

## CORNWALL AS A BORDER AREA \*

The reason for looking at Cornwall in this context is that it was, linguistically, a border area at the right time. At the earliest extreme, parts of East Cornwall were taken over, and no doubt settled, by the English as a continuation of their conquest of Devon in the seventh and eighth centuries; while in the far west of the county, some areas were still Cornish-speaking a thousand years later, in the eighteenth century. There is thus a continuum across the county, with the language dying out from east to west during the historic period; and it is interesting to see whether the different conditions at various times within that period have produced different kinds of survival among the Cornish names. It will not be possible to deal here with all aspects of the question: the phonology will be largely ignored, for example, and distribution-maps of some English elements, such as tūn and wordīg, are still provisional, though reasonably complete. Instead I want particularly to examine the different types of linguistic treatment that have befallen Cornish place-names as a result of the English take-over.

Preservation

The most obvious treatment is that the Cornish name is preserved intact (with some assimilation to English sounds, one need hardly add). Here the main point worth noting is the surprising persistence of the original Cornish stress, long after the language has ceased to be spoken. The stress in a Cornish name is not readily predictable unless one knows the etymology, though by and large it tends to fall on the second syllable of three-syllable names (LOSTWITHIEL, TINTAGEL, etc.). The oddest, to an English ear, are those where, for some etymological reason, the stress comes correctly on the last syllable: yet even in East Cornwall, where the Cornish language has been dead for nearly a thousand years, a final-syllable stress tends to be preserved. Thus the parish of LINKINHORNE (Ordnance Survey grid reference SX 3173), equivalent to a Welsh \*Llan Gynhaearn, 'Cynhaearn's church', can still be heard as LINKINHORNE; and the farm called FENTRIGAN, SX 1990 (equivalent to a Welsh \*Ffynnon Gan, 'bright spring') is still known as FENTRIGAN. Though not infallible, this persistence of the original stress can be useful, as indicating how a name should be subdivided into its separate elements, if the early forms are inconclusive on that score. Anomalous examples, where the correct Cornish stress has been lost, do occur, such as TREGONY, an early borough, and PREDANNACK, a notable headland; but they are very much the exception. Family names are less conservative, presumably because they travel around more; so there are plenty of instances where a family name does not preserve the original stress of the place-name from which it is derived: for example, the surname Keigwin, pronounced 'Keegwin', is derived from the place KEIGWIN, 'white hedge', SW 3934, authentically pronounced 'Kergwidden' in 1895; the surname Penhaligon was correctly pronounced Penhaliggon last century. Cornishmen who have moved up-country are used to being called incorrectly Penrose, Penberthy, Trestrail, etc.

Replacement

At the opposite extreme there is complete replacement of a name, by another of quite different meaning. In Devon, and indeed the rest of England, if one believes in the survival of the Celtic population on a wide scale, this is presumably the treatment that one must assume to have occurred most often, in order to explain the lack of Celtic names; but it cannot often be proved to have occurred. (Lantokai in Somerset, now LEIGH-ON-STREET, is an example, and there are a few others in that county.) It must have been the norm in two areas of East Cornwall, where Cornish names are very much the exception: the far north, and the area round Callington. The whole of

the Hundred of Stratton, the northernmost part of Cornwall, is onomastically a part of Devon rather than Cornwall. It is full of English names, and Cornish ones are very sparse: for example, there are only two or three names in Tre- in the whole of that hundred, whereas all the other hundreds possess large numbers of such names, anything between 90 and 240 instances. What is interesting is that the hundred-boundary is a true linguistic boundary: as soon as one crosses into the next district, Cornish names are immediately plentiful. Either there was a different sort of take-over by the English in the two areas (settlement in the northernmost hundred, followed by conquest without settlement in the rest, perhaps?), or there was a time-lag between the assimilation of the two areas, during which the English became more likely to preserve, rather than replace, Cornish names. The contrast is not so marked in the other area of mainly English names, that around Callington, nor does it coincide with an administrative district in that case; but the region, distinguishable as that lying between the River Tamar and its tributary the Lynher, is again notable for having very few Cornish names: it includes HINGSTON DOWN (Hengestes dūn in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle), notable as the site of the last battle between the Cornish and English, in 838.

Curiously, though, there are not many cases where replacement of a Cornish by an unrelated English name can be unequivocally shown to have occurred. One such in West Cornwall is the village of ST AGNES, SW 7150, formerly Brevannek, 'peaked hill'; in the far west the village of MOUSEHOLE (Pertusum muris in 1242) was in Cornish Porthenys, 'island harbour', though they may originally have been separate, adjacent places, rather than one and the same. Sometimes a manor changed its name, but the two names actually represented different places: thus the Domesday manor of Pennehalgar (correctly Penhirgard, 'Longridge end') was later known by the name of Cherleton, but both names survive as adjacent farms, PENHARGET and CHARATON (SX 2970 and 3069). Sometimes, therefore, what may appear to be alternative names for a place are not true alternatives: the form Intowne alias Treffell, 1718, looks like a case of an English name supplanting a Cornish one, but again they are two adjacent places, INTOWN and TRIFFLE (SX 3354: TRIFFLE comes from Treyuthel 1306, tre plus personal name \*Yuthael). The only category where English names can be fairly consistently shown to have supplanted Cornish ones is in the names of coves and harbours: thus MILLOOK HAVEN, SS 0018, was Porthoy (apparently 'egg harbour') in the fifteenth century; further west, GORAN HAVEN, SX 0141, was Portheast ('St Just's harbour') until the seventeenth century, and HARLYN BAY, SW 8775, was Perleze Bay until the nineteenth. In each case, an original name containing Cornish porth has been replaced by one with an English generic, qualified by a nearby place-name (MILLOOK, GORAN, HARLYN). I have no explanation for why harbours should be particularly subject to this treatment, unless it is that their names were less often written down than those of manors and tenements, and therefore less likely to be preserved. Certainly that is the explanation in the case of the names of very minor coastal features: where those have changed from Cornish to English, it is only the merest chance that may occasionally preserve the former Cornish name. The rock in Falmouth harbour called BLACK ROCK, SW 8331, was Carrak ruen, 'seal rock', until the sixteenth century; the dramatic coastal cave called THE DEVIL'S FRYING PAN, SW 7214, was Hugga-Dridgee, apparently 'tidal cave', until the Ordnance Survey dropped the name in the nineteenth century.

Of course, when one name replaced another, it was not invariably English

replacing Cornish: the best-known instance is the border town of LAUNCESTON, which is English tūn added to Cornish \*Lanstefan, 'St Stephen's church': its former name was Dunheved, English 'down-head'. Similarly what is now called PAYNTER'S CROSS, SX 3964, was formerly Lyribeauton, later Loribeaton, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries: the name is obscure, but it is not Cornish, and, as ending in -ton, is presumably English. FALMOUTH was formerly called both Smithick, 'the smiths' hamlet', and Pennycomequick, 'get-rich-quick', two more English names.

#### Folk-etymology

In borrowing Cornish names, the English often turned them into English words: the hill BROWN WILLY, SX 1579, is Cornish Bronwenely, 'hill of swallows'; the hamlet of CRUMPLEHORN, SX 2051, was Tremylhorne in 1565, no doubt '\*Maelhoern's farmstead' (Old Breton Maelhoiarn); and a pair of cottages called ROSE IN THE VALLEY, SX 023757, were formerly called Resnovallan in 1350, probably 'the ford of the apple-tree'. Curiously, there are seven other cottages in West Cornwall called ROSE IN THE VALLEY, or ROSE-IN-VALE, but they lack early forms, so that one cannot be sure that they all have the same Cornish derivation, though that is likely; one of them has nearby a counterpart, ROSE-IN-THE-BUSH. Very often a part of a name will be treated in this way, producing a name which appears to be part-English: Trebarvet 1327, 'middle farmstead', is now TREBARFOOTE, SX 1899; and Trefron 1305, 'hill farmstead', is now TREBROWN, SX 3363. It is often hard to say whether the modern form is a result of partial folk-etymology or not.

#### Translation

It would be nice to be able to cite plenty of examples of this, the most interesting category; but in fact they are hard to produce. NEWMILLS, SW 9052, was formerly Melenowith alias New Myll, 1596, earlier still Melynewyth, 1364, and has clearly been translated; and the adjacent tenements of CROWSHIRE and LONGCROSS, SX 208996, seem to involve the translation of a Cornish name; but they are rarities. What was not so scarce, however, was to translate the generic of a Cornish place-name, while keeping the qualifier in Cornish: Melyntrait 1235 ('sea-shore mill') became Treythismill 1462, the modern TREESMILL, SX 0855. (Note how the generic was correctly brought from front to back when it was translated.) Presumably the generics, being drawn from a more limited range of words, were more widely understood than the qualifiers: certainly there are plenty of Cornish names where the modern philologist is in the same position, of understanding only that part of a name. A similar example is seen in what became of the name Bronheriard 1284 ('longridge hill'). By 1580 this had been changed into Penheriard, because Pen- is so much commoner than Bron-. Then that form, by 1670, had been half-translated into Heriods Head, itself now folk-etymologised into HERODSHEAD, SX 200607; that farm is little-known, however, and much more familiar is a nearby village, named by contrast HERODSFOOT. (Try explaining that name to a casual enquirer!) What is really worrying is that these names, after centuries of assimilation, now look thoroughly English, even though they are odd: if one had only the modern forms of Treesmill and Herodsfoot, one would never dream of explaining them as Cornish, even though they are slight puzzles as English names.

Parallel to this, but somewhat different, one can find field-names and boundary

names in West Cornwall in about the seventeenth century which were partly or wholly translated, though the translations may not have been names in their own right, but merely for the purposes of the document: Mene Gurta ['stone of waiting'] alias a stae stone, 1613, is probably the writer's own translation: it was a longstone ('of a huge bigness') on a parish boundary, where the priests of the neighbouring parishes used to meet annually, bringing their crosses and banners. In Poole-an-abelly ['the colts' pool'] alias the poole where the colts doe drink . . . called Collen-a-poole, 1660 (another boundary-point), we seem to have both a nonce-translation and a true English alternative. On the other hand, the field Park an goage Cuckow, 1696, looks more as if someone was not sure what language he was using: it is parallel to the common English 'Cuckoo Pen' in field-names (Cornish an gok, 'the cuckoo').

The last type of partial translation is in rock-names, where the Cornish definite article is often translated, leaving the main name in Cornish. Both instances of THE ENYS (SW 3735; SW 5527) must formerly have been \*An Enys (enys, 'island'); THE MOULS (SW 9381) is probably \*An Mols, 'the wether': it is exactly paralleled by the Breton rock LE MOULT, where the definite article has also been translated. THE WRA (SW 3736) was probably \*An Wragh, 'the hag'; the parallel in Brittany, LA VIEILLE, has been wholly-translated if it was originally Breton.

#### Loss of part of the name

My last category is that where part of the Cornish name has been lost. Usually it is the generic, because it is unstressed at the beginning of the name; in East Cornwall this is partly an aspect of a general coming-and-going of Tre-, in either Cornish or English names. Trehibiou 1327 and Trehibyou 1356, in two different parishes, have both now become RIBBY (via such forms as Treribby), though a third instance of the name survives as TRERUBIES. A wood called THE TYRICK used to be a tenement called Nantirack, containing nans, 'valley'. The elements \*ros 'hill' and rid or \*res 'ford' often survive merely as S-: SCARRABINE, SPETTIGUE, SPRIGS and SELLIGAN derive respectively from Roscarrekbyghan (\*ros 'hill' + karrek 'rock', with byghan 'small' suffixed); Rospethigou (\*ros + ?); Respryek (rid 'ford' + the adjective of pry 'mud, clay'); and Reshelegen (rid 'ford' + heligen 'willow-tree'). Less common, but also attested, is loss of the qualifier: ZONE POINT, SW 8430, was Savenheer 1597, 'long cleft or chine'; and my final name is a most interesting one of this type: the fram of SOUTH CARNE, SX 2081, was in c.1120 Charnbrixi, 'Beorhtsige's tor' or 'Beorhtsige's Carn', giving South Carne alias Carne Biskey 1695, and then dropping the personal name altogether. In 1120 it belonged to a family who used similar names, such as Brictric, Brichnot and Bricwold, and the usage seems to show a family of English-users in a Cornish-speaking area in the eleventh century.

\* \* \*

These are the main treatments that Cornish names have received. There are some slight geographical patterns to be discerned, though all types can occur anywhere in the county. The distribution of some is determined by their occurring in particular types of names, which have different survival rates over the county: Cornish field-names and rock-names are largely restricted to the west; surprisingly, so are names in Chy-, 'cot'. The seventeenth-century translations depend on where Cornish was still understood at that time: two of them are from surprisingly far east at the dates they occur (Mene Gurta near Wadebridge in 1613, and Poole-an-abelly near St Austell

in 1660), and they may show no more than vestigial understanding of the local names, rather than true use of the language. The arbitrary addition or loss of Tre- is an especially East-Cornish feature, though it is found elsewhere, including Devon (compare J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer, F. M. Stenton, eds. Place-names of Devon, I, [Cambridge, 1931] xxxvi); the folk-etymologies may also be commoner in the east, though that is only an impression: there are also folk-etymologies within Cornish, of course, mainly in the west.

## NOTE

\* This is a shortened version of the paper given on March 27th, 1982, at the XIVth Annual Conference of the Council for Name Studies held at the University College of North Wales, Bangor.

O. J. PADEL

Institute of Cornish Studies  
University of Exeter

## THE SCOTTISH BORDER - AN ONOMASTIC ASSESSMENT\*

The purpose of this paper is to examine briefly the various factors involved in the place-names of the Scottish Border, and to survey the work that has taken place in the field over the past few decades. The very nature of the term 'Border' is itself difficult. Normally, we in Scotland expect to regard this as involving the four Scottish counties which border on England - Berwick, Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Dumfries, these being pre-regionalisation names, of course. But as we will see, the distribution of critical place-name elements necessitates the study of much of southern Scotland, including Galloway, Lothian, and Strathclyde, if we are to assess the entire onomastic situation. The early Anglian settlements, for example, provide place-name evidence well into the region known now as Lothian, as well as in Ayrshire and Galloway, so it is as well to bear this in mind when we are dealing with names in a purely Border context. The fact that boundaries moved constantly in this part of Britain is also important. After the establishment of the present boundary between the two nations, cultural contact continued. The three marches on each side of the Border Line established in the sixteenth century, or earlier, emphasised the natural inclination of the Border population to regard the line on the map as of little consequence when it came to reiving, murder, extortion, and other similar pastimes.

The source material for place-names in this whole area is perhaps less well organised and more obscure than the equivalent data for England. But as Bill Nicolaisen has said in Chapter 2 of his Scottish Place-Names, '. . . it has always been silently understood that, compared with England, Scotland is indeed much poorer as far as early spellings are concerned and that the proportion of names which will at the end of the day remain unexplained or at least difficult to interpret will therefore be higher than in England. The question arises whether this tacit assumption has a basis in fact or whether one is allowed to be more optimistic . . .'. Nicolaisen goes on to point out that although Scotland has nothing to compare with Domesday Book or the Anglo-Saxon Charters, yet she is not without reliable sources which have proved remarkably adequate for the onomastician despite being several centuries younger than the earliest English material. This is especially true of South-East Scotland, as one might expect. Few state documents or registers begin before the thirteenth century, and many of the earliest spelling forms date from the period 1300-1500. The earliest surviving royal charter is one issued by Duncan II in 1094, although there are land-grants and other charters in such sources as the Register of the Priory of St. Andrews (1040-1107). Indeed, the chartularies of the abbeys and the priories yield the main body of early spellings. The monastic foundations of Kelso, Dryburgh, Soutra, and Coldstream, for example, contain invaluable material for onomastic research, as do the collections pertaining to the Priory of Coldingham, the Abbey of Holyrood, and the Regality of Melrose.

In addition, such sources as Bagimond's Roll, a set of Papal accounts relating to a tithe raised in Scotland in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, provides us with many of the earliest spellings of Scottish names. (See Nicolaisen, 1981, and Annie I. Dunlop, 1939.) This has been described as 'the most extensive surviving set of thirteenth-century names attached to places of ecclesiastical significance in Scotland'. Nicolaisen comments that it 'affords us a glimpse not only of the kinds