

CELTIC PLACE-NAMES IN ENGLAND.

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The speculative derivation of English place-names from Welsh has long been the favourite pastime of the amateur philologist. The method is simple: take the modern form of the word; find a modern Welsh word more or less like it; and then derive the one from the other. If the Welsh word is a river-name it must mean 'water'—if not in Welsh, then in some mysterious pre-Aryan language whose very name is unknown. One might as well claim that Jews and negroes are both branches of the same race because they both have curly hair.

Of course the only safe method of dealing with place-names in different regions is to find out the early forms and to compare these. As will be seen in the following pages, the Saxons took over a fairly large number of Celtic place-names practically unchanged from the inhabitants, especially the names of rivers. Many of these were very probably of pre-Celtic origin; but I have purposely left the detailed discussion of this point to professional students of philology.

In the following notes I have collected instances where the same name occurs in three different regions, Wales, Brittany and England. The instances are practically all taken from documents whose originals date from before the Norman conquest. The principal authorities are (1) for Wales, the *Book of Llandaff*, edited by Rhys and Evans and printed at Oxford in 1893, (2) for Brittany, the *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon en Bretagne*, edited by de Courson and published at Paris in 1863, (3) for England, the Saxon bounds attached to grants of land collected together by W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols, referred to here as B.; and by J. M. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus*, referred to here as K.

The almost complete neglect¹ of the works quoted in

¹Dr. Grundy's *Saxon Land-Charters of Wiltshire*, in *Arch. Journ.* vol. lxxvi, continued in the present volume, redeems this neglect (in the case of one county); as also does the *supplementary* volume of

Bosworth and Toller's Dictionary. The compilers of the original volume seem not to have studied the land-charters. The explanations given there are not of much value.

(3) by English scholars is probably due to the bounds in them being written in Anglo-Saxon. It is not, however, difficult to become familiar with their very simple construction and limited vocabulary; and the reward is considerable, for they are the master-key to the origin of British place-names. There is no reason whatever why, with these Saxon bounds as a rallying point, a new school of comparative philology and archaeology should not spring up. It is really time that the entente between them should be revived. The pioneers brought discredit upon their work through speculative excesses, unscientific methods and fallacious assumptions. But for all that, comparative philologists can give a great deal of help in the solution of archaeological problems. Indeed it has been suggested that the next great advance will come when the data of philology and archaeology are handled by one who is competent in both branches of science. To take a not wholly imaginary example. Let us suppose that a language is found to have, in a certain region, syntactical peculiarities which are foreign to it and which do not occur in it elsewhere; and that these peculiarities are the *normal* characteristics of a different language in some distant land. If archaeologists can point to cultural resemblances between these same two regions at some given epoch in the prehistoric period, the evidence from both sources, pointing to cultural affinities, will be immensely reinforced. Confirmatory evidence from physical anthropology may well prove decisive; and even the evidence of folk-lore may help, if judiciously used.

Another promising line of inquiry would be to take a number of names which are thought to be of pre-Aryan origin and to trace the distribution of the group selected throughout Europe and Asia, again using of course the oldest forms available. If the distribution of the names in such a group coincided with the distribution of some archaeological unit, such as for instance, megalithic monuments or beakers or leaf-shaped swords, a very suggestive correlation would have been established.

I would emphasise the importance of the minor names. It is of little use taking the major names over a whole county, for the greater number of these are bound to be the names of villages, and so, like them, of Saxon

origin. It is in the names of ponds, hills, valleys, stream-lets, woods and the like that pre-Saxon terms will most commonly occur. Such names abound in the pre-Conquest charters. Those who are well grounded in these charters may perhaps be permitted to make judicious use of modern and medieval field-names.

I will now proceed to give the notes I have collected. For the sake of convenience I have taken the *Book of Llandaff* as the starting-point, and the first page reference given is to the 1893 edition of that work, the full title of which is quoted above. (In a few cases other sources also have been drawn upon.)

1. p. 383. In the bounds of Llandeilo Verwallt (Bishopston, Gower) there is mentioned a river called Dubleis. A river called Dyvleis is mentioned in the bounds of Llan-beder, Monmouthshire, and in those of several other places. Compare the following:—

(a) Deuelisch and Defelich in the bounds of Sturminster Newton, Dorset (B. 1214, A.D. 968), now the Divelish.

(b) Deuelisc, a stream mentioned in the bounds of Cheselborne, Dorset (B. 525, A.D. 869); and the modern name Dewlish, Dorset. The stream 'is now called Devil's Brook.' Professor Mawer informs me that the same river-name with the same corruption is found in the Devil's Water in Northumberland.

(c) Doflisc, a stream mentioned in the bounds of Creedy, Devon (B. 1331, A.D. 739); probably the same as that mentioned next.

(d) Doflisc, 'the river Dalch which joins the Yeo near Lapford (Devon),' Napier and Stevenson, *Crawford Charters*, 1895, p. 163, A.D. 739, from a MS. of the eleventh century. The editors add that this is 'the same river-name as that preserved in Dawlish (probably the *Doflisc* of K. iv, 275 and of Ordnance Survey Facsimiles ii, Exeter, plate 12) and in Dowlish, Somerset.'

2. pp. 146, 369. Lann Cors, now Llangorse, Brecknockshire, six miles ESE. of Brecon. The word means a marsh. Compare the following:—

(a) Corsa broc, in the bounds of Stanton Prior,

Somerset (B. 1099, A.D. 963). Corsan stream (the same), in the bounds of Corston, Somerset (B. 767, A.D. 941).

(b) Corsa broc, corsbrok, now Gauze Brook (!) (K. 460, A.D. 956). Identified by Dr. Grundy.

3. p. 420. In the bounds of Lann Cum, now Llangwm, Monmouthshire, three miles east of Usk, occurs the following:—‘from Aber Nant Bis on the Bic as the Bis leads upwards (throughout) its length as far as its source.’ In the bounds of Merthir Clitau (Clodock, Herefordshire) occurs the following: ‘along the Monnow downwards as far as Aber Fynnon Bist as far as its source’ (1893 edition, p. 375).

The mention of a river Bis in the Welsh region is extremely interesting, since it can be exactly paralleled by the river Biss at Trowbridge in Wiltshire. Cf. B. 1127 (Steeple Ashton, Wilts): ‘on bereburne, of tham burne on bis, of bis on mealm, than on alleburne’; four most interesting river-names. Another stream called ‘byssan broc’ occurs in the bounds of Corigescumb (now Corscombe) near Bath, in Somerset (K. 1309).

In the same bounds (of Lann Cum) Rhyd-yr-Onnen is interesting as an exact translation of the common name Ash-ford, if on = an ash tree (plural onnau or onion); but in the list of Gallic place-names of A.D. 449, *onno* is translated ‘flumen.’ (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auct. Antiq.* vol. ix, 1891, *Chron. Min. i*, pp. 613-4, ‘De nominibus Gallicus’ [16 names are given with their Latin equivalents]). Rhyd-yr-onen occurs on the modern O.S. map as a name near Towyn, Merionethshire. Compare the Roman towns of Onna and Onno mentioned by the Ravenna geographer. Onna is preceded in his enumeration by ‘Bindogladia, Noviomagno’ and followed by ‘Venta Velgarum.’ The last is, of course, Winchester, and Bindogladia is Woodyates. If one may hazard a guess, Onna may have been somewhere in the Andover district, perhaps Finkley (near East Anton), where a Roman settlement has been found. The River Anna has given its name to Amport, Abbot’s Ann, Andover and East Anton.

Bartholomew’s gazetteer gives two rivers called Onny, one in Herefordshire and the other in Shropshire; and an original charter of A.D. 759 gives ‘onnan duun’ (*sic*)

in the bounds of 'Onnan forda' (unidentified, but placed in Worcestershire by Birch, i. p. 266, no. 187).

4. p. 432. The bounds of Lann Catgualatyr (Bishopstone or Bishton, four east of Caerleon, Monmouthshire) begin 'aper nant alun.' This is a very common river name. Cf. 'Αλαίνος (Ptolemy), a river on the south coast of England mentioned between the river Ισάκα and Μέγας λιμήν, and perhaps to be connected with the river Allen in Dorset which rises in Cranborne Chase and joins the Stour at Wimborne. The Ravenna geographer mentions a river Alauna which cannot be identified, and Ptolemy also mentions one between Βοδερία (the Firth of Forth) and Οὔεδρα (The Wear). Ptolemy's "Αλαυνος is identified with the Alne in Northumberland by Professor Mawer (*Place-names of Northumberland*, 1920, p. 4).

Compare also the following:—

(a) Alum, in the bounds of Batcombe, near Cheddar, Somerset (B. 749, A.D. 940).

(b) The river Alan, St. David's, Pembrokeshire, probably the alun of Penn Alun (Penally), p. 77.

(c) Alum Bay, near the Needles, Isle of Wight.

(d) Allum Green, near Lyndhurst, Hants. The stream bounding Allum Green on the west is called Highland Water on the Ordnance map. I strongly suspect this name to be a corruption of the same word as 'Allum.' If so, then this river and not the Allen, may be Ptolemy's Αλαίνος.

5. pp. 241, 378. In the bounds of Llan-uwyd, NE. of Llan Vannar, Monmouthshire, a river Liman occurs. It is now called Lumon, and is also mentioned in the bounds of Llan Vannar, Monmouthshire. It is a tributary of the Trothy, which it joins about four miles west by north of Monmouth.

In the Ravenna geographer's list of rivers, between 'Durbis' (Dubris, Dover) and Rovia, occurs Lemana. This shows that it was a river which gave its name to the Roman fort at Portus Lemanis, now surviving in Lympne. It is also mentioned in the bounds of Rucking as 'flumen Limenea' (B. 1336, A.D. 805).

In the bounds of Braunston, Northants, a river called

Limenan (oblique case) occurs, and is to be identified with the Leam (B. 978, A.D. 956. Cf. Ordnance Survey Facsimiles, part iii, plate 46).

In the bounds of Peadingtun, Devon, 'Lymen stream' is mentioned (B. 1323). No identification is suggested by Birch. The place is situated near the confluence of the 'Limen' and the 'Aescburne.' The river on which Newton Abbot stands is now called the Lemon. Professor Mawer informs me that 'wogganwille' in this charter is Oggwell, and he adds: 'This pins it down to very near Newton Abbot, and puts your Lemon beyond question.' A river 'Lym' is mentioned in the bounds of Lyme Regis, Dorset (B. 728, A.D. 938); and a river 'Loman' now joins the Exe at Tiverton. A stream called 'leomene' is mentioned in the bounds of Mytun (? near Tewkesbury, K. 751, A.D. 1033); and the places called Lemington (spelt in various ways) all suggest the same river-name. Early forms however are essential, as Lemmington in Edlingham comes from quite different roots (see Mawer, *Place-names of N. and D.* p. 133).

The island of Ramsay off the west coast of Pembroke-shire was called Limene in the time of St. Justinian of Brittany (Richard Fenton, *Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, London, 1811, p. 124).

The lake of Geneva is now called Lake Lemman and was called Lacus Lemanus by the Romans. According to Nennius (c. A.D. 620) Lochleven was called Lacus Lummonus; it had amongst other peculiarities 340 inhabited islands in it, and only one stream (called the Leven) which flowed into the sea from it.

There is a river Lymn in Lincolnshire, east of Horn-castle.

6. pp. 140, 368. In the bounds of Llandeilo Talybont, Carmarthenshire a river called 'Cam-guili' ('cam' being probably not really part of the river-name) is mentioned. This is probably the modern Afon Gwili, north of the town of Carmarthen. The ancient name of the river Wylfe, which gave its name to Wilton and Wiltshire, was Guilou; this is the spelling given in Asser's *Life of Alfred* (ed. W. H. Stevenson, Oxford, 1904, p. 33, chap. 42). Mr. Stevenson compares the form with that of the river Wellow

(O.E. *Welewe*), in Somersetshire which with the *Wylve* seems to be derived from an original form *Wilavia*.

7. pp. 263, 383. In the bounds of St. Bride's-super-Ely, Glamorganshire, 'finnaun liss' (the springs of liss) occurs. With this may be compared the name of *Liss* (so spelt in medieval documents) in Hampshire and perhaps, the *Lys* in Flanders.

8. pp. 184, 374. The bounds of *Cemeis Inferior*, Monmouthshire, begin at 'aper humir' and end at 'nant humir, id est nant merthir.' The modern name of the river is *Gamber*. Compare the following:—

(a) *Humbre*, the *Humber* in the bounds of *Barrow-upon-Humber*, Lincolnshire (B. 1270, A.D. 971).

(b) *Humber*, between *Tuddenham* and *Bury St. Edmund's*, Suffolk (B. 480, A.D. 854).

(c) *Himboir* \ flumen, A.D. 834, *Hemboir*, A.D. 830 :
Imuor ;
 Chartulary of *Rédon*, p. 12).

(d) *Humera*, apparently another name for the Hampshire river *Test* (*Tersta*) between *Wherwell* and *Whitchurch* (*Liber Vitae*, Hampshire Record Society, 249, bounds of *Drayton*, A.D. 1019).

(e) A river *Humber*, a tributary of the *Lugg*, joining it between *Leominster* and *Hereford*.

9. The old name of the river *Cole*, a tributary of the *Thames* which forms the northern boundary between *Berks* and *Wilts* was *Lenta*. It is so called in B. 477 (A.D. 854) and in the perambulation of the forest of *Berkshire* (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1216-1225, p. 288, 5 Hen. iii). Can this be the same river as that called *Lenda* by the *Ravenna* geographer? A river called *Leonta* is mentioned in the bounds of *Hellerelege* (unidentified), B. 123 (i. p. 178, A.D. 704-9).

10. In the *Rédon* chartulary a river called *Samanum* or *Semenon* is mentioned, A.D. 866. It is identified by the editor with the *Bruc*, rising in dept. *Mayenne* and joining the *Vilaine* opposite the château of *Morlière*.

Compare the following river-names, all of which seem to contain the same root-name¹ :—

(a) Semene (K. 641, A.D. 984, bounds of Tisbury, Wilts.) now called the Sem, and giving its name to Semley.

(b) Semnit (B. 1127, A.D. 964, bounds of Ashton, Wilts) now called the Semington brook.

(c) Sam burna, a fairly frequent river-name in the charters, occurring as Samburne at Warminster, Wilts, and between Calne and Chippenham.

11. The river-name Kaerent which occurs in the bounds of Overbury, Worcestershire (B. 541, A.D. 875) is evidently the same name as that found in France in the form Charente (Carentona, flowing into the Bay of Biscay at Rochefort), Charentonne (flowing north into the Rille at Serquigny, south-west of Rouen) Carentan, a town in dept. Manche, SSE. of Cherbourg; and Charenton (Seine).

12. The river-name Stour is very common in England, but does not occur at all in Wales, so far as I am aware. Spelt 'Sture' it is frequently met with in the Saxon bounds. It is remarkable that two rivers of this name are found in the upper basin of the Po, (a) north-west of Turin, where it joins the Po, (b) south of Turin, flowing past the town of Cuneo.

13. p. 74a. In the bounds of Lann Bocha (St. Maughan, six miles NW. of Monmouth) occurs the phrase 'head of Nant Pedecon' (caput nan pedecon).

In the bounds of Edington near Westbury, Wilts, (B. 1215, A.D. 968) one of the marks is 'Padecan stan.' It stood on the hill just above the village of Edington, overlooking a spring that wells out at the foot of the steep escarpment there. The name survives in Patcombe hill above Edington (six-inch O.S. map, Wilts 45 NW.) which is called Patekynhull in the Edington chartulary (*in campo de Mulborne jac. super Patekynhull*).² It is called Patten's stone in the perambulation of Westbury hundred of A.D. 1575 ('a stone called Patten's Stone, anciently Padcan-stone,' R. Colt Hoare, *Modern Wilts*, hundred of Westbury, pp. 54-57).

¹ See also Dr. Grundy's note on *Symbroce* in *Arch. Journ.* lxxvi, 201.

² Transcript of the *Edington Chartulary*

in the library of the Wiltshire Archaeological Society at Devizes, deed no. 242, 13th or 14th century.

14. p. 110. Budic is mentioned in the life of St. Teilo as a king in Brittany. Budic gave his name to the district over which he reigned (*Cornugallia que postea vocata Cerniubudic*, Life of St. Oudoceus, *Book of Llandaff*, 1893 edition, p. 131). The name Budic occurs constantly amongst witnesses in the chartulary of Rédon in Brittany, see p. ccxxviii. Its feminine form Boudicca is better known in the mis-spelt form Boadicea. Rhys quotes three other instances from Roman inscriptions, Bodicca (Africa) Bodiccus (Pannonia) and Boudica or Boudicas (Spain) and adds: 'It is commonly supposed that they are all of the same origin as the Welsh word *budd*, benefit, advantage, and *buddogol*, victorious, so that *Boudicca* might perhaps be equated in point of meaning with such a Latin name as *Victorina*' (*Celtic Britain*, p. 284).

The following comparisons are suggested:—

(a) Buddecleigh = Butley, Somerset (B. 300, A.D. 801). The same place is referred to in B. 297 'A. ('to Badecan m hidas'). These references, especially the latter, show that Butley cannot possibly be identified with the Aeglea of Alfred's Edington campaign, as is suggested by the authors of *Early Wars of Wessex*.

(c) Badecan well = Bucknall-cum-Bagnall, Staffordshire (B. 884, A.D. 949).

(d) Bedecan lea and badecan daene in the bounds of Crondall, Hants (B. 1307, A.D. 973-4).

(b) Budock, the name of a parish west of Falmouth, Cornwall.

Professor Mawer does not think that the last two instances have any connexion at all with Boudic.

15. A personal name Conuc occurs in the *Book of Llandaff*, and the same name is also given on p. 176 as that of a place conjecturally identified by the editor with Cnwc in St. Bride's Major, Glamorganshire. The following comparisons are suggested:—

(a) Cunuca lea in the bounds of Bathford, Somerset. (B. 1001, A.D. 957).

(b) Canuc, a river mentioned in the bounds of Wudatune (Wootton, Hants? B., but wrongly; B. 969, A.D. 956).

(c) Cunictune = Connington, Hunts. (B. 1003, A.D. 957).

(d) Cunecan forda, in the bounds of Bishop's Lydeard, Somerset (B. 610, A.D. 904).

(e) Conoch, a monastery (*Cartulaire de Redon*, p. 117, A.D. 829-30).

(f) Cannock Chase and Cannock between Lichfield and Stafford.

(g) Professor Mawer says: 'Cunuc must also I think be found in the Cong Burn (Durham). Unluckily we only have forms—1382 Clonglech (clearly corrupted) and 1423 Conkburn.'

16. The personal name Branoc is mentioned seven times in the index to the chartulary of Rédon, where a connection with *bran* meaning a raven, is suggested. In the *Book of Llandaff* a 'villa Branuc' is mentioned (p. 230).

In the *Cartularium Saxonicum* there is mentioned 'Branoc' in Somerset (e.g. ii. 472, A.D. 854). In Alfred's will a place called 'Branecescumb' is mentioned (e.g. ii, 553). It is called Brancminstre in K. 577, A.D. 973, where the bounds are given.

17. p. 73. Grant of land at Cum Barruc. Compare Berroc silva (Asser's Alfred, ed. Stevenson, pp. 1, 155), Berrucscyre (K. 840) Barroscire (K. 886) Barroc (A.D. 1179) = Berkshire.

18. pp. 78, 364. In the bounds of Llandeilo Fawr in Carmarthenshire, one of the marks is Hebauc Mein, translated 'Hawkstone' by the 1840 editors. Near Enstone in Oxfordshire is a standing stone called the Hawk stone; and there is another Hawkstone in Aberdeenshire.

19. pp. 142, 369. In the bounds of Mathern, Monmouthshire, 'otyn lunbiu' is translated 'Lunbiw's kiln.' Mr. J. G. Wood, F.S.A., identifies this as 'at or near a place I knew as Clay Pits, but now called Fairfield, near Hardwick'; and he dates this particular charter between 500 and 600 A.D. (*Moynes Court, Monmouthshire*, Newport, 1914, pp. 86, 87). Bosworth and Toller translate the O.E. *oden* by 'a threshing-floor.' In Pughe's *Welsh Dictionary* (1873) *odyn* is translated 'kiln' (*odyn briddfaen* = brick-kiln; *odynau calch* = limekilns). Llanbarn-odyn occurs in Cardiganshire.

Compare the following :— i

(a) Odencolc, in the bounds of Ham (Dorset ? B. 451 A.D. 847).

(b) Oden aecer, in the bounds of Weston, near Bath, Somerset (B. 814, A.D. 946).

(c) 'Tha olde oden missenne' in the bounds of Christian Malford, Wilts (B. 752, A.D. 940).

20. pp. 134, 368. In the bounds of the diocese of Llandaff the phrase *Ol y gabr* is translated 'the Goats' Track' by the editor. Pughe's Welsh Dictionary also translates *ol* by a 'mark or trace.' The track was doubtless a rough path over the mountains. Compare the Roman town Gabrosenti (*Notitia Dignitatum*) mentioned also as Gabrocentes by the Ravenna geographer. The Roman name would appear to be a half translation of *Ol y gabr*, (doubtless a common native term for these mountain tracks) the Celtic *gabr*- being sufficiently close to its Latin cognate *capro*- to be intelligible in both languages. Bede (chapter 21) translates Gateshead *Ad Caput Caprae*; but he does not give any native original form, the first such being Gatesheued (about 1190).

21. pp. 145, 369. In the bounds of Bishopston, Gower, occurs the phrase *Llwyn Lladron*, translated 'Thieves' Forest.' There is a close parallel to this strange and suggestive name in the Foundation Charter of Witham Charterhouse, Somerset, A.D. 1182. See *Proc. Somersetshire Arch. and N.H. Soc.* vol. lxiv [1918] p. 4 where a '*falda latronum*' is one of the bound-marks. Some kind of a robbers' den is doubtless referred to. It is not unlikely that the native name of the Somerset example contained a Celtic element in it, as do so many place-names in that county. The '*falda*' is interesting in connection with *studfold* and similar compositions of the word -fold, which are often applied to Roman or pre-Roman fortified enclosures. Has the Robbers Den in Somerset been located ?