



University
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‘The most English county in Scotland’ Berwickshire place-names revisited

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“The place-names of Berwickshire may claim special interest, not only because they have never been separately studied before, but because Berwick is **the most English county in Scotland**, and has perhaps a richer store of charters on which to draw than any other.” James B. Johnston, *The Place-Names of Berwickshire* (Edinburgh, 1940), p. 7

*Recovering the Earliest English Language in Scotland:
evidence from place-names (REELS)*

The Leverhulme Trust, 2016-2019

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<https://berwickshire-placenames.glasgow.ac.uk/>

The Berwickshire Place-Name Resource



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Welcome

Welcome to The Berwickshire Place-Name Resource. This resource has been created by the research project *Recovering the Earliest English Language in Scotland: Evidence from place-names*, funded by The Leverhulme Trust at the University of Glasgow from 2016 to 2019. Over the course of four years, the project team surveyed the place-names of the historical county of Berwickshire (now part of the Scottish Borders Council Area), collecting and analysing early spellings from medieval and later documents and maps, undertaking fieldwork, and talking to local people, in order to uncover the languages and meanings of the names. [More information on the project is available here](#), and the [place-names can be searched here](#).

The online resource offers early forms and analysis for all 1,224 Berwickshire place-names on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map series (1:50,000). This map series was chosen because it includes the names of all settlements and major landscape features throughout the county. Another output of the project is forthcoming as a volume within the Survey of Scottish Place-Names (*The Place-Names of Berwickshire Volume 1: The Tweedside Parishes*), and will offer even fuller coverage of six parishes along the border with England, including names of small landscape features such as streams and fishing pools. Also nearing completion is a PhD thesis on Berwickshire hill names. Other publications resulting from the project utilise evidence from the place-names to explore topics such as early settlement, language varieties, literary influence, source materials and types of formation; [publications are listed here](#). A recent (2020) example of such work (published elsewhere under the aegis of the [Forum for Research into the Languages of Scotland and Ulster](#)) appears [here](#), as part of this site. Taken together, they throw important new light on the languages and history of this part of the Borders.

In addition to its core aim of using place-names to investigate the Northumbrian variety of Old English and its development into Older Scots, the project pioneered a new mode of disseminating place-name research electronically, [discussed more fully here](#). Traditionally, the results of place-name survey are published as hard-copy volumes, as with the forthcoming *The Place-Names of Berwickshire Volume 1*. By developing an innovative relational database for the creation and editing of place-name records, the project has been able to generate The Berwickshire Place-Name resource as a freely available, searchable

RECENT POSTS

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Old English: 36 (Ayton, Bassendean, Channelkirk, Chirnside, Cockburnspath, Coldingham, Coldstream, Cranshaws, Duns, Earlston, Edrom, Ellem, Fishwick, Fogo, Foulden, Gordon, Greenlaw, Halliburton, Hilton, Horndean, Hume, Hutton, Lamberton, Langton, Legerwood, Lennel, Mertoun, Mordington, Nenthorn, Paxton, Polwarth, Preston, Simprim, Swinton, Upsettlington, Whitsome)

Scots: 3 (Eyemouth, Ladykirk, Westruther)

Gaelic: 3 (Bunkle, Longformacus, Old Cambus)

Brittonic: 2 (Eccles, ?Lauder)

Saint's name: 1 (Abbey St Bathans)

Birgham < OE *brycg* + OE *hām*

Bridgham Nf, Brigham YE, Brigham Cu

Blackburn < OE *blæc* + OE *burna*

Blackbourne K, Blackburn La

Crooklaw < OE *crūc* / Br **crūg* + OE *hlāw*

Croichlow La

Fishwick < OE *fisc* + OE *wīc*

Fishwick La

Snawdon < OE *snāw* + OE *dūn*

Snowden YW, Snowdon D, Snow End Hrt, f.n. *Snaudunegate*
c.1300 Du, Snowdon Caern

Whitcheater < OE *hwīt* + OE *ceaster*

Whitcheater Nb

Birkenside (*Birchenside* 1161 x 1162) < OE **bircen* + OE *side*

Birkenside Nb

Bassendean (in campo de *Bakestaneden* c.1190 x c.1211)

< OE *bæc-stān* + OE *denu*; Baxenden La

Cranshaws (Will[elm]o de *crennescawe* 1194 x 1214)

< OE *cran* + OE *sceaga*; Cranshaw La, Cronkshaw La

Ryslaw (*riselau* c.1270) < OE *hrīs* + OE *hlāw*

f.n. Rislawe c.13th cent. Lei

Nisbet (aliam villam que dicitur *Nesebite* 1124 x 1138)

< OE **nesu* + OE *bita*; Nesbit Du; Nisbet ROX

Thirlestane (juxta metas et divisas de *Thirlestan* c.1162)

< OE *pyrel* + OE *stān* / OE **pyrelstān*

Thirlstone D, Thurlestone D; Thirlestan FIF



OE *prēosta-tūn* > Preston (Vicarius de *Prestun* 1274 x 1275)

England: 96 (Pickles 2009)

OE *burh-tūn* > Halliburton (Ecclesiam de *Halyburtoun* 1172 x 1194)

England & Wales: 87 (Gelling 1989; VEPN; Draper 2009)

OE *hōh-tūn* > Hutton ((mansio of) *hotun* 1095)

England: 58 (Gelling & Cole 2000: 186); cf. *ofer-tūn* (Cole 2013: 68-75; James 2020)

OE *mere-tūn* > Mertoun (ecclesiam de *Mertoun* c.1165 x c.1171)

England: 34 (Cole 2013)

OE *lang-tūn* > Langton (de *Langtune* c.1150)

Langton Do, K, L, Lei, We, YN, Longton La, St

OE *hyll-tūn* > Hilton ((*mansio* of) *hyltun* 1095)

Hilton Db, Hu, St, YN, Hulton La, St

OE *swīn-tūn* > Swinton (uillam totam *Swintun* c.1100)

Swinton La, YN, YW

OE *hrīs-tūn* > Reston ((*mansio* of) *ristun* 1095)

Reston Li, Riston YE, Ruston Nf

(Cf. OE *risc-tūn*)

OE **hrispe-tūn* > Reston We

ON *hrís-bý* > Risby Li; Reisby DK, Risby DK

Bassendean < OE *bæc-stān* ‘baking stone’

Edmond’s Dean < OE pers.n. *Ēadmær*

Foulden < OE *fugol* ‘bird’

?Hallydown < OE *hālig* ‘holy’

Horndean < OE *horu* ‘dirt’

Lambden < OE *lamb* ‘lamb’

Lumsdaine < uncertain first element

Milne Graden < OE *græg* ‘wolf’

Nabdean < OE *cnapa* ‘boy, servant’

“This was the standard OE term for a main valley. It occurs in about 185 major settlement-names, and the distribution is widespread ... There was probably no region in which *denu* was not part of the place-name-forming vocabulary, though in northern counties it was to some extent replaced by **dæl** or **dalr** in the late OE period.”
(Gelling & Cole 2000: 113)

Lauderdale (*de Valle de Louueder* 1165 x 1174, in *lawederdale* 1200 x 1205) < river-name

“ME *dale* (or OE *dæ*l in the sense ‘main valley’) is only common north of a line from the Mersey to the Humber, excluding NTB and DRH. The comparative rarity in these two counties is significant, supporting the hypothesis that the degree of ON influence in an area is the crucial factor in the use of the word in place-names.”
(Gelling & Cole 2000: 110)

Bemersyde < OE *bēmere* ‘bittern’

f.n. *Bemare(s)forlong* (1263 x 1284) Gl, *Bemerehill* (1574)

W, Bemershills W, Bemersley St, Bemerton W

Milne Graden < OE *græg* ‘wolf’

Grazeley Brk, Gresty Ch, Greywell Ha

Blackpotts < OE *pott* ‘depression’

Potton Bd, Potlock Db

Quixwood < OE **Cwic*

Whixley YW (cf. Cuckney Nt < OE **Cwica*)

Mordington < OE *morb* ‘death, murder’

Morpeth Nb, Mortgrove Hrt

Legerwood ((Iohanne presbitero de *ledgardeswde* 1127)
< OE **Lēodgeard* + *wudu*

Chirnside ((*mansio* of) *cirneside* 1095)
< OE *cyrn* + *sīde*

Lennel ((*mansio* of) *leinhale* 1095)
< OE *hlæne* + *halh*

Channelkirk (ecclesiam sancti Cuthberti de *Childinchirch* 1162)
< OE *cild* + *cirice*

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