**Ulster Place-Name Society Newsletter May 4th 2017**

UPNS Spring Lecture: **The Townland Names of County Wexford** by Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich will be held on Thursday 25th May at 8pm in Lanyon Building/0G/074, Queen’s University Belfast. This will be an occasion to celebrate Conchubhar’s recent publication of two large volumes on the subject with his colleague Aindí Mac Giolla Chomhghaill.

**Membership Renewal.** Members who renew their membership in Spring are reminded to do so; the fee is £10/€14 and £15/€20 for institutions. The Society prefers payment by standing order and a relevant form is enclosed. If you have received this newsletter by post we do not have an e-mail address for you. Please send an e-mail to townlands.upns@gmail.com and we will amend our records. Those who provide an e-mail address will receive more notices regarding events and publications related to place-names and similar subjects.

**Online Place-Names & Mapping**

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has digitised NI Ordnance Survey maps; now available at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-proni-historical-maps-viewer>. UK Open Licence townland maps, which can be published with an acknowledgement but without seeking permission from Land and Property Services, can be accessed here: <https://www.opendatani.gov.uk/dataset/osni-open-data-townland-raster-maps/resource/770e23df-8eec-466c-9baf-f4565ca9662c>. One site which utilises this resource is [www.townlands.ie](http://www.townlands.ie) . Townland boundaries can be viewed at [www.placenamesni.org](http://www.placenamesni.org) and the boundaries and a further wealth of related historical information can be accessed at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/historic-environment-map-viewer> . Justin Ó Gliasáin of Fiontar encourages people to add unmapped placenames to meitheal logainm.ie.

**Activities**

Gordon McCoy has published a map of East Belfast townlands (and rivers) which also marks sites connected to Conn O’Neill. It can be viewed at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/986yy18f89jx8r8/EAST%20BELFAST%20MAP%20FINAL.jpg?dl=0>. He has also organised a Gaelic bus tour which covers East Belfast townlands as part of the EastSide Arts Festival in August. Members of the Society are working on recommendations for the Irish-language ‘Parish Names Project’ of the Church of Ireland.

**The Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland** met in Oxfordshire in late March, part of the weekend being dedicated to surnames to celebrate the launch of the *Family Names of Britain and Ireland* (OUP 2016). There were talks on earlier and more recent English place-names, such as names mentioning the Devil or silver – do these record archaeology? Ann Cole’s field trip taught members to distinguish Oxfordshire soils – wet valley clay and dry sandy hills, where one village had been given a deep well by the Maharajah of Benares!

**Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, conference on *Dinnshenchas* ‘lore of high places’**

This first conference on the medieval collection of prose and verse texts on Irish places was held in early April. Nollaig Ó Muraíle began with an overview, and discussion followed on dating, literary style, appreciation by the Dublin Norse, and some stories of particular places. It was agreed that much more work was needed, on the individual stories and the collection. In oral tradition, Gearóid Trimble studied Henry Morris’s tracing of the route of the Táin.

**Holy Wells** Anthropology professor Dr Celeste Ray <[cray@sewanee.edu](mailto:cray@sewanee.edu)> is asking for local information – accounts, photos, audio clips- on Irish holy wells, for a website for the Irish Studies Program at Queen’s University and University College Dublin’s National Folklore Collection, currently evolving at <http://ihwcbc.omeka.net/> She and colleague are holding a two-day conference on holy wells from Siberia-Africa, and in Ireland, in Waterford on June 26th-7th this year, <https://holywells.wordpress.com/program/> (**€75)**. See her published book <http://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/the-origins-of-ireland-s-holy-wells.html>

The **Lough Neagh Partnership** has been awarded HLF funding for twenty-seven new programmes dealing with the history, heritage and society of the area. Kay Muhr and Pat McKay attended a ‘Lough Neagh Connections’ symposium at Ballyronan on Feb. 15th and a conference entitled ‘Song of the Bog’ will be held at Oxford Island on May 10th. Kay is to speak about south Lough Neagh names at an open information evening (7.30, May 24th) for the Lough Neagh Development Trust, formed to bring the Lough into local community ownership.

**The Advent of Gaelic in Early Scotland: What can Place-Names Tell us?** Annual Seán Mac Airt Memorial Lecture of 17th November 2016

Professor Clancy’s presentation to the UPNS reflected upon recent criticisms of conventional narratives which claim that Gaelic arrived in Scotland from Ireland in the 6th century or before. We can be certain that Argyll was thoroughly Gaelicised by the 7th century, and that very close links with Ireland existed. These links are illustrated by an *Annals of Ulster* entry for 617, listing 50 monks killed on Eigg, over 80% of whom had Gaelic Irish names. However, it is not clear as to where Scottish Gaelic originated from – Ireland, or perhaps the language emerged during a simultaneous development in Scotland.

Clancy finds non-linguistic data on the issue to be non-convincing. Narratives of Irish invasion in texts cannot be treated as evidence, and the archaeological evidence is inconclusive. Clancy approached the issue using a chronology of place-names developed by Morton, Mac Giolla Easpaig and Tempan, among others. The chronological sequence is as follows: (1) monothematic names consisting of unmodified nouns; (2 ) noun + noun ‘close compounds’; (3) noun + noun in the genitive case; and (4) nouns with the definite article. Types (1) and (2) were most productive in Ireland before the 7th century. Clancy considered Argyll in the light of this typology. Although he encountered many problems, including opaque island names of Celtic but non-Gaelic origin, he concludes that the earlier types (1) and (2) are not to be found. This suggests that Gaelic was imported to Argyll from somewhere else – Ireland or another part of Scotland – during the 7th century, and not before.

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