ON DARTMOOR PLACE-NAMES[1]

THE study of place-names has been at one time enthusiastically pursued, at another almost wholly neglected; a science thus interrupted in its growth is dwarfed in its accomplishment.

Chief among the losses suffered, is an absence of restraint. Sciences, like men, have their wild oats to sow in youth; and the study of place-names has had its youth renewed so often that its harvest of indiscretion is prodigious. This makes it advisable, in considering the place-names of any district, to adopt strict criteria of interpretation, and to rigidly exclude, as valueless, all interpretations not conforming to such criteria. If a reasonable degree of certainty is to be attained, it would appear that the following requirements are none too exacting:

1. The name should never be divorced from the place. None but those perfectly familiar with the geography of a place are qualified to attempt the problem of its name.

2. Of all possible interpretations, that which makes the name descriptive of the place as it still exists, or as it is known to have existed within historic time, is the most probable, and should be preferred.

3. No violence should be done to the forms of the language in which the name is assumed to have been framed. As an example: it is not permissible to derive 'Bowerman' from *Vawr maen*, the Great Stone, since the Celtic form would be *maen vawr*, as in the 'Man of War' rock off the Cornish coast.

4. No mutation or change of form should be accepted for which there exists no known precedent, supported by documentary evidence; and, on the other hand, no change of form should be rejected as impossible, on the authority of a textbook.

5. Since the history of a place, if known, may be a valuable aid in

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[1] This article was written before the publication of *The Place-Names of Devon* (*P.N.D.*), but is by no means superseded by that work. Not only are there here various additional data and suggestions based on local knowledge, but also, where opinions diverge, it should not be assumed that those of the authors of the *P.N.D.* are necessarily the more correct. What is perhaps the more remarkable, in a subject so fraught with uncertainty, is the large measure of common ground between different modern authorities. (ED.)

the interpretation of its name, the student should be well informed in local history; on the other hand, none but the most restrained use should be made of the presumed meaning of a name, as an aid to the reconstruction of a forgotten past.

6. It may be granted that some names are capable of direct translation, to modern English. For example, 'stickle-path' equals *the steep path.*

It may be that there is interest in devising elaborate and imaginative interpretations of place-names; it may be that some students regard a confessed ignorance of the origin of a name as a confession of incapacity; for such the modern crossword puzzle may provide congenial occupation.

In the following notes I have endeavoured to exclude all but the simplest interpretations; it is quite possible that at times I have been too ingenious, and have failed to fully observe my own criteria.

Many, in fact most, place-names are constructed from a noun and a qualifying adjective, which latter may be the possessive of a personal name. It is convenient to give some general consideration to these separately, taking first the nouns. The nouns, many of them, present modern English forms; others are to-day either obsolete or obsolescent; others yet have suffered strange change in their centuries of being. It is regarding these last that the following notes will be most detailed.

NOUNS

Ball, 'a hill of rounded outline'. A specialized use of the common English word. As examples, Hemerdon Ball, Corringdon Ball, Cuckoo Ball are all rounded hills.

Beam, I agree with Crossing[1] that this has a mining signification. It may refer to the 'rocking beam' of a pump used for mining purposes. Examples are: 'Caters Beam', 'Omen Beam', etc.

Beare, beer, or *bere. A.-S.* Bearu, bearo, 'a grove, a wood'. 'Black Tor Beare', as which Black Tor Copse was described, in 1588 and again in 1608, is a clear instance of the use of the word with this meaning; it is probably used in the same sense in 'Bair Down' opposite Wistman's Wood, and derives from the proximity of that wood. 'Beara', in South Brent, seems to be another clear example. But 'bere', meaning 'barley', is an alternative which introduces an uncertainty in many instances.

Combe, 'a valley'. Besides the very obvious change to *cum* or *cam*, there exists a form *am* or *ham* (the 'h' very lightly stressed), and this latter version is at times interchangeable with *ken* or *chen*.

An interesting example is 'Birkham Gate', which is on the road to Eyelesboro, at the eastern fence of Ringmoor and hard by Sheepstor Brook. More formally this is still called 'Burracombe Gate'. The

[1] W. Crossing, in his *Guide to Dartmoor*, pp. 9–40, gave the most complete glossary of Dartmoor terms hitherto published. (ED.)

name does not appear on any map, and hence, without a personal knowledge of the neighbourhood, it would give no clue to the identification of the 'Biricombaforda' of the charter granted by Isabella de Fortibus, in 1291. In view of the existence of Burracombe Gate near the head of the Sheepstor Brook, and of Burra Tor near the outfall of that stream into the Meavy, it appears at least probable that the whole valley was formerly known as Biracombe, Bearacombe, or Burracombe, 'the wooded valley'; it still shows more timber than the average of Dartmoor combes.

At Deancombe, in the parish of Sheepstor, is an old tenement, the buildings long in ruins, which is variously called 'Outam', 'Outham', or 'Outcombe'; and the last of these names very accurately describes it, since it is, indeed, 'out the combe'.

'Bycacumbayoneda', a name which occurs in the charter of Isabella de Fortibus, previously referred to, is now known as 'Bickham'. Without multiplying examples, it will be evident that many (perhaps all) of the 'hams' of Dartmoor have no connexion with the *A.-S. ham*, a homestead.

Walkhampton appears in the *Inquisitio Geldi* as 'Walchentone', in 1505–6 it is 'Walcamton'; in the days of Henry VIII it appears on a map as 'Walkynton'; and, within my recollection, it has been called 'Wackenton' by the older moormen. The original form was probably 'Wallacombe-ton',[1] in which the apparent redundancy of either the *ham* or the *ton* no longer appears.

In the days of Henry VIII, Okehampton appears as 'Okenton',[2] and so I have heard it called by the older men. Perhaps the origin may be found in 'Oak-combe-ton'?

Cleave, A.-S. cleof, 'a cliff'. Appears in 'Lustleigh Cleave', 'Tavy Cleave', etc. At first sight it may seem unimportant that the word denotes the cliff bounding the valley, and not the cleft or valley itself. But the fact has significance, and is emphasized by the occurrence of the name 'Shilly Cleaves', near Plymouth, at a place where the name can only refer to an old sea cliff of slate, bounding land now reclaimed.

Cut, 'a track or way, formed by removing the soft surface soil, and leaving exposed the harder, and often stony, subsoil; a way artificially formed through a mire'. The best known example is 'Cut Lane', from which 'Cut Hill' is named.

Down, needs no definition, commonly appears as 'don', as in 'Butterdon'. But a further change has, in some instances, occurred: thus, 'Sciredon', as it was written in A.D. 1275, has now become 'Skeriton', and the 'Leweneston' of 1275 is probably identical with the modern 'Leusdon', while 'Steapedon' (1346–7) has become 'Steeperton'. In

[1] See discussion in *P.N.D.*, p. 243, where this plausible suggestion is not considered. (ED.)

[2] 'Okement-tun' preferred as origin by *P.N.D.* (ED.)

modern pronunciation the use of *don* or *ton*, indifferently, is frequent.

Ford, 'a way, not necessarily restricted to the passage or crossing-place at a stream'. In Petertavy parish, that portion of the Lichway which lies between Lanson Moor Reeve and White Barrow is known as 'Sandy Ford'; and the south-east angle of the newtake, which it skirts, is called 'Sandy Ford Corner'. This Sandy Ford is a trackway devoid of any stream crossings. The name does not appear on the Ordnance map.

It is important to note that, on Dartmoor, *ford* is often but a variant of *worthy, q.v.*

Girt or *gert*, 'a valley with steep sides; a mine gully' (*A.-S.* grút, 'a gulph an abyss'?). The tor at the entrance to the valley of Tavy Cleave is known as 'Gert Tor', a name sometimes assumed to be derivable from 'Great Tor',[1] a suggestion supposed to be supportable by Blackmore's 'girt Jan Ridd'. But whereas he was an outstanding person, there is nothing exceptional about the tor to justify the adjective. Its situation at the entrance to the valley or 'gert' would, however, make it reasonable to call it the 'valley tor'. And this would accord with the fact that the tors which crown the cliff or cleave are known as 'Tavy Cleave Tors'.

Hole, *A.-S.* hole, 'a valley'. This term is usually applied to a restricted area, and not to a complete valley. 'Laughter or Larter Hole', and 'Horse Hole', both in the Dart watershed, are examples. Even this simple word presents its difficulties as a component in place-names, thus: Larter Hole is sometimes changed to 'Larter Hall', and the parish of Holne is constantly spoken of as 'Hole', and frequently appears as such in documents.

Lake, 'a brook, a tributary stream'. This word is never used on Dartmoor with its present literary significance; a sheet of standing water, of whatever size, is invariably called a 'pool'.

It would hardly appear necessary to refer to so well-known a word, were it not for the fact that an antiquarian so well qualified as Davidson has mistaken its meaning.

Man, 'a standing stone, a menhir'. As in 'Beardown Man'. It has been stated that this word derives from the Celtic 'maen', a stone. If that were true one would expect to find other Celtic forms associated with it, a line of evidence which is entirely wanting. I prefer to believe that the stones are so called by reason only that, seen against the skyline, they do indeed present some resemblance to a human figure.

Tor, 'a hill, more usually a hill crowned with rock, and recently used for the crowning mass itself'. The difficulty presented by this word is its constant duplication by the moormen. Thus, 'Hen Tor' becomes 'Hentor Tor', and 'Harter Tor' may equally well be 'Har', 'Hare', 'Hart', or 'Harter' Tor. Of tors devoid of rocky crowns, I may name 'Clay Tor', a hill in the Walkham Valley, and bearing the name since

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[1] But this was written 'Gordetorre' in 1306 (*P.N.D.*, p. 233). (ED.)

1665, at the latest; while 'Udal Tor', now Roborough Rock, is an early example of the name attaching to a rock mass only.

Well, 'a well or spring, running water'. This word has been mentioned to direct attention to the frequent confusion of *well* and *hill*; a confusion so complete that it is at times impossible to determine which is intended. Both degenerate into a terminal *el*, which later scribes restore as fancy prompts. Thus, at varying dates, we read: Pusshill, 1260; Pishull, 1300, 1304, 1354; Pushull, 1316; Pulleshull, 1380; but—Peasewell *alias* Pusswell, 1628; and Piswell, in 1704; while to-day the name has settled down to Pizwell. In 1539 the adjacent ford was called 'Peselford'. Here the concordance of the earlier forms points to *hill* as the true interpretation. But what certainty have we that the process of change may not have occurred more than once?

An additional difficulty arises from the occasional change of *hill* to *hall* and *hel*, or, as seen above, to *hull*.

Worthy, A.-S., 'an enclosed homestead'. Of all the varied components of Dartmoor place-names this has acquired the greatest number of variants; it has changed to *ary* or *ery*, to *ford*, with or without the prefix *a*, to *over*, *ever*, *iver*, and also to *eny*.

There is ample evidence of these changes; Hisworthy Tor is constantly referred to as 'Hessary otherwise Hisworthy'. On Exmoor, Pinkworthy is alternatively called 'Pinkery'. On Dartmoor, Brisworthy is sometimes called 'Brisery' and sometimes 'Briseny'.

All these forms can be seen to follow the rapid pronunciation of the name; the 'ford' form is less obvious. We may start with a simple example: Blachford, in Cornwood, is in the Exeter Domesday '*Blacheorda*', where 'eorda' is the Norman scribe's attempt at 'worthy'. In the Exchequer Domesday, it is 'Blacheurde', the final *e* of which would be pronounced. Omit the final *a* from *eorda*, or the final *e* from *eurde*, and there is left, in either instance, a form from which the 'ford' variant is directly derivable. Since the manor is now invariably called 'Blachford', it may be objected that such, possibly, it always has been; but we have documentary evidence to the contrary, for in the Tax Roll of Devon (1302–3) the manor appears as 'Nitherblacchesworthy', and, in the seventeenth century it appears in a deed as 'Blachford otherwise Blachworthy'.

Now Blachford is a collection of syllables which the Devonshire ear accepts, but if you similarly alter 'Cadworthy' to 'Cadford', you arrive at a certain harshness of sound which no Dartmoor man will leave unmodified; accordingly Cadworthy, on the Plym, has become 'Cadaford' and 'Cadever', and while the bridge is sometimes rightly called 'Cadaford Bridge' (in 1407 it was 'ponte de Cadeworthi'), wiseacres of the past have turned 'Cadever' into 'Cadover', and thence postulated the existence of a river, which the poet of Dartmoor, with finely unconscious humour, has described as the 'ever brawling Cad'.

The change from 'aford' to 'ever' needs no prolonged discussion, resulting naturally from rapid pronunciation. It should be noted that all three forms, Cadworthy, Cadaford, and Cadever, are in present use.

The distribution of the 'worthys' in Devonshire affords some evidence that the name intended, not merely an enclosed homestead, but, more frequently, one of recent origin, a 'newtake' from the moors. The *worthys* cluster around, and some occur within, Dartmoor, Exmoor, and the moorlands, formerly unenclosed, of north and northwest Devon. They were the homes of the pioneers who went out into the waste places. And it is noteworthy that, in the majority of instances, the distinctive prefix is a personal name: thus, Brisworthy—Brictric's worthy, Cadworthy or Cade's worthy, Trowle's worthy, Hexworthy or Hick's worthy, Eggworthy—another Hick's worthy, the change being identical with that in 'Egg Buckland'. There are examples of other classes of prefix, but rare; one such is 'Middleworth', in Sheepstor.

Here, then, is a place-name which is dim history, the evidence of days when the Saxons were advancing the bounds of agriculture at the expense of the wastes. A similar use of personal as place-names occurred much later, when the old manorial system was breaking up and giving place to fixity of tenure.[1] Tenements took the name of their occupiers, for example, at Compton Gifford, we find: 'Dunn's Fields', 'Yonge's', 'Kitt's', etc.

Both were times of new things, and for those novelties no pre-existent names were available, the personal name came most readily to hand to supply the need.

It is highly probable that many of the 'fords' on Dartmoor, perhaps all which are attached to enclosed lands, were in their origin 'worthys'. The same may be said of the 'ivers', 'evers', and the further variant 'ifer'. Thus 'Belliver', on the East Dart, and 'Vitifer', on the West Webburn, would be Bellworthy and Vitworthy respectively. It should be noted that, in 1702, Bellever appears as 'Bellaford'; and, in 1609, it was written in a single entry in the manor court rolls of Lidford: 'Beltabur, Anglice Bellavur', and 'Bellabour'.[2]

Yeo, A.-S., eá, 'running water'. A specialized use of this word arose in connexion with the mining industry, and extended even to Cornwall. The Bailiff of Blackmore wrote, in 1586, 'and every (tin) work may lawfully fetch their water from their river, which the Tinners commonly call the Yeo, without denial or contradiction'. In this manner the word 'yeo' came to be more particularly applied to such streams as were the sources from which those artificial water-courses, called 'leats', were drawn. It was thus that the River Ashburn, at Ashburton, the

[1] See Hoskins & Finberg (1952). (ED.)

[2] However, all renderings prior to 1600 point to 'ford' compounded with wielle (spring, running water) as the original form (*P.N.D.*, p. 192). (ED.)

source and 'yeo' from which the leat of such importance to the industries of that town was drawn, came to be called, and is still called, the Yeo, to the exclusion of its true name. It was the 'yeo' in distinction from the mill-leat.

ADJECTIVES AND OTHER PREFIXES

Black, this may derive from two very different sources, either 'bleak' or 'black', both of which, however, come from the *A.-S. blaec*, meaning pale or colourless. Hence, if we regard the first meaning, the limit of paleness is white, places bleak and exposed are apt to be covered with snow, and hence to be white at times. The other extreme of colourlessness, is black. I am well aware that this is a restatement of common knowledge, but I have made it as an admission that there may be truth in elaborate derivations, little as they are to be encouraged. The task of determining which meaning of 'black' is intended in any Dartmoor place-name is wellnigh hopeless; so many places are both black and bleak. *Erica cinerea* is not inaptly named, and it is by no means the only moorland plant which is dark in shade when dry, and practically black when wet. *Calluna vulgaris* has a very similar effect as a ground covering. On the other hand, places where these plants grow are often exposed and bleak.

Who shall say which of the alternatives was in the mind of the man who first gave name to 'Black Down', Mary Tavy?

Brent, a word barely obsolescent, 'steep, lofty, prominent'. Occurs in Brent Hill, in the parish of South Brent, and in Brent Tor, in the parish of the same name. The most familiar present use of the word is in the phrase, 'brent brow', descriptive of a lofty forehead. Both Brent Hill and Brent Tor are border heights of exceptionally bold outline, and from their abruptness and their height form landmarks visible over wide stretches of country.

The attempt has been repeatedly made to derive the *brent* element in these names from 'brennen', to burn. It has been variously argued that both hills are formed of igneous rocks, a fact of which our forebears were certainly in total ignorance, and that both hills may have been used as beacons; but, if so, why was the ordinary habit of calling them 'beacons' departed from? We have plenty of examples, such as 'Ugborough Beacon', 'Cosdon Beacon', and others.

Butter or *Buttern*, utter, 'outer'? Occurs in 'Butterdon', 'Buttern Hill', etc. In every instance the situation of the place conforms to the suggested derivation of the name, and 'Outer Down', 'Outer Hill', etc., would be accepted as good nomenclature. A marsh near Plymouth was known as 'the Utter Marisch' in the sixteenth century.

Chaw, a 'jackdaw'. I am indebted to Mr. Hannaford, lately the tenant of Headland Warren, for directing my attention to the use of this word in the place-name 'Chaw Gully', applied to one of the old mining

excavations at.Birch Tor (Pl. 7A). As Mr. Hannaford put it, 'Chaw Gully is called after the jackdaws that used to build there; and a proper lot there were before I got tired of them and shot them out of it.' The modern pronunciation of 'Chough', still used for the Cornish Chough, is 'chuff', but in the old days it was sometimes spelt, and I suspect more frequently pronounced, 'cow', 'chow', or 'chaw'. The name covered, not only the jackdaws, but also other members of the corvine race. It should be noted that Crossing has anticipated me as to this.

Corn, in 'Corndon', etc. *A.-S.* corone, 'a crown', or coronian, 'to crown'. The hills and ridges to which the name of 'Corn' has been applied are all the crowning heights of their respective groups of hills.[1] It is interesting to find that 'Corndon Tor', over Dartmeet, is called by Rowe (1856), 'Quarnian Down'.

Dewer, in 'Dewerstone'. I, myself, have joined in the attempt to derive this from the Celtic, and to translate the name as 'stone by the water'. I admit the position to be untenable, and I withdraw. As an alternative the *A.-S.* duua, 'a dove or pigeon', may be suggested. The 'Rock of the Pigeons' is a very appropriate name; although, of late years, 'Jackdaw Castle' would be even more fitting.

Hell, *A.-S.* helle, 'clear, eminent'. The word occurs in Hel Tor, near Moretonhampstead, and that height is indeed singularly prominent as a feature of the landscape.

Homer, 'nearer home', the antithesis of 'outer'. A frequent element in Dartmoor place-names. It is of constant occurrence in field names, such as 'Homer New Park'. A good example of its use is 'Homer Redlake', a tributary of the Tavy; there is also a companion, the 'Outer Redlake'. As another example we may take 'Homerton' or homer down, on the West Ockment.

Lynch, *Lynx*, etc. *A.-S.* hlinc, the nearest synonym of which is 'ridge'. Such ridge may also be a boundary, artificial or natural; or the word may denote a path on the crest of a ridge.

Lynch Common, in the Meavy Valley, Lynch Tor, in the Tavy Valley, Lynx Tor, by the Lyd, and Lints Tor, on the West Ockment, are all in the nature of forelands.

Leather, in 'Leather Tor'. *A.-S.* hlead, 'a steep, a cliff'. The name has been variously spelt: 'Laddre-torre', 1362; 'Ladderrtor', 1417; and 'Leddertor', 1477. If any tor on the moor deserves to be described as a cliff, it is Leather Tor.

Newley, in 'Newley Combe', a valley joining the Meavy Valley above Sheepstor. *A.-S.* neowel, 'profound, deep, a deep gulph'. An essentially accurate description of the combe. In 1443, the name is spelt 'Newelcombe'.

Riddy, in 'Riddy Pit', in the Meavy Valley. *A.-S.* riðe, 'a well'. A spring still rises in this hollow.

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[1] But see discussion in *D.P.N.* (p. 268). (ED.)

Red, in the many 'Redlakes'. This presents a possible ambiguity, the syllable is always pronounced 'rid'. The reference may in some instances be to the colour of the bed of the stream, in summer; when, the water being low, the limonite, formed by the oxidation of ferrous carbonate, derived from the bogs, colours the stones. But this feature is by no means markedly developed in many of the streams called by this name. It is to be noted that many of the 'Redlake' valleys are places to which the moormen still resort to cut reeds for thatching, and 'reed lake' is probably the correct interpretation.[1]

Rough, or *Row*, in the name of many tors. The local pronunciation always makes this rhyme with 'cow'. *A.-S.* rúh, 'rough'. From varied reasons the tors so named deserve the adjective.

Rundle, in 'Rundlestone', one of the Forest bounds, near Princetown. It has been suggested that the original Rundlestone was a stone post, bearing the letter 'R', formerly standing at a point near the Tavistock-Princetown road, below Rundlestone Tor. Admittedly it would be the one artificial bond mark, where all the rest (excepting Syward's Cross) were natural objects, since the 'furnum regis', although a building, was not erected as a boundary mark. Admittedly this post did not lie on the boundary of the forest, as set forth in the earlier perambulations, or as now recognized; which is a straight line joining North Hessary Tor and Mis Tor Pan. And, further, it offered no feature corresponding to its name. But, if we abandon this identification, and give to 'Rundle' the meaning of 'roundel', we have, in Rundlestone Tor, a natural object which fulfils all the conditions; it lies on the precise line of the boundary, and presents good reason for its name. A 'roundel', in common parlance, as in heraldry, was a small circular object. The principal feature of Rundlestone Tor, which I take to be the original Rundlestone, is a great, sloping mass of granite; it has in it one rock-basin, 28 in. in diameter by 5 in. in depth, which must have been formed before the present slope was assumed (Fig. 8, p. 33); and, at the summit, a later basin, also 28 in. in diameter, and, on the average, perhaps 7 in. in depth. The Rundlestone now measures 23 ft by 23 ft, but many feet have been cleaved by the quarrymen from the north end.

Rock-basins are only formed on approximately horizontal surfaces, and the accident of this slab having fallen out of level, after the first basin had formed, and yet in such manner as to permit the formation of a second basin near the summit, makes it unique in my experience; and certainly makes the rock-basins, or 'roundels', very exceptionally prominent.

This rock, with its considerable area, its thickness of 4 ft 6 in., and the circles of its rock-basins, certainly agrees with the description given, in 1736: 'a Great Stone call'd Roundle'.

[1] *D.P.N.* prefers the former on etymological grounds. (ED.)

Rules, or *Roos*, a tor so called, and sometimes known as 'Rolls Tor', one mile north by west from Merrivale Bridge. In 1665, written 'Rulestorre'. *A.-S.* hruse, 'a rock, a hill'.

Sharp, all the many tors known as 'Sharpitor', and 'Sharp Tor', are distinguished by their acute outlines, at least as seen from certain viewpoints. But, in some instances, 'scarp' would be equally applicable.

Smear, in 'Smear Ridge', Petertavy. *A.-S.* smea, 'fine, narrow, acute'. An appropriate description of this particular ridge.

Staple, in 'Staple Tor'. *A.-S.* steopl, 'a tower'. The rock masses of Great Staple Tor include some, as prominent features, which are certainly reminiscent of the flanking towers of a great gateway.

Stannon, Standon Hill, etc. *A.-S.* stennen, 'stony'.

Stinka or *Stenga*, a word not yet obsolete, meaning 'a pool, or standing water'. In the north, a moorhen is still spoken of as a 'stank-hen'. The word occurs on Dartmoor in 'Stinka Tor' and 'Stingers Hill'. The first-named place is written 'Steinigtor' in 1608, and 'Stinkatorr' in 1702. Some years ago, when walking to the tor with Mr. J. S. Amery, a casual remark of his gave the clue to the meaning of the name. He remarked that the tor was unique on Dartmoor, in that the rocks rose, practically, from a pool of water. In fact, no more apt description could be given than 'the tor in the pool or marsh'. This tor, which has no hill of its own, is one of those in which the word 'tor' attaches to a mass of rock alone. (Stingers Hill is also a very marshy spot.)

Wella, or *Walla*, in 'Wallabrook'. There are so many Walla Brooks on the moor that some reference must be made to this word, although no really satisfactory and complete explanation can be given. The Western Wallabrook is very frequently mentioned in documents relating to the Forest. The name occurs in the following forms: 1300, Walebrook; 1344, Wallabrook, Wellabrook, Willabrook; 1358, Wallbrook; 1476, Walbrook; 1491–2, Walbrook, Waterwald brook, this possibly an error for Wester Wald brook; 1557, Welbrook; 1608, Wallebrook; 1689, Walter Brook; 1699, Wellow Brook; 1702, Wallabrook, Welbrook. Here the earlier forms all correspond to the present version. Many, varied, derivations have been suggested.

At one time the favourite suggestion was a derivation from the *A.-S.* 'Wealhas', meaning—strangers, foreigners, and hence the Welsh. This involves the idea that on the banks of all these little streams there dwelt, in Saxon times, small colonies of Celts; in Celtic 'reserves', as it were. Or, in the alternative, that such brooks were temporary boundaries, at which the Saxon wave checked. There is no surviving evidence of any kind in support of either alternative.

A more hopeful idea is that involved in the possible connexion of 'walla' with the Cornish 'heul', a mine working. And, as if to support this, there is a tributary of the Avon called the 'Bala Brook', while 'bal' is a well-known variant of 'huel'. But this admits of critical test:

mine workings are not lost by lapse of time, leaving no surviving traces. And the valleys of the Wallabrooks are by no means places where, taking them as a whole, the remains of ancient workings are prominent.

The *A.-S.* Waella, or wille, 'a well', is yet another possibility, phonetically at least; but the attempt to explain its use, by saying that these streams were called 'Wallabrook', which had their source in definite springs, or wells, in distinction to those which grew to be brooks by mere seepage from the bogs, is unsustainable. In the first place, it involves a system of fine geographical classification, inappropriate to the date of origin of the names; and, in the second place, the streams in question do not, to-day, present the peculiarity in question. On the other hand, 'waella' sometimes has the meaning—'running water'; but I hesitate to say that this more general meaning, as opposed to the particular meaning attached to our present use of the word, was ever really well established.

There remain two other possible sources for the name. It may be a corruption of 'walter brook', the 'tumbling or rolling brook', in which connexion it is well to remember the shortening of the Christian name Walter to Waller. It would then derive from the *A.-S.* waeltan.

Ot it may represent 'willow brook'; the *A.-S.* wileg—'a willow', being its source. Here we have a physical characteristic which cannot be affirmed or denied, as the result of inspection. Time brings its changes to the brook-side vegetation, and the hand of man has not been idle.

I have purposely dealt fully with this last example[1]; it is useful to present the uncertainty and difficulty of the study of place-names. Only a small percentage will ever admit of reasonable certainty of interpretation; the place-names of Dartmoor are like its hut-circles, they yield evidence but sparingly, here and there a flint chip, a potsherd, or a spot of charcoal; here and there a recognizable syllable, but no more.

One conclusion, and one only, I draw from such study as I have given to the subject—if you except the principal rivers, whose names would follow their course upward, there are no traces of Celtic influence, or of any but Saxon occupation, in the Dartmoor place-names. It may be objected that 'combe' is the Welsh 'cwm', and 'tor' is the Welsh 'twr'. I care not from whom the Saxons learnt these words, so only that they learnt them not on Dartmoor. Except where other Saxon forms are in evidence, both 'combe' and 'tor' are almost absent from Cornwall. On the other hand, these words are frequently met with in West Saxon charters. As frequent constituents of the place-names of Devon, they were brought here by the Saxons.

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[1] If, indeed, the earliest known forms are considered, it would appear that there have been at least three separate origins. Thus the Dart Wallabrook seems to be *Wēala brōc* (stream of the Britons), the Avon Wallabrook *Wielle-brōc* (brook fed by a spring), while the Teign Wallabrook, if originally *Wotesbroke*, may incorporate a personal name. See *P.N.D.*, p. 16. (ED.)

There is no novelty in this conclusion. Nearly fifty years ago my father wrote: "The singular paucity of Keltic names on Dartmoor proves two things. First, that during British times Dartmoor was practically unknown to the Saxons. Second, that the Britons of Dartmoor were included in the general expulsion."[1] For myself I am prepared to state the case in another, and simpler form, without traversing these conclusions.

I would merely say that, on Dartmoor, there was no simultaneous occupation by Celt and Saxon; and, further, there was an interval between the Celtic and the Saxon occupation.

[1] "Notes on the Historical Connections of Devonshire Place-names", *T.D.A.*, 1878, Vol. 10, pp. 276–308.