

SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENT IN CUMBRIA AND DUMFRIESSHIRE: THE PLACE-NAME EVIDENCE

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The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provides us with a mere outline of the events which took place during the period of the Viking raids and the Scandinavian settlements in England. The only mention of north-west England, and that an indirect one, occurs in the entry for 875. This tells that while wintering on the river Tyne, the Danish leader Halfdan and his men 'made frequent raids against the Picts and against the Strathclyde Britons.' These raids must have taken them across the Carlisle plain and Dumfriesshire but the Chronicle does not suggest that any Danes settled here at this time or later. We are, in fact, wholly dependent upon non-literary sources such as archaeology and place-names for information about Scandinavian settlement in the north-west. It is therefore my aim to give a brief survey of the place-name evidence, drawing attention to some necessary modifications to hitherto accepted interpretations and to some problems which as yet remain unsolved.

PLACE-NAMES AS DETERMINANTS OF NATIONALITY

The distribution map of parish-names of Scandinavian origin reveals that Viking settlement in Cumbria was particularly dense in the valleys of the Kent and the Eden and along the coastal plain. It has been generally assumed that most of the settlers were Norwegians, some of whom had sailed directly to Cumbria from Norway around the west coast of Scotland at the beginning of the tenth century, while others came from the Viking settlements which had been established in Ireland about the middle of the ninth century. How far does the place-name evidence support these assumptions?

The most obvious evidence for the national identity of the Viking settlers in England is provided by names containing the terms *Norðmenn* and *Danir*. With the exception of the earliest occurrence in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 787, the term *Norðmenn* would seem to have been used exclusively in England of Norwegian Vikings. In eastern England there are many Normanbys and Normantons, while the only place-name to contain the term *Norðmenn* in the north-west is Ormathwaite 'the clearing of the Norwegians (or perhaps of a man called *Norðmaðr*).' This distribution pattern might at first sight seem strange but it should be remembered that names such as Normanby and Normanton

are in fact negative evidence for the presence of Norwegians. In Danish-dominated eastern England the presence of small groups of Norwegians was unusual enough for names meaning 'the settlement of the Norwegians' to be functionally distinctive, whereas in the Norwegian-dominated north-west such names would be useless for distinguishing individual settlements. There are no place-names containing the word for the Danes in Cumbria, and Ekwall has suggested that this might be because there were hardly any Danes in the area.¹ In Dumfriesshire, however, Denbie in the parish of Dalton must mark a settlement of Danes and it seems unlikely that there were no Danes in Cumbria.

In the absence of direct evidence for the presence of Norwegians or Danes, the place-names can perhaps be made to yield indirect information about the nationality of the Viking settlers. This indirect evidence may be either lexical, in which case the place-names will contain elements which are either exclusively or typically Danish or Norwegian, or phonological, in which case the forms taken by the place-names will reflect sound developments that are exclusively or typically East Scandinavian or West Scandinavian. It was earlier thought that morphological evidence could also be used to reveal the nationality of the Scandinavian settlers, since Norwegian was considered to be at a more archaic stage of development in the Viking period than was Danish. The survival in place-names of a Scandinavian genitive in *-ar* was thus thought to indicate a Norwegian origin for the name,² but the genitive in *-ar* was still found in Danish at the time of the original Viking settlements in eastern England³ and its survival in place-names there simply reflects the conservatism of the Scandinavian language in a colonial area.

Lexical Evidence

Danish test-words: þorp, bý

As far as the lexical evidence is concerned, it has been customary to reckon with certain generics as Danish test-words, first and foremost *þorp* 'dependent secondary settlement'.⁴ Place-names in *þorp* are certainly much less common in the north-west than in eastern England but it would be unwise to take this fact as evidence for the comparative absence of Danish settlers. The generic would not have been unknown to some of the Norwegians who settled in England⁵ and *þorps* do occur in areas certainly colonized by Norwegians. There are a few in the Shetland Islands and one in Iceland.⁶ The comparative absence of *þorp*-names from the north-west, then, is more likely to reflect the fact that the term was inappropriate to the kind of settlements found and formed in these areas than that there were no Danes to coin such names. On the other hand, it must be admitted that most of the *þorps* in Cumbria lie in Westmorland and eastern Cumberland — the regions whose nomenclature was most likely to have been influenced by incoming Danes from Yorkshire.

There might be some reason for looking upon the occurrence of the very common generic *bý* as an indication of Danish influence. The generic

would seem to have been used to form names throughout Scandinavia in the Viking period but it is noticeable that names containing it are comparatively rare in areas known to have been colonized by Norwegians, such as Iceland and the Scottish islands, while they are extremely numerous in the Danelaw. The distribution of the *býs* in the north-west is consistent with a movement north-westwards along the Eden valley to the Carlisle plain, with a further dissemination from there southwards along the coastal plain and northwards into eastern Dumfriesshire. The numerous names in *-bý* in the southern part of the Isle of Man might be adduced as an instance of the popularity of *bý*-names in a Norwegian-dominated area. These names, however, may well date from after the partition of the island by Guðrøðr in 1079, when the large farms in the southern half of the island may have been given new names in *-bý*,⁷ very possibly names modelled on names in *-bý* in England.⁸ It seems most likely that the *bý*-names in the north-west reflect influence from the Danelaw, but this does not necessarily mean that the names were all coined by Danes. It should not be forgotten that the generic *bý* had a longer life-span in the north-west than in the Danelaw. Many of the names in *-bý* in Cumberland contain as a specific personal names which can be shown with a reasonable degree of certainty to have been borne by men who were alive in the twelfth century, while others contain Continental Germanic personal names that were probably borne by Norman or Flemish settlers who came to the Carlisle area after William Rufus had driven Dolfin out of Carlisle and established a fortress there in 1092.⁹

Personal Names

The attempt has sometimes been made to determine the nationality of the settlers in a vill on the basis of the personal name contained in the name of the vill, a typically West Scandinavian personal name, for example, being taken to indicate a Norwegian tenant or lord. By a typically West Scandinavian name is meant one that is of common occurrence in Norway and/or Iceland but is not found in early sources in Denmark or is extremely rare there; whereas a typically East Scandinavian name is one that is common in Denmark and/or Sweden but rare in, or absent from, Norway and Iceland. Place-names containing such personal names, however, can only be treated as evidence for East or West Scandinavian settlements respectively, if it can be proved that the names were coined in the very early years of the Viking settlements, before intermarriage and the workings of fashion had invalidated personal nomenclature as an indication of nationality. Fifty years after the first settlements a name of West Scandinavian origin might just as well have been borne by a man of Danish or even English descent as by a Norwegian. Since there will always remain a degree of uncertainty as to the date at which the individual place-names were coined, little can be built upon the typically Danish or typically Norwegian personal names that are found in the place-names of the north-west. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that the typically Danish names *Ēsi*,

Halfdan and *Mōthir* are found in Easby, Alston (earlier *Aldeneby*) and Motherby. These three *býs* all lie fairly close to the routes which would have been followed by Danes entering the north-west from the Danelaw. None of the personal names in the names in *-bý* are typically Norwegian.

Norwegian test-words: skáli, sáetr

Two of the elements found in place-names in Cumbria which have been looked upon as test-words of Norwegian origin are *skáli* 'shieling-hut' and *sáetr* 'shieling'.¹⁰ These generics are of extremely rare occurrence in place-names in Denmark, but this is surely because the flat and fertile nature of that country meant that there was little call for terms to denote the temporary summer dwellings that formed part of an economy based on transhumance to mountain pastures in the summer. There is no reason why Danes should not have made use of these Norwegian elements to form place-names in England. The elements *skáli* and *sáetr* are both found in place-names in Yorkshire.

In summary it can be said that there is no lexical evidence to contradict the assumption that the Scandinavian settlers in the north-west were mainly of Norwegian origin, although influence from the Danelaw is probably reflected in the names in *-bý* and *-þorp*.

Phonological Evidence

The attempt has sometimes been made to exploit phonological evidence for the national identification of the Viking settlers. It has been suggested that the survival of the diphthongs *ei* and *au* in Scandinavian place-names in England is an indication of Norwegian origin, since monophthongization of these diphthongs in stressed syllables to *ē* and *ō* respectively only took place in East Scandinavian.¹¹ The date at which monophthongization took place in Denmark is uncertain but it probably began about 900.¹² There is, however, no reliable evidence for monophthongized forms in place-names in England. Since this is unlikely to mean that all the Scandinavian place-names in England were coined either by Norwegians or before 900, the surviving diphthongs must simply reflect the facts that monophthongization had not taken place in Denmark at the time of the first settlements and that the Scandinavian language spoken in England remained at a conservative state of development.¹³

Holmr

A good deal of weight has been placed by earlier scholars on the side-form *hulm* of the Scandinavian word *holmr* as evidence for Danish settlement. Place-names such as Hulme have been taken to be reflexes of an East Danish form *hulm* which had not undergone *a*-mutation of *u* to *o*.¹⁴ The distribution of the *hulm* forms in English place-names, mainly in Lancashire, eastern Cheshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, is, however, hardly consistent with an explanation of them as being of Danish origin.¹⁵

Even allowing for a Middle English levelling under *o*, more spellings in *u* would be expected to appear for place-names in such predominantly Danish areas as eastern Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. It is possible, therefore, that the variation between *o*-spellings and *u*-spellings ought to be attributed to English scribal conventions and may reflect the influence of the conventional latinized form *hulmus*, which occurs beside *holm*.

The difficulty with this explanation is that it does not account for the distribution pattern of the two variant forms. Kristian Hald has recently treated the problem at some length.¹⁶ He points out that unmutated forms in *hulm* are of extremely rare occurrence in Denmark and argues that unmutated forms must still have been found in West Scandinavian at the time of the Norwegian settlement of north-west England. Hald explains the eventual predominance of the *o*-spellings in England as reflecting the fact that it was in this form that the word was adopted as a loan-word into English. Some support for Hald's view that *hulm* is an archaic West Scandinavian form is provided by the fact that the word appears as a specific in Shetland place-names in the form *hulm*, e.g. Hulmkoddi, Hulmsnof, Hulsund, Hulmasjon, although as an independent word and as a generic the form taken is *-holm*, e.g. Brattholm, Fladholm.¹⁷ It should be noted that the unmutated side-forms *hulter* of *holt* and *urm* of *ormr* are also recorded in Shetland Norn.¹⁸

It would be possible to explain the *hulm*-forms in England as having been introduced by settlers from Shetland if it were not for two major problems connected with such an explanation. First, it is difficult to see why the archaic form should have survived in Norn until the time of the settlements in north-west England in the early tenth century. The *hulm*-names in England are not second-hand names borrowed as such from Shetland, but would seem to have been newly coined in England by Scandinavian settlers in whose language *hulm* existed as a side-form of *holm*. Secondly, it is very difficult to explain the distribution of the *hulm*-forms in England as a result of introduction from Shetland. Hald has suggested that the absence of *u*-forms from Cumberland might simply reflect the fact that the names in *-holm* there were not coined until the word *holm* had been adopted in this form as a loan-word in English.¹⁹ This explanation seems reasonable enough but it does not explain why the archaic West Scandinavian form should be so common in inland regions which are as likely to have been settled by Danes as by Norwegians and which can hardly have been reached by the Norwegians at a period when the archaic form *hulm* still survived. The most satisfactory explanation for most of the *u*-forms in England would seem to be that they are the result of a Middle English dialect development in the north-west midlands, while some isolated *hulm*-forms may reflect the influence of latinized *hulmus*.²⁰

Bý

The commonest Scandinavian habitative generic in the north-west, as in other areas of Scandinavian settlement in England, is *-bý*. This generic can

represent the Old Danish word *bȳ* or the Old East Norwegian *bȳr*. The normal Old West Scandinavian *bær* is a side-form.

The form taken by the element in the north-west might be thought to indicate Danish dominance in the area. In Iceland and the Faroes, for example, the generic normally takes the forms *bær* and *bóur* respectively. As a simplex name the generic takes the forms *Bæ*, *Bea* in Shetland and Orkney, but as the second element of a compound name in the Northern Isles the element was weakened to *-bi*.²¹ This process of weakening would have been encouraged in England by the common occurrence of forms deriving from Danish *bȳ* in the Danelaw. The *by*-spellings, then, cannot be taken as evidence for Danish settlement but they may at least reflect Danish influence.²²

Brant, Banke, Klint

It has been argued that place-names containing forms such as *brant*, *banke*, *klint* without nasal assimilation are evidence of Danish settlement. This is because nasal assimilation is thought to have been effected in most dialects of Norwegian by 850 at the latest,²³ while the development, although occurring fairly frequently in West Jutlandic, was not general in Danish.²⁴ Eduard Kolb has made a very thorough examination of the occurrence of nasal assimilation in Scandinavian loan-words and place-names in England and argued that West Scandinavian assimilation could only have been in its initial stages at the time of the first Norwegian settlements but that it was completed by the time the settlements were fully established.²⁵ If Kolb is correct, this means that the assimilation can hardly have begun to take place before about 900. The predominance of unassimilated forms in England would then reflect the fact that most of the Scandinavian place-names were coined, and the loan-words borrowed, before the development had taken place. For seven out of the ten elements examined by Kolb the cases of assimilation are only isolated and scattered occurrences, and for four of these seven elements the assimilated forms are not found in the region of the first Norwegian settlements but in its hinterland. The survival of unassimilated forms may have been encouraged in the case of *brant* by the existence of a not very common Old English (O.E.) word *brant* and in the case of *banke* by a wish to avoid confusion of *bakki* with O.E. *bæc* 'back'.

Brekka, Slakki

If such a late date for assimilation could be accepted, Kolb's explanation would be perfectly satisfactory as far as the elements for which unassimilated forms predominate are concerned, i.e. *banke*, *brant*, *klint*. But it does not account satisfactorily for the elements which normally appear in assimilated forms, i.e. *brekka* and *slakki*. Kolb suggests that the place-names containing *brekka* in Lancashire and perhaps Westmorland were coined at the time of the Scandinavian settlement, while the names in other

areas (including the Danelaw) are probably younger and owe their existence to a short-lived currency of the word in the respective dialects. This seems very likely. It is striking that the element does not occur in any place-names in Cumberland. Only in the West Riding of Yorkshire is the unassimilated form *brink* of common occurrence and here it is probably a loan from Danish, if not O.E. **brinc*. The element *slakki* occurs most frequently in Westmorland and the West Riding of Yorkshire. Many of the place-names containing it, however, are probably late formations involving the loan-word *slack*, which had entered the local dialects. There is no evidence for the unassimilated form *slank* in place-names.

Why should *brekka* and *slakki* have been borrowed at a later date than *banke*, *brant* and *klint*? Since no satisfactory answer can be given to this question and since it is difficult to date assimilation to as late as the tenth century in the light of the evidence adduced by Moberg from the whole of Scandinavia and particularly the fact that only assimilated forms occur in Icelandic (first settlements about 870) and in Shetland (first settlements about 800),²⁶ the presence of unassimilated forms in Cumbria must be explained otherwise than as early loans from Norwegian.

Vrá

In most dialects of Norwegian initial *v* was lost before *r* in the course of the Viking period, whereas it survives to the present day in Danish.²⁷ The place-name generic *vrá* 'nook, corner', which occurs frequently in Cumberland and Lancashire, always appears there in spellings reflecting *vrá*. This is not necessarily a Danish feature, however. The initial *v* survived in Norwegian at the time of the settlement of Cumbria, although it does not seem to survive in Shetland Norn.

Búð/Bōth

The final piece of phonological evidence to be discussed is the variation between West Scandinavian (and North Jutlandic) *búð* and East Scandinavian *bōth* 'booth'. This variation is problematical. The East Scandinavian form may have resulted from a lowering of *ū* to *ō*, in which case the development must have taken place before the Danish settlements in England, for the form *bōth* lies behind all the Lincolnshire place-names containing the element.²⁸ It is also possible, however, that the West Scandinavian *búð* is a substitution for an original **bōþ-* on analogy with the verb *búa*.²⁹ The distribution pattern of the two forms in the north-west is very clear. All place-names containing the element in Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire north of the Sands have reflexes of the West Scandinavian form *búð* (e.g. Bowderdale, PNWe 2. 31 and PNCu 380; Bewcastle, PNCu 439; Bouth, PNL 216), while all place-names containing the element in Lancashire south of the Ribble and Cheshire have reflexes of the East Scandinavian form *bōth* (e.g. Booths Hall, PNL 40; Booth, PNCh 2. 244). It seems likely that these southern names

were coined under Danish influence and the northern ones by Norwegians.

In summary it must be admitted that the phonological evidence can make very little contribution to the determination of the nationality of the Viking settlers. It seems likely that names containing *bōth* were coined by Danes, whereas all the other spelling variants can be explained on chronological grounds rather than national ones.

GOIDELIC FEATURES IN CUMBRIAN PLACE-NAMES: IRISH OR SCOTS?

There is a very marked Goidelic element in the place-names of Cumbria. This has generally been taken to reflect the presence of Norwegian settlers who had previously spent some time in Ireland and who were probably accompanied by Irishmen. There were certainly some Irishmen in Cumbria, as shown by the place-name Ireby in Cumberland (PNCu 299–300), but whether all the Goidelic features in Cumbrian place-names are to be ascribed to Irish influence is much less certain. These features can be treated under three main headings: 1) the so-called inversion compounds, 2) Goidelic personal names, and 3) the place-names in *ærgi*.

Inversion Compounds

By an inversion compound is meant a place-name in which the specific follows the generic in the order common in younger Celtic place-names. When one or both of these elements in a name in Cumbria is a Scandinavian word, as in the names Setmurthy (*sætr* + *Muiredach*) and Bouthswardhout (*búð* + *Svarthofði*), the name is most likely to have been created by Scandinavian settlers who had spent some considerable time in a Gaelic-speaking area and become accustomed to this type of place-name formation, or by their Gaelic-speaking followers who had adopted Scandinavian generics.

In this context it should be noted that, in Ireland, the Irish and the Scandinavians would seem to have lived as two separate cultural communities and that the Scandinavian place-names in that country have been handed down through English and not through Irish, for in almost every case the natives continued to use the Irish name of the place.³⁰ There are hardly any surviving instances of inversion compounds with Scandinavian elements in Ireland. Names such as Ballygunner (Irish *baile* 'settlement' + Scandinavian personal name *Gunnar*) are simply to be looked upon as Irish formations coined at a time when Norse personal names had come into use among the Irish.³¹ It is, therefore, worth considering whether the Goidelic influence in Cumbria might not rather derive from Norwegian settlers from Scotland and the Isles who had been in close contact with Scottish Gaels.

The case for a Scottish origin for the Goidelic influence in Cumbria has been argued by Alfred Smyth, who suggests that the distribution of

inversion compounds in north-west England probably represents an extension of the concentration of such names in the Norse settlements of Galloway.³² His argument finds support in John MacQueen's examination of the inversion compounds in *Kil-* and *Kirk-* in Galloway.³³ This suggests that Gaelic was established in Galloway before the Norse settlement there had begun, and that some at least of the compounds in *Kirk-* represent partial scandinavianizations of older Gaelic compounds in *Cil-*. From Galloway the name-type may well have spread across the Solway Firth to Cumberland. Purely Gaelic inversion compounds occur frequently in Dumfriesshire west of Nithsdale, however, and there are some partly Scandinavian inversion compounds here too, so influence from western Dumfriesshire may also be reflected in the inversion compounds in Cumbria and eastern Dumfriesshire. It might be noted that eleven of the twelve (partly) Scandinavian hybrid inversion compounds in Dumfriesshire, and six of the twenty-five in Cumberland, are compounds with *Kirk-* and thus show a clear affinity with the Galloway compounds. It has been suggested that the presence of the same type of name-formation in Galloway and Cumbria might reflect a movement from the latter area to the former one,³⁴ but the virtual absence from Galloway of Norse names in *-bý*, *-bekkr* and *-þveit*, all types very common in Cumbria,³⁵ makes this suggestion extremely unlikely.

Personal Names

Ekwall published a list of Goidelic personal names that are found in place-names in north-west England or which occur independently in old documents from the area.³⁶ Almost all of these names do occur in Irish sources but Alfred Smyth has pointed to a few names which are distinctively Scottish, namely *Gilandreas*, *Gilchrist*, *Gilmichael*, *Gilmor*, *Murdock*, *Duncan* and *Kenneth*,³⁷ — to which should be added *Gilleoin* in Gillenbie in Dumfriesshire. He also notes that several of the names are recorded in Icelandic sources as being borne by settlers who came to Iceland from the Hebrides, namely *Cormac*, *Gilli*, *Patrick*, *Belan*, *Kilan*, *Bekan* and *Nel*.³⁸ These facts also support a Scottish origin for the Gaelicized settlers in the north-west.

Ærgi

The third Goidelic feature that Smyth would ascribe to Scottish rather than Irish influence is the loan-word *ærgi* used of a shieling. This element has been the subject of much discussion in recent years³⁹ and it has been shown that there are many grounds for assuming that it came to England from Scotland, where it is found in many names, rather than from Ireland, where there are only a few doubtful occurrences in Kerry. It would seem that there must have been something characteristic about the location or the function of the *ærgi* in the Scottish colonies that led the Viking settlers there to refer to it by the Gaelic term rather than by a Scandinavian word

such as *sætr* or *sel*. They apparently adopted both word and concept and took them with them to England.

I have suggested that the Vikings used the word to refer to what is now known in Norway as a *heimseter*, that is a shieling close to the home-farm that was used for short grazing periods as soon as the pasture allowed it in the spring and on the way home from the mountain *seter* in the autumn.⁴⁰ W. H. Pearsall made a detailed study of the sites of places with names in Scandinavian *sætr* and in the Scandinavian loan from Gaelic *érgi* in Cumberland.⁴¹ Both these words mean 'shieling' but their distribution patterns are different and complementary. Eleven of the *érgi*-names are in the coastal region and only five in the central Lake District, whereas *sætr*-names are commoner in the inner region (15) than in the coastal belt (9). Many of the *érgi*-sites in Cumberland lie in transitional areas where deeper drift soils overlie more infertile rocks and Pearsall suggests that the element *érgi* tended to be used of shielings on residual sites in areas largely given over to arable use, whereas he sees the *sætr*-names as being borne by old-established shieling or settlement sites in traditional pastoral areas. In Westmorland, on the other hand, the *érgi*-names are borne by sites lying on the edge of low-lying marshy and alluvial sites, where there would have been good meadow land. Pearsall considers these sites to be more favourable than the residual *érgi*-sites in Cumberland but less well adapted for settlement than most of the *sætr*-sites, and suggests tentatively that three periods of settlements might be involved. I do not find this chronological explanation very satisfactory. A different place of origin for the users of the two terms is also unlikely, since both *sætr* and *érgi* are likely to have been brought by settlers arriving from the Scottish islands, where both elements are of frequent occurrence. There would simply seem to have been a tendency for *érgi* to be used of shieling-sites in arable areas, while *sætr* was generally used of upland sites.

Further evidence to support the view that the Goidelic influence in Cumbria derives from Scotland rather than Ireland has been supplied by Richard Bailey.⁴² He has pointed, for example, to several parallels between sculptured stones in Cumbria south of the River Ellen and stones in Galloway. These suggest that there was a link by sea across the Solway Firth. The intervening area, consisting of Dumfriesshire and the Carlisle plain, is characterized by a fairly dense distribution of Scandinavian place-names in *-bý*, while Cumbria south of the Ellen has a more markedly Gaelic-Norse nomenclature. Although this nomenclature is not identical with that in Galloway,⁴³ it seems certain that Galloway did exert some influence on the place-names of Cumbria. The map showing the distribution of Gaelic-Scandinavian place-names reveals that the Gaelic influence was more widespread than implied by Bailey. The pattern suggests that there was also an expansion into northern Cumbria from Strathclyde. This Gaelic influence may well be younger than the original Scandinavian settlement in the area for, as pointed out by Kenneth Jackson, the scandinavianized English name Carlatten (**karla-tūn*) has received a Celtic pronunciation with shift of stress to the second syllable and must,

therefore, have been taken over by speakers of a Celtic language.⁴⁴ The marked concentration of names showing Gaelic influence in the valley of the Kent, however, can hardly be linked directly either with expansion from Strathclyde or with immigration from Galloway. It has been suggested above that the several names in *ærgi* in the Kent valley area probably reflect influence from the Scottish islands. The many other names showing Gaelic influence in central and eastern Cumbria may also reflect a general intermingling of settlers from various Gaelic-speaking areas with settlers who had come across the Pennines from the Danelaw.

THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF ANGLIAN AND SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENTS

The last question I want to touch upon is the interpretation of the distribution pattern of Anglian and Scandinavian place-names in the north-west.

Scandinavian Colonization of Vacant Land?

W. H. Pearsall examined the pattern from an ecological point of view.⁴⁵ He argued that it was because the Anglian colonists were primarily interested in plough-land and arable cultivation that their place-names are to be found mainly where the soils are deep and fertile, while they would seem to have ignored the shallow soils and the acid or peaty ones. The Scandinavian colonists, on the other hand, were assumed to have been attracted by the opportunities for pastoral economy that were offered by the inner Lake District and it is here that Scandinavian place-names are dominant. Pearsall also reckoned, however, with an early stratum of Norse settlement characterized by settlements on valley occupation sites, particularly in Furness and Westmorland.

Since Pearsall's study appeared in 1961, much research has been carried out into Scandinavian settlement names in eastern England.⁴⁶ Kenneth Cameron studied the topographical and geological background for Scandinavian settlement and noted that places with names in *-bý* tend to lie in the valleys of tributary streams, on the edges of stretches of favourable land, or on much smaller patches of such land than do the English vills, and that they very often lie on ground that is comparatively infertile or badly drained. He therefore looked upon the *býs* as vills newly established by Viking settlers on the best available vacant land. I followed Cameron's lead in my own study of Scandinavian settlement names in Yorkshire, in which I also discussed the administrative and ecclesiastical status and tax assessments of the settlements with the various types of name. The evidence all seemed, by and large, to support Cameron's interpretation of the *býs* as characterizing areas newly colonized by the Danes.

When discussing the historical background for Viking-age sculpture in the north-west, Richard Bailey chose to follow the path blazed by Cameron and heavily trampled on by Fellows-Jensen in an examination of

the place-names of the area around Appleby.⁴⁷ He sees the distribution pattern here as one of a progressive exploitation of less and less attractive land [Fig. 5.1]. There is a series of Anglian place-names ending in the habitative element *-tūn* on the attractive northern side of the river valley: Long Marton, Brampton, Dufton, Murton and Hilton. On the south side of the river there are some Anglian villages on low-lying ground. Two of these have names in *-tūn*, Bolton and Winton, while there are three which have names originally denoting topographical features, Sandford 'sandy ford', Musgrave 'grove frequented by mice' and Kaber 'jackdaw hill'. The names in *-by* are found either in the river valley, as Temple Sowerby, Kirkby Thore, Colby, Appleby, Crosby Ravensworth, Gt. Asby, Crosby Garrett, Waitby, Kirkby Stephen and Nateby, or on the southern slopes in the shadow of the Lakeland Hills,

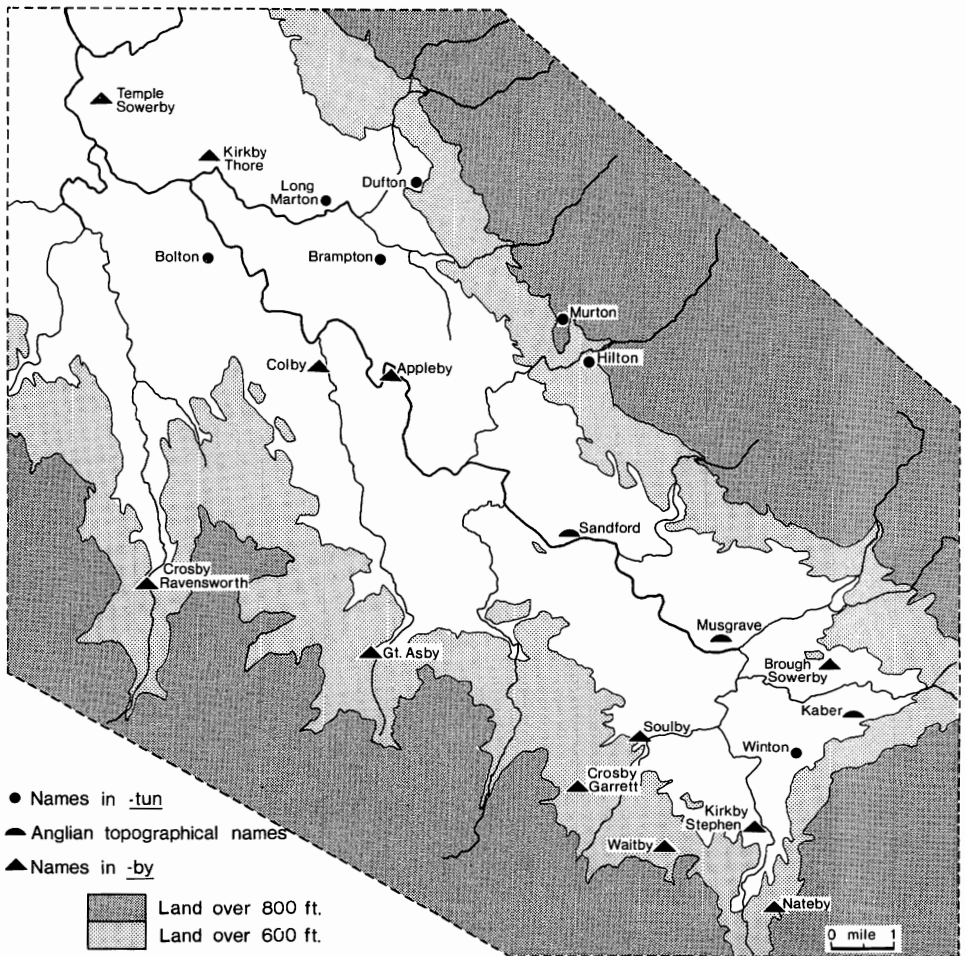


Fig. 5.1 Place-names in the Appleby area (after Bailey, 1980).

Crosby Ravensworth, Great Asby, Crosby Garrett, Waitby and Nateby. Bailey sees these names in *-bý* as an illustration of the way in which the pressure of population demanded the development of new settlements and fresh land-exploitation on less attractive sites at a time when Scandinavian-speakers were living in the area. This is a beautifully simple illustration of the theory. In fact I would now argue that it is all too simple.

A Scandinavian Take-Over of Anglian Settlements?

Two facts must be borne in mind. The first one is that the relative desirability of the sites in an area only indicates the order in which they are likely to have been occupied and cannot provide an absolute dating for their occupation. A settlement on an unfavourable site might be of considerable antiquity. The second fact to be remembered is that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the age of a settlement and the age of its name. I have recently tried to explain, otherwise than as a result of Viking colonization of vacant land, the clear pattern of distribution of vills with Scandinavian names in eastern England on sites less immediately favourable for settlement than those occupied by vills with English names. A reassessment of the pattern of settlement in the Appleby area in the light of the results of this research is appropriate.

First of all, it is important to note that there is evidence for occupation of the area in Romano-British times. The Roman road from the fort *Verteris* at Brough, not marked on the map but in the river-fork north of Brough Sowerby, runs along the valley to Penrith and at the fort known as *Bravoniacum* at Kirkby Thore a branch road leaves for Whitley Castle and Hadrian's Wall. There are two vills with British names, Culgaith and Blencarn, just off the Appleby-map to the north. There are no Anglian place-names of demonstrably early types — such as those in *-hām* or *-ingas* — in the area, but it should be noted that recent studies have demonstrated that names which originally denoted topographical features were among the first to be given by Anglian settlers to their habitation sites.⁴⁸ This means that the valley settlements of Sandford, Musgrave and Kaber may well be of great antiquity. Musgrave is an old parish. The Anglian names in *-tūn* are difficult to date. Of those marked on the map only Marton and Dufton on the northern slopes are parishes.

If we now turn our attention to the *býs* in the valley, we find that the two Kirkbys and Appleby are parishes. Are there any grounds other than their situation in the valley and their ecclesiastical status for thinking that these three settlements may represent old established English vills taken over by the Danes rather than new settlements developed by the Danes on vacant land? Some evidence is provided by the names themselves. The name Kirkby (**kirkju-bý*) was normally given by the Danes to villages in which they found a church on their arrival.⁴⁹ This means that it is likely that both Kirkby Thore and Kirkby Stephen were well established vills long before the Vikings came to the Eden valley. The specific of Appleby is the word for 'apple'. In the oldest records of the name this word appears in its OE form

æppel, suggesting that the whole name may merely be a partial Scandinavianization of an English name (PNWe 2. 91). Appleby was the head of both the Barony and the County of Westmorland and it seems hardly likely that it began life as a Danish pioneer settlement on a second-class site.

As far as the non-parochial *býs* in the valley are concerned, the two Sowerbys have as their specific the Scandinavian appellative *saurr* m. 'mud, dirt, sour ground' and this might be taken as indicating an unfavourable site. The specific *saurr* need not necessarily have been used derogatorily, however. The kind of marshland referred to would often have been very fertile.⁵⁰ Noting that five of the sixteen places called Saurbær in Iceland had a church, Barði Guðmundsson has suggested that the name may have had some special significance connected with a sacred heathen site.⁵¹ The high status of these Icelandic Saurbærs, however, might rather reflect the fertility of the reclaimed marshland on which they stand.

The *býs* on the southern slopes are more problematical. Three of them are the centres of quite extensive parishes, namely the two Crosbys and Asby. It seems that in spite of their relatively unfavourable situations and their purely Scandinavian names, these three *býs* may all be old settlements that had been taken over by the incoming Vikings. The specific of the two Crosbys is the Irish loan-word in Scandinavian *cross*, used of a cross as a religious symbol, so these two places may well have been centres of Christian worship before the arrival of the Vikings.

Waitby, Nateby and Soulby are townships in the parish of Kirkby Stephen. Temple Sowerby is a township in Kirkby Thore, Colby a township in Appleby, and Brough Sowerby a township in Brough. If any of the *býs* in the Appleby area are to be looked upon as instances of Danish new colonization in the strict sense of the word, then these must be the ones. It seems much more likely, however, that they represent dependent units of older estates that had passed into small-scale private ownership for the first time as a result of Viking settlement in the area. These small units had probably been granted by the Danish leaders to their men in reward for their service. Land had not generally been bought and sold in the Anglo-Saxon period⁵² but in the tenth century individual owners were beginning to acquire estates all over England, and it seems likely that this habit of buying and selling land was a result of Viking activity. There are a number of tenth-century charters recording sale of land by the Vikings to the English in Derbyshire, Bedfordshire and Lancashire,⁵³ and early in the eleventh century King Æthelred sold land in Oxfordshire to a Dane called Toti in exchange for a pound of gold that the king needed in order to pay the next instalment of the Danegeld.⁵⁴ Not marked on the map but situated on the Roman road a couple of miles south-west of Hilton is a small settlement bearing the Scandinavian name Coupland (**kaupaland* 'bought land'). This must be just one of the small estates that were bought or sold by the Scandinavians in this area.

I mentioned earlier that Bailey's picture of settlement in the region round Appleby seemed to be too simple and I hope that I have already

shown that a Scandinavian name in *-by* can be borne by different types of settlement — from old-established villages such as the Kirkbys and Appleby to much smaller units of settlement such as Waitby and Nateby. There is another reason why the demonstrated pattern is too simple, however. There are several settlements in the area whose names and locations have been omitted from the map [Fig. 5.2]. I have already drawn attention to the omission of Brough and of Coupland. Among other significant omissions from the map are the neighbouring valley-parishes of Ormside and Warcop, north-west and south-east of Sandford respectively.

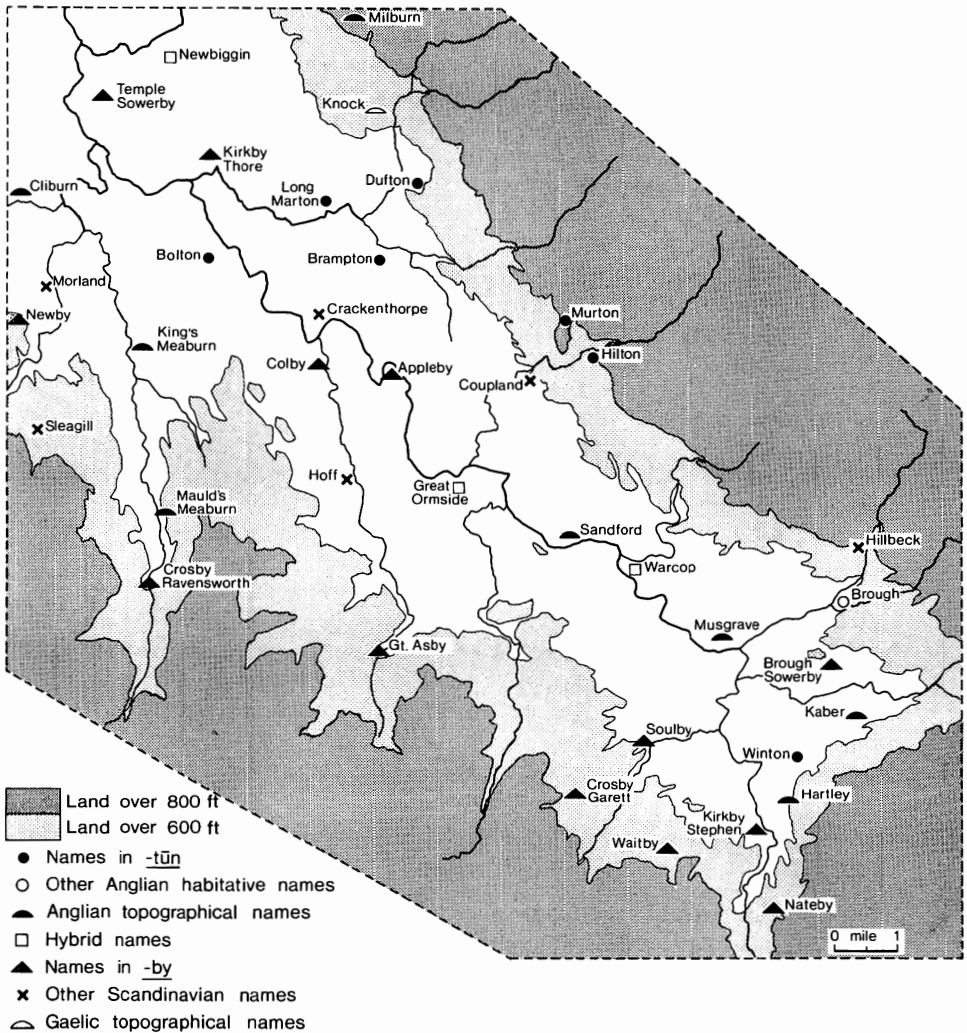


Fig. 5.2 Some additional place-names in the Appleby area.

Ormside contains the Scandinavian personal name *Ormr* and the OE appellative *hēafod* 'headland', although in the earliest form the generic also appears in Scandinavian form *hofuð*, while Warcop has been explained as containing the Scandinavian appellative *varða* 'cairn, heap of stones' and the OE appellative *copp* 'hill'. Its first element is perhaps more likely to be the Scandinavian appellative *vǫðr*, gen. *varðar* 'watch, lookout' (cf. the Danish place-name Vorde (**varðar-haugr*)). Both Ormside and Warcop seem likely to be English villages that had been occupied by the Danes.⁵⁵ Hoff is a township in the south of the parish of Appleby. Its name would seem to be the Scandinavian appellative *hof* 'heathen temple', which is frequently used as a simplex place-name in Norway and Iceland. It has been pointed out that several of the farms called Hof in Iceland were the homes of very influential landowners and this has been taken to reflect a political and economic significance for the name rather than, or as well as, a religious one.⁵⁶ It can hardly be a coincidence that Hoff is less than 3 km. from Appleby, the administrative centre of the whole county. The last omitted name I want to draw attention to here is that of Crackenthorpe, a township in the north of Appleby parish. This has been explained as a Scandinavian settlement name with the generic *þorp*, referring to a dependent secondary settlement, and the specific a Scandinavian by-name *Krakandi* 'the crawling one' (PNWe 2. 101). The specific may alternatively reflect the influence of this name on the genitive plural of OE **crāca* 'crow'.

I would claim, therefore, that the place-name evidence suggests that the Appleby area was well settled by the English before the arrival of the Scandinavian settlers and that these settlers, who probably came from the northern Danelaw, took over all the more important settlements in the region. While the names of Brough and of the *tūns* survived unchanged, however, the names of Appleby, Warcop and Ormside were wholly or partially scandinavianized, and the original names of the two Kirkbys were replaced by the appellative name referring to the fact that they were church-villages. Some of the other names in *-bý* have probably also replaced English names, particularly the two Crosbys and Asby, while the remaining *bý*-names may either have replaced older names for small units of larger estates or represent an extension of the cultivated area under the influx of Scandinavian settlers. The fact that the only *þorp* in the area may have had an OE specific suggests that this dependent secondary settlement may well antedate the Viking invasion.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would argue that the Scandinavian settlement of western and central Cumberland was basically the work of Norwegians, many of whom had spent some considerable time in the Scandinavian colonies in Scotland and the Isles, but that the great sweep of names in *-bý* reflects influence from the Danelaw and that many of the *bý*-names were probably coined by settlers of Danish origin. Since the Scandinavian settlers,

whatever their nationality, are not likely to have contented themselves with second-best land, leaving the most fertile land in the hands of the English, we must reckon with the presence of Scandinavian settlers in vills with English names and not only in vills whose names are wholly or partially of Scandinavian origin. On the other hand, the density of Scandinavian place-names in the inner Lake District makes it likely that in the Viking period several marginal areas were exploited for permanent settlement for the first time, as an expanding population greatly increased the pressure on the land.

Notes

¹ In *Tribal Names in English Place-Names*, in *Namn och Bygd* (1953) xli. 129–77, especially p. 154.

² Cf. e.g. *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder* (1956–78) s.v. -by, cols 385–86 and s.v. *Personnavne*, col. 227.

³ Cf. J. Brøndum-Nielsen, *Gammeldansk Grammatik* (1935) III. 132.

⁴ Cf. e.g. A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*. Part II (1956) 210. Referred to below as *PNEL*.

⁵ Cf. J. Sandnes, *Navn og Bygd i et sørøstnorsk grenselandskap*, in *Namn och Bygd* (1977) LXV. 57–70. 75% of the Norwegian *torp*-names are found in Østfold.

⁶ Cf. *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder* s.v. -*torp*, cols 493 and 500.

⁷ Cf. C. J. S. Marstrander, *Det norske landnåm på Man*, in *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* (1932) VI. 40–385, especially p. 327.

⁸ Suggested to me by Eleanor Megaw in a personal communication in 1977.

⁹ *PNCu*, xxxi–xxxiii. Here and later the abbreviation PN + county abbreviation refers to the publications of the English Place-Name Society, except that *PNLa* = E. Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (1922).

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. *PNEL* I. 200 and 2. 123. In Denmark, however, *skáli* occurs in the place-name *Løvskaal*, while *Sædder* may be an instance of *sætr* as a simplex appellative name (cf. *Danmarks Stednavne* 9. 178 and 16. 44–45 respectively.)

¹¹ Cf. e.g. *PNYW* 7. 63, 83.

¹² Cf. K. M. Nielsen, *Til runedanskens ortografi*, in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* (1960) LXXV. 1–78, especially pp. 67–69.

¹³ Cf. G. Fellows-Jensen, *The scribe of the Lindsey Survey*, in *Namn och Bygd* (1969) LVII. 58–74, especially pp. 67–69.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. *PNEL* I. 268.

¹⁵ Cf. G. Fellows-Jensen in a review of *PNCh* 1–2, in *Saga-Book* (1970–71) XVIII. 203–05.

¹⁶ In *A-Mutation in Scandinavian Words in England*, in Th. Andersson and K. I. Sandred (eds), *The Vikings* (1978) 99–106.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Jakobsen, *Shetlandsøernes Stednavne*, in *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1901) XVI. 55–258, especially pp. 112–13, and *Etymologisk Ordbog over det norrøne Sprog på Shetland* (1921) 328.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Jakobsen, *Etymologisk Ordbog* (1921) 314–15, 593.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.* in n. 16, p. 104.

²⁰ Cf. J. McN. Dodgson, in *PNCh* 5. 237–39.

²¹ Cf. J. Jakobsen, *Shetlandsøernes Stednavne* (1901) 85–86; H. Marwick, *Orkney Farm-Names* (1952) 243–48.

²² Cf. E. Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England* (1918) 8, n.1.

²³ Cf. L. Moberg, *Om de nordiska nasalassimilationerna mp > pp, nt > tt, nk > kk med särskild hänsyn till svenskan* (1944) 205.

²⁴ Cf. P. Skautrup, *Det danske Sprogs Historie* (1944) I. 50.

²⁵ In *The Scandinavian Loanwords in English and the Date of the West Norse Change MP > PP, NT > TT, NK > KK*, in *English Studies* (1969) L. 129–40.

- ²⁶ Cf. J. Jakobsen, *Etymologisk Ordbog* (1921) 23, 67, 68, 404, 779.
- ²⁷ Op. cit. in n. 24, p. 132.
- ²⁸ Cf. Kr. Hald, Lidt om sproglige Forbindelser mellem Nordjylland og Sydnorge, in *Festskrift til Johan Hvidtfeldt* (1978) 105–13, especially p. 107.
- ²⁹ Cf. B. Erlandsson, *Om växlingen ü-ö i ord av typen no. bru-sv. bro* (1972) 76.
- ³⁰ Cf. D. Greene, The Evidence of Language and Place-Names in Ireland, in Th. Andersson and K. I. Sandred (eds) *The Vikings* (1978) 119–23.
- ³¹ Cf. M. Oftedal, Scandinavian place-names in Ireland, in *Seventh Viking Congress* (1976) 125–33.
- ³² In *Scandinavian York and Dublin* (1975) I. 81.
- ³³ In Kirk- and Kil- in Galloway place-names, in *Archivum Linguisticum* (1959) VIII. 135–49, especially p. 145.
- ³⁴ By D. P. Kirby, Galloway prior to c. 1100, in P. McNeill and R. Nicholson (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Scotland c. 400–c. 1600* (1975). 21–22.
- ³⁵ Cf. W. F. H. Nicolaisen, Norse Place-Names in South-West Scotland, in *Scottish Studies* (1960) IV. 49–70.
- ³⁶ Op. cit. in n. 22, pp. 66–72.
- ³⁷ Op. cit. in n. 32, pp. 82 and p. 91, n. 30.
- ³⁸ Op. cit. in no. 32, p. 91, n. 31.
- ³⁹ Cf. Chr. Matras, Gammelfærsk ærgi, n., og dermed beslægtede ord, in *Namn och Bygd* (1956) XLIV. 51–67; G. Fellows Jensen, A Gaelic-Scandinavian Loan-Word in English Place-Names, in *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* (1977–78) X. 18–25; *idem*. Common Gaelic *Áirge*, Old Scandinavian *Ærgi* or *Erg*?, in *Nomina* (1980) IV. 67–74.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. A.-B. Ø. Borchgrevink, The “Seter”-Areas of Rural Norway — a Traditional Multi-purpose Resource, in *Northern Studies* (1977) IX. 3–24.
- ⁴¹ In Place names as clues in the pursuit of ecological history, in *Namn och Bygd* (1961) XLIX. 72–89.
- ⁴² In *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (1980), especially pp. 70–71, 223–29.
- ⁴³ Op. cit. in n. 42, p. 228 and op. cit. in n. 35.
- ⁴⁴ In Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria, in H. Lewis (ed.), *Angles and Britons* (1963) 60–84, especially p. 83.
- ⁴⁵ Op. cit. in n. 41, especially pp. 79–81.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. K. Cameron (ed.), *Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements* (English Place-Name Society, 1975); G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire*, *Navnestudier* (1972) XI; *idem*. *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands*, *Navnestudier* (1978) XVI; *idem*. Place-Names and Settlement in the North Riding of Yorkshire, in *Northern History* (1978) XIV. 19–46.
- ⁴⁷ Op. cit. in n. 42, pp. 38–39.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. B. Cox, The Place-Names of the earliest English Records, in *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* (1975–76) VIII. 12–66; and M. Gelling, *Signposts to the past* (1978) 122–29.
- ⁴⁹ Richard Bailey has drawn my attention to the fact that pre-Viking carving was found in the church at Kirkby Stephen but has now disappeared (cf. J. F. Hodgson, Kirkby Stephen Church, in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*. 1st series (1879) IV. 186; plate 1).
- ⁵⁰ Cf. H. Ståhl, Nils i Söderby, Solbygubben in *Ortnamnssällskapets I Uppsala Årsskrift* (1961) 3–9, especially p. 9.
- ⁵¹ In *Uppruni Íslendinga* (1959) 129.
- ⁵² Cf. T. M. Charles-Edwards, The Distinction between Land and Moveable Wealth in Anglo-Saxon England, in P. Sawyer (ed.), *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* (1976) 180–87.
- ⁵³ For these charters see *English Historical Documents* (1955) I. 503–08 and PNLa 252–53.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. C. R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (1966) 190–93.
- ⁵⁵ For Ormside and Warcop see PNWE 2. 89 and 82.
- ⁵⁶ Cf. S. Rafnsson, *Studier i Landnámabók* (1974). 192–93; O. Olsen, *Hørg, Hov og Kirke* (1966) 192.
- ⁵⁷ An abridged version of this paper in Danish may be found in *Selskab for Nordisk Filologi Årsberetning 1981–82* (1983), pp. 39–47.