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## Leeds Studies in English

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

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

### 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<sup>in</sup> beginning of the 11th century
- s. xi<sup>1</sup> first half of the 11th century
- s. xi<sup>med</sup> middle of the 11th century
- s. xi<sup>2</sup> second half of the 11th century
- s. xi<sup>ex</sup> end of the 11th century

# Old English *Hymele*: An Occasional Flavour of Hops

Irené Wotherspoon<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

When the opportunity of contributing to the proposed ASPNS collection of word-studies was offered to me, with the choice of which plant-name to investigate, I decided on *hym(e)lic* (also in this volume) and *hymele* because neither had a large number of citations, but beyond this, I had no idea what to expect. The two word-studies turned out to be very different from each other in scope and emphasis, and, in spite of the similarity of the names *hymelic* and *hymele*, there is very little evidence of confusion or connection between them in the extant examples: one glossary entry in which OE *hymelyc* translates Latin *bronia* suggests it belongs with *hymele* (CNo. 16; see Appendix B to *hymlic*); and there is a likelihood that Latin *ynantes* should have been translated as *humelic* rather than *humele* (CNos 12 and 13; see Appendix A to this paper).<sup>2</sup> Both studies have been carried out, as far as possible, in accordance with the ASPNS guidelines and appear in the format suggested for contributions to the ASPNS project. The differences between the various manuscripts in which the terms are found are not described, except where relevant to the discussion of the terms themselves, as this information is available in detail in the editions and facsimiles referred to in the bibliography.

## 2. Citations

The catalogue for *hymele* consists of thirty-four entries (see Appendix A1). Entries from charter bounds marked with (2) in the catalogue indicate that *hymele* occurs twice in the same line with the same spelling, and these cases are treated as single entries since they must have occurred in the same vocabulary-choice event. Some other entries are regarded as related (see Appendix A2), and this includes cases in which two or more occurrences of *hymele* are considered to have originated in the same thought, such as a single translation decision or the close repetition of the name in the same text.<sup>3</sup> When the twelve related citations have been subtracted from the total citations, the resulting independent citations number twenty-

<sup>1</sup> Dr C. P. Biggam has collaborated on and contributed to several sections of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The abbreviation 'CNo.' followed by a number, refers to the list of references in Appendix A1.

<sup>3</sup> For a further explanation of related citations, including the treatment of glossary entries, see Wotherspoon on *hymlic* (also in this volume), Section 2.

two. This total is made up of ten occurrences in land records, six in medical works, four in glossaries, one in a gloss, and one in folklore (a charm).

### 3. Descriptors

'Descriptors' are words or phrases in the extant Old English texts which offer descriptive information relating to the plant or plants bearing the name being investigated. In Chapter 52 of the Old English *Herbarium* (CNo. 4), in which OE *hymele* translates Latin *politicus*, the reader is informed that the *hymele* grows 'on old settlement sites and also in damp places' (*on ealdum husstedum ⁊ eac on fuhtum stowum*). The *Herbarium* is translated from Latin, and the corresponding phrase in one Latin manuscript (Montecassino, Archivio della Badia V.97) is *in parietinis et humorosis locis*, 'on walls and in wet (or moist) places' (De Vriend 1984: 96–7).

Chapter 52 of the Old English *Herbarium* has some further information about *hymele*. It is said of the plant that 'its twigs (or shoots) are like a pig's bristles' (*hyre twigu beoð swylce swinen byrst*), and this translates the Latin version which states that the plant has *ramulos quasi seta porcina*, 'twigs (or shoots) like a pig's bristles'.

*Hymele* also appears in Chapter 68 of the Old English *Herbarium*, translating a second Latin plant-name, *brionia*, where it is said that 'This plant is agreeable enough that one can mix it with what one customarily drinks' (*ðeos wurt is to þam herigindlic þæt hy man wiþ gewune drenceas gemencgeað*; CNo. 6; translation in Van Arsdall 2002: 179). This is the passage that Cockayne (1864–6: I.172–3, note b) took to be an indication of the use of this plant for flavouring drinks, and, more specifically, he interpreted it as the use of hops for flavouring beer. The passage is omitted in the Latin manuscript with which he was comparing the Old English *Herbarium*, and he therefore thought it had been added only in the Old English version, thus, by his reasoning, confirming his interpretation.<sup>4</sup> However, the passage does appear in some Latin versions, for example, in Montecassino, Archivio della Badia V.97, a tenth- or eleventh-century manuscript unknown to Cockayne. It is probably true, although not specified, that ale or beer could be described as 'ordinary (or customary) drinks' (*gewune drenceas*), but there is evidence for several different herbs having been used to flavour beer and other drinks in medieval times, and nothing to relate this passage exclusively to beer and hops (see Section 12). The passage could simply mean that people commonly put this herb into their drinks, believing it to do them good.<sup>5</sup>

There are three words which form composite plant-names with *hymele*, and which can also be considered *hymele* descriptors: they are *hege-*, *heah-*, and *eowo-*. Although these composite names could suggest specific varieties of *hymele* with the descriptors only appropriate to those varieties rather than to *hymele* in general, they could perhaps simply apply to any *hymele* plants in particular situations. *Hegehymele* occurs in a list of ingredients for a herbal remedy (CNo. 7; see Section 10), and in the Brussels Glossary as equivalent to Latin *humblonis* from *humblo*

<sup>4</sup> Cockayne is known to have consulted the MSS London, British Library, Harley 5294 and Harley 4986, which contain Latin texts relevant to the Old English translation (Van Arsdall 2002: 102). The British Library dates the former to the late twelfth century, and the latter to the late eleventh to late twelfth century (see 'Digitised Manuscripts' at <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>). Cockayne also mentions the illustration of *hymele* in MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 130, which also has a Latin text, and which dates to the late eleventh century (Cockayne 1864–6: I.172–3, note a).

<sup>5</sup> This is not to suggest that the Anglo-Saxons did not use hops in their beer, but simply that this text does not prove the matter. Banham, for example, believes the use of hops in beer was very likely (Banham 2004: 26). See also Section 12 in this chapter.

'hop' (CNo. 10; see Sections 5.3 and 10). The prefix *hege-* also occurs in the plant-names *hegeclife* and *hegerife*, both of which are normally interpreted as 'cleavers' (*Galium aparine* L.), in which the *hege-* element usually means 'hedge'. Cleavers are climbing plants, attaching themselves by means of hooked hairs on their stems and leaves, and they commonly occur in hedgerows. This suggests that *hegehymele* is a variety of *hymele* which grows in hedges.

*Heahhymele* (CNo. 14 as *heahhumele*) occurs once in a Latin-to-Old English glossary in MS London, British Library, Royal 7.D.ii. Meritt (1945: 59, no. 69, note 13) thinks that *heahhymele* is equivalent to *hegehymele*, and that the interlinear glosses in this late twelfth-century manuscript, including *heahhumele*, were copied from an older glossary rather than having been added independently (Meritt 1945: xvii). However, while the Latin equivalent of *heahhumele* is *briona*, that of *hegehymele* is *humblonis*. The *prima facie* evidence, of course, is that *heahhymele* contains the element *hēah* 'high', indicating that this plant grows to a considerable height or, less likely, grows at a considerable height.

The prefix *eowo-* in *eowohumelan* (CNo. 9) has been held to indicate the female form of a dioecious plant (which has male and female reproductive organs on separate individual plants) through interpreting the first element of the plant-name as *ēowu-* 'ewe, female sheep'. This presupposes that the dioecious nature of some plants was known to the Anglo-Saxons, for which there seems to be no evidence. It is generally held by botanists that early botanical writers in both ancient and medieval times paid little attention to the nature of the flowers of a plant, except occasionally for the colour (see, for example, Greene 1983: I.39; Arber 1986: chapter 5). The earliest signs of recognition of the sexual function of parts of flowers appears to be in the late seventeenth century, when the English plant anatomist, Nehemiah Grew stated, in his *Anatomy of plants* (1682) that stamens are male organs, although he attributed this discovery to his contemporary, the English physician Sir Thomas Millington. It is not really possible to argue from the single apparent example of *eowohumele* that the dioecious nature of some plants was known to the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>6</sup> However, although the Anglo-Saxons may not have interpreted certain features of dioecious plants as being male or female, they would, no doubt, have noticed that differences occurred.<sup>7</sup>

This section provides a collection of clues concerning the identity of the plant named *hymele*. Certain information about its habitat, appearance and possible use by humans has been discussed, and compound names have suggested, at least, a hedgerow location and considerable height for, perhaps, certain varieties of the plant. This information will be considered, in combination with other clues, in Section 10.

#### 4. Collocations

This section is concerned with words or phrases which occur with *hymele* but which do not directly describe it. The present cases all occur in place-names or place descriptions.

<sup>6</sup> The Old English words *wēpnedmann* 'man' and *wifmann* 'woman' can be found in some dictionaries with the translations 'male plant' and 'female plant' respectively, but this results from a mistranslation of an Anglo-Saxon medical remedy in which one type of mugwort is to be used for a male person and another type for a female. It is not the *plants* which are described as male and female (see Pettit 2001: I.120–1, Section 171; II.345–6).

<sup>7</sup> There are a few other plant-names, first recorded from the nineteenth century, which include the element *ewe-*. Examples include *ewe-bramble* 'bramble' (*Rubus fruticosus* L.) and *ewe-gowan* 'daisy' (*Bellis perennis* L.). Neither of these is dioecious.

#### 4.1 *Brōc*

*Hymelbroc* features strongly in the catalogue (Appendix A1; CNos 20–28, 32–33). The usual definition of *brōc* is ‘brook, stream’ (DOE, under *brōc*<sup>2</sup>), but it has been found that words occurring as place-name elements can have specialized meanings. A discussion of *brōc* by Parsons and Styles (2000: 36–9) raises the possibility of meanings such as ‘marsh’, ‘water-meadow’, ‘low marshy ground not necessarily containing running water or springs’ and ‘muddy stream’, depending on various factors, including date and location.

Although the catalogue contains eleven entries for forms of the name *hymelbroc* (including related citations, see Appendix A2), they all refer to the same Worcestershire stream in the boundary clauses of several land grants ranging in date from the late ninth- to the late eleventh-century. The stream is now called the Bow Brook (named after Stonebow Bridge) but was known as the Himble Brook until the late sixteenth century (Mawer and Stenton 1927: 10; Hooke 1990: 133). It joins the River Avon at Defford, and has a reputation for flooding. This suggests a habitat for *hymele* which is near a stream but perhaps includes boggy ground nearby.

#### 4.2 *Mōr*

*Hymele* also occurs twice with OE *mōr* as *hymelmor* (with spelling variations) in the bounds of a charter dated to AD 984. In this charter, Archbishop Oswald of York grants land at Lower Wolverton, Worcestershire, to his relative Eadwig and Eadwig’s wife Wulfgifu. The bounds begin and end at the *hymelmor*.<sup>8</sup> Old English *mōr* can be interpreted as ‘moor, morass, swamp, hill, mountain’ (Clark Hall 1960), and in place-names, Smith gives ‘moor’ as the principal sense (Smith 1956: II.42). He writes: ‘originally ‘barren waste-land’, which in the S[outh] C[ountr]y and Midl[ands] and the fenlands of the east came to mean ‘marshland’’. As Worcestershire is a Midland county, it would appear that the meaning of *mōr* in Oswald’s charter is likely to indicate a marshy area. The location of the *hymelmor* is in the same area as the *hymelbroc*. Hooke suggests that it indicates an area of marshland alongside the *hymelbroc* (see Section 4.1; Hooke 1990: 230).

#### 4.3 *Tūn*

The name *hymeltun* completes the collection of *hymele*- place-names in Worcestershire. It refers to the settlement of Himbleton in that county, which stands on the Bow Brook (see Section 4.1). *Tūn* has many meanings but they are all concerned either with a piece of enclosed land, such as a garden, field or yard, or habitations of some kind, including a house, village or estate (Clark Hall 1960). Smith (1956: II.188–98) explains the several semantic shifts that *tūn* underwent throughout the long period when it was an active place-name element. In Proto-Germanic, it appeared to denote ‘fence, hedge’ but this meaning is extremely rare in early medieval England with only two possible examples extant (Smith 1956: II.189). The meaning of *tūn* gradually shifted from the means of enclosure to the enclosure itself, with examples meaning ‘church yard’, ‘burial ground’ and others. Further shifts extended the meaning to ‘an enclosure with a dwelling’, ‘a single dwelling’, ‘hamlet, village’ and, finally, to the modern sense of ‘town’ indicating an urban area with many buildings. The steps in this semantic process

<sup>8</sup> The spelling *ymel* occurs for *hymele* in CNo. 34, but it is clearly intended to represent the same geographical feature as the *hymelmor* at the end of the boundary clause (CNo. 29; Hooke 1990: 230).

cannot be dated precisely but the earliest and latest meanings can be reasonably excluded in the case of Himbleton.

The earliest appearance of the name of *Himbleton* occurs in a grant of privileges for certain lands, including Himbleton, made by King Cenwulf of Mercia to Bishop Deneberht and his clergy at Worcester. The grant is dated to AD 816, and the form of the place-name is *Hymeltun*. Other ninth-century mentions of Himbleton use the same form (Mawer and Stenton 1927: 135).<sup>9</sup> It is not known, of course, how much earlier than the ninth century the name of Himbleton, and the brook and moor of the same name, were first identified in this way, and it is also unknown which was the first geographical feature to be associated with *hymele*. Hooke (1990: 133) believes that the settlement took its name from the brook, while Mawer and Stenton (1927: 135) state that ‘It is ... more likely that the *tun* and the *broc* were named independently than that the one took its name from the other’, although it is not clear why they are of this opinion. If the plant named *hymele* were being grown as a crop, the meaning of *tūn* could be ‘enclosure’, since there are similar cases, such as *æppeltun* ‘orchard’ and *leactun* ‘herb garden’, but, at this stage in the investigation, it is safer to follow Smith’s opinion that ‘The majority of p[lace] n[ame]s in *tūn* probably had this meaning ‘farmstead’ when they were established’ (Smith 1956: II.190).<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.4 *Cyrre*

The place-name *Hymelcyrre* (spelt *Humelcyrre*) occurs in the will of Ælflæd, the wife of Ealdorman Brihtnoth of Essex (CNo. 17; Whitelock 1930: 38–42; 141–6). The date of the will is c. 1002. Ælflæd bequeaths her various land-holdings, including an estate at *Byliesdyne*, the name of which has been identified with that of Balsdon (Hall), near Lavenham, Suffolk (Whitelock 1930: 140). At the end of the will, the boundary of the *Byliesdyne* estate is described, beginning with ‘from the stream at *Humelcyrre*; from *Humelcyrre*...’ (*of ða burnan. æt Humelcyrre. fra[m] Humelcyr[re]...*; Whitelock 1930: 40–41). It is not absolutely certain that the element *humel-* represents OE *hymele*, since it may represent the Old Norse word *\*humul* ‘a rounded hillock’ which may have had an Old English cognate *\*humol* with the same meaning. However, it is included here with a mental question-mark, reflecting Parsons’ printed question-mark (2004: 27).

Whitelock says of *Humelcyrre* and another place that ‘These cannot be identified’ (1930: 146) although the mention of Acton and Roydon clearly places *Humelcyrre* somewhere south-west of Lavenham. It is also clear from the boundary statement that *Humelcyrre* is on a stream, indicating a similarly damp environment to that suggested by the Worcestershire *hymele* names.

The element *-cyrre* is difficult but it appears to indicate ‘turn, bend’. Although Whitelock (1930: 146) is pessimistic about establishing the landmarks of Ælflæd’s Balsdon estate, a Suffolk historian, Norman Scarfe, has a high degree of success in doing this, thanks to his local knowledge (Scarfe 1972: 131–4). He points out that William Parker in his *History of Long*

<sup>9</sup> The Birch (*Cartularium Saxonicum*) reference number in Mawer and Stenton is given as BCS 256, which is an error for BCS 356. For the text of this grant, with translation and commentary, see Hooke (1990: 107–12).

<sup>10</sup> Humbleton in the East Riding of Yorkshire may also represent *hymele* plus *tūn* but there are several other possibilities for the first element, such as a personal name (*Humli* or *Humla*) or Old Scandinavian *\*humul* or OE *\*humol* meaning ‘something rounded’ such as a hillock. Humbleton is located in an area of several low glacial mounds, so this may be the correct explanation in this case. The possibilities for the first element of this name are fully discussed in Smith (1937: 54–5).

*Melford* (1873) mentions ‘Humblechar meadows’ near a pronounced bend in a stream called the Chad Brook, which eventually runs into Long Melford.<sup>11</sup> It seems clear that *Humblechar* is descended from *Humelcyrre*. Scarfe locates the pronounced bend in the course of the Chad Brook to the east of Spelthorn Wood (at TL 886 478; see Scarfe 1972: 132, Fig. 10). The argument made by Scarfe, and others, is that the *-char* element is cognate with OE *cyrran*, a verb with multiple senses concerned with turning, returning and turning to God (religious conversion) (DOE under *cyrran*, *ge-cyrran*). Parsons agrees since he lists the noun *cerr* ‘turn, bend’ as a place-name element, and adds ‘It seems to be found in the OE boundary *æt Humelcyrre*’ (Parsons 2004: 27–8).

#### 4.5 *Lēah*

It is suggested by Smith (1956: I.276) that *hymele* also occurs as an element in *Himley*, Staffordshire. This place-name first appears in 1086 as *Himelei*, and it is interpreted as meaning ‘the wood or clearing where *hymele* grows’, being a combination of *hymele* with *lēah* (Watts 2004: 305).<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.6 Summary

Assuming that the plant-name *hymele* really does occur in the place-names discussed in this section, the habitat of the plant can be described as near streams and on marshy or damp ground. In individual cases, this may involve water-meadows, (boggy?) moors, (damp?) woods or clearings in woods, farmsteads near streams and, possibly, as a crop grown in fields or gardens (enclosures). Another possible *hymele* name is *Humble Carr*, near Gainsborough, Lincolnshire (Smith 1956: I.268).<sup>13</sup> *Carr* is descended from ON *kjarr* meaning ‘brushwood’, a word which developed into ME *ker* ‘a bog, a marsh, esp[ecially] one overgrown with brushwood’. Smith points out that it occurs frequently with Old English elements, among others, and is often combined with plant-names. He includes *Humble Carr* in his list of plant-name examples (Smith 1956: II.4). Whatever the date of this place-name, it confirms the generally damp habitat suggested by more securely dated cases.

### 5. Translations

This section will consider the Latin plant-names which have been translated by OE *hymele* in Anglo-Saxon sources:

#### 5.1 *Polytrichon*

The plant-name *polytrichon* is translated three times by OE *hymele* in the Old English *Herbarium*, occurring in the forms *politricus* and *politricum* (CNos. 1, 3 and 4). The *Herbarium* was translated into Old English from Latin, and the Latin text owed much to Dioscorides’ *De materia medica*, originally written in Greek in the first century AD, and to Pliny the Elder’s

<sup>11</sup> Long Melford is about four miles from Lavenham as the crow flies.

<sup>12</sup> See also Section 4.2 of Wotherspoon’s article on *hymlic* in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> The English Place-Name Survey has not yet published this area of Lincolnshire, so the earliest date at which it occurs is unknown to the present author. It may not be of pre-Conquest origin.

*Naturalis historia* of a similar date, although other early medical texts were also involved in the English version. As with the folk-names of plants today, a single plant could have many names, and a single name could be used of several plants (see Biggam's introductory chapter, Section 1). From the earliest medical records, *polytrichon* was involved in at least two multi-name plant identifications.

The earliest extant text and illustrations to Dioscorides' work date to the very early sixth century, and are found in the Juliana Anicia Codex (MS Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis Med. Gr. 1).<sup>14</sup> The manuscript contains two plant entries relevant to this section: the first is headed *Adianton* (ΑΔΙΑΝΤΟΝ) and, in the list of alternative names for this plant are *polytrichon* (ΠΟΛΥΤΡΙΧΟΝ) and *trichomanes* (ΤΡΙΧΟΜΑΝΕΣ) (folio 42r). The second plant is named *Kallitrichon* (ΚΑΛΛΙΤΡΙΧΟΝ) and, included in its list of alternative names are *polytrichon*, *trichomanes* and *adianton* (folio 158v).<sup>15</sup> Although the text alone is a little confusing, the accompanying illustrations, which are of a high quality in this manuscript, make the sixth-century understanding of what Dioscorides had intended much clearer. The *Adianton* text is accompanied by an illustration of the maidenhair spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes* L.), and the *Kallitrichon* text has an illustration of the maidenhair fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris* L.). These two plants do not look alike, and modern botanists classify them as belonging to different families, and yet they share several folk-names (including in Modern English) and were credited with effecting the same cures. From here on, they will be referred to as the spleenwort and the fern respectively.

Pliny the Elder's text of the *Naturalis historia* has survived in versions which have been much altered and augmented but it is clear that its accounts of the maidenhair fern and spleenwort retained a close relationship. Speaking of *adiantum*, Pliny not only provides some of its alternative names but gives his explanation for them. Greek *adianton* means 'unwetted' because the plant repels water so effectively that it always appears to be dry. Its other names include *kallitrichon* meaning 'lovely hair' and *polytrichon* meaning 'thick hair' (literally 'many hairs'). Pliny explains these names by the plant's uses: it is an ingredient in a hair dye, it makes the hair grow thick and curly, and it prevents it from falling out (Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VI.336–7, translation by W. H. S. Jones). The extant texts of both Dioscorides' work and Pliny's make it very difficult to distinguish the two plants. Dioscorides wrote that both plants had similar habitats (shady spots, on humid walls and around fountains) and were used for similar remedies (including hair treatments) (Dioscorides 2005: 300). With their several shared names, it was inevitable that these plants would be confused, and this was the situation inherited by the Anglo-Saxons.

The Greek plant-name *polytrichon* was adopted into Classical Latin as *polythrix* (and other spellings) and was used to indicate both fern and spleenwort (see OLD under *polythrix*). The fern prefers limestone cliffs and rock crevices near the sea, and the stonework of walls and bridges but 'always in moist sheltered spots' (Stace 1997: 16). The spleenwort also grows in rocky places such as cliffs and walls.

With this history behind it, the account of this plant or plants arrived in England in a Latin text of the *Herbarium* and various additions, which is often referred to as the 'Pseudo-

<sup>14</sup> A facsimile edition by D'Aronco and Cameron (1998) is available.

<sup>15</sup> The text of these plant entries can be found in Beck's translation of Dioscorides under *adianton* (*kallitrichon* in the Juliana Anicia Codex; Dioscorides 2005: 299–300), and under *trichomanes* (*adianton* in the Juliana Anicia Codex; Dioscorides 2005: 300). The differences occur because Beck is translating a text which was an attempt by Wellmann to reconstruct the order of plants in Dioscorides' original work, before they were alphabetized.

Apuleius'. The Old English translator had no entries under the headings *adiantum*, *callitrichon* or *trichomanes*.<sup>16</sup> There was, however, an entry under the heading *Herba politicum* (De Vriend 1984: 97, 99). This plant was said to grow on walls and in damp places, and to have little twigs or shoots like the bristles of a pig. Its leaves were used in a drink to help abdominal pain, and the plant also nourished women's hair. This was translated into Old English with few alterations: OE *hymele* was added as an alternative plant-name, and the plant was said to help hair growth in both men and women (De Vriend 1984: 96, 98). It is possible that the addition of men in the Old English text as beneficiaries of the hair treatment indicates that the translator had access to another text, such as Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, since this does not specify the hair of women.

The translator also had a plant illustration to help with the identification. The illustration which appears in the Anglo-Saxon *Herbarium* manuscript (London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.III) is not a realistic depiction but it is clearly copied from earlier illustrations of the maidenhair fern (folio 37r). It is difficult to assess the evidence available to the translator into Old English. If s/he had access to other Latin herbal texts, s/he may have found two distinct plant descriptions, or a single description combining elements from the earlier accounts of the fern and the spleenwort. The features they had in common would have added to the difficulties. The illustration perhaps suggests that the fern was, at least, foremost in the translator's mind. Considering the possibility that the translator had an account of the spleenwort under the same Latin name, it is considered wise at this stage to include both fern and spleenwort as possible identifications, as has the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (DMLBS under *polytrichon* 1).<sup>17</sup>

## 5.2 *Bryonia*

*Hymele* also translates Latin *bryonia* in the Old English *Herbarium* (CNos 2, 5, 6; spelt *brionia* in CNo. 5). Two of these references are headings, one in the *Herbarium*'s list of contents (CNo. 2; De Vriend 1984: 12), and the other at the head of the section on *hymele/bryonia* in the text (CNo. 5; De Vriend 1984: 110). The third reference (CNo. 6; De Vriend 1984: 110) occurs in the short account of the remedy attributed to this plant. It is to be used for pain in the spleen, and is to be mixed with food. The only other point of information in this section is that the plant tastes sufficiently agreeable to be put into one's normal drinks, leading some to suggest that it was used as a flavouring (see Section 3).

The plant-name *bryonia* (Greek βρύωνία) appears in two entries in certain manuscripts of Dioscorides' Greek text of the *De materia medica*. In Beck's translation of this work, she includes *bryonia* as an alternative name for *ampelos leukē* (ἄμπελος λευκή) which she identifies as *Bryonia dioica* Jacq., 'white bryony' (Dioscorides 2005: 324–5). Greek *bryonia* is also given as an alternative name for *ampelos melaina* (ἄμπελος μέλαινα), identified as *Tamus communis* L., 'black bryony' (Dioscorides 2005: 325–6). Over the centuries, there have been

<sup>16</sup> It seems likely that names such as *trichomanes* (various forms in different manuscripts) may originate in the word *trichomanes* but, in the Latin texts of the *Herbarium* which are closest to the Old English translation, this name had become attached to entries for the thorn-apple and/or nightshade (De Vriend 1984: 320, no. 144).

<sup>17</sup> The Old English *Herbarium* also includes the plant *gallitricus* which is probably from the Greek *kallitrichon* (a synonym of *polytrichon*), especially as one of its cures is for hair loss (De Vriend 1984: 94–5, Chapter 48). This duplication of entries results from shared alternative plant-names and repeated copying of manuscripts. The Old English name used for *gallitricus* is *waterwyr* 'water plant' which is not surprising given the stated damp habitat of both fern and spleenwort.

several conflicting identifications of the bryonies because the two colours in their names have been variously taken to refer to the berries, flowers or roots. The general consensus, however, now appears to be that Beck was mistaken (having followed earlier authors) and that the Dioscoridean plants are white bryony (*Bryonia dioica* Jacq.; *ampelos leuke*) and a completely different plant, also called ‘white bryony’ (*Bryonia alba* L.; *ampelos melaina*).<sup>18</sup> It has been pointed out that Dioscorides’ description of a bryony with leaves similar to those of ivy, with tendrils and black fruits can only refer to *Bryonia alba*, not the so-called ‘black bryony’ (*Tamus communis* L.) which has differently shaped leaves, no tendrils and red fruits (Renner, Scarborough, Schaefer, Paris and Janick 2008: 277). Whatever the difficulties may be of identifying these plants to species level, the name *ampelon* narrows the field. Greek *ampelos* (ἄμπελος) means ‘any climbing plant with tendrils’ (Liddell and Scott 1940), and both *Bryonia alba* and *B. dioica* fulfill these requirements, as Dioscorides makes clear (Dioscorides 2005: 325–6).

It has been noted that the illustrations in the Juliana Anicia Codex appear to show *Bryonia alba* for *ampelos leuke* (folio 79r) and probably *Bryonia dioica* for *ampelos melaina* (folio 82r; that is, the wrong way round), but it should be remembered that Dioscorides’ work did not originally have illustrations so they were added later, and this, or later copying, gave an opportunity for error (Janick, Paris and Parrish 2007: 1442). However, it was later suggested, very plausibly, that the supposed illustration of *Bryonia dioica* was, in fact, an illustration of the hop (*Humulus lupulus* L.) The plant’s opposite and serrate leaves are wrong for *Bryonia dioica* (Renner et al. 2008: 276–8).<sup>19</sup> It seems likely that this illustration represents the introduction of a new element of confusion which would have been perpetuated by the centuries of manuscript copying which was to follow.

Pliny mentions the Greek name *ampelos leuke* as the equivalent of his Latin name *vitis alba*, literally ‘white vine’, and he then discusses the ‘dark vine’ ‘which is properly called ‘bryony’ (*quam proprie byroniam vocant*; Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VI.428–33). It is clear that both entries owe a lot to Dioscorides’ work, but more remedies have been added, especially in the case of the *vitis alba*.

Both in Dioscorides’ and Pliny’s works, each plant has a large number of uses, mostly medicinal, but the Latin source of the Old English *Herbarium* entry, headed *herba brionia*, mentions only a remedy for the spleen. It recommends putting the herb in food, and says that the problem will be dealt with by urination. Although both of Pliny’s bryonies are recommended for treatment of the spleen and for promoting urine, it is his ‘dark vine’ which has the wording closest to the Latin Pseudo-Apuleius, the source of the Old English *Herbarium*. Pliny’s ‘white vine’ includes the statement that the stalks, ‘boiled and taken in food, are laxative and diuretic’ and, then, several lines further on, mentions that doses ‘taken in drink for thirty days eat up the spleen’ (that is, reduce a swollen spleen) (Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VI.429, 431). As for the dark vine, its shoots are recommended as ‘a food for promoting urine and reducing the spleen’ (Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VI.433). This close association of food, urine and the spleen in the latter plant entry provides the best textual parallel for the remedy in the Pseudo-Apuleius. Its textual origin, therefore, is likely to have denoted *Bryonia alba*, although the accompanying illustration suggested the hop.

<sup>18</sup> To distinguish between the two white bryonies, they will, henceforth in this paper, be referred to by their botanical Latin names.

<sup>19</sup> The plant-names with which these illustrations are labelled, namely, *bryonia leuka* on folio 79r, and *bryonia melaina* on folio 82r are fifteenth-century additions.

The remaining examples of forms of *hymele* translating *bryonia* all occur in Latin-to-Old English glossaries or glosses (CNos. 14, 15, 16). All three cases are extant in twelfth-century manuscripts which were copied or compiled from pre-Conquest sources. The Durham Glossary (CNo. 16; Lindheim 1941: 10, line 66) entry reads *bronia hymelyc* and this is interpreted here as *brionia hymele*, rather than OE *hymlic* (see Wotherspoon on *hymlic* in this volume, Appendix B). The Laud Glossary (CNo. 15; Stracke 1974: 27, line 233) is related to the Durham Glossary so the entry reading *brionia i. humele* could well have originated in the same medical text (see Appendix A2). The third gloss, reading *heahhumele briona*, is discussed in Section 10.

### 5.3 *Humblo*

The Latin equivalent in the Brussels Glossary for *hegehymele* is *humblonis* (CNo. 10), which is interpreted in the DMLBS as *humulus* ‘hop’ (*Humulus lupulus* L.) Although the Latin term *humulus* is not otherwise recorded from pre-Conquest English sources, the term (*h*)*um(b)lo* ‘hop’ is found in Latin texts from continental Europe from the ninth century onwards (see Section 12).

### 5.4 *Oenanthe*

In CNos 12 and 13, *hymele* (spelt *humele* in both cases) interprets the Latin term *ynantes*. Both references occur in the same manuscript, and in close proximity. One occurs in the lower margin of folio 15v of MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1431, and the other on folio 16r, that is, on the following page. They are among a number of Old English glosses which have been added interlinearly and marginally in this manuscript (now dated c.1070 to 1100) containing the Latin *Herbal* of Pseudo-Apuleius.<sup>20</sup> The illustration of *oenanthe* in this manuscript shows a main stem with sinuous S-curves, clearly suggesting a climbing plant. In his edition of the Old English glosses, Gough translates *hymele* as ‘hop plant’ (Gough 1974: 276). He gives no reasons for his translation but he may have been influenced by this illustration of a climbing plant with serrated leaves.

In the Old English *Herbarium*, translated from a version of Pseudo-Apuleius, Chapter 55 is headed ‘Oenantes’ without any English name either here or in the list of contents (De Vriend 1984: 11, 100). The plant is said to encourage urination and improve bad coughs. This is the text which the DMLBS gives as an example of the meaning ‘dropwort’ (see further below in this section). The illustration which appears in MS London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C.III is nothing like the climbing plant in Ashmole 1431. It has an upright main stem with branches to left and right which are diagonal to the stem. However, two trailing black lines are drawn from the root upwards which may suggest creeping shoots.

This plant-name is, of course, Greek in origin, in the form *oinanthe* (οἰνανθη), which means literally ‘wine flower’. Non-literally, it means ‘inflorescence [the complete flower-head] of the grape-vine’, which can include that of the wild vine. In poetry, it can simply mean ‘vine’. Greek *oinanthe* can also mean ‘dropwort’ because the flowers of this plant smell like wine. However, the identification of the plant-name *dropwort* in botanical terms is not easy. Liddell and Scott’s Greek dictionary gives *Spiraea filipendula*, but the *Spiraea* genus has since

<sup>20</sup> Some pages of this manuscript can be seen online at the Bodleian website. See <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/medieval/mss/ashmole/1431.htm>.

been re-classified. The Greek name was adopted into Classical Latin as *oenanthe* with almost identical meanings: '1. The inflorescence or undeveloped fruit-cluster of the wild vine. b. a plant having the scent of forming grapes, perh[aps] the dropwort, *Filipendula hexapetala*' (OLD). This definition is repeated in the DMLBS (under *oenanthe*).<sup>21</sup> This botanical Latin name is now more usually given as *Filipendula vulgaris* Moench, and refers to the (common) dropwort. Plants in the *Filipendula* genus usually have a strong smell as, for example, the appropriately named meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria* (L.) Maxim.), but the dropwort has almost no scent at all so where is the smell of wine which the ancient name *oenanthe* surely demands? The answer is likely to be that *oenanthe* referred, not to the (common) dropwort, but to the water-dropworts, the genus which bears the modern scientific name of *Oenanthe*, and the flowers of which are said to smell like wine (Grieve 1973: 264). Several other writers have reached this same conclusion (for example, De Vriend 1984: 301).

### 5.5 *Volvola*

The last Latin term which is directly translated by *hymele* is *volvola* (appearing as *voluula*; CNo. 11) in the second Cleopatra Glossary.<sup>22</sup> This name also appears in Latin as *convolvulus* and is identified as 'bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)' (OLD). *Calystegia sepium* (L.) R. Br. is hedge bindweed, which includes several sub-species. The bindweeds are also known in English as 'woodbines', and they are climbing plants. Entries appear in two of the earliest Anglo-Saxon glossaries, the Épinal and Erfurt glossaries, which read *uoluola uuidubindae herba similis hedere q[uae] uitib[us] et] frugib[us] circumdari[i] sol[et]*, 'volvola wudubinde, a plant like ivy of which the vines and fruits are usually wrapped around'.<sup>23</sup> Once again, a climbing plant is described. The plant-name comes from the Latin verb *convolvere* which conveys meanings such as 'roll up, coil, enfold' which clearly describe the action of climbing plants with tendrils, which they coil around, for example, other plants as they grow. The findings in this section will be further considered in Section 10.

## 6. Secondary associations

Plant-names which appear to have some kind of relationship with the name being researched, in this case *hymele*, but which are not clearly presented in the Anglo-Saxon sources as synonyms or translations, are referred to in ASPNS studies as 'associations'. These are most commonly encountered in glossary entries where, for example, an Old English name is given as a translation of a Latin name, but other Old English or Latin names have been added to the entry, perhaps at a later date. It is often unclear what the precise function of such an 'extra' word may be. There are no examples of associations for *hymele*, but there are cases of what is known as 'secondary associations'.

<sup>21</sup> *Oenanthe* appears in some greatly variant spellings. In the DMLBS, not only are the later medieval spellings of *yantum* and *yantis* listed, but the spelling *luanum* is recorded from the Anglo-Saxon Laud Glossary as a very likely misspelling of *inatum*, similar to *yantum*. It is explained in the Laud Glossary as 'the flower of wild grapes' (*flos de uuis agrestibus*; Stracke 1974: 47, line 903).

<sup>22</sup> It is given as *vollula* in Quinn's edition of this glossary (Quinn 1956: 60, line 7), with his note 7 on the same page adding 'Read *volvola*'. The manuscript reading is corrected to *voluula* by Voss (1989: 130).

<sup>23</sup> This is the reading in the Erfurt Glossary. The equivalent in the Épinal Glossary differs only in spellings (Pheifer 1974: 55, line 1059).

Secondary associations occur when a common translation of the name being researched has a different Old English translation in an Anglo-Saxon text, and the second Old English translation never appears in company with the first. In the case of *hymele*, the question is whether its common Latin translations, *polytrichon* and *bryonia*, occur elsewhere with different Old English translations. While no Old English equivalent of *polytrichon*, other than *hymele*, can be traced, there are secondary associations for *bryonia*.

*Bryonia* appears in the Antwerp Glossary, a compilation which is extant in two early eleventh-century manuscripts.<sup>24</sup> One entry reads *Brionia wild cyrfæt [ue]l hwit wingearð* (Kindschi 1955: 119, line 12), and the second entry reads *Ampelos leuce [ue]l Brionia hwit wilde wingearð* (Kindschi 1955: 146, line 1). Old English *cyrfæt* means ‘gourd’ and the *wilde cyrfæt* is defined by the DOE as ‘wild gourd, i.e., colocynth or bryony’. Modern English *gourd* refers to the large fruits of the Cucurbitaceae family, which consists of climbing or trailing plants including the *Bryonia* genus and the colocynth or bitter-apple (*Citrullus colocynthis* (L.) Schrad.). The fruits of some species can be hollowed out to provide containers.

Also translating *bryonia* is OE *hwit (wilde) wingearð*. Old English *wingearð* means, not only ‘vineyard’ but also ‘vine’, and ModE *vine* refers to any climbing or trailing plant related to the grape-vine. In modern botany, the grape-vine, which belongs to the *Vitis* genus, is in a different family from the gourd and bryony, but this scientific classification cannot be applied to the Anglo-Saxon folk taxonomy. It seems likely that *hwit wingearð* is a literal translation of *ampelos leuce* ‘white climbing plant’, since the Antwerp Glossary also contains an entry reading *Ampelos male blac wingearð* in which the OE *blac wingearð* translates literally *ampelos male* ‘black (or dark) climbing plant’ (Kindschi 1955: 146, line 2).<sup>25</sup>

## 7. Textual contrasts and comparisons

The purpose of this section is to consider cases in which *hymele* occurs with other plant-names, usually in a list of ingredients for a herbal remedy, and this suggests that *hymele* must be different from the other plants.<sup>26</sup> This section does not provide strong evidence, since plant-names were not always unique to a single plant, and it is not known whether earlier copiers of the manuscripts added their own local names for plants already listed. Nonetheless, the evidence is sometimes worthwhile in a corroborative function alongside better evidence.

*Hymele* appears in the company of over eighty plant-names in potentially contrastive contexts, but the vast majority of these occur only once in this situation. As a single example could easily be the result of an error, such cases will not be discussed. Of the remainder, none of the plant-names occur more than twice with *hymele* so it is not possible to establish any strong tendency. The following plant-names occur twice in lists of ingredients which include *hymele*, and so suggest that they are not the same plant as *hymele*:<sup>27</sup> *æschpote* ‘vervain or

<sup>24</sup> MS Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, 47 and MS London, British Library, Add. 32246.

<sup>25</sup> In one manuscript of the Old English *Herbarium* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 76), the chapter heading for Chapter 68 is *brionia wildemep* (De Vriend 1984: 110, note 13). This is an error for *wilde nep*, in which *nep* or *næp* derives from Latin *napus* ‘turnip’. However, Cockayne notes that *wildemep* is in a later hand (Cockayne 1864–6: I.172, note 1), and the later medieval sources frequently equate Latin *bryonia* with English *wilde nep* (various spellings). Both these words, in post-Conquest sources, have been interpreted as white bryony (*Bryonia dioica* Jacq.) (Hunt 1989: 55–6).

<sup>26</sup> Plant-names considered to be associations, secondary associations or translations of *hymele* are not included in this section (see Sections 5 and 6 above).

<sup>27</sup> The following definitions are taken from the DOE where possible (it is in process of publication and, at the time of

alkanet' (CNos 8, 9); *belene* 'henbane' (CNos 8, 9); *betonice* 'betony' (CNos 7, 8); *bisceopwyr* 'marsh-mallow or betony' (CNos 7, 9); *clate* 'cleavers or the common burdock' (CNos 7, 8); *cwice* 'couch-grass' (CNos 7, 8); *elehtre* 'lupin?' (CNos 8, 9); *finol* 'fennel' (CNos 7, 9); *haesel* 'hazel' (CNos 7, 8); *hegeclife* 'hedge cleavers' (CNos 7, 8); *rude* 'rue' (CNos 7, 8); and *wermod* 'wormwood' (CNos 8, 9).

## 8. Etymology

The etymology of the Old English word *hymele* is a little difficult to clarify. Firstly, Sauer regards *hymele* as a 'native simplex', in other words, not composed of meaningful morphemes (Sauer 1992: 403). At first sight, this word would seem to be connected with Latin *humulus* 'hop', but the Old English word is recorded first, and *humulus* seems to be a Latinization of a Germanic word. This has naturally given rise to much speculation among etymologists and linguists about the origins of the Old English term.

De Vries summarizes the controversy surrounding the origins of *hymele* and its cognates (De Vries 1977: 266, under *humli*). It has been suggested that Old Norse *humli* derived from medieval Latin or that it was first introduced in the twelfth century by French monks. The possibility has also been suggested that the word derived from Slavic *chmeli* which had been borrowed earlier from the east, from the Finns. However, as Wilson points out, the view that the term entered the Scandinavian languages from Finnish at the time of the *Völkerwanderung* is based on an account of the discovery of hops in the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*, but no part of this work was written down before the seventeenth century, and most of it not before the nineteenth century so the original date of the hop account is unknown (Wilson 1975: 640). The Finnish and/or Slavic theory is also disputed by Neuman (1924) on the grounds that borrowings from Finnish or Slavic into Germanic are very rare, though borrowing in the other direction is common. He contends that OE *hymele* and its Germanic cognates are from a root meaning 'to grope about' and are ultimately cognate with ModE *fumble*, as well as with many words of similar meaning in other Germanic languages. This origin is supported by Pokorny, who only found Indo-European cognates in Celtic and Germanic languages (Pokorny 1959: I.795, under PIE *\*pei-m(i)*). The development of a plant name from its habit of growth has many parallels, and the sense of 'grobe about' appears to suggest a climbing or trailing plant, perhaps with tendrils seeking a hold on some supporting object. Indeed, the habit of the stem in particular is a normal feature of plant descriptions in early botanical works and herbals (see, for example, Arber 1986: chapter 5; Wotherspoon, on *hymlic* in this book, Section 6.1).

## 9. Lexical comparisons

This section is concerned with the descendants of Old English plant-names and the meanings they appear to have in the more extensive records of later periods. However, unlike *hymlic* (see Wotherspoon in this volume), *hymele* appears to have disappeared from the surviving records of the post-Conquest period. The word *humly*, recorded in 1876 in Roxburghshire, appears to be a good candidate for a descendant of OE *hymele*, but Britten and Holland (1886: 272) interpret it as *Conium maculatum* L., in other words, a descendant of *hymlic*, which is

writing, has reached the letter G) and, otherwise, from Clark Hall (1960). Where multiple definitions are listed, only the principal ones are given here.

phonologically acceptable. This word *humly* may suggest why *hymele* disappeared: it would seem likely that both *hymele* and *hymlic* evolved into a phonologically similar or identical word, creating ambiguity. Although considerable ambiguity is tolerated in plant-names, there may have been reasons why this particular clash was unacceptable.

## 10. Consideration of the basic data

In this section, the evidence which has been presented in the earlier sections will be considered together. Each section above was concerned only with a particular type of evidence or clues, but it is now time to see whether those findings corroborate or contradict each other.

Starting with the descriptors (Section 3), a plant called *hymele*, and also called *herba polytricus* is said to grow on old settlement sites (specifically, on walls in the Latin source) and in damp places, and is described as having *twigu* like a pig's bristles (CNo. 4). Old English *twig* can mean 'twig, branch, shoot, small tree' but, since the *twigu* in this case are growing on a plant, 'small tree' can be eliminated. Furthermore, the bristles of a pig suggest growths that are close together, a concept which makes twigs or shoots the most likely interpretation, and this fits well with the Latin equivalent, *ramulus* 'a little branch, twig' (OLD). Taking further clues from Section 5.1, it can now be noted that this plant has something resembling bristles (stiff hairs), one of its properties is the ability to nourish human hair, and its name means literally 'many hairs'. This collection of hair-clues may be significant.

Section 5.1 also shows that *two* plants were involved in Dioscorides' text, and that both of them could be called *polytrichon*, they both had similar habitats and they both effected the same cures. In the early sixth century, one of the illustrators of the Juliana Anicia Codex had believed these plants were very different in appearance but, as far as the extant evidence can suggest, only one of those illustrations was available in Anglo-Saxon England. That illustration shows the maidenhair fern. Judging from several surviving manuscripts of the Latin original of the Old English *Herbarium*, the two *polytrichon* plants of Dioscorides' text had already been merged into one plant entry, before it was translated into Old English (De Vriend 1984: 96–9). For the Anglo-Saxons, would the maidenhair fern be compatible with the minimal description provided by their Latin source?

The plant's habitat is given as walls and damp places, and this compares well with Stace's description of the maidenhair fern's habitat: 'limestone cliffs, grykes and rock crevices near the sea ... and on walls and bridges, always in moist sheltered spots' (Stace 1997: 16). At first, the mention of pig's bristles is puzzling but consideration of the plant's anatomy offers an explanation. The thin, black stems (correctly, the rachides) of this plant grow from an underground rhizome so they are often found in close proximity, almost bunched, and they arch over at their ends. The rachides look similar to the long, curved and often dark bristles of the wild boar.<sup>28</sup> The maidenhair fern, which is the subject of the *Herbarium* illustration for *politricus*, so far does not contradict any clues extracted from the Anglo-Saxon sources.

The place-names in Section 4 certainly suggest a damp location, and the element *tun* (Section 4.3) sounds particularly appropriate for the maidenhair fern, which likes damp walls. Interpreting *tun* as 'farmstead', there are several possibilities for stone walls. Although the

<sup>28</sup> Modern domestic pigs result from selective breeding, often with non-European species, from the eighteenth century onwards. The wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) is the closest animal we now have to the early medieval wild or domestic variety.

main house is more likely to have been timber-built, it may have had stone footings, there were probably stone boundary walls on the farm land, and the 'enclosure' sense of *tun* may indicate smaller walled areas for certain purposes. The other locations discussed in Section 4, marshy land near a stream, a wood or woodland clearing, seem much less likely, although stone may have been present.

Returning to the descriptors (Section 3), we find that *hymele* is agreeable to the taste so can be added to one's usual drinks (CNo. 6). This clue appears in a plant entry in the *Herbarium* which is separate from that of *herba politricus*, the Latin name of which is *bryonia*. This *hymele/bryonia* entry is a treatment for pain in the spleen which may or may not have a similar origin as the remedy for abdominal pain in the *hymele/polytrichon* entry (see Section 11), but which has no mention of associations with hair. The Latin source of the Old English *Herbarium* gives no further information on *bryonia*. Its illustration in the Old English translation does not depict maidenhair fern (nor maidenhair spleenwort) but a plant with four rigid stems growing in a fan-shape from the root, three of which branch near the top. At the end of each stem and its branches is a single elongated bud-like structure. The stems have leaves at intervals, each one consisting of a number of very small leaflets on each side, apparently about the size of yew needles. With the minimal information and the stylized illustration for *hymele/bryonia*, it looks as if the Anglo-Saxons would have had difficulty identifying this plant if they had no other information.

Further information about *bryonia* was available in Anglo-Saxon sources but was perhaps not known to the copy-artist of the illustrated *Herbarium* manuscript. In Section 6, it was found that *bryonia* was translated by further Old English plant-names in the Antwerp Glossary, an Anglo-Saxon compilation: *wilde cyrfæt* 'wild gourd' (a climbing plant) and the *hwit (wilde) wingeard* 'white (wild) climbing plant'. Dioscorides' *ampelos leuke* 'white climbing plant' appears in the company of *bryonia*, *wilde cyrfæt* and *hwit wilde wingeard*, all indicating climbing plants. Furthermore, access to Pliny's *Naturalis historia* would have confirmed that *bryonia* was a vine (Pliny the Elder 1942–83: VI.432–3). In addition, it seems likely that an illustrative tradition of showing *bryonia* as a climbing plant may have existed in Anglo-Saxon England, since the manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1431, shows an obvious climber (folio 18v), as does another late eleventh century English manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 130; folio 17r). In conclusion, the scribe and artist of the illustrated Old English *Herbarium* may have been unclear as to the identity of *bryonia*, or they may have been mistaken in their identification, but it seems that at least some Anglo-Saxons would have rightly identified the plant as a climber.

*Hymele* twice translates yet another Latin plant-name, *oenanthe*, in a Latin manuscript (Ashmole 1431) of the Pseudo-Apuleius (see Section 5.4). In the Old English translation of this text (in MS Cotton Vitellius C.III) *oenantes* appears with no English name. The illustrations for *oenanthe* in the two manuscripts are very unlike. The Ashmole illustration shows a main stem in several strong S-curves, with serrated leaves at intervals and, at the very end of the stem, three pointed, elongated buds or fruits which appear to be covered in scales.<sup>29</sup> The Vitellius C.III *oenanthe* has a single, thick and straight main stem with long leaves consisting of sparse, deeply incised leaflets, and two dark wiry shoots extending upwards from the roots.

The use of *oenanthe* to mean 'water dropworts' raises some doubts. The dropworts are

<sup>29</sup> These buds or fruits may suggest hops, which are also scaly, but they do not hang down like hops in this illustration.

umbellifers, and quite unlike the cucurbitaceous plants or climbing plants apparently most commonly indicated by *hymele*. It is, therefore, a possibility that *humele* in CNos 12 and 13 is an error for *humelic*, a term which was definitely used for various umbellifers, probably including water dropwort (see Wotherspoon on *humelic* in this book, Section 9). Against this view is the fact that some manuscript illustrations show a trailing or climbing plant quite unlike the water dropworts. However, it is clear from the previous paragraph that there has been some misunderstanding over the appearance of this plant (as with some others) so the evidence of the illustrations is not entirely reliable.

*Hymele* also translates Latin *volvola*, which denotes the bindweed (see Section 5.5), another climbing plant. If the etymology of *hymele* given in Section 8 is correct, this plant-name originated in a word denoting something like ‘groping, climbing, trailing’ suggesting that its earliest sense, either in Old English or in Common Germanic, indicated a climbing plant.

It seems, therefore, that a number of different *hymele*-naming traditions are extant in the Anglo-Saxon sources, and it is time to consider the compound names in which *hymele* is qualified by *hege-*, *heah-* and *eowo-*. *Hegehymele* means ‘hedge-*hymele*’ and, apart from being included in a long list of ingredients for a salve (CNo. 7; Pettit 2001: I.10–11, Section 15), the only other occurrence of *hegehymele* occurs in the Brussels Glossary, where it translates the Latin *humblonis* from *humblo* ‘hop’ (CNo. 10; Sections 3 and 5.3). The hop is native to Britain (Stace 1997: 116) and, as a climbing plant, it is often found in hedgerows. It was also cultivated as a crop, although there is some debate as to when this activity began in England (see Section 12). Even if hops were cultivated in Anglo-Saxon times, it seems unlikely that the *hege-* prefix was intended to distinguish the wild from the cultivated plant since, firstly, OE *hege* could mean ‘fence’ as well as ‘hedge’ so might be taken to indicate a frame for the cultivated plant to climb (although ‘hedge’ seems the more usual sense of the word), and, secondly, it is clear that *hymele* alone was not restricted to a single plant so was unlikely to specify the cultivated hop. Perhaps the most likely conclusion is that *hegehymele* specified the hop-plant for some Anglo-Saxons who interpreted *hymele* as a climbing or trailing plant in general. Other climbers, of course, can be found in hedges but the hop may have been the most common hedge-climber to those who used this compound name.

If the prefix *heah-* is taken at face value to mean ‘high’ (see Section 3) in *heahhymele*, the hop is certainly a candidate for this name. Modern hops, cultivated on a frame, can grow up to thirty feet high so it may be that, where they attached themselves to a tree, their height could have been considered remarkable in Anglo-Saxon England. *Byronia dioica* can also reach considerable heights, but *hymele* is less likely to have denoted *Bryonia alba* which is not a British native. It would be unwise to suggest that *heahhymele* denoted a specific plant since, in a folk taxonomy, it would most likely have been applicable to any climbing *hymele* which reached a remarkable height.

The prefix *eowo-* ‘ewe’ is unlikely to refer to the female of a dioecious plant, since the realization that some plants can be male or female probably post-dates the Anglo-Saxon period by several centuries (see Section 3). A number of plants have animals in their folk-names, but the significance of *ewe* in this context is not clear.

From the basic data discussed above it seems that *hymele* to the Anglo-Saxons could mean any twining, climbing or trailing plant, as its etymology suggests (Section 8). This would include the maidenhair fern since its shoots grow from what is known as a ‘creeping rhizome’, that is, a thickened stem which progresses under- or over-ground, even acting as a food store for the shoots when it grows across rock. The rhizome of the maidenhair spleenwort is short

and usually described as creeping only a little (Ferguson 1912: 24). It is debateable whether such slight progress would have been noted, and this adds to the impression that the fern is a better *hymele* candidate than the spleenwort. This sort of classification by a particular visible feature is typical of a folk taxonomy.<sup>30</sup> As a result of classifying by such a feature, the name *hymele* could be applied to species which the botanist would consider totally unrelated. It seems we have evidence (or clues) that the name *hymele* was used of the maidenhair fern, the wild gourd, white byrony (*Bryonia dioica*), the bindweed and the hop, which are all climbing and/or creeping plants.<sup>31</sup> If it is true that the definition ‘water dropwort’ arises from a confusion of *hymele* with *hymlic*, as discussed above in this section, then *hymele* would appear to be safely defined as ‘climbing or creeping plant’.<sup>32</sup>

The fact that *hymele* was such a general term would naturally have led to the compound forms *hegehymele*, *heahhymele* and *eowohymele* as attempts to distinguish specific types where required, although these may not have replaced the use of the generic term for these types. The unspecific nature of the term *hymele* is also likely to be a reason for the later introduction of the term *hop*, to specify that plant when it began to become commercially important (see Section 12).

## 11. *Hymele* in medicine

In the *Herbarium* (Chapter 52) where OE *hymele* is equated with Latin *polytrichon*, the leaves of the plant are to be ground with nine peppercorns and nine coriander seeds and put in good wine to be drunk as a cure for abdominal pain, just before taking a bath. It is also said here to make the hair grow, but which part of the plant is to be used or how it is to be administered is not specified. In Chapter 68 of the same work where *hymele* is equated with *bryonia*, it is said to be a remedy for pain in the spleen. The part of the plant is not specified, but it is to be taken with food, and it can also be put in ordinary drinks.

In the *Lacnunga* (CNo. 8), *hymele* (part not specified) is to be pounded together with equal amounts of many other herbs in a mortar. The list of plants is largely in alliterative pairs, *hymelan* being paired with *hegeclife*. This plant is usually identified as cleavers (*Galium aparine* L.; DOEPN), another climbing plant. Many further ingredients are to be prepared and added, such as several tree-barks and animal fats, and the purpose is to make a *bansealf* ‘bone-salve’ that is good for headaches and for infirmities of all the limbs. This recipe contains ‘magical’ elements in contrast to the recipes of the *Herbarium*, and is extremely complex, involving much boiling and skimming, and finishing with the singing of psalms and a prayer. Also in *Lacnunga* (CNo. 7), is a recipe for a *grene sealf*, ‘green salve’ in which *hegehymele* (part not specified) is used with a great variety of other herbs. The method of preparation and uses of the salve are not specified.

In the Charm (CNo. 9), *eowohumele* is used with other herbs in a recipe for a salve to ward

<sup>30</sup> Jerome Bock (his latinized name was Hieronymus Tragus) proposed the name *Serpentariae* for climbing and trailing plants in the early sixteenth century (Greene 1983: I.348–9).

<sup>31</sup> Although southern European writers may well have included the ‘other’ white bryony (*Bryonia alba*) with *B. dioica*, it has been excluded here when considering the Anglo-Saxon context since it is not a British native plant. This is not to deny that it would have been available to some through importation or special cultivation in monastic gardens.

<sup>32</sup> The network of interpretations centred on *hymele* is complex and often confusing. Wilson (1975: 642) makes a valiant attempt to tabulate the network, but any use of this table should take into account later research.

off elves and nocturnal evil spirits and temptations. The recipe contains ‘magical’ elements, such as saying masses over the mixture. The salve is to be smeared on the face, the eyes, and anywhere the body might be painful.

The *hymeles* are one ingredient among many in most of the above recipes, and this makes it difficult to ascertain what was believed to be the function of these plants. However, in the *Herbarium* recipes, this research is easier. Firstly, maidenhair fern, along with the seeds of pepper and coriander, made a drink to help abdominal pain. Secondly, maidenhair fern (presumably by itself) encouraged hair growth. Thirdly, another climbing plant, possibly *Bryonia dioica*, given in food, relieved pain in the spleen. Fourthly, and perhaps with no medical function, a climbing plant, possibly *Bryonia dioica*, could be added to everyday drinks (see Section 12).

The first and second remedies in the Old English *Herbarium* are accompanied by some information about the plant and by an illustration which is recognisable as maidenhair fern. Is this impression misleading in the context of Anglo-Saxon England? In later centuries, *maidenhair* was used of both the fern and the maidenhair spleenwort, and they were sometimes distinguished by the terms ‘true maidenhair’ and ‘common maidenhair’ respectively. As is obvious from its name, the spleenwort rather than the fern was traditionally credited with dealing with problems of the spleen, and this may be because the fern was not plentiful in Britain. Step (1908: 22) describes it as a ‘rare sight’ in this country, and writes ‘It has probably never been plentiful with us, as it is unable to survive our winter climate except in a few sheltered places near the sea on our south-west and western coasts’. The early modern herbalists, well versed in Greek and Latin sources, appear to have assigned the properties described in such sources as being common to the fern and the spleenwort, only to the spleenwort because it was by far the more plentiful plant in Britain.<sup>33</sup> Whether the Anglo-Saxons did the same is a difficult question. The small amount of evidence which has been considered in this paper suggests that the fern was the plant they had in mind, and this may be because the warmer climate (than today’s) of Anglo-Saxon England enabled the fern to grow more plentifully, or because it was cultivated in monastic gardens. The abdominal pain (CNo. 4) and the pain in the spleen (CNo. 6), with different Latin plant-names, may not, of course, have been considered to have the same cause.<sup>34</sup>

## 12. *Hymele* in beer

The question about the role of *hymele* (as hops) which has always interested scholars is whether they were known as a flavouring for beer in Anglo-Saxon England. As discussed in Section 3 above, Cockayne argued that the statement in the Old English *Herbarium* that *hymele* was taken in everyday drinks (CNo. 6) was evidence for hopped beer but, as has been shown, the wording is not conclusive on this point.<sup>35</sup> The drinks beer, ale and mead generally seem to have been thought by the Anglo-Saxons to taste better sweetened (Nelson 2005: 109–10).

The earliest certain documentary evidence for the use of hops to flavour beer, discussed in detail by Nelson (2005) and by Wilson (1975), is from the statutes of Adalhard, Abbot of the monastery of St Peter and St Stephen at Corbie in France, written in 822, following the

<sup>33</sup> The name *spleenwort* is not recorded before 1578 (OED).

<sup>34</sup> See Biggam on *safene* in this volume, Section 14.1, for a discussion as to how Anglo-Saxon physicians may have dealt with the spleen.

<sup>35</sup> Bonser disposes of other aspects of Cockayne’s argument (Bonser 1963: 359–60).

precepts for monks established at the synods at Aachen in 816 and 817 (Wilson 1975: 644; Nelson 2005: 107). A tithe of each malting was to be given to the porter of the monastery who kept the malt he made himself and likewise hops (*humlo*) but, if this was insufficient, he could acquire as much as he needed for making beer. In an earlier passage in the same document, millers are excluded from the duty of gathering firewood and hops, perhaps suggesting that, at this time, hops were not cultivated. An earlier Continental document from 768, granting lands to the abbey of St Denis, also in northern France, mentions *Humlonarias*, which suggests a place known for its hops, but does not necessarily imply cultivation. However, documents mentioning hop-gardens in Bavaria exist from 859 (Wilson 1975: 644; Hornsey 1999: 58; Nelson 2005: 108).

Probably the main point of putting hops in beer was to act as a preservative, as noted by Hildegard of Bingen in the twelfth century (*Physica* I.61, III.27; Migne 1844–65: vol. 197), rather than for the flavour. However, the practice seems to have suddenly become popular in an area of what is now northern France, and it is perfectly conceivable that the practice could have spread across the Channel, although it is not documented in England in the early Middle Ages.

The best evidence for the use of hops in Anglo-Saxon England is not documentary but archaeological. In 1970, at Graveney Marshes in Kent, the remains of a boat were discovered during excavations for drainage works (Fenwick 1978). The boat was found to have contained a cargo of hop cones (Wilson 1975). Radiocarbon dating assigned the timbers of the boat to c.870–886, and the brushwood platform where the boat had been abandoned to c.970. The samples of the contents and surroundings of the boat taken by Wilson were fairly conclusive. The fruits of *Humulus lupulus* hugely outnumber any other macro-fossils identified from the samples, and hop remains were found on the brushwood platform and in the layer overlying the bottom of the boat, but not under the boat, and no hop pollen was found. These facts fairly certainly show that the hop fruits had been brought to the site, and that those outside the boat were not there through any natural agent. Either the cargo of hops had come to the Graveney site from elsewhere in England or from abroad and had been only partially unloaded, or a cargo of hops had been in process of being loaded at Graveney. Though there are several possible economic uses of the hop *plant* (Wilson 1975: 637–8), the only feasible uses for the inflorescences are medical and the flavouring and preserving of beer. The scale of the cargo evidenced by the remains of the Graveney boat suggests the latter use. This evidence, plus the documentary evidence from the Continent for hopped beer indicates that such a thing was probably known in England from the ninth century, although this is likely to have involved the use of wild, rather than cultivated hops.

### 13. Conclusion

The evidence and arguments presented above suggest that OE *hymele* had the principal sense of ‘a climbing or creeping plant’, that is, a plant which was seen to move from one location to another. There is good evidence that *hymele* could denote the maidenhair fern, white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*) and the hop plant, but glimpses of the wild gourd and bindweed suggest the word had a broad application. Attempts to reduce the possibilities by coining compound terms were probably effective at a local level where, for example, a particular species was the pre-eminent hedge-climbing plant, but such efforts probably remained dialectal.

**Appendix A: *Hymele* catalogue**

<i>CNo.</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Short Title &amp; Reference</i>	<i>Spelling</i>
1	Herbarium	Lch I (HerbHead) 52.0	<i>hymele</i>
2	Herbarium	Lch I (HerbHead) 68.0	<i>hymele</i>
3	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 52.0	<i>hymele</i>
4	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 52.0 <sup>36</sup>	<i>hymele</i>
5	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 68.0	<i>hymele</i>
6	Herbarium	Lch I (Herb) 68.1	<i>hymele</i>
7	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 15.1	<i>hegehymele</i>
8	Lacnunga	Med 3 (Grattan-Singer) 31.1	<i>hymelan</i>
9	Charm: 20	Charm 20 (Storms) 2	<i>eowohumelan</i>
10	Glossary: Brussels	BrGI 1 (Wright-Wülcker) 8.210	<i>hegehymele</i>
11	Glossary: Cleopatra 2	CI GI 2 (Quinn) 756	<i>hymele</i>
12	Herbarium (G)	OccGI 36 (Gough) 39	<i>humele</i>
13	Herbarium (G)	OccGI 36 (Gough) 40	<i>humele</i>
14	Glossary: Royal 7.D.II	CollGI 20 (Meritt) 13	<i>heahhumele</i>
15	Glossary: Laud	CollGI 26 (Stracke) 233	<i>humele</i>
16	Glossary: Durham	DurGI (Lindheim) 66	<i>hymelyc</i>
17	Charter: S1486	Ch 1486 (Whitlock 15) 53	<i>Humelcyrre (2)</i>
18	Charter: S1373	Ch 1373 (Rob 56) 1	<i>Hymeltune</i>
19	Charter: S1593	Ch 1593 (Hearne) 1	<i>hymeltune</i>
20	Charter: S219	Ch 219 (Birch 552) 9	<i>hymelbroc</i>
21	Charter: S633	Ch 633 (Birch 937) 2	<i>hymelbroc</i>
22	Charter: S786	Ch 786 (Birch 1282) 24	<i>hymelbroc (2)</i>
23	Charter: S1591	Ch 1591 (Birch 428) 2	<i>hymelbroc</i>
24	Charter: S1591	Ch 1591 (Birch 428) 3	<i>hymelbroce</i>
25	Charter: S1593	Ch 1593 (Hearne) 3	<i>hymelbroce</i>
26	Charter: S1593	Ch 1593 (Hearne) 11	<i>hymelbroc</i>
27	Charter: S1600	Ch 1600 (Hearne) 20	<i>hymelbroc</i>
28	Charter: S1600	Ch 1600 (Hearne) 20	<i>hymelbroces</i>
29	Charter: S1348	Ch 1348 (Kem 645) 9	<i>hymelmor</i>
30	Charter: S1373	Ch 1373 (Rob 56) 4	<i>Hymeltune</i>
31	Charter: S1373	Ch 1373 (Rob 56) 13	<i>Hymeltune</i>
32	Charter: S633	Ch 633 (Birch 937) 5	<i>hymelbroc</i>
33	Charter: S1593	Ch 1593 (Hearne) 5	<i>hymelbroce</i>
34	Charter: S1348	Ch 1348 (Kem 645) 3	<i>ymelmore</i>

Appendix A1: *Hymele* catalogue<sup>36</sup> 52.0 in this short title (DOEWC) should be 52.1.

## Old English Hymele

<i>CNo.</i>	<i>Related</i>	<i>Context</i>
3	4	Closely located in same plant entry. 3+4: hymele
5	6	Closely located in same plant entry. 5+6: hymele
12	13	Probably from the same text originally. 12+13: humele ynantes
15	16	Probably from the same text originally. 15: humele brionia 16: hymelyc bronía
18	30, 31	The same place-name in the same charter. 18+30+31: Hymeltune
21	32	The same place-name in the same charter. 21+32: hymelbroc
23	24	The same place-name in the same charter. 23: hymelbroc 24: hymelbroce
25	26, 33	The same place-name in the same charter. 25+33: hymelbroce 26: hymelbroc
27	28	The same place-name in the same charter. 27: hymelbroc 28: hymelbroces
29	34	The same place-name in the same charter. 29: hymelmor 34: ymelmor

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