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### Furze, gorse, and whin: an aside on Rutland in the Danelaw

Barrie Cox (pp. 3–9)

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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 1–6.</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 1–6.</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>

# Furze, Gorse and Whin: an Aside on Rutland in the Danelaw

BARRIE COX

*Ulex europaeus*, commonly known as furze or gorse or whin, is currently to be found in about fifty percent of Rutland's area.<sup>1</sup> Both *furze* and *gorse* are in origin Old English words, *fyrz* and *gors* respectively. *Whin* is from Old Norse *hvin*. In Rutland, minor names with *furze*, *gorse* and *whin* survive only from the seventeenth century and any form of the shrub's name is absent from the county's major place-names which, in general, have a much longer history. In addition to the noun forms, we find in a few minor names the adjectives *furzy*, *gorsy* and *whinny*, each with the reflex of the Old English adjectival suffix *-ig*.

All known surviving instances of these words in Rutland minor names are listed in Appendix 1. Their distribution is shown in Fig. 1. From appendix and map, several patterns are immediately obvious. First, the majority of surviving names in *furze* belong to the eighteenth century. Second, the distribution of names with *furze* is limited to a relatively small area in the south-west of the county. Third, names with *gorse* have a wider distribution, lying in a broad band from north to south of the county and overlapping the region of *furze* names to their west. And fourth, surviving *gorse* names are in general recorded later than those with *furze*, being especially numerous from the beginning of the nineteenth century. They also tend to be compounded with parish names and on the whole represent extensive features. The forms dated 1800, 1806 and 1824 are taken from early county maps. Some may represent fox covers following the growth in popularity of fox-hunting in the

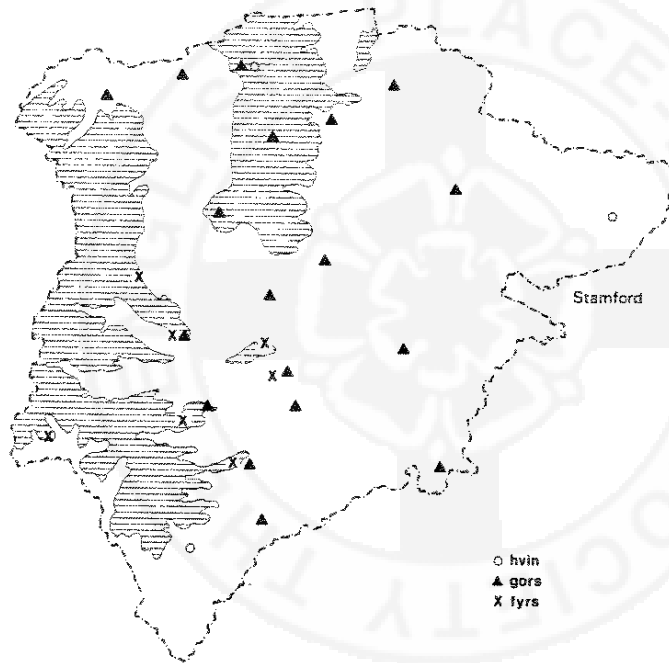


Fig. 1. Rutland, showing the distribution of *fyrs*, *gors* and *hvin*. Land over 400 ft in the north and west of the county is shaded (With acknowledgements to Anne Tarver, who has re-drawn the maps in this article)



Fig. 2. Rutland: the distribution of place-names in *tūn*

eighteenth century. In one or two instances, names in *gorse* are altered to *cover(t)* at a later date. Thus in Cottesmore, *Foxearth Gorse* of 1824 has become *Blackthorn Covert* by 1951, perhaps indicating additional planting to provide extra cover for the fox lairs or even for game, the foxes having been eradicated.

Two thirds of the *furze* names refer to enclosures. Indeed, *Ulex europaeus* was once sown as a regular horse and cattle fodder.<sup>2</sup> But an interesting fact is that the distribution of *furze* names coincides with the dense spread of major place-names in *tūn* (belonging most probably to the period c.750–c.1050) which is such a distinctive feature of the south-west quarter of Rutland (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>3</sup> This is difficult to account for other than to suggest that either *fyr*s was in vogue for *Ulex europaeus* when the region was being assarted and settled in the later Anglo-Saxon period and that this word survived here as a micro-dialectal feature;<sup>4</sup> or alternatively that *gorse* has replaced *furze* across the breadth of the county.

In comparison with Old English *fyr*s and *gors*, the Scandinavian word for the shrub *Ulex europaeus*, *hvin* (giving *whin*, *whinny*), is very rare in the minor names of the county and appears only within one mile of Rutland's boundaries (Fig. 1). Its absence reinforces in a remarkable fashion the evidence of the county's major place-names which indicate that at the time of the Viking incursions, Rutland kept its English integrity intact and that there was no Danish expropriation of land within its borders.<sup>5</sup> The few examples of *hvin* appear to be linguistic echoes across the frontiers from Danish occupied territory.

As they stand, of course, although dramatically distributed, the *hvin* names are only very slight evidence for Danish exclusion. But when we add to them the surviving examples of minor names containing the unequivocally Scandinavian *lyng* 'heather' (Appendix 2), we find that Rutland's marginal distribution of *hvin* names is underwritten (Fig. 3), despite the slightly further spread of *lyng* names from the county boundaries.<sup>6</sup> In the north, a few *lyng* names show linguistic drift from Leicestershire/Lincolnshire, in the east from the Danish borough of Stamford and in the south, perhaps from Danish Northamptonshire, although one must remember the possible

Norwegian settlement at Glaston which may be responsible for the group.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, *lyng* names relate closely to those very areas having names in *hvin* and to the locales of surviving major place-names in *þorp* (Fig. 4).<sup>8</sup>

Even the evidence of the late minor names reinforces the argument that Rutland, although it lay in what was to become the Danelaw, remained English during and after the Viking incursions and that Danish settlers were long kept outside its frontiers, at the very least until such time as when Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians were living peaceably together in a kingdom of England following the reconquest of this region by Edward the Elder.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> K.G. Messenger, *Flora of Rutland*, Leicester Museum 1971, p.54 and Map M13j. The weight of modern distribution is in the southern half of the county.
- <sup>2</sup> M. Spray, 'Holly as a fodder in England', *Agricultural History Review* 29 (1981), p.97.
- <sup>3</sup> B. Cox, 'The major place-names of Rutland: to Domesday and beyond', *Rutland Record* 7 (1987), pp. 227-30.
- <sup>4</sup> A.H. Smith, 'Two notes on some West Yorkshire place-names' in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of their History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P. Clemoes, London 1959, pp. 311-13, argues for *fyr*s being characteristically a West Saxon word, with dialectal usage emphasising its south-western provenance. J. Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, Oxford 1898-1905, s.v. *furze*, *furzen*, notes its modern dialectal usage as characteristic of Lincolnshire and East Anglia and of those south-western counties lying south of Worcestershire-Northamptonshire and west of the Northamptonshire-Isle of Wight line.
- <sup>5</sup> B. Cox, 'Rutland and the Scandinavian settlements: the place-name evidence', *Anglo-Saxon England* 18, forthcoming.
- <sup>6</sup> The modern incidence of *ling* in the county appears rather differently distributed from earlier times according to the evidence of minor names: Messenger op. cit., Map M29b.
- <sup>7</sup> Cox, 'Rutland and the Scandinavian settlements'.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 3. Rutland, showing the distribution of *hvin* and *lyng*

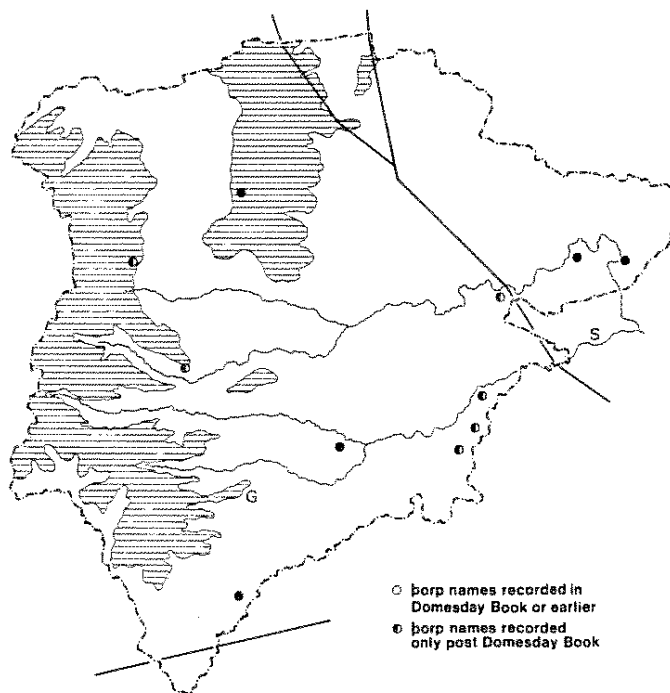


Fig. 4. Rutland: the distribution of place-names in *þorp*. G = Glaston; S = Stamford. Roman roads are indicated. Land over 400 ft is shaded

## APPENDIX I

Names in *furze*, *furzy*:

Belton	<i>The Furze</i> 1786, <i>Furze Furlong</i> 1786
Glaston	<i>Furze Close</i> 1855
Gunthorpe	<i>Furze Close</i> 1796, 1837, <i>Furze Meadow Close</i> 1796
Hambleton	<i>Furze Close</i> 1785, 1792, <i>Furze Meadow</i> late 18th century, <i>Furzy Close</i> 1729, 1785, <i>Furzy Lyndon Hill</i> 1729, 1785
Lyndon	<i>Furze Close</i> 1654, 1658, 1662, 1681, 1715
Oakham	<i>The Furze Hill</i> 1739
Preston	<i>The Furze</i> 1713

Names in *gorse*, *gorsy*:

Burley	<i>Campions Gorse</i> 1800, <i>Gorse Cover</i> 1824, <i>Henton Gorse</i> 1800, <i>Mill Gorse</i> 1800 (> <i>Mill Cover</i> 1824), <i>Watkins Gorse</i> 1824
Cottesmore	<i>Foxearth Gorse</i> 1824 (> <i>Blackthorn Covert</i> 1951), <i>Jacksons Gorse</i> 1800 (> <i>Laxtons Gorse</i> 1824 > <i>Cottesmore Gorse</i> 1951), <i>Warren Gorse</i> 1800
Glaston	<i>Glaston Gorse</i> 1800
Greetham	<i>Goss(e) Hedge</i> 1652, 1787, 1790, <i>Goss hedge Close</i> 18th century, <i>Gossedged furlong</i> 1652
Gunthorpe	<i>Gunthorpe Gorse</i> 1800
Hambleton	<i>Sharplins Gorse</i> 1800, <i>Sharplands Gorse</i> 1806
Lyndon	<i>Woodward Gorse</i> 1806
Market Overton	<i>Hopkinson's Gorse</i> 1824, <i>Gorse Pit</i> c.1942
Pickworth	<i>The Gorse</i> c.1942
Pilton	<i>Pilton Gorse</i> 1800 (> <i>Pilton Cover</i> 1824 > <i>Pilton Fox Covert</i> 1951)
Preston	<i>Wing Gorse</i> 1800 (> <i>Wing Cover</i> 1824)
Seaton	<i>Seaton Gorse</i> 1800
Stretton	<i>Bottom-, Top Gossy Close</i> 1904
Teigh	<i>Gorse Close</i> 1844
Tixover	<i>Tixover Gorse</i> 1800
Edith Weston	<i>Ketton Gorse</i> 1951, <i>The Gorse</i> 1951
Whissendine	<i>Goss Hedges</i> c.1942
Whitwell	<i>Dixon's Gorse Field</i> c.1942



Names in *whin*, *whinny*:

Lyddington *Winnigates Furlong* 1649, 1673, *Wingate furlong* 1669  
 Market Overton  
                   *Winsell Close* c.1760, *Winsell* c.1942  
 Ryhall *Wingate Hill* 1799

#### APPENDIX 2

Names in *ling*:

Ashwell *Lingmore* 1650  
 Barrow *Linge furlong* 1652  
 Bisbrooke *le Lyngges* 1335  
 Great Casterton  
                   *the Lyng* 1545, *Casterton Lings* 1806, 1824  
 Little Casterton  
                   *Linges* t. Henry III (1216-72)  
 Cottesmore *Lyngefurlonges* 1422  
 Empingham *the Linges* 1698, *Ling's Spinney* 1893  
 Glaston *The Lynges* 1612, *The Linges* 1614  
 Pickworth *Lyng*' t. Henry IV (1399-1413)  
 Tinwell *Tynewell Lynges* 1347

Note: The forms presented in the above appendices are unambiguous. In order not to overburden a brief article, it was considered inappropriate to provide detailed source references. Apart from late forms taken from various printed county maps, other examples are drawn chiefly from the Ancaster Muniments in the Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln.