PROBLEMS
OF
PLACE-NAME STUDY
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Being a Course of Three Lectures
delivered at King’s College
under the auspices of
the University of
London

BY
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PREFACE

The Lectures here printed are given, except for a few minor alterations, exactly in the form in which they were delivered at King’s College under the auspices of the Board of English Studies in the University of London. Many of the matters discussed in them might well have been treated at greater length and in fuller detail. Time did not allow of such treatment during the lectures themselves, and to attempt to expand them now or even to make them coldly impersonal would inevitably destroy such unity of thought and feeling as may have been attained under the circumstances of their original composition. The lectures as delivered were not interrupted by reference to sources or authorities, and such references have been reduced to a minimum in the printed text. For all statements with regard to places in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Worcestershire, the North Riding of Yorkshire, and Sussex, the reader is referred to the volumes on those counties published by the English Place-name Society. There and in the Introductory volumes of that Survey (all fully indexed) will be found the material upon which all observations not only upon the place-names of these counties but also upon scattered place-names throughout the country are based. The notes to these lectures confine themselves strictly to matter not referred to in those volumes.

A. M.

August, 1929
INTRODUCTION

When the University of London did me the honour of inviting me to lecture on “Some aspect of Place-name Study,” I hesitated for some little time about the wisdom of accepting the invitation, and that for more than one reason. We are only at the beginning of the great enterprise of a historical survey of the place-names of England. Only a few corners of the vast field have as yet been thoroughly explored, and it is dangerous to come to any general conclusions on so slender a basis. If one draws premature conclusions, there is always the natural danger that new facts may soon come to light which will effectively overthrow them, but there is also a more subtle danger. One’s own views on delicate and difficult problems, which ought at this stage still to be in a fluid condition, may tend to become prematurely hardened and make one less sensitive to new evidence when it comes to light. There was also the further difficulty that in the absorbing work of the Survey during the last six or seven years, almost all one’s discoveries had been made for the Survey and had already found their natural place in the volumes published by it. Any lectures one could give would inevitably include a good deal of repetition of things already to be found in them.

On the other hand, one realised that in those volumes, which include whole masses of material, early and late, and
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Information of every kind, historical, linguistic and topographical, there was serious danger that the public at large and even the specialist in this or that particular field of historical or linguistic study, might not be able to see the wood for the trees, and so it was felt it might serve a useful purpose to sort and re-arrange some of this material, some of this information, in ways which would show, at least in one or two fields of interest, just what was being discovered. A good many of the results of the Survey, e.g. those embodied in the second of these lectures, are already established beyond controversy, except in points of minor detail. On other matters, where judgment must still be left in suspense, it may be helpful to set forth the evidence as so far known, and to indicate some of the considerations which have to be borne in mind in settling the problems which lie before us.

In the end hopes outweighed fears, the invitation was accepted and the lectures were written, but as one wrote them, one realised more than ever how little was entirely one’s own and how much one had profited during the last few years by the work of others. The Survey is a co-operative effort. Almost every page of its volumes bears witness to the unselfish help given by scholars both lay and professional. For many of its best discoveries it has been indebted to scholars like Professor Ekwall, Dr Ritter and Professor Zachrisson. The debt to them, so far as is humanly possible, is set forth in the volumes themselves. My debt
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to my co-editor, Professor Stenton, has had of necessity to remain unexpressed in those volumes, for every page of which we are jointly responsible, but now that I am presenting some of the results of our joint work in my own name, I can only say that without his help at every stage the Survey would never have been undertaken and no one of its volumes could have been written. In these lectures I am still further indebted to him for some of the examples of early ME personal names quoted in the third lecture.
ABBREVIATIONS

ASC  Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.
BCS  Birch, Cartularium Saxonicum, 3 vols., 1885–93.
Du  Dutch.
EHR  English Historical Review.
EPNS  English Place-name Society Publications.
IPN  Introduction to the Survey of English Place-names, 1923.
LGer  Low German.
LOE  Late Old English.
MDu  Middle Dutch.
ME  Middle English.
MHG  Middle High German.
MLGer  Middle Low German.
ModHG  Modern High German.
ModLG  Modern Low German.
NFr  Norman French.
Norw  Norwegian.
ODan  Old Danish.
OE  Old English.
OED  Oxford English Dictionary.
OFr  Old French.
OFrFris  Old Frisian.
OHG  Old High German.
OIr  Old Irish.
ON  Old Norse.
OS  Old Saxon.
OSw  Old Swedish.
PN  Place-names.
ZONF  Zeitschrift für Ortsnamenforschung. (In progress.)