

Harper's Lands

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Dr Carole Hough, in a paper published recently in the *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, after looking at various suggestions regarding their interpretation, suggested that Old English *hearpe* and *hearpere* in certain major place-names from the Anglo-Saxon period were more likely to refer to a bird than to a musician.¹ I was particularly interested to read this, as I had earlier published an article in which I suggested that some field- and minor names in *Harper* could be shown to have close links with musicians.² When Dr Hough and I discussed this, we agreed that it might be appropriate for me to give a short paper at the SNSBI Bangor Conference in which I could put forward some of the evidence for my suggestion. Additional material was provided by Dr Hywel Wyn Owen, who kindly offered some Welsh examples of field-names in both *telyn* 'harp' and *telynor* 'harper' from both published and unpublished sources (figs 1a and 1b). Dr Wyn Owen suggested to me that the use of *telyn* to describe the shape of an enclosure is quite acceptable in Wales, and although we cannot be absolutely certain what an Anglo-Saxon harp looked like as none has survived, Rensch argues convincingly there is sufficient evidence from contemporary sources to suggest that a simple triangular shape is probably what is indicated by some of the 'harp' names in England.³ The sculptured stones in Scotland which have 'harp' motifs, such as the example at Lethendy Tower, Perthshire and on the Dupplin Cross, also Perthshire (attributed to the late ninth or early tenth century), have a simple triangular shape which would seem to support the idea that this may well have been

¹ C. Hough, 'Place-name evidence for Old English bird-names', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 30 (1997–98), 60–76 (pp. 65–69).

² M. C. Higham, 'Musicians and malefactors—pipers and harpers in medieval Lancashire', *Lancashire Local Historian*, 10 (1995), 51–60.

³ F. Rensch, *Harpes and Harpists* (Duckworth, 1989), pp. 29–59, looks at manuscript and relief carving evidence, with examples from Ireland, Man, and Scotland. See also J. Field, *A History of English Field-Names* (Longman, 1993), p. 138.

the normal shape.⁴ Dr Wyn Owen also comments that, in Wales, *crwyth* names are used in the same way. This type of name is also paralleled in Bowland (formerly West Riding of Yorkshire, but in Lancashire since 1974), where the field-name Fiddle Case in Brennandale clearly designates its shape.⁵

The re-instating of Ekwall's 'harper's *t_n*'⁶ and Smith's 'harper's homestead'⁷ for Hough's 'nightingale estate'⁸ relies on medieval evidence—particularly in the North, where documentation for anything before the early twelfth century is very limited indeed. Before one can look at specific examples of 'harper' place-names, it is necessary to establish the status of the harper within medieval society. Compton Reeves suggests that there was a hierarchy among minstrels, some being 'simple musicians who entertained when and where they could', with others, such as harpers, being established well-to-do professionals in the service of the secular and ecclesiastical nobility.⁹ The harpers would have travelled regularly with their masters as valuable members of their households, and were sometimes entrusted with other duties. Whether one of these duties included the greeting of important individuals cannot be proven, but when Edward I moved to St Andrews in early March 1304, using the 'over-sands route' along the sea-beach between Durie (near Leven in Fife) and Sandford near Earl's Ferry, he was greeted by 'five *citharisti* of Scotland', who received 5s 'by gift of the king'.¹⁰

Sanger and Kinnaird state that the Scottish records suggest a pattern which links harpers with 'Harper' place-names on estates often held by landowners of Norman or Flemish origin, the lands being held by the

⁴ Rensch, *Harps and Harpists*, p. 45.

⁵ Field, *A History of English Field-Names*, pp. 137–38, also cites other instances of the field-name Fiddle Case.

⁶ E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford, 1960), pp. 220–21, s.n. *Harpenden*.

⁷ A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York*, English Place-Name Society, 14 (Cambridge, 1937), pp. 89–90.

⁸ Hough, 'Place-name evidence for Old English bird-names', 68.

⁹ C. Reeves, *Pleasures and Pastimes in Medieval England* (Alan Sutton, 1995), pp. 44–47.

¹⁰ *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland, vol. IV*, edited by J. Bain (Edinburgh, 1884), p. 474. I am grateful to Dr Simon Taylor for this reference.

harpers in return for their services.¹¹ They also note that in Scotland and Ireland harpers were often used as spies or secret envoys since the itinerant nature of their profession did not arouse suspicion.¹² This could be just one reason why they were granted lands, as a reward for ‘services rendered’. Certainly in 1296 Master Elyas, *le Harpeur*, Harper of the Earl of Fife, has his lands and goods which were at that time being held in the king’s hands, because the Earl of Fife was a minor, restored to him by mandate of Edward I.¹³

It seems highly probable that a similar pattern of both service and land-holding also appertained in north-west England, where evidence for the holding of property by harpers certainly exists. Whether one can include the ‘part of Harperoxgang’ in Rimington recorded in the Chartulary of Sallay Abbey as evidence for pre-Conquest landholding by a harper is debatable, however.¹⁴ What is more certain is the reference in 1320 to the township of Harpurhey ‘the enclosure of the harper’. Ekwall suggests that it may derive its name from the eighty acres demised for life to William Harpour before 1322.¹⁵ There is another ‘Herper [*sic*] Hey’ recorded near *Horneycliffe* (Edenfield near Bury) in 1540/41.¹⁶ Gilbert le Harpour held a third part of the manor of Middleton near Lancaster, making a final concord regarding this land with Edmund de Nevill and Eufemia his wife in 1314.¹⁷ The medieval harper’s grave slab in the churchyard at Heysham, the ecclesiastical parish next to the township of Middleton (fig. 2),¹⁸ confirms

¹¹ K. Sanger and A. Kinnaird, *Tree of Strings* (Midlothian, 1992), pp. 46–47.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

¹³ C. Bullock-Davies, *A Register of Royal and Baronial Domestic Minstrels, 1272–1327* (Woodbridge, 1986), p. 51.

¹⁴ J. McNulty, *The Chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary of Sallay in Craven, vol. 1* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, vol. 87, 1933), no. 25, pp. 15–16. In this area, *oxgang-land* tends to be associated with the pre-1066 settlement core, the ancient cultivated land, with lands taken into cultivation at a later date being referred to as *riddings*.

¹⁵ E. Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922), pp. 36–37.

¹⁶ W. Farrer, *The Court Rolls of the Honor of Clitheroe, vol. III* (Edinburgh, 1913), p. 328.

¹⁷ *Final Concords of the County of Lancaster, part II, AD 1307 to AD 1377*, edited by W. Farrer (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 46, 1903), p. 19.

¹⁸ This graveslab (fig. 2) has been drawn by Mr B. J. N. Edwards, former Lancashire County Archaeologist, who has been most helpful with this research.

the high status of some of the harpers, and indeed, some of their other duties, which could include the bearing of arms.¹⁹ There are other references to harpers holding lands, with Richard le Harpou recorded as owing homage and service for a tenement in Assheton (Preston) in 1334,²⁰ and Adam de Bredkirk in Amounderness holding ‘2 messuages, ½ oxgang of land in the said town of Neuton (near Freckleton) of Richard le Harpou of Neuton, by knight service, namely by homage and the service of 7¼d yearly, worth 20s’.²¹

The series of *Inquests* held in 1346 regarding the Duke of Lancaster’s lands in Lancashire provide yet further evidence for land-holding by harpers. Examples include Henry Harper, who held a burgage in Salford, and Robert Harper, who had a half-burgage in Liverpool, this last possibly the same property as the ‘messuage and a moiety of half an acre in the borough’ held by Hugh le Harpou of *Lvyerpull* in 1354.²² It is interesting that the Dublin Guild Merchant Roll c.1190–1265 includes several references to harpers, with Thomas le Harpur’s entry having a sketch of a harp in the margin.²³

There is a reference in the 1305 Cal. Fine Rolls which demonstrates how, and hints at why, land grants to harpers were made:²⁴

p. 515

Hugh the Harper has made fine at the Exchequer in 40s for entry into 12 acres

¹⁹ Adam of Clitheroe, who was King’s Harper during the reign of Edward I, accused Gregory of Twyseton of possessing his sword, which was stolen by Adam’s groom, Hugh. The case was heard at Berwick on Tweed in 1296 (Bullock-Davies, *A Register of Royal and Baronial Domestic Minstrels, 1272–1327*, p. 27).

²⁰ *Final Concords of the County of Lancaster, part II, AD 1307 to AD 1377*, edited by Farrer, p. 94.

²¹ *Lancashire Inquests, Extents and Feudal Aids, part III*, edited by W. Farrer (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 70, 1915). The index (p. 231) is most useful, but specific references for the examples quoted here are pp. 97 and 72.

²² *Final Concords of the County of Lancaster, part II, AD 1307 to AD 1377*, edited by Farrer, p. 144.

²³ *The Dublin Guild Merchant Roll, c.1190–1265*, edited by P. Connolly and G. Martin (Dublin, 1992), p. 41.

²⁴ Quoted by Bullock-Davies, *A Register of Royal and Baronial Domestic Minstrels, 1272–1327*, p. 176.

and a rood of waste, in the Forest of Inglewoode, which the king granted him.

8 April. Westminster

p. 523

Grant to Hugh le Harpour, for good service in the parts of Scotland and elsewhere, of 12 acres and a rood of waste in Ingelwood forest ... in the place called Rawebankes, so that he may enclose the same with a small dyke and a low hedge, according to the forest assize and bring it back into cultivation. To him and his heirs of the King and his heirs, with free entry for all his animals and cattle, rendering yearly at the Exchequer, [at Michaelmas] 12s 3d.

25 June. Lewes

Hugh the Harper *alias* Hugh de la Rose (Rose Castle, the estate of the Bishop of Carlisle) was a King's Harper. These men received a daily wage (7½d a day in 1302), two outfits a year, an allowance for a horse (4½d a day) and 'as a gift from the king, cash to buy themselves a sumpter horse for carrying their bedding'.²⁵ What their duties were in addition to providing minstrelsy is not obvious, but must have been important, deserving rewarding by the granting of land. The duties could obviously be dangerous, as suggested by the sword on Gilbert le Harpour's grave slab, or in the case mentioned earlier, heard at Berwick on Tweed in 1296, when Adam de Clitheroe, also a King's Harper, accused Geoffrey de Twyseton of possessing his sword. Adam de Clitheroe appears to have been knighted at some stage during the latter years of his life, for, on his tombstone, he is clearly designated *miles*.²⁶

According to the laws of Hywel Dda in Wales, the king's harper was entitled to his land free, and his horse in attendance and his woollen clothing from the king and his linen clothing from the queen, as well as other perks, and to a 'cow or ox from the booty which the bodyguard takes in a strange country after the king has had his third'.²⁷ Such references as *tir y telynor* in

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27 and 29.

²⁶ He apparently inherited lands in Salesbury (a township granted to his family by Edmund de Lacy) and was buried at Stidd Church, a chapel of the Knights Hospitallers near to Ribchester.

²⁷ D. Jenkins, *The Laws of Hywel Dda* (Llandyssul, 1990), p. 20.

the Melville Richards Archive must surely be to the lands belonging to the harper, a man of high status in Wales. It has been possible to find the names of some of the harpers who were associated with minor 'harper' names. The *Harpurhey* material has already been discussed, with other similar identifications able to be made. The Lancashire material (summarised on Map 1)²⁸ with its comparatively large numbers of harpers and harper's lands throughout the county, and with its apparent cluster of harpers and harpers lands around Treales (*tref llys*)²⁹ invites speculation regarding the continuation of a very long tradition of harping in that area. It also provides evidence both for the high status of harpers and for their holding of land in the medieval period, which suggests that at least some of the references to Harpers lands or estates in Lancashire must relate to musicians, rather than birds. This evidence should be borne in mind when harper references are found in other parts of England.³⁰

²⁸ I am very grateful to Mr Ian Barrow, of Leyland, who has drawn the map based on my rough notes.

²⁹ Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire*, p. 152.

³⁰ Bullock-Davies, *A Register of Royal and Baronial Domestic Minstrels, 1272–1327*, has much information about harpers attached to royal and baronial families, and may be a useful starting point for further research in other areas.

Figure 1a**References to *telynor*- 'harper' in the Melville Richards Archive³¹**

D.d Deloyneor	1401	Breconshire
David Delynnor	1475	Denbighshire
Thomas vychan ap levan David goch 'harper'	1562	Montgomeryshire
Rys Wyn Delynor	1566	Powys
Tir y telynor (<i>tir</i> 'land')	1614	Llansewel
Cay r Teylyniwr	1639	Llaneilian
Tyhyh y Tylynior (<i>tyddyn</i> 'cottage, small-holding, croft')	1648	Llaneilian

***Telynwraig* '(female) harpist'**

telynwraig	1798	Llandyrnog, Dyffrn, Clwyd (Par Reg) ex MRA
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References to harpers in the Dublin Guild Merchant Roll, c.1190–1265³²

Symon le Harpur ³³	9½s
Henricus le Harpur ³⁴	9s
Thomas le Harpur ³⁵ (his entry has sketch of harp in margin)	9s
Walterus le Harpur ³⁶	9s
Johannes le Harpur ³⁷	9s
Phillipus le Harpere de Kolrat (Coleraine) ³⁸	not stated

³¹ These references have been supplied by Dr Hywel Wyn Owen, University of Wales, Bangor.

³² *The Dublin Guild Merchant Roll, c.1190–1265*, edited by Connolly and Martin.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Figure 1b**Welsh examples of *telyn* ‘harp’ in field-names³⁹****‘a fairly common field-name denoting the (triangular) shape of a field’**

Field-Name	Date	Source
<i>Erw'r Delyn</i> (<i>erw</i> ‘acre’, ‘r’ ‘the’)	1783	Pierce ⁴⁰
<i>Erw Delyn</i>	1852	Owen ⁴¹
<i>Ffynnon-delyn</i> (<i>ffynnon</i> ‘well’)	17th/18th cent.	Charles ⁴²
<i>Llain-delyn</i> (x 4) (<i>llain</i> ‘strip, slang’)	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>
<i>Parc-y-delyn</i> (x 2) (<i>parc</i> ‘park, field’)	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>
<i>Cae Telyn, Cae Delyn</i> (x 15)	c.1840	MRA ⁴³
(x 1)	1772	MRA
<i>Llain (y) Delyn</i> (x 40)	1544 onwards	MRA
<i>Erw'r Delyn</i> (x 16)	1490 onwards	MRA
<i>Rhos delyn</i> (<i>rhos</i> ‘moor’)	1838	MRA
<i>Gwern y delyn</i> (<i>gwern</i> ‘alder grove’)	1717	MRA
<i>Y Delyn</i> (x 3) (?pub name)	1718 onwards	MRA

³⁹ All these examples have been supplied by Dr Hywel Wyn Owen, University of Wales, Bangor.

⁴⁰ G. O. Pierce, *The Place-Names of Dinas Powys Hundred* (Cardiff, 1968), p. 37.

⁴¹ H. W. Owen, *The Place-Names of East Flintshire* (Cardiff, 1994), p. 220.

⁴² B. G. Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1992), II, 816.

⁴³ MRA = Melville Richards Archive, University of Wales, Bangor.

Figure 2

Map 1