Notes on some place-names of Pembrokeshire

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1. HIGH, LOWER TOCH

In his classic study of the place-names of Pembrokeshire B. G. Charles (1992, II, 444) suggested that High, Lower Toch (earliest attestations include *Thelch 1372, Tallche 1587) conceals ‘T(h)elach, later Telche, Talch, etc., and Toch may originally have been a river-name of uncertain form and meaning’. He suggests that it may be historically related to Welsh talch ‘fragment, grist’. This semantic elucidation seems to be rather far-fetched, and an alternative explanation of the pre-history of this toponym may be offered instead.

If Charles is correct in seeing the place-name as derived from a hydronym, and if the latter should be indeed reconstructed as *T(h)elach (which may be further supported by Thelath attested in 1326, see Charles 1992, I, 136), this form must remind us of the big group of Welsh river-names in -ach, such as Clarach, Mwddach or Solfach, meticulously surveyed by R. J. Thomas (1938, 1–18). As for the root on which this derivation is based, it remains and most probably will remain the crux of the matter. River-names in tel-, at least to my knowledge, are not found in the Welsh onomastic landscape. Continental Celtic comparanda are not really helpful either. Pomponius Mela (2, 84) records a river-name Telis in Gaul, but that is in fact a misspelling of Tetus (modern Têt).

1 The grid–references for the settlements on the 1:50,000 OS map are SN0514 and SM0515. As the anonymous reviewer of this paper kindly informs me, the river may be identified with the now unnamed stream flowing to the north of Lower Toch, which also may have been mentioned as Thelath in a fourteenth-century record.
Similarly, a place-name Tela (Antonine Itinerary 440, 3) in modern Spain (Cerro del Castillo de Montealegre) is a variant form of Gella, probably due to a Greek transmission error and the confusion of the Greek letters Γ and Τ (see DCCPN 215). More rewarding are the comparanda which are adduced from other Indo-European languages. In this respect I would like to draw attention to Greek σταλάσσω ‘to drip, shed drops, drop’ insofar as it may be connected with τέλμα ‘puddle, swamp, marsh’ and English stale ‘urine’, to PIE *(s)tel(h₂)- ‘to drip’; on this difficult set of forms see Beekes (2010, 1389–90, 1462). If this reconstruction is feasible, it offers a perfect semantic motivation for a Welsh river-name. Alternatively we might consider PIE *telH- ‘still weten [‘to go quiet’], cf. Lithuanian tilti ‘fall silent’ (LIV 621): the ‘silent (river)’ is also not inappropriate for river-names. A connection with PIE *telh₂-m- ‘surface, support’ (cf. Old Irish talam ‘earth, ground’), for which see Matasović (2009, 366), may in theory also be considered, but certainly seems to be far-fetched. It has been noted (Thomas 1938, 1; cf. Russell 1990, 82) that at least some of the river names in -ach in Wales are of Irish origin, although elsewhere in Welsh toponymy the suffix may be of native provenance, cf. Wmffre 2007, 59. As a number of these Irish hydronyms are attested in Pembrokeshire (Thomas 1938, 11; Charles 1992, 1, 7–8), one might consider the possibility that the geographical name is entirely Irish. In this respect, note early Irish tel, tul, etc., ‘protuberance, swelling’. It is important that its derivative in -ach is also attested as tulach ‘hillock, mound’ (cf. Mac Mathúna 1984–8, 36). The word is found in Irish geographical names, as, for example, in Telach na Licce in County Armagh (Muhr 2002, 37). The semantic shift ‘hill’ > ‘river’ is attested elsewhere; alternatively the hydronym could be secondary, cf. King (2008, 68, 156–70).
Discussing the place-name Carnedd or Caerenydd, first attested in 1780 in the compound Blaencarenydd, Charles rightly argues that ‘this looks like the name of a river-source (blæn)’ (1992, II, 409). Forms in Abercarenydd also support this observation, and Charles suggests that the name may originally have been that of a tiny nameless stream which rises near Carnedd (1992, II, 409, 412). He suspects this name may be identical with Welsh carenydd ‘kindred, friendship, love; kinsman’, and thinks that ‘it might well have been applied as a term of affection to this stream’. In support of this claim he refers to the use of câr and its derivatives in the formation of Welsh river-names. This is certainly perfectly possible, and parallels may be adduced from various areas of Wales. For the semantics, consider here, for example, the lost river-name Cuad, which has been associated with the Welsh adjective cu ‘dear’ (Thomas 1938, 19; Charles 1992, I, 9–10), while the hydronym Cain in Flintshire denotes ‘fine, beautiful’ (Davies 1959, 29).

It is notable, however, that many Welsh river-names in car- are also open to other explanations. Thus, for example, Afon Ceiriog in Denbighshire is usually discussed in conjunction with Welsh cár, i.e. ‘beloved (river)’, but alternatively is traced to a personal name Ceiriog (Owen and Morgan, 2007, 79). A similar-looking name of a minor stream on Anglesey Ceiri / Afon Ceri remains difficult, and it was suspected that it could conceal ‘a colloquised plural form of caer (forts)’; it also has been derived, rather implausibly, from Cae rhi ‘the field of God’ (see references in Jones 1989, 59). Some caveats regarding the connection of the Welsh hydronym Ceri with Welsh caru ‘to love’ are expressed also

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2 Identified by the anonymous reviewer of this paper with the hamlet at SN117219 west of Llandissilio village. The Welsh place-names with carenedd ‘cairn’ – for which see, e.g., Owen and Morgan (2007, 72–3) – are probably unrelated to this toponym, which is found in combination with blæn and aber.

3 GPC, s.v. carenydd, may also imply acceptance of the element in this name by noting that the word is found ‘hefyd fel e.ll.’ (‘also as a place-name’). Note the double -n- in the quoted form.
by Thomas (1938, 132–3). The second component of Bryn Caredig in Flintshire could be the adjective ‘kind’, cognate with cár, or else – again – is a corresponding personal name (Davies 1959, 16). The place-name Porthkerry in Glamorgan contains a second element which must remind us of the river-name and the word for ‘love’. However, there are certainly other ways to interpret this place-name element, and Pierce (1968, 199–200) reviewed various possibilities. Ceiro in Ceredigion, on the face of it, may belong here, but may also be discussed in conjunction with a personal name (Thomas 1938, 221). Carrant in Gloucestershire has been treated as a linguistically Celtic hydronym with the meaning ‘friendly, pleasant stream’; but it has also been viewed as ‘Old European’, to *ker- ‘to cut’, on the basis of word-formation and taking into account local relief (Kitson 1996, 99–100); for an ‘Old European’ approach to the river-names in *kar-, which remains controversial, cf. Krahe (1962, 328).

Certainly, place-names in car- are not the only group of toponyms which may include homophones or near-homophones. Indeed, one may expect a certain confusion when dealing with Welsh place-names containing bach ‘little’ and bach ‘nook’, cain ‘ridge’ and cain ‘fair’, corn ‘promontory’ and corn ‘crane’, *el- ‘swift’ and el- ‘numerous’, etc., cf. also ardd ‘hill’ and arth ‘bear’. Moreover, sometimes the homophonous formations share not only the stem, but also a fair similarity or even identity – on the face of it – in a morphological or derivational pattern. Thus, for example, the place-name Y Gyfeillion in the parish of Llanwynno in Glamorgan certainly looks like a plural form of the Welsh noun denoting ‘friend’, cyfaill, viz. cyfeillion. However, as Gwynedd O. Pierce (2002, 91–2) has shown us, in fact the toponym has nothing to do with the Welsh noun meaning ‘friend’ and denotes in fact ‘the two facing rock slopes’ with a dual form, *eillion, of allt ‘hill-slope’. Therefore it is not impossible that Carnedd may conceal a different entity, and this is thus not unparalleled in Welsh toponymic studies.

It has been shown elsewhere that river-names in car- in various Celtic languages, if they do not go back to the words denoting ‘love’ or personal names, may contain a reflex of *kar(r)- ‘stone’ or the like (cf. W carreg ‘large stone, crag’) or be related to the Gaulish word carros ‘chariot’; see
As for the final part of *caren*ydd, that finds plenty of parallels in the toponymy of Wales, including in Pembrokeshire. These parallels are ultimately heterogeneous in origin. For example, the plural suffix -*ydd* is attested in a river-name *Nant Iwennyth*, if it is from *ywen* ‘yew’; and it has been long suspected that the suffix -*ydd* is used to form river-names, as, example, in Afon Pibydd (Charles 1992, i, 17–19, 824). To explain the present river-name, however, such suffixes would require -*n* in the stem, and this is problematic: Welsh *caren* ‘crone, jade, carrion’ is a late loan from English *carrion* and is semantically rather unattractive; its recorded plural form is *caren* *nod*. A connection with the ‘early Welsh territorial suffix’ -*ydd*, as in, for example, Eifionydd or Cristionydd, which was discussed by Melville Richards (1965, 210–11), similarly looks unlikely; and the agent suffix -*ydd* (for which see, e.g., Russell 1989, 37–8) is also irrelevant for the present discussion.

Different word-division may offer a better option for the analysis of this river-name. Just as GPC derives *caren*ydd from an old participial formation from *caru*, as *karantij*- (for the formation see Hamp 1976, 4–8), so the river-name may also reflect this particular morphological model. The exact configuration of the underlying form may be disputable (see Repanšek 2015, 783–4 with further references), but it needs to be asked whether in fact such a hydronym is necessarily derived from the word meaning ‘love’. Instead, it could be linked to the group of words in various Celtic languages which includes Gaulish *carros* ‘chariot’, Old Irish *carr* ‘cart, chariot’, Old Breton *carr* (glossed *uehicolis*), Middle Welsh *carr*, pl. *keir* ‘cart, vehicle’, and traced to *k´rs-o < *k´ers- ‘run’ (see DCCPN 13–14, with references). In this case, it has a perfect match in the Celtic river-name *Carann* in Scotland, which looks like a derivative of Common Celtic *kar-* ‘to love’, but in fact also goes back to *krs-* ‘to run’, as was suggested by Eric Hamp (1990, 193). With a slightly different, but compatible, morphological pattern, this etymology may be

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4 Hamp also refers to the earlier attempt of Watson to trace the hydronym to PIE *kars-* ‘harsh, rough’, but refutes it.
compared with the ancient and early medieval name of the river Charente in France (\textit{Carantonus, Carantonis fluvius}, etc.); and note that the similar-looking attestation of the ancient place-name Guitiriz in Spain \textit{Carantium} (Ravenna Cosmography 4, 43) contradicts the earlier attestation as \textit{Caranico} (Antonine Itinerary 424, 6), see \textit{DCCPN} 90–1.

\section*{REFERENCES}


Davies, E. (1959), \textit{Flintshire Place-Names} (Cardiff: University of Wales Press).


\textit{GPC} = \textit{Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru}, ed. R. J. Thomas et al. (1950–); online at <geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>.


Thomas, R. J. (1938), *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru).