sign declaring ‘Blinkbonnie’. The OS Name Book approved this spelling, but the OS 6 inch map has *Blinkbonie*.⁹ The name was evidently heavily ironical, as the street was described as, ‘A narrow, crooked and dirty lane, or occupation road – a thoroughfare only for foot passengers’ (OS1/5/15/83). The lane survives today, cleaned up and asphalted, winding between high walls. Set into one wall and barely visible, is a stone carved with the name ‘Blinkbonnie’, possibly the very sign mentioned in the OS Name Book. Running parallel to the west is a modern residential street, Blinkbonnie Gardens, named after the allotments that formerly stood here.¹⁰

3. Marwick (1952) does not discuss any Blinkbonny names.

4. Derived names are not included.

5. They paid tax on one of these: a saddle-horse, farm-horses, a female servant, a cart or planted or prepared ground.

6. OS1/11/22/28, NS971600.

7. *Census* 1841, 722/4/1; 1851, 722/10/6. OS Name Book OS1/15/38/10.

8. Thanks to Val Wilson for locating the ruins of this cottage, which stand at NT534637, just over a mile southwest of Longyester. Recorded by Armstrong in 1773 (South East Section) as Blinkbonie, and by Forrest in 1799 as Blink Bonny, it was in ruins by the time the OS Name Book’s surveyors arrived in 1853–54. Canmore ID 181341.

9. OS 6 inch Berwickshire Sheet XIV, surveyed 1857, published 1862.

10. Thanks are due to local residents for the above information and for directions to

Also in the mid-19th century, there were three Blinkbonny names in north Northumberland. One Blinkbonny was a hill 990ft high, described by the OS Name Book as an ‘eminence’, while the second was a small tenanted farm near Flodden owned by the Marchioness of Waterford. The farm is 300ft up and Godfrey Watson wrote that it ‘derives its name from the splendid view that it affords of the Till valley.’¹¹ The third was the Blinkbonny Hotel: this was sited next to Christon Bank station (spelt Christonbank on OS maps) which opened in 1847. Today the hotel is a pub and part of a village, but in the past it was surrounded by open fields.¹² These Northumberland Blinkbonny names demonstrate a shared vocabulary across the Anglo-Scottish border, doubtless encouraged by the movement of farm workers back and forth.¹³

Dixon notes that Blinkbonny is ‘a common 18th-century Scots name’ (2011 [1947], 168), and the records show that it was indeed common at least towards the end of that century. Of the Blinkbonny names in the Scottish OS Name Books, ten appear in these earlier records: Roy’s *Military Survey: Lowlands* of 1752–55; the Armstrongs’ *Map of the County of Berwick* of 1771 and their *Map of the Three Lothians* of 1773; tax rolls of 1790 to 1802; and Forrest’s *Map of Haddingtonshire* of 1799. The sites were in Berwickshire, East Lothian, Fife and Kinross-shire, Midlothian, Morayshire and Peeblesshire. Four more were recorded in the 18th century but do not appear in the OS Name Books: one in Berwickshire (Bunkle), in the Horse Tax Rolls for 1787; one in East Lothian (Whittingehame) on Forrest’s map of 1799; one in Midlothian (Fala and Soutra), on the Armstrongs’ map of 1773; and another ‘near Danderhall’ in Court of Session papers in 1799.¹⁴ The last was probably also in Midlothian, where the OS Name Books record two Danderhalls, one in West Calder parish and the other in Newton parish.¹⁵

There are also 19th-century instances not in the OS Name Books. One such is Blinkbonny muir in Falkirk parish, Stirlingshire, noted by John Reid (2009, 372). Another is in Dunbar, listed as a single house occupied by a male servant and

the lane and the sign.

11. Watson 1970, 172. The hill (NY827876) is on OS 6 inch Northumberland Sheet LX, surveyed 1862, published 1866. The farm (NT908360) is on OS 6 inch Northumberland Sheet XIV, surveyed 1860, published 1866.

12. *Disused Stations*. The station closed in 1965. OS 6 inch Northumberland Sheet XXVII, surveyed 1861, published 1867; NU213227.

13. Fenton 1999, 229, mentions the movement of farm workers between Northumberland and the Borders, ‘from the hiring markets at Duns and Berwick’.

14. NRS CS228/B/11/27.

15. The OS Name Book records that Danderhall near West Calder was named by Lord Hermand: ‘the word “Dander” being the Scotch term for forge clinkers’, alluding to the smithy (OS1/11/26/19).

his family in the census for 1841, but appearing as a group of properties in the Valuation Rolls for 1855–56, most of which belonged to the Earl of Lauderdale.¹⁶ Neither of the Dunbar Blinkbonnies appears on maps of the period. Val Wilson (pers. comm.) points out that as the census was done in house order, the house called Blinkbonny was probably at one end of Dawell Brae (now Victoria Street) or was part of it.

When the name Blinkbonny first came into use is unclear. It is conceivable that it was first applied to hills and later to farms and buildings, but the known hill-names were not recorded early enough to prove this. There is the 990ft ‘eminence’ called Blinkbonny in Northumberland, surveyed in 1862. There is Blinkbonny muir in Falkirk, recorded in 1898; Reid (2009, 372) notes that this was ‘part of the south muir of Falkirk retained by the feuars after the division of the muir in 1807. It was only after that event that the farm called Blinkbonny came into being.’ Then there is Blinkbonny Hill in Earlston, Berwickshire, described by the OS Name Book (OS1/5/16/19) as a ‘hill of considerable elevation’ and shown on the accompanying map as being some 700ft high. Below this at about 450ft was a ‘dwelling house with suitable offices and a garden attached’ called Blinkbonny (OS1/5/16/42), also recorded by Armstrong in 1771. This was probably a farmhouse, as it featured in the farm horse tax rolls for 1797 as having two horses. Clearly the two names are related (and they are counted as one example in the Berwickshire tally of five Blinkbonnies, above), but which came first? Given its size, the hill seems a possible candidate. Similarly in Newcastleton, Roxburghshire, a ‘small house’ called Blinkbonny, at 700ft and occupied by a shepherd, is near Blinkbonny Height, which is 864ft high.¹⁷

The two earliest settlement-names were both recorded on Roy’s map of the lowlands in 1752–55. These were in Newlands parish, Peeblesshire, recorded as *Blink Bonny*, and in Nenthorn parish, Berwickshire, recorded as *Bleak Bonny*. This latter spelling was almost certainly a misunderstanding; though it was high up, the farm was unlikely to have been seen as bleak. Roy himself shows cultivated land and the tax rolls of the 1780s and 1790s reveal a prosperous farm.¹⁸ Further, the view is magnificent, fully justifying the name Blinkbonny

16. 1841, 706/3/13; 1851, 706/2/1. They consisted of a stables, a lime yard, seven houses, two coach houses with cellars and a cellar; the tenants were a flesher, a mason, two fisherman, a candlemaker, a clerk, two grocers, a cooper, a fish agent and a pauper widow. Valuation Rolls fo. 15, ll. 16 to 23; fo. 31, ll. 9, 10, 12, 13. Thanks to Val Wilson for researching the censuses and Valuation Rolls.

17. OS1/29/7/121; OS1/29/7/124; OS 6 inch Roxburghshire Sheet XLV, surveyed 1858, published 1863.

18. E.g. *Horse Tax Rolls* Vol. 09/64, 1788, and *Farm Horse Tax Rolls* Vol. 02/30, 1797, for Blinkbonnie, Nenthorn Parish, Berwickshire.



Fig. 1 Blinkbonny Farm, Nenthorn, Berwickshire: looking south towards The Cheviots

(Fig. 1). In East Lothian, however, Blinkbonny names which appeared on maps of 1773 and 1799 did not appear on Roy's map. This was the era of agricultural improvement, with new buildings being constructed from the third quarter of the 18th century (Fenton 1999, 190) and the expansion of sheep-farming. It seems likely that the Blinkbonny name was given to newly built dwellings.

Most of the farms and cottages in question were owned by people other than the occupiers.¹⁹ Owners included three earls, two dukes, a marquis, a 'Lady' and a baronet, as well as people styled 'Esquire' or plain 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.', and in one instance the City of Edinburgh. In most cases, who bestowed the name is unknown, but two make it clear that the proprietor had the final word. In East Lothian's Whittingehame parish, the OS Name Book noted 'two small dwelling houses, on the farm of Ruchlaw' which were occupied by farm labourers, adding, 'These houses are better know [*sic*] by the inhabitants under

19. Thirty-two of the farmhouses, cottages and rows of cottages listed by the OS Name Books were occupied by tenants; one farm in Nenthorn, Berwickshire, was 'cultivated by the proprietor', while the remaining owners are unspecified.

the Name of Spitemuir, but Mr Sydserf, the proprietor, is about erecting a stone in front of them with the word Blinkbonnie inscribed on it.'²⁰ Mr Sydserf was evidently determined to overwrite a negative name, and saw Blinkbonnie as an improvement.

In Benholm parish, Kincardineshire, however, a proprietor took a different view. Here a large farmhouse held by a tenant was known as Mains of Muirton and North Muirton, but also as Blinkbonny. It was 400ft up and, from the map, it probably had a splendid view southwards to the coast (NO776691). The OS Name Book (OS1/19/4/21) recorded that the proprietor, Hercules Scott Esquire, 'wishes it in future to be called "North Muirton"'. It duly appeared on the 1st edition OS 6 inch map as North Muirton, but by the 2nd edition, surveyed in 1901, it had reverted to Blinkbonnie. It has now gone.²¹

Another name change took place in Abdie parish, Fife, but the agent is not revealed. Here the farm recorded as *Bogtown* on Ainslie's map in 1775 had its name changed to Blinkbonny by 1797 (at which time tax was levied on its four farm-horses).²²

How were the Blinkbonny farmhouses and cottages positioned? Dixon describes them as farms with 'a southerly exposure' or 'a sunny aspect', and 'comparable with Sunnyside'.²³ But examples make it clear that it is the view, rather than the direction faced, that is the key to the name.

The two earliest Blinkbonny farms, in Newlands, Peeblesshire, and Nenthorn, Berwickshire, did indeed face south, both with breathtaking views. In a windblown spot between the Pentland Hills and the Moorfoots, Blinkbonny in Newlands scans the horizon from Hundleshope Heights south of Peebles to the Lammermuirs in the east, while Blinkbonny in Nenthorn looks across a sweep of fields and woods to the distant Cheviots.²⁴

A farmhouse called Blinkbonny near Kirkwall in Orkney also faced south: now the site of self-catering holiday homes, it advertises 'spectacular views over Scapa Flow, and towards the South Isles'.²⁵ In Newbattle parish, Midlothian, Blinkbonny farmhouse has a beautiful view to the southeast. But Wilkinson

20. OS1/15/47/70; NT611735.

21. OS 6 inch Kincardineshire Sheet XXIV, surveyed 1864, published 1868; OS 6 inch Kincardineshire Sheet XXVII. NE, surveyed 1901, published 1904; ESRI World Imagery via <maps.nls.uk>.

22. *PNF* 4, 72-72; *PNF* 5, 300; Farm Horse Tax Rolls, E326/10/2/250.

23. Dixon 2011, 57, 168, 206, 323, 397.

24. Thanks to local people for explaining the view from Blinkbonny, Newlands.

25. <<http://www.blinkbonny.com>>, accessed 18/2/2018. HY424086; OS 6 inch Orkney Sheet CVIII, surveyed 1880, published 1882.



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Fig. 2 The shepherd's cottage, Blinkbonny, in Yester parish, East Lothian, with the hills of Fife on the horizon

(pers. comm.) points out that the row of workers' houses called Blinkbonny in West Calder parish, Midlothian,²⁶ had a 'long and superb view to the north', to Breadalbane, the Trossachs, the Ochils and possibly the Lomond hills, whereas its view to the south 'would have been rough moorland with a few birch'. John Reid (2009, 372) writes that 'the Falkirk example has a fine view north over the strath of the Forth'. Peter Drummond (pers. comm.) explains that Blinkbonny, Lesmahagow parish, Lanarkshire, is 'on a slight north-east facing slope', though with a view to Tinto, a prominent hill to the southwest.

The lack of regularity in positioning is also clear from the example of East Lothian, where four of the five Blinkbonny sites had views to the north.²⁷ The shepherd's cottage in Yester parish was high up and had a spectacular view northwards to the hills of Fife (though its door faced southwest, so would get the sun, Fig. 2), while the two small cottages called Blinkbonnie on Ruchlaw farm had a superb view north to the Forth, taking in North Berwick Law, the Bass Rock and the Isle of May, and Fife on the far side. The dwelling near Seton (NT410745) in Tranent parish also looked north across fields to the Forth a

26. West Calder was moved into West Lothian in 1975, after council boundary re-organisation.

27. The site near Yarrow cannot be precisely located.

mile away, while to the south it faced rising 'impassable marshy ground'.²⁸ The dwelling located by Forrest near Yarrow in Whittingehame parish was part way down a north-facing hill in an attractive rolling landscape, with Traprain Law in the distance.

The only south-facing Blinkbonny in East Lothian was west of Haddington, looking across the Tyne Valley to the Lammermuir Hills.²⁹ Recorded by Forrest in 1799, it was described by the Name Book as a 'small farm house' with 'a farm of land attached', owned by Sir R. Houston of the nearby Clerkington estate. Sir Robert Houston was an officer in the East India Company's army and owned a sugar plantation in Grenada.³⁰ The 1851 census recorded that Blinkbonny was occupied by farmer Alexander Kerr and his family and that the farm was 48 acres.³¹ It was the largest by far of the original Blinkbonny sites in East Lothian and is the only one that has survived. Today, doubtless considerably extended, it is called Blinkbonny House.

Many Blinkbonny buildings no longer exist. Several have disappeared without trace, such as 'cothouses' recorded in the OS Name Book as 'small in bad repair' in Lesmahagow parish, Lanarkshire,³² along with the above-mentioned large farmhouse in Kincardineshire and two sites in East Lothian. One of these was joiner Robert Crawford's home in Tranent parish: today this is the site of Coastline Autos, a carwash on the A198.³³ Also gone are the two labourers' houses renamed Blinkbonny by Mr Sydserf, which are now empty ground. In Peebles-shire, the Blinkbonny farmstead was abandoned in the 20th century; it is still on the OS maps, but only a dilapidated cowshed remains.³⁴

Others have vanished but have left an echo in new names, such as Blinkbonny Gardens in Duns, and three in East Lothian: Blinkbonnie Plantation (NT607726), near the site of a dwelling near Yarrow recorded by Forrest, and Blinkbonny Wood and Blinkbonny Burn, both near the site of the shepherd's cottage already mentioned. The workers' cottages in West Calder parish had vanished by the mid-20th century along with the pit and quarry

28. Described thus on the map, OS 6 inch Haddingtonshire Sheet 9, surveyed 1853, published 1854.

29. OS1/15/40/65. This house appears on Forrest's map of 1799, and is at NT471722.

30. *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/10480/#imperial-summary>>.

31. 1851 Census 709/18/11.

32. OS1/21/45/34; NS88396.

33. OS/1/15/38/10; NT410745; Census for 1841 and 1851.

34. E.g. OS Landranger no. 73, 2012, NT 212512. The farm has been incorporated into Wester Deans since 1989.

they had serviced, by which time a new village had been built a kilometre away on the main road. The new village was called Breich but is nicknamed Blinky, and includes a street named Blinkbonny Terrace.³⁵

A farmhouse and farm between Murrayfield and Craigleith in Edinburgh has had a particularly productive after-life (NT224742). It was recorded as *Blinkbonny* on the Armstrongs' map in 1773 and was listed in the Name Book of 1852–53, but was later divided by the Caledonian Railway and then swallowed up by Edinburgh. Today the farmhouse has been replaced by a Holiday Inn, but a whole estate of Blinkbonnies has sprouted around it: Blinkbonny Crescent, Terrace, Grove, Gardens, Avenue and plain Road.

That Edinburgh Blinkbonny had another legacy. In the 19th century there was a turnpike gate nearby on the Queensferry Road, where tolls were collected (Forrester 1850). A young Yorkshire man, William I'Anson (*sic*), trained racehorses for a wealthy owner at Barnton nearby. He used to pass through the Blinkbonny turnpike regularly en route for England and, later, now a successful breeder himself, he named a thoroughbred filly after it.³⁶ The horse, Blink Bonny (1854–62), became famous, winning the Derby and Oaks in 1857.³⁷ Two of her hooves are displayed in the Blink Bonny pub at Christon Bank in Northumberland. The horse has in turn given her name to an LNER steam engine, an equestrian centre in Australia and a Yorkshire lager.³⁸

Less fortunate was the schooner *Blink Bonny*, perhaps also named after the racehorse. Built in 1874, she was 'bound from Irvine to Londonderry' carrying fire clay and coals when she ran aground on 14 November 1880 off the Kintyre coast. The crew of four were saved but not the ship. The Lightkeeper of the Sanda Lighthouse reported: 'Previous to the vessel being wrecked the Captain got one of his legs very sore hurt & was not able to be on deck, and (vessel) was in charge of the mate. Total wreck.' (*Canmore* ID 115257)

To sum up, Blinkbonny is a Scots and Northumbrian place-name which was applied to places with fine views. Its precise meaning and grammatical

35. Wilkinson (forthcoming). NS971600. See OS 1 inch Airdrie (31), revised 1895, published 1897; OS 1 inch 7th series, Falkirk and Lanark, surveyed 1954 to 1961, published 1961; both via <maps.nls.uk>, geo-referenced maps.

36. *I'Anson international*; The Irish Metropolitan Magazine Vol. 1, April to September 1857, 602.

37. *I'Anson international*. Two other thoroughbred fillies of unconnected stock born earlier were named Blink Bonny, one in New Zealand in 1850 (Porus × Dudu) and one in Australia in 1852 (Egremont × Mrs Burt). Another was born in Australia in 1866 (Conrad × Medora) (Alan Dixon, pers. comm.).

38. <<https://www.scienceandsociety.co.uk/results.asp?image=10306947>>; <<http://www.blinkbonnie.com.au/about>>; <www.horsetownbeers.com>. All accessed 14/2/2018.

structure are open to question. It could be an inversion compound combining noun and adjective, meaning 'fine view'; it could be a verbal place-name, an instruction to 'glance with pleasure'; it could be a calque on Beauvoir and Belvedere, meaning 'bonny to see'. If we are looking for a loose translation, 'place with a beautiful or bonny view' is probably the best.

The name seems to have started life in the first half of the 18th century. First recorded in Berwickshire and Peeblesshire, by the mid-19th century it was found in north Northumberland and had spread through southern and eastern Scotland up to Orkney. There were three hills and a muir called Blinkbonny, but in most cases the name was applied to small farms and rural workers' dwellings, almost all of which were occupied by tenants. Exceptions were a hotel in Northumberland, a group of properties in Dunbar and a 'dirty lane' in Duns, the last clearly named ironically. The farmhouses and cottages were probably built as part of the rural 'improvements', both agricultural and industrial, of the period. Where the views can be confirmed, they look in various directions and are indeed fine, often superb. Many of the Blinkbonny buildings have not survived, but some have lived on through modern street names and a legendary racehorse, still celebrated by *aficionados*.

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Newlands: OS 6 inch Peebles-shire, Sheet V, surveyed 1856, published 1858. Roxburghshire, Newcastleton: OS 6 inch Roxburghshire Sheet XLV, surveyed 1858, published 1863. West Calder: OS 1 inch Airdrie (31), revised 1895, published 1897; OS 1 inch 7th series, Falkirk and Lanark, surveyed 1954 to 1961, published 1961. All available via <maps.nls.uk>.
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APPENDIX 1

Blinkbonny Names in the Scottish OS Name Books

(A) All the known Blinkbonny names in Scotland (various spellings) in the Scottish OS Name Books, giving parish and brief description of each site, plus earlier records of the name, set out alphabetically by pre-1975 county and parish. A site may be mentioned more than once in the OS Name Books, but only one reference for each is given here. To search the OS Name Books online, it is necessary to type the name with the exact spelling into the search engine.

Angus (Forfarshire) 1857–61

St Vigeans: Blinkbonnie – 'A one storied farm steading of rather an inferior description with a few acres of arable land attached'. OS1/14/80/42

Berwickshire 1856–58

Duns: Blinkbonnie – 'A narrow, crooked and dirty lane, or occupation road'. OS1/5/15/83

- Earlston: Blinkbonny – dwelling house. OS1/5/16/42. *Blinkbonnie* 1771 Armstrong. *Blinkbonnie* 1797 Farm horse tax rolls, two horses. E326/10/2/29 This is close to Blinkbonny Hill, OS1/5/16/19
- Eccles: Blinkbonny – small farmhouse + a few acres of land. OS1/5/17/98
- Foulden: Blinkbonny – two tenements and a smithy. OS1/5/21/14
- Nenthorn: Blinkbonny – large farm steading. OS1/5/35/23. *Bleak Bonny* 1752–55 Roy. *Blinkbony* 1771 Armstrong. *Blinkbonnie* 1788 Horse tax rolls, one saddle–horse. E326/10/2/30 *Blinkbonny* 1797 Farm horse tax rolls, four horses. E326/9/17/49
- Clackmannanshire 1861–62
- Dollar: Blinkbonny – cottage. OS1/8/5/17
- Dumfriesshire 1848–58
- Canonbie: Blinkbonny – small house occupied by farm labourers. OS1/10/4/152
- East Lothian 1853–54 (Haddingtonshire)
- Haddington: Blinkbonny – small farmhouse and a farm of land. OS1/15/40/65. *Blink bonny* 1799 Forrest. This is now Blinkbonny House.
- Tranent: Blinkbonny – small dwelling house. OS1/15/38/48
- Whittingehame (Whittingham): Blinkbonnie – ‘two dwelling houses on the farm Ruchlaw, occupied by agricultural labourers’, previously known as Spitemuir. OS1/15/47/70.
- Yester: Blinkbonny – shepherd’s cottage, in ruins. OS1/15/20/41. *Blinkbonie* 1773 Armstrong. *Blink Bonny* 1799 Forrest.
- Fife & Kinross–shire 1853–55
- Abdie: Blinkbonny – farmhouse + farm. OS1/13/41/3. *Blinkbonny* 1797 Farm horse tax, four farmhorses. E326/10/2/250
- Carnbee: Blinkbonny – small farmhouse + small farm. OS1/13/24/29
- Dunfermline: Blink Bonnie – ‘a row of cottage houses’. OS1/13/127/56.
- Kemback: Blinkbonny – small farm steading + 40 acre farm. OS1/13/57/51
- Markinch: Blinkbonnie – ‘a cottage with a garden attached’. OS1/13/92/10
- Newburn: Blinkbonny – three small dwelling houses. OS1/13/97/51
- Saline: Blink Bonny – ‘a cottage with garden attached’. OS1/13/126/16
- Kincardineshire 1863
- Benholm: Blinkbonny – large farmhouse. OS1/19/4/21
- Lanarkshire 1858–61
- Lesmahagow: Blinkbonny – ‘cothouses small in bad repair’. OS1/21/45/34

- Midlothian (Edinburghshire) 1852–53
- Currie: Blinkbonny – ‘a comfortable farmhouse’ + farm. OS1/11/13/14
- St Cuthberts/West Kirk: Blinkbonny – farmhouse + farm. OS1/11/6/26. *Blinkbony* 1773 Armstrong. *Blinkbonny* 1790 Female servant tax rolls, one servant. E326/6/22/48
- Newbattle: Blinkbonny – a farmhouse + offices + a large farm of land. OS1/11/38/7 *Blinkbonny* 1773 Armstrong. *Blinkbonny* 1789 Horse tax roll, one saddle–horse. E326/9/13/80
- West Calder: Blinkbonny – ‘a row of houses occupied by working people on the farm of Wood Muir’. OS1/11/22/28
- Morayshire 1868–71
- Dyke and Moy: Blinkbonny – ‘a fine dwelling house two storeys high’ + offices. OS1/12/10/57. *Blinkbonny* 1797 Farm horse tax rolls, four farmhorses. E326/10/4/203
- Elgin: Blinkbonnie – ‘A croft house with out offices’. OS1/12/11/58
- Urquhart: Blinkbonnie – ‘Two crofts... 1 storey high’. OS1/12/22/73
- Orkney 1879–80
- Birsay: Blinkbonnie – ‘a small dwelling house’. OS1/23/1/204
- Kirkwall and St Ola: Blinkbonny – ‘a farmhouse with out offices attached’. OS1/23/12/124
- South Ronaldsay: Blinkbonny – ‘a substantial, crofter’s, dwelling, with outoffices attached’. OS1/23/12/124
- South Ronaldsay: Blinkbonny – ‘a small cottage’. OS1/23/20/235
- Stronsay: Blinkbonnie – ‘a small farm’. OS1/23/24/119
- Peeblesshire 1856–58
- Newlands: Blinkbonny – ‘a farm steading with a dwelling house and garden’. OS1/24/30/35. 1752–55 *Blink Bonny* Roy. *Blinkbonny* 1790 Cart tax rolls, one two–wheel cart. E326/7/10/207
- Perthshire 1859–62
- Caputh: Blinkbonnie – ‘a dwelling house, one storey in height’. OS1/25/13/6
- Roxburghshire 1858–60
- Eckford: Blinkbonny – dwelling house two storeys high occupied by labourers. OS1/29/10/24
- Newcastleton: Blinkbonny – ‘a small house one storey high’ occupied by a shepherd, also ‘the farm of Blinkbonny’. OS1/29/7/121. The house was near Blinkbonny Height. OS1/29/7/123

Stirlingshire 1858–61

Slamannan: Blinkbonny – ‘a few cothouses, one story in height’.
OS1/32/23/26

APPENDIX 2

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Blinkbonny Names
not in the Scottish OS Name Books

Berwickshire

Bunkle & Preston: *Blinkbonnie* 1787 Horse tax rolls, one saddle-horse.
E326/9/6/47

East Lothian (Haddingtonshire)

Dunbar: a house occupied by a male servant and his family, probably in
Dawell Brae. *Blinkbonny* 1841 census, 706/3/13.
Dunbar: a group of properties. *Blinkbonny* 1855-56 valuation rolls.
Whittingehame: a small building near Yarrow. *Blink Bonny* 1799 Forrest.
Probably gave its name to Blinkbonnie Plantation: OS1/15/47/65.

Midlothian (Edinburghshire)

Fala and Soutra: a settlement. *Blinkbonny* 1773 Armstrong. This part of the
parish was in East Lothian at that date.
Probably West Calder or Newton: *Blinkbonny* ‘near Danderhall’ 1799 NRS
CS228/B/11/27. There were two Danderhalls in Midlothian.

APPENDIX 3

Blinkbonny Names in the Northumberland OS Name Books†

Bellingham: Blinkbonny - ‘an eminence’ 1862. OS 6 inch Northumberland
Sheet LX, surveyed 1862, published 1866.
Embleton: *Blinkbonny Hotel* 1861. OS 6 inch Northumberland Sheet XXVII,
surveyed 1861, published 1867.
Ford: Blinkbonny – ‘a small farm house and steading’ 1860. OS 6 inch
Northumberland Sheet XIV, surveyed 1860, published 1866.

†The Northumberland OS Name Books are being transcribed and prepared for online publication at the time of writing.