

# Leeds Studies in English

## Article:

Oliver J. Padel, 'Some South-Western Problems', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 18 (1987), 209-17

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## SOME SOUTH-WESTERN PROBLEMS

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In south-west England, as in any border area, there are inevitably some problematical names where the language is uncertain. They can be of two kinds: they may either make sense in both languages, so that both Anglists and Celticists want them, or in neither, so that nobody wants them. The brief notes below examine some such difficult names in the south-west. In each case I have no definite solution, but in offering these minor problems to Kenneth Cameron in honour of his retirement, I hope that either he or another may be able to make useful suggestions.

### I. *Trewen*

There are no fewer than four places in Devon, and one in East Cornwall, which appear to be Old English *æt þām trēowum* "at the trees". They are as follows: (a) *Trewyn* (PNDev. I, 148: for abbreviations see end of article) is found as *Trewene* 1311, *la Treawen* 1312, *atte Trewen* 1337 and *atte Trewe* 1348; (b) *Train* (PNDev. I, 261) is found as *atte Trewen* 1311 and *atte Nitheretreawen* 1330 (both pers.); (c) *Traine* (PNDev. I, 281) is found as *atte Trewen* 1370 (pers.) and *Treawen* 1388; (d) *East Trayne* (PNDev. II, 348-9) is found as *atte Trewen* 1330 (pers.). The Cornish instance is the lost home of John *attreawen* 1327, in Calstock parish, surviving as *Trewin* in 1650. The place also occurs in other records; but John does not appear under that name in a survey of the manor of Calstock made ten years after the Subsidy Roll, in 1337.<sup>1</sup>

With these names one can compare others of similar type. In Devon there are three further people called *atte Treawen* and two *atte Trouwen* in the 1332 Lay Subsidy.<sup>2</sup> *Trow* (PNDev. II, 576) is found as *atte Triwe* 1407-10 (pers.). In either Devon or Cornwall, unlocated, are found *Walter attetrywe* 1315 and *Richard de Arboribus* 1314.<sup>3</sup> Similarly in Cornish, the name *Weeth* (plural "trees") and *Withen* (singular "tree") is found several times, and in one instance of the latter (*Withen, Lelant*) we find a *Richard de Arbore* in the parish in 1327 (CPNE, p.121).

The meaning of the Cornish names is fairly certain; it is the English names first mentioned which are a problem. If we seek parallel names elsewhere in England, they are not to be found. Hugh Smith (*Elements* II, 226) cites no instances, nor does Nils Wrander.<sup>4</sup> It is unclear why these authorities have not cited the Devon names, even if only to dismiss them if the given derivation is not accepted. Hugh Smith (*Elements* II, 186) cites *Train* and *Trewyn* as being Middle

English weak nominatives plural, rather than OE datives. The only such name outside Devon cited by Wrander is Twantry, thought, on the basis of the one form *Twantr'* 1381, to be probably (*æt þām twām trēowum* (thus PNNtp., p.111).

An alternative derivation could be found in Cornish, as *tre* "farmstead" + *gwyn* "white, fair" (lenited to *wyn* or *wen* after the feminine *tre*). Such a name is found six times in Cornwall: five times as *Trewen* (in the parishes of Budock, Lanreath, Liskeard, St Tudy and *Trewen* itself), and once in the late Cornish form *Trewidden* (in *Madron*). The precise meaning of "white farmstead" is uncertain, but one could compare a wide range of names elsewhere, including *Bede's ad candidam casam* and *gundy teliau* "Teilo's white-house" in the *Book of Llandaf*.<sup>5</sup>

There are two problems with such a derivation. The first is the form of the names, which, whatever their derivation, were undoubtedly understood as "at the trees" in the Middle English period: some of the spellings make that completely clear. If one thinks that the five names are Cornish *Tre-wen*, one must suppose that the Middle English forms show, in each case, folk-etymology by English speakers. That is not implausible, though it remains an assumption: as the forms of the name stand, it would be perfectly legitimate to argue that they were all English. Note, however, the pronunciation of one of the names with second-syllable stress (PNDev. I, lix), showing that it, at least, has been assimilated to a Cornish pattern.

The other problem is the great dearth of recognisable *tre* names in Devon. The only certain ones are *Trellick*, *Trebick* and *Treable* (PNDev. I, 76 and 211; II, 429). The four names here considered would, if accepted, more than double the number of such names in the county. The only defence for such a suggestion would be that there are some other possible names of the same sort, notably *Trecott* and *Tricombe* (PNDev. I, 166 and II, 628); these too, if originally Cornish, were probably re-analysed as English "tree-cot" and "tree-combe" in the medieval period. (My thanks to Harold Fox for pointing them out to me.)

There is no solution to this problem. Either "at the trees" was a common topographical surname and/or place-name in the medieval period, unique to Devon and East Cornwall for some reason; or such names show a re-analysing of Old Cornish *Tre-wen*. The former remains the more likely possibility, but the restricted geographical range of this dative plural place-name is then curious, and a nagging doubt remains.

## II. *Herriard*

Both *Ekwall* (DEPN, p.236) and *Hugh Smith* (*Elements*, I, 198 and 244) assume that *Herriard*, Hampshire (*Henerd* [n for ri], 1086; *Herierda*, ante 1162) is an English name, though they differ as to its derivation, *Ekwall* taking it as possibly from *hearg* "heathen temple" + *geard* "yard", while *Smith* takes it as from *here* "army" + *geard*, comparing *Harewood* in Cornwall. In CPNE, however, I have

taken this Cornish name to be from Old Cornish \**hyr-yarth* "long-ridge", a compound of *hyr* "long" + \**garth* "ridge" (p.133). Both the elements are liable to occur thus in compounds: see CPNE, pp. 132-3 and 102. (For the unusual lenition of *g* to *y*, instead of to zero, in this compound, see LHEB, p.439.) In fact, the name shows a wide variety of forms, including *Horwoda* 1297 (pers.), *Horawoda* 1327 (pers.), wood called *Hereward'* 1337, *Heregard* 1339, *Herewode* 1340 (pers.), wood of *Hergarth* 1351, wood of *Hirgarth* 1355, *Herwood* 1561, wood called *Hirewood* or *Harewood*, wood called *Herriott Wood* alias *Harewood* 1650.

There are two problems about this name. The first is the conflicting sets of forms. In fact they divide neatly into two: one comprises the place-names proper, such as *Heregard* 1339 and *Hergarth* 1351; the other is the group of surnames including William *Horwoda* 1297, William *Horawoda* 1327, William *Horawode* senior, William and John de *Horawode* 1337 and William *Herewode* 1340. (*Hereward'* 1337, a wood, seems to be intermediate.) It is hard to dissociate these surnames from the place-name *Harewood* found in the same parish and manor, yet they are at variance with the other forms, which definitely refer to a place, until the sixteenth century when the two groups appear to merge. Either they represent an early folk-etymology of the original name, whatever it was, to English "Harewood" (itself a problem: "hare-wood", "hoary wood" or "boundary-wood"? - and to make matters worse, the wood is actually on the boundary of the manor, parish and county); or else the family is an irrelevancy, having come in from elsewhere bringing the English surname with them. On balance the former alternative seems the more likely, but for the present this local problem remains unresolved.

The other problem is the one germane to this collection of notes, for even if the authentic early spellings are taken to be those such as *Heregard* 1339 and *Hergarth* 1351, the choice is still present, as in Hampshire, between Smith's "army-yard" (more likely than *Ekwall's* pagan temple), or my Cornish "long-ridge". The Hampshire place (SU 6646) does not, from the one-inch map, appear to be near a marked ridge; the Cornish one (SX 4469) is at the end of a long ridge of land which causes a loop in the River Tamar - a better ridge than those to be found at other places where a derivation from Cornish \**hyr-yarth* is not in dispute (CPNE, p.133). As with the first group of names, the problem is not capable of solution at the moment; but in the absence of further study of the significance of Old English \**here-geard*, the Celtic derivation may be thought more probable, at any rate in Cornwall.

### III. *Treswell*

With the third group, the problem is the reverse: neither English nor Celtic students want it. The first Cornish name here is *Treswell* (parish of North Hill), found as *Tressawell* 1276, *Trussewell* 1469 and *Treswell* 1542. *Swell* (Poundstock parish) was formerly *Treswelle* 1358, *Swell* 1592: the loss or addition of the prefix *Tre-* is a common phenomenon in place-names, both Cornish and

English, in the east of the county. A third instance, just across the county boundary, is Troswell or Trossell (PNDev. I, 160), found as *Treswell* 1249, *Tressel* 1256, and *Tros(s)well* 1661: no explanation is offered by the editors of that volume.<sup>6</sup> A final example, which may or may not be the same as these three, is Trussel (St Keyne parish, Cornwall), formerly *Trossel* 1293, *Trosseil* 1305 (MS 16th cent.), *Trussel* 1327, *Tressel* 1353, *Trussel-/Tresselbrigge* 1407. This name is different in that there are no early spellings in *-wel*, and in that the variation between *e* and *o/u* in the first syllable is more apparent, though that may be merely a result of its fuller set of spellings.

Certain names elsewhere in England seem comparable. One that will immediately come to our Director's mind is Treswell, a parish on the boundary between Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire; in fact this name has different early forms from those cited above, and so is of different derivation (PNNtt., p.61): *Tireswelle* 1086, etc., becoming *Tressewell* 1428, *Truswell* 1511. Although it is spelt Treswell, the pronunciation /trʌsw(ə)l/ is recorded. The derivation given in PNNtt. is from a personal name \*Tīr + *wella*, "Tīr's spring". For the hypothetical personal name, see PNYoW. III, 237, and PNChc. III, 320. However, the name is of relevance here, in that it shows the same variation of *u* and *e* in the first syllable, even down to the twentieth-century pronunciation - a variation which is not discussed in PNNtt.

The other pertinent name is Swell, found in Gloucestershire (PNGlo. I, 226) and in Somerset (DEPN, s.v., where further, minor, instances are cited). This is an English name, Old English \**swelle* "a swelling", used topographically as "a hill" (Smith, Elements, II, 171 and references).

A Celtic derivation is unlikely for the names in Devon and Cornwall. They cannot be split after *Tre-*, for *sw-* is not an initial cluster of sounds in any of the Brittonic languages, original *sw-* having become *chw/wh* in about the sixth century (LHEB, pp.525-6 and 696). They could be split instead as *Tres-well*, in which, as often in east Cornwall, *Tres-* would be from older *Ros-* "moorland" (e.g. *Treswarrow* < *Rosworvet* 1302, *Treswen* < *Roswein* 1201); but *-well* has no ready explanation in Cornish, and in any case it would be implausible to suggest that *Ros-* had become *Tres-* coincidentally in all three instances without leaving any trace in the early spellings of the names. So any Cornish derivation for the names must be abandoned. However, the loss of *Tre-* in the instance in Poundstock suggests second-syllable stress in that name before the sixteenth century; this would make it more Cornish than English in pattern. (But a stress-shift is possible: see above, under *Trewen*.)

In English, possible derivations would be from OE *trūs* "brush-wood" + *wella* "spring", or from *trēow* "tree" gen. sg. + *wella*, "tree's spring", or from *trēow* + \**swelle* "hill". All three explanations have their disadvantages. Since \**swelle* is so rare in English place-names, the third explanation can probably be discounted. The element *trūs* is also rare in English place-names (for

examples, see CPNE, p.89, and add perhaps Trowspool Drain, PNCh. IV, 160); this makes the occurrence of three examples of *trūs + wella* in east Cornwall and west Devon seem improbable. "Tree's spring" does not suit the name in North Hill parish, with its medial vowel (*Tressawell*, etc.); moreover, *trēowes-wella* seems to be unknown as a compound elsewhere in England, as far as I have noted. However, it is probably the best explanation for the names in Poundstock parish and in Devon. Perhaps the various names are therefore of different derivation. Trussel in St Keyne parish is still a mystery: *trūs + -el*<sup>3</sup>, "brushwood-place", would seem possible. Or it might perhaps have the same derivation as one of the others, but with the loss of *w* before the date of the earliest recorded form (1293): compare *Tressel* 1256, assuming that that form applies to Trossell in Devon. The variation of vowel in the first syllable of several of the names remains a problem, whatever derivation is suggested.

#### IV. *Rose-in-the-Valley*

In west Cornwall there are sixteen minor cottages, widely scattered, with names such as *Rose-in-the-Valley*, *Rose-in-the-Vale*, *Rose-in-Vale*, *Rosevale*, etc. All of them appear only in the modern period, the earliest being *Rose in ye Valley* 1748 (= *Rose-in-Vale*, *Perranzabuloe*) and the others being recorded only from the nineteenth, or sometimes even the twentieth, century. There are three, and only three, similar names in the east of the county, of which one (*Rosevale* in St Pinnock) is recorded only from 1906; the second (*Rosevale* in St Teath) is also recorded only from 1906, but is near to *Rosewater*, recorded from 1841; but the third (*Rose* in the *Valley*, in St Kew) has a run of early spellings, starting with *Resnovallian* 1350, which show it to be a Cornish name, *rid* (> *res*) + *an* + *auallien* (*u* = /*v*/), "the ford of the apple tree", though *\*ros* "moorland" is also a possibility for the first element. This makes it comparable with three other names in mid-Cornwall: *Rosevallen*, in St Stephen in Brannel, and *Rosevallon*, in Bodmin and Cuby parishes. These have earliest forms, respectively, *Rosnauallion* 1313 (St Stephen), *Rosavylyn* 1513 (Bodmin), and *Rosavallen* 1359 (Cuby); and all are composed of Cornish *\*ros* (+ *an*) + *auallen*, "moorland of (the) apple-tree".

The question which obviously presents itself is whether the further eighteen modern names, all but two of them in the west of the county, might have a similar Cornish derivation, despite the lack of early forms, or are English in origin. At first sight, there are two factors in favour of a Cornish derivation for them. One is their distribution: any name found predominantly in the west of the county is liable to be Cornish rather than English. The second factor is the lack of comparable names in other counties. Although "rose" is not unknown in minor and field names across England, the indexes of the Society's volumes show no instances of *Rose* (in) (the) *Vale*, or the like, nor are there any instances among the minor or field names in the two volumes of Dorset so far published. The only remotely comparable name is *Rose Dale*, PNBrk, II, 530. Here one is hampered slightly by the lack of detailed

coverage for the counties nearest to Cornwall; but the absence from Gloucestershire, from Dorset (where available), from east Cornwall in the main, and from the rest of England makes it unlikely that similar cottages are skulking un-noticed in Devon or Somerset in significant numbers. Nor are there any similar field-names given by John Field.<sup>7</sup>

However, the minor, late-looking nature of the places bearing the names is against a Cornish derivation, and so is the corresponding lack of documentation. Any place with a Cornish name would have to be over 200 years old, even in the far west, yet nearly all of the places appear only in the nineteenth century; nor do such early spellings as are available indicate that their derivation is anything other than English. Some of the sites look, from the map, to be particularly recent, being situated on what was unenclosed downland until the nineteenth century. (Few of the places are located right down in valleys, though many are between valley and former downland, or near the tops of valleys.) It is true that Rose in the Valley (St Kew, SX 023757) is also a minor cottage today; but it has the medieval documentation to show its age, and the house itself appears to be medieval in part. It seems particularly implausible that, of the sixteen west-Cornish instances of the name, not one should have an early spelling showing the Cornish derivation. Note that the other three proven instances of \*ros + *auallen*, all in mid-Cornwall, are still obviously Cornish in their modern forms: in other words, out of four cases where a name certainly has such a derivation, only one now appears in the form "Rose in the Valley".

Once again the problem is insoluble. On balance it seems likely that "Rose in (the) valley" was a common English phrase in west Cornwall, applied to minor cottages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reason for its restricted geographical range would be unknown. However, as with the previous examples, there remains a slight suspicion that the sixteen west-Cornish names might, at least in some cases, represent anglicised Cornish names.

Since the above was written, it has become apparent that the problem has wider ramifications; for in addition to the names given above, the six-inch map of Cornwall shows six Rose Cottages and sixteen instances of Rosehill. An English explanation is called for in most cases. While they nearly all look minor and late (eighteenth to early twentieth century in date), a few are apparently influenced, or inspired, by older Cornish names nearby containing "rose" from *rid* "ford" or \*ros "moorland": e.g. Rosehill (Kenwyn) near Roseveth; Rosehill (Camborne) and Rose-in-Vale (Gwinear), both near the Domesday manor of Roseworthy; and Rose Valley (St Just in Penwith) near Chyrose. This offers a partial explanation of the late minor names in Cornwall, including "Rose in the valley", etc. - under the influence of, though not in most cases derived from, Cornish \*ros; though it still does not explain the particular forms, nor why some of the names have such a predominantly western distribution within the county. Moreover, it is still quite unknown how many of the cases of simplex "Rose(s)" in field-names may be from Cornish \*ros.

V. *Stroat, Gloucestershire*

The discussion which follows owes much to a conversation with Margaret Gelling. *Stroat* suffers from having, as published, no forms intermediate between *Stræt* 1061-5 (MS. 12th cent.) and *Strawte* 1575. If intermediate forms could be produced, they might bear out, or contradict, the following suggestions. Smith's discussion (PNGlo. III, 265; cf. p.xiv and IV, 25) is correct in substance, but needs slight amplification. Since the place is situated on a Roman road, the derivation from OE *stræt*, in accordance with the earliest form, seems completely natural at first, the only problem being the unusual later development, *Street* being expected. Smith's suggestion is that the later form has been influenced by an Old Welsh (pronounced form) \**straud* "Roman road", from Latin *strāta* (*via*), but, as he says, there is no evidence that any such word ever existed in Welsh. That being so, it is difficult to suggest its influence on the place-name, and an alternative would be to suggest that the name was originally a Welsh place-name \**Straud* "Roman road" (either from Romano-British *Strāta* or from a Welsh borrowing of that word, otherwise unrecorded, which died out very early), developing regularly into the sixteenth-century form *Strawte*, and that the earliest available form, Old English *Stræt*, represents an early (and short-lived?) Anglicisation of the name - natural enough in view of the closeness of the words in the two languages and the aptness of the derivation on the spot. The advantage of this modification to Smith's scheme is that one is then postulating only a single place-name, not a common noun, in early Welsh, to account for the later pronunciation of the name. Such a scheme seems actually to have been envisaged by Smith (PNGlo. IV, 25), though not sufficiently formulated to appear in his main discussion of the name.

One factor which could to some extent confirm or deny it would be the state of the name between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries: if it agreed with the later, Welsh-looking, form, that would support the scheme offered here; but if it agreed with *Stræt*, it would suggest that more weight should be given to that form, and one would look to see when the irregular development to *Strawte* 1575 had occurred.

The issue is further muddled by the twelfth-century form *Istrat Hafren* "valley of the Severn", referring either to *Stroat* or to the parish of *Tidenham* in which it is situated (cf. PNGlo. III, xiv; the identification with *Tidenham* is accepted without discussion by Wendy Davies).<sup>8</sup> In either case it is hard to dissociate *Istrat* from *Stroat/Stræt*, but it is even harder to associate them. The question here depends partly upon whether Welsh *ystrad* "broad, shallow valley" is suitable here as referring to the flats bordering on one side of the Severn estuary. The site hardly qualifies as a "valley"; but no study of the word is available that could help answer that question. One of Ifor Williams' translations of *ystrad* is "ilecyn gwastad [level place]", and he translates the cognate Irish *srath* as "low ground on the bank of a river".<sup>9</sup>



If *ystrad* does suit the site, well and good; if not, then it must once more be a folk-etymology, presumably of the postulated place-name \**Straud*, by Welsh speakers who no longer understood the name, at some point before the twelfth century. That they should not have understood it is entirely plausible, since the word is not found elsewhere; but on the whole an independent place-name with *ystrad* seems more likely, though as before a small doubt remains.

\* \* \* \* \*

If a conclusion is to be drawn from this very disparate collection of items, it is that one of the problems the toponymist has to face is the very localised nature of some recurrent place-names. If my tentative opinions are correct, then in *atte Treawen*, \**Trūs-wella* and *Rose-in-the-Valley* we have three examples of English names which occur several times within a limited area, and nowhere outside that area. In each of these cases the limited distribution makes it necessary to consider a Cornish derivation instead; but that usually seems to raise more problems than it solves.

*Addendum*

Since item III was written, Örjan Svensson's useful *Saxon Place-Names in East Cornwall* has appeared (Lund Studies in English 77 [Lund, 1987]). Svensson accepts (p.56) the derivation *treowes-wiell* "tree stream" for *Trowell* (North Petherwin), comparing *Trowell* in Nottinghamshire (PNNtt., p.153).

#### ABBREVIATIONS

CPNE = O.J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, EPNS 56-7 (Nottingham, 1985).  
 DEPN = Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (4th edn., Oxford, 1960). Elements = A.H. Smith, *The Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols., EPNS 25-6 (Cambridge, 1956). EPNS = English Place-Name Society. LHEB = Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953). pers. = personal name(s). PNBrk. = Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, 3 vols., EPNS 49-51 (Cambridge and [Nottingham], 1973-6). PNChe. = J. McN. Dodgson, *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, 6 vols. to date, EPNS 44-8 and 54 (Cambridge and [Nottingham], 1970-). PNDev. = J.E.B. Gover and others, *The Place-Names of Devon*, 2 vols., EPNS 8-9 (Cambridge, 1931-2). PNGlo. = A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, 4 vols., EPNS 38-41 (Cambridge, 1964-5). PNNtp. = J.E.B. Gover and others, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire*, EPNS 10 (Cambridge, 1933). PNNtt. = J.E.B. Gover and others, *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, EPNS 17 (Cambridge, 1940). PNYow. = A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 8 vols., EPNS 30-7 (Cambridge, 1961-3).

Early forms of Cornish place-names are cited from the Survey of Cornish Place-names (Institute of Cornish Studies, University of Exeter).

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The Caption of Seisin of the Duchy of Cornwall*, ed. P.L. Hull, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series, 17 (Torquay, 1971) pp.98-107.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*, ed. Audrey M. Erskine, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series, 14 (Torquay, 1969) pp.11, 12, 64, 104 and 107.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Register of Walter de Stapeldon, Bishop of Exeter, (A.D. 1307-1326)*, ed. F.C. Hingeston-Randolph (London and Exeter, 1892) pp.493 and 505.
- <sup>4</sup> Nils Wrander, *English Place-Names in the Dative Plural*, Lunds Studies in English 65 (Lund, 1983).
- <sup>5</sup> *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv*, ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans and John Rhys (Oxford, 1893) p.120.
- <sup>6</sup> The form dated 1256 is not in PNDev., but from *Cornwall Feet of Fines*, ed. Joseph Hambley Rowe, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 2 vols. (Exeter and Topsham, 1914-50) I, p.78 (no.153): for manorial reasons it is more likely to belong here than to any place in Cornwall.
- <sup>7</sup> John Field, *English Field-Names* (Newton Abbot, 1972).
- <sup>8</sup> Wendy Davies, *The Llandaff Charters* (Aberystwyth, 1979) pp.108 and 122.
- <sup>9</sup> Ifor Williams, *Enwau Lleoedd* (2nd edn., Lerpwl, 1962) pp.35-6.