

## The English Place-Name Society

FOR nearly seventy years the English Place-Name Society has been issuing its volumes on the place-names of the counties of England. These publications, prepared under the General Editorship of the Honorary Director of the Survey of English Place-Names, are recognized as authoritative by scholars in other disciplines, and have proved of great value in many fields of study.

Research on the names in twenty-four complete counties has been published, and there are volumes for parts of Dorset, Staffordshire, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and Shropshire. The final part of the *Place-Names of Cheshire* is being edited. The costs of research and publication are met in roughly equal proportions by a grant from the British Academy and by the subscriptions of members. An increase in membership would help to speed up the publication of further volumes.

Members of the Society enjoy, in addition to a free copy of the county volume and of the *Journal* published during each year of their membership, the use of the Place-Names room in the University of Nottingham, with its excellent reference library and other facilities. They may participate in the running of the Society by attendance at the Annual General Meeting and are eligible for membership of the Council.

There is scope for further research on the place-names of all the counties of England, including those already published. Proposals or enquiries (from students, academic supervisors, or private individuals) regarding individual or joint projects will be gladly discussed by the Honorary Director of the Survey.

Details of membership, a list of the Society's publications, or further information may be obtained from:

The Secretary,  
English Place-Name Society,  
The University of Nottingham,  
NOTTINGHAM NG7 2RD.

## OBITUARY

### Professor John McNeal Dodgson, M.A., F.S.A.

JOHN McNEAL DODGSON *alias* Jubbins,<sup>1</sup> who died on 18 January 1990 at the age of 61, was an imaginative scholar and a natural teacher. He produced books and detailed articles of lasting importance to English onomastics, but also managed to inform and entertain audiences at all levels of knowledge when expounding upon his abiding interest in names as fossils surviving from the earliest period of the English language. When he attended CNS conferences he was ever a focus of stimulating discussion, whether at question time after a lecture or at less formal meetings into the early hours of the morning.

Dodgson's abiding curiosity about place-names grew out of an early exposure to the rich dialect of his native Lancashire and was encouraged by his mentor and professor at University College London, A. H. Smith, then Hon. Director of the English Place-Name Society (EPNS). Under Smith's guidance, Dodgson wrote his M.A. thesis (1957) on 'The Major Place-Names of Cheshire'. Much of the rest of his life was spent in collecting and editing the mountain of material that is contained in six closely-printed volumes of *The Place-Names of Cheshire* (EPNS, 1970-81), with the seventh and last now sadly to be published posthumously. The Cheshire survey will always be of immense value both to fellow onomasticians and to local historians in the county. An unusual amount of linguistic and historical knowledge and insight has been distilled into it.

Over a period of some twenty years, Dodgson also both 'minded' and added to the EPNS survey of the place-names of Kent which had been begun by the late Dr. P.H. Reaney. In his retirement he was planning to direct a new survey of Lancashire place-names. He served successively as Hon. Secretary and Hon. Research Officer of the EPNS. As the latter, he was a sympathetic and comradely supervisor of the Society's Research Assistants. He was a founding member of the Council for Name Studies and one of the begetters of *NOMINA* (whose name he coined); of both he was a loyal and consistent supporter. He was also a national delegate to the International Conference of Onomastic Sciences for whose 1965 conference in London he acted as Organizing Secretary.

Beside his survey work, Dodgson wrote a series of articles on particular place-name elements which helped to alter radically the

views of archaeologists and historians as to the pace and nature of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain. In particular, his work on the significance of the group-names containing the Old English suffix *-ingas* successfully challenged an interpretation that had been accepted since the mid nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> He was interested in the semantics of names and in the actuality of their use by the Anglo-Saxons, as examples of the subtleties of the spoken Old English language. He demonstrated, in relation to various versions of the *-ing* suffix that occur in English place-names, that there was evidence for a concurrent use by the Anglo-Saxons of alternative inflected forms of what was basically the same onomastic unit, variant inflexions being used according to the particular context in which the place was mentioned.<sup>3</sup> His article on 'The English Arrival in Cheshire' is a classic use of philological and onomastic evidence to illuminate the Anglian prehistory of north-west Mercia.<sup>4</sup>

Dodgson's work on early names brought him into frequent discourse with his colleague at UCL the late Dr. J.R. Morris, the Dark Age historian and a fellow member of CNS, who conceived the brave idea of publishing a multi-volume translation of Domesday Book, a huge project upon which he had already embarked when he died in 1976. At that time the first six volumes had appeared in print, published by Messrs Phillimore. It was John Dodgson, however, as one of Morris's literary executors, who selflessly took on the time-consuming rôle of general editor to the series, seeing the project through to completion as a 35-volume set in time for the 900th anniversary of Domesday Book in 1986. This ten-year task was undoubtedly completed at the expense of his own work on the last volume of *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, which, however, he was within sight of completing when he died. Another major project announced in 1976 was also forced on to the 'back burner' by Domesday Book; this was to be a Survey of Early English Personal Names and By-names, to be based in the University of London.<sup>5</sup>

Characteristically, however, Dodgson did not lose the opportunity to learn from his necessarily close proximity to the text of the Domesday records, as recent papers on integral onomastic problems bear witness.<sup>6</sup> These papers stressed the influence on medieval onomastic spellings of peculiarities of orthography rather than of speech, a view which also moulds the character of the 'phonological' section due to appear in the last volume of *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, where the orthographic nature of the evidence for the development of Cheshire place-names is described in detail, a description which will prove of lasting value to students of earlier

periods of the English language.

Dodgson's written work was characterized by detail, depth and originality and reflected an ability to categorize and arrange large amounts of data into a theory which sometimes startled received opinion but which was rarely unsustainable from the available evidence. On a personal level, he will be remembered by many for his great skill as a storyteller and for his unfailing generosity and friendship, particularly to younger scholars.

ALEXANDER R. RUMBLE

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> For the origin of this name, see *idem*, 'Two coals to Newcastle', in F. Sandgren, ed., *Otium et Negotium: Studies in Onomatology and Library Science presented to Olof von Feilitzen*, Acta Bibliothecæ Regiæ Stockholmiensis XVI (Stockholm, 1973), 46-8.

<sup>2</sup> 'The significance of the distribution of English place-names in *-ingas*, *-inga-* in south-east England', *Medieval Archaeology* X (1966), 1-29.

<sup>3</sup> 'The *-ing-* in English place-names like Birmingham and Altrincham', *BzN*, NF. II (1967), 221-45; 'Various forms of Old English *-ing* in English place-names', *ibid.* 325-96; and 'Various English place-name formations containing Old English *-ing-*', *ibid.* NF. III (1968), 141-89.

<sup>4</sup> *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* CXIX (1967), 1-37.

<sup>5</sup> See 'English Name-Studies, I', in H. Voigt *et alii*, eds., *The Study of the Personal Names of the British Isles* (Erlangen, 1976), 126-7.

<sup>6</sup> 'Some Domesday personal-names, mainly post-Conquest', *ante* IX (1965), 41-51; 'Domesday Book: place-names and personal names' in J.C. Holt, ed., *Domesday Studies* (Woodbridge, 1987), 121-37; 'Notes on some by-names in Domesday Book', in J.-C. Boulanger, ed., *Le Nom propre au carrefour des sciences humaines et des sciences sociales: Actes du XVI<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des sciences onomastiques* (Quebec, 1990), 221-8