

*Named places on the Tarbat Peninsula*

*Legend:* % possible Pictish, pre 9<sup>th</sup> century existence [6]

+ Norse 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century [6]

\* Gaelic, probably Medieval, 11-16<sup>th</sup> century [36]

*Source: Watson 1996 [1904] unless otherwise indicated.*

*Settlements*

%\*Allan Medieval name cited 1479. Watson 1996, 275 sees Qallan as Pictish meaning a swampy place. Same root as Alness [Alauna] (ibid, 277).

%Annat see Castle craig

+Arboll Norse ork-bol ; farm of the ark? Seal? Nearby Lòn tigh nan cat Cats' house mead.

\*Balachladich village on the shore

\*Balaldie village of the stream

%Balmuchy also in Fearn. Muchaidh might be Pictish, cf Welsh mochyn, a pig.

\*Balintore was G Bail' an todhair [village of bleaching – ie flax]. It was also Abbot's Port, Abbot's haven.

\*Balloan Castle. Town of the meadow. Two causeways led to it. *Cabh-sair an righ* King's causeway. *An cabhsar mor* big causeway

\*Balnabruach Town of the banks

\*Balnuig G bail' an aoig = village of death

\*Bayfield, Ankerville names changed in the 18thc for what was formerly Kindeace G Cinn-déis.

+Bindal Norse bind-dalr [sheaf dale] Near it is Stiana Bleadar, Norse stein-blettr stone-spot.

\*Binn Nigg hill of Nigg

\*Broomtown G bail' a' bhealaidh [not glossed]. Between this and Balintore was the "pass of the cattle"

%\*+Cadboll (Cathabul 1529). From "cat" rather than battle. [But NB the totemic animal of Caithness]

[modern] Cadboll Mount (A Laird of Cadboll was on bad terms with his cousin, Macleod of Geanies, and built the mount to look down on his lands. Made

quadrangular, in steps like a pyramid and about 60ft high. Still existed in Watson's day. Macleod retaliated by planting a belt trees).

\*Castle Corbet G an Caisteal dearg, Red Castle.

\*Castlecraig Now the name of a farm on which may yet be traced the lines of the castle built by William the Lion in 1179. Was Dùn Sgàth fort of dread (Eng Dunskaith). Also contained %Annat (a church that contains the relics of the founder); Rhidorach, dark slope; Culbinn (back of the hill).

\*Cillean Helpak – fishing bank in the Moray Firth

\*Culinald Burn-nook now part of Nigg Farm. The stream flows through the gully at Nigg Church

\*Culliss G Cùl an lios (behind the fort with earthen bank [a *lios*])

\*Dallachie G loch an dàilich ? loch of the meetings

\*Fearn from Lat. *Nova Farina* (New Flour). Parish is G. Sgìr na Manachainn (Parish of the monastery) (Watson 1996, 40)

\*Gallow Hill G cnoc na croiche. About a mile from Ballone Castle.

\*+Geanies G Gàan probably from Norse *gja* a chasm, from the rocky coast

\*Hilton [Eng] was G Bail' 'a chnuic [settlement on the hill]. Chapel dedicated to St Mary. Thus Craeg na baintighearna (Lady's Rock); see cemeteries and ports.

\*Nig 1227. G 'n eig at the notch. Probably the V-shaped gully on which the church stands. "on the analogy of other parish names it is perhaps safer to regard this gully as the notch which gave its name first to the church and then to the parish."

%Pitcalnie G Baile-chailnidh. Perhaps from Gaulish root

%Pitkerrie. G. Baile-chéiridh. ?Dark place

\*Poulfock G poll a' phoca pool of the bag.

%Rarichie G Rath-riachaidh shìos agus R shuas. Fort of the scratches [as of brambles; but the local derivation is "The Picts lived at Cadha 'n ruigh and in springtime they would say: 'tiugamaid 'bhàn 'dheanamh rotha riachagan' 'let us go down to make rows of scratches' (to sow seed in)". This implies an association between the duns and ards cultivation, known in medieval times.

\*Rockfield was G a' Chreag ("rocks")

\*Rhynie G ràthan. Little fort

\*Tarrel G from tar over and ail rock = over rock

+Shandwick G seannduaig from Norse sand-vik, sand bay.

\*Skinnertown G baile nan Scinnearach. Skinner a common name in coastal villages of Easter Ross

\*Teampall Earach. A cave on the south coast, E of Bindal, opposite a moor now cultivated between Bindal and Wilkhaven called Blàr-Earach. Tradition that the cave was once used for purposes of worship.

\*Toll Raoiridh cave on NE side of the Ness

\*An Torran shuas and an Torran shios are the wester and easter hillocks.

### *Cemeteries*

The Three Kings. Skerry off the Nigg coast (King's Sons in NSA). Legend of Danish princess. Hilton, Shandwick and Nigg erected in their memory.

“At Nigg Rocks, below Cadgha Neachdain, there is a graveyard, now covered in shingle. Here the Danish princes were buried. Their gravestones came from Denmark and had iron rings in them to facilitate their landing. So local tradition. This most unlikely spot for a graveyard was not selected without some good reason, the most probable being that hermits once lived in the caves, whence the place was reckoned holy ground”. (Watson 1996,56)

“At Clach' Charaidh, [the Shandwick stone] all unbaptized infants of the parish were buried up till fairly recent times. It is now culitivated” [ie in 1904]

Easter Rarichie. “Here the curate of Nigg lived and the field behind his house is called ‘raon a chlaidh’ the graveyard field. The plough goes over it now and formerly used to strike the gravestones, but these are now removed” (ibid, 57)

“Near Shandwick Farm-house, to the south-west, between the sea and the rock was a graveyard, the name of which I failed to find. Some of the stones are still visible.” (ibid, 57).

A small graveyard E of Hilton used for unbaptised children.

### *Portage*

\*TARBAT (*Arterbert* in 1227) is probably from Gaelic *Tairbeart* meaning an isthmus or peninsula, but may be from an older P-Celtic (British) word meaning headland.

\*Dallachie G *loch an dàilich* ? loch of the meetings

\*Loch Clais na cré Loch of the clay hollow

\*Lochslin. G from *slinn* a weaver's sley. “Lochslin, as a loch, has disappeared, and survives only in the names Lochslin Farm and the ancient ruin of Lochslin Castle” (Watson 1904, 42).

\*Locheye G *loch na h-iudhe*. Uidh from Norse *eith*, isthmus. Might refer to slow running water between lochs.

\*Mounteagle G *cnoc na h-iolaire*. Also *an eith*. [So also perhaps slow running water]

### *Battlefield*

\*Blàr ‘a chath. The battlefield.

### *Ports and havens*

\*PORTMAHOMACK is from the Gaelic meaning the Port of Colman or Cholmag.

\*Port a’ chait Cat’s port, cf Cadboll

\*Wilkhaven translates Port nam faochag [=wilk; =?whelk]. It was Allan-sallach [ford] and had a chapel dedicated to St Bride.

\*Balintore was G Bail’ *an todhair* (village of bleaching – ie flax). It was also Abbot’s Port, Abbot’s haven.

\*Port a’ Chaisteil Castle-haven.

\*Port na baintighearna Lady’s haven (Hilton beach)

\*Port an Druidh (Druid’s port) is west of Shandwick

+Shandwick had a Ballnamorich Fisher town in 1786

%Cairns near the lighthouse are named Bodach an rudha, (the old man of the point), an Cailleach (the old wife), a’ Bhean-mhuinntir (the servant lass).

### *Wells G Tobar*

\*Tobar ma Chalmag, Colman’s well is “behind the library”. Portmahomack

\*Tobar na baintighearna Lady’s haven well Hilton beach

\*Tobar na slainte (well of health) Shandwick

\*Tobar Cormaig Cormac’s well (at Shandwick farmhouse)

Nigg had 20 wells, including a Tobar a’ bhaistidh baptismal well (just above the old UP church)

### *Sixteen chapels recorded on the Tarbat peninsula*

1. Portmahomack, St Colman’s Church (extant)

2. Portmahomack, Chapel Hill (place-name extant)

3 Portmahomack, Dunbar Chapel, still visible in 1791 (*FSA* 648)

4 Portmahomack, Teampul Eraich, near the old castle of Tarbat. “Near it is a plentiful spring of water which continues to bear the name of Tobair Mhuir or Mary’s Well. A small cave or grotto is shown as the abode of the priest” (*FSA*, 648). Teampall Earach, "Easter Temple" is RCAHMS Site 245.

5. Portmahomack *St Brigit’s Chapel* site recorded at *Allansallach* ‘A short mile’ E of Portmahomack church by Macfarlane 1906-8, I, 215. Presumably near Wilkhaven (Watson 1904, 45).

6. Portmahomack St John’s Chapel. Stood a ‘large mile’ from Tarbat parish church (Macfarlane 1906-8, I, 215; RCAHMS, Site 244)

7. Portmahomack., Bindal Hermitage. The site of an old hermitage situated on the shore of the Moray Firth c 1.5 miles NE of Bindal. A wall c 7 ft high and 4 ft broad is supposed to have provided the E, N and S sides, while the W side was the cliff (*ONB* 1872). RCAHMS describes the boundary wall as drystone built and averaging 1.3m wide and 1.7m high with an entrance gap c2.0m wide towards the S end of the E wall (visited 14 sep 1972). Appears to have been an early rectangular building, with an enclosure and clearance heaps (heaps of stones removed from the surface before the land was ploughed for the first time).(RCAHMS, Site 280; NH 9387 8502). Bindal is Norse meaning "sheaf-steading". Nearby is *Stiana Bleadar* (Norse= Stone spot)
8. Balnabruach; a chapel recorded by Davidson (1946, 27)
9. Wester Arbol John Baptist's chapel (Macfarlane 1906-8, I, 215).
10. Hilton St Mary's by Cadbollmount was still visible in the 19<sup>th</sup> c see *OPS* II, 2, 434; *ONB* Book 11, Fearn Parish 28. (*OPS* II 2, 441-3)
11. Hilton St Mary's Chapel on the sea shore recorded in 1529 and still visible in 1855 (RCAHMS Site 210)
12. Shandwick chapel of which 'the walls of which stood pretty entire till within a few years' (*FSA*,592)
13. Old Shandwick chapel (15<sup>th</sup> c). Exposed at the edge of a quarry. NH8582 7453
14. Castlecraig in Nigg parish formerly contained *an Annaid* "The Annat", which refers to a chapel with relics of the founder (Watson 1904, 52-3). Castle built by William the Lion at Dunskeath in 1179 (at Castlecraig) (*NSA*, 25).
15. Nigg. In addition to Nigg parish church, the traditional site of a Chapel dedicated to St Barr (RCAHMS, Site 227; Alston 1999, 181 says this chapel was at Geanies)
16. Another old chapel at Culiss (Nigg) where there is small enclosure that goes by the name of Chapel Park. "Scarce a vestige of the building remains" (*FSA*, 592).

*Names of paths leading to the shore beneath the rocks (at Shandwick):*

Cadha nan caorach *sheep's path*

Cadha sgriodaidh *shingly*

Cadha nan suibhean *rasperrries*

Cadh a' bhodaich *the old man's*

Cadha a' bhreacaich *speckled place*

Cadha Neachdain *Nectans'*

Cadha 'n ruigh *slope*

Cadha togail toinn *the one where you need a push from behind*

Cadha port an druidh *path of the druid's port* (west of Shandwick)