Notes on the Question of the Development of Old Norse *bólstaðr* in Hebridean Nomenclature

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Professor W. F. H. Nicolaisen's pioneering research on the distribution of a range of generic elements of Old Norse origin across Scotland concentrates in the north and west of the country in particular on the settlement generics *staðr*, *bólstaðr* and *sætr* and/or *setr*.[1]

Work has been carried out more recently on *bólstaðr* and on the question of *sætr* and/or *setr* in Gaelic Scotland—i.e. the Hebrides, the West Highlands and the North of Scotland down to the Moray Firth and the Inverness area but excluding Shetland, Orkney and the northern tip of Caithness.[2] The first of two articles examines the distribution and historical phonology of Old Norse *sætr* in its development to modern Scottish Gaelic in both simple and compound names.[3] The second examines the range of reflexes found in anglicised name forms in Gaelic Scotland which were ascribed in Nicolaisen's work to Old Norse *bólstaðr*.[4] Orthographic **-ble**,[5] **-bo, -bol, -boll, -bost, Bosta, Bousd, Boust, -busta, -bull, -pol, -poll, Polla, -pool** and **-puill** are shown to derive not from the one element *bólstaðr*, but from a range of elements, namely Old Norse (ON) *-býli* 'domicile, residence', (-)*bólstaðr*,

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[1] W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names. Their Study and Significance* (London, 1976), pp. 84–94. I am grateful to Professor Colm Ó Baoill and Roy Wentworth for reading an earlier draft of this paper and for their helpful suggestions.

[2] See, for example, R. A. V. Cox, 'The Norse language in Celtic Scotland', *Studia Celtica Upsaliensis* 1, *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis* (Uppsala, 1994), pp. 27–39 (pp. 27–30).

[3] R. A. V. Cox, 'The origin and relative chronology of *Shader*-names in the Hebrides', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 16 (1990), 95–113.

[4] R. A. V. Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*? A re-examination of *bost* & Co.', in *Peoples and Settlement in North-West Ross*, edited by J. R. Baldwin (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 43–67.

[5] Map or other documentary forms are given in bold type; for the most part they are not intentional Gaelic forms of names but represent anglicised forms.

-*bústaðr*, -*ból* 'farm, farmstead, residence' and (-)*pollr* 'head of a sea-loch, bay; pool'. In addition, it is argued that the south-westerly forms -**bolls**, **Bolsay** and -**bus** (chiefly confined to Islay but with some representation in Mull) are, on phonological grounds, likely to have derived from a further, as yet unidentified, element; and, given the phonetic shape of their modern Gaelic pronunciations (see below), an unattested compound *bólshagi is suggested as a possible candidate for the etymon of these reflexes.[6]

In the northern Hebrides,[7] ON *Bólstað* acc. (a compound of *ból* nt. and *stað* acc. m.) yields Gaelic (G.) *Bòsta* [ˈbɔːˌsta] or, with closure of the open final syllable in Gaelic, *Bòstadh* [ˈbɔːˌstaɣ].[8] Initial ON *b-*, *d-*, *g-* regularly yield voiceless G. *b-*, *d-*, *g-* [b̥ d̥ g̊],[9] e.g. G. *beirgh*

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[6] For discussion of possible alternative derivations and of the possible sense of a compound *bólshagi, see Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 60.

[7] For present purposes, including Lewis, Harris, Scalpay, North Uist, South Uist, Skye and Coll.

[8] Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', pp. 46–50. On the question of the closure of an otherwise open final syllable, see *ibid.*, p. 46. In discussing the development of final ON -*bólstaðr*, P. Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference? an attempt to account for the variations in the phonetic development of place-names in Old Norse *bólstaðr* in the Hebrides', *Nomina*, 23 (2000), 107–19 (p. 110), states that 'The final element [ð(-)] was lost early because of its final, unstressed position.' It was certainly present at the time of borrowing into Gaelic, as it is accounted for by the quality of the vowel in the final syllable in Gaelic. The development is an Old Norse short vowel + consonant > G. *-[aː] > G. -[a].

[9] P. Gammeltoft, *The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area* (Copenhagen 2001), p. 104, derives G. *Pràbost* in Skye from ON *Breið(a)bólstaðr* '[the] broad farm', reasoning (upon a misconstruction of C. Hj. Borgstrøm, 'The dialects of Skye and Ross-shire', in *A Linguistic Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland* II, *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* Supplementary Vol. II (Oslo, 1941), p. 33, §45) that 'initial [p]... for original [b] is a result of unvoicing of initial [b] in the local Skye Gaelic dialect.' Here, the initial is in fact post-aspirated [pʰ]- which would be expected to derive in loans from Old Norse not from initial *b-*, but rather from initial *p-*, e.g. G. *palla* 'ledge' [ˈpʰɑLə] < ON *palla acc. m. (note 38). Further, the non-palatal quality of G. [pʰraː]- in a development from ON *Breið-* is not explained; cf. G. *Brèibhig* [ˈb̥ɔ̃ˈeːˌvɪkʲ] < ON *Breið(a)vík* '[the] broad bay' (cf. M. Oftedal, 'The

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[ˈb̥eð̃ˈèj] f. 'coastal promontory' < ON *bergi* dat. nt.,[10] G. *bot* [b̥ɔʰt] m. '(lake or valley) basin' < ON *botn* m.; G. *doca* [ˈd̥ɔʰkə] m. 'pit or quarry' < ON *dokk* f.; or palatalised forms: G. *Dìobadal* [ˈd̥ʲiːbə ˌd̥əL] < ON *Djúpadal* acc. '[the] deep valley';[11] G. *gil* [gʲil] f. 'ravine' and by extension 'stream' < ON *gil* nt. The long Old Norse stressed vowel *ó* yields G. [ɔː] for example in G. *Ceòs* [kʰɔːs] < ON *Kjóss* m. '[the] hollow',[12] and G. (gen.) *Bhata Leòis* [ˌvaʰtə ˈLʲɔːʃ] < ON *Vatnit Ljósa* 'the bright or clear loch'.[13] ON *l* is no longer discernible in G. [ˈbɔː ˌsta] (because of the original long vowel), although the lateral in the Old Norse verb *halsa* can still be traced in the quantity of the stressed vowel in G. *abhsadh* [ˈausəɣ] m. 'decreasing or slackening sail'.[14] Weakly-stressed initial ON *st-* yields G. [st]-, e.g. G. *Tolstadh*

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village names of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides', *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap*, 17 (1954), 363–409 (p. 392).

[10] R. A. V. Cox, 'Old Norse *berg* in Hebridean place-nomenclature', in *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences: Aberdeen, August 4–11, 1996*, edited by W. F. H. Nicolaisen, 3 vols (Aberdeen, 1998), II, 59–65.

[11] Cf. M. Oftedal, 'Names of lakes on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides', in *Proceedings of the Eighth Viking Congress: Århus 24–31 August 1977*, edited by H. Bekker-Nielsen, P. Foote and O. Olsen (Odense, 1981), pp. 183–87 (p. 185): [d̥ʲiːbədəL].

[12] Oftedal, 'The village names of Lewis', 401.

[13] M. Oftedal, 'Scandinavian place-names in Celtic territory: An attempt at a linguistic classification', in *Ortnamn och Språkkontakt*, edited by T. Andersson, E. Brylla and A. Rostvik, *Norna-rapporter* 17 (Uppsala, 1980), pp. 163–91 (p. 186): *Loch Sgeireach* [vahtə ˈLʲɔːʃ]; cf. also G. *ròst* [Rɔːst] < English *roast*.

[14] Regarding the development of ON *bólstaðr*, Gammeltoft (*The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area*, p. 93) states that 'The stem vowel... has developed in various ways. In the West and South-west, the original vowel has retained its quantity, [-ɔː-], [or] has been diphthongised to [-ɔu-], according to Cox (['Descendants of *bólstaðr*?'], pp. 46–50 and 59). He is of the opinion that this is owing to a secondary lengthening as the result of the loss of the following consonant ([l]). However, this is not the case with the Islay example, which has retained the following consonant, so it is probably safest to assume that the stem vowels of the modern reflexes descend directly from original [-oː-].' There are two points here which, however, are out of context. Firstly, the secondary lengthening referred to may have occurred in names

structured specific + generic, i.e. final ON -*bólstað* acc. initially yields G. *-[b̥ɔːʟstaː] compensating for the loss of *ð* (see notes 8 and 26); this gives way to *-[b̥ɔːʟsta] with shortening of the final syllable; and this becomes *-[b̥ɔʟsta] after shortening of the weakly-stressed vowel, which in turn yields *-[b̥ɔːsta] with temporary lengthening of the weakly-stressed vowel due to the loss of *l*. Once the final syllable was dropped, *-[b̥ɔːst] remains, and this, with eventual reduction of the vowel length, gives modern -[b̥ɔst] (Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 50). This could not have arisen in simple names where the generic remains in fully-stressed position. The second point is that a stressed broad vowel in Gaelic before post-vocalic -*ls* (a rare consonant cluster in Gaelic) is likely to be diphthongised, with or without loss of the lateral, in spite of the historical differentiation between a non-geminate lateral + consonant, e.g. *alt* [aʟ̪t] 'joint', and a geminate lateral + consonant, e.g. *allt* [auʟ̪t] 'stream' (T. F. O'Rahilly, *Irish Dialects Past and Present*, (Dublin, 1976, first published 1932), pp. 49–52; C. Ó Baoill, 'Rhyming vowels before long liquids in Scottish Gaelic', *Éigse*, 24 (1990), 131–46 (p. 131); R. A. V. Cox, 'The phonological development of Scottish Gaelic *uinneag* "window" and related questions', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 20 (2000), 212–21 (pp. 214–15)). For example, G. *allsporag* > *abhsporag* f. 'cow's windpipe' (G. Calder, *A Gaelic Grammar* (Glasgow, 1972, first published 1923), p. 68; M. MacLennan, *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (Edinburgh, 1925), p. 2: *abhsporag* aüsporac; Rev. Fr A. McDonald, *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay*, edited by J. L. Campbell (Oxford, 1972), p. 27: *amhsporag* äüspɔrak) < ON *hals* m. 'neck' + ?*barka* acc. m. 'windpipe' (G. Henderson, *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland* (Glasgow, 1910), p. 113, recognises a compound in ON *hals-*); G. *allsadh* > *abhsadh* m. 'decreasing or slackening sail' < ON *halsa* (Calder, *ibid.*; ON *halsa* with a short, not long, stressed vowel as in Henderson, *ibid.*, pp. 138 and 255: *hálsa*); cf. also G. *ballsgaire* > *babhsgaire* m. 'bladderskite [boaster]' (MacLennan, *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language*, p. 25: *babhsgaire* bausgere) 'a light, restless man' (McDonald, *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay*, p. 34: *babhsgaire*) < Early Gaelic *bollsaire ballsaire* (*Dictionary of the Irish Language* and *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1913–1976: *bollsaire*), Irish *bollscaire ballscaire ballsaire* (P. S. Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (Dublin, 1947, first published 1927): *bollscaire*); also the development of English *bolster* in Islay and Kintyre Gaelic (see below). Assuming that the etymon of the Islay form **Bolsay** [ˈb̥ɔuʟsa] includes initial ON *bóls-* gen., diphthongisation has also occurred in the case of

[ˈtʰɔʟɔ̀ ˌstaɣ] < ON *Þolfsstaðir* '*Þolf*'s farmstead',[15] (palatalised) G. *Uamaistean* [ˈũãmɪ ʃtʲən] < ON *Hvammsstein* acc. '[the] rock of the valley'.[16] Short weakly-stressed ON *a* has been lengthened initially to compensate for the loss of ON *ð* in Gaelic (notes 8 and 26), and the resulting Gaelic *[aː] has since been reduced to short [a] in weakly-stressed position in the modern form, cf. G. *Tolstadh* above; also G. *Càrlabhagh* [ˈkʰɑːlə ˌvaɣ] < ON *Karlavág* acc. '*Karli*'s bay',[17] G. *Beirghsgeadh* [ˈb̥eð̥'è ˌʃkʲaɣ] < ON *Bergsgjǫ* '[the] ravine of the promontory'.[18]

In weakly-stressed position, final ON -*bólstað* acc. has gone through similar changes in Gaelic, except that the final of G. *-[b̥ɔːsta] has weakened to the extent that it has normally been lost,[19] while long [ɔː]

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an original long vowel. However, while the lateral remains in **Bolsay** [ˈb̥ɔuʟsa], it is lost in the case of **Bousd** [ˈb̥ɔusta] in Skye, also derived from ON *bólstað* acc. (Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 46), although the presence of diphthongisation in the Skye name suggests that the lateral may have survived longer there than in the north: contrast *Bòstadh* [ˈb̥ɔːsta(ɣ)] in Lewis (*ibid.*, p. 47).

[15] Oftedal, 'The village names of Lewis', 378–79. For the question of loss of case and/or plural endings in the process of borrowing from Old Norse to Gaelic, see R. A. V Cox, 'Maintenance of the Norse legacy in Scottish Hebridean nomenclature', *Namnen i en föränderlig värld*, edited by G. Harling-Kranck, *Studier i nordisk filologi* 78, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland nr 631 (Helsinki, 2001), pp. 45–52 (pp. 46–47).

[16] R. A. V. Cox, 'The Norse element in Scottish Gaelic', Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Celtic Studies (Paris 1991), *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 137–45 (p. 137).

[17] Oftedal, 'The village names of Lewis', 378.

[18] R. A. V. Cox, 'Old Norse *berg* in Hebridean place-nomenclature', 61.

[19] **Heribusta** [ˈhɛrə ˌb̥ʌsta] in Skye (probably from ON -*bústað* acc. rather than -*bólstað* acc.) retains final -[a] as the reflex of the original final syllable (Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 50). Gammeltoft in 'Why the difference?' does not refer to this name; instead, he points out that the loss of the final syllable 'may date to the fifteenth century, as a possible vestige of this vowel, -*e*, is present in the early source form *Husaboste* from 1389..., but not in the form *Froybost* from 1498' (*ibid.*, 111), but it would be difficult to pronounce on the contemporary Gaelic pronunciations of these names from their orthographic

has been reduced to short [ɔ], e.g. G. Siabost [ˈʃia ˌbɔst] < ON *Sæbólstað* acc. '[the] sea-farmstead,[20] G. *Torgabost* [ˈtʰɔrɔ̀gə ˌbɔst] doubtfully from ON *Hǫrg-bólstað* acc. '[the] cairn-farmstead'.[21]

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forms in Scots. With regard to the correct identity of the Old Norse generic in **Heribusta**, Gammeltoft elsewhere cites, in favour of ON *bólstaðr*, the 1630 documentary form **Tarrabost**, which is in contrast to the 1832 form **Herbusta** and the modern Gaelic pronunciation [ˈhɛrə ˌbʌsta] (Gammeltoft, *The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area*, pp. 94, note 69, and 122). It seems more likely that **Tarrabost** is an analogical form based on other Skye names in -**bost** than that it has given rise to the later forms; at any rate, G. [ˈhɛrə ˌbʌsta] from a supposed earlier *[ˈtʰɑrə ˌbɔst] is fraught with phonological improbabilities.

[20] Oftedal, 'The village names of Lewis', 377. Capt. F. W. L. Thomas, 'Did the Northmen extirpate the Celtic inhabitants of the Hebrides in the ninth century?', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 11 (1876), 472–507 (p. 480), gives the variant form *Sjá-bolstaðr* (*sic*), although Gammeltoft (*The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area*, p. 146) implies that he gives *Sæ-bólstaðr*. Gammeltoft continues by suggesting that 'judging from the source evidence as well as the phonetic transcription, the variant form, *sjár*, m., appears to be more likely.' The documentary forms given include **Schaboist** 1662, **Shabust** 1776, **North Shawbost** and **South Shawbost** 1821; contrast, however, the first Board of Ordnance 6 inch-to-the-mile map **Sheabost a Tuath** and **Sheabost a Deas** 1854. Only the 1854 forms can be said to represent Gaelic names (albeit with a partially anglicised orthography), i.e. [ˌʃia ˌbɔst ə ˈtʰuə] ˈd′æs]. ON *sjá-* would be expected to yield G. *[ˈʃaː]-, cf. ON *Kjóss* m. '[the] hollow' > G. *Ceòs* [kʰˈɔːs] above, ON *Ljót* acc. m. > G. *Leòd* [ʟˈɔːd̪], ON *Vatnit Ljósa* 'the bright or clear loch' > G. (gen.) *Bhata Leòis* [ˌvahtə ʟˈɔːʃ] (note 13). In this regard, ON *kjarr* nt. 'brushwood, fen or marsh' would not be expected to yield an initial non-palatal consonant nor long stressed vowel as suggested for **Carbost** ([ˈkʰaːrə ˌbɔst]) in Skye (Gammeltoft, *ibid.*, p. 107). Initial palatal [ʃ]- is determined by the following front vowel in Gaelic and is not a question of dialectal idiosyncrasy (Gammeltoft, *ibid.*, p. 146: 'The sources for Seilebost seem to reflect the palatal [ʃ], which is used in Harris instead of [s]'—which misconstrues C. Hj. Borgstrøm, *The Dialects of the Outer Hebrides. A Linguistic Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland* I, *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* Supplementary Vol. I (Oslo, 1940), p. 159, §217). Stressed G. [ia]-, via earlier *[eː]-, from ON *æ*, is found for example in G. *Siadar* [ˈʃiad̪ər] < ON *Sætr* nt., G. *Loch Trèalabhal* [ˌʟɔx ˈtʰriaʟə ˌvɑʟ] < ON

Þrælafjall '[the] mountain of the thralls' (cf. Oftedal, 'Names of lakes', p. 185, who gives phonemic /ʟɔx triaʟəvaʟ/); see Cox, 'The origin and relative chronology of *Shader*-names', 96–97. (For this reason alone, **Heribusta** [ˈhɛrə ˌbʌsta] (note 19) is unlikely to contain ON *hærri* 'higher' as suggested by Gammeltoft (*ibid.*, p. 122).) Indeed, Gammeltoft's phonetic transcription, [ˈʃiabɔst] (*sic*), is drawn from Oftedal ('The village names of Lewis', 377: [ʃiabɔst]) who, comparing the examples of *Siadar* and *Trèalabhal* above, states that 'The phonetic development is regular.' For the shift from /eː/ to /ia/, see K. H. Jackson, 'The breaking of original long *ē* in Scottish Gaelic', in *Celtic Studies. Essays in memory of Angus Matheson 1912–62*, edited by J. Carney and D. Greene (London, 1968), pp. 65–71. For a question relating to the pronunciation of the English forms, see R. A. V. Cox, 'Place-nomenclature in the context of the bilingual community of Lewis: status, origin and interaction', in *Gaelic and Scots in Harmony*, edited by D. S. Thomson (Glasgow, 1990), pp. 43–52 (p. 50).

[21] Gammeltoft rightly rejects MacIver's derivation (D. MacIver, *Place-Names of Lewis and Harris*, (Stornoway, 1934), p. 50) from a form in initial ON *torg* m. 'square, market place' on the grounds that initial G. *t-* is a back-formation (on the evidence of documentary forms and pronunciations in Gaelic and English) from original ON [h]-, and goes on to reject Thomas' ON *haugr* m. 'mound, hill' ('Did the Northmen extirpate the Celtic inhabitants of the Hebrides', 480): 'Thomas is probably right that the specific refers to this mound [i.e. a chambered cairn] on the farm, only *haugr*, m., is not the correct etymology. ...[T]he specific should rather be seen as originating from ON *hǫrgr*, m., "a stone-heap, a heap of gathered stones"' (Gammeltoft, *The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area*, p. 124). Thomas' suggestion is wrong on the grounds that ON *au* would be expected to yield a long vowel in Gaelic, e.g. G. *sgòd* 'sail, or part of a sail' from ON *skaut* nt. (Cox, 'The phonological development of Scottish Gaelic *uinneag* "window"', 213), rather than on a question of semantics. In addition, both ON *haugr* and *hǫrgr* contain velar fricative [ɣ] which would normally be expected to yield G. [ɣ], e.g. G. *dorgh* [ˈd̪ɔrɔ̀ɣ] 'hand-line' < ON *dorg* f., G. *Borgh* [ˈb̪ɔrɔ̀ɣ] < ON *Borg* f. 'fortification', G. *Borghaston* [ˈb̪ɔrɔ̀(ɣ)ə ˌstɔn] < ON *Borg-stafn* 'fort-spit, or fort-promontory' (Cox, 'The Norse element in Scottish Gaelic', 141), G. *stiogha* [ˈʃt′ɪɣə] 'cliff path' < ON *stiga* acc. m., G. *bàgh* [b̪aːɣ] 'bay' < ON *vág* acc. m. ON *hǫrg* acc. m. is the basis for G. *Na Horgh* [nə ˈhɔrɔ̀ɣ] (cf. Borgstrøm, *The Dialects of the Outer Hebrides*, p. 166; for the question of the use of the article, see, for example, Cox, 'Maintenance of the Norse legacy in Scottish Hebridean nomenclature', pp. 47–48) as noted by Henderson: 'but it may be questioned if

In Islay, ON *bólstað* acc. would also be expected to yield medial -*st*-, as is suggested by the parallel development of Islay Gaelic [pɔustər][22] and Kintyre Gaelic [boˈəsD̥ər],[23] both from Eng. *bolster*.[24]

The Gaelic pronunciations of the Islay reflexes in question, however, are [ˈb̥ouʟsa], -[b̥ʌsəɣ] and -[b̥ʌs].[25] It is assumed that the first of these reflexes yields the second, with loss of the lateral and reduction of the stressed vowel in weakly-stressed position, and weakening of the final vowel in turn (with incidental closing of the open final syllable in Gaelic[26]), and that the third is a reduction of the second, with loss of the

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we have it also in the place-name *Torgabost* (Henderson, *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, pp. 78–79), i.e. because of the presence of a velar stop [g] rather than fricative [ɣ]. If this name is from ON *Hǫrg-bólstað* acc., the development has yet to be explained.

[22] N. M. Holmer, 'Studies on Argyllshire Gaelic', *Kunglig Humanistiska Vetenskaps* 31.1 (Uppsala 1938), p. 130.

[23] N. M. Holmer, *The Gaelic of Kintyre* (Dublin, 1962), p. 46. On the question of the etymology of the Gaelic word, Holmer invokes a development from a form *[boɣsD̥ər] via *[boɣəsD̥ər], perhaps based on the variant spelling form *boghstair*, also written, for example, *bobhstair*, *bòghsdair*, *bolstar* (E. Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary*, 9th edn (Glasgow, 1977, first published 1901–11), pp. 103, 106 and 109, respectively). I am grateful to Professor Colm Ó Baoill for pointing out to me that D. MacAulay, in his review of *The Gaelic of Kintyre* (*Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 10, Part I (1963), 115–23 (p. 119), comments that 'One may quarrel with... the antecedents given... for boˈəsD̥ər which is surely a borrowing from late West Midlands Middle English'.

[24] Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 59. With regard to his hypothesis that the Islay reflexes -**bolls**, **Bolsay** and -**bus** derive from ON (-)*bólstaðr*, Gammeltoft ignores this evidence, stating that the 'core of the problem is that it is not known whether the development from ON [-lst-] to Gael. [-ls(-)] is possible or not, as there are no parallels in Scandinavian loans into Gaelic against which to check the Islay development' ('Why the difference?', 113). See also note 14.

[25] Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', pp. 57–60.

[26] On this point, Gammeltoft ('Why the difference?', 114) considers that the 1588 Islay form, **Nerrabollsadhh**, 'may probably not be seen as evidence of the retention of the final element [ð(-)], the reason being that contemporary source forms show no such remnant.' The spelling in -**dhh** may represent final G. -[ɣ],

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final syllable; while the distribution of the last two reflexes is dependent on the number of preceding syllables in those names in which they occur,[27] e.g. (one syllable) [ˈgrɔː ˌb̥ʌsəɣ], [ˈʀɔː ˌb̥ʌsəɣ],[28] (two syllables) [ˈkʰəʟʼə ˌb̥ʌs], [ˈɴʼɛːrə ˌb̥ʌs].[29] This assumption is phonolo-

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as in G. *Bòstadh* above. For the question of the specific of the Islay form, see note 29 below.

[27] This conclusion is reiterated by Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 113.

[28] Quoted incorrectly in Gammeltoft, *ibid.*, 115, as [ˈrɔˌb̥ʌsəɣ].

[29] Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 59. Gammeltoft (*The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area*, p. 138) argues that the derivation from a form in initial ON *neðri* 'lower' (e.g. H. C. Gillies, *The Place-Names of Argyll* (London, 1906), p. 234) is unlikely since 'ON [ð] is not normally lost or assimilated in the combination [ðr]. At the most, it is changed to [d], as in modern Norw. *nedre* [nɛdrə].' It is relevant here to reiterate the axiom that a 'word or name once borrowed will develop phonetically and phonemically according to the general rules of development in the recipient language, unless there is evidence that the borrowed item has (a) been subject to continued influence from later stages of the evolution of the loan-giving language or (b) received an "irregular" treatment due to such factors as analogy, popular etymology, and influence from other dialects of the recipient language' (M. Oftedal, 'Norse *steinn* in Hebridean place-names', *Fróðskaparrit*, 13 (1964), 25–34 (p. 227). Intervocalically, ON -*ð*- may be lost in Gaelic: G. *Sòdhaigh* [ˈsɔːaj] (where <dh> represents hiatus between syllables), a common name throughout the Hebrides, < ON *Sauð-øy* '[the] sheep-isle'; G. *bodha* (Barra) [b̥o-ŏ] 'submerged rock' < ON *boði* m. (Borgstrøm, *The Dialects of the Outer Hebrides*, p. 137); G. *Brèibhig* [ˈb̥ŏʼeː ˌvɪkʼ] < ON *Breið(a)vík* '[the] broad bay' (note 9); although finally and intervocalically in a palatal environment original ON -*ð*- may be traced: G. *aoidh* f. [əi] 'ford; isthmus' < ON *aið*, later *eið* nt. (R. A. V. Cox, 'Scandinavian toponyms in Scottish Gaelic', a paper given at the Colloque international de la Hague, organised by le District de la Hague and l'Office Universitaire d'Etudes Normandes de l'Université de Caen Basse-Normandie, September 1999, forthcoming), G. *saoidhean* m. 'young coal-fish, saithe' /səijan/ < ON *seið* acc. + Gaelic suffix (Magne Oftedal, *The Gaelic of Leurbost, Isle of Lewis, A Linguistic Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland* III, *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* Supplementary Vol. IV (Oslo, 1956), p. 90); cf. G. *buidhe* [ˈb̥ujə] 'yellow' < Early Gaelic (EG) *buide* (where *d* = a dental fricative). The Old Norse cluster -*ðr*- is likely to reduce in Gaelic to -*r*- with compensatory lengthening of the stressed vowel, cf. G. *adhradh*

gically plausible and is supported by the documentary evidence.[30] Formally, these reflexes would not be expected to derive from ON (-)*bólstað* acc.

More recently still, Dr Peder Gammeltoft has preferred, after Nicolaisen,[31] to derive the Islay reflexes from Old Norse *bólstaðr*,[32] rejecting the suggested *bólshagi* derivation[33] mostly on the grounds that it is otherwise unattested, but also because it 'would represent an instance of innovation in naming which is completely unknown in Scottish place-names of Scandinavian origin.'[34]

['ə:rəɣ] 'worshipping' < EG *adrad*; G. *buidhre* ['bəið'ə], comparative of *bodhar* 'deaf' < EG *bodar* ([ð'] is the phonetic realisation of the palatalised *r* phoneme in, for example, Lewis, and not a reflex of the Early Gaelic dental fricative); G. *saoibhreas* /səivrəs/ besides /səivərəs/ 'wealth', cf. EG *saidbir saidbre* (*ibid.*). ON *Neðra-* '[the] lower...' might well yield G. ['N'ε:rə]-.

[30] E.g. **Eurobolsay** 1562 **Ewrabolse** 1584 **Orepols** 1614 **Oriepols** 1665 **Yorabus** 1751, modern **Eorrabus** (Gammeltoft, *The Place-Name Element bólstaðr in the North Atlantic Area*, p. 114); **Nerrabollsadhh** 1588 **Nerobollis** 1614 **Nerrabolsadh** 1617 **Nerobollis** 1627 **?Morabullsadhe** 1630 **Nerraboltfadvi** 1662 **Nerobols** 1665 **Newbolside** 1674 **?Morabulfadtie** 1687 **Nerabolls** 1751, modern **Nerabus** (*ibid.*, p. 138).

[31] And other scholars before him, e.g. Gillies, *The Place-Names of Argyll*, p. 223; Henderson, *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, pp. 197–99.

[32] Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 112–15.

[33] I.e. by Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', p. 60.

[34] Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 112–13. Gammeltoft (*The Place-Name Element bólstaðr in the North Atlantic Area*, pp. 299–315) rejects a number of other derivations given by Cox (who is said to derive the reflexes **-bol, -boll, -bo, -poll** and **-pool** mostly from ON *pollr* but to be 'cautious enough to say that some may derive from ON *ból*' (p. 88); however, the derivation is made more strongly than is implied and is based upon phonological grounds ('Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', pp. 50–57)). Two names whose pronunciations (-[bɔL]) suggest final ON *-ból* are ascribed by Gammeltoft to ON *-ból* or *-poll* acc.: **Birceapol, Barrapoll**. Several names whose pronunciations (-[bəL]) suggest final ON *-poll* acc. are ascribed by Gammeltoft to ON *-ból*: **Harrapool, Assapol, Corsapool, Cullipool, Unapool, Meoble, Eriboll, Kirkiboll**; or to either *-ból* or *-poll* acc.: **Arnaboll, Arnipol**. In addition, **Scobull** (-[bəL]) is ascribed by Gammeltoft to either *-ból* or *-bœli*, and **Ullapool** (-[bəL]) to *-bœli*.

There is, on the contrary, a good deal of evidence to suggest that the Norse nomenclature of the Hebrides developed along independent though frequently similar lines to that of Norway. A number of Gaelic loan-words have been identified in the Norse nomenclature, e.g. Old Norse *kró* f. in the sense 'fold, pen' < Early Gaelic (EG) *cró* m. of similar sense,[35] and ON *ærgi* nt. < EG *áirge* 'milking-place' and by extension 'shieling', modern G. *àirigh* f.[36] Some Old Norse elements appear to have a more specialised or extended sense than otherwise generally found, e.g. in Lewis ON *gróf* f. is the element commonly used of streams in names of Old Norse derivation;[37] while ON *gjǫ́* f. occurs strictly in the sense 'coastal ravine' and is not found inland. Occasionally, modern Gaelic reflexes suggest otherwise unattested, or at least less common, forms, e.g. an Old Norse weak declension **palla* acc. m., rather than strong declension *pall* acc. m., yielding G. *palla* ['pʰɑLə] m. 'ledge';[38] an Old Norse genitive neuter rather than feminine specific in **Kleifsgróf* '[the] stream of the hill path', yielding G. *Cliasgro* ['kʰlia ˌskro] (note 37). In addition, there are a number of names in Lewis and St Kilda, e.g. G. *Beirgh Làgha* [bøð'øj 'La:ɣə] < ON *Bergit Lága* 'the low promontory', which represent the relatively late development of generic-initial name structures which took place furth of Norway, in particular in the Faroes and to a lesser degree in

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[35] Oftedal, 'The village names of Lewis', 379–80.

[36] As in the place-name *Ásgrimsœrgin*, in *Orkneyinga saga*, edited by Finnbogi Guðmundsson, *Íslenzk Fornrit* 34 (Reykjavik, 1965), Chapter 113, §10.1. See also Cox, 'Old Norse *berg* in Hebridean place-nomenclature', 61, and Cox, 'The Norse element in Scottish Gaelic', 139. For a discussion of the development of ON *ærgi* in Faroese and its survival in Faroese place-names, see Chr. Matras, 'Gammelfærøsk ǽrgi, n., og dermed beslægtede ord', *Namn och Bygd*, 44 (1956), 51–67—the article is briefly summarised in W. B. Lockwood, 'Chr. Matras' studies in the Gaelic element in Faroese: conclusions and results', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 13 (1978), 112–26 (pp. 125–26).

[37] E.g. G. *Cliasgro* ['kʰlia ˌskro] < ON *Kleifsgróf* '[the] stream of the hill path'.

[38] An ON *pall* acc. would be expected to yield G. **[pʰauL]*, cf. G. *call* 'loss', EG. *coll call* (O'Rahilly, *Irish Dialects Past and Present*, pp. 49–52; Ó Baoill, 'Rhyming vowels before long liquids in Scottish Gaelic', 131; Cox, 'The phonological development of Scottish Gaelic *uinneag* "window"', 214); see also note 9.

Shetland, Orkney and Caithness.[39] Such evidence suggests that we should not rule out the possibility, in the context of the Islay reflexes, of lexical innovation during the 450 years (at the most conservative estimate) of Norse presence in the West of Scotland.[40]

Gammeltoft makes a number of additional points in support of a derivation of the Islay reflexes from ON *bólstaðr*:

A link is made between the more northerly -**bost** name forms and the Islay reflexes through the documentary forms of the name **Abos**, on Ulva, an island off Mull (**Abos** 1630 **Abose** 1683 **Abost** 1751 **Abbost** 1771 **Abos** 1832), noting that a 'late development to [-s] is marginally evidenced in the southern extremity of the area of distribution [of the development of ON *-lst-* > G. [-st]]'.[41] Yet among the 'twenty-four' Islay examples of names in -**bus**[42] there is no documentary evidence of a connection between them and ON *bólstaðr*. It seems more probable that this supposed link is the result of analogous formation, or misreading or typological error, than that it sheds light upon the etymon of the Islay reflexes.[43]

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[39] E.g. Faroese *Fjallið Lítla* 'the little mountain' (R. A. V. Cox, 'The Norse element in Scottish place names: syntax as a chronological marker', in *One Cultural Province: Comparative Irish-Scottish Studies* (provisional title), edited by C. Ó Háinle and D. Meek (2002, forthcoming); Chr. Matras, '*Fjallið Mikla, Áin í Dal, Millum Fjarða* and *Urð Mans*', in *Early English and Norse Studies*, edited by A. Brown and P. Foote (London, 1963), pp. 141–49 (p. 143).

[40] I.e. between *c*.800 and the early period of raids on Iona documented in the Irish annals, and *c*.1250 and the Treaty of Perth and the secession of the *Suðreyjar* to the Scottish crown in 1266.

[41] Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 109.

[42] Henderson, *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 197: *Céithir 'busana fichead an Ile*. Gammeltoft records twenty-seven altogether ('Why the difference?', 112). F. W. L. Thomas, 'On Islay place-names', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 16 (n.s. 4) (1881–82), 241–76 (p. 244) quotes the proverb with variant forms *Ceithir busacha fichead 'an Ile* and *Ceithir 'busa' fichead an Ile*.

[43] The documentary forms **Bolstig** and **Port Boldstig** (Blaeu, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* 1654, 1662) are cited under **Bolsa** on Islay in Gammeltoft, *The Place-Name Element* bólstaðr *in the North Atlantic Area*, p. 96, rather than under **Bousd** on Coll where they appear to belong.

It is stated that ON *-lst-* develops on two different lines: firstly, 'ON *-lst-* > G. [-st]' as in G. *Siabost* < ON *Sæbólstað* acc., above; secondly, 'ON *-lst-* > G. [-ls(-)][44] > [-s(-)]': 'There is nothing problematic as such about this reduction itself. In fact, it is quite normal for clusters of three consonants to be reduced to two consonants or even a single one',[45] and G. *sràbh* < Eng. *straw*, and G. *sràid* < ultimately from Latin *strata* are later cited in this regard.[46] Initial [sr]- is original in the Gaelic languages, however,[47] and the loan-words cited have simply fallen together with indigenous words in initial *sr-*.[48] The innovation in Gaelic of initial *sr-* > *str-* 'is shared by Manx with the northern dialect of Scottish [Gaelic]',[49] although this group reverts to historical type under mutation: G. *sròn* [strɔːn] 'nose', *mo shròn* [mə ˈrɔːn] 'my nose'.[50]

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[44] Only -[ls]- occurs today, i.e. in **Bolsay** [ˈb̥ɔuʟsa].

[45] Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 108–09. In addition, it is argued in the case of triconsonantal clusters that 'one would expect the medial consonant to be dropped, apart from cases such as the present where the phonetically most "powerful" consonant [s] occupies the medial position' (*ibid.*, 108), but no examples are given to explain and/or corroborate this.

[46] Gammeltoft, *ibid.*, 114–15. C. J. S. Marstrander, *Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland* (Kristiania, 1915), p. 76, sees the development of EG *sráit* to be via Old Norse *stræti* (as Henderson, *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland*, p. 217) or Old English *stræt*, but ON *æ* is expected to yield long *ē* or broken *ia* in Scottish Gaelic, e.g. G. *Siadar* [ˈʃiad̥ər] from ON *Sætr* (Cox, 'The origin and relative chronology of *Shader*-names', 96–97); see note 20.

[47] Old Irish *sruth* 'stream, brook', *srúaim* 'gush', Welsh *ffrwd* 'stream', Sanskrit *srávati* 'flows', Lithuanian *sravéti* 'to flow', ON *straumr,* Old English *stréam* (R. Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish* (Dublin, 1975, first published 1946), p. 120.

[48] This phonological adaptation has evidently not taken place in the case of the place-name **Stremnish** (Gillies, *Place-Names of Argyll*, p. 158) < ON *Straum-nes* 'stream-promontory', with retrogressive palatalisation, or perhaps from an ON *Streymanes* 'the promontory of the currents' with the adjective *streymr* 'full of currents' (cf. G. *Srèimeanais* [ˈstrēːmə ˌnɪʃ] in Lewis (Cox, 'Scandinavian toponyms in Scottish Gaelic').

[49] O'Rahilly, *Irish Dialects Past and Present*, p. 137.

[50] For the distribution of *sr-* and *str-*, see *The Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland*, edited by C. Ó Dochartaigh, 5 vols (Dublin, 1994), V, item 800 *sròn*, item 801 *mo shròn*.

In Islay and Mull, it is stated, 'there is some marginal and late evidence for a resistance to the combination [st(-)] in place-names of Scandinavian origin.'[51] This is supported by Captain Thomas' statement that '[t]here is usually much abbreviation of the generic terms in the last two centuries, particularly such as have ceased to have meaning in common speech, and in a few cases they are altogether suppressed. Thus *stadr* [*sic*], in the sixteenth century becomes "sta" and "say," but it is now vaguely represented by "s"...'[52] The instances cited by Thomas are **Steinsha**, **Cultorsay**, **Keppols** earlier **Keapolsay**, and **Skerrols** earlier **Skerolsay** which are all derived from forms in final ON *-setr*, and **Eresaid** (also written **Earasaid**) earlier **Herrestuid** which is said to contain ON *-staðr*.[53] If **Herrestuid** does indeed represent modern **Earasaid**, there are spelling errors in other names in the sixteenth-century charter in which it appears which cast doubt upon the form **Herrestuid**;[54] at any rate, were the development *-st-* > *-s-* an authentic one in this case, such a remodelling would be expected to be analogical, not phonological—in effect a one-off event. As for the other names, the supposition that they derive from forms in ON *-setr* is not based on any phonological or documentary evidence, but presumably on the fact that ON (-)*bólstað* acc. has already been deemed, without explaining the development, to yield Islay *-bolls*, **Bolsay** and *-bus*.[55]

In accepting a common origin for both the northern and southern reflexes, Gammeltoft also discusses the potential significance of there being two distinct sets of reflexes from the one element, on the one hand in terms of a chronology of gaelicisation of the Norse-ruled Hebrides, and on the other in terms of a chronology for the changes from *-lst-* >

-st- and *-lst-* > *-ls-* and whether or not these changes originate in a Gaelic or Norse linguistic context. A contrast is made between the development, according to documentary forms, of Myklebost in West Norway and Husabost and Frobost in Skye and South Uist, respectively.[56] The difficulty here is that virtually all Hebridean documentary forms are English/Scots forms and are at a further remove from their Norse etymons, and so a comparison between like and like is not being made. In addition, it is suggested that Norse naming patterns using *bólstaðr* may have taken a different direction in Islay, firstly because the only example of suspected Gaelic influence in the *bólstaðr* onomasticon occurs in Islay, namely **Persabus**, with a suggested specific from 'Gaelic *pearsa*, n.f., "person, parson(?)",'[57] and secondly because the Islay material 'completely lacks the stereotypical place-names in *Kirkjubólstaðr* and *Breiðabólstaðr*, so commonly found in the Northern Isles and in the rest of the Hebrides.'[58] However, Gaelic loan-words in place-names of Old Norse origin are also found in the northern Hebrides,[59] and the so-called stereotypical names are also absent from Harris, Scalpay, South Uist, Tiree, Coll, Mull, Luing, Moidart, Sutherland and Ross-shire. The case of the Islay name **Lyrabus** is also raised, citing Magne Oftedal's article on the development of ON *steinn* in Gaelic,[60] as a potential example of an early

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[51] Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 113.

[52] Thomas, 'On Islay place-names', 242.

[53] Of ON *staðr* and *setr* in Islay place-names, Thomas states that 'it is not easy to distinguish between them when the form of the name is corrupt' (*ibid.*, 244–45).

[54] E.g. **Aelisty**, cf. modern **Ellister**; **Octoforda**, cf. modern **Octofad**; **Garthcarra**, cf. modern **Gartacarra** (from a charter dated 1562; *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1855), II.i, 272–75.

[55] Thomas, 'On Islay place-names', 243–44 and 255–57; although, the development is reversed in the case of the derivation of **Toradale** from ON *Þorisdalr* (*ibid.*, 259; *leg.* ON *Þórisdalr*).

[56] i **Myklabolstað** 14th c. **Møglebostad** 16th c. **Møchelbust** 18th c., modern **Myklebust**; **Husaboste** 14th c. **Froybost** 15th c. **Frobost** 16th c., modern †**Husabost** and **Frobost** (Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 118).

[57] Gammeltoft, 'Why the difference?', 116. It is not clear why it should be considered 'remarkable how absent Gaelic influence seems to be from the specific inventory of this place-name element [*bólstaðr*]' (*ibid.*).

[58] *Ibid.* **Kirkibost** in Lewis, North Uist and Skye; possibly **Breabost** in Skye. For the question over the inclusion of G. **Pràbost** in Skye here, see note 9. (**Kirkapoll**, -[b̥ɔʟ] from ON *-ból*, and **Kirkiboll**, -[b̥əʟ] from ON *-poll* acc., occur in Tiree and North Sutherland, respectively (Cox, 'Descendants of *bólstaðr*?', pp. 50–57).)

[59] See, for example, R. A. V. Cox, 'Norse-Gaelic contact in the West of Lewis: the place-name evidence', in *Language Contact in the British Isles*, edited by P. Sture Ureland, *Linguistische Arbeiten,* 238 (1991), 479–94 (p. 486), and Oftedal, 'Scandinavian place-names in Celtic territory', p. 188.

[60] Oftedal, 'Norse *steinn* in Hebridean place-names'.

Norse loan-name in Gaelic. Oftedal's study shows how ON *steinn* and its earlier form **stainn*, before raising of the diphthong, have produced different reflexes in Gaelic: a long unrounded close-mid front vowel [eː] preceded by a palatalised cluster, and a long unrounded close back vowel [yː], i.e. IPA [ɯː],[61] preceded by a non-palatalised cluster, respectively. Initial palatal [Lʹ]- in **Lyrabus**, therefore, rules out any connection with the archaic Old Norse diphthong **ai*.

Regardless of the merits or demerits of alternative proposals for the derivation of the Islay reflexes, there is no evidence to support their derivation from ON *bólstaðr*.

Phonetic Note

A grave accent, as in G. *beirgh* [ˈbeð'èj], indicates a svarabhakti vowel, with level or rising tone and with stress equal to that of the preceding vowel. [d̥ t d̥ʹ tʹ L N] are dentals. [L N R] are velarised. [R] is trilled. [Lʹ Nʹ] are palatals. [d̥ʹ tʹ] etc. are palatalised.

Anna, Dot, Thorir …
Counting Domesday Personal Names

David N. Parsons
University of Nottingham

Introduction

In dealing with DB material statistical methods are as a rule quite worthless and often definitely misleading

Olof von Feilitzen[1]

Despite von Feilitzen's warning, I aim to show in this paper that his own *Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (PNDB) can be profitably subjected to 'statistical methods'. It is surprising that the great philological achievement of his 1937 work seems nowhere to have been followed up by the sort of 'Applied Anthroponymics' described to this Society by Cecily Clark, some twenty years ago.[2] One might surely expect that the huge corpus of names of those who held land in the days of King Edward the Confessor (died January 1066) would offer some cultural-historical information about late Anglo-Saxon England. For the pre-Conquest period, Veronica Smart has, for instance, several times demonstrated the value of an 'applied' approach to Anglo-Saxon moneyers' names,[3] while Gillian Fellows-Jensen and John Insley have

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[1] O. von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (Uppsala, 1937), p. 26, n. 1.

[2] C. Clark, 'Clark's first three laws of Applied Anthroponymics', *Nomina*, 3 (1979), 13–19, reprinted in *Words, Names and History. Selected Writings of Cecily Clark*, edited by P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995), 77–83. A version of the present paper was read to a meeting of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland held at York in November 2001.

[3] E.g. V. Smart, 'Scandinavians, Celts, and Germans in Anglo-Saxon England: the evidence of moneyers' names', in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History. Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley*, edited by M. A. S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), pp. 171–84.