THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH PLACE-NAMES

The pronunciation of English place-names has been a field widely neglected by pronouncing dictionaries and place-name scholars. In recent years only two publications have to a larger extent - but not exclusively - dealt with the pronunciation of English place-names, viz. G. Miller, *BBC Pronouncing Dictionary of Proper Names,* London 1971, and T. Otsuka et al., *English Pronouncing Dictionary of Proper Names,* Tokyo 1969; beside these two valuable volumes D. Jones, *English Pronouncing Dictionary,* London, 13th edn. 1967, repr. with corr. 1974, contains a considerable number of place-name pronunciations. However, all three dictionaries list the so-called spelling pronunciation of a place-name, i.e. a form of pronunciation which is oriented after the modern spelling of the name; only G. Miller and D. Jones occasionally quote local or archaic forms of pronunciation.

A wider selection of archaic and local (dialectal) forms of pronunciation is presented in two older publications, viz. R. C. Hope, *A Glossary of Dialectal Place-nomenclature,* London, 2nd edn. 1883 (1st edn. Scarborough 1882) and in M.M.A. Schröer, *Neuenglisches Aussprachewörterbuch mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der wichtigsten Eigennamen.* Heidelberg, 2nd edn. 1922 (1st edn. 1913).

In order to obtain further information about possible local, obsolescent or archaic pronunciations deviating from the "official" pronunciation one must consult the publications of the English Place-Name Society, where local and archaic forms are given as incidental material. Another source is the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* by E. Ekwall and a number of publications on English place-names published before the EPNS series started in 1926. Some local forms can also be found in the *English Dialect Grammar* and *English Dialect Dictionary* by J. Wright and in works on regional dialects. None of these works, however, gives a complete list of the pronunciation of place-names in the county dealt with.

For this reason the present writer, having consulted and excerpted more than a hundred volumes on place-names and dialects as well as pronouncing dictionaries, plans to compile a dictionary of archaic, local and Standard pronunciations of English place-names. For some placenames more than one form of local pronunciation has been found, and the source from which a particular form has been collected will be quoted; this will give the reader a hint as to when a particular local form was recorded and whether it is still likely to be in current use. The author expects to present about 9,000 place-names with about 20,000 forms of pronunciation that have been current for the last hundred years.

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COLLECTING PLACE-NAMES IN ARRAN

In the Autumn of 1974 I began work on the place-names of the Isle of Arran in Scotland for a Ph.D. degree supervised by Mr. R. L. Thomson of the University of Leeds. The first part of my task took me to the Ordnance Survey and Rolls Offices in Edinburgh and the Estate Office at Brodick in Arran to obtain names from documentary sources. In addition I was allowed access by kind permission of Professor J. MacQueen to prior collections of Arran place-names tape-recorded from informants by members of the staff of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. It was pointed out to me that these collections were not complete and I would have to rescue what was left in Arran.

Place-name gathering in Scotland involves collecting from oral as well as from documentary sources, and in those areas where Gaelic has recently ceased to become the *gnáth-theanga* of the community in which some of its elders would preserve a memory of the older Gaelic traditions this factor is all the more important. The island of Arran falls into this category, and in the first half of 1975 three trips were made to the island to seek out those old folk who would likely be of help to me. As far as is known only one fluent native speaker of Arran Gaelic survives, though there are others who spoke Gaelic in their younger days, but who have now forgotton most of it; there are a few native speakers of other dialects of Gaelic living in Arran. Within Arran itself three sub-dialect areas of Gaelic are attested: northside (around Lochranza), Shiskine (west coast) and southside (Corriecravie to Brodick). The latter two are closer to each other than to the northside and show similarities to Manx and East Ulster Irish; the former bears resemblances to Tarbert (Mid-Argyll) Gaelic.

During the course of my visits some twenty informants were interviewed, mainly on the western side of the island where the tradition seems to have lingered the longest, and all were most helpful in availing me of their knowledge. The nomenclature obtained from these folk by means of a tape-recorder with reference to 6" O.S. maps were mainly Gaelic and consisted of names of hills, glens, passes, crevices, individual rocks and unusual features, gullies, fields, parts of fields, roads, coastal inlets, creeks, tidal rocks, islets, villages, farms, bothies, paths, etc. In many cases my informants, who had not used or heard some of the names for a long period of time, required spiritual assistance in the form of a dram or three of Bell's best - an indispensable part of the field-worker's equipment in Scotland - to jog the memory. Whisky was usually offered before work commenced to put the informant at ease and to get rid of any formality. Unlike the Isle of Man (where I have collected names and folklore material) no abstainers were encountered. In some cases it was not only place-names that were obtained, but stories and yarns (including memories of illicit distilling and the clearances, fairy tales of the international folktale variety, smuggling, etc.), genealogies of various personalities, the odd bit of *skeet,* and in one instance a fragment of an old Arran song in Gaelic.

The standard equipment used in Scotland in oral collection is the tape-recorder and permission to use it was sought from the informant beforehand. Only on one occasion was permission refused; in this instance the names had to be written phonetically. On some people the tape-recorder had an interesting effect: it either made them reticent and they felt more relaxed when it was off, or it encouraged them to mix their valuable contribution with a lot of rubbish

which had to be sifted later. In spite of its shortcomings, if used properly with discretion, the tape-recorder can be of enormous assistance to scholarship.

Working out in the field in this respect is interesting and enjoyable, but it can have its callous and dehumanising aspects. Just prior to one visit one of my most important informants was committed to hospital after a heart attack. When I arrived on the island I went to see how he was, and following a preliminary chat I casually took out a bit of paper (it would have been improper in the circumstances to introduce the maps and tape-recorder at his deathbed) and asked him just by-the-way what the old Gaelic names were on certain features near to his home - names which at that point in time only he himself knew. I was conscious all the while of obtaining as much of the passing tradition as I could, since the knowledge of it would die with him if uncollected. I managed to get them down and was very grateful for them. Two days after I saw him he died.

After the collections have been made the names are assessed and their significance determined. There is a hint that some names of Brittonic origin, though perhaps disguised in Gaelic or Norse dress, may be uncovered. Completion of this task will take place in due course.

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THE ONOMASTICIAN AFIELD

(This is a slightly shortened version of a paper delivered at the 1977 Annual General Meeting of the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland, which was held on April 16th at University College London - Ed.)

The folklorist, as most of you will no doubt have noticed from time to time, is an unusual animal. Whereas most of us are awake and active during the day, the folklorist is largely a nocturnal creature, seldom stirring much before noon, given to frequenting remote country public houses, and engaging in long conversations with aged countrymen, most of whom seem to be deaf. If you are driving in the country after midnight, and chance to see a muffled figure in your car headlights, trudging along a country lane, tape recorder slung over right shoulder, it will undoubtedly be a member of this rare species on his way to (or from) an encounter with the past. His energy seems boundless, his work-rate stupendous. He can drink most other academics (even onomasticians, who are seldom tee-total) under the table, can afterwards set up a mass of complicated recording equipment with apparent nonchalance, and proceed to record a retired Yorkshire gamekeeper or a Hebridean crofter singing 42 verses of some obscure ballad, not once but twice, to make sure that he got it right the first time. He will put up in cramped lodging houses in isolated parts of Britain, be out in all weathers, and suffer no end of boring stories from individuals who think that they are God's gift to George Ewart Evans. He will then, armed with several dozen reels of tape, retire to his office to analyse his findings. He is at once scholar, electronics technician, car-mechanic, photographer, public relations officer, and father confessor. He can often turn his hand to making music, poaching salmon, gralloching a stag or repairing an outboard motor. He can talk knowledgeably on such diverse subjects as cheese-making, net-mending, whisky distilling, thatching, dyeing, baking, brewing, ornithology, animal diseases, emigration in the eighteenth century, poltergeists, second-sight, demonology and Viking coin hoards. He is, in essence, all things to all men. It is part of his make-up as a seeker after old habits, old songs and the old way of life in general.

In my own branch of oral tradition, that of name studies, I have found myself in a number of unusual situations. In the course of my work I have often lent a hand making hay, cutting peats, or hauling salmon nets. I have helped with sheep-shearing, potato-harvesting and corn-stooking, and on one never-to-be-forgotton occasion, I found myself helping to dig a cess-pit. I have spent several nights alone in a haunted cottage in Yell in Shetland, slept in a tent in Lewis tormented by midges and got half-drowned when I fell out of a boat in Argyll. None of these experiences (the Yell affair excepted) seems to have done me any permanent damage, and I have, in moments of stress, found comfort in the scriptural verse 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

To those of you who are unfamiliar with the work of the Place Name Survey of the School of Scottish Studies, I should perhaps describe it briefly. Essentially, the work of name studies is carried out in two distinct fields - the collection and collation of historical forms and the gathering of place-name material from oral tradition. This last was to be my particular field when I was appointed as Bill Nicolaisen's assistant in 1965, and since then I have been engaged in recording place-name material in the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland, as well as conducting the usual work of the Survey. This is partly a folkloristic process, as well as providing pronunciation forms for existing place-names, since I often work in conjunction with a colleague, especially in these days of financial stringency, when travelling expenses are so high.