



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Jennifer Scherr retires as secretary.

Appreciation by Hywel Wyn Owen



Jennifer Scherr became a member of the SNSBI in 1980. Since then, she has scarcely missed a conference, giving several papers over the years, and acting as mentor, friend and confidant to so many of us. She became SNSBI secretary and held that post for twenty-three years, a remarkable achievement. Jennifer has been efficient, determined, diplomatic and resolute in fulfilling what can sometimes be a thankless task. But she has always been a fund of sound advice based on experience, on good sense and on her commitment to the Society, one of her outstanding characteristics. At the final session in the Canterbury conference, Hywel as outgoing President and Oliver as outgoing Vice President thanked her formally, and Oliver presented Jennifer with a cartographic original on behalf of us all as a mark of our appreciation of outstanding service to the SNSBI.



Newsletter NS. 3 Autumn 2011

Welcome to the 3rd in this new series of newsletters. This issue will, for the most part, be devoted to reports of the various meetings and conferences which have taken place mainly over the spring and summer, but also catching up on a few from last winter.

At the last committee meeting, it was decided that in order to keep the print size of this newsletter to no smaller than 10 points, the page numbers would be allowed to grow to accommodate the material so for this issue, pages 5 & 6 are on a separate sheet.

The officers at the head of the society change on a 3 yearly cycle, so this year, we welcome our new President Mr. Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig and a new Vice-President Mr. Peter McClure, while our previous president Professor Hywel Wyn Owen becomes our other Vice-President. Our new secretary is Ms Kate Hardcastle. For an introduction to the new officers. (see page 3)

There has been a slight problem getting a complete list of the new committee. If anyone has been missed, please let me know and accept my apologies

For those who really like to plan in advance we have destinations for future conferences as well as preliminary details of next year's SNSBI Conference, which will be held in Athenry, County Galway, and . The first circular for the Galway conference will be sent out in November.

Linda M. Corrigan (editor)

Photos left: (Top) Oliver presents Jennifer with her gift. (Below) Hywel looks on as Jennifer shows her gift to the members.

CHARITY NO. 0177455

OFFICERS:

2011-12

President:

Mr Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig

Vice-Presidents: Prof Hywel Wyn Owen

Mr Peter McClure

Hon. Secretary:

Ms Kate Hardcastle

Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary:

Mrs Julia Stanbridge

Nomina Editor: Dr Maggie Scott

Conference secretary:

Liam Ó hAisibéil

Committee:

Dr John Baker

Ms Ellen Bramwell

Prof Thomas Clancy

Dr Linda Corrigan (Newsletter Editor)

Stop Press: last chance to book

SNSBI Day Conference

Yorkshire Place-Names in the Middle Ages. 29 October 2011. Centre for Medieval Studies, The King's Manor York. For further details and contacts see newsletter loose sheet.

UCL Institute of Archaeology, London 10-12 November, 2011

"Power and place in Later Roman and early medieval Europe: inter-disciplinary perspectives on governance and civil organization" Attendance costs £95 (£50 concessions) Further details, as well as registration forms, can be found on the conference website: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly/events>



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Conference reports

The SNSBI Annual Conference, Easter 2011. Report by Chris Lewis

The highlight of the Society's year is the residential conference, this time held over the weekend before Easter on the campus of the University of Kent at Canterbury. It was everything a conference should be, not least for the excellent modern lecture theatre and the meals served in one of the college dining halls, a striking piece of 1960s campus architecture with lovely views across the university's parkland and the city.

See view below:



The conference took its familiar shape from Friday evening to Monday morning, starting with the customary introduction to the region by a local expert, in this case Andrew Richardson from the Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

The organizers laid on a rich mixture of papers on names across and beyond the UK and Ireland. English place-names made up the largest group, with offerings on river-names, names as evidence for Anglo-Saxon roads, the names of early assembly sites, how place-names illuminate the history of Anglo-Saxon estates, and Scandinavian names in Herefordshire. Other parts of Britain were covered by papers on Brittonic place-name elements, Scottish hill-

names, and saints in Scottish place - names. Other speakers told us how the *Oxford English Dictionary* uses place-names as evidence for the history of individual words, and took us across the Channel to think about the 'English' place-names of the Pas-de-Calais and Thuringia.

Personal names were covered by papers on the Anglo-Saxons recorded in various locales in early medieval Europe (including as graffiti in the Roman catacombs) and on tracing the local origins of family names in the Yorkshire Dales. Less traditional topics were how the grand seventeenth-century lady Anne Clifford used place-names to commemorate her family history, the names of the Friar Tuck legends, and the names given since the 1940s to climbing routes in Scotland.

Some of the papers arose from current large-scale projects conducted with public funds, and a welcome innovation at recent conferences has been a session dedicated to a round-up of other research projects. This year we heard about Family Names of the United Kingdom (FaNUK: University of the West of England), Profile of a Doomed Elite: The Structure of English Landed Society in 1066 (PDE: King's College London), the Place-names Database of Ireland (Fiontar DCU: Irish Government), and Scots Words and Place-Names (SWAP: University of Glasgow), and also about the foundation of the Welsh Place-Name Society, and PhD research on contemporary personal naming practices in different Scottish communities.

A good conference is as much about what happens between the papers as during them. Besides all the talk over coffee, meals, and drinks, there were two outings. The

main excursion was to the Roman fort at Richborough and the 'medieval' town of Sandwich, where conference goers were given a briefing, then turned loose to enjoy a sunny day. (see below)



There was also a visit to the cathedral archives, where archivist Mark Bateson had put out a superb exhibition of archival treasures cleverly angled towards place-names and personal names.



Above: delegates gather to visit the archives.

So, the conference was packed with good and interesting things, and as always provided a way of mingling with like-minded name-enthusiasts and name-experts. Conference organizers Paul Cullen and Pam Combes did a wonderful job, but so did everyone who attended: this is one of the friendliest and best run conferences around. If you're new to the Society or haven't been to a conference I suggest you sign up next year.



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More Conference reports:

Place-names and Landscape: Recent Research Conference.

26th Feb 2011 Cambridge University Law Faculty. Organized by: Susan Oosthuizen PhD FSA University Senior Lecturer for Historic Environment, University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education.

Report by **Julia Stanbridge**.

This conference formed part of the Historic environments project; The programme was as follows;

1. Dr Della Hooke - keynote paper on using place-names to research the Anglo Saxon landscape, forests and woodland cover

2. Dr John Baker- Place-Names and civil defence? the toponymic impact of warfare. This paper looked at using place-names to ascertain the signalling and defence systems in place in the landscape with a case study of the names on the Icknield Way.

3. Dr Richard Jones– Thinking through the manorial affix; people and place in later medieval England. Similar to the paper given at the EPNS in June, that these naming practices could be part of a package of seigneurial improvement and display in the 13th century.

4. Dr Ros Faith- Essex salt-marsh and Thames side place-names.

5. Dr Simon Draper-Place-Names and the Anglo-Saxon estate. A similar paper to the one just given at Kent on generic names and their implication for estate management of resources

6. Dr Keith Briggs- Why are there so many East-Anglian fields called 'Harrow'? this apparent dialect name is fairly widespread but the meaning is not clear. He also used it as an opportunity to chart the history of place-name research from Walter Skeat and the rise of the EPNS.

News:

The 2010 issue of **Nomina** may be landing on your doorsteps at much the same time as this newsletter. It is scheduled to be published at the end of September 2011 and to be followed closely by the 2011 issue due by the end of the year.

Dr. David Hill

Many members will be saddened to hear of the sudden death of Dr. David Hill, on 19 July 2011. Formerly Lecturer in Archaeology in the erstwhile Department of Extra-Mural Studies, and latterly in the English Department at the University of Manchester, he will be remembered by many for his entertaining speaking style and by many more for his 'Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England'. While not an SNSBI member, Dr. Hill took a great interest in place-names and his Atlas has supported the work of many scholars.

Gaelic place-names research continues with support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba ~ Gaelic Place-names of Scotland, the national advisory board for researching Gaelic forms of place-names in Scotland is delighted to announce that its work will continue to be funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig over 2011 and 2012. Highland and Argyll and Bute Councils will also continue their contributions to the project. <http://www.gaelicplacenames.org/latestnews.php>

Israel-Palestinian conflict writ large on road signs. The increasingly heated dispute over place names in Israel underlies a much greater political struggle, the BBC's Yolande Knell explains from Jerusalem. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14515035>

News: SNSBI People:

As we have a new president this year, it seems appropriate to introduce our new officers as not all members may be familiar with them. Having been president of the society for three years, at the AGM **Professor Hywel Wyn Owen** stepped down to become one of the Vice-Presidents. Hywel was formerly a secondary school teacher in Mold and then Assistant Principal at Coleg Normal, Bangor. Subsequently, he became Professor and Director of the Place-Name Research Centre at Bangor University. He is Honorary Vice President of the English Place-Name Society and much involved in establishing the Welsh Place-Name Society. A regular broadcaster, he is also co-author of the standard Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales.

Joining Professor Owen as Vice-President and President Elect is **Mr Peter McClure**, one-time Senior Lecturer in English Language and Literature at the University of Hull; specialist in Middle English personal names and surnames; founder editor of *Nomina* and currently a member of the editorial board. He is also a consultant on the FaNUK Project, at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Our New President, **Mr Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig M.A.**, is the Chief Place-Names Officer in the Place-Names Branch of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in Ireland. He is a leading authority on Irish Place-Names and has written many articles on this subject.

The society's new secretary is **Ms Kate Hardcastle** who has published on personal names. She is currently Research Assistant on the FaNUK Project.



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

More Conference reports:

Anglo-Saxon Places of Power, Governance and Authority, 25 March to 27 March 2011, Rewley House, Oxford.

Report by **John Briggs**

This conference was very enjoyable, if a trifle unfocused. It was centred around the "**Landscapes of Governance**" project, but with input from another project, the **European HERA "The Assembly Project"**. It was perhaps dominated by archaeologists, but with a large contribution from historians, and relatively few place-name people: John Baker was really the only contributor there. Jeremy Harte also spoke, but he was really representing folklore. The lack of focus perhaps resulted from the comparative material (Celtic, Scandinavian, Frankish, other Continental European), as well as confusion over what types of assembly we were dealing with in England (royal, church, local/regional/national). Some of this is inevitable: archaeologists have excavated actual assembly sites, but it is difficult to link them with historical assemblies. The folklore element wasn't frivolous or just linked to post-history: there seems to have been conscious (or unconscious) archaising even at the time; for example in the use of pagan name-elements. (I noticed both a Thunderlow - a hundred site - and a Thunderfield - a national assembly site?). The Danes, in 1006, actually captured Scutcher Knob in Berkshire (the site of the Shire Court) *because* of its totemic (or folkloric) significance.

Archaeological excavation has shown that it was of Bronze Age origin, but with post-Roman re-shaping, then a mysterious medieval square structure, an Elizabethan beacon before becoming the site of

a 17th-century fair.

John Baker concentrated on the hundreds and their names. His analysis of the names of hundred meeting places showed the commonest elements to be those of mounds, trees, fords or bridges, and stones. Elements relating to assemblies themselves were rare. But perhaps that was to be expected: after all, it is thought that the hundred organization itself is as late as the 10th century, and the names themselves would all have been much older.

Barbara Yorke attempted to bring some clarity to the questions by distinguishing royal assemblies, shire courts, and hundred courts. We also learned (from Sarah Semple, who did some entertaining historiography) that the 21st century Gorsedd can no longer afford to erect a stone circle for each Eisteddfod, but now employs portable plastic stones!

I have probably said enough to give just a flavour of the conference, and perhaps make you regret what you have missed!

Third Cameron Memorial Lecture

Report by **Oliver Padel**

On 28 January 2011 Dr David Parsons, of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, University of Wales, gave the third biennial Kenneth Cameron Memorial Lecture at the Institute for Name-Studies in Nottingham, entitled "Alfred at Athelney and other stories: some reflections on place-names and the early history of England"; his overall theme was the use of place-names as historical evidence.

Parsons considered the two revolutions which occurred in the second half of the twentieth century: that of the 1960s, in which the significance of *-ingas* names for

the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlement was questioned; and that of the 1980s, in which Margaret Gelling asserted the primacy of topographical names in England. He also considered the recent archaeological conclusion that the open-field agricultural system, instead of dating from the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements, was a development of the mid-Saxon period. While accepting the validity of these revolutions, he thought that they might have swung too far away from earlier interpretations. The *-ingas* place-names may nevertheless have some connection with the earliest settlements, even though they do not correlate with the earliest archaeology; and one of the Laws of King Ine implies the existence of communal agricultural practices well before the Middle Saxon period.

The essential tool for understanding place-names historically is context. The name of Athelney in Somerset ("princes' island") has been explained from King Alfred's refuge there in the winter of 877-8, but he probably did so because it was already a royal estate; compare Ellingsdean (Sussex), "princes' (estate called) *Dene*", where King Ethelred's sons seem to have been reared by their grandmother. Place-names usually arise from prosaic and static conditions, rather than from a single memorable event, although that can occasionally happen. A recent book by David Parsons, Paul Cullen and Richard Jones discusses the *thorp* place-names and the mid-Saxon agricultural revolution. A combination of toponymic, historical and archaeological evidence suggests that *thorps* were created as outlying sub-centres for people working the new open-fields. In conclusion, Parsons emphasised that the most important historical insights arise from the systematic study of place-names overall, rather than from individual examples; and from the systematic combination of toponymic with other evidence.



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Publications

Please note that this is simply a listing of items 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.

Recent Publications:

In the Beginning was the Name: Selected Essays by Professor W.F. Nicolaisen. Published by the Scottish Place-Name Society, 2011.

The Origins of Oxford Street Names by Ann Spokes and Nigel Morgan (Robert Boyd Publications, 2010) ISBN: 9781899536993
The Topography of Medieval Ely, edited by **Anne Holton-Krayenbuhl**.

Cambridgeshire Records Society
<http://www.cambsrecordsociety.co.uk/?q=publications/topography-medieval-ely>.

Title recommended by **Keith Briggs** who adds: "It contains much material (including two 13th century surveys) which were used by Reaney in PN Cambs, so we can at last see this material in context. The only regrettable feature is the modernization of personal names. I cannot understand why people do this when their whole purpose is the printing of primary sources."

Surnames, DNA, and Family History, by **George Redmonds, Turi King**, and **David Hey**, (2011, Oxford: OUP). ISBN: 978-0-19-958264-8.

New in paperback
The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names: Based on

the Collections of the English Place-Name Society, by **Victor Watts** (Editor), **John Insley** (Editor), **Margaret Gelling** (Editor). Originally published in Hardback in 2004. Cambridge University Press (3 Feb 2011)

Scottish Place-names by **W. F. H. Nicolaisen**
 ISBN: 9781906566364
 Published by **John Donald** (Paperback)

This book, the result of twenty years' meticulous research, remains the only comprehensive and systematic study of Scottish place-names. From names which date from the dawn of time - such as the river names Tay and Avon - to more modern place-names, such as Fort William and Helensburgh, W.F.H. Nicolaisen brings to life the rich tapestry of history which has shaped Scotland over thousands of years. When first published in 1976, Scottish place-names was welcomed by reviewers for its innovative thinking and for setting new standards in place-name studies in Scotland. Three further printings within a few years responded to an obvious demand for the kind of overview and methodological guide it provided. The revised edition, first published in 2001, responded to the huge surge of interest in, and study of, Scottish place-names and included an updated preface and additional bibliography.

Forthcoming Events:
Future SNSBI events:
Annual Conference 2012 see last column page 6.
Autumn Day School 2012, Chester (dates TBA)
Annual Conference 2013 5-8 April, at the Glasgow Pond Hotel, Great Western Road, Glasgow

Annual Conference 2014, Aberystwyth (dates TBA)

Forthcoming events which may be of interest to SNSBI Members:

Call for Papers
European Association for Urban History, 11th International Conference on Urban History "Cities and Societies in Comparative Perspective"

29 August -1 September 2012
 Prague, Czech Republic
 Call for Papers for Main Session (M32):
<http://www.eauh2012.com/sessions/>

Session Theme: **"What's in a Name? How we label peripheral places."**

Deadline: 1 October 2011
 Organizers: Richard Harris (McMaster University, Canada), Sonia Hirt (Virginia Tech., USA), Sean Purdy (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil), Charlotte Vorms (University of Paris-1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France).

Worldwide, over the past century urbanization has entailed massive growth at the urban edge. Fringe growth has taken varied forms, attracting widespread interest and concern. Appropriately, scholars and planners in different countries have used various labels to refer to such developments. Everywhere, these have acquired negative connotations. This is especially the case for areas settled by rural migrants, ethnic minorities, or the poor. Such areas are peripheral in both social and geographical terms. Examples include the banlieues of France, favelas of Brazil, gecekondu of Turkey, or hutment slums of India. There are indications that such labels have been resisted by local residents but, especially among anglophones, researchers



SNSBI SOCIETY FOR NAME STUDIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Forthcoming events (contin):

have paid little attention to the fact. This session asks the question: does it matter how we label the socio-geographical periphery? This question raises a number of issues pertaining to the nature, origins, extent, and significance of local resistance to the nomenclature used by experts, planners, and the like. Particular interest attaches to the historical process by which such areas acquire generic labels; by which media and experts give those labels wider currency; and by which they are contested and perhaps changed. The proposed session will bring together historians and those social scientists who are alert to the dynamics of such processes.

Those interested should seek further information and submit abstracts online at the conference website (above).

Richard Harris / harrisr@mcmaster.ca

Advanced courses in the Historic Environment at the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education'

The Advanced Diploma in Historic Environment enables students from all over the UK over a period of nine months to research a topic of their own choice, drawn from pre-historic/historic landscapes, parks and gardens, heritage or archaeology, supported by a personal supervisor and five individual supervisions in Cambridge. The Advanced Diploma is ideal for volunteers, professionals, independent researchers and anyone who has previous good experience of landscape or garden archaeology/history, archaeology, or a related discipline. What's more, successful completion of the Advanced

Diploma may provide a qualification suitable for entry to a Master's degree.

The part-time Master of Studies (MSt) in Historic Environment connects policy and practice in the management and conservation of historic landscapes, parks and gardens with theory, concepts and research in the historic environment.

Applications will be accepted from 1 September 2011 and the closing date will be 30 March 2012. The course will run from September 2012 to July 2014.

Further details of both courses can be obtained by emailing historicenvironment@ice.cam.ac.uk.

This newsletter will probably land on your doorstep at much the same time as the following conference. However, many members will be glad to learn that:

On 1 October 2011 the **Welsh Place-Name Society** will hold its inaugural conference at Aberystwyth. Readers of the Newsletter may recall that an exploratory conference was held in 2010 to discover if there was sufficient interest in establishing such a society, and at the April 2011 SNSBI conference at Canterbury Hywel gave a report on the initial conference and the subsequent extensive discussions. The programme for the 2011 inaugural conference will have papers by Professor David Thorne, Dr Rhian Parry, Professor Prys Morgan and Dr David Parsons amongst others as well as a talk on, and an exhibition of, the extensive resources available for place-name research in the National Library of Wales. The conference will also adopt a constitution and establish a

committee. The WPNS already has a trial website which will then link to the SNSBI website.

Advance Notice:

SNSBI

The 21st Annual Conference. Conference Announcement

The next spring conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland will be held at the Raheen Woods Hotel, Athenry, Co. Galway, Ireland on the 30th March to 2nd April, 2012. The programme is being put together by Dr. Nollaig Ó Muraile of the National University of Ireland, Galway and details of this programme will be provided in subsequent circulars.

Accommodation at the Raheen Woods Hotel is expected to be in single (or double) occupancy of double en-suite rooms on a bed and breakfast basis. The cost will be broadly similar to that of previous years. The historic town of Athenry (*Baile Átha an Rí*) is in close proximity to all regional motorway, rail and air transport links and there is plenty to see and do in the town and in the immediate area [c.15 mins by train to Galway city].

The First Circular will be distributed in November with additional details regarding the conference programme, the excursion, total cost and the booking slip. If you have any queries regarding the conference at this time please contact the Conference Secretary at confsec@snsbi.org.uk.

SNSBI Newsletter
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