THE INDEXING OF WELSH PERSONAL NAMES

9. Griffiths, op. cit., index.
13. Personal knowledge.
14. Unfortunately the list of pseudonyms does not appear in the English edition; the information is absorbed in the text as cross-references.

Father of the man

'I've often seen a cat without a grin,' thought Alice; 'but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life.'

By the same token, an index without a book may be deemed to be much more unusual, not to say curious, than the oft-lamented phenomenon of a book without an index. An example came my way recently—like most good things in life, in the course of looking for something else.

To dispel some of the mystery at the start, the 'book' in question was not printed, but in manuscript. Had it been published, then the chances of its being no longer in existence would obviously be much smaller. The 'Book of Miracles' was a volume among the papers of George Fox, the Quaker, which has since disappeared and may be presumed to have been destroyed. But not 'lost without trace'; nor, indeed, in one sense any longer 'unpublished', since in 1948, some two and a half centuries after Fox's death, its text was reconstructed and edited by Henry J. Cadbury.*

Following Fox's death in 1691 an 'Annual Catalogue' of his papers was compiled, complete with an alphabetical index. Cadbury's Introduction describes how the index was arranged and the way in which he was able to reconstruct from it a large part of the missing 'Book of Miracles'. This process was, as Cadbury says, 'so unusual that it must be described' and may be so here largely in his own words.

Fox's surviving papers were arranged in a series of collections, each represented in the index by a letter or letters (both upper and lower cases being used), with a key to these identifying symbols. Entries in the index were by key words, e.g. a surname, arranged alphabetically and followed, 'according to the manner of the time', by 'the first and last words of the passage containing it and a reference to the collection and page in Fox's writings in which the cataloguer found it.'

Against the letter 'O' in the key to symbols Cadbury found the entry: 'Gff's miracles, fol. bound mst', which was elucidated and confirmed by a reference in the index itself to 'Gff's book of miracles'. This pointed clearly to a bound volume entitled 'The Book of Miracles', to which index entries with the symbol 'O' referred. As an example of such an entry, Cadbury quotes:

Foster
Mary Foster one of her... restored to health 15 0
Mary Foster who lives in L... to the praise of the Lord 63 0

Cadbury inferred from this that 'on p. 15 of the "Book of Miracles" was one narrative which began and ended with the words given on the first line, and on p. 63 another narrative about the same person using the words of the second line.'

Of the 15,000 entries in the index, about 350 referred to this 'Book of Miracles', each relating some case of a 'miraculous' cure or similar event; and by identifying multiple references to the same incident, this figure was reduced to a total of 171 incidents. Partly by conflating index entries referring to the same incident and partly from parallel sources such as Fox's Journal, Cadbury was then able to reconstruct most of the missing volume and to publish it as a text resurrected from the dead.

Even if the index was not the only source for the reconstruction, it was the major one, without which the existence of this collection of miracle stories would never have been suspected. Whether any other 'lost text' has ever been recovered in such a way, I cannot say; but Cadbury's achievement prompts the thought that one criterion of a really effective index may be the extent to which it would make this possible.


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