MEDIEVAL FISHERIES IN THE WEAR, TYNE AND TWEED: THE PLACE-NAME EVIDENCE[*]

I am grateful to Aidan MacDonald for having allowed me an opportunity to discuss a rather curious sub-class of English place-names at the Cork conference which was largely and properly devoted to name studies in Ireland. If this paper seemed as a result to be something of a fringe event, my excuse for offering it was the existence of a rich body of comparative material in Ireland known to me from a series of papers by A. E. J. Went[1] on which an Irish audience would be able to comment at first hand.

The names I deal with have come to notice in the course of preparing the EPNS volumes for County Durham. The first instances I came across were in a forged confirmation of the possessions of Durham abbey purporting to belong to the year 1093, but actually written a hundred years later, which includes a list of eight fisheries on the north bank of the Tyne, twenty-one on the south bank and ten on the Wear. The list, which gives a good idea of the curious nature of these names and of the etymological puzzles which they can present, is as follows:

> Bondeniare, Wallesiare, Vtwordesiare, Holmesiare, Theotincge, Smithesiare, Rachere, Vtwordesiare . . . Hildeiare, Hebbeiare, Fuliare, Hebbiare, Hachesiare, Vtiare, Vchtredesiare, Steinreiare, Fuleiare, Ongreiare, Petthiare, Siwineiare, Vtuordeiare, Vtuordeiare, Vtiare, Londiare, Hoch, Hemmingesiare, Bondeneiare, Fiddeneiare, Sueor . . . Scerbeli, Sandwelle, Finlege, Presteiare, Bradeiare, Rauenesiare, Crochental, Druilaid, Kircheiare, Hebbeiare.[2]

The second element generally represents OE gear 'a weir, a yair'. Yair is defined in Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language as

> an enclosure commonly of a semi-circular form built of stones or constructed of stakes and wattle work, stretching into a tide way, for the purpose of detaining fish when the tide ebbs.

Since my first encounter with this type of name I have collected over 200 instances of medieval and early modern fishery names from the three north-eastern rivers which I hope to give a full account of in other places.[3]   Here I summarise the findings of an analysis of the material.

The classic shape of a river fishery name in north-east England is a compound of two elements. The first may be an adjective, Fuliare 'dirty yair' (OE fūl); a noun uninflected, Londiare 'land yair' (OE lond); a noun inflected in the genitive case, Presteiare 'priests' yair' (OE prēost, g.pl. prēosta); a personal name, Vchtredesiare 'Uhtræd's yair'; or a place-name, Wallesiare which lay in Wallsend and which I take to be a shortened form for 'Wallsend yair'.

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The second element (the generic): this describes the nature of the fishery, a term which, not to become entangled in the niceties of legal definition, is used here in two main senses: (a) the legal right of fishing certain waters, the stretch of water within which the right is exercisable; and (b) a place at which fish are caught, a fishing engine, a fish-weir.

The elements which relate to the first of these two senses are as follows.

bat, a term confined to the Tweed, dial. bat 'a heap of stones on which nets are drawn up where the river bank is too steep'; Bailiff's Bat 1661, Crow's Bat 1849, Davies' Bat 1661.

OE flēot(e) 'an estuary, the tidal part of a river, an arm of the sea, an arm or earlier channel of a river, a stream'[4]; Careflet n.d. (perhaps referring to the Carr Rock in the Tweed), Helflet' yar' 1128 (14th c.) 'eel stream' (OE ǽl, ēl), Hallowflete n.d. (a variant of Hallowstell, see below), Munkeflete n.d. 'monks' fishery' (OE munuc, g.pl. muneca), Neuflet n.d., Warflete n.d.

OE hol 'a hole, a hollow, a deep place in a river': Clayhole 1690, Dent's Hole 1863 (in the Tyne and named after a local family in the 17th century), le Holle 1539 (also in the Tyne, possibly the same fishery), Hob's-hole 1766.

OE luh 'a lough, a lake, a pool', a Northumbrian word cognate with W llwch; Blaklough 1344.

OE pōl 'a pool, a pool in a river'; Buresfurdes pul 14th c., Daw Law Poole 1671, Hoekmanpoil 1312 (a fishery at Durham in a loop of the Wear, from the surname Hokman 'one who dwells in a hook of the river'), piscaria de Pol c.1210 (the best known medieval fishery in the Tweed), le Pulyare 1370 (originally full' yare in Pole 1128 (14th c.), Stani Pul 1128 (14th c.).

ME shot, another term confined to the Tweed and Scotland, 'a place where nets are shot'; Bull Shot 1344, Butershote 1327 x 1377 (instances which antedate the earliest occurrence of this word in OED by more than a century).

OE stell 'a place for catching fish', ModE dial. 'a place in a river provided with arrangements for spreading salmon nets' OED, also 'a barrier placed across a river' EDD, described in the 18th century as 'deep ponds, pools and ditches in the river where Salmon haunting are taken in nets spread beneath them'; Abstelle 12th c. (pers.n. Abba, AEbba or AEbbe (f)), Aldstelle 1124 x 1153 (OE ald 'old'), Crabwater Stell 1562, Ellstell 1604, Hallowstell (earlier Haliware stelle 1099 x 1122, OE hāligwara 'of the saints or monks (sc. of the Lindisfarne community)'), Heystell 1627, Outwaterstell 1562, Sandstelle 1409 (piscaria del Sandes 1344), Tweedmouth Steale 1561, The Wily stell 1671, Witelawestele n.d., piscaria de Woodhornstell 1124 x 1153 (place-name Woodhorn), Yarrow Stell 1562 (place-name Yarrow). An OE -ing derivative of this element, *stelling 'a fishery', lies behind the modern Co. Durham place-name Stella on Tyne, Stellinglei c.1144 'wood or clearing (OE lēah) called or at *Stelling', or, 'near the fishery'.

OE strēam 'a river, a stretch of water'; Berwickstreme 1165 x 1214 (the place-name Berwick), Fol(e)streme 14th c. (possibly OE fūl 'foul, dirty'), Orret stream 1334. Possibly here belongs the Scottish place-name Coldstream.

OE wæter 'a stretch of water'; Broad Water Fishing 1562 (earlier just Brade 1327 x 1377), Crabwater 1327 x 1377 (OE crabba 'a crab, a crayfish'), Humewater 1327 x 1377 (place-name or family name Hume), Hundwater 1327 x 1377 (pers. n. Hund or OE hund 'a hound'), Turnwater 1344 (OE *trun 'circular, round'). Quikham Drawwater 1344, from Whickham on the Tyne, contains ME drawwater 'a stretch of water for drawing' (cf. OED s.v. draw v. 51 'to draw a net through or along a river for fish', hitherto first recorded in this sense c.1440).

ME welle 'a spring: a deep place in a river.' As Peter McClure pointed out to me, this latter sense is more appropriate to OE wǽl, wēl 'a deep pool' than to OE wella. The two words are confused in the Cheshire place-name Thelwall, þel wæle 923, Thelewella 12th c.,[5] and it is probable that the same replace-

ment of the rare element by the common one has occurred in the material cited here although there are no comparably early spellings; piscaria de Blakewell 1217 x 1226, Cromwell (marked in the course of the Tyne on the first edition 6"OS, Crumwell' 1128 (14th c.) 'well in the river bend', OE *crumbe 'a bend', or 'crooked fishery', OE crumb 'crooked'), Sandwelle 1195, Shipwell (Scypwell 1124 x 1153, OE scēap, ONb scip 'a sheep'). Peddle or Pedwell in the Tweed (Padduwel c.1190, ? OE* padde 'a toad' or pers.n. Padda) is described by Reginald of Durham as a place infinitae altitudinis into which a certain schoolboy threw the key of Norham Church in the hope of evading lessons in the school which was conducted therein timore verberum and saeviente magistro. He had not, however, reckoned with Norham's much incensed tutelary saint, Cuthbert, who arranged for the key to be found in the mouth of a salmon mirae magnitudinis which was caught next day in the nets of the local fishermen.[6]

As this study shows, this, and the other elements listed above, imply a station in which the main implement of fishing was the net. One end would be fixed at the shore while the other was taken out in a boat, rowed round in a half circle and brought to land again so entrapping a quantity of fish. A graphic description of this technique on the Tyne at Dent's Hole about 1880 is given in R. J. Charleton's Newcastle Town (London 1885), p.342. Stellnets are recorded at Stanipul and elsewhere c.1300, drawnets at Derewent' muth' 1128. Woodhornstell is specifically said to be piscandum cum retibus in Hugh de Balliol's confirmation of Bernard's grant of the fishery, temp. David I, and Scypwell is described as a tractum duorum retium.[7]

The second sense of fishery, a fish-weir, is almost exclusively expressed by the element gear which may in fact be of Celtic origin.[8] It certainly is not the common Germanic word which is weir, OE wer, related to OS werian 'obstruct' etc. It occurs as a simplex in the place-name Yarm on the Tees, Iarun 1086 (for Iarum), representing OE d.pl. gearum '(the place) at the fish-weirs.' A possible exception is the fishery name Haliwerestem 1128 (14th c.) on the south bank of the Tyne in Whickham and belonging to the bishop of Durham. The source is a late and unreliable copy of a list of Tyne fisheries and this may, therefore, be a bad spelling of strem. If genuine, however, this is probably an instance of an OE *stefn, *stem 'a dam' cognate with ON stemma 'to stem, stop, dam up, esp. a stream', OE forestemman 'to hinder', MLDu, OHG stemmen 'to stem, dam up', a word which is otherwise only recorded much later in English.[9]

Two other elements occur in final position.

OE belg 'bag, sack, belly' occurs in Scerbeli 1195, a difficult name and like many others recorded once only. I am inclined to suggest that belly is used here in a semi-technical sense of the inner cavity of the weir itself. The name would mean 'clean belly' and stand in contrast to weirs which were not scoured clean by the tide, the 'foul-yairs' where debris and filth accumulated or where it was difficult to remove dead fish. It may, however, be a nickname, which seems to be the origin of several other names such as Catesherse c.1147 'Cat's arse', Dripintell 1298 'dry penis' (OE pintel) and Letherhose 1128 (14th c.) (OE leðer-hose 'a leather covering for the leg, a gaiter') which may allude to working conditions at the weirs.

OE *scēla, ME schele 'a hut, a fisherman's hut', the origin of the p.ns. North and South Shields, occurs in Haugh-, Hugh Sheil 17th c. (OE halh 'water-meadow'

or hōh 'spur of land') and Toulershell 1344 (OE *tollere 'one who pulls a net' from OE *tollian, ME tollen 'drag, draw, pull').

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The first elements (the specifics): these fall into five groups classified loosely as descriptive elements, technical terms, place-names, indicators of ownership or tenure, and unexplained.

1. The first element is descriptive

OE bysig, ME besi 'busy'; Besi 1128 (14th c.).

OE cōl 'cold'; Cole 12th c.

OE flēoge 'fly', perhaps alluding to infestation by midges; le Flyeiare 1346, Fle 1387.

OE grēne 'green'; Greneyar 1128 (14th c.).

OE hund 'hound'; Hundwater 1327 x 1377.

OE hungrig, hungor 'hungry; hunger'; Hungeryere 1244; Hongre yare 1128 (14th c.), two different yairs, which suggests a p.n. type, either 'greedy yair, yair which gobbles up fish' or, parallel to the use of hunger in field names, alluding to scanty catches and small profit. The hunger of one of these yairs seems to be illustrated by its citation in a 13th century inquisition for having been extended beyond its legal limits by no less than 42 fathoms. [10]

OFr, ME pas 'a passage across a river'; Paysse 1539.

OE titt 'a teat, a small hill'; Tyt(e) 1327 x 1377.

A further group of adjectives alludes to size, depth or position:

OE brād, ON breiðr; four examples, Bradeiare 1195; Bradyer c.1147; Bradayere c.1150; Braythewer n.d. The precise meaning of broad in these four weirs is unknown although the general sense is clear. The complementary type *small-yair 'narrow-yair' is not on record, but there is one example of

OE lȳtel 'little'; Lut(t)el yare 14th c.

A further possibility is

OE *cort 'short'; Courtyar 1439. However, cort, curt in p.ns is problematic. The adj. *cort is thought to occur in Courtenwell K (Curtone 1348) in contrastive opposition to the nearby Langton. [11] Alternative explanations might be OFr court 'a manor', OE pers.n. *Corta, *Curta, as in Courteenhall PNNth 145-6 (Cortenhale 1086, Curtehala c.1110), Corburn PNNRY 14 (Coteburn 1086, Cortburne 1343, etc.), or the OE element *cort(e), *curt(e) of unknown meaning occurring in the undated Anglo-Saxon boundary-description from Kent (Sawyer 1564; KCD 1363)

> fram sandhlincan andlanges ðaer ea to ðaere wic; fram ðaere wic to ðaere cortan; and swa andlanges to Suðsexan.

If M. Löfvenberg is right [12] in suggesting the sense 'hurdle' or 'fence' for this word (which he derives from PrGmc *kurta- cognate with *krata-, the source of OE cræt '(wickerwork) cart', MDu kratte 'geflochtene Matte, Wagenkorb', OHG krezzo 'Korb' etc., all ultimately from the IE root *ger- 'to turn, twist, plait') we have exactly the right sense to refer not to size but to the interwoven hurdle structure typical of medieval and later weirs. [13]

OE dēope 'deep'; two examples, Dyaph' yar' 1128 (14th c.), Depe 1279; Deap' yar' 1128 (14th c.). The ya and ea spellings are noteworthy and if significant may be a reflection in a late copy of the OE unrounding of the second element of

the diphthong ēo characteristic of late Nb. [14]

Finally, an important contrasting set are the yair names compounded with ūt, ūtweard or ūtweardes on the one hand, and lond on the other.

OE ūt 'outer'; two examples, Uth' yar' 1128 (14th c.), Vtiare 1195, Uttyng(ʒaar) 15th c.; Uth' yar' 1128 (14th c.), Vtiare 1195. (The third form appears to show an interesting diminutive form in -ing).

OE ūtweard 'outer'; again two examples, Uthwat' yar' 1128 (14th c.), Vtuordeiare 1195; Uthward yar' 1195. (The 1128 form may be a mistake or a variant form, cf. Outwater Stell in the Tweed).

OE ūtweardes 'outer' (with g.s. - es in adverbial use); two examples, Vthwardesyar 1128 (14th c.); Vtwardes yar' 1128 (14th c.).

OE lond 'land'; Landeyar 1128 (14th c.). A 'land-yair' is one situated adjacent to the shore, possibly in an artificial channel, an 'out-yair' one situated entirely in the course of the river and not attached to the bank at all. A spectacular example of an out-yair was seen by members of the Bangor conference last year in the Menai Straits. It is a former episcopal yair, still operational, on Ynys Gorad Goch, first recorded in 1590. The remains of a land-yair on the Anglesey side are also visible at low water at the same place. [15]

One interesting but puzzling detail is the description in a 14th century lease of one of the Tyne out-yairs as the sectator of another yair called le Staneryare. The meaning of the term is unknown; CL sectator means 'attendant, adherent, follower.' In some way, therefore, the out-yair at Jarrow seems to have been subsidiary to the Staneryare. Possibly it is to be associated with another yair-name whose meaning is clear but significance unknown, Helperyare 1344 (ME helpere 'helper'). We are perhaps dealing with a system by which one yair directed fish towards another. [16] OE stǣner 'stony place' probably refers to an artificial island created by the digging of a channel parallel to the river. [17] Unfortunately owing to the industrialization of the Tyne shore and the extensive dredging since the middle of last century all traces of any such features have long since disappeared.

Another pair of adjectives describe conditions at the yair.

OE fūl 'foul, dirty'; three examples, full' yare in Pole 1128 (14th c.), Fuliare 1195; Full' yar' 1128 (14th c.), Fuleiare 1195; Foul 1298.

OE *hrotig from OE hrot 'scum'; Dode (sic), 1128 (14th c.), Roti 1279, Rutyare 1344.

2. The first element is a technical term

Four elements allude to artificial channels in which fish are taken.

OE dīc 'a ditch, an excavated trench, an artificial water-course'; Dykes yar' 1128 (14th c.), Dike yare 14th c. Similarly, Abingdon Abbey gardener's account for 1450/1 records the purchase of 'weels for catching fish in the ditch of the convent.' [18]

OE grype, ModE dial. grip 'a ditch, a trench, a drain'; Gump (sic) 1128 (14th c.), Grip 14th c. I am, however, attracted to the idea, since the element gear does not appear in the two recorded forms of this name, that this is really a nick-name alluding to the fish-trap's function of 'gripping' its prey. There is no doubt that other inanimate objects besides weapons were named in this way in the Middle Ages; in 1128 at the yairs at Winlaton on the Tyne, for instance,

two seine nets were called Tol and Pul.

OE (ge)lād 'a water course', ModE dial. lode 'a water-course, a channel, a fenland
drainage channel'; Druilaid 1195 (OE drȳge 'dry'). This word is also used of
a stretch of water in which traps are set in Severn fisheries. [19]

OFr sewiere 'a channel to carry off overflow from a fishpond'; Sueor 1195, Suere
1279, Suor 14th c. This is a difficult name, misread by a 19th century editor
as Snor, but readers of the ME poem Havelok the Dane will remember that
the good fisherman Grim, eponymous hero-founder of Grimsby, set his nets
in the seweres, the drainage channels in the fens near Grimsby. [20] This
instance antedates by two centuries that noted by M. Löfvenberg, Contributions
to ME Lexicography and Etymology (Lund 1946), 87.

These names are to be compared with the descriptive phrase gocia piscaria applied to
another Tyne weir (Petthiare 1195, cuiusdam Gocie piscarie vocate Pedyhare 1325)
which I take to be a Latinization of OE *gota, ME gote 'a water-course, a channel, a
stream'. A lost name le Gote occurs in WRY in 1392, again probably referring to a
fishery. [21]

A further group of protothemes alludes to the kind of device actually used in the
weir to trap the fish.

OE *cūpe 'a coop, a basket' esp. 'a wickerwork basket for catching fish' occurs in
two NE place-names, Cowpen Bewley (Billingham), Cupum 12th c., and
Cowpen (Blyth), Cupum 12th c., both d. pl. formations meaning '(the place) at
the fish-traps.'

OE cȳpe 'a kipe, an osier basket for catching fish', an i-mutation by-form of *cūpe,
occurs in Kepier (Durham), Kypier 12th c., and Little Kepier (Ryton),
Kepeyere 1613, both with OE gear, 'yair with kipes.'

OE hæcc 'a hatch, a grating, a sluice-gate'; Hachesiare 1195 'yair with hatches or
called Hatches.' A Hatch Weir is recorded on the Severn in 1835. Della
Hooke (Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands, British Archaeological
Reports 95, 1981, 270) discusses the OE term hæcwer or 'hackle', which was
'a barrier or fence of wattle set across the current to produce an eddy in
which fish could be caught in a boat'. The usual northern form is heck: a
common weir serving the corn and fulling mills of Thorp Arch which once
stretched across the r. Wharfe contained hecks for catching fish, and le
Samondehekkes 'the salmon traps' are recorded at Wakefield in the 15th
century. [22] N. dial. heck, recorded from the 13th century, is still used in
various technical or semi-technical senses. [23] Such names as Wodehacche
and Stanenehacche [24] suggest that such structures could be made of wood or
stone.

OE *hemming 'that which encloses, an enclosure, a dam'; Hemmi(n)ges yar' 12th c.,
le Hemmyngyar 1438-9. Formally the first element here might be the ON
pers. n. Hemming, but an OE ing substantive related to OE hemman 'stop up,
close' and hamm 'an enclosure' may well have existed. For the variation
between forms with and without inflexional -es, cf. under dīc above.

OE *snegga 'a trap, a snare'; Snegeȝare 1403. For this difficult name I suggest an
earlier form of the apophonic variant sneg of ModE snag 'a short stump
standing out from the trunk, a trunk or branch of a tree imbedded in the
bottom of a river, an impediment, an obstacle'. Several members of the rich
series of ideophonic formations on the root *sne-/*sno- are associated with
the idea of trapping (e.g. snickle 17th c. 'a snare or gin, esp. for pike',
sniggle 17th c. 'a hook for eel-catching', sneg 15th c. 'a snare, a trap') and

most recently Dodgson has proposed ME *snecche 'a trap, a snare, a catch'
for the first element of the lost Cheshire stream name le Sneechebrock
c. 1290. [25]

OE wīle 'a weel, a basket' occurs in another d. pl. place-name Wylam on Tyne,
Wylum 12th c., '(the place) at the fish traps.' The etymology of this word
is disputed; OED s. v. weel regards it as a reduced form of OE wilige 'a
willy, an osier basket' while A. H. Smith explained it as a concrete use of
OE wīl 'a wile, a trick' for some kind of contrivance or trap and referred to
the cognate ON vél (from *wihl-), also used to mean 'a device for catching
fish'. [26] An 18th century account (Bradley's Family Dictionary, quoted in
OED) describes a weel as 'made of osier twigs . . . supported by arches or
hoops that go round and are ever diminishing. Its mouth is somewhat broad
but the other end terminates in a point. It's so contrived that when the fishes
are got in they cannot come out of it again because of the osier twigs which
are advanced on the inside to the place where the hoops are and which stop
the passage, leaving but a small opening there.' This is almost a perfect
description of the eel-traps illustrated in the Luttrel Psalter, [27] and of the
narrow separable funnel which terminates the broad open end or kipe of the
modern putts or putchers used in Severn fisheries to this day. The weels
were either secured to the bottom of the stream or mill-race, as in the
Luttrell Psalter where no weir is shown, or fastened in the rowmes or spaces
of the sluices of the weir itself. [28]

There is one compound in gear with a technical meaning,

OE ebba-gear, of which there are four examples; Hebbeiare 12th c., le Ebyare 1370;
Ebyare 1382; Hebear' 1128 (14th c.); Ebbe yar' 1128 (14th c.). These
examples antedate by 300 years the ME compound ebbing-wer 'a weir for
trapping fish at ebb tide.' According to A. E. J. Went the normal kind of
estuarine weir in Ireland is precisely of this kind, viz. a V-shaped weir with
a gap at the point where salmon may be caught in nets when they move down-
stream in the ebb tide. The fact that four yairs on the Wear and Tyne are
specifically marked out by their nomenclature as of this type suggests that
they were exceptional in these rivers and that weirs were normally constructed
so that fishing could take place during the flood. [29]

3. The first element refers to tenure

What is remarkable in those cases where the first element is a personal name is the
overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon character of the names; Ebba or Æbbe Abstelle 12th
c.; Æscwulf, Essulues yar' 1128 (14th c.); Beorda, Berde yar' 1128 (14th c.);
Ealdceorl, Alcherles yar' 1128 (14th c.); Elli, Ellstell 17th c.; Hræfn, Rauenesiare
1195; Onn, Onnesyare 1382; Padda (Pedwell); Ūhtrǣd, Hutteredes yar' 1128 (14th c.).
The other two instances are either ON (if Hemminges yar' does not contain OE
*hemming) and OG Mahthild, Mald' yar' 1128 (14th c.). The following surnames or
occupational names occur: Hokman 'one who dwells in a bend or hook of a river',
Hoekmanpoil 1312; Holman 'one who dwells in a hollow or near the deep place in a
stream', Holmannes 1327 x 1377; Hume, Humewater 1327 x 1377; Potter,
Pottereshihera c. 1160; [30] Smith, Smiþes yar' 1128 (14th c.).

Other elements alluding to tenure are:

OE bonda, g. pl. bondena; three instances, Bondeneiare 1195 (Felling); Bonde yare

14thc.(Gateshead); Bondewyar 1128 (14th c.) (Wallsend). lOE bonda is an adoption of ON bóndi 'husbandman, farmer, peasant' replacing OE ceorl; both terms have been associated with the pre-feudal territorial organisation of England centred on ancient royal estates called shires in NCy and Scotland. [31] Two of the three examples cited here lie in known shires, Tynemouthshire and Werralshire, the ancient names of the royal endowments of Tynemouth priory and the Jarrow-Monkwearmouth monastery. [32]

OE cirice; three examples, Kircheiare 1195 (Southwick); Chirche yar'; alia Chirche yar' 1128 (14th c.) (Gateshead).

OE hāligwaras 'saints, monks' g.pl. hāligwara, possibly varying with OE hāligwer 'saint', g.s. hāligweres; two examples; Haliwerestem 1128 (14th c.) (Whickham); Hallowstell, olim Haliware stelle (Tweedmouth). The first of these belonged to the Bishop of Durham, the second to the monks of Lindisfarne who are the saints in question. If the first element is a singular noun the reference would be in either case to St. Cuthbert. [33]

OE prēost 'a priest', g.pl. prēosta; Presteiare 1195 (Southwick).

St.Hild; Sancte Hildear' 1128 (14th c.) (Westoe), the reference being to the chapel of St.Hild to which the revenues of the yair were appropriated.

4. The first element is a place-name

There are 37 instances of fishery-names in which the first element is a known or a supposed p.n., e.g. Eddermouth 1327 x 1377 (the mouth of the Whiteadder Water), Fiddeneiare 1195 (*Fitt-denn 'disputed valley'), Heberineyare 1328 (Hebburn yair), Tweedmouth Stell 1639, Woodhornstell 1124 x 1153 etc. I comment only on one example, Totingford 12th c., a fishery on the Tweed. I take the first element here to be OE *tōting 'the look-out place' or 'place called after Tōta, the look-out man' as suggested by Dodgson for the Sr p.n. Tooting. [34] One of the most important considerations in fishing is the early warning of approaching shoals. An early third century Greek poem on fishing describes how first the skilled tunny-watcher (thunnoskopos), whose job it is to detect the movement of all sorts of shoals and estimate their size, climbs a lofty look-out hill. As soon as he announces a sighting to his fellow fishermen, the nets advance as one into the waves. Similarly Theokritos alludes as a normal feature of the coastal bucolic scene to the fisherman Olpis watching for tunny fish. Gow in his note on the passage records that 'in Cornwall a "hooer" is similarly employed to watch for shoals of pilchards,' while Sheldon in his history of Berwick on Tweed writes of the Tweed tacks-man or foreman perched on a kind of scaffold-ladder erected near the run of the stream watching for a shoal of salmon ascending the river. [35]

5. Unexplained

ii corntithe, Coutitche, contitthe yares 14th c. (Gateshead); Gornerh' 1128 (14th c.), Wornerch 14th c.; Gouret 1128 (14th c.) (Gateshead);[36] Huult' yar' 1128 (14th c.), Huulf yare' 1128 (14th c.) (ibid); hurl.hames yar' 1128 (14th c.) (Whickham); Omper 1128 (14th c.) (Gateshead); Swyne yar' 1128 (14th c.),Siwineiare 1195 (Hebburn); Wyses Pul 1128 (14th c.), Wythes pole 14th c.; Brodi 1327 x 1377; Cademan 1671; Canny 1683; Gardo 1561.

*   *   *

Conclusion

The main impression one derives is that many of these names are of great antiquity. There is a high proportion of hypothetical or unexplained elements in the material, much of which was clearly obscure already to the medieval scribes who copied it. Where personal names occur they are overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon in character. There is further some hint of early territorial organizational units which may antedate the Anglo-Saxon period. All this points to a very early exploitation of the fishing resources of these three northern rivers which should hardly occasion surprise when we reflect on the importance of fish as an item of the medieval diet, especially in the monastic communities which dominated so much of Northumbria.

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NOTES

* This is a revised version of the paper given on March 26th 1983 at the XVth Annual Conference of the Council for Name Studies held at Ennismore, Montenotte, Cork.

1. 'Irish fishing weirs I' Jnl. of the Royal Soc. of Antiquaries of Ireland 76 (1946), 176-194; 'Irish fishery weirs II' ibid. 88 (1948), 1-4; 'Irish Monastic fisheries' Cork Hist. & Arch. Jnl. 9, 47-56; 'Some Ancient Irish Salmon Fishing Weirs' Industrial Archaeology 3 (1966), 153-60; 'The Ancient Sprat Fishing Weirs in the South of Ireland' ibid. 6 (1969), 254-60, and numerous other papers.

2. Durham Episcopal Charters 1071-1152 ed. H. S. Offler, Surtees Society 179 (1968), 56-7.

3. See 'Some Northumbrian Fishery Names I' Trans. Durham and Northumberland Architectural and Archaeol. Soc., n.s.6, (1982), 89-92 and forthcoming nos. Fuller documentation will be provided in these articles.

4. Ekwall, ERN 158-9 s.v. flēot: he cites from Blakeney in Nf a fishery called Bradeflett 1284 under the sense 'an arm of the sea, a creek.'

5. PNCh II. 138.

6. Reginaldi Monachi Dunelmensis Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus, Surtees Society 1 (1835), 149-50.

7. R. Weddell, 'The Salmon Fishings in the River Tweed', Archaeologia Aeliana 4 (1855), 300-1.

8. F. Holthausen, Altenglisches etymolog. Wörterbuch (Heidelberg 1934) s.v. suggests that it is a loan from W garth 'hurdle, enclosure.'

9. OED stem sb[3], 3, cites quotations of 1701 'the Stem or Stones laid together in the form of a Wall' in a river in Orkney, and 1766 Act. 16. Geo. III c.36 ₤ 1 'The six several Stems or Stations for taking Fish within the said Bay of Saint Ives.'

10. Three Early Assize Rolls for the County of Northumberland, Surtees Society 88 (1890), 355.

11. EPN I.108 s.v. *cort(e).

12. Contributions to ME Lexicography and Etymology (Lund 1946), 47-8 s.v. Court-bed.

13. Cf. the details of the construction of Colwick weir cited in note 29. IE *ger- and its Gmc derivatives are exhaustively discussed by O. Ritter, Vermischte Beiträge zur englischen Sprachgeschichte (Halle (Saale) 1922), 7-38.

14. K. Luick, Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache (1914-40), 127; A. Campbell, Old English Grammar (Oxford 1959), 278(b); K. Brunner, Altenglische Grammatik (Halle 1942), 35 A.1.

15. Cf. David Senogles, The Story of Ynys Gorad Goch (privately published 1969).

16. Some of the structures in the Severn seem to be designed for this function, ex inf. E. F. N. Prince.

17. West Yorkshire: an Archaeological Survey to A.D. 1500 edd. M. L. Faull, S. A. Moorhouse (West Yorks. C.C., 1981), III. 709 and 721 n.106.

18. Accounts of the obedientiars of Abingdon Abbey, Camden Soc. 51 (1892), 130 cited in West Yorkshire, III. 747.

19. Ex inf. E. F. N. Prince.

20. Line 52 in Early Middle English Verse and Prose, edd. J. A. W. Bennet and G. V. Smithers (Oxford 1966), pp.54 and 293 note ad loc. In the second edition the editors prefer to associate the word with the rare OE sǣ-wer 'sea weir' although Grim appears to take both fresh and salt water fish.

21. PNWRY II. 162, cited in West Yorkshire, III. 749.

22. West Yorkshire, III. 747.

23. Cf. fig. 4 in Went, 'Some Ancient Irish Salmon Fishing Weirs', Industrial Archaeology 3 (1966), 157, where he describes the trap in a riverine weir as consisting of 'a compartment with a pair of upright converging walls with a gap between their proximal ends on the downstream side . . . and a grating, known as the heck, on the upstream side'; cf. also OED s.v. heck sb[1] 2.

24. PNSr 306n cited in MED s.v. hacche.

25. PNCh III. 146. For ideophonic formations see G. V. Smithers, 'Some English Ideophones', Archivum Linguisticum 6 (1954), 88-91.

26. EPN s.v. wll.

27. BL MS Add. 42130 f. 181, illustrated in E. G. Millar, The Luttrell Psalter (London 1932), 114.

28. West Yorkshire, III. 747: this technical sense of room appears not to be recorded in OED.

29. See discussion in Trans. Durham and Northumberland Archit. and Archaeol. Soc. n.s.6 (1982), 92 n.13, where reference is made to the fishing of floods on the Tyne. In Ireland there are in fact instances of both ebb-weirs (le Ebbe Weare 1541, a possession of Dunbrody Abbey in the River Suir, Aghanygny-weare an ebb weare 1668 in Cork harbour) and flood-weirs (Tullymore, a flood weare; Tullaanagh a flood weare 1668, also in Cork harbour), Went, 'Irish

Fishing Weirs I' Jnl. Royal Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland 76 (1946), 178, 183. The tenth-century fish weir at Colwick Hall Nt was of similar construction. It consisted of 'rows of oak posts set 60-70 cm apart in a truncated V pointing downstream with a long and short arm joined by a centre-piece 8 m long. The posts were interlaced with wattle and brushwood of beech, hawthorn and alder, the brushwood in bundles bound round with knotted withies'. Della Hooke, AS Landscapes, 271 referring to P. M. Losco-Bradley and C. R. Salisbury, 'A Medieval Fish Weir at Colwick, Nottinghamshire', Trans. Thoroton Soc. 83 (1979), 15-22.

30. This form illustrates the difficulty some scribes had with the spelling of the element gear; for a parallel instance see OED s.v. yair, first quotation.

31. Cf. J. E. A. Jolliffe, 'Northumbrian Institutions', EHR 41 (1926), 1-42; G. W. S. Barrow, The Kingdom of the Scots (London 1973), 38-9; H. P. R. Finberg, Lucerna (London 1964), 144-60.

32. History of Northumberland VIII. 207ff; Jolliffe loc. cit. 24; Bede, HE IV. 18, HA VII.

33. Cf. the ancient name of the inhabitants of the patrimony of St. Cuthbert, later Co. Durham, Haliwere(s)folc 12th c., 'the saints' people', or more probably, 'the saint's, St. Cuthbert's people', þe saint pople or Cuthbert folk as the 15th c. Life of St. Cuthbert puts it.

34. Beiträge zur Namenforschung, n.f. 2 (1967), 348.

35. Oppian Halieutica 3.637, Theokritos Idylls 3.26, ed. A. S. F. Gow (Cambridge 1950), Vol. II note ad loc.; Sheldon History of Berwick upon Tweed (Edinburgh 1849), 285.

36. It is tempting to see a trace in this name of W gorad 'a weir' but in view of the overwhelmingly English character of these fishery names this is probably wrong.