

Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

==== W ====

Waulk Mill

A *waulk* mill was a fulling mill, found throughout Scotland wherever cloth was woven. The Scots word *waulk* (Mactaggart spells it ‘wauck’) corresponds to English ‘walk’, and both words in the late middle ages developed the specialised meaning of fulling cloth, probably picking it up from Flemish weavers who used their verb *walken* in this sense.

A building at Skyreburn is named Waulk Mill on the 1st edition OS map, with a small lint (flax) mill alongside, near the site where the school was later built. Enrick Mill – or, rather, one of the mills at Enrick – was a waulk mill. It was served by the burn that begins as Gaitgill Burn, then Littleton Burn, and is now culverted under the Enrick Burn to flow down to a diversion into Ass House Strand and thence into Cally Lake. The section by Enrick and through the Cally Woods is still known as Waulk Burn or Waulk Mill Burn. Other waulk mills in Galloway are, or were, at Kirkcowan (Waulk Mill), Sorbie (Waulkmill), New Galloway (Waukmill, sic), Kirkpatrick Durham (Waulk Mill Pool), and Moniaive (Waulkmill Cottages).

Wellees Rig

A forestry-covered hill south-east of the Fell of Fleet is named Wellees Rig, in distinction from The Rig of Wellees to the north across the Black Water of Dee in Kells parish. Scots *ee* or *ey* ‘eye’ was commonly used for a hole or opening in the ground, a *welle-ey* was the mouth of a spring. The terrain on a *rig* ‘ridge’ (see Rig of Burnfoot etc. above) such as this is vividly captured in a line from John Bellenden’s Scots version of Hector Boece’s *History and Chronicles of Scotland*, c1536: ‘Thay knew nocht the ground and fell sometimes in swardis of mossier and sum time in well eys’.

Whillan Hill and Woods

Whillan Hill stands in Cally Woods between Bush Loch and Enrick, alongside the modern road, following the later course of the Military Road, into Gatehouse. It is now edged on the east, south and west by woodland, on the 1st edition OS map there were separate Whillan East and West Woods. Gaelic *cuileann* is ‘holly’, but the ‘Wh-’ implies that the name was probably adopted into Scots from a genitive form with the initial mutated to *ch-*, in a Gaelic name-phrase such as **àird a’chuilinn*, ‘holly hill’. ‘Whillan’ occurs in several names in Galloway, including Drumwhillans (see above), Allwhillan (lost) in Kells, Knockwhillan in Balmaghie and in Rerrick (lost), Dalwhillan in Colvend, and Derwhillan (lost) in New Luce.

Whinny Hill

Scots *whins* are gorse-bushes, and not surprisingly there are plenty of *whins* in place-names in the Stewartry, including seven Whinny Hills. The one near Gatehouse is a modest eminence, currently planted with conifers, to the north-east of Disdow.

White Hill etc.

‘White’ is by far the most common colour adjective in Galloway place-names. There are, for example, as many as seventy White Hills or Whitehills on OS maps covering our region, including White Hill Plantation in Cally Park. In such hill-names, along with the White Top of Culreoch, and White Brae

across the Little Water of Fleet, the reference is probably to upland grasses that give a bleached appearance in winter, like Gaelic *buidhe* (see Craigenboy and Tenniewee above). Such vegetation contrasts with the darker, heather covered peat: the White Water of Dee is less peaty than its Black partner, the White Burn that flows from the Fell of Fleet down into the Black Water of Dee is – or at least at some time was perceived to be – similarly clear. The White Bays at Mossyard and Sandgreen have relatively light-coloured sand in contrast to the estuarine silt, making them popular beaches.

Whiteside

Whiteside Farm up the Skyreburn Glen on the eastern end of Cairnharrow, is a long-established settlement, it was the home of John Bell, one of five Covenanters who were shot dead in 1685; he is buried in Anwoth kirkyard. Like in other 'White' names above, there is a contrast between the soil and vegetation here (under Whiteside Plantation, shown on the 1st edition OS map and little changed today) and on the opposite side of the glen; Whiteside Burn flows into the Skyre Burn from the west, Black Burn joins it from the east.

Wilton

Wilton is marked on the 1st edition and subsequent OS maps as the name of the subsidiary hill on the western spur of the Fell of Laghead, towards the Gatehouse-Laurieston road, at the head of the Laghead Burn. The OS Name Book says, 'from what circumstance or object it derives its name is not known by the inhabitants of the locality'. It has the appearance of a settlement-name: there are traces of shieling huts here, but not of any permanent dwelling. Perhaps the second element was originally Old English *dūn* 'hill' rather than *tūn* 'farm', the two words often get confused in place-names. The first element might well have been *wild*: there are two Wiltons and a Wildon Grange in North Yorkshire where the locations and early records show they were 'wild', uncultivated places, and that would suit this location high on the Fleet/Dee watershed.