

Project Report: Restarting the Staffordshire Survey

Overview

This project, generously supported by Professor Jim and Mrs Mary Ann Wilkes, had the broad objective of establishing the current state of Staffordshire place-name scholarship. The single EPNS volume for Staffordshire (for the hundred of Cuttlestone) was published in 1984, and no survey progress has been made by the EPNS since that date. The aims of the project were, therefore, threefold: 1. To assess further scholarship in the form of unpublished material at the INS and collected for the popular dictionary by Carole Hough and Eila Williamson; and the published volume by David Horovitz. 2. To make an assessment of the current level of volunteer activity within the county and the extent to which this might be harnessed for the collection of place-name material. 3. To assess the level of resourcing required for the completion of a detailed county Survey of the remaining four hundreds. We are pleased to present the results of this project below.

1. The existing material

Held at the INS is a small box of paper slips containing some of Oakden's material for unpublished hundreds. Where possible the slips were divided into hundreds and parishes, although this was not always possible based on the information provided. The number of forms is small and the coverage uneven, with several dozen slips for a few parishes, and far fewer than that for any others. The geographical distribution of the slips is weighted towards the south of the county, in the hundreds of Offlow and Seisdon, although it must be emphasised that even in the parishes with the most slips, there is nowhere near sufficient material for an EPNS entry.

Also held at the INS, however, is a draft typescript by Oakden of what he envisioned as the next volume of PN St: a survey of the north part of Totmonslow Hundred. The typescript remains to be edited, and close examination of the sources used reveals that for it to meet current EPNS standards, it should be supplemented by additional forms (especially of field-names), and the etymologies revisited prior to publication. Nevertheless, this is a considerable piece of scholarship which significantly furthers the progress of the survey. It is worthy of note that the paper slips do not contain all the forms used for this typescript; it is likely, therefore, that much of Oakden's work has been lost since his death.

David Horovitz's 2005 book, *The Place-Names of Staffordshire*, treats mainly major names, with a selection of minor and field-names. The attestations are predominantly from published sources. Carole Hough and Eila Williamson have collected additional major name forms for the forthcoming popular dictionary; their gazetteer is based on the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map, and is therefore not quite as detailed as that of the Shropshire survey (which used the 1:25,000 gazetteer). The research involved in both these publications has provided significant numbers of place-name attestations, especially for major names. In some cases further etymological work remains to be done, but a significant corpus of material is nevertheless available.

In summary, then, the hundred of Cuttlestone is complete and will not be revisited. Major names for the remainder of the county will, by the time of the popular dictionary's publication, have been treated to a high standard, and will help to form the skeleton of the EPNS survey. The volume for North Totmonslow needs some attention but is in a relatively complete state, and is likely to form the next volume of PN St. The area in which we are currently most lacking is that of minor names and field-names, and (to a lesser extent) of major names from unpublished sources.

2. Volunteer activity

Volunteer activity was instrumental in the completion of the Shropshire survey, with much of the material being collected by Margaret Gelling's team of dedicated volunteers. With so much material remaining to be collected for Staffordshire, similar interaction with volunteer groups is arguably essential in order for the survey to be completed in a timely manner.



The Staffordshire Record Office has an excellent volunteer network, and a highly effective existing structure within which projects are run. These consist of weekly “study groups”, usually of two hours, led by an expert with the support of the Participation and Engagement Officer, Matthew Blake. After discussion with Blake, the decision was made to start a volunteer project based at the Record Office so that collection of Staffordshire material could begin in earnest as soon as possible. It was decided that the project would be run by Rebecca Gregory, and that a “study day” would be held on 4th February 2017 to launch the project, with contributions from Gregory, from Drs Jayne Carroll and John Baker of the University of Nottingham, and from Dr Nigel Tringham, the editor of the Victoria County History of Staffordshire. Funding was secured from the University of Nottingham to hold the study day and begin the volunteer project, which would support an application to the AHRC Standard Research Grant scheme for the

completion of the Staffordshire survey. The progress of the volunteer project will also help to shape the Pathways to Impact section of that application.

The demand for the study day was high, with tickets sold out very quickly, and feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive. The project itself began on 22nd February 2017, with volunteers beginning to work on transcription of material from Horovitz's book (kindly provided to us by Horovitz in PDF form for this purpose), as well as collection of forms from sources held at the Staffordshire Record Office. By the end of February there were fifteen volunteers registered, each committed to two hours' research each week. We envision the project steadily growing from this point onwards. Collection of material has begun with a focus on Pirehill Hundred, due to the geographical focus of the collections at the Record Office being weighted towards this area, and due to the relative lack of material for this hundred in Oakden's paper slips.

The collection of material by volunteers will also provide an opportunity to test methods of data input and storage, and will help to shape decisions made about the database to be used for the final project, and about the potential for online resources linked to it.

In summary, not only has the volunteer activity in Staffordshire been assessed, but work has already begun to harness it. Thanks to Professor and Mrs Wilkes' support for this project, further funding has been obtained from the University of Nottingham to enable the launching of this volunteer project which will support an application to the AHRC.

3. Required resourcing

The shape of the project to complete PN St and that of the AHRC application will depend to a great extent on the success and productivity of the volunteer project. Progress will be continually assessed in order to make best use of the available energy and expertise of the volunteers, and to ensure that the best possible foundation is laid for etymological work by a county editor and team of researchers. As mentioned in (2), the potential for using a database suitable for work in GIS and the generation of online resources will be explored through the volunteer project and prior to a full funding application.

Conclusions

This project has allowed the exploration of Staffordshire place-name research, and has already helped to shape a future funding application to complete the county EPNS survey. Possible avenues of collaboration have been identified, and additional funding has been secured. Thanks are due not only to Prof. and Mrs Wilkes for their financial support, but also to staff at the Staffordshire Record Office (especially Matthew Blake), to Carole Hough and Eila Williamson, to Brian Rich (who provided some additional paper slips), and to David Horovitz.