

HISTORY of STRATHMIGLO

Introductory Notes

Strathmiglo parish was one of the nine early medieval parishes in Fothrif (west Fife, Kinross and Clackmannanshire) which belonged to the diocese of Dunkeld. It is a large parish, c.7.5 kilometres (c.five and three quarter miles) east to west and c.5 kilometres (c.three miles) north to south at its widest point. In 1891 Pitlour and Nochnarie, which had been in the Fife part of Abernethy parish, were incorporated into the parish of Strathmiglo.

PLACE-NAME and EARLY HISTORY

*Most of the parish lies between the Ochil Hills to the north and the Lomond Hills to the south. The broad valley between these two ranges of hills is drained by a small river. It is now known as the Eden, but was formerly known as the Miglo, and it is from this river or burn that the parish takes its name. Strath (modern Gaelic srath) means 'broad valley'. The river-name 'Miglo' is probably Pictish, the language spoken in Fife before Gaelic (that is before c.850 AD), and contains the Pictish word *mig 'bog', and meaning something like 'burn which flows through a boggy loch'. Whatever the exact meaning of the river-name, the place-name 'Strathmiglo' must be translated as 'broad valley of the Miglo'.*

The Eden itself rose in Falkland Park (beside the modern farm of Woodmill), and was joined by its tributary the Miglo a short distance east of Dunshelt. It is only in the last 200 years that the name 'Eden' has come to be applied to the river west of this point. It has now become so established that it has given rise to several minor names in the Strathmiglo area, such as Gleneden (formerly Spalefield, beside Barrington) and Edenshead House in Gateside, as well as to the quoad sacra parish of Edenshead, based at Gateside.

The alternative name for Strathmiglo was Ecclesmartin, 'the church of St Martin. Such 'eccles' place-names were coined in the Pictish period, probably in the 7th or 8th century AD. It presumably refers to a site at or near the present parish kirk. It lay on what must have been a very important cross-roads, where the road south through the hills from Abernethy, and which continued south towards Falkland along the western edge of the huge bog of the Howe of Fife, met the east-west route which followed the foot of the Ochils along the northern edge of that bog.

It was no doubt this important cross-roads, as well as its early association with St Martin, which led to the development of a large Martinmass fair at Strathmiglo.

This was held until 1436, when the burgh of Cupar obtained a royal charter which moved the fair from Strathmiglo to Cupar.

The earls of Fife were given the shire of Strathmiglo, along with other lands in north Fife, including the adjacent shire of Falkland (to the south), by King Malcolm IV c.1160. Strathmiglo is first mentioned explicitly as a shire in 1294, and at this time it included not only Strathmiglo parish but also the next parish to the east, Auchtermuchty, acquired by the earls of Fife in the early 13th century.

Most of the lands of Strathmiglo parish belonged to the earls of Fife until 1424, when the then earl of Fife, Murdoch Stewart, was executed by King James I, and his lands were attached to the Crown.. In 1496 James IV granted the lands of Kilgour (Falkland parish) to William Scott of Flawcraig (Kinnaird parish, Perthshire) and his spouse Janet Lundy These lands were described as being in the lordship of Strathmiglo (Straithmeglo) (RMS ii no.2332). This William Scott later became known as William Scott of Balwearie (an estate near Kirkcaldy, Fife). In 1510 William Scott obtained a charter from James IV which united all his possessions in north Fife (including a third of the barony of Ceres) into the barony of Strathmiglo, with power to erect the village into a burgh of barony. However it was not until 1600 that this burgh of barony was actually erected (RMS vi no.1636). The charter erecting the burgh of barony allows Strathmiglo to have a market cross, a weekly Friday market, and two public fairs annually: one on St Cyril's Day (9 June) and one on St Crispian's Day (25 October). Shortly after 1600 Strathmiglo was purchased by Sir Michael Balfour of Burleigh (near Milnathort, Orwell parish, Kinross-shire). The estate fell to the Crown through the forfeiture of Robert fifth Lord Balfour in 1715, and was acquired by Robert Balfour of Balbirnie (Markinch parish, Fife). Shortly afterwards Strathmiglo was purchased by General Skene of Hallyards and Pitlour, and the Skenes still hold land in the parish.

The castle of Strathmiglo, which was in existence by 1420, lay in a field to the east of the village, but was demolished in 1734, part of the stones being used in the building of the steeple at the tollbooth or town-house of Strathmiglo. There is now no trace of this castle. It was known as Cairnie-flappet, a Scots word meaning 'shoddily built, ramshackle', and traditionally bestowed on it by King James V.

The monks of Balmerino Abbey, a Cistercian abbey in north-east Fife, held extensive lands within the parish comprising the estates of Drumdreel and Pitgorno. They had a chapel-of-ease, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, at Gateside, in the west end of Strathmiglo parish..

In 1496, when James IV was assembling his troops at Falkland in preparation for an invasion of England, the bakers of Strathmiglo were employed to bake eight chalders of wheat to supply Falkland Palace, and for this service they received 56 shillings and 4 pence. There is only one baker in Strathmiglo today - Kinnear's - but

it is an important one, which supplies several of the towns and villages round about, including Falkland and Ladybank.

General Observations [taken from D. Miller's plan of Strathmiglo, 1832]

The principal business of the inhabitants is weaving cotton and linen cloths, the material of which is at present brought from Glasgow, Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen and Dysart. There are two manufacturers, and an extensive beach-field. Many of the inhabitants possess acres of land in the vicinity, on short tacks [leases] from Mr Skene. The old rough causeway was lately taken up, and the street macadamised, and forms part of the road from Falkland to Perth. Besides the parish church, there is a meeting of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod. They are commonly called 'Macmillans' here. The place is well supplied with schools, having the parish school, a general subscription school, and a school for females patronised by the Misses Moncrieff of Pitlour, all in new and commodious houses, and the advantages of which the inhabitants seem duly to appreciate. There are two societies viz the Strathmiglo Friendly Society, who have their annual procession at the fair in June; and the Stratheden Operative Mason Lodge, who have their procession on the evening of St John's Day [24 June] by torch light. There is also a public circulating library, a Meal Society, and lately a political union. A musical band was recently got up, chiefly by the assistance of the gentlemen around; it consists wholly of brass instruments, and promises to succeed well. By the last census of 1831, the total inhabitants of the parish of Strathmiglo are stated to be 1,940. And in November 1832 the number of inhabitants living within the bounds of the above sketch [i.e. in the town of Strathmiglo] was 1,204.

Sources of above information:

A.H. Millar, Fife: Pictorial and Historical (2 vols.) (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1895).

David Miller Sketch of the Town and Burgh of Barony of Strathmiglo (1832)

SOME PLACE-NAMES IN THE PARISH, with early forms and a brief explanation of their meaning.

BALCANQUHAL

BalmaccanColle 1294 Stevenson, Documents i, 416

BalcanCol 1517 Fife Ct. Bk. 62.

Gaelic baile mac Anacoil 'estate of the sons of Anacol'. One Anacol or Anecol was thane of Dunning PER for Earl Gilbert of Strathearn around 1200. Dunning lies about twelve km to the east of Balcanquhal, also in the Ochils, so this Anacol may well have been the man whose sons gave their name to this place.

BARRINGTON

Barnton 1818 RHP 23511

Barrington 1828 SGF

Barnton 1832 Miller/map

Barrington 1850s O.S.

Scots barn + Scots toun. A farm created in the south-western corner of the lands of Cash, probably around 1800, as there is no trace of it on Ainslie's map of 1775. Its present form is a good example of the obsessive Englishing of names, which was such a feature of the 19th century.

CASH

'villa' or toun of Westercasse, dated 1294, from Joseph Stevenson, Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland 1286-1306, 416 [in Strathmigloshire]

Esterchasse, 1294 ibid., 417 [in Strathmigloshire]

Estir Casche, 1451 Exchequer Rolls v 468

to John Bykkertoun son and heir of Alexander B. of Casche the lands of Casche with their grain-mill and waulk-mill, 1502 RMS (= Register of the Great Seal) ii no.2647

to Sir William Scott of Balwery the lands of Estir Casche, Westir Casche with its tower and mill and the west mill of Strethmeglo with its lands of the west part of the said toun [of Strethmeglo], and 24 acres of lands of the toun of Pitgorno adjacent to the west end of the toun of Strethmeglo...and these lands of Estir Casche etc. were united in the barony of Strethmeglo.... Also common pasture for the lands of Casche and Falkland in le Lummontis and the muir on the north side of these hills, 1529 RMS iii no.760

Item ..gevin in to Casche quhar the kingis grace drank he beand at the huntyn, xii s. 17 April 1540 'Accounts of the King's Pursemaster 1539-40 Scottish History Society Miscellany 10 (1965), 43 [i.e. 12 shillings paid to Cash for providing King James V with drink while he was out hunting]

Eister Casche was made exempt from feu-duties as compensation for part of its lands having been enclosed and joined to the royal wood of Falkland. This decision was taken at the Parliament held in Perth in 1606, noted in RMS vii no.644

the piece of land lie Raecreuk [= Raecruik, Strathmiglo parish] next to Eister Casche 1612 RMS vii no.644

The name Cash probably comes from the Gaelic word càise 'cheese' (pronounced 'kahshu' - 'u' as in 'cup'). When Cash first enters the written record in 1294 it forms part of the shire of Strathmiglo, held by the earls of Fife. It was probably part of the lands of Strathmiglo which were given to Duncan earl of Fife about 1160 by King Malcolm IV (Regesta Regum Scottorum i no.190), so it was originally what is termed royal demesne i.e. land owned directly by the king, and managed for the needs of the court.

Originally Cash clearly specialised in producing cheese, which would have been for direct consumption by the king, and later by the earl, his household and his retainers. The name must have been coined while Gaelic was the main language of Fife i.e from about 850-1200 A.D., probably earlier rather than later in that period.

It can be compared with a similar name, Goatmilk, on the other side of the Lomonds in Kinglassie parish, which also lay on royal demesne land. It was given by King Alexander I (1107-24) to Dunfermline Abbey. It obviously specialised in the production of goat-milk.

*The name is discussed briefly by the Scottish medieval historian Professor Geoffrey Barrow in his book *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973) 278.*

CORSTON

Cro[s]tone 1294 Stevenson, Documents i, 416

Crostona 1315xc.53 SRO GD 20 /1 /779 o.c.

Scots cros or cors + Scots toun 'farm or estate at a crossing'. Corston lies in the valley of the Eden or Miglo, with lands on both sides of that river. There is also c. 100 metres east of the ruins of Corston Castle, and on the opposite (i.e. north) side of the river, the remains of an old raised causeway which crossed what must have once been a very boggy valley, and which linked Balmerino Abbey's estates of Pitgorno (north of Corston) and Drumdreel (south of Corston).

PITGORNO

Petgornoc 1227 Balm.Lib. no.11

(mill of) Petgornoch 1331 Balm. Lib. no.52

('villa' & barony of) Petgorno x 2 1507 RMS ii no.3081

*Gaelic pett + Gaelic *gronn 'bog' 'estate or farm of the boggy place'. Both elements have been borrowed into Gaelic from Pictish, and therefore the whole name could have been taken over from Pictish by Gaelic-speakers.*

PITLOCHIE

Petclokyn x 2 1235x64 SHR ii p.174

Pethclouchyn c.1240-50 SHR ii pp.173-4

Pethlochy 1452 RMS ii no.533

Gaelic pett + Gaelic clach gen. cloiche 'stone' 'estate or farm of the stone'. The stone in question may well have been some kind of carved monument.

STRATHMIGLO

Stradimiggloch 1160x62

(church of) Stradmigeloch, (mill of) Stradmigeloc 1173x78

(shire of) Stramiglok' 1294

(mill of) Stramyglok' 1294

('le Westend de') Stramigloo 1451

(mill of) Stramiglo 1453

(lands of) Strathmiglo (also called) Eglismartin, (town ['villa'] of) Strathmiglo 1510 [erected into a burgh of barony Strathmiglo]

('Robert Scott at the milne of') Strethmegloch 1517 Fife Ct. Bk. 73

('le Est Myln de') Strathmeglo 1518 RSS i no.2974

Strethmiglo 1519 Fife Ct. Bk. 138

(lands of) Carny (alias) Wester Strathmeglo 1535 RMS iii no.1472 [king confirms to W. Scott of Balwearie and Isabel Lindsay spouse above lands with their tower and fortalice, lands of Redy, Langisland, Drumrechmak, Ramoir, Carincat and the east mill of Strauthmeglo in the barony of Strathmeglo]

('town of') Strathmiglo ('called' Englishmartin) 1781 Sasines no.78

Both Strathmiglo and Ecclesmartin etc. are discussed above.

Dr Simon Taylor

Strathmiglo