

THE ME. OCCUPATIONAL TERM RINGERE

According to Bertil Thuresson's Middle English Occupational Terms (Lund, 1950), p.181, the occupational name Ringere is a derivative of OE hringan 'to ring', and thus signifies 'one who rings; esp. a bell- or change-ringer'. P. H. Reaney's Dictionary of British Surnames (2nd edn, London/Boston, Mass., 1976), s.n., follows suit. No doubt it was Thuresson's desire to provide antedatings to Murray's New English Dictionary that prompted him to opt for the one suitable meaning recorded in NED rather than consider the possibility that the word base need not in this case be a verb stem but might be a noun, OE hring 'ring'. That ME ringere could also mean 'ring-maker' is demonstrated by an informative entry for the London Eyre of 1276, edited by Martin Weinbaum for the London Record Society (London, 1976). Item 491 concerns a plea of the Crown in 1274-5 which reports that

Robert le Ringerer (sic) complains of Martin le Criour and Walter Hervy that on Walter's orders Martin went to his house at Flete, entered it by force, and took and carried off his goods and chattels, namely a brooch (firmaculum) and about 300 rings of latten.

In defence, Walter Hervy (Mayor of London at the time of the supposed offence) claims that he ordered the seizure of the goods because certain London goldsmiths had complained that Robert 'made brooches and rings of latten and set in them precious stones, such as sapphires and other stones, which is against the law and custom of the City' (ibidem).

The otiose final -er of Ringerer is probably to be explained as a copyist's mistaken expansion of a final flourish, a slip occasionally found in this and in other medieval London documents.

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

A fertile year for amateur(ish) anthroponymology: not all memorable, some unrepeatable. The very bulk of material potentially available makes it all the more grievous that - apart from our Editor and last year's generous topo (now revealed as our own, our very own Magister Ratoun) - helpers with the name-harvest have been few.

En passant, the most emphatic démenti possible must be given to the canard that your scribe barely escaped being eaten after losing a mouse-race: athletic competition has never, even in youth, entered into my activities.

Nascitur . . . \*

Of all recent events, that most provocative of anthroponymical antics has been the birth of the presumptive next-king-but-one. Although even hoi polloi had had a good six months' notice of the nominand's arrival, the parents took a week to come out with the traditional, familial sequence William Arthur Philip Louis. Perhaps an Anthroponymer Royal is needed to jolly things along.

Perhaps not; perhaps some of us misheard the public silence. For the royal genealogist [caps. ?] was recorded as commenting, 'It seems clear that William is the Princess's choice; she is a woman of decision and strong will, likely to have her way in all matters on which she feels strongly' [quoted by M. Lassiter, Our Names, Our Selves (London, 1983), p.37, from Guardian, 29.vi.82].

Be that as it may, in the interim the loyal subjects went to town. Bookies opened books, with George reportedly favourite at evens, whereas Kevin and Trevor commanded longer odds. Because (as regular readers will know) only a limited range of English papers reaches Muritania and because no correspondents filled the breach, a comprehensive market-report could not be compiled: regrettably, for it would have demonstrated what the nation feels about its name-stock. A rare glimpse of The Sun revealed that bets had been laid, at 1000-1, on Elvis, Bjorn and Canute [24.vi.82, p.5].

Journalists speculated in their own ways. Philip Howard dwelt on the 'tricky political judgment' involved ('Rest, rest, perturbed spirit of Queen Victoria; but not Albert, I hope') [The Times, 22.vi.82, p.5]. Miles Kington satirized populist notions: for instance, of a 'name that pleases the ethnic minorities, like Winston or Abdul' [ibidem, 24.vi.82, p.14]. Another joker, in the Guardian, urged the claims of Norman (the 'fish-knife' name), adducing its incidence among current Cabinet members [25.vi.82, p.13]. One letter-writer quite baffled your reporter by asking, 'How could any patriotic Englishman whose son was born during the World Cup ever consider calling him anything other than Brian?' [Grauniad, 25.vi.82, p.12]: in this context the only Brian to spring to the scribal mind is The Eye's son of 'Brenda' and nephew of 'Yvonne' - relevant perhaps, but scarcely in the best of taste [perhaps the Editor can explain the allusion].

Post-baptismal comment, although more voluble than greeted Princess Anne's more noteworthy naming of her daughter as Zara [see, however, a letter to The Times, 20.vi.81], found ribaldry damped down. Some ventured to recall that the most recent King William, IV of the name, had been the original Silly Billy [see, e.g., The Times 'Diary', 29.vi.82, p.10]; but fewer, that The First had been The Bastard. Gay News reportedly set a Christmas-quiz question too unedifying to perpetuate [see Guardian,

\* No mus, dear readers, is ever ridiculus.