

In conclusion, I would suggest that it is overly simplistic to assume that place-names functioned as literal descriptions of distinctive features. The early settlers of the British Isles may have placed less emphasis on uniqueness than modern scholars, and they undoubtedly had a range of other priorities which affected naming patterns. Name choices may have been driven by economic, political, legal or social considerations, some of which can no longer be reconstructed. This paper has focused on a small selection of name types in order to explore some of the implications of this line of argument. Many other groups of names may also be affected, and remain to be examined.

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

Sixteenth Annual Study Conference

The sixteenth annual study conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland was held at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, from 31 March to 3 April 2007. The programme was organized by Mr. Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig of the Place-Names Office, Dublin. The opening lecture, by Dr. Nollaig Ó Muraíle (Galway) covered 'Name studies in Ireland: a review'. Professor Thomas Clancy (Glasgow) spoke on 'Logie bared: an ecclesiastical place-name element in eastern Scotland'. He held that parish-names in *Logie* do not contain a Gaelic word for 'hollow' as similar local names do (cf. OIr. *lac*, Sc.G. *lagan*) but a derivative of Latin *locus* 'place' used to name ecclesiastical places in much the same way as OE *stōw* for monastic centres in eastern England or Cornish and Breton *loc* for chapelries (Welsh *llog*, he said, while found in lexical compounds is not productive in place-names). Dr. Micheál Ó Mainnín (Belfast) started from the exploits of a tenth-century king 'Navigating the *Dabhall*: the river and its influence on the topography of North Armagh', relating names of parts of the Blackwater river system to the local topography.

Dr. Paul Cullen (Nottingham) spoke on 'The survival of Celtic place-names in Kent' with specimens including a field-name *Jetties* (< OE **Cethyrst*) relic of a continuous *coed* 'wood' from Blean west to Chatham and Chattenden, and *Winfield Bank* whose first syllable is a reflex of the Roman way-station at *Vagniacis*. His *pièce de résistance* was the argument that the qualifier in the Old English river-name *Rūmenes ēa*, etymon of Romney Marsh, is not as usually thought the Latin personal name *Rōmānus* (phonetics as in OE *Rūm* 'Rome') but the Latin common noun *rūmen* 'throat, gullet, oesophagus' as name of a tidal lagoon supposed to have existed there. The rationale would be that its Romano-British namers fancied a likeness between the movement of waters in it and the bringing up of the cud by ruminant animals. The presentation was not in this reviewer's opinion well served by Dr. Cullen's choice of map, one showing large areas of

continuous open water, with openings to the sea on the south as well as in the north-east. Healthy oesophagi, throats, or gullets open to the outer air only at their upper end. But most geological authorities say that the south coastal shingle spit was continuous from Fairlight to Dungeness. Some details of Anglo-Saxon charters and of Anglo-Saxon history work better if it was. Anything like the modern outflow of the Rother, south of Rye, probably began in the catastrophes of 1250/2 and 1287/8 when Old Winchelsea was overwhelmed by the sea. So the lagoon will have discharged only in the east, though likely by two main channels (at Lympne and Romney). On the other hand the data of Long *et al.* show that any lagoon was not continuous open water but mostly mudflats bare at low tide (much like Breydon Water by Yarmouth), and may reflect no more than creek-riddled saltmarsh only occasionally inundated.¹ The latter looks likelier, given that the charters show much the same landscape mix as in more recent centuries: if there was a lagoon most of it would have to have silted up during just the centuries when the Fens of East Anglia were forming, which is not impossible but would be surprising. It thus seems doubtful if there is good geological sustenance for Dr. Cullen's appetizing hypothesis.

Dr. Carole Hough (Glasgow) spoke on 'Names in Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*'. Dr. Kay Muhr (Belfast) traced 'From *Tamlachtae Dublocho* to *Gort Tamhlacht na Muc*' an Irish place-name element denoting burials. Mr. Peter Kitson (Stoke Prior) explored the etymology within and beyond Germanic of 'OE *hlāw/hlāw* "Burial-mound (etc?)"'. He thought that the vowel variation, dialectal in Old English, derived from an earlier semantic contrast between cognates which were not or were restricted in meaning to artificial mounds, as both forms in most of England are.

Dr. Fiachra mac Gabhann (Galway) examined 'The microtoponymy of Achill, Inishturk and Inishark, Co. Mayo'. Striking differences of knowledge between his different local informants were conditioned by varied fishing and farming customs. Mr. Paul Tempan (Belfast)

¹ A. Long *et al.*, 'The Holocene depositional history of Romney Marsh proper', in *Romney Marsh*, edited by J. Edison *et al.*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph 46 (Oxford, 1998), pp. 45-63.

scrutinized the evidence for 'Five common generic elements in Irish hill and mountain names: *Binn, Cnoc, Cruach, Mullach, Sliabh*'; distinctions between them had much less to do with height than is often claimed. Dr. Pat McKay (Belfast) set forth a wealth of data on 'Some Scots influences on Ulster townland names'. Dr. Simon Taylor (Glasgow) explained 'The trouble with the Forest of Outh: defining a boundary in medieval Fife' (between disputing parties). Mr. Michael Ansell (Stirling) assembled 'Place-name evidence for woodland distribution and hunting in mediaeval Galloway and Carrick'. Some tree-species were used as qualifiers in names of places where palaeobotanic evidence suggests they last grew five thousand years ago; similar persistence of arboreal tradition was reported from some places in Ireland.

Dr. Rhian Parry (Dolgellau) displayed patterns of 'Farm and field names of Ardudwy Uwch Artro', Merioneth, where English measures from the Edwardian settlement interacted with older Welsh arrangements. Prof. Liam Mac Mathúna (Dublin) discussed 'Anglicized names in bilingual texts (1600-1800)' from various parts of Ireland. The two languages could be mixed in ways to enable people from any point in the spectrum of colonial politics to express contempt for others; effects of mutual enthusiasm were much rarer.

After an AGM more successful than last year's in replacement of officers, Dr. Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich (Dublin) continued his account of 'English placenames in south Wexford'. Prominent was a cast of language called Yola, a type of Middle English with Irish elements in it from the 'old' stage of the English presence. Dr. Eamon Lankford (Cork) expounded 'Cork and Kerry Place-Names Survey methodology'. Miss Jennifer Scherr (Bristol) spoke on 'The Norman French element *bretesche* in England and Ireland'. In the most highly technological of this year's papers, Dr. Kevin Murray (Cork) introduced 'The Locus project'. The afternoon coach excursion concentrated its attention on the monastic landscape of Glendalough. There was no paper on the final evening, but dinner in a hotel close to the hill called Great Sugar-Loaf.