

## OBITUARY

### J.P. OAKDEN M.A., PhD, D.LITT

Dr James Parker Oakden, a senior member of the Council for Name Studies and editor of the English Place-Name Society's Staffordshire survey, died on 13 March 1988. He was born in Whiston, near Leek, and was educated at Leek Grammar School. Under W.J. Sedgfield in Manchester and for a year with Allen Mawer in Liverpool, Oakden was able to develop his interest in the place-names of his native county, earlier encouraged by his grammar-school headmaster, T.C. Warrington.

After a brief spell of school and university teaching in England, Oakden became a lecturer in the English Department of the University of St Andrews in 1931. He was later promoted to a senior lectureship, a post from which he retired in 1969. His collections of early forms of Staffordshire place-names go back to the beginning of his career. As long ago as 1936 his files were being consulted for comparative material, witness the acknowledgement in *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*.

The first volume of the *Place-Names of Staffordshire* appeared in 1984. He delayed the submission of the text for subsequent volumes in order to edit new material which has become available during the past few years from several archives in the Midlands. He was working on this to within a few weeks of his death.

James Oakden will be remembered for his conscientious scholarship, his readiness to seek and accept advice on toponymic matters, and his personal warmth and generous friendship.

JOHN FIELD

## NUGAE DE NOMINIBUS ELIGENDIS

If you, dear readers, were opening a café, or even a caff, would you call it *The Pits*? The mousehole-sharer, when shown (somewhere off the South Circular) just such a sign, opined that the target clientèle must be one whose spiritual home was Brand's Hatch. If you were in the fancy-soap business, would you call your chain of fragrant emporia *The Body Shop* (also a bit redolent of axle-grease)? From the complementary viewpoint, if you were a prudent Petriburgess, with even the haziest recollection of what happened in 1070, how would you feel about patronizing a shopping-centre dedicated to Hereward the Wake? Then there are those juggernauts whose legends set the mind a-boggling, such as *TNT Overnite* (? express delivery service for dyslexic terrorists) and *Gayfreight*.

As our title indicates, this year we're focusing on choices and their motivation. From now on, instead of just spilling our shreds and patches pellmell at your feet, we aim to fashion them into thematic quilts. We still, of course, wish to receive all the fruits of your observation as they ripen; but some will be set aside for a year or two to mature (or ferment). So please go on sending in every *trouvaille*, each triviality that the media may vouchsafe. Fret not that your special treasure be not instantly exhibited; rest assured that it will be stored against the day when its theme gets the spotlight.

### SLD up the creek

The onomastic non-event of 1988 had to be the reeling and writhing – not to say, *post-mortem* convulsions – indulged in by the *disjecta membra* of the erstwhile Misalliance as they strove to devise a poll-worthy appellation:

'The Social and Liberal Democrats voted overwhelmingly to use the name *Democrats* as a short working title; ... but a compromise aimed at averting a potentially damaging split in the party will enable local associations and candidates to continue using other names in their constituencies even though it risks causing further confusion among the electorate. The fear among opponents of the change of name is that without the word *Liberal* they risk losing support in their traditional heartlands. Throughout the emotional debate a succession of former Liberal MPs spoke of the dangers of using the name *Democrats* ...'

'Being *Ernest* in town but *Jack* in the country' has its problems, as a correspondent remarked when suggesting *The Bunbury Party* as an apposite name. Other suggestions included *£.S.D.* and also *The Whigs* (to show that at least they're united against the Tories). The SDP – the amputated appendage – was/were *pari passu* advised to 'rename themselves *The Republicans*, thereby underlining their increasing affinity with the Conservative Party' [*The Times*, 27.ix.88, p.4 – a report worthy of a 19th-cent. satirical novel; also Matthew Parris, *ibidem*, p.24, and letters, 30.ix.88, p.15]. One commentator opened the topic right up:

'Why debate only the name of the party? Why don't members debate their own names as well? For instance, whereas *Ashdown* is splendid, *Paddy* sounds unreliable; I favour *Michael* [but *Michael* = *Mick* = *Paddy*. – S.]'

### UnParliamentary?

The habit of attaching a name (frequently uncomplimentary) to a particular Parliament seems to have ended with the Convention Parliament which proclaimed William and Mary joint sovereigns. Names had ranged from the *Addled* to the *Wondermaking* (sometimes called the *Merciless*), taking in on the way a *Barebones*, a *Dunces*, a *Devil's*, a *Mongrel*, a *Rump*, an *Unlearned*, a *Useless*, and, in Scotland (unsurprisingly), a *Drunkard*. Could not Mrs Thatcher's third administration be called the *Bossyboots Parliament*? [letter