NOMINA

A Journal of Name Studies Relating to Great Britain and Ireland

Volume 8

1984

Editor
Peter McClure

Assistant Editor (English place-names) and Reviews Editor
Alexander Rumble

Assistant Editor (Celtic names)
O.J. Padel

ISSN 0141 6340 © NOMINA 1985
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In the latest number of the Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society, 1981-2, the editor, Deirdre Flanagan, published an obituary of G. B. Adams, a member of the Ulster Place-Name Society and of this Council, who died in 1981. It is sad that Deirdre's own obituary appears so soon afterwards. The Council has lost a valued member, but some of the Council have lost a cherished friend.

My acquaintance with Deirdre spanned back thirty years, when she came to Galway as a member of the O.U.U. team at an intercollege debate. I can still remember how she brought music into the traditionally harsh challenge of Irish Irish.

Deirdre was a Belfast girl whose mother tongue was Donegal Irish. She read Celtic in O.U.U., stayed on as a research scholar and later became lecturer in the Department of Celtic. She worked under four departmental heads in her day, M. A. O'Brien, Seita Mac Airt, Heitrich Wagner, Gerhard Stockman, all of whom had some interest in place-names, particularly Mac Airt.

Deirdre and Seita Mac Airt were among the founders of the Ulster Place-Name Society, and they collaborated in editing lists of names from the Ordnance Survey field name books for Co. Antrim. The lists appeared in volumes 1-3 of the Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society during the years 1962-4. Mac Airt edited the journal over the first six issues, but it lapsed after his untimely death in 1958. A second series of the Bulletin began publication in 1974. The editor was Deirdre Flanagan, and as a member of the Colindale Logiannachach (place-names commission), she was able to work in close collaboration with the late Eamonn de Mór and afterwards with the present director, Art Ó Monabháin. Deirdre brought tremendous enthusiasm to her work as editor of the Bulletin, but it was no light task for one who, in addition to her teaching duties, had now three little girls to rear, while her health was never too robust.

Deirdre's work on place-names is well-known to all members of this Council. Much of it deals with the names on a basis of research in Irish ecclesiastical history, and a long list of publications testifies to her ability. She was undoubtedly the foremost contemporary scholar in Ireland in the particular field of names and church history. She was also the leader in a line of scholars who attracted attention by their work in toponymy, in the province of Ulster.

Interest in the subject was first aroused, almost certainly, by John O'Donovan, from Co. Kilkenny, a well-known historian and topographer, who was Professor of Celtic in Queen's College, Belfast, 1844-61. Of special importance for the study of Irish place-names was O'Donovan's work, much of it carried out under arduous conditions, as Archdeacon O'Donovan, in the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, from about 1835 to 1845. He bore the responsibility of determining the name forms of all places on the new maps. Most of the results of his work have been published, some from government sources, in the 1851 edition of the Townland Index, and in a re-arrangement by P. W. Joyce in the three volumes of his Irish Names of Places, over the years 1887-1911. Part of the remainder was published, county by county, in a limited typewritten distribution, by Michael O'Flanagan, about 1930. The rest has been available for some years on microfilm only, in the National Library of Ireland. It may be recalled that O'Donovan's son, a well-known correspondent for the Times, called O'Donovan Peter, was killed in Khartoum with General Gordon, one hundred years ago exactly.

A gifted contemporary of O'Donovan's was William Reeves, from Charleville...
on the Limerick-Cork border, and the two were good friends. Reeves spent many years as a curator in parishes in Ulster, before being appointed Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore in 1886. He was known internationally for his numerous publications on Irish ecclesiastical history and topography. This was the period when some remarkable scholars, from Ireland and the Continent, were beginning to investigate the valuable material in libraries from Ireland to Italy, previously previously unaccounted, dealing with Irish language and literature. O’Donovan and Reeves had some share in these investigations.

It is fitting to name Deirdre Flanagan as a worthy successor to the line of scholars referred to above, who were associated with Queen’s and the Belfast area of Ulster. These scholars did pioneer work in onomastic studies over the past hundred years, and Deirdre adds her share to the achievements of her predecessors. All members of the Council are in a position to appreciate it.

And now, in Deirdre’s own language, Go Maithe Dia rabhacht! "may God be good to her."

T. S. Ó MÜLLE

J. E. B. GOVER

J. E. B. Gover’s association with the English Place-Name Society began in the 1930s and lasted, in one form or another, until his death in May 1984. He took up the study as an amateur, and the Preface to The Place-Names of Worcestershire, dated 1927, pays tribute to the use the editors were allowed to make of his extensive collections from manuscript sources for Cornwall, Devon, Middlesex and Surrey. After this he was employed by the Society, and the Preface to The Place-Names of Sussex, dated 1928, records that the editor had "for the first time the full advantage of his "sub-editorial" services. His name appears, together with those of Sir Albert Mawer and Sir Frank Bentley, on the title-pages of Vols VI-VIII, except for Vols XII and XIV which are the work of P. H. Rosene and A. H. Smith. The extraordinary rate of production achieved by the society during these years must have been due in large measure to his efforts.

Mr Gover left the Society’s employment during the Second World War, and from then until retirement he worked as a civil servant. He maintained his place-name interests by serving on the Council of the Society, latterly as Vice-President, and by supplying information to county editors from his collections of material. When I was working on the Berkshire survey I was very glad to be able to consult him about names in Hampshire.

Mr Gover’s particular area of expertise was Old Cornish, and his typoscript on Cornish place-names has been used by a number of scholars. In the Preface to the fourth edition of The Commissions Decimal Dictionary of English Place-Names Professor Elwes wrote: ‘For the articles on Cornish names invaluable help had been derived from Mr Gover’s great manuscript survey.’ More recently it has been used by the EPNS editor for Cornwall, Oliver Purlie, who tells me that he is particularly sorry that Mr Gover did not live to see the first EPNS publication for that county, which is now in press.

MARGARET GELLING

THE SIXTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL

FOR NAME STUDIES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

1984

The Sixteenth Annual Conference was held at Crombie Hall, University of Aberdeen, from Friday, March 31st to Monday, April 3rd 1984 by Kind invitation of visiting Professor W. P. H. Nicholson, who organised a fine programme. After a warm welcome from Professor Charles Chadwick, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Aberdeen, conference opened with a paper from Professor G. W. S. Barrow on ‘Place-names and the Scottish medieval historian’. On the morning of March 31st, papers were read by Mrs Dorothy Waugh on ‘Classless place-names’, Professor Brian O’ Cofa on ‘The mobility of G Céife in Ireland and Scotland: a look at the source’, Dr Alexander Runje on ‘The names of written forms in English ornamental’, and Mr Arthur Owen on ‘Terminological waste and errors: how same names and spelt names medieval charmers can help each other’. The afternoon was devoted to a series of talks on the Upper Deeside Project: speakers included Dr Adam Wason, Mrs Elizabeth Allan, Mr Donald MacAskill, Mr John Smith, Mr Derrick McClure, and Mr Ian Fraser. On Sunday morning Mr Peter Kinnon spoke on ‘The quantitative study of Old English charter boundaries’ and Dr Gillian Fellows-Jensen on ‘Place-names and settlements: some problems of dating’. In the following pages we are pleased to publish, in revised form, four of the papers and also a report on the Upper Deeside Project.

This was Council’s first visit to Aberdeenshire, and it proved a stimulating one, both in the quality of conference papers and in the bracing atmosphere - a combination of brisk Aberdonshire climate, lively folk entertainment, and an inspiring Sunday afternoon excursion. Adam Watson and Elizabeth Allan took us by coach up Deeside towards Balmoral, and on the way introduced to several of the Project’s informants, who spoke to us about the land and its names. At Ballindalloch we stopped to meet Mr Charlie Wright, until his recent retirement a deer-stalker on the Balmoral Estate. Thence we drove to a loveliness at Rosemarkie where, after taking appropriate spirits and an excellent meal, we were entertained by a magnificent display of Scottish piping from Mr Wright. It was a memorable afternoon and evening to conclude a very successful conference.

PETER MCCLURE