

Bynames of Location with the Suffix *-by* Revisited

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Between 1234 and 1251, Peter Westiby attested a multitude of charters which made benefactions to Guisborough Priory, seventy-one of which related to lands in Guisborough, thirty-two others to benefactions to the almoner and the fabric, thirteen to lands in Lowcross, fourteen to lands in Barnoldby, twenty-one to lands in Ormesby and a few others to Normanby, Cotum and Glasedale.¹ Certainly, Peter was thus a freeman and his status is confirmed by his other activities, amongst which he made a benefaction of eight acres to the Priory, described as Peter Westiby of Guisborough.² As one of the Priory's free tenants, he quitclaimed rights to the house.³ It is consequently clear that he was a free tenant of the Priory in Guisborough. He was, moreover, the son of Nicholas Westiby, for, by the style of Peter *filius Nicholai Westiby*, he had transferred two selions to the Priory for the fabric fund.⁴ It is thus also possible that he was the Peter *filius Nicholai* who attested other charters in favour of the Priory.⁵ Assiduously, he acquired land in Barnoldby which he conveyed to the same house.⁶ In Guisborough too, Christine de Westiby and Emma de Westiby, both widows, made benefactions of land to the Priory.⁷ In short, these details provide some biographical perspective on a bearer of the

¹ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, edited by W. Brown, 2 vols, Surtees Society, 86 and 89 (Durham, 1889–92), I, 24–85, 145–61, 172–90, 198–215 and 238–62, and II, 5, 117 and 197; three charters which involved him were dated Purification 1234/35, Easter 1251 and 1251: I, 143–44 and 147 (nos ccxli, ccxliii and cclv).

² *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, I, 56 (cxxvii).

³ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, I, 56–57 and 74 (nos cxxix, cxxx and clxxx).

⁴ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, I, 157 (ccxciii).

⁵ For example, *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, I, 160, 176 and 178.

⁶ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, I, 203 and 209 (nos ccccxvii and ccccxix–ccccxxii).

⁷ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, I, 57 (nos cxxxi–cxxxii).

topographical byname with the suffix *-by* which pertained to and defined a particular region. It is, however, possible to extend beyond the biography to elucidate other aspects of this regional lexis.

Brought to our attention by Kenneth Cameron, this form of compounded byname is composed of a point of the compass and the suffix *-by*, and he described their occurrence in Lincolnshire in the lay subsidies of 1327 and 1332.⁸ Perhaps its meaning was equivalent to a more convoluted description of a toft and croft in Hooton Colswain: *de uno tofto cum crofto que iacent in exteriori extremitate eiusdem ville versus meridiem ex occidentali parte vie.*⁹ Behind the formation lay the description of the habitation of the bearer: as Cameron suggested, ‘John who lived in the north of the village’, village being interpreted flexibly. The corpus thus comprised *Northiby*, *Southiby*, *Westiby* and *Estiby*, but additionally *Oustiby* (east). With the evidence at his disposal, Cameron indicated a concentration of such name formations in the north of Lindsey and sporadically in parts of the East and West Riding. It is this distribution which can be further refined and interpreted.

Whilst the formation occurred sporadically in the southern Parts of Lincolnshire, it is indeed accurate to describe its main location in north Lincolnshire, and the East and West Ridings.¹⁰ More clearly can this distribution be discerned in Fig. 1, compiled from cartularies and lay subsidies.¹¹

⁸ K. Cameron, ‘Bynames of location in Lincolnshire subsidy rolls’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 32 (1988), 156–64.

⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax MS 7, f. xxvi verso (cartulary of Kirkham Priory).

¹⁰ For scattered locations in Lincolnshire: London, British Library, Add MS 40,008, ff. 290r and 291r (Liolf de Suthiby, tenant at Scottlethorpe, and Guy de Suthiby, tenant of meadow in Edenham).

¹¹ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne* as above; Bridlington Priory cartulary (London, British Library, Add MS 40,008, e.g. f. 195r: Henry Northyby at Cowton; f. 22v Gilbert Oustyby, tenant of a toft, at Hilderthorpe); also ff. 290r and 291r for *-by* names at Scottlethorpe and Edenham, Lincs; PRO E179/135/14–16 (Lincolnshire lay subsidy, 1332); *Yorkshire Deeds*, edited by W. Brown, C. T. Clay, M. J. Hebditch and M. J. Stanley Price, 10 vols, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 39, 50, 63, 65, 69, 76, 83, 102, 111 and 120 (Wakefield, 1909–55), III, 69 (203) and 84 (262), IV, 134 (453–56), VI, 127 (419) and VII,

Its configuration in the East Riding can be well illustrated by a small assemblage of this form of *cognomen* in North Cave. Polyfocal settlement at North Cave included the minor places of North Cliffe and South Cliffe. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries charters relating to North Cliffe were attested by Robert Westyby, Henry Westibi, and Roger Westibi, who were probably related since in 1330 Robert Westiby de Northcliff conveyed to his daughter Constance a toft and croft in North Cliffe which he had by inheritance from his brother Henry. Similarly, charters for South Cliffe were witnessed by Roger Suthyby and William Suthyby about the same time.¹² Otherwise, the byname remained more scattered, with single representatives in vills, as Robert Suthiby who held land in North Dalton, or William Westiby who was a tenant in Raventhorpe.¹³ In the early fifteenth century, the form occurred in Seaton in the liberty of Beverley when Margaret wife of Thomas Northiby of Gembling was involved in a land transaction there.¹⁴

Nor were bearers of this form of topographical byname necessarily of the lowest status, for Walter Uppiby held four bovates freely in Burythorpe which owed knight service. The type of service is not of extreme importance, but it is evident that Walter belonged to the higher echelon of free tenants with substantial holdings. Moreover, a further form of these bynames is added to the corpus: *Uppiby*.¹⁵ The Westibi and Suthybi nexus in North Cave were also of free status, if with less land. On the other hand, Geoffrey Suthibi belonged to the group of unfree tenants

84–93 (240–69); *The Percy Cartulary*, edited by M. T. Martin, Surtees Society, 117 (Durham, 1921), pp. 156–57 (cccclxxxii–cccclxxxv) and 178 (dxxxviii); *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy ... 30 Edward I (1301)*, edited by W. Brown, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 21 (Wakefield, 1897), pp. 3, 47, 52, 57–58, 61–62, 70, 72, 74, 79 and 112–14; *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy ... 25 Edward I (1297)*, edited by W. Brown, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, RS, 21 (Wakefield, 1894), pp. 23, 120–22, 125–26, 130, 132–33, 135, 137, 139–42, 147, 149 and 153–54.

¹² *Yorkshire Deeds*, VI, 84–93 (nos 240–69): the later charters are dated 1313–33.

¹³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax MS 9, ff. 92r and 98r–v (Warter Priory cartulary).

¹⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Yorkshire ch. 114.

¹⁵ *The Survey of the County of Yorkshire Taken by John de Kirkby, Commonly Called Kirkby's Inquest*, edited by R. H. Skaife, Surtees Society, 49 (Durham, 1867), p. 270.

(*nativi*) in Sewerby.¹⁶

Illustrative of the range of economic status of the bearers of this form of byname is Table 1, compiled from the lay subsidies, levied on personal estate (chattels), of 1297 and 1301.

Despite the relative proliferation of this form of byname through the region before 1350 and, indeed, in some vills where there were several bearers, such as North Cave, by the late fourteenth century its distribution had declined and it became concentrated very much in the East Riding. In the Poll Taxes of the late fourteenth century (1377–81), the form is found neither in the West Riding of Yorkshire nor in Lincolnshire.¹⁷ In the Poll Tax of 1381 for the East Riding, the form persisted at Beverley (one taxpayer), Weighton (one), Bishop Burton (five), North Cave (one), Newbold (one), Eastburn (three), Holme on the Wolds (two) and South Dalton (one).¹⁸ By the late fourteenth century, the distribution had become much more concentrated and confined to the East Riding.

Without doubt, Cameron was absolutely right in his explanation of the formation of this form of byname and its etymology. We can augment the forms that he found with Uppiby and also Dunyby.¹⁹ By adding to the number of instances and distribution, it is possible, however, to expand on his interpretation of the significance of the names. What the names illustrate is that the ‘North’ was not a homogeneous nor clearly defined entity, but an amorphous zone which both consisted of sub-regions with specific dialectal markers and spilled out into other areas not usually considered part of a north. Thus a sub-region of the north was constituted by this dialectal form in a ‘Humberside’ region which consisted of the East

¹⁶ *Yorkshire Deeds*, VI, 127 (419).

¹⁷ *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. Part 2: Lincolnshire–Westmorland*, edited by C. C. Fenwick, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, n.s. 29 (Oxford, 2001), pp. 1–60 and ‘Rolls of the collectors in the West Riding of the Lay Subsidy (Poll Tax) 2 Richard II’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 5–7 (1879–84), 5, 1–51, 241–66 and 417–32; 6, 1–44, 129–71 and 287–342; 7, 6–31 and 145–86.

¹⁸ E. Lloyd, ‘Poll Tax returns for the East Riding 4 Ric. II’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 20 (1909), 318–52.

¹⁹ *Yorkshire Charters*, VII, 87 (250) for Dunyby in North Cave; Uppiby and variants occurred at Frothingham, Wold Newton, Theakston, Old Malton and Seamer.

Riding and north Lincolnshire (some of the Part of Lindsey), a sub-region which extended out of the north as usually defined. To some extent, this geographical dialectal region confirms the relationship between the southern parts of Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire (Lindsey) suggested from other evidence by Kristensson.²⁰ The distribution of this form of topographical byname thus alerts us to the mosaic of the north and to the porosity of its boundaries.

Postscript

Carole Hough has subsequently brought to my attention D. N. Parsons, 'How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England? Again', in *Vikings and the Danelaw. Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21–30 August 1997*, edited by J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. N. Parsons (Oxford, 2001), 299–312, esp. 305–06, which examines another significance of this form of topographical byname. I hope in the future to make a regional comparison of expressions of this form of topographical byname, such as *bysouthen*, *byestoun* etc.

²⁰ G. Kristensson, *Studies on the Early Fourteenth Century Population of Lindsey* (Lund, 1976–77).

Figure 1