

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGLISH PLACE-NAMES

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IN 1956 my predecessor as Honorary Director of the English Place-Name Society commented 'The British Academy, a generous foster-parent of some thirty years' standing, should find satisfaction in the results of the Society's youthful vigour in the past, and I am sincerely grateful, not only for the honour of delivering the Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, but also for the occasion it provides me to express to the Academy itself the gratitude of all place-name scholars for its continued interest in this field of inquiry'.¹ I cannot but echo, with interest, Hugh Smith's thanks, indeed with considerable interest, for, since I became Honorary Director, the Academy has made the English Place-Name Survey one of its Major Projects, and has now increased its grant, as our science colleagues so quaintly put it, by a factor of sixteen. With all this in mind, my subject today had to be in the field of place-name study; and, in view of the important work done by my colleagues in the Survey, and elsewhere, there could only be one possible choice of title—for reasons which I hope will become increasingly clear.

Place-name students have long recognized that, occasionally, an individual place-name has a deeper significance than the immediate etymological meaning of the name might suggest.² But it is the wider study of the types, the distribution, and the topographical situations of place-names derived from a particular element, or from groups of elements, that has enabled my colleagues, particularly in recent years, to open new fields of inquiry, of importance, not only for place-name scholars, but also for others in apparently quite disparate disciplines.

¹ A. H. Smith, 'Place-names and the Anglo-Saxon Settlement' (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, xlii, 1956), 67-8.

² For example, Flamstead (Herts.) and Lawrress Wapentake (Lincs.) and see particularly A. E. B. Owen, 'Hafdic: A Lindsey Name and its implications' (*Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 7, 1975), 45-56.

The study of place-name elements is not, of course, new. Important surveys have been conducted, chiefly by Swedish scholars, into the etymology, meanings, and place-name usages of a number of Old English words.¹ Similarly, aspects of place-name formation have been examined by Ekwall,² Tengstrand,³ and, more recently, by Dodgson;⁴ and while Ekwall's *Dictionary*⁵ stands supreme of its kind, the collection of Anglo-Saxon charter names by Forsberg,⁶ and of elements by Smith⁷ and Middendorff,⁸ are fundamental contributions to the subject. In a different way, Mawer,⁹ Stenton,¹⁰ Dickins,¹¹ and Gelling,¹² for example, have demonstrated the significance of various groups of names and related them to a wider context.

What, however, marks the more recent work of my colleagues in the Survey, and of myself, from many of these studies is that we have examined groups of place-names in terms of topographical, geological, historical, and archaeological evidence.

¹ e.g. R. Forsberg, 'On Old English *ād* in English Place-names' (*Namn och Bygd*, 58, 1970), 20–82; K. I. Sandred, 'The Element *hamm* in English Place-names. A Linguistic Investigation' (*Namn och Bygd*, 64, 1976), 69–87; S. Karlström, *Old English Compound Place-Names in -ing* (Uppsala, 1927); C. Johansson, *Old English Place-names and Field-names containing lēah* (Stockholm, 1975); K. I. Sandred, *English Place-names in -stead* (Uppsala, 1963); E. Ekwall, *Old English wīc in Place-names* (Uppsala, 1964); Margaret Gelling, 'English Place-names derived from the Compound *wīcām*' (*Medieval Archaeology*, xi, 1967), 87–104.

² E. Ekwall, *English Place-names in -ing* (2nd ed., Lund, 1962).

³ E. Tengstrand, *A Contribution to the Study of Genitival Composition in Old English Place-names* (Uppsala, 1940).

⁴ J. McN. Dodgson, 'The -ing- in English Place-names like Birmingham and Altringham' (*Beiträge zur Namenforschung*, N.F. 2, 1967), 221–45; 'Various Forms of Old English -ing in English Place-names', (*ibid.*), 325–96; 'Various English Place-name Formations containing Old English -ing' (*ibid.*, N.F. 3, 1968), 141–89.

⁵ E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names* (4th edn., Oxford, 1960).

⁶ R. Forsberg, *A Contribution to a Dictionary of Old English Place-names* (Uppsala, 1950).

⁷ A. H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements* (EPNS, xxv–xxvi) (Cambridge, 1956).

⁸ H. Middendorff, *Altenglisches Flurnamenbuch* (Halle, 1902).

⁹ e.g. A. Mawer, *Problems of Place-name Study* (Cambridge, 1929).

¹⁰ e.g. F. M. Stenton, 'The Historical Bearing of Place-name Studies' (*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxi–xxv, 1939–43, xxvii, 1945).

¹¹ e.g. B. Dickins, 'English Names and Old English Heathenism' (*Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, xix, 1933), 148–60.

¹² e.g. Margaret Gelling, 'The Element *hamm* in English Place-names: A Topographical Investigation' (*Namn och Bygd*, 48, 1960), 140–62.

We have seen place-names, I suggest, as the direct result of human activity, and have related them to the utilization and development of the land on which our forefathers settled. In these terms the study of place-names is, therefore, an essentially human discipline. Of course, little of this research would have been possible without the large amount of place-name material collected and analysed, county by county, by our predecessors in the Survey,¹ and without similar studies produced by Swedish scholars.² It is, therefore, hardly pure coincidence that Swedish scholars today are directly involved in the Society's Survey as never before.

For more than forty years place-name scholars accepted the view that the earliest identifiable place-names of English origin were those derived from the Old English suffix *-ingas*, and that those with the genitive plural *-inga-* followed by another element like OE *hām* 'a homestead' were only a little later in date. In its most sophisticated form,³ only those names in which *-ingas* and *-ingahām* have a personal name as first part were considered to go back to the earliest period of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Britain, but not those in which the first element is an appellative. When suffixed to a personal name, *-ingas* denotes the followers or dependants of the person named, hence Hastings (Sx) means 'the followers or dependants of *Hæsta*' and Gillingham (Do, K) 'the homestead of the *Gyllingas* (the followers or dependants of *Gylla*)'. With appellatives or earlier place-names, however, *-ingas* denotes the dwellers or inhabitants at a place, hence Meering (Nt) means 'the dwellers by the pool, or near (a lost place) *Mere*' and Uppingham (R) 'the dwellers higher up, or in the elevated place', and this usage of *-ingas* is found in Old English documentary sources, other than place-names, as late as the eleventh century. As a result, therefore, even though on other grounds, some place-names of the Meering and

¹ Foremost among these are, of course, Sir Allen Mawer, Sir Frank Stenton, and Professor A. H. Smith, together with Dr. P. H. Reaney, Professor Bruce Dickins, and Mr. J. E. B. Gover.

² Particularly, E. Ekwall, *The Place-names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922); A. Fägersten, *The Place-Names of Dorset* (Uppsala, 1933), H. Kökeritz, *The Place-names of the Isle of Wight* (Uppsala, 1940), and O. S. Anderson (Arngart), *The English Hundred-Names* (3 vols., Lund, 1934-6). Less satisfactory are J. K. Wallenberg, *Kentish Place-names* (Uppsala, 1931) and *The Place-names of Kent* (Uppsala, 1934).

³ See A. H. Smith, 'Place-names and Anglo-Saxon Settlement' (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, xlii, 1956), 75 ff., and *English Place-name Elements* (EPNS, xxv-xxvi) (Cambridge, 1956), i. 282-303.

Uppingham type have the appearance of age, they cannot be used as evidence for early Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The theory that the *-ingas* names are the earliest identifiable place-names of English origin goes back at least to Kemble in 1849,¹ and is best studied in Ekwall's classic monograph,² and in Smith's more sophisticated version.³ It should be remembered, of course, that these *-ingas* names are not in origin place-names proper; they denoted groups of people, and indeed these groups must have varied considerably in size.⁴ They became the names of places when the groups so-called became permanently associated with the places in which they settled. For various reasons, it was argued that folk- or group-names go back to the time of the earliest English settlements in Britain, to what has more recently been called the *immigration* phase; and a significant feature of the argument in favour of their antiquity is that groups of dependants under a single leader, the social organization suggested by a name like Hastings, seem to have been typical of the migration period; moreover, similar names are found in numbers on the Continent.

The argument was taken a stage further. When such names are plotted on a map, they indicate the areas where the earliest English settlements took place, and their distribution gives some idea of the routes by which the settlers penetrated inland. Discussion has, naturally, also been focused on the period within which *-ingas*, *-inga-* names were being formed, and, from his monograph, it would appear that Ekwall considered this to extend from the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon settlement in this country down to somewhere in the seventh century in areas of later penetration.

If arguments based on linguistic, social, and political considerations pointed to the antiquity of the personal name + *ingas* and *ingahām* types, as place-name scholars believed, archaeological evidence was thought to support fully this view. When a map showing the distribution of *-ingas* names is placed by the side of one showing Anglo-Saxon pagan burial-sites, from the late fourth century to *c.* 700, there appears to be a direct correla-

¹ J. M. Kemble, *Saxons in England* (London, 1849).

² E. Ekwall, *English Place-names in -ing* (2nd edn., Lund, 1962).

³ See p. 137 n. 3.

⁴ On this point and its implications, see W. Davies and H. Vierck, 'The Contexts of the Tribal Hidage: Social Aggregates and Settlement Patterns' (*Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 8, 1974), 223-93, particularly 238-41, and also T. M. Charles-Edward, 'Kinship, Status and the Origins of the Hide' (*Past and Present*, 56, 1972), 3-33.

tion in the areas in which both occur. Indeed, Ekwall thought there was a 'remarkable agreement'.¹ But, from such maps, it is equally clear that there are areas in which *-ingas* place-names are found, but where pagan burial-sites are little evidenced, and vice versa.² These anomalies have long been recognized, but such was the aura of sanctity bestowed upon the theory of the antiquity of the *-ingas* type, particularly by place-name scholars, that when attempts were made to explain the anomalies, these tried to accommodate or to reconcile the two distribution patterns. The most notable was that by Dr. J. N. L. Myers,³ who, in 1935, noted the possibility that the place-names might represent a phase *later* than that of the burial-sites. However, as Dodgson subsequently put it, Myers 'conceded the disparity of the two kinds of evidence, but offered a shrewd reconciliation of them by supposing that if the *-ingas*, *-inga-* place-names were contemporary with the pagan cemeteries, the disparity of distribution must be caused by the non-survival of the *-ingas* names . . . or by the non-discovery of a burial-site'.⁴ And it should be remembered that Myers presumably attempted to reconcile the two patterns because of the insistence that *-ingas* and *-inga-* place-names belong to the immigration phase of Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The first faint whisper that, perhaps after all, the long-held

¹ E. Ekwall, *op. cit.* 2 n. 2.

² See, for example, the two maps in the Introduction to *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages. South Sheet* (Ordnance Survey, 1935). One such area is Essex, where *-ingas* and *-inga-* names are found in numbers, but where few pagan burial-sites have so far been discovered. The excavations at Mucking, however, have revealed an extensive Anglo-Saxon settlement (together with two Anglo-Saxon pagan burial-sites), which begins in the late Roman period and 'is providing crucial evidence for the first coming of the English to Britain', as Dr. Gelling points out in the Introduction to *Place-name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements* (English Place-Name Society, 1975), iii. She goes on to suggest that this discovery has revealed the need for a re-examination of all the names in Essex, which have hitherto been considered to contain *-ingas*, and that we should check that crucial place-names really do belong to the categories to which they have been assigned. At the same time, Mucking (if the name really is derived from *-ingas*) serves to remind us of the occasional coincidence between place-names and pagan burial-sites that Dodgson himself noted (see p. 8). Now, see further Margaret Gelling, 'The Place-names of the Mucking area' (*Panorama, Journal of the Thurrock Local History Society*, 19, 1975-6), 7-20. For a convenient outline of the results of the excavations at Mucking, see *Current Archaeology*, v, 3, 73-80, where additional references are also given.

³ J. N. L. Myers, 'Britain in the Dark Ages' (*Antiquity*, ix, 1935), 455-64.

⁴ J. McN. Dodgson, 'The Significance of the Distribution of English Place-names in *-ingas*, *-inga-* in South-east England' (*Medieval Archaeology*, x, 1966), 4.

theory might not be inviolate was heard in a review by Dr. Margaret Gelling of my own *English Place-Names*,¹ but it was Mr. John Dodgson who, in 1966, disposed of it completely.² It should, however, be *very clearly* borne in mind that the etymology and meaning of these names are not in question—Hastings still means ‘the followers or dependants of *Hæsta*’, and is still in origin a folk- or group-name, not a place-name proper. What is changed is the ‘significance’ of the name, its status, if you like, as belonging to the immigration phase of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Britain.

When Dodgson examined in close detail the coincidence of *-ingas*, *-inga-* place-names and pagan burial-sites in the south-east counties, this was found to be, if I may quote Dr. Gelling’s excellent summary, ‘about as little as is possible, given that both occur in substantial numbers in the same southern and eastern portions of England’; and of the new maps, which showed both types of evidence, compiled by Dodgson, she remarks ‘if we must regard them as contemporary, there was a law in operation from A.D. 400 to A.D. 600 which said that people of English descent might either have a pagan burial or live in a place with an *-ingas* name, but were to be strongly discouraged from doing both’.³ Of course, there are occasional coincidences between these place-names and burial-sites, as Dodgson has demonstrated, but they are comparatively rare. The overwhelming evidence from south-eastern England shows that the supposed close relationship between the two is illusory; the *-ingas*, *-inga-* names cannot, it would seem, go back to the *immigration* period of the settlements.

Yet, once more, I must emphasize that the evidence indicates that the personal name + *ingas* formula is an archaic one. Even so, it is equally clear that in the areas under discussion ‘this sort of place-name and the social organization it represents is largely associated with settlements in districts removed from both the immigration-phase burials and from those communities which continued the ‘discoverable’ burial habit until after the introduction of Christian methods’.⁴ In other words, the *-ingas* societies must have used different, and distinctive, burial customs from these others, and their burial-sites must, for some reason,

¹ In *Oxoniensia*, xxvi–xxvii, 1961–2, 347–50.

² J. McN. Dodgson, *op. cit.* 1–29.

³ Margaret Gelling, ‘Recent Work on English Place-names’ (*The Local Historian*, 11, 1, 1974), 4.

⁴ J. McN. Dodgson, *op. cit.* 16.

be difficult to discover today. Already in 1935, however, Myers had suggested a possible answer to this, namely, that the burial places of the *-ingas*, *-inga-* folk may have become the Christian churchyards of the Conversion, and, as Dodgson went on to argue, such a hypothesis is eminently sensible.¹

I cannot do justice to the detailed considerations which lead Dodgson to suppose that 'the emergence of the *-ingas* community as a social entity coincided with a movement away from the immigration-settlement areas',² and that these names belong *in general* to a *colonizing* phase of Anglo-Saxon settlement, which suggests a sixth-century date for this in south-eastern England. Suffice it to say that to those of us who work in the place-name field, as well as to others in related disciplines, this hypothesis is a most attractive one. Granted our present state of knowledge, the *-ingas*, *-inga-* place-names seem to have resulted from a development that is later than the immigration phase of settlement represented by the early pagan burial-sites, and that is contemporary with a colonizing phase which followed soon after. The significance of these names is still considerable—the formula is still an archaic one—but, as Dodgson puts it in his own inimitable way, 'it would demote those men whose names appear in the *-ingas* place-names from the captaincy of immigrant armadas and transfer them to the leadership of the folk who made Britain England', and 'they are still sure of their eminence in some command, whichever way the speculation goes'.³

Dodgson recognized that the pattern which emerged from his study of south-eastern England might not necessarily be repeated in other areas, and that further work was needed to test his hypothesis there. In 1971 Mr. Joost Kuurman did precisely this for the East Midland counties of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire,⁴ districts in which, it should be noted, names derived from *-inga-*, particularly those from *-ingahām*, are far more numerous than those derived from *-ingas*. This fact led Kuurman to decide that the *-ingahām* place-names here deserved special study 'in order to try and establish their relationship with *-ingas* and other *-inga-* names' (e.g. *-ingalēah*, *-ingafeld*, etc.).⁵

¹ J. N. L. Myers, op. cit. 461, and J. McN. Dodgson, op. cit. 16.

² J. McN. Dodgson, op. cit. 18.

³ Ibid. 20.

⁴ J. Kuurman, 'An Examination of the *-ingas*, *-inga-* Place-names in the East Midlands' (*Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 7, 1975), 11–44.

⁵ Ibid. 15.

In this decision he was, no doubt, influenced by Dr. Gelling's earlier study of place-names derived from OE *wīchām*,¹ in which she had shown that this compound was used by the earliest Germanic immigrants to Britain, and that, therefore, OE *hām* must have been an archaic element in English place-name giving.

Kuurman's detailed examination fully supported Dodgson's conclusions, that the association of *-ingas*, *-inga-* names with Anglo-Saxon burial-sites was rare, and that these place-names in general belong rather to a colonizing than to an immigration phase of settlement. But he took his study a stage further, for he examined the sites of these place-names in more detail, from a topographical and geological point of view. He found it too coincidental that 'a large number of *-ingas* and *-inga-el.* place-names are situated more inland and upstream from the *-ingahām* places',² and, as a further contrast, that the latter occur more frequently alongside and on major, and I stress major, Roman lines of communication, and, to a lesser degree, along rivers and major streams. In addition, an examination of the sites of these names in terms of the Geological Drift map suggested that the majority of the *-ingahāms* were on more attractive sites for settlement than those derived from *-ingas* and *-inga-* + another element. Consequently, so far as the East Midlands is concerned, a further dimension was added to Dodgson's hypothesis, namely, that 'the colonists used OE *hām* in combination with their folk-name to denote the colonization settlements they made in the neighbourhood of the convenient lines of communication and penetration . . . , and which as such would be early in the colonization period, and that other terminal elements [i.e. like *lēah* and *feld*] and folk-names (proper) [i.e. the *-ingas* names themselves] were used to name more inland, and therefore, presumably, later settlements'.³ In other words, Kuurman confirmed Dodgson's hypothesis, but suggested, in addition, that, in the East Midlands at any rate, the evidence provided by topography and geology suggests that the place-names derived from *-ingahām*, in general, preceded those derived from *-ingas* and *-inga-* followed by some other element. This involves nothing less than a stratification, within the whole group of

¹ Margaret Gelling, 'English Place-names derived from the Compound *wīchām*' (*Medieval Archaeology*, xi, 1967), 87-104.

² J. Kuurman, op. cit. 34.

³ Ibid. 35.

-ingas and -inga- names, completely contrary to that previously held, and which I described earlier.¹

The old order changes; nothing, ladies and gentlemen, is sacred any more, for a new pattern of stratification also emerges from Dr. B. H. Cox's important study of OE *hām* 'a homestead' in the place-names of the Midlands and East Anglia.²

For various reasons, OE *hām* has long been considered a source of early place-names in England, and Dr. Margaret Gelling's work on OE *wīchām*, to which I alluded earlier,³ has confirmed this in a striking way. She examined twenty-eight examples of this compound, and found in them 'a very abnormal' distribution pattern. No less than twenty-four are situated on or within a mile of a *major* Roman road, and it is clear, as she herself says, that 'the connexion with Roman roads is essential to an understanding of these place-names'.⁴ Now, it is a well-known, but sometimes forgotten, fact that OE *wīc* is a Germanic loan-word from Latin *vicus*.⁵ Dr. Gelling suggests that this may well be relevant to the meaning of the compound *wīchām*, for a further feature of the distribution of names of the Wickham, Wykeham type is that about half are directly associated with known Romano-British habitations. She goes on to propose that OE *wīchām* was a compound appellative, and not an *ad hoc* compound place-name, and that it denoted a small settlement in the neighbourhood of, or associated with, a Roman *vicus*. One can only regret that there is as yet insufficient archaeological evidence to associate these place-names with the Germanic *laeti*, who were employed towards the end of the Roman period to give protection to a neighbouring village or group of villas. To date, relevant finds have been made at only four of the Wickhams, so that the correspondences between the two are insufficient. But it would not surprise me at all if such an association eventually turns out to be the vital significance of this small, but important, group of place-names. At any rate, they are already significant enough, for not only do they appear to indicate some direct communication between the Romano-

¹ See *supra*, pp. 137 ff.

² B. Cox, 'The Significance of the Distribution of English Place-names in *hām* in the Midlands and East Anglia' (*Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 5, 1973), 15-73.

³ See *supra*, p. 142 and p. 142 n. 1.

⁴ Margaret Gelling, *op. cit.* 87.

⁵ *Ibid.* 93. It is, perhaps, surprising, in retrospect, that this is not discussed in E. Ekwall, *Old English wīc in Place-names* (Uppsala, 1964).

British and the English peoples, but they also confirm in a striking way the very early use of *hām* in our place-names.

Already in his doctoral thesis in 1971,¹ Cox had independently noted that in Leicestershire and Rutland the *-ingas* and *-inga*-place-names appear from their distribution to be largely later in date than the period of the pagan Anglo-Saxon burials; and, further, that such names are well away from the *major* Roman road system, while place-names in *hām* are much closer to these roads. These observations led him to a study of the distribution of *hām* names in thirteen counties in the Midlands and East Anglia.

It is, of course, sometimes difficult to distinguish between *hām* and OE *hamm* 'an enclosure' in the second element of some place-names,² but Cox consistently notes those instances where the early spellings show that there is any significant doubt, so that future research is unlikely to affect his conclusions in any meaningful way.

He submitted all the examples of *hām* to a rigorous examination, involving a study of their physical situations and their archaeological contexts. His material shows that they occur much more frequently in the most easterly counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, and Cambridgeshire. Further to the west they become quite rapidly rare, so that there is no certain example at all in Staffordshire, only two in Derbyshire, and three, all Newnhams, in Warwickshire, and these he suggests 'probably represent late movement into difficult territory'.³ He found that, almost without exception, the *hāms* are situated within three miles of a *major* Roman road, a pattern which can hardly, it would seem, be the result of pure chance; and that a significant number are close to, or are associated with, Romano-British habitations and Anglo-Saxon pagan burial sites. All this suggests an early date for the *hāms*, as too does the fact that the vast majority are situated on land most suitable for agricultural exploitation.

A comparison of the distribution and situations of the names in *hām* with those in *-ingas* and *-ingahām* suggests a remarkable conclusion, that the *hāms* predate the *-ingas* and *-ingahāms*; and further, a similar comparison, made independently of Kuur-

¹ *The Place-Names of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Ph.D. thesis, The University of Nottingham), 1971.

² See, for example, A. H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements* (EPNS, xxv-xxvi) (Cambridge, 1956), i. 229-30 and p. 145 n. 3.

³ B. Cox, op. cit. 45.

man's, supports the conclusion that the names derived from *-ingahām* pre-date those derived from *-ingas*. Cox comments, almost incredulously, 'This is difficult to accept at first sight. Logically one would suppose names in *-ingas* to have preceded place-names formed from its genitive plural + *hām*. In fact they did so; but not as place-names.'¹ He clearly supposes the stages of development of *-ingas* to have been from folk-name to district name and finally to place-name.

It is impossible to summarize shortly the evidence which Cox collected and which justifies his conclusions. Perhaps his own summary of the temporal sequence indicated by the distribution patterns in Norfolk may be given as being reasonably typical of the whole, and it should be borne in mind that it is based on a detailed analysis of the sites and situations of more than 120 place-names. The temporal sequence is first, '*hām* beside the Roman roads, on higher ground and on light soils in areas easily accessible by road and river', second, '*-ingahām* sometimes beside the roads but generally spreading away from them and breaking new territory', and third, '*-ingas*, *-inga-* in areas peripheral to more desirable land and often sited on low-lying ground such as in the fens south of the Wash and in that from the Broads to the sea'.²

The consequence of Cox's study is, at first sight, startling, for it presents a completely new stratification of these types: first, the *hāms*, then, the *-ingahāms*, and later, the *-ingas*, probably extending over a period from the first federate settlements down to the end of the seventh century.

A similar conclusion, though with a different time scale, was reached by Mr. John Dodgson in a paper in which he discussed place-names derived from *hām*, in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex.³

I have already drawn attention to the difficulties sometimes involved in distinguishing between *hām* and *hamm* when they occur as second element of place-names, and that there are a number of examples in which early spellings are not decisive in favour of the one or the other.⁴ The etymology and meaning of OE *hamm* is, indeed, the subject of a paper by Dr. K. I. Sandred shortly to be published, and it is quite clear that the corpus

¹ Ibid. 48.

² Ibid. 41.

³ J. McN. Dodgson, 'Place-names from *hām*, distinguished from *hamm* Names, in Relation to the Settlement of Kent, Surrey and Sussex' (*Anglo-Saxon England*, 2, 1973), 1-50.

⁴ See *supra*, p. 144.

of possible *ham* place-names will have to be re-examined in the light of Sandred's important observations.¹ But, as with Cox, the conclusions which Dodgson reached, as a result of an examination of the certain examples of *hām* in the three counties, should not be invalidated by a reassessment of place-names in *ham*.

Dodgson points out that *hām* names in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex occur on the edges of the pattern of Romano-British settlement and expand outwards from it; and that many names in *hām* appear in areas where there are no Anglo-Saxon pagan burial-sites, though others are found in close proximity to such sites. This seems to indicate that the names themselves were contemporary with the pagan burial custom, but that they were also used after that custom had become obsolete. Further, their distribution suggested to Dodgson that names in *hām* were earlier than those in *-ingas* and *-inga-*, and that the *-ingahām* type was what he calls a 'late' variety of the *hām* type.

Dodgson goes on to suggest that the distribution patterns indicate that the place-names derived from *hām* came into use at the very beginning of the colonizing phase, when a movement was made beyond the immigration areas, in the three counties, where pagan burial-sites are to be found. Such a development there he places in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Further, from his work on Cheshire, Dodgson believes that *hām* place-names there belong to an English 'take over' in the seventh century; and though the chronology is different, he sees, as he puts it, a close spatial and sequential similarity in the two areas, the three south-eastern counties of England and Cheshire, but for the details we shall have to wait for the publication of the final volume for Cheshire.

The combined studies of a small group of place-name scholars have, therefore, resulted in the setting up of hypotheses completely contrary to the views held by earlier generations. The *-ingas* type can no longer be considered to represent the earliest identifiable 'habitative' place-names of English origin, and its place has been taken by the *hāms*. But the present generation of place-name scholars is equally clear that this is only the beginning of the search to identify the earliest English place-names in the various areas of England, for there are, of course, many districts where names of the types I have discussed are

¹ K. I. Sandred, 'The Element *ham* in English Place-names. A Linguistic Investigation' (*Namn och Bygd*, 64, 1976), 69-87.

rare or non-existent. Most of us believe that, in the next decade or so, Dodgson's prediction will be proved correct, when he said, 'It might turn out that quite ordinary nature-names, such as *burna* "a stream", *lēah* "a wood", *feld* "open land", are the first to be used by settlers in a new land',¹ and to these I'm sure we should add *ford* 'a ford', and *ēg* 'an island, dry ground in marsh, etc.', as well as the singular place-name forming suffix *-ing* 'a place, a stream, etc.', as the new evidence from Berkshire suggests.² However, there can be no doubt that Margaret Gelling was right when she said 'but it is unlikely that we shall be able to produce a single formula which will have the attractive simplicity of the [old] *-ingas*, *-ingahām* hypothesis'.³

A similar reassessment of the place-names of Scandinavian origin in eastern England is taking place, and already a view of their significance in terms of the extent and density of Scandinavian settlement has emerged, just as revolutionary as those I have already discussed.

It has, of course, long been recognized that there are large numbers of such names in eastern England, and these were seen as the direct result of the settlements of the *micel here*, whose campaigns began in 865, and whose number, according to the accepted theory, was to be reckoned in thousands.⁴ It was assumed that members of the victorious Danish army took over large numbers of existing English villages, which they renamed; and it was almost axiomatic of this view that the coming of the Danes radically altered the patterns of the place-names in the areas in which they settled. Indeed, F. T. Wainwright, in 1954, said of parts of Leicestershire that 'English place-names have been swept away or completely overlaid by Scandinavian or Scandinavianized place-nomenclature',⁵ and this may be taken as a reasonable summary of the prevailing opinion.

Professor P. H. Sawyer, however, claimed that the size of the

¹ J. McN. Dodgson, 'The Significance of the Distribution of English Place-names . . .', 5.

² Margaret Gelling, *The Place-names of Berkshire* (EPNS, li) (English Place-name Society, 1976), iii. 819 ff.

³ Margaret Gelling, 'Recent Work on English Place-names' (*The Local Historian*, 11, 1, 1974), 5.

⁴ This view was so generally held that individual reference is unnecessary, but see particularly F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943), 241 n. 1.

⁵ F. T. Wainwright, 'Danes and Norwegians in England' (*Quatrième Congrès International de Sciences Onomastiques*, 1954), 530-40, particularly 538-9.

Danish army had been exaggerated, and that it was to be counted rather in hundreds than thousands.¹ Sawyer's arguments seemed to me impressive, and no less a careful historian than Professor H. R. Loyn accepted that a case had been made out for the smallness of the army in the field, but not for the smallness of the number of settlers themselves.² This was precisely my own view.

Now, clearly, if Sawyer is right about the size of the *micel here*, this must materially affect our interpretation of the Danish settlements themselves. Despite the fact that he originally considered it of no value in determining the extent and density of these settlements, the place-name evidence remains; villages with Scandinavian or Scandinavianized names are there for us still to see; but, if the army was in fact only small, then clearly all these place-names could not have been given by the men of the army, especially when it is remembered that it was divisions of it which settled respectively in Yorkshire in 876, in Mercia in 877, and in East Anglia in 879. A complete reappraisal of the place-name evidence was, therefore, required, particularly in view of Sawyer's denigration of its relevance to the question of the extent and density of Danish settlement.

A re-examination of the linguistic evidence provided by these place-names, as well as a consideration of the general linguistic influence of the Scandinavian languages upon English in its various dialects, convinced me that the large number of Scandinavian place-names could not be explained in terms only of settlements by members of a small victorious army. On these grounds, alone, Loyn's assessment is vindicated; none the less, the traditional lines of approach cannot take us much further. The problem, therefore, has to be examined in terms of land-settlement, looking at the site of each of the Scandinavian-named places, and comparing them with neighbouring English-named villages, from a topographical, geological, and agricultural point of view.³

It is easy to define the site of a village and to assess its particular qualities. But, as Dr. B. K. Roberts points out, it is also

¹ P. H. Sawyer, 'The Density of the Danish Settlement in England' (*University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, vi, 1958), 1-17, and *The Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn., London, 1971), 120 ff.

² H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1962), 54.

³ This took up, in detail, a line of investigation suggested in L. W. H. Payling, 'Geology and Place-names in Kesteven' (*Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages*, iv, 1935), 1-13.

important to take note of the *situation* of the site 'relative to the resources of the surrounding area'.¹ We have also to bear in mind that, on occasion, a 'poor' site might well be accepted, because of the advantages of a 'good' situation.

There are five principal considerations for men seeking a place in which to settle, and the likely order of importance of these in the eyes of early settlers might well be: the supply of water, the availability of arable land, the availability of grazing land, resources of fuel, and the ease of obtaining building materials. These considerations will help us in making assessments. But we must also remember that a choice of site may not always have been rational, that an irrational element might sometimes enter in, 'taboos, dreams, fears, priestly deliberations or feminine intuitions'—and these we shall never be able to estimate.²

When I examined, with these factors in mind, the sites in the East Midlands of the names derived from ODan *bȳ* 'a farmstead, a village', and recorded in DB,³ it was clear that some share the characteristic features of English-named villages, suggesting that at least these represent earlier villages taken over and renamed by the new settlers. Although I did not realize it in 1965, the *Kirbys* and *Kirkbys*, as a group, probably belong here, for my colleagues in Denmark believe that, there, *kirkubȳ* was used as an appellative 'a village with a church'. In many instances, therefore, this common name is probably a Danish renaming of an older English village.⁴

But the vast majority of the places with names in *-bȳ* in the territory of the Five Boroughs contrast with neighbouring English-named villages. Indeed, it is apparent from a glance at a map that whereas English-named villages are often found in the valleys of the major rivers, the *bys* are frequently situated in tributary valleys and along smaller streams. This would itself suggest that they arose as a result of colonization in the strict sense; and such a hypothesis can be tested by a rigorous examination of their sites in terms of the Geological Drift map,

¹ B. K. Roberts, *Rural Settlement in Britain* (forthcoming), see Chapter 4, 'Patterns of Village Settlement'. Dr. Roberts has kindly allowed me to read this chapter in manuscript.

² Ibid.

³ K. Cameron, *Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: The Place-name Evidence* (Inaugural Lecture, University of Nottingham, 1965).

⁴ On this point, see Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1972), 227.

and by personal examination. Frequently Danish-named villages are found to be on the less attractive sites, and the evidence indicates that the theory that a large number of the names in *-bȳ* represent villages taken over and renamed by the Danes is wrong. The great majority of them appear to indicate that the Danes who settled there came as colonists, not necessarily farming virgin land, but certainly taking up sites not at that time occupied.¹

Now, it is hardly possible that all this could have resulted from the settlement of a part of a small victorious army, or from expansion and extension of settlement between the date of the first Danish settlements and 1086. The evidence, including that of large concentrations of *bȳs* in various areas, seems to presuppose a migration from the homeland into the East Midlands, behind the protection of the armies of the Five Boroughs, which held Watling Street as the boundary between English and Danish England for two generations or so, and this has subsequently been described as my 'secondary migration theory'.²

The second stage in this re-examination involved a similar detailed investigation of the place-names recorded in DB, and derived from ODan *þorp* 'a secondary settlement, an outlying farmstead, a small hamlet dependent on a larger place'.³ Again, the evidence provided by the topographical and geological characteristics of the sites is instructive. For the most part, it seems clear that the *thorps* represent new and secondary sites, for these are usually inferior to those of neighbouring villages. Frequently, in fact, one could suggest the place the particular *thorp* was secondary to, and sometimes such places have English names. To argue from this, however, that the East Midlands *thorps* are to be derived rather from OE *þorp*, *þrop*, a similar meaning, prostitutes the evidence, both linguistic and topographical.⁴ It could certainly be argued, on the other hand,

¹ K. Cameron, *op. cit.* 11 ff.

² P. H. Sawyer, *op. cit.* 167 and 'The two Viking Ages of Britain. A Discussion' (*Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 2, 1969), 168.

³ K. Cameron, 'Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: The Place-name Evidence, Part II, Place-Names in Thorp' (*Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 3, 1970), 35-49.

⁴ N. Lund, 'Could the Thorp-names in the Danelaw be Old English rather than Old Danish?' (forthcoming). For comments on this, see Gillian Fellows Jensen in *The Study of the Personal Names of the British Isles* (Erlangen, 1976), 50; and for clear cases where the *thorp*-names must be late, see, for example, A. E. B. Owen, 'Hafdic: a Lindsey Name and its Implications' (*Journal of the English Place-name Society*, 7, 1975), 45-56.

that ODan *þorp* had been taken over into the local vocabulary, and used as such, and that the place-names need not necessarily be evidence of Danish *settlement* itself. But, these names are at least indicative of a widespread and considerable Danish *influence*, and that influence must have arisen from something. That something must have been Danish settlement on a scale considerable enough for the word to have become *the* term used of a secondary or dependent settlement over the whole area.

A comparison between the sites of the place-names derived from *bý* and those from *þorp* indicates unmistakably what we would expect from the meanings of the two words themselves, that as a group the *thorps* belong to a later stratum of name-giving than the *bys*. None the less, it is nice to find that this is indicated by a comparison of the sites of the places so-called. At least it vindicates the techniques I used.

The third stage of this investigation involved what, following earlier writers, I called the Grimston-hybrids, the group of place-names in which a Scandinavian personal name is compounded with OE *tūn* 'an enclosure, a farmstead, a village'.¹ It is quite clear that these are hybrids, for ODan *tūn* was no longer a living place-name formative element in the period when the Danes settled in England.² Subsequent research for Yorkshire has, however, shown that I should have included in my survey all the hybrids in *-tūn*, since they share similar characteristics of site and situation.³

The classic interpretation of the personal name hybrids was that of Sir Frank Stenton, who suggested that from their geographical situations it was unlikely that the villages so-named denoted new settlements; that it was at least possible that they denoted English villages 'acquired by a Danish owner at the time when the Great Army of the Danes divided out the land which it had chosen for settlement'; and that there was no reason to suppose that the English peasantry had been deliberately expropriated.⁴ In 1958 I supported this interpretation, and pointed out that, at any rate in Derbyshire, these hybrids

¹ K. Cameron, 'Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: The Place-name Evidence Part III, the Grimston-hybrids' (*England before the Conquest. Studies . . . Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, Cambridge, 1971), 147-63.

² Gillian Fellows Jensen, *op. cit.* 109-30.

³ *Ibid.* 110-11.

⁴ *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire* (EPNS, xvii) (Cambridge, 1940), xviii-xix.

are situated on excellent agricultural land—so bringing choice of situation into the argument for the first time.¹

The striking feature of the distribution of these names in the East Midlands is that, in general, they occur in areas where *bys* are absent, and are found in the valleys of important rivers like the Trent. But, most significant of all, when their sites are compared with those of neighbouring English-named villages, the correlation between the two is clear. It is, in fact, impossible in the great majority of cases, to distinguish meaningfully between the sites of the hybrids and those of the adjacent English-named places. As a group, therefore, they appear to represent English-named villages taken over and partially renamed by the Danes, as Stenton had suggested, and, further, it is highly likely that they belong to a very early phase of Danish settlement in areas already heavily settled by the English.

The techniques I developed in these studies were applied to an examination of Scandinavian names in Yorkshire by Dr. Gillian Fellows Jensen.² She, however, went further, supporting her arguments by the evidence of DB assessments, parish status, and statistics concerning lost villages; and, with the help of Professor D. M. Wilson, took account of archaeological evidence, particularly the provenance of sculptured stone crosses showing *no* Viking influence and that of the sculpture decorated in the Viking style.

Fellows Jensen has listed and discussed the relevant names in all the various groups, including names of Scandinavian origin in addition to the *bys* and *thorps*, as well as those earlier names, whose forms have been scandinavianized, groups which I had not had time to consider in detail. Her findings confirmed the broad outlines of my own studies, and vindicated the pattern of stratification which my own work suggested. She is currently engaged on a fully documented survey of all the Scandinavian place-names in the East Midlands, to be followed by a similar study for East Anglia, so that all the basic evidence for Scandinavian names in eastern England will at last be available.

Enough, however, has already appeared for us to say with some confidence that subsequent work in this field will not alter materially the *broad* conclusions so far reached. It is certainly gratifying to read that 'the combined work of Cameron and

¹ K. Cameron, 'The Scandinavians in Derbyshire: The Place-name Evidence' (*Nottingham Medieval Studies*, ii, 1958), 92–3.

² Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement in Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1972).

Fellows Jensen has established a framework and provided a firm basis for discussion by historians and others'.¹

As a result of this systematic and detailed investigation of Scandinavian and hybrid names, therefore, a new stratification suggests itself: the earliest identifiable place-names are the hybrids in *tūn*, representing Danish take-over of existing villages; the earliest new Danish settlement is represented by the names derived from *bȳ*; and a later stage is represented by those derived from *þorp*, though it may transpire that many of these are the result rather of Scandinavian influence, than of Scandinavian settlement in the strict sense. Consequently, the older theory that a large number of the *bys* represent English villages taken over and renamed seems to have been wrong. It must, however, be clearly understood that I have never argued that the Danes did not settle in existing villages *without* changing the names. Of course, this must have taken place in many instances. What I have tried to emphasize is that the great majority of *Danish-named* places, particularly those derived from *bȳ* and *þorp*, are new settlements on land unoccupied at the time.

It has recently been said that 'most . . . scholars are agreed that the number of Danish settlers was considerable. On the whole, it seems that the most satisfactory explanation of the numerous Scandinavian place-names is Cameron's theory of a secondary migration from Denmark. The original armies can hardly have been responsible alone for all the villages with Scandinavian names, particularly since the Vikings also settled in old established English villages',² and, with our present state

¹ Margaret Gelling, 'Recent Work on English Place-names' (*The Local Historian*, 11, 1, 1974), 6.

² Gillian Fellows Jensen, 'The Vikings in England: A Review' (*Anglo-Saxon England*, 4, 1975), 206. There are very few instances in written sources of the Danes taking over existing English settlements and re-naming them; Derby, formerly *Norðweorðig*, is a notable example. We know, however, that the Viking army took over important centres like Cambridge, Leicester, Lincoln, Northampton, Nottingham, and Stamford without altering the names in any way. Presumably this must have happened elsewhere with smaller places when men from the *micel here* settled in eastern England. It is difficult, nonetheless, to see how this can be *proved*, except by archaeological evidence. The settlements of men from the army no doubt involved the taking over of numbers of existing English villages, and included among these are likely to be the personal name and other hybrids. But, the greater number of the *Danish-named* villages themselves seem to represent new settlements, chiefly on unoccupied land, the result, according to my interpretation, of a secondary migration.

of knowledge, this probably represents the view most widely held.

Certainly during recent years, place-name scholars have been paying some attention, though little as yet has appeared in print, to the significance of the personal names, which occur as first element of habitative place-names—more precisely, what is the relationship between the bearers of these personal names and the settlements named after them? It has, hitherto, been usually assumed that this relationship was ‘occupational’; but in strictly Anglo-Saxon contexts, the number has been extended of place-names, in which the person named can be identified and can be shown to have been a ‘manorial’ owner, rather than, say, the founder of a settlement.¹

In the context of Danish settlement, we should perhaps see a ‘manorial’, and not an ‘occupational’, association in the personal-name hybrids, as I first suggested in my Presidential Address to the Viking Society in 1974. Within reasonable striking distance of the Danish borough of Nottingham, in the Vale of Trent, there are about a dozen such place-names, and it is at least conceivable that the *Gamall* and *Tovi*, for example, who gave their names to Gamston and Toton, were overlords of these older villages. Their association would then certainly be rather ‘manorial’ than ‘occupational’.

I have suggested that the personal-name hybrids belong to the earliest stratum of Danish name-giving here. Is it beyond the bounds of possibility that the names of a few of the men from the Danish army, which partitioned Mercia in 877, can still be identified today? I suggest, tentatively, that their names may have been fossilized, as it were, in the first elements of some of the hybrids. If my interpretation of the latter is correct, and this now seems to have been generally accepted, their significance may be even greater than Sir Frank thought in 1940.² And so, though very tentatively indeed, I suggest that not only are Aslockton, Car Colston, and Colston Bassett, Gamston, Gonalston, and Toton, for instance, ‘manorial’ in type, but that they have also, for nearly 1,100 years, concealed the names of *Aslakr*, *Kolr*, *Gamall*, *Gunnulf*, and *Tovi*, men of the *micel here*, the extent and density of whose settlements have exercised, and will, it seems, continue in the future to exercise the academic mind.

¹ On this, see, for example, Margaret Gelling’s comments in W. F. H. Nicolaisen, Margaret Gelling, and Melville Richards, *The Names of Towns and Cities in Britain* (London, 1970), 21–2, and *The Place Names of Berkshire* (EPNS, 1, i, 1976), iii. 822–33.

² Cf. *supra*, p. 151.

The scholars, whose studies I have discussed today, are all members of the English Place-Name Society, and all, except two, are also involved in the basic work of the English Place-Name Survey. Between them they have edited twelve of the Society's volumes, and each is currently engaged in the preparation of a county survey. It was, in fact, in most cases, a direct result of work for the Survey, which led to dissatisfaction with certain older theories, and which has opened up and stimulated exciting fields of study. Great strides have already been made by this generation of place-name scholars, as a glance at the substance of my predecessor's lecture twenty years ago will show. And this is only the beginning of what is certain to be a continuing process, so that, if my successor in twenty years time is afforded the same honour, he or she will, without doubt, be able to make a comparison as great or even greater.

I began by referring to the gratitude Hugh Smith expressed, on behalf of all place-name scholars, to the British Academy, and to his comment that the Academy 'should find satisfaction in the results of the Society's youthful vigour'. I end by echoing once more his words, and at the same time claim that the Academy should take immense pride in the Society's work and publications, particularly in a year which has just seen the publication of its fiftieth volume. It can take equal pride in the outstanding work of my colleagues during the past ten years, work which it has helped to stimulate by its generous support. One scholar has referred to this as 'the new look' of English place-name studies,¹ and no one at the moment can predict where precisely it will lead. However, we can be assured that the spirit of inquiry, which inspired it, is just as strong today. Indeed, if we are to judge by the new studies, completed but not as yet published, there is little doubt that it will take us into new and perhaps even more exciting areas of research, and will certainly provide us with more than sufficient new material for a future lecture on 'The Significance of English Place-Names'.²

¹ Quoted by Margaret Gelling, 'Recent Work on English Place-names' (*The Local Historian*, 11, 1, 1974), 7.

² All the papers discussed here, with the exception of that by Kuurman and the second of Dodgson's articles, have been published as part of a collection of essays in *Place-name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements* (EPNS, 1975). Excellent bibliographies are to be found in Gillian Jensen, 'Place-name Research and Northern History: A Survey' (*Northern History*, viii, 1973), 1-23, and 'Place-names and Settlement History: A Review' (*Northern History*, forthcoming).