

Luis'na par'n but off we went,
 on to Kirkmichael, our steps were bent,
 But e'er we passed the Games field by,
 at stane an' palar we had a try,
 then to the village, hastened on,
 nae boy was there, yestreen was gone,
 up to Coonmighleins so said the fowks,
 it was nae 'dress'd unto these fowks.

Notes on Strathardle.

Strathardle extends from the junction of the Brijachan and Fernale - the united waters of which form the Ardle - to the confluence of the Ardle with the Blackwater, a little below the Brig o' Cally. At the latter junction the river takes the name of the bricht. The Gaelic name of the strath is *Strath-ardful*, pronounced *dra-ardil*, and is supposed to be derived from two Gaelic words meaning the strath of high stream or river - either having reference to the high sources of the river, or to its being more elevated in comparison with another stream, such as *Athole* - in Gaelic *Athshil*.

Another explanation, however, is given as to the origin of the name. According to ancient tradition, one of the Ossianic heroes, named *Ardil*, who is said to have fallen in a great battle between the *Valdormians* and the *Danes*, was buried on the estate of *Birnnean*, near the river, the spot being marked by a large stone, erected at the head, and a lesser one at the foot of the grave. From this circumstance, the name of the river and the strath is supposed to have sprung; and, as confirmatory of this supposition, it may be mentioned that

the original spelling of the name was *Ardil*, instead of *Ardle*, which is now its customary form. The grave of *Ardil* is situated at the side of the public road, about two miles west from *Kirkmichael*. Happens that the strath's original name was, in Gaelic, *Strath-na-muic-broac*, pronounced *dra-na-muic-broac* the strath of the bruddled boar; so it seems very probable that the changing of it was in some way connected with the above named hero. It is evident too, from many other names and circumstances, that the place was at one time much infested, with boars as well as wolves. For instance, *Et-carmic* - in Gaelic, *Picarmuic* - means the hollow where the boar was turned; *Stron-a-muic*, the point towards which the nose of the boar was when conquered; *Borlands* the lands frequented by these wild animals; *Revaddie* on the Stone of Cally - in Gaelic *Rui-mhadairdh* pronounced *Ruivaddie* - means the wolf's shieling or pasture; *Clashvaddie*, in *Doris* hill or wood - Gaelic *Clas-mhadairdh* - a hollow or pass for the wolves. The roads through out the strath are good, with the exception of the one on the south side of the Ardle, which is now almost completely grass-grown. This road extends to about 10 miles in length, and there are thirty-four gates planted across it to prevent sheep or cattle from straying. The district is for the most part *passoral*, and in this respect bears a high character.

It is also famed for its game, which attracts sportsmen from all quarters; and during the summer and shooting seasons the neighbourhood is much enlivened by visitors, tourists and sportsmen.

Glenericht. - Gaelic, *Gleann-creachd* - means the

beautiful or comely glen or valley; and considering the diversity and surpassing grandeur of its scenery, the name is strikingly appropriate. The glen extends from the confluence of the Ardle and Blackwater to *Blangowrie*, where, terminating in the rocky ravine of the *Keith*, it opens out upon the smiling and fertile Howe of *Strathmore*. A more romantic and picturesque stretch of landscape could scarcely be found, even in all *Britain*. *Glenericht* house, stands on the east side of the river, on a low lying but beautiful site, amidst most charming surroundings. Access is obtained to it from the public road, by a fine avenue of considerable length, which is carried over the river by a handsome iron bridge.

Blackercraig. - Gaelic *Craig-dhubh* which just means *Black-craig*; but the name in full is understood to be *Craig-dheath-chaillich*, the *craig* of the *black muns*. The mansion, which is situated on the south side of the river, is a large castellated edifice of modern erection, but constructed on an ancient plan. It has a fine appearance, and is encompassed with pretty knolls and beautiful young plantations. The approach from the public road is by a tastefully primed, and well shaded avenue, which is carried across the river by a splendid double bridge, surmounted with an entrance lodge.

Stone of Cally. - This is the narrow jutting point of land enclosed by the Ardle and Blackwater where these rivers meet. The name means the *Nose of Cally*.

Cally - is derived from *Chaillich* which means *mun*. The name in full, as always used in Gaelic, is *Lagan-dubh-chaillich*, pronounced *Lagan-du-chaillich*, and meaning the valley of the black muns.

Woodhill - This is a modern name, which originated from the plantation of the hill with wood. The old Gaelic name is *Balmacreechic*, regarding the derivation of which various explanations have been given. According to one supposition it is derived from *Bal-na-bruthachaidh*, which means the town of spouty ground, or of small springs; many of these small water springs were found along the foot of the hill, and are still to be met with, where the land has not been drained. Another obvious derivation of the name is *Bal-na-crao-bhachaidh*, signifying the town of the tufts of wood, some of which are still visible along the river side. Still another derivation is admissible, however - *Bal-na-creuchie*, meaning the clay town, as the estate abounds in clay or mortar. Although the names are differently spelt, their Gaelic pronunciation is somewhat similar, so that the original name cannot on any principle of language be regarded as having any reference to hanging or the gallows, with which it has been frequently erroneously connected, in consequence of the corruption of the name by those ignorant of the Gaelic language. The Gaelic name of the "town" or hill in the *Balan-tuin* park, below the public road, is *Tom-an-rach*, pronounced *Tom-an-ra* which means the hill of judgment - a place for holding the baron's courts or public assemblies. On the upper side of the road is another eminence which commands an extensive view of the strath, called, in Gaelic, *Tom-a-chluig*, meaning

the bell mill, to which it is probable the people were summoned to attend court, or for other deliberations on matters of special importance. From ancient tradition, it is said the proprietor of Balnacreechie had the right or power, to force all the owners of property, by the side of the river to cut down all trees within certain length of the river, along its course through the strath, for fishing purposes.

Woodhill house is beautifully situated at the base of the hill, being shrouded in the bosom of splendid trees of various kinds. The house is built in a magnificent style, and the surroundings are pleasant and attractive. A neat Roman Catholic Chapel adjoins it.

Balantuin - means the town of the hillocks. at present the extent of property bearing this name is made up of three divisions, which are distinguished as Easter, Middle, and Wester Balantuin.

Balmyle - Gaelic Bal-mhille, the town of the mount. The name is derived from the high hill, called the Kings of Balmyle, which forms part of the estate. It is a nice property, the mansion being in regard to site and surround one of the finest in the strath.

Merghlands - Gaelic Bun-mharig, meaning the mark hill, town, land, or castle, or the rusty hill.

Balnabreck - Gaelic Bal-na-bric, the haugh of trout. It is probable that the name may have originated from the river at that part being well stocked with trout; or it may have arisen from the facilities afforded to anglers there owing to

the banks of the river being comparatively clear of trees or bushes. Another supposition is that the name is derived from the burn which runs down the hill and passes through the haughs, before it enters the river. This burn is named Ald-a-bhrigan, pronounced Aldavrigan, meaning the breeches burn, from a resemblance being traced in its course to that article of dress.

Pitearnie - Gaelic Pit-car-muic, the hollow where the boar was turned, - embraces the farms of Pit-carnie, Stonamuic and Dalvey.
Dalvey - Gaelic Dal-bheith, means the haugh of birch.

Balnabruaich - the town on the head of the brae. On the hill stands a cairn of stones of immense magnitude, called Cairn-Iadw, the grey cairn, the origin of which, according to ancient tradition, was this: - A loch on the contiguous estate of Dalubgan, was the haunt of a mermaid, which occasionally visited the lower portion of the strath, but never without committing damage. Her depredations became insupportable, and the inhabitants being in terror of her visits, various fruitless attempts were made to capture and conquer her, with the view of putting a stop to her ravages. Ultimately a famous dog, named Brano, belonging to the Singalians, was let loose upon her at the village of Kirkmichael, and after an exciting chase and fierce encounter, overpowered and killed her where the cairn lies. In olden times many curious and incredible stories were current amongst the people of the strath regarding the doings of this fabulous being. The loch said to have been her

abode, was by no means of a lovely appearance, and its banks were very unsafe for people walking on them, being liable to give way. Its Gaelic name is Loch-mhairich, meaning the mermaid's loch.

Dunidea - Gaelic Duni-deth, the distant hillock. There is a fine limestone quarry here, the rock being of excellent quality. In olden times Dunidea was reputed to be a favorite haunt of fairies.

Ashintilly - Gaelic Cas-an-tulich, the cascade of the mountain; There is an old castle on this property at the foot of a hill named Craignabattan. The castle bears the date 1583 above the front door, and right above the date are the words, "The Lord defend this house." There are over a dozen apartments in the house, and from their names rather peculiar circumstances appear to have been connected with three of the rooms. One is called "Red Fox's room," the "bold outlaw," being said to have lodged in the castle when on one of his daring marauding expeditions. Another is named, "Green James' Room." The lady distinguished by that appellation is said to have been killed there through jealousy; and for many years the apartment remained unoccupied for fear of her ghost. Lastly there is the "Thief's hole," which is covered by a strong heavy arch. The hole is said to be the place where thieves and other offenders were confined till a court was held by the baron.

The punishment for the crime of theft in those days was death on the gallows; but when a bribe was successful in saving life, the culprit had to leave the district, and reside in some other

part of the country. Ashintilly was formerly the seat of a barony, and the barons had the power of hanging or drowning as the case may be. The site of the gallows was on the farm of Inloid, and was called Tom-na-groich, the hill of the gallows. Tradition hands a story down to the effect that a baron of Ashintilly, killed and robbed a drover at the ford of Gally, and that he caused his butler, who was quite innocent, to be hanged for the crime. But it is said this black deed was speedily followed by sad desolation falling on the baron and all that pertained to him. At the same time, it is firmly stated that this is the furthest back murderer heard of in connection with Strathardle.

Aldchlappie is situated, immediately to the east of the village of Kirkmichael. The place derives its name from the peculiar noise made by the burn which runs past on the west.

Dalnagairn - Gaelic Dal-man-gairn, the haugh of cairns, situated to the west of Kirkmichael.

Inverchroskie - Gaelic Inverchroskie, meaning the entrance of the Burn Chroskie into the river. It may be explained that the burn derives its name from the circumstance that it crosses the road.

Ennoehdu - Gaelic Am-ach-dubh - means the barren sheet of land. There is a snug little village here, and tradition says a great battle was fought at this place long ago - probably that in which Ardil was slain, as the reputed hero's grave is near by.

Dinnivan — Gaelic, *Dior-nan-ean*, means "the bird's grove," and a more beautiful spot for a residence and estate could scarcely be found. The mansion has a beautiful and imposing appearance, being situated on a high eminence, and towering above all others in the strath. The policy grounds are very tastefully laid out, and the avenue is one of the nicest to be seen. A fine burn runs along the east side of the mansion and the avenue, and joins the Arde at the village of Ennochdhu. The burn flows through a deep den, which is prettily laid out with walks and rockeries, constructed with "creature stones." Here, also, there is a nice heather summer house, perched on a precipice overhanging a still pool, and from which a charming view is obtained of two small waterfalls.

Free access being allowed to the grounds, they are much frequented and admired.

Strathloch — the strath of lochs, is situated at the ends of Glenbriarachan and Glenfermate. A very large block of stone is to be seen on the farm of Bridgend. It is upwards of twenty feet in height, and measures about 25 feet in diameter. It is composed of a slaty granite, and being the largest stone in the district, it is called the *Black-mhor*, or the big stone.

Glenfermate — Gaelic *Glen-fearnaithe*, the glen of the alder trees, is a very beautiful glen and forms one of the most valuable grazings for sheep and cattle in the North of Scotland. It also affords excellent shooting, abounding in deer, and all other ordinary kinds of game. In older times, when

the Highlands were far more densely populated, than at the present day, there was a road leading to and from Badenoch thro' the glen. Another name of this glen — *Tonn-tharon*, meaning the baron's territories, indicates that it was once a barony.

Glenbriarachan — Gaelic — *Gleann-briarachan-conan*, meaning *Glen Conan's verdicht*. It is altogether a sweet little glen; the road from Kirkmichael to Pitlochrie, passing through it, is carried over a wild hill named *Badro* — Gaelic, *Bad-a-bhith*, meaning a postage with a spot of green grass.

Daraw — Gaelic, *Da-abhuinn*, meaning two rivers or the view of two rivers meeting — namely, the Briarachan and the Fernate. The name in full is *Da-abhuinn-tir*, signifying the land at the confluence of two rivers.

Kindrogan — Gaelic *Kin-droi-ghrion*, meaning the head or end of the briars or thorns which grow along the banks of the Arde to that place. The mansion house is a nice country seat, being very pleasantly situated; and has been honoured by three visits from Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

Dalreach — Gaelic, *Dal-reach*, meaning the rough haugh. It has an excellent shooting lodge.

Tullocheurran — forms part of the estate of Kindrogan, and is very skilfully cultivated.

Kirkmichael — Gaelic *Kil-michael*, meaning the church or burying ground consecrated to Saint

Michael. The parish manse adjoins the village; and the old name of its site was *Tonn-an-shagairt*, which means the priest's hilltop. It seems that at some distant period the village of Kirkmichael, occupied a position of considerable importance, as a large market, known as *Kirkmichael-fair*, was held there annually in September. Some misunderstanding, having arisen, however, between the Highlanders and the English dealers, the business of this market was afterwards transferred to *Falbrink*. A well-attended market was also formerly held in the village every Friday. For the most part the marketing consisted of home-made goods of all descriptions, and "rosie" sticks, all the way from *Rannoch*, which were generally used for lighting purposes in these days. There is a small stream, called the *"siller burn"* about four hundred yards south-west from the village, where in ancient times the dealers always paid their accounts. It appears that a weekly court was held in *Kirkmichael*, by a baron; hence the custom of the inhabitants electing a baillie, once a year, in honor of the past.

Bannerfield — where it is said a battle was once fought. Several years ago while several laborers were trenching a birch wood, on the property of *Balnault*, they found a number of ancient silver penny coins of the reigns of Edward I and Edward II, of the monks of *Bury St. Edmunds*, *Cambridge*, and *London*.

Balvarron — Gaelic *Bal-tharain*, the baron's town, remains of a chapel and burying-ground can be traced.

John was inclined some day to go,
explore the carries o' *Bon-y-ghlor*,
An' get Jim to accompany me
so baiths could scan the scenery.
Sae by *Glenbriarachan's* steep ascent,
in upward track oor steps wur bent;
But when we landed at *Tommhulan*,
we fand the folk's wur at the *"siller"*.
O' their hay doon i' the fields,
baith lads an' lassies, some shields,
we east oor coats, stick in the work,
some big the hay, some sheal wi' fork.
It wur rare fun the fortune o' t',
the day wur fine but mighty hot.
When we got dune, the place then cleared,
up to the cornfield we a' steered,
to fling the hammer an' the stane,
wi' sleight o' arm an' strength o' bane.
Then made a pole o' a hay prop,
for vaulting thus we had nae scope.
But when the sun wur nearly gone,
we took the hill, baith o's alone,
An' pursued oor way far up the heights,
o' *Braig-nan-ghuinacs* very flights.
Grae aff the top, too grauin a piev,
jal *Balnagarrn* to *Ennochdhu*.
Then spout the ridge by *Braig-nan-rechan*,
the travellers went but saaly pechin,
Afore they reached *Braig-rechan's* peak,
wi' stiffish banes an' sweatin' reek,
Doon on a stane they josed wi' other,
an' tried to rake their wits thegither,
Afore they tried the downward path,
name by the *fermate's* rugged strath.