Some Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

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Galla Hill and Gallows Knowe

These two locations, Galla Hill overlooking the Old Military Road above the steep drop down to Gatehouse before The Cut was made, and Gallows Knowe overlooking the old road from Anwoth to Carsluith, between Burnside and High Auchenlarie, were doubtless sites where the bodies of malefactors hung as a warning to passers-by. *Gallow* (often singular in Scots and northern English) is common in minor place-names throughout Scotland and the north of England; there is a Gallows Hill south of Twynholm, overlooking the road up from Kirkcudbright Bay near Ingliston, and in Wigtownshire a Gallow Hill in Sorbie, and Gallows Hills in Penninghame, Mochrum and Whithorn, while a dozen historic examples can be found in the DOST. See also Culcraigrie and Culcronchie above.

Garniemire

Garniemire, Garniemyre, Garneymore, is a former farmhouse close to the site of the old Mill of Girthon, otherwise known as the Mill of the Lake. The lake, whch was presumably the mill-pond, has long since been drained, as to a large extent has the mire. No visible trace remains of the mill, but it appears to be one mentioned ca. 1300, and is marked as an antiquity on the 1st edition OS map.

 The name is a bit of a mystery to me, *garnie* (or any similar form) not being recorded in the DOST or any other of the authoritative sources, nor is it close to any likely Gaelic word. There is a Garnaburn in Colmonell in Carrick, but that seems equally obscure.

One suggestion, given its proximity to the old mill, might be a variant of 'granary' or 'grange': Scots *grainery* is recorded from the Stewartry in 1955 in SND; *garnal* is recorded from Ayrshire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (elsewhere in Scotland, *girnel*); *grainzie* is also in SND, but this is only recorded as a Gipsies' word, and the 'z' seems to have been pronounced as 'z' or 'j', not 'y' like the Older Scots ʒ ('yogh').

Another possible consideration might be *grainie* a form with diminutive –ie of Scots and northern English *grain*, in sense 2 in DOST and SND, from Old Norse *grein* meaning 'a branch, fork', quite frequently used for small burns and tributaries in place-names in northern England and southern Scotland. It would certainly be appropriate to Garnaburn in Carrick, that is a fairly modest tributary of the R. Stinchar, and Garniemire is shown on the 1st edition OS map by the confluence between a very small channel that presumably served the old mill, and the Endrick Burn (the channel appears to have been a wee burn straightened as a mill-lade by the time of the survey, and it has been further modified since).

A third suggestion (from Mr. J. G. Wilkinson) is Gaelic *gronnaich*, 'boggy, miry', clearly appropriate to the location. The word seems to be originally from a P-Celtic (Brittonic and Pictish) *gronn*, though evidence for that is only found in mediaeval Latin contexts, and for the Gaelic word only in place-names very largely in Pictland. If this word is present here, like *carden*(see Cardoness above), it is as perplexing as the Pictish-style carvings on Trusty's Hill.

But all these proposals require fairly severe phonetic changes for which there is no comparable evidence. Metathesis (swapping over) of 'ar' is common enough, but the second syllable presents difficulties for any of the 'granary' words, and the change of vowel in the first syllable would be abnormal if the origin was *grain-* or *gronn-*.[1]

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[1] The surname *Balgarnie* recorded in south-east Scotland is presumably from the place-name Balgornie in Bathgate WLo, which is one of the few *gronnaich* names (just) south of the Forth. But the well-documented names involving that element in Fife show no sign of *gronn-* becoming *garn-*.

Garries Wood

On the 1ˢᵗ edition OS map, Garries Wood names the stretch of woodland along the riverside from the bridge to the schoolhouse, though the name probably extended formerly over the land by then occupied by James Credie's Nurseries, and now by Garries Park. Garrie and Garries occur in Stoneykirk, Garries also in Portpatrick, and Maxwell reports that 'garrie is used locally to denote a scree of stones' (though this is not recorded in the DOST or SND). It would be a Scots word ultimately derived from Gaelic *garbh* 'rough'; indeed, before it was vigorously cleared and planted with trees, the whole area would have been a challenge to cultivate.

However, 'Garry' in Irish place-names usually represents *garraí*, Scottish Gaelic *gàrraidh*, from Old Norse *garðr*. These are usually, a little misleadingly, translated as 'garden', but refer to a walled enclosure used for cultivating vegetables long before the days of formal gardens, kitchen gardens or nurseries. While Credie's tree nursery long postdated the demise of Gaelic in this area, it is possible that the name referred to some such small plots enclosed, cleared and kept fertile for kitchen crops in earlier times (*gàrraidh* may be singular or plural, and the modern form may preserve plurality)

It's also worth mentioning that *garrie* is listed in the SND as a variant of *gairy* meaning 'striped' (from *gair*, a strip or stripe). As a noun, *gairy* or *garrie* is a name given to a striped cow. However, the citations for that usage are all from Fife, Angus or the Mearns.

Garvellan

The ridge of rocks across Mossyard Bay, enhanced at the Millennium with the delightful little labyrinth of turf-cutting and stones laid out by children, has the common Gaelic name *garbh eilean*, 'rough island'. That the north-eastern rock is now only an island at high spring tides, linked to the shore by a fine tombolo (a ridge of sand formed by wind and tidal currents), is an indication of the lowering of relative sea-level along our coastline, as the land gradually recovers from weight of ice in the last glaciation. This is important to bear in mind when interpreting the landscape of the coast and well up the Fleet estuary too.

Gatehouse of Fleet

The eponymous 'gatehouse' is said to be the building next to The Murray Arms hotel, standing end-wise to Ann Street, which was formerly the route of the Old Military Road, and probably older ways before that, continuing down Old Ford Road to cross the Fleet below Ditches Pool. The name was given to the ambitious scheme for an industrial town begun in the 1760s by James Murray. Either the original house or the town gave its name to Gatehouse Hill, overlooking it from the east, and in turn to Gatehouse Hill Wood. There is another Gatehouse, with Gatehouse Bridge and Burn, just south of Laurieston.

Gouhous on Blaeu's map is probably a miscopying of *Gaithous or *Goithous on Pont's, the letters would have looked much more similar in Pont's handwriting than they do in modern print.

Gait in Older Scots is normally the northern word < ON gata, 'a road', though by the early 17th century it was also being used for early Modern English 'gate' (back-formed from the OE plural gatu) used instead of yett (from OE ġeat, Northumbrian OE ġæt). There is no record of *gaithous in the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue (on-line at Dictionary of the Scots Language), though yet(t)hous, 'a house with or by a gate', is recorded from 1459, and gattehous is in the Oxford English Dictionary from 1458 (also ȝate housis 1380); on the other hand 'road-house' for 'a wayside inn' only appears in the OED in 1857, and there is no record of any Scots equivalent, *gaithous or otherwise. So whether Gatehouse was 'a road-house' or 'house with a gate' is uncertain, but either way it was probably a toll-house, and/or a place of refreshment.

It should be noted that Taigh an Rathaid, which currently appears in the Wikipedia article on Gatehouse, is of course a translation into modern Scottish Gaelic of 'house of the road'. There is no evidence or reason to think that Gaelic speakers ever called the place by that or any other name. Gaelic speakers did not, and do not, normally translate Scots or English names, any more than Scots or English speakers translated Gaelic ones.

Gaitgill

Gategill on the 1st edition OS Map, but recorded as *Gaitgil* in 1469, and regularly *Gaitgill* from 1560 (when it was *alias* Litiltoun) onward. The second element is certainly either Old (West) Norse *gil* 'a ravine', or the same word used commonly in Scots and northern English (especially Lake District) place-names for a steep, narrow glen with a burn. The reference here must be to the valley running south from Gaitgill Hill towards Conchieton to become Waulkmill Burn by the Mill of Borgue. Gaitgill House stands beyond White Hill to the west.

Maxwell takes the first element to be 'road' (see Gatehouse above): the (later course of the) Old Military Road skirted Gaitgill Hill on the north side, but there is no apparent reason to associate the valley with a routeway. An alternative might be the Scots and northern English homonym *gate* 'goat' (Old English *gāt*, Old Norse *geit*).

Germany Isle

Germany Isle, like the neighbouring Drumshangan Isle (see Drumshangan above), is still, as on the 1st edition OS Map, the name of a field on the narrow tongue of land between the Big and Little Waters of Fleet (there is a small island alongside it in the Little Water, and it is not clear on the 1st edition OS Map whether the name refers to, or includes, this feature, though on more modern maps it is evidently the field-name). Names of foreign lands when given to fields are quite often just a joking indication that they are some way away from the farm, a bit difficult to get to, and that could be the case here. But it might be that an owner or tenant once had some connection with Germany, perhaps in military service.

Girthon

Girthon (*Girtun* 1296, *Gerton of Flete* 1300, *Girtoun* 1306x29, *Girton* Blaeu) is likely to be identical in formation to Girton by Cambridge, which is well documented from the 10th century onward; it is recorded as *Gerton* in 1399, like our *Gerton of Flete*. Another Girton, by the Trent north of Newark in Nottinghamshire, has a similar array of early forms, as do the Grettons in Gloucestershire and Shropshire. The descriptive element is Old English *grēot* 'grit, gravel, lots of small stones', a very fair description of the glacial till that covers much of the surface around the Clauchan and Old Kirk of Girthon and the lower part of the Fleet Valley generally.[2]

This name need not necessarily date from the time of Northumbrian rule, it could be later. However, by the time of the earliest records, Girthon had become the kirktoun of a very large mediaeval parish, extending up the south-eastern side of the valley as far as the headwaters of the Fleet. The possibility that this might have been based on a more ancient territory cannot be ruled out.

Glassnoch Wood

A fine woodland plantation beside the Fleet across from Carstramont Wood, but *glasanach* in Dwelly's dictionary is 'a grassy plain' (from *glas* 'grass-green'), which no doubt preceded the present wood. Glasnick in Penninghame parish, which is marked on Blaeu's map, may well have the same origin.

Glen Bridge

'Glen' in place-names in southern Scotland may occasionally be a trace of Cumbric *glynn* (modern Welsh *glyn*), it is often early Gaelic *glenn* (modern *gleann*), but also very frequently Scots *glen*, borrowed from Gaelic. All go back to early Celtic *glennos*, 'A valley', typically a substantial but relatively narrow one.

Glen Bridge over the Skyre Burn on the Old Military Road at the head of Skyreburn Glen is one of four with this name in The Stewartry. Clearly such names would only have been in local use, in contexts where it was understood in which glen the bridge was located.

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[2] Formally, the name could be Old Norse *grjot-tún*, with the same meaning; however it is doubtful whether ON *tún* was in use among West Norse speaking settlers in the Irish Sea zone.

Glencapenoch

Glencappenach on Blaeu's map seems to be either the glen of the Laggan Burn or the Lane Burn; it is mentioned in an entry of 1297 in the Register of the Great Seal in association with Bardarroch (see above), Drummuckloch (see above), and Skyreburn Mill, and is listed by Maxwell, but is not to be found on any OS maps.

There is a Capenoch Burn in Ayrshire (Maybole), a house and croft named Capenoch in Wigtownshire (Kirkinner) and a Capenoch farm, moor and loch (with a possible early form with Glen-) in Dumfriesshire (Keir, near Penpont).

Gaelic *ceap* can mean a tree-stump or a block of stone (see Glengap below), *ceapan* a little stump or block, and *ceapanach* (a place) 'abounding in little stumps or blocks'. Maxwell favours 'stumps', but a lot of lumps of stone would be more a permanent distinguishing feature of this lost glen. In Scottish and Irish Gaelic, *ceapach* came to be used for a tillage plot, typically in former woodland so likely to be 'abounding in stumps': such a sense might be relevant here, though there is no record of the diminutive *ceapanach* being used in this way.

Glengainoch

The name appears on OS maps only as Glengainoch Burn (and Dam), but it presumably referred to the valley between Shaw Hill and Auchencloy Hill where that burn flows down from the Fell of Fleet. Its lower course across Barnywater Flow to its confluence with the Black Water of Dee hardly qualifies as a glen.

Glengeynett on Blaeu's map leaves room for a little doubt, but Maxwell is probably right in interpreting the descriptive element as Gaelic *gainmheach*, though 'gravelly' would be more appropriate to the drift geology here than his 'sandy' (there is or was a gravel quarry near the burn, in the FSC plantation). There was a farmstead named Gannoch in the Wood of Cree at the northern tip of Minnigaff parish, already in ruins on the 1st edition OS Map; it was probably *gainmeach*. Maxwell mentions a Glenganagh in Co. Down, which is the name of a stately home on Ballyholme Bay in Bangor, but I am not sure if that was the location of the eponymous glen (if it was, 'sandy' would be appropriate): it would appear to be an Ulster Irish equivalent of Glengainoch.

Glengap

Recorded as *Glengep* 1504, *Glenghaip* on Blaeu's map, this farm at the northern tip of Twynholm parish stands on what was probably once a through route from Nun Mill on Kirkcudbright Bay up into the hill pastures and links with other cross-country high roads (see also Miefield and Trostrie).

The name must refer to the valley of the Glengap Burn, now largely in forestry, the second element being *ceap* 'tree-stumps' or 'blocks of stone' (see Glencapenoch above). Again, *ceapach* could mean 'tillage plots', but *ceap* without a suffix is not recorded as having that meaning. Glengappock in Crossmichael parish, in the hills west of Parton, looks similar, but early forms (*Glengoppock* etc.) suggests this was *copag* 'dock, *Rumex* species'.

Goat Bught Rigs

At the northern edge of Girthon parish In FCS land, Goat Bught Rigs names a pair of small rises in low-lying land alongside Marion's Pool and Isles on the Black Water of Dee, across from the Raiders' Road Forest Drive. Although it now seems a wild and remote spot, the name, along with traces of field-walls and buildings, are interesting evidence of farming activity

Bught is a Scots word meaning a fold, more specifically a milking-pen, usually for sheep but here evidently goats, though the remains of folds here (at least one still visible) are labelled Old Sheep Ree' (two) and 'Old Hay Ree' on the 1st edition OS map. The word is used by S. R. Crockett in 'The Raiders' with the spelling *bucht*; *boucht* and *bought* are other variants, and it is probably shares its origin with Scots words with the same pronunciation and range of spellings but meaning 'a bend', 'something bent or curved', including 'a coil of rope, a length of line, a fishing line'.

Rig is an important term in Scottish agricultural history, occurring frequently in place-names: it refers to a strip of land used for cultivation, probably originally demarcated by the ridge of earth thrown up by the plough. Here *riggs* evidently indicate a doubtless arduous struggle to grow oats or barley in this challenging location.

Goat End
The farm on the road up the valley just north of the Anwoth turning probably does not take its name from the animal, but from Scots *gote* 'an artificial channel, ditch or drain'. It stands between a complex series of man-made watercourses flowing from Killiegown Wood and Woodhall Loch to Pulcree Burn and the Fleet.

Goat Lumps
On the southern slopes of Round Fell, near the northern tip of Girthon parish, Goat Lumps are hard to make out among forestry on satellite or ground-level photos, but the name seems self-explanatory. Around eight natural features in The Stewartry are named 'Lump' or 'Lumps' (see Green Lumps below).

Gormal Hill
Gormal Hill is the summit of the northern-projecting spur of the Fell of Fleet. Maxwell in his *Studies in theTopography of Galloway* (1887) interpreted it as *gorm* 'grass-green' and *aill* 'a cliff'. In fact *ail* is a rather rare word in Irish Gaelic meaning 'a rock or stone', but its status in Scottish Gaelic is doubtful, and in any case neither 'cliff' nor 'rock' seems distinctively appropriate for this hill. In *The Place-Names of Galloway* (1930) he offered a different etymology, *gar* 'near' and *meall* 'a hill', typically a large, bare, rounded one, which suits Gormal Hill very well. However, *gar*, which is actually a noun meaning 'proximity, nearness' (as in *am ghar* 'near me'), is very dubious in place-name formation. Picking the best from both suggestions, **Gorm-meall* 'grass-green rounded hill' would seem tempting, but colour adjectives normally follow nouns.

Maybe this was a Cumbric name, with *moil* (modern Welsh *moel*), the cognate of *maol*, preceded by the intensive prefix *gwor-* (modern Welsh *gor-*, *gwar-*): **Gwor-moil* 'great rounded hill' would certainly be an apt description, Gaelic speakers would have readily substituted *maol* for *moil*, but would not have recognised *gwor-* as cognate with their *for-*. Normally, the consonant after *gwor-* should be 'softened', so **Gwor-voil* (modern Welsh *gor-foel*), but such mutation is quite often absent from Cumbric place-names. However, I find no comparable Welsh hill-name in *Archif Melville Richards*, so the suggestion can only be tentative.

Green Lumps
The 'lumps' here are probably the series of rounded tops along the summit ridge of Castramont Hill.

Green Wood
Being green is hardly a distinguishing feature of this wood just upstream of Rusko Castle, or of any wood. The land was probably formerly referred to as 'The Green', Scots *grene*, according to DOST (sense 1b) 'an open piece of grassy ground, especially that forming part of the grounds of a manor-house or castle'. It would have been good grazing before it was planted with trees, and indeed a good part of the wood seems to have returned to pasture since the 1st edition OS map. Less likely, though pehaps not impossible here, would be Middle English *grēne* cognate with Old Norse *grjon* meaning 'gravelly ground', but this is rare and seems to be only evidenced as a place-name in The Isle of Grain in the Thames estuary.

Grey Hill
Galloway, especially The Stewartry with its greywacke rocks and occasionally overcast skies, is famously 'grey', but why the hill above the Knocktinkle viewpoint should be thought distinctively so is not immediately apparent. Scots *gray* is used for a rather wider range of tints, merging further into brown than is usual in Standard English, and likewise in the Gaelic spectrum, *glas* can be grey-green, the colour of moorland grass, or pale and wan; such perceptions might have influenced its use in English locally.

The name is anyway very common, there is a Grey Hill in Balmaclellan parish, two of them in Parton, and at least a dozen others elsewhere in our region.

Greystone

Greystone appears on the 1st edition OS map as a group of buildings, presumably a substantial farm, on the high ground to the east of Drumshangan Bridge, but it ceased to exist and the site is now hidden in forestry. It was presumably named from a conspicuous stone that was distinctively 'grey' in some sense, see Grey Hill above.

Grieves House

Grieves House is not marked on any maps. However in the 1881 Girthon census (866) it is listed as being between Cally Mains and Cally Mains Cottage. The meaning of *grieve* here would have been 'The overseer or head-workman on a farm; a farm-bailiff' (DOST sense 2b).

Grobdale

The Grobdale Lane (burn) marks the parish boundary south of Loch Skerrow, with Grobdale of Girthon and Grobdale of Balmaghie being settlements on either side. The name is not easy to interpret: *grob* probably referred either to the watercourse or to the glen it runs through. Old English *grōp* meant 'a ditch or drain'; it is in the place-name Grappenhall in Cheshire, and in Scots and northern English, *groop, gruip* etc. kept that meaning. However the Old Norse cognate *gróf* meant 'a stream, the hollow a stream makes,' or 'a pit', and other Germanic cognates support that range of meanings. It may be that Northumbrian Old English preserved the sense of 'a stream in a hollow' or 'a hollow with a stream', appropriate to Grobdale Lane which flows for much of its fairly level course through a glacially-scoured valley between high hills; alternatively, the Scandinavian usage may have influenced the meaning of the late Northumbrian/ early Scots word, or indeed the name may have originated as Norse **gróf-dalr* and have been adapted to 'Grobdale' in Scots speech.

Gull Island

One of the small islands in the southern part of Loch Skerrow, not marked on OS maps, the name is probably modern and self-explanatory.