

Early Ayrshire Ryburns

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There are two places in the British Isles where the name Ryburn occurs on maps. The first is the River Ryburn, near Halifax, West Yorkshire, and the second is near Dunlop, in Ayrshire. The village of Ripponden, past which the River Ryburn flows, was known as 'Ryburnedene' in 1307 (Goodall, 1914, p17). According to Mills (1991, p273), 'Ryburn' in Old English means fierce or reedy stream, but these two adjectives are contradictory, and the translation is therefore somewhat dubious. I do not know if any Ryburns originated from West Yorkshire, although a 'William de Ryeburne' was fined by the Abbot of Byland in 1251, in relation to an alder wood at Scackleton, North Yorkshire (Transactions, 1968, p132). This William may have come from the Ryburn Valley, West Yorkshire, rather than from Ayrshire.



Figure 1. Blaeu's Map of 1654 (based on Pont's Map of 1600) showing the location of 'Ryburn'

Ayrshire is a part of Scotland that lies southwest of Glasgow, and includes towns such as Ayr, Kilmarnock and Largs. On Timothy Pont's early maps of Scotland there are several places in the parish of Dunlop, Northeast Ayrshire (old district of Cunninghame), whose names start with the words 'Temple', or 'Tempel' (Pont, 1604). These are the 'temple lands' that in feudal times belonged to the Knights Templar (Griffith, 2007a). They include 'Templeton', 'Tempelhou', 'Temple Hapland' and 'Temple Ryburn'. On later maps these change to 'Chapelton', 'Chapelhou', 'Haplan', 'Hapland', 'Ryburn', 'Reaburn', 'Rayburn' and 'Ryeburn'. On most maps the buildings on the lands of Ryburn are situated less than a mile northeast of the village of Dunlop, on the north side of Glazert Water (river).

Early Ryburns

The Knights Templar existed from the end of the 11th century until 1312, when they were disbanded and their lands given to the Knights of St John (Wikipedia). We know from the story of ‘The Bride of Aiket’ (Griffith, 2007b) that some in the district, like ‘Henry Montgomerie of Hessilhead’, went on crusades to the Holy Land, but the Knights Templar were many things in their day, such as financial planners and bankers. I first thought the existence of ‘Temple Ryburn’ indicated that in medieval times the Ryburns were themselves Templar Knights, but Roger Griffith (pers. com. 2008), Ayrshire historian, thinks otherwise :-

“The Ryburns may have purchased or rented land that had been Templar lands from the likes of Lord Torphichen (surname Sandilands), but they were probably not Templar Knights. To be such meant having to give up all possessions to that order. Adding a name, like Ryburn to Temple-Ryburn was a way of clarifying ownership, as in Fairlie Crevoch, Lindsay Crevoch, etc.”

The Ryburns may have lived in the area since the 12th century, but 22 January, 1496, is the earliest certain date, when a ‘Robert Ryburn’ witnessed an ‘Instrument of Sasine given by a noble Knight Sir Adam Mure of Caldwell’ (Mure et al., 1854, p49). Caldwell Manor lies north of Dunlop, near Lugton, and at one stage the Mures were considered the wealthiest family in Scotland (<http://caldwellgenealogy.com/forum/config.pl/noframes/read/1668>). As outlined below, a John Ryburn was involved in the murder of John Mure of Caldwell in 1570. In 1587, a ‘Jonet Ryburne’ was spouse to Robert Heygait of ‘Chapelhous’ (Fig. 1), just west of ‘Ryburn’ (Glasgow, 1900, p91). According to Paterson (1852, p180), ‘manor house Ryburne’ was in the ‘Lands of Dalry, ... lying within the bailiary of Cuninghame’. The lands of Dalry were ‘wadset’ (mortgaged) by the 8th Lord Boyd as part-payment for a fine of £15,000 imposed by Oliver Cromwell in 1646. The Boyds held the Barony of Kilmarnock since 1320, and ‘during the great civil war [the 8th Lord] was a steady supporter of royalty’.

Although the early Ryburns are in the Scottish records, the results of recent (2008) 37-marker Y-DNA tests on myself, Roger Ryburn of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Glenn Ryburn in the USA, and Eric Ryburn of Alvin, Texas, show a strong Irish affinity in our ‘Recent Ancestral Origins’ results. There are approximately three times as many Irish matches as there are Scots. The tests are for Y-DNA markers that follow the direct male line of descent, and are only affected by mutations over time. These results seem to require that the ancestors of the early Ayrshire Ryburns to ultimately have originated from Ireland. We are probably taking here about a time that was at least 1000 years before the present.

Several early Ryburns were mentioned in a 1955 letter from a Duncan Ryburn to Edith Joyce Riddell, a New Zealand Ryburn descendant. Duncan was headmaster of a large secondary-school in Glasgow, and the last Ryburn to be born in Campbeltown, Kintyre :-

“Raeburn, Rayburn, Reyburn, Reburn, de Rabourne: these are all different spellings of the same name. The name, Ryburn, is derived from the lands of Ryburn in the Parish of Dunlop. ... Andrew Ryburn was a Burgess in Glasgow, 1430. David was also a Burgess; John a Guild Brother; Thomas a Goldsmith, 1463 [Stuart, 1844]; Thomas a Chaplain in the Cathedral of Dornoch 1594; Sir Henry Raeburn, portrait painter, 1756 -1823. The Christian names common to the Ryburns seem to have been James, John, Thomas, Robert and William. Elizabeth is mentioned only once.”



Figure 2. Raeburn Coat of Arms

The name 'Raeburn' seems to have a different origin to that of 'Ryburn', as there is a 'Rae Burn' stream and a 'Raeburn' property just north of the English border, near Gretna Green of secret-marriage fame. This appears to be where Sir Henry Raeburn's ancestors came from (Anderson, 1863, p318). There are also a Rae Burn and Raeburn in Cumbria, just 18 km to the east (<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/>). In 1707, the Laird of Raeburn was a Walter Scott, great-uncle of the famous author Sir Walter Scott. At the age of just 21 he was run through and killed by Pringle of Crichton, in a sword duel at 'Raeburn's Meadow-Spot', near Selkirk (Lockhart & Scott, 1853, p4). We know the name 'Ryburn' originated from the lands of Ryburn, in Ayrshire, so most 'Raeburns', including Sir Andrew Raeburn, who was Prior of Urquhart in 1429, and Sir Henry Raeburn the famous portrait painter, are probably unrelated. However, spelling quirks must have caused considerable confusion between the two names, and we know for sure that some Raeburns were just spelling variants of Ryburn or Ryeburn.

The website <http://www.surnamedb.com/> says this on the origin of the surname 'Ryburn' :-

"This interesting and curious surname is of early medieval English origin, and is a locational name from the old lands of Ryburn in the parish of Dunlop, Ayrshire. The placename is composed of the northern Middle English "ray", a roebuck (Olde English pre 7th Century "ra"), and "-burn", a stream (Olde English "burna, burne"). During the Middle Ages when migration for the purpose of job seeking was becoming more common, people often used their former village name as a means of identification, resulting in a wide dispersal of the name. Variants of Raeburn in the modern idiom include Ryburn, Rayburn, Reburn and Reyburn. The surname first appears in records in the early 14th Century (see below), while Andrew de Raburn, burgess of Glasgow, and John of Raburn, a witness there, appear in Glasgow records in 1430 and 1454, respectively. Thomas Raburn was vicar in the choir of Glasgow in 1468, according to Glasgow Episcopal Registers. The name is also found in Aberdeen, where David Riburn was burgess in 1409. Sir Henry Raeburn (1756 - 1823) was a notable [better classed as 'exceptional', R. Griffith. pers. com. 2008] portrait painter. His son was granted a Coat of Arms in 1841 (Fig. 2. – see www.houseofnames.com), which depicts, on a piece of green ground, a roebuck statant proper, drinking out of a blue brook, on a silver field; on an ermine canton, a knight's helmet proper, with the Motto "Robur in Deo" (Strength in God). The first recorded spelling of the family name is shown to be that of William de Raeburn [but see above], which was dated 1331, in "Manuscripts of Robert Mordaunt Hay, of Duns Castle", during the reign of King David 11 of Scotland, 1329 - 1371. Surnames became necessary when governments introduced personal taxation. In England this was known as Poll Tax. Throughout the centuries, surnames in every country have continued to "develop" often leading to astonishing variants of the original spelling."

I like the explanation of the name Ryburn I heard as a boy. A 'rye' was a stream or river crossing consisting of stepping stones – nothing to do with a field of rye grain. In the well-known Robbie Burns song "Comin Thro' the Rye", a girl crossing a rye can't avoid a boy coming in the opposite direction, so she has to get her petticoat wet in order to avoid being kissed. So, 'Ryeburn' could be the name of a stream with a rye across it. On the 1858 Ordinance Survey Map of Dunlop (Fig. 5), the words 'stepping stones' can be seen on the Black Burn, just west of



Figure 3. River Ryburn, near Triangle Village, West Yorkshire

‘Ryeburn’. Also, there may have been a rye across Glazert Water in the ‘Wee Glen’, just below the old Ryburn manor (Fig. 7). The River Ryburn, near Triangle Village in West Yorkshire, may also have been named from a line of old stepping stones (Fig 3. – found by searching in Google for ‘Ryburn River Stepping Stones’).

In a well-written letter to the New York Times, John Phin (1898) of Paterson, New Jersey, claims that the ‘Rye’ was a small rivulet, in the northwest district of Cunningham, that had a crossing of stepping stones (the ‘Rye Water’ flows past Dalry). He confirmed the above interpretation of Robbie Burns’ song, except that ‘Rye’ was the name of the stream. He expressed indignation that the song was often misinterpreted to mean a field of grain, thereby losing much of the charm of the original song, which he maintains predated Robbie Burns’ version by a wide margin. Phin’s letter was only one of many, as there was great controversy about the matter at the time, with many amusing letters to the editor. No clear resolution seems to have emerged, though (see <http://query.nytimes.com/>).



Figure 4. Hapland Farmhouse, 2007, called ‘Ryeburn’ on 1858 Ordinance Survey Map.

A ‘Gilbert Ryburne’ was a burges in Aberdeen in 1503 (Robinson, 1857, p259). In 1530, during the reign of Henry 8th, a John Ryburn, of Speen, Buckinghamshire, was persecuted for his protestant beliefs. He was probably a follower of the ‘Lollard Movement’ (see Wikipedia). This John Ryburn appears to have had all the stubborn, persevering and argumentative qualities of a true Ryburn, so he may well have descended from original Ryburn stock in Ayrshire. He was not burned at the stake, though, just “molested and troubled”. From Fox and Turner’s (1846, p583) book on martyrs :-

“John Ryburn, accused at Roshborough, A.D. 1530. Persecuted by Doctor Morgan. It was testified against John Ryburn, by his sister Elizabeth Ryburn, being put to her oath, that she, coming to him upon the Assumption even, found him at supper with butter and eggs, and being bid to sit down and eat with him, she answered, that it was not convenient time then to eat; to whom he said again, that God never made such fasting days. ... Furthermore, the said John Ryburn was accused upon these words, for saying that the service of the church was nought, because it was not in English. ‘For,’ said he, ‘if we had our Paternoster in English we would say it nine times against once now. ...

Thomas Lound, priest, who had been with Luther two years, being afterwards cast into the Fleet [Prison] at London, was a great instructor of this John Ryburn" [Another sister, Alice, his wife and his father, Richard, were also compelled to 'depose against him', before John Longland, bishop of Lincoln.]

In Pont's account of the district of Cunningham (Fullarton, 1858), which can now be read in full on Google Books, we find on page 165 :-

"RYBOURNE — The lands of Ryburn are situated in the parish [of Dunlop] and near the church of Dunlop. The property perhaps never was of great extent; but the fact of the original owner having taken his family name from it is proof sufficient of the high antiquity of their holding; for the usage is coeval with and confined to the feudal era of Scottish history, which commenced about the beginning of the eleventh and terminated with the close of the thirteenth century. In 1570, John Ryburn of that Ilk, who was married to a daughter of Cuninghame of Aiket's [Castle], was, along with his father-in-law, "delatit of the slaughter of John Mure of Caldwell." The property however did not long remain with its ancient owners after this time. Neil Ryburn of that Ilk sold the lands of Ryburn to Gabriel Porterfield of Haplaid, May 31, 1638. Individuals of the name are still to be met with; and the late Mr. Raeburn [doubtless the same name], the celebrated artist, has contributed to its dignity by his talents and respectability of character,"

The term 'of that Ilk', which was widely used in post-feudal Scotland, is a formal title meaning that the name of the family was granted by the King from the name of their lands. It also implies that the early Ryburns were 'Lairds' who administered tenant farmers, and had the right to raise a body of men-at-arms. A Scottish laird was roughly equivalent to a squire in England. They were landed gentry. In Fullarton's book (1858, p38), in a section apparently written by Pont himself in about 1600, we find :-

"Rybourne is the possession of Rybourne de eodem, now laird thereof."

I translate this as "Ryburn owns the Ryburn lands of old, and is now the laird". However, Roger Griffith (pers. com. 2008) thinks 'de eodem' means the same as 'of that Ilk'.

Ayrshire Bloodfeuds

In the late 16th – early 17th century the Ryburns were caught up in a centuries-long feud between the Cunninghams, under the Earl of Glencairn, and the Mures, Sempils and Montgomeries - the last-mentioned led by the Earl of Eglinton. The feud had started in about 1448, when the King unwisely transferred the baillieship of Cunninghame, long held by the Earls of Glencairn, to the Earls of Eglinton. Anderson (1862, p746) relates the first known Ryburn involvement - already mentioned above - as follows :-

"... on November 4th, 1570, William Cunninghame of Aiket and two of his servants, with John Ryburn of the ilk, his son in law, were put upon their trial for the murder [on 20 September, 1570] of John Mure of Caldwell, when they pleaded that the deed was committed by the deceased Alexander Cunningham of Aiket, and they were unanimously acquitted."

To no avail, it seems, as the same 'John Ryburne' was himself murdered in May 1571 by the Laird of Caldwell (Fraser, 1859), who was the eldest son of the murdered Sir John Mure (who had been knighted by the Scottish king). Hugh Montgomerie, the third Earl of Eglinton, made an obligation to assist the Earl of Glencarne in the "pursuit and punishment of the Laird of Caldwell and others, concerned in the slaughter of John Ryburne". However, the outcomes of this obligation, if any, are not yet known to me.

On 12 April, 1586, another "John Reyburne of that Ilk", presumably the son and heir of the murdered John Ryburn, was involved in a further feuding murder (Robertson, 1891, p53;

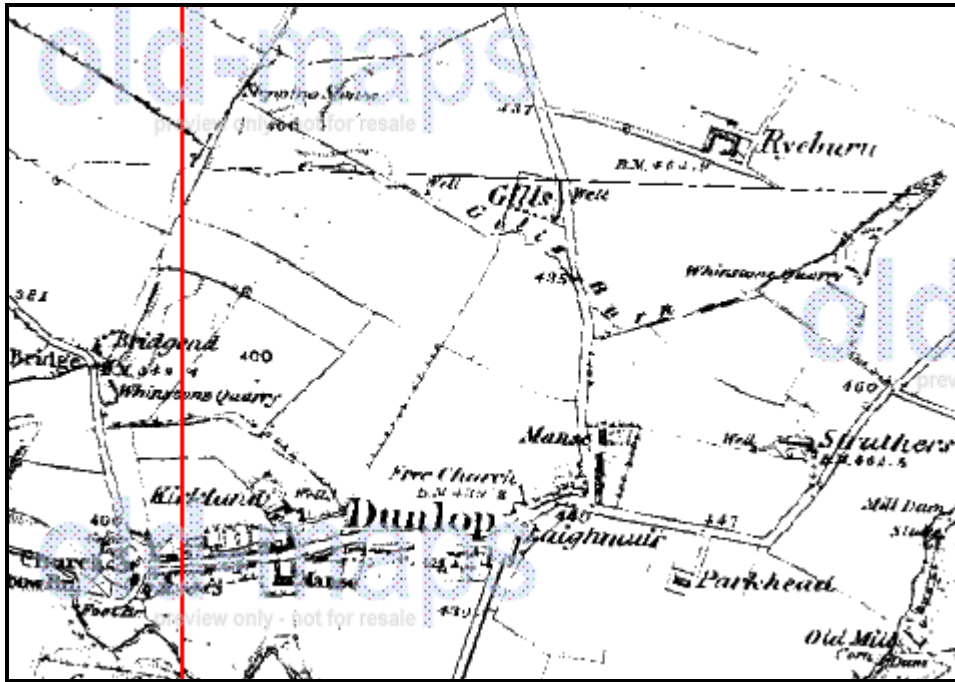


Figure 5. The location of ‘Ryeburn’ on the 1858 Ordnance Survey map of Dunlop

Paterson, 1847, p89). This was the infamous “Murder at the Annick Ford” (Griffith, 2007b), where a group of 34 Cunninghams and associates, including a John Reyburne (also spelt “Ryburne”, Robertson, 1908, p308), ambushed and killed Hugh Montgomerie, the 4th Earl of Eglinton, and some of his servants. This was the son of the Montgomerie who had vowed to assist in the pursuit of John Ryburn’s Father’s murderer! According to Griffith “... a wave of bloody revenge swept over Cunninghame and elsewhere. Cunninghame friends, relatives and adherents were killed without restraint”. M. Brown (1986) has described the times in his book “Bloodfeud in Scotland”, and Robertson (1908) devoted over 60 pages to various Ayrshire vendettas. It would seem they lived in very dangerous times. On page 96 of Brown’s book we read in connection to those involved in the Annick Ford murder :-

“Of these, all but Clonbeith [John Cunningham, who fired the fatal shot] and Ryburn are known to have been outlawed, and while Montgreenan [Alexander Cunningham] was not a murderer, he was widely suspected of having had a hand in its planning. Over the next sixteen years only four of these men were murdered in reprisal for their part in the killing, and apart from those slain 1591-92 [an unknown number], and a servant of Glencairn’s [James Cunningham] who died in a street brawl in Perth in 1606, no-one else was...”

And again on page 98 :-

“Over the next few years Giffen [Robert Montgomerie] struggled to keep his enemies at the horn [outlawed], thus making them more vulnerable to vengeance killings, while Glencairn [James Cunningham] stepped up his efforts to have the hornings [outlaw declarations] suspended. In 1593 Giffen had Aiket [Alexander Cunningham] and Ryburn summoned to answer concerning alleged remissions [pardons] they held.”

According to Brown, Glencairn had more influence in the Scottish court than Giffen. Those known to have been killed in revenge include John Cunninghame of Clonbeith and Alexander Cunninghame of Aiket, but John Ryburn seems to have escaped retribution in the short term. In 1603, however, probably the same ‘John Ryburne’, clearly from the Dunlop area, was put on trial for ‘Adultery and Child Murder’ (Pitcairn, R, 1833, p415) :-

“May 18 — JOHNE RYBURNE of that Ilk.
Robert Montgomerie of Heifilheid produceit our fouerane lordis letteris,
purcheft at the inftance of Mr Thomas Hammiltoune, aduocat to our fouerane
lord, aganes Johne Ryburne of that Ilk, for Adulterie and the Murthour of ane
infant bairne, gottin vpoun Agnes Dunlop : Be the quhilk Letteris the faid
Ryburne of that Ilk is put to the Horn”

Needless to say, this was almost certainly a trumped-up charge. ‘Put to the horn’ means to be proclaimed an outlaw for not responding to a summons. In Scotland the messenger-at-arms goes to the Cross of Edinburgh and gives three blasts on a horn before he heralds the judgment of outlawry. The Montgomeries had finally “horned” John Ryburn, notwithstanding the assertion by Browne that he had got off Scot free.

As did many others, this John Ryburn seems have fled to Ireland to escape retribution. In 1629 there was a court case in the Scotland Court of Sessions mentioned by Brown (1826, p.298) – ‘Ryburn *against* the Laird of HyslenHeade’ (Hessilhead). The Laird of Hessilhead, Frances Montgomerie, gained possession of the Ryburn land (‘merk-land’) while ‘Ryburn’ was in Ireland by claiming that Ryburn’s land inheritance papers (‘*precept of clare constat*’) were not genuine (‘*in pessima fide*’). Ryburn, possibly John’s son Neil, must have succeeded in regaining the estate, otherwise Neil Ryburn would not have been able to sell the land in 1638. This is the first of several indications of Ryburn Irish connections.

The Ryburns who went to Ireland may have joined the Hamilton-Montgomery settlement in Ulster that officially commenced in 1606. This royally approved settlement was privately sponsored by James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery. James Hamilton was the son of Hans Hamilton, the first protestant minister in Dunlop, while Hugh Montgomery, from Beith, was a soldier and aristocrat of considerable influence with James VI of Scotland (who later became James I of England). Many families from Ayrshire joined this successful settlement, but the Ryburns most likely settled in the lands administered by James Hamilton. By 1606 Hamilton and Montgomery were bitter rivals, and the Ryburns were no friends of the Montgomeries. There could well be records in Belfast of the Ryburns presence in this settlement.

At about this time we also have evidence of Ryburns in Glasgow. On August 22, 1589, a “John Ryburne” (possibly the one at the 1586 Annick Ford murder) was involved with others in a court arbitration case in Renfrew, near Glasgow (Hill, J., 1835, p46). Scotlands-People website has the images of four handwritten Ryburn testaments. These include a 1607 ‘Testament Testamentar’ of Williame Ryburne in ‘Dormontsyde’; a 1608 ‘Testament Dative’ of Katrene Ryburne, married to Williame Wilson in ‘Maynes of Raiss’; a 1609 Testament Testamentar of Margaret Ryburne, married to Andrew Harvie, ‘Maltman Burgess of Glasgow’; and a 1614 Testament Dative of another Margaret Ryburn married to Thomas Bar, ‘Tailzeour Burgess of Glasgow’. These handwritten documents from the Glasgow Commisary Court are very difficult to read, so little information has been extracted from them as yet. In the Dunlop area in 1619 and 1620, was a John Ryburn, “serjeant”, who was mentioned by Broun (1895) as a witness in several legal matters.

The Lands of Ryburn Sold

From what we already know about the Ryburns who went to Kintyre (Ryburn 2008), the Neil Ryburn cited in the paragraph from Pont’s book may have been my great x 7 grandfather. The amount of land Neil Ryburn sold to Gabriel Porterfield in 1638 is not revealed, but Dobie (1876) tells it like this :-

“On 31st May, 1638, Gabriel Porterfield purchased from Neil Ryburn of that Ilk the 13s. 4d. land of old extent of Ryburn, commonly called Temple-Ryburn. The estate of

Hapland consisted of Brokwelmure (Brockwellmuir), Dunlophill-Montgomerie and Ryburn; later part of Lainshaw was purchased as well.”

According to McKerral (1948), ‘thirteen shillings and four pence’ refers to the method in which land was formally divided in earlier times – called ‘land of old extent’. It so happens that this amount of land translates exactly into one ‘merk’s’ worth of land under a newer system. The Ryburn estate that was sold must have been of one ‘meklands’ extent (about 200 acres). Land was measured by value, rather than acres, which were then not then in common use. The annual rent for one merk of land was 32 pounds in Kintyre in 1650, probably much more in Ayrshire, so Neil Ryburn must have received many times more than this.

Location of Ryburn Manor House

On General Roy’s (1747-55) map (Fig. 6), which is much more accurate than Pont’s (1604) map, ‘Reaburn’ is marked on the north bank of Glazert Water, just east-northeast of Dunlop and opposite the ‘Old Mill’ on the south side of the Glazert. It lies to the southeast of the Gills Burn. On modern maps this would probably place the old ‘Ryburn Manor’ on Newmill Road, which trends northeast out of Dunlop, about half way between the modern properties called ‘Ashludie’ and ‘Cairnknowe’. If you look at the 2002 imagery (historical imagery) in Google Earth (Fig. 7), you can see traces of what must have been a group of buildings in roughly the location of the ‘Ryburn’ buildings shown on General Roy’s map. The old buildings are outlined by patches of greener vegetation. In later imagery there appear to be low mounds of masonry debris. This may well be the traces of the old Ryburn Manor, which was sold along with the land by Neil Ryburn to Gabriel Porterfield in 1638, and which was



Figure 6. Location of ‘Reaburn’, or the Ryburn Manor, on General Roy’s Map, 1747 - 1755

later pulled down and rebuilt where Hapland is now. There are also some trees there that may be the remains of the shelter belts of the old manor. The old and new are about 400 m apart. A 'Whinstone Quarry', shown in Figure 5, exists about half way between Hapland and the postulated location of the old Ryburn Manor. This may well have been used for the stone that went into one or both buildings.

On the Ordinance Survey Map of 1858 (Fig. 5), which seems quite accurate, 'Ryeburn' refers to buildings in a 'U'-shape about 800 meters northeast of Dunlop Church. In the Ayrshire Directory for 1851-52 (Ayr, 1851), a property called "Ryeburn" in the Dunlop area was being farmed by a John Robertson (also in 1871, Rogerson & Tuxford, 1871). On the 1897 Ordinance Survey Map, 'Ryeburn' has changed its name to 'Hapland', but otherwise appears similar in location and shape to the buildings on the older map. The Glasgow-Kilmarnock railway (Fig. 7) is an obvious addition to the 1897 map. Griffith (2007b) states :-

"Hapland is near Dunlop. In 1820 the estate was of 200 acres and the proprietor was Lieutenant-General Alexander Trotter. The old mansion house was demolished around 1876 as it was not in keeping with the modern age. A new steading was built at the site, possibly the 'Newhouse' marked on the OS maps. Some of the old tree wind-breaks and policies of the estate can still be made out. It seems likely that Temple-Ryburn had its name changed to Hapland at around this time as the OS of 1858 shows Ryburn in the same position as later maps (1897, etc.) show Hapland."

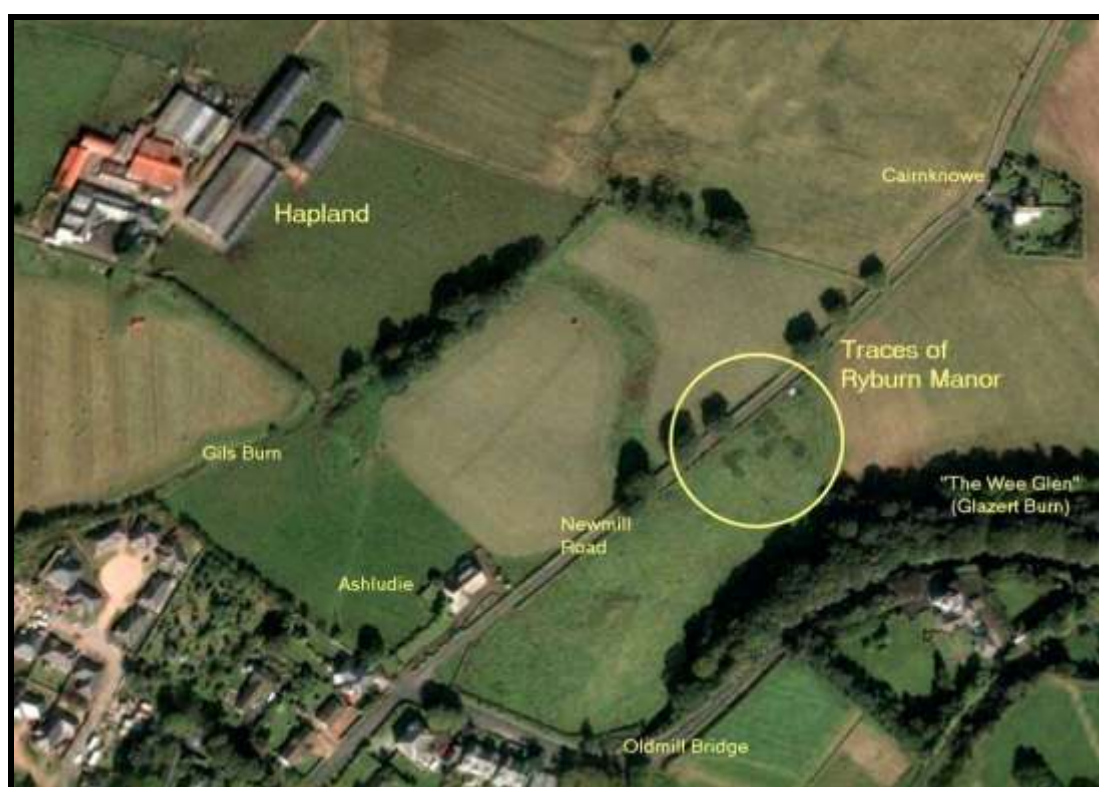


Figure 7. Probable traces of the old Ryburn Manor, 2002 Google Earth imagery.

This could be correct, but I think that the buildings called 'Ryeburn' on the 1858 map were replaced *in situ* by the new buildings called Hapland, which is that shown in Figure 4. The outside appearance of the current Hapland Farmhouse (Fig. 4) accords with a building erected in about 1876. The similarity of the U-shaped buildings on the 1858 and 1897 maps suggests that the basic plan of the old buildings was largely followed by the new ones. It is also quite possible that the buildings called 'Ryeburn' on the 1858 map were incorrectly labeled, and later corrected on the 1897 map. Errors were not uncommon during the first ordinance survey

(R. Griffith pers. com. 2008). In earlier times, however, the above evidence points to a 'Ryburn Manor' that was located east of 'Ryeburn' on the 1858 map.

Ryburns in Kintyre

Starting in 1650, many lairds and farmers from Ayrshire and Renfrewshire migrated to the Kintyre Peninsula, in Argyllshire, to take up land in the 'plantation scheme' championed by the first Marquis of Argyll (McKerral, 2001). The Ryburns were amongst them. The land there had been largely depopulated by war and pestilence earlier in the 17th century, and the Lowlanders went there to introduce better farming practices and act as a 'civilizing influence' on the remaining, Gaelic-speaking highlanders. They were mostly 'Covenanters', strong supporters of the early Presbyterian Church. Later on, some went there to escape religious turmoil, 'The Killing Time', in the Lowlands. In Kintyre the Ryburns flourished.

According to McKerral (2001, p148), the earliest Ryburns in Kintyre were John Ryburn and Janet Jameison, who were living in 'Backs' in 1659. Backs is a farm that still exists as East and West Backs at the southeastern end of the present-day Campbeltown Airport. The earliest Ryburn to appear in the Campbeltown birth registers was a James Ryburn, born in 1660 to John Ryburn and 'Jenat Jameson'. John was noted as a "tacksman in 1666, name of holding indecipherable, but probably Backs". A 'tacksman' was usually landed gentry, a patriarch and a cut above the ordinary tenant farmer. This John Ryburn may well have been Neil Ryburn's son. He appears to have been followed by at least one other Ryburn family, Patric Ryburn and Jane Baird, who McKerral says by 1673 were in 'Garvarchie', about 5km south of Backs. Patric may have come from Ireland

McKerral (2001, p69) states that the "heirs of the deceased John Porterfield of Hapland" were amongst the twelve original tacksmen who migrated to Kintyre in 1650, at the beginning of Argyll's plantation scheme. Their 'tack', of twelve merklands extent, included the farms of Achalick, Craig and Backs. McKerral also says that in 1653 the tacksman of this tack was Alexander Porterfield, who was the brother of John Porterfield, formerly the ruling elder in the Parish of Dunlop. John Ryburn must have been closely allied with the Porterfields, as the Ryburns seem to have lived next door to Hapland since feudal times. The Porterfields may not have remained in Kintyre for very long, as their name does not appear in the appendix of Lowland names in McKerral's book. Also, there are no Porterfields in Kintyre birth records. McKerral says the Porterfields were 'Remonstrants' who were caught up in the 'Persecution', and some of them sought refuge in Holland. John Ryburn seems to have taken over all or part of their tack by 1659, or by 1666 at the latest.

Ryburns in Poland/Lithuania

During the exile of Charles II to Europe in 1651, a James Ryburn was listed as living in Poland/Lithuania, along with many others from Scotland and England (Pernal and Gasse, 1995, p45). They were the contributors of a 10% tax towards 'The 1651 Polish Subsidy to the Exiled Charles II'. This James was probably a close relative of the John Ryburn, who became a tacksman in Kintyre in about 1660 – possibly his brother. During the English Civil War, the Ryburns may have been supporters of royalty, as was their overlord, the 8th Lord Boyd. This James could well have been a 'Cavalier'.

Ryburns Remain in Ayrshire

Not all of the Ryburns went to Kintyre. Donald Ryburn (pers. com. 2007), of Lakeland, Florida, has visited the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock and unearthed a number of Ryburns living in Dalry and Kilmarnock in the second half of the 17th century. These Ryburns were described as a ‘sept of Clan Boyd’. The parish registers from Dunlop only go back to 1700, and those prior to 1780 “were very irregularly kept” (Patterson, 1852, p44), but Scotlands-People website records the following births in Kilmarnock in the second half of the 17th century -- Margaret, to James Ryburn and Agnas Picken, 1675; Mathew to John Ryburn and Janet Picken, 1676; Mathew to Mathew Ryburn and Elspit Cudberson, 1681; Margaret to John Ryburn and Marion Lang, 1684; and Marion to John Ryburn and Marion Lang, 1688 – also William to John Ryburn and Agnes Grey in Ayr Township, 1671. R. Griffith (pers. com. 2008) says that some Ryburn associates were “no doubt Jacobites – the MacAlisters of Kennox, for instance”. This was presumably after about 1690, and suggests that the Ryburns at that time may have been Jacobites as well.

On July 14, 1707, a James Ryburn, bonnet maker, was “fyned five pounds Scots” at Stewarton. He had beaten John Picken “for cutting his feather” (Ayr and Wigton Archiological Association, 1884). This was after failing to front the court when first called :-

The Procurator Eiscall compleaned of John Pickand and James Ryburn, and their fighting, cutting others [hat] feathers, and beating and blooding one another. Both being summoned, called, compeired not, therefore held guilty of all laid to ther charge ; upon all quhich [which], ye said Judge forsaied, they not being present, fyned them, [imprimis](#), in ten pounds scots for [contumacy](#), and ordains [poynding](#) therefore, within terme of law, and appoints them to be summoned de novo [again].

From the same source, three years later (August 3, 1710), probably the same James “Rayburn” was before the court again. This is the first reference to Ryburns as bonnet makers. The quote was first sent to me by Roger Griffith :-

In the action pursewed be Robert Russell, customer in the meall mercat of Stewartoune, against James Rayburn, younger, bonnetmaker in Stewartoune, for payment makeing to hum of nyne poundis scottis money as pryce of ane boll of meall, furnished by the compleaner to the defender in December jm Vljc and nyne or therabot. The said action being called, and the defender not compearing was holden as confest, and therof decerned to make payment of the samen, within term of law, and executione pass hearupon, in communi forma, and for fourteen shilling money forsaied of expenssis of plea. *James Ross, Baillie.*

A search of the LDS database reveals many Ryburn and ‘Reyburn’ births and marriages in Stewarton and Kilmarnock in the 18th century. By the first census in 1841 there were Ryburns as handloom weavers, bonnet makers, carpet weavers, sewers, knitters and shoemakers in Stewarton, Kilmarnock and Largs. We also know that there was a fair amount of tooting and froing between Ayrshire and Kintyre. In the early days of the Kintyre plantation the ‘plantationers’ used to return to Ayrshire each year to participate in communion, and have their children baptized. In about 1820 a James Ryburn became a shoemaker in Largs. His descendants now live in Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Ryburns in Ireland

We also know that there were a few Ryburns living in Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries – and possibly earlier. They may have been amongst the Lowland Protestants who joined the various plantation schemes in Northern Ireland starting in the 17th century, and even earlier. This was the start of the infamous troubles in Northern Ireland. Also in Ireland were many Rayburns and Reburns, who are possibly distantly related. A number of William, James,

John, Thomas and Edward ‘Reburns’ lived in ‘Manachan City’, Monaghan, Ireland, from as early as 1711. From records in the LDS database, several of those Reburns migrated to North America in the mid 19th century. A Thomas Ryburn born in Belfast in about 1828 became a ‘scavenger’ (street cleaner) in Campbeltown, where he married Euphemia Gillies in 1858. He died in 1901. In the 1841 census an Edward Ryburn, born in 1818 in Ringaskiddy, County Cork, was an able seaman on the ‘Black Prince’, a warship stationed at Greenock. In the 1881 British census, a Michael Ryburn, born in Cork, Ireland, in about 1841, was a Royal Navy Coast Guard boatswain living with his family in Tywardreath, Cornwall. Another possible connection to Ireland was a 50 foot sloop owned by a ‘P. Ryburn’, Scotland, that is in the 1810 Loyds of London Shipping Register. This boat was surveyed in Cork. The owner was either Patrick Ryburn (b. 1757), or Peter Ryburn (b. 1768), both of Campbeltown. This suggests that the Kintyre Ryburns may have known about the Cork Ryburns at that time.

In the 1840s, two Ryburn families from Ireland appear in the incoming passenger lists for New York. Thomas (23) and Janet (19) Ryburn arrived on 10 May, 1842, on the “Scotland”, and Michael (50), Bridget (40), Mary (15), Daniel (9), Michael (4) and Catherine (4 months) arrived on 12 June, 1849, on the “William Larneston”.

Ryburns Sally Forth and Flourish

An account of the numerous Ryburn families living in Kintyre, following their migration there from Ayrshire after 1650, has already been compiled by one of their descendants – me (Ryburn, 2008). Today, very few Ryburns remain in the British Isles, and there appear to be none left in Ayrshire, Kintyre or Ireland. It is up to us colonials to document what little is known of their history. This document is still a work in progress, and I welcome any further information that may lead to its enhancement.

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