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Towards an explanation of the Kentish *-mondens*

Richard Coates (pp. 40–47)

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ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	<i>Cornish Place-Name Elements.</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN BdHu	<i>The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.</i>
PN Brk	<i>The Place-Names of Berkshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Bu	<i>The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.</i>
PN Ca	<i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i>
PN Ch	<i>The Place-Names of Cheshire, Parts 1–5.</i>
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN D	<i>The Place-Names of Devon, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Db	<i>The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Do	<i>The Place-Names of Dorset, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Du	<i>The Place-Names of County Durham, Part 1.</i>
PN Ess	<i>The Place-Names of Essex.</i>
PN ERY	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.</i>
PN Gl	<i>The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Hrt	<i>The Place-Names of Hertfordshire.</i>
PN Le	<i>The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Parts 1–6.</i>
PN Li	<i>The Place-Names of Lincolnshire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Mx	<i>The Place-Names of Middlesex (apart from the City of London).</i>
PN Nf	<i>The Place-Names of Norfolk, Parts 1–3.</i>
PN Nt	<i>The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.</i>
PN NRY	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.</i>
PN Nth	<i>The Place-Names of Northamptonshire.</i>
PN O	<i>The Place-Names of Oxfordshire, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN R	<i>The Place-Names of Rutland.</i>
PN Sa	<i>The Place-Names of Shropshire, Parts 1–6.</i>
PN Sr	<i>The Place-Names of Surrey.</i>
PN St	<i>The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Part 1.</i>
PN Sx	<i>The Place-Names of Sussex, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN W	<i>The Place-Names of Wiltshire.</i>
PN Wa	<i>The Place-Names of Warwickshire.</i>
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Wo	<i>The Place-Names of Worcestershire.</i>
PN WRY	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.</i>

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF THE KENTISH *-mondens**

On the southern border of Kent there is a rather dense group of names ending (in the most frequent modern spelling) in *-monden*. There are others in the same area that have different forms, but were once of the same type. Their distribution by parishes is as follows:

Horsmonden	Horsmonden, Spelmonden, Remmingtons (earlier [^] Radmonden ¹), Badmonden, Stammerden (all denns of Maidstone, made over by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Clares as a single manor by 1171 (Witney 1976: 231))
Wittersham	[^] Kyrsmondenn
Hawkhurst	Delmonden (Witney 1976 places this in Cranbrook)
Biddenden	Omenden, Dashmonden

There is a hundred-name *Rushmonden* in Sussex, but this is not relevant; it is a late, and extraordinary, conflation of two earlier hundred names *Rushton* (and) *Denn* (Mawer and Stenton 1930: 344).

Following a hint by Ekwall (1933: 82) on Horsmonden, Wallenberg (1934) conjectured that some of these names are *-denn* names associated with various categories of *mann* e.g. **horsmann* 'horseman', **spilemann* 'jester', etc., (*ge-*)*bedmann* 'cleric', and so on.² This picturesque, and peculiar, explanation is not right, even though Smith accepted it for Badmonden (1956: 24). The forms show a clear progression in the spelling of the second syllable which is inconsistent with a derivation from *mann*. They are tabulated below, the first attestation dates for each letter in that syllable being shown, following Wallenberg.

Horsmonden	u c. 1100	e 1226	i 1232	o 1259
Spelmonden	y 1292	e 1313	i 1327	
Remmingtons	u c. 1270	i 1307	y 1348	
Badmonden	i 1213 (no other letters attested in Middle English)			
Stammerden	e 1275	i 1278	y 1327	
[^] Kyrsmonden	u 1253	i 1278	y 1313	o 1327
Delmonden	u 1206	i 1240	e 1270	

These forms clearly demonstrate that the etymon is not one which involves *mann*: *o* is found exclusively late, and *a* is not found at all. Witney's implication (1976: appendix c) that some of them contain 'folk-names' (i.e.

*My thanks are due to Winifred Abbott for comments on an early draft of this paper.

names involving reference to categories of person, I suppose) cannot therefore be accepted.

A derivation from (*ge-*)*mān(e)-denn* 'common pasture' is also out of the question, since the earliest forms of each name show almost exclusively high vowels (*u/y/i*) and there is no *e* at all in three names. Such a name is also inherently improbable since *denns* in Kent appear to have been appropriated from formerly common land to the exclusive use of individual manors (Witney 1976: 36ff.). Before dismissing this possibility out of hand, though, we should note the field-names in the Angmering/East Preston area of Sussex identified by Standing (1984; his map refs. IV/515, IX/46. 47 and V (b)). *Munmare Field* in Angmering typifies the names, and Standing derives it from *gemāne, mersc.*³ Topographically this is not implausible as they stand together as a group astraddle parish boundaries. But even though the earliest attestation is as late as the c16 the derivation of the first syllable from (*ge-*)*māne* is still unconvincing.

Formally speaking, there are two possible solutions.

Either (1): there is no historical progression implied by the quoted letter distributions and the spread of graphic forms *u, i, y, e* represents OE /y/ (if indeed all these names can be referred to OE times). That is difficult for Kent with its usual preponderance of *e* for /y/: *e* is by no means dominant in the attested forms whereas *u* is.

Or (2): there is a progression from a back vowel (/u/) to a front vowel or to a central vowel represented by front vowel letters. This could indicate a natural reductive change in unstressed syllables of medial lexical elements in frequently-used forms. In every case where *u* is recorded at all, it precedes the appearance of front vowel letters. (Note however that the dates of change inferable literal-mindedly from the spelling innovations given do not precisely coincide from name to name.)

On neither interpretation does an etymology leap out at us, but we might reasonably guess, if the second solution is right, that the middle syllable of these names represents *mund* 'protection'. The loss of one medial *d* from a geminate after *n* between two non-primary-stressed syllables poses no real problem. A **munddenn* could have been a secured (palisaded?) swinepasture; though this would evidently represent a major manpower and material resource enterprise which should be recoverable archaeologically or in archives (like for example the palisaded bank of Ashdown Forest in Sussex or of Wychwood in Oxfordshire; or indeed the bank of any Dark Age or medieval wood (cf. Rackham 1980: 13)). On the other hand, and more probably, it could have been a legally defined entity.⁴

A certain plausibility attaches to this suggestion, although it is at first sight rather a long shot. All the places mentioned are close to the Sussex/Kent border. This may safely be assumed to have been roughly, if

not exactly, as it now stands since mid to late Saxon times, at least west of the Isle of Oxney. (But cf. Witney 1976: 53–4.) For instance Flimwell (Sussex), with its suggestive name ‘the refugees’ spring’ (PNSx 452), is only a few yards from the boundary between Ticehurst (Sussex) and Goudhurst (Kent) even now. Lamberhurst parish has oscillated historically between the two counties. Witney surmises that it was originally settled from Kent, but it was partly in Sussex from early till 1895, when the part of the parish south of the Teise was reunited with Kent. The proximity of a kingdom border would be a sufficient condition for human activities to need at least judicial protection.⁵ Spelmonden is two and a quarter miles from the present boundary but under a mile if South Lamberhurst is reckoned to Sussex. In the same parish, Remmingtons (now = *Hazel Street*; earlier *Hasellets* (Hasted 1798: 320)) is about three and a half miles from the present border. The nucleus of the modern village of Horsmonden does not represent the location of the early church; this is near Spelmonden, cf. Andrews’ map of 1769, less than 3 miles from the boundary, and even closer if South Lamberhurst is reckoned to Sussex (see above). Badmonden is about five and a half miles inside Kent. I have not been able to locate Stammerden; but since Gilbert and Robert de Stamyndenne are taxed in the Sussex subsidies for Ticehurst, Stamyndenne was probably very close to the border. (Mawer and Stenton (1930: 455) and Coates (1979: 324) incorrectly refer these people to Starvenden in Ticehurst.) Delmonden is half a mile from the present boundary, in Hawkhurst. Wittersham in Oxney, containing Kyrsmoðenn, is bounded by the River Eastern Rother which divides Kent from Sussex (though Kyrsmoðenn itself has not been located precisely).

There is a further possible solution within the same formal argument. It has been argued (cf. Clark Hall’s *Dictionary* (1960))⁶ that *mund* can also mean ‘bridegroom’s gift to father-in-law or bride’. The only literary attestation where this meaning is likely is in Cynewulf’s poem *Christ*, lines 92–4:

Fricgað þurh fyrwet hū ic fæmnan hād
 mund minne geheold and ēac mōdor gewearð
 mære meotudes suna.

(‘[You] ask inquisitively how I kept virginity, my bride-gift, and still became the glorious mother of God’s son.’ (My translation)) But given that such a form exists⁷, it may not be too far-fetched to speculate that some of the names we have been considering, including some of those in footnote 4, are parallel to the several south-eastern names containing, without doubt, *morgengifu* ‘morning-gift to a bride’.

If **munddenn*, in whichever sense, is indeed the source of the latter part of the Kentish names, can we provide etymologies for them?

Horsmonden

It is probable that Horsmonden (surprisingly for the parish name) is analogically reformed to the locally-dominant form-type from earlier **Horsburn(an)denn* (Wallenberg, Ekwall) or **Horsbun-denn*⁸ and therefore irrelevant to the etymology of the others. Every form of it recorded before 1212 shows *b* in the second syllable. A form of 1226 shows no *b* or *m* (*Horsenden*), but this should perhaps be referred to Horsenden in neighbouring Goudhurst. It is not, therefore, referable to an early coining involving **horsmann* 'horseman'.

Spelmonden

1. *speld* 'splinter', torch'. The name would probably mean 'swinepasture where [pieces of wood] could be got', cf. Reaney (1961: 70), Gelling (1984: 313). All the other English place-names involving *speld* are in this area:

Spils(h)ill (K, *gesell*)

Speldhurst (K, *hyrst*)

Speldhurst (K, Biddenden, 9 miles from Horsmonden;
Wallenberg 1934: 334)

Speldridge (Sx, *ersc*)

All are within 20 miles of Spelmonden.

2. *spell* 'speech' may not be out of the question, as I do not know the location of meeting-place of Horsmonden half-hundred. Not, as conjectured by Wallenberg, from **spilemann* 'jester' because of the early *u/y* forms in the second syllable.

Badmonden

It is hard to reconcile the surviving forms in *Bid-/Bade-*. The first element is not *bedd*, which has never been found initially; nor is it likely to be *bed-*, the first element of **bedwinde* 'convolvulus' et sim., which is not on record as an independent form. If it is a personal name, cf. *Bēda*, *Bēada*, *Beadda* and *Badda*, and take your pick. If *-i-* is due to confusion with *Biddenden* (9 miles away), perhaps *B(e)adda* is the most likely. Reaney asserts (1961: 70) that 'compounds of *denn* with a personal name are not uncommon' [in Kent, RC]. Not, as Wallenberg and following him Smith conjectures, from *(ge-)bedmann* 'cleric'; not only because of consistent early *i* in the second syllable, but also because of the disyllabic form *Bade-* of 1275.

Remmington's (formerly Radmonden, Hasellets: now Hazel Street)

The early forms in *Red-/Rade-* suggest:

1. *rēad* 'red', with possible reference to iron in the soil (cf. Hasted 1798: 311–2).
2. A personal name *Rēada*, for instance as a hypocoristic of *Rēadweald*; or possibly *Rēada*; the latter seems safer phonologically as we would not expect *ā* to survive as such in Kent.
3. *hrēod* 'reed' would be unlikely to develop forms in *a*.

Not, as Wallenberg conjectures, from *rēdemann* 'horseman', because of the problem with *ā*, and because of the *u/i* in the second syllable of early forms; but either from *rēad* or its personal-name derivative.

Stammerden

Almost beyond doubt from *stān* 'stone, flagstone'. Not from *stānmann* 'stonecutter' (thus Wallenberg; he says the reflex is attested only as a surname), because of *y/i/e* in the second syllable.

The names treated so far may be subdivisions of a single **munddenn* rather than separate ones.

^Kyrsmundenn

If the 1253/4 form *Cristinmunde* is correct this can hardly be other than *cyrsten* < *cristen* 'Christian'. Although it is formally ideal, it is hard to see what the name could imply. Ultimately from *cyrstna* (genitive plural)? The reduction favoured by Wallenberg, from *cristenmann*, is too severe for the evidence. On the other hand the other forms cited, of which *Kersmūdenn*' (Assize Rolls, 1292) is a fair representative, suggest a gross error in the form *Cristinmunde* (Knights' Fees, 1253/4); the only other appearances of a *t* are in two other forms from the 1292 Assize Rolls one of which contains an obvious gross error (*Chistmundenne*). It is fair to wonder whether the first element could be *cerse* 'cress' instead, but the plausibility of this cannot be checked until the exact location is known. Moreover the forms show far too many *i*'s instead of *e*'s, in the first syllable for this to be likely. The matter is best left open. Further complications arise because of the existence of the surname *Kersteman*, a possessor of which was assistant curate of Ticehurst (Sussex) in 1794.

Delmonden

1. *del* (Kentish form) 'hollow'; it is adjacent to a small dip.
2. *dēl* 'lot, portion' is possible in Kent, but the sense is not clear in connection with a *denn*.

Not from *dælmann* 'dalesman' or similar, as Wallenberg surmises, because of *u/e/i/y* in the thirteenth century forms of the second syllable. (Cf. also *Delmynden* 1540, *Archaeologia Cantiana* 38, p. 11; and *Delminden* 1597, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 86, p. 121.)

Omenden in Biddenden may also be a **munddenn* name, but no early forms show *u*. It is also in a general way less plausible in connection with the 'protection' explanation because of its greater distance from the kingdom boundary. Wallenberg (1934: 333) may thus be right in deriving it from a personal name *Umma*; but we are not compelled to accept his hilarious explanation of this personal name: someone nicknamed from his '(h)umming' and hawing.

Dashmonden in the same parish regrettably has no published early forms. Ward (1945: 7) asserts that it is 'regularly in manor rolls' (i.e. those of c. 1620 in his possession). It seems to be near Lewcell. In the absence of datable forms prior to 1620 and of a likely etymology, as well as in view of its distance from the county boundary, we cannot take it safely as a **munddenn* name, at least not in its suggested 'protection' sense.

Comenden, near Sissinghurst, is not treated by Wallenberg, but it may be referred to as *Chemonden* (a *denn* of Charing) in Archbishop Pecham's survey of 1285 (du Boulay 1961: 76). We cannot build anything on this one form.

A *Spilmonden* appears in Goudhurst on Andrews' map of 1769, and it seems not to be a mere duplication of the name of the immediately adjacent Spelmonden, just across the River Teise in Horsmonden, for that is spelt *Spelmanden* on the same map. I know no earlier forms for this place, which is a bare mile from the county boundary.

APPENDIX: Some further problems

1. The names of this type seem occasionally to have influenced neighbouring ones, e.g.:

- (i) *le milnes down* (t. HyVIII) > *Tilmanden* (date ??) > *Delmonden* (date ??) > *My Lady's Cottage* (Cranbrook, adjacent to Hawkhurst; Witney 1976: 214) (if this progression is to be credited—it is not supported by forms cited in Wallenberg 1934).
 - (ii) *Horsendens* [9] (now Grove Place in Goudhurst, adjacent to Horsmonden) appears as *Horsemondens* in ?t. EdII (Witney 1976: 5, 232, 300).
 - (iii) *Ellenden* [10] (Hawkhurst) seems to show the influence of *Delmonden* in the same parish, e.g. in the form *Elmundenn* (c. 1270, 1347; Wallenberg 1934: 338).
2. More than one early form shows inexplicable *u* (for *v*) instead of *m*: Spelmonden is *Speluyngden*' (1292); Delmonden has *u* in 1292 and 1346; Ellenden likewise (see above and footnote 10).

NOTES

- ¹ A raised caret (^) before a form means that the place-name is no longer current; in the case of *^Kyrsmundenn* the place too is lost.
- ² Note the convention that an asterisk before a word means that it is not attested, but that its existence is inferred.
- ³ Eustace (1935) says that there was a mere there, now drained, whence the name. But he also says that *Angmere* of Angmering was also a mere, and I am therefore inclined to treat his opinions with reserve, for this is really based on a personal name.
- ⁴ I am grateful to Winifred Abbott for pointing out this possibility. *mund* has also been suggested as an element of Munden (Herts.), Mundon (Ess) and Munstead (Surrey), usually with more than a hint that 'protection' is intended in a topographical sense rather than a legal one (see the EPNS volumes for these three counties, Ekwall's *Dictionary* and Gelling 1984). In some of these *mund* may represent the ancestor of English *mound* (dialectally also = 'hedge'). This element may also formally account for the Angmering field name mentioned above. I do not think it is likely that the Latin borrowing *munt* is involved anywhere, given that OE had a fairly subtle vocabulary for hills (cf. Gelling 1984: 124–87).
- ⁵ Cf. the adjacent parish name *Goudhurst*, which is apparently **gūðhyrst* 'battle wood', following Wallenberg—and pace Ekwall because there is no trace of the medial syllable that his suggested solution would demand.
- ⁶ I have not been able to trace the original suggestion.
- ⁷ *mund* 'protection' is feminine, whilst *mund* 'bride-price' is masculine.

- ⁸ I.e. *hors* + *bune* + *denn* 'horse', + 'reed, (?) umbellifer species, hollow-stalked plant', + 'swinepasture'. For *bun(e)*, see Gover, Mawer and Stenton (1934: 376). If *hors* is not a mere distinguishing element, we may have to do with a form **horsbun(e)*. Formally and semantically, cf. the umbellifers *hogweed*, *pignut*, *cowparsley*; and the various plants *horseradish*, *horse chestnut*, *horse bean* and *horsemint* and the OE *horselene* (Ælfric Glosses).
- ⁹ This may be manorial; cf. Ipm no. XXXVII (1263) printed in *Arch. Cant.* 4 (1861), 311/4.
- ¹⁰ It is possible that this is also a **munddenn* name, but the material is highly ambiguous: *Eluindenn*' (1240), *Eldindenne* (1253), *Elmundenn* (c. 1270), each of these types being further evidenced. I will not speculate on which is original.

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