

Behind the dictionary-forms of Scandinavian elements in England

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Old Norse and Anglo-Scandinavian

In common with the tradition out of which it grew, *English place-name elements* (1956; hereafter EPNE) cites all the Scandinavian elements which its editor A.H. Smith found in names of the north and east in their Old Norse (ON) form. This is perfectly defensible lexicographical practice; after all, ON was the first Scandinavian language to be written extensively (and in an accessible script) and the vehicle of an important literary tradition. Dictionaries of ON existed already in 1956; cross-reference was facilitated; scholars would be familiar with the words as cited. Relying on its word-forms to represent the whole of the Scandinavian language-complex was therefore a rational strategy to adopt and one which the editors of the *Vocabulary of English place-names* (1997–date, hereafter VEPN) continue to use for the same good reasons. The lemma of the Scandinavian (Scand.) word for ‘beaver’, for instance, appears (VEPN 1: 107) as **bjórr**, a good ON form, rather than the ancestral form **bē(v)r-*, though the latter could more obviously legitimate the recorded forms of *Barbon* (PN We 1: 23) and *Bardale* (PN YN: 263) with their consistent medieval record of forms like <Ber->.

As this example implies, though, the practice of using ON lemmata can be philologically misleading, since it might suggest that Scand. forms identical with ON forms were the ones which entered English toponymy (as noted already by Hamre 1958). Whilst this sometimes happened, it was not always the case. Many place-names in England show evidence of forms which are demonstrably older than ON. Let us take the familiar field- and minor name element *sleight* ‘smooth or level place’ as a case in point. EPNE (2: 129) cites the source of this element under the ON lemmata **slétta** (noun) or **slétr** (adjective). As the English spelling I have selected suggests, the element is typically represented in medieval and later texts by <sleight>, sometimes also <sleet>, and it is clear from the former that the source is North Germanic, i.e. Scand., **sleht-*, the ancestor of the root of the two

Norse words cited; Smith himself makes this clear in the text of the entry.¹ The assimilation of postvocalic [h] to certain following consonants is dated by Haugen (1976: 155) to the Common Scandinavian period, i.e. before 1050, and it is **sleht* that the Scandinavians donated to the English lexicon. There is nothing to prevent us from believing that the word was borrowed relatively early in the colonization of the Danelaw.²

Bearing in mind this distinction between ON and pre-ON forms, we should ensure that scholars have a means of specifying precisely which appear in Scand. names in England, just as they have for Brittonic thanks to the work of Jackson in the first volume of this journal (1968). To that end, this article is offered as a specification of the philology underlying certain lemmata in handbooks such as EPNE and VEPN, so that, where necessary, anachronism or the appearance of anachronism can be avoided. It is also a contribution to Anglo-Scandinavian (AScand.) philology more generally. My own practice in future will be to cite reconstructed AScand. forms, accompanied by the normally-cited ON forms to facilitate cross-reference; citing reconstructed forms is what I have done with regard to Brittonic in Coates and Breeze (2000: 347–56) and subsequent work.

Why bother?

In case some justification of this pedantic practice seems desirable, consider the following. We do not cite borrowed Latin words in their Old French form, thus, for instance, claiming implicitly that English *direct* is taken from Old French *dreit* or French *droit* rather than from Latin *directus*. We do not, nowadays, write that a name such as *Cheetwood* (La; Ekwall 1922: 33) contains Welsh *coed* ‘wood’; we write (Neo-)Brittonic or Proto-Welsh **cēd*, even at the cost of equipping it with the asterisk which indicates that such a form is strictly hypothetical, i.e. that there is only indirect evidence for its existence, however robust that evidence is. We do not, or should not, claim that the surname *Scotney*, found manorially in e.g. Sutton Scotney, Ha (Gover 1961: 179), is derived from French *Étocquigny*. It is not from the current name of this village in Seine-Maritime, Normandy, but from a version of it current in medieval England, exemplified in the surname *Escoteni* found in the Pipe Roll of 1195–6 and *Scoteni* later, which did not suffer metathesis of its two plosive consonants as the French local name did. It is correct to say that the family originated in (what is now) *Étocquigny*, but that the surname is borrowed in the form <(E)scoteni>. Where it is

judged necessary, we should have the means available to avoid committing the same sorts of solecism with Scandinavian names, and we should be able to offer carefully reconstructed forms appropriate to the period of borrowing alongside our handbook lemmata. We already do this kind of thing for Scandinavian personal names; we would not say that *Anlaby* (PN YE: 216) contains *Óláfr*, but the earlier form of this name *Anlāf* (representing *Anleif*).

Some illustrative material

In what follows, then, I adopt the default principle of citing Scand. elements in the form in which they existed when they first entered toponymy, so far as this can be determined. For example, there is no evidence in England for the use of the historic strong nominative singular in *-r*, and for our purposes it should be regarded as having been obsolete at the crucial time.³ Certain important ON vowel effects – umlauts and diphthongization (“breaking”, i.e. *a*-umlaut of */e/), stress-shifting in diphthongs (both inherited and broken), and lengthening before certain consonant clusters – are also not found.⁴ I therefore propose, in my own practice, to supplement such forms as the following ones with reconstructions of the type discussed above:

- *melr* ‘sandbank or sandhill’ with the nominative singular suffix *-r* appropriate to masculine nouns of this class and adjectives with similar inflectional behaviour (see also some of the items below); and also those showing this suffix assimilated to the preceding consonant, as in *steinn* ‘stone’ or derived personal name and *ketill* ‘kettle’ or derived personal name
- *hqrgr* ‘cairn’ with *u*-umlaut (this term is used here for the effects of both [u] and [w] on a preceding [a])
- *ƒjall* ‘fell, mountain’ with breaking (*a*-umlaut), plus stress-shifting in a diphthong produced by breaking
- *skjǫldr* ‘shield’ with breaking (*a*-umlaut) and *u*-umlaut,⁵ plus stress-shifting in a diphthong produced by breaking
- *ǫjúpr* ‘deep’ with stress-shifting in an inherited diphthong
- *lúndr* ‘grove’ and *hjálmr* ‘helmet, barn’ with pre-cluster lengthening (the former is given thus in EPNE 2: 27–8, but appears to be in error; any forms testifying to lengthening must be due to the contemporaneous pre-cluster lengthening which is general in English (cf.

Cameron 1968, and for the earliest instance of this criticism, Hamre 1958: 618)

Shifting the focus of interest away from ON forms is tantamount to claiming, for instance, that *a*- and *u*-umlaut and, in most phonetic environments, stress-shifting in a diphthong, did not take place in the Scand. spoken on the western side of the North Sea. Since most of what is known about AScand. is known only through insular scribal traditions, it is equally possible that their effects were entirely obscured by the processes of aligning the phonemic systems of AScand. and OE with each other. Any evidence surfacing which suggests that these phonetic changes did indeed occur in Britain will need careful evaluation.

Other issues in Anglo-Scandinavian phonology and morphology

A major issue concerns the Scand. front rounded vowels /œ:/ and /y/. Did they exist in England? The evidence about the former is rare and ambivalent. If the names *Leake* (L; Cameron 1998: 79), *Leek* (St; Watts 2004: 367; Horovitz 2005: 357) and so on contain the element **læk-* ‘stream’, which is possible but not certain, then it seems that AScand. did not have /œ:/ in the period of the records. It seems to have unrounded to [e:], just as its ME equivalent did. This conclusion is supported by *Scaitebec* (YW; EPNE 2: 126) if it contains the ancestor of ON *skøyti* ‘shaft, missile’ with its front rounded diphthong. The case of /y/ is much better resourced with evidence. It is found in such elements as are cognates – or ancestors – of ON *bryggja* ‘jetty >> bridge [in England]’, *hryggr* ‘ridge’, *hylr* ‘pool’, *lyng* ‘ling, heather’, *ryð* ‘clearing’, *ytri* ‘outer’, and so on. None of the evidence I have seen suggests conclusively that any of these words was pronounced with [y] in relevant names in the period of record; i.e. there are no spellings with Middle English (ME) <e> or <u> which might tell against a pronunciation with [i]. If closer investigation confirms this, are we to assume that Common Scand. **/y/*, the product of *i*-umlaut, had unrounded in England before the end of the first millennium (whilst even in the least conservative parts of Scandinavia proper it persisted for over 200 years more), or that it participated in the general English unrounding of front vowels which was gaining momentum at the same period? It seems safer, provisionally and for present purposes, to presume the latter and to reconstruct AScand. elements as if their front rounded vowels remained intact during the period at which

they were borrowed.⁶ There is little pre-Conquest evidence to guide us, so we see the issue through ME-coloured spectacles. Indeed I have assumed that the basic AScand. vowel inventory was identical with that of ON, even if the effect of some assimilatory changes must be discarded, as discussed above. That is, the system had retained as distinct the historic Common Scand. vowel phonemes, long and short: /i e ε a o ɔ u y ø œ/ and the diphthongs /au ei ey/ (adapted, with some typographical simplification, from Gordon and Taylor 1957: 266 and Haugen 1976: 152). The issue of the so-called “rising” diphthongs (i.e. /j/ followed by a vowel) will be touched on below.

As for morphology, where evidence for an element comes only from names containing an inflected form, there may be no good grounds, at any rate in place-name study, *not* to reconstruct a form identical with the citation-form of an ON word. A good example is *Whenby* (PN YN: 30) whose first element is *kvenna* ‘woman (genitive plural)’, which casts no light on whether the AScand. form of the nominative case (the citation-form) was different from ON *kona* or not.

Anglo-Scandinavian place-name elements in the light of the above

The main part of this article consists of a simple list of ON etyma taken directly from EPNE, arranged in six tables, with suggestions for reconstructed earlier forms which are appropriate in the light of the above comments, just as Jackson did for Brittonic. EPNE is used as the foundation because VEPN, with its more up-to-date scholarship, is not yet sufficiently far advanced to provide a full list. These new reconstructed forms need to be ascribed to a language and a period with suitable names. I suggest, following Gillian Fellows-Jensen’s lead, that *Scandinavian* is sufficient where the etyma show no evidence of eastern (Danish) or western (Norse) dialectal features, and that *Anglo-Scandinavian* might be used where greater specificity is required. Appropriate abbreviations would be respectively *Scand.*, and *AScand.* Where regional features can be detected, it is acceptable to speak of *Anglo-East (West) Scandinavian*, abbreviated as appropriate. Since the forms are the result of philological scholarship and are not directly evidenced, they should be asterisked. It is important to remember that this should strictly be done even when a form so arrived at is identical to a form known from ON, as in the case of ON *naut* ‘cattle’, Scand. **naut*. Since the list below is intended to be strictly practical,

however, the only ON forms selected for critical intervention are those which differ from what is justifiable in the light of evidence from Viking and post-Viking England. Some of the suggestions merit or need further discussion, and this is done in notes at suitable points in tables 1–6.

In all the tables below, therefore, nominative singular *-r* and assimilated allomorphs of it are omitted; no further account is taken of this feature. The vowel-assimilation features mentioned above are suppressed. All instances of late pre-cluster vowel-lengthening are discarded. A hyphen is used to indicate stem-final position. It does not follow from this that an inflectional ending must always have been present. The hyphen could be omitted where no issue of inflectional morphology is involved.

In writings on place-names, symbols in ON etyma are normally chosen in accordance with the orthographic practice of writers of ON. But since the intention is now to draw attention to phonetic characteristics of the source forms which are not strictly ON, some innovations are suggested. <w> is used for ON <v>, which is generally acknowledged to have represented phonetic [w]; <v> is used for ON <f> in those environments where it was pronounced [v]; and, in similar environments, <y> is used instead of ON <g> where this represented a fricative consonant.⁷ This is consistent with what is now generally done with reconstructed Proto-Welsh and corresponding Neo-Brittonic languages. If phonology (i.e. phonemics) rather than phonetics were in question, it would be defensible to continue to write <f> and <g> in the latter two cases. But for most purposes a representation of the exact reconstructed pronunciation, rather than of the synchronically valid phonological units of the period, will be the most useful for philological scholars. Other self-evident adjustments to ON scribal practice are made, namely the use of <f> for [f] where ON uses <p> before a consonant in such words as *elptr* ‘swan’ and *topt* ‘houseplot’.

Some judgements have been made which may remain controversial. For instance, there seems to be no evidence in the toponymic record by which to judge for how long Scand. initial [h] remained audible before [l] or [r], as in the words *hlaða* ‘barn’ and *hreysi* ‘cairn’. Since pre-Conquest evidence from the relevant counties is often sparse, it is possible that the apparent early loss of [h] in such words is not a peculiarity of AS cand.,⁸ but rather that it disappeared in the general initial cluster-simplification of ME that was completed north of the Thames in the period 1100–1300. Retaining <h> for such instances of [h] is not inappropriate. In some other cases, it is a matter of judgement whether a particular detail is one proper to AS cand. or OE. The ancestor of the word *wapentake* has an inherited long vowel in its first syllable in ON (*vápnatak*) and presumably in Common Scand. (cf. early

OHG *wāffen*, MDu *wāpen*). It was borrowed into late OE as *wapengetæc* with a short vowel, and it seems highly likely that the shortening was an *English* effect, since English has a history of vowel-shortening in the stressed syllable of trisyllables. We cannot be sure how to evaluate the fact that the ancestor of ON *kíll* ‘creek’ has a short vowel in the sole name in which it is known to appear in England, though its position in a closed syllable may be responsible. Furthermore, whilst Scand. **lātr-* ‘lair’ may be indistinguishable from, or even confused with, Middle Irish *lettir* ‘slope’ in the north-west, it seems possible that it too always has a short vowel in England, i.e. in AScand. But none of these points is beyond dispute.

Generally, the etymologies given in Survey volumes are not challenged, since the purpose is to discuss pronunciation and the examples are illustrative of points of phonetics. The writer does not necessarily agree with all of the etymologies mentioned or implied below.

The work of earlier scholars, especially Smith, might appear to be unfavourably criticized here, but that is not the case. There is no suggestion that they were (or are) ignorant of the issues involved. They were fully aware of the sound-changes which transformed Common Scandinavian into Old Norse, and would have expected their philologically literate readers to be able to unwind them to arrive by inference at an understanding of how an ON word from the high Middle Ages could serve as the source for late-OE, early-ME name-forms. They would have been aware that their proposals relied on shorthand rather than sleight of hand, and would no doubt have seen their practice as legitimate. The present proposal is not a corrective, therefore, but it embodies an intention to exercise philological exactitude and avoid anachronism in future place-name work, and to offer others a checklist for doing the same.

Table 1

**Old Norse etyma from EPNE
with *u*-umlaut of [a] (*u*-stems
and *ō*-stems)**

Reconstructed AScand. etyma

bǫllr ‘ball’	*ball-
flǫt ‘flat piece of ground’	*flat-
gǫltr ‘boar’	*galt-

hǫfn (1) 'haven', (2) 'possession'	*havn-
hǫfuð 'head'	*havuð- Forms with <o> for expected <a> are found in ME place-names. These may be for Late Scand. (not necessarily Late AS cand.) *hǫvuð-, i.e. showing <i>u</i> -umlaut, or, in the writer's view more plausibly, for the earlier Scand. type *hauvuð-, since Scand. forms in <au> usually give ME <ou>, i.e. they appear in spellings with an <o>.
hǫgg 'felling >> part of wood marked off for felling'	*hagg-
hǫldr 'yeoman, "hold"'	*hald- However, <i>hold</i> is the form found in some names suspected of being Scand., in which case it is appropriate to give as the etymon Late Scand. (not necessarily Late AS cand.) *hǫld-, i.e. showing <i>u</i> -umlaut (EPNE 1: 258).
hǫrgr 'cairn'	*harg-
hǫtr 'hat' The Durham name <i>Hett</i> could be from the dative singular of this word, <i>hetti</i> (though the use of that case-form would be unusual) or from the related word <i>hetta</i> 'hood'.	*hatt-
hvǫnn 'angelica, <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> '	*hwann-
knǫrr 'warship' (under <i>lending</i> in EPNE 2: 23)	*knar-

knotttr ‘ball, knot, mass >> hillock’	*knatt- However, <i>knott</i> is the form found in some names suspected of being Scand., in which case it is appropriate to give as the etymon Late Scand. (not necessarily Late AS cand.) *knott-, i.e. showing <i>u</i> -umlaut (EPNE 2: 5–6)
kokkr ‘lump’ (or perhaps personal name) EPNE 2: 6 mistakenly gives <i>kokkr</i>	*kakk-
lqgr ‘law’ (incorrectly for lqg)	*lay-
mql ‘gravel(ly soil)’	*mal-
mqrk ‘boundary’	*mark-
qkull ‘ankle’	*ak(k)ul- The appearance of this specifically West Scand. form in <i>Acklam</i> (YE; EPNE 2: 54) has been challenged (e.g. CDEPN: 2).
qmstr ‘heap (e.g. of dung, corn)’	*amst-
qngull ‘fish-hook; ? >> bend’	*angul-
rqrst ‘resting-place’	*rast-
stqng ‘pole’	*stang- Surely the fact that this word may appear as dialectal <i>stong</i> is due to 10 th -cent. English rounding of [a] before a nasal group (as in <i>long</i>), and not to <i>u</i> -umlaut in the source-word as suggested in EPNE (2: 157).
stqrr ‘sedge’	*star-
stqđ ‘landing-place, staithe’	*stađ-
strqnd ‘strand, beach’	*strand-

*þrǫngr ‘compressed, narrow’	*þrang- On <i>throng</i> in <i>Throngham</i> (Cu; EPNE 2: 214), cf. the note on *stang- above. The name is currently <i>Thrangholm</i> (PN Cu: 135), and spellings in <o> in this and other names (PN We 1: xix) are late.
vǫgn ‘grampus’	*wayn-
vǫllr ‘meadow, pasture, paddock’	*wall-
vǫr ‘fenced-in landing-place’	*war-

Table 2

Old Norse etyma from EPNE with breaking, i.e. *a*-umlaut of [e]

Reconstructed AScand. etyma

bjarg ‘precipice, rock’	*berg- It is correctly noted in VEPN (1: 89) that this would be indistinguishable from *berg- ‘hill’, which is why the element cannot be proved to have appeared in England.
fjall ‘mountain, fell’	*fell- As noted in EPNE (1: 174), this is indistinguishable from the related *fell which gives e.g. Icelandic <i>fell</i> , embodying the same root. The difference is due to differences between lost suffixes.
hjallr ‘shed’	*hell-
hjálmr ‘helmet >> barn’	*helm-

jafn 'level'	*evn- Breaking seems to have applied early in absolute-initial position, and this element always appears in England in the form showing breaking, viz. *javn-; the latter is therefore the etymon that should be cited for this word. The same applies to the next two items and to <i>jǫfurr</i> in table 3.
jalda 'nag, broken-down horse'	*eld-, *jald-
jarl 'earl'	*erl-, *jarl-
kjarr 'brushwood-covered marsh, carr'	*ker-
skjaldari 'shieldmaker'	*skeldari
skjálfr 'shelf'	*skelf-
skjallr 'resounding'	*skell-

On the lack of evidence for this process (and those treated in table 3) in loanwords in the general vocabulary, see Björkman (1900: 292–3).

Table 3

**Old Norse etyma from EPNE
with breaking compounded
with *u*-umlaut of the breaking-
product [a]**

Reconstructed AScand. etyma

fjǫðr 'feather'	*feðr-
hjørtr 'hart'	*hert-
hjørð 'herd'	*herð-
jǫfurr 'wild boar'	*evur-, *javur- See note on <i>jafn</i> in table 2.
kjǫlr 'keel >> ridge'	*kel-

skjǫldr ‘shield’	*skeld-
smjǫr ‘grease, butter’	*smer-
tjǫrn ‘mountain lake, tarn’	*tern-

The only proffered evidence from England for breaking plus *u*-umlaut concerns the name *Beetham* (We), which is discussed after table 4.

Table 4

**Old Norse etyma from EPNE
with stress-shifting in diphthongs**

Reconstructed AScand. etyma

bjóðr ‘table >> plateau’	*bēð-
bjórr ‘beaver’	*bē(v)r-
*bjúgr ‘bent’, nominalized as ‘river-bend’	*bēγ-
djúpr ‘deep’	*dēp-
djúr ‘animal’	*dēr- Later *dȳr, monophthongized from a form like <i>djúr</i> , may be found in <i>Dyrah</i> (Cu; PN Cu: 236).
fljót ‘fleet, river’	*flēt Also in Scotland; river Fleet (Kcb; Nicolaisen 2001: 144).
gljúfr ‘chasm’	*glēvr-
grjót ‘gravel’	*grēt-
hjól ‘wheel’	*h(w)ēwul- The later form equivalent to the ON form has been offered as the etymon of <i>Shoulthwaite</i> (Cu; PN Cu: 316), but the earliest spelling <Heolthwaitis> suggests the persistence of */ē/ and the distinct vowel of the second syllable.

kjóss ‘small creek, valley, recess’	*kēs- This may appear in <i>Keasley</i> (We; PN We 2: 108), but modern /keizli/ gives pause for thought. Other relevant names give no problem.
ljóss ‘bright >> bare’	*lēs-
sjón ‘view’	*sēn-
skjól ‘shelter’	*skēl-

There is little toponymic evidence that Common Scand. */ēu/ and */ēo/, the respective sources of ON *jú* and *jó*, did not merge in AScand. as */ē/. The alleged counterevidence in the claim for *Shoulthwaite* seems to be wrongly interpreted. The evidence for a trace of a diphthong in *Dyrah* looks stronger if the etymology in PN Cu is correct, but there is only a single medieval record, and that is rather late (1332). The most serious evidence is provided by *Shunner Howe* (YN; PN YN: 130), but even in this the two earliest spellings are <Senerhou>. Smith suggests here that the modern development appearing to confirm the presence of something like ON *jó* “indicates a late connection with the Scandinavians”, though if he is right that the same applies in the late-evidenced *Shunner Fell*, Wensleydale (no independent entry in PN Y at all), the effect seems to have been at the level of an individual lexical item rather than of dialect more broadly. This impression is underlined by the apparently identical *Shundraw* (Cu; PN Cu: 314). Perhaps ON *sjónar-haug(r)* ‘lookout mound’ was borrowed lexically at a time when bilingualism favoured Scandinavian less and fewer borrowings were made. There is very slim evidence (two spellings) in the general borrowed vocabulary for the persistence of a diphthong in OE or early ME,⁹ with no distinction between the two possible sources corresponding to ON *jó* and *jú* (Björkman 1900: 300).

Elsewhere in Yorkshire there are signs of a ME process producing [j] before diphthongs (PN YE: xxxi), but the evidence does not permit confidently ascribing it to Scand. influence (see e.g. PN YE: 175–6, 182–3); something similar appears late in Derbyshire names (PN Db 1: lii), and neither instance appears to bear on the main point of this article. Smith also notes early forms of *Deepdale* (We; PN We 1: liii, 2: 221–2) that suggest *jú*, though these are contemporaneous with English-looking spellings. Following Ekwall, he also notes very early forms (including Domesday) of *Beetham* (also We 1: liii) that suggest *jó*, though he discusses at length (1: 66–8; addendum 1: xiv) the suggestion made in the Scandinavian

philological literature that there was a word that might be lemmatized as **beð*, a relevant form of which would have had the stem *bjøð-* (actually recorded; VEPN 1: 94), perhaps, in this context, meaning ‘embankment’. The etymology of the latter remains uncertain but the forms of both these names (especially *Deepdale*) demand to be treated respectfully and they encourage us to adopt a cautious position which acknowledges that chronologically distinct forms may appear in AS cand. toponymy.

This is the limit of the evidence known to the author for the non-merger of these two Scand. diphthongs as **/ē/*. The well-known crux *yule* shows, however (Björkman 1900: 242), that in initial position a stress-shifted inherited diphthong (whichever it was) was retained, as also in *York* (Fellows-Jensen 1987: 147–8), just as the stress-shifted broken Scand. **/e/* was retained in this position (see items like *jafn* in tables 2 and 3).

Bewholme, a settlement-name in Nunkeeling (PN YE: 77–8), is derived by Smith from the dative plural form of an inferred ON **bjúgr* ‘river-bend’, which in our terms would be **bēγum*. The medieval spellings are entirely consistent with the spirit of Smith’s account and with the letter of the present proposal.

Table 5

**Old Norse etyma from EPNE
with pre-cluster lengthening,
where not treated above**

Reconstructed AS cand. etyma

lúndr ‘grove’	<p><i>*lund-</i></p> <p>There are six simplex names found as pre-modern or modern <i>Lound</i>. This may indicate instances of Late Scand. <i>*lūnd</i> (if this is authentic) or of a development of <i>*lund-</i> in accented position through the identical late-OE process. The earliest spellings (CDEPN: 383, under Lound, Lount) do not suggest a long vowel at all.</p>
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málmr ‘sand(y place)’	*malm-
úlfr ‘wolf’	*ulf-

These forms are correctly given without the accent by Cameron (1968: 31, 31, 39 respectively; for commentary on the underlying issue of the dialect incidence of lengthening, see also Hamre 1958: 618–9).

Table 6

Old Norse etymon from EPNE **Reconstructed AScand. etymon**
with consonant-group
assimilation

slétr, slétta ‘level (ground)’	*sleht-
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The case for this, perhaps the most obviously telling of all the instances presented, was argued above. The form of the argument can be repeated in all cases where phonetic change occurs during the period of interest; for instance **hváll-* ‘isolated hill’ evolves into **hól-*, and there is evidence for both the earlier and the later in English toponymy (EPNE 1: 270, 258). It is defensible to argue, as implied in the case of *Deepdale* above, that the word must have been borrowed twice, at different times and/or by different communities; this, from the point of view of the respective communities involved, is no different from borrowing different words.

The **sleht-* case is also a quite different matter from the issue of consonantal assimilation affecting nasal clusters, where the dialectal differentiation caused by the progress of this change through the Scand. vocabulary has had a lasting effect in England too. We find *brink* and *breck* in England as reflexes of Common Scand. **brinka* ‘slope’, but since both were borrowed separately as regional toponymic elements in England, they need to be treated as separate elements, as has been common practice: Anglo-East Scandinavian **brinke* and Anglo-West Scandinavian **brekka*.

The final phonological issue to be touched on is that of the representation of final unstressed vowels, especially the noun-class markers *-i* and *-(j)a*. There is no evidence in England for the preservation of this distinction, and the circumstances of the transmission of name-forms in non-Scandinavian documents throughout the Middle Ages even complicate the issue of whether there are grounds for reconstructing a distinction between

vowel-final elements and those without such a vowel. Smith comments explicitly, for instance, on the difficulty of telling apart “ON” *skál* ‘bowl, hollow’ from *skáli* ‘temporary hut’, and *brot* ‘small piece (of land)’ from *broti* ‘heap of felled trees, etc.’ (EPNE 2: 123; 1: 53 respectively), and the same applies to *hjalli* ‘ledge’ and *hjallr* ‘shed’ (1: 248). The issue is complicated further by the fact that some relevant words were clearly borrowed into English (note grammatically English *-scales* in various names, for instance). There seems little linguistic justification for any stronger claim than that AS cand. elements might have a final vowel, which we could symbolize as <V>, its precise phonetic nature being unknown. We may suspect, of course, that it was a mid-central vowel, like that on which the values of late OE short unstressed (especially final) vowels were converging. That <V> may have been only variably present; although, anticipating a full reassessment of the key names, we may find that it was present where a vowel was etymologically expected, whether *-i* or *-(j)a*. If we write anything more specific into the relevant reconstructed early-AS cand. forms, we are going beyond what the evidence allows and making etymologically-based assumptions which may have been false in the complex bilingualism of the later Danelaw.

Dialectological matters

The wider issue of dialectal diversity in the Scand. of Britain can be briefly addressed here, since it has an impact on the issue in hand, namely the way we select our reconstructed forms to accompany ON and subsequent lemmata. The evidence exists for specifically Danish or Norse forms (e.g. *bōth* vs. *būð* ‘booth’). In the “breck/brink” pair mentioned above, the spelling-differentiation is of phonological significance and therefore important. In the “booth” pair, the differences between the representations of the (phonetically identical) final consonants, and the use of the macron as opposed to the acute accent for the identical feature of vowel length, are a requirement when dialects of ON and later periods are under discussion. In the interests of representational uniformity in the reconstruction of earlier, pre-Old Danish and pre-ON, forms, it would be best to refer to Anglo-East Scand. **bōð* and Anglo-West Scand. **būð*, using the phonemically appropriate symbol for the final consonant, and deciding on the macron in common use to indicate vowel length in lemmata in both normalized OE orthography and in reconstructed Brittonic forms.¹⁰

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Notes

1. This element might sometimes be confused with the English word which turns up in regional dialects as *slait* ‘sheep-pasture’, cf. Löfvenberg (1949).
2. The wider issue of dating the entry into English of Scandinavian words of this historic type is dealt with succinctly by Björkman (1900: 173, followed by examples).
3. If contrary evidence ever turns up, this idea should of course be revised. The exiguous evidence for the retention of nominative suffix *-r* is reviewed by Björkman (1900: 17–19). The notion that English-speakers dispensed with this *-r* is reinforced by their treatment of the ancestor of the ON element *sætr* ‘shieling’, where the final *-r* is historically integral to the stem, yet is absent in this element in several names in the northern counties. Clearly its grammar was not understood and it was treated as a (dispensable) inflectional suffix, as in even the earliest records of e.g. *Setmurthy* and *Setmabanning* (PN Cu: 433–4, 313–4).
4. These phonological phenomena are described conveniently in e.g. Gordon and Taylor (1957: 260–83); for details of lengthening, see Haugen (1976: 205–6).
5. No stand here is taken on the vexed question of by precisely which route original Common Scand. *[e] became ON [jɔ].
6. On the thin evidence for front rounded vowels in loanwords in the general vocabulary, see Björkman (1900: 294–5 and cross-references), von Feilitzen (1937: 54–6) and Fellows-Jensen (1968: LXXVI–VII).
7. As noted, ON orthographic <g> in non-initial position represents [ɣ]. It is unclear to me why the editors of PN Cu (376), following Ekwall, argue that *Drigg* is from the dative case (*dregi*) of ON *drag* ‘portage’. At best, on conventional assumptions, it could be for a not readily explicable form **draggi* from **dragg*. (Swedish *dragga* has been said to be a borrowing from English, cf. Björkman 1900: 157, n. 2, following Tamm; on 234 he suggests a special development of single [g].) However the case of *Inglemire* in Hull (PN YE: 213) suggests that a name clearly containing Scand. **igli* ‘leech’ can develop, in historic (i.e. English) times a pronunciation with the plosive [g]. Compare, in the discussion of *Flegg* (in PN Nf 2: 1–2), the allusions to Danish *flæg* with [j] and Swedish *flägg* with [g], both meaning ‘reed (or the like)’, and related obscurely to each other.
8. It disappeared in Scandinavian except Icelandic and Faroese in the Old Scandinavian period (1150–1350; Haugen 1976: 212).

9. The OE word is the probable borrowing *scēot* ‘swift, ready’ from the source of ON *skjót-*, in the (West Saxon) Benedictine Rule (on whose background see Gretsch 1999). The ME is *mēoc* ‘meek’, *mēoken* ‘render meek’ (cf. ON *mjúkr*), which coexist with non-diphthongal forms (Björkman 1900: 217).
10. For obvious reasons, I have left out of account the divergent forms which can be assumed by an AS cand. element in English dialects; that is a matter of *English philology*. I have in mind questions like the differentiation of *Raby* (three counties) and *Roby* (La; Ekwall 1922: 113), containing AS cand. **rā* ‘boundary’. Another source of interference is folk-etymology, as seen in the unexpected appearance of [ai] instead of local equivalents of RP /ei/ in AS cand. **wreinV* ‘stallion’ in three names in north-western counties, all of which happen to be **WreinV-hals* ‘stallion’s neck’, which has in each case become *Wrynose*.

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