# **Place Names Of The Parish of Cluny**

Being The Substance Of A Paper

By The Late

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CLUNY

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A place name is not always simply the name of a place. It is often - "**Echt**," for example - that of a locality or district. But a Place Name is frequently the name of an object in a certain place. For example "**Cairn Balloch**" means <u>the cairn in the pass</u>. Sometimes a Place Name applies to a thing, without any reference to a place at all, e.g. "**Clochmore**," <u>Big Stone</u>.

As a rule, A Place Name consists of more than one word - two at least, and sometimes more. One word will indicate an object, another the place where it is; or, one word may indicate the place, and another will distinguish that place from others of the same kind One might suppose a Place Name to be only a single word, but when closely examined it will be found to be two. <u>Cloak</u> looks like one word, but it is really <u>Clock-ok</u>, i.e. little stone or stony land.

There are some assumptions, which if allowed will afford great help to the Place Name interpreter. In the first place, it may be assumed that Place Names had a meaning when they were first given, and that their meanings corresponded to some prominent characteristic of the places to which they were applied. For example - when we see a mountain with a great mass of granite conspicuous upon it, we are not surprised to hear it called "Clocknaben," the stone of the mountain. Again, when we find a place near a burn called "Waulkmill" we are quite ready to believe that a Bleaching Mill must have once marked the spot, although now there may be no trace of it. [waulk, walk, wack, wak, wauk to make cloth thick and felted by a process of soaking and beating and shrinking waulkmill fulling mill - Concise Scots Dictionary 1985 - WRW] This assumption is specially allowable with regard to Place Names of ancient date. When we come to those of modern times, we are not so sure about them. Place names of today are very often "fancy names," as we may call them. By that, I mean that the reason why a certain name has been given to a place is not one that you could find out from the nature of the locality. The name has been given from some private and peculiar reason in the mind of the person who imposed it. For example - in passing through a village not long ago. I noticed a cottage having the name "Eden" painted above the door. On inquiry, I ascertained that the name was given by the proprietor, because the name of the tenant was "Adam". If I had been that tenant, I would thought the name rather ominous. It would have suggested to me that I would not long be a tenant of that Eden, any more than Father Adam was of that Eden of long ago.

In the search after the meaning of Place Names one meets with various difficulties. One such difficulty is caused by the fact that names are apt in the course of time to lose their original form through changes in spelling. In this way, probably, some names have become meaningless, or have acquired a meaning which they did not originally, and were not intended to have. We have a good example of this in the neighbouring parish of Midmar. Some of you may have been struck with the manifest inappropriateness of the name of that parish. The district of Mar, as you know is divided into three parts. These are "Braemar," "Cromar," and "Midmar." Now, Midmar ought to in accordance with its name to have been between the other two. Instead of that its place is at one end. The name of Midmar is thus quite inappropriate. It would appear, however that the name of the parish or locality was not spelled Midmar some centuries ago, but Migmar. In documents of the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th centuries it is spelt Migmar or Megmar or Mygmar. What the prefix Mig means I hardly know, but I know of no reason to think that it meant the same as Mid. It would seem to be a case of a change of name with a consequent change of meaning. There is a somewhat similar case in the parish of Birse. A place called "Midstrath" is found in old documents to be spelled Migstarth and Megstrath. A good deal of the difficulty encountered by the student of Place Names may result from similar changes in spelling.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that Place Name often loses their appropriateness by changes that occur in the course of time in the places to which they were originally applied. For example - most of you know, I suppose, of a street in Aberdeen called Loch Street. The name suggests the existence of a body of water somewhere in the neighbourhood. But no such body of water is now to be seen, nor was at any time since I knew Aberdeen. But in former times, as may be seen from old maps, there was in the locality an extensive marsh or loch - now long since drained off - and Loch Street was afterwards formed in the locality.

But to return to our own parish, I find from the Valuation Roll of the parish that there are some 280 different places named in it. For my purpose, however, many deductions must be made from this number. In the first place, there are several groups of places, the individual members of which have the same, or substantially the same name. For example - there are about ten <u>Corskies</u>. It is generally sufficient to notice or remark upon one name only in each of these groups. Then there many places that can hardly be said to have names, in the proper sense of the word. They have designations rather than names. For example - there places designated as Lodges, Schools, Schoolhouses, Churches, Manses, Hall, Policies, Woodlands, Parks, Quarries, etc. In these ways perhaps 180 names may be passed over as of no importance from our point of view.

Of the remainder, that have what may be regarded as Place Names, the names, Gaelic and non-Gaelic are in about the following proportion: - Of the whole number of Gaelic names, there are about half as many again that are non-Gaelic. This is pretty much accordance with what Dr. Macdonald in his book says. "in the central parts of the Counties of Aberdeen, Banff and Kincardine, English names become more numerous, and corruptions in Gaelic names are more noticeable; while along the seaboard, Gaelic names are in a minority, and in many cases have become half English. The relative proportions of Gaelic and English names of places will be seen by a comparison of the names in the inland parishes with those of the seaboard - thus Glenmuick on Deeside contains one English to three Gaelic, while Aberdeen has three English to two Gaelic. The figures in Banffshire are much the same. Inveravon has two English names to three Gaelic, while Rathven has nearly two English names, and Kinneff has two English to one Gaelic". The non-Gaelic names are either English or Scotch, with the exception of a few that are derived from Latin.

I shall begin with the name of the parish of "**Cluny**". I find that there are some seven or eight Clunies in Scotland, and at least one in France. "**Cluny**," as it occurs in Scotland, is a form of the Gaelic word <u>Cluaine</u> (pronounced pretty nearly **Cluny**.) The Gaelic word means <u>place of good pasture</u>. This name seems appropriate enough to the parish. The French **Clugni** (often spelled without the **g**) is the name of a small town, not far from Macon. In the middle ages it was very famous as a Monastic centre. The g in it is silent, and the name is pronounced <u>Cleeny</u>. That was the way we in our youth pronounced the name of this parish. We would have been thought trying to talk in a superfine way if we had pronounced it in the present day manner, therefore we always said <u>Cleeny</u>. We talked French without even knowing it.

The hills in Cluny parish are few. One can hardly say there are more than three, "**Corrennie**," and the "**Gallow Hill**," and the hill of "**Achath.**" Only part of Corrennie is in Cluny, but I believe Cluny parish reaches to and includes the top of it. The best part of the name is no doubt the Gaelic <u>Corrie</u> which means <u>Cauldron</u>, and is applied to any deep, steep-sided hollow in a mountain district. The last part would seem to mean

overgrown with ferns. "**Corrennie**" therefore means the hill of <u>Fearny Corrie</u>. This word <u>Corrie</u> appears in another Place Name, "**Corrybeg**" <u>Little Corrie</u>. The name of the Gallow Hill no doubt commemorates the fact that hangings took place on it long ago, when country lairds had the power of the pot and gallows. The term "**Achath**" is composed of two Gaelic words, <u>Achadh</u>, generally contracted into <u>Ach</u> or <u>Auch</u>, meaning field, and <u>Chath</u>, meaning fight. The name thus means <u>Field of the fight</u>. A battle was fought there long ago, of which no record remains.

The parish has no lochs, but has several burns. The Northern boundary of the parish is the burn of "**Ton**." This appears in some decuments as the burn of "**Torr**." "**Ton**" means bottom, and "**Torr**" means, heap or hillock. Then there is the burn of Sauchen or Cluny, with its affluents the "**Douglas**" burn, and the burns of Corsindae and Linton. The Douglas burn is said to have got its name from the fact in a battle on the moor of Dalherrick, a man of distinction of the name of Douglas lost his life. This may be a case of putting the cart before the horse. It may be that the name <u>Douglas Burn</u> suggested the story that a great man of that name was killed near it. The Southern boundary of the parish was at one time the burn of "**Kinnernie**." It is not so now, but "**Kinnerie**" is still a Place Name in the parish. The first part of the word may be the Gaelic <u>Kin</u> or <u>Caen</u>, meaning head or end, but for the latter half of the name I can find no suggested meaning. The latter part of the name "**Kinnernie**" - head or end of the alder wood.

There are six estates, Cluny, Castle Fraser, Linton, Kebbaty, Midmar and Corsindae, either wholly or partially in the parish of Cluny. Each of these estates boasts of a mansion house, but only two of these are in the parish, viz., Cluny Castle, and Castle Fraser. The old name of Castle Fraser was Muchil. In one document it appeared as Muchil-in-Marr. That name is still perpetuated in the burn of Muchil. Muchal probably means Pig's Cliff. There is another mansion house, now in ruin, viz., "Tillycairn." The prefix (or Suffix) Tilly, of which Tulloch is the full form, is a very common one, in Place Names derived from Gaelic. It means knoll, and Tillycairn would therefore mean the knoll of the Cairn. The other Tillies in the parish are "Tillyfro," "Tillyseat," and "Tillysoul." <u>Tillyfro</u> means heather knoll. Where Tillyseat is I cannot find. It is not mentioned in the Valuation Roll. The word soul is the Gaelic Sabhul, pronounced soul, and means barn. Tillysoul, would therefore, Knoll of the barn or Barn knoll. Tilly also appears in the form Tirry, as in Tirrygowan. This word gowan, may, as far as the spelling goes be either the Scotch word for the wild daisy, or the Gaelic word for Smith. I would prefer to take it, both in the name Tirrygowan and Ardnagowan (the name of one of the houses in the hamlet of Sauchen) as meaning Smith. If so, each of these two names might be translated Smiddy Hill.

Coming to one of the groups of places, having the same name, that I have spoken of, <u>viz</u>., <u>Sauchen</u>, there can be little doubt but that the name is a form of the Gaelic <u>Saugh</u>, meaning <u>willow</u>, which has now become Scotch, in the same sense. Place Names, in which this word forms an element are numerous throughout Scotland. For example <u>Sauchie burn</u>, the scene of the skirmish in which James 3rd of Scotland was killed, <u>Sauchen bus</u>, <u>Glen Saugh</u>, the <u>Sauchs</u>, <u>Savoch</u>, or <u>Sauk</u> of Deer, etc. From the number of places in Cluny called Sauchen (as part of the name) all contiguous to one another, it seems probable that Sauchen was once an estate, or lairdship. This is strengthened by the fact that among the Sauchens there is a <u>Mains of Sauchen</u>. According to the common practice, the term <u>Mains</u> was applied to the Home Farm, or the Farm occupied by the Laird.

This conjecture has now become a certainty. From the old Poll Book it is quite clear that in the year 1695 there was an estate of Sauchen, and that there was a lady of Sauchen and her daughter. The name was Forbes. It also appears that the Lady of Sauchen resided at the Mains. There apparently was no other mansion house than the house of the Mains.

In this connection I may mention a somewhat curious fact, that in the policies of Linton there is a structure, consisting of a block of hewn stone, six feet in length, resting horizontally on two pillars of hewn stone, sunk into the ground and projecting 1.5 feet above the surface. This structure is situated on the sloping side of a ravine, through which a small stream flows. On the horizontal stone there is the deeply cut word SAUCHEN. There is no date, unless it may be on the basement, which being underground is not open to inspection.

I have tried to find some clue to the meaning of this structure, but all I have been able to gather is that at some time the heiress of the estate of Sauchen married the heir of the estate of Linton. If there is any truth in that it may be at that time that the stone structure was put up. In the old Poll Book there is no mention of <u>Linton</u>. It apparently did not exist. <u>Lyn</u>, however, is mentioned, and it may be that Linton, when it came in to existence, got its name from its proximity to <u>Lyn</u>, and that it just means <u>Lyntoun</u>.

It may be as well to bring in here the other Place Names in the Parish of Cluny that, like Sauchen, are derived from the vegetable world. There are not many of them. They are "Arnhill," the hill of <u>arn</u> or alder trees; "Rowanbush," derived from the familiar rowan tree; "Ivy Cottage," "Broom Brae," "Dockenwell," possibly also "Kinnernie."

Besides Dockenwell, there are only three Place Names that have the termination <u>well</u>. These are "**Blackwell**," "**Redwell**," and "**Denwell**." I may, however, couple these "**Culthibert**," which is Gaelic and means the <u>corner well</u>.

Before quite leaving Sauchen, it may be convenient to refer to the Place Names in the Village or Hamlet of Sauchen. This Hamlet is of quite modern date. I remember when there was neither church, manse, school, school-house, post office, bank nor cottage - nothing but a moor covered with whins and heather, with a big pool, called the <u>Mark's Peel</u>, where the hamlet now is.

Well, we have the Bank, which is rather a designation than a name; "**Roslin**," which is probably a repetition of <u>Roslin</u>, a village in Mid-Lothin, famous for its beautiful chapel. The name has probably nothing to do with the "Queen of Flowers," the Rose, but is formed of two Gaelic words <u>Ross</u> - projecting rock or headland, and <u>lynn</u> a pool or stream. [The situation of Roslin Castle on a peninsulated rock overhanging the river Esk, makes this name quite appropriate.] <u>lvy Cottage</u> I have already mentioned. "**Dunchattan**." The origin of this name will be understood when I remind you that <u>Chattan</u> was the name of the great clan, in which the McPhersons formed one of the septs or divisions. ["But the MacKintosh who became Chief of the Cat Confederation, Clan Chattan, claimed descent from the royal house of Duff." Ian Grimble - Scottish Clans and Tartans 1973 - WRW]

"Ardnagowan." This means the <u>Hill of the Smith</u> or <u>Smiddyhill</u>. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the person who built the cottage was a man named <u>Smith</u>. "Ann Cottage." -This is a personal name, and I may mention in connection with it four other personal names, viz.- "Castle Fraser," "Bristow Cottage," "Williamson's Croft," and "Braeneil." There is also another name that may come under this category, viz.: "Cornival," to which I shall

again refer. We have two new names in the hamlet, viz., "**Gowanlea**" and "**Roslin Bank**." The prefix <u>Gowan</u> in the former is perhaps the Scotch word for the wild daisy.

There is a group of "<u>Corskies</u>." Corskies is a common hill name, found throughout the country. It seems to be a form of the Gaelic <u>crasg</u>, which means <u>crossing</u>. Hence such a name is often associated with a road crossing a hill. There is a transposition od the letters in the name. It should be croskie. Similar transpositions are often found in Place Names, or at least in the common pronunciation of them. A place in my native parish, the name of which was "**Gallow Fields**," was always pronounced <u>Gallow Fields</u>. Another example is "**Corsefield**," in Midmar. I have heard it called <u>Corsefiedle</u>.

There is a group of "**Drumnahoys**," at least four. The meaning of the name would seem to be, <u>the ridge of the kiln</u>. The Gaelic for kiln is <u>atha</u>. Now <u>atha</u> with an article becomes <u>hoy</u>. A hundred years ago it was customary for farmers to dry their corn before sending it to the mill to be ground. For this purpose either each farmer must have had a kiln of his own, or there must have been a public kiln, available for all and sundry. In some parts of the country there were I believe, such public kilns. Perhaps there was one at Drumnahoy, and hence the name.

Place Names are often expressive of the work or industry carried on in th district. Hence such names as "**Milton**," "**Waulkmill**," "**Smiddyhill**" are pretty common. We have neither of the first two in Cluny, unless "**Millbank**" may indicate what was once the site of a mill, and there is a Waulkmill just over the border between Cluny and Midmar. But we have two Smiddyhills, as I have already mentioned, <u>viz</u>., "**Tirrygowan**" and "**Ardgowan**." "**Baudygaun**" also means <u>smiddy clump</u>.

I have already referred to the name "**Culthibert**." This is said by Macdonald and others to mean <u>Corner Well</u>. For a while I was puzzled with this, because the Gaelic word for well is <u>tobar</u>, and <u>thibert</u> is not very like <u>tobar</u>. However, on consulting a Gaelic Dictionary I found that in certain connections the word <u>tobar</u> appears as <u>thiobairt</u>, which would be pronounced very much as <u>thibert</u>. There is no doubt, therefore, that the interpretation of Culthibert is right, and that it means the well of the corner, the well at the back</u>. And it is really so; it lies just at the back shoulder of Corrennie.

"Smiddy Clumps." In our parish there are no Place Names that bear witness to the presence of the Romans, so numerous in England, and even in the south of Scotland. There are, however, four Place Names that argue some acquaintance with the Latin tongue by those who imposed them. There is "Vulcan Croft." This place is very well named, since it is tenanted by a Smith, and Vulcan was the Roman name for the Smith God. Then there is "Felix." If the name is applied to the occupier it means happy; if to the croft it means fruitful. Then we have "Talpa-brae," which means Molehill, Talpa being the Latin for mole. I am informed on good authority that the name was given because the occupant was a mole catcher. Of course, there would be few moles there, but there might be many dead ones. Lastly there is "Sylvan Cottage," which is also appropriately named, being situated in the woods, or as the Latins would have said in Sylvis. I said there are no lochs in Cluny parish. There must have been bogs or marshes at one time, if the testimony of Place Names is to be relied on. Bog is a component part of many Place Names. The number of such bogs may be inferred from the fact I have counted as many as 61 Place Names in West Aberdeenshire, of which bog forms a part. There are three or four of these in Cluny. There are "Bogendinny," - the fox's bog; "Bogintorry," - the bog of the height. Then there is

"Dalherrick" - Dal, is a field and churraich, a bog - the field of the bog. Lastly, there is "Bog Gurkur," the older name of West Mains. The most eminent authorities admit inability to give any meaning to the name, or even to assign it to any known language. The conjecture is made that Gurkur is the Gaelic Garcair - a prison. There may be good ground for the suggestion. There is a place in the neighbourhood of "Bog Gurkur" called "Courtcairn." That name would indicate that at that place courts for the trial of cases were held. Then there is the "Gallow Hill" quite close by, where hanging took place. If there were a court house and a gallows, what is more likely than there should have been a prison? Then there is "Shaggart." I can find no meaning suggested for this. There is no question, however, but that the word is the Gaelic word for priest, and Place Names of which the word priest (either in Gaelic or English) are not uncommon. For example - in Braemar there are two - "Carn-an-Saggait" - the priest's carn; and "Coir-na-Saggart" - the priest's coirie. Then there is "Priest's Water" in Gartly; "Priest's Wood" in Keig; and "Priest's Wells" in Insch. Of course, there is difficulty in our "Shaggart," in that there is no accompanying word carn or coir, and it would seem very strange that a a place should be called priest without any qualification. But the qualifying word in this case may have once existed, and been lost, but still I notice a Place Name in Braemar which is simply"Cailbeach" - old woman. If a place be called <u>old woman</u>, why might not a place be called <u>the priest</u>? "Gight" in the neighbourhood of Shaggart, is no doubt the same word as the better known "Gight" in Methlic. In a printed paper on the place names in Methlic, I find it suggested that "Gight" is the Gaelic Gaothach, pronounced Genach, meaning windy place. That would be a very good meaning to give our "Gight" judging from the character of the road from Drumnahoy to the Old Post Office, which just passes underneath Gight. A more windy road I do not know. If there is any wind at all you are sure to meet it on that road. In "Cairnfold" we have a termination that is pretty common throughout the country. It sometimes appears in the form of fauld. We have the same termination in "Plyfolds," in the parish of Cluny. Ply or Pley seems to mean a quarrel or strife. Hence "Pleyfauld" is name given to the scene of the battle of Harlaw. The scene of the battle of Alford is also called "Fechtfauld." What may have originated the name in the parish of Cluny I do not know. We have the same termination in two other places, "Cotfolds," and "Greenfolds."

There are several Place Names in the parish that are English or Scotch. The meanings of these names are for the most part quite evident. Hence they require only mention. They are - "Bankhead," "Backhill," "Blackhill," "Burnhead," "Burnside," "Bristow Cottage," "Causeyton," "Denwell," "East Cottage," "Greenmoss," "Greenwell," "Greencrook," "Greenburn," "Glenton," "Glenhead," "Ivy Cottage," "Kirkhill," "Ladymoss," "Lynbank," "Meikle Ley," "Little Ley," "Ley Brae," "Muirton," "New Inn," "Newbigging," "Prospect Cottage," "The Park," "Redwell," "Woodlands," "Woodend," "Walkend," "Whitehill, etc" I wish to remark on Park. When my father removed to Cluny in 1843, the Park was known as the Perk. Whether this was a mere variation of spelling and pronunciation, or whether it was the Scotch form of Perch, I cannot say. I see that in Macdonald's book the Place Names Park and Perk are treated as if they were the same, with a difference merely in the spelling. But the question is, what meaning of the enclosure, or the meaning of situated on the top. I am inclined to think that the latter is the meaning that should be given to the Place Name in Cluny, whether it be spelled Park or Perk. The Park is situated on top of a considerable hill, and might be rightly called the Perk. There is another Perk in the parish of Essie, and it is on top of an uncultivated hill.

I make also a remark on "**Woodlands**." The ground that now forms\_the farm of Woodlands was, when I first knew this district, entirely covered with wood. It was known as the <u>wood</u>

of Dockenwell. The name <u>Woodlands</u> seems very inappropriate now, seeing there is not a tree on the place. But it was quite appropriate when it was first given, as the memory of the wood was fresh in everybody's mind.

The name "**Ladymoss**" calls for a remark. The word <u>Lady</u> when it occurs as part of a name in Natural History, as it often does in Botany, generally means "**Our Lady**," the Virgin Mary. This is the case in Lady's Mantle, Lady's Bedstraw, Lady's Hood, Lady's Fingers, etc. This may be its meaning in <u>Ladymoss</u>. But there is also a Gaelic word <u>Leathad</u>, pronounced very like lady, which means <u>hill slope</u>. If that is the word here, then <u>Ladymoss</u> means <u>the mossy slope</u>.

Besides <u>Tilly</u> or <u>Tirry</u>, and <u>Ard</u>, and <u>Drum</u>, denoting a <u>height</u>, there are some other words that have the same meaning, such as <u>Knock</u>, <u>Tom</u>, and <u>Ord</u>. These are exemplified in the following Place Names in Cluny:- **Knockholm** = <u>Barehill</u>; **Tomngorum** = <u>Green Hillock</u>; **Ordhead** and **Ordhill** = <u>Hammerhead</u> and <u>Hammerhill</u>. The Gaelic word means <u>hammer</u>, and it is applied to a round knoll in the shape of a hammer head.

There are at least two Place Names that mean the opposite to height, <u>viz., hollow</u>. These are "**Glack**" - <u>hollow</u>; and "**Laggan**" - <u>little hollow</u>. There is also a place called "**Slugdhu**," which means <u>the black Slough</u>, and I am told that that word expresses the character of the place before the Mill that now stands upon it was built.

Place Names are sometimes derived from the animal kingdom. I find only three such in Cluny parish, viz., **Talpa Brae** (which I have mentioned another connection.) **Crowness**, which may be a corruption of <u>crownest</u>, and may mark the site of what was once a rookery, and "**Cunnigar**," <u>Rabbit Warren</u>. There is a Cunnigar hill and a Cunnigar wood both in Cluny.

There are a few names, the meanings of which I cannot find, or of which I am extremely doubtful. These are "Hadden," "Quinach," "Rinalloch," "Birselawsie," and "Leggerdale."

I have tried to make something of "**Birselawsie**," with very little result. The different ways in which it is spelled in various documents in which it appears, makes it almost impossible to know what the word really is. It appears as "**Busslassie**," "**Blairglassie**," "**Barglassy**." Now-a-days it is spelled <u>Birselawsie</u>. The first part of the name of the parish of <u>Birse</u>. But there is no certainty of even its meaning. Some supposed it to be a Pictish word. Anyhow the meaning seems to be lost. But the name of the place to the west of it, "**Drumlawsie**" would seem to show that it is Gaelic.

The termination of "**Leggerdale**," would seem to show that it is Teutonic and not Celtic. <u>Dale</u> would mean valley; but what the first part of the name means seems quite unknown.

I have mentioned that I refer again to the name "**Cornival**," or as it is pronounced <u>Cornivale</u>. I for a while puzzled about this name. I have learned, however, that the first tenant of the place, who also named it, was a man called Mr. Horne. This at once threw light upon the matter, "**Cornu**" is the Latin word for <u>Horn</u>, then the place stands in a valley, or rather overlooking a valley. Now the Latin for valley is <u>vallis</u>. "**Cornival**" therefore means <u>Horne's</u> <u>Valley</u>.

There is a place "**Bogrolland**." The first part of the name speaks for itself. Then it is suggested that the last part of the name <u>roland</u> contains a transposition of letters, and that it should really be <u>Ronald</u>, a well known Gaelic personal name. The word would mean <u>Ronald's bog</u>.

I find in one of the books I consulted a Place Name "**Tillychaddy**." I find no such place mentioned in the Valuation Roll, and I do not know if it exists at all. [Meilke Tillchaddy at N57^11.5' W2^36' appears on Ordnance Survey Sheet 76 Surveyed 1863-67. The modern name would appear to be **Meikle Ley**. - WRW]

Some forty years ago, or more, there was a place which no longer exists. It was a house and croft close beside the school of Cluny. It was called "**Cot-town**" <u>cot</u> meaning an enclosure. It was tenanted by a man of the name of Baxter, a shoemaker.

In these remarks that I have made, I need hardly say that there is little or nothing original. All I have done has been to collect and arrange a variety of items of information from books and other sources. I cannot vouch that all that I have advanced is correct; for some things I can only claim a reasonable probability. I think it was the famous Bishop Butler, who said, that "probability is the guide of life." In a great many things, perhaps in most things, absolute certainty cannot be had. We are therefore obliged to be content with probability.

The want of absolute certainty on th subject of Place Names is not after all a very deplorable thing. Nothing of much practical consequences depends upon it. It is not a matter or death whether a certain place, Corrennie for example got its name from ferns or a marsh, whether it means hill of the fern corrie, or the hill of the marsh corrie. And yet, although we are ready to cry out - What's in a name? - there is after all a truth in names. I cannot read that well known passage in the second chapter of Genesis, about God causing the beasts and birds to come to Adam, to see what he would call them, "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof," without feeling that there is a signification and an importance in names. And that impression is confirmed by noting throughout the Bible narrative, with what care names were bestowed on persons and places, and how such names were given as were fitted to express some important characteristic of the person or place. There is unquestionably a truth in names, and if so, it need not be an altogether useless thing to try to find out what significance there is in the Place Names of our parish.

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