Leeds Studies in English

New Series XLIV

2013

Magic and Medicine
Early Medieval Plant-Name Studies

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Leeds Studies in English

<www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>
School of English
University of Leeds
2013

Leeds Studies in English

<www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

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Abbreviations

ADS	Archaeology Data Service
ASPNS	Anglo-Saxon Plant-Name Survey
BML	British Medieval Latin
BSBI	Botanical Society of the British Isles
CGL	*Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*
CNo.	Catalogue Number
COD	*Concise Oxford Dictionary*
DMLBS	*Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*
DOE	*Dictionary of Old English* (Toronto)
DOEPN	*Dictionary of Old English Plant Names* (online)
DOEWC	*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (online)
DOI	Digital Object Identifier; *Dictionary of the Irish Language Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials*
DOST	*Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*
DSL	*Dictionary of the Scots Language* (online)
EDD	*English Dialect Dictionary*
EPNE	*English Place-Name Elements* (A. H. Smith)
Gk, Gr.	Greek
HTOED	*Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary*
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
LAE	*Linguistic Atlas of England*
Lat	Latin
MCOE	*Microfiche Concordance to Old English*
ME	Middle English
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
MHG	Middle High German
MLG	Middle Low German
ModE	Modern English
ModIce	Modern Icelandic
ModLG	Modern Low German
ODEE	*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*
OE	Old English
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OF	Old French
OHG	Old High German
OI	Old Irish
OIce	Old Icelandic
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
PASE	*Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* (online)
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PN W	*Place-Names of Wiltshire* (J. E. B. Gover et al.)
PN Wo	*Place-Names of Worcestershire* (A. Mawer et al.)

RCHM(E)	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
TLL	*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*
spp.	species (botanical, singular)
ssp.	species (botanical, plural)
TOE	*Thesaurus of Old English*
VEPN	*Vocabulary of English Place-Names*

Short Titles

Old English source texts may be indicated by short titles assigned by the *Dictionary of Old English* and *Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, which refer to specific editions of the texts. They occur particularly in the appendices, and examples include: Lch II (1); Med 3 (Grattan-Singer). The key to these references can be found at the DOE website under 'Research Tools' then 'List of Texts'. See http://www.doe.utoronto.ca.

Botanical Latin

Plant-names in botanical Latin aim to provide an international identification for a particular plant or group of plants. They are followed by abbreviations indicating the botanist who assigned and/or reassigned the name, and the most common abbreviation is 'L.' indicating 'Linnaeus', the famous Swedish botanist. Examples include: *Bellis perennis* L. (daisy); *Betula pendula* Roth. (silver birch).

Dates

Manuscript dates are often given in a form beginning 's.' (for *saeculo* 'in the century'). Some examples follow:

s. xi^{in} beginning of the 11th century
s. xi^{1} first half of the 11th century
s. xi^{med} middle of the 11th century
s. xi^{2} second half of the 11th century
s. xi^{ex} end of the 11th century

Old English *Hymlic*: Is it Hemlock?

Irené Wotherspoon

1. Introduction

This word-study appears to be more straightforward than that of *hymele* (Wotherspoon, in this volume) in that Old English (OE) *hymlic* (found in various spellings, including *hemlic*) has an apparent Modern English descendant.[1] It is usually taken for granted that *hymlic* means 'hemlock' (*Conium maculatum* L.). However, re-examining even such an apparently well-established case by bringing together the evidence can give new perspectives on this and associated plant-names.

2. Citations

The catalogue for *hymlic* (Appendix A1) consists of twenty entries, after the rejection of one example of *hymelyc* as being a misspelling of another plant-name (see Appendix B). In addition, certain catalogue entries are classed as 'related citations' (Appendix A2), meaning that, in their extant form, they cannot be shown to have an origin which is independent of other similar citations. In the case of glossary entries, 'origin' is interpreted here as the point at which a particular Latin term became associated with a particular Old English term or terms in an act of translation and/or explanation. It may be possible to trace that act back to a particular Latin text, or to an earlier glossary involving Latin and/or Greek with no Old English element, but it may also be impossible to uncover that ultimate origin. It would be extremely useful to ascertain that a single Latin to Old English translation had been made quite independently by two or more early medieval scholars, but such precision as to date and location is most often beyond us. The relations between glossing traditions are beginning to be untangled by scholars. For example, the relationship between Catalogue Numbers (CNos) 10 and 11 (both in the Brussels Glossary), 12 (the Durham Glossary), 13 and 14 (the First Cleopatra Glossary) and 15 (the Laud Glossary) is described by Rusche as involving descent from a common archetype (original) (Rusche 2003: 181), while a more distant relationship between these and CNos 17 and 19 (the two manuscripts of the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary) is demonstrable: Rusche argues convincingly for the common archetype to which these glosses are variously related being a text of Dioscorides' *De materia medica* available in England by

[1] The spellings which actually occur in the sources can be seen in Appendix A1 below.

the late seventh century (compare Hall, this volume: Section 3; see also Pheifer (1974) for the relationship and chronology of the glossaries). In spite of such welcome elucidations, however, we cannot, as yet, identify separate original acts of translation, as opposed to copyings, so it is safer to regard identical glossary entries as having descended from a single parent, that is, as 'related citations'.

As regards the independent results (excluding related citations) from Appendices A1 and A2 in this article, there is a total of twelve *hymlic* occurrences of which nine are in medical works, two in glossaries, and one in land records (charter bounds).

3. Descriptors

'Descriptors' are words or phrases in the source texts which qualify a plant-name, thus offering some information on its appearance, characteristics or other qualities which were noticed in Anglo-Saxon times. There are no descriptors extant for *hymlic*, not even estimations of its efficacy as a medical remedy which are commonly found elsewhere.

4. Collocations

'Collocations' are words or phrases which occur in the source texts with, in this case, *hymlic*, but do not directly describe the plant's appearance or characteristics. The three collocations with *hymlic* will now be discussed.

4.1 *Niðeweard*

The collocation *niðeweard* features in the phrase *nyoðeweardne hymlic,* 'the lower part of *hymlic*', and it occurs in the medical text now named *Lacnunga*, in a salve to get rid of lice (CNo. 8; Grattan and Singer 1952: 172–3, Section 130). The phrase presumably indicates the lower part of the stem, or the root. *Niðeweard* is frequently used with the names of plants in Anglo-Saxon medical works, for example, with *wyrmwyrt*, *medowyrt*, *eoforþrote* and others, and it also occurs in charms.

4.2 *Lēah*

Lēah is the most likely interpretation of *lege*, occurring in a phrase including *hymlic* in the form *hemlec lege* (CNo. 20). The text is a charter which grants land at Bathampton, Somerset to a certain Hehelm. The grant was issued in the year 956 by King Eadwig (see Kelly 1999). *Hemlec lege*, a phrase occurring in the description of the boundary of the land grant, is interpreted as '*lēah* covered in *hymlic*'. Gelling and Cole (2000: 237) have considered the meaning of *lēah*, and find that, up to the mid tenth century, it denoted 'forest, wood, glade, clearing' but, after this date, it developed a meaning of 'pasture, meadow'. Although Eadwig's charter dates to the period of semantic change, the place-name itself is most likely to be considerably older, so probably enshrines the earlier meaning.

4.3 *Dæl*

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find evidence for *hymlic* collocations in place-names, as opposed to place-descriptions such as that in Section 4.2. A major difficulty is the separation of the plant-name *hymlic*, with its various spellings, from the various spellings of words such as OE *hol* 'hollow' (dative plural: *holum*) and Old Norse (ON) *holmr* 'small island, water-meadow'. However, the example of Holmedale Farm, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, appears to be a safe example of *hymlic* in a place-name. The name is extant as *Humbelochedaile* in the twelfth century, and as *Humbelokedale* in the thirteenth century. This name is accepted as indicating 'Hemlock Valley' by Smith, and features what he describes as 'the obscure Sc[ottish] and NCy [North Country] form *humilok*', combined with *dæl* 'valley', from Old Scandinavian *dalr* (Smith 1937: 163; 321).[2] Nonetheless, there is no pre-Conquest evidence for this name, and, even if there were, the only information offered by this single example is a botanical habitat which is likely to be appropriate for many native species.

5. Translations

Hymlic, in the surviving Latin-to-Old English glossaries, translates Latin *cicuta* and the transliterated Greek word *leptefilos*.

5.1 *Leptefilos*

There are two loci where *hymlic* glosses *leptefilos*, namely the Brussels Glossary (CNo. 10) and the First Cleopatra Glossary (CNo. 14).[3] The Cleopatra manuscript (which contains three Latin-to-Old English glossaries) was written in Canterbury in the early tenth century (Ker 1957, no. 143; Rusche 1996), and the plant-name entries included in it were taken from an earlier plant-name glossary. The Brussels manuscript, written in Canterbury in the early eleventh century (Ker 1957, no. 9), contains a glossary which can be traced back to earlier Latin-to-Latin and Greek-to-Latin glossaries which were subject-classified rather than alphabetically arranged. The plant-name entries in Cleopatra and the section entitled *Nomina herbarum Grece et Latine*, 'Names of Plants in Greek and Latin', in the Brussels Glossary derive from the same source.

Leptefilos originates in the Greek plant-name *leptophyllos* (λεπτόφυλλος), meaning literally 'thin-leaved', which appears to provide evidence for the plant's appearance. However, the glossary name *leptefilos* requires explanation. Bierbaumer (1975–9: III.152; see also DOEPN, under *hemlic*) raises the possibility that there may have been manuscript confusion with Greek *chairephyllon* 'cow parsley' (*Anthriscus sylvestris* (L.) Hoffm.), especially as this plant was also called *cicutaria* (see Section 5.2 on *cicuta*), and shares several other names with hemlock.

Bierbaumer also suggests another possibility. The preceding gloss to [*l*]*eptefilos hymelic* in the Brussels Glossary is *cinoglossa ribbe* (Wright 1884: 295, lines 27–8). In the earlier glossary

[2] For the Modern Scots usage, see *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (DSL) under *humlok* n[oun].

[3] In the Brussels Glossary (MS Brussels, Royal Library, 1828–30), *leptefilos* appears erroneously as *Ieptefilos* (with initial upper-case *i*) (Rusche 2003: 183). Wright's reading error of *septefilos* (Wright 1884: 295, line 28) was corrected by Logeman (1890: 318).

now known as the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary,[4] the equivalent entry for Brussels' *cinoglossa ribbe* appears with a more accurate Latin lemma (headword) as *canis lingua ribbae* (Pheifer 1974: 12, line 184), and the entry which immediately follows (which must be the equivalent of Brussels' [*l*]*eptefilos hymelic*) is *cicuta hymblicae* (that is, *hymlic*). This suggests that *cicuta*, as a result of a slip of the eye when the text was copied, had, by the time the Brussels and Cleopatra manuscripts were written, been replaced by *leptefilos* which had been drawn in from a different entry. Mistakes and confusion are not rare in the Old English glossaries, apparently caused by, among more general factors, various re-arrangements of the source materials, and then the glossaries themselves, into semantic groupings or alphabetical order, as shown by Lendinara (1999).

Rusche (2003: 182–5) also believes that *leptefilos* once belonged to a different gloss, suggesting that it has been taken out of context from Dioscorides' *De materia medica*, a first-century medical work written in Greek and later translated into Latin. It includes three types of *artemisia*, namely: *artemisia, artemisia leptofilos* and *artemisia tagantes* (Howald and Sigerist 1927: 42–5). Rusche (2003: 191) is able to make a convincing case that a Greek-to-Latin plant-name glossary based on the *De materia medica* was available in Canterbury in the late seventh century, and, possibly, even a full Greek text of this medical work. He also presents evidence that *leptefilos*, as a lemma for *hymlic*, resulted from a copying error by which *leptefilos* was detached from Dioscorides' *artemisia leptofilos*. Furthermore, since *leptefilos* is an adjectival form, rather than a noun, it is unlikely to have originated as an independent plant-name without having a noun to qualify.

Rusche (2003: 188) shows that the correct Old English gloss to *leptefilos* (taken as a type of *artemisia*) can be found in the Durham Glossary where it is glossed *mugvyrt*, that is, OE *mucgwyrt* 'mugwort', in modern designation, a member of the *Artemisia* genus (Lindheim 1941: 15, line 217).[5] The correct interpretation also appears in the Old English *Herbarium*, a translation from the southern European Latin medical compilation usually referred to as the *Herbarium of Pseudo-Apuleius*. The Old English entry for *mugwyrt* begins: 'This third plant that we call *artemisia leptefilos* and, by another name, *mucgwyrt*' (*Đeos þridde wyrt þe we artemesiam leptefilos & oðrum naman mucgwyrt nemdon*; De Vriend 1984: 58). Thus, it can be seen that the *leptefilos hymlic* gloss is an error which, therefore, offers no evidence for the interpretation of OE *hymlic*.

5.2 *Cicuta*

There are eight loci in the glossaries where *hymlic* glosses Latin *cicuta* (also occurring as *cicata*).[6] Classical Latin *cicuta* denoted 'hemlock, *Conium maculatum*', as well as the juice of hemlock, and the stem of the same plant when used as a pipe (OLD). However, Kitson (1988: 107) makes an argument based on, among other things, the diverse qualities of *cicuta* as being both poisonous and healing, for Classical Latin *cicuta* having variously indicated hemlock, ground-elder (*Aegopodium podagraria* L.), masterwort (*Peucedanum ostruthium* (L.) W. D. J. Koch) and wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris* L.) (but see also Section 10 below).

[4] The Épinal-Erfurt Glossary survives in two manuscripts: Épinal, Bibliothèque Municipale 72, and the first glossary in Erfurt, Stadtbücherei, Amplonianus F.42. Some entries are Latin-to-Latin but many are Latin-to-Old English, and both manuscripts are copies of a lost original which was compiled in late seventh-century Canterbury.

[5] The Durham Glossary survives in a twelfth-century manuscript (Durham, Cathedral Library, Hunter 100), but its glosses originate in the same Canterbury archetype as those of the Brussels and Cleopatra glossaries.

[6] CNos 11–13 and 15–19. *Cicata* occurs in CNo. 12.

Kitson (1988: 105–6) makes a further point that, although Pliny has distinct names for nearly forty umbellifers, he has none for ground-elder, masterwort and wild angelica, which have clear visual similarities. Moreover, the traditional cures assigned to these plants correspond reasonably well with some of the uses for *cicuta* recommended by Pliny. Kitson, therefore, considers the name *cicuta* to denote these three plants as well as hemlock. As regards the British medieval Latin of the Anglo-Saxon glossaries, the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (DMLBS) defines *cicuta* as 'hemlock (*Conium*), conf[usion] w[ith] *conyza* and other plants' (see Section 6.2 below). Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) is given in the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) as the only English equivalent of Latin *cicuta* (MED, under *cicūta*).

It is evident from the above that there is some element of doubt that *cicuta always* meant *Conium maculatum* in English texts, though it appears to be the *principal* sense of *cicuta* from Classical Latin through to the later Middle Ages.

6. Associations

This section is concerned with words which are presented in the source texts as having a relationship with, in this case, *hymlic*, but which cannot be safely taken to represent a direct translation. In a glossary entry, for example, an associated term may be in third position after the lemma and its presumed translation.[7]

6.1 *Wōdewistle*

Hymlic is associated with *wōdewistle* in an entry in the Durham Glossary (CNo. 12) which reads: *cicata heomlic uel vude-vistle*. In an entry such as this, it is provisionally assumed that *hymlic* was provided as the Old English translation of Latin *cicuta*, and that *vude-vistle* was added, probably later. It may be intended as a synonym of *hymlic*, as a more generic or a more specific term, or there may be various other reasons for its presence. It is, therefore, safer to describe such a term with the somewhat neutral word 'association', pending new evidence.

Lindheim (1941: 42, no. 116) regards *vudevistle* in the Durham Glossary as indicating *wōdewistle*, arguing that the glossator has understandably mistaken the first element for *wudu-* 'wood' since it is very common in Old English plant-names. The correct first element, however, judging from other occurrences of the name, is *wōd* 'mad'.

Although *wōdewistle* is in third position in the Durham Glossary entry, elsewhere it glosses Latin *cicuta* directly, for example, an entry in the Brussels Glossary reads: *cicuta wodewistle* (Wright 1884: 297, line 8).[8] Since *cicuta* is glossed directly by both *hymlic* and *wodewistle*, it might be assumed that all three names refer to the same plant, but it should be remembered that *cicuta*, at least, may have more than one meaning (see Section 5.2).

The literal meaning of *wōdewistle* may offer some clues. The second element *-hwistle* indicates a reed or pipe, that is, a hollow stem which can be used to make sounds, as with a whistle. At a later date, in Middle English (ME), *wode-whistle* is defined as: 'any of several hollow-stemmed plants, esp[ecially] hemlock (Conium maculatum) and cowbane (Cicuta virosa)' (MED, under *whistle*). The hollow stems of *Conium maculatum* are known to have

[7] For a more detailed explanation of associations see Biggam, in this volume, Section 6.

[8] This entry (but with various spellings) also appears in the Corpus Glossary (MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 144; Hessels 1890: 31, line C397) and in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary (Pheifer 1974: 14, line 248).

been used as whistles by children, sometimes with fatal results (Lopez 1999: 852).[9] Cowbane also has hollow stems. The 'reed, pipe' or 'hollow-stemmed' meanings are borne out by the Anglo-Saxon Harley Glossary[10] entry: *cicuta musa fistula*, in which Latin *musa* indicates 'cornemuse, hornpipe, bagpipe' (DMLBS, under *Musa*, sense 3), that is, musical instruments involving a reed or pipe; and *fistula* (in the pre-Conquest period) indicates the pipes of musical instruments, tubes or ducts in the human body, and the spice cinnamon which can be acquired in the form of sticks which are usually hollow (see DMLBS, under *fistula*, senses 2, 4a and 6a).

The *wōd-* element of *wōdewistle*, meaning 'mad' has two possible explanations. In a text which was known in Anglo-Saxon England, namely, Virgil's *Eclogues*, there is found a close association of *cicuta* and *fistula* in *est mihi disparibus septem compacta cicutis fistula*, 'I have a pipe formed of seven uneven hemlock stalks' (Eclogue 2, lines 37–8; Virgil 1934–5: I.12–13). This refers to the musical instrument known as Pan pipes, as the same eclogue makes clear: 'Pan it was who first taught man to make many reeds one with wax' (*Pan primum calamos cera coniungere pluris instituit*; Eclogue 2, lines 32–3). Connection with the pipes of Pan may account for *wōd-*, as Pan was reputed to cause 'sudden and groundless terror' (OED, under *Pan*). Bierbaumer, however, suggests that *wōd-* might refer to the effects of poisoning with cowbane as this often involves convulsions, screaming and gnashing of teeth (*Krämpfe mit Toben, Schreien, Zähneknirschen*; Bierbaumer 1975–9: III.259).

The Antwerp Glossary[11] equates *wōdewistle* with the Latin plant-names *helleborus* (in first position after the lemma) and *veratrum*. The Latin names most often indicate the white hellebore (*Veratrum album* L.) and/or the black hellebore (*Helleborus niger* L.), but DOEPN suggests the gloss to *helleborus* 'has to be a confusion with *wēdeberie*' (which more usually glosses this name; see Hall's first paper in this volume, Section 3) especially since the hellebore stem cannot be made into a whistle or hollow tube. For this reason, DOEPN interprets *wōdewistle* as cowbane (*Cicuta virosa* L.) which *does* have a hollow stem.

6.2 *Conyza*

Another association with *hymlic* occurs in the Laud herbal glossary, in an entry which reads: *Cicuta .i. humeloch [ue]l coniza*, 'Cicuta, that is *hymlic* or *coniza*' (CNo. 15; Stracke 1974: 29, line 297). This represents an originally Greek plant-name, *konyza* (κόνυζα), which was adopted into Latin as *conyza*. In Classical Latin, this name denoted '*Inula viscosa* and related species' (OLD), referring to the woody fleabane, now classified as *Dittrichia viscosa* (L.) Greuter, and its relatives. In other words, the definition of Classical Latin *conyza* cannot be more specific than 'the fleabanes (the *Inula* and *Dittrichia* genera)'. In British medieval Latin, the DMLBS interprets *conyza* generally as '*Inula sp*[*ecies*] (conf[usion] w[ith] other herbs)'. Since the publication of the fascicule for 'C' (1981) of the DMLBS, the *Inula* genus has been re-classified by botanists into *Inula* and *Dittrichia* genera, so the definitions of the Classical Latin and British medieval Latin name *conyza* are essentially the same, with two exceptions: apparent connections with hemlock and with lovage in the latter (DMLBS, senses b and c; for lovage, see note 12 below).

[9] I am grateful to Alaric Hall for drawing my attention to this paper. See also Hall's second paper on *elleborus* in this volume, Section 7.

[10] MS London, British Library, Harley 3376.

[11] MSS Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum 47 [and] London, British Library, Addit. 32246.

The sense of 'hemlock' ascribed to *conyza* results from the Laud herbal glossary entry cited above (CNo. 15) in which *conyza* appears to be offered as an alternative Latin name for *cicuta*. It is clear that this association of *conyza* and *cicuta* continued into a later period, as can be seen in an entry in the Alphita Glossary, dated to before 1400, in which the lemma *cicuta* is 'interpreted' by several Latin and English words, including the phrase *coniza uel conium*, and the English words *hemelok uel hornwistel* (MED under *horn* 7c). The pairing of *conyza* and *conium* in this definition suggests an explanation as to how the fleabane name *conyza* was drawn into a *hymlic* association.

It is often the case that the later glossaries with lengthy interpretations represent a gathering together of various definitions from the past, both correct and mistaken, so they need to be analyzed rather than taken on trust. For example, Mowat suggests that the first interpretation following *cicuta*, namely, *celena*, is 'Apparently a name for *cucurbita* [gourd] which has slipped out of its place from the similarity of σίκυος [*sikuos* 'cucumber, gourd'] to cicuta' (in Mirfeld 1882: 39, note 20). The pairing of *coniza* with *conium* in the Alphita Glossary hints at a further confusion of two names, and one which probably originated at an earlier period. Latin *conium*, from the Greek *kōneion* (κώνειον), like *cicuta*, is defined as 'hemlock' (DMLBS), and the two names occur together in the Laud herbal glossary, only eight lines away from the entry mentioned at the beginning of this section (CNo. 15). Stracke (1974: 85, no. 297) suggests that confusion may have arisen between *conyza* and *conium* so that the former, instead of the latter, was added to the *cicuta .i. humeloch* entry. This explanation is repeated in DOEPN (under *hymlic*) as a probability, and in the DMLBS (under *conyza*) without qualification. If the formal confusion of *conyza* with *conium* is accepted as the reason why the former name occurs with *cicuta* and OE *hymlic*, it clearly makes no contribution to understanding *hymlic*.[12]

7. Textual contrasts and comparisons

The purpose of this section is to consider cases in which *hymlic* occurs in close proximity to other plant-names, suggesting that *hymlic* is somehow contrasted or compared with those other names. Depending on the quality of the evidence and the identification of the other plant-names, this information can imply that *hymlic* indicates a different plant from its companions. This information can usually only be used in a corroborative fashion along with better quality evidence from the above sections, but it must, nonetheless, be taken into consideration.[13]

In the glossary entries (CNos. 10–19), the plant-names accompanying *hymlic* are considered as translations (Section 5 above) or associations (Section 6), but the medical texts offer evidence for potential lexical contrast in the lists of ingredients (usually plants) used in concocting the medical remedies. *Hymlic* appears in the company of over fifteen other plants, but the majority of them accompany *hymlic* only once. Single instances of textual contrast are treated with extreme caution since they could arise from errors in transmission, or from

[12] A further confusion occurs in this same area of the Laud herbal glossary, since *coniza* is glossed by *coriandru*[*m*] at line 302 (Stracke 1974: 29). This particular entry is thought to derive from confusion between *conium* and *corion* (Stracke 1974: 85, note 297). A single glossary entry equating *conyza* with *lubestica* occurs in an eleventh-century Latin-to-Old English and/or to-Latin glossary in MS Brussels, Bibiothèque Royale 1828–30 (Wright 1884: 297, line 11). This must also result from an error, since Latin *lubestica* indicates lovage (*Levisticum officinale* W.D.J. Koch) (DMLBS under *levisticus*), adopted into Old English as *lufestice*. Another entry in the same glossary correctly has *lubestica lufestice* (Wright 1884: 301, line 35).

[13] For further information about this approach, see Biggam (in this volume), Section 7.

individual error. However, *wermōd* 'wormwood' appears three times in apparent contrast with *hymlic* (CNos. 7, 8, 9), and *belene* 'henbane' appears twice (CNos. 6, 7).[14] This suggests that, whatever the identification of *hymlic* is found to be, it is unlikely to be wormwood or henbane.

8. Etymology

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) gives no etymology for *hymlic/hemlic*, and can find no cognates in other languages. It suggests that the form *hym-* is the original, and that *hem-* is a Kentish dialectal variant, although there seems to be little real evidence for this suggestion. Apart from one instance of *hymlic*, the occurrences of this plant-name in the Anglo-Saxon medical compilations now known as Bald's *Leechbook* and *Leechbook III* (CNos. 1–6) have *e*-spellings, whereas all occurrences in the *Lacnunga* (CNos. 7–9), have *y*-spellings. The Latin-to-Old English glossaries (CNos. 10–19) have *y*-, *u*-, and *e*-spellings. The dual forms *hem-/hum-* continue into Middle and Early Modern English (see quotations in the MED and OED). Liberman (2008: 105) opines that the chronology of the glosses, with *-y-* forms appearing in the earlier ones, and *-e-* forms from about the time that OE *y* became Kentish *e*, is responsible for the assumption that the *e*-spellings of this plant-name are Kentish rather than just later. Note also that the plant-name *wermōd* 'wormwood' appears as both *wermod* and *wyrmod* but the spelling does not always tally with the form of *hymlic/hemlic* in the same sentence, for example, in the *Lacnunga* (CNo. 7), the forms *hymlic* and *wermod* appear side by side. This casts doubt on a dialectal explanation.

Sauer (1992: 403) gives *hemlic* as a native simplex, that is, he does not regard it as consisting of *hem+lic* or *heml+ic.* However, the possibility of a stem+suffix formation is still worth consideration. Taking the possible suffix in *hym(b)+lic/hem+lic* first, *-lic* '-like' is a commonly occurring Old English suffix found in many adjectives; but there is no evidence that *hym(b)lic/hemlic* was originally an adjective, and, as pointed out by Liberman (2008: 108), both this adjectival suffix and an origin in OE *lēac* 'leek, onion, garlic, garden herb' are phonologically improbable. Liberman sees the *-lic* ending of *hym(b)lic/hemlic* and its Modern English descendant *-lock* as a parallel to that of OE *cyrlic/cerlic*, the ancestor of *charlock*. He hypothesises that *-lic* is cognate with OHG *-ling* and that *hemlic* goes back to a form *hem-l-ic* with double suffix, only otherwise recorded in *cyrlic*, 'but by the year 700 the suffix had become unproductive and dead'. The *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (ODEE) gives *-oc/-uc* as a diminutive suffix in Old English, the use of which was extended in Middle English. Liberman attributes the change from *-ic* to *-ock* as due to a folk etymological association with *-lock*, as in, for example, *wedlock*.

Turning to the stem of *hymlic/hemlic*, while still assuming for the moment that *-lic* is a suffix, searching for the source of a word for which there are no obvious cognates in other languages necessarily leads to the 'no stone unturned' approach adopted in this word-study. *Hem* 'a hem, border' (Bosworth 1898) is not a very common word in Old English, but Liberman (2008: 106) cites the suggestion in Webster (1828, under *hemlock*) that it might refer to a 'border plant, a plant growing in hedges' (see below). Bosworth (1898, under *hem*) also mentions the occurrence of *hemme* in the fifteeenth-century *Promptorium parvulorum* which is interpreted by Latin *fimbria* 'a fringe', again suggesting a peripheral feature, but this

[14] *Netel* 'nettle' also occurs twice in apparent contrast with *hymlic* (CNos. 1, 4), but one of these is named as 'red nettle' which may indicate a different plant from commonplace nettle.

sense is not attested in Old English. Liberman also mentions tentative suggestions from other nineteenth-century etymologists, including that of a hypothetical word meaning 'to heap up, to cover' or 'to hinder', and a connection with *healm* 'stubble'. None of them is convincing. Liberman (2008: 106–7), in conclusion, relates the *hem-* element in *hemlic* to Low German and Middle High German *hemer* 'hellebore' and its cognates in Balto-Slavic languages, all of which derive from a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root **kem/*chem* meaning, for example, 'poison, misfortune, bitterness, sickness'.[15] He relates the *hym* of *hymlic* and *hummel* 'hornless (of cattle)' to a zero grade of the same root.

For the *hymblic* forms (with medial *-b-*), which are the earliest forms, Liberman rejects the idea that the /b/ is a parasitic sound caused by the preceding /m/, and proposes that these forms constitute an independent variant of the Old English plant-name. Certainly it is unlikely that the *b*-forms have anything to do with *umbella*, the Latin term from which *Umbelliferae*, the name of a botanical family (also known as *Apiaceae*) is derived.[16] As noted in the study of OE *hymele* (Wotherspoon, in this volume), the flowers of plants often seem to have held little interest for medieval people. However, the source of the Greek-derived Latin name *conium* (see Section 6.2) does, apparently, relate to the shape of the flower (an inverted cone), and this image persisted as late as the modern description 'umbellate', dating from the mid-seventeenth century (from Latin *umbella* 'sunshade, parasol'). Although the earliest examples of OE *hymlic* occur with a *-b-* (as in *hymblic(e)*), the name is unlikely to have any connection with *umbella* since this word is quite rare in Classical Latin, and, for British medieval Latin, Latham gives just one example, dated as late as c.1217. Furthermore, although initial *h-* is not stable in some Old English words, extant examples of *hymlic* always occur with *h-*.

It might be supposed from the form of the two words that *hymlic* has a connection with the Old English plant-name *humele/hymele* (see Wotherspoon, in this volume), and it seems that the two words could occasionally be confused (see Appendix B) but in terms of their forms rather than their semantics.

As mentioned above, Liberman derives OE *hym-* from a Proto-Indo-European word-root **kem-* (Pokorny's **kemero-*). Pokorny also has a root **ḱem-* which he defines as 'Stange, Stock, Horn' (stick, cane, horn), appearing in Köbler's partial revision of Pokorny as 'pole, stick' (*Indogermanisches Wörterbuch* (IW)). The semantic core of this root appears to indicate an artefact or natural object useful to humans because of its length and thinness. As the origin of a plant-name, this suggests a tall plant with a relatively straight stem and, preferably, with a traditional use or uses in rural societies.

9. Lexical comparisons

This section on the lexical comparative evidence[17] represents an attempt to ascertain the applications of the word *hemlock* (the direct descendant of OE *hymlic* and its variant forms) in the botanical folk taxonomy of England, to assess the concepts which the use of *hemlock* appears to involve and, in turn, to see whether the results relate in any way to the etymological findings in Section 8. Britten and Holland (1886: 254) find the name *hemlock*, without further description, usually denotes the plant called 'hemlock' today (*Conium maculatum* L.), but they

[15] This word-root appears as **kemero-* in Pokorny's (1959) dictionary of Proto-Indo-European.

[16] Hemlock belongs to the Umbelliferae family, but this is not to suggest that *hymlic* has yet been identified.

[17] Sections 9 to 12 have been written in collaboration with C. P. Biggam.

add 'it is frequently applied … to several of the large *Umbelliferae*'. They interpret reference to the 'large hemlock' as indicating wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris* L.), and to the 'small hemlock' as possibly indicating cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris* (L.) Hoffm.). They also mention that William Withering, a late eighteenth-century botanical writer, refers to fool's parsley (*Aethusa cynapium* L.) as 'lesser hemlock'. Britten and Holland also identify three plants which have been called 'water hemlock': hemlock water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata* L.); fine-leaved water-dropwort (*Oenanthe aquatica* (L.) Poir., formerly known as *Oenanthe phellandrium* Lam.); and cowbane (*Cicuta virosa* L.)

Although the above list of species is relatively small, there are hints that *hemlock* was a name which, in certain times and places, could be applied to a larger number of plants. The *English Dialect Dictionary* (EDD) includes the following comment by William Patrick (1831: 137) about the name *hemlock* in Lanarkshire: 'By the common people nearly all the Umbellate plants are called hemlock'. In Middle English, there was an even broader use of the name, since, apart from *Conium maculatum*, the MED (under *hemlok(e)*) also defines it as 'any of various wild plants or weeds; fern, wild succory'. The apparently wide application of the name *hemlock* which is evidenced in post-Conquest times may simply result from the collection of localized uses but, as with all early plant-names, we should not assume it was used of only one or two species. If, for example, the name *hemlock* became synonymous with poison, another poisonous plant may well be named as a hemlock too, in spite of it having no other connection with the first-named plant. This form of naming is common in a folk taxonomy.

The next step in this part of the research is to consider the non-*hemlock* folk-names of the plants which have also been called *hemlock* in English folk taxonomies, because most British plants have several names. This provides a set of concepts representing the cognitive associations which have been made with these plants in various locations and at various times. This is useful because it is often the case that features of plants which seem obvious to modern people were not necessarily the significant ones to country-dwellers of the past. Only the concepts that were the most productive of names will be mentioned here. Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) has an abundance of names relating to lace, such as *Honiton lace*, *lady's lace* and *gipsy curtains*.[18] This must refer to the flower-heads of hemlock which look like small groupings of tiny white stars. There are also numerous variations of the name *kex*, such as *kakezie, kesh, kexies* and *koushe*. The OED identifies this as meaning 'The dry, usually hollow, stem of various herbaceous plants, *esp*[ecially] of large umbelliferous plants'. This name occurs across Britain in a huge variety of forms, suggesting the importance of this concept in connection with the plant. Other names perhaps hint at the hemlock's poisonous qualities, such as *bad man's oatmeal* (referring to the devil) and *devil's blossom*.

The names of wild angelica are dominated by variations of *kex*, including *kesk* and *kewsies* but this word is often qualified, as in *ghost-kex, smooth kesh* and *trumpet keck*. This suggests that wild angelica was not considered the *archetypal* source of hollow stems. Two names suggest this plant's liking for water, namely, *water kesh* and *water squirt*, and two other names, *ground ash* and *ground elder*, may suggest that its leaves resemble those of the named trees.

Cow parsley has a profusion of names which combine the word *parsley* with various animal-names, for example, *dog parsley, hare's parsley, sheep's parsley* and, of course, *cow parsley*. These names presumably allude, firstly, to the similarity of parsley (*Petroselinum*

[18] The plant-names mentioned in this section are taken from Grigson (1955).

species) leaves to those of cow parsley, and, secondly, they suggest that this plant is inferior to the parsley preferred by humans. Other names also suggest, literally or metaphorically, that cow parsley was eaten by animals, for example, *rabbit's food* and *adder's meat*. Cow parsley flowers, just like hemlock flowers (see above), can be described as white and lacy, and some names alluding to this feature are shared by hemlock and cow parsley, for example, *gipsy curtains* and *Honiton lace*. Other 'lacy' cow parsley names are: *my lady's lace, Queen Anne's lace* and *Queen Anne's lace handkerchief*. Some cow parsley names focus on the stem of this plant, as with other plants discussed here. It has a number of *kex*-related names such as *kesk* and *kewsies*, and also various forms of *eltrot* which the OED defines as 'A name for the stalk of several plants'. Like the hemlock, cow parsley also has a few 'devil' names, such as *bad man's oatmeal* (shared with hemlock), *devil's meat, devil's parsley* and *naughty man's oatmeal* (another euphemism for the devil). As cow parsley is not as toxic as the hemlock, these names may have been 'borrowed' from the hemlock because the two plants have considerable similarities of appearance.

Fool's parsley has much fewer names than the previously mentioned plants. It has several animal names combined with *parsley* or *dock*, such as *cow parsley* (shared with cow parsley), *dog poison* and *pig dock*. This is yet another umbellifer with white, lace-like flowers, and the name *lace curtains* probably refers to them. Another name, *devil's wand*, appears to combine a devil-name with a word which may refer to the long stem.

We now turn to three plants, mentioned above, which have been called 'water hemlock': hemlock water-dropwort; fine-leaved water-dropwort; and cowbane. Hemlock water-dropwort is extremely poisonous, possibly the most poisonous indigenous British plant, and the force of *hemlock* in two of this plant's names may well indicate toxicity. Particularly poisonous are the plant's roots which consist of five or more tubers looking like swollen fingers, and this explains its names *five-fingered root* and *dead man's fingers*. It is also known as *dead tongue* which the OED suggests results from the paralysis of the speech organs which can result from poisoning by this plant. Hemlock water-dropwort is also known as *bilders, belder-root* and *billers* which derives from a Celtic root *bior*, *bir* 'water, well, spring', giving rise to Irish *biorar/biolar* and Welsh *berwr* both meaning 'water-cress' (OED, under *bilders*; Breeze 2000 argues specifically for a Primitive Cornish etymon for the English word). *Bilders* is defined in the OED as 'A name given by the old herbalists to some water plant or plants, cruciferous or umbelliferous'; J. B. Smith argued that its original sense in English was 'watercress' but was later extended to various water-plants (2005). It is also called *eltrot* (discussed above) and *cowbane* (see below).

The fine-leaved water-dropwort is less poisonous than the hemlock water-dropwort but still dangerous, and its names of *water hemlock* and *horsebane* indicate this, as does the name *deathin*, used in parts of Scotland, where it is also used of cowbane (DSL, under *deathin*). Another name for this plant is *edgeweed* which, presumably, refers to its preferred habitat at the sides of streams or ponds.

Cowbane apparently has fewer names than the other plants considered here. It is also known by names considered above: *water hemlock* and *deathin* in Scotland, both presumably referring to its poisonous qualities, as does the name *cowbane* itself, meaning 'cow-killer'. It is also known as *brook-tongue*, referring to its watery habitat, and as *scoots* which may also refer to its habitat since Britten and Holland state that the name, in Ireland, refers to other Umbelliferae growing in wet places.

The latter part of this section is intended to show the concepts most usually connected with

the plants designated 'hemlock' in at least parts of Britain. These names were, for the most part, assigned by people living in a rural environment who were familiar with these plants, and in receipt of oral traditions about them. These salient associations are likely to have had a long history (see Biggam 2003: 206–7). It is clear that some concepts, such as lace-like flowers, cannot be attributed to early medieval times, but names which warn of poisonous qualities, for example, are likely to have a long history, and may help in the identification process. What conclusions can be drawn from the information presented in this section?

As regards the etymology of *hymlic*, there appear to be three possibilities for the word-stem, as discussed above. Firstly, OE *hem* 'a hem, border' led Webster (1828) to suggest a definition for *hymlic* of 'border plant, a plant growing in hedges'. If this is coupled with descriptions of the habitats of those plants which have been referred to as 'hemlock', we find considerable evidence for edges and linear features: hemlock (roadsides, ditches); wild angelica (by streams, ditches and ponds); cow parsley (hedgerows, ditches and ponds); hemlock water-dropwort (ditches, pondsides); fine-leaved water-dropwort (ditches, ponds, and the name *edgeweed*); and cowbane (ditches, pondsides). Only fool's parsley has no mention of edges or linear features in its habitat description (all habitats are taken from Stace 1997).

The second possible etymology of *hym-* was related by Liberman to a word-root which could mean 'poison, bitterness, sickness' and, of the 'hemlock' short-list, the majority of the plants are poisonous, and cow parsley is mildly toxic. Wild angelica is neither, and has long been eaten. The poisonous properties of the other plants are compatible with names referring to the devil, which occur for hemlock, cow parsley and fool's parsley. Fool's parsley, hemlock water-dropwort, fine-leaved water-dropwort and cowbane have names which suggest they can kill animals (at least).

Thirdly, it has been suggested that another Proto-Indo-European word-root meaning 'stick, cane, horn' could refer to the stems of the 'hemlock' plants which provided hollow tubes for various purposes. All the short-listed 'hemlock' plants in this section have hollow stems, and this is compatible with the large variety of *kex*-type names and *eltrot* names recorded for the hemlock, wild angelica, cow parsley and hemlock water-dropwort.

10. Consideration of the basic data

The purpose of this present section is to bring together all the information from the previous sections, to consider any contradictions, and to decide on the conclusion which is currently best supported by the evidence.

Perhaps the clearest evidence arises from the use of *hymlic* to translate Latin *cicuta* (Section 5.2). *Cicuta* in Classical Latin and in Middle English has been interpreted in authoritative dictionaries as meaning only 'hemlock', that is, *Conium maculatum*. In addition, the DMLBS gives 'hemlock' as the principal sense of *cicuta* in British medieval Latin, although mentioning that it has been confused with *conyza*. As discussed in Section 6.2, this confusion appears to result from the similarity in spelling between *conyza* 'fleabane' and *conium* 'hemlock' so it provides no evidence for an alternative plant identification.

Is there corroborative evidence to support a hemlock identification? The three concepts which are listed at the end of Section 9 emerge from various associations made in folk taxonomies with plants which have been called 'hemlock', and the suggested etymologies of the word *hemlock.* All three concepts are appropriate for hemlock: it grows in 'borders',

namely, roadsides and ditches; it is poisonous; and it has a long stem. The evidence of *wōdewistle* (Section 6.1) is interpreted as something like 'mad whistle', probably combining an element suggesting the symptoms of poisoning with an element indicating a hollow stem, and *wōdewistle* is both associated with *hymlic*, and also glosses Latin *cicuta*. *Cicuta* itself is linked with the concept of hollow stems in its Latin interpretations of *musa* and *fistula* which can both refer to the pipes of musical instruments (Section 6.1).

The apparently simple summary above is complicated by the fact that several of the umbellifers are very similar in appearance, and also grow in border or marginal areas, are poisonous and have hollow stems. Is it possible to eliminate some of the short-listed plants? Evidence for the habitat of *hymlic* is limited to the example (here spelled *hemlec*) in charter bounds relating to Bathampton in Somerset, and to the place-name Holmedale Farm in the East Riding of Yorkshire. All the short-listed plants are native species and occur all over England, so this does not eliminate any of them. However, cowbane has a very patchy distribution in modern times, and it does not have a strong presence in either Somerset or Yorkshire. It is not clear, however, whether this distribution pertained historically. The 'Species Account' for *Cicuta virosa* by A. J. Lockton on the website of the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI, accessed 25 January 2012) states the following:

> The pattern of distribution of Cowbane is unusual, and none of the published accounts offers an explanation. Losses seem to have occurred mainly in populations isolated from its core range – was this the end point of a lengthy decline, or just transitory occupation of unsuitable habitat? Little is known about its lifecycle and ecology. It may be one of those plants that is associated with fluctuating water levels – a habitat type that has been largely overlooked by British ecologists and conservationists.

This suggests that cowbane may be the least likely identification for the Somerset and Yorkshire locations, but the lack of information on the historical situation means that there is no certainty on this point. Furthermore, specific micro-habitats at Bathampton and Holmedale Farm may have enabled this plant to thrive in small pockets. It would be unwise to eliminate cowbane on this fragile evidence.

As has been discussed above (Section 9), the sense of 'border' occurs in the habitats of all the short-listed plants, as described by Stace, with the single exception of fool's parsley, and the sense of 'poison' is appropriate for all the plants except wild angelica. While the above discussion may seem, at first, to weaken the cases of fool's parsley and wild angelica to be *hymlic*-candidates, it should be remembered that such arguments are based on the later folk-names of these plants, most of which cannot be traced back to Anglo-Saxon times.

Another observation from the later plant-names is of interest. While the name *hemlock* has been applied at some time to all the short-listed plants, several of the names involve qualifiers for the word *hemlock*. In particular, hemlock water-dropwort, fine-leaved water-dropwort and cowbane have all been named 'water hemlock', implying that the archetypal hemlock is less interested in water. In addition, the hemlock water-dropwort's name suggests that there is something about it which is more like hemlock than other water-dropworts. Turning back to the names listed above, as recorded by Britten and Holland, we can deduce that wild angelica ('large hemlock') must be larger than archetypal hemlock, and that cow parsley ('small hemlock') and fool's parsley ('lesser hemlock') must be smaller than the archetype. These names based on a watery habitat and the size of plants will now be considered in the context of seeking a 'hemlock' archetype.

Which 'hemlocks' are not likely to be called 'water hemlocks'? The hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) grows on damp ground (Stace 1997: 507) but Stace does not mention any

preference for watery features. Similarly, cow parsley is described as growing in grassy places, hedgerows and wood-margins (1997: 501), and fool's parsley as preferring cultivated and waste ground, with no mention of water (1997: 506). There is a clear contrast here with (apart from the named water hemlocks) wild angelica which grows in damp places, fens, marshes, and by streams, ditches and ponds (1997: 514). This survey suggests that the archetypal 'hemlock', if it definitely appears in the present short-list of plants, is more likely to be hemlock, cow parsley or fool's parsley.

As regards the size of the plants, hemlock grows up to 2.5 metres (Stace 1997: 507), which is the same maximum height given for wild angelica ('large hemlock') (1997: 514). The 'small hemlock' (cow parsley) grows up to 1.5 metres (1997: 501) and the 'lesser hemlock' (fool's parsley) grows up to one metre or, exceptionally, 1.5 metres (1997: 506). These sizes, given that they can only provide a rough guide (1997: xvii), are compatible with hemlock being the 'hemlock' archetype.

The use of *hemlock* to qualify a name for wild angelica means that it does not always imply the presence of poison. It seems likely that *hemlock* as a qualifier often indicates the similar appearance of many umbellifers with their erect stems bearing lacy, usually white, umbrella-shaped flowers. From this consideration of hemlock-qualifiers, it appears that hemlock itself (*Conium maculatum*) is a good candidate for the archetypal hemlock in recent centuries, although it must be stressed that this may not have been true in every region of Britain. Cockayne came to the same conclusion for Anglo-Saxon England. In his index (under *hemlic*) he agrees that hemlock is the archetype: 'hemlock, conium maculatum: Other plants may be sometimes called hemlock, for the umbellate herbs require educated eyes, but this is the starting point for English notions' (Cockayne 1864–6: II.391).

11 *Hymlic* in medicine

This section considers the roles that the plant named *hymlic* played in Anglo-Saxon society, insofar as the contemporary sources reveal them. In the case of *hymlic*, the only role recorded is medical. Although modern descriptions of the old medical uses of hemlock concentrate on the effects of it when taken by mouth (see OED; Cooper and Johnson 1984: 230), the evidence in Old English is mainly of topical use (direct application to the body). All instances from the Anglo-Saxon medical compilations, Bald's *Leechbook* and *Leechbook III*, involve mixing *hymlic* and other plants with some medium to make an ointment or salve.

The remedies occurring in Bald's *Leechbook* are numbered 1 to 5 in the Catalogue below. A remedy for headache (CNo. 1) involves making a paste for the head from a mixture of willow and oil to which is added pounded *hymlic* and two other plants.[19] Another remedy (CNo. 2) involves a salve for a sudden pain or soreness accompanied by swelling. *Hymlic* is to be ground up, mixed with wax, and, the resulting salve having been warmed, it is to be bound onto the affected place. Another recipe (CNo. 3) instructs that the bark of several trees as well as woad and *hymlic* should be boiled in urine, and then butter and honey should be added. Although it is not stated that this is a salve, the presence of the last two ingredients suggests it. It is intended to help *hrēofl*, an affliction which is often translated as 'leprosy' but which can also apply to any scabby or similar skin problem.

[19] The short text for each reference can be found by searching the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (DOEWC) for the spellings shown in the Catalogue below.

A remedy for a *wenn* (a growth or tumour) and/or a 'wen boil' (a boil, infected swelling, blister) (CNo. 4) involves making a salve from four plants, including *hymlic*, and boiling them in butter and sheep's grease. More of the four plants are then added, along with other plants, and tar and salt, and the whole concoction is then to be mixed, put onto a cloth, warmed at the fire, and smeared onto the swelling. Another mixture (CNo. 5) is intended to burst a swelling. *Hymlic* should be mixed with wax, warmed, the mixture beaten together, and then bound onto the swelling.

The only recipe in *Leechbook III* (CNo. 6) involves a remedy for a sore knee. Henbane and *hymlic* are to be pounded and the resulting mixture used to bathe the knee and to be laid on it.

In another Anglo-Saxon medical text, the *Lacnunga*, a further three remedies involving *hymlic* can be found. The first is a sleeping draught (CNo. 7) which involves four plants, including *hymlic*, which are to be pounded, put into ale, and left to stand for a night before being given to the patient to drink. Another recipe (CNo. 8) is to make a salve for dealing with lice. The lower part of *hymlic* is to be boiled in butter with another plant, and the resulting salve is to be smeared on the head ensuring that 'there will be fewer lice' (*þær bið þara lusa læs*). The third *Lacnunga* recipe is also for lice, but this time for a drink. *Hymlic* and two other plants are to be put in ale, and the patient is to drink a bowlful of the mixture, and eat nothing more for a night.

In summary, *hymlic* is used in salves for headache, for swellings of various kinds, for a sore knee, to reduce lice and, probably in the form of a salve, for a skin problem. It is also used in drinks to encourage sleep and to deal with lice. This collection of 'cures' suggests that it was the poisonous qualities of the plants which were valued. It is speculation, of course, but it would make sense in the medieval period to try to 'kill' the agents causing headache, infected swellings, boils and scabs, since many of these problems were considered to be caused by a 'worm' under the skin. Similarly, it is likely that a mixture with a poisonous ingredient could kill lice. The poisonous quality of *hymlic*, used in a mild dose, had also, it seems, been found to induce drowsiness (see this use of hemlock in Section 12).

It may be useful to consider the major traditional uses (as recorded in later sources) of the plants with 'hemlock'-names to see if there is compatibility with the Anglo-Saxon remedies. The hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) and the hemlock water-dropwort cures certainly seem to echo those of the early medieval period. Hemlock leaves were used for poulticing external cancers 'which was merely a version of the hemlock poultice in widespread use for sores and swelling' (Allen and Hatfield 2004: 188). Hemlock water-dropwort was used to poultice serious whitlows (abscesses near finger- and toe-nails) in parts of England, but the Manx and Irish uses are particularly close to the Anglo-Saxon remedies, involving treatments for skin cancers and tumours respectively. Depending on the precise identification of 'water hemlock' this plant has also been used in Ireland to treat scrofulous swellings on the neck (Allen and Hatfield: 185-6).

Somewhat less compatible with Anglo-Saxon practice is the use of wild angelica for rheumatism, corns, and as a spring tonic (Allen and Hatfield: 190), although corns could be considered a form of scabbiness. Cow parsley was historically used to cure kidney or bladder stones or gravel, and, assuming the plant-identification is correct, it was used among women in the Outer Hebrides as a sedative (Allen and Hatfield: 182–3). The last purpose is reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon sleeping-draught. Fool's parsley, fine-leaved water-dropwort and cowbane are not mentioned in Allen and Hatfield (2004).

12. Discussion and conclusion

It would appear from the above sections that hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) is a prime candidate for the Anglo-Saxon plant named *hymlic*. As summarized in Section 10, *hymlic* frequently translates Latin *cicuta* which is interpreted as 'hemlock' in Classical Latin, British medieval Latin and Middle English. Theories about the etymology of *hymlic* suggest three possibilities: a marginal habitat; poisonous qualities; and a long, hollow stem, and these features are all possessed by hemlock. In addition, the traditional medical use for hemlock in the British Isles tallies with one of the major Anglo-Saxon uses for the plant. Although the identification of OE *hymlic* with *Conium maculatum* looks convincing, there are clear indications that this is not the only likely identification. Others have come to the same conclusion but not always for convincing reasons. Kitson (1988: 104), for example, contends that the *cicuta* used in medicinal recipes was a completely different plant from hemlock, as a poisonous plant would not have been used medicinally. However, Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, Bk 25.95), in his description of the uses of *cicuta* mentions both its poisonous characteristics when taken by mouth, and its curative properties as a topical application. These two conflicting properties are found in other medicinal plants, such as the hellebore. With hemlock there are two distinct properties depending on dose. Quotations given in the OED (under *hemlock*) refer to the use of hemlock as a powerful sedative, and Lopez (1999: 853) comments, with reference to its effect on animals, that 'with non-toxic doses a sedative or depressive effect of the central nervous system, producing deep sleep, is noticed'. This clearly reminds us of the presence of *hymlic* in the Anglo-Saxon sleeping-draught (CNo. 7).

Although Kitson's argument has not been found convincing, it is nonetheless highly likely that the plant-name *hymlic* was not used exclusively of hemlock by the Anglo-Saxons, especially since the name was not exclusive to *Conium maculatum* in its Middle English form nor in later folk taxonomies (see Section 9). Grattan and Singer (1952: 84) point out that several of the umbellifers are extremely difficult to distinguish visually, and the Anglo-Saxons may, therefore, not have been able to do so: 'there are some botanic groups, such as the Umbelliferae … in which the species are so numerous and so hard to distinguish, even for a modern botanist, that successful identification of them by the AS herbalist is intrinsically most improbable'. This opinion is considered overly pessimistic by other writers, however, for example: 'There is a popular impression that the Umbelliferae, with a few conspicuous exceptions … are almost indistinguishable from one another unless you have ripe fruit and a microscope. In fact with a little experience almost all British umbellifers can be identified when in flower, and often from the leaves alone' (Tutin 1980: 3). It seems highly likely that the Anglo-Saxon physicians, if not the majority of the population, spending their lives among the local flora, would be perfectly capable of noting crucial details. Nonetheless, the use of the word *hemlock* as a qualifier in later times, and the broad classifications of folk taxonomies, as opposed to scientific ones, suggest we should resist the conclusion that *hymlic* referred exclusively to *Conium maculatum*. This is because, quite apart from regional variations, folk taxonomies often classify plants according to their uses in particular communities. Thus, 'hemlocks' for those seeking a strong ingredient for a poultice would be likely to refer to several poisonous umbellifers; the 'hemlocks' being sought out for food would clearly refer to different umbellifers; and the 'hemlocks' needed by children for their whistles and pea-shooters would be those umbellifers with straight and hollow stems. Finally, those with little use at all for these plants would probably label all the similar-looking, white-flowered umbellifers as 'hemlocks'.

It is therefore suggested that OE *hymlic* (and its various forms) should be defined as 'hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), but may also be used more generally as a term for similar umbellifers'.

Appendix A: *Hymlic* catalogue

CNo.	*Source*	*Short Title & Reference*	*Spelling*
1	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 1.6.1	*hymlican*
2	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 31.6.3	*hemlic*
3	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 32.3.3	*hemlic*
4	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 58.1.1	*hemlice*
5	Bald: Leechbook	Lch II (1) 77.1.1	*hemlic*
6	Leechbook	Lch II (3) 50.1.1	*hemlic*
7	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 62.1	*hymlic*
8	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 130.1	*hymlic*
9	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 131.1	*hymlic*
10	Glossary: Brussels	BrGl 1(Wright-Wulcker) 8.8	*hymelic*
11	Glossary: Brussels	BrGl 1(Wright-Wulcker) 8.46	*hymelic*
12	Glossary: Durham	DurGl (Lindheim) 116	*heomlic*
13	Glossary: Cleopatra 1	ClGl 1 (Stryker) 905	*hymlic*
14	Glossary: Cleopatra 1	ClGl 1 (Stryker) 3826	*hymlic*
15	Glossary: Laud	Coll Gl 26 (Stracke) 68	*humeloch*
16	Glossary: Corpus 2	CorpGl 2 (Hessels) 3.391	*hymlice*
17	Glossary: Épinal	EpGl (Pheifer) 192	*hymblicae*
18	Glossary: Antwerp	AntGl 4 (Kindschi) 32	*hemlic*
19	Glossary: Erfurt	ErfGl 1 (Pheifer) 185	*huymblicae*
20	Charter: S627	Ch 627 (Birch 973) 4	*hemlec*

Appendix A1: *Hymlic* catalogue

CNo.	*Related*	*Context*
10	14	From same earlier glossary; same erroneous entry. 10: hymelic leptefilos 14: hymlic leptefilos
11	12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19	Probably from the same text originally. 11: hymelic cicuta 12: heomlic cicata 13: hymlic cicuta 15: humeloch cicuta (vel coniza) 16: hymlice cicuta 17: hymblicae cicuta 18: hemlic cicuta 19: huymblicae cicuta

Appendix A2: Related citations

Appendix B: Rejected items

Lexeme	*Reference*	*Reason for rejection*
hymelyc	DurGl (Lindheim) 66	The Durham Glossary *hymelyc bronia* is the only example of (apparently) *hymlic* glossing *bronia* (that is, *brionia*). Lindheim (1941: 33, no. 66) suggests it is an error for *hymele brionia*, stating that *brionia* cannot be said to mean only 'hop', as it occurs glossed by terms meaning a variety of creepers (including hop). None of the umbellifers resembles a creeping plant, so this case is taken to be a confusion of OE *hym(e)lic* with *hymele* (for the latter, see Wotherspoon in this volume).

Appendix B: Rejected items

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