Thanks to Bob Cathro for forwarding this Cathro History.

STRACATHRO PARISH

The surname Cathro (and its variations) is obviously derived from or related to the Parish of Stracathro, which is the modern spelling of an earlier Celtic name. The parish is located in the northeast part of the ancient County of Forfarshire, the boundaries of which correspond closely to the modern County of Angus (now part of the Tayside Region). The parish is about 10 kilometers long and 1.5 kilometers wide and is aligned northwesterly across the gentle, northeast-trending Strathmore Valley. It is centered about 40 kilometers northeast of Dundee, 10 kilometers inland from Montrose, a harbor on the North Sea, and 6 kilometers north of Brechin, the nearest town.

The valley, which was somewhat marshy before it was drained, was settled by Saxons long after neighboring drier areas had been settled by Celts. It is bounded on the southeast side by Stracathro Hill (119 meters elevation), which is part of the Sidlaw Hills that separates the valley from the North Sea. To the northwest lie the Grampian Hills, which form the edge of the Highlands. Three small but historically important hills named White Caterthun, Brown Caterthun and Lundie Hill (elevations of 298, 287 and 244 meters respectively) are located on that side. The parish is drained by the North Esk River, which reaches the sea just north of Montrose. The North Esk is joined by a tributary called West Water near Stracathro House.

A partially preserved earth and rock wall called Dunlappie Dyke, 2 to 3 meters high and up to 4 meters wide at the base, is of uncertain age. It is thought to have extended from the summit between Brown Caterthun and Lundie Hill in a southeasterly direction for about 5 kilometers to the vicinity of Auchenreoch, near Stracathro Church. It is interpreted as the boundary between the property of Dunlappie and the Royal Forest of Kilgarie, which was in use from at least 1319 to 1488.

The earliest written record of the parish name appears in a grant to the monastery of Arbroath of a toft and croft in "Villa de Strukatherach" and also two acres of land belonging to the same town by Turpin, who was Bishop of Brechin from 1178 to 1198. A later document referred to the Kirk of Stracathirach as a parsonage of the Cathedral of Brechin.

The name Stracathro is preserved today at Stracathro Hill, which is shown on detailed maps of the area, at the parish church (Presbyterian) and at Stracathro Hospital and House. The house now serves as an administration building for the government hospital, which was formerly a veteran's facility. The house is an impressive Georgian building erected about 1840 by Alexander Cruikshank and sold in 1848 to Sir James Campbell, Lord Provost of Glasgow. One of his sons was Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, a Prime Minister of Great Britain. The 1940 acre estate was acquired by the government in 1939. The present church, a plain building erected in 1791 and repaired in 1849, was dedicated to St. Rule. According to the Gazeteer of Scotland (1884), Stracathro Parish consisted of 5300 acres, of which 4000 were cultivated. The population in 1861 was 546, with 118 houses.

Because Stracathro and Angus are strategically situated at the edge of the Scottish Highlands, they played a key role in Scottish history dating back to pre-Roman times. The history of the southern Scotland is marked by successive waves of invaders from the continent, which have contributed to a complex gene pool. This history has been divided into four main periods: pre-Roman (neolithic, bronze and iron ages), Roman, Dark Ages, and medieval/modern (Crowl, 1986).

The pre-Roman period is known only from archaeological evidence, which indicates that the first invaders who overran the native Neolithic people were from the Low Countries and the Rhine River delta (2000 to 700 BC). They were ruled by a warrior aristocracy and reinforced by a priestly caste that was able to organize sizable groups of workers for construction projects. The next wave came from the Alpine region, a warrior race who used horse-drawn carts. They spoke an Indo-European language called Celtic, of which one branch has survived as Gaelic and the other was spoken until recently in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. According to the Romans, the Celts were war-mad. Intermittent tribal warfare required the construction of fortified towns called hill forts. Scotland may have contained as many as 1500 of these, many of which were quite small.

White Caterthun and Brown Caterthun are the most impressive hill forts in Scotland, so named for the color of the rocks used in the walls. White Caterthun, the largest and highest, consists of five concentric stone ramparts and adjacent ditches, of which the three outermost ones are much eroded. The summit is encircled by an oval ring of scattered stones, 150 by 65 meters in size, that represent the remains of the two inner walls that presumably collapsed after the decay of the timber-laced construction. These ruins have been interpreted as a tribal stronghold and royal seat dating to the Iron Age, when the area was inhabited by a mixture of Gaelic peoples of Celtic (Aryan) and Cymric (Welsh) origin. The name Caterthun is believed to be derived from catter (circular stone fort) and thun (fortified hill) and to represent a fortress on a hill.

The first recorded history of Scotland dates from about 80 AD, some 40 years after the Romans first invaded England. The period until 410, when the Romans left England, consisted of numerous attempts by them to subdue and pacify the unruly northern people of Caledonia and push them back from Angus into the Highlands. In the first push, Julius Agricola led a force of 20,000 Legionaries and a large group of auxilia (usually foot-soldiers and cavalry recruited from the pacified barbarian tribes) and established a short-lived fortress in 84 AD near Blairgowrie, about 25 kilometers northwest of Dundee. From there, they pushed north to defeat an army of 30,000 Picts at a place named Mons Graupius, which has not been relocated but was probably north of Aberdeen. To control this part of Scotland, they built a road along the Strathmore Valley that crossed Stracathro Parish, and established a camp at a point called Blackdikes, just west of Stracathro House. A modern highway (A94) now closely parallels the southeast side of the Roman road and passes within half a mile of Stracathro House.

A few years later, uprisings elsewhere in the Roman Empire made it necessary to pull the troops back to a line between the Tyne River and the headwaters of the Solway Firth, close

to the present boundary between England and Scotland. Here they built a great stone wall 120 kilometers long between 122 and 128 AD that was named after the Emperor Hadrian. In 142 AD, the Romans began construction of another defensive position 60 kilometers long called the Antonine Wall that lay through the narrowest part of Scotland, roughly between Glasgow and Edinburgh. At its maximum size many years later, it was 4 meters wide and 3 meters high on a stone foundation, bounded by a ditch 12 meters wide and 3.5 meters deep. For the next century, the Romans varied their strategy between pulling back to Hadrian's Wall and leaving small, defended forts in Scotland, and reinvading the Lowlands and controlling the coastline by ship.

By the end of the Third Century, the Romans began to lose control. In 367 AD, an alliance between the Picts from the Highlands, the Scotti people from Ireland and Saxons and Frank pirates from northern Europe gradually pushed the Romans out of Scotland. For the next three centuries, Scotland was ruled by tribal chiefs who imposed some sort of civil rule. About 500 AD, settlers began arriving from Ireland. There is little written record until about 600 AD, at which time the country was divided into four kingdoms: Picts to the north and northeast (including Angus), Scots to the west, Britons to the southwest and Angles to the southeast, with some scattered Saxons along the east coast. The Celtic language was gradually submerged by an Anglian dialect that eventually evolved into Broad Scots, familiar to readers of Robbie Burns. From then until about 1060, much fighting and mixing took place between the various tribes, with the addition of some Norwegian blood from Viking invaders to the north. The Normans, who had conquered England, introduced feudalism in place of the Celtic customs, which was vigorously opposed by the Scottish people, particularly the Highlanders. Much of the subsequent fighting took place in Angus, at the edge of the Highlands.

Three noteworthy historic events took place within Stracathro Parish. The first was the Battle of Stracathro in 1130, when the 5000 man army of King David 1, led by Edward of Mercia, defeated the 5000 followers of Angus, Earl of Moray. Angus had claimed the English throne as a descendant of Macbeth. The battle is believed to have taken place at Ballownie Farm, immediately north of the old Roman camp. The bodies of Angus and 4,000 of his men and 1,000 of King David's soldiers were placed in two piles (tumuli), which are preserved as low mounds.

The second event occurred in 1296 when John Baliol paid homage to Edward 1 at Cimiterio de Stroukatherach (churchyard) and was deprived of his royal position.

The third was in 1452 at Huntly Hill, on the west side of Stracathro Hill, where Earl Beardie (the Tiger Earl of Crawford) was defeated by the Earl of Huntly in the Battle of Brechin.

THE SURNAME CATHRO

CATHRO. A sumame found in Angus, evidently derived from lands of the same name there. Cf the place name Stracathro. Jacobus Catrow (was) a charter witness, 1533. William Cathraw was burgess of Perth in 1509, and another William Cathrow was married in Perth in 1562, David Cathrow was miller in Kethinnis (Kettins) in 1602, and Alexander Cathrov died in Glamis in 1643. Helan Cathrow is recorded in Dundee in 1613. There is a place Cathroseat in Forfar Retours.   Black (1946)

Most authorities suggest that Stracathro is a modern contraction of Gaelic words, although there is considerable disagreement on the meaning. Most sources feel that Stra comes from Strath, meaning mossy or boggy valley, and Cathro is derived from Cathaer, Cath(e)rach or Catterthun, meaning a circular stone fort or fortified hill. Combining the two ideas denotes a valley of warriors and has produced the names appearing in early histories and on early maps, such as Stracathrow, Strickathrow, Strath-cath-rach, Straukatherach and Stracatherach. These meanings certainly fit the local topography and history.

Local folklore has provided at least two other origins for the name. One holds that a Roman General ordered his men to ford the North Esk with the cry Strick-an'-ca'-throw.   In another account, three Danish Generals were slain in battle here in the Middle Ages, one of whom was a very tall man named Stracatheras. The Scottish National Dictionary contains an entry for 'Cathrough, Cathro(o), Cathrou and Cathrow' and gives four definitions: (1) to display great energy in work (the example provided is Robbie Burns' 1792 poem "Hey Ca'thro") (see Appendix 1); to survive an illness; or to be a hard worker; (2) a disturbance; (3) a light wash of clothes; and (4) a search (see Appendix 2).

Another weaker possibility is that the name Stracathro is somehow related to a medieval scholar and teacher named Cadroe, who was born about 900 AD to Royal parents and raised by an uncle at the Church of Kirkell, about 80 kilometers southwest of Stracathro. After attending the best schools of that era at Armagh, Northern Ireland, he became an influential teacher in Scotland before moving to the continent, where he became the Abbott of Wassor and St. Felix, near Metz in northeastern France. He died about 976 AD and was created a saint of the Catholic Church. Since "d" in the Saxon language corresponds to "t" or "th" in Gaelic, his name would be spelled Cathroe or Cathro by the Celtic people who lived in Angus at that time. Although we don't know his birthplace, it is possible that he was born near Stracathro and that the valley was named after him - Stracathro.

HEY, CA' THRO'

(A poem by Robert Burns)

Up wi' the carls of Dysart,
And the lads o' Buckhaven,
And the kimmers o'.Largo,
And the lasses o' Leven.

CHORUS

  Hey ca' thro', ca' thro',
  For we hae mickle ado;
  Hey, ca' thro', ca' thro'
  For we hae mickle ado.

We hae tales to tell,
And we hae sangs to sing;
We hae pennies to spend,
And we hae pints to bring.

CHORUS

We'll live a' our days,
And them that comes behin',
Let them do the like;
And spend the gear they win.

According to William Scott Douglas (1891), "this highly philosophical ditty … was picked up
or invented by Burns; if the former, it must have been during some Saturday afternoon
excursion from Edinburgh along the Fife coast in 1878; if the latter, then simply from the
text suggested to him in some old collection of music where he would have read the name of
the tune –'Carls o' Dysart'. Tradition has supplied another excellent verse, as follows:

Ne'er break your heart for love,
Just turn the boat about,
There's as gude fish i' the sea
As ever yet cam out."

DEFINITIONS OF CATHRO FROM THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL DICTIONARY

CA' THROUGH, -THRO(O), -THROU', -THROW,
A - **verb**

   (1) To display great energy in getting work done, to work away.
   a) "May I suggest that we might honour the centenary of their author's [Scott'sl death by introducing the fine phrase "Ca' through" . . . because it forms a counsel of perfection for the New Year." (J.M.Bulloch in Times, 30 Dec. 1931)

   b) "Hey, ca' thro', ca' thro', For we hae mickle ado!"
   (Robbie Burns; Hey, ca'thro'; Ayr, Cent. ed., 1792)

   (2) To pull through (an illness).
    a) "We got him hame a' richt, an' he'll mebbe ca' throo' t.". (Arbroath Herald, 8 Jun. 1893)

B – **noun**

   (1) Drive, " push " (used of work).
    a) "He's a servan' it hiz a ca-through we's wark." (correspondents, 1933; Gregor, 1866)

   (2) Disturbance
   a) "There was siccan a ca'-thro', as the like was never seen."(Scott Antiquary; 1818)

   b) "Wi' this an' that, they'd a gey ca' thro'". (R.C.Buist in Scots Mag.; Nov. 1934)

   (3) Of clothes : a slight or preliminary wash.
    a) "A gaed the colour't things a ca'-throw." (W.B.Watson, 1923)

   (4) A search.
   a) "I'll gie the press a ca' throu', bit I dinna think yir glesses are there." (1937)

   b) "Man, Jimmie, ye sud tak' a wife; she wud be cheaper than a hoosekeeper." "Weel, gin a   hed the hairst by, a'll yoke the shalt an' hae a ca'-throw." (1938)

SPELLING VARIATIONS OF THE SURNAME CATHRO IN THE SCOTTISH IGI RECORDS
Page 1

	County	Parish
Caitro	Angus	Brechin
Cathara	Angus	Monifieth
Catharo	Angus	Liff, Benvie & Invergowie
Catharow	Angus	St. Vigeans
Cathary	Perth	Cargill
Cathera	Aberdeen	St. Nicholas
Cathero	Angus	Liff, Benvie & Invergowie
	Lanark	Barony
Cathery	Perth	Collace
Cathra	Angus	Arbroath; Kinettles; Liff, Benvie & Invergowie; Mains & Strathmartine; Monifieth; Tealing
	Aberdeen	Skene
	Lanark	Barony
	Perth	Alyth; Caputh; Kinfauns
Cathrae	Ayr	Kilbirnie
	Dumfries	Torthorwald
	Dunbarton	Old Kilpatrick
	Fife	Kinghorn
	Lanark	Barony
	Midlothian	Corstorphine; Edinburgh: Inveresk
	Perth	Meigle

	County	Parish
Cathrae (continued)	Roxburgh	Crailing; Hawick; Mawich; Melrose
Cathraw	Angus	Inverkeilor; Montrose
	Perth	Meigle; Moneydie
Cathray	Angus	Arbirlot; St. Vigeans
	Perth	Bendochy; Caputh; Cargill; Meigle
Cathre	Angus	Dundee
	Fife	Balmerino; Kirkcaldy
	Perth	Blair Atholl
Cathrea	Ayr	Dalry
	Fife	Kinghorn
	Roxburgh	Melrose
	Selkirk	Selkirk
Cathree	Fife	Kinghorn
Cathrein	Lanark	Glasgow-High Church
Cathrel	Lanark	Glasgow-Bridgeton
Cathrell	Lanark	Glasgow-Bridgeton; Glasgow-Central
Cathren	Angus	Dundee; Monifieth
Cathres	Angus	Oathlaw
Cathrew	Angus	Arbirlot; Arbroath; Dundee; Eassie & Nevay,; Guthrie; Mains & Strathmartine; Murroes; St.Vigeans; Tealing

	County	Parish
Cathrew (continued)	Perth	Abernyte; Bendochy; Caputh; Kinclaven; Moulin; Redgorton
Cathrey	Angus	Airlie
Cathrie	Berwick	Cranshaws
	Fife	Elie; Kirkcaldy
	Midlothian	Edinburgh
	Perth	Abernyte; Kinclaven; Longforgan; Perth
Cathroe	Angus	Glamis
	Perth	Cargill; Kinclaven; Perth
Cathron	Angus	Dundee; Eassie & Nevay
Cathroy	Angus	Glamis
Cathrow	Angus	Airlie; Arbirlot; Arbroath; Auchterhouse; Brechin; Dundee; Eassie & Nevay; Farnell; Forfar; Glamis; Guthrie; Inverarity & Methy; Kettins; Kirriemuir; Lundie & Fowlis; Mains & Strathmartine: Monifieth; Monikie; Montrose; Oathlaw; Panbride; Ruthven; St. Vigeans; Tannadice; Tealing
	Fife	St. Andrews & St. Leonards
	Kincardine	Markirk
	Perth	Alyth; Auchtergaven; Caputh; Fowlis Easter;
	Inchture;	Kinclaven; Meigle; Perth
Cathrowe	Perth	Errol
Cathrron	Angus	Panbride
Cathry	Angus	Airlie; Arbirlot

	County	Parish
Catrow	?	?
Cawthra	Lanark	Glasgow
Cawthron	Midlothian	Edinburgh; Leith
Cawthrow	Angus	Inverkeilor
Cothrew	Angus	Arbroath
Kathra	Angus	Liff, Benvie & Strathmartine
Kathray	Angus	Eassie & Nevay
Kathrew	Angus	Arbroath
Kathro	Angus	Carmyllie; Dundee; Dunnichen; Glamis; Liff, Benvie & Invergowie; Monikie; Murroes
	Perth	Perth
Kathrow	Angus	Monikie