NOTES AND COMMENTS

A. NOTES ON SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES

13. *Some Early Name-Forms of the Stirlingshire* Carron

Of the six Scottish rivers bearing the name *Carron*—there are two in Ross-shire, and one each in Banffshire, Kincardineshire, Stirlingshire and Dumfriesshire—five are very sparsely documented; in one or two cases there appears to be no written evidence for these names before the seventeenth century. The exception is the Stirlingshire river of this name. Rising in the Lennox Hills and flowing into the Firth of Forth at Grangemouth, its geographical position on the border between Highlands and Lowlands, between Pictland and Anglian territory, as well as its proximity to the Scottish capital have contributed to the comparatively frequent appearance of this name in early documents.

The Register of the Great Seal alone has numerous entries referring to this river of which it will suffice to mention those occurring before 1600: *Carroune, Carroun* Robert I, *Caroun* 1450, *Carroun* 1539, *Carrone* 1542, *Carroun* (2) 1544, *Carron* 1552, *Carroun* 1553, *Carrone* 1565, *Carron* 1598. Though these entries are fairly late when compared with, let us say, English evidence for rivers of comparable size and importance, they represent a much better documentation than is available for the majority of Scottish water-courses.

We are, however, even more fortunate with regard to the Stirlingshire *Carron*, for although it is not mentioned in classical sources—and very few Scottish names are—there is a number of name-forms a good deal earlier than those quoted above, including one from the Registrum Episcopati Glasguensis of *c*. 1200, one from the Morton Chartulary of the time of Alexander II (1214-49), and two or three from " foreign " sources, i.e. English and Irish ones. The first of these, *Caroun*, poses no problem and can be left undiscussed in this context; the second, *Strathkawan*, is best examined in connection with the Irish sources; and it is the "foreign" references to our name which are to concern us in this note.

As these early forms are of great value in the interpretation not only of our Stirlingshire *Carron* but also of the five other instances of this name in Scotland for which documentary

evidence is so much poorer, their correct dating and proper assessment is of considerable importance, and the following paragraphs are to deal with this particular aspect of our material. These forms have all been discussed before by other scholars, and this note is partly intended for the critical examination of their statements and conclusions.

(a) Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: *Cære*

We shall first look at an early English reference to our name, quoted by Johnston (1892:57; 1903:68; 1934:127), with slight variations in the wording, as " prob. O.E. Cron. 710 Caere". The identification of *Cære* with *Carron* goes back to Skene who (1867:LXXXI note 2; and 1886:270) compares the entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 710, " . . . And þam ylcan geare feaht Beorhtfrið ealdorman wið Pehtas betwux Hæfe and Cære, . . ." (Classen-Harmer 1926:13), with the corresponding reference in the Irish Annals of Tigernach—in this case for 711— "Strages Pictorum in campo Manand ab Saxonis . . .", and takes the plain of Manann[1] to be situated between the Stirlingshire *Carron* and the Linlithgow *Avon*. Plummer, whose judgment is normally very sound, accepts this identification in preference to others (1899:36; cf. also pp. 345 and 389 of his Index); but even as late as 1926, Classen and Harmer whose "List of Names of Places and People" to their edition of one manuscript of the Chronicle had been checked by Mawer, place question-marks against R. Carron for *Cære* and R. Avon for *Hæfe* (1926:142 and 145, respectively). The slight reluctance in various scholars' minds to regard this identification with a good deal of certainty, probably stems from the fact that not a single one of the many English *Avons* shows an early form in which the original -*ona*-suffix has dropped out. On the other hand, this is not a decisive argument against Skene and Plummer, and until some better proposal is put forward, we shall regard the *Cære* of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as referring to our Stirlingshire *Carron*.

The telescopic style necessary for a dictionary of place-names, such as Johnston's, sometimes raises certain problems, however. In all other instances, his dates refer to the year in which the relevant manuscripts were actually written. In the case of a quotation from a chronicle, on the other hand, the date of the year in which the incident referred to occurred,

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is given. Now, none of the manuscripts extant of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle goes back to the beginning of the eighth century, the earliest entries in the earliest manuscript (A; cf. Plummer 1899:XXVII note 2) dating from about the year 900. This means that the actual source of Johnston's quotation is by no means contemporary and that he should at least have given the date of the manuscript in brackets after the original date.

This brings us to two further points: (1) What is the date of the manuscript(s) in which our reference occurs, and (2) was this entry for 710 A.D. ever contemporary, i.e. did it ever form part of the seventh and eighth century notes of which Anderson speaks (1922:XXIV)? As to the first question, one look at Thorpe's parallel edition of the six main manuscripts of the Chronicle (Thorpe 1861:69-71) would have shown Johnston that the Carron and the Avon are only mentioned in two of them, the entry in D (British Museum, Cotton MS. Tiberius B. IV) being *betwux Hæfe 7 Cære*, and the one in E (Bodleian MS. Laud 636), *betwix Hæfe 7 Cære*. Quite apart from the fact that it would have been important to note that our names appear in the dative case, and not in the nominative, their occurrence in two manuscripts to the exclusion of all others would certainly have been worthy of note, especially as these two MSS. are by no means the earliest we possess.

What is the significance of this situation? Without going into details, this is the essential information: D, itself a late compilation, is a copy of some other manuscript, with the earliest hands dating from about 1100, perhaps (Plummer 1899:XXXIV; Classen-Harmer 1926:XII), and E's first hand goes up to 1121 and seems to have been written at that time (Plummer 1899:XXXV; Classen-Harmer 1926:XI). E, although running closely parallel to D from the beginning to 890 inclusive, is by no means a transcript of D, however, but both are based on common originals (Plummer 1899: LXIV, LXI, and LXII). The first idea that comes to one's mind is that a later annotator added this passage about the locality in which the battle took place, to the originals of D and E, at a much later date. In that case, the entry could not possibly be contemporary or chronologically near to the event in 710, and Johnston's date would be completely unjustified.

The answer to our question (2) above may, however, not be as negative as would appear at a first glance. We can get

one step farther when we ask whether anything is known about the source of these additions to the annal 710 in D and E. Plummer (1899:LXVIII) has shown that one of the resemblances of D and E is "the expansion of many of the annals derived from Bede by the substitution of matter taken from the text of H.E. [Historia Ecclesiastica], for the brief chronological notices of the epitome which Bede appended to that work, H.E. V.24". He thinks that this enlargement of the Chronicle by means of the text of Bede took place in some northern monastery, probably Ripon; he is further of the opinion that this northern recension extended a copy of the Chronicle reaching up to 892, which had been sent to Ripon and subsequently travelled southwards again. According to him (1899:LXI note), the annal for 710 is one of the many entries affected by this expansion, which means that here we have an early twelfth century copy of a passage dating from 731 (Plummer 1896:CLI).

Our part of the annal, however, cannot be traced to either Bede's text or his chronological summary in Book V, chapter 24, and Plummer ascribes our addition tentatively to a group of northern annals (1899: LXVIII note 6), based on the Latin Northumbrian Annals embodied in Simeon of Durham and Roger of Hoveden. The extension of these annals may be said to have taken place in Ripon not earlier than the middle of the tenth century, because of a reference to Ripon in 948 (ms. D). Our passage incidentally also passed into Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* of 1125-30 where it appears as *inter Heve et Cere* (Arnold 1879:111). The entry in Johnston, under *Carron*, should therefore read: *Cære* (dat.) *c.* 950 (1100) Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D, A.D. 710. This, although slightly more space-consuming, would be much more accurate and satisfactory than the present entry. Of course, the original may be earlier but too little is known about the northern source to give a certain date.

(b) Nennius or Irish Nennius: *Carun*

In the third edition of Johnston's *Place-Names of Scotland* (1934:127), the entry discussed above is followed by a reference to the so-called *Irish Nennius* in which a form *Carun* is supposed to be found. Unfortunately this reference, which would have given us a most welcome early example of our name, does not exist. The passage to which, for reasons which will become clear

in the next few paragraphs, he is obviously referring, reads
like this (van Hamel 1932:31-2):

"... is e ainm an claide sin la Bretnu Guaul. 7 rofor-
congair clod aili do denum a n-agaid Gaedeal 7 Cruithnech
..."

This roughly corresponds to the Latin

"... vocatur Britannico sermone Guaul. Propterea iussit
fieri inter [Brittones et] Pictos et Scottos ..."

The main point is that there is no reference to the River
Carron after the name *Guaul*. Johnston may have misunder-
stood either of two statements in this connection. In 1869,
Robertson wrote: "The work called Nennius (in the tenth
chapter), written A.D. 796, and finished in 858, also mentions
the Carron" (Robertson 1869:140). If this were true as it
stands, this would again supply us with the very desirable
eighth to ninth century form of our river-name, but again
an investigation into the genesis of the manuscripts of this
work proves such a hope to be unfounded. A passage referring
to the River Carron is contained in only two manuscripts,
both of them thirteenth century ones (Mommsen 1898:165).
In one, Cantabrigiensis collegii corporis Christi u. 139, it
appears as an annotation in the margin; in the other, Canta-
brigiensis Bibl. publ. Ff. I 27, it has been incorporated in
the text. Diack (1924:143) quotes this passage in a different
context, but although he chides the annotator for his "absurd
explanation" and his poor "qualifications in the etymological
field", he does not make it clear that the annotator's comments
are thirteenth century additions. This is the second statement
which may have mislead Johnston although, of course, both
Mommsen's edition of *Nennius* (1898) and Van Hamel's
edition of the *Irish Nennius* (1932) would have been available
for checking in time for the third edition of his dictionary
(1934).

The passage in question has been inserted after the word
Guaul and is basically meant to be a comment on this name.
The part of it which is of interest to us here, reads like this
(with all its etymological imperfections):

"... Carutius postea imperator reedificavit et VII
castellis munivit inter utraque ostia domumque rotundam
politis lapidibus super ripam fluminis Carun, quod a suo
nomine nomen accepit, fornica in voctoriae memoriam
erigens construxit".

It belongs to the thirteenth century, not to the eighth or ninth, and is either contemporary with, or younger than, the *Caroun* of the Episcopal Register of Glasgow (see p. 96), and not 400 years older.

(c) Annals of Ulster: *Sraith Cairinn*

Our third problem is of a slightly different nature. It concerns a note in Skene's *Celtic Scotland* (1886: 250 note 35), dealing with events in which Domnall Breac was slain in Strathcarron in A.D. 641. The battle and Domnall Breac's death are registered by a number of Irish annals, in some of them twice under different years; and it appears that Reeves was the first to link the various spellings in those annals with our river-valley, in his edition of Adamnan's *Life of St Columba* (Reeves 1857:202 note). Though taken from O'Connor's imperfect version of 1812, Skene's quotation from the *Annals of Ulster* is practically identical with the transcription in Hennessy's later and more trustworthy edition (1887:104), but unfortunately he quotes the less convincing MS. Bodleian, Rawlinson B 489, which has *in bello Sraith Cairinn*, instead of the alternative MS. Trinity College Dublin, H.I. 8, with its *in bello sraith Cairuin* (see Hennessy loc. cit.; Anderson 1922:167 note 1). The first manuscript is, indeed, a close copy of the second down to the middle of the eleventh century, and *Cairinn* for *Cairuin* (*-uin* is the genitive ending; the nominative would end in *-un* or *-on*) is obviously an error—or a "correction" —on the part of the transcriber.[2] Skene knew the original and quoted it as an alternative in an earlier work (1867: 348). The *Annals of Ulster* were, as we have them, compiled at the end of the fifth century, but the language, of the Irish entries at least, is contemporary from the end of the seventh century onwards (Ó Máille 1910: 5-6).

Skene's second quotation is from the *Annals of Tigernach*, in respect of the same event: *in cath Srathacauin*, and he concludes from this that "the upper part of the Vale of the Carron . . . is called Strathcarron, but it also bore the name of Strathcawin" (1886:250 note 35). In support of this conclusion, he draws attention to a spelling *Strathkawan* in the Morton Chartulary (Morton 1853:XXXIV), which occurs in a thirteenth century charter dating from the reign of Alexander II. The writer is not in a position to assess the correctness of this spelling as he has not seen the original, but even if it were correct it would hardly be sufficient

evidence for the second name suggested by Skene for Strath-carron, a name which so closely resembles the first that a scribal error seems to be the much more likely explanation. Skene would have done better to turn to the second entry in Tigernach in which the battle is mentioned. In Stokes' edition (1896:209) this reads: *i cath sratha Carun*, with a note adding that the MS. has *carn* for *Carun*. Skene quotes this annal too (1867:72), but does not deduce from it the obvious implication that the other spelling had to be emended to *Ca[r]uin*. Stokes (1896:186) is quite justified in doing so. The one and only MS. in which these annals have survived is a fourteenth century one (McNeill 1914:39); the section containing our entries appears to be a somewhat abridged version of an Old Irish Chronicle whose language was retrospective up to 712, and afterwards contemporary (McNeill 1914: 80 and 89).

It remains to add in passing that our annal and name are also to be found in two further Irish Annals, the so-called *Chronicum Scotorum* and the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*. The former, a sevententh century compilation containing an inaccurate abridgement of Tigernach's Annals or a copy of Tigernach's source, has *in bello Stratha Caruin* for 640 (Hennessy 1866:86), and *i ccath Stratha Carun* for 682 (*ibid.*: 108). The latter, an English translation of 1627, of a work now lost, mentions under 681 *the battle of Strathkaron*, followed by *Srait cormhaich* (Murphy 1896: 110). In addition, Skene (1867:131 and XLVII-XLVIII) prints the fourteenth century version of a *Cronica Regum Scottorum* to which he ascribes the original date 1165. This contains the reference *apud Carrun*.

Although many of these Irish Annals are interconnected or dependent upon each other, the variants they offer in the spelling of our *Carron* are of considerable interest to the interpreter of the name, particularly so as, ultimately, they seem to contain some fairly early material. The consistent spelling with one *-r-*, which links up with the English and early Scottish evidence, may have some bearing on the etymology of the name.

[1] This is the genitive; the nominative—which is not recorded—would have been *Manu* in Old Irish. I am indebted, for this information and other helpful suggestions, to Professor K. H. Jackson who very kindly read the typescript.

² Since this journal went to press, the writer has had an opportunity of checking the reading of H. I. 8 in the manuscript room of Trinity College Dublin. Although not entirely unambiguous, it appears to be indeed *Cairuin*, in spite of the difficulties this provides.

³ The writer has also been able to examine the original of this entry in MS. F. 3. 19, Trinity College Dublin. The Irish entry looks like a later addition in the same hand. The transcriptions from the Chronicum Scotorum (T.C.D., H.I. 18) were also found to be correct.

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B. OTHER NOTES

Book Reviews

Scotland Past and Present. By J. M. Reid. Oxford University Press. 1959. 7s. 6d.

Mr. Reid's comprehensive survey of Scotland in 200 pages is an outstanding achievement. The first chapter, "A view of Scotland," assembles the primary historical and geographical data, and it is followed by chapters on industry, agriculture and fisheries, the church, education, the law, government and "Arts and voices." The book concludes with a twelve-page chronological table and a five-page bibliography.

The facts which are so abundantly and lucidly set forth in the book make it admirably suited for the enlightenment of the English and other races furth of Scotland. To informed Scotsmen it may present no new facts, but it should stimulate their thinking, for although the author writes as one who is proud of many features in Scottish life and institutions, he is unhesitatingly critical when criticism is called for, and he expresses his opinions with candour and conviction.

Mr. Reid is properly sceptical about the modern cult of clans and tartans, and with all his evident regard for the Church of Scotland he admits that the presbyterian system facilitated schism and secession. His principal complaints, however, are directed against the changes in administration which have superseded a "practical and active local democracy" in burgh and parish by "a system of Welfare controlled from afar",