

Note

Last issue's *Note* inadvertently omitted any citation of authorship. The editor asks forgiveness for this oversight from readers and especially from the author of "I Didn't Even Know His Name": Names and Naming in Toni Morrison's *Sula*," Professor Karen Stein, University of Rhode Island.

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English Locative Surnames and the Local Pronunciation of Place-Names

Locative surnames are surnames which derive from a place-name and which used to denote the place from where the person so named has moved to his new place of residence. They contrast with address names which used to describe the place where the person so named actually lived or worked, such as *Mill*, *Oakley*, "one who works at the mill, one who lives at an *ac lēah*."

The modern form of the locative surname may be identical with the modern form of the respective place-name, but more often than not they differ either orthographically (e.g. *Latch* from *Lache/Chs*; this difference is more conspicuous, when the surname is a phonetic rendering of the place-name, such as *Wooster* from *Worcester*, *Norridge* from *Norwich*, etc.), or they differ phonetically—what is even more interesting for the linguist (e.g. *Pidgley* from *Pidsley/D*, *Blyde* from *Blyth/Nb*, etc.). Some of these surnames in turn are identical with the local pronunciation (loc. pron.) of the place-name they derive from.

These phonetically different forms of place-name and locative surname—deriving after all from the same source—are no corruptions, as one can often read in onomastic literature; all of them can be explained linguistically.¹ The same applies to the loc. pron. of place-names.

As to the modern pronunciation of English place-names, one must recall that the modern spelling of a place-name in most cases represents a historical spelling which was adopted during the last century discarding a number of different spellings for the same name, which had been in use side by side for centuries.²

The "standard" or "official" pronunciation of a place-name (though there is no authority prescribing how to pronounce place-names) is used by radio-announcers, by people who are acquainted only with the written form of the name, or by people who simply prefer it for some reason to any other form; this form of pronunciation will—as a rule—be based on what this historical spelling suggests, regardless whatever the former pronunciation, which has developed over the centuries, was like (e.g. *Cirencester/Gl*, now usually pronounced /saɪərənsestə/, but formerly and still locally /sisitə/). There are only a few exceptions to this rule: *Cholmondeley/Chs* is always pronounced /tʃʌmlɪ/, *Gloucester* is always /gləʊstə/, etc. These names are either known as a curiosity (like *Cholmondeley*) or the educated speaker simply knows how to pronounce that name correctly (like *Gloucester* and other names in *-cester*).

The local pronunciation of a place-name, however, is the pronunciation used by the natives

¹ These divergent phonological developments are explained in detail in: Klaus Forster, *Englische Familiennamen aus Ortsnamen*. Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft 61, Nürnberg 1978.

² In some cases even today different spellings are used for the same name; e.g., the post office of Hainford/Nf is spelled Haynford.

and the inhabitants of a particular place, by people living in the vicinity of this place and by people who are familiar with the place and the local customs.

It would not be correct to call this form of pronunciation the "dialectal" pronunciation of a place-name, i.e. a form of pronunciation that shows features of the local dialect, as is the case with the second element of the place-name Longtown/Cu, which is locally pronounced (loc. pron.) /tu:n/ and thus complying with the dialectal representation of ME /u:/ as /u:/ for StE /au/, or the loc. pron. of Burneston (in the former North Riding of Yorkshire), which is /bɔnɪstən/ with the dialectal /o/ for ME /ir/ (as in dialectal /bod/ for StE 'bird')³.

What is meant by "local pronunciation" in this article is not only this form of pronunciation showing features of the regional dialect; the loc. pron. of a place-name is rather independent from the local dialect. It came into existence by means of phonological developments similar to those which affected locative surnames. This is the reason, why locative surnames can be homophonous with the loc. pron. of a place-name, as we shall see from the following examples:

Sevenoaks/K used to be pronounced /snu:ks/ until this form of pronunciation succumbed to the modern spelling pronunciation /sevənouks/. The form /snu:ks/ can easily be explained linguistically: The loss of the voiced fricative /v/ in intervocalic position is a common English sound-change and is also found in StE words, such as sennight, Halloween, etc.; as the letter *v* was retained in the spelling of evening, seven, etc., these words are now pronounced with /v/ (as is the official pronunciation of the place-name). The family name, however, which has undergone the same sound-changes, obtained a phonetic spelling, probably, because the connection with the place-name was no longer evident. Thus, a form of loc. pron., soon forgotten, will survive in a surname, viz. *Snooks*. *Sinnocks*, a form between Sevenoaks and *Snooks* is also found as a surname.

The loss of intervocalic /v/ can also be observed in the surnames *Daintry* (from Daventry/Np, loc. pron. /deintrɪ/, otherwise /dævəntrɪ/), *Rainscroft* (from Ravenscroft/Chs, loc. pron. /reinskrɔft/, otherwise /reivənskrɔft/), *Candish* (from Cavendish/Sf, loc. pron. /kændɪʃ/, otherwise /kævndɪʃ/), *Swasey* (from Swavesey/Ca, loc. pron. /sweɪsi/, otherwise /sweivzi/), etc.⁴

Dissimilation is another sound-change which often accounts for the rise of variants of locative surnames and the loc. pron. of place-names. Mainly *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r* are affected, in particular when occurring in subsequent syllables.⁵ Often the total loss of one of these consonants is involved. Thus, Beaminster in Dorset is loc. pron. /bemɪstə/, Ponsonby/Cu is /pʊnsəbi/; both forms are found in early documents: *Bemystre* (1390),⁶ *Punceby* (14th cent.);⁷ in both cases the phonetically older form survives in the modern place-name, the more advanced forms are found in the loc. pron. and in the modern surnames *Bemister* and *Ponsaby*.

Weardale/Du is generally pronounced /wiðeɪl/, the diphthong /iə/ being influenced by the name of the river Wear (OE *Wēor*). In the compounded name of the valley, however, the OE diphthong *ēo* has been shortened and was ME *e* (cf. the spelling *Werredal*, 1227),⁸ which—through the influence of the following *r*—became ModE /a:/, as can be found in the loc. pron. /wa:dl/ and the surname *Wardle*.

The well-known surname *Burlington* derives from the place-name Bridlington/ERY (this form of the place-name being first recorded in 1119)⁹, which is loc. pron. /bɜ:lɪŋtən/, besides /bɔlɪŋtən, bɔlɪntən, bɔlɪtən/. Both the loc. pron. /bɜ:lɪŋtən/ and the surname *Burlington* are due to a

³H. Orton et al., *Survey of English Dialects. The Basic Material*, 4 vols., Leeds 1962 ff., vol. I, pt. 2, p. 393.

⁴All forms of pronunciation quoted here are taken from a dictionary of the local pronunciation of English place-names, compiled by the present writer and to be published shortly. Further bibliographical data referring to the loc. pron. of place-names can be found there.

⁵W. Horn, M. Lehnert, *Laut und Leben*, 2 vols., Berlin 1954, p. 1048 ff.

⁶A. Fägersten, *The Place-Names of Dorset*, Uppsala 1933, p. 262.

⁷A. M. Armstrong, *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, 3 vols., Cambridge 1950 ff., p. 427.

⁸E. Ekwall, *Dictionary of English Place-Names*, Oxford, 4th ed., 1966.

⁹A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire*, Cambridge 1937, p. 101.

metathesis of *-ri-* to *-ir-* and the subsequent loss of *d* (*-rdl-* > *-rl-*).¹⁰ It is interesting to note that *Burdlington* and *Burlington* are recorded place-name variants in 1650 and 1651 resp.¹¹ The surname *Bolliton*, incidentally, also exists, but does not seem to derive from this place-name.¹²

In some cases the loc. pron. and the modern surname are closer to the original form of the place-name than the modern form of the place-name itself: *Pilling/La* (a diminutive of Welsh *pyll* ‘pool’ with the Welsh suffix *-yn*)¹³ is loc. pron. /pilin/ and the surname deriving from it is *Pillin*, both conserving the final *-n*, which in the place-name has been altered to *-ng* on the analogy of place-names in *-ing*.

Kenilworth/Wa, though derived from the personal name *Cynehild*, is *Kelingworth* as early as 1316; *Kyllingworth* and *Killingworth* are the common forms from the 15th to the 17th century. They seem to be influenced by *Kilworth/Le*, about 20 miles away; those Early Modern English forms do not continue as place-names, yet they survive in the somewhat archaic loc. pron. /kiliŋwəp/ and the modern surname *Killingworth*.¹⁴

Anglo-Norman influence, too, may have caused a particular form of loc. pron.: *Hedingham/Ess* (from the OE personal name *Hēðin* and the suffix *-ingahām*) is loc. pron. /hiniŋəm/; the loss of intervocalic /ð/ is due to an Anglo-Norman sound-change (the place-name is spelled *Henyngham* in 1373; this form was discontinued after ca. 1600).¹⁵ The modern surname which arose from the Anglo-Norman form of the place-name is *Henningham*.

Anglo-Norman influence is also found in the loc. pron. of *Pontefract/WRY* and the surname derived from that place-name, but the history of the modern place-name is a little different. The French rendering was *Pontfrei*,¹⁶ in which the loc. pron. /pɔmfrit/ and the surname *Pomfret* originate. The place-name is now generally pronounced /pɔntifrækt/.

Exter/D is said to be pronounced locally /eksənz/ which has its origin in the Mediaeval Latin form *Exonia*. People moving from Exeter in the ‘surname period’ could have been called ‘John of Exeter’ or ‘William d’Exeter’ or ‘Thomas d’Exonia.’ The modern surnames *Exeter*, *Dexter* and *Exon* result from these Mediaeval by-names.

It can easily be seen from the few examples given that it is not by chance that the loc. pron. of place-names and some locative surnames are homophonous. In some instances the locative surname and the local pronunciation arose independently from each other, yet both caused by the same sound-change; this mainly applies to forms which came into existence during the Early Modern English period, when surnames were already firmly established, and it can be excluded that the surname derives from the loc. pron. of the place-name.

In other instances the locative surname derives from a form of the place-name which was used beside some other form of the place-name during the ‘surname period’ (e.g. the French form beside the Anglo-Saxon form), but was eventually given up in favour of that other form. Most locative surnames of the type we discuss here belong to either of these two groups (see drawings below).

Some forms of loc. pron. which were common some decades or even only some years ago have become obsolete by now; other forms are still used today, but they, too, may soon become obsolescent and be used by old people only. The influence of the broadcasting media, which use the spelling pronunciation, the allegedly inferior social status of the dialect, and the social intercourse between villagers and strangers may hasten the extinction of local place-nomenclature. But these forms will survive in surnames, often without their bearers realizing it.

¹⁰ Cf. Horn-Lehnert, p. 1127.

¹¹ A. H. Smith, p. 101.

¹² Cf. H. Barber, *British Family Names*, London, 2nd ed., 1903.

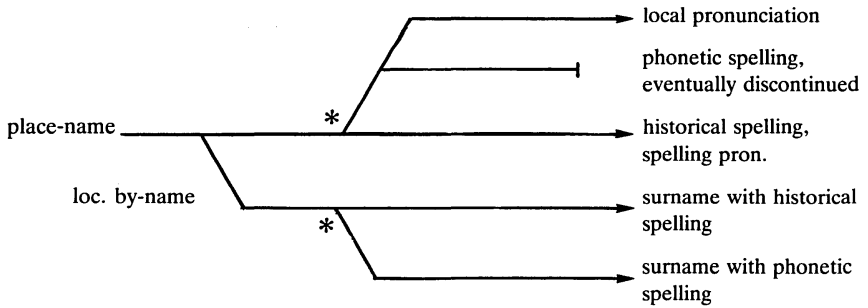
¹³ E. Ekwall, *English River-Names*, Oxford 1928, repr. 1968.

¹⁴ J. E. B. Gover et al., *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, Cambridge 1936, p. 172.

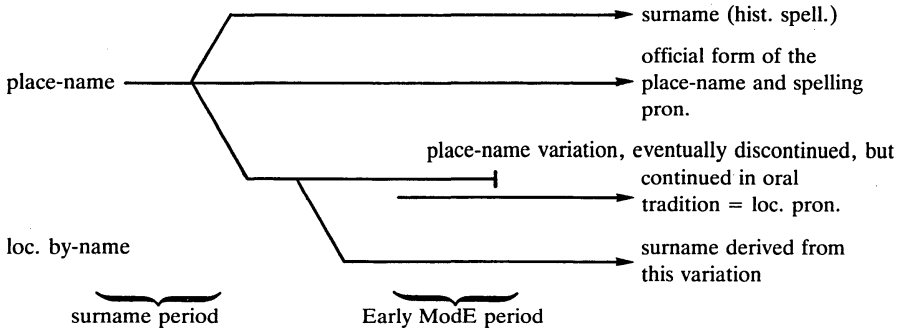
¹⁵ P. H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Essex*, Cambridge 1935, p. 438.

¹⁶ A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 8 vols., Cambridge 1961–63, vol. II, p. 75.

A



B



* sound-change affecting place-name and surname alike
 Drawing A: e.g. Daventry/Daintry
 Drawing B: e.g. Pontefract/Pomfret