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SPELLINGS OF BRUNANBURH REVISITED

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The article considers the question whether the spellings of the name *Brunanburh* and *Brunnanburh* in texts relating to King Athelstan's battle of 937 indicate the existence of two different places with very similar names, as proposed by Michael Wood. It argues that the claims made for two places are based on mistaken assumptions about the manuscripts and their sources, and that the difference is best explained as orthographic variation. An alternative is offered that the first element of *Brunnanburh* may be a hypocorism. Theories that might have prompted the 'two places' hypothesis are examined and it is demonstrated that Alistair Campbell, editor of the Old English poem *The Battle of Brunanburh*, conflated grammatically different name types and omitted crucial lexical and manuscript evidence from his consideration of the question. The manuscript and name evidence is presented and clarified. Uncritical adoption of Campbell's linguistic arguments to support Burghwallis as the site of the battle is analysed and shown to be mistaken. The assumption that the Scandinavian element *brunnr* is present in the name *Brunnaburh* and referred to Burghwallis and its spring is undermined. The overall conclusion is that the spellings of *Brun(n)anburh* are best regarded as variants.

Keywords: Old English; The Battle of Brunanburh; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; hypocoristic names; manuscript variants; grammar of names; The Battle of Brunanburh 937

Introduction

Debate about the name and site of the battle of Brunanburh in 937 has continued for decades and shows no signs of ceasing.¹ The battle itself was important, and it

¹ Recent works (listed alphabetically by author) include Andrew Breeze, *British Battles 494–937: Mount Badon to Brunanburh* (New York: Anthem Press, 2020), 'Brunanburh Located: The Battle and the Poem', in *Aspects of Medieval English Language and Literature*, ed. Michiko Ogura and Hans Sauer (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), pp. 61–80; Paul Cavill, 'Ships and *Brunanburh*', *English Studies*, 98 (2017), 549–61, 'Scandinavian *Vina* and English Battles', *Notes and Queries*, 63 (2016), 1–5, and 'The Battle of *Brunanburh* in 937: Battlefield Despatches', in *In Search of Vikings: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Scandinavian Heritage of North-West England*, ed. S. E. Harding, D. Griffiths, E. Royles (London: CRC Press, 2015), pp. 95–108, hereafter 'Battlefield Despatches';

was celebrated in the Old English poem in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *The Battle of Brunanburh*,² as a crushing victory for the English over the Irish-Norse men of Anlaf Guthfrithsson, the men of Alba under Constantine, and (in later sources) the lesser contingents of men from Strathclyde and probably Northumbria. It is generally understood that the battle took place somewhere in the north of England, but it has been difficult to reach any consensus as to precisely where Brunanburh might have been. The main division of opinion depends upon one's view of the reliability of John of Worcester's report in the early twelfth century that the fleet of Anlaf Guthfrithsson from Ireland *ostium Humbre fluminis ... ingreditur* (entered the mouth of the River Humber),³ and thus that the battle was likely to have taken place in the east of England, against the view that the west is logistically and strategically more likely. Much of the debate focuses on place-names: those who want the battle to have been fought in the east have to cast around for possible similarities between existing names and *Brunanburh*; those who argue for the west have a name which securely derives from *Brunanburh*, namely Bromborough on the Wirral.⁴

Those who argue against Bromborough tend to be dismissive of place-names. Michael Wood writes, '[a]ny attempt to defend [Bromborough] will rest entirely on uncertain and overstated onomastic evidence',⁵ and Kevin Halloran asserts, '[an onomastic approach] relies too much on an analysis of forms that derive variously from copied, altered, difficult to read, and conflicting sources of uncertain provenance'.⁶ Despite these dismissive comments, these writers nevertheless base their arguments largely on onomastic material, or at least on name identification. Wood identified

Clare Downham, 'Note: How big was the Battle of Brunanburh?', <https://www.academia.edu/43891453/Note_How_big_was_the_Battle_of_Brunanburh?>, accessed March 2021, and 'A Wirral Location for the Battle of Brunanburh', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 170 (2021), 15–32, hereafter 'Wirral Location'; Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011); *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook*, ed. Michael Livingston, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), hereafter *Casebook*; Michael Livingston, *Never Greater Slaughter: Brunanburh and the Birth of England* (London: Osprey, 2021); Michael Wood, 'Searching for Brunanburh: The Yorkshire Context of the "Great War" of 937', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 85 (2013), 138–59, hereafter 'Searching', and 'The Spelling of Brunanburh', *Notes and Queries*, 64 (2017), 365–96, hereafter 'Spelling'. The list is by no means exhaustive: several of the authors have produced online lectures and newspaper reports.

² The poem has been edited many times, but *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. Alistair Campbell (London: Heinemann, 1938), hereafter Campbell, is the principal edition used here and is cited by line number.

³ John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, trans. J. Bray and P. McGurk, 3 vols., Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995–), II 392–3.

⁴ The linguistic processes involved in the development of *Brunanburh* to Bromborough were outlined by John D. Niles, 'Skaldic Technique in *Brunanburh*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 59 (1987), 356–66 at 364 n. 2; the processes were illustrated from existing records of Bromborough by Cavill in *Casebook*, p. 344. The identification is admitted as 'convincing as a place-name' by Wood, 'Searching', p. 154, but according to Neil McGuigan, review of *Casebook*, *Scottish Historical Review*, 93 (2014), 286–88, 'the argument at its best comes down to the claim that one of the Wirral's place-names, represented by modern Bromborough, *might* be derived from Old English *Brunanburh*' (McGuigan's italics); this view is supported by several of the mistaken arguments which are discussed in the present article. Doubts expressed more recently that Bromborough might be Brunanburh, in Michael Deakin, 'Bromborough, Brunanburh and Dingesmere', forthcoming in *Notes and Queries* (2022), will be addressed elsewhere.

⁵ 'Searching', p. 154.

⁶ See Kevin Halloran, 'The Identity of *Etbrunmanwerc*', *SHR*, 89 (2010), 248–53, hereafter '*Etbrunmanwerc*', at pp. 252–53.

Brinsworth, Nottinghamshire, and Burghwallis, Yorkshire, as *Brunanburh*;⁷ Halloran identified Burnswark, Dumfries and Galloway, as the site of the battle, based on its supposed similarity with a form *Æt Brunnanwerc* recorded in the twelfth century by Symeon of Durham.⁸ While the two last of these identifications have been suggested in the twenty-first century, Ray Page's acidic comment on the first might still be regarded as applicable, '[i]t is hardly enough to look round for the nearest modern name beginning *Br-* [or *Bu-*] and identify that as *Brunanburh*'.⁹

A new attempt has been made by Wood to make his Burghwallis identification more plausible. In one of his recent works, Wood has made an argument that the spelling of the name in the B and C texts of the *Brunanburh* poem in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *Brunnanburh*, and the names *Æt Brunnanwerc uel Brunnanbyrig* in Symeon of Durham's *Libellus de Exordio*,¹⁰ is an indication that this might be a different place, with a different meaning, from *Brunanburh*. The original idea was Campbell's, though Wood assimilates and adapts it:¹¹

[T]hree of the four Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mss of the poem have the <nn> spelling, including the best tenth-century text, B. This is not, however, simply a matter of a different spelling of the same name. The spellings represent different names.¹²

In recent years *Brunanburhs* have been 'discovered' in numerous places where the name is never actually recorded: Burnswark, Lanchester, Burnley, Bromswald, Bourne, and many another.¹³ But for one writer to produce three *Brun(n)anburhs* seems a little over-enthusiastic. Some culling is necessary, and the analysis below is designed to assess how reliable the ideas are and how accurately the evidence is used in the argument that there might be different places called *Brunanburh* and *Brunnanburh*. If the ideas are demonstrated to be implausible, and use of evidence is shown to be mistaken, some localisations of the battle may be ruled out.

Spelling Variation and Sources

There are more sensible explanations for the different spellings, and more linguistically accurate explanations of the sense of the elements. Wood's argument begins by setting up a straw man:

⁷ Respectively in 'Brunanburh Revisited', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 20 (1980), 200–217, 'Searching' *passim* and 'Spelling', p. 369 n. 26.

⁸ 'The Brunanburh Campaign: A Reappraisal', *SHR*, 84 (2005), 133–48 and '*Etbrunnanwerc*', pp. 248–53. The ideas were rebutted in Paul Cavill, 'The Site of the Battle of *Brunanburh*: Manuscripts and Maps, Grammar and Geography', in *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling*, ed. O. J. Padel and D. N. Parsons (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2008), pp. 303–19, hereafter 'Manuscripts and Maps'. See also 'Battlefield Despatches', pp. 99–104.

⁹ R. I. Page, 'A Tale of Two Cities', *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 335–51, at p. 344.

¹⁰ For further detailed discussion of the manuscripts see below.

¹¹ Campbell, p. 62.

¹² 'Spelling', p. 367.

¹³ For older identifications, see John Henry Cockburn, *The Battle of Brunanburh and its Period Elucidated by Place-Names* (London: Sir W. C. Leng & Co., 1931); for more recent ones see the publications listed in note 1 above and the places discussed by Paul Hill, *The Age of Athelstan: Britain's Forgotten History* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), pp. 135–60, especially pp. 141–42.

[A]n alternative spelling of Brunnanburh was current in the tenth century, within living memory of the battle; and the witnesses for that spelling are early enough, and numerous enough, to make it at least questionable that they can be explained purely by copyists' mistakes. Are these differences in spelling all errors, or do they have a significance that we have missed?¹⁴

Having dismissed the idea that spellings might be the result of scribal error or copyists' mistakes by implication, Wood then goes on to base his argument on the idea that the spelling *Brunanburh* was an error, a scribe's mistake. He suggests that there was an 'original form' of the name, *Brunnanburh*, and that a 'confusion in spelling arose in the tenth century'. That is to say, that the scribe of the A manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and other early authorities, misspelt the name *Brunanburh*, 'possibly influenced by oral transmission', but nevertheless the scribes made an error in not spelling the name in the 'original', 'northern <nn> form'.¹⁵

In a footnote Wood writes that 'Cavill (331) does not attempt to explain the nn forms, suggesting that they might be due to scribal error'.¹⁶ No suggestion of the kind was made. The argument made by Cavill that the variant spellings are 'without significance'¹⁷ depends on the obvious and almost infinitely demonstrable fact that place-names are peculiarly susceptible to variations of spelling and pronunciation across time, place and document type. If we were to take Nottingham as an example of Wood's proposition that '[t]he spellings represent different names',¹⁸ the absurdity of the argument becomes evident. In the Chronicle, A has *Snotengaham*, while E has *Snotingeham* and *Snotingham* (all under the year 868); then later documents have (among others) *Notingeham* 1130, *Nottingham* 1172–4.¹⁹ The variant spellings represent material differences of pronunciation but they undoubtedly refer to the same place, rather than two or more places. Wood does not apply this argument to *dingesmere* (line 54 b), but there again we have material differences of spelling: D's *dynigesmere* is hardly a different place. And then what about Dublin (line 55 b), *difelinl dyflenldyflinldyflig* in the different manuscripts?

Something more needs to be said about the evidence for the spelling *Brunnanburh*. The A manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 173, fol. 26r, has a superscript \n/ added. That this 'may even be by the main scribe' is fanciful:²⁰ the manuscript is viewable on the Parker Library on the Web site²¹ and the reader will note that the ink of the interlinear letter is lighter, and the form of the -n- without serifs on the descenders, is clearly different from the -n- in the main text. Bately notes succinctly 'n' added in another hand'.²² The reader will also note that an annotator

¹⁴ 'Spelling', p. 365.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

¹⁶ 'Spelling', p. 365 n. 3; the reference is to Cavill's chapter, 'The Place-Name Debate', in *Casebook*, pp. 327, pp. 327–49, hereafter 'Place-Name Debate'. See also 'Manuscripts and Maps', p. 305.

¹⁷ 'Place-Name Debate', p. 331, also 'Manuscripts and Maps', p. 304.

¹⁸ 'Spelling', p. 367.

¹⁹ J. E. B. Gover, Allen Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, English Place-Name Society xvii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 13. Hereafter *PN Nottinghamshire*.

²⁰ 'Spelling', p. 366.

²¹ <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/wp146tq7625>>, accessed January 2022.

²² *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition, 3: MS A*, ed. Janet Bately (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), p. 70 text note.

added an interlinear $\backslash n/$ to *danede* at the bottom of the same page, another orthographical variant.²³

Manuscript B, London, British Library, Cotton MSS, Tiberius A vi, fol. 31v, is uncertain because the manuscript is badly damaged at the point where the name occurs. In the digital facsimile three or four minims are visible at the crucial point.²⁴ It cannot be asserted with certainty that the spelling is *brunnanburh* from the manuscript, but in the magnification possible with the photograph it looks probable. Simon Taylor read ‘Brunanb[ur]h’.²⁵ The B Chronicle derives ultimately from the same exemplar as does C, BL Cotton MSS, Tiberius B i, fol. 141r, where the reading *brunnanburh* is undisputed. The other Chronicle manuscript of the poem, D, British Library Cotton MSS, Tiberius B iv, fol. 49r, has the single $\langle n \rangle$. In sum, one late manuscript, C, has the *Brunnanburh* spelling; another from the same exemplar, late tenth-century, B, probably has it; another, A, has an annotation in a later hand adding the superscript $\backslash n/$. Symeon of Durham has the forms *Aet Brunnanwerc uel Brunnanbyrig*,²⁶ and one spelling in Langtoft manuscripts has *Bronneburgh*.²⁷ Dozens of manuscripts and other known writers that have the name have the single $\langle n \rangle$ spelling, including John of Worcester, whose work was widely known and copied in the north.²⁸

Wood argues that B is ‘a less corrupt text’ than A, and thus that *Brunnanburh* ‘may have been the original form of the name’, and *Brunanburh* ‘a West Saxon rendering of a northern place-name, which the southerners may have only heard spoken’.²⁹ This argument is hard to reconcile with the accepted transmission of the Chronicle. Very few people doubt that *Brun(n)anburh* is a northern place-name; but the idea that there was a ‘northern’ version of the name with a ‘correct’ spelling *Brunnanburh* which was garbled in the rest of the tradition makes no sense. The poem itself is resolutely focused on the victory and prowess of the West Saxons, and not likely to appeal to northern sensibilities,³⁰ much less be composed by a

²³ It is uncertain what this word means, see the lengthy discussion in Campbell, pp. 98–102. It is *denmade* in B and C, *dennode* in D, indicating a consensus $\langle nn \rangle$ spelling. The *Dictionary of Old English: A to I* online, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey *et al.* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018), s.n. *dennian*, notes that this is ‘a crux, probably to be taken as an instance of *dynnan* “to resound”, though it lists several other possibilities.

²⁴ Martin Foys, *et al.*, ed. *Old English Poetry in Facsimile 2.0* (Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019): <<https://uw.digitalmappa.org/58>>, accessed January 2022.

²⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition, 4: MS B*, ed. Simon Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), p. 51. Hereafter, Taylor, *MS B*.

²⁶ Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de Exordio atque Procurso istius hoc est Dunhelmensis Ecclesie*, ed. and trans. David Rollason, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 138. Hereafter Rollason, *LDE*.

²⁷ *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. and trans. Thomas Wright, 2 vols, Rolls Series (London: Longman, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1866–68), I 330. Wright’s edited text, from BL, Cotton MSS, Julius A v, reads *Bruneburge*; BL, Royal MSS, 20 A xi reads *Brunesburgh*, and BL, Royal MSS, 20 A ii, reads *Bronneburgh*, the spelling referred to above.

²⁸ Downham, ‘Wirral Location’, pp. 21–22, has given good reasons for discounting Wood’s argument; ‘Searching’, pp. 147–50, that John of Worcester, Symeon of Durham, the Melrose Chronicle, Roger of Howden, Ailred of Beverley, Higden, Langtoft, Roger of Wendover and Robert of Gloucester, all drew independently on ‘a set of tenth-century northern annals from York’ now no longer extant.

²⁹ Respectively, ‘Spelling’, pp. 366, 367 and 369.

³⁰ See Paul Cavill, ‘Kings, People, and Lands: The Rhetoric of *The Battle of Brunanburh*’, forthcoming in *Ideas of the World in Early Medieval England*, Studies in Old English Literature, 1, ed. Mark Atherton, Kazutomu Karasawa and Francis Leneghan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022).

northerner.³¹ That there was a ‘correct’ northern spelling preserved in Chronicles B and C seems moreover to presuppose that Anglo-Saxon England, particularly in the north, had fixed written forms of names that southerners only heard and so misspelled.³²

With regard to transmission of the poem and annals of this section of the Chronicle, it is generally accepted that material for the years 934 to 975 constituted the ‘Continuation 2’ which was added to the common stock of the Chronicle in the various centres where it was kept.³³ The continuation was promulgated by the West Saxon royal house and there is no doubt that it was written in a southern dialect and originated most probably in a Winchester scriptorium. Though there is some discussion about the precise place in which the B text was kept and the precise relations between B and C, it is nevertheless clear that the agreements between B and C show that they are very closely related and derive from the second continuation. This means that the ultimate source of the poem and the <nn> spelling *Brunnanburh* in B and C was linguistically West Saxon, the language of the second continuation.³⁴

Wood offers no linguistic or manuscript transmission evidence that there was a pre-existing northern version of the poem or the name that was copied into B and C, or that the name copied into B and C was garbled in the (other) West Saxon tradition of A and others. In this context it is noteworthy that, as Whitelock observes, Chronicle D, BL Cotton MSS, Tiberius B iv³⁵ and E together ‘form what is known as the northern recension of the Chronicle, and I have little doubt that the archetype from which they were copied was written at York’.³⁶ D has the <n> spelling in its

³¹ In the bilingual MS F, BL Cotton MSS, Domitian A viii, a remarkably cramped manuscript, thirteen lines, or two-thirds of a page, were left blank on fol. 57v, as Baker notes, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition*, 8: *MS F*, ed. Peter S. Baker (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), p. 79. This is immediately before the 937 Brunanburh entry beginning at the top of fol. 58r. A possible explanation is that the scribe intended to copy the Old English poem or parts of it, but did not, perhaps because he could not translate it, but equally possibly because it was not to his taste.

³² The idea that the ‘more original’ text of the poem would preserve ‘correct’ spellings such as the <nn> is not sustainable. Campbell himself writes, ‘[t]o make B or C the basis of the text, owing to their superior readings in a few places, is not to be recommended’, p. 13. The B text is ‘less corrupt’ in that it makes better sense of the idiom of the poem, not that the scribe’s spelling overall is somehow superior. B has the meaningful *secga swate* (with the blood of warriors, 13) and *cumbolgehnastes* (in the clash of standards, 49) by contrast with A’s contextually meaningless *secgas hwate* (brave warriors) and garbled *culbodgehnades*. B’s scribe still has spelling variants, including double consonants in *ecggum* (with edges, 4) and *secggeap* ([books] say, 68), and fairly consistent late spellings such as *cing* for *cyning* (king, 1 and 35). B also has the odd mistake, as in *headolina* for *heapolinde* (battle-shield, 6). The spelling of Scribe 3, who wrote the portion of the C Chronicle containing the poem, has been noted to include frequent doubling of consonants, but not those just mentioned from B other than *wigges* (of battle, 20, 59); see Campbell, pp. 9–10, and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition*, 5: *MS C*, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. xcvi, (x) [b]. Hereafter O’Brien O’Keefe, *MS C*. See also ‘Manuscripts and Maps’, pp. 303–09 for further discussion.

³³ Campbell’s chapter ‘The Text’, pp. 1–15, is useful, and details, among other things, the correspondences and spelling variations between B and C. See also Taylor, *MS B*, pp. xxxiv–xliv; and O’Brien O’Keefe, *MS C*, pp. lvii–lxii, which takes into consideration the important work by Janet Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and Textual Relationships* (Reading: University of Reading, 1991).

³⁴ O’Brien O’Keefe, *MS C*, writes ‘The material in annals 933–46, common to A, B, C and D, written by the 950s, would have been written in language half way between that of Alfred and that of Ælfric’, i.e. between early West Saxon and late West Saxon, p. lx.

³⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 6: MS D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996). Cubbin remarks, uncontroversially, ‘D is basically a copy of the Northern edition of the Chronicle’, p. xxvii.

³⁶ Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents I* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 111.

version of the poem as has already been noted. The E manuscript of the Chronicle, Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud MSS, Misc. 636, copied at Peterborough in the Danelaw, and which omits the Old English poem and abbreviates the annal, also has the <n> spelling of the name, ‘Her Æðelstan cyning lædde fyrde to Brunanbyrig’ (In this year King Athelstan led an army to Brunanburh). F, BL Cotton MSS, Domitian A viii, copied from an ancestor of E, similarly has the <n> spelling. None of these northern-derived texts has the <nn> spelling.

Wood goes on to discuss Symeon of Durham’s phrase *Æt Brunnanwerc uel Brunnanbyrig*, and attributes it to:

an earlier northern source or sources. Moreover, it was very likely one in Old English, as Symeon preserves the locative preposition (*a*)*et* and the dative *byrig*. The form of citation with *aet* also suggests a written source. As for its meaning, whether *wercweorc* or *burh*, the place to which Symeon referred was evidently called not ‘Bruna’s fort’, but ‘the fort at the spring’.³⁷

In the most obvious sense the source was earlier than Symeon. But how much earlier is unclear, since the phrase lacks the dative *-e* on *-werc* in both the earliest manuscripts of the *Libellus de Exordio*, Durham, University Library Cosin MSS, V II 6, and BL, Cotton MSS, Faustina A v.³⁸ The other twelfth-century manuscript, Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff i 27, has *etbrunnanuwerch l brunnanbyrig*.³⁹ The *-werc*, *-uwerch* spellings most probably reflect the loss of inflections in late Old English and early Middle English, together with the replacement of Old English <p> *wynn*, a letter similar to *p*, the usual letter-form for *w*, and *et-* for Old English *æt*: thus the names once more reflect spelling variation. There is no indication where Symeon got the forms from. The conclusion Wood draws is in fact a *non sequitur* as is shown below.

Wood’s arguments, then, constitute a very flimsy basis on which to theorise that the *Brunnanburh* spelling of the name refers to a different place and means something different from *Brunanburh* with one <n>. The idea seems to be that there was an early tradition of the battle originating in the north and familiar with a place called *Brunnanburh*, and that this tradition was transmitted to the south and misheard by the southerners and the site of the battle was identified mistakenly with a different place called *Brunanburh*. Contrary to Wood’s assertion, the evidence strongly suggests that the variation of the forms may indeed be ‘simply a matter of a different spelling of the same name’.

A Hypocoristic Name?

Another possibility to explain the spelling variation may be considered. Wood, and Campbell before him, believe the variant spelling to be a common noun rather than

³⁷ ‘Spelling’, p. 367.

³⁸ See Rollason, *LDE*, p. 138 for the Cosin reading, and Faustina at <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_faustina_a_v_f025r>, fol. 61v, where the manuscript reads *etbrunnawerc ul brunnanbyrig*.

³⁹ Available at <<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-FF-00001-00027/172>>. This is p. 158 in the manuscript page-numbering, digital version p. 172.

a personal name. They admit that the *Bruna*- spelling points to a masculine personal name.⁴⁰ But they do not take into account the possibility that *Bruna* might be a hypocorism, that is, a shortened form of a dithematic name.⁴¹ There are many such dithematic names, where *Brun-* is compounded with another element or theme. The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database records, among others, the following masculine names with *Brun-* and a second theme, listed together with the number of bearers or attestations: *Brungar* (15), *Brunheard* (2), *Brunman(n)* (19), *Brunstan* (15), *Brunwine* (13), *Brunhyse* (2), *Brunræd*, and *Brunsig* (1 each).⁴² These names could all be shortened to *Bruna*, which shows the distinctive weak declension typical of such names.⁴³

A peculiar feature of hypocoristics is the modification of consonant patterns. In Old English and Germanic names, and throughout the Indo-European languages more generally, these short forms are notably subject to consonantal gemination, that is to say, doubling of consonants.⁴⁴ Cecily Clark explains, '[i]n the Germanic languages generally, a consonant-cluster formed at the element-junction of a compound name was often simplified in the hypocoristic form to a geminate, Old English examples including the masc. *Totta* < *Torhthelm*'.⁴⁵ Redin notes that names with the single consonant and the geminate might exist side-by-side in the record, and there are many examples in his work, including among others *Bot(t)a*, *Ceol(l)a*, *Ead(d)a*, *God(d)a*, and *Tun(n)a*.⁴⁶ These names are recorded over the whole date-range of Anglo-Saxon England from Bede and early charters through to Domesday Book.

These well-documented facts lead to an alternative interpretation of the < n > and < nn > spellings of *Brun(n)anburh*. It is possible that the scribe of the exemplar of Chronicles B and C recognised that the first element of the place-name was a hypocoristic personal name. The element is clearly a weak substantive typical of hypocoristic names, with the genitive inflection *-an*. Reading the name in this fashion, the scribe might have rendered the hypocoristic with its characteristic geminate consonant, thus arriving at *Brunnanburh*. This explanation, not in my view as compelling as the simpler one which sees the < n > and < nn > spellings as orthographic variants, nevertheless takes into consideration the particular forms of the name and known linguistic and onomastic processes.

⁴⁰ 'Spelling', p. 366, Campbell, p. 61.

⁴¹ The idea was earlier proposed in 'Place-Name Debate', p. 332.

⁴² Available at <<http://pase.ac.uk>>, hereafter PASE. The list is not exhaustive. It should be noted that the name of an individual could be attested more than once: for example, moneyers could have worked at more than one mint, or an individual named in Domesday Book could have held lands in more than one area. The name of a man who held land in Derbyshire and Yorkshire in Domesday Book 1086, *Brune* (PASE), may represent a hypocorism, or a version of Continental *Bruno*.

⁴³ As Mats Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English* (Uppsala: A.-B. Akademiska Bokhandeln, 1919), p. xxx notes, '[a]s regards Germanic languages, the masc. suffixes most employed are *-an* (OE *-a*) and *-ja-* (OE *-i*)'. Hereafter Redin. F. M. Stenton, in his 1924 essay, 'Personal Names in Place-Names', in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Doris Mary Stenton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 84–105, at p. 88, notes, '[i]n Old English a long series of short names is formed by the addition of the suffix *-a* to the first element of the compound', and in n. 3, he adds regarding the *-a* form, '[t]he common termination of weak nouns in Old English'.

⁴⁴ Redin, pp. xxx-xxxvii.

⁴⁵ Cecily Clark, 'Onomastics', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, I, ed. Richard M. Hogg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 452–89, at pp. 459–60.

⁴⁶ Redin, pp. xxxv, 45, 46, 47, 49, 56.

Campbell's Edition and the Spellings

Campbell was very keen to explain the different spellings as meaningful; but common sense and Occam's Razor, along with a welter of onomastic evidence, indicate that they are orthographic variants. Campbell's analysis is fairly modest, and problems mostly arise due to his need to justify the idea that there were multiple places called *Brun(n)anburh*. He discusses two strands of evidence: the personal name forms and the common noun. This analysis needs further discussion, since it is flawed, and later writers like Wood rely very heavily on Campbell. The main issues with Campbell's edition at this point are that he confuses grammatically-distinct name forms and elements and he relies on inadequate editions for the evidence relating to the names of Brunanburh.

In a footnote treating the idea that Brunanburh might be Bromborough, Campbell writes, 'of course, the coincidence of *Brunan-*, a common, and *-burh*, a very common, place-name element, proves nothing relative to the site of the battle'.⁴⁷ This clearly contradicts Campbell's evidence that *Bruna* is in fact a rather rare name: he points out in a footnote that the personal name *Brun* is common,⁴⁸ but that he knows of only one *Bruna*, a moneyer.⁴⁹ Though Searle records a moneyer with this name, PASE does not list the *Bruna* name at all.⁵⁰ In an earlier article it was suggested that Campbell was mistaken that first-element grammatically weak name forms (implied by the capital *B-* and the oblique case *-an* in Campbell's statement) were at all common;⁵¹ this has now been confirmed by Keith Briggs's collation of the personal names in English place-names, extracted from the hundreds of thousands of names in the ninety volumes of the English Place-Name Survey so far.⁵² Briggs lists four names securely to be identified as deriving from the personal name *Bruna*: three associated with one landholder on the Wirral, Cheshire, namely Bromborough, Brimstage and Brimston; the other name is Bromham, Bedfordshire.⁵³ Hill-names derived from an adjectival element *brune* 'brown' might increase the number of names with a weak oblique form **brunan*

⁴⁷ Campbell, p. 59 n. 4. The comment is picked up by Wood (see below) and Halloran, 'Etrunnanwerc', p. 249 n. 6, also quotes Campbell on the name elements: see further 'Battlefield Despatches', p. 100.

⁴⁸ This is demonstrated by PASE, which lists thirty-five *Brun* names.

⁴⁹ Campbell, p. 61 n. 2.

⁵⁰ William George Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), p. 117.

⁵¹ 'Battlefield Despatches', p. 100.

⁵² Keith Briggs, *An Index to the Personal Names in English Place-Names* (Nottingham: EPNS, 2021). Briggs helpfully notes the names listed in PASE. His *Index* covers names in other EPNS works in addition to the Place-Name Survey; but since the Survey is not yet complete, the *Index* is only indicative.

⁵³ Respectively, J. McN. Dodgson, *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, Part 4, EPNS XLVII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 234–40, and A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire*, EPNS III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 29. There is a possibility that Burton in Tarvin, Dodgson, *PN Cheshire*, Part 3, EPNS XLVI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 270, may be a *Bruna* name, but the interpretation depends on a single form, *Brunburton* 1282; it is more likely to be a manorial affix, as suggested by Dodgson, p. 271. *Burnelee*, late thirteenth-century, a minor name in Newton by Daresbury, Dodgson, *PN Cheshire*, Part 2, EPNS XLV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 155, might be close enough to the *Bruna* estates further into the Wirral to be a detached property of the same man or his family.

marginally: the Brendon Hills and the associated name Brown in Somerset are likely examples.⁵⁴

Campbell later suggests that *Brun-* and *Bruna-* names are really the same, and this is possibly what motivates the idea that *Brunan-* is a ‘common’ place-name element. Variant name forms in William of Malmesbury, Æthelweard and Gaimar, he writes, ‘have as first element *Brunan-*, *Brune*, *Brunes-*, which are equivalent forms; ... there must have been many places with names like *Brunan-* (*Brunes-*) [-]feld, -ford, -dun, -weorc’.⁵⁵ It is hard to know in what sense Campbell thought the forms of the name were ‘equivalent’ or ‘alternative’, since as he says, ‘[t]he first element of the form with one *n*, *Brunanburh*, can only be regarded as gen. s. of *Bruna* or *Brune*’.⁵⁶ It is likely that Campbell was troubled by the existence in his list of names relating to the battle of such forms as Henry of Huntingdon’s *Brunesburh* and Gaimar’s *Bruneswerce*, which do not appear to be weak *Bruna-* names, but must in some sense be equivalent.⁵⁷ This issue has been resolved, however. It has been noted that one manuscript, BL, Arundel MSS, 48, used by Thomas Arnold for his then-standard edition of the *Historia Anglorum*,⁵⁸ has the name in the three different places it appears in the *Historia* (Book v. 18, Book v. 19 and Book v. 32) spelt *brunesburi(t)h*.⁵⁹ However, early manuscripts from the six different recensions of Henry of Huntingdon’s text show this to be an aberration: no other manuscript consulted has the *Brunes-* spelling, and the overwhelmingly dominant form is *brunebiri(h)*.⁶⁰ The Gaimar spelling given by Campbell follows the same pattern: one manuscript has the form *Bruneswerce*, two others have *Burneweste*, and another *Brunewerche*.⁶¹ Once again, the dominant spelling of the name in the extant manuscripts is *burne-*, *brune-*, the late, weakened form of *brunan-*. As has been suggested, the *-s-* in the one spelling quoted by Campbell most likely represents a late secondary genitive.⁶² Thus while *Bruna* and *Brun* look a bit similar, the name of the battle derives clearly and definitively from the first and not the second.

The grammar and inflections of the weak noun *Bruna* are different from those of the strong noun *Brun* in Old English, as Campbell admits. They are neither ‘equivalent’ nor ‘alternative’, and investigation into the manuscripts of the sources reinforces this conclusion. Briggs lists thirty-nine places with a probable personal

⁵⁴ The name Brown in Somerset in the charter S311 is discussed below. See David N. Parsons and Tania Styles, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names*, 2, *Brace–Caester* (Nottingham: Centre for English Name-Studies, 2000), p. 200, under **brūn**¹. Hereafter VEPN. Also E. Ekwall, *Studies on English Place- and Personal-Names* (Lund: Gleerup, 1931), pp. 62–63, hereafter Ekwall.

⁵⁵ Campbell, p. 63.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵⁸ *Henrici Archidiaconi Huntendunensis Historia Anglorum*, ed. Thomas Arnold, Rolls Series (London: Longman and Co., 1879).

⁵⁹ Not, it is to be noted, ‘*Brunesburh*’ in Arnold’s edition and Campbell’s list, p. 60.

⁶⁰ For the details see ‘Place-Name Debate’, p. 349. Henry, *Archdeacon of Huntingdon: Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. Diana Greenway, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), now the standard edition, uses BL, Egerton MSS, 3668, which has the forms *Brunebirih* and *Bruneberi*, pp. 310, 332.

⁶¹ *L’Estoire des Engleis by Geffrei Gaimar*, ed. Alexander Bell, Anglo-Norman Texts (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), p. 112, line 3518 and notes. See also ‘Manuscripts and Maps’, pp. 305–06.

⁶² ‘Manuscripts and Maps’, p. 306.

name first element deriving from *Brun*.⁶³ This name element is demonstrably common, but *Bruna* place-names are not. This is unwarranted confusion of the name-types, and runs counter to the evidence.

Campbell then goes on to discuss the <nn> spelling in some charter names. He considers a form in a probably-inauthentic grant of King Æthelwulf to the church of St Peter and St Paul, Winchester, in 854, numbered 476 by Birch, now S311.⁶⁴ The grant is preserved in a twelfth-century Winchester document, and relates to a considerable area of land in Taunton and Brown, Somerset, the latter of which places is referred to in the Old English bounds as *in Brunan*. Campbell surmised this might be ‘a mistake for *Brunnan*’.⁶⁵ Brown is in Treborough, Somerset, as identified by Ekwall and accepted by Finberg⁶⁶ and Sawyer. It is recorded in Domesday Book as *Brune*, and Campbell’s speculation that *Brunan* in the charter ‘may be a mistake for *Brunnan*’ is proved to be misplaced. Quite why a name preserved in a Winchester charter for an estate deep in Wessex should reflect what Campbell suggests to be *brunnan* with ‘the medial *n* doubled by the influence of O.N. *brunnr*’⁶⁷ is not discussed or justified.

The other charter is a grant of land in Stoke by Ipswich, Suffolk, by King Edgar to Ely in 970, in copies of the twelfth century, Birch 1269, S781. There are several witnesses to this charter, including two with the full Old English bounds: the bounds are included in the earliest manuscript, BL, Cotton MSS, Tiberius A vi, fol. 99r, used by Birch;⁶⁸ and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.41, p. 90. The second of these witnesses refers to a boundary running ‘swa forð on midde weardne stream [pæt] hyt cymð on brunnan’ (so onwards in the middle of the river until it comes to the stream).⁶⁹ This is the unambiguous reading of the *Inquisitio Eliensis*, in the Trinity College manuscript, and is adopted by Blake, Hart, and others.⁷⁰ The other, Tiberius, has a damaged text, where *brun-* ends one line and the beginning of the next has a small hole. Nevertheless, the space would only accommodate two letters, and it is likely the reading was *brunan*.⁷¹ Campbell was not aware of the Trinity

⁶³ These figures relate to personal names, but there are many more based on the adjective *brun* ‘brown’. The number does not include dithematic names in place-names, such as Brungar in the name Broomfleet, and many another.

⁶⁴ Walter de Gray Birch, ed., *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*, 3 vols (London: Whiting and Company, 1885–1893), II 75–77. Hereafter Birch. S refers to *The Electronic Sawyer: Online Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Charters*, <<https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/>>, accessed February 2022, hereafter Sawyer. Sawyer 311 is <<https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/charter/311.html>>. Most commentators label the grant ‘spurious’.

⁶⁵ Campbell, p. 61 n. 3.

⁶⁶ H. P. R. Finberg, ed., *The Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1964), pp. 122–23.

⁶⁷ Campbell, p. 61.

⁶⁸ Birch, III 563–65. The edition is a composite of several sources, but BL, Cotton MSS, Titus A vi lacks the Old English bounds, so the material is transcribed from Tiberius and early editions.

⁶⁹ The manuscript is available online at <<https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/O.2.41/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=121&r=0&xywh=-1363%2C958%2C6305%2C3481>>, accessed February 2022.

⁷⁰ E. O. Blake, ed., *Liber Eliensis*, Camden 3rd series XCII (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962), pp. 111–13, where the Old English bounds are given at p. 113 n. 1; Cyril Hart, *The Danelaw* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), pp. 60–62. Hereafter Hart. The form is marked <*brunnan*> in the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009), alerting the reader to the existence of a variant or lacuna.

⁷¹ As acknowledged by Campbell, p. 62 n. 3 (continued from p. 61) referring to Birch’s edition where he prints ‘brun[nan]’, III 564. The manuscript is available online at <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_tiberius_a_vi_f036r>, accessed February 2022.

College manuscript as he refers to Cotton Tiberius as ‘the only MS. which contains the boundaries of the charter’.⁷² But that it was known is revealed by the fact that Sweet ‘gives *brunna* as a form alternative to *burn*, *burna*, *burne*’ in his *Dictionary*,⁷³ for which Campbell complained Sweet ‘offered no evidence’.⁷⁴ The spelling *brunnan* in Trinity O.2.41 is that evidence.

Hart identified the bounds of the charter, which follow at this point the course of the river Orwell (*on middeweardne stream*) from the dock in Ipswich south until the Belstead Brook debouches into it at grid reference TM162420 (*þæt hyt cymð on brunnan*).⁷⁵ Hart notes that the stream was ‘earlier called the Bourne Brook’⁷⁶ and points out the proximity of ‘Bourne Park, Bridge and Hill’. Bourne Bridge is recorded as ‘*burnebregge* c. 1450 BL Add MS 30158, *Burnbrige* c.1539 Cavendish Map, *Bourn bridge* 1554 (1654) Annals’.⁷⁷ While *bo(u)rne* occasionally occurs as a modern reflex of *brunnr*,⁷⁸ it is the most common and plentiful reflex of Old English *burna*.⁷⁹ Though Hart posits derivation from ON *brunnr* on the basis of the charter spelling, the alternative he mentions, Old English *burna*, **brun(n)a* ‘stream’, confirmed by the local *burn(e)*- and *Bourn(e)* names, is more plausible. Thus the single example of a **brun(n)a* common noun is ambiguous in its spelling, but not in its meaning. There is some possibility that in this Danelaw district the <nn> spelling could have been influenced by Scandinavian *brunnr*, including the metathesis of the first two letters, but the existence of a probable <n> spelling, and the local names showing reflexes of *burna* suggest it is a spelling variant.

Campbell’s arguments are flawed. In support of his view that *Brunnanburh* might be a different place from *Brunanburh*, he proposes a <nn> form for Brown, Somerset, that proves not to exist; he contradicts himself about the frequency and distinctiveness of the name *Bruna*, which is rare; and a fuller examination of the common noun suggests that there was spelling variation, *brunnan* and *brun[an]* in the dative, in the extant texts of the only example in Old English, and that these variants derive ultimately from Old English *burna*, **brun(n)a* ‘stream’. There is no evidence that any of the known *Brunna*- names might derive from *brunnr*.

Wood’s Use of Campbell

Wood takes up Campbell’s restrained and (as indicated above) imperfect argument and expands it to support his argument that *Brunnanburh* really means ‘the burh at the spring’. Campbell’s argument that <nn> spellings might reflect ‘the medial *n*

⁷² Campbell, p. 62 n. 3 (continued from p. 61).

⁷³ Henry Sweet, *The Student’s Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), under *burne*, p. 30.

⁷⁴ Campbell, p. 61 n. 3.

⁷⁵ Hart, p. 61.

⁷⁶ I have been unable to verify this; the 1880 Ordnance Survey 1:5000 map has Bourn Villa, Bourn Hill and Bourn Hall either side of the brook, which it names Bourn Bridge Creek. But the existence of Bourne Brooks in Essex and Staffordshire indicates that the name type is not uncommon, see VEPN, p. 91.

⁷⁷ I am grateful to Keith Briggs for permission to use material from his unpublished *Suffolk Place-Names*, draft of 2 February 2022.

⁷⁸ Bourn in Cambridgeshire and Bourne in Lincolnshire are the ones listed in VEPN, pp. 50–51.

⁷⁹ The list is too long to repeat, see VEPN, pp. 90–93.

doubled by the influence of O.N. *brunnr* has been demonstrated to be possible; but Campbell did not suggest that the first element of the name was Scandinavian *brunnr*, partly because he saw that element as essentially synonymous with OE *burna* (and variants) meaning ‘stream’, and partly because the grammar of the two elements is incompatible. Despite this, Wood attributes his argument to the authority of Campbell: ‘the <nn> spelling, Campbell thought, appears to derive from an Old English *brunne* (related to Old Norse *brunnilbrunnr*) a word for stream, well, or spring... In this case it could mean, as he suggested “the fort by the stream”, but equally—and perhaps more likely—Brunnanburh would be ‘the fort at the spring’.⁸⁰ Wood goes on to conclude, ‘[f]ollowing Campbell, Brunnanburh then could be the genitive singular of Old English **brunne* a form of *burne* “stream or spring”, but more likely influenced by Old Norse *brunnr* (dat *brunni*)’.⁸¹

While OE **brunne* and ON *brunnr* are cognate, the Old English word has not been demonstrated to mean ‘spring’, and Campbell did not suggest such a meaning. The *Dictionary of Old English* gives ‘stream, brook, river’, but not ‘spring’ for *burna*, *burne*, *burn*.⁸² Nor does the etymological relationship between *burna* and *brunnr* mean that grammar, inflection and semantics can be ignored. The *Brun(n)an-* forms represent a standard oblique case of an Old English weak noun; but there is no case in the standard declension of singular Old Norse *brunnr* that would plausibly give a form *brunnan*.⁸³ There is no particular sense to invoking influence of the singular ON dative *brunni*, except that it has a spelling <nn> and, eliding the grammatical ending, gives an approximation to the desired name *burh* ‘by or at a spring’.

Wood’s preference for Old Norse *brunnr* as the first element of *Brunnanburh* seems to arise from the fact that it is the only element mentioned which can demonstrably mean ‘spring’. Burghwallis has a spring, though the place has no place-name record resembling *Brunnanburh*.⁸⁴ The process by which Wood arrives at the likelihood of the element *brunnr* occurring in *Brunnanburh* appears to start with his identification of Burghwallis as the battle site. It develops by his supposing the existence of multiple similar names;⁸⁵ then by identifying the <nn> form as ‘original’ and specifically ‘northern’; then by identifying the first element as Scandinavian *brunnr*; then by importing an extended meaning into the Old English word *burna* and variants ‘influenced by’ *brunnr*; and finally by confusing the grammatically-distinct name elements. None of these processes is underpinned by linguistic evidence and analysis.

⁸⁰ ‘Spelling’, p. 367.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁸² *Dictionary of Old English: A to I* online, s.n. *burna*, *burne*, *burn*. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who noted that the *DOE* has one example where *burne* glosses Latin *fons* ‘spring, fountain (of wisdom)’, Proverbs 18:4, *aqua profunda verba ex ore viri et torrens redundans fons sapientiae* ‘words from the mouth of a man are as deep water; and the fountain of wisdom as an overflowing stream’. In this case the identification of the *fons* with the *torrens redundans* might hint at a more substantial stream than is usually signified by ‘spring’, and thus motivate the gloss *burne*.

⁸³ The nominative singular is *brunnr*; accusative singular *brunn*; genitive singular *brunnis*; dative singular *brunni*.

⁸⁴ See A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Part 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 35–36. See further Paul Cavill, forthcoming, ‘The Battle of Brunanburh: The Yorkshire Hypothesis’.

⁸⁵ See above, and also his repetition of Campbell’s notion that ‘the elements of this name [Brunanburh] are common ones’, ‘Spelling’, p. 366.

Conclusion

The present article questions what the spellings of *Brun(n)anburh* might indicate. It shows that, rather than suggesting the existence of multiple names and thus places that are otherwise not recorded, the spellings most likely represent spelling variation. This is an obvious and demonstrable process in records of place-names. Equally obviously, a minimally different spelling of a name in four versions of the same poem is overwhelmingly likely to refer to the same place: once again this is demonstrable from the Chronicle poem in relation to the name Dublin. Scrutiny of the source of the <nn> spellings in some manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reveals that they are southern in origin, and the supposition that southern scribes misspelled a specifically more ‘original’ and ‘northern’ form referring to a different place is shown to be implausible. It is demonstrated that the *Brun(n)a-* forms of the first element of the place-name could derive from hypocoristic forms of the personal name, producing spelling variants, a process frequent in pre-Conquest English personal names.

These main arguments, both of which attribute the spelling differences to simple variation, would clearly, if accepted, render the speculations of Campbell and Wood void. But there are many other reasons why Wood’s proposal that the <nn> *Brunnanburh* spellings indicate the name meant ‘burh by a spring’, as against ‘Bruna’s fort’, is flawed. Campbell does not confuse *Brun-* and *Bruna-* names,⁸⁶ but he nevertheless conflates them with a view to showing their frequency and supporting his notion that more than one place is referred to. Closer examination of Campbell’s evidence concerning the <nn> spellings in some names, and the noun **brunne*, shows that he expected them where they do not exist, and that the one that exists as a common noun is very likely to be a spelling variant.

Campbell’s argument that the <nn> spelling might be influenced by Norse *brunnr* is taken by Wood as a mandate to state that the first element of *Brunnanburh* was likely to be *brunnr* and thus to mean (exclusively) ‘spring’. To arrive at this, there is a process of conflation of the grammar and spelling of Old English names with entirely distinct and incompatible Norse grammatical elements, and importation of the Norse meaning ‘spring’ into Old English *burna*, **brun(n)a*, **brun(n)e* where it does not demonstrably belong.

In short, it is overwhelmingly likely that the *Brunanburh* and *Brunnanburh* spellings of the place-name near where the battle took place are orthographical variants. There is no evidence that *Brunnanburh* with <nn> was a peculiarly ‘northern’ form. There is no evidence that *Brunnan-* or the common noun occurring as *brun[an]* and *brunnan* represent Scandinavian *brunnr*. And the Old English common noun **brun(n)a*, **brun(n)e* clearly means ‘stream’ not ‘spring’. So the answer to Wood’s question, ‘Was the Burghwallis fort in the Anglo-Saxon period [Brunnanburh] “the fort at the spring”?’⁸⁷ must be negative: it is vanishingly unlikely. Certainly in this

⁸⁶ While Wood mentions the distinction between *Bruna* with a weak genitive *Brunan* (the form in *Brunanburh*) and *Brun* with the strong genitive *Brunes*, ‘Searching’, p. 150, he can still assert on the same page, for example, that Brinsley, Nottinghamshire, is ‘a *Bruna* name’, ‘Searching’, p. 150 n. 62, citing *PN Nottinghamshire*, which clearly identifies the personal name as *Brūn*, p. 117, as does the medial *-s-* in the name.

⁸⁷ ‘Spelling’, p. 369 n. 26.

controversy one should be circumspect and keep an open mind, as Wood recommends, and his and Campbell's arguments invite re-examination of the evidence. But the best explanation of the spellings of *Brun(n)anburh* is orthographical variation; Campbell's and Wood's arguments do not carry conviction and lack corroborating evidence.

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