Some interesting Renfrewshire place-names

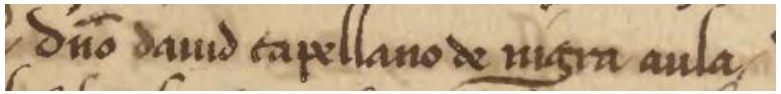
Denis Rixson

Sources and Abbreviations may be found within the Renfrewshire section of my blog at:
Renfrewshire | Land Assessment Scotland

Names recorded as they were – generally NOT converted into Latin.

Home to the early Stewarts, and Paisley monastery, Renfrewshire has place-names recorded from the 12th century.

Few Renfrewshire place-names were translated into Latin. One was Blackhall (NS 4963) which became *Nigra Aula*.



Master David, chaplain of Black hall, (RMP pp 232-3, 1272)

The surname Hall was also rendered *Aula* – see RMS I (407, 540) 1 December 1371

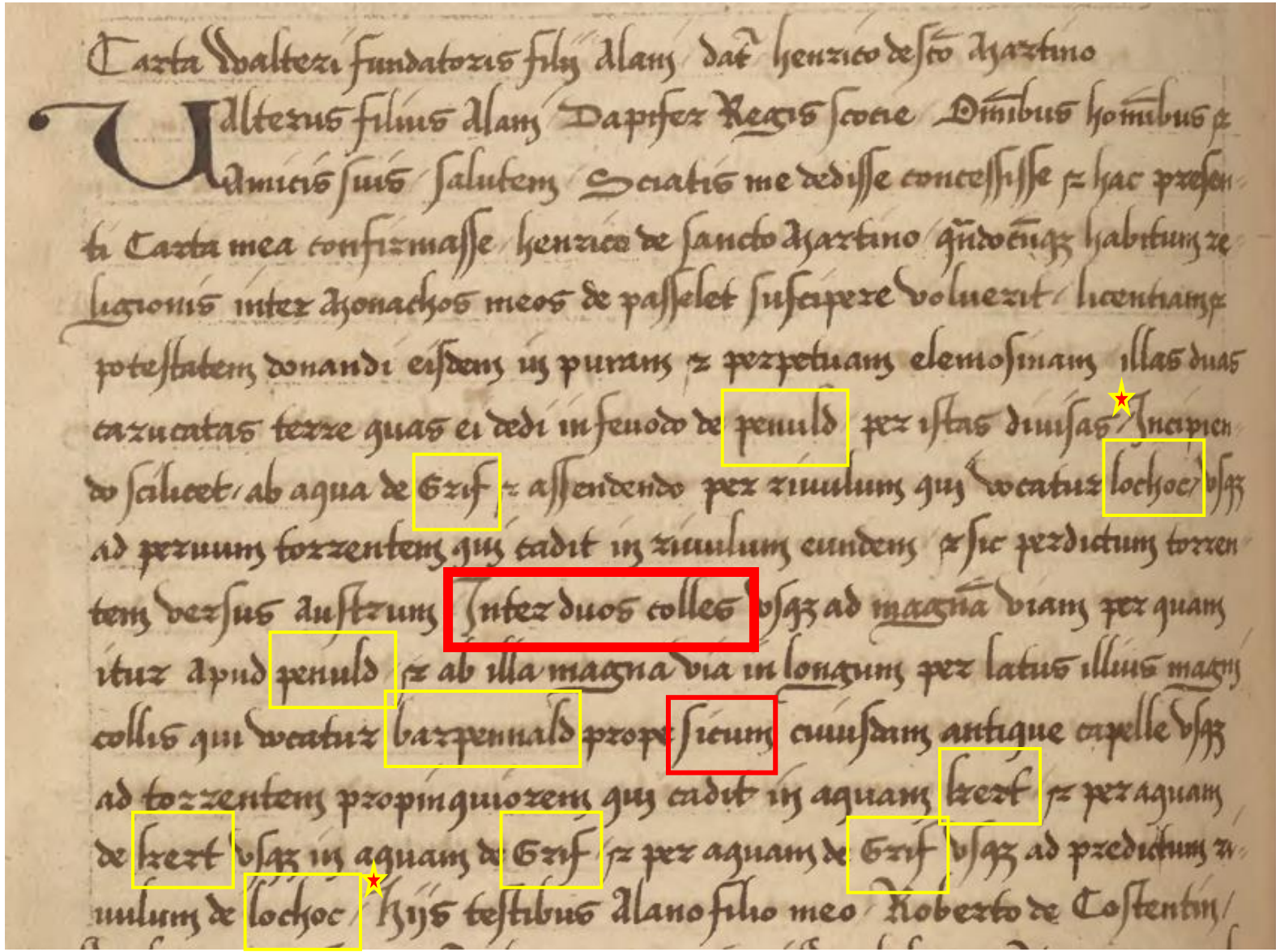
Another name was 'Long Loch' (NS 4752) which was *'longum lacum'* in Fraser, Lennox II No 2, 1177 x 1204.

What language were these names translated from? - Probably from English.

Blackhall was the Stewart base and it is unlikely that when Walter Stewart, or his monastic scribes, arrived in Renfrewshire, they had any knowledge of Gaelic.

It is also likely that if Long Loch already had a Gaelic name, such as Loch Fada, that would have been the one recorded by the scribe.

There is a third example involving a much less significant place:



NLS PDF p 90, RMP pp 48-9 (Scott No 42, 1173 x 1177), charter from Walter Stewart to Henry de St Martin, permitting him to gift to Paisley Abbey those two carucates which Walter gave him in the fee of Penuld.

Place-names:

Penuld (Pannell)
Grif (Gryfe Water/River Gryfe)
Lochoc (Locher Water)
Inter duos colles ('Tweeniehills')
Barpennald (Barr of Kilbarchan?)
Kert (Black Cart Water)

MacKenzie (p 32): *Beginning at the water of Grif and following the stream which is called Lochoc as far as the rill which falls into that stream; and along the said rill southwards between two hills* ['Tween-ye-hills?] *as far as the main road which goes to Penald, and from that main road in a straight line along the side of the great rising ground called Bar-Penald towards the site of a certain ancient chapel, as far as the adjacent burn, and along it until it falls into the water of Kert, and along the water of Kert until it meets the water of Grif, and along the water of Grif as far as the aforesaid stream of Lochoc.*

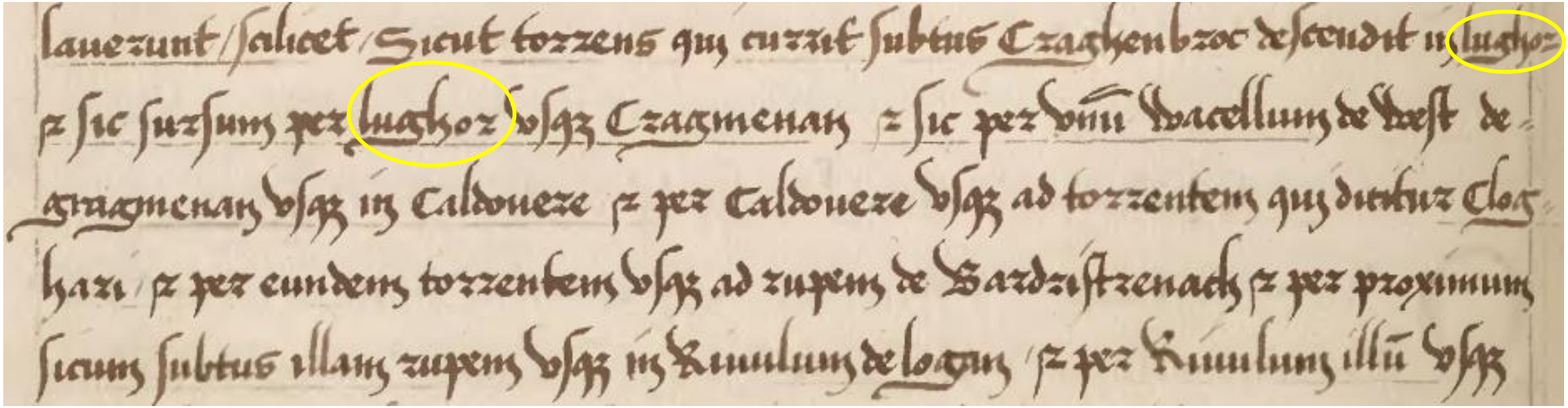
We are not looking at original documents here. We are looking at a transcription, made perhaps 1520-30, of those documents, or possibly of an earlier transcription of those original documents.

The spellings of the place-names we meet in the Register *may* have been read in error or mis-transcribed.

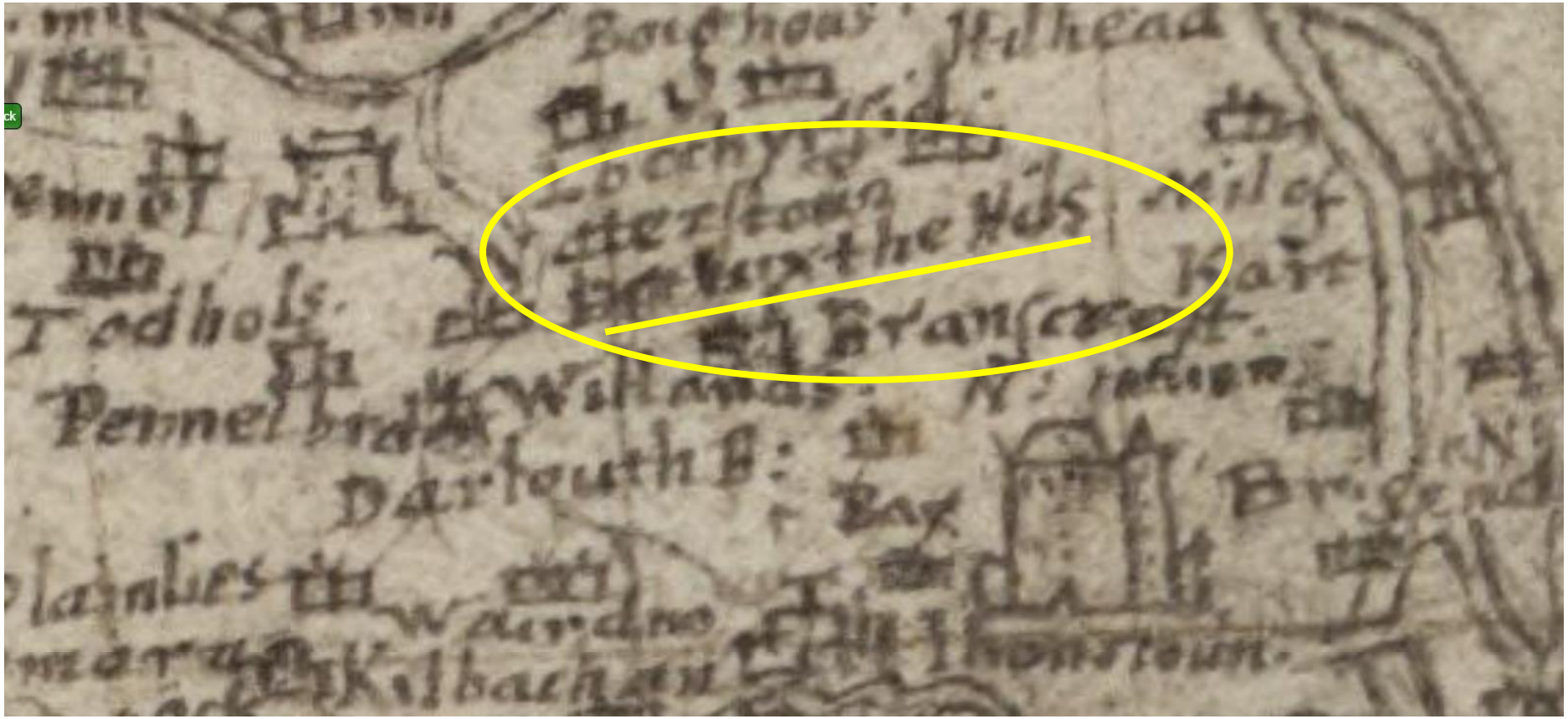
e.g. the Locher Water.

RMP pp 48-9 (WW Scott No 42, 1173 x 1177) we have Lochoc (twice) (preceding slide)

In RMP pp 13-14 (WW Scott No 14, 1177 x 1199) we have: Lughor (twice – see below)



Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (1) - Manuscripts from Scotland > Chartulary of Paisley Abbey, 16th century, containing material covering the years 1163-1530 - Early manuscripts - National Library of Scotland



Pont(33) Map of Renfrewshire - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
Map images - National Library of Scotland

The Latin of 1173 x 1177 says '*inter duos colles*' (literally: 'between two hills') of which 'betwixt the hills' seems a happy translation.

But we have lost the precision of '**two**' hills.

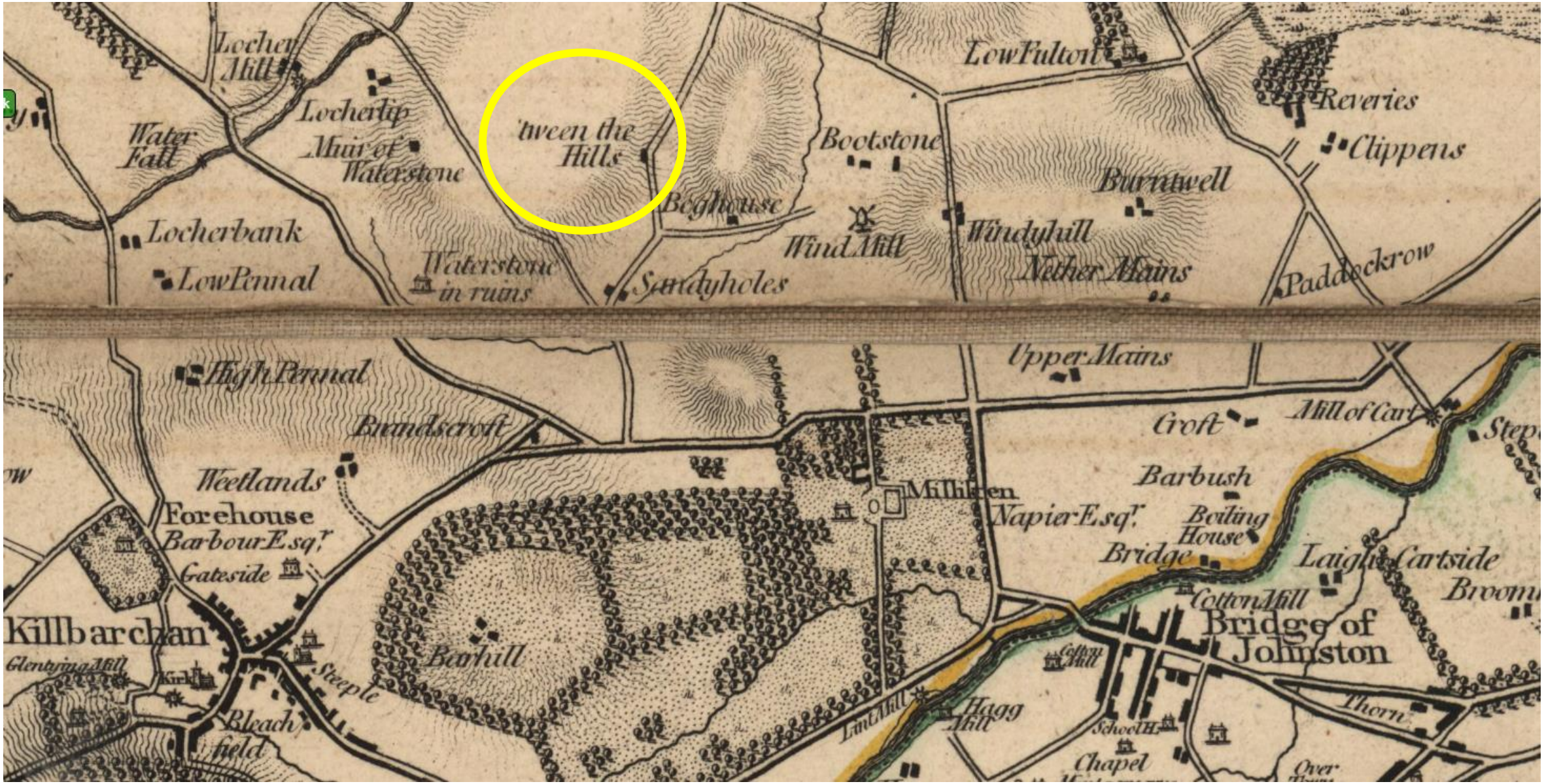
Is the Latin actually a twelfth-century monastic rendering of what was already a local place-name?
If so, in what language?

NRS GD148/227 1586 refers to a James Cunynghame 'betuix the Hillis'. (Roughly contemporary with Pont).

2 mercatis terrarum nuncupatis Betwixt the hills … in barony of Ramphorlie-Cunynghame, Renfrew Retours (175) 1676
(2 merklands called …)

2 mercatis terrarum nuncupatis Betuixt the Hills … in parish of Ramfarly-Cuninghame, Renfrew Retours (191) 1690

Ainslie 1796



John Ainslie, Map of the County of Renfrew, 1796 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
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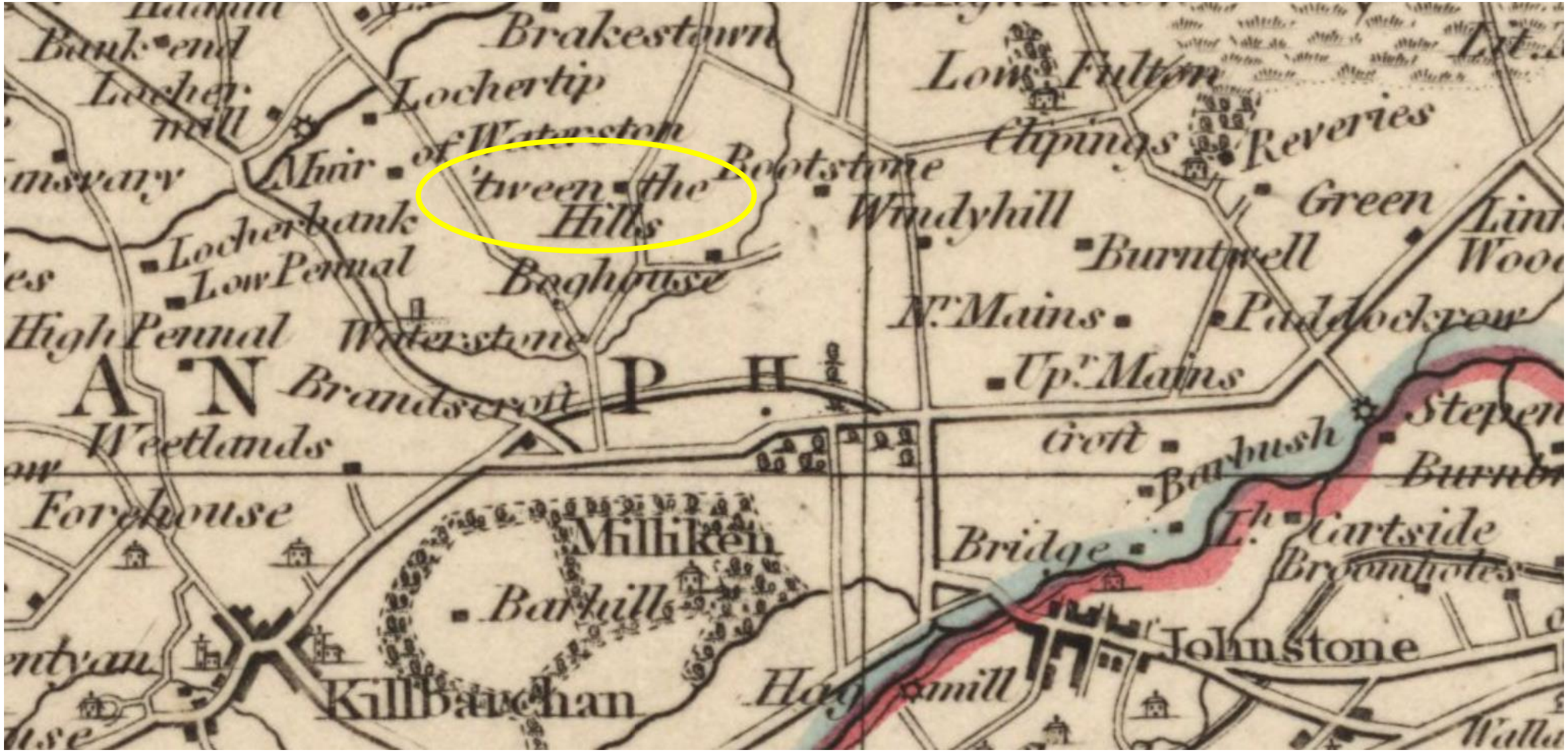

Thomson, 1826

John Thomson, Renfrew-shire, 1826 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
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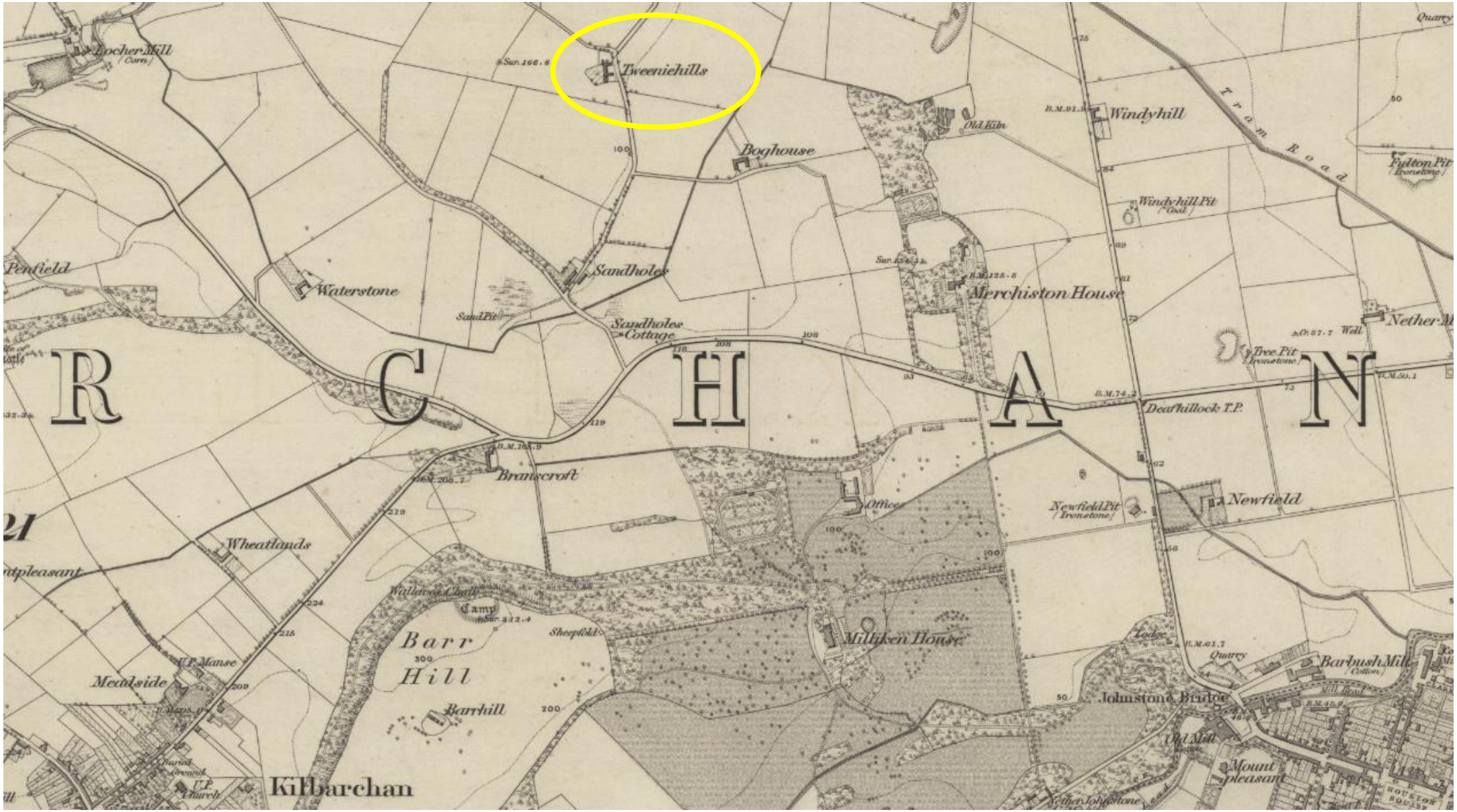


OS 6” Sheet XI (1857)

OS 6” 1st edition, Renfrewshire Sheet XI, Surveyed 1857 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
Map images - National Library of Scotland

Sheet 60 - Glasgow - B/*/*/* Edition
Revised: 1962 to 1973, Published: 1965, Reprinted: 1974
Size: sheet 92 x 75 cm (ca. 36 x 29 inches)

The name survives to this day as Tweeniehills, NS 4164

OS 1" 7th Series Sheet 60, Published 1965, Reprinted 1974 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
Map images - National Library of Scotland

What might have been the original language for this place name?

We have several such names in Gaelic.

Benderloch in Lorn, for *beinn eadar dà loch* 'hill between two lochs,' (Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba) (The two lochs are Etive (to south) and Creran (to north)

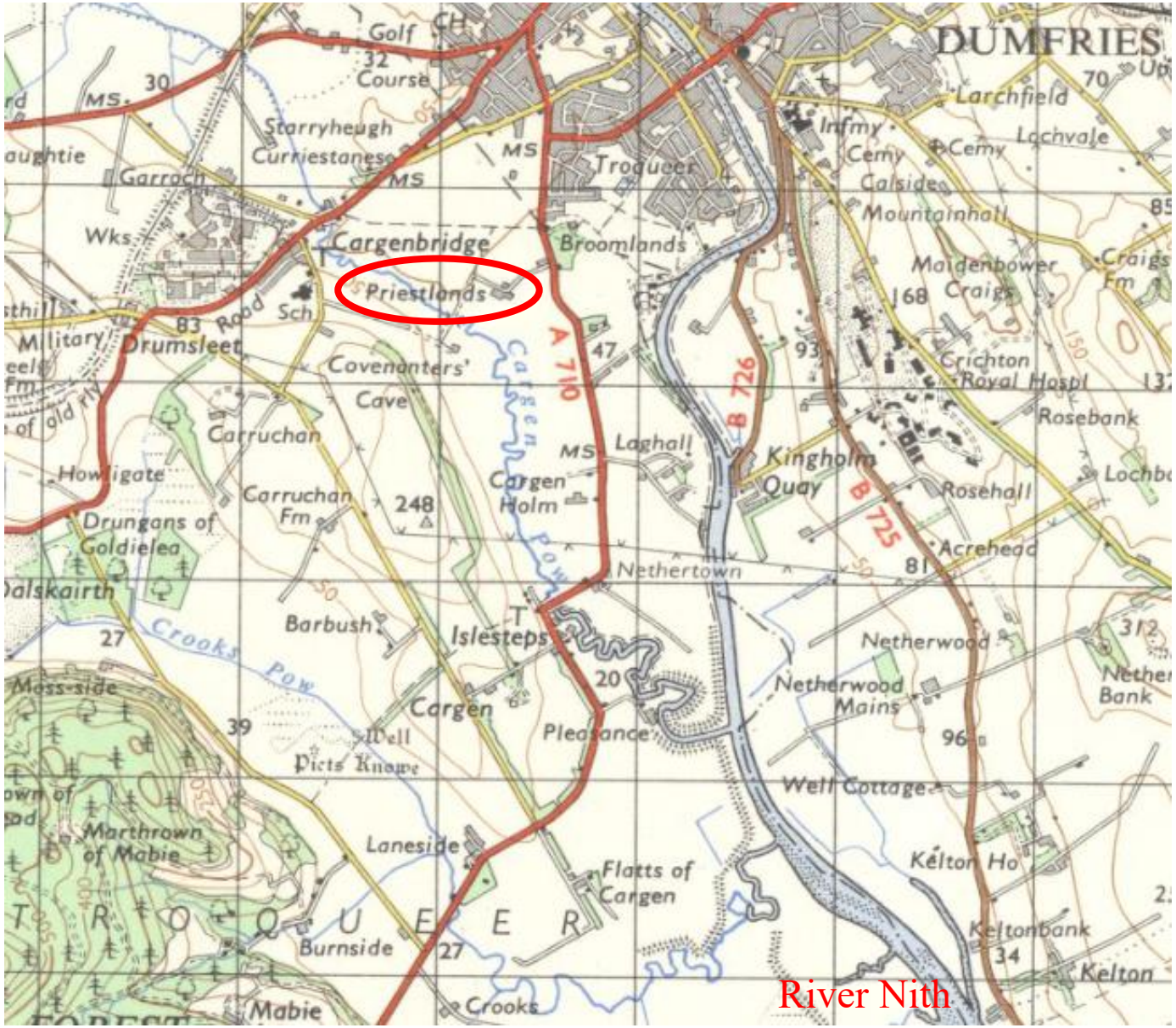
Edarasky – a now lost place-name in Lochaber, probably for 'between (two) waters' with the last element being '*uisge*' for a river (i.e. freshwater). The rivers are likely the Spean and the Lochy, possibly the Lundy.

Edraisk – the name of a davach in Assynt, Sutherland - between the Kirkaig and Inver rivers

Ederline - Eadar Linne (Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba) Gaelic *linne* (pool). South end Loch Awe.

Ardroil, Uig, Lewis. Eadar Dhà Fhadhail (between two fords)

Druim Eadar da Ghleann NM 8685/8785, East end of Loch Beoraid, South Morar, the ridge between two glens.



RMS IV (242) 1548 gives '10 merklands Auld Extent called **Inter aquas** and Preistislandis', Troqueer parish, Kirkcudbrightshire.

Inter aquas (between waters) presumably between Cargen Pow and River Nith *or* between Crooks Pow and Cargen Pow.

As with 'Inter duos colles' the name 'Inter aquas' raises the question of what language it had been translated from.

Gaelic/English/Northern Brittonic?

OS 1" Sheet 75, 1972

OS 1" 7th Series Sheet 75, Published 1965, Reprinted 1972 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
Map images - National Library of Scotland

Cumbric settlement terms with element *–trev ?*

The following names are *offered for investigation*. **Some,** *may* derive from Northern Brittonic '*trev*' (a homestead or farmstead). Names are given by parish. Following each name is a Grid Reference or Map name such as 'Pont' or 'Roy' to indicate the source. Documentary sources are given for some names, for instance those that are not mapped at all.

Kilmacolm

Eschintre - RSS II (3359) 14 February 1539-40. This may not be in Kilmacolm.

Rowntrehill, NS 3669. East Rowantreehill is marked Knapps on Explorer 341.

Plaintreeyet, Ainslie(1789)

Erskine

Hietre - RSS I (213) 1498. c. NS 3773, Roy.

Eaglesham

Hardtres (Pont) SW from Blakhous, W of Earn Water.

Kilbarchan parish

Roundtree Flatt, NS 4062, CSEP(1) c. 1782.

RS53 ff 44r-45r 1642 gives 1m Rononetrieflatt.

Neilston parish

Trees NS 4959.

Lochwinnoch parish

Overtries of Auchinbothie, RS53 f 53r 1642. See also Robertson(1818).

Swinetrees, NS 4159, Semple Rental 1644 p 170.

Trees, Robertson(1818), Roy, Poll-tax 1695 p 193.

Bourtrees, Paisley Rental 1460, NS 3656

Bowtrees, AHC I (113) 1540.

Belltrees, NS 3758, Pont.

Roundtree Craig (hill-top) NS 3462.

NB 3 x Roundtree

Names in achadh – usually indicative of early Gaelic settlement.

Names beginning with Ach- or Auch- (from Gaelic *achadh* 'field'). Names are given by parish.
Following each name is a Grid Reference or Map name such as 'Pont' or 'Roy' to indicate the source.

Inverkip
Auchinfour – a large and important site
Auchneagh NS 2575
Auchmade NS 2375
Auchnearn NS 2475
Auchinfin c. NS 2475?

Greenock
Auchendarroch NS 2975
Auchinmugden NS 2874

Kilmacolm
Auchinleck NS 3372/3373
Auchentiber NS 3172
Auchendores NS 3572
Auchenbothie NS 3470
Auchenfoyle NS 3170/3171

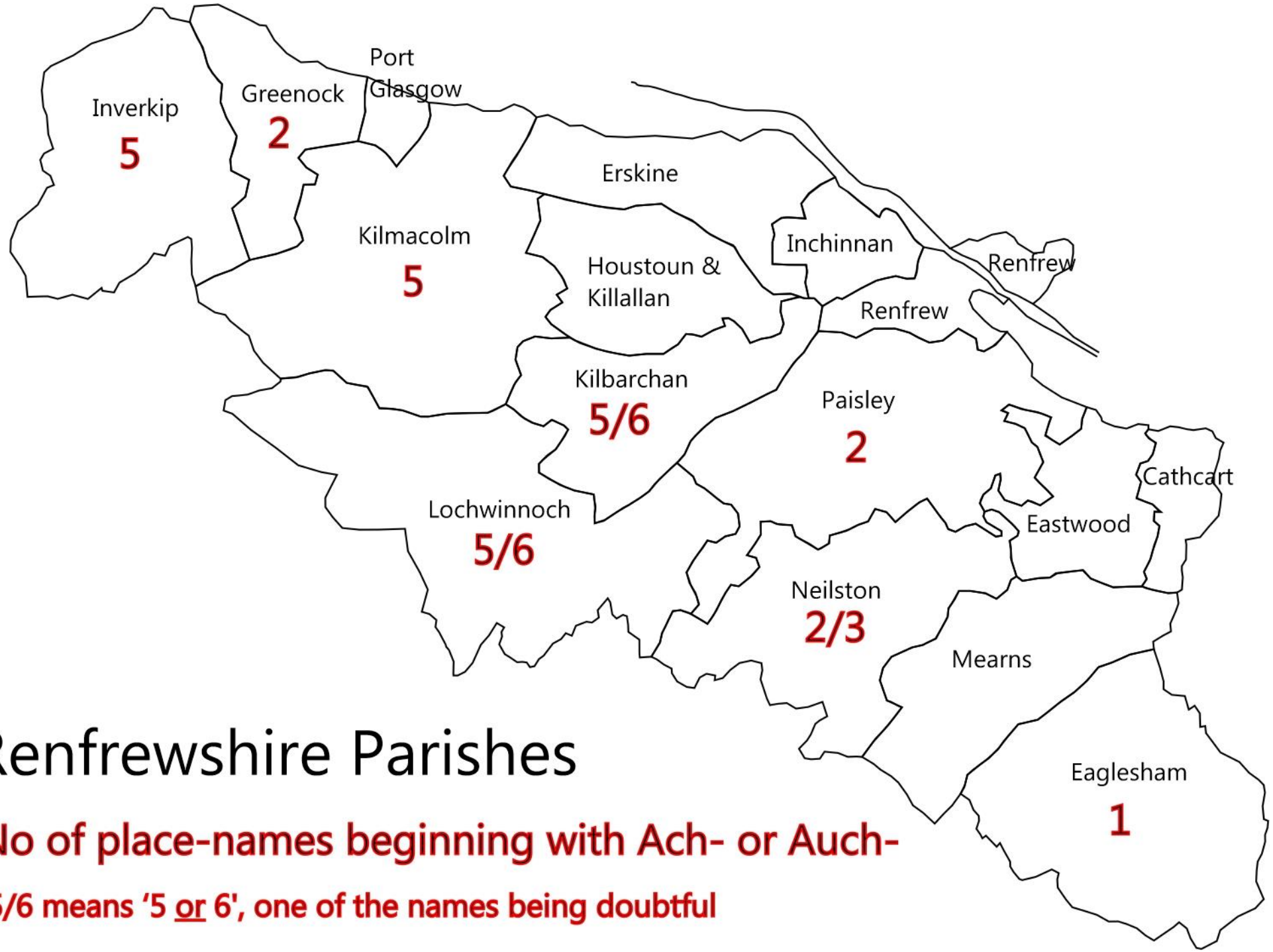
Eaglesham parish
Auchinhood, NSA p 392 writes: *Formerly the farms of Netherton, Polehall, Holemuir, and Maulauther, constituted an ancient property named Auchinhood.*

Kilbarchan parish
Auchincloich NS 3663
Auchinseal NS 3764
Auchans NS 4266/4366
Auchenames NS 3962
Auchendinning NS 3860/3960
Auchinraith. Dodds, 'Craigends', p 24. (Unlocated)..

Neilston parish
Auchentiber NS 4757
Auchenback NS 5058
Aucheas, Roy.

Lochwinnoch
Auchingown NS 3657
Auchinreoch NS 4260
Achinhean NS 3257
Auchinbothie – a large farm, see Lochwinnoch table for components.
Achinneare - probably Auchinhean. Pont & Blaeu map a similar place-name to E of Lochwinnoch. (Achinern? (Pont), Achinard (Blaeu)).
?Auchinharie - only reference I have is RSS I (3697) 1526-7
Auchingrange NS 3757. I have no early references for this name - it may be modern.

Paisley
Auchenlodment NS 4362/4461
Auchentorlie NS 4963



Renfrewshire Parishes

No of place-names beginning with Ach- or Auch-

5/6 means '5 or 6', one of the names being doubtful

Some ‘Achadh’ farms in Renfrewshire were significantly large

It is not always possible to be sure of farm valuations but the following are examples of *achadh* farm sites worth at least 3m.

Inverkip parish
Auchinfour – perhaps an estate name of £10(15m)?
Auchneagh (£4 or 6m)
Auchmade (£4 or 6m +)

Kilmacolm parish
Auchenbothie 4m

Eaglesham parish
Auchinhood 5m

Kilbarchan parish
Auchincloich 3m
Auchinseal 3m
Auchans 4m
Auchenames (28m or 30m in earliest form)

Neilston parish
Auchenback 8m

Lochwinnoch parish
Auchingown £14 3s 4d (21¼m)
Auchinreoch 5m
Auchinhean 3m
Auchinbothie 10m

Paisley parish
Auchenlodment £5 (7½m)

The size of these farms, particularly those emboldened in red, might suggest a dominant, Gaelic-speaking, landowning class.

Names in Baile – Gaelic for township/fermtoun ?

Very few – and on this page very doubtful

Greenock
Balwharly. NS 2875. I am not sure this is old. There is a Wherlie in Houstoun NS 4166

Mearns
Balgray NS 5156/5056 in Pont. The earliest reference I have for this is Bagraw in Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok, I, p 147 No 25 **1413**.
Peter Drummond wrote an article entitled 'Balgray and Balgreen' for 'The Journal of Scottish Name Studies', Vol. 12, 2018, pp 77-96. He argued 'Balgrays' were not from Gaelic baile. The evidence from Renfrew supports that.

Bellcraig Quarry, just S of Alton, OS 6" Sheet XVII, 1856. Unlikely.

Eaglesham
Ballageich Hill NS 5350 probably not from *baile*; perhaps from Gaelic *bealach*, a hill pass.

Neilston/Eastwood (either east side of Neilston parish or west side of Eastwood parish
Belalor – Fraser Lennox No 2 (1177 x 1204) *only reference*.

Lochwinnoch parish - Following images from online resource:

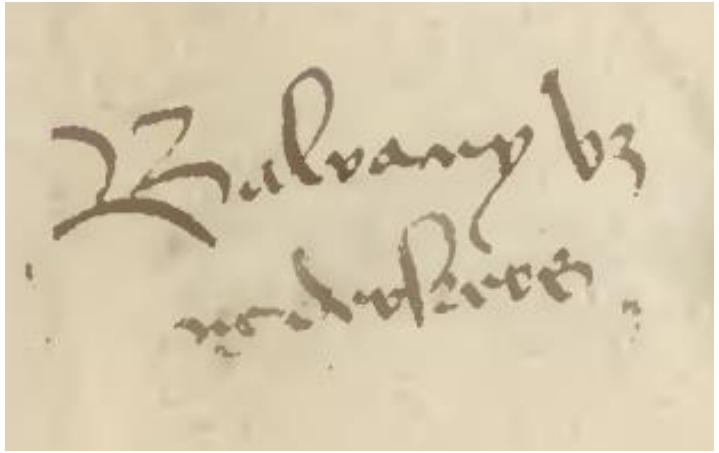
Paisley Rental Book - Manuscripts from Scotland - Early manuscripts - National Library of Scotland

Runs from 1460-1550s. Individual entries sometimes difficult to date. It was a rolling record.

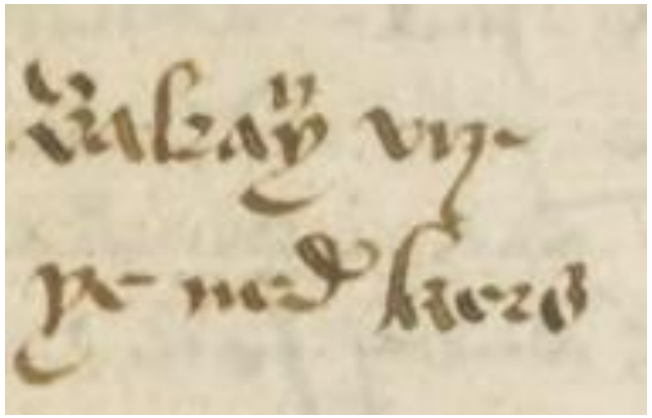
Also important for **family** names.

Balrany = Nether Kers (or Easter Kers - NS 3355) 1460 (Paisley Rental). Ex Paisley Abbey.
This seems to have had 3 different names.
The first references in the Paisley Rental have 'Balrany viz. Neder Kers' (1460) and 'Balra(n)y viz. ye Neder Kers' (1472?).
From 1484 it became 'Ester Kerse'.

1460



1472?



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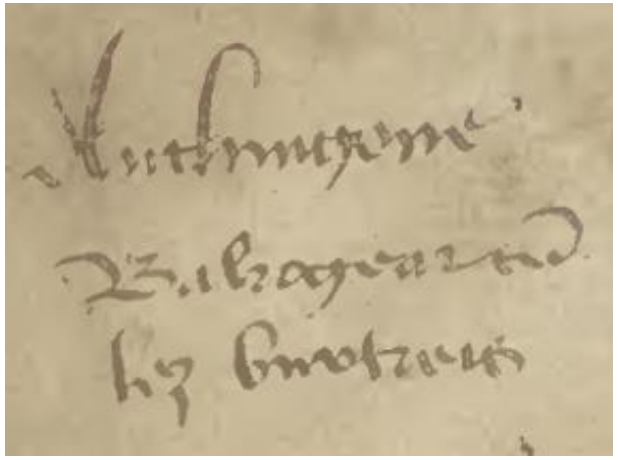
(1) - Manuscripts from Scotland > Paisley Rental Book - Early manuscripts - National Library of Scotland

Balroger (Pont and Paisley Rental, NS 3356) – now Barrodger

Although the first element is now ‘Bar’ it is clear from the Rental of Paisley Abbey, (and possibly Pont’s map - which is hard to read), that it was formerly ‘Bal’.

Paisley Rental: Balrogear (1460, 1472), Balroger (1484, 1502).

1460



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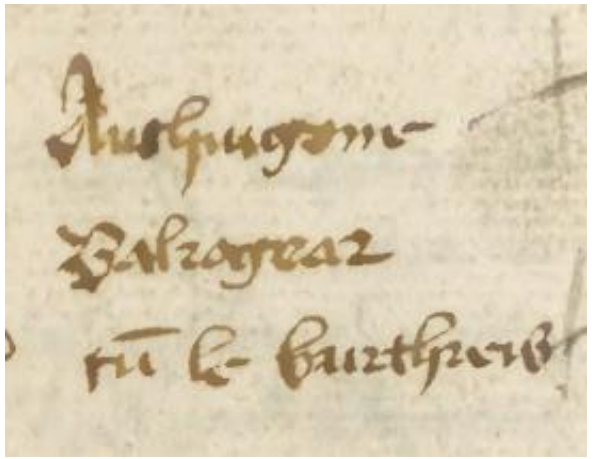
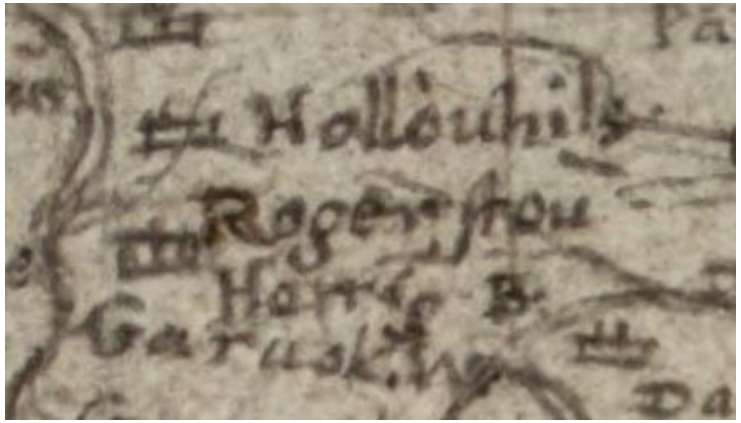


1472

But, further west in Renfrewshire, Pont marks: **Rogerstou(n)**



Pont(33) Map of Renfrewshire - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
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Balgreen/Balgrein NS 3560 Pont (hard to be sure of penultimate letter)

Balgrein in RS53 f 54r 1642.

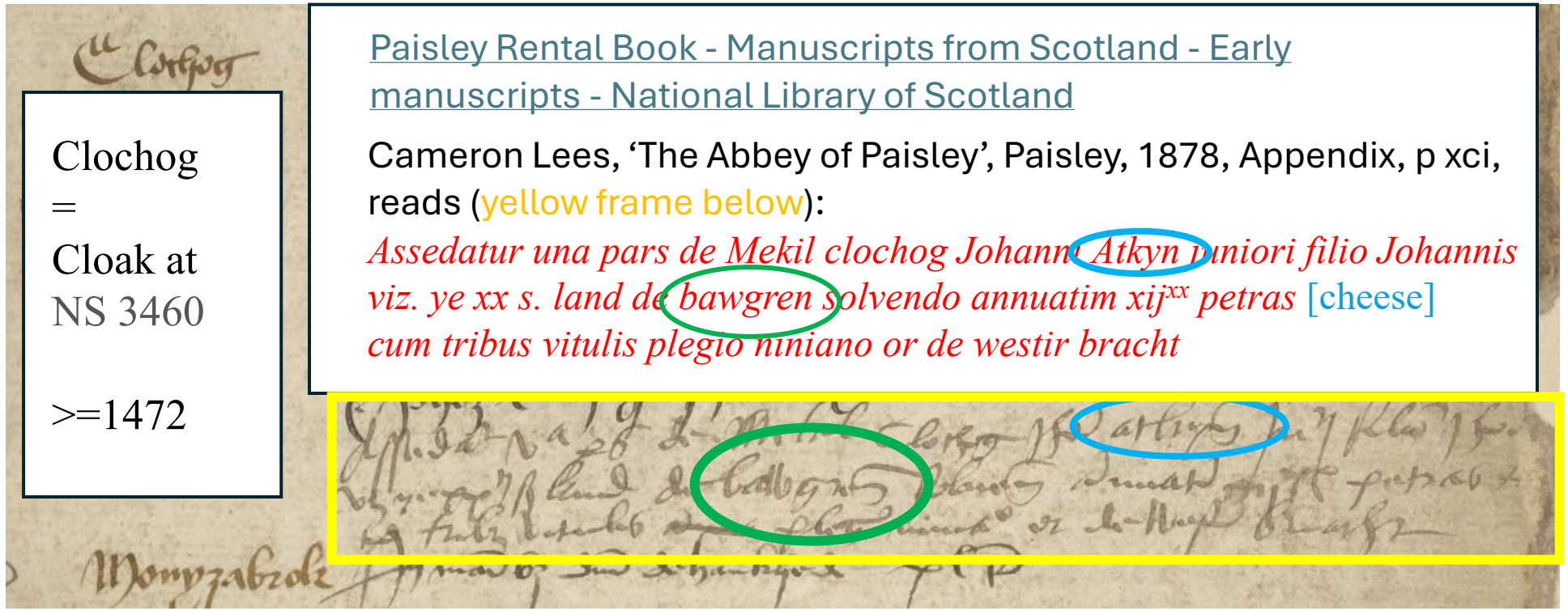
Clochog
=
Cloak at
NS 3460

>=1472

Paisley Rental Book - Manuscripts from Scotland - Early manuscripts - National Library of Scotland

Cameron Lees, 'The Abbey of Paisley', Paisley, 1878, Appendix, p xci, reads (yellow frame below):

Assedatur una pars de Mekil clochog Johanni Atkyn iuniori filio Johannis viz. ye xx s. land de bawgren solvendo annuatim xij^{xx} petras [cheese] *cum tribus vitulis plegio niniano or de westir bracht*



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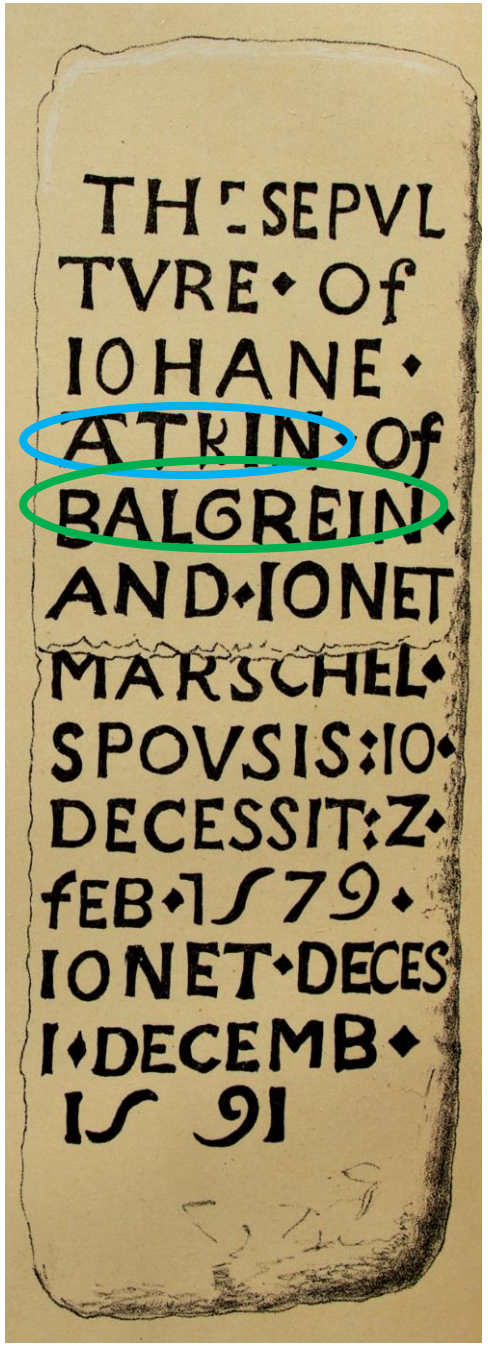
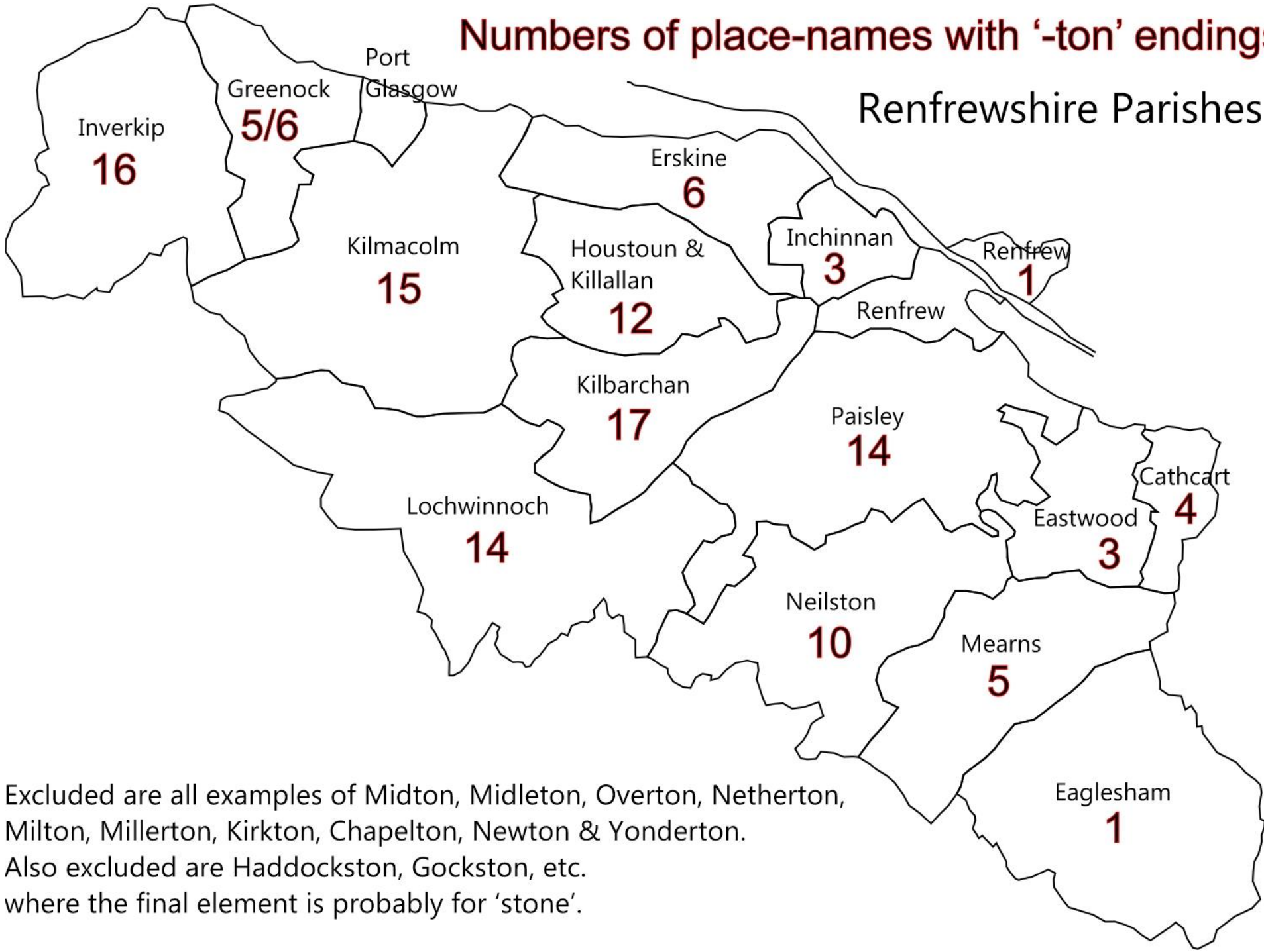


Grave-slab from Lochwinnoch churchyard illustrated (Plate III) in 'Archaeological and Historical Collections relating to the County of Renfrew', Vol II, Parish of Lochwinnoch, Paisley, 1890.

NB Same family (Atkin, Aytkin) as in Rental

Numbers of place-names with ‘-ton’ endings.

Renfrewshire Parishes



Excluded are all examples of Midton, Midleton, Overton, Netherton, Milton, Millerton, Kirkton, Chapelton, Newton & Yonderton.
Also excluded are Haddockston, Gockston, etc.
where the final element is probably for ‘stone’.

Examples of –ton names deriving from particular families

Inverkip parish
Lunderston NS 2174 - Thomas de Londrys 1379

Houstoun parish
Hugh – first lord of Houstoun (12th century)
Yetston NS 3970 - RSS VIII (1816) 1583-4 has a John Yettis in Erskine parish.
Mashington NS 3968 - Patrick Maschen in RMS III (2742) 1542

Neilston parish
Jaapston NS 4555/4556 (Paisley Rental gives local tenants called Jope, Jok, Jobson or Jop)

Paisley parish
Crookston NS 5262 - 12th century family called Croc.

Numerous other possibilities:
Fodston NS 3766

Abyrnythyston, Brouston, Sympylston, Darrochston – GD148/125 1533

Peockstone NS 3560, Spreulston NS 3955, Ralston NS 5063, Narvelston, NS 3256/3356

Botherickfield

Crawfurd (1710, p 71) refers to a charter in the possession of Sir John Houstoun.
The charter was from Robert, grandson of Baldwin of Biggar. The lands are called Kilpeter.

Baldwin of Biggar had made a grant to Reginald, son of Hugh of Padvinan, and Robert was now ratifying or confirming that grant.

But then comes an additional clause. It wasn't just the lands of Kilpeter **but also that land which Bodricus (Boderick)** and Arkenbaldus (Archibald), his (i.e. Reginald's) brothers, held.

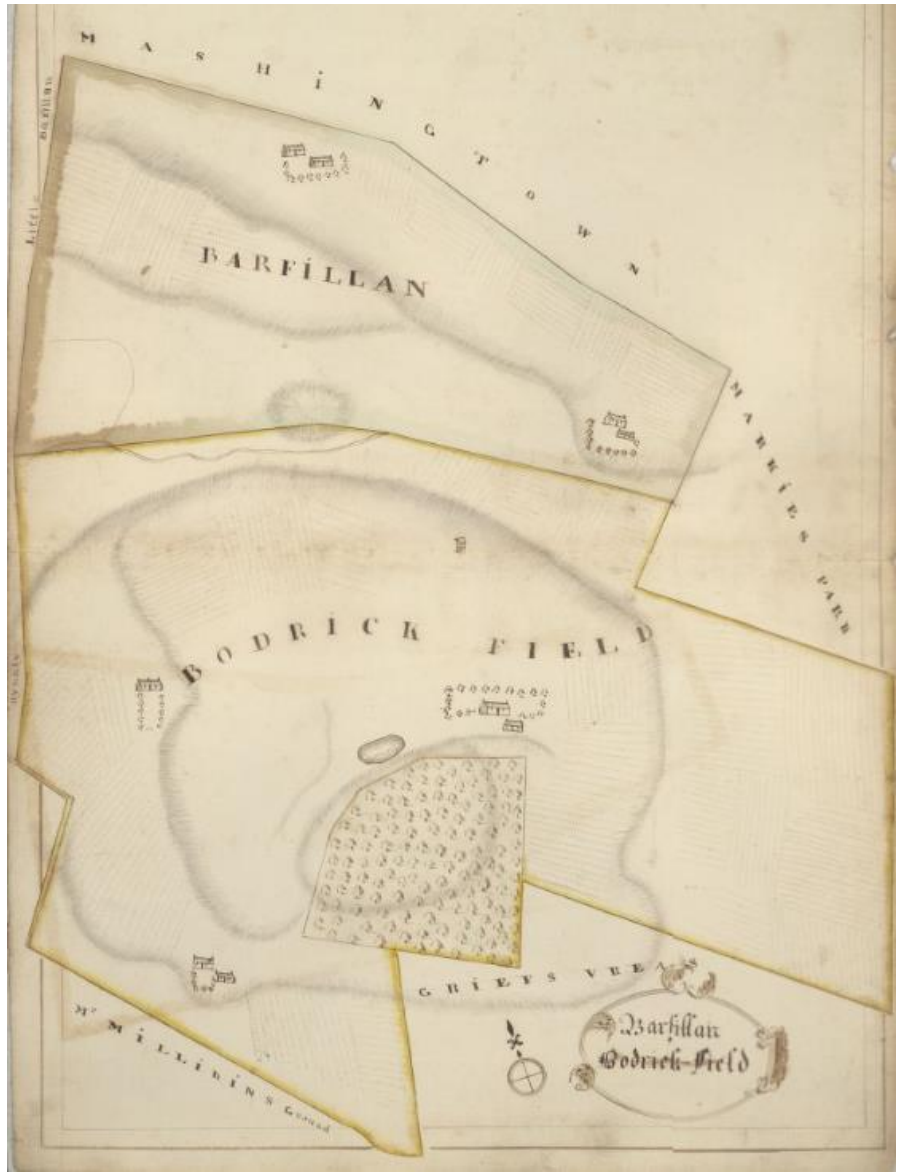
The first witness is Alan Stewart so this charter must date to the period between the death of Alan's father, Walter Stewart, in 1177, and Alan's own death in 1204.

Professor Barrow (The Kingdom of the Scots, 1973, p 329) made the inspired connection between Bodricus and Botherickfield.

We are given an outline of this farm in an estate map of 1760 which is viewable within the National Library of Scotland's Digital Map Library.

Botherickfield (Houstoun & Killallan parish)

NLS Acc.4394, 11, c. 1760



NLS Acc.4394, 11 - Barfillan, Bodrick Field - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
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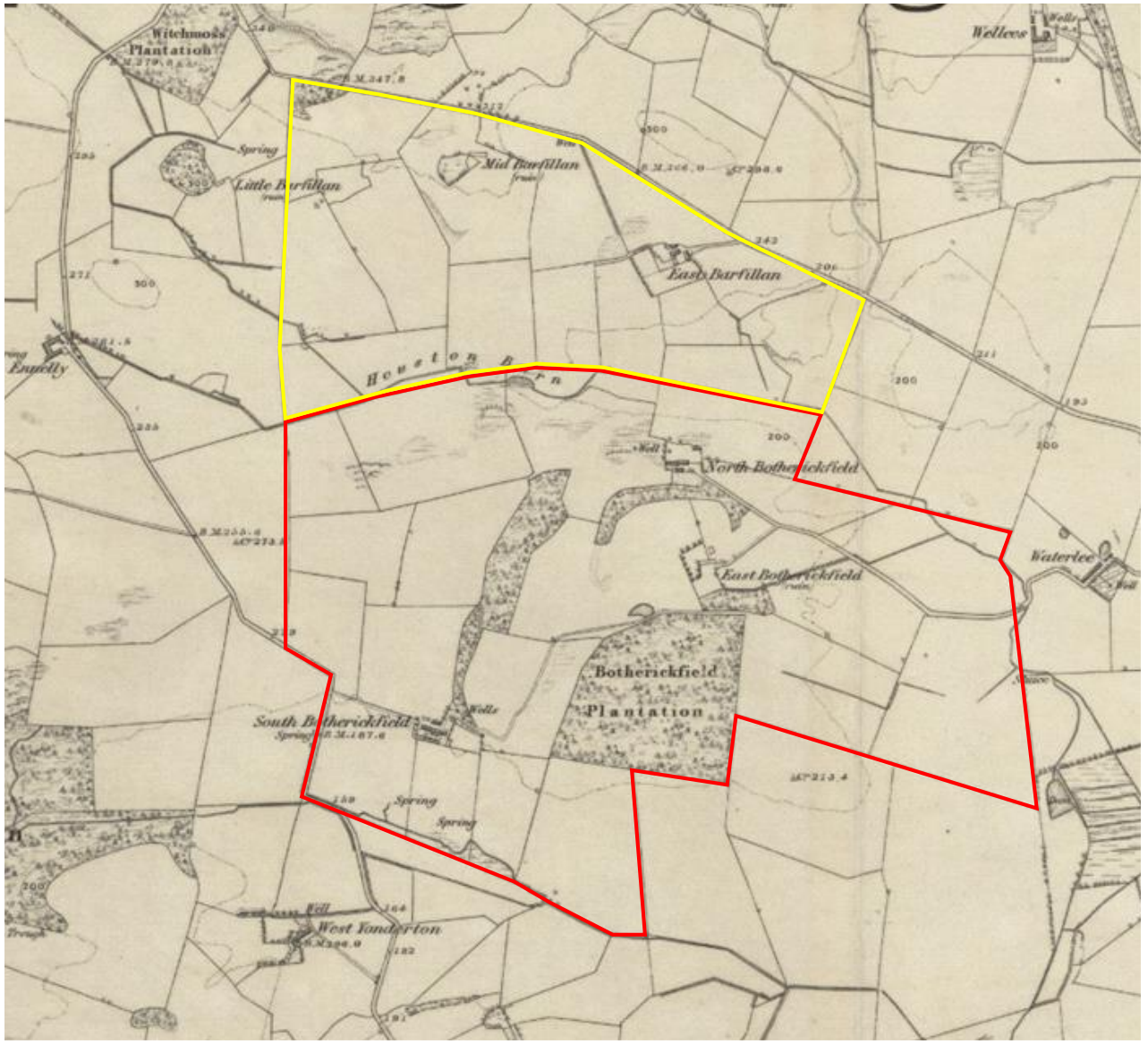
OS 6" Sheet VII 1857



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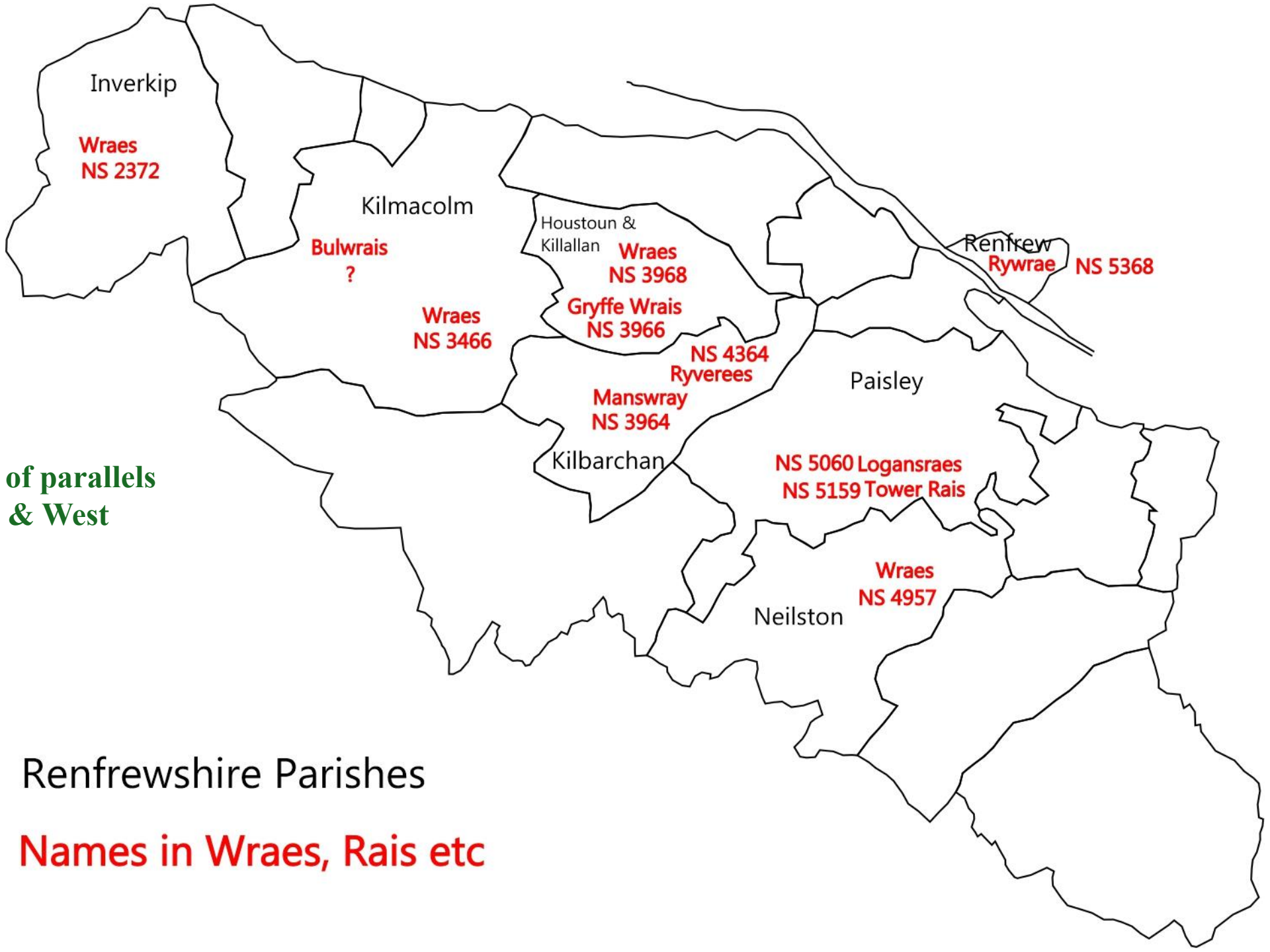

Absence of parallels to North & West

Renfrewshire Parishes

Names in Wraes, Rais etc

Parallels in Cumberland and Westmorland?

English Place-name Society: 3 volumes on the 'Place-names of Cumberland' and 2 volumes on 'The Place-names of Westmorland'. Parallel names in Cumberland and Westmorland fall into two types.

Names thought to derive from Old Norse ***hreysi*** (a stone cairn) and others from Old Norse ***vrá*** (a nook or corner of land).

Examples: (Cumb. III = The Place Names of Cumberland, Volume III; West. II = The Place Names of Westmorland, Volume II etc).

From ***hreysi*** (cairn):

West. I p 12 Rais Beck & Raise Beck (cairn stream); p 56 Raismoor, (cairn moor); p 80, Stanrays (stone cairn); p 107 Raisbeck (cairn stream).

West. II p xiii Staynwallerays (stone wall cairn); p 44 Raisbeck and Raisgill (cairn stream and cairn ravine); p 107 high & low Raise (high and low cairn). See also p 161 (Raise Bank), p 203 (White Raise), p 226 (Raise), p 264 (multiple other examples: Colbrainrayse, Raiseherling etc.).

West. II p 306 states '6 of the examples are associated with ancient remains'. See also Index p 355.

Cumb. I p 24 Raise Gill, pp 178-9 Raise & High Raise [There is a pile of stones here];

Cumb. II p 317 Raise;

Cumb. III p 479 Racy Cott, Dunmail Raise. See also Index p 547.

From ***vrá*** (a nook or corner of land):

West. I p 128 Ellenwray;

West. II p 297 multiple examples including Wraygreen, (The) Wray, Todwray, Wreay, Bracken Wreays, Dubwra, Langvra, Scotwra, Starrow wreay, Suinwra, Thornwray. See also p 309 where '*vrá* 'as a place name and field name is less common than in Cumberland; 23 examples noted, nearly half recorded before 1400'.

Cumb. II p 336 Rowrah (probably rough nook or corner), p 392 Paddock Wray (toad corner);

Cumb. III p 488 Wray Head, Wrayside, Wreah, Wreay, Aughtertree, Benwray, Bramery, Dockray, Lacra, Murrah, Sillerea Wood, Westray etc, - and noted as common in field names. See p 502 for distribution pattern.

Some Renfrewshire names *appear* to have retained the '**v**' from *vrá*. In the National Library of Scotland Digital Map Library we find a series of estate maps from Houstoun parish which date to c. 1760. On Acc.4394, 9, 10 & 11 we have a farm marked 'Grief's Vrea's'. On Acc.4394, 8 & 12 we find another just called 'Vrea'.

This seems to be a different type of name to that found in 'Stewart's Rais' or 'Logan's Rais' (Paisley parish).

Houstoun parish estate maps c. 1760 from NLS Digital Map Library

Acc.4394, 12

This is now Wraes at NS 3968. It was Wrayis in GD148/324 1573.
It also appears on a boundary in Acc.4394, 8.

NLS Acc.4394, 12 – Mashington Vrea - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
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This is now Gryffe Wraes at NS 3966

Acc.4394, 9, also at boundaries in Acc.4394, 10 & 11

NLS Acc.4394, 9 - Raven's Haugh, Grief's Vrea's - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
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Can we list all the ancient cairns in Renfrewshire to see where they *may* match with surviving names from Old Norse *hreysi*?

Sources for Renfrewshire Cairns:

Historic Environment Scotland's 'CANMORE' database list some **15** possible sites, 2 of which appear to be natural.

Another source is F. Newall 'Early Open Settlement in Renfrewshire', PSAS Vol 95, 1961-2 pp 159-170. This gives a map with cairns marked A-N, P, R1 & R2, S, T (**19** sites) plus descriptions of some of them on pp 167-168. He also gives Grid References which allow us to compare these with the CANMORE sites.

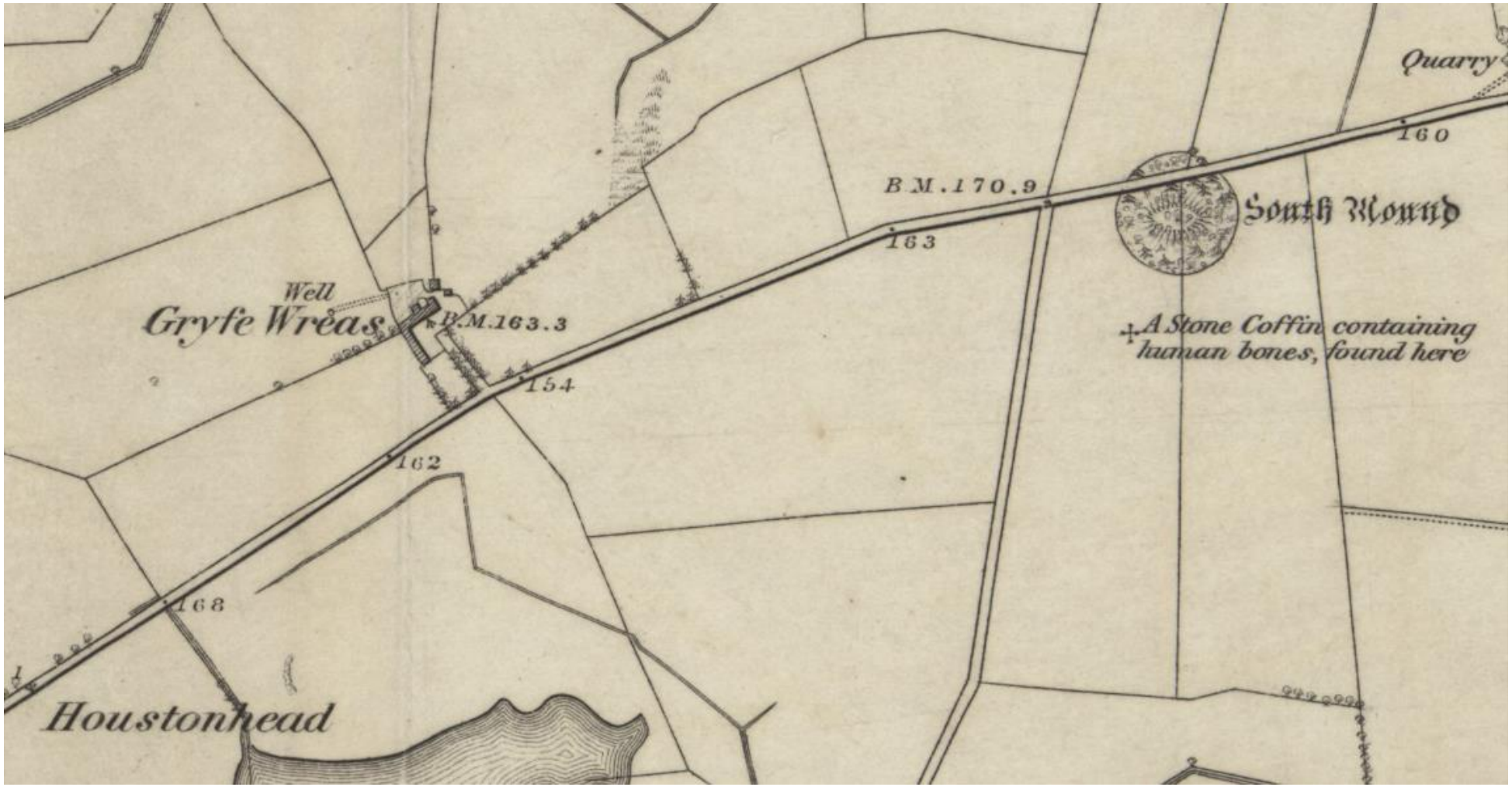
There is also a reference to a cairn at Lawfield (Houstoun parish) in PSAS 57 (1922-1923) pp 104-5.

As well as these **15-20** possible sites we should acknowledge that other cairns may have disappeared under the plough or under housing estates.

How does the list of grid references for sites in Wraes etc. match with that for prehistoric cairns?

The **only** likely match is between Gryfe Wraes (NS 3966) and the South Mound of Houstoun (NS 4066).

Conclusion. It is difficult to argue that the Renfrewshire names in ‘Wraes’ derive from ON ***hreysi*** **(a cairn).**



OS 6” Sheet VII, 1857

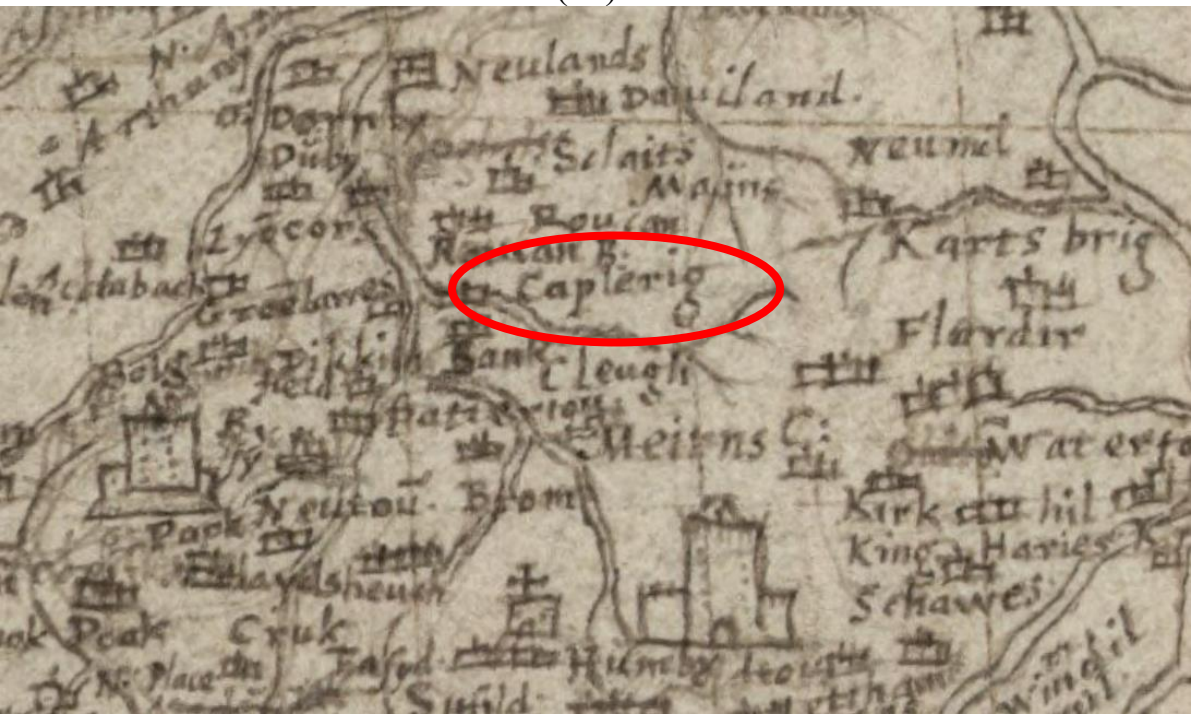
Capelrig

The name Barcapel (Mearns) seems to be the modern version of the old Capelrig.

GD3/1/7/5 1541 concerns a sale by John Muir of Caldwell of 5m AE of the east part of his lands of Capelrig.
Renfrew Retours (146) 1655 is the retour of William Muire of Caldwall, '*in the tempill landis off Capilrige*'.
Renfrew Retours Q (No 4) 1676 refers to William Mure of Caldwall and 'Keplerig', formerly called templeland.

Purves p 162, under the heading 'The Temple Lands', gives 'The chapel Rig' as £6 13s 4d (10m).
Stewart f 50r, under the heading 'The tempillands', gives 'The capilrig' as £6 13s 4d (10m).

Pont(33)



Pont(33) Map of Renfrewshire - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland Map images - National Library of Scotland

Blaeu

J. Blaeu, The Baronie of Renfrow, 1654 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland Map images - National Library of Scotland

Comparison with Cumbria?

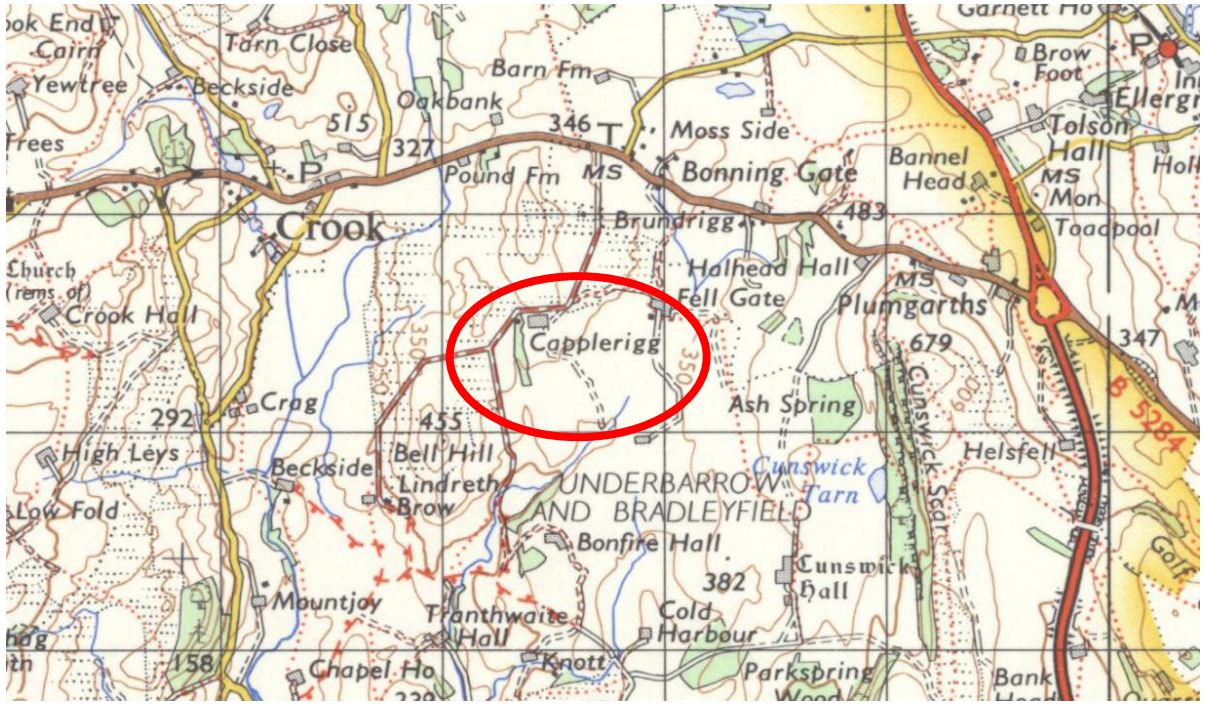
The ‘Place-Names of Westmorland’ offers 3 similar names. (OE = Old English, ON = Old Norse)

West. I p 104 Capple Rigg < ON *kapall* (horse) + OE *hrycg* or ON *hryggr* (ridge or cultivated strip)

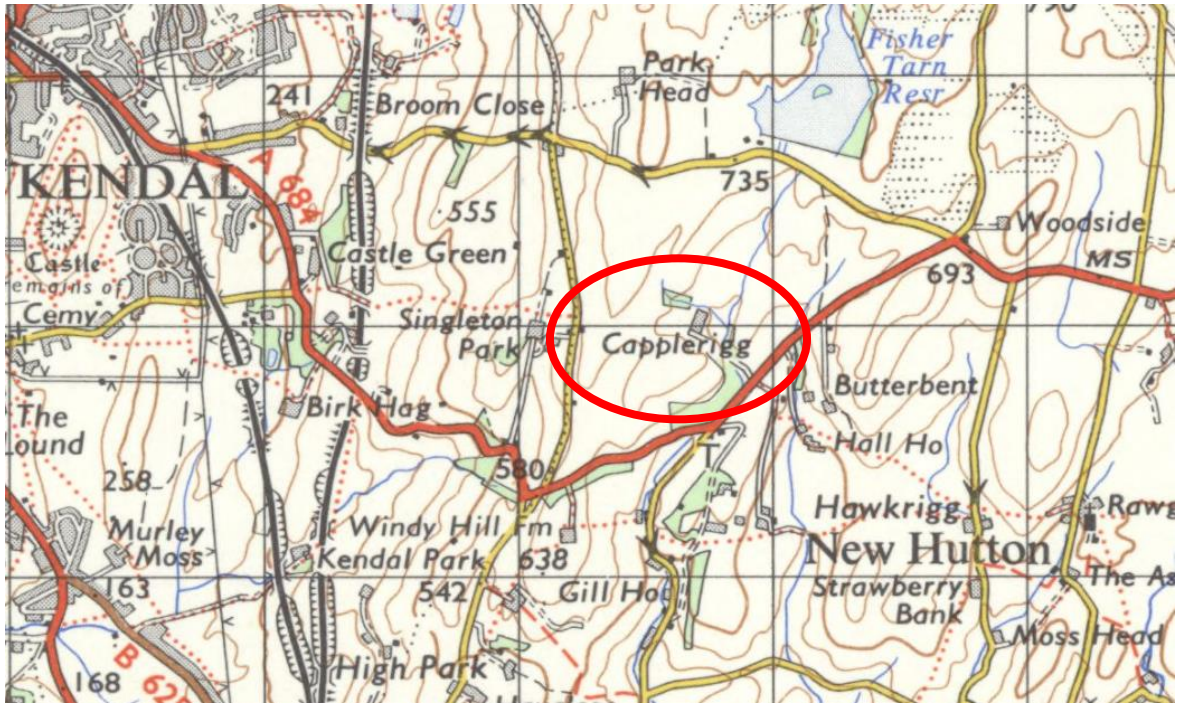
West. I p 132 Capplerigg - ditto

West. II p 152 Capple Rigg - ditto

OS 1” Sheet 89, Lancaster & Kendal, 1972



OS 1” Sheet 89, Lancaster & Kendal, 1972



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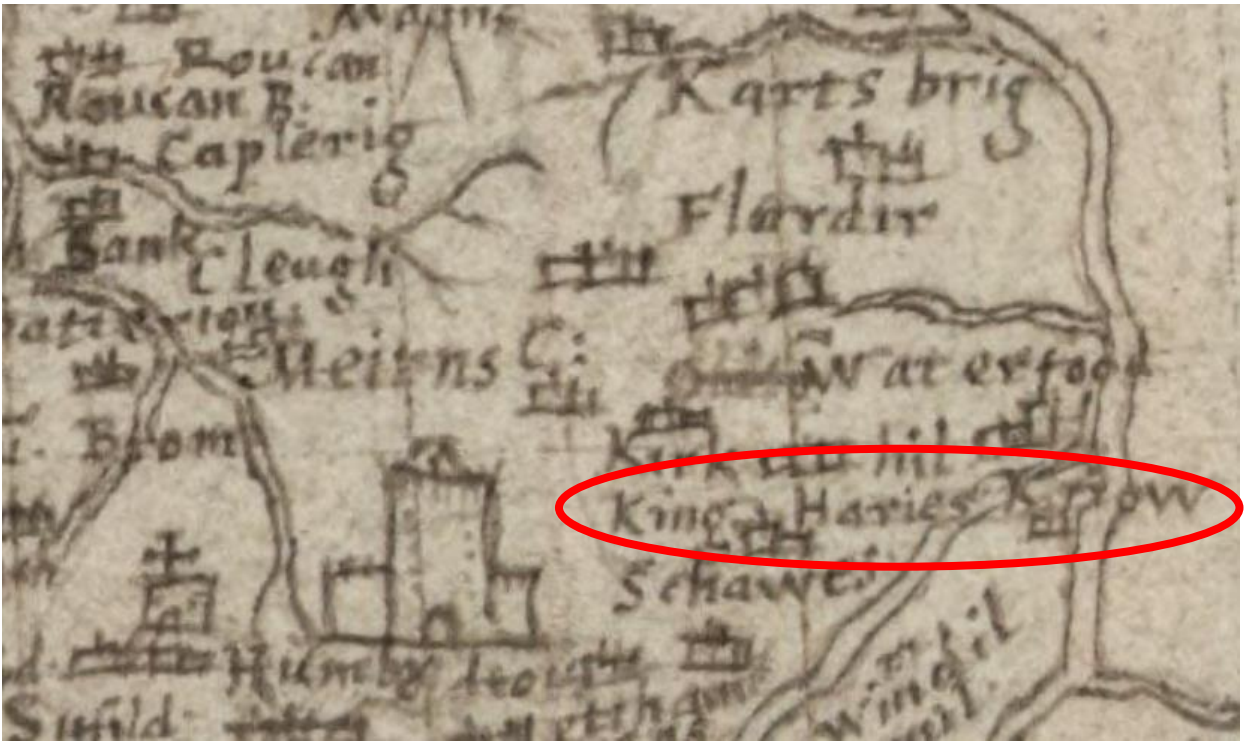
King Henry's Knowe NS 5555, Mearns parish

This curious name is 'King Haries Know' in Pont, 'Kingharies' in Blaeu, 'King Harrys Know' in Roy & Ainslie, 'King Henrysknow' in Richardson (1795).

This place-name has a parallel in Cumb. I p 79 'King Harry'. The latter can be documented back to 1268 and the editors suggest that the first element is actually for Gaelic '***ceann***' (head), '*the second is entirely obscure*'. As in Mearns the name is associated with other features; in the case of Cumberland, 'moor', 'fell end' and 'common'.

Pont(33)



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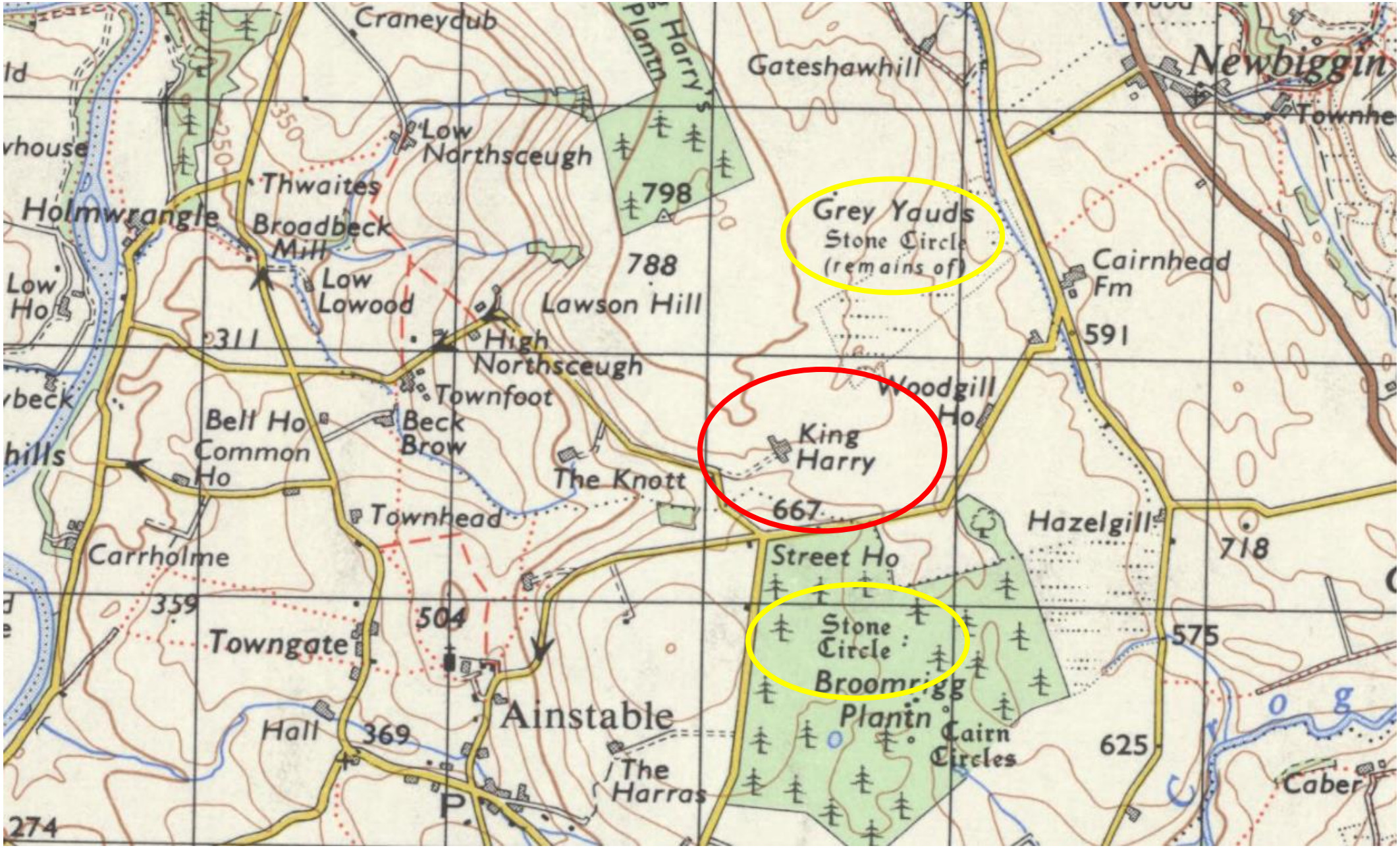
J. Blaeu, The Baronie of Renfrow, 1654 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland Map images - National Library of Scotland



OS 1”
Sheet 83
Penrith

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Shovelboard

In Houstoun parish we find the place-name Shovelboard at NS 3869.

In 'Place-Names of Shropshire', Volume 9, p 350, there is discussion of the field-name '*Shewbread*', north of Wentnor, Shropshire.

It has been suggested this derives from Old English scofl-brǣdu (shovel-width, as in a narrow field).

See also Cavill, A New Dictionary of English Field-names, under Shovel Broad/School Broad (pp 381/369).

The variants given include School Board, Shew Bread, Shoolbread, Shovel Boards.

Variants in Renfrewshire:

Roy (Shoolbraids)

OS 1857 (Shovelbread)

Shovelboard (OS Explorer 341)

It is not obvious from the maps that the field was particularly thin. **Was it once?**

OS 6" 1st edition, Renfrewshire Sheet VII, Surveyed 1857 - Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland
Map images - National Library of Scotland

OS 6" Sheet VII, 1857