

ART. VI.—*Lanercost*. By Sir IFOR WILLIAMS, D.Litt.,
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ON Lanercost, Ekwall in his *English Place-Names* (p. 273) observes that the first element is the Welsh *llannerch*, "glade", and that the second element is obscure. He refers to the Cornish place-name *Landrake*, on which he cites Old Cornish *lanherch*, "an open place in a wood, a glade = Welsh *llannerch*." Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (p. 356), sees the same word in Lanark of Lanarkshire, Barr-lanark near Glasgow, and "further north we have Lanrick . . . Lendrick in Kinross and Lendrick near Kirriemuir, Forfar. All these show metathesis." He, too, explains *llannerch* as "a clear space, a glade." Perhaps one ought to add that the *d* in these names is the excrescent *d* which tends to develop after *n* when *r* follows; cf. *Henry*, *Hendry*: German *Donner*, English *thunder*: Latin *tener*, Welsh *tyner*, but French *tendre*, English *tender*, etc.

First of all, the meaning of *llannerch*. It is an obvious derivative of *llann*, originally a piece of ground, cf. the English cognate *land* and the Welsh compounds *ydlan*, rick-yard (*yd* = corn); *gwinllan*, vineyard (*gwin* = wine); *corfflan*, graveyard (*corff* = body, corpse). Dr Davies, in the *Dict. Duplex* (Welsh-Latin and Latin-Welsh), 1632, translates it by the Latin *area*, and *llannerch* by *areola*. Where the Revised Version, I Kings 22, 10, describes the kings of Israel and Judah sitting each on his throne "in an open place (margin, Hebrew: "a threshing-floor") at the entrance of the gate of Samaria", the Welsh version has *llannerch*: the Vulgate, *area*. On consulting the dictionary, I find that the

latter can mean a plot of ground, a court or yard, a threshing-floor, and a bald spot upon the head! No wonder, then, that *llannerch* too is used in Welsh for a glade or clearing in a forest (a sort of bald patch!), an open space in a town, and generally for a plot or spot, or patch of ground. In an old Welsh Leech Book, published by T. Lewis, I came across a rarer usage: black spots or patches on a sheet were described as *llannerche duon*. This confirmed an entry in the Latin-Welsh part of the 1632 dictionary, under *maculatus* ("spotted, stained"): one of the translations given was *wedi llannerchu*, "having become spotted", a past participle formed from a verb *llannerch-u*, derived from *llannerch*, "spot". A quotation from Pughe, 1832, may also be of interest: *llannerch*, he says, was a hay-making term to describe raking the hay into thick *patches*.

As for the Cornish example quoted by Ekwall, *lanherch*: R. Williams, in his Cornish Dictionary, explains it as "an open place in a wood, a glade, a forest." The only reference he gives is one to the Cornish Vocabulary of the twelfth century, where it translates the Latin *saltus*, a forest pasture, woodland pasture, woodland—so the patch need not be quite bare! The author of this vocabulary had before his eyes Aelfric's Glossary (Latin—Anglo-Saxon), where we find *nemus vel saltus* glossed together as *holt*, "grove, wood." The Cornishman must have disregarded the *vel* ("or")—a crossed *l* is the usual contraction for it—and put down *kelli*, "grove", for *nemus* and *lanherch* for *saltus*. He did not regard the two Latin words as synonyms, and thus may be said to have voted for "woodland pasture" rather than "woodland."

Taking Welsh and Cornish together, then, we can be satisfied with "an open space" as the simple meaning of *llannerch*.

The *-ost* in Lanercost may be a personal name, derived from the Latin *Augustus*. In Welsh, a *-g-* between two

vowels disappeared, both in Celtic words and in borrowings from Latin. Thus, the Welsh name for the month of August is *Awst*. In the charters quoted in the *Book of Llandav* (early twelfth century), p. 142, a king in Breconshire during the seventh century is called *Agustus rex*, *Agust rex*; p. 154, *August rex*. In later Welsh, he too would have been called *Awst*. Lanerc-Ost may be a piece of land once owned by a North Briton called *Awst*.

On the Gloucestershire bank of the Severn is a village called *Aust*, or *Aust Clive*. Sir John Lloyd (*History of Wales*, p. 174 f.) argues in favour of locating here the conference of the monk *Augustine* with the British bishops of Wales, in 602 or 603. "It was known in Welsh as *Penrhyn Awstin*", but "it appears as *aet Austin* in the charter of 692 or 693 which bestowed it on the see of Worcester." If he is correct, we have here an *Augustine* becoming *Austin*, and at last *Aust*, pronounced almost like *Ost*!

Ekwall's earliest date for *Lanercost* is 1169 (*Registry of the Priory of Wetherhal*), the year of the foundation of an *Augustinian* priory here. This brings into discussion the greatest Augustine of all, but it seems to me very unlikely that his name is the *Ost* that we are dealing with. Would anybody in that district, as late as 1169, have used *Lanerc* for the site of the priory? It is just possible that the local dialect may have preserved it as a common noun, meaning woodland pasture, a glade, or the like. I cannot, however, believe that *Augustine*, or *Augustinian*, could have become *Ost* in the twinkling of an eye, immediately the priory was founded. But it was a happy coincidence, nevertheless, this coming of Augustinians to a site whose name commemorated an early Augustus.