

Brittonic place-names in England

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The topic of Celtic place-names in England is particularly beset by the kinds of difficulties for which place-name studies generally are well known. Such names have, by definition, come down to us mediated through another language, in which the names had to be modified phonologically; and most of them will have been etymologically opaque to their English users for some time, often for several centuries, before the date of their earliest attestation. This problem of mediation is not present, or far less so, for English, Scandinavian, or French names in England; thus for Celtic names there is an extra layer of uncertainty in anything said about them, as well as additional skills required for studying them. Moreover, the topic is intimately related to another one, still the greatest problem in the history of England, the question of what happened in the fifth to the seventh centuries, when the invading Anglo-Saxons encountered the indigenous British. The intractability of that related topic, for which place-names constitute major evidence, adds to the problems of studying the Brittonic names.

A history of the scholarship on Brittonic place-names in England would not usually, today, need to discuss much work from before Kenneth Jackson's *Language and History in Early Britain* (1953), since that book provided a new and secure phonological framework for the subject and still forms the basis for any work in it.¹ However, Eilert Ekwall's essay on the topic, published at the beginning of the Survey of English Place-Names in 1924, remains useful; and his book on one

The volumes of the English Place-Name Society's Survey are indicated by EPNS + county abbreviations as given on p. vi above. Anglo-Saxon charters are indicated by S + the number in P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1968) and the electronic version of S 1–1602 by S. E. Kelly, rev. by R. Rushworth (2006) at <<http://www.esawyer.org.uk/>>.

¹ K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953).

important group of these names, those of rivers and streams, remains the standard authority on the subject, although there has subsequently been valuable further work.²

Since 1953 the subject has naturally advanced in many areas. The Survey itself has continued, adding further examples of Brittonic names, and providing greater detail and understanding concerning those already known. Hugh Smith's *English Place-Name Elements* (1956) provides a useful survey of the chief Brittonic words, though important corrections to their forms were subsequently made by Jackson, and of course Smith's work is now superseded for those elements which have appeared to date in the fascicles of the *Vocabulary of English Place-Names*.³ Succinct introductions to the topic have been provided in a chapter by Kenneth Cameron, 'Celtic place-names and river-names', and two chapters by Margaret Gelling, on Romano-British place-names and later evidence for Brittonic survival.⁴ There is a full treatment of the place-names of Roman Britain.⁵

Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze have published a book on the specific topic of Celtic place-names in England, plus additional individual articles;⁶ and Coates has separately discussed the significance of these names.⁷ Patrick Sims-Williams has re-examined Jackson's work

² E. Ekwall, 'The Celtic element', in A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton (eds), *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names*, English Place-Name Society 1.i (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), pp. 15–35; Ekwall, *English River-Names* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928).

³ A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society 25–26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) [EPNE]; Addenda and corrigenda by K. Jackson, *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 1 (1968–69), 43–52; 2 (1969–70), 73–74; 3 (1970–71), 50; and 6 (1973–74), 52; D. Parsons and T. Styles with C. Hough, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names* I (*Ā–Box*) (Nottingham: Centre for English Name-Studies, 1997); D. N. Parsons and T. Styles, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names* II (*Brace–Cæster*) (Nottingham: Centre for English Name-Studies, 2000); D. N. Parsons, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names* III (*Ceafor–Cock-pit*) (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2004) [VEPN].

⁴ K. Cameron, *English Place-Names* (London: Batsford, 1961 and subsequent editions), ch. 2; M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (London: Dent, 1978, and subsequent editions), chs 2 and 4.

⁵ A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London: Batsford, 1979) [PNRB].

⁶ R. Coates and A. Breeze, *Celtic Voices, English Places: Studies of the Celtic Impact on Place-Names in England* (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000); for subsequent articles see the yearly bibliographies in *Nomina* and *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*.

⁷ R. Coates, 'The significances of Celtic place-names in England', in M. Filppula and

on the phonology of Brittonic place-names borrowed into English.⁸

For Brittonic names in specific geographical areas, the major work by Alan James on the elements of Brittonic place-names in northern England and southern Scotland, though not yet fully published, is available in electronic form.⁹ A fine survey of the county of Fife has now made its place-names, including Brittonic ones, fully available in their onomastic context.¹⁰ My own *Cornish Place-Name Elements* is of some use for all Brittonic areas, since it gives details of Welsh and Breton cognates and usages of the elements, and also cites parallel place-names in other English counties.¹¹

Within Wales, the completion of the historical dictionary of Welsh has provided ready access to the toponymic usage of individual Welsh words, since it often includes place-name evidence within its citations.¹² Welsh river-names have been well treated.¹³ There is now a historical dictionary of Welsh place-names, aiding comparison westwards across the border;¹⁴ and two Welsh counties now have complete published surveys, alongside partial surveys of two others.¹⁵ The publications of Melville Richards

others (eds), *The Celtic Roots of English* (Joensuu: Joensuu University Press, 2002), pp. 47–85; R. Coates, ‘Invisible Britons: the view from toponomastics’, in P. Cavill and G. Broderick (eds), *Language Contact in the Place-Names of Britain and Ireland* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2007), pp. 43–55.

⁸ P. Sims-Williams, ‘Dating the transition to Neo-Brittonic: phonology and history, 400–600’, in A. Bammesberger and A. Wollmann (eds), *Britain 400–600: Language and History* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990), pp. 217–61 (esp. pp. 237–44 and map, p. 261).

⁹ A. James, ‘Brittonic language in the Old North’ <www.spns.org.uk/bliton/blurb.html>.

¹⁰ S. Taylor and G. Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife*, 5 vols (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006–12).

¹¹ O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society 56–57 (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1985) [CPNE].

¹² R. J. Thomas, G. Bevan et al. (eds), *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, 4 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1950–2002); fuller treatment of letters A–B is still appearing.

¹³ R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1938), covers names based upon vocalic suffixes in *-a-* to *-o-*; supplemented by his article, ‘Enwau afonydd â’r ôl-ddodiad *-wy*’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 7 (1933–35), 117–33, and 8 (1935–37), 27–43.

¹⁴ H. W. Owen and R. Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer, 2007).

¹⁵ B. G. Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1992); I. Wmffre, *The Place-Names of Cardiganshire*, 3 vols (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004); G. O. Pierce, *The Place-Names of Dinas Powys Hundred* [Glamorganshire] (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1968); H. W. Owen, *The Place-Names of East Flintshire* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994).

have made Welsh place-names generally more accessible;¹⁶ and his extensive collection of historical forms of Welsh place-names is accessible on-line as a searchable database.¹⁷

For Brittany, the work of Bernard Tanguy in particular has provided material of great value for comparative purposes in Britain: he has published surveys of the major names in two of the four departments, and a classified list, with examples, of the elements used in topographical names.¹⁸ There is also now a convenient one-volume dictionary of Continental Celtic place-names, building upon considerable recent work in that area.¹⁹

In 1924 it was possible for Ekwall to survey the whole subject of Celtic place-names in England within twenty pages. For reasons of length this chapter deals only with certain aspects of the topic. It largely ignores those few parts of England which have significantly greater density of Brittonic place-names, either because they were less thoroughly settled by the Anglo-Saxons (notably Cornwall and parts of Herefordshire), or because of re-immigration at various dates – Cumberland in the tenth century, and part of Shropshire around Oswestry in the central Middle Ages.²⁰

With regret, this study stops at the Scottish Border, except for occasional glances into southern Scotland, although all workers in the

¹⁶ Bibliography in *Onoma* 18 (1974), 619–25; note especially M. Richards, *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969).

¹⁷ Archif Melville Richards Database <www.e-gymraeg.co.uk/enwaulleoedd/amr>.

¹⁸ B. Tanguy, *Dictionnaire des noms de communes, trèves et paroisses du Finistère* (Douarnenez: Le Chasse-Marée, 1990); *Dictionnaire des noms de communes, trèves et paroisses des Côtes d'Armor* (Douarnenez: Le Chasse-Marée, 1992); *Les Noms de lieux bretons*, 1, *Toponymie descriptive* (Rennes: Centre Régional de Recherche et de Documentation Pédagogiques, 1975).

¹⁹ A. Falileyev et al., *Dictionary of Continental Celtic Place-Names* (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2010); other recent work by Falileyev and others is referred to in the introduction and bibliography.

²⁰ K. Jackson, 'Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria', in H. Lewis (ed.), *Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), pp. 60–94; A. James, 'A Cumbric diaspora?', in O. J. Padel and D. N. Parsons (eds), *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2008), pp. 187–203; B. G. Charles, 'The Welsh, their language and place-names in Archenfield and Oswestry', in Lewis (ed.), *Angles and Britons*, pp. 85–110 (pp. 99, 105, 110); Ll. Beverley Smith, 'Yr Iaith Gymraeg cyn 1536', in G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 15–44 (p. 19 and references).

field are aware that distribution-maps of English names are misleading if they stop at the modern Border. The work of Alan James is making the Brittonic names in that region more accessible, but it is still not easy to examine these names in terms of their historical documentation and onomastic context, except in Fife.

Sims-Williams's re-examination of the phonology of Brittonic place-names in England is so thorough that the topic does not need detailed treatment here. Naturally it is not the last word on the subject: some of his datings of Brittonic sound-changes may be on the early side, being based on evidence which ultimately amounts to very few forms which need not be decisive.²¹ Moreover, Sims-Williams was revisiting Jackson's chronology specifically with a view to elucidating the development of the Brittonic languages, using Jackson's own evidence and methods but in the light of subsequent scholarship in those areas. His treatment therefore prepares the ground for further work studying the Brittonic place-names from the perspective of Old English diachronic phonology.

There is room for slight reservation, too, concerning one of the basic methods used by Jackson and Sims-Williams, even though it remains an essential tool. Brittonic names borrowed into English, when plotted geographically, show chronological progression from east to west across England in their contrasting representations of Brittonic sounds. The later a name was borrowed, the later the Brittonic phonology that it is likely to reflect. This progression can be used to chart the advance of English across the country, and also to provide relative datings for the chronological sound-changes which are frozen into the place-names. But it would be dangerous to expect this principle to be applicable too rigidly at a small scale among the small numbers of names available in most of England. Within the south-western peninsula alone there is an uncomfortable disparity between the borrowed tribal name of Devon itself, *Deofenas*, showing Brittonic lenis *m* in its later, lenited, form giving Old English [v], contrasting with some names to the west of Devon which show the same sound borrowed in its earlier (pre-lenition) form, as [m], for example in the name of the River Tamar and indeed some lesser places within eastern Cornwall itself.²² It is virtually

²¹ O. J. Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin: sceptical speculations', in A. Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin: Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales* (St Andrews: University of St Andrews Press, 2013), pp. 115–52 (pp. 118–19).

²² For example, Hammett, Hampt, Hamatethy, all correspond to Welsh Hafod 'shieling';

inconceivable that these and other names showing [m] were actually borrowed into Old English significantly earlier than the name of Devon itself, or any earlier at all; and this uncomfortable fact must make us wary of trying to generalize too rigidly from the limited corpus of names showing these kinds of contrasts. Similarly, the forms of place-names ascribed to Brittonic **crūg*, including Crook (D), Creech (Do), Creek, Crook- and Crutch- (all in Sr), Crich (Db), and Crutch (?), Church- and Crook- (all in Wo) are incompatible with regular chronological progression.²³

Given the small numbers of Brittonic place-names existing in most of England, occasional inconsistencies in the behaviour of words (perhaps especially names), when borrowed between languages with rather different phonological systems, may make it difficult to achieve a fine-tuned geographical chronology of sound-changes. Of course the attempt to use the data in this way must still be made: a broad geographical and chronological progression can be detected, and most names do not show a phonological free-for-all. Sims-Williams, following Jackson, has successfully constructed a chronology from them; but at smaller geographical scales the low numbers of names may create limits to how exactly this chronology can be applied.

Brittonic river-names are not examined in detail here, since that section of the subject has remained largely static since Ekwall's thorough study, in the sense that the corpus has changed little. However, within the corpus there has been fresh work. Peter Kitson has examined British river-names in the context of the theory that many river-names, in Europe and beyond, are 'Old European', an essentially undifferentiated Indo-European language attested in river-names over much of the area of the later language-groups of the family; he has suggested that some river-names in Britain can be better understood as Old European names which were reinterpreted as Brittonic, before being subsequently borrowed by the Anglo-Saxons.²⁴ Andrew Breeze has shown that better interpretations

CPNE, p. 127.

²³ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 290, 292, 294, 336 etc.; D. Probert, 'Mapping early medieval language change in south-west England', in N. Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), pp. 231–44, has attempted to reconcile this material; see also D. N. Parsons, 'Sabrina in the thorns: place-names as evidence for British and Latin in Roman Britain', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 109 (2011), 113–37 (pp. 129–30); and below, pp. 22–23 and 30–31.

²⁴ P. Kitson, 'British and European river-names', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 94 (1996), 73–118.

for known Brittonic river-names in England can sometimes be obtained by considering types of river-names found in later Brittonic areas, particularly Wales; some Brittonic river-names in England can be interpreted as based on words for weapons, tools, and animals and birds. Examples include Laughern Brook (Wo), equivalent to Welsh *llywern* ‘fox’;²⁵ and the River Poulter (Nt), equivalent to Welsh *paladr* ‘spear’;²⁶ however, neither *llywern* nor *paladr* seems actually to be attested as a Welsh stream-name.

English place-names in Irish or Scottish Gaelic, occurring mostly in northern counties, are not considered here. They constitute a different kind of topic, arising from immigration, mostly in about the tenth century and by people who were probably of mixed Norse-Irish background.²⁷ However, these names also provide a reminder that some Brittonic names in England may also have arisen through inward migration by speakers of Welsh or Cumbric in the central Middle Ages.²⁸

The present chapter is therefore limited to three specific aspects of Brittonic place-names in England. First, the extent to which areas within England differ from one another in the density of Brittonic names which they contain. Second, the types of Brittonic name which have survived across most of England, and also the types of places which have Brittonic names, since that dimension provides an important tool for assessing whether a particular name is likely to be Brittonic. Finally, that group of names which consist of a single Brittonic element, either on its own (e.g. Liss or Avon), or combined with an English one, sometimes tautologically (e.g. Chetwood, Bredon), since these single-element Brittonic names form an important sub-group, of which the precise significance is still unclear.

²⁵ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 67–69, repeating a suggestion of Henry Owen, in G. Owen, *The Description of Penbrokeshire*, ed. H. Owen, 4 vols (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1892–1936), II, p. 288, n. 9; compare Ystumlllywern ‘fox’s bend’ SO4313, Monmouthshire, on the River Troddi.

²⁶ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 74–76.

²⁷ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 234–62 and 265–66. See now D. N. Parsons, ‘On the origin of “Hiberno-Norse inversion-compounds”’, *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 5 (2011), 115–52.

²⁸ For example, James, ‘A Cumbric diaspora?’, and F. Edmonds, ‘A twelfth-century migration from Tegeingl to Lancashire’, in T. M. Charles-Edwards and R. J. W. Evans (eds), *Wales and the Wider World: Welsh History in an International Context* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010), pp. 28–56.

Varying densities of names

The overall scarcity of Brittonic place-names in England has not altered significantly since Jackson's or even Ekwall's time.²⁹ The publications of Coates and Breeze, and others, have made a few valuable additions to the corpus;³⁰ but in a judicious review of *Celtic Voices*, Alan James pointed out that the authors of that work had not significantly increased the corpus itself: typically their contributions offer fresh interpretations of names which were already considered Brittonic, or of uncertain language.³¹

In 1953 Jackson published his well-known map of Brittonic names of rivers and streams, on which four zones across England and Wales show an increasing density of Brittonic names from east to west.³² The map was based on Ekwall's *River-Names*, and it has been often cited and reprinted; since the corpus has changed little since Ekwall's time, the map remains valid today, and agrees rather well with more recent maps showing Brittonic settlement-names (below). However, Stephen Yeates has raised the important question of when changes in river-names may have occurred, especially the replacement of Brittonic names by English ones.³³ He has quite rightly pointed out that as late as the sixteenth century river-names were less stable than they are now, and he cites examples of rivers which can be shown to have had different names for parts of their courses, or which changed from an ancient name to an (Old?) English one in the late-medieval or early-modern period. Only one of Yeates's examples was not already listed in Ekwall's *River-Names*, so these issues do not invalidate Jackson's map; but they are extremely important. The chief implication is that it would be desirable to revisit the river-names in their own right, not for their derivations, but rather to consider the comparative attestation of English and earlier names in

²⁹ Map 2 in EPNE; Gelling, *Signposts*, ch. 4; O. J. Padel, 'Place-names and the Saxon conquest of Devon and Cornwall', in Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 215–30.

³⁰ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*; P. Brotherton, 'Celtic place-names and archaeology in Derbyshire', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 125 (2005), 100–37, may have added one or two in that county.

³¹ A. James, review of Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, *Nomina* 27 (2004), 147–50.

³² Jackson, *Language and History*, p. 220; Gelling, *Signposts*, p. 89.

³³ S. Yeates, 'River-names, Celtic and Old English: their dual medieval and post-medieval personalities', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 38 (2006), 63–81.

historical records, both over time and (crucially) the kinds of records and contexts in which the various names occur.

Brittonic names of settlements and estates can be less confidently plotted. One difficulty is the lack of even coverage across England as a whole, since the detail of the individual county surveys has deepened during their ninety years. However, the increase in detail is mostly in minor names and field-names, which (it is suggested below) are the categories least likely to contain Brittonic names in most of England; so the uneven coverage may not be a major problem. Another difficulty in compiling a map of all Brittonic names in England is the varying status of the names. A Brittonic river-name obviously has a different kind of significance from an estate-name, but there are also estates named from a river, and especially in the south-west there are sometimes numerous estates all named from a single river.³⁴ It is difficult to know how to plot such estate-names, since some of them may have been created by subdivision during the Anglo-Saxon period, or even the original estate-name may have been created in that period from the borrowed river-name. A third difficulty is that a simple Brittonic name may have different significance from one combined with an English second element, for example, Creech (Do) versus Creechbarrow (So); but often it may be uncertain whether an English element has been added subsequently to a Brittonic name now known only in a combined name.³⁵ Given these difficulties, it is understandable that the authors of *Celtic Voices* were cautious about providing general distribution-maps of Celtic names in England, although the county-maps form an essential part of that volume.³⁶ On a single map it would be difficult to show the various types of name, and the various types of features that they denote, without making it undesirably complex or even misleading.

These maps of Brittonic names (excluding river-names) in individual counties show the overall westward increase in density which is generally recognized, similar to that of the river-names. The counties can be approximately (and impressionistically) classified into three groups: those showing hardly any Brittonic place-names, those with a slightly richer

³⁴ For example, at least eight different manors in Domesday Book, all called *Clist(e)* or *Clistone*, and named from the River Clyn: EPNS D, pp. 573–74, 577–78 and 584–86.

³⁵ On Creechbarrow see below, pp. 30–31.

³⁶ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 275, 357 and 368–92.

density, and those with slightly more again. The first group, where Brittonic names are extremely scarce, includes the whole of the east of the country south of approximately the River Humber, extending westwards into the central Midlands: the eighteen counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Middlesex, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Rutland, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, and Warwickshire.³⁷ Some of these counties are even sparser than others: Kent is slightly richer than its two western neighbours, and East Anglia particularly poor.³⁸ But in none of them is there more than a light scatter. Independently of this observation, a recent survey has identified at most about 100 pre-English settlement-names (including doubtful ones, but not rivers) in the sixteen south-eastern counties, an average of about six per county.³⁹ This area includes two counties (Hampshire and Berkshire) which are here classified in the next group; the average would be lower still without them. In addition County Durham, in the north-east, is also very light compared with its neighbours to south and north (Yorkshire, Northumberland).

The second group, with a slightly greater, though still sparse, showing of Brittonic names, comprises three adjacent counties in the south (Berkshire, Hampshire including the Isle of Wight, and Wiltshire), and four northern counties (Staffordshire, Yorkshire especially the West Riding, Westmorland, and Northumberland), which form less of a discrete block than the three southern counties. Finally, eleven western counties show slightly greater density again: Cheshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Somerset, and Worcestershire. Even here, however, the

³⁷ Surrey looks denser than Sussex on the maps in Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, p. 389, but several of the Surrey names are doubtful, to varying degrees; see V. Watts, *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) [CDEPN], entries for Caterham, Coulsdon, Leatherhead, and Merrow.

³⁸ To the names in Kent listed in Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 315–16, add now Winfield Bank: P. Cullen, 'Vagniacis and Winfield: the survival of a British place-name in Kent', in Padel and Parsons (eds), *A Commodity of Good Names*, pp. 95–100; and perhaps Pennyquick, Kent (*Penycreek*, *Penecreek* 1502, *Pennycrych* 1574), if that is 'head of the tumulus', **penn* + **crūg* (compare Penkridge, St): J. K. Wallenberg, *The Place-Names of Kent* (Uppsala: Appelbergs boktryckeriaktiebolag, 1934), p. 556; my thanks to Paul Cullen for help with this name.

³⁹ Parsons, 'Sabrina', p. 123: south and east of a line embracing Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hampshire.

overall numbers of Brittonic names constitute a very small proportion even of the major names (parishes and manors): these counties, including even Cumberland, are denser only in comparison with others further east, not when compared with the thoroughly Brittonic areas of Cornwall and Wales.⁴⁰ Even in all the counties of this third group the overall density of Brittonic names is much closer to that of eastern counties, such as Essex or Durham, than to that of Cornwall. The only areas showing true density of Brittonic names are parts of certain counties bordering on Wales, notably Shropshire and Herefordshire, where spoken Welsh survived until Tudor times, and where minor names and even field-names in Modern Welsh are found.⁴¹

Within these three broad categories the densities are not even. Ekwall, in 1924, had already pointed out the differential survival of Brittonic names in different areas;⁴² and Margaret Gelling has also discussed the topic briefly.⁴³ Ekwall's examples were at a broad level, and mainly exemplified the increasing numbers found by moving westwards across England. One area which he noted was Dorset and adjoining parts of Wiltshire; his other areas were Devon and Somerset, western parts of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and Herefordshire and Shropshire 'in a position of their own'.

Subsequent work on the Survey has made greater detail possible. Hence one can note areas of slightly greater density such as north-western Derbyshire, running into north-eastern Cheshire and south-eastern Lancashire; and eastern Hampshire as contrasted with the near-desert of Sussex and Surrey.⁴⁴ Coates has suggested that the phonology of a few names in north-west Wiltshire may suggest the survival of Brittonic speech into the seventh century there.⁴⁵ In Westmorland there is a difference between the south, largely devoid of Brittonic names, and the

⁴⁰ Padel, 'Place-names and the Saxon conquest'.

⁴¹ Charles, 'Archenfield and Oswestry'; the areas (but not all of the names) are shown on the maps in Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 379–80 and 388.

⁴² Ekwall, *Introduction*, pp. 27–31.

⁴³ Gelling, *Signposts*, pp. 60–62, 90 and 101, with reference to Map 2 in EPNE.

⁴⁴ Map 2 in EPNE; Gelling, *Signposts* (1978), p. 90; Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 377 and 389.

⁴⁵ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 112–16; several of the names are only doubtfully Brittonic.

north, dividing at Shap Fell.⁴⁶ However, even these clusters tend to consist each of only about half a dozen names.

Even assuming that local clustering exists and is significant, there has not been much discussion of what it means. There is probably a general assumption that such clusters indicate ethnic enclaves, places where a community of Brittonic-speakers survived, within a context where other people round about were speaking Old English. A case could probably be made for some of these apparent clusters (for example, that of north-west Derbyshire) being located on land which is less desirable for agriculture. If these clusters are significant in terms of Brittonic survival, then the blanks, the much larger areas in between the clusters, presumably mean something different in terms of such survival, or the lack of it.

Types of name, types of places

The chief types of name which have survived are well known. Single-element names (discussed below) are common. Names composed of two elements are usually true compounds, having the qualifying element in first position as in the Germanic languages, for example Malvern ‘bare-hill’ (Wo), Candover ‘fair-waters’ (Ha), Lich(field) ‘grey-wood’ (St). These compounds stand in contrast with the name-phrases which provide the overwhelming majority of place-names in all the Neo-Celtic regions (Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, Ireland, much of Scotland, and the Isle of Man), and which have the generic element in first position, and the qualifying one second.⁴⁷ It is generally accepted that, since almost all names from Roman Britain and Ancient Gaul are true compounds (with the chief exception of names in *Duro-*: PNRB, pp. 346–47), and the great majority from Neo-Celtic areas are name-phrases, there was a change in how place-names were made, in all the Celtic languages, in about the fifth to sixth centuries; the implication is that the type of a name therefore provides some indication of when it was created. Exceptions to this principle, in both directions, are sufficiently well attested to make it dangerous if applied rigidly;⁴⁸ but as a rough guide it remains useful.

Overall, the Brittonic names in England are very different from those appearing in any later Brittonic area. One of the two crucial tools of

⁴⁶ My thanks to Alan James for pointing out this distinction.

⁴⁷ CPNE, pp. xv–xvi.

⁴⁸ CPNE, pp. xvi–xvii.

place-name study, equal in importance to the need for early spellings of names, is the comparative method. The existence of a convincing comparison or parallel within the Brittonic world greatly strengthens a suggested derivation, just as a lack of such a parallel weakens it; but many Brittonic settlement-names in England lack close parallels in Wales or Cornwall. Comparisons between Wales and Ancient Gaul seem to be almost easier to find than between Wales and England.⁴⁹ However, the known Roman-period place-names in Wales (a small sample, perhaps not very representative) also fail to show a great deal in common with later Welsh place-names, so the lack of correspondence between Brittonic names in England and Wales may be partly due to the poorness (or partially unrepresentative nature?) of the Roman-period sample, and to subsequent changes in naming habits within Brittonic.

Parallels do exist, providing precious evidence of some continuity in Celtic naming habits. For example, the compound *Branodunum* ‘crow-fort’ or ‘fort of **Branos*’ in Norfolk is paralleled by the name-phrase Dinbren (also called Dinas Brân) in Denbighshire; by *Caer Brân* (Co), with the same personal name qualifying a different word for ‘fort’; and by early Irish *Dún mBrain* and *Ráith brain*.⁵⁰ Second, there are recurrent compounds, such as Mellor in Lancashire and Derbyshire, both corresponding to the Welsh examples of Moelfre ‘bald-hill’ (*moel* + *bre*); likewise Mulfra, Mulvra and Mulberry in Cornwall;⁵¹ and Tulketh (La), *Tolchet* (So), and Olchard (D) are paralleled by Tyllgoed ‘hole-wood’ in Wales (*twll* + *coed*), Tolgus (Co), and *Toulgoat* in medieval Brittany.⁵² There are also a very few parallels of name-phrases, including Pentridge (Do) and Pentrich (Db), ‘boar’s head’, with their equivalents in Pentyrch (Wales) and Penterc’h (Finistere), for which in turn the several Irish examples of *Cenn tuirc* ‘boar’s head’ constitute essential comparanda for their interpretation.⁵³ Similarly Penge ‘wood’s end’ (Sr), *Paunsett* (W), Penketh (La) and Penquit (D) are paralleled by Pencoed (Wales) and

⁴⁹ M. Richards, ‘Some Welsh place-names containing elements which are found in Continental Celtic’, *Études celtiques* 13 (1972–73), 364–410.

⁵⁰ CPNE, p. 29.

⁵¹ CPNE, p. 167; Mellor in Cheshire (Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, p. 279) is the same place as Mellor in Derbyshire, EPNS Db, p. 144n.

⁵² CPNE, pp. 219–20; O. J. Padel, ‘Two Devonshire place-names’, *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 41 (2009), 119–26 (pp. 119–22).

⁵³ CPNE, p. 222.

Penquite, Pencoose (Co).⁵⁴ As a name-phrase in the far east of England, Penge provides valuable evidence that such a name could be created presumably before the sixth century, although it is of the phrasal type considered to be later in date.

The general lack of correspondence leaves some suggested derivations for Brittonic names in England unparalleled in the Brittonic world. Although this situation is not impossible, it is a cause for concern. Some Brittonic explanations generally accepted for difficult names in England have a strained appearance. Even with changes in naming-habits, if the Brittonic names within England were typical of the naming-habits of the language in the period down to the fifth century, one might expect some similar older names to have survived within Wales or Cornwall. In Appendix I a sample list is given of some fifteen place-names in England for which Brittonic derivations have been suggested, but no close parallel in the Brittonic world has yet been found. Doubt concerning the Brittonic derivations which have been suggested for these names need not mean that their pre-English nature is altogether questionable; merely that a convincing derivation has not yet been produced, and that Brittonic may not necessarily offer one. But good parallels may yet be found for some of these names, as work proceeds in the Brittonic areas themselves.

Conversely, there is also a lack of parallels in the other direction, common Brittonic types of name which might be expected to have occurred in Anglo-Saxon England. Such absences could be due to a particular type of name having arisen in the Brittonic world after the language had died out in most of England (for example, phrasal names incorporating the definite article, as in west-Cornish *Pen-an-vounder* 'the head of the lane').⁵⁵ One type of name which is common in all Brittonic areas, but largely absent in England, is the type consisting of a single element, usually a plant-name but sometimes another natural resource such as a mineral, plus the adjectival ending *-āco-*, Welsh *-og*, Cornish *-ek*. In place-names this ending usually means 'growing with' or 'abounding in' (a plant or a substance). The Brittonic place-names in England include a high proportion of single-word place-names; such names incorporate no syntax or morphology, unlike compound and phrasal names, so they were more easily borrowed. Therefore one might

⁵⁴ CPNE, p. 181.

⁵⁵ CPNE, pp. 5–7 and references.

have expected single-word names using this suffix to be well represented in England; but there are few such names outside Cumberland, and those that exist are atypical. There are half a dozen instances from Roman Britain.⁵⁶ York, *Eburacum*, contains this suffix, possibly with a plant-name but more probably with a personal or god-name, which makes this name a good example of a parallel between a Romano-British place-name and a common Gaulish type;⁵⁷ but this use of the suffix (personal name + *-āco-*) is not well attested in the later Brittonic areas, though Tudweiliog (Caernarfonshire) and Pebidiog (Pembrokeshire) are two Welsh examples.⁵⁸ Romano-British *Vagniacis* also contains the suffix; it probably survives as the first syllable of Winfield Bank (K). The base-noun here is probably British **wāgn-* ‘marsh’, a usage closer to the later Brittonic type, though still not quite the same.⁵⁹

Chideock in Dorset and Dunchideock in Devon both contain the suffix in an adjectival form of **ked* ‘wood’, Welsh *coed*; but in the Brittonic world the adjective of that particular word seems to be rather unusual, so these two English names are themselves slightly atypical, though not in doubt.⁶⁰ Quantock and Berk(shire), like Bannock in the Scottish Midlands, all containing this suffix, are names of hill-ranges; in all three names, both the words to which the suffix has been added, and also the use of the formation to denote a hill-range, are again atypical of the names with this suffix in the main Brittonic regions. In the north-west and Scotland there are lesser names of similar type, such as Barrock (Cu), Charnock (La), and Bannock(burn) (Stirlingshire); but still very few containing plant-names.⁶¹ One reason for the general lack of parallels in the use of this suffix may be that in Wales and Cornwall the botanical place-names with this adjectival suffix are mostly names of rather minor places, whereas in most of England it tended to be the names of more

⁵⁶ P. Russell, ‘The suffix *-āko-* in Continental Celtic’, *Études celtiques* 25 (1988), 131–73 (pp. 155–56).

⁵⁷ PNRB, pp. 355–7; Russell, ‘Suffix *-āko-*’, pp. 139–54.

⁵⁸ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales*, p. 478; Charles, *Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, p. 197, and other examples cited there.

⁵⁹ Cullen, ‘*Vagniacis* and Winfield’.

⁶⁰ Note also Quethiock, Cornwall: O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance: Alison Hodge, 1988), p. 146; Tanguy, *Noms de lieux bretons*, p. 100, cites Roscoëdec and Linhouëdec, both containing the adjectival form.

⁶¹ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 281 and 316; James, ‘Brittonic language in the Old North’, s.v. *-og*.

important places, such as *Eburacum*, that were borrowed. So perhaps this use of the suffix existed in England but such names have not survived.

Another lack in most of England is Brittonic names containing habitative elements. They are almost entirely absent from names attested in the Roman period. The ancestors of Welsh *caer* 'fort' and *tre* 'farmstead' are both unattested; that of *bod* 'dwelling' is considered to occur only in *Botis*, the island of Bute (PNRB, p. 273). Among English names of later attestation a very few examples do appear: one instance of **līs* 'court' (Liss, Ha); and two or three possible examples of compounds containing *tre* have been suggested, standing beside a considerable number of such names in southern Scotland.⁶² On the other hand, neither of the two suggested instances of **tīγ* 'house', Priddy (So) and Minety (W), is convincing: Priddy, if Brittonic at all, could be a derivative of **prīð* 'clay', rather than a compound of that word with **tīγ*; and Minety is more likely to be English 'mint-island', OE *mint* + *īeg*.⁶³

The types of places preserving Brittonic or older names in England are well established. Rivers are the best known, along with some other major natural features, such as large woods (Savernake in Wiltshire; Wyre in Worcestershire; *Andred* in early Sussex and Hampshire, a former settlement-name later attached to a natural feature; and probably Arden in Warwickshire), and major hills or ranges, such as Chiltern (Bu), Quantock and Mendip (So), Berk(shire), Malvern (Wo), Pen-y-Ghent (Y), Mam (Tor) (Db), Helvellyn and Blencathra (Cu), and also Cheviot (Nb), since it is presumably pre-English, although without a convincing Brittonic derivation.

Among settlements having Brittonic names, less attention has been given to the types of places to which these names belong. Nearly forty known names of Roman towns and forts have survived, mostly in very reduced form. What has happened to the majority of these names is regular enough to be called a pattern. It is exemplified by the names Manchester (*Mamucium*) and Wroxeter (Sa; *Viroconium*), in which a

⁶² Chitterne, Wiltshire (Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, p. 85); and possibly Kinder and Findern, Derbyshire (Brotherton, 'Celtic place-names in Derbyshire'), but there are reservations concerning both of these: Kinder as a river-name is more likely to contain *-duvr* 'water'. Scottish examples of *tre* are listed by James, 'Brittonic language in the Old North', s.v. *treβ*.

⁶³ EPNS Gl 1, p. 81; EPNS W, p. 61: there was a noted abundance of wild mint there in the seventeenth century.

Romano-British name has survived, but reduced to a single syllable (usually its first), and followed by *-cæster* as an English generic. Appendix II (pp. 40–41) gives a list of these names within England, and of the smaller number of other Romano-British names of settlements and forts which have also survived, but without the addition of *-cæster*. These names are obviously of the highest interest; the discussion of them by Colin Smith remains especially useful.⁶⁴ The reduction of the Romano-British names to a single syllable has occurred rather irregularly (note the disyllabic survival in Cirencester, though there exist pronunciations of that name which reduce it further); Margaret Gelling has pointed out that where early evidence exists (before the tenth or eleventh century), it suggests that Romano-British names were originally borrowed in fuller form, and the reduction happened subsequently within Old English, not at the stage of borrowing.⁶⁵ The fact that *-cæster* is itself a disyllabic generic may have contributed to the subsequent reduction of the Romano-British names, since the composite names were more complex than a monosyllabic generic would give. However, in the case of Lich(field) and Win(field) the Romano-British names have likewise been reduced to a single syllable, even though the English generic (*feld*) is a monosyllable.

The frequency of the Manchester type suggests that it could be useful to re-examine those *-cæster* names which lack a recorded Romano-British ancestry, in case some may also have a Brittonic first element. The parallel of Alcester (Wa, from Romano-British *Alauna*) suggests that Alchester in Oxfordshire could be such an example, although it has no Romano-British attestation.⁶⁶ Dorchester (O) is another such example, though *Dorcic-* there might be a river-name.⁶⁷ The extent of the reduction which has usually occurred in the qualifying element of such names would make these later-attested *-cæster* names difficult to analyse, lacking the Roman-period forms which might provide derivations; but it

⁶⁴ A. H. A. Hogg, 'The survival of Romano-British place-names in southern Britain', *Antiquity* 38 (1964), 296–99; C. Smith, 'The survival of Romano-British toponymy', *Nomina* 4 (1980), 27–40.

⁶⁵ Gelling, *Signposts*, pp. 54–55.

⁶⁶ EPNS O, p. 241 and 1, p. xvi n. 2, suggests (following Richmond and Crawford) that Alchester is *Alauna* in the Ravenna Cosmography; but Rivet and Smith identify that *Alauna* doubtfully as Alcester (Wa) (PNRB, pp. 207 and 244).

⁶⁷ EPNS O, p. 152; compare rivers called **Dorce* in Surrey and Wiltshire, Ekwall, *River-Names*, pp. 128–29; but see R. Coates, 'The pre-English name of Dorchester on Thames', *Studia Celtica* 40 (2006), 51–62.

might be fruitful to examine them, not with a view to suggesting fresh derivations, but merely with a view to identifying those which lack a convincing derivation in Old English. Where so much is uncertain, collecting the data and perhaps identifying patterns is a necessary preliminary to attempts to solve individual problems.

What is evident from the two lists given in Appendix II is that survival of Romano-British settlement-names is well established, albeit in reduced form. However, it was not the norm, for the total of these survivals is at most 39 out of approximately 180 fort- or settlement-names attested in Roman-period England. (Wales and Scotland are not included in these figures, since they raise such different questions of continuity; nor are Romano-British names of rivers and other major natural features in England included, unless they seem to have survived as settlement-names in their own right.) So although these lists provide respectable and important evidence for survival of names, the rate of survival is not high, and as Colin Smith has noted, no name of a Roman villa or estate has survived as a place-name. Since we know the names of so few of those, that is not surprising, but the lack still forms an important part of the whole picture, and stands in marked contrast with Gaul.⁶⁸

Among the names which do show continuity, one point that sometimes occurs in discussion of them is some problem in the phonology which makes the development of the name irregular. Occasionally the problem might be resolved if we could posit written influence upon the transmission of the name. Names where that hypothesis might help include Binchester (*Vinovium*), Brougham (*Brocavum*) and Catterick (*Cataractonium*); also Loughor (*Leucarum*), in Wales (PNRB, pp. 504, 284, 304 and 388). There may be no more than half a dozen such names, but combined they might make a case for not ruling out entirely the possibility of written influence.⁶⁹ But in most surviving names such influence is unnecessary.

Ten of the *-cæster* names showing survival of a Romano-British name, listed at the end of Appendix II (i) (pp. 40–41), are known only from medieval documents, and have not survived to modern times, being replaced mostly by names lacking *-cæster*. In three of these names (York, Reculver, Richborough) the Romano-British name has survived, but

⁶⁸ Smith, 'Survival of Romano-British toponymy', p. 27.

⁶⁹ Compare remarks of Smith, 'Survival of Romano-British toponymy', pp. 32–33.

without *-cæster*; in the other seven cases the Romano-British name has been lost (Bath, Chester-le-Street, Canterbury, Pevensey, Tadcaster, St Albans, and Bradwell-on-Sea). The history of these seven names could be taken to suggest that the Anglo-Saxons originally borrowed rather more in the way of place-names from the British, but subsequently lost or replaced them; and, hence, that the replacement of Brittonic by Germanic names occurred not at the period of settlement but at a later date. However, there are other interpretations of this limited material. Some of the ten names showing temporary survival are found primarily or solely in Bede. It is possible that he could have created them himself, knowing the written forms and using the parallels which existed; his purpose might have been to steer the onomasticon so as to create a continuity between the Roman past and the Anglo-Saxons. For some other places Bede used the Latin name itself, such as *Eboracum* for York. He seems to have had access to written sources for some places, mainly in northern England, for which he used Romano-British names, such as *Campodunum* near Leeds, *Calcaria* (Tadcaster), *Cataracta* (Catterick), and *Durobriva* (Rochester, K) (PNRB, pp. 293 and 348).⁷⁰

A similar question of continuity arises from the important corpus of names published by Barrie Cox, those place-names recorded in Anglo-Saxon sources down to 731, including Bede.⁷¹ The material listed by Cox contains a comparatively high proportion of Brittonic (or partly Brittonic) place-names, 32 out of 224 names, or 14%.⁷² The question therefore arises whether this material suggests that the Anglo-Saxons originally borrowed a larger number of Brittonic names than we now have. Cox did not draw that conclusion himself, and he pointed out that the high proportion of ecclesiastical sites named in these earliest sources may have caused an imbalance towards Brittonic names in the list, compared with a comparable selection of secular names.

Moreover, it has already been noted that the Anglo-Saxons borrowed names of important towns and other existing settlements; since the names in these earliest records include many of the most important places, such

⁷⁰ Similarly Gelling has suggested that *Acemannesceastre* for Bath, found only in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, was a learned form, not in local use (*Place-Names in the Landscape* (London: Dent, 1984), p. 13).

⁷¹ B. Cox, 'The place-names of the earliest English records', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 8 (1975–76), 12–66.

⁷² Cox, 'The place-names of the earliest English records', pp. 53 and 56–57.

as London, York and Lincoln, the list would be expected to show a high proportion of Brittonic names, compared with a list including typical quantities of lesser place-names. In terms of demonstrating continuity from British to Anglo-Saxons, the name of a major town is less significant than the name of a lesser estate.

Thirdly, owing to the uneven coverage of these earliest English sources, Cox's corpus of names is uneven in its distribution, with hardly any examples in East Anglia; even the names of the Saxon-Shore forts in that region are absent from Cox's list, although present in other areas. East Anglia is also very lacking in Brittonic names. If more names from that very Germanic area had been present in the material, they might have reduced the proportion of Brittonic names in the corpus, giving it a higher proportion of Germanic ones. Overall, therefore, the list of names recorded down to 731 does not lend support to a hypothesis that higher numbers of Brittonic names were borrowed to begin with, to be gradually replaced later.

Alan James has suggested a refinement of such a hypothesis, based upon changes in settlement-patterns which occurred in much of (especially lowland) Britain in the eighth to twelfth centuries.⁷³ He suggests that initially the Anglo-Saxons may have borrowed many more Brittonic place-names, replacing them with Germanic ones only during these later centuries because of the changes in settlement at that period. However, at present it is not clear that Cox's data would support this theory either. As already seen, only 14% of his pre-731 settlement-names were Brittonic, so the corpus does not indicate extensive borrowing in the early period. Moreover, of the 194 settlement-names in Cox's corpus, at most about 43 have now been lost (including ones which refer to settlements still inhabited, but now known by other names). These figures mean that changes in settlement during the Anglo-Saxon period did not involve loss of settlement-names on a scale sufficient to suggest that the overall onomasticon would have looked very different before the eighth century. Clearly more work is needed on this interesting suggestion, but at present it does not account for the absence of Brittonic names in most of England.

The types of places in England having Brittonic names are not

⁷³ A. James, review of Cavill and Broderick (eds), *Language Contact in the Place-Names of Britain and Ireland* in *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 3 (2009), 135–58 (pp. 145–47), with reference to Coates, 'Invisible Britons'.

restricted to major natural features and Roman towns and forts. Among lesser places with clearly Brittonic names, it is still mainly ones of some administrative or economic significance which appear, such as Anglo-Saxon estates, Domesday manors, and parishes. This suggested principle, that Brittonic names tend to belong to places of some administrative significance, means that the type of place to which a name belongs is one factor to be considered in deciding whether a name is likely to be Brittonic.⁷⁴ If a place was not of administrative significance in the central Middle Ages, then the burden of proof for a suggested Brittonic derivation is greater; for example, good parallels within the Brittonic world itself. There may be a danger of circular reasoning here: in order to have a convincing Brittonic derivation, a name must usually be well attested in the written record; but places which are well attested were usually ones of some administrative significance. However, the documentary record does contain some names of lesser places, and when these occasionally have a good Brittonic derivation there may be particular circumstances to explain the exception.

The principle is not uniformly applicable. It probably applies most strongly in the south and east, and less clearly in parts of the north-western counties, where there are examples of a few minor settlement-names and even field-names which may be Brittonic.⁷⁵ There may be several reasons for this variability, including the later immigration, already mentioned, by speakers of Cumbric into north-west England. In Lancashire such names can alternatively sometimes be attributed to Welsh immigration in the central Middle Ages. The minor settlement-name Alkincoats (in Whalley parish), if it is Brittonic at all, would be proclaimed by its form to be such a Welsh import, though it is not in the area of known Welsh settlement;⁷⁶ however, it is more likely to belong with the other (English) names in *-coat(s)*, etc., in the same parish and elsewhere in Lancashire.⁷⁷

A Brittonic place-name recently suggested in Devon, Olchard ('hole-wood', *toll* + **kēd*), flouts this principle, since medieval documentation for it is lacking at present, and its first known appearance is as a local

⁷⁴ Compare Ekwall, *Dictionary*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

⁷⁵ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 281–86, 316–19 and 338.

⁷⁶ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 218–19; Edmonds, 'Twelfth-century migration'.

⁷⁷ E. Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922), p. 9.

surname in 1332 (Walter *Tolchet*), which is far from the kind of attestation to be expected of a convincing Brittonic place-name.⁷⁸ However, in this instance the Brittonic parallels are excellent (Welsh *Tyllgoed* ‘hole-wood’, and comparable names in Cornwall, Lancashire, Somerset and Brittany); the topography suits the suggested derivation; the location itself is typical of an ancient settlement, similar to those of Domesday manors in Devon and Cornwall; and it may be the lack of recent work on medieval records in Devon, and perhaps the corruption that the name has undergone, which are responsible for its lack of a recorded history at present.

Two other names which appear to violate this suggested principle are Winfield Bank (K), probably the *Vagniacis* of the Antonine Itinerary (British **wāgn*- ‘marsh’ + OE *ge-fall* ‘fall, (?) felled area’), and *Chetwde*, given as a lost field-name in Yorkshire.⁷⁹ In making his suggestion about Winfield Bank, Cullen has noted that it is a rarity in that respect;⁸⁰ since Winfield is attested in 1199 and again in the thirteenth century, it might be interesting to note what kind of place it was at that period. Similarly with *Chetwde* 12th (Brittonic **kēd* ‘wood’ + OE *wudu*): lost names classified under ‘field-names’ in the volumes of the Survey can include names of important places, now disappeared. Here it would be desirable to ascertain whether the name referred to a major wood, like Chute Forest in Wiltshire and Hampshire, or to a settlement (now lost) as Chetwode (Bu) does. Or the name may belong with the greater incidence of minor places having Brittonic names in the north-western counties. Overall, more work is needed on the kinds of places to which definite Brittonic names refer, in order to ascertain the validity of this suggested principle in different parts of the country.

There can be other reasons why Brittonic elements appear at the level of field-names and minor settlement-names, without necessarily violating the general principle. The frequency of minor settlement-names containing Crook, Creech, etc., usually ascribed to Brittonic *crūg*, suggests that this word was borrowed into English dialect, perhaps only for naming purposes. Judging by the variety of forms, it may even have

⁷⁸ Padel, ‘Two Devonshire place-names’, pp. 119–22.

⁷⁹ Cullen, ‘*Vagniacis* and Winfield’; EPNS WRY 4, p. 122 (not in Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, p. 344); Pennyquick (K) may be a third such name (note 38, above).

⁸⁰ Cullen, ‘*Vagniacis* and Winfield’, p. 99.

been borrowed into English more than once in different areas, or once borrowed have spread into areas which also show it in another form.⁸¹ The element *penn* ‘head’ also appears in a considerable number of minor settlement-names in western counties; these are discussed below (pp. 32–33).

The name Idoer (W) appears once as an ancient stream-name (now Brinkworth Brook), and ten times as separate nineteenth-century field-names, two of them on that particular stream.⁸² The pattern of attestations suggests that this was a single ancient Brittonic stream-name (presumably containing **duvr* ‘water’), which subsequently spread, perhaps in the early-modern period, by re-application as either a field-name or a stream-name. The pattern would be similar to that of Delabole, in east Cornwall (SX0784), a Domesday manor (*Deliov*) with a large and well-known slate-quarry. Its full name is attested from 1284 *Delyou Bol*, and it recurs as a field-name in at least twenty-eight Cornish parishes, mainly in the eastern half of the county, from the late sixteenth century onwards.⁸³ The reason for the re-application is not clear: although lesser slate quarries might have been named after the famous one, it is unlikely that all these fields did contain small slate quarries. In the case of Idoer (W) some comparable modern re-application of the ancient stream-name may be responsible for the recurrent later field-name.

One outstanding exception to the general principle is the name of a pass in Cumberland, Trusmadoor, which has been convincingly explained by Diana Whaley as equivalent to Welsh **Drysfa* ‘door-place’ (plus English *door*). The earliest attestation so far found for this name is no older than 1867.⁸⁴ This probable Brittonic name is wholly exceptional in the lateness of its appearance; but the greater incidence, already noted, of

⁸¹ See above, p. 6; compare Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, pp. 137–39; M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, Shaun Tyas, 2000, repr. with corrections, 2003), pp. 159–63; Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 269 and 350; Probert, ‘Mapping early medieval language change’, map on p. 236, shows south-western examples of **crūg*.

⁸² Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 93–94 and map on p. 116; further local detail in EPNS W, pp. 2–4, 69 and 74, and Ekwall, *River-Names*, pp. 208–09.

⁸³ Padel, *Popular Dictionary*, p. 78; O. J. Padel, ‘Fields called *Denabole*’, *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* 36 (1987–91), 145–47.

⁸⁴ D. Whaley, *A Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2006), pp. 348–49 and plate 1; Whaley, ‘Trusmadoor and other Cumbrian “pass” words’, *Nomina* 24 (2001), 77–95; there do not seem to be comparable examples of **Drysfa* ‘door-place’ from Wales itself or from other Brittonic areas.

Brittonic minor names generally in Cumberland provides a context.

Thus in order to assess whether a particular name in England is likely to be a Brittonic one (whether ancient or due to medieval in-migration), it has to be studied, not as an isolated phonological specimen, but in the context of the other names of the area in which it occurs, including even the field-names in some cases. Factors which may help to classify a name may usually include the kind of place to which it refers, in the context of kindred information for other Brittonic names (if any) in the same area, and the kind of documentation in which the name appears, as well as the frequency, type and phonology of other Brittonic names in the same area.

Single-element Brittonic names

Many of the accepted Celtic names within England consist of a single Brittonic element, or one combined with an Old English generic, sometimes tautologically or roughly so: for example, Chute (Forest), Bre(don), the Rivers Avon, the various places called Crich, Crook, etc., Liss (Ha), and names in *Eccles*(-). To understand these names one looks first to the Brittonic regions. There are few parallels for such names in Cornwall (two places called Bray, and two called Brea, but none called *Pen*, *Cos*, *Cruk* or *Eglos*);⁸⁵ in Wales some of these single-element names are paralleled, others not: there are no examples of simplex Afon, Bre, or Pen, but there are numerous woods, and a few farms or hamlets, called Coed, tumuli called (Y) Crug, and a dozen places called Lllys 'court'. These names tend to be first attested in the nineteenth century and do not seem likely to be much older. The simplex names suggested by the English names Avon, Pen- and Eccles seem to be unparalleled in the Brittonic world. The paralleled and unparalleled names imply different types of explanation for the English names. In addition, some of these single-word Brittonic names in England form a special category, since the very words were used apparently in different ways from their known Brittonic uses.

Theoretically some of these simplex names might have arisen from common nouns (appellatives) in Brittonic which were mistaken for names by the Anglo-Saxons, rather than having been simplex Brittonic place-names in their own right. However, these two alternatives are not the only possibilities. In the case of **eglēs* it is still uncertain which language the

⁸⁵ CPNE, pp. 30, 67, 74 and 91.

Eccles- names were originally given in, let alone their significance. As for *penn*, some English place-name authorities consider that this Brittonic element has the meaning ‘hill’ in England; if so, this word had a different meaning as well as usage in English from that of the Brittonic languages (see below).

Richard Coates has suggested an intermediate position for some of these names:

the English took over monomorphemic Brittonic words for landscape features as if they were proper names, possibly many times over, in such a way that no new lexical item of the relevant form entered English. [...] most items that were borrowed were understood as being used in order to make reference, but not as denoting; they named, but had in most instances no lexical status.⁸⁶

This subtle approach is very helpful; the suggestion is that these words were not necessarily encountered as names in Brittonic, but were used by the Anglo-Saxons to form names. That is not the same thing as saying that the Anglo-Saxons mistakenly thought that they were Brittonic names, although that too is possible in some cases: rather, a Brittonic word was borrowed and used in Old English as a simplex name, sometimes differently from its usage in Brittonic, but it did not become available for use in any other way in Old English. It was because **Bre* did not mean ‘hill’ to the Anglo-Saxons, or only so as a Brittonic word, that it was available to them as a simplex name. Thus such names, according to this analysis, would be ones given by speakers of Old English, but deliberately using a ‘native’ word. One can envisage colonists in Africa or Australia doing something similar with topographical terms used by the indigenous peoples: getting the right meaning, or approximately so, but applying it slightly differently to make their own names: the use of ‘loch’ in standard English to refer to specific sites in Scotland, or the Australian adoption of ‘billabong’ might provide approximate parallels, though in both these cases the words are used as (specialized) appellatives. Closer still might be the way in which Celtic generics were used, sometimes with Latin personal names, to coin names for Roman places, such as *Caesaromagus* (Chelmsford, Ess) and (on the Continent) *Augustodunum*

⁸⁶ Coates, ‘The significances of Celtic place-names’, pp. 72–73; Coates, ‘Invisible Britons’, pp. 48–49.

(PNRB, pp. 22–23 and 287–88).⁸⁷

The situation is slightly more complicated for words which do occur widely as simplex names in Wales, notably *coed* and *crug* of the elements found thus in England. Even within a single language there can be uncertainty about what precisely constitutes a proper name (e.g. ‘the street corner’; see Coates below, pp. 138–43), and the precise status of the numerous examples of Coed and (Y) Crug in Wales, referring to a wood or a tumulus, is open to question. It seems likely that these are mostly very recent names, and dependent upon the living language to serve as casual local descriptions. For this purpose Cornwall stands in an intermediate position between Wales and most of England, since the Brittonic language has been dead there for several centuries in most of the western half, and for rather longer in the east; so there are no examples at all of *cos* ‘wood’ or *cruc* ‘tumulus’ as simplex names, presumably because in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the language was already too weak to create or use minor names of this type, such that they could have been recorded as place-names by the surveyors in about 1800.⁸⁸

However, Coates explicitly excluded some single-element Brittonic names from his discussion, recognizing that his explanation need not apply to all such formations. Avon is an example: in Welsh this word means ‘river’, but it never occurs as a name; the river-name occurs in south-west England and central Scotland.⁸⁹ In this case it has been significantly pointed out that if we are dealing with a common noun which was mistaken as a name by the Anglo-Saxons, then the Romans made the same mistake, since we find one example of *Abona*, both river and settlement, in Roman Britain.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the full word *avon*, including the suffix *-on-*, does not seem to have cognates outside

⁸⁷ A. L. F. Rivet, ‘Celtic names and Roman places’, *Britannia* 11 (1980), 1–19.

⁸⁸ There is one farm now called Engoyse ‘the wood’ (Wendron parish), reduced from older *Coiscuntell* 1556 ‘gathering-wood’; and two farms called Crugoes, Cregoe (plural **Crugou* ‘tumuli’): CPNE, pp. 67, 76 and 74.

⁸⁹ See the map in PNRB, p. 239; also James, ‘Brittonic language in the Old North’, s.v. *āβ*. It is unclear whether early forms make the Scottish names definitely Brittonic **avon*, not Gaelic *abhainn*: J. B. Johnston, *Place-Names of Scotland*, 3rd edn (London: Murray, 1934), p. 94.

⁹⁰ VEPN I, p. 3; Rivet and Smith, PNRB, p. 239, say that the river-name also occurs in Gaul ‘though little mentioned in the classical sources’ – seemingly not at all, in fact.

P-Celtic, as either a word or a name.⁹¹ This fact, combined with the pre-English existence of *Abona* as a name, suggests that this word may actually have originated as a river-name, from the wider-occurring Indo-European root *ab-* plus the Celtic suffix *-on-*; and that it was only later that it became generalized in Welsh (less clearly in Cornish and Breton) to give a common noun meaning ‘river’.⁹² This theory would be compatible with the various pieces of evidence. However, I have not found any close parallels to the suggestion that a recurrent place-name might have become a common noun.

The *Eccles* names are odd in several ways, both the simplex examples and the names in which it is compounded with an English word. It may be doubted whether they all have the same derivation, and it is open to question whether the names usually cited as examples of this element do all represent Brittonic **eglēs* or an Old English reflex of that.⁹³ In Cornwall at least it is doubtful whether the word was used to form place-names, either simplex or qualified, in the early post-Roman centuries, as it would need to have been elsewhere in England in order to have entered into Brittonic place-names.⁹⁴ The repeated nature of some of the English compounds in *Eccles-*, particularly the four examples in which it is compounded with Old English *halh* ‘nook, corner’ (Eccleshall, etc.), is

⁹¹ Gaelic *abhainn* is not etymologically equivalent, and was originally the dative case of Old Irish *ab* ‘river’: W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1926), p. 430; R. Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1946), p. 213; J. Vendryes and others, *Lexique étymologique de l’irlandais ancien* (Dublin and Paris: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1959–), pp. A4–5.

⁹² This suggestion replaces the account given in CPNE, pp. 13–14; in Cornish and Breton the common-noun *avon* occurs only in glossaries, and the usual Breton word for ‘river’ is *stêr*.

⁹³ K. Cameron, ‘Eccles in English place-names’, in K. Cameron (ed.), *Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1975), pp. 1–7; Gelling, *Signposts* (1978), pp. 83 and 96–99; C. Hough, ‘Eccles in English and Scottish place-names’, in E. Quinton (ed.), *The Church in English Place-Names* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2009), pp. 109–24; A. James, ‘**Eglēs/Eclēs* and the formation of Northumbria’, in Quinton (ed.), *The Church in English Place-Names*, pp. 125–50.

⁹⁴ A. Preston-Jones, ‘Decoding Cornish churchyards’, *Cornish Archaeology* 33 (1994), 71–95 (p. 81); O. J. Padel, ‘Christianity in medieval Cornwall: Celtic aspects’, in N. Orme (ed.), *Victoria County History of Cornwall II: Religious History to 1560* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2010), pp. 110–25 (p. 119a); and the word is virtually unknown as a formative element in Brittany, where it might have been expected to occur if it was in use in Britain at an early date.

suspicious.⁹⁵

Names in Eccles were omitted from the maps in *Celtic Voices*, on the grounds that *eglēs was considered, along with penn and one or two other elements, to be among the few words actually borrowed into Old English.⁹⁶ Without necessarily endorsing that suggestion, it is suggested here that Eccles names have actually received too much attention as possible Brittonic names. There is a recurrent stream-name in England of this form, appearing in two Ecclesbournes;⁹⁷ two lost instances of Ecclesbroc;⁹⁸ Ecchinswell in Hampshire;⁹⁹ Eccleswall (i.e. ‘well’) in Herefordshire;¹⁰⁰ Eccles cumb in Somerset;¹⁰¹ Ecclesdo c. 1180, a stream in Yorkshire;¹⁰² and in County Durham Eggleston (*Egleston*’ 1197) and Eggleshope (*Egleshope* c. 1160×85) are on a stream called Egesburne (*sic*) in c. 1160×83, now Great and Little Eggleshope Beck and Eggleston Burn.¹⁰³ Although Ekwall cited only five of these nine names, he observed, ‘The common occurrence of Eccles- in stream-names is remarkable’. He considered possible English derivations for the names, including a personal name *Eccel and OE ecels ‘additional land’, along with Brittonic *eglēs, but no derivation explains the recurrence in stream-names.¹⁰⁴ There is also a River Egel in Glamorganshire.¹⁰⁵ If -es- were an

⁹⁵ Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 130: the four instances are ‘perhaps not beyond the bounds of coincidence’.

⁹⁶ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 272–73.

⁹⁷ EPNS Db, p. 7; that in EPNS Sx, p. 507, has late and variable forms; note also Ecclesden (not nearby), EPNS Sx, p. 165, where an OE personal name *Eccel is accepted, though a name in *eglēs has been suggested by R. Coates, *Toponymic Topics: Essays on the Early Toponymy of the British Isles* (Brighton: Younsmere, 1988), pp. 48–51.

⁹⁸ In Worcestershire 8th (11th–12th) S 142 (also in S 1372), and in Middlesex 962 S 702, at Ashford, *Ecelesford* 969 (c.1100), EPNS Mx, pp. 11–12.

⁹⁹ *Eccleswelle* 1086; situated on *Ec(e)lesburna* in 931 (12th), S 412: R. Coates, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (London: Batsford, 1989), p. 70.

¹⁰⁰ B. Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names* (Oxford: BAR, 1989), p. 130.

¹⁰¹ In the bounds of Corston in 956 (12th) S 593.

¹⁰² EPNS WRY 2, p. 229; -do is obscure.

¹⁰³ NY9531 to NY9825; derived by V. Watts, *A Dictionary of County Durham Place-Names* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2002), p. 39, from the genitive of the personal name *Ecgwulf*.

¹⁰⁴ Ekwall, *English River-Names*, p. 141; E. Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), s.v. Ecchinswell.

¹⁰⁵ SN7107: Breeze in *Celtic Voices*, pp. 142–44, suggests that these English names contain the name of a supposed Celtic hero *Echel*, in an English genitival form.

English genitive in these names, one could compare the syntax of *Auenes broc* ‘stream called *Aven*’ in Dorset;¹⁰⁶ but it would be most improbable for a stream-name to appear in the genitive so consistently in all these various names.

Kenneth Cameron excluded these stream-names from his discussion of *Eccles* names, and they have remained largely divorced from that corpus in subsequent discussion;¹⁰⁷ but he also pointed out that even the names in his reduced corpus are all located close to rivers or streams, except for one on the coast.¹⁰⁸ In the context of these stream-names some of the names in Cameron’s corpus might deserve to be reconsidered, for instance the Eccleshalls. Gelling and Cole cite some examples of *halh* compounded with river-names, though no repeated examples;¹⁰⁹ and they additionally say that a high proportion of *halh* names have obscure first elements, depending upon how charitable one is about possible personal names which also appear in many *halh* names.¹¹⁰ Perhaps a better understanding of *halh*, and of other English words compounded with *Eccles*, might help with understanding *Eccles* itself; the conclusions in the most recent account of *halh* do not suggest an explanation of why it should regularly have been combined with a word meaning ‘British church’;¹¹¹ and one recent suggestion of the meaning of **eglēs*, ‘land belonging to a (British) church’, seems to have developed partly out of the ‘administrative’ sense of *halh* invoked by Margaret Gelling, ‘piece of land projecting from, or detached from, the main area of its administrative unit’.¹¹² Taking the whole corpus together, it is at least worth considering whether some or most of the names currently considered to derive from Brittonic **eglēs* contain instead some English word, perhaps a personal name or stream-name.

For some one-word Brittonic place-names another suggestion can be

¹⁰⁶ 10th (14th) S 573, EPNS Do 1, p. 30.

¹⁰⁷ Cameron, ‘Eccles in English place-names’, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Cameron, ‘Eccles in English place-names’, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, pp. 129–30.

¹¹⁰ Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, pp. 127–28.

¹¹¹ P. Stiles, ‘Old English *halh*, “slightly raised ground isolated by marsh”’, in A. R. Rumble and A. D. Mills (eds), *Names, Places and People: An Onomastic Miscellany in Memory of John McNeal Dodgson* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1997), pp. 330–44.

¹¹² James, ‘**Eglēs/Eclēs* and the formation of Northumbria’; Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, pp. 100 and 109.

made, perhaps especially for those with a tautologous English element added, the Chetwood and Bredon types. The explanation arises from a phrase in a Somerset charter purportedly of the seventh century, where a hill now called Creechbarrow (ST247255), outside Taunton, is specified by two names:

Et tres cassatos in australi parte amnis Tan ad insulam juxta collem qui dicitur brittannica lingua **Cructan** apud nos **Crycbeorh**, et hec pars telluris evidentissimis cingitur limitibus, habet enim ab austro Blacanbroc, ab aquilone Tan.¹¹³

And three hides [of land] on the south side of the River Tone, at the island by the hill called *Cructan* in the British language, *Crycbeorh* among us, and this piece of the land is surrounded by very visible bounds, for it has Black Brook on the south, Tone on the north.

The charter, in its sixteenth-century copy, is not beyond question, but this clause within it must presumably be derived from an early text. The contrast seen in *brittannica lingua ... apud nos ...* is unparalleled in England, though there is an approximate parallel in eighth-century Scotland, *in loco qui sermone Pictorum Peanfahel, lingua autem Anglorum Penneltun appellatur* ‘in the place called *Peanfahel* in the speech of the Picts, but *Penneltun* in that of the Angles’.¹¹⁴ This uniqueness within England is itself symptomatic of the general Anglo-Saxon reluctance to engage fully with Brittonic place-names. The clause does not necessarily constitute evidence that Brittonic was still a living language in that part of Somerset in the later seventh century, though it does suggest that it had been so fairly recently, within the previous two or three generations.

It is the names within the phrase that are especially illuminating. The Brittonic name here is a standard two-element name-phrase, with the generic element, **crūg*, in first position, and the qualifier, the river-name Tone, in second. The structure means that the name inevitably incorporates a certain amount of Brittonic syntax, and in English such a name has a foreignness and awkwardness which discourages its adoption

¹¹³ ‘672’ (for 682?) (16th), S 237; W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 4 vols (London: Whiting, 1885–99), no. 62 (Glastonbury); Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, pp. 159–61, with illustrations.

¹¹⁴ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, I, 12; B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds), *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 42; now Kinneil, West Lothian, NS9880; compare Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, pp. 346–48.

as a name in its entirety. It is stressed on the second syllable, not because individual Brittonic words were stressed on the final syllable (although they were at that date), but because the qualifying element takes the stress, irrespective of the stress in polysyllabic words. *Cruc Tan* is really two separate words, and probably sounded so, rather than as a unified name. The Saxons seem to have borrowed only the first word, **crūg*, then added their own word, *beorh*, which in this case, whether by chance or intention, is synonymous or nearly so. The fact that the Anglo-Saxons recognized the second word as the local river-name might have helped to make the syntax clear, which might in turn have made that element seem separable and encouraged its omission. Partial adoption of this kind might be considered to explain some other tautologous compounds, and perhaps other single-element names as well. The term ‘grudged’ or ‘reluctant borrowing’ might describe this type of partial adoption. Such borrowing is quite distinct from the reduced forms of some polysyllabic Romano-British names, since (as seen earlier) in those names the reduction of the original name to a single syllable seems to have taken place long after the date of borrowing, whereas in *Cructan* becoming *Crycbeorh* the dropping of the second Brittonic element seems to have been inherent in the act of borrowing.

It is also worth noting that in this case the single word, **Crūg* or **Cryc*, does not seem ever to have existed as a name in its own right. It went straight from being the first (generic) element in a Brittonic name-phrase, *Cruc Tan*, to become the first (specific) element in an Old English name, *Crycbeorh*. Thus the latter name does not mean ‘hill near to (a settlement called) **Cryc*’, but ‘hill which we [the Saxons] call *Cryc*’ (note the hyphen). Such an interpretation is compatible with Coates’s suggestion, that common generic elements were sometimes adopted, perhaps comprehendingly, for the purposes of forming English names but without being borrowed as ordinary words into the language; and such partially-borrowed names would constitute a particular sub-type within Coates’s general scheme of words borrowed for name-forming purposes.

There are two cautions concerning such an extrapolation from this unique name. It does not help with the Avon names, since even if Primitive Welsh **avon* did actually mean ‘river’, it is very unlikely that rivers were named as *Avon X* in Brittonic at this early period, although

that has previously been suggested:¹¹⁵ such names do not appear in Wales until the late Middle Ages.¹¹⁶

Second, the question would remain whether this type of borrowing applied particularly to tautologous compounds (as in Creechbarrow), or also to other names in which a single Brittonic element is used on its own. This question raises additionally the difficult one of English names containing *Pen*. As mentioned earlier, some English authorities think that this word has the sense ‘hill’ in England, or at least ‘high ground’, perhaps ‘ridge’.¹¹⁷ If so, and names such as Pendle (La; *Pen-* + *hyll*), Inkpen (Brk), and Hackpen (D, W) support the idea, then the word was used in a sense not known in the Brittonic languages, where the word means not ‘hill’ but ‘head, top, end’, corresponding to Old English *hēafod*, not to *hyll* or *dūn*, and does not occur as a simplex place-name. The *pen* element in such names can hardly, as it stands, have been a Brittonic place-name, for Brittonic *penn* on its own does not make good sense as a name: describing a place as a ‘head’ or ‘end’ begs the question, of what.¹¹⁸ It might make sense to hypothesize that *Pen-* in some names was originally the generic word in Brittonic name-phrases of which the qualifier was dropped (as in *Cructan*, above). The kind of name in which this could be envisaged happening is *Peon mynet* ‘the end of the hill’, found in an eleventh-century charter-text for Culmstock, in north-east Devon.¹¹⁹ One can envisage such a name being half-borrowed, along the lines of *Crycbeorh*, to become English *Pen Hill, although no such name is known in that area.

However, that explanation would still not necessarily account for the frequency of the specific combination *penn* + *hyll*, of which there are at least ten instances, including some minor and field-names.¹²⁰ We should

¹¹⁵ Henry Bradley, cited in Ekwall, *River-Names*, p. 23.

¹¹⁶ Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd*, pp. 125 and 164, and ‘Enwau afonydd â’r ôl-ddodiad -wy’, p. 131; also loose compounds in poetry: *Byrri avon*, *Certenhin avon* (Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd*, pp. 130 and 203).

¹¹⁷ Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, pp. 210–13.

¹¹⁸ Similarly OE *hēafod* (EPNE, I, p. 237) and Irish *cenn* seem not to occur as simplex place-names.

¹¹⁹ S 386; EPNS D, pp. 612n., 617; Cornish Penmenna etc., CPNE, pp. 163 and 178. The charter is attributed to King Athelstan but dated 670 (!); *Peon mynet* itself probably referred to Culmstock Beacon ST110150.

¹²⁰ Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*: Pen Hill (Gl, three, p. 299), Pendle(-) (La, two, p. 319), Penhill (Y, two, pp. 343 and 345), perhaps Penhill (D, p. 293), Pen Hill (Do,

need to suppose, either that the English often part-borrowed Brittonic **Penn minið* ‘end of the hill’, but not other names in *Penn*- such as **Penn coid* ‘wood’s end’ or **Penn nant* ‘head of a valley’, where *hyll* would not have been a natural word to add; or that the English did misunderstand *penn* in such part-borrowed names as meaning ‘hill’, and added their own supposedly synonymous term. Alternatively, Brittonic *penn* may have been borrowed by the English as a formative element in the (incorrect) sense ‘hill’, and used by them to create tautologous place-names. It is notable that all of the names in *penn* + *hyll*, although they were created (perhaps entirely) by English-speakers, occur towards the western side of England, in counties where other Brittonic names are reasonably well attested, not in the eastern counties where Brittonic names are particularly rare. However, the areas where Brittonic names are better attested are also the hillier parts of the country, thus more likely to have names referring to hills; and, in addition, Gelling and Cole have suggested that perhaps *hyll* was not in use in the earliest period of the Anglo-Saxon settlement, which could also have contributed to the absence of these names from eastern counties. The names in *penn* + *hyll* may not all be of the same kind.

The unlocated place-name in eastern Devon or western Somerset or Dorset, found in the Chronicle (s.a. 658) as *æt Peonnum* ‘at the *Pens*’, is instructive in this context. *Pen* is used here as an Old English word, in an inflected plural simplex name, a thoroughly Anglo-Saxon formation, as if understood in some sense; but, in accordance with Coates’s analysis, that need not mean that it was actually borrowed into Old English as an ordinary word.

Other Brittonic words for ‘hill’ provide clearer examples of tautologous compounds. There are three or four instances of **bre* plus *dūn*;¹²¹ but only one, very uncertain, instance of **bre* plus *hyll*;¹²² **crūg* recurs with *hyll* and *beorh*, but there is only one instance of it with *dūn*.¹²³

p. 295), and *Penhul* (field, Db, p. 289).

¹²¹ Bredon Lane (D), Bredon on the Hill (Le), Bredon (Wo), and possibly Brydonhill, field (Cu): Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 285, 292, 320 and 341.

¹²² Brill (Bu): Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, p. 278.

¹²³ Crook Hill and perhaps *the Cruckhill*, field (Db), Church Hill (Gl), Crouch Hill (O), Churchill (Wo, two), and perhaps Crook Hill (W), Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 288, 298, 325, 339 and 341; Creechbarrow (So) and Crookbarrow Hill (Wo), Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, pp. 332 and 341; Churchdown (Gl), Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, p. 298.

There seems to be no example of a name composed of *penn* + *dūn*.¹²⁴ Whether or not the names in *Pen* + *hyll* suggest that *hyll* was felt (by the English) to be a suitable generic for names in *Pen*-, at any rate *dūn* apparently was not. It is possible that further study of the differences between the various words for 'hill' in Old English might illuminate the meaning ascribed (by speakers of Old English) to Brittonic *penn*.

Thus the names in England which contain a single Brittonic topographical word, often one which is used widely as a generic in Brittonic name-phrases, are not all of one kind. Various processes were involved in the borrowing and use of these names and words by the Anglo-Saxons, and these processes, although not fully understood, make the names some of the most illuminating data for considering such limited linguistic interaction as the evidence suggests between the two peoples.

Attitudes to Brittonic names

The final matter to be considered is different attitudes to Brittonic place-names in England, especially as evidence for the Anglo-Saxon settlement and possible Brittonic survival. Approaches to the place-names will be affected by opinions concerning that wider issue. There have been many attempts to assert that there are rather larger numbers of Brittonic place-names in England than have generally been recognized. The claim can take two main forms. The extreme one is that large numbers of English-looking place-names are actually folk-etymologized Brittonic names, reinterpreted as English (for instance, that English *-ton* is actually Modern Welsh *ton* 'grassland', or that names in OE *-dūn* are derived from Brittonic *din* 'fort'). Much more reasonably, the suggestion has been made that since English toponymists usually, and necessarily, come to their research from a background in English philology, they will try to explain a difficult name within Germanic, rather than looking to Brittonic.¹²⁵

The more extreme claim hardly needs refuting. It involves ignoring the basic methods of place-name study, the use of early spellings and the comparative principle. Margaret Gelling's later work provides important

¹²⁴ Pendown (Co) SW760488 is a nineteenth-century creation, on land which was still downs (rough grazing) in the seventeenth century.

¹²⁵ For example, Coates, 'Significances', p. 48.

confirmation that for most names the long-established English etymologies are correct: the precise and consistent shades of meanings which she has established for different topographical elements in Old English would not exist, if many of the names in which they appear were actually reinterpreted corruptions of earlier Brittonic names. Additional refutation of such wayward theories is obtained from examining the qualifying (specific) elements in the names, which mostly are consistently meaningful words in Old English, or attested or reasonably reconstructed personal names; and is also shown by the implausible nature of the Brittonic names which are hypothesized, when compared with genuine names from the Celtic world, ancient and modern.

The more reasonable assertion can be answered, first, by suggesting that there has also been a counter-tendency to ascribe to Brittonic any name that cannot easily be explained as English; the strained appearance, to a Celticist, of some of the names appearing in Appendix I (pp. 38–39) is symptomatic of this tendency. The choice whether to struggle within Germanic or Celtic to explain a difficult name may be due as much to individual preference as to academic background. Second, efforts over the last two decades to redress the balance of Brittonic names in England have produced few convincing examples of completely new Brittonic names previously considered to be Old English, again suggesting that the established results of the survey have been broadly accurate. Within any language there will be a few names which arise from irrecoverable, sometimes near-random, processes in which whim or other unknowable human factors may have played a part, producing names which are entirely opaque to subsequent generations, and not capable of being analysed by the rigorous methods necessary within onomastics. The nicknames of a children's playground may include one or two such names, and place-names can sometimes arise similarly. Not all obscure place-names in England are necessarily pre-English.

Conversely, one recent work has suggested that Brittonic names have never existed in the east of England, that area having been Germanic, rather than Celtic, from at least the Neolithic period.¹²⁶ This extraordinary claim seems to have arisen out of taking seriously the opinion expressed by some archaeologists, that there was no significant change in the population of England in the fifth and sixth centuries. Stephen

¹²⁶ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British* (London: Robinson, 2006).

Oppenheimer, who at least takes account of the linguistic evidence, has taken that position to its logical conclusion for a geneticist. He is (perhaps necessarily) imprecise about where in England the supposed boundary (genetic or linguistic) lay between Germanic and Celtic;¹²⁷ and also about when the Germanic peoples arrived: at times it seems to be the Neolithic, several millennia BC, or even the Mesolithic, earlier still.¹²⁸ However, his discussion of place-name evidence implies that many Roman-period place-names of England are of uncertain language, although he cites work which makes it clear that where identifiable they are thoroughly Celtic, and that none at all are Germanic.¹²⁹ The use which Oppenheimer makes of the linguistic evidence will make a non-scientific reader uneasy about his interpretation of the genetic evidence, especially in the knowledge that the same genetic data have also been interpreted very differently.¹³⁰ Perhaps the science of DNA-typing is still too young for its exciting and important conclusions to be applied confidently at present in relation to other disciplines. In the early days of an extremely important analytic tool, theories naturally have to be tried out; but this particular tool may not yet be able to offer more than speculations for use in other disciplines.¹³¹

The concluding question, therefore, is why many people would like there to be more Celtic place-names in England than scholars have generally recognized. There is something romantically attractive in the idea that names can be extremely ancient, placing us in verbal contact

¹²⁷ Welsh border, *Origins of the British*, pp. 4, 175, 301 and 405; Wessex and Stonehenge, pp. 272, 308–09 and 328; but Cornwall received both eastern and western genetic input, p. 308.

¹²⁸ Bronze Age or Neolithic, Oppenheimer, *Origins of the British*, pp. 105–06 and 355; Neolithic, pp. 232–33, 250–51, 269 and 382; Neolithic or earlier, pp. 213–14, 228–29, 301 and 308; Mesolithic, p. 245.

¹²⁹ Oppenheimer, *Origins of the British*, pp. 323–29; see also Gelling, *Signposts*, ch. 2, and D. N. Parsons, 'Classifying Ptolemy's English names', in D. N. Parsons and P. Sims-Williams (eds), *Ptolemy: Towards a Linguistic Atlas of the Earliest Celtic Place-Names of Europe* (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2000), pp. 169–78.

¹³⁰ Oppenheimer, *Origins of the British*, pp. 172 and 399–443.

¹³¹ In this rapidly-developing interdisciplinary topic the remarks of Patrick Sims-Williams remain sound: 'Genetics, linguistics, and prehistory: thinking big and thinking straight', *Antiquity* 72 (1998), 505–27, supplemented now by his 'Bronze- and Iron-Age Celtic-speakers: what don't we know, what can't we know, and what could we know? Language, genetics and archaeology in the twenty-first century', *The Antiquaries Journal* 92 (2012), 427–49.

with remote periods, as some names unquestionably do; and all onomasts are susceptible to the appeal of that concept. Additionally, many people do not like to think that the foundation of England may have been, in part, a violent process.¹³² The extent of native survival must have varied from region to region, yet the absence of any convincing evidence for significant linguistic influence of Brittonic upon Old English (e.g. syntax, vocabulary) suggests a lack of extensive linguistic intercourse between the populations.¹³³ In archaeological circles, for half a century, there has been a dominant assumption that Brittonic survival was widespread, that the archaeological evidence for it only needs documenting, and that the Anglo-Saxon invasions were limited to ‘small groups of Germanic lifestyle advisers’.¹³⁴ Partly that attitude was a reaction against an earlier overuse of simplistic invasion models. Perhaps it also arose out of misunderstanding or misrepresentation of contrary models of large-scale migrations, as if they must entail complete elimination of the population: yet in places where ethnic cleansing by colonists is attested within the historic period, such as (in different ways) the Americas and Australia, there has also been plenty of survival, with mixed marriages and other forms of intercourse; so evidence for survival is not evidence against a violent Anglo-Saxon settlement.¹³⁵

¹³² For example, Coates, ‘Significances’, p. 47, ‘expiation for the sins of my forefathers’, has light-heartedly captured a widespread, if usually unspoken, thought among English scholars.

¹³³ For unconvincing attempts to find syntactic influence see H. Tristram, ‘Why don’t the English speak Welsh?’ in Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 192–214, and references given there; contrast R. Coates, ‘Invisible Britons: the view from linguistics’, in Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 172–91.

¹³⁴ H. Härke, ‘The debate on migration and identity in Europe’ (review), *Antiquity* 78 (2004), 453–56 (p. 455).

¹³⁵ My warm thanks to Richard Coates, Alan James, and David Parsons for their comments upon this chapter, saving me from errors and omissions; they are naturally not responsible for remaining inaccuracies and infelicities.

Appendix I: Some suggested Brittonic derivations lacking parallels in the Brittonic world

A sample of Brittonic derivations which have been suggested for place-names in England, but for which no convincing parallel in the Celtic world has been found. The list is merely a selection of such names, and good parallels for some of these names may yet be found. For further detail and references, see Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*. English derivations, some similarly doubtful, have also been suggested for several of the names: see the entries in Ekwall, *Dictionary*, and CDEPN.

Arlosh (Cu): ‘facing burnt (land)’ (?) or ‘very-burnt (land)’ (?); compare Losk ‘burnt (land)’ (?) (Db): compare Welsh *llosg* ‘burning’?

Beccles (Sf): **Bach-lys* ‘small-court’ (?) (or OE *Bec-læs* ‘stream-pasture’)

Brailes (Wa): **bre* + *lys* ‘hill-court’ (?) (but Ekwall, *Dictionary*, suggests an English derivation; **bre-lys* rejected by Jackson, EPNS Db 3, p. viii, and by Gelling, *Signposts*); or compare Breazle (below)?

Breazle (D), *Breulishill*, *Brewlleshull* 1238: **Breu-lys* ‘generous-court’ (Modern Welsh *brau* ‘frail, refined, generous’), or **Briw-lys* ‘shattered-court’ (Modern Welsh *briw* ‘shattered’), or **Bryw-lys* ‘strong-court’ (Modern Welsh *bryw* ‘lively, strong’) (?) (all + OE *hyll*). For this name compare Brûlis (Morbihan, Brittany: 2 miles north of Muzillac, south-east of Vannes), spelt *Breulis*, *Broulis*, *Broolis* 11th–12th: Bernard Tanguy, in *Cartulaire de Redon*, edited by H. Guillotel and others, 2 vols (Rennes: Amis des Archives Historiques du diocèse de Rennes, Dol et Saint-Malo, 1998–2004), II, 69a.

Chard (So), *Cerdren* 1065 (15th–16th): Welsh *cerdinen* or *cerddinen* ‘(one) rowan-tree’ (?)

Charles (D), *Carmes* 1086, *Charnes* 1242 etc., *Charles* 1244 etc.: **Carn-lys* ‘rock-court’ (?)

Chinnock (So): compare Welsh *ciniog* ‘tattered’ (?)

Coslany (Nf): compare Welsh *cystlynedd* ‘relationship, kindred’ (?)

Croyde (D): compare Welsh *crud* ‘cradle’ (?)

Doult(ing) (So): Welsh *dylad* ‘flood’ (+ *-ing*²) (?)

Minety (W): Welsh *min* ‘edge, lip’ or *myn* ‘kid’ + *tŷ* ‘house’ (?)

Ower(moigne) (Do): compare (only?) (Bwlch) *Oerddrws* ‘(gap of) the cold-door’ (Merionethshire, SH7917); but an English derivation is suggested by Watts, CDEPN

Priddy (So): Welsh *pridd* + *tŷ* ‘clay-house(s)’ (?)

Tarnock (So): compare Tarnac (France) < **tarnāco-* ‘dry-place (?)’

Trusham (D): compare Welsh *drys* (OCo *dreis*) + *ma* ‘brambles-place’?

More plausibly perhaps compare Welsh **drysfa* ‘door-place, pass’ (cf. Trusmadoor, Cu)? But still with (different) problem in the vowel

Watchet (So): compare Welsh *go-* + *coed* ‘sub-wood’ (?)

Appendix II: Surviving Romano-British settlement-names

See the discussion (above, pp. 16–19). The list includes a few uncertain examples (Smith, ‘Survival of Romano-British toponymy’, pp. 31–32). Further details of the Romano-British names are given in PNRB, and of the later names in CDEPN.

(i) Survivals with OE **-cæster** added (28 or 29 examples)

Alauna (PNRB, p. 244): Alcester (Wa); compare Alchester (O; but no Romano-British name known there)

(?) *Bannovalium* ‘horn-strong (?)’ (PNRB, p. 265): Horncastle (Li; seemingly part-translated)

Branodunum (PNRB, p. 274): Brancaster (Nf)

Calleva (PNRB, p. 291): Silchester (Ha; Coates, *Toponymic Topics*, pp. 39–47)

Colonia (PNRB, p. 312): Colchester (Ess)

Corinium (PNRB, p. 321): Cirencester (Gl)

**Coriosopitum* (PNRB, p. 322): Corchester (Nb; also Corbridge)

Danum (PNRB, p. 329): Doncaster (Y)

Durnovaria (PNRB, p. 345): Dorchester (Do)

Durobrivae (PNRB, p. 346): Rochester (K)

Glevum (PNRB, p. 368): Gloucester

Isca (PNRB, p. 378): Exeter (D)

Longovicium (PNRB, p. 398): Lanchester (Du)

Mamucium (PNRB, p. 409): Manchester (La)

Manduessedum (PNRB p. 411): Mancetter (Wa)

Sorviodunum (PNRB, p. 461): Salisbury (W)

Venta (PNRB, p. 492): Winchester (Ha)

Vinovium (PNRB, p. 504): Binchester (Du)

Viroconium (PNRB, p. 505): Wroxeter (Sa)

Anderitum (PNRB, p. 250): *Andredescester* 890s ASChronicle A, s.a. 491 (= Pevensey, Sx)

Aquae Sulis (PNRB, p. 255): (on) *Acemannesceastre* 973 ASChronicle A (= Bath; Coates, *Toponymic Topics*, pp. 24–30)

Calcaria (PNRB, p. 288): *Kælcacaestir* 8th Bede (= Tadcaster, Y)

Concangis (PNRB, p. 314): *Kuncacester* c. 700 (9th) Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert (= Chester-le-Street, Du)

Durovernum (PNRB, p. 353): *Dorwitceaster* 1120s ASChronicle E, s.a. 604 (= Canterbury, K)
Eburacum (PNRB, p. 355): *Eoforwicceaster* (etc.) 890s+ ASChronicle ABC, Orosius, OEBeDe (= York)
Othona (PNRB, p. 434): *Ythancaestir* 8th Bede, *Effecestre* 1086 DB (= Bradwell-on-Sea, Ess)
Regulbium (PNRB, p. 446): *Raculfcestre* 784 (12th) S 38 (= Reculver, K)
Rutupiae (PNRB, p. 448): *Reptacaestir* 8th Bede (= Richborough, K)
Verulamium (PNRB, p. 497): *Verlamacaestir* 8th Bede (= St Albans, Hrt)

(ii) Survivals without OE **-cæster** (10 or 11 examples)

Brocavum (PNRB, p. 283): Brougham (We)
Cataractonium (PNRB, p. 302): Catterick (Y)
 (?) *Cilurnum* (PNRB, p. 307): Chollerton (Nb; but the connection is doubted in PNRB, and not mentioned in CDEPN, pp. 137a and 139b)
Dubris (PNRB, p. 341): Dover (K)
Letocetum (PNRB, p. 387): Lich(field) (St)
Lindum Colonia (PNRB, p. 393): Lincoln
Londinium (PNRB, p. 396): London
Luguvalium (PNRB, p. 402): (Car)lisle (Cu); note Brittonic *Cair-* in the modern name, corresponding elsewhere to *-cæster*: Welsh *Caerlleon* = Chester (Bede's *Legacæstir*), and Old Welsh *Cair Daun* (*Historia Brittonum*) = Doncaster
Pennocrucium (PNRB, p. 437): Penkridge (St)
Spinis (PNRB, p. 462): Speen (Brk)
Vagniacis (PNRB, p. 485): Win(field) (K; Cullen, 'Vagniacis and Winfield')