

## Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

### Eleventh Annual Study Conference: Newcastle 2002

The eleventh annual study conference organized by the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland was held at Henderson Hall, University of Newcastle, from 5 to 8 April 2002. The programme was organized by Dr. Diana Whaley. The opening paper was by way of local historical introduction: Prof. Richard Bailey (Newcastle) on ‘Bernician sites: what needed naming?’.

On the Saturday morning Prof. W. F. H. Nicolaisen (Aberdeen) voiced ‘Thoughts on a North-West Germanic toponymy’, examining implications of different modellings of the gradual separation of the various Germanic languages for the extent in space and time over which place-name elements were productive, especially ones with exact cognates in Old English and Old Norse. Dr. John Insley (Heidelberg) spoke on ‘The Goths in Italy and Southern Gaul: the evidence of the names’. It was often not easy to tell them apart in place-names from Franks on the north or Lombards on the south, and there were even hybrids with Gallo-Romance. Dr. Doreen Waugh examined ‘Some place-names from the Old Scatness project, Shetland’. Long-distance transport was much in evidence, with Sumburgh Airport close to a bay where ships paid toll in Viking times. Mr. Ian Fraser (Edinburgh) presented ‘Scottish place-names: a brief survey’, analysing types and exemplifying transmission between languages. Dr. George Redmonds (Huddersfield) reported on partly collaborative work by himself and the geneticist Brian Sykes on ‘Surnames, genes, and genealogy’, finding one or in several cases two identifiable local origins for all present-day bearers of a particular name.

The afternoon began with an essay by Dr. John Koch (Aberystwyth) in ‘Connecting early Welsh poetry with place-names in northern England and southern Scotland’ and allowing for the various biases of different dynasties’ poets. Dr. Nollaig Ó Muraíle (Belfast) explored ‘Early Ireland—some aspects of the Anglo-Saxon connection’, especially as seen in Irish place-names and vernacular historical sources. There was then a brisk excursion to inspect at first hand ‘Sights and street-names of Newcastle’, including the narrow alleys down to the river called ‘chares’ (OE *cierr*), Mithraic stonework in the university museum, and a very modern bridge. In the evening, in the sad absence ill of Dr. Margaret

Gelling, Mrs. Ann Cole (Oxford) presented what should have been their joint paper on Old English place-names as guidance for travellers ‘From Quentovic to Pons Ælius’ (roughly Dunkirk to Newcastle).

Sunday began with an Annual General Meeting that managed to appoint a new treasurer and membership secretary, who later revealed an idiosyncratic definition of the latter function. More conventional lexicographic methods enabled Dr. Carole Hough (Glasgow) to document some unrecognized ‘Onomastic applications of the word “white”’. Miss Alison Grant (Glasgow) juxtaposed standard theories of ‘Language contact and the inversion compounds’ well known in Cumbrian place-names, demonstrating a balance of linguistic probability that they were created by native Celtic-speakers (specifically Gaelic-speakers) who were adult learners of Old Norse, not as place-name scholars have tended to assume the other way round. Dr. Veronica Smart (Edinburgh) presented ‘Pitit and Litelman—an onomastic conundrum’, the conundrum lying in the word ‘and’: it looked as if a tenth-century Stamford moneyer had both a French and an English name. Mr. Victor Watts (Durham) emphasized how Old English were most of the ‘Field-names of South Durham’, despite ninth-century Viking distribution of the territory. Liz Sobell (Hexham) charted ‘Riggs to Pingles: field-names of a Hexhamshire farm’, showing how estate history could change the referential meaning of local names. Dr. Alan James (Ashbourne), with acknowledgements to Lewis Carroll and Margaret Gelling, tried to pin down the sense of an elusive place-name element in ‘The hunting of the Snook’. Prof. Richard Coates (Sussex) showed very strong reason to think the standard etymology of the name ‘Lindisfarne’ wrong. Several of those present, however, afterwards voiced the view that the evidence he had assembled pointed to a different kind of transfer of name-elements between languages from the one he suggested.

The Sunday afternoon coach excursion, lightly guided by Richard Bailey, visited first the Anglo-Saxon royal site at Yeavinger and some of its nearby predecessors and successors, then the island of Lindisfarne, where those who wished could verify the accuracy of Prof. Coates’ information from Symeon of Durham. In the evening Dr. Peder Gammeltoft (Copenhagen) surveyed ‘Place-names in *-toft* in England’. The weekend’s entertainment was rounded off by Dr. Paul Cullen (Nottingham) ‘Grappling with M’ for the updating of *English Place-Name Elements*.

P.R.K.