

Notes on some place-names of Pembrokeshire

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I. HIGH, LOWER TOCH

In his classic study of the place-names of Pembrokeshire B. G. Charles (1992, II, 444) suggested that High, Lower Toch (earliest attestations include *Thelch* 1372, *Tallche* 1587) conceals ‘*T(h)elach*, later *Telche*, *Talch*, etc., and *Toch* may originally have been a river-name of uncertain form and meaning’.¹ He suggests that it may be historically related to Welsh *talch* ‘fragment, grist’. This semantic elucidation seems to be rather far-fetched, and an alternative explanation of the pre-history of this toponym may be offered instead.

If Charles is correct in seeing the place-name as derived from a hydronym, and if the latter should be indeed reconstructed as **T(h)elach* (which may be further supported by *Thelath* attested in 1326, see Charles 1992, I, 136), this form must remind us of the big group of Welsh river-names in *-ach*, such as *Clarach*, *Mwddach* or *Solfach*, meticulously surveyed by R. J. Thomas (1938, 1–18). As for the root on which this derivation is based, it remains and most probably will remain the crux of the matter. River-names in *tel-*, at least to my knowledge, are not found in the Welsh onomastic landscape. Continental Celtic *comparanda* are not really helpful either. Pomponius Mela (2, 84) records a river-name *Telis* in Gaul, but that is in fact a misspelling of *Tetus* (modern Têt).

¹ The grid-references for the settlements on the 1:50,000 OS map are SN0514 and SM0515. As the anonymous reviewer of this paper kindly informs me, the river may be identified with the now unnamed stream flowing to the north of Lower Toch, which also may have been mentioned as *Thelath* in a fourteenth-century record.

Similarly, a place-name *Tela* (Antonine Itinerary 440, 3) in modern Spain (Cerro del Castillo de Montealegre) is a variant form of *Gella*, probably due to a Greek transmission error and the confusion of the Greek letters Γ and Τ (see *DCCPN* 215). More rewarding are the *comparanda* which are adduced from other Indo-European languages. In this respect I would like to draw attention to Greek σταλάσσω ‘to drip, shed drops, drop’ insofar as it may be connected with τέλμα ‘puddle, swamp, marsh’ and English *stale* ‘urine’, to PIE **(s)tel(h₂)-* ‘to drip’; on this difficult set of forms see Beekes (2010, 1389–90, 1462). If this reconstruction is feasible, it offers a perfect semantic motivation for a Welsh river-name. Alternatively we might consider PIE **telH-* ‘still werden [‘to go quiet’]’, cf. Lithuanian *tilti* ‘fall silent’ (*LIV* 621): the ‘silent (river)’ is also not inappropriate for river-names. A connection with PIE **telh₂-m-* ‘surface, support’ (cf. Old Irish *talam* ‘earth, ground’), for which see Matasović (2009, 366), may in theory also be considered, but certainly seems to be far-fetched.

It has been noted (Thomas 1938, 1; cf. Russell 1990, 82) that at least some of the river names in *-ach* in Wales are of Irish origin, although elsewhere in Welsh toponymy the suffix may be of native provenance, cf. Wmffre 2007, 59. As a number of these Irish hydronyms are attested in Pembrokeshire (Thomas 1938, 11; Charles 1992, 1, 7–8), one might consider the possibility that the geographical name is entirely Irish. In this respect, note early Irish *tel*, *tul*, etc., ‘protuberance, swelling’. It is important that its derivative in *-ach* is also attested as *tulach* ‘hillock, mound’ (cf. Mac Mathúna 1984–8, 36). The word is found in Irish geographical names, as, for example, in *Telach na Licce* in County Armagh (Muhr 2002, 37). The semantic shift ‘hill’ > ‘river’ is attested elsewhere; alternatively the hydronym could be secondary, cf. King (2008, 68, 156–70).

2. CARNEDD

Discussing the place-name Carnedd or Caerenydd,² first attested in 1780 in the compound *Blaencarenydd*, Charles rightly argues that ‘this looks like the name of a river-source (*blaen*)’ (1992, II, 409). Forms in *Abercarenydd* also support this observation, and Charles suggests that the name may originally have been that of a tiny nameless stream which rises near Carnedd (1992, II, 409, 412). He suspects this name may be identical with Welsh *carenydd* ‘kindred, friendship, love; kinsman’, and thinks that ‘it might well have been applied as a term of affection to this stream’.³ In support of this claim he refers to the use of *câr* and its derivatives in the formation of Welsh river-names. This is certainly perfectly possible, and parallels may be adduced from various areas of Wales. For the semantics, consider here, for example, the lost river-name *Cuad*, which has been associated with the Welsh adjective *cu* ‘dear’ (Thomas 1938, 19; Charles 1992, I, 9–10), while the hydronym *Cain* in Flintshire denotes ‘fine, beautiful’ (Davies 1959, 29).

It is notable, however, that many Welsh river-names in *car-* are also open to other explanations. Thus, for example, Afon Ceiriog in Denbighshire is usually discussed in conjunction with Welsh *câr*, i.e. ‘beloved (river)’, but alternatively is traced to a personal name Ceiriog (Owen and Morgan, 2007, 79). A similar-looking name of a minor stream on Anglesey Ceiri / Afon Ceri remains difficult, and it was suspected that it could conceal ‘a colloquialised plural form of *caer* (forts)’; it also has been derived, rather implausibly, from *Cae rhi* ‘the field of God’ (see references in Jones 1989, 59). Some caveats regarding the connection of the Welsh hydronym *Ceri* with Welsh *caru* ‘to love’ are expressed also

² Identified by the anonymous reviewer of this paper with the hamlet at SN117219 west of Llandissilio village. The Welsh place-names with *carnedd* ‘cairn’ – for which see, e.g., Owen and Morgan (2007, 72–3) – are probably unrelated to this toponym, which is found in combination with *blaen* and *aber*.

³ *GPC*, s.v. *carenydd*, may also imply acceptance of the element in this name by noting that the word is found ‘hefyd fel *e.ll.*’ (‘also as a place-name’). Note the double *-n-* in the quoted form.

by Thomas (1938, 132–3). The second component of Bryn Caredig in Flintshire could be the adjective ‘kind’, cognate with *câr*, or else – again – is a corresponding personal name (Davies 1959, 16). The place-name Porthkerry in Glamorgan contains a second element which must remind us of the river-name and the word for ‘love’. However, there are certainly other ways to interpret this place-name element, and Pierce (1968, 199–200) reviewed various possibilities. *Ceiro* in Ceredigion, on the face of it, may belong here, but may also be discussed in conjunction with a personal name (Thomas 1938, 221). *Carrant* in Gloucestershire has been treated as a linguistically Celtic hydronym with the meaning ‘friendly, pleasant stream’; but it has also been viewed as ‘Old European’, to **ker-* ‘to cut’, on the basis of word-formation and taking into account local relief (Kitson 1996, 99–100); for an ‘Old European’ approach to the river-names in **kar-*, which remains controversial, cf. Krahe (1962, 328).

Certainly, place-names in *car-* are not the only group of toponyms which may include homophones or near-homophones. Indeed, one may expect a certain confusion when dealing with Welsh place-names containing *bach* ‘little’ and *bach* ‘nook’, *cain* ‘ridge’ and *cain* ‘fair’, *corn* ‘promontory’ and *corn* ‘crane’, **el-* ‘swift’ and *el-* ‘numerous’, etc., cf. also *ardd* ‘hill’ and *arth* ‘bear’. Moreover, sometimes the homophonous formations share not only the stem, but also a fair similarity or even identity – on the face of it – in a morphological or derivational pattern. Thus, for example, the place-name *Y Gyfeillion* in the parish of Llanwynno in Glamorgan certainly looks like a plural form of the Welsh noun denoting ‘friend’, *cyfaill*, viz. *cyfeillion*. However, as Gwynedd O. Pierce (2002, 91–2) has shown us, in fact the toponym has nothing to do with the Welsh noun meaning ‘friend’ and denotes in fact ‘the two facing rock slopes’ with a dual form, **eilltion*, of *allt* ‘hill-slope’. Therefore it is not impossible that *Carnedd* may conceal a different entity, and this is thus not unparalleled in Welsh toponymic studies.

It has been shown elsewhere that river-names in *car-* in various Celtic languages, if they do not go back to the words denoting ‘love’ or personal names, may contain a reflex of **kar(r)-* ‘stone’ or the like (cf. W *carreg* ‘large stone, crag’) or be related to the Gaulish word *carros* ‘chariot’; see

references in *DCCPN* 13–14. As for the final part of *carenydd*, that finds plenty of parallels in the toponymy of Wales, including in Pembrokeshire. These parallels are ultimately heterogeneous in origin. For example, the plural suffix *-ydd* is attested in a river-name *Nant Iwennyth*, if it is from *ywen* ‘yew’; and it has been long suspected that the suffix *-ydd* is used to form river-names, as, example, in *Afon Pibydd* (Charles 1992, 1, 17–19, 824). To explain the present river-name, however, such suffixes would require *-n-* in the stem, and this is problematic: Welsh *caren* ‘crone, jade, carrion’ is a late loan from English *carrion* and is semantically rather unattractive; its recorded plural form is *carennod*. A connection with the ‘early Welsh territorial suffix’ *-ydd*, as in, for example, *Eifionydd* or *Cristionydd*, which was discussed by Melville Richards (1965, 210–11), similarly looks unlikely; and the agent suffix *-ydd* (for which see, e.g., Russell 1989, 37–8) is also irrelevant for the present discussion.

Different word-division may offer a better option for the analysis of this river-name. Just as *GPC* derives *carenydd* from an old participial formation from *caru*, as **karantiġo-* (for the formation see Hamp 1976, 4–8), so the river-name may also reflect this particular morphological model. The exact configuration of the underlying form may be disputable (see Repanšek 2015, 783–4 with further references), but it needs to be asked whether in fact such a hydronym is necessarily derived from the word meaning ‘love’. Instead, it could be linked to the group of words in various Celtic languages which includes Gaulish *carros* ‘chariot’, Old Irish *carr* ‘cart, chariot’, Old Breton *carr* (glossed *uehculis*), Middle Welsh *carr*, pl. *keir* ‘cart, vehicle’, and traced to **k’rs-o* < **k’ers-* ‘run’ (see *DCCPN* 13–14, with references). In this case, it has a perfect match in the Celtic river-name *Carann* in Scotland, which looks like a derivative of Common Celtic **kar-* ‘to love’, but in fact also goes back to **krs-* ‘to run’, as was suggested by Eric Hamp (1990, 193).⁴ With a slightly different, but compatible, morphological pattern, this etymology may be

⁴ Hamp also refers to the earlier attempt of Watson to trace the hydronym to PIE **kars-* ‘harsh, rough’, but refutes it.

compared with the ancient and early medieval name of the river Charente in France (*Carantonus*, *Carantonis fluvius*, etc.); and note that the similar-looking attestation of the ancient place-name Guitiríz in Spain *Carantium* (Ravenna Cosmography 4, 43) contradicts the earlier attestation as *Caranico* (Antonine Itinerary 424, 6), see *DCCPN* 90–1.

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