



G.B. Grundy had put forward, in 1921, the suggestion that the name is derived from the name of St Boniface.<sup>4</sup> Grundy was supported by local folk-linguistics on this point. An important piece of supporting evidence is the dedication of the little church at Bonchurch: it really is to St Boniface, and has been for as long as records go back. Since there are no phonological obstacles to the first syllable of the saint's name appearing in *Bonchurch*, the onus surely rests on Grundy's opponents to explain why his view is unacceptable. Kökeritz, however, just dismisses it: 'out of the question'. It is possible that, in writing this, he was concerned to distance himself from Grundy, whose etymological explorations were not always impeccable. We therefore need to try to reconstruct any more serious objection of Kökeritz's, and presumably of Ekwall's, for ourselves. A partisan of the local view might take *Bonchurch* for a compound of the structure [saint's name] + *cirice*, where the first element might be a highly-reduced version of the bare stem or of the stem in the genitive case. There was no reason for Ekwall and Kökeritz to disbelieve in the existence of such place-names: we find, for instance, *St Michael on Wyre* (Lancs.; 1086 *Michelescherche*) and *St Mary Church* (Devon; c.1070 *Sce Maria Circea*, a bizarre but suggestive form). *Christchurch* (Hants.), *Dewchurch* and *Peterchurch* (Herefs.), all with an originally genitive first element, are of Middle English origin but appear to continue the pattern of the Lancashire and Devon names just mentioned. If it be objected that none of these spellings predates the Conquest, and that they therefore tell us nothing reliable about the onomastic possibilities of earlier Anglo-Saxon England, we can still draw attention to significant analogues. Place-names in '-church' are found with a personal name in the genitive as the first element even if that person was not a saint, e.g., *Alvechurch* (Worcs.), (*Thorpe*) *Adchurch* (Nthants.), *Offchurch* (Warks.), all recorded in Anglo-Saxon times. Broadly parallel forms of Old English origin in *-stōw* 'place with cult associations (*inter alia*)' exist, with a saint's name in the genitive case as the first element: *Hibaldstow* (Lincs.), *Edwinstowe* (Notts.), *Peterstow* (Herefs.), *Wistanstow* (Salop), *Jacobstowe*, *Padstow* (Cornwall), *Felixstowe* (Suffolk); and just possibly with a bare stem first element, but more likely also genitive: *Instow* (Devon) and *Godstow* (Oxon.). One might also mention *Romaldkirk*, *Felixkirk* (Yorks. NR), *Chadkirk* (Cheshire) as Old Norse or Old Norse-influenced analogues.<sup>5</sup> I believe there are no inherent objections to a name of the structural type *\*Bonifatiuscirice* or *\*Bonifatiusescirice*; and certainly not to the latter.

If Ekwall and Kökeritz could have no serious objections to a name of this structure, they must have thought that the forms as transmitted could not provide support for this etymology. It is true that some rather drastic abbreviation must have taken place to produce 1086 *Bonecerce* (DB fo. 53, Hants (IOW) 7/1), 1271 *Bonechurche* (*Assize Roll*), and so on. But given that *Bonifatius*, when uttered by an Old English speaker, would have been stressed on the first syllable, and given the length of the supposed place-name, a reduction of this type is unsurprising. Only the degree may be surprising. Even then, one should bear in mind such attested reductions as 695 *Gistheresuuyrth* (BCS 87 S1246) > 1086 *Gistelesworde* (apparently <*\*Gis(t)les-*), which may be a case of either phonologically or morphologically based attrition. (This is now *Isleworth*, Middx.)<sup>6</sup>

It is also possible that a short-form *\*Bona* existed; *\*Bonancirice* would be an irreproachable etymon for the recorded spellings. (*\*Bonescirice* might also be possible, but there is no trace whatever of the strong genitive inflection in the medieval record, as there is in the case of other relevant names, such as *Dewchurch*.) No indigenous name *\*Bona* or the like is known otherwise in Old English. Some continental personal names in *Bon-* are recorded. Those found amongst the Lombards have been plausibly viewed, by Elda Morlicchio, as containing Latin *bonus*.<sup>7</sup> There appears to be no strong support for the notion that names in *Bon-* may be of Germanic origin and thus available for inclusion in wholly English place-names. Moreover, Latin names of speakers of Old English are exceedingly rare, which makes it unlikely that *Bonchurch* could enshrine the Latin name of a person other than the saint.

One might, I suppose, toy with the idea that *Bone-* could represent a Middle English form of an OE *\*Bāna*, a weak-declined name-form derived from the common noun *bān* 'bone'. Such allusive by-names or nicknames would not be unexpected, but clear analogues for the use of such body-part terms are hard to find. The *\*Wemba/Wæmba* posited as a derivative of OE *wamb* 'belly' in *Wembley*<sup>8</sup> is not a phonologically precise parallel; *\*Wamba*, without *i*-mutation, would be required for such a parallel (as in the Gothic supposed congener cited by the editor of *PNMiddx*). I have looked through Searle's *Onomasticon*<sup>9</sup> in vain for a *\*Nōsa*, *\*Lippa*, *\*Hēafda*, *\*Fōta*, *\*Fingra*, *\*Earsa*, *\*Flæscā*, *\*Si(o)nwa* and the like (but, N.B., the place-name *Fingringhoe* (Essex), for which Ekwall in *DEPN* entertains the possibility of a personal name, and the charter form *Lippan dic*<sup>10</sup>). Moreover, one might expect for a reflex of OE *\*Bāna* at least some Early Middle English spellings in *-a-*; there

are none. If we were nevertheless to accept the possibility of a \**Bāna* of such an origin, we should have to allow either that its appearance in *Bonchurch*, with its church of St Boniface, is a pure coincidence, or that it is the folk-etymological source of a church dedication already in place in the early Middle Ages. The latter is unlikely, owing to the apparent absence in post-Conquest England of any cult of St Boniface.

As for the plausibility or otherwise of *Bona* as a short-form for *Bonifatius*, there is some Old English evidence for short-forms in *-a* for names of foreign origin, but in most cases it is not clear whether the alien name has been abbreviated and supplied with the Old English inflectional element; or whether the Old English name has merely been adapted from a short-form, or the first element, of a dithematic name in the parent language; or whether the name in question was fully Anglicized before the short-form was created. Förster gives Anglicized Welsh *Cada*, *Penda*, *Riuuala*, *Tuda*;<sup>11</sup> the first and the last, at least, may not be Old English in form at all, for Jackson notes an OW *Tuta* and allows the probability of an Old Welsh hypocoristic of names in PrW \**Cad*.<sup>12</sup> Von Feilitzen and Insley have pointed to Anglo-Scandinavian *Acha*, *Auca*, *Turka/Turca*/\**Tukke* in Middle English;<sup>13</sup> but the medieval dates of attestation of these forms and their mode of formation, from Scand. *Askell*, *Audkell*, *Þorkell*, could suggest that these were already fully Anglicized names when the short-forms arose. There is no clear evidence, therefore, that short-names were formed in Old English by directly abbreviating alien names and supplying a flexional *-a*. But there are certainly no grounds for saying that this was impossible in Old English, and there was a very large pool of hypocoristic personal names serving in a general way as the basis for an analogical *Bonifatius* > \**Bona*, e.g., that of Boniface's kinswoman Leofgyth, known to him as *Leoba*.

It would be interesting to know whether a local Boniface cult existed. Liebermann's *Die Heiligen Englands* records no such cult.<sup>14</sup> Grundy points out that 'the well in the neighbouring parish of Ventnor', carved out of Bonchurch, is dedicated to Boniface. I do not know how old this tradition is. I take it that Grundy refers to the former well near the summit of St Boniface Down. The name of this latter hill is on record since the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The dedication of the church, the down, and the well I take to constitute but a single instance of the veneration of Boniface. An eighth-century synod recommended that Boniface, the 'apostle of Germany', born in Devon c.680, be venerated in England as highly as Gregory and Augustine, but no substantial cult seems to have

crystallized outside Germany.<sup>16</sup> A reliquary discovered in the church at Brixworth has been associated with Boniface, but the grounds for this association are not altogether compelling.<sup>17</sup>

I suggest therefore that there is no pressing reason to reject the traditional local etymology of the name of Bonchurch, even though there are relatively minor uncertainties about its morphology. In any case there is every reason to reject all the alternatives put forward by Ekwall and Kökeritz.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND NOTES

I am grateful to John Insley for discussion of some of the ideas in this paper, and for suggestions about their wider ramifications.

<sup>1</sup> E. Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1936; fourth edition 1960), *s.n.*

<sup>2</sup> H. Kökeritz, *The Place-Names of the Isle of Wight*, *Nomina Germanica IX* (Uppsala, 1940), 45-6.

<sup>3</sup> M. Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English* (Uppsala, 1919), 87.

<sup>4</sup> G.B. Grundy, 'The Saxon land charters of Hampshire, with notes on place and field names, I', *Archaeological Journal* LXXVIII (1921), 55-173, esp. 119.

<sup>5</sup> For a convenient list, see K. Cameron, *English Place-Names*, 4th edn (London, 1988), 126-8.

<sup>6</sup> *PNMiddx*, 27. The editor expresses some uncertainty about whether the Old English form does indeed refer to Isleworth. But the identification is accepted by P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated Bibliography* (London, 1968), entry S1246.

<sup>7</sup> E. Morlicchio, *Antroponimia langobarda a Salerno nel IX secolo; i nomi del Codex diplomaticus Cavensis* (Naples, 1985), 220.

<sup>8</sup> *PNMiddx*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> W.G. Searle, *Onomasticon anglo-saxonicum* (Cambridge, 1897).

<sup>10</sup> BCS 924, Sawyer 605.

<sup>11</sup> M. Förster, 'Keltisches Wortgut im Englischen', *Texte und Forschungen zur englischen Kulturgeschichte: Festgabe für Felix Liebermann zum 21. Juli 1921* (Halle, 1921), 119-242, esp. 176-7. I discount his inclusion of *Adda*, rejected by H. Ström, *Old English Personal Names in Bede's History* (Lund, 1939), 59 and n.1, following Ekwall in a lecture of 1932.

<sup>12</sup> K.H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 309, 555.

<sup>13</sup> O. von Feilitzen, 'Notes on some Scandinavian personal names in English

12th-century records', *Personnamnsstudier 1964, tillägnade minnet av Ivar Modéer (1904-1960)*, *Anthroponymica Suecana VI* (Stockholm, 1965), 52-68, esp. 64-6. J. Insley, 'Some Scandinavian personal names from south-west England', *Namn och Bygd LXX* (1982), 77-93, esp. 88 and n.44. *Idem*, 'The names of the tenants of the Bishop of Ely in 1251: a conflict of onomastic systems', *Ortnamnssällskapets i Uppsala Årsskrift* (1985), 58-78, esp. 62.

<sup>14</sup> F. Liebermann, ed., *Die Heiligen Englands* (Hanover, 1889).

<sup>15</sup> Kökeritz, *op. cit.*, 233; there is some doubt about the precise date of this record of *terram cultibilem lateris montis sancti Bonifatii*.

<sup>16</sup> The assessment of Boniface is by his approximate contemporary Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury; for the synod, see A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, eds, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1871), 390-4.

<sup>17</sup> A medieval gild of Boniface existed at Brixworth, and the reliquary found in the church has been thought, by association, to be of the saint: see *VCH Nthants.*, IV, 157, n.2. Parts of the present church of Brixworth existed at the time when Boniface (under that name) and his memory were most conspicuous in England (c.718-54 *et subseq.*): see H.M. and J. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols continuously paginated (Cambridge, 1965-78), (1), 108-14, where the original structure, much of which survives, is dated to the seventh century.

## Place-Naming in Domesday Book: Settlements, Estates, and Communities

David Roffe

DOMESDAY BOOK furnishes the first record of the majority of English place-names, and it is therefore not surprising that the study of those therein has been preoccupied with their etymology and identity. Their applications and referents have received less attention. There have always been names, such as those in *-tūn* with the root meaning of 'fence', 'enclosure', or 'homestead', which identify places in the strictest sense, but in the earliest period of English toponymy there were some, like *-feld* names, which referred to regions rather than specific settlements. By the eleventh century, however, almost all had become names of habitative nuclei.<sup>1</sup> With the limited exception of river names and the like which were employed in the West Country to identify holdings, it is therefore axiomatic that Domesday provides a minimum account of existing or former settlement-sites in the country at the time. This, however, is saying less than it seems. Until recently, it was generally assumed that Domesday place-names could be directly identified with the nucleated villages which subsequently bore the names; and, since it was believed that Domesday was compiled from the testimony of representatives from the community, the distribution was thus, barring omission and error, an accurate reflection of eleventh-century settlement patterns.<sup>2</sup>

This view is no longer tenable. Archaeological fieldwork has suggested that, at this time, there was often dispersed settlement which only later agglomerated.<sup>3</sup> Further, it is clear that Domesday Book was not a survey of villages. The men of individual settlements did occasionally provide information, but it was the vill which was regularly consulted through the priest, the reeve, and six of its members. This institution is not to be confused with the economic entity which was the township; from the late tenth century the vill was the basic unit of local government which often comprised a number of estates, settlements, and field systems.<sup>4</sup> The structure of the network was largely a matter of public record; the regular sequences of vills and hundreds in the text show that juries were called from a geld list which recorded the name of each community. Their testimony, however, was limited to details of tenure, assessment to the geld, and possibly value of land. From its inception at Gloucester in 1085 Domesday Book was perceived as a survey of estates, and it is clear that it was tenants-in-chief or their