

Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

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Rainton

This farm, now famed for its ice-cream, cheese, and visitors' centre, is *Ramtoun* on Blaeu's map, though this could be a miscopying of **Raintoun* on Pont's lost original. Rainton is listed in the Old Valuation Roll of 1682 as; this farm and its neighbours – *Cuffietoun* (now on Cally Mains farm), *Clean* (see Saul's Clain on Boreland of Girthon), Carrick, *Knockevin and Milertoun* (see Knockewan and Millerton below for both of these) - formed the original core of Murray family lands in Girthon (thanks to David Devereux for this information).

Old English *ramm* 'ram' is a more southern word for what in Scotland and northern England is commonly a 'tup', though it is found in at least two place-names in southern Scotland in mediaeval records (see the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*).^[1] But Rainton is probably the authentic form, and Old English **hraefn-tūn* 'raven-farm' is a possible origin. I don't think ravens nest here now, but they were formerly widespread in the Galloway lowlands, nesting in trees as well as on craggy outcrops, and only retreated to the hill country as farming, tree-felling and the activities of gamekeepers intensified during the nineteenth century.

Hraefn, and Norse *Hrafn*, were popular boys' names in Anglo-Saxon and Viking times, and another personal name that might be in the background would be Old English *Rægn*, corresponding to Norse *Ragn* or *Reginn*, which are all short forms for various two-syllable names. Early records for Rainton in Houghton, Co. Durham show it was Old English *Rægen-ing-tun*, formed with a short form of one *Rægenwald* known to have been associated with that place. A similar origin is proposed for Renton in Coldingham, Berwickshire, by Glasgow University's ongoing survey of place-names in that county, and could apply here.^[2]

However, given the location of Rainton next to the parish boundary between Girthon and Borgue (formerly Kirkandrews), Norse *rein* 'a boundary strip' might be considered. Rains Brook in Warwickshire is on the county boundary, Rainworth Notts on a former wapentake boundary. Although I don't find it in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, *reann* is recorded in William Dickinson's *Dictionary of Cumberland Dialect* as 'a balk left for a boundary-line in a common field'; it occurs (in various spellings, *rein*, *rain*, etc.), in field-names in that county, and frequently in Westmorland, Yorkshire and the shires of the Danelaw. Although it generally refers to a boundary strip or baulk, it sometimes seems to be applied to a watercourse, so might have been an earlier name for the Goat Strand here. See also under Margrie Meadow and Auld Mare for the possibility that these names might also refer to the boundary, which may pre-date the formation of parishes in or about the 12th century.

^[1] The absence of -s- in any of the records rules out *hramsa* 'ramsons, wild garlic', though that certainly grows here.

^[2] The absence of -s- also makes a Scandinavian personal name unlikely, but the Old English connective *ing-* occurs in Edingham and Penninghame.

Rattra

Rattra in Kirkandrews, *Rotrow* on Blaeu's map, bears an interesting and significant Brittonic/Cumbric name, one shared by two Rattrays, in Blairgowrie in Perthshire and Buchan in Aberdeenshire.

The early Celtic word **rātis* meant ‘an earthen rampart’, thence ‘a fortified enclosure’; it occurs in as many as seventeen place-names recorded in classical sources in the Celtic-speaking regions of the Roman Empire. It retained the sense of ‘a fort’, specifically ‘a ringfort’, in Ireland, where *rath* is very common in place-names. However, in Welsh, Cumbric and Pictish it came to be used (in the form **rawd*) for the home of a chieftain, and thence for an estate or a district administered from such a residence.

The second part of the name is *trev* ‘a farm’, both a habitation and the land associated with it. Threave, some twelve miles away on the Dee, is simply *trev*, and *was* probably ‘*the* farm’, having a specific role or status within an estate, it may well have been the ‘home farm’, ‘mains’, of the local chieftain. And likewise **rawd-drev* would have been ‘the principal farm of a district or estate administered from a chieftain’s fort (**rawd*)’, doubtless the neighbouring Robertson Moat (see Robertson below, Moat above). An alternative etymology, with the intensive prefix *rö-* (Modern Welsh *rhy-*), would give **rö-drev* ‘great farm’, implying much the same.

Rig of Burnfoot, Cairn, Craigbrack

Scots *rig*, from Old Norse *hryggr*, corresponding to Old English *hrycg*, ‘ridge’, is unsurprisingly common in the corrugated landscape of the Stewartry. There are 32 ‘Rig of’ names in our county, predominantly in the parishes of Minnigaff and Kells, but Girthon has these three along with Queen’s Rig, Sheil Rig and Wellees Rig; see under each of the defining names.

Ringdoo Point

A Scots and northern English *doo* is a pigeon of any kind, including rock doves which would have nested on the Stewartry coast, but are now hopelessly interbred with racing pigeons. A ‘ringdoo’ might be a collared dove, but those are quite recent incomers and no such name for them is recorded in the Scottish National Dictionary. So it seems the headland to the south-west of Mossyard Bay, forming the angle between Fleet Bay and Cree Bay, was Gaelic, apparently **rinn dubh* ‘black point’. There are two more Ringdoo Points in Galloway, one (with Ringdoo Bay to the east and – fortuitously? - Dove Cave to the west), a relatively modest rocky headland on the coast below Borgue, the other a low-lying sandy point at the east end of Torrs Warren on Luce Bay. Nevertheless, it is not obvious why any of these should have been seen as ‘black’, or even relatively dark: both the points on the Stewartry coast are formed of the greywacke common in the county, with igneous intrusions and lichen crusts, but not markedly different from neighbouring cliffs; the one on Luce Bay is now covered by dunes, though a dark rocky outcrop might have been a distinctive feature in the past.

Roberton

As noted under Moat above, Robertson Moat was probably established in the early thirteenth century by a junior member of the family of Ralph de Campania who held the motte and bailey, at Boreland of Borgue (see Boreland above), and named after one of the two or more Roberts in the de Campania lineage. Recent scholarly research has confirmed that a significant proportion of place-names of this form, with a personal name plus *-to(u)n*, were formed in southern Scotland and northern England during the period 1100-1250, Robertson can pretty confidently be ascribed to that time (cf. Edgarton above).

Rock Pool

This seemingly rather nondescript name was given to the basin in the riverbed at Boat Green, which formed the harbour of the young industrial town of Gatehouse before the canal and Port McAdam

were constructed. Ships up to 100 tons could sail on the tide as far as this point, where the sand, mud and saltmarsh of the estuary give way to visible rock in the riverbed and banks. There may well have been a more conspicuous rock here, engineering and the build-up of silt may have made it less obvious.

Rough Loop

A meander of the Big Water of Fleet through sand and gravel east of Little Cullendoch Moss is marked as Rough Loop on the 1st edition OS map, but the course of the river is very variable along this stretch, and on current maps the loop appears as a curving ‘oxbow’ inlet by-passed by the main flow of the water. In contrast to the mossy ground to the west, the gritty surface here is indeed rough.

Rough Point

The rocky headland and foreshore at the north end of Airds Bay, overlooked by Rough Point Hill, is a place of rough water when the tide is up. Lying close to the main channel up the Fleet estuary, and to the confluence with the Skyreburn and the entrance to the canal, it would demand careful navigation to avoid it.

Roundfell

Round Fell is a prominent hill answering to its name near the north-western corner of Girthon parish. A farm named Roundfell is listed in the 1819 Valuation Roll and the 1851 Census, and marked on the 1st edition and subsequent OS maps, on the Palfern Burn to the west of the hill. A ruin across the burn on the 1st edition map may be of an earlier dwelling, but the nineteenth century farm is itself now a ruin in FCS forest. Roundfell was the name of another hill and farm in Colvend parish, likewise now hidden in forestry.

Rusko

Rusko Tower is marked on Blaeu’s map as Rusko, and that spelling is used nowadays for the Tower, along with Rusko House, Lodge and Mains, and Upper Rusko with Upper Rusko Bridge, Burn, Cottages and Wood, though on the 1st edition OS map these are spelt *Rusco*, and *Ruscoe*, Ruscoe are also found. John A’Carsane’s deposition to his daughter and son-in-law of 1494 includes Rusko in an extensive estate including *Glenkyreburn* (see Skyreburn below) and Pulcree (discussed above). The Skyreburn is a good two miles west of Rusko, with the not inconsiderable bulk of Kenlum Hill in between, it was a large tract of upland, and it is not clear whether the name Rusko belonged originally to the location of John’s tower-house, or to all or part of the landholding.

There is a Glenrusco in Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire: this is mentioned as *Glenruskow* in a charter recording the conveyance of that and other holdings in 1341 from Malcolm Fleming, Lord of Biggar to his cousin James Fleming. It is intriguing that the same Malcolm Fleming was, in the same year 1341, created Earl of Wigtown, and in 1342 was granted the lands of Cardoness, by David II (thanks to Alistair Livingston for bringing this possible link to my attention). The extent of those lands is unknown, they may have included what later became John A’Carsane’s estate. It is at least a curious coincidence, and the possibility of a transfer of name needs to be noted.

Maxwell interprets the name as Gaelic *riagach*, ‘moory, boggy lands’; in fact, *riag*, possibly related to Old English *risc* ‘rush’, is used for rushes, sedge and cotton-grass, vegetation typical of moorland bogs, and *riagach* for land not fit for ploughing because of such vegetation, though it still had some

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value for grazing and as a source of thatch and bedding. The words were borrowed into Scots as *risk*, *risky*, as in Risky Burn in Fife. In Irish place-names *riasc* and *riascach* occur fairly commonly, e.g. Rousky Co. Tyrone. Glenrusco, mentioned above, is likely to be **gleann-riagach* ‘boggy glen’, or **Riasgach* may have been an earlier name for what is now Glenrusco Burn. Whether or not the name of our Rusko was transferred from Tweedsmuir, the description *riagach* could have applied to the moorland overlooking the Tower, or have been an earlier name of the Upper Rusko Burn or one of the other watercourses in the vicinity.

However, there is another possibility. Maxwell refers to ‘Ruscoe in Yorkshire, pronounced Roosca’. This is presumably Ruscoe near Middlesmoor in upper Nidderdale; there is also Roscoe Lowe, a hill above Adlington in Lancashire. Neither of these is likely to have a Gaelic origin, Norse **rǫ-skogr* is more likely: *skogr* is ‘a wood’, *rǫ* may be ‘roe-deer’, or an identical word meaning ‘a boundary’. Either could be appropriate to Rusko, located in what was always a well-wooded part of the Fleet Valley, still frequented by roe-deer, but also at the northern extremity of the parish of Anwoth (but see also discussion under Pulcree). While there are relatively few names of certain Old Norse origin in the area, there are several that are possible, or at least show Scandinavian influence, including the river-name Fleet, the parish-name Anwoth, Skyreburn, Corse of Slakes, Cardoness, Ardwall and Barholm, see entries for all of these.

Rusko Bridge is otherwise Castramont Bridge, built 1862. Prior to that, the river was crossed here by stepping stones. The tower-houses at Rusko and Castramont were thus close to the point where travellers using the high route from the east came down from Laghead to cross the Fleet, as well as guarding routes up the valley.

Rutherford’s Monument, Walk, Well and Witness

The Rev. Samuel Rutherford is an important figure in the history of the Church in Scotland. He was minister of Anwoth from 1627, it was said of him ‘he was always praying, always preaching, always visiting the sick, always catechising, always writing and studying’. His Calvinistic writings led in 1636 to his exile by church authorities to Aberdeen, though he continued to keep in contact with his parishioners by letter. Following the re-establishment of Presbyterianism in 1638, he was made Professor of Divinity at St Andrews, where his writings arguing the case against the divine right of kings and the episcopate, and in favour of the priesthood of all believers and church government by the faithful, were of fundamental importance in the formulation of Presbyterian doctrine.

He seems to have been a popular, conscientious minister, though many accounts of him date from around the time, 1842, when his Monument was erected at its prominent point on the Boreland Hills, and tend towards hagiography: at that time, Scotland was again wracked with disputes concerning the relationship between kirk and state – from the crown to local lairds – and the Disruption was about to separate the Free from the Established Church. Rutherford’s Walk is the path he would have used between his residence (see Bush o’ Bield above) and the Old Kirk.

I have suggested above that the name Anwoth may indicate a church that was already ‘ancient’ when the Gaelic language was introduced, probably in the tenth century. Though the oldest part of the existing building dates only from 1627, the proximity of the Old Kirk to a well is another hint of a possibly early Christian foundation, maybe superseding an even earlier pagan cult. Several mediaeval churches in Galloway have wells close by, most named for universal saints (St. Andrews Well at Kirkandrews for example, and see Lady’s Well above), or major figures of the early church in

Galloway (e.g. St. Ringan, i.e. Ninian, at Kelton, St. Winnian at Kirkgunzeon), though a few may commemorate the original founders (e.g. the obscure St. Glassen at Rerrick). But it is ironic that at Anwoth any pagan, early Christian or later mediaeval dedication has been replaced by the name of the sternly Calvinist Rev. Rutherford – one wonders whether he would have approved, but such Biblical sayings as Proverbs 10:11 ‘the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life’ would have been familiar to him and his flock.

Rutherford’s Witness beside the old track from Anwoth Kirk to Skyreburn is a nice example of local lore. The ‘Witness’ is a group of stone boulders; the Rev. Rutherford is said to have discovered some of his parishioners playing football here after his Sunday service at Anwoth Kirk; there are many tales of such sinners being turned by earlier saints into stone, but the Presbyterian divine simply denounced them for playing on the Sabbath and ‘called on the stones to be witnesses between them and him’ – which no doubt sufficed to petrify the Sabbath-breaking soccer-players! It is tempting to see a hint of ‘paganism’ in this story, but the learned Puritan divine was on firm Biblical ground, no doubt consciously alluding to Genesis 31:45, 52 where Jacob sets up a stone and says ‘(let) this pillar be witness’, and Joshua 24:26-27 where Joshua likewise sets up a stone and says ‘this stone shall be a witness unto us’. The folklore concerning the stones, and Rutherford’s Well, is no doubt rooted in beliefs going back a very long way (as are those incidents in the Bible), but Dr. Rutherford would have been mortified by any suggestion of an inadvertent lapse into paganism.