Two Celtic Names: Catlowdy and Wampool

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Cumbria has more Celtic toponyms than anywhere in England except Cornwall. They include names of rivers (Derwent, Kent, Mite), hills (Blencathra, Helvellyn), towns (Carlisle, Penrith), and villages (Blencogo, Cardew, Lamplugh, Penruddock), together giving a distinctive aspect to Cumbrian identity. Although the forms are discussed in the English Place-Name Society's surveys for Cumberland (1950-2) and Westmorland (1967), problems remain. Hence these notes on Catlowdy in the north of the county and Wampool in its north-west.

Catlowdy

Catlowdy is a farm (NY 4576) in the parish of Nicholforest, east of Liddesdale, 13 miles north of Carlisle and just over a mile from Scotland. It is recorded in 1275 as *Kackledy*, between 1509 and 1547 as *Catlody*, and in the 17th and 18th centuries as *Catlowthy* and *Catlowdy*. This has been taken as referring to a stream, the first element meaning "dung, filth", the second "lady", the whole meaning "dirty lady", that is, "dirty stream".[1]

But such an etymology has no parallel in English; and Catlowdy is not on a stream. The form is surely not English but Cumbric, as with nearby Carwinley (NY 4072), equivalent to Welsh *Caer Wenddoleu* "Gwenddolau's fortress" (associated with legends of Merlin), or Spadeadam (NY 5870), from the Cumbric cognate of Middle Welsh *Sbaddaden* "little hawthorn".[2] That allows a likelier derivation. The first element will correspond to Welsh *cad* "battle", the second to Welsh *glowty* "cattle-shed, byre" (still current in Dyfed and Glamorgan dialect) and its Cornish cognate *glawjy* "shed". Welsh *cad* "battle" often has intensive force. *Cadnant* means "powerful stream, torrent"; *caterwen* is "great oak, spreading oak (*derwen*)"; a *catperth* is a "great thorn, thorn-brake, thicket". As for Welsh *glowty*, this probably derives through contraction via *gwalowty* from *gwaelod* "bottom, base" plus *ty* "house".[3] So the Cumbrian toponym will mean "big house, great cattle-shed", the latter corresponding to English *byre* at Byers Green and Edmondbyers in County Durham, or dialectal *shippen* at Shippen in the old West Riding and Shippon in Berkshire.

If correct, the explanation has several points of interest. It seems evidence for British settlement and language in the 10th and 11th centuries, after Northumbrian power collapsed and the region was re-occupied by Britons (from Strathclyde). Their Cumbric language died out soon after 1100, but left its mark, even outside Cumbria. A striking example from Yorkshire is *Penyghent* "summit of the pagans" (compare early Welsh *gynt* "pagans; Vikings"). Speakers of Cumbric gave the name to the mountain beyond their frontier with the Viking kingdom of York, where language (and religion) changed abruptly.[4]

Philology apart, the name of Catlowdy may also help envisage the building that stood there. It was perhaps a long house of the kind once common in Celtic Britain and Ireland, with people and livestock under one roof, the animals being in the lower half of the structure, separated originally by a line of stones and later a wall and

passageway.[5] One timber-framed long house of about 1500, formerly at Hendre'r-ywydd Uchaf (SJ 1263) east of Denbigh, survives at the National History Museum, St Fagans.[6]

There is also an Arthurian link. Light on *glowty* is cast by the 11th-century *Mabinogion* tale of Culhwch and Olwen, when the hero Culhwch first greets King Arthur, declaring "Hail, sovereign prince of this Island! Be it no worse unto the lower half of the house (*gwaelawt ty*) than unto the upper", and so on.[7] Use of *gwaelawt ty* in this early text, plus the Cornish cognate *glawjy*, indicate a form going back to the Roman era. There are hence grounds for seeing -*lowdy* as the Cumbric cognate of Welsh *glowty* and Cornish *glawjy*, its *g* lost in combination after the intensive prefix *Cat-*. Such a derivation explains the persistent *o(w)* of *Catlody*, *Catlowthy*, *Catlowdy*. This "great cattle-shed" or "great farm, important farm" would as an agricultural name have an equivalent at Birdoswald (NY 6166), 12 miles south-east, on Hadrian's Wall. The sense there is "Oswald's cow-yard", the first element also being Cumbric (cf. Welsh *buarth* "enclosure for milking cows; farmyard"), while *Oswald* itself is English.

Cumbria was eventually reclaimed for England by William Rufus in 1092, after the kings of Strathclyde had held it for two centuries. Catlowdy may thereby provide evidence for the period before 1092, with few surviving records. The translation "big farm, great cattle-shed" implies that it was not an out-farm but the centre of a British estate or manor, and so of some local importance. From the equivalents described in Welsh law-tracts, we can deduce something of the renders and food-rents that it would supply, and its implications for early landscape in a remote part of Cumbria.[8] It should in any case not be related to a stream-name, or words for dung or "lady".

Wampool

The Wampool flows 16 miles from the Caldbeck Fells, crossing the coastal plain to meet the Solway's tidal flats and then (north of Grune Point) the open sea. On its way it passes the hamlet of Wampool (NY 2454). It is *poll Waðoen* in Gospatrick's Writ of about 1060, *Wathenpol* in 1292, and *Wathelpol* in 1307. Despite taking *Waðoen* as Old Norse *vaðill* "ford", Ekwall noted that in Gospatrick's Writ the two elements are in Celtic order (as with Kirkbride "St Bridget's church", a village passed by the Wampool).[9] Yet Norse *vaðill* cannot be original. It does not account for "n" in the oldest attestations. The form will be purely Celtic. As regards meaning, the English Place-Name Society states "Partially obscure", but gives *pol* as either Irish for "pool, stream" or Cumbric for "pool, creek".[10]

Fresh analysis may assist us. Welsh *gwadn* means "sole (of the foot or shoe)", as in the 12th century *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, which describe shoes of fine cordwain with gold-leafed buckles, ordinary leather being used for the soles (*guadneu*) only. But it also means "foundation, basis, groundwork, bottom, base, pedestal", and has a dialectal plural *gwandde* and variants *gwaddan* or (in South Wales) *gwaddon*, where *dd* has the "th" sound of English *this*. The non-standard form occurs in place-names, including *Maesygwandde* (SN 7736) "field of the foundations", north of Llandovery, Carmarthenshire.[11]

Welsh *gwadn* "sole; foundation" and *gwaddon*, plus the cognates *goden* in Old Cornish and *guodon* in Old Breton, help with *poll Waðoen*. The form will be Cumbric (not Irish) and mean "pool of (the) foundation", just as *Pwllheli* on the Gwynedd coast is "pool of salt water". Failure to show *gw-* is not problematic. Initial *gw-*, developing in Welsh and its immediate cognates from the late 8th century onwards, long remained difficult for English-speakers. Gospatrick's Writ itself shows this by *wassenas* "retainers", with a first element from the Cumbric equivalent of Welsh *gwas* "boy, lad; servant; vassal".[12] The point is confirmed by Cumbric toponyms in Scotland and Cumbria, where *Gw-* seems unknown, or the name of Gospatrick ("servant of [St] Patrick") himself, with *Gos-* for original *Gwas-* in his name.

If *poll Waðoen* means "pool of (the) foundation", it has archaeological implications. The analogy of Welsh *gwandde* "foundations" indicates a ruin, perhaps the Roman one at nearby Kirkbride, rather than the hamlet of Wampool itself. There are analogies for *Waðoen* and *Wathen-* as "foundation". In Lancashire is the region of Makerfield, denoting Ashton-in-Makerfield near St Helens. It relates to Welsh *magwyr* "wall, (dry) stone wall, fortification, bulwark, ruin" (possibly Roman remains at Wigan), itself a borrowing from Latin *maceria* "wall of soft clay; enclosure, wall".[13] The same element occurs in Old Breton *Macoer*, as also *Maker* (facing Plymouth) and *Magor* (near Camborne) in Cornwall, or *Abermagwr*, *Y Fagwyr*, *Fagwyr-Wen*, and *Magwyr* or *Magor* (ST 4287) "ruin" in Wales, the last by the Monmouthshire marshes and perhaps signifying remains of a villa.[14] The form will in any case hardly go back to pre-English times, before the Northumbrians annexed the region in the 7th century. It will be due rather to occupation of Cumbria by Cumbric-speaking Strathclyders in the years about 900, when a language similar to Welsh was spoken from the Clyde to the Eden.[15]

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Notes

1. V. E. Watts, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Cambridge, 2004), 120.
2. Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze, *Celtic Voices, English Places* (Stamford, 2000), 282, 284.
3. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950-2002), 374, 1410.
4. Andrew Breeze, 'Three Celtic Toponyms: Setantii, Blencathra, and Pen-y-Ghent', *NH*, xliii (2006), 161-5.
5. S. Applebaum, 'Roman Britain', in H. P. R. Finberg, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: AD 43-1042* (Cambridge, 1972), 1-277, at 146-8.
6. I. C. Peate, *Welsh Folk Museum, St Fagans: Handbook* (Cardiff, 1970), 24, 26, 29.
7. Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans, eds., *Culhwch and Olwen* (Cardiff, 1992), 6.
8. T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350-1064* (Oxford, 2013), 282-92.
9. Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1936), 472.
10. V. E. Watts, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Cambridge, 2004), 649.
11. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, 1542-3.
12. Tim Clarkson, *Strathclyde and the Anglo-Saxons in the Viking Age* (Edinburgh, 2014), 154-60.
13. Eilert Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922), 93-4.
14. H. W. Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandyssul, 2007), 309.
15. Alan G. James, 'A Cumbric Diaspora?', in O. J. Padel and D. N. Parsons, eds., *A Commodity of Good Names* (Donington, 2008), 187-203.