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OE *walh* in English place-names: an addendum

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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>

OE *walh* in English place-names: an addendum

The purpose of the present note is to record an addition to the corpus of place-names derived from OE *w(e)alh* collected by Professor Cameron in the twelfth issue of this *Journal*¹. In accordance with his expectation that new 'finds' will continue to appear, one such has recently turned up among the muniments of the Dean and Chapter, Durham, in the course of collecting materials for the Place-Name Society's Durham volumes. It occurs in the parish of Elwick Hall in the south east of the county as a lost field or minor name in the vill of Burn Toft (NZ 445279) with the following forms, *Walewurtes* c.1250, *Walewrtes* 13, *Wallewortis* 1310, *Ouer Walworth*, *Nethir Walworth* 1379². But for the two last forms these might be regarded as instances of the occurrence in minor names of OE *wealhwyrt* 'elecampane, *inula helenium*', a large herbaceous plant once much cultivated for its medicinal properties³, for which ME spellings both with and without medial *-e-* are recorded in OED. The 1379 forms, however, seem to confirm that we have to do here with the OE compound place-name *Wala-wort*, 'enclosure of the Welsh'.

Whatever settlement may once have existed at this spot had clearly already disappeared by the time of the surviving documents which simply record the two Walworths as ordinary furlongs (or *flats* as they are usually called in Co. Durham) in the Southfield of Burn

Toft. Their exact position is unknown, but this whole area of the county is characterised by a profusion of deserted village sites. e.g. in Elwick Hall alone, Amerston, Burn Toft itself, Newton Hanzard, Stotfold⁴. Possible sites might be High Burn Toft (NZ 445279) where ancient earthworks are still visible on the ground, or the significantly named Tofts (448275). According to Smith and Mawer⁵, Burn Toft, *Bruntoft* c.1250, is a compound of ON *brunnr* 'a well, spring' and *topt*, *toft* 'a building site, a curtilage, a messuage', but from a topographical point of view the very striking position of High Burn Toft on the summit of the steep bank which overlooks Wolviston North Burn suggests rather ON *brún*² 'an edge, the brow of a hill'. A handful of fourteenth century spellings in *Broun*—perhaps point the same way. Such a Scandinavian topographical name could easily have replaced OE *Walawort* either in the tenth century when there was Viking activity in the district⁶, or in the eleventh century when rural settlement was widely disrupted in the course of the harrying of the North by William the Conqueror⁷.

There is no known settlement site of the Roman period in the immediate vicinity of Burn Toft. Indeed, comparatively little is known of Roman or native settlement in this part of the county at all. Somewhere there are perhaps two named settlements to be discovered⁸ and a whole Roman signalling system⁹. There was almost certainly a settlement at Seaton Carew¹⁰, and an iron-age site is known in Hartlepool¹¹.

Pollen records from Thorpe Bulmer near Hart indicate intensive agricultural activity in Roman times followed by a return to grassland¹².

More pertinent, perhaps, is the possibility that in this corner of the county we have an example of the type of multiple estate whose antiquity, it has been argued, pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon arrival. Such estates or shires are well known in the west of County Durham¹³, while in the east we have reference in the thirteenth century to a shire with its *caput* at Billingham. This probably refers to no more than the prior of Durham's estate consisting of the four townships of Billingham, Wolviston, Cowpen and Newton Bewley, but before this time Billingham itself belonged to an older administrative unit, the lordship or *herness* of Hart, *Billingham in Heorternesse* c.1050, a unit which also included the parish of Elwick Hall¹⁴. Whatever ancient land units may have existed in the west were undoubtedly disturbed by the Viking activities of the tenth century or more especially by the harrying of the North and the consequent reorganisation during the twelfth-century recovery. By contrast, western shires, for example, that centred on Bishop Auckland, retained their ancient shape into modern times.

If the shadowy *Heorternesse* or Hartness does commemorate the one-time existence of an ancient multiple estate of the kind described by Professor Glanville Jones, the appearance of the place-name Walworth in or on the periphery of such a district provides an

excellent parallel both to the Walton in the multiple estate of Kirkby Overblow in Yorkshire and to the other Durham Walworth which was likewise a constituent member of another shire with its *caput* at Heighington¹⁵.

It seems, therefore, that this latest example exhibits a number of characteristics of *walh* names as tabulated by Professor Cameron. It was a small and insignificant settlement abandoned at an early period; it lay within but on the far edge of an important Anglo-Saxon estate; and finally, wherever its exact position, it must almost certainly have lain on boulder-clay and thus have occupied a marginal site from a geponic as well as from a geographical point of view.¹⁶

V.E. WATTS

E.F.M. PRINCE

NOTES

1 *English Place-Name Society Journal*, 12, 1979-80, 40-46.

2 The documents concerned are *Miscellaneous Charters* 165, 158, 161 and 4.1.*Elemos.*23a, respectively.

3 M. Grieve, *A Modern Herbal*, London 1931, s.n. elecampane. There seem in fact to have been two OE plant names which were frequently confused, *wealhwyrt* 'elecampane' and *weallwyrt* 'wallwort, danewort, dwarf elder, *sambucus ebulus*' cf. *Anglia* 41, 133.

4 See B.K. Roberts, *A Preliminary Check List of Rural Clusters in Co. Durham*, University of Durham, Department of Geography 1975.

- 5 *English Place-Name Elements*, II, 183; *Place-Names of Durham and Northumberland*, Cambridge 1920, 32 s.n.
Bruntoft: Mawer adds the possibility that the first element might be OE *burna* 'a stream' with metathesis.
- 6 C.D. Morris, 'Northumbria and the Viking Settlement', *Archaeologia Aeliana*⁵, V. 1977, 96.
- 7 B.K. Roberts, 'Village Plans in County Durham', *Medieval Archaeology*, XVI, 1972, 51-4.
- 8 *Dictum, Lugudunum*, cf. I.A. Richmond, O.G.S. Crawford, 'The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography', *Archaeologia* XCIII, 1949, 11-12, 32; A.L.F. Rivet, Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, London 1979, 339, 401-2.
- 9 B. Dobson, 'The Roman Period' in *Durham County and City with Teesside* ed. J.C. Dewdney, Durham 1970, 198; 'Roman Durham', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, n.s. II, 1970, 35.
- 10 J.A. Petch, 'Roman Durham', *Archaeologia Aeliana*⁴ I, 1925, 25-6.
- 11 At Catcote, *Archaeological Newsbulletin*, March 1965.
- 12 D.D. Bartley in *English Medieval Settlement* ed. P.H. Sawyer, London 1979, 138-40.
- 13 V.E. Watts, 'The earliest Anglian names in Durham', *Nomina* 2, 1978, 30 and reference cited in n.1; B.K. Roberts, *The Green Villages of County Durham*, Durham 1977, 13-18 and Fig.4b.
- 14 For details see E. Ekwall, *Studies on English Place- and Personal Names*, Lund 1931, 75-8; *Victoria County History of Durham* III, 236.
- 15 *English Medieval Settlement* 9-34, Cameron *loc.cit.*21, Roberts 1977, 18, Watts *loc.cit.*30.
- 16 Cameron's points 6, 7 and 8, *loc.cit.*30. Most of the southern part of Elwick Hall parish is boulder clay according to the 1" Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Drift Sheet 33.