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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	*Cornish Place-Name Elements*
EPNE	*English Place-Name Elements*, Parts **1** and **2**
PN BdHu	*The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire*
PN Brk	*The Place-Names of Berkshire*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**
PN Bu	*The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire*
PN Ca	*The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*
PN Ch	*The Place-Names of Cheshire*, Parts **1**–**5**
PN Cu	*The Place-Names of Cumberland*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**
PN D	*The Place-Names of Devon*, Parts **1** and **2**
PN Db	*The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**
PN Do	*The Place-Names of Dorset*, Parts **1**–**4**
PN Du	*The Place-Names of County Durham*, Part **1**
PN Ess	*The Place-Names of Essex*
PN ERY	*The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York*
PN Gl	*The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, Parts **1**–**4**
PN Hrt	*The Place-Names of Hertfordshire*
PN Le	*The Place-Names of Leicestershire*, Parts **1**–**7**
PN Li	*The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, Parts **1**–**8**
PN Mx	*The Place-Names of Middlesex* (apart from the *City of London*)
PN Nf	*The Place-Names of Norfolk*, Parts **1**–**3**
PN Nt	*The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*
PN NRY	*The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire*
PN Nth	*The Place-Names of Northamptonshire*
PN O	*The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, Parts **1** and **2**
PN R	*The Place-Names of Rutland*
PN Sa	*The Place-Names of Shropshire*, Parts **1**–**6**
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Wippedesfleot in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

Richard Coates

In 465 CE, Hengest and his son Æsc are said to have fought against the *Walas* 'Britons' near *Wippedesfleot*, commonly assumed to be in Kent and probably in coastal marshland like another place named with *flēot* 'creek', Ebbsfleet in Minster (Cullen 1997: 531–32). Twelve Briton nobles failed to leave the battlefield. That is the account in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. A frankly ambiguous passage declares that 'One of their thegns, whose name was *Wipped*, was killed there.'[1] Who *hiera* 'their' refers to cannot be determined on linguistic grounds. We may be dealing with a Briton or an Anglo-Saxon.

Any explanation of the place-name as deriving from the name of a dead Briton is unconvincing, given that the personal name is hard to interpret as Welsh – there is no modern personal name like ****Gwyffedd* or ****Gwyffed*, forms that could have evolved from the Late British/Proto-Welsh forms that might be implied by the name in the *Chronicle*. In any case, why would the invaders have wanted to commemorate the enemy, even if a valiant one? The Latin of the bilingual MS F of the *Chronicle* (written over six hundred years after the events, in about 1100) consciously dispels the ambiguity by describing Wipped as 'a very rich man on Hengest's side',[2] probably implying that he was an Anglo-Saxon, though not necessarily, given the fluid and ethnically inconsistent state of early alliances.

Redin (1919: 38) toys inconclusively with the idea that we are dealing with one of the rare Old English [OE] suffixal personal-name formations in *-ede* (1919: 161–62; see also Insley 2013: 227; Colman 2014: 140),[3] but

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[1] *Her Hengest 7 Æsc gefuhton uuiþ Walas neah Wippedesfleote 7 þær .xii. wilisce aldormenn ofslogon, 7 hiera þegn an þær wearþ ofslægen, þam wæs noma Wipped.* (MS A)

[2] *ibi etiam quidam perdives nomine Uuipped ex parte Hengest occiditur.* (MS F)

[3] Names formed with *-ede* do indeed form genitives in *-es* (Redin 1919: 161, citing the single convincing example *Monnedes præfecti* where the name-form agrees with the Latin genitive in *-i*).

he notes (1919: 108) that the only sign of the base-name *Wippa* in the documentary record known to him is in some undoubtedly faulty Middle English renderings of the name of king Pybba of Mercia (*floruit* around 600 CE) in which <þ> has been confused with <ƿ> (wynn, = <w>).[4] *Wippa* has, however, been suggested as the first element of the place-name *Whippingham*, Isle of Wight (Kökeritz 1940: 234, and references there). Ekwall (1960: 513, *Whippingham*) draws attention to *Wippan hoh*, a place-name in a royal charter of Chetwode and Hillesden, Buckinghamshire (949 CE; BCS 883, S 544), which is however known only from sixteenth-century copies and should be viewed with caution.[5] Redin also mentions an attested Old High German *Wippo*, but this would be a cognate of an OE *Wibba*. He speculatively also relates the supposed base of *Wippede* to a Germanic root meaning 'swing', as exemplified by the ancestor of Modern English *wipe*, and offers (1919: 38) a possible parallel in the use of Old West Scandinavian *vippa* as a byname, citing Rygh and Jónsson (cf. Swedish *vippa* 'to wag', but that may be borrowed from Dutch or Low German *wippen* 'to bob up and down, bounce'). No ancestor of *whip* is known in Old English, however, and such a form cannot therefore be assumed to appear in *Whippingham* or in *Wipped*; OED implies the word was probably borrowed from a continental Germanic language. In both *whip* and *Whippingham*, the <h> is a later, unetymological, addition.

We should conclude that an OE *Wippa* is theoretically possible but by no means assured, since it is perhaps explicable only as a devoiced side-form of *Wibba*, itself unrecorded but perhaps a hypocoristic form of the attested *Wīgb(e)ald* or *Wīgbeorht*;[6] and that *Wipped*, if a derivative of it, has been transmitted in a uniquely truncated form. Even the best MS of the *Chronicle* gives disyllabic *Wipped*, not a form in *-ede*.

In the absence of deeply convincing onomastic parallels on both sides of the linguistic and ethnic divide in Britain, there is nothing to discourage

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[4]   Note that <angle-brackets> enclose letters as alphabetic symbols of the written languages in question, [square brackets] enclose representations of sounds in the notation of the International Phonetic Alphabet, and /slashes/ enclose representations of phonemes (structural units of sound in a particular language), also in IPA notation.

[5]   Mills (1996: 108) treats *Wippa* as unattested.

[6]   The *ad hoc* devoicing stage in this argument which produces a 'side-form' might be dispensed with if *Wippa* could be derived from an etymon with at least one medial voiceless consonant, such as the attested *Wihtbald* and *Wihtbrord*. A few other such 'side-forms' with medial devoicing, i.e. forms which do not conform with general phonological developments, are found in the literature (Redin 1919: 64, and 88 with note 3, dismissing an opinion of R. E. Zachrisson that such devoiced forms may be hypocoristics; Insley 2013: 240).

a different attempt on this name, laying aside the presumption that *Wipped* is a man of either race. He may, as Redin himself implies, be a ghostly inference of a well-known type from a place-name which has become obscure, like the Port who was traditionally appealed to in explaining the name of Portsmouth (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MS A, annal 501), and like the *Chronicle*'s invented British ruler *Natan* or *Natan leod* in *Natanleaga* (annal 508, *pace* the defence of this ruler's existence by Breeze (2000)). Insley (2007) emphatically endorses Redin's opinion concerning this 'pseudo-history'.

A Brittonic solution of the name is possible. Let us prepare the ground with a brief discussion of the relevant philological facts and the sources of difficulty which they pose for the subsequent analysis. Firstly, the pronunciation of British/Brittonic was, at the time of the Anglo-Saxon incursions in the late fifth century, undergoing a well understood set of rapid changes, discussion of which forms the core of Kenneth Jackson's seminal *Language and History in Early Britain* (1953). For present purposes, note that the diachronic change called *lenition* involved the three original voiced plosives [b, d, g], which became the corresponding fricatives [β *or* v, ð, ɣ] between vowels, while the three original voiceless plosives [p, t, k] became voiced [b, d, g] between vowels. Secondly: a key issue in the discussion will be at what stage in the developing phonology a name was borrowed; and how the Anglo-Saxons may have represented sounds alien to their own phonology by sound-substitution, i.e. by the deployment of phonemes of their own language in their place.

Although some quite complex philological argumentation is needed, the name could be accounted for as containing the ancestor of Welsh *gwybed* 'gnats', attested as Middle Welsh *gwydbet*, with the consonant closing the first syllable not being lost till the sixteenth century (GPC 1744c).[7] This would have been Brittonic **wĭðbed*, presumably for late British **wid(V)pet-* (where V is a mid-central, or reduced, vowel), though the exact etymology is uncertain. (The second element may be **bet-*, if one follows the analogy of the etymology of Welsh *gwybod* 'to know' given by Schrijver 1995: 461, with reversal of the lenition of **[b]* through a process

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[7]   It should be noted that medial <d> figures consistently in the evidence for this Welsh word, but is completely absent in its Cornish and Breton cognates (cf. for example the Old Cornish singular form *guibeden* (12th), the oldest attestation of the word; Padel 1985: 119).

technically known as *provection*.[8]) The form heard around 460–70 by speakers of English may not yet have had the three obstruent consonants[9] fully affected by intervocalic lenition by then;[10] two place-names in Kent, OE *Ra**c**ulf* Reculver from Romano-British [RB] *Regulbio* (oblique case form) and *Re**pt**acæstir* Richborough from RB *Rutupiæ*, *Ritupis*, *Rutupis* appear to contain good evidence (emboldened and underlined) of not yet fully-lenited British obstruent consonants, though *Raculf* may have final [f] by sound-substitution for the lenition-product [β] since OE had no final simple [b] or [v]; we return to this last point below. *Raculf* with its <c> clearly indicates that the corresponding sound in *Regulbium* was still a plosive [g] rather than a fricative [ɣ]; OE had no [g] in this position, and the corresponding voiceless velar [k] was substituted.

If the invaders heard **wid(V)pet-*, or a form with a lenited /p/ tending towards [b] (cf. Jackson 1953: 553–54), it is credible that they would have copied it as **/widpe[t]/. (We will return to the final consonant below.) The history of consonantal developments in the Brittonic languages suggests that the medial cluster may well have been heard as voiceless by English-speakers. The *Lich-* in the name of Lichfield, OE *Liccid*, with Brittonic /t / (< /d/ by provection) + /g/ in **Lēt-gēd*, was borrowed with English /tk/ by regular sound-substitution in the absence of prevocalic [g] in early OE, assimilated later to /kk/, and then palatalized before a front vowel; this is not identical to the case in point, but it offers potent analogies, especially as regards the voicelessness of the resultant cluster. Note that even if the medial /d/ in **wid(V)pet-* had been lenited, the absence of a [ð] in the English of the very earliest period would have meant that it was sound-substituted by a plosive [d]. On these matters, see Jackson (1953: 563–65). In Old English itself, some medial clusters are devoiced, especially those involving the *-d-* of the regular (weak) past tense suffix. OE <pp> may therefore legitimately be held to be capable of representing the Brittonic cluster under discussion.

The English spelling of the final consonant is of course <d>, which suggests that the incipient Brittonic intervocalic lenition at least of /t/ was heard as [d], as in *Andred* (Pevensey, Sussex, as in the former name of the

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[8]   A term for a phonetic change in Celtic languages whereby voiced stop consonants (plosives) regularly become voiceless in contact with other consonants, generally also stops (and also for another related change not relevant here).

[9]   Obstruents are the classes of stop consonants (in the form under discussion, Brittonic */d/, */p/ or */b/, and */t/) and fricative consonants taken together as a set.

[10]   To recap briefly, lenition involved these three consonants respectively becoming sounds approximating to [ð] (the <th> in *other*), [b] or [v] (actually [β], a bilabial sound), and [d].

Weald derived from it; from *Anderitu). Jackson (1953: 554–56) notes that in other names this may have later changed to /t/, probably in syllables unstressed in English. If it should be thought that the English <d> makes for a contradictory argument, with absent or incomplete lenition being assumed in the medial cluster and completed lenition for the final consonant, note that exactly the same problem needs to be confronted in the Kentish OE name *Reculf* for RB *Regulbium*, with (1) OE <c>, i.e. /k/, for unlenited British */g/ and (2) OE <f>, representing [v], for [β], i.e. lenited British */b/ (Jackson 1953: 553–54, 558–60) and not of course a British */f/, even if the borrowed British sound was devoiced word-finally in English for phonological reasons internal to English. The evidence is slight, but it might suggest that British lenition proceeded first in immediate post-tonic position.[11] This should not, however, be insisted upon, and is not crucial for the claim in the present paper.

We can assume that a name involving this element would have had a British/Brittonic generic, or a place-name forming morpheme (see below), in any event not now recoverable in either case, and that the whole name meant 'gnats' creek' or the like. Old English speakers took **WidVpet-* as the proper name of the place and added their own generic, *flēot*. They employed a construction with the loanword/name in the genitive case, such as that seen in *Exanceaster* Exeter, *Særesbyri(g)* Salisbury, *Nymdesfelda* Nympsfield and *Portsmouth*; and in *Acemannes-ceaster* Bath, if the analysis by Coates (1988: 24–30) is accepted. Tengstrand (1940: xxx–xxxi; and see xxiii, xlviii–xlix, lix) is quite clear that pre-English place-names may appear as the first element of an English compound name, and quotes Ekwall (1922: 94, under the name *Makerfield*) to that effect.

Interesting partial parallels to the proposed name are provided by the Welsh suffixally-derived river-names *Gwybedog* (cf. Welsh *gwybedog* 'fly-infested'), *Gwybedig* and *Gwybedyn* (Thomas 1938: 190), and the Cornish *Lawhippet*, *Lawhibbet*, which, despite appearances, originate as phrasal names with *nans* 'valley' as the first element (CPNE 119). The first Cornish name has probably been influenced by the form of the modern English word *whippet*, but in any case it echoes strikingly the present proposal about the historical phonology of *Wippedesfleot*.

To conclude: the suggested British Celtic derivation may appear tortuous, but it appeals to genuine words and onomastic part-parallels; against it is the fact that other names in Kent with *flēot* appear to be fully

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[11]   OE had final /d/ in loanwords from Latin, or rather Proto-Romance (e.g. *eced* 'vinegar' < *acētum*). Sound-substitution of /b/, if it had been retained in the British source of *Raculf*, would have been necessary because OE had no simple (non-geminate) [b] in word-final position (as noted above).

English (Cullen 1997: 625), though there are uncertainties about the derivation of the first element of *Ebbsfleet* (1997: 531–32). But even though the English solution is phonologically simpler, it depends on a supposed personal name which is not only unattested, a "side-form" (i.e. it contains a phonologically unexpected feature), and anomalous in one detail of its morphology, but also without definite parallels in other Germanic languages. The matter cannot be regarded as settled, but I submit that the present suggestion deserves to lie on the table.

Richard Coates
richard.coates@uwe.ac.uk

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