

Londinia of the North?

WHEN DAVID Bird contributed a stimulating article on 'The Origins of Roman London', he touched on the mystery of derivation of the name *Londinium* — which must have been chosen at a time when the Celtic language known as British was in use from the south of Britain up to the Forth-Clyde line¹. Dr. Bird pointed out that though the hypothetical British word *lindo-*, 'pool, lake', could describe a tidal lake on the river Thames, it has been largely ignored by place-name experts discussing the *Londinium* problem².

With Dr. Bird's comments in mind, and pending any new pronouncements by the experts, there may be some interest in looking at the Scottish place-names 'Lundie' and 'Lundin', which have some resemblance to *lindo-* and have been tentatively linked to *Londinium*. There are at least two groups of Lundin names and a good many 'Lundies'.

Lundin Links standing stones (NO 404 027)³, Lundin Wood and the remains of Lundin House⁴ are all near the Fife coast, behind Largo Bay, within about a kilometre of each other.

The second Lundin group is in Strathray, Perthshire, about 2.5 km north-east of Aberfeldy. Lundin Farm (NN 881 502), the Lundin burn, and a group of standing stones (NN 880505) and similar monuments are on the lower slopes of the hillside to the south of the river Tay (whose name is thought to be derived from the same root as 'Thames')⁵.

In speech, 'Lundin' sounds broadly similar to the usual modern pronunciation of the first two syllables of *Londinium*. The more correct pronunciation of the 'u' is 'oo', but around Aberfeldy at any rate pronunciation fluctuates between 'oo' and 'u' as in 'fun', the latter version perhaps influenced by the spelling of 'Lundin'. Early this century, however, a field worker noted that the local pronunciation of Lundin Farm was 'Loan-ten'⁶.

1. D. Bird 'The Origins of Roman London' *London Archaeol* 7 (1994) 268-70.
2. A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith *The Place-names of Roman Britain* (1979) 10-11.
3. Bird *op cit* fn 1, 268 n 8; but cf E. J. Davies 'The Derivation of London' *History* 11 (1926) 229, para 4.
4. Royal Commission Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland 11th Report with inventory . . . of Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan (1933) 186, no. 379; B. Walker and G. Ritchie *Exploring Scotland's Heritage, Fife and Tayside* (1987) 177, no. 99.
5. *Inv Fife op cit* fn 4, 184, no. 375.
6. M. E. C. Stewart 'The Excavation of a Setting of Standing Stones at Lundin Farm near Aberfeldy, Perthshire' *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 98 (1964-5 and 1965-6) 126-149; Walker and Ritchie *op cit* fn 4, 176, no. 98; Rivet and Smith *op cit* fn 2, 465-6, 470. Stewart reports that the old spelling of Perthshire Lundin is 'Lundun', and adds that a fragment of an Iron Age *dun* or fort survives about 1/2 km east of Lundin Farm, an observation that eerily evokes the old, discredited, derivation of *Londinium* from Welsh *Llyn-Din* 'lake-fort'. Stewart *op cit* 129; Davies *op cit* fn 3, 227-9.
7. Mr. J. B. Stevenson, *pers. comm.*
8. F. R. Coles 'Stone circles surveyed in Perthshire' *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 42 (1907-8) 133, fn 1.
9. W. J. Watson *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*

'Lundie' and 'Lundin' were accepted as Celtic in origin by W. J. Watson (1865-1948), still regarded as a leading authority on Scottish Celtic place-names. Watson explained the two place-names in 1926: *Lunndragán* at Taynult, Argyll, is from [hypothetical] *lunnd*, meaning probably "a marsh", whence the common place-name Lundie; its diminutive *lunndán* means "a smooth grassy place, a marshy spot", found also in place-names, e.g. *an* [the] *Lunndán*, near Aberfeldy . . .⁷.

In 1904, Watson had been more expansive and speculative. Writing of the hill (Maoil) Lunndaigh in Ross and Cromarty, he said: "Lunndaigh is Englished Lundy, a name of very frequent occurrence, always in connection with lochs or bogs. We have lochs of this name in Lochalsh, Applecross, Knockbain, Golspie, near Invergarry and in Forfarshire. There is also Lundin in . . . Fife . . . In certain parts there may still be heard in common speech the word 'lunndan', meaning a green spot, but apparently primarily a green wet place. From all this it is clear that Lunndaigh or Lundy means a wet place, a boggy loch or stream . . ."⁸. The overlap in meaning between *lunnd* and its derivatives, and *lindo-* is obvious⁹. Are they related?

After suggesting that 'Lundy' may be distantly related to Latin *lutum*, 'mud', Watson went on: "Hence, most probably, London, Latin *Londinium*"¹⁰. Watson did not repeat this suggestion in his 1926 publication, and it seems to have had little impact on place-name studies¹¹.

Nevertheless, the meanings of 'Lundie' and 'Lundin' seem remarkably apt as descriptions of the environs of *Londinium*. Dr. Bird, for instance, pointed out the strategic importance of the marshes round the site of the Roman city; and the Walbrook and Fleet rivers must have added to the general impression of dampness¹².

Moreover, Watson considered 'Lundie' — in Ross and Cromarty at any rate — to be of Pictish origin¹³, i.e. to belong to a language

- (1926, 1986 reprint) 450.
10. W. J. Watson *Place-names of Ross and Cromarty* (1904) 158.
11. The convergence is reinforced by the Breton *lenn*, 'marsh', cited by Rivet and Smith as a modern representative of *lindo-* Rivet and Smith *op cit* fn 2, 392.
12. Watson *loc cit* fn 10. Watson also proposed to link London with Paris linguistically by interpreting *Lutetia Parisiorum* as 'the muddy town of the Parisii'. Watson *loc cit* fn 10; cf Rivet and Smith *op cit* fn 2, 404; P.-M. Duval *Résumé du Paris antique* (1972) 8.
13. It was taken up by: J. B. Johnston *The Place-names of England and Wales* (1915) 352 'London'; -do- *Place-names of Scotland* (3rd edn 1934) 245 'Lundin Links'; Alex. MacBain *Place Names Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (1922) 56.
14. Bird *op cit* fn 1, 268-70; J. Hall and R. Merrifield *Roman London* (1986) 6, Fig. 10.
15. Watson *op cit* fn 10, xlvi, 189, 213; repeated in MacBain *loc cit* fn 13.
16. L. Alcock 'Pictish Studies: Present and Future' in A. Small (ed.) *The Picts, a New Look at Old Problems* (1987) 80-1; W. F. H. Nicolaisen *Scottish Place-names* (1976) 121, 171; A. Ritchie and D. J. Breeze *Invaders of Scotland* (1991) 19; Watson *op cit* fn 9, 2, 70-1.
17. Bird *op cit* fn 1, 268, 270; N. Merriman *Prehistoric London* (1990) 45-6.
18. Watson *op cit* fn 10, 140.

spoken in Britain north of the North-Clyde line, probably contemporaneously with British further south. Pictish, a Celtic language, is considered to have been more closely akin to British than was its successor, Gaelic, another Celtic language, introduced into Scotland from Ireland in the early centuries AD⁶. So a Pictish rather than a Gaelic origin for 'Lundie' should increase the likelihood of the name being related to *Londinium*.

Superficially, then, the case for deriving *Londinium* from something like *lunnd/lunndan*, perhaps related to *lindo*, appears attractive, but only the philologists can say whether it is feasible.

One factor that might be relevant to any re-assessment of the derivation of *Londinium* is the situation in the London area immediately before the Roman conquest. In the late Iron Age the district seems to have been comparatively backward and isolated⁷, just the sort of place where archaic forms of language might have survived into Roman times and influenced the naming of *Londinium*.

Perhaps the time is right for the place-name experts to take a fresh look at '*Londinium*'. Here, they are unlikely to be troubled by the "water bull, whose herd may be heard in winter bellowing beneath the ice" on one of *Londinium*'s possible namesakes, Loch Lundy, Ross and Cromarty⁸.

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Roman London

I WAS DELIGHTED to see that in reviewing Gustav Milne's new book on Roman London, Harvey Sheldon also took time to comment on my views on the status of Roman London. As this is developing into a three-way wrestling match, may I return to the ring?

First, may I side with Gustav Milne against Harvey Sheldon. "Who on earth", writes Harvey, "apart from the military administration established *Londinium*?" The answer is, of course, the Emperor. I do not believe that the military administration went round founding towns. I think this was the role of the civil administration. The evidence seems to be that the towns were only founded when the army moved out. The governor was indeed the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, but there was also a civil administration under him, and it was this civil administration that founded most towns — operating through the *civitates*. But I believe it was the procurator, acting on behalf of the Emperor, who founded London.

Second, was London ever a chartered community? "Clearly it wasn't at the time of the Boudican uprising but this does not preclude it from becoming a municipium or a colonia thereafter" writes Harvey. Well, I believe there is good evidence that London never became a chartered town, and that comes from the absence of villas around London. Keith Branigan has argued that the Cotswolds may have been imperial domain until the 3rd century when it was sold off; it was after this that villas sprang everywhere, thus explaining the wealth of 4th century villas in the west country. The absence of villas around London is one of the strongest arguments against it ever having been a chartered community. I suspect that no Roman could have conceived of any proper town without it being surrounded by villas where the leading citizens lived.

Third, may I qualify my assertion that we have no evidence of governors in London until the 3rd century. When I first began to have my suspicions about Roman London about 20 years ago, and it dawned on me that the 'governor's palace' was not the

governor's palace but the procurator's, at first I went too far and tried to exclude the governor altogether. Subsequently I have taken more account of the probability that London became the capital in the late 1st century and that governors would have passed through and stayed there periodically. However, I still suspect the main governor's residence would have been with the main legionary headquarters, in Chester and York. I gather that David Mason, who has been writing up the 1970s excavations in Chester, would like to interpret some of the evidence of Chester in these terms, and I am looking forward to his lecture at the Society of Antiquaries in the coming session: all those concerned with Roman London should attend.

Finally, Harvey asks "can we really say that *Londinium* resembled wild west shanty towns?" Well, this depends on how you interpret the overall plan. There has been a tendency to straighten the street plan of Roman London, in the belief that it jolly well ought to be regular. Can I appeal to the draughtsmen (or draughtswomen) at MOLAS who draw up these plans for their support? If the street plan of Roman London was that of a wild west shanty town, please draw it as such! It is on your interpretation that we decide how regular or otherwise was London's layout.

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Croydon Anglo-Saxon Cemetery

MS O'SULLIVAN'S report on the Croydon Inquiry (Vol. 7, no. 16) is going to be a most valuable text — certainly until the next PPG16 appeal and probably after that. Its appearance was particularly apposite in that it coincided almost precisely with the 'PARIS Conference at the Museum of London: PARIS, by way of anticlimax, stands for Preservation of Archaeological Remains in Situ. It was a good conference but, alas, it provided little evidence of our ability to preserve archaeological remains beneath developments. In many cases, it would seem that the only certain way to preserve *in situ* would be by abandoning proposals to develop. The Paris conference did provide evidence that attempts to preserve *in situ* on development sites was likely to be expensive as well as uncertain.

Curiously, both the Croydon Inquiry and the PARIS conference paid little attention to the difficulty of protecting archaeological remains during actual construction works — surely a crucial aspect in the Croydon case and many others. At Croydon both the Inspector and English Heritage seem to have been happy to let the shallow, fragile grave deposits take their chance beneath standard construction site metal mesh decking.

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Saxon Tothill

THE SPRING ISSUE contains an interesting article on Tothill Street. I find it difficult however to follow the map on p. 432. The road running past the Abbey towards the river is Victoria St.; Tothill Street joins this street from the north. I take it that the position of Tothill is at the bend in Horseferry Road: a long way from Tothill St. — over 1/4 mile.

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The author tells me that Tothill Street was laid out in part of an area formerly known as Tothill Fields, which also included the site of Tothill itself — editor.