

Some Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

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Academy Land

The land on the Cally Estate between the house that had been built in 1796 for the Episcopalian chaplain of Cally and rector of Gatehouse or Cally Academy (see Cushat Wood below) and the presumed Episcopalian chapel (see Cross Cottage) is marked as Academy Land on the 1st edition OS map. It was probably allowed to the Academy for growing food. Part of it is now covered by the Cally Woods, the rest forms part of the Cally Golf Course.

Aikyhill

Aikyhill, upstream of Carstramon on the east side of the confluence of the Big and Little Waters of Fleet, looks to be Scots, ‘oaky hill’. The adjective *aikie* is only found in the SND in the mysterious though delightful children’s phrase *aikie guineas* recorded by Jamieson (1822) for ‘small flat shells bleached by the sea’; ‘oaky’ was used figuratively in English for ‘hard, tough’ in the seventeenth century, but as ‘abounding in oaks’ only from the mid-nineteenth, according to the OED. Nevertheless, *Akaside* appears as a place-name in a Melrose charter as early as 1213-19 (thanks to William Patterson for this information), so *aikie* is one of a good many words evidenced in place-names long before they appear in the vocabulary of surviving texts.

A different name, Shekinah, was used for some years in recent times when the property belonged to the wife of the pastor of a local Evangelical church. It is biblical Hebrew (*shekhinah*), primarily ‘a dwelling-place’, but used especially for the presence of God in the Tabernacle and subsequently in the Temple.

Airds

Airds Farm is recorded from c1690.

Two closely-related Gaelic words *àrd* and *àirde* are used very commonly in Scottish place-names for ‘a height’. However, *àirde* is also used for ‘a point, promontory’; in Irish place-names, *ard* is generally ‘a height’ and *airde* ‘a point’, but the two are not so consistently distinguished in names in Scotland. So **Àirde* here probably referred primarily to Airds Hill, though possibly to Rough Point.

Àirde occurs quite commonly as a simplex (single element) name in Galloway, e.g. Aird near Stranraer, but it often has the Scots plural *-is*, English *-s*, added: other places named Airds in the Stewartry include Airds of Kells, with Airds Craig, Airds Wood and Airds House; Airds near Balcary on Auchencairn Bay, with Airds Heugh, Airds Point and Airds Cottage; Airds Hill near Parton; Airds Glen in Crossmichael parish; Airds on the Nith estuary in Troqueer parish, with Airds Hill, Merse and Point. Such forms may hint that the Gaelic predecessor was the plural form of *àrd*, *àird*, and imply more than one summit, but it can indicate that a landholding named **Àirde* was at some time subdivided into two or more portions. Airds Hill isn’t obviously multi-summitted, it was probably **Àirde*, and the farm and landholding, perhaps at some time subdivided, were named from it.

Across the water, The Ard or Ards on the Isle of Man (referring to Maughold Head), and the Ards Peninsula in County Down (*Aird Uladh*, ‘peninsula of the Ulstermen’) are comparable: in both these cases, the added *-s* is apparently fortuitous, carrying no particular meaning.

Alderlea, Elderslie

Two adjacent properties at the southern end of Fleet Street in Gatehouse, overlooking Alder Pool in the Fleet. The 1st edition OS 6” map shows Alderlea as ‘Alder Cottage’, and the two names seem frequently to have been confused with one another.

The tree-name, in standard English ‘alder’, is from Old English *alor*. The (fourteenth century) development of Middle English *aller* to *alder* is a southern English feature, in the north the /d/ sound was

not intruded. However, the influence of southern Standard English is evident in the name of Alder Pool, after which these properties are presumably named.

The SW Scots form *eller* is reflected (for example) in Ellerslie at Tongland and Ellerslee near Drumlanrig Castle. Elderslie near Paisley and Ellerslie near Kilmarnock compete for the title of birthplace of Sir William Wallace. Alternation between *eller* and ‘alder’ led to confusion with the southern English name ‘elder’ for what in Scots is the *bourtrees*. That, along with the need to differentiate the two neighbouring properties, and its patriotic association with the Wallace, probably explain Elderslie.

Old English *lēah* ‘a clearing’ rivals *tūn* ‘a farm’ as the commonest place-name element in much of England, though it is rather less common in the northernmost counties and southern Scotland; however it does occur, in our region typically as –lie or –lee, as we have seen at Ellerslie and Ellerslee. The Middle English development of this word to mean ‘a meadow, grazing land’ survives as ‘lea’ in English, but the Galloway Scots form is *lay*.

So Alderlea, like Alder Pool, is very much an ‘English’ name, comparable to Alderley in Gloucestershire (though the Alderleys in Cheshire are formed from an OE personal name, not ‘alder’). Elderslie (now called Glendale) is closer to the local Scots form seen at Ellerslie.

Algower Strand

The burn flowing down from Bengray to Loch Whinyeon was probably **Allt a'ghobhar* ‘goat burn’ (not ‘glen of the goats’ as on the Place-Names in the Stewartry Website 18.08.16: perhaps there has been confusion with Glengaber in Kirkconnell, Dumfriesshire). It is conceivable, though, that Gaelic speakers reinterpreted a Cumbric word, **gwover* (modern Welsh *gofer*) ‘a small stream’, as *gobhar* ‘goat’.

Scots speakers unaware of the meaning of *allt* have added *strand*, another word for a wee burn; it was probably related to Middle English *strind* with similar meaning, found in the poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and the place-name Strines in Derbyshire (now S. Yorkshire), and ultimately to the verb ‘strain’ (with a ‘strainer’), but only remotely to ‘strand’ in the sense of the strip of land just above a river or shore, or in the sense of a slender thread or piece of hair. It is very common in our area, there are more than fifty ‘strands’ in the Stewartry alone.

Maxwell in *The Place-Names of Galloway* 1931 has a perplexing entry for Algower, beginning ‘a hill of 2063 feet (in) Carsphairn’. There is no such hill, but comparing his *Studies in the Topography of Galloway* 1887, it seems that Sir Herbert, or his printer, mistakenly inserted a slightly revised text intended for Alhang into the entry for Algower. Alhang in the 1887 work is misplaced before Algower; the same text appears unchanged in its correct place in the 1931 publication. The rest of the entry for Algower, explaining that *gobhar* here is likely to refer to goats rather than horses, is appropriate to the Strand, and is essentially the same in both of Maxwell’s books.

Altiwhat

The name of the burn running down from the Fell of Fleet into Loch Fleet, although OS maps seem to imply the name is also used for the cleugh it runs through. It is **Allt a'chait* ‘(wild) cat burn’ (not **Allt na chat* as on the Place-Names in the Stewartry Website 18.08.16). Maxwell misplaces it in Balmaclellan parish

Anacarrie Ford

This name appears on a plan of the Fleet estuary fords in the Stewartry Museum (accession number 1981/22/02: I am grateful to Dr David Devereux for bringing this to my attention). The date, and the identity of ‘Mr. Tait’ who undertook the survey, are uncertain, but it is probably from the mid- to late 18th century. The ford crosses the Fleet from near Barhill, west of Girthon Kirk, to the foreshore below Ardwall House.

Anacarrie has a Gaelic name, probably **Àth na-* ‘ford of the’, with *carraigh* (early Gaelic *coirthe*, Irish *cairthe*) ‘rock, stone’ (or the more common, related, word with the same meaning, *carraige*), possible as the final element; whether any prominent rock is still visible there I do not know, changes to the estuary

in the past two centuries - especially the building of the canal (the crossing was close to where the sluice was constructed at the entrance to the canal) and extensive drainage works on the Cally side - have probably altered the low-tide surface quite a bit.

An alternative (suggested by Michael Ansell) would be *caraidh*, genitive of *caradh*, 'a fish weir': maps don't indicate any weir at this point, though again engineering works have doubtless modified the geography, and fish traps are indeed likely to have been placed in this part of the estuary. In Irish Gaelic (*cora*, *coraidh*) the meaning can in any case extend to 'a causeway'. The word occurs quite frequently in Ulster place-names, sometimes as 'carry', e.g. Ballycarry and Knocknacarry, both in Co. Antrim, Doochary Co. Donegal: all these are on river weirs. It is not so common in Scotland, but does occur in place-names, e.g. Torr na caraidh (n.b. not *coraidh*) overlooking a weir on Loch Garry, Inveness-shire.

Áth[a] is a prolific element in Irish, and quite common in Scottish, place-names from the earliest records onward, e.g. it is reported to be the commonest place-name generic in the great early mediaeval saga, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. However, we cannot necessarily assume Anacarrick goes back to the earliest use of Gaelic in our area, the name could have been formed at any date while the language was current, say the 10th - 15th centuries. On the other hand, if it was a reliable crossing-place, the routeway itself could go back a lot further.

Anwoth

Although this is routinely listed among the Scandinavian names in our region on the assumption that the second element is ON *vað* 'a ford', I know of no suggestions as to what the first element may be, and the early forms seem to me to leave room for doubt: *Anewith* 1200 x 6, *Anuith*, *Anweth* 1536, *Annoth* 1559, *Anuecht* 1575.

John Wilkinson has suggested a Brittonic compound **onn-wīdh* (modern Welsh **onn-wŷdd*) 'ash-wood'. This cannot be ruled out, there is at least tentative evidence for the Brittonic **wīdh* being confused in place-names by Old English speakers with *vað*, but compounds of this form are considered by scholars to be very early (unlikely to be later than the fifth century); in the absence of more and earlier documentary evidence, we should be cautious.

Maxwell says 'probably *annoit*, a parent church'. While his enthusiasm for finding Gaelic etymologies needs to be treated with caution, and the records don't allow for any certainty, I think his suggestion is worth taking seriously.

Forms like *Anewith* could indeed reflect a, phonetically fairly close, transcription from Gaelic speech of *annoit*, which is from Latin *antiquitas*, becoming Old Irish *andóit*, modern Scottish Gaelic *annaid*. The word has a rather complex range of meanings in Old and Middle Irish, essentially 'ancient church foundation, church having a special relationship with its patron saint, mother church from which others have been founded', but it does not occur in Irish place-names. It is however quite frequent in Scottish names, including probably Annat Hill in Kirkcubright and Annatland in New Abbey, and there has been scholarly debate about its precise significance.

The current consensus is that such names (which, as here, are always the single element *annoit*, never combined with any other Gaelic element) indicate churches that were perceived as already 'ancient' at the time the Gaelic names were given, or land belonging to such a church. In the case of Anwoth, if the name is Gaelic, it would probably have been given when the language first became established in the area, say in the tenth century. The church in question might by then have been ruined and abandoned, or it might have still been a major ecclesiastical centre, of that we cannot be sure.

The proximity of Anwoth Old Kirk to Trusty's Hill and Rutherford's Well and its location at a strategic point on the main east-west route through Galloway make the possibility of an even earlier ecclesiastical site a tantalising one. The earliest Christian establishments in northern Britain and Ireland were not necessarily isolated ascetic communities: some were in close proximity to secular strongholds, evidently serving to proclaim the *Romanitas* of their patron chieftains. That the church and small parish of Anwoth originated as the home and land of such a religious community is at least an interesting possibility.

Ardwall

The place-name Ardwall or Ardwell occurs in several locations in south-west Scotland: Ardwell, with Ardwell Bay, on the Carrick coast south-west of Girvan Ayr (Carrick was historically part of Galloway); High and Low Ardwell in Kirkcolm parish in the north Rinns, Wigtownshire; Ardwell, with Ardwell House, Mote, etc., and Ardwall (sic) Point away to the west, all in Stoneykirk Parish in south Rinns; Ardwell Hill on the west flank of the Cairnsmore of Fleet, above Palnure in Minigaff parish in the Stewartry; Ardwall, with Ardwall Mains, south of New Abbey in the Stewartry; and our Ardwall in Anwoth parish, with Ardwall Cottage (now The Shieling) and Sheds (which were farm cottages), Ardwall Hill and Deer Park, High and Low Ardwall and Low Ardwall Hill, and Ardwall Isle across the Fleet estuary in Kirkandrews (formerly Borgue) parish. Of these, the Ardwalls in Carrick are represented by *Ardwall* on Blaeu's map; Ardwell in the south Rinns is shown as *Ardwel Cast(le)*, with *Ardwel Mill*, and *Port Ardwel* to the west; Ardwall in Anwoth is *Ardowale* 1536 in the Register of the Great Seal, and *O(ver) Ardwel* and *N(ether) Ardwell* appear on Blaeu's map, the latter corresponding to Ardwall House.

The two stately houses, Ardwell in Stoneykirk and Ardwall in Anwoth, are both seats of branches of the McCulloch (of Myreton) family; it is possible that others in this list have some McCulloch connection. So far as I can ascertain, no names of this form occur anywhere else in Scotland, nor indeed in Britain.

The first syllable looks obviously like Gaelic *àird* 'a height', cf. Airds above. For the second element, Sir Herbert Maxwell (in 'Studies in the Topography of Galloway' 1887, 54, though not in his 'Place-Names of Galloway') suggested *gall*, as seen in Gall-Ghàidheil, the 'foreign (i.e. part-Scandinavian) Gaels' who gave their name to Galloway. This is reasonably plausible, the Gaelic possessive form would have been *a'ghoill* 'of the stranger', the change of the palatalised 'gh' (rather like 'g' in Dutch) to 'w' being similar to that in the transformation of 'Gall-Ghàidheil' into 'Galloway'. The eponymous strangers need not have been Gall-Ghàidheil themselves, but incomers or people perceived as 'different' at some time when Gaelic was the main local language.

As Maxwell pointed out, *gall* in Gaelic can also mean a standing stone. There are indeed notable standing stones in the vicinity of Ardwell in Stoneykirk, but such monuments are not apparently associated with the others, and it seems that *gall* is not often used in this sense in place-names in Scotland, Ireland or the Isle of Man: the usual word in Scottish Gaelic is *clach*, see Auchencloy below, but also Dergall Bridge.

Another Gaelic possibility (suggested to me by William Patterson) would be **àrd mhaol* or **àird mhaoil*, 'high' or 'height of a' *maol*, that being a common term for a bare, rounded hill (see Benmeal below). Viewed from across the estuary, before landscaping works and tree-planting, the location of Ardwall could have matched that description. Whether the same can be said of the others listed above I am not sure: rounded hills are of course common in Galloway, and many of them may have been 'bare'.

But we may consider alternatives in other languages once spoken in our area. A Cumbric **ardd-waul* (*dd* pronounced as voiced 'th', like in 'father'; Old Welsh *ard-uaul*, Modern Welsh *ardd-wal*) 'height with a wall' is an interesting possibility, especially as there is Penwhail in Girthon, see below. Cumbric **ardd-wel* (Old Welsh *ard-uel*, Modern *ardd-wellt*) 'pasture height' is also possible, but *-wel* is less likely to have given forms like *-wale* in the 1536 record, and *ardd* is much less common as a place-name element in Wales than its cognate is in Scotland.

The second syllable, *-wall* or *-well*, equally obviously suggests Scots *wall* 'a well', or southern English 'well'. The falling together of 'wall' and 'well', along with the need to distinguish between, in particular, the two 'big houses', would explain the variation between Ardwall and Ardwell. But it seems unlikely that the name is English or Scots in origin, it is hard to find an explanation for *Ard-* in either language.

MacQueen (2002, 86) thinks the Ardwalls on the Rinns are Old Norse, with 'almost certainly *völlr* "field"'; indeed, that word (also meaning 'meadow, pasture') is seen in names like Dingwall and Kirkwall, and the form *velli* '(at) – field' could explain the *-wall/ -well* variation. However, the first element is a problem for a Norse etymology, MacQueen's suggestion *urt* 'herb' is phonetically unconvincing, development to *Ard-* would be abnormal even in one location, let alone consistently in six.

A final thought is of a Gaelic-Norse hybrid, introduced by the Gall-Ghàidheil, *àrd-* + *-völlr* adopted by Gaelic speakers as *-wall*. *Völlr* can mean ‘pasture’ or ‘a paddock’, and ‘pasture-height’, a hill with (perhaps enclosed) grazing, would suit the locations of the several Ardwalls and Ardwalls, and the expansion of livestock farming in the hills that apparently came with the Gall-Ghàidheil, and it would be consistent with the concentration of these names in the region most associated with those settlers.

So Cumbric **ardd-waul* or Gaelic-Norse **àrd-völlr* are not impossible, but either Maxwell’s **àrd a’ghoill* or Mr. Patterson’s **àrd mhaol* remain the best suggestions.

Ardwall Isle is of archaeological importance as the site of a sixth-century Early Christian settlement with its oratory and cemetery. It has been known by various names over the years: in the nineteenth century, as Knockbrenn Isle (*Knockbuck’s* in the 1851 Census), also Laurie’s or Larry’s Isle after Lawrence Higgins, who was born in Ireland 1793/4, died 1867, buried in Kirkandrews kirkyard; he is listed as a shepherd in the 1851 Census, but is also said to have kept an inn on the island serving seafarers and maybe smugglers (thanks to Margaret Wright for information).

Arkland

Archland 1691. By Arkland Burn, north of the Corse of Slakes road, a remote place now, but near the Glen Bridge (1640) on the major east-west route that became The Old Military Road.

There are also the house named Arkland Kirkpatrick Durham parish, and High, Low and Over Arkland in Kelton. It is possible that these were mediaeval landholdings whose income was dedicated to the care of a shrine, an ecclesiastical meaning of *arc* ‘ark’ ‘chest, coffer, casket’, borrowed into Gaelic as *airce*; Watson mentions *Caibeal na f-airce*, an old chapel in Glen Dochart, as ‘chapel of the shrine’. Presumably a reliquary associated with our Arkland would have been in Anwoth Old Kirk.

However, ‘Ark-’ in place-names in England can reflect **áergi*, a Scandinavianised form of early Gaelic *áirge* (modern *àirig*) ‘a shieling’. If so, the second element might be *land*, identical in Norse to the English word, but more often referring to waterside land, but it could be *lundr* ‘a small wood, a grove’. However, it should be noted that ‘Ark-’ from **áergi* is found in Lancashire, Cheshire and South Yorkshire: further north, ‘Airy-’ or ‘Airie-’ is usual, whether the origin is Scandinavian or Gaelic (Airyland adjacent to Arkland in Kelton may be an example).

Ass House Strand

Scots *strand* here, as quite often, means a small artificial channel (but see Algowater Strand above for a natural *strand*). The Ass House Strand was formed by diverting the Waulk Burn in a culvert under the Kirk Burn to provide Cally Mains thrashing mill and the Cally Laundry with water. It also supplied Cally House and helps to feed the artificial Cally Lake. The Ass House is not otherwise recorded: *ass* is the Scots equivalent of ‘ash’ from the fireplace, but I am not aware of any such thing as an ‘ash house’; it might be a comic mishearing of the ‘ice house’, near which the channel flowed into Cally Lake, but it was probably just what its name implies!

Auchencloy

Auchencloy (deserted farm site), with Auchencloy Hill, at the northernmost tip of Girthon Parish, is on record as *Auchincloy* in 1543, and as *Achinclouy* in Blaeu’s Atlas. It is best known today as the site of a skirmish between a party of Covenanters and Montrose’s dragoons in 1684; one of the six Covenanters killed here, Robert Fergusson, was buried on the spot (the other bodies were taken to Dalry), an inscribed slab marks his grave, and the event is commemorated by a monument erected in 1835, now hidden among conifers.

Gaelic *clach* is a general term for a stone of any size, but in place-names, especially with the definite article as here, it indicates a prominent one. The genitive in modern Scottish Gaelic is *cloiche*, but ‘-cloy’ implies Irish/ early Gaelic *cloighe*. So **achadh na cloighe* ‘field of the stone’ may refer to a much older monument, or to a conspicuous natural rock, maybe a glacial erratic or a Neolithic standing stone, but any eponymous *clach* seems no longer to be identifiable (see Craig below for the Cat Craigs of Auchencloy).

There is another Auchencloy, with Big Auchencloy Hill, near Stoneykirk in the south Rinn; there are several standing stones in this district. Aughnacloy in Co. Tyrone is one of many similar names in Ireland.

Auchenlarie

High, Mid and Low Auchenlarie, with Auchenlarie Burn, are not recorded before the 1st edition OS Map and 1851 Census.

The name is undoubtedly one of the very common Gaelic formations with *achadh* ‘field’ and the definite article. However, the final, specific element is less evident. Maxwell’s suggestion, *na laire* ‘the mare’, is not impossible, though that word has become -leary at Garthleary in Inch parish, Wigtownshire (in his entry for which, PN Galloway 144, Maxwell changes Auchenlarie to Auchenleary).

An alternative possibility might be *na leirg*, genitive of *learg* (early Gaelic *lerg*), primarily ‘a hillside’, typically a steep one, which certainly suits the Auchenlaries; Dwelly also gives ‘gives ‘sloping place exposed to sun and sea’, which is doubly appropriate. *Learg* occurs as a single element name in Wigtownshire at (High and Low) Larg in Leswalt parish, on a hillside overlooking the sea, and (Little and Mains of) Larg in New Luce, on a hillside inland, and Largs in Ayrshire (with added Anglo-Scots –s) is likewise on a hillside facing the sea.

However the related word *leargaidh* (pronounced ‘laragy’), ‘slope, steep shore’, is more common, occurring in Ulster as a single-element name, Largy, in Counties Antrim, Cavan, Derry, Fermanagh and Monaghan; it is common in names on the Isle of Man too, typically as Largey or Lhargey; it occurs in Scottish Gaelic names, though not so commonly, and would not be impossible here: **Achadh na leargaidh* could reasonably have been contracted by Scots speakers to Auchenlarie.

Another, probably related, word *làirig*, can mean ‘a steep slope’ or ‘a gap between hills’. As the Auchenlaries are indeed on the slope down from the gap between Ben John and Barholm Hill, **Achadh na làirig* would again be doubly appropriate. However, while *làirig* is common in the Perthshire Highlands and Breadalbane, and reasonably common elsewhere in the Highlands, it does not seem to be found in our region (but see Fleuchlarg).