

Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

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Quarterland

A farm by the Little Water of Fleet on the way to Drumruck is unusual in having this Scots or English name, corresponding to Gaelic *ceathramh*, a common element in Galloway place-names, occurring occasionally as a single-word name as at Carhowe, a former house on the old road from Twynholm to Senwick. The quarterland was an important unit of land-assessment in mediaeval Galloway corresponding to a quarter of a *davoch*, see Carrouch Burn above. It was a substantial unit (defined in terms of yield rather than acreage) sufficient for a large farm or several smaller holdings. The Girthon Quarterland may be a relic of such a territory, but it could be a more recent division of an estate. There is a Quarter Land (sic) at Bennan by Loch Ken, but this appears to be a field-name, a relatively modern enclosure.

Queen's Rig

This ridge (see Rig of Burnfoot etc. below) between Laughengie Hill and Ewe Hill, overlooking the Flesh Market from the east, is unlikely to have any royal connections. Old English *cwēn* was simply 'a woman', and while a modern English queen wears a crown, a Scots *quean* is just a lassie. Women played important parts in transhumance farming, tending the livestock on the summer hill-grazings, milking and butter- and cheese-making. Maybe this stretch of upland was reserved for the girls to do their share of the work outwith the critical watch of their elders. See also Sheil Rig below.

However, if the singular 's on OS maps is a guide, the ridge might have been associated with someone named Queen. The surname Queen is current in our region (these days chiefly in Dumfriesshire, it seems). In Galloway, Queen would be a short form of MacQueen, again nothing to do with royalty, but an anglicised form of *Mac Shuibhne*, 'son of Sweeney'.