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NAMES OF PLACES
IN
HERTFORDSHIRE.

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NAMES OF PLACES

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THE names of localities in England are said by an American writer to be not only older than all epics and histories, but also to contain abundant stores of primitive and savage observation; and we think few can have thought over the subject, can have lived in "this atmosphere of legendary melody which is spread over the land," without feeling most forcibly the truth of the remark. Unlike America, where "the land is whitewashed with unmeaning names—the cast-off clothes of the country from which the emigrant comes," the names of our valleys, of our streams, of our towns, have a history of their own. Not only is the character of a district, the nature of a country, the site of a castle or a farm, strongly marked out by the titles, but even the different races which once inhabited the land can be clearly traced. With a map in his hand, the skilful interpreter of the names of our country can mark out the place where the Celt fought his fierce battles, where the Saxon raised his strongholds, and where the Scandinavian brought desolation and misery. He can trace the fields in which the flax, the wheat, or the oats were grown; the wood which shel-

tered the wild boar, or the wolf; the streams which rapidly forced their way through the valleys, or the waters which flowed sluggishly onward to the sea. He can perceive where meadows noted for their shining beauty were placed, where stood the village coldly situated on the hill: he can point out the site of the home by the willows, and can discover the place of the cottage built by the well. In a word, he can live in the past; and, though more than a thousand years have elapsed, he can recall the appearance which England presented in those days to our forefathers. I will not, however, detain you with any further introductory observations, but simply remarking that the matter is hardly alluded to by our county historians, I will at once commence my subject,—the interpretation of the names of localities in Hertfordshire.

It is well known that four great races have at different times inhabited our country—I. the Britons; II. the Romans; III. the Anglo-Saxons; IV. the Danes; the two latter, the Saxons and the Danes, being kindred races, the Saxon being the Teutonic, the Dane the Scandinavian branch of the German race. The earliest inhabitants of England were the Britons, a Celtic race, the different dialects of whose language are still preserved in Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. That this people found a home in Hertfordshire there cannot be the least doubt. The remembrance of them has, however, been almost entirely obliterated from the land. The names of their battle-fields, (cad,) of their towns, (tre,)

of their heaths, (ros,) of their castles, (caer,) of their churches, (llan,) have all disappeared; and the only records existing of the people are the names of the streams. These, it is singular to remark, have for the most part retained their British titles. Thus the little stream which flows near our town, like the Var in the south of France, and the Yar in Norfolk, is simply a corruption of the British "yar" or "war," signifying water. The Ash, which flows into the Lea at Stanstead, is another form of the words Axe, Exe, Esk, Usk, all of which are derived from another British word "gwysg," also signifying water. The Stour, from which Stortford takes its title, is derived from the British "dwr," which means deep water, and which gives its name to the Adur in Sussex, the Douro in Spain, and other rivers of Europe. The Lea also seems to have been derived from the same language. In the old chronicles it is generally written "Liga," which is evidently a kindred form to Liger, the ancient name of the Loire, a river of the Celtic race. It seems to be connected with the Welsh word "llyr," water, which is most distinctly to be traced in the word Leir, the ancient name of the river, upon which Leicester (Ligora-ceaster) stands. The Pirrat and the Ivel, though of doubtful origin, are also well known to be British forms. The Kime, upon which Kimpton stands, is another form of the word Cam, which signifies "the winding," a descriptive title which, we may remark, the inhabitants of Lucknow have given to the river which flows round their city; the Cam of the Britons being equivalent to the Goomtee of India.

The Colne is said by Salmon to take its name from its crossing the road which led *ad Coloniam Verulamium*. When we remember that this city was not a *colonia*, but possessed the higher privilege of being a *municipium*, this derivation must fall to the ground. This word, which exists under the various forms of Calner in Lanarkshire, Callen in Kilkenny, and the Culan Water in Banffshire, has been more correctly traced up to the Celtic *Cul-an* "the narrow or confined river." These are, however, as we before said, almost the only traces which we can find of the existence of the Britons in the county; when the Romans withdrew from this island, and the great wave of the Saxon race reached this district, it seems to have swept away every record of the people, and their villages and homes must have been entirely destroyed, or have passed under Saxon names into the possession of the invaders.

We now proceed to consider the Roman element of the first period, and in this case we are obliged to make almost the same remark as we did when we alluded to the Britons. The traces of them, like the traces of the tribes they subdued, have almost entirely disappeared. We can find the position of their roads by the title of Street, (Latin, *Strata*,) as Markyate Street, Thorley Street; we can discover the direction of the great military road in Ikeneld Road;* we can find the position of their camp in Cheshunt, (*Castra Hunt*;))

* There were three principal Roman roads in Hertfordshire, the Ikeneld Road in the north, (which took its name from *y cen-i*, the people occupying a point of land,) leading from Norfolk through Exeter to the Land's End; Watling Street in the south-west, leading from Dover to Chester, probably a corruption of *Gwdelinsare*, the way of the Gael; and Herman Street, Via Herminia, on the east, leading from Rutupia to Hull, derived from *Herman*, a soldier, signifying a military road.

and in one place we can trace a Latin name in the title of a small stream—the Bean, formerly called the Benefician, the fertilizing stream. But this is all. The occupation of Britain by this war-like people for four hundred years, impressing as it did its own character for a time, passed away, and left in the names of Hertfordshire few traces of its existence.

We now come to the Saxon period. The early chroniclers tell us that three distinct races came (about 450 A.D.) from the Continent, and settled in Britain—the Jutes, the Saxons, and the Angles. Dr. Latham has very carefully discussed this subject, and he comes to the conclusion that the Saxons and the Angles are the same race; while the Jutes are probably Goths from Gaul. It is not in our power to enlarge on this point, and we pass on at once to the immediate object we have in view—the examination of the Saxon, or, as Dr. Latham would say, the Angle names of the localities in the county.

Hertfordshire possesses few eminences which deserve the title of hills: those gentle undulations of the ground which are of such frequent occurrence, were called by the Saxons “dun,” and by the British “din.”*

This word is sometimes used by itself—as the Downs of Sussex; but as a general rule, the Angle names for geographical localities are compound words, the element of wider and more general signification coming last: thus, Hamstead means the sted or mansion near the hamlet, whilst Stodham means the hamlet near the

* Melley Hill in the north, may be derived from A.S. *Mel*, a boundary, the hill on the boundary; or may be traced to the British *Moel*, a word which gives its name to the Mell Fell of the lakes, and which is described by Southey “as rising like a huge tumulus.”

wood. The hills whose titles are connected with this termination, generally took their names from the trees which crowned them. Thus we have Elmdon, the hill of elms; Essendon, (from *Aesc*,) the hill with the ash trees; or, it was called more generally, Hoddesdon,* (from *Holt*, *hod*, a wood,) the hill covered with a wood; or Meadon, (from A.S. *mæd*, a trunk of a tree, and then with an enlarged meaning, a grove of trees)—the hill with a grove of trees. Sometimes the dun was called after some well-known animal, as Wandon, from A.S. *Wanda*, a mole—the hill with the moles; or Hunsdon, (A.S. *Hund*,) the hound's hill. Other descriptive titles of the dun are seen in Nettledon, (A.S. *Netele*,) the hill abounding in nettles, and Standon, the hill defined by the presence of stones.

When the hill assumed an oblong form, it was generally called a ridge, (from A.S. *Hricg*, the back,) which is itself connected with the British *Rhag*; thus we have—

Totteridge, (*Tot*, a small grove of trees,) the wooded ridge.

Thundridge, from *Thunor*, the old Norse name of Thor, the thundering god; who, according to Kemble, gives his name to Thundersly and Thundersfield.

Puckeridge, from *Puck*, the well-known leader of the fairies.

Puttridge, (A.S. *Pytt*, a well,) the ridge with the standing pool of water.

Ramridge, from the British *Ram*, high, the high

* Hoddesdon is sometimes written Odes-done, and has been supposed to be the site of the *tumulus* or residence of Oddo, a Danish chief.

ridge; or from *Rimm*, the name of a British deity or chieftain, the ridge of Rimm—Ashridge, Sandridge, explain their own meaning.

The mound or isolated hill was called *Hoe* (from A.S. *heah*, *hoh*, other forms being *hoo*, *haw*). Thus we have North-haw, the north hill, so called in opposition to South-haw, the old name for Barnet.

Bengeo, or Beninghoe, the hill situated near the meadow watered by the Bean.

Stagenhoe, from A.S. *Stæger*, a path, the hill with or near the path.

The same word not unfrequently means a sepulchral mound, and when it is found in combination with the title of one of the Saxon clans it is not improbable that the place thus designated marks the last resting-place of the tribe.

The round hill, which was smaller than the *Hoh*, was called *Low*; we have an instance of its use in Comberlow-green, which is composed of *Comber*, a running sheet of water, and *Low*, a hill, and signifies a hill near the sheet of water.

The wide plain situated at some height above the surrounding country and unenclosed, was called field (A.S. *Feld*). It had few characters by which it could be distinguished, and frequently borrowed its title from some of the productions of its surface. Thus we find—

Hatfield (A.S. *Hæd*, *had*,) the heath field.

Bramfield (A.S. *Brom*,) the broom field.

Woodfield (A.S. *Wod*,) the field covered with trees.

Micklefield, (A.S. *Mycel*,) the large field.

These fields seem sometimes to have been selected as fit places for holding markets for the surrounding districts, as indicated by the word Chipperfield, (A.S. *Cipan*,) the market field.

They were not unfrequently dedicated to some god, as Thorfield, the field of the god Thor.

The pasture land, which was probably partly covered with wood, was called Leigh, Lea, Ley. It is a name of very frequent occurrence in Hertfordshire. The meadows which were particularly adapted for the feeding of cattle, were called Oxley, (*Oxa*;) those which were resorted to by the swan and the crow, Swanley (*Swann*) and Crowley (*Craw*). When the land was enclosed, it was called Yardley or Ardley, (from the A.S. *Geard*,) or Lockley, (from the A.S. *Loca*,) an enclosed place. When it possessed more woods than usual it was called Graveley, the pasture with trees, (from the A.S. *Græffa*, a grove;) and when any particular tree grew in the locality, it took its title from that circumstance, as Oakley, (*Ac*,) the meadow with oaks. That which was distinguished for its beauty, and bright and shining position, was called *Shenley*, from the old word Sheen, (A.S. *Scire*,) which once gave a name to Richmond. If its form was of an unusual length the Saxons called it Langley, (*Lang*,) or of small extent Smalley, (A.S. *Smæl*). In two cases the word "Leigh" seems to have had a wider signification, and to have been applied to land in which barley and flax were cultivated, as Barley, (from A.S. *Bere*, barley,) the barley field. Lilley, anciently Lindley and Linley, (A.S. *Linet*,) meaning the flax or hemp grounds. The

titles of their leaders, or their gods, were frequently given to the Leigh, a custom which, in the latter case, was most probably derived from their wish to obtain by this means a blessing on their pasture. Thus we have—

Thorley, the pasture dedicated to Thor.

Offley, the pasture of the Mercian king Offa.

Wormley, the pasture of Worm, the great Scandinavian leader, who has given his name to Ormshead and many other places in the kingdom.

Wymondley, originally Wymondeslai, the meadow of Wymond. This Wymond was probably a son of Withlaf, king of Mercia, the great benefactor of Croyland Abbey. His name is also preserved in Wymondham, in Norfolk.

The meadow, when it was free from trees, was called “*Ing*,” A.S. Of this we have examples in

Chelsing, (from A.S. *Col*, cold,) the coldly situated meadow.

Bromin Green, (from A.S. *Brom*,) a broom or shrub; the meadow covered with broom.

Welwyn, the meadow with a well (*wel*).

Hitchin, the meadow watered by the *Hitz*.

Willian, the meadow with the willows, (*welai* or *widde a withy*). Its original name in the Domesday Book was *wedelee*, meaning the lea with willows.

Braughing, in “Domesday” Brachinges, either the meadow with the brook, (from the A.S. *broc*,) or the badger’s meadow, (from the A.S. *broc*, a badger.) As Badger’s Green is situated only a few miles to the west, the latter derivation may perhaps be preferred.

Hence also Bragbury End, Brickett Wood, Brockett Hall, and Brock Holts.

Herring Gate may be derived either from the clan *Heorringas*, or from *Herra*, a lord. In the latter case it signifies the lord's meadow, and is thus distinguished from Chorley Green, the *Ceorl* or churl's pasture.

The great war-god of the Saxons was *Teu* or *Tyr*; from whom we find two places have taken their names. Thus Tewin, anciently Tewinge, is the meadow of the god *Teu*; and Tring, that is Tying, instead of being connected with the word triangle, as our historians suppose, is evidently derived from the same source. May not each of these have been a Campus Martius of our Saxon forefathers?

A low piece of ground, a space between two hills, was called *Comb*, as in Sacomb, from *Sæ*, the sea—the flooded valley. This word is really of British origin, being in fact another form of *Cwm*. The more usual title for a valley amongst the Saxons was the syllable *den*, from the A.S. *denu*; they seem to have generally taken their names from the trees which flourished in them. Thus we have Birkesden, (*Birce*), the valley of the birch trees; Aspenden, (from A.S. *Æspe*, or *asp*), the valley with the aspen trees; Measden, (from *Mæste*, the acorn,) the valley abounding in acorns. Sometimes we find the valley taking its name from the abundance of the rushes which grew in it, as Rushden, (*Risce*), the valley full of rushes. Sometimes from the river which flowed through it, as Gaddesden, the valley watered by the Gata. The neighbouring village of Harpenden takes its name from the *Hearpene*, the nightingale, and thus signifies the nightingale's valley. Munden and Frithesden, (the one being derived from A.S. *mund*, security; and

the other from *frid*, peace; freedom from molestation,) point out probably some place of refuge in common danger, or some asylum for the oppressed. Walden may be derived from A.S. *weald*, a forest, or *wel*, a well; but the character of the district, I believe, is in favor of the derivation which describes it as a "wooded valley." A few terminations of unusual occurrence may here be alluded to. In the north we find Buckland, (A.S. *Bocland*,) a title very common throughout England. This town takes its name not from *boc*, a beech tree, but from *boc*, a book, and signifies "Book-land," that is, land held by a charter of writing, free from all fief, fee, service, or fines; or, as we now say, freehold land. Land of this character was severed by an act of government from the folc-land, and converted by a charter or book into an estate of perpetual inheritance. It might be held by freemen of all ranks.

Separate or privileged land, freehold land, was sometimes called Sundor-land, whence the origin of the name Sunderland. Land possessed without this legal right was probably called Numen, "seized" land, from *niman* or *neoman*, to take. In the chronicles such land is called Naman's-land, and in Cambridgeshire it exists under the more correct form Nymondole. It has been corrupted in Hertfordshire into the words "No man's land."

Again, we find "croft," sometimes corrupted into "crat," a little field; "hurst," a wood; "grave," a small wood; "hunt," a chase: as Long-croft near Bovington, Starr's-croft near Flamstead; Titbert, the hurst near Tyttenhanger; Bygrave, the wood near the

town; Cheshunt, to which we have already alluded, the chase near the camp.

The termination mead, and lands, and moor, having been preserved in our language, explain themselves. Of these we find, Horsmead, (A.S. *hors*,) the meadow for horses; Hormead, from the road in the neighbourhood, which is still called Hare Street, the military road, being probably a portion of the *Via Herminia* of the Romans; Exlands, the old form for Oaklands; Dilmore, the moor in the valley, or Dal; with Blackmore and Frogmore.

Most of the rivers of the county we have already alluded to. The only remaining streams to which attention must be called are,—Hiz, anciently written Hitch, which is derived from A.S. *Wych*, a spring, a word which gives its title to the Itchen, the river upon which Winchester stands; and the Gata, which is derived from A.S. *geotan*, to pour, and signifies a drain.

Those streams which dried up at certain seasons of the year, and flowed freely at others, the Saxons called *Burne*: of these we may mention Redburn, (from *red*, *reod*, a reed,) the rivulet abounding in reeds; Wadburn, (*wad*, a ford,) the rivulet which could be forded; Broxbourne, (from *Broc*, a badger,) the badger's rivulet. Similar in meaning to burne was the word *broc*, a rivulet, which is found in Spelbrook, (from *Spilde*,) the dangerous brook.

If we pass from those terminations which mark out the natural features of the country to those which describe the different abodes of the inhabitants, we

shall find that the most important is the syllable "ton." This word—derived from A.S. *tun*—originally meant "a plot of ground fenced round, or enclosed by a hedge." It then came to mean "a dwelling with the enclosed land," and finally many dwellings within an enclosure, and thus a village, or a town. It was natural for the clan, or tribe, which had made the enclosure to call the place after its own name. The names of these clans ended in the syllable "ing," and Kemble says that, as a general rule, whenever the word preceding "ton," or any other similar termination ends in "ing," we may conclude that we have the name of one of the great Saxon families. The exceptions to this rule are, however, numerous. Thus Islington, which is clearly an example of the kind, instead of being named after a clan, is undoubtedly derived from "ysel," a diminutive of "eyse," a British word for water; and, in our own county, Bennington is more likely to mean a town near the meadow watered by the Bean, than to be connected with the Saxon tribes. Kemble's rule may however be safely applied to several places in the county:—

Barrington, the town of the Beorringas;

Caddington, the town of the Cadingas;

Bovington, the town of the Bofingas; and

Wallington, the town of the Wælingas, or the Gauls these being the names of tribes which have settled in different parts of England.

The position of the enclosure, or the local character of the district, sometimes supplied a title, as

Norton, the town situated in the north (North.)

Weston, the town situated in the west (West.)

Marston, the town situated near the marsh (Merse.)

Garston, (A.S. *Gærs grass*,) the town amidst the grass fields.

Sandton, the town situated on a sandy soil.

Gilston, (from Scandinavian *Gill*, old German *gal*,) the town situated on the rivulet.

Watton, (from *wad*, a ford,) the town at the ford.

Luton, (Lee town,) the town on the river Lee.

Not unfrequently the town was called after some animal which was found in numbers in the neighbourhood, or which had presented itself to the early settlers on their arrival in the locality, as

Foxtown, the town infested with foxes.

Drayton, (from *dray*, a squirrel,) the town infested with squirrels.

Wigginton, (from *wicga*, a beetle,) the town infested with beetles.

Sometimes we meet with places which have borne different titles at different periods, and when this is the case, we are able to read in the change of name the changing fortunes of the town. This is remarkably the case with Layston. Originally it was called Icheton, which being derived, like Hitchin, from *wych*, a spring, signified the "town by the spring."* As time passed on, the inhabitants seem to have built a stone church, and pleased with their efforts, as the people of Leominster called their town the "Leof," or beloved minster, so they called their village "Lefstanchirche," the beloved stone church. A worldly age appears to have suc-

* Hence High Wych, near Sawbridgeworth.

ceeded—an age which, finding Lefstanchirche too long for common use, threw away the syllable “chirche,” and abbreviated the old title into Lefstan, and then to Layston.*

We frequently find the town taking its name from some tree which grew in the neighbourhood, though the only instance of the kind in our county is Ashton, (*Asc*), which signifies the town near the ash trees. Hexton, which takes the form of the town of the *ac* or *ec*, that is “the oak,” seems upon investigation to have had a very different derivation. Salmon and Clutterbuck connect the name with the old word Hocgen, a solemn feast, and maintain that it took its title from the “Oc,” a festival that was long kept in the town to celebrate the deliverance of the people from the Danish yoke. If, however, we refer to the manner in which this word is spelt in the Doomsday-book, it would seem that this derivation cannot be maintained. Hexton was originally written Hehstantune, which being simply the Saxon *heh*, “high,” joined with *stanton*, “the town built of stone,” evidently signifies the high town built of stones. But, although we have no towns which have derived their names from trees, we have many localities in the county which have done so. Thus as Oswestry signifies the tree of the Christian Prince Oswald, so we have Throcking, that is Thorocking, the meadow of Thor’s oak; and Elstree, *Ella’s tree*, so called after the great Saxon leader, Ella. Baldock, too, which stands in the northern part of the county, may allude to the

* Clutterbuck says that Royston takes its name from Dame Roise, who erected a cross, called “Roise’s Cross,” and that the place in which it was erected having been bought by Eustace de Mere, a monastery of the Augustines was afterwards built on the site.

position of some bald, or kingly oak ; or may take its name from " the mildest, the wisest, the most eloquent and beautiful " of all the Saxon Deities, the god Baldur,* the son of Odin, and the god of light. Shallock points out the position of an oak which once sheltered a sheal, or shepherd's hut ; and Gummock probably takes its title from *gum*, majestic, and alludes to the site of some noble tree of the forest. It is well known that amongst the marks which were used to distinguish the limits of the different estates, none were more frequent than the ash or the oak. Kemble says that at Addleston, near Chertsey, is an ancient and most venerable oak called Crouch, (*cruæ crucis*,) that is the cross oak, which tradition declares to have been a boundary of Windsor Forest.† May not the place called Gannock in the north be derived from *Gang-oc*, the oak of the circuit ? And as *Gang-dagas* and *Gang-wuce* signified the days and the week the parish was perambulated, may not *Gang-ac* have signified some remarkable tree which marked the divisions of the estates.

Whilst "ton" signified originally the enclosed land, and thence the houses situated in the enclosure, the syllable "ham," designated primarily "the home," "the dwelling," and thence a town, a village. We meet with various places of this form in the county, thus—

Aldenham, (A.S. *Ald*,) the old town, and

Newnham, (A.S. *Newe*,) the new town :

* Baldur was the second son of Odin. All things were supposed to have sworn not to hurt Baldur. But the mistletoe (among trees) was overlooked. Hence his death from a dart made of a shoot of that plant, which Loki (the Lucifer among the Æsir) put into blind Hodur's hand to throw at him.

† Potter's Crouch probably signifies the cross which stood near some ancient pottery. Croxley Green is to be traced to the same word.

Pelham, (A.S. *Pol*,) the town by the lake or pool ;
 Puttenham, (A.S. *Pytt*,) the town by the well ;
 Hadham, (A.S. *Hæd*,) the town near the heath field ;
 Stodham, (A.S. *Stoc*, “the trunk of a tree,”) the
 town near the wood ; and

Cottingham, like Cotswold, (from A.S. *Cote*,) the
 town near the sheep-cots.

Another Saxon word which was used to designate a
 dwelling place, a mansion, and thence a village, was
wic. This word is sometimes applied to a particular
 dwelling as a “monastery,” or “a castle,” and some-
 times, especially in the north of Europe, to a creek
 formed by the winding bank of the river, as in Green-
 wick and Harwich. We find it used in its simple
 meaning in

Chilwick, (A.S. *cile*, cold,) the coldly situated village ;

Berwick, (A.S. *bere*, barley,) the village amongst the
 barley fields ; and

Eastwick and Westwick.

The simple “station” or field was called “stead,”
 (from A.S. *stede*;) of this termination we have many
 examples, as—

Wheathamstead, (A.S. *hwæte*,) the station near the
 hamlet standing among the corn fields.*

Rothamstead, (A.S. *Reod*,) the station near the hamlet
 situated amongst the reeds.

Flamstead, a corruption of Verlamstead, the station
 near the hamlet standing on the Ver.

Gorstead, (A.S. *gor*) the station in the marsh.

* It has been suggested that Wheathamstead may be more directly derived
 from *wæt*, wet, but the loss of the initial *h* is no objection to its being traced up
 to *hwæte*, wheat, for Hreopadun Repton is written Repton in very early manu-
 scripts.

Stanstead, (A.S. *stan*,) the station perhaps built of stones.

Berkhampstead, anciently Beorh-ham-stéde (*beorh*, the summit of a hill,) the station near the hamlet standing on a hill.

Hemel Hempstead, in Doomsday-book Hamelamestede, (*heamol*, frugal, thrifty,) the frugal homestead. The word "hemel" has sometimes been derived from a German word *himmel*, heaven. But *himmel* is not found in A.S. language; the word by which the Saxons designated heaven being *heofon*. As, however, a frugal is undoubtedly a happy homestead, the derivation proposed, though differing in its origin, may differ slightly in sense, and the inhabitants of Hemel Hempstead may still believe that theirs is the happy homestead.*

Another word *stoc* signifying "a place," which is found very frequently over England, is met with in the single instance—Leverstock Green; which being derived from *læfer*, a bulrush, or rush, signifies the place amongst the rushes.

In the north stands Cottered, a town which seems to have had different titles at different periods. In Doomsday-book it is called "Chodrei," and then, being derived from *coedd*, a wood, and *leigh*, a meadow, meant the meadow near the wood. A little later, in King Stephen's reign, it is called, from the ridge of hills adjoining, Codrich, the ridge near the wood, and as it was formerly spelt Cotterid, its present name is probably simply a corruption of Cotteridge.

* Hemel Hempstead was sometimes called Hean Hempstead. Hean is probably derived not from *hean* "high," but from *hean*, humble; the two titles, *hean* and *hamol*, both seem to refer to the former lowly condition of this town.

Near Cottered is a place, which takes its name from a word which is now obsolete. I allude to Reed, or as it was anciently written Reith. This name which is found also in Yorkshire, is a corruption of A.S. *rithe*, a well or river. In our county this word points out probably the ancient source of the river Rib.

We very frequently find the syllable *hag* or *hay* connected with Saxon localities: this word is derived from A.S. *haga*, a hedge; it still exists in our language in the word hawthorn, meaning the hedge-thorn, or thorn used for making hedges.

Fairfax has retained the word in the sense of a wood, in the line—

“Thus said, he led me over holts and hags;”

and Sir Walter Scott has introduced it in *Waverley*, to produce a confusion in Edward's mind between *hag*, a witch, and *hag*, a wood. It is usually applied to farms in the West of England, and in this sense was probably used in the words, East Brook Hay, West Brook Hay, Little Hay, Bark-way, (A.S. *beorce*,) the farm with the beech trees.

Stevenage, (in Doomsday-book, Stigenace,) from *stig*, a road, the farm near the road.

The more general word for a farm was “worth,” which is taken from A.S. *weorthig*. Leo supposes that it meant enclosed land surrounded with water, though the original word simply signifies a field or manor. We find—

Marsworth, (A.S. *mersc*,) the farm in the marsh.

Kensworth, on the Chiltern hills, anciently Canesworth, (A.S. *cean*, *cen*, *cæn*, a pine or fir tree,) the farm with the fir trees.

Letchworth, (A.S. *lecha*,) the farm situated by the rivulet.

Sawbridgeworth, the farm near the bridge over the Soar.

Knebworth, (A.S. *cnæp*,) the farm situated on the rising ground.

Rickmansworth, (*rice*, a district, *mersc*, a marsh,) the marsh farm.

The termination *hanger*, (from the A.S. *hangra*, a meadow usually situated by the side of a wood,) is not of such frequent occurrence in England. In Hertfordshire it is found in Panshanger, which is most probably derived from *pine*, the pine-tree, and signifies meadow with the pine trees; and in Tyttenhanger, which, like its kindred form Tuddenham, in Suffolk, may be traced to the O.Eng. *tod*, a fox, or to the A.S. *tydde*, granted.

There is one word which frequently occurs in all parts of England, and which, in an especial manner, carries our thoughts from our own peaceful times to the days in which might triumphed over right. I allude to the syllable "borough." This word, derived from Saxon *burh*, originally meant the stronghold or place of defence, into which the inhabitants might retire in times of invasion. We have only a few places derived from this word in the county. Of these are—

Aldbury, (A.S. *ald*,) the old stronghold.

Kingsbury, (A.S. *cyng*,) the stronghold of the Saxon kings.

Hertingfordbury, the stronghold near Hertingford: the ford at the hart's meadow.

Few subjects have attracted more attention amongst antiquarians than the origin of the title Cold Harbour. Various suggestions have been offered about each portion of the name. The word cold has been explained as alluding either to a coldly situated place, or a store for coals, whilst Harbour or Harborough has been traced up to the word *Here*, an army. That the word Cold (*Col*, A.S.) has any connection with coals seems very improbable, for it is found not only in districts in which coals do not exist, but even in places where no store-place for coals was likely to have been made. The four places which bear this title in Hertfordshire are all situated in cold and exposed positions, and therefore so far as Hertfordshire is concerned, I think there cannot be any doubt that the word cold is to be taken in its ordinary meaning. Sometimes places with this name are found by the side of rivers, and when this is the case, it is not improbable that the epithet is derived from *ceol*, a ship, and that the word then meant a refuge for ships. In proposing two meanings for the word cold, varying with their position, it will not be thought that an improbable theory is suggested, when it is recollected that in Market Harborough we have an instance of another prefix to the word Harbour. With respect to the second portion of the name Harbour, when we recollect that the important syllable is found in the words Haworth, Hargrave, Harwood, Harley, Harland, Harrow, Harwich, we may dismiss at once its supposed connection with *Here* an army. The very frequency of its occurrence shews that it must have had some simple meaning. Besides the places above enumerated, the

very words Cold Harbour occur nearly thirty times in England, chiefly in the old kingdom of Mercia; and not only so, but the syllable Har was used very frequently as a prefix of a man's name, as is seen in Harrold, and Hardicanute, sons of Canute. The word to which we are inclined to trace this title is *Hear*, High, or proud, a word which gives a very simple and intelligible meaning to the names of which it forms a part. On this supposition Cold Harbour originally signified the coldly situated high town.*

The castle or mansion of the leaders was called Hall, (A.S. *heal*,) a word which, in addition to this signification, means at times an inn, or place of refreshment. It is found in

Chishall, (A.S. *ceosel* or *cesel*,) the hall near the gravel pits.

Clothall, anciently written Cleyhall, and Clodhall, (A.S. *clæg*, clay,) the hall in the clay soil.

Kelshall, (A.S. *keld*, a spring,) the hall near the spring.

Lufenhall, (*leofen*, food,) the hall of plenty.

Widdial, (A.S. *widde*, a willow,) the hall near the willows.

Northhall needs no explanation.

Sheephall might also have been passed over without observation, had it not been for two places called Fairland and Faircroft-hall, which are in the same district. The meaning of Sheephall is evident, but many might pass over the latter without seeing that they were equivalent words. And yet such is undoubtedly the

* Several of the Cold Harbours with which I am acquainted are the names of farms. Har when compounded with well, etc., as Harwell, Harford, Harborne, would, like the Latin *altus*, signify deep. It is probably this word which gives the name to the Harz mountains.

case. Faircroft and Fairland are derived, not from our adjective fair, but from the Scandinavian *faar*, the sheep, a word which gives its name to Fairleigh and Fairfield; and thus they signify in northern dialect what Sheephall did in the language of the Angles.

Another word signifying a hall, which has become obsolete in the language, is met with in Dorsell, which is derived from *deor*, a deer, or any wild animal, and *sel*, a dwelling.

The more humble dwelling of the peasant was called cot, (A.S. *cote*,) of which we possess examples in

Caldecote, (A.S. *cald*,) the bleak cottage; and

Codicote (*coedd*, a wood,) the cottage near the wood.

The lonely situated dwelling was called Earne, (A.S. *earn*,) as in Walkern, from A.S. *wacch*, or *wealh*, the servant, the servant's hut; and Biggin Farm, near Buckland, is to be traced to the provincial *biggin*, a building.

We have had already to allude to places situated by roads, and taking their name from this circumstance. Another instance of this kind may here be mentioned, viz., the town Anste, which being derived from *hean*, high, and *stige*, a path, signifies the lofty path. Those who have visited the beautiful Anste Cove in Devonshire, will know how appropriate the title is to that locality. Another very usual word to indicate a road in Saxon times was the *gæt*. It is found much transformed in Markyate Street, which, in its original form, was Mearc-gæte,—the road near the Mearc; mearc is interpreted by some to mean “a meadow,” by others “a frontier, or march.” Markyate will therefore mean

either "the path by the meadow," or "the boundary road." It will be noticed that the "g" in gate has been transformed into y; this Dr. Leo says is generally the case when the "g" is followed by a vowel. The word is sometimes further transformed into "yott," or "yatt," as in Ayott and Sarratt. The former word is a compound of "a" water, as in the Aland Island,— (the "Sealand Island,") with the syllable "yott," and means the road by the water, alluding probably to some road which skirted the Lea mer, now Lamer park, that is, the lake formed by the flooding of the Lea; and the latter may be traced to a corruption of *soar*, signifying water, with the syllable *yatt*. The form *yett* is found in "The Ghaist's Warning"—

"When she came till the castell yett,
Her eldest dochter stood thereat."

There seems to have been hardly any bridges in the district, which is probably to be accounted for by the rivers being so small and unimportant. The fords, however, are very numerous. One which was situated at the Staple, or market-place, they called Stapleford; another which the Roman road crossed was called Ickelford; a third, which led to the town of Hertford, was called Byford—the ford near the town (*by*.) The nature of the adjacent country sometimes suggested a name; thus we find Lemsford—the ford near the Lum, a provincial word signifying the wooded valley. Not unfrequently, too, the different characters of the river which the ford crossed, supplied a title. Thus when the river was small, or in A.S. a *lecha*, the place was called Latchford; when the stream was broad,

(Saxon *wid*,) they named it Widford; when it was necessary to wade the stream in order to cross it, it took the name of Watford (A.S. *wad*;) when its waters were rapid enough to form a torrent (A.S. *saef*;) they gave it the title of Shefford. This word, I may here mention, gives the title to the Sheaf, the river upon which Sheffield stands. There is, however, no class of words which more frequently supplies the titles for the fords than the names of animals. Thus we have Ox-ford, Horse-ford, Gat-ford (the Goats-ford;) Fair-ford, (the Sheep's-ford;) Swine-ford; and in our own county, Hertford, (A.S. *heort*;) the Hart's ford. The origin of this practice cannot, in all cases, be ascertained, but it is most probable that it arose sometimes from the kind of animals which fed by the banks of the river, and sometimes was, in a primitive age, a rough method of describing the depth of the stream. Thus the Ox-ford would be a ford which the ox could pass; and Gat-ford, would be a shallower stream, which was fordable by goats. At all events, the custom is so prevalent, and the word hart so common as the title for A.S. localities, as Hart's-bath, Hartlepool, (the Hart's pool,) Hartley—that though several other derivations have been given for the capital of the county, none seem so simple, or so satisfactory, as that which interprets it to mean the hart's ford.

The position of the floodgates, or dams by which they held up the water, is indicated by the word *hatch*, as in Colney Hatch.

The wells they used are pointed out by the syllable

well. Thus the well or spring which is the origin of the river Rhee is called Ash-well, the well surrounded by ash trees. That from which the New River rises is called Am-well, the well near the hamlet. Rad-well, the well surrounded with reeds. Potter's-bar takes its name partly from being the site of some ancient pottery, and partly from being an ancient bar on Enfield Chase. Ware, or A.S. *waer*, a dam, points out the position of the Wear, which was strongly fortified by the Danes in 964, in order to defend their vessels. Westmill and Wadesmill (*wad*, a ford,) were the places at which they ground their corn; and Northchurch was the place at which our forefathers assembled for worship.

We have now gone through the list of localities which are of Angle origin, and we think the survey, rapid as it has been, must have been sufficient to show the truth of Dr. Latham's remark, that the county of Hertford is one of the most purely Angle in the country. A few of the rivers, as we have seen, take their names from the language of the Britons, and a few localities may be traced to the Roman and Scandinavian element: but with this exception, the whole county is Saxon to the core; the names of its towns, its villages, its farms, its halls, and its cottages, can all be traced up to the great family to which it is our boast to belong; and if at times we find remains of other races, they are so few, so thinly scattered, that they can have produced no permanent effect on the character of the district.

If we pause for a moment to consider the aspect

which the county presented to the Saxons, we can simply say that it appears, as now, to have been a pleasing home to our forefathers. It abounded in forests and woods of oak, ash, beech, and aspen trees. Though in some districts there were marshes and moors and high plains, in which the broom and the heath alone flourished; in other parts there were fields which produced wheat and barley and flax, and meadows which gave an abundant sustenance for the cattle. No hill like Blagdon seems to have been the resort of the wolf, no meadows like Eversley were frequented by the wild boar, (*efer*,) but the song of the nightingale (the *hearpene*) was heard in its valleys, whilst the *broc*, or badger, the hound, the hare, and the squirrel, alone were found in its woods.

Even the position of the sandy soil, the gravel pits, and stony and clayey soils, have been handed down to us in the names of districts. It is rather remarkable that so abundant as the chalk is, we have no place called after it, and that amidst their fields of wheat, of barley, and flax, the natives had not found the advantage of cultivating the beans as at Benfield, or the oats, as at Oatley.

A few remarks must be made upon the Scandinavian element which was introduced after the Saxon invasion. There are certain tests by which we can always detect the presence of these terrible invaders of our country. In Dr. Latham's opinion, the principal are the following:—

1. The names of towns in "sk" rather than "sh," as Skepton for Shepton.

2. The form of "ca" instead of "cha," as Carlton for Charlston.

3. The termination "by" rather than "ton," as Whitby for Whitetown.

4. The use of "kirk" for church, as Kirkby for Churchton.

5. The existence of places ending in "ey," signifying an island.

Of the first, second, and fourth of these forms, I am not aware that any example exists in Hertfordshire. The form "by" for town is found in Bygrave, the town by the wood, and in Farsby, (from *fyr*s,) the town amongst the fern; and the syllable "ey" is seen in Colney, the island formed by the Coln; and in Bushey, the island filled with bushes; and in Odsey, (from *oddi*,) the island of brakes. We must not also forget the Scandinavian word Fairland, to which we have already alluded; and the titles Dane's-bridge, Dane-end, and the hundred of Dacorum, all of which point out the former presence of the Northmen. When, however, we have taken every Danish word which exists in the county, their number is so small, compared with the Saxon titles, that it is evident the Northmen never made their influence felt in this district. If at times they made inroads into the county, as they probably did when Croyland Abbey was destroyed in A.D. 867, and again in A.D. 914, when, as "Florence of Worcester" relates, the Pagan army from Northampton and Leicester marched first to Oxford and afterwards to Leighton, they must have been quickly expelled. In fact, the position of the county, situated so far from the

coast, was little suited for the abodes of those wild hordes whose home was literally on the sea, and whose strength consisted in the use they made of their ships.

The double names which frequently occur in the county, deserve a passing notice. These have arisen from some connection of the place with ecclesiastical affairs, or have been added to explain the ownership in the middle ages. Thus we have Abbot's Langley, King's Langley; Abbot's Walden, (given to the abbot and convent of St. Alban's by Wrelptan, minister of Ethelred,) and King's Walden. Bishop Hatfield, so called because it formerly belonged to the Bishop of Ely, who had a palace there. We have also Draycot Beauchamp, so called from the Beauchamp family, who came over at the time of the Norman conquest. Pelham Furneaux, so called from Simon de Furneaux, Bishop of London; Pelham Sarners, from a person of this name who purchased some of the land in this manor from the Bishop of London shortly after the conquest; Pelham Brent, or Burnt, from a great fire which happened in the village in the reign of Henry I.

Of the names belonging to the Latin of the second period, which titles are generally connected with ecclesiastical affairs, we have St. Alban's, St. Margaret's, St. Ippolyts or Hippolytus. The Præ in this neighbourhood takes its origin from the Latin *prata*. The Grange farm was the farm at a distance from the abbey, which was stocked and cultivated by the monks; Serge-Hill takes its name from the cloth which was manufactured there for the use of the inmates of the

monastery; and the various "cells" in the district point out the position of the different religious houses, as Market Cell, etc.*

I must here conclude. If the paper has failed to interest you, I feel sure the fault is in myself and not in the subject. Though the effort to interpret these names has occupied much time, yet I have found the study so enticing, that the longer I followed it the more interested I became. The subject not only reveals to us, what perhaps has hitherto been a mystery, the meaning of the names of the places which we inhabit, but it also enables us to recall the feelings with which the wild Briton, or the early Saxon settler, beheld scenes now so common to us. The joy or the sorrow which they felt when they first saw the woods and mountains of their homes; the feeling of admiration with which they gazed upon the new beauties of the scene, coming often with the rapidity of the sunbeam, has, with the power of the sunbeam, been indelibly written on the land in which we dwell. If the paper has suggested any of these thoughts to you, I shall be fully repaid for any labor I may have bestowed in deciphering the meaning of the names of localities in Hertfordshire.

* The word "sell," which is applied to several residences in the county, is not connected with the monastic word "cell," but is derived from A.S. *sel*, a hall or mansion.

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