



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

IMPORTANT CONFERENCE NOTICES

Online Event 17 October 2020

The society are planning to hold an online event on 17 October, to make up for the postponement of the conference in Bridgend. By the time you receive this newsletter, the call for contributions will have closed, but please keep an eye on the SNSBI website and your emails for more information. if you have not already done so, you should soon receive the programme and details for (free) registration.

SNSBI 29th Annual Spring Conference 9-12 April 2021 Heronston Hotel, Bridgend, Glamorgan

The Committee has postponed the conference in Bridgend, which we now hope to hold from 9-12 April 2021. We very much hope that conditions will allow us to go ahead with a live event, but naturally all the arrangements have to be provisional. More information will follow - please continue to check your emails and the SNSBI website.

Newsletter NS. 21 Autumn 2020

Hello, and welcome to the 21st issue of the SNSBI newsletter.

Many of you will notice that I have not fully refreshed the picture banner at the top of the page, but I have had fewer trips outside due to lockdown, and so have had fewer opportunities to take pictures of interesting signs. There is, however, one new picture of a sign for Star Carr Lane. Many thanks to Kathryn Bullen for sending it in, with the following note:

*“The example is from Wrawby near Brigg in northern Lincolnshire (PN Li 2 309). The Star Carr name keeps cropping up in northern Lincolnshire and I have found additional examples in the Isle of Axholme, the area of my current PhD research. The etymology has nothing to do with stars, but everything to do with a ME borrowing from ON *stjorr* 'sedge, bent grass', coupled with *kjarr* 'brushwood, marsh', and describes what was once a wetland landscape in this part of the Danelaw.”*

This issue is again shorter than usual, as there is no Spring conference report, but we do have an interesting note from Keith Briggs, along with some other information. Please also see the SNSBI conference information on the left-hand side of this page.

Harry Parkin (editor)

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SNSBI is still on
Twitter!

[@SNSBI_official](https://twitter.com/SNSBI_official)

If anyone wishes to get in touch with news, interesting articles, upcoming events, etc., please send us a message over Twitter or e-mail promotions@snsbi.org.uk

Many thanks to our Publicity Officer, **Dr James Butler**, for managing the account.



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NEWS

Congratulations to **Emma Heywood** who has been awarded the 2019 SNSBI Essay Prize for an essay on kinship marking in Anglo-Saxon personal names.

If you are interested in submitting an essay, please see the details on the final page of this newsletter.

Voprosy Onomastiki

The editorial board of the journal **Voprosy onomastiki (Problems of Onomastics)** is pleased to inform you of the publication of **Vol. 17 (2020), Issues 1 & 2**, free of charge on the journal's website: onomastics.ru/en

Articles include:

Tolstaya, S. M.
To the Etymology of the Name Vladimir.

Datsishina, M. V.
Place Renaming and German Policy-Making in Temporarily Occupied Soviet Territories.

Romanova, T. P.
Eventonym: A Specific Type of Advertising Proper Name

This is just a small sample of the articles available. Please visit the website for a full list (Ed.)

Nomina Bibliography

The **Nomina** bibliography team encourages members to send details of publications dealing with names in Britain and Ireland to biblio@snsbi.org.uk for inclusion in the annual bibliography.

The team would particularly welcome information about books and book chapters, and articles in journals that don't regularly publish onomastic content.

If it's not obvious why a publication will be of interest to SNSBI members from its title, a sentence or two outlining the onomastic content would be an enormous help!

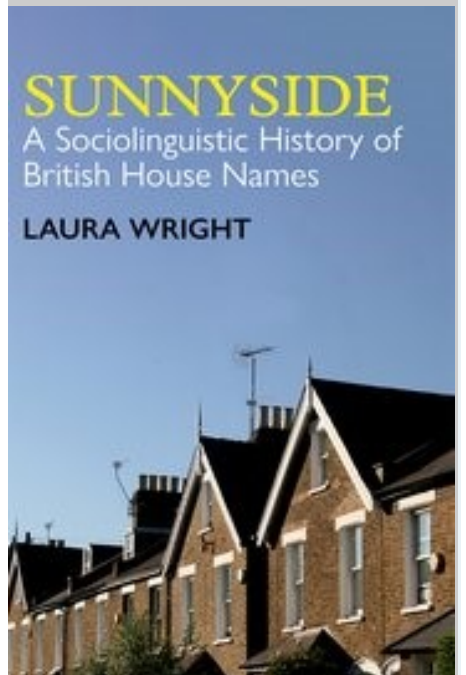
Odd pics from Keith Briggs



The street-name Duckamere in Bramford in Suffolk can be traced back to *Ducklemore Field* 1655, and this is probably derived from the surname *Duggel* found in the area back to c.1200. So it has nothing to do with ducks!

Recent Publication

Sunnyside: A Sociolinguistic History of British House Names by **Laura Wright**. Oxford: Oxford University Press. £65



Described by the publisher as 'A pioneering history of British house names'.

See oup.com for further information.

Please note that publications listed on this page are included because they are of potential interest to members. Listing here does not imply any opinion regarding quality, academic rigour etc. Where appropriate, reviews will appear in **Nomina** in due course.



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Monoliteral toponyms by Keith Briggs

How short can a place-name be? It depends, of course, on our measure of length. In the study of language, speech should have priority over writing, and so a single phoneme would be minimal. A place-name such as Eye in Suffolk would then qualify, at least in its modern pronunciation. But in this note I would like to examine those rare toponyms that have been written with a single letter. I confess that this is just for amusement; there is no natural unity in this group of names. It is nevertheless curious that though a few of them have a long history, they are not mentioned in existing works on toponymy. Many are of uncertain etymology and therefore the suggestions below are tentative, but the likelihood is that in most cases they have something to do with water. We have to allow that they are occasionally spelled with two letters, usually to indicate a long vowel, or in some cases a diphthong. Needless to say, all monoliteral toponyms consist of vowels only (I exclude from consideration such letter-shape names as L Field or D Wood). These names are rare, and so this note, like its subject matter, is necessarily short.

The very first noun in the printed version of the Oxford English Dictionary is “aa”, defined as ‘a stream, a water-

course’. But there is only one citation: *Communis sewere vocat’ le Seventowne Aa* 1430, in Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire. Germanic cognates are widespread in hydronymy; several rivers in Germany and the Netherlands are called Aa. A number of streams in the north of England and in Scotland appear to have simplex names derived from Scandinavian á ‘stream’, though usually records to prove this are not extant. Settlements on the banks of such streams can adopt the name of the stream. Such are Ae (village and forest), Glen Ey and Ey Burn, Glen Ea, Ay Wick, Shetland, Ay Gill in the North Pennines (Stainmore Forest), and Ea or Ay in Lancashire [1].

In Norway, there are a number of farms called Å (earlier Aa) or O, both names meaning simply ‘stream’ [2]. The Oa in Islay is possibly Old Norse *hofuð* ‘head’. In Shetland, Oe Stack might have its specific from ON *øy* ‘island’, and Aa Skerry could be from *há* ‘high’, as the skerry is rather elevated [3].

Place-names more distantly related also occur in France, in former Germanic speaking areas. A practically certain case is Eu, an old town on the Normandy coast, now swallowed up by the neighbouring Le Tréport. This appears as a surname *Ou*, *Hou*, *Dou* in medieval English sources. The name is usually

said to be Germanic *a(g)wjō*, meaning a wet or marshy place (the source of German Au ‘meadow’), but some early documents dignify it by transforming the name into Augusta [4].

There is an O near Mortrée in the Orne département. This appears as “O.” on the eighteenth-century map of Cassini (Figure 1), and Ô in modern maps. No book on French place-names says anything about it. It is in a marshy area (*prairie*), so it may have the same origin as Eu, though it is rather far from a region where we expect Germanic names, being on the southern boundary of Normandy. This might be the same place as the one spelt *Oht* and *Hot* in 1050 [5]. If so, some other etymology is indicated.

Certainly unrelated to O is Oô (dép. Haute-Garonne) in the Pyrenees, the name of a town and a lake (Le lac d’Oô). It appears as Oo on Cassini’s map (Figure 2). This is explained by Elcock as from Basque *ibón* ‘mountain lake’, taken into French as *ioû*, *eoû* [6]. Another interesting French name is Y, one kilometre north-west of Matigny in the Somme département, and well-known from its appearance on the SNSBI website banner. It does not appear on the Cassini map. However, in his analysis of the so-called declaration of treasurer Guy of Noyon cathedral (a copy of about 1200 of an eleventh-century original),



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Figure 1: O near Mortrée (département Orne) on the eighteenth-century map of Cassini. From <http://cassini.ehess.fr/cassini/fr/>.

Guyotjeannin [7] identifies *villa que dicitur Iei* therein as “peut-être Y”. This looks likely despite the form *Iei* being mysterious, as the region is appropriate and no other candidate is known. But if this identification is incorrect, then the name may not be old, and could just refer to the Y-shaped junction of three roads at the centre of the village. See Figure 3.

I conclude with a random miscellany. The mediterranean island of Château d’If has a last element ultimately from Latin *insula* with a diminutive suffix *-ittu*; the spelling with *-f* is unetymological and the name is pronounced *I* in provençal [8]. Iona was simply *I* or *Hi* in early records, and *I* in Irish sources. The meaning is unknown; Coates says it is “not ivy” [9]. A monastery called by the single Greek letter α in St. Sauveur (département Côtes-d’Or) was *monasterium in pago Atoariensi; quod quondam Alfa*

vocabatur in 883, and is recorded with the same name (spelt *Alpha*) in 1138 [10]. O Brook in Devon was *Ocbroke* 1240, from *āc-brōc* ‘oak brook’ [11]. Olsen [12] mentions a field called O and an island called Ó in Norway. Möller [13] discusses several places in North Germany called *A* or *O* in pre-1200 records. These are: *silvam, que dicitur A*, a wood near Peine between Hannover and Braunschweig; a field-name recorded as *Ha, A-feld*, and *grangiam in A*, which was southwest of Loccum; a wood called *O* near Hildesheim: *silvam . . . que O dicitur*; and a hamlet and wood called *Oh* near Walkenried: *in loco, qui dicitur Oh*. Möller (p.34) thinks the last may derive from Old Saxon *ouwa*, from Germanic *a(g)wjō* ‘Aue, Gewässer’.

Notes:

1 Eilert Ekwall, *The place-names of Lancashire*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922, pp. 10, 190.

2 The farms can be found by searching the online edition of *Norske Gaardnavne* at <https://www.nb.no/search?q=Norske%20Gaardnavne>.

3 Alan Macniven, *The Vikings in Islay*. Edinburgh: John Donald, 2015, p. 93. I thank Peder Gammeltoft for all information in this paragraph.

4 François de Beaurepaire and Dom Jean Laporte, *Dictionnaire topographique du département de Seine-Maritime*. Tome I: A à G. Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982–4, pp.356–7; Pierre-Henri Billy, *Dictionnaire des noms de lieux de la France*. Paris: Errance, 2011, p. 251.

5 Marie Fauroux, ed., *Recueil des actes des ducs de Normandie (911–1066)*. Caen: Société des Antiquaires de Normandie, 1961, p. 289.

6 W. D. Elcock, *The Romance languages*. Faber & Faber, 1975, p. 179.

7 Olivier Guyotjeannin, “Noyonnais et Vermandois aux Xe et XIe siècles. La déclaration du trésorier Guy et les premières confirmations royales et pontificales des biens du chapitre cathédral de Noyon”. In: *Bibliothèque de l’école des chartes* 139.2 (1981), pp. 143–189 at 164, 167.



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8 Pierre-Henri Billy, *Dictionnaire des noms de lieux de la France*. Paris: Errance, 2011, p. 178.

9 Richard Coates, "A glimpse through a dirty window into an unlit house: names of some north-west European islands". In: *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*. Toronto, 2008, pp. 228–242.

10 A. Roserot, *Dictionnaire topographique du département de la Côte-d'Or*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1903, p.366; Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville. "Deux diplômes carlovingiens des archives de l'Aube". *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 39 (1878), p. 193–198.

11 Eilert Ekwall, *English river-names*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928, p. 306.

12 Magnus Olsen, *Farms and fanes of ancient Norway*. The place-names of a country discussed in their bearings on social and religious history. Instituttet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning. Serie A: Forelesninger IX. Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), 1928, pp. 26, 222.

13 Reinhold Möller, *Niedersächsische Siedlungsnamen und Flurnamen in Zeugnissen vor dem Jahre 1200*. Ed. Rudolf Schützeichel. Bd. 16. Beiträge zur Namenforschung. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979, pp. 33–34.



Figure 2: Oô (départ. Haute-Garonne) on the eighteenth-century map of Cassini. It is 5 kilometres west of Bagnères-de-Luchon. From <http://cassini.ehess.fr/cassini/fr/>.

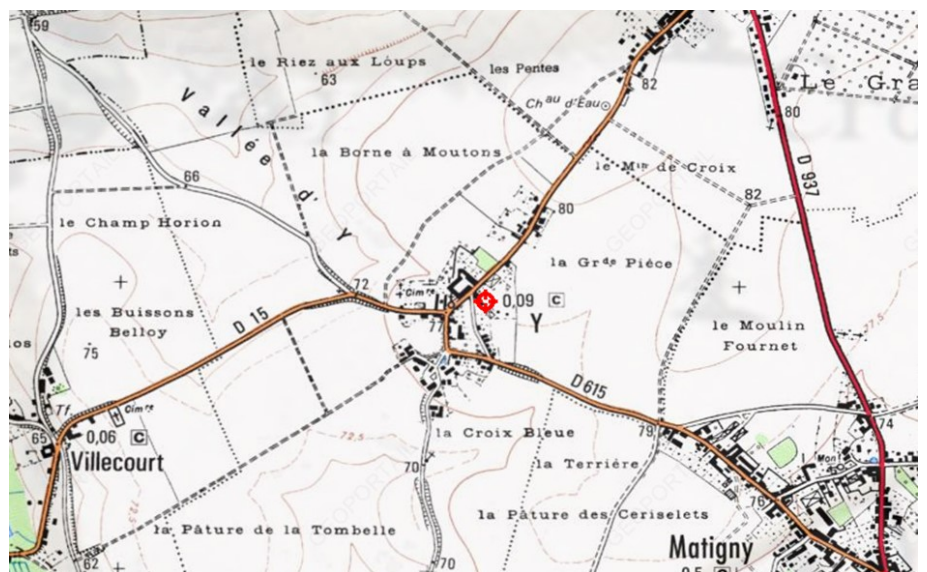


Figure 3: Y (départ. Somme). From <http://logiciels.ign.fr/>. Under free CeCILL licence.

This contribution is published in the newsletter without peer-review. The author would be grateful for any comments. We welcome further short submissions for inclusion in future issues.



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland Essay Prize

1. A prize of £100 will be awarded annually for the best essay on any topic relating to the Society's interests.
2. Submissions are invited from students and other researchers. The prize will normally be awarded to those who do not have a track record of scholarly publication.
3. Essays should be about 5,000 words in length.
4. Essays should in some way make an original contribution to the subject.
5. Essays should be double-spaced, with pages numbered in a single sequence of arabic numerals, and should include a bibliography of source-material used and of books and authors cited.
6. Two electronic text copies of the essay should be submitted by 31 October each year to secretary@snsbi.org.uk. One of these copies should be anonymised (i.e., with all information which may indicate the author's identity removed) for refereeing purposes.
7. Entries will be blind-refereed and the final decision made by a panel normally consisting of the President, the two Vice-Presidents and the Editor of Nomina, who may consider it for publication.
8. Provided an essay of sufficient merit is forthcoming, the winner will be announced at the next AGM, held in the spring of the following year.

Entries should be sent to the Honorary Secretary: Dr Rebecca Gregory, secretary@snsbi.org.uk

Forthcoming Events

The **27th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences** will be held in **Kraków, Poland**, from 22 to 27 August 2021.

This conference was due to be held in August 2020, but has been postponed. Early Bird registration has been extended to 31 March 2021.

The main topic of the Congress is the interdisciplinarity of onomastic research

For more information visit icos2020.jordan.pl

In the previous issue of the newsletter, information was provided on The **Modern Language Association (MLA) 2021 Conference**. This will still take place from 7 to 10 January 2021, but will be held online.

As part of this conference, the **American Name Society** will be chairing a panel with the literary theme 'Toponyms and Literaryscapes'.

For more information visit mla.org

The Language of Names

Some of the students from **Dr James Butler's Language of Names** class at the University of Salford have had their assignments on UK place-names posted on the module's academic blog, which can be found here -

<https://languageofnames.salford.ac.uk/wordpress.com/>

From the *About* page:

"What can place-names tell us? [...] Do names simply function as straightforward titles and labels, or do they shed light on the history of a place and its context? These are some of the questions that the blogs on this site set out to explore."

This section of the newsletter usually provides brief details on future SNSBI conferences. Due to the postponement of the Spring 2020 conference in Bridgend, and the continued impact of COVID-19, plans for the society's conference programme may be subject to change. Keep an eye on the SNSBI website and emails from the society for updates - Ed.

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