

EARDISLAND
the
PLACE-NAME

In 1890 the Reverend Joseph Barker, Vicar of Eardisland, read a Paper to a meeting of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club entitled:

*Erislonde, Alias Eardisland, Alias Areland*¹

His first, introductory, paragraph was:

ERISLONDE, ALIAS EARDISLAND, ALIAS ARELAND.

[By Rev. JOSEPH BARKER, Vicar.]

So does this place appear among the livings discharged of this Deanery in Bacon's *Liber Regis* of 1786; and in Dingley's *History from Marble*, compiled in the reign of Charles II. and printed for the Camden Society in 1867, we have it Erdestland. I have also seen it Aresland; being on the banks of the river Arrow we find too Areland, *vel* Eardisland, *quasi* Arrow-land; and we have even now in these days of general education sometimes Yurzland. There are various conjectures respecting the meaning of Eardisland, and in my endeavour to get at its right interpretation I have received much kind help from a respected member of our Club, Chancellor Phillott, and also from the Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge, the Rev. Dr. Skeat.

This was followed by three paragraphs, fifty two lines in all, in which he discussed what his correspondence with Professor Skeat revealed, and then put forward a few ideas of his own.² He concluded with the opinion:

then, I am inclined to feel satisfied that the place 'in which we take the liberty of residing' is the land of the wolf's home, and may not a part of the parish named "Bearwood" be the wood of the Bear?

¹ This was later also published after his death as a booklet entitled: *Eardisland: Its Church and Antiquities*

² He stressed the variety of spellings of Eardisland which he had encountered. I myself have come across well over fifty variations and recorded at least fifty four of them and their sources before discontinuing the project.

Scholarship moved on, in particular expert study of Domesday Book. In 1916 the eminent scholar, churchman and historian of Herefordshire, Canon Bannister published:

THE PLACE-NAMES
OF
HEREFORDSHIRE
Their Origin and Development

by

The Rev. A. T. BANNISTER, M.A.
Canon Residentiary of Hereford Cathedral
Author of 'Herefordshire and its Place in English History'
Editor (for the Cantilupe Society) of 'The Register of Adam de Orleton'

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1916

Printed for the Author

His listing for *Eardisland* on page 64 is one of the longest which he includes. It finishes with a short, firm, conclusion: *Earl's Lene from O.E. Eorl* :

Eardisland.

- 958 Lionhena, Birch.
- 1086 Lene¹, Dom.
- 1243 Urselane, T. de Nevill.
- 1278 Erleslone, Ep. Reg.
- 1291 Erleslene, Tax. Eccles.
- 1302 Erleslone, Quo War.
- 1303 Erslon, F.A.
- 1321 Erleslonde, Ep. Reg.
- 1326 Erleslonde, Ep. Reg.
- 1332 Erselane, Ep. Reg.
- 1341 Erslone, Non. Inq.
- 1529 Ereslond, Ind. Ct R.
- 1538 Erislonde, Val. Eccles.
- 1577 Aresland, Saxton's Map.
- 1610 Areland, Speed's Map.
- circ. 1660 Aresland, Silas Taylor.
- 1786 Eardsland, Taylor's Map.
- 1786 'Erislonde, alias Eardisland, alias Areland,' John Bacon, 'Liber Regis.'

There seems no reason to doubt that this is, as tradition says, Earl's Lene from O.E. *Eorl*. The 16th and 17th century forms in *Are-* are due to assimilation with Arrow, the river on the banks of which *Eardisland* is situated. For the second element see *Lene*.

¹ Of the three portions of *Lene*, in the 12th and 13th centuries, Kingslene was a Rectory, Monkeslene belonging to the Abbey of Conches, and Erleslene to that of Lyre, had Vicars only.

His listing for *Lene* on page 114 is short but informative:

**Lene* [Domesday Hundred].

1086 *Lene*, Dom.

This name is applied in Dom. and later to a whole district, which is roughly the valley of the Arrow between *Kington* and *Leominster*. Low-lying land, it possibly took its name from *W. llion*, 'floods,' 'streams.' It is the second element in the names of *Kingsland*, *Eardisland*, and *Monkland*; and it may be the first element in *Lyonshall*, and even of *Leominster*.

I researched Bannister's first entry 958 *Lionhena*, *Birch* and found a recent scholarly publication³ which, without specifically mentioning *Eardisland* made it clear that, whilst *Lionhena* was indeed in the *Lene*, it was well West of *Eardisland*, beyond *Pembridge/Shobdon* boundaries.

Care should therefore be taken not to follow Bannister in this particular respect.

Much more recent than Bannister is Coplestone-Crow:

Herefordshire Place-Names

Bruce Coplestone-Crow

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³ Lewis, Beryl. *Boundary Landscapes* Kington History Society, 2008.

Whilst equally, indeed more detailed than Bannister, he does not include *Lionhena* in the early spellings and sources which he quotes. This will not have been an oversight:

Eardisland (420585)

Working Copies and Abbreviations separated. Sent for Eardisland, the other for copies of Abb.

Werlesluna 1067-71 Gallia Christiana, Orleslen(a) 1137-9 HDB, 1174-86 Barrow, Orlesleu(a) c1140-55 Dugdale, c1250-63 AcornC, Urselane 1243 Fees, Erleslane 1285 QD, Wewislan', Erleslen 1291 Tax, Erleslon 1302 BM, Erslon 1303 FA, Ersleone 1334 SR, Ereslond 1529-30 Court, Erislonde 1535 VE. Lene 1086 DB, Le(e)na 1148-9 Foliot, 1155 Dugdale. Horlesdone 1226-30 Capes, Erldene 1269 Capes.

'Earl's Leen'; v. District Name Leen. The earl is Morcar, son of earl Algar of East Anglia, who had the estate before 1066 (DB).

The notes in pencil are mine and should be ignored.

I have no copy of what he says about *District Name Leen*, but I have seen it and know that it is similar to what Bannister, and others much more recent than Bannister, also say.

CONCLUSION:

Points of detail aside, there is no doubt that modern scholarship has it that the Place-name *EARDISLAND* originated as *EARL'S LENE* and that the earl was Morcar, Earl of the Northumbrians.