JOURNAL OF THE ENGLISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY

Volume 41 (2009)

ISSN 1351–3095

Two Devonshire place-names

O. J. Padel (pp. 119–26)

ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	*Cornish Place-Name Elements*.
EPNE	*English Place-Name Elements*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN BdHu	*The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire*.
PN Brk	*The Place-Names of Berkshire*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**.
PN Bu	*The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire*.
PN Ca	*The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*.
PN Ch	*The Place-Names of Cheshire*, Parts **1**–**5**.
PN Cu	*The Place-Names of Cumberland*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**.
PN D	*The Place-Names of Devon*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN Db	*The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**.
PN Do	*The Place-Names of Dorset*, Parts **1–4**.
PN Du	*The Place-Names of County Durham*, Part **1**.
PN Ess	*The Place-Names of Essex*.
PN ERY	*The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York*.
PN Gl	*The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, Parts **1**–**4**.
PN Hrt	*The Place-Names of Hertfordshire*.
PN Le	*The Place-Names of Leicestershire*, Parts **1–6**.
PN Li	*The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, Parts **1**–**7**.
PN Mx	*The Place-Names of Middlesex* (apart from the *City of London*).
PN Nf	*The Place-Names of Norfolk*, Parts **1**–**3**.
PN Nt	*The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*.
PN NRY	*The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire*.
PN Nth	*The Place-Names of Northamptonshire*.
PN O	*The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN R	*The Place-Names of Rutland*.
PN Sa	*The Place-Names of Shropshire*, Parts **1–6**.
PN Sr	*The Place-Names of Surrey*.
PN St	*The Place-Names of Staffordshire*, Part **1**.
PN Sx	*The Place-Names of Sussex*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN W	*The Place-Names of Wiltshire*.
PN Wa	*The Place-Names of Warwickshire*.
PN We	*The Place-Names of Westmorland*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN Wo	*The Place-Names of Worcestershire*.
PN WRY	*The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Parts **1–8**.

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

Two Devonshire place-names

O. J. Padel

1. Olchard, in Ideford parish, SX 8777

Devon is notorious for its lack of Brittonic place-names; virtually none have been convincingly added to the few listed in *Place-names of Devon* (PN D: 674), in the nearly 80 years since that book was published, although valuable new interpretations have been offered of some of them. Olchard seems to be one name which can be added to the list. It is inexplicably omitted altogether from PN D, perhaps because of a lack of readily identifiable early forms. It appears as *Oldchard* on the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1809), and on Benjamin Donn's earlier one-inch map of the County of Devon (1765). So far I have found no references to the place itself earlier than this, nor any spellings which anticipate the modern form Olchard. It has every appearance of being an old hamlet, with a large Georgian house (Well House) and a dozen or so cottages; the occupants of the large house believe the settlement to be ancient, claiming (as so often) that it 'goes back to Domesday', though I cannot find it in that source (whereas Ideford itself does appear); they also claim that the well from which the house is named was believed to have healing properties and was resorted to by large numbers.

Despite the lack of early spellings for the place itself, some forms are available which suggest a derivation. They begin with a man listed in the Lay Subsidy of 1332 within the tithing of Ideford (which would have included Olchard), Walter *Tolchet*; in that record he was the only person in the whole county bearing that surname (Erskine 1969: 59). The surname is obscure; a link between his surname and the place-name Olchard is not self-evident, but becomes apparent from the evidence of later surnames. By the 15th century this rare surname had moved a few miles to the west; a Thomas *Tolchet* appears in 1491–4, and a William *Tolchet* in 1497–8, both active (though not necessarily resident) in Ashburton parish, nine miles south-west of Ideford (Hanham 1970: 17, 20, 24).[1]

By the 16th century this surname had again moved a few miles to the west, and also changed slightly in form: in Dean Prior parish, four miles south-west of Ashburton, Christopher and Walter *Tolchard* appear in 1525; and Walter, Margery and John *Tolcherd* in 1544 (Stoate 1979: 180; 1986: 168). Later in

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

the 16th century we find Thomas *Tolcherd* 1581 in Holne parish, four miles north-west of Dean Prior, and the adjacent parish to Ashburton on its western side (Stoate 1988: 51). In each case these are again the only persons in the whole county bearing that surname, and no examples of the older form *Tolchet* appear; so a link between these rare surnames seems very likely, especially in view of the geographical proximity of these Tolchards to the earlier people called *Tolchet*. The appearance of same Christian name in both 1332 (Walter *Tolchet*) and 1525 and 1544 (Walter *Tolchard*, *Tolcherd*) is even suggestive of a possible lineal descent, though not necessarily so.

In fact, a close parallel can be offered for the change of *Tolchet* to *Tolchard*, and it is highly suggestive for the derivation of the surname. The Brittonic place-name Morchard, 'great-wood', refers to two separate parishes (Cruwys Morchard and Morchard Bishop) 20 miles north of Ideford. These names are found in the forms *Morchet* 1086, *Morchard* 1257–80 (Cruwys Morchard), and *Morchet* 1086–1256, *Morcherd* 1226, *-morchard* 1311 (Morchard Bishop; PN D: 380, 408). The editors of PN D have suggested that the development was influenced by English 'orchard'. Given this parallel development and the derivation of Morchard, the form *Tolchet* as a predecessor of *Tolchard* immediately becomes highly suggestive, since *Tolchet* 'hole-wood' is also known as a lost Brittonic place-name in Somerset (Turner 1952–4: 19); and in fact it is a compound name which reappears, in the appropriate forms, in all Brittonic areas: several examples of Tyllgoed in Wales (including the 12th-century *Tollcoit* in the Book of Llandaf), Tolgus in west Cornwall, Tulketh in Lancashire, and Toulgoat in Brittany (CPNE: 219–20).

It thus seems that the rare Devonshire surname Tolchard is likely to be derived from a Brittonic place-name **Tolchet* 'hole-wood' (whatever that means: see below). If so, there should be a place-name of that form in Devon which gave rise to the surname; but none appears in PN D. The obvious area to seek this place-name is in the area where the surname is first attested, in Ideford in 1332; at that date its bearer might well have been resident at the place from which he took his surname. Within that parish, Olchard is the only place of remotely suitable form, and an association of the two also provides a derivation for that otherwise obscure place-name.

The loss of initial *T-* in place-names, owing to misdivision of the phrase *at T-*, is well attested all over southern England, seemingly at a variety of dates from the 13th century to the 16th; the phenomenon has been recognised since the beginnings of the Survey of English Place-names (Mawer 1924: 2; VEPN **1**: 34–5). The following illustrative list of such names is arranged in chronological order of the date when the loss is first attested, although naturally that date need not show when the loss actually occurred.

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

- Ickenham (Mx): *Ticheham* 1086, *Ikeham* 1203 (PN Mx: 43)
- Ibsley (Ha): *Tibeslei* 1086, *Ibbesleg'* 1236 (Coates 1989: 99)
- Elstree (Hrt): *Tidulvestre* 1188, *Idolvestre* 1254 (PN Hrt: 74)
- Adlestrop (Gl): *Tatlestrop*(*e*) 1251, etc., *Attlesthorpe* 1330 (PN Gl **1**: 211)
- Hixham (Hrt): *Tedriceshā* 1086, *Hidersham* 1367 (PN Hrt: 186; an anomalous instance, with initial *Th-* originally)
- Arracott (D): *Tadiecote* 1327, *Adecote* 1394 (PN D: 208)
- Oakington (Mx): *Tokint'* 1194, *Okington* 1594 (PN Mx: 53)
- Acton (Do, Langton Matravers parish): *Tacatone* 1086, *Acton* 1550 (PN Do **1**: 34)
- Elmsworthy (Co, Kilkhampton parish): *Tylmaneswurth* 1238, *Tylmysworthy* 1517, *Emsworthy* 1699)

The contrary process is also attested, though it does not concern us here: the lost Titlar Hill (Berkshire) and Tiddingford Hill (Buckinghamshire) were *Yttelawe* (1197) and *æt Yttingaforda* (10th) respectively (PN Brk: 402–3; PN Bk 81), and in Cornwall Tipton (St Kew parish), Tupton (×2, Cardinham and St Neot parishes) and Tipperton (Davidstow parish) were all *Uppeton*, etc., in the 13th or 14th century.

On present evidence, therefore, it seems very probable that *Tolchet* 1332 refers to the place in Ideford parish now called Olchard, with the rare early-modern surname *Tolchard* providing an intermediate form, and loss of initial *T-* in the place-name. The surname Tolchard has survived in that form (still rare) to the present day, so the loss of *T-* has occurred only in the place-name. Without forms for the place-name itself we cannot tell when it was lost: by the time of the 16th-century spellings the surname may well have become separated from the place-name, so the loss could have occurred in the place-name before that date. The change from *-chet* to *-chard* may have occurred independently in the place-name and surname after the separation, since the surname still existed in the form *Tolchet* after probably having moved out of the parish

As for the question of precisely what a **Toll-gȩd* 'hole-wood' actually was, discussion has been inconclusive. Turner suggested the explanation 'wood in a hollow', which seems very possible, although Welsh *twll* normally denotes a true 'hole' rather than a 'hollow' simply. The meaning 'wood pierced by a stream' has also been suggested; and, perhaps least likely, 'wood where holes were made in the trees for extracting honey', a suggestion which is based upon the Modern Welsh meaning of *coed*, plural 'trees', rather than to its older meaning, 'a wood' (singular; cf. CPNE: 219–20). In the non-Welsh place-names **kȩd* must have its earlier meaning, 'a wood' (not 'trees'),

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

so presumably it does so in the Welsh ones too. A referee of this paper has pointed out that one meaning of Welsh *twll* (and of Breton *toull*) is 'cave'; if that meaning is ancient, and is present here, a 'cave-wood' would presumably be one with a cave in it. Another meaning given for Breton *toull* is 'creux' (a hollow), and overall, 'wood in a hollow' seems the likeliest meaning, perhaps one filling a hollow in the landscape.

The wood referred to in the place-name will be the substantial one, over a mile long, running from north-east to south-west on the south side (and some of the north side) of the valley immediately to the south of Olchard, which sits upon the hillside looking down across the wood. Although this wood is now partly given over to conifers, it covered the same extent on the First Edition (1809) of the Ordnance Survey one-inch map (where it is called Down Wood); so it is not created by modern forestry, and would be classed as potential 'ancient woodland' for historical-botanical purposes. Either of the suggested meanings, 'wood filling a hollow' or 'wood pierced by a stream', could have suited the topography of this large wood. Whatever its meaning, Olchard seems to be another instance of this widespread Brittonic place-name, **Toll-gędd* 'hole-wood'. It is therefore a rare addition to the list of such names in Devon, though naturally it does not affect the general distribution or the overall sparseness of Brittonic place-names in the county (for the contrast between the two south-western counties, cf. Padel 2007: 215–30).

For complete assurance, it would be necessary to find medieval references to the place Olchard itself. In most of England, including Devon, a surviving Brittonic settlement-name would normally belong to a major place, such as a manor or sub-manor, and should therefore be reasonably well attested in the documentary record. Although Olchard has the appearance of being just such a major settlement (in local terms), medieval references have so far proved elusive; I have failed to find the name in the obvious sources where it might be expected to appear, such as the Feudal Aids, the Book of Fees, the Devonshire Eyre of 1238, and (with more local reference) the Feet of Fines and printed Ancient Deeds. It may be that further searching in unpublished records could provide the documentation needed to confirm the evidence of the surname-spellings given here, or to refute it by providing alternative forms for the place-name. Given the changes which the place-name has undergone if the suggestions made here are correct, it is not surprising that the editors of PN D failed to recognise early forms for Olchard; but it is more curious that they failed to include even the modern name, since it is a respectably-sized settlement appearing on both modern and earlier maps.

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

2. Kingsett, Kingseat, Kingshead

These three farms are all on the edge of Dartmoor, and all have early forms indicating 'king's seat', with Middle English *sete* 'seat' (or an Old English antecedent of that word) perhaps referring to a hill with a good view: Kingsett in Marytavy parish (SX 5180) was *Kyngsete* 1417; Kingseat in Walkhampton parish (SX 5769) was *Kyngessete* 1333; and Kingshead in Widdecombe parish (SX 7177) was *Kyngessette* in 1333 (PN D: 201, 245, 529).[2] At present the Survey seems to provide no exact parallel for such a name, although (*ge*)*set* in the sense 'dwelling, building for animals' and *setl* 'seat, dwelling' are both well represented. The nearest parallel is the name Kingsettle, occurring in both Somerset and Dorset, which has a similar meaning but with Old English *setl*; but the Dorset example lies within the royal forest of Gillingham, and so may actually have denoted a royal lodge (PN Do **3**: 49–50). Kingsettle Hill, in Brewham parish (So ST 7334), has a large plantation called King's Wood Warren just to the north-east of it, which is suggestive of a royal association; alternatively it may provide the only close parallel for the three Devonshire names. In the case of those names, no association with royalty is known, the farms lying outside the bounds of the royal forest of Dartmoor.[3]

There may be a particular local reason for this distinctive recurrent name. In the centre of Dartmoor lies the antiquity called the King's Oven (SX 671812), a prehistoric chambered cairn on Water Hill; it was already *furnum Regis* in 1240 in the perambulation of the bounds of the forest (PN D: 425) and may be attested a century earlier still. In 1113 the canons of Laon, travelling from Exeter to Cornwall during a visit to England, were shown *cathedram et furnum illius famosi secundum fabulas Britannorum regis Arturi* 'the seat and oven of that king Arthur, renowned according to the legends of the British'. Since the King's Oven lies near to the main route across Dartmoor, it has long been considered likely that this 12th-century 'oven of king Arthur' is the King's Oven recorded a hundred years later (Padel 1994: 5–6).[4] Arthur's Seat and Arthur's Oven are both known as names elsewhere, notably in Scotland (where Arthur's O'on, near Stirling, is attested in the 13th century and as 'Arthur's palace' in the 12th) but also in Wales, where Gerald of Wales gave *cathedra Arturi* as his translation of a hill-name in Breconshire (Padel 1994: 6 and 25–6). The canons were also told that they were then passing through *terra Arturi* 'Arthurian country', and at Bodmin they witnessed a lively demonstration of the fact, when the scepticism of one of their servants regarding King Arthur caused a riot among the townspeople.

No identification has been suggested for the 'seat' of King Arthur shown to the canons; but if the 12th-century 'King Arthur's Oven' could become 'King's Oven' a century later, it is reasonable to wonder whether 'King Arthur's Seat' might also have become 'King's Seat'. Such an explanation

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

could provide a particular local reason for these three distinctive names. The editors of PN D very nearly made the link: "All three places are situated on or below prominent hills and it is likely that they were originally hill-names, 'king's seat' signifying perhaps a lofty spot. Cf. Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh ...", with mention of the two Kingsettles, in Somerset and Dorset (PN D: 201). The further suggestion made here is to wonder whether the popularity of legends about Arthur in the Dartmoor area meant that several hills on the edges of the moor were formerly known as 'King Arthur's Seat', shortened to 'King's Seat' by the time that the names appear in the documentary record through having been transferred to farms, or perhaps in the very process of that transfer. Alternatively, it is possible that 'King's Seat' became popular in its own right as a name in the area for such sites, owing to a single one which had had the fuller name. It is not possible to assess which might have been the hill shown to the canons in the 12th century. None of the three names lies naturally on a route westwards over the moor past the King's Oven, probably heading for Tavistock. The seat shown to the canons could even have been another hill altogether, for which that name has not survived.

Such names and folklore are likely to have originated in the Brittonic language, although individual names (or their antecedents) need not go back to the period when a Brittonic language was spoken in the area, which means the ninth century or earlier in Devon. The folklore itself, and hence the potential for creating such place-names, can have a long afterlife even when the language has long been dead in the surrounding area. Another example of a name of the same type is provided by King Arthur's Bed, a tor on the eastern edge of Bodmin Moor (SX 240756), where William Borlase, in 1754, reported the local lore about the name: "Round Arthur's Bed ... there are many [rock basins], which the country people call Arthur's Troughs, in which he us'd to feed his Dogs" (Padel 1994: 29). By the mid-18th century the Cornish language had been dead in this eastern area of Cornwall by probably a good five centuries, an even longer gap than that which we need envisage on Dartmoor in the 12th or 13th century.

The referents of such names are variable: antiquities of various dates, individual natural rocks, and large hills. Both examples of 'Arthur's Oven' refer to antiquities, the Devonshire one to a prehistoric chambered cairn (though previously thought to refer to a nearby tin-smelting furnace); the Scottish one, it is thought from its description, to a circular building of Roman date, destroyed in the 18th century (Padel 1994: 5–6 and references; Greeves 1995). On the other hand, King Arthur's Bed in Cornwall is a rock with a natural hollow shaped like a human torso. The ninth-century *Carn Cabal*, named from Arthur's dog, refers to a prehistoric cairn containing rocks with natural marks resembling pawprints (Padel 1994: 3).

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

Any notable feature was potentially available for such explanation. In the case of Arthur's Seat the examples in Edinburgh and Breconshire are both major hills, the Breconshire one not identified with certainty, since the name has been lost. It is unclear whether such names originally referred to the whole hill, with Arthur envisaged as a giant for whom it would serve as a comfortable seat, like Cadair Idris in Merionethshire; or whether the name initially referred to a spot, presumably at the summit, which could serve as a good look-out for a person of normal size, the "lofty spot" suggested by the editors of PN D. If the latter, the names recall an episode in the 12th-century Welsh story, 'Culhwch and Olwen', in which two of Arthur's warriors, Cei and Bedwyr, became engaged upon an adventure by sitting on top of Pumlumon, in central Wales, and espying smoke going straight up from a huntsman's fire despite the strength of the wind; and a similar episode, in the prologue to the 12th-century *Life of St Cadog*, in which Arthur himself, accompanied by the same two warriors, was sitting on top of a hill in south-east Wales and spotted a princess being abducted; they intervened only for Arthur to take a fancy to the princess himself, but his companions reminded him that they were meant to help persons in distress (Bromwich and Evans 1992: lines 953–6; Davies 2007: 206; Wade-Evans 1944: 26–7).

More generally, antiquities bearing names of the type Grim's Dyke and Devil's Dyke show comparable practices in a purely English context. Features attributed to the devil show a similar variation in type: dramatic hollows with names such as the Devil's Beef Tub (Dumfriesshire NT 0612), Devil's Punchbowl (Sr SU 8936) and Devil's Fryingpan (Co SW 7214) are entirely natural, whereas Devil's Dykes are usually man-made linear earthworks (e.g. PN Sr: 214; PN Ess: 374–6; PN W: 15–6 and 363; and references given there). One rock in Cornwall (in St Columb Major parish, SW 923619), now called Giant's Quoit, has also been called Arthur's Quoit and the Devil's Coit at different times.

The hills above the three Devonshire farms called 'King's seat' could perhaps be envisaged in the same way as the Arthurian hills in Welsh story-telling, suitable places from which to survey the surrounding countryside, looking for trouble. The hills in question to which the name could refer are as follows: Kingsett in Marytavy parish has Kingsett Down (1061 ft) a mile to the north-east (SX 5281); Kingseat in Walkhampton parish has Down Tor (1201 ft) half a mile to the south-east (SX 5869); and Kingshead in Widdecombe parish has an unnamed twin-peaked hill just over the 1350-foot contour half a mile to the south-west (SX 7068–7069). The location of all three hills on the edge of Dartmoor may well be significant, and they are all on spurs which project from the moor into lower-lying ground, and so should afford good views over the surrounding farmland, on two or more sides. The

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.

view from each of these hills deserves to be checked on the ground, but I have not yet had the opportunity to carry out this enjoyable task.

English Place-Name Society, Nottingham NG7 2RD
E: name-studies@nottingham.ac.uk

Notes

1. There was also a William *Tolchet alias Fokeray* in Devon (location unclear) in *c.*1408: Postles 1995: 40
2. For Middle English *sete* and its antecedents, see EPNE **2**: 95 and 120; my thanks to Paul Cullen for advising me on these forms.
3. My thanks to Tom Greeves for confirmation of this point.
4. For the correct location of the name, see Greeves (1995).

References

Bromwich, R., and D. Simon Evans, ed. (1992), *Culhwch and Olwen*, Cardiff.

Coates, R. (1989), *The place-names of Hampshire*, London.

Davies, Sioned, trans. (2007), *The Mabinogion*, Oxford.

Erskine, Audrey M., ed. (1969), *The Devonshire lay subsidy of 1332*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society 14.

Greeves, Tom (1995), 'King Arthur's Oven: Dartmoor's first tourist attraction?', *Dartmoor Magazine*, 39, 6–8.

Hanham, Alison, ed. (1970), *Churchwardens' accounts of Ashburton, 1479–1580*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society 15.

Mawer, A., and F. M. Stenton, ed. (1924), *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names*, Cambridge.

Padel, O. J. (1994), 'The nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27, 1–31.

—— (2007), 'Place-names and the Saxon conquest of Devon and Cornwall', in N. Higham, ed., *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, Woodbridge.

Postles, David (1995), *The surnames of Devon*, Oxford.

Stoate, T. L., ed. (1979), *Devon lay subsidy rolls, 1524–7*, Almondsbury.

——, ed. (1986), *Devon lay subsidy rolls, 1543–5*, Almondsbury.

——, ed. (1988), *Devon taxes, 1581–1660*, Almondsbury.

Turner, A. G. C. (1952–4), 'A further selection of Somerset place-names containing Celtic elements', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 15, 12–21.

VEPN = Parsons, D., T. Styles and C. Hough (1997), *The vocabulary of English place-names*, Nottingham.

Wade-Evans, W., ed. and trans. (1944), *Vitae sanctorum Britanniae et genealogiae*, Cardiff.

Journal of the English Place-Name Society 41 (2009), pp. 119–26.