

Medievalism in British and Irish Business Names

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Introduction

‘Medievalism’ is the cultural movement concerning the reception of the Middle Ages in post-medieval times.¹ It is a fascinating subject to study, covering not only the history of scholarship, but also the Gothic Revival in architecture, the Arts & Crafts movement, historical novels,² operas³ and films.⁴ Like Orientalism, Classicalism and Biblicalism, it affects names.

The subject concerns fashions which involve the self-conscious copying of the medieval, rather than traditions that continue from the Middle Ages, such as ‘heraldic’ pub names or the design of coinage. As a social movement, it even has a dated origin, with the 1760 publication of *Ossian* and the appearance in 1764 of the first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*.⁵ The latter was called ‘Gothic’ because it was ‘Not Roman’, but soon the phrase denoted a horror novel, and writers like Walter Scott were producing better-researched works called

¹ The subject now has a large bibliography, including a regular volume of essays, *Studies in Medievalism*, published by Boydell and Brewer. A recent book which emphasises the literary tradition is M. Alexander’s *Medievalism. The Middle Ages in Modern England* (London, 2007).

² The phrase ‘historical novel’ is, however, much earlier: there is an example from 1700. See S. Tyas, ‘Historical novels and medieval lives’, *Recording Medieval Lives. Proceedings of the 2005 Harlaxton Symposium*, edited by J. Boffey and V. Davis (Donington, 2009), pp. 273–99.

³ The only work I know examining medievalism in music is *King Arthur in Music*, edited by R. Barber (Cambridge, 2002), which is mostly concerned with opera.

⁴ There have been several studies of ‘medieval films’. Two recent titles are N. Haydock’s *Movie Medievalism: The Imaginary Middle Ages* (Jefferson NC, 2008) and *Medieval Film*, edited by A. Bernau and B. Bildhauer (Manchester, 2009).

⁵ These are major public statements, but more private medievalism can be seen as far back as the 1720s, in the origins of freemasonry and the medieval affectations of the notorious Hell-Fire Clubs. James Macpherson claimed to have translated Ossian’s Gaelic poems in 1760: *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language*. Further supplementary publications even claimed manuscript sources. Walpole also claimed *Otranto* to be a translation of an old book in the black letter from a library in the north of England.

historical novels (*Waverley* in 1814, *Ivanhoe* in 1819).⁶ In 1835 the UK government launched the design competition to build the new Houses of Parliament in the Gothic style, and thereafter medievalism became a major cultural movement which is still playing out its influence.

For medievalism to appear in business names, society needs affluence. In a lively atmosphere of consumerism businesses invent imaginative ways to get attention, including the use of colourful naming. This country achieved such an environment at the end of the nineteenth century, when millennial feelings, pride in the achievements of the long reign of Victoria, and the national celebration of the Alfred the Great millenary in 1901,⁷ all gave encouragement to the use of history in marketing. So, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the atmosphere has been right for the presence of medievalism in business.

It seems that no particular trade is more likely to take a medievalist name, the same name might be used for widely different trades, and the same name can be used anywhere in the world, but there are some patterns. Places with medieval associations are more likely to have them, as evidenced by the Arthurian cluster in Cornwall and the Robin Hood cluster in Nottingham, so there is an interesting element of local pride in these names, and even perhaps a tension between places with competing claims to ‘own’ an aspect of the past. Also, there are some aspects of the Middle Ages which are more likely to be commemorated than others, so I am going to use ten medieval subject areas as name categories rather than using the types of business or linguistic patterns. In surveying medieval historical novels I also found that some events are fictionalised hundreds of times while others feature in only one novel. The reception of the Middle Ages in popular culture is selective.

A word on terminology is also needed here, as the expressions are ambiguous. ‘Trade names’ can refer to either the business which is conducting the trade, or the product or service which is being sold. ‘Business names’ can also refer to both, but usually identify the specific institutions. Onomasts perhaps prefer ‘ergonym’ for the trader, and ‘technonym’ for the product. I make no distinction between business and

⁶ An excellent bibliography of Scott’s work is W. B. Todd and A. Bowden, *Sir Walter Scott. A Bibliographical History 1796–1832* (New Castle DE, 1998).

⁷ A record of this event is provided in A. Bowker, *The King Alfred Millenary. A Record of the Proceedings of the National Commemoration* (London, 1902).

brand names in this paper, and a few place-names have appeared in the form of business parks and public houses.

Adrian Room classifies trade names using three broad categories: those based on pre-existing personal and place-names (John Lewis, the Guisborough Bookshop), those based on standard words (the Sock Shop), and those based on artificial coinings which do not necessarily have any original meaning (nylon).⁸ This scheme, however, rather misses the point when the name uses historical allusions. Nor does it do justice to combinations, acronyms, abbreviations or puns which are very common in trade names. A comprehensive classification system for business names has not yet been found. In this paper, my approach is to ignore the linguistic problem and concentrate on the factual content of the names. This does reveal useful categories, though still with some overlaps between them.⁹

There is another conceptual context in which business names need to be understood, which is their emotive social function. The classic work on metaphor and its effect on language and the mind, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, 1980) emphasises linguistic aspects of metaphor which are entirely relevant to trade names, but by concentrating on the factual content of the names, we are also placing them in the context of a community's sense of its own identity, be it local or national, and where the allusion is used internationally it reveals aspects of one culture playing out in another. Business names are

⁸ Room has provided three excellent guides to names in business, with *Corporate Eponymy. A Biographical Dictionary of the Persons Behind the Names of Major American, British, European and Asian Businesses* (Jefferson NC, 1992), *Dictionary of Trade Name Origins* (London, 1982) and *Encyclopedia of Corporate Names Worldwide* (Jefferson NC, 2002). His categories appear in the introductions to the last two. An excellent short essay is chapter 16 of L. Dunkling, *The Guinness Book of Names* (London, 1974), pp. 199–209. Works about the ideologies of business names, often with the intention of helping those searching for a name for a new enterprise, include N. Taylor's *The Name of the Beast: The Process and Perils of Naming Products, Companies and Brands* (London, 2007), and the humour book G. Swillingham's *Shop Horror. The Best of the Worst in British Shop Names* (London, 2005). Academic studies include publications arising from European conferences, such as *Names in Commerce and Industry: Past and Present*, ed. L. Kremer and E. Ronneberger-Sibold (Berlin, 2007), reviewed in the current issue of *Nomina*, below.

⁹ My approach to the historical novel is similar: I ignore the literary quality of the works and class them according to factual content. Studying an art form through its factual content is unusual, but it does produce interesting revelations.

presented to the world in an iconic way (or at least the businesses hope for their name to become so in the public imagination). ‘Semiotic’ is perhaps a better term than the currently over-used ‘iconic’, and by using an historical allusion businesses are perhaps reaching for a ready-made symbol which reduces the long-term effort of working the name into the public’s mind. As will be seen, however, the ready-made option runs the risk of associating the business with negative connotations, and might even risk suggesting that the business is parochial or old-fashioned. These considerations are very much in the mind of those who advise on trade names for a living, though it can still be an entirely healthy decision for a new business to defy arbitrary ephemeral fashions.

Types of Medievalism in Business Names

I offer ten categories of medieval usage below. The first two are perhaps ‘pseudo-medievalism’, in that they refer to ideas which we associate with the Middle Ages, but which are not exclusive to them.

1. Heraldry

This rarely features in names because it is visual rather than verbal, except of course in pub names, but in cases where these are a continuation of medieval usage, they are not medievalism. Pub names might even be seen as the name of the building rather than the business (i.e. the licensee), so I just want to briefly acknowledge the category of heraldic pub names here. They have been discussed many times before. I recommend Cox’s book and Dunkling and Wright’s popular dictionary.¹⁰ Heraldry is frequently used, of course, as part of a trade logo, but the visual symbol itself is not part of the name. An example of heraldic usage which is not a pub name is Chevron, found in many North American businesses, including, since 1984, the multi-national oil company.

2. Arms, armour and other medieval evocations

This group includes names like Shield Insurance and Visor Consultants. They claim to protect you. But my first category was perhaps ‘too medieval’ for inclusion and this second category perhaps not medieval

¹⁰ Cox is strong on continuing medieval styles in *English Inn and Tavern Names* (Nottingham, 1994); see also Leslie Dunkling and Gordon Wright, *A Dictionary of Pub Names* (London, 1987).

enough. Terms for armour, and words like *abbey*, *alchemy*, *archer*, *castle*, *cathedral*, *crown*, *knight*, *minstrel*, *pageant* and *spire* are often used in trade and the Middle Ages, but their denotations and connotations are not limited to that period. They may also stem from a personal or place-name rather than history. There are several estate agents called Knights, in Wales, England and Scotland, and many use the chess piece as a logo, but they all seem to originate in a surname. The building society Abbey National originated as the Abbey Road Building Society in 1874.

Nevertheless, sometimes these words can be explicitly medieval. The transport and distribution company Knights of Old Ltd., of Kettering, was founded in about 1900 and has a knight in full tournament gear as its logo. Their motto, 'Service with Honour', seems to explain the name. Knightactive organise medieval themed events. The company arranging banquets at Caldicot Castle is called castle4banquets and the Knights of Middle England organise jousting in Warwick.

3. Medieval linguistic affectation

This category is unambiguously relevant and commonly this takes the form of *Ye Olde* in the name of businesses in old buildings, especially pubs. This amusing cliché is not mentioned by Cox, but it became popular at the time of the Arts and Crafts movement around 1900 and at the time it was entirely sincere. The Arts and Crafts movement was idealistic and it celebrated old things as good things. *Ye Olde* is now in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and the entry begins:

Etymology: < *ye* graphic var. of THE *adj.* (see Y *n.*) + OLDE *adj.*

Employed esp. commercially to suggest (spurious) antiquity in collocations the other words of which are often also archaistically spelt. Also *absol.* as *n.*, a building characterized by (spurious) antique furnishings.

1896 W. WROTH *London Pleasure Gardens* I. 56 A modern public-house. 'Ye olde Bagnigge Wells.'

1900 *Confectioners' Union Hand-bk.* 167 Ye olde English toffee.

Later examples follow. The *OED* is right to insert the word 'spurious' in brackets as sometimes it is a genuine antiquity that is referred to, as in the

1896 reference, though not the toffee from 1900. Presumably these trade names existed slightly before their appearance in print. The ‘Ye Olde Movement’ was responsible for much renaming as well as new coining. Photographs of The Trip to Jerusalem, a medieval pub in Nottingham, show that in about 1900 the pub was called The Trip, but now it is called Ye Olde Trip. None of the old buildings now so called were called that before c.1900, but Cox records an earlier, eighteenth-century, fashion for adding ‘Old’ to pub names. So, the sympathy is there before, it is only about 1900 that we get this strange affectation.

It is possible that this usage originated in America; the *OED* records an 1852 political usage:

1852 U.S. *Democratic Rev.* Mar. 224/2 We shall ... show ... the character of ‘the old foggy’, or ‘ye olde fogie’, as he at present exists.¹¹

Here we see a phrase which is taken to suggest the English Middle Ages, with both old-fashioned and nostalgic connotations, appearing overseas and then either being imported into the UK or appearing slightly later here, independently. ‘Old’ spellings are common in literature throughout the nineteenth century, and *ye* itself survived from the Middle Ages as a manuscript rendition of ‘the’ until the early nineteenth century.¹² It is even set in metal on some of the seventeenth-century trade tokens (‘ye overseers of ye poor’ appears on a Cambridgeshire one in 1668). At some point the thorn symbol <þ> stopped being recognised as such and became misinterpreted and mispronounced as though it were a <y>. Then the belief was generated that our ancestors talked like that. It is a challenge to understand when and how this happened; certainly the printed usage is early, notably occurring in the ‘Cromwell Bible’ of 1539: *The Byble in Englyshe ... bothe of ye olde and newe testament*. In part, the process was aided by other linguistic factors: some medieval manuscript renditions of <þ> bore a strong resemblance to <y>, and early printers often adopted <y> to represent <þ> if working with continental presses which did not

¹¹ *OED*, s.v. *olde adj.*

¹² It occurs for example in diaries of 1814–17 published in *The Travel Journals of Robert Hyde Greg of Quarry Bank Mill*, edited by B. and A. Freer (Donington, 2007).

include thorn. This use of <y> is fairly common in mid-Victorian printing, before its use in business names.¹³ The mispronunciation of the long *s* as *f* is perhaps worth mentioning as another linguistic mistake originating in typography.

Of course, when *Ye Olde* is combined with a non-medieval trade, or found on a modern building, it can seem quite absurd. ‘Ye Olde Tea Shoppe’ is an obvious anachronism. There is an on-line business called Ye Olde Infocomme Shoppe, and in 2008 I saw in Nottingham a shop called Lincolnshire Farm Produce / Ye Olde Potato Island. Carterton, Oxford, has a pub called Ye Olde Aviator, and there is an internet trader called Ye Olde Banknote Shoppe.

4. Secular medieval personalities

Robin Hood must be the only terrorist who is popular amongst the descendants of his enemies, in Nottingham and France (where he is called *Robin des Bois*). He is a make of sports car. Nottingham had a Robin Hood Cycles (Raleigh is also in the city), and a Robin Hood bus company. Robin Hood Boilers of Beeston sold nationwide (I have a copy of their 1938 catalogue). Nottingham Building Society uses Robin Hood as its logo. Openly associating a bank with a notorious thief and outlaw does seem rather bizarre, but shares were also sold in 1858 for a Robin Hood Mining Company in Matlock,¹⁴ seemingly without anyone thinking it must be crooked. Nottingham is passionate about Robin Hood and it was really quite upset when Doncaster named its new airport after him, but the stories are consistent: he lived the other side of Sherwood Forest in the Barnsley area, from where he antagonised the sheriff based in Nottingham. He became a British-wide hero in the fifteenth century (present in Scotland in the May Day plays), and an international one by the eighteenth. Perhaps the more important a figure becomes the more

¹³ In 1861 there was published in London a cartoon history book called *Ye Booke of Pictures Painted by Ancient People to Veritable Historic Rhymes*, which covered the period from Alfred to Henry VIII, and in 1881 a medieval fair was held, recorded in *The Illustrated London News* (June 18, 1881) as ‘Ye Old English Fayre at ye Royal Albert Halle’. The affected spellings are just beginning here, and the writers missed opportunities for further exaggeration, but they show that the fashion started before it transferred to business. A great many of the examples in the British Library catalogue are publications from overseas.

¹⁴ Known from a share certificate sold on Ebay in 2008.

one location will seek to claim him as their own. Tourism and local pride were not uncommon in the Middle Ages, particularly when religious centres sought to encourage pilgrimage.

Robin's companions are also found in trade. Friar Tuck fish and chip shops are found throughout Britain and Ireland, sometimes using the word Friar without Tuck, but then having a logo which makes it clear that he is the friar intended (as in the supply company Friar's Pride). The pun also works, with less precision, for Chipmonks (a takeaway in Street, Somerset; there are also three Chipmunks fish and chip shops with a less obvious referent). Opposite Lenton Priory is the chip shop Lenton Friary; but he is a deep fat friar so other trades also use him. The hospitable side of Friar Tuck's literary personality is also celebrated in the name of a Convention Centre in New York. The sixteenth-century character would now be regarded as obnoxious, but in the twentieth century (particularly in the Richard Greene 1950s television series), it was transformed into that of a Christian hero, so now he is a brand of clerical dress, and his reputation for wisdom makes him appropriate for the name of a Singapore-based management consultancy.

Maid Marian is a pub and a restaurant and a bakery in Nottingham. She runs Cleaning Services in Newcastle; and one Marion Pate of Melrose has a range of cakes called Maid by Marion. In 1998 the National Milling Corporation of Agricola, Guyana, launched their range of Maid Marian Flour. They were perhaps influenced by the successful Robin Hood Flour of Canada. Little John is a brand of ale, and he runs a paddock in Nottingham; Will Scarlet keeps a pub. The Sherwood Florist nicely puns on Forest.

There are 11 Robin Hood businesses in the 2008 Nottingham telephone directory, and another 8 for his companions, while Robin Wood of Edale, Derbyshire is a business specialising in reproductions of medieval wooden bowls, plates and cups.

The traditional first Englishman, Hengest, is a restaurant in Aylesford, Kent, and Hengest Farm Feeds operate from Banstead, Surrey. There seem to be no usages of Horsa or Vortigern.

King Offa runs both a primary school in Bexhill-on-Sea and a distillery at Hereford, and Egbert Systems operate from Swindon (near the traditional site of the Battle of *Ellandune*). Egbert's visit to Dore is commemorated in the name of King Egbert School, Sheffield.

Alfred the Great is another hero who has an extraordinary local, national and international presence. He shares with Robin the distinction of being a bus company (in Winchester), and a brand of beer.¹⁵ Alfred's use in business also begins early. There are eighteenth-century trade tokens which feature him. The creation of the statue at Wantage in 1849 stimulated his use in local business logos and business names, as the more famous Winchester statue also did after 1901.¹⁶ He is on Edwardian crestware and brass nick-nacks, the delightful pottery King Alfred Night Light Holder, and King Alfred Tea Cakes is an Edwardian brand from Bath. King Alfred is a cigar, a daffodil, a train,¹⁷ a Royal Navy cruiser (launched in 1901), several pubs,¹⁸ a swimming pool (at Hove), several schools, and a campus at the University of Winchester. He has many talents.

The famous tenth-century Viking king of York, Erik Bloodaxe, is commemorated by the poetry publisher Bloodaxe Books. Founded in 1978, the company operates from Highgreen in Northumberland, and cite Erik's command that Egil write him a praise-poem overnight as an early act of poetic patronage. Bloodaxe Boats, established in 1984 at Cowes, Isle of Wight, use a Viking ship logo for their business, building and designing dinghies (they also have an Axeman series of International Moths). In the 1970s, York Archaeological Trust raised Erik's profile with their merchandising in support of the Coppergate excavations.

King Athelstan runs a pub in Bournemouth and several schools, in Sherburn in Elmet, Hastings, Sheffield, Kingston-upon-Thames and Hampton, Middlesex. In Exeter and Malmesbury he runs an estate agency and a secondhand furniture shop. The unlucky Ethelred the Unready now runs a community youth club in London.

King Cnut is definitely claimed as the inspiration for King Cnut Ethical Clothing Ltd of Reading, founded in 1999, but the style of the brand strongly suggests that the real inspiration was the subtle rudeness

¹⁵ Beer labels are more likely to employ medievalism than wine, but there are many continental medieval connections in D. Seward's *Monks and Wine* (London, 1979). These are often a continuing tradition rather than new medievalist usage, however.

¹⁶ R. Wilkinson, 'King Alfred lives in advertising' (1982) is a short essay available on the website of the Vale and Downland Museum Trust at Wantage.

¹⁷ See J. Pike's *Locomotive Names, an Illustrated Dictionary* (Stroud, 2000), for other examples.

¹⁸ King Alfred's Head in Wantage actually pre-dated the 1849 celebrations.

of French Connection UK. Their website claims ‘King Cnut has had many threats and battles over his surname [sic] due to the narrow mindedness of many ignorant peasants but he has fought on and is still here to tell the tale!’ The company remains the only use of that spelling in *Yellow Pages*. There is the transport company Canute but they do not acknowledge a royal foundation.

Cnut’s grandfather, King Harald Bluetooth, is the inspiration behind the wireless computer technology called ‘Bluetooth’, which takes a runic letter as its symbol. The thinking is that Bluetooth unites separate devices, just as the king united several peoples of Denmark and Norway.

Hereward the Wake is a local hero in the Isle of Ely, but surprisingly he only seems to run a pub there. In Peterborough, however, he has run a double-glazing company, a business consultancy, a curtain company, a stationers, and a sportswear shop and he is the local Community College and the local commercial radio station, but Hereward is notorious for having sacked Peterborough Abbey in 1070, so it seems odd to name a Peterborough enterprise after him.

Lady Godiva is the heroine of Coventry, where she appeared on the local trade tokens in 1792, along with an attractive elephant and castle for the medieval arms of the city.¹⁹ The Coventry Building Society offers Godiva Mortgages, claiming a fair deal. Unexpectedly, she also makes Godiva Guns ... and Fire Pumps ... and she has been a Belgium-based chocolate company since 1926. The website for Godiva chocolates states that the founder ‘sought a name that embodied the timeless qualities of passion, style, sensuality and modern boldness’. Such qualities are indeed associated with the story, even though ‘style’ seems irrelevant to nakedness. Nevertheless, Lady Godiva is a range of women’s underwear and swimwear, a clothes shop, a hairdressers, and a range of skin products (the Godiva Lip Gloss seems to be the most circulated). Godiva’s

¹⁹ See J. R. S. Whiting, *Trade Tokens. A Social and Economic History* (Newton Abbot, 1971) for an over-view of this extraordinary coinage. Given the ideological importance of coinage for propaganda, these local mintings reveal something of how communities saw themselves in the 1790s. Hundreds of them present the medieval arms of the locality, and several offer more specific medieval messages (coins from Anglesey, Dublin, Brechin, Dundee, Bath, Coventry, Lancaster, Nuneaton, Sleaford and Southampton).

Milk is a perfume described as a pheromone love oil, from Sorceress Products.²⁰

Jack Straw (of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt) is commemorated in the large, currently derelict, hotel called Jack Straw's Castle in Hampstead, London, and Jack Straw's Country Store of Evesham makes straw baskets.

The medieval printer Gutenberg is commemorated in the internet Gutenberg Project, which aims to digitise the book and therefore remove the need for printing, so it is a rather strange dedication.

Dick Whittington, both a real person as well as a pantomime figure, is commemorated in the Dick Whittington Family Leisure Park, near Gloucester. The theologian and tragic lover Peter Abelard appears to be commemorated in Abelard Nursing of Nottingham and Abelard Management Services of Woodcroft near Newport, Gwent. The tragic couple's son, with the extraordinary name of Astrolabe, or the medieval instrument he was named after, is a brand of New Zealand wine stocked by Waitrose.

The Irish hero Cuchulainn runs a Construction company in Glasgow and from 1961, as Cú Uladh, a bus service in Ireland;²¹ and the original birth name of Cuchulainn, Setanta, was used for the Irish-based international sports television channel. Brian Boru gave up the Irish kingship in 1998 to become a brand of vodka. There are many Brian Boru hotels in Australia, New Zealand and America, and a club in Wigan. The Welsh king Owain Glyndŵr has run an hotel at Corwen in Clwyd at least since the time of George Borrow's visit in 1862. Llywelyn the Great's dog Gelert is a Welsh business selling mountaineering and camping gear, based in Porthmadog, not far from Beddgelert, where there is also a shop called Gelert Gifts and a Prince Llewelyn Hotel. Caernarfon has a Gelert Motors and Newport, Gwent has the delightful Gelert Dog Training Wales. Since 1982 Gelert Pet Nutrition has made dog food in Wales.

²⁰ In April 2009 their website (attached to Ebay) presented 467 different products, mostly perfumes, and several had medievalist names, including Chypre of the Crusader, Victorian Gothic, Celtic Sun, Morgan le Fay, Merlin, Medieval Monastery (intended for use in mixed foundations, perhaps?), Viking, Guinevere, Freya and Ceridwen's Cauldron. Several Vampire names (including Bite Me!) and Lemon Meringue Pie were also perfumes in the list...

²¹ B. Share, *Naming Names. Who, What, Where in Irish Nomenclature* (Dublin, 2001), p. 121.

Robert the Bruce is a pub in Dumfries, and King Bruce was an Edwardian cigar.

Black Prince is a black ale brewed by St Austell's Brewery, Cornwall, and there are four Black Prince pubs (one in Woodstock). Black Prince Holidays Ltd operate boat hire from Northwich and Bromsgrove and Black Prince Security will protect you in Wolverhampton.

The Aztec emperor Montezuma II represents the last moments of the European Middle Ages, and he was soon commemorated in seventeenth-century art and literature, and in several operas. Today, however, he runs Mexican restaurants in America and Australia, and in the UK Montezuma's Chocolates Ltd was founded in Brighton in 2000, and they have actually issued a rich chocolate truffle called Montezuma's Revenge.

Richard III is commemorated as an hotel in Leyburn, North Yorkshire, and as a restaurant in Scarborough. Given his traditional reputation, it is perhaps strange that he also founded the Richard III Infant and Nursery School, Leicester without the appropriate security checks, but the case against him was always unproven. The more euphonious dynastic name has inspired Plantagenet Music Ltd, established in 1994 in York (it specialises in recordings of military bands). Tenby in Pembrokeshire has a Plantagenet House Restaurant, and an American company called Plantagenet Tours organises holidays in historical Europe. Plantagenet is now a place-name in Canada and Australia. The replacement dynasty is commemorated in Tudor Travel of Speen, Buckinghamshire.

5. Religious personalities

There are many saints in trade. Most of these are also medieval personalities, but one can include some from the classical period if their cult flourished in the Middle Ages. As with the secular personalities, there can be uncertainty whether the motivation is local or national, whether the mainstream saint in a local business is perhaps intended to show the best of national culture to a local market, or whether a local saint is considered to display the best of a location to the wider country.

St George is a well-established pub name, and has been since 1369. Cox records the new fashion for George and the Dragon from 1822 onwards. Pistrucci's famous sculpture first appeared on gold coinage in 1817, but the design is classical. Perhaps the dragon in the national consciousness at the time, however, was Napoleon.

The explanation for the usage is often the local church dedication. The Ethelburga Syndicate operated from Bishopsgate in London, where she is the parish dedication, from 1902–45.²² St Fin Barre's Brewery in 1861 took its name from the nearby St Finbarr's Cathedral, Cork. The Corah company in Leicester had a range of St Margaret hosiery from 1865, again named from the local church, but they even had a rather good statue of St Margaret overlooking the factory, almost suggesting an identification with the saint which was beyond the local connection. They supplied Marks & Spencer but when Marks launched their own St Michael brand in 1928, they sought a matching saint's name and chose the forename of the founder, Michael Marks.

Until recently, Thomas Becket was commemorated in the tea shop Becketts at Peterborough Cathedral. His severe lifestyle does not seem to connote lavish hospitality, or even good hygiene, but it was run in the former Becketts Chapel, the real reason for the name.

Oswald's Hotels operate from Thirsk, North Yorkshire, where St Oswald is the local dedication, and he also runs a hospice charity shop in Gateshead, but his cult was surprisingly widespread in the Middle Ages, inspiring the Tyrolean wine label San Osvaldo.²³

Unique local connections are present in Whitby, where a small publisher is called Caedmon of Whitby, and where there is a St Hilda's Business Centre. Caedmon Nets Ltd of Whitby make and sell the special nets which cover lorry or skip loads during transport and Caedmon House is an antiques centre. Whitby also now boasts a number of Goth shops, cashing in on the Whitby association with Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's novel.

Bede Tools & Machinery of Jarrow, and Bede Furnishings Ltd of South Shields, keep alive his memory in the place where he spent his whole life. Alcuin Lodge is a York guesthouse, and the scholarship of St Aquinas seems to have inspired Aquinas Training of Chobham, Surrey, and Aquinas International Ltd of Bristol, a recruitment consultancy.

St David is an ale made by Brains of Cardiff, and Lindisfarne Mead is actually made on the island, at the St Aidan Winery, which uses imagery from the Lindisfarne Gospels in its marketing.

²² See *The Stock Exchange Official Year-Book 1974–5* (London, 1975), p. 474.

²³ See *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, edited by C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (Stamford, 1995), pp. 210–40, for the spread of the cult through Europe.

The Cornish St. Kew Products Ltd make confectionary at Wadebridge, not far from the village also dedicated to him (or her).

6. King Arthur & Associates

This 'holding company' makes a class of its own as it uses names of people, places and objects from the one cultural source. There is a cluster of them in Cornwall but they have offices everywhere. Since 1962, they have run three large satellite dishes on the Lizard Peninsula called Arthur, Guinevere and Merlin. Merlin has a reputation for wisdom, so it is good to see him running charities and a Manchester University science project. These also provide my only acronyms. The Manchester one is Multi-Element Radio Linked Interferometer Network, an array of radio telescopes, and the charity is Medical Emergency ReLief, INternational, founded in 1993 and based in London. Merlin is a picture framer in Helston and a glass company in Liskeard. In Chesterfield he is a computer company, in Glasgow a business consultant, in Leyland a make of cycles and in London a publisher. King Arthur himself runs a few pubs and hotels, a bookshop and a school. In America King Arthur Flour seems a suitable competitor for the Canadian Robin Hood Flour, and the sword Excalibur is the name of business consultants in Stirling, Plymouth and London, a beer label and a nationwide kitchens company. Avalon, Galahad, Pendragon, Lancelot, Round Table and Tintagel also appear, but the most widespread Arthurian name is now that for the whole syndicate, Camelot.

In 1993 there was a change in the British way of life when John Major introduced the national lottery, giving the franchise to the Camelot Group PLC of Watford. Why Camelot? One wonders if they first thought of Winalot, but it was already used as a dog food, or if they played with the words Game Lottery and saw that they combined as Gamelot, making an easy jump to Camelot, but I am merely guessing. Onomasts, however, know that Camelot is a false place-name invented in the twelfth century by a Frenchman (Chrétien de Troyes), soon widely used for the Arthurian capital or fantasy land, and I am more than happy to describe the National Lottery as a False Foreign Fantasy, though I am sure it is not what the founders intended. Even worse for the Camelot Group is that the word in modern French is used for commercial trash of no substance or

quality, its etymology being the French medieval word for commerce rather than deliberate mockery of Arthuriana.²⁴

Camelot is also used for the Camelot Theme Park in Chorley, Lancashire; Camelot Courier Training Ltd in London; a small airline, Air Camelot, based in Wincanton, Somerset; and Camelot Home Inspections of Bristol will do a Home Information Pack for you.

Because Camelot is the archetypal castle, it is also good to see the Camelot Play Castle based in a former church in Rotherham, and companies running bouncy castle services called Jumpalot, in Burntwood, and several variations of Bouncealot from Hemel Hempstead to Midlothian. These can, of course, pun equally with Camelot and Lancelot (the Midlothian example takes the form Sir Bounce-A-Lot).

7. Vikings and other medieval nationalities

Just as for Robin Hood, this seems a bit misguided, traditionally they were pirates, but one company definitely has a more refined view of them. Bateman's Brewery in the Lincolnshire Danelaw recently promoted their Valiant beer with Viking imagery and the catch-phrase 'Develop a Liking for a Viking'. They explain: 'Valiant Norsemen invaded ... bringing with them an audacious, indomitable attitude ... they were peace loving, with the desire to integrate and settle'. The stationery company Viking Direct might be best understood in this context, connoting a fast delivery. The Viking Loom embroidery shop in York also suggests a sophisticated historical awareness, and the multi-national publisher Viking perhaps employs their reputation for literature.

Vikings connote qualities such as dynamism, success, and go-getting, so in most business names Viking is used as an adjective. In Viking Direct, therefore, there seems to be a missing noun and it is intriguing to imagine what it might be.

York has a cluster of Viking names. Would one trust Viking Removals? Viking Communications claims 'to operate in the traditional manner', whatever that means in a Viking context. A friend in York has checked local directories for me and found that there are at least 14 Viking businesses in the city and another 10 use the name *Yorvik*.

Crandall in Hampshire had a Viking Restaurant in the 1960s, a decade before their modern rise in popularity after the archaeological discoveries

²⁴ I am most grateful to Paul Tempan for mentioning this to me.

at York,²⁵ and their extraordinary talents even extend to Viking Chimney Sweeps in Wallingford. Since the 1970s Stamford, one of the Danish Five Boroughs, has had a large modern pub called The Danish Invader, accompanied by a substantial metal statue of a Viking next to the road outside.

Another Viking business is Saga Holidays of Folkestone. Offering travel for the over-fifties, the name, punning with *sage*, suggests maturity, and travel, adventure, a story to tell. However, the licentious behaviour of many on Saga Holidays has earned them the delightful nickname Saga Louts, an unfortunate rebound ... but rather appealing.

Rover Cars (from 1904) have a name which should just connote travel, but they use a Viking longship as their logo. This rather suggests that the name is the Danish *rover*, used for the Vikings ... but regrettably also meaning robber (and with another pejorative definition in the on-line Urban Dictionary). Vikings are colourful but the name still seems more suitable for a rugby team, along with all the bulls, tigers, wasps, dragons and other predators who play that game. In Australia there is a rugby team called St Edmund's Vikings—an extraordinary juxtaposition, given his martyrdom.

Goth shops are perhaps relevant here because the form of the word is a nationality, though the usage seems to be inspired by the nineteenth-century nickname for enthusiasts for the Gothic Revival in architecture, and ultimately, of course, the reputation for horror in the 'Gothic Novel'. Names include the Goth N Glitz shop at Morecambe, The Goth & Rock Shop of Chesterfield and The New Goth of Cowdenbeath, Fife. Internet traders include Alchemy Goth, Gothic Universe, and the punning Fancy Goth, Goth Cat and Little Miss Gothic.

Other ethnicities include Saxon, the brand of toilet paper sold by the retailer Aldi. Anglo-Saxon Books is a publisher specialising in the period, and there are several Saxon estate agents. The Celts are represented in the Celtic Business Park, Newport, and in the Welsh-based pub chain Celtic Inns Ltd, founded in 2002. In 2010 the Ryder Cup was held at the Celtic Manor Resort near Newport. Of course, even the name Celtic is pure medievalism because no such name existed in the Middle Ages.

²⁵Many of the older hotel names are found in guides such as *Ashley Courtenay's Let's Halt Awhile. England. Ireland. Scotland. Wales*, 32nd edn (London, 1965).

The importance of the North Sea oil industry for the economy of East Scotland has given us Pict Petroleum (1985–95), which, since a merger, continues its alliterative career under the new name Premier Pict Petroleum. An Edinburgh television company Hand Pict Productions Ltd have exploited the name's punning potential.

The Lombards, important for medieval banking, are commemorated in 'Lombard', now part of the National Westminster Bank, but originally an investment bank which first used the name Lombard Banking in 1946.

8. Actual medieval events

These are sometimes commemorated, but not very often. Hastings Direct is an insurance company. The name is a simple transfer from the place-name where they operate, but they use Norman Conquest imagery in their advertising, and they have the 1066 telephone number. The wooden cars these friendly Norman knights drive are reminiscent of those driven by the Flintstones in the stone age. Norman's Conquest Extra Strong Ale won the 1995 CAMRA award. The name itself is ambiguous but the label design makes the 1066 connection clear. There is also a marquee hire company called 1066 Marquees at Bexhill in Sussex, and Battle itself not only has a Ye Olde Café, but a charity shop called Ye Olde Battle Axe / Axing Prices in Battle, The 1066 (a pub restaurant), and a shop called 1066 Clocks. There are 45 uses of 1066 in *Yellow Pages*, mostly in Hastings, Battle, St Leonard's on Sea and Bexhill on Sea, while Chester le Street, Durham, has a builder called 1066 William the Concreter.

Although they are far from politically correct, the Crusades appear many times in business. There is a Crusader Business Park in Warminster; Crusader Holidays operate from Clacton and Crusade Envelopes is a national brand. Conqueror is also the name of a note paper, with a medieval knight as its logo. Another stationery brand is Defenda Envelopes. Stationery products seem particularly prone to adopting names suggesting a powerful importance.

The north of England has several White Rose and Red Rose businesses; Stirling, not far from Bannockburn, has an inn called simply 1314.

I thought the Black Death of 1348 to be too tragic an event for a lively business name, but it has now been used for a skateboard business in Bristol, presumably one which enjoys street-cred gothism.

9. Medieval forms of place-names

These are comparatively rare. Glasgow had a café called The Molindiner, which commemorates a local burn, and it puns with diner, and the name also appeared in the Molendinar Park Housing Association. Norvic Shoes uses the Latin ‘of Norwich’ (*Norvicensis*), and Norvic Matches has also been a brand of safety match. Yorvik has already been mentioned. Such names illustrate that their market is sufficiently historically aware to understand their meaning. The more obscure Anglo-Saxon name for York, *Eoforwic*, has not been used, but the Roman name *Eboracum* has, with 19 in the city and all of them abbreviated as Ebor (another Roman name is used for several Anderida businesses in Sussex). Well-known is the chain of soft furnishing shops called Dunelm, originally founded in Durham. It may be that Ebor and Dunelm are more memorable because they are also famous as the abbreviations for the respective bishops. Peterborough once had the name *Medeshamstede*, and surprisingly this is the name of an hotel in Shanklin, Isle of Wight, presumably because a founder came from Peterborough.

Sarum and Barum are thirteenth-century scribal forms of Salisbury and Barnstaple. Both were revived in the nineteenth century and remain popular names for local businesses.

Wroughton near Swindon commemorates the 825 Battle of *Ellendune* with its Ellendune Shopping Centre.

Suggesting a sophisticated understanding, but which may simply derive from bilingualism, occasionally the original meaning of a place-name is celebrated, as in the various Crow Valley businesses of Cwmbran, Gwent, such as Crow Valley Sheds. The town also has a brewery which makes Crow Valley Stout. Of course, folk etymologies can also appear, as in The Three Kings pub in Threekingham, Lincolnshire.

St Ivel was invented in 1900 as a fictional saint for the place-name Yeovil, by a dairy company based in the town.

10. Names from literature

This category includes both medieval originals and modern texts. Robin Hood and King Arthur have already been mentioned. There is a Beowulf Consulting Ltd., a Beowulf Brewing Co. at Walsall, Beowulf CCTV Solutions of Knutsford and Beowulf of Halifax make silencers and radiator covers for motorcycles. The hero’s fantastic dive to the

underwater lair of Grendel's Mother seems to have inspired Beowulf Diving of Wimborne. There has been a Chaucer Hotel at Canterbury from 1957 (and Canterbury currently has many other Chaucer businesses, including a bookshop). *Piers Plowman* was celebrated in a delightful series of school history textbooks in the 1920s. Langland wrote after the Black Death and he had a social conscience, so it seems relevant that his commemoration appeared after the immense national shock of the First World War.

The advent of printing perhaps belongs here, with William Caxton still in business as a printer in London, Treorchy, Accrington, Purley and Tiverton. Early printers were also booksellers, and there is a Caxton bookshop in Frinton-on-Sea and a stationer in Radleff. I was delighted to receive the proofs of *A Commodity of Good Names* delivered from David Parsons using a box from Gutenberg, a printer in Tarxien, Malta.

Mabinogion is a restaurant in Bangor, Gwynedd.

Havelok the Dane is celebrated at Grimsby with Havelok Housing Association Ltd., and with similar names for housing associations in Lincoln and Brigg.

Everyman's Library, a large series of classics published by J. M. Dent, first appeared in 1906, with distinct Arts and Crafts-inspired end-papers and bindings.

The Italian writer Boccaccio has inspired both the London-based video company Boccaccio Productions Ltd, and the Dublin Boccaccio Italian Restaurant; and Dante also keeps restaurants, in Belfast and Edinburgh. It all seems obvious enough for an Italian restaurant but one wonders what the motivation was behind Northern Ireland's Inferno Television, Kendal's Juggling Inferno, London's Inferno Communications, and Exeter's Inferno Jewellery. Manchester's Inferno Fireplaces and Nottingham's Disco Inferno, however, seem appropriate usage.

Modern works include *Ivanhoe*, which has become a real place-name, in California and Australia, and by the 1881 census it had become a real first name.²⁶ Ivanhoe Hotels or pubs are in Dublin, Belfast and Edinburgh. Ivanhoe Road Management Co. Ltd are in Liverpool; Ashby de la Zouche (a location in the novel) has had an Ivanhoe Football Club

²⁶Scott based the name on the Buckinghamshire place-name Ivinghoe, but in a form which denied the original meaning. In the novel it is a locative surname for one Wilfred de Ivanhoe.

since 1948 and now has an Ivanhoe Business Park and an Ivanhoe Technology College. Scarborough has The Ivanhoe hotel and Doncaster offers Ivanhoe Battery Suppliers. Adrian Room records that *Marmion*, Scott's tale of the battle of Flodden, was commemorated in an industrial cleaner from Proctor & Gamble, registered in 1888.

Counting as modern because he is post-medieval is William Shakespeare, and there are several coinings from his plays. They still count, but the cigar called Hamlet and the car called Giulietta are inspired by the plays rather than the original medieval story. Sir John Falstaff is commemorated in several pubs, restaurants and hotels as well as a newsagents (London) and an antiques shop (Cranbrook, Kent), and in Birmingham and Tamworth he makes a pun for a recruitment company called Fullstaff Ltd.

Another fictional, and popular, text is *Ossian*, which is now a brand of children's clothes; a Glasgow publisher, an hotel in Kingussie, an engineering company in Lennoxton, Dunbar, and a band performing Celtic folk music on the Iona label; and not just Scotland: in London Ossian is a jeweller, a video company and a guesthouse. One wonders how the notorious forgery found its way into the commercial world, where imitation is limited by very strict copyright.

The success of the film *Braveheart* soon inspired the name of the Perth-based investment syndicate Braveheart Ventures Ltd., and a guesthouse in Edinburgh.

Conclusions

One of the fascinating aspects of business names is the search for categories. These usually concentrate on linguistics, but by emphasising the cultural reference in the name I think we record the reason behind it more clearly, but it will be apparent that this approach still gives us overlaps and complex linguistic challenges represented by iconic abbreviations, puns, acronyms etc. Moreover, these categories seem peculiar to medievalism and will only work to some extent with other movements. Classicalism would require extensive mythological and language sections, Orientalism perhaps more contemporary categories, Biblicalism perhaps a greater number of divisions for personal names.

Multi-national businesses today invest a great deal of research and consultancy in avoiding the sort of double meanings I have highlighted in

some of these names, particularly where a product is planned for an international market. This has stimulated the rise in the number of ‘meaningless’ names in Room’s third category, names which suggest but do not specify any substance. One wonders whether it really matters. One would like to think that customers are more concerned with the quality or value of what they buy rather than its slick presentation. Not only do many great trade names from the past belie modern fashions, but an obvious cultural *faux pas* like the use of Camelot and Viking seems to make no difference at all to the commercial reality of the enterprise. Another, non-medieval, example is the use of ‘Cavalier’ in many business names, despite the double-meaning which suggests taking opportunistic advantage of customers.

Neither does it necessarily mean anything to the employees. An opportunity arose for some oral research in 2008 when I saw Viking Signs of Grantham installing a new shop sign. I asked them if they knew why they were called Viking, given that they were pirates. I received the friendly answer ‘I haven’t a clue, mate!’

In conclusion, medievalism is not as common in trade names as classicalism is, but I think such names often have a sincerity about them, especially if they express local pride. The naming processes are, surely, rather similar to those employed for the naming of follies (King Alfred’s Tower at Stourhead, Wiltshire was completed in 1772), schools since the 1960s (before then most schools take the local place-name or founders’ names, but nowadays there are many historical references) and the occasional Robin Hood or Arthurian landscape feature. Above all, they certainly require the existence of a history-conscious society for them to have any meaning. What is perhaps the most interesting thing about them, therefore, is that such names exist in the first place.²⁷

²⁷Many more examples are possible to illustrate the categories found. Comparison with inspiration from other historical periods could also be illuminating, and as the data grows it might lend itself to some linguistic analysis. Possibly, therefore, there might be a book one day. I am most grateful to the following for encouragement and suggestions: Mary Atkin, Hilary Baker, Pam Combes, the late Margaret Gelling, Carole Hough, Peter Kitson, Chris Lewis, David Roffe, Adrian Room, Maggie Scott, Kevin Sell, Edward Sproston, Tania Styles, Simon Taylor, Paul Tempan, Kevin Troop, my brother Christopher Tyas, the eponymous Paul Watkins, and Doreen Waugh.