

# NOTES

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIELD-NAMES 8: FURROW

The use of the common noun *furrow* is of course ubiquitous in agriculture, the result of ploughing any piece of ground. It is equally well-known in the doublet *ridge and furrow*, applied to the traces of former arable land now given over to pasture. It applies especially to the remains of medieval ploughing, where repeated cultivation over several centuries has often left prominent ridges and deep furrows. The word *furlong* is derived from furrow, used as a generalised term for a bundle of strips in the open fields, varying widely in size from a few acres to thirty acres or more. Furlong is also a unit of distance, one-eighth of a mile or 220 yards (equivalent to forty rods/poles/perches), which gave rise to the notional acre of land measuring one furlong by 22 yards wide (4 rods, etc.=one cricket pitch), a total of 4,840 square yards. All these of course are standard Imperial measurements, whereas local rods often differed in length, meaning that the 'acres' on one estate were often 10% more or less than those of its neighbours.

While the occurrence of *furlong* in both medieval and modern field-names is commonplace, the appearance of *furrow* in fifty or so field-names across Buckinghamshire is less easily explained. Furrow and furlong both derive from Old English (OE) *furh*, alternative forms *fyrh*, *ferh*, meaning 'furrow, trench', with cognates in most Germanic languages.<sup>1</sup> *Furh* occurs fairly commonly in minor names in Surrey and Sussex, and in medieval field-names in many other counties, for example a group in east Berkshire. The precise meaning in these circumstances is often unclear, however, given the universal occurrence of trenches created by ploughing prior to sowing seed. The most likely explanation is the extension of the sense to any man-made trench or drain, and in Middle English, from which the earliest recorded examples usually come, 'a piece of arable land'.

Most field-names ending in -furrow so far noted

are not recorded until the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, by which time the modern spelling naturally predominates. The only name so far with a run of medieval spellings is Hollow Furrow in Winslow (e.g. *Holweforu* 1342; *Holweforgh* 1352; *Holughforugh* 1423). Other examples from the Winslow estate include *Watforgh* 1359 and *Watforough* 1361, and *Wodeforgh* (1365). The spellings suggest that the pronunciation at that time was 'forrow'.

The corpus of Buckinghamshire field-names containing furrow so far totals forty-eight examples in thirty-six parishes, all north of the Chiltern escarpment apart from an example in The Lee (Appendix 1). In so far as there is any clustering, there is a belt running north-west from Ivinghoe and Weedon to Thornborough and a small group in the Brickhill-Bletchley area. The area along the Thames in the far south of the county does, however, have a good number of examples of a related name, which is discussed separately below. Apart from an avoidance of the chalk region, there is no obvious correlation with geology or soils, nor with estates that may once have been in common ownership. Some parishes have several examples of furrow-names, notably Winslow with three and Long Crendon with five. All of the Crendon examples are Broad Furrows, differentiated in the sources by the common field in which they lay, although given the changing names of some fields over the centuries, some of the Furrows may be identical. Although furrow-names only occur in about one-fifth of parishes outside the Chilterns and south-east Buckinghamshire, there appears to be no obvious reason why such names should not be more widespread.

These field-names do, however, reveal a very distinctive pattern. There are no fewer than twenty-two Water Furrow[s] and six Broad Furrow[s] (counting the Long Crendon examples separately), almost 60% of the total. Broad furrows may reflect some local requirement for enhanced

drainage on wet or waterlogged soils. Water furrows might be explained in several ways: [1] A system of water management, possibly to produce grass for hay, distinguished in some way from water meadows; [2] They may be examples of OE *furh* in its sense of ‘trench, drainage ditch’; [3] They may be furlongs prone to flooding, possibly where water collects in the furrows after heavy rain or flooding. Again, it is difficult to see what are essentially linear features should give their names to fields, especially as furrow-names occur in parts of the county with ample natural streams. The Winslow name Hollow Furrow was obviously well-established by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, and is equally difficult to explain.

Six parishes bordering or close to the Thames from Taplow to Upton-cum-Chalvey contain twenty examples of field-names that appear in sources between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with spellings in *fere/ferr/fyrr/fur* and *vere/veire/veer* (Table 1). Examples of these are also found across the river in north-east Berkshire and north-west Surrey, indicating the possibility of a local naming fashion, though not necessarily one going back to the early days of English settlement, of course.<sup>2</sup> The presence of v- forms indicates that at least in some places at some times, the initial letter

was voiced, a feature more typical of south-west England.

In several of these cases, it seems probable that the *fere* or furrow is a drainage ditch of some kind, most notably in the case of Eton’s *Middelfyrrefurlong* which reappears in 1474 as *Middelfyrre*. This meaning of *furh* is appropriate to the low-lying, flood-prone area adjacent to the Thames, even if does not apply in all of these examples. There is, however, no apparent reason why these names occur in some, but not all of the Thames-side parishes and their immediate neighbours. Equally, there is no evidence yet that these names survived later than the early-18<sup>th</sup> century, and in most cases after 1500, when one might have expected them to appear in sources such as tithe maps in suitably evolved forms.

The two discrete groups of Buckinghamshire field-names derived from OE *furh* evidently contain instances of both ‘furrow’ and ‘trench, ditch’, although it is impossible to be sure which applies, other than a possible bias towards drainage features in the Thames-side cluster. The frequency of Water Furrows elsewhere may indicate that this was also the case in the north of the county, although there are other possible explanations, as noted above.

TABLE 1 *Fere/Vere* Names in South-East Buckinghamshire

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>		<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
Burnham	1368	Boltesfere		Eton	1309	Foliforw
	1632	Headland Acre <sup>a</sup>			1366	Folifur
Datchet	1756	Green Vere			1468	Fullefur
	1429	Midfer <sup>?</sup>			1474	Makfyrr
Dorney	1372	Brokfere <sup>b</sup>			13th	Middelfyrrefurlong
	1372	Parkfere <sup>b</sup>			1474	Middelfyrre
	1372	Scachfere <sup>b</sup>			Taplow	1639
	1337	Stertefere		1639		Leadmore Veire
1462	Stertefere		1639	Marsh Veire		
Eton	1442	Deneveer		1639		Stone Veire
	1465	Denevere		1639	Thame Veire	
	1357	Innyngfere		Upton	1724	Canlandes Fere
	1465	Innyngferr			1635	Mead Vere Furlong
			1607		Watrie Fere	

Notes: a. A fere on the north; b. Possibly in Boveney

## References

- A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements* (vol. 1, 1956), 189; see also [www.koeblergerhard.de](http://www.koeblergerhard.de), Germanisches Wörterbuch (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2007) for continental material.
- M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire* Part 3 (1976), 870; J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer & F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Surrey* (1934), 359.

## APPENDIX 1

## Furrow-Names in Buckinghamshire

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Name</i>
Addington	1517	Water-Furrow	Nash	16th	Waterfurrowes
Adstock	1798	Water Furrow Furlong	Pitchcott	1635	Water Furrowes
Aston Sandford	1674	Little Water Furrow	Princes Risb.	1810	Watch Furrows
Bletchley	1718	Water Furrow		1823	Water Furrow
Bow Brickhill	c1950	Water Furrows	Quainton	1977	Water Furrows
Buckland	1844	Broad Furrows Piece	Sherington	1580	Rensfurrow Furlong
	1844	Wet Furrows		1580	Watery Furrows Furl.
Clifton Reynes	?	Water Furrow Piece	Simpson	1691	Midle Water Furrowes
Cublington	1607	Water Furrowes	Slapton	1812	Runfurrow
Edgcott	1639	Water Furrowe	Soulbury	1769	Rowley Furrows
Granborough	1923	Shortland Furrows	Stewkley	1701	Royle Furrows
Great Brickhill	1640	Water Furrowes		1811	Water Furrows
The Lee	1909	Furrows, Little	Thornboro'	1970	Blackgrove Furrow
Haddenham	1977	Runfurrow		1977	Town Furrow
Hartwell	1776–7	Runfurrow	Waddesdon	1859	Westerfurrows
Haversham	1680	Water Furrow	Wavendon	1640	Litle Water Furrowes
Ivinghoe	1809	Little Water Furrows	Weedon	1802	Water Furrows
	1762	Windmill Way Furrow	Westcott	1929	Water Furrows
Long Crendon	1656	Broad Furrowes	Whitchurch	c1770	Water Furrows
	1812	Broad Furrows Leys		c1770	Weed Furrow
	1666	Broadfurrow	Wing	1607	Water Furrows
	14/15 <sup>th</sup>	Broadfurrow		Winslow	1973
	1656	Broad Furrows	1331		Holewefourgh
Mentmore	1852	Weed Furrow	1343		Waterforu
Mursley	1974	Water Furrow		1365	Wodeforgh

Note: 1. Date and form of earliest reference

# LOST AND FOUND: OBJECTS RECORDED ON THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME DATABASE

The following objects are some of the more spectacular finds reported to the Buckinghamshire Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in 2013. Details of these and other finds reported to the PAS from all over the country can be found on the PAS website, [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk). References to objects shown in the text are derived from the PAS database.

## LION FIGURINE

A Roman cast copper-alloy figurine of a lion standing on a low pedestal (Fig. 1). The lion is shown fairly naturalistically and well moulded, with his mouth slightly open but without the teeth shown. The eyes are shown as pellets in the centre of oval hollows and the ears are laid back against the wavy mane. The body is smooth, the tail curled



FIGURE 1 Figurine of a lion on his pedestal

up and the claws shown as grooves in the feet. He stands on a rectangular hollow plinth which has decoratively moulded edges. The lower edge of the plinth has been cut back so that the sides only rest on a flat surface at the corners.

Research for parallels has not come up with anything particularly similar, although a fairly complete lion figurine was found in the area of Salisbury, Wilts (WILT-5A8A35). This is a different style, as are the half dozen fragments of figurines.

Lion masks are commonly seen on furniture fittings (LVPL-A50B03, BUC-F53C66, BUC-F52027), spouts (NLM-10C624), mounts (BH-0DE347), key handles (NLM-1E9032), knife handles (NCL-47B422), spoon handles (HAMP-BC38B6) and brooches (LON-FFA2A1).

The lion has been acquired by the County Museum with grants from The V & A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of the Museum. Museum ref. AYBCM 2013.122. PAS database reference BUC-0C7D27.

#### EARLY MEDIEVAL BROOCH

A silver disc brooch, with extensive niello inlays (Fig. 2). Niello is a black mixture of copper, silver, and lead sulphides, used on early medieval metalwork. The edge is decorated with bold beading, each bead oval. The beading is interrupted at one point (the 'top' of the brooch) by two longer curves with a point in between: in each of the curves is a small circular hole, perhaps to take a suspension loop.

Within the beaded border is a narrow groove, and within this is a narrow silver ridge. Then comes a broad band of niello-inlaid decoration divided into four by reserved circles, each of which originally carried a separate dome-headed silver rivet. One of the rivets is adjacent to the pair of small suspension holes, and if this is held toward the top the right-hand rivet (as you look at it) is missing. Much of the niello inlay around this rivet hole is also missing, helping to distinguish between the reserved silver areas (below the polished but still proud surface of the niello inlay) and the shiny silvery decomposed niello. Keying to hold the niello can be seen in the empty grooves.

Although the decoration is subtly different in each of the four fields, those opposite each other seem to have broadly similar designs. It is also



FIGURE 2 Silver disc brooch. The inner openwork section features two creatures and complex designs in niello around the outer border

quite hard to work out, perhaps because the niello appears to be spreading beyond the confines of the grooves engraved to contain it. Clockwise from 12 o'clock with the suspension holes held at the top, the first field contains a pair of addorsed, Trewiddle-style animals with their heads looking backwards over their shoulders towards each other. They are broadly similar to each other, with jagged edges to their chests (perhaps indicating the mane of a lion) and longitudinal stripes on their bodies. Each has a reserved lappet extending from the back of the head, a niello dot for an eye, and an open mouth. The front foot is simply depicted as a round-ended line, but the rear foot appears to point upwards and have three toes. The tails interlace with each other in a relatively simple knot.

The second field contains a similar Trewiddle-style animal with striped body, but looking right, the head not turned backwards, and with a tail interlacing with itself. There is a shape in front of the head which may indicate that the animal is biting at a plant.

The third field appears to contain two addorsed animals in profile with their heads turned backwards to look at each other. The left-hand animal appears bigger, and has a long lappet extending from the back of the head. Again, the tails interlace in a relatively simple loop.

The final field is heavily obscured by corrosion, but the elements visible (such as a jagged edge that may be a mane) seem to indicate that it is another animal.

The inner edge of the niello-inlaid band is formed from a ridge of silver, and then a ring of similar bold oval beading as is found on the outer border but set within a broad groove. Next is another silver ridge, and then comes an inner zone of decoration, this time in bold and deep chip-carved relief which has in several places broken through to the reverse, although it does not seem that an openwork effect was intended.

The motif in the centre consists of two writhing animals, each with a niello-inlaid circular eye with a nielloed line running downwards from its rear edge to form a comma shape. They each have a curly lappet at the back of the head, and no obvious limbs. The bodies run over half the circle each, knotted on themselves in three half-hitches forming curved and angled loops; they do not interlace with each other.

The treatment of the tails is slightly different

between the two. One has a pair of transverse grooves and then forks into two near the other animal's mouth; this may be biting at it, or one of the forks may turn into the animal's lower jaw. The other tail has a tendril leading off it close to the end, which bifurcates, and then another fork or bifurcation at the end; there are no transverse grooves here. The other animal is clearly biting at one of the ends of the tail.

In the centre is a raised flat-topped boss with a fine engraved line very close to its edge, and in the middle of this is a fifth separate silver rivet. All the rivets are roughly the same size, 4-4.5mm in diameter.

On the reverse, the missing rivet, centre rivet and one side rivet can be seen to hold a separate pin and catch-plate, made from a single strip of silver which is expanded at each rivet. The pin and spring are now missing, but the curled catch-plate is intact. It is sited right at the rim of the brooch, but is not visible from the front.

Both faces have patches of thin orange corrosion, perhaps from iron in the soil. This corrosion or staining masks some aspects of the decoration. The Friends of the County Museum have since kindly funded the conservation of the brooch.

The design of this brooch, with a central motif and surrounding frieze, can be compared with a 10th- or 11th-century brooch found in Thames Street, London, now in the British Museum (accession number 1856, 0701.1461). On the whole, however, it fits better into a group of 9th-century brooches with separate one-piece pin-and-catch-plate fixed on with three of the five rivets. Examples include a copper-alloy brooch from Evington Brook, Leicester, dated to the early 9th century (Webster & Backhouse 1991, no. 186), five larger brooches from Pentney, dated to the second quarter of the 9th century (*ibid.* 1991, 187 a-e; Webster 2012, fig. 112), and an openwork silver brooch from the Beeston Tor hoard, deposited c.875 (Webster & Backhouse 1991, no. 245a). The Pentney brooches have the combination of niello-inlaid and relief animal ornament, and the Beeston Tor brooch has similar bold beading: the Evington Brook brooch also has a hole, perhaps for a suspension device or 'keeper'. In addition, the shaping around the two perforations echoes the shaped tops of many 9th-century strap-ends, confirming the date. (Text taken from a report for the Coroner by Helen Geake, Finds Advisor for PAS).

The brooch has been acquired by the County Museum as part of the Treasure process with grants from the V & A Purchase Grant Fund, the Headley Trust and the Friends of the Museum. Museum ref. AYBCM 2014.9. PAS database reference BUC-ABA063.

#### SWORD POMMEL

A medieval inscribed copper-alloy sword pommel, of 'wheel' type (Ward Perkins 1940, 22 fig. 1 type VIII) dating to 1300–1500 (Fig. 3). The pommel is hollow and circular with a slightly flattened lower edge. It is widest around the circumference with a flat circular face of smaller diameter on each side. There is a rectangular hole on the lower edge where

the pommel would have been attached to the hilt, and another smaller rectangular hole (the edges of which are unevenly broken) at the top edge, where the top of the hilt is likely to have stopped. This type of pommel was common in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century. The size would suggest use on a sword rather than a dagger. Each flat circular face has an engraved design in a circular border of indentations. Each side has three letters below a horizontal line with scrolled corners and a central cross pattee above. One side reads 'XHC' (Jesus Christ) and the other 'IPC' (possibly personal initials). The pommel is in the finder's collection. PAS database reference BUC-C66975.



FIGURE 3 Engraved sword pommel



FIGURE 4 Gold cloisonné lace tag

#### LACE TAG

A slightly damaged, post medieval, gold cloisonné aiglet or lace end (Fig. 4). The object consists of a gold tube squashed into an elliptical cylinder, with a dome shaped end. The design on the outer surface consists of cells or cloisons delineated by twisted gold wire soldered onto the body of the object. These would have been filled with coloured enamels, of which only the white survives. The mouth of the aiglet has a border of nine small circles around it. Below that are rectangular panels, three containing S shapes rope-wise, which have traces of white enamel. These alternate with three panels filled by a rope pattern, made by twisting the twisted cloison wire. The domed end is bordered by a strand of twisted wire and has a ten-petal flower with a circle of twisted wire around a ball knob. All the background enamel has gone, so the

writer can only speculate about whether the aiglet was colourful or just gold and white.

Aiglets like this example can be seen in Tudor portraits as men's hat decorations, as in 'An Unknown Man' by Moretto da Brescia c.1542 (National Portrait Gallery). These objects were also favoured as decoration on lady's gowns and sleeves, as in 'An Unknown Lady', thought to be a member of the Cromwell family, by Hans Holbein 1536–1540 (Toledo Museum of Art) or Elizabeth FitzGerald, Countess of Lincoln, by S. van der Meulen, c.1560. See also LON-F2F3A4.

The lace tag has been donated to the County Museum as part of the Treasure process. Museum ref. AYBCM 2013.18.0. PAS database reference BUC-E33633.

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