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Viking race-courses? The distribution of *Skeið* place-name elements in northern England

Mary Atkin (pp. 26–39)

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ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	<i>Cornish Place-Name Elements.</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN BdHu	<i>The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.</i>
PN Brk	<i>The Place-Names of Berkshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Bu	<i>The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.</i>
PN Ca	<i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i>
PN Ch	<i>The Place-Names of Cheshire, Parts 1–5.</i>
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN D	<i>The Place-Names of Devon, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Db	<i>The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Do	<i>The Place-Names of Dorset, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Du	<i>The Place-Names of County Durham, Part 1.</i>
PN Ess	<i>The Place-Names of Essex.</i>
PN ERY	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.</i>
PN Gl	<i>The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Hrt	<i>The Place-Names of Hertfordshire.</i>
PN Le	<i>The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Li	<i>The Place-Names of Lincolnshire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Mx	<i>The Place-Names of Middlesex (apart from the City of London).</i>
PN Nf	<i>The Place-Names of Norfolk, Parts 1–3.</i>
PN Nt	<i>The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.</i>
PN NRY	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.</i>
PN Nth	<i>The Place-Names of Northamptonshire.</i>
PN O	<i>The Place-Names of Oxfordshire, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN R	<i>The Place-Names of Rutland.</i>
PN Sa	<i>The Place-Names of Shropshire, Parts 1–9.</i>
PN Sr	<i>The Place-Names of Surrey.</i>
PN St	<i>The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Part 1.</i>
PN Sx	<i>The Place-Names of Sussex, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN W	<i>The Place-Names of Wiltshire.</i>
PN Wa	<i>The Place-Names of Warwickshire.</i>
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Wo	<i>The Place-Names of Worcestershire.</i>
PN WRY	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.</i>

VIKING RACE-COURSES ?
THE DISTRIBUTION OF SKEIÐ PLACE-NAME ELEMENTS
IN NORTHERN ENGLAND

The English Place-Name Society's county volumes and Ekwall's *Place-Names of Lancashire*¹ list eight *Hesketh* or *Heskett* place-names in Northern England, the name being derived from Old Norse *hestr*, a horse, and *skeið* which implies 'a track, a course, especially a race-course.' *Skeið* may have a further meaning of boundary according to Smith, *Elements*. The element *skeið* also occurs alone as *Scate* or *Skaith(e)* in three instances; and in Cumberland two examples occur where *skeið* is combined with *bruni* (Old Norse) meaning 'burning, a place cleared by burning' or possibly 'a brown horse', *Elements*. The name *Skygates* in the East Riding of Yorkshire is derived from *Skeið* combined with ON *gata*, 'a way, a path' (*PN YE*, 171). To these may be added two further *Hesketh* names in Lancashire, which being minor names were not listed by Ekwall. This makes sixteen in all.

Apart from these last two *Hesketh* names whose etymology is not established, all the names are wholly derived from Old Norse, and this may explain the markedly north-west distribution shown on the map. Four of the places are in Cumberland; none are in Westmorland apart from the boundary with Yorkshire; one is in

1. The following abbreviations are used throughout this paper:

Ekwall	E. Ekwall, <i>The Place-Names of Lancashire</i> , (Manchester, 1922)
Elements	A.H. Smith, <i>English Place-Name Elements</i> , parts I and II (E.P.-N.S. XXV, XXVI, 1956).
M & W	Mannix & Whellan, <i>History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cumberland, 1847</i> , (reprinted M. Moon, Beckermeth, Cumberland, 1974).
Margary	I.D. Margary, <i>Roman Roads in Britain</i> , (revised edition, London, 1967).
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland</i> , 1 - iii (E.P.-N.S., XX-II 1952).
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland</i> , 1 - ii (E.P.-N.S. XLII-III, 1966).
PN YE	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire</i> , (E.P.-N.S. XIV, 1937).
PN YN	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire</i> , (E.P.-N.S. V, 1928).
PN YW	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire</i> , 1 - viii (XXX-VII, 1961-2).

Yorkshire East Riding; six in Yorkshire West Riding; one in Yorkshire North Riding; and three in Lancashire. This distribution must reflect the Norse settlement of Northern England. In the West Riding none is found in the three southern Wapentakes, where Danish rather than Norse settlement was significant, but the virtual absence of the element in Westmorland is surprising. The map also shows that more than half of these place-names occur on known Roman roads, and also close to the boundary where wapentakes, hundreds or wards meet. In addition, several have also been significant centres in the past - as a Domesday caput, or the site of a mother-church or court moot.

Places with the element *skeið*

Information on each place listed below opens with the earliest reference and date where this can be ascertained; National Grid Reference; its location with reference to the historic administrative divisions - county and hundred, wapentake or ward; Ordnance Survey one-inch First Edition sheet number (with sheet number of David and Charles reprint).

CUMBERLAND

1. *Brunskaiith. Brunschayt*, 1292, *PN Cu. 127*, (NY 329591) is a lost site in Burgh by Sands parish and township in Cumberland Ward, OS 1st ed 107 (D & C 4). The village is on the south of the estuary of the Eden, and 5m WNW of Carlisle. The church is next to the Roman fort of Aballava on Hadrian's Wall, and on Margary 86a. It is 4½m from the boundary with Allerdale Below Derwent Ward, and the church containing some Saxon work is dedicated to St Michael (M & W, 185). Customary courts for the Barony of Burgh were still held in 1847 and there was

'an ancient and singular custom of holding races on the death of the Lord of the manor... when a silver cup prize was given by the new lord; no horses being allowed to run except those bred in the Barony of Burgh'

This race was run in 1844, the previous one being in 1804 (M & W, 185). The field name *Spielmanholme*, (*PN Cu, 127*), perhaps derived from *spiel*, to play, may also hint at celebrations associated with the moot.

2. *Brunstock*. *Brunescayth* c 1253, *PN Cu*, 109. (NY 417596)
 Brunstock Hall and Park were in Brunstock township, a detached part of Crosby upon Eden parish in Cumberland Ward, 3m NNE of Carlisle, OS 1st Ed 106 (David & Charles 5). The entry in *PN Cu* is under Stanwix as the authors used post-1934 civil parishes. Hadrian's Wall crosses the south part of the park and Margary 85b lies just outside the park boundary, and leads to the fort and civil settlement at Stanwix on the north bank of the Eden, opposite Carlisle. Brunstock is close to the boundary between Cumberland and Eskdale Wards. Kingmoor, a mile or two further west also has a tradition of horse-racing. Kingmoor is on Margary 7 and was a detached part of the ecclesiastical parish of Carlisle. The races were held annually by the eight free guilds of burgesses of the city. A saddle was run for, and 'it is said that the charter of Carlisle is held by the tenure of this 'leather plating'.' (M & W, 116). Carlisle race-course seems to have developed in the eighteenth century. It is shown on the OS 1st Ed map south of the Eden in the curve of a river meander. The boundary between the city and Cumberland Ward cuts across the middle of the oval race-course. This is a site strikingly similar to that of Preston race-course as shown on the OS six-inch 1st edition map. It stood on a river island between the hundreds of Amounderness and Leyland, but the racecourse itself is shown as not assigned to either hundred. Perhaps such a site commended itself as a 'no-man's land' between hundreds.
3. *Heskayth*, 1272. *Hutton Sceugh alias Hesketh Pasture*, 1560, *PN Cu*, 281 and 200. (NY 351377) *Heskayth* is a field name in Caldbeck parish, in Allerdale Below Derwent Ward. Hutton Sceugh lies 1m S of Heskett Newmarket (NB the name Heskett in Heskett Newmarket is not derived from *skeiþ*, *PN Cu*. 276). There is no recognised Roman road through the township. There is however a track along the steep face of Caldbeck Fells, passing below the Carrock Fell hillfort. This track links the Roman road to Voreda fort from Keswick, Margary 741, to the Roman road at Old Carlisle, Margary 754. There is a lane called *the Street* along this route. The antiquity of this route is suggested by Millward and Robinson, *The Lake District* (London, 1970), 134, who noted that the position of three churches dedicated to St Kentigern

'probably marks the route of his mission through a district on the eastern and southern flanks of the Skiddaw massif that seems to have been a centre of British population.'

Caldbeck Fells have had a rich and varied mineral wealth, for copper, iron and zinc, as well as silver have been mined here in the past (Millward & Robinson, *op cit*, 230), and it seems very unlikely that Iron Age people and Romans would not have exploited them, though no archaeological evidence has come to light so far. Mining would undoubtedly have given rise to the development of a trackway.

4. *Hesket in the Forest*. Hescayth, 1285, *PN Cu*, 199. (NY 475445) Parish in Leath Ward, OS 1st Ed 102 (David & Charles 8). The present villages of High and Low Hesket lie on Roman road Margary 7e, half-way between Penrith and Carlisle. Leath Ward and Cumberland Ward meet here, and also the North and South Wards of the Forest of Inglewood.

'The Forest or Swainmote Court for the seigniority is held yearly, on the feast of St Barnabas the Apostle (11th June) in the parish of Hesket in the Forest in the open air, on the Great North road to Carlisle; and the place is marked by a stone placed before an ancient thorn, called Court Thorn. Here are paid the annual dues of the lord of the forest, compositions for improvements, purprestures and agistments and the puture of the foresters.' (M & W, 178).

In 1847 there was a Horse and Jockey Inn in the village (M & W, 270); and the field name *Lacan Close*, 'the close where games were played', occurs in 1650 (*PN Cu*, 205).

LANCASHIRE

1. *Hesketh with Becconsall*. *de Heschath*, 1288, Ekwall, 138. (SD 444239). Parish and township in Leyland Hundred, OS 1st Ed 90 (David & Charles 19). 6m SW of Preston. It is not on a known Roman road, but there is some evidence to suggest that it lies on an old routeway. From Hesketh northwards an ancient ford crossed the Ribble to the Naze whence the same alignment would lead to Kirkham, a known Roman site. Southwards from Hesketh the same alignment leads to Rufford (*rough ford*) and thence either across the Douglas and along the moss edge to re-cross the Douglas at Parbold, or via Causeway End across the mosses to Newburgh. Either route would then lead on to the Ashurst ridge and the flanks of Billinge Hill towards the Roman road from Warrington to Wigan, Margary 70b, in the neighbourhood of Ashton in Makerfield. The west boundary of

the parish is also the boundary between West Derby and Leyland Hundreds, and Amounderness Hundred is the other side of the Ribble. Ekwall suggests that horse races were held on the sands at Hesketh, (Ekwall, 138) perhaps a site comparable with that of *Vikarskeið* mentioned by Snorre Sturlason in the *Heimskringla* this was a flat stretch of sand now called *Skeið* in south Iceland. (trans S. Laing, Everyman edition, London, ND, 33). Courts leet and baron were held at Hesketh in an inn at the edge of the sands (J. Harland, ed, *Baines' History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster* (vol 2, Manchester, 1870), 133).

The following two place-names taken from the OS map are minor names which Ekwall did not examine:

2. *Hesketh Lane* (SD 615415) in Chipping parish, OS 1st Ed 91 (David & Charles 15). In Amounderness Hundred, 4m NW of Ribchester. It is 1½ miles from the point where Margary 7c turns sharply NE at Jeffry Hill. A continuation of the alignment before the Jeffry Hill turn would lead past Arbour Farm into Hesketh Lane, and join Margary 704.
3. *Hesketh Wood* (SD 385784). It is in Cartmel parish in Lonsdale Hundred, North of Sands, OS 1st Ed 98 (David & Charles 11). It is not on a known Roman Road. It is 2½ miles from the county boundary with Westmorland. There is a race-course there today. In 677 King Egfrid gave St Cuthbert the land of Cartmel 'and all the Britons in it.' The Priory Church of St Mary replaced the pre-conquest parish church in 1188.

WESTMORLAND

1. *Scarth of Scaithe*. *The Skarith of Skait(e)s*, 1684, *PN We*, ii, 18. In Kirkby Stephen parish and Mallerstang township, OS 1st Ed 97 (David & Charles 12). It is a high-level pass over the Yorkshire-Westmorland boundary, but it seems not to have a track over it today. A mile away there is a track called *High Way* running roughly parallel to the route the pass takes.

YORKSHIRE, EAST RIDING

1. *Skygates*, *Skaydgat*, 1185, *PN YE*, 171. (SE 870504) Warter parish and township in Harthill Wapentake, Bainton Beacon Division, OS 1st Ed 94 (David & Charles 18). The *skeið-gata*

here is the Roman road, Margary 29, which crosses the chalk wolds, passing through the middle of the township. *Wartre* named the Domesday hundred and was a Domesday caput with three berewicks and one soke. It stands now between three divisions of Harthill Wapentake. Smith suggests that 'the nearby deep valley called Race Dale is worth noting' (*PN YE*, 171). *Warter* means 'gallows tree', so perhaps there was here also an association with an open-air court of law.

YORKSHIRE, NORTH RIDING

1. *Hesketh Dike and Grange*. *PN YN*, 198 (SE 503869 and 514878) In Boltby township and Felixkirk parish, OS 1st Ed 96 (David & Charles 13). In Burdforth Wapentake, 6m NE of Thirsk. Hesketh Dike is an earthwork lying athwart a Bronze Age ridge track on the scarp crest of the Hambleton Hills. Along the route of the track many finds of prehistoric and Roman date have been made. This stretch of road has been associated with horse racing at least from the early seventeenth century, and still is today (J. Rushton, *The Ryedale Story*, Malton, ND, c. 1975, 84). Boltby was a Domesday manor and had one berewick in 1086.

YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING

1. *Hesketh House* *PN YW* ii, 177 (SE 277258). In East and West Ardsley parish in Agbrigg Wapentake, OS 1st Ed 87 (David & Charles 22), 5m NW of Wakefield. It lies half a mile south of a Roman road from Wakefield to Bradford marked on the first edition OS map. It is close to the boundary with Morley Wapentake; and *Tingley*, 'the mound where the thing or council met' is marked by an earthwork near the point where the Wakefield-Bradford road is crossed by the road from Huddersfield to Leeds. This was the moot for Morley Wapentake, although today it lies just over the boundary in Agbrigg Wapentake.

'This parish (Woodkirk) was undoubtedly an important one for assemblies, for Woodkirk has associations with Lee Fair Green which is the site of the Great Lee Fair.' 'The fair at Woodkirk was granted by Henry I and confirmed by Stephen to be held on the Feast of the Assumption and on the Nativity.' (*PN YW* ii, 175-6).

Woodkirk is a mile south of Tingley on the Huddersfield-Leeds road, and Hesketh House is halfway between them. Two field

names in the township also seem to refer to these gatherings. *Le Ganstedes* (1348) derives from *gagn-stadr*, a meeting place, the place of a trial; and *les Justynglandes* (1358), jousting lands, indicates one of the entertainments (*PN YW* ii, 178).

2. *Heskitt House. Eskett*, 1540 *PN YW* vi, 63 (SE 061538) In Bolton Abbey township in East Staincliffe Wapentake, OS 1st Ed 92 (David & Charles 16), 5m E of Skipton. A Roman road has been identified higher up Wharfedale and leading down the valley, Margary 730, but its course is not known in the vicinity of Bolton Abbey. Margary says that one continuing down Wharfedale is 'very likely' (Margary, p.384). It would join the Roman road, Margary 72a, which lies two miles south of Heskitt House. The Wharfe here is the boundary between wapentakes, and four meet within five miles of Bolton Abbey. *Bodelton(e)* in Domesday Book was the caput for a very large group of associated villas, and the establishment of the Priory Church gave it great importance as an ecclesiastical centre in the Middle Ages. The field name *Court Green* and *Gildusflat*, 1297 (guild-house), (*PN YW* vi, 64) may refer to administrative or legal gatherings.
3. *Hesketh. Heskett*, c. 1530 *PN YW* vi, 38 (SD 847470) In Bracewell parish and township, in East Staincliffe Wapentake, OS 1st Ed 92 (David & Charles 16). It is 9m from Skipton. It stands on the Roman road, Margary 72a from Ribchester to the fort at Elslack, at the point where it is crossed by the hollow way called Coal Pit Lane which was the old road from Gisburn to Colne. This road marks the wapentake boundary between East and West Staincliffe, as well as parish boundaries. A Romano-British farmstead has been uncovered recently in earthworks alongside Coal Pit Lane.² In Gisburn, two miles away, there is a centre of horse training today, and it would appear that there was one also in the past, since a field name recorded in 1539 is *Stoode Close* (a horse stud) (*PN YW* vi, 167).
4. *Over and Nether Hesketh. Neyther Heskett*, 1629 *PN YW* vi, 160 (SD 8358) This is a lost place-name in Long Preston parish and township in West Staincliffe Wapentake, OS 1st Ed 92 (David & Charles 16). It lies 10 miles NW from Skipton. A site claimed
2. Mr. G. Ingham has informed me that recent excavations by Earby Archaeological Society in earthworks alongside Coal Pit Lane have uncovered a fourth-century Romano-British farmstead.

as a Roman fort lies east of the village, and according to Margary at least one Roman road, 722, passes through the township. Long Preston was a Domesday manor with nine appendant vills. The church, with the ruins of an ancient chapel dedicated to St Michael (T.D. Whittaker, *History of Craven*, London, 1812, 124), lies next to the supposed Roman fort, and was the mother church for four townships. The boundary between East and West Staincliffe Wapentakes lies about three miles south-east of the village.

5. *The Skaithe* PN YW vi 205 (SD 712525) In Slaidburn parish and township in West Staincliffe Wapentake. It is close to the village whence a moorland track goes over the pass from Yorkshire to Lancashire. This road roughly parallels the Roman road, Margary 7c a mile or so further west. Slaidburn, on the edge of the Forest of Bowland was the centre for the Forest and Barony courts in the medieval period (R. Cunliffe Shaw, *The Royal Forest of Lancaster*, Preston, 1956, 213).
6. *Scate Moor Lane*. *Scaite*, 1801 PN YW v, 11 (SE 444597). In Whixley parish and township in Upper Claro Wapentake, OS 1st Ed 93 (David & Charles 17). It is at the junction of two Roman roads, Margary 280 and 8a: one from York and the other between Tadcaster and Aldborough. It is close to the meeting point of three wapentakes, Lower and Upper Claro and Ainsty.

There seems therefore on the evidence of these sixteen sites a justification for suggesting that these places were open-air meeting places between people of neighbouring wapentakes for which the Roman roads provided not only the easy route of access to the central point, but perhaps also the race-course itself.³ This would provide the advantage of measured miles as well as a firm and clearly-marked track. In later times at least some of these places were certainly the sites of courts of justice for the wapentake, ward or hundred. They may of course have served also as places where inter-wapentake disputes were settled. This combination of judicial function and celebration is entirely in keeping with what is known of the Norse *things* or moots.

3. Mrs. M.C. Higham has drawn my attention to a passage in R.H. Hayes and J.G. Rutter, 'Wade's Causeway, a Roman Road in NE Yorkshire', *Scarborough and district Archaeological Society Research Report No. 4* (Scarborough, 1964): 'The length of Roman road on Wheeldale Moor is known locally as the Skivick. (OS six-inch map: Skivick Crag overlooking Wheeldale Lodge), SE 8097.' The authors claim a derivation from *skeið*.

'A cult gathering was also made the opportunity for a public assembly, which apart from the transaction of public business might turn into a kind of fair. Games, contests, dancing might all be more or less closely connected with the cult celebration. Horse racing and horse fighting seem to have been particularly usual at heathen feasts - possibly they played a part in the selection of victims for sacrifice, possibly a victorious beast was looked upon as especially favoured by the gods.' (P.G. Foote and D.M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, London, 1970, 402)

The same authors also quote a translation of the opening lines of the poem *Hamvismál* about the death of Svanhild

'trampled by horses, white and black, on the public way, gray, trained to pace, horses of the Goths' (*op cit*, 354)

The 'horses of the Goths' is a phrase implying very fine horses (*op cit*, 329). What is not clear in the translation is whether the animals were 'trained to pace, on the public way', implying perhaps that this is where races took place, or whether it simply means that Svanhild was killed on the public way.

The place-name element *skeið* is Norse and implies no earlier date for a race-course at these sites than the period of Norse settlement. It is however relevant to consider whether they pinpoint an institution much older than the name. In Celtic literature, too, horse racing was a significant part of the celebrations which accompanied the great judicial and cult assemblies. In the *Silva Gadelica* edited and translated by S. H. O'Grady in 1892 is the account

'Here too is the reason for which the feast at Tara was made at all, the body of the law which all Ireland enacted then, during that and their next convention at the year's end, none might transgress...' (quoted in A. Rees and B. Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, Bristol, 1961, 171).

Rees and Rees suggest that the great feast at Tara 'presided over by kings' was instituted by the god Lug 'and it was he who instituted horse races, an important feature of assemblies...' (*op cit*, 143). 'There were horse races and chariot races through which new orders of merit were established' (*op cit*, 171).

It certainly appears that there is evidence to suggest that the *skeið* place-name element should be regarded, not as being sometimes race-course and sometimes boundary, but as normally being both. The evidence seems strong enough to suggest that *skeið* place-names occur sufficiently often near Roman roads to justify looking for archaeological evidence of a Roman road if one is not known in the vicinity of that place-name element.

Dr. M. Gelling has drawn my attention to a *skeið* place-name at Wickham Skeith in Suffolk. In her paper (M. Gelling, "English Place-Names derived from the compound *wicham*", *Medieval Archaeology*, 11 (1967), 87-104) she discusses the significance of the *wicham* place-names, a high proportion of which are close to Roman roads, and suggests that these 'may have derived their names from a connexion with the *vici* of Roman Britain.' The name *Skeyth* is mentioned in 1Hy3 (BM)⁴ and is presumably an addition to the name at the time of the Scandinavian settlement of that area. It is interesting however that two apparently significant place-name elements occur together here, both perhaps implying great antiquity to the settlement and to the institution. I have also found a *Skaith* in the city of Leicester, and there may well be other examples in southern England whose sites would be worth examining.

There are in the West Riding of Yorkshire two examples of race-course sites with English names which, in situation, appear to be of the same type as the *skeið* place-names, and are perhaps also ancient. Race Course Hill in Bingley is near the crossing of two Roman roads and on the boundary between East Staincliffe and Skyrack Wapentakes. Horse Race End in Warmfield is on a Roman road, and lies close to the boundary of that wapentake with Osgoldcross. Smith suggests that Warmfield (*Warnesfeld*, 1086) may derive from *wræna* a stallion (*PN YW* ii, 117). The road runs across Heath Common to Agbrigg, the bridge 'which names the wapentake and which was the meeting place for the wapentake; in 1286 an inquisition was held there and in 1324 it is reported as a place of execution' (*PN YW* ii, 117). It lies only a mile from Wakefield to whose importance as a centre Smith draws attention. The first element of Wakefield is 'OE *wacu*, a watch, a wake, and in the place-name it would refer to some great annual wake or festival, during which in later times the well-known cycle of mystery plays (the Towneley plays) was regularly presented. Wakefield itself is the traditional capital of the West Riding...; as Goodall notes, it

4. Dr. M. Gelling, personal communication.

was within 10 miles of the meeting places of five wapentakes... This concentration of wapentake meeting places so close to Wakefield also suggests that from very early times it was a convenient place of assembly for the southern half of the (West) Riding... its location indicates at least a Pre-Conquest importance...' (*PN YW* ii, 163).

There may be other elements which would be worth examining, such as *plega*, a playing place, which is fairly common in the south of England. Dr. Gelling has also told me of *Baynard's Green* (a bay horse) in Oxfordshire. A Roman road from Baynard's Green leads over Cottisford Heath on the boundary with Northamptonshire, and the OS first edition map shows a race-course here at the south end of the Heath (*PN Ox*, 238).

The geographical distribution of the places with *skeið* and the two English examples shows three loosely-clustered groups and six outlying single examples. It is possible that more examples may occur in Lancashire where minor place-names have not been examined etymologically⁵ but at present Hesketh with Beconsall (which Ekwall vouched for), Hesketh Lane in Chipping and Hesketh Wood in Cartmel stand alone, and so does the example on the Westmorland-Yorkshire boundary. On the east side of the Pennines, the single example in the North Riding, Hesketh Dike in Boltby, and Skygates in the East Riding are also isolated.

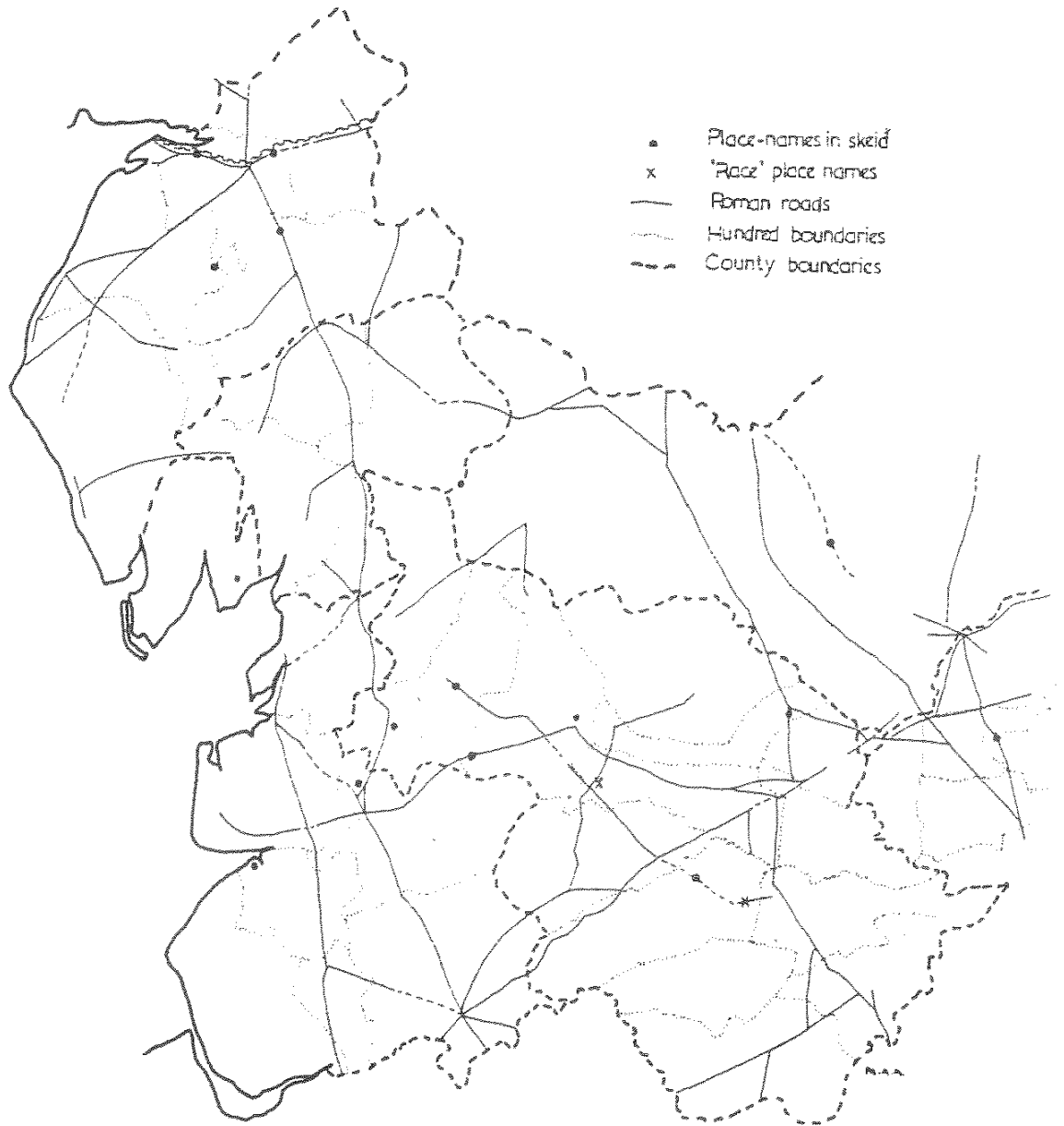
There is a group of four round Carlisle in Cumberland Ward or immediately adjoining. Another group of four occurs on the map in East and West Staincliffe, the district known as Craven. The last (and less convincing) group comprising two *skeið* names and the two English ones is more widely spaced around Leeds, on the outer edges of the district of Elmet.

It may be pure chance, but it is interesting that Cartmel, Carlisle, Craven and Elmet (and Makerfield - see footnote) have all been recognised as having had British survivals long into the Anglo-Saxon period.

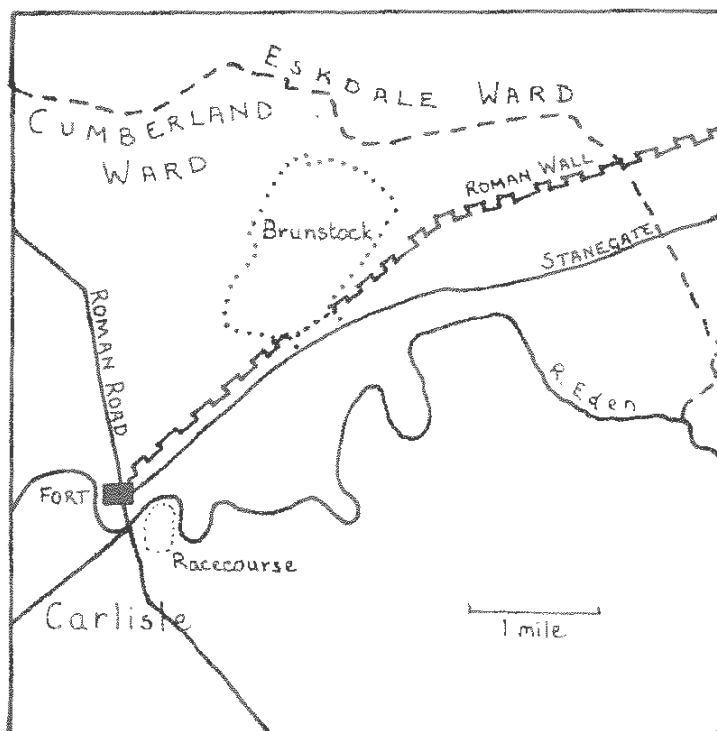
MARY ATKIN

5. Since preparing this paper I have found one in *Hesketh House* in Billinge, in Makerfield Hundred.

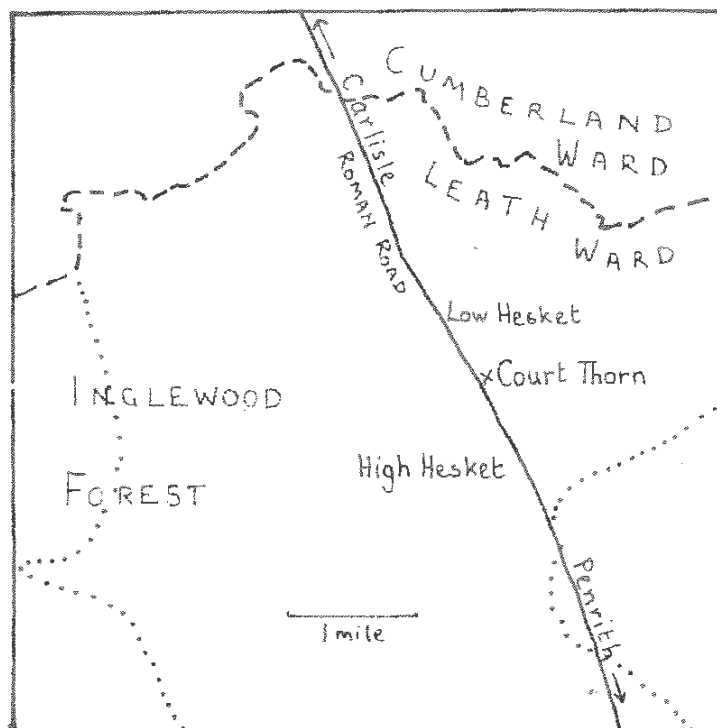
SKEIÐ PLACE-NAMES IN NORTHERN ENGLAND



Maps showing the location of some place-names derived from skeit

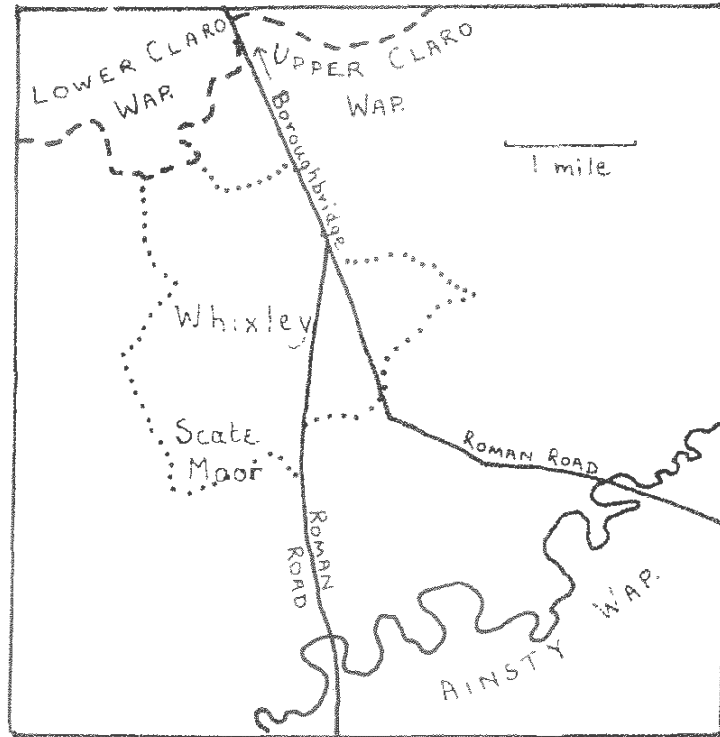


Brunstock, Cumberland.

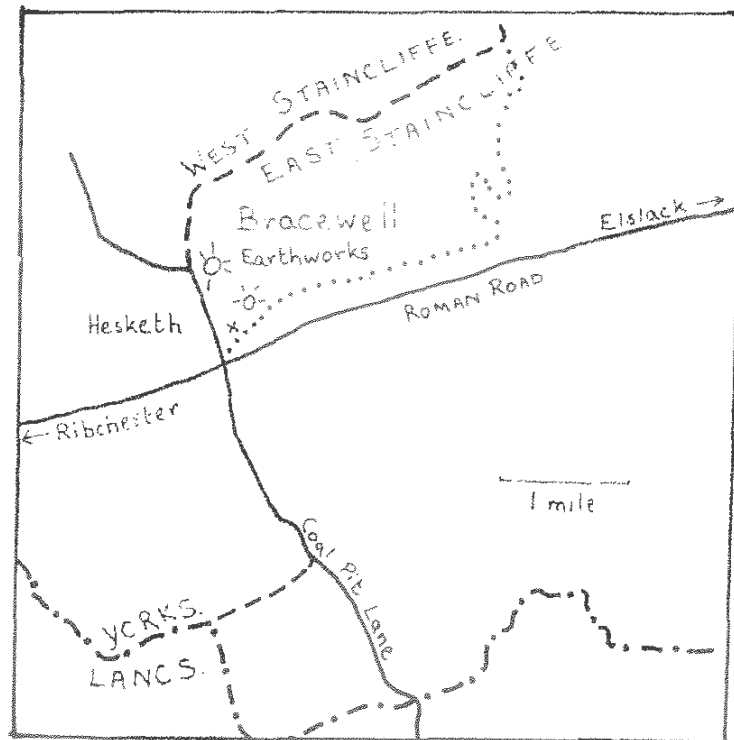


Hesketh in the Forest, Cumberland.

Maps showing the location of some place-names derived from skeið



Scate Moor Lane in Whixley, Yorks W.R.



Hesketh in Bracewell, Yorks W.R.