**Ulster Place-Name Society Newsletter 3 November 2017**

**UPNS Autumn Lecture**

**The Importance of Place-names in the Storytelling Traditions of the Blue Stack Mountains**will be delivered by Dr Eithne Ní Ghallchobhair on Thursday23th November 2017 at 8.00 pm in Room 02/018 of the Peter Froggatt Centre, Queen’s University Belfast. The presentation will be preceded by the Society’s AGM at 7pm.

**Membership**

Members who renew their membership in autumn 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 for you to return to your bank.

**Activities**

Members of the Society made recommendations to the Parish Names Project of the Church of Ireland. This project aimed to provide an Irish language version of every parish in Ireland, but turned out to be far more complex than had been envisaged, and was hampered by a lack of input from experts on place-names. Gordon McCoy made suggestions regarding the Northern dioceses based upon secondary sources, which was proof-read by Pat McKay and Kay Muhr, who also provided many interpretations which were not readily available; indeed Kay carried out most of the work on the Clogher diocese herself. The work on the Northern dioceses (Armagh, Derry and Raphoe, Down and Dromore, and Clogher) is now complete. Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise (the Irish Guild of the Church of Ireland) is extremely grateful for this painstaking work, for which it expresses thanks in its annual report (https://issuu.com/gaeleaglais/docs/2017\_cge\_annual\_report\_final).

Kay Muhr and Liam Ó hAisibéil are working on a publication on the family names of Ireland. Kay was one of two speakers at the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies (UAFP) annual 'Literature of Irish Exile' day conference on Oct 21st, on place and family names and associated lore in Tyrone. Gordon McCoy gave a talk on the place-names of Kilkeel on the 24th of October. He is also looking at the options for a new website for the society, as the present site will expire early in the new year.

Pat McKay is working on a jointly-authored book with Niall Comer of Ulster University on the townland names of the Barony of Coleraine. He has also been commissioned by Mid-Ulster District Council to supply Irish-language versions of the road names and townland names of the area, in many cases drawing on previous work carried out by Kay Muhr and on work presented on the www.ulsterplacenames.org website. Pat has also appeared on the TG4 series *Racht* and has been interviewed for the BBC2 series *Ulaidh faoi Thalamh* (Ulster under ground) which will deal with aspects of our hidden heritage.

**Annual Deirdre Flanagan Memorial Lecture**

 ‘The townland names of County Wexford’ was delivered by by Dr Conchubhar Ó Crualaioch on 25th May 2017. Ó Crualaioch’s presentation summarised the findings of his research with Aindí Mac Giolla Chomhghaill, published in their two-volume volume of the same name*.* Their work challenges the promotion of Wexford to tourists as a ‘Norse’ county; there are few place-names of Scandinavian origin (apart from ‘Wexford’ itself), reflecting the early gaelicisation of Norse settlers. Place-names in the county bear witness to the complex interplay between Irish, Anglo-Norman and English populations and their attendant languages. Settlement names can have various sources, such as Bridewell (<Tobar Bhríde) in Northern Wexford, which are post-1600 translations. Place-names which are derived from Norman names which became popular among the Irish, such as Jamestown (Baile Shéamais < James) and Ballyedmund (Baile Éamainn < Edmund), may indicate either Anglo-Norman or Irish settlement. However, some townlands preserve Anglo-Norman names which the native Irish did not adopt, such as Garryhubbock (< Garraí Hobac < Hobock) and Ballyshonock (< Baile Sheonaic < Johnock), providing firmer evidence of Anglo-Norman settlement and subsequent gaelicisation. Most place-names in south Wexford are English, reflecting the marginalisation of Irish and the predominance of speakers of Yola, a dialect of English reflecting that spoken elsewhere in the Pale. Distinct elements of this dialect include ‘much’ (big) (e.g. Muchgrange) and ‘nether’ (lower) (e.g. Nethertown).

Most Anglo-Norman settlement names contain a surname or forename, a phenomenon for which Ó Crualaioch has a compelling explanation. Anglo-Norman families were more secure in their land tenure, holding land as freehold. Many Irish tenants were less secure in their occupancy, being subject to the whim of a Gaelic lord; as a consequence they were reluctant to call a townland after themselves.

**Northern Ireland Place-Name Project**

The Northern Ireland Place-Name Project has received funding of £150,000 from the NI Department of Finance which includes within its remit Land & Property Services (who are responsible for hosting the project’s website, www.placenamesni.org, and supplying the mapping). The aim of this funding is to provide basic information on the website on the possible origins of townland names for those parts of N. Ireland which have not yet been covered. A postdoctoral researcher, Dr Frances Kane, who will work under the direction of Professor Mícheál Ó Mainnín, took up post for 3 years on 30 October 2017. Queen’s University has supplied a doctoral studentship in tandem with this funding and this studentship has been awarded to Brian Devlin (who has also started his research).

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