Derivation of Place Names

From: Andrew Baird, *The Annals of a Tweeddale Parish – the History of the United Parish of Broughton, Glenholm and Kilbucho*, 1924, pages 152-156.

Place Names in the Parish

In his Scottish Land Names, Sir H. Maxwell says "There is perhaps no district in Scotland where the intermixture of languages is so perplexing as in the southern part of Strathclyde, round the watershed where the Clyde, Tweed and Annan take their source.   Names appear here on the map like fossils, Celtic, Saxon, Scandinavian."

The Place Names in the Parish can suggest much.   They tell us of ancient inhabitants, of physical features, hills, dales and rivers, of woods and trees, men's names given to land, Church names, early dedications of chapels and wells – of invasions – such as the Scandinavian – which left their mark on names, embracing Old Norse, Icelandic, Norwegian and Danish.   Scandinavian settlers left their impress, from dates varying from the eighth to the eleventh century, according to Veitch;   though it is difficult to determine.

"Celtic land names suggest visions of hill life, as Anglo-Saxon land-names call up pictures of the settlement of the valleys," says Sir George Douglas.

The Anglo-Saxon names are generally plain and matter of fact, while the Cymric have a music all their own and reflect the spirit of a romantic emotional people.   Such musical sounds we can realise in such lines as

"Garlavin, Cardon, Cardrona, Caerlee

Penvenna, Penvalla, Trahenna, Traquair."

Amongst names of dwelling places there is *Broughton*, compare 1200 Brouhtone, then Bruchton.

"Brough," Norse.   Anglo-Saxon form "Burgh", a walled or sheltered place.   Toun, ton or tun, Anglo-Saxon, originally hedge or fence: hence fenced place or enclosure, and thus, yard, farm, dwelling.

Glenholm – Glen, Cymric Glyn, a deep vale.   Holm or Whaum, a small valley or hollow between hills – Glenwhym, Glenquhome or Glenholm, Icelandic Hvammz – a grassy slope or vale;   meadowland.

Kilbucho – 1200 Kylbeuhoc, 1567 Kylbocho.   Kil, (cella) church or burying place of St. Begha, female disciple of St. Aidan and Abbess Hilda, sixth century.   The final 'oc' in the early forms is diminutive – 'little Begha' or Bees – same as St. Bees, Cumberland.

Cardon or Caerdon – 'Caer' originally a wall, hence walled place, fort – Cymric, Gael, Dun, a fort.

Chester-Rig, foot.   Latin "Castra," Camp, Castrum foot.   While the derivation is Latin, this is probably one amongst several of the last retreats of the Cymri of Strathclyde, against the Pict and Scot of Argyllshire from South and West, and the Saxons from North and East.   "Rig," Scandinavian, A hill.

Chapelgill.   The Chapel Glen.   Norse, "Kapilla," and "gill" a ravine or cleft of the mountains.   It shows how far Scandinavian influence went.   Near by, is Glenkirk.

Culter Fell a compound of the Celtic "Cultir" or "Culter", the land at the back, and the Norse, "Fell," a hill.

Glencotho – Gaelic "Gleann-Ceotha" – Glen of the mist.   Some trace it to older Gaelic – The Hidden Glen.

Coomlees – "The Hollow or sheltered pastures."   "Cym," "Cwm," hollow (cf. English Coomb, Old English, Cumb, a valley or a bowl.)   Cup-shaped depression in the Hills, shelter or place between the hills, probably applied to the hill itself.

Rachan, Gaelic "Racan" arable land, but the "*Ra*" may be the Norse "ra" as in Wrae.

Wrae – A corner, a landmark from Norse "Wraa," "ra," cf. "wry" from Old English wrigian, to bend – The Wrae.

Mossfennan – 1260 Mosspennoc, 1296 Mespennon.   "Moss" or "Maes."   Cymric, a Meadow by the Pen, head or hill Scandinavian.   "Pennoc" may be a diminutive.

Heughbrae – Anglo-Saxon, "How" – a hill.

Cleugh – enters freely into place names such as the Cat-cleugh of Ratchill and the Cleugh in Kilbucho. "Cleugh," a rugged ascent or a hollow descent on the hillside.   Anglo-Saxon, "Claugh," a cleft of a rock or the side of a hill.

Bamflat – "Bowflat," flat or field for cattle.   Scandinavian Bow.   Old Norse "Bú," farm stock, cattle.

The Shaw – A wood.   Old English, "Scaga," Icelandic Skág-r – "Dene," a wooded hollow.

Shiels – Broughton Shields – The Shieling.   Old Norse "Skali," a shepherd's hut, a shelter.

The Glack "The pass or defile."   Gaelic "Glac," "A hollow or valley."   The old word means "the palm of the hand."

Corstane – In Cornwall – "Cors," a bog or fen is common, but "Cors" is also an early Saxon form of Cross.   Gaelic Crois.   It may take its name from a march stone or stones marked with a 'cors' or cross.   The distinctive mark on these stones, says Macdonald in "Place Names," indicates Church property, memorial or boundary stones.

These 'Cors' stones appear in all disputes about Church lands.   'Corstane' marched with the old parish glebe of Broughton prior to 1815 before the excambion.   Dr. Joseph Robertson says, "Many of the Scottish Crosses were unhewn stones graven with a cross."

Cross Cryne, a road or pass across a ridge.   The first part may be Crosg, a crossing, found for example in Glen-crosk, now Glencorse, or more likely "the boundary Cross."   Chambers in his *History of Peeblesshire*, wrote, that "During his temporary and imperfect possession of Scotland, consequent on the Battle of Haledon Hill, Edward Baliol in 1334, surrendered to Edward III. a large portion of the South of Scotland, including the County of Peebles."

Carlops and the hill of Cross Cryne were to be the north-western boundaries of the ceded territory: as Wynton in his rhyming chronicle says:

"At Karlynlippis and at Cross-cryne

Thare thai made the marches syne."

There is a "Cryne's Cross Mounth" which leads from Laurencekirk and 'Paldy' kirk in the Mearns to the river, - an important pass much used in olden days.   By this route Edward I. of England is thought to have marched with his forces in 1296 when he visited Aberdeen and received the homage of the burghers.   Cryne's Cross is supposed to be a personal name.   There was a noted Aberdeen family in the middle centuries named Cryne and Cryne's Cross (Footdee) was a well-known property.   Members of the Cryne family witnessed charters and made donations to St Nicholas' Church.   It is suggested that as a boundary stone of the Cryne family may have given the name to this Grampion route, so a like boundary Cross may give the name to the Peeblesshire "Cross Cryne."

Pyked Stone – English or Gaelic (pic) a sharp point or pike.

Burnetland – The land of the Burnets, an ancient family.

The Logan – Gaelic "lagan," logan.   A hollow surrounded by rising ground.   Old Icelandic, "Laegd," a hollow or low place.

Trahenna, between Broughton and Stobo parishes and Trebetha in Kilbucho mean a dwelling place or home: Tref-fa the Home Place: Tre, tra and dre, as Dreva, being all forms of the same Cymric root.

Tweed, probably Cymric Tywi from the root "Twy," what limits, checks or bounds.   A very old and difficult word.

Merlindale – speaks of the valley of Merlin, prophet and bard, said to have been converted by St. Mungo at Altarstone.

The musical names in the parish are heard in the well-known rhyme:-

"Glenkirk and Glencotha,

The Mains o' Kilbucho,

Blendeven and the Raw,

Mitchellhill and the Shaw,

There's a hole abune Thriepland

Would haud them a'."

Blendewing – Welsh "Blen," the upper part or source of a stream, upland.

Glenkirk, probably a part translation of "Gleann na Cille" – Glen of the Church: Cill turned into Scotch, Kirk.

Glenlood, head of Holms Water "Lude," cf. Atholl, in Gaelic "an Leothaid," the broad slope.