

11. The swift descent of literary names from the upper classes to the social strata below them has always puzzled me (Kisbye 1981, p.607; 1983, p.97; 1984, p.74). It is usually only a matter of decades before the names cease to be class-distinctive. Maids and servants, however, would seem to have been the catalytic agents in the process. Recently I accidentally came across a direct reference to the common practice among the domestic staffs of upper-class families of imitating the name-giving practices of their employers (Emanuel Sejr 1959, p.41). Their names become status-names (see Kisbye 1984, p.74 ff).

SETTLEMENTS AND TOPOGRAPHY

A review of MARGARET GELLING, Place-Names in the Landscape, Dent: London and Melbourne, 1984, x + 326 pp., 8 maps, £15.

This book is about the meaning and significance of topographical settlement names, the type of village name which defines a settlement by reference to its place in the landscape. In seven chapters devoted to water-courses, waste, roads and tracks, valleys, hills, woodland, and ploughland and pasture, it analyses in alphabetical order the use of some 140 elements, British, Old English and Old Norse, found in settlement name formations, based primarily on the materials in Ekwall's Dictionary of English Place-names. Easily the longest entry is that for dūn, but there are substantial discussions of feld, halh, hamm, hop, lēah, trēow and other neglected items. Important new material occurs in the accounts of æcer, ānstīg, bæc, crūg, cumb, dūn, ēg, feld, fyrhō, grāf, hop, hyrst, lēah, ric, trēow, wasse and windelesōra. The 70 page index serves as a dictionary of over 5000 names in England and in Scotland south of the Forth-Clyde line; translations only are provided, no forms. It is, indeed, a little irritating to have to turn time and again from the text to the index to see, for instance, why 'superstition gives rise to . . . Purbrook', to find that it is in fact 'puckbrook', information that could have been included in the text; and while mentioning minor irritations, why have Ekwall's well established county abbreviations been abandoned, and why do their successors appear so distractingly in capitals?

It is widely held that words possess meaning primarily by virtue of their participation in a complex structure or system of signification. Structuralist awareness is evident in this book, that is to say, the notion that any field of meaning is mediated by a vocabulary the members of which in some sense mutually define each other: in principle fenn, mersc and mōr, or hyll, clif and dūn are not synonymous. Literary usage is not much help: the vocabulary of Old English poetry with its rich resources of synonym and parallel evolved to satisfy the demands of alliterative versification actually undermines the principle of semantic structure. It seems unlikely that the vocabulary of name giving was like that: names, after all, are functional, they define locations primarily for practical tenorial, agricultural, economic, commercial, migratory purposes rather than poetic pleasure. The main method, therefore, is to turn to the reality mediated through the linguistic code to see what correlations may be established. The task is fraught with difficulty: the broad physiography of the landscape remains constant, but forest has disappeared, rivers change course, villages move site or become urbanised, and land management is revolutionised. Nor does the language stand still, words vary in meaning both diachronically and synchronically, according to regional usage. To recreate imaginatively the landscape of the past, and furthermore to see it through past eyes, is what is required. Dr Gelling makes out a good case for a variety of new or refined interpretations. But, as she readily admits, this exercise is but a beginning. By no means all the material available in the county surveys is studied here in detail - how could it in one 300 page volume? Detailed local knowledge is of vital importance for refinement of the broad picture. Detailed and exhaustive studies of individual elements are urgently required. The importance of this book, apart from redressing the balance of attention given to habitative and topographical names, and the individual insights, is as a stimulant to future work. There are great and exciting tasks awaiting students in search of Ph.D. topics. But will our universities continue to be able to produce researchers qualified to undertake them?

A third tool available to prize out meaning is etymology. On the whole, perhaps rightly, Dr Gelling does not rate it highly, preferring usage so far as it can be established as a more reliable guide. Nonetheless, it cannot be without significance that all the cognates of brōc mean 'marsh' rather than 'stream'. Stap (p.80) is likely to have had 'landing place' as its original sense, related as it is to stand which, like Latin stāre (and statio), had as one of its senses 'ride at anchor'. The usual word for shore was ōfer (cf. p.n. Hannover, Gk ἠπειρος 'coast'), probably an ancient comparative formation on the root *ap(o)- 'away' in the sense 'etwa rückwärts gelegener Teil (von Binnenland aus gesehen)'.¹ From this point of view hop is rather puzzling since its sense 'valley, recess' seems hard to reconcile with the meaning of its supposed cognates OE hype 'hip, the projection of the pelvis and top of the thigh' and hēap 'a heap'.

Some specific points. Ewen Gl (p.12) < OE æwel is said to be named from the source of the River Thames. But to judge from the modern map Kemble, Coates and Trewsbury are nearer the source to-day: has it moved, or does Ewen predate the other names? // Dr Gelling brings out well the organisational or economic significance of name types like the āc-tūns, ēa-tūns, fenn-tūns, grāf-tūns, mōr-tūns and wudu-tūns. These common types relate to settlement function within a larger unit. So too, I think, do some instances of dative plural names. In Cleveland, for instance, it seems to me that the settlements at the marshes (Marske), at the hills (Leatham), at the oak-clearings (Acklam), at the fishermen's huts (Coatham, Ayresome) and, perhaps, at the fish-weirs, too (Yarm), imply a set of reciprocal relationships within an overall preceived unit, whatever precisely that may have been. // The sense of 'a pool in a river', especially 'a pool where fish haunt', for OE pōl (p.28) is established by the name of the most famous episcopal fishery in the Tweed, which was simply Pol,² and the example is not unique. Water, too, had a technical sense 'stretch of water with fishing rights' as probably also did strēam (which does not appear in the chapter on rivers) in Coldstream, Berwicks.³ // Although wicga (p.56) means 'beetle', its root sense alludes to movement. The word is a classic example of an ideophonic formation with affective consonant gemination (as also are a number of other by origin colloquial OE animal terms, bridd, docga, frogga, hogg, stagga), in this case on the root seen in the words wag (OE wagian), waggle, wiggle etc. The wicga of Wigmore He, Sa may well, therefore, have had the sense 'unstable ground' quite independently of the insect name. The *cwabba of Quob Ha (p.34) is an analogous formation related to the verb quake (OE cwacian). // Strōther (p.59) was sufficiently characteristic of the North East for that acute philologist, Geoffrey Chaucer, to allude teasingly to it in the Reeve's Tale: the two dialect speaking undergraduates,

of o toun were they born, that highte Strother,
fer in the north, I kan nat telle wher. //

The interpretation of ānstig (p.63) has been overinfluenced by ON einstigi and by its supposed literary parallel ānpæð in Beowulf 1409-10,

stige nearwe,
enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad,

still glossed 'path in which men must go in single file'.⁴ But Levin Schücking demonstrated long ago that the ān of ānpæð implies not single file ('Gänsemarsch') but 'lonely', and enge not 'narrow' but something like 'threatening, sinister'.⁵ Whether any of Dr Gelling's examples might be regarded as lonely needs perhaps to be considered. But her own suggestion, 'stretch of road linking at least four routes', carries conviction, especially if expressed in terms such as 'stretch of road where four routes become one'.

Hills, of course, are notoriously difficult to define. A modest rise which may be perceived as a hill in flat country would pass unnoticed in undulating country, at any rate by a motorised travelling public. So perhaps with stig 'ascent'. As for pæð (p.78) there is some evidence, I think, that it may have been used of Roman roads, at least in some parts. Brancepeth and nearby Rag Path Du, and Morpeth and Gamelspath Nb (NT 379607) are certain examples, and this usage was noticed by Ross and Bailey in their study of the word.⁶ In NCy dialect it also developed the specialised sense 'a small road which descends or ascends a ravine obliquely to ease the gradient, a path through a wood'.⁷ It is yet another element which would repay detailed study. // The suggestion (p.88) that cumb 'a coombe' is to be identified with OE cumb 'a cup' rather than with PrW *cumm is attractive. Nevertheless, a casual glance at the map does show that as a topographical term it is by no means confined to shorter, broad, bowl-shaped valleys, as the examples of Brockley Combe, Burrington Combe, Goblin Combe So demonstrate and the name Widcombe implies. // Is the double appearance of the same pers.n. with the same element really as suspicious as Dr Gelling believes (p.92)? // Hægstald (p.93) has by origin a well established socio-legal meaning illuminatingly discussed by Peter Ilkow.⁸ It is also found as a personal name, and this may be its use in place-names. // The earliest document mentions two Ryhopes (p.112) and there are in fact two valleys. // May not Wallop (ibid.) contain OE weall 'a wall', to avoid importing Mercians into Hampshire? // OE mid (p.117) is indeed not an adjective; but midd is. // The summary of the three rival theories of the nature of -ing(a)- in English place-names (pp.118ff) is admirably clear, but Dr Gelling's own tentative suggestion - that the proximity of elements beginning with h or w may have been responsible for palatalization and assibilation of the g in compound names like Burlingjobb, Radnorshire - won't do. Any discussion of the phenomenon as a phonological process must begin with Alistair Campbell's statement that palatalization of OE g in the group ng takes place after front vowels: he gives the pronunciations ping 'thing' and feng 'seized' as examples, i.e. presumably something like [θɪŋj], [fe:ŋj].⁹ Palatalized stops were subsequently either assibilated or retracted to velar articulation. Assibilation of stop ġ (and ċ) was confined to final position and to medial position before (?front) vowels, but the distribution of velar and palatal or assibilated pronunciations was open to analogical disturbance, and in individual words could produce doublets such as ditch < dīċ and dyke < nominative plural dīcas, dative plural dīcum, the incidence of which might be influenced also by differing solutions in differing dialects. Thus whether or not reinforced by a locative inflectional ending -i, whether or not by origin a genitive plural suffix -inga- or a connective -ing-, we might expect to find, as indeed we do, an incidence of assibilated forms in compound place-names containing -ing-. It is interesting, further, to note that the distribution of hop (and of assibilated -ing- in compound names?) shows some concentration in the west and north. If this is really so (and we need distribution maps to check it), it shows all the signs of a relic feature remote from the centres of linguistic innovation.¹⁰ The view (p.120) that the -ing- suffix was no longer in use when the English names of the Welsh Marches were being coined needs, perhaps, some reconsideration: it may be that it was no longer in use in eastern and southern England but, like the concentric ripples in a pool of water, was possibly still in evidence at the periphery of the English expansion. // Shincliffe (p.134) does not overlook the Tees. // *nēs (p.173) is a ghost form: it should be *nesu or *neosu.¹¹ // Birkenside (p.187) and Minsteracres (p.233) are in Nb, not Du. // It seems unlikely that grafan 'to dig' and grāfa 'a grove' can be assigned to the same root: the former implies Gmc *graban- < IE grob-/greb-, the latter, which seems to have no IE cognates, Gmc *graita-. Grāfe may not necessarily be a NWMidl dialect

variant: OE spellings with æ can be represented by a in GDB (cf. Graveley Ca), and consequently places like Graveley Hrt (for which GDB is the earliest evidence) are ambiguous as between grāfa and grāfe: in either case non-standard pronunciations would be preserved, either OE ā not rounded to ō or OE æ, ME ē developed as in break, great rather than as in stream, dream. The phonology of place-names as opposed to the living language is, indeed, too little understood, and badly needs systematic treatment. Is, for instance, Dr Gelling's fascinating idea tenable that the wold names in Kent (<OE wald rather than the expected form weald) are fossilized forms from a period before the (linguistically) pre-historic sound change known as breaking, rather than the result of the (much later) influence of Standard English wold? If so, they would be amongst the most archaic names of the county. But if they were immune to one change (ProE ǣ > æ > ea before ld), why did they succumb to subsequent changes (OE a > ā before lengthening groups and OE ā > ME ō)? // It is a typically nice insight (p.206) to suggest that a lēah, unlike ā grove, is essentially too big to be characterised by an adjacent feature but is normally named after a feature found within it. // According to the transcription used in this book (th = OE ð, þ) licggead (p.236) looks as if it ought to be licggeath: but the charter is not identified in the book and cannot be checked. // Redmarshall (p.307) is 'red-pond hill' not 'reed-pond hill': Surtees comments on the soil colour.¹² // The following misprints have been noticed: relavant p.79; cogantes p.97; anomolous p.112; Newbury p.163 (should read Newburn); DUR p.220; ric p.307 (should read ric).

This is a most important book. It corrects, refines and supplements A. H. Smith's English Place-Name Elements and everyone who uses p.n. evidence will need to study and ponder what is said here. The matter is dense and it is a demanding read requiring a good supply of 1:50,000 O.S. maps at one's elbow (the maps in the book are poor, especially that of the Chiltern country which is too overloaded with information to be of any use). Such a survey of usage risks degenerating into mere cataloguing without being either exhaustive or sufficiently specific to provide definitive solutions. But within the limitations the task imposes, the book is written with immense clarity, judgment and honesty: and where the material permits the writing is masterly and, indeed, exciting.

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NOTES

1. Hjalmar Frisk, Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, 2nd ed. Heidelberg 1973, s.v.; G.Drosdowski, P. Grebe, Duden Etymologie, Mannheim 1963, s.v. Ufer.
2. NOMINA VII, 1983, 36.
3. Ibid., where also an explanation of Wylam (p.52) is offered.
4. C. L. Wrenn, Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment, revised ed. by W. F. Bolton, London 1973.
5. L. L. Schücking, Untersuchungen zur Bedeutungslehre der ae. Dichtersprache, Heidelberg 1915, 37ff.
6. H. W. Bailey, Alan S. C. Ross, 'Path', Transactions of the Philological Society, 1961, 109.

7. Ibid. 109, 110.
8. Die Nominalkomposita der altsächsischen Bibeldichtung, Göttingen 1968, 164-6.
9. Old English Grammar, Oxford 1959, 174.
10. Cf., for instance, the map of rhotic dialects in J. K. Chambers, P. Trudgill, Dialectology, Cambridge 1980, 110.
11. See M. T. Löfvenberg's review of A. H. Smith, English Place-Name Elements in English Studies XLIII, 1962, 42.
12. Robert Surtees, The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham, III, London 1823, 71.