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English Place-Names: The Leverhulme project

Carole Hough (pp. 15–26)

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

English Place-Names: the Leverhulme Project

Carole Hough

Introduction

An article on the history of the English Place-Name Society in last year's *Journal* mentioned a grant awarded to the University of Nottingham by the Leverhulme Trust to finance a five-year research project employing two full-time Research Associates (Armstrong et al., 1993). The project is known as *A Survey of the Language of English Place-Names*, and is taking place at the Centre for English Name Studies under the leadership of Professor Barrie Cox (Academic Director) and Professor Christine Fell (Administrative Director). I was appointed as the first Research Associate at the inception of the project in January 1992, and am pleased to report here on the progress made during the first two years.

Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the Leverhulme project are as follows:

i)   To establish a computerised database of English place-name material. This will act as a research tool for scholars, making it possible to locate all occurrences of individual place-name elements or combinations of elements, and to analyse patterns of use.

ii) To produce a new edition of *English Place-Name Elements*. This will replace Smith's edition of 1956, which has now been outdated by more recent research.

iii) To compile a dictionary of Old English words in place-names, to supplement the Toronto *Dictionary of Old English*. This will include words which have not survived in literary sources, as well as others for which place-names are crucial to interpretation.

iv) To compile a similar dictionary of Middle English words in place-names, to supplement the Ann Arbor *Middle English Dictionary*.

v)   To compile a handlist of early modern terms antedating or correcting entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

The Database

The reason for establishing a place-name database is to make the information within the English Place-Name Survey more accessible to scholars. The sixty-six volumes of the Survey so far published constitute an immense amount of primary material relating to a wide range of subject areas. Computerisation will help to maximise the potential of this material as a research archive by allowing greater flexibility in searching than is possible with the published volumes. Using modern technology, place-names containing individual elements or combinations of elements may be identified quickly and easily, as may those relating to particular fields of interest, such as topography, archaeology, social customs, women's studies, religion, flora or fauna. It is already possible to trace all occurrences of individual words in the corpus of literary Old English by means of the Toronto *Concordance* (Healey and Venezky, 1980). Computerised searching techniques will extend this and other facilities to the corpus of place-names.

Our main priority during the first year of the project was to plan and structure the database, in collaboration with the Cripps Computing Centre at Nottingham University. The software used is INGRES, a powerful relational database package which facilitates the rapid manipulation and retrieval of data. The database is stored on the university mainframe computer, and will be accessible over JANET (Joint Academic NETwork), a computer network linking all universities within the U.K. as well as other academic institutions both here and abroad. The database will therefore be widely available to outside scholars. It will act primarily as a finding-tool for information published in the English Place-Name Survey, and is intended to be used in conjunction with the Survey itself. It will not reproduce the lists of early spellings for each place-name from the county volumes, nor the detailed discussion of the place-name by the county editor, but will enable scholars to identify those place-names which are of relevance to a particular line of enquiry or research.

The format of the database is based on the English Place-Name Survey to date, but with the material organised in computer-searchable form. Each place-name has associated with it a range of information,

as illustrated in the following sample entries for the Nottinghamshire parish names *Rolleston* and *Halam*:

(a)   *Modern form of place-name:*   Rolleston

Modern form of place-name:	Rolleston
Location: (i) Grid ref.	SK 7452
(ii) County	Nottinghamshire
Wapentake	Thurgarton
Parish	Rolleston
Date of earliest known record:	1086
Type of place-name:	Parish
Still in use?	Yes
Etymology:	"Hróaldr's farmstead"
EPNS reference:	Vol.17 p.173
Element(s):	Hróaldr
	tūn

(b)

Modern form of place-name:	Halam
Location: (i) Grid ref.	SK 6754
(ii) County	Nottinghamshire
Wapentake	Thurgarton
Parish	Halam
Date of earliest known record:	958 (14th century)
Type of place-name:	Parish
Still in use?	Yes
Etymology:	"at the nooks"
EPNS reference:	Vol.17 pp.167-8
Element(s):	halh

Any or all of this data may be utilised for searching purposes. Information on location will enable us to focus on place-names within a particular geographical area, either by grid reference or by administrative unit. The date of the earliest known record is important in identifying place-names and place-name elements in use at different times. The type of place-name is recorded so as to differentiate settlement names from nature names, major names from minor names, and so on; and the database also distinguishes between "lost" place-

names and those still in use. Only a brief summary is given of the original meaning of the name, but there is a reference to the appropriate volume and page within the county survey (including any subsequent addenda) where a full discussion and a list of early spellings may be found.

Each element within the place-name is further analysed as follows:

(a) *Element:*   Hróaldr
      Language: Old Scandinavian
      Dialect: Not applicable
      Part of speech: Proper noun
      Grammatical case: Genitive singular
      Function: Specific
      Subject category: Personal name/
                                    Dithematic/Masculine

      Independently recorded?   Yes

      Element: tūn
      Language: Old English
      Dialect: Not applicable
      Part of speech: Common noun
      Grammatical case: Singular
      Function: Generic
      Subject category: Habitative/Settlement
      Independently recorded?   Yes

(b) *Element:*   halh
      Language: Old English
      Dialect: Anglian
      Part of speech: Common noun
      Grammatical case: Dative plural
      Function: Generic
      Subject category: Topographical/Piece of land
      Independently recorded?   Yes

This information, combined with the details relating to each place-name, will make it possible to select and retrieve a wide range of categories of material. For instance, *Rolleston* would be retrieved by a search for any of the following:

place-names containing an Old English element;
place-names containing an Old Scandinavian element;
place-names containing an Old Scandinavian personal name;
place-names containing a masculine personal name;
place-names containing a dithematic personal name;
place-names recorded before A.D. 1100;
place-name specifics in the genitive singular case;
hybrid place-names;
place-names containing an Old English noun;
place-names containing OE *tūn*;
habitative generics;
place-names combining a personal name with a habitative generic;
place-names combining an Old Scandinavian dithematic masculine personal name with OE *tūn*;
parish names within Thurgarton wapentake.

Halam would be retrieved by a search for any of the following:

place-names containing an Old English element;
place-names recorded before A.D. 960;
place-names containing an Old English noun;
place-names containing OE *halh*;
topographical place-names;
simplex place-names;
dative plurals;
simplex topographical place-names in the dative plural;
Anglian dialectal forms;
parish names within Thurgarton wapentake.

The analysis of material does of course present a number of difficulties. For instance, early place-name spellings may fluctuate between alternative dialectal and inflectional forms. These are accommodated within the database by allowing up to two entries for both dialect and grammatical case. Early spellings of Ludwell in Wiltshire (EPNS 16 p.189) preserve Anglian as well as West Saxon forms; and hence both dialects are associated with this place-name within the database. Similarly, the Dorset parish of Wool (EPNS 52 p.188) has been entered as nominative plural as well as dative plural, since both variants occur in early spellings of the place-name.

As the derivation of many place-names is uncertain, provision has been made for alternative etymologies, with confidence levels to indicate varying degrees of probability. For instance, it is often difficult to distinguish between a personal name and an appellative as a place-name specific. An instance is the Nottinghamshire parish of Ranskill (EPNS 17 p.93), which may derive either from a personal name *Hrafn* or from the word *hræfn* "a raven". Both have been recorded as possibilities within the database. The second element of this name may be either OE *scylf* "a shelf, ledge, slope" or its ON cognate *skjalf*; so again, both possibilities have been recorded. When a substantial number of such place-names have been entered, it may be possible to identify recurrent patterns which will throw some light on the balance of probability. This is of course the aim of the database: not to act simply as a repository of information, but to function as a working tool for further research.

The database also identifies elements which are not independently recorded outside place-names, as well as those for which place-names testify to a semantic range not evidenced in the literary corpus. Towards the end of the project, we shall retrieve these entries for separate publication as supplements to the existing dictionaries of Old and Middle English. A handlist of early modern and dialectal terms supplementing entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* will be generated in similar fashion.

Individual sections of the database are arranged hierarchically, to allow the maximum flexibility in interactive searching. Each place-name is assigned to the appropriate county, and then to an individual

hundred/wapentake and parish within that county. This will allow the user to focus on his or her area of interest, whether this is a county or group of counties, or a single parish. Similarly, each place-name element is assigned to one or more major subject category, which is then sub-divided as appropriate. Thus the subject category Topography is divided into terms for woodland, water, hills, valleys, etc., so that it will be possible either to retrieve place-names containing any or all topographical terms, or to concentrate on those referring to individual features of the landscape. Personal names are divided according to type (monothematic, dithematic, or hypocoristic) and gender; and this will enable the user either to retrieve all place-names containing personal names, or to focus on dithematic names, feminine names, or other specific types. By combining search terms, it will be possible to focus on categories of material such as otherwise unattested Old English dithematic feminine personal names within the Nottinghamshire area; or Anglian dialectal forms relating to particular types of hill recorded before A.D. 1000. The aim is to allow the maximum flexibility in interactive searching; and we believe that this approach offers considerable potential for further research.

In order to avoid repeating the same information for elements which occur again and again in different place-names, the database has been designed to contain separate records for place-names and for place-name elements. These are linked together so that the information relating to each element only has to be entered once, and is then automatically associated with every place-name in which that element occurs. For this reason, the input of material into the database has begun this year with individual elements rather than with place-names. At the time of writing (November 1993), provisional records have been created for over four thousand place-name elements; and it is hoped to complete this stage of the project by the end of the year.

So far as Old English elements are concerned, the Anglian dialectal form is normally used as the main headword entry, with alternative dialectal and inflectional spellings listed as variants. Thus West Saxon *healh* is included as a variant of Anglian *halh*, as are inflectional forms such as *halas* (nominative plural) and *halum* (dative plural). There are links within the database between headwords which are in some way

related to each other: examples include cognate words, nouns and adjectives formed from the same stem, personal names based on words, and compounds with a common theme. Thus the OE noun *hræfn* "a raven" is linked with its ON cognate *hrafn* as well as with the personal name *Hrafn*; and OE *tūn* is linked with its ON cognate *tún* as well as with compounds such as *burh-tūn* and *hām-tūn*. Again, the aim is to allow flexibility of retrieval, in that users of the database will be able either to focus on a particular place-name element, or to widen the search to include all related elements, compounds, and cognates.

The main input of place-names is scheduled to begin early in 1994, and will continue for the duration of the project. Ideally, the database should cover *all* English place-names, including minor names and field names. In practical terms, this will not be possible within the five-year time-scale of the project, and so it has been decided to begin with the coverage of major names from the published volumes of the English Place-Name Survey, going on to minor and field names if time permits. Although place-name entries will be very largely based on the findings of the county survey, we shall also take into consideration other publications and recent research, giving additional bibliographical references where appropriate.

Progress Towards the New Edition of Elements
The facility offered by the database of tracing and analysing all occurrences of individual elements in place-names will be utilised for the second stage of the Leverhulme project, the compilation of a new edition of *English Place-Name Elements*. This will be a revision of Smith's edition of 1956, incorporating the corrections published in *JEPNS 1* (1969) and subsequent addenda, plus other necessary emendations. All entries are being thoroughly updated in the light of published material and of work in progress at the Centre for English Name Studies and elsewhere. For many elements, more precise definitions can now be offered than was possible nearly forty years ago. OE *brōc*, for instance, was defined by Smith as "a brook, a stream"; but thanks to the work of Ann Cole (1991) is now known to refer to a particular type of stream, characterised by a muddy bed and

a visible sediment load. Another example is OE *wæsse*, a word hitherto taken to refer to a marsh, but which Gelling has demonstrated to mean "land by a meandering river which floods and drains quickly" (1984, p.59). These will clearly supersede Smith's definitions in the new edition of *Elements*. So too Cameron's seminal article on OE *walh* (1980) has allayed earlier uncertainty as to whether this element refers to "a Briton, a Welshman", or to "a serf".

Place-name citations are being revised in line with current thinking, since many of the etymologies given by Smith have now been revised or rejected. This involves checking the extensive addenda to the county survey itself, as well as other published studies. We are extremely fortunate that the recent bibliography by Spittal and Field (1990) makes it possible to locate relevant publications relating either to place-names or to individual elements. Additional place-name citations from the post-1956 volumes of the Survey will allow a more representative selection of occurrences to be presented for each element.

Quotations from literary sources are also being revised to ensure that all are taken from the most recent and authoritative scholarly editions. Several of the editions used by Smith have since been superseded, and in many instances it is now possible to present more reliable readings. Due to the occurrence of typographical errors in Smith's *Elements*, it is unfortunately also necessary to check the accuracy of quotations from editions which are still in use.

A number of additional place-name elements have been identified in volumes of the county survey published since 1956; and these will of course be included in the new edition of *Elements*. Examples include OE *cot-mann* "a cottager", the first element of Cotmanhay in Derbyshire (EPNS 28 p.474), ON *efri*, as in Earby, West Riding of Yorkshire (EPNS 35 p.33), and OE *snōr* "a hill", discussed in EPNS 66 (pp.xx-xxi). At the same time, we shall exclude "ghost-words" which have now been shown to be without foundation. Two examples are OE *frēo-mann* "a free-man", which as I demonstrated in 1991 did not exist as a compound word in Old English, and OE *snār* "brushwood", a hypothetical word which has now been rejected in favour of *snōr* (*supra*). Rather than silently omitting these and other

superseded entries, we intend to include a list of rejected headwords as an appendix to the new edition, with a brief rationale and bibliographical references.

We aim to use the Anglian spellings of OE headwords more consistently than does the 1956 edition of *Elements*, following principles already formulated for the Leverhulme database. Dialectal variants will probably be presented in the form of an appendix rather than as cross-references within the main body of the text. We believe that it will also be helpful to include the grammatical gender of headwords. This was not given by Smith, and its omission has been perceived as a drawback by users of the 1956 edition. There will of course be problems: we shall not always be able to identify the gender of elements unattested in the literary corpus, and nouns which can take more than one gender, such as OE *crundel* and *hyll*, are less than straightforward. Nevertheless, the information is worth including wherever possible, and will also be recorded within the database.

A further change will be the provision of a wider range of symbols in addition to the asterisk used by Smith to designate unattested forms. These will serve to identify not only those elements which are not independently recorded outside place-names, but also those which are only recorded as hapax legomena, or in compounds, glosses, poetry, or charter-bounds. Corresponding symbols incorporated into the Leverhulme database will make this information computer-searchable.

Work on the new edition of *Elements* began in summer 1993. It is proceeding concurrently with work on the database, and is scheduled for completion by the end of 1996, when funding for the Leverhulme project will run out. Entries are being made directly onto disk, using the "Word Perfect" word-processing package and equipment provided by the Department of English Studies at the University of Nottingham. This will obviate the need for an intervening type-setting stage, so that publication can follow with the minimum delay. Publication in loose-leaf format is envisaged, to allow for the regular updating of individual entries in the light of future research.

National and International Collaboration

We have established strong links with other major projects, both in this country and abroad. In particular, members of the Research Group on Manuscript Evidence at the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College Cambridge, another Leverhulme-funded project, have assisted us in many ways. Professor Jane Roberts and Dr. Lynne Grundy of the *Old English Thesaurus* project have also been most generous in making some of their material available to us in advance of publication. I was fortunate last year to visit the *Institut for Navneforskning* at Copenhagen University, as well as the Swedish Place-Name Archive, the Swedish Institute for Dialect and Folklore Research, and the Dictionary of Medieval Swedish Personal Names in Uppsala. We are also in close contact with the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project at Queen's University, Belfast, and with other place-name projects in Great Britain and Ireland.

As the Leverhulme grant includes provision for travel and conference attendance, it has been possible to organise a special session entitled "English Place-Name Studies" at the Twenty-Eighth International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, in May 1993, and to present papers on the project at other major conferences, such as the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists, Oxford, in August 1993, and the European Society for the Study of English, Bordeaux, in September 1993. These have proved extremely valuable both as a vehicle for making our work more widely known, and as a means of getting feedback from outside scholars during the early, planning stages of the project. I shall also be organising a session on English Place-Names at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, in July 1994.

In November 1993, a one-day conference at Nottingham on "The Place-Names of Lindsey" was organised jointly by the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland and the Centre for English Name Studies. This included papers by Kevin Leahy ("Lindsey: the archaeological background"), Barrie Cox ("The pattern of Old English *burh* in early Lindsey"), Cyril Hart ("Lindsey: the administrative background"), Kenneth Cameron ("The Lincolnshire county survey"), and myself ("Re-writing *English Place-Name Elements*").

Project Staff

The project team based at the Centre for English Name Studies comprises Professor Barrie Cox (Academic Director), Professor Christine Fell (Administrative Director), Professor Kenneth Cameron (Academic Adviser), and myself as Research Associate. In addition, the Council of the English Place-Name Society has established an advisory group comprising Dr. Gillian Fellows-Jensen (Copenhagen), Mrs. Joy Jenkyns (Oxford), Professor Raymond Page (Cambridge), and Mr. Victor Watts (Durham). Staff of the Cripps Computing Centre at Nottingham University, and in particular Mr. Graham Watson, are closely involved, contributing both time and expertise on an ongoing basis; and we have also benefited from the assistance and advice of other specialists, including Dr. Marilyn Deegan (Oxford) and Dr. Leslie French (Cambridge). I look forward to being joined by a second Research Associate from early 1994 for the final three years of the project.

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