



# SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## IMPORTANT CONFERENCE NOTICES

### Online Conferences Spring & Autumn 2021

The Committee has decided to postpone the 2021 Spring conference in Bridgend. Although it's disappointing that we won't be able to meet in person, we will be holding an online event in lieu of the weekend conference on 10 and 11 April 2021. The 2021 Autumn day conference is also likely to be online. Please keep an eye on the SNSBI website and your emails for more information.

### SNSBI 29th Annual Spring Conference 8-11 April 2022 Heronston Hotel, Bridgend, Glamorgan

As mentioned above, the Committee has decided to postpone the conference in Bridgend. We now hope to hold this conference on 8-11 April 2022. We very much hope that conditions will allow us to go ahead with a physical 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. 22 Spring 2021

*Hello, and welcome to the 22nd issue of the SNSBI newsletter.*

*I'm pleased to let you know that this newsletter is a full eight-page issue! It contains lots of important and interesting information, so I encourage you to read it carefully.*

*I'd like to draw your attention to the notice on the left-hand side of this page, which explains the decision to postpone the 29th Annual Spring Conference. We now hope it will be held from 8-11 April 2022; it will still take place in Bridgend.*

*Very many thanks to all of those who sent material for inclusion in the newsletter. Please continue to do so. In the current circumstances, with fewer conferences to report on, it would be a challenge to put a full newsletter together without your help, so I'm very grateful.*

*In this issue, there is a short note written by Trevor Ogden, and I'm also grateful for additional content provided by Keith Briggs, Ann Cole, Alice Crook, and Hywel Wyn Owen.*

*Harry Parkin (editor)*

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2020-21

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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](mailto:promotions@snsbi.org.uk)

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



# SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## Conference report

### SNSBI AUTUMN DAY CONFERENCE

HELD ONLINE ON 17 OCTOBER 2020

#### Report by Alice Crook

On Saturday, 17th October, SNSBI members and guests attended the autumn day conference. Restrictions meant the event had to be hosted online, but it was a welcome chance to see some friendly faces and hear about some of the new and exciting research currently happening.

Session 1 (Personal Names) was chaired by **Peter McClure**. **Keith Briggs** gave the first paper of the day—*The first girls in England*—which explored early bearers of the family name *Girle* and potential implications for the etymology of ‘girl’. This very interesting talk showed that, although the name is found throughout England after 1300, it was present in East Anglia in the 13th century, with examples dating from as early as 1208. Keith closed his paper by outlining several avenues to explore, including the possibility of ‘girl’ being a foreign borrowing or deriving from a term for ‘girdle’.

Next we heard from **Clare Green**, presenting her

research on *Naming Welsh-speaking children: case studies from London and Gwynedd*. This paper was an engaging discussion of children’s names and multilingualism, drawing on qualitative interviews with two Welsh-speaking mothers about their conscious naming decisions and their use of the Welsh language at home. Clare summarised two key factors affecting the style of the resulting names: linguistic environment (Welsh-speaking or English-speaking area, and level of exposure to Welsh culture), and parents’ sense of identity.

There was a short break halfway through the programme. I’d anticipated 15 minutes of silence as everyone stepped away from their screens, but it was really nice to see instead that the usual coffee break atmosphere was retained, with many participants using the time to share recent news and discuss the day so far.

Session 2 (Place-Names), chaired by **Jennifer Scherr**, began with **Paul Tempan’s** paper *Names in the Irish built environment transferred due to a common function*. This talk focused on “copied names”—names which have been transferred from another location due to a

common function or association—and Paul convincingly argued that these names should be treated according to certain rules. For example, the meaning of the primary name should not be applied to secondary instances (don’t look for holy wells near all Bridewells!), and translations of the secondary name should be based on the shared function or association rather than the meaning of the primary name.

**Kathryn Bullen**, a postgraduate student at the University of Nottingham, then presented

*Axholme—Place-Names in the Marsh*, an overview of her PhD project. Her work aims to discover what place-names can tell us about society and culture in the Isle of Axholme and to benefit local environmental agencies through an awareness of Axholme’s watery past. The paper presented numerous pieces of place-name evidence for Axholme’s history and culture, including field-name evidence for watery areas (including words for plants found in wet landscapes, like reeds and sedge), for a history of flax and hemp growing, and for landscape management. Kathryn also posed a tantalising question about the meaning of the element *beave*, which inspired several





## SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

suggestions during the questions.

Sadly, connection issues (a hazard of online events!) meant that **Thomas Clancy** was unable to give his paper during the conference, but he kindly produced a recording later that day. *Iona's Namescape: place-names and their dynamics in Iona and its environs* was an introduction to a new AHRC-funded 3-year project at the University of Glasgow (partnered with National Trust for Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland) focusing on Iona and its place-names. The project has five distinct strands: a survey of the place-names of Iona and Staffa; Iona's earliest records; naming the monuments; the relationship between Iona and Mull (particularly exploring and comparing the Scandinavian impact on the islands); and authority and authenticity. Two conferences are planned, *St Columba and Iona* in December 2021 and *The Curation of Names: Authority and Authenticity* in September 2022.

Thanks go to the organisers on the SNSBI committee, in particular **Rebecca Gregory** and **Julia Stanbridge**, and to **James Butler** and **Eleanor Rye** for their management of the Zoom meeting and

providing technical support as required.

### P. H. Reaney biography and bibliography

*Members may be interested in a webpage created by Keith Briggs which includes a short biography of the personal-name and place-name scholar, P. H. Reaney ([keithbriggs.info/reaney.html](http://keithbriggs.info/reaney.html)) The page also provides a comprehensive bibliography of his works.*

#### Excerpt from biography:

Reaney's earliest linguistic researches were on the dialect of Penrith, on which he published a book and a short paper in phonetic script. He began his serious place-name work with the publication in 1930 of a volume on the place-names of Walthamstow. This was to lead on to his two major EPNS volumes on the place-names of Essex and Cambridgeshire. All Reaney's books and papers were destroyed in the second world war, yet he was able to resume his researches after receiving copies of books from a group of ten Swedish scholars who had heard about his misfortune (details in the preface to *A dictionary of British surnames*). His 1960 work *The origin of English place-names* is still one of the best general

introductions; it is mostly of solid scholarship, is written in a lively style, and has well-chosen illustrative examples throughout. The only competitor is Cameron's *English place-names* (1961, new edition 1996). Reaney collected much material on Suffolk place-names, but did not complete any publications on this subject.

Reaney's later work was on English surnames, with a dictionary and a survey volume. The first edition of the dictionary had several reprintings and was revised in 1976 by R. M. Wilson. The third edition eventually became the basis for the current definitive reference work, the *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (2016).

Reaney obtained a PhD in 1931 (London), a LittD in 1935 (Sheffield), and was made FSA and FRHistS. At various times he was a member of the councils of the English Place-Name Society, the Philological Society, and the Essex Archaeological Society, and was chairman of the Walthamstow Antiquarian Society. After his retirement, he lived in Tunbridge Wells. The University of Sheffield has an important archive of his papers, including much correspondence with other major scholars of his time.



# SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## NEWS

### The etymology of 'girl'

A new paper by Keith Briggs on the word "girl" has now been published. This is the promised follow-up to the paper presented at the SNSBI online conference on 17 October [see page 2]. For those without an OUP subscription, a link to the full text will soon be available at <http://keithbriggs.info>.

The etymology of 'girl': two more ideas, *Notes and Queries*, online publication 2021-01-11  
<https://academic.oup.com/nq/advance-article/doi/10.1093/notesj/qjaa176/6076713>

### 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](mailto: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 Ann Cole



The Peep in Northleach, Gloucestershire. If you peep along it, you can see a little bit of the High Street at one end, and the market place at the other!

### Student network and discussion group

The society would like to explore the possibility of establishing two new groups for members: a **student network** and a **discussion group**. These will allow members to meet online and discuss their onomastic interests.

Please send expressions of interest to [secretary@snsbi.org.uk](mailto:secretary@snsbi.org.uk)

### Recent Publication

**The Place-Names of Clackmannanshire**, by Simon Taylor with Thomas Owen Clancy, Peter McNiven and Eila Williamson (editors).

Note from the publisher, Shaun Tyas:  
*This is the eighth volume in the acclaimed Place-Names of Scotland series and covers the whole of this small county in one volume. It comprises the parishes of Alloa, Alva, Clackmannan, Dollar and Tillicoultry. Nevertheless, there are 660 place-names covered in the volume. There are introductory essays on the county's geography, geology, early history, administrative history and linguistic history. Each parish has a substantial historical introduction, illustrated by both modern and ancient maps, and the volume is rounded off with a glossary of terms and an index.*

The retail price is £35, but Shaun is willing to sell it at £28 to SNSBI members. Contact [shaun@shauntyas.myzen.co.uk](mailto:shaun@shauntyas.myzen.co.uk) if you would like to place an order.

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.





# SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## Old Norse-derived surnames and place-names in Norfolk

by Trevor Ogden  
[ogden@ogs.org.uk](mailto:ogden@ogs.org.uk)

At SNSBI's 2019 Autumn Meeting in York, Peter McClure gave a paper considering how transference of given names between Old Norse (ON) and Old English communities could have been used to integrate families. In the course of this, he extracted from the *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* [1] (ODFN) 36 surnames derived from ON given names, and he used Archer Software's *British 19<sup>th</sup> Century Surname Atlas* [2] to show that in the 1881 census they tended to concentrate in various counties in the Danelaw.

I had already noticed two surnames from ON given names, Hannant and Took, which tended to be in parts of Norfolk where there are more ON place-names. I was wondering whether this could be more than coincidence when I read the summary of Peter's paper in the Spring 2020 Newsletter [3]. I wrote to Peter, and he very kindly sent me details of his presentation. In his 36 surnames, there are 10 which the Surname Atlas shows

had more examples in Norfolk than in any other county in 1881. Adding three common variants to these made 13 names in all, which in the census were held by a total of 2169 people in Norfolk. The names are Asker, Copeman, Farman, Hacon, Hannant (and Hannent), Thirkettle (and Thurkettle), Tooke (and Took), Tooley, Tubby, and Ulph. With the possible exception of Copeman, all of these tend to concentrate in the north or east of the county. Fig 1 shows the distribution of all 13 names taken together.

Fig 2 is adapted by permission from Tim Pestell's recent book *Vikings in East Anglia* [4]. It shows the distribution of ON place-names in northern East

Anglia, which of course is commonly taken as an indicator of areas of Viking settlement. Comparing Figs 1 and 2, it is a matter of judgement whether there is a real relationship. I therefore tried to tie this down quantitatively by sorting the Norfolk 1881 enumeration districts into three classes, according to whether they included "many", "some", or "few" ON place-names. The idea was that these three classes of enumeration district would define zones corresponding roughly to strength of Viking influence, which might appear in the surnames.

When it comes to where the ON place-names are, maps differ in detail as a result of how they treat hybrids, and how small a

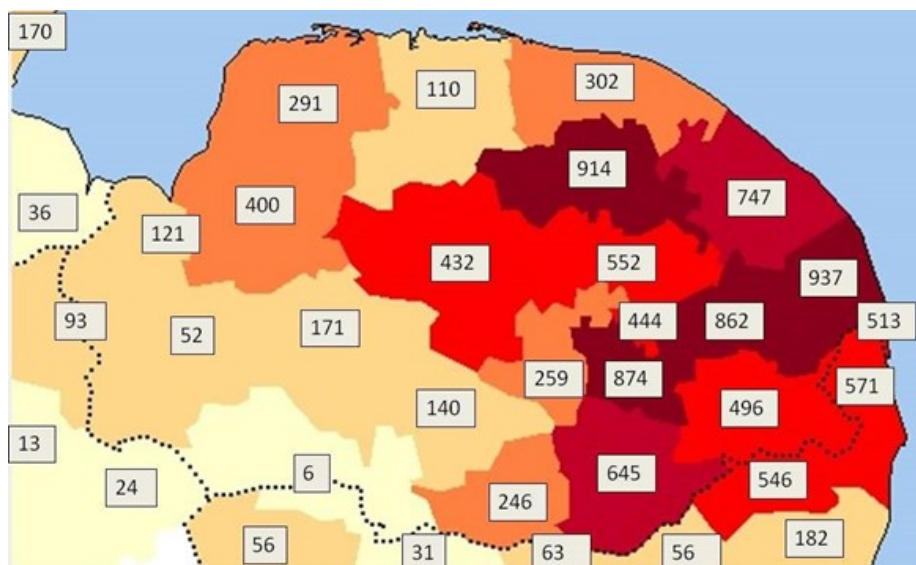


Fig. 1. Numbers of people with the 13 ON-derived surnames in Norfolk 1881 enumeration districts, per 100,000 of the population.



# SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

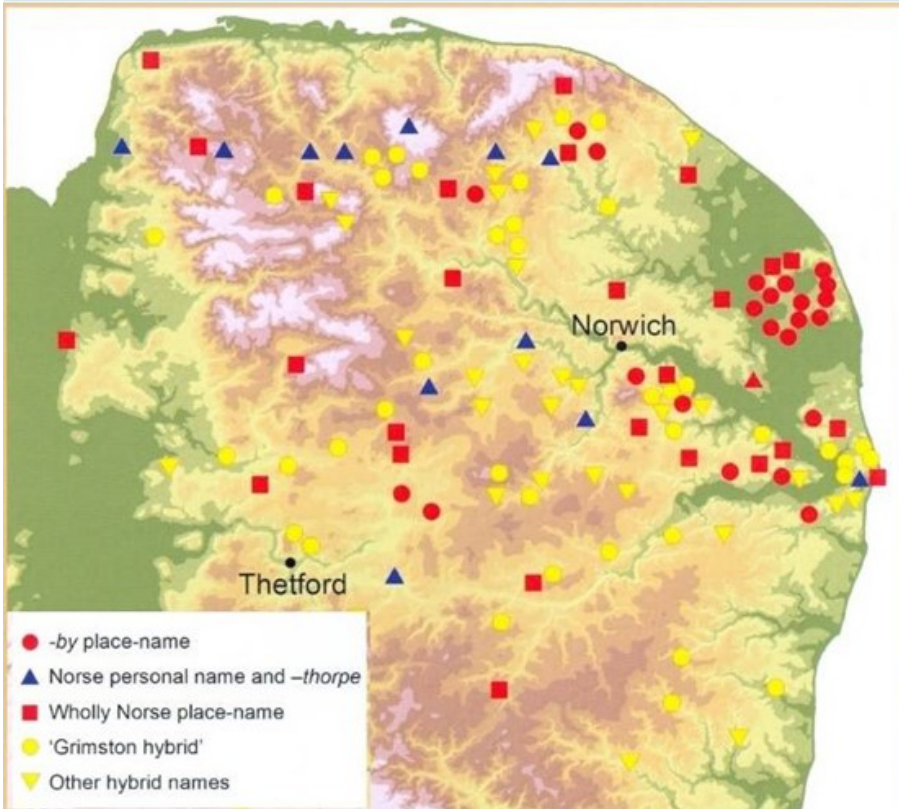


Fig 2. Old Norse place-names in northern East Anglia, adapted from Pestell [see note 4].

named place they include. I used the Institute of Name Studies (INS) map of Norfolk as my main source [5], and backed it up with Tim Pestell's map. My "many" enumeration districts contained from 7 to 12 INS names each (7-17 Pestell names); "some" had 3-6 (2-6); and "few" 0 or 1 (0-2). I included two enumeration districts just over the SE border into Suffolk, because they appeared to behave similarly with respect to the 13 names (see Fig 1); two of the Norfolk enumeration districts have some parishes in neighbouring counties. These and other details are included in a paper placed online [6]. The "many" zone included 8 enumeration districts; "some" had 12 districts; and "few" had 3 districts. I treated the Norwich and Yarmouth districts separately. Neither town had ON place-names identified by the two sources, but Norwich is known to have had Scandinavian settlement and has several "gate" street-names. Yarmouth barely existed at the time of Viking settlement, and was presumably mainly populated later from the surrounding areas. The locations of the resulting zones are illustrated in Fig 3.

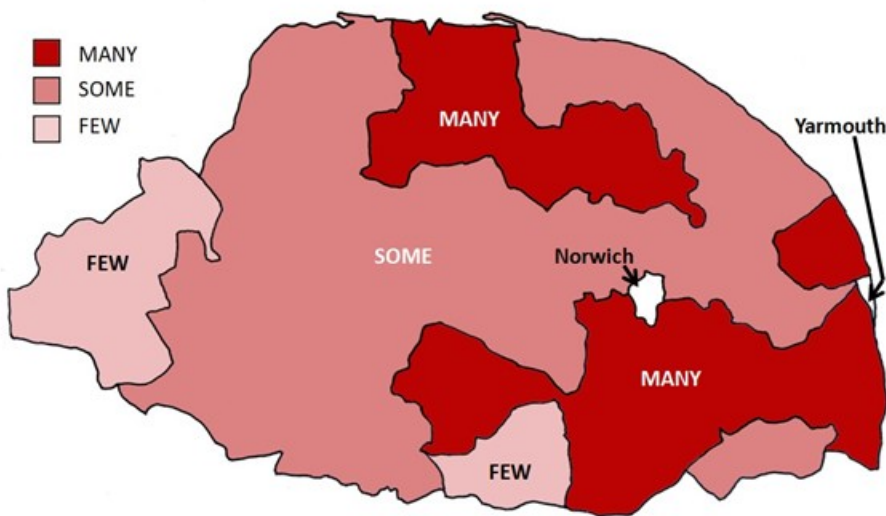


Fig. 3. Norfolk divided into zones according to whether the 1881 enumeration districts contained many, some, or few ON place-names. (Drawn by Sue Walker)

Within each zone, I added together numbers of occurrences of the names for all the





## SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

enumeration districts, and used this and the total 1881 population of the zone to obtain a number of name holders per 100,000.

Fig 4 illustrates the results. The “many”, “some” and “few” zones had respectively 570, 349, and 128 name-holders per 100,000. Norwich and Yarmouth had 433 and 512. Looked at in this way, the frequency in the 1881 population of surnames derived from ON given names is strongly related to the concentration of ON place-names. In 1881, a person living in the parts of Norfolk with many ON place-names was about 4.5 times as likely to have an ON-derived surname as a person living in an area with few, and a person in the “some” area was 2.7 times as likely. Yarmouth and Norwich were intermediate between “many” and “some”.

The results in Fig 4 are not completely surprising. Richard McKinley commented that there were many examples of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian personal names in East Anglia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century [7], so they were available when hereditary surnames were formed, and the persistence of local concentrations of surnames in various parts of the

This contribution is published in the newsletter without peer-review. The author would be grateful for any comments.

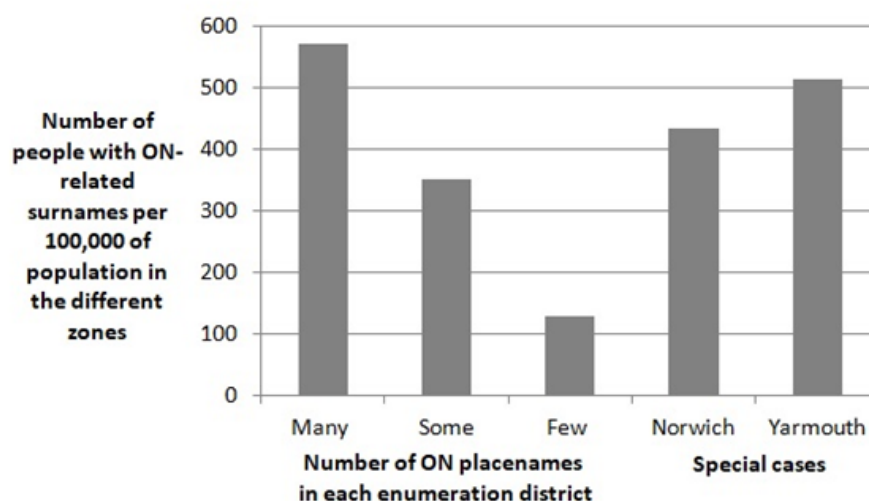


Fig. 4. Frequency of ON-related surnames in zones defined by frequency of ON place-names

country is well-known. However, they are an interesting example of the strength of survival of ON influence locally.

*Acknowledgments:* Many thanks to Peter McClure for supplying his list of names and for other comments (though he is not responsible for opinions expressed); to Tim Pestell for permission to use Fig 2, and to Sue Walker for drawing Fig 3.

### Notes

1. Hanks, P., Coates, R., McClure, P. (2016). *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford University Press.
2. Archer Software, *The British 19<sup>th</sup> Century Surname Atlas Ver 1.20* [www.archersoftware.co.uk](http://www.archersoftware.co.uk) 2015
3. Parkin, H. SNSBI Autumn Meeting and Study Day, 19 Oct 2019. SNSBI Newsletter, NS 20,

Spring 2020. Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland. <http://www.snsbi.org.uk/newsletter.html>

4. Pestell, T. (2019). *Viking East Anglia*. Norfolk Museums Service. ISBN 0903 3101 912

5. Institute for Name-Studies, University of Nottingham, *Key to English Place-names*. <http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/> Consulted 21 Jan 2021.

6. Ogden, T. & McClure, P. (2021). Are surnames from Old Norse personal names more frequent in areas of Viking settlement than elsewhere in Norfolk? <https://www.academia.edu/44948541>

7. McKinley, R. A. (1975). *Norfolk and Suffolk surnames in the Middle Ages*, pages 127-128. English Surnames Series II. Phillimore, London.



## 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](mailto: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](mailto:secretary@snsbi.org.uk)

### Gwynedd Pierce: Toponymic Centenarian

May 2021 will see the hundredth birthday of Emeritus Professor Gwynedd Pierce, former SNSBI president. Gwynedd was head of the department of Welsh History at Cardiff University and the author of several authoritative books on the place-names of Wales. His *Place-names of Dinas Powys Hundred* (1968) was the first publication in Wales to adopt the EPNS model for an exhaustive place-name survey. He also published extensively in scholarly journals including *Nomina* and the EPNS journal. He became the Welsh Place-Name Society's first Honorary President in 2012.

To celebrate his birthday and honour his achievements WPNS is publishing a festschrift. Co-edited by Ann Parry Owen, Angharad Fychan, Gareth Bevan and Hywel Wyn Owen (who have also contributed articles), the peer-reviewed volume will be mainly by contributors from Wales, such as Glenda Carr, Dylan Foster Evans, Richard Huws, Eleri James, Heather James, Prys Morgan, Richard Morgan, Rhian Parry, David Parsons, David Thorne, Dafydd Whiteside Thomas, Dei Tomos and Ifor D Williams. There will also be two notes by Gwynedd

himself taken from his regular columns in local publications. However, the volume also includes contributions from scholars from outside Wales who in the past were invited to address the annual WPNS conference. Hence contributions by Aengus Finnegan, Peter McClure, Oliver Padel and Simon Taylor. SNSBI involvement will also see a greeting by Diana Whaley on behalf of SNSBI.

It is worth noting that this is WPNS's first publication. The volume, entitled *Mater yr Enwau* ('the matter of names'), will be on the WPNS website but it is intended that some hard copies will also be available. Publication will probably be late summer 2021, but details will be circulated nearer the time.

Hywel Wyn Owen

### Forthcoming events

**SNSBI Spring Conference, online, 10-11 April 2021**

**SNSBI Autumn Day Conference, Autumn 2021**

**SNSBI Spring Conference, Bridgend, 8-11 April 2022**

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