West Stormont's Auld Times

Spring 2024

Birnam Hill reflected in Gauls Loch (See p10)

WEST STORMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Auld Times is the journal of

The West Stormont Historical Society

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by Dr Allan Kennedy

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Scotland Below the Surface

by Bruce Keith

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From the Black Watch Archive (tbc)

By Fiona Connah & Dr Nicky Small

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REDGORTON O.S. NAME BOOK

JENNIFER MCKAY

Many and varied are the resources for a student of family or local history. There is the Old Statistical Account (OSA) which contains descriptions, written in the 1790s, of every parish in Scotland and there is the New Statistical Account, a compilation of a follow-up exercise undertaken in the 1830s. These can be found on the Scotland's Places website. The Scotland's People website holds records of births, deaths, marriages, census information and more; enough to keep the family historian happily browsing for hours. Another resource is gazetteers; there are two: Fullarton's and Groome's, which provide descriptions of the parishes and notes of agriculture and industry, the churches, the schools and historical snippets. Then there are the Ordnance Survey First Edition maps from the 1860s. Go to the National Library of Scotland website to see these maps.

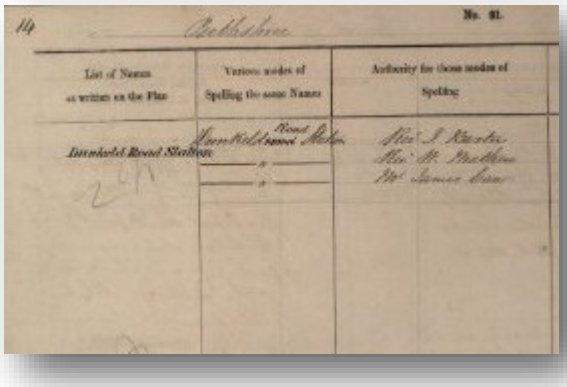
One resource that can be overlooked is the Ordnance Survey Name Books. Any one of these may contain a little gem of information that answers a question about your great-grandparents' home or where they worked in the 1860s.

After the Ordnance Survey (OS) cartographers had been out in the field, taken their measurements and worked up their drawings, they had to add the names of the features they had depicted on their maps. The names they had gathered were listed in a Name Book for each parish in Scotland. I have chosen the Name Book for the Parish of Redgorton to illustrate a few points.

The map-makers followed a protocol when looking for names: in every parish they approached and questioned "reliable local informants" and on every page of the Name Book the names of the informants are listed. These gentlemen were asked for the name and all forms of spelling currently in use. A brief description of the feature and additional information deemed relevant or interesting were added to the final column of the page.

The OS surveyors may have thought they were simply recording names to add to their maps to provide information for contemporary map users. However, the Name Books reveal much more than these men could have imagined, in terms of social history and, hence, their value to present day readers.

If we consider the category headed "Informants", we discover that in Redgorton, they comprise a narrow section of the community: landowners, tenant farmers, the ministers, schoolmasters, managers of industrial facilities and the tenants or owners of "big houses".



The books were written up in longhand and some of the notes in the last column are in handwriting so small, because of lack of space, that it is almost impossible to read them. Fortunately, dedicated volunteers have transcribed the original entries and the transcriptions are appended to each page, thus saving the researcher a lot of time. Some of those volunteers are members of the West Stormont Historical Society and I thank them for making this resource so much more accessible.

Transcriptions of sections of the Old Statistical Account copied into the Name Books have helped to keep alive old stories, such as the tale of the Battle of Luncarty. The final column also records contemporary information and affords us a few snapshots of life in Redgorton parish around 1860, under the heading of "Descriptive Remarks, or other general Observations which may be considered of Interest".

As I write this during International Women's Month, it strikes me that there is a total absence of women among the informants. There is no mention, in this Name Book, of any woman. This reflects the legal status of women, their lack of agency and their lack of property-owning rights in the mid nineteenth century. The informant was by default, always a man.

What do we learn of the then current situation in Redgorton? We learn who owns which property and its state of repair and the names of the tenants. The landowners were: the Duke of Atholl, Mr Maxtone Graham of Cultoquhey, the Earl of Mansfield and Mr J Murray of Murrayshall. The entire village of Stanley was feued from the Duke of Atholl by Howard Esq of Stanley House and Balthayock.

We discover that Stanley Mill, which had recently been employing around 1200 people, was not working and that most of the houses in Stanley were lying empty because the mill workers had left. Where, one wonders, did all these people go? As the mill was closed because of what the OS surveyor called the "Stoppage of the Cotton Mills", (as a result of the Cotton Famine caused by the American Civil War) there was unlikely to be other employment in

cotton mills in Scotland or anywhere else in the UK.

And, here I come across a glimmer of illumination with regard to my own family history. A great-great-grandfather was a weaver in Crieff. In the 1851 census he is a cotton handloom weaver working at home. In 1861 he is a cotton weaver, and his wife, a yarn-winder, both most probably working in a mill, and in 1871 there is no sign of them. I found a son in Glasgow but no trace, in Scotland, of any other family member. They reappear in Crieff in the 1881 census and the head of the household is now a farm labourer. The Cotton Famine may very well explain their temporary disappearance and the change of occupation.

Luncarty Bleachworks, one of the largest in Scotland, was functioning; it processed linen. Accommodation was provided for the workers at Trinity, which was, "two dwelling houses divided into many tenements and occupied by families employed in the Luncarty Bleach work, property of William Marshall". This statement implies that children worked at the bleach works. It also implies extremely crowded living space and, by extension, insalubrious living conditions. Another two houses "divided into many apartments and occupied by families employed in the Luncarty Bleach Work" are listed under the name of Scarth.

Other bleachfields were at Cromwell Park and Pitcairnfield. The bleachworks at Cromwell Park were operated by Caird & Co of Dundee for bleaching linen yarn. The machinery was driven by steam and water power and around 40 people were employed there. Cromwell Park had two other mills: a beetling mill and a weaving mill. The complex was the property of the Earl of Mansefield.

Last remnant of Cromwellpark in1976. Courtesy of Canmore.

The textile industry was not the only provider of non-agricultural work in the parish. Ordie Mill, which made shuttles and bobbins, straddled the boundary between Redgorton and Moneydie – the house and the factory were in Moneydie and the wood-storage sheds were in Redgorton. And, one final manufacturing enterprise was the Strathord Tile Works which produced bricks and tiles.

The railway stations are listed. Dunkeld Road Station was for goods only and was operated by the Scottish North Eastern Railway, which ran from Perth to Aberdeen. Luncarty Station, on the same line, comprised a booking office and two sheds. This line, we are told, had electric telegraphic communication along its length.

Loch Class engine at Luncarty station in 1912.

The road running between Perth and Dunkeld was a turnpike road, that is, a toll road. Every turnpike road was the responsibility of a group of trustees (mostly local gentry). They ran it according to an act of parliament, passed specifically for each road and money raised from tolls helped towards the road's upkeep. A turnpike was a gate constructed of sharpened posts (pikes) which created a barrier when rolled across the road where road users had to stop to pay the tolls. Tolls varied according to the size and mode of transport being used. Although the generic term 'turnpike" was used for toll roads, the barrier need not have been made of spikey posts; at Marlehall, the Name Book refers to a "checkbar" and goes on to say that "a wooden box is all the building connected with this T P". The toll collector, Mr J. Boag, was referred to as the "Taxman".

Pitcairngreen Post office received its mail from the main post office in Perth at 8.30am and dispatched mail at 3.00pm. The parish school at Balmblair also housed a Post Office and the Registrar's office. The first post arrived from Perth at 6.30am and was dispatched 45 minutes later. The second post arrived at 11.15 am and was dispatched at 3.30 pm. Mr Dobbie, the schoolmaster was also Postmaster and Registrar.

Finally, something rather different: the Name Book reports that two hoards of coins had been found in the parish. In 1834 about 1500 coins of different dates were found under a large stone near the Thistlebridge; 540 of the coins "were dispersed among different individuals of which no account can now be obtained; 872 are in the possession of Mr Greig, merchant in Perth, who holds them for sale. " Clearly, there was no Treasure Trove law compelling finders to hand in discoveries to the authorities.

Thistle Bridge was not a bridge but a volcanic dyke which ran across the Tay below the surface of the water. To avoid confusion, the name was written on the map as one

word and in a font that indicated it was a natural feature.

Another hoard was recorded in the New Statistical Account as having been found in 1789 beside a large stone at Dumbies Knowe on Balmblair Farm; it contained “as many of Davids groats and half-groats and Edwards pennies, as amounted to three pounds.” No-one was able to show the OS surveyors where the Knowe was or where the money was found. It is likely that the coins were hidden around the time that Edward III’s English army was campaigning against David II in Scotland in the 1330s when the Battle of Dupplin Moor was fought in the next parish.

I would encourage anyone who is interested in their local history to look at the relevant parish Name Book; there will something in there that will catch the eye, even if it isn’t a story of buried treasure!

For Name Books go to scotlandsplaces.gov.uk or simply google OS Name Books.

A Whigmaleerie

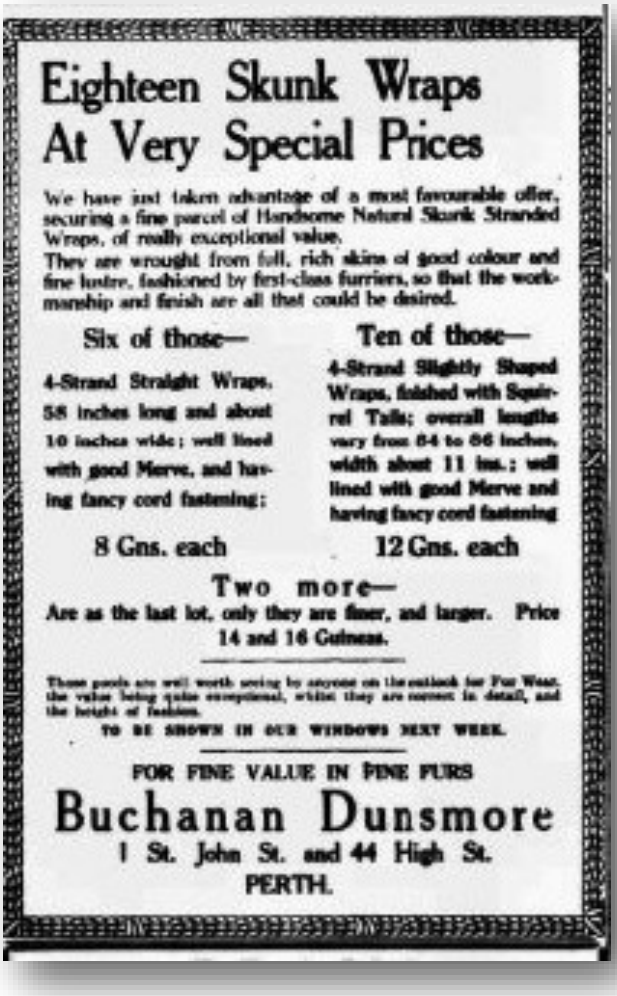
There was an Auchtergaven mouse
(I canna mind his name)
Wha met in wi’ a hirplin louse
Sair trauchl’d for her hame.

‘My friend, I’m hippit; and nae doot
Ye’ll heist me on my wey.’
The mouse but squinted doun his snout
And wi’ a breenge was by.

Or lang he cam to his ain door
Doun be a condie-hole;
And thocht, as he was stappin owre:
Vermin are ill to thole.

William Soutar

BACK IN THE DAY



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We have just taken advantage of a most favourable offer, securing a fine parcel of Handsome Natural Skunk Stranded Wraps, of really exceptional value.
They are wrought from full, rich skins of good colour and fine lustre, fashioned by first-class furriers, so that the workmanship and finish are all that could be desired.

Six of those—
4-Strand Straight Wraps, 58 inches long and about 10 inches wide; well lined with good Merve, and having fancy cord fastening:
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4-Strand Slightly Shaped Wraps, finished with Squirrel Tails; overall lengths vary from 54 to 56 inches, width about 11 ins.; well lined with good Merve and having fancy cord fastening
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These pieces are well worth seeing by anyone on the outlook for Fur Wear, the value being quite exceptional, whilst they are correct in detail, and the height of fashion.
TO BE SHOWN IN OUR WINDOWS NEXT WEEK.

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PERTH.

Skunk wraps, as billed here in the Perthshire Advertiser in May 1924, were very popular. Production had increased over the past couple of decades until it supplanted the previously most traded fur—Muskrat.

Often because the wraps were passed off as ‘Alaskan Sable’.

However, after the identity of the fur became known, Skunk took a dive in popularity. Elsewhere.

Presumably, Buchanan Dunsmore thought the largely rural readership of the PA would be less squeamish. And would value the strength and longevity of the fur over the association with Pepe Le Peu.

PETER CONACHER PRINCE OF THE PIPE ORGAN

MICHAEL LAWRENCE

When Peter Conacher was born in Bankfoot on 16th July 1823 there were, at most, thirteen working pipe organs in the whole of Scotland. For well over 250 years, the instrument had been forbidden by the Church of Scotland. There were only five organs in Edinburgh, two in Glasgow, two in Aberdeen, and one in Dundee. All were associated with the Episcopal Church who had used organs from about 1700. Organs had also been installed in chapels at Banff, Peterhead, and Montrose.

Organs had been played in Scotland since the reign of James I, who was crowned in 1423, and were used in abbeys, cathedrals, collegiate churches, town churches, and university colleges. John Knox returned to Scotland from Geneva in 1559 and set in motion a tide of church reformation and iconoclasm that swept away all ornaments of worship that existed in the Roman Catholic church such as statuettes, wall images, cassocks, candles, bells and incense thuribles.

Organs were smashed by the Protestant mobs or fell into disuse and eventual ruin. Kirks were stripped back to the bare walls and church services were conducted without complex chanting or any form of instrumentation. Similar tactics were employed in England to wipe away all signs of Catholicism. In the centuries that followed, organ building skills were lost across the British Isles.

Peter's father, John Conacher, was a master cabinet maker. By 1841, the Conacher family had moved to Blairgowrie and Peter and his two older brothers, John and James, had served an apprenticeship under their father.

Peter had a love for music and was a talented pianist. In his early 20s, he moved to Glasgow where he learned the piano fitting and tuning trade and was able to combine musical ability with his carpentry skills to meet the growing demand for cabinet pianos in the booming city. And it was in Glasgow that Peter became fascinated with the fundamentals of the pipe organ.

After 1830, the number of organs in Scotland increased dramatically. The ban on music in Roman Catholic churches had been lifted and, with increasing affluence and toleration, both Catholics and Episcopalians were building small chapels and equipping them with pipe organs. Protestant dissenters such as the Congregationalists, Unitarians, Methodists and Baptists were also allowing organs in their churches.

During Peter's time in Glasgow in the 1840s, the city was home to a few organs that he could visit and this included the Trades Hall, the University of Glasgow Concert Hall, St Andrew's RC Church, and Episcopalian churches such as St Andrew's-by-the-Green, which was nicknamed disparagingly as "the Whistlin' Kirk" by the local Presbyterians.

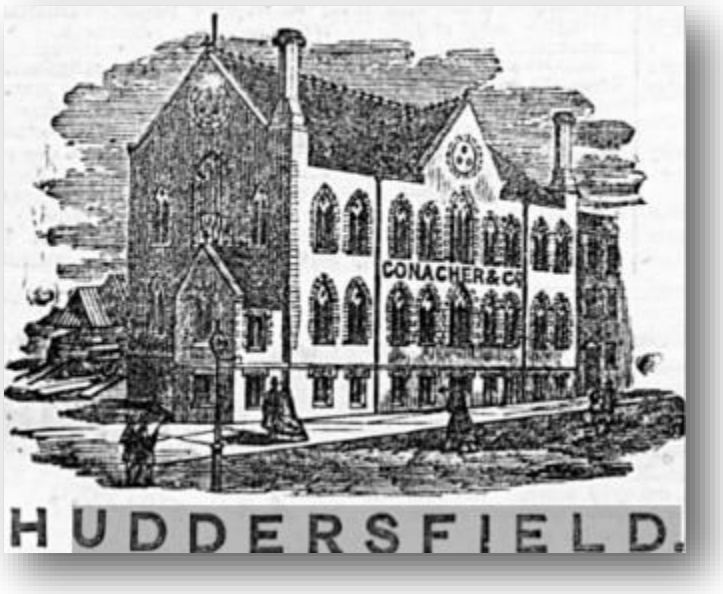
In 1850, Peter joined his parents in their new home in Edinburgh. Here he was able to obtain some direct experience of organ building with the well-known firm of Hamilton & Müller whose advertisements carried the strapline "Organ Builders to the Queen".

David Hamilton had trained in the Netherlands and Germany and he encouraged Peter to follow the same path. In 1851, Peter travelled to the city of Leipzig in Saxony where he worked for two years until he had thoroughly mastered the German system of organ building, tuning and voicing.

On his return to Scotland, Peter married Janette Soutar from Blairgowrie on 21st August 1853. The couple settled in London after Peter landed a job with William Hill & Sons Limited, an old established firm of organ builders. Within a few months he had moved across London to join the rival

firm of Joseph Walker & Sons Limited.

Much of the work with Joseph Walker was in Yorkshire where there was a growing demand for organs. Peter could see there were ample prospects in the north of England for him to set up his own business. He found premises at White Lion Yard on Cross Church Street in Huddersfield and the first advertisement for the new firm appeared in the Huddersfield Chronicle on Saturday 9th December 1854. The business started well and within six months had moved to larger premises at 7 Upperhead Row in Huddersfield.



Success continued and, on Saturday 13th July 1861, the Chronicle reported on the opening of a new factory on George Street in Huddersfield for Conacher & Company to cope with the huge demand for their organs. The factory was equipped with a steam engine and powered saws and staffed with a team of skilled craftsmen and experienced organ voicers and tuners. The firm could produce organs that were suitable for chapels, churches, cathedrals and town halls. By the mid-1860s, company output was averaging some 30 large organs each year for customers throughout the UK, and increasingly across the British Empire.

Conacher's first Scottish contract was at Greenock Congregational Church in 1861 and this led to him building most of the organs for independent churches in Scotland over the next decade. The increase in his Scottish work also brought Conacher to the forefront when the Church of Scotland and other Presbyterian churches changed their tune on the appropriateness of musical instrumentation in a kirk.

Until the second half of the 19th century, the only music allowed in Scottish Presbyterian churches was the unaccompanied singing of psalms led by a precentor who sang a line which the congregation repeated. The outcome was often a tuneless drone that was endured rather than enjoyed.

The first use of a musical instrument in a Church of Scotland kirk since the Reformation was at St Andrew's-in-the-Square in Glasgow on Sunday 6th September 1807. An organ was used to accompany a single psalm but this action was immediately condemned by the Presbytery of Glasgow who believed "the use of organs in the public worship of God is contrary to the law of the land, and to the law and constitution of the Established Church". This started a highly controversial debate that became known as "the organ question" which rumbled on for the next 50 years.

The majority anti-organ faction firmly believed that worshippers should not attend a public service to be entertained by music and singing. These conservatives preferred their church walls bare, their seats hard, their sermons extempore and full of hell fire, and their sinners publicly humiliated.

After 1830, as the use of organs by other denominations became increasingly popular, there were ministers and elders who wanted the Kirk to take a more liberal stance on instrumentation. This group wanted the congregation to enjoy attending a public service and was also keen on beautifying their churches with stained glass, providing comfortable seating, encouraging choirs, and including congregation participation in the church liturgy.

Much of the demand for change was led by the Rev Dr Robert Lee at Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh. Lee was regarded as a rebel within the Church of Scotland and, as well as his eventually successful campaign for instrumental music, pioneered the reform of liturgy, the use of a prayer book, and the practice of standing for singing and kneeling for prayer. Lee installed a harmonium at Greyfriars in 1863 and an organ in 1865.

Traditionally, kirk sessions had oversight of the style of worship in their own parish and they were aggrieved when the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1865 transferred powers to either forbid or sanction the use of instrumental music in an individual church to the local Presbytery. This was known as the Pirie Act. What, in fact, became the norm thereafter was that if a congregation was unanimous in wanting an organ and there was no significant local dissent then they expected the Presbytery to sanction and not oppose the kirk session decision.

The first organ introduced into a Church of Scotland kirk with the express approval of the General Assembly was built by Peter Conacher and installed in Duns Parish Church in 1865. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Peter Conacher was building pipe organs across Scotland, winning contracts from all denominations – Church of Scotland, Episcopalian, Congregational, Baptist, Roman Catholic and United Free.

With his business continuing to grow, Conacher had to increase his production capacity yet again. In 1873, the company's new Springwood Organ Works in Huddersfield was opened with a large steam engine, wood cutting and planing machinery, a full complement of specialist finishing equipment, and eighty highly skilled craftsmen. This made Conacher's the largest and best equipped organ factory in the United Kingdom. By now, the Conacher firm had built around 350 pipe organs across the UK.

One of Conacher's first jobs after the opening of the Springwood Works was at St John's Kirk in Perth. He had already installed an organ in the Congregational Church on Kinnoull Street in 1866. The Episcopal Church then commissioned him to build organs for the St John the Baptist Chapel on Princes Street in 1871 and St Ninian's Cathedral on Atholl Street in 1873, both relatively new buildings.

St John's Kirk

Siting an organ in St John's Kirk was a different challenge. The Town Council refused to allow Conacher to place the organ where he favoured in the back gallery. The next position chosen was the north east corner but this required the removal of the seats of several prominent families and so was turned down to avoid discord. The Council eventually agreed for the organ to be placed behind the pulpit on the east wall where there were several monuments and a fine window. The kirk session accepted Conacher's advice that nothing could be done to reduce the height of the pipework without ruining sound quality and the result was the defacement of the interior of the ancient church. This issue was repeated across the country as organs were fitted pragmatically into ancient churches wherever there was a suitable wall.

Organ registers suggest that the Conacher & Company built around 150 organs in Scotland from 1865 until the outbreak of the First World War. Conacher's highlights in Scotland include Craigiebuckler Church in Aberdeen, Brechin Cathedral, St Mary Magdelene Church in Dundee, Canongate Church in Edinburgh, Bute Hall in the University of Glasgow, and St Mirin's Cathedral in Paisley.

Across the rest of the UK his productivity was equally impressive. In his adopted home county of Yorkshire, Peter Conacher built at least 140 organs. And he was almost as prolific in the neighbouring counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Staffordshire. Peter Conacher organs are found across England from the West Country, London and the Home Counties to the Lake District, Lincolnshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Some 90 Conacher organs are found in Wales, and he was particularly popular in Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire. Some say that the Conacher organ is the true national instrument of Wales and not the triple harp. The best Welsh examples include: St Paul's Church in Colwyn Bay, the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Flint, St Elian's Church in Llanelian, St Mary's Church in Llanfair Talhaiarn, and the Theatr Soar in Merthyr Tydfil.

There are well over 100 Conacher organs in Northern Ireland and this includes the All-Saints Parish Church in Antrim, Ballywalter Presbyterian Church, Holy Trinity Church in Banbridge, St Columba's Cathedral in Derry, Cathedral of Macartin in Clogher, Cathedral Church of St Brigid in Kildare, and St Cedma's Parish Church in Larne.

Conacher & Company also built many organs overseas, particularly in the former colonies. These include:

Wesleyan Church, Wellington, New Zealand; Grand Bank Methodist Church, Newfoundland; St Cyprian's Church, Barbados; Presbyterian Church, Rangoon; St Andrew's Kirk, Chennai, India; St Andrews Church, Bengaluru; and St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Manly, Sydney.

Peter Conacher died of congestive heart failure on Tuesday 12th April 1894, aged 70. At the time of his death, the firm had built some 900 pipe organs across the UK and worldwide.

Peter was succeeded as Managing Director by his son Joseph Conacher. Joseph died in 1913 and was succeeded by Peter Conacher Jnr who died in 1921. Peter Snr's great grandson, Philip Conacher, then managed the firm until 1950 as the last family member at the helm. He led the firm during the growth of the film industry in the 1930s and 1940s when Conacher & Company manufactured hundreds of organs for installation in cinemas across the UK.

In 1972, Conacher & Company was bought by the renowned organ builders, Henry Willis & Sons Limited. The business now concentrates on the conservation and restoration of organs and the delivery of routine maintenance such as cleaning, tuning and minor adjustments. Over its 170-year history, the company has built and installed some 2,000 pipe organs.

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Fisher Luck

Hae ye no heard o' Sandy Caird
Wha was a whin-stane napper?
He yank't a trout frae Buchanty Spout,
And wasna it a whapper !

For twenty year, or maybe mair,
In dry and in drubbly weather
He tried for trout at Buchanty Spout
But never tain anither.

William Soutar

Buchanty Spout

GAULS OF MURTHLY

PAUL MCLENNAN

On the road out to the old A9 from Byres of Murthly, just past the sawmill on the right, there used to be a small farm: Gauls of Murthly. With fields on both sides of the road. Today, the most noticeable feature by the roadside is a large clump of bamboo. The area behind that was once better known as Mill Dam. And immortalised by Sir John Everett Millais in one of a series of evocative landscapes he painted across the estate – 'Lingering Autumn' (1890).

A little way north of Gelly Cottage, formerly Three Mile House, the ancient pre-turnpike road from Perth to Dunkeld forked. The right-hand cart track then headed north-east past Colrie to the ferry point on the Tay known as Boat of Murthly. The left-hand one continued, now in the lee of Birnam Hill, down to Dunkeld via another ferry, at Inver. Down between Gauls of Murthly and Byres of Murthly.

Note that in those few sentences we name check the estate's most prominent 'X *of* Y' combinations:

Byres – possibly an early equivalent to *mains* or *home farm*;

Boat – the ferry closest to the castle which, although public, was there primarily because the Stewarts then had extensive holdings on the north side of the river; and

Gauls – the odd one out, not seemingly a description or function. And not an easy name to parse, as we shall see.

The commonest Scottish 'X *of* Y' place-name combinations, in which a generic term precedes a qualifying element linked by the preposition *of,* are variations to do with water: Burn of Vat, Burn of Birse, Burn of Sorrow, Boat of Garten etc. Nary a one in Perthshire, by the way. But the combinations occur in other ways: Bullers of Buchan, Braes o' Fosse, Mains of Murthly etc. (The latter confuses the issue somewhat as it has nothing to do with 'our' Murthly. It's a steading above the distillery on the edge of Aberfeldy.)

Gauls of Murthly may be unusual, but it is neither peculiar nor unique.

Before examining the potential origins of this place-name it is worth having a look at its place on the estate.

Murthly today centres on the crossroads at the junction of the B9099 and the road to Kinclaven. Where once again there is a bar and restaurant, Uisge. Close by are the village hall, level crossing, and a housing estate, Druids Park. A little way down the road the prominent landmarks are Wilks Garage and the shop/post office. And there's the primary school up at Ardoch, oddly at the edge of the village (because it was shared with Airntully, from a time when every kid walked to school regardless of the weather).

People remember village history, if a bit vaguely on dates. That Murthly once had an inn (burned down in 1928), a railway station (closed 1966), a lunatic asylum (closed in 1986), and a church (deconsecrated in 1986). If you stand at the crossroads and look at all the houses around, then cast your mind's eye along Kinclaven Road right to the last house, and similarly down the B9099 to the bungalow on the other side of the post office . . . none of them existed before 1856.

Yet the Stewarts acquired Murthly Castle and the estate, in a dodgy deal, as far back as 1615. (From the Abercrombies, a recusant family: Catholics still in a newly Protestant, virulently anti-papist Scotland.) Between then and the coming of the railway in 1856 their attention and focus was elsewhere. On the farms of Tathyhill, Pittensorn, Hillhead, Byres, and across what is now the old A9 to the even more productive fermtouns of Meikle, Nether and Upper Obney, and another half dozen smaller farms close by. As shown in a clip below from James Stobie's map of The Counties of Perth and Clackmannan of 1783, where the fermtouns in the "Opnies" are prominent.

In the middle to late 18th century, the busiest part of Murthly estate was Colrie, near Byres. Because of its three mills: two for grinding meal, one for lint. Today all that remains is Colrey Lodge nestled by the A9 on the Pittensorn Road. And a neglected mill pond. (The spelling has changed over the centuries.)

Back in the day, Gauls of Murthly was much more in the centre of things. However, we do not know how or when it got its name.

It may be we should look for its derivation in the old Gall-Ghaidheil nomenclature. Alison Grant in an article for 'The Bottle Imp' (Issue 10) tells us that: " The Gaelic place-name *gall* means 'stranger, foreigner', and occurs in Scottish place-names including Achingall 'field of the strangers' (East Lothian), Rubha nan Gall 'point of the strangers' (Mull), Cnoc nan Gall 'hill of the strangers' (Colonsay), Allt nan Gall 'stream of the strangers' (Sutherland), Inchgall 'isle of the strangers' (Fife), Barr nan Gall 'summit of the strangers' (Argyllshire) and Camusnagaul 'bay of the strangers' (Wester Ross)."

In many cases said strangers were Viking settlers. Who left their mark down the west coast from Fingal's Cave to Galloway and across the Irish Sea. In fact, two kinds of strangers: Fair (Norwegians) which comes through in names - *fionn gall/*Fingal; and dark (Danes) - *dubh gall/* Dougal. There were also later incomers, known as *Gall Bhreathnach*/stranger-Britons.

There are three instances of Gall/Gaul in place-names locally, within four miles of each other.

One is *Galbrydistoun*, which Dr Simon Taylor, leading expert in Scottish Place-Names studies, suggests is early medieval. "It seems to contain the personal name Galbraith [*Gall-Bhreathnach* "stranger-Briton,"] with the Scots habitative element *toun*, not introduced north of the Forth until the late 12th century." Today the area is known as Bradystone.

The other two are different to Galbrydistoun but akin in topography. The other Gall, by the way, lies on the edge of Bankfoot between the junction with the road to Murthly and Taste of Perthshire. There is no evidence of Norse settlement there or on Murthly estate, however. Invasion and a stay well beyond welcome in and around Dunkeld in the late 9th century, yes. But no archaeological evidence of roots being put down.

The earliest evidence we have of Gauls of Murthly is an undated, but from its context clearly 18th century map: "Plan of Farm of Byres". (Murthly & Strathbraan Estates archives.) Bordering this coloured plan is a blank area named as Gauls Farm. The earliest map of Gauls of Murthly itself is in the folio of estate plans published in 1825. (Murthly & Strathbraan Estates archives.) Interestingly, the main feature, the Cyrano schnoz of the farm, is a large body of water: emphatically marked 'Gauls'. (The steading is also named.)

This is repeated in "Plan of the Baronies of Grandtully, Murthly and Strathbraan" c. 1830. (Part of the Grandtully Muniments on loan to the National Records of Scotland.) And again, in "Plan of the Farm of Byres and Kingswood" c. 1856 (Murthly & Strathbraan Estates archives), where it is given as 'Gauls Loch'.

The farm was bounded to the north by the turnpike road from Perth to Dunkeld (now the old A9); to the west it marched with the lands of Dalpowie at Birnam Burn; and to the south, Byres of Murthly. The largest acreage of the farm lay to the south and east, marching with another estate farm, Muirlands. In this section the grass parks were dominated by scrub, tussocks and gorse, ground not yet fully wrenched from the Muir of Thorn, much of it bog, with a massive 10 acre spread of open water and shrub covered islets. In the estate plans of 1825 Byres farm is shown as having 100 acres. By contrast, neighbouring Gauls had only 79 acres, and this difference is made starker yet by their relative rental values: £165 per annum as opposed to £75. Gauls only declined in value over the years. By 1885, it had all but disappeared as an independent farm. Byres farm grew though, but in the opposite direction, encompassing Kingswood.

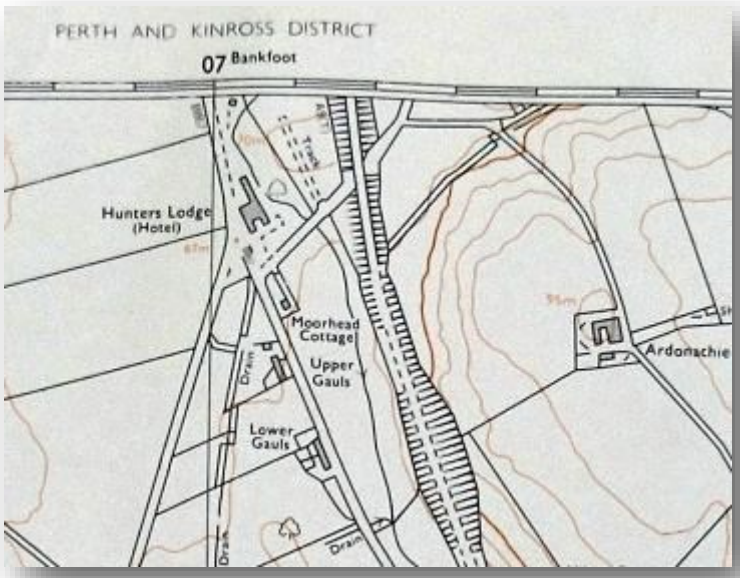
On the Dictionaries of the Scots Language website there is a clue to the origin of the name . . . 'Gaul' is a variant of *Gal n*. the bog myrtle, *Myrica gale*. First noted in print in 1726 by a botanist, W. Macfarlane. Then in James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785): "The sweet-smelling plant which the Highlanders call gaul." Back in the day young bucks would tuck a pungent sprig in their bonnets when courting. Trust Boswell to fasten on that. (In traditional folklore bog myrtle has also long been considered a good repellent against insects such as the midge (*Culicoides impunctatus*) and this has recently been confirmed through scientific tests of the oil extracted from the plant. (According to Trees for Life.) An armful gathered into your tent might make all the difference . . . If you have no stomach for the modern alternative, Avon's *Skin So Soft* aka granny-juice.)

However, as the name suggests, bog myrtle thrives on

acidic, none too solid peaty ground. A tenant farmer might not be so easily won over to it growing profusely on his small farm. Old farmers know the term as describing a watery, boggy place. It seems likely that Gauls of Murthly was so called because it was ill-favoured land.

Its major feature, however, has been transformed over the years into Mill Dam. Fed from Stairdam below Birnam Hill, it became an important power source via a system of sluices and a lade that turned the big wheel at Murthly sawmill and was channelled to another pond above Colrie to turn the wheels of three more mills.

The other ground known as Gall/Gauls, just south of Bankfoot, we know from the first edition OS map at 6" to the mile (from an 1864 survey) as a triangular area: 'Gall'. Significantly, the land includes a body of water, Mill Dam, and is bisected by a lade. In later editions, although the water has been drained, memory of it and the boggy nature of the ground persists to the north and south of the B869, which are shown as Upper Gauls and Lower Gauls.



Remember the commonest 'X *of* Y' place-name combinations? Water related. I may have to rethink my assertion there is nary a one in Perthshire.

CLIMATE CHANGE OR WEATHER?

A RECURRING THEME

Dr Nicky Small

Here we are in early May and the weather has been cold, wet and pretty miserable for months. We are all recalling the lovely weather of 2020, the lockdown summer, and wonder if we will have any warmth and sun this year at all. There are historians who study the weather of the past, indeed, with concerns about our climate, environmental history is growing in popularity. Those of us who trawl through early modern estate papers, the family letters, journals and reports from factors in the archives of noble families, see countless references to weather. Next to enquiries after health, the weather was indeed the next most important topic. In an age when a short cold or fever might develop into something sinister and carry you off in a couple of days it's understandable that letters started with asking after the recipient. The importance of the weather, closely linked to health, especially if that cold had been brought on by being soaked in the rain, then followed.

Farming and forestry, the health of livestock, the planting and the harvests all demanded certain weather, as they do now. Travel was almost impossible in some weather; waiting for ferries, for roads to clear of snow or dry out from rain was necessary. The Duchess Anne of Hamilton recounted a story to amuse her company of her carriage overturning at a ford but this cost her two black eyes and was only deemed amusing long after the event. Duchess Anne's son, Basil, was writing to his sister, Lady Katherine Murray (later first duchess of Atholl) in 1696 and gives the usual family news of business, health and politics, for his sister was a highly political woman, like her mother. He then mentions something that we see now as critical to this period in history. He reported that they were having *"the strangest, cold unnatural weather that ever was seen, still great easterly winds, & frost in the morning, so that we keep our fires yett. The condition of this countery looks very judgment like…I pray God arest his wrath."* [i] He was writing in June. This of course was the middle of a period we often call the 'ill years of King William'.[ii] The 1690s were actually part of what we understand now to have been a Little Ice Age, long term climatic cooling between the Middle Ages and the twentieth century. Cold, harsh winters and cold, wet summers were coupled with remote volcanic eruptions causing dust veils that impacted on the weather. Not that anyone writing at that time knew this. What they did know was that the ill weather brought famine to many as subsistence living meant crop failure and dearth. The weather impacted not only on people's lives and health, but on Scotland's economic health too and that , in turn, led to the Union of 1707.

Sources:

i Blair Castle Box 29/1/8/227 June 6th 1696 Basil to Lady Murray.

ii Cullen, K J *Famine in Scotland*: The 'Ill Years' of the 1690s (Edinburgh, 2010).