Some Place-names in and around the Fleet Valley

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Half Mark

A farm on the Rusko Estate, in ruins on the 1st edition OS map and now demolished. The name indicates the land was valued for fiscal purposes at half a mark, so one-third of one pound Scots (6s 8d). Although *merk* is commonly given as the Scots form, *mark* is in fact usual in older documents when the unit of valuation was current. There is a Half Mark still extant in Dalry, another in Leswalt parish on the north Rinns; Half Merk is a remote farm on the Wigtownshire moorlands in the north of Kirkcowan parish near the border with Ayrshire, and north of that border in Carrick is another Half Merk now in forestry plantations.

Hard Croft

The farm on the southern slope of Low Ardwall Hill appears on the 1st edition OS map, though not in the 1851 census, so was either unoccupied at that date or was established shortly after (the map was published in 1854). However, the name may be older: it could mean a tough smallholding, but a Scots *croft* was primarily a small enclosed portion of land, and 'hard' could be a variant of 'herd', so it might have been an enclosure where livestock was herded, probably before and after being taken onto the hill (see Herd Hill below).

Herd Hill

Herd Hill is the southernmost of the series of summits on the Rig of Drumruck, between the Big and Little Waters of Fleet. There are other Herd Hills in Wigtownshire (Kirkcowan and Old Luce), Dumfriesshire (Dunscore), and just across the border in Cumberland (Askerton). But 'herd', Old English *heord*, is generally rare in English place-names, it seems to be more common in Scotland. The noun in Scots can refer either to a flock of animals or to their keeper, but this was probably the hill where livestock was gathered in at the end of the summer grazing.

Hill Faulds

A location now in forest, on a south-facing slope above Meikle Cullendoch Moss, just to the east of Craiglowrie Burn and the N7 Cycle Route. Marked on the 1st edition and subsequent OS maps, simply sheepfolds where the hill-grazing stock could be penned.

Hillhead

On the southern spur of Gatehouse Hill, the highest point on the path from Hill Cottage above the millpond over to Disdow, this house was occupied by a gamekeeper in the 1881 Census. The names Hill Cottage and Hillhead imply that Gatehouse Hill was probably referred to as simply 'The Hill'. Hillhead is a very common name in the Scottish Lowlands, there were eight dwellings so named in the Stewartry at the time of the original Ordnance Survey, five of them, including the one in Gatehouse, still exist, along with a dozen or so more elsewhere in the region.

Hinton

Hinton Farm, now incorporated in Mossyard, stands on a relatively level platform on the hillside above Laggan, overlooking Laggan, the A75, and down to Mossyard. Above is Hinton Cairn and Gallows Knowe, with the old road on the far side.

Hinton is a common place-name in England, Ekwall lists twenty-five in his *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, most of them being parishes. In the majority of cases, the origin, confirmed by early records, is Old English *hēan-tūne*, 'high farm', which is obviously appropriate to our Hinton. Technically, it is an inflected form having a locative sense, '(at the) high farm'; such formations are frequent in Old English place-names, but would not have been used by Scots speakers, so we can infer that this name dates from the time when Northumbrian Old English was current – probably (as *tūn* was rarely used in the early Anglo-Saxon period) some time between 750 and 870, though possibly as late as 1100.

A handful of much less likely interpretations should be noted. Several Hintons in England are shown by early forms and historical records have a different origin, *hīna-tūn* 'farm of a (religious) community', but there is no reason to suppose this was the case here. And Maxwell suggests the first element is Scots *hint*, for *ahint*, 'back, behind', though he does not say what Hinton is behind: there is a *Behindeby* on record at the back of Great Grimsby in Lincolnshire, and Hindharton in Devon is behind Hartland, but it is a very rare element. Finally, Cumbric *hint* (Welsh *hynt*) 'way, path' might have passed into local Scots and had *-toun* added, but Hinton, unlike most of the other farms in the area, stands off any through route, ancient or modern.

Hog Hill

Hog Hill, the eastern spur of Shaw Hill, overlooks the north-eastern edge of Girthon Parish, the Black Water of Dee, and is now in Cairn Edward Forest. The name is common, there are a dozen Hog Hills in south-west Scotland, including two in Balmaclellan, and one each in Carsphairn and Crossmichael, parishes. They were hills where *hoggs* were pastured, yearling sheep, not swine (a southern English usage). In the Northern Isles, 'hog' in place-names often reflects Norn *haug*, Old Norse *haugr*, either a natural small hill or a burial mound, but that is unlikely in Galloway, where the usual reflex is 'howe'.

Holecroft

Holecroft overlooks Bardristan Toll just west of the boundary between Anwoth and Kirkmabreck parishes on the old road above the coastline of Wigtown Bay. It stands beside where the un-named burn flowing out of the Cleugh of Tongue drops into a hollow, hence 'Hole-'. As at Hard Croft, the second element could refer to a smallholding or, earlier, simply an enclosed portion of land.

Hungry Stone

This is marked on the 1st edition OS map on the south-east flank of Stronach Hill, above where the Old Military Road climbed steeply over that spur of Cambret Hill to join the Corse of Slakes route. Now it is a fairly remote spot on pastureland. There are many cairns and other prehistoric features in the vicinity, though it is not clear to me just which was the Hungry Stone. Nevertheless, it is easy to imagine travellers feeling a need to pause here for a bite on this arduous crossing over the hills.