

Summary

Old English *meresteall* and Old Swedish **marstall*

A North-West Germanic compound?

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In the Swedish province of Uppland there is a hamlet called *Marstalla*, written *in marstaldum*, *in marstal* (1312). The first element has been interpreted as either *mar* ‘marsh, lake’ or **mar* ‘horse’. In the latter case, the second element is explained as **stadhul* ‘enclosure’ or ‘dwelling place’, the whole thus representing a compound **marstadhul* ‘enclosure or pasture for horses’. In the same province there is a large meadow area called *Marstallen*, a name that has been interpreted in the same way.

OE *meresteall* means ‘pool of stagnant water’. It has been argued that the etymological meaning of *meresteall* is ‘a place where a pool is liable to form in wet seasons’. The sense ‘standing water’ is well documented for words that have evolved from OGmc **mari-*.

The two localities *Marstalla* and *Marstallen* correspond remarkably well to the meaning of OE *meresteall*. In both places there are rivers that flood seasonally, creating large areas of standing water. I therefore conclude that the names are formed from an OSw. **marstall*, formally and semantically identical to OE *meresteall*. Most probably it is actually the same word, originating from a North-West Germanic **maristallaz*.