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Three Cornish Place-Names

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1. Two Cornish place-names in the Isles of Scilly

The rocky islets known as Melledgan and Hanague are to be found on the south-western and north-eastern fringes respectively of the Isles of Scilly (in the parishes of St Agnes and St Martin). They are located at OS grid references SV 862064 and SV 958151 (OS 1: 25,000).

Both names have all the appearance of a Cornish language origin. The Cornish language may have still been in use on the Isles of Scilly about 1600, but if so it probably died out during the following century. Thus the evidence of Cornish place-names in the islands may provide a terminus ante quem for otherwise undatable sound-changes in the language. However, it is not impossible that some at least of the Cornish place-names on Scilly (particularly the maritime ones) owe their modern forms to the pronunciations of seafarers from the Cornish mainland speaking Modern (Late) Cornish.

(a) Melledgan

Melledgan (almost always so spelt; also Melidding c.1708 Godstelo and Melledgan 1859 Murray) is probably to be associated with Late Cornish molnadzvon ‘a naked snail’ recorded by Edward Lluyd. Here the spelling -d- is Lluyd’s own (one which was adopted by others writing in Cornish) for the Cornish sound represented by -d-. In modern Melledgan. Like the great majority of modern Cornish place-names this is now spelt in accordance with the orthographical rules of Modern English.


2 e.g. 1693 Collins, 1748 Martyn, 1794 Tovey & Giner, and 1808 Greig & Alexander. For abbreviated sources of place-name forms, see list on pp. 10–11, below.

The Cornish word apparently survived in the English dialect of western Cornwall as *melewidegon* 'slug'. The root can be seen in the Late Cornish plural form *molbuer* 'snails', also recorded by Lhuyd (compare Breton *melc'hraid* 'slugs'). *Molhuizbon* is a singulative form, created by adding the suffix -en to the root (as also in Breton *melc'brεden*). In the Late Cornish forms the original Common Brittonic dental stops are realised medially as /d3/ ('palatalisation'), and finally as /z/ ('assibilation'). Breton is thus more conservative in this respect.

An adjective deriving from the root seen in the name Melledgan presumably survives as Meludgack (reflecting an unrecorded Middle Cornish *melavabegek*, with g representing the palatalised medial stop), the name of a rock off Beagle’s Point in the parish of St Keverne (OS 1:25,000, SW 769164).5

(b) Hanjague

Unlike *Melledgan*, *Hanjague* is not an easy name. Here the lack of any early (Middle Cornish) evidence, and the absence of an obvious etymology, compound the problems presented by the variety which is apparent in the recorded forms: *Hingake* 1693 Collins, 1744 Heath, *Hingack* 1699 Gascoyne, *Hanjake* c. 1708 Gostelo, *Hinjackle* 1748 Martyn, 1794 Tovey & Ginver, (race of) *Hingg* n.d. Tovey, *‘Hanjague*, or the Sugar-Loaf' 1859 Murray. Thomas records two earlier forms — *Ingeak* 1655, and *Hingack* 1680—and states that the modern pronunciation is ‘‘Hanijg’’ or ‘Anijg’ (stress on the second syllable).6

Thomas associates Hanjague with an adjectival derivative of Old Cornish *gwis*, Middle Cornish *gveos* ‘wind’ (Breton *gwenn*; the expected Late Cornish form would be something like *gweindjack*), as found in such place-names as Croft Windjack, and Adjavindjack ‘windy gap’, where the initial g- has regularly been lost by lenition following a feminine noun.

While the location might suit this interpretation, the consistent absence of any reflex of initial /gw/ or /w/ tells against this derivation. If Thomas is right to assume that there has been a shift of stress to the second syllable, then Hanjague looks more like an adjectival derivative (Middle Cornish *hinge* or *hynsk* of the Old Cornish element *binsi* ‘way’ (Breton *ben*; Welsh *hyn*)), which is found in combination in Old Cornish *cambinis* ‘unjust, injurious’ and *eunbis* ‘just’, and survives in later Cornish *cammensyb* ‘injustice’ (sixteenth century).7 Old Cornish *cambinis* apparently survived in the Cornish dialect of English in the form *camdonjack* ‘ugly-looking, mean’. The spelling *Hinjack* in particular looks like a Late Cornish form of such an adjective.8

However, the usual position of the stress in Cornish, and Cornish place-names, is on the penultimate syllable. In this it is exceptionally conservative, and the modern stress noted by Thomas thus tells against a derivation from either *egeos* or *binsi* + *-ek*. In fact, most of the other recorded forms, especially when taken as a whole, tend to suggest that the modern stress is original: (a) the spellings *Ingeak* (with ex for /ei/ or /ei/), *Hingake*, *Hanjake*, *Hanjague*, all point to long vowel quantity in the second syllable; (b) in Cornish place-names the voicing of final /k/, apparent in *Hingg*, and in the modern spelling and pronunciation, is a feature of stressed final syllables—compare Meneage (traditionally pronounced

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5 This particular word may also occur as Bolijack (Landewednack parish), the name of part of Housel Bay. Denasalisation of initial /m/ (or perhaps the erroneous de-lentition of its lenited manifestation /v/) is a common feature of Late Cornish; compare Late Cornish *haz* as against Middle Cornish *mei* ‘but’, and in place-names the numerous instances of Mellingey and Bolingey (various spellings), both meaning ‘mill-house’: O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, vol. 56/57 (Nottingham, 1985), p. 151.
6 Thomas, *Drowned Landscape*, p. 46.
9 It should be noted that the frequency of a given form on maps or charts cannot serve as basis for weighting its value, given the cartographer’s practice of copying this kind of information from earlier surveys. Tovey, for instance, who was Master-Gunner on the islands at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, may have followed Martyn in using the form *Hinjack* on his map, while employing a form he knew at first hand, *Hingg*, in his writings. (This illustration is, of course, conjectural). Conversely, Gascoyne admits to relying on Collins for his map of Scilly, but spells this name differently—but see Thomas, *Drowned Landscape*, p. 57 and n. 31 (p. 296).
/mənˈtɛɪg/, also found compounded in Treveneage and Lesneage, Killeloganoue, Lanzeague, Reskajene, Tregeague and other examples on the Cornish mainland.

(c) In Scilly place-names the adjectival suffix -ek generally shows the usual Late Cornish development to -æk (compare Meludgack, above); for example, the other Eastern islets now known as Great and Little Ganimick are the Keninaaks (‘place of wild garlic’) in 1689 Robyn; similarly the Credinick (close to Bishop Rock) are Great and Little Credinack in 1693 Collins, 1744 Heath, 1794 Tovey & Ginver, and 1808 Greg and Alexander;10

(d) the development of (written) e to a (= [æ]) in an unstressed initial syllable is paralleled in Keninak > Ganimick (see (c) above).

Since either the displacement of stress from a penultimate syllable, or its attachment to a final syllable, would be highly unusual, the examples of Meneage already cited (which is Manalec ‘place of monks’ in 1269), Reskajeage (Roskedieck in 1252) and Lanzeague (Lansiack in 1204) all suggest on every count that the final syllable of Hanjague likewise represents a contraction of two syllables. For this reason we should perhaps regard Thomas’s early (seventeenth-century) form Hengiack as critical, presenting as it does the possibility of a third syllable.11

On the surface Hengiack passes muster as a reflection of an adjectival derivative (Middle Cornish *ben-gy-ek) of Middle Cornish bensy ‘ancient house’. Middle Cornish bensy occurs relatively frequently in place-names (sometimes as bengy), both alone and in name-phrases. The usual modern form is Hungy or -hengy, which may have the significance of ‘ruin’ in a place-name context.12 If we accept

10 The comparative distribution of forms in -isek and those in -asek warrants a separate study. The substitution here of -isek for earlier (Late Cornish) -asek is paralleled on the Cornish mainland, in Tremethick (Madron), for example, which was Tremether in the Ordnance Survey of 1813.

11 But not unequivocally: some late forms for Kenediack, for example, offer parallels to the forms of Hanjague: Keniiggiaack 1589, Caniack 1696, Kenedgack 1859; here, however, the modern stress and the abundance of early (fourteenth-century) forms of the type Kyngiiek, Kyngsieck point to a derivation from Middle Cornish kinyu ‘firewood’ + -yek, a variant of -ek.

12 E. G. Goonhingey (St Gluvas parish; Gwynhney 1342), Hengy (Gunwalloe parish; Heny 1405), Hensfrane (St Stephen in Brannel parish; Hens, Hengyvan, Hengyvan, both mid-14th century).

the existence of an adjectival derivative, a figurative application to a prominent rock like Hanjague is semantically quite plausible.

There remains another possibility. Garland records an English dialectal (West Cornwall) word jan-jeak with the meaning ‘small’.13 Now, the initial h- of a Cornish word surviving as Hanjague in Scilly might easily have assimilated to the j- which introduces the second syllable once the original significance had become opaque in English dialect.14 If Hanjague were ultimately the same word as janjeak, a name meaning ‘small’ might have been given to a rock whose shape rising from the surface of the sea might suggest the creature, as was presumably the case with Melledgan.

The etymology of janjeak is obscure, and it is not easy to associate it with *hengyek semantically. It should, however, be noted that the adjective-forming suffix OCo -ac, MClo -ek, is commonly found in what must originally have been nicknames for small animals, such as Middle Cornish cronék ‘toad’ (literally ‘thick-skinned’; Old Cornish creinoc, Late Cornish krunag, and English dialect cronack), Late Cornish lestek ‘fox’ (literally ‘tailed’) and skywurnak, skowurnak ‘hare’ (literally ‘long-eared’; English dialect skoernik, skowernack; compare Breton skoarnnek).15

In the absence of further evidence we must content ourselves with the assumption of a trisyllabic origin for Hanjague, a potential formal


14 One need only compare the example of the humble bumble bee in English!

15 Formally Hengiack could represent ben ‘old’ + the Cornish word surviving in Late Cornish teacack, yjsxek ‘farmer’ (the first element, Old Cornish ti, Middle Cornish cby ‘house’, being the same as the -y in beny). However, this seems an unlikely compound. Formally, too, an adjectival derivative of Middle Cornish bysny or bensy (kle bensel, Breton bentz) ‘neighbour, fellow’ is equally possible. Middle Cornish bensy or *benye may also be preserved in the otherwise obscure Cornish place-name Jangye-ryn (Gunwalloe parish), with an assimilation of the initial consonant as here suggested for janjeak. Here ryn is apparently cognate with Welsh rhyn, Breton renn ‘point’. If so, the order of the elements in this name is of interest in that it is the reverse of the normal Cornish word order. If the second element is to be associated with rhyn and ryn, then it too must have survived into English dialect to be used in this way (despite being recorded only in place-names), unless ryn is here the qualifier.
identity with an unrecorded Middle Cornish *hengyek ‘ruinous or ruin-like (place)’, and a similarity to dialectal janjesk ‘smail’, the semantic plausibility of which association is enhanced by the example of Melledgan.

Significance
In the case of a defunct language such as Cornish, the evidence of place-names surviving in an externally imposed orthography can be of special value in understanding its historical phonology where its own older orthography is imprecise or ambiguous. The modern spellings of Cornish-language place-names generally reflect an attempt by speakers of English to render the phonological system of (Late) Cornish using a modern English system of orthography.

The etymologies which have been suggested for Melledgan and Hanjague bear on the innovation in Cornish phonology which most clearly distinguishes it from its sister languages, Breton and Welsh, and which remains the most controversial aspect of Cornish linguistics. As I have illustrated above, Melledgan probably derives from an Old Cornish form cognate with Breton melc’wredenn, and surviving as molhnidzhon and melwidgeon in Late Cornish and local English dialect respectively. Although it is recognised that Old Cornish dental stops had become /d/ medially by Late Cornish in certain environments, a position immediately preceding the singulative-forming suffix -en is not one of them. Indeed, it is usually suggested that /d/ remains unchanged before any vowel + /nt/. However, the evidence of Melledgan supports that of Late Cornish logodzhan ‘mouse’, recorded by Lhuyd (Old Cornish logodten), in suggesting that the development was possible at least before /e/ + /nt/.

Hanjague apparently demonstrates the expected development of Celtic /nt/ to Late Cornish /ndz/ medially. However, it has been suggested that this development was not complete until the early seventeenth century. It seems unlikely that we should expect examples of the full development in the Scillies if the Cornish language was by and large defunct there by that time. Either Cornish continued in use in an appropriate context for longer than has been thought, or the full development is earlier than has been supposed.

Postscript
In fact, consideration of Melledgan and Hanjague, and the other names we have adduced in evidence, serves to demonstrate that most of the characteristic features of Late Cornish phonology, to wit:

(a) the development of MICO /e/ to a (= /a/?) in unstressed final syllables: *mellewegen > Melledgan, *keninek > Keninak;
(b) the subsequent development of MICO /e/ to a (= /a/?) in initial unstressed syllables: Hengiack (etc.) > Hanjake (etc.), Keninak > Ganimick;
(c) the development to /d3/ of the reflex of Common Brittonic /d/ which is represented in Middle Cornish by written s, g and j: Melledgan, Hanjague;

are present, indeed pervasive, in the Cornish place-names of the Isles of Scilly.

If we add to these:
(d) the almost universal loss of /0/ in the combination /r0/ which is evident in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms of the numerous Scillonian names with the initial element porth (‘cove’), which also survives in island, and mainland, dialect as par, por: e.g., the forms Porcassa, Porcongar, Perronnellin, Perrinnis (sic) and Perskillia (all 1808 Greig & Alexander), now Porth Cressa, Porth Conger, Porth Mellon, Late Cornish form logosan must be by analogy with the plural form preserved in Late Cornish logaz (the Breton plural is logad, and the singulative form logadenn). The only other case where a singulative form is recorded for both Old and Middle Cornish is Old Cornish gwibaden, Middle Cornish ‘webesen ‘great’ (see Padel, Cornish Place-Name Elements, p. 119, for an explanation of the disparate initial consonants). Here too the Middle Cornish form has apparently been remodelled by analogy with an unrecorded outwardly simplex plural form *(al)webes (compare Welsh gwrîbed, Breton triwed).
Porth Minick and Porth Killier, with the historical spelling restored in the modern forms;\(^{18}\)
\[(e) /nn/ > /dn/: Penrose (Collins 1693, Tovey and Ginver 1794) > modern Pednroso;\]
then it is apparent that the Cornish which was spoken on Scilly shared in the very latest general phonological developments of the language. In the circumstances it must be inferred that these developments were complete before the language became moribund in the islands. That they were only later reflected in the spelling of place-names is presumably due to the orthographic conservatism which has always been a feature of Cornish place-names.

One thing is certain, though. Either the Cornish language remained in use on the islands, among the maritime community perhaps, until later than has generally been supposed (and it should be remembered that apart from place-names there is no evidence of its ever having been used there), or the phonological developments which are assumed to characterise Late Cornish (from c. 1600 onwards) had taken effect earlier than is usually supposed, but remained unreflected in the orthography until they were revealed when the norms of spelling of Early Modern English were adopted, or rather applied, during the Late Cornish period.

2. Bosistow (St Levan)
The first element in this name is Old Cornish *bod 'dwelling', and the second probably a personal name. Amongst the earlier forms recorded are: Bodistow, Bodustow, Bosetow (all 1302); Bosustow (1320), Bosistow, Bosisstow (1668).\(^{19}\) The 1302 forms exemplify both the archaic spellings with -d- and newer spellings with -s-, apparently reflecting the assimilation of medial /d/ in Middle Cornish. This assimilation is typical of Cornish pronunciation.\(^{18}\)

The loss of /θ/ in porth in place-names is not necessarily late: see for example, the early forms cited for Porthpean (St Austell) and Portquin (St Minver) in O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988); it may be significant that /θ/ was later restored in forms which had lost it at such an early date. However, it is a common feature of late-recorded maritime, non-settlement names, as evinced both here and on the mainland: compare Perhaver (Goran) and Perburgus (Veryan) for example.

\(^{18}\) Interestingly enough, the form Bosistow does not, apparently, occur as a surname.

\(^{19}\) Wakelin (1975, p. 76) lists nine Cornish place-names with *Boj* or *Bef* for OCe *Bod*. In addition to Bosistow or Bojisto, other possible contenders for such a list are the two instances of Boswarthen (Madron and Sancread, both examples of which appear as Budswharton in the Ordnance Survey of 1813. As far as I am aware, all other recorded forms show only *Bos* at both locations.

\(^{20}\) N. J. A. Williams, 'A Problem in Cornish Phonology', in *Celtic Linguistics: Iethryddiaeth Gelasidau. Readings in the Brythonic Languages: Festschrift for T. Arwyn Watkins*, edited by M. J. Ball and others (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 241–74 (pp. 258–62). Williams acknowledges that he had access only to Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, and was 'for the most part unaware of earlier forms of any of the names' (pp. 258–59).

\(^{21}\) The dates and geographic distribution of these examples reflect the scope of the International Genealogical Index from which they are taken.
The significance of these forms is that they constitute evidence of palatalisation in an item, in this case an onomastic item, which does not otherwise display it. The situation is too complex for this alone to throw any real light on the problem (the identification of the conditioning factors). However, taken together the forms Bejusto, Hanjague and Melledgan oblige us to consider the possibility that palatalised forms may have existed unrecorded at a certain level for every item where only forms with a sibilant are now known to have existed in Middle or Late Cornish, or survive in place-names. Viewed in conjunction with janjeak and melwidgeon this may provisionally be identified as the level of minor place-names and vernacular speech, that is to say the last stronghold of spoken Cornish.

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The Nature of Irish Pub-Names

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Despite the fact that a very large proportion of Irish people do not drink alcoholic liquor,1 pubs form a prominent element in the Irish cultural landscape, both North and South. In many Irish villages, pubs outnumber shops. Since much of their business is transacted in the evenings, their position in the streetscape is emphasised by lighting. Furthermore, unlike many churches, pubs proclaim their presence through large name-signs, so that their visual impact tends to be disproportionately strong. As a result, the role of the pub and of the pub-name in moulding the cultural landscape in built-up areas in Ireland is very marked.

Pub-names in large urban areas tend to differ somewhat in character from those in villages and small towns, principally because the matrix of street-names exercises a strong influence over them. For this reason, even though it contains some seven hundred pubs, the Greater Dublin area has been excluded from consideration here, but it will be the target of a separate study later. Similarly, most of the larger urban centres (Belfast, Cork, Derry, Waterford, Galway, Drogheda and Dundalk) have been avoided, though Limerick has been included in order to maintain some urban input. Because the large number of pubs in this island would have rendered the study unwieldy, it was decided to concentrate on an arbitrarily-selected sample consisting of the pub 'population' of two counties in each province—Leitrim and Roscommon in Connaught, Cavan and Down in Ulster, Laois and Longford in Leinster, and Clare and Limerick in Munster (Fig. 1, p. 73). Pub numbers are unstable due to the closure of uneconomic concerns, to the opening of new establishments,2 and to the law...