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Old Norse-Old English Interactions in Medieval Lancastrian Place-Names

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Abstract

This paper presents the analysis of a corpus of place-names, assessing the patterns and impact of Old Norse–Old English (ON-OE) language contact in medieval Lancashire. It argues that Lancashire proves to be a particularly dense area for ON onomastic evidence. However, it does not appear to follow the general patterns of ON–OE interactions established in other areas of Scandinavian settlement in England. Instead, these linguistic interactions may be better understood within the regional context of Irish sea mobility, multilingual speakers, and mixed communities.

Keywords: toponomy, topography, lingusitic analysis, environmental analysis, Old Norse, Old English, regionality

Introduction

Scholars have long debated the extent of linguistic transparency between Old Norse (ON) and Old English (OE) speakers in the Early Medieval period and the impact of prolonged language contact on the development of English. This paper analyses a corpus of place-names, assessing the patterns and impact of ON–OE language contact in medieval Lancashire. Place-names evolve in the conversations of ordinary people as they refer to familiar places and therefore provide valuable insights into the places and features that were recognisable and important in the medieval mind (Carroll 2020). Just as place-names can be seen as a repository for traditional ecological knowledge and amplifying the subtleties of medieval topography (Jones 2013; Cullen, Jones, & Parsons 2011; Gelling & Cole 2000), their structure and preservation of linguistic elements provide vital evidence for the various languages present in medieval Britain that have since become obsolete. Lancashire proves to be a particularly dense area for ON onomastic evidence. However, it does not appear to follow the general patterns of ON–OE interactions established in other areas of Scandinavian settlement in England. Instead, these linguistic interactions may be better understood in the wider context of Irish sea mobility, multilingual speakers, and mixed communities.

The settlement of Norse speakers in England during the Early Medieval period places two languages which are closely related and somewhat mutually intelligible in prolonged proximity to one another. This contact resulted in a considerable influence on OE and its development into Middle English (Dance, Pons-Sanz, & Schorn 2019; Hansen 1984; Geipel 1971). The extent of linguistic material transferred from Norse to English during this period goes beyond commonplace "need-based" borrowing of words for new concepts (Dance 2004, 2012), and the volume of everyday language with Norse origin provides evidence for the frequent nature of interactions between the two languages in the Early Medieval period (Durkin 2014; 2020).

Moreover, Norse use in England continued beyond the Norman invasion. Matthew Townsend (2000) suggests that Early Medieval England had become a bilingual society in which both ON and OE flourished and that the long-term settlements of the Scandinavians led to a new generation of language speakers—born in England to Scandinavian or mixed parentage. This created the potential for bilingualism to progress beyond simply a societal level—that is, the acceptance of two different languages as the native tongue of monolingual speakers—and expand to reach a personal level, where second-generation Scandinavian settlers could have feasibly grown up with some degree of fluency in both ON and OE. Evidence survives for the continued use of Norse until *ca*. 1100 in the North West of England and at least until 1066 in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (Jesch 2015; Parsons 2001). Graffiti, dated to the early twelfth century, on the wall of Carlisle Cathedral reads **tolfin : urait þasi runr a þisi stain** 'Dolfinn carved these runes on this stone' (Page 1995, 189), and the continued relations with the Norse-speaking Kingdom of Man and the Isles may have prolonged the influence of ON in parts of Lancashire (Edmonds 2019). These instances indicate the survival of Norse in the North West well beyond the period of initial settlement or even second-generation speakers.

Overall, the largescale influence of ON on the development of English place-names and the English language has three key implications for the study of early medieval Lancashire. Firstly, ON and OE share various linguistic similarities, allowing for some degree of mutual intelligibility between the two languages. Secondly, the bulk of the language contact between ON and OE took place in an environment where both languages possessed similar status and communicative relevance. Finally, Norse remained relevant and continued to be

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used well beyond the initial period of settlement or second-generation speakers, and epigraphical evidence suggests its active use and survival in North West England extends beyond the Norman Conquest (Jesch 2025). This creates the possibility for a dual level of multilingualism where, initially, both languages were accepted within monolingual groups and, by the time of second-generation speakers, some individuals were speaking both OE and ON natively.

Methodology

This study collected data for 242 place-names in the historic county of Lancashire, taken from the Lancashire Map in the *Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* (Humphrey-Smith 2002, 19). This number, however, is a gross figure which was later refined as follows. Wherever possible, direct replications of names have been omitted, but repeat names that differ by at least one element (e.g., *Cartmel* and *Cartmel Fell*, *Poulton le fylde* and *Poulton le sands*) were included as separate entries. An upper chronological limit of *ca.* 1350 was implemented, to allow for the delay in the recording of earlier place-names (Fellows-Jensen 1972) and for the continuation of language development and interactions beyond an initial point of contact, while remaining safely within the medieval period (Fellows-Jensen 1999, 1985, 1978). This upper limit reduced the initial 242 names to a corpus of 194 place-names from which this statistical and linguistic analysis is conducted. All etymologies discussed are taken from Mills' Oxford Dictionary of British Place Names (2011), unless stated otherwise, and the full corpus of names and etymologies used can be provided on request.[1]

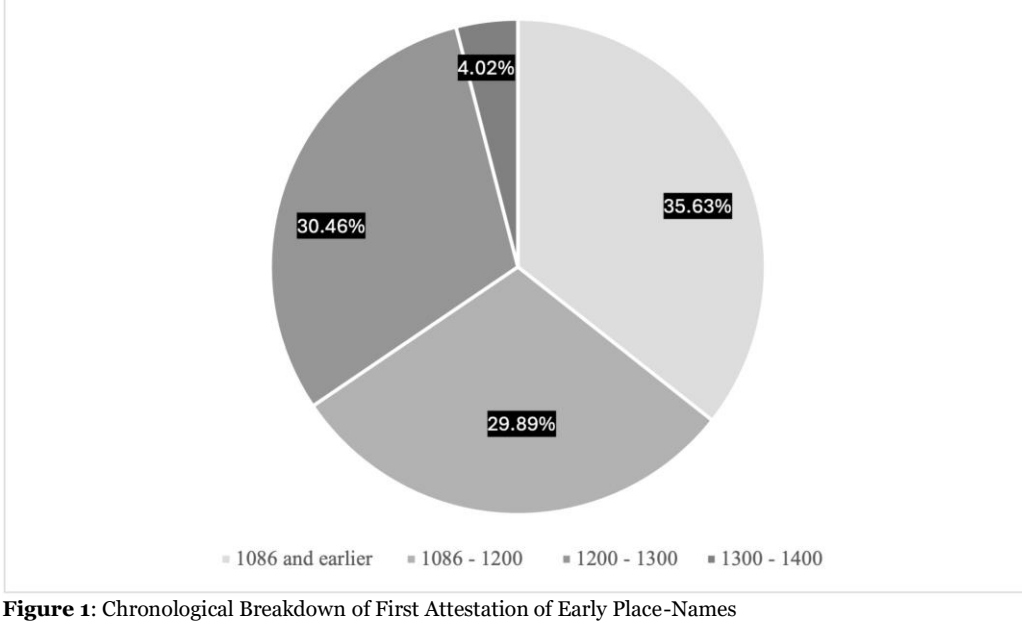

Figure 1: Chronological Breakdown of First Attestation of Early Place-Names

Findings

Most of the place-names in the corpus are, unsurprisingly, OE in origin and thus only evidence OE naming elements. There are seventeen simplex names: *Chipping*, *Lytham*, *Melling* (x2), *Pilling*, *Billinge*, *Birch*, *Bootle*, *Bury*, *Croft*, *Deane*, *Downham*, *Hale*, *Hey*, *Hoole*, *Leigh*, and *Lever*. Most of the OE names in the corpus are compound names, comprising two meaningful naming elements, such as *Gressingham* from **gærsing** 'grazing pasture' + **hām** 'homestead'/**hamm** 'enclosure', or an OE personal name with an OE generic element, such as *Atherton* from **Æthelhere** + **tūn** 'farmstead' or *Todmorden* from **Totta** + **mære denu** 'boundary valley'. As expected, these two meaningful elements are most often a specific and generic pair, that is, a less frequently occurring term which is specific to this place-name paired with a general term such as

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'village' or 'river' which frequently occurs in place-names. This common structure of toponymic coining follows the same grammatical patterns of modern English, seen most clearly by adjective + noun phrases. Overall, the corpus provides evidence for 246 OE elements found in standard compounds, and a further nine elements used as fillers between two elements. However, of the 131 instances of an OE generic element, only thirty-three different terms are used, nineteen of which occur only once. Figure 2 breaks down the frequency of OE generics.

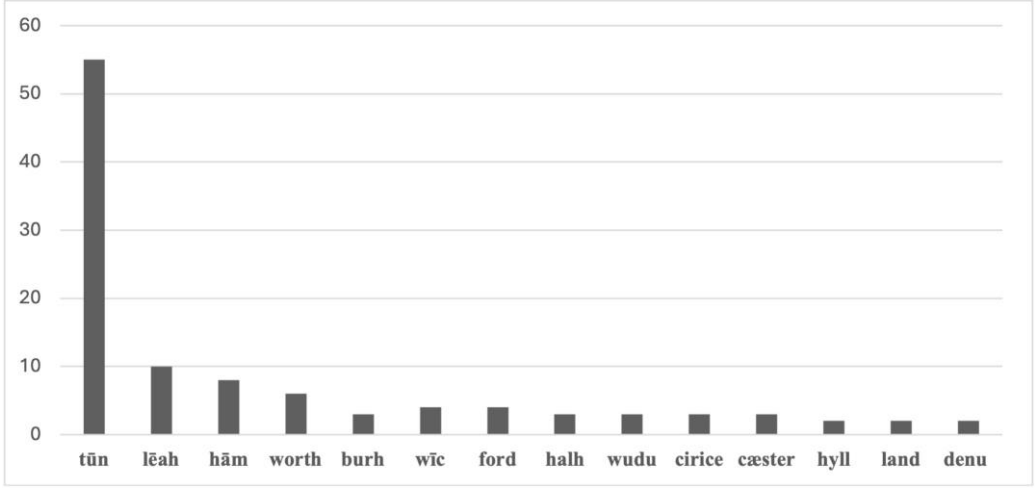

Figure 2: Frequency of Reoccurring Old English Generics

The most frequently used OE generic in the corpus is **tūn** 'farmstead', a habitative term. Of the remaining generics, seven are topographic terms: **denu** 'valley', **hyll** 'hill', **wudu** 'wood', **halh** 'nook of land', **ford** 'water crossing', **land** 'estate', and **lēah** 'woodland clearing'. The other seven are habitative terms: **cæster** 'roman fort', **cirice** 'church', **hām** 'homestead', **hamm** 'enclosure', **wīc** 'dwelling or dairy farm', **burh** 'fort', and **worth** 'enclosure'. Consequently, in the more common naming patterns of OE in Lancashire, there is no real prominence or preference for noticeable manmade settlement features or natural features over the other in terms of terminology type distribution. Overall, the overwhelming linguistic evidence of OE across the corpus is wholly unsurprising, and something to be anticipated in place-name analyses of counties throughout England.

ON elements also feature heavily in Lancashire place-names, with prominent clusters of Norse place-names in the north and frequent Norse compound names towards the south of the county. Despite the general compatibility between medieval English and Scandinavian onomastics (Kisbye 1991), the extent of Scandinavian influence is not consistent across the areas known to have been settled by Norse speakers in England. Lancashire, however, proves to be a particularly dense area for ON onomastic evidence. Fifty names indicate some degree of Scandinavian influence. ON elements appear sixty-seven times across the corpus, and forty-one different ON terms are featured. This large record of ON influence could reflect a particularly active area of Scandinavian settlements within England, a reading supported by the coastal clustering in the distribution of Old Norse names in Lancashire (tigure 3, interactive map can be accessed using link provided).[2] In the corpus, there are four simplex names: *Arkholme* 'place at the hill pastures' from ON **erg** in the dative form *ergum*, *Holme* and *Hulme* 'dry ground or island in a marshy area' from ON **holmr**, and *Meols* 'the sandhills' from ON **melr.** But much like OE, the majority of the ON elements in the corpus are recorded in compound names. However, there is slightly more variation in ON than OE, as from the thirty-one instances of ON generic elements, eighteen different terms are used. More noticeably, there is considerable overlap between the meanings of these elements across the two languages (table 1).

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Figure 3: Distribution Map of Old Norse Names in Lancashire Showing ON (Stars), ON-OE (Hearts), ON-Old Irish (Big Squares), ON-Brittonic (Diamonds), and ON Affixes (Small Squares)

Map Source: Map data © 2026 Google

Table 1: Old Norse and Old English Semantic Similarities

Old Norse Generic	Meaning	Old English Generic
by	village or homestead	**tūn**
dalr	valley	**denu**
erg	sheiling, hill pasture	**x**
hlíth	slope	**hlith**
hol	hollow	**holh**
holmr; ey	island	x
kirkja	church	**cirice**
kjarr	marsh	x
melr	sandbank	x
sætr	mountain pasture	x
skeith	boundary	**mære**
skógr; viðr	forest, wood	**sceagaæ; wudu**
stǫng	post	x
stǫth	landing place	x
vík	creek, river bend	**stæl; pōl; burna**
þveit	clearing	**lēah; rodu**

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While several Norse generics do not appear to have any direct semantic parallels, there is a noticeable commonality between most of these generic elements. This recorded overlap in terminology supports the idea that place-names in both languages naturally developed as descriptive labels for the Lancastrian landscape. This is reinforced by the presence of ON **þveit** (*Finsthwaite*, *Satterthwaite*, and *Seathwaite*) alongside OE **lēah** and **rodu**, as 'woodland clearing' generics are considered one of the best indications of areas newly settled by the medieval Scandinavians, and have been interpreted as an indication of the active removal of the ancient woodlands in Lancashire for purposes of new settlements (Fellows-Jensen 1991). Alhough this link between topographic terminology and who is actively creating these clearings cannot be directly proven, the correlation between language use and environment is particularly notable in Lancashire. As Hooke (2010) shows, Lancashire is not a particularly dense area of woodland in the Early Medieval period. However, Rackham's (1995, 47) map of terminology associated with woodland clearances illustrates an intense clustering of **þveit** names, especially in northern Lancashire. This unusual combination of a relatively dense clustering of ON clearing terminology in an area with a comparative lack of woodland emphasises the unusual extent of ON onomastic influence in the county, particularly throughout its ecological place-names.

The use of specialised ON topographic terminology on par with, or indeed exceeding, the specialised use of OE landscape generics reinforces the idea of linguistic equality between the two languages and speech communities in this area. Moreover, the cognates OE **hliþ** found in *Lytham* and ON **hlíð** recorded in *Kellet* provide further evidence for similar topographical terminology used in the descriptive place-naming of both languages. Though there is still some uncertainty in distinguishing between cognate terms, Mills (2011) suggests the differing element(s) and language origin of these two names with relative confidence. Finding both terms within the area rather than just one suggests that communities of OE and ON speakers successfully coexisted and lived alongside one another to some extent. At very least, this evidence indicates that cognate OE words were not always automatically Scandinavianized by the new settlers and/or Norse words were not automatically anglicised during shifting power dynamics. This paper does not suggest that there are no instances of Scandinavianization in the place-names of Lancashire. There appears to be some changes in *Kirkham*—attested as *Chicheham* in the *Domesday Book*, but *Kyrkham* by 1094. Here, OE **circe** is replaced by ON **kirkja,** although this is potentially for ease of articulation due to the lack of the /ʧ/ phoneme in ON at that time, rather than any lack of lexical understanding. On the contrary, lexical understanding of pre-existing name elements makes it more likely for original elements, such as **circe**, to be retained and Scandinavianised rather than replaced entirely (Haugen 1976).

This interactive relationship between Lancashire's physical environment and ON topographic terminology is reinforced by other patterns of linguistic regionality established across the corpus. Scholarship already acknowledges the prominence of certain topographic elements, with Clark (1992) and Fellows-Jensen (1985) noting the prominence of **gil**, **fell**, and **þveit** in North West England under the predomination of Norwegian settlers. Two of these terms appear in the Lancashire corpus: **þveit**, as mentioned previously, is evidenced by *Finsthwaite*, *Satterthwaite*, and *Seathwaite* while **fell** appears in the affix of *Cartmel Fell* (ON ***kartr** 'rough stony ground' + **melr** 'sandbank' + **fjall** 'mountain') and *Tatham Fell* (OE personal name **Tata** + OE **hām** + ON **fjall**). Beyond these previously noted patterns, four elements appear localised to the place-names of Lancashire: ***kartr** (as above), **geirr** 'spear' (*Garstang*), **lauf** 'leaf' (*Lowick*), and **torf** 'turf roof' (*Torver*). A further four terms mostly occur in the North Western counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Cumberland, and Westmorland: **erg** 'shieling/hill pasture' (*Torver*, *Goosnargh*, *Arkholme*), **melr** 'sandbank' (*Cartmel*, *Cartmel Fell*, *North Meols*), **stǫng** 'post' (*Garstang*), and **sætr** 'mountain pasture' (*Hawkshead*). The Norse element **erg** has been strongly associated with Norwegian settlers in the North West, with the term often introduced from Old Irish or Gaelic (Smith 1956). Two more terms only tend to occur in northern counties: **sef** 'sedge or rushes' (*Seathwaite*, *Sefton*) and **hestr** 'horse' (*Hesketh*). Finally, while **dalr** 'valley' can be found in many places, there appears to be some clustering and concentration of this place-name element in North West England, as evidenced by *Skelmersdale*, *Rochdale*, and *Over Wyresdale*. This relative abundance of regionalised ON terminology in North West England, paired with the sheer variety of landscape elements, stresses the presence and depth of Norse language use in early medieval Lancashire, alongside the potentially unique linguistic environment that arose from it.

This distinct environment, however, is not constrained to topographic terminology. Fekete (2015) argues that names comprising a Norse personal-name and Norse generic are the most frequent types of Scandinavian place-names in Britain. However, this pattern does not appear to hold in Lancashire, which again indicates a different linguistic environment. From the forty-five names with ON elements, only seven could potentially fit this pattern: *Toxteth*, *Skelmersdale*, *Ormskirk*, *Formby*, *Hornby*, *Hawkshead*, and *Finsthwaite*. Even from these seven, two remain ambiguous. While *Formby* and *Hornby* could fit, Mills (2011) makes it clear that their generics may instead be ON **forn** 'old' and **horn** 'horn' respectively, rather than personal names. Overall in the Lancashire corpus, Norse personal names only account for 24.39% of the various types of different compound elements (figure 3), rather than the more frequent topographic elements (53.66%), and often appear in compounds with OE generic elements as well as ON.

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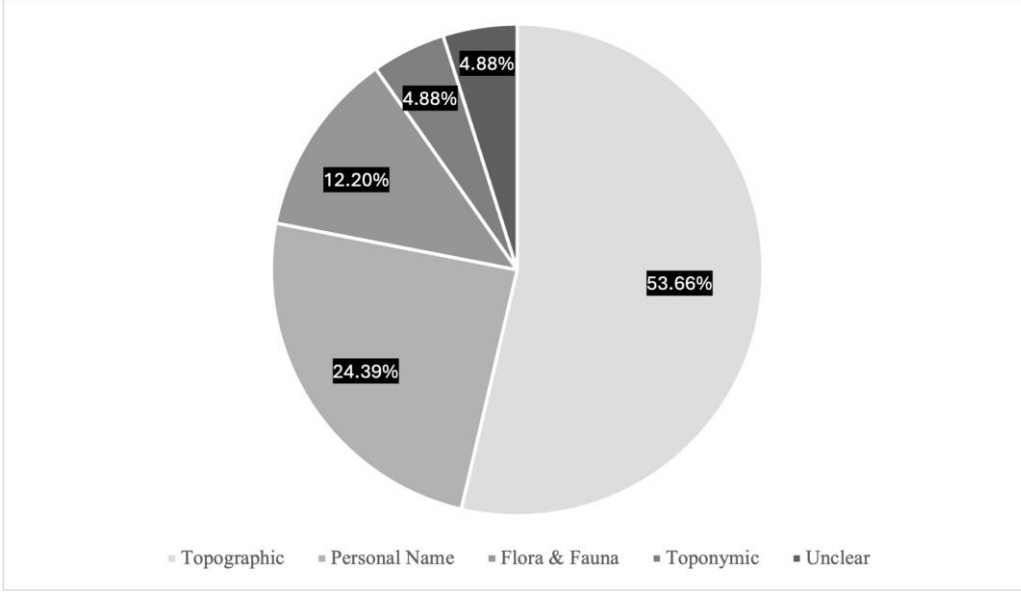

Figure 4: Categories of Old Norse Name Elements

It is these hybrid names which, despite their lesser frequency, are of greater value when examining the potential impact of multilingualism. They can be split into two categories: topographic hybrids such as *Stalmine* (OE **stæll** 'stream or pool' + ON **mynni** 'mouth'), *Burscough* (OE **burh** 'fortification' + ON **skógr** 'wood'), *Croxteth* (OE **crōc** 'bend' + ON **stǫð** 'landing place'), *Rochdale* (OE river name **Recedham** + ON **dalr** 'valley'), *Sefton* (ON **sef** 'rushes' + OE **tūn**) and Toton hybrids consisting of ON personal names with the OE generic **tūn**, such as *Caton* (ON **Káti**), *Ulverston* (ON **Ulfarr**), *Flixton* (ON **Flík**), *Tarleton* (ON **Þaraldr,** variant form of **Þórvaldr**), and *Turton* (ON **Þórir** or **Þórr**). These hybrids traditionally have been interpreted in the following ways:

> (1) These settlements have undergone a change in ownership, and a previously medieval English settlement has been taken over by Scandinavian settlers and their names altered (Fellows-Jensen 1981).
>
> (2) These settlements reflect a naturally occurring place-name (Fekete 2015), and evidence settlements with a mixed population of OE and ON speakers.
>
> (3) These hybrid names, though using elements originating from two different languages, should be interpreted as a monolingual descriptor using a borrowed place-name element (Gammeltoft 2007) but not necessarily reflecting any maintained language contact between the two name-forming languages.

As noted above, the corpus does not reflect any consistent pattern of OE name elements being Scandinavianized, and therefore Fellows-Jensen's argument of changing ownership and name-element replacement seems unlikely. However, any combination of these explanations may prove true, including a blend of interpretations two and three, which could explain the commonplace formation of Toton hybrid names. Toton hybrids appear to borrow the OE **tūn** in the development of new names, however this generic is clearly understandable to ON speakers due to their cognate word **tún** (Gregory 2017). Therefore, much like the retention and Scandinavianization of OE **circe,** when the name clearly retains understanding and lexical meaning to speakers of both languages, perhaps it makes more sense to use the more commonplace Old English generic. Consequently, these names could reflect either (or both) a mixed community of combined Norse and English speakers, or a sole coining by Norse speakers adapting to the patterns of onomastic coining already found in their new areas of settlement. However, this potential linguistic borrowing does not just happen in one direction, and Jayne Carroll suggests that though the variety and frequency of Scandinavian vocabulary in place-names could not have transpired without large numbers of ON speakers, "not all of the names were necessarily given by Scandinavian speakers" (2020, 97). Consequently, there appears to be a strong argument for

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linguistic borrowings between ON and OE, leading to naturally-occurring place-names using both languages, though having the potential to be coined by either groups of speakers or a mixture of both. This difficulty in identifying what is a purely Scandinavian settlement and what is an Anglo-Scandinavian settlement is emphasised by Richards, who states that no place-names are "clearly 'Scandinavian' or "Viking'; one cannot identify Scandinavian settlement. On the other hand, all of them may be defined as Anglo-Scandinavian, representing a new grouping created through the interaction and maintained contact of both cultures" (2020, 306). This interpretation is supported by several archaeological studies which suggest that arguments for the long-term presence of separate Scandinavian communities only explore certain parts of available evidence, while ignoring contradictory evidence, such as burial artifacts, which overwhelmingly support mixed Anglo-Scandinavian societies (Hadley 2020; Edwards 1998; Graham-Campbell 1992).

Linguistic co-coining, rather than monolingual element borrowing, is more clearly emphasised through the topographic ON-OE hybrids. Coates (2006, 340) suggests that the "most-ancient layer of English place-names appears to consist mainly of names which are simply descriptive of the place-named, either its physical aspect or its ownership or tenure", a pattern which all of these hybrid names seem to follow. The older the name, the more likely that the ON elements were given by native ON speakers. Linguistic borrowing of terminology would have been less common at the start of language interaction and the development of multilingualism in the North West in comparison to later periods. These hybrids offer no clear set pattern of formation beyond the standard two-element compound formation, and so indicate instances of genuine dual-language use and onomastic coining. The most notable example of this can be seen in *Stalmine*, in which the specific element ON **mynni** follows the generic element OE **stæll**, a structural inversion which is acknowledged as a characteristic feature of Anglo-West Scandinavian place-naming (Coates 2006). This name not only emphasises the linguistic interaction between Norse and English in this part of the country, but also indicates prominence of West-Scandinavian settlers and the connection between medieval Lancashire and the wider Irish sea region. The corpus emphasises this connection through several names. One name is formed entirely of Old Irish (*Douglas* from **dub** 'black + **glaís** 'stream') while there are two Old Norse-Old Irish hybrid names *Goosnargh* (Old Irish personal name **Gussan** + ON **erg** 'shieling or hill pasture') and *Becconshall* (Old Irish personal name **Becan** + ON **haugr** 'burial mound') and the Old Norse word for Irish in *Ireleth* (ON **Írar** 'irish' + ON **hlíð** 'slope'). These names provide strong evidence for Old Norse and Old Irish contact (Higham 1978), as well as the movement of Scandinavian settlers across the Irish sea towards the North West coast of England. There could also be evidence of direct links and linguistic influence from the Isle of Man as *Douglas*—the name of the island's capital—is transferred to Lancashire.

In all cases of place-name hybridization, whether these reflect the adoption of OE generics into ON name coining or linguistic contact and multi-lingual formation, these name combinations and potential substitutions between two languages (such as **tūn** for **tún**) emphasise some degree of linguistic intelligibility and mixing. For these dual language place-names to emerge there must be some possession of linguistic competence in both English and Norse for the various groups and peoples of medieval Lancashire (Dance 2012; Townsend 2002).

This linguistic competence and transparency is somewhat stressed by the similarities in the interactions between ON and OE with the pre-existing Brittonic name elements. ON-Brittonic compounds appear to follow the same structural patterns as OE-Brittonic compounds, both consisting of names where the specific element is a Brittonic topographic name and the generic element is an ON/OE term. Here, I use the term compound, rather than hybrid, to highlight the temporal difference between the two name elements joined together and the lack of reasonable, genuine interaction between the languages evidenced. Both *Altcar* (Brittonic **alt** 'muddy river' + ON **kjarr** 'marsh') and *Wyresdale* (Brittonic **wyre** with genitive 's' + 'flowing river' ON **dalr** 'valley') feature river names as their specific elements, paralleling the OE counterparts. However, while the OE names tend to favor toponymic terms as their generics, all ON-Brittonic compounds feature topographic terms as their generic element. The consistent use of natural features in these compounds emphasises the descriptive nature of these names, and reinforces the argument for the creation of new Norse-speaking settlement communities. While both ON and OE are used to form compound names with Brittonic name elements, there does not seem to be any understanding of their lexical meaning, as highlighted through *Breedon-on-the-hill* (Brittonic **bre** 'hill' + OE **dūn** 'hill') and, from Lancashire, *Pendle Hill* (Brittonic **pen** 'hill' + OE **hyll** 'hill'). In instances such as these, the meaning of the older, established Brittonic elements appear to have become opaque for the later OE and ON speakers (Clark 1992), resulting in these apparent tautologies. The parallels between OE and ON interactions with Brittonic language elements emphasise the structural and linguistic similarities of the two Germanic languages and, in contrast, the shared opacity of Brittonic names for Germanic speakers. The loss of semantic transparency in these Germanic-Brittonic compound names, and indeed any Brittonic name later modified for clarity, reiterates the unique linguistic relationship reflected in ON-OE hybrid names, where—despite the use of two languages—the descriptive nature and lexical meaning underpinning the place-names remains clear and understandable.

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This pattern of lexical opacity between name elements, and the unique transparency between ON and OE, is further emphasised in the limited onomastic influence of the Anglo-Normans. Across the country the Anglo-Norman contribution to English place-names is comparatively sparse, and largely relegated to administrative affixes rather than any natural linguistic interactions between French and OE (Jones 2012). This restricted influence is reflected in the Lancashire corpus, as only seven place-names (3.61%) reflect any Anglo-Norman linguistic elements, and all of these depict later administrative additions rather than core name elements. *Whittle-le-woods*, *Walton le Dale*, *Poulton le Fylde*, *Poulton le Sands*, and *Bolton le Moors* all feature the French definite article **le** 'on the/at the' in their affixes, while *Chorlton cum Hardy* contains the Latin preposition **cum** 'with'. Finally, the early attested form of *Little Lever*, *Parua Lever, ca.* 1212, uses the Latin form *parva* 'little'.

Though the social inequality between OE and Anglo-Norman speakers has been widely established (Skaffari 2002) alongside the smaller presence of Anglo-Norman speakers, perhaps the lack of linguistic transparency between the languages also contributes to the limited onomastic influence. Where the mutual intelligibility between ON and OE leads to the productive co-coining of place-names in areas of multilingualism, perhaps the largescale absence of linguistic understanding between OE and Anglo-Norman speakers further limited the value, relevance, and thus overall use, of Anglo-Norman naming elements for the general English population. This linguistic split thus strengthens the social divide. Overall, the multilingual place-names of early medieval Lancashire suggest a correlation between linguistic intelligibility and onomastic influence. The Germanic-Brittonic compounds and Anglo-Norman administrative affixations indicate the limited value of semantically opaque name elements, while the ON-OE hybrid names strongly suggest the coexistence of medieval English and medieval Scandinavian communities and emphasise the unique relationship between ON and OE in the medieval North of England.

Conclusion

Overall, the coast of North West England appears to form a distinct environment for language interactions in England, notably different to other areas of Norse settlement. However, the influence of Irish, Gaelic, and Manx cultures on ON interactions in Lancashire is apparent throughout this corpus, as is the prolonged survival of ON in North West England. Perhaps, rather than the established patterns of ON-OE contact in England, ON interactions in Lancashire are more in keeping with wider patterns in the Irish sea region. Though not identical, the language interactions in the North West appear to parallel the close relationship and linguistic contact between Old Norse and Gaelic speakers that transpired in the Isle of Man throughout the period of Norse settlement (Broderick 2007). The place-names here reflect natural Scandinavian coining, a system of naming element borrowing, but also the continuation of productive native naming elements despite the arrival and presence of Scandinavian cognates—all traits which have been observed throughout the presented analysis of place-names in Lancashire. Perhaps just as Old Norse speakers shared a unique relationship with the Gaelic speakers of the Isle of Man (Thompson 1983), this continued and expanded to the Old English speakers of the Lancashire coast. The place-names of early medieval Lancashire appear to evidence a multilingual environment. This analysis suggests that the combined influence of linguistic equality, lexical transparency, and developing regionality provides the opportunity to transition from individual settlements of Norse speakers to the successful establishment of mixed communities evidenced throughout the North West of England. However, this preliminary overview also indicates the importance of examining Old Norse onomastic influence in the North West within the wider scope of Irish sea mobility and settlement, mixed communities of speakers, and the distinct regional and linguistic environment(s) that stem from these factors—further research in this area is most certainly required.

Notes

[1] Please contact the corresponding author for the full corpus of names and etymologies.

[2] The full interactive map of Old Norse place-names from the Lancashire corpus can be accessed by the following link:
https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=12yadChxdeMfMIvk5gT2Gv_DZIBTFRpY&usp=sharing

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