

Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

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Palace Yard

Marked as a historic monument at Enrick on the 1st edition and subsequent OS maps, what appears to have been a moated enclosure around the footings of a large rectangular building is traditionally taken to be the site of a property of the mediaeval bishops of Galloway (i.e. of Whithorn). Edward I of England is supposed to have been staying here on 9th August 1300 when he imposed a fine on the miller of Girthon for 'irregularities'. This identification is plausible, but in the absence of documentation or archaeological investigation, beyond proof. In any case, 'palace' would be a bit of an exaggeration: the bishop's main residence was across Cree Bay (possibly at Clary, where carved stones suggesting a high-status building have been found), the house at Enrick would have served most of the time as a grange (farm and collecting place for teinds in kind), but also as a lodging for the bishop or his officers when visiting this part of the diocese, and it was maybe an adequate stopping place for an English king seeking to assert his authority in the region.

Palfern and Palnure Burns

The Celtic watercourse word **pol*, cognate with English 'pool', occurs very commonly throughout southern Scotland and northern England in Brittonic (*pol*) and Gaelic (*poll*) forms, and adopted into Scots as *pow*. In Brittonic and Gaelic toponymy in these regions it is the standard word for an upland burn.

Palfern Burn (*Pulfern* in Maxwell's *Place-Names of Galloway*) forms part of the northern boundary of Girthon parish, flowing from High Craigeazle down to join the Palnure Burn near the Deer Range on The Queens Way. It is undoubtedly Gaelic **poll-feàrna* 'alder burn'.

The upper stretch of Palnure Burn continues the boundary of Girthon parish from its confluence with Palfern Burn up to its source north of Round Fell, where the line continues to where Pullaugh Burn meets the Black Water of Dee. The name is again Gaelic and formed with a tree-name, **poll an iubhair* 'burn of the yew-trees' (though singular in form, Celtic tree-names are generally collective nouns).

In the past, the glen through which the burn flows was *Glenure*, and in more recent times the name Palnure has been given to the bridge, the inn, and the former railway station and harbour, all on the main road to Newton Stewart where the Burn flows into Cree Bay.

Peat Hill

The south-west spur of Cairntosh Hill. One of four Peat Hills in the Stewartry, and as many as 26 on maps covering Dumfries and Galloway. 'Peat', *pete*, *peit*, was originally a Scots and northern English word, probably of Celtic origin and related both to *pett* 'portion of land', common in place-names in the 'Pictish' north-east of Scotland though not in the south, and to 'piece' which came into English via French but ultimately from a Celtic source. In place-names, 'moss' tends to be used more often for peat bogs, 'peat' was a countable noun for a cut piece, a turf, so the many Peat Hills were probably places where peat was regularly dug, though the name may be a relatively modern English form.

Penwhaile

Penwhaile is a Brittonic or Cumbric place-name. On the 1st edition OS map it is marked on ground among three minor summits, Mid Hill, Herd Hill and Craigbrack, on the Rig of Drumruck, across the Big Water of Fleet from the Clints of Dromore; later OS maps locate it more closely, though in somewhat varied positions, in the valley between Craigbrack and the west side of the Rig, now under forestry plantation.

It is a name that rings a bell for any student of early place-names in Scotland, recalling the site at the east end of the Antonine Wall that must have been early Brittonic **penn-wal* ‘end of the wall’. Bede writing in 731 already called it *Pean-fahel*, so even by his time the second element had begun to come under Old Irish influence, changing *wal* to **fāil*, Bede’s *fahel*; by the time of *Historia Brittonum* the early ninth century, the first element was replaced by early Gaelic *cenn-*, hence the alternative forms in the *Historia*: Pictish (and Cumbric) *Pengual*, **penn-gwal*, and Old Irish *Cenail*, **cenn-fhàil*, modern Kinneil. Bill Patterson has drawn my attention to a possible parallel in Dumfriesshire, Kenziels on The Merse close to the east side of the mouth of the River Annan. The OS Name Book 1848 mentions an embankment here, which is still apparently visible and may be an ancient sea-wall (though Johnson-Ferguson’s suggestion in ‘The Place-Names of Dumfriesshire’, **(aig a’)* *cheann-gheal* ‘(at the) white head’, is a possible alternative origin).

Our Penwhaile is very likely to have had a similar origin. The eponymous wall, and even the precise location, are now lost, but it is conceivable that a wall here (replaced by the time of the Ordnance Survey with the ‘improved’ straight ones now in the FCS plantation) continued the line of the Clints of Dromore on the east side of the Fleet, marking the boundary between farmed land and hill pasture. If so, **penn-wal* might be better translated ‘head-wall’, Scots *heid-dyke*, that ancient and vital feature of the Scottish rural landscape since prehistoric times separating farmed and permanently settled land from summer hill-pasture and hunting and gathering country.

Whatever the precise reference, the survival of this name may be another hint that the mediaeval parish of Girthon preserved, at least in part, the bounds of some more ancient territory. Such a territory could have been the domain of an Iron Age chieftain.

Pibble

To the west of Penwhaile and the Waters of Fleet, on the Fleet/ Cree watershed, lies Pibble, with Pibble Hill and the nineteenth century Pibble Mine. This preserves a Brittonic word of reasonably certain Latin origin: *pāpiliō* meant ‘a butterfly’, but the Vernacular Latin word *papiliō*, perhaps soldiers’ slang, is recorded from early third century onward. It was used for ‘a tent’ and so for the wide range of temporary buildings used in classical and medieval times. It was adopted as Brittonic **papil*, which evolved to Welsh *pebyll* ‘camp’.

This word is found in several place-names in southern Scotland, including Pauples Hill in Wigtownshire (Penninghame), Mosspebble in Dumfriesshire (Ewes), Cairnpapple Hill in West Lothian, Papple in East Lothian (Garvald), and, best-known, Peebles. There are some ten examples in Wales; it seems to be unknown in Cornwall or Brittany. In place-names in the north, it would be likely to refer to temporary bothies used in connection with summer grazing (or, rather, to the sites where these were regularly erected) - either shielings in the hills, or assembly places where livestock

was gathered, and perhaps traded, in spring and autumn (as at Peebles, which became the site of a great fair and livestock market in the middle ages).

There are phonological grounds for inferring that these names are unlikely to have been formed earlier than the tenth century, and landscape history indicates that large-scale transhumance was a feature of the tenth and eleventh centuries, so, although this word was probably current in the north from the late Roman period, its use in naming Pibble and elsewhere probably dates from that period.

Picts' Kiln

The people first referred to as *Picti* in the late third century AD certainly lived north of the Forth, and the Kingdom (or kingdoms) of the Picts known from the sixth to ninth centuries lay in the north-east, between the Dornoch Firth and Firth of Forth. We know from place-names in that region that the Picts spoke a language different, but not greatly so, from the Brittonic spoken south of the Forth. After the Pictish kingdom had, in the ninth century, been taken over by a dynasty of Scots, and the Gaelic language had superseded Pictish in that region, the Gaelic word *Cruithne* came to be used more loosely for people who spoke a language similar to Pictish, or who were simply perceived as belonging to an 'older' ethnic group than the Scots or the English. Thus from the middle ages into modern times and even the present day, the myth of 'Galloway Picts' has flourished, and there was even a family on the Rhinns named Creeney. Such 'Picts' may have been folk who continued using Cumbric at a time when Gaelic had become the more common language, or who were for some other reason still identified as ethnically distinct from the Gall-Ghàidheil (see under Ardwall above).

So it is not surprising that local lore identified ancient remains as the work of 'Picts', and antiquarians, and indeed Ordnance Surveyors, accepted this until relatively recent times. So we have a pair of 'Picts Kilns' (sic: one with 'supposed site of') marked as historic monuments on the 1st edition OS map short distances north-west and south-west of Upper Rusko. According to the Canmore website, there are two old corn-drying kilns of unknown date in the same 100m square as Upper Rusko, as well as three prehistoric burnt mounds, two of which are shown on the current OS Explorer Map close to the locations of the 'Picts Kilns' on the original version. It is an area rich in relics of human occupation over the past three millennia.

There is a 'Pict Kiln' in Minnigaff parish, east of Garlies Castle across the Penkiln Burn.

Plumtree Croft

At the time of the first Ordnance Survey, Plumtree Croft was a wedge of woodland between the grounds of Ardwall House and Boreland Moat, though now it is open land. While it might (as the Place-names of the Stewartry website suggests) be the site of an old smallholding, that is a relatively modern sense of 'croft': in place-names the word more usually refers simply to a small, enclosed field, especially one near a house.

If the name originated in earlier Scots, the fruit would probably have been damsons rather than wild plums, the ancestors of the cultivated type. But given the location, an English name of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century referring to a cultivated plum-tree is perhaps more likely.

Plunton

This substantial estate in Borgue parish is evidenced today by a range of names including Plunton Castle, Burn, Hill, House, Mains, Mill, Bridge, and Lennox Plunton. If Daphne Brooke's

interpretation, ‘plum enclosure’, is correct, the name is likely to be mediaeval, though if taken as ‘plum-tree farm’ it might be from the later years of Northumbrian rule. In either case, the ‘plums’ would have probably been damsons (see Plumtree Croft above). However the earliest records, *Puncktoune* 1457 and *Pluncktoune* 1458, raise doubts, and, bearing in mind that the vowel is long in both Old English *plūm* and Scots *ploom*, it is not wholly certain that word really is present in this name, notwithstanding later forms that include *Plomtoun* and *Pluwmpytoun* 1461, *Plumtounne* 1482, *Pluntoun* 1484, *Plumtoun* and *Plumptyoun* in Blaeu’s Atlas. It is good example of the lesson that the better-documented a place-name is, the more difficult it can turn out to be!

Poind Fauld

A *poind-fauld* in Scots corresponds to a ‘penfold’ or ‘pinfold’ in English, an enclosure where straying animals were impounded, to be reclaimed on payment of a fine. A fairly large rectangular enclosure is marked as Poind Fauld on the 1st edition OS map in a loop of the Big Water of Fleet south of Craiglowrie, and although nothing remains of it on the ground or on later maps, its probable outline can still be discerned on the Google Earth satellite view. The Canmore website declares it ‘post-medieval’.

Pool Ness

On the Big Water of Fleet above Rusko, between the Scrogs of Drumruck and Meikle Bennan, apparently a favoured place for both angling and swimming. There is a small waterfall above the pool, and Maxwell was surely right in recognising the name as Gaelic **poll an easa* ‘pool of the waterfall’, *poll* here having the sense of ‘a deep part of a stream’. Poulanass, a beauty-spot in Glendalough Co. Wicklow, is a more dramatic **poll an easa*.

The notion, recycled on the Kirkcudbrightshire Places website, of a Celtic goddess of water named Ness, is a fantasy. Ness or Nessa, a queen, not a goddess, is indeed a significant figure in the Ulster Cycle of legends, but there is no reason to associate her with the Fleet. The loch and river-name Ness (Gaelic *Nis*) is unlikely to have any connection with her or with our pool: it is ancient, probably pre-Celtic, from a root-word likely to be associated with flowing water, but not with any known deity, Celtic or otherwise. In any case, **poll Neisse* would become something like ‘Pool Neish’ in Scots and English. Norse *nes* ‘nose, point’ (see Cardoness above) is likewise not relevant to this pool.

According to the Kirkcudbrightshire Names site, this is also sometimes known as the Greyling Pool. There is an inscription on a rock beside the pool which says ‘Greyling put in the Fleet 22nd Sep 1870’, grayling (as it is usually spelt these days) being a freshwater fish of the salmon family.

Port McAdam

Port McAdam was built about 1837 as a new harbour for Gatehouse to replace Boat Green, the estuary downstream having been canalised in 1823-4 to allow vessels of up to 300 tons to come upstream. Although the canal-building was an enterprise of Alexander Murray III, the construction and management of the wharf was outsourced to a local businessman, David McAdam, after whom it was named. A Port Cottage was recorded on the 1851 Census, but appears on no maps nor in any later records. It was presumably in the vicinity of the harbour.

Pringles Hill

Pringles Hill at Auchenlarie is presumably named from some person named Pringle who lived or farmed here, but I have no information as to his or her identity. The surname Pringle is fairly common

in Galloway (the former Free Kirk Manse in Borgue is now Pringleton House), though most associated with the Borders. Hoppringle in the upland parish of Stow, formerly in Midlothian, is the ‘enclosed valley’ (Old English *hōp*) long associated with that family, though not necessarily the origin of the surname, though it is not necessarily the origin of the surname. Hoppringle is an ‘inverted’ place-name, suggesting Celtic influence on its formation (see Kirkcudbright above), Stow is a parish with a significant cluster of Cumbric names. The second element may be **ringil* (Welsh *rhingyll*), an ‘officer of the peace’ responsible for maintaining law and order: a charter of William the Lion from around 1170 refers to persons having such duties in that area. Less likely in this locality would be a formation with Old Norse *gil*, or its Scots and northern English form ‘gill’; the first element in that case might be the Old Norse personal name *Prjónn*, literally ‘pin’ or ‘peg’.

Pulcree

Pulcree is the name of the home farm of Rusko, but it belongs primarily to the Pulcree Burn, a typical Gaelic *poll* ‘upland burn’ (see Palfern and Palnure Burns above). Rising on Scar Hill and flowing south, then curving south--east past Pulcree Farm to join the Fleet above Standing Stone Pool, the upper reach is now named Ornockenoch Burn. It has been dammed upstream (see Ornockenoch above), and straightened below Pulcree.

Pollincree 1456, *Poolkree* on Blaeu’s map, *Polcree*, *Pillincree* both 1604, is pretty certainly **poll na criche*, ‘burn of the boundary’, cf. Cree above, the boundary being presumably that of the demesne of Rusko Castle, later of the Rusko Estate. Given the association of Pulcree and *Glenskireburn* in the earliest, 1494, record of Rusko, one wonders whether this burn may have been the mediaeval boundary between Anwoth and Kirkdale parishes, the Rusko lands being added when the boundaries were re-drawn in 1618: see Kirkdale above and Rusko below.

The wee Pulcree Burn in Minnigaff rises near Garlies Castle, and might likewise have been a boundary of land associated with the castle, but on the 1st edition OC map it is spelt *Pulcrae*. Other possible origins for ‘-cree’ or ‘-crae’ can be found under Cree above.

Pulwhirrin Burn

Pulwhirrin Burn (spelt *Pulwhirran* by Maxwell) is the main watercourse of the mediaeval parish of Kirkandrews, rising at the watershed near Conchieton and flowing south through Auchenhay, Plunton, Barmagachan and Rattrra to the sea below Kirkandrews. It is doubtless a Celtic *pol*, probably Gaelic *poll*, though the second element is a little problematic. It may be *fhuarain*, genitive of *fuaran* ‘a natural spring’. The source of the stream has been obscured by mill and road works over the centuries, most recently the realignment of the A75, but it must have been an abundant source of fresh water. ‘Softened’ (and silenced) ‘fh’ is not strictly regular in Scottish Gaelic on a genitive masculine noun unless there is a definite article (*an fhuarain*), but the article may have been lost, and in any case the equivalent is *uráin* in Ulster Gaelic and *varrane* in Manx, something similar in Galloway Gaelic could well have become ‘-whirrin’ or ‘-whirran’ in Scots speech. Other possibilities would be *a’chuirn*, an early genitive form of *càrn* ‘cairn’, though no conspicuous cairn is now to be found near it, or else *a’chaorainn* ‘rowan’.