

NOTES

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIELD-NAMES

3: TREES AND CROPS

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Earlier notes in this series have concerned some of the more unusual names acquired by local fields over the centuries. Here the focus turns to more commonplace names which are often not less interesting in what they can tell us about earlier landscape and agricultural practices. It should be borne in mind that these notes reflect an interim position

in the collection of field-name material for Buckinghamshire, with relatively few parishes having complete coverage from the medieval period to the present day. At present, about three-quarters of the 218 parishes have reasonably detailed listings for the period 1800-2000, but pre-1700 material has yet to be systematically collected.

TABLE 1 Trees in Anglo-Saxon.

ða halgan æc	Chetwode	949	the holy oak
Tumbaldes treowe	Linslade	966	Tunbeald's tree
[westan randes] æsc	Monks Risborough	903	[west of the] ash tree
welandes stocce	Monks Risborough	903	Weland's stump
hundryþe treow	Upper Winchendon	1004	hundred tree
feower treowe hyl	Wotton Underwood	840-52	four tree hill

Trees & Shrubs

Noteworthy trees were commonly used as boundary markers in Anglo-Saxon times, and feature in many charters. The examples in Table 1 occur in Buckinghamshire¹.

While the precise significance of such names is now lost, all are suggestive of fascinating aspects of local history. In the cases of the Holy Oak at Chetwode (a tautological compound of the Celtic *cet/coed* and Old English *wude*, both meaning 'wood' and indicative of contact between speakers of the both languages²) and of Weland's Stump at the meeting point of Monks Risborough, Great Kimble and Great Hampden, there are possible echoes of the pagan past. The Hundred Tree stands on the boundary between Ashendon and Waddesdon Hundreds. Although they probably only date from the tenth century as administrative entities, this may have been the boundary between much older territories. The ash tree on the boundary between the two Risboroughs must have been very prominent, needing no qualification. Later,

ash trees formed the largest single group giving rise to field-names. Four Tree Hill represents the southern end of a long salient of Wootton territory, almost at the summit of the ridge called *Æscendun* 'ash hill', close to the village of the same name. Perhaps the hundred moot was hereabouts. It is impossible to know at this remove who Tunbeald was, or whether his land lay in Linslade, Grove or Wing.

Trees, and to a lesser extent prominent patches of shrub vegetation and individual plant species have continued to be used as field-names right through to the present, even though they may have long since ceased to exist. Table 2 lists in order of frequency the use of tree and related names in Buckinghamshire fields. The totals indicate the number of parishes with such names currently identified, and it is often the case that more than one example will be found in the parish.

Unlike the boundary features discussed above, many field-names derived from trees and shrubs commemorate the growth of these species *within*

TABLE 2 Tree & Related Names in Buckinghamshire Fields.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Parishes</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Parishes</i>
Ash	81	Thistle	35
Crab Apple	56	Briar	30
Oak	55	Thorn	24
Willow	51	Fern	22
Cherry	36	Broom	22
Holly	33	Gorse	15
Elm	28	Hawthorn	5
Pear	26	Bramble	4
Walnut	25	Bracken	2
Beech	22		
Elder	19		
Alder	18		
Apple	16		
Birch	15		
Hazel	15		
Aspen	7		
Plum	7		
Chestnut	2	Amersham/Weston Underwood	
Pignut	1	Great Linford	
Lime	1	Great Horwood	
Service	1	Fulmer/Upton boundary	

the field, either naturally, or as the result of deliberate cultivation. Many are also hedgerow species and may only have been planted at the time of enclosure, around two centuries ago. Some species are associated with particular habitats, for example willow and alder, which will affect the incidence of field-names. The four most prevalent tree types account for almost half of all such names so far noted, while thistle, briar and [haw]thorn account for three-fifths of the shrub/plant names.

Cultivated species of fruit trees are difficult to separate from their wild counterparts, notably cherry, but pears, apples, walnuts and the surprisingly rare plum are likely in many cases to have been deliberately planted, either as orchards, or as specimen trees. Walnut trees were an exotic introduction, possibly by the Romans. (The earliest mention in the OED is c.1050, but it is only frequent after c.1350). So far, walnut first occurs in this county at Chesham (1535), Medmenham (16th cent.) and Hitcham (1607). Orchard-names occur in fifty parishes, without any indication of the trees concerned.

It is perhaps the rarity of chestnut and lime trees in the field-naming lexicon that occasions most

surprise. The various species of the former occur very widely, and are often prominent in the landscape, but they seem to have been unpopular in all areas, as do limes. (There are no early names in Buckinghamshire containing the Old English form *lind*.) Service trees are not common, however, and the example on the Fulmer-Upton boundary evidently fulfilled a dual function as a landmark and field-naming element. Pignut occurs only at Great Linford, from 1607. It is the fruit of several types of North American hickory tree, but quite why this exotic appears only in one place is as yet unclear.

The thistle has clearly been a bane of the farmer over the centuries, as witnessed by the five fields called *Thistle Forest*. Fern and bracken were once utilised extensively in the economy, notably for fuel.

Crops

That many fields bear the names of crops is to be expected in an enclosed landscape, where the crop in question may have been first grown locally at that spot, or where a field is habitually used for a certain crop, allowing for rotation practices. This phenomenon is, however, less easy to explain in

TABLE 3 Crop Names in Buckinghamshire Fields.

<i>Crop</i>	<i>Parishes</i>	<i>Crop</i>	<i>Parishes</i>
Beans	67	Corn	27
Grass	58	Flax	25
Wheat	49	Sainfoin	19
Barley	42	Turnip	9
Rye	40	Potato	6
Oats	38	Maslin+	3*
Peas	37	Vetch	2**
Hay	29	Pumpkin	1***
		Fallow	6

Note:+ A mixture of rye and wheat; * Great Missenden/Radclive/Sherington;

** Chesham/Fawley; *** Burnham

areas cultivated under the open or common field system prior to enclosure. Here, there was a two- or three-year rotation of winter grain, spring grain and fallow, so that, for example, a Rye Furlong would only have been used for that crop every second or third year. There are, however, many examples of such furlong names, although relatively few seem to have survived the redrawing of the landscape that took place with enclosure. Some parcels of land, of course, were always cultivated severally. Here experiments with different crops could be undertaken, for example beans and flax, neither of which could have been sown over hundreds of acres of the typical open field where the paramount need was for grain. The fact that these two crops, and others, gave rise to furlong-names suggests that medieval farming was not quite as hidebound as we may have imagined. Perhaps such blocks of land were given over to the named crop on a regular basis and temporarily fenced off from the main grain crop.

Setting aside the question of beans and peas for a moment, the staple grain crops predominate in roughly equal proportions. The presence of rye and oats reflects the medieval, rather than the modern pattern of cropping in this part of England. Both were suited to the lower fertility of the times, and also to a climate which was in some ways colder and wetter than today's. The fact that most parishes do not have examples of any of these staple crops in their field-names seems surprising, perhaps they were taken for granted and not deemed special enough to warrant specific names. Grass, hay and corn are imprecise generic terms, but nevertheless produced a good number of field-names, with the

former occurring in parishes across the county, often in the form *Grass Seeds*.

Fertility of the soil and ways in which it could be improved were key issues for medieval farmers, and difficult to resolve. There were no artificial fertilisers and the principal sources of additional nutrients were human and animal waste, and the growing of legumes, with their ability to fix nitrogen in substantial quantities. So-called nightsoil was regularly carried from the houses to the fields, although much was probably used on the enclosed tofts and crofts where families grew their own vegetables. The grazing of animals on the fallow fields was a major source of nutrients, and in some cases, sheep were "folded" overnight or for short periods in small fenced-off areas of the open fields. The only direct evidence of folding so far recorded comes from the name of one of Stewkley's open fields, but there are other possible examples in Shenley Brook End, Wingrave and Great Linford. Farmyard dung would also have been a prized commodity.

In the medieval period the main legumes were beans and peas. It is often assumed that they were introduced in the post-conquest period as rapid population and arable expansion in the 12th-13th centuries put ever-greater pressure on the soil. Field-name evidence is only available in quantity from this same period, so it is impossible to say whether the use of such crops had begun before 1100. Fifteen Buckinghamshire parishes currently have *bean* names recorded before 1300, the earliest being Calverton (1200-19), Wavendon and Ellesborough (1218), Shenley Brook End (pre-1225) and Leckhampstead (1225-31), although

other examples will no doubt come to light as research progresses. The evidence is ambiguous as to whereabouts beans were grown in the open field system. Taking the earliest records, the substantive elements qualified by bean are: land (7); furlong (4); hill (2) and croft (2). Croft definitely and land possibly indicate separate, probably enclosed areas, while furlong is obviously within an open field. Taking all 67 parishes with these names, the most common substantive elements are: land (20); hill (15); furlong (13) and croft (8), which may push the balance of probability in favour of beans originally having been cultivated in enclosed plots, even if they were then more widely distributed across the open fields. Bean field-names are almost entirely absent from the Chiltern region and the Thames side parishes (the sole example in the latter being Beanlands in Upton, not on record before 1851). Where parishes like Ivinghoe and Risborough have such names, they lie on the flat lands of the Vale. Otherwise, only open-field parishes have these names, but even then they are not yet on record in every parish.

Peas occur much less frequently in field-names, especially in the earliest records. Only four examples predate 1300: Westbury; Stewkley; the Kimbles and Quainton. The first two are furlong-names, while Kimble is a *dūn*, 'hill', and Quainton an enclosure (OE *word*). The pattern of these names is similar to that noted for beans, with most in Vale parishes, although there is a scattering across the Chiltern dip-slope (e.g. Chesham, Wycombe) and a few in the south-east (Hitcham, Hedgerley, Farnham), most of them post-medieval. The distribution of substantive elements is different from that for bean-names: furlong (12); croft (5); field (5) and hill (4). There are as yet no Peaslands in Buckinghamshire.

Other crops associated with attempts to improve agricultural productivity include vetches of various kinds, although they have given rise to field-names in only two parishes (Chesham and Fawley), and turnips, which have produced names in nine parishes: Aston Clinton, Broughton, Drayton Parslow, Hanslope, Oving, Princes Risborough, Stoke Hammond, Wendover, and Wing, which has the earliest recorded example (1680). There are no examples of mangelwurzel names so far.

Clover occurs in the field-names of 27 parishes

across the county, the earliest record so far is from Wingrave (1607). Most occurrences relate to post-enclosure fields, after 1750. This legume was an important source of fertility, and of fodder. Sainfoin, a member of the pea family, was apparently introduced from Europe in the seventeenth century (the earliest OED reference is 1626). The Buckinghamshire field-name corpus includes Old Sainfoin (Chesham, 1629), which suggests a rather earlier use than OED. Its French name, meaning 'wholesome hay' was beyond many local farmers, and we often read of Saintfoin, even St. Foin, 'holy hay'! Other variants include Saing Foin and Saintfein. The names are widely distributed across the county: Buckingham, Chesham, Cuddington, Drayton Beauchamp, Edlesborough, Great Missenden, High Wycombe, Hoggston, Ilmer, Nether Winchendon, Penn, Radclive, Shalstone, Stantonbury, Stoke Goldington, Stone, Stowe, Tyringham & Filgrave, Westbury. Most records so far postdate 1750 and are associated with post-enclosure fields in the north of the county. Again, the surprise is that relatively few parishes provide references to the use of an innovative crop.

The related lucerne, a trefoil, occurs even less widely than sainfoin. This too was an introduction (OED 1606). Buckinghamshire examples, however, are mostly recorded from tithe surveys: Chesham Bois (1838); Dinton (1803); Edlesborough (1839); Farnham Royal (1840); Ivinghoe (1965); Long Crendon (1941); Stoke Poges (1842) and Wavendon (1840). The various leguminous crops, other than beans and peas, seem to have been associated with the so-called "Agricultural Revolution" of the eighteenth century, although there were always pioneers who seem to have tried new crops almost as soon as they were introduced.

REFERENCES

1. For details see M. Reed, 'Buckinghamshire Anglo-Saxon Charter Boundaries', in M. Gelling, *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley*, Leicester 1979, 168–187.
2. A. Mawer & F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire*, 1925, 62; cf. Brill and Brickhill, compounds meaning 'hill hill'.

MURSLEY'S MEDIEVAL MARKET

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The rapid growth in the cultivated area and population of Buckinghamshire in the two and a half centuries after 1066 led to an upsurge in the number of towns, markets and fairs to cater for new demand and trading patterns. The development of markets and fairs was the subject of a paper by Michael Reed in 1978,¹ and this note adds some further facts about the market at Mursley.

Although it is difficult to imagine today, Mursley was evidently a centre of some importance in medieval times. It was the name-place of one of the three Cottesloe Hundreds and centre of a rural deanery, which indicates that it functioned as an administrative centre from at least the tenth century. In 1086 it was purely rural in its attributes, however, and as such indistinguishable from its neighbours. There is no indication that its church was ever a minster, but Mursley did come to possess two markets and fairs, and possibly some of the attributes of borough status. These have left a reminder in the form of a considerable widening in Main Street north of the church, upon which there has been no encroachment since the removal of whatever stalls appeared on market and fair days, probably some time in the fifteenth century (see below). Unfortunately, there is no evidence as to the nature of the market/fair, whether general or associated with particular commodities, such as livestock and grain.

Mursley filled a gap between the markets at Winslow and Leighton Buzzard and came into existence towards the high-watermark of the medieval economy. The earliest mention is of a Wednesday market and three-day fair in August, granted to Robert fitzNeel in 1229, predating the first grant to Winslow by six years. The fitzNeel family had been lords of the manor in Mursley and Salden since the mid-twelfth century, and Robert was a descendant of the first lord, Richard fitzNeel.² The relationship between Robert and Agnes fitzNeel, who held the manors with her first husband Reginald Bassett by 1220, is unclear, but the Mursley estate may have been subinfeudated to him.³

The prior of Snelshall held a small estate in Mursley, and was granted a Thursday market in 1230, which was suppressed because of complaints from the prior of Grovebury about competition with Leighton in 1287, even though they lay further apart than the notional 6½ miles between markets.⁴ Snelshall Priory already had a Thursday market at the priory itself, granted in 1226. This lies in the adjacent parish of Whaddon and it would seem that the prior was rather carried away with the idea of market provision. Perhaps the Mursley market was in fact a replacement for that at Snelshall, whose rural location may not have attracted so much business.

In 1242, the Wednesday market at Mursley was granted to Agnes fitzNeel and her second husband Warin fitzGerald, and the three-day fair was changed to September. Often, market charters represent the aspirations of manorial lords to enhance their income, with no actual trading taking place, but in the case of Mursley, the topographical evidence indicates that this was not the case. There is, however, little evidence for the functioning of the market. The Hundred Rolls of 1279 offer some tantalising glimpses.⁵ Sweteman the weaver may have been attracted by the enhanced demand caused by what was still a two-day market and the late-summer fair, and there may have been other craftsmen beyond those associated with a purely agrarian settlement. Robert fitzNeel, son of the earlier Robert who was killed at the battle of Evesham in 1265, held the Wednesday market in 1279, along with a *portmanmote*, assize of bread and ale, pillory and *schilsingstol* (sic).⁶ These attributes suggest that Mursley may have been more than just a market place. The *portmanmote* was the moot or court of the portmen, those who dwelt in boroughs (OE *port* conveys the sense of both trading place and town, inland as well as coastal; cf. the several Portways leading to towns like Aylesbury and Leighton). Assizes controlling the quality of key staple products are also urban rather than rural prerogatives. The right to dispense justice was not necessarily restricted to towns, and unlike his

neighbour at Whaddon, Robert had no right to a gallows. There is no other evidence that Mursley's lords aspired to elevate the market village into a town, with the potential for income from burgesses. Although it is difficult to see why these rights should be mentioned in the Hundred Rolls if they did not exist in practice, on balance it seems unlikely that Mursley acquired any urban attributes during the thirteenth century, unlike Winslow, for example. There is no hint of long, narrow burgage plots in Main Street. In 1334, Mursley was taxed at the rural rate of one-fifteenth, rather than one-tenth.

The period between 1275 and 1310 represents the apogee of medieval population and economic activity, followed by crop failure, famine and from 1349 outbreaks of plague. A survey of 1341 provides some evidence of the impact of such changes on Mursley.⁷ One carucate of demesne land was uncultivated, and all those in the parish were said to be *agricultures* and none *mercatores*. In other words, the population was all engaged in agriculture, with no merchants or traders. This suggests that the Wednesday market and fair had failed after about a century, unless they were still held, but manned by non-residents. None of the 1334 taxpayers with occupational surnames were associated with either trade or industry (e.g. reeve, cowherd).⁸

The next reference to Mursley market noted by Michael Reed comes in 1416, when the Wednesday market and two fairs in August and September were granted by Henry V to his brother John, Duke of

Bedford. This period saw the first shoots of recovery from the traumas of the fourteenth century, and it was evidently felt worthwhile to revive this local trading centre. The grant was renewed to Sir Robert Whittingham, lord of Salden and Mursley in 1449.⁹ This is the last record of the market, and the date of its final demise is not known.

REFERENCES

1. M. Reed, 'Markets and Fairs in Medieval Buckinghamshire', *Recs. Bucks.* **20** (1978), 563–585.
2. VCH Bucks., vol.3, 402.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Reed, 'Markets', 564; Mursley was one of only three places in Bucks. with a market on more than one day, the others being Wing and Worminghall.
5. *Rotuli Hundredorum*, Record Commissioners, 2 vols., 1812–1818.
6. The form seems to be corrupt, with *scholdingstol probably intended. This is an alternative to the more common ducking stool, and this is a very early reference. See OED s.v. 'scold'.
7. *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, Record Commissioners, 1807.
8. *Early Taxation Returns*, Bucks. Record Soc., **14** (1964).
9. S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, 1806.

THORNTON CHURCH CLOCK

In 2004 the Buckingham Archaeological Society made a small grant towards preserving the clock in Thornton Church. The parish is amalgamated with Nash and the church is under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. The clock itself was manufactured by E. J. Dent of London, the makers of the clock commonly, but erroneously, known as Big Ben. Like most of their clocks it is a flat-bed movement supported on a frame approximately at waist height above the floor. The timekeeping mechanism is central with the striking and chiming trains on either side. The dial has long since disappeared. "E. J. Dent" is cast into the plates holding the timekeeping mechanism, together with the inscription "Clock maker to the Queen" and is also engraved on the countwheel.

The clock is undated, but must have been installed before 1862, when Sheahan recorded it. However, its manufacture can be narrowed down further to a period of nine years. In his early career Edward John Dent made only small timepieces, chronometers and watches. Turret clock orders were sub-contracted out. However, in 1844 Dent built his first turret clock for the Royal Exchange in London and in view of its success decided to set up a separate factory to make others. This was still active at his death in 1853. The business continued, but the name was changed, as the business was split between the two stepsons; Frederick and Richard. See *Edward John Dent and his Successors*, Mercer 1977. The clock was obviously made between these two dates and most probably when the church was restored in 1850.

The clock itself seems to have stopped working in the 1920s. The dial either fell off or was removed, leaving an open space from the original slit window behind. The trust did consider repairing it but this proved too expensive. An inspection in November 1999 showed that it was deteriorating badly due to damp coming through the window. Little could be done at that time although the whole of the mechanism was sprayed to delay further corrosion. In 2004 it was decided that it would be possible to clean the clock cheaply using voluntary labour, even though it was not practicable to repair it at this stage.

The Society has enabled this by providing a small grant and as a result the timekeeping and the chiming mechanism have both been cleaned and coated to prevent further decay. The work has taken about eighteen days so far and it is hoped that the striking side can also be completed by 2005. During this work some evidence of earlier repairs were noted and at some time there had also been problems with the chiming mechanism. Thanks are due to the Society for the grant and to the Milton Keynes Museum for the use of their workshop. The repairs that will be required eventually are mainly on the timekeeping mechanism, but the connections to the bell hammers and the lines for the weights will also need replacing before it will go again. A new dial is also required, etc. The total cost is still likely to be several thousand pounds.

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