NAUGHTY WORDS IN BRITISH PLACENAMES

DARRYL FRANCIS
Mitcham, Surrey, England

The source material for this article has been collected fairly casually over a number of years, with a few gaps filled recently by searching gazetteers of British placenames. At first blush, the material might seem more suitable for Dr. Reinhold Aman's Maledicta, the International Journal of Verbal Aggression. However, his journal is more concerned with the employment of words for maledictive purposes, whereas **Word Ways** emphasizes the wordplay aspect of language – in this instance, the nesting of potentially-embarrassing words in normal-appearing placenames. In response to my enquiry, the editor confirmed that material of this nature "could be published in **Word Ways** without embarrassment" if couched in a strictly logological format. (Blast! the whole idea of this material is that it is embarrassing!)

The idea for this article was sparked some years ago by the realisation that the British placename Scunthorpe had a naughty word embedded in it. I wondered how many other placenames contained obscenities, rude words, or subjects not fit for polite conversation. I make no claims for the collection given below being exhaustive. I could have gone on and researched many scores of additional such names, but I had to stop somewhere. 69 seemed like a good enough number to stop at!

In most of the examples, the offensive word directly appears within the placename. However, in a few cases it was necessary to resort to other forms of wordplay: adjacent letters in scrambled form, non-adjacent letters in proper order, or deletions (such as FANY for FANNY, or PIS, an obsolete variant of PISS). These are tagged with asterisks.

A few of the words used (BALLOCK for 'testicle' and QUAINT for 'female pudendum') are drawn from early English and probably unfamiliar to the average reader. Several placenames are more likely to offend British sensibilities than American ones. BRISTOL (Cities) is rhyming slang for 'titties', and (Hampton) WICK for 'prick'. BONK is British slang for 'copulate', found in the Longman Register of New Words (1989). CUNNY and PRAT are both defined as 'female pudendum' in Eric Partridge's A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English. SOD has the British meaning of 'sodomite'.

I hope that no one will be at all offended by this rather peculiar itinerary of British places and geographical features. Perhaps one or two readers will be inspired to search for similar examples in the United States or other countries.

ARSEnal   an   area   of   the   London   borough   of   Islington,   and   also
  the   name   of   a   railway   station   in   the   area
cARSEburn   a   village   in   Forfarshire
mARSEtt   a   hamlet   in   North   Yorkshire
tARSEt   a   parish   in   Northumberland

ASSel   a   river   in   Ayrshire   [almost   homonymous   with   'asshole']

BALLOCh*   a   village   in   Dunbartonshire   [homonymous   with   'ballock']

BALL'S   pond   a   district   in   Islington,   London

BONKle   a   village   in   Lanarkshire

BOTTOMs   a   locality   in   West   Yorkshire
broadBOTTOM   a   locality   in   Cheshire
pratt's   BOTTOM   a   hamlet   in   Kent

BREAST   an   island   in   County   Wexford,   Ireland

BRISTOL   a   large   town   in   Avon

BUMble   hole   a   locality   in   Worcestershire

prettyBUSH   a   locality   in   County   Wicklow,   Ireland

high   BUSTon   a   parish   in   Northumberland

COCKermouth   a   town   in   Cumbria
COCKfosters   a   district   in   Middlesex,   and   also   the   name   of   a   rail-
  way   station   in   the   area
COCKing   a   village   in   West   Sussex
COCKs   a   locality   in   Cornwall
COCKshot   a   locality   in   Worcestershire

CRAPstone   a   hamlet   in   Devon
sCRAPtoft   a   parish   in   Leicestershire

CUNNYberry   a   fixed   light   in   the   sea-inlet   of   Lough   Foyle,   between
  Counties   Donegal   and   Londonderry

sCUNThorpe   a   town   in   Humberside

lower   DICKer   a   hamlet   in   East   Sussex
the   DICKer   a   village   in   East   Sussex
upper   DICKer   a   hamlet   in   East   Sussex

DIDDLEbury   a   parish   in   Shropshire

FANNYside   a   loch   and   moor   in   Dunbartonshire
FANNYville   a   seat   in   County   Tipperary,   Ireland
FANYbedwell*   a   hamlet   in   Denbighshire   [an   embarrassing   image]

FARThorpe   a   hamlet   in   Lincolnshire
FARTown   a   hamlet   in   Yorkshire

FELL   gATE*   a   locality   in   Durham

UCKField*   a   town   in   East   Sussex

GAYs   a   seat   in   Devonshire

MUFF   a   village   in   County   Donegal,   Ireland

PEninNlS*   a pile of rocks in the Scilly Isles
PENlSarwen   a village in Caernarvonshire, Wales
PENlStone   a town in West Yorkshire, famous for its cloth
PEnniNlS*   variant of 'Peninnis'

PETERhead   a town in Aberdeenshire

PlDDLE   a river in Worcestershire
PlDDLEtown   a village in Dorset
PlDDLEtrenthide   a village in Dorset
sPlDDLE   a fishing village in County Galway

PlShill*   a parish in Oxfordshire
PlSlake*   a village in Surrey

PRATt's bottom   a hamlet in Kent
sPRATton   a village in Northamptonshire

PRlCKleden   a locality in West Yorkshire
PRlCKshaw   a locality in Lancashire
PRlCKwillow   a village in Cambridgeshire

QUAlNTon   a village in Buckinghamshire

RAPEmills   a hamlet in West Offaly, Ireland

SHlTlington   a parish in West Yorkshire
SHlTtenton   a locality in Dorset

chipping SODbury   a market town in Gloucestershire
SOD island   an island in the River Shannon, Ireland

STlFFord   a village in Essex [easily mistyped as 'Stiffrod']

SUCK   a river in Connaught, Ireland

sTlTworthy   a locality in Devon
TlTSey   a village in Surrey

TURDalewater   a loch in Shetland

TWATt   a hamlet in Shetland

dURlNEmast   a loch in Argyllshire

hampton WlCK   a village in Middlesex, on the River Thames

WlLLY   a parish in Northamptonshire

   For the final item, I propose TlTESKlN, a parish in County Cork, Ireland, which is made up of two elements, neither embarrassing in itself, but combining into a most suggestive whole!