

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF SOME ROGART PLACE-NAMES

P = Pictish (approx. 500 A.D. to 900 A.D.)

N = Norse (approx. 870 to 1200)

G = Gaelic (approx. 1100 to 1850)

E = English (gradually increasing from 1800 on)

All the above overlapped except that Pictish was gone before English came in.

1. **ABERSCROSS, P.** Originated as Pictish aber 'meeting of two burns' and sgor 'deep cleft'. For a long time it was Abersgor or Aberscor, and two townships grew up there, Wester and Easter Aberscor. The clerks saved time by writing the two as one and added s to show there were two, and the name became Aberscors. This was corrupted to Aberscross, but there has never been a cross or ecclesiastical settlement there. Nor a crossroads.
2. **ACHALLACH, G.** (near Dremegid). Probably a corruption of Ach a'chaillich, 'field of the old woman'. This could refer to a nun or holy woman, but there is no proof of this. The place is not far from the church, but this was not the site of the oldest church in the parish.
3. **ACHASTAILE, G.** (near Muie). Might be 'field of the whisky still'.
4. **ACHAVOAN, G.** (near Farlary). Probably 'field of the bothie or hut'.
5. **ACHEILIDH, G.** (on south side of strath). Possibly 'field of the water course' from achadh eileich. There are remains of water lades and wheels in the crofts here.
6. **ACHNAGARRON, G.** (near Balclaggan). 'field of the thicket or copse'.
7. **ACHNAHUIE, G.** (near Langwell). 'field to the north, more northerly field' (?)
8. **ACHORK, G.** (near Farlary) 'field of oats', achadh-choirc.
9. **ACHVRAIL, P or G.** (near Acheilidh, on the south side of the strath). A difficult one. Might possibly be a corrupt form of achadh-braoileagan 'field of blaeberries', but this is far from certain. There was a water wheel there, and the name might relate to that.
10. **ARDACHU, G.** (opposite Muie). Ard means a height or eminence, a hill, and achu, with the stress on a, would mean a field - but there may be more to it than this. If the stress is on the final u, it might be ard a'ghaoth 'hill of the wind'.
11. **BAD A'CHRASGAIDH, G.** (near Remusaig). 'Thicket of the crossing-place', probably the thicket which marked where to turn off to cross through the hills here.

12. BALCLAGGAN, G. (up the hill above Corry). Baile chlaiginn 'Farm of good arable land'. This is now a G. name, but may well have started as Pitclaggan in Pictish times.
13. BANSCOL, G. (near Rhilochan). Seems to be White School (?)
14. BARDACHAN, P. (near Dremegid). Bard was an old word, probably Pictish, for a meadow or fenced park, but many places called Bardachan are associated, often wrongly, with a bard or poet of former times, and each man who lived there might be called The Bard, even though not a poet himself.
15. BLAIRICH and BLAIRMORE, G. (up the strath near Tressady). Watson says Blairich means 'spotted place', but it has also been associated with the word blar, 'an extensive field', bigger than achadh, dal or bard. Blairmore 'big field'.
16. BRAEGRUDIE, G. (up the Brora river). 'Stoney slope'.
17. BREAKUE, N. (near Morness). Probably a Norse name, brekka-voll 'steep field, field on a steep slope'. Often found elsewhere as Breakwell.
18. CAOLAS, G. (above Lettaidh). This is a very odd word to find in the middle of a moor, miles from the sea, as it normally means a kyle, a narrow arm or channel of the sea. Here it is an old settlement across the Lettaidh river from Lettaidh itself, and it may mean a narrow place for crossing the river. Possibly a Pictish usage was 'ford, crossing-place', but this is doubtful.
19. CNOC ARD AN TIONAIL, G. (near Knockarthur). Tionail means a gathering of people, and the high hill (Cnoc Ard) was evidently the meeting place. In form, tional could be a corruption of Norse Thing-voll (which is Dingwall in Easter Ross), and that would make this the place where in Norse times local courts were held, a kind of local parliament where important community decisions were made. The Thing or Parliament was usually at a place with a steep-sided hill, as here, so that the main speaker could stand above the crowd and make himself heard. He would recite the local laws, and then cases would be heard and communal decisions made. Democracy at work. An important placename.
20. COLLINSTOWN (north of Lettaidh). Apparently English, and modern, but it could be a corruption of an older name. I haven't a clue as to its origin.
21. CORRY, G. (near the hotel). Gaelic coire, but this name must have had a second part (Corrie belonging to -- ? Corrie under the hill ? Something like that).
22. COUL, G. (near Knockarthur). Gaelic cul 'back of, behind', a name which clearly had another part, probably 'back of the hill', something so obvious that folk stopped using it.
23. CRAGGIEMORE, CRAGGIEBEG, G. (near Rhilochan). Creagach meant 'rocky' but this place seems no more rocky than anywhere else round there. 'Big Rocky Place' and 'Little Rocky Place'

24. CREAG A'BHATA, G. (near the hotel). An odd name, 'Rock of the Boat', but hills and rocks were often named for their shape - which may have changed over the years.
25. CROIC, N. (on the River Brora). Wherever you find this name it is always on a river, at a point where the river takes a violently sharp turn - or has done in the past, as sometimes the corner has been cut off to form an ox-bow lake. This indicates that it is N. kro-vik 'hook-bend' and not a Gaelic word involving cro 'cattle-pen'
26. CULDRAIN, G. (near the church). 'Back of the thicket (of brambles)'.
27. DALACH MOR, P. (near the river Fleet). 'the field on the big plain beside the river'. See Dalmore.
28. DALMORE, P. (near the river Fleet). Probably this used to be Dalach Mor, see above.
29. DALNABREAC, P,G.N. 'River plain of the hill slope'. I think there was originally a Norse name Brekka for the slope above what is now Dalnabreac, and in G. times, this name was formed for the flat bit below, using a Pictish word dal which is common along the river Fleet. It is 'the dal or river flat of Brekka'.
30. DALREAVOCH, P,G. (on the River Brora). 'brindled or spotted or greyish-yellow river plain'.
31. DAVOCHBEG, G. (near Eiden). Davoch was a measure of land but not in acreage. It was calculated according to how many beasts it could support, so a davoch of rich fertile land was smaller than a davoch of poor moorland. This is 'small davoch' which tells us the land was good.
32. DREMERGID, DRUIMAIRGID, G. (in upper Rogart, between Rhilochan and the church). This means 'Ridge of the Money', or Ridge of the Silver' - but what money ? There is clearly a story behind this name.
33. EIDEN, N. (on the river Fleet, downstream from Rogart). Probably Norse heith-endi 'edge of the uncultivated land, farm on the boundary between worked and unworked land'. But it is possible that this Norse name overlies an older Pictish name, and that this is a Norse rationalisation.
34. EMLYS (near the school). This is marked on the map, but I haven't any idea what it means. It must be a corrupted form, and appears to be from Gaelic aimhleas, meaning 'misfortune', a very unlikely placename. More information is required.
35. FARLARY N or G (east of Rhilochan). At first glance this seems to be a G. shieling name ending in airigh, the Gaelic word for summer pasture. But this often fell together with Norse gerthi, with much the same meaning, and the first part appears to be Norse fjar-voll 'sheep-field'. So this would have been summer grazing for sheep.
36. FLEET, N. (river and strath, with its mouth at Loch Fleet, to the east). This is Norse fljot, 'tidal river'. Until the Mound was built in 1810, the river Fleet was tidal right up to Pittentrail at spring tides, and probably as far as Kinnauld at neaps. The lower strath was frequently flooded by salt water.

37. GARVOULT, G. (near Dremergid). Gaelic garbh-allt 'rough burn'.
38. GLENELG, G. (near Dremergid) Probably a name introduced from the west ?
39. GRUMBY, P or N. (up the River Brora). This is a puzzling name. It looks Norse, and the ending -by usually indicates a primary farm on a prime central site, as in Golspie. But Grumby is not central or prime, being high and exposed. The first element is obscure. Is it Norse grim 'grim, unpleasant' ? This does not sit well with a -by ending. Names which begin with Grum- are often associated with a chambered cairn or ancient burial site, sometimes with a stone circle. The word seems to be the Celtic root gruam- which is used to denote a supernatural being of some sort, a ghost or monster, a spirit of the dead, some presence arising from the nature of the site. It is clearly then much older than the Norse period, and Grumby may well be one of those sites. It is a place of many ruins, and a chambered cairn may have been one of them. I don't know how you would translate it ('place of spirits' ? 'haunted place' ?).
40. INCHCAPE, P/ G. (on south side of the strath). Inch is the Pictish word for a piece of cleared ground. I think the second bit is from ceapach, 'arable, suitable for cultivation'. So the whole name means 'arable land'.
41. INCHOMNIE, P/G. (near Knockarthur). Inch, a piece of cleared land, but the second bit is not certain, possibly chomhnuidh (pronounced 'homny', believe it or not), meaning a house or residence. So this name would be 'piece of land with a house on it'.
42. INCHORAIG, P/G. (in the strath below Inchcape). Inch, a piece of cleared land. The second bit may be oraig 'sheaf of corn', and the whole name would be 'land where corn is grown'. Or it may possibly be a form of seamhraig, the G. word for a primrose. As so many placenames in Rogart refer to forms of agriculture, the first may be the right one.
43. KINLOCH, G. (at the head of Loch Salachaidh). An English spelling of Ceann-loch, 'head of the loch'.
44. KINNAULD, probably P. (downstream from central Rogart). This looks like Ceann-uilt, 'head of the burn', but this does not make sense here. The first part is an English form of ceann, 'head' and there are two possibilities for the second : either alt / uilt with the meaning of a valley, or allt / uillt 'burn or river' but used in a slightly different way to mean a stream of moving water and here applied to the tidal waters which used to come right up the strath, until the Mound was built. I suggest that this was probably the extent of the high tide at neaps, i.e. the point the tide reached every time, and that it went up as far as Pittentrail only at High Water Springs, the tide at its highest. I guess this meaning for allt was Pictish, and we know there was a very very old church here, which dates back to Pictish times, so we would expect a Pictish name. I would translate 'head of the tidal waters' - but I'm open to correction. It is certainly an old name found in the oldest legal documents.

45. KNOCKARTHUR, P/G (near Rhilochan). Knock is G. cnoc 'hill', and the second part is probably the same as Ard an Tional (see above, no. 19).
46. LANGWELL, N. (north of Little Rogart). This is a common Norse name, lang-voll, 'long field'. It became a farm name before the Norsemen came to Rogart, i.e. it was a field-name in Norway and Orkney but by the time the Norsemen brought it here, it was already a farm-name.
47. LETTAIDH, P. (above Tressady). This is NOT a woman's name in spite of Lettie's Grave, and the grave is NOT that of anyone called Lettie, although it is a Pictish grave from the time just before the Norsemen arrived. Lettaidh, pronounced 'Let-eye', is a Pictish-Gaelic word meaning 'a broad, gentle slope', which is exactly what it is. It has been compressed from leathad-aidh, translate as 'place of the wide slope'. Lettaidh was cleared in the early 1800s, and all the houses burned, to prevent the people returning. It was one of the more violent clearances, and the place has been deserted ever since.
48. LOCH AIRIGH MOR, LOCH AIRIGH BEG, G. (in the hills south of Inchcape). 'Big Loch of the Shieling, Little Loch of the Shieling'. These shielings or summer pastures have a Gaelic rather than a Pictish name - the Picts called a shieling a ruidh, which the Gaelic speakers used for a slope. Both forms are found in Rogart.
49. LOCH CRACAIL, G / N. (in the hills SW of Acheilidh). Loch is Gaelic, but it has been added to an existing Norse name, kraka-voll, 'field of the crows'. It is possible that Kraki was the name of a man who had the land, but 'crows' seems more likely.
50. LOCH PREAS NAN SGIATHANACH, G. (near West Langwell, north of Lettaidh). Although Preas 'thicket' is a very old word, which seems to belong to Welsh rather than Scots Gaelic, this is probably a G. name, but the meaning of sgiathanach is not clear. It can mean a man (or men) from Skye ; or it can mean 'beings with wings', but we have only the map-makers' word for this spelling, which may have been sgianach - 'people with knives'. It is further complicated by having a mixture of singular and plural, so that the name as given on the map is nonsense. Translate, very dubiously, 'loch of the Skyemen's thicket'. The incident that the name is based on is long forgotten.
51. LOCH SALACHAIDH, G. (east of the church). 'Loch of pollution' (something spoiling the water).
52. MILLNAFUA, G. (up the hill above the hotel). Possibly 'the mill of running water', G. muilean a'fuaran. It could possibly be 'cold mill' muilean fuar, but the former seems more likely as many mills were powered by running water.
53. MORNESS, N. (up hill above Rovie Lodge). The Norse word mor was the same as G. moine, and meant peat, peat moss, place where peat was cut'. Nes could mean a sea-headland, but was also used, as here, for an inland head, high ground between converging burns.

54. MORVICH, P. (downstream from central Rogart). This is a very old word for a sea-plain or area subject to flooding by exceptionally high tides, and the mapmakers were wrong in giving a form which would mean 'big byre'. Translate : 'farm liable to flooding'.
55. MUIE, G. (up the strath, on the north side). There is argument about this name, which appears quite commonly elsewhere as Moy. Professor Watson said it was G. a'Mhuaigh, from Magh 'a flat plain', but that does not seem right here, as Muie is on the side of a hill. Some say it is G. muigh meaning 'outside', because the township is outside the main settlements of Rogart ; others say it is related to G. muidhe 'a churn', with reference to the dairy-work done at the place as a shieling. Take your pick.
56. PITFURE. P. (near Rovie Lodge). Pit was an old Pictish word for a share or portion of land, and fure was from another old Pictish word meaning 'pasture'. So the name means 'a share of the pasture'.
57. PITTENTRAIL, P. (township near Rovie). Pit is the old Pictish word for a share or portion of land, and the second part is probably treabhail, meaning 'arable' ; translate 'a share of the arable land'. These last two names seem to go together.
58. RAMASCAIG, N. (near Loch Cracail, SW of Acheilidh, in the hills). Probably from Norse hrafna-skiki 'ravens' strip of land', but possibly a personal name, Hrafn-skiki, 'strip of land belonging to a man called Hrafn'. Hrafn was a common personal name. A skiki was a strip of flat land alongside a river or loch, and the original Ramascaig was probably at the west end of Loch Cracail. There are several skiki names in East Sutherland, e.g. Overscaig, on Loch Shin, and Sciberscross on the River Brora, which is corrupted from Sigbers-skiki,
59. REANDOGGIE, G. Ruidh 'shieling or summer pasture' plus a G. word for dockans. Probably quite a late name, as dogan 'dockan' was a loanword from English (or Scots).
60. REIDHCHALMAI, G. This name looks very odd because of the spelling that the mapmakers chose to give it. It appears twice in Rogart, once downstream in the strath, between Eiden and Torroble, and once up near Little Rogart. Reidh is G. for a smooth plain, especially used for a green oasis in the midst of bristling rocks. It is often confused with ruidh, 'shieling'. Chalmal is probably to do with camalaidh, a place where a river or burn takes a sharp bend. In both these sites, there is a burn making a big turn.
61. REMUSAIG, P / G. (up the hill behind the hotel). Re is Pictish ruidh, 'shieling', and the second part is possibly G. muiseagan 'primroses', though this is not certain.
62. RHAOINE, G. (up the Lairg road above Muie). Probably from G. raon 'upland pasture', here in the plural (of sorts) : 'upland pastures'.

63. RHILOCHAN, P/G. (near Knockarthur). Rhi is probably another spelling of ruidh, 'shieling', though it could be from reidh 'smooth green plain'. The second part refers to the small loch close by.
64. ROGART, P /N /G. This is the name of the parish, a name of great antiquity and huge complexity. To boil it down to its simplest, it possibly means, or originally meant in Pictish times, possibly as long as 1500 years ago, 'church with a walled enclosure'. The form Rogart now used by English speakers is Norse, but Gaelic speakers have a form with no g in the middle which is probably older.
65. ROSSAL, N. (up the Lairg road, near Inchcape, on the south side of the strath). A Norse name, hrossa-voll, 'horses' field', probably a farm where horses were bred. It is the same name as Rosehall, which has been mistakenly re-spelled and has acquired a new pronunciation from the new spelling. Rossal is much closer to the original.
66. ROVIE, P. (down in the strath, near Pittentrail). This is a very old name from Pictish times, and possibly means 'church-place'. There was an old chapel here, and this may have been the site of the original parish church. But Professor Watson said he thought the name meant 'excellent land'.
67. SCIBERSCROSS, N. (on the River Brora). This is a Norse name and old spellings make it clear that it was a skiki name, for a strip of land beside the river. The first part may be the personal name Sigber. Translate as 'Sigber's bit of river bank'.
68. SPLOCKHILL, E (?G). (in Little Rogart). Could this be a translation name from a previous G. name ? G. sloc sometimes appears as splock, meaning a hollow or dip, or a marsh. The G. word cnoc is sometimes translated to 'hill' in names, and I wonder if this was once Cnoc Slocach, or some such. Just a guess. Or was it brought in from outside ?
69. TANNACHY, G. (near Rhilochan). This is probably a land-tenure name, as it seems to be some form of G. tan, 'land, ground'. Translate 'a share of land'.
70. TEANGA, N. (up the Lettaidh river). This is a Norse name which came to be used in a Gaelic name, Achadh na Teanga, which tells us that teanga had been borrowed into Gaelic as a loanword, and that this name is Gaelic rather than Pictish, since it is after the Norse period. Teanga means 'a tongue of land between two converging burns', which fits exactly here. Placenames are very obvious, sometimes.
71. TORBRECK, N or G ? (near Tressady). This depends on where the stress was originally. If it was TOR-breck, it is a Norse name, torf-brekka, 'turf-slope', but if it was Tor-BRECK, it is Gaelic torr-breac 'speckled hill'. If it started as a Norse name, later Gaelic speakers may have assumed it was torr-breac and changed the stress accordingly, so we cannot now tell which it was. Possibly 'turf-slope' does not fit the place as well as 'speckled hill'.

72. **TORBOLL, TORROBLE, N.** (near the mouth of Strath Fleet). There have been attempts to link this with the personal name Thor or some personal name e.g. Thorkell with Thor as first element, but they would all require an s in the middle (Thors, Thorkels, etc). If it is a personal name at all, it would have to be a woman's name, Thora. The Norsemen did have a certain amount of women's rights, and women were allowed to inherit and own property, which would be named after them, but it is extremely unlikely that a woman would hold a primary farm in this area, that is, a big farm established by the first settlers, because at that time (late 800s) this was a frontier area, unstable and dangerous, liable to invasion by the displaced Picts in Ross-shire, at any time. The Norsemen needed strong trained fighting men available at a moment's notice, and as this was a primary farm, it would not have been part of a woman's marriage endowment or her inheritance. So forget Thora. I think this is torf-bol, 'turf farm'. Bol was a primary, big farm set up by the earliest settler, who would then as part of the next phase of settlement give out portions of land to his followers, and these smaller farms would have names ending in voll or stathir. The pattern in Rogart is not fully developed, for whatever reason, and there are no known stathir names here, although there are a few voll names (e.g. Langwell, Rossal, Breakue). The old records particularly mention turf or peat at this time, and it seems that the Norsemen began to build houses from turf-blocks - the foundations would be of stone to about two feet high, then a frame of curved wooden beams would be embedded in the founds, to stabilise the walls and hold up the roof. Blocks of turf would then form the walls, and a thatched roof of straw or heather, possibly covered by turf as well, would be added. In Norway and Iceland these turf roofs were of growing sods of grass, and as they grew, a cow or goat might be tethered up there, to enjoy a feed of the grass. The name Torroble is found near Lairg, too.
73. **TORRBUIDHE, G.** (near Balclaggan, not far from the church). 'Yellow hill'.
74. **TOSC-AIRIGH, G.** (above Lettaidh). This is a shieling name, later than the Pictish ones. The first part seems to be something to do with tosg, a peat-cutting spade, but the name is corrupt and it is hard to decide what its original form was. Probably it means 'peat-cutting shieling'. Presumably this was where the Lettaidh folk cut their peats.
75. **TRESSADY, G.** (on the north side of the strath, near Lettaidh). This seems to be Gaelic treasadaidh, 'a place of rich ground where a third crop could be grown' - but it does seem a bit unlikely when the season was so short. Perhaps more likely is some sort of land-tenure name 'a third part (of a davoch ?)'. This is guesswork.

These are some of the Rogart names, with my stab at what they might mean - but your guess is as good as mine, and these are only suggestions.

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