

*Place-Names of Northern Ireland. Vol. 8: County Fermanagh I: Lisnaskea and District: the Parish of Aghalurcher. Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona.* Edited by Patrick McKay for the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project, 2004. Primary Bibliography, Glossary of Technical Terms, Index to Irish Terms of Place-Names (with pronunciation guide), Place-Name Index, Map. Pp. xxii + 260. £12.50. ISBN 0 85389 869 3.

In the 1990s I had the pleasure of writing, in this journal, laudatory reviews of the first seven volumes in the series *Place-Names of Northern Ireland* (*Names* 40 [1992] 308-09; 41 [1993] 198-99; 45 [1997] 125-26 and 223-25), deeming the series and its individual volumes among the very best publications in the field of toponymic research. In my assessment of Volume 7, I expressed the hope that funds would continue to be made available to support the completion of the series. For several years that seemed to be a forlorn hope, but I am happy to report that, after a hiatus of seven years, Volume 8 has now been published under new auspices. It is still difficult to predict what the future will hold, but there is no reason why one should not regard this volume as an earnest not only of good intentions in that respect but of the vision and the will to achieve the completion under difficult circumstances. The publishers, Dr. John M. Kirk and Professor Donall Ó Baoill, are well enough placed and strongly enough convinced of the value and quality of the series to make every effort to see things through. We wish them luck in their endeavors. It is encouraging to note that Volume 9 is already listed as forthcoming.

One of the main desiderata in projects of this kind is continuity not only of purpose but also of execution. That this goal can be reached is partially accomplishable by the fact that some of the members of the original research team are still around to add to the geographical coverage following the established pattern. The author/editor of the volume under review, Dr. Patrick McKay, is one of these members of the

former team. He is the editor of Volume 4, Co. Antrim I: The Baronies of Toome (1995), as well as of *A Dictionary of Ulster Place-Names* (see *Names* 52 [2004] 129-31), and therefore brings to Volume 8 the best of credentials and a guarantee that the proven format and structure of the previous seven volumes are maintained. It is not superfluous to mention again that among the outstanding characteristics of the volumes in the series are the amount of space given to the discussion of individual names (surely the envy of editors of similar toponymic projects elsewhere) and the transparency with which potential etymologies are evaluated in scholarly but accessible language, a point not to be ignored when one considers that the envisaged audience of the series does not consist exclusively of academics or academically trained readers. Like its precursors, Volume 8 reaches out to this wider audience. Helpful, in this respect, is the repetition of the General Introduction by Dr. Kay Muhr, the Senior Research Fellow in the current Research Group behind the series of publications, under the general editorship of Dr. Nollaigh Ó Muraile. Dr. Muhr offers an informative "Brief History of Place-Name Study in Ireland," an account of "Method of Place-Name Research," a brief sketch of the linguistic background, a synopsis of "Spelling and Pronunciation," a survey of the "Sources," a guide as to "How to Use this Series," and "Suggestions for Further Reading."

As far as the languages involved are concerned, it is worth remembering that, in contrast to the modern situation when there is not a single speaker of Irish (Gaelic) native to Ulster alive, Northern Ireland was almost wholly Irish (Gaelic)-speaking until the seventeenth century. This is reflected in the inventory of place names, especially the names of the townlands and of natural features, while a few names are reminders of an early Norse presence, and a sizeable group of names preserve Anglo-Norman influence from the twelfth century onwards. The arrival of speakers of English and Scots during the so-called "Plantation" in the seventeenth century

not only added a new stratum to the corpus of Northern Irish place names but also set in motion a gradual process of Anglicization of the Irish (Gaelic) names.

A couple of reader-friendly appendices, one on “Aspects of Irish Grammar Relevant to Place-Names,” the other on “Land Units” (Territorial Divisions in Ireland, Secular Administrative Divisions, Ecclesiastical Administrative Divisions, and Tribal and Family Names), provide useful background information, as do two bibliographies and a glossary of technical terms. Two place-name indices are particularly helpful as quick access roads into the volume. One of these lists gives the modern Anglicized forms (*Aghacramphill – Tulnagoran*) and the map locations of the names in question; the other consists of the Irish (Gaelic) name forms and their pronunciation (*Abha Dhubh – Tulaigh Neamhain*). These two indices also offer a useful overview of the name inventory included in the volume.

Volume 8 is, of course, of value in itself, especially to readers interested in County Fermanagh, but its usefulness is enhanced as part of the series and against the wider, though less detailed, treatment in McKay’s Dictionary.

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*The Worst Baby Name Book Ever.* By David Narter. Nashville, TN: Cumberland House. 2005. Pp. 192. \$9.95 USA; \$12.95 Canada. ISBN 1-58182-456-4.

David Narter, who previously wrote *Don’t Name Your Baby*, has created another parody of modern baby name books. The tone Narter takes is set in the introduction, where he says, “Most people are ordinary . . . [so] of course their names are mediocre, boring, ugly, and forgettable. Most *people* are mediocre, boring, ugly, or forgettable, and over time, can’t

help but rub off on their names.” In other words, Narter sets out to prove that any name can be trashed with a little ingenuity. Some examples from the name dictionary in his book:

**Courtney:** Derived of the ancient suburban expression “Our daughter is ‘specialler’ than yours.”

**Carol:** Rumor has it that the Smithsonian soon will include a Carol, along with girdles and iron lungs, in an exhibit dedicated to quaint and useful items of the twentieth century.

**Seth:** This name is a terrific choice for parents who have recently overcome their lisps.

**Aubry:** Here’s a name that walks the razor wire of gender identity and poor spelling.

I’m sure by now you get the idea. In addition to his interpretations of individual names, Narter’s book includes several special sections, again parodying more serious baby name books, such as “Names that Remind People of Clay” and “Names that Animals are Likely to Telepathically Whisper to Crazy People.” Just to prove he’s a good sport, the latter page simply includes thirty-six repetitions of the name David.

Occasionally Narter does throw in a serious comment. His entry on Hillary seems to prove he’s a Democrat, while the entry on Payton proves he’s a football fan and huge admirer of the late Walter Payton. But most of his entries maintain the same tongue-in-cheek level of insult. Though such humor often falls flat for this reviewer personally, occasionally it can be downright hilarious. Narter’s short description of the suburban soccer team including Caitlin, Caitlyn, Katelyn, Kaitlyn, and Kaitlin is almost worth the price of the entire book.

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