



- Key:
1. Ormiston.
 2. Johnston.
 3. Thorestont.
 4. Thomastoun.
 5. Randerston
(*Randolph*).
 6. Wormistone
(*Winemar*).
 7. Pinkerton by Crail.
 8. Otterston.
 9. Couston (*Kol*).
 10. Pinkertont by
Inverkeithing
(exact site
unknown).
- centre of sheriffdom
of Fife.
□ burgh.

Map 2: FIFE. Distribution of settlement-names in *-tūn* + Anglo-Scandinavian, English or Norman personal or occupational names, c.1200.

The Place-Name Hexham: A Mainly Philological Approach

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When I was invited, in 1992, to talk to the Hexham Local History Society on the place-names of the area, I readily accepted, in the belief that at least the major place-name was well documented and well understood. In the event, however, looking at it afresh, I found a whole series of questions raised themselves, and a host of issues I had scarcely anticipated. The following paper is offered in celebration of the sheer fascination of place-name study and the great range of matters it can touch upon, some of them not a little recondite and much disputed.¹

The earliest occurrence of the name Hexham is c. 1120 in the Laud manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in the annal for the year 685:

Her hæc Ecgferð cining gehalgan Cuðbert to biscope. 7 Theodorus archiepisopus hine gehalgode on Eforwic þam forman Eostordæge to biscope to Hagustaldes ham.

In this year Ecgfrith had Cuthbert consecrated bishop, and archbishop Theodore consecrated him bishop of Hexham at York on the first day of Easter.²

Typical spellings from Richard of Hexham's History of the Church of Hexham and other twelfth-century writers are *Hestoldesham*,

¹This is a revised and expanded version of a paper originally given at the Annual Conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland at Alston Hall, Lancashire, in April 1993, and subsequently at the 28th International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, in May the same year.

²*Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, edited by Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1892-99), I, 39; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, translated by G. N. Garmonsway (London, 1953), p. 39.

Hastaldesham, *Hestaldasham* and *Hesteldesham*.³ From 1268 to 1535, the regular spelling in Latin documents is *Hextildesham*, although the appearance of the spellings *Hextelsam* in 1314 and *Hexham* from 1362, originally in documents written in French and increasingly frequently from 1408 in all documents, demonstrates that the longer form became a traditional chancery form isolated from the spoken language.⁴

At first glance, this may seem an acceptable sequence of forms. But a number of questions immediately raise themselves about this name.

I. In the first place, the form *Hextildesham* cannot derive directly from *Hestoldesham*. Richard of Hexham's own explanation that *Hestoldesham* is named

a rivulo ibi decurrente et quandoque ad modum torrentis exuberante,
hestild nomine, quasi praedium Hestild

from a stream running down there and sometimes swelling to a torrent,
called the *Hestild*, as though 'the *Hestild* manor'

is simply guesswork.⁵ Rather, it seems likely that *Hestoldesham* was reformed, at least partly under the influence of popular etymology, as if it were 'Hextild's estate'. *Hextild* or *Hestild* is an Anglo-Saxon feminine personal name actually borne by the wife of Richard Comyn, an important magnate and beneficiary of Hexham in the twelfth century.⁶

³*The Priory of Hexham*, edited by James Raine, 2 vols, Surtees Society, 44/46 (Durham, 1864-65), I, 8-106.

⁴*ibid.*, pp. xvii-cxxiii.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 8. The stream is the brook which runs on the west side of the town and is now known as Cockshaw Burn.

⁶Richard Comyn was a nephew of William Comyn, archdeacon of Worcester and chancellor of King David of Scotland, who, in 1141, attempted to seize the bishopric of Durham. He was donor of the lands of Carraw on the Roman wall to the Priory of Hexham (*ibid.*, p. 148, note q; p. 169, note x.6). The Comyn family, which subsequently rose to great power in Scotland, already had an interest in the north when William I sent the ill-fated Robert de Commines to Durham in 1068, with the title of earl, to restore order north of the Tees. See D. C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (London, 1964), p. 214; G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973), *passim*. I have not

Nor can the form *Hestoldesham* derive directly from *Hagustaldesham*. *Hagustaldesham* means either 'Hagustald's estate' or 'the *hagustald*'s estate'. *Hagustald* is a compound name or title formed from OE *haga* 'a hedge, a fence, a fenced enclosure, a dwelling within an enclosure', and *stald* 'owner, possessor, occupier'. OE *haga* normally becomes *haw(e)* in Middle English, just as *haguthorn* 'hedge-thorn'—the sort of thorn-tree used to form natural hedges—becomes ModE *hawthorn*.⁷ Beside *haga*, however, there was another Anglo-Saxon word *hæg* meaning 'woven fence, piece of land enclosed by such a fence',⁸ as in the place-names Hay in Breconshire (*La Haye* 1259) and Hay in Westmorland (*Haia*, (*le, ye, the*) *Hay(e)* 1297 etc.);⁹ and beside *hagustald*,

come across another example of the name *Hestild*, which could, however, be of ON origin, **Hestildr* < *hestr* 'horse' (cognate with OE *hengest* and *Há-* in ON personal names < PrGmc **hanha-*) + *hildr*; for similar feminine compound names, cf. *Armbildr* (PrON **arnu-* 'eagle'), *Bjarnbildr* (*björn* 'bear'), *Dýrbildr* (*dýr* 'wild animal, deer'), *Ulfbildr* (*úlfr* 'wolf'), etc.

⁷ME forms without labialization occur in Yorkshire place-names such as Haigh, Hague, etc. (Victor Watts, 'Shaw/Shay Revisited', *Nomina*, 13, 1989-90, 109-14, at p. 110), and a late ME form with *ā* < *au* is theoretically possible, although it would be indistinguishable from *hay* < OE *hæg*; see n. 7, below.

⁸OE *haga* and *hæg* are related words, both ultimately deriving from the Indo-European root **kagh-* 'interlace, fence'. Different suffixes were compounded with this root to form a family of related words in Germanic, **haga-* (OE *hæg*, German *Hag* 'woven hedge'), **hagan-* (OE *haga* 'natural or quickset hedge'), **hagjō(n)* (OE *hecg*, German *Hecke*) and **hagna-* (OHGerman *hagan*, OE **hæg(e)n* 'grove, enclosure'). The details of these connections may be followed in standard etymological dictionaries such as C. T. Onions, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford, 1966); Kluge-Seebold, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Berlin and New York, 1989); Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols (Bern and Munich, 1959-69), I, 518; F. Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934); and cf. R. Coates, 'Virgins and Haws: The Progeny of Germanic *HAG- in Old English', in his *Toponymic Topics* (Woodingdean, 1988), pp. 74-80.

⁹E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford, 1960), s.n. Hay, and *PNWestm.*, I, 131, unless these are to be taken from the *i*-declension variant OE *hege* from PrGmc **hagi-*.

there was the parallel variant *hægsteald*, spelt *behstald* in the tenth-century Northumbrian gloss added interlinearly to the Lindisfarne Gospels while the community of St Cuthbert was lodged at Chester-le-Street.¹⁰ Although it is not found in the recorded spellings of Hexham, it is clear that the variant **Hæg*-, or better **Hehstaldesham*, is required to explain both twelfth-century *Hestoldesham* and the re-shaped *Hextildesham*, since *Hagustaldesham* could only have produced forms such as **Hau*-, **Hou*- or **Hostaldesham*.

II. The second question is whether the specific of this name is to be regarded as a personal name or an appellative (common noun), a question left over when I translated *Hagustaldesham* as either 'Hagustald's estate' or 'the *bagustald*'s estate'. *Hagustald* is found as a personal name in runic inscriptions in Scandinavia,¹¹ and is also

¹⁰Albert S. Cook, *A Glossary of the Old Northumbrian Gospels* (Halle, 1894), gives fourteen references to *hébståld* 'virgo' (m. and f.) as well as one each to *hébståldhád* and *hébståldnisse* 'virginitas'. The spelling is interesting, since comparison with other forms in the gloss, *beh* itself ('altus, excelsus, summus'), *hehsacerd* ('summus sacerdos'), *hehsedl* ('thronus, tribunal'), etc., suggests that the glossator believed that the first element of the compound *behstald* was OE *hēah*, Anglian *hēh* 'high', rather than *hæg* 'enclosure'. Franz Wenisch, *Spezifisch anglisches Wortgut in den nordhumbrischen Interlinearglossierungen des Lukasevangeliums* (Heidelberg, 1979), p. 169, is probably wrong in following Hildegard Rauh's claim that *hægsteald* is a specifically Anglian word (*Der Wortschatz der altenglischen Uebersetzungen des Matthaeus-Evangeliums untersucht auf seine dialektische und zeitliche Gebundenheit*, Diss. Berlin, 1936) in view of the occurrence of *hægsteald* in the Somerset and Gloucestershire place-names cited below.

¹¹*HagustaldaR*, Valsfjord c. 400, *HagustadaR*, Strand c. 500 (Wolfgang Krause, *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark*, mit Beiträgen von H. Jankuhn, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen: Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, 3. Folge, 65 (Göttingen, 1966), nos. 55 and 75); cf. W. P. Lehmann, *A Gothic Etymological Dictionary* (Leiden, 1986), A-177 s.v. *and-stald*.

attested in Old High German,¹² but not so far independently in English. As a personal name, it is a by-name from the common noun *bagustald*, the original sense of which has always been taken to be 'possessor of a fenced enclosure'.¹³ It is recorded in all the Germanic languages (except Gothic) in various derived senses, such as 'bachelor, youth, servant, chieftain', and in medieval Latin in the Lombard Laws (in the form *gastaldius*, *gastaldio*, *kastaldis*) in the sense 'steward (of royal estates), governor (of a district)'.¹⁴

In Anglo-Saxon texts, *bagosteald* and *hægsteald* are used both as nouns and adjectivally in the following senses:

1. In legal texts, to translate Latin *caelebs* 'unmarried', and in contrast to OE *hæmedceorl* 'married man'.¹⁵

¹²Fourteen examples of *Hagustalt* are cited in Ernst Förstemann, *Altdeutsches Namenbuch*, I: *Personennamen* (Bonn, 1900), col. 717. The term also occurs in four OGerman place-names, *Hagestaldeshusen* 11th cent. (? = Alkertshausen near Blaufelden; Förstemann, *Altdeutsches Namenbuch*, II: *Ortsnamen*, [I], col. 1154), *Hagestaltstedi* 10th cent. (Hagstedt near Vechta, *ibid.*), *Hagestaltistorf* 12th cent. (Harsdorf near Freyung, *ibid.*, [II], col. 1541) and *Agastaldaburg* 1046 (? = Terborg near Leer, M. Gysseling, *Toponymisch Woordenboek van België, Nederland, Luxemburg, Nord-Frankrijk en West-Duitsland* (Tongern, 1960-61), p. 460), where it can hardly be a personal name since this is a genitive plural compound.

¹³So, too, the German name, according to H. Kaufmann, *Altdeutsche Personennamen: Ergänzungsband* (Munich and Hildesheim, 1968), p. 162, is a 'Beiname eines Erwachsenen, nicht aber also Rufname, den man einem Kinde beilegte'. He proceeds to cite Kluge's traditional explanation of it as an old legal term for the *Hagbesitzer* in contrast to the *Besitzer des Hofes* which the eldest son inherited; see further below. Cf. also Krause-Jankuhn, *Runeninschriften*, p. 124, and John Insley, 'The Scandinavian Runic Inscriptions of the Older Futhork and Old English Personal Names', in *Old English Runes and their Continental Background*, edited by A. Bammesberger (Heidelberg, 1991), p. 326.

¹⁴Lehmann, *Gothic Dictionary*, A-177.

¹⁵*Ecgberti Confessionale*, in *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, edited by B. Thorpe, 2 vols (London, 1840), II, 132, line 8, and 142, line 13.

2. In poetry, to mean 'youth, warrior'.¹⁶
3. In biblical paraphrase, to mean 'young man' and also 'virgin' of either sex.¹⁷
4. In the sense 'novice, tiro' translating Latin *tiro* contrasted with *miles* 'knight', OE *cniht* contrasted with *hægsteald vel geong cempa*.¹⁸

In addition are found the nouns *hægsteald-bād* and *-nis* 'virginity, bachelorhood', *hægstealdman* used in both senses 1 and 2 above, and *hægstealdlic* 'virginal' used of the Virgin Mary.¹⁹

Hagustald, or rather *hægsteald*, occurs in two other English place-

¹⁶*Exodus* line 327, *hægsteald modige* 'young warriors (were) valiant', a phrase parallel to *wigend unforhte* line 328, 'warriors (were) fearless'; Finnesburg Fragment line 40, of Hnæf's retainers defending the hall doorway against attack; *Genesis* line 1862; *Beowulf* line 1889, of Beowulf's retinue described as a company of *fela-modigra hæg-stealdra*, where the usage is ambiguous as between adjectival 'of the very brave ones, of the young' and nominal 'of very brave young warriors'; *Descent into Hell* line 21, of Christ as a young warrior arising from the dead; *Fortunes of Men* line 92, of a young warrior who trains a hawk; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle versions C and D under year 1065, of the retainers of Edward the Confessor. This sense also occurs in the strange gloss *swylce geongum hægstealde, rince, bysse*, for Latin *ut effebo hircitallo*, in which *hægsteald* is further explained by the OE words *rinc* and *byss*, both poetical terms for a man, especially a young warrior, and corresponds to Latin *ephebus* 'youth' and to *hircitallos* 'tragelaph', a fabulous animal, half goat and half stag (*Old English Glosses, Chiefly Unpublished*, edited by A. S. Napier, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Mediæval and Modern Series, 11 (Oxford, 1900), no. 3476).

¹⁷Psalm 148.12 translating Latin *iuvenes* and contrasted with *fæmnan*, *virgines*, and frequently in the Lindisfarne Gospel and Durham Ritual glosses; see the references in J. Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898).

¹⁸The Anglo-Saxon interlinear gloss of Defensor's *Liber Scintillarum*, edited by E. W. Rhodes, Early English Text Society, 93 (London, 1889), p. 205, line 6.

¹⁹Durham Ritual 66.1. The actual form used is the Northumbrian dialect form *bebstallic*.

names: Hestercombe in Somerset (grid reference ST 2428), *Hægstaldescumb* [672 for 682] 17th cent., *hægstaldescumb* * [854] 12th cent., *Hegstealdcumb* [c. 900] 12th cent.,²⁰ *Hestercumba* [1155 × 1158] 1334, 'Hægsteald's valley' or 'the *hægsteald*'s valley'; and the lost *Hegestuldes setl* [950] 19th cent. Sawyer 553, 'Hægsteald's dwelling' or 'the *hægsteald*'s dwelling' in the bounds of Pucklechurch, Gloucestershire.²¹

There are two important German discussions of the term *hagustalt*. Peter Ilkow, in a monograph on compound nouns in the Old Saxon biblical poetry, re-states the conventional view: according to the Germanic laws of inheritance, on the death of his father, the first-born son succeeded to the family estates and privileges *in toto*, including rights over his younger siblings, who were not, however, left entirely destitute. They were rather entitled to receive a small neighbouring property, one without manorial rights and too small to support a full-scale household. In German, such a property was called a *Hag*, 'a plot of ground with a surrounding fence', and its occupant, the *hagustalt*, was, in effect, unable to contract a legal marriage so long as he remained in the *Hag*. He might, however, leave or be driven out, and seek war-service elsewhere, becoming a soldier of fortune, hoping to win enough booty himself, or as another lord's vassal, to set himself up in independence. Hence the semantic development of the word to 'young warrior' and 'vassal'.²²

This, the traditional view, was forcibly challenged by the distinguished German Philologist, Jost Trier, in 1949, in a fascinating, if tantalising, discussion of the German word *Heide* 'heath'.²³ Arguing from the connotations of the word in early German lyric poetry, he sought to demonstrate that the underlying sense of this word was not 'waste land', but 'common land', and that the term originated in

²⁰P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), nos 237 (doubtful), 311 (spurious) and 1819.

²¹*PNGlos.*, III, 67.

²²Peter Ilkow, *Die Nominalkomposita der altsächsischen Bibeldichtung* (Göttingen, 1968), pp. 164-66. Cf. also H. M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 341-42.

²³'Heide', *Archiv für Literatur und Volksdichtung*, 1 (1949), 63-104.

connection with early communal settlement patterns.²⁴ Etymologically, it can be traced back to an Indo-European form **kei-t-i-a* (beside **kei-to-* from which Welsh *coed* 'wood' ultimately descends) from the root **kei* + suffixed *-t-*. IE **kei-*, with its ablaut variant **kei-* and different suffixal elements, is widely held to be the source of a large family of words all connected with the idea of community, e.g. Latin *civis* 'a citizen' (< **kei-wi-s*) and OE *hīwan* 'a household, a family' (< **kei-wo-s*), and *hām* (< **kei-mo-*).²⁵ According to Trier, the same root **kei-* lies behind words for things made of interlace, such as fences and hurdles.²⁶ He argued that the idea of the

²⁴To which we might add passages in English, such as the famous opening lines of *The Canterbury Tales*, 'When Zephyrus eek with his sweete breeth | Inspired hath in every holt and heeth | The tendre croppes . . .', where *croppes* means 'young shoots' and *heeth* the common open land between the village proper and the surrounding woodland (*holt*), *heath* being an English word which, along with *moor* (originally meaning 'marshland, common pasture' rather than 'barren upland'), was pushed into semantic shift by the increasing use of the (originally) French word *common*, a semantic shift paralleled by German *Heide*. The relationship of the plant-names *heath* and *heather* to the landscape term seems to be derivative. In OE, *hæthe* glosses Latin *thymus* 'thyme', a plant of dry banks and pastures (Épinal Glossary, no. 1002, 7th cent., Erfurt Glossary, no. 2012, 8th cent.). Its association with *genista* 'broom' and the moorland *Calluna vulgaris* (northern *ling*) dates only from the 14th century, and seems to reflect the semantic shift. The other word for *Calluna vulgaris*, *heather*, of uncertain origin, is first recorded in the 14th century in the northern spellings *hathir*, *haddy*, and was subsequently assimilated to the form of *heath*; see OED, s.vv.

²⁵Trier, 'Heide', pp. 92 ff; Émile Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, I: *Économie, parenté, société* (Paris, 1969), p. 335 ff.; Pokorny, I, 539–40.

²⁶The link here, however, is tenuous. The words he cites, *κοίτη* 'bed, lair, fold for cattle, basket', *κοτίς* 'box, basket', *κοίτος* 'bed, sleep', seem rather to have senses derived from that of *κείται* 'lies'. Although this word is treated by Pokorny (I, 539–40) under *kei-kei-*, connection with Gothic *haims*, OE *hām*, etc., is regarded by Chantraine as 'très douteux' (*Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, 2 vols (Paris, 1968–80), I, 510), and rejected by Lehmann, *Gothic Dictionary*, H-57, s.v. **heirwa-frauja*; see his important discussion 'PIE

community was intimately bound up with that which marked the boundary or edge of the communal, and pointed to a semantic development 'fence' > 'community, group' > 'surrounding ring of common land, boundary'. It is to this concept that he related the word *haga* 'enclosure', not in the sense 'plot of ground with a surrounding fence', but rather 'the ring of houses which form the community'. In this seductive but highly speculative interpretation, a *hagustalt* is not one who occupies a plot, but a warrior who serves the whole community and is offered hospitality and entertainment by turns at each of the participating houses of the ring which forms the community. Such *samurai* warriors, it is argued, were the direct descendants of the Chatti professional warriors of the first century A.D., who despised the actual possession of home or land:

None of them has a home, land, or any occupation. To whatever host they choose to go, they get their keep from him, squandering other men's

key—a Problem in Etymological Research', in *Studia Linguistica Diachronica et Synchronica*, edited by U. Pieper and G. Stickel (Berlin, New York and Amsterdam, 1985), pp. 519–25, where the *haim*, *heirwa* family is convincingly related to IE **kei-* 'here'. The issue, however, is actually irrelevant to Trier's argument, since he believed that the sense 'community' might have been primary and independent of the presence of physical fences, hurdles or interlace work ('Heide', p. 95). And, as we have seen, the *Hag* family belongs rather to the IE root **kagh-*; see above, n. 7, and below, n. 27.

What lies at the root of Trier's argument is not so much phonological correspondence as his well-known thesis that the primary sense of words depends not on disinterested observation of the objects of this world, but on man's active involvement with them economically, as user, consumer, exploiter, etc. His attempt to see the concrete sense 'fence' at the base of a whole group of words whose (secondary) sense is related to the communal exemplifies the first of his three rules of *Wortforschung*: 'Treten in einem Wort, sei es gleichzeitig, sei es im geschichtlichen Nacheinander, praktisch-technische und kontemplativ-distanzierende Bedeutungen auf, so gilt die Arbeitshypothese: die praktisch-technischen Bedeutungen sind die ursprünglichen' ('Meine drei Ansätze zur Wortforschung', in *Gedenkschrift für Jost Trier*, edited by H. Beckers and H. Schwarz (Cologne, 1975), p. 2).

property since they think it beneath them to have any of their own.²⁷

The semantic development 'servant, young warrior' > 'noble retainer' is due to changing social circumstances, as the institution developed from service of the community to service of an overlord.

Attractive and persuasive though they are, Trier's arguments have not commanded universal assent.²⁸ In a sense, however, this does not matter. Whether the basic sense was 'owner of a plot' or 'protector of a community', the kind of person concerned is, by definition, one without a family home, an exile, in fact, and early Germanic literature, from *Beowulf* onwards, is full of examples of young warriors who seek fame and fortune in exile. 'Young warrior' is, in fact, the only secular sense which is demonstrably relevant in Anglo-Saxon England, and if, by definition a *hagustald* did not possess an estate, it is hard to see how the place-name *Hagustaldesham* could have arisen with any other non-religious sense. *Hagustald* was probably some sort of honorific title like OE *cild* 'young nobleman', if not actually a personal name, for which, as we have seen, there is no evidence in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁹

²⁷'Nulli domus aut ager aut aliqua cura: prout ad quemque venere, aluntur, prodigi alieni, comtemptores sui', Tacitus, *Germania*, 31.5; English version from *The Agricola and the Germania*, translated by H. Mattingly, revised version (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 128. Tacitus's lapidary style is, as so often, problematic. The last phrase should probably be translated, not 'scorning to have any property of their own', but 'scorning the property they had before taking to this mode of life'. Tacitus writes as a Roman and a rhetorician: his phraseology imitates a passage in Sallust, and is not in any case to be taken as objective anthropological comment.

²⁸Lehmann, *Gothic Dictionary*, H-22 s.v. **haiþi*, regards the proposed original meaning 'common land' for *Heide* as unconvincing, and, indeed, posits a different IE base, **kaito*- 'uncultivated land, woods'. It is, however, accepted by de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, p. 217, s.v. *heidr*². Kluge-Seebold, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, relate *Heide*¹ to Latin *caedo* 'cut down' in the sense 'useful waste land'; i.e. where the wild vegetation has been cut down. Of *Hagestolz*, they say: 'die Bestandteile sind offenbar *Hag* und die Entsprechung zu gt. *staldan* "besitzen"—alles weitere ist unklar und spekulativ'.

²⁹Cf. above, n. 12.

III. If, then, the element *hagustald* in the name Hexham is, if not an actual personal name, some sort of by-name or title, is it possible to identify the person to whom it may have applied? Hexham was an estate given in 674 to St Wilfrid by queen Æthelthryth of Northumbria.³⁰ In later times, estates were often known by tenurial names, which could change with change of ownership. If an estate was given to religious house, it was often known by the name of its donor; thus Nelson near Hartlepool in Durham, *Nelestune* c. 1196, is the estate given to Finchale Abbey by Niel, the steward of Robert De Brus II in whose fee it lay.³¹ Now Æthelthryth was honoured liturgically as a virgin, even though she was twice married, first to Tondberht, ealdormon of the South Gyrwas, secondly to king Ecgfrith of Northumbria, a marriage which was definitely not consummated.³² She is depicted in a tenth-century manuscript with the inscription *Imago sanctae Æthelbrythae Abbatisae ac Perpetuae Virginis* 'the picture of St Æthelthryth, abbess and perpetual virgin'.³³ Since one of the senses of *hagustald* is 'virgin', the question arises whether the reference in the name Hexham is not to Æthelthryth herself. Unfortunately, the use of the masculine genitive singular ending *-es* casts some doubt upon this. When used with a feminine reference, the noun would probably have had the feminine genitive ending *-e*. Even in the Old

³⁰*The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, edited and translated with notes by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), Chapter 22 (p. 45). Æthelthryth is the proper Anglo-Saxon form of the queen's name, but she is variously found in literature as *Aedilthryd*, *Aethilthryth*, *Ethelfryth*, *Etheldreda* and *Audrey*. In giving Wilfrid an estate to endow a monastery, Æthelthryth was doing no more (or less) than her mother-in-law Eanfled did when she persuaded her husband Oswiu to give a site to found a monastery at Gilling; see Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, edited by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), III, 14 (hereafter HE).

³¹Cf. *Medieval Settlement*, edited by P. H. Sawyer (London, 1976), pp. 219–22; Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (London, 1798), pp. 180–84.

³²Bede, HE, IV, 19 (p. 391). Wilfrid himself confirmed the truth of this to Bede in person.

³³British Library, Add. MS 49598, fol. 90v. See Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1984), p. 118.

Northumbrian dialect of Old English, in which the *-es* genitive ending was widely extended into the declension of *ō*-stem feminine nouns, genitive singular *hebstalde* is still found in Rushworth.³⁴ Furthermore, we do have a valuable piece of evidence about how the name Hexham was understood in early times. The Welsh king, Cadwallon of Gwynedd, who, in 632, had overthrown king Edwin of Northumbria and his son Osfrith, was himself overthrown and killed near Hexham in late 633 by St Oswald. This battle, called in English *Hefenfeld*,³⁵ is referred to in the early ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* ('Nennius') as *Catscaul* or *Cantscaul*.³⁶ The latter form, which is probably the correct one (since *Cat-* can be explained as due to omission of the abbreviation mark for *n*), can be interpreted as a compound of Old Welsh *cant* 'surrounding wall, enclosure', and *scaul* 'young warrior', cognate with Irish *scál* 'champion, hero'.³⁷ It is thus, apparently, a literal translation of *Hagustaldesham*, especially if the writer mistook the ending *-ham* for OE *hamm* 'an enclosure', instead of the correct *hām* 'village, estate'.

Hexham was clearly a royal estate, and Tom Corfe's suggestion that the *hagustald* in question was Æthelthryth's father-in-law, Oswiu, younger brother of king Oswald, is unobjectionable, though no more than a guess.³⁸ Could it, however, refer to Wilfrid himself? As James

³⁴Karl Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik*, 3rd edition (Tübingen, 1965), § 252, Anm. 2.

³⁵Bede, HE, III, 2; traditionally identified since Leland with Hallington, Northumberland.

³⁶*Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals*, edited and translated by John Morris (London and Chichester, 1980), pp. 79 and 86.

³⁷See Kenneth Jackson, 'On the Northern British Section in Nennius', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, edited by Nora K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 20–62 (at p. 34), following Ifor Williams, 'Bellum Cantscaul', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 6 (1931–33), 351–54.

³⁸As he himself admits, in *Hexham Historian*, 1 (1991), 45. Another possibility could well be Æthelthryth's husband king Ecgrith, Oswiu's son; just as Oswiu gave a site for the monastery at Gilling at the request of his queen, Eanfled, so perhaps it is more likely, in spite of Eddius's words that Hexham was obtained *a regina Aethelthrythae* 'from queen Æthelthryth' (*Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, chapter 22, p. 44), that Ecgrith was the donor at Æthelthryth's request. Bede actually says that Ecgrith promised Wilfrid

Campbell has written,³⁹ what shines through Wilfrid's career are the values of the Northumbrian nobility. He was himself a nobleman. Royal *gesiths* were entertained in his father's home.⁴⁰ He early obtained arms, horses and equipment for himself, and was recommended to Oswiu's queen, Eanfled, while still a boy.⁴¹ His early career is precisely that of the kind of exile implied by the term *hagustald*, the distinguishing factor in Wilfrid's case being that his exile took on a religious motivation, with Rome as its goal.⁴²

IV. A further point arises, however, which takes the argument to another issue. *Hagustaldesham* is not the only or the earliest name for Hexham, and it is time to review the other evidence. It falls into three types:

(A) The earliest forms are those in Bede's Ecclesiastical History completed in 731, the earliest MSS of which (The Moore MS and the Leningrad MS) belong to c. 737. In this work, Bede consistently refers to 'the church at Hexham', *Hagustaldensis ecclesia*, in which *Hagustaldensis* is a Latin adjectival form 'Hagustaldian', related to the place-name in exactly the same way as his *Lindisfarnensis ecclesia* 'the Lindisfarnian church' is related to the place-name Lindisfarne, 'the island of the Lindsey travellers', OE *Lindisfarena-æg*.

(B) The oldest MS of the early eighth-century anonymous Life of St Cuthbert, written about A.D. 900, gives the form *Hagustaldesae*, with variants from later MSS, *Hagustaldesæ* late 10th cent., *Hagustaldese* 12th cent., and *Hagustaldense* (which seems to have been influenced by the Latin adjective *Hagustaldensis*) in four MSS dated between c. 1200 and the fourteenth century. Comparable with this are the spellings in the Laud MS (MS E) of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *Hagustaldesée*,

estates and money if he could persuade Æthelthryth to consummate their marriage (HE, IV, 19, p. 393).

³⁹James Campbell, Eric John and Patrick Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1982), p. 83.

⁴⁰*Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, p. 7 (chapter 2).

⁴¹*ibid.*

⁴²*ibid.*, p. 9 (chapter 3).

Hagustaldese, under the year 766, and the abbreviated forms *Hagstd ee* under the year 780 and *Hagust'd ee* under the year 789, with the corresponding form *Hagst ée* in British Library MS Cotton Domitian A.VIII of c. 1100 (MS F). The earlier MS of Eddius's Life of Bishop Wilfrid, written about A.D. 720, MS C of the eleventh century, gives *Hagustaldesae* twice, and, with the preposition *in* prefixed, *Inbagustaldaesae* twice, and *Inbagustaldensae* once. The later MS F of c. 1100 is less consistent, with *Hagustaldesia*, *Agustaldaesia*, *Agustaldaesei*, *Inbaegustaldesei*, *Inaegustaldesae*, *Inagustaldesia* and *Inbegustaldesia* once each.

(C) Two examples of the spelling *Hagustaldes ea* are found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in MS E of c. 1121 under year 681, and in MS F of c. 1100 under year 685.

There can be no doubt that the (B) type spellings all represent OE *Hagustaldes-ē(g)* 'Hagustald's island' or 'the *hagustald*'s island', while the (C) form appears to represent OE *Hagustaldes-ēa* 'Hagustald's river' or 'the *hagustald*'s river'. Early spellings of OE *ēg* (pronounced [ei] to rhyme with *day*) are found in the following sources:

- (1) Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert, 699 × 705: *Cocwædesæ*, Coquet Island, Northumberland; *Lindisfarnae*, Lindisfarne;
- (2) Eddi's Life of Bishop Wilfrid, c. 710 × 720: *Lindisfarne insula*; *in Seolesia*, *in Selaesia*, Selsey, Sussex;
- (3) Bede's Prose Life of St Cuthbert, c. 721: *Insula Lindisfarnea*;
- (4) Bede's Ecclesiastical History, 731: *Beardaneu*, Bardney, Lincs.; *Cerotaesei*, Chertsey, Surrey; *Heruteu*, Hartlepool, Co. Durham; *Laestingaeu*, *Laestinga ei*, *in Laestingae*, Lastingham, North Yorks.; *prouincia Lindissi*, *Lindissae prouincia*, Lindsey, Lincs.; *Peartaneu*, Partney, Lincs.; *Selaeseu*, Selsey.⁴³

⁴³See Barrie Cox, 'The Place-Names of the Earliest English Records', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 8 (1975-76), 16-41, and Ivar Dahl, *Substantival Inflection in Early Old English* (Lund, 1938), pp. 99-100, for a fuller and more correct list. Northern sources only are cited, since the charter

Thus we have *æ* once, *ae* thrice, *e* once, *ea* once, *ei* twice, *eu* five times, *i* once, and *iae* twice. They may be explained as follows. OE *ēg* derives from PrGmc **a(g)wǰō-*, a feminine *jō-* formation on the root **ahwō-* of **ahwō* 'river'.⁴⁴ In the Anglian dialect of Old English, this would be expected to give *ē* in the nominative case,⁴⁵ but *ēge* in the genitive and dative cases,⁴⁶ whence a new analogical nominative singular *ēg* could develop.⁴⁷

Of the sixteen early spellings cited above, therefore, those in *ae* and *e* may be taken as representing OE *ē*,⁴⁸ and those in *ei* as representing *ēg*.⁴⁹ Bede's unusual *eu* is either an archaic form from **awjō* without analogical loss of *-u*,⁵⁰ or a re-inflexion with the OE feminine nominative singular ending *-u*, which was regular with short-stemmed nouns like *faru*, *lufu*, *racu*, etc., but normally absent in long-stemmed

evidence for names in Essex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex is not relevant here.

⁴⁴Lehmann, *Gothic Dictionary*, A-60.

⁴⁵By *j*-mutation of **awwju* < **awwǰō* < **awjō* with consonant gemination before *j* and loss of the *j*-element, as, for example, in OE *ǰð* 'wave' = OSax *ūdia*. The *-u* element was lost by analogy with the *ō*-declension in which it could not stand in OE after a long syllable: A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), § 120 (2); Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik*, § 173, Anm. 2, and § 257, Anm. 1; H. Krahe, *Germanische Sprachwissenschaft*, II: *Formenlehre*, Sammlung Göschen, 780 (Berlin, 1969), p. 25.

⁴⁶Where the *j*-element is preserved as a syllable breaker.

⁴⁷Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik*, § 176.4.

⁴⁸*æ* and *e* may be taken as equivalents; cf. Colgrave's comment on 'slight orthographical differences which, so far as one could tell, were due largely to the idiosyncracies of the scribes. Thus *-ae* is written sometimes *-ae*, sometimes *-e*, and sometimes *-e'*' (*Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, p. xv).

⁴⁹OE *g* is regularly written *i* when it stands for the palatal spirant [j].

⁵⁰So Cox, 'Place-Names of the Earliest English Records', p. 16, following Dahl, *Substantival Inflection*, p. 101, though his view that *ēg* is a new nominative formed from 'the original obl. case, PGmc **awi*' seems mistaken, since this would surely have given OE **ewe* exactly as *ewe*, *eowu* 'female sheep' from **awī*: Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 593 (2). There is no trace in English of any form derived from an **awī* parallel to Gothic *marwi* < **magwī*: E. Kieckers, *Handbuch der vergleichenden gotischen Grammatik*, 2nd edition (Munich, 1960), p. 113; Lehmann, *Gothic Dictionary*, M-42.

nounds like *lār*, *bōt*, etc.⁵¹

Of the remaining spellings, *Lindisfarnae* and *Lastingae* are ambiguous as between *Lindisfarn-ē* 'Lindisfarne island', *Lasting-ē* 'Lasting island', and *Lindisfarna-ē* 'island of the travellers to Lindsey', *Lastinga-ē* 'island of the Lastingas'; *Solesiae* and *Selaesiae* seem to reflect the West Saxon form *ī(g)* for Anglian *ē(g)*;⁵² and *Lindisfarnea* seems to show confusion with OE *ēa* 'a river'.⁵³

To return to Hexham, all the early spellings can be explained as reflecting either OE *ē* (those in *-ae*, *-æ*, *-e*, *-ée* and *-ee*, which seem to be ways of denoting a long *ē*), or OE *ēg* (those in *-ei*), with the remainder reflecting exactly the same variants *-iae* and *-ea* that have been encountered above. It seems to be clear that the only element to be considered is OE *ē(g)*, and that OE *ēa* 'stream, river' can be left out of account.⁵⁴

Here the example of Lavington (Yorks) is instructive. Like Hexham, it, too, has forms in both *-hām* and *-ēg*: *Laestingaeu*, *Laestingaé*, *Laestingaei* 731, *Læstinga ea* 10th cent., *Lestingaheu*, *Lestingaea*, *Lestingay* 12th cent., and *Lesting(e)ham* 1086, *Lavington -yng-* 1086 × 1089 – 1665, *Lavington -yng-* from 1393.⁵⁵ Like Hexham, it, too, was an early monastic site.⁵⁶

Now the use of OE *ēg* in English place-names has been investigated by Dr Margaret Gelling, although she does not discuss either Hexham

⁵¹So R. Girvan, *Angelsaksisch Handboek* (Haarlem, 1931), § 26 Aanm.

⁵²But the ending *-ae* remains problematic because, even if these forms are regarded as Latinizations of OE *Solesig*, the inflexional ending required after the preposition *in* is *-a*, not *-ae*.

⁵³Ultimately from related Gmc **ahwō*.

⁵⁴There is no semantic difficulty, of course, with OE *ēa*, which occurs very frequently in early place-names. Its sense must frequently have been 'stretch of river' within which an owner possessed the right of taking fish. Cf. V. E. Watts, 'Medieval Fisheries in the Wear, Tyne and Tweed: the Place-Name Evidence', *Nomina*, 7 (1983), 35–45 (at pp. 35–37).

⁵⁵*PNYorksNR*, p. 60.

⁵⁶Founded by St Cedd c. 651 × 654 'amongst steep and remote hills which seemed rather to contain dens of robbers and the lairs of wild beasts than the habitations of men' (Bede, HE, III, 23).

or Lavington.⁵⁷ She identifies five meanings:

1. 'dry ground surrounded by marsh' (when it occurs in ancient settlement-names);
2. 'island';
3. 'well-watered land';
4. 'hill jutting into flat land';
5. 'patch of good land in moors'.

Since neither Hexham nor Lavington—certainly not Lavington, to judge from Bede's comment quoted in note 56—are names of ancient settlements, sense 1 may be rejected. Sense 2, 'island', might be true for Hexham if the reference were to an island in the course of the River Tyne, such as Broomhaugh Island (grid reference NZ 9464), but hardly for Lavington. The most likely sense for both is 5, 'patch of good land in moors'. Lavington (SE 7290) is situated beside a small watercourse on the edge of Spaunton Moor, while Hexham lies beside a small stream on the edge of high ground which reaches to over 800 feet, overlooking the Tyne Valley and used as rough summer pasture in later times.⁵⁸

Hexham and Lavington share another feature. The earliest forms for both names are, as we have seen, compounds in *ēg* in the sense 'patch of good ground in moor-land'. These names seem to reflect the conditions of the original settlements in the seventh century. Subsequently, reflecting their development as religious centres, both were reformed as names in *hām*, one of whose meanings seems to have been 'monastery', a specialised sense evolved from the more general sense 'dwelling-place, house, house-hold'. This sense had already developed by the time of the Old English translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History. There, for instance, the translator renders Bede's *abbas in monasterio quod vocatur Peartaneu* 'abbot of Partney monastery' as *abbud of Peortanea ðam ham*.

The difference, onomastically, between Partney and Hexham and

⁵⁷Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984), pp. 34–40.

⁵⁸Cf. the sheiling-name High Shield (grid reference NY 9362).

Lastingham, all three of them seventh-century foundations, is that, while the *Peartaneu hām* continued to be called Partney,⁵⁹ the *Hagustaldesēg hām* and the *Lastingaew hām* became respectively *Hagustaldeshām* and *Lastingahām*, today's Lastingham and Hexham.

⁵⁹As, *mutatis mutandis*, did Bardney, Chertsey and Selsey.

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

Second Annual Study Conference: Preston, 1993

The second annual study conference organized by the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland was held at Alston Hall near Preston, Lancashire, from 2 to 5 April 1993. Dr Mary Higham and Mrs Mary Atkin, who drew up the programme, took some pride in showing how well such an event could run in a non-university environment. Excess of demand over supply of single rooms caused some participants to be lodged, rather palatially, in neighbouring farmhouses; fortunately the weather, while not exactly good, was at least co-operative. Proceedings began on the Friday with introductory remarks by Bill Nicolaisen (Aberdeen), the president, about the Society, and by Mike Patterson, vice-principal of Alston Hall, about the house (the common tale of one built as a family house in the nineteenth century which no family in the twentieth could afford to run; we still found a pleasant family atmosphere about the place). The first lecture was also local, Dr Alan Crosby (Preston) on the historical-geographical background of the Ribble Valley, dominated, as the Sunday excursion was to be, by Pendle Hill seen from various directions.

On the Saturday Mícheál Ó Mainnín (Belfast), who thought that names of physical features in the island of Ireland had been unduly neglected, spoke about 'The mountain-names of County Down', concentrating on the great variety of names of the Mountains of Mourne. Tomos Roberts (Bangor), on 'Late naming-patterns in Anglesey and Caernarfonshire', treated changes in naming-habits from the early nineteenth century, mainly of houses and hamlets (plus one famous railway station). Judicious anecdotes from George Borrow and biblical concordances provided documentation for some of the names. Dr David Postles (Leicester), 'At Sørensen's invitation: the patterning of patronyms in Leicestershire and Rutland c. 1245-1525', concerned mainly the distribution of the suffix *-son* in those counties. Mrs Ann Cole (Oxford) spoke about place-names which might advance information on road conditions to 'The Anglo-Saxon traveller'. She showed that *stānweg* significantly often connotes helpfully firm (rather