NOTES AND COMMENTS

A. SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES

23. The Distribution of Old Norse *býr* and *fjall*

As a follow-up to the discussion of the geographical distribution of the Scandinavian element *þveit* in the last issue of this journal (Nicolaisen 1964:96-103), I wish to present, in the following, revised versions of two maps originally published four years ago (Nicolaisen 1960:55 and 59). Very little comment will be required as these maps are in the main simply intended to give an improved picture of the geographical distribution of the Old Norse element *býr* "a farm-stead, a village" and *fjall* "a hill, mountain" in place-names in Southern Scotland and Northern England. As far as the Scottish evidence is concerned, this is, in fact, identical with that presented in 1960 but it has now been possible to plot the English names in question in a similar manner rather than simply giving quantitative proportions per county as had to be done four years ago.

The map showing the distribution of place-names in *-bie, -by* (Fig. 1) should be particularly well balanced in this respect as it has been compiled from comparable sources on both sides of the present border, i.e. it takes into account not only modern but also historical evidence supplied for England mainly by the relevant volumes of the English Place-Name Society. The scope of the map has been extended to cover the same area as that showing the distribution of *þveit* (Nicolaisen 1964:99) and now takes in the whole of the counties of Northumberland and Durham, most of the North Riding of Yorkshire and part of the East Riding. I have already commented on the artificiality of the southern limit (*ibid.*: 96) but this is not the place to present the geographical scatter for the British Isles as a whole. All this map is intended to demonstrate is the danger of looking at the Scottish (or English) material in isolation, or, more positively, the unity of the evidence from both north and south of the border. There are, of course, place-name elements to which, for linguistic or other reasons, this does not apply but *býr* is certainly not one of them.

Comparison with the *þveit*-map is unavoidable, and it is

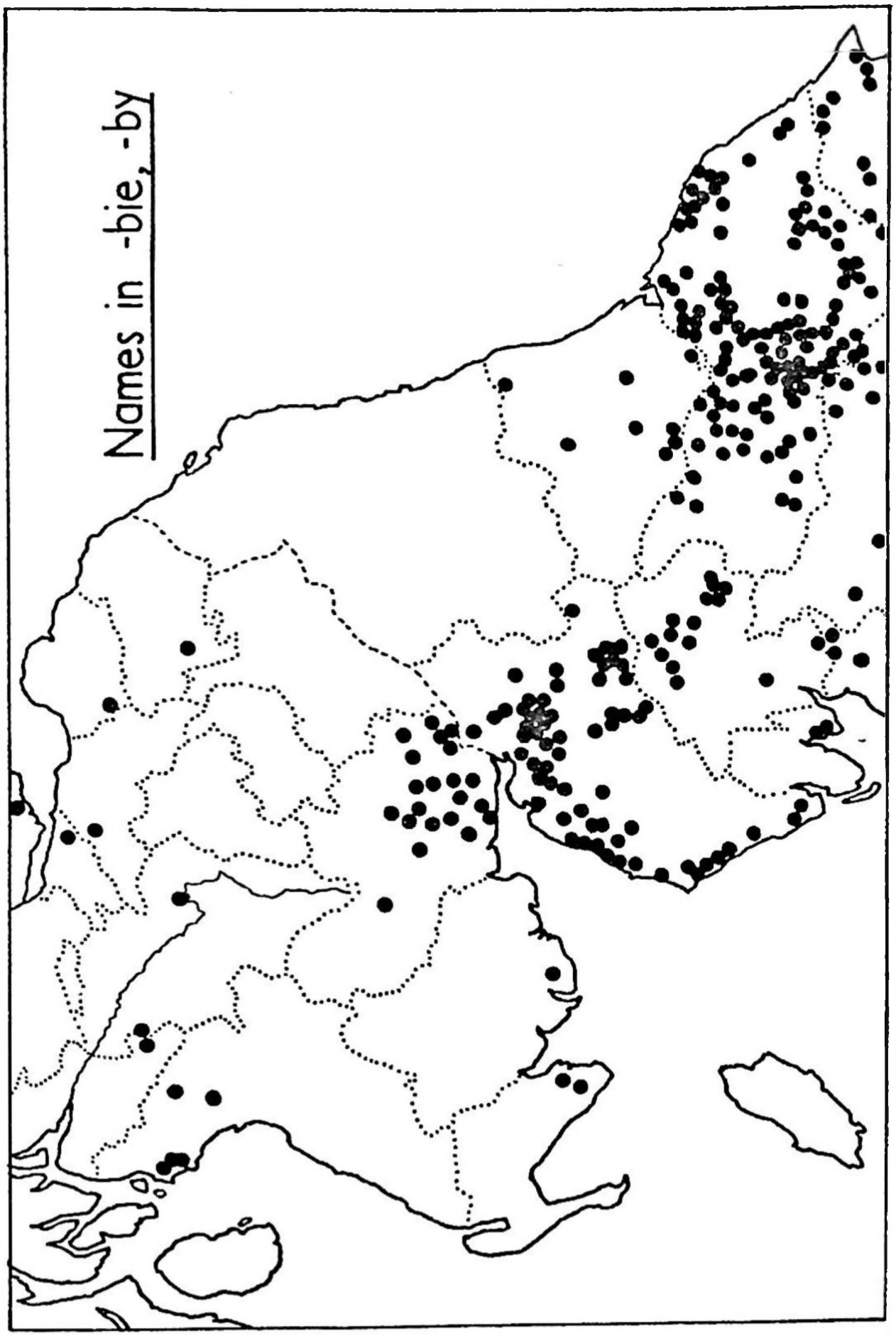

FIG. 1.—Names in *-bie*, *-by* in Scotland and England (exclusive Isle of Man). The Scottish evidence is from the Ordnance Survey one-inch maps, the English names from the quarter-inch sheets.

interesting to note that although the counties involved in the distribution of these two elements are more or less the same, *býr*-names occur in considerable numbers outside these areas of concentration. This not only applies to the parts of England and Scotland shown on the map but also to those off the map. In contrast to the distribution of *þveit*, practically the whole of Southern Scotland has sporadic examples of *býr* in place-names, and whereas the only other instances of Scottish names containing *þveit* are three farm-names in the Northern Isles, *býr* also occurs, although never in large numbers, in the Western Isles and in other parts of the Scottish mainland where Scandinavians settled. In England the inclusion of Durham in the distribution of *býr*-names is shown—these probably late names given by an English-speaking population rather than by Scandinavians—and south of our map names in *-by* occur far beyond the *þveit*-country, i.e. in addition to the evidence presented they not only occur in the southern parts of the counties shown and in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire as do *þveit*-names, but also in all parts of the Danelaw (Smith 1956:I, 68). Both Norwegian and Danish settlers used this word and as it "continued in living use as a place-name element after the Norman Conquest" (*ibid.* I, 70), *by*-names were also created by English and Norman settlers.

If one compares the distribution of *þveit* and *býr* in those counties in which both of them are found, it becomes apparent that the two distribution patterns are by no means congruent. Whereas there are instances of names in *-thwaite* and *-by* occurring closely together, *þveit*-names on the whole cover areas in which *býr*-names are not particularly common, and *vice versa*. In general, *býr*-names especially when traceable directly to Scandinavian speakers must be the primary settlements whereas *þveit*-names are associated with the secondary development of less promising ground, usually on a higher level. This is perhaps not quite so obvious, not anyhow on a map of this scale, in Dumfriesshire as in some of the English counties, especially Cumberland and Westmorland but also the North Riding of Yorkshire.

It is not the purpose of this note to examine in as much detail as for the *þveit*-names the existence of identical equivalents on both sides of the border. There are many of them, and for an indication of some of them and for a number of other aspects concerning the distribution of *býr* the reader is referred to Vol. 4, pp. 55-7, of this journal.

The difference between simply noting the number of names per county containing a certain element and actually plotting them is even more striking in the case of Old Norse *fjall* "a hill, a mountain" which we find as *fell* on our maps. In 1960, for instance, we noted for the very extensive North Riding of Yorkshire the existence of two names containing *fell* as the second element. This gave no indication as to how far east or south these names might be found whereas they are in fact both located in the most westerly corner of this region (Fig. 2), close to the Westmorland and West Riding borders. Similarly, the West Riding examples are all in its western half.

Apart from this obvious improvement in the graphic representation of the English evidence, our new map also corrects a number of figures given in the earlier version. This is due to better information available as we scrutinised the Ordnance Survey maps (scale: 4 miles = 1 inch) for the whole of the English part of our map instead of relying on printed name lists of the counties not yet covered by the English Place-Name Society. This applies to Northumberland, Durham and Westmorland, to which we had only attributed one single name, and that in the last of these three counties, whereas the quarter-inch maps have nine in Northumberland, two in Durham and fifteen in Westmorland. The evidence is therefore more reliable on our new map although there must still be a discrepancy in the respective density of the names north and south of the border; for in Scotland we have extracted all names from the one-inch maps as against the quarter-inch sheets for Northern England.

The *fell*-country, then, appears to be the most north-westerly of all the distribution patterns mapped, taking in the whole of Galloway and Carrick which names in *þveit* and *bekkr* (see Nicolaisen 1960:53) do not enter and where there are only one or two *býr*-names near the shores of the Solway Firth. It is not really part of the Danelaw, partly for linguistic reasons, one presumes, and partly because a word like *fell* is bound to occur in hilly country only. The great majority of this group of names cannot be called Scandinavian as they have obviously been coined by English speakers, mainly using other geographical names as first elements although not exclusively so. *Fell*-names are very much a secondary toponymic stratum and, as the primary names employed in creating them are of a variety of linguistic origin and more or less accidentally compounded with *fell*, it would be useless to look for identical

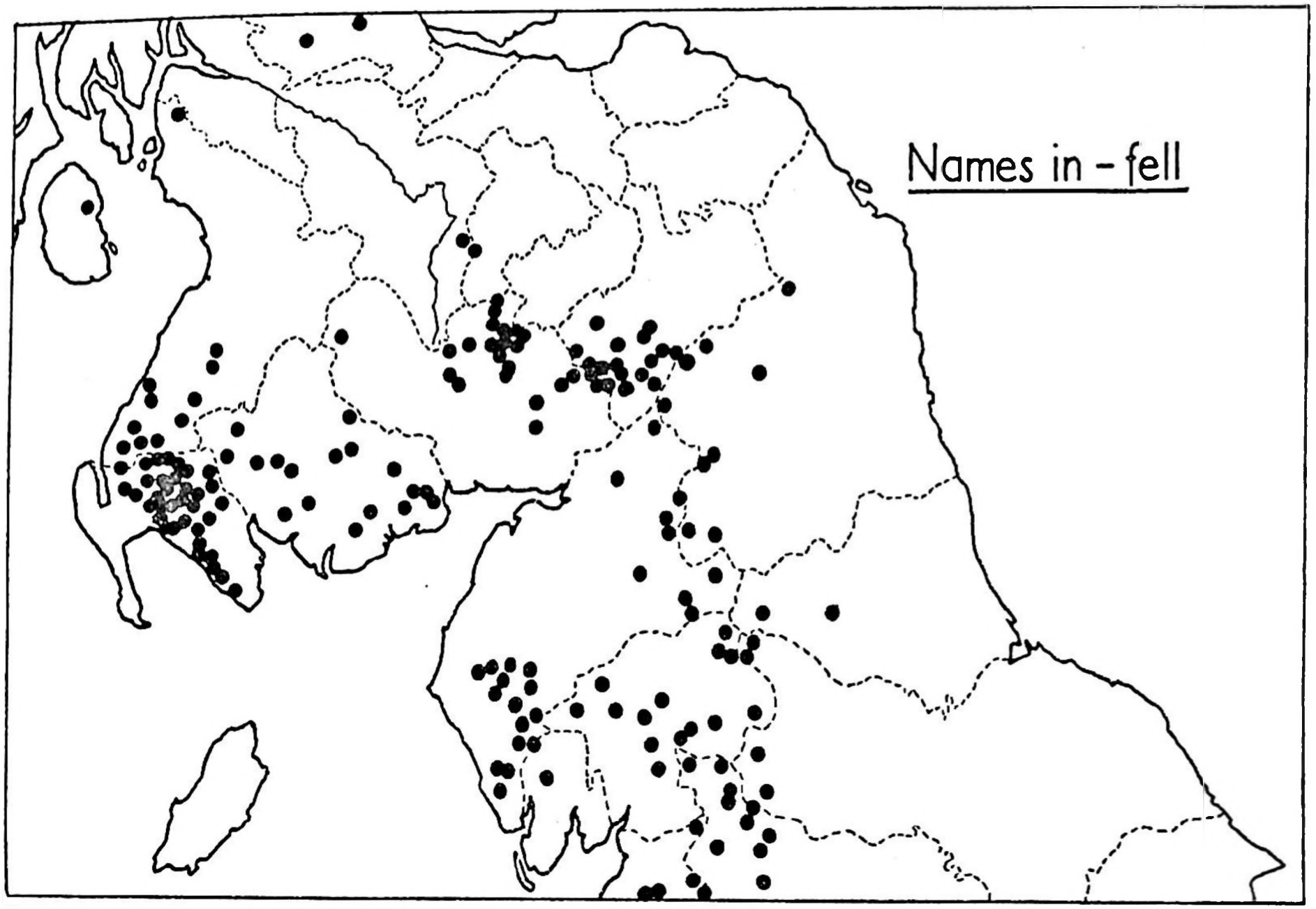

FIG. 2.—Names in *-fell* in Scotland and England (exclusive Isle of Man). The Scottish material is from the Ordnance Survey one-inch maps, the English evidence from the quarter-inch sheets.

pairs south of the border. It must suffice to say that only very few of them can have been given by settlers speaking a Scandinavian language and that fell has to be regarded as an English dialect word borrowed from Scandinavian rather than as a Norse element (for further information see Nicolaisen 1960: 59-61).

We can only hope that, in conjunction with our note on *þveit* and especially with the map showing the distribution of this element, these two new maps have remedied at least some of the faults inherent in the presentation of our material in 1960. The more one studies words like *býr*, *fjall*, *þveit*, *bekkr* and others, however, the more one becomes aware of the need for a comprehensive survey of Scandinavian place-names in these islands. This would lend a new dimension to the study of Scandinavian settlement and influence in Britain and Ireland.

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B. COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Goat-keeping in the Old Highland Economy—2 *

Dr. John Lorne Campbell kindly contributes the following additional note, from an unpublished report on the Highlands made in Rome in 1737, referring to the people who lived in the Garbh-chriochan, Clanranald's mainland territory in western Inverness-shire:

> In the hills [i.e. at the summer sheilings] they live well, by their standards. When the cattle, sheep and goats give birth to young, the calves, lambs and kids are killed and eaten, leaving only a single calf to be reared for every two cows, and so too with the other animals. From the milk they make butter and cheese for use in the winter.[1]

* For the first part see *Scottish Studies* 7 (1963) 201-09.