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### The etymology of the first element of Woodsford, Dorset

John Insley (pp. 59–65)

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	<i>Cornish Place-Name Elements.</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN BdHu	<i>The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.</i>
PN Brk	<i>The Place-Names of Berkshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Bu	<i>The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.</i>
PN Ca	<i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i>
PN Ch	<i>The Place-Names of Cheshire, Parts 1–5.</i>
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN D	<i>The Place-Names of Devon, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Db	<i>The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Do	<i>The Place-Names of Dorset, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Du	<i>The Place-Names of County Durham, Part 1.</i>
PN Ess	<i>The Place-Names of Essex.</i>
PN ERY	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.</i>
PN Gl	<i>The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Hrt	<i>The Place-Names of Hertfordshire.</i>
PN Le	<i>The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Li	<i>The Place-Names of Lincolnshire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Mx	<i>The Place-Names of Middlesex (apart from the City of London).</i>
PN Nf	<i>The Place-Names of Norfolk, Parts 1–3.</i>
PN Nt	<i>The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.</i>
PN NRY	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.</i>
PN Nth	<i>The Place-Names of Northamptonshire.</i>
PN O	<i>The Place-Names of Oxfordshire, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN R	<i>The Place-Names of Rutland.</i>
PN Sa	<i>The Place-Names of Shropshire, Parts 1–9.</i>
PN Sr	<i>The Place-Names of Surrey.</i>
PN St	<i>The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Part 1.</i>
PN Sx	<i>The Place-Names of Sussex, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN W	<i>The Place-Names of Wiltshire.</i>
PN Wa	<i>The Place-Names of Warwickshire.</i>
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Wo	<i>The Place-Names of Worcestershire.</i>
PN WRY	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.</i>

## The Etymology of the First Element of Woodsford, Dorset

The etymology of the first element of Woodsford Do is not unproblematic. The early forms are: *Werdes-* 1086 *et freq* to 1457, *Werde-* 1196 *et seq* to 1388, *Werd-* 1303, *Wardes-* 1086, 1323, 1428, *Warde-* 1221, 1275, *Wirdes-*, *Wyrdes-* Hy 3 (14) *et freq* to 1498, *Wyrde-*, *Wirde-* 1244 *et seq* to 1535, *Wyrte-* 1270 (1372), *Wyrdu-* 1389, 1392, *Wyrdis-* 1417, *Wirdis* 1428 *Weyrde-* 1268, *Wodes-* 1280, *Woddes-* 1544, *Wood-* 1575, 1774, *Woods-* 1682, 1741, *Wordes-* 1337, 1428, 1458, *Vride-* 1344 (14) (PN Do I. 186).

Ekwall DEPN s.n. *Woodsford* took the etymon of the first element to be the OE pers.n. *Wīgheard*. A.D. Mills PN Do I. 186-187 thinks that Ekwall's etymology is probable but regards the suggestion of Kökeritz PN Wt 67 that the etymon is an OE (WSax) *\*wierde* 'beacon', an *i*-mutated variant of OE *\*wearda* or *\*wearde* 'beacon', words cognate with OE *weard* 'watch' and corresponding to ON *varði*, *varða* 'beacon, cairn', as a possible alternative. Mills thinks that if the second of these two etymologies is to be preferred then the forms with genitival *-s* (which are more numerous than those without) must be regarded as analogical (*op. cit.* 187).

First it is necessary to consider the OE pers.n. *Wīgheard*. An OE *Wīgheard* would have given a ME *Wiard*. OE *Wig-* could already drop the voiced spirant [ɣ] and appear as *Wi-* in the OE period<sup>1</sup> and the loss of *h* at the beginning of the weakly stressed second elements of compounds of obscured meaning which was widespread in OE would have been reinforced after the Conquest by AN usage.<sup>2</sup> The diphthong *ea* in OE *-(h)eard*

arose from fracture of OE *æ*, PrGerm *a* before *r* + consonant.<sup>3</sup> Normally the diphthong *ea* would have been lengthened to *ēa* before the consonant group *rd* in the period c.750–850 but in the case of the second element *-(h)eard* in compound pers.ns. this lengthening did not take place owing to weak stress.<sup>4</sup> OE *ea* was monophthongized c.1000 to *æ* which is in turn from c.1100 onwards retracted to *a*.<sup>5</sup> In ONb OE *æ* was not fractured to *ea* before *r* + consonant but was retracted to *a*<sup>6</sup> and hence in ONb *Wīghard* would correspond to *Wīghard* elsewhere, though the coexistence of *a* and *ea* (< *æ* by fracture) in the stem syllables of weakly stressed or unstressed second elements of compounds has been noted generally in OE so that it would be false to regard the form *Wīghard* as exclusively ONb.<sup>7</sup> The normal ME form throughout England would have thus been *Wiard*. The issue is, however, complicated in post-Conquest records by the existence of a West Frankish pers.n. *Wiard*.<sup>8</sup>

OE *Wīghard* occurs as the name of a 7th century archbishop of Canterbury and has been noted in the early 9th century part of the Durham *Liber Vitae*.<sup>9</sup> There are also several examples of the name in 9th and early 10th century charters.<sup>10</sup> However, the name is not attested in DB and it does not appear to have been in common use in the last 150 years of the OE period. In post-Conquest records, however, *Wiard* is fairly well attested, cf. *Wiardo*, abl. (witn.) c. 1200 RA 5. 98 (L); *Willelmus filius Wiardi* 1203 Pleas 3. 102 (Sa); *Reinerus filius Wiard'*, *Adam filius Wiard'* 1206 Pleas 3. 266 (Nf). Reaney s.v. *Wyard* took the post-Conquest *Wiard(us)* to represent OE *Wīghard* but in view of the rarity of the OE name after 900 it is much more likely that we are concerned with the Continental *Wiard*, though a certain con-



vergence of the two names cannot be ruled out. In any case, the Introduction of the Continental name would have had a reinforcing effect on the OE name and if Woodsford Do had contained OE *Wigheard* as its first element it would be reasonable to expect some early forms in *Wiarde*-, *Wyarde*- in the post-Conquest period but these do not occur. A p.n. which does appear to contain OE *Wigheard* is *Wizaller D* whose early forms are: *Wierdesalre* (p) 1296, *Wyardesallre* (p) 1305, *Werdesallere* (p) 1310, *Wyddesaller* 1538-44, (PN D 266). Here the pers.n. forming the first element preserved its e.ME form into the early 14th century. In view of these considerations the suggestion that OE *Wigheard* forms the first element of Woodsford Do is to be rejected.

The suggestion that the etymon is an OE (WSax) *\*wierde* 'beacon' must now be examined. Kökeritz PN Wt 66 took OE *\*wearda* (-e) 'beacon' to occur in *weardan hylle* Wt 928 (12) BCS 663 (S 400) and (ib. 67) regarded OE *\*wierde* as the first element of *wierdes forda* St 975 (11) BCS 1312 (S 801). OE (WSax) *\*wierde* would have been an *i*-mutated variant of *\*wearde* and Kökeritz (ib. 67) regarded it as having either a PrGerm *\*warðjaz* or *\*warðjō*. PrGerm *\*warðjaz* to which Gothic *wardja* m. 'watcher' belongs was a masc. noun belonging to the Germ -*ja* stem (IE -*iō* stem) and would have resulted in an OE *\*wierde* (WSax), *\*werde* (Angl), gen. *\*w(i)erdes*. PrGerm *\*warðjō* is a fem. noun belonging to the Germ -*jō* stem and would have resulted in an OE *\*wierde* (WSax), *\*werde* (Angl), gen. *w(i)erde*. Hence only the first of these two is a possible base for the etymon of the St *wierdes ford(a)*. The form *wierde* (gen. *wierdes*) is, however, specifically WSax and its appearance in an OE boundary clause from St, which lay in the Anglian dialect area,

would be difficult to explain. It might be better to follow the suggestion of Ekwall DEPN s.n. *Woodsford* that *wierdesford(a)* contains OE *Wigheard*. A pers.n. form *Wierd* would reflect weakening of stress in the second element subsequent to the loss of the spirant [ɣ]. This weakening of stress would have resulted in the reduction of the diphthong *ea* to *e* which probably has here the phonetic value [ə].<sup>11</sup>

PN Brk 663 gives both OE *\*wearde* and a pers.n. *\*Wearda* as possible alternatives for the first element of *weardan dune* Brk 943 (c.1200) BCS 789 (S 491). PN Brk 681, however, takes a pers.n. *\*Weard* to form the first element of *wardas bæorh* Brk 856 (12) BCS 491 (S 317). An OE *\*Weard*, *\*Wearda* would correspond to the OHG pers.n. *Wardo*, *Warto* which is an original byname belonging to OHG *warto* m. 'guard, look-out man'.<sup>12</sup> OE *\*Weard* seems to occur in the forms *Wahardo*,<sup>13</sup> dat., c.1156-1158 (15) Rufford 133, Roberto filio *Ward'*, *Wardo*, dat., c.1165-1195 (15) Rufford 132, Robertus filius *Ward'* c.1190-1220 (15) Rufford 131 (Shirebrook Db). If an OE *\*Weard* is assumed to form the first element of *Woodsford* Do then the l. OE form of this place-name would have been *\*Wēardesford*, the original *ea* of OE *\*Weard* having been lengthened in the period c.750-850 on account of its preceding the lengthening group *rd*.<sup>14</sup> OE *ēa* was monophthongized to *æ* c.1000 and this *æ* in turn was raised to *ē* in e.ME, a process which was already apparent at the time of DB.<sup>15</sup> The DB and later spellings in *Werd(e)(s)*- thus reflect a ME *Wērdesford* < l. OE (11th century) < *\*Wēardesford*. The spellings in *Warde(s)*- probably reflect AN interchange of *a* and *e*.<sup>16</sup> The 1268 form *Weyrdeford* would seem to indicate that the vowel of the stem syllable was still long in the latter part of the 13th

century.<sup>17</sup> Theoretically the spellings in *Wyrdes-*, *Wirdes-* etc. could be taken to represent an OE (WSax) *\*wierde* m. < PrGerm *\*warōjaz* but the fact that such forms only appear from the 13th century onwards tends to speak against this and to suggest that they arose as the result of the sporadic raising of the original *ē*.<sup>18</sup> The form *Wodesforde* 1280 seems to show replacement of the first element by OE *wudu*, ME *wod(e)* 'wood', possibly as a result of popular etymology and this form has prevailed to give the modern Woodsford. The forms in *Wordesford* 1337, 1428, 1458 are probably best described as 'mixed' spellings resulting from confusion between the traditional forms in *Werdes-* etc. and the newer *Wodes-*.

JOHN INSLEY

#### NOTES

- 1 Campbell Para. 267.
- 2 Campbell Para. 267, Feilitzen Para. 140.
- 3 Campbell Para. 144.
- 4 Luick Paras. 267, 268, Jordan Para. 22.
- 5 Jordan Para. 58.
- 6 Campbell Para. 144.
- 7 Brunner Para. 43.2b.
- 8 West Frankish *Wiard* corresponds either to OHG *Wīghard* or to OHG *Wīdhard* (see Forssner 252-253). Note that there was a Chester moneyer in the time of Æthelstan who bore the name *Wiard* (SCBI 5. 31). Forssner 253 n. 1 thought that this moneyer's name might represent OE *Wīgheard*. Note also that there seems to have been a moneyer of Alfred called *Wiard* (Forssner *loc. cit.*).
- 9 Ström 179, Sweet OET 486.



- 10 For example, 805 (9) BCS 321 (S 161), 814 (contemp.) BCS 348 (S 177), 899 x 904 (16) ASCharters 16 (S 1283), 904 (contemp.) ASCharters 18 (S 1281).
- 11 See Brunner Para. 43.3.
- 12 For OHG *Wardo*, *Warto* see FörstemannPN 1539 and D. Geuenich, *Die Personennamen der Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda im früheren Mittelalter* (Munich 1976) 99.
- 13 In the form *Wahardo* ONb \**Ward* has been confused with *Waard* West Frankish *Wadard* (for which see Forssner 237) and an AN hiatus filling *h* has been inserted (see Feilitzen Para. 145).
- 14 See Jordan Para. 22.
- 15 Jordan Para. 81, Feilitzen Para. 26.
- 16 See Feilitzen Paras. 7, 9.
- 17 Cf. PN Brk 796-797.
- 18 Cf. PN Gl 4. 67, PN Brk 797.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

ASCharters	<i>Anglo-Saxon Charters</i> , ed. A.J. Robertson, Cambridge 1939.
BCS	<i>Cartularium Saxonicum</i> , ed. W. de G. Birch, London 1885-1893.
Brunner	K. Brunner, <i>Altenglische Grammatik nach der angelsächsischen Grammatik von Eduard Sievers</i> , 3rd ed., Tübingen 1965.
Campbell	A. Campbell, <i>Old English Grammar</i> , Oxford 1959.
DEPN	E. Ekwall, <i>The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names</i> , 4th ed., Oxford 1960.
Feilitzen	O. von Feilitzen, <i>The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book</i> , Uppsala 1937.
FörstemannPN	E. Förstemann, <i>Altdeutsches Namenbuch. I. Personennamen</i> , 2nd ed., Bonn 1900.
Forssner	T. Forssner, <i>Continental-Germanic Personal Names in England in Old and Middle English Times</i> , Uppsala 1916.
Jordan	R. Jordan, <i>Handbuch der mitttelenglischen Grammatik</i> , 3rd ed., Heidelberg 1968.
Luick	K. Luick, <i>Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache</i> , Leipzig 1914-1940.
Pleas	<i>Pleas before the King or His Justices</i> 1198-1212, 1-4, ed. D.M. Stenton (Selden Society 67, 68, 83, 84), London 1952-1967.
PN Brk	M. Gelling, <i>The Place-Names of Berkshire</i> , Parts 1-3 (EPNS 49-51), Cambridge 1973-1975.



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