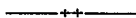




The Value of Field Names.

By Miss E. E. Thoyts.



THE bulk of, if not all, the Berkshire Field Names of the Kennet Valley are of Anglo-Saxon derivation. This is only what one would expect to find. The Danish names, if any remain, have become mingled with, or corrupted in the more common Anglo-Saxon forms of the same word. Sleytsdune, or Slietsdowne, a Field Name at Sulham in 1600, sounds Danish, and its near vicinity to the famous Battle of Englefield would also afford another proof. So also is Bownisdowne, 1601, corrupted to Bowresmoor thirty-three years later, perhaps originated from the same source as Barrow's House. Field Names which have been handed down to posterity simply by tradition were, when entered in deeds or documents, spelt solely by the phonetic sound. It is very curious to note the varieties of ways one word may be spelt, the meaning being utterly lost and obscured through the change of letters. The Village Basildon is a case in point. It was sometimes Basledon, and Baselton, Basildon, Balesdon. The old Heriot service, that by which the Lord claimed as his due the best of the tenant's flock or herds, gave to a field in Purley its name Herriard or Harriard's Edge, but the custom died out, and with it the meaning of the word, which got down to Harry Jaws, and last of all to Harry George, so far away from its derivation as to be quite unrecognisable. In one 17th century deed refers to the Heriot Service itself. Carelessness or want of knowledge often leads to mistakes. The Ordnance Map prints "Genesis Coppice" in Sulhamstead for Jennings, a former owner, whose name the covert bears. Shawe Croft, Englefield, and The Bittes in Queen Elizabeth's time changed in a hundred years to The Pitts and Hawe Croft. Avis Croft changed from Annis into Harris. The Lord's Broad or Mead was the name of the Lord of the Manor's portion in the Lot Meadow or Common Field of Whitley, in Comner or Cumner, formerly called Swinford-out-Mead.

De La More's Coppice, Bucklebury, dates back to the days when the De La Mares were owners of Aldermaston by the marriage of the Achard heiress to Sir Thomas De La Mare, 1358, in whose family it continued till the 16th century, when an heiress married one of the Fosters of Harpesdon, county Oxon. Lady Lauds, Burghfield, may have belonged to Goring Priory, and Bishop's Mead there was probably Church or Collegiate land. *Croft*, the Anglo-Saxon small enclosed field, and *hain*, homestead or farm, are common Berkshire terminations. *Well* is the Norse, vellir fields. *Ley*, *Ly*, or *Lea*, the sheltered spot where the cattle lay, a meadow. *Cote*, Anglo-Saxon, a cottage or cot, or small farm. *Ton*, properly a hedge, means a hedged-in place, an enclosure. *Don* is the same, T and D being kindred letters.

AN OLD COMMUNION TABLE.—The "Academy" states that Wadham College has recently become possessed of the old Communion Table at Ilminster Church at which, in all probability, Sir Nicholas and Dorothy Wadham must have been in the habit of communicating. It is of oak, handsomely carved, and undoubtedly good Elizabethan work. A stone altar has been substituted at Ilminster, and the Communion Table will now be placed in the College chapel.

HENLEY ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL.—The Royal Grammar School Museum has just received some interesting additions. Two relics of Norman architecture have been presented by Sir Walter Phillimore. They are portions of carved masonry from the old St. Patrick's Chapel, which formerly stood near St. Patrick's stream. Mr. W. Wing, of Caversham, has presented some coins, an Edward VI. sixpence, a Queen Elizabeth shilling, a James I. shilling, and a Charles I. shilling, which were dug up on a farm in Houghton Conquest, about 1845. They were found in jars with many hundreds of similar coins, most of which were claimed by the Crown as treasure trove. The Museum has also recently received a varied collection, presented by Miss Morris, including skins of animals, coins, fossils, minerals, and a vase from Pompei, and Mr. G. B. Biggs has presented some fossils.