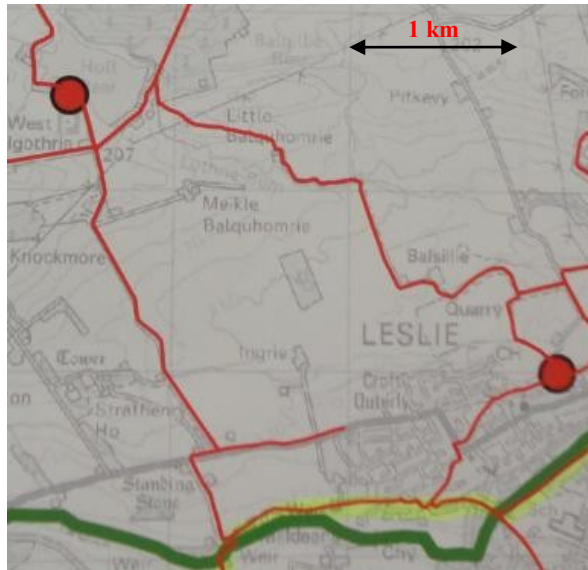


Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership

Place-Name Walk: **Leslie Circular Walk** via Balsillie, Little Balquhomrie, Holl Reservoir, The Hazels, Farmlands and Prinlaws

Sunday 8th November 2015

From the Back Braes Carpark (beside Leslie Football Club) at 09.45
led by David Munro and Simon Taylor: Duration a little over 3 hours



This leaflet was compiled by Simon Taylor of the University of Glasgow, a partner of the Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership, from The Place-Names of Fife vols. 1 and 2 (Taylor with Márkus), produced as part of a research project based at the University of Glasgow and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2006–10).

Further reading:

W. G. Rowntree Bodie, *Some Light on the Past Around Glenrothes* (Glenrothes 1968).

Simon Taylor, with Gilbert Márkus, *Place-Names of Fife Vol. 2* (Central Fife between Leven and Eden) (Shaun Tyas: Donington 2008)

Simon Taylor, with Gilbert Márkus, *Place-Names of Fife Vol. 5* (Discussion, Glossaries, Texts) (Donington 2012).

Meikle Balquhomrie Balgothrie Well Farmlands East Lomond Ingrie



Introduction

What is a place-name walk? It is a walk through past and present, through landscape and language. It is an attempt to see the modern environment through the eyes of the people who gave it the names which we still use today, taking the names themselves as our guides. These names are guides also to the languages of the past: for Fife these are chiefly **Pictish**, **Gaelic** and **Scots**, together spanning around 1,500 years, with the last names coined in Gaelic around 1200.

The walk is entirely within the parish of **Leslie**. This was formerly known as **Fettykil** (*Fitkil* c.1175, *Fithkil* c.1175, kirk of *Fethill* alias *Leslie* 1555, *Fettykil Mill* 1956, Gaelic *fiodh c(h)ill* ‘wood(en) church’). It became known as **Leslie** when the Leslie family, deriving their name from Leslie in Aberdeenshire, became feudal superiors of the barony of Fettykil in the late 14th century. We will mainly be on the southern slopes of the **Lomonds** [*Lomondys* c.1350, probably from a Pictish **lumon* related to Welsh *llumon*, ‘a beacon’, found in the Welsh hill-name Pumlumon (English Plynlimon)], the highest hills in Fife.



The Route

We start from the car park below **Hawk Hill** (*Hawk Rigg* 1856), beside **Croft Outerly** (1856, Scots ‘a croft or piece of land lying outside or at the edge’, named in relation to the old town of Leslie), and follow the footpath north then east round Leslie Football Ground, formerly **Pepper Knowe**, a small gravelly knowe or knoll (Scots *pepper*, perhaps in the sense of ‘speckled’), which had already been entirely removed by quarrying in the 1850s. Over to the east we see **Roaring Hill** (1856), perhaps so called because it was used as target practice. We follow the core path through the middle of the Balsillie Farms Sand & Gravel Quarry (opened in 1981), formerly a long, low ridge of hills called **Balsillie Laws** (Scots *law* ‘hill’), past **Balsillie** itself (*Balcely* 1488, *Bawcellie* 1510, *Bawsylle* 1522, *Basillie* 1542, Gaelic *baile* ‘farm’ + Gaelic *seileach* ‘willow’), passing many willows.

There are several farms in Leslie parish with Gaelic names starting with *baile*. On the way to Balsillie we see **Ballingall Mill** and **Ballingall** to the north (*Ballyngal* 1392, (John) *Bangale* (of that ilk) 1478, *Ballingall* 1504, *Bangae* 1642, *Balga* 1775, *Ballingall Milln* 1810, Gaelic *baile nan gall* ‘farm of the foreigners’, probably the Norse). Going up Balsillie Avenue we come to the **Lothrie Burn** (*Zothry burne* 1390, *Luthry B(urn)* 1642, *River of Lothrie* 1811, perhaps from Gaelic *lothar* ‘trough, vat, tub’, or a word connected with Gaelic *loth* ‘mud’. We follow it upstream to **Little Balquhomrie** (*Balquhomry* 1517, *South-Baquhumry* 1519, *Mekil Balquhombry* 1519, *Little Balquhomrye* 1522, *South Balquhomrie* 1556, *Balhumry* 1775, *G baile (a) chomraich* ‘farm of (the) confluence’, possibly where the Holl Burn met the Lothrie Burn; pronounced ‘balhoomrie’, with stress on ‘hoom’ (rhyming with ‘broom’). By the 16th century the lands of Balquhomrie had been divided into two parts, **Little Balquhomrie** and **Meikle** (Scots ‘big’) **Balquhomrie**, also called South Balquhomrie, on the south side of the Lothrie Burn. The path heads north-west from Little Balquhomrie, with the lands of **Balgothrie** to the north (*Ballothery* c.1350, *Balgothrie* c.1350, Henry Burt in *Balgothrye* 1522, *Balgothrie* 1775, *Little Balgothrie* 1828, *Meikle Balgothrie* 1828, perhaps Gaelic *baile + gaoth* ‘wind’, so ‘windy, exposed farm’, or perhaps ‘farm on the Lothrie Burn’) near **Balgothrie Well**, which the Ordnance Survey described in the 1850s as ‘a very rapid spring from which the town of Leslie is supplied with water’. We walk along the dam of **Holl Reservoir**, which takes its name from the farm of **Holl** [*The Hoyll* 1522, *Hoill* 1542, *Holl* 1642, Scots *holl, howe* ‘a hollow’], now under a reservoir created in the 1890s.

As we come down Stratheny Avenue (a stretch of which is called **The Hazels**, from the many hazels along it, perhaps once forming a hazel hedge), we catch on our right glimpses of **Stratheny House** [*Stratheny* 1179, *Strathanret* or *Strathanrec* 1226, (Walter of) *Stratheny* c.1263, (Hervey and John of) *Stratheny* c.1318, (John of) *Strathenyri* 1329, Gaelic *s(r)ath* ‘strath, broad valley

of the Enerly?’] the Enerly Burn (derivation unknown) runs through the lands of Stratheny into the Leven. Stratheny’s lands go down to the Leven, and the tenants once had to pay annually 1000 eels, two pigs and one cow to the monastery of Inchcolm. At the main road, we turn right along a narrow pavement past the North Lodge to Stratheny then across the busy road down the side road past the farm of **Farmlands** [*Farmlands* 1775, ‘lands held at ferme’ i.e. for rent] down to the River **Leven** [(river) *Leuine* c.1050; (island of) *Lochleuen* c.1150], the loch taking its name from the river, the name most likely deriving from Celtic **le:uo-* ‘smooth’, in the sense of smooth- or slow-flowing. We pass the small settlement of Stratheny Mill, originally a corn mill and later a paper mill (1869-1924), one of the many mills along the Leven. The river here is the boundary between the parishes of Leslie and **Kinglassie** [*Kilglassin*’ c.1140, *Kilglessin* c.1155 *Kilglassin* 1226, *Kinglassin* 1226, *Kylglassy* 1430; it contains Gaelic *cill* ‘church’+ (perhaps) a saint or holy person called Glaisne. The 16th-century Aberdeen Breviary under 30th January mentions St Glascianus, bishop and confessor, ‘who is the patron saint of Kinglassie in Fife’. But it may be ‘church on a burn’ (Gaelic *glais* ‘a burn’). The parish was also known as Goatmilkshire, after the farm of **Goatmilk** [*Gatemilc* 1130; ‘goat milk’]. Up the opposite slope is the farm of **Milldeans** [*Myldanys* 1535, *Mylnedeanes* 1644, the mill of *Kinglassie* alias *Gaitmilk-mylne* or *Mylne-deanes* 1644, *Millden* 1654, ‘a den (steep valley) associated with a mill or mills’. It was the main mill of the parish of Kinglassie]. On the Leslie side of the river, ahead of us up the slope to the left, is the large house of **Westgate**, formerly known as *West Park* (1856, 1968), Scots *park* meaning ‘a field’, giving rise to the street-name West Park Avenue. The path takes us directly into **Prinlaws** [*Prenlas* 1441, *Prenlaws* 1441, *Prinles* 1574, *Prynlayis* 1574, *Prinless* 1654, probably Pictish **pren glas* ‘green tree’, possibly **bren glas* ‘green hill’].



Detail from map of the Counties of Fife & Kinross by John Ainslie, 1775, Source: RSGS