

## CLOVESH0 AND MILDENHALL

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The importance of the identification of *Clovesho* needs no stressing.<sup>1</sup> This paper makes no pretence at an identification. It is concerned solely with an examination of some of the supplementary evidence for its location in Mildenhall. It will be found to be almost entirely destructive, but no apology is needed for that, as the first essential in arriving at the truth is to eliminate errors.

The essential difficulty in equating *Clovesho* with *Clovenho* in Mildenhall is the difference in form. *Clovesho* is a difficult name. *Clofes-* looks like the genitive of a personal name, but no such name is known. The only parallel seems to be Clossworth in Somerset, *Clovesuurda* in Domesday Book; which Ekwall<sup>2</sup> takes to mean 'enclosure of the crevice or valley', an unusual genitival compound. On this analogy, *Clovesho* might mean 'spur of land, ridge, hill' or, possibly, 'barrow of the crevice or valley'. The exact meaning of *hōh* depends on the site and that is unknown. In any case, we should expect the medial *s* to survive. *Clovenho* probably means 'the cloven hill or barrow', a common name which may have arisen in any county where there are barrows. The two names are distinct formations and cannot be equated until some indisputable proof has been found that both were used of the same place.

Apart from imaginative reconstructions of the topography, arguments have been drawn from place-names in support of the Mildenhall identification. No local documents for Mildenhall have yet been examined for the survey of Suffolk place-names. But the material already gathered allows of some check. Holmesey and Littley should not be divided as *Holmes-eye* and *Little-eye* (p. 102). Holmsey is found as *Holmeresye*, c. 1189-1200,<sup>3</sup> whilst Littley at the same date was *Littlesei*.<sup>4</sup> These readings are confirmed from other copies of the document. Holmsey was clearly 'the island by or in Holmere', the mere in the hollow, exactly paralleled by the Buckinghamshire and Herefordshire Holmer.<sup>5</sup> *Littlesei* is more difficult. It cannot mean 'little island'. The first element looks like a personal-name, unless the name was really *litle-sei*, 'little

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that *Clovesho* was in Mildenhall was made by Claude Morley in *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, vol. xviii (1924), pp. 91-122. Reference is to this paper, where no other reference is given.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*, p. 103. (DEPN).

<sup>3</sup> R. H. C. Davis, *The Kalendar of Abbot Samson*, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> DEPN, p. 235.

swamp or lake', containing the rare OE *sæg* found in the Cambridgeshire Soham.<sup>6</sup> On this, judgement must be reserved for the present. Holywell is certainly 'holy spring or well'. It occurs as *Haliuelle*, c. 1189-1200.<sup>7</sup> Wamil Hall (p. 103) is correctly identified with the *Twanhill* of 1276. Here lived (c. 1200-11) Roger *de Thwinkella* or *de Tuomhelle*,<sup>8</sup> 'by the two hills'. OE *æt þām twām hyllum* became ME *atte twamhille*, *at twamhill*, *at wamhill*, and so modern *Wamil*. Identical in meaning is the Cheshire Twemlow.<sup>9</sup>

*Mondes Way* and *Mundesfeld* (p. 103) are probably represented today by Mons Wood. This can have no connexion with *Godmundesley* as suggested (p. 114). "The prefix may have dropped out" is a delightfully simple way of solving a difficulty. *Godmundesleah* is undoubtedly the Leicestershire Gumley, 'the clearing of Godmund', a not uncommon Saxon name found in other place-names. The name was *Godmund*, not *Godes mund* (p. 117), and could never appear simply as *Mund*, "much in the same way as *Waermundesham* in Sussex became *Mundham*" (p. 114). There is no place *Waermundesham* in Sussex, but there are two *Mundhams*. North *Mundham* is found in a Saxon charter of 680 as *Mundanham*, whilst *Muntham Court* in Findon is *Moham* in Domesday Book, *Mundeham* c. 1234 and later.<sup>10</sup> Neither ever began with *Waer-*. An earlier reference to *Mundesfeld* is *Mundys furlong* (1464)<sup>11</sup> which makes it clear that this was originally part of the holding of a man with the surname *Mund*.

"Coplow has a very tempting similarity to Clovesho, though Suffolk colloquialism intrudes but never drops an l" (p. 103). The sole resemblance is that both names begin with *C*, both contain *l*, and both have two *o*'s. There is no similarity of pronunciation. The only possible association is that both *-ho* and *-low* are used of barrows. *Coplow*, 'rounded hill or tumulus' occurs twice in Cambridgeshire: *Coploe Hill* in Ickleton (*le Coppelowe* 1483) and *Copley Hill* in Babraham (*Coppelawe* 1164).<sup>12</sup>

"On Gedge's map this locality is marked as 'Carra' cills and 'Chair' reach; such a combination of names suggests that Mildenhall was a place of importance in prae-Roman days for Carra would be the Celtic Calla, a landing place, and Chair the Celtic Caer, a fortress. The present name of this landing place, Jude's Ferry, may have some connection with the unlocated Judanbyrig, near Thetford, of the Sax. Chron. or derived from St Judoc later St

<sup>6</sup> P. H. Reaney, *Place-names of Cambridgeshire*, pp. 196-7.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> DEPN, p. 461.

<sup>10</sup> A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *Place-names of Sussex*, pp. 72, 198.

<sup>11</sup> *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, vol. i, (1853), p. 297.

<sup>12</sup> Reaney, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 100.

Just" (p. 107). This is typical of the specious and dangerous type of argument based solely on the modern forms of place-names, without reference to the known facts of the history of the language.

Before calling in Celtic to support our theories, we must establish the fact that there is a Celtic element in Suffolk place-names. Elsewhere, in eastern and southern England, where Celtic influence is slight, it is the Celtic names of rivers and hills that have remained in use. In Suffolk the only certain river-name of Celtic origin is the Stour, and this is shared by Essex. Orwell may be Celtic but its etymology is difficult and cannot yet be regarded as settled. Blyth 'the pleasant stream' and Waveney 'quaking-bog stream' are English. The rest are late back-formations, Alde from Aldeburgh, Deben from Debenham, Yox from Yoxford, etc. The only certain place-name of Celtic origin is Dunwich 'port of the deep water'. Other evidence of Celtic influence may be discovered as the survey of the place-names of the county proceeds, but it is unlikely that sufficient evidence will be found to justify explaining every difficult name as Celtic.

Of *Carra* I know nothing, but *Chair* has certainly no connexion whatever with the Celtic *caer* 'fort'. This had a hard *c*, pronounced *k*, and in England is found in Carlisle and Cardurnock in Cumberland which was long part of the Celtic kingdom of Strathclyde. In Mildenhall, Chairfen Drove leads to a bend in the Lark. On the Cambridgeshire side of the river, in Isleham, is Chair Drove, a short straight road leading to the Lark. The same term is found in Chear Fen and Chear Lode in Cottenham (Cambs.) and is common in Cambridgeshire minor names and field-names, often becoming modern *Chain*. It is from an OE \**cear*, an unmutated form of the *cierr* 'turn' which is found in Charing Cross, named from a large bend in the Thames. It occurs in Newcastle street-names in the sense 'winding lane or passage', and in place-names may refer to a bend in a river or to the winding river itself. The present writer has already suggested that *Chare* was probably the name of the winding course of the Old Lark.<sup>13</sup> Jude's Ferry probably owes its name to a onetime owner of the ferry, cf. Cook's Ferry in Walthamstow; *Jude* or *Judd* was a pet-name of *Jordan*.

*Bargate* is a very weak foundation on which to build a harbour (p. 109). *Bar* is of French, not Celtic origin and in English is late, certainly post-Conquest. *Bargate* is a common term for old town-gates or for streets leading to the gates—the gates that barred the way—and is probably used here in the sense of some barrier for holding back the waters. The fenmen had an abundance of terms for this. In the Cambridgeshire fens we have the simple *Barre* and compounds such as *Barrewere* 'the weir which barred the waters',

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 150, 192.

*Barrefeld* 'field by the barre', *Barrelode*, etc.<sup>14</sup>

The only other evidence for this 'harbour' is drawn from the etymology of Mildenhall itself. "Here we have hall, and hall is a corruption of hale, a 'sheltered cove', sprung directly from our harbour" . . . "to find the meaning of the medial syllable den, or dun, a hill, we do not need go outside our harbour for on the right *ho*, at its entrance just within the bar, stands an artificial mound or Moot Hill" . . . "This pagan temple *dun* would cast its *mund* over the entire neighbourhood and render it a place of 'holy dread', sufficiently important to account for its embodiment in the second syllable of Mildunhal" . . . "They converted both heathen people and heathen temples to Christianity in the same way, and marked them with the sign of the Cross—the people with the cross of baptism and the temple by erecting a large cross upon its summit, which latter sign, cross or image, was termed the *Mael*. This I give as a possible origin for the name Mildenhall, being the resultant shaping of *Mael-dun-hale*, i.e. Cross-hill-harbour" (pp. 110-111).

This is a typical example of how not to deal with place-names. A place-name can be forced to support any preconceived theory so long as the facts and the laws of language are ignored. The modern method is to eschew theory until all the material has been collected and then to account for the facts established. Before attempting to explain a place-name, all its earliest forms must be collected. These must then be explained in accordance with all the known facts of the language in use when the name was given.

Compare the theoretical *Mael-dun-hale* with the earliest known form of Mildenhall, found in an Anglo-Saxon writ of 1043-4: *Mildenhale*.<sup>15</sup> There is no *mael*; there is no *dun*; and *Mildenhale* is the most common form of the name, found regularly from the twelfth century onwards. If this were the sole form, the meaning would be straightforward. But there are variants, some quite normal and to be expected, others more difficult. *Mildehale* is a common example of the Anglo-Norman loss of an *n* when preceded and followed by an *l*. The Domesday forms are both corrupt, *Mitdenehalla* and *Mudenehalla*, but both probably stand for *Mildenehalla*. In 1130 the name occurs as *Middelhala*. This looks like 'middle *hale*', but might be from *Mildehale*, with metathesis of the *ld* to *dl*. Or it may have developed from *Mildenhale*, through loss of the first *l*, giving *Midenhale*, and assimilation of the *n* to the following *l*. The Normans always had difficulty in pronouncing words containing two or more of the sounds *l*, *n*, *r*. In 1203 we have *Middehal*, which again looks like 'mid-hale', but may be from *Midelhale* with dissimilatory loss of the first *l*.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>15</sup> F. E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, p. 154.

This examination of these forms suggests that the name came to be regarded as meaning 'middle hale', even if that were not its original meaning. But such a meaning is possible. Ekwall has suggested that this Suffolk name seems to be OE (*æt*) *middelān hale*, '(at) the middle *halh*'. This presupposes that there had been a metathesis of *dl* before 1050, giving *mildanhale*.

There is another Mildenhall in Wiltshire: *Mildenhealch* c. 775,<sup>16</sup> *Mildanhald* 803-5, *Mildenhalle* 1086 DB, *Mildehale* 1241, which, as Ekwall remarks, is clearly 'Milda's *halh* or nook'.<sup>17</sup> *Milda* is an unrecorded Old English personal name from OE *milde* 'mild' or a short form of such OE names as *Mildburh*, *Mildfrith* or *Mildred*. The fact that there are two Mildenhalls would suggest that both had the same origin and it would be a curious coincidence, though not altogether impossible, that both should contain the same personal name. The twofold occurrence would suggest a descriptive term as the first element. All the Middle English forms of the Wiltshire name begin with *Milden*-.<sup>18</sup> The earliest Suffolk example has the same form and *Mildenhale* is much the most common spelling. The twelfth century variants in Suffolk are certainly Anglo-Norman. This is definitely in favour of the personal name. For the Wiltshire name there is an unfortunate gap in the forms. There are none from the 14th and 15th centuries. But in 1539 we find *Midnall* and in 1675 *Middenhall* which suggest earlier variations similar to those in Suffolk. The second element is OE *healh* 'nook or corner of land', with other meanings always difficult to assign. If the Suffolk Mildenhall was 'the middle *halh*', there must have been two others and their discovery and location would probably settle the etymology. There was certainly one other, *Chaldehyale* (or *Chaldehyalc*), apparently in the neighbourhood of Weston Ditch.<sup>19</sup> But *healh* was a very common term and for the present the etymology must remain open.

It is clear that at present there is no definite evidence for placing *Clofesho* in Mildenhall. The field-name *Clovenho* is a different formation and the etymological arguments used in support have little or no foundation.

<sup>16</sup> Armstrong, Mawer, Stenton and Dickins, *Place-names of Cumberland*, p. lxxv.

<sup>17</sup> DEPN, p. 311.

<sup>18</sup> Gover, Mawer and Stenton, *Place-names of Wiltshire*, p. 301.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 142.