



NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES

IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

CONFERENCE NOTICES

2021 autumn day conference

Registration for the 2021 SNSBI autumn conference, which will take place online on Saturday 23rd October, is now open. The conference is free for SNSBI members, with a small charge of £5 for non-members, and you can find the full programme and booking link on the SNSBI website. See page 5 for the conference programme.

SNSBI 30th Annual Spring Conference 8-11 April 2022 Heronston Hotel, Bridgend, Glamorgan

We very much hope to hold the 2022 Spring Conference at the Heronston Hotel, Bridgend, on 8-11 April 2022, but all the arrangements have to be provisional at this stage. More information will follow - please continue to check your emails and the SNSBI website.

Newsletter NS. 23 Autumn 2021

Welcome to the 23rd issue of the SNSBI newsletter!

You may notice that this issue looks a little different, with a new heading based on the new SNSBI logo (designed by Graeme Thornhill) and a new colour scheme to match.

Many thanks to Jeremy Harte for the Harrington Close picture, and to Ann Cole for the images of Cup and Saucer and the sign with multiple place-names, all in the banner at the top of each page. Further thanks go to Ann Cole for the other images sent for inclusion, some of which are in this newsletter and some of which will appear in future issues. As always, very many thanks to all of those who sent material for inclusion in the newsletter. Please continue to do so.

I hope you enjoy the new-look newsletter!

Harry Parkin (editor)

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NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Conference report

SNSBI 29th Annual Conference, 10–11 April 2021, Online

Report by Ellie Rye and Jess Treacher

The proceedings of the conference were opened by **Diana Whaley** who also chaired the first session. **Carole Hough** presented the first paper of the weekend, which focused on the links between the toponymies of Berwickshire and England. She highlighted examples of recurrent compounds, the most numerous being *prēosta-tūn*, *burh-tūn*, *hōh-tūn* and *mere-tūn*, that have parallels south of the border, particularly in Northumberland, but also as far afield as southern England and Wales. In so doing, she demonstrated that Berwickshire has a wealth of names that can be used as new evidence to further our understanding of the English toponymicon. This was followed by **Ayokunmi O. Ojebode** and **Idowu Odebode** who introduced us to the onomastic practices of the Yoruba people of western Africa. They explained the traditional system of anthroponymy, whereby children are given three

names at birth: a circumstantial name, a personal name and a family name, and emphasised the importance of the socio-political, historical and religious contexts for naming. Yoruba names can communicate information about the sex, status, religion, age, ancestry, occupation, education, birth and the spiritual significance of their bearers.

The next session was chaired by **Jayne Carroll** and the first paper was given by **Jon Masters** who presented his research on the changing marshlands along the River Alt near Altcar in Lancashire. In Domesday Book Altcar is described as an area of wasteland with no geld value, but the Cistercian monastery established there in the thirteenth century improved the land and converted it to agriculture. Although documentary evidence is scarce, Jon demonstrated that by using LIDAR and minor names, particularly those with the element *-poll-pul*, it is possible to investigate these later medieval improvements of the wetland landscape. **Jo Pye** then shared her research on Cornish place-names and the results of large-scale digital mapping.

By selecting seventeen case-studies from across Cornwall and examining their linguistic and geological context, she has been able to track changes in the toponymy of the county throughout the medieval period. Place-name forms appear to have undergone replacement over time and there is a clear east-mid-west patterning across the county that reflects language variation, with Cornish predominant in the west and English creeping in from the east.

Session three was chaired by **Aengus O’Fionnagáin** and kicked off by **Jennifer Scherr**, who as part of her work on the forthcoming *Popular Dictionary of Somerset Place-Names*, has had further thoughts on surnames in Somerset toponyms. She stressed the repetitive nature of the Somerset name-stock (many Nortons and Coombs), within which settlements were distinguished by affix, deriving largely either from Anglo-Norman personal names, bynames and surnames, or from Middle English occupational terms. Of particular interest were the place-names Culborne and Grabham which may contain early examples of the surnames Kidner and Grobham. Next up was



NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Graham Collis who explored the conundrum of the place-name Gislingham in Suffolk. He discussed the possible linguistic origin from the Old English folk-name **Giselingas* and whether this may instead have been a Scandinavian-influenced name, related to the Old Norse personal name *Gisli*, as is perhaps the case for Gyslingham in the Pas-de Calais.

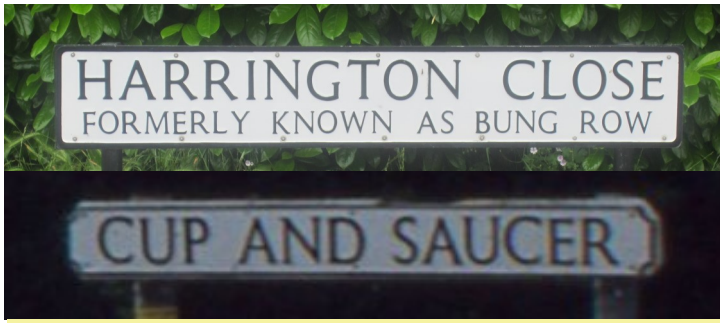
Our final academic session of day one was chaired by **Alasdair Whyte**. The first paper of the session was given by **Gavin Smith**, who argued for the application of models from the social sciences to the distributions of place-name types. In his paper, Gavin presented case-studies of the elements **gē* 'district, region', **windels* 'windlass' and **-ware* 'dwellers' and made suggestions about the social contexts for the formation of names containing the elements. Gavin's paper was followed by two book launches. The first was the launch of **Keith Briggs'** *An index to Personal Names in English Place-Names* published by the English Place-Name Society. The *Index* -- the culmination of five years' work -- brings together lists of personal names contained in English Place-Name Society volumes, the *Prosopography*

of Anglo-Saxon England (*PASE*) and other sources such as the British Academy *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series and the Durham *Liber Vitae*. Using the examples of *Gosenhale* (Suffolk) and *Gosenhelle* (Oxfordshire), Keith illustrated how the *Index* will allow the evidence for personal names to be checked quickly and easily to assess the likelihood of different personal names occurring in place-names. In this case, the evidence for an Old English personal name **Gōsa* can be shown to be plentiful enough to suggest this personal name as the first element of *Gosenhale* and *Gosenhelle*. Staying with personal names, the session concluded with the launch of **Kay Muhr** and **Liam Ó hAisibéil's** *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names of Ireland* published by Oxford University Press. The *Dictionary* covers the 3,828 family names with 100 or more bearers in the 1911 Census, and includes evidence of early bearers and distribution maps (the latter in the online edition only). Kay and Liam discussed the linguistic origins of the Irish family names in the dictionary, and the various strategies for anglicizing Irish they've considered in the form of evidence from gravestones in Ballinascreen (Derry), which

chart the adoption of the English-derived *Bradley* for Ó *Brolacháin*, replacing earlier transliterated forms like *O Brullaghan*.

As an SNSBI weekend conference wouldn't be complete without musical performances over a glass or two, Diana had arranged a splendid programme for the evening social. As we entered the Zoom 'bar', we were treated to **Diana and Ian Whaley's** recording of a selection of Northumberland folk songs, accompanied by glorious shots of Northumberland. **Alice Crook** was then our host for the evening, as we enjoyed live performances of song and verse from **Kay Muhr, Pat McKay, Dàibhidh Grandd, Simon Taylor** and **Alasdair Whyte**.

After Sunday's AGM, we began the morning's proceedings with a series of project reports chaired by **John Baker**. **Eila Williamson** and **Simon Taylor** reported on the 'Place-names of the coalfield communities' project (ayr-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk), a project producing a place-name survey of five parishes in East Ayrshire, and parts of three other parishes. The names testify to the use of Northern Brittonic, Old English, Gaelic and Scots or Scottish Standard English in the area, but, as Eila and Simon illustrated, they also



NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

provide a rich seam for investigating naming in the Industrial Age. **Emily Lethbridge** subsequently introduced us to nafnið.is, the new website providing access to resources in the Icelandic place-name archive at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Research. Digitisation of the existing paper records is ongoing, but the database already allows researchers to search through records of nearly half a million Icelandic place-names. Last but not least, **Susan Kilby** reported on a recent project to produce educational resources on Shropshire place-names, 'Learning the landscape through language: place-names and childhood education'. The project has led training events for educators and produced a host of resources for primary school children, which you can have hours of fun with on the project website (www.learningthroughlanguage.co.uk/). (Off to build a *dūn* now... *ER*.)

The final session of the weekend, chaired by **Carole Hough**, began with **Rob Briggs'** paper 'Benson and hedging my bets' focussing on early records of the place-name *Benson*. Rob suggested that a spelling *be singa hearh* from the charter Sawyer 235 might also refer to Benson, comparing a spelling from Sawyer 93, *Banesinga uilla*.

Finally, **Keith Briggs** presented 'the nicknames of some medieval felons' to us. The number of ne'er-do-wells with (by)names indicative of criminality was an entertaining illustration of the development of some 'occupational' surnames (e.g., Alexander *Trech'* 1308/9, perhaps one of Jess's less illustrious forebears...). Keith's paper was also an excellent demonstration of the lexicographical evidence that can be gleaned from names, presenting examples including antedatings of *runaway* (Thomas *Ronneaway* 1370/1) and *starter* 'deserter, vagrant, shirker, quitter' (*John le Startere* 1308) which push evidence for these words back one or two centuries.

The conference concluded at lunchtime on Sunday. Thanks go to all involved in organising this conference, allowing us to meet and hear about exciting research and invaluable resources despite the pandemic.

Recent Publication

It was noted in the previous issue of the newsletter that a book to honour the hundredth birthday of Emeritus Professor Gwynedd Pierce, former SNSBI president, would soon be published. The book, titled *Ar Drywydd Enwau Lleoedd*, is now available, and can be purchased from a number of online and high street book shops.

The volume contains 13 Welsh articles and 7 in English. The subject matter of the articles varies from Caernarfon street names and fishing flaps to the names of capes in Cornwall; from Cardiff street names to the importance of place names in Medieval Welsh poetry.

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.

Odd pics from Ann Cole

Church Passage or Tink-a-Tank, in Banbury, Oxon





NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

SNSBI autumn day conference

Expanding horizons in name studies
23 October 2021

Tickets must be booked via eventbrite. There is a charge of £5 for non-SNSBI members. A Zoom link will be sent two days before the event and again on the morning of the event. See the SNSBI website for a link to the booking site.

Conference information and programme

09.30 Rhian Parry:
Collecting and sharing toponyms in Wales

10.00 Katie Hambrook:
Promoting public engagement with place-name studies

Break

10.45 Susan Kilby:
Urban communities, street-names, and challenging histories

11.15 Sara Uckelman:
Update from the SNSBI outreach working group on schools

Break

12.00 Nic Coombey:
Finding the field-names of Borgue, Dumfries and Gallo-way

12.30 Aengus Ó Fionnagáin:
Community-led collection of minor place-names and the Westmeath Field Names Project 2018–21

Lunch break

14.00 Round table:
Name studies in Britain and Ireland, 30 years on

The round table will celebrate thirty years since the launch of SNSBI in October 1991. Our panellists will reflect on developments in onomastics over the last three decades in their areas of specialist interest, and will look to the future of the discipline. The panellists are Richard Coates, Peter McClure, Kay Muhr, Simon Taylor, Hywel Wyn Owen, and the discussion will be chaired by Carole Hough.

Odd pics from Ann & Rachel Cole



Dark Lane
Aldwick, West Sussex

SNSBI outreach/ reaching out

At the SNSBI AGM on 11th April 2021, the SNSBI Committee proposed to launch an 'outreach' project, and this was well received by members.

The aim is to explore new ways of engaging and informing a wider public and to provide resources for anyone curious about names, all without compromising our existing activities or academic standards, and without duplicating the work of our sister organisations (and without placing undue strain on busy people!).

Since then, good progress has been made through a series of Zoom meetings, beginning with a preliminary meeting on 13th May for all members who had expressed an interest in the venture. At that meeting, three potential strands of activity were identified: Resources (drafting introductions to aspects of name studies, bibliographies, links etc.); Case Studies (working on templates for presenting individual names or topics of interest); and Schools (devising and piloting attractive educational resources on place- and personal names).

Each strand is being taken forward by a small working group, who will report back to the Committee and eventually to all members. There are already some exciting ideas, which we look forward to sharing. Meanwhile, warmest thanks to all involved, and if anyone else has thoughts or suggestions, please contact president@snsbi.org.uk



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The English names of French bastides

by Keith Briggs

We are all very familiar with the transfer of place-names from Great Britain to colonies in the last few centuries. There are hundreds of examples, and many are very well known, such as Newcastle in New South Wales, Boston in Massachusetts, and East London in South Africa. It has to be remembered that some of these city-names are actually from the surnames of prominent people, and therefore are only indirectly from British toponyms; examples are Melbourne and Sydney. But it seems less well known that in the thirteenth century a comparable process resulted in several places in France receiving transferred English place-names. In France quite a few other names are known which are transferred from Spain, Italy, Germany, and Flanders (Nègre, *Toponymie générale de la France* pp.1727ff), and this makes the explanation of the names below as transferred from England plausible. Though some of these English names are listed in dictionaries of French place-names (such as that by Dauzat & Rostaing), they are rarely treated as a group. Thus this short note has the aim of assembling the corpus, and

giving a few explanatory comments.

The part of south-west part of France commonly called Gascony (though it included other regions beyond Gascony proper) had been a possession of the English kings since the time of Henry II. After the loss of Normandy, it was isolated and difficult to administer. Edward I thus implemented in the 1270s and 1280s a policy of the planting of planned fortified towns, called bastides, which he hoped to populate with English burgesses. Such a policy had been used with some success in north Wales, the main examples being Conwy, Caernarfon, and Beaumaris. But there the towns incorporated very substantial castles as part of the defences.

Some of the French bastides had town walls and gates of stone, but none had any defences as strong as the Welsh towns. A convenient reference for the history of these places is M. Beresford, *New towns of the Middle Ages* (1967), pp.575-636.

Some of these bastides received English names, probably in most cases after the toponymic surname of a royal official involved in setting up the town. The most significant of these is Libourne, now only a short train ride from Bordeaux, and apparently set up to capture the wine trade on the Dordogne, at a point before its junction with the Garonne. It is highly likely that Libourne received its name from Roger de Leybourne, who came from Leybourne in Kent. Parts of



The river gate of Libourne (taken by the author in April 2019)



NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

the walls and a gate survive (photo). Images of town charters are online at <http://www.manuscripts-medievaux.fr/notices-manuscript/msaa01-cartulaire-et-statuts-de-la-ville-de-libourne-dit-livre-velu.aspx>.

Another foundation was Hastings; here it is convenient that the Gascon Rolls which are now online at www.gasconrolls.org tell us that in 1321 the inhabitants petitioned the king mentioning that the town was founded (in 1289) by John de Hastings, seneschal of Gascony. The name thus comes from Hastings in Sussex. This was another river-port, this time upstream of Bayonne. Though it is now only a village, the planned street layout is still visible.

The remaining bastides with English names are yet smaller; places called Londres St Etienne and Nicole in dép. Lot et Garonne are believed to get their name from London and Lincoln respectively (*Nicole* being the normal medieval French form of the name Lincoln). Then there is *Baa*, a place for which good documentation survives, though the exact site (somewhere in the southern suburbs of Bordeaux) is lost. The name commemorates Robert Burnell, Bishop of Bath (Beresford p.593). Finally we have the case of Le Temple de Breuil; Beresford (p.620)

mentions that it had an occasional alias of *Felton*, after John Felton, a seneschal in 1319.

By 1295, Edward I was having such difficulties with the territory that war against the French king was planned. Possession of Gascony thenceforth fluctuated between England and France, with England losing all claims after 1453. Most of Edward I's bastides decayed, leaving only Libourne as a large town still bearing its English name.

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

NEWS

Northumberland Name Books website goes live

A set of dog-eared and characterful handwritten books record some fifteen thousand Northumberland place-names from Abberwick to Youly Sike, and they are now accessible at namebooks.org.uk. Dating from c. 1860, the 104 Ordnance Survey Name Books for Northumberland (most housed in The National Archives, Kew) record the immense

fieldwork project through which the names on the First Edition Six Inch-scale maps of the county, and subsequent maps, were collected, and thanks to the dedicated work of over thirty volunteers led by Diana Whaley, transcriptions and images can now be freely searched and browsed on the website. The pages also include brief descriptions of the places: landscape features and archaeological sites, gentlemen's residences, colliers' cottages, churches, chapels and now long-gone farms, ferries, wells, spas, pubs, mines and 'manufactories'.

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!



NAMES

PLACES

PEOPLE

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

Events

**The Cameron Lecture
6pm on 15 October 2021**
Dr Tania Styles, Senior Editor
Oxford English Dictionary

English Place-Names and the *Oxford English Dictionary*: Surveying the Landscape

With the centenary of the Survey of English Place-Names fast approaching, this lecture celebrates the long tradition of collaboration between scholars of English place-names and the lexicographers of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Using examples from our recent work, it aims to explore some of the ways in which place-name scholarship is being used in the Dictionary today to ensure that the *OED* continues to serve as the definitive record of the English language.

This event will be held online. Registration details will be posted on the website of the [Institute for Name Studies](http://www.institutefornamestudies.org.uk) in due course.

**English Place-Name
Society annual lecture
4pm-5:30pm
16 October 2021**
Professor Angus Winchester

Field-Names and Agrarian History: reflections from Cumbria

Field-names, which are intimately bound up with agrarian history, allude to a wide range of characteristics (field

shape; vegetation; land use; soil quality; land ownership, etc.) and, hence, can shed light on the evolution of the rural landscape from the medieval period to modern times. Using examples from the Lake District and surrounding areas, this lecture will explore the relationship between field-names and field systems, including open fields, seigniorial enclosures and areas of medieval colonisation, as well as discussing the lost minor names of the unenclosed fellsides, which formed an integral part of the upland farming system.

Angus Winchester is Emeritus Professor of History at Lancaster University. He has long been fascinated by minor place-names as windows into the history of upland landscapes.

This event will be held online. Registration details will be posted on the website of the [English Place-Name Society](http://www.englishplace-namesociety.org.uk) in due course

Forthcoming events

**SNSBI Autumn Day
Conference, 23 October 2021**

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

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