

GREAT MIGRATION TOUR TO ENGLAND
5 TO 15 AUGUST 2008

TOUR TALK

Issue #4

February 2008

PLACE NAMES

Much of the history of England may be read in the place names, many of which we will be interpreting on the tour. The majority of the parish names in Essex derive from the period of Saxon immigration and settlement, beginning in the late fourth century, as the last remnants of Roman authority were disappearing. There are vestiges of the earlier layers of Celtic and Roman times, and additional changes to the names took place after the Norman Conquest, but most of the elements found in the place names have been traced to common Anglo-Saxon words and personal names.

For many decades the English Place-Name Society has been publishing county-by-county surveys of the names of parishes, manors, fields and other local features. The twelfth volume in this series was prepared by P.H. Reaney and published in 1969 [P.H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Essex*, English Place-Name Society, Volume XII (Cambridge, 1969)].

Much research on toponymics has taken place since 1969, and in 1984 Margaret Gelling published an important volume, setting forth her interpretation of the historical importance of place names across England [Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984)]. She organized her material in seven topical chapters, covering such features as “Rivers, Springs, Pools and Lakes” and “Valleys and Remote Places.”

A further aid in understanding place names of Anglo-Saxon origin is a slender volume aimed at students of Old English [Stephen A. Barney, *Word-Hoard: An Introduction to Old English Vocabulary* (New Haven, 1977)]. This little book presents the 227 most common words in the surviving Old English literature, arranged in order of frequency of use. Many of these words occur as common elements in place names.

All three of these books are intended for reference purposes; none of them is a page-turner intended to be read from cover-to-cover. The value of these publications derives from bits and pieces that can be quarried from each of them and reassembled into a story behind the place names. For now we will look at just one name that we will encounter on several occasions during our travels. We will discuss many more during our time on the coach.

On three different days we will visit parishes that include the name “Hatfield.” The interpretation of this name is quite straightforward. As with many other localities, the name is constructed from two elements, the Old English words “hāth” (or “hæþ”) and “feld,” a combination glossed by Gelling as “heathland.”

The earliest usage of “heath” was as “open, uncultivated ground,” later acquiring the narrower sense of “a bare, more or less flat, tract of land, naturally clothed with low herbage and dwarf shrubs.” Interestingly, the word has only recently (in the last two or three centuries) become associated with the word “heather,” a term derived from the Scots “hadder,” describing vegetation found mainly in Scotland and Yorkshire. In other words, a “heath” encountered by the Saxons a millenium and a half ago would not necessarily have been covered with what we now think of as “heather.”

At any rate, in the older sense of “open, uncultivated ground,” a tract of land of this sort would have been a common feature of the landscape, especially notable in a part of England which was heavily wooded when the Saxons first saw it.

On Thursday, 7 August, we will spend the afternoon at Hatfield House, which is situated in the parish of Hatfield, Hertfordshire. Two days later we will spend some time at Hatfield Broad Oak, Essex, and then, toward the end of the tour, on Wednesday, 13 August, we will pass through the parish of Hatfield Peverel, Essex, on our way to and from our pub lunch at Boreham.

Note that in the first instance the name “Hatfield” stands alone, whereas in the the Essex instances the basic name is supplemented by a second name. This is a widespread phenomenon, resulting when a common name occurs more than once in a county, requiring some further distinguishing element. In the earlier records, Hatfield Broad Oak also occurs as Hatfield Regis, or King’s Hatfield. The latter version of the name derives ultimately from Domesday Book, where the manor was held directly by the King. Both versions of the name for this settlement occur in records of the twelfth century, and in the Feet of Fines for 1303 the name is “Hatfeld Regis atte Brodeok.” Hatfield Peverel also derives from Domesday, the manor having been held in 1086 by Ranulf Peverel.

HIGH LAVER AND HATFIELD BROADOAK

On Saturday, 9 August, we will begin the day with visits to High Laver and Hatfield Broad Oak, just to the west of Chelmsford. Neither of these parishes sent many immigrants to New England, but both are very important to the progress of the Great Migration. In part this is the result of the presence in each parish of a prominent Puritan gentry family. (In a future issue of *Tour Talk* we will return to the subject of the importance of the Puritan gentry to the Great Migration.)

High Laver was the home of the Masham family, who arrived in Essex in 1615 from Yorkshire and purchased the manor of Oates. William Masham married Elizabeth Barrington of the leading family of Hatfield Broad Oak. The Mashams were strong

Puritans, and were affluent enough to have their own family chaplain. Roger Williams served in that capacity from late 1628 until late 1630. He engaged in an unhappy courtship of a Barrington daughter, and when that project failed he married Mary Bernard at High Laver on 15 December 1629. Roger Williams was followed as Masham family chaplain by John Norton, who also migrated to New England.

In the last decade of the seventeenth century the philosopher John Locke was invited by Lady Masham to reside at Oates. He accepted that invitation and died at High Laver in 1604 and is buried in the churchyard there [Mark Goldie, *John Locke and the Mashams at Oates* (Cambridge, England, 2004)].

1) **James Penniman** was baptized on 29 July 1599 at Chipping Ongar, Essex, a market town about four miles southeast of High Laver. On 26 July 1631, he married at High Laver Lydia Eliot, sister of Reverend John Eliot of Roxbury. The Penniman family sailed for New England late in 1631 [GMB 3:1426-30].

2) **Roger Williams** took his B.A. at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1627 and then came to High Laver as chaplain in late 1628. In late 1630 he and his family sailed for New England, where he resided at Salem, Plymouth and Providence [GMB 3:2007-10].

3) **John Norton** was baptized at Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, on 6 May 1606 and received his B.A. and M.A. degrees at Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1624 and 1627. He succeeded Roger Williams as chaplain to the Masham family and came to New England in 1635 [GM 2:5:272-80].

Hatfield Broad Oak lies about five miles north of High Laver. The leading gentry family in town were the Barringtons, like the Mashams a family of strong Puritan persuasion. Sir Francis Barrington, who died in 1628, had married the aunt of Oliver Cromwell. In late 1625 several leading Puritan ministers gathered at Hatfield Broad Oak, to consider a number of issues regarding the prospects of the Puritan movement, including the proper placement of Reverend Thomas Hooker. The conference led to Hooker's position as a lecturer at Chelmsford [Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c.1620-1643* (Cambridge, England, 1997), pp. 9-14].

The church at Hatfield Broad Oak was for four centuries part of a Benedictine priory, founded about 1135 by Alberic de Vere. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, the buildings of the priory were disassembled, so that little remains other than the church itself. The north wall of the church, shown here, preserves some remnants of one side of the cloister.

Claims have been made that members of the Morrill and Howe families of Roxbury derived from Hatfield Broad Oak, but evidence in support of these claims has not been found. There are a few documentable connections to Great Migration immigrants.

4) **Andrew Warner** married at Thaxted, Essex, on 5 October 1624, the parish register entry reading "Andrew Warner of Hatfield Magna married Mary Humfrey daughter of

Robert of Thaxted” [GMB 3:1928-32]. Thaxted is about ten miles north of Hatfield Broad Oak. The Warner family came to New England in 1633, settling first in Cambridge and then moving on to Hartford, Farmington and Hadley.

5) **John Masters** arrived in New England in 1630, settling first at Watertown and then moving to Cambridge in 1633. His English origin is unknown, but on 14 March 1630/1 he addressed a letter to “the right worshipful Lady Barrington at Hatfield, Broadway [*sic*], or to Sir William Mirsome at Oates in Essex” [GMB 2:1234-36; Everett Emerson, ed., *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638* (Amherst, Massachusetts, 1976), pp. 83-85].

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