Kildreke c.1360

Pitliver (Dunfermline parish, Fife) pett
Lauer c.1128; Lauer c.1166; Petliver 1227, c.1230 (× 2); Livers 1230×36; Liviers c.1230; Liviers 1231; Petliver 1451; Pitliver 1557 × 1585
(Gaelic leabhar ‘book’, in this context ‘Gospel book’)

Pitmurchie (Lumphanan parish, Aberdeenshire) pett
? Morchoy 1250; Pitmorchie 1470

Pittowie (Craul parish, Fife) pett
Petollin 1153 × 1178; Pitolly 1312; Tolly 1452; Pittowie 1642; Tollie 1646
(Gaelic tol ‘hole, hollow’)

APPENDIX 4
GAEIC, CUMBRIE AND PICTISH ELEMENTS (with approximate meanings)

âth (Gaelic) ‘ford’
bad (Gaelic) ‘spot, clump’
baile (Gaelic) ‘estate’
blàr (Gaelic) ‘top’
bhàrr (Gaelic) ‘field’; ? ‘clearing in wood’
boch (Gaelic, Cumbric and [?] Pictish) ‘booth, sheiling’; ‘church’
(Gaelicisation of Cumbric and [?] Pictish *bd ‘dwelling’)

cair (Cumbric and Pictish) ‘fort’
cill (Gaelic) ‘church’
cinn (Gaelic) ‘head, end; (at the) end of’
coid (Cumbric and Pictish) ‘wood’
coille (Gaelic) ‘wood’
dabhach (Gaelic) ‘davoch’ (measurement of arable land roughly equivalent to a carucate; probably borrowed from Pictish)
dail ‘haugh, water-meadow’ (borrowing into Gaelic of Pictish *dol)
dún (Gaelic) ‘hill, fortified hill, fort’
innis (Gaelic) ‘island, haugh’
moine (Gaelic) ‘ bog, peat-bog’
pett (borrowing into Gaelic from Pictish) ‘estate’
poll (Gaelic) ‘pool, sluggish stream’
tulach (Gaelic) ‘hillock; (?) habitation mound’

For a fuller discussion of this element see S. Taylor, ‘Place-names and the early Church in eastern Scotland’, in Scotland in Dark Age Britain, edited by B. E. Crawford (St Andrews, 1996), pp. 93–110.

Ella: An Old English Name in Old Norse Poetry

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Old Norse skaldic poetry is a fruitful source for the study of Old English place- and personal names. Skaldic poetry of the Viking Age is predominantly a type of praise-poetry, providing both commemoration and eulogy, and thus the skalds tend to cite a great number of names, both as a record of peoples or territories conquered and as a form of triumphal rhetoric. Since late Anglo-Saxon England was one of the main spheres of Viking activity, it is no surprise to find English names among those most frequently cited: excluding doubtful instances, in the extant skaldic corpus twenty-nine different English place-names are found in forty-five different occurrences (including river-names), and nine personal names in thirty occurrences. The evidence of Old English names in skaldic verse is of interest for many reasons: historically, for instance, it provides often unique information on the course of the Anglo-Scandinavian wars; linguistically, it permits study of the Scandinavianisation of English names, with attendant implications for Anglo-Norse language contact and intelligibility; and onomastically, it preserves an independent tradition of early forms for a wide range of names, forms which importantly must have been transmitted from Anglo-Saxon to Scandinavian orally rather than scribally.¹

I give below a list of the Old Norse forms of Old English personal names to be found in skaldic poetry, excluding Ella, the name

This is a revised version of part of a paper given to the annual conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland at Nottingham in April 1996. I am grateful to members of the Society for discussion on that occasion, and to Heather O’Donoghue for comment on earlier drafts. Except where discussing philological details, I refer to well-known figures by their most familiar name-form in Modern English (e.g. Alfred, Ethelred, Cnut).

¹ I discuss all these issues at greater length in my English Place-Names in Skaldic Verse, English Place-Name Society (Nottingham, forthcoming).
subsequently to be discussed in detail. The various poets and poems are cited in probable chronological order, and references are to strophe and line in Finnur Jónsson’s standard edition of the skaldic corpus:2

**Aðalbrikt** (OE *Æhelbriht*, an English priest in Norway)
1. Ívarr Ingimundarson, *Sigurðarbøk* 1.2

**Aðalrét** (OE *Æhelrēd*, king of England 978–1016)
1. Gunnlaug Illugason ormsgunga, *Aðalráðsdrápa* 1.4
2. Gunnlaug Illugason ormsgunga, *Lausavísur* 10.6
3. Óttarr svarti, *Höfðadlaun* 8.2
4. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Knútsdrápa* 2.3
5. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Knútsdrápa* 7.8

**Aðalsteinn** (OE *Æpelstôn*, king of England 924–39)
1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Aðalsteinsdrápa* 1.5
2. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Aðalsteinsdrápa* 2.2
3. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Bersgílisvísur* 4.8
4. Haukr Valdisarson, *Íslendingadrápa* 9.4
5. Haukr Valdisarson, *Íslendingadrápa* 13.2
6. [Anon], *Nóregi konunga-tal* 12.3

**Álfgeirr** (OE *Ælfgær*, one of Athelstan’s governors in Northumbria)
1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Lausavísur* 9.8

**Álfsa** (OE *Ælfgifu*, mistress of Cnut, mother of Sveinn and Harold Harefoot)
2. Pjóðólf Arnórrsson, *Magnúsflókar* 3.8
3. [Anon], *Nóregi konunga-tal* 36.2

**Godžer** (OE *Godric*, one of Athelstan’s governors in Northumbria)

**Játgeirr** (OE *Æadgær*, king of England 959–75)
1. Óttarr svarti, *Knútsdrápa* 3.6

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2 *Den Norske–Islandiske Skaldedigtning*, edited by Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols (Copenhagen, 1912–15). At one point I have presumed to alter the title given by Finnur: the poem composed by Gunnlaug ormsgunga for an Anglo-Saxon king should clearly be *Aðalráðsdrápa*, not *Aðalsteinsdrápa*.

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1. Egill Skallagrímsson, *Adalsteinsdrápa* (c.937) 1.2:

Nú hefr fald-Gnáar felda,
fellr þjóð und nið Ellu,
hjaldr-snerrandi, harra
hófuðbaðmr þría þjóðra.  

'Now the prime son of kings, the augmenter of the noise of headdress-Gnú [i.e. warrior], has brought low three princes; the land passes into the control of the descendant of Ella.'

2. Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Bórsdrápa* (c.1000) 20.8:

Né líðostrum Listu
látr val-Rygr góttu
aldrminkandala dar
Ellu steins of bella.  

'The Rogalanders of Lister of the hawk-lair [i.e. giants] could not resist the faithful life-shortener [i.e. Þórr] of the men of Ella of stone [i.e. giants].'

3. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Víkingarvísur* (c.1015) 7.7:

Stóð Hringmarahiði
(herfall vas þar) alla
Ellu kind, en olli
árvóðr Haralds starfi.  

'All the people of Ella [i.e. the English] stood on Hringmarahiðr [Ringmere], when the heir of Haraldr [i.e. Óláfr helgi] caused trouble. There was death in battle.'

4. Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Knútsdrápa* (c.1025–30) 1.1:

Ok Ellu bak,
at, lét, hinn’s sat,
Ívarr, ara,

5 Where the poem has not been composed in the standard *dróttkvætt* metre a suitable self-contained portion has been cited.

6 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 30.
7 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 144.
8 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 214.

Jórvík, skorit.  

'And Ívarr, who ruled at Jórvík [York], had an eagle cut on the back of Ella.'

5. Hallvarðr háreksblesi, *Knútsdrápa* (c.1025–30) 3.5:

Ullar lézt við Ellu
ættleifð ok mý reifðir
sverðmans snyrtiherðir
sundviggs flota bundit.  

'Splendid hardener of the sea-horse of Ullr [i.e. warrior], you had your fleet bound to the inheritance of Ella [i.e. England], and gladdened the gull of the swordman [i.e. raven].'

6. Þjóðólf Arnórson, *Magnúsflókkr* (c.1045) 6.6:

Unó átal Vínda
Ellu konr á fella;
þar hafi gumnar górva
garðr helgi fregir meiri.  

'The kinsman of Ella [i.e. Magnús] caused countless Wends to perish. Who has heard of warriors make a greater spear-storm?'

7. Hallr Þórarinsson & Rognvaldr jarl, *Háttalykill* (c.1145) 7a.1:

Ella var  -  
-  
Ragnars bani rómu vanr  
-  -  -  -  .sefóisk ferð.  

'Ella was . . . the slayer of Ragnarr, accustomed to battle . . . the company perished.'

8. Einarr Skúlason, *Haraldsdrápa II* (12th century) 5.1:

Alls varð Ellu
ungr geitunga

9 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 232.
10 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 293.
11 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 333.
12 *Skaldedigtning*, IB, 490.
lofaðr lifgjafi
lands ráðandi.13

'The famous young feeder of the birds of Ella [i.e. warrior] became ruler of all the land.'

9. [Anon.], Krákmál (c.1200) 24.5:

Eigi hugðak Ellu
at aldrægi minu,
þás blóðvali bræðdak
ók bord á lög keyrðak.14

'I never thought that Ella would be my death, when I gorged the blood-hawk and drove my ships through the water.'

10. [Anon.], Krákmál 27.6:

Hjoggum vér með hjørvi.
Harðla líðr at ævi,
grimt stendr grand af naðri,
góinn byggvir sal hjarta;
vaentum hins, at Viðrís
vöndr í Ellu standi.15

'We struck with the sword. My life is almost past, and the pain from the snake is sharp. Having entered, he dwells in the hall of my heart. I hope that Viðrís's staff [i.e. a sword] will pierce Ella.'

Why then does Ella triumph over all other Anglo-Saxons in frequency of occurrence? The Old English name behind the Old Norse form is Ælla, and the Ælla alluded to was the ruler in York at the time of its capture by the Viking army in 867. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS 'A' reads as follows for that year:

Her for se here of Eastenglum ofer Humbre muþan to Eoforwicceastre on Norþphymbre. 7 þær was micel un'labeluernes þære þeode betweenx' him selfum, 7 he hædfun hiera cyning aworpenne Osbyrht 7 ungecynse cyning underfengon Ellan, 7 hie late on geare to þam geicordon þat hie wiþ þone here wînnde wærung, 7 hie þeah micle fierd gegadrodon 7

13 Skjaldedigtning, IB, 426.
14 Skjaldedigtning, IB, 655.
15 Skjaldedigtning, IB, 655.

Bone here sohton æt Eoforwicceastre 7 on þa ceastre bræcon, 7 hie sume inne wurdon, 7 þær was ungetic wiþgeslagen Norþphymbra, sume binnan, sume butan, 7 þa cyningas begun ofslægene, 7 sio laf wiþ bone here friþ nam.16

In this year the Viking army went from the land of the East Angles, over the mouth of the Humber, to York in the land of the Northumbrians. And there was great division in that people amongst themselves, and they had driven out Osbyrht their king and received as king Ælla, who was not of royal blood; and late in the year they turned to fighting against the army. Nevertheless they assembled a great levy, and attacked the army at York, and stormed the city, and some of them broke inside; and there was an immense slaughter of the Northumbrians—some inside, some outside—and both the kings were slain, and the survivors made peace with the army.

In later Norse tradition this Ella became the figure who put Ragnar lodbrok to death in a snake-pit, and was himself subsequently killed by the sons of Ragnar, led by Ívarr inn beinlausí, by the rite of the blood-eagle: these stories are most fully told in the Icelandic Ragnar saga lodbrokar and the Báttr af Ragnar sonum,17 and in a thirteenth-century collection of riddles one finds a punning allusion to Ella's death by blood-eagle (I have excluded this citation from the main body of evidence on account of its lateness):

Ek sá fljúga
fugla marga:
aldtrjón Ellu,
eggdaða menn...18

I saw many birds fly: the death of Ella [i.e. 'blood-eagle'], men killed by the sword [i.e. val 'the slain', a homophone of val 'hawk'].

18 Skjaldedigtning, IIB, 247.
While not common, Ælla is not a rare Old English name, and was most famously borne by the first king of the South Saxons (477–c.515), whom Bede acclaims as having been the first bretwalda, and also by an early king of Deira (560–88). The etymology of the name is obscure. OE Ælla was declined as a weak masculine noun (oblique cases Ællan), and the same is true of ON Ella (oblique cases Elia).

What is perhaps unexpected in the Old Norse form is that the initial vowel should be e rather than a; for ON a, not e, was cognate with OE æ (both reflexes of Germanic a), and thus if ON Ælla is a borrowing from OE Ælla it does not show cognate substitution. Clearly the first syllable of the personal name Ælla is one of those fossilised circumstances in which normal sound-changes did not occur (the common name element Æll is another): it shows neither West Saxon Breaking to a, nor Anglian Retraction to æ. ON Ælla cannot be a Northumbrian form showing Second Fronting of æ to e, since unfortunately 'second fronting does not take place before p'.

The only Old English dialect to show regular development of Germanic a to e in all positions was Kentish, but owing to the geography of Viking Age England it seems impossible that ON Ælla should derive from a Kentish form.

Turning to the uses of the name Elia in skaldic verse, the two most striking are those by Eilifr Gobbrúnarson and Einarr Skálagar. Eilifr, composing around the turn of the millennium in the Norwegian pagan milieu of Earl Håkon Sigurðarson, employs the name as the base word in a giant-kennning, where Ælla steins 'Elia of stone' seems to indicate 'king of stone', i.e. 'giant', and the first syllable of Ælla provides full rhyme with the first syllable of bella. Daphne Davidson compares Eilifr's similar use, in bôrsdráp 18, of the king's name Heidrek in the kennning Heidrekur þiarís veggr. Ælla is to be a dwarf-name, and

so þiarís veggr means 'the wall of the dwarf' = 'rock'. Consequently, Heidrekur þiarís veggr must mean 'Heidrek of the wall of the dwarf' = 'Heidrek of rock' = 'giant'.

Einarr, composing a century and a half later, uses the kenning Elia... geityngu... lipfjafi. Lipfjafi means literally 'life-giver', therefore perhaps 'feeder', and geityngur is a type of bird, so the kenning means 'feeder of the birds of Elia'. Meissner gives Elia geityngur among his listings of kennings for 'raven'. When the first element of such kennings is a personal name, it is always either an Óðinn-name (e.g. Yggsvætu 'the swan of Ygg') or a valkyrie-name (e.g. Gpisðið skjaf the gull of Gpisð) or what Meissner terms a hero-name. There are four examples in this last category: Elia geityngur 'the bird of Elia', Endils sopfr 'the bird of Endill', Lefa þipr 'the gull of Leifa' and Spvis sopfr 'the bird of Spvi'. Endill, Leifa and Spvi are names which occur elsewhere in skaldic verse as base names in kennings at least half a dozen times each, and whom Finnur Jónsson classifies as sea-kings.

To make sense of Einarr's kenning one therefore has to take Elia as a sea-king or hero heiti (i.e. base name or word), conveniently providing assonance with Ælla. The whole kenning then fits together as 'feeder of the birds of Elia' = 'feeder of ravens' = 'warrior'.

The question that arises from these two occurrences, therefore, is whether the name of the Anglo-Saxon king has been generalised as a (sea)-king heiti, or whether there already existed in Norse poetic tradition the shadowy name Elia as a king heiti, which possibly influenced the form of OE Ælla when it entered Old Norse, and was given new life by the traditions surrounding Ragnar's slayer. Besides these two citations from Eilifr and Einarr there is no evidence for the latter suggestion, and one could certainly argue that one would expect such a heiti to feature in the lists in Skaldskaparmál. On the other hand, Elia does occur as a standard legendary name in the Sögubók at nokkrum fornkonungum, as one of Harald hilditun's champions who fought at Brávellir and was killed there by Starkadr. It would, I

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20 M. Redin, Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English (Uppsala, 1919), p.59. Æll and Ælla appear to be variant, masculine i-stem forms (Redin, Studies, p. 125).
23 The form in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS 'A' confirms æ rather than e: æ is of course simply a common manuscript abbreviation for æ, as also in brecon for brecon and wp for wpel.
25 R. Meissner, Die Kenningar der Skalden (Bonn, 1921), pp. 19–23.
27 Forntjaldssögur, II, 111–34 (p. 131).
think, be easier to understand the frequency and generalisation of *Ella* if one posits that the name of the obscure Northumbrian slayer of Ragnar loðbrók resembled and took on the form of a now even more obscure pre-existing sea-king or hero. This must remain a hypothesis; but, if it is accepted, one might argue that the early South Saxons and Deiran kings of the same name constitute additional support for such a legendary Germanic figure—that is, they could be kings named after a mythical ancestor. Alternatively, of course, one of them might actually be the legendary figure—particularly, perhaps, *Ælla* of the South Saxons, a figure from within the Age of Migrations.

The frequency with which skalds use the name *Ella* as the defining element in a kenning for England or the English argues strongly, as Alfred Smyth has claimed, that the Scandinavians in England looked back in their traditions to the conquest of England by Ragnar loðbrók and his sons, and saw continuing Anglo-Scandinavian hostilities within the feud-like framework of that tradition. Thus Egill characterises Athelstan as the *nís Ælla* ‘descendant of *Ella*’, and Sigvatr speaks of Óláfr as having been opposed by the *Ælla* *kinnr* ‘people of *Ella*’ at the battle of Ringmere. Hallvarðr describes Cnut as conquering the *Ælla* *ættleifr* ‘inheritance of *Ella*’, and bjóðrfr (most strikingly) terms Magnus the *Ælla* *konnr* ‘kinsman of *Ella*’ in order to emphasize his claims to the English throne. The assumption behind all these references is that the foe and slayer of Ragnar, whom Ívarr in turn triumphed over, must have been a formidable figure and worthy opponent. For the Scandinavians in England, *Ella* was a name redolent of great associations, a resonant shorthand for the Anglo-Saxon monarchy.

And for these evocative usages the relationship with historical origins and reality no longer matters, and Christine Fell’s scepticism is not therefore to be upheld when she writes:

To refer to England as the land of *Ella* and the English as the race of *Ella* is not uncommon in skaldic verse, and it is generally assumed that the *Ella* referred to must be *Ella of Northumbria, killer of Ragnar Lodbrok*. I find it improbable that the Scandinavians should assume this petty character loomed so large in English history, and think it more likely that tradition preserved the name of *Ella*, king of the south Saxons . . . or alternatively of that of *Ælla* of Deira instrumental in inspiring the missionary zeal of Pope Gregory.30

But this improbability only arises, I think, when one surveys the situation from the vantage-point of modern history and with an Anglo-Saxon perspective (that is, familiar with such sources as Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), not when one takes an eleventh-century Scandinavian view from the Danelaw. Smyth and Rory McTurk have both (in different ways) demonstrated that the Danelaw did indeed witness the circulation of various traditions concerning Ragnar and *Ælla*, and for the contexts in which the name is used in skaldic verse (usually defining Anglo-Scandinavian confrontations in England), the *Ællas* of Sussex and Deira would not furnish pertinent allusions.

Smyth not only states (what is unexceptionable) that ‘Medieval Scandinavian writers saw in the blood-eagling of *Ælla*, the formal conquest of England by the Norsemen’; but he also argues that ‘the historical evidence shows that the death of *Ælla* was of crucial significance for the Norse conquest of northern and eastern England’.31 He is, however, following an entirely false scent when he argues that the name of *Ælla* was augmented, and a specific connection with a snake-pit established, by the similarity of the Old Norse form of his name with that of Atli/Attla: ‘The very name, *Ælla*, suggested to the Scandinavians a connection with Attila’s cruelty. Old English *Ælla* was written *Ella* in Old Norse and pronounced *Edbla*, which was remarkably similar to *Atli*, the Norse form of *Attla*.32 Smyth has been misled by the fact that Old Norse is usually read with a Modern Icelandic pronunciation: the devoicing of the first of a pair of consonants is a post-medieval development, and thus *Atli* and *Ella* would not sound similar in Viking Age Old Norse.

As a final anecdote that seems to confirm the fame of Ella among the Scandinavians in England a small piece of Lake District folklore can be cited. St. Michael's Church, at Pennington in Furness in the southern Lakes, is famous for having a Norse runic inscription on its tympanum, showing that in that area a form of Old Norse was still being written (and therefore presumably spoken) as late as the twelfth century: it is therefore the latest Old Norse runic text from England, and argues for a very strong Norse influence on the Furness region.33 Standing in the church porch one can see some hundred yards away a mound at the far end of a field, partially obscured by a clump of trees: both mound and field are known as Ellabarow, and locally the former is said to be the burial mound of an Anglo-Saxon king called Ella.34 The great Lake District antiquarian W. G. Collingwood recorded a version of this legend at the turn of the century, but he was (uncharacteristically) at a loss as to how to explain the name.35 It seems to me, though, that the preservation of the name Ella in this context can only be explained as the result of the heavy Scandinavian influence on the area: it was only among the Scandinavians in England that Ella was a famous Anglo-Saxon king (indeed, the most famous of all)—among the English he was an obscure and unremembered figure, and for the same reason it is unlikely that the name is of a more recent bookish derivation. One might argue that the Ella behind the legend is that of Sussex or Deira (as for instance Ēlla of Deira later appears in

34 The mound and its story were drawn to my attention by Mr Jim Marshall, the verger of St. Michael's and a life-long resident of Pennington; he recalled playing the part of the king's miller in a dialect play about King Ella back in the 1940s, performed by the local schoolchildren in the very field of Ellabarow.
35 W. G. Collingwood, *The Lake Counties* (London, 1902), p. 53: 'At Pennington is the Ellabarow, reputed to be the mound where "Lord Ela sleeps with his golden sword"'.

Chaucer's 'Man of Law's Tale'), but there are two good reasons against this: (i) the Ēllas of Sussex and Deira were hardly sufficiently famous Anglo-Saxons to lend their name to a local tradition in the southern Lake District (as one might imagine a figure such as Alfred or Ethelred doing); and (ii) with its initial e, the Pennington name must be descended from the Old Norse form Ælla rather than the Old English form Ēlla (later Alla, as in Chaucer: OE æl > ME a). This local legend therefore provides exciting confirmation of what is taught by both the runic tympanum and by the density of references to Ælla in skaldic verse, and thus provides a fitting conclusion to this study of the surprising adventures of one Old English name in Old Norse poetry.