

THE RIVER WHELOCK:
CHESHIRE *WHELOCK*=WELSH *CHWILOG*

E. EKWALL in *Dictionary of English Place-names* s.v. *Wheelock* gives the following forms: "(river) 1321 Qwelok, 1440 Whelok, (village) DB Hoiloch, 1260 Wehlok, 13C Welok". He suggests a Welsh origin from *chwel*, *chwyl* "turn" and quotes a dictionary adjectival form *chwelog* from which he concludes that "The Wheelock is a very winding river". Thus also Professor Simeon Potter, "Cheshire Place-Names" in *TRANSACTIONS*, Vol. 106. This is a good illustration of what one might call the dictionary approach to the handling of Welsh material for the interpretation of English place-names. *Chwêl* "turn" is well attested in Welsh, but the adjective *chwelog* is not to be found in the *University of Wales Welsh Dictionary*, and it certainly does not as far as I am aware enter into any place-name elements. One might be allowed to suggest as a general principle that no English place-name should be given a Welsh derivation unless a similar form is found as a Welsh place-name, or is otherwise attested.

Ekwall however was on the right track because he mentions a Welsh stream *Chwilogen*. This is a lost name in Llanystumdwy, Caernarvonshire, but the name of a village *Chwilog* remains. Here we are on surer ground. Welsh *chwil* means "beetle, chafer", and the adjectival compound *chwilog* "abounding with beetles". This then is our Cheshire *Wheelock*, with the *-ee-* representing the long Welsh *i*. *Chwilogen* is a diminutive in *en* from *chwilog*.

Chwil and its compounds is very common in Welsh place-names, and is often found with an anglicised spelling *wheel*, particularly in South Wales where *chw-* in dialects becomes *wh-*. Here are some examples:

As the first element—

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|-----------------------------|--|
| + <i>crug</i> "mound" | <i>Chwilgrug</i> [Monm.] > <i>Wilcrick</i> |
| + <i>carn</i> "rock, cairn" | <i>Chwilgarn</i> [Llannarth, Cards.] |
| | <i>Rhoschwilgarn</i> [Tredreyr, Cards.] |
| + <i>mynydd</i> "mountain" | <i>Chwilfynydd</i> [lost name, Cards.] |

As second element—

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>pwll</i> + "pool, pit" | <i>Pwll-y-chwil</i> [Llangrannog, Cards.] |
| <i>aber</i> + "mouth" | <i>Aber-chwil</i> [Llansanffraid Glyn Ceiriog, Denb.] |

<i>capel</i> + "chapel"	<i>Capel Chwil</i> [Llanwenog, Cards.]
<i>crug</i> + "mound"	<i>Crug y Chwil</i> [Llanwenog], cf. <i>Chwilgrug</i> above.
<i>pant</i> + "hollow"	<i>Pant-y-chwil</i> [Llandinogad, Carms.]

Chwilog as second element—

<i>bod</i> + "dwelling"	<i>Bodchwilog</i> [Llansanffraid, Cards.]
<i>bryn</i> + "hill"	<i>Brynychwilog</i> [Aberdaron, Caerns.]
<i>llwyn</i> + "grove"	<i>Llwynwhilwg</i> < earlier <i>Llwynchwilog</i> [Llanelli, Carms.]
<i>pant</i> + "hollow"	<i>Pant(ch)wilog</i> [Llansanffraid]
<i>rhos</i> + "moor"	<i>Rhoschwilog</i> [Llanddeiniolen, Caerns.]

There is a derivative in *-er*, *chwiler* "grub, serpent, viper". It appears in a river name in Denbigh, *Chwiler*, and as second element in

<i>aber</i> +	<i>Aberchwiler</i> [Denb. often found as <i>Aberwheeler</i>]
<i>pentre</i> + "village"	? <i>Pentre Wheeler</i> [Mitchell Troy, Monm.]

An adjectival compound in *-(i)og* produces *Chwileiriog* [Llanarmon and Llandegla, Denb.] and *Wileirog* [Llangorwen and Genau'r Glyn, Cards.]

Finally there is *chwil* + a collective suffix in *-or-*

<i>bwlch</i> + "gap"	<i>Bwlch y Whilor</i> [Whitechurch, Pem.]
<i>pen</i> + "top, end"	<i>Penchwilor</i> [Henllan Fallteg, Carms.]

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