

# **When is a hill not simply a hill? Investigating nuance in (early) medieval place-names**

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Underlying database available for consultation at [Dūn Crug and Berg Database](#)

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## Abstract

Landscape terminology is ubiquitous in historical place-names throughout England. Such terminology reveals much about the perceptions of historical occupants of the land, as well as how they lived and used that land. Place-names offer a unique insight into historical, socio-economic and cultural conditions. The information they reveal is not limited to the upper echelons of society, but informs our understanding of those living locally in a place, at all social levels.

Inspired by the work of Margaret Gelling (latterly with Ann Cole), this thesis selected three place-name elements: OE/OScan *berg*, OE/Brittonic *crug* and OE *dūn* (with potential links to Brittonic and Goidelic elements). Previous understandings of these elements were analysed, including lexical usage outside of the toponymicon. All the elements had been thought to represent some kind of hill. A national corpus of all available *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-names was assembled from available published and some unpublished sources. The database, including linguistic and etymological analysis, was combined with other archaeological, historical, topographical and geological datasets in a mapped GIS interface, available on a website designed specifically for this research.

Armed with this mobile research tool, hundreds of site visits were carried out, alongside desk-based analysis. The results illuminated important philosophical questions surrounding human identification and perception of features in the landscape, as well as visibility and navigation in the landscape, with wider implications for understanding place-naming practice and motivation as a local, non-centralised phenomenon. The value of physical fieldwork was demonstrated.

Computational approaches were shown to be an important heuristic tool but not a substitute for such fieldwork. Following the campaign of fieldwork, it was clear that a single, uniform and diagnostically recognisable profile was not present for each of the elements throughout the country, as had been suggested by Gelling and Cole. Therefore, such a profile was not the essence of meaning for these elements.

Nevertheless, the distribution patterns for the elements across the country demonstrated that there was rich nuance to be understood in their onomastic use. Compound place-name analysis, looking closely at the other elements collocating with *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* in compound place-names, yielded a better understanding of why these elements might have been used in particular place-names. Although



not anticipated as part of the original research agenda, the study shed light on patterns of OScan-influenced naming, which differed starkly from OE-influenced naming. It also highlighted a strong diachronic shift in meaning in the understanding of OE *dūn*.

The results have a range of implications for understanding some of the earliest surviving OE names for settlements, farming and land use, for contrasting quantity and nature of OScan influence in central regions of the country compared with those further away from OE-dominant zones, and for glimpsing Brittonic and Goidelic influence on place-name elements in certain areas. In essence, the study demonstrates the motivation behind historical naming using these three elements, shedding new light not just on the historical landscape but crucially on the identities of the people naming the landscape and the ways in which they made use of that landscape.

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Born in Lancashire in the shadow of the West Pennine moors, I grew up climbing hills in search of views. Admittedly, the viewpoints were often shrouded in fog, nevertheless undeterred I continued with a life-long love of hills and looking in the landscape. Thanks to my father, many a childhood walk involved navigating by an historical map usually in search of a long lost railway steep incline. To him I probably owe my love of historical maps and working out what used to be present in the landscape. The website developed for this thesis continues to be used as a historical ‘satnav’ in all my journeyings.

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## Figures<sup>1</sup>

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## Abbreviations

|       |                                                                      |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ASC   | <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>                                         |
| BGS   | British Geological Survey                                            |
| DMLBS | <i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i>             |
| DEM   | Digital Elevation Model (including vegetation and construction)      |
| DOE   | <i>Dictionary of Old English</i>                                     |
| DS    | <i>Danmarks Stednavne</i>                                            |
| DTM   | Digital Terrain Model (terrain only)                                 |
| EA    | Environment Agency                                                   |
| eDIL  | <i>electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language</i>                   |
| EDD   | <i>English Dialect Dictionary</i>                                    |
| EPNS  | English Place-Name Society                                           |
| ERY   | East Riding of Yorkshire                                             |
| GIS   | Geographic Information System                                        |
| GPC   | <i>Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru: A dictionary of the Welsh language</i> |
| HE    | Historic England                                                     |
| HER   | Historic Environment Record                                          |
| JEPNS | <i>Journal of the English Place-Name Society</i>                     |
| ME    | Middle English                                                       |
| MEC   | <i>Middle English Compendium</i>                                     |
| ModE  | Modern English                                                       |
| NGR   | National Grid Reference                                              |
| NHLE  | National Heritage List for England                                   |
| NLS   | National Library of Scotland                                         |
| NRV   | North Riding of Yorkshire                                            |

|       |                                              |
|-------|----------------------------------------------|
| OCR   | Optical Character Recognition                |
| OE    | Old English                                  |
| OED   | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>             |
| ON    | Old Norse                                    |
| ONP   | <i>Ordbog over det Norrøne Prosasprog</i>    |
| OS    | Ordnance Survey                              |
| OScan | Old Scandinavian <sup>2</sup>                |
| PAS   | Portable Antiquities Scheme                  |
| PASE  | <i>Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England</i>  |
| UID   | Unique Identifier                            |
| VEPN  | <i>The Vocabulary of English Place-Names</i> |
| WRY   | West Riding of Yorkshire                     |

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘OScan’ is used to cover the range of languages sometimes referred to as Old Danish, Old East and West Norse, and Old Icelandic. At times other authors use the term Old Norse. This latter term usually covers the same range of languages and is retained in quotations from other scholarship. It should be taken to be an equivalent label to OScan, unless expressly indicated otherwise.

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1. Aims and structure of the thesis

This thesis was inspired initially by the work of Margaret Gelling, including her subsequent collaboration with Ann Cole. The emphasis placed by these two scholars on the richness, nuance and precision in the use of landscape terminology within historical place-names is highly attractive. Names utilising such terminology should not be seen as mere synonyms; nor were they ‘intrinsically trivial’ (Stenton 1924, 37).<sup>3</sup> Rather, such names offer an unparalleled insight into the historical landscape, how it was perceived, used and identified with by occupants of the land.

Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) covered names referencing many different kinds of landscape feature. From amongst this range, the sub-category of names potentially referencing hills was selected for this thesis for the reasons set out below. Hills are unlikely to have changed out of all recognition between the early medieval period and today. They lend themselves to investigation via a sustained campaign of fieldwork. Three elements in particular were chosen.<sup>4</sup> Two – OE/OScan *berg* and OE *dūn* – had been identified by Gelling and Cole as having differing, distinctive, diagnostic profiles.<sup>5</sup> The visibility of these particular profiles to travellers in the

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<sup>3</sup> Stenton (1924, 37) had noted that ‘the Anglo-Saxons were remarkably sensitive to diversities of ground’.

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘oronym’ is sometimes used for names including these elements since they have often been thought to refer to some kind of hill. As the title of this thesis suggests, the extent to which these elements always referred to a hill is under investigation.

<sup>5</sup> The headforms and definitions used for OE and OScan elements are those offered by the draft volumes of VEPN (in progress), unless otherwise indicated. VEPN’s headforms tend not to reflect West Saxon variants in their form, but such variants are taken to be included within the headforms. OE *berg* could be written in the form *beorg* as a result of the breaking of the monophthong /e/ into a diphthong /eo/ in front of /rg/ as set out in Hogg (1992, §5.16). This would persist in West Saxon dialects but would undergo Anglian smoothing of the diphthong back into a monophthong, resulting in a return to *berg* in Anglian dialects, for which see Hogg

landscape was thought to play a role in the use of these elements in place-names, and in motivating and consolidating naming practice. Accordingly, they were obvious candidates for testing.<sup>6</sup>

Since Gelling and Cole believed that the meanings they had identified for *berg* and for *dūn* applied throughout England, the universality and consistency of the usage of these elements in place-names needed to be tested. To achieve meaningful analysis across the country (a wide geographic remit) within the timescale of this thesis, the elements compared within the corpus had to be restricted to a small number.

OE/Brittonic *crug* was added to *berg* and *dūn* since it was an oronymic element apparently with a similar meaning to *berg*.<sup>7</sup> It was included to answer specific research questions that arose in the border counties between Wales and England.

Through a comprehensive literature review, Chapter One addresses the state of understanding concerning the likely meanings of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*, both in place-names and in the OE lexicon. It outlines the evidence available for understanding their meanings and charts the areas in which scholars looking at this topic have agreed or disagreed in the past.

Chapter Two explains how the corpus of names, which is the basis for the findings of this thesis, was assembled. Important methodological considerations pertinent to the use and analysis of place-names are covered in this chapter. The methodologies utilised range from detailed linguistic assessment to fieldwork and computational investigation using geological, topographical, historical and archaeological datasets. Chapter Two explains how this interdisciplinary approach was achieved, including the development of a new, mobile research tool using GIS software.

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(1992, §5.96). Throughout this thesis, quotations from primary sources or secondary literature may use the West Saxon variant. The headform used in the thesis is the VEPN headform *berg*, within which *beorg* is included, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>6</sup> The Kitson (2008) article ‘Fog on the Barrow Downs’ previously paired *berg* and *dūn* in critical discussion of the Gelling and Cole ideas.

<sup>7</sup> Given the evolving nature of the vowel sound in this word (see discussion in 1.7 below), and also given that it is not assumed at the outset of inquiry that this element became a fully-fledged OE element, the headform used throughout the thesis is *crug*, without further indication of vowel quality or length.



Chapter Three presents the results of fieldwork and interdisciplinary assessment of the names in the corpus, arguing that it is not possible to identify a diagnostic profile, used consistently and universally throughout the country, in place-names containing the elements *berg*, *crug* or *dūn*. Nor is the visibility of the features referenced in such names likely to be the dominant factor explaining the coining of these names. In this context, important observations are made about naming practice, the groups of people that are likely to have been behind the naming of places and from which kinds of vantage points naming is likely to have occurred. Notwithstanding the differences between the conclusions of this thesis and the earlier work of Gelling and Cole, it is clear that a high degree of rich nuance and precision is present in the usage of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* in English place-names. The distribution maps for the national corpus, explained in Chapter Two, reveal stark patterning that demanded further investigation and explanation. Accordingly, Chapter Four moves on to linguistic assessment of the collocations present in the national corpus. It examines closely the elements collocating with *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* within compound names, looking at exclusivity and recurrency of compounding, as well as the diachronic evolution in compounding and the particular geographic distributions of compounds.

Through compound place-name analysis, the presence of distinctive OScan influence on naming in certain areas at certain times emerged as a theme. Chapter Five presents and discusses this theme. The chapter includes comparison with other studies that have assessed the extent of OScan influence discernible in particular place-name corpora in other areas of the country. Methodological considerations involved in such assessments are explored. Contributions are made in this chapter to academic debates about the ways in which the extent of OScan influence should be assessed.

The use of OE *berg* is looked at in greater depth, highlighting the differences between it and OScan *berg* within English place-names. Interesting differences emerge in the kinds of OScan influence evidenced in different parts of the country, with implications for our knowledge of language contact between OE and OScan.

Chapter Six turns to a detailed consideration of the element *dūn*. The chapter uses both linguistic analysis of compound names and interdisciplinary assessment of the topographical and archaeological sites where *dūn*-names can be found. It concludes

that a key meaning for the element *dūn*, in its earliest recorded onomastic use, is that of being a site amenable to settlement which is elevated *relative* to the local topography, situated as an island enclosed either by artificial enclosure or topography, or by both. This chapter explores thematic topics with which OE *dūn* appears to be particularly closely associated, in particular the presence of crops and the exploitation of vegetation.

The element *crug* offers a good contrast to *dūn* as an element also arising by way of influence from neighbouring languages but with a very different footprint in the English place-name corpus. Possible reasons for this difference are explored in this chapter.

Finally, Chapter Six explains how the meaning of *dūn* evolved diachronically throughout the study period. Indeed, later place-names, containing elements which are derived from OE *dūn*, refer to places which are in many respects the opposite of places referred to by the earlier use of OE *dūn*.

Throughout this thesis, contributions to methodological debates and substantive results are intertwined. In the end, a refined understanding of the use of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* in English place-names enhances our appreciation of the historical landscape, settlement, language, naming motivation and practice.

## **1.2. The toponymicon and the lexicon**

The toponymicon is not the same as the lexicon. Place-names seem often to have arisen as descriptive phrases, utilising elements taken from the lexicon. However, once a phrase had transitioned into being a name, and was in usage for some time, it could continue to function as a name even after the elements of which it was composed had ceased to be a part of the lexicon (see 3.3.2. for further discussion). Conversely, elements might fall out of use in naming practice but continue within the lexicon. Hough (2010, 3) cited the example of OE *hām* ‘village; manor; estate; homestead’, which ceased to be used in place-names but continued in the lexicon as the predecessor to ModE ‘home’ (OED 2025, s.v. home n.1 & adj.). Equally, a word might be borrowed from the toponymicon and given subsequent lexical life, having not previously been independently attested in the lexicon, as Hough (2010, 8) argued was the case with the OE compound *hām-stede* ‘homestead’ (see also Sandred 1963, 65-67).

Because of this, the toponymicon and the lexicon are to some extent separate, not necessarily occupying the same footprint nor obeying the same linguistic rules (Clark 1991, 284).<sup>8</sup> In practical terms, the meanings carried by the elements *berg*, *crug* or *dūn* in the OE corpus, outside of place-names, were not necessarily coextensive with those carried by the same elements onomastically. It is for this reason that works such as that of Smith (1956) and, more recently, Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004) were written to provide reference works covering what elements might have meant in a place-name specific context. Hough (2010, 4) made the point that comparing with the toponymicon in other north-western Germanic languages might be more illuminating than looking to the OE or OScan lexicon. Nevertheless, it is important to remain aware of the ways in which words were used in the ordinary lexicon. Hence, the next sections look at what can be learned about the meaning of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* from historical texts, as well as what scholars have considered their meanings to be within place-name usage.

### 1.3. Survey and literature review: *berg*

#### 1.3.1. *berg* as ‘hill’ or ‘mountain’

The dictionary definitions of OE *berg* give it the meaning ‘hill’ or ‘mountain’ (DOE 2025, s.v. *beorg* n.; Bosworth-Toller 2019, s.v. *berg/beorg* n.). In modern German, *berg* retains the meaning of hill or mountain (Airlie, Littlejohn and Beattie 2007, s.v. *berg* n.). However, ME *berg* lost this meaning, possibly as a result of Anglo-Norman influence or even the semantic influence of OScan *berg* (Sądej 2009b, 98-99; Durkin 2009, 280). In northern dialect, *berg* continued to have a presence as *bargh* or *barf* (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:88) defined as a ‘long low ridge or hill’ (EDD 2011-2025, s.v. *bargh* sb.) and in the south-west as *barrow* to reference artificial burial mounds (Gelling 1997 [1978], 132; OED 2025, s.v. *barrow* n.1). The

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<sup>8</sup> As listed by Clark, amongst other processes the toponymicon is subject to assimilation, dissimilation, syncope, elision, procliticisation and analogical reformation.

latter enjoyed something of a lexical resurrection as a result of antiquarians and archaeologists.<sup>9</sup>

There are examples of *berg* in OE literature that support the meaning ‘hill’ or ‘mountain’. The *OE Orosius* dates to the late ninth or the early tenth century, and survives in two manuscripts, the earliest of which dates to the tenth century (Godden 2016, xi-xii, 419).<sup>10</sup> As pointed out by Kitson (2008, 389), this text uses *berg*, in both plural and singular forms, to refer consistently to large mountain ranges dividing up continents, such as the Caucasian, Armenian, Aurès, Pyrenees, Atlas and Taurus mountains as well as the Alps, the mountains of Parnassus and those around Olympus (Godden 2016, 24-29, 32-35, 54-55, 66-67, 264-265, 288-289). This text is particularly useful given that it references known locations, indicating how large a *berg* could be in the mind of the author.

Biblical references illustrate a metaphorical use of *berg*. In some of the OE versions of chapter three and verse five of the Gospel of Luke, thought to date to the tenth century, *berg* is used to translate the Latin *collis* ‘hill; mound’ (Skeat 1874, 38-39; DMLBS 2015, s.v. *collis* n.). *Berg* is paired with OE *munt* translating Latin *mons* ‘mountain; hill’ (DMLBS 2015, s.v. *mons* n.); *munt* is itself derived from Latin *mons* (Bosworth-Toller 2019 s.v. *munt* n.) but mainly used ‘in the linguistic register of religious prose’, never in charter boundaries (Kitson 1997, 238). Although in the Gospel pairing, *collis*, and therefore by implication its OE rendering with *berg*, is likely to refer to the smaller feature of the two, the literary context concerns the action of bringing low every mountain and hill as part of God’s people seeing his salvation. Arguably, if the hills were already small, this would be less of a feat and, therefore, less of a metaphorical salvational turn-around. On that basis, *berg* is likely to be referring to sizeable hills in this reference.

Another biblical allusion using *berg* is found in the tenth-century Exeter Book (Conner 1994, 301). In the poem *On the Day of Judgement*, there is a reference to being *on sȳne beorg* (Thorpe 1842, 54-55), that is Mount Zion. Leaving aside the

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<sup>9</sup> It is always possible for a word to be reintroduced into the English language. For instance, ‘iceberg’ is a *berg*-compound introduced to the English lexicon in the eighteenth century via Dutch (OED 2025, s.v. *iceberg* n.).

<sup>10</sup> All dates are CE (Common Era) unless otherwise indicated.

actual size of the various physical locations for Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the literary context for this reference involves a ‘vast mighty people’ (*mægen-folc micel*) coming together on this hill on the day of judgement and salvation. Once again, context demands that this *berg* is not small and unimpressive.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar vein, and continuing with the theme of judgement day, *berg* is used in *Be Dōmes Dæge* or *Judgement Day II*. The text is a tenth-century OE version of a Latin poem ascribed to Bede writing in the eighth century, surviving in manuscripts dating to the eleventh century (Caie 2000, 9-10). In line 101 ‘beorga hli<ðu> bugað and myltað’, there has been debate about whether *berg* denotes graves because of the presence of the word *hlida* following *beorga*, which reads as if the ‘lids’ or ‘doors’ of each *berg* were being referenced. Caie (2000, 90, 115) suggested emending this text to *hliðu*, which then reads as a reference to the slopes of each *berg*, more fitting for hills. The Latin source for this phrase is *collesque liquescent*, and there is no mention of any artificial mounds or graves. Once again, *collis* is translated by *berg*. The context is that of the hills bowing down and melting on the day of judgement (Caie 2000, 74, 105).

In poetic texts the choice of word might have been driven by poetic considerations, such as the need for alliteration. Therefore, a cautious approach must be adopted when relying upon poetry for the meaning of a word in the OE lexicon, but it can be done with care. The element *berg* appears to have been used far more frequently in OE poetry than *dūn*. According to Bessinger (2015, 6, 16), the ratio of references is 398 to 25 respectively. This difference in usage is worth noting.

In *The Phoenix*, also found in the tenth-century Exeter Book, the absence of hills and mountains, denoted by *berg* and *munt* respectively, is used to indicate the paradisaical nature of the land which the phoenix occupies. This is drawing on biblical references, such as those outlined above, involving the mountains and hills being levelled on the day of judgement and salvation (Cook 1919, 47-48). By implication, paradise must be a place where such features no longer exist.

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<sup>11</sup> It is not that this location was only ever referred to using *berg*. Ælfric used *dūn* to refer to Sion in his Homilies dating to the tenth century (Thorpe 1844, 210-211).

In essence, late into the OE period in literature, *berg* could signify considerably sized hills and even continent-defining ranges of mountains.

### 1.3.2. *berg* as ‘heap’ or ‘mound’

OE *berg* also had a clear usage with reference to mounds, artificial or otherwise.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, a modern reflex of *berg* – *barrow* – is used to describe burial mounds from the Neolithic to the early medieval periods (OED 2025, s.v. *barrow* n.1). In *Beowulf*, one of the terms used for Beowulf’s tomb is *berg*. The tomb is described as *beorh þone hean* (Swanton 1997, 182-183, line 3097) which could be translated (my translation) ‘the high mound’. The *berg* concerned is clearly artificial, not a natural mound as seen by line 3096: ‘ge geworhton æfter wines dædeum in bælstede beorh þone hean’. This is translated by Swanton as ‘in remembrance of your friend’s deeds you should construct at the site of the pyre a high barrow’ In other words, the people are asked to construct a *berg*. *Beowulf* survives in a manuscript dated to the early eleventh century, but the composition of the text may have been considerably earlier (Neidorf 2016).

In the stories surrounding Saint Guthlac, there has been much debate about the reference to Guthlac’s home as a *berg*. Guthlac was a seventh- and eighth-century hermit who made his home in the fens surrounding Crowland, Lincolnshire. The Latin *Vita* of Saint Guthlac, written by Felix in the eighth century (Colgrave 1985, 15-19), referred to Guthlac building his cell on top of a burial mound. The mound is described as a *tumulus* made of clods of earth heaped together (*agrestibus glaebis coacervatus*) (Colgrave 1985, 92-95). Further, the reader is told that it had been dug into and split open by greedy people looking for treasure. Guthlac found a cistern in the mound on top of which he built his cell. Potentially, this ‘cistern’ could have been the stone cist or one of the stone chambers contained within certain prehistoric burial mounds, albeit chambered barrows do not typically occur in the Fenlands (Semple 2013, 150).<sup>13</sup> Either way, there can be no doubt in the Latin source that a

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<sup>12</sup> Artificial mounds could be sepulchral or non-sepulchral. It is hard to tell without excavation and, even then, the possibility of previous loss of interred remains cannot be ruled out.

<sup>13</sup> Semple (1998, 112) maintained that the hollow in which Guthlac made a home was caused by the earlier attempted robbing of the barrow. Meaney (2001, 34-35)

burial mound was the home of Guthlac. The *Vita* was translated into OE and OE *hlāw* ‘tumulus; hill’ was used for the mound (Wentersdorf 1978, 136).

Two poems commemorating Guthlac were also composed in OE and are found in the Exeter Book. The unusual compound *beorgseþel* was used to describe this dwelling in *Guthlac A* (Roberts 2019 [1979], 86, line 102). Some commentators have wanted to translate this as a ‘mountain dwelling’. If taken literally, it might suggest that the author of the poem was unfamiliar with the landscape of the Lincolnshire fens, devoid of all mountains as they are. Roberts (2019 [1979], 21-22) agreed with those who have argued for a spiritual interpretation of the landscape in *Guthlac A*; the mountain dwelling would evoke the landscape of the desert fathers (Reichardt 1974). On the other hand, Wentersdorf (1978) and Shook (1960) concluded that the burial mound, referred to by Felix in the Latin *Vita*, was the referent for the word *berg* (see, too, Anderson (1991, 71-73) who agreed, on balance, with Wentersdorf and Shook). Given that *berg* could refer to an artificial mound (burial or otherwise) in the OE lexicon, there is no need to insist upon a strained interpretation, placing metaphorical hills in the Lincolnshire fens, particularly when other sources suggest that a burial mound was part of the tradition

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pointed out that Neolithic long barrows with timber cists have been found in the area, as well as Roman barrows in the east of England with lined cists. Bronze Age barrows have also been found along the Crowland gravel peninsula. This area is now recognised as a Bronze Age barrow cemetery stretching along the peninsula, oriented upon a Neolithic or early Bronze Age henge, which was reoccupied in the early medieval seventh century (Wright and Willmott 2024). Meaney noted that there is hagiographical precedent for anchorites living in cisterns, albeit those were not references to cisterns in conjunction with graves. Still, the description might have been a borrowed trope. Bede’s description of Cuthbert’s dwelling fits this trope (Jones 1995, 272) and there was a well-known tradition of St Anthony living in tombs and suffering a demon attack there. Nevertheless, Meaney was inclined to find that there was historical substance to the account of the barrow, a conclusion which must now be rendered far more plausible in light of recent archaeological excavation in the area.

surrounding Guthlac's home and recent archaeology verifies this as highly likely.<sup>14</sup> This is so, even if one allows for the fact that *Guthlac A* has moved away from a strict depiction of a literal landscape (Clark 2015, 51-52). Nor is the discussion in Brady (2017, 53-81), about the non-linear battle for the *berg* between Guthlac and the demonic erstwhile inhabitants, in which the *berg* is described in both positive and negative terms, compromised by seeing it as a burial or artificial mound rather than a natural hill.

The act of building on or near a burial mound with Christian symbolism had precedent, in terms of claiming a pagan spiritual centre for the new religion and doing so in a visual way. As Wentersdorf (1978, 141) observed, the poem states that Guthlac had no desire for riches in this life, but wished to free the land for God. This description serves to distinguish Guthlac from the ordinary disturber of a burial mound looking for treasure, placing him in the pattern of holy men reclaiming such sites for Christianity. Guthlac is said to go on a campaign of breaking mounds (*beorgas bræce*) (Hall 2007, 215-218). Guthlac raised the cross over his *berg* (Roberts 2019 [1979], 88, lines 179-180; Hall 2007, 228).<sup>15</sup>

In a similar vein, there is a reference in the OE poem *Dream of the Rood*, in which the rood speaks and relays how it was set on a *berg* (Swanton 1996, 95, line 132).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> There is little reference throughout the poem to gaining height by climbing a mountain. The demons have to lift Guthlac into the air to enable him to see what is happening in monasteries (Roberts 2019 [1979], 95, line 412). If *Guthlac A* had been making reference to spiritual mountains, it would perhaps have made more use of the spiritual motif of an arduous ascent and the increased spiritual benefit gained by such spiritual elevation. Instead, the few uses in *Guthlac A* of the verb (*ā*)-*stīgan* 'to go up' do not always occur in a positive context (cf. Sharma 2002-2004).

<sup>15</sup> For Kobos (1972, 124-125, 140), the use of the cross to mark the barrow was a link to insular Celtic Christian practices. Semple (1998, 113) also drew attention to possible parallels between Guthlac's story and Irish belief.

<sup>16</sup> An abbreviated version of the poem is carved on to the Ruthwell Cross (Dumfriesshire, close to the Cumbrian border) (Howlett 2008). The stone sculpture is thought to date to the eighth century, judging stylistically - possibly early eighth century (O' Carragáin and North 2012, 178-184; Cramp 1995). However, it is not



Although this could be a reference to a natural hill, the possible allusion to erecting crosses on or at the site of barrows should not be discounted. As one non-literary example of this practice, the charter boundaries of Whitehill and Shipton-on-Cherwell (Oxfordshire), S909 1004 [12th-13th] and S911 1005 [c.1196-7] respectively, refer to a *cristelmæl* ‘cross’ near the site of a *langan hlæw/hlaw* ‘a long mound’ (Gelling 1953–1954, 487, 489).<sup>17</sup> There are, in fact, several long and round barrows recorded in this area overlooking Enslow Bridge (NHLE 1021413, UID Mon. No. 336597, 336600, 336603, 336606, HER 13499) (see also Brown 1978). The presence of the cross seems plausible as an attempt to impose a Christian identity on this significant spot. Although OE *hlāw* was used in this charter reference to a barrow, it is clear from the Guthlac accounts how this word could be used interchangeably with *berg* in the context of burial mounds.<sup>18</sup> The cross was described as being *eoldan* ‘old’ in the tenth-century charters.

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certain whether the poem was carved on the cross contemporaneously with the stone cross’s construction, or at a subsequent date.

<sup>17</sup> Charters are often called into question as forgeries (partial or entire). There is frequently a divergence of opinion in scholarly assessment concerning the dating of a charter, and the extent of its authenticity. The boundary marks of a charter may be genuine, even if reused in a later fabrication. Throughout this thesis, the dates given for charters are those given in eSawyer (2024), or alternatively by the EPNS editors, and are cited with the caveats outlined above in mind.

<sup>18</sup> Grinsell (1959, 61-63) drew a distinction between the use of *berg* for prehistoric barrows and *hlāw* for early medieval barrows. Semple (2013, 163-164) wondered if *berg* might occur more commonly with names of mythical association in charter boundaries compared to *hlāw*. The latter was not much used in charter boundaries. Kitson (1995, 72) argued that the absence of *hlāw* in the south-west, and the exclusive use of *berg* for artificial burial mounds, even those of early medieval date, demonstrated that *hlāw* ‘had ceased to be productive in Wessex by the 570s leaving *berg* as the sole possible choice. Resolution of this suggestion is beyond the scope of this thesis. It would require a country-wide survey of names including *hlāw*, plus as much of the archaeological data available as possible. As Semple (2013, 158) noted, without excavation, it is impossible to be sure of the date of a burial mound.

Another early usage of *berg* to signify a mound is found on the Franks Casket, dating to the eighth century and thought to have been fashioned in Northumberland (Webster 2023; Waxenberger 2023a). The right-hand side carved panel depicts a figure sitting on a mound and another figure sitting inside a mound. The runic inscription accompanying the panel includes the phrase *on harmberga* ‘in/on/over a/the sorrow/harmful mound’ (Hall 2002; 2007, 227; Waxenberger 2023b).<sup>19</sup> In Joshua (chapter 7 verse 26), the people of Israel piled a heap of stones over a man named Achan who had sinned. In the *OE Hexateuch*, dating to the eleventh century, the OE for this action reads ‘worhton mid stanum ænne steapne beorh him ofer’ that is ‘they worked with stones a lofty mound (*berg*) over him/them’ (my translation) (DOE 2025, s.v. beorg n. sense 2). In this context, *berg* translated the Latin *acervus* ‘heap; pile’ (DMLBS 2015, s.v. acervus n.). The *OE Martyrology*, probably composed by the ninth century, referred to a miracle carried out by John the Evangelist involving piles of stones. The word *berg* was used to denote a pile or mound in the following phrase: *twegen beorgas litelra stana* ‘two mounds of little stones’ (my translation) (Rauer 2013, 1-3, 38-39). In *The Ruin*, another OE poem found in the Exeter Book, a place was said to have fallen into ruin ‘broken into mounds’ and *berg* is the word used for the mounds (*gebrocen to beorgum*) (Klinck 1992, 104, line 32).

In *Ælfric’s Grammar*, dating to the late tenth century, the Latin word *agger*, which meant heap but was also used for the raised part of an engineered Roman road (DMLBS 2015, s.v. agger n.), was rendered by OE *berg* (Zupitza 1880, 43). The Roman *agger* was a relatively small-scale, artificial rise, giving some idea of how small a *berg* could be in the minds of those using the OE lexicon.

There are frequent references in OE charter boundaries to boundary markers with *berg*-names. A range of such charter references is included in DOE (2025, s.v. beorg n. senses 2, 3.a-e) as evidence of the lexical use of *berg* to refer to mounds and heaps as well as artificial burial mounds. Charter references have also been considered by Semple (2013, 158-164) and Kitson (forthcoming). Many appear from

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<sup>19</sup> Waxenberger (2023b, 264-265) parses the runic inscription as *on harmberg a so* that the final *a* is translated, not as part of the declension of *harmberg*, but as the adverb ‘always’.

their archaeological context to refer to an artificial mound. In addition, for boundary marks to work practically as markers, they must refer to a precise point rather than an entire hill, making it more likely that a smaller artificial mound was the referent of *berg* in these contexts (Hooke 1980-1981, 8). Grundy (1922-1928) and Grinsell (1935-1939, 1959, 1987, 1991, 1992) pursued correlations between charter boundary markers and barrows, based on archaeological knowledge available at the time.

In addition, there is the linguistic evidence of the compound names themselves. Names with qualifying elements such as *idel* OE ‘empty’ or *brocen* OE ‘broken’ have been interpreted as referring to burial mounds that have been dug into in search of burial goods (Gelling 1997 [1978], 132; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:41). Notably, *brocen* is the verb used to reference Guthlac’s work at his *berg*-sites (plural, not just his home) in the Fenlands. There are also descriptive references within charters that fall short of being fully-fledged names but clearly indicate the presence of an artificial mound. For instance, in a charter concerning land at Martyr Worthy (Hampshire), S273 825 [1130-1150], there is a reference to ‘þam beorgan bæ adolfen wæs’, that is ‘the mound that was dug (into)’. Overall, there are a lot of early references, in charters and literature, to *berg* as a mound or heap, including a burial or artificial mound.

In terms of trying to sort out which meaning – ‘hill; mountain’ or ‘heap; mound’ – was prior, the Indo-European cognates and etyma listed in the OED (2025, s.v. barrow n.1) cluster around the concept of being ‘high’ (see also Pokorny 1959, 140-141, s.v. *bhereǵh-*; and Mann 1984, 74). From the same or a similar Indo-European root, Celtic *\*brīga-* > Welsh *bre* ‘hill, hillock, mountain, hill-country, upland, peak’ is derived, as well as possibly Celtic *\*bergo-* > Welsh *bera* ‘pile; rick (of hay or corn)’, albeit the latter word appears not to be attested until the fifteenth century (Falileyev, Gohil and Ward 2010, 10-12, s.v.v. *bergo-*, *bergu-*, *brig-*; GPC 2024, s.v.v. *bre* n., *bera* n.).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> As Sims-Williams (2016 [1998], 353) pointed out ‘the linguistic term “Celtic” derives from the usage of ancient and early medieval Greek and Latin writers, who only use it of *Continental* Celtic languages’. Nevertheless, he argued it remained a

In contrast, Motz (1976) noted that the Indo-European root was cognate with Germanic words indicating shelter and protection, and felt that this meaning was basic to the Indo-European meaning. OE has a feminine noun *beorg* meaning ‘protection’, ‘refuge’ and a verb *beorgan* meaning ‘to shelter’; ‘to protect’. On the other hand, Kitson (forthcoming) disagreed with the reasoning in Motz (1976) on the basis that it relied too heavily on the relationship between *beorg* plus its cognates and OE *burh* ‘fortification’ and its cognates.

Watts, Insley and Gelling (2004, xlii) noted that *berg* is from a verbal root meaning ‘to rise or grow’. A heap or pile is arguably rising and growing even if it has not attained a lofty height. On the basis of the literature review, serious consideration must be given to the possibility that ‘heap or mound’ was a primary meaning for OE *berg*, and not a secondary meaning derived from an initial meaning of being a ‘hill or mountain’. Indeed, the latter meaning seems to be something that finds clearest expression in later texts such as the *OE Orosius*.

### 1.3.3. *berg* as both

By the time of the manuscripts of the eleventh century, it is possible to find both meanings – ‘mountain’ and ‘mound’ – in one text. Within *Beowulf*, the dragon’s lair is described by *berg* in a way that could signify a mountain or hill, as Kitson (2008, 389) highlighted. A stream gushed out of the *berg* (Swanton 1997, 156-157), suggesting it was a natural feature, albeit that stream is described as being hot with fire. The *berg* is also the place where the dragon guards treasure, reminiscent of the treasure thought to be contained in burial mounds.

In *The Phoenix*, although there is a reference to large hills (or their absence) using OE *berg*, there is also a reference to *beorhstede* ‘the place of the *berg*’ (Cook 1919, 59). This occurs when the phoenix, burnt in the fire, brings its bones back to the pyre. In this context, *berg* is similar to the reference discussed already relating to Beowulf’s tomb, in which a *berg* is a mound created over a funeral pyre. This would have been an artificial mound.

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useful label within which to include the insular Celtic languages, Goidelic and Brittonic. This approach is followed in this thesis.

The duality of meaning is aided by the fact that burial mounds and other artificial mounds often occupied a position on the crest of a hill. From afar, they may have appeared as part of the hill. They would be indistinguishable from other notable, but naturally occurring, summit crags. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 148) allowed for ‘a distinctive group in which the *berg* is not a free-standing hill, but a rounded knob on the edge of a ridge’. Although this could be a natural rounded knob, it is easy to see how an artificial mound in the same position might be indistinguishable from a natural mound, at least from a distance.

The Cotswolds overlooking the Severn valley or the Ridgeway overlooking the Vales of the White Horse and of Aylesbury are two locations where both a natural hill and a burial mound might be found – the latter on top of the former – and there are many more such locations throughout the country. It is in fact very hard to rule out the (potentially former) presence of artificial mounds on hills and ridgeways. Thus, it is impossible in hilly country to prove that an instance of *berg* was referencing a natural hill, as opposed to an artificial mound which once might have been sited on top of that hill (Kitson 1996, 21). It is easier in flat topography where there is no semblance of a hill; in such a case an alternative archaeological explanation has to be sought for the *berg*-name. As Gelling (1997 [1978], 133) wrote, the archaeologist should

devote serious attention to [*berg*] ... when a name containing it refers to relatively flat ground. Grandborough WAR [Warwickshire], for instance, which has the same etymology as Grandborough BUC [Buckinghamshire], is on very flat ground, and this may have referred originally to an artificial hill.

#### 1.3.4. *berg* in place-names

Gelling (1998, 78) argued that ‘the word *beorg*... is consistently used in place-names for a hill which has a continuously curving outline’. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 145,148) together said that ‘the defining characteristic of a *beorg* is a continuously rounded profile’ and that ‘the sense “a perfectly rounded hill” is borne out by the evidence on the ground’. The profile should be largely concentric and smoothly rounded with no flat top. As a result, settlement would not be possible on top of a *berg*. Within this definition for *berg* as it occurs in place-names, Gelling and Cole included both natural hills and artificial mounds, albeit Gelling limited the latter to a zone south of Birmingham (Gelling 1997 [1978], 134; 2000 [1984], 127)

and/or Rutland (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 148). According to Gelling and Cole, the essence of meaning for *berg* lay in a very distinctive and uniform profile.

Effectively, Gelling and Cole identified a different use for OE *berg* in place-names than might have been deduced from its lexical and literary usage. Indeed, based on this work, Rye (2016, 31) cited *berg* as a specific example of the phenomenon whereby the toponymicon differed from the lexicon and should be treated as a separate entity. Hough (2010, 9) allowed for the reduced toponymical meaning, as defined by Gelling and Cole, as an influence constraining the ME lexical meaning of *berg*. If it is true that the element *berg* within place-names consistently meant a feature that was continuously or perfectly rounded, it was, as Kitson (2008, 386) put it, ‘very much the odd man out’, compared to its cognate counterparts.

It is true that small barrows have rounded profiles, at least, prior to antiquarian excavation, after which they could assume the profile of a deflated soufflé! It is harder to see how and why the rounded profile of a small artificial mound should be translated on to the shape of natural hills denoted by the element *berg*. Ordinarily, natural hills exhibit multiple complex profiles and often fall far short of perfect or continuous rounding.

Nor is there anything in the Indo-European etymology to hint at ‘rounding’ as the key to being a *berg*. The semantic field possibilities include ‘rising’, ‘growing’, ‘height’, or possibly ‘shelter’ and ‘protection’ if Motz’s views were followed. None of these necessarily entail ‘rounding’. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 145) stated explicitly that the specialised use of a word ‘is not to be explained by reference to ultimate etymology’. Nevertheless, one might expect an account of how a word moved from its etymological origins to a very different specialised meaning.

In terms of early place-name usage, Cox (1976, 19, 23, 29) listed three place-names including *berg* which were attested prior to 731. They are *Coolbeorg* – the lost name of an estate granted to the church in Worcester; *Hugabeorgum* – the lost name of an estate granted to the monastery in Selsey; and Bearsted (Kent). Gelling (2000 [1984], 128) took these three, together with the number of times *berg* appears with OE *hām* ‘homestead, village’ (see 4.8.3.), as evidence of the early use of *berg* for place-name formation.

### 1.3.5. OScan *berg*

OScan languages also had an element *berg*, which was linguistically formally indistinguishable from OE *berg*.<sup>21</sup> Whilst there was an OScan broken form *bjarg*, Coates (2006a, 52) argued that OScan influence arrived in England prior to the breaking (*a*-umlaut of /e/) of *berg* to *bjarg*. Therefore, what was imported into Britain was OScan *berg*. Rye (2016, 50-55, 63) doubted this as a satisfactory explanation, given the presence of broken forms in seventh- and eighth-century runic evidence from Denmark and Sweden, however if *berg* was used in an inflected form, in the dative case for instance as *bergi*, then any evidence of breaking had it been present would disappear (see also Sandahl 1964, 274). Many place-names, when first coined, appear in the dative case as part of a phrase communicating how to get to a place or what is to be found at that place. Without diagnostic *beorg* or *bjarg* forms, OE and OScan *berg* are inseparable.

Dictionary definitions of OScan *berg* give the following range of meanings: ‘a rock; elevated rocky ground; precipice’ (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874, s.v. *berg* n.) or ‘crag; cliff; cliff face’ (ONP 2024, s.v. *berg* n.). The much-cited *lögberg* ‘law rock; hill of laws’, at the Icelandic *þing* ‘parliament’ site, is indeed rocky and beside a cliff face forming an amphitheatre. Nothing is rounded, let alone perfectly or continuously rounded.



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<sup>21</sup> OE *berg* was masculine in gender, where OScan *berg* and *bjarg* were neuter.



1. Icelandic *logberg*, Thingvellir (A.Lloyd: April 2024).

Richard Cox (1991, 485; 1996, 63) argued that OScan *berg*, borrowed into the Scottish Gaelic toponymicon as *beirgh(e)*, continued the meaning of ‘bare, exposed rock; cliff; precipice’. It was often used, on the Isle of Lewis for example, of coastal promontories (Cox 2022, 521). According to DOE (2025, s.v. *beorg* n. sense 1.c.), the sense of ‘cliff; headland; promontory’ was also part of the semantic range for OE *berg*. However, much of the cited evidence for this is taken from *Beowulf*, an OE text describing an OScan milieu. Beowulf ruled over the Geats in what is now part of Sweden. When Beowulf set off with his men by sea to help Hrothgar, the sea cliffs are described as *beorge* or *beorgas* (Swanton 1997, 44-45, lines 211, 222). It is possible that *berg* in this text is more reflective of the range of meanings borne by *berg* in OScan languages, rather than OE.

#### - OScan *berg* in English place-names

Within place-names in the north-west of England, there are fields of drumlins, caused by glacial deposition, named with *berg*-names (Smith 1961–1963, 7:16, 271). On the ground, such drumlins are low hillocks, rounded and bearing some resemblance to artificial burial mounds. OED (2025, s.v. *drumlin* n.) defines a drumlin as ‘a long low hill or ridge chiefly composed of till which has been rounded and smoothed by past glacial action’. The term, derived from Irish *druim* ‘back, ridge’ (eDIL 2019, s.v. *druim*(m)), was originally used of Irish landforms and first attested according to the OED in 1812. Another attestation from 1893 described



drumlins as ‘lenticular mounds’. The ridge-like nature is symptomatic of the fact that they are always elongated in one dimension, the direction of which indicates the direction of the ice flow. They are, therefore, not concentric nor perfectly rounded but directional, rather as an over-sized long barrow. What is significant is that this application of *berg*, to features that appear as if they were heaps, piles or artificial mounds as opposed to large hills, mountains or crags and cliffs, occurred in the north of the country where OScan had a greater influence.

For both OE and OScan *berg* in English place-names, Gelling and Cole were suggesting that the continuously rounded profile was key. For natural features, Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 149) argued that ‘it seems probable judging from the siting of some minor names in northern counties, that ON *berg* was used in the same sense as the English word’. (They did not allow for artificial mounds bearing a *berg*-name in the north: see 1.3.4. above). On the other hand, Eller Barrow, in Furness (historical Lancashire), is an artificial mound, scheduled as a round barrow by Historic England (NHLE 1007230), bearing a *berg*-name. The name is first recorded in 1332 in the *Furness Coucher Book* (Ekwall 1922, 211). Townend (1997) argued that Eller Barrow is an OScan and not an OE name. If so, this is an example of OScan *berg* applied to an artificial mound, far above the suggested Rutland and Birmingham cutoff line for artificial burial mounds labelled with a *berg*-name, as suggested by Gelling and Cole.



2. Eller Barrow (A.Lloyd: November 2022) photographed from NGR 326385, 477302 (cropped and zoomed).

The results from this study, and their implications for the meaning of OE and OScan *berg* as used in place-names within England, are examined in greater detail in Chapter Five.

#### 1.4. Survey and literature review: *dūn*

##### 1.4.1. *dūn* as ‘hill’ or ‘mountain’

The OE dictionary definition of *dūn* is given simply as ‘hill’ or ‘mountain’ (Bosworth-Toller 2019, s.v. *dūn* n.; DOE 2025, s.v. *dūn* n.). As with *berg*, there are biblical references which appear to use *dūn* to refer to sizeable hills or mountains. In *Genesis A*, surviving in the Junius manuscript dating to the late tenth or early eleventh century, the biblical flood is described as standing fifteen man-cubits over the tops of the *dunum* (plural dative) (Krapp 1931, 44, line 1398). Noah’s ark came to rest on the highest mountains in Armenia. The word for mountains is again *dunum* (Krapp 1931, 44, line 1421). Elsewhere in this text, Lot dwells in a cave in the side of a high hill (Krapp 1931, 77, line 2596) and Abraham climbs a lofty hill to make a sacrifice of Isaac (Krapp 1931, 84, line 2854); both are signified by *dūn*.

However in the tenth-century OE *Orosius*, in which *berg* is always used to denote a large and continent-dividing range of mountains (1.3.1), *dūn* is consistently used to refer to a much lower place amenable to military activity. It is rendered as ‘hill’ by Godden’s translation, however the nature of the activity that was possible on the hill, according to the text, gives further clues as to what kind of hill was actually involved. These were certainly not hills of the kind for which *berg* is used in the same text.

The references for which *dūn* is used include the following: the place where the Athenians met Darius and gave battle ‘æt þæt dune ... þe mon hat Morothhome’, that is, ‘at the *dūn* called Marathon’ (Godden 2016, 122-125). Marathon is actually a plain on which there are burial mounds. It is not mountainous (Kitson 2008, 390); a place for observing battles burning like fires, the observer commenting – ‘ic sitte on anre heahre dune’, translated ‘I am sitting on a high *dūn*’ (Godden 2016, 206-207); the place where Pyrrhus, the King of Epirus, met the Romans for a third battle ‘on Arosuius þære dune’, that is, ‘on the Arusian hill’ (Godden 2016, 230-231); a place where Romans perished whilst fighting Jugurtha, King of Numidia, ‘þe heora mitinc wæs on sandihtre dune’, translated ‘because their battle site was on a sandy *dūn*’

(Godden 2016, 322-323); a place where the Romans, when fighting the Gauls, complained of thirst ‘þa hi hi on anre dune gemetton’, that is, ‘when they had come together on a *dūn*’ (Godden 2016, 324-325); the place where Pompey and Cato assembled a large force ‘on Thraci þære dune’, translated ‘on the *dūn* called Dyrrachium’; the place where Pompey waited with thirty kings for Julius Caesar in Greece ‘on anre dune’, translated ‘on a *dūn*’ (Godden 2016, 334-335); a place where Romans fighting the Germans in intense heat sought the prayers of Christians for enough water ‘onufon þære dune’, that is, ‘on top of the *dūn*’ (Godden 2016, 374-375); and the place where Probus, a Roman emperor, died when fighting usurpers ‘on Symrie þære dune’, that is, ‘at the *dūn* of Sirmium’ (Godden 2016, 388-389).

Apart from one other reference, these are all the *dūn* references that there are within the *OE Orosius*. *Dūn*-sites in this context seem to be open places capable of holding fighting armies. The difference between the meanings of *berg* and *dūn* in this text is stark.

In *Ælfric’s Grammar and Glossary*, written in the late tenth century, *dūn* glosses Latin *mons* (Zupitza 1880, 11). In medieval Latin, the semantic range of *mons* is wide and includes smaller features such as mounds, cliffs, heaps and piles, not just mountains or large hills (DMLBS 2015, s.v. *mons* n.). In the eleventh-century *OE Hexateuch*, the parting of the Red Sea to permit the people of Israel to cross is described in terms of the water piling up, for which *dūn* is used as a translation of the Latin *mons* (DOE 2025, s.v. *dūn* n.). In the Rushworth Gospels (dating to c. 800 with tenth-century OE glosses: see Kotake 2023, 3, 8) in Matthew (ch. 5 v. 14), *dūn* was used to gloss Latin *mons* but the context is a reference to a city on a hill being very visible in the landscape. The Latin for the settlement was *civitas* and the OE gloss was *cæstra* (Kotake 2023, 99).<sup>22</sup> Here, then, *dūn* cannot be an uninhabitable elevation, but is associated with settlement and that settlement is of a certain status.

Writing in the eighth century, Bede glossed *dūn* within the place-name *Uilfaresdun* as Latin *mons* (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 155, 3.14). This was where Oswine (ruler of Deira) assembled his army to fight Oswiu (ruler of Bernicia) in the mid-seventh century and it was said by Bede to be ten miles north-west of Catterick

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<sup>22</sup> Other OE versions of the gospels use OE *munt* or *mōr* ‘marsh; barren upland’, not *dūn*, for the hill on which the settlement is located (Kemble 1858, 42-43).

(NRY). There has been no agreement on the precise location of this place (cf. Breeze 2005, who suggested Diddersley Hill, a small, discrete rise of fifteen metres above the elevated plateau west of Scotch Corner). Although there are some hills in the Yorkshire Dales near Richmond which might be within a ten-mile buffer zone, these are not mountains. Moreover, the majority of land surrounding Catterick is in the flat Vale of Mowbray.

Overall, with one or two biblical exceptions, many of these *dūn*-references are not to very high or uninhabitable mountains. Instead, lower places where activity was possible, which might resemble a heap or mound, seem often to have been the referent.

#### 1.4.2. *dūn* as an active place

In *Be gesceadwisan gerefan* ‘Concerning the prudent reeve’ (*‘Gerefa’*), there is a reference to *winterdūn* (Liebermann 1903–1916, 1:453, [1]). The text dates to the tenth century and is preserved in a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century manuscript (Harvey 1993). The reeve needs to know

*ælcre tilðan timan, ðe to tune belimpð; forðam on manegu[m] landu[m] tilð  
bið redre ðon[ne] on oðrum; ge yrðe tima hrædra, ge mæda rædran, ge  
winterdūn eac swa...*

This reads (my translation) ‘the time of every labour relating to the estate; since on many lands labour is sooner than on others; and the time of ploughing is sooner, and the meadows sooner, and the winter *dūn* also so...’ The winter *dūn* is, therefore, something that happens at a particular time in the agricultural year. Nouns are being used in this passage in a verbal manner to denote activity.

Bosworth-Toller (2019, s.v. winter-dūn n.) takes this as a reference to the winter pasturing or folding of domesticated animals, such as sheep, onto low-lying relative elevations, where drainage is better. Page (1997) argued that the verb-like usage of *winterdūn* should equate to winter farming work in general, and could refer equally to a hill used for sowing winter crops. Certainly, the context of the reference was one of working the land – that is, ploughing and meadows – as opposed to livestock farming.

The text appears to lift lists of words from other glossaries and texts (Banham and Faith 2014, 8), and contains ‘gaps and false emphases’ (Page 1985; 1997, 302),

suggesting that it is more of a literary or scribal work, rather than a text closely connected with the realities of farming. Nevertheless, this does not undermine the point that the concept of a *winterdūn* appears to have been a known farming activity. The nominal element *dūn* became a prepositional, adverbial and adjectival word, signifying movement downwards or a lower position (OED 2025, s.v. adown adv. & prep., down adv. & prep.; Sadej 2009a).<sup>23</sup> Sifting through charters, it is clear how often *dūn* was used in this way at an early stage. In King Alfred's translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, dating to the late ninth century, Cain was described as being very angry and bowing his head down. The OE used was *hnipode ofdune* (Sweet 1871, 234). The *Junius Psalter* (late tenth or early eleventh century) used the phrase *adune astigað* (Brenner 1908, 148, Ps. 106 [107] v. 26) to describe descending. There was no equivalent for *berg*, nor for *crug*, neither of which became associated with adverbs, adjectives or prepositions of movement or position. Arguably, this is a further strand of evidence demonstrating how *dūn* was particularly associated with activity. The OE *Orosius* use of *dūn* could also be viewed in this light, contributing to the picture of *dūn* as a place of activity.

#### 1.4.3. *dūn* and Celtic influence

One of the conundrums of OE *dūn* is that, unlike *berg*, it does not appear to have had semantically similar, contemporaneous, Germanic and Scandinavian cognates. OE *dūn* may well be cognate with Old Frisian *dūne* and Old Saxon and Old Dutch *dūna* (Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, xlili; Smith 1956, 1:139).<sup>24</sup> However, these cognates tend to signify sand dunes or snow heaps that are low-lying agglomerations of loose particles, and so quite different from what appears to have been the OE concept of *dūn* (Kitson 2008, 388; forthcoming). The Old Frisian word, via post-medieval borrowing from Dutch, gave rise to *dune* (as in a sand dune) in modern English (OED 2025, s.v. dune, n.).<sup>25</sup> The earliest place-name reference to OE *dūn* in

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<sup>23</sup> The morphological progression seems to have been *ofdūn(e)* > *adūn(e)* > *dūn(e)*.

<sup>24</sup> OED (2025, s.v. dune n.) suggests that there are Old Dutch place-names pre-dating the eleventh century. No underlying evidential source is cited.

<sup>25</sup> On the coast, low sand dunes can also be referred to as 'denes' or 'dens' (OED 2025, s.v. dene n.1). The etymology for this word is uncertain, but the OED links it

a coastal context is Sandown Castle (Kent), *Sandoñ* 1199 (Coates 2000, 237-238; Cullen 1997, 481). From this, Coates suggested that OE *dūn* could be used to signify a sand dune by the twelfth century, albeit noting that it would be good to have corroboration of this in the contemporaneous lexicon, not just in place-names.

The late ninth- or early tenth-century *Old English Boethius*, surviving in mid-tenth-century manuscripts onwards, uses *berg*, not *dūn*, to refer to sand dunes. The reference to *sondbeorhas* or *sondbeorgas* occurs in the context of it not being wise to build one's house on a sand dune – an adaptation of the biblical parable in Matthew chapter 7 (Godden and Irvine 2009, 1:8, 264, 406, 2:112). Although this is only one example, it is interesting that at this date *sondberg* was used to describe a sand dune, not *sonddūn* (see also Historical Thesaurus 2024, s.v. sand hill).<sup>26</sup>

Within the corpus for this study, the earliest collocation between OE *sand* and *dūn* is *ouer sanddoune*, S764 968 [1338-1340], near Sturminster Newton (Dorset) (Mills 1977–2020, 3:200), and Sandon (Hertfordshire), (*of*) *Sandune* 1000 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1938, 164). In these inland geographic locations far from the coast, the collocation is likely to be referring to an aspect such as the quality of the soil, rather than being a reference to a sand dune. Field (1972, 192) observed that references to 'sand' frequently denoted the sandy nature of soil.<sup>27</sup>

In essence, OE *dūn* does not seem to have referred to sand dunes in its earliest attestations. Nor does there appear to be anything paralleling OE *dūn* in contemporaneous Germanic and Scandinavian cognates.

To make sense of this disparity between OE *dūn* and the other Germanic languages, possible influence from Celtic languages has been suggested.<sup>28</sup> For instance, OED

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very tentatively with Low German *düne*, East and North Frisian *dün*, Dutch *duin* and French *dune* (see also Briggs 2020, 325-326; forthcoming).

<sup>26</sup> The *berg* in *Guthlac B* is referred to as *sondhofe* 'sand house' (Roberts 2019 [1979], 118 line 1196; Bosworth-Toller 2019, s.v. sand-hof)

<sup>27</sup> Although Cole (2016) assessed soil types from soil survey and geological mapping for many of these place-name sites, OE concepts of 'sandiness' need not necessarily map on to modern classifications in soil mapping today.

<sup>28</sup> Celtic *\*dūno-* appears to be a neuter noun, where OE *dūn* is a feminine noun, although it can appear with masculine/neuter genitive inflections.

(2025, s.v. down n.1) summarises the position as, ‘probably a borrowing from a Celtic language’. There is a Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* which finds expression in the Irish and Scottish Gaelic words *dún* and *dùn*, as well as the Welsh and Cornish words *din/dyn*, all of which appear both in the lexicon and the toponymicon of their respective countries.<sup>29</sup> It also finds expression in Gaulish *dūnum*, albeit mainly recorded in place-names and in Latin authors (Matasović 2009, s.v. *\*dūno-* n.).

There has been debate over the primary meaning of the Indo-European root from which the Celtic etymon is derived. It seems to have been one of enclosure. The Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* appears initially to have held the meaning of ‘fort’ and ‘enclosure’. (Förster 1921, 52-54; Vendryes 1959, D:222-223; Watkins 1994, 2:751-753; Sims-Williams 2006, 13; Matasović 2009, s.v. *\*dūno-* n.; Falileyev, Gohil and Ward 2010, 18, s.v. *dūno-*; Delamarre 2012, 144, s.v. *dūnon*; cf. Pokorny 1959, 259-263 s.v. *dheu-*).<sup>30</sup>

Förster (1921, 53) and Kitson (forthcoming) suggested that it was in fifth-century glosses that the meaning of ‘mountain or hill’ was first evidenced in late Continental Celtic for *\*dūno-* and its successors.<sup>31</sup> In *Endlicher’s Glossary* or *De Nominibus*

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<sup>29</sup> Celtic *\*dūno-*, or its Goidelic successors, does not appear to be present in place-names on the Isle of Man (Broderick 2006, 101-102).

<sup>30</sup> OE *tūn* ‘village, enclosure, estate’, and the other Germanic cognates of *tūn*, are either derivatives of the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-*, borrowed prior to the operation of Grimm’s law, or are cognates with the Celtic etymon, derived from a common Indo-European root (Watkins 1994, 751; Sims-Williams 2006, 13; Mallory and Adams 2006, 223; Kitson 2008, 388; OED 2025, s.v. *town*). A survey of the meaning of *tūn*, both in the OE lexicon and toponymicon, is well beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, parallels between *dūn* and *tūn* are inescapable in some of what follows in this thesis. Complicating the picture further, names in *dūn* often end up in modern reflexes with endings in <ton>; they look at first blush as if they were derived from *tūn* as a generic. A medial /s/, as found in genitival endings, could prompt devoicing from /d/ to /t/. In this corpus, there are over 180 such names; only earlier name-forms, where available, make clear that *dūn* is the etymological generic.

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note the sound change that occurred in Brittonic in approximately the fifth century. There had previously been an evolution in Brittonic

*Gallicis, dunum* (a Latin borrowing of Celtic *\*dūno-*: see further below in 1.4.4.) was glossed in Latin with *montem*. However, the Glossary appears to have been written in the eighth century after Gaulish had ceased to be spoken as a language. It included an early attempt to explain Celtic place-names (Lambert 1997, 410). Some of the words may in fact be vulgar Latin and not Gaulish. Therefore, the gloss does not necessarily give the primary meaning of the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* (Lebel 1962, 173). In the ninth century, other writers, such as Heiric of Auxerre, explained *dūnum* similarly, but, again, such explanations were late and after Gaulish had died out (Dumville 1983, 89; Sims-Williams 2016 [1998], 353; 2006, 5, 13). OED (2025, s.v. town n.) infers that the ‘sense “hill” in Gaulish is apparently secondary and may have developed because Iron Age fortifications were often situated on hilltops and promontories’.

It is quite likely that the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-*, and its Brittonic, Goidelic and Gaulish successors, never lost the sense of fortification or enclosure, even as the range of meanings broadened.

#### 1.4.4. Latin *dūnum*

Gelling resisted the idea that OE *dūn* might be linked with Celtic *\*dūno-*, feeling that there was ‘no easy association’ between the two (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 164). One of the problems in associating the two is that Romano-British place-

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from /u:/ in final syllables to the raised sound /ü:/ which, in this context, Jackson (1953, 317-319) dated to the first century. OE is not thought to have possessed the rounded front vowel /ü:/ represented by <y> until the seventh or eighth centuries. OE /u:/ would often substitute for such a sound if it persisted in Brittonic (Jackson 1953, 309, 320).

In approximately the fifth century, there was a further shift in this linguistic context in Brittonic from /ü:/ to /i:/, such that Celtic *\*dūno-* is represented by *din* and *dyn* in Welsh and Cornish (Jackson 1953, 319; Smith 1956, 1:139). Since OE *dūn* does not reflect this vowel change, any borrowing from Brittonic is thought to have occurred prior to such change. Therefore, it may also have been prior to an evolution in meaning to include ‘mountain or hill’.

Incidentally, the fronting to /i:/ may have been late in Brittonic speech in the north, facilitating greater confusion with OE *dūn* (James 2019, 2:108).



names in England utilising the word *dūnum*, a Latinised version of *\*dūno-*, were not usually named in OE with *dūn* (Gelling 2000 [1984], 141). As OED (2025, s.v. down n.1) notes, there is an ‘apparent discontinuity in place-name use’. For example, the Roman site at Brancaster (Norfolk) had been known as Branodunum (Rivet and Smith 1979, 274-275). The original *\*dūno-*generic was replaced in OE with *cæster* ‘city; walled town; fortification’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:158-162).<sup>32</sup> *Sorviodunum*, Old Sarum, was the predecessor to Salisbury; *\*dūno-* was replaced by OE *burh* ‘fortified place; stronghold’ as the generic (Rivet and Smith 1979, 461; Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1939, 18-19; Gelling 1997 [1978], 55; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:74-85).<sup>33</sup> In essence, OE speakers did not seem to associate *-dūnum* in these place-names with OE *dūn* in their own language.

The Celtic etymon had become a loan word in vulgar Latin, and, as such, it was used freely as a common noun within the Latin vocabulary. It was not used solely to translate pre-existing Celtic names (Rivet and Smith 1979, 274-275; cf. Bedon 2003). Sims-Williams (2000, 10) suggested that *Maridunum* (Carmarthen, Wales) was a name that was best seen as entirely coined in Latin, and, as such, was a ‘Roman creation’ even if using borrowed lexical elements. *Dūnum* was productive in the Augustan Roman period, judging by its combination in place-names with the personal names *Augusto-*, *Caesaro-* and *Iulio-* (Sims-Williams 2006, 307).

It is possible that places named with Latin *dūnum* represented something subtly different from that which was referred to by the insular expressions involving *\*dūno-*, including OE *dūn* if it was influenced by that Celtic etymon. Although

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<sup>32</sup> Note that there is no hill on the site. Colchester (Essex), which was Camulodunum in Romano-British naming, is another example (Reaney 1935, 367-369; Rivet and Smith 1979, 294-295). This could be used to support the idea that the original Celtic etymon did not necessarily include the idea of a ‘hill’ and it was not borrowed into Latin with that meaning.

<sup>33</sup> There was a shift in location and refounding of the settlement away from the original location of *Sorviodunum*, but this was after the OE name had already been attested, so it does not account for the fact that the generic in *dūnum* was replaced in the OE name.

impossible to prove, this might explain why Romano-British place-names in England using *-dūnum* were not commonly renamed with OE *dūn*. Furthermore, the use of *cæster* was closely equated with the Latin word *civitas*, for instance in Bede's writings in the eighth century (Campbell 1986, 100) and in *Ælfric's Grammar and Glossary* in the late tenth century (Zupitza 1880, 11). The fact that this word is chosen to replace *dūnum* suggests that the latter carried with it a sense of a substantial settlement with rights and privileges attached. It may be that, where a site was obviously Roman and/or was of a sufficient scale or status, the OE elements *ceaster* or *burh* were used rather than *dūn* in place-names.<sup>34</sup>

#### 1.4.5. Brittonic and Goidelic cognates

eDIL (2019, s.v. *dún*) defines *dún* as 'fort' stating that, in Old Irish, it

usually applied to a residence of a chief or dignitary, consisting of an earthen (more rarely stone) rampart, inside which the house ('tech') or houses were erected; often of considerable extent and in case of a royal residence having two (or even three) circumvallations with a moat between.

There is no mention of *dún* being a hill.

GPC (2024, s.v. *din*) defines *din* as 'city, fort, fortress, fastness, stronghold (e.g. defensive hill)'. Again, the concept of a fort is to the fore with the idea of a hill being a secondary possibility, and only if it were a defensive hill.

DSL (2024, s.v. *dun*, *doon* n.) gives a definition focusing on prehistoric forts, generally on high or isolated sites, or any similar defensive structure. It notes that the term *dun* or *doon* is in use as an archaeological term. The citations it lists date from the eighteenth century onwards.

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<sup>34</sup> There are also examples of OE *burh*, not OE *dūn*, being used for places that previously bore a name in Brittonic *din*. For instance, Bamburgh was attested as *Dinguayrdi* and *Din Guoaroy* in *Historia Brittonum* in 829/30 (Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 33; Monumenta Germaniae Historica 2019, §§ 61, 63). Perhaps, OE *dūn* was not used where Brittonic *din* was referencing a place with significant civic status, for example, a fortification of high status; OE *burh* might have been felt to be appropriate instead.

The definition in OED (2025, s.v. *dun* n.3) is an archaeological and antiquarian definition as applied to sites in Ireland and Scotland. It reads:

A type of small fort or fortified dwelling used in the Scottish Highlands and Ireland from the latter part of the 1st millennium BC to the early Middle Ages, typically consisting of a stone wall around a large house and agricultural buildings; any similar defensive structure, such as a broch or rath; (sometimes also) a hill fort; a promontory fort.

This definition allows for much smaller-scale places than eDIL.

#### 1.4.6. Brittonic and Goidelic place-names

As was the case for OE elements, it is important to separate lexical and toponymic usage. The two may not exactly coincide. Moreover, there are questions of dating and diachronic evolution in meaning. Published place-name surveys are currently less complete in their coverage of Scotland and Wales, compared to England. Additionally, written records typically were generated later or survive only from later periods, when compared to England, making many of the place-names appear late in terms of first attestation. A comprehensive survey of *dún*-, *dùn*-, and *din/dyn*-names is well beyond the scope of this work. The aim of this section is to highlight (non-exhaustive) examples of the observations that have been made about such Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Cornish place-names, to give broader context to the focus on OE *dūn*-names, not least in light of the discussions concerning etymology outlined above.

Flanagan (1973, 159; 1980–1981, 17) observed that ‘*dún* ‘fort’ is a prestige term in Irish writing’ ‘usually employed for the dwellings of kings and chieftains. This is reflected in heroic literature’ (see also Flanagan and Flanagan 1994, 75–76). In terms of the literary definition, this agrees with eDIL. Nevertheless, Flanagan (1973, 157) also observed that *dún* was one of the commonest settlement terms in Irish townland names. It could refer to defended homesteads on level ground enclosed by earthen banks. The element is distributed throughout Ireland, at both inland and coastal sites, including promontory forts. It is the only one of the elements considered by Flanagan (1973) that has a universal distribution (see also Flanagan 1980–1981,

16).<sup>35</sup> There were also *dún*-names for ecclesiastical sites and simple monastic units (Flanagan 1973, 161). ‘The majority of Ordnance Survey *dún*-townland names are documented in anglicised form only – mainly from the seventeenth century onwards – whilst minor *dún*-names are, for the most part, totally undocumented’ (Flanagan 1980–1981, 19). This is because ‘many of the names are known only in local usage and are, as yet, unrecorded’ (Flanagan 1973, 158). It is, therefore, hard to trace the rise in usage of this element in Irish place-names or any diachronic or diatopic evolution in meaning. According to Mac Giolla Easpaig (1981) *dún* appears to have been absent from earlier compound names, appearing first in name phrases after the fifth century.<sup>36</sup> On this, see, also, Flanagan (1980, 44).

Padel (1985, 84-85) listed various Cornish places bearing a name including the Cornish element *\*dyn*. First-attestation dates for these names were not included. Padel noted where a ‘fort is visible’ and observed that the meaning encompassed ‘cliff-castle’.<sup>37</sup> According to Padel, ‘in several cases there is nothing now to be seen’. Richards (1972, 364-389) examined the use of *din* in various Welsh place-names acknowledging that the documentation used was ‘highly selective’. Most of the attestations in his list of *din*-places date from the thirteenth and fourteenth

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<sup>35</sup> The distribution map produced in Flanagan (1973) can usefully be compared with that in the glossary of Logainm (2024). Both reveal a universal distribution. Indeed, the distribution maps in Flanagan’s earlier work correspond well to the distribution maps in the current Logainm database; more names have been added but densities and hotspots of distribution remain broadly the same.

<sup>36</sup> Celtic names are thought to have been formed as compounds with generic following qualifier initially, in the same way that OE and OScan names were formed. In later phases of naming, name phrases were used with qualifier following generic (Jackson 1953, 225-227). However, Padel (1985, xiv-xvi) questioned how rigid that chronological development was, at least in Cornwall, suggesting that name phrases may have been used prior to the fifth century and compound names may have been used after that point. See, also, Tempan (2009); and Clancy (2013, 228) concerning the position in Ireland and Scotland.

<sup>37</sup> *din/dyn* could also be translated ‘refuge’ (Jackson 1982, 33).

centuries onwards. His list focused on forts ‘generally on high ground’ (Richards 1972, 367).

The OE text *Ordinance concerning the Dunsæte* (Liebermann 1903–1916, 1:374–379) is thought to date from the tenth or eleventh centuries, surviving in eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts (Molyneaux 2011). It describes the *dūnsæte* ‘*dūn*-dwellers’ who seem to have occupied land on either side of the English and Welsh border, although it could be translated as referring to the Welsh side alone (Molyneaux 2011, 249–250). It is not clear whether the people living in this area were identified with *dūn*-places in general or a particular *dūn*-name (Baker 2017, 429). Gelling (1989a, 199–201) identified the river that separates the two sets of people described in the text as the river Wye, placing the region in question at the southern end of the Anglo-Welsh border zone.<sup>38</sup> Whilst Gelling (1992, 118–119) suggested that *dūnsæte* (with other *-sæte* names along the border) could have arisen out of an attempt to codify relations along Offa’s Dyke in the late eighth century, Lewis (2007, 141) doubted such an early date. Baker (2017, 440) argued that *-sæte* names are better understood, not as early tribal names, but as a later phenomenon and ‘administratively coherent’. In any event, the label appears to be reflecting awareness of the particular relevance of OE *dūn* for this border area, possibly influenced by the use of Celtic *\*dūno-*, latterly reflected in Brittonic *din*.

The survey in Clancy (2013) noted several early-attested names in *dún*, derived from one source in particular, ‘the Iona Chronicle’. Many of these early-attested names refer to places of high status or significance. They include Dunadd (see further

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<sup>38</sup> The *Wentsæte* mentioned in the text put the location somewhere near Gwent (Molyneaux 2011, 152). Lewis (2007, 142) argued that there was a specific *dūn*, namely Dinedor, a hill fort south of Hereford. Gelling (1992, 118), on the other hand, pointed out that, if a Welsh word formed the basis of this name, it would most probably have been spelt *din-* not *dūnsæte*. Therefore, this must be a reference to OE *dūn* and any eponymous place should have an OE name. Lewis pointed to the Domesday name *Dunre* for the hundred and manor which became Dinedor; the attestations indicate how frequently and persistently *dūn* could apparently be substituted for *din* or vice versa (Anderson 1934, 168; Coates, Breeze and Horovitz 2000, 304; Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 187).

below) and Dunbar, attested as *Dynbaer* in *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Colgrave 1927, 76-77). Many surviving names using the element *dún* are name-phrases as opposed to name compounds (James 2019, 2:108). Brittonic *din*-names existed in certain parts of Scotland – Dunbar is one such. However, they may not all be transparent as such, particularly in the absence of earlier forms, owing to influence in particular areas from Gaelic *dún/dùn* or even OE *dūn*.



3. Dunadd, April 2008: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dunadd\\_Fort\\_20080427.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dunadd_Fort_20080427.jpg) © Otter CC BY SA 3.0 (L); View of the drained marsh and peat bog from the top of Dunadd: A.Lloyd, July 2020 (R).

Dunnadd (Kilmartin Glen, Scotland) is a famous example of a highly significant *dùn*-site occupying a relatively small, rocky knoll in a marsh, formerly an island promontary in Loch Crinan (Carver 2019, 175-178; Cox and Lathe 2017).

MacDonald (1981) surveyed *dùn*-names in Scotland, gathering information from OS maps, acknowledging that the historical attestations of these names had not been surveyed, that some names could be late medieval or post-medieval, and that a few might prove not to be *dùn*-names on closer inspection of historical name-forms.

Whilst Taylor and Márkus (2006–2012, 5:359-360) noted a relatively close, but not invariable, correlation between *dùn*-names in Fife and fortified remains, MacDonald (1981, 38) concluded that the ‘toponymic range of meanings of *dùn* is probably very wide and quite unspecialised’. It could ‘denote enclosed settlements sites, fortified or not, of all periods and types from the Iron Age to at least post-Viking times’. It could be ‘applied to natural features that were potentially habitable or defensible, but not actually enclosed or fortified; or that resembled habitable or defensible locations in miniature’. MacDonald (1981, 39) noted that ‘the difference between an enclosure purposely designed to withstand military attack and one erected simply to delimit an area of greater privacy and to inhibit casual intrusion by men or animals, was probably one of degree rather than of kind’. In addition, *dùn* could mean solely ‘heap, hillock, mound’ without connotations of a fort (MacDonald 1981, 38; Dwelly

and Bauer 2011 [1918], s.v. *dùn*). Martin (2013, 116) thought that several of Kintyre's *dùn*-sites were hillocks with 'no evidence of ever having been fortified'.<sup>39</sup> Harding (1997) assessed 'duns' in Argyll, observing that they are an extremely heterogenous collection and often small.

#### 1.4.7. OE *dūn* in place-names

Smith (1956, 1:138) had noted that OE *dūn* used in place-names could apply 'to anything from a slight gentle slope to a high mountain'. In her early work, Gelling also outlined a range of topographical possibilities for *dūn*-sites. She included ridges, sub-circular hills and shelves on the side of a high hill, plus a topographical overlap with OE *ēg* 'island', as a rise of fifty feet or less in marshy ground (Gelling 2000 [1984], 142; 1988, 71). Gelling (1998, 77) thought that *dūn*-places were usually in areas of relatively low relief.

By the end of their collaboration, Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 164) stated that *dūn* was 'consistently used in settlement-names for a low hill with a fairly level and fairly extensive summit which provided a good settlement site in open country'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> There are numerous sites labelled as *dùn* using a simplex form on OS mapping for Kintyre (and probably elsewhere in Scotland). These do not appear to be place-names. The label is in Gothic script to signify historical and archaeological interest. Other labels written in the same script include 'church; tower; fort; castle; cairn; standing stone' which are clearly not meant to be toponymic. It appears as if OS surveyors are using the word lexically, rather as with 'barrow' or 'tumulus'. An initial comparison between nineteenth- and twentieth-century mapping suggests that some sites labelled *fort* or *castle* in the earlier OS mapping have been re-labelled *dùn* or *dun* in the later mapping. However, pursuing this further is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>40</sup> I have not come across an explanation of what 'open country' meant to Gelling and Cole. Statutorily, it referred to open access land in legislation throughout the twentieth century. Part V of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 defined 'open country' as

any area appearing to the authority ... to consist wholly or predominantly of mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff or foreshore (including any bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or other land adjacent to the foreshore).

Their definition had arguably become codified. In the line drawings presented of archetypal *dūn*-sites, the profile is marked as ‘whale-backed’ (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 166; 2023). Cole (1988-1989, 15) described *dūn* as ‘like an upturned bowl with a limited area of flat land on top’. In essence, clearly different and diagnostic profiles were outlined by Gelling and Cole for *berg* (1.3.4.) and *dūn*. Gelling was not suggesting that OE *dūn* was purely a topographic term without reference to settlement. As is clear from the quotation above, it was a place that ‘provided a good settlement site’. Moreover, Gelling argued that the idea of settlement was intrinsic to the meaning of *dūn*. Gelling was clear that

what we see here is not (as is frequently asserted) the coining of an OE hill-name which was subsequently transferred to a settlement. It is the application to ancient settlements of a new English name, the generic of which embraces both the habitations and the site. The element *dūn* in a name would convey to an Anglo-Saxon both the nature of the site and the likelihood of the settlement being a high-status one. (Gelling 1998, 78; see also Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 165).

Gelling also commented that

these [instances in which *dūn* refers to an uninhabited hill adjacent to the settlement] are greatly outnumbered by examples in which the village and the hill form a single entity, and it is likely that for the most part settlement names in *-dūn* were coined for pre-English settlements in recognition of this characteristic situation. (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 167; see also Gelling 2000 [1984], 142).

According to Gelling (2000 [1984], 143), the word *dūn* had not ‘received the attention it deserves as a potential clue to settlement history’. This is all very different from the theory that first the hill was named, and then over some years, by a process of ellipsis or metonymy, the settlement acquired the name of the hill (Ekwall 1960, xviii-xxi; Cameron 1996a, 25-26). Gelling (2000 [1984], 127) highlighted a quasi-habitative definition for *dūn*, unlike *berg* or *crug*. Given Gelling’s definition of OE *dūn* referring to settlements on hills or elevations, Kitson (forthcoming) described it as ‘too close for coincidence’ that Celtic *\*dūno* and its successors should also refer to some form of settlement to be found frequently on hills or elevations. For Kitson, the commonality in semantic field and linguistic form



was compelling evidence that there was a link between the Celtic etymon and OE *dūn*.

Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 164) argued that the use of *dūn* for settlement-names was present from the beginning of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ period, but may not have been much in evidence after 800. Gelling (2000 [1984], 142) based this on the rarity of *dūn*-names for settlements in Cornwall and in the Weald. The logic was that *dūn* must have ceased to be productive in these counties by the time of the spread of OE into these areas.<sup>41</sup> Cornwall does not have a published survey, so it is not possible to compare the incidence of OE *dūn*-names in this county fairly with other counties. However, Dr Oliver Padel has provided the author with a list of fifty-five *dūn*-names in the county, attested prior to 1500.<sup>42</sup> Kent has not been the subject of a full published survey. Moreover, the topography and geology of the Weald (low-lying, forested and not free-draining, but including plenty of clays and infertile sands) may not have lent itself to *dūn*-names. OE *berg* was also not common in the Weald, suggesting that topography may have been the determining factor. Baker (2007, 202-7) made a similar point in his study of *dūn* in the Chilterns and Essex regions, noting that *dūn* may not have occurred in areas of known fifth-century archaeology displaying Germanic influence, because some of those areas were topographically unsuited to *dūn*.

There is agreement that *dūn* was a relatively early place-name element. Cox (1976, 17-18, 23, 25, 28-29) listed six examples attested prior to 731. They are Breedon (Leicestershire), Laughterton (Lincolnshire),<sup>43</sup> Ovington (Northumberland),<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> There are important methodological considerations to be discussed (2.2.2.) about the extent to which settlement names can be hived off and considered in isolation from other place-names.

<sup>42</sup> Chapter Two (2.2.1.) gives an explanation of this cutoff date.

<sup>43</sup> This requires making a link between *Leugtticdun* in S1806, 675 x 692 [12th], and Laughterton (Lincolnshire), which is not certain.

<sup>44</sup> This relies on the argument that the attestation *Osingadun* in the *Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert* was a scribal error for *Ofingadun*, and then on linking that name to Ovington (Colgrave 1940, 126-127, 335-336). This place was where Cuthbert was

Watton (ERY), Yeadon (WRY),<sup>45</sup> and the lost *Uilfaresdun* (NRY), already discussed. This is double the number of place-names Cox lists for *berg* in the same article. Cox (1976, 60-61) concluded that *dūn* (but not *berg*) was a topographical element important in the formation of English place-names before 730. Cox (1976, 57) assumed that for a ‘topographical’ term like *dūn* ‘a measurable period of time must have elapsed between the creation of the name and its transference from a feature in the landscape to the habitation site which developed in its vicinity’. Therefore, an attested name would need to have been coined considerably before its attestation to give time for this transference. This is different from the quasi-habitative status advocated by Gelling for *dūn*, discussed above.<sup>46</sup>

Many of the early documents used by Cox for his survey came from monastic archives. Therefore the places identified within them reflect the kinds of topography chosen for monastic sites (Baker 2005, 50).<sup>47</sup> Moreover, national coverage is very patchy in these early records, with areas of early medieval settlement in regions like East Anglia poorly represented (Cox 1976, 13). Nevertheless, it is interesting that *dūn* figures relatively strongly in a corpus of names derived from early monastic sites. It does so alongside OE *ēg* ‘island’ and *feld* ‘open country; unencumbered ground’, both of which also appear strongly in Cox’s corpus. This suggests that here

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said to be eating with the Abbess of Whitby, Ælfflæd (daughter of Oswiu), when he foresaw the death of one of her brethren.

<sup>45</sup> This requires making a link between the attestation *Ingaedyne* in *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Colgrave 1927, 36-37, 164) and Yeadon. This place was part of the lands given to the church at Ripon by the kings Ecgrith (Northumbria) and Ælfwine (Deira), following the church’s establishment by Wilfred in the 670s. Watts, Insley and Gelling (2004, 710) and Smith (1961–1963, 4:155) do not list this place as an early attestation for Yeadon (WRY).

<sup>46</sup> Gelling (1981, 39) pointed out that six early *dūn*-names seems less impressive as a number when set against the large number of *dūn*-names in Ekwall (1960) and viewed as a proportion of the overall corpus.

<sup>47</sup> Breedon was the site of a monastery; *Leugtricdun* was an estate granted in 675 x 692 by Æthelred, king of Mercia, to the minster at *Medeshamstede*; Watton was the site of a nunnery; and *Ingaedyne* was an estate given to Wilfred at Ripon.

*dūn* was not referencing mountainous or inhospitable terrain. It referenced land suitable for use by a monastic community, just as *ēg* and *feld* did.<sup>48</sup> The parallels between these three elements are returned to in Chapter Six.

It is agreed by all, including Gelling and Cole, that the element *dūn* continued to be used in field-names and other minor names.<sup>49</sup> This thesis looks at the continued use of *dūn* throughout the medieval period, tracing a shift in its meaning in Chapters Four and Six.

### 1.5 Interchangeability

Gelling and Cole concluded that there was a precise division between *berg* and *dūn*; *dūn* was the larger eminence, capable of accommodating a settlement on top of it, with a whale-backed profile, whilst *berg* was the smaller, perfectly rounded form. However, in the charter boundaries for Taunton, S311 854 [1130-1150], *dūn* and *berg* appear to be used interchangeably.<sup>50</sup> The boundaries are in Latin, with a translation into OE. In Latin, it reads ‘hinc ad orientalem plagam in mediam partem monticuli qui hæðbeorh nominatur’, in which the feature called *hæðbeorg* is described as a *monticulus* ‘a little mound, hillock or barrow’ (DMLBS 2015, s.v. *monticulus* n.). In OE, it reads ‘swa east on midneweardne del þære dune þe man Hætbeorg nemð’ ‘so east to the middle part of the *dūn* named “heath *berg*”’ (Rumble 2014, 101); in other words *berg* and *dūn* appear to have been referring to the same feature interchangeably.<sup>51</sup> If Gelling and Cole were right, these words

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<sup>48</sup> Cox (1976, 60-61) argued that four out of the six *dūn*-references in his corpus were likely to be references to actual settlements, using historical and archaeological evidence as well as linguistic context and grammatical structure in the underlying sources.

<sup>49</sup> The problem of defining these categories robustly and consistently is examined in 2.2.2.

<sup>50</sup> Rumble (2014, 96) dated the bounds to the late ninth or early tenth century and Kitson (2008, 390) dated them to the beginning of the eleventh century.

<sup>51</sup> There is ambiguity. It is not clear what the precise referent for *þe* ‘which’ is: is it the middle part of the *dūn* which is called heath-*berg* or is it the *dūn* (in its entirety) which is called heath-*berg*? The fact that *dūn* was used to translate Latin *monticulus* ‘little mound’ lessens this ambiguity and points in favour of the second

should not have been used as synonyms. Kitson (2008, 390) noted that the use of *dūn* to translate Latin *monticulus* required ‘deliberate thought’ rather than ‘mechanical translation’. It was not a common gloss, unlike, as we have seen, the use of *dūn* for Latin *mons*. The element *dūn* was also used in the same text to refer to a place known as *middel cnoll*. OE *cnol* signified ‘the summit of the hill’ (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 157). It would appear that *dūn* was being used as a generic term for a small hill-feature, interchangeable with other oronymic elements.

Rumble (2014, 95) noted that the interchange between *berg* and *dūn* would have implications for Gelling’s and Cole’s ideas ‘about the precision of OE topographical terms’. Having identified the problem, he explained it away on the basis that this was an OE translation of a Latin text. It may not have been authored by a scribe with first-hand knowledge of the nuances of OE. Rumble cited the way in which the OE version has several lengthy descriptive clauses explaining names, which would not be necessary or likely if the culture of the scribe was a predominantly OE one and ‘the language of both the topographical term and the surrounding text’ were the same (Rumble 2014, 96). Such a naming formula used a ‘literary not a colloquial register’ (Bately 2006, 358).

On balance, it is probably correct to explain this charter’s particular use of *dūn* as heavily influenced by the Latin context of the translation. It does not however remove the fact that OE *dūn* was used as equivalent to small features, whether Latin *monticulus* or OE *berg* and *cnoll*.<sup>52</sup> The extent to which *berg* and *dūn* could be seen

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interpretation. *Dūn* was seen by the author of this text as a small feature, not a large one capable of having a separately named middle part.

In addition, the Latin phrase *in mediam partem* (if not the OE phrase) does not need to mean that the middle part of a larger feature was indicated. Throughout the text, *partem* was used to indicate the direction of travel: *in/ad orientalem partem* ‘eastwards’ or ‘to the east side’; *in/ad aquilonalem partem* ‘to the north side’ or ‘north’; *ad occidentalem partem* ‘to the west side’ or ‘west’; and *ad australem partem* ‘south’.

<sup>52</sup> There is another example of interchangeability in the Kentish place-name Luddesdown. The *dūn*-name was attested in c. 975 as *hludesduna/e* (Wallenberg

as interchangeable is at the forefront of this thesis' investigation. This study looks not only at physical form (in Chapter Three) but also at linguistic usage in compound names (in Chapter Four) to try to tease out the difference between these two elements.

### 1.6. Universality

A key aspect of the Gelling and Cole view was the universal application of their findings throughout England. They specifically used *berg*- and *dūn*-names to exemplify the universality of their system. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], xv) argued that

These names represent a system which operated over most of England, from Kent to Northumberland and from the east coast to Offa's Dyke. It is not so apparent in the south-west peninsula, where English speech arrived several centuries later, and this accords with many other indications that the full glory of the topographical naming system belongs to the early part of the Anglo-Saxon period ... everywhere a **beorg** is a small, rounded hill and a **dūn** is a larger eminence which affords a good settlement site.

The word 'everywhere' should be noted. In relation to the claim made for *berg*, Kitson (2008, 388) remarked that 'the degree of exceptionlessness they want there to be ... is one that large linguistic samples practically never show'. It would override commonly found dialectal and regional differences. The need to test this significant strand of what Gelling and Cole argued is the reason for focusing on *berg* and *dūn* across England to make sure that the country-wide picture is captured as accurately as possible.

### 1.7. Survey and literature review: *crug*

In origin, *crug* was derived from the Brittonic languages. In Welsh, *crug* has a range of lexical meanings, including 'hillock; knoll; cairn; tumulus; heap; mass; stack' (GPC 2024, s.v. *crug* n.). In Cornish, *cruc* could mean 'barrow; hillock' (Padel 1985, 73). The Celtic etymon *\*crouco-* or *\*krowko-* was used on the Continent in place-names to signify 'hillock; hill' (Falileyev, Gohil and Ward 2010, 16, s.v.

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1934, 101-102; Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 385). However, the site was also possibly referred to in 939 as *hludes beorh* (S447).

crouco-; Matasović 2009, s.v. \*krowko-).<sup>53</sup> The related Old Irish word *crúach* meant ‘stack; rick; heap; conical pile’ as well as ‘hill; mountain’ (eDIL 2019, s.v. *crúach* n.). The Gaelic word in Kintyre place-names had a similar meaning (Martin 2013, 96-99). The difference between the Welsh and Cornish is the lenition of the final *c* into *g*. However, final and medial *g* was often represented by *c* in OE, eroding this difference (Jackson 1953, 556-557; Smith 1956, 1:115). In this context, Brittonic /u:/ is thought to have rounded to /ü:/ by the sixth century. The latter sound was sometimes rendered as OE /u:/ or /u/, sometimes as /ü:/ spelt with a <y> once OE had developed this sound in the seventh and eighth centuries (see fn. 31), and sometimes as OE /i:/ as at Penkridge in the corpus (Jackson 1953, 308-311, 315-317, 321; Gelling 2000 [1984], 138-139; Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 161, 163; Sims-Williams 2003, 105-106; Probert 2007, 234-237). The charter reference to Creechbarrow, (S237) 682 [1503], displays the shift in vowel sound. It reads ‘collem qui dicitur brittannica lingua Cructan apud nos Crycbeorh’ or ‘the hill which is called in the British tongue *Cructan*, amongst us *Crycbeorh*’ (Ekwall 1928, lxvi-lxvii; Edwards 1988, 15-17; Abrams 1996, 99-100; Padel 2013, 30-31).

As with OE *berg*, Cornish *cruc* glosses Latin *collis* (Graves 1962, §718). Welsh *crug* glosses Latin *cumulus* ‘heap; mound; barrow’ (DMLBS 2015, s.v. *cumulus* n.; Wade-Evans 2013 [1944], 118). Old Breton *cruc* glosses Latin *gibbus* ‘lump; hump’ (DMLBS 2015, s.v. *gibbus* n.; Fleuriot 1964, 124) and *aceruus* ‘heap; pile’ (DMLBS 2015, s.v. *aceruus* n.; Loth 1890, 122). The OE *Hexateuch* gave evidence of how OE *berg* also glossed *acervus* (1.3.2.). Within an insular context, meanings appear to have encompassed both natural features and artificial mounds, as was the case with OE *berg* (Padel 1985, 73-74). As with *berg*, it can be difficult to decide whether a natural hill was the referent, or an artificial mound (now lost) once sited upon the hill. The latter was the explanation for Penkridge (Staffordshire) according to Gelling (2000 [1984], 138).

Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 159) argued that *crug* had become part of the OE toponymicon. It was used, they said, to coin OE names, not just as an inherited, pre-existing Brittonic name. It referred to ‘a natural hill with an abrupt outline which

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<sup>53</sup> The proposed headform for the Celtic etymon in the forthcoming volumes of VEPN is *krouko-*.

makes a specially striking visual impact’. The definition offered for each of the *crug*-sites in Gelling and Cole (2023) was that of ‘abrupt hill’. Gelling (2000 [1984], 138) suggested that the word was used by Welsh speakers ‘for a small abrupt hill, or for a larger hill with a small, distinctively-shaped, summit’. In slight contrast, Gelling (1998, 81) wrote that ‘the word was applied to isolated hills which make a particularly striking visual impact’. In fact, the line-drawing profiles outlined for *crug*-names (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 160) do not differ markedly from those outlined for *berg*-names (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 146-147). Furthermore, Kitson (2008, 387) took issue with the profile of one of the archetypal *crug*-names, that of Crookbarrow (Worcestershire), discussed further in 3.1.

Gelling and Cole felt that the number of occurrences of *crug* in OE names meant that it must have been adopted as a word (and not just a name) into OE, and that ‘perhaps it filled a perceived gap in the OE range of hill terms’. On the other hand, Coates (2007a, 181; 2007b, 48-49) argued that *crug* was only taken into OE names as a simplex or qualifier, not usually as a generic, and that this was consonant with it not being a lexical item but a borrowing as a proper noun.<sup>54</sup> Coates, Breeze and Horovitz (2000, 350) suggested that ‘the representation of this element in English names needs further careful study’. Padel (2013, 25, 31) finessed Coates’ position by suggesting that borrowing might not be of Brittonic names *per se* but Brittonic words, using them however only as proper nouns, never as common nouns within the lexicon. This might have included a degree of comprehension of the original meaning of the word in the Brittonic languages. Hough (2012, 14) suggested that they could have been ‘borrowed as *meaningful* names, a category not recognised by modern scholarship’.

The element *crug* was included in this study because of a gap in the *berg*-name distribution along the Marches bordering Wales, to see if *crug* took the place of *berg* in names in that region. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two. The element *crug* also serves as a useful comparator to OE *dūn*. It will be helpful in Chapter Six to compare *dūn* to another element derived from a Celtic etymon. The comparison serves to show the extent to which each was adopted into the OE

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<sup>54</sup> A comparison could be made with the use of Brittonic *eglēs* in OE place-names (James 2019, 2:127; Hough 2009).

toponymicon or lexicon, going on to have a life of their own within OE beyond meaning and usage in the originating languages.

## **1.8. Conclusion**

In Chapter One, the three elements covered in this study were introduced. The chapter included a review of what has been said to date about the use of these elements in place-names, as well as in the lexicon. It outlined the ways in which the influence of different languages, including OScan, Goidelic and Brittonic, may be involved. There is clearly scope for clarifying and deepening understanding of the precise meanings of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*, with a focus both on topographic, physical interpretation and linguistic usage based on wider context. It is important to elucidate whether there is uniformity in meaning throughout the country and the extent to which each element is distinct from the other two. The next chapter will explain the corpus which is the basis of this study, looking at how it has been assembled, including discussion of various important methodological issues.



## Chapter Two: Building and analysing a national corpus

### 2.1. Sources for the corpus

The corpus has been gathered primarily from the published volumes of the EPNS Survey of English Place-Names, with some other works included (both published and unpublished) where available to the author, particularly to supplement counties in which the EPNS survey is not yet complete. Earlier works published prior to the commencement of the EPNS survey were also considered where relevant and reliable.

The working database included names occurring within Wales and Scotland available in published surveys. This was for comparison, not least because of the research questions posed in Chapter One. Modern borders are not representative of historical borders, nor are they necessarily binary cutoff points for language. A naming phenomenon seen on one side of the border may well continue on the other side. However, these additional names are not included in the descriptive statistics or distribution maps of the final version of this thesis. The survey in Wales and Scotland is by no means complete, and displaying only a handful of names might well be misleading.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the genesis of this thesis was to examine the work of Gelling and Cole pertaining specifically to England. The remit of their theory was ‘from Kent to Northumberland and from the east coast to Offa’s Dyke’ (Gelling and

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<sup>55</sup> In Cornwall, *crug*-names may be best understood as Brittonic and not part of any ‘English’ distribution (Dr Oliver Padel pers. comm.). In that case, both Cornwall and Wales inform understanding of Brittonic usage of the element but do not shed light on possible OE adoption of the word. There is currently no full published survey of Cornwall; there would need to be detailed assessment to try to separate out the extent of Brittonic and OE influence in Cornish place-names.

A list of unpublished *dūn*-names was made available to the author by Dr Oliver Padel. There was not an equivalent list available for *berg*- or *crug*-names (on the latter, see comments above). The *dūn*-names are useful in showing a continuation of naming practice crossing from Devon into Cornwall. However, relative numbers of *berg*- and *crug*-names in this county compared to *dūn*-names cannot be assessed until an equivalent survey is available for the other two elements.

Cole 2014 [2000], xv). Hence, the final corpus was limited to England, whilst recognising the artificiality of modern borders and with awareness of data beyond those borders.

The sources from which the corpus was assembled currently number 158, including the comparator Scottish and Welsh sources consulted. They are all included in the online database (explained in 2.4.) as the ‘References’ table. The primary sources on which these reference works draw, for evidence of historical forms and attestations, number 1,100. They are included in the online database as the ‘Sources’ table.

### 2.1.1. Robust comparison between elements

The advantage of assessing elements side by side is that, in any given area, they will all be subject to the same advantages and disadvantages flowing from the underlying survey. If a region has not been surveyed in detail, all elements suffer the same particular lack of detail. Conversely, if a region has been extensively surveyed, all elements benefit from that greater depth. Where there are shortcomings in underlying historical documentation, where the primary sources have not survived or were not created at an early date, all names in the area are subject to the same limitations. As a result, if patterns emerge in any relative comparison between *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*, they are real and substantive patterns. Where one element is exclusively present or strongly dominant compared to another, that is not merely an artefact of the survey, since the results for both are drawn from the same level of survey. It is the result of some genuine historical difference on the ground.

## 2.2. Criteria for inclusion in the corpus

### 2.2.1. Date of first attestation

Place-names are evidenced in written records. They may well have existed long before the first attestation, or they may have come into existence immediately prior to being written down. Generally, the first possibility is thought to be the most likely, since it usually takes time for a place-name to acquire sufficient stability, continuity and importance to be recorded in early documentation. Of course, documents do not always survive. Hence, the very first attestation of a name is likely to be lost to us. This is an unknowable unknown. First-attestation dates are used to

give some indication of the date of a place-name but only with this significant caveat in mind.

For the purposes of assembling the corpus, a name had to have at least one attestation earlier than 1500. This was to make sure that all names in the corpus were at least medieval. They could, of course, have been much earlier in origin. The dates used for attestations are the dates given by survey editors and compilers, who originally extracted the name attestation from primary records. The database contains a numerical field which has to contain a single date (in order to be searchable as a numerical field). It also contains a text field in which uncertainty in dating, derived from the survey editor's noting of uncertainty, is captured. Where a date range is given for the underlying source, the full details of the range is in the text field, whereas the earliest possible date for the range is in the numerical field. Given that a name may well have been in existence long before the first surviving written record of it, it seems legitimate to select the beginning of the possible range of dates for the single date that has to be entered into the numeric field. The 'uncertainty' field also contains details in square brackets where the manuscript, from which the attestation is derived, is thought to be a later copy of an earlier source.

Attempts were made to avoid transferred or derived names. Individuals could acquire locative personal names, and then take them with them when they moved, conferring them upon land, which they owned in new places, as manorial names. If the source for a place-name attestation is a personal name, this is noted in the uncertainty field. Place-names that only have personal name attestations are to be treated with caution. However, the interpretation of the original survey editor in such cases was given considerable weight, on the basis that they would have had access to the overall context of all the primary documents.

### 2.2.2. Type of name

- When is a place-name a certain 'type'?

Within the Survey of English Place-Names, names are often grouped together under a label signifying what 'type' they are. The 'type' labels used are typically 'major' or 'minor' names as well as 'field-names'. However, what these labels mean is not as straightforward as it might seem at first. One fundamental question that is often not posed clearly enough is whether it is the place-name that is a certain 'type' or the

place itself? Since places evolve in status, allocating a single ‘type’ to a place applicable across all time periods is problematic. It is critical to ask about timeframe. In many cases, a place-name might have started by referring to a single spot in the landscape, evolving subsequently into a name of greater significance and wider association. The trajectory can work in the reverse direction. Field-names appear today to reference fields, where once there might have been settlement. Using field and furlong names to find earlier settlement was a method deployed with some success in the Shapwick project (Gerrard and Aston 2007, 74-101, 963-981).

- Evidence used to assess ‘type’ of place

All too often there is conflation of evidence from varying time periods to confer upon a place a single ‘type’. The surveys underlying the corpus do not give much detail on the nature of a place contemporaneous to a particular name form.

Sometimes such context is not available in the underlying documents. At other times, the full context of the underlying source would have indicated the nature of the place contemporaneous to a particular attestation. However, survey editors have not generally published such information. This is regrettable where such information was available originally at the point of consulting the primary source. It would be a herculean task to go back, search for, and add this context into one hundred years’ worth of surveys across England from all the thousands of primary records consulted.<sup>56</sup>

There have been similar discussions concerning the use of Domesday Book; some have cautioned against assuming that every Domesday entry correlates to settlement, when it may refer to land, an estate or even a vestige of an earlier form of administration (Taylor 1983, 125-126; Roffe 1990-1). In essence, the Domesday survey was derived from a system of taxation; it was interested in units of taxation, rather than settlement *per se*. There are examples of scholars attentively considering what contextual analysis might say about the nature of a place; however, this tends to be limited to stand-alone studies or a relatively small corpus of documents, not the ongoing place-name survey (Cox 1976, 60-61; Campbell 1986).

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<sup>56</sup> The Survey of Scottish Place-Names tends to include more information on the historical context of documents from which name-forms are derived, and to do so even if name-forms do not vary from one attestation to another.

In terms of administrative status –parish, township etc. – it is usually possible to see if a place has ever enjoyed such status. However, it is difficult to say whether a name was first attached to a parish or township, and subsequently associated with the chief settlement within that unit, or vice versa (Wrathmell 2012, 102).

When dealing with names for minor features, onomasts have tended to rely on nineteenth-century mapping to identify whether a name is that of a barn, field, wood, river, hill, mill, road, river crossing etc. That, of course, is the imposition onto the name of the nineteenth-century association found on historical mapping.

Aside from evidence drawn from the documentary context, there might be archaeological evidence which could suggest a possible status for a place. However, such evidence is always fragmentary. It is difficult to jump from a small sample to the creation of a narrative covering the whole history of a place. Nor is it always easy to date finds with sufficient precision. It is not possible to be sure that something discovered archaeologically necessarily relates to the place-name in question. Wharram Percy (Yorkshire) has been the subject of archaeological investigation since the 1950s, yet more than fifty years on, there remains considerable debate over the extent to which the Middle Saxon archaeological record can be linked to what is recorded in Domesday Book (Wrathmell 2012, 163-180). How much more so with the countless other sites which have not been the subject of any real archaeological investigation, let alone the concentrated endeavour at Wharram Percy.

The work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, documenting and mapping as many small finds as possible, particularly metal finds covered by the Treasure Act 1996, is helpful in adding to the archaeological record. However, it suffers from various forms of bias, such as the constraints of landowner access permission, the location of transport networks, the varying relationships between metal detectorists and archaeologists, including local HER officers, the nature of farming or the land use regime in a given area, the standards of locational accuracy in reporting and the fact that systematically investigated areas are not recorded if they are ‘blanks’, that is true negatives in the distribution pattern (Daubney 2016, 269-271, 277). These are all forms of investigation bias, additional to survival bias which affects whether artefacts are deposited in the first place, and subsequently survive after deposition in the ground. It is difficult to interpret confidently from PAS data something located,

coherent and organised like a settlement. Artefacts are disturbed in the plough zone for some time prior to discovery. Daubney (2016, 37-46, 275-276) would rather shift the terminology to that of 'persistent places'. Such places are evidenced by a density of artefacts found in mutual proximity spanning multiple periods. The terminology of 'persistent places' avoids the need to determine a particular type of place or settlement for a cluster of artefacts.

- How has 'type' been delineated in EPNS surveys?

EPNS surveys have not made much overt use of archaeological data when categorising names by 'type'. However, the labels 'major' and 'minor' might suggest to a reader that such data was being used. In his instructions on preparing a county survey, Smith (1954, 23-24) defined major names as including those for which a 'fair body of early material exists' and for which 'early material exists demanding lengthy discussion'. Minor names were defined as including those 'for which only later material (post 1500) has been found, which is inadequate for etymological purposes or is capable of summary treatment'. Furthermore, surveys often place all unlocated minor names in the category headed field-names, even if they are attested prior to 1500 and are not actually field-names (Smith 1954, 24; Rumble 2011, 35). Smith's delineation between 'major' and 'minor' clearly includes questions of etymological interest. Matters which interest a modern onomast are allowed to influence whether a name is deemed to be 'major' or 'minor'. This might not be apparent to every user of EPNS surveys. Certainly, the labels 'major' and 'minor' suggest *prima facie* that the line is drawn based on the nature of the place, rather than the nature of the onomastic scholarly discussion.

Moreover, there is inconsistency across surveys in drawing the line between 'major' and 'minor'. Rye (2016, 184-185) classed all township and ecclesiastical parish names as major. (Note that this is based on the status of the place rather than onomastic discussion of the name.) All other names 'with a few exceptions' were classed as minor by Rye. The few exceptions included names that had a large number of early forms, on the basis that they must have been significant if recorded so many times early on. However, survey editors did not publish all the attestations that exist (Smith 1954, 24). They often only published forms which differ in a linguistically significant manner. There may be names which do not qualify as major names following Rye (2016) purely because all of their pre-1500 attestations were

the same or similar. Association with a name that exhibits a significant amount of variation in its historical attestations should not necessarily be a measure of being a significant place. Additionally, Rye (2016, 244) classified major names differently in her Westmorland case study compared to her Wirral case study. In the former (but not the latter), the definition was expanded to include any names that had five or more pre-1500 forms. In the Leicestershire survey used by Rye (2022), major names were all those ‘names of primary historical or etymological interest’ (Cox 1998-2019, 3: xvii). Everything else was treated as a minor name (Rye 2022, 29). Once again, etymological interest was used to demarcate the significance of a place. What is of etymological interest is obviously left to the individual survey editor’s judgement.

Gelling and Cole are often said to have been investigating settlement names only. Gelling based the core of her corpus on the earlier work of Ekwall (1960) but acknowledged that ‘the corpus of material assembled... in this great work was not selected on rigorously logical criteria. Some very “minor” names are included, and some “major” ones are left out’ (Gelling 2000 [1984], 4). In addition, many more names have been collected and analysed since the work of Ekwall. There are considerable numbers of parish, township or major settlement names that were not included in the Gelling and Cole synthesis.<sup>57</sup> They were transparent about the fact that ‘the term “major”... is a term which has been loosely interpreted especially by the present writer, and both “major” and “minor” are employed without close definition or total consistency in the present book’ (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], xxiii). Their study drew on material from field-names and landscape features ‘in discussions of some generics’. They based their conclusions about OScan *berg* on ‘some minor names in northern counties’ (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 149).

- Is ‘type’ a useful category?

If names came into existence out of descriptive phrases in ordinary speech, the eventual status of a place which might ultimately be associated with a name should be irrelevant to the formulation of the phrase. Splitting names up into ‘major’ or ‘minor’ ‘types’ would seem to be unhelpful when trying to understand etymologies.

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<sup>57</sup> The number lies between c. 115 and 410 names, depending on where the cutoff for ‘major’ settlement is positioned.

Subsequent status of a place is extraneous to what the place-name elements meant in the name's original coining. Reaney (1935, xxix) observed that, 'There is no essential difference in origin between field- and place-names'. Rumble (2011, 34) felt that the focus on so-called major and minor names had erected a potentially misleading hierarchical structure, based on socio-economic status, not linguistic considerations.

Drummond (2007b, 85) noted that the Gelling and Cole theory concerning universal meanings for *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* meant that such meanings should apply to all names. They placed no limit on universality depending on status: 'they entered no such codicil themselves'. It would not be possible to have a distinctive, diagnostic and uniformly consistent, topographic profile for each of these oronymic elements which only applied for settlement names but not for other kinds of names. When moving through the landscape and attempting to recognise *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* features by their profiles, the observer would not differentiate such features on grounds of whether they had come to be associated at a particular point in time with a parish, settlement or field.

Of course, since minor names are often recorded later than major names, it may be that the meaning of *berg*, *crug* or *dūn* had shifted by the time of later recording. This would have the effect of giving the impression that *berg*, *crug* or *dūn* meant something different in major as opposed to minor names. In reality, it would not so much be a case of the element meaning something different as a result of the status of the name; rather, the element would have shifted in meaning in time and minor names were not recorded early enough (on average) to reflect the earlier meaning.

The upshot of this discussion is that the corpus for this study includes all names, so long as they were attested prior to 1500. It does not limit itself to 'major' names (however that label might be defined). In this way, all the available evidence of how *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* have been used in English place-names is captured and analysed. It is not wise to exclude some of the evidence based on criteria which have been applied inconsistently across surveys and which appear at times to be confused in rationale or to have conflated matters that are not necessarily relevant to the meaning of these place-name elements.



- How does 'type' retain utility as a classification?

This study does not entirely jettison the 'type' of a place-name as a useful, if challenging to apply, categorisation. There is no doubt that the status of a place affected whether its name was recorded. For instance, to be recorded in the Domesday survey a place had to be of sufficient status to be of taxable value and interest. Field-names would not be recorded in such a survey. As a general rule, it is more likely that names associated with some degree of administrative status were recorded in earlier documents. Field-names and other names of minor features tended to be first recorded in later documents.<sup>58</sup> This correlation between status of place and date of first attestation is borne out in the corpus for this thesis (2.5.4 below).

Moreover, the 'type' of place bearing a name provides information about who might be doing the naming. As a working assumption, names for major places could potentially have been conferred in a top-down centralised way. They are of significance and use to many. Names for minor features, on the other hand, are likely to have been named by those living on the land locally. Being of no significance to those further afield, they would not typically be named by them. Indeed, they might only be known by those living locally. Minor features and places carry import to local inhabitants where they would be overlooked by administrators. Therefore, if particular linguistic patterns are seen in minor but not major names, interpretative conclusions can be drawn about the kind of language being spoken locally. As Townend (2002, 47) observed

The real proof of the intensity of Norse influence on English place-nomenclature is to be found not so much in the major settlement names as in the minor names and field-names, as such a profound effect on microtoponymy is again wholly absent from the Norman influence on English nomenclature.

In other words, microtoponymy exhibiting an OScan influence suggests that those living locally on the land used language with such a linguistic flavour. It is not

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<sup>58</sup> There are exceptions: charter boundary markers may have been nothing more than landscape features but their names were recorded early. River names are early names used by many and persisting on account of that.

simply that there were OScan-speaking ruling elites in the land. This is a topic returned to in Chapter Five. It serves to illustrate why it is important to retain some awareness, however imperfect, of the types of places whose names are being analysed.

### 2.2.3. Located or lost

This study initially only collected and examined located place-names. An important element of the study is the assessment of the physical characteristics, profile and topography of sites; place-names had to be located on the ground to make this analysis possible. However, the study was subsequently widened to include unlocated names. Such names are relevant for linguistic analysis of compound collocations. Their non-inclusion would have made distribution maps showing the occurrence of collocations partial and misleading.

Unlocated names are not necessarily lost. They are names for which no precise location was identified by the survey editors. If a detailed review of local historical documents were to be undertaken for a particular name, it might be possible to find evidence suggesting where the name originally lay. Such names are, in any event, locatable to the nearest settlement, township or parish, in whose records the attestations of the name occur. They are, therefore, not entirely lost, just not as precisely locatable as place-names which persist today. Thus, these unlocated names can in fact be plotted with the other names in a georeferenced database. At parish- or township-scale, the distribution maps of all the names viewed together are informative and robust.

## 2.3. Structure of the database

### 2.3.1. Place-Names table

The database is a relational one. It has a simple structure. There is one table in which place-name attribute data is included in a series of fields. Discussion of possible etymological meaning was used to inform the analysis of names within this thesis. Published volumes were previously translated into digital records by scanning, making them searchable with OCR software (DEEP 1923–2024). However, the OCR accuracy was low, hence the conversion of the prose discussion from published volume to digital record contained quite a few typographical errors. Were this to be published, it would need a considerable amount of cleaning. Therefore, it

is not included in the online version of the database. The discussion is already available online in many cases (DEEP 1923–2024) or within the published survey volumes. The latter are referenced specifically where cited throughout the thesis.

It is common for editors to suggest more than one possibility for the elements comprising a place-name. These multiple possibilities are listed in fields numbered Element 1-6. They are typically in the order that they appear in prose discussion, which is not necessarily the order of greatest likelihood. When searching for place-names containing certain elements, it is necessary to carry out a search across all six fields.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.3.2. Attestations table

The place-names table is linked to an attestations table in a one-many relationship via the UID Place-Names ID. All the elements within this study could be confused with other elements, particularly if the only evidence available by which to judge is a single or late attestation. The elements typically act as the generic in the place-name (2.5.3. below). This means that they occur second in the place-name after the qualifying element, following English word order. They do not bear the primary stress in a compound place-name, following English patterns of stress which place the primary stress on the initial syllable. Without stress, vowels were reduced to a non-distinct schwa /ə/ and consonants were de-voiced or lost. OE *berg* is regularly liable to be confused with OE *bearu* ‘grove’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 65-67),<sup>60</sup> *berc* ‘birch’ or *burh* ‘stronghold’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:80). For OE *dūn*, common confusions include OE *denu* ‘valley’ and *tūn*

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<sup>59</sup> It is possible to use a many-many junction table which pairs the UID for each place-name, that is the Place-Name ID, with an element which is thought to occur in the place-name. This permits a search across one field only. However, it is then not possible to search for combinations of elements occurring within one place-name. Given that compound collocations (combinations of elements) are such a key part of this study’s research, and place-name research in general, this limitation was not acceptable. It was, therefore, better to use a slightly less elegant but more effective database structure for the purposes of this study.

<sup>60</sup> The dative *berge* could be spelt *berwe*, as the medial fricative was labialised and vocalised (Jordan and Crook 1974, §186).

‘enclosure, village’. For *crug*, via metathesis there could be confusion with OE *cirice* ‘church’ (Mawer, Stenton and Houghton 1927, 106-9; Ekwall 1931, 33-54).<sup>61</sup>

Not all attestations present in the published surveys have been collated for the corpus database, only those which show variations in the spelling of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*, and which were attested prior to 1500. However, in Chapters Four to Six, where there is a specific query about a particular collocation, the published survey was reconsulted to check runs of attestations from the point of view of the spelling of the element accompanying the *berg*, *crug* or *dūn*.

### 2.3.3. Elements table

There are three index tables which support the two relational tables: Place-Names and Attestations. One functions as a glossary of place-name elements. This glossary is an ongoing work of cleaning-up and standardisation. Throughout name-surveys, different editors over long time periods have made different choices about the headforms they use. Initially, this study had a separate entry for every permutation. However, latterly the approach that has been taken is to group together permutations under one headform, following the approach of the *Vocabulary of English Place-Names* (in progress) (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004). Alternative forms caused, for instance, by vowel variation, regional and dialect differences are generally grouped together. Adjectival forms (actual or constructed) derived from a nominal form are also usually grouped with that headform. If the glossary entries are too sub-divided, collocations of similar meaning are hard to spot. Thematic trends become harder to discern which is of relevance to the second half of this thesis.

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<sup>61</sup> It is not possible to rule this out on grounds of grammar alone; there are examples of the feminine noun *cirice* used with the masculine/neuter strong genitival ending -*es*- in later attestations. Therefore, the presence of <es> or <s> is not a reliable diagnostic tool to indicate *crug* rather than *cirice* (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 162). Runs of historical spellings are critical, alongside contextual analysis of the location of the site bearing the name (Gelling 2000 [1984], 139).

Elements obviously changed orthographically and semantically as OE gave way to ME.<sup>62</sup> Traditionally, EPNS surveys linked names to an OE or OScan derivation whatever the date of first attestation, rather than differentiating between OE/OScan and ME.<sup>63</sup> The coining of a name might substantially pre-date its first written attestation, in which case it would be a mistake to assume it was a ME name. Elements which are thought only to have come into existence in the ME period would be marked as ME. Accordingly, following the pattern of earlier editors and the EPNS survey in general, names are linked to OE and OScan elements.

There are numerous cognate or linguistically proximate OE and OScan words. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, these pairings can be formally indistinguishable. They have been listed together in joint entries in the glossary, to make querying names by place-name element as effective as possible. This also serves to alert users to the possibility of an OScan element even where such a possibility was not overtly noted in the original survey.

#### 2.3.4. Sources table

A second index table is provided in the database containing the primary sources from which historical forms have been taken by editors and compilers. Since the survey has been carried out county by county, there is variation in how different editors have cited similar sources. Some primary records have been published at a county level by local record societies. Within DEEP (1923–2024) sources were structured by county, not as a national table. The standardisation of sources is an ongoing work in terms of EPNS output.

#### 2.3.5. References table

Finally, there is an index table which gives the full references for the corpus, in terms of the secondary literature and surveys from which the corpus was assembled and from which etymological analysis was gathered.

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<sup>62</sup> Old Norse could equally be said to shift into Middle Norse in certain parts of England (Parsons forthcoming).

<sup>63</sup> Later surveys, for instance Briggs (forthcoming), Dodgson and Rumble (1970–1997) and Cox (1998–2019), frequently separate OE and ME names.

## 2.4. Database platforms

### 2.4.1. Georeferencing the data

Each place-name contained within the corpus has been given a British national grid reference, either based on the location of the name on OS nineteenth-century mapping (NLS) or located to the historical core of the settlement, township or parish in whose records the name is attested. A point feature is generated for each place-name in ArcGIS.<sup>64</sup> Obviously a settlement has a greater spatial extent than a single point. However, it is extremely hard to delimit the spatial extent of place-name's

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<sup>64</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the version of ArcGIS Pro used for this study is the latest available; at the time of writing this is 3.4.0. The key tools used in ArcGIS are documented in footnotes in order that the methodology can be replicated by anyone wishing to do so. The workflow involves loading .csv files of the tables of data into ArcGIS Pro using the 'Excel to Table' tool. These tables are then converted into georeferenced point features using the 'XY Table to Point' tool. The coordinate system selected is GB NGR. The relationships between tables are recreated using the 'Create Relationship Tool'. Documentation is available online at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/conversion/excel-to-table.htm> <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/data-management/xy-table-to-point.htm> <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/data-management/create-relationship-class.htm> [all accessed December 2024]. Where there are numerous unlocated names in a parish or settlement, they may all end up being located to the same historical core point. The points will be layered one upon another. This means that it is not obvious visually to a user how many are present. To improve this, the georeferencing tool 'Disperse Markers' was utilised, only for these particular place-names: documentation is available online at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/cartography/disperse-markers.htm> [accessed December 2024]. The 'expanded' dispersal pattern was chosen, which retains the existing pattern of distribution, expanding points slightly around their centre of mass where they coincide. Since all these points are located only to nearest settlement, township or parish, moving them by a few metres to enable them all to be visible has no impact on the distribution patterns at the scale at which analysis is carried out.

association. This is so with extant names and all the more so when trying to suggest what the spatial extent of a place-name's association might have been historically. Moreover, as discussed in 2.2.2., as the status of a place fluctuates diachronically, so will the spatial extent of the place-name association. GIS software is a powerful tool, enabling the mapping of spatial data in a hitherto unprecedented manner. However, its power can also be its weakness. It is very easy to draw detailed polygons using GIS, purporting to indicate the spatial extent of a place. This creates a false impression of certainty if the underlying basis on which the boundary lines have been drawn is not well-evidenced. The hard, binary nature of the lines delimiting the polygon belie the uncertainty surrounding the historical extent of settlement and place-name association. HERs which use polygons to mark historical settlement (and not all HERs do) often actually delimit the extent of archaeological investigation, not necessarily the extent of historical settlement. Fisher and Wood (1998, 248-249) used the specific example of Billesdon, which happens to be a *dūn*-name within this study's corpus, to highlight the difficulty of being able to agree on the spatial extent of a settlement. They posed the following questions

When are you definitely within the village? Do you think that visiting the village would help your understanding? Is it possible that the opinions of the people in the village would help you decide? Do you think they would all agree?

This topic is returned to in greater detail in 3.5. In the meantime, it is less misleading to georeference historical place-names with points rather than polygons. It allows for greater uncertainty and fluctuation in the spatial boundaries of place-name association over time, whilst still giving good indication of the place-name location for the purposes of distribution patterns.

#### 2.4.2. Creating a mobile research tool

The georeferenced database is available online, via a website built specifically for this thesis. The URL for the website is contained in this hyperlink [Dūn Crug and Berg Database © Abigail Lloyd 2020-2024 \(arccgis.com\)](#). The corpus is combined with other datasets, such as: OS nineteenth-century mapping provided by the NLS at various scales, including the six- and one-inch scales used by EPNS survey

editors;<sup>65</sup> Environment Agency lidar data from their 2022 composite digital terrain model at one metre resolution, using a multidirectional hillshade visualisation;<sup>66</sup> and British Geological Survey data at 1:50,000 and 1:625,000 scale.<sup>67</sup>

This interface is interactive enabling a user to zoom in and out, viewing at various scales. Users can query the corpus, seeing instantaneous distribution maps based on the filters applied. The mapped interface shows distributions not curtailed by county boundaries. This research tool can be accessed wherever there is internet connection, on a desk-based computer or on a smart phone. It has the capability to zoom to the user's location and show what is in their vicinity, forming an essential part of fieldwork. The corpus and other datasets are accessed whilst on site; research questions are probed and verified on the ground.

Some of the images presented in this thesis are static outputs from the georeferenced database. Whilst informative, they do not show the interactive capabilities of the full database hosted on the website. It is hoped that a version of this website may be available at the conclusion of this study for public use. A significant part of the work supporting this thesis has included developing and refining this digital tool and public output, to make the research more widely useable.

## **2.5. Outline statistics for the national database**

Within English counties, there are 1,244 *berg*-names in the corpus, 48 *crug*-names and 1,740 *dūn*-names. These headline figures give us some idea of the relative frequencies of the elements in names attested prior to 1500 throughout England. However, the headline figures mask variations in time and place. Kitson

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<sup>65</sup> Documentation is available online at <https://maps.nls.uk/projects/api/#api> [accessed December 2024].

<sup>66</sup> Documentation is available online at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/13787b9a-26a4-4775-8523-806d13af58fc> [accessed December 2024].

<sup>67</sup> Documentation is available online at <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/technologies/web-map-services-wms/web-map-services-geology-50k/> <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/technologies/web-map-services-wms/web-map-services-geology-625k/> [accessed December 2024].



(forthcoming), examining a corpus of English charter material, reported 269 mentions of *dūn* (corresponding to 209 features on the ground allowing for duplication in different charter boundaries), compared to 446 mentions of *berg* (corresponding to 369 features on the ground). The difference in ratio of *berg* to *dūn* between Kitson's work (1: 0.6) and the work of this corpus (1: 1.4) can be explained by the fact that Kitson's material was limited to charter references. Solely within charters in this corpus, *berg* also outnumbers *dūn* in frequency.

The low numbers for *crug* should be noted. These numbers contrast with the observation of Gelling (2000 [1984], 138) that 'The word is relatively common, especially in minor names, and this suggests that it may have been borrowed into OE as an appellative to be used in place-name formation'. The implications of this are discussed further in Chapter Six.

### 2.5.1. Geographic distribution

Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 149) stated that (for *berg*)

It is probable that no special significance attaches to the distribution, the word being likely to occur anywhere if the topography rendered the appropriate type of hill a useful marker in a settlement-name.

However, the corpus distribution for each of the elements, including *berg*, appears to be affected by factors that are not linked to topography. There are notable absences within certain regions for each of the elements which are unlikely to be dictated by topography alone.

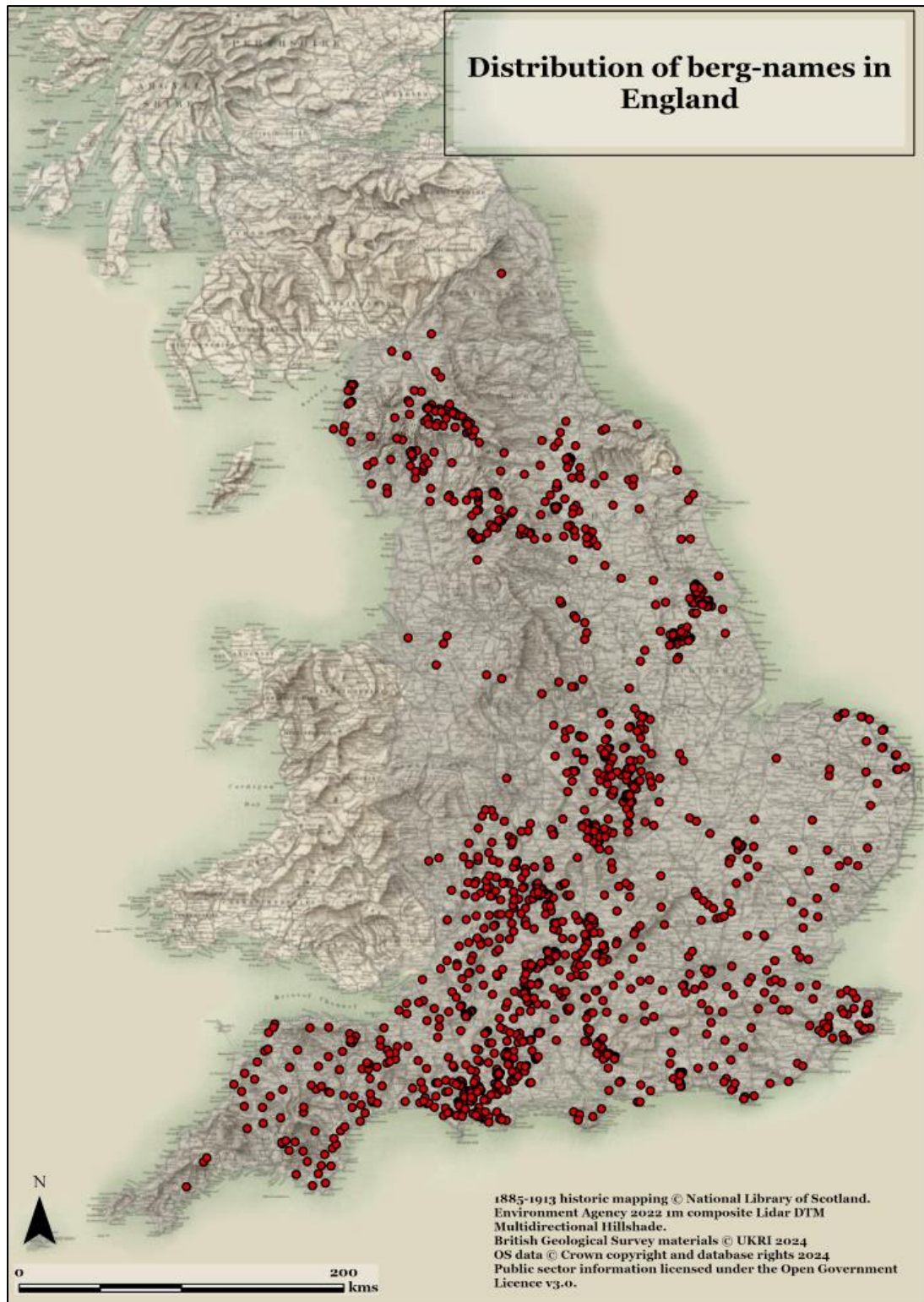
#### - *Berg*

The clear gaps for the distribution of *berg*-names lie in the counties along the Anglo-Welsh border, those of Shropshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire. The latter two have not been fully surveyed, however the first two have been the subject of a detailed and recent EPNS survey, which is finished for Cheshire and almost complete for Shropshire.

There is a near binary split between *berg*-names in the north-west and *dūn*-names in the north-east. The absence of *berg*-names in the north-east might have been attributed to the poor state of the survey in that area, were it not for the fact that, under the same conditions, *dūn*-names are present. Equally, under identical survey conditions, *dūn*-names do not emerge in the north-west where *berg*-names do. The

conclusion seems to be that this is a real, substantive divide and not an artefact of the survey.

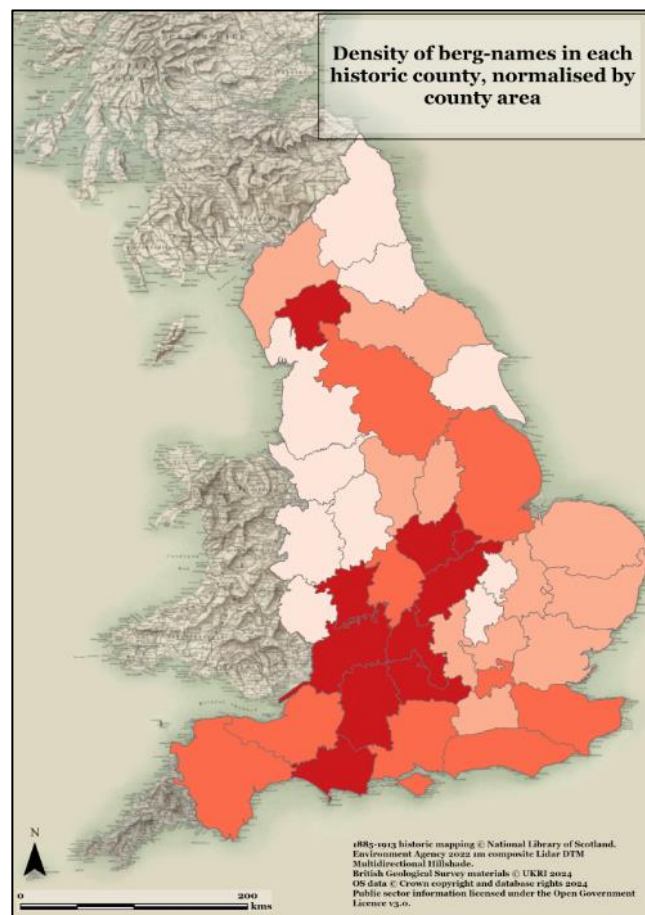
Drummond (2007b, 93-97) identified a west-east split between OScan *fjall* ‘mountain’, becoming *fell*, in Dumfries and Galloway, Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire, and OE *hlāw* ‘mound; hill’ from Berwickshire to Aberdeenshire. The west-east split in the north of England between *berg* and *dūn* bears some resemblance to this (see Figure 4). No topographical, geological or geomorphological rationale could be identified for this split. Drummond concluded that this was a linguistic, dialectal patterning (see, too, Drummond 2007a, 43-4).



4. England (1:4,500k scale) showing *berg*-names.

Figure 5 represents the density of bergs in each historical county; the counts per county of *berg*-names are normalised by the area of the county, so that large counties do not loom large just by dint of their area. The county boundaries are those

of the OS dataset representing the position c. 1888.<sup>68</sup> The results are symbolised in quartiles. Dark red represents the highest density quartile, red-orange the second highest, red-pink the second lowest and light pink the lowest density quartile. The map helps to clarify and illuminate the densities of *berg*-names in the south and south midlands, as well as those running in a swathe across the north from the north-west to the Humber. The differences between these groups are explored further in Chapter Five. The map also highlights how low the density of *berg*-names is along the Welsh border and in the north-east.



5. Densities of *berg*-names organised by historical county and by quartile (1:4,500k scale).

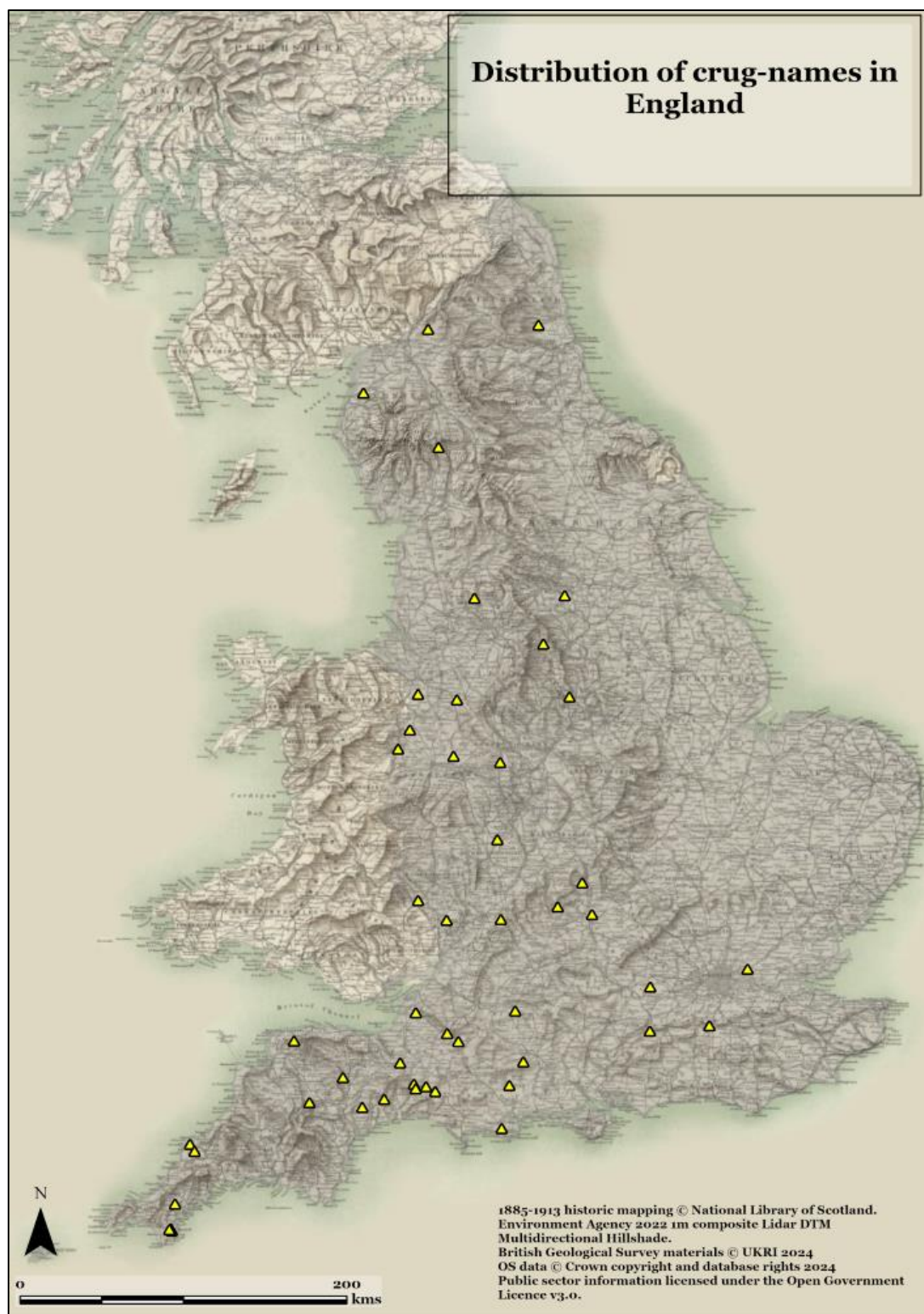
<sup>68</sup> Documentation is available at

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/documents/product-support/support/historic-county-boundaries-c1890.pdf> [accessed December 2024]. The ArcGIS Pro

‘Summarize Within’ tool was used to generate the county counts: documentation is available at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/analysis/summarize-within.htm> [accessed December 2024].

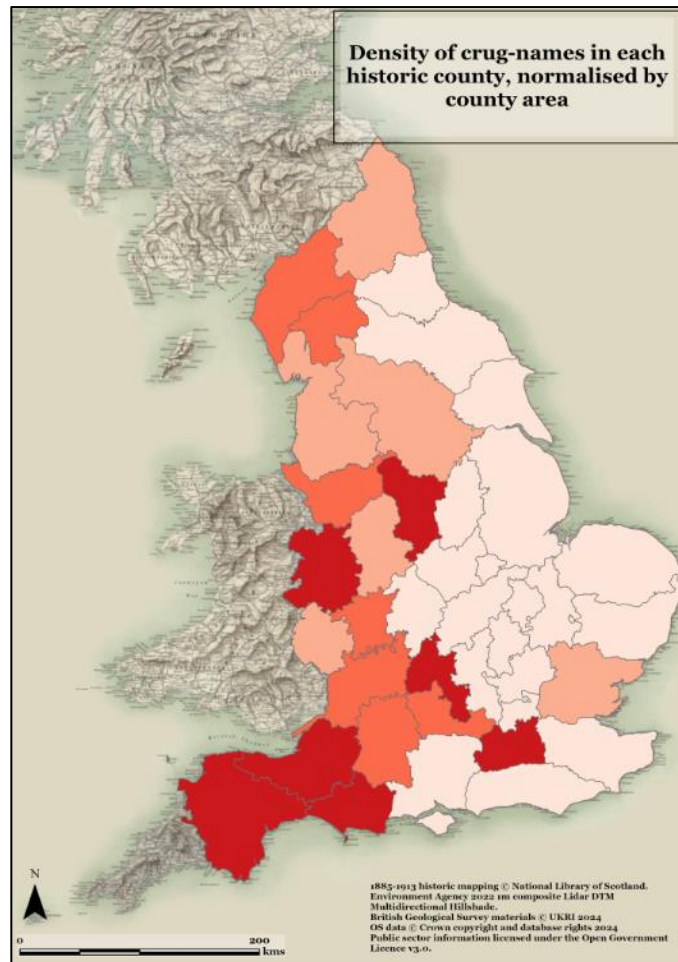
- *Crug*

The distribution of *crug*-names is, perhaps unsurprisingly, western in its bias. Very few names exist further east than a north-south line drawn on the axis of the Pennines down through the country. Clusters, such as they are, exist in the south-west if at all. If *crug* was used in OE place-naming, it did not extend very far east. Its location remained in areas close to enduring Brittonic influence.



6. England (1:4,500k scale) showing *crug*-names.





7. Densities of *crug*-names organised by historical county and by quartile (1:4,500k scale).

Although the same colour ramp has been used in Figures 5 and 7, the symbolisation is internal to each map. Quartiles are calculated relative to the other names on the map. So, the darkest red colour is marking the highest density counties for *crug*-names relative to all *crug*-names on that same map, but these are not at all as dense as the highest density counties for *berg*-names. This is clear from Figures 4 and 6.

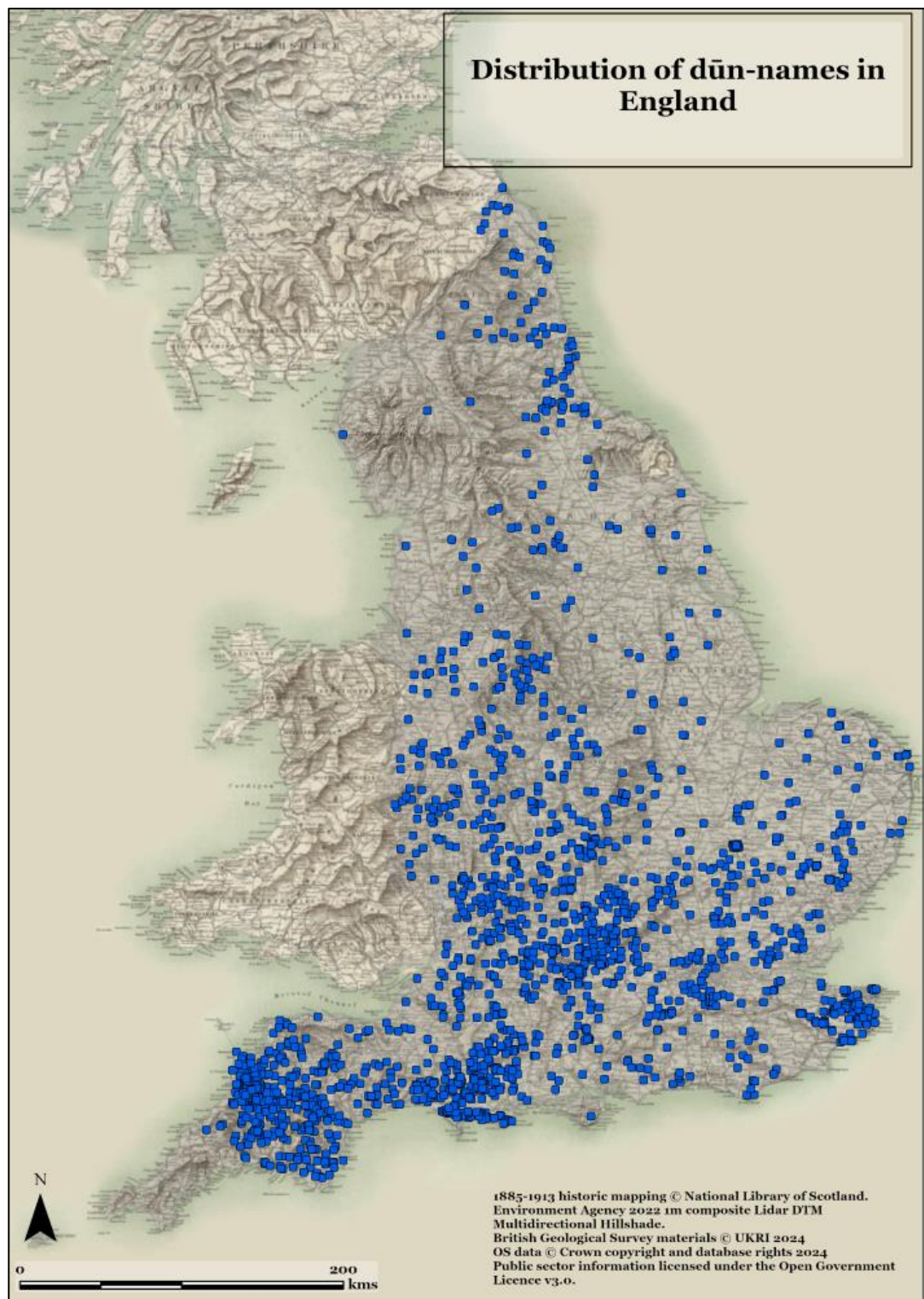
Although there are *crug*-names present along the Anglo-Welsh border, they are not present in sufficient numbers such that they could be said to have taken the place of *berg* in the OE lexicon in these areas. This initial impression, derived from numbers and distribution, is supplemented by analysis of their respective collocations in Chapters Four and Six.

#### - *Dūn*

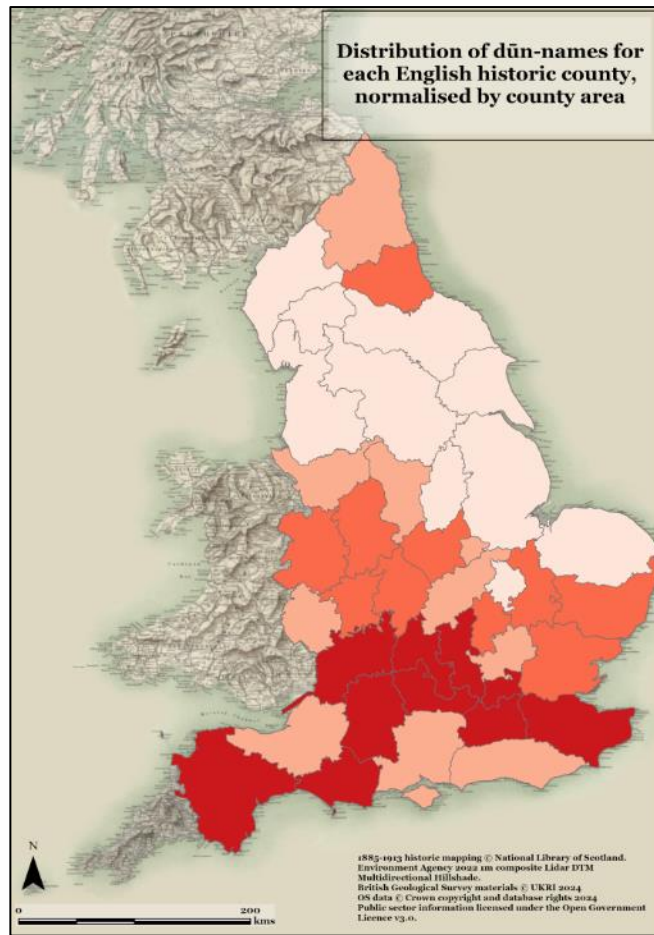
The overall geographic distribution of *dūn*-names appears skewed to the south-west by very high densities in Devon and Dorset. However, many of the first-attestation dates for these counties are later than elsewhere in the corpus. The proliferation of

later attested *dūn*-names appears to relate to a later use of the element, with associated meanings which may differ from earlier uses of *dūn*. Therefore, the overall picture from this geographic distribution needs further interrogation. All the early *dūn*-names listed by Cox (1976) (1.4.7. above) are located further north, Leicestershire being the furthest south for any of those names. Although Cox's sample size was extremely small, it serves to illustrate how an earlier strand of *dūn*-names might not reflect the south-western bias of the aggregated corpus of *dūn*-names as a whole. In the north, *dūn* is confined to the north-east and is not really found in the north-west.





8. England (1:4,500k scale) showing *dūn*-names.



9. Densities of *dūn*-names organised by historical county and by quartile (1:4,500k scale).

The putatively oronymic elements are not necessarily at their most densely clustered in hilly areas. Even in a county famous for its upland features, such as Cumberland, Westmorland or the WRY, the names from this corpus tend to occur on lower ground. This may not be surprising given that these names are all linked to settlement or use of the land. Names are likely to cluster where people live and occupy the land, rather than in remote and uninhabited terrain. Nevertheless, this observation is important given the assumption that might otherwise be made that putatively oronymic elements are likely to be found where there are sizeable hills.

## 2.5.2. Date distribution

The dates of first attestation span a broad range. Aggregated descriptive statistics mask this. In order to assess the average where a sample is not normally distributed, it is more accurate to look at median rather than mean values. Even then the median value can mask the spread of values that lie behind that. The corpus median values

for first-attestation dates are 1200 for *berg*, 1170 for *crug* and 1238 for *dūn*.<sup>69</sup> The box and whisker plots in the following figures illustrate not only the median value for each element, ordered by county, but also the upper and lower quartile values either side of that, and the extent of the spread beyond the majority of values, indicated by the extent of the whiskers stretching from the boxes, showing outliers.

For *berg*, the counties which have median first-attestation dates before 1000 are counties that have early charter references but do not appear to see *berg* continuing on in naming later into the medieval period. They include Berkshire and Wiltshire.

The plots for *crug*-names demonstrate how few names are in the dataset. Box and whisker plots are not really suitable when there are only one or two names in a county (if any). Figure 11 is provided to illustrate the comparison between the paucity of *crug*-names and the numbers of *berg*- and *dūn*-names.

Nearly every county has a large spread of first-attestation dates for *dūn*-names. Out of all the elements, *dūn* (and its ME successors) is the one appearing to have the longest use. This longer run of dates for *dūn*-names in most counties tends to push the median first-attestation date for the counties later (as well as the overall corpus median for *dūn*, referred to above).

Given the correlation between ‘type’ of name or place and date of first attestation (2.2.2.), counties in which there has been extensive collection of minor-name material may find that they have more later-attested material than those without such a survey. It is important, therefore, to be cautious before concluding that there are no late first attestations in a county that has not been subject to such a survey. It may be that the material exists but has not been collected to the same extent. On the other hand, the inter-element comparisons remain robust. For instance, in Leicestershire, first-attestation dates of *dūn*-names skew relatively early, despite extensive collection of minor-name material in this county’s survey. The *berg*-names unearthed under the same survey conditions skew late. They are the subject of

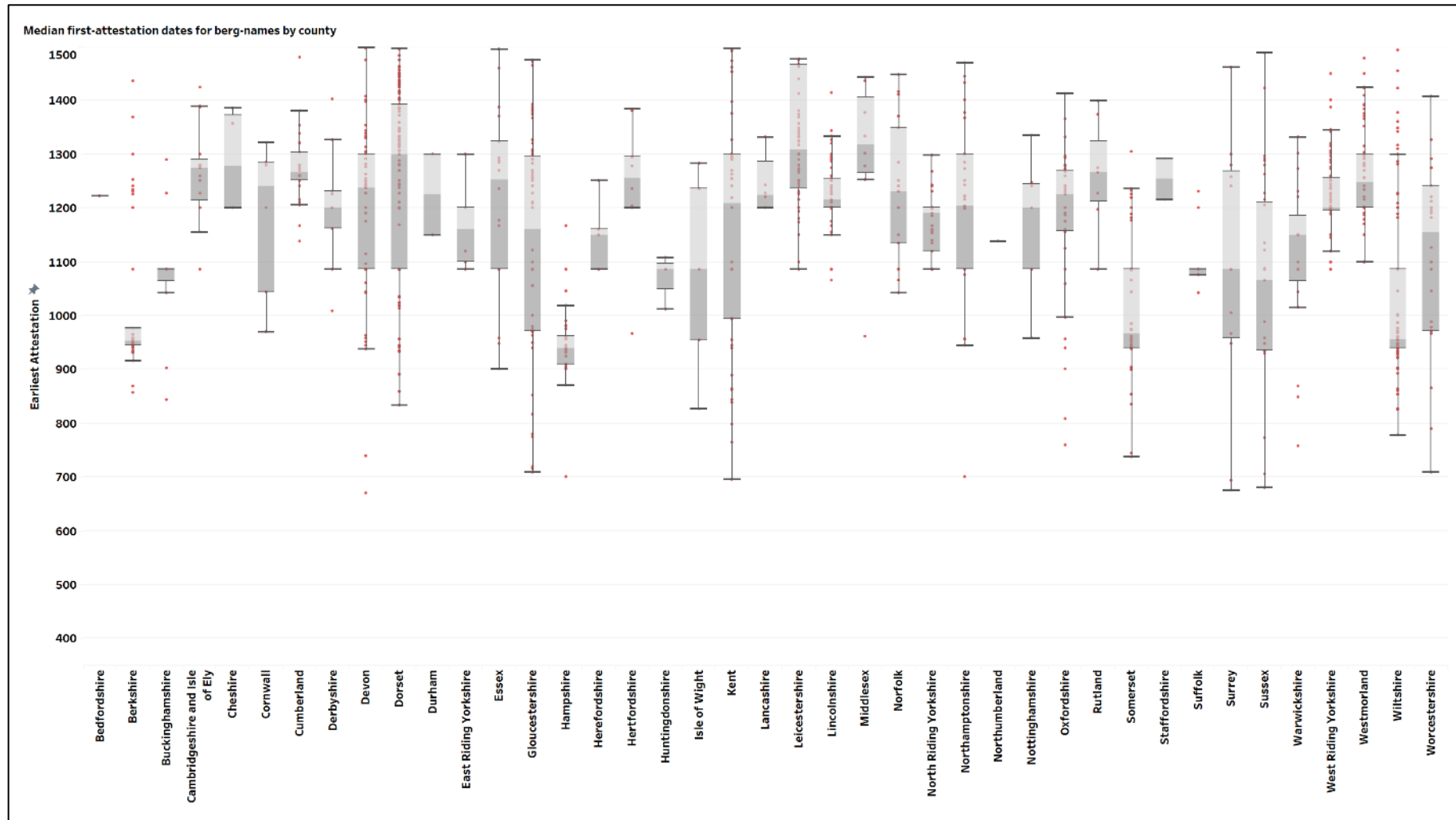
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<sup>69</sup> Since these dates are based on taking the earliest possible first-attestation date where there is a range of dates (for example, a regnal period), the averages will be at the early end of a possible range. Of course, first-attestation dates are only a proxy for the date of the name itself, the name having come into existence some time prior to its first surviving attestation.

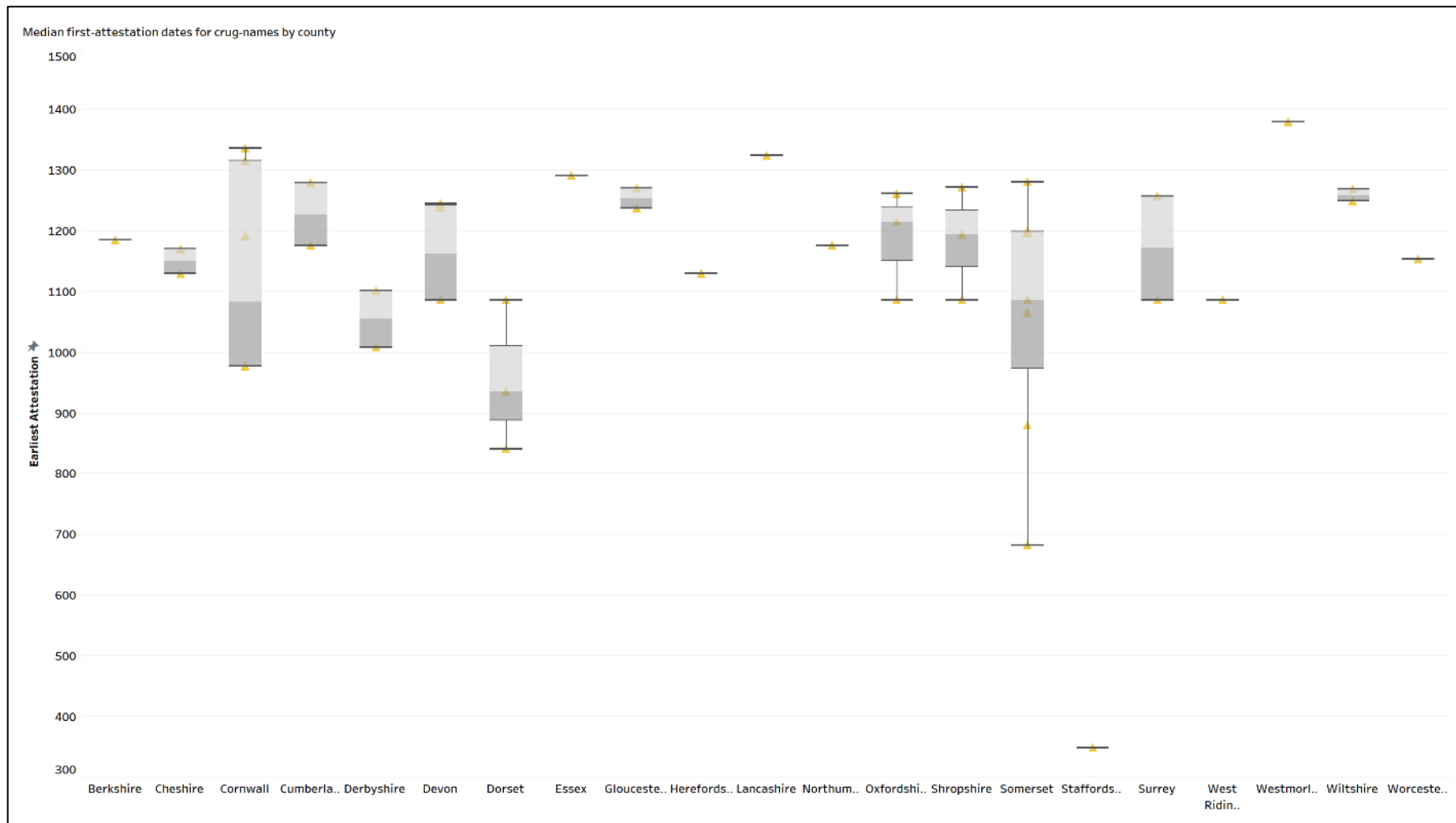
discussion in Chapter Five. Figures 10, 11 and 12 are an important reference for the following chapters.<sup>70</sup> Figures 13 and 14 compare the same data for *berg* and *dūn*, side by side, ordered by county. They help to illustrate differences within an individual county between these two elements, and they are also a useful reference point for the rest of the thesis.

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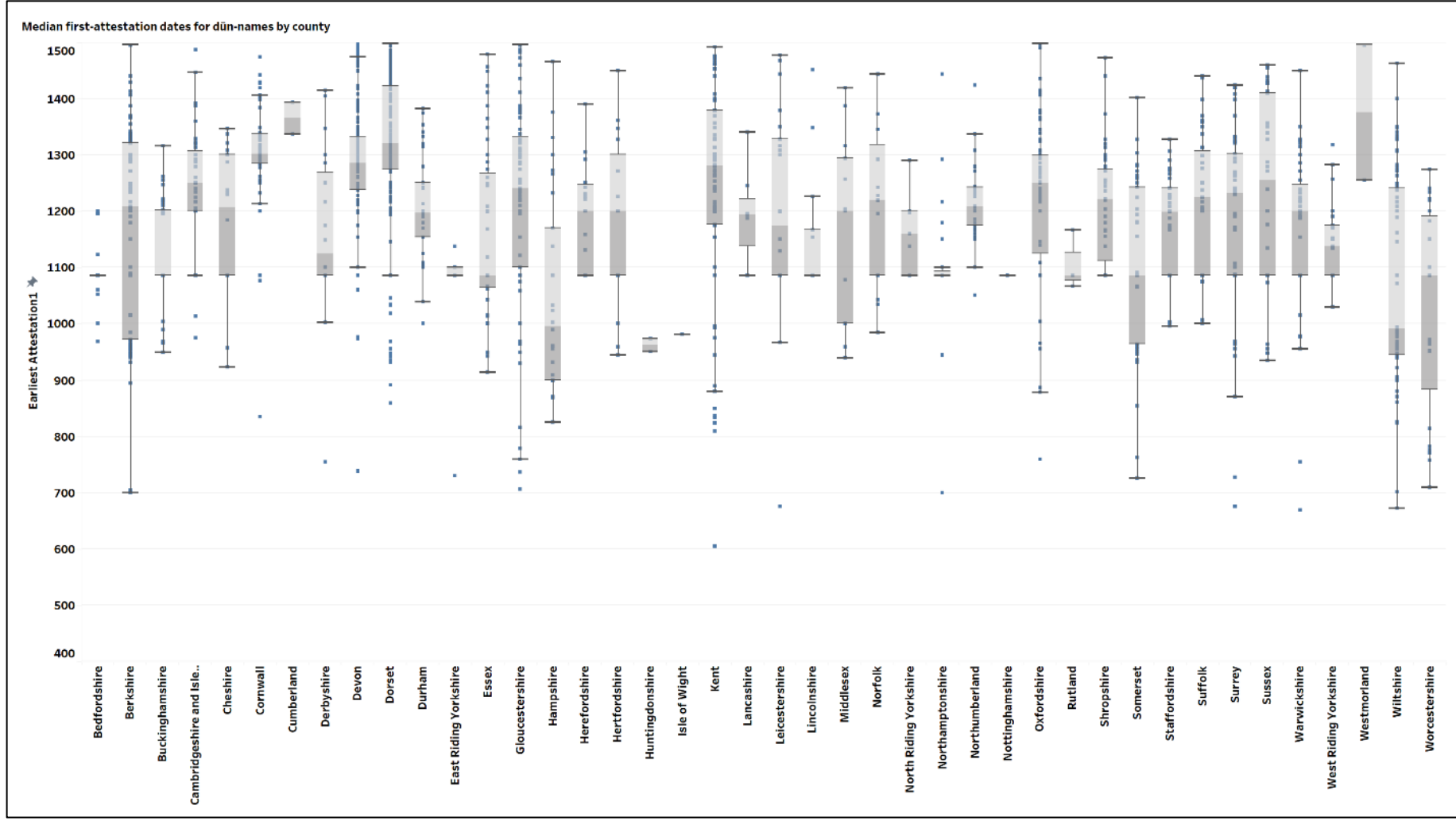
<sup>70</sup> The figures are displayed in landscape format on the next five pages.



10. Box and whisker plots for the range of first-attestation dates for *berg*-names within individual English counties.

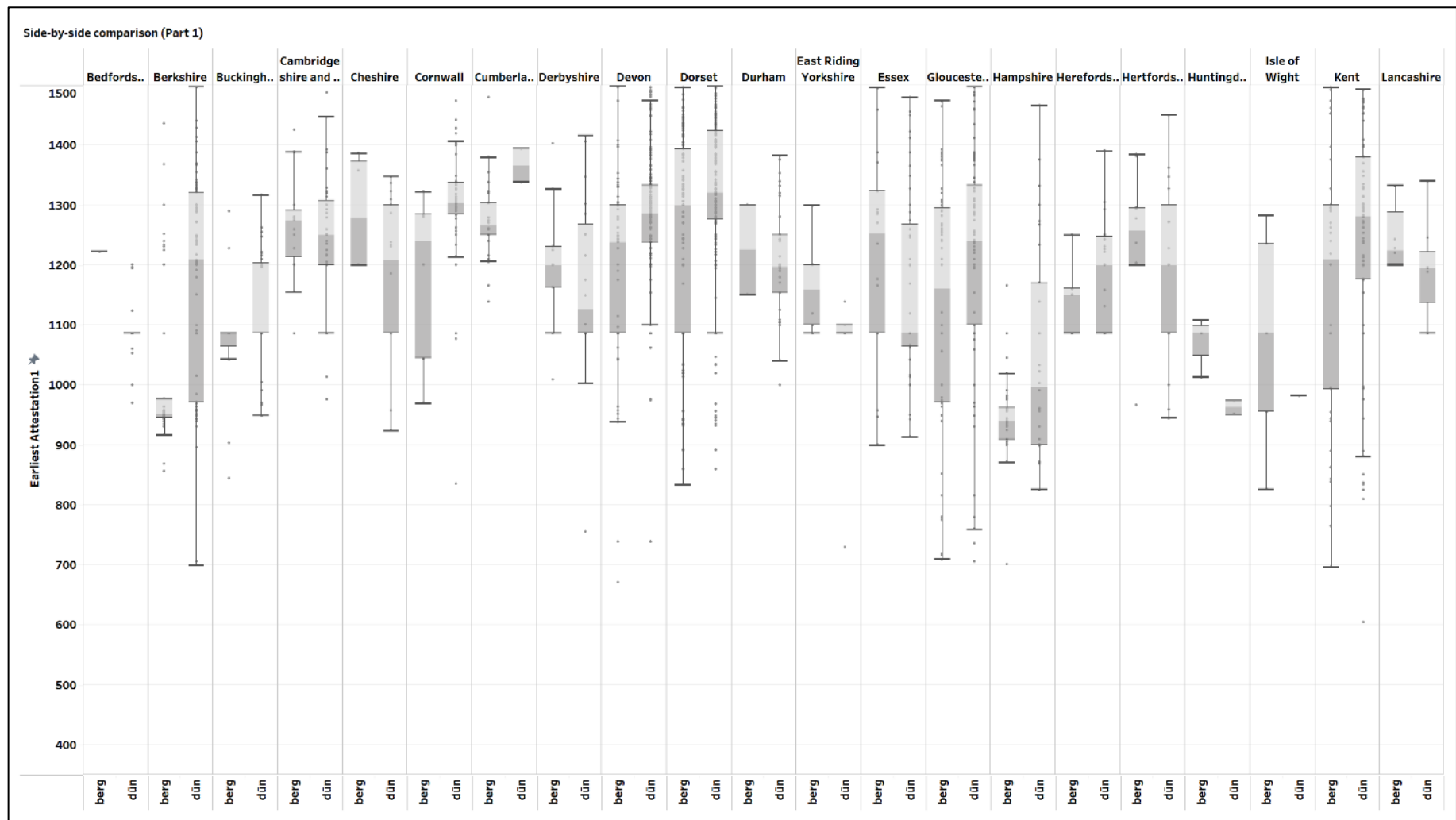


11. Box and whisker plots for the range of first-attestation dates for *crug*-names within individual English counties.

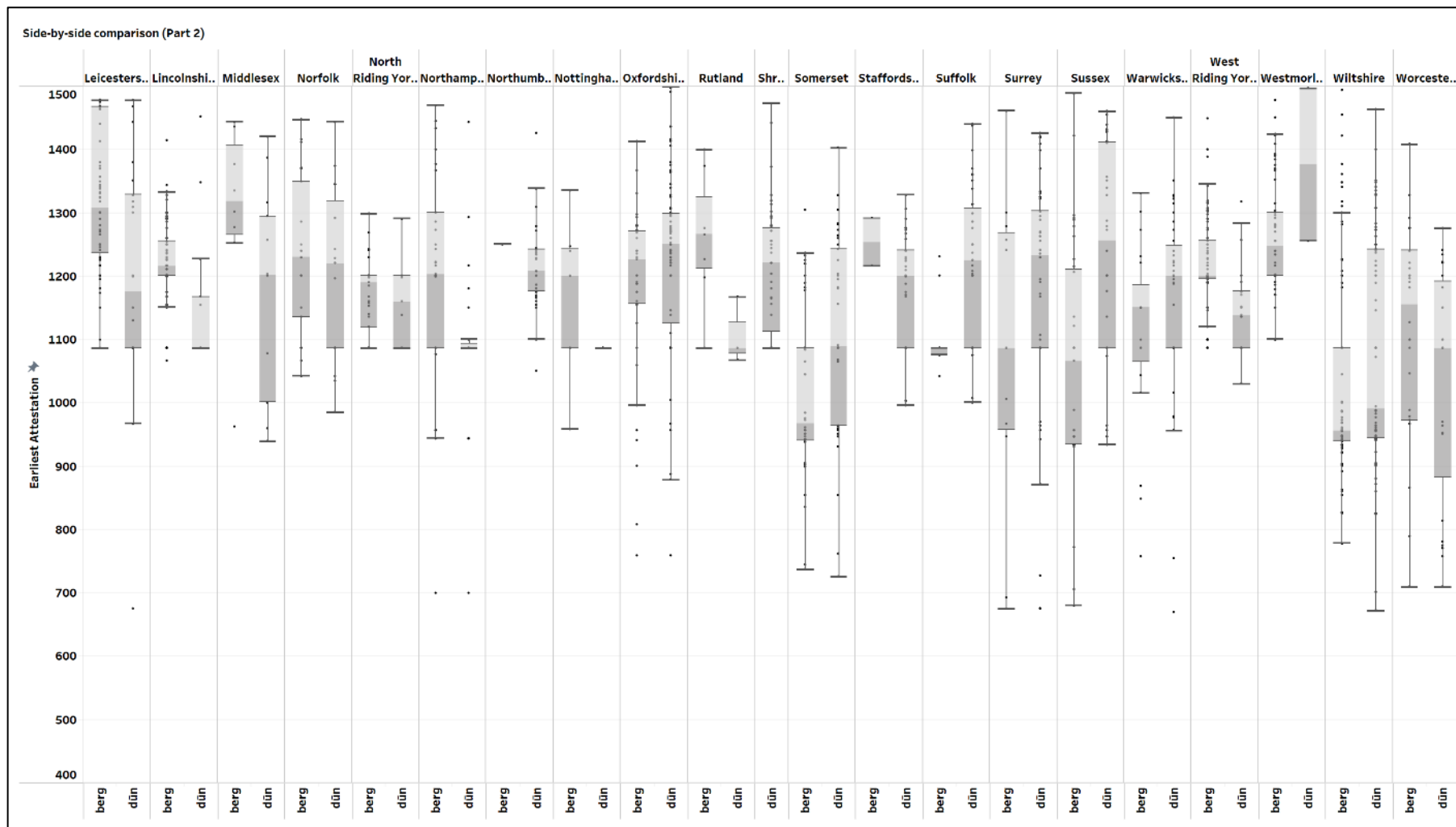


12. Box and whisker plots for the range of first-attestation dates for *dūn*-names within individual English counties.





13. Side-by-side comparison of first-attestation dates for *berg-* and *dūn-*names, ordered by county (part one).



14. Side-by-side comparison of first-attestation dates for *berg*- and *dūn*-names, ordered by county (part two).

### 2.5.3. Generic, qualifier or simplex?

English place-names are frequently compound names; two (or more) words are combined. The base word known as the generic element is qualified by another noun or adjective; the latter is usually referred to as the specific element or qualifier. In the vast majority of corpus names the element is the generic. Eighty-six percent of *berg*-names involve *berg* as generic and eighty-four percent of *dūn*-names feature *dūn* as the generic.<sup>71</sup> For *crug*, if one excludes Cornish examples, in which what appears to be a generic pursuant to OE word order might actually be a qualifier pursuant to Brittonic word order, there is only one example of *crug* acting as a generic: Evercreech, Somerset (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 163; Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 220). This is another way in which *crug* has a very different corpus footprint from *berg* and *dūn*.

Only six percent of *berg*-names and ten percent of *dūn*-names involve *berg* and *dūn* respectively as qualifier. In stark contrast, fifty-six percent of *crug*-names have *crug* functioning as the qualifier. The remainder of *crug*-names are simplex names, that is well over a third, whilst well under ten percent of *berg*- and *dūn*-names are simplex forms. These differences with *crug* are returned to in Chapter Six, including careful consideration of the kinds of elements with which *crug* collocates as qualifier in compound names.

The use of an element as a simplex name suggests one of two possibilities: (a) the element was being treated as a proper, not common, noun; it was inherited as the name of the referent, not as a descriptor of the referent; or (b) there was no need to differentiate the simplex name from other names. This latter eventuality might have arisen for names of minor places used only in a local context, without confusion with other names further afield. Kitson (forthcoming) found that twenty-two percent of *dūn* references in charters were simplex, considerably more than this corpus' six percent for simplex *dūn*-names. Kitson noted that *dūn* was probably also being used lexically in charter material; it is not always easy to delineate between a simplex name and lexical usage, and this might account for the higher proportion of simplex names recorded in charters compared to this corpus.

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<sup>71</sup> Cox (1976, 60) noted that all his early *dūn* attestations were generics in compound place-names.

#### 2.5.4. Names with administrative status

Names that have been associated with some degree of administrative status include parish, township, hundred, wapentake, county, chapelry, liberty or extra parochial names.<sup>72</sup> Forty percent of *crug*-names have had such status in their history, compared to twenty-one percent of *dūn*-names and ten percent of *berg*-names. For each of the elements, the median first-attestation date is 1086 within this subset of names with administrative status. This is notably earlier than the corpus average for each element (2.5.2.). However, it is evidence of the correlation between type of place and date at which a name is first recorded; names for administrative places are recorded earlier on average.<sup>73</sup>

#### 2.5.5. Survival as a name

Sixty-three percent of *berg*-names do not survive on modern maps, compared to thirty-five percent of *dūn*-names and ten percent of *crug*-names. There is an inverse relationship for each element between proportions of names with administrative status and proportions of non-surviving names. The former are less likely to drop out of use or memory, having achieved administrative status. There is also the increased written documentation of the name that this status brings.

Even amongst minor names, Rye (2016, 29) noted that those first recorded early have a greater survival rate than those recorded later (see, too, Cavill (2018, Gregory introduction, xxiii-xxvi ). This is somewhat at odds with Hall (2012) who had argued that earlier OE place-names were more unstable than later ones.<sup>74</sup> In fact, it

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<sup>72</sup> The administrative label used by the survey editors is adopted in this study, albeit on occasions differences are noted between the survey and other sources such as Youngs (1979); Youngs (1991) and GB Historical GIS Project (2024).

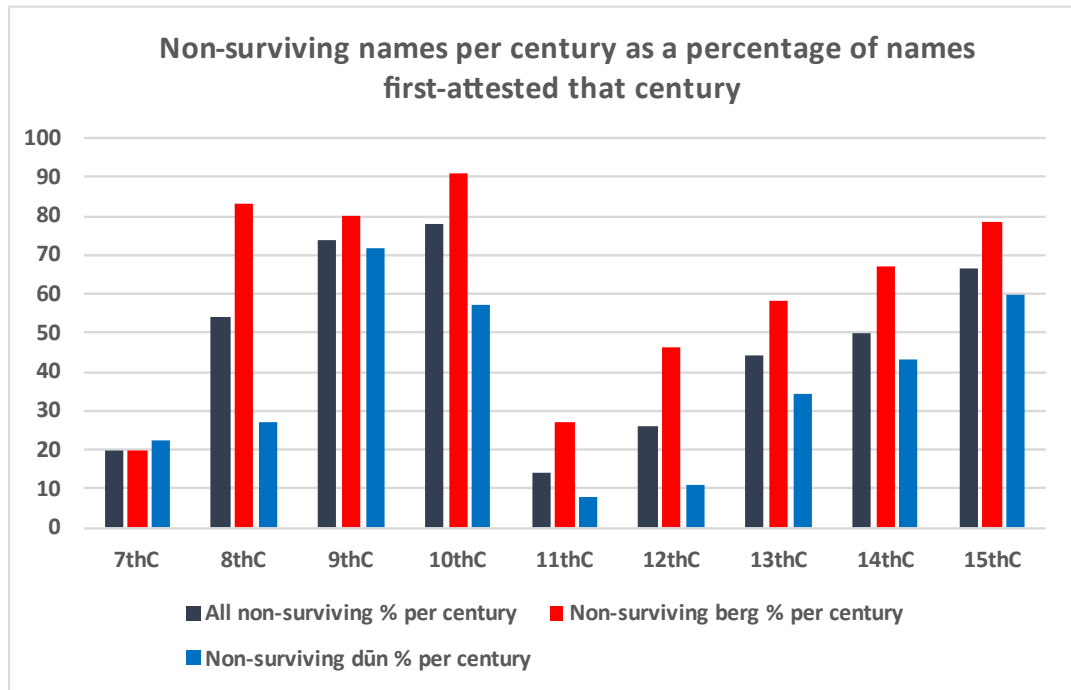
<sup>73</sup> It was possible for newly founded or reorganised settlements to acquire status quickly, for instance in Lincolnshire and the Yorkshire Wolds in the tenth and eleventh centuries following Scandinavian settlement (Cullen, Jones and Parsons 2011, 75-79).

<sup>74</sup> The dataset in Hall (2012, 104-107) was necessarily very small, considering only ‘place-names denoting land granted, meeting places and recipients’ from single-sheet charters largely excluding boundary clauses.

was not so much the date *per se* of a name that affected survival, but other factors relating to the ongoing use of the name. Early recording of the name obviously helps survival. However, the underlying factors which caused a name to be used by enough people and to be significant enough to be recorded, might also be the reason why the name survived; because of such underlying reasons, it might have survived regardless of whether it was recorded or not. Conversely, charter boundary markers are examples of early potential names which often fell out of use despite being recorded. The named feature ceased to have importance, until all that was left was a documentary attestation whose referent was lost in the mists of time.

- The chronology of place-names that do not survive

The overall trends in non-survival of names shown in figure 15 can be explained by reference to underlying sources. The earliest sources recorded estate names, the locations where charters were made or the location of people involved in giving or receiving land. These types of place were usually established and not ephemeral. The names for such places are likely to have survived. Later charters included detailed land boundaries. Place-names referred to boundary features, which by definition might be small, functioning as discrete boundary markers. They were marginal, existing on the edges of land rather than in the centre. They might fall out of use if the pattern of landholdings changed. It is not surprising that these names would have a higher attrition rate. This could account for the increasing rate of non-survival in the centuries prior to the eleventh century. In the eleventh century, the majority of first attestations for place-names are derived from Domesday Book, and must have been of a certain status to be recorded in that source. Being of such status, not many of them have been lost. Most have survived, accounting for the dip in non-survival in the bar chart in figure 15. The proportion of non-survival after the eleventh century creeps up again as more minor and field-names are first attested. Such names could fall out of use more easily.



15. Non-surviving place-names as a percentage of the total names for that element first attested that century.

In figure 15, *berg* and *dūn* are separated to illustrate how they track individually. They each broadly follow the same overall trend. Nevertheless, *berg*-names consistently exhibit more non-survival than *dūn*-names relative to the overall trend. This is a significant finding. It is one that spans different document types, ranging from early medieval charters through to late medieval terriers. No matter how the sources change over the centuries, still *berg*-names have a lower survival rate than *dūn*.

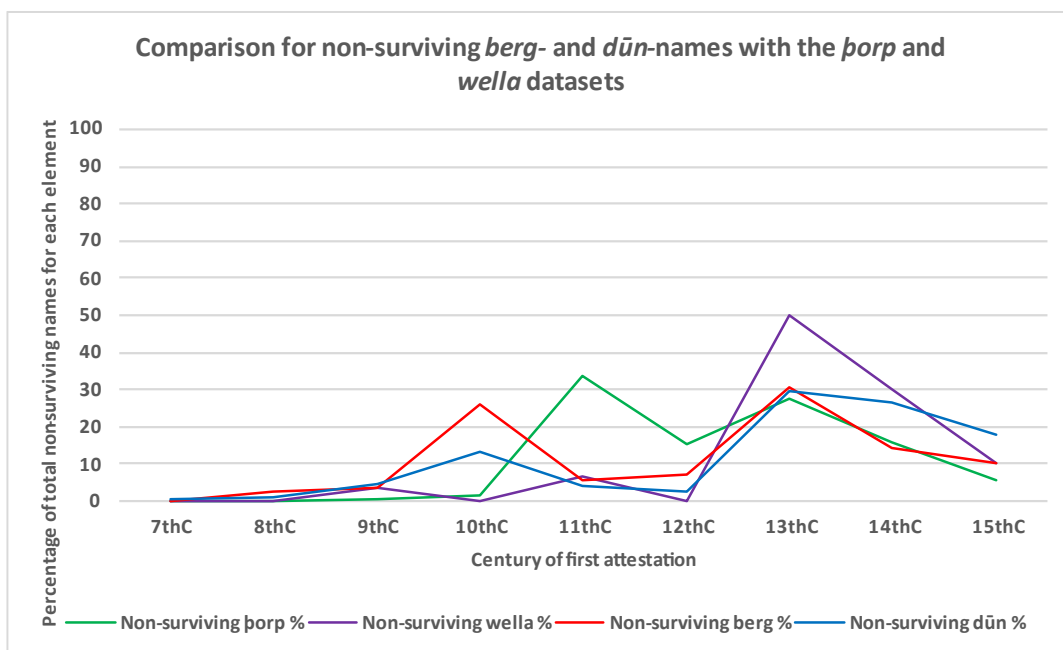
#### - Comparison with other datasets

Cullen, Jones and Parsons (2011) analysed a dataset of 726 *þorp*-names attested before 1500, 207 of which were lost names. The element *þorp* could be described as a ‘habitative’ term, signifying settlement. It is an OScan term (with OE cognate) translated as ‘secondary settlement; outlying farmstead; hamlet’. The *þorp* dataset was ‘from 35 of England’s 41 historical counties ... including everything from ancient parishes to medieval and modern field-names’ (Cullen, Jones and Parsons 2011, 18).

The Flood and Flow Project (Flood and Flow 2015-2019) involved a dataset of water-related place-name terminology. It contained 506 records of place-names involving the OE *wella* ‘spring, stream’, all attested prior to 1500, including thirty

lost names. This unpublished database encompassed major names such as parish, township and other historical settlement names collected throughout the country.

Figure 16 expresses the proportion of non-surviving names first attested each century as a percentage of the total number of non-surviving names overall. This captures when the largest quantities of non-surviving names are first attested, rather than focusing solely on the position as a proportion of each century's first attestations as in Figure 15. For the *porp* and *wella* datasets, the first spike in non-surviving names occurs amongst those first attested in the eleventh century, not the tenth, whereas for *berg*- and *dūn*-names it is the tenth. The second spike for each dataset is amongst names first attested in the thirteenth century.



16. A comparison of non-surviving names as a percentage of total non-surviving names for each element, comparing between the study corpus and *porp* and *wella* datasets, tracking by century of first attestation.

## 2.6. Conclusion

Chapter Two explained how the corpus for this study has been assembled, setting out the criteria and rationale for inclusion within the dataset. It detailed how the database is structured, and how it is available online for use as a mobile research tool, including for remote fieldwork. The challenging category of ‘type’ of place or place-name has been deconstructed, showing what it does and does not mean, and how and where it retains utility as an analytical category.

The corpus’ headline descriptive statistics were discussed, giving a sense of the shape of the corpus in terms of geographic distributions, date ranges, types of place



involved and function of the element in compound place-names. The inter-element comparison between *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* ensured that emerging relative patterns are robust, evidencing underlying phenomena, and are not just an artefact of the survey. Chapter Three looks in more detail at key aspects of the Gelling and Cole theory, assessing topographically whether the distinctive and diagnostic profiles they outlined for *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-names exist with uniformity and consistency across England. It examines whether profile could be used for navigation and whether such profiles reflect the essence of meaning for these putatively oronymic elements.

## Chapter Three: Why profile cannot be key

The discussion in Chapter One set out how the nuanced definitions which Gelling and Cole proposed for each of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* focused on distinctive and, therefore, diagnostic profiles. Such profiles were thought to be recognisable universally by all wherever they occurred within England (1.6. above). Universality is a striking hypothesis; it is not one that was likely to be accepted without question. This chapter examines some of the problems with the idea of such universal profiles as the key to understanding the essence of *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-names. The problems include methodological issues. However, the issues go beyond methodology and point to the substantive conclusion that universally applicable profiles for *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-features, differentiated, distinctive and readily recognisable throughout the country, did not exist.

### 3.1. Universality and topographic variety: initial thoughts

England is a varied country in its geology and topography, despite its small size. Given such variety, it would be surprising if a single profile for each oronymic element could be used everywhere throughout the country. Gelling argued for an absolute not a local understanding of her ideas, commenting that these names ‘must be studied on a national, not a regional, basis’ (Gelling 2000 [1984], 6-7). She criticised Stenton for being impatient with OE speakers for not using identical landscape terminology in place-names ‘under similar circumstances’ in different counties. Her conclusion was that where identical terminology was not used it was because ‘similar circumstances’ did not exist. Gelling maintained that names containing a particular landscape term ‘are to be found anywhere in the country where the landscape has the appropriate feature’. In Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], xv) direct comparison was made between four hills in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northumberland, with the argument that those bearing the same OE term should be visibly identical in form. Thus, the profiles they suggested for *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* were not just the best a county could muster. For *berg*, for instance, they were not just the most rounded profile the county could manage, even if that differed from another county’s most rounded profile. Instead, there must be a uniform profile for *berg* across counties throughout the country.

Kitson (2008, forthcoming) took issue on topographic grounds with the particular descriptions proffered for two of the archetypal examples for *berg* and *crug*. Roseberry Topping (NRY) was attested in 1119 as *Othenesberg*: OScan *Óðinn* plus *berg* ‘Odin’s hill’ (Smith 1928, 164). The name exists in place-names in Scandinavia; the same collocation of *Óðinn* and *berg* features in Onsbjerg, Samsø, and potentially the two Onsbjerg names on Bornholm, Denmark (DS 2024; Fellows-Jensen 1981, 135). Samsø is a low-lying island but Fellows-Jensen suggested that the *berg* referent might be the hill known as Dyret which is a ‘prominent saddle-shaped hill to the south-west of the village’ of Onsbjerg. The Yorkshire hill that bears the name is a dramatic and prominent crag.<sup>75</sup> It is certainly not perfectly nor continuously rounded.

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<sup>75</sup> There are two equivalent names within the predominantly OE-speaking areas of England, however these names appear to reference artificial burial mounds. They are Woodnesborough (Kent) – there is a tumulus immediately to the north-west of the church (Gelling 1973, 126; Cullen 1997, 506-507), albeit Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 148-149) latterly suggested that the referent was the small rounded hill on which the church stands – and *wodnesbeorge* (Wiltshire), (S272) 825 [1130-1150], which has been identified as the long barrow now referred to as Adam’s Grave, north of Alton Priors (NHLE 1013032) (Gelling 1997 [1978], 132). Two battles at this spot were recorded in the ASC in 592 and 715 (Whitelock 1979, 158, 171). Fellows-Jensen (1981, 135) argued that the Yorkshire name was more likely to have been a transferred name from Denmark, rather than an independent fresh coining within England. This topic is returned to in Chapter Five.



17. Roseberry Topping (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 456929, 515768 looking SSE just over three kilometres from the summit (cropped image).

Since Roseberry Topping does not conform to the suggested profile for a *berg*, Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 152) argued that *Othenesberg* originally applied to ‘the rounded hill overlooked by the topping’. Topping was added to the name to refer to the dramatic peak beside the rounded hill.<sup>76</sup> Their line drawing suggested that a shoulder of Roseberry Topping to the south was ‘the rounded hill’ to which they referred. This can only be the area associated today with the separate name Cliff Ridge. Cliff Ridge was attested in 1350 (Smith 1928, 165). The presence of this name as *Clyverigg* so early makes it unlikely that *Othenesberg* originally applied to this part of the hill. In addition, the other ‘Roseberry’ names, for instance Roseberry Common, are much closer to Roseberry Topping, not Cliff Ridge (Kitson 2008, 387-388). The suffix for Newton under Roseberry is attested as *Newetunie sub Ohtnebercg* in 1140-1153 (Smith 1928, 163). Thus, Newton under Roseberry was known as such from at least the first half of the twelfth century, yet it sits directly beneath Roseberry Topping, not close to Cliff Ridge. Had *Othenesberg* originally been located at Cliff Ridge, one might have expected to see a legacy of derived or

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<sup>76</sup> Topping is first attested in the run of Roseberry names in 1610 (Smith 1928, 164).

affixed ‘Roseberry’ names in that vicinity, as opposed to surrounding the later supposedly transferred location for the name. The fact that these early-attested names cluster around Roseberry Topping suggest that it, not Cliff Ridge, is the original location for the *berg*-name. Moreover, the Gelling and Cole suggestion does not answer why the name ‘Odin’s hill’ would have been given to an unremarkable lower flank of a much more striking and dramatic topographic feature. The association with the Scandinavian deity is more likely to be with the more arresting hill. Kitson (2008, 388) referred to the Gelling and Cole argument concerning this name as ‘outrageous special pleading’.

Kitson also took issue with the Gelling and Cole account of the name Crookbarrow in Worcestershire.<sup>77</sup> They each gave differing accounts of the profile of the hill in prose and in line drawing. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 161) presented the hill from the north-east saying that

situated by exit 7 on the M5... it is very much a *crūc* in the impact it makes on the beholder, and from some aspects ... it is very much a rounded **beorg**.

Kitson (2008, 387) surveyed the feature from the trainline to the south and described it as having

a tripartite profile: a nearly straight steep rise at the Worcester end, meeting at a point summit well off-centre (an obtuse angle but still a point) a long straight-line summit ridge which slopes down at four or five degrees below the horizontal to join a steeper shorter straight slope at the eastern foot (see also Kitson 2012, 46).

As with Roseberry Topping, Kitson felt that what he had observed was the more dramatic aspect of the feature, and that it was impossible to believe namers would name a feature with elements that were ‘incompatible with almost every part of the feature’s most characteristic and spectacular profile’.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Crookbarrow was first attested in 1182 as *cruchulle* (Mawer, Stenton and Houghton 1927, 178). Note that the generic was OE *hyll* ‘hill’ not *berg*.

<sup>78</sup> Crookbarrow is a scheduled monument (NHLE 1014900). It includes the buried remains of a motte castle formed by artificially steepening the sides of the hill. If this modification dates to the eleventh or twelfth century, the name might pre-date



18. Crookbarrow seen in this study's website; the line of the railway is seen to the south in the historical OS mapping (NLS) and the line of the motorway (and junction) is seen in the underlying lidar (EA).

The challenges to archetypal examples need to be taken seriously. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 146-147, 160 and 166 respectively) put forward only eight examples in line drawings of archetypal *berg* profiles, four for *crug* profiles and five for *dūn* profiles. There are two additional line drawings for *dūn* and one for *crug* in Gelling (1998, 79, 82). A few more photographs (not line drawings) are available at Gelling and Cole (2023). They represent seven additional sites for *berg*, four for *crug* and eight for *dūn*. However, relative to the size of the corpus in this study of *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-names, and, indeed, relative to the corpus within Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) itself, thirty nine is not many. If there are challenges even to these, which one might expect to be the most clear-cut of examples, this is significant.

More generally, others have noted, in passing, regions where the Gelling and Cole idea of universality might not be borne out.<sup>79</sup> Kemble (2003, 155) asked whether the Gelling description for natural *berg*-sites, of a small continuously rounded hill, should be modified for eastern England. Cullen (2013, 176-177) noted that any

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the modification. One might be incorrectly reading the present profile and form back on to the meaning of an earlier name. This is a hazard of which to be keenly aware. It reinforces the need for archaeological and historical input before assuming that the profile of a hill today is the same as it has always been.

<sup>79</sup> Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 165) noted that many of the *dūn*-sites in Gloucestershire were too large to be settlement sites; the settlement was to be found at the foot of the hill (see also Coates 2023, 279-281).

universality of profile and topological shape broke down in Derbyshire. It is worth quoting his comments in full.

It is noticeable that the basic hill-terms, especially OE *dūn* and *beorg* which Gelling and Cole identify as contrasting with each other over so much of England, operate differently here. The locations of those 'major' names in the north-west of the county which contain *dūn* suit the general pattern well enough: 'upland expanse'<sup>80</sup> is an appropriate description at Chelmorton, Hartington, Great and Little Longstone, and Nether and Over Haddon (along with adjacent Sheldon, which is probably named from the same feature as the Haddons), although these upland expanses are not so much flat-topped as distinctly undulating, except at Sheldon where the striking flatness is reflected in the qualifying element OE *scelf* 'shelf'. But not a single 'major' name in Derbyshire contains *beorg* ('rounded hill' in Gelling's terms), and it is rare in 'minor' names too. I suspect the chief contrast in hill-type which merits mentioning in this landscape is not so much 'large and flattish' (*dūn*) versus 'small and roundish' (*beorg*) but rather 'green and usable, i.e. for ploughing or pasture' (*dūn*) versus 'rocky and unusable' (OE *ecg* 'edge', *clif* 'cliff, *torr* 'rocky outcrop', *clūd* 'mass of rock', and so on). The terminology is not less precise than elsewhere, it is just precise in a different way.

Whilst challenging the idea of a distinct profile for these elements in Derbyshire, Cullen proposed that nuance in their meaning remained; it was to be found in ideas of land use. The conclusion of this study is similar, as will be seen.

### 3.2. Universality and travellers

Gelling was unwilling to venture too far into speculating on how a universal system could have arisen.<sup>81</sup> However, she and Cole cautiously put forward the possibility

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<sup>80</sup> 'Upland expanse' is, of course, different from the Gelling and Cole idea of a whale-back profile recognisable from afar, discussed in 1.4.7.

<sup>81</sup> The introduction to Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) was written by Gelling in the first person to explain the relationship of the later book to her earlier work: Gelling (2000 [1984]). She explicitly acknowledged Cole's research as the source of the idea

that the visual perception of travellers, as they navigated and moved along historical routes, could have played a role in a country-wide naming system. At least, it might have consolidated such a system, even if it did not initiate it (see also Cole 2011b). As Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], xvi) commented, ‘a country-wide system of topographical naming would certainly facilitate the giving of directions to a traveller, and would also make it easy to know when a destination was in sight.’ Such a system would need to be useable by all, whether local inhabitant or visitor from afar entering unfamiliar terrain.

In her earlier work, Gelling had placed greater reliance on the fact that the nuance of a hill-form was something only locals might appreciate after time spent becoming intimately acquainted with the lie of the land. Gelling (2000 [1984], 124-5) observed that

Hills (like some other categories of settlement-site) probably need to be viewed on the ground, or better still experienced as dwelling-places before the vocabulary of their naming can be truly understood. There will be nuances of slope and overhang ... which only people with local knowledge can hope to appreciate.

If this is correct, the nuanced meaning of the oronymic element would not be as transparent to the travelling stranger and could not be used as easily as a navigational aid. The results of this study support Gelling’s earlier thoughts on this point over her later more tentative suggestions.

### **3.3. Using oronymic elements as navigational aids**

#### **3.3.1. The historical challenge**

If universality was achieved in the early medieval naming period, one has to ask when there was enough political stability to facilitate a country-wide system. England was not united but was populated with diverse regional groups speaking, at the very least, differing dialects. When was the land safe enough to enable travellers to move in sufficient numbers with sufficient frequency such that a naming system could be universally spread and adopted? As Kitson (2012, 45) questioned

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concerning the importance of travellers’ perceptions of the landscape (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], xvi).



Is the ‘Anglo-Saxon traveller’ ... a coherent phenomenon of a particular period, or just a ghostly amalgam of the linguistic choices of indefinite numbers of people over an indefinite time?

If travellers did not bring about universality, then, Cullen (2013, 176) observed

It is necessary to wonder who the well-organized local folk might be, across the land, who have apparently done so much onomastically to facilitate his wanderings, or to wonder whether such a name-system could or would be imposed by a central authority.

When was there such a central authority that could effect such an imposition? This question lingers without an answer.

### 3.3.2. The linguistic challenge

In order to navigate by a name, that name needs to be semantically transparent. For instance, if one was going to navigate to the place whose modern name is Gran(d)borough (Buckinghamshire), *Grenebeorge* S1228 1042 x 1049 [14th] (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 134), by way of looking for a green, perfectly rounded hill, one would need to have known that that was what the elements making up the name might have meant originally.

However, there is an inherent tension in the idea that place-names were used as lexically transparent navigation aids. As descriptive phrases become fossilised into names, they lose their semantic import. Indeed, it is in fact their ‘senselessness’ that ensures their survival long after their constituent elements have fallen out of the lexicon (Coates 2012b, 32). Coates (2013, 140-141) observed that

names are devices for senseless referring ... they allow the reasonably probable identification of a place in a context of use ... without the hassle of appealing to word-meaning and grammar ... and with stability.

As Gammeltoft (2005, 260) put it, ‘A place-name only needs to function, not to mean anything’. If this is how names function, and how they survive long after the lexicon has moved on, there would only be a limited, narrow period of time in which a name-phrase’s meaning might be sufficiently transparent to aid navigation. After this, it would be fossilised into a name, and its etymology forgotten, or, at the very least, not at the forefront of people’s minds.

The process was obviously not binary; it was more of a sliding scale. At a given point in time, a name might sit somewhere along that journey towards ultimate ‘senselessness’ for the everyday user, whilst still being partially transparent to the thoughtful user. Hough (2012, 18) argued that OE and OScan speakers were strongly motivated by names with informational content, such that they had no time for names which were semantically mere empty labels to them. She also pointed out that this motivation continued, saying ‘the impetus towards folk etymology when an original meaning has been forgotten reflects a strong motivation to make sense of names’ (Hough 2012, 15).

However, also amongst the reasons offered by Hough (2012, 13) is the statement that topographic names must have remained lexically transparent or else they would have been unable to fulfil their orienteering function. Arguments become circular at this point and it is hard to establish which claim is prior: is it that names have to remain lexically transparent because they are navigational or is it that they cannot be navigational because they swiftly cease to be lexically transparent? It is worth noting that Hough agreed that names would need to be lexically comprehensible in order to function as a navigational aid. If they had, for any reason ceased to be comprehensible, it is agreed by all that they could not facilitate travelling through the landscape. Hence, the challenge of a narrow window in time in which a name could function as a signpost remains.

### 3.3.3. The topographic challenge

#### - Angle of recognition

We have already seen how there is room to argue in the case of Roseberry Topping and Crookbarrow about the identity and profile of the eponymous feature. Leaving aside Kitson’s claims that Gelling and Cole were engaged in special pleading in the case of Roseberry Topping, if they were right and the *berg*-name applied to the southern rounded shoulder of the more eye-catching hill, that shoulder is not visible from most vantage points around the hill. It is not at all visible from the viewpoint in Figure 17. A hill which has a profile only from certain limited angles is perhaps far less likely to be named as a result of that profile. It is also less likely to be used for successful navigation if it can only be ‘recognised’ from a constrained line of

approach.<sup>82</sup> The experience of this study is that this is a common issue with many potential eponymous features. Even if one aspect of the referent feature can be made to fit the desired profile, many other aspects do not. Very precise and constrained approach lines would be needed to limit the appearance of the feature to a particular profile.

- Shape-modifying qualifiers

If an oronymic element was regularly qualified by shape-modifying elements within compound names, one might well begin to question whether a precise and uniform profile could really have been intrinsic to the meaning of that oronymic element. As Kitson (2008, 384) observed ‘we may suspect... that where there are blunt semantics in a qualifier, subtle nuancing of the substantive did not apply’. This point could, of course, be argued the other way. Nurminen (2012, 288) thought that the regular and recurrent collocations of OE *\*hamol* ‘broken; mutilated’ with *dūn* were, in fact, evidence of a common understanding of the shape and profile of *dūn* that had to be remarked upon where it did not meet expectation (see 4.6.2. below for further discussion). However this seems unlikely where an oronymic element is regularly or exclusively qualified by a particular shape-modifying element. Recurrency and/or exclusivity suggest that the element collocating with the oronymic element is

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<sup>82</sup> One can imagine a scenario where the particularly striking and diagnostic profile was visible from a major historical routeway, in which case it might not matter so much that the profile was not visible from other angles not on such a routeway. However, this scenario is very hard to establish in any individual case, let alone for every case in which the profile only exists from certain angles. The existence and precise route of medieval historical tracks is difficult to establish with certainty archaeologically and historically, albeit many would argue for strong continuity in routes visible on nineteenth-century mapping. This was discussed in Lloyd (2021a, 23-36, 51-55, 60, 64, 66), alongside a methodological approach to modelling historical routeways and visibility from those routes to a specified landscape feature in eleven case studies for OE *weard* ‘watch/look out’ names. In the specific cases of Roseberry Topping and Crookbarrow, the locations from which the profile identified by Gelling and Cole is invisible seem to be no less or more on evidenced historical routes than those from which it can be seen.

thought to relate in some way specifically to that particular element, and therefore to its definition.

### 3.4. Testing universality

Several scholars have sought to test the Gelling and Cole ideas in particular regions. Nurminen (2011, 2012) examined Northumberland and County Durham. She concluded that

the question of whether the use of these [hill-]terms can also be said to be characterised by a high degree of consistency is much more problematic. OE *dūn*, for instance, has a highly specialised meaning in the place-names of the study area, being typically used of fairly low, level-topped hills, but since there are also several instances where it is used of features which do not have this shape, it is questionable whether its use in the study area could be said to be characterised by ‘a very high degree of consistency’ (Gelling and Cole 2000:165). It is also worth noting that map-work and field-work conducted for the present study have shown that identifying the features the hill-terms refer to is often problematic and sometimes impossible even in the case of terms such as *dūn* and *hōh* for which specialised uses can be established (Nurminen 2012, 242-243).<sup>83</sup>

The level of doubt explored by Nurminen is set out in some of her tables. Table 4.40 showed that there were four examples of *berg* encountered, only one of which was said to be certain; the remaining three were uncertain. Out of 114 instances of *dūn*, only fifty three were certain whilst sixty one were uncertain.<sup>84</sup> Table 4.20 listed the

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<sup>83</sup> Nurminen attempted to separate out specialisation and consistency. Arguably this does not follow. Showing that a *dūn* exists that meets the ‘specialised’ meaning of a *dūn* as outlined by Gelling and Cole, but at the same time finding that others do not meet that definition, not only poses problems for consistency but also for specialisation itself. If *dūn* can be used to refer to a hill meeting the Gelling and Cole definition alongside plenty of other hills that do not, it is hard to say that the element is being used in a specialised way. If the profile of a *dūn* were truly diagnostic, it should be reserved only for those landforms meeting the definition and never applied to those that did not.

<sup>84</sup> Nurminen (2012, 13-14) defined ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ as follows:

variety found in the physical shapes of the *dūn*-sites, including: ‘Hill (irregular shape), Rounded hill-spur, Rounded/oval-shaped hill, Long/or narrow hill, Triangular hill-spur, Summit, Hill-spur (shape), Part of a hill, Rectangular hill-spur, Ridge and Not known’. Nurminen (2012, 144) observed that ‘OE *dūn* is typically used in the study area of hills of irregular shape, with 31 (50.9%) features falling into this category’. Those that did not conform to the Gelling and Cole definition included early attested *dūn*-names (Nurminen 2012, 145).

Pratt (2005) assessed a small sample of hills in the Scottish borders, commenting that

although a place might be clearly on a hill, what was less easy to identify was whether it was on a *-dūn* hill shape. Gelling and Cole suggest that, where the *-dūn* element appears in a place-name and the settlement itself is not on such a hill shape, it might relate to an ‘uninhabited hill adjacent to the settlement’. As they describe various types of *-dūn* shapes, it is usually easy to find something that matched in the area; it could be said, then, that this would seem to provide an explanation that fits just about any circumstance. (Pratt 2005, 96)

Drummond (2007b) also sought to test the application to Scotland of Gelling and Cole’s ideas about England, albeit not with *berg*, *crug* or *dūn*. He thought the results were not convincing, concluding that ‘it is difficult to detect such a universal standard for hills in the non-Gaelic parts of southern Scotland’ (Drummond 2007b, 99).

Grannd (2022) compared oronyms within Berwickshire with those in the Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) corpus. Grannd’s study characterised a hill as a polygon, computationally measuring lines of sight from a researcher-designated summit to first break of slope in eight directions and joining up those eight breaks of slope into a polygon. As a result, what was assessed was a discrete area around the chosen

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*certain* in those cases where only one interpretation can be suggested for the element in question, and this interpretation is both supported by the early forms, and, in the case of topographical terms, also seems plausible on the grounds of local topography. All other occurrences have been classified as *uncertain*.

summit for each hill (Grannd 2022, 243). The study did not consider, via fieldwork or otherwise, the profile of a hill viewed from elsewhere in the surrounding landscape looking at the hill. Grannd's study sought to find a replicable and objective methodology, turning to digital and computational approaches to do so. It is helpful in clarifying the issues researchers face. Although the comments offered in this study may seem critical, many of the challenges identified were acknowledged expressly by Grannd and illustrate well the irreducible problems encountered. This is explored further in the following sections.

Finally, Mølgaard Bjørn (2015) in Denmark found that *bjerg* could be used with reference to several quite different kinds of topography, not just one defined form. This suggested that the Gelling and Cole ideas could not apply in Denmark.<sup>85</sup>

### **3.5. How is a hill defined?**

The previous section illustrated some of the problems encountered by studies seeking to follow in the footsteps of Gelling and Cole. The unwritten assumption is that it should be an easy thing to agree upon the definition of a hill, in terms of its boundaries, and to be able to identify the hill and its boundaries through fieldwork. Gelling (1998, 76) keenly advocated that 'topographical vocabulary' could 'be decoded by field-work'. There is actually considerable uncertainty encountered on the ground by researchers. This has arguably not been the subject to date of sufficient explicit acknowledgement and analysis. The uncertainty is very real and needs to be addressed. The number of site visits carried out at the time of writing amount to 580 throughout England including some visits across English borders. All of this fieldwork informs the findings reported in this chapter.

#### **3.5.1. Finding the right hill**

One advantage of previous studies is that it is possible to compare and contrast choices made by different researchers, when considering the same name, as to which feature might be the eponymous hill. It is common to be unsure exactly which feature was being referenced by a name. This is so even though fieldwork inevitably involves reverse engineering: the researcher enters the landscape knowing it is associated with a *berg*-, *crug*- or *dūn*-name and looks for a feature that might 'fit'

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<sup>85</sup> I am grateful to Peder Gammeltoft for drawing my attention to this article.

the name. It is all too easy to try to make features fit by viewing them from particular angles, screening out much that does not fit. It is a form of confirmation bias for which it is hard to compensate. Notwithstanding this, finding the right hill still remains an uncertain process.

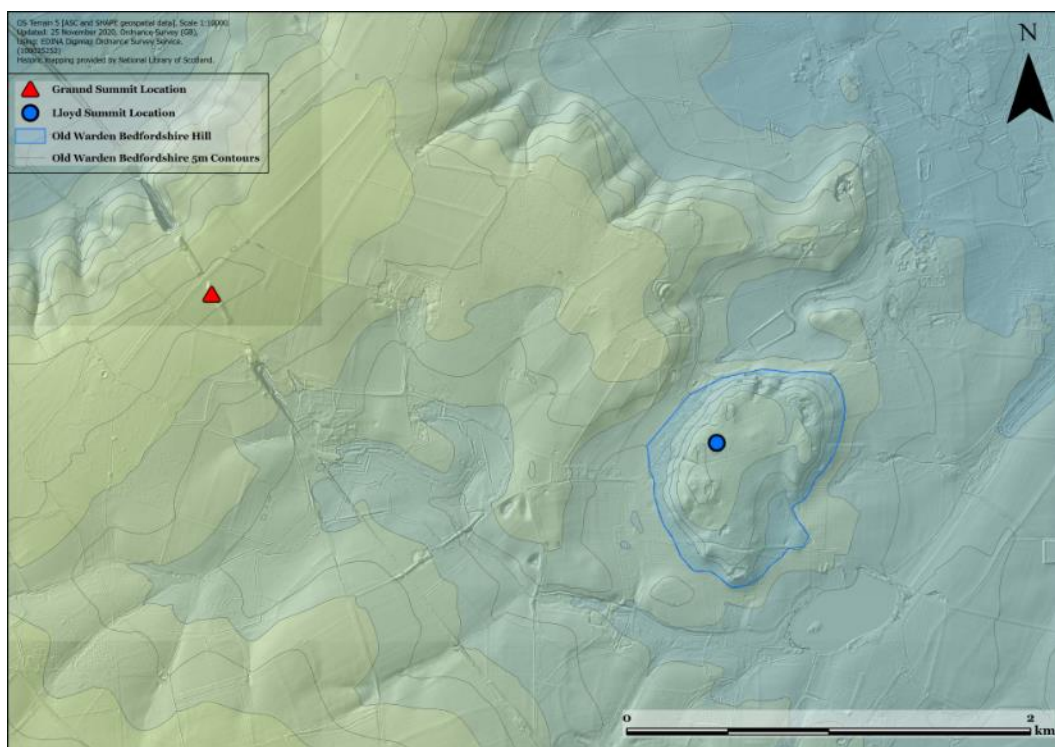
Many more sites, over and above the 580, have been assessed in this study using desk-based analysis judging from both historical and modern OS mapping and EA lidar-derived topographical modelling. The same issue of uncertainty in researcher-led identification of the hill arises in a desk-based process as with fieldwork. A few examples are set out below, all of which are major settlement, township or parish names. These are not minor names, yet uncertainty over the correct identification of the oronymic referent is present. If the problem exists with major names, how much more so with minor names, which are more often lost.<sup>86</sup>

- Old Warden (Bedfordshire)

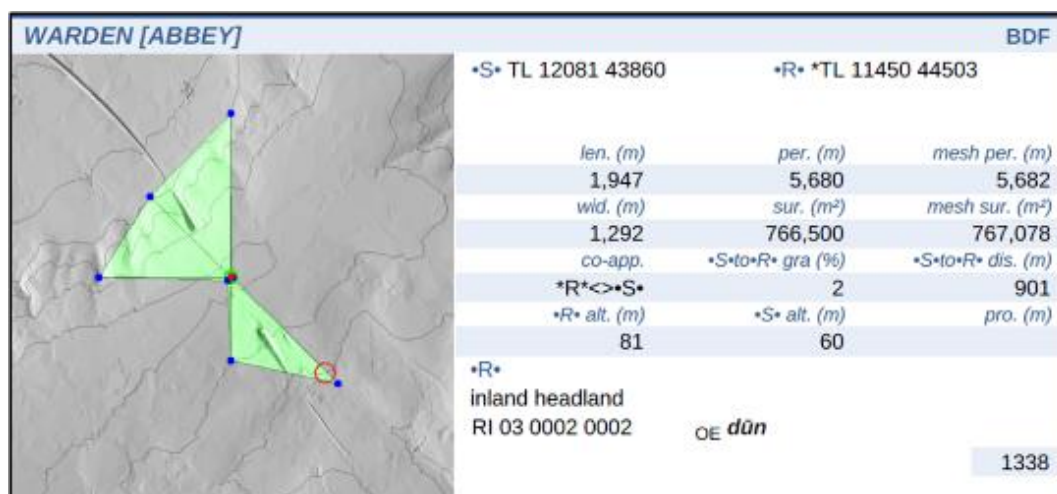
The probable *dūn* of Old Warden (Bedfordshire), *Wardone* 1086 (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 97-98), was identified in Lloyd (2021a), following computational and historical analysis as well as fieldwork on the ground. It was also identified in Grannd (2022). However, the choice of feature in the two studies was completely different. As a result, the polygon representing the *dūn* on the map was not only in a different location but also a different shape as Figures 19 and 20 show. (Note that neither feature has a settlement on top of it.) Figure 21 shows how the feature selected in Lloyd (2021a) appears on the ground.

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<sup>86</sup> The majority of examples given focus on *dūn*-names, since the comparator studies in Northumberland, Berwickshire and the Scottish Borders were focused on *dūn* rather than *berg* or *crug*; *berg* and *crug* are not present as place-name elements in these areas.



19. The location of the *dūn* of Old Warden: Lloyd (2021a) selected the feature demarcated in blue; Grandd (2022) selected a summit shown by the red triangle.



20. The polygon generated for the *dūn* of Old Warden in Grannd (2022, 3:468).





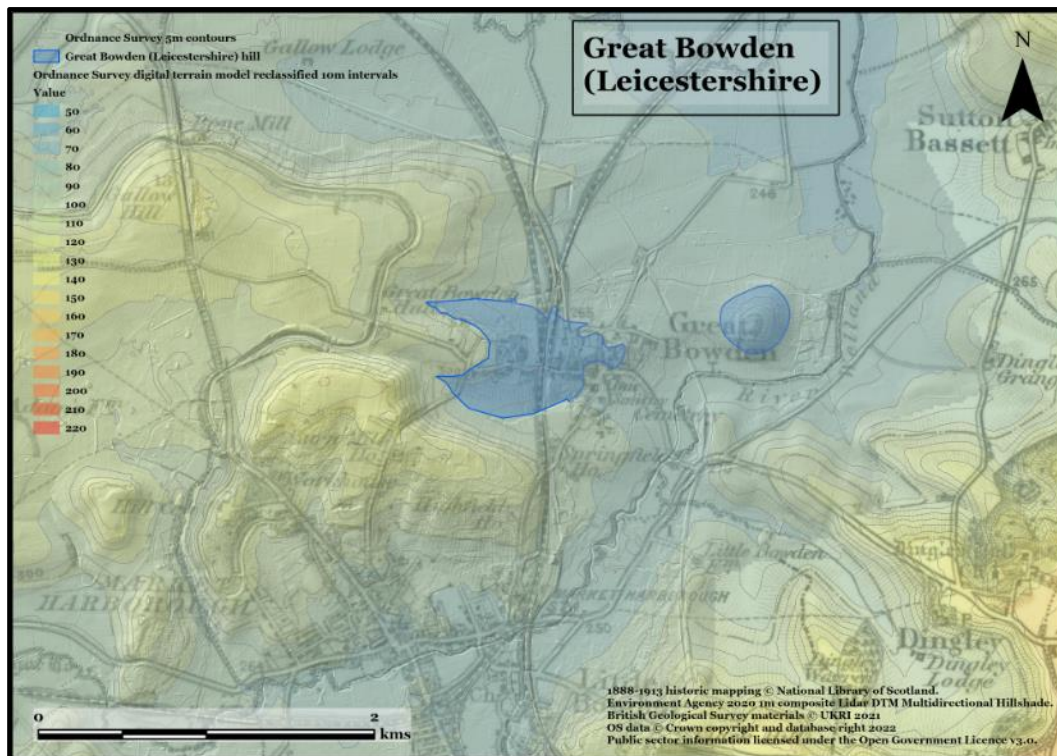
21. Old Warden (A.Lloyd: February 2021) from NGR 513723, 244309 looking SSE, under 700m from the summit of the *dūn* chosen in Lloyd (2021a).

- Great Bowden (Leicestershire)

The *dūn* in Great Bowden (Leicestershire), *Bugedone* 1086 (Cox 1998-2019, 4:175), was identified by Gelling (2000 [1984], 156) as the wide shelf on which the settlement stands at the 250-300 feet contours overlooking the River Welland. Grannd (2022, 3:177), on the other hand, opted for a small circular hill to the east.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Although the qualifying element for this name was originally a personal name (OE *Buga/Bucga*), it appears to have been reformulated in spellings from the thirteenth century onwards as if the qualifying element was OE/OScan *boga/bogi* ‘bow; arch; bend’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:121). This suggests that the feature should be in some way shaped as a bow for the later reanalysis to be cogent. Gelling’s choice is so shaped, whereas Grannd’s is not.



22. Great Bowden: *dūn* choice for Gelling (left) and Grannd (right).

To add further uncertainty, Bourne (2003, 48) argued that ‘the “down” of Great Bowden can be clearly seen on the road that leads into Bowden from the A6 to the north of Market Harborough’. However, neither of the sites located by Gelling or Grannd can be seen from this vantage point. Another, separately named *dūn*-site, Gallow Hill, *Calowdon* 1328 (Cox 1998-2019, 4:54), is visible but, given the independent name, is unlikely to be the *dūn* of Bowden.



23. Great Bowden (A.Lloyd: July 2022) NGR 473603 289415 looking SE (just over one kilometre north of the Gelling ‘shelf’, closer to the A6).

Finally, the name ‘Bowden’ is also present further south across the River Welland in the settlement Little Bowden. The presence of two major settlements sharing the same name, differentiated by Great and Little, suggests that this might have been a larger area bearing the name, which has been subdivided.<sup>88</sup> If this is so, it makes it harder to know precisely where within that region the *dūn* might have been.

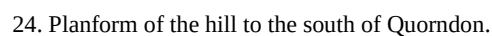
Moreover, within the run of name attestations, there are a series of spellings starting from the twelfth century in which the OE generic *denu* ‘valley’ appears to have been used. Cox (1998-2019, 4:175-176) suggested that the valley in question might have been that of the Welland running between Great and Little Bowden. This is highly plausible but it is nevertheless critical to note the early confusion over the name referent. The confusion was present in medieval attestations. Had there been a clear-cut example of a *dūn* in the area that all could recognise and agree upon, perhaps this confusion would not have crept into the historical understanding of the name.

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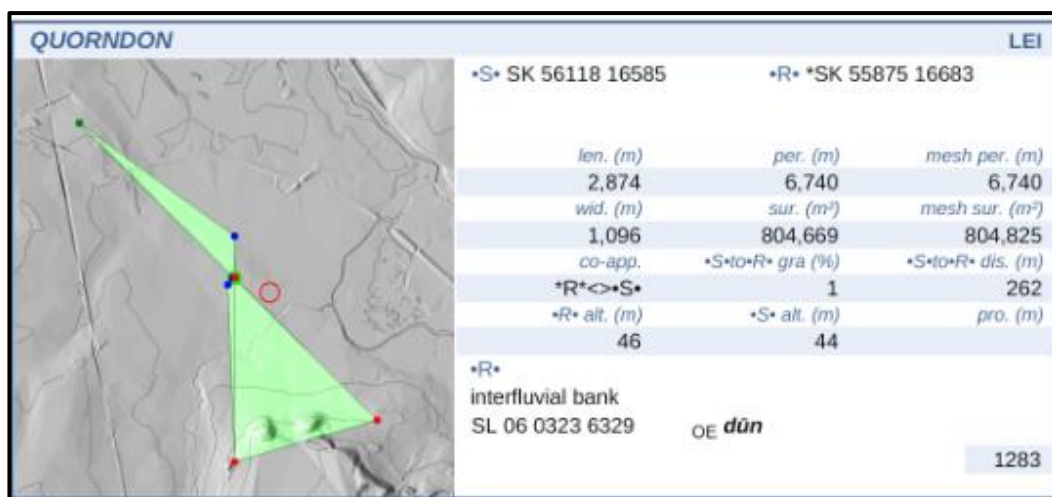
<sup>88</sup> The prefixes Magna and Parva first appear in the run of attestations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Cox 1998-2019, 4:175, 184).



Quorndon (Leicestershire) is attested as *Querendon(e)* in the reign of Henry II (Cox 1998-2019, 7:169). Gelling (2000 [1984], 142, 156) thought that Quorndon ‘has a very low site by the R. Soar and the name may refer to the hill S. of the settlement’. In Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 167), she reiterated that the *dūn* for Quorndon ‘refers to an uninhabited hill adjacent to the settlement’. Although this hill has been severely quarried, it is still possible to see something of its extent and location.<sup>89</sup> Grannd (2022) selected a different location resulting in a different polygon, as shown by the comparison between Figures 24 and 25.



<sup>89</sup> The quarrying for granite (evidenced since prehistoric times) actually fits with the qualifier which is OE *cweorn* ‘mill stone, quern stone’. A bigger problem is that the hill is also associated with the name Buddon, *Buddon* 1379 (Cox 1998-2019, 7: 170), which is another *dūn*-name. It is possible that the hill had two names, perhaps one on the north side facing the village of Quorndon and one on the south, where Buddon wood is. Alternatively, the presence of the name Buddon at this site might mean that the *dūn* of Quorndon was originally elsewhere.



25. Quorndon in Grannd (2022, 3:450).



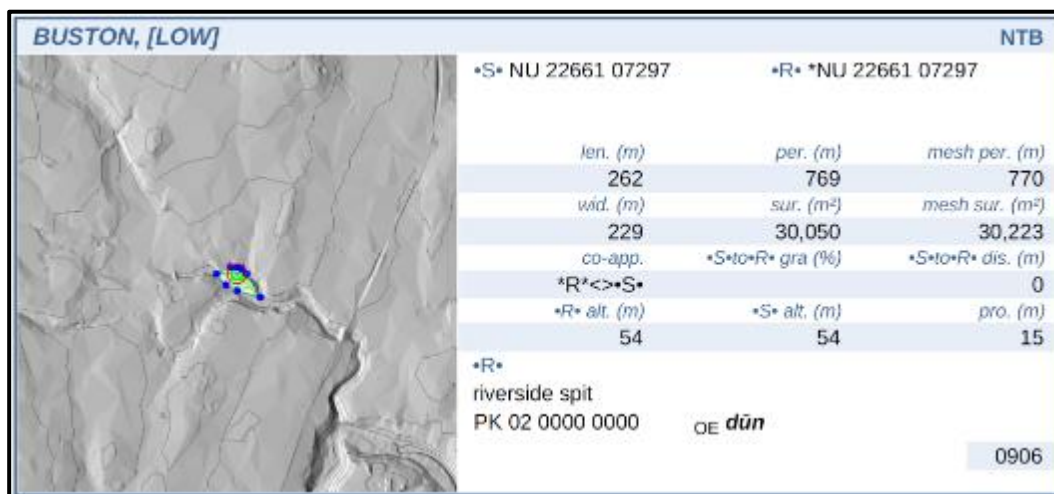
26. Quorndon/Buddon (A.Lloyd: August 2022) NGR 455540 314603 looking NE 800m from the summit of the *dūn* as chosen by Gelling.

#### - Buston (Northumberland)

Buston (Northumberland), *Buttesdon* 1166 (Mawer 1920b, 35), is another settlement split into two, forming High and Low Buston. Gelling and Cole (2023) selected High Buston as their choice for the *dūn*, whilst Grannd (2022) selected Low Buston. Again, the results flowing from each choice are different as Figures 27 and 28 show.



27. High Buston (A.Cole).<sup>90</sup>



28. Grannd (2022, 3:318).

- Callerton (Northumberland)

Callerton (Northumberland) was attested as *Calverduna* between 1100 and 1135 (Mawer 1920b, 37). There are several dispersed locations which bear the name,

<sup>90</sup> The grid reference given in Gelling and Cole (2023) is one for High Buston itself rather than the position from which the picture is taken. Based on this study's site visit, the image appears to have been taken from the east, less than 300m from the summit itself.

including High Callerton, Black Callerton, Callerton Grange, Callerton Common and Lane. Nurminen (2012, Table 7, No. 4) recorded that Callerton

is the name of a settlement situated on comparatively low-lying ground by the Ouse Burn. Present-day C~ is a 20th century settlement; the original C~ settlement was apparently at, or near either Black C~, High C~, Darras Hall or C~ Hall ... The reference of OE *dūn* is uncertain as there are several hills in the area which might be referred to as *dūns*. The reference is here thought to be to the hill at the foot of which High C~ and C~ Hall are situated.

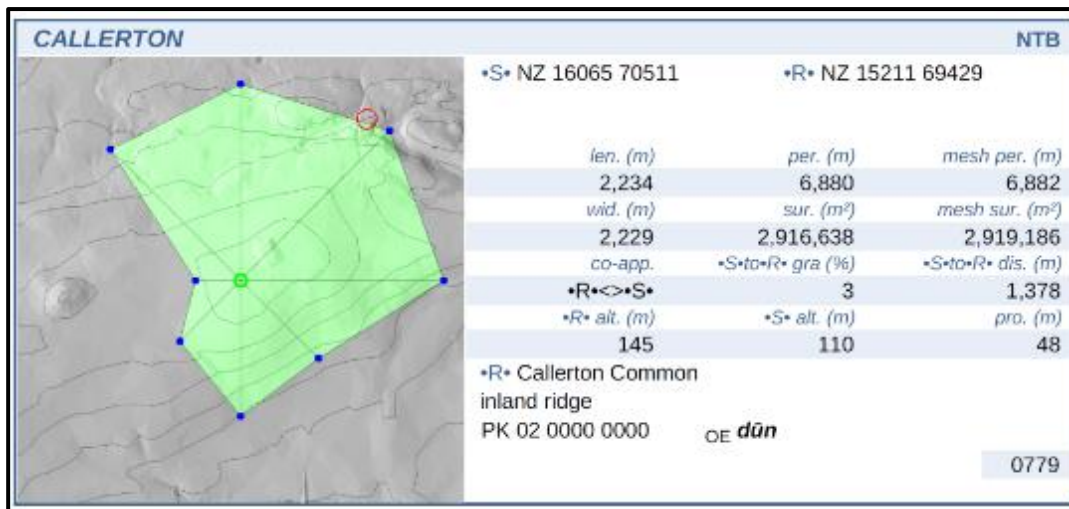
Even with the benefit of this description, it is not completely clear which feature Nurminen selected as the *dūn*. Based on map analysis and site visits, the most defined rise, at the foot of which High Callerton and Callerton Hall could be said to be situated, is the feature named Brough Hill on modern OS 1:25,000 maps.



29. Brough Hill (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 416356 570700 looking S 300m from the summit.

Grannd (2022) selected a summit for the *dūn* much further south-west, modelling Callerton Common as the *dūn*.

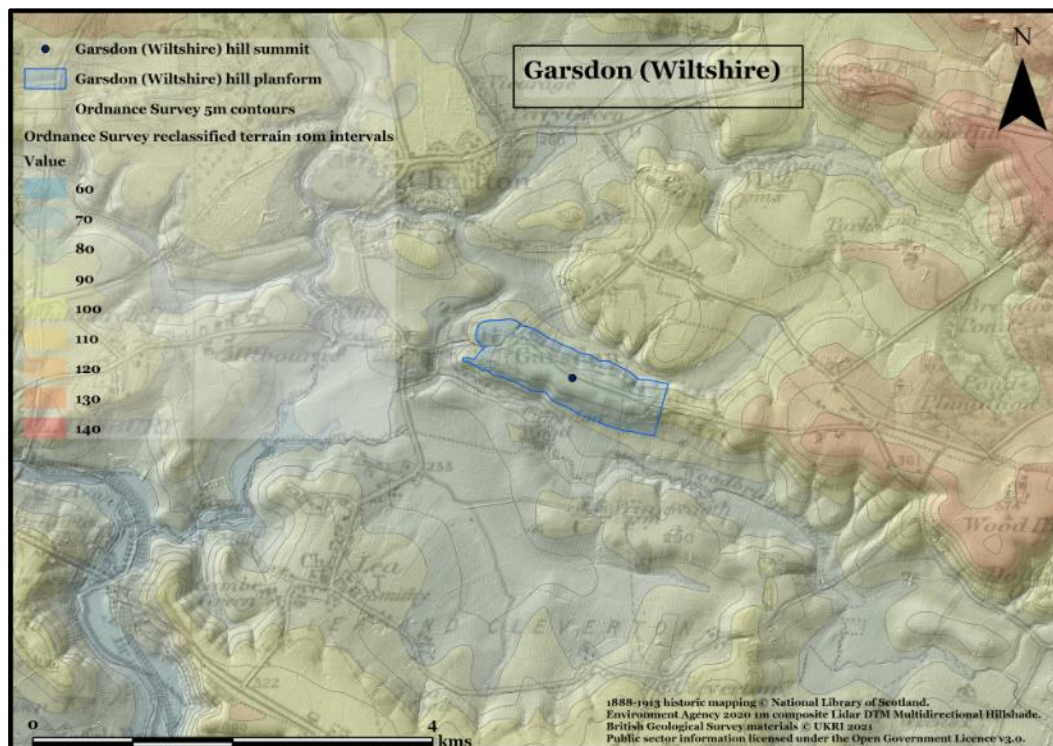




30. Grannd (2022, 3:274).

- Garsdon (Wiltshire)

Garsdon (Wiltshire) is attested in a charter as *Gersdune*, S243 701 [12<sup>th</sup>] (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1939, 58-59). Based on site visits and map analysis, this study identified as the *dūn* the hill along which the settlement sits and which continues to the east-south-east.



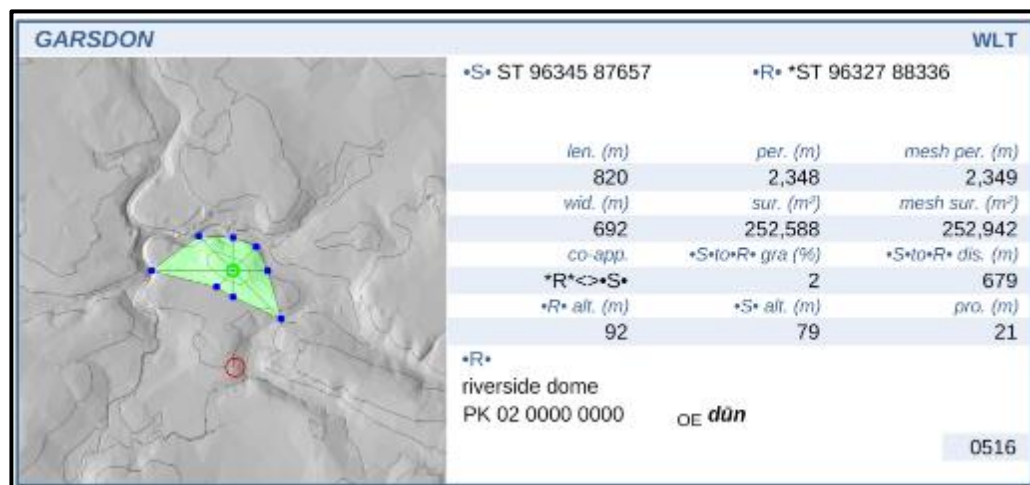
31. A polygon delimiting the hill on which Garsdon sits at the western end.





32. Garsdon (A.Lloyd: November 2021) NGR 396563, 187446 looking NE 500m from the summit identified by this study.

Grannd (2022) identified the *dūn* as land further north, close to another settlement called Charlton.



33. Grannd (2022, 3:181).

The level of disagreement between researchers is stark. The challenge of selecting the ‘correct’ feature to analyse goes well beyond a methodological challenge. It poses fundamental questions about how recognisable and distinctive these features are on the ground. It undermines the idea that universally diagnostic profiles might be the essence of their meaning.

### 3.5.2. Where does the hill begin and end?

In some instances, researchers agree on the likely feature that is the eponymous feature. However, they disagree considerably on its limits.<sup>91</sup> This becomes particularly acute where GIS is used and there is an attempt to define the hill using a polygon (see 2.4.1. above). The problem is accentuated where metrics such as length, breadth, area and summit height are used to assess how alike features are, and with what consistency oronymic elements were used in place-naming.

It remains a problem using the methodology employed by Gelling and Cole, viewing the feature from elsewhere in the landscape and analysing its profile. As will be seen below, the framing of a hill, the distance from which profiles are depicted and the size (as well as angle) of the window of reference are all critical to the kind of profile that is generated. A profile changes considerably if part of a hill is excluded. Since researchers differ on where the feature begins or ends, there is considerable scope for argument about the correct profile.

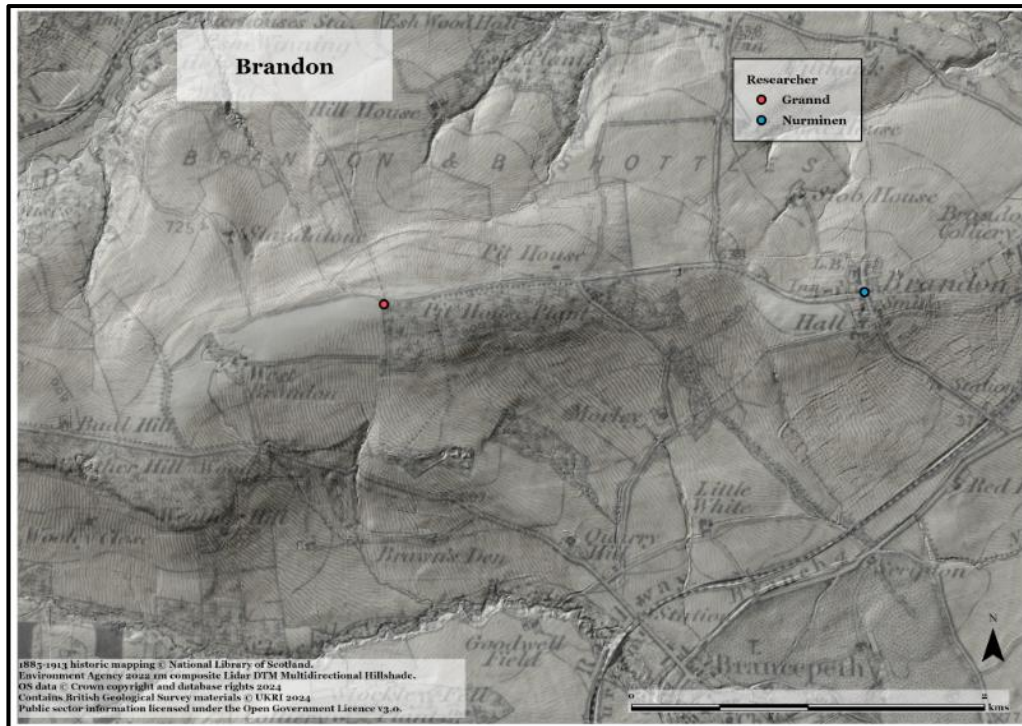
To illustrate with some examples:

- Brandon (Durham)

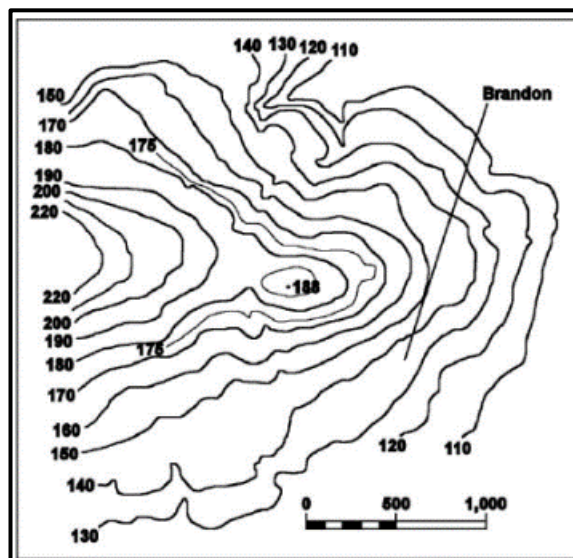
Brandon (Durham) was attested as *Braindune* in c. 1190 (Mawer 1920b, 30). Whilst both Nurminen and Grannd agreed on the feature which was the *dūn*, they made very different choices about summit location. Grannd placed the summit much further west than the settlement which sits on an eastern spur. Nurminen (2012, Table 7, No.2) said that the village was ‘situated partly at the foot of, and partly on the slopes of a rounded hill-spur forming part of a very extensive ridge formation’. The question of how to draw boundaries is particularly problematic when features are large and not naturally delimited. The researcher has to draw cutoff lines based on judgement not driven by topography. Since *dūn*-sites not infrequently occupy spurs, this a particularly vexed problem for *dūn*-names, albeit it also affects the other oronyms.

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<sup>91</sup> Although presented in separate sections, the topics covered in 3.5.1. and 3.5.2. shade into one another. A point is reached where the boundary lines are drawn so differently between studies that, effectively, some might say researchers have chosen different hills: see the discussion of Billesdon below.

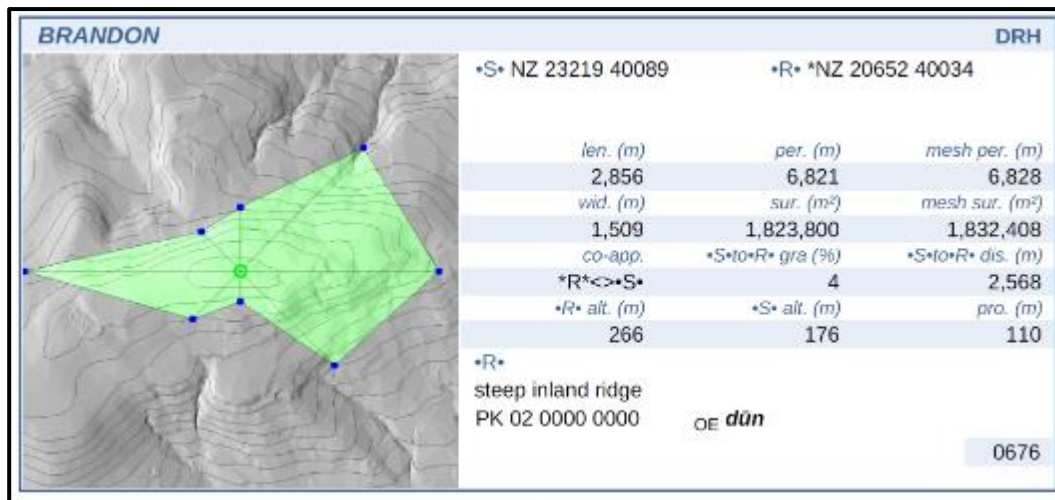


34. Brandon (Durham) showing the different locations chosen for the summit by different researchers (note the scale indicating 2.7km between the two points).



35. Nurminen (2012, 153).

Nurminen (2012, 152) calculated a length of 900m for the *dūn* of Brandon; the width varied between 200-1200m. She recorded the height as 188m (Nurminen 2012, Table 7, No.2).



36. Grannd (2002, 3:238).

Grannd assessed the length of the *dūn* as 2,856m and its width as 1,509m. Its height was calculated to be 266m. These dimensions are very different from those calculated by Nurminen.<sup>92</sup>

- Brandon (Northumberland)

A second Brandon in Northumberland was attested in c. 1150 as *Bremdona* (Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 80). Nurminen (2012, Table 7, No.1) stated that Brandon is the name of a settlement situated in the valley in which the River Breamish flows. There are prominent hill-features NNE, WNW and SW of B~, and the reference of OE *dūn* is, therefore, uncertain; it is here thought to be to the hill NNE of the settlement.

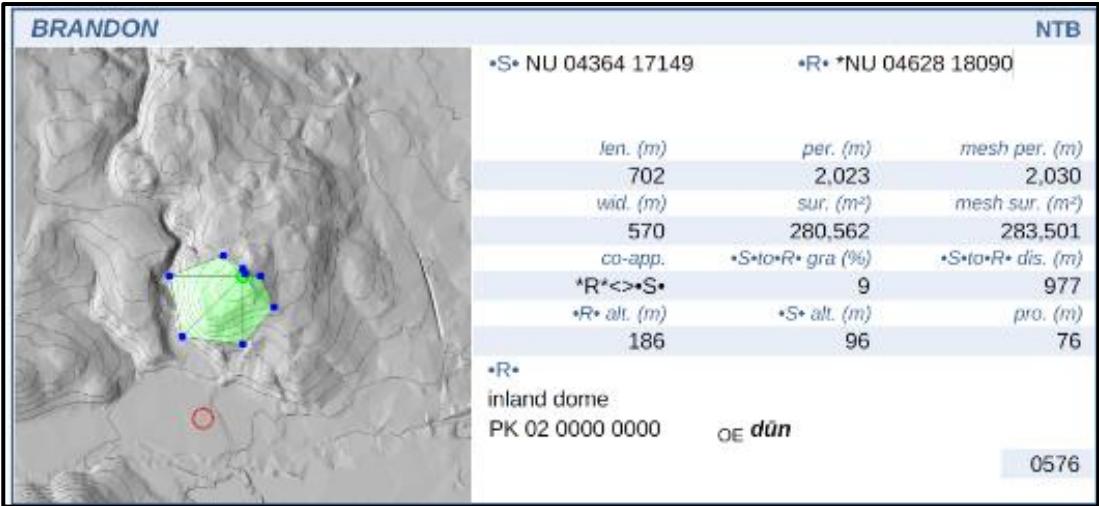
Despite the uncertainty, Grannd agreed with Nurminen on the location of the *dūn*. The relevant hill has a hillfort on top of it (NHLE 1006528), albeit the current settlement bearing the name sits at the foot of the hill to the south.

<sup>92</sup> The eastern spur on which the settlement of Brandon sits is not on the image of the *dūn* generated by Grannd (Figure 36). It is outside the frame of reference.



37. Brandon (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 404139 617151 looking NNE one kilometre from the summit.

However, notwithstanding agreement on the *dūn*-identity, the dimensions Nurminen and Grannd record for the *dūn* vary considerably. Nurminen (2012, Table 7, No.1) assessed the length to be ‘?1,300m’ and the width as varying between 150-1,100m.



38. Grannd (2022, 3:202).

Grannd recorded a length of 702m and a width of 570m.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Grannd’s methodology did not involve capturing the full extent of a hill, as will be discussed further below. It is therefore not possible to compare metrics from his study with another if that other study sought to measure the full extent of the hill.

- Callerton (again)

The discussion in 3.5.1. noted the difference between Nurminen and Grannd in chosen starting point for this *dūn*-name. The resultant dimensions given by each vary considerably. Nurminen (2012, Table 7, No.4) recorded a length of ‘?500m’ and width varying between 75-300m, whilst Grannd (2022), having selected the more expansive common land to the south-west, recorded a length of 2,234m and a width of 2,229m (see Figure 30).

- Billesdon (Leicestershire)

Billesdon (Leicestershire) is attested in 1086 as *Billesdone* (Cox 1998-2019, 4:4). Gelling (2000 [1984], 156) noted that Billesdon

stands at the source of Billesdon brook, one of six streams which rise on the adjacent hill. Local knowledge would be required in order to judge whether an earlier settlement was likely to have stood on top of the hill.

A site visit, as well as computer modelling, has shown how difficult this *dūn* is to model with certainty in terms of its boundaries. It is part of a general hill range that is itself amongst other upland undulations, rather than sitting discretely, overlooking a vale or lowland area. It is far less visible than might have been anticipated, and harder to distinguish on the ground from the rest of the hill range surrounding it.<sup>94</sup> The current settlement of Billesdon spills out over two different hills. Both hills have their own independent names.<sup>95</sup> It is not clear that the historical centre was necessarily on one as opposed to the other of them. The parish church which is of medieval age lies on the lower slopes of the southern hill, not the northern. On the

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<sup>94</sup> The computational viewshed (see 3.11.1.) showing how lacking in visibility the hill is, when viewed from the surrounding landscape, corroborates the physical experience on the ground.

<sup>95</sup> The hill to the south is known as Kates Hill, first attested in 1826. Cox (1998-2019, 4:5) suggested that this name included the OScan personal name *Kāti* or *Kati*. The hill to the north is known as Old Hill, *Oldhull* 1467 x 1484. Cox (1998-2019, 4:5) suggested OE *wald* ‘high forest land’ as the qualifier. From the single available attestation, the qualifier could also be OE *ald* ‘old’ (see 4.6.1. for further discussion of this qualifying element and its potential significance). If the latter is the case, the northern hill might have been settled and used for a long time, making it potentially the more likely candidate for the *dūn*.



other hand, the Billesdon parish boundaries follow the contours of the northern hill. Medieval pottery finds suggest a northern locus for the medieval settlement, as do ridge and furrow remains visible on the ground and in the EA lidar. This study selected the northern hill. Grannd (2022, 3:273) selected the southern hill.

In contrast, Bourne (2003, 31) observed

Given the dominance of this hill in the landscape for miles around it is reasonable to assume that this place would have been significant in the early Anglo-Saxon settlement of the area.

That certainty and clear dominance was definitely not the experience of this study. Coplow, to the north east of Billesdon, is a far more distinctive landmark. This is sometimes referred to as Billesdon Coplow, and perhaps it was this peaked hill with an abrupt profile to which Bourne was referring.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Coplow has an independent name first attested in 1335 as *Coppelowe* (Cox 1998-2019, 4: 5). It is not a ridge feature; it is hard to see how it might have been described by OE *bill* ‘ridge’ or OE *bile* ‘beak; promontory’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:99-100) (see 4.8.1. for discussion of this collocation as a topographical descriptor rather than a personal name). Therefore, it seems unlikely that the name Billesdon originally referred to the hill now known as Coplow.



39. Billesdon environs (A.Lloyd: June 2022) NGR 470984 301905 looking NE just over one kilometre from the summit of the *dūn* identified by this study. The distinct hill to the left is Coplow; Billesdon is on the right of the picture and blends into the general hilly outlook.

### 3.5.3. The underlying philosophical problem

Although this issue of a lack of consensus is not foregrounded in the discussions of Gelling and Cole, nor in those studies which came after, it is in fact a well-known problem discussed within other disciplines, such as those of geography, archaeology and even philosophy.<sup>97</sup> To illustrate, people might think they know what Scafell Pike is, as long as they have some familiarity with the Lake District, yet Fisher and Wood (1998, 249) were correct when they said

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<sup>97</sup> The problem was discussed in Lloyd (2021a). There is a brief discussion of the topic in Grannd (2022, 1:223-224) who observed that ‘being able to determine the edge of a relief-feature... is a vital aspect of human perception and fundamental to the processes of linguistic categorization the GCH [Gelling-Cole Hypothesis] proposes’ and ‘a relief-feature becomes knowable and therefore nameable because it has a boundary, however vague, that can be distinguished, and also such perceptions are somehow shared between observers’. This study agrees completely with these comments by Grannd. However, the overall study in Grannd (2022) did not go on to determine the edge of relief features in human perception within its results (see 3.8.1.).



If asked to draw the extent of Scafell Pike, could you really do so, and would it have the same extent in interpretations by different individuals?

Attempts outlined above in 3.5.1. and 3.5.2. by different researchers to identify and delimit relevant features illustrate this problem vividly. ‘Classifying geographical phenomena on the basis of single or multiple attributes is not a precise science’ (Fisher and Wood 1998, 247). It is interesting how often human beings can agree upon a core of identity for an object but endlessly debate the bounds of that identity. As Fisher and Wood (1998, 250) observed

While many people would believe each feature to have an extent, they cannot unequivocally specify the points of transition from mountain to non-mountain, village to non-village.

Humans strongly perceive landforms as distinct objects when they are convex, since convex objects are seen as enclosing (Smith and Mark 2001, 15). Hill forms are often convex so perhaps it is not surprising that humans have made distinct objects of them in their perception and discourse, and given them names. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 143) noted that convexity had a substantial lead over concavity in OE topographical vocabulary, although both are very well represented therein.

Philosophers have been quite concerned about the fact that so-called ‘objects’ are not objects in reality (they cannot be defined with sufficient precision) but are objects mainly within human perception.<sup>98</sup> Mountains have been said to be ‘a mere reflection of human habits of perception and action’ and ‘what is called a “Berg” in German may not coincide with what is called a “mountain” in English’ (Smith and Mark 2001, 2). There is a complex interplay between the physical world and shared (or divergent) human perception of that world.

Smith and Mark repeatedly noted that the physical world is, in fact, modelled by scientists as a mathematical field continuum, not a series of discrete objects. When

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<sup>98</sup> Sainsbury (1989) attempted to separate out vagueness of object from vagueness of identity. The article specifically discussed Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) as an example of a vague object. Varzi (2001) argued that the vagueness of object was only a semantic or conceptual vagueness. Mount Everest was one of the examples discussed. The debate ranges over ontological versus epistemic vagueness.

one is trying to understand gravitational processes, such as erosion, drainage, run-off, landslides, flooding etc., it is fields that are used to quantify processes and predict impacts and effects. These fields are modelling the processes that generated landforms and hills in the first place. On this basis, named hills are largely constructs of human perception; they are an imposition of discrete identity onto a continuity in variation of the earth's surface.<sup>99</sup>

The mountain is not a real (*bona fide*) feature; it can be interpreted as simply a region in the continuum of variation of the surface of the earth, which people choose to identify and name (Fisher, Wood and Cheng 2004, 106-107).

Why do humans do this? Humans appear to make 'objects' out of slight variations in elevation ('slight' being measured relative to the overall size of the earth's geoid)<sup>100</sup> when those variations 'afford' humans different possibilities (Smith and Mark 2001, 11). Smith and Mark were explicitly referencing Gibson's theory of 'affordance' (Gibson 1979, 127-143).<sup>101</sup> An 'affordance' 'consists in a particular sort of opportunity for interaction that something in the environment has in relation to the animal' or human (Thompson 1995, 224). The 'affordance' concept aims at a balance between the role of the human perceiving the possibilities afforded by the environment and the real physical characteristics in that environment which are doing the affording. Affordances are therefore neither wholly objective nor subjective; they are relative to the human perceiver who perceives the opportunity. Thus, they are also relative to the scale of that human and their desired activity, as well as the scale of the environment and in this case the particular landform. Whatever the ongoing discussion about various aspects of Gibson's theories, they

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<sup>99</sup> 'Landform kinds do indeed exist; but their ontological status is of a secondary sort, to be ranked (perhaps) with kinds of settlement... rather than with the very joints of reality' (Smith and Mark 2001, 17).

<sup>100</sup> 'Variations above and below the geoid have a range of less than about 22 km, and this is ... about one third of one percent of the planet's radius of about 6400 km' (Smith and Mark 2001, 11).

<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, Gibson (1979, 134-135) specifically said that 'to perceive an affordance was not to classify an object'.

have been influential in debates about the use of GIS in landscape archaeology, in particular for the modelling of terrain and of visibility (Gillings 2009, 2012, 2015, 2017; Lock and Pouncett 2017).

Gelling's earliest discussions of *dūn* focused particularly on the utility of a *dūn*-site for settlement, rather than defining any universal, precise profile for a *dūn*. This placed the emphasis on the interaction between the landscape and how humans were able to use that landscape; in Gibsonian terms, what that landscape afforded the human. This study supports Gelling's earlier instincts about the core of the meaning of *dūn* rather than the later focus on profile.

#### 3.5.4. Is this a modern problem?

A key point arising from this discussion is that the inherent ambiguity in how hills are perceived is not a modern problem. The underlying landforms in most cases have not changed out of all recognition during the time elapsed since the early medieval period. Where the researcher encounters difficulties in being sure which the eponymous feature is, this is an ambiguity that an early medieval traveller would also have encountered, entering the landscape without prior knowledge and searching for signposts via the oronyms considered in this study.

Moreover, where researchers disagree on exactly how to quantify a hill – where to draw the line defining its edges – these are the kinds of debates that are fundamental to human perception. Humans have always had the capacity to identify the core of an object such as a hill, whilst living with uncertainty and a lack of consensus over that particular object's precise boundaries. The challenge is rendered more acute with the advent of GIS and modern computational technology, but it is not a problem generated by these methods of analysis. It is also encountered when traditional and analogue methods of analysis are used, such as line drawings (see 3.7.).

In addition, an exercise in geomorphic taxonomy should not be confused with historical place-naming. In the first, a survey might formulate and agree upon the definition of a landform, classifying it by certain mathematical metrics. It would

subsequently apply that definition universally and consistently across the country.<sup>102</sup> This is not what was happening in place-naming. There was no nation-wide survey to find the landforms which most merited the name, which fitted to the greatest extent any definition formulated for the oronym, before applying the name to a particular site.

Again, all these points go beyond methodological challenge. They raise the substantive question of whether universally consistent and recognisable profiles could ever have existed for *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-sites.

### **3.6. The role of fieldwork**

Gelling and Cole placed great emphasis on fieldwork. Fieldwork is vital in any attempt to understand naming practice. The fact that uncertainty is encountered on the ground does not mean that fieldwork has failed or is redundant. Quite the opposite; fieldwork that reveals ambiguity helps to clarify where the essence of meaning and nuance in the use of particular names may or may not lie. By ruling out one option on the ground, other options have to be looked for to explain naming phenomena.

In an age of changing technology, fieldwork keeps the researcher closely allied with the vantage points and perspectives from which naming arose in the first place; these are the perspectives that motivated naming practice. The plan-view afforded by detailed OS mapping and the topographic modelling using 1m EA lidar data were not available to medieval occupants of the land. Aeroplanes did not exist; aerial photography and satellite imagery were not a reality. Names were generated by those on the ground, typically on foot (or on a beast of burden), never in a car.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> The revisions to the list of Munros in Scotland illustrate how even a metric that appears deceptively simple to calculate – that of being over 3,000 feet in height – is not easy to apply. The complexity of topography forces debate over where one Munro ends and another begins. Is a ‘top’ an independent Munro in its own right or merely a connected shoulder of an existing Munro?

<sup>103</sup> The fieldwork carried out for this study has highlighted afresh how different the impression of a landscape is when gained from a car driving along a road, as compared to being on foot walking historical footpaths.

The highest elevation that a medieval viewer of the landscape might have had is the vantage point from a neighbouring hill.

Although hills were used to obtain views of the surrounding landscape (as evidenced by the frequent usage of *dūn*-sites in the *OE Orosius* to do just that in various Roman battles), where hills themselves were named for their appearance, it was their appearance from elsewhere in the landscape that mattered. It is near impossible to assess a hill profile (or other visual impression a hill makes) whilst standing on top of it. Given this, a methodology such as that laid out in Grannd (2022), in which hill-forms are assessed exclusively from a summit point, not looking from elsewhere in the landscape, will never be measuring the same definition of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* set out by Gelling and Cole.

A third of all located place-names in this study's corpus have been visited. This is thought to be the most concentrated number of site visits to *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-places made by any research project to date.<sup>104</sup> Site visits were made to all parts of the country, with concentrated clusters of visits in the north and in the centre and south midlands. Computational techniques were used alongside fieldwork. They are described further below, and were tested and verified by physical site visits.

### 3.7. The presentation of fieldwork

The presentation of fieldwork can smooth out data. Presentation of a simplified picture radically alters the experience of a reader of a publication viewing images from that of someone present in the landscape looking at the landscape itself. The debate between Gelling, Cole and Kitson concerning the presentation of

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<sup>104</sup> The fieldwork carried out by Gelling and Cole obviously encompassed a far wider range of landscape terminology, not just *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-sites. Grannd (2022, 1:282) calculated that there were 6,302 names overall considered within Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]). Looking specifically at *berg*-, *crug*-, and *dūn*-names, the total number listed in their publications is just over five hundred. Of those, it is not clear how many of them were actually visited. The number of line drawings and photographs published in Gelling (1998); Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) and Gelling and Cole (2023) for *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*-sites, for which site visits must have been carried out, was thirty nine.

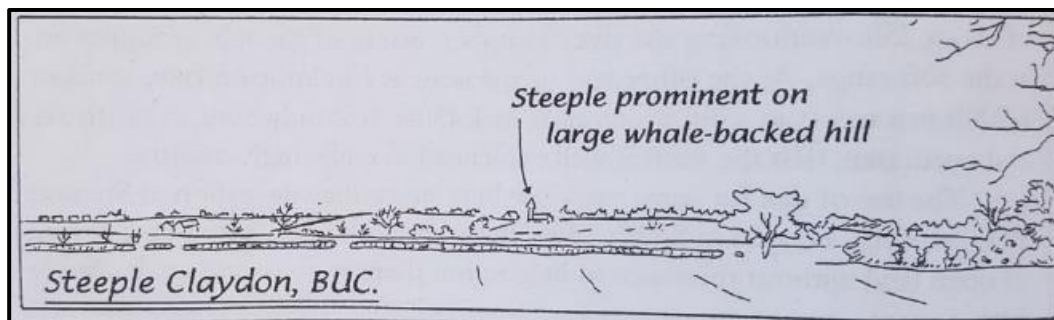
Crookbarrow (Worcestershire) was alluded to above (3.1.). Just as there is advantage in comparing previous studies to identify the level of divergence between researchers in the identification of a hill, so there is value in assessing how different researchers present their respective results from the same sites.

### 3.7.1. Line drawings

Pratt (2005) and Nurminen (2012), following Gelling (1998) and Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]), used line drawings to illustrate a small number of the profiles they observed. Line drawings are helpful but they present a static and single view of a place. They are also highly simplified. By very definition of being a line drawing, they reduce the amount of complexity within the landscape evident to the observer's eye.

#### - Steeple Claydon (Buckinghamshire)

Steeple Claydon was attested in 1086 as *Claindone* (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 53). It is one of the archetypal line drawings offered in Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) to illustrate the whale-backed profile of a *dūn*. Comparing the line drawing and the image on which it was based, it is difficult to discern whether what is drawn on the left-hand side of the line drawing is the slope of the end of the *dūn* or a hedged field boundary beyond which the hill continues.



40. Gelling and Cole (2014, 166).



41. A. Cole: Gelling and Cole (2023).

It is critical to know the distance from the hill at which an image was taken or drawn. Questions of scale are highly important in landform identification, as discussed further in 3.8. It is not just computational methods that are affected by scale. By standing close to a feature and cropping out extraneous features (a judgement as to what is extraneous is involved), it is possible to make almost any hill look as if it has a level summit or is continuously rounded. Clear grid references for vantage points need to be supplied. The viewer must be alert to the fact that the distance from which a hill is shown is a vital ingredient in assessing what its bounds and visual characteristics are.

- Earsdon (Northumberland)

Earsdon (Northumberland) was attested as *Erdisduna* in the reign of Henry II (Ekwall 1960, 156). The photograph of Earsdon taken for this study in Figure 42 is just under two kilometres away from the summit of the *dūn* as the crow flies. In a flattish landscape, the rise that is the *dūn* is evidently slight. The line drawing drawn in Nurminen (2012) must have been drawn much closer to the summit.<sup>105</sup> It is

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<sup>105</sup> No grid reference is given for the position from which the drawing was created, other than stating that it was from the SSE. The grid reference given – NZ1993 – is

framed such that only the slopes of the hill are retained within the drawing, nothing of the surrounding context. The result is an image that looks more distinct as a profile than might be the case for a traveller on the ground.

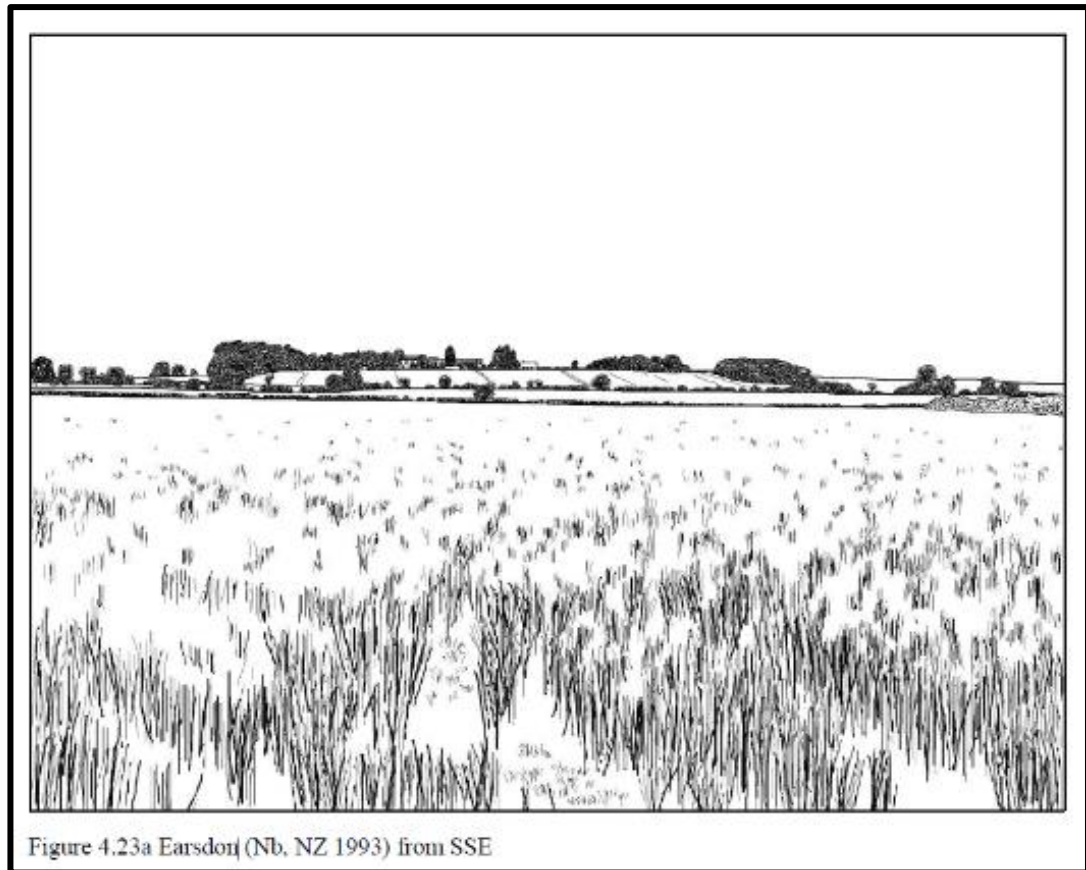


42. Earsdon (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 419474 592219 looking NNE just under two kilometres from the summit.

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the bottom south-west corner point of the grid square in which Earsdon sits, and so is a generic grid reference for the grid square not the precise vantage point.



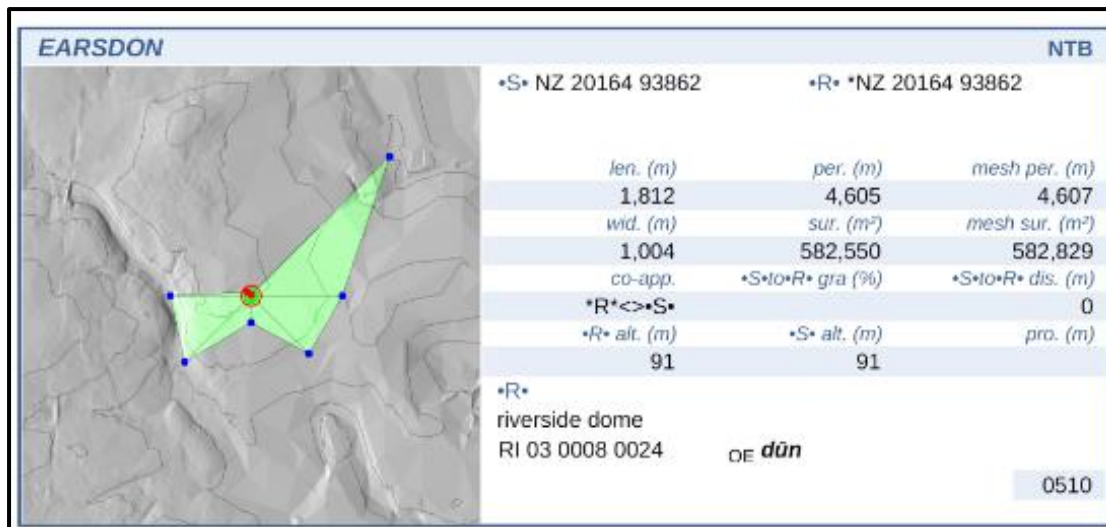


43. Nurminen (2012, 146).

The slightness of the hill relative to the surrounding undulating landscape is further evidenced by the results recorded in Grannd (2022). That study's software (explained below in 3.8.) generated a rather distended polygon, probably because the changes in height were so slight in certain directions that the first 'break of slope' that the software registered was elongated in those directions.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Unsurprisingly, this produced differences in measured length and width between Grannd and Nurminen. Grannd recorded them as 1,812m and 1,004m respectively, whilst Nurminen (2012, Table 7, No.8) recorded them as 500m and varying between 50-325m respectively.



44. Grannd (2022, 3:179).

Almost all the line drawings used in Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]), Pratt (2005) and Nurminen (2012) do not show a landscape backdrop. They give the appearance that the hill feature is skylined or silhouetted, which renders any profile more visible than it is in reality. In truth, there are often many other aspects of landscape crowding in behind and in front. The hill feature is in fact green or brown with a wider green or brown background as well as foreground. There is little colour differential enabling the hill to stand out or be easily discernible, other than from immediately adjacent to it. This has implications for using the hill as a navigational signpost (see further discussion at 3.11.2.). These implications are masked by the use of line drawings for the presentation of fieldwork. Line drawings utilise a binary black and white colour contrast not found in reality.

### 3.7.2. Photographs

Some of the previous points also apply to the use of photographic images, particularly if taken immediately in front of the feature rather than from further afield. Zoom lenses mean that it is possible to take an image which appears more dominant in the landscape, and more cropped in terms of context, than is the true case when standing at that point in the landscape. Any zoomed image should be labelled as such. In addition, photographs flatten perspective, making it difficult to judge relative distance and scale.

- Buston (again)

Figure 27, repeated here as Figure 46 to enable side-by-side comparison, showed the image Gelling and Cole (2023) used for High Buston. It was taken not more than

300m away from the summit. Arguably, at this point the viewer is already on the eastern slopes of the *dūn*. The effect is to constrain the view so that the slope occupies most of the image, without any wider context. Figure 45 looks at the same feature from just over one kilometre away and reveals a very different prospect to that in Figure 46.



45. High Buston (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 422884 607463 looking north, 1.3 kilometres from the summit.



46. High Buston (A.Cole).

### 3.7.3. Planforms

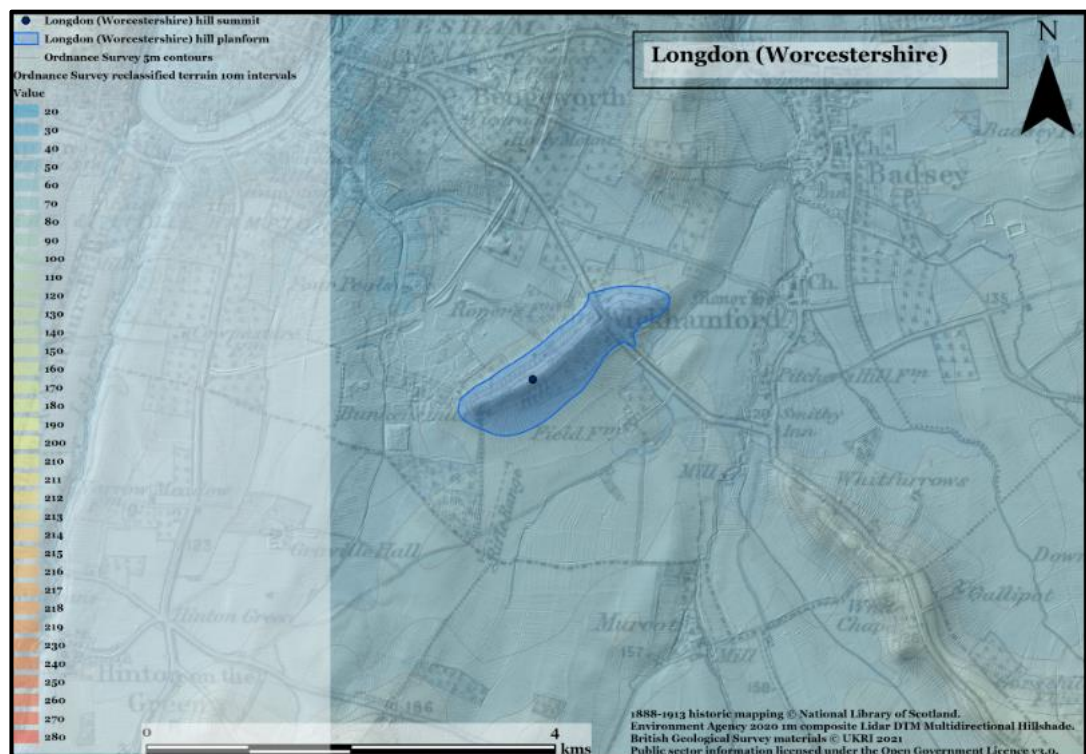
Planforms are obviously a different method of quantifying a hill; they are not equivalent to the profiles that Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000]) identified as distinctive for these oronymic elements. Nor are planforms a metric that would have been used by early medieval or medieval occupants of the land to distinguish between features and to name places. Planforms are derived from orthorectified aerial images and cartesian coordinate systems, not historical vantage points. Nevertheless, it is clear from the writings of Gelling and Cole that they looked at contour maps; they allowed modern, mapped presentations of the landscape to influence their assessment of it. Nurminen (2011; 2012, 152-153) looked at contour lines (see Figure 35), from which she derived her length and width metrics referred to above for Brandon (Northumberland), Brandon (Durham), Callerton and Earsdon. Attempting to draw planforms runs into the acute dilemma of how to identify and define the boundaries of a hill (discussed above in 3.5.1–3.5.4.). Therefore, not only is it a metric that does not equate to the visual appearance of the hill in the landscape, but it is also a metric that varies considerably from one researcher to another. It should be possible to look for consistent patterns in planform by using a single researcher. That researcher is at least likely to be internally consistent, even if they differ from another researcher. That approach has been tested in this study (see



discussion in 3.10.2. below). However, even then the planforms for a particular oronymic element do not display uniformity in scale, size or shape. They do not evidence a conclusion that a *dūn*-site will have a particular shape planform (or that a *berg*- or *crug*-site will have its own particular shape planform distinct from the other two). The following example illustrates this.

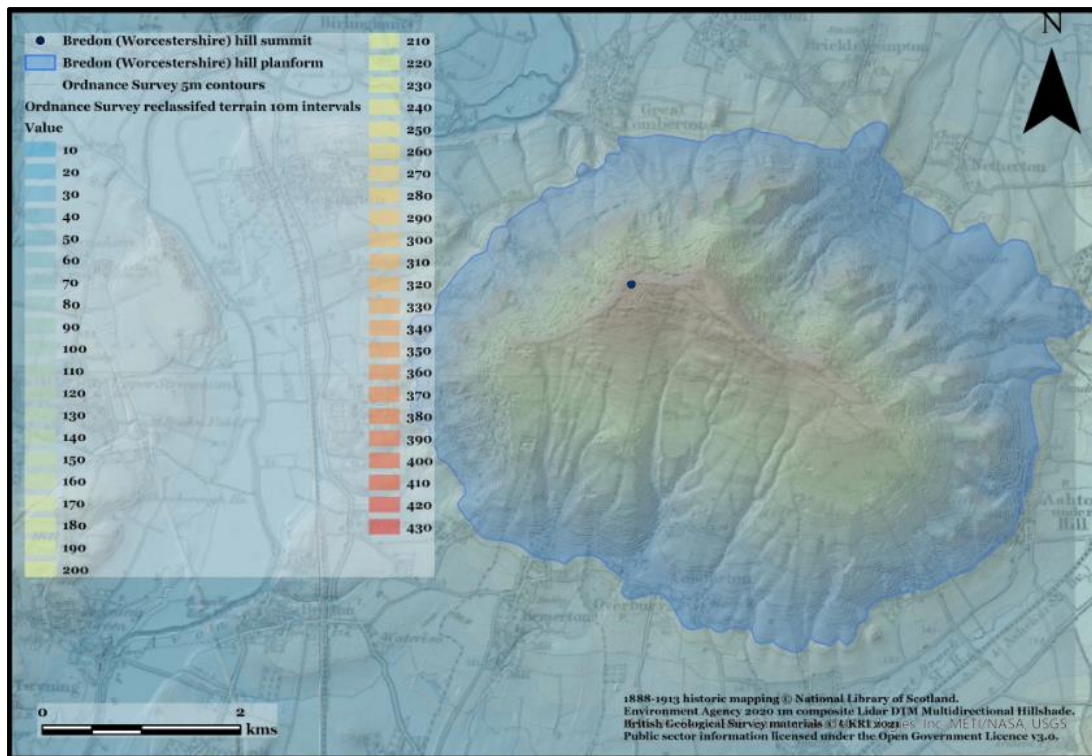
- Longdon and Bredon (Worcestershire)

Longdon is attested as *langendune*, S80 709 [12th/13th] (Mawer, Stenton and Houghton 1927, 96). The likely *dūn* is no more than seven kilometres from the *dūn* of Bredon. The latter is of considerable size, dominating the horizon at Longdon. Bredon was attested in a charter, S109 775 [11th], as *Breodun in Huicciorum* (Mawer, Stenton and Houghton 1927, 101). Hence, the names are both pre-conquest names. They are also both parish names. However, they are very different in terms of the size and shape of *dūn* they reference, as can be seen by comparing Figures 47 and 48 paying careful attention to the respective scales of each map, which are of necessity not the same given how large Bredon is.



47. Longdon (Worcestershire) planform.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>107</sup> All planforms for this study are generated by tracing around five metre contour lines, guided by an OS DTM at five metre resolution, using OS Terrain 5, as well as



48. Bredon (Worcestershire) planform.

the EA lidar hillshade model. Documentation is available online at

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/products/os-terrain-5#technical>

[https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/webhelp/os/data\\_information/os\\_products/os\\_terrain5\\_dtm.htm](https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/webhelp/os/data_information/os_products/os_terrain5_dtm.htm)

[https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/webhelp/os/data\\_information/os\\_products/os\\_terrain5\\_contours.htm](https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/webhelp/os/data_information/os_products/os_terrain5_contours.htm) [all accessed December 2024]

The ‘create mosaic dataset’, ‘add rasters to mosaic dataset’, ‘merge’, ‘reclassify’ and ‘trace’ tools in ArcGIS Pro were used. Documentation is available online at:

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/help/data/imagery/creating-mosaic-datasets-wf.htm>

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/data-management/add-rasters-to-mosaic-dataset.htm>

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/data-management/merge.htm>

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-analyst/reclassify.htm>

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/help/editing/create-segments-by-tracing-other-features.htm> [all accessed December 2024].

It is problematic that *dūn* can be used for two such different sites in terms of planform. Nor can this be explained away on account of geographical location, status or age of name. These *dūn*-names are not separated by geographical distance, status of place, or chronology. It suggests that the presence of a particular planform is not the key to the use of *dūn* in a name.

#### 3.7.4. Summit heights

Many of the previous studies have commented on the height of features referenced by *berg*-, *crug*- or *dūn*-names.<sup>108</sup> However, absolute height above sea level is actually a fairly meaningless statistic in this context. Relative height compared to the surrounding landscape is what a viewer sees. There are small features with relative heights of only twenty or thirty metres, sitting on an elevated plateau such that they record a high absolute height. The viewer is not aware of the absolute height above sea level, only the relative height within the immediate landscape. A much more imposing feature, in terms of its height over the surrounding landscape, will record a lower absolute height if it is situated in landscape that is close to sea level.

- Heber (WRY)

Heber is attested as *Haybergh* in 1290 (Smith 1961–1963, 6:38). The name references a small drumlin-like hill. Its relative elevation is no more than twenty metres compared to the surrounding landscape. Its summit height in absolute terms is 172m because it sits on a relatively elevated landscape.

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<sup>108</sup> This can be done with considerable accuracy using the OS five-metre DTM or EA one-metre lidar, creating a point on the map in ArcGIS and extracting the elevation data for that point using the ‘extract multi-values to points’ tool. Documentation is available online at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/data-management/create-feature-class.htm>  
<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-analyst/extract-multi-values-to-points.htm>

[both accessed December 2024]



49. Heber (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 386484 449758 looking SE less than 300m from the summit.

- Fawber (WRY)

Fawber is attested in 1400 as *Fallebergh* (Smith 1961–1963, 6:219). The name references another small feature with a relative elevation of roughly thirty metres over the immediately adjacent landscape, but an absolute height of 329m.



50. Fawber (A.Lloyd: October 2022) NGR 380827 474471 looking NW just under 200m from the summit.



Roseberry Topping is far more dominant in the landscape (see Figure 17). It has a relative height difference of approximately 200m on its western flank and 80m on its eastern flank) but it is only 320m tall in terms of absolute height, smaller than Fawber. This illustrates how absolute height is a misleading statistic.

- Brom(e)sberrow (Gloucestershire)

Brom(e)sberrow was first attested with certainty as *Brunmeberge* in 1086 (Smith 1964–1965, 3:166). Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 148) wrote that Bromsberrow was a ‘relatively high’ *berg*. In fact, the hill identified by Gelling and Cole as the *berg* is only 70m above sea level, and only 15m above the surrounding landscape. It is nowhere near as high as the previous three *berg*-sites in absolute terms. It is not even as high in relative terms, relative to the respective landscape.

Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 165) wrote that height ranges for *dūn*-sites were between 200-500ft OD, that is 61-152m above sea level, although exceptions at either end were also mentioned. Gelling (2000 [1984], 143) gave the same range writing that only in north Staffordshire and north Derbyshire was *dūn* well evidenced in ‘really high country’. In fact, there are many *dūn*-sites in this study outside that height range, in terms of the absolute height of their summits above sea level. Grannd (2022, 1:260, 320) found that Berwickshire hills referenced by *dūn*-names (or their etymological comparators or successors) were on average 221m in height. Berwickshire seems to be an elevated county, as are various English counties; the overall elevation of the particular region dictates the absolute heights recorded. Therefore, the summit height metric does not help when assessing the topographical distinctiveness of *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-sites. There is no particular height range that can be attached to any of these oronymic elements with diagnostic distinctiveness. They vary considerably depending on the surrounding landscape.

### **3.8. Automated landform extraction**

Pursuing an understandable desire to mitigate subjective variability, Grannd (2022) turned to a computational approach to formulate a replicable methodology for the identification and quantification of hill features. What was quantified was far removed from what was visible to those naming the features in the first place; the logic of this methodology lay in trying to identify consistency in whatever it might be that is quantified for a particular oronymic element, as well as consistent difference between those elements, even if that was not precisely what might have

motivated place-naming. The attempt to find computational solutions is important. Ultimately, it serves to highlight the underlying issues which go beyond methodology. The work of this study (see further in 3.10.), alongside the work of Grand, demonstrates that digital methodologies do not always provide the answer, particularly if that answer is not there to be found in the underlying substantive material.

As discussed in 3.5.3., modelling the processes involved in the formation of geographic relief typically relies on mathematical fields in which there is a continuum of variables. However, geographers have also tried to classify landforms as discrete objects, such as ‘peaks’, ‘pits’, ‘ridges’, ‘valleys’, ‘saddles’ and ‘passes’.<sup>109</sup> They have sought to automate the digital identification and extraction of landform classifications, but it is not clear that such attempts have been completely successful yet (Evans 2012, 105). Once again, the key issue is the difficulty in demarcating the boundaries of landforms. This was shown to be a problem (in 3.5.1-

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<sup>109</sup> As noted in 3.5.4., this scientific process of classification does not map neatly on to the historical process of place-naming. Hence, there should be caution about using such modern methods of classification as proxies for the investigation of historical naming motivation and practice.

3.5.4) when human discretion is employed; it is all the more acute when an algorithm is used.<sup>110</sup>

It is easy to define mountain (peaks) as points, and valleys (thalwegs, not following the sinuosity of channels on floodplains) as lines, but assigning an area to either of them leaves much room for uncertainty and disagreement. (Evans 2012, 100)

Some forms of automated categorisation rely on differential calculus to define when a feature is a peak or a pit etc.<sup>111</sup> The Geomorphon software used in Grann (2022) relies on ‘line-of-sight’ analysis looking in eight directions from the researcher-chosen summit. For both kinds of software, questions of scale remain critical. The scale at which an area of landscape is analysed determines what features are found

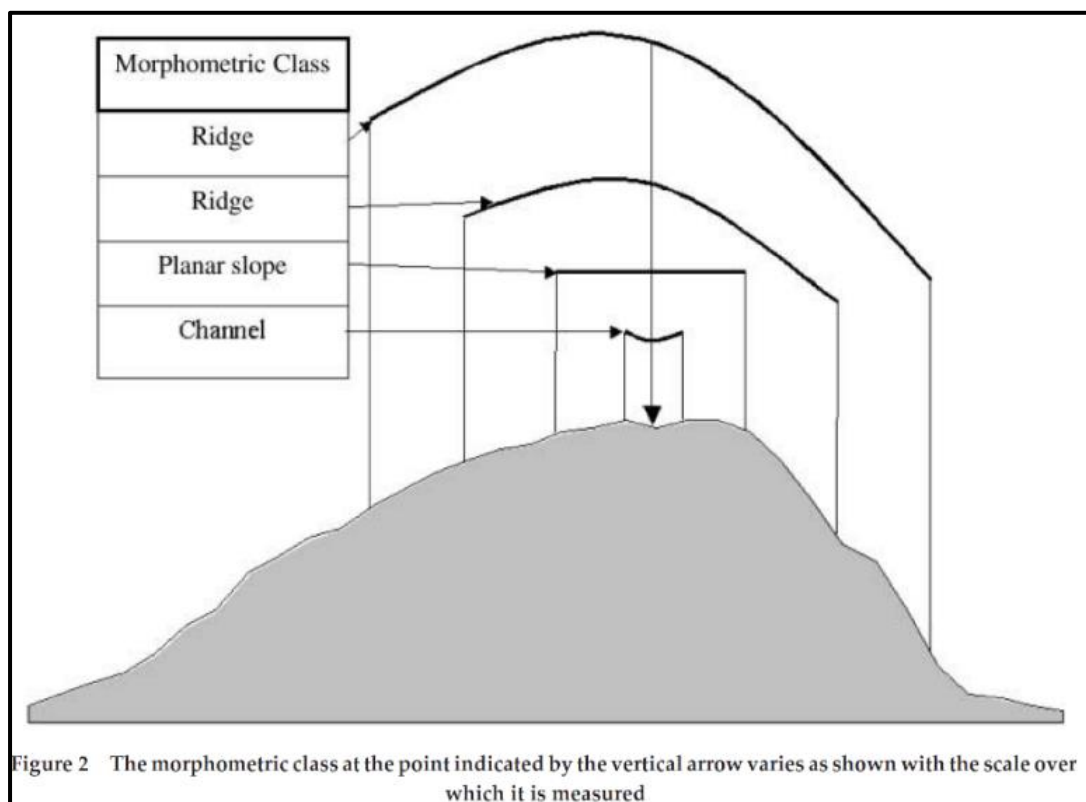
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<sup>110</sup> Drumlins are the one feature where there has been some success in extracting the boundaries of discrete landforms with some consistency, agreement and replicability (Evans 2012, 97-98). It is interesting to note the variety of names given to drumlin-features across England, as well as in places such as south-west Scotland. In Ireland equally, it seems that a variety of names were used to label drumlins in the Irish drumlin belt, stretching across fourteen counties (Aindí Mac Giolla Chomhghaill, Irish Placenames Branch, pers. comm. and unpublished paper). Flanagan (1973, 160) noticed an interchange between Irish names in *druim* (the Irish lexical element meaning ‘ridge’ from which ModE *drumlin* was derived) and those in *dún*. James (2019, 2:108, 116) and MacDonald (1981, 30-31) also observed confusion between *dùn* and *druim* in Scotland.

Given what has been observed so far, a full survey of place-names associated with drumlin-features (outwith the scope of this thesis) might well find quite a variety of place-name elements used. That this is so for a landform that is recognised by geographers as being one of the easiest to delimit is noteworthy. It illustrates that place-namers did not necessarily apply a uniform term in their naming even when there was a (relatively) uniform and recognisable shape, size and profile, as in the case of a drumlin.

<sup>111</sup> Landsurf (Wood 2009) is such a landform recognition software that is freely available.

(Fisher, Wood and Cheng 2004, 108). The size of the search window or search radius (along with other parameters) is crucial. The resolution of the DTM for the underlying landscape, which determines the extent of detail present, is also important. In other words, landform classification is not independent of scale; it is relative to the scale at which it is carried out. At a particular scale or frame of reference, a feature can appear to be a pit or channel; at a broader scale, it appears to be a plain – the ‘pit’ is seen, in a broader context, to be a small dip in an otherwise flattish landscape; yet broader still, it might become a ridge – the ‘plain’ is seen, in a larger view, to be the summit of an otherwise sloping feature. The scale-specificity of landforms is intrinsic to geographic analysis. Improved resolution DTMs (with advances in the lidar available from the EA, for example) are hugely welcome. However, as Evans (2012, 96-97) noted, increased resolution can actually problematise matters further: how much detail is too much and to what extent should small-scale detail be ignored or smoothed?



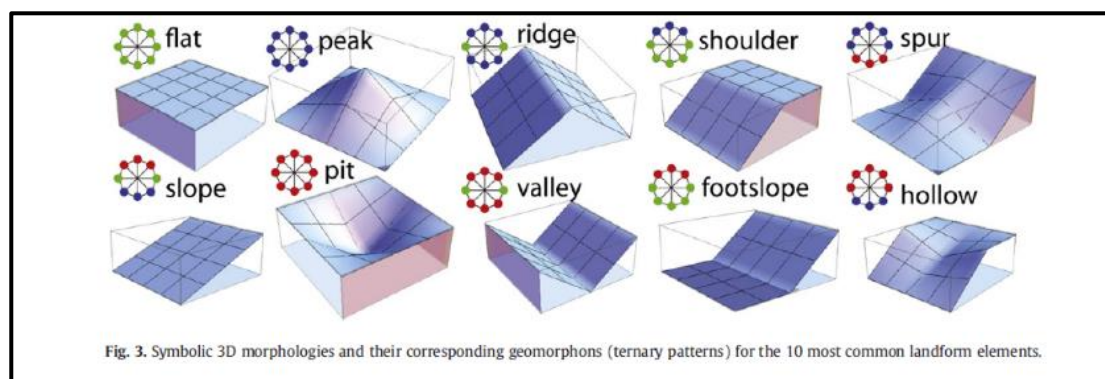
51. Illustration taken from Fisher, Wood and Cheng (2004, 109) showing variations in morphometric class depending on scale of analysis and window.

This is why Fisher and Wood felt that automated landform extraction would struggle, and that the best that could be done would be to model in a probabilistic and ‘fuzzy’ manner. This involves conducting landform identification over different

scales, weighting all of the results by various metrics, giving a ‘fuzzy’ or probabilistic outcome where the landform is not a member of one class or another (e.g. peak or ridge) in a binary, absolute sense, but has a weighted sliding-scale membership of those classes. Fisher and Wood (1998, 255) commented ‘Thus the one location is to some degree one of each of the six types of land form described’.

### 3.8.1. Geomorphons

Geomorphons involve lines of sight that stop at the first break of slope. If, where they stop, the ground is higher, they are recorded with a red circle, if level, a green circle is used and, if lower, a blue circle.



52. Illustration taken from Jasiewicz and Stępiński (2013, 150) to indicate how the most common landforms are represented by an 8-point geomorphon.

The geomorphon software is as reliant on scale-dependent parameters as any other software seeking to automate landform extraction. It may not be as hidebound to a fixed search window as other techniques are, and it may be more flexible in responding to features of differing scale in a single computational run (Jasiewicz and Stępiński 2013, 151-153), but it is still dependent upon parameters which relate to the scale of analysis. Describing geomorphons, Jasiewicz and Stępiński (2011) stated:

Form recognition depends on two free parameters: **Search radius** and **flatness threshold**. Using larger values of L is tantamount to terrain classification from a higher and wider perspective, whereas using smaller values of L is tantamount to terrain classification from a local point of view. A character of the map depends on the value of L. Using a small value of L results in the map that correctly identifies landforms if their size is smaller than L; landforms having larger sizes are broken down into components. Using larger values of L allows simultaneous identification of

landforms on a variety of sizes in expense of recognition of smaller, second-order forms. There are two additional parameters: **skip radius** used to eliminate impact of small irregularities. On the contrary **flatness distance** eliminates the impact of very high distance (in meters) of search radius which may not detect elevation difference if this is at a very far distance. Important especially with low resolution DEMs.

All these parameters, including what constitutes a salient break of slope, are modified by the researcher. More fundamental still is the fact that the researcher sets the initial selection of feature and location of summit. It has already been shown how this initial choice can generate dramatically differing results (3.5.1-3.5.2). Hence, researcher-led variability and subjectivity is not avoided by the use of this software.

In the 2022 study, where the geomorphon did not look correct, the parameters were altered in a trial-and-error manner to obtain an improved geomorphon (Grannd 2022, 1:255-256 and pers. comm.). In particular, where one of the lines of sight stopped abruptly short, the ‘skip’ parameter was altered to change the scale at which local anomalies would be ignored. If one of the lines of sight extended much further than the others, the flatness distance was altered to change the scale at which there would be compensation for flat, non-changing landscape. If an improved geomorphon could not be achieved, the chosen summit point could be moved manually by the researcher and the computational process re-run. Some geomorphons continued to be labelled in that study as ‘unsuccessful’, such as those reproduced in this study as Figures 20 (Old Warden, Buckinghamshire) and 25 (Quorndon, Leicestershire). In total, Grannd (2022, 3: 416-523) catalogued 319 examples of geomorphons labelled as ‘unsuccessful’.

Unfortunately, there was no sensitivity analysis reported for the setting of the parameters. Computational extraction of landforms should ideally investigate the amount by which results vary if the starting parameters are varied. One needs to know whether landforms are ‘persistent’ – identifiable as such regardless of the scale of analysis or the setting of parameters – or whether they are highly affected in their classification depending on small changes in initial inputs made by the researcher.

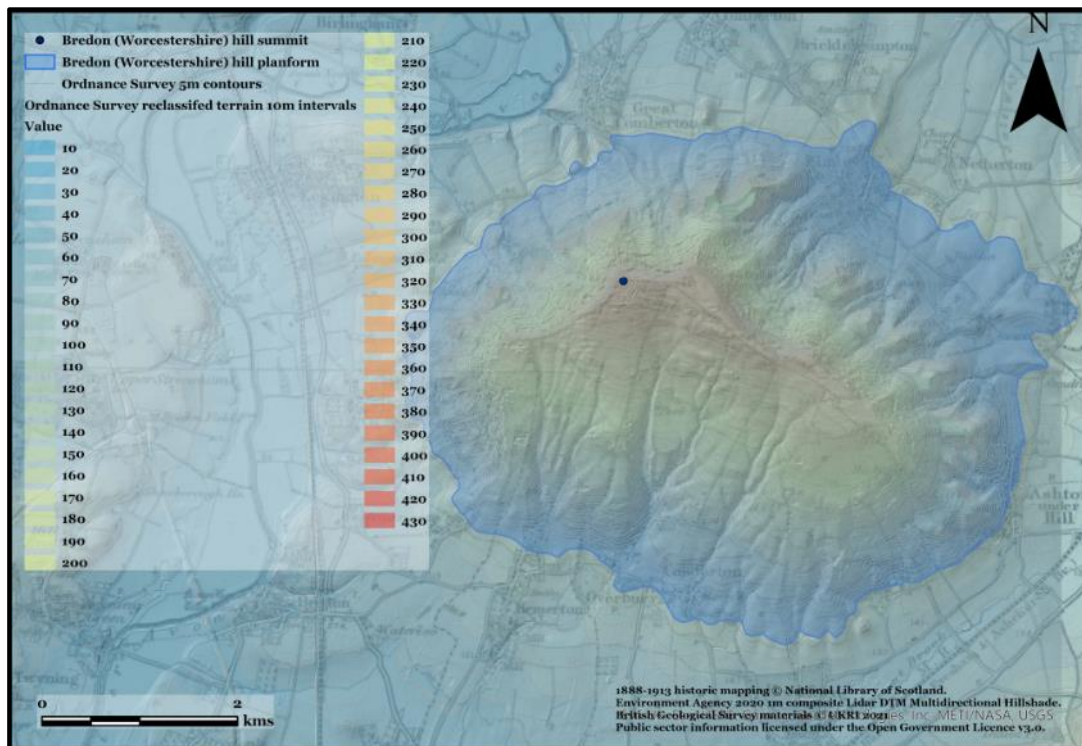
When manually altering the computer-generated output because it does not seem to be visually correct, the researcher appears only to have the underlying DEM and its contours as a guide. Parameters are altered until the computer-generated output matches more closely what is visible to the researcher in that underlying DEM. The net effect of this approach is that the software is not being used for automated classification of landforms (for which it was developed). Instead, the software is being used to draw a polygon correlating with the underlying DEM and contours. The results are accepted or rejected depending on how much they map onto that DEM. In effect, it is the researcher's visual assessment that is ultimately the key criterion in this methodology.

If this approach is employed, it might be more accurate for the researcher to work directly with a high resolution DTM, tracing that DTM in a GIS programme to generate a visually verified planform.<sup>112</sup> The geomorphon software proceeds along eight lines of sight. Wherever it stops on all eight, it joins those eight points up in an eight-sided polygon. This is a blunt representation of a hill planform, cutting across the nuance of the actual contour lines of the hill even on a thirty-metre resolution DEM, and all the more so on a five-metre resolution DTM. The difference between Figures 53 and 54 demonstrates this; Bredon (Worcestershire) is modelled in these figures using the same summit point.

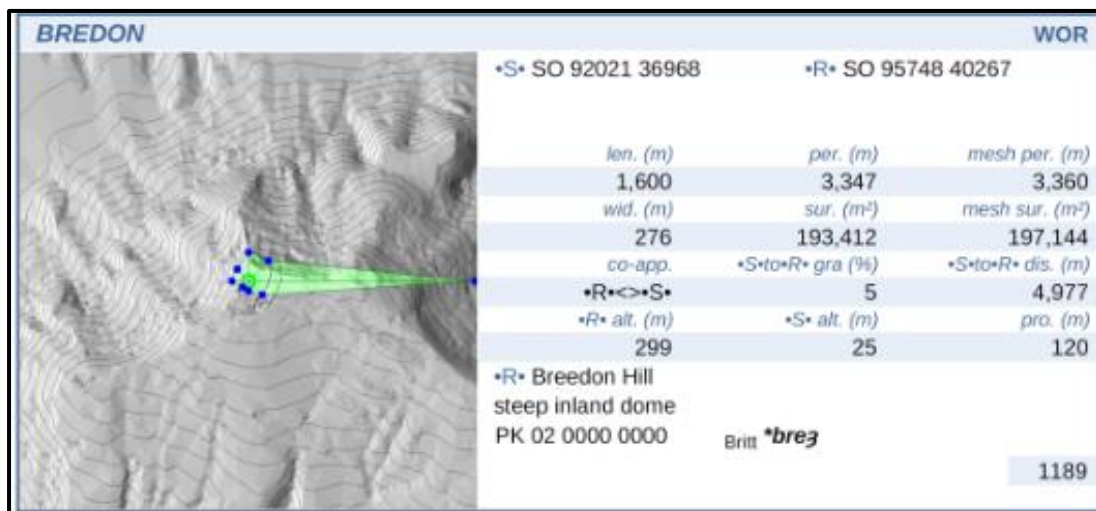
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<sup>112</sup> The DEM used in the Grannd (2022) study was thirty metres in resolution, provided by ALOS World 3D of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency: see the Geomorphon profiler documentation online at <https://gitlab.com/geomorphon-hunters/GeomorphonProfiler> [accessed December 2024] and Grannd (2022, 239 fn.197).

- Bredon (Worcestershire)



53. Bredon (Worcestershire) planform generated in this study (see 3.7.3.).



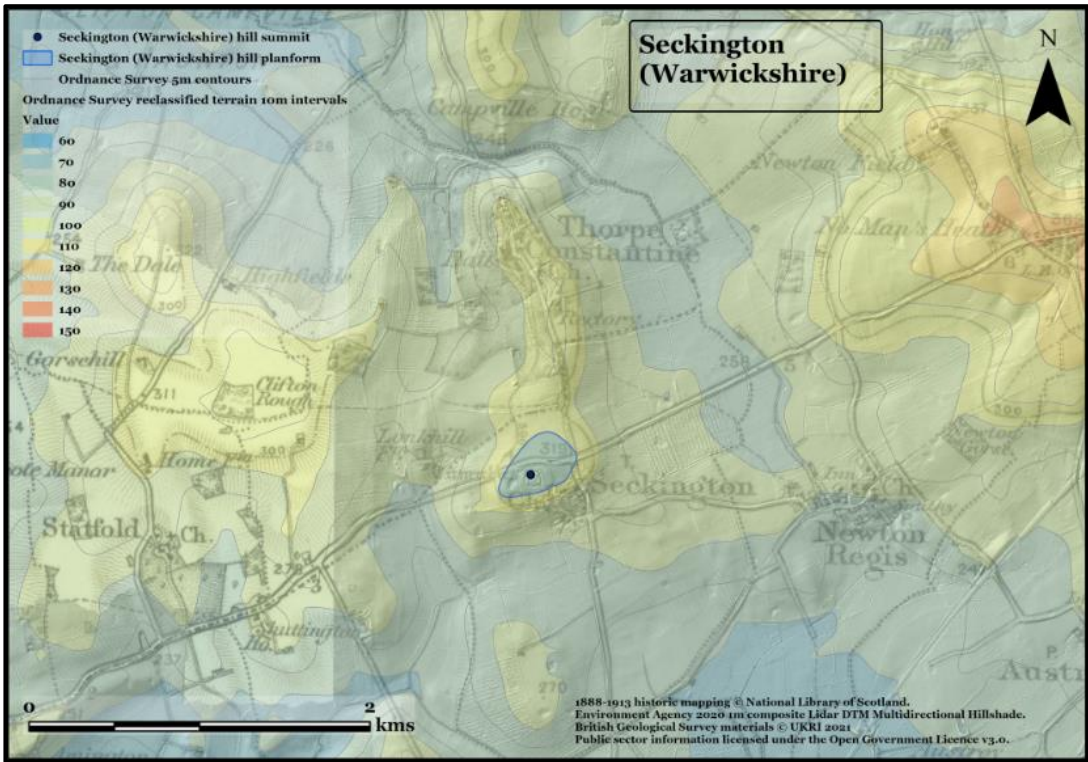
54. Grannd (2022, 3:418).

- Seckington (Warwickshire)

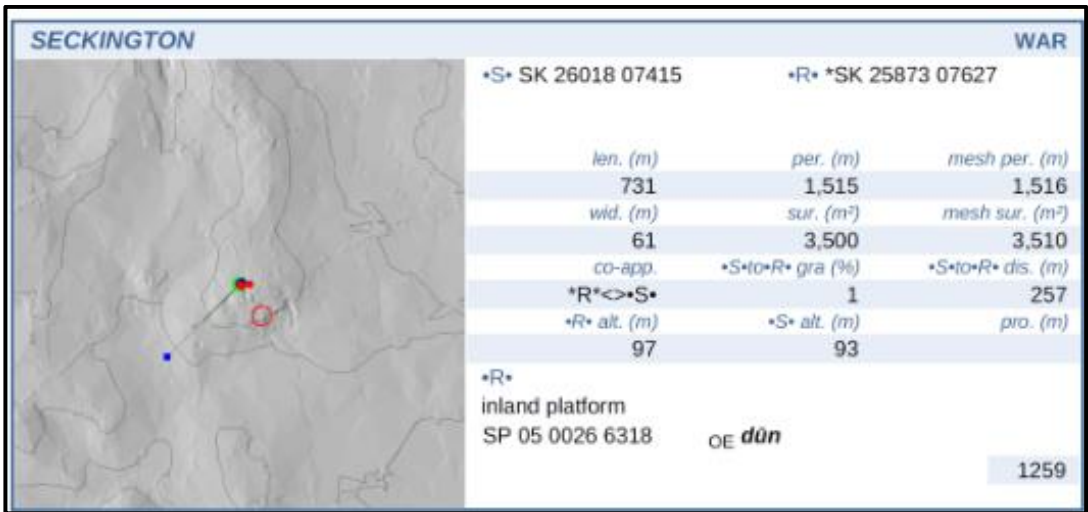
Seckington was attested in 755 in the ASC, in the form *Sec(c)andun(e)* or *Sæcandune*, being the place where Æðelbald, King of Mercia, was killed (Bately 1986, 37; Irvine 2001, 38; Cubbin 1996, 14; Gover et al. 1936, 24; Whitelock 1979, 176). There is a small discrete feature on which the settlement sits, which can be identified and traced by the researcher using the methodology set out above in 3.7.3.



The geomorphon software was unable to identify this feature (compare Figures 55 and 56).



55. Seckington (Warwickshire) planform generated in this study.



56. Grannd (2022, 3:442).

Although slight, the hill and settlement are visible in the landscape, even if one has to be at close range (c. 700m from the settlement in Figure 57).



57. Seckington (A.Lloyd: May 2021) NGR 425893 306705 looking NNE just under one kilometre from the summit.

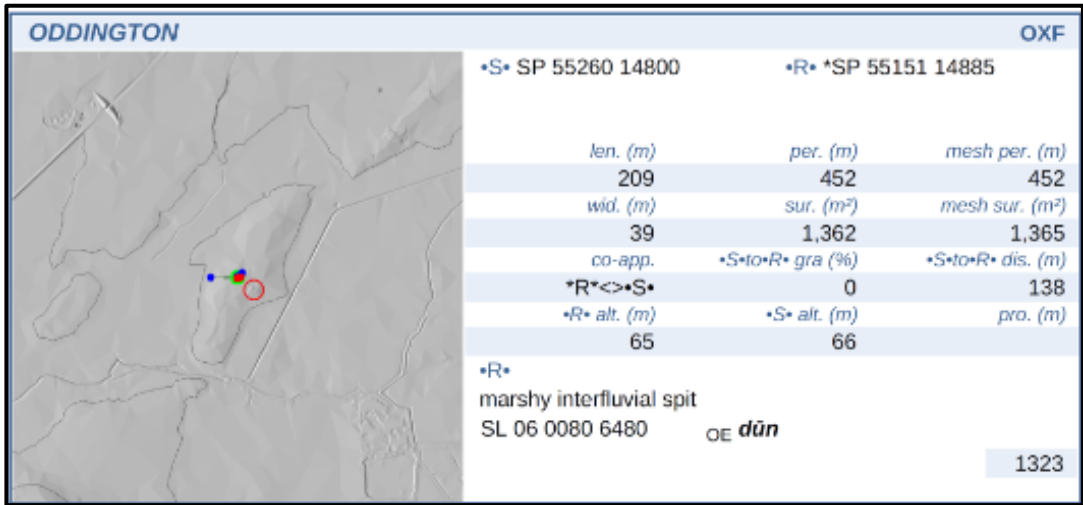
Out of the five *dūn*-exemplars put forward in Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 166) and the nine extra *dūns* photographed in Gelling and Cole (2023), four are excluded by Grannd (2022) and labelled as ‘unsuccessful geomorphons’. They are Oddington, Shenington, and Claydon (all Oxfordshire), and Long Crendon (Buckinghamshire). Since the software cannot always model even the archetypal *dūn*-places as put forward by Gelling and Cole, how much more so those which were less emphasised by Gelling and Cole as typical *dūn*-sites?

- Oddington (Oxfordshire)

Oddington is attested as *Otendone* in 1086 (Gelling 1953–1954, 233). The rise at Oddington is very slight, in a low-lying marsh. Gelling (1953–1954, xv) described the site as one of ‘small limestone islands in the Oxford Clay of the Ray basin’.



58. Oddington (Gelling and Cole 2023) apparently taken from the SSE less than 300m away from the settlement.



59. Grannd (2022, 3:463).

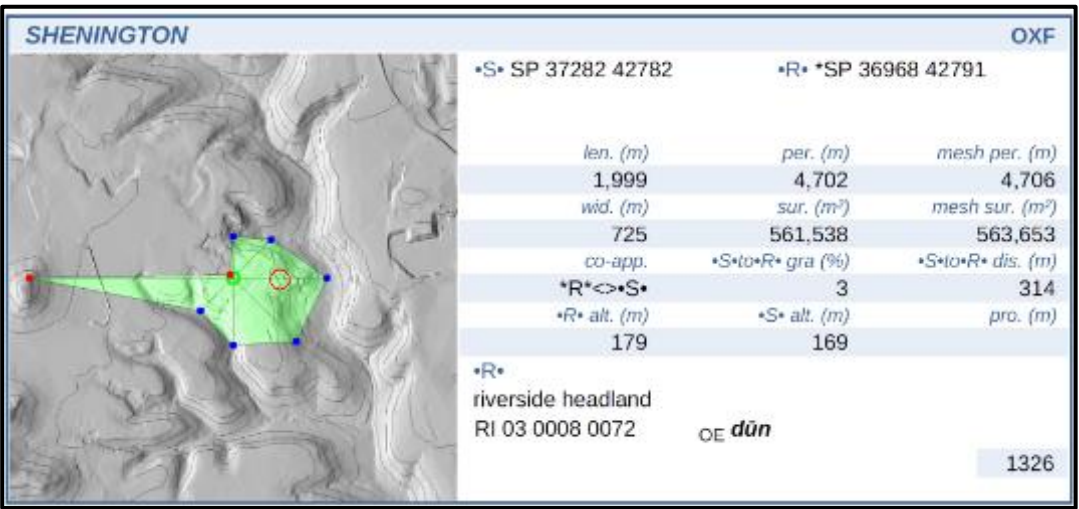
Interestingly, the thirty-metre DEM used by the geomorphon software, shown in figure 59, reveals a small island as described by Gelling. However, the software was not capable of mapping on to it, so slight is the change in relief. A researcher working by eye could do so. The small island would be noticeable in time of flood, but during a dry and summer season when vegetation is in full growth, is almost imperceptible (even from a very short distance away as shown in Figure 58). This kind of island-site is returned to for discussion in Chapter Six.

- Shenington (Oxfordshire)

Shenington is attested as *Senendone* in 1086 (Gelling 1953–1954, 402). The *dūn* of Shenington is quite difficult to delimit. The settlement sits on the edge of a flat plateau, delineated relatively sharply to the east by a tributary of the Sor Brook, but otherwise not particularly demarcated from land to the north, west or south. From one perspective, it appears as a settlement on top of an elevation. However, that is not the case from all other angles. The geomorphon software was particularly distended on the western side.



60. Shenington (Gelling and Cole 2023) apparently from the NW on the Alkerton Road approximately 1.2 kilometres away from the settlement.



61. Grannd (2022, 3:464).



Overall, the geomorphon software did not produce an archetypal geomorphon code corresponding to a particular element, for instance a *dūn*. Grannd (2022, 1:330) acknowledged that ‘a single geomorphon code is too crude a metric to characterize the complex shape of most hills in the real world’. The appendices from the Grannd study evidenced huge variety in the geomorphon codes and polygons produced. The study therefore turned to comparing between oronymic elements, not on the basis of a geomorphon code or on the appearance of a geomorphon polygon, but based on other metrics such as height, length, width and area etc. This brought it far closer to the kind of analysis carried out by Nurminen (2012). This raises all the points discussed above in 3.5. and 3.7.

### **3.9. What should happen to features that cannot be drawn, demarcated or quantified?**

It is very important that features which are difficult to identify and classify are not discarded from the study. Ambiguity and uncertainty is ambiguity and uncertainty that would have been encountered historically; it is directly relevant to how possible it might have been to navigate by profile; it is relevant to whether universally applicable profiles were the essence of meaning for each of these oronymic elements. Grannd (2022, 1:297) commented that ‘the number of tests per element failing to compute geomorphons ... equates to an overall failure rate of 32%’. Hence, a third of features were apparently not included in the statistical analysis testing the ideas of Gelling and Cole (Grannd 2022, 1:256 and pers. comm.). When the heart of the investigation is the question of whether there was a universal, precise and consistent understanding of a particular oronymic element based on its shape and profile, it is problematic to rule out those which do not conform or are not easily measurable as conforming, and to use the remainder to test the universality, precision and consistency of the definition of the element. Rather, all these sites need to remain in the corpus of places that are topographically assessed. They need to be part of the body of evidence from which conclusions are drawn about whether there ever was a topographically defined, universal system.

### 3.10. This study

#### 3.10.1. Fieldwork

For 580 *berg*-, *crug*- or *dūn*-names, site visits examined potential locations for the relevant landform from various angles and distances, travelling on foot wherever possible in the surrounding landscape and photographing relevant features. The dates of first attestation for the names of the places visited span the full range of the corpus from 350 to 1499. This campaign of fieldwork brought home the stark contrast between assessing sites from a single photograph and travelling in the landscape trying to find (and decide upon the extent of) a landform. It also highlighted how close a photographer had to be to capture some of the ‘profiles’ illustrated by previous studies, as well as how confusing and unclear the picture often was at distances of only one or two kilometres from the place-name location. It demonstrated how photographs and line drawings select content, eliminating other aspects of the landscape which might distract. However, the busier picture is the one that greets the visitor in reality, which they must navigate.

In 1.5 above, the interchangeability of the oronymic elements in historical written sources was discussed. A similar interchangeability in physical shape was not infrequently observed on the ground.

- Orlingbury and Harrowden (Northamptonshire)

Orlingbury was attested as *Ordlingbære* in 1076<sup>113</sup> and Harrowden as *Hargindone/Hargedone* in 1086 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1933, 122, 125). These names appear to be names of similar age, using the proxy of first-attestation date.

The places are not much more than a kilometre apart. Both are names with administrative status: one a parish, the other a hundred. Their physical referents appear very similar in form. They have almost identical summit heights. There is not

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<sup>113</sup> Although the survey editor opted for a *berg*-name as the preferred etymology, the attested name forms suggested that there had historically been confusion with OE *burh* ‘fortified place’, *bearu* ‘grove’, *bær* ‘pasture’ or *bær* ‘bare’.

much to tell them apart topographically, yet one has a *berg*-name, the other has a *dūn*-name.<sup>114</sup>



62. Orlingbury (A.Lloyd: May 2022) NGR 483829 272740 looking SE just over two kilometres from the summit.

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<sup>114</sup> There are two Harrowden settlements next to each other, split into Great and Little Harrowden. The latter is closer to Orlingbury and occupies the most defined section of rolling hill. The former is situated on a section of rolling hill that is the same height but slightly less defined and more sprawling.



63. Harrowden (A.Lloyd: May 2022) NGR 486353 272283 looking SE one kilometre from the summit.

#### - Barham and Claydon (Suffolk)

Barham, *Bercheham* 1042 x 1066, and Claydon, *Claindun(a/e)* 1086, both in Suffolk (Briggs forthcoming), are less than one kilometre apart. The names are close in date in terms of first attestation. Both are settlement names of administrative status (the first a parish, the second a hundred). However, it is very difficult to distinguish the sites in terms of topographic form. They form part of the same hilly range on the eastern bank of the River Gipping; land associated with one name blends into another, without topographical cut off. One is a *berg*-name; the other a *dūn*-name.

As Coates (2013, 151) observed, it is hard to explain ‘why one place is more deserving of the name ... than another nearby’. At least, it is hard to explain if one is looking to topographic form alone to provide the rationale. These sites do not have dramatically different profiles – certainly, nothing that would give them distinctive recognisability one from another respectively as a *berg*-site and a *dūn*-site.

### 3.10.2. Digital analysis

#### - Rapid assessment alongside other datasets

In addition to physical site visits, much of the corpus of 1,641 precisely located names has been assessed using the GIS interface designed for this study, combining historical OS mapping, lidar-derived topographic modelling and BGS geological



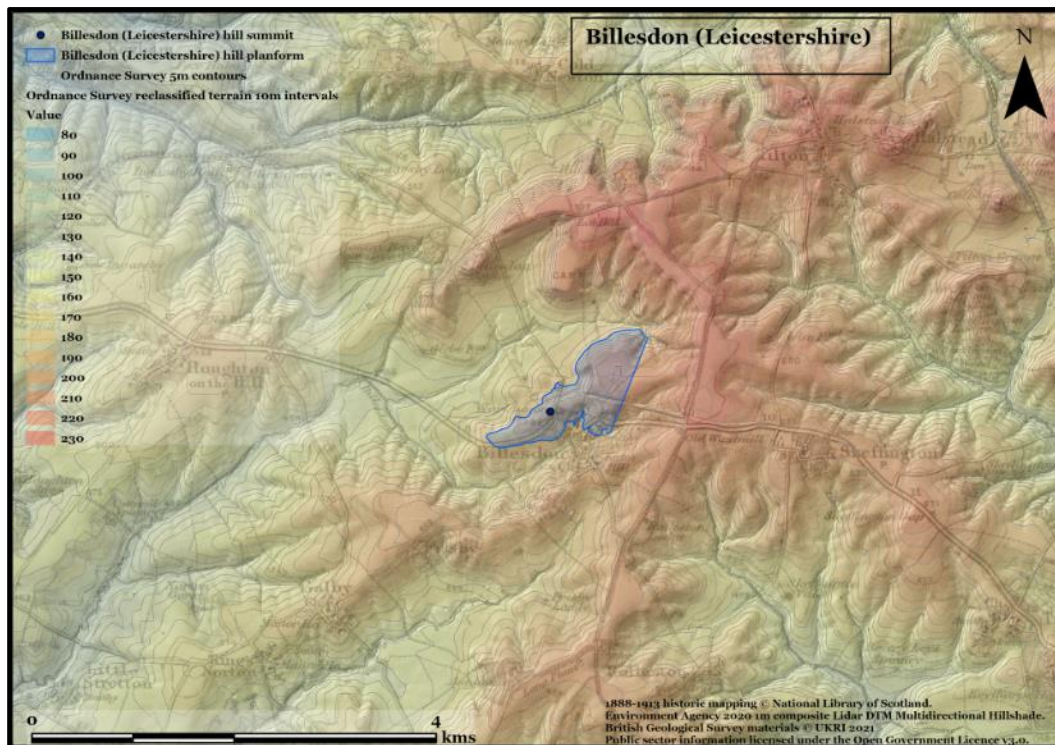
mapping. From historical mapping and lidar, evidence of historical earthworks, including artificial mounds, can be identified which may have been lost from later mapping. These sources are an important check on whether any referent might have been archaeological. Historical mapping also helps to trace names lost to modern mapping. The development and use of this GIS-based research tool (2.4.2.) has enabled the assessment of many more sites throughout the country than was possible in previous studies. It enables the assessment of sites alongside other data relevant to the better interpretation of their place-names.

- Testing planforms as a methodology

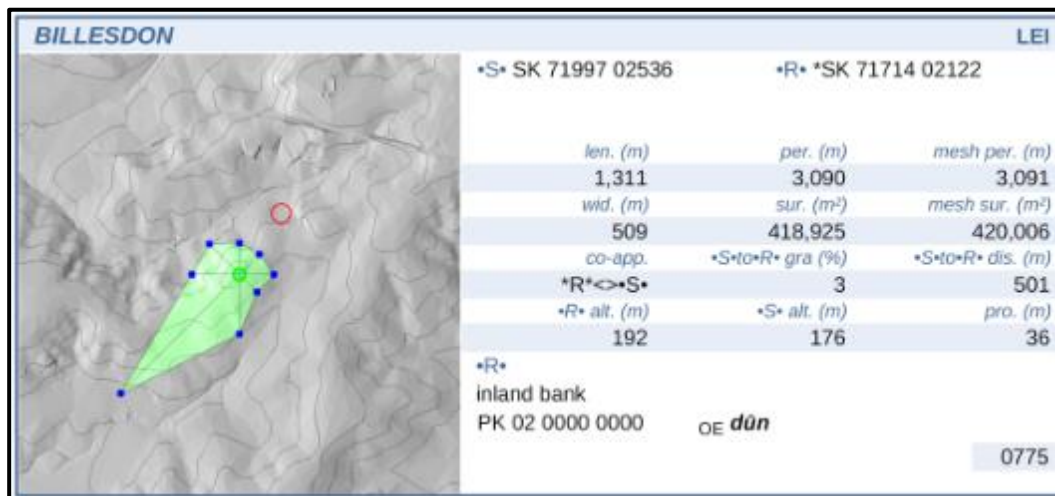
Analysis using DTMs (whether those generated from EA one-metre lidar, or the OS five-metre mapping), and OS contour lines, has shown how challenging it is to draw a planform representation of a hill agreed upon with sufficient consensus. When tracing a specific contour line, there is the question of which contour line to select. On one side of the hill, the contour line might appear to reflect well where the hill begins, whilst on the other side the same contour line no longer does so. Plenty of features are not delimited by clear changes in contours on all sides; the researcher has to delimit a cutoff point artificially with a line where there is no real change in underlying topography. Drawing the shortest possible straight line might keep the length of this artificial demarcation to a minimum, but the straightness of the boundary – unrelated to underlying geography – appears highly artificial. There are significant numbers of such cases.

- Billesdon (again)

Billesdon (Leicestershire), discussed above in 3.5.2., is an example of this problem. The polygon in figure 64 is nuanced in its relation to underlying topography (contrast the geomorphon software in Figure 65). However, it still involves the researcher in making decisions about where artificially to delimit the *dūn* in terms of planform.



64. Billesdon (Leicestershire) planform generated in this study (see 3.7.3.).



65. Grannd (2022, 3:273).

Moreover, fieldwork reinforced the fact that planforms do not necessarily correlate with how a hill appears visually in the landscape. The latter not the former is what those naming a site would have seen; the latter is what might have motivated naming.

#### - Three-dimensional models

Two other digital tools were trialled in this study to explore ways of measuring the visual appearance of a hill. They proved to be unsatisfactory but a brief account of them is given here, starting with three-dimensional modelling.

It is possible to convert a planform into a three-dimensional scene using the OS five-metre DTM as the underlying terrain, initially extruded with a z factor of 1 (z representing the multiple of the height coordinates in the DTM), over which the mapped planform layer is draped.<sup>115</sup> Such a process is computationally resource-hungry. Hence, the benefits need to be high to outweigh the costs in terms of processing time.<sup>116</sup> It is not worth it if it does not really provide new, illuminating or reliable information.

The strength of three-dimensional modelling should lie in trying to capture a sense of movement throughout the landscape, as opposed to a static two-dimensional image. In fact, when navigating around the three-dimensional scene, it is difficult to achieve a vantage point akin to being on the ground looking at the hill. Typically, the closest one could get was a position hovering some metres above ground level, akin to a bird's eye view. To go closer to the ground meant losing the resolution of the underlying mapping and topography. The experience is similar in a programme like Google Earth Pro, in which observing objects in three dimensions works whilst occupying a bird's eye position. However, as a user zooms in closer to street level, the programme quickly defaults to street-view, no longer being able to sustain the three-dimensional view so close to the ground.

The z-factor had to be amplified so that the ratio between reality and the three-dimensional scene was 1:2, rather than 1:1. Without this, there was not enough contrast, particularly over long distances or with small hills. However, this involved an exaggeration of features, and made comparison with photographic images harder.

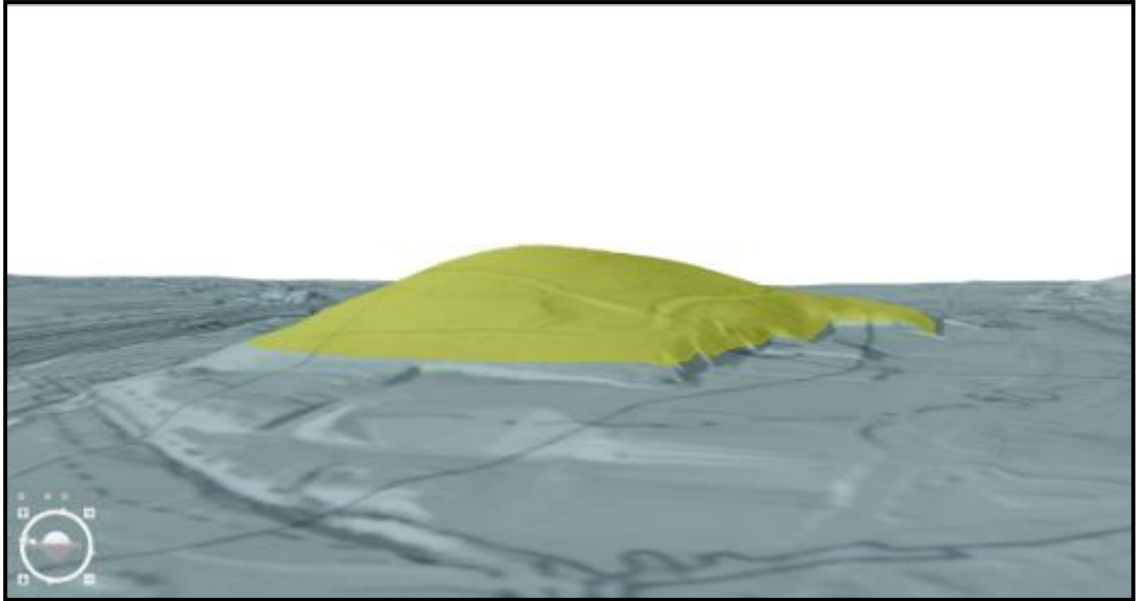
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<sup>115</sup> Since this methodology is dependent on first having drawn a planform, it is subject to all the problems previously identified with the drawing of planforms.

<sup>116</sup> Time waiting for the rendering of scenes can be lessened if the mapping is clipped to the hill form alone, without surrounding landscape context, but then the context is lost, substantially lessening the point of attempting this kind of modelling. Documentation for the ArcGIS 'clip layers' tool is available at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/help/mapping/properties/clip-layers-in-a-map.htm> [accessed December 2024].

- Creechbarrow Hill (Somerset)

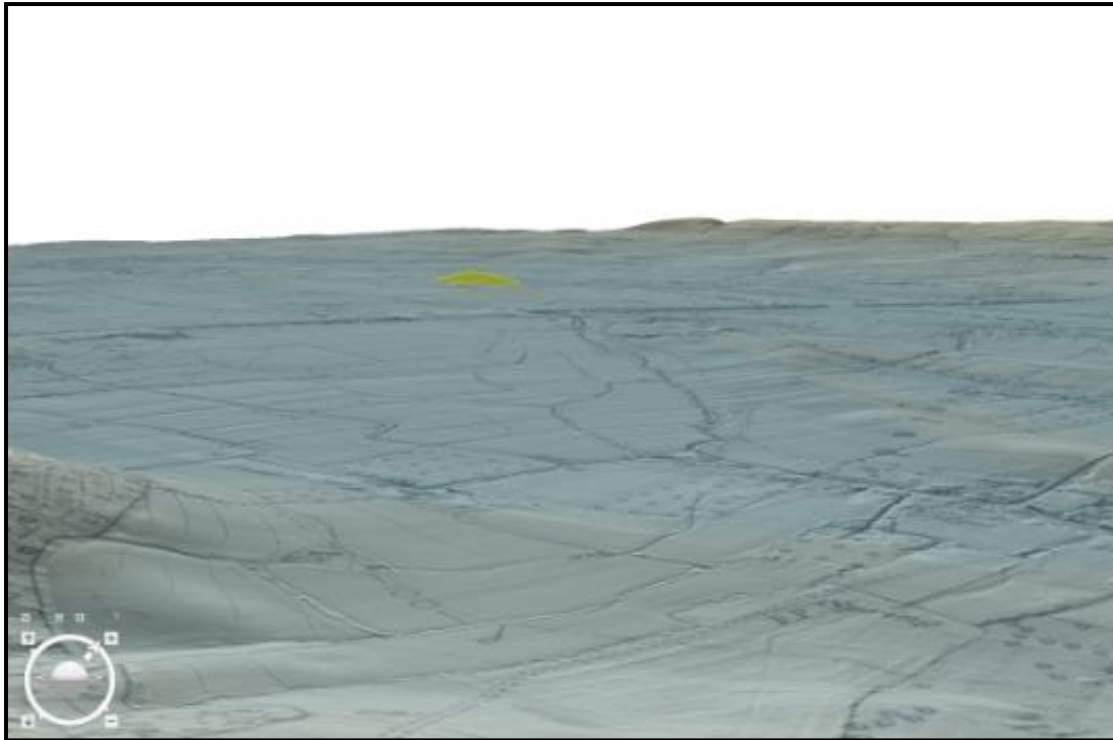
Creechbarrow was discussed above in 1.7. The following figures show a comparison between a three-dimensional model of the hill and a photograph taken from the same spot (allowing for the difficulties in digitally obtaining parity of location as just explained). Figures 66 and 67 are both less than 300m from the summit of the hill. Figures 68 and 69 are both over three kilometres from the same summit.



66. Three-dimensional ArcGIS Scene of Creechbarrow Hill (Somerset) from the same position as Figure 67.



67. Creechbarrow Hill (A.Lloyd: June 2022) NGR 324355, 125459 looking E less than 300m from the summit.



68. Three-dimensional ArcGIS Scene of Creechbarrow Hill (Somerset) from the same position as Figure 69, with the z-factor increased for greater topographical contrast and the hill picked out in yellow colour contrast, unlike reality.



69. Creechbarrow (A.Lloyd: June 2022) NGR 326943, 122968 looking NW over three kilometres from the summit.

For all these reasons – the dependence of this analysis on planforms which might themselves be open to question, the difficulty in achieving a vantage point that was



realistic and not artificial, the need to amplify colour contrast and exaggerate height differential, the considerable time spent waiting for the processing of a single scene and the fact that the results did not shed more light on the place and its name than a site visit would – this mode of analysis was not pursued further.

#### - Profile lines

Having drawn a planform, it is possible in ArcGIS to draw transecting lines over that planform.<sup>117</sup> The stack profile tool extracts height data from the OS DTM at regular and closely spaced intervals along any transecting line drawn.<sup>118</sup> In a software programme such as Tableau, the exported tabulated data from the transecting line can be used to generate a line graph which gives the profile of the landscape along that transection.<sup>119</sup> The transecting line could extend a chosen distance beyond the planform to try to capture some of the undulations and changes in topography in the surrounding landscape along the same line.

This tool initially appeared to be helpful. It seemed to offer the chance to replicate the kinds of line drawings pioneered by Gelling and Cole, using a much more accurate OS DTM at five-metre resolution. However, there are real problems with this visualisation set out below. Some of the problems relate to methodology and to some extent replicate some of the concerns already voiced relating to hand-drawn line drawings (3.7.1.); others go beyond this to reveal yet again the underlying substantive issues in trying to define a single profile type for particular hills applicable across the country.

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<sup>117</sup> Once again, this methodology is dependent on the accuracy or otherwise of the planform drawn for each hill.

<sup>118</sup> Documentation is available online for the ‘create feature’ and ‘stack profile’ tools at

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/help/data/feature-classes/create-a-feature-class.htm>

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/3d-analyst/stack-profile.htm>

[both accessed December 2024].

<sup>119</sup> Documentation is available online for the ‘table to table’ tool at

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/conversion/table-to-table.htm>

[accessed December 2024].

Hills do not usually have clear axes. Thus, it is very difficult to select which out of numerous potential transecting lines should be drawn. If a hill is irregular, and most are, it is impossible to know how best to section parts of the hill. Should lines be chosen that encompass most of the hill? The most arresting profile might pertain to only part of the hill. Moreover, even where a hill does have an obvious dominant axis, it does not follow that that axis correlates with a distinctive profile as viewed from the landscape around.

The precision of the OS five-metre DTM meant that the profile tool gave greater weight and salience to a jagged part of the transecting line than a human observer might. This was evident comparing the use of the tool with the experience on the ground. In the context of the whole feature, not just a single line, human eyes smooth out anomalies in favour of overall shape recognition.

Transecting lines are artificial. They give no indication of the landscape in front or behind. Human perception of a rounded profile is actually highly influenced by awareness of landscape in front of it which is rounded. If the landscape in front is sheer, that, too, has an impact on visual perception. Many of the transecting lines are not actually physically viewable from any position in the real world. (In reality, there would always be landscape in front blocking the view.) These lines are a digital creation which could not be verified by an observer on the ground.

The transecting profile gives the impression that the feature is skylined or silhouetted. This is hardly ever the case. Landscape sitting behind the hill in the physical world creates a very different impression. The edge of one green-brown form against a green-brown background does not stand out (see earlier discussion in 3.7.1.-3.7.2.).

- Baltonsborough (Somerset)

Baltonsborough is associated with a relatively discrete topographic feature. It is attested as a name in a charter, S1410 744 [1338-1340], as *Balteresberghe* (Ekwall 1960, 24). However, when viewed from less than three kilometres away (Figure 70), the feature is invisible. This is not because it is blocked by any other landscape. With binoculars, or zooming in with a camera lens, it can be seen. The problem is that it does not stand out against a green landscape backdrop.





70. Baltonsborough (A.Lloyd: May 2021) NGR 355876 137966 looking SSW just under three kilometres from the summit.



71. Baltonsborough (A.Lloyd: May 2021) zoomed-in from the same vantage point as Figure 70.

For all these reasons, this mode of analysis was not pursued further. The difficulty in making this analysis work goes beyond methodology; it signposts the inherent problems in trying to reduce hills to simple discrete profiles. Such profiles rarely exist on the ground. They require cropping and simplification in their visual

presentation. As with the analogue, so with a digital methodology; it is possible to create an artefact which looks compelling in isolation, but which is far removed from physical experience. It is the latter that counts when it comes to understanding historical naming.

### **3.11. Navigation and the traveller**

#### **3.11.1. Viewsheds**

It is possible to generate viewsheds within ArcGIS to help assess how visible a feature is from the surrounding landscape. This process is again dependent upon the prior demarcation of a planform. It is only as informative and accurate as the planform is. The output should be used as a heuristic, iterative tool of where the feature is likely to be most or least visible.

The viewshed uses a line-of-sight calculation between each five-metre square of the OS DTM in the surrounding landscape and regularly-spaced points within the planform of the feature itself.<sup>120</sup> The landscape is assessed up to eight kilometres from the summit.<sup>121</sup> In reality, many hill features are not visible from much more than one to three kilometres away; many are even less visible than this, requiring the viewer to be nearly on top of them before their outline can be discerned. The hill-points are generated at equal fifty-metre spacing over the entire planform area.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> The viewshed tool documentation is available online at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-analyst/visibility.htm> [accessed December 2024]

<sup>121</sup> Eight kilometres was selected based on extensive fieldwork, both for this study and in Lloyd (2021a). A limit of just over seventeen kilometres was initially selected. This was refined to an outer limit of twelve kilometres, and then further refined to eight kilometres. Documentation for the ArcGIS ‘buffer’ tool is available at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/analysis/buffer.htm> [accessed December 2024]

<sup>122</sup> Fifty metres was selected as a realistic spacing, generating as many consistently spaced points as possible without making the viewshed analysis unsustainably slow and unwieldy. Documentation for the ‘polygon to raster’ and ‘raster to point’ tools is

The total number of points is recorded. Visibility at a particular landscape-point is assessed by the proportion of the hill-points with a line of sight from that point in the landscape.

To simulate looking at the hill from the landscape, as opposed to the other way around, an offset of 1.75m is placed on the surface elevation (Wheatley and Gillings 2002, 210-212). This offset is typically used in the generation of such viewsheds to represent the average height of a human observer. The line-of-sight is then calculated from each landscape-point at a height of 1.75m above the terrain, representing the rough position of human eyes standing and looking from that point in the landscape.

The analysis does not make allowance for vegetation. The impossibility of doing so was canvassed in Lloyd (2021a, 46), given available data for both modern and historical vegetation cover, and given the way in which GIS viewshed modelling with DTMs is calculated. In the same study, it was demonstrated that the viewsheds were nonetheless robust (tested and verified by fieldwork) in giving an indication of hotspots and coldspots in visibility, notwithstanding changes in vegetation cover.

Viewshed images are symbolised using a hotspot colour ramp.<sup>123</sup> The output is best used as a dynamic tool via the website, zooming into the hot or cold spots at different scales. A hotspot is not the same as a distinctive profile. It signifies that a

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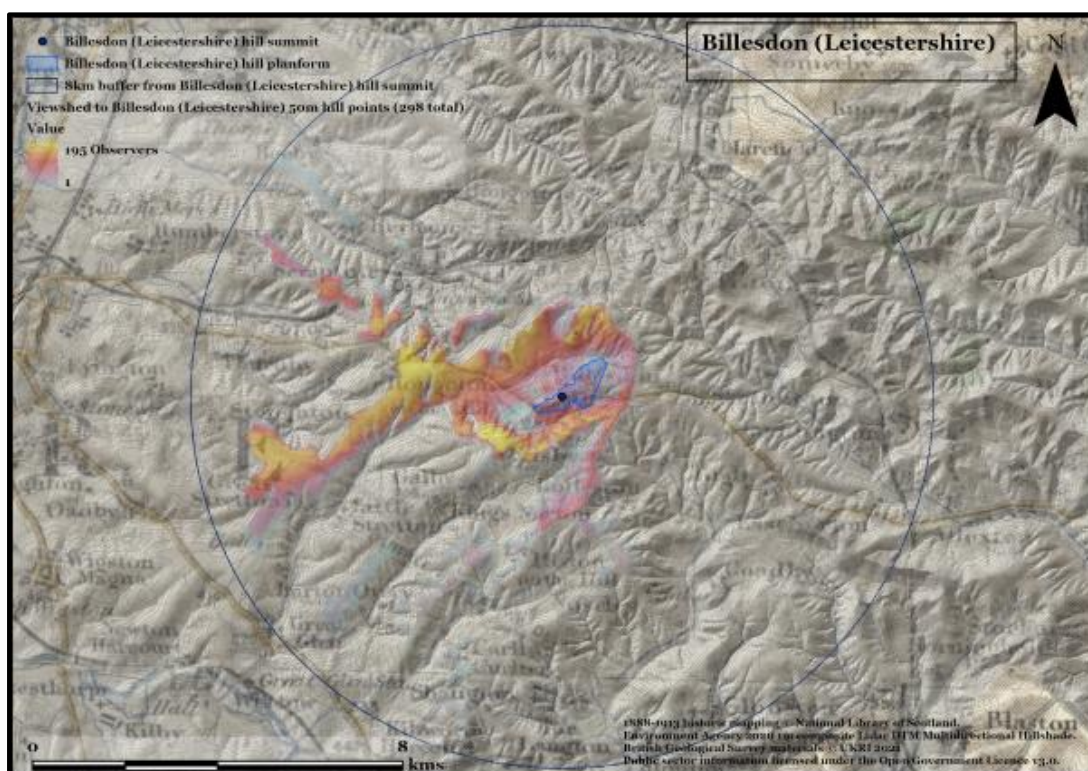
available at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/conversion/polygon-to-raster.htm>  
<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/conversion/raster-to-point.htm> [both accessed December 2024]

<sup>123</sup> The colours closer to hot-yellow indicate greater visibility; those that are cooler (blue-purple) indicate less visibility. Where there is no colour, and the underlying historical basemap shows through, there is no visibility between that landscape point and any of the hill-points, i.e. the hill is not likely to be visible at all at that point in the landscape. Note that the colour scheme is relative to each of the individual outputs. It is not possible to compare across outputs simply by trying to see which has a redder red or bluer blue etc. The same issue was discussed with regard to Figures 5,7 and 9 above (2.5.1.).

large proportion of the hill feature is visible at that spot in the landscape, not that there is a diagnostic and recognisable profile visible.

- Billesdon (once again)

In 3.5.2. above, the comments of Bourne (2003, 31) concerning the ‘dominance’ of the *dūn* ‘for miles around’ were questioned based on fieldwork. They could also be questioned based on desk-based viewshed analysis. Figure 72 shows that most of the landscape for eight kilometres around is not able to see any of the *dūn*. This is shown where there is an absence of any colour within the blue bounding circle and the historical basemap is visible underneath the hotspot symbology).



72. Viewshed analysis for Billesdon (Leicestershire).

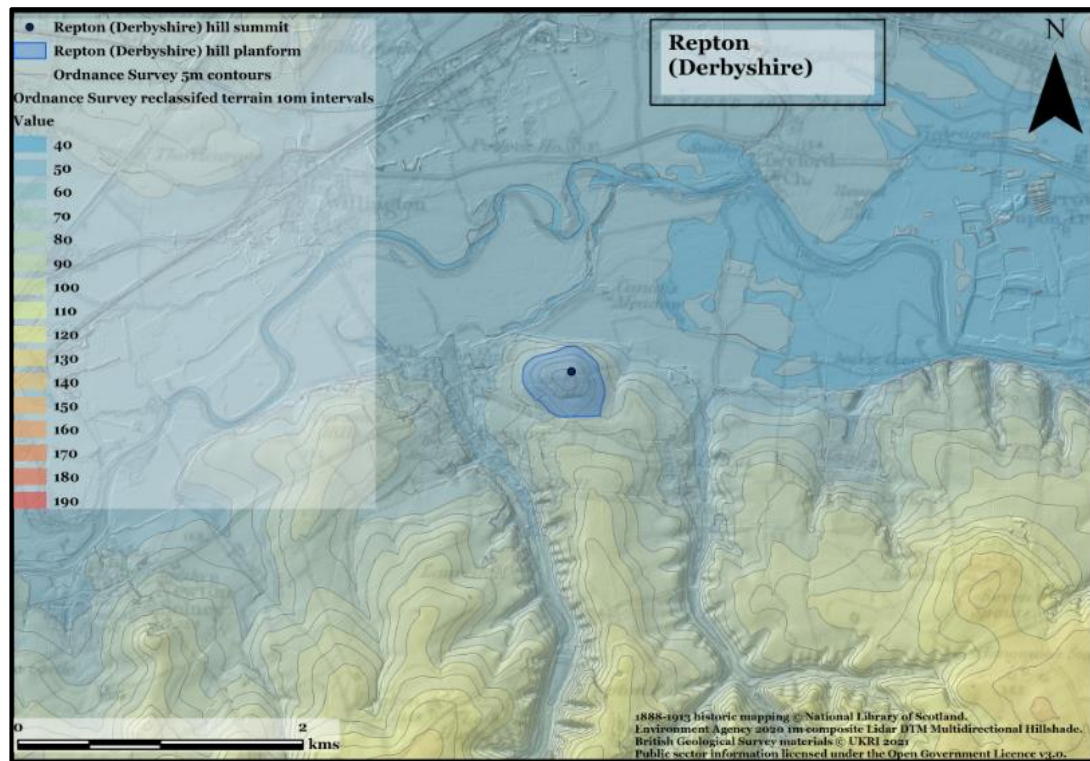
Viewshed analysis also demonstrates how irrelevant absolute summit height is for visibility in the landscape. The *dūn* of Billesdon has a summit height of 181m. This is higher than the benchmark range Gelling and Cole set for *dūn*-sites (see 3.7.4. above). However, the *dūn* of Billesdon is not very visible in the landscape because of the equivalent height of that surrounding landscape.

- Repton (Derbyshire)

Repton was attested as *Hreopa(n)dune* in the ASC for 755 (Cameron 1959, 653; Cubbin 1996, 14; Bately 1986, 37). If one had to select a distinct and proximate hill



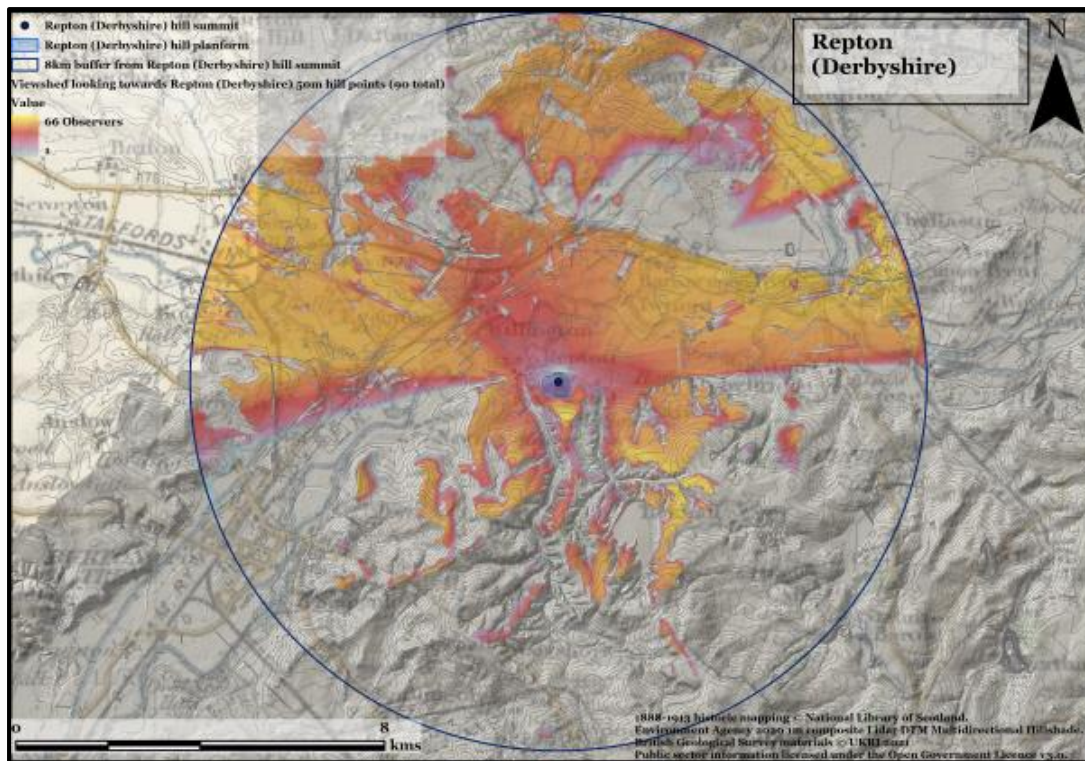
as the likely candidate for the *dūn*, it is most likely to be the hill immediately to the east of the old town, adjacent to the site of Repton Abbey.<sup>124</sup>



73. Repton (Derbyshire) planform generated in this study (see 3.7.3.).

The summit height of this feature is only 75m, at the bottom of the range outlined by Gelling and Cole for *dūn*-sites. However, this feature has far more visibility in the surrounding landscape than Billesdon (compare Figures 72 and 74). It also has a very directional viewshed; it is notably visible from the River Trent and flood plain to the north, but almost invisible from the hillier land to the south.

<sup>124</sup> It is now known as Askew Hill, but Askew is only attested from 1539 and as a field: *Haske Feld* (Cameron 1959, 654).



74. Viewshed analysis for Repton (Derbyshire).

### 3.11.2. Visibility for the human eye

The viewshed hotspot map points the researcher to places in the landscape from which visibility (or its absence) should be assessed. However, the technical existence of a line of sight (as the computer calculates it) is not sufficient for the human eye to be able to discern a feature in the landscape. This was borne out in the fieldwork for this study. The fieldwork in Lloyd (2021a) made clear that visual contrast is essential to see things in the landscape over any distance. Features need to be skylined or silhouetted, or else they need to be picked out in very different colours such as white on a green background. It is striking how quickly the landscape of green and brown loses three-dimensionality and becomes a flat background. Depth of vision and height difference is hard to gauge over longer distances. This was a problem that even the geomorphon software encountered; the flatness distance parameter sought to compensate for the fact that height changes become less salient with distance.

- Warborough (Oxfordshire)

Warborough was attested in 1200 as *Wardeberg* (Gelling 1953–1954, 138). It is one of the sites Gelling and Cole offered as an archetypal *berg*-site. They felt that it was a ‘larger than average’ *berg* and ‘a distinctive feature from vantage points in the

region’ (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 148). It is possible to replicate the view point they used.



75. Recreation of the Gelling and Cole image of Warborough, Oxford (A.Lloyd: May 2020) NGR 458712, 194026 looking NE one kilometre from the summit (cropped image).

So close to the hill, all other surrounding context is cut out and a curved silhouette achieved. However, if the viewer moves around to the opposite side of the hill, on the eastern side looking south-west from a distance of c. three kilometres, the view is transformed. The *berg* is extremely hard to discern and looks like a flat, green field. The researcher is only able to pick it out with prior knowledge of where it must be, using modern mapping. An early medieval traveller relying on a diagnostic profile for recognition would not have alternative maps by which to check where the site must be. What stands out from the second vantage point are the silhouetted features on the skyline consisting of Wittenham Clumps (a scheduled Iron Age fort: NHLE 1006302) and the barrow (a Bronze Age bowl barrow: NHLE 1018722) on Brightwell-cum-Sotwell hill with its solitary tree.

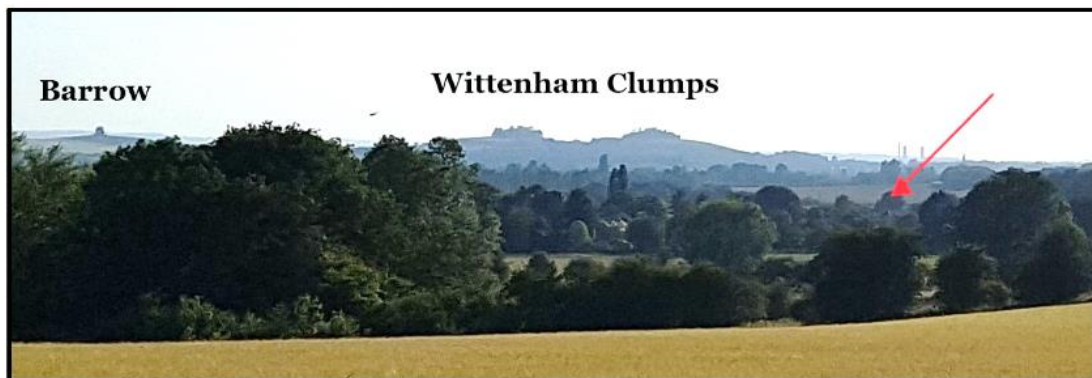


Figure 76. Warborough (A.Lloyd: May 2020) NGR 462910, 194845 looking SW three kilometres from the summit. The red arrow indicates where the *berg* of Warborough is.

This is a single case study that illustrates a very common phenomenon. Moreover, it is evidence drawn from one of the Gelling and Cole archetypal sites. It is even more evident in the many sites they did not deem as clear cut or did not include in their corpus.

### 3.11.3. Distance and its implication for naming practice

What is very helpful about all the fieldwork carried out is how it evidences the sorts of distances over which *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*-features can typically be picked out by an observer in the landscape. Those distances are surprisingly small. This is the case even where the observer already knows what to look for and where, or is using an OS map to aid location and recognition. None of the figures included in the preceding discussion are taken from more than three kilometres from the summit of a given feature. Many are much closer, such that the feature is the only thing in view.

As a result even where the appearance of a feature is motivating naming practice, it must be doing so at very local and proximate vantage points. It is not occurring at great distance from national routeways, rather it is typically a local phenomenon. The fact that these landscape features are not clearly recognisable, other than over local distances, suggests that historical naming was a bottom-up phenomenon, originating from those living on the land and walking and working in the locality, rather than a top-down centralised process (cf. Morris 2012, 55). This is an important strand of evidence shedding light on who was doing much of the naming that has resulted in our surviving stock of English place-names.

### 3.12. Conclusion

Chapter Three has shone a light on the difficulties in finding the universally distinctive, topographic form and profile that Gelling and Cole suggested was the essence of each of the elements in this corpus. The chapter has also illuminated the difficulties in using these elements as navigational signposts.

The chapter started by considering the *a priori* historical, linguistic and philosophical issues raised by these ideas. It went on to review previous studies, including the difficulties such studies encountered when carrying out fieldwork and desk-based assessment. The ways in which fieldwork should be carried out, and, critically, how the results should be presented to others, have been critiqued in this chapter. It is vitally important that the metrics chosen for quantification and the visual presentation of results both correlate to the human experience on the ground and do not present an overly simplified picture.



Computational methodologies were explored in detail. As with all mathematical modelling, computational approaches are only as robust as their starting parameters and assumptions. In addition, whilst they are a powerful heuristic and iterative research tool, they must work hand in hand with embodied presence in the landscape. This chapter presented a methodology combining site visits with computational analysis, explaining the need to remain close to the original human experience that motivated naming initially.

Crucially, whichever methodology is used, the inherent ambiguity or uncertainty in trying to identify or demarcate features in the landscape is not lessened. Much of this chapter discussed methodological issues, yet the conclusions go well beyond methodology. Discrete, recognisable, universally applicable and consistent profiles do not exist for the elements in this study. Rather, the national picture is one of great variety both in size and scale, as well as in profile and form. This is so even for the handful of archetypal sites put forward by Gelling and Cole. It is all the more so for the many other names in the remainder of their corpus and in this study's corpus. Any statistical assessment of features must include all the uncertain identifications, as well as those sites that are challenging to demarcate with confidence. They represent the real picture of the full range of landscape associated with the place-name elements in this study. There is certainly not the level of consistency one would have needed for topographic forms to function as navigational way markers recognisable country-wide.

Moreover, from the assessment of visibility in the landscape, many features, regardless of profile, do not stand out from anything other than local and proximate vantage points. The distances are insufficient to be of use to the long-distance traveller without prior knowledge. That is not to say that the appearance of features is never of interest in motivating naming. The next chapter examines collocations. Some of the qualifiers, with which *berg* and *dūn* in particular collocate, demonstrate that something about the physical appearance of the feature referenced in the name was noted. This is considered further in Chapter Four.

None of what has been written in this chapter is intended to undermine the sharpened focus Gelling and Cole rightly gave to landscape terminology within English place-names. There clearly was nuance and precision in the use of such terminology. The key to such nuance may not lie in the physical profile of the

eponymous features; however, the names themselves hint at further nuance to be explored, and understanding to be gained. Cullen (2013, 178) signposted a direction of travel for exploring these names that does not focus on topography alone; it recognises that the use of the landscape, and human interaction with it, is a critical part of understanding naming practice:

One trap which the investigator of landscape terminology must not fall into is to expect to answer topographical questions solely at the level of physical surface geography.

Hopefully, this chapter has fleshed out how true this comment is.

## Chapter Four: Compound place-name analysis

As noted in 2.5.3., *berg* and *dūn* typically function as generics in compound place-names. Since this study is nationwide and compares between elements, it is possible to contrast which of the study's elements attract particular qualifiers, how frequently or exclusively, and when and where such collocations are to be found. Whereas the previous chapter's work could only really consider located names, so as to be able to assess the physical appearance of the name referent, this chapter can draw on many additional lost names (2.2.3).

*Crug*-names are different from their *berg* and *dūn* counterparts in that they occur more often than not in a simplex name or in the qualifying position within a compound name. When they are compounded, they occur with a finite number of generic elements, which have minimal overlap with the qualifying elements compounding with *berg* and *dūn*. *Crug*-names will be dealt with in a separate section at the end of this chapter.

### 4.1. Etymology versus motivation

Collocations appear deceptively simple. One might think 'identify the qualifier and the generic, and surely meaning will follow'. However, a simple juxtaposition of two elements leaves considerable scope for a range of interpretations when trying to discern why a name might have been coined for a particular place. Coates (2012a, 227) considered the case of OE *tūn* 'enclosure, farm, village' collocated with an element of agricultural significance. He noted various possibilities in interpreting such a collocation including (i) topography: a *tūn* 'near or at' the agricultural element; (ii) ecology: a *tūn* 'well placed to exploit' the agricultural element; (iii) construction: a *tūn* 'built of' the agricultural element; (iv) specialisation: a *tūn* 'organised for' use of the agricultural element, implying centralised networks of resource and exchange; and (v) renders: a *tūn* 'liable to deliver' the agricultural element. He observed that (iv) and (v) might be hard to distinguish. Coates (2013, 151) noted that the difference in naming practice between etymology and motivation is not often clearly drawn in English place-name scholarship. This study is mindful of this distinction.

## 4.2. Thematic classifications

Traditionally, place-name scholars have used categories to give some sense of order to the collocations observed. Gelling and Cole used the following classifications: ‘descriptive terms’, ‘personal names’, ‘crops’, ‘vegetation’, ‘wild creatures’, ‘domestic creatures’, ‘classes of people’, ‘group-names’, ‘supernatural beings’, ‘product or activity’, ‘topographical feature’, ‘earlier hill or river name’, ‘buildings or structures’, ‘numbers’ and ‘position’. The problem is that it is a matter of debate into exactly which of such boxes a compound name should be put. The extra information on motivation for naming, where available, might alter the box into which a name is slotted. The discussion below, concerning particular collocations, should make this clear. The corpus for this study was roughly categorised in the working database.<sup>125</sup> The categorisation was intended as a blunt heuristic tool. The experience gained through this process demonstrated how hard it was to select the right classification and to be consistent in that selection for names containing the same compounds.

Categorisation runs the risk of over-simplifying meaning. There is an uneasy compromise in trying to find sufficiently diversified boxes for classification such that names are not all lumped together, but not so many that results are atomised to the point of being diffuse, unwieldy and uninformative. Attempting to discern patterns in national data is time consuming; it requires an iterative approach in which various ways of slicing and packaging the data are trialled, not all of which prove to be helpful in terms of yielding fruitful avenues of research. Additionally, it is all too easy to set up anachronistic categories which those coining and using the names originally would not have recognised. This is particularly the case in the classification of vegetation or animals as a weed or wild, when they might in fact have been historically perceived as a resource, and managed and farmed in some way.

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<sup>125</sup> The categories were Administrative, Personal Name, Categories or Groups of People, Numerical References, Wild Animal(s), Domestic(ated) Animal(s), Wild Vegetation, Domesticated Vegetation, Water, Geology, Climate or Weather, Colour, Topography (that is shape), Routeways, Directional References, Construction or Structures, Defence, Ritual and Industry.

### 4.3. Recurrent compounds

Certain collocations repeat. Some of these repeat collocations may not have been independent coinings. Rumble (2011, 48) described recurrent compounds as ‘nominal compounds which recur in the corpus frequently enough to suggest that in fact they were standard descriptive terms rather than separate coinings in each instance’. The presence of the compound in the historical lexicon, where it exists, clearly points to the contemporaneous recognition of the compound. However, even where the compound is not independently attested in the OE (or OScan) lexicon, it seems likely that certain name-compounds became available for use as such without requiring those coining the name to recreate the compound afresh each time.

It is difficult to prove that a compound term had become such a term of art. Coates (2013, 146-147) noted that the absence of the definite article in the entire run of attested name-forms might suggest that a name had become a ‘ready-made’ name used in repeated bestowal, as opposed to being a lexical phrase which evolved gradually into a compound place-name in each instance. Coates cited examples from the study of Kingston names in Bourne (2012, 2017) and of Upton names in Jones (2012b). Unfortunately, many place-names have limited and late-attested runs of historical attestations. Alternatively, by the time they are first attested, the grammatical components of the original name phrase have been lost. In both cases, it is impossible to rule out their existence in the first place.<sup>126</sup>

The separate etymologies of the two elements comprising a known recurrent compound may not be as helpful in giving an indication of the motivation for naming as they might be with a new coining. The elements functioning repeatedly together in a recognised compound may have come to refer to something evolved and different from that which one would have deduced from the etymologies of the individual elements considered alone.

### 4.4. Thematic analysis: introduction

Within a corpus of the size of this study, there are numerous collocations upon which comment could be made, and many themes that could be drawn out. Only the

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<sup>126</sup> In contrast, it is worth noting that in Irish place-names the definite article is part of a later phase of name-coining, rather than an earlier one (Toner 1999).

dominant themes and principal collocations of interest are highlighted in the following discussion. Many of the single occurrences or those collocations that repeat in small numbers are not considered below. Moreover, many of the qualifying elements that are mentioned in this chapter would merit a study in their own right. Again, this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, the aim is to draw together the overall picture of common *berg*-, *crug*- and *dūn*- collocations.

In this chapter, elements are grouped together by meaning, primarily because this aids thematic analysis; it helps to explore the motivation in naming practice for pairing certain themes with *berg*, *crug* or *dūn*. Many (but not all) of these elements are cognate. The grouping of elements in this chapter is not to be taken as a suggestion that the elements are cognate, unless otherwise indicated. Some elements are linguistically mutually indistinguishable without being formally cognate.

Detailed discussion is reserved for Chapter Five. The focus of this chapter is on thematic analysis; the focus of the ensuing chapters shifts to consider some of the differences between OE and OScan influence within the corpus and, in conclusion, what the emerging themes might mean for our better understanding of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*.

#### **4.5. Thematic analysis: physical characteristics**

Many compound names in this corpus include elements which reference physical characteristics.

##### **4.5.1. Size and shape**

There are compound names that appear to suggest that a feature is ‘big’ or ‘long’. However, the landscape referents for these names are not necessarily the biggest or longest features. For instance, OE/OScan *micel/mikill* means ‘large; big’. Muckelborough (Leicestershire), *Michelberwe* c.1270 (Cox 1998-2019, 4:106), has a height above sea-level of 69m and an area, calculated by drawing a planform as described in 3.7.3., of 0.28km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>127</sup> Both of these measurements are below the

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<sup>127</sup> The summit is actually marked as Knob Hill on modern OS mapping, however this name is first attested much later in 1742 (Cox 1998-2019, 4: 106). Places bearing the name Muckelborough span the hill top; they are Muckelborough Farm, -

average height and area of *berg*-sites in Leicestershire, calculated using the same methodology. The averages are 131m above sea-level and 0.34km<sup>2</sup>, respectively. Muckelborough is not perceived by an observer as being particularly larger than other Leicestershire *berg*-sites. In a similar vein, Mickleber (WRY), *Mikelbergh* 1290 (Smith 1961–1963, 6:43), has an area of 0.08km<sup>2</sup>. It is a small glacial drumlin, no larger than other drumlins surrounding it, with a relative height above the surrounding landscape of just 30m.<sup>128</sup>

Whilst recognising that something about a feature must have attracted its name,<sup>129</sup> it is not always obvious why a particular feature attracted a particular name more than another neighbouring feature, as Coates (2013, 151) warned it might not be. This actually clarifies and confirms how local a phenomenon historical naming is. Naming is not the product of an empirical survey, as geographers might carry out today; it is not the case that all hills over a certain height are given the qualifier OE/OScan *micel/mikill* ‘big’ or all those over a certain length are given the qualifier OE/OScan *lang/langr* ‘long’.<sup>130</sup> This is an important conclusion to see borne out by this national corpus.

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Lodge and -Plantation. The area of the hill is hard to delimit requiring artificial cutoff on aspects where contours do not provide an obvious stopping point.

<sup>128</sup> Both the Leicestershire and WRY *berg*-referent, despite being named ‘large’, are poorly visible to the surrounding landscape. Using the methodology in 3.11.1., seventy percent of landscape points within eight kilometres of the summit of Mickleber (WRY) cannot see any of it, and eighty-two percent of the landscape within eight kilometres of Muckelborough (Leicestershire) cannot see any of it. Both features are hard to photograph from the surrounding landscape; other parts of the landscape quickly start to block visibility.

<sup>129</sup> Unless, as was suggested in a supervision once, I am forced to conclude that much of English place-naming was an exercise in irony!

<sup>130</sup> Field (1972, 129) and Cavill (2018, 258) gave a relative definition for ‘long’ as used in field-names, in that it signified land that was longer than the fields nearby, as opposed to being long in absolute terms. Some features in the corpus bearing a ‘long’ name seem to be singled out for the name because they have one axis that is longer than their other axes, as opposed to being longer than surrounding features.

- ‘long’ OE/OScan *lang/langr*

There are eighty collocations in the corpus. Half are lost names. The fact that so many of these names could be lost may indicate that the referents are not likely to have been particularly dominant or striking in the landscape.<sup>131</sup>

Just under half of the group are *berg*-names and the majority are *dūn*. A far higher proportion of the *berg*-names are lost, compared to the *dūn*-names. Some of the located *lang/langr* collocations with *berg* appear to be referencing prehistoric long barrows.<sup>132</sup> Many of the lost *lang/langr* collocations with *berg* are also likely to be referencing long barrows. This is clear from the documentary context in which the

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Longber (WRY), *Lang(e)breg*’ 1307 (Smith 1961–1963, 6:249), is another small glacial drumlin with an area of 0.10km<sup>2</sup>. It does have one axis that is slightly elongated relative to the others, which might have occasioned the name (see, also, Longdon (Worcestershire) shown in figure 47). However, other similar elongated drumlins have not gained the name. At the other end of the spectrum is Langber (WRY), *Lang(e)berh(e)* 1199 (Smith 1961–1963, 5:69). It is a much larger hill (summit height 399m and area of 3.86km<sup>2</sup>) without any obvious elongated axis.

<sup>131</sup> This is not to say that small features cannot go on to become the referent for a name associated with an enduring and large place. It is just that the names for large and dominant features are less likely to fall out of memory.

<sup>132</sup> Longborough (Gloucestershire), *Langeberg* 1086 (Smith 1964–1965, 1:246), lies north-east of a long barrow (NHLE 1003333). Ganborough, first attested in 1777, is also very close (Smith 1964–1965, 1:247). The long barrow is labelled by HE as ‘Ganborough long barrow’. It may be that both names are referencing the same burial mound. Lambrough Banks (Gloucestershire), first attested in the thirteenth century (Smith 1964–1965, 1:28), and Longbury (Dorset), first attested in 1415 (Mills 1977–2020, 3:21), both reference long barrows.



attestations are found<sup>133</sup> and from the topographic context, for example in a small area of low-lying flat land in Lincolnshire adjacent to the Humber.<sup>134</sup>

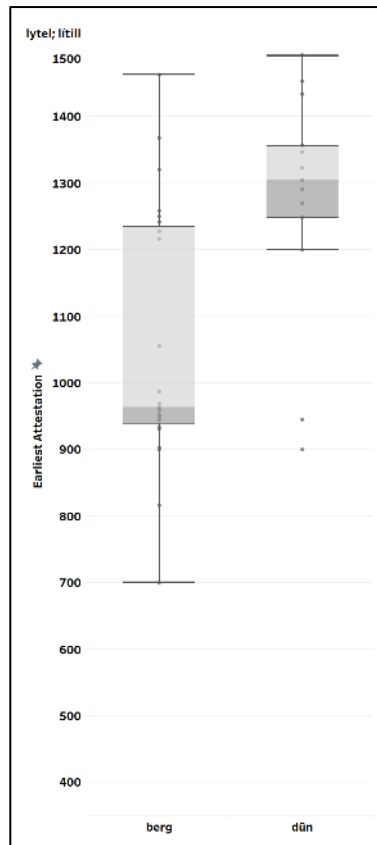
- ‘little’ OE/OScan *lytel/lítill*

There are thirty-seven occurrences in the corpus – two thirds with *berg*, the remainder with *dūn*. The geographical distribution is mainly southern and central. There are no northern *dūn* examples. Nearly all of these names, bar two, are lost, which is striking. The *berg*-names have early-attested dates on average and many of them are to be found in charters. The *dūn*-names, on the other hand, appear to be first attested later, possibly reflecting a later strand of naming.

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<sup>133</sup> A charter, S374, 904 [after 1263], referring to land in Micheldever (Hampshire) includes the following description *betweox þan twan langan beorgan* ‘between the two long barrows’ [my translation]. The phrase *be suðan þam longam beorge* ‘by the south of the long barrow’ [my translation], in a charter, S1026 1055 [11th/12th], referring to land in Upper Swell (Gloucestershire), has been linked by Hooke (1980-1981, 14) to the long barrow labelled Swell IV (NHLE 1008206).

<sup>134</sup> The names in this area are *Langeberg*, Brocklesby, attested early in the reign of Henry II, *Langeberg*, Habrough, attested late in the reign of Henry II, *Longbergh*, East Halton, attested late thirteenth century, *Langberg*, Immingham, attested c.1240, *Langberche*, Keelby, attested late twelfth century and *Langberg*, Great Limber, attested c.1260 (Cameron 1985-2010, 2:72, 145, 156, 171, 177, 229 respectively). All are recorded separately in the EPNS survey for Lincolnshire.



77. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations with *lytel/litill* comparing *berg* and *dūn*.

- ‘high’ OE/OScan *hēah/há(r)*

There are potentially thirty-one occurrences within the corpus.<sup>135</sup> A third collocate with *berg* whilst two thirds collocate with *dūn*. The *dūn*-names are largely, albeit not exclusively, southern. There are no *berg*-names in the south.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, none of the *berg*-collocations display the weak oblique form *hēan* which is typical of OE *hēah* in place-names (Smith 1956, 1:238), and is evidenced frequently in the *dūn*-collocations.

<sup>135</sup> The further complication for some of these names, particularly those with limited runs of name forms, is that one cannot be sure another element is not involved, such as OE *hōh* ‘ridge end; heel’, OScan *haugr* ‘hill; heap; mound’ (Smith 1956, 1:256-257; Jordan and Crook 1974, §§ 130, 186; Kristensson 1967, 205; 1995, 139; Rye 2016, 90) OE/OScan *hār/hárr* ‘grey; hoary’ or OE/OScan *hēg/hey* ‘hay’.

<sup>136</sup> There is one doubtful fifteenth-century attestation for a place called *Hymbury* (D0rset), which Mills (1977–2020, 1:298) interpreted as possibly derived from the oblique form *hēan* plus *berg*.

In the north, Smith (1967, 2:85) suggested that *hór*, an OScan variant for *há(r)*, was at play (see also Gronvik and Hovda 1959, 154-155). Rye (2016, 260) agreed with this, when discussing OScan *hár* for High Knipe (Westmorland) which has attestations of *Hognip(p) -nyp(e)* in the thirteenth century. This variant could lead to modern forms starting in *Hu-*, as in Huber Hill (Westmorland), attested as *Hoberghe* in the twelfth century.<sup>137</sup>

The compound *hábjarg* is known from OScan literature, for instance appearing in *Heimskringla* and in *Þorvalds þáttr víðförla*.<sup>138</sup> In that context the reference was to a natural feature, for example a high cliff from which people were thrown to their death.<sup>139</sup> *Beowulf* is a story told in OE but set in a Scandinavian milieu. As already noted in 1.3.5., Beowulf's tomb was called *beorh þone hēan* 'the high mound', and so the element *hēah* could be applied in literature to an artificial mound as well as a natural feature. Beowulf's tomb was described as being built to tower high on a headland – *hēah hlifian* (Swanton 1997, line 2805).

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, both Ælfric and Wulfstan referred to *heagum beorgum* as places where sacrifices were offered to pagan gods (Marsden 2004, 243, lines 56-7; Pope 1967, Vol. II, De Falsis Diis, p. 684 line 138) and specifically in pagan worship honouring Óðinn or Wōden. Ælfric might have derived his comments from Martin of Braga, rather than direct observation (see Pope 1967, 715-716; Dronke 1969, 1:64; and Townend 2002, 129). Castigating those who worshipped pagan gods at a high place is a well-rehearsed Biblical trope; it could arguably find its way into religious writings regardless of actual practice on the ground. On the other hand, Ælfric was concerned with a contemporaneous resurgence in non-Christian paganism and Wulfstan was operating in York between 1002 and 1023 and should have been aware of practice in the Scandinavian-influenced areas of northern

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<sup>137</sup> This explanation could also be applied for a name like *Hoberges* (Lincolnshire) although it is not part of the analysis offered by Cameron (1985-2010, 3:62).

<sup>138</sup> See ONP (2024) <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?c241239> and <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?c241240> [accessed December 2024].

<sup>139</sup> There is also a reference in the *OE Orosius* in which Mount Olympus is described as *se hysta beorh* 'the highest mountain' (Godden 2016, 30).

and eastern England (Townend 2002, 128, 138). Robinson (1993, 18) argued that Beowulf's tomb (*berg*) should be seen as a pagan shrine. Bethurum (1957, 223, notes to lines 69-70) cited evidence from place-names in northern Europe for the association between Óðinn (and Woden) and *berg*-sites, as did Grimm and Stallybrass (1880, 152-153).<sup>140</sup> The British and Danish names involved were discussed in 3.1 above.

Many of the located 'high' *berg*-sites in this study's corpus are not particularly high within their surrounding landscape. There are small glacial drumlins within this group surrounded by drumlins of a similar height. This is very speculative, and the evidence is extremely scant, but, on the basis of the references above, one might wonder whether 'high' *berg*-sites in OScan-influenced areas, which are not particularly physically high, gained the name instead as a result of association with non-Christian activity, whether actual or as part of mythical association in the landscape.<sup>141</sup> Whatever the interpretation given to them, as far as *berg*-names are concerned, this collocation is concentrated in areas of potential OScan influence as explained further in Chapter Five.

- 'bow; arch; bend': OE/OScan *boga/bogi*

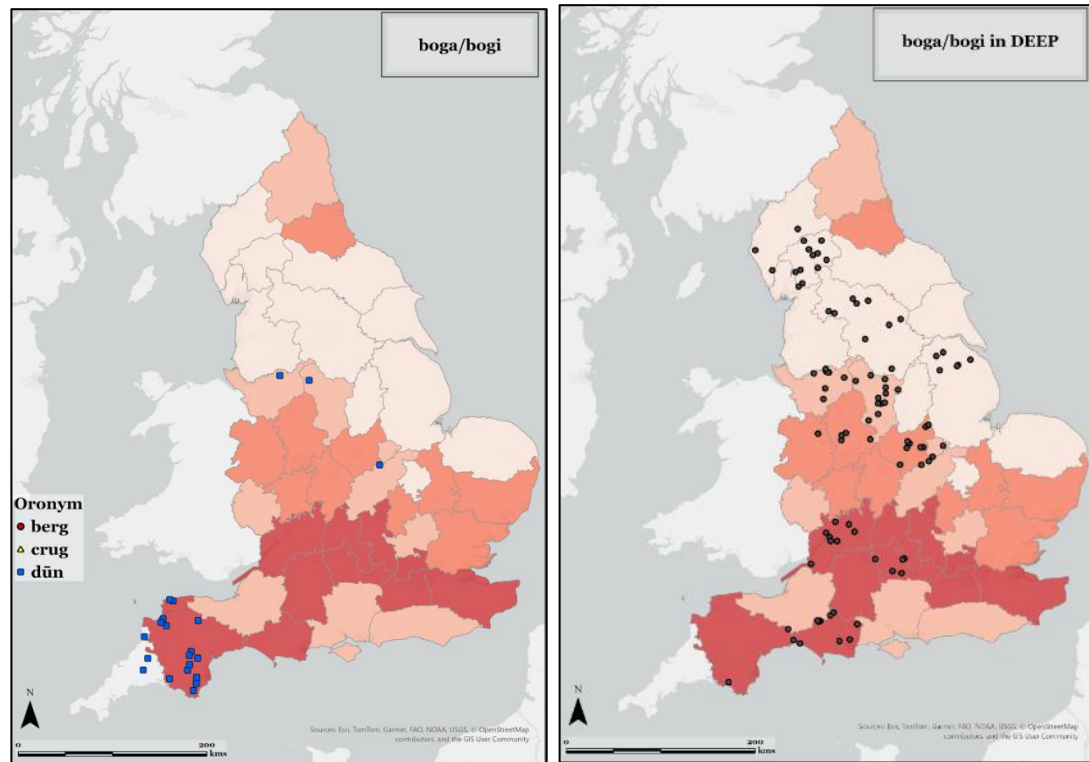
There are twenty-one occurrences in the corpus, collocating exclusively with *dūn*. Such exclusivity is noteworthy. The majority of the collocations are in Devon, or just over the border in the eastern part of Cornwall, with only three in the corpus occurring elsewhere. Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 1:121) noted that 'the element is disproportionately common in Devon', as a result of its pairings with *dūn* and OE *wudu* 'wood' (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 37-38). On the other

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<sup>140</sup> In *Atlakviða*, part of the *Poetic Edda*, Atli and Gunnar swore an oath to each other by *Sigtýs bergi* 'the mountain of Sigtýr', god of victory (Dronke 1969, 1:9). This was another name for Óðinn (Faulkes 1995, 64; Byock 1999, Note 1).

<sup>141</sup> If the association between being 'high' and religious overtones is correct, it illustrates how difficult it is to classify the motivation for a name from simple etymology. Etymology alone might at first glance suggest a topographic categorisation rather than a religious one.

hand, the beta prototype EPNS digital survey shows that the element is found much further afield than Devon, including northern counties.<sup>142</sup>

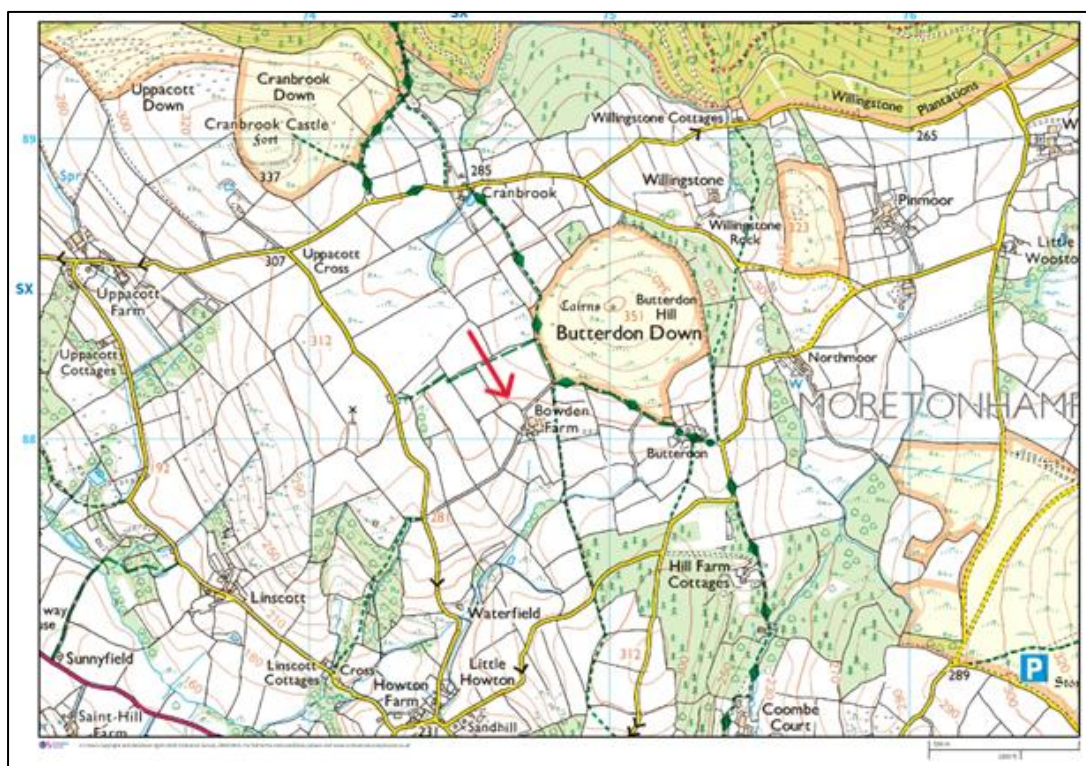


78. Distribution of *boga/bogi* in this study (L) and in the beta EPNS digital survey (R) against the overall density of *dün*-names normalised by county area.

The names in this group are attested later on average than the rest of the corpus; this is probably a facet of being largely located in Devon, which has later attestations in general (see figure 13). All but one are surviving names, notwithstanding the fact that they are all relatively minor names, with only one (Cheshire) name relating to a place with administrative status.

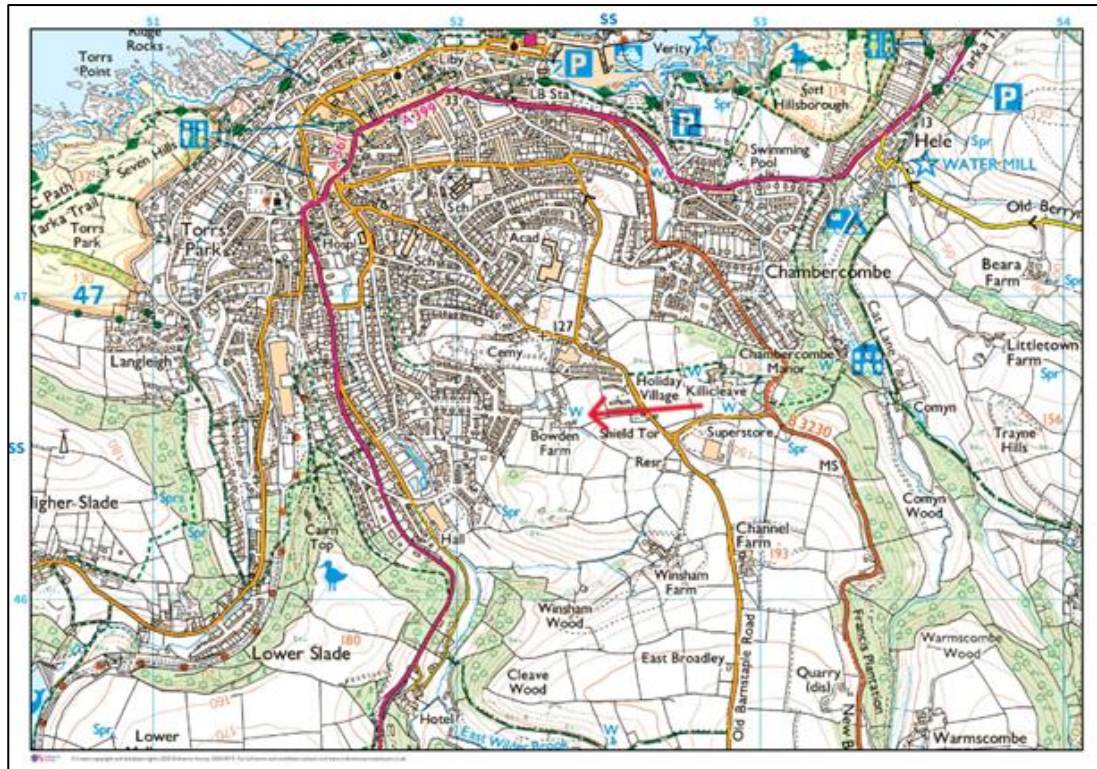
<sup>142</sup> This database is a result of earlier digitisation of the survey volumes. However, much of the data still needs to be cleaned up and added to. Hence, results from the beta digital database will have errors, are only georeferenced to parish, township or settlement level, and will not represent the full number of place-names including certain elements. For example, the Devon *boga/bogi* place-names currently do not show up in the EPNS database output. Still, it is a useful comparator and check, particularly in a case where an element appears to be confined to a very narrow region in this study, but a quick search of the beta database can confirm that the element does occur elsewhere in other names.

In terms of naming motivation, the parallel collocation ‘bow-wood’ has been interpreted as referring to a place where trees were grown for producing bows (see Rye (2016, 65) – although this does not explain why these names should be concentrated in Devon). It is hard to see how that interpretation of *boga* is relevant to *dūn*. The Devon sites often refer to farms which sit at a curve in the contour lines (see figures 79 to 81). However, not every farm sitting on such a curve in the contour lines is given the name. Moreover, Devon is not the only county where such topography exists. Therefore, topography does not explain why there is a concentration of this element collocating with *dūn* in Devon, and almost nowhere else.

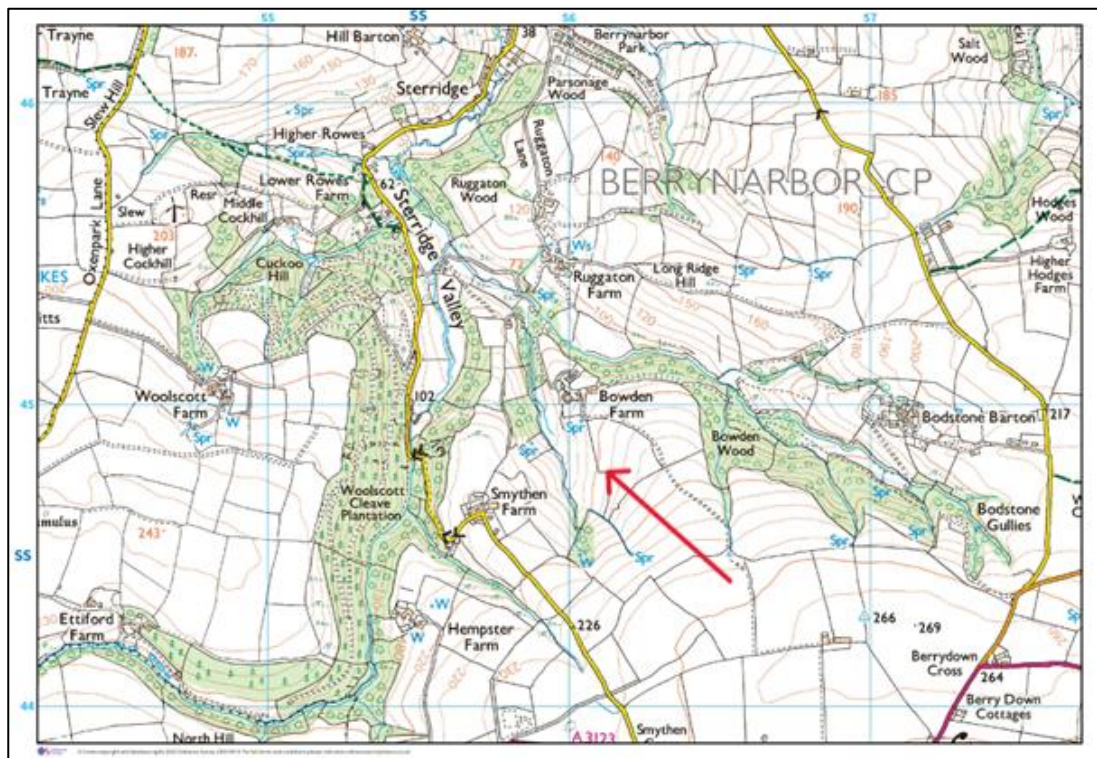


79. Bowden (Moretonhampstead), *Bughadun* 12<sup>th</sup> (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931-1932, 485) © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey (AC0000851941).





80. Bowden (Ilfracombe), *Northbughedon* 1262 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931-1932, 48) © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey (AC0000851941).



81. Bowden (Berrynarbor), *Bowdon* 1270 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931-1932, 28) © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey (AC0000851941).

Devon has a very high percentage of *dūn*-names in general (see figure 8). It also has several other compound collocations occurring only in that county or found rarely elsewhere. Many of these collocations are highly recurrent. Why does there appear to have been a preference for using recurrent *dūn*-compounds in Devon? Had these names become terms of art – ‘ready-made’ names – by the time of their use in Devon? If so, why are they not found in other counties prior to their deployment in Devon?

Devon names from the corpus also appear to exhibit greater durability; even though many of the names are minor or for non-administrative places, most of them are not lost. Changes in farming can lead to loss of minor names over time. There might be something to explore further here concerning the persistence of land use and land layout in Devon (Rippon 2012, 341-342). To take this further would require detailed study of landscape change in Devon beyond what is possible within the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is worth noting here this particular characteristic of Devon names in the corpus.

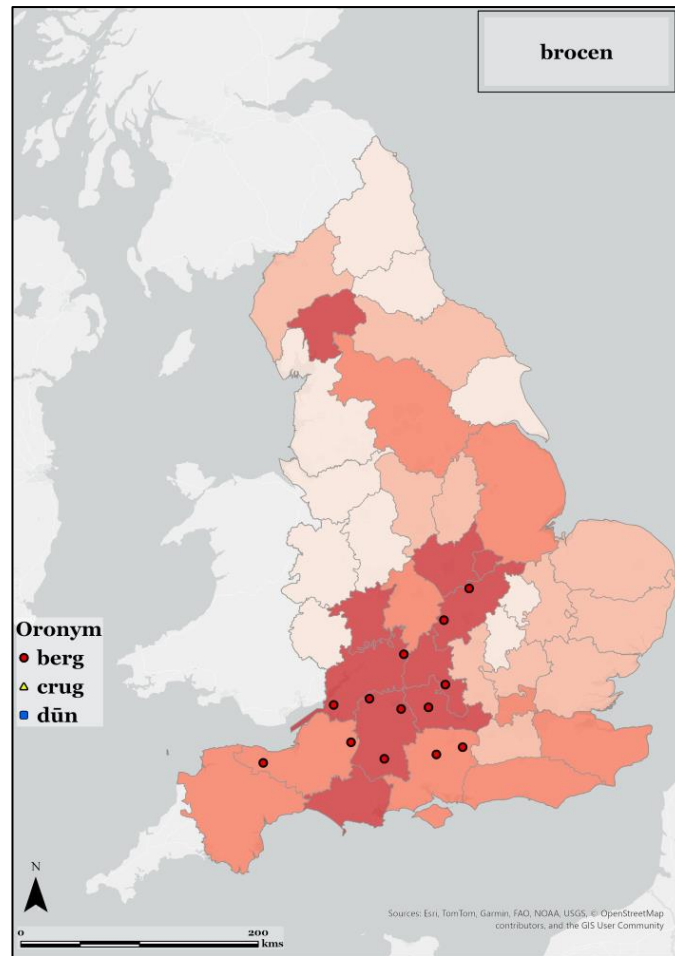
- ‘large; big; great’ OE/OScan *micel/mikill*

There are seventeen occurrences in the corpus, nearly all collocating with *berg* rather than *dūn*. Nearly all of the names do not survive. As with *lang/langr*, features with the appellation ‘big’ do not actually appear to have been so dominating and large that they were beyond being forgotten in terms of their names. Of the few names that can be located, two have already been discussed above and shown to be not particularly large compared to what surrounds them. The Nottinghamshire example, Micklebarrow or Mickleborough, *miclan beorh* S659 958-959 [14th] (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1940, 181), is discrete and noticeable, sitting as it does on the north of the River Trent and its tributaries. However, its summit height is only 56m, lower than the surrounding hills, with an immediate relative rise of only 40m. Its area is c. 0.32km<sup>2</sup>. The other collocations in this group, whose precise locations and referents are lost, are obviously not measurable.

- ‘broken’ OE *brocen*

There are thirteen occurrences in the corpus, all notably with *berg*. These are charter instances in the main, and this is reflected in their geographic distribution and early median first-attestation date.





82. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *brocen* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

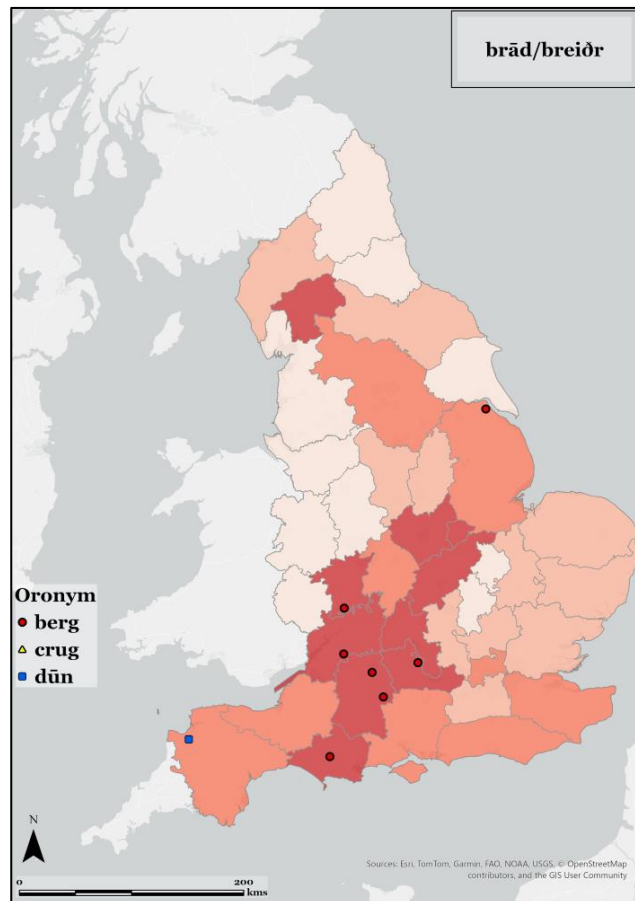
All bar one of the names are lost, reflecting the fact that the names are likely to have passed out of memory once the charter boundaries ceased to be of importance. The collocation with *berg* signifying a mound into which people had broken has already been discussed in 1.3.2. It could also refer to land that was broken up, uneven and rough (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:41), so it should not be automatically assumed that an artificial mound was the referent. It is interesting that the collocation did not really persist into the post-charter period.

- ‘cloven’ OE *clofen*

This element should probably be taken together with the previous element. It occurs six times and only ever with *berg*. As with *brocen*, all bar one of the names do not survive. The distribution is also similar. Also as with *brocen*, this element could be applied to natural features as at Clannaborough, *Cloenesberga* 1086 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 364), albeit the majority of references probably are to artificial mounds.

- ‘broad’ OE/OScan *brād/breiðr*

There are eight instances in the corpus, all except one pairing with *berg*. The *berg*-examples are early in their first-attestation dates and their distribution largely correlates with areas of charter production.<sup>143</sup> The collocation with *berg* is not picked up in Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 2:2-4), albeit the frequent use of *brād* in OE charters is mentioned. The one *dūn*-name has a late first-attestation date of AD1496. It is also the only surviving name; all the early *berg*-names are lost. Again, an element which appears, at first blush, to indicate a large feature appears actually to have been applied to features which were small enough not to dominate the landscape, whose names could be forgotten.



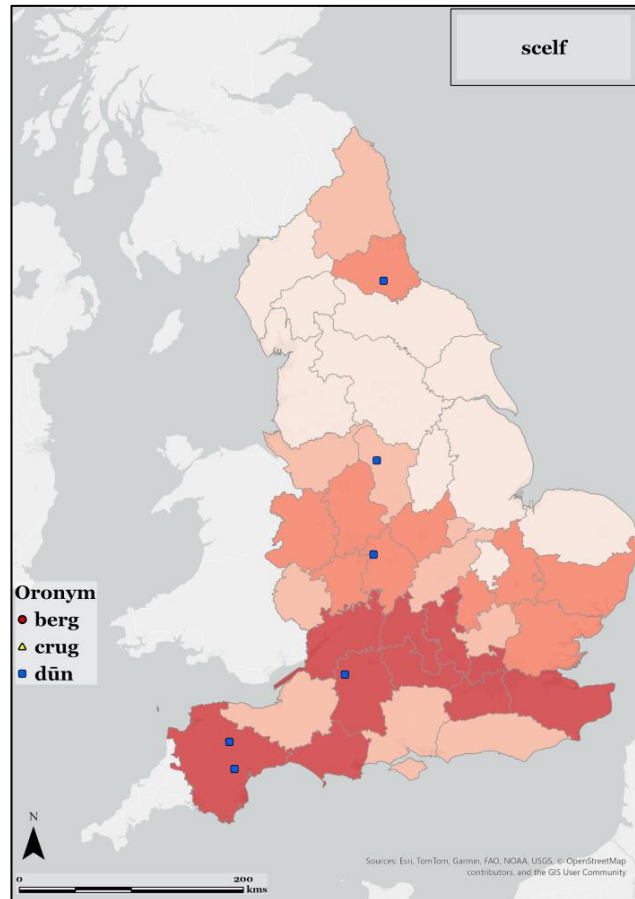
83. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *brād/ breiðr* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

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<sup>143</sup> The one Lincolnshire example is attested in a thirteenth-century form – *braydberhg*’ – that suggests that OScan *breiðr* is the element concerned not OE *brād* (Cameron 1985-2010, 2:205). Insley (1985, 125) discussed how *breiðr* was prevalent in the field-names in Lincolnshire (near Ingham), rather than *brād*.

- ‘shelf’ OE *scelf*

There are six instances, collocating exclusively with *dūn*. All except one survive as names. Gelling (2000 [1984], 142) originally noted that *dūn* ‘sometimes denotes a flat shelf, often on the side of a high hill’. The distribution of these names runs up the spine of the country.

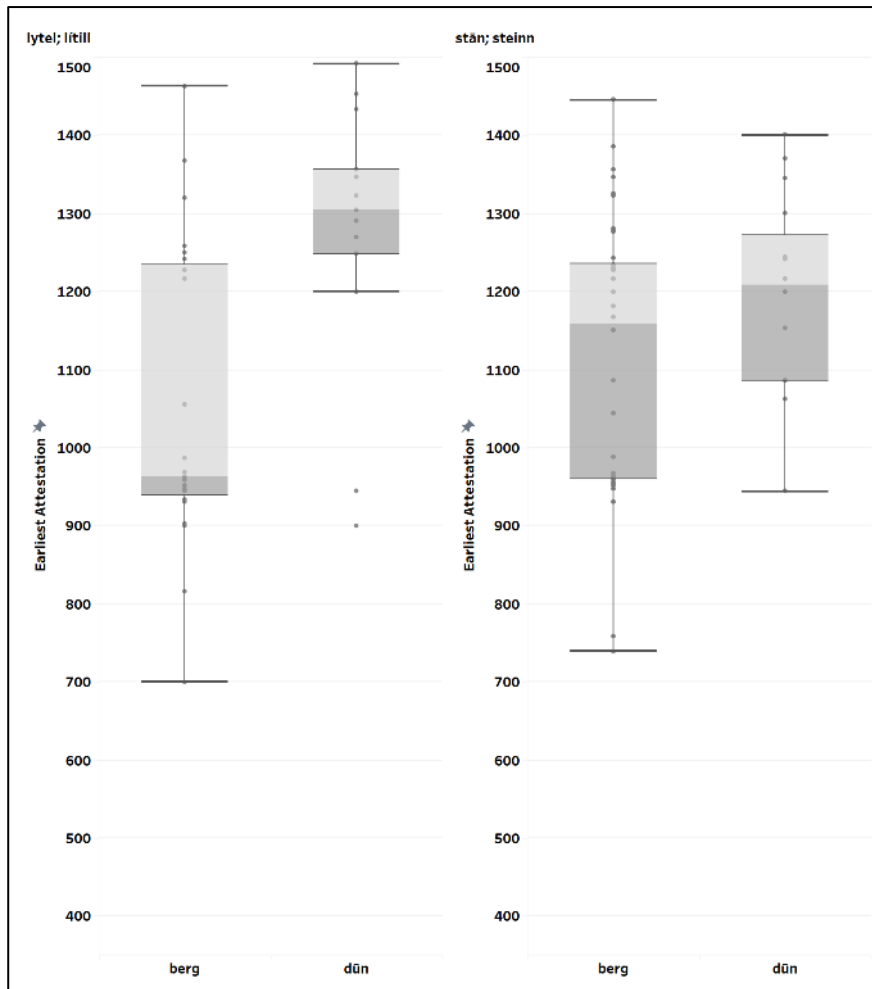


84. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *scelf* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

#### 4.5.2. Geology

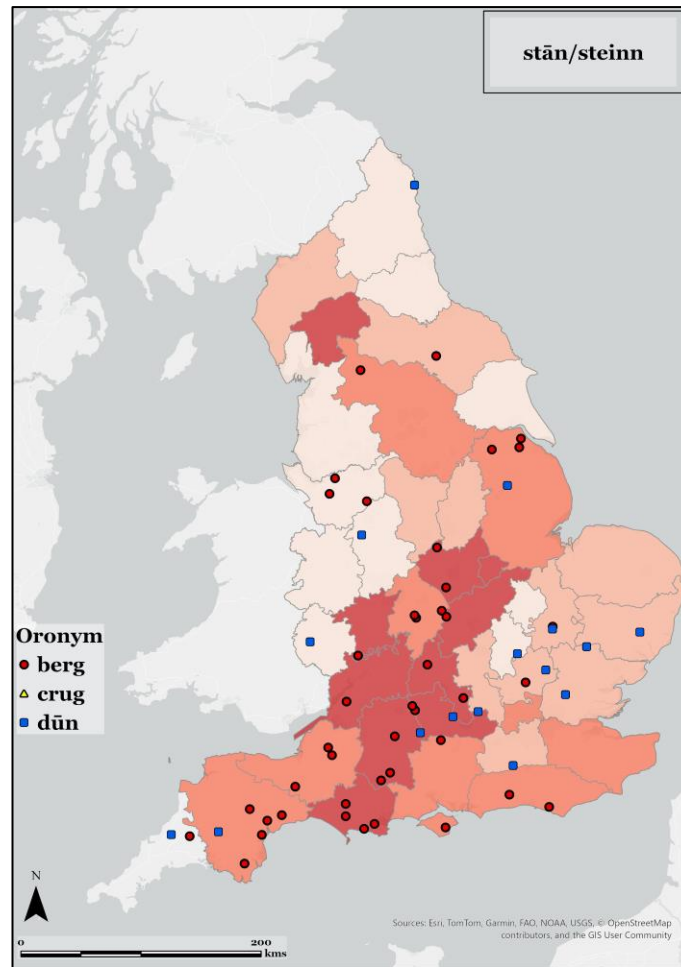
- ‘stone’ OE/OScan *stān* (including *stānig* adj. and *hringstān* ‘circular stone’)/*steinn*

There are fifty-eight occurrences within the corpus. Nearly three-quarters of these pair with *berg* rather than *dūn*. The *berg*-names are slightly earlier in their attestations than the *dūn*-names on average, albeit the difference is not quite as pronounced as it is for the collocations with ‘little’.



85. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations in this corpus with *stān/steinn*, compared with *lytel/lítill*

Two thirds of this group is lost, not surviving today as names. Overall, the distribution skews to the south.



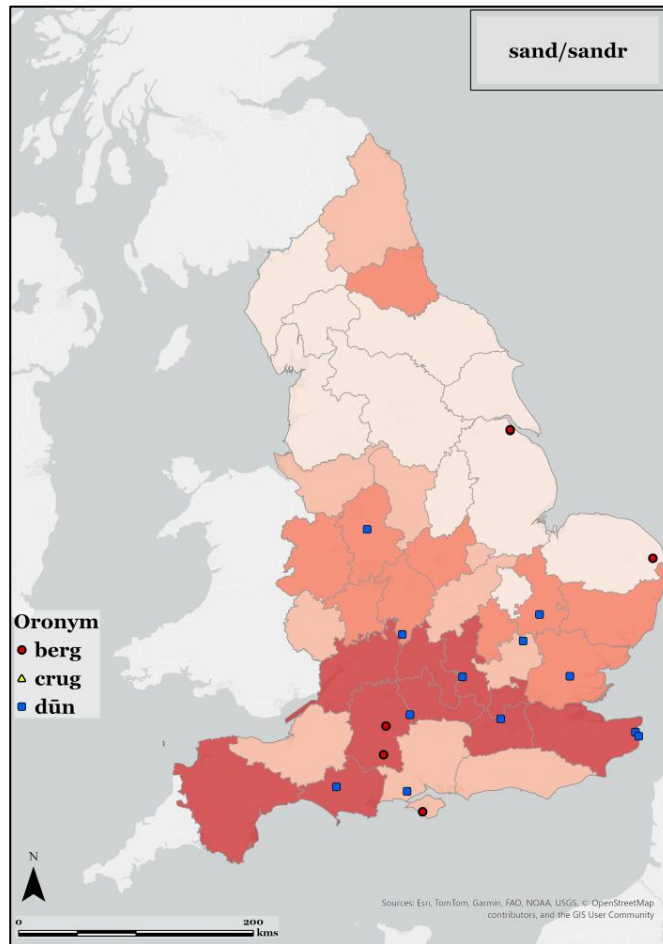
86. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *stān/steinn* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

If a natural *berg* or *dūn* was the referent, the element ‘stone’ could have referred to the quality of soil or the presence of stony outcrops which might have been visually striking or seen as a resource to be exploited. Where an artificial *berg* was the referent, the element ‘stone’ could have indicated the construction material of the feature (cf. Baker 2012, 319-320).<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Although many of the referents cannot be located precisely, of those that can the following *berg*-names appear to refer to artificial mounds: *stan beorh/g* S1003 1044 in Dawlish (Devon) (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 492), Stow Barrow (Somerset) *Staberga* 1181 (Turner 1951), and possibly Stoborough (Dorset) *Stanberge* 1086 (Mills 1977–2020, 1:73). The dragon kept watch over his hoard in *Beowulf* in a *stanbeorh* (Swanton 1997, 140, line 2213).

- ‘sand’ OE/OScan *sand/sandr*

Of the eighteen occurrences in the corpus, two thirds collocate with *dūn*. Overall the distribution is fractionally skewed to the east compared to typical distribution patterns for this corpus.<sup>145</sup>



87. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *sand/sandr* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

This collocation has already been discussed in 1.4.3. in the context of considering the origin of OE *dūn* and the lack of contemporaneous Germanic cognates. In this corpus, although the element collocates more frequently with *dūn*, there are examples paired with *berg*. Indeed, there are as many *berg*-collocations on the coast as there are *dūn*. The earliest (ninth-century attested) *berg*-names are in Wiltshire.

<sup>145</sup> Figure 87 is a much more limited distribution compared to the distribution of the same element in Figure 1 in Cole (2016), which extends throughout the country, avoiding the Wash.

- ‘clayey; clay’ OE *clægig*/OScan *leirr*

The nine occurrences of *clægig* in the corpus pair with *dūn*. As with other similar groups displaying an exclusive preference, such exclusivity is worth noting. The names appear to run across a belt of land from east to west in the centre of the country. They do not follow the main national geological trends which sweep from south-west to north-east (figure 88).<sup>146</sup> Cole (2011a, 10) found that the distribution of ‘clay hill’ names was surprisingly concentrated; they are apparently not found to the north of Staffordshire nor in the south-east, yet this is not because there is an absence of suitable geological candidates in those areas.<sup>147</sup>

According to Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 3:91–96), the OE noun *clæg* ‘clay’ collocated frequently with OE *hyll* ‘hill’, but the adjective *clægig* did not. The main evidence of the adjectival form would be medial <n> in historical forms, surviving from the inflected weak adjectival form *clægigan*, (Mawer and Stenton 1925, xxvi) or the *\*clægen* proposed by Ekwall (1960, 110).<sup>148</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>146</sup> The possibility of localised lenses of clay existing within other geological strata should not be discounted. Cole (2011a, 7) noted the frequency with which sites with ‘clay’ names are on geological junctions.

<sup>147</sup> There are three proximate names: Steeple Claydon, Middle Claydon and Botolph or East Claydon. The first was one of the archetypal *dūn*-profile sites put forward by Gelling and Cole, discussed above in 1.4.7. and 3.7.1. The three names have clearly been given later affixes to distinguish them one from another, giving rise to the suspicion that there may originally have been only one *clægig dūn*, the description of which was used to identify a larger area, of which these three are subdivisions. However, each name is now associated with a separate hill, each of which would have been appropriate independently to have called a *clægig-dūn* (Cole 2011a, 9). They were each separate ancient parishes, with separate entries in Domesday Book (Powell-Smith, Palmer and Slater 2024). Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 3:95) treated them as if they were three separate instances of a collocation of *clægig* with *dūn*.

<sup>148</sup> The uninflected form appears to be recorded in an eleventh-century form in the phrase *into clæig dunes hale* (Hearne 1723, 2:420; DOE 2025, s.v. *clæig* adj.). This is another collocation with *dūn*.

/n/ should survive both before dental plosives and before /h/ (Jordan and Crook 1974, §170, n.2). Had *hyll* collocated with the adjectival form, one would have expected <n> to survive in attestations, as it does with the place-names involving *dūn*. Therefore, the preference for the noun form over the adjectival with *hyll*, and vice versa for *dūn*, appears to be a genuine substantive phenomenon, and not an artefact of surviving attestations. Further explanation of this phenomenon on current evidence is difficult. However, being mindful of the pattern might help in future research to find or propose an answer.

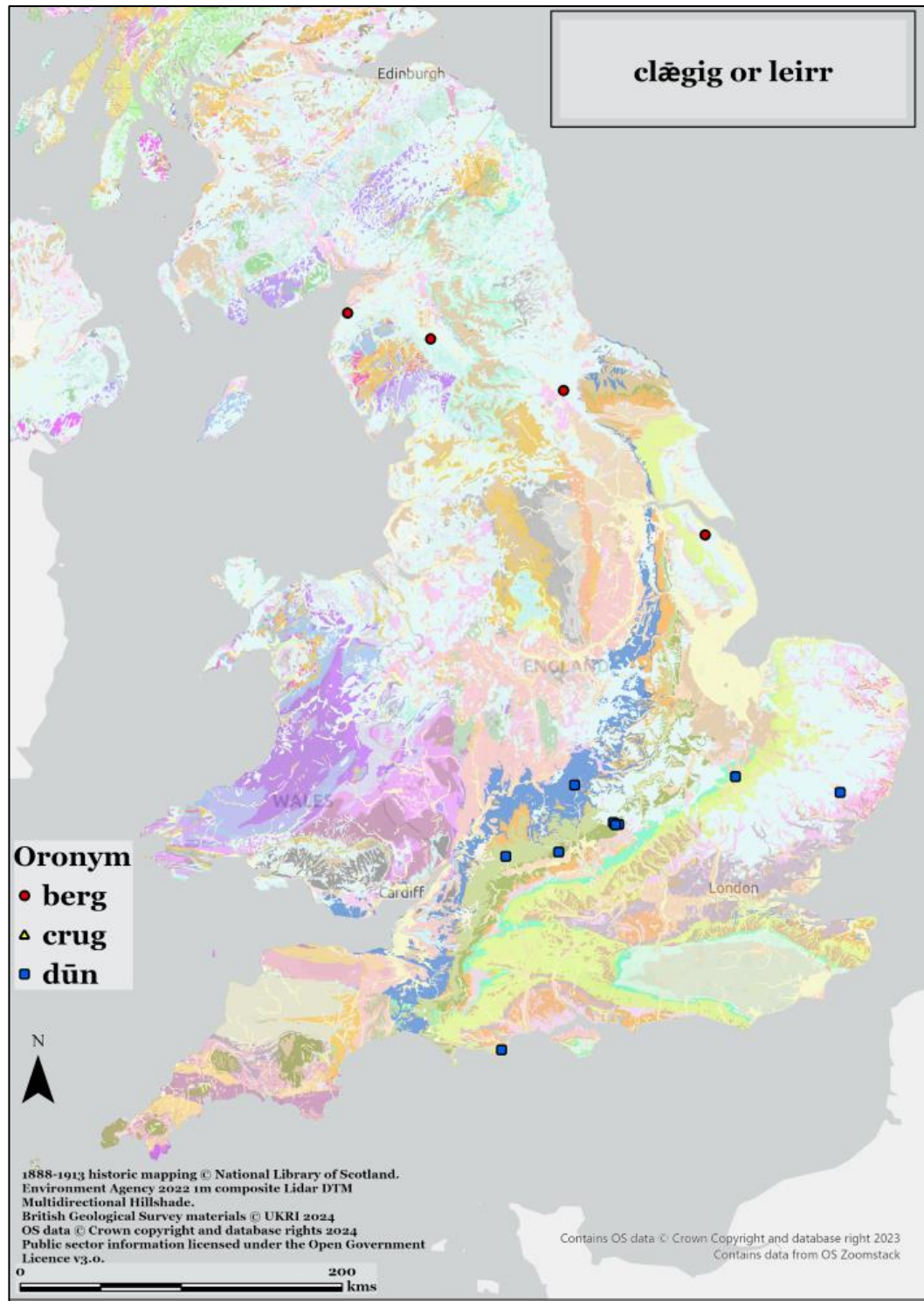
Clay soils are mineral-rich but poorly draining and prone to water-logging. Cole (2011a, 5) noted that *clæg* in a place-name might have indicated farming possibilities; this would be particularly so when sloping topography (as at a hill site) was also present, permitting gravity to mitigate the absence of free drainage in clay soils.<sup>149</sup>

Although *berg* never collocates with *clægig* in this corpus, there are four collocations between *berg* and OScan *leirr* ‘clay; earth; loam’. The sample size may be small but the distribution is markedly northern, in Cumberland, Lincolnshire, NRY and Westmorland (figure 88). *Lerbjerg* is found frequently in Danish place-names (DS 2024). It is attested in Norway in at least seven farm names in the form *lerberg* (Rygh 1897-1936, 3:94, 5:27, 270). If the qualifier indicating ‘clay’ was chosen for these names because of the relevance of clay for farming, the binary split between *berg* and *dūn* collocations – between Scandinavian-influenced areas and the south respectively – is interesting. This is returned to in Chapter Five.

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<sup>149</sup> Clayhidon (Devon) is thought to be a collocation between OE *hæg* ‘hay’ and *dūn*, first attested in 1086 as *Hidona* (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 610). From 1485 onwards attestations including *clæg(ig)* as an affix begin, such as *Cleyhidon*, and the parish is said to be ‘remarkable for its clay’. This perhaps illustrates how a clay hill could be used for hay crops.



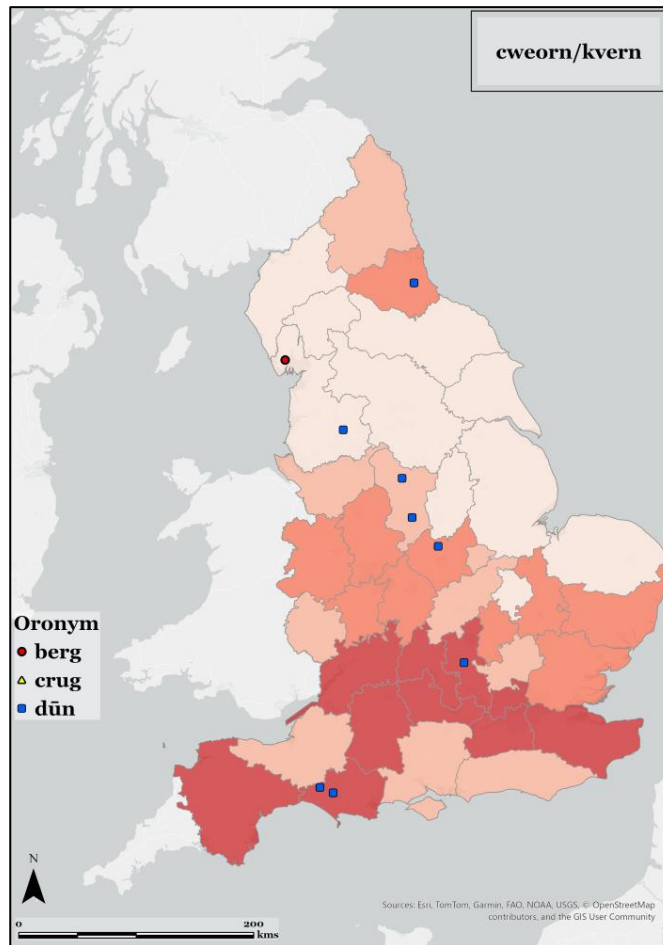


88. Place-names in this corpus including the elements OE *clægig* and OScan *leirr*, plus underlying geological mapping.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>150</sup> At this scale, the legend is disabled by the BGS on account of the sheer number of geologies present. Moreover, local lenses of clay are not visible at this scale.

- ‘quern; hand-mill; mill’ OE/OScan *cweorn/kvern* and *myln/mylna*

The first occurs nine times, all but once with *dūn*.<sup>151</sup>



89. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *cweorn/ kvern* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

There are various possibilities for naming motivation. The reference might well have been to the stone necessary to make mill stones (Smith 1956, 1:122; Field 1972, 177; Cavill 2018, 348). However, no site has the same geology as another. Many stone-types are represented: sandstones, mudstones, as well as various kinds of superficial deposits. Given that the OE element *cweorn* could also combine with OE *burna* ‘stream’ and *wella* ‘spring’, Ekwall (1922, 46) suggested that it must also

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However, the general south-west to north-east sweep of geology is clear, against which the distribution of the relevant corpus names can be seen.

<sup>151</sup> There was a recognised OScan compound *kvernberg* denoting a millstone quarry (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874, s.v. *kvernberg* n.).

have the sense of a mill structure, such as a water mill.<sup>152</sup> If the latter were the case, these names would not sit within the theme of geology. Instead, they might sit within the theme of arable farming. The fact that a structure required for the processing of grains collocates so regularly with *dūn*, rather than *berg* or *crug*, should be borne in mind when reading section 4.6. below.

There are nine collocations with OE/OScan *myln/mylna* in the corpus. The first attestations are generally later than average. Cullen (1997, 591, 663) found that in parts of Kent there was a recurrent compound between *myln* and *berg*, particularly with later attestations (post-1500 in many cases, so only two pre-1500 cases are within the corpus). Most examples included the definite article. He suggested that the compound was functioning as a ME appellative referring to ‘the mound on which a mill stands’.

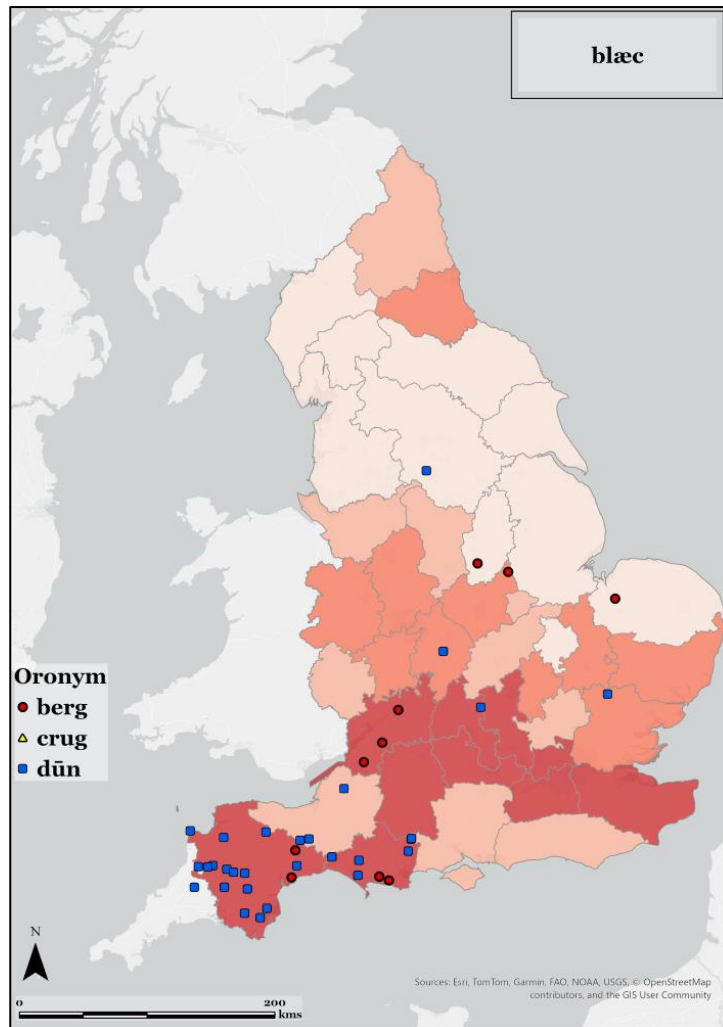
#### 4.5.3. Colour

- ‘black’ OE *blæc*

There are thirty-nine occurrences in the corpus; nearly three-quarters of the collocations are with *dūn*, forming a south-western distribution focused on Devon and continuing into the eastern part of Cornwall, as with OE *boga* (4.5.1.). They are later in their first attestations. They are nearly all associated with places of non-administrative status, yet nearly all survive. Once again, these Devon clusters of names are not lost despite being associated with minor locations.

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<sup>152</sup> *cwyrnburna* occurs in a charter, S703 962, concerning land at Chelsworth (Suffolk). *cweornwelle* occurs in a charter, S1566 [12th], detailing the bounds of Oundle (Northamptonshire) .



90. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *blæc* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

In terms of linguistic form, *blæc* is hard to distinguish from its antonym OE *blāc* ‘white; pale’.<sup>153</sup> In terms of naming motivation, explanations focus upon the use of *blæc* to indicate the fertility of the landscape, or the use of *blāc* to indicate the absence thereof. The latter might also denote bareness and an absence of vegetation on account of infertility (Smith 1956, 1:37). According to Parsons, Styles and

<sup>153</sup> Where the more easily distinguishable OScan elements *bleikr* ‘pale’ and *blár* ‘dark’ subsequently exerted influence on name forms, this extra evidence helps to suggest what the underlying OE etymon might originally have been (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:111; Townend 2002, 206). However, such extra evidence is not likely to be found in the south-west of England, where the bulk of these corpus names lie.

Hough (1997–2004, 1:111) and Cox (1994, 286), these evolved meanings were first attested in early ModE.

Other suggested explanations for *blæc* in place-names include the presence of burning, coal, peat, woad processing or dyeing (Cavill 2018, 33) or a black crop such as beans and peas (OED 2025, s.v. black crop n.), albeit the latter meaning is attested from the post-medieval period onwards. Archaeologists have suggested that *blæc* refers to land that is dark or black because of former settlement, creating dark humic soils in the area (Hall 1981, 32; Gerrard and Aston 2007, 398-403; Aston and Gerrard 2013, 117-120). In the Shapwick project (Somerset), this correlation between the element and occupation archaeology was borne out, but that is not always the case, and one should be cautious before jumping to that conclusion (Cavill 2018, 33 and Gregory introduction: xxxvii; Lloyd 2021b, 7). Incidentally, none of these proposed interpretations of *blæc* explains why its collocation with *dūn* should be so concentrated in Devon. As with *boga*, this distribution remains markedly pronounced but unsatisfactorily explained.

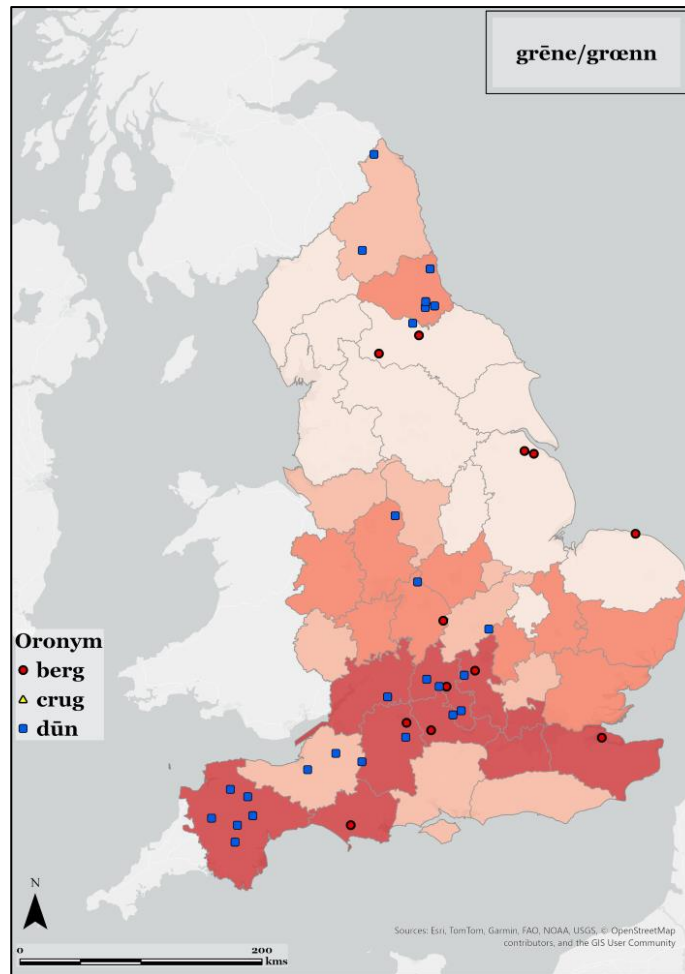
Elements referencing the colour of a feature appear deceptively simple to interpret. In fact, a range of explanations can be put forward for the use of a colour adjective in a place-name. More are discussed below. This is another qualifier where there is scope to argue about the thematic classification that should be given to the compound name, depending on the interpretation given to the qualifying element.

- ‘green’ OE/OScan *grēne*/*grænn*<sup>154</sup>

There are thirty-nine occurrences within the corpus. Once again, just under three-quarters of the collocations are with *dūn*, the remainder with *berg*. There is a cluster of *grēne* plus *dūn*-names in the north-east.

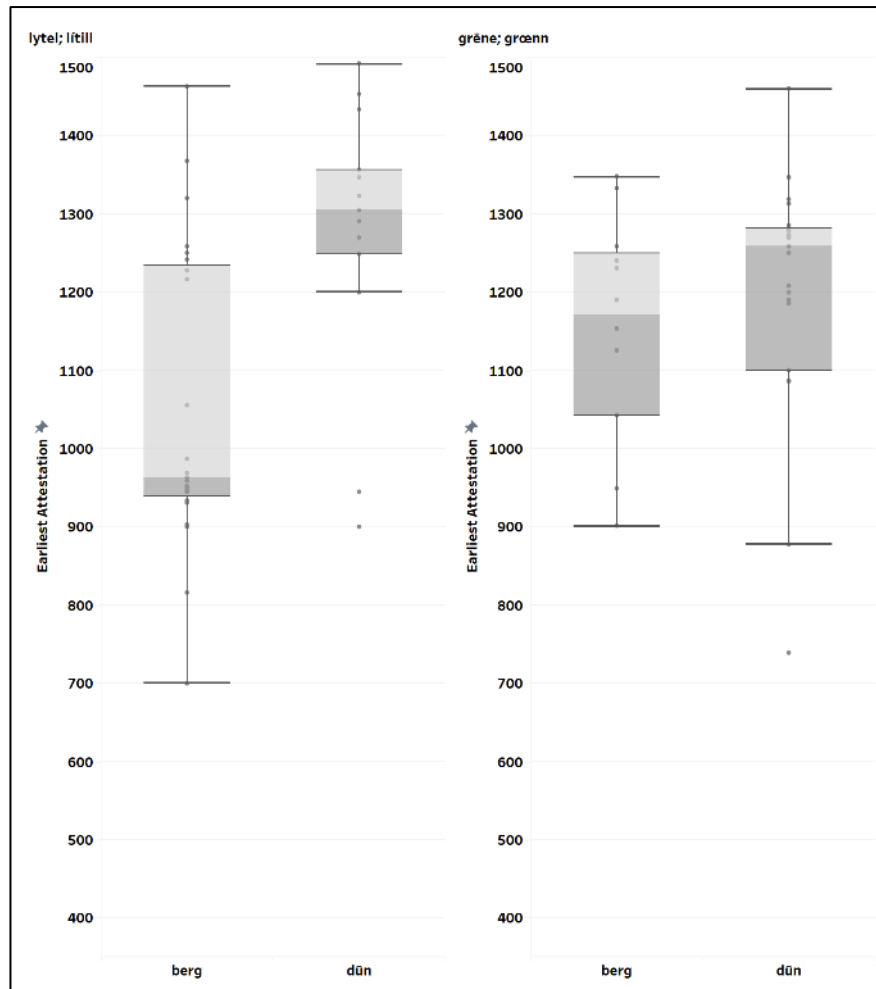
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<sup>154</sup> The OE and OScan forms were probably indistinguishable by the time they were recorded in place-names in England (Coates 2006a, 46; Rye 2016, 85). OScan /ø:/ (<œ>) would have unrounded to /e:/ by then, as had also happened in OE (Jordan and Crook 1974, §51; Hogg 1992, §5.77).



91. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *grēne/groenn* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

The *berg*-names include several early charter names; the *dūn*-names include several later minor names.



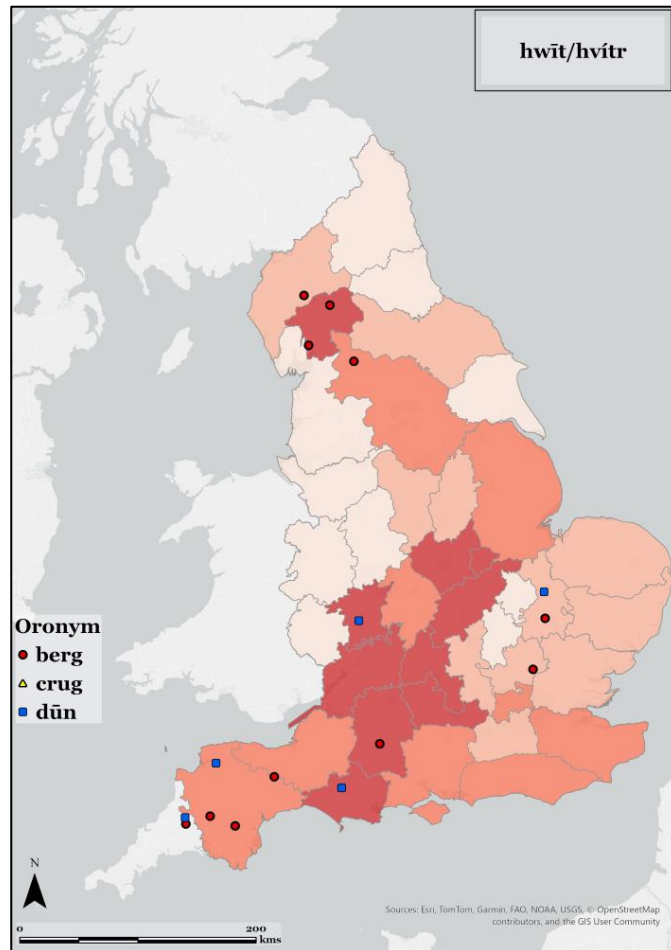
92. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations with *grēne/graenn* in the corpus, compared with *lytel/lítill*.

Why might someone be motivated to use the element *grēne* when coining a name? A green hill might be one which is favourable for agriculture and capable of supporting vegetation, as opposed to bare rock or excessively stony soil. Smith (1956, 1:209) suggested the meaning ‘young’ and ‘growing’ for the use of *grēne* in place-names. Cavill (2018, 181) suggested that it distinguished grassland from arable. Field (1972, 93) observed that the colour was ‘often indicating marshy land’. In charter boundaries, Kitson (1993, 40) stated that it referred to features that were turf-covered. This might be particularly relevant to artificial mounds if capped or built up with turf. It appears in some contexts to have been a good thing for a feature to be *grēne*. In the gnostic poetry in Cotton Tiberius B i, it was a mark of blessing

and of correct order. Just as woods should blossom, a *berg* should stand green on the earth – *beorh sceal on eorþan grēne standan* (Williams 1914, 128, lines 34-35).<sup>155</sup>

- ‘white’ OE/OScan *hwīt/hvítr*

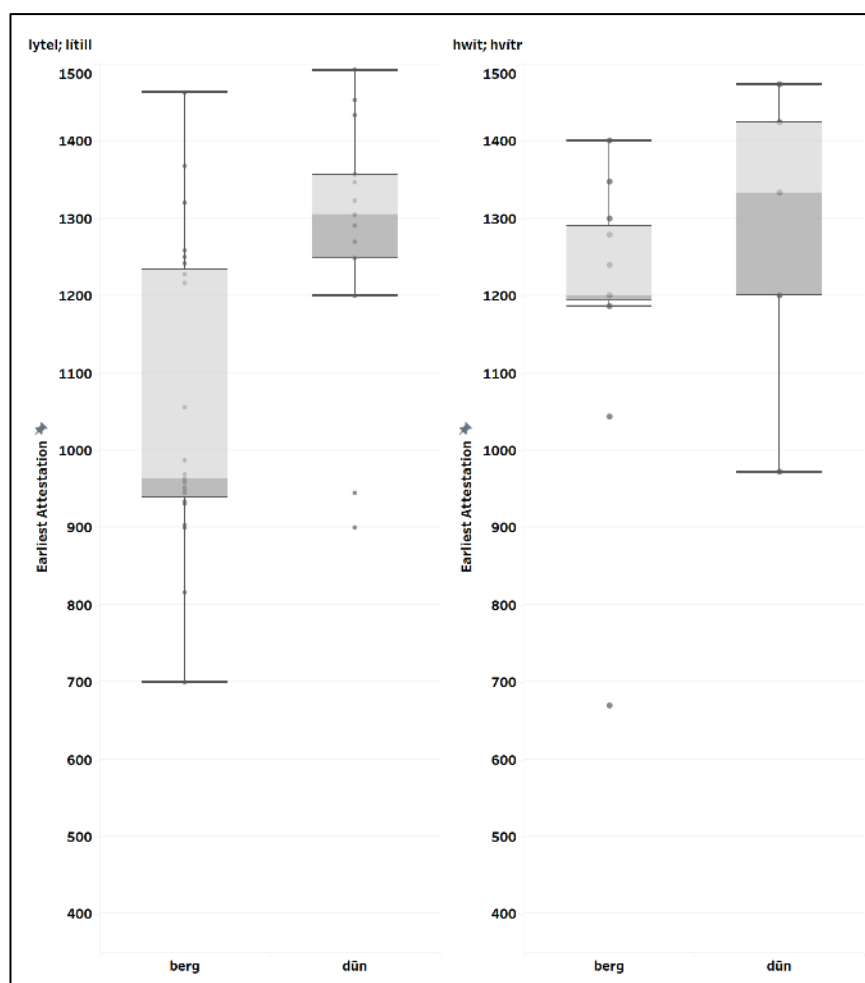
Sixteen times this appears in the corpus; two thirds of the occurrences are with *berg*, the remainder with *dūn*. The latter group generally have late first-attestation dates and they are all southern in distribution.



93. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *hwīt/hvítr* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

<sup>155</sup> It is also the description of the place (*grene beorgas*) which the *wræcmægas* ‘wretches’ (used of devils or demons) had to give up, bewailing that fact, when Guthlac occupied their land: see *Guthlac A* (Roberts 2019 [1979], 90, lines 231-232). Although the home of demons might not seem like a good place, the fact that the demons lament giving up the site suggests that it was a favourable one. The fact that Guthlac claimed the site tallies with descriptions of *grene beorgas* as a marker of correct order and blessing.





94. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations in this corpus with *hwít/hvítr*, compared with *lytel/lítill*

Three-quarters of these names survive even though nearly all of them are names associated with minor places or features. It may be that the visibility of the ‘white’ aspect, singled out in the names, contributed to their survival. The referents of these names probably stood out better in the landscape, meaning that the names associated with them did not fall out of use.

Where the referent is an artificial mound, it might have been capped with chalk (Evans 1985, 84; Ogburn 2006, 407).<sup>156</sup> In other places, the natural referent is a scar of a rock such as white limestone. Whitbarrow (Westmorland) is attested between

<sup>156</sup> At least two of the names in this group are referring to artificial mounds: White Barrow (Wiltshire), *Whitebergh* 1348 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1939, 237) and Wittaburrow (Devon) (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 530). The unlocated *berg*-names may also be referencing artificial mounds.

1186 and 1200 as *Wi-* or *Wyteber* (Smith 1967, 1:82). The grey-white scars are still very visible today, notwithstanding foliage.



95. Whitbarrow (Westmorland) (A.Lloyd: November 2022) NGR 347985 487495 looking WSW just over three kilometres from the summit (cropped image).

#### 4.5.4. Weather

- ‘snow’ OE/OScan *snāw/snjór* (*snær*)

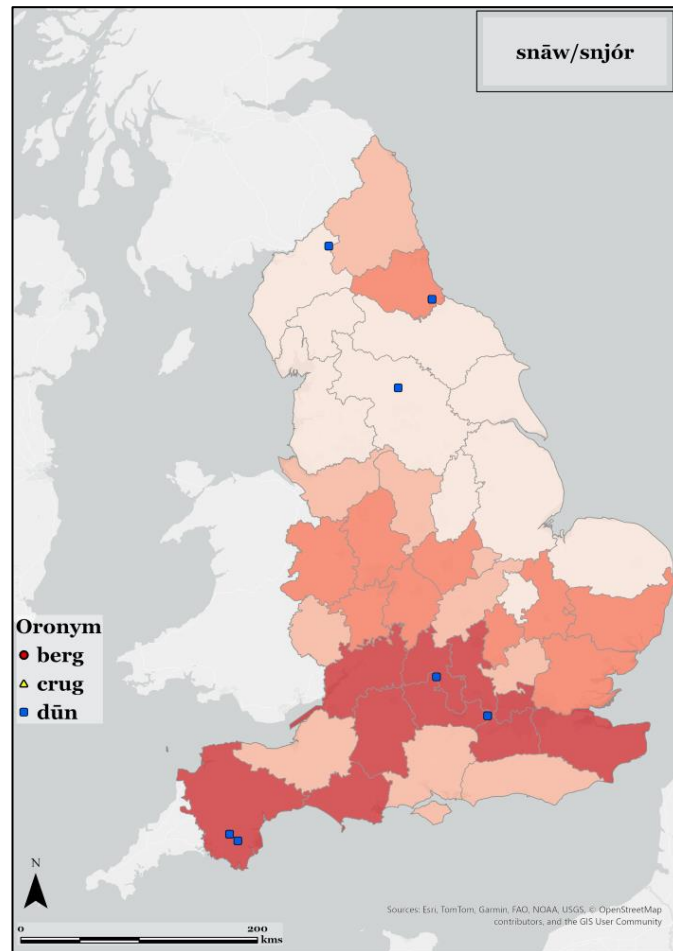
There are seven examples spread throughout England.<sup>157</sup> The collocation is always with *dūn*, never with *berg* or *crug*. The exclusivity is worth noting. Only two of

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<sup>157</sup> There are two more examples in Wales and Scotland that follow the same pattern as the English names. Snowdon (Caernarvonshire) is first attested in 1095 as *Snawdune*. The first attestation of the English name is earlier than that of the Welsh name: *Weddua Vaur* appears first in 1284 (Owen and Morgan 2007, 443). Indeed, this name appears to be the earliest attested example of this collocation currently known in Britain. It pre-dates the earliest example from this study’s corpus in England by over a century.

Snawdon (Berwickshire) is first attested as *super Snaudon*, possibly between 1228 and c.1260, albeit only the later fifteenth-century rubric mentions the name. The name is clearly attested by c.1318 appearing as *totam terram de Snawdon* (Hough, Taylor and Williamson 2016-2019, s.v. Snawdon). Scots *snaw* ‘snow’ and *doun* ‘hill’ may be influencing the development of this name (DSL 2024, s.v. snaw n. and doun n.1).

these names fail to survive. The names have first-attestation dates that are later than the corpus average.



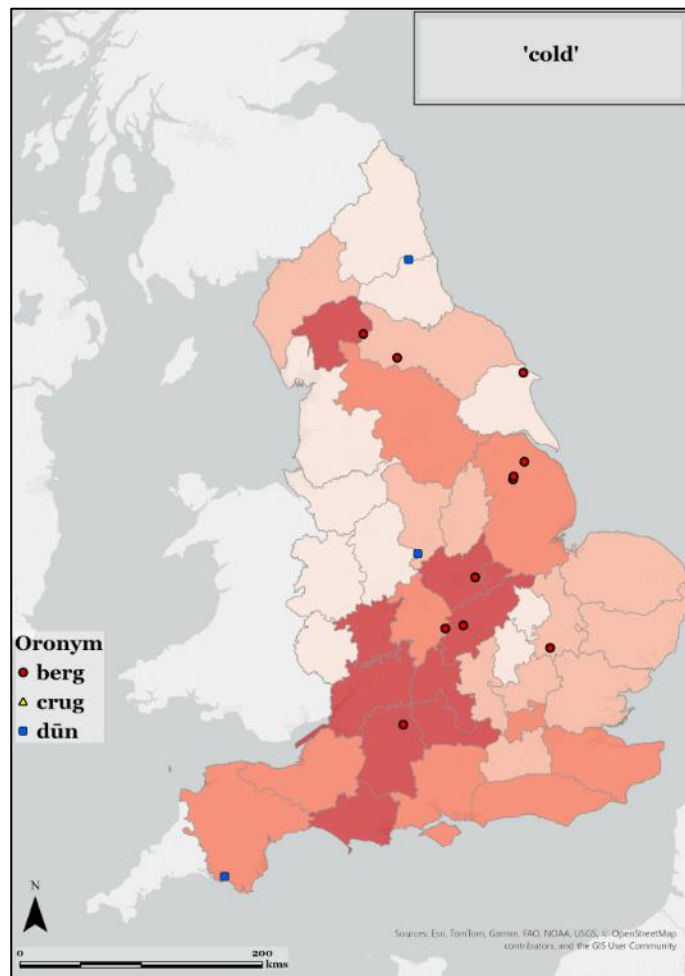
96. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *snāw/snjór* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Smith (1956, 2:132) thought that this collocation marked out hills where the snow lay for a long time, although four of the instances in this corpus are in the southern counties of Devon, Berkshire and Hertfordshire, so not the most northerly parts of England. In addition, Smith's explanation does not account for the absence of collocations with *berg* or *crug*. Each of these elements is capable of referencing large enough features on which snow could lie and, also, of being situated in parts of the country where this might be more prone to happening. Nor is there a clear explanation for why the particular *dūn*-sites, referenced in this name, have been singled out in relation to 'snow', as opposed to other *dūn*-sites. It might be helpful not to analyse this collocation as if the sites acquiring the name were those which had the greatest amount of snow. The only collocation which merits that interpretation is Snowdon (Wales). However, none of the English sites resemble

Snowdon in terms of scale, altitude and hostile environment. Rather, the appellation might have arisen because particular land use in a particular place meant that the presence of snow lying for a long time was noticed in that context.

- ‘cold’ OE/OScan *cald/kaldr* and *blā(w)/blár*

A possible counterpart to the ‘snow’ plus *dūn* collocations are the ‘cold’ plus *berg* names. There are eight collocations of *cald/kaldr* solely with *berg*.



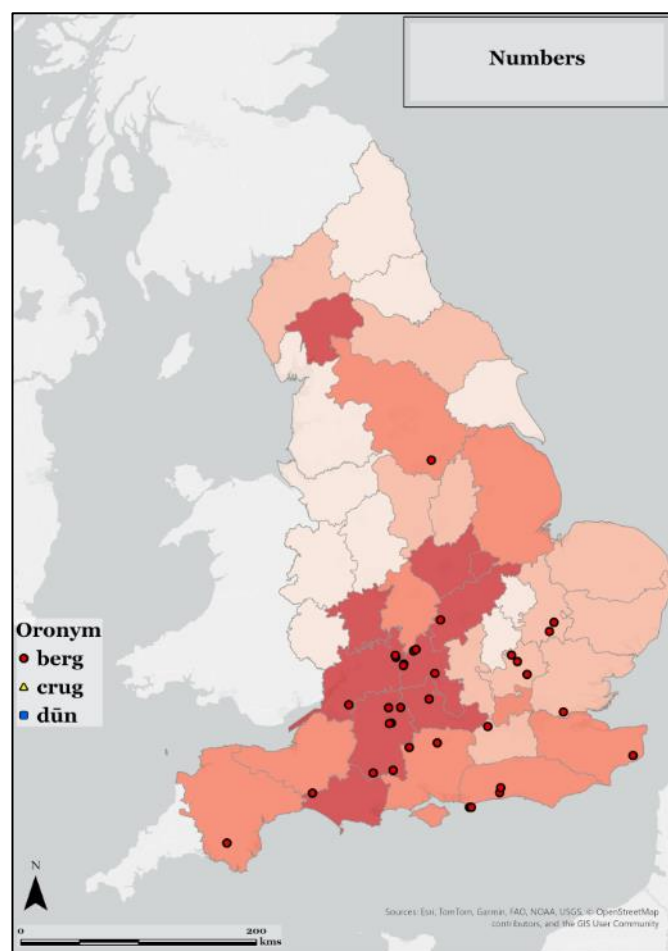
97. Place-names in this corpus including OE/OScan *cald/kaldr* and *blā(w)/blár* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

In terms of naming motivation, Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 2:127-130) suggested that this element could refer to the wind-swept and exposed position of the place.

OE/OScan *\*blāw/blár*, which meant ‘blue; dark’ but had an extended meaning signifying being exposed and cold or cheerless (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:109-110), collocates with *berg* in areas of OScan influence. Otherwise, it collocates with *dūn*.

#### 4.5.5. Numbers

It requires people to number features, grouping them together for particular reasons. This thematic classification could easily, therefore, be placed in 4.8. below, rather than here. In any event, all thirty-three collocations including a number are with *berg*, never *dūn*. Many of the names are non-surviving. ‘Two’ and ‘three’ are the most frequent numbers but there are others, extending up to ‘eleven’. It seems highly likely that artificial mounds were being counted. The distribution is southern, correlating with areas of charter production. These names are mainly early in first attestation.



98. Place-names in this corpus including numerical elements against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

#### 4.5.6. Directions

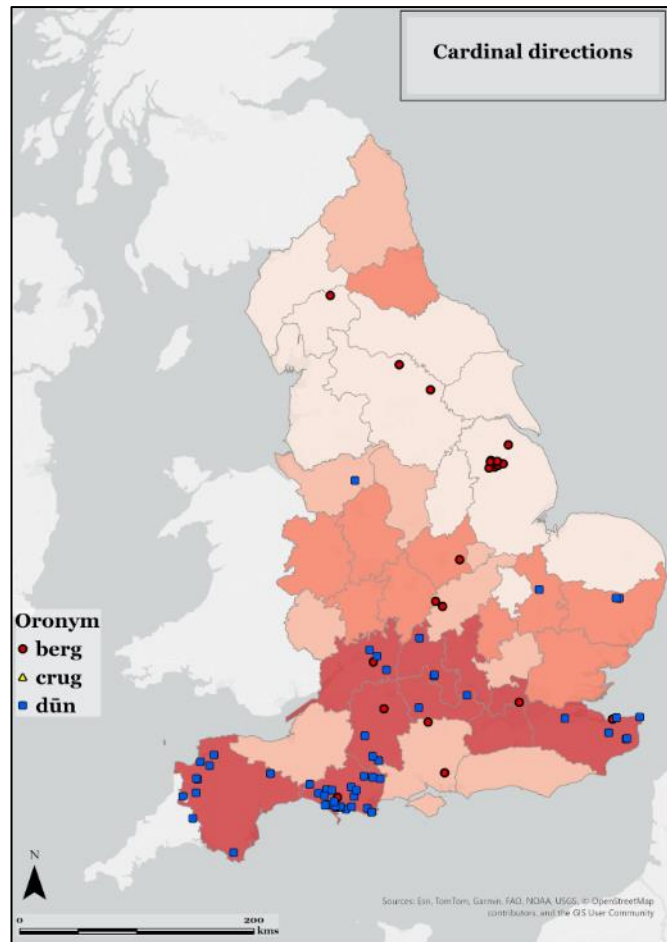
Directional terms are also human constructs. They reflect human perception, organisation and navigation of the landscape. Directional names are given in

relationship to other places in the landscape.<sup>158</sup> It is interesting that many of these names no longer survive in the landscape, suggesting possibly that the relevant network by which the landscape was being ordered lapsed such that the directional name no longer made sense outside of that defunct relationship.

Amongst the directional collocations, all four of the cardinal directions are referenced, with ‘north’ and ‘south’ dominating. The names are on average later first attested. The comments in Jones (2012a, 198-199) may be relevant here, in which it was observed that the cardinal points are not greatly attested in furlong names prior to the late fourteenth century, and that earlier names with cardinal directions might represent a different kind of top-down naming as opposed to bottom-up. This is returned to in Chapter Six, along with other directional elements such as ‘middle’ or ‘under’.

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<sup>158</sup> Given the way in which historical name-forms shorten, becoming less transparent over time, it is hard to be sure whether the original name phrase was referring to the eponymous feature as being ‘east’ (for example) of another place, or whether it was referring to a place that is ‘east’ of that eponymous feature. The grammatical inflections that might help to clarify this relationship have often been lost from historical attestations.



99. Place-names in this corpus including cardinal directions against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

## 4.6. Thematic analysis: vegetation

### 4.6.1. Cultivation

As already alluded to, it is difficult to draw hard-and-fast lines between types of vegetation. What might be regarded as a weed today could well have been a valuable resource in the past. Bracken is one such example, discussed below in 4.6.2. Vegetation is broadly split into plants which might have been cultivated, as opposed to those which might have existed in wild growth. Of course, both might have been managed to varying degrees.

- ‘hay’ OE/OScan *hēg* (*hīg*)/*hey*

There are thirty-four potential occurrences in the corpus. It is hard to separate out collocations with *hēg/hey* from those with OE (*ge*)*hæg* ‘enclosure’, OE *hege* ‘hedge; fence’ and OE *hēah* ‘high’. The following fall together in ME: /e:j/, /æ:j/ and /æj/, rendered with spellings such as <ay>, <ey>, <ei> and <ai> (Jordan and Crook 1974, §§93-95, 97; Kristensson 1967, 168-170; 1987, 146-147; 1995, 19, 114; 2002, 215).

This is a particular problem with limited attestations; see, for example, Haydon (Dorset), which only has one attestation in the early fourteenth century of *Haydon* and is now a lost field-name. On the basis of this one attestation, Mills (1977–2020, 3:178) suggested it was a *hēg* plus *dūn* collocation.

Over two thirds of the collocations involve *dūn*. However, in the north, *berg* usually collocates with this element.<sup>159</sup> Many of the located northern *hey* plus *berg* compound names reference glacial drumlins, or similar features that are small and rounded.

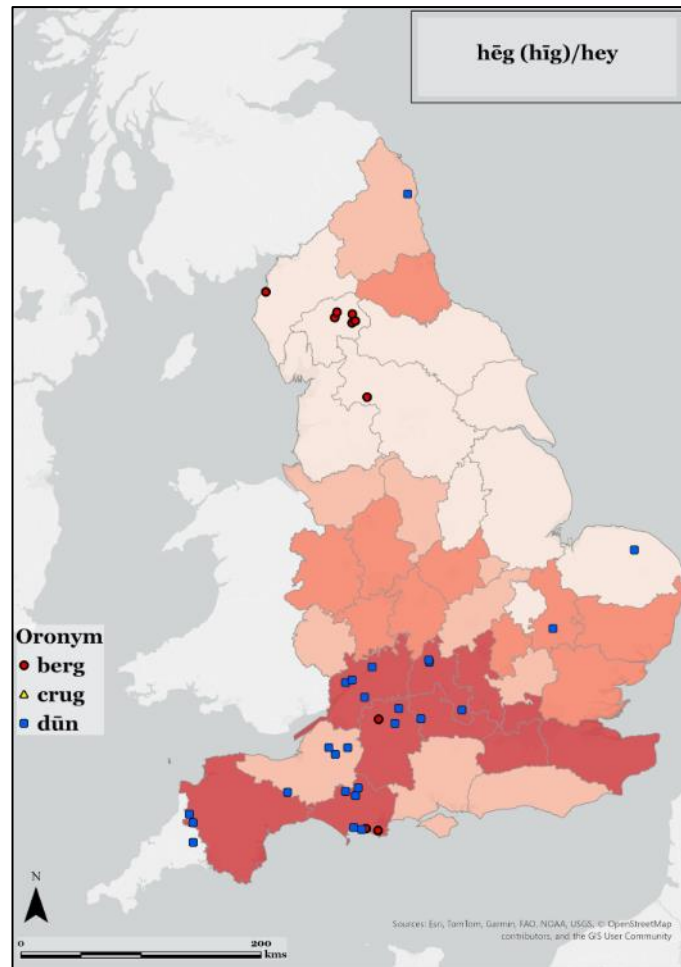
No examples of OE *hēg* collocating with *berg* could be found in DOE (2025). On the other hand, *hey-björg* is a recognised OScan compound, occurring in the thirteenth-century *Íslendinga Saga* (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874, s.v. *hey-björg* n.) It is the compound noun used to describe hay stores in *Hænsa-Þóris saga* (ONP 2024, s.v. *hey-björg* n.).<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> The one northern example of a *dūn* is Aydon (Northumberland). This has a run of spellings which suggest that it might be a collocation with OE/OScan *ēg/ey* ‘island’ rather than *hēg/hey*; *Ay-* and *Hay-* spellings alternate (Ekwall 1960, 20). The three southern examples collocating with *berg* are all lost names and may involve *ge(hæg)*: *on þe hegeberges* in Wiltshire is a solitary name-form from a charter, S466 940 [1338-1340]. The other two involve *berg* as qualifier rather than generic, an unusual reversal in this context. They are both late-attested field-names and probably involve *(ge)hæg* given the context. They are *le Barghey ad castrum de Corff* 1435 and Barrow Hayes, *le Barryhey(e)s* 1461 (Mills 1977–2020, 1:30-31, 127). If these questionable outliers are discounted, the north-south divide is stronger still.

<sup>160</sup> The OScan noun *björg(bjarg)* and verb *bjarga* could also refer to ‘help’ and it is this sense that might underlie the idea of a hay-store. On the other hand, a hay-store or hay-rick does look like a mound or heap of hay and OScan *berg* could mean a ‘mound’ or ‘heap’.



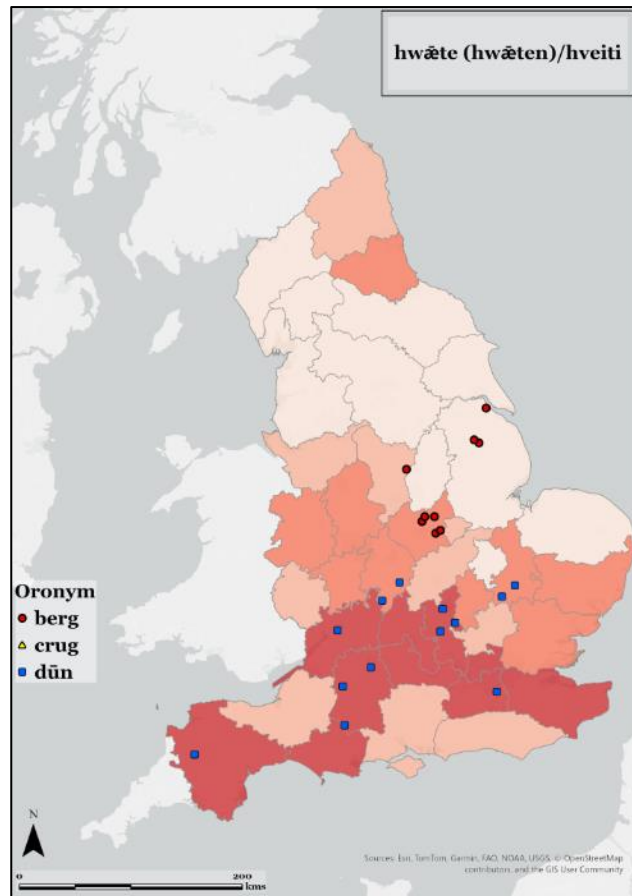


100. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *hēg/hey* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

- ‘wheat’ OE/OScan *hwæte* (*hwæten*)/*hveiti*

The next most common collocation referencing cultivated vegetation is ‘wheat’, with twenty-two occurrences in this corpus.<sup>161</sup> The geographical distribution splits starkly between *dūn* in southern areas and *berg* further north.

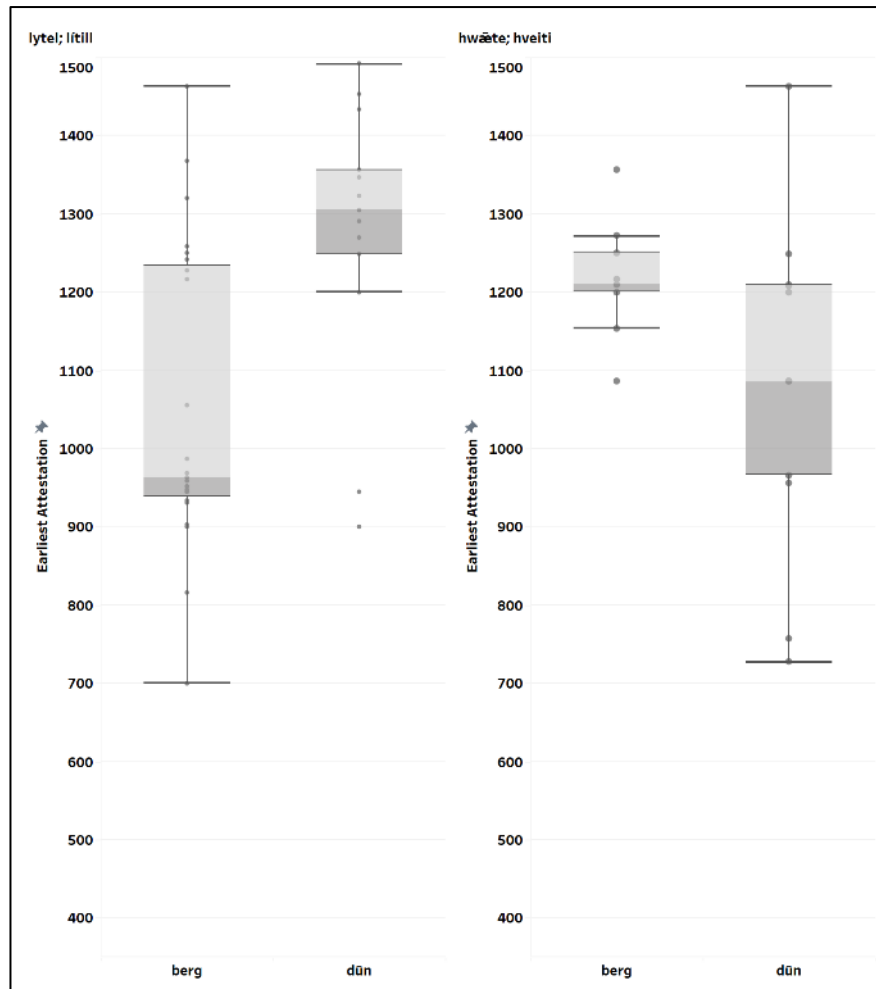
<sup>161</sup> There are examples of the OE adjectival form *hwæten* used, for instance, at Waddington (Surrey), *Whatindone* S1181 727 [13th] (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1934, 46).



101. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *hwæte/hveiti* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Smith (1956, 1:271) observed that the element was common in ME and later field-names. However, many of the *dūn*-names are first attested early. Four of those early-attested *dūn*-names are parish names. By contrast, many of the *berg*-names are lost.<sup>162</sup> Figure 102 shows *hwæte/hveiti* compared with *lytel/lítill* for this study's corpus: with the former, *dūn* is used in collocations over a long period of time, including the earliest attestations, whereas *berg* is used in collocations in a discrete, later period of time; with the latter, *berg* is used in collocations over a long period of time including the earliest attestations and *dūn* is used in collocations only later in time.

<sup>162</sup> One of the Leicestershire examples, Whatborough, is a parish name (Cox 1998-2019, 3:272), but the settlement is no more; it is a scheduled deserted medieval village (NHLE1008555).



102. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations in this corpus with *hwæte/hveiti*, compared with *lytel/litill*

‘Bread wheat’ – OE *hlāfhwæte* that is wheat of sufficient quality to make bread – was important in the early medieval period, featuring for instance in dues rendered at Hurstbourne (Hampshire) recorded in a charter, S359 900 [1130-1150] (DOE 2025, s.v. *hlāf-hwæte* n.).<sup>163</sup> Banham and Faith (2014, 28-29) argued that free-threshing bread wheat was the most popular of all cereals by the tenth and eleventh centuries judging from identified archaeological botanical finds (see also Banham 1990, 16-20).<sup>164</sup> Banham (2010, 191) thought that the growth in wheat production

<sup>163</sup> Rent and tithes were recorded in ninth- or tenth-century charters to be paid in wheat or *clenes wetes* ‘clean wheat’ (eSawyer 2024, S1448).

<sup>164</sup> Inevitably, archaeological evidence is limited. Sites have to have been investigated sufficiently, and the conditions for plant survival, identification and accurate dating have to have been present.

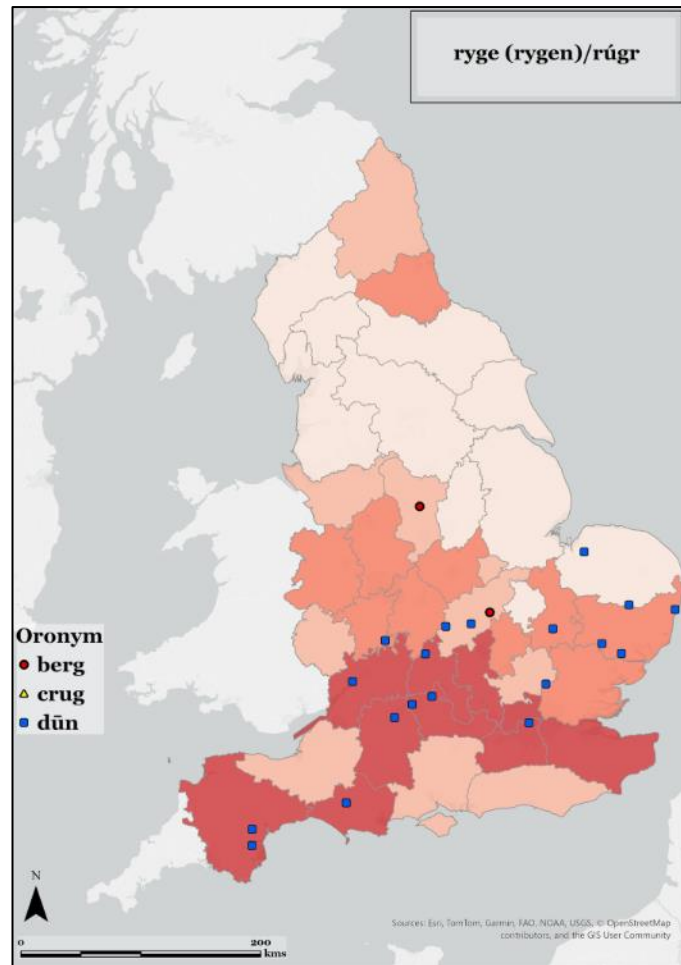
could be dated to the eighth century. This background context of the value of wheat may be reflected in its use as an element in early names for *dūn*-places of administrative importance.

- ‘rye’ OE/OScan *ryge* (*rygen*)/*rúgr*

Twenty-one occurrences exist in the corpus.<sup>165</sup> They are dominated by *dūn*. The distribution is exclusively southern. As with the ‘wheat’ collocations discussed above, there are several relatively early first attestations in this group, and five of the *dūn*-names are parish names; all of the latter are located in East Anglia.

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<sup>165</sup> There are examples with an adjectival form *rygen*, for instance Raydon and Reydon, Suffolk (Smith 1956, 2:91; Briggs forthcoming) and Roydon, Essex (Reaney 1935, 49-50). The adjectival form may have been used to signify ‘characterised by’, ‘overgrown with’, ‘made of’ or ‘growing with’ (Smith 1956, 1:151-152).



103. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *ryge/rúgr* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Banham (1990, 33) suggested that rye (also a free-threshing crop) was not as common as wheat in the early medieval period. It was found on a few sites in East Anglia and the South Midlands. In contrast, McKerracher (2016) looked at a wider sample of charred plant remains drawn from archaeological recovery at sites in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley region, Essex and East Anglia. He concluded that this data showed a striking rise in rye cultivation in the seventh to ninth centuries. Wheat was present but not necessarily dominant over barley. The precise choice of crop was likely to be driven by environmental constraints (McKerracher 2016, 98). Wheat thrives on clay-rich soils and is found as a signature on these kinds of early medieval sites (McKerracher 2022, 139). Rye withstands the cold well and grows on poorer soils (Forster and Charles 2022, 71, 74), such as those containing sand or peat. The historical core of Reydon (Suffolk) sits on sandy soils (BGS 2024) as do parts of Roydon (near King's Lynn). Rye is also more salt-tolerant (Banham and Faith 2014, 179); this might explain its growth in these locations.

The smallness of archaeological sample size constrains any generalisations. Nevertheless, the fact that in this corpus ‘rye’ has a similar signature to that of ‘wheat’ is worth noting. It suggests that they were both important early medieval crops featuring in collocations with *dūn*.

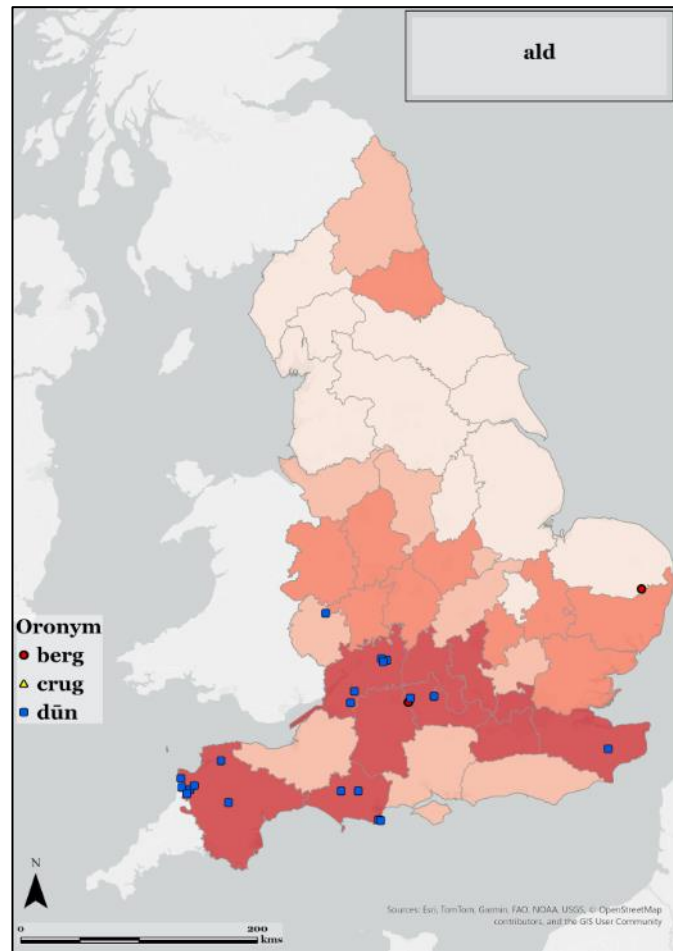
- Excursus: missing staple crops

Barley is poorly represented in this corpus. There is a field-name in the WRY which appears to be a collocation between OScan *bygg* ‘barley’ and *berg*. *Bygbergh(h)* is attested between 1235 and 1255, (Smith 1961–1963, 6:241). There is also a collocation in Westmorland involving OScan *bygg-hús* ‘a barley barn’, attested as *Bughusbergh* between 1190-1210 (Smith 1967, 1:150). There are three minor names potentially involving OE *bere* ‘barley’ or *bere-ærn* ‘barley barn’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:85-86). One is very early and two very late: they are, respectively, *on berendes beorh*, attested in a charter, S630 956 [15th]. This might involve a personal name rather than a reference to a barley barn (Mills 1977–2020, 3:122); Bardown (Sussex), *Berdowne* 1410, albeit difficult to distinguish from OE *bær* ‘bare’ or *bær* ‘swine pasture’ (Mawer, Stenton and Gover 1929-1930, 451); and *Berdonn* (Kent) attested in c. 1453 (Cullen 1997, 47).

- ‘old’ OE *ald*

At first sight it might seem odd to include this element here. However, this is another element whose sense in a collocation cannot be derived from etymology alone. The Devon survey editors suggested that this collocation referred to land that had long been under the plough, and in that sense was ‘old’ (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, lviii, 677; see also Gelling 1973-1976, 865). EDD (2011-2025, s.v. *old-land* sb.) recorded the following meaning for ‘old-land’: ‘Ground that has lain untilled a long time, and is now ploughed up; arable land which has been laid down in grass more than two years.’ Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 1:9) noted, ‘it is *at the time of re-use* that the term becomes applicable’. With this understanding, it would appear that this collocation refers to some form of cultivation and so belongs in this section.

There are twenty-two occurrences in the corpus, nearly all with *dūn*. The distribution is markedly south-western.<sup>166</sup>



104. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *ald* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

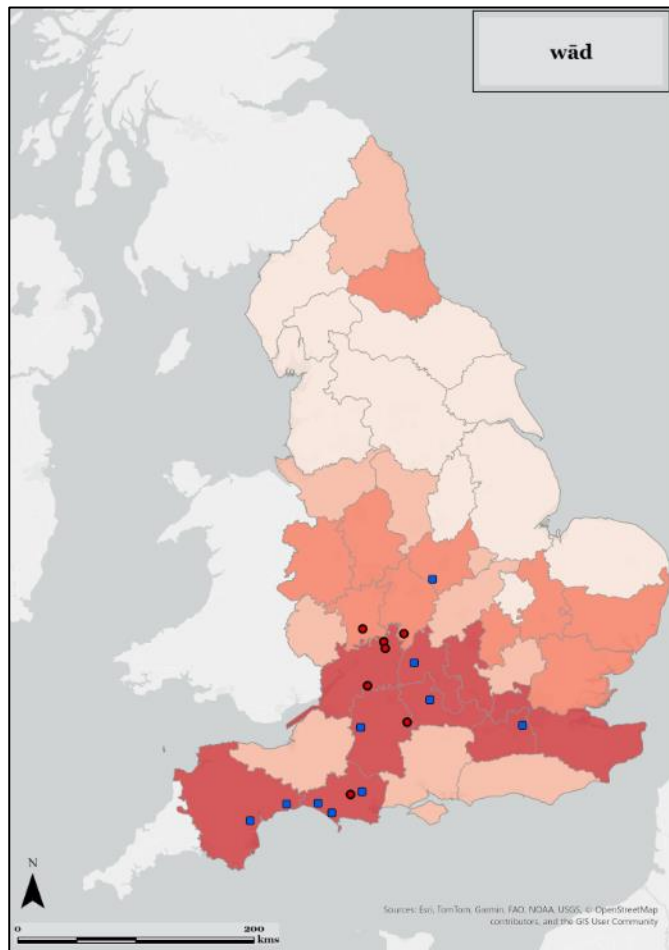
The paucity of collocations between *ald* and *berg*, as well as *crug*, is surprising. In the *OE Herbarium*, mugwort is said to grow around ditches and *on ealdum beorgum* (DOE 2025, s.v. *eald* adj.; Vriend 1984, 58, XIII, lines 3-4). OE *eald* ‘old’ is very frequent as a qualifier in charter material (Kitson 1993, 34). Given that both *berg* and *crug* might refer to burial mounds, which would be perceived as old or prehistoric, it might have been expected that they would have been named with this element. Instead, the near exclusive collocation with *dūn*, coupled with the wider

<sup>166</sup> Many of the recurrent compounds in Devon begin with /j/ reflecting the fracture of *ald* > *eald* in this area, with a stress shift to the second vowel in the OE period, which created a rising diphthong (Hallqvist 1948, 84-89; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:8-9).

context of *dūn*-collocations and elements signifying cultivation, reinforces the point that the sense of *ald* in these names is a reference to old cultivation.

- ‘woad’ OE *wād*

Sixteen records potentially including this element occur in the corpus.<sup>167</sup> The distribution is southern.



105. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *wād* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Unlike the case with ‘wheat’ and ‘rye’, the *berg*-collocations are earlier than the *dūn*-collocations. Furthermore, there are no places of administrative status, unlike the names referencing ‘wheat’ and ‘rye’. The *berg*-names include several charter instances. Kitson (forthcoming), examining charter material for *berg*, commented ‘Vegetable qualifiers are rather few and unvaried, mainly **wād** "woad" reflecting cultivation and **fearn** "fern" reflecting complete lack of it’. There is agreement here

<sup>167</sup> Collocations between *wād* and *dūn* can be hard to distinguish from those between *hwæte* and *dūn*.



that collocations referencing vegetation are not common for *berg*; those with *wād* and *fearn* are the exceptions to that rule.

Smith (1956, 2:234) observed that woad appeared to have been indigenous near Tewkesbury. Mawer, Stenton and Houghton (1927, 221) suggested that there was evidence for woad cultivation in Worcestershire, Hampshire and Berkshire. Despite the assumption of ‘cultivation’ made by commentators, possibly this activity was closer to management and exploitation of a naturally growing resource, rather than cultivation as for wheat or rye.

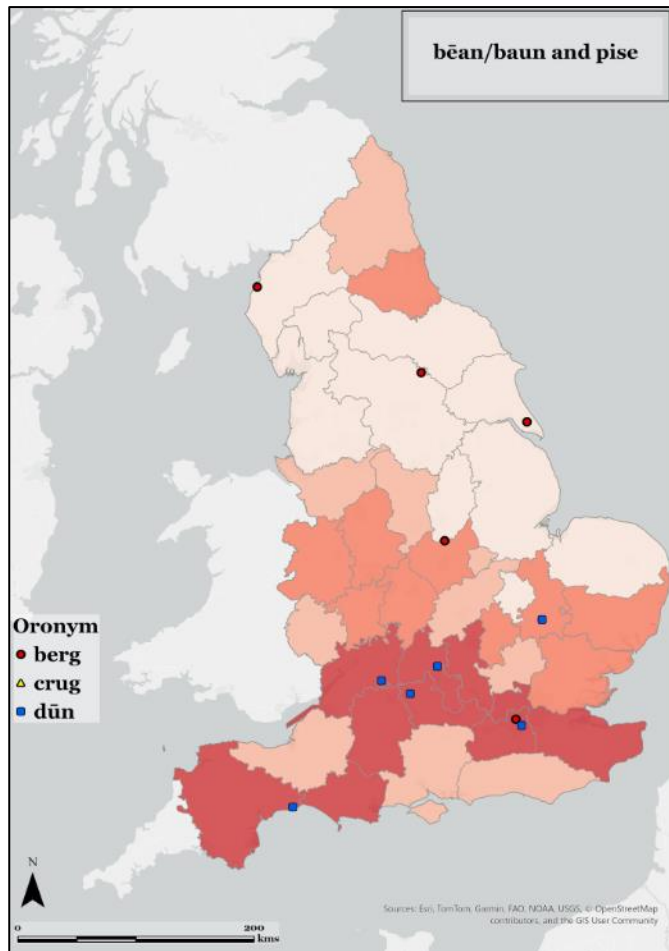
- Legumes: OE/OScan *bēan/baun* ‘bean’ and OE *pise* ‘peas’

Seven examples of the first exist in the corpus, nearly all collocated with *dūn*.

Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 1:64) did not note the collocations with *dūn*. The majority of the collocations are non-surviving. Although the solitary *berg* example is early, the *dūn*-names are later attested, differing from the pattern of early first attestations for rye or wheat *dūn*-names.

Bean crops have been interpreted as a sign of crop rotation (Lodwick 2022, 155; Treasure and Church 2017, 120-121). They help to improve soil quality through nitrogen-fixing, as well as helping to suppress weeds. On the other hand, Banham and Faith (2014, 35-36) did not find evidence of a close link between increased legume cultivation and the introduction of rotational-crop farming. Even if crop rotation were present, this would not explain why one of the crops being rotated gave its name to a place over and above the other crops forming part of the rotation.

In the north, there are four collocations between OE *pise* ‘peas’ and *berg*. This does not occur in the south. They also have later first attestations and all bar one of the names do not survive. Peas are a legume like beans, but more delicate, ordinarily requiring sheltered growing conditions (Banham and Faith 2014, 34-35).



106. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *bēan* and *pise* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

- ‘clover’ OE *clǣfre*

There are six collocations including ‘clover’ in the corpus, all with *dūn*. Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 3:90-91) noted the repeated collocations with *dūn*. All bar one of these names survive today. The distribution is southern and central, and spans much of the study period in terms of first-attestation dates. Field (1972, 48) and Cavill (2018, 80) dated the active cultivation of clover for the improvement of agriculture to the mid-seventeenth century, however it is likely that its benefits as a crop were known and exploited before then. Cattle could be grazed directly on it and, by the seventeenth century, it had taken its place in crop rotation, in place of a fallow year (Williamson 2022, 212-213).

- ‘oats’ OE/OScan *\*hæfera/hafri* and OE *āte*

There are five examples of the first element in the corpus, all collocating with *berg* and all in Scandinavian-influenced areas.<sup>168</sup> OED (2025, s.v. haver n2) prefers a Scandinavian origin for this word based on its geographical distribution. As Rye (2016, 85-86) noted, OE/OScan *\*hæfera/hafri* and OE/OScan *hæfer/hafr* ‘buck; male goat’ are mutually indistinguishable in ME phonology. OE /æ/ developed into ME /a/ (Hogg 1992, §§5.215-5.216). These words are actually cognate despite their differently evolved meanings (Orel 2003, 148; OED 2025, s.v. hafer n.2). Ekwall (1936, 106) preferred the ‘oat’-meaning to the ‘goat’-meaning in various place-names. The judgement is often made based on context.

Whether *\*hæfera/hafri* or *hæfer/hafr* is preferred as the etymon by a survey editor, names said to include either occur mainly in Scandinavian-influenced areas, not elsewhere. (The EPNS beta digital survey has been used to gauge this distribution.) In terms of whether it should be ‘oats’ or ‘goats’ in the interpretation of this corpus’ *berg*-collocations, this is best judged in the wider context of *berg*-names, particularly noting the frequency with which crops feature in *berg*-collocations in OScan-influenced zones, and animals do not (see further below and Chapter Five). On that basis, etymologies involving ‘oats’ seem more likely for these name forms. *hafri* plus *berg* is recorded as a Norwegian farm name in the form of *havreberg* (Rygh 1897-1936, 12:18; Rygh 2024).

#### 4.6.2. Uncultivated (but possibly managed or exploited) vegetation

- ‘rough’ OE *rūh*

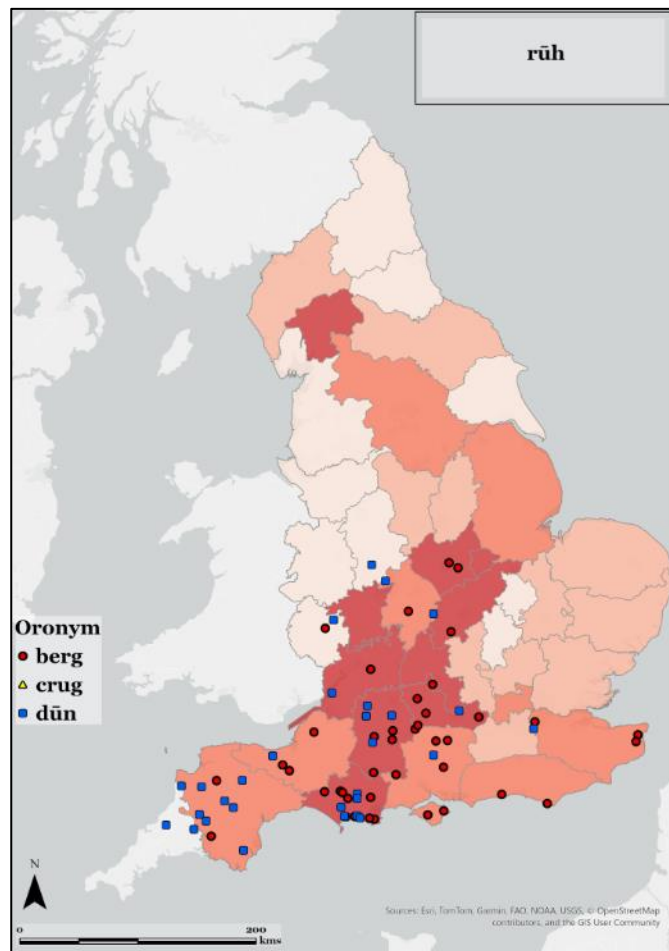
This is a frequently occurring element, featuring seventy times in collocations within this study’s corpus. It is another example of an element where precise classification of the names within which it occurs is not clear from a simple one word meaning. What exactly does it mean to be ‘rough’? And should a name including this element be classified within the theme of physical characteristics or vegetation?

The geographical distribution for these collocations is markedly south and south-western. The element *rūh* occurs frequently elsewhere in the country in other

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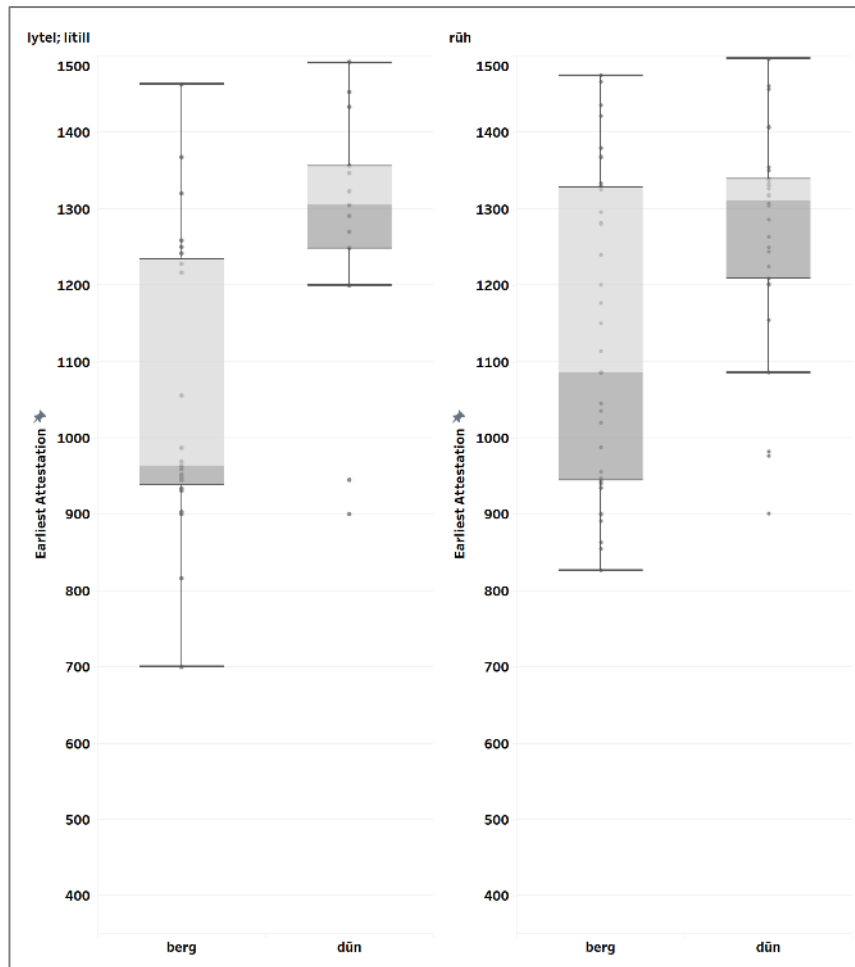
<sup>168</sup> There is one example of OE *āte* in the corpus, collocating with *dūn* in Wiltshire as *Otedoune* in 1341 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1939, 430).

collocations with other generics not in this corpus (assessed from the EPNS beta digital database). The geographical restriction to the south and south-west therefore appears to be a particular property of *berg*- and *dūn*-collocations with *rūh*. Just under two thirds of the names fail to survive as extant names and there are very few names of administrative status.



107. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *rūh* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

The dates of first attestation show relatively strong patterning, with *berg*-names appearing to be part of an earlier strand of naming when compared to *dūn*-names. Although there are outliers, the median first-attestation dates are skewed early and late for *berg* and *dūn* respectively, as was also the case for *lytel/litill*.



108. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations with *rūh* in this corpus, compared with *lytel/litill*

Kitson (forthcoming) observed *rūh* as an element collocating frequently with *berg* in charter material. He commented ‘vegetation on **beorgas** is much more characteristically summed up in a general impression of shagginess conveyed by the adjective **rūwan** or **rūgan** “rough” used of 22[19] features’. Accordingly, he suggested that the sense of roughness referred to the uncultivated vegetation found at or on these *berg*-sites.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Although not many of the referents for these names can be located precisely, of those that can there are examples of artificial or burial mounds, indicating that the element *rūh* could be applied in this context. They include Rowberrow (Somerset) *Rugebera* 1177 (Ekwall 1960, 394), possibly Roborough Down (Devon) *Rueberge* 1114-1116 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 225), and Rowborough (Isle of Wight) *Rougheberg* 1282 (Ekwall 1960, 394) (NHLE 1009388).

In terms of what might motivate the use of the element for the later strand of *dūn*-names (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six), upland pasture might be referred to as ‘rough’ in the sense of ‘rough grazing’. In the context of field-names, Cavill (2018, 360) thought that *rūh* signified ‘unploughable land; infertile waste land’. He went on to say that ‘scattered stones on some fields so named may indicate archaeological sites’.<sup>170</sup> In the *OE Life of St Guthlac*, the fens around Crowland, Lincolnshire are described as *rugan fennas*, conveying something of their wildness (Goodwin 1848, 20-21).

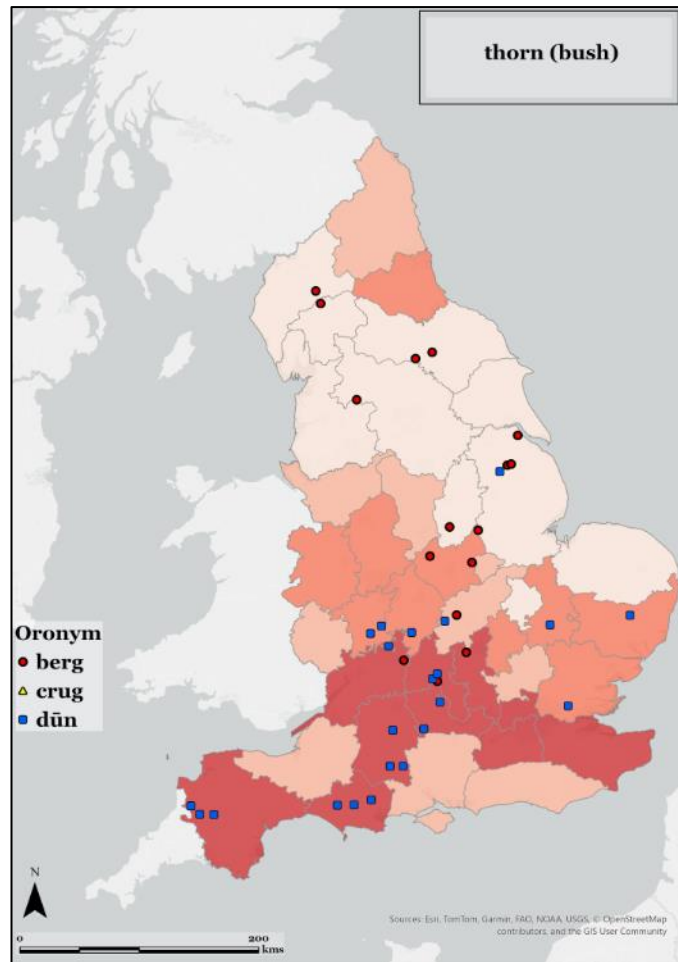
- ‘thorn (bush)’ OE/OScan *þorn* and *þyrne/þyrnir*<sup>171</sup>

The next most frequent collocation referencing the uncultivated occurs thirty-eight times. There is a near complete north-south split between *berg* and *dūn*, respectively. Compounding with *berg*, this element is also found in Danish and Norwegian place-names. DS (2024) records approximately fifteen names using the form *tornbjerg* and Rygh (2024) records many names in various forms thought to be derived from *þorn* and *berg*. Smith (1956, 2:204-205) suggested that the frequency of ‘thorn’ in naming may well be because of its use in quick-set hedging to create enclosures. As such, it was a valuable resource and a form of built structure dividing up the landscape.

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<sup>170</sup> If ‘rough’ was intended to refer to the rockiness of the ground, then such an interpretation might push the classification of a name into the theme of physical characteristics rather than vegetation, or of human activity if archaeology was the referent.

<sup>171</sup> Cleasby and Vigfússon (1874, s.v. *þorn*, *þyrnir* n.) record *þorn* and *þyrnir* as used interchangeably, a point Kitson (forthcoming) also noted, contrary to Smith (1956, 2:204, 222).



109. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *þorn* and *þyrne/þyrnir* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Rackham (1980, 17, Table 2.1; 1986, 210-211, Table 10.1) counted ‘thorn’ in his sample as the most frequent tree mentioned both in place-names and in charter boundary features. He was, of course, including the use of *þorn* as the generic or as a simplex name, since that is how the element appears most often in charter material (Kitson forthcoming). Treacher (2023, 485) agreed that the element was the most frequently attested arboreal term in major place-names (again including examples as simplex or generic) and the most common element for meeting place-names, suggesting that this might be because it ‘thrives in open land and clearings’ where gatherings could be held. Field (1972, 230) noted that an unclipped hawthorn grows into a substantial tree, has a characteristic outline and is almost indestructible; qualities that lent themselves to being visual markers. In this study’s corpus, the element is never a generic or simplex but only a qualifier paired with *berg* or *dūn*.

- ‘fern’ OE *fearn*

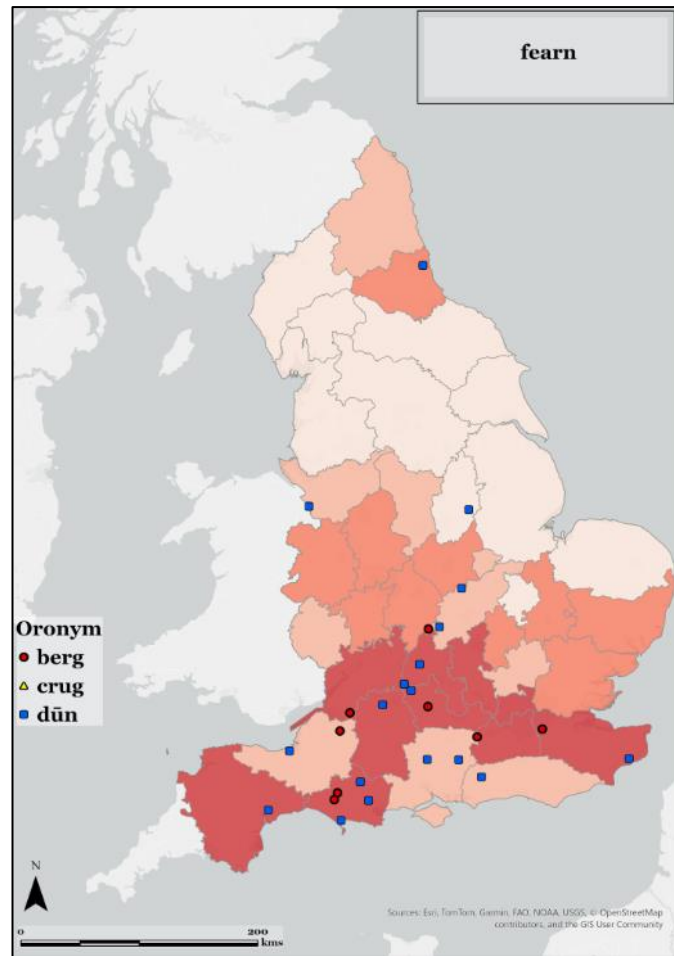
There are twenty-six occurrences in the corpus (including adjectival forms). Many of the *fearn* plus *dūn* collocations exhibit a persistent <en>, <in> or <ing> at the end of the qualifying *fearn*-element in attestations. The form <en> represents the adjectival suffix discussed in 4.5.2. and 4.6.1. The modern reflex of these names is often written as Faringdon, Farringdon or Farrington. The modern form need not necessarily indicate an original medial *-ing-* particle, since it was common for name forms to shift from an original adjectival suffix in *-en*, or weak nominal ending in *-an*, to *-ing* by way of analogical substitution (Smith 1936; 1956, 1:282-283). The combination of the suffix *-ing* paired with a noun referencing vegetation is known from place-names elsewhere (Coates 1997, 37-41): Clavering (Essex) is a famous example (Smith 1956, 1:289; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 3:91). It is composed of OE *clǣfre* ‘clover’ plus *-ing*, interpreted as ‘place where clover grows or that is covered in clover’. Interestingly, none of the *clǣfre* plus *dūn* collocations referred to in 4.6.1. showed signs of medial *-ing-* even though *\*clǣfring* appears to exist as an independent place-name. Conversely *\*fearnig* does not exist attested independently as a simplex place-name or lexical element, but it does seem to be a form behind many of the *fearn* plus *dūn* collocations.<sup>172</sup>

The distribution for these collocations is predominantly southern as shown in the following figure:

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<sup>172</sup> The adjectival form *fearnig* does exist in place-names (Smith 1956, 1:166).





110. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *fearn* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

The fact that first-attestation dates are early for both *berg*- and *dūn*-collocations in this group is striking, including the fact that a very high proportion (twelve) of these names are for places with administrative status. These are not just minor names.

Bearing in mind the interesting status of many of these names, what might be the motivation for the name? We have already seen that Kitson (forthcoming) noted *fearn* as one of the few elements referencing vegetation collocating with *berg* in charter material. He thought it signified a complete lack of cultivation. On the other hand, fern might be seen as a resource. Certainly bracken, a form of fern discussed below, was seen as such (Rymer 1976). Just like bracken, fern might be seen as a sign of the commons (Winchester 2006, 2). In addition, ferns like moist conditions for growth, a point which will be returned to in Chapter Six.

- ‘broom’ and ‘bramble’ OE *brōm* and OE *brēmel*

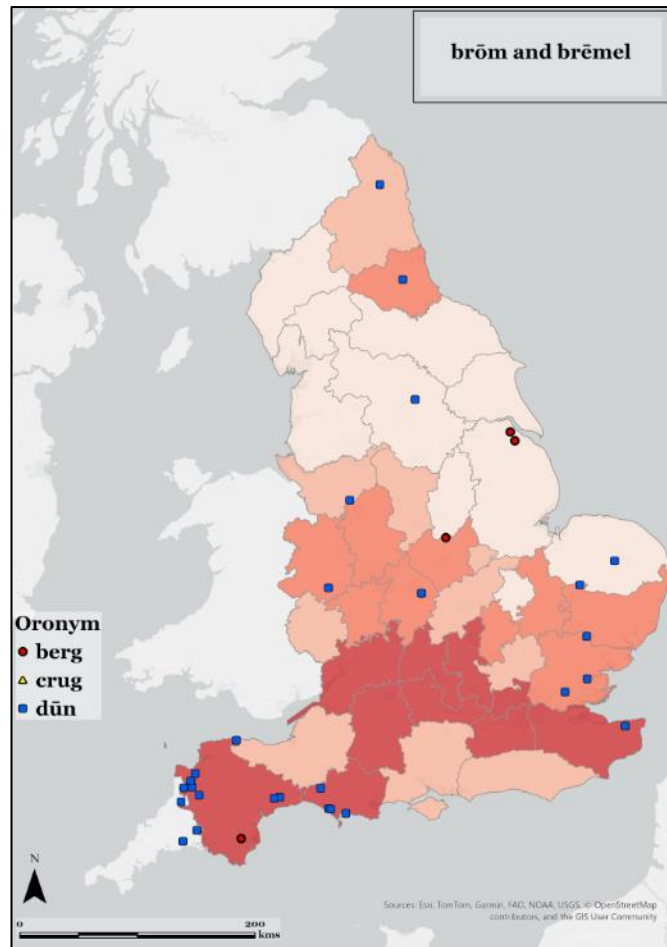
Twenty-one probable occurrences of the first element exist in the corpus, mostly collocating with *dūn*. The distribution spans the country. There are some early first attestations and names for places with administrative status in this group.

In modern taxonomy, broom is distinguished from gorse by its absence of spines, although historical cognates for *brōm* seem to have denoted a thorny bush or shrub (Treacher 2023, 193; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:42). Treacher (2023, 484) found that *brōm* collocated commonly with *dūn*, as well as OE *feld* ‘open country; unencumbered ground; land for pasture or cultivation’ and OE *lēah* ‘forest clearing; (later) pasture or meadow’, observing that broom is a light-seeking plant found most often in open landscapes. What this means for the nature of a *dūn* is returned to in Chapter Six.

There is considerable difficulty in separating out names including *brōm* from those including OE *brēmel* ‘bramble’, an i-mutated derivative of *brōm* (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:17).<sup>173</sup> There are a further ten names within this corpus that potentially include *brēmel*, all of which collocate with *dūn*, nearly all of which survive as names, and which are mainly located in the south-west.

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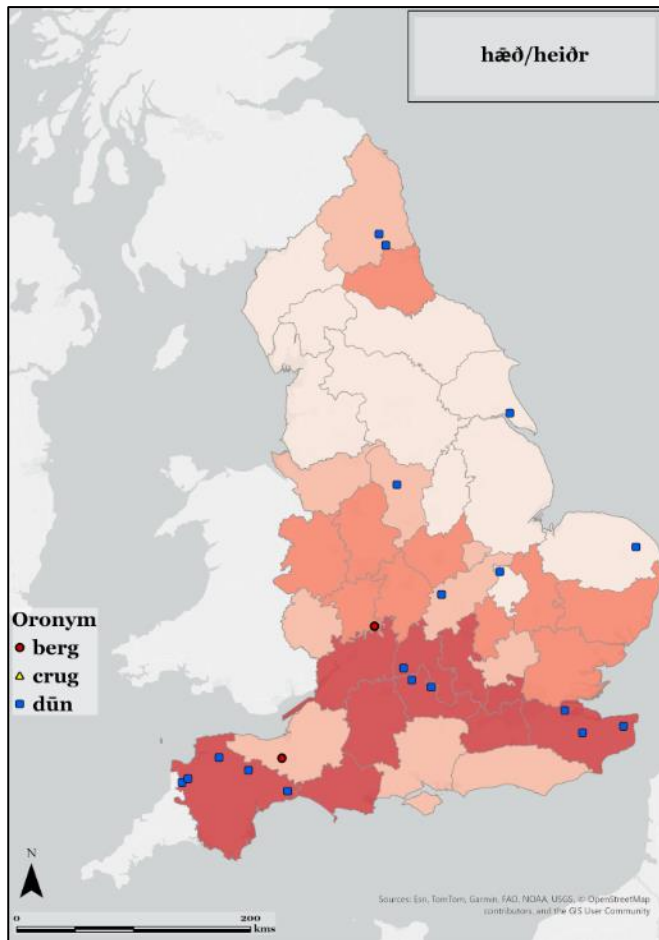
<sup>173</sup> There is further potential confusion with the unattested side form *\*brēme* ‘broom; place where broom grows’ which is not formally distinguishable from OE *breme* ‘famous; glorious’. The latter, if it could be shown to exist in place-names, would be interpreted as ‘rugged’ when applied to topography (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:17)



111. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *brōm* and *brēmel* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

- ‘heather; heath’ OE/OScan *hæð/heiðr*

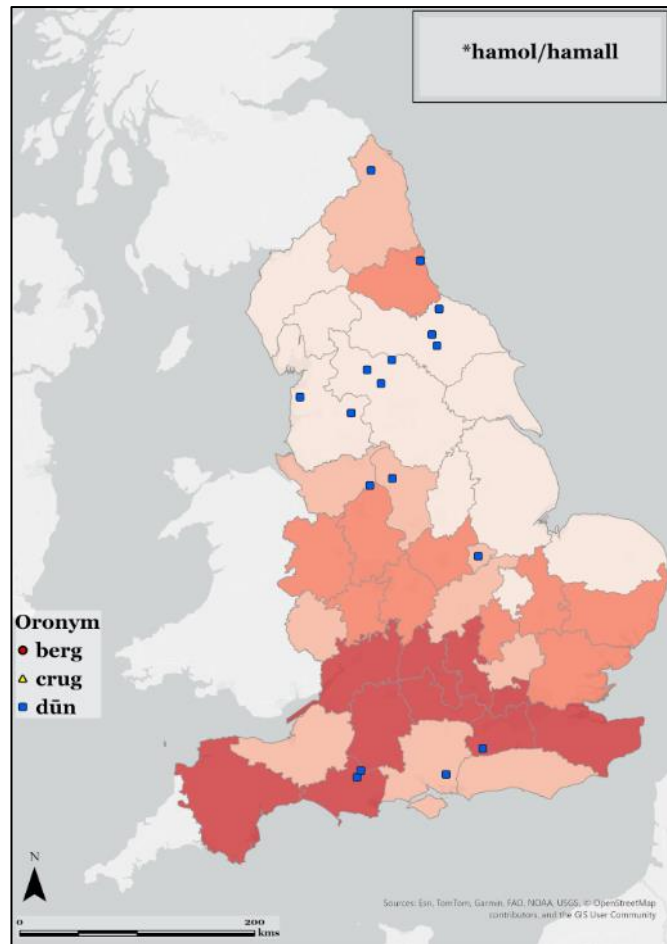
Occurrences number twenty, once again strongly favouring *dūn*. The majority of the group survives as extant names. The distribution is spread throughout the country. Smith (1956, 1:219) argued that OE *hæð* as a qualifier (as opposed to generic) was more likely to indicate heather rather than a heath. The name forms do not show the presence of adjectival or toponymic suffixes, as noted for *fearn* and other vegetation elements above.



112. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *hǣð/heiðr* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

- ‘bare’ and ‘clean’ OE/OScan *\*hamol/hamall*, OE *clǣne* and OE *calu*

There are seventeen occurrences in the corpus of the first element, exclusively collocating with *dūn*. The distribution skews to the north of the country away from the counties with the highest density of *dūn*-names, albeit not without some southern examples.



113. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/Oscan *\*hamol/ hamall* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

The OE element *\*hamol* is unattested outside of place-names. The river Hamble (Hampshire) was interpreted by Ekwall (1928, 189) as derived from a common Germanic root meaning ‘maimed’ or ‘crooked’; the name was said to reference the bends in the river (see, too, Middendorf 1902, 65; and Coates 1989, 85). However, Ekwall acknowledged that the sense of being ‘crooked’ was lost early and is not actually evidenced. When used with hill-names, Ekwall (1928, 190) preferred the sense of ‘bare’ or ‘level’ (having been cut off). Smith (1956, 1:231) noted the attested OE verb *hamelian* ‘to mutilate’ and a by-name, *Hamela*. However, the noun *hamola* is used in the context of being forcibly shaved and shamed; it is mutilation in that sense (DOE 2025, s.v. *hamola* n.). The laws of Alfred in the ninth century referred to paying a fine if one had shaved someone else as a means of disgracing them – *on bismor to homolan bescire* (Liebermann 1903–1916, 1:68-69 [35.3]). *Hamall* exists as a by-name in OScan referring to one whose head is close-shaven (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874, s.v. *hamall* n.). Mawer (1920a, 57-58) noted

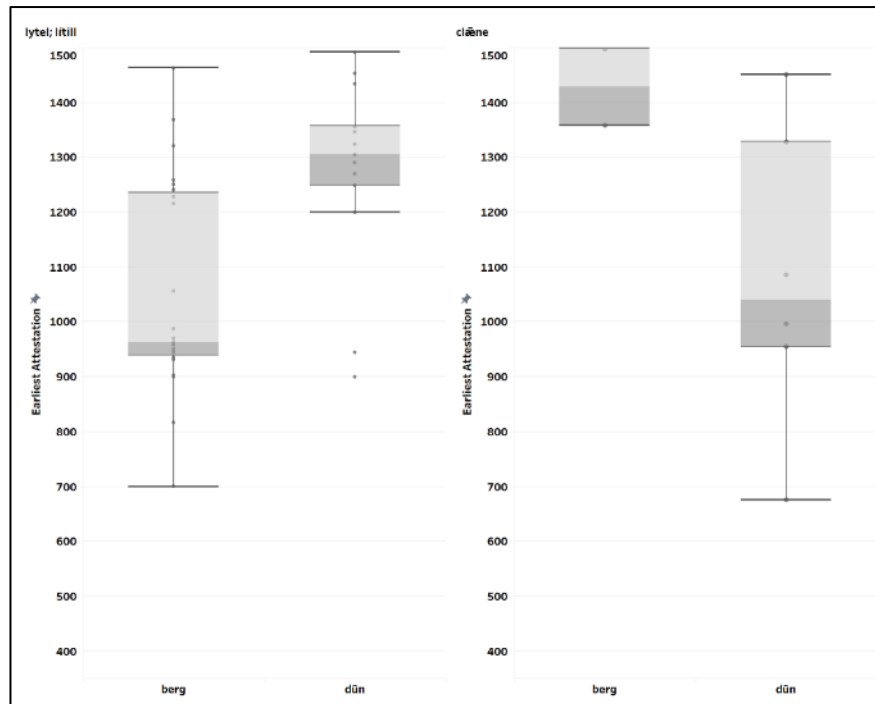
Norwegian and Swedish parallels *hummel* and *humel* with a ‘rounded’ meaning (which could conceivably have been derived from a shaved or shorn object). These parallels might account for the /u/ vowel in the first syllable in many of the English place-names, for which it is otherwise hard to account. The word persists in Northern dialect, where it refers to being shaven, bald, or with cutoff horns (EDD 2011-2025, s.v. *hummel* adj., sb. 1). If Scandinavian parallels were influencing the spelling or meaning of these names, it is worth noting that this happened in the context of collocation with an OE generic like *dūn*, as opposed to a generic that could be OScan.

There is also a related OScan compound *hōmulgrýti* which refers to ‘heaps of earth-fast stones’ (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874, s.v. *hömulgrýti*). This compound appears in *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats* in which it is said that there will be no growth if a field is full of brambles or *hōmulgrýti* (ONP 2024, sb. n. -grýti (suffix); Keyser and Unger 1851, 19). Sandnes and Stemshaug (1997, s.v. *Hummelsund*) suggested a meaning for *\*hōmull* of ‘layer of pebbles’ (see also Rygh 2024, s.v. *Hummelsund*). Certainly, a stony place covered in earth-fast stones and pebbles would be bare of vegetation. Cox (1994, 180) suggested that *\*hamol* could be used to indicate that a hill was bare or treeless.<sup>174</sup>

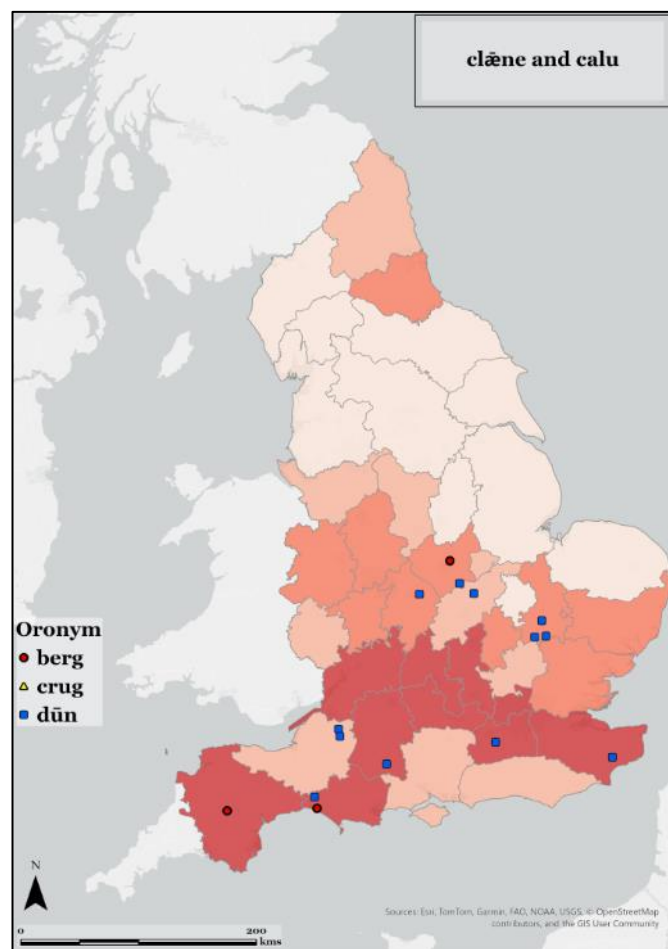
Reinforcing this theme as one that is commonly associated with *dūn*, rather than *berg* or *crug*, there are eight examples of OE *clæne* mainly collocating with *dūn*, the first attestations for which are early. This distribution is southern.

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<sup>174</sup> Once again, this discussion demonstrates how difficult it is to classify names simply by etymological juxtaposition. Depending on the precise meaning of *\*hamol/hamall* these names could be referencing physical shape or the absence of vegetation.



114. Distribution of first-attestation dates for collocations with *clæne* in this corpus, compared with the very different profile for *lytel/litill*



115. Place-names in this corpus including the elements OE *clæne* and OE *calu* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

In the OE translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, the phrase *on clænum land* referred to open land, paralleling land that had been cleared of thorns (Sweet 1871, 410-411; DOE 2025, s.v. clæne adj.). There is a specific reference to *dūn*-land as *clæne* in the *OE Herbarium* (DOE 2025, s.v. clæne adj. sense 8; Vriend 1984, 30, I, lines 1-2). 'Clean' appears to refer to being free from excessive growth, whether naturally or by clearance. The element collocates relatively frequently with hill terms, as if the 'clean' (and clear) state of a hill was remarked upon where it existed (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 3:96-97).

In addition and continuing the theme, there are seven collocations with OE *calu* 'bald', all but one of them with *dūn*. This element also has the sense of being clear of vegetation (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:132-133); this continues as 'callow' in southern dialects (EDD 2011-2025, s.v. callow adj.), and many of the first attestations for this collocation are later.

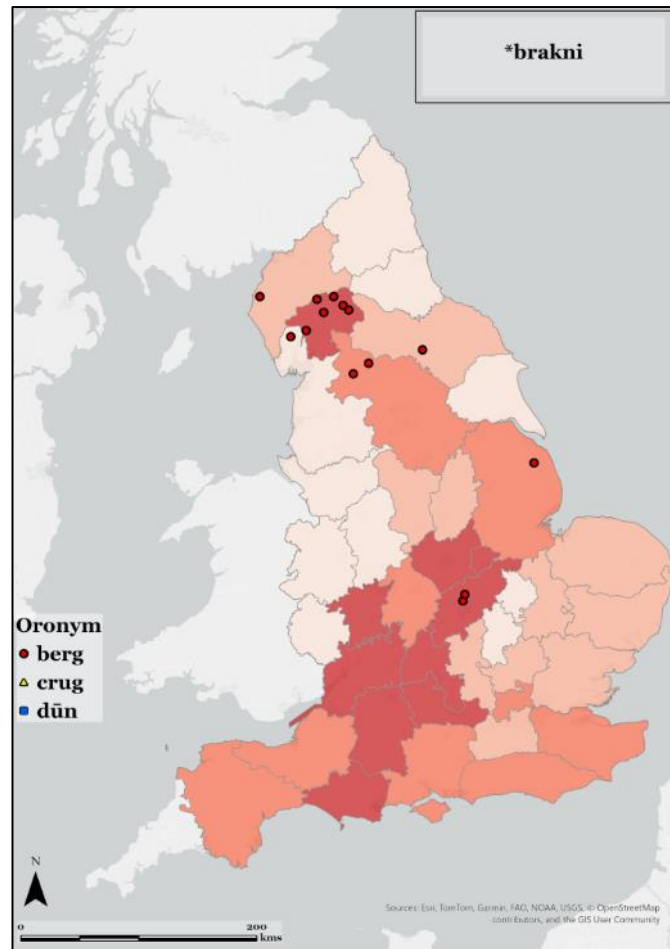
- 'bracken' OScan *\*brakni*

All fourteen collocations in the corpus pair with *berg*, never *dūn*. Given the geographical distribution of this element it is likely to demonstrate OScan influence (Gersum Project 2024, s.v. braken n.; OED 2025, s.v. bracken n.), although the derivation is not straightforward (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 109; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:4-5; Rye 2016, 66-67).<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Modern Scandinavian cognates point to an OScan form *\*brækni* or *\*brekni* not *\*brakni* as required by ME *braken* > ModE *bracken* (Björkman 1900, 231-232). An unattested OE form *\*bræcen*, hypothetically constructed from OE *bracu* 'bracken; fern; thicket', has also been put forward as a possible source for ME *braken*.





116. Place-names in this corpus including the element OScan *\*brakni* against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

The geographical distribution of the element *\*brakni* in other collocations outside of this study's corpus is also limited to OScan-influenced areas, as assessed through the EPNS (beta) digital survey. DS (2024) records multiple Danish place-names involving 'bracken' and *berg*, in the form *bregnebjerg* (see also Fellows-Jensen 1972, 91-92; 1978, 152).

Bracken was not necessarily unwanted vegetation; rather it was often a prized resource. In the early post-medieval period, it was the subject of regulation on common land (Winchester 2006). Amongst the many uses for bracken were cattle litter, thatching, potash (for glass and soap), fuel, firing bricks and damp-proofing hay stacks (Rymer 1976; Winchester 2006; Historic England 2023). Generally, these 'bracken'-*berg* sites do not look significantly different from the 'hay'-*berg* sites, which also cluster in the north-west (4.6.1. Figure 100).



117. Brackenber (Shap, Westmorland): A.Lloyd: December 2021.



118. Brackenbrough (Kirby Thore, Westmorland): A.Lloyd: December 2021.

One Lincolnshire example, Brackenborough, is a parish name (Cameron 1985-2010, 4:1-2), albeit the settlement no longer exists; it is now a scheduled deserted medieval village (NHLE 1003616). The whole site is an almost perfectly circular, raised, natural platform.



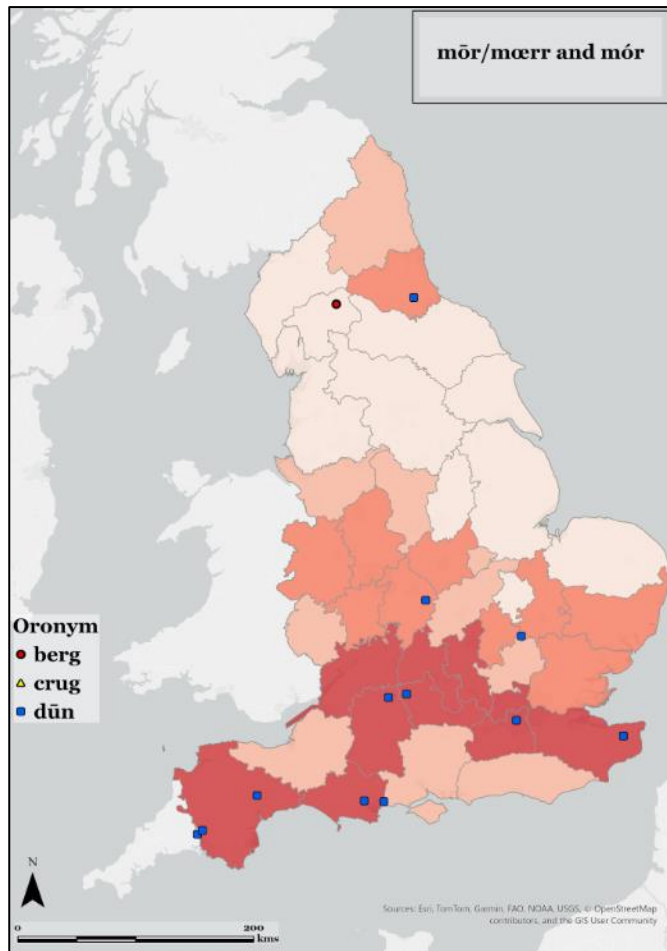
119. Brackenborough (Lincolnshire) Environment Agency lidar as seen in the mobile website developed for this study.

- ‘moor’ OE/OScan *mōr/mærr* and OScan *mór*

There are thirteen examples in the corpus, all bar one collocating with *dūn*. Nearly all of the names survive.<sup>176</sup> A high proportion of the *dūn*-collocations with this element are names of places with administrative status. The distribution is generally southern.

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<sup>176</sup> The one unlocated example is the *berg*-collocation which has a single attestation: *Moreberch* attested in 1256 (Smith 1967, 2:96). Given the paucity of evidence, this could conceivably be a different generic, not *berg*.



120. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *mōr/mærr* and OScan *mór* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

In terms of naming motivation, much depends on the date of name coining. The element appears to have undergone a shift in meaning. It originally indicated a low-lying watery place, akin to a marsh (OED 2025, s.v. moor n. 1). Kitson (forthcoming) argued that *mōr* in charter material mainly referred to ‘flat land near large rivers’ and tended ‘to be close to small streams ... where the drainage was worst’. Looking at the geographical distribution in figure 120, these names are not referencing northern upland moors. Even Mordon (Durham), *Mordun* c.1040 (Mawer 1920b, 145; Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 421), sits on a small, elevated platform, no more than ten metres above Mordon Carrs, a marshy river valley feeding the River Skerne.

A marshy area was not necessarily waste. As Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 59) commented, ‘for place-name forming purposes a *mōr* was probably seen primarily as a factor in the economy of the farming community. Some lowland areas

designated *mōr* were a major resource for settlements on their fringes or on island sites within them’.

The element appears to have shifted in meaning to become associated with upland areas and rough grazing (OED 2025, s.v. moor n.1 sense 2). The OED suggests that this shift may have been influenced by the Old Icelandic word *mór* ‘heath’. Despite appearances, this word is actually non-cognate with OE *mōr* and its Old Icelandic cognate *mærr* ‘fenland; marsh’.<sup>177</sup> The later attested *mōr* plus *dūn* names include examples in which *mōr* is the generic and *dūn* the qualifier, reversing the normal order. This might reflect how the concept of *mōr* expanded in geographical and physical size such that it supplanted *dūn* in the hierarchy of naming elements (discussed further in 4.8.3.).

- ‘brushwood’ OE/OScan *hrīs/hrís*

There are eleven instances, predominantly paired with *berg*, spread throughout the country. The compound collocating with *berg* is found in both Danish and Norwegian place-names; DS (2024) records multiple names derived from the form *risbjerg* and Rygh (2024) records at least two names including the form *risberg*. Topographically, the physical features associated with this collocation vary. The Buckinghamshire feature is large and dominating. The two located northern examples (NRY and Westmorland) are small and rounded.

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<sup>177</sup> Rye (2016, 95-96) suggested that the possibility of OScan *\*mór* (with stem-final non-inflexional /r/ and a marshy meaning) should not be discounted, based on its possible presence in a few place-names from Norway and Jutland and in Swedish dialect. Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 58-59) discussed the relationship of OE *mōr* to the semantic fields of being ‘wet’ and ‘dry/barren’.





121. Monks and Princes Risborough (Buckinghamshire): A.Lloyd: June 2020.

Brushwood was a resource needed for fires, but also for making other equipment such as brushes or for building a causeway (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 68-69).

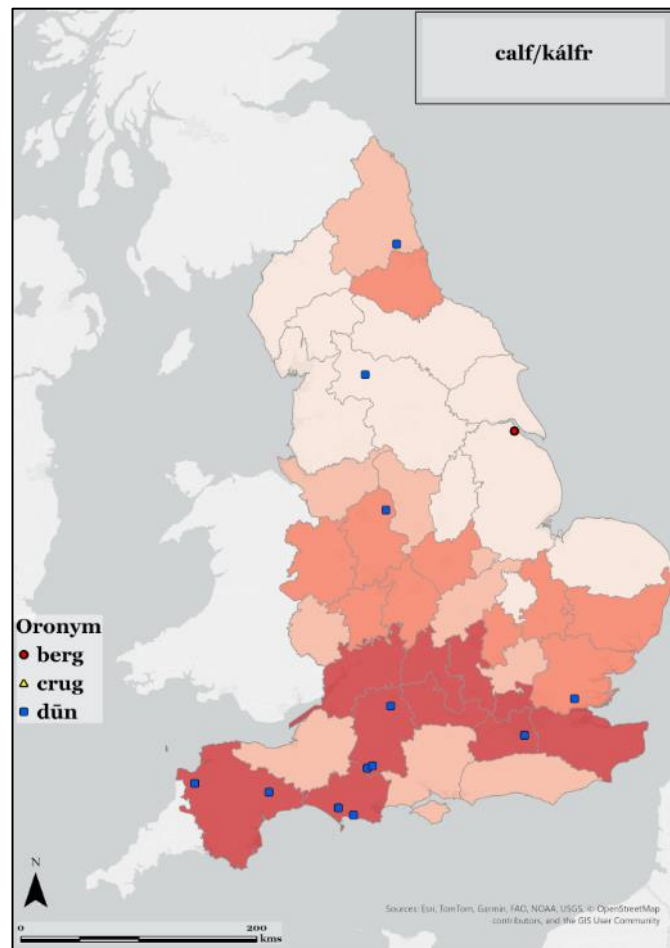
#### **4.7. Thematic analysis: animals**

In stark contrast to the numbers of repeat collocations involving vegetation of one sort or another, there are far fewer recurrent compounds referencing animals. Wild animals are not dealt with in this chapter on account of the low numbers, but they will be looked at in Chapter Five. Neither *berg* nor *crug* feature significantly with farmed animals. *Dūn*-names exhibit some recurrency collocated with elements signifying farmed animals, but even they are low in number. It is notable how few collocations there are referencing sheep. Given later associations of ‘downland’ with sheep pasture and a farming regime dependent on sheep-wolding, it is interesting to note their absence in this study’s corpus. Whatever *dūn* later became, this was not apparently a central part of its original meaning. This will be returned to for discussion in Chapter Six.

#### 4.7.1. Livestock

- ‘calf’ OE/OScan *calf* (*celf*)/*kálfr*

Out of thirteen collocations in the corpus, the collocating element is always, save for once, *dūn*.<sup>178</sup> There are some early-attested names and overall the median first-attestation date for these collocations is earlier than average. The distribution is mainly southern.<sup>179</sup>



122. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *calf/kálfr* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

<sup>178</sup> The sole *berg*-collocation is in an OScan-influenced area; it is Cawber Farm (Lincolnshire), attested as *Calueberg* in the reign of Henry III (Cameron 1985-2010, 2:199). The land is flat on the banks of the Humber and now covered by an oil refinery.

<sup>179</sup> Therefore, many of the attestations show the breaking and palatalised initial consonant to be expected in the West Saxon and Kentish areas with the OE form *cealf* (Jordan and Crook 1974, §§61, 76).

Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 2:130-132) note this element’s frequent collocation with *dūn*. In terms of naming motivation, they suggest that in this context the *dūn* must be functioning as a reference to pasture for the calves.

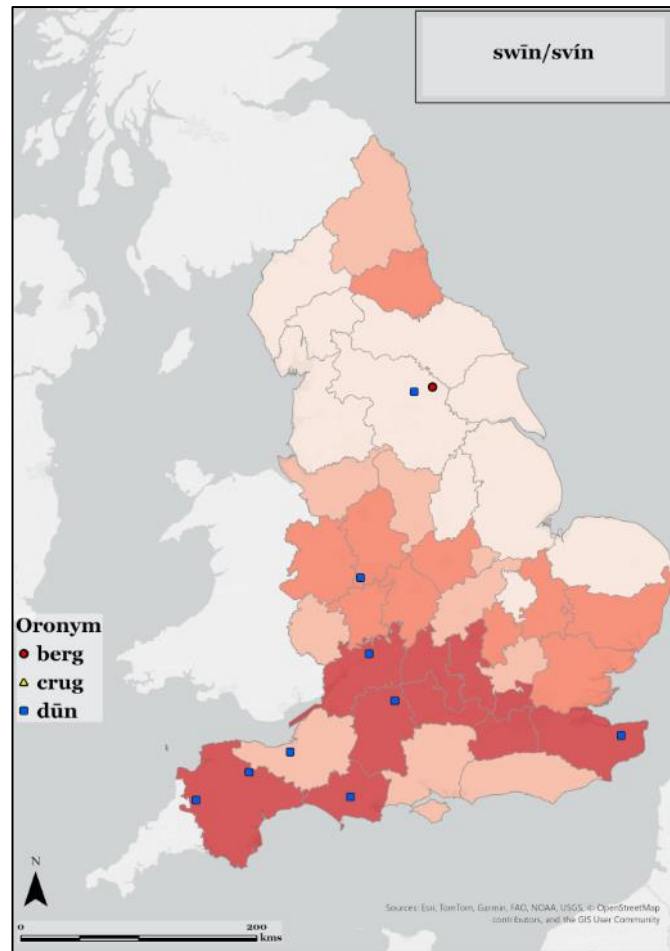
- ‘pig; swine’ OE/OScan *swīn/svín*

Out of ten occurrences in the corpus, all bar one collocate with *dūn*.<sup>180</sup> The distribution is skewed to the south-west. Again, the names are relatively early attested.

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<sup>180</sup> The sole *berg* example is *Swinsty Bergh* (WRY) first attested in the early twelfth century as *Suinstiberc(h)* (Smith 1961–1963, 4:251). Additionally, there are two references using ME *pigge*, both collocating with *dūn* in the south-west. Another solitary collocation with *berg* uses OScan *gríss* in *Gazbur Field* (WRY), *Northgriseberg* 1226 (Smith 1961–1963, 4:220). As unwise as it is to build any conclusion on a sample so small, it is worth pointing out that the *berg* collocations for farmed animals lie in OScan-influenced areas; in OE-dominated areas, *dūn*, not *berg*, features in such collocations.





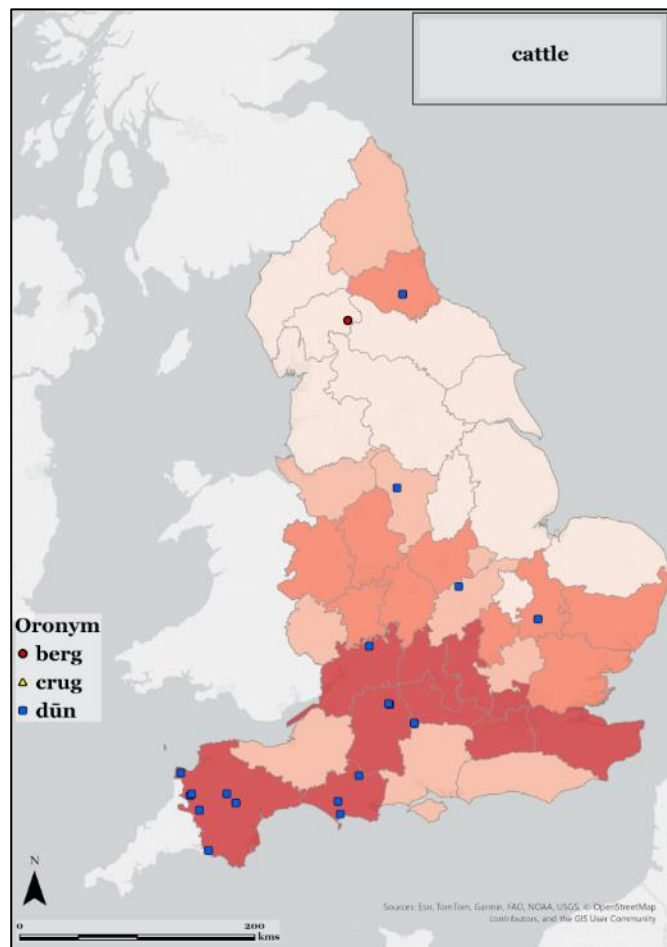
123. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *swīn/svín* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

In *Bald's Leechbook*, dating to the mid-tenth century, we are told that to relieve shoulder pain, a mixture including the dung of pigs that are on *dūn*-land is required: *swines scearu þæs þe on dun lande* (Cockayne 1866, 62-63). The same swine is described as being a *feld-gangende*, that is 'going into/onto pasture'. The emerging parallels between *feld* and *dūn* have already been noted in 1.4.7 and 4.6.2. *Dūn*-land is considered further in Chapter Six.

- 'oxen; cattle; cow' OE/OScan *oxa*; *uxi*, OE *hrīðer*, OE *stot* and OE/OScan *cū/kýr*: There are six collocations of the first element in the corpus with *dūn*, and only one with *berg*.<sup>181</sup> There are three involving *hrīðer*, all with *dūn*. The distribution is predominantly southern. *Stot* (which might also refer to a horse) occurs solely with *dūn* in the corpus and in Devon. 'Cow' also collocates exclusively with *dūn* three

<sup>181</sup> The solitary *berg*-name is again in the north, attested in 1202 as *Oxeberghe* (Westmorland) (Smith 1967, 2:5).

times. All of these elements signifying cattle are spread throughout the corpus date range for first attestations, with a slightly later bias than those for young calves discussed above.



124. Place-names in the corpus referencing cattle (aside from calves) against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

## 4.8. Thematic analysis: people

Categories referencing people are not at all as recurrent as those alluding to physical characteristics or vegetation. One or two of the most recurrent collections are highlighted below.

### 4.8.1. Personal names

Early on in the survey of England there was a tendency to propose an otherwise unattested personal name as a solution to a problematic place-name etymology. Some now need revision (Gelling 1997 [1978], Ch. 7; Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], xxi-xxii). The situation is further complicated by the fact that personal names were often derived from common nouns, particularly those that were

nicknames, by-names or occupational names, and that referred to shape, physical characteristics or animals. This makes it harder to distinguish between the lexicon used in place-naming and a possible personal name.<sup>182</sup> Earlier scholarship followed the idea that a genitival inflection (particularly a singular genitive, where one could be discerned in the available historical name-forms)<sup>183</sup> must indicate a personal name. It has now been accepted that, in fact, genitival endings occur with adjectives and common nouns. Kitson (1993, 72) observed from charter material

Animal-names are *normally* compounded in the genitive, more often than not the genitive singular. So I think it is not only implausible but quite wrong of place-name scholars to allow themselves the reasoning that because an animal-name qualifier is in the genitive singular it is a human being not an animal that is named.

Personal names are not usually recurrent. Typically a personal name occurs only once or twice in the corpus. Where a personal name occurs with greater frequency, this in itself arouses suspicion that the collocation does not involve a personal name but, rather, a common noun or adjective.

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<sup>182</sup> In analysing the possible personal names within this corpus the following sources have been consulted: PASE (2025), DOE (2025), Mawer (1919), Redin (1919), Ekwall (1931), Fransson (1935), Von Feilitzen (1937, 1945, 1963, 1965, 1968), Tengvik (1938), Löfvenberg (1942), Thuresson (1950), Fellows-Jensen (1968), Seltén (1972), Clark (1978), McClure (1979, 2010a, 2010b) Carlsson (1989), Insley (1982, 1994, 2000), Reaney and Wilson (1997), Kitson (1993, 2002), Hough (2002), Rollason et al. (2007), Okasha (2011), Colman (2014), Hanks, Coates and McClure (2016) and Briggs (2021).

<sup>183</sup> Tengstrand (1940, 177-8) pointed out that an inorganic <n> could arise with a plural genitive *horsa*, giving rise to forms in *horsan* (*horsen*, *horsin*, *horsyn*). As a strong genitive plural this could be interpreted as a collective group of horses, rather than interpreting it as a singular weakly-inflected OE personal name *Horsa*.

- OE *Dunn(a/e)*

The personal name *Dunn(a/e)* can be confused with *dūn* in historical spellings, particularly in the absence of <nn> in the historical forms.<sup>184</sup> The personal name is attested from at least the eighth century with both strong and weak inflections as both a masculine and feminine name (PASE 2025, s.v. Dunn, Dunna, Dunne; Rollason et al. 2007, A.4.73; Von Feilitzen 1937, 227-228; Redin 1919, 12-13, 114, 120-122; Okasha 2011, 82-83, 93, 110; and see Hanks, Coates and McClure 2016, s.v. Dunn for use as a nickname evolving into a family name in ME). There are potentially twenty-two collocations in this corpus that might involve the personal name, at least according to the suggestions of previous survey editors. (They are included in this corpus because they could, on the other hand, be interpreted as *dūn* in a qualifying position).<sup>185</sup> This is a high degree of recurrency compared to how infrequently personal names ordinarily repeat in the corpus.<sup>186</sup> The next most often repeated personal name is *\*Bil(l)(a)*, which only occurs eight times in the corpus, and this may not be a personal name either in many of the place-names concerned (see further below). The distribution is spread throughout the southern two thirds of the country and is, therefore, not explicable as multiple plots of neighbouring or proximate land held by one named individual (cf. Cox 1980, 44). It is the high level

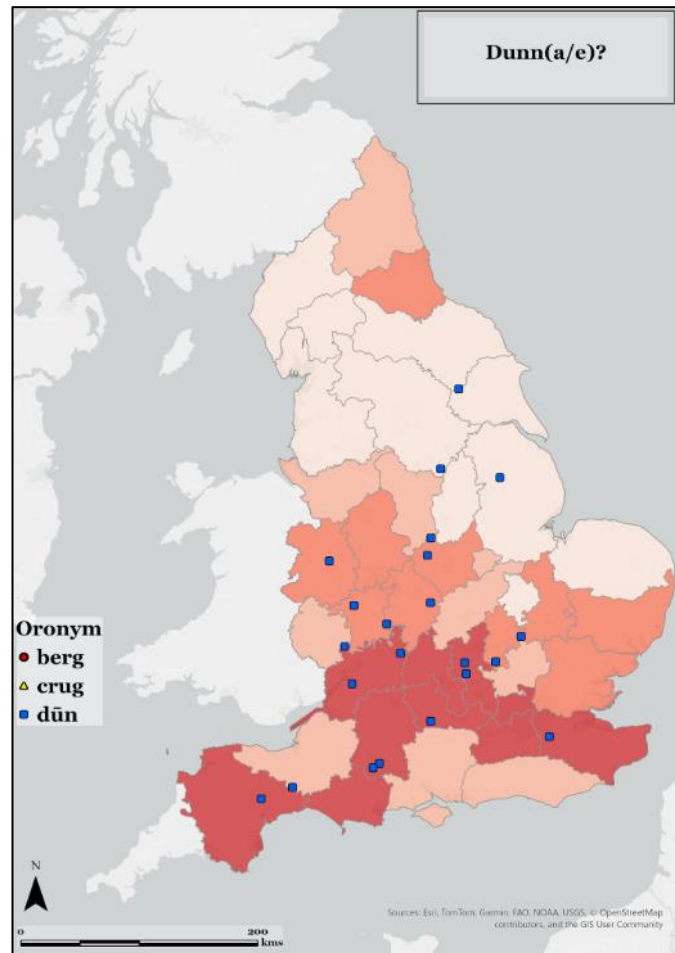
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<sup>184</sup> The difference in length between /u/ and /u:/ was not necessarily preserved within name-forms; both could be written with <u> or <o> (Jordan and Crook 1974, §§ 37-38, 55). The personal name can also be confused with the OE adjective *dunn* ‘dark; dusky; dull brown’ (DOE 2025, s.v. *dunn* adj.).

<sup>185</sup> There may well be more place-names, not captured in the current corpus, where an editor opted to count the qualifier as *Dunn(a/e)* without entertaining the possibility of *dūn*. However, they should be considered as potential candidates for the corpus if neither the historical name-forms nor contextual evidence give grounds for distinguishing that name from another name which has been interpreted as involving *dūn*.

<sup>186</sup> Further work on this would require looking at how frequently a personal name recurs with a generic such as OE/OScan *tūn/tún*. This corpus only captures the levels of recurrency between personal names and the generics *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*.

of recurrency that is the strongest point suggesting an interpretation based on *dūn* as qualifier rather than a personal name.



125. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *Dunn* (*a/e*)? against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Two thirds of these names include a collocation with OE/Oscan *tūn/tún* ‘enclosure; farmstead; village’ as the generic. Of these, all bar one appear to include the medial *-ing-* particle.<sup>187</sup> This particle has already been discussed in 4.6.2. It often accompanies *tūn* as a generic, so much so that Smith (1956, 1:291-293) treated *-ingtūn* almost as a place-naming element in its own right.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>187</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that the extended personal name *Dunning* was attested by the ninth century (PASE 2025, s.v. Dunning; Redin 1919, 166; Von Feilitzen 1937, 228).

<sup>188</sup> Much of the debate surrounding this compound generic has also revolved around whether the particle should be deemed to be plural or taken as singular; the former – a suggested *ingatūn* – is interpreted as meaning the village, farm or estate of the

Fellows-Jensen (1974, 1996) argued that more of these names should be interpreted with *dūn* as the qualifier, not a personal name. She argued for the *-ing-* particle to be seen as a place-name forming suffix combining with *dūn* to form *dūning*, meaning ‘of the hill; at the high place; by the high ground; beside the hill’ etc.<sup>189</sup> However, unlike the case of Clavering (Essex) discussed in 4.6.1., *dūning* never occurs as a simplex name in the known toponymicon, nor in the OE lexicon, a point made by Gelling (1997 [1978], 179). On the other hand, nor does *\*fearning* but it is clearly operating in many of the *fearn* plus *dūn* names discussed in 4.6.2. If the topography ‘clearly’ points to a *dūn* interpretation of one of these place-names, Watts, Insley and Gelling (2004, xlv) followed Fellows-Jensen;<sup>190</sup> they accepted that the case for *dūn* as qualifier plus medial *-ing-* had been made.<sup>191</sup>

This topic is difficult to resolve in a manner with which all commentators will agree. It is also bound up with the use of *tūn* in place-names, discussed below in 4.8.3. Given the frequency of these collocations, it has to be questioned whether they can all be examples of the personal name *Dunn(a/e)*. Instead, the frequency might be better accounted for by interpreting some of them as *dūn* in the qualifying position.

- OE *\*Bil(l)(a)*

After the putative *Dunn(a/e)* names, the next most frequent personal name suggestion is *\*Bil(l)(a)*, which occurs possibly eight times in the corpus. This is an otherwise unattested name. It has been suggested it might be a shortened version of

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people associated with the person whose personal name formed the qualifier; the latter – *ingtūn* – is interpreted as the village, farm or estate associated with the person whose personal name formed the qualifier (Ekwall 1960, 264; Gelling 1997 [1978], 178).

<sup>189</sup> Fellows-Jensen followed in the footsteps of Zachrisson (1932-1933, 1936-1937); the latter was reviewed in Ekwall (1935).

<sup>190</sup> Given the conclusions of this study in Chapter Three – that is that there is no single, uniform and distinctively recognisable topography for *dūn*-sites - it is challenging to distinguish between *Dunn(a/e)* and *dūn* as qualifier based solely on topography.

<sup>191</sup> Arngart (1972) also agreed with Fellows-Jensen on some of these names, in particular that a word like *dūning* might conceivably exist.

a dithematic name such as *Billfrith*, *Billnoth* or *Billheard*, or a by-name or nickname using the common noun OE *bil(l)* -es ‘a sword with a hooked point’. There is also the common noun OE *bile* ‘beak; projecting piece of land’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:99-100). Therefore, these collocations might have included a simple appellative describing the topographic form of the referent, indicating that it appeared hooked or projecting in nature, rather than a personal name. Billesdon (Leicestershire), discussed in 3.5.2, 3.10.2 and 3.11.1. above, arguably has a hooked or projecting appearance in plan form.

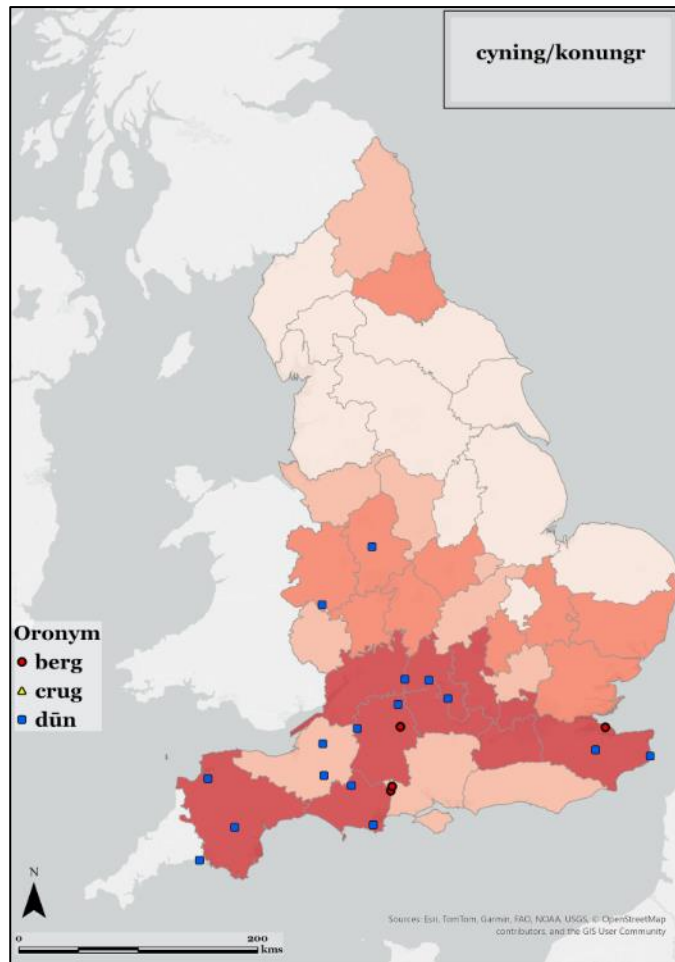
Some of the collocations include the medial particle -*ing*-. The composite element \**billing*, signifying association with a hill of a projecting shape, was suggested by Dodgson (1967, 326-332) (see, also, Ekwall 1960, 43; Dodgson and Rumble 1970–1997, 1:138-139; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:100-101). This would be a parallel to the *dūning* element suggested by Fellows-Jenson, discussed above.

In essence, there are very few personal names which recur in the corpus and they have alternative possibilities as common nouns.

#### 4.8.2. Kinds of people

- ‘king’ OE/OScan *cyning/konungr*

There are twenty occurrences in the corpus, nearly all with *dūn*. The distribution is southern. However first attestations are on average late. This does not appear to be a significantly early strand of naming. There is only one parish name amongst the group, in stark contrast to other collocations such as those with OE *fearn* or *mōr* discussed in 4.6.2., or OE *hām* and *tūn* just discussed. On first principles, one might have thought that a collocation referencing a king would have been more closely correlated with places of administrative status, and certainly more closely linked than collocations appearing to reference uncultivated vegetation.



126. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/Oscan *cyning/konungr* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

The collocations between OE *cyning* and *tūn* were investigated by Bourne (2012, 2017). She observed that they were late in first attestation and not of as high a status as might have been anticipated.<sup>192</sup> Hough (1997) noted that a *cyninges tūn* was found in the laws of Æðelberht as early as the seventh century, suggesting that these names could refer to early unrecorded administrative divisions and estates.<sup>193</sup> More recently, Hough (2013, 213-217) suggested that the frequent collocations between

<sup>192</sup> Gelling (1997 [1978], 125) suggested that such names must ‘belong to a relatively late stage of social organisation’. This still does not account for the surprisingly ordinary status of the places associated with these names.

<sup>193</sup> In the seventh-century laws of Æðelberht (Kent), there are stipulated fines for killing a man *in cyninges tune* (Liebermann 1903–1916, 1:3 [5]). The *OE Bede* renders *in villa regia* as *on anum þæs cyniges tune* (DOE 2025, s.v. *cyning*; *cyng* n.; Campbell 1986, 113).



an unnamed *cyning* and minor bits of landscape might be best interpreted as land forfeited to the crown (the king whoever he may be), noting provisions for such forfeiture in early medieval laws. This is a more satisfactory explanation for the kinds of places associated with *cyning* plus *dūn* in this corpus.

#### 4.8.3. Habitation

Terms that relate explicitly to some form of settlement occupy the generic position in compound place-names in this corpus, displacing the putatively oronymic elements to the qualifying position. Since this is not a position *berg* or *dūn* normally occupy, it is striking that habitative terms take priority over them as the generic.<sup>194</sup>

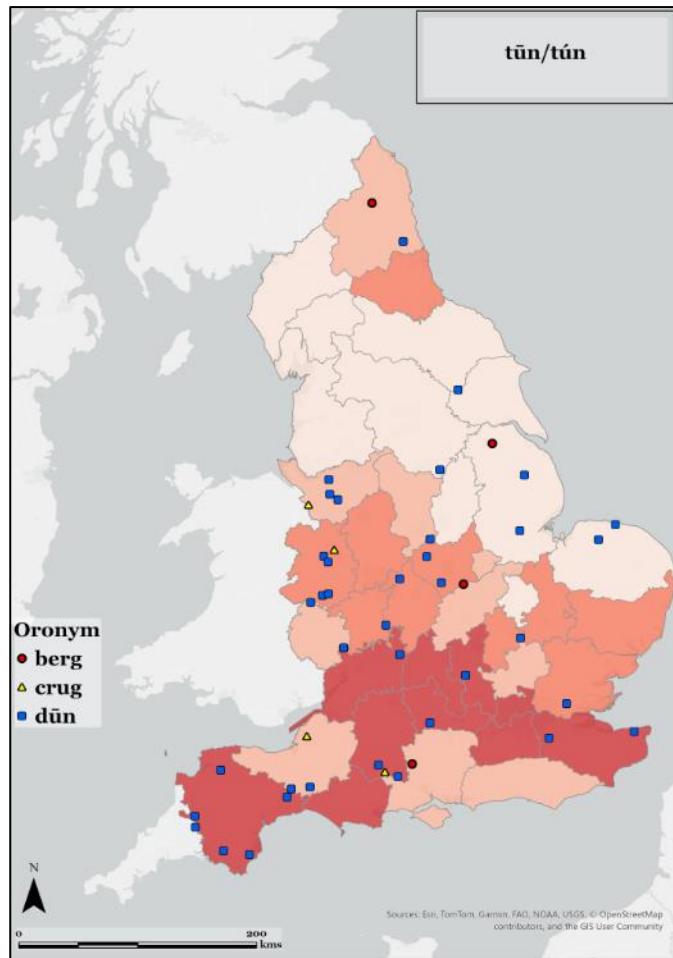
- ‘enclosure; farmstead; village; estate’ OE/OScan *tūn/tún*

There are forty-five occurrences in the corpus, nearly always involving *dūn* as a partner element, alongside one or two *berg*- or *crug*-names.<sup>195</sup> All bar two of these names survive. The distribution is country-wide, save for the north-west, where *dūn*-names in general are absent.

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<sup>194</sup> OE *lēah* ‘woodland clearing; pasture; meadow (later)’ and *feld* ‘open country’ (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 237, 269) both also displace *berg* and *dūn* to the qualifying position in this study’s corpus. It was suggested by Gelling and Cole that *lēah* was quasi-habitative, denoting settlement in a wooded environment.

<sup>195</sup> This total will fluctuate depending on how many names designated as having a personal name qualifier are interpreted instead with *dūn* as qualifier, as discussed in 4.8.1.



127. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE/OScan *tūn/tún* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Two thirds of this group are names for places of administrative status, with early first-attestation dates. This is a very high proportion relative to the proportions seen elsewhere in the corpus.

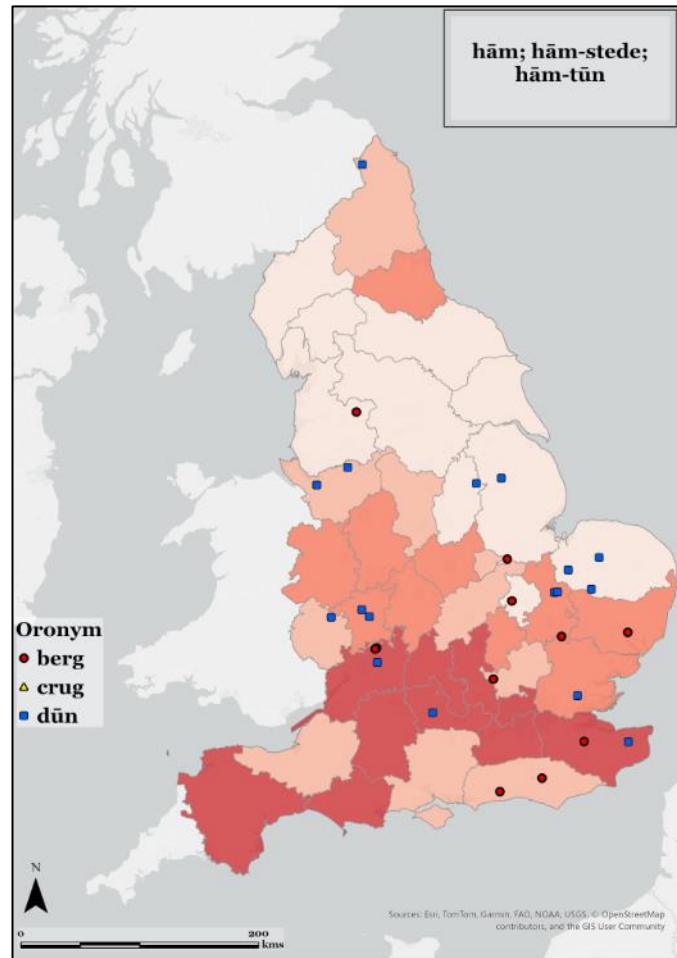
- ‘village; manor; estate; homestead’ OE *hām*

There are twenty-eight occurrences in the corpus, including OE *hām-stede* ‘homestead’ and *hām-tūn* ‘home farm’.<sup>196</sup> These compound names are more evenly shared between *berg* and *dūn*, rather than favouring *dūn*.<sup>197</sup> As with *tūn/tún*, the majority of these names survive. Over half are for places with administrative status

<sup>196</sup> This element needs to be distinguished from OE *hamm* ‘land hemmed in by water’, something which is not always easy judging from historical name forms or even from topography (Dodgson 1973; Gelling 1997 [1978], 112-116; Kolb 1989).

<sup>197</sup> This runs counter to Smith (1956, 1:29) who had suggested that *berg* collocating with habitative generics was rare.

(significantly, the highest proportion for any collocating element in the study). The first attestations are on average early. The distribution is skewed further east than many other distributions in this corpus.



128. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *hām* and derivative compounds against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

This element has long been part of discussions concerning the earliest surviving English place-names (Cox 1973, 1976).<sup>198</sup> Gelling (2000 [1984], 128) used the *berg* plus *hām* collocations as evidence that *berg* was ‘part of the earliest place-name forming vocabulary of the Anglo-Saxons’.

- ‘farm; village’ OScan *bý(r)*

The element *bý(r)* could be used both by western and eastern Scandinavian speakers in various forms (Ekwall 1918, 8; Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 2:104-

<sup>198</sup> Correlations between *hām*-names and early medieval archaeology have not been overwhelmingly convincing (Copley 1986, 2-3; Gelling 1988, 74; Baker 2005, 55, 60).

108). As it happens, all examples of *berg* compounded with *bý(r)* in this corpus are on the eastern side of England, which is an interesting parallel with the eastern skew of *berg*-names collocating with *hām*-compounds.<sup>199</sup> As with the previous two collocations in this category, nearly all of these names are associated with places of administrative status, and are, therefore, unsurprisingly early first attested.

Physically, all these names involve large hills on which settlement sits.<sup>200</sup> There is actually a strong commonality in topography for the *berg* plus *bý(r)* names.

However, it should be noted that there are also tumuli in the vicinity of at least one of these sites (Borrowby, Lythe). This makes an artificial referent on top of the hill also possible as an interpretation of *berg* in that context.



129. Borrowby (Lythe, NRY): A.Lloyd: November 2022.

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<sup>199</sup> There are multiple Danish place-names recorded using the form *bjergby* (DS 2024).

<sup>200</sup> This is contrary to the comments in Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], xiii) that whilst ‘**dūn** was likely to be the site of a large village... **beorg** might have a single farm or be the site of a church’.



130. Borrowby (Leake, NRY): A.Lloyd: November 2022.



131. Barrowby (Kirkby Overblow, WRY): A.Lloyd: April 2022.



132. Barrowby (Lincolnshire): J.Carroll.

#### 4.9. *crug*-collocations

In complete contrast, *crug* rarely collocates with any of the elements set out above. Its pattern of compounding is markedly different from that exhibited by both *berg*- and *dūn*-names. The discussion in 2.5.3. noted how infrequently *crug* functioned as a generic in place-names within this study's corpus. Instead, one third of names are simplex. Of the remaining compound names, *crug* is usually the qualifier and the range of generic elements with which it compounds is very restricted.

Interestingly, despite the fact that it can reference an artificial burial mound in Brittonic (1.7.), it does not collocate with the range of elements that *berg* does, which are best interpreted as if an artificial burial mound is the referent, such as being 'long', 'broken', 'cloven', 'high' or appearing in multiple numbers. Nor does it collocate with other elements with which OE *berg* is found in compound names, discussed next in Chapter Five.

The most recurrent compound in the corpus is that of *crug* with OE *hyll* 'hill' which is found seven times. Amongst these, there are some early attestations, as well as places with administrative status. All of the names survive. The next most recurrent compound involves collocations with OE/OScan *tūn/tún* 'village; estate; farm', of

which there are four, all of which survive and three of which are for places with administrative status.

It is notable that nearly all *crug*-names in this corpus are surviving, not lost, names. They do not suffer the same levels of attrition that early *berg*-names or *berg*-names referencing artificial mounds often do (discussed further in Chapter Five). Nor is their rate of non-survival as high as that of later *dūn* field-names (discussed in Chapter Six).

#### 4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn out some of the most recurrent compounds present in this study's corpus, highlighting the themes that emerge from those compounds.

There is clear evidence that it is not possible to read simplistically from a two-word etymology directly into the motivation for name-coining. For instance, colour adjectives appear to have been used as a proxy for fertility or the nature of the ground. The application of 'old' to *dūn* seems to have referred to ploughing the land and bringing it back into cultivation. The adjective 'high' collocating with *berg* might tentatively be suggested as alluding to heathen worship where the topography does not give an obvious explanation and where the collocation is otherwise securely evidenced (see fn. 135). Other *berg*-collocations, describing a 'broken' or 'cloven' state, appear to be referencing activity surrounding burial mounds. Collocations that refer to numbers and *berg* are best explained as indicators of more than one artificial mound and possible burial cemeteries.<sup>201</sup>

There are qualifiers which note topographical characteristics but which do not seem to have been conferred upon features that were the biggest, the longest or the broadest in the landscape, despite using the adjectives 'big', 'long' or 'broad'. Naming practice was not using absolute mathematical metrics; the motivation for naming was more local and particular to the relative landscape than this. The

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<sup>201</sup> *Berg* is not the only element used to refer to artificial mounds in English place-names. OE *hlāw* (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 178-180), *crug* and OScan *haugr* (Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 174) also referred to such mounds. Crucially, however, in this study neither *crug* nor *dūn* collocate with any of the elements suggestive of artificial mounds, whereas *berg* does.

compound name analysis carried out in this chapter provides evidence of this, to supplement the evidence already discussed in Chapter Three (3.10.1., 3.11.3.).

The use of a particular element seems also to have been relative to specific land use. As with ‘snow’, for instance, a collocation may remark upon the impact of its presence; that impact would have been relative to activity carried out in the locality. So, for example, there may not have been significant snowfall in quantitative terms, but it would have been remarked upon if repeatedly impacting upon farming (or mobility) in that location.

There are differences in the application of the same qualifying element to *berg* compared with *dūn*. Those referencing the ‘little’ or ‘rough’ nature of a feature appear to apply to *berg* in an earlier stratum of place-naming and to *dūn* in a later one. The explanation for the former is probably to be found in connection with the use of *berg* to refer to an artificial mound, considered further in Chapter Five (5.7.1.). The explanation for the latter is discussed in Chapter Six (6.5.2.), where the diachronic shift in the meaning of *dūn* is explored. It is also possible to see corresponding diachronic shifts in the sense of qualifying elements compounding predominantly with *dūn*, such as ‘moor’. Other themes, such as the rise of directional collocations with *dūn*, appear to reflect this shift also, and are explored further in 6.5.2.

There are divisions apparent between early, southern *berg*-names and later-attested, more northerly *berg*-names, particularly those which lie in areas of heightened OScan influence. The recurrent collocating elements for each group do not overlap greatly, if at all. This will be explored in the next chapter (5.7.1.-5.7.2.), in which some recurrent themes for early and southern *berg*-names that have not already been discussed in this chapter will be highlighted.

There are themes that apply to *dūn*-names in the south but *berg*-names further north, particularly referencing arable farming and exploitation of wilder vegetation, such as ‘hay’, ‘wheat’, ‘oats’, ‘peas/beans’, ‘thorn’, and ‘bracken/fern’, as well as references to the condition of the soil in the form of ‘clay’, and to the land being cold and exposed (which could be noted in a name because of its relevance to farming).

Other elements indicating the same themes, such as ‘rye’, ‘clover’, ‘clean’, ‘bare’ and ‘black’, only really collocate in numbers with *dūn*. Farmed animals also fall into



this category, although where there are isolated collocations with *berg*, they are all in the OScan-influenced areas; they do not appear with OE *berg*.

Finally, there is a distinctive regional concentration of *dūn*-compounds in Devon using recurrent compounds mainly or only occurring in that county, and almost exclusively with *dūn*, such as ‘black’ and ‘curved’. This is a clear phenomenon to be noted, even though satisfactory explanation within the Devon context falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated how much information can be gleaned from careful compound place-name analysis. The next two chapters draw together what can be concluded as a result about each of *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*, as they were used in place-naming in different areas and time periods.

## Chapter Five: Separating OE and OScan *berg*-names

Chapter Four began to outline some of the stark differences between *berg*-names in the south and south-west, and those further north in areas historically more influenced by OScan language. Were it not for a national corpus spanning both areas, such differences would not have been as obvious. Although this study's corpus was not originally assembled to analyse the extent and nature of OScan influence in particular areas, this has now emerged as an interesting theme, to which this corpus can make a distinctive contribution, and which this chapter now considers. Before considering the differences between what might be termed OE and OScan *berg*-names are analysed, the chapter first considers the historical context for OScan influence, how it has been assessed and quantified by other scholars using other corpora and how this corpus fits with those studies.

### 5.1. Historical context

The subject of Scandinavian migration into England from the late eighth century onwards is a large topic. It is not the intention in this chapter to rehearse extensively the details of that movement of people, language and influence, including those over which scholars have debated long and hard. The aim in this section is to explain in brief why we might expect to find intensified OScan influence on place-names in certain areas and not so much in others.

The first mention in the ASC of what would become Scandinavian migration into England is in the year 787, when a reeve was slain by men arriving in three ships. According to Æthelweard's version of the Chronicle, this took place near Dorchester (Dorset) (Campbell 1962, 27).<sup>202</sup> Following various mobile attacks, a Scandinavian

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<sup>202</sup> In the Winchester Chronicle (ASC A) they are described as *þa aerestan scipu deniscra monna* 'the first ships of Danish men' (Bately 1986, 39). The Abingdon Chronicle (ASC C) described the ships as *iii scipu Norðmanna* 'three ships of Northmen' (O'Brien O'Keefe 2001, 50). The Peterborough and Worcester Chronicles (ASC E and D) added that the ships were *iii scipu/scypu Norðmanna of Hereðelanda/Hæreðalanda* 'three ships of Northmen of Hordaland' (Irvine 2001, 41; Cubbin 1996, 16). Whichever label is used, the groups that came to England from Scandinavia during the next four hundred years were diverse. They included those coming via Iceland, Ireland or Scotland and the islands in between. Downham (2009) noted the interchangeability of labels in many of the early medieval

force described as *hæpene men* ‘heathen men’ over-wintered in England for the first time in 851, possibly at Thanet (Kent) (Whitelock 1979, 188; Bately 1986, 44). Over-wintering was a significant step along the trajectory towards permanent settlement in England. Archaeologically, in particular via metal detecting, increasing evidence of the great army has been traced at the *wintersetl* ‘winter quarters’ in Repton (Derbyshire), Torksey (Lincolnshire) and Aldwark (NRY), as well as possible evidence on the Tyne (Northumberland) (Hadley and Richards 2016, 2018, 2023; Richards and Haldenby 2018; Williams 2020; Kershaw et al. 2023; Biddle 2023).

In the second half of the ninth century, the *micel here* ‘great army’ went throughout Kent, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria. These kingdoms all made peace with the army. In 875-876, one leader, Healfdene or Halfdan, went with part of the army into Northumbria and began to share out the land, to plough and support themselves (Whitelock 1979, 194-5; Bately 1986, 49-50). In 877, Mercia was shared out, the army taking the eastern areas. In 880, East Anglia, too, was shared out (Whitelock 1979, 195-196; Bately 1986, 50-51).

As is often rehearsed, Alfred as leader of Wessex fought with a Scandinavian army led by Guðrum in 878. A treaty was drawn up between the two men following this battle in which the bounds between the lands that the two men claimed to control were set out, running up the River Thames, the River Lea, in a straight line to Bedford, up the River Ouse, and along Watling Street. Alfred claimed land to the south and west of this line, whilst Scandinavian influence lay to the north and east.<sup>203</sup> Later English law codes referred to Danish people living in areas of England but with their own laws which they administered and which were respected by the rulers from Wessex: see, for instance, Edgar’s code issued at *Wihthordestan* in 962-963 (Whitelock 1979, 434-437).

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accounts and cautioned against setting up anachronistic ethnic divisions between ‘Danes’ and ‘Northmen’.

<sup>203</sup> These bounds are often used as a shorthand for the parameters of the Danelaw (see for example Gregory 2017, 28-29). For a fuller discussion of ‘the Danelaw’ see Hart (1992, Ch. 1).

Towns lying within the area ceded to the Scandinavians by Alfred, such as Leicester, Northampton, Derby, Nottingham, Tamworth, Towcester, Runcorn and York, were the subject of campaigns by Wessex and Mercia under Alfred's children, Edward the Elder and Æðelflæd, in the early tenth century. However, this did not remove Scandinavian influence in those regions. The ASC continued to refer to a mixture of ethnicities dwelling in certain places, for example, in 920 all men in Northumbria were said to have given allegiance to Edward at Bakewell, *aegþer ge Englisce ge Denisce ge Norþmen ge oþre* 'whether English, or Danish, or Northmen, or other' (Whitelock 1979, 217; Bately 1986, 69; Downham 2007, 95-96).

In the far north-west, Scandinavian influence arrived by the end of the ninth and beginning of the tenth centuries, although understanding the precise timeline in this area suffers on account of the fact that it was a 'chronicle blind-spot' (Woolf 2007, 132-133). Scandinavian speakers came mainly via the Irish Sea, with connection points in Ireland, the Isle of Man, southern Scotland and the Western Isles of Scotland. In the first half of the tenth century, a Scandinavian axis between Dublin and York spanning England in the north was briefly established (Stenton 2001 [1943], 357). Numismatic evidence supports the idea of a continuation in Scandinavian influence from York over the East Midlands at the same time (Blackburn 2006; Naismith 2017, 301-303; Rye 2022, 16). Despite the ebbing and flowing of power, for instance in 942 and 954 (Whitelock 1979, 221, 224), Scandinavian influence (whether Norse or Danish) continued in these areas. There is, therefore, based on this historical timeline, an anticipated zone of Scandinavian influence stretching from the north-west, across Yorkshire and down the eastern side of England.

However, at the beginning of the eleventh century, Svein Forkbeard, king of Denmark, and his son, Cnut, ruled England as a whole. Moreover, the process of language diffusion, operative over four centuries since the ninth century, means that we should expect to see the mark of Scandinavian influence on language over a wide area. As Dance (2012, 1733-1734) put it:

even by the first efflorescence of ME literature in the early 13th century, a substantial body of Norse-derived words is already attested well outside the areas principally settled by Scandinavian speakers... the difference between the Norse-derived words recorded in northern/eastern as opposed to

southern/western dialects is one of more versus less, not an absolute matter of presence versus absence.<sup>204</sup>

Historical events lend wider context – context which has been used by EPNS survey editors to select between possible OE and OScan etyma where distinction on formal grounds alone is not possible – but such context is not necessarily determinative. The corpus of place-names must be interrogated on its own terms to verify where it supports or contradicts the picture garnered from historical and archaeological sources.

## **5.2. Using place-names to understand Scandinavian influence**

Place-names that appear to point to OScan influence are abundant. What such names mean for the scale and timing of Scandinavian migration has long been debated and is summarised in Abrams and Parsons (2004). OScan language continued to have a long-lasting effect on the English language, both in areas closely associated with Viking Age activity and further afield. Scholars such as Dance (2003, 2018) and the Gersum Project (2024) have studied its influence on ME language. Place-names coined in the medieval period may have been influenced by OScan language without being contemporaneous to ninth- or tenth-century settlement of Scandinavian speakers (Carroll 2020, 97).

A version of OScan language continued to be spoken in parts of England long after the ninth and tenth century, although it is very hard to say categorically when it finally died out (Parsons 2001). Runic inscriptions, such as the inscription on the twelfth-century Pennington Tympanum (Cumberland), demonstrate the ongoing use of Old Norse in a mainstream ecclesiastical context, even if in a form that was beginning to lose its orthodox inflections (Townend 2002, 193-194; Barnes and

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<sup>204</sup> These words echo those of Wainwright (1975, 257-258) who thought that language diffusion alone could not adequately account for large concentrations of OScan-influenced words.

Page 2006, 307-312).<sup>205</sup> The church at Pennington is within sight of Eller Barrow, one of the OScan place-names in this study's corpus (see 1.3.5.).<sup>206</sup>

Compound names that use Celtic-language word order with OScan generics are often referred to as 'inversion compounds', albeit that term presupposes that the target language in which such names were coined is known.<sup>207</sup> Parsons (2011) suggested that such compound names might have arisen as a result of later language contact between Scandinavian and Goidelic speakers within the north-west of England in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Parsons' arguments depend upon the continuation of OScan-influenced speech in areas south of the Solway (see also Parsons forthcoming; and Edmonds 2019, 139, 169-171). Clancy (2008) set out how the influence of Gaelic via the Gall-Ghàidheil (Gall-Goídil) expanded south in the eleventh century from the Firth of Clyde into Galloway. Its influence could have been felt across the Solway alongside influence from the Isle of Man (cf. Edmonds 2019, 69-70, 170-171). Edmonds also pointed to the possible continuation of Brittonic influence on names in the area, alongside increasing Gaelicisation, cautioning that linguistic history cannot necessarily be closely tied to rulership. Together with Taylor, she observed that 'the inversion compounds may reflect a compromise between various linguistic groups [including Brittonic and English] as they learned new languages' (Edmonds and Taylor 2017, 167).

Overall what is evident in the surviving name stock is the product of generations of linguistic intermixing, as well as more general language diffusion. It is very important to bear this in mind.

### 5.3. Linguistic clues

OE and OScan are cognate languages. At the point at which Scandinavian migration first began into England, it is possible they were so close that they could

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<sup>205</sup> There are also twelfth-century ON runic inscriptions in Carlisle Cathedral (Barnes and Page 2006, 289-292).

<sup>206</sup> *Ella* is likely to be a Norse remembering of a Saxon king *Ælla* (Townend 1997).

<sup>207</sup> It is only an inversion if the names were coined by OScan speakers using a word order judged to be 'inverted' in comparison to OScan word order; there is no 'inversion' if the names were coined by Goidelic speakers.

conceivably be seen as akin to different dialects within a dialect continuum, rather than completely separate languages.<sup>208</sup> On that basis, Anglo-Scandinavian contact was not the same as language contact where the languages are further apart.<sup>209</sup> Dialect contact ‘put new forms into circulation in the recipient language which effectively acted as variants of native ones’ (Dance 2012, 1727). This makes teasing them apart in the place-names of this corpus a challenge.

The task is made yet more challenging by the fact that OScan place-name elements are generally drawn up from standardised headforms derived mainly from Icelandic texts dating to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This is much later than the time of initial Scandinavian migration into England. The OScan language found in Iceland, Denmark and Norway would have continued to diverge from that found in England during the intervening period. Coates (2006a) questioned how many of the phonological developments traditionally used to distinguish OScan from OE had actually occurred by the time of OScan influence first appearing on the shores of England. A standardised lexicon taken from later texts written outside of England gives limited insight into the vocabulary, phonology and morphology of words used in the eighth to tenth centuries when OScan linguistic influence first significantly arrived in England and mixed with OE.

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<sup>208</sup> Later twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scandinavian sources alluded to the perception that these languages had once been mutually intelligible, whilst acknowledging subsequent divergence: see, for instance, *The First Grammatical Treatise* (Haugen 1972 [1950], 12-13) and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (Quirk and Foote 1957, 15; Townend 2002, 150-171, including a review of many other sources).

<sup>209</sup> Even in the case of true language contact, Sandnes (2016, 549) cautioned against viewing place-names that appear to demonstrate mixed linguistic influence as hybrid in the sense of involving a code-switch mid-name, pointing out that ‘a place-name is coined in a certain linguistic context and even if the speakers are bilingual, a code shift is not to be expected in a very limited linguistic unit such as a name’. Cox (1988-1989) argued that the term ‘hybrid’ masked the borrowing of words from one language to another, and obscured salient focus on the context and identity of the borrower.

Finally, many of the diagnostic changes relied upon to tell OE and OScan apart are particularly prominent in West Saxon forms of OE and less evident in Anglian OE. Given that areas of OScan influence overlap most closely with Anglian regions (see 5.1.), it becomes still harder to say whether the evolution of a name is of Anglian or Scandinavian origin.<sup>210</sup>

Nevertheless, with these caveats firmly in mind, there are diagnostic linguistic traces which point towards OScan influence. Townend (2002, Ch. 3, Appendix 3) discussed these at length (see also Ekwall 1960, xxv-xxvi; Fellows-Jensen 1972, 131-168; 1978, 199-230; 1985, 192-259; and Dance 2012, 1729-1730). Finding such evidence does not, without more, make clear whether a name was influenced by OScan from the outset of its coining, or whether it has undergone subsequent Scandinavianisation having started life as an OE name. Only earlier unambiguous OE forms would prove that. In this study, where there is clear evidence of OScan influence on the name in the historical attestations, the name is allocated to a category of OScan influence. This puts to one side the question that may be hard to resolve satisfactorily of distinguishing whether this is influence *ab initio*, or as the name was used subsequently in its history.

Palatalisation before, and sometimes after, front vowels and some diphthongs with a front first element was a key feature of OE (Hogg 1992, §§ 7.15-7.26), not occurring in OScan (Townend 2002, 39). Palatalised OE *g* became /j/, whilst OScan *g* remained velar as /g/ (Townend 2002, 61). However, the difference is not diagnostically foolproof; sometimes palatalisation did not occur, for example in oblique cases where velar /g/ would remain in OE on account of the back vowel in the inflexional endings (Hogg 1992, §7.16). At this point, an OE word may be formally indistinguishable from OScan (Rye 2016, 84).

In addition to palatalisation, there was a process of assibilation by which palatal *k* became /tʃ/ as in OE *cirice* ‘church’, and palatal *g* became /dʒ/ as in OE *ecg* ‘edge’ (Hogg 1992, §7.33). The consonantal cluster *sk* was palatalised and assibilated to /ʃ/.

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<sup>210</sup> This is not to say that Anglian dialects were in origin more proximate to OScan languages, rather that subsequent evolution in these dialects made them harder to distinguish from OScan languages than was the case with West Saxon (Nielsen 1985; Townend 2002, 26-28; Dance 2003, 87-88).



There was a ‘complete failure to assibilate amongst Scandinavian settlers’ (Campbell 1959, §438).<sup>211</sup> The two OE words can be contrasted with their OScan equivalents *kirkja* ‘church’ and *egg* ‘edge’. However, these sound changes have to be traced through spellings, and orthography was not consistent. Palatalisation and assibilation, although widespread in OE, were poorly represented in texts (Hogg 1992, §§7.15, 7.34). In ME, whilst a spelling using <cg> might represent the sound /dʒ/ indicating palatalisation, the spelling <gg> could not be relied upon conversely to indicate non-palatalisation. For example, it was used in the twelfth-century Peterborough Chronicle to represent /dʒ/ (Jordan and Crook 1974, §192). Equally, OE *ecg* was spelt as *egge* in ME (MEC 2025, s.v. *egge* n.2) with <gg> representing /dʒ/. On the other hand, ME *eggen* ‘to urge on’, derived from OScan *eggja* with a non-palatalised /g/, was spelt in the same way with <gg> (Styles 2001, 293; MEC 2025, s.v. *eggen* v.1).<sup>212</sup> If it is not possible orthographically to distinguish sounds in historical name-forms, OScan and OE elements effectively become indistinguishable (Rye 2016, 70).

Vowels diverged slightly between OE and OScan. The divergences were conditioned and regular, hence predictable. The ability of OE and OScan speakers to make phonemic correspondences between pairs of sounds was key to the mutual intelligibility of the languages (Townend 2002, 33, 41, 62). Some of the correspondences indicated by Townend are set out below:

| <b>PGmc</b> | <b>OScan</b> | <b>OE</b>    |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| */a/        | /a/          | /æ/          |
| */æ:/       | /a:/         | /æ:/ or /e:/ |
| */ai/       | /ei/         | /a:/         |
| */au/       | /au/         | /e:a/        |

Phonological changes involve moderation of a word so that alien sounds are rendered in sounds familiar to the speaker’s language. Lexical substitutions involve

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<sup>211</sup> Laker (2021) reviewed the failure to assibilate in Anglian areas, examining the multiple causative factors in operation including OScan influence.

<sup>212</sup> The same phenomenon is seen with OE *\*bagga; bacga* ‘badger’ discussed in 5.7.1. below, which was palatalised but could be spelt with <gg> (Campbell 1959, §64).

the name-user recognising meaning but reformulating a name using an equivalent word in their own language. Given the closeness of OE and OScan, lexical substitutions were normally cognate, involving only phonemic substitutions, making it difficult to distinguish in practice between the two scenarios outlined above (Townend 2002, 64).

In theory, morphological and grammatical elements fossilised within name forms might give clues to OScan influence. However, where the languages were very close, there was likely to be a rapid simplification of grammatical inflexions to aid communication. Differences were smoothed out (Parsons 2001, 302). Townend (2002, 197-201) concluded that ‘inflexions were largely non-functional in Anglo-Norse communication’. There are not many diagnostic examples of grammar preserved in name-forms to be found in this study’s corpus, which would have aided in distinguishing between OE and OScan.

#### **5.4. Comparisons with other studies**

There have been various other studies that sought to assess OScan influence in a particular area, whether through rigorous quantitative analysis or more impressionistically and qualitatively. This corpus was not initially assembled to assess OScan influence. The question of OScan influence became relevant as patterns emerged from compound place-name analysis. This corpus is nationwide and includes data from areas dominated by OE influence. This has proved to be a highly valuable comparator, and one which other studies lack by very definition of their starting research question parameters, setting out as they did to analyse a defined area of potential OScan influence.

When considering names from the EPNS survey of Norfolk, Parsons (2006, 167) argued that it was best to count OScan generics. Parsons argued that generics were more secure in their interpretation, occurring as they do more frequently than qualifiers. However, this study has found that there is often considerable uncertainty in interpretation of the generic in a place-name (see 2.3.2.). Gelling (1981, 43) observed the same problem in relation to *dūn*. A stress pattern of speech and word order in name phrases and compound names, which places the emphasis on the qualifier, mitigates against the generic surviving clearly without confusion in historical forms. Other studies such as Carroll (forthcoming) and Rye (2022)

compared qualifiers alongside generics. In this study, it is the qualifiers that are counted since *berg* and *dūn* typically occupy the generic position.

This study does not focus exclusively on microtoponymy, albeit the corpus includes all available microtoponyms pre-1500 for *berg*, *crug* and *dūn*. Hald (1948) looked at a collection of field-names in Benniworth (Lincolnshire) found primarily in a late twelfth-century charter in the Kirkstead Cartulary. Cameron (1973) used the same source for field-names in Dunholme (Lincolnshire). Watts (2002) looked at field-names for two townships from material for the EPNS survey of County Durham. Cox (1989-1990) used field-name material from his survey of Rutland for the EPNS. Parsons (2006) drew on the EPNS survey for Norfolk, assembling names first attested between 1100 and 1400; the date range meant that much of the data comprised field-names, given that many of the major names were first attested prior to 1100. Rye (2016, 2022) also focused on minor names. Given its inclusion of all available field-names, this study can be compared with these previous studies.

Rye (2016, 17-19) pointed out the downsides of assessing Scandinavian influence in a qualitative way. It is always possible to highlight particular OScan names in a given area, but it is impossible to quantify OScan influence, or compare meaningfully with another region, unless there is a base line for the corpus under assessment.<sup>213</sup> Rye (2022) standardised and synthesised her own work in Leicestershire, the Wirral and Westmorland with the other available quantitative studies mentioned above in Lincolnshire, Rutland, Durham and Norfolk. This study is also quantitative with a defined corpus. Therefore, it is possible below (5.6.) to compare and contrast results from this study with those in Rye's synthesis.

### **5.5. Linguistic categorisation**

Rye (2016, Ch. 2) discussed at length the problems encountered in distinguishing between OE and OScan elements. Her analysis highlighted how many elements need to be assigned to the category of formally linguistically indistinguishable. In Rye's

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<sup>213</sup> Other studies on OScan influence in names include Insley (1985) and Cameron (1975, 1978, 1996b, 1997). These were not synthesised by Rye on account of them being insufficiently quantitative.

work, this category was excluded from further comparison; the quantitative metric of OScan influence, as compared with OE, discounted the OE/OScan linguistically indistinguishable category. However, this is a very large subset of data to exclude. Indeed, given that OE and OScan *berg* are indistinguishable (see 1.3.5.), all *berg*-names would be excluded, and are by Rye (2022) in Leicestershire. However, this corpus of *berg*-names merits further investigation using a wider context. Names were, therefore, placed into three categories: OE, OScan or OE/OScan, the latter being the linguistically ambiguous category. The labels indicate influence discernible from the historical attestations of a name; they do not represent a claim for the linguistic origin of the name when first coined (see 5.3.). The label OE is used where there is no OScan influence evidenced in the run of available historical name-forms, OScan where there is, and OE/OScan where it is not possible on formal linguistic grounds to be sure. Since the corpus for this study was derived mainly from published works, the linguistic analysis of the original editor was followed unless there was obvious cause to refine it. This was usually by making clear that a name should be in the OE/OScan category on formal linguistic grounds, rather than presuming an OE (or in some cases OScan) influence upon the name.

## 5.6. County case studies

The five historical pre-1974 counties of Westmorland, Cumberland, the WRY, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire were selected as case studies. The choice gave a good contrast between the eastern and western areas of suspected OScan influence, as well as offering a comparison to the studies synthesised by Rye.<sup>214</sup>

Within each county, all names were separated out into century of first attestation and by category of linguistic influence for the qualifier, focusing on OE, OScan or OE/OScan as defined above in 5.5.<sup>215</sup> It is important to focus not just on the quantity

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<sup>214</sup> As with the analysis in 2.5. above, subdivision into counties enables analysis comparing densities and percentages mathematically. However, county boundaries are to some extent anachronistic and artificial. As helpful as county comparisons are, the mapped presentation of distribution patterns, capable of crossing county boundaries, remains key.

<sup>215</sup> Other linguistic categories are very rare in this corpus, and never recurrent. Hence, they are not included in this part of the analysis of the corpus.

of OScan influence but also on variety or lack of it. A single OScan-influenced name repeated over and over might, in quantitative terms, appear to represent a high degree of OScan influence in an area. However, it is more likely to have been a borrowed recurrent compound (see 4.3.); that is, it was a ‘ready-made’ name, which could be borrowed and used by those who did not otherwise speak a language influenced to the same extent by OScan. For each county, results are presented first counting all names including repeat compounds, and secondly counting the repeats once, in the earliest century of first attestation but not thereafter.

Absolute numbers (represented by the overall heights of the bars in the bar charts) fluctuate relative to the state of the underlying survey of names in a county, dependent also upon the state of historical records in that area. There may be low numbers where there is only an early or incomplete survey, or where available documentary records are later in date and survival is patchy. However, comparisons *between berg and dūn* and *between* categories of linguistic influence remain robust (2.1.1.). Therefore, it is the patterns in relative heights of the bars in the charts in any one century that are informative.

#### 5.6.1. The emerging national picture

The results from the OE and OScan categories (momentarily setting aside the OE/OScan category) can be usefully compared with the emerging national picture as synthesised by Rye. The following tables are adapted from Rye (2022, 43-47). The first table organises results in descending order of OScan influence (as defined above in 5.5. and counting repeats) expressed as a percentage relative to OE influence (also as defined in 5.5. and counting repeats). The second table is ordered in the same manner but with repeats excluded. The maps in Figures 134 and 136 represent the proportion of OScan influence as a percentage of the total of OE- and OScan-influenced names (temporarily ignoring the OE/OScan category). The red circular symbol varies in size – larger represents a greater proportion of OScan influence relative to OE.<sup>216</sup>

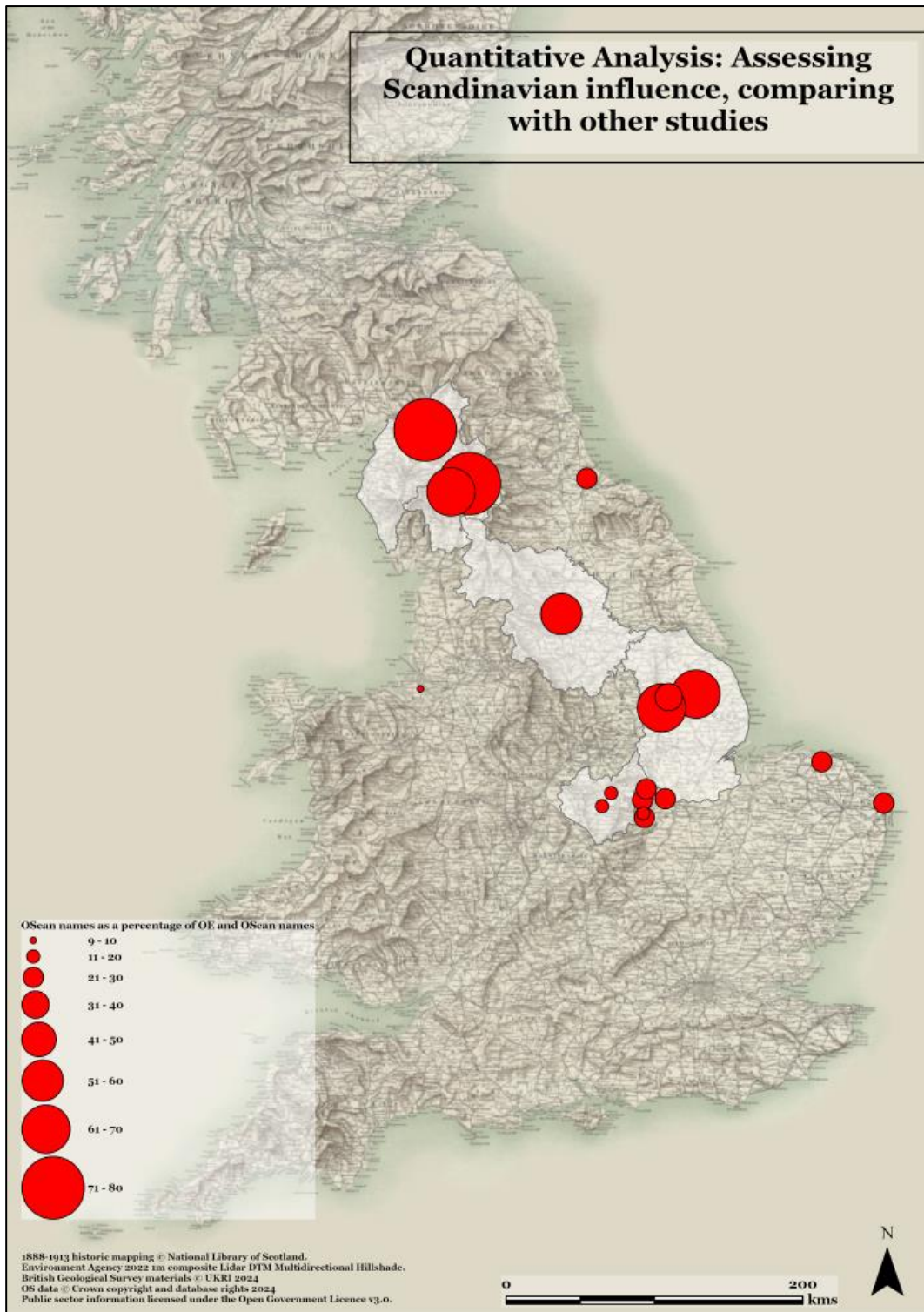
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<sup>216</sup> This methodology uses graduated symbology: Metadata is available online at <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/help/mapping/layer-properties/graduated-symbols.htm> [accessed December 2024].

Rye (2022, 36) suggested that fifty percent seemed to be likely to be the upper end of the scale of OScan-influenced names in a corpus based on her study from the West Ward, plus Hald's and Cameron's studies from Lincolnshire. The case studies from this corpus exceed this suggested ceiling, albeit this is perhaps not surprising given the focus in this corpus on the qualifiers in *berg*- and *dūn*-names (as opposed to a focus on qualifiers in any compound names).

| Region                                                   | OE (all names) | OScan (all names) | OE (all) % of OE:OScan | OScan (all) % of OE:OScan | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Westmorland                                              | 5              | 20                | 20                     | 80                        | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Cumberland                                               | 4              | 10                | 29                     | 71                        | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Benniworth, Lincolnshire (Hald 1948)                     | 18             | 42                | 30                     | 70                        | Names 1.12th or e.13th century. Generics only.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Lincolnshire                                             | 12             | 27                | 31                     | 69                        | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| West Ward, Westmorland (Rye 2016)                        | 215            | 332               | 39                     | 61                        | Names to 1500CE, not including personal-name elements.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| West Riding of Yorkshire                                 | 23             | 33                | 42                     | 58                        | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Dunholme, Lincolnshire (Cameron 1973)                    | 46             | 27                | 63                     | 37                        | Names to 1272CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Flegg, Norfolk (Parsons 2006)                            | 68             | 27                | 72                     | 28                        | Generics only between 1100 to 1400 CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| East Hundred (Little Casterton), Rutland (Cox 1989-1990) | 105            | 40                | 72                     | 28                        | As explained by Rye 2022, these figures are the result of adding totals from Cox's tables for each hundred, only up to 1500CE. The column without repeats is derived from the highest number in any parish from that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Billingham & Wolviston, County Durham                    | 164            | 57                | 74                     | 26                        | Elements recorded after 1500CE omitted.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Holt & North Erpingham (Parsons 2006)                    | 65             | 21                | 76                     | 24                        | Generics only between 1100 to 1400 CE. NB. Rye 2022 records 23:12 for the ratio excluding recurrences. However the original figures in Parsons (2006) are 27:12 identical to those for Flegg.                                                       |
| Wrangdike Hundred (Lyddington), Rutland                  | 311            | 97                | 76                     | 24                        | As explained by Rye 2022, these figures are the result of adding totals from Cox's tables for each hundred, only up to 1500CE. The column without repeats is derived from the highest number in any parish from that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Oakham Soke Hundred (Oakham), Rutland (Cox 1989-1990)    | 92             | 25                | 79                     | 21                        | As explained by Rye 2022, these figures are the result of adding totals from Cox's tables for each hundred, only up to 1500CE. The column without repeats is derived from the highest number in any parish from that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Alstoe Hundred (Market Overton), Rutland (Cox 1989-1990) | 183            | 50                | 79                     | 21                        | As explained by Rye 2022, these figures are the result of adding totals from Cox's tables for each hundred, only up to 1500CE. The column without repeats is derived from the highest number in any parish from that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Martinsley Hundred (Uppingham), Rutland (Cox 1989-1990)  | 79             | 15                | 84                     | 16                        | As explained by Rye 2022, these figures are the result of adding totals from Cox's tables for each hundred, only up to 1500CE. The column without repeats is derived from the highest number in any parish from that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Leicestershire                                           | 36             | 7                 | 84                     | 16                        | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| East Goscote, Leicestershire (2022)                      | 469            | 72                | 87                     | 13                        | Names to 1500CE, not including personal-name elements.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Wirral (Rye 2016)                                        | 592            | 58                | 91                     | 9                         | Names to 1500CE, not including personal-name elements.                                                                                                                                                                                              |

133. Comparing OE and OScan influence in various corpora (including all recurrent compounds).

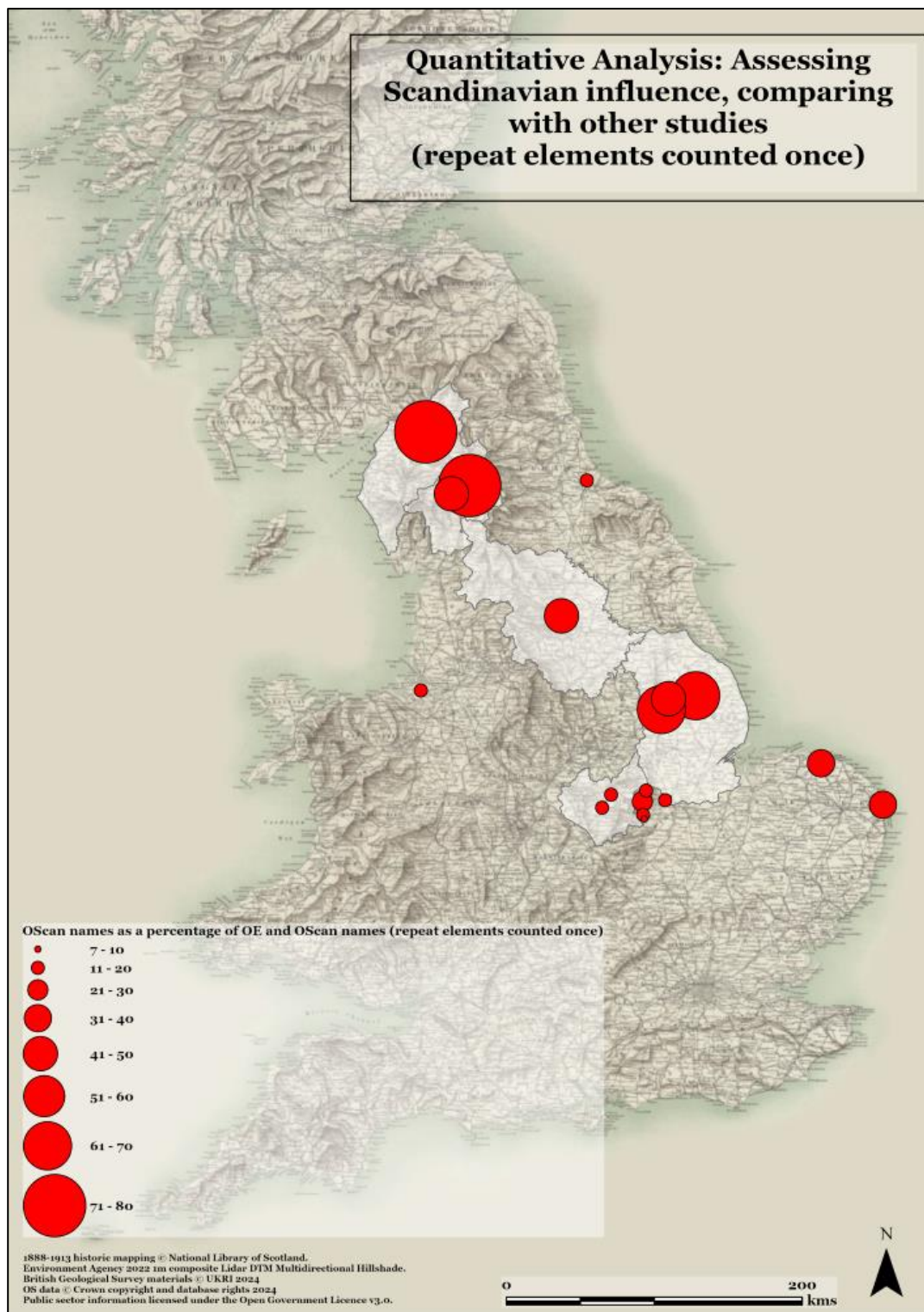


134. OScan influence as a percentage of OE- and OScan-influenced names in various corpora (including all recurrent compounds).



| Region                                                             | OE (repeat<br>collocations<br>counted<br>once) | OScan<br>(repeat<br>collocations<br>counted<br>once) | OE (no<br>repeat) % of<br>OE:OScan | OScan (no<br>repeat) % of<br>OE:OScan | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Westmorland                                                        | 5                                              | 14                                                   | 26                                 | 74                                    | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Cumberland                                                         | 4                                              | 10                                                   | 29                                 | 71                                    | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Benniworth,<br>Lincolnshire (Hald<br>1948)                         | 7                                              | 15                                                   | 32                                 | 68                                    | Names l.12th or e.13th century.<br>Generics only.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Lincolnshire                                                       | 10                                             | 19                                                   | 34                                 | 66                                    | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| West Riding of<br>Yorkshire                                        | 23                                             | 22                                                   | 51                                 | 49                                    | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| West Ward,<br>Westmorland (Rye<br>2016)                            | 108                                            | 94                                                   | 53                                 | 47                                    | Names to 1500CE, not including<br>personal-name elements.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Dunholme,<br>Lincolnshire<br>(Cameron 1973)                        | 26                                             | 19                                                   | 58                                 | 42                                    | Names to 1272CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Flegg, Norfolk<br>(Parsons 2006)                                   | 27                                             | 12                                                   | 69                                 | 31                                    | Generics only between 1100 to 1400<br>CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Holt & North<br>Erpingham (Parsons<br>2006)                        | 27                                             | 12                                                   | 69                                 | 31                                    | Generics only between 1100 to 1400<br>CE. NB. Rye 2022 records 23:12 for<br>the ratio excluding recurrents.<br>However the original figures in<br>Parsons (2006) are 27:12 identical to<br>those for Flegg.                                                           |
| Oakham Soke<br>Hundred (Oakham),<br>Rutland (Cox 1989-<br>1990)    | 37                                             | 11                                                   | 77                                 | 23                                    | As explained by Rye 2022, these<br>figures are the result of adding totals<br>from Cox's tables for each hundred,<br>only up to 1500CE. The column<br>without repeats is derived from the<br>highest number in any parish from<br>that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| East Hundred<br>(Little Casterton),<br>Rutland (Cox 1989-<br>1990) | 36                                             | 9                                                    | 80                                 | 20                                    | As explained by Rye 2022, these<br>figures are the result of adding totals<br>from Cox's tables for each hundred,<br>only up to 1500CE. The column<br>without repeats is derived from the<br>highest number in any parish from<br>that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Alstoe Hundred<br>(Market Overton),<br>Rutland (Cox 1989-<br>1990) | 35                                             | 8                                                    | 81                                 | 19                                    | As explained by Rye 2022, these<br>figures are the result of adding totals<br>from Cox's tables for each hundred,<br>only up to 1500CE. The column<br>without repeats is derived from the<br>highest number in any parish from<br>that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Billingham &<br>Wolviston, County<br>Durham                        | 69                                             | 14                                                   | 83                                 | 17                                    | Elements recorded after 1500CE<br>omitted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Martinsley Hundred<br>(Uppingham),<br>Rutland (Cox 1989-<br>1990)  | 15                                             | 3                                                    | 83                                 | 17                                    | As explained by Rye 2022, these<br>figures are the result of adding totals<br>from Cox's tables for each hundred,<br>only up to 1500CE. The column<br>without repeats is derived from the<br>highest number in any parish from<br>that hundred, named in parentheses. |
| Leicestershire                                                     | 30                                             | 6                                                    | 83                                 | 17                                    | Collocating with berg or dūn. Names to 1500CE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Wirral (Rye 2016)                                                  | 188                                            | 36                                                   | 84                                 | 16                                    | Names to 1500CE, not including<br>personal-name elements.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| East Goscote,<br>Leicestershire<br>(2022)                          | 151                                            | 25                                                   | 86                                 | 14                                    | Names to 1500CE, not including<br>personal-name elements.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Wrangdike Hundred<br>(Lyddington),<br>Rutland                      | 52                                             | 4                                                    | 93                                 | 7                                     | As explained by Rye 2022, these<br>figures are the result of adding totals<br>from Cox's tables for each hundred,<br>only up to 1500CE. The column<br>without repeats is derived from the<br>highest number in any parish from<br>that hundred, named in parentheses. |

135. Comparing OE and OScan influence in various corpora (excluding recurrent compounds).



136. OScan influence as a percentage of OE- and OScan-influenced names in various corpora (excluding recurrent compounds).

Results from this corpus fit well into the picture created by the earlier surveys, as refined by Rye. Westmorland and Cumberland have the highest proportions of unambiguous OScan influence. Lincolnshire is next, aligning with the picture Hald discovered in the north-east of that county in Benniworth. The WRY occupies

middle ground (numerically as well as geographically) but still with a strong OScan percentage. It records higher proportions of OScan influence than results from Norfolk explored by Parsons. Leicestershire fits with the picture Rye (2022) discovered in her study of East Goscote, and is closer also to the results obtained by Cox in Rutland (as well as Watts in Durham and Rye (2016) in the Wirral). Importantly, the results from Westmorland, Cumberland and the north of the WRY, plus the north of Lincolnshire, tie in with the zone of longer-lasting Scandinavian influence on language, delineated as the Great Scandinavian Belt by Samuels (1985).<sup>217</sup>

The surprise is how small the proportion of OScan-influenced names is in the East Midlands or the Wirral (and Cheshire generally in this corpus). This is not what one might have anticipated by looking at the historical sources such as the ASC (Gelling 1995; Rye 2016, 144-146, 348; 2022) or, indeed, major place-names. It has parallels with the low numbers of OScan-influenced metal finds (particularly female dress items) recorded by 2008 in the East Midlands (Kershaw 2013, 179, 209). In contrast, East Anglia and northern Lincolnshire had far higher levels of OScan-influenced metal artefacts than counties like Leicestershire. Based on this evidence, Kershaw (2013, 212) and Rye (2022, 38) wondered if occupation in these areas might have been military in nature, lacking ‘a sizeable familial element’. However, as far as the place-names are concerned, there are other explanatory possibilities, which are considered below in 5.8.

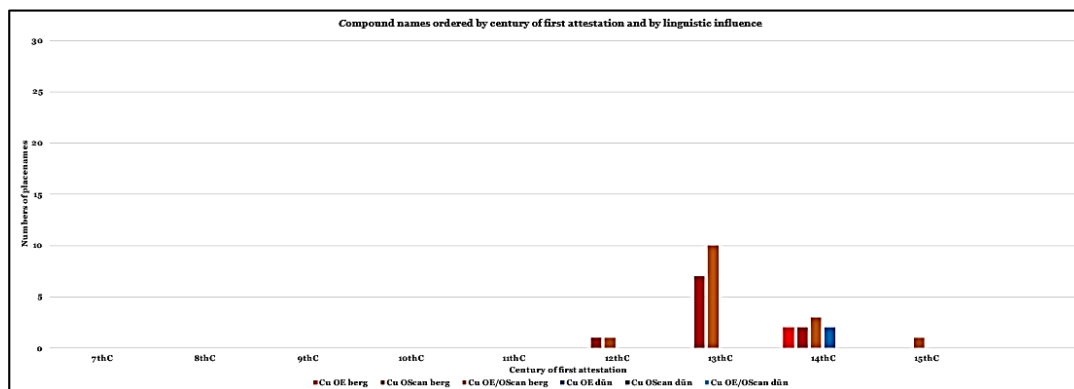
### 5.6.2. Cumberland

There is very little in this county within the present corpus that is clearly OE-influenced as defined in 5.5. Across all three categories of linguistic influence considered, there are hardly any recurrent compounds (as evidenced by the fact that the heights of the bars in the bar charts do not alter substantially when repeat compounds are removed). Indeed, seven of the collocations are not currently known to repeat anywhere else in the country. The corpus in this county is strongly OScan or potentially OScan (that is, OE/OScan) influenced. Although the sample size is

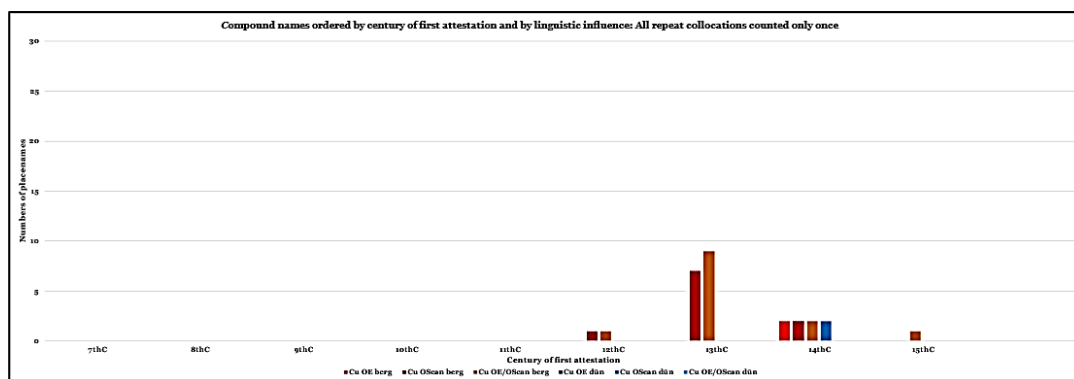
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<sup>217</sup> Samuels was looking at Scandinavian influence on language generally, rather than on toponymy specifically.

small, the variety (non-recurrency) in OScan (and potential OScan) influence is important to note.



137. Cumberland linguistic analysis including repeats.



138. Cumberland linguistic analysis excluding repeats.

In Cumberland and Westmorland, Carroll (forthcoming) notes that the OScan qualifiers compounding with the OScan generic *bekkr* ‘stream; beck’ were also varied and non-recurrent. In contrast, any OE qualifiers were low in number and recurrent.<sup>218</sup> The work in this study tallies with Carroll’s findings.

The majority of corpus names in this county are non-administrative. There are only two parish names in the corpus (both of which in fact display Brittonic and Goidelic

<sup>218</sup> In Carroll (forthcoming), the proportion of OE:OScan elements combining with *bekkr* is 18:35, that is sixty-six percent OScan relative to OE influence. If recurrency is removed, these numbers become 6:26 or eighty-one percent OScan relative to OE influence.

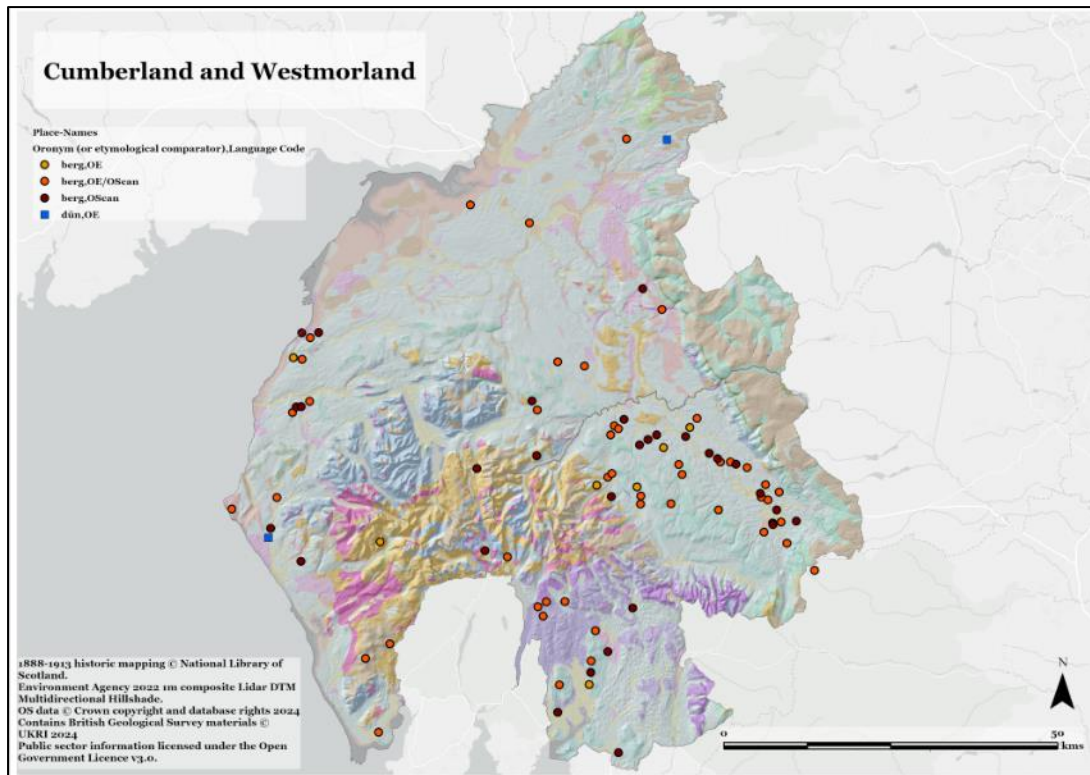
influence).<sup>219</sup> Hence, much of the OScan and potential OScan influence in the corpus for Cumberland occurred in microtoponymy. Such names represent influence found at the level of the people who were using the land locally; they are not representative of a top-down or centralised influence (see 2.2.2.).

Geographically, the names of OScan and potential OScan influence occurred on the coastal margins and lowland riverine catchments. They were not found in the mountainous hinterland. This is not because the EPNS survey of Cumberland did not cover these areas. Checking the EPNS beta digital survey of the county including all names outside of this corpus, there is relatively good coverage of names in the centre of the county. Therefore, the preference of corpus names (predominantly *berg*-names) in Cumberland for the lower lying areas is not an artefact of the survey. This has implications for what a *berg* was in an OScan-influenced area. It was not applied to the highest features despite the fact that it could be used with this sense in OE literature (see 1.3.1.), and notwithstanding the fact that Cumberland has plenty of high and craggy features.<sup>220</sup> Many of the *berg*-names in the Upper Eden valley (Westmorland) reference low-lying, rounded glacial deposits (see the eastern cluster in Figure 139).

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<sup>219</sup> They are Berrier and Gilcrux, both of which use elements of Goidelic and Brittonic origin and could be argued as ordered generic-qualifier rather than qualifier-generic (Armstrong and Dickins 1950-1952, 181, 287).

<sup>220</sup> Yewbarrow (Cumberland), *le Mikeldor de Yowberg* 1322, is an OE compound of *eowu* ‘ewe’ and *berg* (Armstrong and Dickins 1950-1952, 441). It is an obvious OE *berg*-name (note, not OScan) that would qualify as a name referencing a mountainous hill in Cumberland.

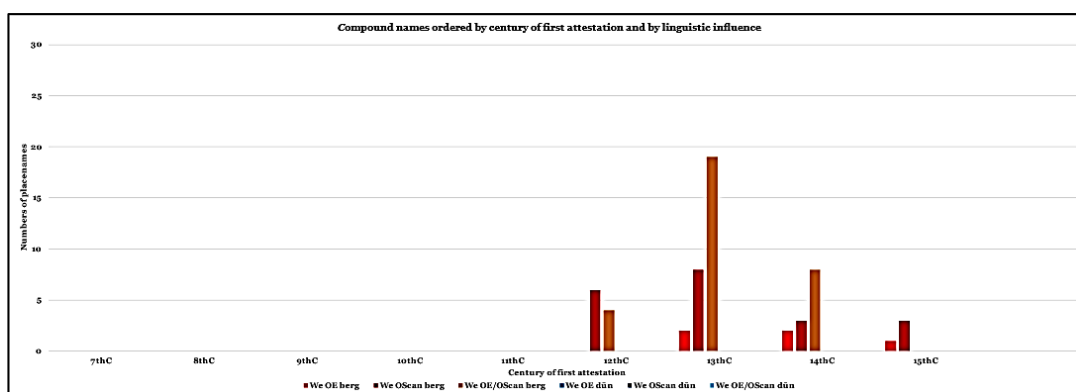


139. The distribution of *berg*- and *dūn*-names in Cumberland and Westmorland, symbolised according to linguistic influence, together with underlying geological and topographical relief.<sup>221</sup>

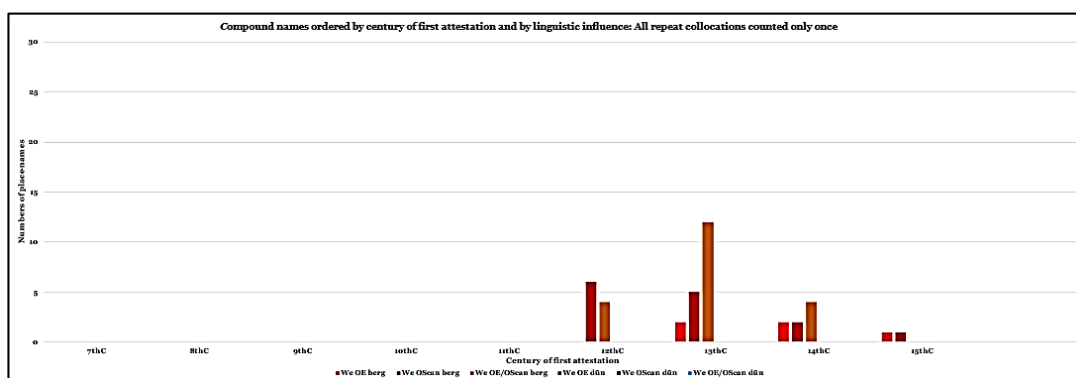
### 5.6.3. Westmorland

The linguistic profile of Westmorland in the corpus is similar to that of Cumberland, save that it has significantly more in the OE/OScan category and it has recurrency where Cumberland does not. These phenomena are both particularly evident in names first attested in the thirteenth century. The elements at the forefront of recurrency in this county include *\*brakni* ‘bracken’ (placed for the moment in the OE/OScan category for reasons discussed in 4.6.2.) and OE/OScan *hēg/hey* ‘hay’ (4.6.1.).

<sup>221</sup> Again, at this scale, the legend is disabled by the BGS on account of the sheer number of geologies present, but overall trends are discernible.



140. Westmorland linguistic analysis including repeats.



141. Westmorland linguistic analysis excluding repeats.

Although there is increased recurrency, there are still high proportions of unique (to the corpus) compounds. There are thirteen in total, making up twenty-one percent of the county's corpus names, equalling the proportion that was also seen in Cumberland for unique compounds.

As with Cumberland, there is a striking lack of names with administrative status. Only one name is of township status.<sup>222</sup> Once again, OScan or potential OScan (OE/OScan), influence in the corpus for Westmorland is predominantly found in microtoponymy, providing information about the social level at which this linguistic influence was manifested.

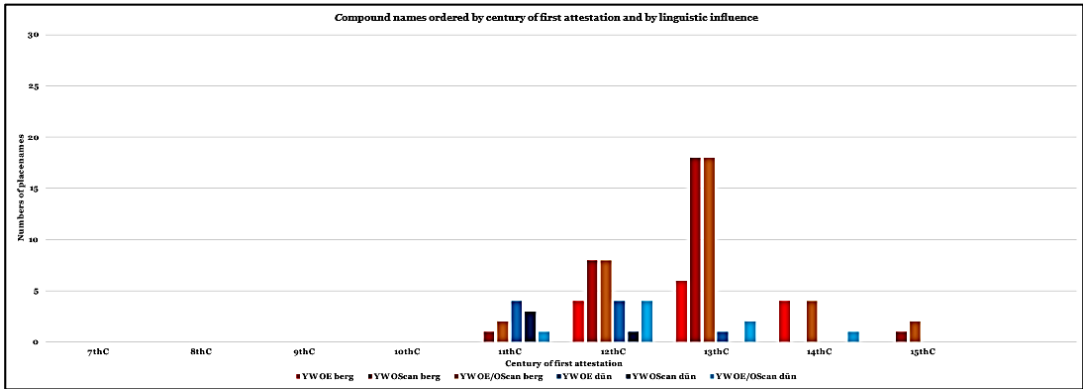
#### 5.6.4. The WRY

Compared to Cumberland and Westmorland, there is an increased proportion of OE-influenced compounds in the corpus for WRY, particularly in earlier attested strata.

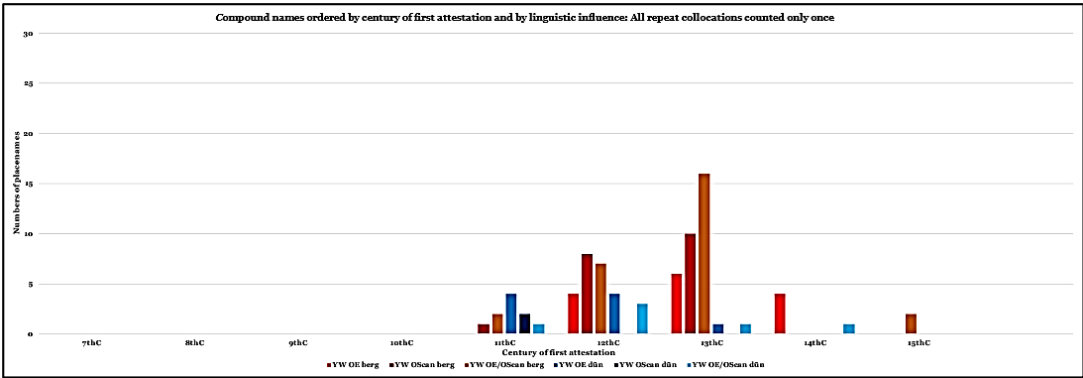
<sup>222</sup> Kaber, first attested in the twelfth century as *Kabergh* and *Cabergh* (Smith 1967, 2:5), was a township until the mid-nineteenth century, becoming a civil parish thereafter (Youngs 1991, 463; GB Historical GIS Project 2024, s.v. Kaber).



There is a spike in recurrent names first attested in the thirteenth century, as there was with Westmorland. However, the recurrency in the WRY is greater in unambiguous OScan names, rather than the OE/OScan category, which differs from Westmorland.<sup>223</sup>



142. WRY linguistic analysis including repeats.



143. WRY linguistic analysis excluding repeats.

<sup>223</sup> Smith (1961–1963, 7:271) counted 142 *berg*-names in the WRY, commenting that ‘just over a third are combined with ON els’. This study’s corpus includes only eighty six, being those first attested prior to 1500. Nevertheless, the proportion of those that collocate with OScan elements remains at a third as Smith found.



The elements leading recurrency in OScan-influenced names in the corpus within the WRY include *kelda* ‘spring’,<sup>224</sup> *rauðr* ‘red’ (collocating with *dūn* not *berg*),<sup>225</sup> *skáli* ‘temporary hut; shed’<sup>226</sup> and *skalli* ‘bald head; bare hill’. The OE/OScan recurrency is driven by elements such as *\*hamol/hamall* ‘bare’ (see 4.6.2. –

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<sup>224</sup> All six of the occurrences of *kelda* in the corpus collocate with *berg* and are found in the WRY, Westmorland and County Durham. Carroll (forthcoming) discusses the use of *kelda* in Westmorland and Cumberland, where it is frequent and common, as opposed to Lincolnshire where it is almost absent. There are examples of *kelda* and *berg* compounded in Norwegian farm names in the form *kelduberg* (Rygh 1897-1936, 2:58, 4:182, 8:220). There are many more examples in Danish place-names using the form *keldbjerg* (DS 2024).

<sup>225</sup> Although not suggested for the etymology of these names by the editor of the survey of WRY, *Rauðr* could occur as an OScan personal name. The personal name interpretation has been suggested for place-names where it is not obvious how the generic would otherwise be ‘red’, for example when collocating with *þorn* ‘thorn(tree)’ or *bý* ‘farmstead; village’ (Dodgson and Rumble 1970–1997, 2:56-57; Fellows-Jensen 1968, 216; 1978, 64). The WRY examples of this element are the only examples in this corpus.

<sup>226</sup> In Orkney, it has been suggested that *skáli* signified a high-status building, although this might be a late, evolved sense. For the underlying debate, see Marwick (1952); Fellows-Jensen (1985; 2000, 137); Whyte (1985, 105-111); Thomson (1995, 2012); Winchester (2011) and Harrison (2016, Ch.8). Rye (2016, 328-331) discussed the element’s lexical presence in ME in northern regions of England cf. OED (2025, s.v. *scale* n.4). There are nine occurrences in this corpus, always collocating with *berg*. Despite being an element referencing some form of settlement or occupation, *skáli* does not displace *berg* from the generic position (contrast the position with other habitative terminals set out in 4.8.3.). Fellows-Jensen (1985, 311) pointed to Danish use of the element in place-names. DS (2024) contains several examples. This is not, therefore, an element likely only to have been found in Old West Norse. The other examples, outside of the WRY, occur in Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. These are all areas of OScan influence, located on both the east and west sides of the country. The element can be hard to disentangle from *skalli* unless <ll> survives in attested spellings.

collocating with *dūn* not *berg*), *galga/galgi* ‘gallows’,<sup>227</sup> and *hēah/há(r)* ‘high’ (see 4.5.1.). The overall corpus distribution of these latter three collocations is important contextual evidence which would tend to suggest that OScan influence should be suspected, rather than OE, as has previously been discussed and will be explored further below.

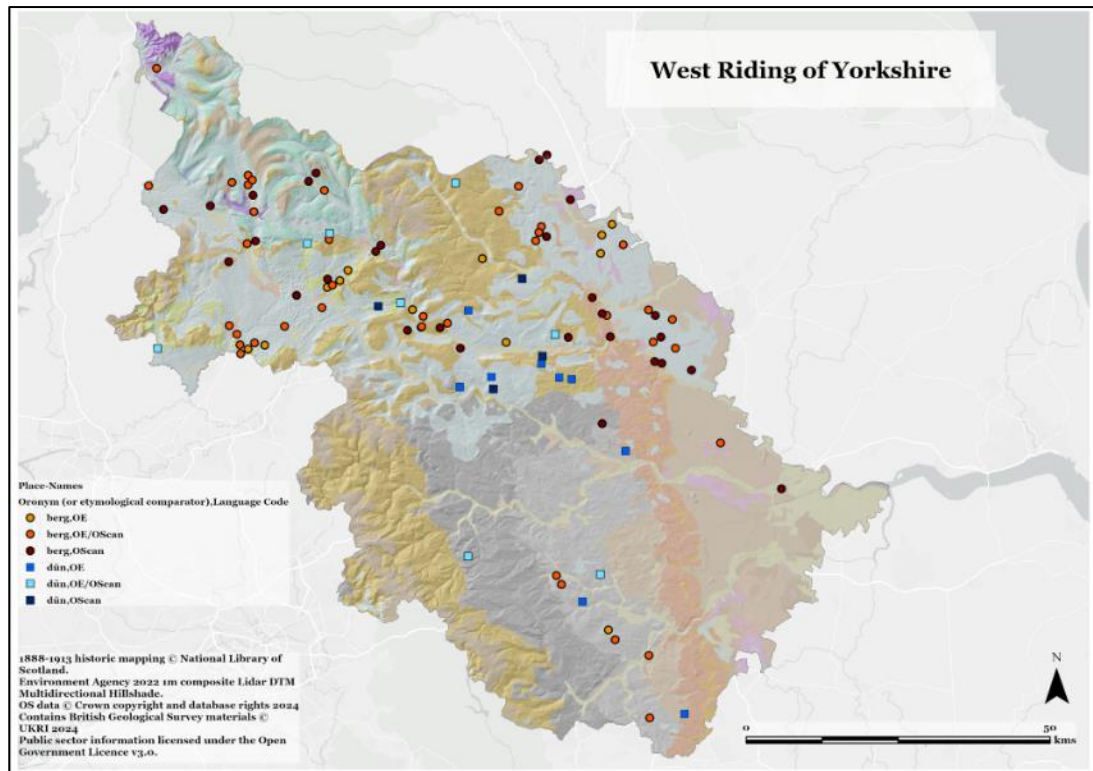
The story is not all one of recurrency. There are unique (to the corpus) collocations in the county – twenty three in total. This amounts to twenty-one percent of the county’s corpus names, matching the proportions seen in Cumberland and Westmorland. Although many of these hapax collocations display OScan influence, more display OE influence in the WRY compared to the two previous counties. This, and the early attested stratum of OE-influenced names referred to above, are evidence pointing to greater OE influence surviving in the name stock in the WRY, when compared to Cumberland and Westmorland. The majority of names in WRY from the corpus are names without any administrative status. There are, however, four parish and four township names, of which five display OE influence, compared to one with OScan.

In all three counties discussed so far, the formally indistinguishable OE/OScan category does not contain many unique collocations. Collocations in this category tend to be recurrent. This is an important point returned to in 5.8. below.

*Berg*-names lie in the northern half of the county as noted by Smith (1961–1963, 7:271). Although an elevated plateau, this part of the county is largely covered with alluvium, diamicton and glacial till. OE-influenced names are located centrally and towards the east, albeit still very much in the northern half of the county. The survey of the WRY was a fairly detailed one, amounting to seven volumes. The EPNS beta digital database confirms that there are many place-names in the southern half of the county within that survey. Since coverage was even in the underlying survey, the northern bias visible in figure 144 must have been a substantive phenomenon within this corpus, and not an artefact of the survey condition.

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<sup>227</sup> The elements *galga/galgi* collocate exclusively with *berg*, in Cumberland, NRY, WRY and Lincolnshire. These are all OScan-influenced areas spanning both west and east. The names are all first attested in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.



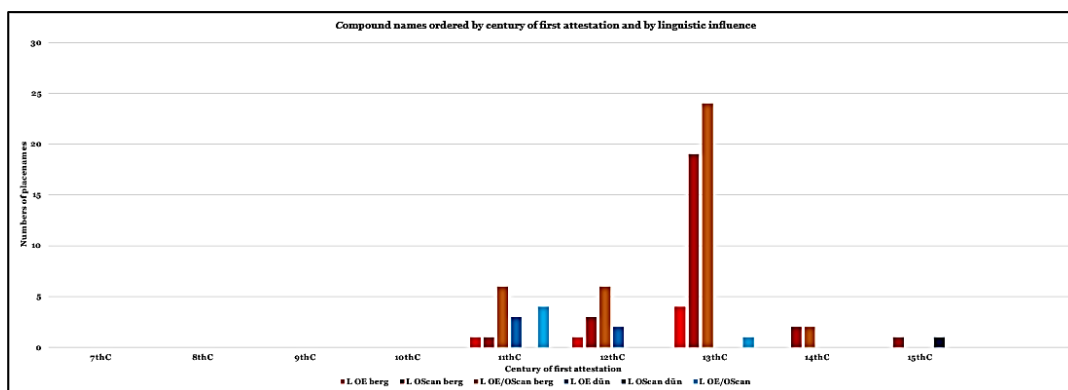
144. The distribution of corpus place-names in the WRY, symbolised according to linguistic influence, together with underlying geological and topographical relief.

#### 5.6.5. Lincolnshire<sup>228</sup>

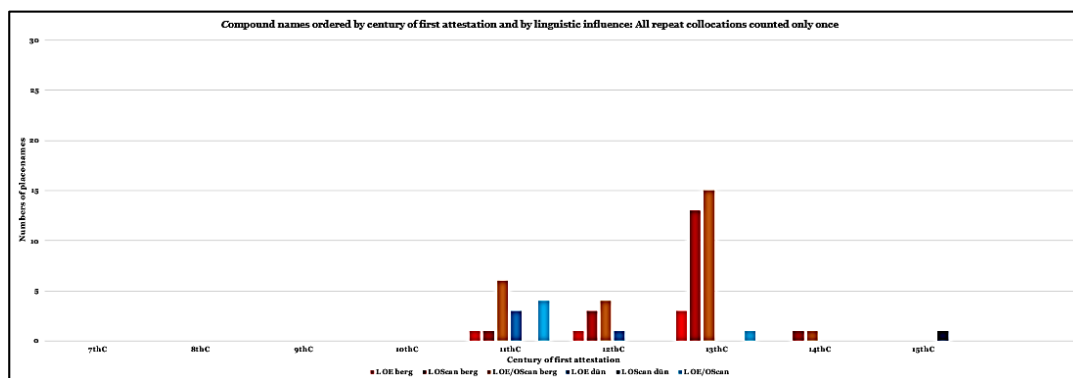
Lincolnshire has a greater proportion of corpus names in the OE/OScan category.

Many of these are recurrent, particularly those first attested in the thirteenth century.

<sup>228</sup> Lincolnshire is an incomplete survey so the safest results relate to the northern part of the county which has been the most comprehensively surveyed to date. There are names within the corpus from the southern half but it would be unwise to compare the two halves of the county given the difference in the completeness of survey. Within the northern half, results are clear: the dominance of OScan-influenced *berg*-names over OE influence (and over *dūn*-names in general) is a genuine result and not a product of an incomplete survey.



145. Lincolnshire linguistic analysis including repeats.



146. Lincolnshire linguistic analysis excluding repeats.

The elements leading recurrency in OScan names within Lincolnshire include *blár* ‘lead-coloured; dark’ (Parsons, Styles and Hough 1997–2004, 1:109), *hveiti* ‘wheat’ (see 4.6.1.)<sup>229</sup> and *steinn* ‘stone’ (see 4.5.2.).<sup>230</sup> The OE/OScan recurrency is driven

<sup>229</sup> The Lincolnshire examples all show clear OScan influence, evidenced by the <ai> and <ay> spellings in their historical attestations (Cameron 1985-2010, 2:145, 212, 3:63, 71; Townend 2002, 79). Whiteborough (Nottinghamshire) shows similar OScan influence with <ey> as well as <ay> spellings (Fellows-Jensen 1978, 229-230).

<sup>230</sup> Historical spellings including <ai>, <ay> and <ey> point to clear OScan influence (Cameron 1985-2010, 2: 211, 231, 6:27). Such influence was noted by Insley (1985, 124-128) in relation to nearby Ingham (Lincolnshire). *Dunston Hill*, first attested as *Dunstanhil* in the reign of Henry II, displays OE rather than OScan influence in its use of OE *stān* ‘stone’ (Cameron 1985-2010, 7:105). It lies in Scothern parish (Lincolnshire), further south and west than the clusters of *berg*-names showing OScan influence.

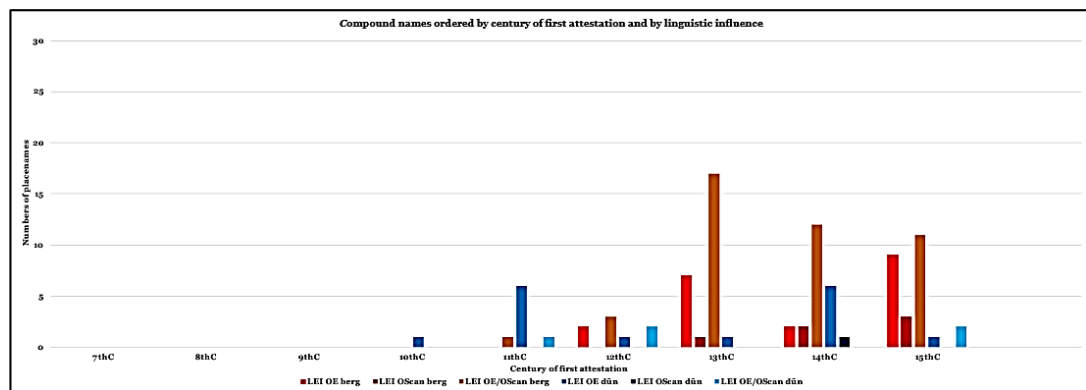
by elements such as *lang/langr* ‘long’ (see 4.5.1.) *norð/norðr* (4.5.6.) and *þorn* (4.6.2.).

The proportion of collocations that occur in Lincolnshire once and nowhere else in the corpus is quite a bit lower than the equivalent metric in the previous three counties. This fits with the pattern of higher recurrency in general in this county.

Most of the Lincolnshire corpus names are very minor indeed. There are eleven parish names, nine of which have *berg* or *dūn* in qualifying position, paired with a generic like *tūn/tún* or *hām*<sup>231</sup> or OScan *bȳ(r)* ‘farmstead; village’ (see 4.8.3.). This fits with the eastern skew to these kinds of names in which a habitative generic displaces the putatively oronymic element to the qualifying position.

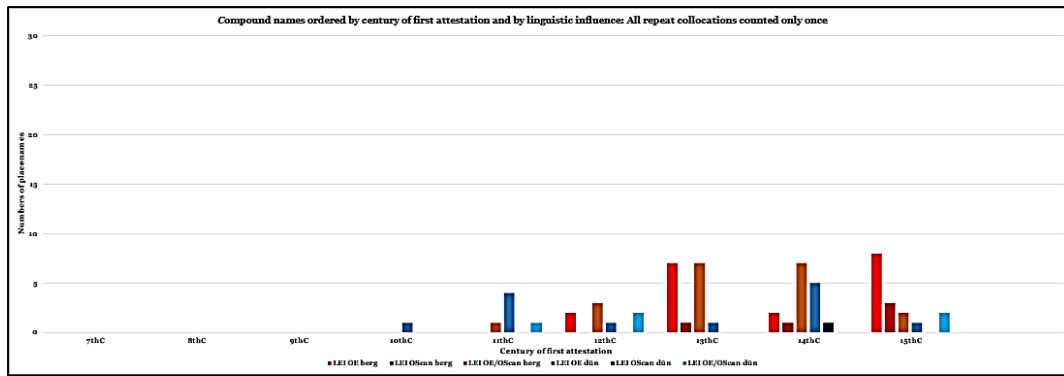
#### 5.6.6. Leicestershire

OE influence in the corpus names for Leicestershire is present in all the centuries of first attestation. The distinct stratum of earlier attested *dūn*-names compared to later attested *berg*-names was noted in 2.5.2. Leicestershire is particularly dominated by recurrency in the OE/OScan category and it has very low numbers (whether recurrent or not) in the unambiguous OScan category.



147. Leicestershire linguistic analysis including repeats.

<sup>231</sup> In Lincolnshire, these collocations show confusion with OScan *holmr* ‘island; raised ground in marsh’ (Perrott 1979, 391-392; Cameron 1985-2010, 7:41).



148. Leicestershire linguistic analysis excluding repeats.

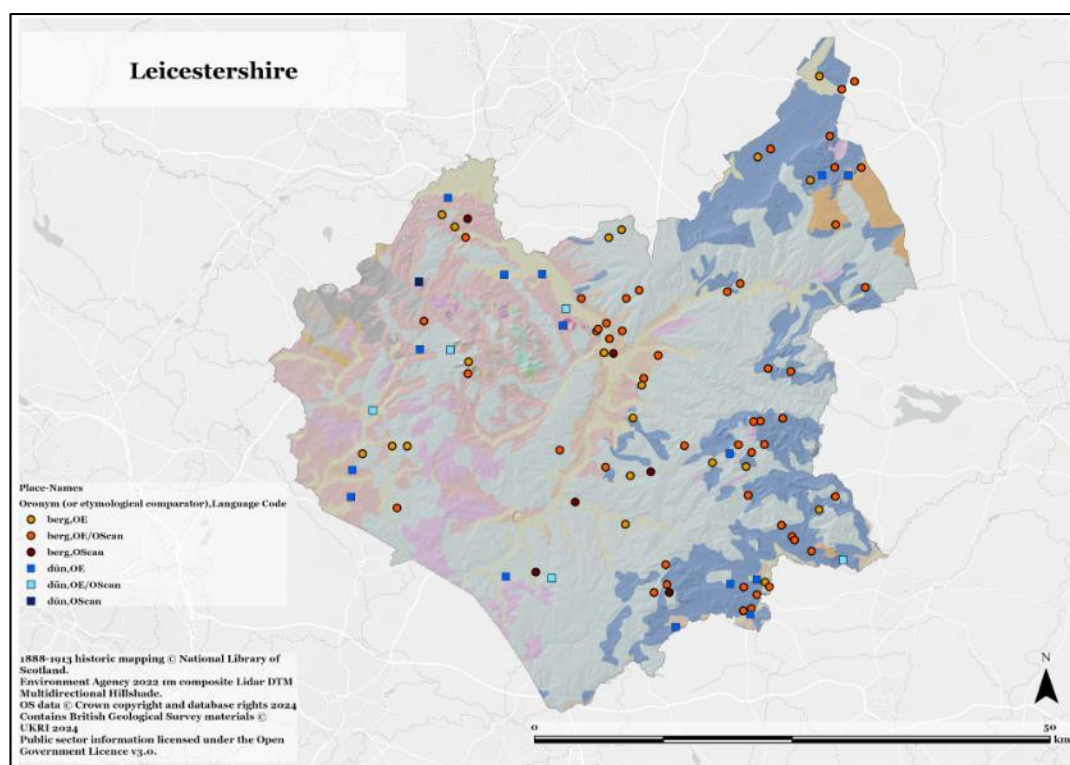
OE/OScan recurrency is driven by elements such as *\*hæfera/hafri* ‘oats’ (see 4.6.1.), *hwæte/hveiti* ‘wheat’,<sup>232</sup> *lang/langr* (4.5.1.), *lytel/lítill* (4.5.1.), *micel/mikill* (4.5.1.), *smeoru/smjor* ‘butter; alluding to rich pasture productive of butter’ and *porn* (4.6.2.).

The proportion of collocations occurring in Leicestershire which are unique in the corpus is higher than Lincolnshire; it is similar to the proportions seen in Cumberland, Westmorland and the WRY. However, in Leicestershire these hapax collocations are mainly OE in influence rather than OScan.

Much of the corpus in Leicestershire consists of minor names. There are eight parish and four township names, three-quarters of which are *dūn*-names. This result is consistent with the fact that there is an early attested strand of *dūn*-naming surviving in this county.

In terms of geographic distribution, OE/OScan-influenced collocations skew to the east of the county.

<sup>232</sup> Cox (1998-2019, 3:222) allowed for the possibility of OScan *hveiti* in one Leicestershire name with a single attestation *Weteberue*, using <e> in the first syllable. This is a spelling form which actually all of the Leicestershire names in this group have.



149. The distribution of corpus place-names in Leicestershire, symbolised according to linguistic influence, together with underlying geological and topographical relief.

## 5.7. The wider context of the corpus

Stepping back from examining collocations based purely on linguistic form, this corpus contains wider contextual evidence. OE *berg* was used in regions away from pronounced OScan influence in a very different manner compared to that of OScan *berg*. The thematic analysis of Chapter Four is useful at this point.

### 5.7.1. OE *berg*

OE *berg* does not usually feature in collocations referencing crops, other exploitable vegetation, or farming in general (including livestock).<sup>233</sup> On the other hand, there are distinctively recurrent collocations with OE *berg* that are not found extensively, if at all, in areas of OScan influence. They are mainly found in areas further south and west. They appear often to point to a mound-like feature that is small and in some cases artificial. The collocations also give an impression of a place that is somewhat removed from settlement. The elements *rūh* ‘rough’ (4.6.2.) and *lytel* ‘little’ (4.5.1.) fit this pattern, as do *brocen* ‘broken’ (4.5.1.), *clofen* ‘cloven’ (4.5.1.)

<sup>233</sup> The exceptions to this are the collocations with *wād* ‘woad’ (4.6.1) or *fearn* ‘fern’ (4.6.2.).

and all the numerical references indicating a plurality of *beorgas* (4.5.5.). There are also frequent recurrent compounds between OE *berg* and wild animals.<sup>234</sup> They include the following:

- ‘wolf’ OE/OScan *wulf/úlfr*

Thirteen ‘wolf’ compound names appear in the corpus (see figure 150 for a map of collocations with wild birds and animals in this corpus). In charters, Kitson (forthcoming) indicated that badger and wolf were the two commonest animals to collocate with *berg*. He also noted that much of central and southern England was probably emptied of wolves by the tenth century, and certainly by the twelfth century. Hence, reference to wolves was likely to indicate that a name was an older coining (unless found in the north). Wolves lingered longer in Scotland and Ireland (Pluskowski 2006). Interestingly, the majority of the thirteen names within this corpus are southern in location.<sup>235</sup> Wolves signified marginality relative to society. This was so practically on the ground, but also in literary association, particularly Icelandic literature (Guðmundsdóttir 2007; Bourns 2021; Su 2023).<sup>236</sup> Wolves could acquire emblematic and mythological status. Many of these names for animals could also be the (nick-)names of people (for example PASE 2025, s.v. Wulf). However, the recurrency of the collocation points to a non-personal name interpretation, bearing in mind what has already been said about how unusual it is to see personal names recurring in this corpus (4.8.1.).

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<sup>234</sup> Some of these wild animals collocate occasionally with *dūn*. The pattern appears to be that this occurs in names later attested when the meaning of *dūn* may have shifted (see further discussion in Chapter Six).

<sup>235</sup> This contrasts with the findings of Aybes and Yalden (1995, 204) in which many of the names were in Cumberland, Westmorland and the WRY.

<sup>236</sup> It was the OScan word *vargr*, rather than *úlfr*, which was used to signify both a wolf and a human outlaw (Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874, s.v. *vargr* n.). The OScan literary traditions are later in date than some of the relevant names in this corpus. They are also highly developed in their psychological resonance.



- ‘badger’ OE *\*bagga/bacga*

This occurs five times in the corpus, exclusively with *berg* and solely in the south-west.<sup>237</sup> Parsons, Styles and Hough (1997–2004, 1:36-37) discussed how this word transitioned from meaning ‘bag’ to signifying ‘badger’ in place-names. There is also a personal name, *Bacga*. However, Kitson (1993, 72-75) was adamant, on grounds of frequency of occurrence and general context, that this element must refer to the animal in nearly all place-names, rather than a personal name (see also Smith 1956, 1:17-18). Artificial mounds are ideal for badger setts, as English Heritage and others tasked with preserving scheduled barrows know only too well.

- ‘lark’ OE/OScan *lāwerce/læ-virki*

There are ten occurrences of this bird in the corpus, nearly all paired with *berg*, unlocated and in the south. Many of the corpus names are first attested early. It would be useful for further research to be carried out into the significance of this bird, to note any wider associations (including folkloric) between the lark and the landscape. It would also be helpful to know if this was in reality a word capable of signifying a variety of birds, and not just the skylark as defined in modern taxonomy. DOE (2025, s.v. *lāwerce* n.), based on evidence from OE and ME glosses, suggests that it could stand for a stone-curlew, plover or nightingale as well as skylark. Kitson (forthcoming) thought that larks were the wild birds classically associated with *berg* in charters.<sup>238</sup> What is clear is that the recurrent presence with OE *berg* of the lark, hawk, eagle and corvids, listed below, is not found generally with *berg* in OScan-influenced areas, nor in *dūn*-names.

- ‘hawk’ OE/OScan *hafoc/haukr*

There are nine occurrences in the corpus, again favouring *berg* and with the earliest attestations. All examples are southern.

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<sup>237</sup> There are also a couple of collocations with OE *brocc* ‘badger’, one with *berg* and one with *dūn*, both in the south.

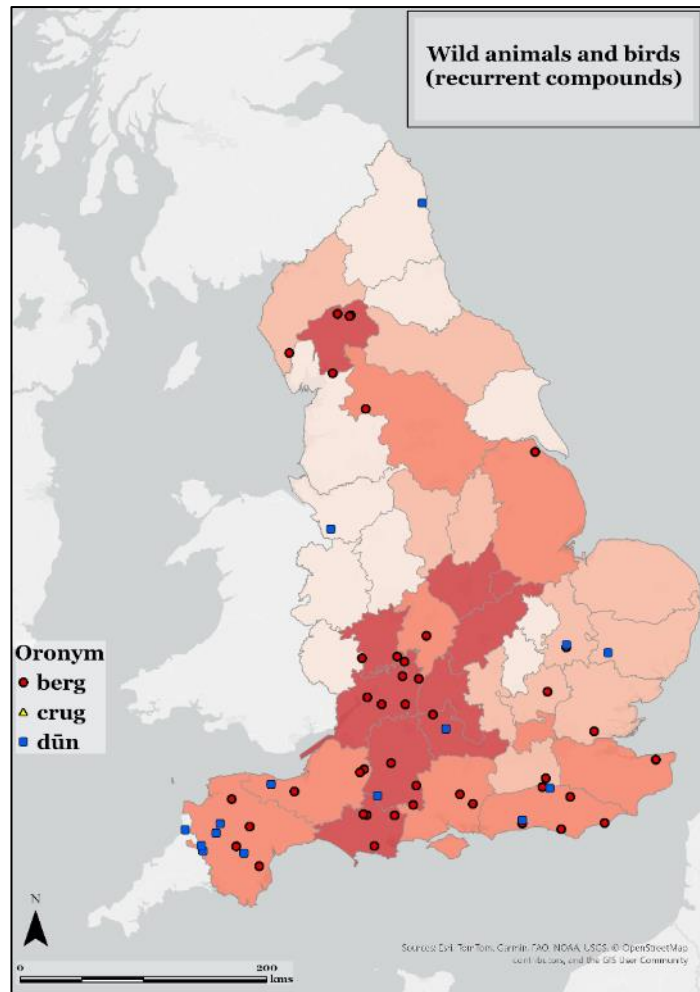
<sup>238</sup> See Hough (2003) for a discussion of *lark* and *laverock* in place-names in a different context.

- ‘eagle’ OE/OScan *earn/ǫrn*

Nine examples are found in the corpus, preferring to collocate with *berg*. All of the names are southern or south-western. This is another element singled out in Kitson (forthcoming) as collocating frequently with *berg* in charter material.

- Other wild birds

In the context of prehistoric forts, Semple (2013, 166) suggested that an association with wild birds in place-naming implied an abandoned, ruined and ancient state. Gelling (1997 [1978], 144-145) suggested that ‘raven’ (combined with *burh* ‘stronghold’) could be a reference to the god Woden, since his OScan counterpart Óðinn was associated with ravens. Given what has already been said about the association between *berg* and Woden or Óðinn (see 4.5.1.), a similar association could exist where a corvid and *berg* collocate. OE/OScan *hræfn/hrafn* ‘raven’ occurs four times, all but once with *berg*, in both north and south. OE *crāwe* and OScan *kráka* ‘crow’ occur eight times in the corpus, predominantly with *berg*. Most of the names are southern. The northern names are clearly OScan influenced, collocating with *kráka*.



150. Place-names in this corpus referencing wild animals and birds against the overall density of *berg*-names normalised by county area.

#### - Boundaries

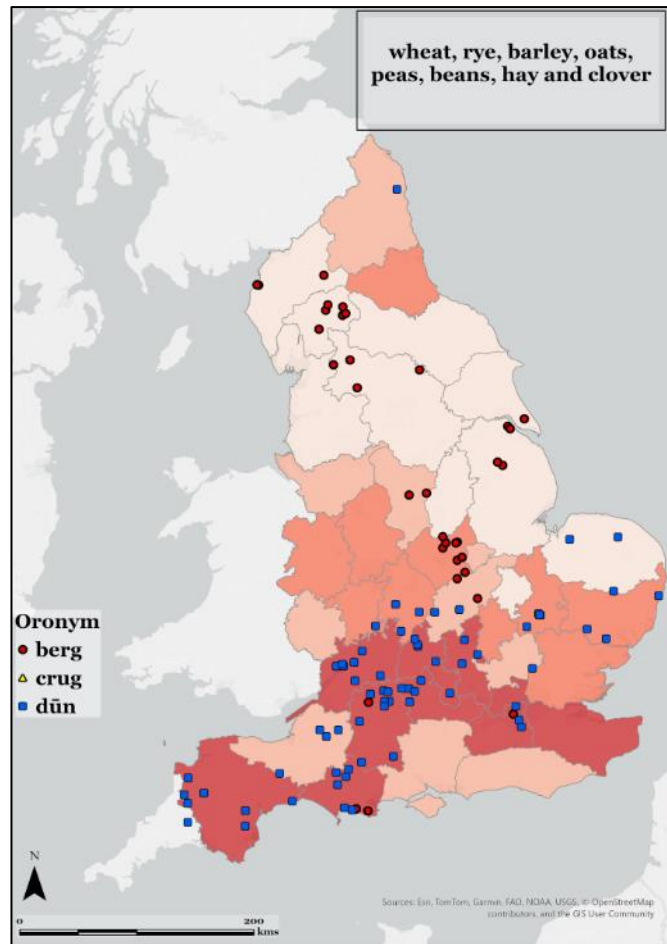
The fact that OE *berg* was used so often in charter boundaries as the name of a boundary marker suggests that it was frequently referencing discrete (and more diminutive) features. A large and undifferentiated hill might be too big and imprecise to be of use in delineating a boundary and the land holdings consequent upon that boundary. It would also be too imprecise for a meeting point. There are seven instances of OE/OScan *(ge)mōt/mót* ‘assembly; meeting’ in the corpus, all in the far south and all pairing with *berg*. They have early first attestations on average, and given their distribution are best interpreted as OE *berg*-names. The sense of OE *berg* capable of application to a mountain range such as the Alps (1.3.1), in the *Old English Orosius*, was clearly not at play here.

### 5.7.2. OScan *berg*

In stark contrast, OScan *berg* collocates with elements signifying vegetation, both the farmed and the wilder resource (4.6.1.). It does so in a way that OE *berg* rarely, if ever, does. Equivalent collocations in the south are with *dūn*, not OE *berg*. This is not therefore a question of topographical determinism. It is not that certain vegetation only grows in the north; the vegetation itself is found in both north and south but the element with which it collocates changes.<sup>239</sup> The distribution patterns are so striking as to be almost binary in their north-south divide. This wider context is important. It is by setting these regional patterns side by side that it is possible to see clearly that otherwise linguistically indistinguishable names are best interpreted as showing OScan influence.

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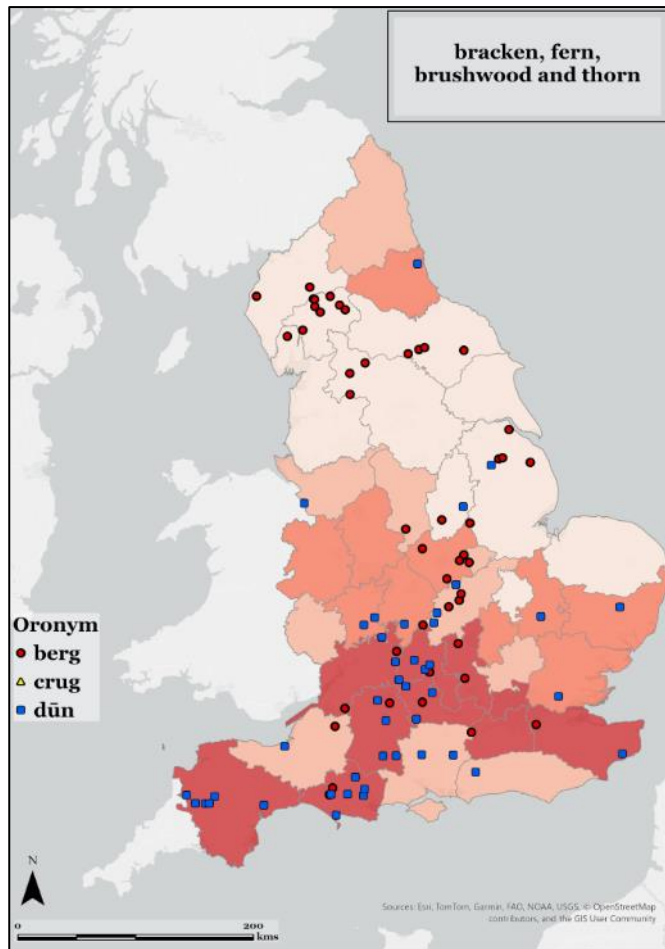
<sup>239</sup> An initial survey of the Irish Placenames Branch database focusing on the Irish drumlin belt, and widening out to the overall townland dataset, shows how rarely crops collocate with oronymic elements in Irish place-names, particularly when compared to collocations referencing pastoral farming (Aindí Mac Giolla Chomhghaill, Irish Placenames Branch, pers. comm. and unpublished paper). The dataset does not generally have first attestations earlier than the mid-sixteenth century. It is dominated by places of administrative status, not microtoponymy. In this study, it is not so much the overall numbers that are critical but the stark distribution difference whereby crop and vegetation collocations occur with *berg* (often physically referencing drumlin-like features) in the OScan-influenced areas but not with *berg* in the south.



151. Place-names in this corpus referencing various crops against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.<sup>240</sup>

This pattern of collocations for *berg* in OScan-influenced areas stretches from west to east. It is not restricted either to Cumberland and Westmorland or to the East Midlands. The same pattern can be observed with wild vegetation, which could be an important resource (4.6.2.). It is not as stark a pattern but it is discernible, nonetheless.

<sup>240</sup> See footnote 159 for the explanation of how the outliers (northern *dūn* and southern *berg*) may not be reliable, and, if discounted, the binary north-south split in Figure 151 is stronger still.



152. Place-names in this corpus referencing various types of wild vegetation against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

### 5.7.3. Two separate phenomena

Although Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 149) in a few short sentences placed OScan *berg* in the same category as OE *berg*, it is clear that OScan *berg* is a distinct nuanced phenomenon. Given that many of the *berg*-collocations in the OScan-influenced areas are not found in OE-dominant areas, this is not just a question of subsequent Scandinavianisation of existing OE names. If this were the explanation, one would expect to find equivalent (albeit non-Scandinavianised) *berg*-collocations in the OE areas. It is more convincingly interpreted as a distinct, separate OScan-influenced pattern of naming.

#### - Transfer or independent coining

At various points throughout the discussion of these terms, reference has been made to parallel compounds found in Norwegian and Danish sources. This serves to strengthen the wider context in which these compounds should be seen safely as

OScan in influence, rather than being set aside as indeterminate.<sup>241</sup> However, it also raises the question of whether these names were transferred to England as ‘ready-made’ names, rather than being coined independently in England. Given how ordinary and lexical the elements involved are, there is no reason why these names could not be independent coinings, even if using an element repertoire influenced by OScan (Brink 2016).<sup>242</sup> Fellows-Jensen (1981, 137) observed that the topographical surroundings of a name such as Breckenbrough (NRY) or Brackenborough (Lincolnshire) could not be proved to be inappropriate for its etymological meaning. Therefore, it was not possible to assert that these names must have been transferred wholesale from Denmark where they also occur. They could easily have been coined afresh and independently as a response to the English landscape. Gelling (1991, 150) thought that ‘doublet’ names in the Isle of Man matching those in England would best be interpreted as similar independent responses to the landscape arising out of similar circumstances using a similar lexicon.

### **5.8. Further thoughts on language contact and place-name survival**

If, by considering wider context, many of these OE/OScan collocations are safely allocatable to an OScan-influenced pattern of naming, this has significant implications. It alters previous statements about the quantity of OScan influence discernible through place-names in certain areas. Such influence is more present and visible than was originally thought.

It is also of note that, in the East Midlands, recurrent and linguistically proximate forms were used in naming; contrast this with the north-west and parts of north-west

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<sup>241</sup> The parallels seen in Danish and Norwegian sources are generally much later in date, so need to be caveated on that basis. However, they are interesting, in that they parallel patterns of compounding found in historically OScan-influenced areas of England but not OE-dominated areas.

<sup>242</sup> Fellows-Jensen (1981, 135) argued that Roseberry Topping (see 3.1.) was an example of a transfer from Denmark, given its pagan associations. Whether this is agreed with or not, Roseberry Topping is an unusual name, referencing a pagan deity which is not common in the corpus. A single ‘special’ name does not disprove the point that most of the recurrent compounds in the corpus use the everyday lexicon and could sensibly be seen as coinings of names made in England.

Yorkshire, where the OScan influence was varied, non-recurrent and linguistically distinct from OE. Carroll (forthcoming) observed the same pattern in the qualifiers compounding with *bekkr* in the north-west compared with those compounding with the same generic in Lincolnshire. As a substantive phenomenon, this has implications for the underlying socio-economic, historical and cultural picture in these regions. In the East Midlands, it is the mutually intelligible names that were used with repetition and that survived in quantity in the name stock. It may be that this is a signature trace of increased language (or dialect) contact in the East Midlands. This could be interpreted as OE speakers borrowing OScan loan words (or names) or vice versa, or it could be seen as mutual, simultaneous movement closer by both groups, particularly given that the languages are not that different and should perhaps be seen as dialectal variants (see 5.3).<sup>243</sup> Either way, this phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the position of the East Midlands on the fluctuating border between OE-dominant Wessex and Mercia and the OScan-influenced ‘Danelaw’, and the enduring legacies of both zones. It would fit with a centralised geographical position in the country, mitigating in favour of the accommodation of languages (or dialects) one to another, removing barriers to comprehension.

Accordingly, whilst it is pleasing to see how the results from this corpus align well with the synthesis carried out by Rye (2022), this involved setting aside the interesting category of OE/OScan names. A more nuanced picture is gained if that category is included and analysed with the benefit of the wider context that this corpus offers. This corpus was in a position to offer wider context because it was nation-wide and had not originally been assembled to answer the narrower question of OScan influence on naming.

Finally, in the north-west, there is poor survival of any OE-influenced strata in the corpus. As well as the absence of OE *berg*-names, there are hardly any *dūn*-names.

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<sup>243</sup> For some of these very proximate words, even with a form displaying clear OScan influence, it can become impossible to know whether it represents an OE speaker’s borrowing of an OScan word, or an OScan speaker using an OE word with the influence of their OScan phonological substratum in evidence (Townend 2002, 206-207).



Were there ever OE *berg*- or *dūn*-names originally in these areas? If so, were they expressly replaced by OScan-influenced names?<sup>244</sup> Or did they lapse as other features in the landscape were named with OScan-influenced names? Is this like-for-like replacement with new name stock or a shift in focus in what is of importance in the landscape, leaving earlier names unnoticed as new ways of living in the land develop? These questions are very difficult to answer. The researcher is in the realms of hypotheticals and unknowable unknowns when it comes to names that might have existed unattested prior to the surviving name stock. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight the possible narratives that could underlie what we now see in the corpus. These are questions to return to in the next chapter once *dūn*-names, and their development, have been looked at more closely.

### 5.9. Conclusion: the nuance of a *berg*

This chapter has set out some of the history of OScan influence in England, as well as the scholarship that has attempted to quantify that influence and its geographical distribution. The results from the corpus, when analysed according to the metrics used by other comparative studies, fit in well with the emerging national picture. There is clear, varied and non-recurrent OScan influence in the north-west. In broad terms, this diminishes when moving further south and east to the East Midlands.

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<sup>244</sup> As Townend (2002, 49) pointed out, it is impossible to know if an OScan-influenced name replaced an earlier English name, unless the earlier name is recorded. Derby is often cited as a famous example of this. Æðelweard, writing in the late tenth century, suggested that the Danes had renamed Derby, writing *in locum qui Northworthige nuncupatur, juxta autem Danaam linguam Deoraby* ‘in a place which is named Northworthy, now however Deoraby in the Danish language’ (Cameron 1959, 446; Campbell 1962, 37). Carroll (2010, 257-258) explained how the name may not actually be a new coining of a name by Scandinavian speakers but, in fact, ‘a Scandinavianization of a pre-existing name of British origin used by the Anglo-Saxons’, influenced both by the British river name for the River Derwent and the transferred settlement name *Derventio* used during the Roman period and possibly enduring into the early medieval period. Either way, there is clear evidence of OScan-influenced replacement of an OE name or reinstatement of an earlier name. Normally, surviving historical evidence of such deliberate and conscious change is vanishingly rare.

Instead, greater recurrency and indistinguishable OE/OScan naming patterns are observed.

Rather than conclude that this indicates less OScan influence than might have been expected in these areas, this study has gone on to use the wider context of the corpus to demonstrate how many of these names must have been part of an OScan-influenced naming practice. This brings OScan influence to the fore where otherwise it might have been less visible.

Many of the names in this category of OE/OScan influence are microtoponyms. Since these names are not likely to have been of importance to centralised authority, they are likely to have been created by those who lived in the local landscape for whom such features were of note and relevance. Hence, OScan and OE/OScan influence highlighted in these kinds of names yields important information about the language of local inhabitants in a particular area.

Differences can be traced in the nature of OScan influence on language and naming between the north-west and the East Midlands. Linguistically proximate forms and recurrency of terms appear to be favoured in the latter zone, or they survive best, possibly because these are the kinds of names which aid comprehension. It would be interesting to trace whether this is a phenomenon evidenced in other datasets, beyond this corpus, in areas of heightened dialect contact.

In the south and south-west, distinctive patterns of OE *berg*-names have been highlighted. They do not focus on farming or exploitable vegetation but frequently on aspects of the landscape where artificial mounds might be found, that are perhaps marginal and further away from settlement. This gives insight in its own right into the use of OE *berg* in names, as well as being part of the wider context against which OScan *berg* stands out more clearly. The themes associated with each – OE and OScan *berg* – are distinct and discrete. OScan *berg* is often more closely linked to occupational activities and land use, in a way that is paralleled by *dūn*-names (not OE *berg*) further south.

In terms of whether *berg* should be seen as a large, mountainous feature or a small heap or mound, both are present in OE and OScan *berg*-names. The sense of being a small mound or heap may have been part of OScan-influenced naming from the point in time at which those names first started to be coined in England. This sense appears to be part of the understanding of *berg* in Norwegian and Danish sources.

We should not presume that it is a meaning developed first in OE, migrating subsequently into OScan-influenced naming within England. The evidence is not there to conclude this.

As for which was prior in either OE or OScan, it is hard to track an evolution in sense from large *berg* to small. This is partly because for many names, particularly in the north, both senses are present in the surviving name stock at the earliest dates of attestation. Again it is important not to presume that enduring meanings for *berg* in cognate Germanic languages – signifying a large hill or mountain – necessarily correspond to the element's earliest meaning within England in the early medieval period.

## Chapter Six: What is a *dūn* and does it change?

### 6.1. Looking again at the physicality of *dūn*-sites

Chapter Three concluded that a unique, uniform and diagnostic profile did not exist throughout the country for *dūn*-sites. Having a whale-backed profile was not the essence of what it meant to be a *dūn*. Indeed, there are numerous sites in this study associated with a *dūn*-name where it is hard to find any kind of hill. At most, there might originally have been a small elevation of a few metres relative to the surrounding topography. Such a small rise might make all the difference to being wet or dry, and thus be important for farming or occupation, but it hardly qualifies as a traditional hill. It is also easily erased.

As with *berg*-names (5.9.), it is hard to trace clear diachronic development in physical size. It is not that there are no examples of *dūn* as a large feature in the earliest available stratum of the corpus. The corpus reflects naming from multiple time periods. The main chronological tool for sifting through these layers is that of first-attestation dates, which is a blunt tool not least where names are first recorded late in time or documentary survival is poor. However, there are multiple early examples of *dūn* used in naming with no obvious hill in the vicinity. This calls into question what exactly *dūn* was signifying in those situations. Chapter One (1.4.3.) set out how OE *dūn* could be linked to a Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* and, thereby, to an Indo-European root referencing some form of enclosure. In flat land, topographic enclosure might be achieved by water or marsh, out of which an island of useable land might rise slightly but sufficiently; this was then associated with a *dūn*-name.

#### 6.1.1. Island sites

Gelling noted that early on in the history of English place-naming *dūn* could have taken over from OE *ēg* ‘island’ in place-names (1.4.7). There are clear examples of such island sites bearing *dūn*-names discussed in earlier chapters, such as Oddington (Oxfordshire) (3.8.1.). Watton (ERY) is included in the earliest place-names listed in Cox (1976). It was attested in Bede’s writings c. 730, and explicitly references its ‘wet’ location with the OE qualifier *wēt* ‘wet’ (Smith 1937, 158). The settlement and the medieval abbey have almost slid into the marshes which drain past Beverley into the Humber Estuary. Many of the *dūn*-sites in the Essex marshes, such as Canewdon

and Ashingdon (Banham and Faith 2014, 175), are no more than thirty-five metres above sea level,

The predilection for relatively early *dūn*-names to collocate with OE *mōr* ‘marsh’ in low-lying contexts is evidence of *dūn* being used for an island site. As Gelling and Cole noted (discussed in 4.6.2.), these island sites would be well placed to exploit the resources of the marsh. They include *be norðe mordune* attested in a charter, S1208 931 [12th] (Gelling 1973-1976, 686-689), sitting in the Vale of the White Horse (Berkshire). The site is encircled by, and only ten metres above, the River Ock and its tributaries. It is now known as Alfred’s Hill on modern OS maps.

Moredon (Wiltshire), now a suburb of Swindon, is attested as *Mordun* in a charter, S486 943 [1130-1150] (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1939, 33). It sits ten to twenty metres above, and surrounded by, the River Ray and its tributaries. Morden (Surrey), now a suburb of Greater London, is attested as *Mordune* in a charter purporting to date to 969. It is described as slightly elevated land between the valleys of the River Wandle and the Beverley Brook (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1934, 53). The elevation is between ten to twenty metres. Steeple and Guilden Morden (Cambridgeshire) are only ten to twenty metres above the Rivers Cam or Rhee, Cheney Water and their tributaries which bifurcate the area. That name is attested as *æt Mordune* in a will dating to 1014 (eSawyer 2024, S1503; Reaney 1943, 61). Mordon (Durham), *Mordun* 1040, has already been described in terms of its marshy geographic position in 4.6.2. (Watts and Cavill 2007, 187-188). The River Skerne and its feeders, from which Mordon is separated by no more than ten metres height, were described by Surtees (1823) as ‘a wide morass; in winter frequently a continued sheet of water’. These are all of the earliest collocations between *mōr* and *dūn* in the corpus. There are no collocations of equivalent first-attestation date that do not conform to this topographic pattern.

*Dūn* also has a tendency to collocate in early and administratively significant names with OE *fearn* ‘fern’. This is another important natural resource that likes moist conditions for growth (see the discussion in 4.6.2.). Some of these sites are on flat ground adjacent to rivers. Farndon (Nottinghamshire), *Farendune* 1086, is almost entirely enclosed by the River Trent and one of its tributaries, the River Devon, plus

various feeder brooks. It is effectively an island site.<sup>245</sup> Gover, Mawer and Stenton (1940, 213-214) concluded that, because there was no semblance of a hill, *dūn* must denote open land (see also Stenton 1913, 3, fn. 1).<sup>246</sup> Given the topography involved, an understanding of *dūn* which includes the sense of an island-site would account better for this name. Farndon (Cheshire), possibly attested in 924 in the ASC as (*æt*) *Fearndune*, is a low-lying site on the Welsh border on the banks of the River Dee (Dodgson and Rumble 1970–1997, 4:73-75).

Field argued that the element OE *grēne* ‘green’ might indicate marshy land (4.5.3.). Six out of seven of the located *grēne* plus *dūn* compounds, that are all attested by 1100, are associated with low-lying land or in close proximity to water. Grendon (Devon) is attested in a charter purporting to date to 739 as *on grenan dune* (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 428). The farm bearing the name sits in a hollow with several springs. Grendon (Northamptonshire), *Grendon(e)* 1086 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1933, 146), is enclosed on a small peninsula by small streams. The relative elevation is no more than thirty metres. The historical core of Grendon (Warwickshire), *Grendone* 1086 (Gover et al. 1936, 15), sits on low-lying ground beside the River Anker which regularly floods. Grendon Underwood (Buckinghamshire), *Grennedone* 1086 (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 103-104), lies no

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<sup>245</sup> The Roman road ‘the Fosse Way’ runs alongside the Trent through Farndon, indicating that the settlement is straddling sufficient firm ground of use to an historical important route. Otherwise, the church is not much higher than the ferry crossing point over the Trent, pools and willow trees are visible today surrounding the settlement, and extant street names such as ‘Marsh Lane’ indicate the low-lying, wet nature of this site.

<sup>246</sup> Cullen (2013, 168) argued that Farndon (Nottinghamshire) was a ‘typical *dūn* in Gelling terms’. However, it does not have a whale-back in terms of profile, nor is it perceptible as a hill, being only one or two metres above the Trent and the Devon. Many of these island sites are labelled ‘unsuccessful geomorphons’ in Grannd (2022). In other words, the relief is so slight the software could not model it. The sites were excluded in that study from further consideration and statistical analysis; however they should be included because they are providing critical information about what a *dūn* could be (see 3.9).

more than ten metres above the many tributaries of the River Ray in an area that is often waterlogged. Grindon (Durham) (Watts and Cavill 2007, 87) is on very flat ground, although there are defined water course ravines in the vicinity.

From site visits and GIS analysis, other island sites have been identified, named as *dūn* with other kinds of collocations – that is, collocations that do not immediately point to the presence of marsh or water. Ryedown (historical Berkshire) is attested as (*ofer*) *rigedune* in a charter, S758 968 [12th] (Gelling 1973-1976, 408). The area associated with the name is relatively flat, but encircled with watercourses. They now appear as field ditches and backwaters but they are prominent in the original charter boundaries. They include the following boundary markers: *sceortan dic* ‘short ditch’, *ælfþryðe dic* ‘Ælfthryth’s ditch’, *þæne mor* ‘the marsh’, *ealden dic* ‘old ditch’, *temese streame* ‘the Thames’, *þæt riðig* ‘the stream’, *on wase* ‘watercourse known locally as Osse ditch’ and *on Cyddesige* ‘Cyddi’s island’ (Gelling 1973-1976, 710).

Other *dūn*-crop collocations reference low-lying sites encircled partially by water. Roydon (Norfolk), (*et*) *Rygedune* 1035 x 1040 (Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 511), is on low, flat ground, with a common that today includes a wetland nature reserve. Reydon (Suffolk) attested as *Riendunā* (Briggs forthcoming) sits just above Buss Creek and the marshes feeding into the sea. Whaddon (Buckinghamshire), *Wadone* 1086 (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 101), sits five metres above the River Ouzel floodplain. Whaddon (Wiltshire), *Wadone* 1086 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1939, 144), sits at the confluence of the River Avon and the Semington Brook. Whaddon (Cambridgeshire), *Wadune* 1086 (Reaney 1943, 68), is flat and encircled by feeder streams for the River Cam or Rhee.

Additionally, *dūn*-collocations with other vegetation (aside from crops) reference marshy positions. Haddon (Huntingdonshire), attested in a charter, S556 951 [14th], as *æt Haddedune* (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 188), is at the foot of a ridge rising twenty metres out of the marshy land created by the Nene and its tributaries as they flow into what is now Peterborough. Hedon (ERY) lies in the wet flatlands bordering the north side of the Humber. It was a port of significance originally. Brandon (Suffolk), *Bromdune* 1007 (Briggs forthcoming), is located on the flat lands along the Little Ouse on the edge of fenland. Brandon (Warwickshire), *Brandune* 1086 (Gover et al. 1936, 157), is another relatively low-lying and early

site on the banks of the river Avon. Even sites associated with animals can appear as island sites (4.7.1). Swindon (Gloucestershire), *Svindone* 1086 (Smith 1964–1965, 2:112), is a low-lying site, surrounded on most sides by small streams.

If it is accepted that *dūn* could refer to an island site, this alters some of the attempts there have been to find a suitable hill in the vicinity of some *dūn*-names. For instance, in relation to Abingdon (Berkshire), Gelling (1957; 1973–1976, 2) argued that the *dūn* in *Æbbandun* must refer to part of Boars Hill to the north of Abingdon.<sup>247</sup> However, the historical core of Abingdon is an important Iron Age, Romano-British and early medieval site, enclosed topographically by the confluence of the Thames and the Ock. The topography was enhanced by ditch and bank structures (possibly flowing with water from the River Stert) to create a recognised oppidum (an Iron Age enclosed and defensible settlement). This appears to be a good example of a low-lying *dūn* surrounded by water, without need to search for a hill to give meaning to the name.<sup>248</sup>

#### 6.1.2. Enclosing works

As with *berg*-names, where topography fails to give an obvious clue to the naming motivation involved, it is important to consider the possibility of an archaeological referent. In the case of *berg*-names, artificial mounds might have generated the naming. In the case of *dūn*-names, artificial enclosing works, perhaps working with

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<sup>247</sup> Boars Hill is itself attested as a name in 1170 as *Boreshulla* (Gelling 1973–1976, 462).

<sup>248</sup> Confusion concerning the name was evidenced as early as the twelfth century. Possibly because earlier meanings of *dūn* were being lost, medieval scribes created a story about the abbey being founded by an Irish monk on a nearby hill, subsequently migrating to the low-lying site of the abbey in modern-day Abingdon (Stenton 1913, 2–3, Claudius C ix, B vi; cf. Biddle, Lambrick and Myres 1968). However, later medieval documents such as the charter bounds in S567 do not prove that Abingdon Abbey was earlier on the eastern tip of Boars Hill. They appear to be part of a forged charter. The bounds are also hard to follow. As Gelling (1957, 55–57) acknowledged, it is hard to account for the use of Abingdon itself as a boundary marker for bounds that were supposed to be describing land at Abingdon, and in which Abingdon would be central.



and enhancing the topography, might account for the conferral of a *dūn*-name on a site.<sup>249</sup>

Given that Gelling thought that some form of occupation was intrinsic to the idea of a *dūn* (1.4.7.) and that many of the names would be referencing earlier pre-English settlements, it is legitimate to consider the archaeology of these sites. A full survey of the archaeology of each and every *dūn*-site is well beyond the scope of this study. In addition, such a detailed national survey might not be conclusive, given the incompleteness in survival, investigation and recording of archaeological data, and the challenges encountered in its accurate interpretation (see the discussion in 2.2.2.). Suffice to say that an in-depth study of any particular given *dūn*-site might find evidence of pre-English enclosure.<sup>250</sup> As with *berg*-names, where there is a large hill it is impossible to know beyond all doubt whether the hill itself motivated the name or whether archaeological remains (now lost) did so.

As noted in 1.4.4. above, Gelling resisted connecting *dūn*-places with the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-*. One of the reasons for doing so was because she felt that large hillforts were associated with *\*dūno-* in Celtic languages but were not associated with OE *dūn*. However, this does not need to be an absolute barrier to an association

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<sup>249</sup> Some of the *\*hamol/hamall* plus *dūn* names include sites of recognised hillforts, such as Hambledon Hill (Dorset) (NHLE 1002677), *Hameledun* c.1270 (Mills 1977–2020, 3:61), Fontmell Down (Dorset) (NHLE 1020361), *on hamelendune* in a charter, S419 932 [15th] (Mills 1977–2020, 3:106), Humbleton (Northumberland) (NHLE 1016714), *Hameldun* 1169 (Mawer 1920b, 120), as well as the Hambleton Hills (with several promontary forts and cross dykes) (NRY) and Humbledon Hill (Sunderland), *Hameldone* 12th (Ekwall 1960, 257) (NHLE 1402212).

<sup>250</sup> Many of the sites mentioned above in 6.1.1. have evidence of enclosure from an initial consultation of the HER (2025), PAS (2025) and NHLE (2025). Cropmarks of Iron Age, Romano-British and early medieval enclosures and other related finds have been seen at Farndon (Nottinghamshire), Grendon (Northamptonshire), Grindon (Durham), *be norðe mordune* (Berkshire), Whaddon (Cambridgeshire), Hadden (Huntingdonshire), Brandon (Suffolk) and Swindon (Gloucestershire). Ryedown (Oxfordshire) is an extensive Iron Age and Romano-British settlement site documented on the HER (2025).

between OE *dūn* and the Indo-European root of ‘enclosure’ via influence from Celtic *\*dūno-*. Names including the Brittonic and Goidelic successors to *\*dūno-* do not always reference a hillfort, although some of them plainly do (see discussion in 1.4.6). Gelling may have been overly influenced by the monumental hillforts particularly present in the south-west of England.<sup>251</sup> In her rejection of a link between *dūn* and *\*dūno-*, Gelling (2000 [1984], 141) specifically referred to Maiden Castle (NHLE 1015775), as if such a site should bear a name in OE *dūn* if it were to be true that there was a link between OE *dūn* and Celtic *\*dūno-*.<sup>252</sup> She also thought that it was a problem for maintaining a link between these two elements that there was no connotation of ‘defence’ in OE *dūn*. However, archaeological understanding and definition of hillforts has moved on considerably. *The Atlas of Hill Forts* (Lock and Ralston 2022, 2024) made clear how many small-scale enclosures there are, occupying relatively elevated positions (see also Bowden et al. 2018). Oswald, Ainsworth and Pearson (2006, 61) commented that

archaeologists familiar with the monstrous hillforts on the chalk downland of Wessex and Sussex have often used the scale of the defences and the size of the settlement as yardsticks, leading them to disregard all but a handful of sites in northern England and the Scottish Borders.

Maiden Castle is the archetypal ‘monstrous hillfort’ and it should not cause us to disregard all the evidence there is in the archaeological record of smaller enclosing works that used and enhanced the natural topography. Indeed, there are so many small sites in Ireland, Cumbria, Northumberland and Galloway, including raths, ringforts, rounds (these in the south-west of England) and ‘Scottish duns’, that a

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<sup>251</sup> Lock and Ralston (2022, 405, fig. 9.3) showed that large hillforts over five hectares in area were concentrated in the south and south-west, focused on the counties of Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset (where Maiden Castle lies), Hampshire and Berkshire.

<sup>252</sup> *Maiden* names applied to earthworks were a later twelfth-century phenomenon (Coates 2006b; Hough 1996, 22-23). The Dorset example cited by Gelling was not actually attested as a name until 1607 (Mills 1977–2020, 1:377). Equally, Taylor and Márkus (2006–2012, 5:360) observed that several large fortifications in Fife did not bear a name in *dūn*.

(lower) size threshold was imposed by *The Atlas of Hillforts*. There was a requirement for a site to be above 0.2 hectares in area and this excluded the smallest sites from the database, including some vitrified hillforts, unless they could satisfy other criteria (Lock and Ralston 2022, 29-31). Whilst this may have made the *Atlas* feasible, it arguably introduced an arbitrary cutoff point into what was otherwise a continuum of enclosed sites.

The term ‘hillfort’ itself has perhaps become somewhat misleading, in that there is no requirement for an enclosure to be on a hill, nor for it to be fortified or defensible, for it to be classified as a hillfort. In terms of elevation, ‘the site should take advantage of its local topography and setting so as to be locally in a dominant position ... but relatively slight topographic dominance is accepted’ (Lock and Ralston 2022, 30). In fact, Lock and Ralston (2022, 409) concluded that ‘the local setting of hillforts in the landscape seemed to be more important than absolute height, with 23.4% of all hillforts being located at less than 50m in altitude’. This finding parallels the observations made about *dūn*-sites in this corpus; they do not necessarily occupy hills as traditionally defined, but can be found in very low-lying environs, where the relative topography suits.

None of this is to claim that there is a one-to-one correlation between hillforts, as redefined in current archaeological thinking, and *dūn*-sites; rather, that the two are not as incompatible as Gelling thought. There is an overlap, and one which might be strengthened if further research into prehistoric enclosures found at *dūn*-sites were to be carried out.<sup>253</sup>

Another interesting point of overlap is the lack of sites in the *Atlas* in the north-west. Indeed, sites are low in density (per 100km<sup>2</sup>) across the ‘Scandinavian Belt’ from Cumberland and Westmorland, into Yorkshire, and the north-east Midlands (Lock and Ralston 2022, 400, fig. 9.1). This is a phenomenon in the hillforts data that

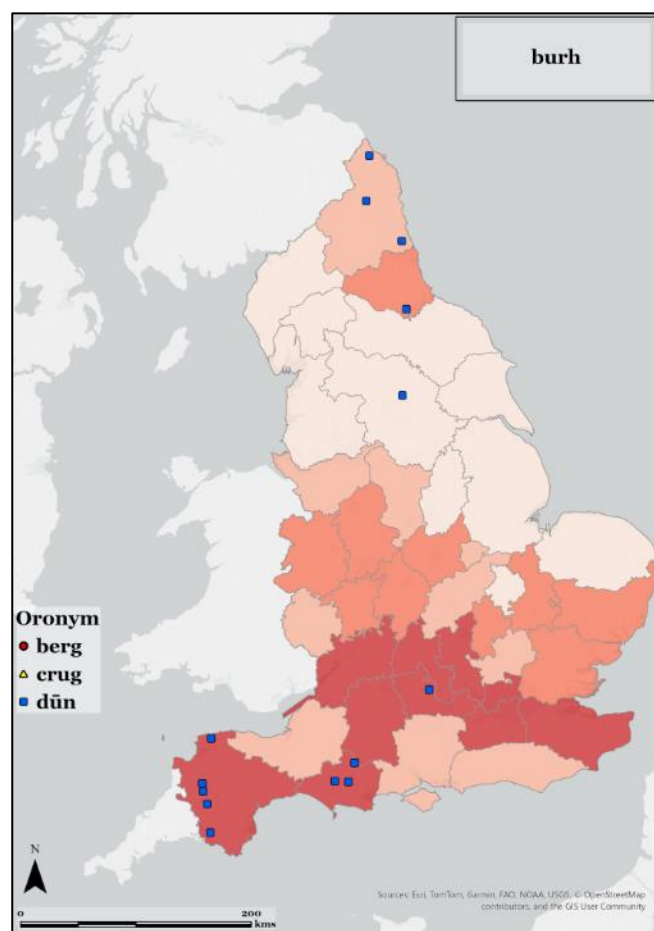
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<sup>253</sup> A quarter of *dūn*-names in Northumberland in this corpus are listed as hillfort sites in the *Atlas*. This is the county with the greatest overlap. The modern names of the hillforts do not always precisely correlate with the *dūn*-names even when it is obvious that the constructed enclosure must have been part of the motivation for the *dūn*-name. This is the case at Breedon on the Hill (Leicestershire), *Bredune* 675 (Cox 1998-2019, 7:34). The hillfort is labelled ‘The Bulwarks’ in the *Atlas*.

parallels the lower numbers of *dūn*-names across the same stretch of land. Even if it is not possible currently to provide a full explanation, it is worth noting that correlation.

- OE *burh* ‘fortified place’

Gelling thought that *burh* could be used in OE naming for sites that had borne a Romano-British name in *dūnum* (see 1.4.4. above). *Burh* by definition would entail enclosing works. As a qualifier, *burh* collocates in this corpus exclusively with *dūn*. There are fourteen examples. The geographic distribution is striking, split into two relatively discrete and far-flung clusters, in the south-west and in the north-east.



153. Place-names in this corpus including the element OE *burh* against the overall density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area.

Not many of the places bearing these names have gone on to be significant in terms of administrative status. Only three are townships.<sup>254</sup> It would be nice to find a

<sup>254</sup> They are Great Burdon (Durham), *Burdune* 1109 (Watts, Insley and Gelling 2004, 99); Burradon (Northumberland), *Burgdon* 1154, and Burradon

correlation between these names and fortified enclosures. However, the evidence is not currently there for many of the names in the group. Hence, even when a name points to the possibility of archaeology, the archaeological evidence is not always preserved, or easy to discover.<sup>255</sup>

- OE *þorn* ‘thorn’

As previously discussed, Smith (1956, 2: 204-205) suggested that one possible naming motivation for collocations with ‘thorn’ was because of the plant’s ability to be grown in a quick-set hedge, creating effective but speedy enclosures (4.6.2.). This, then, would point to the presence of enclosing works. In the south, it is nearly always *dūn* that collocates with *þorn*, not *berg* or *crug*. Therefore, tentatively this might be further evidence of the association between *dūn* and enclosure, whilst also recognising that there are many other ways of interpreting the collocation with *þorn*, as set out above in 4.6.2.

## **6.2. What themes emerge for *dūn*-sites from compound place-name analysis?**

This study has shown how physical topography alone cannot be relied upon to explain all the nuances of a place-name element. Much additional information can be gleaned by looking at compound place-name analysis, focusing on the other elements with which a place-name element collocates. Chapter Four has explored this in some depth. Various themes emerged strongly for *dūn*-sites, particularly when seen against different themes for *berg*-sites in the same areas.<sup>256</sup>

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(Northumberland), *Burhedon* 1200 (Mawer 1920b, 34), all becoming parishes in the mid-nineteenth century (Youngs 1991, 95, 322).

<sup>255</sup> *burh* plus *tūn* is a recognised recurrent collocation (outside of this corpus). It has been suggested that such sites are not where the fortification of the *burh* was to be found. Rather, they were subsidiary sites servicing the *burh* which lay nearby (Blair 2018, 199).

<sup>256</sup> It would be extremely helpful, but well beyond the scope of this thesis, to look closely at the kinds of compound naming or name phrases in Brittonic and Goidelic areas of Britain collocating with the successors to the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-*, to see what patterns emerge by way of comparison.

### 6.2.1. Growing crops and exploiting vegetation

Coates (2012a, 216) observed that ‘it is striking how many, and how often, grain-crop words collocate with words for hills, especially *dūn*’. He went on to comment specifically on the collocation between OE *ryge* ‘rye’ and *dūn*, saying ‘there is no obvious reason why rye should have a special association with hills’. Whilst Coates did not pursue these observations further in that article, this study has shown the extent to which *dūn* in particular collocates with crops, including ‘rye’ (4.6.1.). It also collocates frequently with other kinds of vegetation that might have been useful as a resource (4.6.2.). For a *dūn* to be amenable for the growing of crops, it cannot be a high and craggy mountain. It must be sheltered, and not overly exposed. It must have relatively good access for those tending the crops. Perhaps, most crucially, it must have good water management, neither being overly dry nor saturated. Well-watered but free draining is probably ideal. This helps to make sense of the observation that many *dūn*-sites are in effect small, raised islands in surrounding landscape that is otherwise lower and wetter. A slope that is not overly steep would aid the drainage of water in months with greater rainfall whilst still permitting the planting of crops.<sup>257</sup>

The point has already been made in Chapter Five (5.7.2.) that *berg*-names in OScan-influenced areas collocate with elements referencing crops and other kinds of vegetation. However, many of these names are minor. In contrast, *dūn*-names

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<sup>257</sup> The Irish Placenames Branch observed that townland names involving *cruithneacht* ‘wheat’ nearly always refer to some form of elevation, agreeing that this might be because of the need for good drainage for the growing of wheat (Conchubhar Ó Cruailaoich pers. comm. and <https://www.logainm.ie/ga/teamai/4>). Numbers of townland names involving wheat are low, possibly because it was hard to grow wheat successfully in the Irish climate (Kelly 1997, 220-221). Oats (*coirce*) and barley (*eorna*) show similar pairing in Irish place-names with elevation (<https://www.logainm.ie/ga/teamai/5> and <https://www.logainm.ie/ga/teamai/6>). Although less common, rye (*seagal*) is also found in some names with elevation entailed in the meaning <https://www.logainm.ie/ga/teamai/7> [all accessed December 2024]. Rye was an important crop in Ireland alongside wheat, probably because it was hardy and thrived in poorer soils and colder climates (Kelly 1997, 221-222).

exhibiting the same patterns in the south are frequently some of the earliest attested *dūn*-names and the ones with administrative status. It seems, therefore, that this meaning of *dūn* belongs to the earliest available stratum of *dūn*-names; it is close to the core of the original meaning of *dūn* in English place-names. In addition, there are the repeated collocations between *dūn* and *ald* ‘old’, which have been interpreted as referring to land that had been cultivated in the past (possibly long cultivated) (4.6.1.), and that was being brought back into cultivation. This further enhances the association between *dūn* and cultivation as it relates to early sites and an early stratum of names.

Based on recurrency between OE *mōr* ‘marsh’ and *hæð* ‘heath’ and OE *tūn*, Gelling and Cole argued that the places associated with these names must have been part of a network of designated places with organised responsibility for exploiting the resources of the marsh and the heath (Gelling 1997 [1978], 200; 2000 [1984], 55; 1992, 122; Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 59).<sup>258</sup> Banham (1990, 20-21) argued the same point for collocations between *hwæte* and *tūn*, for places with responsibility for growing wheat (see also Smith 1956, 2: 91 for the same point concerning collocations with rye). Given that *dūn* also displays marked recurrency with these elements, the same arguments could apply to the *dūn* collocations. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the distribution of the names is sufficiently strategically spaced to represent a centrally organised administrative network.<sup>259</sup> Rather, where

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<sup>258</sup> This argument helped Gelling explain why some settlements were given the name and others were not (Gelling et al. 1990-2020, 1:114-115). If topographic situation was the only place-naming motivation, this would not have been so explicable. Introducing the concept of administrative designation and organised function within a network gave an explanation that went beyond what was visible on the ground.

<sup>259</sup> This conclusion differs from the arguments made by some for *burh-tūn* sites to be seen as part of an organised network (Gelling 1989b; Zanella 2015; Blair 2018, 193-200). Any statistical modelling is only as robust as the underlying substantive evidence is for the model’s assumed parameters. Those modelling assumptions include the precise early medieval location of place-names, the date of coining of the name, the reasons for excluding some types of place-names from the dataset and

geography and climate made exploitation of particular resources possible, a *dūn* might have been seen as an important site in that area for managing that resource. Commenting on the significance of such *dūn*-places, Gelling (1981, 43) observed that a name such as ‘Claverdon Warwickshire is not just a gratuitous botanical/topographical observation’.

The connection with crops might also explain why it is that *dūn* begins to form a lexical compound with OE *land*. The latter term was defined by Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 279-284) to include reference to a ‘new arable area’. It is notable that *dūnland* has its own lexical entry in DOE (2025).<sup>260</sup> There is no equivalent lexical compound between *berg* and *land*. There are three *dūn* plus *land* names attested prior to 1500. The lexical compound with *dūn* persists into ModE as ‘downland’, albeit with altered connotations as the meanings of both *dūn* and *land* shift (discussed further below).<sup>261</sup>

#### 6.2.2. Winter-*dūn* and crop rotation

The concept of a *winterdūn* was discussed in 1.4.2. The concept linked *dūn* to farming activity, particularly to arable cultivation. In addition, the label ‘winter’ indicated that a *dūn* had a particular role to play in the winter, a time when ground is often at its most waterlogged.<sup>262</sup> Winter waterlogging was the major obstacle to successful winter-sown crops (Banham and Faith 2014, 56). Potentially, a *dūn* was a place where land became available soonest for sowing during, or immediately after, the winter months. Interestingly, Banham and Faith (2014, 58) observed that wheat

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prior assumptions made about the kind of network that existed that are then used to prove that that network existed.

<sup>260</sup> The association between OE *clǣne* ‘clean’ and *dūn(land)* – being clean of rough vegetation as a new arable field brought into cultivation is – has already been remarked upon in 4.6.2.

<sup>261</sup> OED (2025, s.v. downland n.1) records that the word was unattested between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries. There was scope for considerable evolution in meaning in the intervening period.

<sup>262</sup> Page (1997, 304-305) pointed out that *Gerefa* itself warned that this would be a phenomenon relative to the estate and its particular land. Hence, again, any place-names using the compound are likely to have been locally coined.



and rye were crops which might typically be sown in the winter period.<sup>263</sup> Both of these collocate markedly with *dūn* (see 4.6.1.). Of further interest is the fact that barley and oats were treated as spring-sown crops in the medieval period (Banham and Faith 2014, 58), and neither of these collocate significantly with *dūn* (4.6.1.).<sup>264</sup> The fact that *dūn* is associated with winter crops but not spring crops is of note.

There are other crops used in crop rotation, as it is known to have developed in the medieval period, such as legumes and clover.<sup>265</sup> In this corpus, *dūn* collocates with these elements in the south (4.6.1.) but the first attestations of such names tend to be later. They are also more often than not for places of lower status (administratively). There are also five examples of the collocation *winterdūn* itself in this corpus. They are all late in terms of first attestations (three are first attested in the fifteenth century) and they refer to places that are minor in status. They are located in Berkshire (Gelling 1973-1976, 331), Hampshire (Gover unpublished), Essex (Reaney 1935, 607) and Kent (Cullen 1997, 369).<sup>266</sup> Given the dates of attestation, they might have been coined as the sense of *dūn* shifted (6.5.1). They nevertheless retain the association between winter and a *dūn*-site.

It is interesting that there are so few mentions in the corpus of sheep.<sup>267</sup> Later medieval agricultural regimes, particularly for the growing of wheat, involved

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<sup>263</sup> Evidence of crop rotation is found in the medieval period, not the early medieval, but Banham and Faith (2014, 72-73) observed that it could not be ruled out from the earlier period.

<sup>264</sup> There are some collocations with *berg* mainly in the OScan-influenced areas discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>265</sup> Sowing beans is one of the tasks in *Gerefa* for Spring (Liebermann 1903–1916, 1:454 [12]).

<sup>266</sup> Cullen suggested an OE personal name *Wintra* as the collocating element. There is an eighth-century example of the name in PASE (2025, s.v. *Wintra*). However, the recurrency of the compound (see 4.8.1.) and the wider context of the use of *dūn*-names in connection with (winter) crops, mitigates against the personal name interpretation.

<sup>267</sup> There are ten collocations in total in the corpus spread across five different elements: OE *eowu* ‘yew’; OE *ramm* ‘ram’; OE *\*ēan* ‘lamb’; OE *scēp* ‘sheep’ and

folding sheep on the fields to improve soil condition via the nitrogen content of manure (Mont 1977). The relationship between sheep and crop was integrated. If this was occurring at the time of the earliest attested *dūn*-names, it is not reflected in the names themselves. It was also not reflected in *Gerefa* (Page 1985, 217; 1997, 302-303).<sup>268</sup>

### 6.2.3. Openness and bareness

There are several collocations emerging out of the work in Chapter Four, which appear to reference the openness of *dūn*-sites. Dundry (Buckinghamshire), *Dunrege* 1202, was interpreted by the survey editors as ‘bare ridge’ (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 144). In this compound name, OE *hrycg* is translated as ‘ridge’ whilst *dūn* itself functions as a qualifier meaning ‘bare’. As a generic, there are several recurrent *dūn*-compounds with OE/OScan *\*hamol/ hamall* interpreted as ‘bare’ in 4.6.2., as well as OE *clæne* ‘clean’ and *calu* ‘bald’. The repeat collocations with OE *brōm* ‘broom’ were also noted in this context, given the way in which broom favours open growing conditions and collocates, alongside *dūn*, with other OE elements such as *feld* and *lēah* indicating openness (4.6.2.). All of these strands of evidence suggest that *dūn*-sites could be picked out because of their bareness and the fact that they were clear, presumably of dense tree cover. This aspect of *dūn*-sites would stand out if the surrounding landscape were otherwise full of physical encumbrance.<sup>269</sup> The bareness of the *dūn* would perhaps have the appearance of an island surrounded by more thickly wooded areas. In that sense, *dūn*-places might be island-sites encircled by water or by trees.

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OE/OScan *weðer/veðr* ‘castrated ram’. There is not really any recurrency. Overall, the names are relatively late in their first attestations and are for minor places, without administrative status.

<sup>268</sup> There is a Summer reference in *Gerefa* to attending to hurdles for the sheep but, given the timing of the activity, this has been interpreted as attending to the pens for shearing and dipping the sheep not for their winter folding on arable fields (Page 1997, 303).

<sup>269</sup> The military activity referred to so often in the *Old English Orosius* as taking place on a *dūn* would require freedom from physical encumbrance and openness, particularly in terms of lines of sight.

### 6.3. Why are *dūn*-names absent from the north-west?

Gelling (2000 [1984], 142) suggested that the ‘extreme rarity’ of *dūn* in the north west ‘may be due to the comparatively late establishment of English speech in that region’. In the corpus, there is a near complete absence of *dūn*-names in the north-west. As was mentioned at the end of Chapter Five (5.8.), this poses the question of whether such names ever existed in the first place or whether they were lost and replaced. On the other side of the Pennines in Northumberland and County Durham, *dūn*-names are found frequently, notwithstanding the incomplete nature of the EPNS survey in these counties (see 2.5.1. and figure 8). This suggests that where Anglian speech was well established, *dūn*-names were used.<sup>270</sup> Leicestershire and the WRY both have substantial numbers of *berg*-names in later strands of naming (see 2.5.1. and 2.5.2. as well as figures 4 and 5). However, they also have an earlier stratum of *dūn*-names that survives alongside the *berg*-names (see figure 14). These *dūn*-names have not been removed entirely from the name stock by the arrival of OScan-influenced *berg*-names. On the same basis therefore, one would expect some English *dūn*-names to have survived in the north-west had they ever existed in the first place, notwithstanding later OScan-influenced patterns of naming. There has been much discussion about the extent of Anglian control over the north-west in the seventh to ninth centuries (Cramp 1995; Edmonds 2014, 2019). Such control may have been limited to ecclesiastical centres (operating through a predominantly Latin-speaking and -writing institution). It may have been largely top-down control rather than representing an extensive migration of Anglian influence at all levels of society.<sup>271</sup>

The other surprising result from the north-west is that there does not seem to be much evidence of surviving Brittonic- or Goidelic-influenced names derived from

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<sup>270</sup> This study has shown the variety of topography in which *dūn*-names occur and the way in which *dūn* is not defined by a specific form. Therefore, the absence of *dūn*-names in the north-west cannot be explained simply by a change in topography.

<sup>271</sup> If Anglian influence on place-names in the north-west was limited, this is further confirmation that *berg*-names in this area must have been a result of OScan influence rather than OE. It can be added to the evidence discussed in Chapter Five.

the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-*.<sup>272</sup> Dunmallard appears to be a coining entirely in Goidelic.<sup>273</sup> Two other *dūn-* or *dún-* names may involve Brittonic elements.<sup>274</sup> Other than these three, there are only two *dūn-* names with OE collocations and they are both late fourteenth-century attestations. In other areas bordering regions with known Brittonic or Goidelic influence, there are plenty of *dūn-* names. These include Northumberland spreading into Berwickshire (Scotland), the counties along the Welsh Marches spreading into Wales, and Devon spreading into Cornwall in the south-west. In the Berwickshire survey, the difficulty of disentangling place-names that might have been influenced by Brittonic *din*, Old English *dūn* and Gaelic *dùn* is acknowledged (Hough 2020, 242-243; Hough, Taylor and Williamson 2016-2019, s.v. Duns, Gordon). However, in the north-west all these strands are largely absent. Although it is hard to know how far to push the correlation, it is worth remembering that the *Atlas* also recorded a low number of what they classified as hillforts in the north-west. This is a surprising result given the concentration of these sites in the north-east, Wales and south-west. It would appear that for some reason Brittonic and Goidelic names reflecting Celtic *\*dūno-* were not coined in great number in the north-west. Alternatively, any that had been coined were disturbed by a pattern of OScan-influenced naming in this region which did not preserve the Brittonic and Goidelic names in the name stock. In addition, there was insufficient OE-influenced naming in the area to reinforce and add to any names in Celtic *\*dūno-* with OE

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<sup>272</sup> Cumbric (Brittonic) speech may have been reintroduced or reinforced in the area in the tenth century, as well as Goidelic in the eleventh (Jackson 1963; James 2008).

<sup>273</sup> The suggested etymology is *dún mallacht* ‘dun of curses’ (Armstrong and Dickins 1950-1952, 187; Edmonds 2019, 171). The word order in the name is generic first, as would be expected for Goidelic-influenced coining. The site is a small multivallate hillfort (NHLE 1008264).

<sup>274</sup> They are Meldon, first attested in 1256, possibly using the Brittonic element *mēl* ‘bare’ (Smith 1967, 2:109; James 2019, 2:205-207) and *Poudun*, first attested in 1496, which could involve a ME personal name or might be derived from Brittonic *poll* ‘pool; pit’ (Smith 1967, 2:203). Gaelic *máel* ‘bald, shorn’ and *poll* ‘hole’ might also be possibilities.

names in *dūn*, as occurred on the eastern side of the Pennines straddling the border with Scotland.

#### 6.4. Celtic loans: contrasting *dūn* with *crug*

Although it is impossible to be certain, it seems more likely than not that OE *dūn* arose out of a connection with the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-*. OE *dūn* appears to have been an insular phenomenon. Later Frisian and Dutch words which relate to ModE ‘dune’, meaning sand dune, do not seem to go back to the earliest stratum of OE *dūn* (1.4.3.). Sand dunes were rendered as *sondbeorgas* in the late ninth to early tenth century in the *Old English Orosius*. It is *berg* that was used, not *dūn*. The earliest collocations between OE *sand* and *dūn* were for inland sites, not coastal, and may have been referencing the quality of the soil (4.5.2.). Therefore, if there were no apparent contemporaneous Germanic cognates, there must have been an independent reason for the existence of OE *dūn*.

Some of the previous objections to the links between OE *dūn* and Celtic *\*dūno-* are not absolute barriers to positing a connection between them. An Indo-European root referencing ‘enclosure’ can work for both. In many examples of *dūn*-names, it seems that looking for some form of topographic enclosure makes better sense of the name, as with island sites encircled by water, marsh or even trees. Such topographic sites may have been further enhanced by enclosing works. Such topographic sites often give a position of relative elevation, making it easy to see how *dūn*, like Celtic *\*dūno-*, could be used as a gloss for Latin *mons* or vice versa, and become associated with some form of elevation (see 1.4.1. and 1.4.3.). Although there are examples of significant sites and hillforts with Brittonic and Goidelic names derived from *\*dūno-*, not all uses of this element in names relate to such high status sites. Moreover, Romano-British names in *dūnum* may have reflected a vernacular Latin with extra military and civic associations, which might explain why these sites were not renamed using OE *dūn* (1.4.4.).

OE *dūn* clearly became a fully-fledged OE place-name element, used throughout OE-speaking areas. It featured in numerous collocations with a wide range of other OE elements. It was used throughout the study period of this corpus, found in the earliest and latest attestations. It also underwent a diachronic shift in sense, persisting through ME into ModE as *down* (see below). OE *dūn* was grammaticalised and associated with adverbial and adjectival forms (1.4.2.)

demonstrating the extent to which, whatever its origins, it was a fully functioning element in the OE lexicon and toponymicon. This is all very different from OE/Brit *crug*.

The numbers of *crug*-names in the corpus are small compared to *berg*- and *dūn*-names (48 as compared to 1,244 and 1,740, surveyed and collected under exactly the same conditions: see 2.5. above). As compared to *berg* and *dūn*, it is hard to see that *crug* ‘occurs so frequently in place-names in England’ that it must have been ‘adopted’ into OE (cf. Gelling and Cole 2014 [2000], 159). The distribution is clearly western in bias, remaining close to areas of ongoing Brittonic influence. More critically still, the collocations are limited in scope. Rarely does the element function as a generic; nearly always it is a qualifier, qualifying a very small range of generics, or it is a simplex name (2.5.3., 4.9.). Brittonic *crug* had a similar meaning to OE *berg*, referencing small artificial mounds and discrete, or abrupt parts of, natural hills that had a mound-like appearance. However, whereas OE *berg* collocated with several OE elements which were best interpreted as descriptors of such mounds and the activities that surrounded them (5.7.1.), *crug* does not collocate with any of these OE elements or any equivalents. In the counties bordering Wales, there are hardly any *berg*-names, yet *crug*-names do not fill that gap in the toponymicon.<sup>275</sup> Their numbers are not greatly increased in these areas. They are no more than what might be expected for a region with proximity to Wales, where *crug* continued as an operative place-name element. If there is any clustering of *crug*-names, it is in the south-west. This is so even though many *crug*-names in Somerset

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<sup>275</sup> There are only three *crug*-names in the corpus in Shropshire, two of which collocate as the qualifier with OE *cot* ‘cottage’ and *tūn* and one which is a simplex name. Two *crug*-names exist in Cheshire, collocating as a qualifier with *tūn* and as a simplex name. Two exist in Worcestershire, one as a simplex name and one famously collocating with *berg* as discussed above in 3.1 and 3.3.3. There is one *crug*-name in Staffordshire, that of Penkridge. This was also mentioned above (1.7.) and is a Brittonic coining using Brittonic generic-qualifier word order and Brittonic elements: \**penno*- ‘head’ alongside *crug*. The one *crug*-name in Herefordshire is another non-English coining following Brittonic word order and using Welsh *llan* ‘church’ (GPC 2024, s.v. *llan* n.).

(and Cornwall) have not yet been published. Very few of the *crug*-names in the corpus are lost. Forty percent are for places with administrative status, which is high compared to twenty-one percent for *dūn*-names and ten percent for *berg*-names (2.5.4). Within the current corpus, *crug* was not productive in later field-names but appears mainly to have survived in earlier attested names with administrative import.

All of this suggests that, when compared to *berg* and *dūn*, *crug* was behaving more as an inherited Brittonic name or proper noun, not a lexical element used in the toponymicon (see Coates 2007a, 181; Coates 2007b, 48-49; and Padel 2013, 25, 31). Even the limited range of generics with which it collocated, for example OE *tūn*, often otherwise paired with proper nouns in compound names.

## 6.5. Later attested names

### 6.5.1. The shifting meaning of *dūn* into *down*

Lexically, the OE element *dūn* moved through ME *doun(e)* (MEC 2025, s.v. *doun(e)* n.) into ModE *down*. The definition of *down* offered by OED (2025, s.v. *down* n.1 sense 2.) is as follows

Chiefly in *plural*. An elevated stretch of open, uncultivated land with gently rolling hills... undulating chalk and limestone uplands in southern and south-eastern England, with few trees and used mainly for pasture.

Downs are typically large features with little to delimit them topographically.<sup>276</sup>

These are not discrete features. Names associated with downs or downland merge one into another, without it being easy to achieve consensus as to where association with one name should end and another should begin.

Particularly in chalk and limestone upland, downs are often above the spring line, making settlement on top of a down problematic.<sup>277</sup> Settlement tends to be lower down, as anyone who has walked the Ridgeway across southern England knows only too well. Water management remains a challenge on the top of these hills. Historically, 'dew ponds' lined with clay were used (Cole 2011a, 5), and are still

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<sup>276</sup> Sadej (2009a, 109) wrote that a new sense emerged for ME *downe* in the thirteenth century of 'an open expanse of elevated land'.

<sup>277</sup> Gelling and Cole (2014 [2000], 165) noted this point.

visible in the landscape. Furthermore, these lands were not usually subject to arable cultivation (at least, prior to the arrival of intensive farming aided by cheap energy). As the OED points out, they were mainly used for pasture. From the sixteenth century onwards, the citations listed by the OED refer to sheep upon the downs.<sup>278</sup> All of this is almost a complete inversion from the typical topographic position and land use identified for early attestations of OE *dūn* in this study. The latter could often be identified by topographic enclosure, could be low-lying and surrounded or close to water, could be a place to settle on top of and were used particularly for arable cultivation or exploitation of wilder vegetation, as opposed to livestock farming let alone any connection with the pasturing of sheep. The one point of crossover is that hillforts and small-scale enclosures are often found on upland downs. Words evolving to mean the opposite of their original etymology is a known phenomenon. OE *wald* appears to have evolved from referencing woodland to referencing high, open land, cleared of all trees and not at all wooded (Smith 1956, 2:239-242).

This shift in meaning appears to be one that is concentrated in the south of England. Named downs such as ‘the North Downs’, ‘the South Downs’, ‘the Berkshire Downs’ and ‘the Sussex Downs’ are all located there (OED 2025, s.v. down n.1 sense 2.). Downland is described by the OED (2025, s.v. downland n.1) as ‘in later use chiefly: gently rolling hill country, esp. in southern England’. Again, the focus is on the south of the country.<sup>279</sup>

#### 6.5.2. Tracing the shift through compound place-name analysis

This shift in meaning from OE *dūn* to ModE *down* can be traced through recurrent collocations. There are collocations which appear prominently in a later stratum.

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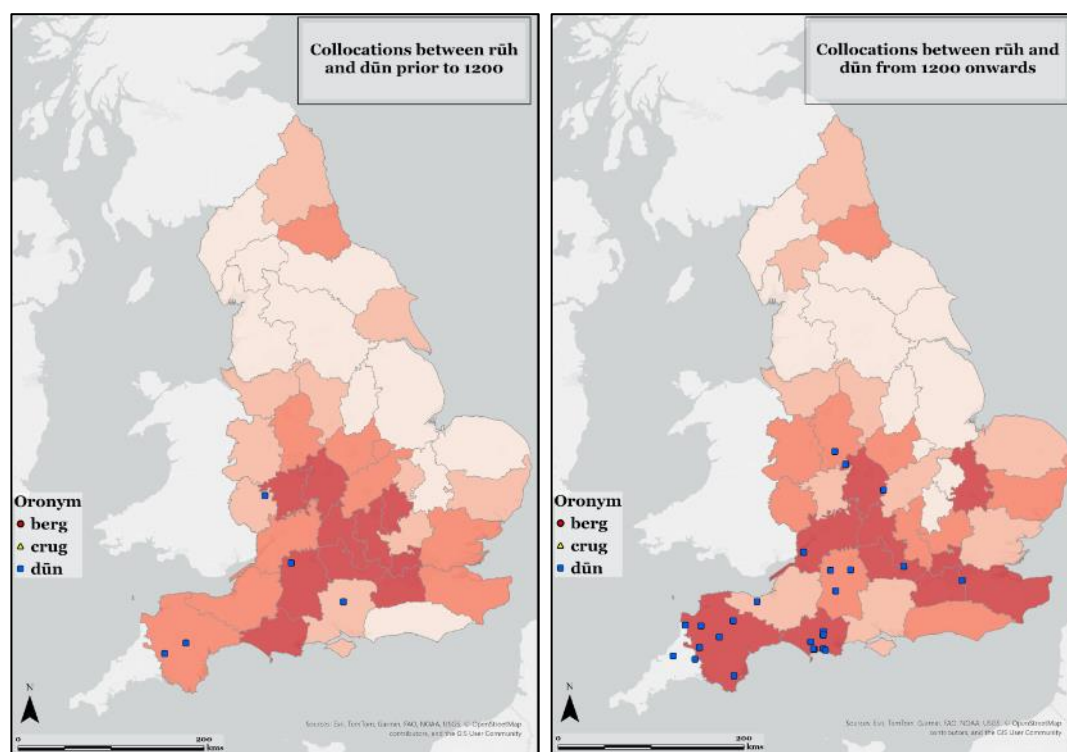
<sup>278</sup> Such is the level of association between sheep and downland that OED (2025, s.v. down n.1 sense 5.) notes that ‘Down’ is often included in the official names for various sheep breeds.

<sup>279</sup> This might help to explain why Gover, Mawer and Stenton (1939, 430) thought that in Wiltshire collocations between animals and *dūn* were more frequent than those with crops; they were examining later names once *dūn* had shifted in sense and this shift was more prevalent in a county like Wiltshire.



- Rough grazing

*Rūh* ‘rough’ was identified as one such in 4.6.2. (see Figure 108 in particular).

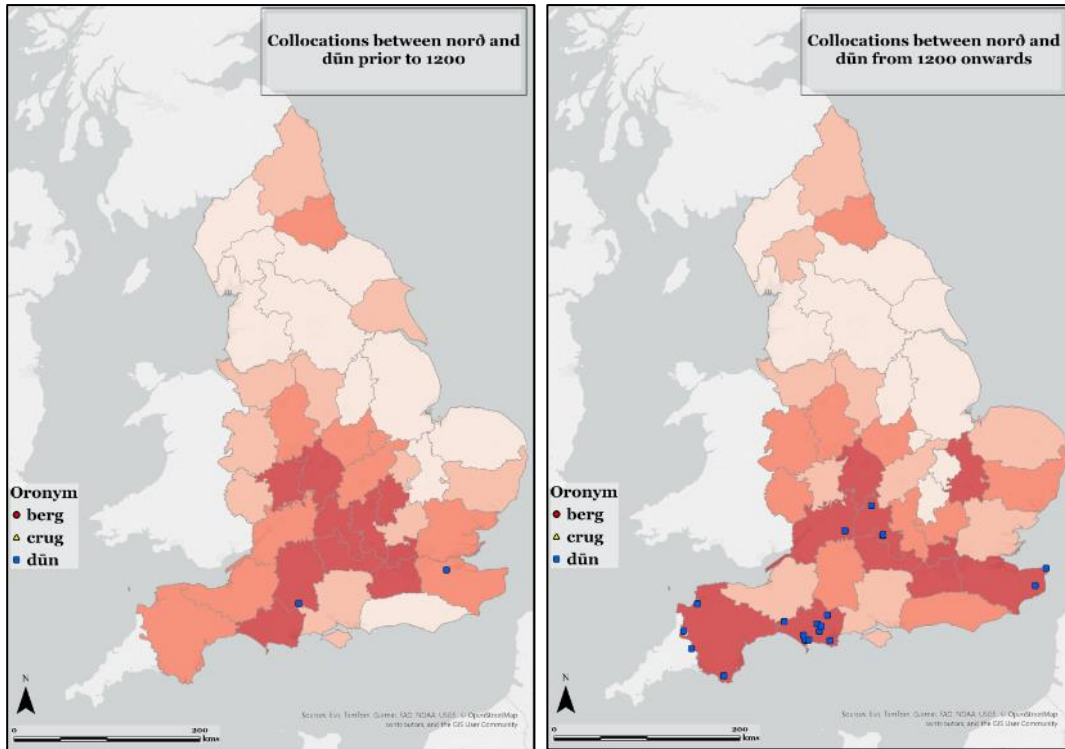


154. A comparison between *rūh* plus *dūn* collocations prior to 1200 and from 1200 onwards, against the density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area for the same time periods.

This compound is clearly more prevalent in the later attested names. These names are mainly minor names. The distribution is concentrated in the south-west, mirroring the southern bias in the emergence of the ModE word *down*. Although the element *rūh* is one for which multiple interpretations are possible (4.6.2.), in this context it seems plausible that it was referring to rough land used for rough grazing.

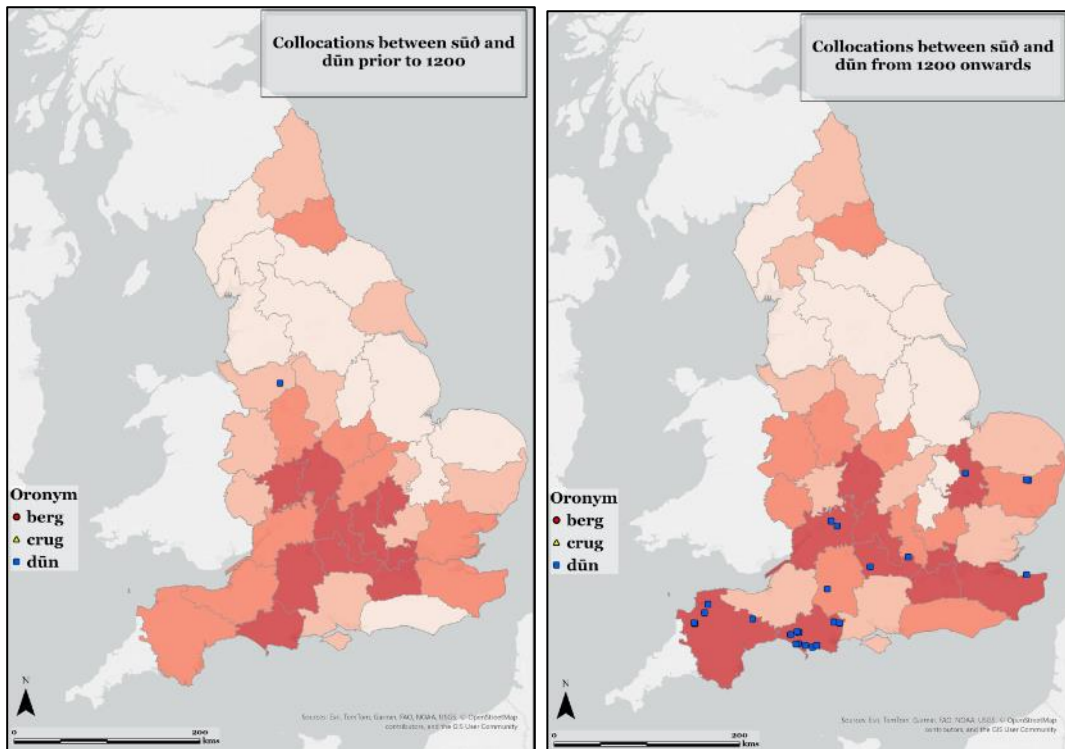
- Directional elements

Directional elements were discussed in 4.5.6. There was a definite rise in the number of later attested collocations with *dūn* that appear to name the feature directionally in relation to another place, or vice versa. Relevant collocating elements include *norð* ‘north’: most of these collocations are first attested after 1200 and have a strong southern bias, also mirroring the emergence of *down*. They are nearly all minor names.



155. A comparison between *norð* plus *dūn* collocations prior to 1200 and from 1200 onwards, against the density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area for the same time periods.

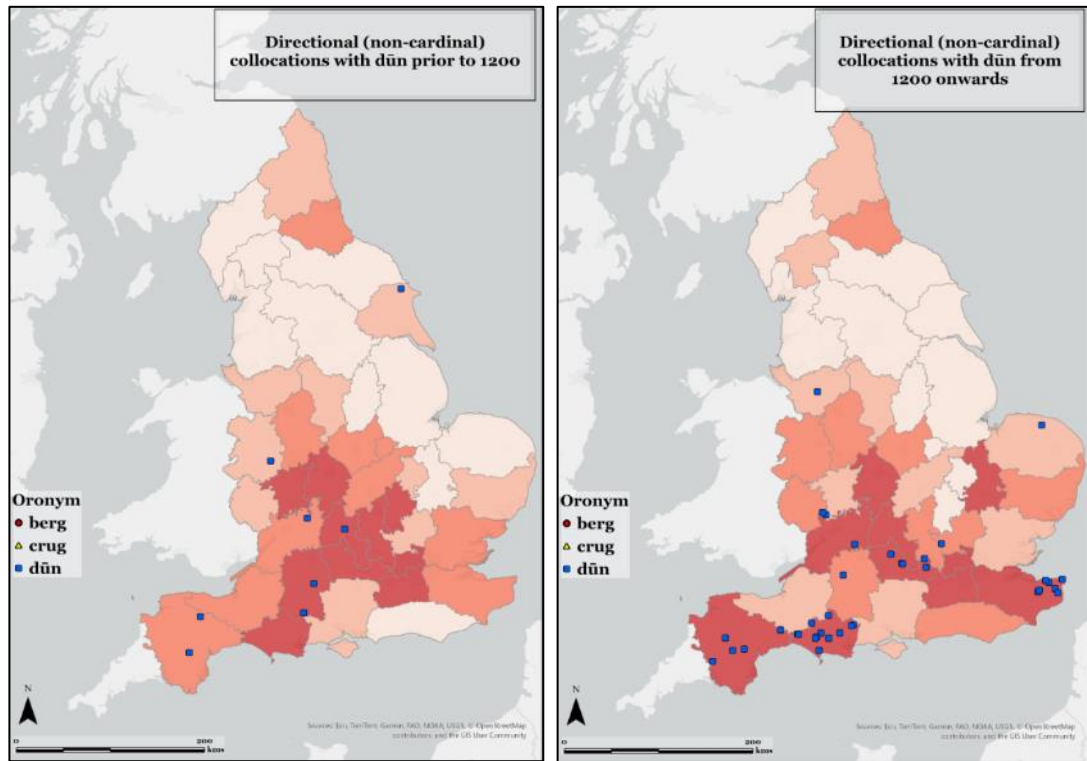
The same trends are seen with *sūð* ‘south’ plus *dūn*.



156. A comparison between *sūð* plus *dūn* collocations prior to 1200 and from 1200 onwards, against the density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area for the same time periods.

They are also seen, in smaller numbers, with *west* ‘west’ and *dūn*.

There are other non-cardinal, directional terms such as OE *middel* ‘middle’ (including superlative forms), OE *under* ‘under’, OE *up(p)* ‘up; upon’, OE *(a)būfan* ‘above’, OE *fore* ‘in front of’, and OE *beneoðan* ‘beneath’. All of these are also late attested and minor names concentrated in the south, mirroring the emergence of *down*.



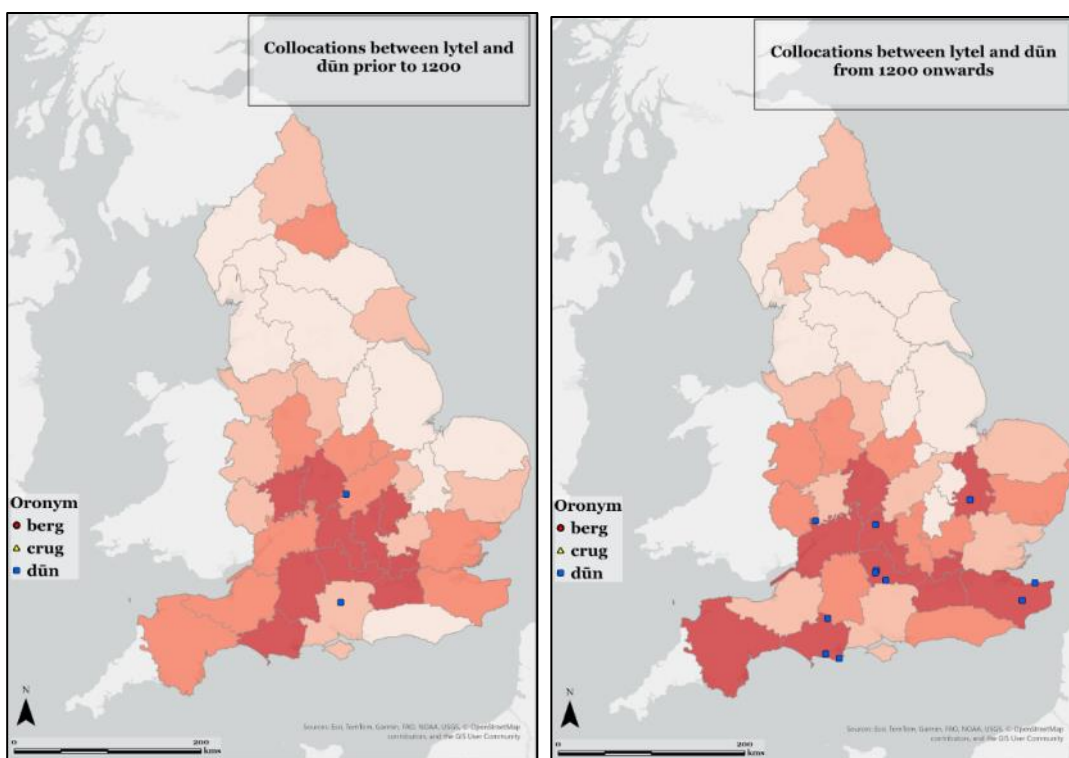
157. A comparison between non-cardinal, directional collocations with *dūn* prior to 1200 and from 1200 onwards, against the density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area for the same time periods.

As the sense of *dūn* shifted into a larger, less topographically defined concept of *down*, the collocations had to do extra work to disambiguate where the relevant named place actually was. This is probably why these collocations make such a marked appearance in the later attested names, having not been present before in such numbers.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>280</sup> These prepositional elements are potential evidence of elliptical naming (Ekwall 1960, xviii). It is interesting to note that they collocated with a later strand of *dūn*, not the earlier one. This supports Gelling’s belief (discussed in 1.4.7.) that OE *dūn* was not referring to settlement by way of ellipsis in its earliest phase.

- ‘littleness’

The frequency of OE *lytel* collocating with *dūn* in later attested strands was commented upon in 4.5.1. It is interesting that it occurs in later names. It appears that as the sense of OE *dūn* shifted into a larger and less topographically defined sense of *down*, it became more appropriate to remark upon the littleness of a site where that occurred.<sup>281</sup> In the earliest stratum, it was not remarked upon to the same extent, possibly because it was more typical then for *dūn*-sites to be more tightly topographically defined, and generally low-lying. In effect, when it was more usual, it was not recorded. All bar one of these names are lost names, so it is not possible to verify this theory with topographical physical assessment. In addition, many of the later attested *dūn*-names, against which the ‘littleness’ or otherwise of these names would need to be benchmarked, are also lost, further compounding the problem of verification. The distribution of this collocation in the second half of the study period mirrors the emergence of *down*, in terms of where these names are at greatest density.



158. A comparison between *lytel* plus *dūn* collocations prior to 1200 and from 1200 onwards, against the density of *dūn*-names normalised by county area for the same time periods.

<sup>281</sup> Unless this is a further example of irony in English place-naming!

### 6.5.3. The linguistic influence of *down* and its use as an affix

The shift in the sense of *dūn* to *down* is so complete that there are *dūn*-names where *down* is added as an extra affix, notwithstanding the fact that the name was originally a *dūn*-name. The common etymological origin was clearly not apparent to name-users by this point in time. Smeardon Down (Devon) was attested as *Smerdon* in 1340 and as *Smardon Downe* by 1561 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 232). Cripdon Down (Devon) was attested as *Crepedon* in 1238 but gained the Down affix by the time of nineteenth-century mapping (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 482).

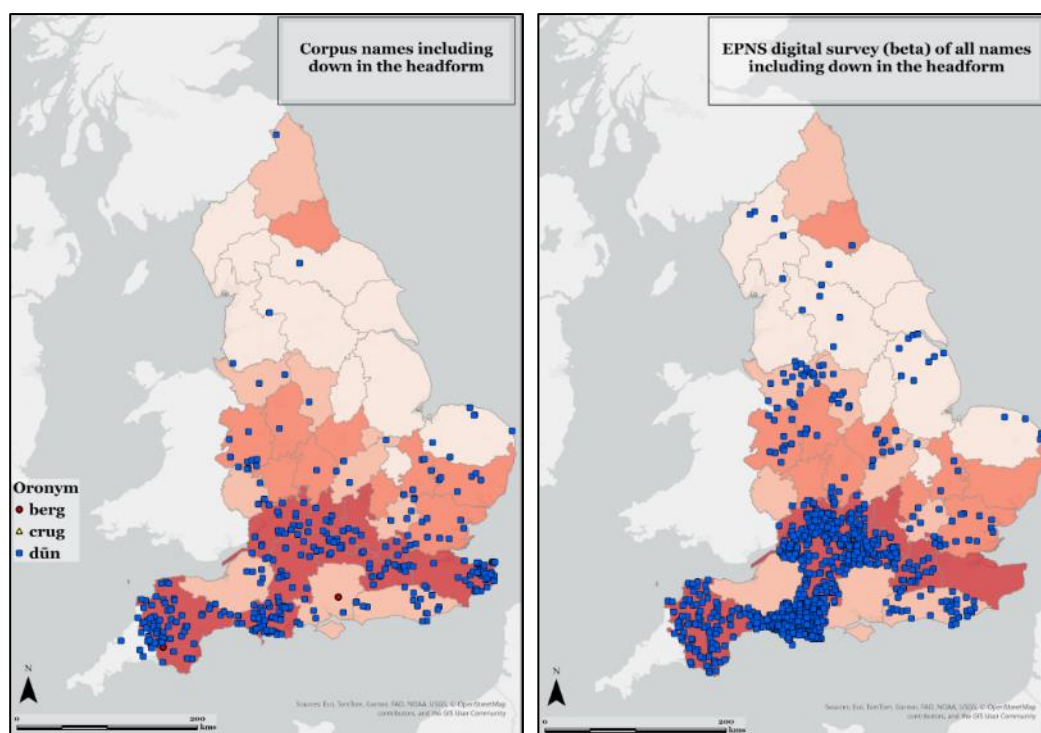
The following distribution maps indicate where names use the spelling *down* in their later headforms. This might be as an affix or it might be that the original compound name begins to be spelt with *down*-forms without an additional affix. Names from the corpus are mainly *dūn*-names by origin.<sup>282</sup> This is compared to all the names in the EPNS beta digital survey (extending beyond 1500 in terms of dates of first attestation) that use the spelling *down* in their headforms, whether as an affix or part of the compound name.<sup>283</sup> Although both groups are an amalgam of names of different origins and dates, they demonstrate the linguistic influence of *down*. The bias for this phenomenon remains southern.

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<sup>282</sup> *Down* was added as an affix to some *berg*-names, such as Roborough Down (Devon), first attested as *Rueberge* in 1114-1116, to which the affix was added by 1540 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1931–1932, 225).

<sup>283</sup> Where *down* is added as an affix to an established settlement name, it may be functioning in similar manner to a lexical word such as *common*, added to an existing settlement name to read as the common of a particular place. Although this is outwith the scope of this study, *down* as an affix may be indicating that a settlement has grazing and other land use rights to a particular parcel of (up)land. Cartographically, there may be areas where a hill range is divided up and linked to settlements by means of the name formula: settlement name plus *down*. The rights to use the hill range would in this way be parcelled out between neighbouring settlements.



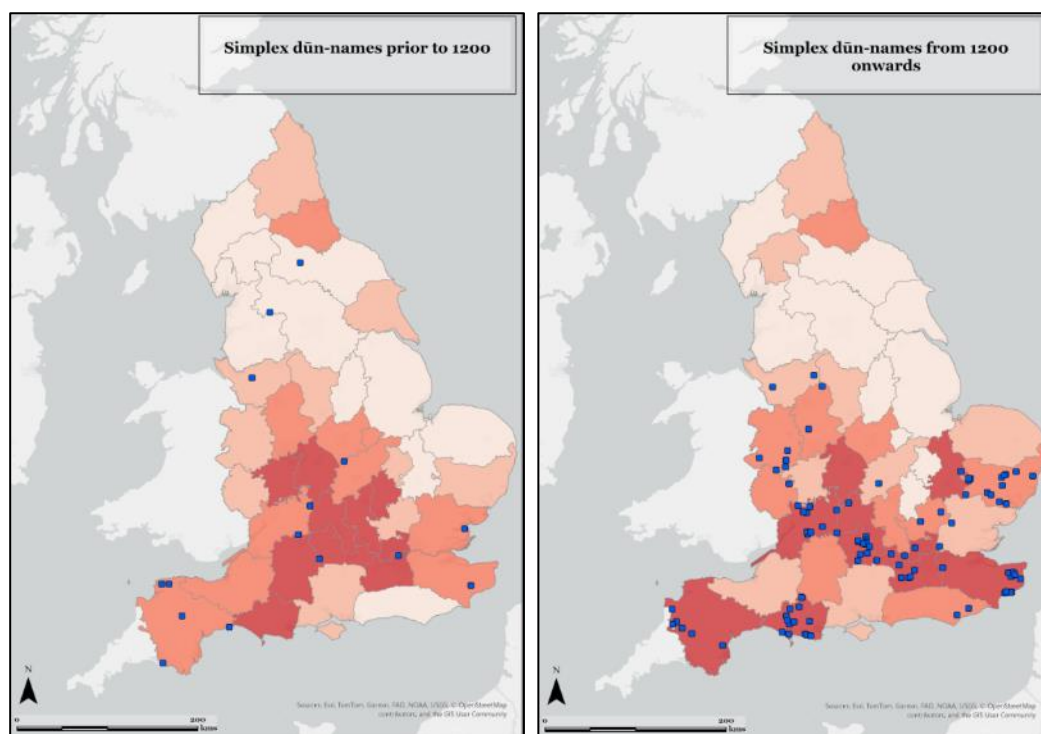


159. Names including down in the headform, comparing between the corpus for this study and the EPNS digital (beta) survey, against the density of *dun*-names normalised by county area.

#### 6.5.4. *dun* as a simplex name.

*Dun* as a simplex name also seems to be more prevalent in later strands of naming.

Many of the names are minor and are lost field-names.



160. A comparison between simplex *dun*-names attested prior to 1200 and from 1200 onwards, against the density of *dun*-names normalised by county area for the same time periods.

A simplex name can be simplex because it was an inherited name and known as a proper noun without need for further qualification (as might have been the case with some of the simplex OE/Brittonic *crug*-names discussed above in 6.4.).

Alternatively, it can be simplex because it was minor and local, such that disambiguation from other simplex *dūn*-names was not required whilst the name was only used in a local, not national, context. The latter is probably the best explanation for the late simplex *dūn*-names which are minor and often non-surviving in the modern name stock.

## **6.6. Conclusion: the evolving nuance of a *dūn***

The meaning of OE *dūn* was a fascinating and evolving one. Looking closely at both the topography and the compound place-name analysis for early *dūn*-sites suggested that these places were not necessarily the most elevated position in the landscape.

Instead, they might well have occupied an island site, with relative elevation permitting settlement and the farming of crops just above surrounding marsh or water. Such sites, advantageous for settlement, might have been enhanced by constructed enclosing works. These need not have been monumental; connections between OE *dūn* and the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* should not be discounted solely on the grounds of monumental hillforts. The Indo-European etymological origin for *\*dūno-*, indicating some form of enclosure (topographic or otherwise), fitted many Celtic applications of the place-name element, as well as some OE *dūn*-names early on in the history of English naming.

It has been particularly interesting to see distinctive land use emerge as a theme collocating with OE *dūn*. The results of compound place-name analysis has shifted the understanding of OE *dūn*, from being purely a name element defined by a particular topographical understanding, to being one that is more richly understood alongside the kinds of land use frequently associated with it. OE *dūn* had a striking association with crops, particularly winter crops, as well as general exploitation of vegetal resource. This matches well with its common topographic position, of relative elevation, offering a non-waterlogged position in the landscape.

It is fascinating to note the way in which OE *dūn* shifted in meaning diachronically, coming ultimately, in its ModE reflex *down*, to mean something almost the opposite of OE *dūn* in many ways. It is particularly satisfying that this shift can be picked up in compound place-name analysis, looking at the kinds of elements collocating in

later *dūn*-names, even where many of these names are not located and cannot be topographically assessed. Again, the themes of land use and perception of a place, seen through compound collocations, are to the fore in understanding the rich nuance of diachronically evolving naming practice.

Along the way, it has been interesting to note the lack of OE *dūn*-names in the north-west, as well as Brittonic or Goidelic names in *din/dyn* or *dùn/dún*, and to start to draw out some of the implications for language in this area. Finally, given that it seems likely that OE *dūn* had some connection with the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* originally, it is very helpful to note the differences between it, functioning as a fully-fledged OE place-name element, and Brit *crug*, another element derived from a Celtic origin, as used in OE naming. This comparison has again proved the value of setting these elements side by side in this corpus.



## **Conclusion**

### **The importance of the landscape**

The ubiquity of landscape terminology in historical place-names is striking. It is a rich seam of insight into the historical perceptions that inhabitants had of the landscape surrounding them. Whilst a single place-name on its own might appear limited in the information it is able to convey, patterns emerge when multiple names are gathered together in a comprehensive nation-wide corpus. The results from this study call into question the comments of Stenton (1924, 36) that ‘simple descriptive phrases, and the information which can sometimes be extracted from them relates rather to the nature of the ground than to the life of the people settled upon it’. Throughout this thesis, much has been learnt about human settlement and the ways in which people used and related to their landscape. Moreover, ‘the nature of the ground’ is an interesting subject in its own right. Names referring to the nature of the ground always go beyond topography and tell us something about human perception and ways of seeing and classifying the landscape. They represent a dialogue between the physical world and human agency (3.5.3.).

### **The importance of fieldwork**

Gelling and Cole were undeniably right to put the emphasis on to the landscape as it features time and again in English place-names. Their focus on fieldwork and mapwork has been adopted and refined in this study. GIS software and analysis enable rapid assessment of large swathes of data. Lidar topographical modelling, geological and historical mapping can all be combined easily with place-name data, linguistic analysis and archaeological information. The mapped interface generates a powerfully visual result. Research questions are more easily highlighted. Avenues of research are more easily interrogated. The whole is available in a portable format, bringing together desk-based research with on-site examination. It is usable at multiple scales, able to accommodate varying degrees of precision in the location of known or lost place-names. The digital outputs from this thesis demonstrate what is possible for a place-name database, usable by others in an interdisciplinary manner (available at [Dŭn Crug and Berg Database © Abigail Lloyd 2020-2024 \(arcgis.com\)\)](#)).

Computational methods of analysing the landscape have been closely examined (3.5, 3.7-3.8). It is clear that nothing replaces experiencing the environment that originally motivated naming. That experience should be direct, on the ground, replicating as best one can the angles and lines of sight one might have had, as well as the pace of movement on foot or by horse power. Modelling visibility digitally is helpful, but as a heuristic and iterative tool, pointing to places ripe for further investigation (3.11.). Viewsheds need to be verified and tested. A computational line of sight does not replicate all the factors which make a place visible or, indeed conversely, render it imperceptible to human eyes. Hence, fieldwork remains critical; its value has been demonstrated throughout this study.

### **The human scale of naming**

Over distances of more than a mile, features are often far less visible than might have been thought. The landscape swiftly becomes an undifferentiated backdrop. Perspective and depth are lost. Without colour contrast, green-brown features do not stand out against a green-brown background. This was the conclusion of the fieldwork exploring visibility in the landscape. Five hundred and eighty site visits reinforced how close an observer needs to be before a feature is easily discernible. That is the case even with prior knowledge of particular location using modern OS maps (3.11.2-3.11.3.). This is an important finding. It seems more likely than not that names were generated on a local scale. They were not generated for the benefit of long-distance travellers. In turn, this contributes to the finding that naming practice was more often than not a bottom-up process, rather than top-down.

### **The absence of universal diagnostic profiles**

Humans actually find it very difficult to delimit the spatial extent of a hill (and, indeed, a settlement). People are good at agreeing on the core of an object, and the rough location of that core, but fuzzy about achieving consensus on precise boundaries (3.5.). Whilst this may be deeply unsatisfactory for some philosophers, it appears to be a fundamentally human phenomenon. Humans construct discrete identity from a continuum, without being able to specify precisely where that identity begins and ends. This is at the heart of place-naming. It is also a challenge recognised by geographers seeking to automate computational landform extraction (3.8). Using algorithms and mathematical formulae does not remove the inherent ambiguity that feeds into all the underlying parameters governing the model, each of

which a researcher has to determine prior to running a model. This study has shown that a computer does not solve the problem. This challenge is inextricably linked to the way humans create identity, names and their associations.

In addition, the coining of a place-name is not the same process as that which geographers undertake when surveying and classifying the country. In the latter, nomenclature is defined according to a specified metric (height, area, profile, slope etc.), and conferred upon all features satisfying the metric. This is how the Gelling and Cole theories about profile came to be applied. It was as if researchers could expect to see everything with a small perfectly, continuously rounded profile labelled *berg* and everything with a larger whale-backed profile labelled *dūn*. In fact, as others observed and as witnessed throughout fieldwork for this corpus, it is often difficult to know why one feature was more deserving of a particular descriptive term than another. This serves as an important reminder of the difference between historical naming practice and modern topographic survey. Since names historically came into existence on a local basis, without the benefit of an overarching national survey or centralised organisation, we should not expect them to be allocated only to the features most ‘deserving’ of the label as viewed from a national vantage point. Rather, the motivation for their coining is more particular than that.

Across the country, it is not the case that *berg* is always a small, perfectly or continuously rounded hill (or artificial mound). Nor is it the case that *dūn* is always the larger eminence with a whale-backed profile. The archetypal examples given by Gelling and Cole are few in number and can be argued with, as Kitson demonstrated. Although there may be some sites that conform precisely with the stated profile definitions, there are not many of them. There are not enough to warrant the idea that these profiles represent the key to understanding these elements in place-naming. There are more sites that fail to conform. The uniform consistency needed, such that these profiles could be used as travellers’ navigational aids throughout the country, was not found to exist.

The definition of *crug* as ‘abrupt’ in profile does not serve to distinguish it from many other hills or mounds. Visually, features bearing the name *crug* can look very similar to those bearing the name *berg*, or indeed other names. As with *berg* and *dūn*, a definition focused on profile fails to answer in as much depth as might otherwise be possible why *crug* might have been used in a particular place-name.

## The importance of nuance

Place-names incorporating *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* are without doubt full of nuance, as Gelling and Cole stated. The nuance may not have lain in a diagnostic profile evident throughout the country. That does not mean that there was no nuance present.

The question follows: what then was a *berg*, *crug* or a *dūn*? It might be tempting to answer it in a manner that falls back on physical topography. However, to do so would be to miss some of the richness of nuance uncovered in this study. The answer is better framed not solely at a physical level but in terms of the activities and perceptions associated with these elements. The latter can only be determined by looking closely across all corpus names to see the patterns emerging in compound place-names.

### - *Berg*

*Berg*-names clustered in two main areas: in the regions correlating with OE charter production and in the ‘Scandinavian Belt’ (2.5.1.). In both areas, many of these were not names with administrative status. In both areas, many of these *berg*-names have not survived. However, in terms of the themes of collocations, there was little overlap between these two zones: in OE-dominated areas, and in charters where an artificial mound might be the referent, collocations referencing farming (whether arable or livestock) were almost entirely absent. Wild animals were referenced with recurrency, alongside other repeat compounds that build up a picture of a feature potentially less proximate to settlement (5.7.1.); in OScan-influenced areas, on the other hand, *berg* was used in collocations with elements that paired with *dūn* elsewhere in this corpus. These collocations focused on arable farming and on vegetation generally, which could of course have been used as an important resource even if wild (5.7.2.).

Etymologically, *berg* could reference a (natural or artificial) mound in the sense of a heap or a pile (1.3.2.), as well as a larger hill or mountain (1.3.1.). It is not possible to disentangle these meanings chronologically with certainty (5.9). Nevertheless, the use of *berg* in place-names, in a manner which must relate to the ‘heaped’ meaning, emerged clearly in the results of this thesis. On the ground, many of the OScan-influenced *berg*-names were associated with low-lying drumlin-like features. The

use of OScan-influenced *berg* for artificial mounds was evidenced as far north as Furness (1.3.5.). In addition, the use of OE *berg* to reference small mounds was well established in this corpus. The meaning of *berg* as a small natural hill or artificial mound is the one that survived in the English lexicon and spoken dialect (1.3.1.). The sense of something as large as a mountain, or as a range of hills, dropped out of usage. There were other words capable of taking the place of *berg* in this sense. In England, Anglo-Norman *mountain* was in use by the thirteenth century (OED 2025, s.v. mountain n.), although Kitson (1997, 236-239) noted an early twelfth-century use of the element in an OE (transitional) charter. The possibility that the influx of Anglo-Norman into the semantic field occupied by *berg* caused it to lose some of its range of meaning was touched upon in 1.3. above. In addition, as has been shown in Chapter Six, *dūn* evolved into *down*, signifying a range of hills (often in the plural). So, it, too, occupied something of the larger end of this semantic field once occupied by *berg*.

#### - *Dūn*

Unlike the other two elements, *dūn*-names showed a clear shift in meaning between earlier and later layers of names in the corpus. Earlier understandings of the element included that of being a place of relative (not absolute) elevation, sufficient to make a site amenable to farming and settlement. Etymologically, *dūn* is likely to have been linked to the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* and, therefore, an Indo-European root referencing the idea of ‘enclosure’. Low-lying island sites (with *dūn*-names) were enclosed by water and marsh. The relative elevation of a *dūn* might have been only a matter of a few metres but enough to make the ground the least waterlogged around. Such sites could have been further enhanced by artificial enclosing works, utilising and enhancing the topographical position. The use of *dūn*-names in such cases was aligned with uses of the Celtic etymon *\*dūno-* for a wide variety of small sites, being enclosed or capable of enclosure. Various interdisciplinary strands of evidence contributed to this refinement of the understanding of OE *dūn*, from topographical analysis and archaeological awareness (6.1.) through to linguistic patterns in collocations (6.2.). The use of *dūn* paired with winter crops, which would require good drainage at a difficult time of the year, is an interesting theme to emerge clearly from this corpus. Overall, the usage of *dūn* in place-names reflects the strong link between this element and activity on the land – that is, ways of using the land.

In so far as *dūn* is a topographic term, it is one that was associated strongly with how the topography might have been advantageous for certain kinds of activity.

Towards the end of the study period, as *dūn* moved into ME, before becoming ModE *down*, meaning shifted to signify a place *above* settlement, rather than a place beneath a settlement. It became a place above the spring line, not used for arable crops. It was physically broad, rolling and without obvious delimitation and topographical enclosure. ModE *down* came to have association with a regime of farming focused on sheep. Earlier, in contrast, OE *dūn* rarely collocated with animals, sheep being notably absent. Once again, all strands of evidence from the topographical to the linguistic (6.5.) have contributed to clarifying and confirming this shift in meaning. The use of *down* is particularly prevalent in the south in counties associated with well-known, post-medieval *down*-names, such as the North and South Downs, Berkshire and Wiltshire Downs.

#### - *Crug*

*Crug* is interesting almost by what it was not. Numerically, compared to *berg* and *dūn*, there are actually very few *crug*-names in England. The distribution remained associated with areas bordering Brittonic-speaking regions. *Crug* only once appeared as a generic in the corpus (2.5.3.). As a qualifier, it collocated with a very limited range of OE generics (4.9.). It had a higher incidence of appearing in simplex form and yet a large proportion of *crug*-names in the corpus were not minor, but of administrative status. Hence, this was not just simplex use as a field-name, as was observed with *dūn* (6.5.4.).

In terms of etymology, the range of meanings *crug* supported in Brittonic overlapped with the meanings for *berg*. Both *crug*- and *berg*-named natural hills could look similar and both elements could refer to artificial mounds. It does not seem that there was a gap in the OE toponymicon which *crug* was required to fill. However, whilst *berg* was used as a generic with descriptors making clear it was referring to artificial mounds or wilder places, *crug* never collocated in this way in this corpus. In essence, *crug* seems to have been used as a proper noun, either in simplex form or as a proper noun qualifying a limited range of generics such as OE *tūn*.

To shed more light on this conclusion for *crug*, it would be helpful to compare *crug* with other Brittonic elements which also seem to have been used in OE place-names. There are not many but they are listed, for example, in Coates (2007a, 180-181). It seems likely that *crug* was one of a small set of elements borrowed ‘in order to make reference but not as denoting by virtue of their lexical content’ (Coates 2007b, 49). Further surveys of other Brittonic elements to contrast them with *crug* is beyond the scope of this thesis, which aimed to contrast *crug* with *berg* and *dūn*. However, examining *crug* against such other Brittonic elements would be a useful avenue of future research. It would shed light on how *crug* differs from, or parallels with, such other elements, to put alongside the ways in which *crug* differs from *berg* and *dūn*.

### **Methodological recommendations**

The methodological approach of this study could easily be replicated in future research; a corpus of place-name data and linguistic analysis made available on a mapped interface, combined with other interdisciplinary datasets, is a powerful research tool (2.4.). The website developed could easily be used to generate and pose other research questions, both with this corpus and other place-name corpora. It is a relatively stable platform for sustainably making available such information for others to interrogate. It can easily be added to and refined as further information, data and research results are forthcoming. Finally, it enables fieldwork to take place in conjunction with digital analysis. This approach in tandem utilises the power of new technology to process and present data, whilst not departing from the physical experience that motivated naming in the first place.

Many place-name studies focus on discrete areas, unsurprisingly given the unavoidable trade-off between depth and breadth of research. This thesis has shown the value of limiting the number of elements in a corpus in order to achieve national coverage. The benefits of seeing national trends are worth the cost of limiting the numbers of elements examined. Retaining relative inter-element comparison enables the results to be robust (2.1.1.). It is possible to distinguish between patterns that are the consequence of the state of the underlying survey and those that are caused by substantive phenomena worthy of further investigation. This approach is recommended in addition to single element studies in the future.

It is useful to keep track of the status and ‘type’ of a place, given its importance for understanding who might have been doing the naming in any particular case (2.2.2.). Nevertheless, given the issues in evaluating status and allocating a single status to a place that will have fluctuated in significance through time, and given that status is not directly relevant to etymology, ‘type’ of place should not be used to exclude place-names from corpora. Ideally, as much evidence as is available from all place-names using a particular element, whatever the ‘type’ or status of the names, should be deployed to inform what that element might mean onomastically.

OScan influence on naming was not originally a research question for this thesis but it emerged as a very interesting avenue of inquiry. This illustrates the value of as much context as possible. OScan influence showed up more strongly against a backdrop of quite different OE practice both in *berg*- and *dūn*-names (5.7.). The steps taken by Rye (2022), to standardise and synthesise earlier quantitative work on OScan influence in various place-name corpora, are very helpful in presenting an emerging national picture, enabling studies to be compared one with another. It is pleasing that the results from this thesis fit well into that synthesis and contribute to the national picture measured by the methodology Rye has developed (5.6.). Nevertheless, it is possible to go further and use wider context to highlight where OScan influence was present in naming, even though it cannot be distinguished formally and linguistically. This, in turn, opens up interesting questions for future research.

### **Future research directions**

The patterns that emerged from this corpus shed light on areas of contact between different languages and dialects. In the north-west, OScan influence manifested in a variety of non-recurrent elements. In contrast, in the East Midlands, OScan influence showed greater recurrency, utilising elements which were linguistically indistinguishable from OE, and which would have been mutually intelligible (5.8.). This is an area eminently suitable for further exploration. It would be helpful to see if this trend is borne out with other elements in a comparison across the same areas. It has implications for understanding language contact in a central area with language communities living in close proximity, subject to changes in political power. This can be contrasted with the development of language in the periphery, further afield. In addition, specific case studies would be interesting, such as a



closer look at the forty *berg*-names exhibiting clear OScan or OE/OScan influence present in a very flat landscape, not more than 20km<sup>2</sup> in area, on the banks of the Humber (Lloyd forthcoming).

There are also absences that merit further research. It has been tentatively suggested that the absence of OE *dūn* in the north-west might be seen as an indicator of the lack of Anglian influence in place-names, or its disruption by OScan-influenced naming (6.3.). This contrasts with counties like Leicestershire or the WRY in which OScan influence is evident but an earlier stratum of OE naming still survives in the names in this corpus, notwithstanding later OScan influence. The north-west is an extremely interesting area linguistically. It is not clear why Brittonic or Goidelic names derived from *\*dūno-* are barely present. They are frequent in the north-east, Welsh borders and far south-west. Future research could explore whether this pattern is born out with other elements. The Brittonic and Goidelic elements that survive with any recurrency in this area would be interesting to examine, as well as any Anglian elements. It is important to understand what was present prior to the arrival of OScan influence on naming.

It would be useful to examine further the position along the Marches. *Crug* does not seem to be taking the place of *berg* in these areas. Research that explored what other oronymic elements might have filled any gaps, and why *berg* is not used, or used only sparingly, in these areas, would be beneficial.

Finally, Devon merits further study in its own right. There are several results which apply to Devon alone in the corpus. The density of *dūn*-names in this county is striking and disproportionate to the rest of the corpus. In addition, there are several collocations (4.5., 4.7.) that are highly recurrent but only occur in Devon.

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The three elements *berg*, *crug* and *dūn* were certainly not simply hills. They were not synonyms but nor are they capable of explanation solely at the level of physical description. There is a richness of nuance and a depth of association carried by each of them that served to distinguish them one from another. The meanings they bore were intricately interwoven with the interactions of people with the landscape. They

varied in space and in time. It is immensely rewarding and illuminating to explore nuance in such historical place-names.

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<sup>284</sup> The references in the bibliography relate to citations within the text of the thesis. They are in addition to the references from which the underlying corpus database was drawn, which are all itemised in the online database at [Dūn Crug and Berg Database © Abigail Lloyd 2020-2024 \(arcgis.com\)](https://dun-crug-and-berg-database.arcgis.com) within the 'References' table. The primary material upon which those references drew is also itemised in the same online database within the 'Sources' table.

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