

**THE PLACE-NAMES OF THE
LIVERPOOL DISTRICT; OR, THE
HISTORY AND MEANING OF THE
LOCAL AND RIVER NAMES OF SOUTH-
WEST LANCASHIRE AND OF WIRRAL**

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The place-names of the Liverpool district; or, The history and meaning of the local and river names of South-west Lancashire and of Wirral by Henry Harrison

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HENRY HARRISON

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OR,

*The History and Meaning of the Local and River
Names of South-west Lancashire and of Wirral.*

BY

HENRY HARRISON.

** RESPECIENDUM EST UT DISCAMUS EX PRÆTERITO.*

LONDON :
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1898.

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To

SIR JOHN T. BRUNNER, BART.,

OF "DRUIDS' CROSS," WAVERTREE,

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE NORTHWICH

DIVISION OF CHESHIRE,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY HIS OBEYIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

8. 175 13

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS little onomasticon embodies, I believe, the first attempt to treat the etymology of the place-names of the Liverpool district upon a systematic basis. In various local and county histories endeavours have here and there been made to account for the origin of certain place-names, but such endeavours have unfortunately only too frequently been remarkable for anything but philological, and even topographical, accuracy. They are, however, generally chronicled, as a matter of record, in the present monograph, with such criticism and emendation as may have been thought necessary.

The science of philology has made rapid strides since the days when Syers, in his *History of Everton*, solemnly asserted that etymology, a branch of philology, was neither more nor less than "guessology"; but even to-day, after all the accessible historical and philological evidence bearing upon a name has been thoroughly sifted and carefully weighed, there sometimes remains an element of uncertainty that creates a hiatus which must be filled by guessing—but, still, by what Professor Skeat has called, in this connection, "reasonable guessing,"¹ not the kind of etymo-

¹ Dr. Sweet says, in the preface to his new Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: "The investigator of Old English . . . is often obliged to work by guesswork, until some one else guesses better."

logical jumping at conclusions which has, for example, induced a Welshman to claim that the name Apollo is derived from the Cymric *Ap-haul*, 'Son of the Sun'; an Irishman to assert that the Egyptian deity Osiris was of Hibernian descent, and that the name should consequently be written O'Siris; a Cornishman, saturated with the Phœnician tradition, to declare that his Honeyball is a corruption of Hannibal; a Scotsman to infer an affinity between the Egyptian Pharaoh and the Gaelic Fergus; and even an Englishman to calmly asseverate that Lambeth (the 'lamb-hithe'), containing the palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury, derived its name from the Thibetan *llama*, 'high-priest,' and the Hebrew *beth*, 'house.'

While, however, in England, we bring our guessing powers into operation only, as a rule, after the lapse of centuries, in America it sometimes happens that a place receives its name one day and the next (so to speak) the origin of that name is shrouded in mystery, as witness the following characteristic extract from a recent number of a Western States journal :

"Nobody around the oilfields seems to know why the new field is called Chipmunk. Most aver that it has always been Chipmunk ever since the time of the mound-builders. Others have it that the first white settler was eaten by chipmunks, ever since which notable event a pure white chipmunk has haunted the valley, scaring other chipmunks to death. Chipmunk may also be called Chipmunk because there are no chipmunks there."

In order to impose a more or less recognised limit upon the so-called district of Liverpool, it has, for the purpose of this treatise, been divided into two hundreds—that of West Derby, which comprises practically the whole of south-west Lancashire, and that of Wirral, which embraces the tongue of land separating the estuary of the Mersey from that of the Dee. The names enumerated in the body of the work, which is arranged in alphabetical form with respect to the two hundreds, I have summarized herewith, according to their linguistic origin :