Kilpeck, near Hereford, and Latin *pedica* `Snare'

Andrew Breeze
University of Navarre, Pamplona

The name of Kilpeck (SO 4430) has been problematic. Early forms include *Chipeete* in Domesday Book, *Cilpedec* in the Book of Llandaff, and *Kilpedet* in 1176.[1] The first element is plainly Welsh *cil* `corner; recess, covert, nook', but the second has been obscure.[2] It is true that *nant pedecou* `valley of *pedecou*' (a plural) occurs in a ninth-century land-grant from St Maughans (SO 4617), near Monmouth.[3] Yet the meaning of Old Welsh *pedec (>Modern Welsh *peddeg) has been unknown.

However, its form provides a clue. Its *p* may show borrowing from Latin, since no cognate of Welsh *peddeg is apparent in other Celtic languages, and many Welsh words beginning in *p-* are loans from Latin (*padell* `pan', *pais* `petticoat', *pall* `robe', and so on). If we turn to Latin dictionaries, we find *pedica* `trap, snare, fetter'. Livy mentions pack-animals trapped in ice as if by a fetter (*pedica*); Vergil advises when to set snares (*pedicas*) for cranes. If British did borrow *pedica*, Old Welsh *pedec is precisely what it should give, with first short *e* preserved, and penultimate *i* lowered to *e* by final _-affection in the fifth century, before loss of final syllables in Brittonic.[4]

Old Welsh *Cilpedec* probably thus means `snare nook' and *nant*

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[1] E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford, 1960), p. 276, s.n. *Kilpeck*.

[2] *Ibid*. B. Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, BAR British Series, 214 (Oxford, 1989), p. 111, s.n. *Kilpeck*, offers no advance on Ekwall; and R. Coates, `Gazetteer of Celtic Names in England (except Cornwall)', in R. Coates and A. Breeze, *Celtic Voices, English Places. Studies of the Celtic Impact on Place-Names in England* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 263–345 (p. 308) also leaves the second element of Kilpeck as an open question.

[3] Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, p. 276, s.n. *Kilpeck*. The grant, in a hand of 1125 × 1150 in the *Book of Llandaff*, is dated to *c*.850 by W. Davies, *The Llandaff Charters* (Aberystwyth, 1979), p. 106.

[4] K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), pp. 573–78 and 632.

pedecou `valley of snares'. This makes semantic as well as phonological sense, since it is paralleled at Snargate (TQ 9928) `gate where snares for animals were placed' on Romney Marsh, Kent.[5] If, then, Kilpeck can be taken as `snare nook, snare covert', it provides a simple explanation of a West Midlands place-name, explains Old Welsh *pedecou* as `snares', and offers a glimpse of Kilpeck before it was settled, when it was a place where the Welsh trapped game.

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[5] Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, p. 428, s.n. *Snargate*.