

In his autobiography, *Blessings in Disguise*, Sir Alec Guinness wrote “In recent years there has developed a tiresome custom of referring to these [memorial] services as ‘celebrations’—a cosy euphemism, such as ‘industrial action’ to explain the cessation of work.” I boldly use the term. I think Mac’s life should be celebrated, and that his industry and insight in the education business is worthy of celebration, celebration not merely of memory but also of joy and gratitude.

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### **Breandán S. Mac Aodha, 1934-2001**

Breandán Mac Aodha was truly an Irish friend of the American Name Society. He contributed articles to *Names* and his work in onomastics was reported regularly in the Ehrensperger Report.

Mac Aodha was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on January 4, 1934, the second in a family of four. To his parents, Edward and Kathleen, he was always “the wee lad,” but he grew up to be a tall, wiry, energetic man who once cycled around Ireland. From childhood on he had a remarkable affinity with birds and wild animals, some of which followed him around his garden. An educational visit to the Donegal Gaeltacht confirmed him in a life-long love of the Irish language.

At Queen’s University, Belfast, he studied geography under Sir Estyn Evans, obtaining an Honours BA in 1955, followed by an MA in 1958 for a thesis on *The Pattern of Farming in County Tyrone*. He was much influenced by Evans’ approach to historical geography through an examination of cultural landscapes, folklore and customs, but he supplemented this with a linguistic/literary route featuring the study of place names.

In 1958 Mac Aodha was appointed Head of the Geography Department in St. Patrick’s Teacher Training College, Dublin. From there he moved to a Lectureship in University College, Galway. At the early age of 33, he was promoted to Foundation Professor of Geography, a chair he occupied until he retired in 1999. To cater to Irish as well as English speakers, he undertook the heavy burden of running a bilingual

department. It became so highly regarded that it attracted staff/student visits from many European universities, as well as from Montreal and Berkeley.

Mac Aodha was a member of the Irish Government's Place-names Commission Subcommittee which published *Guidelines for Street-names* (1962) and *Irish Versions of Street, Road and Estate Names* (1992).

In 1989 Mac Aodha contributed two articles to *Names*, one on minerals named after places and another on Irish street names. He also wrote complimentary reviews in *Names* of books on the place names of Limerick and Down, and on the surnames of Ulster. His place name publications in English include: "Place-name Research in Ireland" (*Anglo-Irish Studies*, 1975); "Some Major Elements in Spanish Place-names" (*Geography*, 1979); "Place-names in Yeats's Poetry and Plays" (*Gaélianna de l'Université de Caen*, 1984); "Póvoa and Related Settlement Terms" (*Boletim de Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 1985); "Some Penal Era Place-names in North-West Ireland" (*Folklife*, 1988); "Execution and Irish Place-names" (*Nomina*, 1996); and "Toponymy of the Upper Glenarm District" (*Ainm*, 1997).

Mac Aodha authored, co-authored, edited or translated ten books. His magnum opus was *The Galway Gaeltacht Survey* (1969 and 1971), the most comprehensive study ever undertaken of an Irish-speaking region. In addition, he edited *Topothesia: Essays in Honour of T. S. Ó Máille* (1982) and *Hereditas*, with Bo Almqvist and Gearóid Mac Eoin (1975). He translated into Irish *Rocks and Minerals* by Eva Fejer *et al.* (1995) and *The Weather* by Eleanor Lawrence and Borin Van Loon.

Edward Austin Currie and he wrote *Ireland: A Systematic and Regional Geography* (1968; 1971). With colleagues on the Government's Terminology Committee he published *Dictionary of Geography* (1972) and *Geography and Planning* (1972; 1981).

During sabbaticals in the Iberian Peninsula Mac Aodha became fluent in Spanish and Portuguese. Subsequently he wrote accounts of the lives and works of Lorca, Becquer, and Machado, and for *An tUltach* (1978-1982), he translated more than 120 of their poems into Irish. *Uaimheolaíocht*, an anthology of his own poetry, was published shortly before his death in Galway on July 21, 2001.

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