

A note on Lindale's Name: Lime trees, flax or lake?

The most usual derivation for the name is that Lindale means '**valley where lime trees grow**' (Mills 1976:105). 'Linde' is Anglo Saxon for lime and refers to the past or current presence of lime trees, (Mabey 1996:118), while 'dalur' is Old Norse for valley, in this case the steep Lindale Beck, hence Lindale meaning valley with lime trees.

Richard Mabey in his *Flora Britannica* comments that lime must have been a well-known tree in England as late as the Anglo Saxon period, to judge by the number of place names which feature it, though he comments that it is dangerous to assume that a place name component which resembles the name of a plant is necessarily derived from it. It is essential to trace the name back step by step to its first use to be sure of its origin and meaning.

Tilia cordata, the small leaved lime, is a native British tree, generally regarded as a southern tree species as it needs high summer warmth (of 20°C) to set fertile fruit, although it does occur in coppiced woodland in the South Lakes area, for example on Whitbarrow. Pollen records show that around 6000 years ago, in the warm wet Atlantic Period, lime was once the most common tree in lowland England. Lindale may have been a small enclave for lime trees during the several early Holocene cold snaps (Worsley 2006). As the climate cooled lime trees were unable to spread, and only survived in sheltered hollows, and where maintained by coppicing. Lime wood is white, easy to carve and takes a good polish, and is much sought after by wood carvers.

One problem with this place name interpretation is the lack of lime trees around Lindale. Brian Barker (2014), who has a detailed knowledge of Lindale's trees, is not aware of any 'native lime trees' in Lindale. Any lime trees in the area are in gardens. The one ancient lime tree, on the parish boundary, on Back Lane, above the village, is probably Common Lime, *Tilia europaea*, a hybrid of the small and large leaved lime, easily identifiable by its many suckering shoots. A fine avenue of lime trees which once extended from Windermere Road to Eller Howe, but is now severed by the by-pass, are believed to have been planted, possibly around 1820, by George Webster, architect, of Eller Howe.

Intriguingly though, there are a couple of other possible derivations for Lindale's name. The 'Lin' part could mean flax. 'Line' is also Old English for 'lin' or flax, which is known to have been grown at Low Newton, for linen, so Lindale could mean '**flaxdale**'. 'Lin' could also have been derived



from the Celtic place name 'llyn', meaning lake. The Welsh suggestion is a possibility as many Cumbrian names contain Welsh words either in part or in whole, and south Cumbria features on several occasions in the Mabinogion, a late Mediaeval collection of Celtic folktales (Worsley 2006). So Lindale could also mean the **valley with the lake** in it, perhaps referring to Helton Tarn in the Winster valley, or the Lindale Pool, where the Lindale Beck once flowed into the sea. In Old English and Gaelic, 'llyn' has been used to refer to any type of water, so Old English 'hlynn' can mean a torrent, and Gaelic 'linne', a pool, torrent or ravine. In Scotland and Northumberland, the place name 'linn' usually refers to a waterfall, although it can also mean a plunge pool or stretch of water. Brian Barker, a long time Lindale resident and tree expert, has always believed that Lindale means '**valley with the beck in it**', after 'linne', the Scottish or Northumbrian term for a steep sided, steeply descending valley.

As may often happen, research makes the picture less clear.

References

- Brian Barker (2014) tree surgeon, personal communication
Mabey, R. (1996) *Flora Britannica*. Sinclair-Stevenson
Mills, D. (1976) *The Place Names of Lancashire*. BT Batsford Ltd, London
Worsley, Prof Ann (2006) personal communication

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