

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THE STUDY of place-names is infrequently discussed; few people realise the interesting connections that can be uncovered by delving into such works as Etwall's "Oxford Dictionary of Place Names" and Stokes' "English Place Names", which makes close reference to the former.

The historical aspects are, of course, far-reaching. Experts can distinguish between various derivations from their language study - Latin roots are obvious to many of us - e.g. *Castra* - a fort - Chester, Lancaster, Cirencester

Porta - door or entry - Portland, Portsmouth

It is interesting to note that the Anglo-Saxon and Danish roots can help us to define the boundaries of these invasions, e.g.

Norwegian element in Northern England - Scarborough, Normanby.

Danish influence in the Danelaw - Yorks, Leics, Nott and Lincs.

Scandinavian influence in Norfolk and further south - beck (brook) etc.

Reference to physical conditions in various parts of the country gave help to the mediaeval traveller and hinted at local conditions. Names ending in "bridge" indicate a crossing and often include the type of bridge - Bridgford, Clappersgate, Bamford, Burford etc.

Some names hint at early industry - Milbrook, Melford, Fullerton, Woodmancote, Sapperton, Salter, Saltford etc. Plaistow, Playford refer to sports and horse-racing.

Many names refer to cereals, fruits and animals -

Wheatley, Pyrford (referring to pears),

Cherry Willingham, Cowley, Oxtun, Shepton and Oxford.

Chipping refers to a market - Chipping Norton, Campden and Sodbury.

The mention of names of tribes, gods, local families and historical events all leave their impressions -

Wychwood - Forest of the Hwicce, Kencot - Cēna's cot,

Wednesbury - from Woden's burg, Stratford - Ford by which a Roman

road crossed a river.

All the Stratfords are on Roman roads.

The legacy of the Norman invasion left its imprint - many of the names still have French words surviving. The invaders took over many castles and manors and gave names superseding the English ones - Beamish, Beaumont, Belper and Chapel en le Frith, Leafield, Mountsorrel.

The readers of this magazine I am sure would prefer to hear of local interpretations, and here is a list taken at random:

Asthall - Woodland of the Asthall people.

Asthall - Old English for Easthall.

Bruern - Brewery,

Burford - Ford by a hill or tumulus,

Charlbury - The burg of Ceorl's people,

Filkins - The people of Filica,

Finmere - Mere frequented by woodpeckers,

Finstock - Stoc (trunk of a tree),
Fulbrook - Foul or dirty brook.

(I should have preferred the connection with Fuller's earth found nearby, or a full brook).

Gatcombe - Valley frequented by wild goats,

Guiting - Guiting seems to have been the old name for the Windrush.

Gyting is a derivative of Old English "gyte" = "flood".

Guiting Power - from the local family, could be Poix or Picard.

Hailey(bury) - Hay lot or allotment for grazing.

Handborough, (Church and Long) - Hagen's Hill, Hand's Hill, or Cock's Hill.

Headington - connected with Headda (local person).

Idbury - Ida's Burg.

Kiddington - The Tun of Cydda's people,

Kidlington - The Tun of Cydela's people.

Leafield - The Field; 'lea' (le) is the French definite article.

Slaughters (Upper and Lower) - Slough; muddy place.

Taynton - The Tun of Taeta people.

Widford - Wide ford.

Whitehall - Hill with a curved hollow. The Wychwoods.

Ascott-u-Wychwood - The d'Oiley family took its name from one of the Ouillys in Normandy.

Milton-u-Wychwood - Middle Tun.

Shipton-u-Wychwood - Sheep Farm. Tun = homestead.

Some amusing names still survive in our locality and elsewhere:

Come to Good, near Truro;

Whip ma Whop ma Gate, York;

Christmas Pie, Surrey;

Pity Me, Durham;

Hollywood, in Warwickshire;

Gibraltar, Bucks.;

Egypt, Bucks.;

Purgatory Farm, Oxon.;

Wyre Piddle, Glos.;

Stragglethorpe, Lincs.

(Pictures of most of these are in Stokes' English Place Names).

We are constantly referring to changes in style and spelling in our English language, but I have felt it is a little impertinent of us to change the names of foreign countries and cities. Foreigners do it to us, I admit, but it would economise on time, help ease communication and certainly, in some cases, preserve more beautiful sounds to keep to the original.

I am prompted to say this as my arrival as a young student in "Bruxelles" did not immediately mean that I should translate this as "Brussels". I hopped out of the train in time, but it has always rankled in my mind ---. How much prettier sounding are Italia and Espana; why shouldn't Germany be Deutschland and Sweden Sverge? Roma and Venetia are easily within our limits of pronunciation. Conversely why should London become Londres to the French - we lose the Latin connection.

And so to where we came in. Perhaps this was why I was prompted to write in the first instance.

M.M.

Can anyone find the meaning of Ready Token?