Institute for Name-Studies + Institute for Medieval Research

# Nottinghamshire Names Day Saturday 14th June

## 10:00 - 10:40 Rebecca Gregory - Settlement-names in Nottinghamshire

The names of most of England's cities, towns and villages are more than a thousand years old. They originated as meaningful descriptions of the world as early medieval people saw it, preserving everyday language along with the names of people, depictions of the landscape, and markers of resources and locations important enough to pin to a verbal map. In this talk, we'll think about how researchers decode and examine settlement-names which may have circulated orally for hundreds of years before their first surviving written records. We'll look at some examples of Nottinghamshire names which have changed dramatically over the past millennium, and consider how important those earliest spellings are. Once we've got to grips with the study of settlement names, we'll take a whirlwind tour through the peoples and languages present in Nottinghamshire and the permanent traces they left in the place-names we use every day.

Rebecca Gregory is Assistant Professor in Historical Linguistics and Onomastics at the University of Nottingham. She teaches across a range of topics in medieval language and literature, but her main research interest is in English place-names, especially in relation to the Scandinavian influence on names in the East Midlands. Becca is author of Viking Nottinghamshire (Five Leaves Press, 2017) and a contributor to the New Dictionary of English Field-Names (English Place-Name Society, 2018). In the wild, Becca can be spotted wearing wellies, carrying coffee, with a dog in tow.

## 10:40 - 11:20 Jayne Carroll - The names of Nottinghamshire water-courses

The names of rivers are amongst the oldest place-names still in use in Nottinghamshire today. This talk will explore the county's river- and stream-names, discussing their varied linguistic origins and the meanings that they had when they were first in use, hundreds – in some cases thousands – of years ago. These names communicate how the rivers behaved and were perceived in the distant past, from the 'trespassing' Trent to the 'lazy' Idle, from the 'crooked' Cocker Beck to the 'gravelly' Greete.

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**Jayne Carroll** is Professor in Early-English and Name-Studies, and is Director of the Institute for Name-Studies at Nottingham. She has particular research interests in Scandinavian influence on English place-names, the place-names of the west midlands, and place-names with watery connotations. Jayne is co-editor of Perceptions of Place (with David Parsons) and The Place-Names of Shropshire: Part 8 (with John Baker).

#### 11:20 – 11:50 Coffee Break

## 11:50 – 12:30 John Baker – Medieval assembly sites in Nottinghamshire

In the early medieval period, the business of local governance in Nottinghamshire, as in the rest of England, was carried out at public assemblies, generally held at established locations in the open air. Place-names are an important (in some ways the primary) source of evidence for the sites at which such gatherings occurred. Two types of place-name are especially significant: the names of recorded meeting-places; and place-names containing elements that imply the presence of assembly. For the first type, the names of Domesday districts – known as hundreds in much of England but wapentakes in Nottinghamshire – are especially valuable, since many seem to have been called after their meeting-places. The second type, containing elements such as þing 'assembly' and spell 'speech' often survive only as minor names and it is not always clear exactly what kinds of assembly they hosted. This talk explores the place-names of assembly in Nottinghamshire to assess their value in identifying locations of assembly and the nature of those meeting-places.

John Baker is Associate Professor in Name-Studies, and has worked at the Institute for Name-Studies in various roles since 2005. He works on place-name etymology and the application of onomastic evidence in historical approaches to medieval landscape and society. His publications include Beyond the Burghal Hidage (with Stuart Brookes) and The Place-Names of Shropshire Part 8 (with Jayne Carroll).

Meadows

## 12:30 - 13:10 Paul Cavill - Nottinghamshire field-names

There are many thousands of field-names in Nottinghamshire, but a field-name survey of the county has not yet been attempted, though many local historials have worked extensively on these names. The English Place-Name Survey of Nottinghamshire, published in 1940, included a selection of field-names for each parish from Enclosure Awards and Tithe records, and dipped into the main medieval documents for information.

This session will consider a wide range of names to identify some of the main types. It will suggest some pitfalls to be avoided in the interpretation of names. Often names change over the years as ownership, farming practices, naming fashions and language itself changes. It is not always possible to find out what names originally meant, but early spellings, where we have them, give us clues. Some early sources will be briefly mentioned, as will resources for interpretation.

The names, both early and late, provide interesting information not only about the development and use of the land, but also about the namers and the vocabulary they used for familiar things. Some of these terms are amusing, some intriguing, some puzzling, some, indeed, doggedly literal, but together they contribute material that will enhance our understanding of local history.

Paul Cavill was Research Fellow for the English Place-Name Society and Survey for over twenty years until 2010. With Jean Cameron he has published several articles on Nottinghamshire field-names in the Journal of the English Place-Name Society. He was a contributor to the two-volume edition of The White Book of Southwell published by the Pipe Roll Society in 2018 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer), and the same year he produced A New Dictionary of English Field-Names (Nottingham: EPNS). In recent years he has worked on Shropshire names. He is currently Editor of the Journal of the English Place-Name Society.

#### 13:10 - 14:10 Lunch

## 14:10 - 14:50 Dominic Thompson - British Sign Language names in Nottingham (and beyond)

Signed languages, such as British Sign Language, differ in many ways from spoken language. This includes sentence structure, cultural norms, and of course naming conventions.

Since signs are visual, there are opportunities to use shape and movement during communication, which are largely absent in speech. As a language of the UK, BSL exists alongside English, so is also influenced by elements of English spelling and naming.

After a brief intro to signed languages, we'll take a look at the various ways place-names are produced in British Sign Language. We will look at my current attempts to define categories of BSL place-names, with examples drawn from Nottingham and beyond. We will discuss how these names originate, what connections they have to English place-names, why they vary, and why they change.

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**Dominic Thompson** is an imposter - he doesn't actually study place-names. He does find them interesting though. His main research is around the psychology of language - how language is organised in the mind, how it interacts with emotion, and how our communication is impacted by the medium we use (speech, writing, sign, digital, etc.)

#### 14:50 – 15:30 Susan Kilby – Nottingham's street-names

Nottingham's street-names reveal all kinds of fascinating information about the history of the city and the people who lived there. They tell us about the occupations of some of the city's earliest inhabitants, and how the medieval town was organised and laid out. We learn about the intersection between the town and the surrounding countryside: routes through which livestock were brought to market, and streets that were once part of the extensive open fields that surrounded the earlier town. Our street-names show us the various communities that lived in the city, and in some cases, they reveal connections to specific individuals – in many instances these were people who were important in some way to Nottingham's past. In the modern era, street-names associated with people generally commemorate individuals of national as well as local importance, and so we find members of the monarchy alongside high-ranking military officers and Members of Parliament. This paper explores the importance of Nottingham's street-names as a key source of evidence for the city's history and development. And, just as the city's landscape has been in a near constant state of flux since its foundation, we examine how its changing street-names reflect this dynamism.

Meadows

**Susan Kilby** is a Research Associate within the Institute for Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham. She trained as a medieval historian and is interested in human interactions with - and responses to - England's varied and diverse landscapes. Most of her work incorporates a focus on place-names of all kinds as she seeks to better understand our relationship with the local landscape, and the role that it plays in social and cultural history.

## 15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

## 16:00 - 16:40 Peter McClure - Surnames in Nottinghamshire

Most current Nottinghamshire surnames originated in the late medieval period, describing someone's occupation, or who they were related to (relationship names), where they lived or came from (topographic and toponymic names), or how they were nicknamed. Some arose widely across Britain, others have a more regional distribution. Typical of the north Midlands are Walker (occupational), Kirk (topographic), Burton (toponymic), Johnson and Gamble (both relationship names). Kirk and Gamble have Old Danish origins and reflect Viking settlement in the east Midlands in the late ninth and tenth centuries. Burton derives from several places so named and is therefore polygenetic (naming multiple, unrelated ancestors), whereas Attenborough is monogenetic, as DNA evidence has confirmed, because it derives from a single ancestor in the Nottinghamshire hamlet of that name. Thanks to linguistic changes, many surnames now convey a false sense or no sense. What counts as a Nottinghamshire surname? Some that originated here, like Attenborough and Daft, have stayed, but Cromwell has entirely left the county, while others, like Pierrepoint (from Normandy) and Starbuck, have come into the county from elsewhere. The talk concludes by showing how researching Nottinghamshire's surnames has contributed to a better understanding of the history of the English language and society.

Dr Peter McClure is Honorary Professor of Name-Studies in the Institute for Name-Studies, University of Nottingham. His main research has been in the linguistic origins of English personal names and surnames and their value as evidence for other kinds of historical research, including family history, social history, vanished words and meanings, changes in pronunciation, long-lost occupations, patterns of migration, and the assimilation of foreigners. He is a co-editor (with Patrick Hanks and Richard Coates) of the Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland (2016) and (with Patrick Hanks and Simon Lenarčič) of the Dictionary of American Family Names (2nd edition, 2022). He is a former President of the Society of Name Studies in Britain and Ireland, a current Vice-President of the English Place-Name Society, and a consultant to the Oxford English Dictionary on English personal names and surnames.

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