

Twenty-First Annual Study Conference

The XX1st Annual Study Conference organized by the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland was held from 31 March to 3 April 1989 at David Russell Hall, University of St Andrews. The programme of papers had been drawn up by Mr Ian Fraser (Edinburgh) and Dr Veronica Smart (St Andrews), who are to be congratulated on its appropriateness and coherence.

Proceedings opened after dinner on Friday 31 March, with a plea from Dr Graeme Whittington (St Andrews) for greater interdisciplinary co-operation: as an instance of the mutual relevance of philology and of historical geography, he cited the toponymy, topography and settlement history of North Fife.

The Saturday-morning session began with a splendidly illustrated account by Mr John Kerr of place-naming along some estate boundaries in Atholl: a continuation of the research on which he reported at Nottingham in 1987 (see *ante*, XI, 131-43). Next, Dr Doreen Waugh discussed the rôles played in Shetland toponymy by certain Scandinavian elements, notably *borg*, *sætr*, *staðir*, *bólstaðr* and *þing*. The session concluded with a witty, as well as interdisciplinary, history by Dr Ronald Cant (St Andrews) of the city of St Andrews itself, toponymy included.

The afternoon saw a return to terms associated with estate boundaries, when Miss Boel Jepson (Lund) considered certain items used in Old English charters. Next, Dr Gillian Fellows-Jensen (Copenhagen) reassessed, with particular reference to the Central Lowlands, the value of name-evidence for Viking settlement. The day's work concluded with a paper provoking lively responses from the audience, when Mr John Field illustrated the variety and abundance of animal-reference in English field-names.

The Sunday morning was devoted to two substantial contributions, each taking up a variation on an earlier theme. First, Mr Peter Kitson (Birmingham) returned to the vocabulary of Old English boundary-clauses, using this as a basis for revising the map of Old English dialects. Then Mr Fraser reported on a pilot survey, based partly on documents and partly on replies to a questionnaire, of field-naming in southern Scotland.

The afternoon excursion—guided by Mr Fraser with the assistance of Dr Smart and of Dr Barbara Crawford (St Andrews)—took the party over the Tay road-bridge and westwards along the riparian plain, the Carse of Gowrie, as far as Perth and then south to Abernethy. All were there invited (though some declined) to ascend a twelfth-century watch-tower whose stone newel had, at some sacrifice of authenticity to safety, been replaced by a cast-iron spiral; at its parapetted summit we enjoyed fine vistas, and air fresh enough to whisk away a Cambrian hat—happily, soon restored to its owner. On then to a tea featuring a sumptuous variety of scone (all reassuringly non-petrous), but never a biscuit; the apparently toponymous dainties missing were, in any case, rumoured to be in fact

named from their inventor's surname. Before re-embusment, out came cameras in clicking profusion. Eastwards then along the estuary's southern shore to Balmerino and the all too scant remains of its once-great abbey, in whose grounds there stands a Spanish chestnut, dated at between four and seven centuries old, his venerable limbs now patched with plaster and supported by prostheses.

The concluding session, held after dinner on the Sunday evening, was an open-forum discussion, chaired by Mr R.A. McKinley (Leicester). Topics ranged from the potential rôle of name-studies both in school curricula and in post-graduate work to possible strategies for alerting amateur enthusiasts, whether genealogists or local historians, to the need for scholarly caution when using name-evidence. Such considerations led to proposals for founding an auxiliary onomastic society, more broadly based than the present Council. On that note, the company adjourned to the bar.

The papers by Dr Fellows-Jensen, Mr Field, Mr Kerr, Dr Waugh and Dr Whittington appear in the present volume (that by Mr Kitson is to appear elsewhere).