

JERSEY PLACE NAMES*

"But why do you want to know the names of my fields? We are all forgetting them now as they are so old." This was said to me by a neighbour, and I am so grateful to him, as his remark was the catalyst which started us off making our record.

One of our own fields, Le Clos des Gronds, could not be explained by anyone whom we asked, and from this point my husband and I started to feel that local field-names ought to be catalogued, preserved and explained. This had never been attempted. Working with us from the beginning was a friend, Jean Arthur, fortunately far younger than I, so that she will be able to continue the study into the future.

She and I started systematically touring the island, which we both know so well, and we visited hundreds of farms and recorded all the place-names the owners could tell us, as well as the name of the fief on which their farms stood. Throughout we met traditional Jersey hospitality, and the numbers of cups of tea we have been offered would encircle the island, while my garden is full of cuttings and shrubs I was given.

Our lists were gradually filled in on the map and on index cards. To begin with we only listed names that could be located on the map, but as we were also working on many local collections of manuscripts we realised that many of the more interesting and ancient names could not always be located. So gradually our card index came to contain far more names than our maps.

Concurrently my husband set about to read all published material and to extract therefrom all place names. With this rapidly growing mass of material he saw that some form of analysis was becoming necessary, and so one might say that he turned our catalogue into dictionary form. This he was well qualified to do, being a classical scholar, an expert cartographer and a most meticulous worker and painstaking typist. We started collecting names in 1963, and he devoted an ever increasing amount of his time to this work for well over a decade. Finally the Corpus of Jersey Toponymy was presented to La Société Jersiaise, the local archaeological and historical society, in 1975.

I was going to refer to it as the finished work, but such a study can never be finished, and every batch of manuscripts studied adds some new names to our collection. But there comes a time when the worker needs to pause and to produce the fruits of his labours and offer them to the world for the benefit of others. And so our joint effort was produced, through his workmanship, in two works, a place-name dictionary and a folder of maps.

The former, in typescript, is bound in three volumes, amounting to nearly 1,000 quarto pages. The introduction explains the situation and our approach to the work, cites sources and bibliography, and analyses the many types of name represented. Then alphabetically over 5,000 names are given, with the map reference, the parish, the etymology, variants of spelling in ms. or printed sources, with particular emphasis on the earliest forms found.

The map folder is based on the 12½" O.S. map of Jersey, and is hand-drawn on tracing paper. It contains 44 sheets, and every place-name that we have been able to locate is filled in. Local fields were all numbered

some years ago by the Department of Agriculture and these reference numbers have been used. In addition to field-names there are roads, rocks, bays, creeks, streams, ponds, marshes, districts, villages and hamlets.

We have not found all the field-names and I do not think we ever shall; many small patches are just called La Falaize, Le Cotil, or La Vallette, for instance, and there are large numbers of purely descriptive names such as Le Clos de Devant, de haut, du nord, and the inevitable Clos du Ménage, which usually passed to the eldest son in his share of the 'partage' of the property.

Small as Jersey is, it is packed with archaeology and history, a microcosm of evolution from our palaeolithic cave at La Cotte to a field called Le Clos du Bunker, referring to a German bunker built during the last war. A field where the Queen was entertained in 1978 was being named La Clos de la Reine, having previously been named Le Clos de la Herpe, the Witches' field.

Perhaps the earliest documentary sources from which one can pick out place-names are the Extentes (1274, 1331, 1528, 1607, 1668 and 1749) and the Assize Rolls (those of 1299 and 1309 are easily available) and Le Cartulaire des Iles in which a few documents are pre-conquest. It is from there, for instance, that we learn that in 1042 the parish church of St Mary was already named 'arsis monasterii' the only record of such a monastery. Of manuscript material there is more than one could possibly study in a life time. There are fourteenth-century documents among them, and from then on the quantity grows. The sixteenth century is particularly rich and gives us many pre-Reformation chapels and wayside crosses.

The language, it will be seen, is French, and this needs some explanation. Jersey French is closely akin to Norman French, but until recent years was not a written language, and what was spoken in the Courts and by the lawyers was pure French, and our manuscript 'contrats' are very good indeed, well written, with faultless grammar. But some localised forms appear naturally, particularly in place names.

I hardly dare to give individual names, so varied and fascinating are they, but here are a very few examples, where the name is still in use.

Frigidus Mons in 1160 is now Frémont.

La Terre de Gabart stems from a family name recorded in 1299.

La Flocquetterie, derived from Robert de Flocques who was here in 1461 with the invading forces of Maulevrier.

Ile Agois, derived through Agouais, from the Goes family of the 12th century.

Bradford Farm, derived from the holdings of the Bras de Fer family, one Robertus Bradfer having held a 'bovata terrae' there in 1274.

Le Hercanty, the tilted menhir, mentioned as a sea-mark in 1685.

Le fief de Vingt Livres, from 20 librates of land, the dower of Marguerite d'Aubigny in 1227.

La Douzaine d'oeufs, a field so named from an annual payment of a dozen eggs to the parish priest.

Le Moulin de Tostain, from an 11th-century priest of that name, (known as 'Pape les âmes cum tortis pedibus.')

The island is but twelve miles by four, but in that small area history seethes, a history moulded by the geographical position of a group of islands torn between ecclesiastical and historical links with Normandy, and a deep and abiding loyalty to the English Crown, a loyalty which began with John's loss of Normandy in 1204, an historical fact which put the islands, and Jersey most of all, in the forefront of battle.

And so, with my friend I continue the work, since my husband's very sudden death in 1979. Every name or fact, new to us, which comes our way, is recorded, and we hope to incorporate this material in an appendix to his work if and when it is published. It has been a most interesting project, sometimes really exciting, sometimes disappointing, but in the long run deeply rewarding.

NOTE

*This is a shortened version of a paper given at the Twelfth Conference of the Council for Name Studies at Keele, March 23rd 1980.

JOAN STEVENS

St. Mary, Jersey

THE SURVIVAL OF ROMANO-BRITISH TOPONYMY*

Nothing ambitious is offered here, simply a series of comments which may shed a little oblique light. They arise in part from the work of Professor Rivet and myself on The Place-names of Roman Britain (PNRB), although within that book it was no part of our purpose to deal systematically with post-Roman survival of names.

The problem of the survival or extinction of Romano-British toponymy is much less than a purely philological one. In considering the linguistic situation of south and east Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries, the period after Roman authority was withdrawn and during which Germanic invaders and settlers displaced speakers of Latin and British over large areas, the philological fact is seen to be utterly dependent upon changes which only the historian and the archaeologist can explain. The historian depends for possibly historical data on a few brief references in chronicles, and must make what he can of the literary-pious text of Gildas and of the part-legendary materials in the early sections of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the pedigrees and regnal lists, etc. He further depends upon Bede who wrestled, honourably but not always successfully, with the same intractable materials and perhaps others not now extant. What is the poor philologist to do when he finds such serious works as Leslie Alcock's Arthur's Britain (1971) and John Morris's The Age of Arthur (1973) brought under devastating attack by David Dumville for their incomprehension or misuse of sources?¹ On the other hand it seems that archaeological techniques have made great progress in recent years in recognizing both late Romano-British and early Germanic presences, either by identifying habitations or in the typology and dating of pottery and other artefacts. We can hope to learn much more in the near future about e.g. late Romano-British Christianity, the state of some towns in the 5th century, perhaps about the dating of early Germanic settlement, and so on. Place-name studies will benefit accordingly, and it is a pleasure to pay tribute to Mrs Gelling's work on, for example, wīc-hām names, in which so many strands both philological and archaeological are drawn together.² There is an admirable running commentary on these matters, with much reference to the work of Continental scholars and to Continental sites, by Mrs Hawkes in her section 'Post-Roman and Pagan Anglo-Saxon' of the survey 'British Antiquity', annually in the Archaeological Journal.

The scope of 'Romano-British toponymy' goes far beyond what is directly recorded for us. From all sources up to 410, including late texts such as the Ravenna Cosmography (early 8th century), Professor Rivet and I collected some 460 names, including not only habitation-names but also regional and ethnic names, river-names, etc., which of course have to be considered together in a mutually informative system. Some names are still missing for relatively important places, such as Lancaster fort and vicus, many among minor towns, and a few of major rivers such as the Medway. To this total of about 460, covering most of the 'major' toponymy, one must add notionally thousands of names unrecorded in any ancient text or inscription. Every river, every lake and forest and hill, had its name, surely 100% Celtic. Some of these we can deduce confidently, e.g. *Brigantia (strictly, perhaps, a divine name) > R. Brent of Middlesex (compare R. Braint of Anglesey). Every small settlement had its name, perhaps 95% Celtic, allowing a few named in Latin along the roads (like the recorded Ad Ansam). Every villa had a name, usually that of the owner or of an early owner, and of the 600 villas it is likely that most would have been named in Latin because they belonged to romanized gentry, in line with the four villa-names we do know (*Albiniano, Anicetis, Sulloniacis, Villa Faustini).