

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

Tenth Annual Study Conference: Isle of Man 2001

The tenth annual study conference organized by the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland was held at the Empress Hotel, Douglas, Isle of Man, from 6 to 9 April 2001. The programme was organized by the Society's president, Dr. Kay Muhr. The first speaker was a Manx resident, Sir David Wilson, former director of the British Museum. His paper on 'The Viking Age in the Isle of Man—an introduction' was illustrated with slides and with some choice specimens of official language (pathologist on skull with top hacked off by viking: 'The trauma took place at, or nearly at, death').

On the Saturday morning Dr. Margaret Gelling (Birmingham) gave 'An overview of Manx place-names', using monastic bounds *c.*1280 as the earliest substantial sample. She stressed the rareness of pre-Norse names, even for rivers or ancient monuments. Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig (Dublin) then considered the group of obviously related place-names and names of divine and/or heroic personages containing 'The element *Man* in Irish and Welsh'. He judged that the place-names *Manaw* and the like came first, meaning 'mountainous', the personages Irish *Manannán*, Welsh *Manawydan*, being at various removes derivatives. Dr. George Broderick (Isle of Man and Berlin) gave an account packed with detail of 'Goidelic elements in Manx place-names'. Saturday afternoon was spent enjoying the experience of one of the Isle of Man's still working steam railways; the destination was Castletown, where we split up on various visits. In the evening Mr. Robert Thomson (Isle of Man) spoke on 'Manx surnames'. He paid special attention to those involving place-names, but what struck the outsider's eye in his material was the great number of names beginning with the C of 'Mac', *Quiggin* = [*Ma*]c + *Viking* and the like.

Sunday began with an Annual General Meeting unsure how to deal with the absence, due to sudden illness, of the services of our energetic treasurer and membership secretary Dr. Mary Higham. Academic business was resumed when Dr. Gillian Fellows-Jensen (Copenhagen) spoke on 'The mystery of *bý*-names in Man', incorporating scholarly controversies from the 1970s on. Mrs. Eilis Fitzsimons (Belfast) spoke on the Manx 'St. Maughold of Kirk Maughold'. He turned out to be really an Irish saint

Caelán alias Mochae, one of those whose name appears in bafflingly many forms thanks to early Irish's wealth of hypocorisms. It was remarked during discussion afterwards that the reason why so many Celtic saints are reputed to have floated on quernstones is that they make very good ballast for round boats like currachs. The maritime theme was kept up by the next speaker, Mr. Bill Richardson (Australia), continuing his occasional series on groups of names on early charts. Those he was concerned with today were for features off Selsey Bill, 'The Owers, Les Ours, Weenbrug and "The Old City"'. The morning was rounded off by Dr. Peder Gammeltoft (Copenhagen), with a survey 'On place-names in *-toft*, *tote* and *tobhta* from Shetland to the Isle of Man', taking into account both usage in the Scandinavian homelands and linguistic nuances of several stages of naturalization into Gaelic.

The customary Sunday afternoon coach excursion passed through places entertaining from a cross-linguistic point of view, starring Manx *moddey oaldey* 'wild dog' and the original St. Trinians. Its physical aspect proved less satisfying, thanks partly to rain, partly to restrictions of access designed ostensibly to inhibit spread of foot-and-mouth disease from the mainland, but mainly because carved stones we came to see *in situ*, either roofed over to protect them from the elements or actually in church buildings, had no adequate illumination available to see them properly. In the evening Dr. Rosemary Power (Derby) spoke on 'Man and contacts in the Middle Ages'. Viking princes appeared in her account less as martial heroes than as politicians, often inadequate ones. Discussion afterwards included mention of an Irish king, his name conventionally normalized in diplomatic Latin as the biblical Malachi, who became Marmaduke when he crossed the Irish Sea.

P.R.K.