The Tintinhull Name.
Scenario 1
By Dan O'donoghue

1.Introduction

William Stukeley's engraving of St Michael's Hill, Hedgecock Hill and Ham Hill, 1723

Ever since I moved to Tintinhull I have been musing on the origin of the name of the village.A Belgian cartoon character meets a Yorkshire City!
In a county with many strange names (Huish Episcopi,Ryme Intrinseca and Queen Camel to name but three) Tintinhull has always seemed to me so unEnglish!
Recently with nothing to do as my car was being serviced I went to Yeovil library and read some books on local history.In one of them (A History of Somerset by Robert Dunning) I came across the following:
'Many place-names current in the twenty first Century have Celtic elements which weathered the Saxon invasion and settlement and point to surviving Celtic speaking populations -Evercreech,Camel,Polden and Quantock are totally British,Glastonbury and Tintinhull partially so.The river names too are Celtic in origin.'
Could Tintinhull be of Celtic origin?
Having been taught Irish Gaelic as a child in Manchester as my mum was a native speaker I was prompted to research a possible Gaelic origin for Tintinhull.There is an Irish word 'Tintean'(pronounced '*Tintin*')meaning 'Hearth' or 'Home' as in 'Home is where the Hearth is'.
So my first stab was that the origin could be something like 'The Home of …….' in Gaelic.I then discovered a Gaelic name used for a Danish King of the Viking age
'Ailche' (pronounced '*Ull-yeh*') So Tintinhull originally could have been 'The Home of Ailche' – 'TintinUllyeh'.A very close phonetic fit.
However this hypothesis bit the dust when I contacted Dr.David Parsons at the University of Wales-an expert on Old Welsh(also called Brithonic) and also an expert on place names.He explained that Brythonic would have been the language spoken in Somerset in the Iron age not Irish Gaelic!

Languages : The Indo-European languages have eleven language origin/types:

Indo-European

Anatolian (now extinct)
Hellenic (eg Greek)
Italic (eg Latin,Romance languages\\\0
Illyrian (npw extinct)
Slavonic (eg Russian,Polish)
Baltic (eg Latvian)
Germanic(eg English,German)
Armenian (eg Armenian)
Indo-Iranian (eg Persian)
Tocharian (now extinct)
Celtic

Celtic further breaks down into
Hispano-Celtic
Gallic
Lepontic
Q-Celtic/Goidelic
P-Celtic/Brithonic

Hispano-Celtic,Gallic and Lepontic are now extinct.
Geodelic is the origin for Irish,Scots and Manx Gaelic.
Brithonic is the origin for Welsh,Breton and Cornish.

So Brithonic is what the Durotriges would have spoken when the Romans invaded.
Surprisingly some elements of Brithonic language are still in use-as in the Yorkshire hill farm
method of counting sheep-Yann,Tann,Tethera 1,2,3................

Dr.Parsons also pointed out that sometimes Glastonbury is associated with Ireland because
of a settlement of Irish monks at a place near Glastonbury-Beckery which is derived from
Irish Gaelic 'Becc Eriu' ='Little Ireland.He confirmed that this was an unusual exception.
So undeterred by this dead end and the close phonetic fit I continued the research.

2.Place Names
Place names have all sorts of origins. Rivers are some of the earliest named places because of
their importance as the original fast way of travelling with baggage/weapons/fighters.Many
names of places then become related to geographic features like rivers,valleys(Coombe) or
hills.Some names are related to important people who lived there and frequently names
change as history unfolds.For example modern Ilchester was named Lindinis before Roman
times.
Lindinis as a place name appears in the Ravenna Cosmography – a list of Roman place
names written in Ravenna in the eighth century by an unknown.

Another interesting example is modern Dublin which was an anglicised form of the Gaelic Dubh Linn meaning Black pool but is officially Baile Atha Cliath in modern Gaelic(Mouth of the ford).
Equally many English place names end in ton-farm,ham-village,ley-wood,stow-meeting place and bury-fort.So place names can vary over time/political and societal needs.
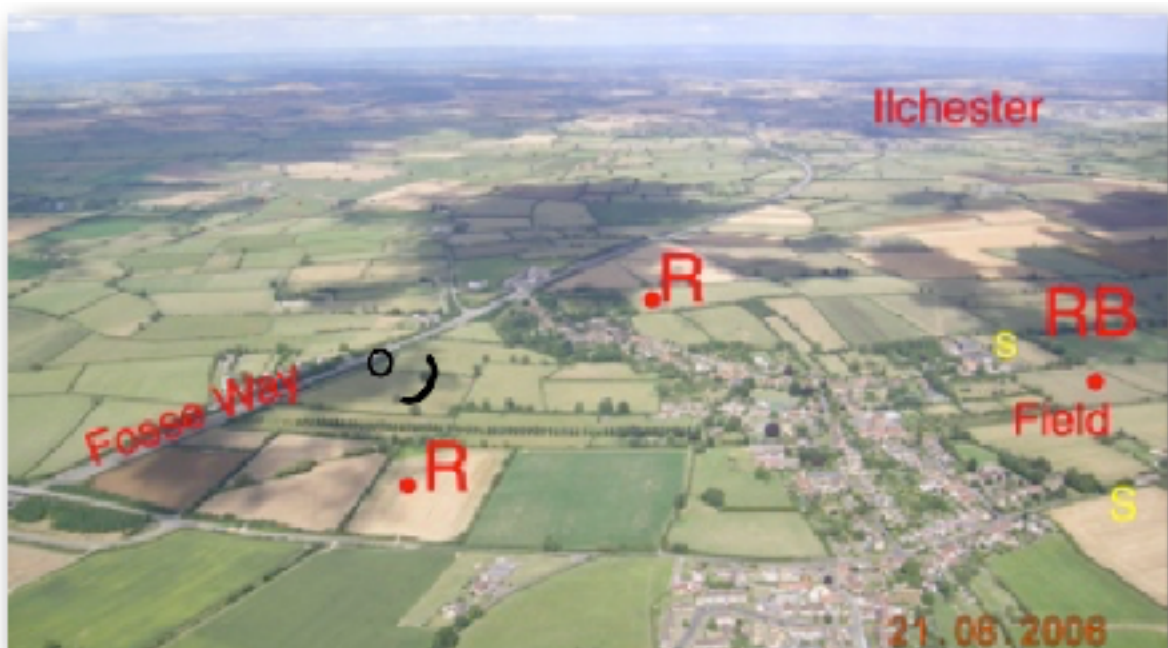

3.Previous commentators opinions.

All commentators are satisfied that the final element is 'hill' (Old English hyll). In his Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names (4th edn, 1960), Eilert Ekwall thought the first element was obscure but tentatively compared it to the Germanic personal name Zinzo. Everyone else seems to suspect that the first element is Brithonic, and that hyll has been added later in English.
Brithonic was the language of the iron age inhabitants of this area – the Durotriges.
A.D. Mills, Dictionary of British Place-Names (rev. edn, 2011) suggests, equally tentatively, that it may be made up of *din= 'fort' or *tin= 'rump, bottom' + *tnou 'valley'. Victor Watts, Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names (2004), favours *din ='fort' plus an unknown element. And both he, and Oliver Padel,in Cornish Place-Name Elements, compare a place called Tinten in Cornwall (near St Tudy), a name which Padel also thinks is made up of the fort-word and an unknown element. Tinten appeared as a manor in the domesday book so in date terms doesn't link well with 'Hulle'.Also'Tudy' exists as a place name in Brittany suggesting a Brithonic origin.Watts's account sets out a fairly lengthy run of spellings. These begin with forms from Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury (10th-century charters which survive only in very late copies, but which recent study has judged very largely to be authentic) spelling the name as Tintanhulle, and hulle is very much the expected spelling in south-west England for 'hill' in the medieval period. Domesday Book has its own quirks of spelling, and it frequently spells hill as hell across the country; its other form of hill -halle seems quite isolated in the run of spellings of Tintinhull from early sources: Tintehalle Tutenelle Tintenella Tuttenella Tintehella Tuttehella Tyntehulle .
Katherine Barker in her paper from the 1980's 'Pen,Ilchester and Yeovil:A study in the landscape history and archaeology of south-east Somerset' shows Tintinhull within the Roman *territorium* of Ilchester and with regard to the Tintinhull name suggests an origin may be 'tintern- / dindern-hill.

On the other hand Collinson in his 1791'The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset' suggests that the ''Tintinhull hundred met on an eminence lately called 'tutenelle' which would be 'look out hill'.

Before the Anglo-Saxons arrived, the language of Somerset was Brithonic and the sequence preceding hill is thus very likely to be a Brithonic name if the name is from pre-Roman times.. In general in Somerset — many hills, woods and rivers preserve Brithonic names wholly or in part (eg River Brue from brwy meaning 'brisk' and Yeo(Ivel) from gifl meaning 'forked'. 'din' is an old Welsh word, meaning 'fort, stronghold, esp. fortified hill', surviving in Modern Welsh dinas 'city'.

4.Modern Academics

After approaching Professor Bonner and Dr.Ben Guy at the Cambridge department of Anglo-Saxon Nordic and Celtic studies they redirected me to Dr. David Parsons at the University of Wales who is the expert on Old Welsh/Brithonic and place names involving derivations from the language. Dr.Parsons is of the view that so far none of the attempts at explanation of the name Tintinhull had taken into account the closeness of Ham Hill fort and the likelihood that the name was of Brithonic derivation.He favoured the first syllable 'Tin' being from Brithonic 'din' meaning Fort/Stronghold or fortified Hill.He also pointed out that in this part of the world the 'D' had often changed to 'T' as in Tintagel and Tintern.

5.Topographic.

 What none of the place-name commentators point out is the near-association of Tintinhull with the Montacute hill-fort(Ham Hill)the largest hill fort in England although not as well known or researched as e.g.Maiden castle at Dorchester or Cadbury hill fort. It is worth noting that Ham Hill fort was about 4 times larger than Maiden Castle and 10 times larger than Cadbury hill fort.

Tintinhull lies about two miles from Montacute where the largest hill fort of the Durotriges is sited and three miles the other way to Ilchester (previously Lindinis before Roman times) which was a Durotriges settlement on the river Ivel.It is known that the Durotriges were at Lindinis in AD 369 from an inscription on a stone in Hadrian's wall which reads :
Civitas Durotrigum Lendiniensis
translated as 'The Canton of the Durotriges of Lendiniae built this'.
 Lindinis eventually gained a Roman name change to Ilchester(Fort on the river Ivel).Ilchester was clearly an important Roman 'Civitas'(inhabited by the Durotriges speaking a Brithonic tongue as well as Latin.)and maybe vied with Dorchester for importance.
Ilchester was county town of Somerset up to the 1200's and so had a lasting importance post Roman occupation. The Durotriges minted coins without the head of an overall ruler or King which suggests a social system based on local rulers /Chieftains of small areas surrounding the large hill forts rather than ruling over the total area that the Durotriges inhabited.

The next village to Tintinhull (on the road to Yeovil and about 2 miles distant) is called Chilthorne Domer.Domer is a family name of a Medieval Lord of the manor but Chilthorne is a 'British hill name' eg the Chilterns .So another 'hill' name.
Tintinhull occupies the first and only (steep)hill encountered before Ham Hill iron age fort if travelling from Ilchester(Lindinis) and after Tintinhull the road to Ham Hill has only a small incline. Tintinhull has also been found to maybe have a 'D' shaped spread bank similar to one at Ilchester dating to pre Roman times suggesting a possible half way house to Ham Hill.Thus it is possible that the name of the village was based from the time of the Durotriges on being at the top of a hill before arriving at the Iron age fort. **Insert fig 1**

6.Linguistic

Although the start point for research was a possible Gaelic name there is little evidence for that. A straw poll of the village inhabitants suggested that the most common everyday pronunciation of the village name is 'TINT-NULL'suggesting that the village name has had,and retains its strange two parts 'Tintin and Hill]. Following Dr.Parsons point concerning how the 'D' often changed to a 'T' in the South west I considered whether the name was in fact a conjunction of 'Tintern' and 'Hill'. There are two reasons for this.If the pronunciation of Tintern is researched online it appears very,very close to Tinten or even Tintin.This is however modern pronunciation. More importantly Tintern derives from Brithonic ' Din d'Teyrn which means 'Fort or Rocks of the King'.To show that 'Tintern' as a name came into use at the *time* of the Durotriges there is evidence at Tintern of a ford(which is still evident today) called Tintern ford in Roman times .In Welsh history King Tewdrig defeated the Saxons in the 6th century defending 'Rhyd Dindryn' -Tintern Ford –a rocky place on the river Wye.
Tintern by the 16th century was called Tyntterne and then in the 17th Tinterne or ,as today,Tintern.Thus showing how the spelling has changed but not the pronunciation.

7.Conclusion
Tintinhull is on a steep hill close to the largest hill fort in England,famous for its stone quarries.
The Durotriges occupied the area in the iron age and had a settlement by the River Ivel at modern day Illchester and spoke a Brithonic language.As most commentators favour 'Hill' as the last part/origin in the name this would suggest that the 'Tintin' part is a place associated with a hill.
This arrives at a suggestion that Tintinhull is a hill name associated with the nearby Iron age fort at Ham Hill i.e. Din teyrn hulle = hill of the chieftains fort/stones..

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