There is a lot of history in place names, and some linguistics too. The diversity of English place names certainly reflects the history we have been considering. To start with the capital: though the exact origin of the word *London* is disputed, it may well have had Celtic origins. Perhaps it is *Llyn-don* – the town (*don*) by the lake (*llyn*), or perhaps *Laindon* meaning 'long hill'. It sits on the river *Thames*, from Celtic *Tamesas*, meaning 'dark river'. There are plenty of other Celtic river names in England – *Avon* and *Ouse* meant ‘water’ or ‘stream’. And there are other place names with Celtic origins that have survived: *Devon*, *Kent* and *Cumbria*, for example.

The Romans also left plenty of place-name evidence of their presence. The suffix *-chester* comes from the Latin *castrum* meaning encampment. The names *Manchester* and *Lancaster* are interesting for two reasons. One is that in both cases the word to which the suffix is attached is a Celtic one. The first element of *Manchester* is probably related to the Celtic *mamm* meaning a ‘breast-like hill’. As for *Lancaster*, the word means the encampment on the river Lune – a Celtic river name probably meaning ‘healthy, pure’. By combining Celtic and Latin origins, these place names show evidence of two stages of Britain's early history. Secondly, notice the slightly different suffix *-caster* is the Anglo-Saxon form of the Latin. But Old Norse did not have the 'ch' [tʃ] sound and replaced it with [k], to give -caster in some parts of the Danelaw area. The city of Lancaster, further north than Manchester, shows this ON form. This sound difference is discussed in more detail in 5.3.3.

Anglo-Saxon place names are to be found everywhere. There are towns ending with the suffix *-ton* (the OE for ‘farmstead’), or *-ham* ('homestead'), or *-ley* ('wood'), or containing an *-ing* (OE for ‘the people of’ or ‘belonging to’, hence the Vikings may be ‘the people of the fjord’). By combining Celtic and Latin origins, these place names show evidence of two stages of Britain’s early history. Secondly, notice the slightly different suffix *-ester* is the Anglo-Saxon form of the Latin. But Old Norse did not have the ‘ch’ [tʃ] sound and replaced it with [k], to give -caster in some parts of the Danelaw area. The city of Lancaster, further north than Manchester, shows this ON form. This sound difference is discussed in more detail in 5.3.3.

Finally, wherever in the world you are, think about the name of the place where you come from or are now living. What is the origin of the name? What history and what linguistics does it reveal? It might tell you something about its geographical position, about what it was famous for . . . and about the language spoken when it was founded.

*foundlings who were lodged and wholly maintained by the institution.*