

THE EARLIEST ANGLIAN NAMES IN DURHAM*

The documentary history of Durham in the early Anglian period is in practice largely the history of the community of St. Cuthbert and its land holdings as recorded in the eleventh century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*. Lindisfarne was founded with royal endowment in 635. The princess Hild was settled by Aidan on a hide of land on the north side of the Wear in 648. About the same time Heiu founded Hartlepool on an iron-age site. Tynemouth, another Romano-British site, was probably founded before 651, Gateshead by 653. Benedict Biscop founded Monkwearmouth with a royal endowment of 70 hides in 674 and Jarrow (*Cogferðes mynster aet Done mupe* 794) followed in 681 with a further 40 hides. Pagan burial is rare in Durham and there was probably no permanent English settlement before the victory of Catterick in 598. These, therefore, are the earliest surviving Anglian names in the county.

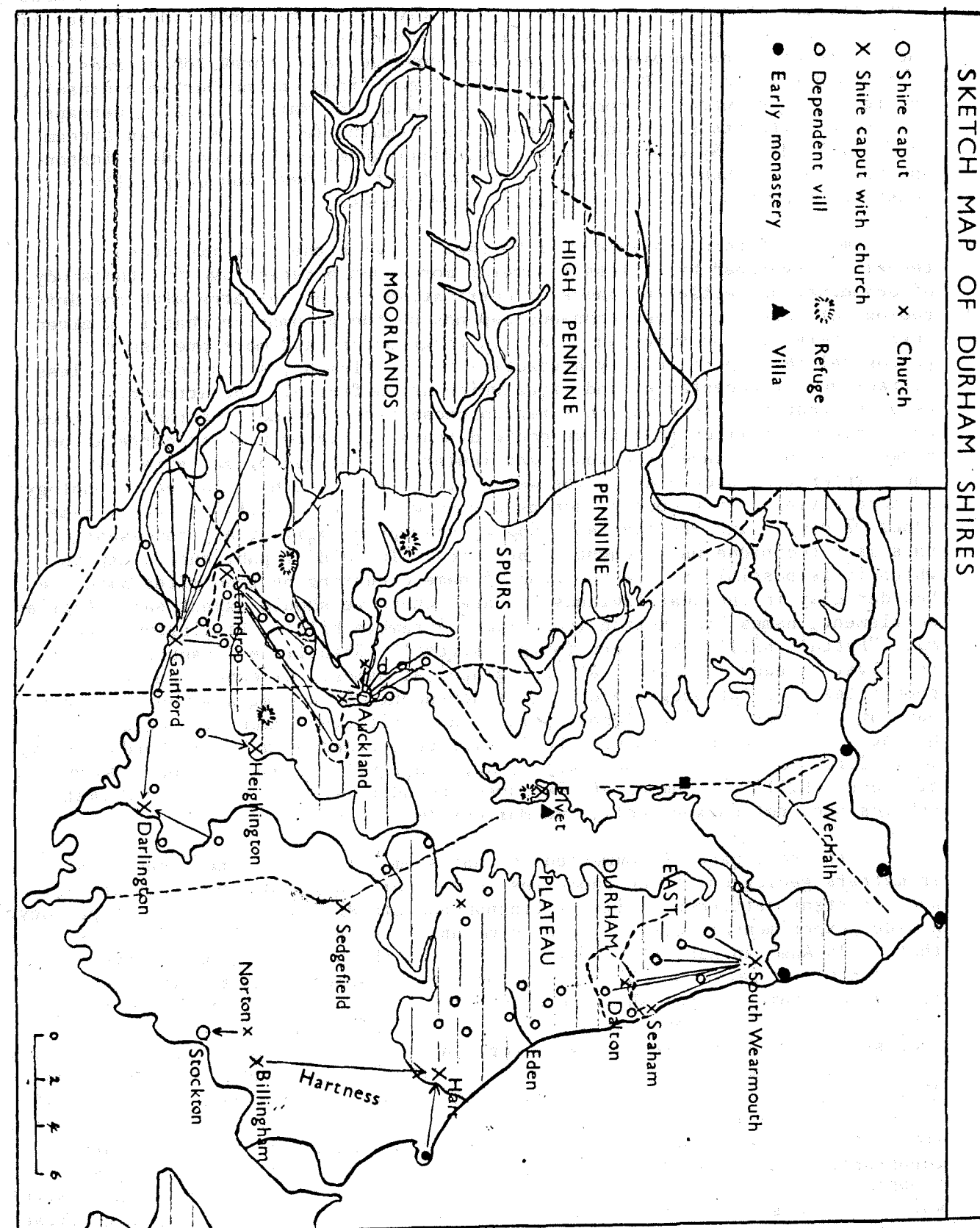
Ninth century endowments of the community included Gainford and its dependencies between Tees and Wear and Dere street and the mountain in the west (830-845), and Billingham in Hartness (the *hērmess* or lordship of Hart, perhaps the former endowment of the Hartlepool monastery which had since been destroyed by the Danes). In 876 Halfdan "shared out the lands of the Northumbrians" but his successor returned two of those estates, viz. all the land between Tyne and Wear as far west as Dere street (an area including the original Monkwearmouth/Jarrow endowments and later known as Weralsshire, from Wear and *halh*), and a coastal estate including *Seletun*, Horden, N. and S. Eden, Hulam, Hutton and *Twinlingatun*.

Tenth century leases and acquisitions continue the history of these estates. They include an itemization of the fourteen villis of the Gainford estate, and mention several new estates - the royal vill of S. Wearmouth and its eleven dependencies, Darlington and various territories, Norton, Escombe and its territories, and an estate centred on Auckland. Finally c.1031 Cnut gave Staindrop and its eleven dependencies.

Comparison with the geomorphological regions of the county show that the earliest endowments lie in excellent situations in the Tees and Wear lowlands, while the Gainford and Staindrop estates extend across both areas of the best agricultural land and areas of the harsher Pennine uplands.

Some of these estates or shires consisting of a central *caput* to which services were rendered by the dependent *appendicia*, are documented from the ninth century. Later evidence allows us to add shires based on Heighington, Quarrington and Billingham, but if the arguments of Professor G. R. J. Jones and others are accepted, the origins of some of these estates must antedate the seventh century.

Among the distinguishing features of these estates is (1) the possession of a refuge, such as Hamsterley Castles in Aucklandshire (dating perhaps from c.700 A.D.); sites which may have been refuges for Staindropshire and Heighingtonshire await confirmation by excavation; (2) an estate church, such as Gainford with its many pre-conquest fragments and reference to an *abbas* in 801,² Staindrop which preserves eighth century fabric, and Aucklandshire with the famous seventh century church at Escombe as well as Anglian sculpture at St. Andrew's; (3) geographical separation of the lord's court and the church settlement as at North and South Auckland, Town and Church Kelloe, and Stockton and Norton; (4) late fission of original unitary estates, as at Seaham and Dalton, originally in South Wearmouth; (5) settlement names referring to estate officers (Ryhope in S. Wearmouth, 'reeve's valley'), preserving British names (Auckland, Eden), mentioning British population (Walworth in Heighingtonshire), or recalling estate geography (Norton; *Westun* in S. Wearmouth; Middleham between Sedgfield and Cornforth; *Middletun* in Staindropshire).



If the antiquity posited for this kind of estate is justified, their names must be among the earliest stratum of English names in the county. They, and the names of the earliest monastic foundations, are almost exclusively topographical, *Heruteu*, (later Hartlepool, 'stag island'); Tynemouth, Wearmouth, Donmouth; Gateshead (*hēafod* 'headland'); Sedgfield; Staindrop (*hop* 'valley'); Gainford; and, though not specifically mentioned as a shire, but originally the centre of an extensive parish at the convergence of three Roman roads, close to a villa at Old Durham, to recent Roman finds on the Durham peninsula, and to an as yet undated promontory fortification at Maiden Castle, perhaps also Elvet with its pre-conquest sculptural remains (*elfetu*, *ēa* 'swan stream' or *ēu* 'island'). By contrast only four, Billingham, Darlington, Heighington and Stockton are habitation names (and the first of these was originally a constituent part of the earlier estate of Hartness).

Members of this audience will be familiar with the very important technique developed by Professor Cameron more than a decade ago for the study of Scandinavian settlement names of correlating the place-names with the drift geology of a region. The technique depends on the assumption that in a given region there will be sites which are in geographical and more precisely geological terms particularly attractive for settlement, sites which are less attractive but acceptable, and sites which are definitely not attractive. Assuming that folk settling in a region chose first the most attractive sites available, it follows that if we could discover a fairly regular correlation between any place-name type and a particular type of geological site, we could infer that such a name type was early or late in the relative chronology of name giving. In a county such as Durham where the traditional early name types *wīchām*, *-hām*, *-ingahām* and *-ingas*, are sparsely, if at all represented, this is a technique which ought to be tried. In 1976³ I published a map in which it is possible to see the kind of name occurring on good sites amid the boulder clay in the Wear lowlands, an area where we should expect early Anglian settlement, names like Hetton (*hēope-dūn*, 'bramble hill'), Pitlington (again *dūn*, 'Pytta's hill'), Sherburn ('bright stream'), Shincliffe ('haunted bank') and Elvet already discussed, all topographical names. Elsewhere on the map good sites occur at Sedgfield and its dependent *wīc* and at a number of minor habitative names in *tūn*. Topographical and habitative names also occur on the boulder clay, e.g. Hett (*haett* 'hat'; village perched on a hill), Hordon (*horu*, *denu* 'dirty valley'), Kelloe (*celf*, *hlāw*, 'calf hill'), Quarrington (*cweorm*, *dūn* 'quern hill'), a number of *tūn* names including several so-called Grimston hybrids and, not unexpectedly, two Murtons (*mōr*, *tūn*).

In the same paper I commented on what seemed to me as a non-specialist in matters geological to be anomalies in the correlation of what must be early and important settlements like Billingham and Stockton with their drift geology. A wider experimental correlation of name and site in S. Durham has since shown that of 75 Anglian habitative names (excluding the Newton and Morton type) 18 became names of parish and 31 lie on good sites. None of the 8 Newtons or Mortons are names of parish or on good sites. None of the 23 Scandinavian habitation names are names of parish and less than a third of them occur on good sites. Of 72 settlements with topographical names (excluding names in *lēah* which have a special distribution in Durham⁴) 13 are names of parish and 28 lie on good sites. In other words, 41% of Anglian habitative names and 39% of Anglian topographical names lie on good sites, and taken as groups there is apparently no significant difference in the distribution of habitation and topographical names other than *-lēah*. There is some variation within the topographical group itself: thus more names referring to hills are on good sites while all names in *denu* or *hop* lie on apparently poor sites. But no significant variation is observable among the habitation elements of which *tūn* in any case accounts for over 70%. Since *tūn* was productive as a name forming element over a very long period, it is hardly surprising that it occurs on all types of site from excellent to poor.

This rather unhelpful result may, of course, be due to too narrow an interpretation of the geological evidence, and there is no substitution for personal examination of sites 'in the field'. It certainly demonstrates the inadequacy of relying simply on the geological information contained in the 1" Ordnance Survey sheets available for Durham, and the need to use soil classification maps such as Margaret Faull used for Yorkshire in *British Archaeological Report* 37. A good instance is Staindropshire, much of which lies on a vast expanse of boulder clay. Yet the 1950 soil survey made by the North East Development Association emphasises the excellence of the soil around Staindrop for agricultural purposes. This can only mean that the drift information mapped is insufficiently refined to be used alone for name and site correlation purposes.

In any case, the criteria for site selection by the earliest Anglian settlers in Durham and elsewhere were more complex and multifarious than this sort of relatively crude correlation with drift geology can always reveal. This is something which Dr. Brian Roberts has been recently reminding us of, and it is perhaps time now for us to turn to his paper on "Site and Situation: some hairs for splitting".

Notes

* A shortened version of a paper delivered on April 16th at the tenth conference of the Council for Name Studies.

1. e.g. G. R. J. Jones, 'The Multiple Estate as a Model Framework for Tracing Early Stages in the Evolution of Rural Settlement'. *L'habitat et les paysages ruraux d'Europe, Les congrès et colloques de l'Université de Liège*, vol. 58, 1971, 251-267.
2. The presence of an *abbas* at Gainford does not necessarily imply the existence of a monastery in the Benedictine sense; it may have been a monastic family with a hereditary right to the title of *abbas*, or a non-monastic group of secular clergy living a semi-communal life, exactly the kind of community which Professor Jones envisaged as serving the needs of a multiple estate. Cf. C. W. O. Addleshaw, *The pastoral organisation of the modern dioceses of Durham and Newcastle in the time of Bede*, Jarrow Lecture 1963, 8-9, Jones *loc.cit.* 266.
3. *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* ed. P. H. Sawyer, 218.
4. *ibid.* 219, 221.

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