The Place-Name Hexham: A Mainly Philological Approach

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When I was invited, in 1992, to talk to the Hexham Local History Society on the place-names of the area, I readily accepted, in the belief that at least the major place-name was well documented and well understood. In the event, however, looking at it afresh, I found a whole series of questions raised themselves, and a host of issues I had scarcely anticipated. The following paper is offered in celebration of the sheer fascination of place-name study and the great range of matters it can touch upon, some of them not a little recondite and much disputed.1

The earliest occurrence of the name Hexham is c. 1120 in the Laud manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in the annal for the year 685:

Her hæt Ecgferð cining gehalgan Cæðbert to biscope. 7 Theodorus archiepiscopus hine gehalgode on Eoferwic þam forman Eostordægo to biscope to Hægustaldes ham.

In this year Ecgrith had Cæðbert consecrated bishop, and archbishop Theodore consecrated him bishop of Hexham at York on the first day of Easter.2

Typical spellings from Richard of Hexham’s History of the Church of Hexham and other twelfth-century writers are Hestoldsbam,
Hastaldesham, Hextedesham and Hesteldesham. From 1268 to 1535, the regular spelling in Latin documents is *Hestaldesham*, although the appearance of the spellings *Hexted* in 1314 and *Hexham* from 1362, originally in documents written in French and increasingly frequently from 1408 in all documents, demonstrates that the longer form became a traditional chancery form isolated from the spoken language.

At first glance, this may seem an acceptable sequence of forms. But a number of questions immediately raise themselves about this name.

I. In the first place, the form *Hestaldesham* cannot derive directly from *Hesteldesham*. Richard of Hexham's own explanation that *Hestaldesham* is named

a rivulo ibi decurrente et quandoque ad modum torrentis exuberante, estild nomine, quasi praedium Hestild

from a stream running down there and sometimes swelling to a torrent, called the *Hestild*, as though 'the Hestild manor'

is simply guesswork. Rather, it seems likely that *Hestaldesham* was reformed, at least partly under the influence of popular etymology, as if it were 'Hextild's estate'. *Hextild or Hestild* is an Anglo-Saxon feminine personal name actually borne by the wife of Richard Comyn, an important magnate and beneficiary of Hexham in the twelfth century. 

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1 The Priory of Hexham, edited by James Raine, 2 vols, Surtees Society, 44/46 (Durham, 1864-65), I, 8-106.
2 ibid., pp. xvi-cxxii.
3 ibid., p. 8. The stream is the brook which runs on the west side of the town and is now known as Cockshaw Burn.
4 Richard Comyn was a nephew of William Comyn, archdeacon of Worcester and chancellor of King David of Scotland, who, in 1141, attempted to seize the bishopric of Durham. He was donor of the lands of Carraw on the Roman wall to the Priory of Hexham (ibid., p. 148, note q; p. 169, note x.6). The Comyn family, which subsequently rose to great power in Scotland, already had an interest in the north when William I sent the ill-fated Robert de Commines to Durham in 1068, with the title of earl, to restore order north of the Tees. See D. C. Douglas, William the Conqueror (London, 1964), p. 214; G. W. S. Barrow, The Kingdom of the Scots (London, 1973), passim. I have not

Nor can the form *Hestaldesham* derive directly from *Hagustaldesham*. *Hagustaldesham* means either 'Hagustald's estate' or 'the hagustald's estate'. *Hagustald* is a compound name of which title formed from OE *bæga* 'a hedge, a fence, a fenced enclosure, a dwelling within an enclosure', and *stald* 'owner, possessor, occupier'. OE *bæga* normally becomes *bær(e)* in Middle English, just as *haguiðorn* 'hedge-thorn'—the sort of thorn-tree used to form natural hedges—becomes ModE *haw thorn*.

Beside *bæga*, however, there was another Anglo-Saxon word *bæg* meaning 'woven fence, piece of land enclosed by such a fence', as in the place-names Hay in Breconshire (*La Haye* 1259) and Hay in Westmorland (*Haia, (le, ye, the) Haye* 1297 etc.); and beside *hagustald*, come across another example of the name *Hestild*, which could, however, be of ON origin, *Hestildr < hestr 'horse' (cognate with OE *hengest* and Ha- in ON personal names < PrGmc *hanuka* + *bildr*; for similar feminine compound names, cf. *Arnbildr* (PrON *a rumu* 'eagle'), *Bjarnbildr* (bprn 'bear'), *Dyvikildr* (dfrr 'wild animal, deer'), *Ulfbildr* (dfr 'wolf'), etc.

'ME forms without labialization occur in Yorkshire place-names such as Haigh, Hague, etc. (Victor Watts, *Shaw/Shay Revisited*, Nomina, 13, 1989-90, 109-14, at p. 110), and a late ME form with *a* < *au* is theoretically possible, although it would be indistinguishable from *hay* < OE *bæg*; see n. 7, below.

OE *hæga* and *bæg* are related words, both ultimately deriving from the Indo-European root *kagh- 'interlace, fence'. Different suffixes were compounded with this root to form a family of related words in Germanic, *hæga* (OE *bæg*, German *Hag* 'woven hedge'), *hægam* (OE *bæg* 'natural or quickest hedge'), *hægri* (OE *bæg*, German *Hecke*) and *hægas* (OHE *German hagen*, OE *bæg(e)n* 'grove, enclosure'). The details of these connections may be followed in standard etymological dictionaries such as C. T. Onions, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford, 1966); Kluge-Seebold, Eymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache (Berlin and New York, 1989); Jan de Vries, *Atlantisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin and Munich, 1959–69), I, 518; F. Holthausen, *Atlantisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934); and cf. R. Coates, *Virgins and Haws: The Progeny of Germanic *HAG- in Old E atish*, in his *Toponymic Topics* (Woodingdean, 1988), pp. 74–80.


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there was the parallel variant *bægestald, spelt behstald in the tenth-century Northumbrian gloss added interlinearly to the Lindisfarne Gospels while the community of St Cuthbert was lodged at Chester-le-Street. Although it is not found in the recorded spellings of Hexham, it is clear that the variant *Haeg, or better *Hebstaldesham, is required to explain both twelfth-century Hextoldesham and the re-shaped Huctldesham, since Hagstaldesham could only have produced forms such as *Hau, *Hou or *Hostaldesham.

II. The second question is whether the specific of this name is to be regarded as a personal name or an appellative (common noun), a question left over when I translated Hagstaldesham as either 'Hagstald's estate' or 'the bagstald's estate'. Hagstald is found as a personal name in runic inscriptions in Scandinavia,11 and is also attested in Old High German,12 but not so far independently in English. As a personal name, it is a by-name from the common noun bagstald, the original sense of which has always been taken to be 'possessor of a fenced enclosure'.13 It is recorded in all the Germanic languages (except Gothic) in various derived senses, such as 'bachelor, youth, servant, chieftain', and in medieval Latin in the Lombard Laws (in the form gastaldus, gastaldio, hystaldis) in the sense 'steward (of royal estates), governor (of a district)'.14

In Anglo-Saxon texts, bagstald and hystald are used both as nouns and adjectivally in the following senses:

1. In legal texts, to translate Latin aedilis 'unmarried', and in contrast to OE hamestead 'married man'.15

14Fourteen examples of Hagstald are cited in Ernst Förstemann, Altdötsches Namenbuch, I: Personennamen (Bonn, 1900), col. 717. The term also occurs in four OGerman place-names, Hagstalshayn 11th cent. (? = Alberchshayn near Blaufelden; Förstemann, Altdötsches Namenbuch, II: Ortsnamen, [I]. col. 1154), Hagstalstid 10th cent. (Hagsted near Vechta, ibid.), Hagstalstorf 12th cent. (Harsdorf near Freyung, ibid., [III], col. 1541) and Agstaldslburg 1046 (? = Torgersborg near Leer, M. Gyseling, Toponymy Woordeboek van België, Nederland, Luxemburg, Nord-Frankrijk en West-Duitsland (Tongern, 1960-61), p. 462), where it can hardly be a personal name since this is a genitive plural compound.

15So, too, the German name, according to H. Kaufmann, Altdötsche Personennamen: Ergänzungsband (Munich and Hildesheim, 1968), p. 162, is a 'Beiname eines Erwachsenen, nicht aber also Rurname, den man einem Kinde beilegte'. He proceeds to cite Kluge's traditional explanation of it as an old legal term for the Hagbesiter in contrast to the Beiter des Hofs which the eldest son inherited; see further below. Cf. also Krause-Jankuhn, Runeninschriften, p. 124, and John Inlay, 'The Scandinavian Runic Inscriptions of the Older Fujark and Old English Personal Names', in Old English Runes and their Continental Background, edited by A. Bannenberger (Heidelberg, 1991), p. 326.

10Albert S. Cook, A Glossary of the Old Northumbrian Gospels (Halle, 1894), gives fourteen references to behstald 'virgo' (m. and f) as well as one each to behstaldhið and behstalduna 'virgins'. The spelling is interesting, since comparison with other forms in the gloss, beb itself ('altus, excelsus, summus'), behsacerd ('summus sacerdos'), behed ('thronus, tribunal'), etc., suggests that the glossator believed that the first element of the compound behstald was OE bieð, Anglian beb 'high', rather than bæg 'enclosure'. Franz Wenisch, Spezifisch angels. Wortgut in den nordnordischen Interlinear glossierungen des Lateinevangeliuims (Heidelberg, 1979), p. 169, is probably wrong in following Hildegard Raub's claim that bægestald is a specifically Anglian word (Der Wortschatz der angels. Uebersetzung des Matthaus-Evangeliuim untersucht auf seine dialektische und zeitliche Gebundenheit, Diss. Berlin, 1936) in view of the occurrence of bægestald in the Somerset and Gloucestershire place-names cited below.

2. In poetry, to mean 'youth, warrior'.

3. In biblical paraphrase, to mean 'young man' and also 'virgin' of either sex.

4. In the sense 'novice, tiro' translating Latin tiro contrasted with miles 'knight', OE cnihh contrasted with hægsteald cel geung ceapta.

In addition are found the nouns hægsteald-hàd and -nis 'virginity, bachelorhood', hægstealdman used in both senses 1 and 2 above, and hægstealdlike 'virginal' used of the Virgin Mary.

Hægstald, or rather hægsteald, occurs in two other English place-

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16Exodus line 327, hægsteald modigc 'young warriors (were) valiant', a phrase parallel to wighend unforhte line 328, 'warriors (were) fearless'; Finnesburg Fragment line 40, of Hael's retainers defending the hall doorway against attack; Genesis line 1862; Beowulf line 1889, of Beowulf's retinue described as a company of fela-modigina hægstealdas, where the usage is ambiguous as between adjectival 'of the very brave ones, of the young' and nominal 'of very brave young warriors'; Descent into Hell line 21, of Christ as a young warrior arising from the dead; Fortunes of Men line 92, of a young warrior who trains a hawk; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle versions C and D under year 1065, of the retainers of Edward the Conqueror. This sense also occurs in the strange gloss u/source geongum hægsteald, rince, hyse, for Latin et æfesto hircitallo, in which hægsteald is further explained by the OE words rince and hyse, both poetical terms for a man, especially a young warrior, and corresponds to Latin ephesus 'youth' and to hircitallo 'tragelaph', a fabulous animal, half goat and half stag (Old English Glosses, Chiefly Unpublished, edited by A. S. Napier, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Medieval and Modern Series, 11 (Oxford, 1900), no. 3476).


19Durham Ritual 66.1. The actual form used is the Northumbrian dialect form hebostýl.
connection with early communal settlement patterns. Etymologically, it can be traced back to an Indo-European form *koi-i-a (beside *koi-to- from which Welsh coed 'wood' ultimately descends) from the root *koi + suffix -ia. IE *koi-, with its ablaut variant *kei- and different suffixal elements, is widely held to be the source of a large family of words all connected with the idea of community, e.g. Latin civis 'a citizen' (< *kei-ia-s) and OE hriwan 'a household, a family' (< *kei-wa-s), and ham (< *koi-mo). According to Trier, the same root *kei- lies behind words for things made of interlace, such as fences and hurdles. He argued that the idea of the community was intimately bound up with that which marked the boundary or edge of the communal, and pointed to a semantic development 'fence' > 'community, group' > 'surrounding ring of common land, boundary'. It is to this concept that he related the word haga 'enclosure', not in the sense 'plot of ground with a surrounding fence', but rather 'the ring of houses which form the community'. In this seductive but highly speculative interpretation, a hagastalti is not one who occupies a plot, but a warrior who serves the whole community and is offered hospitality and entertainment by turns at each of the participating houses of the ring which forms the community. Such samurai warriors, it is argued, were the direct descendants of the Chatti professional warriors of the first century A.D., who despaired the actual possession of home or land:

None of them has a home, land, or any occupation. To whatever host they choose to go, they get their keep from him, squandering other men's

"key"—a Problem in Etymological Research", in Studia Linguistica Diachronica et Synchronica, edited by U. Peters and G. Stichel (Berlin, New York and Amsterdam, 1985), pp. 519–25, where the haim, heius family is convincingly related to IE *heu- 'here'. The issue, however, is actually irrelevant to Trier's argument, since he believed that the sense 'community' might have been primary and independent of the presence of physical fences, hurdles or interlace work ('Heide', p. 95). And, as we have seen, the Hag family belongs rather to the IE root *hagh-; see above, n. 7, and below, n. 27.

What lies at the root of Trier's argument is not so much phonological correspondence as his well-known thesis that the primary sense of words depends not on disinterested observation of the objects of this world, but on man's active involvement with them economically, as user, consumer, explorer, etc. His attempt to see the concrete sense 'fence' at the base of a whole group of words whose (secondary) sense is related to the communal exemplifies the first of his three rules of Wortforschung: 'Treten in einem Wort, sei es gleichzeitig, sei es im geschichtlichen Nacheinander, praktisch-technische und kontemplativ-distanzierende Bedeutungen auf, so gilt die Arbeitshypothese: die praktisch-technischen Bedeutungen sind die ursprünglichen' ('Meine drei Ansätze zur Wortforschung', in Gedenkschriff für Josef Trier, edited by H. Beckers and H. Schwarz (Cologne, 1975), p. 2).
property since they think it beneath them to have any of their own.37

The semantic development ‘servant, young warrior’ > ‘noble retainer’ is due to changing social circumstances, as the institution developed from service of the community to service of an overlord.

Attractive and persuasive though they are, Trier’s arguments have not commanded universal assent.38 In a sense, however, this does not matter. Whether the basic sense was ‘owner of a plot’ or ‘protector of a community’, the kind of person concerned is, by definition, one without a family home, an exile, in fact, and early Germanic literature, from Beowulf onwards, is full of examples of young warriors who seek fame and fortune in exile. ‘Young warrior’ is, in fact, the only secular sense which is demonstrably relevant in Anglo-Saxon England, and if, by definition a *hagustald* did not possess an estate, it is hard to see how the place-name *Hagustaldesham* could have arisen with any other non-religious sense. *Hagustald* was probably some sort of honorific title like OE *clid* ‘young nobleman’, if not actually a personal name, for which, as we have seen, there is no evidence in Anglo-Saxon England.39

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37 Nulli domus aut ager aut aliqua cura: prout ad quomque venere, aluntur, prodigii alieni, contempores sui’, Tacitus, *Germania*, 31.5; English version from *The Agricola and the Germania*, translated by H. Mattingly, revised version (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 128. Tacitus’s lapidary style is, as so often, problematic. The last phrase should probably be translated, not ‘scorning to have any property of their own’, but ‘scorning the property they had before taking to this mode of life’. Tacitus writes as a Roman and a rhetorician: his phraseology imitates a passage in Sallust, and is not in any case to be taken as objective anthropological comment.


39 Cf. above, n. 12.

III. If, then, the element *hagustald* in the name Hexham is, if not an actual personal name, some sort of by-name or title, is it possible to identify the person to whom it may have applied? Hexham was an estate given in 674 to St Wilfrid by queen Æthelthryth of Northumbria.30 In later times, estates were often known by territorial names, which could change with change of ownership. If an estate was given to religious house, it was often known by the name of its donor; thus Nelson near Hartlepool in Durham, *Nelestane* c. 1196, is the estate given to Finchale Abbey by Niel, the steward of Robert De Bruis II in whose fee it lay.31 Now Æthelthryth was honoured liturgically as a virgin, even though she was twice married, first to Tondberht, ealdorman of the South Gywras, secondly to king Ecgfrith of Northumbria, a marriage which was definitely not consummated.32 She is depicted in a tenth-century manuscript with the inscription *Imago sanctae Æthelthrythae Abbatisae ac Perpetuae Virginitatis* ‘the picture of St Æthelthryth, abbess and perpetual virgin’.33 Since one of the senses of *hagustald* is ‘virgin’, the question arises whether the reference in the name Hexham is to Æthelthryth herself. Unfortunately, the use of the masculine genitive singular ending -es casts some doubt upon this. When used with a feminine reference, the noun would probably have had the feminine genitive ending -e. Even in the Old

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30 The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephenus, edited and translated with notes by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), Chapter 22 (p. 45). *Æthelthryth* is the proper Anglo-Saxon form of the queen’s name, but she is variously found in literature as *Æþildibrôt*, *Æcelþryth*, *Æofþryth*, *Æelþreda* and *Audrey*. In giving Wilfrid an estate to endow a monastery, Æthelthryth was doing no more (or less) than her mother-in-law Eanflaed did when she persuaded her husband Oswiu to give a site to found a monastery at Gilling; see Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, edited by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), III, 14 (hereafter HE).


32 Bede, HE, IV, 19 (p. 391). Wilfrid himself confirmed the truth of this to Bede in person.

Northumbrian dialect of Old English, in which the -es genitive ending was widely extended into the declension of ő-stem feminine nouns, genitive singular behstalde is still found in Rushworth. Furthermore, we do have a valuable piece of evidence about how the name Hexham was understood in early times. The Welsh king, Cadwallon of Gwynedd, who, in 632, had overthrown king Edwin of Northumbria and his son Osfrith, was himself overthrown and killed near Hexham in late 633 by St Oswald. This battle, called in English Hefenfeld, is referred to in the early-ninth-century Historia Brittonum (\textit{Nennius}) as Cattscaul or Cantscaul. The latter form, which is probably the correct one (since Catt- can be explained as due to omission of the abbreviation mark for \(n\)), can be interpreted as a compound of Old Welsh \textit{can} \textit{t} \textit{wall}, \textit{enclosure}, and \textit{scald} \textit{young warrior}, cognate with Irish \textit{scoll} \textit{champion, hero}. It is thus, apparently, a literal translation of \textit{Hagustaldesham}, especially if the writer mistook the ending \textit{ham} for OE \textit{hamm} \textit{an enclosure}, instead of the correct \textit{ham} \textit{village, estate}.

Hexham was clearly a royal estate, and Tom Corfe's suggestion that the \textit{hagustald} in question was Æthelthryth's father-in-law, Oswiu, younger brother of king Oswald, is unobjectionable, though no more than a guess. Could it, however, refer to Wilfrid himself? As James Campbell has written, what shines through Wilfrid's career are the values of the Northumbrian nobility. He was himself a nobleman. Royal \textit{gesiths} were entertained in his father's home. He early obtained arms, horses and equipment for himself, and was recommended to Oswiu's queen, Eanfled, while still a boy. His early career is precisely that of the kind of exile implied by the term \textit{hagustald}, the distinguishing factor in Wilfrid's case being that his exile took on a religious motivation, with Rome as its goal.

IV. A further point arises, however, which takes the argument to another issue. \textit{Hagustaldesham} is not the only or the earliest name for Hexham, and it is time to review the other evidence. It falls into three types:

(A) The earliest forms are those in Bede's Ecclesiastical History completed in 731, the earliest MSS of which (The Moore MS and the Leningrad MS) belong to c. 737. In this work, Bede consistently refers to 'the church at Hexham', \textit{Hagustaldes ecclesia}, in which \textit{Hagustaldes} is a Latin adjectival form 'Hagustaldian', related to the place-name in exactly the same way as his \textit{Lindisfarne} \textit{ecclesia} 'the Lindisfarne church' is related to the place-name Lindisfarne, 'the island of the Lindsey travellers', OE \textit{Lindisfara} \textit{e}\textit{g}.

(B) The oldest MS of the early eighth-century anonymous Life of St Cuthbert, written about A.D. 900, gives the form \textit{Hagustaldese}, with variants from later MSS, \textit{Hagustaldese} late 10th cent., \textit{Hagustaldese} 12th cent., and \textit{Hagustaldense} (which seems to have been influenced by the Latin adjective \textit{Hagustaldensis}) in four MSS dated between c. 1200 and the fourteenth century. Comparable with this are the spellings in the Laud MS (MS E) of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, \textit{Hagustaldes\textit{d}}, estates and money if he could persuade Æthelthryth to consummate their marriage (HE, IV, 19, p. 393).


Life of Bishop Wilfrid, p. 7 (chapter 2).

ibid.

ibid., p. 9 (chapter 3).
Hagustalde, under the year 766, and the abbreviated forms Hagst ed under the year 780 and Hagst’d ed under the year 789, with the corresponding form Hagst ét in British Library MS Cotton Domitian A.VIII of c. 1100 (MS F). The earlier MS of Eddius’s Life of Bishop Wilfrid, written about A.D. 720, MS C of the eleventh century, gives Hagustaldeæ twice, and, with the preposition in prefixed, Inagustaldeæ twice, and Inagustaldeæ once. The later MS F of c. 1100 is less consistent, with Hagustaldeæ, Agustaldeæ, Agustaldeæ, Inagustaldeæ, Inagustaldeæ, Inagustaldeæ and Inagustaldeæ once each.

(C) Two examples of the spelling Hagustales ea are found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in MS E of c. 1121 under year 681, and in MS F of c. 1100 under year 685.

There can be no doubt that the (B) type spellings all represent OE *Hagustaldes-æg(e) ‘Hagstald’s island’ or ‘the hagstald’s island’, while the (C) form appears to represent OE *Hagustald-es ‘Hagstald’s river’ or ‘the hagstald’s river’. Early spellings of OE ēg (pronounced [ei] to rhyme with day) are found in the following sources:

1. Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert, 699 × 705: Cocewedesæ, Coquet Island, Northumberland; Lindisfarne, Lindisfarne;
2. Eddi’s Life of Bishop Wilfrid, c. 710 × 720: Lindisfarne insula; in Sealsæ, in Selasæ, Selsey, Sussex;
3. Bede’s Prose Life of St Cuthbert, c. 721: Insula Lindisfarner;

Thus we have ae once, ae thrice, e once, ea once, ei twice, en five times, i once, and iae twice. They may be explained as follows. OE ēg derives from PrGmc *a₂gwō, a feminine jō- formation on the root *abwō ‘river’.44 In the Anglo-Saxon dialect of Old English, this would be expected to give e in the nominative case,45 but ēg in the genitive and dative cases,46 whence a new analogical nominative singular ēg could develop.47

The six early spellings cited above, therefore, those in ae and e may be taken as representing OE ēg,48 and those in ei as representing ēg.49 Bede’s unusual ei is either an archaic form from *awjō without analogical loss of -u,50 or a re-inflexion with the OE feminine nominative singular ending -u, which was regular with short-stemmed nouns like faru, lufta, racu, etc., but normally absent in long-stemmed

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43See Barrie Cox, ‘The Place-Names of the Earliest English Records’, Journal of the English Place-Name Society, 8 (1975-76), 16-41, and Ivar Dahl, Substantival Inflection in Early Old English (Lund, 1938), pp. 99-100, for a fuller and more correct list. Northern sources only are cited, since the charter evidence for names in Essex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex is not relevant here.

44By y-mutation of *awjō < *awjō < *awjō with consonant gemination before j and loss of the jelement, as, for example, in OE jōl ‘wave’ = OSax adu. The -u element was lost by analogy with the ð-declension in which it could not stand in OE after a long syllable: A. Campbell, Old English Grammar (Oxford, 1959), § 120 (2); Brunner, Altenglische Grammatik, § 173, Anm. 2, and § 257, Anm. 1; H. Krahe, Germanische Sprachwissenschaft, II: Formenlehre, Sammlung Göschen, 780 (Berlin, 1969), p. 25.

45Where the j-element is preserved as a syllable marker.

46Brunner, Altenglische Grammatik, § 176.4.

47ae and e may be taken as equivalents; cf. Colgrave’s comment on ‘slight orthographical differences which, so far as one could tell, were due largely to the idiosyncrasies of the scribes. Thus -ae is written sometimes -ae, sometimes -e, and sometimes -e’ (Life of Bishop Wilfrid, p. xv).

48OE ēg is regularly written i when it stands for the palatal spirant [j].

49So Cox, ‘Place-Names of the Earliest English Records’, pp. 16, following Dahl, Substantival Inflection, p. 101, though his view that ēg is a new nominative formed from the original abl. case, PGmc *swei seems mistaken, since this would surely have given OE *ese exactly as esse, eowu ‘female sheep’ from *ewe; Campbell, Old English Grammar, § 593 (2). There is no trace in English of any form derived from an *swei parallel to Gothic nawi < *magi: E. Kieckers, Handbuch der vergleichenden gotischen Grammatik, 2nd edition (Munich, 1960), p. 113; Lehmann, Gothic Dictionary, M42.
nouns like lær, bót, etc.\textsuperscript{31}

Of the remaining spellings, Lindisfarneae and Lastingae are ambiguous as between Lindisfarne- 'Lindisfarne island', Lastingæ 'Landing island', and Lindisfarneae 'island of the travellers to Lindsey', Lastingæ 'island of the Lastings'; Sooleiae and Selasieae seem to reflect the West Saxon form ḳg) for Anglian ḳg),\textsuperscript{32} and Lindisfarnea seems to show confusion with OE ēa 'a river'.\textsuperscript{33}

To return to Hexham, all the early spellings can be explained as reflecting either OE ē (those in -ae, -æ, -e, -ē and -ee, which seem to be ways of denoting a long ē), or OE ēg (those in -ig), with the remainder reflecting exactly the same variants -iæ and -æ that have been encountered above. It seems to be clear that the only element to be considered is OE ē(ḡ), and that OE ēa 'stream, river' can be left out of account.\textsuperscript{34}

Here the example of Lastingham (York) is instructive. Like Hexham, it, too, has forms in both -bām and -ēg: Lastingae, Lastingæ, Lastingae 731, Lastings ea 10th cent., Lastingæus, Lastingæus, Lastingey 12th cent., and Lasting(e)ham 1086, Lastingham yng: 1086 × 1089 - 1665, Lastingham yng: from 1393.\textsuperscript{35} Like Hexham, it, too, was an early monastic site.\textsuperscript{36}

Now the use of OE ēg in English place-names has been investigated by Dr Margaret Gelling, although she does not discuss either Hexham or Lastingham.\textsuperscript{57} She identifies five meanings:

1. 'dry ground surrounded by marsh' (when it occurs in ancient settlement-names);
2. 'island';
3. 'well-watered land';
4. 'hill jutting into flat land';
5. 'patch of good land in moors'.

Since neither Hexham nor Lastingham—certainly not Lastingham, to judge from Bede's comment quoted in note 56—are names of ancient settlements, sense 1 may be rejected. Sense 2, 'island', might be true for Hexham if the reference were to an island in the course of the River Tyne, such as Broomhaugh Island (grid reference NZ 9464), but hardly for Lastingham. The most likely sense for both is 5, 'patch of good land in moors'. Lastingham (SE 7290) is situated beside a small watercourse on the edge of Spaunton Moor, while Hexham lies beside a small stream on the edge of high ground which reaches to over 800 feet, overlooking the Tyne Valley and used as rough summer pasture in later times.\textsuperscript{38}

Hexham and Lastingham share another feature. The earliest forms for both names are, as we have seen, compounds in ēg in the sense 'patch of good ground in moor-land'. These names seem to reflect the conditions of the original settlements in the seventh century. Subsequently, reflecting their development as religious centres, both were reformulated as names in bām, one of whose meanings seems to have been 'monastery', a specialised sense evolved from the more general sense 'dwellings-place, house, household'. This sense had already developed by the time of the Old English translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History. There, for instance, the translator renders Bede's abbas in monasterio quod vocatur Partenæa 'abbot of Partney monastery' as abbad of Partenæa bām ham.

The difference, onomatologically, between Partney and Hexham and

\textsuperscript{31}So R. Givan, \textit{Angelsaksic Handboek} (Haarlem, 1931), §26 Aanm.

\textsuperscript{32}But the ending -ae remains problematic because, even if these forms are regarded as Latinizations of OE Sooleis(g), the inflexional ending required after the preposition in is -a, not -ae.

\textsuperscript{33}Ultimately from related Gmc *suōdō.

\textsuperscript{34}There is no semantic difficulty, of course, with OE ēa, which occurs very frequently in early place-names. Its sense must frequently have been 'stretch of river' within which an owner possessed the right of taking fish. Cf. V. E. Watts, 'Medieval Fisheries in the Wear, Tyne and Tweed: the Place-Name Evidence', \textit{Nomina}, 7 (1983), 35–45 (at pp. 35–37).

\textsuperscript{35}PNYorkNR, p. 60.

\textsuperscript{36}Founded by St Cedd c. 651 × 654 'amongst steep and remote hills which seemed rather to contain dens of robbers and the lairs of wild beasts than the habitations of men' (Bede, HE, III, 23).

\textsuperscript{37}Margaret Gelling, \textit{Place-Names in the Landscape} (London, 1984), pp. 34–42.

\textsuperscript{38}Cf. the shellfish-name High Shield (grid reference NY 9362).
Lastingham, all three of them seventh-century foundations, is that, while the Peartune hām continued to be called Partney,\(^9\) the Hagustalesgen hām and the Lastingæu hām became respectively Hagustalesham and Lastingeham, today’s Lastingham and Hexham.

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\(^9\)As, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, did Bardney, Chertsey and Selsey.