

Carolside in Berwickshire and *Carelholpit* in Lincolnshire

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The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the derivation of the place-name Carolside in the county of Berwickshire in southern Scotland, and to suggest that the first element may represent an animal name otherwise attested only in a field-name in Lincolnshire in the east midlands of England.¹ The significance of this is not only that it offers a satisfactory solution to a problematic place-name, but that it provides an addition to the known corpus of early English and Scots vocabulary.

Recorded spellings of Carolside, as assembled by Williamson in her doctoral dissertation of 1942, are as follows:

Carelside 1484
Carrellsyde 1535, 1582, *-sidis* 1567
Carrilsyd 1620
Carolsyde 1662²

These establish the second element as the Old or Middle English form of the word *s_de* '(hill-)side', a place-name generic found mostly in southern Scotland and northern England.³ The first element is more problematic, as the attested spellings do not correspond closely to any known word in either the Celtic or the Germanic languages represented in the toponymicon of this area of the border counties. Williamson tentatively suggested a derivation from a Gaelic personal name *Cairell*, or alternatively from the genitive plural form *karla* of Old Norse (ON) *karl* 'freeman'. There the matter has rested since 1942. Carolside is neither a major place-name nor one of the

¹ All references are to the county boundaries preceding the United Kingdom local government re-organization of the 1970s.

² M. G. Williamson, 'The Non-Celtic Place-Names of the Scottish Border Counties' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1942), p. 145.

³ Williamson (*ibid.*) raises the possibility of an alternative derivation from ON *str* 'shieling', but this is, as she points out, 'doubtful', and can probably be discounted.

earliest recorded from the area, so it has attracted little attention from scholars.⁴ Either of Williamson's proposals is perfectly reasonable when the place-name is viewed in isolation, and in the absence of comparative material the issue could not be resolved. My reason for wishing to re-open the question is that new evidence has now come to light in the form of a recently-published field-name from Lincolnshire in England. I shall argue that the same first element is represented in both toponyms, and that a comparison of the two place-name contexts may make it possible to identify the language and meaning of this element more securely.

A recent edition of the *Thurgarton Cartulary*,⁵ a collection of charters and administrative records from the Augustinian priory at Thurgarton in Nottinghamshire in England, has made available a number of previously-unpublished field-names and street-names which have already proved a rich source of new words and antedatings.⁶ Of particular interest in this connection are two mid-thirteenth-century grants of land at Kirkby Green in Lincolnshire containing the field-name *Carelholpit* or *Karelholpit*.⁷ Apart from the variation between <c> and <k> as the initial consonant, the spelling of the first element is identical to that of the 1484 form of Carolside, and I therefore suggest that we are looking at the same word.

If this suggestion is correct, the occurrence of the term in the English county of Lincolnshire excludes any possibility of a Gaelic derivation. The proposed personal name *Cairell* can thus be ruled out. Both place-names, however, occur within areas of Norse settlement, so Williamson's alternative etymology from ON *karla* 'of the freemen' remains formally possible. An Old English or Old Norse genitive plural *-a* inflection would normally be weakened to *-e* in Middle English spellings, and the transposition of <e> and <l> could be explained as the result of metathesis.

⁴ It is not included, for instance, in W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names. Their Study and Significance* (London, 1976), and there is no entry for Carolside in the Index of Places in J. Spittal and J. Field, *A Reader's Guide to the Place-Names of the United Kingdom* (Stamford, 1990).

⁵ *The Thurgarton Cartulary*, edited by T. Foulds (Stamford, 1994).

⁶ See for instance C. Hough, 'The field-name *Palmerwang*', *Notes and Queries*, ns 44 (1998), 31; *eadem*, 'ME **capelin(g)*', *Notes and Queries*, ns 44 (1997), 164; *eadem*, 'ME *hacche-man*', *Notes and Queries*, ns 43 (1996), 268; *eadem*, 'An ante-dating of ME *leir-pit* "clay pit"' (forthcoming).

⁷ Foulds, *The Thurgarton Cartulary*, pp. 488 and 489.

It would nonetheless be remarkable for such metathesis not only to appear in both extant spellings of the Lincolnshire field-name, but also to survive into the modern form of Carolside. ON *karl* 'freeman' is of frequent occurrence in both English and Scottish place-names, most commonly in the collocation *karla-t_n* 'farmstead of the free men' which survives as Carlton or Carleton.⁸ Although metathesis is occasionally evidenced in early spellings, as for instance in the 1279 spelling of Carleton in Cumberland as *Karelton*,⁹ and in the Domesday Book spelling of Carlton in Nottinghamshire as *Careltune*,¹⁰ I know of no instances where the metathesised form predominates, or where it has become so well established as to appear in the modern spelling or pronunciation of the place-name.

A derivation from ON *karl* is also unlikely on contextual grounds. Like the cognate Old English (OE) *ceorl*, the element occurs mostly in combination with habitative generics such as OE *t_n* 'farmstead' and OE *cot* 'cottage, shelter', and it would be difficult to make sense of a combination with OE *s_de* '(hill-)side' or with OE *hol* 'hole, hollow', neither of which is recorded elsewhere with this type of qualifier.¹¹ OE *s_de* characteristically occurs in combination with descriptive adjectives, animal names, and topographical terms; while as Williamson notes, OE *hol* 'as an ending, is usually coupled with the name of an animal'.¹² The same point is made by Kitson, whose study of Anglo-Saxon charter boundaries finds that 'a *hol* is oftenest named after an animal living in it'.¹³ Indeed, in addition to a more

⁸ It is often difficult to distinguish from the Old English equivalent *ceorla-t_n*, from which it appears to have been adapted.

⁹ A. M. Armstrong *et al.*, *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, 3 vols, English Place-Name Society, 20–22 (Cambridge, 1950–52), II, 377.

¹⁰ J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, English Place-Name Society, 17 (Cambridge, 1940), p. 72.

¹¹ A possible exception is Earlside in Roxburghshire, where the first element is OE *eorl* 'earl, nobleman'. As Williamson ('Non-Celtic Place-Names', p. 142) points out, however, the second element may be OE *ste* 'seat' rather than OE *s_de* '(hill-)side', a possibility strengthened by the occurrence of the same formation in the lost place-name *Earlside* in Northumberland, recorded in 1200 as *Yerlesset* (A. Mawer, *The Place-Names of Northumberland and Durham* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 69).

¹² Williamson, 'Non-Celtic Place-Names', p. 234.

¹³ P. Kitson, 'Quantifying qualifiers in Anglo-Saxon charter boundaries', *Folia*

general meaning 'hollow, valley, depression' which is also represented in place-names,¹⁴ *hol* appears to have been the standard term for an animal's lair in both Old and Middle English. Terms for 'a lair, den' listed in *A Thesaurus of Old English* include *brocchol* 'a badger sett', *foxhol* 'a fox's earth', *oterhola* 'an otter's hole', and *wulfhol* 'a wolf's den'.¹⁵ All of these have given rise to place-names, as for instance Brockholes in Berwickshire and Brocklehurst and Brocklerig in Dumfriesshire,¹⁶ Foxholes in the East Riding of Yorkshire and Foxhole Wood in Lincolnshire,¹⁷ the field-name Otter Holes in both Derbyshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire,¹⁸ and Winfold in Cambridgeshire and the lost field-name *Wlfola* in Sussex.¹⁹ Other place-names from *hol* include Beevor Hall (OE *beofor* 'beaver') and Calfholes (OE *calf* 'calf') in the West Riding of Yorkshire,²⁰ Catshole (OE *catt* 'wild cat') and Hartshole (OE *heorot* 'hart') in Devon,²¹ Raffles in Dumfriesshire (ON *refr* 'fox'),²² Taghole in Derbyshire (OE *tagga* 'young

Linguistica Historica, 14 (1993), 29–82 (p. 33). See also his Table 5, which demonstrates that the only other types of elements represented in significant numbers in combination with *hol* are personal names and adjectives.

¹⁴ A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 25–26 (Cambridge, 1956), I, 257, s.v. *hol*¹.

¹⁵ J. Roberts and C. Kay with L. Grundy, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, 2 vols (London, 1995), I, 81.

¹⁶ Williamson, 'Non-Celtic Place-Names', p. 234.

¹⁷ A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York*, English Place-Name Society, 14 (Cambridge, 1937), p. 115; K. Cameron, *The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, 5 vols so far published, English Place-Name Society, 58, 64/65, 66, 71, 73 (Cambridge and Nottingham, 1985–97), II, 165.

¹⁸ K. Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, 3 vols, English Place-Name Society, 27–29 (Cambridge, 1959), II, 203; A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 8 vols, English Place-Name Society, 30–37 (Cambridge, 1961–63), VII, 206.

¹⁹ P. H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*, English Place-Name Society, 19 (Cambridge, 1943), p. 186; A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 6–7 (Cambridge, 1929–30), II, 560.

²⁰ Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, I, 304; III, 180.

²¹ J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Devon*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 8–9 (Cambridge, 1931–32), II, 490; I, 221.

²² Williamson, 'Non-Celtic Place-Names', p. 234.

sheep'),²³ Todholes in Dumfriesshire and Tod Hills in Midlothian (Middle English (ME) *tod`fox'*).²⁴

Examples could be multiplied, but the above selection of place-names combining an animal name with OE *hol* may suffice to demonstrate the prevalence of this type of formation in both major toponyms and field-names. This does not, of course, amount to anything more than a working hypothesis that the first element of the Lincolnshire field-name *Carelholpit* may be an animal name. Other types of qualifiers also combine with *hol*—notably personal names and topographical terms—but the absence of a genitival inflection in the recorded spellings *Carelholpit* and *Karelholpit* makes these interpretations less likely, whereas the combination *carelhol* would fit neatly into the pattern of compound appellatives represented by OE *brocchol`badger sett'*, OE *foxhol`fox's earth'*, OE *oterhola`otter's hole'*, OE *wulfol`wolf's den'*, ME *todhole`fox's earth'* and so on.

An alternative possibility suggested to me by Mr Peter Kitson is that the field-name may represent a compound of **carel* with *holpit`deep pit'*, paralleled by *colheapytte`coal + deep pit'* in the bounds of a tenth-century Kentish charter.²⁵ Again, animal names are common in combination with OE *pytt*, referring either to `a den'²⁶ or to `a hole in the ground serving as a trap for animals'.²⁷ Place-name occurrences include Dog Pots in the West Riding of Yorkshire,²⁸ Houndapit in Cornwall,²⁹ Wolf's Pit in Derbyshire³⁰

²³ Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, II, 510.

²⁴ Williamson, 'Non-Celtic Place-Names', p. 234; N. Dixon, 'The Place-Names of Midlothian' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1947), p. 307.

²⁵ P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, 8 (London, 1968), no. 877. J. K. Wallenberg, *Kentish Place-Names* (Uppsala, 1931), p. 336, suggests a possible derivation from OE *col`coal' + h_ah`high, deep' + pytt`pit'*, but prefers OE *col + h_ap`heap' + pytt*.

²⁶ Roberts and Kay, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, I, 81.

²⁷ Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, II, 75–76, s.v. *pytt*. See also Roberts and Kay, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, I, 221, where *wulfpytt`a pit for trapping wolves'* appears under the heading `A snare, trap, noose'.

²⁸ Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, V, 98.

²⁹ Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, II, 75–76, s.v. *pytt*.

³⁰ Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, I, 26.

and Woolpit in Suffolk (OE *wulf* `wolf').³¹ It is therefore worth considering whether such an interpretation would also fit the toponymic context of Carolside in Berwickshire.

Again, the second element of the place-name, OE *s_de* `(hill-)side', occurs elsewhere in combination with words for wild animals and birds found in abundance on the hillside. Instances include Bemersyde in Berwickshire (OE **b_mere* `?bittern'),³² Hardenside in Dumfriesshire (OE *hara* `hare'),³³ Roeside in Derbyshire (OE *r_* `roe, roe-buck'),³⁴ Whelpside in Midlothian³⁵ and a lost *Whelpside* in West Lothian (OE *hwelp* `young animal'),³⁶ the field-name Connyside in Westmorland (ME *coni* `rabbit'),³⁷ and two lost Derbyshire field-names, *le Fouleside* 1415 (OE *fugol* `bird') and *Wormside* 13th c. (OE *wyrm* `reptile, snake').³⁸ Domestic creatures are represented in Lambside in Devon (OE *lamb* `lamb').³⁹ An interpretation of **carel* as an animal-name would thus also be suitable for Carolside.

It remains to attempt to establish an etymology for such a term. I have been unable to trace any cognates for **carel* in other Indo-European languages, and therefore suspect it to be a native coinage.⁴⁰ Neither Carolside nor *Carelholpit* is recorded before the thirteenth century, and since *hol*, *s_de* and *pytt* all continued in use as place-name-forming

³¹ W. W. Skeat, *The Place-Names of Suffolk* (Cambridge, 1913), p. 125.

³² This interpretation is proposed in C. Hough, `The trumpeters of Bemersyde: a Scottish placename reconsidered', *Names*, 47 (1999), 257–68.

³³ Williamson, `Non-Celtic Place-Names', p. 147.

³⁴ Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, I, 65.

³⁵ Dixon, `The Place-Names of Midlothian', p. 179.

³⁶ A. MacDonald, *The Place-Names of West Lothian* (Edinburgh, 1941), p. 47.

³⁷ A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Westmorland*, 2 vols, English Place-Name Society, 42–43 (Cambridge, 1967), II, 284.

³⁸ Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, III, 749.

³⁹ Gover *et al.*, *The Place-Names of Devon*, I, 276–77. Lambside is, however, unusually far south for an occurrence of OE *s_de* `hill-side', and since it is also anomalous in containing the only known combination with a word for a domestic, as opposed to a wild, animal, lingering doubts remain as to whether the generic may here have its alternative sense `land beside a river or wood'.

⁴⁰ The form *Carelgate* `road to Carlisle' recorded by Armstrong *et al.* (*The Place-Names of Cumberland*, III, xvi) can scarcely be relevant, as *Carel-* here derives from Welsh *caer* `fortified place' prefixed to *Luguvalio*, the Romano-British name for Carlisle.

elements throughout the early and late medieval periods, it is difficult to establish dating parameters. It is worth noting, however, that the structure of **carel* would appear to be consistent with an interpretation as an animal name. The suffix *-el* is used to form diminutives and agent nouns in both Old and Middle English, and occurs in the names of wild creatures such as OE *pyttel* 'hawk' and OE *wifel* 'weavil, beetle', both of which are recorded in place-names.⁴¹ The *Middle English Dictionary* also notes a use of the suffix 'in nouns denoting agents, instruments, or objects, formed to go with verbs', as exemplified for instance by ME *bidel* 'herald' from *b_den* 'to announce, command', and ME *forer_del* 'precursor' from *r_denf_re* 'to ride ahead'.⁴² In that case, it might be possible to associate **carel* with the verb *carien* in one of the recorded senses 'to transport by horse' or 'to go, proceed, travel'.⁴³ Unfortunately, neither gives a wholly satisfactory meaning. In the first instance, a derivative noun could be taken to refer to a type of pack-horse, but the combination with *hol* strongly suggests a wild, rather than a domestic, animal. In the second, it might just conceivably refer to an animal noted for speed, but this would represent a drastic and possibly unwarranted extension of meaning. The question must for the time being remain open.

To conclude, I believe the existence of an Old or Middle English word **carel* to be established beyond reasonable doubt by the two place-names discussed in this paper; and as a working hypothesis based on the toponymic contexts, I suggest that it may represent the name of an animal. Rather than containing either a Gaelic personal name or ON *karl* 'freeman', therefore, Carolside in Berwickshire would form one of the large group of toponyms named from a type of animal indigenous to the area—an animal also found at *Carelholpit* in Lincolnshire.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, II, 76, s.v. *pyttel*, and II, 264, s.v. *wifel*. The most recent discussion of *wifel* is by Kitson, 'Quantifying qualifiers in Anglo-Saxon charter boundaries' (pp. 75–77).

⁴² H. Kurath and S. M. Kuhn, *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, 1952–), s.v. *-el* (1).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, s.v. *car_en*. The verb also has a number of other recorded senses, including 'to raise to the mouth', 'to propel through the air', 'to hold up', 'to wear' and 'to transfer', none of which seems likely to be relevant.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Professor W. F. H. Nicolaisen for his kindly and constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper.