

## The Study of Hydronymy and Structure

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is about the English hydronyms, its origins, characteristics and types. The geographical names of the British Isles are quite well studied. These islands represent an area with clearly defined natural boundaries. The names that developed in England and the UK as a whole have become widespread in other countries where English is spoken.*

**Keywords:** Hydronyms, toponyms, geographical names, linguistics, types structure.

### INTRODUCTION

A study of the hydronymy of England indicates that this group of names developed in a very unique way and has significant features compared to other toponyms. If, considering toponymy, we can say that its most characteristic category is the category of direct cultural and historical conditionality of a given morphological type, then in hydronymy this is not entirely true. Hydronyms are more isolated, the connection “person - name” in this area is much less pronounced. Hence the individual characteristics of hydronyms, which are reflected in their semantic, morphological and phonetic structure.

There is an opinion, supported by a number of English linguists, that the hydronyms of England are the most ancient and stable layer of geographical names of the country [Mawer, 1929]. This hypothesis is based on the fact that a large number of hydronyms are of Celtic and pre-Celtic origin. This circumstance also determines many specific features of this group of names.

Hydronymy is also interesting in the sense that in this area there is observed such a rare process in language as the artificial creation of names. Moreover, this is not a modern trend, but a process rooted in tradition. The creation of hydronyms by chroniclers and historians is a widespread phenomenon and covers a long period (up to the 16th century). A number of hydronyms are arbitrary sound combinations formed by analogy with proper names, that is, phonetically corresponding to proper names. This is how, for example, the name of the river The Marlin arose from the former Gut's Mouth. Many names were later fixed. This group includes the names Len, Ingol, Alre and others. Of great interest in hydronymy, as well as in toponymy, is the still insufficiently developed question of the stratigraphy of names. There are a number of indicators that allow us to determine the period of occurrence of hydronyms. Among other criteria, an important role is played by the structure of the name, the frequency of use of the same name, and information about the process of its creation.

A significant difference between hydronymy and toponymy lies in the use of a defining element. In toponymy, the presence of a definition or its nature is not so clearly associated with the location of the object. In hydronymy, the difference in word-formation models is largely determined by the difference in landscape. In areas where rivers are numerous (for example, in the western regions of England), the need for differentiating features was felt by the population, which was reflected in the structure and semantics of names. In these areas, hydronymic models of the "definition + definable" type arose. Where there are few rivers, differentiating characteristics turned out to be unnecessary: in comparison with the western regions, there are few rivers in the east of England. Therefore, for the name of the river on which the village was located, either the term "river" or the name of the village itself was used. A large number of names of cities, villages, and regions come from hydronyms. This is the most ancient layer of names, which has been preserved most of all in the west of the country. In many cases, the hydronym that gave the basis to a toponym has been preserved only in written monuments.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The most common way to create toponyms from hydronyms is by combining with **-ton** element (Alwinton, Ribbleton, etc.). They are very common in the west and southwest of the country, but are almost completely absent in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Surrey, i.e. in the east and southeast of the country.

Combinations with **-ham** are much less common and are preserved mainly in the northern regions. There are also combinations with *wic*, *burg*, *ceaster*, *cot*, *stoc*, *worth*, *feld*, *head*, *mouth*, *dale*, *bridge*, *ford*. The nature of the elements used shows that the process of formation of toponyms from hydronyms covers mainly the western regions of England. Place names in Great Britain are rich and varied, largely due to changes in language and culture. They may contain elements that take their roots from the languages of various peoples - Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians, French. All these peoples contributed to the toponymy of the country. Despite the fact that the official language of Great Britain is English, place names are only partially English. Among them, several toponymic backgrounds can be distinguished and, above all, of course, Celtic. In the 11th century BC. The invasion and settlement of Britain by Celtic tribes began, which continued until the beginning of the 1st century. BC. The Celts mixed with the local tribes of the Picts and Scots, and this mixed population, mostly of Celtic origin, is traditionally called the Britons. In 400-350 BC e. Celtic languages are especially widespread in the British Isles: many place names are, if not entirely, then partially of Celtic origin. There are many Celtic elements among the names of natural objects, for example rivers: Eden (old Celtic name Edehelm), Cocker, Irthing. After the colonization of the islands by the Anglo-Saxons, the Celtic tribes were pushed back by settlers to the north and west. Therefore, the number of Celtic names in these areas - Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, where the languages of the Celtic group - Irish, Scottish, Welsh - have still been preserved, has increased sharply. In Northern Scotland, elements of hydronyms are of Gaelic origin, for example in the names of lakes the term loch is often found,

meaning lake in the Celtic languages: Loch Ness, Loch Lomond, Loch Neigh. The name of a lake in England may include the term Lake (Wimbleball Lake), and an artificial reservoir Reservoir (Roadford Reservoir, Colliford Reservoir). Some Celtic elements are present in the following names: Aberystwyth, Aberdyfi, Aberdeen, Aberuthven, where *aber* is the mouth of a river, the confluence of rivers, also the prefix *inver* is the confluence of rivers, the mouth. In addition, a large number of Celtic names are preserved in the western regions of England proper - Cheshire, Devonshire, Worcestershire, etc. Most English rivers bear Celtic names: Avon, Don, Exe, Ax, Esk, Usk, Thames, Derwent, Severn, Dee. The names: Aire, Humber, Ouse, Tees, Wey, Wye, Tyne belong to the most ancient layer of English place names.

In the toponymy and hydronymy of Great Britain and Ireland, the Celtic element **-don** is widespread, the etymology of which is interpreted as “river”; it can act as a suffix, affix and prefix:

1. the suffix **-don** is present in the names of the following cities: Sheffield-upon-London (a region of London), Bandon (on the southern coast of Ireland), Badon (in 500 a battle took place here between the English and the Romanized Celts led by Ambrosius Aurelianus), Wimbledon (near London, famous for tennis competitions); rivers: Calmdon (in Northern Ireland), Croydon (near London), Ledon (in England), Loddon (London area), Little Don (England);
2. the prefix **-don** is present in the names of: a) cities: Dongegal (in the Bay of Donegal in Ireland), Doncaster (on the Don River in England), Donson-Bridge (in England); b) rivers and bays: River Don (Humber basin in England), River Don (in Scotland), Donegal Bay (in the north-west of Ireland);
3. the stem **-don** is in the names of: a) cities: Londonderry (in Northern Ireland near Loch-File Bay), Londonald (in Scotland); b) counties: Londonderry, Huntingdonshire (in England)

London is the capital of England, also a descendant of the Celtic Llyn-dun (translated as a fortress by the river), converted by the

Romans into Londinium. The noun *avon* – river – has been preserved as a proper name. From the Celtic word *uisge* (water) the names of the rivers Exe, Usk, Esk come. From the same word the noun *whiskey* is later formed - vodka, whiskey. The Celtic word *loch* was inherited by many lakes in Scotland whose names include *Loch*. Celtic borrowings entered the Old Germanic language, obeyed the laws of grammar, phonetics and word formation of the Old English language and became indistinguishable from the original vocabulary.

In 449 AD e. the Angles, Saxons and Jutes began settling the British Isles. The Anglo-Saxons called the country *England* (country of the Angles), and their language was called *Englisc*, which modern scholars call *Old English* or *Anglo-Saxon*. Since modern English directly developed from Old English, place names that are of Old English origin are considered original. Old English elements used in the names of water bodies are *bourne*, *burn* - stream (*Ashbourne*, *Blackburn*, *Bournemouth*, *Eastbourne*), *well* - spring source, *well* (*Elmswell*, *Bakewell*). Latin also influenced English place names, although only slightly. The era of 400 years of Roman occupation of the British Isles did not leave a significant imprint on the people of the country. Most of the surviving names from this period are peculiar Latin-Celtic complexes. Here it should be noted the popularity of the component *-chester/-caster* (from Latin *castra* - camp, Old English *caster* - camp) in the names of those settlements that were located on the site of former Roman fortifications and cities. It is used in combination with ancient attributive components, most often of Celtic origin, with Celtic names of rivers (Mr. *Doncaster* <hydronym *Don*; Mr. *Colchester* <hydronym *Colne*; Mr. *Lancaster* <hydronym *Lune*). It is also worth mentioning Lat. *portus* - harbor in some names of the south of England: *Portsmouth*, *Portsea*, *Portsmouth*, *Portchester*. In some cases (especially when denoting the position of a settlement on a river), the English upper and lower are rendered by the Latin superior and inferior (upper, lower) - *Rickingham Superior*, *Rickingham Inferior*.

The Scandinavian conquerors (IX-XI centuries) left a noticeable mark on the toponymy of the British Isles. However, their influence is not felt throughout the country, but in a certain

north-eastern region, known as Danelaw (literally Danish law), which covers the counties of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, Cumberland. The founding of Scandinavian settlements in this area led to the formation of the Scandinavian toponymic layer. Among the massively repeated toponymic elements in Danelaw, the component holm should be highlighted, which was used to designate areas of land near water, small islands (English holm - floodplain, river island). Holm occurs as a simple toponym (Holme) and as the final element of complex names (Heigholme, Bromhohn, Oxcnholme, Tupholme).

One of the most common elements in the hydronyms of the Old Norse language was fith - a narrow sea bay, bay: Burrafith, Firth, Forth. The English name of the city Swansea comes from the Old Norse meaning Swain's island, and in Welsh its name means the mouth of the Tawe River and sounds like Abertawe. It should be noted that Welsh place names are more related to nature than to people and the elements designating and describing rivers are numerous here. The Norman Conquest, despite its enormous socio-cultural influence, did not lead to the emergence of an extensive French toponymic layer in England. The influence of the French language on the toponymy of the country is very insignificant: the conquerors constituted a small elite of the ruling class of England, the names of the country were created by the people. Thornton le Moors, Houghton le Spring - on the marshes, by the stream, where the French article is perceived in a function close to a preposition, that is, to communicate with the location indicator of objects.

#### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

At the same time, it is customary to refer to the institutional type: legal, medical. When studying the morphological and semantic characteristics of the names of English settlements, it is also possible to identify the repetition of some elements associated with water bodies:

- aber (Celtic element) – the mouth of a river or the confluence of two rivers (Aberystwyth Abergavenny);
- avon (Celtic element) – river (Avon, Netheravon, Avonmouth);
- a (Anglo-Saxon element) – stream, stream, island (Greta); a, ay, ey (Scandinavian element) – island (Strongsay, Sheppey);
- bank – bank of a river, lake, sandbank (Firbank, Ninebanks);
- beck – stream (Sandbeck, Pinchbeck);
- bourne, borne, burn (element from Old English) – stream (Broxbourne, Bournemouth, Blackburn, Wolburne);
- brook – small stream (Sedgebrook);
- by (element from Old English) - bend of the river (Byford);
- crook – turn, bend of the river (Crook);
- ea, eau, y (element from Old English) – river (Shepeau, Eaton, River Eye);
- fen (an element from Old English) – swamp, swamp (Matfen, Swinfen, The Fens);
- fleet (dialectism) – stream, small tributary of a river (Aldingfleet, Fleet Street);
- ford (Anglo-Saxon element) - ford (Cryford, Oxford, Fordham, Tetford);
- loch (Gaelic) – lake (Loch Fine, Loch Lomond); in Ireland usually Lough;
- marsh – swamp, swamp, swampy soil (Lamarsh, Denge Marsh);
- meer – swamp, lake, pond;
- pool – a small pond (Blackpool, Butpool);
- wash (Old English element) – stream or swamp (Washford).

Considering hydronyms in connection with the process of their creation, it is necessary to highlight names for which the term “back-formations” is proposed in the English toponymic literature, that is, derivatives of toponymic names. Cases where the name of a river is derived from the name of a settlement are quite common. However, the reverse name is typical for a later period. In England, this phenomenon, falling out of the main mass flow of name formation (more precisely, the opposite of it),

is most common in areas with a mixed population, where linguistic differences did not allow the population to correctly understand and perceive the meaning of a previously existing foreign name and, therefore, were replaced. "Reverse" formations are common mainly in the southeast of England, in Essex, Sussex, and Kent. Large numbers are also attested in Cumberland, an area with populations of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Scandinavian origin.

This process means a transfer of meaning, that is, the name of a settlement or any natural object is used without change as the name of a river or stream. Thus, the hydronym Bathem is associated with the name of the settlement, which, in turn, comes from the name of the ancient inhabitants of the area. The etymological meaning of the name of the river is Dene - **valley**, Glen - **lowland**, Fontmell Brook - **bare hill**, Eamont - the confluence of rivers, etc. Many reverse names of rivers are based on the names of cities located on their banks with the addition of geographical terms - stream, source (rivers Barton Brook, Tipalt Burn, etc.). The country has a number of names used in parallel, both as toponyms and hydronyms: Blackburn, Bradbourne, Holborn, Shirburn, Woburn and many others. Those few proper names that are found in hydronyms also mostly refer to reverse formations (for example, Chelmer from Chelmersford - a ford belonging to Selmer).

Reverse names are also interesting because this is one of the ways to form variants of the name of the same object. The question of variants, their nature and origin is a special and very interesting problem of hydronymics.

Cases related to reverse names, when a river can receive several names (old and new), are not so numerous in England, but they do exist. At the same time, when considering the options for river names, one should distinguish between synchronic and diachronic options. The latter arise as a result of a change of names, and the river usually receives a new name after a large city located on its banks (for example, the Hail River was named Kum after the city of Kimbolton). Among the synchronic variants, the most common are local variants: for example, the Steeping River has several names along its course - Partney (for the village),



Sausthorpe (for the city), etc. In some cases, the emergence of variants is associated with ancient customs and superstitions. Thus, Osk (the river in which salmon live) - a variant of the hydronym Cearn - apparently arose among fishermen who considered this name to bring good luck. There are certain reasons to assume that in the hydronymy of any country there is a layer of ancient names that were replaced precisely because they were perceived as sacred. The "everyday", daily use of names seemed to desecrate this name, and it was replaced. This process is usually called the "taboo phenomenon" in toponymic literature. Hydronyms are associated not only with the names of settlements, but also with other water bodies: Thames, Thame, Tame, Team, Teme. This connection between water names helps in deciphering the meaning of many hydronyms.

Hydronyms contribute to the expansion of onomastic vocabulary itself, i.e. spheres of proper names. Many names of populated places and streets, first and last names of people, names of animals, etc. are formed from hydronyms.

The range of toponyms themselves, formed on the basis of the names of rivers and lakes, is especially wide. Smaller settlements - urban-type settlements, villages, villages, railway stations, etc. - are often named after nearby rivers and lakes. "Etymology is a capricious science, sometimes allowing two, three, or more solutions. ...and that's not the point. Many hydronyms in the world do not have reliable and unambiguous explanations. Perhaps they will remain dark" [Ageeva, 1985: 5]. Establishing the reliable etymology of a geographical name is carried out by toponymists, whose work requires special and very thorough historical and linguistic research. It is obvious that such an ideal analysis is almost unattainable in practice, and only those names become the property of science that, for some reason, fall into the sphere of scientific interests of specialists.

English hydronymy is so ancient that identifying the connection between a name and the term that was its basis is a task of exceptional complexity (for example, the names of the rivers Ure, Axe, Neen, Exe, etc.). Cases of the use of modern appellatives - hydronymic terms as part of names are rare.

Of all the toponymic groups - the names of populated places, mountains, streets, etc. - the names of rivers are the most difficult to determine the etymology. They are less susceptible to erosion by time and are often very old, and therefore it is not easy to restore their original form and content. These features of hydronymy make it very interesting for historians, linguists and geographers, since they allow us to look into the distant past, about which written sources are silent.

Discovering the meaning of a proper name involves searching for a common noun from which the proper name is derived - if the meaning of the name is not obscured and if there is knowledge of the language from which the name comes. Thus, revealing the meaning of the name of the English city of Oxford, we can establish that it comes from two words: *oh* - bull and *ford* - city. Thus, the name of the ancient university town of England, one of the largest in the country, means Bull Ford. Despite the fact that the name is not poetic, it breathes history: one can easily imagine where the city of Oxford once began [Ageeva, 1985: 6].

#### CONCLUSION

Speaking about the origin of the names of rivers in England, E. Equal noted that most of the more or less significant rivers in the country bear pre-English names, while smaller streams have Scandinavian or English names (“...most rivers and streams of some importance have pre -English names, while smaller streams mostly have English or Scandinavian names” [Eckwall, 1928]. The creation of most English hydronyms goes back centuries, and it is very difficult to establish a connection between the name and the term that formed its basis. Most hydronyms use nouns associated with the concept of “water” (“source”, “river”): Avon, Ax, Amber, Humber, Ouse, Wear, Tyne, Don. Descriptive names like Blackwater, Blackburn, Freshwater are also common.

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