

THE POLDRATE PUZZLE: GAELIC OR SCOTS?

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This article began in response to a quick question: ‘Is there any truth in the name Poldrate in Haddington coming from *épaule droite* or “right shoulder”?’

The simple answer is ‘no’, but trying to find out where the name actually did come from was not so easy. The search for a solution lasted for months, extending to five other Poldrates – in Angus (Barry), Glasgow, Lanarkshire (New Monkland), Berwickshire (Lauder) and West Lothian (Linlithgow) – as well as Puldrite in Orkney. Information and ideas came in from an ever-widening network of generous people, who are listed at the end.

Poldrate in Haddington is today the name of a road on the south side of the town, about 0.2km long, linking Sidegate to the Waterloo Bridge on the River Tyne (Fig. 1: Detail of OS 6 inch Haddingtonshire Sheet 10, surveyed 1853, published 1855). The road and immediate area are also referred to locally as ‘the Poldrate’. Approaching the river, the road crosses the mill-lade¹ beside Poldrate Mill, and then the Haugh or river-meadow. Before the Waterloo Bridge was built, there was a ford at this point, which led to the Bolton Road. This was the main route into the town from the southwest.

Poldrate Mill, earlier called East Mill, takes its name from the road.² It is now part of a large community complex at Poldrate, hence the local interest in the name.

After the suppression of the Episcopalian church in 1688, the Rev. John Gray, well known as the founder of Haddington’s library, preached in a meeting-house in Poldrate. According to the local historian James Miller (1844, 468), Gray’s etymology for Poldrate was ‘*Peau-droit*, (i.e. Malt Street)’. This is baffling: *peau-droit* means ‘right skin’ or ‘straight skin’ – and *peau* is feminine, so the adjective should be *droite* – and there seems to be no other record of a Malt Street in Haddington.

It was another 19th-century historian, John Martine (1883, 51), who put the *épaule droite* etymology on the record. He wrote that ‘formerly the name of it [Poldrate] was Poudret, or in French, *l’épaule droite*, part of a fortification, which no doubt existed in the time of the French occupation of Haddington.’ Unfortunately for that theory, the name Poldrate was recorded in the

1. *Mill-lade* is the ‘chiefly Scots’ term for ‘a channel constructed for leading water to a mill-wheel; a mill-race’ (*OED lade*²; also see *DOST lade*³).

2. See Armstrong and Armstrong 1773 and OS Town Plan 1893, X.6.14, for the name East Mill.

Haddington Burgh Records in 1425, more than a century before French troops were present in Haddington in 1548–49.

The place-name scholar W. J. Watson (*CPNS*, 139) interpreted the name thus:

Poldrait was the name of a croft at Lauder ‘between the Kirkmyre and the land called Gibsonisland,’ 1501 (*RMS*); compare ‘the land in Hadingtoun called Sanct Androisland in Poildraught’ (*Retours*); the first part is *poll*, a pool or hollow; the second part is probably *drochaid*, a bridge, causeway, as in Fren draught, Ferendracht in *Reg. Arbr.*, ‘bridge land,’ Aberdeenshire.

Looking at Poldrate, Haddington, does the topographical and other evidence bear out Watson’s theory, or could this be a Scots, rather than a Gaelic, place-name?

Certainly both languages are possible in East Lothian. Although Gaelic was never dominant, it was part of the mix from at least the 10th century on, as the Scots asserted control over the area, creating a scattering of Gaelic place-names.³

The first question is where and what was Poldrate, as it appears in early documents?

The first two mentions of Poldrate are earlier than those that cited by Watson. A court case in Haddington in 1425 included references to ‘ane uthyr land lyand in the strete callyt *poldrate* betwix the land of john gothreson on the south half and the strete callit wyrlingstrete on the tother half on the north half’.⁴ A street in Older Scots could mean ‘a road, path or track’, as well as ‘a street in a town or village’ (*DOST stret(e)*^{2,3}). In the same document, this land is also referred to as ‘lyand in *poldrate*’. **Wyrling Street*, here named as a northern boundary, is today’s Mill Wynd.⁵

Then in 1454, Gylbert of Redpeth, brother of a burgess, made an annual grant of 20s to the altar of St John in the parish church, and to a chaplain there to do ‘Goddis service’ for his soul and others, from his tenement of land ‘with the pertinence liand in the burgh of Haddington in the upper end of the Sydgate on the west syd of the pule of *poldrate*’.⁶ The lands surrounding Gylbert’s land are named, indicating that it lay part way down Poldrate.⁷

3. Barrow 1973, 153–54. Watson (loc. cit., 140–42) gives examples of Gaelic place-names in ELO.

4. *HBR*, 20 Feb 1425; Thomson 1855–56, 386.

5. Martine (20th century) notes this information from a Protocol Book of 1612.

6. *HBR* 7 Sept 1454; Miller 1844, 387.

7. ‘On the westsyd of the pule of *poldrate* betwixt a land of Robert Achy / son on the

In 1478, ‘a tenement of land lyand ... on the south part of the *Puledrate*’, plus four merks annual rent from it, was part of a grant made by Sir John Haliburton to the Haddington Grey Friars to run a three-bed almshouse on the land on *Puledrate*.⁸ This land was doubtless the land still known as ‘the Friars’ Croft’ in the 18th century: it adjoined the churchyard and thus was on the east side of Poldrate.⁹ According to John Martine (1883, 57), it occupied what became ‘the prettily situated mansion and grounds of Tyne Park ... with the field adjoining.’ The likelihood is that the lands previously named were on the west side of Poldrate.

Another landholding appears in the 16th century. Four hundred years earlier, David I had granted St Mary’s Haddington and everything belonging to it to St Andrews Cathedral (*David I Chrs.* no. 85). In the 1560s during the Reformation the crown commissioned a comprehensive survey of church income in Scotland. This includes a list of annual rents received by St Andrews Priory from Haddington: five properties are listed, including ‘the land of St Andrews in *Poldroch*’, which yielded 12d. This was the smallest sum of the five: three others yielded 2s, while one yielded 20d (*Books of Assumption*, 11).

In 1611, the same landholding, now ‘called St Andrews Lands in Poldrate’ (nuncupata Sanctandrois-landis in *Poldraith*) and still yielding 12d per year, was a tiny part of an enormous grant made by James VI to Ludovic, Duke of Lennox, which included the lands of St Andrews.¹⁰ Then, in 1616, James gave the same 12d worth of land ‘in *Poldraucht*’ to Thomas, Lord Bynning, and it stayed in the family, continuing to yield 12d, until at least 1645.¹¹

Thus Poldrate was the name of a street or road at the end of Sidegate, as it is today. The immediate area contained several landholdings and a pool (*pule*). These were probably bounded by today’s Mill Wynd to the north, the parish church on the northeast, and the River Tyne to the south.

south pt [part] on the ea [east part] & a land of Jonet Festamaw on the north pt [part] on / the wy put [possibly westerly part?] To be haldyn & to be had the said annual rent of twenty schillynge; transcribed by Frances Woodrow. Gylbert’s grant to the altar of St John may have influenced the naming of St John’s Port, an alternative name for the South Port, which separates Sidegate from Poldrate (OS Town Plan 1893, Sheet X.6.9).

8. *Grey Friars*, no. 5.

9. Miller, 1844, 385. The name ‘Friars’ Croft’ so close to the parish church led to the erroneous view that the church had once belonged to the Friars: a view enshrined on OS 6 inch Haddingtonshire, Sheet 10, 1855, which labels the church ‘St Mary’s Church or Church of the Franciscan Monastery’. The OS Name Book contains correspondence on the subject between the Ordnance Survey Office and the Rev. J. Cook (OS1/15/22/72, 72A, 72B).

10. *RMS* vii no. 464.

11. *RMS* vii nos. 1537, 1671; *Retours* Vol. 1, nos. 170, 181, 203.

PROBLEMS WITH *POL*

The word *pol* occurs in all Scotland's historical languages and is a complex topic.¹² It is **pol* in Brittonic, *pōl* in Old English, *poll* in Gaelic, *pollr* in Old Norse, and *poll* or *pow* in Scots. Alan James writes (BLITON under **pol*): 'The etymology and historical inter-relationships among the various forms in the several languages remain uncertain.' He outlines a range of meanings for *pol*. Firstly, 'the basic meaning in all the languages' seems to be 'a hollow, usually holding standing water, bog or mud'; this extends, *inter alia*, to a puddle and a pond. Secondly, it can mean 'an underwater hollow in a stream-bed, a fish-pool in a river'. Thirdly, it can mean 'an upland stream', becoming 'the standard word for a small or medium-sized stream' in central southern Scotland and northern England.¹³ Fourthly, it can mean 'a lowland stream', specifically 'a slow-moving ditch-like stream, flowing through carse-land' (*DOST poll, pow* n.) – carse-land being low-lying, fertile land beside a river (*SND carse* n.). This definition of *pol* 'seems characteristic of northern English and Scots usage' (BLITON, loc. cit.). Fifthly, *pol* can mean 'a cove, creek, sheltered inlet', a usage characteristic of south-western Scots (BLITON loc. cit.).

So which *pol* do we have in Poldrate? Other place-names in East Lothian throw little light on the matter. The Ordnance Survey's 6 inch maps of the 1850s show only one *pol* name: – Poldrate itself.¹⁴ They also show Powshiel (or *Powel-shiel* on Forrest's map), a name now lost, which according to the Name Book was a small shepherd's house.¹⁵ Clearly named for a shieling, the house was situated on a hill near Oldhamstocks between two burns; these perhaps provided the element *pow*.

Powshiel combines two nouns, *pow* + *shiel*, and thus could mean either 'shieling (by a) stream' or 'stream (by a) shieling'. The context, with the name clearly applying to the house, tells us that the former is correct. Thus its structure is specific + generic, characteristic of Scots and English. At least one Scots *pol* name in Midlothian cited by Dixon has the same structure: Polton 'farm by a pool' (2011 [1947], 281). *Poldrate*, if Scots, is likely to have the same structure, but could be generic + specific, in which case it would be termed an 'inversion compound', coined on a Gaelic or French pattern. An example of such a compound is *Croftangry*, possibly 'grassland croft'.¹⁶

12. For discussions of *pol*, see Barrow 1998, 59; BLITON under **pol*; Gelling and Cole 2014, 28–29; *PNF* 5, 472; Smith 1970, 68–69.

13. Barrow 1998, 59. While Barrow writes that this definition applies 'in south-west Scotland', James points out that maps 2.3 and 2.4 on the following pages of Barrow's article 'also show considerable numbers [of *pol*-names] in central southern Scotland and northern England' (pers. comm.).

14. OS 6 inch Haddingtonshire, Sheet 10, surveyed 1853, published 1855.

15. OS 6 inch Haddingtonshire, Sheet 17, surveyed 1853, published 1854. Name Book OS1/15/15/26. Forrest 1799.

16. *PNF* 5, 343–44.

Can we find a stream or a pool in the landscape at Haddington? The River Tyne runs west to east at the bottom of Poldrate. Though not at its widest here, it is definitely not a stream, and therefore does not match the usual Scots definition of *poll*, later often *pow* 'a slow-moving, ditch-like stream' (*DOST poll, pow*). It could, however, supply an Old English or Gaelic pool, in the form of a pool in the river where fish lie. Local fishery expert Tom Robertson comments (pers. comm.) that the stretch of water at the bottom of Poldrate is 'on the whole very shallow': 'There is a slightly deeper trench on the far side of the river and, on occasion, some migratory fish (sea trout and salmon) will use this deeper part of the river to make their way upstream to spawn.' We need to bear in mind, however, that conditions on this stretch of the river have changed over the centuries, and in particular have been affected by 'two very severe weirs' either side of it. These 'mean that the river is slow in terms of current, particularly in low water conditions.'

Documentary evidence raises another possibility. The 1454 council record referring to 'the pule of *poldrate*' as a boundary marker indicates that there was indeed a pool at that date, but away from the river, probably to the west of the road. The pool was perhaps associated with the mill.¹⁷

This pool could have been the origin of the *pol* in Poldrate, but by 1454 the meaning of the name had been forgotten, so it was necessary to add *pule* for clarification. If this is so, it suggests that the *pol* in Poldrate could have been Gaelic. In that case, the spelling *Puledrate* in 1478 represents an assimilation of the first element to Scots. Alternatively there could have been a stream (Scots *poll*) called Poldrate, with the pool appearing later and named after it.

The linguistic evidence in relation to the second element is equivocal. The early forms begin as *-drate*, then become *-droch*, *-draucht* and *-draught*. Watson clearly did not know about the earliest forms, which are from local records. The later forms are obviously closer to *drochaid*. There is no equivalent of any of these in Brittonic, so we are looking at either a Gaelic or a Scots origin.¹⁸

Does the topographical evidence support 'bridge or causeway'? Was there either along this stretch of the river prior to the 15th century, when the name first appears?

Haddington's oldest bridges are the Nungate Bridge, close to the parish church, and the Abbey Bridge 2km downstream. Both names relate to the famous priory for Cistercian nuns founded beside Haddington by Ada de Warenne, daughter-in-law of David I.¹⁹ One of these bridges (probably the Nungate Bridge) was mentioned in

17. The Burgh Records show that two corn mills were operating in the 16th century (Urwin 2002, 16, 46).

18. BLITON; Alan James, pers. comm.

19. Chandler 1981, 130.

a royal charter of 1202 × 1207.²⁰ The Nungate Bridge is also mentioned in a charter of 1350, though the present structure is thought to be 16th-century.²¹ There was also a ford close to the Nungate Bridge, connecting with today's Ford Road.

The Waterloo Bridge was built at the bottom of Poldrate in 1817, its foundation stone laid on the anniversary of the battle (Martine 1883, 58). Before this, according to John Martine, 'there was no stone bridge across the Tyne at this point'. Instead (loc. cit., 57), 'There was a ford, and stepping-stones, and a wooden bridge for foot-passengers a little way above it'. The first such wooden bridge was known as the 'Chinese bridge'; it was built in the 1730s but suffered various vicissitudes before being swept away in a flood in 1775.²² Both the ford and the Chinese Bridge are shown on the Armstrongs' map of 1773 and the track to the ford from Poldrate was still evident on the 1853 Haddington Town Plan (Fig. 2: Detail of Armstrong and Armstrong, Plan of Haddington (inset), Map of the Three Lothians, 1773) (Fig. 3: Detail of OS Town Plan of Haddington 1853 Sheet 2).

What appears to be a fine stone bridge over the Tyne at this stretch is depicted in John Slezer's *Theatrum Scotiae*, published in 1693 (Fig. 4: John Slezer, 'The Prospect of the Town of Haddington', 1693).²³ Slezer was a military engineer and his book was a collection of splendid engravings of 'prospects' or views of important Scottish towns and buildings. His 'Prospect of the Town of Haddington' shows three bridges. On the right is the Nungate Bridge with its three arches; on the far left is a little bridge across the mill-lade at the bottom of Poldrate; between them is a broad bridge with a dog bounding across it and pedestrians and a horseman progressing to and from it.

The bridge with the dog on it appears to be crossing the Tyne, but this is deceptive. As local historian David Anderson realised (pers. comm.), Slezer actually shows a bridge over the mill-lade, greatly exaggerating its size. On the left of this bridge, he shows the mill-lade, but on its right he shows the River Tyne, flowing under the Nungate Bridge. The two waterways are made to look like one. As Chris Fleet, Maps Curator of the National Library of Scotland, observed (pers. comm.), 'This tallies with Slezer's deliberate reassembling of reality to suit his aesthetics in other scenes too.'²⁴

The bridge over the mill-lade no longer exists, but appears on 18th- and 19th-

20. *RRS* Vol. ii, no. 459; *Yester Writs*, no. 8.

21. *Yester Writs*, no. 26. See Canmore ID 56563 for dating estimates.

22. Martine, C., 1982, 37–38; Miller 1844, 476.

23. See <<http://digital.nls.uk/slezer/index.html>>; Cavers 1993.

24. This analysis of Slezer's *Haddington prospect*, also appears in *Cairt*, Issue 32, January 2018, 5, along with a discussion of his prospect of the Bass Rock from the south, which dramatically rearranges the landscape (p. 6).

century maps.²⁵ It linked a road from the town to the ford near the bottom of Poldrate. The road, of which only the northern part still exists, branched off south-eastwards from Poldrate at the bottom of Sidegate and continued to the bridge at the mill-lade; here it joined a track across the Haugh leading to the ford (Fig. 5: Detail of William Forrest, Map of Haddingtonshire, 1799). By the end of the 19th century, the footbridge had gone and the road had been absorbed into the grounds of the mansion called Tyne Park.²⁶

There is an intriguing entry in the Burgh Records for 3 April 1682 (*HBR* Robb *Extracts*): 'The counsall ordaines intimaciouns to be maid throw the whole toun, that none wasche at the little common bridge at the eister hauche, or to set to fyres thereto, in tyme coming.'

Was this 'little common bridge' over the Tyne? This seems unlikely, both because of the adjective 'little' and because no known bridges upstream of the Nungate Bridge have started from the Easter (or Lower) Haugh, doubtless because the south bank is high here. All have started from the bottom of Poldrate westwards. The 'little common bridge' is much more likely to have been the bridge over mill-lade described above.

It seems we have no bridge at near the bottom of Poldrate which could justify the element *drochaid*, but, as Watson pointed out, there is another possibility: a causeway (*CPNS* 139, op. cit.). A bridge and a causeway have essentially the same function: to provide a means of crossing somewhere wet. While in modern English and modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic the concepts are distinct, in the past they were expressed by a single word: *brycg* in Old English and *drochet* in medieval Gaelic.²⁷

The river is notoriously flood-prone. James Miller wrote (1844, 475): 'To detail the pranks of the Tyne, and her moving accidents by flood and field, would occupy a small volume.' As recently as 7 July 2012, the Haugh was one of the areas in Haddington saturated by the overflowing river – an event documented modern-style on YouTube.²⁸ It seems possible that the road called Poldrate, or at least the lower part across the Haugh to the ford, which is shown on the Armstrongs' map of 1773 as a track, could have been reinforced and described as a 'causeway'.

Thus, the linguistic, documentary and topographical evidence, while not conclusive, might point to a Gaelic origin for Poldrate, as *poll* + *drochaid* meaning 'pool by the causeway'. This is in line with Watson's suggestion, but by-passing 'bridge'.

25. Armstrong & Armstrong 1773; Forrest 1799; OS Haddington Town Plan 1853, Sheet 2.

26. OS Haddington Town Plan 1893, Sheet X.6.15.

27. *VEPN*, *brycg*, f.; <dil.ie/18757>, accessed 10.11.2017.

28. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWe8Z_HSn0E>, accessed 10.11.2017.

We need also to consider the possibility that Poldrate is a Scots name, combining *poll* (usually ‘stream’ but sometimes ‘pool’) with another element. As mentioned above, it might be an inversion compound. The second element might be derived from Scots *drit* or *dryt* ‘dirt’, or the verb *dryt(e)* or *drit(e)*, past tense *drait*, ‘to void (as) excrement’ (*DOST drite* v.). Both noun and verb are related to modern English *dirt*, which probably started life as Old Norse *drit* ‘excrement’.²⁹ While in modern Norwegian *dritt* retains this meaning, as does Icelandic *dritr*, in Middle English *drit* had a broader range of meanings, including not only ‘excrement’ but also ‘unclean matter that soils’, along with ‘mud’ and, figuratively, ‘something worthless or degrading’ (*MED dirt* noun). By metathesis it becomes *dirt* in modern English and the emphasis on excrement recedes. In today’s dictionaries aimed at a popular market, ‘excrement’ disappears. Thus in the *Compact Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*, first published in 2002, *dirt* is defined as ‘a substance that makes something dirty’ (2009, ‘noun). Scots *dryt* is in the intermediate phase, so if this is the second element of Poldrate the meaning might be ‘dirty stream or pool’ or more specifically ‘shitty stream or pool’. However we have a problem backing this up in the Haddington case: such a description is most unlikely to have applied to the River Tyne or to the mill-lade (discussed below), while the 15th-century ‘pule’ is an unknown quantity.

While we have no evidence of dirt or excrement here, it should be said that the concept of a ‘dirty pool’ is a common one. *DOST* under *pule* lists several quotations which link stagnant pools with unpleasantness, such as the proverb ‘A still pule wil stink and [if] ye steir it’.³⁰

Further, Gaels, Scots and Norse-speakers have not been shy in coining names on this theme. John Garth Wilkinson cites several: Dirtholes, Kirknewton; Lingore Linn, West Calder, where *gore* is Scots ‘dirt, stagnant water, slime’; and Balcalk, Tealing, Angus, which was *Polcak* in 1472 (*RMS* ii, no. 1062), thus probably Gaelic *poll* ‘pool’ with Gaelic *cac* ‘dung or filth’.³¹ Likewise there was *Polkak* in Carse of Gowrie, Perthshire, in 1565.³² We also have the famous example of Clarty Hole farm near Melrose, from Scots ‘dirty hollow’, which Sir Walter Scott bought in 1811 and renamed Abbotsford,³³ while in 1587 North Berwick boasted the *Clairtie Burne* (*DOST: clarty* adj.). Wilkinson also cites the Orkney name Puldrite, which Hugh Marwick states (1952, 123)

29. See *OED dirt* n.; Cleasby-Vigfusson has *drit* ‘dirt, esp. of birds’, and *drita*, pret. *drite*, ‘to dirty, cacare’.

30. Carmichael, *Prov.* no. 201, cited in *DOST, pule* n. 1 a., b. (a).

31. Wilkinson, forthcoming (1).

32. *Books of Assumption*, 285, 289.

33. Gleig 1871, 78; *PNF* 5, 404, *hole*.

is Old Norse, from ‘*pollr* “a pool”; *drit* “dirt” or filth’. On the OS 6 inch map of 1882, Puldrite appears as a settlement next to Puldrite Bay, with Wester Puldrite to the southwest.³⁴ Marwick spells it Puldrit and describes it as, ‘A farm in Gorsness at a beach from which the sea does not ebb out properly and seaweed lies rotting there emitting an offensive smell.’ This name appears to be an inversion compound.

Another possible second element in *Poldrate* is Scots *draucht*, to which *DOST* assigns twelve meanings, including a channel made for the purpose ‘of drawing off water from a stream or land’ (*draucht* ⁵n.). Significantly, *DOST* illustrates this definition with three quotations from between 1577 and 1650 where *draucht* is specifically associated with mills. These include ‘The dames and watter drauchtis pertaining to the saidis mylnis’ (ibid.). Clearly here *draucht* is synonymous with *mill-lade*.

Thus *Poldrate* might mean ‘stream channel’. If specific + generic, on the Scots pattern, this might be interpreted as ‘a channel with stream-like qualities’; if an inversion compound (generic + specific), it might be ‘a stream with channel-like qualities’. The former would well describe a mill-lade, whereas the latter would be better suited to the canalised streams widely found in lowland agricultural areas. Wilkinson suggests ‘channelled burn’ as a possible translation, which would fit well with the latter category (forthcoming (2)).

In the Haddington case, *draucht* is echoed in some of the early forms – *Poldroch* 1586/87, *Poldraucht* 1616 and *Poildraucht* 1637 – though not the earliest ones. There is also an obvious candidate for a ‘stream channel’: the mill-lade. A lengthy structure about 1km long, the lade comes off the Tyne at a large weir to the southwest of the town.³⁵ It supplies first of all the former West Mill, then runs parallel to the river before supplying the former East Mill (also known as Kirk Mill or Poldrate Mill) at the junction with the road called Poldrate. It then runs under the road, before continuing past the Haugh to rejoin the Tyne close to St Mary’s Church.

The question is, then, was the lade constructed early enough for it to inspire a road name recorded in 1425? The answer is ‘yes’. In a charter of 26 March 1319, confirmed in a privy seal letter of the same date, Robert I grants Alexander Seton the lands of Barns and the east mill of Haddington (terrarium de Barns et orientali molendino de Haddingtoun) (*RRS* v, nos. 148, 149). As mentioned, this mill was powered by the lade.

Another meaning for *draucht* listed by *DOST* is ‘the act or right of drawing a net to catch fish; the place where a net is drawn.’ (*draucht* n.⁶) Netting is

34. OS 6 inch Orkney, Sheets XCVI and CII, surveyed 1879–80, published 1882. HY420186.

35. NT511733; *Canmore* ID 279595, also 279594.

unlikely, however, to have occurred at this stretch of the River Tyne. Tom Robertson explains (pers. comm.): 'Netting was used in the more tidal stretches of river as people were attracted by the salmon and sea trout that come into the river.'

Do other Poldrate place-names throw light on the question?

BARRY, ANGUS

Poldrait c. 1562 *Books of Assumption*, 58, xxi ['set to Thomas Flemyng paying 41 merks' recorded in a Balmerino Abbey rental.]

Powdraith 1600 *RMS* vi, no. 1049.

Poudraythis 1603 *RMS* vi, no. 1411.

In 1598, the lands of Balmerino Abbey were erected into a lordship for Sir James Elphinstone, who became Lord Balmerinoch.³⁶ The lordship included lands on the opposite side of the Tay in Angus, which were part of the barony of Barry (Fig. 6: Detail of OS 1 inch Sheet 49 Arbroath, published 1888, showing the parish of Barry, Grange of Barry, and the Buddon and Pitairlie burns).³⁷ A charter of 1600 includes a list of salmon fisheries (salmonum piscarias) in the barony, one of which is called *Powdraith*. This reappears in a charter of 1603 as *Poudraythis*.

The exact location of this *Poldrait* is unknown, but as it was a salmon fishery, it seems likely that *Poldrait* in this case was a Scots stream name. The second element could be *draucht*, meaning either 'water channel' or 'the place where a net is drawn'.

GLASGOW

Poldrait (burn) 1549 *Glasg. Prot.* no. 17.

Powdraith (burn) 1552–53 *Glasg. Prot.* no. 147.

Powdraith (area) 1550–1 (twice that year, and also in 1555) *Glasg. Prot.* nos. 70, 71, 55.

In 16th-century Glasgow, according to Robert Renwick, there was a 'piece of ground called Powdraith or Poldrait' which 'was possessed in barns and rigs by various persons.'³⁸ It was on the north side of Gallowgate next to a well dedicated to St Kentigern, which in 1558 was 'commonly called *Sanct Mongowis Spoutis*', hence today's street-name Spoutmouth (Fig. 7: Detail of OS Glasgow Town Plan 1892–94, Sheet VII.II.17, showing Spoutmouth on right).³⁹ There

36. *Balm. Lib.*, vi.

37. *RMS* vi, no. 1049.

38. Renwick 1908, 33.

39. *Glasg. Prot.* no. 431. Spoutmouth is at NS598648.

were two burns in Powdraith: the burns of Malyndinor (now Molendinar) and Poldrait or Powdraith.

This area today is largely covered in buildings and tarmac; it is cut through by a railway and the burns are no longer visible. Thus, the topography cannot help us to explain the name, but the fact that the name applies to a burn (called *Poldrait* and *Powdraith*) as well as an area, and that the area name appears repeatedly with the first element *pow* (Scots 'stream'), suggests that in this case we have a Scots 'stream' not a Gaelic 'pool'.

We have no evidence to tell us whether the second element was Scots *dryte* or *draucht*, leaving open the possibility that this was a 'dirty burn' or a 'stream channel', or something else altogether.

NEW MONKLAND, LANARKSHIRE

Poudrait Bridge, southwest of Cumbernauld, appears on an estate plan of 1775 (Fig. 8).⁴⁰

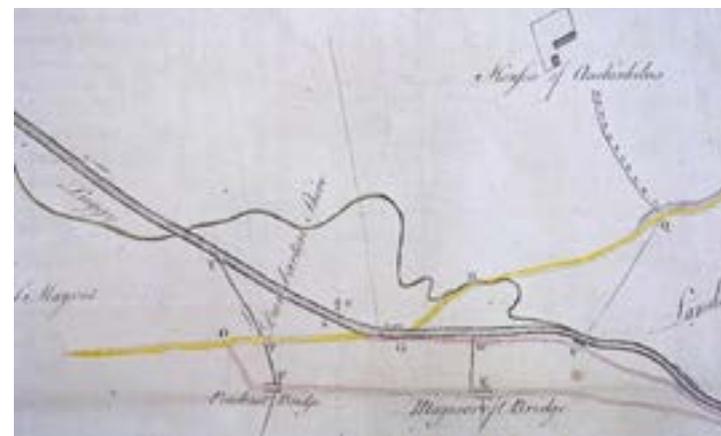


Fig. 8 Detail of NRS, RHP643/1 (1775)

'Plan of the Water of Luggie from Chapleton Bridge downwards to Condorrat Ford, Dunbartonshire', showing Poudrait Bridge, bottom left.

It crosses the Gain Burn, a tributary of the Luggie Water. The Luggie's tributaries are described by Peter Drummond (2014, 30) as 'often more like ditches or sikes than streams.' He notes (pers. comm.) that the Gain Burn is

40. RHP643/1, 'Plan of the Water of Luggie from Chapleton Bridge downwards to Condorrat Ford, Dunbartonshire'; Drummond 2014, 31. Most of the area covered by the plan is in Dunbartonshire, hence the title, but *Poudrait Bridge* was in New Monkland parish, Lanarkshire.

a small stream, 'definitely running, not particularly slowly'. From the photograph (Fig. 9), it looks as though it has been straightened, a process that might have begun a long time ago. It thus seems possible that *Poudrait* was an earlier name for the Gain Burn, meaning 'stream channel' or 'channelled stream', from Scots *poll* or *pow* + *draucht*.



Fig. 9 The Gain Burn near Poudrait Bridge

LAUDER, BERWICKSHIRE

Poldrat, Lauder, appears in a charter of 1501 as a landholding adjoining the town of Lauder, Berwickshire (RMS ii, no. 2595). The charter refers to 'the landholding and croft called *Poldrat*, on the south side of the royal highway/high street, extending to the parish church, between the Kirkmyre and the land called Gibson's Land' (tenementum terre et croftam nuncupatam *Poldrat*, ex parte australi vici regii, extendentem ad ecclesiam parochialem, inter le Kirkmyre et terram nuncupatam Gibsonisland).

This gives us one firm point of reference: the parish church. Built in the 12th century, this stood outside the town to the east, some 60 yards west of the fort. By the 17th century the fort was known as Thirlestane Castle, taking its name from another castle 3km to the east. The church and both castles are shown on Blaeu's map of 1654 titled *Mercia* (Fig. 10: Detail of Blaeu 1654 *Mercia*).⁴¹ The church was moved into the town in 1673.⁴²

41. On Blaeu 1654, *Laudelia*, the castle is simply named 'The Fort' and the church is shown close to the town.

42. The church was at NT532479: see *Canmore* ID 55889.

Another charter tells us that the Kirkmyre, one of the boundaries of *Poldrat*, was a pendicle of Castlehill, west of the church.⁴³

Our first charter says that *Poldrat* is 'on the south side of the royal street'. This is puzzling, as the main street of the burgh runs from northwest to southeast, and so does not have a 'south side'. It is, however possible that the street in question is the one now known as The Row (previously Rotton Row).⁴⁴ This runs across the top of the old town, inside the town wall. It now stops at the Thirlestane estate wall, but previously ran on eastwards through Lord Lauderdale's policy to the Easter Road at Norton.⁴⁵ At a crossroads, it branched right to the church site and castle (Fig. 11: Detail of OS 6 inch Berwickshire Sheets XIX NE and XX NW, surveyed 1906, published 1908).

If The Row is the *vicus regius* of the charter, it would provide a northern boundary for *Poldrat* along with the former church and the Kirkmyre.

It seems likely that *Poldrat* occupied a swathe of land that ran southwards between the town wall and Castle Hill. But where did it end? According to the charter, we have the Kirkmyre at one end and Gibson's Land at the other. But the position of Gibson's Land is unknown.

Today, the land is parkland, with sheep grazing between well-spaced trees.⁴⁶ It slopes from north to south, with a spring called Nathan's Well near the town at the southern end. To the southeast is a track leading to a bridge – formerly a ford – over the Leader Water. The track crosses a meadow which must have been flood-prone, as it is protected from the river by an artificial bank.

Watson (*CPNS*, 139) identifies this Lauder example, like the Haddington one, as Gaelic, but if so, it is very unusual, as it is hard to find a single other Gaelic name in the parish. In the Borders region, Gaelic appears to have been much more significant in Peeblesshire than in Berwickshire, Roxburghshire or Selkirkshire.⁴⁷

There is no evidence on the ground of a pool or a stream, or indeed a bridge. It might have been possible to describe the track to the ford as a causeway (one meaning of Gaelic *drochaid*), and there could have been a pool on the wet land beside it. But as in the Haddington case, this is highly speculative.

43. 'with the lands and green of the Kirkmyre on the west side of the church of Lauder (pendicle of Castlehill)' (cum terris et viridario lie Kirkmyre ex parte occidentali ecclesie de Lauder (pendicula de Castlehill)), RMS vi, no. 73.

44. OS 6 inch Berwickshire, Sheet XIX NE, surveyed 1906, published 1908.

45. <<http://www.lauder.bordernet.co.uk/history/towntrail/10.html>>, accessed 15/11/2017. Most of this route is still evident on OS maps.

46. Field trips to Lauder were made on 6/8/2017, 7/10/2017 and 29/10/2017.

47. Watson, *CPNS*, 139–40; Fraser 1995, 183; Williamson 1942, ii.

LINLITHGOW, WEST LoTHIAN

Poldrait 1495, *Poldrait* 1527, *Podraid* 1546, *Poldrate* 1607, *Poldrait* 1611, *Poldrett* 1632.⁴⁸

The name *Poldrait* survives today in Linlithgow attached to a late 19th-century villa south of the Union Canal.⁴⁹ No settlement on the site is shown on the OS 6 inch map of 1856, and the name does not appear there until the 1897 map, which means that the surviving house-name cannot be taken as a guide to the location of the lands of *Poldrait* (Fig. 12: OS 6 inch Linlithgowshire Sheet V NE, surveyed 1895, published 1897; the house named *Poldrait* is bottom left).

A sasine of 1495 refers to 'the lands of *Poldrait*, extending to 25 acres near Linlithgow',⁵⁰ while a 1527 charter includes a grant of '6 acres of the lands of *Poldrait*, at the east end of the burgh of Linlithgow' (6 acras terrarum de *Poldrait*, ad finem orientalem burgi de *Linlithqw*).⁵¹ This suggests that the lands were not near the site of the present house, which is to the southwest of the burgh and west of the lands of the Carmelite Friars. The Carmelite lands were included in a charter of 1632 separately from the lands of *Poldrett*.⁵² The site of the monastery, south of the town, is shown on the OS 6 inch map of 1897 (Sheet V NE).

The area where the *Poldrait* lands were probably sited is now cut through by the Union Canal and the railway line and is partly built-up. A clue provided by the topography is that Bell's Burn, which feeds Linlithgow Loch from the southeast, passed through this area. According to the *Gazetteer for Scotland*:

Bell's Burn rises from a spring at Porterside and flows west northwest alongside the B9080 road, under the Union Canal and railway to Low Port. Here it passes beneath Bell's Bridge and curves round to the north-east to fall into Linlithgow Loch, a quarter-mile (0.4km) northeast of the town centre, having completed a course of 1¼ miles (2km).⁵³

Given that in c.1500 the lands of *Poldrait* comprised 25 acres at the east end of the burgh, it seems likely that the *pol* in question, if a stream rather than a pool, was Bell's Burn. The OS 25 inch map shows that this burn had been

48. See Appendix for more details of early forms; yet more are listed in Macdonald 1941, 69, and Wilkinson, forthcoming (2).

49. NS999763. See OS 6 inch Linlithgowshire, Sheet V NE, revised 1895, published 1897.

50. NRS GD3/1/1/50/1.

51. *RMS* iii, no. 449.

52. 1632 *RMS* viii, no. 1990.

53. <<http://www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst90918.html>>, accessed 20/3/2018. Porterside is at NT018767 and Bell's Bridge at NT005771.

heavily engineered by the mid-19th century, a process that probably began much earlier.⁵⁴ Thus it may well have been a 'channelled burn', conforming with Scots *poll* + *draucht*.

Wilkinson, however, suggests that this *Poldrait* might have been 'dirty stream' or 'foul pool'. He points to another local place-name, Fouldubs 'filthy pool', from Scots *fule* 'foul' and *dub* 'pool', suggesting that this could be 'a virtual translation of *Poldrait*, or perhaps a similar name applied to similar features of the same area.' The cottages named Fouldubs were sited east of the burgh in a place where Bell's Burn used to overflow, creating a large pond known as the 'Bellsburn Dub' or 'Foul Dubs'⁵⁵ (Fig. 13: OS 25 inch Linlithgowshire Sheet V.3 (Linlithgow), surveyed 1856, published 1856; Fouldubs (two small workmen's cottages, OS Name Book) is at the top right, next to Low Port).

CONCLUSION

All the *Poldrate* names, except *Poudrait* Bridge, first appear in charters dating from 1425 to 1600. One (Haddington) is a road; one (Angus) was a salmon fishery; one (Glasgow) was an area containing lands; one (Lauder) was a landholding and croft; one (Lanarkshire) was a bridge; and one (Linlithgow) was lands. All took their names from landscape features that we have attempted to identify. Two of the names (at Haddington and Linlithgow) have survived into the present.

If we assume all the names share the same etymology and put the Lauder example aside because it provides too little evidence of any kind, we can discount Watson's Gaelic *poll* + *drochaid*, because we only have evidence of 'pools' in two cases (Haddington and Linlithgow) and there is a general lack of bridges (unless one counts *Poudrait* Bridge in Lanarkshire, where the bridge is probably named after the stream) and very tenuous evidence for a causeway (at Haddington).

It seems much more likely that the first element is Scots *pol* or *pow*, as every name is certainly or possibly connected with a stream. The second element is unlikely to be related to Scots *dryt* 'dirt' because we only have evidence of a 'dirty pool' in one case (Linlithgow) and that has a competing interpretation. Orkney's *Puldrite* is clearly a 'dirty pool', but its etymology may differ from that of *Poldrate*.

On balance, the topographic evidence suggests that the *Poldrate* name might be Scots *pol* + *draucht* 'stream channel'. This would fit with Haddington's

54. OS 25 inch Linlithgowshire, Sheet V³ (Linlithgow), surveyed 1854, published 1856.

55. Wilkinson, pers. comm., and forthcoming (2); West Lothian OS Name Books, 1855–1859, Vol. 39, OS1/34/39/7, Fouldubs; Jamieson 2007, 10, Bellsburn Avenue.

mill-lade: here the case is strengthened by the linguistic evidence that *draucht* might refer to a mill-lade. 'Stream channel' would also fit with Linlithgow's Bell's Burn and with the Gain Burn in Lanarkshire and might have fitted with the salmon fishery in Angus and the burn in Glasgow. This is a mundane, practical solution, less exotic than *épaule droite*, but all the more credible for that.

APPENDIX

A collection of early forms of Poldrate (Haddington) and Poldrait (Linlithgow)

POLDRATE, Haddington

poldrate 20 Feb 1425 *Court and Council Records of the Burgh of Haddington* A court case contains references to 'ane uthyr land lyand in the strete callyt *poldrate*' and 'the tother land lyand in *poldrate*'.

poldrate 7 Sept 1454 *Court and Council Records of the Burgh of Haddington* A grant to the parish church of rent from land 'in the upper end of the Sydgate on the west syd of the pule of *poldrate*'.

Puledrate 11 June 1478 *Grey Friars* no. 5 Indenture between the Grey Friars of Haddington and Sir John Haliburton, Vicar of Greenlaw, who endows the friars with land and rents, including 'a tenement of land lyand ... on the south part of the *Puledrate*', to maintain a three-bed almshouse on that land.

Poldroch 1586/87 *Books of Assumption*, p. 11 'Out of the land of St Andrews in Poldroch, 12d.' [spelling modernised except for the place-names] This refers to annual rent paid by Haddington to St Andrews Priory.

Poldraith 1611 *RMS* vii, no. 464 (p. 173, col. 1) '12 pence of land in Haddington known as Saint Andrew's Lands in *Poldraith*' (12 den. de terra in Hadingtoun nuncupata Sanctandros-landis in *Poldraith*). Note: This grant is contained in a lengthy charter from James VI to Ludovic, Duke of Lennox, the son of James's favourite, which includes 'the lands and other belongings of St Andrews' (terras et alia que ad prioratum de Sanctandros pertinuerunt).

Poldraucht 1616 *RMS* vii, no. 1537 '12 pence of land in Haddington known as Saint Andrew's Lands in *Poldraucht*' granted to Thomas Lord Bynning (12 den. de terra in Hadingtoun nuncupata Sanct-Andros-landis in *Poldraucht*).

Poldraught June 30 1637 *Retours* vol. i, no. 170 'annual rent of 12 pence of land in Haddington called Saint Andrew's Land in *Poldraught*' (annuum redditum 12d. de terra in Hadingtoun nuncupata Sanct Andros land in *Poldraught*).

Poldraught Oct 23 1640 *Retours* vol. i, no. 181 annuum redditum 12d. de tenemento in Hadingtoun nuncupato [sic] Andros land in *Poldraught*.

Poldraucht Apr 10 1645 *Retours* vol. i, no. 203 annuum redditum 12d. de terra in Hadingtoun nuncupata Sanct Andros land in *Poldraucht*.

POLDRAIT, Linlithgow

Poldrait 1495 GD3/1/1/50/1 Instrument of sasine following in precept of clare constat in favour of Robert Montgomery of Gyffyne in the lands of Poldrait, extending to 25 acres near Linlithgow.

Poldrait 1527 *RMS* iii, no. 449 'six acres of the lands of Poldrait, at the east end of the burgh of Linlithgow' (6 acras de terrarum de *Poldrait*, ad finem orientalem burgi de *Linlithqw*).

Podraid 1546 *RSS* iii, no. 1886 'the gift of the warde of all and hail the landis of *Podraid* with the pertinentis, lyend within the schirefdome of Linlithqw'

terras de *Poldrate* 1607 *RMS* vi, no. 1838 vic. Linlythgow.

terras de *Poldrait* 1611 *RMS* vii, no. 591 vic. Lynlythgow.

lie Poldrett 1632 *RMS* viii, no. 1990 'garbal and other teinds (both rectory and vicarage) of the lands and acres below-written ...' (decimas garbales aliasque decimas tam rectorias quam vicarias terrarum et acrarum infrascriptarum ...). There follows a list of lands, one of which is the Poldrait.

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