

NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION: FIELD COLLECTION OF NAMES

Report presented by France*

In 1971, the National Geographical Institute revised the model form for the surveyor's list of names which is used in France for the collection of all place-name data. The earlier forms had already been revised in 1961 and 1965 to provide for the preparation of punched cards and for some automatic processing of the data so recorded. The new model form, illustrated here, is mainly intended to facilitate the task of field staff, while retaining the advantages of the earlier forms.

* The original text of this report, submitted in French, was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.65.

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE POSITION IN IRELAND

Report presented by Ireland*

There are two official languages in Ireland, Irish and English, so that, generally speaking, each place will have an Irish-form and an English-form name. The Irish language was, from its introduction in prehistoric times until very recently, the language of the majority, if not the entirety, of the population; so the great majority of the place names have an Irish-language origin, and the difference between the Irish-form and the English-form names is basically one of orthography in most cases. Although the orthography of the English-form names is based on that of the English language, some additional guidance to the pronunciation would be needed by the English speaker. The two forms of name will be discussed separately here: it may be more convenient to consider the English-form names first.

ENGLISH-FORM NAMES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS.

The smallest, and the basic, administrative area is the townland (there are some 60,000 of these covering the whole of Ireland, varying considerably in area but averaging approximately 140 hectares); other administrative areas include counties, baronies, parishes (now largely obsolete for administrative purposes), electoral divisions and urban districts. The English-form names of all these units have a definite official form, generally that decided on in connexion with the first large-scale (1:10560) survey of the country, made about 1830. Apart from a very small number of exceptions, where the most widely used form differs from the official one, the official forms are accepted as being the correct ones.

The boundaries of these administrative areas are clearly defined and unambiguous. In many cases, however, the same name may have a number of different applications: it may happen, for instance, that a village (which does not have a defined boundary), a townland, a parish and an electoral division all bear the same name. In practice this is rarely a cause of confusion, as the context normally indicates which is being referred to; if necessary, however, the particular unit or territorial division referred to must be specified.

* The original text of this report was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.70.

ENGLISH-FORM NAMES FOR NON-ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS (EXCLUDING STREETS)

There is no designated authority for settling the English-form names of features such as villages, undefined districts, valleys, mountains, rivers or lakes. The forms given on the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps are generally, but not always, taken to be correct. It would seem that less care was taken with names of this type in the first large-scale surveys in the last century than with names of administrative areas, and some revision of the names appearing on the maps would be desirable; this would, of course, involve research.

From the nature of the features listed in the previous paragraph, it will be clear that their boundaries are, generally speaking, undefined. It does not seem practical, or necessary in most cases, to attempt definition. There may possibly be an exception in the case of small rivers which may have different names at different points in their course, but it is doubtful whether there would really be much benefit in specifying, probably arbitrarily, a point where the river changed its name from one to another. If rationalization were to be attempted in these cases, it would probably be better to aim at using only one name throughout the course of the river.

ENGLISH-FORM NAMES FOR STREETS

The authority in the case of street names is the local authority (generally the county or city council), but the staffs of these authorities have no training in place-name work and moreover deal with the naming of new streets only on an *ad hoc* basis and generally in a rather superficial way. There is room for improvement here. Some tidying of already existing street names might also be desirable, although changes in existing street names are rather difficult under present legislation (see below "Change of names").

THE IRISH-FORM NAMES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND NON-ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS

Both classes of name may be taken together. The Placenames Branch of the Ordnance Survey, with the

advice of a commission established by the Government, is in the process of providing the material on which sound official forms can be based. Since the work is being done on the basis of scientific place-name research, the process is necessarily a slow one. It has, however, already been completed for all the town and village names and for many major physical features.

It is expected that legislation will be introduced under which these fully researched Irish-form names will be given legal recognition as they are decided on. This will probably be done by reference to the existing English-form names, so that their area will be defined or undefined, and their application normally single or multiple, following the usage of the corresponding English-form names.

IRISH-FORM NAMES FOR STREETS

These are not generally dealt with by the Placenames Branch of the Ordnance Survey, except in so far as they may incorporate a place name. Whatever provision might be made for English-form street names, as suggested above, should also apply to Irish-form street names.

NEW NAMES

A certain number of new coinages emerge and in some cases gain currency with changing circumstances. They are generally of popular origin and partake of the nature of nicknames. They can, however, also arise by extension from the arbitrary usage of an individual (so that what was, in origin, the name of a house or of a tavern or of a shop may be applied to a railway station or to a district).

There is no name authority to deal with these. Even if there were, the names would probably have become rooted in local usage before they came to the notice of the authority. The most that could be done would be to decide on a particular spelling for the name.

CHANGE OF NAMES

There is a special procedure laid down by legislation for changing names. Although the procedure varies slightly depending on the class of name involved, it is based on the agreement of the local authority and a poll of the ratepayers (i.e. payers of a local property tax) of

the area, a majority of whom must vote in favour of the change. It also requires consulting the director of the Ordnance Survey about the proposed change but, as no attention need be paid to his comments, this is no more than a formality.

For the names of administrative areas, as well as for the names of villages and streets, the procedure laid down works reasonably well. If anything it may be over-conservative. In some instances where the same name referred to more than one entity (say, to both a village and an electoral division), a change has been made, by inadvertence, only in the case of one application, leading to some uncertainty and ambiguity.

Generally speaking, for names of non-administrative areas apart from villages, no use has been made of the rather expensive and troublesome procedure laid down, and it is unlikely that it would ever be resorted to in these cases.

SUMMARY OF THE POSITION REGARDING STANDARDIZATION

The necessary standardization has already been done in the case of English-form names and is in process in the case of Irish-form names. New names may need supervision, and name changes should be made in a rather tidier way than has been the case heretofore. Street names also need supervision, but are a rather different problem.

GAZETTEERS

The *General Topographical Index*, published in connexion with various censuses of population, fulfils the main functions of a gazetteer for a number of classes of English-form names (townlands), towns (defined as clusters of 20 houses or more), parishes, baronies, district electoral divisions and similar administrative units, as well as islands). It does not include the names of natural features (although any of the names in the Index may include, or may in origin refer to, a natural feature). The latest such *General Topographical Index* published was that for 1901 (with a later supplement for 1911 giving changes made up to that date). Both are now out of print, but are available in libraries. Although some of the areas concerned have changed since 1911 (in particular the parliamentary areas), the basic townland, parish, barony and country network has not, so that the last edition available has lost virtually none of its value as a gazetteer.

REPORT ON WORK RELATING TO GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN COSTA RICA

Report presented by Costa Rica*

COSTA RICAN COMMITTEE ON NOMENCLATURE

By Executive Decree No. 161-C of 15 October 1971, the following members were appointed to the Costa Rican Committee on Nomenclature, which had been established by Act No. 3535 of August 1965: Enrique Soto Borbón,

representing the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports; Rafael Obregón Loría, representing the University of Costa Rica; Carlos Aguilar Piedra, representing the Academy of Geography and History; Ricardo Fernández Peralta, representing the Board of Trustees of the National Museum; and Eduardo Protti Martinelli, representing the National Geographical Institute. Our own representative, Mr. Protti, was appointed secretary of the Committee, having been nominated by the Deputy Minister

* The original text of this report, submitted in Spanish, was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.13.