# THE PROGRESSIVE OR EXPANSIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE-NAMES.[1]

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The common or usual notion with respect to place-names generally seems to be that they had from the first what may be called a wide or comprehensive meaning, or, at the least, application. Yet a few moments' consideration seems sufficient to do much more than merely suggest that this can scarcely be so. For, if we analyse names ending with the Old English *ton* or others terminating in the Danish *by*—to specify no other at present—it is at once obvious that the colonising name-giver and settler in either instance could but have applied the name he gave, in the former case to the spot he fenced in or 'tyned;' or to the buildings which he had made habitable for himself and his *familia* in the other.

In one place in his *Old English Manor*, we find Dr. Andrews expressing himself thus:—"the *tún* was primarily the manor enclosure," (p. 151. n); in another, "the mansion with its enclosures, the original *tún*." Elsewhere, writing of the earliest stages in the development of the manor, he says, "the first element to be formed on these artificial manors, if we may so call them, would be the dominical element, the *tún*, as used in the translation of Augustine's Soliloquia and in the Gerefa; the *by*, as we find it in the Danish place-names; consisting of the Lord's or Chief's house with its outbuildings and quarters for cattle which were set up in the clearing hewn from the forest," (p. 61); while the more comprehensive conception of what is referred to is more fully set out a few pages further on. "This was presumably a mansion of size and importance, standing adjacent to a court or yard, which probably formed the area between the house and the outbuildings, the quadrangle which was the customary form of homestead construction, so arranged

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for defence. Around this quadrangle were the barns for corn and hay, the stalls for horses and cattle, the pens for sheep, and folds for smaller animals. Somewhere within the court were ovens and kilns, and near by, the salt-house, the malt house, the ricks of hay and wood, and perhaps the mill. Within the inland were also enclosed fields or meadows, arable and pasture, together with a kitchen garden for herbs and vegetables. Near by, were the quarters for the slaves in or near the Lord's house, etc. Around all, was the permanent hedge which enclosed the Lord's *tún*, as the farmstead is called in the Gerefa and *Rectitudines.*"

I quote this passage *in extenso* because it brings before us very distinctly the prominent idea involved in the word *tún*, namely, that of a *fenced-in place.* Not that I adopt the description as certainly or universally accurate. I accept the quadrangular space or court enclosed by the Lord's own dwelling and the various offices mentioned, on three sides; if indeed not, in some cases, all round. But I am inclined to demur to the enclosure of fields, meadows, pastures, &c., at least originally, within the precincts of the *tûn* proper; at all events in these northern parts. At the date of the writings quoted, the description may have become a fairly accurate one in the more southerly districts of the kingdom. But that it was so originally, and especially in the north, there is certainly no proof. And besides, what proof there is, is as certainly not of a nature to confirm Dr. Andrews' views; but rather, distinctly antagonistic to them. And perhaps even this was to be looked for when the evidence relied upon seems mainly to be of the documentary, and not of the archæological, character.

But admitting, for the moment, that fields, meadows, gardens, pasture-land, were enclosed within the fence from which the *tún* derives its distinguishing name, still it is to be observed that the writer supposes a comparatively very large area belonging to the germinating manor, *which was not enclosed within the tún proper*, on which villages, hamlets, scattered houses, might be or were existing. In other words, the *tún* proper at first or originally only designated a limited spot selected at will out of an extensive sweep of the country side. But that

the whole extensive sweep of country began to be called after the special *tún* in question from the time of its completion, there is not a scrap of evidence, as far as I am aware, to show. And what is thus asserted of places whose names end in *tún* or *ton*, is equally true, perhaps even more strikingly so still, of places whose names terminate in the familiar Old Danish *by*.

A very singular, and, as I think, a very luminous as well as interesting illustration of the principle herein advanced is to be met with in what may be termed the "name history" of a manorial township which was, very soon after the Conquest, part and parcel of the earliest endowment of the renascent Abbey of Whitby.

The earliest writing in the Cartulary of the Abbey named, may be dated as far back as the first decade of the second half of the twelfth century, and can hardly be later than 1178 or 1180. In this early writing, among the specifications of the original grants made by William de Percy, the founder, and Alan his eldest son and heir, we find the following :—"Nedhrebi, *i.e.* Steinsecher, Thingwala, Leirpel, Helredale, Gnip, *i.e.* Hauchesgard, etc." And what we cannot well help noticing is that two of the places specified have alternative names; and also that the second of these alternative names, in either case, is the later and better known. The two possessions or manorial townships which, about the year 1178 were more familiarly known as Steinsecher and Hauchesgarth, had at the time of the foundation, or just a century earlier, been distinguished by the names Nedhrebi and Gnip; the former existence of which last name, it may be interjected, is still attested by the survival of the local designation of a hill called 'Nype Howe,' so spelt occasionally, although the form 'Gnipe Howe,' is adopted by most, and surely has the better authority to support it.

The fact of the supersession of the old Old Danish name in either of these two cases by another belonging, in point of fact, to the same vocabulary, is sufficiently interesting, and would lead to an equally interesting series of considerations if we attempted to account for the fact by aid of an historical investigation of the circumstances. But this will not be approached in the present paper, as it would lead us astray from the study of the matters

connected with the locality called Gnipe or Hauchesgarth, and the inferences and deductions thereupon dependent.

There can be no question that both of the earlier and superseded names, Netherby and Gnipe, belong to the class or section of "descriptive place-names;" the descriptiveness depending upon local position in the one instance, and upon natural configuration in the other. As there was an Overbi—which in our modern speech would take the form of Upperby—as well as a Netherby, the question and nature of the descriptiveness need not be further entered into as regards that one of the two names. As to the other, or Gnip, Gnipe, Nype, correlated as it must be with the distinguished elevation of its survival in what is called Nype Howe, the merest reference to the Icelandic Gnìpa, with its equivalent form Gnúpr, meaning a peak, an elevated point, is sufficient to assure us of its descriptiveness, even without the additional suggestiveness residing in the facts that it was a word of frequent occurrence in local names in Iceland, and that the plural Gnupar as well as the singular Gnúpr afforded names for divers settlements or farms in the island named.

But our interest will centre more in the name which, at so early a period, superseded the, at that time, so familiar and so frequently adopted local or farm-name, Gnipe or Nype:—that is, Hauchesgard or Hawksgarth.

It may be said that this name is descriptive too. So are all local names belonging to the same category. But then its descriptiveness is of a totally different character from that inherent in such terms as *over*, *upper*, or *gnipe* with the meaning "peak." As regards its first element, or Haukr, it is descriptive in precisely the same manner and to the same extent as Northmanneby, Ugleberdesby (both in its near vicinity), Ormsby, Daneby, or any other of the hosts of local place-names involving a personal name as, or in, their first element. Hauk was the name of the man, chief or lord, who devised and wrought the gar*dh* or garth itself.

But it is more important to ask, "What of the said gar*dh* or garth itself?" The answer to this question is perhaps fuller and more pregnant than may be at the outset anticipated.

Because, in contrast with that of which Dr. Andrews has written in his description of the *tún*, the representation does not depend solely on mere written statements and the deductions made from such statements, but upon most evident and unmistakeable survivals of a material and very abiding nature.

It is a long time now since my attention was first called to these material survivals. Latterly, in virtue of inquiries made of me by the surveyors engaged in the operations preparatory to the execution of the Ordnance maps drawn to the 25-inch scale, and of the representations of a much interested friend living in the neighbourhood, interest as well as attention was more strongly aroused, and arrangements were made for a more deliberate and systematic inspection of the place and its remains from older times, than I had ever yet given it and them. The place and the remains adverted to will be found on sheet 32 of the 6-inch Ordnance survey, and on sheet XXXII. 12 of the maps drawn to the scale of 25·344 inches to the mile. In the former they are described as "Whitby Lathes," with banks and a moat delineated. In the latter the verbal description is "Whitby Lathes (Site of)," with "Manor House" added as the designation of the nature of the dwelling-house indicated as there present. I need not, of course, say that the delineation is perfectly accurate; that the moat (or what remains of it), very noteworthy as well as very traceable, is there, and that the massive remains of ancient embankments arrest one's attention in divers directions as soon as he leaves the high-road on which the place abuts. The one thing in the description just now cited which was not verified by the evidences all round, as soon as the eye rested upon them, was the accuracy of the term "Manor House." Not that there was any reason, or suggestion of reason, for doubting it. That was simply a circumstance requiring verification of another kind. It depended on historical evidence and not the mere testimony of the senses.

But the historical testimony was not in abeyance even, and much less far to seek. Within a few minutes of the commencement of our survey I was told, and by the "Seneschal" himself—this Whitby Lathes being one of

the dependent manors associated with the head manor of Whitby—that the Manorial Court is still held there; that it is there that the "homage" assembles, and all the formal preliminaries and observances of the Court are duly attended to and scrupulously gone through; and that it is not until all this has been carefully done according to established custom, that the Court is adjourned, and the more social parts of the ceremonial duly honoured and fulfilled at another place.

Now, here I must advert to another topic, closely connected, however, with the matters now under notice. I mean that "Whitby Lathes" is not a name of *very* ancient imposition, like Gnipe, or even like Hauchesgarth, or its still more recent representative, Hawsker. It is, in point of fact, not possible to say exactly when it was first imposed. I do not meet with it in any of the Whitby documents—and I think I am familiar with them all—earlier than the first quarter of the fourteenth century; and it was most likely not until the development of the agricultural economy of the Convent had reached large proportions that the name, which is fully self-explanatory, was newly affixed. At the end of the century named, the Convent people had become farmers on a large scale indeed. The catalogue of their live stock shows that they owned three hundred and ninety-four head of "neat stock," oxen, bullocks, cows and calves; three thousand, six hundred, five score and nine—it must be remembered that they reckoned by the "long hundred" and six score to the hundred—sheep; and so on, according to the proportion of the times; and the continuation of the inventory shows in the most striking way that Whitby Lathes was far away the greatest and most important of the agricultural establishments belonging to the Abbey. What then, as it seems to me, we are not so much justified in assuming, as bound to assume, is that the agricultural development had rendered it expedient, if not necessary, to effect such a territorial rearrangment or readjustment as is implied in what is advanced above.

Possibly a few words illustrative of what has thus been said, are called for here. During the incumbency of Abbot Benedict, or *circa* 1138–1148 (when he resigned) —Aschetillus or Aschetinus de Houkasgart obtained the

sanction of the Abbot and Convent of Whitby to build a chapel at Haukesgarth and to endow it with certain neighbouring lands. This Aschetin de Haukesgarth, whose first name is very variously spelt, was the founder of the not unimportant family of de Haukesgarth. His father, who exchanged lands at Newholm, near Dunsley, for the Haukesgarth lands, was called William de Newham. The family seems to have been continued through William, Aschetil's eldest son. At the close of the thirteenth century, a Thomas de Haukesgarth, almost certainly a great-grandson of Aschetil's, is the lord of Haukesgarth; and in 1308 we find an Adam de Haukesgarth, the then representative of the family in lineal descent, quitclaiming to the Convent all his right and claim in and to the said manor itself, and all that appertained thereto. No motive for, or explanation of this remarkable cession and surrender is assigned; and there seems to be nothing in the written records to afford any enlightenment on the subject. It is, however, certainly probable—I think more than probable—that Thomas de Haukesgarth, who became Abbot of Whitby some fourteen years later, (that is, in or about 1322,) was at that time a monk in the Whitby fraternity. Certainly no fully satisfactory elucidation of the circumstances under comment is supplied by the recollection: but we are at liberty to form the hypothesis that the cession of the manor just spoken of and the succeeding elevation of the then monk were not totally unconnected. The certainties, however, are that, in 1308, the Manor of Haukesgarth with all its rights, members, and appurtenances, reverted to the Convent of Whitby; and that, assuredly within a very short time of the same period, what had hitherto been the manor house of the manor called Haukesgarth, became available for different purposes, and received a new name exactly in accordance with the said new purposes. It was then called, as it continues to be called to this day, Whitby Lathes; in standard English, Whitby Barns; the word *lathe* in that sense being hardly obsolete, even yet, in the Whitby district and neighbourhood.

That this historical statement is no matter of mere conjecture or hypothesis is certain. There is a document in the Whitby Cartulary, which must find its date

within the first ten or twelve years of the fourteenth century, in which the "grangia" of "Whitbilathes" is specifically mentioned, together with that of Stakesby. So early had the new name been framed and imposed.

But this brings in, at least furnishes the occasion for the introduction of, considerations of another cast or description. There are in the *Cartularium Abbathiæ de Whiteby*, published by the Surtees Society, copies of several Computi, belonging to the latter part of the fourteenth century, in each of which we find, in repeated iteration, such entries as the following:—"De villa" or "De firma villae de Hakenes," so much; "De Curia ibidem" so much. "De manerio de Eschedale" "De Curia ibidem; "De manerio de Stakesby" "De Curia ibidem"; "De firma de Sothfilinge" "De Curia ibidem." But in every case, on coming to the Haukesgarth and Staynsyker district, the entries are "De Curia de Whitbylathes" "De Manerio de Haukesgarthe." The manor was the manor of Haukesgarth: but the court was the court of Whitby Lathes.

Collate this fact with the fact mentioned above, that the Manor-court is still formally held at Whitby Lathes, the dwelling house there being characterised in the 25-inch Ordnance map as the ancient Manor house; and a singularly interesting circumstance is brought before our minds, with one or more singularly interesting deductions following as consequent upon it.

I have already drawn attention to the material fact that, in anything there may be to be said about Hauchesgarth, in special reference to its physical characters, what there is to say does not depend simply and solely on written accounts, or deductions drawn from such records, but that the material remains of the *garth* itself are there to testify for themselves.

In direct connection with that statement, I would remark that our attention can hardly be fully directed to this particular term *gardh*, its meaning and applications, without our thoughts being turned towards the recollection of such names as Mikligard, Asgardr, Midgardr, Holmgardar, and so forth; and a moment or two later, it is likely, of the more modern Danish *gaard*, its meaning and application.

It is not a little curious as well as instructive to mark the transitions of meaning which are so strikingly observable as belonging to this word, the modern form of which is *garth*. First, we have "yard" simply, denoting an enclosed space: then we proceed to "courtyard," or "court with the premises around it": then to the "house or building itself as something of marked solidity and stability: and so to the conception of a "strong-hold, a fortress." Nor is even this quite all. As the pure Icelandic or Old Norse passes through the dissolving stage which terminates with its becoming modern Islandic, *gardhr* takes the sense of a *fence* of any kind, especially the fence around the homestead; more particularly the "home field," which is also called *tungardhr*. In speaking of that curious survival from ancient times, the Whitby Horngarth, I have said, in one place in my book on *Old Whitby Memorials*; "It is scarcely possible, if we wish to form a true notion of what the Horngarth service really was, to lay too much stress on the point that the actual and philological meaning of *garth* in both the old Whitby terms, Acregarth and Horngarth, is "FENCE," whatever the material employed in making it—earth, stones, wood, hedging-stuff, or what not may happen to be; and *fence* only; and even I think, it might be insisted without the idea of *enclosure* involved or implied. The *garth*, whether an enclosing garth or not, is still a 'garth' or 'fence.'"

And certainly, if the object of the Ordnance surveyors had been to illustrate what the Glossarist has written, as above, it is a little difficult to perceive how they could have effected their purpose better than in the delineation of the ancient Haukesgarth, represented as it is in and by the less ancient, but still sufficiently venerable, Whitby Lathes. For it is not possible to ignore or dispute the identity of the site of the latter with that of the manorial or lord's residence, or material *manerium*, in the sense that belongs especially to that word, of "mansion" or homestead. There is the moat with allied earthworks which cannot but suggest the "stronghold." There are the massive hanks, still several feet in width, on the side undefended by water, making it no difficult work for a moderately active imagination to recall the mounded

ramparts of earth and stone which, capped with palisading or abbattis, equally effected the enclosure and fulfilled the defensive purposes of the stronghold.

The agricultural and other economic exigencies of the monks—to say nothing of those of the post-dissolution farmer—may have interfered with the integrity of the most ancient parts of the more ancient works; and the more modern as well as the more ancient highway-master may have added his share in the way of defacement and alteration: but there is enough still left not simply to arrest the archæologist's attention, but to excite the mere tourist or wayfarer's curiosity. And I do not think it is particularly difficult to pick out the places whereat the hands of both the monkish labourer and the old causeway-constructor have left their discernible traces.

But what ought, from our point of view, to be most dwelt upon, is the indisputable fact that the original Hauchesgard—whoever the Haukr who constructed it may have been—must, as a mere local name, have designated a very limited area. This survival of the moat and these massive earthworks, (or "banks" if we like to call them so), show us the dimensions as accurately as if we beheld it in its pristine completeness and strength. No doubt the time soon came when the manorial area granted to Haukr came to be called by the name of the lord's homestead or (adopting the Scripture sense)"mansion": but, until that time came, Haukesgarth only meant the said homestead, mansion, or settlement. At present, following the name-system adopted in the maps of the Ordnance Survey, the general district is styled the "Township of Hawsker cum Stainsacre"; and it might be very difficult to delineate Hawsker proper with complete accuracy. But a few names still survive—such as Gnipe Howe, Lathegarth, Moorgate Lees (wrongly entered as Moorgate *Lathes* in the Ordnance maps) and particularly Whitby Lathes itself—to speak to the fact that Hauksgarth was by no means the sole or exclusive local place-name in vogue throughout the district which eventually claimed to be known as Hawsker. As to other ancient place-names finding their location within the same limits, it must suffice to name Overby, Netherby or Stainsacre, Lairpel or Larpool, Thingwala, and Helredale—a name lately revived for Parish Council purposes.

In short, just as has been already seen, as far as the argument from induction goes, the same must have been the case with entire classes of names ending in *-ton* and *-by*, so we see by ocular demonstration in the case of this place-name ending in *-garth*, that what came eventually to be the proper and distinctive name of a manor, township, parish or parochial district, had originally but a very limited areal application. It represented merely what came afterwards to be called if not "The Hall", or "The Manor House", or some equivalent epithet, the "Capitale Messuagium" of old formal documents. Its expansion of sense, such that it came to include the area of the hundreds or thousands of acres ultimately understood as comprised under the specific designation, was the result of later development.

The conclusion thus formulated may be illustrated by a glance or two in the direction of other place names, either already mentioned, or at least named as neighbouring places in the list of vills scheduled in the same original grant to the Convent of Whitby. For instance let us take "Nedhrebi, *i.e.* Steinsecher", and Snetune. Netherby or the Lower *by* was of course so called in distinction from or contrast with Overby or the Upper or Higher *by*. But its name, Netherby, within a century or so, was replaced by one the intrinsic signification of which should not be overlooked. The *by*, the original habitable building or set of buildings, the permanent residence or "mansion" had given way to the *acre*:—"the field, (*i.e.*, the arable land, ground for tillage" (for this is Vigfussen's definition or meaning of the Norse *akr*); or, when opposed to *tún*, the meaning becomes what we intend when we say "the cornfields": the same sense, moreover, being entirely preserved in the oldest English use of the same word. The limited areal sense in *by* had been replaced through the use of the wider, but still limited, areal sense of a term which implied the then corn-lands of the estate concerned.

Yes, but in those early days the "acres" or "corn-lands" formed but one unit, and not a large one, in the aggregate area made up of the composite group of units represented by, besides the "acres," the "sylva pastilis," the heather-clad moor, the general commonable lands of the entire praedial area under notice. No long time,

very probably, (but it is not easy to say how long or how short the time was first), and the entire aggregate, the whole grant or estate, began to be known by the name which had originally specialised only the cultivable and cultivated portion of land thereto appertaining.

The illustration afforded in the instance of Snetune, though of a slightly different character, is perhaps more interesting still. The earliest mention of the place is in the Domesday record of the lands granted to Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, where the entry begins "In WITEBI et SNETON (berewica) ad geldum sunt, &c." Snetum then was a "berewic" to Whitby. Turning to Berewic in the Anglo Saxon dictionary, the student is referred to *beretun*, where he finds that word and *berewic* explained by "a corn farm, a grange, a corn village, a court-yard." Passing by, for the present, the idea of limited area, which is either expressed or implied in each of these somewhat incongruous definitions, it is to be observed that the idea of something detached is distinctly suggested in the conjunction of Sneton with Whitby. Whitby is the head or capital manor; Sneton the dependency, locally separate and distinct or detached, but, otherwise than *locally*, closely connected still. And here an observation neither uninteresting or uninstructive suggests itself. Referring again to the A.S. dictionary, under the head *Snæd*, which is defined as "a little piece, a morsel, a bit or fragment," the compound word "snæd-landes" is given with the explanation "a piece of land taken from a manor." And this is precisely what, relatively to Whitby, Sneton was in Domesday times. It was the "Snæd-tun," the manorial grange or corn farm, which with its appendages formed the court or hay-enclosed space appertaining to the more important caput, or capital establishment, which Whitby then was, and more especially in the Confessor's time. Whitby might be, relatively and as to her geographical area, only small, and Sneton large. But the Domesday entry, by telling what the head manor and town was geldable at, tells also what her material greatness and importance were, and so emphasises the relevancy of the name of Snetun—a detached grange or farming-vill whose name in the near future came to designate the whole area of four thousand acres and upwards of intermingled

"acre" or arable, woodland pasture, moor, swamp, waste, common, which then, in a way little allowed for now a-days, constituted the severed bit of the capital lordship. There was the limited *tún*, or hedged in grange first, but in the issue it was the whole areal expanse of the lordship that was denoted.