

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

Essay Prize

1. A prize of £100 will be awarded annually for the best essay on any topic relating to the place-names and/or personal names of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Man or the Channel Islands.
2. Submissions are invited from all students and other researchers. The prize will normally be awarded to those who have not previously had work in onomastics published.
3. Essays should be about 5,000 words in length.
4. Essays should in some way make an original contribution to the subject.
5. Two copies of the essay should be submitted 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 President of the Society, and may be considered for publication in *Nomina*.
7. Entries must be submitted by 30th June each year. Provided an essay of sufficient merit is forthcoming, the winner will be announced in October of the same year.

Entries should be sent to:

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Ingestre, Staffordshire

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University of Nottingham, University of Sussex
 and Staffordshire County Council

The situation of Ingestre

Ingestre is a parish in Staffordshire some four miles east of the county town, in an area noted for its salt springs; Salt village is 2.5 miles to the north-west. The rather open nucleus of the parish consists of the church (NGR SJ 977248), great house and a small number of other dwellings. A triangular extension of the high ground of Cannock Chase points northward, like an arrowhead, into the clay lowlands of the centre of the county. Its tip lies at Sandon, through which the River Trent flows in a south-easterly direction, defining the eastern edge of the triangle. Ingestre sits on this eastern flank, at an elevation of fifteen metres or so above the level of the river, and some forty-five metres below the top of a long and rather broad rolling ridge that marks the highest land within the arrowhead, and the site of Ingestre Park. Despite its relative prominence, this ridge has not been dramatic enough to attract a topographical name, or at any rate not one which is recorded. Ingestre Hall and the church of St Mary are about 600 metres removed from, and on slightly higher ground than, the small cluster of houses that make up the settlement. Little Ingestre, the former house of the land-agent of the lord (Earl Talbot in 1851), is set slightly lower again. The cluster sits exactly on the boundary between the gravels of the broad, flat river-terrace above the floodplain of the Trent, and the mudstones of the ridge. The river-valley below the settlement is notable for the Swan's Neck, a graceful river meander, and for Pasturefields, a former watermeadow that is now the only surviving inland brine-spring marsh in the country.

The data

The name of Ingestre has so far resisted attempts at a satisfactory explanation. Here are the spellings in the record known to us in June 2002, from a variety of sources but mainly collected by David Horovitz. Abbreviations for documentary sources are either those used conventionally by the English Place-Name Survey or those listed in the References

below.¹

In Gestreon [sic] DB 1086
Iggestroud 1161 × 1182 SRO 1/7972 [for *Iggestrond*?]
Ingestrent pre-1184 SHC XII (i), 271
Ingkestront 1184 × 1228 SHC XII (i), 271
Higgestrend c.1200 SHC XII (i), 273
Ingestre 1236 Fees
Ingestreon 1236 and 1243 SHC 1911, 397, 394
Ingerstrent [sic] Cl 1242
Ingestret Fees 1242
Higestront Fees 1242
Ingestrond c.1250 SHC VIII, 135
Ingestraund Aßs 1250
Ingustre, Inggustre 1305 SHC XII (i), 285
Ingestre 1371 SHC X new series (ii), 47
Inglystre 1373 SHC XIII 101
Engulstre 1532 SHC 4th series 8, 57
Ing(l)estre c.1540 Leland
Ingestrye 1605 SHC 1940, 320

The current pronunciation is [ˈɪŋ(ə)stri(:)] (hardly [ˈɪŋgestri] as suggested in some editions of *English Pronouncing Dictionary*).² An older pronunciation [ɪŋstə] was recorded in Schröer's pronouncing dictionary.³

¹ In the form-list, note that SHC = *Staffordshire Historical Collections* (formerly the *Transactions of the William Salt Archaeological Society*). References to volumes in the various series of this periodical are given in the style which it has used to refer to itself, and which is not consistent. SRO = Staffordshire Record Office.

² A. C. Gimson (ed., orig. Daniel Jones), *Everyman's English Pronouncing Dictionary*, 13th edn (London, 1967), s.n.

³ A. Schröer, *Neuenglisches Aussprachwörterbuch, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der wichtigsten Eigennamen*, 2nd edn (Heidelberg, 1922), s.n.

Scholarship

The first interpretation of the name known to us is the one attempted by Walter Chetwynd, the Staffordshire antiquary who lived at Ingestre Hall in the seventeenth century, and who thought the name derived from the Greek εγγύς 'near' and the name of the river Trent, which forms the eastern boundary of the manor and parish.⁴ The biographer went on to contradict his subject loftily:

it is sufficiently obvious that Inges-tre means either the 'Vill of the Ings' or 'the Ings of Trent', in reference to the Ings or flat meadows by the river side ...

This is incorrect on two grounds. Firstly, the word *ing* 'meadow; pasture' is a Scandinavian borrowing which in earliest records appears in the form *eng* (as befits its origin), and the earliest spellings of Ingestre show no sign of this. Secondly, again in line with its origin, the element is only found in Danelaw counties such as Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, and has not been noted in Staffordshire.

The first interpretation offered in the modern era was that of W. H. Duignan, which we quote in full, since it well illustrates how problematic the name is; we believe it to be wholly wrong, especially as regards the suggestion that Ingestre is a conflation of several local names.

Ingestre, 4m NE of Stafford. D[omesday] *Gestreon*; 13 c. *Ingestraund*, *Ingestrent*, *Ingestre* (frequently), *Yngestre*. Here D. seems to be quite at sea, and though the river Trent bounds the manor, I do not think it plays any part in the present form of the name. *Ing*, *Inga*, was an A[nglo-] S[axon] p[ersonal] n[ame], and the terminal *tre* doubtless represents A.S. *treow*, *treo*, ME *tree*, *tre*, a tree; perhaps because Ing's property was bounded by some notable tree, or because he lived near one. I do not reject the terminals *straund* and *trent*. A.S. *strand*, M.E. *stronde*, meant (*inter alia*) the shore or bank of a river. It is possible that the name was in an unsettled state, hovering for a time between Inge's strand, Inge's trent, and Inge's tree; but of the prefix there can be no doubt.⁵

⁴ H. E. Chetwynd-Stapylton, *The Chetwynds of Ingestre, being a History of that Family from a Very Early Date* (London, 1892), p. 42.

⁵ W. H. Duignan, *Notes on Staffordshire Place Names* (Oxford, 1902), p. 84.

J. P. Oakden reassessed a number of Duignan's pronouncements, including that on Ingestre, but his note is inconclusive:

of special interest [is] ... Ingestre whose older forms *In Gestreon*, *Ingestraund*, etc., are admittedly rather difficult both phonologically and semantically ...⁶

Such a guarded observation makes it impossible to guess whether he might have formulated a derivation, and he regrettably did not live to publish the volume of *PN St* on Pirehill hundred which would have covered Ingestre.⁷

Ekwall took the bull by the horns and accepted the *Domesday Book* form at face value, associating it with Old English (OE) *gestrēon* 'gain, property'—'here used in some special topographical sense',⁸ but who knows what? Smith notes this element both as spelt here and in a hypothetical metathesized form, and accepts that it occurs in Ingestre,⁹ but has to appeal to a variant form (*ge*)*streond* (found only once in Old English and taken by Toller to represent a lexically distinct feminine noun¹⁰); he also accepts that it is the only possible occurrence of the word as a place-name generic thus far noted.¹¹ The first element was

⁶ J. P. Oakden, 'W. H. Duignan's "Notes on Staffordshire Place-Names", 1902: a reassessment', *Transactions of the Lichfield & South Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society*, 9 (1967-68), 31-36 (p. 34).

⁷ County volumes of the English Place-Name Survey are referred to conventionally as *PN X* where *X* abbreviates the county name; Nt = Nottinghamshire (1940), Sa = Shropshire (1990-), St = Staffordshire (1984-; suspended), Sx = Sussex (1929-30), Wa = Warwickshire (1936).

⁸ E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 1st edn (Oxford, 1936), *s.n.*, 4th edn (1960); hereafter *DEPN*.

⁹ A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 25-26 (Cambridge, 1956), II, 163 and 151.

¹⁰ T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth* (Oxford, 1898), *Supplement* (1921), *s.n.* *gestrind*.

¹¹ For the word in Strensall (East Riding of Yorkshire), which Ekwall adduces in comparison, cf. R. Coates, 'The slighting of Strensall', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 13 (1980-81), 50-53, where the element is accepted but a quite incompatible sense is proposed.

identified by Ekwall with 'the word for "hill"' in Ingon (Warwickshire), for which however the editors of the English Place-Name Survey Warwickshire volume,¹² published in the same year as the first edition of *DEPN*, did not venture an explanation, and the name has never been picked up in addenda or corrigenda to the Survey.¹³ Ekwall's explanation completely fails to do justice to the variety of the forms, which he does not even allude to, and most of the variants in which are not consistent with *Domesday Book*. Only two mid-thirteenth-century forms are in fact wholly consistent with it. As always, we find it hard to give credence to *Domesday Book* where it deviates from other sources. There is little to be said for an English explanation which requires two rare or doubtful elements, one in a unique form and a unique position in the name, in a construction without a close semantic parallel whose implications are uncertain ('hill property'(?)). Worse still, the hill at Ingestre, which Ekwall describes as 'marked', is no such thing; inspection by David Horovitz and Stephen Potter confirms that the village stands on ground which is of no great height and which shows no abrupt changes of contour.¹⁴ Recall also that the adjacent ridge has never borne a name, so far as we know. The only other account of the name of Ingestre, that by Poulton-Smith, loosely paraphrases Ekwall and adds some local detail not relevant to the interpretation.¹⁵ Ingestre is absent from Mills's dictionary.¹⁶ We believe that much remains to be explained.

¹² *PN Wa*, pp. 233-34.

¹³ C. A. Hough, *The English Place-Name Survey: a Finding-List to Addenda and Corrigenda*, Centre for English Name Studies, publication 2 (Nottingham, 1995).

¹⁴ We may add this to the list of hills invented by place-name scholars, e.g. Ekwall's at Carburton (Nottinghamshire; *DEPN*, p. 86, and cf. *PN Nt*, p. 71) and that of Mawer and Stenton, aided by Ritter, at Sunt (Shipley, Sussex; *PN Sx*, p. 201 and I: xlvi).

¹⁵ A. Poulton-Smith, *Staffordshire Place-Names, Including the Black Country* (Newbury, 1995), p. 67.

¹⁶ A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 1st and 2nd edns (Oxford, 1991 and 1998).

An interpretation

Richard Coates argued for a borrowing of the Vulgar Latin word *angustie* 'narrows' into Welsh, where it would take a form like **engist* in the earliest period. He claimed that it appears in the name of Ingst, Gloucestershire, a place at a significant narrowing of the Severn estuary. Interference from Primitive Welsh (PrW) **ing* 'narrow', serving as a base for analogical change in the borrowed word, was possible, but that was not strictly necessary to explain the place-name.¹⁷

The word, whatever its inflection for number,¹⁸ is used in place-names elsewhere in Romance-speaking territory. Richard Coates has investigated some possible candidates. It is claimed to occur in the name *Angoisse*, dép. Dordogne, France.¹⁹ The local topography of Angoisse is not available for scrutiny in our libraries, but Papy and Barrère note that this area on the fringe of the Périgord vert is a landscape of rivers which 's'encaissent en des gorges étroites' 'are enclosed in narrow gorges', and they include in the list the Loue, which flows close by

¹⁷ R. Coates, 'Aust and Ingst, Gloucestershire', in R. Coates and A. Breeze with D. Horovitz, *Celtic Voices, English Places. Studies of the Celtic Impact on Place-Names in England* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 54–57. It is true that the medieval record shows <n> in Ingst (<ng> is found only from 1779), whilst we are claiming [ŋ] in Ingestre. The difference is that in Ingst the vowel between the nasal consonant and the [st]-cluster seems to have been lost early (no sign of it whatever in the Gloucestershire record) whilst it was retained in Ingestre (no sign whatever of its loss). In Ingst, therefore, we have assimilation of [ŋ] to the following cluster; in Ingestre we do not. We account for the difference between the two names as regards syncope vs. retention of the vowel by appealing to the apparent influence of a retained inflectional syllable in Middle English and the syncope which that causes in the case of Ingst (Coates, 'Aust and Ingst', p. 55); the conditions for syncope are not met by Ingestre where the following syllable was presumably fully stressed (see further below), and in any case not inflectional.

¹⁸ The sole reason for preferring the plural form in this and the explanations that follow is that the singular form is rare in classical times. There is no formal barrier to the singular *angustia* appearing in any of the names discussed.

¹⁹ A. Dauzat and Ch. Rostaing, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de lieux de la France*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1978), p. 19.

Angoisse.²⁰ What particularly distinguishes the site of Angoisse for this name is unclear. Richard Coates's memory of an exchange visit thirty-seven years ago has dimmed. The river is tackled by a minor road of moderate gradient running mainly parallel to it on both banks, to judge by the Michelin 1: 200,000 map,²¹ and the area of woodland in the valley narrows towards the bridge; this all suggests a significant and narrowing declivity.

Much more problematic are two instances of *Anguix*, one in Pastrana, Guadalajara, Castilla-La Mancha (Tagus valley), and one in Roa, Burgos, Castilla-León, Spain. These are presumably pronounced [aŋ'gix], to judge by the Basque connection suggested by Joan Corominas (see below), and it is unknown whether the name is related to Asturian dialect *angüexa*,²² which is the exact phonological correspondent of French *angoisse* seen in the Périgord place-name. The phonology of the Spanish name does not suggest a descendant of *angustie* because Latin [u] never has a front unrounded vowel as a reflex, though it may surface dialectally as a diphthong including one, as evidently in the Asturian word. We make no linguistic claims about this name, and it is explored here simply because of the suggestive topography of one of the places, that in Pastrana. This is described as being close to 'el profundo desfiladero del río Tajo' 'the deep gorge of the river Tagus' and its castle as having 'unas espectaculares vistas sobre el profundo cortado por él transcurre el Tajo' 'spectacular views over the deep gorge through which the Tagus flows'.²³

We cannot find topographical information about the second *Anguix*. Corominas is surely mistaken in deriving *Anguix* from Basque *angia*

²⁰ L. Papy and Ph. Barrère, *Atlas et géographie du Midi atlantique* (Paris, 1982), p. 169.

²¹ Sheet 75, Bordeaux-Tulle (no date).

²² *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*, edited by J. Corominas and J. A. Pascual, (Madrid, 1980), s.n.

²³ J. L. García de Paz, web-page 'Mal de Amores: una triste leyenda'. *Historias de la tierra*. www.alcarria.com/template_historias.cfm?key=79, revised '4/06/00', visited 30/05/02; anonymous web-page (TopRural S.L., commercial agency), 'Castillode Anguix.' www.toprural.com/index.cfm?accion=clase&idp=19&idz=34&idc=2&idt=4, created/revised 2002, visited 30/05/02.

'pasture-land',²⁴ not least because the relevant word is generally *angio*, but also because this word is found only in the western extremity of the province of Gipuzkoa, and in precisely one place-name there. There is no evidence that Basque was ever spoken at either of these places. The site of Los Anguijes near El Salobral, Albacete, with its indisputable plural form, remains to be investigated.

The word *angustie* is used in relation to other features that can have constriction. Among classical writers, Suetonius writes of the *angustiae* of the Hellespont (perhaps the nearest parallel to the application proposed in the name of Ingestre), and Cicero describes Corinth, on its isthmus, as 'posita in angustiis atque in faucibus Graeciae' 'situated in the narrows and in the gullet/gulf of Greece'.²⁵

Following a suggestion by David Horovitz that the name of Ingestre may, like Ingst, include the Brittonic reflex of *angustie*, i.e. **engist*, we should like to propose that the full name was PrW **Engist Trehanton* (or following the suggested analogical change **ĭngist*) 'the narrows of Trent'. As noted, Ingestre is in the Trent valley, and the river marks its eastern historic parish boundary. The river-name is anglicized in the record of the Anglo-Saxon period as <Treanta>, <Treanta>, <Treonta>. So a perfectly plausible anglicization of such a Welsh name-form is something like **Ingist Treont(a)*, later, regularly, after the reduction of variety in the unstressed vowel system of Old English, **Ingest Treont(a)*.²⁶ That seems to give a basis on which to explain

²⁴ J. Corominas, *Tópica hespérica: estudios sobre los antiguos dialectos, el substrato y la toponimia romances* (Madrid, 1972), II, 250.

²⁵ These usages were checked using the Perseus Project online Lewis and Short dictionary, *A Latin Dictionary*, edited by C. T. Lewis and C. Short (Oxford, 1879), online version www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/resolveform; installation and revision history unknown, visited 30/05/2002.

²⁶ It might be objected that of all the 'narrows' names we consider this is the only one which is not a simplex, but carries the river-name as an element. The answer to the objection is simply that the solution works phonologically. We cannot speculate on whether (a) a river-name has been lost in some or all of the others; (b) whether there were once similarly-named places nearby but on other rivers. There are a few other names in England which appear to carry a specifier in second place in the neo-Brittonic manner, e.g. Fontmell, Chittoe and Chitterne in Wiltshire (R. Coates, 'Evidence for the persistence of Brittonic in

some of the more difficult features of the spellings in the record, in particular the alternation between <ent> and <ont>. The alternation may be due in part to the general development to <e>/[e] seen in the river-name, the records of which never contain <o> alone; and in part to the fact that the phoneme spelt <eo> would have yielded early Middle English (ME) [ø], which resolves dialectally into <e> representing [e] and <o> representing [ø]. Ingestre is close to the heterogloss separating ME <o> from ME <e> from this source (cf. the much-reproduced map by Moore, Meech and Whitehall first published in 1935,²⁷ which shows the line roughly following the Trent valley). For as long as <o>-spellings were found, it would be possible to rationalize a written form <Ingestront> as containing the word *strand/strond* (see further below); when such spellings became obsolete, such an identification would no longer be possible. [ø] becomes [e] in the West Midlands by about 1300; consistently with this, spellings showing <o> in this name dry up around 1250 and with them any suggestion of the word *strand/strond*. Significantly, records of about 1250 are both the last to contain an <o> and/or be capable of suggesting a pronunciation [o] (as <au> does), and the last with a <d>. The pronunciation with [e] was clearly established at about this time. One other detail of the pronunciation: stress was shifted, as one might expect in an English name which may or may not have been felt to be a compound, from the third to the first syllable. As might be expected in such an obscure name, analogy has been massively active to supply an interpretable generic element in second position; one would not expect a river-name in this position in a strictly *English* name (although Chetwynd in the pre-modern era evidently thought it was a possibility), however much the pronunciation might encourage its identification, and no matter how obvious it might seem to be in context. These attempts to remodel the final element analogically are consistent with the fact that Old English elements in this position are expected to supply detailed topographical information, as demonstrated by Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole in

Wiltshire', in Coates and Breeze with Horovitz, *Celtic Voices, English Places*, pp. 112–16 (pp. 114–15), and references there).

²⁷ R. Jordan, *Handbook of Middle English Grammar: Phonology* (The Hague, 1974), p. 97.

recent work;²⁸ an obscure element cannot do the necessary job. The analogical attempts have involved (especially WMid) ME *strond* 'shore', as noted above, and ME *strēt(e)* 'street' (unless a macron abbreviation for <n> has simply been lost in the 1242 form in *Fees*), and apparently also OE *gestrēon* 'gain, property'. The later loss of the final consonants remains unexplained, but this is a problem for any explanation; perhaps further interference, this time from *trēo(w)* 'tree', is involved. Note also the remarkable late-medieval attempts to link the first element with the word *English*.

Now, is there actually a narrowing in the area? On the face of it, the name would be better applied a couple of miles further south at the confluence of the Trent and the Sow, where the joint river flows through the gap in hills between Shugborough Park and Great Haywood. Could the waters of the Trent have backed up seasonally into a **wæsse* 'land liable to sudden flooding and draining' at Ingestre, as in Gelling's classic description of Buildwas (Shropshire)?²⁹

A particular problem with rivers is that they have frequently been modified so comprehensively, through channel-deepening, meander-cutting and flood defence works, that their current morphology is not a good indication of the way they were when early place-names came into being. However, because alluvial silt is only deposited during times of flood (because the water-flow is slowed sufficiently for it to come out of suspension) the current distribution of alluvium is a reasonable, if imperfect, indication of the extent of past floodplains.

Within the limitations of their scale, drift geology maps indicate the extent of alluvium that is deep enough to be considered an element of the surface geology. The relevant current map shows the deposit as being confined in a narrow band on either side of the present course of the river.³⁰ However, in some cases the alluvial deposits have not been deep enough to register as surface geology, but have influenced soil

²⁸ Especially in M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000).

²⁹ Gelling and Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 64; cf. *PN Sa I*, pp. 65–66 and 51.

³⁰ Geological Survey of Great Britain [England and Wales] 1: 50,000 Series, Solid and Drift edition, sheet 140, Burton upon Trent.

formation: the distribution of alluvial gley soils is therefore a further indication of regular flooding in the past. This distribution is shown very approximately by the Soil Survey of England and Wales.³¹ These sources provided background information for a field survey to identify the areas around Ingestre that show evidence of past alluvial deposition. This was facilitated by the fact that the dark alluvial gley soils that are now well-drained are favoured for potato-growing.

Stephen Potter has plotted the extent of this historic floodplain as Map 1, on the basis of the distribution of alluvium and alluvial gley soils. Its boundaries generally coincide with those shown on the Environment Agency's 2001 Indicative Floodplain Maps. These are

indicative of the area which could be affected by flood events, overtopping or breaching of flood defence structures. They are based on the approximate extent of floods with a 1% annual probability of occurrence for rivers ...³²

The floodplain near Ingestre broadens south-east of Weston around the confluence of the Amerton Brook with the Trent, between Hixon on the left bank and Ingestre on the right. This means that in times of high rainfall, at and upstream of Ingestre inundation has occurred. In comparison with this section upstream below Weston and that downstream near Great Haywood, the flood-channel near Ingestre is narrow, and at its narrowest downstream of Trent Walk Bridge. The Amerton Brook is the key. The distribution of alluvial soils is proof that it flooded regularly and extensively in the past. It flows across an extensive (wide and level) terrace, across which floodwater could spread without constraint when it overflowed, and it joins the Trent just upstream of Trent Walk Bridge (SJ 983254), the bridge carrying the track from Ingestre over the Trent to join the A51 and continue as a minor road to Hixon.

The fact that the floodplain widened around the confluence is due to the discharge of floodwater from the wide terrace of the Amerton Brook

³¹ Sheet 3, Soils of Midland and Western England, at a scale of 1: 250,000.

³² Environment Agency, *2001 Indicative Floodplain Maps*, CD-ROM Data Disk, ID M13009D, and Flood Explorer Disk, ID M13009F (Bristol, 2001).

into the Trent. The additional water needed to be accommodated by the Trent. At the confluence, the river could not take it all within its own channel when it was itself bank-full. The inevitable consequence was flooding, with the flood-lake formed on the terrace effectively extending southwards to the vicinity of Ingestre. At this point the capacity of the channel of the Trent was sufficient to cope with the volume of floodwater that it received, so a balance was achieved and the flood-lake did not extend any further to the south. In times of flood, therefore, the Trent at and below Ingestre would be noticeably narrower than further north. In fact, its floodplain was narrower here than anywhere else for which we have an analysis, namely from Salt (SJ 9527) to Colwich (SK 0121). Even at the point at which the joint flow of the Trent and Sow passes through hills between Great Haywood and Shugborough Park, the floodplain was wider than at Ingestre (see Map 1, south-eastern corner). Ingestre is at the only point hereabouts where the floodplain narrowed without the funnelling effect of any geomorphological feature.

If the area were subject to equally dramatic draining so that a swamp did not develop—and we believe that this was so, because as noted above the effect of flooding has been to produce alluvial gley soils rather than a layer of alluvium—the situation would be just as at Buildwas. And just as at Buildwas, the village/manor centre of Ingestre is close to the point above which the flood-lake could form. However, such sudden flooding and draining is unlikely to happen nowadays, since the course of the Amerton Brook has been artificially deepened as part of flood-defence works, to the extent that barley can now be grown adjacent to it.

The alluvial deposits on each side of the river channel close to Ingestre are less extensive than at Hopwas on the Tame or Alrewas at the confluence of the Tame and Trent (both places whose names contain the element **wæsse*, discussed at the end of this article). Comparative information for these two places is given in Map 2, but at the Trent/Amerton Brook confluence just above Ingestre the deposits are of comparable extent.

We noted above the impact on river-flow of human activities such as flood defence works. We can only speculate what additional effects the building of the Trent and Mersey Canal along this valley has had on the

hydrology. On the 1890s Ordnance Survey maps,³³ however, the lower Sow valley, three miles south of Ingestre, is marked as 'liable to floods', so we can be confident that there the liability to flood was not eliminated by the building of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal which follows the Sow hereabouts; i.e. the canal did not drain the floodplain here. Now precisely in order to avoid inundation, the Trent and Mersey was built along the line of the first river terrace, above the level of normal flooding, and at the one potential weak point where the canal could have been inundated, i.e. where its course intersects that of the Amerton Brook, the brook has been engineered to pass beneath the canal at some depth, which has also contributed to its deepening and therefore further reduced its capacity to flood.

Conclusion

The name incorporates a Brittonic word (borrowed from Latin) meaning 'narrows', and this concept can be expressed geomorphologically or hydrologically in different ways. The Severn narrows involve a constriction of flowing water, as does the Hellespont; the identifiable continental examples (which, apart from Angoisse, may not be true parallels) involve constriction of a river between rock-walls; the narrowing at Ingestre is a constriction of the channel of flowing water visible at times of flooding. In each case the banks of the river in some state or other approach each other more closely than further upstream. In the case of Corinth, the narrowing is the inverse; the land is constricted in relation to the water.

On the grounds presented above, we feel reasonably confident (1) that the currently-hypothesized floodplain approximates to that of the pre-canal era, and that the name Ingestre as we have interpreted it, 'narrows of the Trent', is appropriate at the point at which it applies because that point is just below the lowest at which the Trent used to form a **wæsse* (for which Gelling and Cole offer the interpretation 'alluvial land liable to sudden floods';³⁴ we suggest as a gloss the hydrologists' term 'flood-lake', the term being applied metonymically to a place where one could

³³ These can be viewed conveniently via www.old-maps.co.uk, a web-site supported by the Landmark Information Group Ltd and the Ordnance Survey.

³⁴ Gelling and Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 64.

form); (2) that flooding was a feature of the area at the time of the likely formation of the place-name (i.e. in pre-Anglo-Saxon times), and, in all probability, a regular feature of the winter landscape after sudden heavy rainfall;³⁵ and (3) that the **wæsse* of the Trent has been eliminated by works affecting the Amerton Brook, which itself may still be subject to flooding, though less extensively, as a result of those works. We are also quick to acknowledge that an early antiquary, Chetwynd, anticipated our solution in part by suggesting that the name contained the river-name, though we did not know that when the idea first came to us, and it is clear that his solution was not driven by an understanding of the local environment.

On **wæsse*: a general observation and the philology of the term

Our ancestors did not necessarily treat a **wæsse*, a flood-lake or area prone to sudden flooding, as a barrier to movement. We find it interesting that some such areas seem to have been chosen as river crossings, e.g. the course of the Roman road Ryknild Street does not change near Alrewas to find a narrower section of the floodplain. Presumably these crossings were originally fords or wades, rather than bridging-points, so perhaps there was an advantage in crossing at the point where flooding could be extensive, but the water-velocity low. We do not know what, if anything, singling out Ingestre for a name meaning

³⁵ The position of settlements like Stafford, Weston and Ingestre itself, on river terraces, shows that their creators were mindful of the need to avoid floodplains, but to be close to them for the fertility that comes with the alluvium. We believe flooding was probably much more common in Anglo-Saxon times than in days since the regular engineering of rivers; witness the catastrophic recent decline in the distribution of the native black poplar (*Populus nigra var. betulifolia*), a riverside tree whose seedlings flourish only on moist bare soil patches such as are created by natural processes like bar deposition on the insides of the meanders of non-engineered rivers which are liable to flooding. The Ingestre **wæsse* may well have appeared regularly in winter, and if so the narrows downstream of it might well have been of some strategic importance. After heavy rain in the winter of 2002/03, the Trent overflowed its left bank just south of Trent Walk Bridge, as observed by Stephen Potter. If this happened at earlier periods, the narrowing of the river below this point would have been even more striking than was previously believed.

'narrows' implies about the ancient transport infrastructure of the Trent Valley. No Roman road is known to have crossed the river hereabouts.

This is a suitable point to add an exploration of the philology of this hypothetical element. The existence in Old English of this word is inferred from place-names such as Washbourne (Gloucestershire), Broadwas (Worcestershire), Bolas and Buildwas (Shropshire), a lost name recorded in an Anglo-Saxon charter for Marchington (Staffordshire; BCS 890, S 557 (anno 951)³⁶) *pirewasse*, Alrewas and Hopwas (also Staffordshire), Rotherwas and Sugwas (Herefordshire), probably the river Gwash (Leicestershire—Lincolnshire) and perhaps Allerwash (Northumberland). The form appears certain to be **wæsse* (nominative singular), sometimes with Mercian second-fronted <e> in the first syllable and sometimes with analogical <a> taken from **wassan* (oblique, e.g. genitive, singular). The final nominative *-e* indicates that it is a weak feminine noun. No convincing Germanic etymology has been put forward. Ekwall suggests a root-relation with Scandinavian words such as Old Swedish *vass* 'reeds' and Norwegian *vassa* 'to wade', and havers between wider affiliation to *water* or *wade*.³⁷ He concludes with a point about the frequency of English words with no obvious continental counterparts, a reflection on the semantic unusualness of the name of the Gwash, and an extensive footnote about the non-connection of **wæsse* with *wāse*, the source of *ooze*. Smith says essentially the same.³⁸ Semantically, though, a more plausible set of congeners is the group of ablaut-relatives of *wāse*, namely Old Saxon, Old High German *waso*, Old Frisian, Middle Low and High German and Middle Dutch *wase* 'mud; wet, marshy ground'. (The Old Saxon, Middle Low German, High German and Dutch forms mean additionally or instead 'turf, grassland' and have an uncertain relation to the masculine MLG *wrase*, Modern German *Rasen*, which also mean 'turf; lawn'.) What needs explanation is the fact that the continental dialects have a single [s] whilst

³⁶ BCS = W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols and index (London, 1885–99); S = P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, 8 (London, 1968).

³⁷ E. Ekwall, *English River-Names* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 436–38.

³⁸ Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, II, 237–38.

Old English has a geminate [ss]. The postulated English word must be, for phonological reasons, a weak feminine noun; the continental words mentioned are mainly masculine, but crucially in two of the language-states most closely related to Old English, i.e. Old Frisian and Middle Low German, *wase* is feminine, providing the grammatical link between the insular and continental forms.³⁹ If the issue of the geminate can be solved, **wasse* can be viewed as the counterpart of (at least some instances of) *wase*. No final solution can be offered here, but we note other long-recognized instances of unexpected gemination in various Germanic languages—what are called ‘lautsymbolische Verstärkungen’ ‘sound-symbolic strengthenings’ by W. Braune.⁴⁰

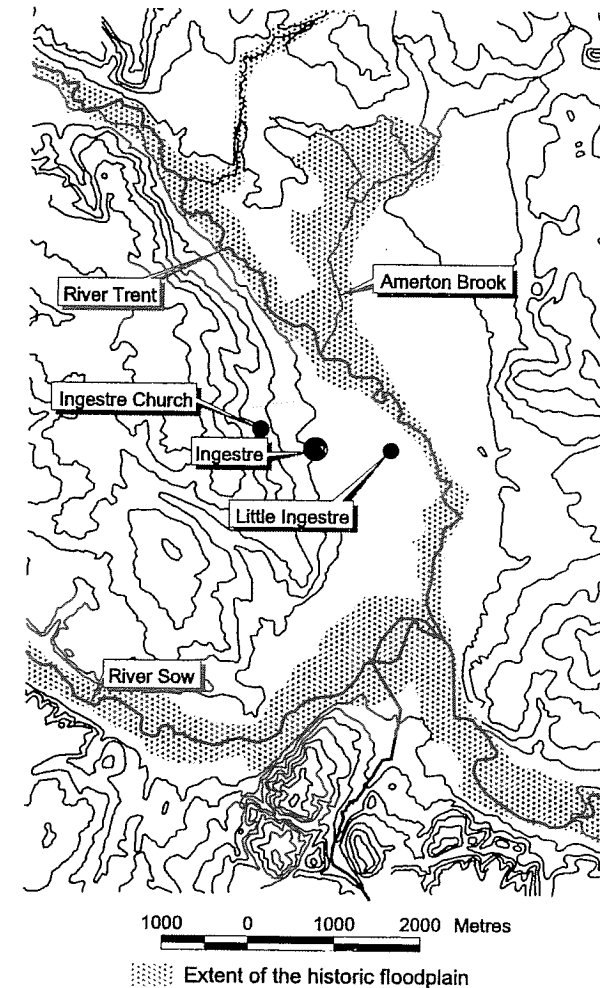
Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for advice and information on Basque toponymy from R. L. Trask and on Romance philology from Max W. Wheeler, both of the University of Sussex; also to Graham Walker of English Nature, North Mercia team, who advised us on the status of the Pasturefields Site of Special Scientific Interest. Map 2 is based upon Geological Map Sheets 140, Burton-upon-Trent (S&D) 1: 50,000 (1982), and 155, Lichfield (SwD) 1:63,360 (1926). Reproduced by permission of the Geological Survey. © NERC. All rights reserved. IPR/31-39C.

³⁹ On the Frisian word, see W. L. van Helten, ‘Zum altfriesischen Vokalismus’, *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 19 (1914), 171–96 (p. 194).

⁴⁰ A. Martinet, *La gémation consonantique d’origine expressive dans les langues germaniques* (Paris, 1937); W. Braune, *Althochdeutsche Grammatik*, 10th edn W. Mitzka (Tübingen, 1961), p. 87.

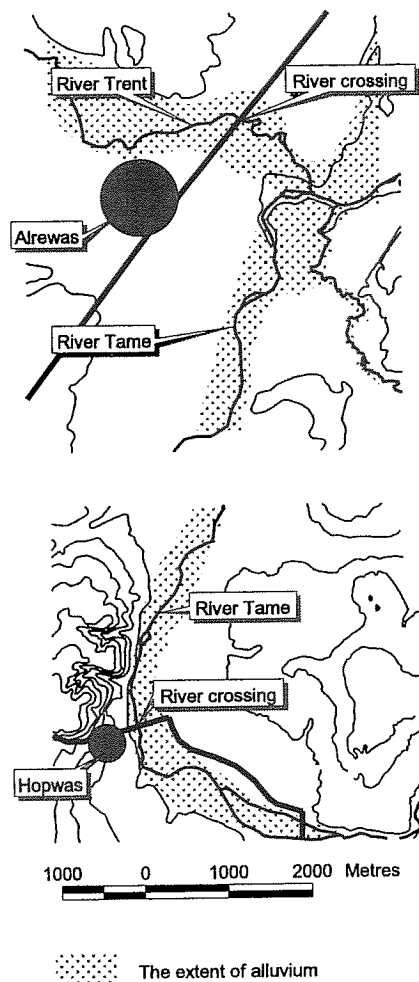
Map 1: The situation of Ingestre and the floodplain near the village



Drawn by Stephen Potter using ArcView.

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Map 2: The relative extent of alluvial deposits at Hopwas and Alrewas for comparison with Ingestre (all Staffordshire).



Drawn by Stephen Potter using ArcView.

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Onomastic Uses of the Term 'White'

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The Old and Middle English etymons of Present-Day English *white* have a range of applications, of which several are represented in the onomasticon.¹ In the place-names of England and Scotland, Old English (OE) *hwīt* can refer to white stone used as building material, as in Whitthorn in Wigtownshire 'white building',² to clear water, as in Whitburn in West Lothian 'white stream',³ to chalky soil or infertile land, as in Whitfield in Northamptonshire 'white open land',⁴ or to the colour of tree-bark or blossom, as in Whitwood in the West Riding of Yorkshire 'white wood'.⁵ In surnames, the use of Middle English (ME) *whīt* is similarly multi-faceted, referring to white hair in many instances of White, Whitehead and Whitelock,⁶ but also forming the first element

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 5–8 April 2002. I am grateful to those present for their comments, and in particular to John Freeman, Peter Kitson, Peter McClure and Bill Nicolaisen.

² J. Field, *Place-Names of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1980), p. 188. All references are to county boundaries preceding the local government re-organisation of the 1970s.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire*, English Place-Name Society, 10 (Cambridge, 1933), p. 64.

⁵ A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1998), p. 377, s.n. *Whitwood*. This seems more plausible than the interpretation suggested in A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 8 vols, English Place-Name Society, 30–37 (Cambridge, 1961–63), II, 124: 'The sense is probably that of thinly growing, and therefore bright, woodland'.

⁶ P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of English Surnames*, 3rd edn with corrections and additions by R. M. Wilson (Oxford, 1991), pp. 486–87, s.n.n. *White*, *Whitehead* and *Whitelock*. Alternative derivations for the first and third respectively are from the personal names OE *Hwīta* and OE *Wihlāc*, while *Whitehead* is