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Creatures Great and Small:
Excursions among English Field-Names

John Field

CECIL Frances Alexander's complete line alludes, of course, to 'all' creatures—a zoological inclusiveness not appropriate in the present circumstances. Field-names often suffer from the 'too-well-known-to-need-description' syndrome, and the comment 'self-explanatory' is not always helpful to the reader. Even though the meaning of such names as Foxhole Croft, Cow Close or Pony Paddock may be apparent from the modern form, the interpreter has a duty to indicate details in the use of the names which will expand the significance for the benefit of the enquirer. The intention of surveying these types of English field-name, which include such large numbers of what are often described as 'commonplace' names of supposedly obvious meaning, is to demonstrate a greater breadth and variety of reference than might at first be thought likely, and to ask some questions, possibly naive questions, about the terminology.

Most of the references to the horse in field-names are predictable: there is a fair supply of Horse Pastures, Horse Closes, Horse Crofts, Horseplots and Horse Meadows to be found throughout the country. Horse Meadow Field was the name of one of the open fields of Aston Cantlow, Warks., in 1714, previously known simply as the other field. With the characteristic West Midland generic, there was a Horse Leasow in Oldbury, Worcs., a Horse Leasowe in Worcester in the time of Charles I, and a Horselesowe in Weston under Lizard, Staffs., in 1530. We learn from George Foxall that Shrewsbury livery-stable keepers pastured horses used in the coaching business in Coach Horse Field, and that in Broseley, in the same county of Shropshire, there is a piece of land called The Blind Horse Field. Packhorse Close, in Ashleyhay, Derbys., and Packhorse Ground, in South Stoke, Som., remind us of a form of transport that was not dependent on first-class roads.

For many of these instances, a fairly recent origin can be suspected but Horse Moor in Croughton, Nthants., seems to be of longer standing, witness Horsemor c.1255. Other generics include wordtun, as in Horsadine in Tibberton, Salop, and gers-tün 'paddock', as in Horse Gussan Close in Chinnor, Oxon., with an earlier form Horstergstone in 1220. Great Horsy in Lydiard Millicent, Wilts., is not the breathless compliment to a race-winner that it seems; it was Horsheye in the thirteenth century and so is no more than yet another term for 'horse enclosure' (hors-leghæg), also
found in other parts of England, e.g., in Staffordshire. The customary division of agricultural operations into arable and pastoral suggests that, as grassland and its management play as large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and large a role in the rural economy as arable land, pasture land and 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Nomina XIII

< OE wase 'mud' + loc(a) 'enclosure, lockable area'. Long
Galopper Hill, in the 1764 glebe terrier for Long Preston, Yorks.WR,
may well have reached that form by association with Hesckett nearby;
it was earlier Gawberhead 1677, 1685, probably 'gallows headland or
hill' (< ON galg + OE beorg + OE heafod), with which may be
compared Gallaber, in Malham, Yorks.WR.

From the horse to the fox is an intelligible, if to many an
emotionally-charged, shift of topic. Hunting men are among those
responsible for some of the minor names on the map, many of these
being of land viewed strictly from the rider's point of view, not the
husbandman's, and containing no direct allusions to the fox itself.
There are, of course, plenty of the latter, with reference to foxholes
in medieval names persisting into modern times, as in Fox Holes in
Steeple Morden, Camb., which has earlier forms Foxhole in the
thirteenth century and Foxholfurlong 1407. In the early thirteenth
century one of the three open fields of Cottenham, Cambs., was
Foxholefield. Foxholes in Church Lawford, Warks., has an even
earlier antecedent, namely the twelfth-century Foxholes. Foxhill in
Austrey, Warks., has developed from Foxholes recorded in 1213.
Development to Foxhill occurred quite early in Melbourn, Cambs.,
where Foxholes 1267 is represented by Foxhull 1354 and Foxhill
1492. Similarly Foxhole 1228 in Cottenham, Cambs., becomes Foxell
in 1460, but Foxall in 1596. In Hothorpe Field, one of the open fields of Theddingworth, Leics., a furlong given as Foxhole Leys
Furlong in the 1674 glebe terrier and as Foxholes in that of 1679,
had become Foxhill Leys by 1690. Foxcote in Ilminster, Warks.,
dating from 1607, is a less usual term for a fox's earth; another is
Foxborough Close, found in Foxton, Leics., and Fox Burgh in
Brookby, Leics. In Waltoning, Oxon., Fox Burys of the 1815
enclosure award was Foxbury Close a century before.

Fox Cover(t) is frequent among the modern names of many, if
not most, English counties. Additions to this simple form may be
illustrated from the East Riding field-names Big Fox Cover (Folkton),
Fox Covert Hill (Kennythorpe), Fox Covert Plantation (Eddlethorpe,
Folkton and Willerby), and Fox Cover Bottom (Bughtorpe). Elsewhere,
picturesque arbitrary names have been applied to fox-covers, including Australia Gorse in Ridlington, Rutland, and the famous Botany Bay Fox Cover at Billesdon, Leics. Colin Ellis has
suggested that Botany Bay was chosen for the latter (which had been
taken as a cow pasture until sold to the hunt in the 1790s), because it was
about the furthest point to which the hounds of the Quorn had to
go, and so a remoteness name of this type would be an obvious
choice. It seems just as likely that the references to Australia
and the penal colony in these names of rough ground on the
ease of the parish carry the implication of the possibility of
transportation awaiting poachers of other game on the land.

Most of the names of fox-covers mentioned in Ellis’s
Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt are of the ownership type, such as Bridget's Gorse, for a cover which 'used to be known locally as
Dalby Rough Field but was made into a proper cover by Mr. C. J.
Phillips, who christened it after his niece, Miss Bridget Drake'.
Records, for reasons of perhaps greater concern to sociologists
than to onomasticians, preserve far more of the details of such naming
than other land documents, and it is therefore frequently possible to
discover identities of the eponymous dedicaries. Some were owners,
such as Thomas Gisborne, who made Gisborne's Gorse, near Charley,
Leics., or Nicholas Charlton who enclosed several acres of
self-sown gorse previously known as Trussington Gorse, two-thirds
of a mile south of Six Hills; this became Charlton's Gorse. Others
were slightly lower in the social scale. Adam's Gorse, half a mile
south-east of Thorpe Satchville, was resown by Otho Paget for Lord
Manners, and looked after for many years by the Underwood family;
as Adam had been a Christian name in that family for several
generations, it is probable that one of them gave the name to the
cover. Sometimes a general term was used, such as Parson's
Thorns, alluding to this cover being on Hickling Glebe, in the
neighbouring county of Nottinghamshire, and Curate's Gorse, on the
edge of the same glebe; we are told that the latter refers facetiously
to Parson's Thorns, and that 'if the parson cannot perform the
service, the curate will'.

The eminence of its given name did not necessarily bring
prosperity to a new cover. Ellis tells us that in 1871 General E.S.
Burnaby 'got the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) to
sow gorse seed and to plant a tree in the centre' of some land west
of Baggrave Hall, Leics.; the plantation was duly renamed Prince of
Wales's Cover. The seed, however, failed, and the land was
subsequently, in 1884, replanted with thorn and privet.

Our topic is, of course, creatures great and small, and no
particular apologia is required for references to these unfledged
biped. They may be mentioned later in connexion with various
squadrupeds other than foxes and horses, after consideration has been
given to some of the animals of the farm.

There the oxen were slain, a 1322 furlong-name in Hoby,
Leics., shows the importance of oxen to the medieval husbandman.
This rather lengthy name (written, in the original, as a single word)
Nomina XIII

has not lasted, but another medieval Leicestershire name (in slightly misspelt Latin), *ubi Godwynesoex morieabatur* 'where Godwin's ox died', survived at least until 1679 as *Goodins Ox*, to be found in the Great Bowden glebe terrier for that date. More frequently cited is either of these is the thirteenth-century furlong-name *theretheoXlayddehyde* in Northall, Bucks, 'a picture in miniature of a medieval farming tragedy' being the solemn comment of the Editors of *PN Bucks.*

For a possible reason for the demise in the fields of these draught animals we may turn to Ariosto. Sacrionate, about to ravish Angelica, is frustrated by a white knight (a little later identified as the maid Bradamante). After a brief skirmish, in which lions, bulls and rams are called in to furnish matter for comparisons, the Tartar king fails to withstand the force of his opponent's charge and we are told that

> The horse of Sacrionate lay prostrate,
> Its rider pinned beneath its lifeless weight.

Not unexpectedly, Sacrionate finds some difficulty in getting to his feet, and his predicament is remarked on by the poet in an elaborate simile:

> As when a ploughman, dazed with stupefaction,
> After a thunderbolt has struck, aghast,
> Slowly uplifts himself where by its action
> Beside his lifeless oxen he was cast,
> And views, dismayed, the shrivelling contraction
> Of pine-trees stripped and withered by the blast,
> So Sacrionate rises to his feet,
> The damsel having witnessed his defeat.

The possibly fatal effects of lightning on oxen (and on a good many other things) exposed to it would have been quite familiar in the open arable fields of England as in those of Ariosto's native Ferrara, and such meteorological accidents may account for the deaths of some of the animals referred to in these field-names. We may surmise that in Great Bowden it was only the ox that succumbed to the lightning stroke, but that Godwin himself survived, otherwise there would probably have been yet another *Dead Churl Furlong*.

Field-names alluding to draught oxen encompass the full range of generics, alphabetically from *Oxhall* in Eastleach Martin, Glos., ('the halh or nook of land for the oxen') to *Oxyard* in Ashley Folville, Leics., which was probably where the working animals were prepared for their daily labours. Wainwright found numerous examples in Amounderness Hundred in Lancashire, with one or two instances each of *Ox Butts, Ox Close, Ox Croft, Oxen Croft* and

*Oxenholme*, but nearly a dozen cases of *Ox Hey.* Doubtless it was the importance of the animal in medieval agricultural operations that brought about the numerous settlement names that are indistinguishable from field-names: *Oxhey*, Herts., to be compared with *Oxhey Meadow* in Cadlington, Oxon.; *Oxenholme*, Westm., identical in form with *Oxen Holme* found in the tithe apportionment for Little Marton, Lanes.; and *Oxley*, Staffs., differing but little from the numerous examples of *Ox Leaze* in the field-names repertoire. The apparent compliment in *Great and Little Excellent* in Corby, Nthants., is diminished when an earlier form is found: in 1580 these two old enclosures were called *Great and Little Exlands*, and were probably pasture closes on which were kept the oxen of the parish.

Livestock management is reflected in numerous field-names. References to the driving of cattle from home fields to out-pastures may generate the names of fields adjoining drove roads, as in *Oxen Rake Meadow* (OE hraeca 'narrow path'), in Malham, Yorks.WR, or may designate the grass-grown tracks themselves, e.g., *Neatgangs* 'cattle tracks', recorded in 1773 in Goxhill, Lincs. (OE neæt 'cattle'); this was an area of pasture, 250 acres in extent, beside the river Humber, and was divided at the Enclosure into six rectangular closes.

Beef and dairy cattle are mentioned in field-names in greater numbers than draught oxen are. The specific Neat, already mentioned, is not common, and some modern names had early forms clearly derived from ON *naut* rather than OE *næt*. *Neat Marsh*, in Preston, Yorks.ER, for instance, was *Notmers* in 1344, and alternative forms survived in *Neat- altas Nodgarth*, in Ambleside, Westm. Hugh Smith noticed the frequency of references to the bull in Westmorland field-names, and particularly the uncanny repetition of the name *Bull Copy*. He observed more than two dozen instances of this name in the county. At its first occurrence in the volume, in Casterton, he noted that 'according to Caxton, *The game and playe of cheese* (1474), 112, "a great bole is suffisid with right lilit a pasture"'; he continued, 'and after the enclosures this seems to have been the view of the local farmers'.

There is room for more than one comment here, and at least one unanswered question. Why should the view of local farmers have been modified after the enclosures? The nature of cattle was not altered by the change in land distribution, and it is likely that a hedged or fenced area was already in existence for the restraint of the bull. It is noteworthy that all the examples are of the nineteenth century, but earlier forms, which would provide evidence of pre-enclosure husbandry, are notoriously lacking for Westmorland.
It must be said that, though Smith reported about 24 examples of the name, other observers, in particular Mary Atkin, have reached a different total. Mary Atkin's records show that, in the 22 townships of Kendal barony alone, there were 45 fields bearing this name on the various farms; several townships had three or four of each, and one (Heslington) had seven.

It was obviously convenient to keep the tethered bull at the place where the cows were brought to him for service. But why should Copy have been the persistent generic? Smith did explain that this is the pseudo-singular form of coppice, but offered no opinion on the suitability of coppices as places to contain an animal notorious for its lack of docility. In fact, these enclosures are known to have usually been former coppice land, the remaining trees providing some shade from the sun, but not growing in sufficient numbers to cause any problems from flies.

Further, Smith did not mention, either in this or any other EPNS volume, that the term occurs elsewhere. In his own Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, a single example is indexed—among the minor names in Linton, in East Staincliffe wapentake. It is in this and the neighbouring West Staincliffe that the substantial number of instances of Bull Copy occur in field-names, with one or two in Ewecross wapentake, as well as Bully Copy in Rawdon, in Skyrack wapentake. Turning to a standard primary source, Mary Higham has counted no less than eleven examples in West Riding tithe awards, three each in the parishes of Bentham and Easington; in addition, she has found the name in North Lancashire, in eight places, one of which, Whittington, has as many as seven on its separate farms.

In the East Riding, Bull Firth in Walkington is annotated by the school field-name collectors: 'Parish bull kept here'. Another possible reinforcement of this use of coppices comes from the other end of England. In Pamphill, Dorset, Starley is recorded from 1598, as the name of a cope; the first element here is taken to be OE stér 'steer'.

In the dozen or so places in Westmorland which have in their recorded field-names bull with generics other than copy, each of these generics, strangely enough, is a different one for each of the townships concerned. If the record is complete, which seems doubtful, it is almost as though a toponymist had been called in and been required to work through his repertoire of generics. Thus, Kentmere has Bull Slack; Kirby Stephen, Bull Gap; Crosby Garrett, Bull Intake; New Hutton, Bull Hole; and Kendall, Bull Mire. Not all of these imply smallness, but not a single one suggests the opposite, apart perhaps from Bull Ground (in Morland), the generic of which is a term normally applied to spacious pasture land. Though a close called Bull Copy may be small, it must not be supposed that it was minute, despite the possible implication of the Caxton extract. Mary Higham has found that these fields vary between two and five acres in extent.

In addition to Bull Copy, Hartley also has Bulles House, apparently a development from earlier Bullhouse Howe 'bull-house hill', recorded in 1709. In Crosby Ravensworth, Smith related Bullace Croft to the term bullace 'wild plum', which is by no means impossible. However, the Hartley form offers an analogy, and Bullace Croft may also refer to a bull-house. Bull Pit, which is not often recorded, is found in Peak Forest, Derbys., and Bullpits occurs in Wimborne Minster, Dorset. These, like Bull Baiters in Great and Little Leighs, Essex, and Bull Ring in Braithwell, Yorks.WR, in Cirencester and in Tewkesbury, Glos., may have been fields in which bull-baiting took place. Bull Stake in Hattersley, Chs., may involve a similar reference, though, as John Dodgson noted, it may also have been the place (like the numerous Bull Copys already mentioned) where cows were served.

A seventeenth-century document alludes to a custom in Whittlesey Rural, Cambs., where The Constables was assigned to the village constables 'for the keeping each of them a common Bull and Boar for the use of the Inhabitants'. Bull Marfur 'bull boundary furrow' is found in Stallingborough and other places in Lincolnshire; the characteristic generic marfur would be used of a not very extensive area of land. A number of generics occurring in many different counties may suggest small plots of land, such as Bull Hern in Reading, Berks., Bull Acre in Tabley Superior, Chs., and more especially its antecedent thirteenth-century form Bullehalith ('the bull's halh or nook of land'); and, in Leicestershire, Bulls Nook in Carlton and in Twycroes, Bulls Pen in Glen Magna, and Bull Gores in the open fields of Kings Norton. But little weight can be put on the significance of these generics, first, because they are also used with other specific elements and, secondly, because other generics, such as Crates, Croft, Dole, Field, Ings, Piece and Yard, also used with Bull as specific, say no more and no less about their size. Bulls Tail, found in Wychwood, Oxon., and Donington, Leics., may indicate a small, curved piece of land, named from its resembling the tail of a bull, or from the bull's being kept on a remnant or tail of land, of no particular size, projecting from another field.

Cow Close, Cowleaze, Cow Pasture, and so on, are very frequently found, the generic sometimes varying according to the
region, for instance, Cow Carr being found in the Fens, and Cow Park in the South West. Cow Leasow may be expected chiefly in the West Midlands, though examples are found elsewhere, such as Cowesowe c.1360 in Shifford, Oxon. The idiosyncratic spelling of Coughgarth in Hartley, Westm., may or may not be deliberate. The name Cowleaze Thousand Acres in Hampreston, Dorset, must not be overlooked, though the field may well be, as David Mills notes that it is very small. Cowgate, 'the right of pasture of one head of cattle', is found occasionally, e.g. Cow Gait in Ashwell, Rutland. In Cowholding, in Glaston, Rutland, can be identified the rare field-name term holding, i.e. land on which holding-stock or breeding cattle were kept. Cowhead occurs in Dunham Massey, Chesh.; although apparently the only example in the county, it is recorded without comment in PN Chesh. There is in Arclid, Chesh., a form Cowshade—so spelt, but perhaps to be broken down as Cows Hade, if it is to be grouped with other forms found in another north-western county, namely Westmorland. Work by Mrs. M. Atkin on these names is in progress.

Functional names in which the word cow is not used include Milking Close, in Abney, Derbys., and Milking Plot, in Fife Neville, Dorset. In Soyland, Yorks.W.R., Baitings, from ON beiting 'pasture', was the summer pasture for cattle in the medieval vacary at Salstonall. The place-name survey of Lincolnshire has produced two compound names of some interest. In Lincoln itself is Cow Paddle, adjoining the river Witham, but the fairly obvious sense of Paddle here is not recognized in the dictionaries. In Stallingborough, in the North Riding of Lindsey, instances of Cowdam occur. The term has not so far been noted elsewhere, and the specific connexion with cattle is not so obstructive that the elements in Horse Cowdam (which is found in the same tithe apportionment) should be considered mutually exclusive. It is, of course, possible that the first element here is not cow, just as that in Cowwits, in Horley, Surrey, is plausibly to be identified with the sixteenth-century Colpytt 'charcoal pit'. In this a dialect feature of a very dark [1] may be involved, as it may also be in Cottingham, Yorks.ER, where Cowcroft was earlier Coltscroft c.1325, evidently intended for young horses rather than cattle.

Field-names alluding to calves have a range of specific forms. Both singular and plural occur in modern names: there are numerous Calf Closes, but also Calves Close in (among other places), Windsor, Berks., East Allington, Devon, Breeden, Leics., and Tooley Park, Leics. The genitive plural is found in Calurecroft c.1250 in Gloucester, in the modern Calver Croft in Alderwasley, Derby., and elsewhere, and with a possessive -s augmenting the plural genitive ending in Calvers Close in the 1626 glebe terrier of Medbourne, Leics.

This may be the right moment to consider the question: how were the closes associated with the animals to which their names refer? The imperfect state of cultivation of tracts of land called variously meadow, leasow, etc. has already been mentioned. The impression is given, particularly when one is presented with a range of early forms going back seven or eight centuries, that cows have fed on Cow Pasture, calves in Calf Nook, bulls on Bull Ings, and horses on Horsecroft, uninter- ruptedly from time immemorial. For the fact that this is not so there is abundant documentary evidence ranging from medieval terriers, through Seventh- and eighteenth-century leases, to enclosure and tithe-commutation documents of more recent times. H. L. Gray quotes a 1611-12 terrier from the survey of Macclesfield manor and forest. In it is to be found 'One other arable called the Calfe crofts by estimation 3 acres'. From this and a number of similar references it may be inferred that the use of the name of a grazing animal clearly did not imply that the land was permanent pasture. However, there are animals with at least a semi-permanent connexion with named pieces of land, whether enclosed or not, as we shall now discover.

1988 was for landscape archaeologists and agrarian historians the Year of the Rabbit. An attack on the theory of the post-Conquest introduction to England of this mammal was mounted in the February issue of The Local Historian by John Warry. A vigorous reply appeared in the May issue from the pen of James Bond, who included among his arguments the largely negative, but well-marshalled, place-name evidence in favour of the traditional view. In the meantime, in the first issue of the Agricultural History Review for the year, Michael Bailey published a paper on East Anglian medieval land manage- ment, which included rabbit-farming, on which he provided many interesting details. This was not the first time that the topic had been discussed in these journals. About three decades earlier, Elspeth Vale had written 'The rabbit in England' in the Agricultural History Review, and John Sheal contributed 'Historical material on a wild animal—the rabbit' to The Local Historian in 1970. In a correspondence which followed the latter article, Arthur Britton presented, in chronological order, early forms of coninger, assembled from the volumes of the Survey of English Place-Names published by that time.
The term rabbit is relatively rare in field-names, one reason for this being, of course, that historically cony or coning is the specific English term for the animal, and rabbit for its young. There is a Rabbit Berry in Stonehouse, Glos., and Rabbit Field is among the names collected by the Women's Institute in Kingswear, Devon.\textsuperscript{28} Rabbit Bank in Ageden and in Wincle, and Rabbit Borrow in Dodcott cum Wilkesley are among the few instances in Cheshire, a county well provided with other onomatopoeic names of numerous warrens. Rabbit Croft occurs in Mytholmroyd, Yorks.WR, Rabbit Field in Eddlethorpe, Yorks.ER, Rabbit Ground in Pamphill, Dorset, and Rabbit Holes Meadow in Burton Overy, Leics. There are a few examples in Rutland, such as Rabbit Burrows in Byhall and Rabbit Close in Pickworth. An unusual variant is Dying Rabbit Field in Kirby Underdale, Yorks.ER. This was recorded about 1936, and so does not allude to the great post-war outbreak of myxomatosis.

Many of these modern Rabbit-field-names may well denote land on which rabbits have been particularly numerous, though not systematically farmed in a coninger. Without other evidence, it is not possible to judge the antiquity of the name Rabbit Warren in Northenden, Ches., and in Holt, Leics. It has been suggested that names like Rabbit Hill in Birdsall, Yorks.ER are merely 'land on which rabbits are found', whereas at least some names including the plural Hills may refer to relics of medieval warrens.\textsuperscript{29}

The most frequent field-names associated with rabbits consist of cony with a generic, or with one of the numerous variants of ME coninger. Among the faunal field-names this Middle English term, normally alluding to medieval or later rabbit warrens, gives rise to even more spelling variants than Modern English saffoin does among the herbal ones. In collecting examples, the not entirely serious aim of finding 57 varieties was soon shown to be a serious underestimate of the possible total. Here is a fine case of specimens of mishearing, miscopying, metathesis, metanalysis, reconstruction, and replacement. The changes rung on Cony, Coning, Conny, Cunny and Cunning, in combination with Gear, Gare, Gayare, Gare, Greave, Grey, Grave and Grove or Groove, would be the envy of every campanological team from Berwick unto Ware—and beyond. They exhibit phenomena to delight the etymologist, the phonologist, the psycho-linguist, and the obsessive collector of picturesque field-names, who would doubtless make a special note of forms like Gunnnery in Egleton, Rutland; The Gunneries in Gruffydam (Worthington), Leics.; Gunner Field in Hordley, Salop; Kunegar in Chinnor, Oxon.; and the Kunniger in Bisbrooke, Rutland. The street-name contrivers have taken their usual inept toll. In one

garden city, Cony Dell, characteristic of its county, was evidently not regarded as sufficiently inviting to potential house-buyers, and so has been transformed into the more spacious-sounding, but otherwise unrecorded, Coneydale.\textsuperscript{40} A more restrained transfer is found in Chipping Norton, Oxon., where Conygree Terrace is traceable to The Coneytrees of the 1770 enclosure award.

We are told that of the two Old French terms for a rabbit-sanctuary, conilliere and coniniere, only the latter passed into English, the second /n/ evidently immediately dissimilating to /ng/ or being modified to a normal /ng/, as the termination /-in/ would have been felt to be unacceptable.

The earliest quotation for the alternative term conyng-erthe is dated 1430, whereas conyger, conynger is on record from 1292. The NED treats conyng-erthe as an independent form, briefly discussing its corruption to the later cony-garth, quite reasonably mentioning the /g/ of the first component as being transferred to the second. It would have been formed on the model of fox-erthe, an early (but unstable) compound found in major names, such as Foxearth (Essex), recorded in Little Domesday Book as Fosearde,\textsuperscript{41} and occasionally in field-names, e.g. Foxearth Gorse in Cottesmore, Rutland. The conyger entry in NED is to be commended both for its succinct discussion of the convoluted variations brought about by 'obvious striving after a meaning', and for its acknowledgment of 'local field- and farm-names'.

The warren was a sufficiently distinctive feature in the medieval countryside for it to be a landmark from which the furlongs, and even the great fields themselves, were named. There is a reference in 1520 to the Great Felde otherwise called the Conyngrefield in Great Chesterton, Warks., and the 1605 glebe terrier for Loughborough, Leics., gives the name of one of the open fields there as Fallows alias Coneygree.\textsuperscript{42} In 1708, the alternative name for the South Field in Waterstock, Oxon., was Conygere Field.\textsuperscript{43}

From time to time we are given an account of the relationship between the rabbit warren and the main stream of the agrarian economy of a place. Kerridge remarks on the numerous and extensive rabbit-warrens of the Yorkshire Wolds, where sheep and conies shared the grazing.\textsuperscript{44} This fact is not noticeably reflected in the recent field-names of the East Riding, in which coninger is relatively rare. In Elmwell there is a Conny Garth, but the term has been completely replaced in Brackenholme-with-Woodall, where a close called by the shape name Leg o' Mutton has its alternative description in parenthesis, 'Cunny Green'.

To a surviving name in the Lincolnshire Fens, however
Nomina XIII

—Coneygarth Farm, just south of the Old Seabank between Holbeach Horn and Holbeach Bank—the narrative of its medieval past can be fitted. We are told that here the abbot of Crowland’s warren comprised 60 acres of enclosed sheep pasture in the late thirteenth century. On such land, the management of the warren proceeded alongside the care of the pasture, and maintenance conditions can be found written into the leases of several centuries later.45

Reaney remarked that in Cambridgeshire

‘coninger ME (s) is rare. We may note the forms Conynger (1287), the Conynger (1407), Cunygera (1388), Conynger 1549.46

As was customary in the EPNS volumes at the time, he omitted to name the parishes in which these forms occur. The spellings, apart from Cunygera (which seems to be a Latinized form), can be matched in other counties. In his earlier volume, PN Essex, Reaney had declared conyger, conynger, conygarth (grouped together) ‘fairly frequent’, and he included some forms, such as le Conewer (1350), le Conyerstade, Conyfer Slade (1539, 1546), and Conyfer (1598), which are decidedly unusual,47 and it would be interesting to know in which parishes they occur. With these the modern form Coney Fare may be usefully compared, with the further question whether these fare forms are perhaps modified from medieval spelling with initial palatal spirant. In the Essex parish lists of field-names, examples are very few; Reaney noted Coney Burrow Field in Bocking, with le Conygere 1417 for comparison, and Coney Fare in Felsted (Conygere 1487-9) and in Stelling, with early comparative forms including le Quercunnygere 1422 and le Coneygerthe 1487, but it should be remembered that he used a small selection from his main source of modern names, Waller’s tithe award transcriptions (themselves comprehensive but not exhaustive) published at the turn of the century.48

However, it remains true to say that in the south-eastern counties of Essex, Middlesex, Kent, and Surrey, modern names recognizably derived from coninger are very rare or entirely absent: from the limited amount of evidence it would be imprudent to be more definite. In Middlesex, it is not sur- prising that there should be no trace today of Conyngerfield 1597 in Holborn, and forms of Cony Green in Hillingdon go back no further than 1659. The recorded history of Conyborough Hill in Edmonton is only a year older. Coney Berry Field occurs in Blechingley, Surrey, where there was also a Clappers Field, perhaps embodying the dialect form clapper ‘rabbit burrow’, identified in, for instance, Clapper Close in East Garston, Berks.49 Coneygre Pightle in Rickling appears to be the only survivor of the form in Essex, Coney Burroughs or Burrows being the forms frequently found in that county. Little and Great Coneyborough on a 1782 map of Chingford are traceable to Conniborrow Field in a 1627 document, and modern Coney Burrows, in Wethersfield, perhaps goes back to Coneygreth 1489. There is a Coney Furrows in the tithe apportionment for Little Braxted, Coney Pightle in Rawth, Coney Hill Field in Rayleigh, and Coney Marsh in Tollesbury. In Hertfordshire, Coney Dells prevails, with rare alternatives, such as Coney Grove, in Cheshunt, the modern reflex of the sixteenth-century Cunnygrove.

The single instance of Connygate (in two Connygates 1605) in Odd Rode, Ches., is noteworthy, as this term is supported by only one rather cryptic quotation in the NED: 'This weasel-monger, who is no better than a cat in a house, or a ferret in a cony-gat', from a speech to Queen Elizabeth. A weasel-monger is said to be a 'mole-catcher', though the imagery is confused, as weasels were also used to catch domestic mice. The sense of gate here would be 'an areal unit of pasture', as in Cowgate or Sheepgate, rather than 'a road' (ON gata). However, arguing partly from its rarity, it may be wondered whether Connygate is not a form of Coney-garth. It is worth noting that when other generics are found, the specific is often cony, variously spelt, rather than coning, but that early forms are often varieties of coninger, conigre.

There are some Cony- names derived from other specific elements, particularly ODan kunung, ON konung 'king', the principal element in major names such as Coneythorpe, Yorks.WR, Coneysthorpe, Yorks.NR, and Coney Weston, Suffolk. Some fairly certain instances of the surname Cony also occur, e.g. Coney Acre in Cranborne, Dorset, and perhaps Coneyhook in Ewhurst, Surrey.

Even when precise parish locations are not given, information in the EPNS glossaries is of some value in establishing the earliest recorded date of this term, e.g., in PN Warks., 'The earliest example is le Conynger (13th)'. The earliest form in Cambridgeshire, though noted without such a comment, is from 1287; in Nottinghamshire, 13th century; in Derbyshire, 1298; and in Hertfordshire, 1423.50 There are similar references in other EPNS county volumes. No conclusions at all about the date of the rabbit’s arrival can be drawn from these dates, which are obviously based on fragmentary evidence. Now that the agricultural historians and landscape archaeologists have shown the way into the rabbit-warren, it is clearly time for toponymists to explore the rather uncertain linguistic history of coninger.

UPPINGHAM
NOTES

This is a revised version of the paper read on 1 April 1989 at the XXIst Annual Study Conference organized by the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland, held at the University of St. Andrews.

2 Examples noted in *PN Staffs.*, I, include *Horsley* 1570, *Horse Hays* TA, *Cannock* (p.65), *Le Horsey* 1401, Castle Church (p.79), and *Le Horshey* 1434, *Horsey* 1462, Coppenhall (p.84).
3 *PN Beds. & Hunts.*, 292.
4 M. Atkin, 'Viking race-courses', *JEPS* X (1977-78), 26-39; at 35.
5 *PN Herts.*, 283.
6 *NED*, s.v. *rubbing* 4 (b).
7 Foxall, *Shrops. Field-Names*, 44-5. Warks. and Worcs. field-names have been kindly provided by Mr. M. Beacham.
8 Discussed by Mrs. Atkin in 'Viking race-courses'.
9 Baynard's Green, earlier *Bayard's Green*, on the boundary of Northamptonshire with Oxfordshire, was probably the site of tournaments held by Richard I in 1194 and by Henry III in 1249 and was described in 1646 as 'a large greene or downe, where often is horse-racing, six myle long', cf. *PN Oxon.*, 238. D. M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1971), notes Baynard's Leap (precise location unspecified) among extra-parochial pieces of land. Such land might well be used for horse-racing.
10 These and other East Riding examples in the paper are recorded in the unpublished field-names collections (now in the Brynmor Jones Library of the University of Hull) made by pupils in East Riding Schools. The survey, directed by Professor King and organized by Mrs. Espinasse, was made about 1936.
11 C. Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1951), 199.
12 Ibid., 200.
13 Ibid., 65.
14 Ibid., 201; for *Parson's Thorns*, v. ibid., 204.
15 Ibid.
16 *PN Bucks.*, 259.
19 'Bull Copy (a frequent f.n. in We (27 examples).'), *PN Westm.*, I, 29-30, cf. ibid. II, 243.
20 Based on a personal communication from Mrs. M. Atkin.
21 The nearest approach to such a mention comes in the Introduction to *PN Yorks.WR*, VII, 67-8, where Smith observes that the 'fringes of forest-land were cleared by the pasturing of swine, sheep and cattle, which prevented the natural replacement of the forest trees...'.
22 Based on a personal communication from Mrs. M. Higham.
23 *PN Dorset*, II, 172.
24 Bullace Grange, in Thurlstone, Yorks.WR, was also known as Bullhouse Hall, with early forms *Bulhuses*, *Bolehus* in the 13th cent. and *Bullhouse* in 1647 (*PN Yorks. WR*, I, 339).
25 *PN Ches.*, I, 308.
26 *PN Cambs.*, 371.
27 *PN Dorset*, II, 228.
28 *PN Yorks.WR*, III, 63.
29 Forms for the Yarborough Wapentake of Lincolnshire are quoted by permission of Professor Kenneth Cameron from the volume he is preparing for publication.
30 In a private communication, Mr. Stanley Ellis has kindly confirmed that the transformation is quite feasible. Not only may *of* become *ou*, but there would regularly be a loss of *s* before another consonant.
38 From the Devon & Cornwall Women's Institutes' field-name collection in Devon County Record Office, Exeter.
39 The suggestion was put forward during an informal discussion at the conference.
40 The street-name referred to is in Welwyn Garden City.
41 In the discussion of *Foxearth* in *PN Essex*, 429, Reaney noted the variety of forms, e.g. *(h)erde*, *(h)erthe, *-yerde, *-herne, and *-horne*, as well as early substitution of *-hol*, the root of most surviving names alluding to foxes' dens. The earliest recorded form of *Fox's Yard*, in Haughton, *PN Ches.*, III, 310, *le fox yarthe* 1574 had become *be foxysyarde* by 1637.
Shaw/Shay Revisited

Victor Watts

IN a note appended to Mary Higham's article on *shay* names in the previous issue of this journal, Dr Margaret Gelling discussed the phonological problem of the relationship of *shaw* to *shay*.1 There can, as she says, be no doubt that *shay* derives from OE *seca* (i.e. OE *scaiga*) to diphthongize to *-aw*—i.e. [æa]), and that instead it lengthened to *-æge* (i.e. presumably [a:ga]) in the open syllable, whence late ME -āg- spelt -ai(g)-, -ay-.2

Dr Gelling is rightly uneasy about this account, but her own suggestion that

'In the case of Shay it has to be presumed (though Smith does not say this) that there was late diphthongization of the new raised vowel which caused -age to become -aye.'3

is also unsatisfactory, since on the one hand it describes no more than the normal development of ME [a:] (viz. raising and eventual diphthongization to [ei]) and on the other does not explain the loss of the consonantal element, presumably [g], of the hypothetical late ME -āge.

In fact, *aw/ay* variation is a very well attested phenomenon in English.4 On the one hand, the usual development of ME [au] in words like *claw*, *draw*, *slaughter*, *hawk* and *haunt* seems to have involved assimilation of the two elements of the diphthong to produce the monophthong [a:] by about 1600, although diphthongal pronunciations continued to be recognized as late as 1685.5 By the time of this monophthongization ME [a:] was generally represented by a high front vowel [ɛ:] and there was no possibility of the new monophthong becoming associated with ME [a:].6

On the other hand, in some varieties of English there was a monophthongization of ME [au] so early that it did become associated with ME [a:] and consequently developed as a front vowel accompanying ME [a:] through successive raisings to [æ:], [ɛ:], [e:] and eventually diphthongizing to [ei].7 In the history of English phonology it is important to think not of once and for all historical sound-changes but rather of tendencies or repeated or recurrent operations.8 Thus, in some varieties of (non-standard) English the same development seems to have occurred at a later period and to