

Human Life And Activities Reflected In English Field-Names

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Abstract

Three or four categories of English field-names refer closely to human beings and their activities. Some allude to ownership and include a personal name (e.g., *Forman's Close* or *Old Mary's Field*), a description (e.g., *Heiress's Land* or *Grammum's Croft*) or a rank or profession (e.g., *Lord's Acre*, *Bishop's Close*, or *Bakerland*). Others honor national heroes (e.g., *Wellington* or *Nelson*) or commemorate great men who favored the name-giver's political or religious persuasion. These names are drawn from a wide repertoire and throw light on social and agricultural life in former times and on the complexity of name-giving motivation.

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Introduction

The practice of naming fields is to be found in Britain and mainland Europe, and the repertoire of names is remarkably similar across national frontiers. Field-names may be used to refer to precise locations within the village or on the farm, to direct a worker to his tasks for the day, or to locate a particular operation or event. Descriptions of estates or farms in sales catalogues and similar documents include field-names, as well as designating the pieces of land by serial numbers derived from the official Ordnance Survey maps. Given the quantity of individual fields even in a relatively small country, this multitude of names is clearly overwhelming, and manageable discussion demands categorization.

Field-names are usually two-word phrases, the second (or generic) component being a term that is usually a synonym for "field" or "piece of land": *Field*, *Ground(s)*, *Plot*, *Close* or *Tyning* 'enclosed field'; *Alotment* 'an allocation of distributed land'; and *Patch*, *Piece*, *Pightle* or *Pingle*, and *Croft*, all of which may be applied to small enclosures. With a specific term added, a two-component name serves to identify a particular field. Some generics (e.g., *Land*, *Flat*, *Ridge*, and *Ley*) have sur-

vived from the earlier agrarian economy, in which large fields were cultivated in common.

The main divisions of the unenclosed arable fields were called *Furlongs*, *Shots*, or *Flats*—all terms found among modern field-names, though currently they are usually applied to no more than a fraction of the large area for which they were originally used. *Furlong*, as an open-field unit, is identical in origin (OE *furlang* ‘the length of a furrow’) but not in sense, with the linear measure of one-eighth of a statute mile. Units in the pasture were known as *Leys*.

Ley (OE *lēah*) originally meant “a wood” but later, “a clearing or glade in a wood,” finally developing the current sense of “piece of grassland.” The term *lease* ‘pasture’ (OE *lǣs*), is sufficiently similar in both form and meaning to *Leys* for confusion to occur in the analysis of many names. *Leasow*, frequently found in the field-names of West Midland counties (Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Shropshire, and Herefordshire), is from the dative case *lǣswe* of Old English *lǣs*, so that its original sense would have been “at the pasture.”

The restricted range of names applied to the great open fields themselves included compass direction (*East Field*, *South Field*, etc.) and references to buildings and landmarks (*Church Field*, *Mill Field*, *Brook Field*, *Wood Field*) with only occasional deviations from these. Within the great fields, the furlongs were also individually named, e.g., *Little Furlong*, *Clay Furlong*, *River Shot*, *Church Furlong*, *Abovetown Furlong*.

Categories of Modern Field-Names¹

Modern enclosed fields draw upon a greater variety of names than either the open fields or their furlongs. Size designations, such as *Great Field*, *Big Close*, or *Twenty Acre Close*, occur frequently, with occasional fanciful names, such as *Handkerchief Meadow*, *Larks’ Lease*, and *Mouse Park*, together with the ironical *Hundred Acres* and even *Thousand Acres*, for very small fields.

Also very common are shape names, such as *Square Close*, *The Triangle*, or *Round Field*; fanciful names in this category include *Stocking Leg*, *Cocked Hat*, *Chopping Knife*, and *Spectacles*. Names of crops are found in *Peasehill*, *Oat Lands*, *Hemp Croft*, *Wheat Field*, and *Barley Acre*. Domestic, farm, and wild animals enter the record in such names as *Dog Kennel Close*, *Cow Close*, *Bull Piece*, *Rabbit Warren*, and *Foxhole Close*.

References may be made in the names to local topography, as in *Hill Close* or *Hollow Pasture*, or to features near the land, such as a church, a house, a road, a lake, or a plantation of young trees. Qualities of the soil, its stickiness, hardness, stoniness, or muddiness also contribute to the nomenclature, and fertility and infertility provide an entertaining assortment of complimentary and derogatory names (Field, "Compliment and Commemoration" and "Derogatory Field Names"). Other classes include allusions to agricultural operations, such as stump-clearing, paring-and-burning, or the management of "floated" water-meadows.

Remote fields may have such obvious names as *Far Close* or *Distant Meadow*, or receive a transfer, such as *Georgia Plantation* or *North and South America*. Land on the border of the parish may be called *The Rand* (from Old English *rand* 'border') or *The Reins* (derived from its Old Norse counterpart, *reinn*). Land in dispute, either between owners or between adjacent parishes, may be called *Threaplunds* or *No Man's Land*. *Gospel Close*, *Epistle Field*, and similar names mark the route of the annual "bound-beating" processions, once universal but no longer required now that accurate mapping registers the boundary lines. Folklore has generated such names as *Hobgoblin*, *Maypole Ground*, *Midsummer Leys*, and *Holywell Close*. Other names designate endowments of various kinds, such as *Chantry Piece*, *Poor Close*, *Bread Allotment*, and *Bellringer's Close*. Rent and conditions of tenure may also be alluded to, as in *Five Shilling Meadow* or *Monday Land*, the occupier of the latter being liable to work in the lord's service on Monday of each week. The locations of rural industries, such as the processing of flax or woad, charcoal-burning, or rail-making, may also be identified from field-names.

Human life and activities are obviously involved in the laborious processes of clearing tree-stumps, the removal and burning of weeds, or the preparation after harvest of economic plants, as well as in the acceptance of income, as a right or in charity, from endowed land. The human element, however, is even more explicitly represented in a class of names having at least two or three examples in a modern parish. In "ownership" names, the specifiers are the personal names (or the professional descriptions) of owners or occupiers of the land at some undetermined time in the past. Examples include *Sharps Leaze* in Melksham WLT, *Alsop's Croft* in Hartington DRB, *Martha Meadow*, *Old Masters Meadow*, *Mathews Field*, *Priest Field*, and *Little Simpson Field*, all in Adlington CHE, *Brown's Field* in Dymock GLO, and *Keepers Headland*, *Betty's*

Croft, Potters Field, Farmer's Croft, Vernon's Piece, and Wright's Croft, all in Essington STF.

Documentary Sources

Unlike some other categories, ownership is completely extrinsic to the features of the land itself, and so interpretation is possible only by identifying from documents the possible bearers of the personal names. Enclosure and tithe records provide details both of field-names and of personal names, enabling some connections between the two to be made with certainty and ease.

The piecemeal enclosing of commonly-cultivated land either for separate arable cultivation or as pasture had been going on for centuries. In many parts of England, however, the transition from an open-field agronomy to enclosed farming took place during the eighteenth century (exceptionally in the nineteenth or even the early twentieth century), either by agreement among the local landowners or more formally using the official process of parliamentary enclosure. After the passing of a private act of parliament authorizing the procedure, the reallocation of land was made under the supervision of commissioners. Much of the documentation has survived among the public records, and the awards (with their accompanying maps) can be used to trace the transfer of the names of the open fields and their constituent furlongs to some of the new enclosures. The awards often also recite the names of "ancient enclosures"—land already taken out of the common system, usually in medieval or Tudor times.

Under the open-field system, an individual tenant's holding of land was dispersed as strips in the furlongs of each of the common fields, of which there were usually two or three in a parish, though in certain areas there could be many more. The strips were not separately named, identification being in a descriptive form. One of the parson's strips in Thrusington LEI was thus described in 1700: "One land lying east and west, butting from the Church-head-land east, into little Burrowseek west; between land in the occupation of Richard Warren north, and of Hugh Warren south, both belonging to the Lord Coningsby" (adapted from Beresford, "Glebe Terriers" 115).

Cumbersome though this may have been, it was precise enough when each tenant knew by rote the location of his own and his neighbors' strip-holdings within the larger square or rectangle of the furlong. The document (known as a "terrier") recording the land occupied by one

tenant would include numerous entries in the form just quoted. The records of the land held by the vicar of the parish (the "Glebe Terriers"), dating from the sixteenth century, are a valuable source of pre-Enclosure field and furlong names. Enclosure, however, meant that the parish was divided into measured areas equivalent or proportionate to the individual's holdings in the common fields. Redistribution resulted in a patchwork of approximately rectangular and often very large plots, which could be later subdivided by the allottee. Each smaller unit then required a name (Figs. 1 and 2).

A convenient mode of designation was provided by the name of the current occupier himself, as had been customary among the medieval enclosures, e.g., *Archenbawdes lande* 1462 in Daglingworth GLO, owned in the late thirteenth century by Bartholomew Erchembald, a member of the Cirencester family of Archibald. Some of these names survived into modern times, e.g., *Wormerscroft* in Titsey SUR, the modern form of which, dating from 1538, conceals the Anglo-Saxon personal name *Wulfmaer*, more evident in the earliest spelling *Wolmescroft* 1402.

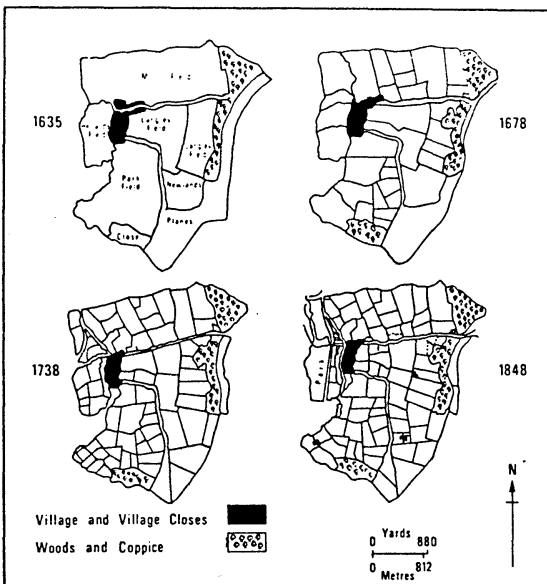


Fig. 1.
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NTP. Field-boundary
changes
through two cen-
turies.

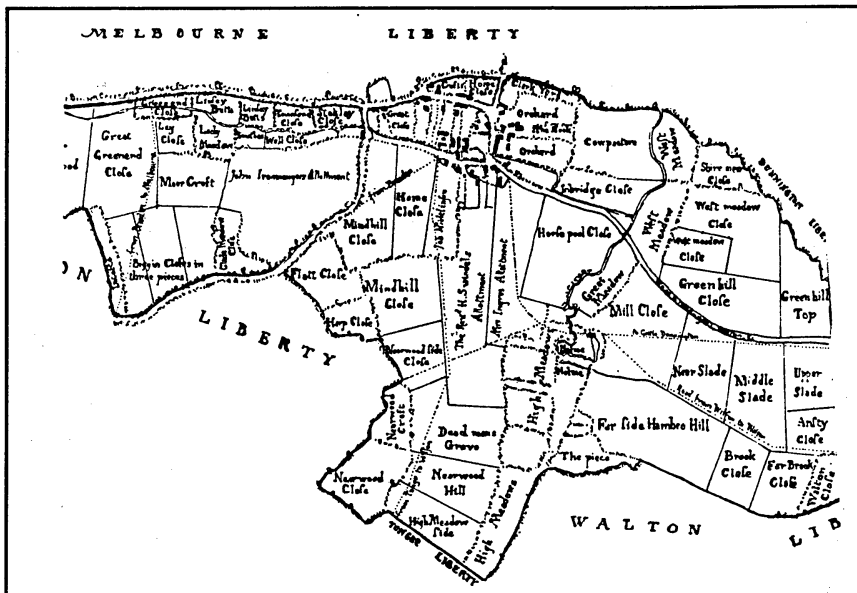


Fig. 2. Wilson LEI. Field-names just after 18th-century enclosure of this hamlet in the parish of Breendon on the Hill.

The Enclosure Award for Ampney Crucis GLO includes *Goding Ham*, traceable to *Godwynesham* 1354 ‘Godwin’s water-meadow,’ alluding to a medieval, even possibly an Anglo-Saxon, tenant, whereas *Haslets*, in the same parish, probably takes its name from a more recent occupier. *Cuddington*, in the 1815 Enclosure Award for Watlington OXF, goes back to *Cudendone* of the early thirteenth century, and means “Cuda’s hill.” In the same Award, the strange name *Peg’s Ears* can be explained by reference to medieval forms: *Pecgesheth* 1300 and *Peggeshethe* 1385-86 show that this was originally “the heath of a man called Peg,” whose name appears also among the field-names of the adjoining parish of Britwell, where *Pegeshey* ‘Pecg’s enclosure’ is recorded in 1317. *Coleman Flatt*, mentioned in the Enclosure Award for Alvaston DRB, was *Colmans flat* as early as 1237. *Darks Field* in the Award for Ashbury BRK was *Darksfyld* in 1519, pointing to tenure at or before that date by a local family called *Dark*.

Among the field-names in the 1764 Enclosure Award for Billesdon LEI are *Forman’s Close*, *Manton’s Meadow*, and *Ward’s Close*. The first was occupied at the time by William Forman, *Manton’s Meadow* by Sarah Manton, and *Ward’s Close* by William Ward. The occupier of *Near and*

Far Whitwell's Close was one Dorothy Whitwell. Two of these names have something to contribute to social mobility studies, as the places of origin of the family-names, the Rutland parishes of Whitwell and Manton, are not very far from Billesdon.

Enclosure Awards are a useful source of field-names, but far more plentiful lists are to be found in another, and usually later, class of document, Tithe Apportionments. Support for the parish priest by the payment of tithes of all agricultural produce was an obligation going back to Anglo-Saxon times. At enclosure, the tithes were usually commuted to a cash payment, a "rent charge." In very many parishes, however, payment in kind survived into the nineteenth century. The passing of the Tithe Commutation Act in 1836 permitted a general change to payment in cash. Commissioners were appointed and surveys were made of the parishes adopting the new system, each piece of land being assessed on the basis of its area and the current average price of grain. These procedures generated public documents, preserved as files of correspondence and other papers recording the evidence and decisions, culminating in apportionments and accompanying maps.

Tithe Apportionments (dating from about 1839) list in their schedules, under a uniform set of headings, the names and areas of the fields, the occupiers' and owners' names, and the state of cultivation ("arable," "pasture," etc.). Many field-names in the ownership category can be explained by reference to the names of occupiers or owners recorded in these schedules. In the Tithe Apportionment for Essington STF, dated 1839, the owner of *Green's Upper & Lower Piece* is named as Joseph Green, *Quinton's Corner* was owned by Henry Quinton, and *Vernon's Piece* by Colonel Vernon. In the same document, Robert Sheldon is given as the occupier of *Sheldon's Nook*.

However, not all the families commemorated in the Tithe Apportionment field-names were the nineteenth-century occupiers. An entry in the Biggleswade BDF Apportionment reads "Srupps Farm Homestead," but this is almost certainly an error for *Scrupps*, alluding to the family of Henry le Scrope, who died seised of land in Holme in Biggleswade in 1337. The modern name *Cobie Furlong* at Flintham NTT can be traced to *Colbenfurlang* 1333, the personal name here being the Scandinavian *Kolbeinn*.

Saxeys Ham (the generic representing OE *hamm* 'meadow') in Wool DOR embodies a surname occurring in the Subsidy Roll of 1332 as *Sexi*, but the preservation of the surname through six centuries is not in itself evidence of continuity of occupation by that family. An early

tenant of *Snooks Moor*, also in Wool, may have been William Snowk, mentioned in 1393. *Davenports Meadow* in Sturston DRB was *Dauenportcroft* in a document of the reign of Edward I, and was doubtless originally held by an ancestor of Christopher Dauenporte, mentioned in 1428. In Lambley NTT, *Stanton Close* represents *Stentons Close* in the Subsidy Roll of 1689, the Stentons being named in local documents from the sixteenth century.

For some owners or husbandmen a surviving field-name may be virtually all that they bequeath to posterity. The Vyes were once a substantial family in Arne DOR, but today they are remembered only by “a memorial stone in the parish church ... and the field name Hill Vieland” (Kerr, *Bound to the Soil* 39).

Vieland can be analyzed into the family name, compounded with *Land*, here having the sense “property in land,” rather than the frequent “strip in the furlongs of the open fields.” The qualifying term *Hill* suggests that the land had at some time been divided, the higher part being the piece named here.

Houblons Field in Westmill HRT was once owned by a Huguenot family of this name, noted in local records as living in the parish in the middle of the eighteenth century. Also in Westmill, *Lemon Field* conceals the much older personal name *Lēōfmār* or *Lēōfmann*, more clearly apparent in *Leumaresfeld* 1263 and *Lemannesfeld*, found in fourteenth-century deeds. Another name interpreted from an extraneous source was *Franderground*, in Kirkby in Ashfield NTT. This appears in White’s 1850 *Directory* as *Flander Ground*, suggesting a possible Belgian connection, either as a commemorative name, or perhaps a name suggesting remoteness, like *Flanders*, in Antrobus and in Higher Whitley CHE. It was found, however, that the land was once the property of the Fitzrandolph family, and the form of the name is explained by spellings in an eighteenth-century diary, where it is recorded as *Fitzrandolf Ground* and *F’Randolf Ground*, the contraction being evidently misread at some time as “Frاندolf.” *Heavens Platt* in Horley SUR is perhaps to be identified with *Heveresgardine* 1392, from the surname of Roger and William de Heure, from Hever in the neighboring county of Kent and occurring also in *Great* and *Little Heavers*, in Bletchingley SUR. *Ipskrit* in Holwell DOR is almost opaque until consultation of the Enclosure Award reveals it to be *Hibbs Croft* (Kerr, “Dorset Fields” 233). The generic *Croft* ‘a small piece of land, often attached to a dwelling’ undergoes numerous other changes in spoken and field-name use, becoming *Craft*, *Craught*, *Crout*, *Croat*, *Crate*, *Coat*, and even *Groats*, as in *Scotch*

Groats (for *Scott's Croft[s]*) in Eastwick HRT. *Bishop Craft* in Histon CAM embodies the surname *Bishop*, and *Petticoats* in Furneux Pelham HRT has been fancifully altered from *Petty* or *Pettit Crofts*, just as *Petticoat Lane* in Bratton WLT is possibly traceable to *Petitescroft* 1325.

Golden Staples in Great Bardfield ESX has a complimentary appearance, but early forms indicate its personal-name origin: *Goldynesstaple*, occurring in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, alludes to a post or pillar (OE *stapol*) probably a landmark, on property owned by a person with the Old English name *Goldwine*. In contrast, *Old Kettle* in Elmstead ESX seems derogatory. Cristian Ketel, however, is named in the 1319 Subsidy Roll; the bearer of this surname, derived from ON *Ketil*, would probably have been a member of an Anglo-Scandinavian family (Insley, "Addenda to the Survey" 42-43).

Occasionally, what might be taken for an allusion to a natural feature turns out to have a personal-name origin. *Myres* in Alston CMB seems to be one of the normal terms for a marshy or boggy area, but this name has a different origin, since the field had been owned by Sir John Myers, a mining speculator in this district. The converse of this is an apparent reference to ownership that is really a name from another category. *Knightleys*, at Chirton WLT, appears to point to a man or family called Knightley, but a document of 1517 has *Nightleaze* 'night pasture,' a name that can be paralleled in *Nightless* in Stamford Rivers ESX, *Nightless Field* in Capel SUR, and *Nightleys* (*Night Lease* 1650) in Cheshunt HRT.

The most frequent English surname, or its occupational counterpart, often occurs in field-names. What has been called the "primate and patriarch of our surnames, its form unchanged for 1,000 years" (Cottle 262) demands to be mentioned here. *Smiths Plot* in Wool DOR at one time belonged to the family of John Smith, named in Hearth Tax records in 1664. Many early examples allude to the craftsman, rather than to the bearer of a hereditary surname. *Smithishalfacre* c.1250 in Hassop DRB would be the patch assigned to the smith by virtue of his craft. *Smithfield* in Morton YOW is well documented (e.g., *Smythffeld* 1467 and *Smythe Feylde* 1557); the present form dates from 1643. The Berkshire field-names, *La Smytheslond* 1325 in Cholsey and *Smytheslond* 1428-9 in Steventon are further instances. Occasionally, *Smithfields* (etc.) may have originated in OE *smethe* and must be interpreted "smooth, level fields."

Some of the craft terms in field-names are not easily recognized. In Cheshire, *Heusters Croftes* 1462 (Egerton) were occupied by a *heuster*

'a dyer.' *Simmister Croft* (Pickmere) contains the Middle English occupational name *Semester* 'tailor, seamstress,' and *Quisters Hey* (Dutton) was the enclosure used by a bleacher, earlier known as a *whitester*, the strongly aspirated initial *Wh-* being represented by the *Qu-* spelling. *Sowter Butts* in Monyash DRB is from OE *sutere* 'a shoemaker.' In Wareham DOR some land recorded in 1597 as "*place called Hoopers Crosse*" was in 1393 *mess' quod Will' le ouper tenet*, i.e., "the messuage (property or premises) which William the Hooper holds," and a Peter le hoper is found in late fifteenth-century documents. These craftsmen made hoops for barrels. *Peatman Croft* (*Petmarcrofte* 1547) in Appleby WML is an early example of ModE *peatman* 'a peat-cutter,' or the surname based upon it. *Creedman's Close* in Bennington HRT was *Cribmans Close* in 1652, referring to a cowman who looked after the feeding-cribs of the cattle. *Bakerland'* 1584 in Wool DOR points to a medieval bakery. Three virgates of land were held there, according to Domesday Book (1086), by Osmund Pistor, i.e. "the baker," and in the thirteenth century Robert and his descendant William de Welle held two hides of land by service of being the king's baker.

Grammarian's Field in Brereton-cum-Smethwick CHE alludes to the schoolmaster and may have been an endowment either for his personal cultivation or to provide his salary. The more recent owner of *The Doctor's Field* in Shrewsbury was Dr. Robert Darwin, the father of the naturalist Charles Darwin, who was born in a house nearby (Foxall 65). Itinerant tinkers (*tinklers* in some dialects) were a feature of English rural life until quite recent times. Their temporary encampments would be sited on fields given such names as *Tinker's Flat* in Disley-Stanley CHE, *Little Tinklers Leasow* in Shrawardine SHR, *Tinkler Croft* in Milburn WML, or *Tinklers Leys* in Harwick OXF.

References to Feudal Society

Land occupied by men of various social degrees, from the king downwards, is duly marked by field-names. The long and well-documented history of *Great Kings Mead* in Leighton Buzzard BDF suggests a royal connection, as does *The Kinges Close*, recorded in 1610 Star Chamber documents relating to Chelmorton DRB, which was within the royal manor of the Peak. But the surname *King* is found in the *Kings Close* recorded in a document of 1332 relating to Monks Kirby WAR and associated with a certain Richard Kyng.

Shreves Close in Mundesley NFK and *Sheriff's Meadow* in Forton STF (*Shereue meadowe* 1320-60) allude to a sheriff; if not actually part of his holding, the land may have been charged with dues payable to that officer (Hoare 418). The fourteenth-century field-names of Crowton CHE include both *le Schyrreffeld* and *le Mareschaldefeld*—the latter being land assigned to the master of horse or steward. *Lords Meadow* in the Tithe Apportionment for Arborfield BRK, *Lords Close* in Kendal WML, *Lords Coppice* in Corfe Mullen DOR, and *Lords Piece* in Evington LEI allude to the lord of the manor, an office and title which outlasted the feudal system. The “lord” concerned might be a man of any rank, and not necessarily a peer, but *Lords Acre* in Barrowden RUT was owned by the Marquess of Exeter, lord of the manor of Barrowden.

Manorial and parochial officers enjoyed exemptions and perquisites of various kinds, which perhaps offset their liability to penalties when they failed to punish others for misdemeanors against the manorial customs. Field-names bearing their titles denote the pieces of land assigned to them for separate cultivation, in recompense for the performance of the duties of their office. On one Glastonbury manor a tenant in 1189 held five acres *quia bedellus est* ‘because he is the beadle,’ and in another document *Budellond* occurs as a field-name. *Beetles Mead* in Arne DOR was recorded as *Bydellismede* in 1477, but *Budelham* 1295 ‘the beadle’s meadow’ in Upton BRK did not survive to modern times.

Another manorial officer was the reeve, the estate operational manager. *A ferdel of land called Reeveland* in Bleadon SOM belonged to the reeve *ex officio*. In Great Tew OXF, its counterpart was *Reveton* 1278-9 ‘the reeve’s enclosure.’ Two plots of pasture called *Refhammes* were allotted to the Glastonbury reeve (Bennett 176). *Revemede* ‘the reeve’s meadow’ and *Revegore* ‘the reeve’s gore or wedge of land’ were found in Ramsey HNT, where the reeve was commonly free from customary duties and ate for part of the year at the lord’s table. The office of reeve, despite the material advantages wittily enumerated by Chaucer in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (A.593-612), was, like other manorial appointments, not much sought after, and in at least one place a special rent was paid by twelve virgaters, “that they may not be chosen for the reeveship” (Bennett 171).

The bailiff’s holding is remembered in *Le Bailicroft* 1310 in Spotbrough YOW. A more recent name is *Bailiffs Leasow* in Pontesbury SHR. The holders of *Tithing Mans Ground* in Islip OXF, *Tythingman’s Land* in Pimperne DOR, or *Tithingmans Acre* in Painswick GLO, were the local peace officers, who carried out duties later performed by the

police. This term has nothing to do with the payment of tithes, but is derived from *tithing*, a group of communities or parishes.

Constables Ham in Rousham and *Constables Plot* in Spelsbury are Oxfordshire references to such functionaries under a different name; in earlier periods there may in fact have been some differences in the duties. An instance in the same county, *Cunstable land* 1229 (Goring), antedates by two and a half centuries the earliest dictionary record of the term in the sense "township peace officer." In Shropshire there is a *Constable's Leasow* in Willey. Nottinghamshire examples include *Cunstable Bauk* in Treswell and *Constable Dole* in Everton. In Derbyshire there are *Constable Field* in Egginton and *Constables Piece* in Brailsford: *Cunstable Peece* in 1640. *The Constables Grass* in Whittlesey CAM was assigned in 1668 "to the constables for keeping each of them a common Bull and Boar for the use of the Inhabitants" (PN C 371). Another allotment here was *The Bellman's Grass* assigned to the bellman (the town-crier and/or watchman). This official is also referred to in *The Bellman's Swath* in Grove BRK, a *swath* being "a strip of grassland in the common meadow."

Milnewardesforlonge 1327 in Catton DRB was land allotted to the mill-ward or keeper of the manorial mill. If it was a furlong of average size (probably sublet to other tenants), it must have represented a substantial addition to the mill-keeper's income, much of which would come from the mill itself. *Haywards Hooks* (*Haiwards Hooke* 1561) in North Moreton BRK was *hookland* (i.e., land separately cultivated and not following the cropping regime of the common field) allotted to the hayward, whose duties included the care of the enclosures. There is a slight spelling variation in the modern form of *Haywoods Piece* in Kingsbury WAR which may be the allotment of William le Hayward named on the 1332 Subsidy Roll. Land called *Sulstiche* 'plough portion' was reserved at Glastonbury SOM for the manorial ploughman (Bennett 183), an equivalent name for whom occurs in *Akermans Meadow* (*Akermanmede* 1360) in Woodeaton OXF and *Akermanslande* 1538 in Cumnor BRK (from OE *æcer-mann*).

Cotman 'a cottager' is found in the thirteenth-century Sharnbrook BDF field-name *Cotmannadole* 'allotment of the cottagers,' and in *Cottney Furlong* in Southam WAR (*Cotmanfurlong* 1336). Elsewhere, *cottere* is found, as in *Cotter Lands* in Torkington CHE. In a document of the reign of Henry V there is a reference to *Lez Bondelandes* in Brougham WML, from ON *bóndi* 'unfree tenant.' The Old English term *ceorl* 'free peasant' occurs in quite early names. In Oxfordshire,

Churlgrave 'peasants' grove' in Mapledurham is recorded about 1180, and a *ceorla graf* is found in a Wheatley charter of 956. The churls seem, however, to be more frequently remembered in the field-names of the *Dead Churl* type, as in *Dead Charl Field* in Abbots Anne HMP, *Dead Shells* in Welton NTP (*Dedchurl* in the thirteenth century), *Dedecherle* in Cassington OXF, and in three separate places in Warwickshire.

Poor Ground is not always a description of the fertility of the place but often designates endowed land. The village poor were cared for by various bequests of pieces of land, the rent from which provided the necessary funds. *Poor's Piece* is frequently found, and *Poors Allotment* may imply the replacement by the Enclosure Commissioners of some plot previously endowed for the benefit of the poor. On *The Poor's Plot* in Upwey DOR the poor of the parish had a right of cutting furze for fuel (PN Do 1: 249).

Field-Name References to Women

Women owners and occupiers of land are recorded in field-names of all periods. The not uncommon *Lady Croft* occasionally alludes to the lady of the manor but is usually an endowment for the support of a chapel or church of the Blessed Virgin. *The Morrey* in Kilmarton HMP and *Mor-rif* in Foleshill WAR (*Le Moreyif* 1411) were pieces of land given by men to their brides on the day after their marriage, the name being from OE *morgen-gifu* 'morrow-gift.' The modern *Purn Croft* in Winfrith Newburgh DOR is traceable to *Purnelcroft* found in a series of records between 1392 and 1682, and probably alluding to Petronilla or Purnelle de Bosco, who granted land to Bindon Abbey in 1280. *Old Mary's Field* in Plomley CHE probably alludes to a seventeenth-century lady of the manor, Lady Mary Cholmondley. In Shrawardine SHR *Peggy's Croft* is said to be named after Margaret Punch, who died in 1695. *Jenny Garth* in Wheatley YOW was derived from *Jenny* the pet form of *Janet*; there is also a *Phyllis Croft* in the same parish.

The passage of time makes it almost impossible to identify the person referred to in *Queenborough* in Bampton OXF, first mentioned as *Queneburgheye* 1238 'Cwēnburh's island' embodying the Old English woman's name *Cwēnburh*. *Annis Wood* recorded in the Sevenhampton GLO Enclosure Award was in 1575 *Annyswoode*; the Middle English personal name *Anneis* was a variant of *Agnes*. *Clemence Field* in the Hurley BRK Tithe Apportionment goes back to *terra Clemence* 1304, which contains the Middle English female personal name *Clemence*

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(Latinized as *Clemencia* or *Clementia*). *Margarets Close* was the eighteenth-century name of *Market Close* in Billington BDF. The Margaret concerned has not been identified, which perhaps suggests the reason why the name was modified to *Market*. The women alluded to in *Old Jane Pingle* in Bakewell DRB, *Dorothy Close* in Chickerell DOR, or *Isabel Field* in Butley CHE are just as mysterious.

Names referring to the widow or dowager include *Widow Croft* in Timperley CHE, *Wydwowes Crofte* 1611 in Rainow CHE, *Widow Pingle* in Skegby NTT and in Clowne DRB, and *Widow's Allotment* in Carsington DRB. *Grammum's Croft* in Woodford CHE was earlier *Grandmother's Croft* (1766) and may be compared with *Grandmother Meadow* in Bollin Fee CHE, *Grandmother's Meadow* in Burrough on the Hill LEI, and *Grammers Croft* in Highclere HMP. To these, which indicate remnants of land set aside for the widow's benefit during her remaining years, may be added *Old Woman's Meadow* in Marple CHE, *Old Wife Ing* in Liversedge YOW, and *Old Womans Dowry* in Chapel en le Frith DRB; *Ing* in the Liversedge name means "meadow," from ON *eng*. *Heiress's Meadow* in Church Stoke SHR is a slightly different allusion.

A field at Milton Lilborne WLT is called *Little Ann*. Before shedding too many sentimental tears over orphan girls, however, we may look further into the location of this land. It adjoins a plantation called *Little Land Coppice*, and as a plantation or coppice would customarily have been named from an adjoining arable field, *Little Ann* was almost certainly earlier called *Little Land*.

Ecclesiastical Ownership of Land

Field-names often refer to religious owners or occupiers. Terms like *Bishop*, *Parson(s)*, *Monk*, and *Abbot* may be surnames as well as ecclesiastical titles, but *Bisschopishaye* 1353 'the bishop's fenced-in enclosure' in Tarvin CHE refers to the Bishop of Lichfield, lord of the manor of Tarvin. *Abbote Medowe* 1538 in Great Budworth CHE, later Abbey Field, was the property of the superior of the house of Augustinian Canons normally referred to as Norton Priory which was actually raised to abbatial rank some time during the Middle Ages (cf. PN Ch 2: 173; Butler & Given-Wilson 404). There seems, however, to be no monastic reference in *Abbot Flatt* in Staveley DRB. Local tradition has it that *Abbot* was the surname of a fishmonger ordered to repair a local bridge as a penance, though it is not explained how his name came to be

attached to the field. *Prior Close* in Whitwell DRB was held by the prior of Worksop, and *Priory* in Portland DOR by that of St. Swithun's Winchester, lords of the manor until the thirteenth century. *Priory Mead* in Arne DOR probably alludes to St. Mary's Priory in Wareham. *Monks Close* in Monks Kirby WAR is traceable to *Mounk croft* 1495, alluding to the monks of Angers, to whom the land was given in 1077. *Monukesholmes* 1236 'the monks' meadows' in Lathbury BUC, *Munkesfeld* in Newton CHE, and *Le Monekenecroft* 1387-8 in Watlington OXF also point to medieval monastic ownership. *Chance Hays* in Huntington STF is not from the surname *Chance* but was earlier *Channon Heys* 1575, *Chanance Heys* 1578, *le Chanons Hey* 1598, pointing to its having been held by canons. *Minson Meadow* in Cookham BRK was *Munechenelese* 1294 'the meadow of the nuns.'

The parochial, non-monastic clergy are also remembered in field-names. Caversfield OXF has both *Parsons Ground* and *The Vicars Piece*. *Le Prestysbrade* 'the broad piece of land held by the priest' was recorded in Holme BDF in 1426. Names like *Parson's Pightle* and *Parson's Close* in Tingrith BDF, *Parson's Close* in Leighton Buzzard BDF, and *Parsons Meadow* in Banbury OXF normally refer to the glebe land, held by the parish priest as part of his benefice. An unusual reference is found in *Cherchewardesheyte* 1396-7 'church-warden's island' in Abingdon BRK (Abingdon is on the Thames). In South Luffenham RUT the parish clerk was allotted a piece of land in for ringing the church bell at 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. daily from Michaelmas to Lady Day. This bequest of *Bell-ringing Close* was said to have been made by a lady traveller who was guided to the village by the sound of the church bells.

Commemorative Names

Some field-names refer to participants in events on the land. The author of *Pilgrim's Progress* is said to have preached on *Bunyan's Close* in St. Paul's Walden HRT. On a piece of land now called *Monmouth's Field* in Woodlands DOR once grew the ash tree in which the Duke of Monmouth was found hiding after the Battle of Sedgmoor in 1685. Other fields are named after people having no direct connection with the land, or often even with the parish or locality. It would be interesting to know why in the township of Elwick Hall DUR (Fig. 3) there are fields called *Wellington*, *Duke*, *Blucher*, *Donkin*, and *Nelson*. What was it that impelled the farmers to rename the fields, presumably at some time after 1815, in honor of military and naval leaders prominent in the war against

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Napoleon? Donkin, moreover, seems to have been not particularly glorious on the battlefield and was a Whitehall-based staff officer at the time of Waterloo.

For commemorative naming taken to an extreme degree, however, the focus must be shifted to the opposite end of the country. It was Barbara Kerr ("Dorset Fields" 233) who first drew attention to the wealth of commemorative names in Halstock and in Corscombe on the estate of Thomas Hollis. This eighteenth-century English republican admired and sought to honor the Commonwealth leaders in the preceding century. Among his fields in Halstock are to be found names such as *Lilburne Mead*, *Pym Mead*, *Hambden Mead* (for *Hampden*-), *Prynne*, and *Bastwick*, together with others referring to political theorists and moral philosophers, legislators, and tyrannicides, including *Brutus*, *Cassius*, *Plato*, *Xenophon*, *Socrates*, *Solon*, *Harmodius*, and even *Confusius* [sic]. (See Figs. 4 and 5.) Oliver Cromwell is not included, but Thomas Cromwell (Henry VIII's Vicar-General) receives a mention in a field-name in the neighboring parish of Corscombe, in which the remainder of Hollis's property was situated. Here he commemorated religious reformers,

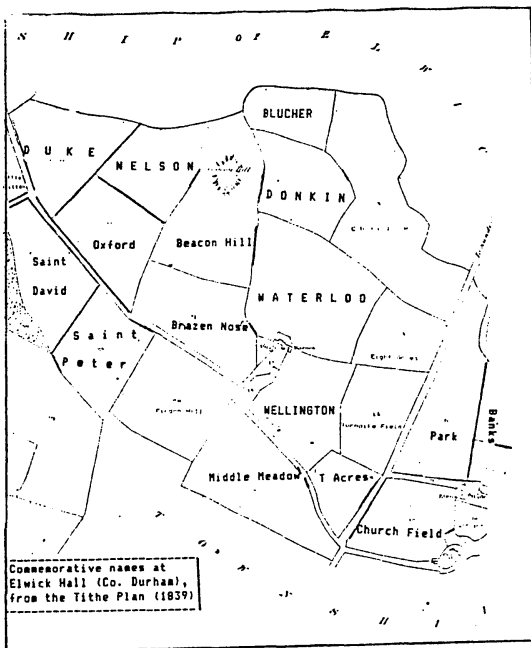


Fig. 3. Elwick Hall DUR. Commemorative field-names (Napoleon War Heroes).

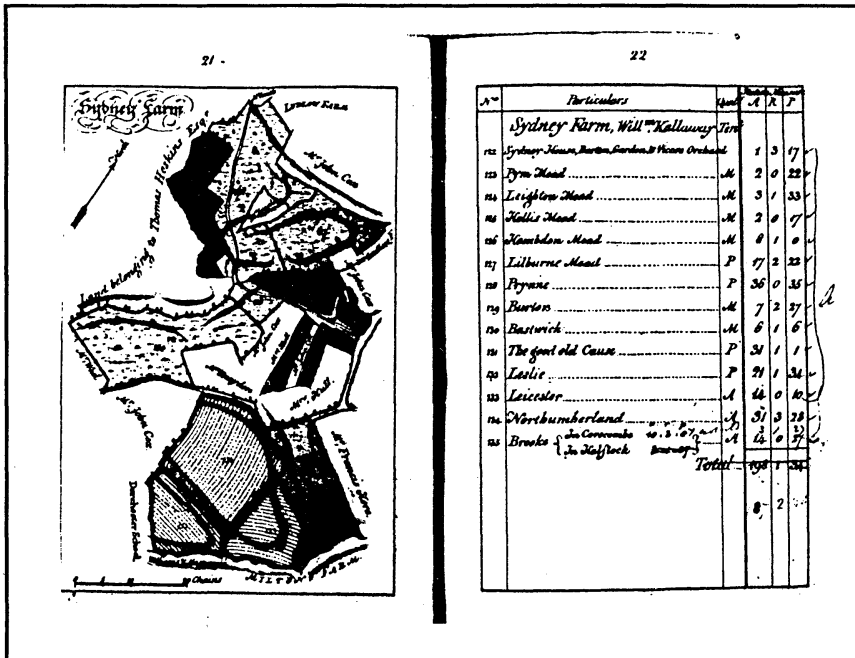


Fig. 4. Halstock DOR. Map and schedule of the field-names of Sydney Farm (Commonwealth leaders).

giving his fields such names as *Henry Eighth*, *Edward the Sixth*, *Luther*, *Calvin*, and *Knox*.

Conclusion

Like other placenames, field-names of all categories provide valuable evidence for the historian of language; and their variant spellings, closely associated with spoken forms, have much to offer to the student of dialect. Field-name references to personal names and human activities are demonstrably of some antiquity, and their exploration may be seen to broaden the horizons of the study. As in many other spheres, there is much of value beneath superficial ordinariness, and the identification of people and the social and agrarian systems alluded to in these field-names may provide or elucidate useful material for social, economic, and agricultural history.

Uppingham, Rutland (Leicestershire), England

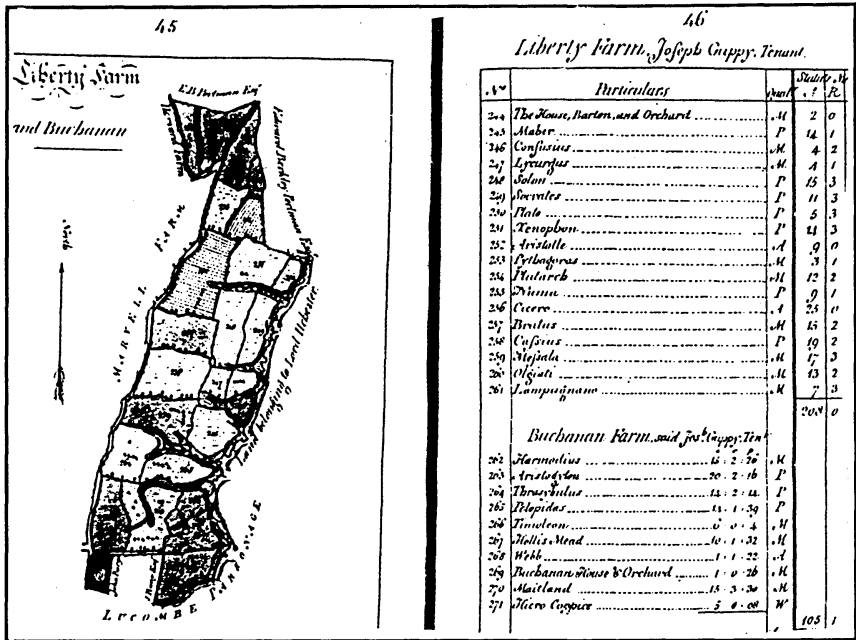


Fig. 5. Halstock DOR. Map and schedule of the field-names of Liberty Farm (Greek and other philosophers and tyrannicides).

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Dr. James Yelling and to Macmillan Press Ltd. for permission to reproduce Fig. 1. Fig. 2 is from a map by John Glover based on an original in Leicestershire Record Office. Fig. 3 is redrawn from the Tithe Plan of Elwick Hall, preserved in the Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic in the University of Durham. Figs. 4 and 5 are from the Records of the Corscombe and Halstock Estates, deposited by the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society in the Dorset Record Office, and are from microfilms kindly supplied by the County Archivist.

Note

1. All names listed are or were used of fields in England. Unless other sources are specifically stated, Shropshire names are from Foxall; Norfolk, from Hoare; East Riding of Yorkshire, from an unpublished collection in the Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull; and Leicestershire and Rutland names, from my own collections. Most other field-name examples are from the publications of the English Place-Name Society, references to the volumes of which are abbreviated to PN, followed by an EPNS county symbol (PN C, PN Ch, PN Do, PN O = *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire, -of Cheshire, -of Dorset, -of Oxfordshire*). Elsewhere in the text the following contractions recommended by the

Council for Name Studies are used for the names of counties, which are those that existed before the 1974 reorganization.

BDF: Bedfordshire	LIN: Lincolnshire
BUC: Buckinghamshire	LNC: Lancashire
CAM: Cambridgeshire	NTP: Northamptonshire
CHE: Cheshire	NTT: Nottinghamshire
CMB: Cumberland	OXF: Oxfordshire
DOR: Dorset	RUT: Rutland
DRB: Derbyshire	SHR: Shropshire
ESX: Essex	STF: Staffordshire
GLO: Gloucestershire	WAR: Warwickshire
HMP: Hampshire	WLT: Wiltshire
HNT: Huntingdonshire	WML: Westmorland
HRT: Hertfordshire	YOE: East Riding of Yorkshire
LEI: Leicestershire	YOW: West Riding of Yorkshire
OE: Old English; ON: Old Norse; ModE: Modern English	

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