

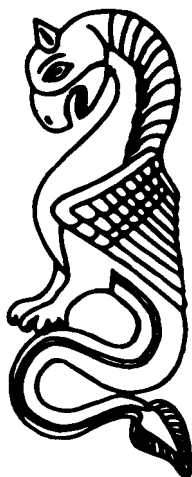
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Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
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SOME ALTERNATIVE ANALYSES OF MEDIEVAL FIELD-NAMES

A.D. MILLS

Those of us concerned with the elucidation of medieval field-names are of course well aware that (as with many older place-names) it is often impossible to decide whether the first element of a compound name is a significant word or a personal name/surname. In the analysis of field-names, space alone may require that all the possible alternatives cannot always be rehearsed, and the single explanation thought most likely by the editor will then be the one given. However this can result in an impression of certainty where sometimes there is none, and, more occasionally, in etymologies and explanations that seem unconvincing. More importantly perhaps, the cumulative effect of such interpretations may lead to some distortion in the lists of elements and personal names that conclude the county surveys. It is intended that the following suggestions for the alternative analysis of some examples of common medieval field-name types may be a contribution towards a finer tuning in our elucidation of their origins and meanings.

The material in this paper is not original, but has been gleaned from the abundant field-name lists in recently published EPNS volumes.¹ It is regretted that the material has not been collected at all methodically, rather it has been noted in passing while consulting the volumes in question. However it is hoped that even such a random sampling may have some validity, since it is certain that many more examples similar to those adduced would come to light if a more methodical survey of the published material were undertaken.

Most of the field-names under consideration are first recorded in the medieval period itself (13th-15th century), though a few are somewhat later (up to about 1650). All are likely to be of post-Conquest origin, but the possibility of pre-Conquest origin for some names cannot of course be precluded. Characteristic second elements are *croft*, *furlang*, *(ge)hæg*, *plek*, and *ryding*, with several others occurring only in single examples.

Medieval field-names with a personal name or surname as first element, both with and without possessive *-s*, are of course extremely common in the published material. Those without possessive *-s* sometimes contain old feminine or old weak masculine personal names where the absence of *-s* may be historically correct (e.g. *Uluethemed*' late 13th century Bk 211 from OE *Wulfgýs*; *Ebbelonde* 1317 Bk 325 from OE *Ebba*), but many other examples contain a wide range and variety of personal names and surnames (e.g. *Oselakemere* 13th

century Bk 183 from OE *Ōslāc*; *Dandecroft* late 13th century Ch 2.221 from ME *Dande*, a pet-form of *Andrew*; *le Banastreyord* 1487 St 46 from the surname *Bannister*; *Shirecroft* 1346 Bk 52 from a John *Shyre*). Examples like the last one, where only the occurrence of a local surname in the documentation makes it likely that the first element is a surname rather than a significant word (i.e. *scīr*¹ "district" or *scīr*² "bright"), should put us on our guard about making our interpretations too dogmatic. It should also be noted that the presence of the definite article (as in *le Banastreyord*) does not necessarily make a personal name/surname a less likely first element.

In the EPNS volumes, the vast majority of medieval field-names of the type exemplified above have been subjected to plausible analysis, and in the case of the many similar examples in which the first element may alternatively have been a significant word, the alternatives have been clearly set out (e.g. *Hondecroft* 1362 Ch 4.27, from either *hund* "dog" or a personal name *Honde*). However just occasionally, in individual cases, the personal name/surname alternative has not been entertained when perhaps it should have been.²

The examples that follow under (I) below are all cases in which the first element does not have possessive *-s* but which seem capable of this alternative treatment. In some names the explanation of the first element as a personal name or surname will only remain an alternative possibility, valid but not necessarily more attractive than the significant word already proposed. But in other cases, it is felt that the personal name/surname alternative actually provides a preferable or more convincing etymology, occasionally avoiding the need to consider a significant word which may seem inappropriate or unlikely.³ There follow, under (II) below, some cases where the editors have chosen not to provide any explanation of the first element (again all without possessive *-s*), presumably reflecting their uncertainty, but where a personal name/surname solution looks extremely likely. To these are added, under (III) below, a few cases where the first element shows possessive *-s*, but where nevertheless only a significant word has been proposed. Here too, personal names and surnames may be suggested as alternative first elements, and may in some cases provide more convincing etymologies.

- (I) Field-names in which the first element (without a possessive *-s*) has been analysed as a significant word, but where a personal name or surname might be seen to provide a possible, and often preferable, alternative:

Colheye 1488, *le Collhey* 15c Ch 2.50 (OE *col*¹ "charcoal" is suggested; but the common personal name/surname *Col(l)* is a likely alternative)
Dickerleaze 1609 Bk 83 (OE **dicor* "ten" is suggested, though with ? in list of elements ib. 864; the surname *Dicker* is a preferable alternative)
Donseforowe (no doubt for *Douse-*) 1433-4, *Dowce-*, *Doust-* 1434-5,

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- Dous-* 1439-40, *Duss(e)-* 1440-1, 1483, *Dust-* 1590-1 Bk 422 (OE *dūst* "dust" is suggested; but the majority of early spellings favour the personal name/surname *Douce*, *Dowce* (rather perhaps than the ME adjective *douce* "sweet" from which the personal name is derived), the spellings in -t- representing the diminutive *Doucet*)
- Edderudynges* 1453 St 47 (OE *ēdre* "stream" is thought possible; but the common ME surname *Edde* (v. Reaney s.n. *Edds*) is a more convincing alternative)
- Flynt(e)furl'* 1519 Bk 349 (OE *flint* "flint" is suggested; but the surname *Flint* is a possible alternative)
- La Giggehurne* 1348 Bk 79 (ME *gigge* "flighty girl" is thought possible (though the word is not included in the list of elements ib. 872); the surname derived from this word (v. Reaney s.n. *Gigg*) is just as likely)
- Godderudynges* 1407, *Godrydding* 1569 St 47 (OE *gōd* "good" is suggested; but the surname *Good* is a likely alternative)
- Goldrydinge* 17c, *Cole Readings* 1658 Bk 138 (OE *col*¹ "charcoal" is suggested; but a surname is just as likely, perhaps especially in view of the discrepant spellings; cf. *Colheye* above)
- Hoggerudyng* 1312 Ch 4.55 (OE *hogg* "hog" is suggested; but a personal name/surname *Hogg* is equally likely, either from *hogg* or a pet-form of *Roger*; cf. discussion of alternatives under *Hodg Croft* Ch 1.158 and the significant early spelling *Rogerrudyng* 1353 for the analogous field-name *Hodge Riddings* Ch 3.189)
- How(e)crofte* 1548 Bk 169, *Howmeade* 1547 ib. 458 (for the first of these OE *hōh* "heel, spur of land" is suggested, for the second no suggestion is made, but in the list of elements ib. 881, both are considered "perhaps more likely to be from *hol*", i.e. from *hol*¹ "hole" or *hol*² "hollow"; however a better solution might be the ME personal name/surname *Howe* (usually a form of *Hugh* but possibly also from a simplex place-name in *hōh*, v. Reaney s.nn. *How*, *Hugh*), cf. *Huwemedede* 1255-8 Bk 169 interpreted as probably "Hugh's mead", in the same parish as *How(e)crofte*)
- Masfurlong'* 1430-1, *Masse-* 1431-2, *Maste-* 1440-1, 1588-9, *Mass-* 1842 Bk 420 (OE *mæst* "mast of a ship, perhaps used of a pole stuck in the ground" or OE *mæst* "food for swine" are tentatively suggested, but "the last seems unlikely as there is no woodland in the parish" ib. 420 and only the first is included in the list of elements ib. 890; however the ME personal name/surname *Masse*, a pet-form of *Matthew*, looks a preferable alternative, the spellings in -t- representing a diminutive *Masset*, cf. *Donseforowe* above. There is then no difficulty in including the form *Matforlong'* 1390-1 here, from *Mat(t)*, yet another pet-form of *Matthew*; cf. next)
- Mattecroft* 1399, 1410, *Mad-*, *-mat-* 1424-5, *-made-* 1433-4, *-mac-* 1466, *-make-* 1501 Bk 422 (first element is thought to be "possibly OE *matt* 'mat', later associated with *mād*, but *matt* has not been noted as a topographical term", and there is no entry in the list of elements ib. 890; this name is in the same parish as the previous name and is very likely also from *Mat(t)*, a pet-form of *Matthew*)

- le moneheye*, -*haye* 1306, 1423 St 54 (OE *mōna* "moon" is thought possible, and reference is made to Field 141 who cites Moon Field Hrt (*Monefildole* 1416, *Monefeld* 1463) as "a name not yet satisfactorily explained" which "may allude to a location favoured for moonlight activities, such as poaching"; however for both these names the ME surname *Mone*, usually from AFR *m(o)un*, is a possible alternative, and may also be found in *Man Moor St* 63 (*le monemor* 1354, *Monnemo(o)re* 1570, where the later spelling probably represents *Moune-*), for which no first element is proposed)
- Potterforlong* 1549 St 53 (the occupational term *potter* is proposed; clearly there will always be a difficulty in distinguishing between occupational term and surname in field-names like this, but the surname alternative may often be preferable)
- the Richcrofte* 1653 Ch 2.240 (the adjective *rich* "fertile" is suggested; but a personal name *Rich* (a diminutive of *Richard*) or a surname *Rich* (which has various origins) may be just as likely)
- Roundeforlonge* 1390-1 Bk 423 (the first element is taken to be ME *round* "round", making "an unusual furlong-name"; however the ME surname *Round* is a more convincing alternative. Cf. discussion of next name)
- Rownyngfurlong* 1431-2, *Rowny-* 1434-5, *Row(yng)-*, *Rovyng-* 1438-9 Bk 423 (following a suggestion made by Dr von Feilitzen, the first element is thought to be ME *rouning* "whispering, muttering", but as is pointed out loc. cit., "this would be another unusual furlong-name"; moreover a late field-name *Rouning Ground* 1839 Bk 241, 901, is thought tentatively to contain the same first element. Other explanations may be preferable. *Rouning Ground* is best interpreted as a late alteration of *Rowney Ground* (-*ing* G- < -*yg-*) from ROWNEY BRIDGE Bk 240 in the same parish. In *Rowny(ng)furlong* the -*ng* may also be analogical (cf. Gl 4.77 for similar examples), in which case the first element might be best explained as from a surname *Rowny* (this in turn from a place-name such as *Rugheneie* Bk 211 or the *Rowney Bridge* mentioned). In fact it is also conceivable that the *Roundeforlonge* noted earlier belongs here, since it was in the same parish as *Rowny(ng)furlong*; *Rounde-* may well be for *Roune(y)-* with epenthetic *d*)
- Strecchelane* 13c Bk 211 (OE *strecca* "stretch of land" is suggested; the ME surname *Strecche* is a possible alternative, v. Reaney s.n. *Stretch*)
- Towheye* 1567 St 49 (OE *tōh* "tough" is suggested; the surname *Tow(e)* from this same word is a possible alternative)
- Whiterudyng* 1453 St 49 (OE *hwīt* "white" is suggested; the surname *White* is a possible alternative)
- Wilcrofte* 1607 St 70 (OE *willig* (sic) "willow" is suggested; the personal name/surname *Will* is a preferable alternative)

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- (II) Field-names in which the first element (without a possessive -s) has not been analysed (i.e. no interpretation has been offered), but where a personal name or surname might be seen to provide a likely solution:

Adyfurlonge 1336 Ch 2.240 (probably *Ady*, a pet-form of *Adam*, cf. *Adcoksfeild* 1316 in the same township, analysed as from *Adecoc*, another pet-form of *Adam*)
Damagasestede 1349 Bk 450 (no doubt from *Dame Agace*, the vernacular form of *Agatha* with ME *dame* "lady")⁴
Eletewod' 1270 Bk 35 (probably a diminutive *Elet* of the personal name *Ellen*)
Kuttelaughton 1409 St 54 (the first element is probably ME *Cutt*, a pet-form of *Cuthbert*; in *Lawtonmustard* 1514 (same township), the final element is given as *mustard* "mustard", but the ME surname *Mustard* is more likely in view of the inversion in the compound)
Lullemixhull 1230 Bk 425 (the first element is probably a ME surname *Lulle*, from the OE personal name *Lulla*; it is of course not necessary to suppose that *Lulle-* reflects an OE genitive singular *Lullan-*)
Maldecroft 1342 Bk 75 (no doubt the common ME vernacular form *Mald* for the personal name *Matilda*)
Parche Crofte 1450 Ch 4.148 (this could be the ME surname *Parche* found e.g. in the Dorset subsidy rolls for 1327 and 1332, but cf. elsewhere in Cheshire a *Porchcroft* 1341 Ch 2.63 interpreted as being perhaps from ME *porche* with the sense "land dedicated to the maintenance of a church porch")
Wylkestrecche 1342 Bk 75 (no doubt the ME personal name/surname *Wilke*)
Yryshestyle 1552-3 Bk 308 (probably the ME surname *Irish*).

Slightly different but also essentially in this category is:

Gybonvelethyng 1475 Li 205 (here the first element is seen to be "the personal name or surname" *Gibbon* but "the meaning of -vele- is obscure"; in fact -vele- no doubt represents the ME surname *Veale* (v. Reaney s.n. *Veal*), so that *Gibbon* (a diminutive of *Gibb* which is a pet-form of *Gilbert*) is here a Christian name - thus "Gilbert Veale's possession". For an analogy of this type of field-name, consisting of the full name of the person (without a possessive -s) plus element, cf. *Col(l)yncol(le) Rew(e)* 1542 Do 1.356, "Colin Coll's row", and for similar names with a possessive -s, cf. *le colet rokesrudyng* below)

- (III) Field-names in which the first element (with a possessive -s) has been analysed as a significant word, but where a personal name or surname might be seen to provide a possible, and often preferable, alternative:

Brocwaynesmor 1355 St 64 (the first part of this name is analysed as from OE *brōc* "brook" and *wægen* "cart", but the meaning of such a compound is not clear; a ME surname **Brocwayn*, a bahuvrihi compound from ME *broke(n)* and *wægen*, meaning "one who has a broken cart", looks more likely, cf. *Brokenhorn*,

- Broketoth in Seltén 17)
- Cokkesplekes* 1462 St 47 (OE *coccc*² "cock" is suggested; however the common ME personal name or surname *Cock* is just as likely. Obviously this is one of many hundreds of such names (cf. also *Crowescroft* below) where there can be no certainty about the nature of the first element. But the alternatives really need to be presented, especially as the personal name/surname possibility, referring to the ownership of the land in question, might be considered to give a better meaning)
- Crowescroft* 1340 Bk 297 (OE *crāwe* "crow" is suggested; but the ME surname *Crowe* is just as likely, cf. discussion of *Cokkesplekes* above)
- Henstresplekes* 1441, *Hewstres-* 1453 St 47 (the first part of this name is analysed as from *hengest* "horse" and *trēo* "tree", but the meaning "tree(s) where a horse was tethered" is unconvincing; the ME occupational surname *Heustere* "dyer" (Fransson 106, with eight examples from St) looks more likely, with *Hen-* for *Heu-* in the first form, cf. *Heusters Croftes* Ch 4.33)
- Prese Barne* 1552-3, *The Preyes Lynche* 1576, *Prayes Barne* 1587, *Close called Praise* 1591 Bk 308 (ME *pre* "meadow" is suggested; but the ME surname *Pre(ye)* (from this same word, v. Reaney s.n. *Pray*) is just as likely, cf. discussion of *Cokkesplekes* above)
- Slightly different but also essentially in this category is: *le colet rokesrudying* 1453 St 47 (this is interpreted as "a clearing with rocks removed", from OFr (ME) *roke*, OE *ryding* and the surname *Collet(t)*, a diminutive of *Nicholas*. However this explanation of *-rokes-* is not convincing; it is more likely to be the common ME surname *Roke* (v. Reaney s.n.), the name thus meaning "Nicholas Roke's clearing". For analogies of this type, consisting of the full name of the person (with a possessive *-s*) plus element, cf. *le Quistansnelesleg'* 1285 Ch 4.27, *Wyllesteveneslane* 1435 Bk 424)

Even if only a proportion of the above suggestions are thought worthy of consideration, it is clear that many more medieval field-names than previously supposed may have to be added to the already numerous class that indicates ownership or possession. Although it will always be difficult or impossible to decide between significant term and personal name/surname in many cases, the different possibilities will need to be kept in mind and the reasonable alternatives rehearsed. A more flexible approach to the interpretation of the first elements of medieval field-names will not only enhance the socio-historical value of the material but also contribute to a better understanding of the vocabulary, personal names and surnames in use during the medieval period.

NOTES

¹ Those cited, with abbreviations used, are: Wa = *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, by J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton (Cambridge, 1936); C = *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*, by P.H. Reaney (Cambridge, 1943); Gl = *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, by A.H. Smith, Parts 1-4 (Cambridge, 1964-5); Ch = *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, by J.McN. Dodgson, Parts 1-5 (Cambridge, 1970-2; 1981); Bk = *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, by M. Gelling, Parts 1-3 (Cambridge, 1972-3; 1976); Do = *The Place-Names of Dorset*, by A.D. Mills, Parts 1-2 (Nottingham, 1977; 1980); St = *The Place-Names of Staffordshire*, by J.P. Oakden, Part 1 (Nottingham, 1984); Li = *The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, by K. Cameron, Part 1 (Nottingham, 1985). Other books cited, with abbreviations used, are: Field = *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, by John Field (Newton Abbot, 1972); Fransson = *Middle English Surnames of Occupation, 1100-1350*, by G. Fransson (Lund, 1935); Reaney = *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, by P.H. Reaney, 2nd ed. (London, 1976); Sandred = *English Place-Names in -stead*, by K.I. Sandred (Uppsala, 1963); Seltén = *Early East Anglian Nick-names: Bahuvrihi Names*, by B. Seltén (Lund, 1975).

² What appears to be an occasional slight reluctance to consider a personal name or surname as first element, at least where there is no sign of possessive *-s*, is for the most part only implicit; however it can also find more explicit expression, as in the discussion of SKILLCROFT Bk 155, where on the basis of the single early spelling *Skyllcroft* 1252-3, the rather unlikely element *skil* "boundary" or "separate" is preferred to the ME surname *Skille* on the grounds that "the element might be expected to be in the genitive singular if it were a personal name or surname".

³ Cf. M. Gelling, *Nomina* 4.83, reviewing G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands*, Copenhagen, 1978: "the author's preference for appellatives rather than personal names as first elements leads to some unconvincing etymologies".

⁴ The occurrence of *stede* (probably in the late sense "dwelling-place, farm") with a ME personal name is unusual, but not implausible, as far south as Berkshire; *Mannestede* 1524 Do 2.172 (cf. *Mannescroft* 1416, both probably containing the ME surname *Man(n)* rather than the OE personal name *Mann* adduced) would seem to be an even more southerly example. Otherwise, compounds of *stede* with personal names/surnames from the ME period have so far been noted only in the North and Midlands, the most southerly being from counties like Cambridgeshire (*Sauserstede* 1334 C 345) and Warwickshire (*Griffynestede* 1367 Wa 332), v. Sandred 111-12.