

## Tideswell and Tideslow.

By T. N. BRUSHFIELD, M.D., F.S.A.



ANYTHING which tends to throw light on the origin of place—and of personal—names, must always be acceptable to the philologist as well as to the antiquary. Very recently the pages of *Notes and Queries* have contained a series of articles respecting the etymology of the names Tideswell and Tidslow or Tideslow. The principal contributors were Mr. S. O. Addy, Professor Skeat, and myself, *vide* 9th S. xij. 341, and continued to 10th S. j. 371, to which the references in the text relate. As the subject is one of much local interest, no excuse need be made for the present article; it will, however, be necessary to reiterate some portions of my remarks in that periodical, especially as some important points relating to the archæological side of the question were only briefly noticed.

That Tideswell owed its name to an intermittent spring, termed an ebbing and flowing well, situated within the village, has been the traditional belief in the locality for centuries. That this tradition has continued to the present day, and still remains the current belief, is evident from the following statement of Mr. F. Davis, in *The Etymology of Derbyshire Place-Names*, printed in the *Journal* of this Society (vol. II. (1880), p. 65): "Tideswell . . . the tidal or ebbing and flowing well. The well from which Tideswell received its name has ceased to ebb and flow [for] about two centuries." Also from the 'Ebbing and Flowing Well,' situated in the 'Town Head' of the village, being recorded in the Ordnance Map of the district.

The earliest reference to this peculiar feature of the well yet found recorded, is that made by T. Risdon, in his *Survey of Devon*, for which he collected the materials between the years 1605 and 1630, although the work was not printed until 1714. The parish of East Budleigh in that county was originally one of the royal manors (Domesday), but in the twelfth century it was divided into five sub-manors, of which a place called Tidwell was one, and of this Risdon remarks: "Here is a pond or pool maintained by springs, which continually welm and boil up, not unlike that wonderful well in Darbyshire which ebbeth and floweth by just Tides, and hath given name to Tideswell, a Market Town of no mean Account." (II. 83-4.)

Of this sub-manor the Rev. Dr. Oliver notes, "Tideswell, *i.e.*, Tide-well."\* This alone disproves the assertion made by Mr. Addy, that "the story about the tides of an ebbing well appears to have been invented by Charles Cotton," born in 1630 (10th j. 92).

The Tideswell spring is thus alluded to by J. Martin in his account of *A Journey to the Peak of Derbyshire*, printed in the *Philosophical Transactions* of 1729, who says: "An ebbing and flowing well is far from being regular, as some have pretended. It is very seldom seen by the neighbours themselves; and, for my part, I waited a good while to no purpose. And so I shall pass it over in silence" (25).

In *The Natural History of England* (1759-63), by B. Martin, is this notice: "What renders this place (Tideswell) most remarkable, and from whence it takes its name, is a Spring or Well that ebbs and flows" (ii., 234). Some authors have confused this intermitting spring with one in the vicinity of Barmoor Clough, often termed the "Sparrow Pit ebbing and flowing well," situated from  $5\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 miles from Tideswell, on the side of the road leading to Chapel-en-le-Frith. It is the one recorded by T. Hobbes (1588-1679) in his *De Mirabilis Pecci*, published in 1636 (in Latin—an English translation was issued

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\* *Monasticon Diœc. Exon.* 1846, 252.

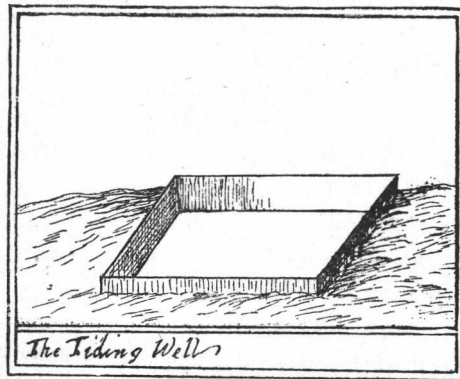
in 1678); and also by Charles Cotton (1630-1687) in *The Wonders of the Peake* (1681). The account in the latter is copied in Cox's *Magna Britannia* (1720), j., 430; also in Macky's *Journey Through England* (1724), ij., 192, but in each instance the quotation commences, "Near Tide's Wall," words not to be found in the original, where the first line runs, "North-east from hence (Buxton) three Peakish miles at least."

In maps of the seventeenth century it is termed "Weeding," or "Wedging Well"; and in the one by Morden, in Camden's *Britannia* (1695), it is lettered "Wedding Well." This name disappears in the next century, and in the works of Pilkington (1789) and of Rhodes (1824) it is designated "Ebbing and Flowing Well."

Pilkington is the most trustworthy writer on the subject, having visited both places, as recorded in his *View of Derbyshire* (1789). In this he reports the well at Barmoor Clough to be wholly dependent on the rainfall, and as ceasing to flow for three weeks or a month in dry weather. At its best it formed "a stream nearly large enough to turn the overshot wheel of a corn mill." He adds: "There was formerly a spring of this kind at Tideswell likewise; but it has now ceased to flow, and the place where the well is situated is scarcely known. . . . I was informed that the well, which is now closed up, might be easily restored to its ancient state" (ij. 250-3).

The account of Tideswell in A. Jewitt's *History of Buxton* (1811) contains this paragraph: "The well, of which so much has been said by old authors, and which is supposed to have given name to the town, is now nearly choked up with weeds and rubbish" (188). He also describes the one at Barmoor Clough, and "felt hurt to find so great a curiosity in so uncleanly and neglected a state" (170). A few years later Rhodes (1824) thus alludes to that at Tideswell: "The spot where the well once was is still pointed out to the traveller who enquires for it, but it is now choked up, and its ebbings and flowings have long since terminated" (74). During the

present autumn, accompanied by the vicar, the Rev. J. M. J. Fletcher, I visited the site of the well, situated in a private garden attached to "Craven House," on the right-hand side of the Manchester road. It consists of a square opening formed of brick, sunk several feet below the ground level, with a sloping bank towards it on each side. It was put into its present satisfactory condition some years since, within the memory of an old inhabitant, after having been in a greatly neglected state for a long period. A remarkable corroboration of the tradition asserting its intermitting character, and which appears



Reproduced from Saxton's map.

to have escaped the notice of modern writers, remains to be told. The seventeenth-century map of Saxton, "amended by P. Lea," contains three Derbyshire illustrations, and of these one is entitled "The Tiding Well." As shown in the accompanying *fac-simile*, it bears a singularly close resemblance to the existing well-opening, which has been built, as it were, on the same lines, that of the Barmoor Clough example being entirely different.

The spring at Tideswell continues to act as an ordinary well, except in dry seasons, having long since lost its ebbing and flowing peculiarity. Judging from the description given by

Hobbes, as well as that by Cotton, the volume of water yielded by the well at Barmoor Clough is now much less than formerly.

As far as I have been able to learn, the ancient and current tradition that a well, yet existing at Tideswell, formerly possessed tidal or intermitting properties, which gave the name to the place, has never been called in question until the appearance of an article by Mr. S. O. Addy, entitled "Tideswell and Tideslow," that was published in *Notes and Queries* of October 31st, 1903. In this, without making any reference to the old tradition, he advocated the philological origin of these place-names. In his opinion, the prefix *Tides* represents a personal name, *Tid*; and the affix *well* or *wall* "has nothing to do with a brook or spring of water," but is based on the Old Norse *völlr*, with "some such meaning as farm or enclosure" (9th xij., 341). In evidence of this he lays great stress on the circumstance that *wall* is so frequently found as a suffix to place-names, and "seems in many cases . . . to be . . . a field or paddock." He cites "Tiddeswall and Bradwall," noted in Speed's map of 1610, as examples; but had he examined the alphabetical list on the back of that map, he would have found these places named as "Tideswell" and "Bradwell" (10th j. 92). Sir Henry Bemrose has kindly furnished me with a long list of variations in the manner of spelling the name, taken from early records, parish registers, maps, books, etc., extending from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, and showing that in the thirteenth the word almost invariably ends in *well*, and in this respect is similar to the "Tidesuelle" of the Domesday Book. In the seventeenth, *wall* was a common termination, but from the latter part of the eighteenth there has been a general reversion to the original *well*. The variations for the most part were probably due to the carelessness of map-makers, and especially to their practice of copying the place-names from the works of their predecessors, without any enquiry as to their correctness. "Tiddeswall" appears in Saxton's map of 1579, and the spelling remained unchanged in all maps up to the middle of the next century. Moreover,

according to Professor Skeat, "the Old Norse *völlr* is not represented in English by *-well*, but by *-wall*" (10th j., 91). From all this it is fairly evident that Mr. Addy's explanation of the affix *well* or *wall* is not correct.

Again, Mr. Addy affirms that "the present pronunciation of Tideswell (drawling out the "i") is owing to a false etymology which has been circulated in guide-books"; and adds, "It has been connected with the *tide* of an ebbing well," as though the pronunciation had suggested the tradition (9th xij., 341). But surely the word was pronounced with a long "i" previous to the era of guide-books. Was the Domesday "Tidesuuelle" pronounced Tideswell or Tidswell? The spelling suggests the former. Both as a place—and as a personal—name it is recorded as "Tydeswell" in documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.\*

Professor Skeat considers the prefix *Tides* to represent the name of a man called Tidi or Tide, *Tides* being the genitive case, and the entire word denoting "Tidi's well." Also, that "the Anglo-Saxon for 'intermittent well' might have been *tid-well*—i.e., tide-well; but it could not possibly have been *tides-well*" (9th j., 91). Further, "We can here only explain the actual presence of an "s" that is really pronounced by the supposition that it has *always* been pronounced" (10th j., 317).

Mr. W. de Gray Birch states: "Many of the names of persons and of places, no doubt, have been written down by the Norman scribes incorrectly, perhaps following a phonetic and arbitrary, rather than any etymological rule.† And Professor Skeat remarks, "We must not trust the spellings of Domesday Book over much. After all, the scribes were Normans, and they often made a sad hash of Anglo-Saxon" (10th j., 229). That their transcription of Anglo-Saxon place-names was not altogether trustworthy, the following illustrations will sufficiently exemplify. In the Exchequer Domesday Book (Devonshire) we find recorded "Chisewic" and "Potsforde," and these in the

\* Vols. v., viii., xiv. (Index) of this *Journal*.

† Domesday Book, (1887,) 125.

Exeter Domesday appear as "Clisewic" and "Poteforda." Some important variations will be found occasionally in the same document; thus in the *Inquisitio Geldi* we find "Dippeforda" and "Dippesforda."

Must we regard the presence of an "s" in the middle of a place-name as the invariable sign of the genitive case? If so, it is remarkable that two of the examples just noted should respectively show both its omission and its retention, the "s" being in either case omitted in the modern name. Another example occurs in "Titesle" (Cheshire), now known as Titley. Other Domesday words exhibit no sign of the genitive, and yet the modern forms have the "s" inserted; thus "Hirletun," "Wibaldelai" (Cheshire), and "Steintune" (Derbyshire) are now represented by Hurleston, Wimbaldsley, and Stenson. According to Professor Skeat, the presence of the *es* as the genitive case in the place-name under notice marks the essential difference between "Tidi's well" and the "well of the tides," the former being the philological and the latter the traditional form. But Southsworth, in the county of Devon, is written in the will of King Alfred himself, *Sutheswyrthe*. Here we have the *es* dividing the two words, as in Tideswell, and if the one is to be the well of someone called Tide, then the other ought to be the worth of someone called South. Surely this is my case, for if *Sutheswyrthe* is the southern worth, so *Tidesuuelle* is the tidal well. Again, in a charter of Edward the Confessor, Nettleswell in Essex is spelt *Nethleswelle*. According to Professor Skeat's argument, this must be the well of someone named Nethli or Nethle; but as the Anglo-Saxon for the common nettle was *netele*, I prefer to associate the well with the weed and to call it Nettleswell. The natives, too, call it Nettleswell, just as Derbyshire folk speak of Tideswell. The two words are too much alike in spelling and in meaning to admit of any etymological distinctions. After due consideration of these various points, the suggestion that the *s*, whether or not the sign of the genitive, may have been an accidental interpolation, seems to be a very natural one. Nor

do I think that an old antiquary (who makes no pretence to an intimate knowledge of philology) was in any way unreasonable, or that he displayed "a shameless and unpardonable meddlesomeness" in making such a suggestion. It seemed scarcely right that a tradition which had remained unquestioned for so long a period should be ruthlessly sacrificed by the hasty adoption of a new philological explanation, however plausible it might at first sight appear, and especially as the Anglo-Saxon name has descended to us through the acknowledged untrustworthy channel of a Norman scribe.

We pass on to consider the origin of the place-name Tidslow or Tideslow, the latter being the form in general use. The low or funeral tumulus (entered in the Ordnance map as "Tides Low. Human Remains found.") is situated on the top of a high eminence about a mile from the village, whence a very extensive view of the surrounding country is obtained. It is situated on the south-east side of a series of mounds due to mining operations, from which a wide mine-rake ("Tideslow rake") descends to the road leading to the village.

Many of the Derbyshire lows are named from the villages in their vicinity, such as Fairfield, Chelmorton, Calver, etc.; and there is fair reason to believe that the original and proper name of the one under notice was Tideswell-low or top, and as "Tideswell Top" it appears in *Peak Scenery*, by E. Rhodes (1824), p. 72. Now, from time immemorial the village has always been known to the inhabitants of that part of Derbyshire as "Tidsa" or "Tidsor." In a letter of W. Darbyshire, of the year 1660, preserved in the Bodleian Library, it is written "Tidsald" (Ashmol. MS., DCCCXXVI., fol. 239); and C. P. Moritz, a Prussian clergyman, who visited the place in 1782, records that its "name is, by a singular abbreviation, pronounced 'Tidse'" (*Travels in England*, ed. 1887, 149). My friend, Mr. A. Wallis, a native of the county, and for many years editor of the *Derby Mercury*, who was well acquainted with the locality fifty years since, informs me the low was then locally known as "Tidsor Topping."



According to Professor Skeat, "place-names are best preserved when they are left to the keeping of the illiterate, who speak naturally, and are not ambitious to be always inventing new theories" (10th j., 317). But there is always a tendency for the inhabitants of a locality, especially of a rural one, to abbreviate both the spelling as well as the pronunciation of place-names; thus, Wāverton (Cheshire) and Wāvertree (Lancashire) are customarily and respectively termed Wārton and Wārtree; and nearer home, Idridgehay was always known as Ithesa; so, in like manner, Tideswell becomes shortened to Tidsa.

As far as has yet been ascertained, our earliest knowledge of the low under notice being known by any especial name is noted in a map of the county, contained in Pilkington's *Derbyshire*, in 1782 (reproduced from one published by P. Burdett in 1767), in which it is termed "Tidslow top." By what authority the name has been changed to "Tideslow" in recent maps is unknown, but may probably have been the work of map-makers, who have many sins of this kind to answer for. From the original name "Tideswell low," or the local "Tidsa low," it was easy for a map-maker to abbreviate it to "Tidslow," the form given in Burdett's map. The change was not warranted by any evidence, but apparently was made for it to agree with "Tideswell."

Professor Skeat asserts: "It is surely obvious that Tideswelle can only mean 'Tidi's well'; and Tides-low—Anglo-Saxon, *Tides-hlāw*—can only mean 'Tidi's burial-mound'" (10th j., 91). Now, even if the former be correct, it by no means follows that the latter is equally so, especially as the age of the low is thus limited by him: "The mound may be as old as the eighth century, or even earlier" (10th j., 91). When the matter comes to be fully investigated, grave doubts must again be necessarily cast on the Professor's interpretation.

On purely philological grounds he gives a lucid explanation of his view of the meaning of both place-names. Mr. Addy, on the contrary, does not attempt this, but simply asserts:

“One can hardly doubt that Tideslow is the sepulchre of Tid,” and “contains an Englishman’s name” (9th xij., 341)—the personal, tribal, or family one, Tid, Tida, or Tidi. To this further allusion will be made. With the knowledge that “human remains,” according to the Ordnance map, were discovered in the low, one fails to understand why he or some other person interested in the subject did not make some local enquiries, or examine some of the leading works on the topography of Derbyshire, to ascertain whether any definite information as to its contents was obtainable, more especially considering Mr. Addy’s remark, “It would be of great interest to know what were the contents of the tomb” (9th j., 341). He suggested the low might have been opened by lead-miners, probably on the same principle that actuated the tanners to explore many of the barrows on Dartmoor—viz., in the hope of finding buried treasure. Had he gone a step further, and made such diligent enquiry as would have tended to throw some light on the age of the tumulus, as shown by its contents, his opinion, or rather assertion, as well as that of Professor Skeat, would in all probability have been considerably modified. Rhodes, the author of *Peak Scenery*, who visited the place in 1813, and again a few years later, but prior to the publication of his work in 1824, records the following: “From Wheston, a short walk of about a mile brought us to an eminence called Tideswell Top, a place that curiosity had very recently opened for the purpose of ascertaining its contents. It was a tumulus composed of a series of narrow caverns, formed with stones and earth, in which several skulls and many human bones were found. There is something unseemly, if not unfeeling, in thus disturbing the relics of the dead, and leaving them to bleach in the sun, or be preyed on and gnawed by animals. Some of the bones had been carried away, but many remained unburied, and lay scattered about that earth-built sepulchre, which those who consigned them to it vainly hoped might have ‘canopied them until doomsday’” (72).

Anyone who is practically acquainted with the contents of prehistoric tumuli, will at once recognise from this description that the interment belonged to the early Neolithic period, thus graphically described by the greatest living authority on the subject, Professor Boyd Dawkins, in his *Early Man in Britain*: "The Neolithic tribes in Britain buried their dead sometimes in caves which had previously been used by them for dwellings, and sometimes in chambered tombs, which probably represent the huts of the living. Each of these was generally used as a vault common to the family or tribe, and contained skeletons of all ages. The interments are shown to have been successive and not simultaneous, from the bones being in various stages of decay, as well as from the fact that the bodies could not have been crowded together in the space in which the skeletons are found. . . . The more important contain a stone chamber built of slabs of stone set on edge, and very frequently with a narrow passage leading into it, which was also used for interments after the chamber was filled" (284).

Mr. Bateman examined several tumuli of this class on Bake-well and Brassington Moors, at Minninglow, and at Five Wells, Taddington. Of the last-named there are detailed accounts in his *Vestiges, &c.* (1848), 91; in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vii. (1852), 210, with an illustration from a drawing of mine; and in *The Reliquary* of October, 1901. The large number of bones found at Tideslow indicates that they were deposited in a chambered mound rather than in a series of separate cists; but whichever may have been the form, the tumulus certainly belonged to the early Stone Age.

Mr. Addy affirms "it is something to know that a man of note called Tid gave his name to Tideswell, and that he received the lasting honour of mound-burial on a hill which overlooks that town" (10th j., 92). As the personal name *Tid* and the funeral mound *low*, forming the compound word Tidslow or Tideslow, are Anglo-Saxon, if "a man of note called Tid" was interred

there, the contents ought to have belonged to that period; but, as already proved, they belonged to the Neolithic instead, between which remote prehistoric period and that of the historic Anglo-Saxon, not only many centuries but the whole of the Bronze Age intervened. Moreover, during the latter period it was very rare for more than one body to be interred in the same grave or mound.

I expressed my doubts whether in the long list of lows recorded in Mr. Bateman's *Ten Years' Diggings* (1861), 289-297, is contained "a single example of the name of a prehistoric individual"; to which Mr. Addy replied by citing a long array of terms and of personal names of Old Norse or of Anglo-Saxon origin, contained in the prefixes to many lows; but the whole of them belonged to historic times. In a subsequent communication he added a number of others, notwithstanding that the following remarks of mine had already appeared: "The whole tenour of his remarks is beside the question at issue, as all his examples are of the historic as distinguished from the 'prehistoric' period, to which latter alone, as I distinctly stated, my remarks applied" (10th j., 53, 91, 191, 230).

I scarcely think I could have expressed my opinion in plainer terms. Nevertheless, an entire absence of any reference to the prehistoric age characterizes the whole of Mr. Addy's articles. After a careful consideration of his remarks, the only conclusion as to his meaning at which I can arrive is, that, as the names of many of the barrows in Derbyshire are of Old Norse or of Anglo-Saxon origin, the barrows also must be assigned to one or other of those periods. Some of them undoubtedly are, of which two examples are at Monyash and Brushfield. Others exist at Moot Low, Hurdlow, Gally Low, White Low, etc.; but the greater number of those in the Peak district were raised in Neolithic times. Even those of the Bronze Age are comparatively rare in the same district; and Mr. Bateman had been busily engaged in barrow-opening for two years before he was successful in discovering and

examining one; this was at Brier Low, near Buxton, on May 12, 1845, at which operation I had the pleasure of assisting. That both Mr. Addy and Professor Skeat concur in opinion in assigning Tideslow to the historic (Anglo-Saxon) period, the following quotations will be deemed sufficient proof:—

Mr. Addy: "Tid must have 'died into the hill' long before a church at Tideswell was thought of. Was English spoken here before the sixth century, or do the rude cinerary urns of Derbyshire belong to a later date than that? Some of these *lows* may have been family tombs" (9th xij., 341).

Professor Skeat: "The name *Tidi* occurs in the 'Liber Vitæ of Durham, and again in Beda, but not later. So the mound may be as old as the eighth century, or even earlier" (10th j., 91).

Does not the former lay himself open to much comment when alluding to the "rude cinerary urns"?

These opinions are based on a misconception, that because a tumulus bears an Anglo-Saxon name it must therefore belong to that period; whereas the Anglo-Saxon names of the majority of the lows are of comparatively modern date (historic) as compared with the period of their original construction (prehistoric).

Then comes this important question: Is it probable or possible that any personal, tribal, or family name has been perpetuated, or has descended to us, through the long period that has elapsed between the Neolithic, the Bronze, and the Iron Ages, and that of the Historic? To this a decided and final negative must be given.

The science of philology has undoubtedly made great strides during the last few years, and no one appreciates the labours of Professor Skeat in this direction more than I do, but from their very nature such labours must, in a great measure, be limited to the historic period; but it seems to me that we must wait for future developments before it can throw much or any light on matters relating to the domain of Prehistoric Archæology.

Whether Tideswell signifies Tides-well (the well of the Tide or Tides) or the well of Tid, is a moot point; yet I see no reason to abandon the old tradition until all possible fallacies have been first eliminated. But whatever may be the correct explanation, there is no basis of fact upon which to rest the belief that Tideslow was the burial place of Tid. Such a belief involves a singular anachronism in the attempt made to explain the interment in a Neolithic tumulus by assigning it to one of the Anglo-Saxon race.

I have no pet theories to nurse or to perpetuate; all I care about is to elicit the truth, whether the view I have temperately expressed be the correct one or not. In these circumstances a writer seems to be entitled to common civility, even from his opponents, and ought not to be made the subject of uncourteous remarks at the hands of those whose position in the world of letters and experience in controversy, should teach them to act towards honest enquirers in a more liberal spirit.

EDITORIAL NOTE.—The last paragraph in Dr. Brushfield's paper calls for a little explanation. In the argument which ran its course through the pages of *Notes and Queries* the tone of Dr. Brushfield was most courteous and mellow throughout, but that of Professor Skeat raises the serious question as to how far the logic of abuse is to be permitted to pass without criticism. The following is an example of his style of academic debate:—

“In cases where place-names have been wilfully perverted, it has generally been done by force of a popular etymology that tries to give a new meaning to a word. The worst instances of this character are not those due to unlearned people, but to the shameless and unpardonable meddlesomeness of those who ought to know better, and who imagine they know what is correct, when they are all the while in the blindest ignorance. Place-names are best preserved when they are left in the keeping of the illiterate, who speak naturally and are not ambitious to be always inventing theories.”—*Notes and Queries*, April 16th, 1904.

It is no excuse to say that a weak case may require bolstering with strong language, for if manners make the man, how much more do they make the argument. Of late years there seems to have arisen in the minds of some writers to our scientific journals a dominant idea that the public will welcome as clever, language which they and their friends would not tolerate in their private and social life. They do not flatter their readers. Horace Walpole used to say: "When people wade beyond their sphere, they make egregious blunders"; when, therefore, Professor Skeat points his philological argument against the generally accepted belief of archæologists, in such contumelious terms as the above, one is tempted to reply in the words of the great Milton:—

"Though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them as well as his words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man as any yeoman competently wise in his mother dialect only."

W. J. ANDREW.

*A very good & sensible  
article  
R. G.*