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DEIRDRE FLANAGAN

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It is with a profound sense of personal, no less than scholastic, loss that we pay brief tribute here to the memory of Mrs Deirdre Flanagan, of the Department of Celtic, Queen's University of Belfast, who died in early March 1984. We mourn the passing of an esteemed friend as much as that of a respected colleague.

Deirdre Flanagan (née Morton) was born on 23 April 1932 and educated at St Dominic's High School, Belfast, and at Queen's, whence she graduated in Celtic languages and literature in 1953. Her subsequent career was with the Celtic department of that university: as research assistant to J.B. Arthurs from 1953 to 1956; as assistant lecturer from 1956 to 1960; as research assistant to Professor Heinrich Wagner from 1960 to 1962; as part-time tutorial assistant from 1963 to 1966; as lecturer from 1966 to 1972; and finally as senior lecturer from 1973 to 1984.

If a tribute is to be honest, it must be personal. And so it is in the context chiefly of our own relationship with Deirdre that we remember her here. She has, indeed, created a monument for herself 'more lasting than bronze' in the form of her invaluable contribution to the study of early Irish toponymy both in general and with particular reference to her native province of Ulster. Recent work which we personally have found of great significance (in the course of study of aspects of the early historical place-name nomenclature of Celtic Scotland) and of which we would make especial mention here, is: 'Ecclesiastical nomenclature in Irish texts and place-names: a comparison' (*Proc 10 Int Cong Onomast Sci*, 1969, 379–88); 'Settlement terms in Irish place-names' (*Onoma* 17 (1972–73) 157–74); 'Common elements in Irish place-names: *ceall*, *cill*' (*Bull Ulster Place-Name Soc ser 22* (1979) 1–8); 'Place-names in early Irish documentation: structure and composition' (*Nomina* 4 (1980) 41–5: summary only, but of great value); 'The Christian impact on early Ireland: place-names evidence' (unpublished at the time of writing: an important statement, *inter alia*, on the *domnach* church names). This is but a selection; and Deirdre has been taken from us at the height of her powers. Her conscientious and careful scholarship, moreover, has brought much needed order and method to areas of place-name studies, especially the early ecclesiastical, that have suffered (even in the recent past) as much from haphazard and unsystematic endeavour as from outright neglect – in Ireland as in Celtic Britain. Deirdre displayed in her work, furthermore, a marked topographical sensitivity. She had a sympathy for the realities of the physical landscape and its human inhabitants and for their interaction, which is too often lacking in those trained primarily in language or literature, or even in documentary history. She assuredly did not belong to that myopic school of thought that commonly assumes, once a given name has been provided with a more or less satisfactory pedigree and plausible etymology, that no more remains to be said.

Place-name studies north and south of the border – and beyond – have suffered grievously by Deirdre's untimely death. Consideration of her work for the Ulster Place-Name Society and her editorship of and contribution to the Society's *Bulletin* over the last few years indicates the force of the blow that the Society has received. We intend no criticism, therefore, when we say that here alone she will be very hard to replace.

Deirdre's qualities of personal warmth and loyalty as a friend no less than as a colleague and her self-effacing modesty combined with rigorous scholarship were most notable. It would, perhaps, be not entirely unjust to suggest that this was a combination of qualities the more striking for its comparative rarity in an academic world that is not generally conspicuous for personal or professional generosity.

To her university colleagues and, above all, to Deirdre's husband Laurence and daughters Gráinne, Dunla and Laoise, we offer our sincere sympathies. We hope it will be some consolation to them to know that their loss is also ours.