Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland

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2. Submissions are invited from all students and young researchers. The prize will normally be awarded to those who have not hitherto had work in onomastics published.

3. Essays should be about 5,000 words in length.

4. Entries should in some way make an original contribution to the subject.

5. One copy of the essay should be submitted to the Secretary of the Council in clear typescript, double-spaced, and including a bibliography of source-material used and of books and authors cited.

6. Entries will be judged by a panel appointed by the Chairman of the Council, and may be considered for publication in *Nomina*, the Journal of Name Studies relating to Great Britain and Ireland.

7. Entries must be submitted by 31 May. Provided an essay of sufficient merit be forthcoming, the winner will be announced at the Annual Name Study Conference in the spring of the following year.

Entries should be sent to:
> The Secretary,
> Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland,
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Place-Names in Northern Fife

Graeme Whittington

FOR the geographer who works on the evolution of settlement and land-use, place-names have long been regarded as providing a form of data additional to what may be obtainable from map, fieldwork, and documentary sources. The geographer must, however, be essentially a consumer of the philological efforts of the place-name scholar. That is not to say that on occasion journeys into the philological unknown have not been undertaken by geographers. This tends to happen in a Scottish context; nothing exists there comparable with the county volumes produced under the aegis of the English Place-Name Society.[1] Place-name works do exist for Scotland, but they tend either to be dated or to deal with particular elements. For the geographer wishing to look comprehensively at a region this can be a major disadvantage. As a result errors are no doubt committed which must cause the philologist considerable anguish.

There is also a reverse side to this situation. Over time there has been a major shift by place-name scholars from the restricted position put forward by Wyld:

> '... place-names here are considered as elements of language and are treated as a purely linguistic problem. The work is not concerned with the question whether names fit the places to which they are attached or whether they ever did so.'[2]

There is now a greater involvement in putting the place-names into their environmental context,[3] but from the philologist's point of view that holds as many dangers as the philological component of place-names does for geographers. This is not only because physical environments change as a result of natural and human agencies but also because they are perceived in different ways through time. Such matters were very much in the mind of Watts, who felt it necessary to urge caution upon place-name scholars attempting to come to grips with the contemporary setting of place-names. Commenting on the statements sometimes made about the environmental inferiority of some preferred early settlement sites, he voiced the following concern:

> 'I suspect that the evidence of the one-inch drift maps may need a good deal of refinement. It would be interesting to hear a geographer's comment on the quality of the drift evidence for the kind of exercise place-name scholars have been conducting .... how delicate ought our geological information ideally to be? Is sand and gravel always superior to clay?'[4]

There can be no doubt that place-names are a powerful tool for those who wish to reconstruct landscapes and the nature of the settlements and land-use systems of which they were comprised. Can they be left solely, however, in the hands of place-name scholars or of any other group of workers? The statement that, for the most effective exploitation of place-names, '.... the co-operation of philologists, botanists, geographers and historians is required' is as true today as it was when Thomas made it in 1974.[5] No doubt the place-name scholar and the geographer can each make significant contributions to landscape study on their own, but how much more powerful their work would be if they formed part of a strong interdisciplinary team. As an illustration of that view some place-names in northern Fife will be examined. The findings will be presented from two main standpoints: first, that of the contribution that a geographer can make, not only stemming from a training in an understanding of environmental conditions but also involving a strong sense of spatial awareness and the seeking of patterns; secondly, that of the unresolved questions which emerge as a result of the geographer's enquiries.

I: The Spatial Context of the Place-Names

The area chosen for this exercise lies to the south of the estuary of the River Tay in eastern Scotland. It displays a varied topography which falls into four discrete units (Map 1).
i)   *The river Tay shoreline*
This is a restricted area of low altitude which is essentially a raised beach formed after the retreat of the last ice-sheet. It possesses sandy soils which are freely draining and quick to warm up in the spring. A proneness in the past to flooding by the river Tay, still tidal in this reach, probably inhibited early settlement.
ii)   *The Ochil Hills*
An impressive range of hills which runs from Stirling in the west to the north-eastern corner of Fife. At the western end of the area under consideration they present a sharp escarpment to the south and reach a height of over 250 m. (approx. 750 ft.). As they progress eastwards they not only decline in altitude (to a maximum of 100 m. [approx. 300 ft.]) but become extremely dissected and broken. Large areas in between the more isolated hill masses are often, even today, water-filled or boggy.
iii)   *The Howe of Fife*
This area of relative lowland is one of uneven topography and very

varied geological nature, having been a dumping ground for eroded materials carried by the last ice-sheet. Large expanses of sand and gravel occur and extensive shallow lochs existed until drained by Improver landlords in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
iv)   *The plateau of East Fife*
Generally about 100 m. (approx. 300 ft.) in altitude, the plateau-forming Carboniferous sandstones here are usually covered in glacial till which tends to provide a colder, more moisture-retentive soil than those to be found in the areas to the north.

In these four topographic units place-names will be looked at in three contexts: those elements which relate to early settlement; names which refer to past agricultural practices; and, finally, names which reveal the interaction of settlement and land use in an organizational sense.

II: Place-Names and Early Settlement

Place-names and the elements which they contain have been exploited by geographers for a long time in their consideration of early settlement characteristics.[6] In the specific Scottish context, an examination of Dark Age settlement has been attempted by the examination of the place-name element **pit-**.[7] This does seem to provide a potent weapon for such work, and Barrow has gone a long way in revealing its potential,[8] but, taking up the earlier quotation from Thomas, it appears that more could be achieved if only some pertinent questions were posed. For the geographer these would be: why are the place-names located where they are; what were these locations like when the place-names came into existence; what do the names signify in land use and settlement terms?

An examination of the sites occupied by the places with names containing the **pit-** element revealed that nearly all of them showed a preference for well-drained soils on south-facing slopes.[9] Some do not, as the examples of Pickletillem, Pitlethie, Pitlair and Pettinmyres in northern Fife reveal (Map 2). Does that tell us something about the economy of the occupants of those sites? Were there diversified, specialist occupations which led to the choice of sites not only at variance with the usual but also in a location which at the time of their founding must have been almost entirely waterlogged?

Of an intriguing nature is the way in which these place-names in **pit-** are distributed (Map 2). This raises several questions. What was occurring in the areas where there are no such names? They too possess sites environmentally similar to those which elsewhere are

occupied by **pit-** place-names. Surely for the scholar interested in settlement patterns the empty areas should warrant as much attention as the occupied ones.

A further interesting feature is the clustering of these place-names. This is particularly the case in the vicinity of Abernethy and just to its south. Why are there so many instances of this place-name element there? They are very noticeably located at a point in the Ochil Hills where these still retain considerable altitude and before they have become strongly dissected (Map 1). These settlements would have been remote from the main lines of human movement across Fife. Is that why they survived? Does that indeed mean that there may have been a more even distribution to the east at one time but that in that area, more easily traversed, they have been superseded? It seems unlikely. The strong clustering and frequent recurrence of this place-name element in the vicinity of Abernethy could also be of great significance, given the former ecclesiastical importance of that settlement. Did the **pit-** element signify more than a piece of land?[10] Did it denote a particular type of land share? Did the settlement bearing the name come to have an organizational importance or standing which others did not possess?

It is with that in mind that a further place-name element in northern Fife might be approached. The introduction of Q-Celtic into this area led to the appearance of place-names containing the first element **bal-**; the distribution of these is shown in Map 3. Being related to a linguistic change, they are of particular interest in that they raise the question of whether the settlements were achieved by confrontation or arose from integration. Can their spatial pattern tell us anything? They reveal nothing comparable with the marked clustering displayed by the **pit-** element around Abernethy. Furthermore, they colonize the raised beach along the Tay estuary which the **pit-** place-names avoided. Their presence on the east Fife plateau to the south and west of St Andrews indicates that the Q-Celtic speakers found this area environmentally suitable. Other place-names in **bal-** also appear in the empty zone between the **pit-** names around Abernethy and those further to the east. Does this amount to anything other than a settlement infilling? That begs the question of land organization and tenure. Was there no ordered system at that time? The **pit-** place-names appear to indicate a piece of land, that is, something granted. How were the **bal-** settlements decided upon? Where they lie in very close proximity to place-names in **pit-**, as do Balgove and Ballindean with Pitormie and Pitedie (Map 3), what was their relationship? Were they on an

equal footing, or was one subservient to the other? The Book of Deer shows that a **bal-** settlement could lie within a **pit-** land share.[11] What does that suggest? These are questions over which the historian and the geographer should surely join forces with the place-name scholar and perhaps, as a result of joint effort, shed further light on this fascinating and tantalizing period of Scottish landscape development.

III: Place-Names and Previous Agricultural Practices

Embedded in some of the place-names of northern Fife are references to past agricultural practices; some are interesting but obvious examples, whereas others require an understanding of an agricultural system which died in the eighteenth century, if their true significance is to be grasped.

One of the feudal services exacted in the agricultural realm was that of thirlage, whereby a tenant was bound by his lease to have corn ground at the estate mill and to provide labour for the scouring of the mill dam and the repair of the mill; thirlage was much resented.[12] All of these activities represented an indirect payment to the landlord and so the possession of a mill or mills was a valuable asset. This led to even minor streams being dammed, with a consequent loss of arable land, to create the necessary head of water to drive the mill. A legacy of this occurs in today's place-names in the presence of the form *Damside* on the Moonzie Burn (Map 4).

A further feature of earlier agricultural practice swept away by the eighteenth-century Improver Movement was the system by which the lands of a farm were divided into infield, outfield and moorland (Fig. 1).[13] Today the element **muir** 'moor' appears in many place-names of this area. The conclusion all too readily reached is that it refers, in accordance with modern usage, to an area of land vegetated by coarse grass species and heather. This is not, however, the origin of the word's meaning in many place-names. As Figure 1 shows, the outer perimeter of the fermtoun's lands was the muirland, a pasture zone of great importance in a period when sown-grasses were unknown. It could occur at virtually any altitude and was not restricted to the poorest soils.[14] The examples of the **muir** element on Map 4 are, with the exception of Annsmuir, all located on ground which today is rated by the Soil Survey of Scotland's Land Capability Survey classification as Class 2, the same as the soils of the arable land of the settlements to which the muirs belonged. The

latter farming divisions thus lie on land which is marginal only in the sense that it was on the outer perimeter of the land worked by the fermtoun's occupants.

During the main part of the Improver Period, a major alteration took place in the way in which land was to be exploited; this was made possible by the nature of Scots law. A notable feature of the English and Welsh landscapes is the frequent existence of common land, a surviving relic of the manorial system of landholding. When Enclosure took place, then, owing to the fact that English law has a foundation in custom and rights of usage, some land had to be left open so that the various 'rights of common', enshrined in law, could continue to be practised. In Scotland, commons (the Commonties) also existed, but Scots law did not recognize the existence of rights of land exploitation based on custom and usage over a long time-span.[15] Thus when Enclosure occurred during the Improver Period, the Commonties were swept away by means of an enabling act: the Division of Commonty Act passed in 1695 by the Scottish parliament. Despite this, Map 4 displays two present-day place-names containing the word *common*. In both instances they have survived because under the 1695 Act commons belonging to the Royal Burghs, among which were both Auchtermuchty and Newburgh, were exempt from the division and enclosure process.

A final example of earlier agricultural practices is to be found in the farm-name of *Bruntshields* to the south-west of St Andrews. The name is of interest in two respects. It seems to contain the element **shiel** (ME *sheal*), and this locates the only known example in this area of the seasonal movement of cattle to an upland zone. Bruntland (<ME *brennen* 'burn', past part. *brent*, *burnt*, etc., + *land*) occurred in those parts of the fermtoun where thin soils and excessive moisture allowed only of a poor vegetation cover. Turves were cut from such an area and burnt for their ash, which provided nutrients sufficient to nourish the cultivation of oats over a two-year period. The two practices of arable cultivation and seasonal pasturing of cattle on the sheiling ground is documented for other areas,[16] and it may well have been population pressure which caused this phenomenon at this location in the first place and eventually forced the development of a permanent farmstead.

IV: Place-Names and the Organization of Land Use and Settlement

The exploitation of farmland demands an organizational arrangement whereby the crops to be grown, the time of ploughing and cultivation, and the other aspects of agriculture can be decided. This management necessity was recognized by the monastic landowners of the early medieval period, who set up granges so that their land was, at first, managed by lay brethren but then increasingly let out to tenants.[17] There were monastic houses in northern Fife, and each used this land-management method, as is demonstrated by present-day place-names such as *The Grange* (St Andrews), *Grange* (of Balmerino) and *Grange of Lindores* (Map 5).

The system by which land tenure was organized and managed in the pre-Improver Period is still imperfectly understood. Dodgshon has drawn attention to the practice of dividing fermtoun lands into two parts known in Latin as *solaris* and *umbralis*: the sunny and the shady parts.[18] This cannot be anything other than a reference to the existence of the sunwise division of lands, a practice also documented by Göransson for Scandinavia.[19] Dodgshon also points out that, as land documentation moved from Latin into English, so *solaris* becomes *east* and *umbralis*, *west*. Over all four of the topographic divisions defined for northern Fife (Map 1), extant place-names show a frequent occurrence of the qualifiers *east* and *west*. Before the Improver Period such place-names referred to multiple-tenancy fermtouns. Not only is there interest in these place-names as to the possibility of their indicating the once widespread nature of the sunwise division of lands, but the fact that the fermtouns shared one name must also indicate the previous existence of a single, undivided farm unit and settlement. Thus the place-names are important indicators of the method of land organization of the pre-Improver Period. When a farm-name exists with cardinal qualifiers, it is also worth noting that very rarely are south (*australis*) and north (*borealis*) used. Dodgshon found this to be so in his survey and only two examples occur in northern Fife, in Straiton and Lambieltham (Map 5). In some instances the land division has gone further than the *easter* /*wester* system, and then qualifiers such as *over*, *lower* and *middle* appear. There are also cases where either the *easter* or the *wester* qualifier does not appear, e.g. *East Colzie* but *Colzie*, *Flisk* and *East Flisk*. Is this indicative of different settlement, tenurial and land-division systems? Place-name work has considerable potential for investigation into former land organization and management.

V: Conclusion

The tenor of this paper has been deliberately maintained at the inquisitional level.   Some place-names can be understood and the part they play in helping to explain landscape evolution identified by scholars trained in a particular discipline and working alone.   Even when this does occur, it is not necessarily the case that all facets of the contribution which could be made by the place-names are fully exploited.   It is in that sense, to return to the theme which opened this paper, that the potential of interdisciplinary co-operation would repay the undoubted effort and energy that the setting up of research projects involving a wide spectrum of workers would demand.

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NOTES

This article is a revised version of the paper given on 31 March 1989 at the XXIst Annual Study Conference organized by the Council for Name Studies, held at the University of St Andrews.

[1]   Cf. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names* (London, 1976), 1-2.

[2]   H.C. Wyld and T.O. Hirst, *The Place-Names of Lancashire: their Origin and History* (London, 1911), p.viii.

[3]   This is only one element in the more general approach to the study of place-names which some workers still regard as not being properly addressed by place-name scholars.   See the pertinent questions posed by N. Lund in his review of Th. Andersson, ed., *Nordiska Namnstudier: Festskrift til Harry Stahl 22 September 1985, ante XI* (1987), 182-3.

[4]   V.E. Watts, 'The evidence of place-names, II', in P.H. Sawyer, ed., *English Medieval Settlement* (London, 1976), 122-32.

[5]   C. Thomas, 'Place-name analysis in the geographical study of landscape', *Studia Celtica* VIII-IX (1974), 299-318.

[6]   S.W. Wooldridge, 'The Anglo-Saxon settlement', in H.C. Darby, ed., *An Historical Geography of England before 1800* (Cambridge, 1936), 88-132; S. Kirk, 'A distribution pattern: -ingas in Kent', *JEPNS* IV (1971), 37-49.

[7]   G. Whittington, 'Place-names and the settlement pattern of Dark Age Scotland', *PSAS* CVI (1977), 99-106.

[8]   G.W.S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973), passim.

[9]   G. Whittington and J.A. Soulsby, 'A preliminary report on an investigation into *pit* place-names', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* LXXXIV (1968), 117-25.

[10]   Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names*, 152ff.

[11]   The Book of Deer is a Latin Gospel-book, on blank pages and in the margins of which are entered records regarding grants of land made to the monastic house of Deer in Aberdeenshire.

[12]   J.E. Handley, *Scottish Farming in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1953), 281.

[13]   G. Whittington, 'Agriculture and society in Lowland Scotland, 1750–1850', in *idem* and I.D. Whyte, eds, *An Historical Geography of Scotland* (London, 1983), 141-64.

[14]   G. Whittington and D.U. Brett, 'Locational decision-making on a Scottish estate prior to enclosure', *Journal of Historical Geography* V (1979), 33-43.

[15]   I.H. Adams, 'The Division of Commonties', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh (1967).

[16]   M.D. MacSween, 'Transhumance in North Skye', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* LXXV (1959), 75-88.

[17]   T.B. Franklin, *A History of Scottish Farming* (London, 1952), 53.

[18]   R.A. Dodgshon, 'Scandinavian "solskifte" and the sunwise division of land in eastern Scotland', *Scottish Studies* XIX (1975), 1-14.

[19]   S. Göransson, 'Regular open-field pattern in England and Scandinavian solskifte', *Geografiska Annaler* XLIII (1961), 80-104; *idem*, 'Solskifte: a misinterpreted concept', paper given at Queen's University, Belfast in 1971.
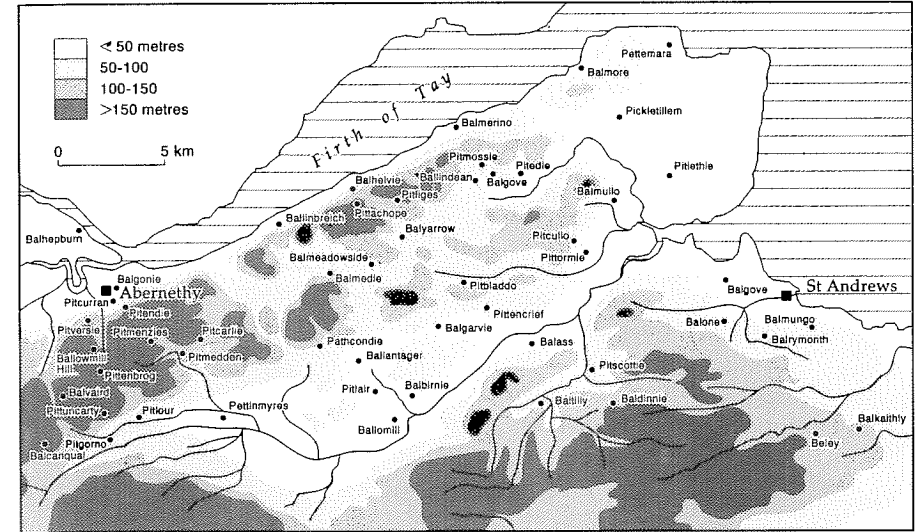
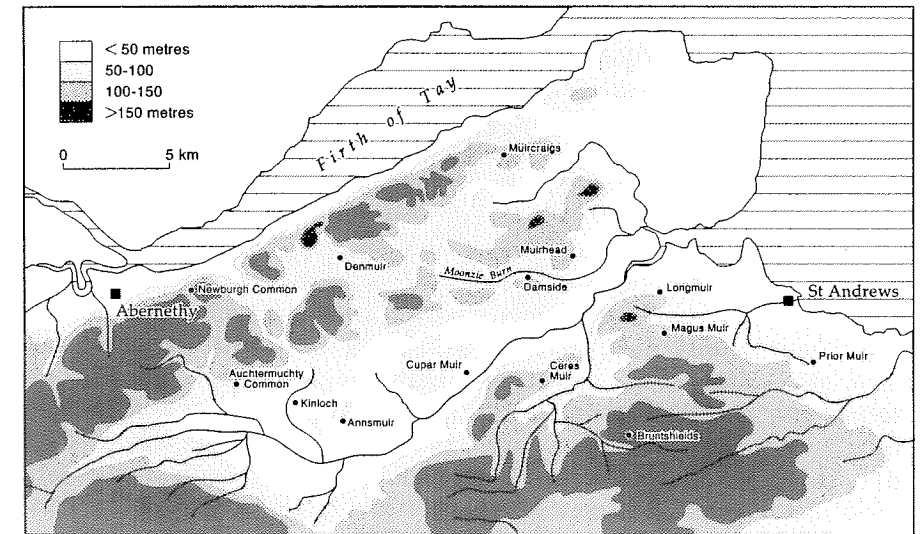**Map 1.** The topographic regions of the study area.
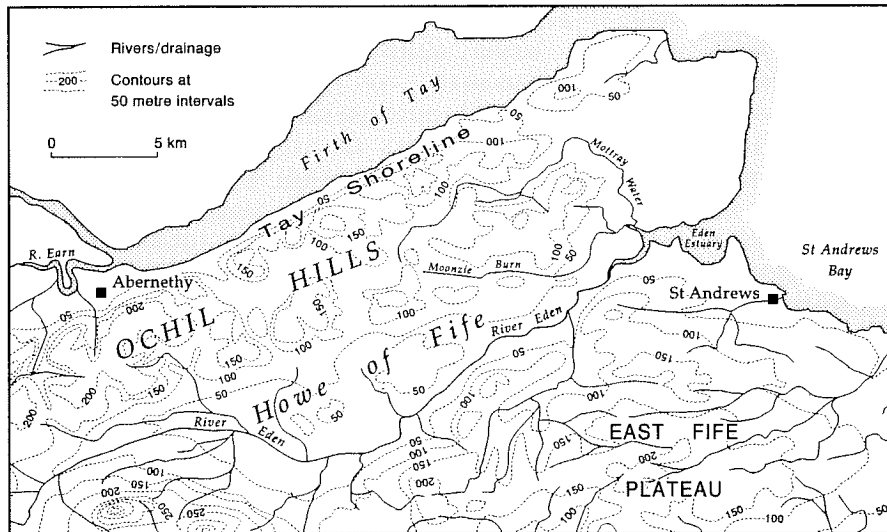
Map 2. The distribution in northern Fife of place-names containing the element pit-.
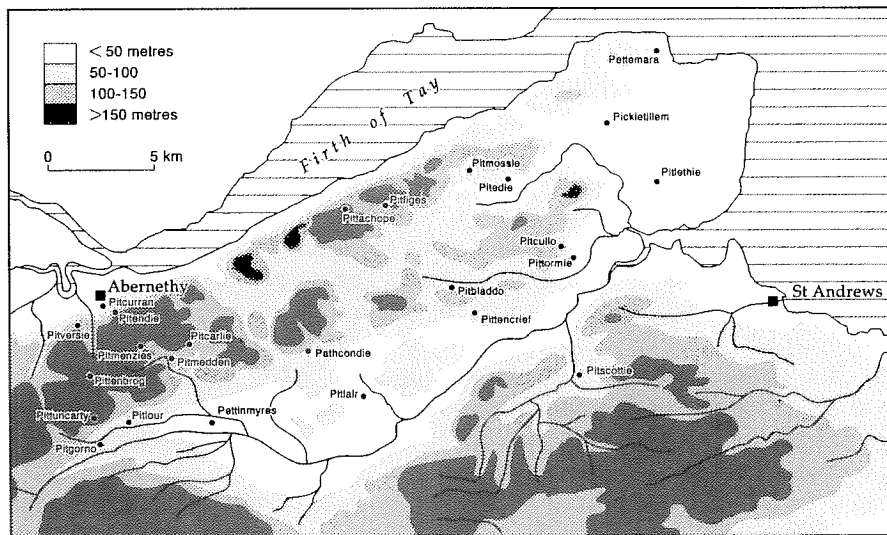
Map 3. The distribution in northern Fife of place-names with the first element bal-. The location of the place-names containing the element pit- is also given.

Map 4. Place-names in northern Fife related to former agricultural practices.

Map 5. Place-names in northern Fife associated with previous methods of the organization of settlement and land use.
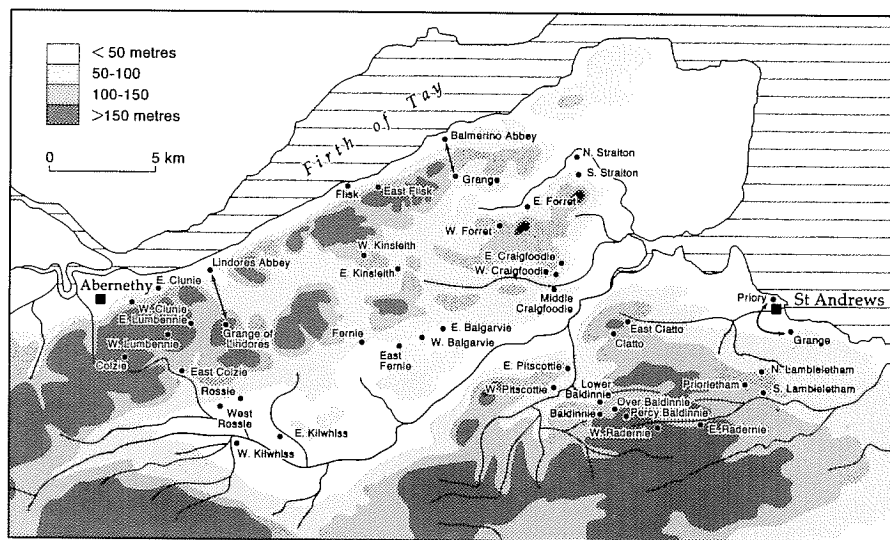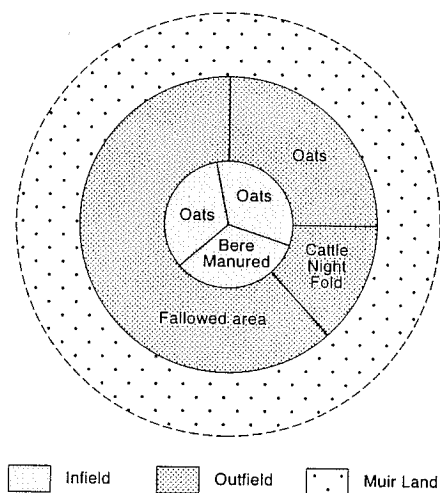

Figure 1. The land-use units of a pre-Improver Period fermtoun.

Late -bý Names in the Eden Valley, Cumberland

Brian K. Roberts

IN 1950 the editors of the English Place-Name Society's survey of Cumberland drew attention to a group of names in -bý which were likely to postdate the conquest of the district by William Rufus in 1092. In two cases there was precise documentary support for linking settlements with datable individuals: thus, Gamblesby and Glassonby are associated with the *terram que fuit Gamel filii Berne et terram illam que fuit Glassam filii Brictrici drengorum meorum* mentioned in a plea of 1201 but referring to the time of Henry I.[1] In all other cases the evidence is less direct, consisting of the occurrence, as place-name specifics combined with the generic -bý, of personal names of distinctive types, either of Continental origin or else likely to have been current west of the Pennines during the first half of the twelfth century.

There are broadly two types of place-name involved:
(1) ones in which the personal name figuring as specific is of a type rare in pre-Conquest England, that is, of French, Breton, Flemish, or other Continental derivation: e.g., *Botcherby* with OFr *Bochard* < CG *Burghard*; *Harraby* with OFr *Henri* < CG *Heimrik*; *Upperby* with OFr *Hubert* < CG *Hugbert*; *Tarraby* with OFr *Terri* < CG *Theodrik*; *Aglionby* with OFr *Agyllun* (c.1176 the vill was held by Laurence son of Agyllun); *Ponsonby* with OFr *Punsun*; *Robberby* with OFr *Robert* < CG *Hrodbert*; *Johnby* with Biblical *Johannes*, rare in pre-Conquest England; *Wiggonby* with Breton *Wigan* or *Wigayn*; *Ellonby* and *Allerby* both with Breton *Alein*; *Lamonby* with *Lambin*, a short-form of CG *Lambert* < *Landbert*, a name popular in Flanders; and *Rickerby* with OFr *Ricard* < CG *Rikhard*.[2]
(2) ones containing personal names of other origins reflecting the eleventh- and twelfth-century mix of the local population, that is, ones of Old English, Irish, Gaelic, or Anglo-Scandinavian origin: e.g., *Melmerby* with Old Celtic *Mael-Muire*, *Mael-Maire*; *Maughonby* with OWelsh *Merchiaun* or OBret *Merchion*; *Dolphenby* with Scand *Dolgfinnr*, a name widely current in northern England, and indeed found in an eleventh- or twelfth-century runic inscription in Carlisle cathedral; *Corby* with OIr *Corc(c)*; *Scotby* 'bý of the Scots', the specific being the gen.pl. of Scand *Skotar*; *Motherby* with Scand *Mothir* fem.; *Lazonby* 'bý of the freedmen' with Scand *leysingr* or, less likely, 'bý of a man called Leysing', for the name was frequent in twelfth-century Cumberland, thus, Orm son of Leising; *Wormanby*, perhaps 'Wilmær's' or 'Winemær's *by*'; *Oughterby* with OE *Ūhtræd*;