

Place-names in the valley of the River Stinchar, Carrick, Ayrshire.

Some notes by Michael Ansell.

River Stinchar NX 081 818 (mouth of river)

Early forms include:

Glenstenchere: Charters of the Abbey of Crossraguel no. 23 dated 1405

Stinchell: RMS iv no. 2332 dated 1574

Stincheat: RMS vi no. 1877 dated 1607

Stincheor: RMS viii no. 722 dated 1621

Stincher: Inq ad Cap no. 450 dated 1653

Stincher: Inq ad Cap no. 490 dated 1657

Stincher: Inq ad Cap no. 506 dated 1658

Stinsiar: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Ardstinsiar: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Stinsar/Stinser: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Stinchar: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis¹

This is a perplexing river-name. On the pronunciation to start with, according to Scottish National Dictionary and BBC Pronouncing Dictionary of British Names, it's pronounced 'stinsher' ['stɪnʃər]. It would seem to be one of a group Old English (OE) or Old Norse (ON) place-names (perhaps better termed Anglo-Scandinavian) that may have been coined when the south-west of what is now Scotland was under the sway of the Northumbrian Kingdom when it expanded from its more narrowly drawn extent following the Northumbrian defeat at Dunnichen/Nechtansmere/Lynn Garan in 685. The plain of Kyle was apparently under Northumbrian control in the 8th Century and the river name Stinchar may have been formed after that date. The language spoken here when the Northumbrian OE was introduced would have been Brittonic. River names are usually conservative however Stinchar is very unlikely to be Brittonic, or Celtic of any kind, the phonology being thoroughly unCeltic. Nor does this river name seem to be characteristic of watercourses that are classed as pre-Celtic or non-Indo European. Therefore it is to OE/ON that we need to consider in respect of understanding this hydronym.

The first syllable suggests ON *steinn*, a stone but the second, if it's '-sher', isn't Scandinavian, unless it's anglicised. Possibly this started out as an OE river-name related to OE *scearu* 'share, division, boundary' that was influenced by the ON sound system, but then readjusted to Scots

Looking at the physical geography and geology, the best guess may be that Stinchar represents something like 'stone-shear' i.e. cutting through stone. But this is very uncertain.

¹ Thanks to Alan James for suggestions regarding Stinchar

Barr NX 276 941

Early forms include:

Bar: RMS v no. 1437 dated 1587

Bar: RMS viii no. 606 dated 1624

Bar: RMS vii no 1952 dated 1632

Barr Inq ad Cap no 575 dated 1672

Barr: Inq ad Cap no 699 dated 1692

Barkirk: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

W. Barn: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

E. Barn: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Barr: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

Gaelic (ScG) *bàrr* 'a top of anything' in place-names in Galloway and Carrick usually applied to relatively low hills and drumlins. This is one of the most common topographical place-name elements with at least 250 places in Galloway and Carrick incorporating this word. It is also very common in Argyll. Although now applied to the village it would presumably have originated as a simplex place-name *Am Bàrr*, 'the top', applied to some local hill.

Pinmore NX 205 903

Early forms include:

Pynmoir: RMS iv no. 1485 dated 1563

Pynmoir: Inq ad Cap no 716 dated 1578

Pynmoir: Inq ad Cap no 64 dated 1603

Pynmoir: RMS vii no. 1532 dated 1616

Nether Pinmoir: Inq ad Cap no 610 dated 1677

Nether Pinmoir: Inq ad Cap no 625 dated 1681

O. Pinmoir/N. Pinmoir Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Panmore: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Pinmore/Pinmore Mains/Little Pinmore: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

ScG *a' Pheighinn Mhòr*, the big pennyland. The term *peighinn*, 'a pennyland' and *leth-peighinn* 'a half pennyland', are the basis of over 100 place-names in the south-west,

predominately in Carrick and Nithsdale, some in Kyle with a only a few in modern Galloway. These place-names overwhelmingly are attached to farms, often in the upper valleys of both areas and probably originated as a fiscal measure of land. Given the variability in the nature of the types of farms described as *peighinn* units it seems likely that it became a standard term for a reasonably substantial holding rather than implying any precise measure.

Peighinn place-names are also common in parts of the Hebrides including Mull and Skye, illustrating links between Carrick and these areas.

It is curious that not a single one of the sources above reflects lenition of the qualifying specific after feminine nouns in ScG. One might expect to see a form such as *Pynvoir* or the like. That may suggest that **mh** was so strongly nasal that it was consistently heard by scribes as more like **m** than **v**. However it does seem to be that lenition after feminine nouns was often not carried through to Scots forms in south-west Scotland.

Other examples of this include Pinbain, ScG *a' Pheighinn Bhàn*, 'the white pennyland' and Pinbreck, *a' Pheighinn Bhreac*, 'the speckled pennyland'.

Pinwherry² NX 197 866

Early forms include:

Pinquhirrie: Calendar of the Laing Charters no 918 dated 1575

Pinquhirry: RMS v no. 1685 dated 1580

Pinquhirrie: RMS vi no. 603 dated 1597

Pinquhirrie: RMS vii no. 670 dated 1612

Pinquhirrie: Calendar of the Laing Charters no 1652 dated 1612

Pinquhirrie: RMS vii no. 1787 dated 1618

Pinquhirrie: RMS viii no. 760 dated 1624

Pinquhirrie: RMS viii no. 1479 dated 1629

Pinquhirrie: Inq ad Cap no. 559 dated 1668

Penwherry: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

Either ScG *Peighinn a' Choire*, 'pennyland of the cauldron' perhaps referring to a pool in the Duisk or perhaps as Maxwell alluded to³ *Peighinn Foithre* the specific of which he stated as the plural of *fothar*, 'a forest'. However the Fócloir Gaeilge-Béarla⁴ has *foithre* as the genitive singular of a feminine Irish noun *fothair* meaning 'wooded dell, dingle, dell, pasture, steep slope towards precipice' One of these senses may have been the origin of the place-name.

² Thanks to Alan James and Ronnie Black for suggestions on this place-name.

³ Maxwell, Sir Herbert, *The Place-Names of Galloway* p. 224.

⁴ <https://www.teanglann.ie/en/fgb/fothair>

There is similar place-name in Old Luce, Wigtownshire, Pinwherrie which Professor John MacQueen derived from *Peighinn a' Choire*⁵

Another possibility might be the personal name Ciothruadh. In their *Irish Names* Ó Corráin and Maguire say, p. 52: "This was a very common name among the learned families of O Duigenan and Mac Firisigh. It was anglicised *Kihrooe* and transformed into *Jerome* in the seventeenth century." So it could be that Pinwherry is *Peighinn Chiothruaidh*, Ciothruadh's pennyland.

Colmonell NX 144 857

Early forms include:

Kirkecolmanele: Glas. Reg., no. 51 dated 1179

Kirkecolemanele: Glas. Reg., no. 57 dated 1181

Kerkecolem': Glas. Reg., no. 62 dated 1186

Kirkecomanel: Glas. Reg., no.111 dated 1216

Calmonell: Numerous RMS references between 1592 and 1663

Kamanel K: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Calmonell: Numerous Inq ad Cap references between 1607 and 1687

Camenell: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Colmonell: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

ScG **Circ Colmán Eala*, 'church of Colmán Eala of Lann Eala, Co. Offally. This saint is said to have died in 618 with his crozier apparently kept as a relic at Lynally (Lann Eala) in the early seventeenth century⁶. Thomas Clancy (forthcoming) has noted nearly 60 place-names incorporating 'kirk' followed by a Gaelic personal names in Galloway and Carrick and argues that these are fully Gaelic coinings comprising the borrowed Germanic generic element 'kirk' plus the name of a (usually) Gaelic saint. It seems *circ was borrowed by Gaelic speakers in Galloway and the south-west as well as in Cumbria and the Isla of Man, probably from OE but influenced by ON and later Scots sound systems⁷. Clancy suggests that this implies Gaelic speakers, from around 870 coming into contact with the infrastructure of an earlier Northumbrian church⁸. For a full discussion of this saint and other dedications to him see the Saints in Scottish Place-Names website⁹. Note Kilcalmonell in Kintyre with the same meaning.

Ballantrae NX 084 824

⁵ MacQueen, John, *Place-Names of the Moors and Machars*, p 43.

⁶ Ó Riain, Pádraig, 'A Dictionary of Irish Saints pp 203-205

⁷ Clancy, Thomas, 'Place-names and Gaelic in Galloway: the case of names containing *cill* and *kirk*' *forthcoming*

⁸ Clancy, T.O., 2008, 'The Gall-Ghàidheil and Galloway', *JSNS* 2, 19-50.

⁹ <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/saint.php?id=56>

Early forms include:

Ballentray: RMS iii no. 2400 dated 1541

Ballentray: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Ballintrae: RMS xi no. 475 dated 1663

Ballentray: RMS xi no. 994 dated 1666

Ballintrae: Inq ad Cap no 150 dated 1668

Ballentray: Inq ad Cap no 611 dated 1677

Ballintrae: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Ballantrae: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

ScG *Baile na Tràgha*, 'village of the seashore'. Suitably describes the situation of Ballantrae.

Ardstinchar NX 086 824

Early forms include:

Ardstynchell: RMS ii no. 128 dated 1429

Ardstinchell: RMS ii no. 128 dated 1429

Ardstincheare: RMS ii no. 2124 dated 1492

Ardstinchall: RMS v no. 155 dated 1580

Ardstinsiar Cast. Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1600

Ardstinchaw: RMS vii no. 665 dated 1612

Ardstincher: RMS vii no. 1162 dated 1615

Ardstincher: RMS viii no. 728 dated 1621

Ardstincher: RMS vii no. 1886 dated 1631

Ardstinchard: RMS x no. 94 dated 1653

Ardstincher: RMS x no. 87 dated 1653

Ardstincher: Inq ad Cap no 525 dated 1662

Ardstincher: Inq ad Cap no 680 dated 1683

Ardstincher: Inq ad Cap no 641 dated 1685

Ardstincher: Inq ad Cap no 642 dated 1685

Stinsar Castle: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Ardstinchar: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

ScG **Aird Stinsiar* (following the Blaeu spelling), 'promontory or height of the (river) Stinchar'. This is a ScG place-name incorporating an earlier, possibly OE name for the River Stinchar. It refers to a rocky bluff on the north side of the river, strategically located above a river crossing point. The remains of Ardstinchar Castle sit atop the hill. For the river name see discussion under River Stinchar.

Knockdolian¹⁰ NX 113 848

Early forms include:

Knokindulean: RMS i app 2A no 339 dated Robert I

Knokdolain: RMS i app 2A no 335 dated Robert I

Knokdolean: RMS i app 2A no 1063 dated David ii

Knokdolean: RMS i app 2A no 341 dated Robert I

Knokdoleane: RMS i app 2A no 335 dated Robert I

Knokdolian: RMS i app 2B no 27 dated David ii

Knokdolian: RMS i app 2B no 112 dated Robert I

Knocdoliane: Charters of the Abbey of Crossraguel no. 20 dated 1374-5

Knokdoliane: RMS vi no. 526 dated 1596

Knokdolyan: RMS iv no. 1935 dated 1570

Knokdolyane: RMS iii no. 1183 dated 1532

Knokdolean Hil: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590

Knockdalean: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590

Knockdolean Hill: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Knockdolian: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

One possibility is ScG *Cnoc an Dealgain* 'hill of the pin or skewer', perhaps from its sharp appearance. The Knokindulean form above shows the article 'an' although this seems to have been dropped in later versions of the place-name. The palatal [lj] is problematic however, but [lg] between vowels could have been palatalised in either Galloway Gaelic or Scots.

¹⁰ Thanks to Alan James and Ronnie Black for suggestions on this place-name

Alternatively a much more obscure, though phonetically perhaps a bit closer possibility might be ScG *Cnoc Doilein* '(of) circling wind, eddying breeze'¹¹.

However another possibility is as suggested by Ronnie Black 'in Irish spelling **Cnoc Dó Léana**, or in Scottish Gaelic spelling **Cnoc Dà Liana**. I give both versions, because the number is as in Irish, the noun specific more as in Scottish Gaelic – basically we are dealing (in my opinion) with **Cnoc Dó Lian**, or in fact **Cnoc an Dó Lian** in the first citation, **Knokindulean**. It would mean 'the Hillock of the Two Meadows'. If I am right about this, it gives you the number two in Galloway Gaelic'.

There are at least 330 place-names in Galloway incorporating ScG *cnoc*, a hill. These are never the tallest hills in the area, usually they are applied to much more modest eminences, even sometimes to drumlins. Knockdolian is probably the most shapely *cnoc* in Galloway and Carrick.

Craigneil Castle

Early forms include:

Cragnele: RMS ii no. 290 dated 1477

Cragneile: RMS iii no. 896 dated 1529

Cragneill: RMS iii no. 1849 dated 1538

Cragaeil: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590

Craigneill: RMS vi no. 526 dated 1596

Cragneil: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755

Craigneil: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

ScG *Creag Nèill*, 'Niall's rock' upon which a late 14th or early 15th century castle here was built.

St Cuthbert's Church NX 117 838

Early forms include:

Kirkcudbrycht: RMS ii no. 2892 dated 1504

Kirkcudbrycht-Innertig: RMS iii no. 3082 dated 1545

Kirkkoubri: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590

Kirkcudbright Innertig: Inq ad Cap no. 176 dated 1618

Kirkcudbrycht-Innertig: RMS viii no. 720 dated 1620

¹¹ Thanks to Alan James for these suggestions

Kirkcudbrycht-Innertig: RMS viii no. 1337 dated 1628
Kirkcubright-Innertig: Inq ad Cap no. 352 dated 1646
Kirkcubry-Innertige: Inq ad Cap no. 450 dated 1653
Kirkcudbright Innertig: Inq ad Cap no. 490 dated 1657
Kirkcudbright Innertig: Inq ad Cap no. 525 dated 1662
Kirkcudbright Innertig: Inq ad Cap no. 680 dated 1693
Kirkcudbright Innertig: Inq ad Cap no. 678 dated 1693
Old Kk. Of Kirkcobry: Roy Lowlands surveyed 1752-1755
Old Kirkcudbright: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

Analysis

ScG **Circ Chaoibrichd Inbhir Tig*, 'Cuthbert's church at the confluence of the river Tig'. This was the original parish church of Kirkcudbright-Innertig, now Ballantrae parish. The parish centre was moved from here to Ballantrae in 1617¹². This is a place-name coined in Gaelic using a borrowed generic (probably OE *cirice*, *church*) influenced by ON and/or Scots and honouring a Northumbrian saint, Cuthbert of Melrose. The meaning of Tig is opaque, it may be pre-Celtic.

Kirkdominae NX 253 928

Early forms include:

Kirkdominae: RMS iii no. 1127 dated 1532
Kirkdamnie: Geog. Coll. II, no. 585 dated 1630
Kirkdomnie: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590
Kirkdomine: RMS v no. 115 dated 1580
Kirkdominie: RMS iii no. 1127 dated 1532
Kirkdominie: Inq ad Cap no. 506 dated 1658
Kildinine: Highland Papers, iv, 142 dated 1404
Kildamonie: Highland Papers, iv, 142 dated 1404
Kirkdamdie: Highland Papers, iv, 142 dated 1404
Kirkdomny b: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590
Kirkdomy: Blaeu South Carrick published 1653, surveyed c. 1590
Kirkdominae: OS 1st edition 6" map c. 1850

¹² https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1357654680&name_id=29938

Analysis

In the Charters of the Abbey of Crossraguel¹³ a charter by Robert III dated 1404 confirms to the Abbey ' duas mercatas terre Capelle Sancte Trinitatis de Kildomine'. The Ayrshire and Galloway Archaeological Association edition of these charters mentions in a footnote that:

In the parish of Bar, on the Stinchar, called at various times Kildinine, Kildamonie and Kundamonie the ruins of the Chapelstill exist, but the date of its erection is unknown. The celebrated " Kirkdamie Fair" has from time immemorial been held at this place on the last Saturday of May, but is now little more than a gathering of farmers in the neighbourhood.

This site appears to be the remains of a pre-reformation chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity. According to Canmore the surviving remains of the chapel cannot be easily dated¹⁴. Canmore mentions that an annual fair, (held on the last Sunday of May) was held until 1837. The site further states that holy water to serve the chapel was taken from the Struil Well nearby and that the water gushes forth out of the vertical rock there.

Again according to Canmore the chapel was partly deconstructed in 1650 to help build the church at Barr.

In terms of place-names this one could be one of the most interesting and significant in the Stinchar Valley or indeed Carrick more widely. It is possible that the place-name as we see in the variety of forms above has been formed by the ScG terms **circ* and *cill* being 'bolted on' to a pre-existing and place-name, possibly involving *domnach* (*later domhnach*), the earliest Gaelic word for a church. This then has been latinised and garbled in various ways by medieval scribes as indicated in the above list. Gilbert Márkus¹⁵ has written about this term and its potential significance as signifying a pre-Columban era religious establishment. This is based on the idea that in Ireland the use of this term appears to have stopped by the end of the 6th Century, mostly being replaced by *cell* or *cill*. If this is the case it would hint at very early Irish Gaelic contact and perhaps settlement well before the now generally accepted c.870-1100 era of the Gall-Ghàidheil Gaelic introduction in strength. However Márkus cautions that it may have been the case that *domhnach* remained productive in Scotland longer than in Ireland such that the date of coining of this place-name could be correspondingly later. It does however appear to be very rare in Scotland, Márkus cites a *Druim Domhnaich* in Lochaber and suggests three other potential place-names worthy of further investigation.

The Struil Well mentioned above would seem to take its name from ScG *sruthail* with the meaning 'flowing' or 'streaming' (the same element as found in Glen and Loch Trool). Struil Well is therefore likely to be a part translation of *An Tobar Sruthail* 'the streaming well', a name that seems to fit the Canmore description of the water as it flows from the rock. As Alan James has pointed out (pers. comm.) the collocation of church and well encourage the thought of an early origin. Indeed it is possible that this is one of those pagan sites which was co-opted and Christianised by early missionaries.

The generic term seems to have alternated between 'kirk' and 'kil' over the centuries, something that happens fairly frequently with such ecclesiastic terms in south-west Scotland.

¹³ Ayrshire and Galloway Archaeological Association, p. 37

¹⁴ <https://canmore.org.uk/site/62626/kirkdominae>

¹⁵ Scottish Place-Name News 2003, 15

In the Gaelic of south-west Scotland **circ* seems to have been used for more important churches many of which became medieval parishes and which may have been part of the inherited ecclesiastic infrastructure of the Northumbrian church. '*Cill*' on the other hand seems to have been used for more remote religious cells which may not have had such an origin. It could be that Kirk/Kil Dominae pre-dated the Northumbrian take over of the area (probably in the 8th century) and failed to become established as an important site under their jurisdiction but retained its local reverential importance until relatively recently.