

## Summary

### Place-names and prehistoric technology

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This essay gives examples of how different types of prehistoric technology, relatively simple and more advanced, are reflected in place-names. The areas touched on are hunting and trapping, road and bridge building, and iron making.

Trapping of elk (moose) and other wild animals such as foxes and wolves, using pitfalls or *gravar* ‘pits, trenches’ as they are called in the medieval laws, is reflected in names such as *Älggropstjärnet*, *Älggraven*, *Rävgrav* and *Ulvagraven*. *Björngällsåsen*, the name of a smallholding in Säfsnäs in Dalarna, contains the word *björnhjäll(e)* ‘raised position for shooting bears’.

Many place-names bear witness to the considerable skill that existed in prehistoric times when it came to facilitating the crossing of streams or waterlogged ground. The parish name *Läby* in Uppland (*in parochia ladhuby* 1316) contains the word *lada* in a sense of ‘something piled up’, and refers to a long causeway built across an old area of marshy ground. The element *ör* (OSw. *aurr*) ‘gravel’ – found for example in *Örby* in Lagga parish, Uppland, an area not characterised by gravelly soils – refers to a gravel causeway. Another means of traversing waterlogged land is reflected in *Risbro* in Västmanland and the village name *Resebro* in Östergötland (*j Risabro* 1375). Here, a *risbro* ‘brushwood causeway’ was constructed by laying down a bed of brushwood and covering it with stones and gravel. Near settlements bearing the name *Jordbro*, the method used was to tip out stones and earth in the marshy area, thereby creating a *jordbro* ‘earth causeway’.

Evidence of the production of iron from bog ore is provided by names in *Bläst-* in Dalarna, which contain *blästa*, a word denoting a furnace in which the ore was heated by charcoal in a

blast of air introduced by bellows. These furnaces, especially the types with water-powered bellows, could be given descriptive names, e.g. *Flasan* (from the verb *flasa* ‘rustle’).

Names in *-hyttan* refer to various kinds of smelting works for more advanced, larger-scale production of iron, which have been in use ever since the early Middle Ages, especially in the Bergslagen region of central Sweden. The first elements of these names are often personal names, e.g. *Amshyttan* (incorporating the man’s name *Amund*). Names in *-benning* contain OSw. *bygning* ‘building’, probably originally *hyttobygning*, again referring to iron-smelting works. Most of these names, too, have personal names as their first elements, e.g. the man’s name *Amund* in *Ombenning* (*j amundabygninge* 1400). In both these groups of names, the first elements no doubt refer to the founder or an early owner.

Plants for subsequent working of the iron are reflected in names containing *hammar* ‘forge hammer, water-powered hammer’, e.g. *Hallstahammar*, referring to an iron-forging hammer built on land belonging to the village of Hallsta.