

Kildreke c.1360

Pitliver (Dunfermline parish, Fife) *pett*

Lauer c.1128; *Lauer* c.1166; *Petliuer* 1227, c.1230 (× 2); *Liuer* 1230×36;

Livers c.1230; *Liuers* 1231; *Petlyuer* 1451; *Pitleuir* 1557 × 1585

(Gaelic *leabhar* 'book', in this context 'Gospel book')

Pitmurchie (Lumphanan parish, Aberdeenshire) *pett*

? *Morchory* 1250; *Pitmorche* 1470

Pittowie (Crail parish, Fife) *pett*

Petollin 1153 × 1178; *Pitolly* 1312; *Tolly* 1452; *Pittowie* 1642; *Tollie* 1646

(Gaelic *toll* 'hole, hollow')

APPENDIX 4

GAELIC, CUMBRIC AND PICTISH ELEMENTS (with approximate meanings)

àth (Gaelic) 'ford'

bad (Gaelic) 'spot, clump'

baile (Gaelic) 'estate'

bàrr (Gaelic) 'top'

blàr (Gaelic) 'field'; ? 'clearing in wood'

both (Gaelic, Cumbric and [?] Pictish) 'bothy, sheiling'; 'church'
(Gaelicisation of Cumbric and [?] Pictish **bod* 'dwelling')³⁵

**cair* (Cumbric and Pictish) 'fort'

cill (Gaelic) 'church'

cinn (Gaelic) 'head, end; (at the) end of'

**coid* (Cumbric and Pictish) 'wood'

coille (Gaelic) 'wood'

dabhach (Gaelic) 'davoch' (measurement of arable land roughly
equivalent to a carucate; probably borrowed from Pictish)

dail 'haugh, water-meadow' (borrowing into Gaelic of Pictish **dol*)

dùn (Gaelic) 'hill, fortified hill, fort'

innis (Gaelic) 'island, haugh'

mòine (Gaelic) 'bog, peat-bog'

pett (borrowing into Gaelic from Pictish) 'estate'

poll (Gaelic) 'pool, sluggish stream'

tulach (Gaelic) 'hillock; (?) habitational mound'

³⁵ For a fuller discussion of this element see S. Taylor, 'Place-names and the early Church in eastern Scotland', in *Scotland in Dark Age Britain*, edited by B. E. Crawford (St Andrews, 1996), pp. 93–110.

Ella: An Old English Name in Old Norse Poetry

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Old Norse skaldic poetry is a fruitful source for the study of Old English place- and personal names. Skaldic poetry of the Viking Age is predominantly a type of praise-poetry, providing both commemoration and eulogy, and thus the skalds tend to cite a great number of names, both as a record of peoples or territories conquered and as a form of triumphal rhetoric. Since late Anglo-Saxon England was one of the main spheres of Viking activity, it is no surprise to find English names among those most frequently cited: excluding doubtful instances, in the extant skaldic corpus twenty-nine different English place-names are found in forty-five different occurrences (including river-names), and nine personal names in thirty occurrences. The evidence of Old English names in skaldic verse is of interest for many reasons: historically, for instance, it provides often unique information on the course of the Anglo-Scandinavian wars; linguistically, it permits study of the Scandinavianisation of English names, with attendant implications for Anglo-Norse language contact and intelligibility; and onomastically, it preserves an independent tradition of early forms for a wide range of names, forms which importantly must have been transmitted from Anglo-Saxon to Scandinavian orally rather than scribally.¹

I give below a list of the Old Norse forms of Old English personal names to be found in skaldic poetry, excluding *Ella*, the name

This is a revised version of part of a paper given to the annual conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland at Nottingham in April 1996. I am grateful to members of the Society for discussion on that occasion, and to Heather O'Donoghue for comment on earlier drafts. Except where discussing philological details, I refer to well-known figures by their most familiar name-form in Modern English (e.g. Alfred, Ethelred, Cnut).

¹ I discuss all these issues at greater length in my *English Place-Names in Skaldic Verse*, English Place-Name Society (Nottingham, forthcoming).

subsequently to be discussed in detail. The various poets and poems are cited in probable chronological order, and references are to strophe and line in Finnur Jónsson's standard edition of the skaldic corpus:²

Aðalbrikt (OE *Æpelbriht*, an English priest in Norway)

1. Ívarr Ingimundarson, *Sigurðarbolkr* 1.2

Aðalráðr (OE *Æpelrēd*, king of England 978–1016)

1. Gunnlaugr Illugason ormstunga, *Aðalráðsdrápa* 1.4
2. Gunnlaugr Illugason ormstunga, *Lausavísur* 10.6
3. Óttarr svarti, *Höfuðlausn* 8.2
4. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Knútsdrápa* 2.3
5. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Knútsdrápa* 7.8

Aðalsteinn (OE *Æpelstān*, king of England 924–39)

1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Aðalsteinsdrápa* 1.5
2. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Aðalsteinsdrápa* 2.2
3. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Bersöglisvísur* 4.8
4. Haukr Valdísarson, *Íslendingadrápa* 9.4
5. Haukr Valdísarson, *Íslendingadrápa* 13.2
6. [Anon], *Nóregs konunga-tal* 12.3

Álfgeirr (OE *Ælfgār*, one of Athelstan's governors in Northumbria)

1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Lausavísur* 9.8

Álfifa (OE *Ælfifu*, mistress of Cnut, mother of Sveinn and Harold Harefoot)

1. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Lausavísur* 28.1
2. Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, *Magnúsflokkr* 3.8
3. [Anon], *Nóregs konunga-tal* 36.2

Godrekr (OE *Godrīc*, one of Athelstan's governors in Northumbria)

1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Lausavísur* 9.6

Játgeirr (OE *Ēadgār*, king of England 959–75)

1. Óttarr svarti, *Knútsdrápa* 3.6

² *Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning*, edited by Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols (Copenhagen, 1912–15). At one point I have presumed to alter the title given by Finnur: the poem composed by Gunnlaugr ormstunga for an Anglo-Saxon king should clearly be *Aðalráðsdrápa*, not *Aðalsteinsdrápa*.

Játmundr (OE *Ēadmund*, king of East Anglia died 869 or king of England 939–46)

1. Óttarr svarti, *Höfuðlausn* 8.8
2. Óttarr svarti, *Knútsdrápa* 7.5

The most remarkable features of this list are the distribution of frequencies and the absentees: there may be six extant references to Athelstan and five to Ethelred, but there are none at all to (say) Alfred, Edward the Confessor or Earl Godwine. These two last-named figures (and several others) are repeatedly mentioned in the later Icelandic saga-accounts of Anglo-Saxon England, accounts which draw as much on written sources as oral. The distribution of the skaldic evidence therefore acts as implicit corroboration of the value and genuineness of that evidence: the Anglo-Saxon figures most frequently mentioned are those who impinged most strongly on the Scandinavian consciousness during the Viking Age itself. Thus Ethelred was the main opponent in the campaigns leading ultimately to the accession of Cnut; Athelstan was honoured partly on account of his generosity to Egill Skallagrímsson, most famous of Icelandic skalds, and partly on account of his fostering of King Hákon of Norway (often known in later saga-prose as *Aðalsteinsfóstri* 'Athelstan's foster-son');³ and *Ælfifu's* fame in skaldic verse is due to her position as regent of Norway during the unhappy period when her teenage son Sveinn was king there (1030–35).⁴ But it is the references to *Ella* which really confirm that the skaldic evidence is giving us a lopsided, Scandinavian-centred view of Anglo-Saxon England, and with it a sense of how minor figures are able to grow out of all proportion through the relayings of oral tradition.

Astonishingly, the name occurs no fewer than ten times in the extant corpus, used by eight different poets in nine different poems, thus making its bearer by far the most frequently named Anglo-Saxon in skaldic verse. These ten citations are given below, again in probable chronological order and with traditional dates attached; for each citation I have given (with translation) the whole *helmingr* or half-strophe in which it occurs.⁵

³ The main Icelandic saga-account of Athelstan's fostering of Hákon can be found in Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, edited by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslensk Fornrit, 36–38 (Reykjavík, 1941–51), I, 143–46.

⁴ See Snorri, *Heimskringla*, II, 398–414.

1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Aðalsteinsdrápa* (c.937) 1.2:

Nú hefr fald-Gnár felda,
fellt jörð und nið Ellu,
hjaldr-snerrandi, harra
höfuðbaðmr þrjá jöfra.⁶

'Now the prime son of kings, the augments of the noise of headdress-Gnó [i.e. warrior], has brought low three princes; the land passes into the control of the descendant of *Ella*.'

2. Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórsdrápa* (c.1000) 20.8:

Né liðföstrum Lista
látr val-Rygir mǫttu
aldrminkanda aldar
Ellu steins of bella.⁷

'The Rogalanders of Lister of the hawk-lair [i.e. giants] could not resist the faithful life-shortener [i.e. Þórr] of the men of *Ella* of stone [i.e. giants].'

3. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Víkingarvísur* (c.1015) 7.7:

Stóð Hringmaraheiði
(herfall vas þar) alla
Ellu kind, en olli
arfvörðr Haralds starfi.⁸

'All the people of *Ella* [i.e. the English] stood on *Hringmaraheiðr* [Ringmere], when the heir of Haraldr [i.e. Óláfr helgi] caused trouble. There was death in battle.'

4. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Knútsdrápa* (c.1025–30) 1.1:

Ok Ellu bak,
at, lét, hinn's sat,
Ívarr, ara,

⁵ Where the poem has not been composed in the standard *dróttkvætt* metre a suitable self-contained portion has been cited.

⁶ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 30.

⁷ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 144.

⁸ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 214.

Jórvík, skorit.⁹

'And Ívarr, who ruled at *Jórvík* [York], had an eagle cut on the back of *Ella*.'

5. Hallvarðr háreksblei, *Knútsdrápa* (c.1025–30) 3.5:

Ullar lézt við Ellu
ættleifð ok mǫ reifðir
sverðmans snyrtiherðir
sundviggs flota bundit.¹⁰

'Splendid hardener of the sea-horse of Ullr [i.e. warrior], you had your fleet bound to the inheritance of *Ella* [i.e. England], and gladdened the gull of the swordman [i.e. raven].'

6. Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, *Magnúsflokkur* (c.1045) 6.6:

Unði ótal Vinða
Ellu konr at fella;
hvar hafi gumnar gǫrva
geirhríð fregit meiri?¹¹

'The kinsman of *Ella* [i.e. Magnús] caused countless Wends to perish. Who has heard of warriors make a greater spear-storm?'

7. Hallr Þórarinnsson & Rognvaldr jarl, *Háttalykill* (c.1145) 7a.1:

Ella var - - -
- - -
Ragnars bani rómu vanr
- - - sœfðisk ferð.¹²

'*Ella* was . . . the slayer of Ragnarr, accustomed to battle . . . the company perished.'

8. Einarr Skúlason, *Haraldsdrápa II* (12th century) 5.1:

Alls varð Ellu
ungr geitunga

⁹ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 232.

¹⁰ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 293.

¹¹ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 333.

¹² *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 490.

lofaðr lífgjafi
lands ráðandi.¹³

‘The famous young feeder of the birds of *Ella* [i.e. warrior] became ruler of all the land.’

9. [Anon.], *Krákumál* (c.1200) 24.5:

Eigi hugðak Ellu
at aldragi mínu,
þás blóðvali bræddak
ok borð á lög keyrðak.¹⁴

‘I never thought that *Ella* would be my death, when I gorged the blood-hawk and drove my ships through the water.’

10. [Anon.], *Krákumál* 27.6:

Hjoggum vér með hjörvi.
Harðla líðr at ævi,
grimt stendr grand af naðri,
góinn byggvir sal hjarta;
væntum hins, at Viðris
vöndr í Ellu standi.¹⁵

‘We struck with the sword. My life is almost past, and the pain from the snake is sharp. Having entered, he dwells in the hall of my heart. I hope that Viðrir’s staff [i.e. a sword] will pierce *Ella*.’

Why then does *Ella* triumph over all other Anglo-Saxons in frequency of occurrence? The Old English name behind the Old Norse form is *Ælla*, and the *Ælla* alluded to was the ruler in York at the time of its capture by the Viking army in 867. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS ‘A’ reads as follows for that year:

Her for se here of Eastenglum ofer Humbre muþan to Eoforwicceastre on Norþhymbre. 7 þær wæs micel un’ge’þuærnes þære þeode betweo’x’ him selfum, 7 hie hæfdun hiera cyning aworpenne Osbryht 7 ungecyndne cyning underfengon Ellan, 7 hie late on gearo to þam gecirdon þæt hie wiþ þone here winnende wærun, 7 hie þeah micle fierd gegadrodon 7

þone here sohton æt Eoforwicceastre 7 on þa ceastre bræcon, 7 hie sume inne wurdon, 7 þær wæs ungemetlic wæl geslægen Norþanhymbra, sume binnan, sume butan, 7 þa cyningas begen ofslægene, 7 sio laf wiþ þone here friþ nam.¹⁶

In this year the Viking army went from the land of the East Angles, over the mouth of the Humber, to York in the land of the Northumbrians. And there was great division in that people amongst themselves, and they had driven out Osbryht their king and received as king *Ælla*, who was not of royal blood; and late in the year they turned to fighting against the army. Nevertheless they assembled a great levy, and attacked the army at York, and stormed the city, and some of them broke inside; and there was an immense slaughter of the Northumbrians—some inside, some outside—and both the kings were slain, and the survivors made peace with the army.

In later Norse tradition this *Ella* became the figure who put Ragnarr loðbrók to death in a snake-pit, and was himself subsequently killed by the sons of Ragnarr, led by Ívarr inn beinlausi, by the rite of the blood-eagle: these stories are most fully told in the Icelandic *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and the *Þáttr af Ragnars sonum*,¹⁷ and in a thirteenth-century collection of riddles one finds a punning allusion to *Ella*’s death by blood-eagle (I have excluded this citation from the main body of evidence on account of its lateness):

Ek sá fljúga
fugla marga:
aldrtjón Ellu,
eggdauda menn . . .¹⁸

I saw many birds fly: the death of *Ella* [i.e. ‘blood-eagle’], men killed by the sword [i.e. *val* ‘the slain’, a homophone of *val* ‘hawk’]...

¹³ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 426.

¹⁴ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 655.

¹⁵ *Skjaldedigtning*, IB, 655.

¹⁶ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A*, edited by J. M. Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition*, 3 (Cambridge, 1986), p. 47.

¹⁷ Printed in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, edited by Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík, 1943–44), I, 93–163. For critical discussion of the events and traditions associated with Ragnarr and his sons see A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850–880* (Oxford, 1977) and R. McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (Oxford, 1991).

¹⁸ *Skjaldedigtning*, IIB, 247.

While not common, *Ælla* is not a rare Old English name,¹⁹ and was most famously borne by the first king of the South Saxons (477–c.515), whom Bede acclaims as having been the first *bretwalda*, and also by an early king of Deira (560–88). The etymology of the name is obscure.²⁰ OE *Ælla* was declined as a weak masculine noun (oblique cases *Ællan*), and the same is true of ON *Ella* (oblique cases *Ellu*).

What is perhaps unexpected in the Old Norse form is that the initial vowel should be *e* rather than *a*; for ON *a*, not *e*, was cognate with OE *æ* (both reflexes of Germanic *a*), and thus if ON *Ella* is a borrowing from OE *Ælla* it does not show cognate substitution. Clearly the first syllable of the personal name *Ælla* is one of those fossilised circumstances in which normal sound-changes did not occur (the common name element *Ælf* is another): it shows neither West Saxon Breaking to *ea*, nor Anglian Retraction to *a*. ON *Ella* cannot be a Northumbrian form showing Second Fronting of *æ* to *e*, since unfortunately 'second fronting does not take place before *l*'.²¹ The only Old English dialect to show regular development of Germanic *a* to *e* in all positions was Kentish,²² but owing to the geography of Viking Age England it seems impossible that ON *Ella* should derive from a Kentish form.²³

Turning to the uses of the name *Ella* in skaldic verse, the two most striking are those by Eilífr Goðrúnarson and Einarr Skúlason. Eilífr, composing around the turn of the millennium in the Norwegian pagan milieu of Earl Hákon Sigurðarson, employs the name as the base word in a giant-kenning, where *Ella steins* 'Ella of stone' seems to indicate 'king of stone', i.e. 'giant', and the first syllable of *Ellu* provides full rhyme with the first syllable of *bella*. Daphne Davidson compares Eilífr's similar use, in *Þórsdrápa* 18, of the king's name *Heiðrekr* in the kenning *Heiðrekr Þúrnis vegg*. *Þúrnir* seems to be a dwarf-name, and

¹⁹ See W. G. Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* (Cambridge, 1897), p. 30.

²⁰ M. Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English* (Uppsala, 1919), p. 59. *Ælli* and *Ælle* appear to be variant, masculine *i*-stem forms (Redin, *Studies*, p. 125).

²¹ A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), p. 63, §165.

²² Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, pp. 122–23, §§ 289–90.

²³ The form in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS 'A' confirms *æ* rather than *e*: *e* is of course simply a common manuscript abbreviation for *æ*, as also in *bræcon* for *bræcon* and *wæl* for *wæl*.

so *Þúrnis vegg* means 'the wall of the dwarf' = 'rock'. Consequently, *Heiðrekr Þúrnis vegg* must mean 'Heiðrekr of the wall of the dwarf' = 'Heiðrekr of rock' = 'king of rock' = 'giant'.²⁴

Einarr, composing a century and a half later, uses the kenning *Ellu . . . geitunga . . . lifgjafi*. *Lifgjafi* means literally 'life-giver', therefore perhaps 'feeder', and *geitungr* is a type of bird, so the kenning means 'feeder of the birds of *Ella*'. Meissner gives *Ellu geitungr* among his listings of kennings for 'raven'.²⁵ When the first element of such kennings is a personal name, it is always either an Óðinn-name (e.g. *Yggs svanr* 'the swan of Yggr') or a valkyrie-name (e.g. *Göndlar skúfr* 'the gull of Göndul') or what Meissner terms a hero-name. There are four examples in this last category: *Ellu geitungr* 'the bird of Ella', *Endils svörr* 'the bird of Endill', *Leifa mör* 'the gull of Leifi' and *Sörva svörr* 'the bird of Sörvi'. *Endill*, *Leifi* and *Sörvi* are names which occur elsewhere in skaldic verse as base names in kennings at least half a dozen times each, and whom Finnur Jónsson classifies as sea-kings.²⁶ To make sense of Einarr's kenning one therefore has to take *Ella* as a sea-king or hero *heiti* (i.e. base name or word), conveniently providing assonance with *alls*. The whole kenning then fits together as 'feeder of the birds of *Ella*' = 'feeder of ravens' = 'warrior'.

The question that arises from these two occurrences, therefore, is whether the name of the Anglo-Saxon king has been generalised as a (sea-)king *heiti*, or whether there already existed in Norse poetic tradition the shadowy name *Ella* as a king *heiti*, which possibly influenced the form of OE *Ælla* when it entered Old Norse, and was given new life by the traditions surrounding Ragnar's slayer. Besides these two citations from Eilífr and Einarr there is no evidence for the latter suggestion, and one could certainly argue that one would expect such a *heiti* to feature in the lists in *Skáldskaparmál*. On the other hand, *Ella* does occur as a standard legendary name in the *Sögubrot af nokkurum fornkonungum*, as one of Haraldr hilditönn's champions who fought at Brávellir and was killed there by Starkaðr.²⁷ It would, I

²⁴ D. L. Davidson, 'Earl Hákon and his poets' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 1983), p. 663.

²⁵ R. Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (Bonn, 1921), pp. 119–23.

²⁶ *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguae Septentrionalis*, 2nd edn, edited by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1912–15), pp. 109–10, 366 and 562.

²⁷ *Fornaldarsögur*, II, 111–34 (p. 131).

think, be easier to understand the frequency and generalisation of *Ella* if one posits that the name of the obscure Northumbrian slayer of Ragnarr loðbrók resembled and took on the form of a now even more obscure pre-existing sea-king or hero. This must remain a hypothesis; but, if it is accepted, one might argue that the early South Saxon and Deiran kings of the same name constitute additional support for such a legendary Germanic figure—that is, they could be kings named after a mythical ancestor.²⁸ Alternatively, of course, one of them might actually be the legendary figure—particularly, perhaps, Ælla of the South Saxons, a figure from within the Age of Migrations.

The frequency with which skalds use the name *Ella* as the defining element in a kenning for England or the English argues strongly, as Alfred Smyth has claimed, that the Scandinavians in England looked back in their traditions to the conquest of England by Ragnarr loðbrók and his sons, and saw continuing Anglo-Scandinavian hostilities within the feud-like framework of that tradition. Thus Egill characterises Athelstan as the *nið Ellu* ‘descendant of Ella’, and Sigvatr speaks of Óláfr as having been opposed by the *Ellu kind* ‘people of Ella’ at the battle of Ringmere. Hallvarðr describes Cnut as conquering the *Ellu ættleifð* ‘inheritance of Ella’, and Þjóðólfr (most strikingly) terms Magnús the *Ellu konr* ‘kinsman of Ella’ in order to emphasize his claims to the English throne. The assumption behind all these references is that the foe and slayer of Ragnarr, whom Ívarr in turn triumphed over, must have been a formidable figure and worthy opponent. For the Scandinavians in England, *Ella* was a name redolent of great associations, a resonant shorthand for the Anglo-Saxon monarchy.²⁹

And for these evocative usages the relationship with historical origins and reality no longer matters, and Christine Fell’s scepticism is not therefore to be upheld when she writes:

To refer to England as *the land of Ella* and the English as *the race of Ella* is not uncommon in scaldic verse, and it is generally assumed that the Ella referred to must be Ella of Northumbria, killer of Ragnar Lodbrok. I find it improbable that the Scandinavians should assume this petty character

²⁸ I am grateful to Oliver Padel for this intriguing suggestion.

²⁹ See further R. Frank, ‘King Cnut in the verse of his skalds’, in *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*, edited by A. R. Rumble (London, 1994), pp. 106–24 (pp. 110–13).

loomed so large in English history, and think it more likely that tradition preserved the name of Ella, king of the south Saxons . . . or alternatively of that Ella of Deira instrumental in inspiring the missionary zeal of Pope Gregory.³⁰

But this improbability only arises, I think, when one surveys the situation from the vantage-point of modern history and with an Anglo-Saxon perspective (that is, familiar with such sources as Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), not when one takes an eleventh-century Scandinavian view from the Danelaw. Smyth and Rory McTurk have both (in different ways) demonstrated that the Danelaw did indeed witness the circulation of various traditions concerning Ragnarr and Ælla, and for the contexts in which the name is used in skaldic verse (usually defining Anglo-Scandinavian confrontations in England), the Ællas of Sussex and Deira would not furnish pertinent allusions.

Smyth not only states (what is unexceptionable) that ‘Medieval Scandinavian writers saw in the blood-eagling of Ælla, the formal conquest of England by the Norsemen’; but he also argues that ‘the historical evidence shows that the death of Ælla was of crucial significance for the Norse conquest of northern and eastern England’.³¹ He is, however, following an entirely false scent when he argues that the fame of Ælla was augmented, and a specific connection with a snake-pit established, by the similarity of the Old Norse form of his name with that of Atli/Attila: ‘The very name, *Ælla*, suggested to the Scandinavians a connection with Attila’s cruelty. Old English *Ælla* was written *Ella* in Old Norse and pronounced *Edhla*, which was remarkably similar to *Atli*, the Norse form of Attila’.³² Smyth has been misled by the fact that Old Norse is usually read with a Modern Icelandic pronunciation: the devoicing of the first of a pair of consonants is a post-medieval development, and thus *Atli* and *Ella* would not sound similar in Viking Age Old Norse.

³⁰ *Egils saga*, translated by C. Fell (London, 1975), p. 187. Ælla of Sussex is also favoured by D. Hofmann, *Nordisch-Englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana 14 (Copenhagen, 1955), pp. 24–25, §6.

³¹ A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 2 vols in 1 (Dublin, 1987), II, 277 and 295.

³² Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, p. 52.

As a final anecdote that seems to confirm the fame of Ella among the Scandinavians in England a small piece of Lake District folklore can be cited. St. Michael's Church, at Pennington in Furness in the southern Lakes, is famous for having a Norse runic inscription on its tympanum, showing that in that area a form of Old Norse was still being written (and therefore presumably spoken) as late as the twelfth century: it is therefore the latest Old Norse runic text from England, and argues for a very strong Norse influence on the Furness region.³³ Standing in the church porch one can see some hundred yards away a mound at the far end of a field, partially obscured by a clump of trees: both mound and field are known as Ellabarrow, and locally the former is said to be the burial mound of an Anglo-Saxon king called Ella.³⁴ The great Lake District antiquarian W. G. Collingwood recorded a version of this legend at the turn of the century, but he was (uncharacteristically) at a loss as to how to explain the name.³⁵ It seems to me, though, that the preservation of the name Ella in this context can only be explained as the result of the heavy Scandinavian influence on the area: it was only among the Scandinavians in England that Ella was a famous Anglo-Saxon king (indeed, the most famous of all)—among the English he was an obscure and unremembered figure, and for the same reason it is unlikely that the name is of a more recent bookish derivation. One might argue that the Ella behind the legend is that of Sussex or Deira (as for instance *Ælla* of Deira later appears in

³³ See B. Dickins in A. Fell, *A Furness Manor: Pennington and its Church* (Ulverston, 1929), pp. 217–19; E. Ekwall, 'How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England?', in *A Grammatical Miscellany offered to Otto Jespersen on his seventieth birthday*, edited by N. Bøgholm, A. Brusendorff and C. A. Bodelsen (Copenhagen, 1930), pp. 17–30 (pp. 23–24); and R. I. Page, 'How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England? The epigraphical evidence', in *England Before the Conquest. Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, edited by P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 165–81 (pp. 171–72).

³⁴ The mound and its story were drawn to my attention by Mr Jim Marshall, the verger of St. Michael's and a life-long resident of Pennington; he recalled playing the part of the king's miller in a dialect play about King Ella back in the 1940s, performed by the local schoolchildren in the very field of Ellabarrow.

³⁵ W. G. Collingwood, *The Lake Counties* (London, 1902), p. 53: 'At Pennington is the Ellabarrow, reputed to be the mound where "Lord Ella sleeps with his golden sword".'

Chaucer's 'Man of Law's Tale'), but there are two good reasons against this: (i) the *Ællas* of Sussex and Deira were hardly sufficiently famous Anglo-Saxons to lend their name to a local tradition in the southern Lake District (as one might imagine a figure such as Alfred or Ethelred doing); and (ii) with its initial *e*, the Pennington name must be descended from the Old Norse form *Ella* rather than the Old English form *Ælla* (later *Alla*, as in Chaucer: OE *æ* > ME *a*). This local legend therefore provides exciting confirmation of what is taught by both the runic tympanum and by the density of references to *Ella* in skaldic verse, and thus provides a fitting conclusion to this study of the surprising adventures of one Old English name in Old Norse poetry.