

# The Wægmundings



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# Wiglaf is a Swede!

2602    Wīglāf wæs hāten,    Wēoxstānes sunu,  
         lēoflic lindwiga,    lēod Scylfinga,  
         mæg Ælfheres.

## Wiglaf's Father Weohstan Killed Eanmund in the service of Onela!

2610                                      gomel swyrd getēah;  
þæt wæs mid eldum    **Ēanmundes** lāf,  
**sunu Ōhtere;**    þām æt sæcce wearð,  
wræccan winelēasum    **Wēohstān bana**

## So How Does Beowulf Grant Wiglaf Weohstan's Hereditary Land?

2606    Gemunde ðā ðā āre    þe hē him ā̅r forgeaf,    (hē=Beowulf, him=Wiglaf)  
          wīcstede weligne    Wā̅gmundinga,  
          folcrihta gehwylc,    swā his fæder āhte.

## And How Does Weohstan Bequeath Wiglaf His War-Gear *mid Gēatum*?

2623    geaf him ðā **mid Gēatum**    gūðgewāda  
         æghwæs unrīm    ðā hē of ealdre gewāt

# Beowulf, Too, Is a Wægmunding

“Ðū eart endelāf   ūsses cynnes,  
Wægmundinga;   ealle wyrd forswēop  
2815   mīne māgas   tō metodsceaftē,  
eorlas on elne;   ic him æfter sceal.”

## Sister-Son Relationships in *Beowulf*

- ▶ Hygelac and Beowulf
- ▶ Sigemund and Fitela (881; his son as well as nephew? cf. *Völsunga saga*)
- ▶ Hnæf and Hildeburg's son share a pyre (1114; Tolkien proposes fosterage)

## Foregrounded Brother-Son Relationships in *Beowulf*

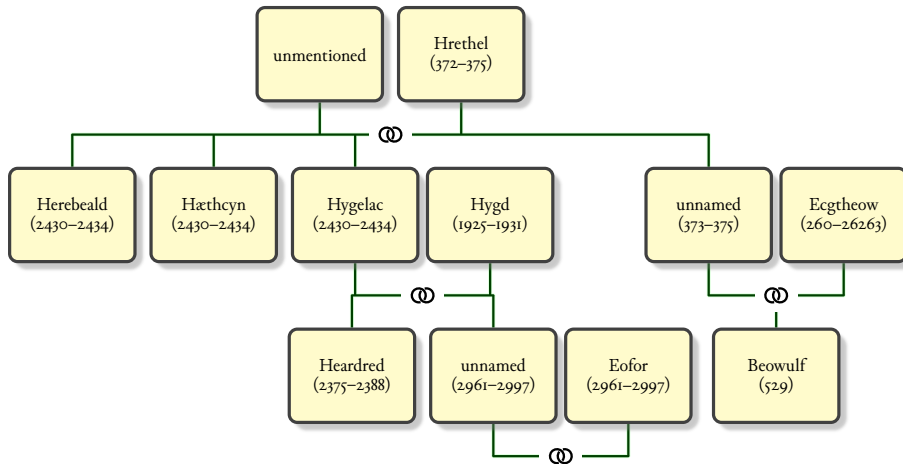
Described by the term *subtergefæderan* “nephew and paternal uncle” (1164).

- ▶ Hrothgar and Hrothulf (Halga's son)
- ▶ Onela and the sons of Ohthere (Eanmund and Eadgils)

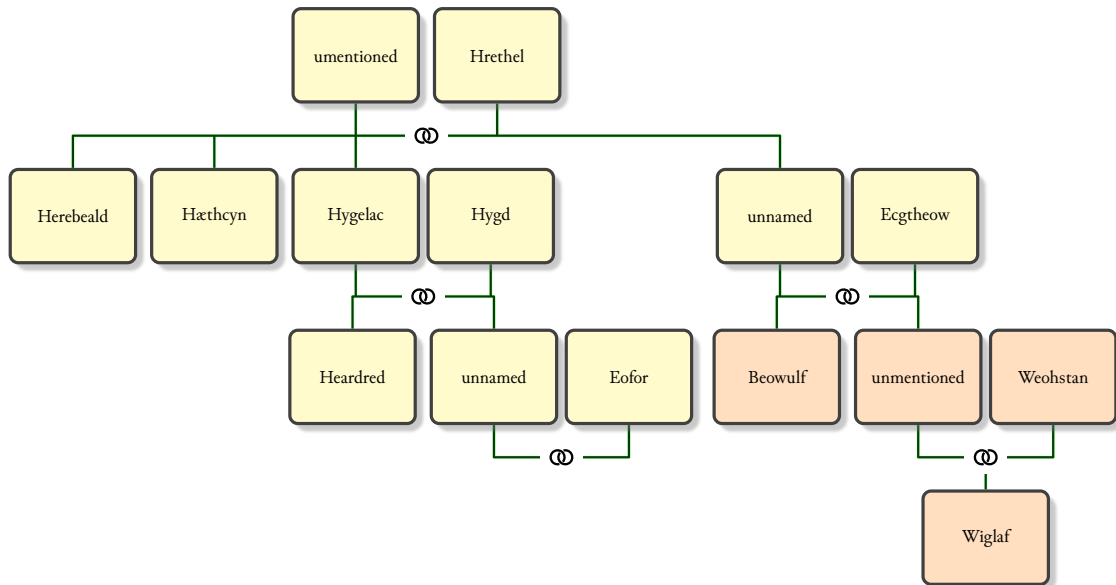
Coincidence or otherwise, these relationships all lead to conflict (Ohthere's sons) or at least threaten usurpation (Hrothulf).



## The Hrethlings According to *Beowulf*



# The Wægmundings According to Eliason



## Can't Ecgtheow Be the Wægmunding Connection?

Yes; Eliason's evidence against this position is only that

- ▶ Ecgtheow does not alliterate on /w/  
(But then neither does Beowulf alliterate with Ecgtheow, or Ælfhere with Wiglaf.)
- ▶ Beowulf being half-Swedish would be “unthinkable or even ridiculous” (98)  
(In fact, the Wægmundings demonstrate one could move between these categories.)

Eliason does not explain

- ▶ how his sister's marriage would make Beowulf a Wægmunding but not a Swede
- ▶ why Ecgtheow's lack of alliteration on /w/ is more problematic than that on /b/  
(Unless, as per p. 101 fn 1, Beowulf's real name is Ælfhere, which Eliason rejects)

## Can't Hrethel Be the Wægmunding Connection?

Not if alliteration matters.

But every Hrethling we know of is dead, with the possible exception of Eofof, so that could fit.

## Can't Beowulf's Mother be the Wægmunding Connection?

Yes; Eliason's evidence against this position is only that she has a father already; he does not consider that Beowulf's mother could have had a mother.

## Bibliography

- Eliason, Norman E. "Beowulf, Wiglaf and the Wægmundings." *Anglo-Saxon England* 7 (1978): 95–105.
- Farrell, R. T. "Beowulf, Swedes and Geats." *Saga-Book* 18, no. 3 (1972): 223–96.