The Toponymy of Communal Activity: Anglo-Saxon Assembly Sites and their Functions

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Abstract

The paper builds on earlier discussion of the multiple functions of medieval judicial assembly sites, providing a comprehensive evaluation of relevant English hundred-names, and making reference to associated microtoponymy. While religious, military, commercial, and recreational activities may all have occurred at assembly-sites, it can be hard to delineate the evidence so clearly along these lines, and attempts to do so may be anachronistic in some instances; nevertheless, the analysis of different group activities has important implications for our understanding of the evolution of the hundredal system and its impact on society at large.

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Introduction

Early medieval legal and social governance was carried out through a series of public assemblies. In Anglo-Saxon England, reference is made to such gatherings in early legal codes, and by the tenth century it is clear that an organized framework of local and regional moots was in operation, whereby the freemen of each district were compelled to meet every four weeks in order to settle disputes, regulate social interactions and execute legislative decrees (Liebermann 1903, 3, 10, 192; Whitelock 1979, 391, 395, 429-30; and e.g. Chadwick 1905, 228-62; Stenton 1971, 292-301; Loyn 1974; Wormald 1986; 1999). By that time, if not earlier, the structure of this system of assemblies consisted of sub-shire districts known as hundreds (wapentakes in some areas), hereafter referred to as the hundredal system. It is the Domesday survey of 1086 that provides the first detailed snapshot of this administrative system within its geographical and landscape context. The survey lists English vills under their hundreds or wapentakes, allowing these districts to be reconstructed as they stood in the late eleventh century. Moreover, the hundreds themselves are named in the survey, sometimes after their most important manor, but frequently after the place that served as the meeting-point for the district, and therefore providing important information about the types of site deemed suitable for such gatherings.

This system of administration touched the everyday lives of all inhabitants of Anglo-Saxon England. As the focus for the administration of local society and the enactment of law-codes, these meetings regulated relationships between different classes of freemen, between free and unfree, and between men and women. While ostensibly only freemen had a say at these events (and perhaps often under the diktat of local lords), it is likely that the gatherings were sometimes attended by a much wider cross-section of society. The logistical requirements of a large assembly – provision of food and drink for all attendees and any animals that transported or accompanied them, erection of appropriate shelters and perhaps other formal structures for discussion and negotiation – may well have been a substantial concern, and these legislative procedures could last several days (cf. Douglas and Greenaway 1953, 449-50). The freemen themselves and especially the higher-status attendees may therefore have required a considerable entourage of family and supporters, cooks, labourers, and so on.

In these conditions, hundredal meetings perhaps also served as an opportunity for a wide range of social interactions and public activities of a commercial, religious or recreational nature. In his pioneering and wide-ranging work on the English hundred-names, Anderson (1939*b*, 184, 213-14) drew attention to some of these other activities, while Pantos (2004*b*, 166-70) has noted that the characteristics of these sites point to a range of non-administrative activities, and cites toponymic, archaeological and documentary evidence for this. The work of the Leverhulme-funded *Landscapes of Governance* project (a collaboration between University College London, the University of Nottingham, and the University of Winchester) is leading to the compilation of a searchable database of Domesday hundreds, and attempting to place the hundreds within their landscape context. This allows a more detailed analysis than has previously been possible of hundredal toponymy and its landscape context, and this paper seeks to expand on and re-emphasize Anderson's and Pantos's important work on the multiple functions of assembly sites. The aim here is to provide an overview of functional aspects of medieval assembly suggested by place-names, leaving more detailed analysis for later discussion (Baker and Brookes forthcoming *c*). The paper will therefore set out the toponymic vocabulary relating to the functions of hundredal moots, and discuss further possible references to non-judicial activities that should be taken into account. Together, these may well suggest that multi-functionality was the norm, rather than the exception, at sites of legal and governmental assembly, raising important questions about the evolution of the hundredal system. The paper will also consider the overlapping nature of apparently separate functions, and the wider landscape of medieval assembly and what it tells us about the hundredal geography of eleventh-century England.

The functional and function-related vocabulary of hundred-names

The following headwords are divided according to the type of function they seem to indicate, but this categorization is offered only for convenience, since a number of the functions may have been interrelated. I have tentatively separated 'secular' from 'religious', but this is essentially a division of criteria along modern lines; it should not be assumed that the two were always clearly distinct to the medieval mind. The headwords are all found in Domesday hundred-names, and the examples given in bold type are Domesday hundreds. By concentrating on this source alone, it is possible to provide a coherent and controlled analysis within the confines of the present paper. In the interests of space, early forms are only provided in special cases. For fuller etymological discussion, readers should turn in the first instance to Anderson (1934; 1939*a*; 1939*b*), now available online at: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly/ElectronicAnderson, and to the relevant volumes of the English Place-Name Society county survey.

Detailed references are omitted except for difficult or controversial interpretations. Further discussion of post-Domesday hundreds and of microtoponymy associating Domesday hundreds with references to function is included under some headwords, but this is not intended to be comprehensive. Further work on the hundreds has and will continue to reveal more such instances.

'Secular' Assembly

Three features of hundred meeting-places might be assumed to be universal: the presence of large groups of people; verbal interaction; and the administration of law and justice. All of these aspects are naturally commemorated in hundred-names.

JUDICIAL, GOVERNMENTAL AND DELIBERATIVE GATHERINGS

(ge)mōt (OE) 'assembly': **Modbury** (Dorset; OE *beorg*). The post-Conquest hundred of Mutford (Suffolk; OE *ford*) may have the same first element (Anderson 1934, 84-86; but cf. Watts 2004, 427), and a number of hundreds are suggested as having met at or near to *(ge)mōt* names: e.g. Flendish/Mutlow Hill, Cambridgeshire (Anderson 1939*b*, 100-101; Reaney 1935, 35, 140; Meaney 1994), Uttlesford Bridge/Mutlow Hill, Essex (Anderson 1939*b*, 35-36), Copthorne/Nutshambles (Nail 1965), Harlow/Mulberry Green, Essex (*Motebergh(e)* 1382; *Moteberry* 17ᵗʰ-18ᵗʰ; Anderson 1939*b*, 39).

þing (OE/OScand) 'assembly': **Thingoe** (Suffolk; OScand *haugr*). Manshead (Bedfordshire) assembled in the vicinity of Tingrith (OE *þing-riþ* 'assembly-stream'; Mawer and Stenton 1926, 113, 134-35).

*cȳft (OE) 'coming together': **Kiftsgate** (Gloucestershire; OE *gēat*; Ekwall 1957; Smith 1964*a*, 250, 261, 229–30).

DEBATE, DISCUSSION, PASSING OF JUDGEMENTS, ETC.

spell (OE) 'speech' or perhaps 'pronouncement': **Spelthorne** (Middlesex; OE *þorn* 'thorn-tree'), **Spelhoe** (Northamptonshire; OE *hōh* 'hill-spur').

rǣd (OE) 'advice, counsel, council': suggested for **Radfield** (Cambridgeshire; OE *feld*; Martin and Satchell 2008, 186), which is, however, usually derived from OE *rēadan-feld* '(at the) red field' (Anderson 1934, 101; Reaney 1943, 113-14; Wright 1978, 141-47). The persistent medial –*e*– in early forms of Radfield (e.g. *Radefelle* 1086, *Radefelde* 1086 (c. 1180), *Radefeldhdr'* 1157, 1188, *Redefeld'* 1185) seems more appropriate to the weak dative adjectival ending in *rēadan-feld* (cf. Campbell 1959, 272), and only a single early form (*Radesfeld* c. 1080 (c. 1180) ICC) supports an OE *rǣdes-feld* 'open-land of the council'. At the very least, this form suggests local reanalysis of the name, perhaps due to acknowledgement of the conciliar role of the place. An apparent absence of red soil in the vicinity is nevertheless problematic (Martin and Satchell 2008, 186, and *contra* Reaney), and the element *rǣden* 'rule, government', which is noted by Smith (1956*b*, 79) as a second element in place-names, may provide a more suitable solution, perhaps interchanging with OE *rǣd*. The same element might be formally acceptable in **Radlow** (Herefordshire; OE *hlāw*) and **Redhove** (Dorset; OE *hān*), but need not be assumed.

resp/*ræsp* or *reps*/*ræps* (OE) 'accusation': **Rapsgate** (Gloucestershire; OE *geat* 'gate'; Anderson 1939*a*, 23-24; Smith 1964*a*, 144, 154, 155, 161).

scrifen (OE) past participle of *scrīfan* 'to decree, allot, adjudge, impose (sentence)' **Shrivenham** (Berkshire; OE *hām* 'homestead').

wita (OE) 'councillor' (gen. pl. *witena*): **Wittery** (Shropshire; OE *trēow* 'tree'), ?**Whitstable** (Kent; OE *stapol*; Wallenberg 1934, 491, 493; Anderson 1939*b*, 148-49; Smith 1956*b*, 146, 270-71; Ekwall 1960, 514; Mills 2003, 496; Watts 2004, 675; Cullen 1997, 290, 296-97). It has been proposed that **Bisley** Hundred (Gloucestershire) met at Wittantree in the parish of the same name, and that the latter is from OE *witena-trēow* 'tree of the councillors' (Anderson 1939*a*, 27-28; Smith 1964*a*, 117, 121; Pantos 2002, 279-81).

dōmere (OE) 'judge' (gen. pl. *dōmera*): **Damerham** (Wiltshire; OE *hām* 'homestead' or *hamm* 'hemmed-in land').

Some elements of relevance here are absent from Domesday hundred-names, but occur in the microtoponymy in the vicinity of hundred meeting-places. *Gersdon* (Gloucestershire) may have held its meetings at Middleford, apparently identical with the *motera ford* 'speaker's ford' of a local Anglo-Saxon charter (999; Sawyer 1968, no. 896) (Grundy 1935-1936, 61-64; Smith 1964*a*, 59; Pantos 2002, 296). *Malsdon* (*Maldon* 1287) may well be a *mæþel-dūn* 'speech-hill' near to the meeting-place of **Westbury** (Gloucestershire), although it does not necessarily mark the site of the hundredal assemblies themselves (Smith 1964*c*, 207; Pantos 2002, 314).

LARGE BODIES OF PEOPLE (MUSTERING?)

here (OE) 'army': **Harlow** (Essex; OE *hlāw*). Harville, Kent, a possible compound of OE *here* and *feld* 'open land', is adjacent to **Wye**, the centre of both a hundred and a lathe.

EXECUTION OF CRIMINAL JUDGEMENTS

galga (OE) 'gallows': **Gallow** (Norfolk). The geographical coincidence of some modern *Gallow* place-names and hundred meeting-places has been noted, but need not indicate public execution during the Anglo-Saxon period (Pantos 2002, 90-94; 2004*b*, 166-69). Nevertheless, it points either to that activity in the modern period or to a folk-tradition of it.

wearg-trēow (OE) 'fellon tree', i.e. 'gallows': **Warter** (E. Yorkshire). Wor Barrow in Dorset is an excavated early medieval execution cemetery and may go back to OE *wearg-beorg* 'fellon-barrow'; it was in view of the meeting-place of **Handley** (Harman *et al.* 1981).

'Religious' or 'Spiritual' assembly

SITES OF POSSIBLE 'PAGAN' IMPORTANCE

wēoh/wīg (OE) 'an idol, a shrine': **Wye** (Kent).

ōs (OE) 'immortal being' (gen. pl. *ēsa*): **Easewrithe** (Sussex; OE *wrīþ* 'bush, thicket, coppice'); first element could alternatively be a personal name (Mawer *et al.* 1929-1930, 146).

Pagan deities: *Weneslai* (Bedfordshire; *Wōden* + *hlāw* 'mound'), **Thunderlow** and **Thurstable** (Essex), *Toreshou* (E. Yorkshire; *Þunor/Þór* + *hlāw/stapol/haugr*). **Grimshoe** (Norfolk) may be an oblique reference to Óðin, since *Grímr* seems to have been one of his by-names (Smith 1956*a*, 210), and Gelling (1973-1976, 346-47) suggests that *hræfn* in **Ramsbury** (Wiltshire) might refer to the raven as familiar of *Wōden*.

There is considerable debate about place-names of the type that include **Swineshead** (Gloucestershire; Smith 1964*c*, 74-75) and **Manshead** (Bedfordshire; Mawer and Stenton 1926, 112-13, 134); they may be references to totemic representations of animal or human heads (Bradley 1910, 31-32; Dickins 1934; Smith 1956*a*, 236; Ekwall 1960, 229; Gelling 1962, 16-18; Meaney 1995, 29-31).

SITES OF UNSPECIFIED RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE

hālig (OE) / *heilagr* (OScand) 'holy': **Halikeld** (Yorkshire; OE *celde* / OScand *kelda* 'spring').

SITES WITH CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

Many of the churches that gave their names to hundreds were also names of important Domesday manors and therefore need not have been the meeting-places of their hundreds (Pantos 2002, 64). Nevertheless, public assembly did take place in the vicinity of such sites. An island very close to Deerhurst priory seems to have been the venue of a meeting between Edmund and Cnut in 1016 (Pantos 2002, 293); and later medieval accounts place the meetings of **Albanstow** just outside the abbey precinct (Page 1908, 319-22; 1920, 32; Levett 1924, 60). Anderson (1934, xxxvii) treats OE *cros* / OScand *kross* as equivalent to OE *stān* in hundred-names, and as 'stones erected in memory of some important person', but the potential Christian symbolism should not be overlooked. It is arguably more likely that some instances of *stān* (and perhaps also *stapol*) refer to the remains of masonry crosses, than that *cros/kross* was used in a generic way to mean 'erected stone monument'.

cirice (OE) 'church': **Litchurch** (Derbyshire; pers.n.), **Whitchurch Canonicorum** (Dorset; OE *hwīt* 'white'), **Pucklechurch** (Gloucestershire; pers.n.), **Newchurch** (Kent; OE *nīw* 'new'), **Baschurch** (Shropshire; pers.n.).

cros (OE) / *kross* (OScand) / *croes* (Old Welsh) 'cross': **Osgodcross**, **Sneculfcros**, **Staincross** (Yorkshire; OScand pers.ns. / OScand *steinn* 'stone'), **Brothercross**, **Guiltcross** (Norfolk; OScand pers.ns.), **Walshcroft** (Lincolnshire; OScand pers. n. or OE *wealh*), *Walescros* (Derbyshire; OScand pers.n. or OE *wealh*), **Normancross** (Huntingdonshire; OScand *Norðmaðr* or OE *Norðman* 'Norseman'), *Atiscros* (Cheshire; named from Croes Ati in Flintshire; Anderson 1934, 148). Note also the later hundreds of Ewcross, Buckrose (both Yorkshire) and Faircross (Berkshire; *de Bella Cruce* 1256, *Faircross* 1569). See also Rumble 2006, 31.

mynster (OE) 'church, monastery': **Yetminster**, **Beaminster** (Dorset; pers.ns.), **Exminster** (Devon; RN), **Bedminster** (Somerset; pers.n.), and **Warminster** (Wiltshire; RN). Note also the later medieval hundred of Leominster (Herefordshire; RN).

Saints' names: **Albanstow** (Hertfordshire; OE *stōw* '(gathering) place', *Sanctus Martinus* (Romney Marsh; Kent), **Congresbury** (Somerset; OE *burh* 'stronghold'). **Guthlaxton** (Leicestershire; OE *stān* 'stone'), **Oswaldslow** (Worcestershire; OE *hlāw* 'mound'), *Grimboldestou* (later Grimbalds' Ash; Gloucestershire), and *Wichestanestou* (later Wixamtree; Bedfordshire), contain the names of Anglo-Saxon saints or martyrs, but did not apparently meet at ecclesiastical foundations dedicated to those figures. That *Grimboldestou* and Wixamtree are compounded with the generic *stōw* suggests that their meeting-sites may have been places of religious gathering (see below).

Reaney (1935, 87) allows the possibility that **Becontree** (Essex) is OE *bēcun-trēow* 'sign- or signal-tree' and such a compound might conceivably be a synonym for cross (cf. Rumble 2006, 36, 38); but such an interpretation requires the Domesday form to be dismissed as entirely unreliable, and the first element is generally taken to be a personal name (Anderson 1939*b*, 52-53; Mills 2003, 48; Watts 2004, 46). Pantos (2002, 68) points out the absence of OE *rōd* and *mǣl*, both of which can denote 'a cross', in hundred-names. In fact, the absence

is not quite total, because the Domesday Half Hundred of **Maldon** may be a compound of *mǣl* and OE *dūn*, 'hill with a cross' (Reaney 1935, 218). However, the Domesday district seems to have been named from the borough of Maldon, to which it was appurtenant, and the borough was in turn named from the 'hill with a cross'. In other words, by the time the half hundred came into being, the cross on the hill may only have been a memory preserved onomastically, and not a functioning place of spiritual assembly at all.

Given the Danelaw distribution of hundred-names in *cros*/*kross*, it is conceivable that they were crosses erected during a phase of evangelizing activity within the areas settled by Scandinavians in the ninth and tenth centuries. If this represents the re-use by Christian preachers of a framework of assembly sites, then it implies the existence of a relatively structured early or pre-ninth-century system of local public assembly, which continued to form the basis of governmental administration after the period of Scandinavian settlement. If on the other hand it results from the adoption of Christian assembly sites into a hundredal system laid out in the tenth century, the implication is that the hundredal system as it existed in Domesday really only came into being, in parts of the country at least, at the end of the ninth century or later, and made use of venues primarily dedicated to other kinds of public assembly. In either case, these names are of potential significance for our understanding of the chronology and evolution of English administrative geography and the processes of Scandinavian conversion.

Socio-economic assemblies

COMMERCIAL

port (OE) '(market) town': **Langport** (Kent; OE *lang*). The meeting-place of the hundred of Stotfold, Buckinghamshire lies within the Domesday manor of Lamport (*Landport*, *Lanport* 1086, *Lamport* 1152–58, *Langeport* 1227; probably OE *lang*; Mawer and Stenton 1925, 40, 48-49). Ekwall (1936, 180–82) interprets OE *lang-port* as a periodically-used roadside market place (perhaps consisting of booths). It is worth noting the lost *Langeport* (1086; Gover *et al* 1938, 179–80) near Hare Street in Hertfordshire, and probably therefore close to the meeting-place of **Edwinstree** (Page 1914, 3); and further instances of the compound in **Eastbourne** and in the bounds of **Pagham**, both Sussex; in the bounds of Meon, Hampshire (perhaps near to **Meonstoke**); and at Canterbury, Kent, very close to where **Westgate** Hundred met; as well as Long Port Field and Longport Meadow (*Longport* 1674) in **Wye**, Kent (Cullen 1997, 36, 655, and cf. 52).

RECREATIONAL

gamen (OE) 'game': **Gainfield** (Berkshire).
wīg-fald (OE) ?'wrestling-enclosure': **Wifold** (Berkshire), but alternative explanations of the compound are possible (Skeat 1911, 13; Anderson 1939*a*, 210-11; Ekwall in the addenda to Gelling 1953-1954, lii; Gelling 1953-1954, 46; 1973-1976, 343, and cf. 109, 235).
winn (OE) 'strife, conflict', perhaps 'wrestling' (cf. *winn-stōw* 'a wrestling-place'; Bosworth and Toller 1898, 1234-35): **Wonford** (Devon; *Wenfort*, *Wenforde* 1084, *Wunfordhdr'* 1168; OE *ford*); Ekwall (1960, 530) and Anderson (1939*a*, 98-99) take the first element to be an unrecorded **winn* 'meadow'; Gover *et al.* (1931-1932, 10, 441) suggest a river-name and a wholly Brittonic etymology.

OE *pleg* 'play' is not found in hundred-names, but occurs several times in place-names near to hundred meeting-places. Whether this is a reference to sporting recreation or martial training of some kind is an important question that is difficult to answer, but it is possible that

the two things were not viewed as clearly separate in any case. Pantos (2004*b*, 166) notes the occurrence of a *pleg-stōw* 'play place' at an assembly-place in **Seisdon** (Staffordshire). Within the parishes of **Wrotham**, **Bromley** and **Eastry** (all Kent) were places with OE *pleg* as their first elements (Plaxtol, Plaistow, and Playstool respectively; Wallenberg 1934, 10, 157; Ekwall 1960, 368; Mills 2003, 370; Smith 1956*b*, 67; Watts 2004, 474; Cullen 1997, 498), suggesting that sporting activities were pursued in the vicinity of the hundredal manors, even if there is no evidence that the hundredal meetings took place at the sites of those manors. **Deerhurst** is said to have met at *Plaistow* in the fourteenth century (Pantos 2002, 292). There was also a field known as *le Pleye* (1459; OE *plega* 'games place') in the parish of **Pucklechurch** (Gloucestershire; Smith 1964*c*, 67).

UNSPECIFIED

stōw (OE): '(gathering) place': **Bunsty**, *Wichestanestou* (Bedfordshire), **Northstowe**, **Longstowe** (Cambridgeshire), *Grimboldestou* (Gloucestershire), **Albanstow** (Hertfordshire), **Alboldstow** (Northamptonshire), **Broxtowe** (Nottinghamshire), **Alstoe** (Rutland). OE *stōw* seems to refer to places where gatherings of some sort took place, and perhaps often has religious connotations (Smith 1956*b*, 158-61; Gelling 1982; Forsberg 1984; Cederlöf 1998). In compounds such as *pleg-stōw* 'place of recreation' and *cwealm-stōw* 'place of execution' the implication is clearly not primarily religious, and Sawyer (1981, 162) suggests that it may sometimes have denoted a market.

Discussion

Some of these elements make more explicitly than others the link between hundredal meeting-places and a wide range of communal activities, but the implication is clear – places where people gathered for hundredal business could have multiple functions. It is surprising, however, that some functions are poorly represented in the vocabulary of hundred meeting-places. Secure references to recreation are relatively few. Commercial activity might also be expected to leave a more significant mark on hundredal toponymy, since the buying and selling of goods might be anticipated at any place where people gathered in large numbers on a regular basis. There certainly seems to have been an association between markets and public administrative assemblies (Britnell 1978; Sawyer 1981, 160-61; Pantos 2002, 86-87), and Aston (1986, 68) has observed that many late Anglo-Saxon market towns in Somerset coincide with meeting-places. Of course, a number of eleventh-century administrative districts are named from places of commercial importance during the Anglo-Saxon period, especially those with names in *wīc* (e.g. **Fordwich**, **Greenwich**, **Sandwich**, (all Kent), **Middlewich** (Cheshire), **Ipswich** (Suffolk), and **Norwich** (Norfolk)). That element itself does not seem always to indicate commercial specialization, and is not therefore included in the list of headwords; and it is not always certain that the hundred originally (or ever) met at the *wīc* after which it was named. In other words, the hundredal gatherings of Northwich (Cheshire), for example, may have taken place in a separate location from the commercially important hub by that name (Anderson 1934, xxix-xxx, 149; Pantos 2002, 246).

Coincidence with markets might be suspected where the hundred meetings took place at the gates of a town, as was apparently the case with Bleangate and Westgate (earlier *Stursete* 1086; Anderson 1939*b*, 148-49) at Canterbury, and Dudstone at Gloucester (Anderson 1939*a*, 12-13; Smith 1964*b*, 114, 137, cf. 135, 167). Haslam (1987, 87-88) proposes that Anglo-Saxon markets often evolved in such places, but whether they were there at the time the assembly-sites were established is difficult to determine. It is not the hundred-names themselves that reveal the presence of markets here, and the location of assembly at such sites could have served a range of practical, social, ideological or ceremonial purposes. Perhaps

significantly, the element *cēap* is absent from Domesday hundred-names and *port* only occurs once, while clearly identified archaeological evidence of trading at hundred meeting-places is rare (Pantos 2002, 87-89; 2004*b*, 166).

Some aspects of leisure and commerce may be reflected by the hundred-names in a more indirect way. The earliest type of trading that took place at hundred meeting-places may have differed from the regulated monetary exchange practised at major Anglo-Saxon trading emporia, and was perhaps of a more informal nature, not necessarily involving the use of coinage, nor suitable for sustaining a permanent commercial settlement. Similarly, some forms of recreation and entertainment do not require a specialized playing area. Wherever hundredal gatherings came together, barter and exchange of produce and livestock are likely to have taken place, as are sporting activities of one kind or another. Modern country fairs often combine these two types of activity, and some forms of recreation – horseracing, for example – might have served an important function in advertising the chattel for sale. A considerable number of hundred-names make direct or presumptive reference to animals, and are worth looking at in this context.

Domestic beasts

bucca (OE) 'he-goat': **Bucklow** (Bedfordshire; OE *hlāw*).

bula (OE) 'bull': **Bulford** (N. Yorkshire; OE *ford* or *mere*).

hrȳþer (OE) 'cattle': **Rotherbridge**, **Rotherfield** (both Sussex; OE *brycg*, *feld*).

lamb (OE) 'lamb': **Lambourn** (Berkshire; OE *burna* 'a stream').

nēat (OE) 'cattle': **Neatham** (Hampshire; OE *hām*).

oxa (OE) 'ox': **Oxney** (Kent; OE *ēg*).

ræcc (OE) 'hunting-dog': **Rochford** (Essex; OE *ford*; Reaney 1935, 176, 196-97; Ekwall 1936, 77; 1960, 390; Anderson 1939*b*, 49-50; Mills 2003, 392; Watts 2004, 504).

scēap (OE) 'sheep': **Shipton** (Oxfordshire; OE *tūn* 'farm').

*steorce (OE) 'heifer': **Startley** (Wiltshire; OE *lēah*).

stōd (OE) 'a stud, a herd of horses': **Stodden** (Bedfordshire; OE *denu*). The post-Domesday hundred of Stottesdon is probably OE *stōdes-dūn* 'hill of the stud of horses' (Anderson 1934, 160-61), although Smith (1956*b*, 158) prefers a first element *stot* 'a horse, an ox'.

swīn (OE) 'swine, pig': **Somborne** (Hampshire; OE *burna*), **Swineshead** (Gloucestershire). **Offlow** (Staffordshire) may have met at a mound in Swinfen parish (OE *swīn-fenn* 'pig-marsh'; Pantos 2002, 434-35; 2004*b*, 164; Horovitz 2005).

ticcen (OE) 'kid': **Titchfield** (Hampshire; OE *feld*).

weþer (OE) 'sheep, ram': **Wetherley** (Cambridgeshire; OE *lēah*), **Witheridge** (Devon; OE *hrycg* 'ridge').

*yxen (OE) 'oxen': **Ixhill** (Buckinghamshire; Mawer and Stenton 1925, 114, 127; Anderson 1939*b*, 5).

The post-Domesday *hundredum de Bebia* (c.1130) in Leicestershire is named from the vill of Beeby, 'the village where bees are kept', OE *bēo* 'bee' (Cox 2004, 42). The presence of domestic animals might be implied indirectly by reference to other invertebrates. OE *bēaw* 'gad-fly' may be the first element of **Bewsbury** (Kent; OE *burh*), and ***Wiveliscombe***

(Somerset; OE *cumb* 'a valley') seems to contain OE *wifel* 'beetle'. Gad-flies can be sheep parasites, while some beetles feed off cattle dung, and therefore thrive in regular proximity to livestock. **Budleigh** hundred in Devon (*Budeleie* 1084 Geld Rolls) might also be relevant (pers.n. Budda or OE *budda* 'beetle', with OE *lēah*). Dietz (2004, 70, 81, 119) notes also references to pasture in **Somerden** (OE *denn*; Kent) and the post-Conquest hundred-name *Hagemeda* (a.1169; OE *mǣd*, Gloucestershire).

Wild animals

dēor (OE) 'a (wild) animal': **Deerhurst** (Gloucestershire; OE *hyrst* 'wooded hill').

forsc (OE) 'a frog': **Freshwell** (Essex; OE *welle* 'spring')

fox (OE) 'fox': **Foxearle** (Sussex; OE **elre* 'alder copse'), **Foxley** (Northamptonshirel OE *lēah* 'glade')

fox-hol (OE) 'a fox-hole': **Fexhole** (Warwickshire)

henn (OE) 'a hen, a fowl': **Henhurst** (Sussex; OE *hyrst*)

heorot (OE) 'a hart': **Hartlepool** (Durham; OE *ēg* 'an island', *pol* 'a pool, a creek'), **Hartismere** (Suffolk; OE *mere* 'a pool, a lake'), **Hertford** (Hertfordshire; OE *ford*), and **Hartfield** (Sussex; OE *feld* 'open land').

hræfn (OE) 'raven': **Ramsbury** (Wiltshire; OE *burh*)

hwæl (OE) 'whale': **Welesmere** (Sussex; OE *mere*).

lāwerce (OE) 'lark': **Larkfield** (Kent; OE *feld*)

leax (OE) 'salmon': **Lexden** (Essex; OE *denu* 'a valley')

A number of the wild animals in this list would have been hunted as game, and it is tempting to think of a 'hart-ford' or 'hart-pool' as somewhere deer were known to frequent, and a place from which huntsmen might therefore begin their pursuit. Henhurst and Deerhurst might well have been hunting grounds (and *dȳr-bȳ* (see below) perhaps had a functional role in the management of game). We might think of Lexden as a place of seasonal gatherings to catch fish. If such an interpretation of these names is possible, then in most cases the administrative role of the sites must have been a secondary development, making use of sites with a longer tradition as hunting moots; but it is probably advisable not to read too much into this group of names. Foxes are named three times in hundreds, and no doubt they were hunted as vermin rather than game, and with the intention of extermination rather than management of an edible resource. If a fox's haunt became a traditional gathering place for fox-hunters, then the latter were not doing that job with distinction.

Animal enclosures

*djúr/dȳr-bȳ (OScand) 'animal': (West) **Derby** (Lancashire).

gōs-cot (OE) 'goose-cot': **Goscote** (Leicestershire).

hlōse (OE) 'pigsty': **Loose** (Suffolk), **Clacklose** (Norfolk; OScand pers.n.). Ekwall (1960, xxxi) and Anderson (1939*b*, 183) reject the notion that *hlōse* meant pigsty in hundred-names, taking it in such cases to refer to a temporary shelter set up for the meetings, and although Pantos (2002, 63-64) has reservations, she seems to be of essentially the same opinion. Note, however, that elements denoting 'shelter' and not associated with animals are either absent

(*hūs*, *cot*) or extremely rare – *ærn* (**Crewkerne**, Somerset), *botl* (**Nobottle**, Northamptonshire) – in Domesday hundred-names.

scypen (OE) 'cow-house': ***Scipa*** (Wiltshire). OE *scypen*, *scipen* is literally 'a shed', but is glossed as *bovile*, *stabulum*, *bostar* and probably therefore specifically means 'a cowshed' or similar (Anderson 1939*b*, 184; Bosworth and Toller 1898, 847-48; cf. Latham 1965).

stōd-fald (OE) 'horse-enclosure': **Stotfold** (Buckinghamshire), **Stotfold** (Northamptonshire), **Studfold** (Wiltshire). Note also, *Stodfald* was an alternative name for the ancient enclosure at Borough Hill, possible meeting-places of ***Alwardeslea*** (Northamptonshire; Gover *et al.* 1933, 131-32; Pantos 2002, 375-77; 2004*b*, 165 fn.27, 169 fn.48). Crawford (1924, 150-52) notes that *stōd-fald* often denotes such enclosures, and takes the reference to be figurative. Other instances of *stōd-fald* fall within the same parishes as hundred meeting-places, though not adjacent to them: in **Blewbury** (Berkshire; Gelling 1973-1976, 758-61), **Wirksworth** (Derbyshire; Cameron 1959, 419), and **Puddletown** (Dorset; Mills 1977, 328).

*sulhman-burh (OE) 'ploughman's stronghold or protected enclosure': **Salmonsbury** (Gloucestershire), perhaps so-called because oxen were kept in the ancient enclosure here.

Wulf-(ge)hæg (OE) 'wolf-enclosure': **Wolphy** (Herefordshire)

The recurrence of animal terminology in hundred-names is not surprising, since it forms an important part in wider place-naming practice, but the number of hundred-names that seem to denote animal enclosures – 10 in all – is striking. Although an individual correlation might be explained away, the cumulative evidence cannot be. A coincidental preference for the types of ancient enclosure figuratively labelled *stōd-fald* might explain its recurrence here, but seems inadequate when taken together with references to other animal-pens.

A number of practical explanations present themselves. Places where animals graze are much better suited for popular gatherings than areas of arable cultivation, where for much of the year the danger of damage to crops would be high. Fieldwork has shown that a considerable number of hundred meeting-places were in areas likely to have been communal, upland pasture in earlier times (Baker and Brookes, forthcoming *a*), and Oosthuizen (2011) suggests a context for the origins of communal gatherings in the regulation of shared pastoral rights; within these open expanses, stock enclosures may have been suitably distinctive landscape markers. Perhaps in some cases pens were erected at assembly sites to ensure that the beasts associated with transportation to and from the meeting could be accommodated. In that case, if nothing else, the recurrent references to animal enclosures reveal something of the character of meeting-places.

They might, however, be symptomatic of specific kinds of communal activity. Pantos (2004*b*, 169) suggests that these and other earthworks and enclosures associated with assembly sites were connected with commerce. If Stodfold, Loose, and Goscote were not locations at which horses, pigs and geese were bought and sold during the course of the hundredal assemblies, then perhaps their owners were missing an opportunity!. Animal enclosures might have served as corrals in which pastoralists deposited their livestock during the course of the hundredal assembly, while interested parties examined the merchandise. Such activity could be seasonal and not take place at every hundredal gathering, but it would be regular enough for the establishment of a stock enclosure to be worthwhile. The location of Stotfold, Buckinghamshire, within the manor of Lamport has been noted already, and this at least testifies to commercial activity in the vicinity of the hundred meeting-place. It has been suggested that the meeting-place of Studfold Hundred in Wiltshire was at Tan

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Hill/*Charlborough*, site of late medieval fairs and therefore certainly a place where commercial activity went on (Pollock and Reynolds 2002, 254).

An alternative explanation of these names is that they commemorate the pursuit of leisure activities at gatherings. In this context, the *stōd-fald* names are again potentially significant, because there seems to have been a long association of horseracing with hundredal meeting-places. In several cases, modern gallops still coincide with hundred meeting-places. Staploe hundred in Cambridgeshire was probably situated somewhere on or adjacent to the present Newmarket racecourse, while *Spellhonger Coppice* (OE *spell* 'speech', *hangra* 'hanging wood'), a name indicative of assembly and a possible meeting-place for **Bradley** hundred in Gloucestershire (Smith 1964*a*, 163, 179-80, 188), is on a gallops not far from Cheltenham race-course. At Newmarket, racing under royal patronage began in the early seventeenth century, but may have been building on a much earlier local traditions (May 1982, 19-20; 1984, 3-5). The probable location of *stodfalde* in the bounds of a charter of Uffington in Berkshire (c. 931 (12th) Sawyer 1968, no. 1208; Gelling 1973-1976, 381, 688, cf. 684) directly on top of the Kingston Warren Down gallops is perhaps worth noting.

The existence of race-tracks in medieval England seems to be attested in place-names containing OScand *skeið* 'a course, a track, a race-course', and the compound OScand *hestr-skeið* 'horse-track' (Smith 1956*a*, 245; 1956*b*, 124). Skygates (E. Yorkshire), OScand *skeið-gata* 'race-track road' is situated in the parish and township of **Warter**, which gave its name to the Domesday wapentake (Smith 1937, 171; Atkin 1977-1978, 30), Hesket in the Forest (Cumberland; *hestr-skeið*) was the site where forest courts were held annually in modern times (Atkin 1977-1978, 29), and Hesketh House (W. Yorkshire) lay between Woodkirk, site of a fair, and the lost *Tingley* (OE *þing-hlāw* 'assembly-mound'; Smith 1961*b*, 175, 177; Atkin 1977-1978, 31-32). Atkin demonstrates not only the link between horse-tracks and sites of assembly, but also the survival of horse-racing traditions at some of these places into the modern period. It is not, then, unrealistic to think of Newmarket race-track as a successor to earlier horse-racing on the same heath, and the recurrence of the compound *stōd-fald* at hundred meeting-places might be a further indication of this kind of activity. It should not be assumed that game-animals and horses were the only entertainment – cattle, sheep, geese, and other beasts might have been the subject of sport or blood-sport, and certainly tests of bravado between man and bull could be imagined. It is worth noting, for example, the wide range of blood-sports practised, according to tradition, during public wakes in Shropshire (Jackson and Burne 1883, 2:446–51). If a **wulf-(ge)hæg* was an enclosure in which wolves were caught (Anderson 1934, 163), then what, we might ask, was done with the wolves thereafter? In parts of Europe, Pluskowski (2006, 101) notes the use of wickerwork enclosures to catch wolves alive, and some form of wolf-baiting is at least conceivable.

Conclusions

Hundred-names and hundredal microtoponymy provide an insight into the multiple functions that may have operated within a wider landscape of assembly, but two things are clear from the present study. Firstly, drawing distinctions between different functions of a site may be an anachronistic exercise, creating a functional categorization that would have been unrecognizable to those who attended hundredal moots during the medieval period. The discussion of animal enclosures is a case in point, showing the difficulty of dividing elements of a commercial activity from those associated with recreation. Indeed, a spiritual side to these animal references might also be proposed. In Ireland and Scotland, an association between assembly sites and horse tracks has also been noted and has been linked with the horse symbolism prominent in Celtic mythology (Binchy 1958, 124; Driscoll 2004, 83; Atkin

1977-1978, 34). In fact, religious, commercial, and recreational activities may all have been intricately tied together within the procedures of some public assemblies, to the extent that the practitioners may no longer have been able to say whether a horse was raced as a celebration of an equine deity, as a means of showing off its speed and endurance, or for the pure enjoyment of it; whether horses were bought and sold primarily for practical and commercial purposes, or simply in order to participate in those races and be part of the spiritual observance; or whether the horse was revered because it was sacred, because of its market value, or because of its importance in horse-racing.

A second important observation that arises from this discussion is the very extensive range of vocabulary relating to communal activities. Often our toponymic search for sites of assembly is confined to terms such as *þing*, *spell*, and *(ge)mōt*, and while these are clearly among the best indicators of formal public rendezvous, a much wider terminology of group activities exists. Many place-names not geographically close to known sites of administrative assembly are onomastically associated with gatherings of one kind or another – judicial and governmental, military, spiritual, commercial, and leisure (e.g. Dymond 1992-1993; Pantos 2004*a*, 196, Fig. 8.1; Baker and Brookes forthcoming *b*). The four neighbouring hundreds of Armingford, Odsey, Edwinstree, and Uttlesford, on the borders between Hertfordshire, Essex, and Cambridgeshire, present a useful example. The locations of their hundredal meeting-places have been placed respectively at Arrington Bridge, Gallows Hill (next to Odsey Grange), Meeting Field in Furneux Pelham, and Uttlesford Bridge in Wendens Ambo (Anderson 1934, 104; 1939*b*, 25-26, 33-36; Gover *et al*. 1938, 168-69). Nevertheless, OE *(ge)mōt* may lie behind as many as five place-names within these four hundreds (Mettle Hill, Mootelowfurlong, Metley Hill, Mutfords, and Mutlow Hall; Reaney 1935, 543; 1942, 51, 60; Gover *et al*. 1938, 168, 180; Coates 1978), which also contain an OE *spell-beorg* (*Spelbeorghe*; Sawyer 1968, no. 907; Hesse 1994, 135-37), a Playstow (Gover *et al*. 1938, 175), and a *here-hlāw* (*Harlawe* 1294; Reaney 1935, 630). Yet only one of these names implying communal gatherings is spatially close to a posited hundred meeting-place. In other words, as many as eleven different assembly places may have existed within four hundredal districts.

On the face of it, this suggests that a very busy landscape of assembly existed during the medieval and early modern periods, perhaps with a considerable degree of functional, hierarchical and perhaps even seasonal separation – some sites serving individual territorial units, some serving larger groupings; some specializing in economic interactions, others in military duties; some used in summer, others in winter; and so on. We might conclude that assemblies convened for the administration of justice formed only one stratum within a multi-layered medieval landscape of popular gatherings associated with military mustering, religious observance, commercial activity and leisure pursuits. If the sites were in use contemporaneously, then the network of assembly sites and the organization of local and regional governance must have been more complex than is suggested by the hundredal system outlined in the Domesday survey, and this has significant implications also for our understanding of the everyday lives of medieval people, who must therefore have existed within a very complex socio-economic administrative framework, attending a considerable variety of forums for negotiation, regulation, and exchange.

In view of the evidence for multiple-functionality at individual sites, however, this can only be part of the explanation. Since these different communal functions could occur at separate sites, but also sometimes coexisted, it seems likely that assembly sites evolved functionally over time. In some instances, the genesis of the hundredal system may have involved the

taking over of sites already used for gatherings of another kind, simply imposing a new role on it. In other cases, hundredal assemblies may have been established at sites not previously used for such purposes, with other activities subsequently migrating from earlier communal places and evolving within the new popular foci. What the diverse toponymic evidence of assembly may also reveal is that the location of district meeting-places themselves changed over time, perhaps in recognition of changing territorial geography, new political or social priorities, or socio-economic trends. The patchwork picture of the hundreds provided by the Domesday survey is not indicative of uniformity or universality in territorial relationships, topographical location or onomastic traditions. The present discussion seems to reinforce the impression that the image we get is really just a single brief moment in time of a system that had been evolving in different ways and at different speeds over an extended period, and continued to do so after 1086.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

Pers.n.	Personal name
OE	Old English
OScand	Old Scandinavian

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