

Why are so many East Anglian fields called Harrow?

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Place-names and landscape: recent research
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Outline

- ▶ Background to the study of English place-names
- ▶ The etymological method
- ▶ Microtoponymy
- ▶ Harrow, heathenism, and archaeology
- ▶ Harrows and Harrow fields
- ▶ Theories

The study of English place-names

- ▶ Walter Skeat 1835–1912
- ▶ Eilert Ekwall 1877–1964
- ▶ Allen Mawer 1879–1942; English Place-Name Society 1923.
“handmaiden of historical study, . . . to illuminate the gaps in the written historical record, especially of the pre-literate Anglo-Saxon period” (ODNB)
- ▶ Margaret Gelling 1924–2009

Disciplines linked: Linguistics — settlement history — landscape history — agricultural history — archaeology — paleobiology

The etymological method — an example

Newbourne in Suffolk:

Neubrunna 1086

Neubrounia 1158-62

Neubrunne 1254, 1286

Neubronne 1286

Neubroune 1286, 1316

Neubroun 1291

Neuburne 1291

New(e)bourn(e) 1327

Newborn 1524

Newborne 1568, 1674

Microtoponymy — an example: Babraham (13th)

Aldestrete; Berelond; Bitherholm; Badestoneshel; Blaclond; Brademedede; Brademedwe; BRICTIVE; Chalchenho hill; Chesewic; Clay; Coppelowepad; Cron; Cronles; Cumade; Flegges; Fueberewes; Fulburnedene; Furcas; Godrichesweie; Grundlesfeld; Hevivemere; Hundeshelle; Landimere; Longhil; Longland; Maggeshil; Moroluespitt; Munkespap; Pikedaker; Portweye; Rencheshofeld; Shepherdshedene; Slo; Stapele; Stichepes; Stonhil; Tailgore; la Tertre; Walentreas; Wichweie; Wronge.

(Cartulary of Hospital of St John, ed. Underwood 2008)

Harrow, heathenism, and archaeology

Harrow < OE *hearg* is traditionally taken to denote a pre-Christian temple or shrine:

- ▶ Dickins (1934); Stenton (1941); Gelling (1962, 1977); Bronnenkant (1983); Wilson (1985); Meaney (1995); Bailey (1996).
- ▶ Known from glosses:

lupercal: *haerg*

lupercal: *hearth*

sacellorum: *haerga* 'temples' gen. pl.

sacelli: *hearges* 'temple' gen. sing.

simulacris: *hergum* 'icons' dat. pl.

lucum: *hearga* 'sacred grove'

fana: *heargas* 'fane'

fanaticae: *hearthlicre* 'pertaining to a temple'

Capitolii: *ðæs heafodlican hearges* 'of the chief temple'

Amphitrioniadæ, id est, Herculis sacello: *hearge*

Hercules: *hearge*

Harrow on the Hill, Middlesex and others

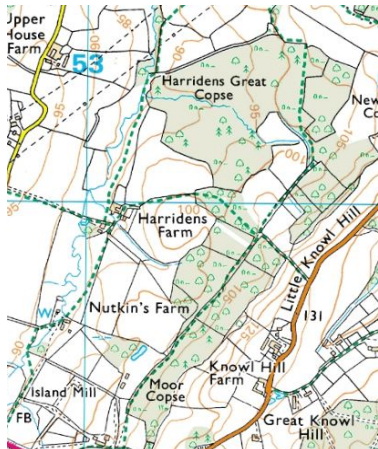
The first three places are on prominent hills.

- ▶ *gumeninga hergæ* S:106, a charter of 767
- ▶ *Besinga hearh* S:235, a charter of “688”
- ▶ Great and Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire *Hargedone* 1086
- ▶ Peper Harow, Surrey *Pipereherge* 1086
- ▶ Harrowden, Bedfordshire *Herghetone* 1086
- ▶ Harrow Fields in Cheshire: archaeological evidence has been found which might support the interpretation of a hill-top shrine associated with pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon ritual activities (Vipond 1993; Semple 2007).

Harrow place-names



Harriden's Farm, Kingsclere



Robert de Harwedon 1304 occurs in this area

Warner — Sutton Hoo

Warner (1985) finds heathenism in Sutton Hoo in Suffolk solely on the basis of three field-names in a 17th century manorial survey:

- ▶ *Harrough pightle*
- ▶ *Thurstow went*
- ▶ *Hellond*

Warning: this is reading far too much into the data.

Harrow — the agricultural implement

- ▶ Classical Latin *hirpex* (*occo* 'I harrow')
- ▶ Old English *egeþe*
- ▶ Medieval Latin *herpex*, *harpex*, *herpica*, *harpica*, *hercia*, *herchia*, *harcia*, *hacia*, *hertica*
- ▶ Middle English *haru*, *harou*, *harewe*, *harwe*, *harrowe*, *harrow*
< Old English **hearwe*?
- ▶ *For plogh and haru [harwe, harou] cuth he dight* a1300 Cursor Mundi
- ▶ *Emma le Harewere* early 13th (Flixton near Bungay, Suffolk)

A harrow in the Bayeux Tapestry



East Anglian fields 1

- 1 *unam aliam peciam prati que uocatum Harewe* 1208, Shadingfield, Suffolk
- 2 *le Harwe* t. Henry III [1217-1272], Cretingham, Suffolk
- 3 *le Harwe* 12 Edward I [1283/4], Hickling, Norfolk "*jungerie*"
- 4 (piece of moor called) *Harwe* late 13th, Edingthorpe, Norfolk
- 5 (turbaries in) *le Harwe* 1313, Ormesby or Burgh, Norfolk
- 6 *una pecia terre vocata le Harwe* 1325; *unum pictellum nativum vocatum le Harowe in Sibton* 1484; Sibton, Suffolk
- 7 (meadow and pasture in) *le Harwe* (beside the stream) 1350, Bocking, Essex
- 8 (meadow at the) *Harwe* (in the Turfpits) 1303-50, Walsham le Willows, Suffolk

East Anglian fields 2

- 9 *Harewe* 1409, Dilham, Norfolk (fen)
- 10 *le Harwe in Langenok* 1421, Lannock, Baldock
- 11 *Harowpightyil* 1465, Hasketon, Suffolk
- 12 *le Harrowe* 1466, *le Harrows* 1677. Repps with Bastwick, Norfolk
- 13 *a crofte called le Harwe* 1471. Elmswell, Suffolk
- 14 *Harlowes alias Harowes* 1499, Barnham, Suffolk
- 15 *a piece of land called the Harow* 1506, Wantisden, Suffolk
- 16 (pightle called) *le Harowe* 1518, Mendham, Norfolk
- 17 *le Harrowe* 1553, Fundenhall, Norfolk
- 18 *le Harrowe* 1557, Gillingham, Norfolk
- 19 *Harrow* 1594, 1823, Shotley, Suffolk
- 20 (Little and Great) *Harrow* 1627,1637 Clippesby, Norfolk

East Anglian fields 3

- 21 *Harrowe Close* 1629-30, Garboldisham, Norfolk
- 22 *Le harrowe* 1544; (wood called) *The Harrow* 1631, *Harrow Wood* 1735 Freston, Suffolk
- 23 *Harrough Pightle* 17th., Sutton Hoo, Suffolk
- 24 *Harrowe Pightle* 1700, Shropham, Norfolk
- 25 (a close called the) *Harrow* 1724, Brockford, Suffolk
- 26 *The Harrow* 1735, Harkstead, Suffolk
- 27 *Harrow Pightle* 1811, Uggeshall, Suffolk
- 28 *Harrow Street Farm*, Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk
- 29 *The Harrow* 1840, Chelmondiston, Suffolk
- 30 *Upper Harrow Hill* 1840, Bradfield St. Clare, Suffolk
- 31 *Harrows* c.1840, Debenham, Suffolk
- 32 (piece of enclosed land called) *Harrow* 1853, Burgh, Suffolk

Theories

- ▶ Is a Harrow field one where a harrow is normally kept?
- ▶ Or one first broken-in or cleared by harrowing?
- ▶ Extended meanings: hearse, bier, candelabrum
- ▶ *The plough and harrow* public house
- ▶ a gate
- ▶ a cry of distress

Harrow – a gate

- ▶ *Paid for ye harrow of a gate* 1528 (Canterbury)
- ▶ “the hinder upright timber of a gate by which it is hung to its post, the ‘harr’ ” (EDD)
- ▶ 2a. A frame with pegs or spikes on which skins were stretched to dry, a parchment-maker's frame; 2b a sledge or sled 2c ?some kind of hurdle or wickerwork frame. Most of the citations for 2a are from religious texts and liken Christ's body on the cross to a parchment stretched on a harrow. (MED)

Haro! Alas!

- ▶ a1400 *Sche. . . gradde 'Harow!' with gret rage.*
- ▶ 1481 *I crye out harowe on them that so falsely haue belyed me.*
- ▶ *'Out! help! allas! harrow!' he gan to crye c.1400*
- ▶ Rather late and *harwe* forms not found
- ▶ Cf. fields called *Hungry Hill, Hare'm-Scare'm, Pity Me, Rotten Row* etc.

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