

PLACE-NAMES AND THE SCOTS LANGUAGE: THE MARCHES OF LEXICAL AND ONOMASTIC RESEARCH

1. INTRODUCTION

Lexicography and onomastics are two closely related disciplines that are often of benefit to one another. Both also make an important contribution to wider aspects of language study. Onomastic evidence for Scots can help to shed light on the period of pre-literary Scots and fill in some of the gaps in the record of lexical evolution from Anglian Old English to Early Scots. Scottish name evidence can also be of particular relevance to English onomastics. This paper focuses on some of the ways in which the study of Scotland's place-names can inform our understanding of the early vocabulary of the Scots and English languages.¹

Within the last hundred years, many individual studies of English place-names, and the ongoing work of the English Place-Name Survey, have succeeded in establishing the toponymic corpus of England as a valuable resource for the early history of the English language. Several influential reference works on English place-name vocabulary now exist, including A. H. Smith's two-volume dictionary of *English Place-Name Elements*, now under revision at Nottingham University for a new series of fascicles entitled *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names*. Specialised surveys of particular groups of elements also exist, including Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole's examination of topographical place-name elements in *The Landscape of Place-Names* (2000). Smaller, detailed studies (e.g. Hough 1995 and 1998, Kitson 1997) have illuminated our understanding of historical English lexis, revealing words and meanings hitherto unknown. Collectively, this research has unearthed a wealth of material relevant to Old and Middle English vocabulary.

Despite the ancient linguistic connections between the territories now known as England and Scotland, Scottish place-names have seldom been taken into consideration in such studies. There are several reasons for this, the most significant being that the Scottish Place-Name Survey, based at the School of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, is considerably less advanced than the English Place-Name Survey. Although the last decade has seen the completion of several PhD theses on Scottish place-names (e.g. Stahl 2000, Grant 2003, Scott 2003, MacNiven 2006), and only last year a major research project on Gaelic

¹ The information for this paper is largely drawn from Scott (2003b).

place-names attracted significant funding,² Scotland has no institute comparable to the Institute for Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham.³ Nevertheless, collections of historical spellings of many place-names, the raw data on which all further work is based, may be found in the archives of the Scottish Place-Name Survey, and in three PhD theses written at the University of Edinburgh in the mid-twentieth century (Macdonald 1937, Williamson 1942, Dixon 1947). Only Macdonald's work was ever published in book form, though the Scottish Place-Name Society is currently planning to produce reprints of Dixon's and Williamson's theses.⁴ Unlike the English Place-Name Survey, the Scottish Place-Name Survey does not have an extensive programme of planned publications, nor is there an established methodology by which county surveys are produced. It is to be hoped that the template provided by Simon Taylor and Gilbert Markus's ground-breaking survey of the place-names of Fife (2006–) may one day be applied to all of the counties of Scotland.

Historical spellings of Scottish place-names rarely pre-date the twelfth century, but this need not detract from the usefulness of the material (Nicolaisen 2001: 25–6). In some ways, it makes the material more interesting, especially for the researcher who is willing to engage with Middle Scots names and lexis rather than focusing entirely on evidence for Old English or Old Norse. Until quite recently, many Scottish onomasticians have seemed rather reluctant to investigate or even acknowledge the relevance of this data to the history of the Scots language (Scott 2003a: 24–5). In part, this is likely to have resulted from earlier perceptions of Scots and its status as a language. Interest in Scots is currently on the increase, and there now exist a variety of important publications, focusing on Scots, that were unavailable to those working in the early twentieth century. It was not until 1976 that the full text of the *Scottish National Dictionary (SND)* became available, and not until 2002 that *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue (DOST)* was completed. These two resources provide a 22-volume history of one of Scotland's major languages, and thanks to a three-year digitisation project under-

² The Arts and Humanities Research Council awarded a grant of nearly £400,000 to the Department of Celtic at Glasgow University for a project entitled 'The Expansion and Contraction of Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: the onomastic evidence', headed by Professor Thomas Clancy with Dr Simon Taylor as the chief researcher.

³ Several continental European countries also have institutions dedicated to onomastic study, for example the Department of Name Research at the Institute for Nordic Studies in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the Department of Onomastics at the Institute for Language and Folklore Research in Uppsala, Sweden.

⁴ Further information may be found on the Society's website: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/institutes/sassi/spns/>

taken at the University of Dundee, both were made available in March 2004, free to anyone with internet access, as the searchable online *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (www.dsl.ac.uk).⁵ Large reference works such as these have greatly facilitated the study of Scots in recent years.

In accordance with current practice, ‘Scots’ is used in this paper to denote the historical and modern linguistic continuum that stretches from ‘Broad Scots’ to ‘Scottish Standard English’ (Corbett et al. 2003: 1). In assessing historical Scots place-name evidence, I have employed the standard chronology by which Scots lexis is currently assessed, rather than classifying the elements according to their etymologies.⁶ Evidence that pre-dates 1100 is therefore classified as Old English or Old Norse, evidence from 1100 to 1375 is ‘pre-literary Scots’, and evidence from later periods will be classified as either Early, Middle or Modern Scots following the accepted conventional divisions of time.⁷ This system is more faithful to the evidence, as the traditional model of assessing place-name elements according to their etyma is in danger of obscuring important lexical and semantic information relevant to the period of coinage.⁸ Although the earliest historical form of a place-name does not inform us directly of its date of inception, it does provide a rough *terminus ante quem* from which inferences may be drawn.⁹

This taxonomical framework facilitates comparison of Scots and English evidence, though some important caveats should be remembered. Naming patterns are often directly influenced by local culture, and there are many subtle differences in usage which might be overlooked if political borders are ignored. For example, the administrative authority of an English *bailie* differs from that of a Scottish *bailie*. In medieval and

⁵ Although the website itself is hosted by Dundee University, custodianship and future development of the online dictionary is now the responsibility of Scottish Language Dictionaries.

⁶ See also Scott (2003a: 24–5).

⁷ i.e. following the standard periodisation of Scots: Early Scots 1375–1450, Middle Scots 1450–1700, Modern Scots 1700– (CSD Introduction: xiii).

⁸ As I have argued elsewhere (Scott *forthcoming*) earlier commentators often chose to examine elements in relation to their etymologies, with the result that Scots place-name elements such as *craig* ‘hill’ would not be regarded as Scots, and would instead be treated as representative of their Gaelic etymon, *creag* ‘hill’ (as in Macdonald 1941: 127). By employing this methodology, the cultural significance and precise semantic applications of Scots *craig* as a name element were effectively ignored.

⁹ Although more often associated with archaeology than linguistics, the term *terminus ante quem* (literally ‘end point before which’) has proved useful in the context of place-name studies. As Nicolaisen notes, there is an important codicil to its use, that is, ‘how much *ante* is another question’ (2001: 46).

modern Scotland, a *bailie* is usually a magistrate next in rank to the *provost*, a Scottish *provost* being roughly equivalent to an English *mayor*. In English use, however, the word was 'formerly interchangeable' with *bailiff* and could therefore denote 'the king's officers generally, including sheriffs, mayors, etc.', 'an officer of justice under a sheriff' or 'the agent of the lord of a manor' (*OED2* s.v. *bailie n.*, *bailiff n.*). Similarly, in medieval Scotland a *vicar* did not necessarily hold a religious office, as the word was also used to denote someone 'appointed to act in the place of another, a substitute or representative, a vicegerent' (*DOST* s.v. *vicar(e n.)*). Although there are traps for the culturally unwary, it is of course also true that the histories and etymologies of Scottish and English names and lexis are very much intertwined, and as a result, Scottish onomastic evidence can often be of great value to English and Scots historical linguistics.

2. THE GERMANIC TOPONYMICON OF SOUTHERN SCOTLAND

In the course of producing my doctoral dissertation, I compiled a corpus of Old English, Old Norse and Scots place-name elements so far identified in the place-names of Southern Scotland, a process which would have been far more arduous were it not for the earlier studies by Dixon (1937), Macdonald (1941) and Williamson (1942). The thesis was the first to focus attention on qualifying elements rather than generics, and the corpus contains over five hundred elements. One of the main benefits of collecting the early spellings for a large number of names is that once this task is complete, the data can then be re-interpreted, taking into account any relevant changes in methodology and name-theory. For the dissertation, the contribution of Scottish place-names to the Germanic lexicon and onomasticon of Britain was investigated through close study of two categories of place-name element: those that have no direct parallel in English place-names, and those for which the equivalent lexical item is rarely attested or unattested in literary sources. The former category identified Germanic elements that have so far received little attention due to their absence in England, while the latter identified elements that shed light on rare or unattested lexis. Names sometimes provide the only source of information regarding the former existence of a word or meaning.

3. SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES AND THE LEXICON

The majority of Germanic place-name elements found in Scottish sources do not appear on record before the Middle Scots period 1450–1700 (Scott 2003b). Nevertheless, many of these Middle Scots place-names can still provide antedatings to lexical usage. The element *sanctuary*, probably

signifying 'a sacred place in which fugitives were by law or custom immune from arrest', occurs in the lost West Lothian¹⁰ name *Sanctuary Crofts* (Scott 2003b: 234–36), first recorded in the form *les Sanctuary-croftis* in 1451 (Macdonald 1941: 121). The earliest known evidence for the use of the equivalent Scots lexical usage is found several decades later, in 1513, in Gavin Douglas's translation of the *Aeneid* (*DOST* s.v. *sanctuary n.*). Similarly, the earliest known lexical use of Scots *buss* 'a (clump of) bush(es)' is found in Robert Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (*DOST* s.v. *bus n.*), a text conventionally dated *a*1500, whereas the earlier-fifteenth century forms of Berrybush in Selkirkshire (*Berybus* 1455; Williamson 1942: 216) extend the date-range slightly further back in time. In this instance it could be argued that the name evidence is of less value to the word's history, given that the date of *a*1500 assigned to *Orpheus and Eurydice* by *DOST* is based on the estimated date of the poet's death. Nevertheless, given the commonplace use of such conventions in historical dictionaries, where precise dates are difficult to assign, name evidence may often complement the lexical evidence. Lexicography would therefore be well advised to maintain an awareness of non-lexical sources which could supplement other documentary evidence.

Some name evidence has already received attention from the major Scottish historical dictionaries. *SND* includes some name evidence, although precise locations for the names are not usually offered (e.g. s.v. *peel n.*⁴ I. 1., *shed n.* 4.). *DOST* frequently comments on the use of place-names (e.g. s.v. *stank n.*¹) and sometimes devotes whole senses to onomastic rather than lexical usage (e.g. s.v. *mure n.* 5., *sete n.* VII. 17. a. and b.). There are also instances where a curious blurring of the line between word and name takes place, with both lexical and onomastic evidence treated together, as though they were directly comparable (e.g. s.v. *poll n.*¹ 3). In this entry, typical onomastic constructions such as 'the pow mylne of Dalkeith' (1481), 'Powlandis' (1540) and 'powburne' (1563) are regarded as examples of attributive use of the noun. Modern onomastics, however, takes the view that a name is not simply equivalent to the sum of its parts, but mutates at the moment of coinage. Place-name elements are often subject to different influences from their lexical counterparts. Although, as I have been arguing, names may contribute to our understanding of the uses of words, a more precise delineation of these two categories of evidence in the historical dictionaries of Scots would be beneficial, and may be introduced at some future stage of

¹⁰ In accordance with current practice, geographical locations of individual names refer to the counties of Scotland as they existed before the reorganisation of local government in 1974.

revision.¹¹

Other Scots elements are recorded from the Early Scots or pre-literary Scots periods. Given that their earliest forms only provide a *terminus ante quem* regarding coinage, some may represent original Old English names. Many of these elements have yet to be recognised as showing antedatings for their lexical equivalents. For example, *howlet* ‘an owl’, as the first element of Howliston in Midlothian, recorded in the early fourteenth century,¹² predates the earliest known lexical usage in English and Scots by over a hundred years.¹³ A smaller number of elements are first recorded in eleventh century sources, showing that they were productive during the Old English period. Old English *musel* ‘a mussel’ is one such Scottish element, found in the early spellings of the Midlothian name Musselburgh (*Muselburge* 1070; Dixon 1947: 206). The Old English word is attested as a lexical item in the literary corpus of England, but does not appear to have been used to coin English place-names. Similarly, early evidence for the place-name *Hesterhoh* in Roxburgh (*Hesterhoh* c.1050; Williamson 1942: 140) indicates the use of Old English *hōh* ‘heel, spur of land’ in Scottish place-names. The Middle Scots reflexes *heugh* and *heuch* continue to be productive as name-forming elements, generally denoting either ‘a precipice, crag, cliff, steep bank, etc. (overhanging the sea or a river)’ or ‘a glen or ravine with steep, overhanging sides’ (Scott 2003b: 180–84).

4. SCOTS LEXIS FROM THE ONOMASTICON: ANIMAL NAMES

As has already been comprehensively demonstrated by the study of English place-names, there are many instances when a name or a group of names is all that remains to indicate the former existence of a specific word or meaning. In recent years, Hough has discussed the use in place-names of several otherwise unattested usages of Old English terms for animals and birds, including **græg* in the sense ‘a grey animal’, specifically the wolf (1995), and **brūn* ‘a brown animal’, perhaps ‘a pig’ (1998). These studies, and others like them, are crucial to the interpretation and reassessment of the significance of place-names in Scotland, and their wider implication is that much more is yet to be explored and understood.

The research on Old English **græg* calls into question some of the earlier interpretations of Scottish place-name evidence. Williamson interprets *Graden* in Milne Graden, Berwickshire, probably having Old

¹¹ Funding permitting, Scottish Language Dictionaries hopes to produce a fully integrated and updated historical dictionary of Scots that will incorporate all relevant data from *DOST* and *SND*.

¹² *Howelotestone* 1336-7 (Dixon 1947: 284).

¹³ The earliest lexical evidence in *DOST* is from *The Book of the Howlat*, c1450 (s.v. *Howlat*, n.).

English **græg* ‘badger’ as its first element, on the grounds that a name meaning ‘badger’s valley’ is more plausible than a name meaning ‘grey valley’ (1942: 103). She also gives the meaning of Graden in Roxburgh as ‘badger hill’, from Old English **græg dūn* (1942: 131). Williamson refers to Ekwall’s discussion of the element, in which he proposed the unattested Old English sense ‘badger’ for the substantive use of **græg* in place-names (1942: 103, 131; Ekwall 1936: 80–1). Ekwall’s proposal has largely been accepted, but in recent years Hough (1995) and Biggam (1998) have suggested that Old English **græg* in English place-names means ‘wolf’. It is therefore necessary to re-examine Williamson’s assessment of the two Scottish Border-county place-names in the light of this new theory.

The Old English place-name element *dūn* ‘hill, upland expanse’ is often found in England in combination with terms denoting animals (Gelling & Cole 2000: 169). The first element of the Northumberland name Wooden is ‘wolf’, which suggests that other combinations of *dūn* with a term for the wolf are quite plausible. It is therefore possible that a similar construction may be represented in the Roxburgh name Graden, first recorded as *Graydoun* (1347; Williamson 1942: 131). In Scotland, there are a small number of names in which the generic *dūn* appears to be qualified by a specific denoting a type of animal, as in Cunzierton in Oxnam in Roxburgh (*Cuniardon* 1468), from Old French *conniniere* ‘rabbit-warren’ or a later reflex (Williamson 1942: 130), and perhaps also Browndean Laws in Roxburgh (*Brondoun* 1451), if the first element is Old English **brūn* ‘a pig’ (see below for discussion of this element). There is also one possible doublet of Wooden in Northumberland, which is the Roxburgh name Wooden (Williamson 1942: 101). The Scottish name has been interpreted as probably showing Old English *wudu denu* ‘wooded valley’, but Williamson also compares it with the Northumberland name (1942: 101). Unfortunately the earliest historical form of the name, *Wodden* (1439; Williamson 1942: 101) is too late to allow any firm conclusion to be reached, but it is possible that the Roxburgh and Northumberland names have the same underlying structure. The evidence of Wooden in Northumberland and perhaps also Wooden in Roxburgh may strengthen the possibility that the Roxburgh Graden could mean ‘wolf hill’.

Similarly, *Graden* in Milne Graden in Coldstream, Berwickshire (*Greiden(e)* 1095–1100; Williamson 1942: 103) may reflect in its first element a word denoting a wolf. Its final element appears to be Old English *denu* ‘valley’, which, like *dūn*, is found in English names in combination with terms for animals, including the fox, the hare, the hind and the roe (Gelling & Cole 2000: 117). In Scotland, there are further examples of place-names in which the generic *denu* is qualified by a

specific denoting a type of animal, as in the name Harden in Roxburgh (*Hardenhead* 1662–65), the first element of which may be Old English *hara* ‘a hare’ (Williamson 1942: 97). Other examples include Lambden in Berwickshire (*Lambeden(e)* c1248), from Old English *lamb* ‘a lamb’ (Williamson 1942: 103), and Oxendean in Berwickshire (*Oxindene* 1479), from Old English *oxa* ‘an ox’ (Williamson 1942: 104). Such evidence adds some support to the possibility of *Graden* in Milne Graden, Berwickshire, having the sense ‘valley of wolves’.

Place-name elements in England which refer to the wolf have been identified as combining with terms for water, as in the names Woolmer in Hampshire and Wreighburn in Northumberland (Hough 1995: 363), and so there is some possibility that the same construction may be found in Scotland. There are a number of modern Scottish names in which *grey* or *gray* combines with a water term such as *burn*, but in the absence of historical forms little can be said with certainty about the age of these names, or the significance of the first element, which may simply be a later reflex of Old English *græg* ‘grey’. Further investigations into Scottish toponymy may reveal more examples of names which could contain Old English **græg* ‘wolf’. New research into the place-names of England has shown that a reconsideration of Williamson’s interpretation of the two Borders names discussed above is necessary, and has demonstrated that ‘badger’ is not the only animal which may have been referred to by place-names in **græg*. From a comparison with English evidence, it therefore seems likely that the substantive use of Old English *græg* ‘grey’ to denote ‘a grey animal, the wolf’, already shown to exist in the corpus of English place-names, is also represented in Scotland in Milne Graden in Berwickshire and Graden in Roxburgh.

In the case of **brūn*, ‘a brown animal’, Hough’s argument is supported by literary evidence which shows that the adjective *brūn* developed a substantive sense ‘a brown animal’ in Old and Middle English (1998: 512). The Scots word *broun*, *broon* ‘brown’ has also been used occasionally to denote ‘a brown animal’ in literary sources, and is recorded in the sense ‘a brown horse’ in the early fifteenth century and from the twentieth century until the present day (*DOST* s.v. *broun(e)* n., *SND* s.v. *broon* n. 1. (1)). It is therefore possible that the word could also have been used to denote other types of brown animal, and that such usage may be reflected in Scottish place-names.

Confusion with other elements, however, often makes the identification of the element **brūn* ‘a brown animal; a pig’ difficult, and it is sometimes impossible to distinguish it from reflexes of Old English *brūn* in the sense ‘brown, dark-coloured’. The Old English word is sometimes employed as a noun with the sense ‘the brown one’ in river names, which is frequently indistinguishable from Old Norse *brúnn*, with the

same sense, and from Old Norse *brunnr* 'a well, a spring' (Smith 1956: I, 53). Further confusion is also possible with Old Norse *brún* 'a brow, the edge of a hill'. A variety of compound place-names have given rise to surnames in *Brown-*, *Broun-*, etc., from which subsequent place-names may also be derived. *Brounfield* is attested as a surname in Scottish sources from 1453, *Brownhill* from 1359, *Brownlea* and its variants from 1563, *Brounrig* in 1684, and *Brownside* from 1505 (Black 1946: 106, 108).

Many of the uses of *broun* in Scottish names occur in combination with elements denoting hills (Scott 2003b: 283–84). While such names could simply denote 'a brown hill', other interpretations are possible. Hough has suggested that Brownsall, in the Dorset place-name Brownsall Hundred, the second element of which is Old English *hyll* 'a hill', may mean 'hill of the pig' (Hough 1998: 517–18). She has also noted that the three Brownhill place-names in Derbyshire and the seven Brown Hill(s) in the West Riding of Yorkshire may have referred to land which was good for grazing pigs, comparing these with the common English place-name Swindon 'hill where pigs are kept', from Old English *swīn* 'swine' and Old English *dūn* 'a hill' (Hough 1998: 518). It is therefore possible that some of the Scottish names in which the second element denotes a type of hill may be doublets of English place-names, and that in such cases the first element may be Old English **brūn* 'a pig'.

Old English *hyll* 'a hill' is commonly found in combination with animal-names (Smith 1956: I, 275). In Scottish place-names, *-hill* combines with a wide variety of different types of element, including personal names, occupational terms, colour adjectives and other descriptive terms (Scott 2003b: 488–92). It appears to combine more frequently with the names of wild birds and animals than domesticated animals, as in the Midlothian names Kinnen Hill, from Middle Scots *cuning* 'rabbit'; Todhills from Middle Scots *tod* 'fox'; Ravenshill from Middle Scots *ravin* 'raven'; and the lost *Pyehills* in Dumfriesshire, from Scots *pie* 'magpie'. Nevertheless, combinations with the names of domesticated animals are also found, including Cowhill in West Lothian and the numerous Lamb Hill names recorded in modern sources.

There is some possibility that the early spellings of the lost names *Brunecnoh* in Roxburgh and *Brownlaw(s)* in West Lothian may show reflexes of the Old English genitive plural form **brūna-* 'of the pigs'. However, as Hough notes, this form 'would survive in Middle English [and Middle Scots] spellings as **brune-*, thus becoming indistinguishable from an inflected form of the adjective or from the Middle English reflex of the Old Norse personal-name *Brūni*' (Hough 1998: 518). Nevertheless, the medial *-e-* of the pre-literary Scots form *Brunecnoh* (1165–75; Williamson 1942: 242), and the Middle Scots forms *Broun(e)law(is)*

(1500–1637; Macdonald 1941: 14) for *Brownlaw(s)* in West Lothian indicates that these names could be derived from an original Old English place-name in **brūna-*. Williamson interpreted *Bruncenolh* as ‘brown hillock’ (1942: 242), but it may instead have had the sense ‘hill of the pigs’. Similarly, Macdonald defined *Brownlaw(s)* as ‘brown hill(s)’ (1941: 14), but this name could represent another original ‘hill of the pigs’.

The Scottish names Brownlee in Lanarkshire and Brownlee near Dundonald in Ayrshire may usefully be compared with Burnley in Lancashire. Hough suggests that Burnley could be interpreted as ‘pasture for pigs’ (Hough 1998: 513), and it is possible that the same meaning may lie behind the two Scottish names. In the absence of early spellings it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the morphology of the original forms of the names, but it is interesting to note that the surname Brownlee is recorded in a Middle Scots source as *Brwnelie* (1608; Black 1946: 108), the spelling with medial *-e-* perhaps preserving a weakened form of an original Old English **Brunalēah* ‘pasture of the pigs’.

Comparative evidence from England has allowed the identification of Old English **brūn* ‘a brown animal; a pig’ in the toponymic corpus. From a consideration of this evidence it seems likely that this usage is also represented in the place-names of Scotland, especially because the corpus of Scottish place-names contains many examples of names which are doublets of, or have similar morphology to, those discussed in Hough (1998).

5. SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES AND THE WIDER ONOMASTICON: HEXPATH AND HEXHAM

Scottish place-names can provide valuable comparative evidence of relevance to English onomastics. A case in point is the evidence presented by the historical forms of Hexpath in Berwickshire and its implications for the interpretation of Hexham in Durham. In 1942 Williamson suggested that the first element of the Berwickshire name Hexpath was derived from Old English *hægstald* ‘warrior’, supporting her view with comparative evidence relating to Hexham. She disagreed with the then current belief that Hexham was originally a river-name of Celtic origin, which was later corrupted to **Hestild* and re-interpreted as being ‘associated with’ Old English *hægstald* (Williamson 1942: 154). However, the modern interpretation of Hexham is considerably different from that of the 1940s, and has some important implications for the Berwickshire name. Hexham was discussed most recently in studies by Watts (1994) and Bullough (1999), and both investigations derive the first element of the place-name from Old English *hagstald* ‘warrior,

bachelor', which can clearly be seen in the early form of the name, *Hagustaldes ham* (c. 1120) (Watts 1994: 120).

Hexham also appears in the form *Hextildesham* in Latin documents from 1268 to 1535 (Watts 1994: 120). According to Watts, this historical spelling demonstrates that the name was re-shaped to incorporate the feminine name *Hextild* or *Hestild*, borne by the wife of Richard Comyn, a twelfth-century noble (Watts 1994: 120). Watts argues that folk-etymology gave rise to a re-interpretation of the place-name as 'the *ham* of *Hestild*' (i.e. *Hestild*'s homestead or settlement; Watts 1994: 120). Curiously, however, the evolution of the spellings for Hexham shares some noticeable features with the early forms of Hexpath in Berwickshire. Forms in *Hextild-* or *Hexteld-*, closely resembling the spellings of the Durham name, were recorded in the thirteenth century.¹⁴

It is possible that Old English *hægstald-* could become *Hextild-* during the Middle English period, so Williamson's interpretation of the Berwickshire name may be correct. Hexham is now believed to be derived from *hagustald*, a variant form of the same word. However, Watts states that the forms in *Hextild-* do not reflect an expected phonological development from the variant *hagustald*, which would instead produce forms in **Hau-*, **Hou-*, or **Host-* (Watts 1994: 121). He argues that a variant form **Hæg-* or **Hehstaldesham* would therefore be necessary before the progression to *Hextildesham* could be explained on phonological grounds. Apparently unknown to Watts, there is an example of an Old English spelling *Hægstealdes æ* in *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, which would complete the phonological sequence as described above (Miller 1896: IV, 360).

The evidence of Hexpath may therefore confirm that the Old English variant *hægstald* could become *Hextild-* as a result of a logical progression, although there is the additional complication that none of the historical spellings of Hexpath demonstrates with certainty that the first element was indeed Old English *hægstald*. Two other place-names thought to be derived from Old English *hægstald* or its variant *hagustald* are Hestercombe in Somerset (Ekwall 1960: 237; Smith 1956: I, 215) and *Hegestuldes setl*, a lost Gloucestershire name recorded in the year 950 (Watts 1994: 125). But the Somerset and Gloucester names do not provide supporting evidence for the development of forms in *Hextild-*.

Watts' argument that the place-name Hexham was re-shaped under the influence of a feminine name *Hestild* or *Hextild* also has important implications for the interpretation of Hexpath. Watts states that he has found no other examples of the name *Hestild* (Watts 1994: 120–21, fn. 6), but the similarity of the thirteenth-century spellings for Hexham and

¹⁴ *Hextildespeth(e)* 1296, *Hexteldespehe* 13th cent. (Williamson 1942: 154).

Hexpath may indicate that this personal name could also be found in Scotland during the Middle Ages. If the first element of these place-names represents a feminine name, then the *-es* ending may seem problematic, because of its resemblance to the masculine genitive inflection associated with masculine personal names. However, this alone does not prove that Hestild need be interpreted as a masculine name, as it has recently been established that the genitive marker *-es* was also used in combination with feminine personal names (Robinson 1993). Robinson has noted a significant number of historical examples of the use of the *-es* inflection with names that are clearly feminine, including *Kyneburges* in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, *Racheles* in a late translation of Genesis, and several toponymic examples cited from Boehler's *Die altenglischen Frauennamen* (Robinson 1993: 173). Other masculine inflections are also found in combination with feminine names in the late Old English period, as noted by Hough (2002: 49–50).

It remains possible, then, that Hexpath contains an example of the feminine personal name *Hestild* or *Hextild*. Nevertheless, derivation of the first element from an original Old English *hægstald* is phonologically plausible, and Williamson adds some support to her argument by pointing out that the medieval road through the Cheviot Hills, Clennel Street, was once known as *Hexpathgate*. Although the true age of this name is difficult to determine, she argues that:

The use of the term for 'warrior', and the fact that the main road here runs very straight east and west and is protected on the north by the earthwork known as Herri's Dyke, suggests that the Anglian population of the Merse may have had a military thoroughfare here leading to Lauderdale to meet the Roman Road from the north, along which marauding parties of Scots may have been accustomed to advance (Williamson 1942: 154).

The spelling of Hexham found in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* may indicate that several variant forms of the name existed concurrently, and that there is no need to look elsewhere for a solution to the chronological development of that name. What is clear is that it is very unlikely that both Hexham and Hexpath underwent the same process of re-shaping under the influence of the same feminine name, and considering the similarity of the medieval spellings, I would argue that Williamson was correct in her assessment of the Berwickshire name. Previous studies of Hexham, however, overlooked this Scottish evidence and its implications for the evolution of the English name.

As a brief footnote to this account, it may be worth adding that the first element of the lost Roxburgh name *Hesterhoh* is not explained by Williamson, who states only that it is 'probably Celtic' (1942: 140). The earliest known form of the name, *Hesterhoh* (c1050), bears close similarity to the twelfth-century forms recorded for the English place-name

Hestercombe in Somerset. The historical spellings of Hestercombe clearly trace the development of the first element from Old English *hægstald* (*Hægstaldescumb*, 672; *Hegsteldescumb*, 854; *Hegstealdcumb*, c900; *Hestercumba* 1155; Watts 1994: 125). It is therefore very likely that the Roxburgh name *Hesterhoh* also developed from an earlier form, **Hægstaldeshoh*, with Old English *hægstald* as its first element.

This is only one example of an item of Old English lexis that has left its mark on the Scottish onomasticon, but it does raise the question of how 'Scottish' Old English material should be treated, and perhaps invites some reconsideration of the taxonomy regarding its cultural status. The fact that we use the term 'Old English' to describe the Germanic language that was brought to this island by the Angles and Saxons can be problematic, particularly when discussing the transitional period from Anglian Old English to pre-literary Scots. Although it is probably too inconvenient to attempt to deviate from current conventions, it would perhaps be more accurate if there were an alternative label for 'Old English' that recognised its neutral and unbiased parental relationship to the Scots and English languages.

6. CONCLUSION

By demonstrating some of the information that can be gleaned from close study of words and names, I hope to illustrate the need for greater recognition of the Scottish toponymicon as a national resource for early linguistic history. While the research discussed in this paper attempts to draw attention to some of the questions regarding the relationship between the Scots lexicon and onomasticon, there is much more to be done. Scotland's place-names remain a largely under-utilised resource, not just for Germanic research, but also for its contribution to the understanding of Scottish Gaelic, and indeed the older P-Celtic and pre-Celtic languages now no longer spoken.¹⁵ Names are widely recognised for their cultural significance, and a fully supported Scottish organisation for name studies would fit comfortably under the umbrella of the proposed Institute for the Languages of Scotland.

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¹⁵ See Nicolaisen (2001) chapters 8 and 9.

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