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Rendering the Historic Landscape Visible: Sustaining and Enriching our Connections to Places through Onomastics

1. Introduction

Many English place-names include landscape terminology. Yet, it is probably fair to say that such names were marginalised in the early years of English place-name scholarship. In the *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names* MAWER and STENTON (1924: 36–37) observed that those coining early medieval place-names were "remarkably sensitive to diversities of ground" but that many place-names using phrases descriptive of the landscape were "intrinsically trivial" and "tell nothing of importance for social history." In another sentence it was said that "the information which can be extracted from them relates rather to the nature of the ground than to the life of the people settled upon it."

GELLING (1984) notably challenged this approach.[1] She argued that the landscape terminology embodied in English place-names was rich and nuanced. Latterly, she collaborated with the geographer, Ann Cole, in GELLING and COLE (2000) to expand upon the precise meanings for a whole range of topographical terms as they appear in English place-names. CULLEN (2013: 164) noted that Gelling had employed a "fresh open-minded approach". She was "prepared to allow the names to speak for themselves and thereby reveal what mattered to those who coined them". Landscape terminology and topographical elements would not be used with such frequency in English place-names if such things were not of importance to those coining these names.

Arguably, place-names that describe the landscape are telling us how early medieval or medieval inhabitants perceived their environs.[2] They give us insight into the cultural, social and economic significance of places, as well as notions of early medieval and medieval identity. Through these names, the historical landscape is rendered visible and our connections to places are

[1] Gelling was not alone in challenging previous thinking on this topic. Nevertheless, she has become synonymous with this strand of place-name scholarship, inspiring many other scholars such as PRATT (2005), DRUMMOND (2007), NURMINEN (2012) and GRANND (2022).

[2] English archaeological research frameworks, and databases such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme, tend to divide the medieval period into the early medieval (from *c.* 410 to 1066) and medieval (from 1066 to *c.* 1500). Given the use of interdisciplinary evidence in this study, a similar division is used in this article.

sustained and enriched. Gelling was a champion of this reality. Since her work, more data has become available alongside new digital technologies that have the power to shift research in this area, both methodologically and substantively. The time is ripe for review of her pioneering work.

2. Assembling a national corpus

This article arose out of research examining three elements, putatively referring to hills, which Gelling and Cole had defined in particular ways. They are *berg* (OE/OScan),[3] *crug* (Brittonic/OE)[4] and *dūn* (OE). The background to the selection of these three is as follows: hills are potentially the least altered features in the landscape between the early medieval era and now, even allowing for quarrying, erosion, changes in vegetation or development. This makes it marginally less complex to locate and examine this aspect of the landscape and to assess how such features might have looked historically. Two of the elements, *berg* and *dūn*, were linked to the specific location of early medieval settlement according to GELLING and COLE (2014 [2000]: 145, 148, 166) ("beside the rounded hill" for *berg*, and "on [the] summit of" for *dūn*). All three are of interest because of their potential connections with other languages: Old Scandinavian in the case of *berg,* Brittonic in the case of *crug* and possible Brittonic and/or Goidelic influence in the case of *dūn.* By the end of their collaboration, Gelling and Cole had significantly codified the topographic profiles for *berg* and *dūn.* They suggested that the meanings they proposed for *berg* and *dūn* centred upon particular, distinctive profiles, applied throughout England. GELLING and COLE (2014 [2000]: xv) stated 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" and "everywhere a **beorg**[5] is a small, rounded hill and a **dūn** is a larger eminence which affords a

[3] Old Scandinavian is used in this article as a label that covers Old East and Old West Norse, Old Danish and Old Icelandic.

[4] Given the evolving nature of the vowel sound in the Brittonic word, and given that it was not assumed at the outset of the study that this element became a fully-fledged OE element, the headform used throughout the underlying study was *crug,* without further indication of vowel quality or length.

[5] OE *berg* could be written as *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: 84–86, §5.16). This would persist in West Saxon dialects but would undergo Anglian smoothing of the diphthong back into a monophthong, resulting once again in *berg* in Anglian dialects, for which see HOGG (1992: 146–147, §5.96). In this article, save for in quotations from primary or secondary literature, headforms for OE and OScan elements are those offered by the volumes of VEPN (PARSONS–STYLES–HOUGH 1997–2004: and in progress). VEPN's headforms tend not to reflect West Saxon variants. However, for the purposes of this article, an Anglian headform should be taken to include all OE variants, unless otherwise indicated.

particularly good settlement site." In labelling line drawings of *dūn*-sites, GELLING and COLE (2014 [2000]: 166) tended to mark the profile as "whale-backed." Given that Gelling and Cole had proposed such different profiles for *berg* and *dūn,* this was another aspect of these names that could be tested in the landscape. For all these reasons of interest and testability, these elements were chosen.

The study gathered a corpus of all known *berg-, crug-* and *dūn*-names in England, first attested prior to 1500 CE. It is impossible to know when a place-name might have been coined. It may have been in existence a long time before being written down in a surviving record. Alternatively, it may have come into existence only shortly before. However, dates of first attestation at least tell us that the name was in existence by the time of attestation. As such, all names with a first-attestation date of 1500 CE or earlier have to be medieval. The sources for the corpus were the published EPNS county survey volumes, as well as other national published collections such as EKWALL (1960), WATTS, INSLEY and GELLING (2004) and eSawyer (2025), and unpublished data made available to the author. The full list of sources forms part of the online database (to be made available publicly in 2025). In order to assess the ideas put forward by Gelling and Cole, it was necessary to probe matters with a national survey. Only national extent would show whether the uniformity and consistency in profile and meaning for *berg, crug* and *dūn* were borne out across the country or not.

This study was able to assess many more place-names containing these elements than was possible for Gelling and Cole. Within the national corpus there are 1,244 *berg*-names, 48 *crug*-names and 1,740 *dūn*-names. The comparison between elements gives a robust idea of the relative incidence of these elements within English place-naming. Of these totals, a proportion of the names are non-surviving. In this category, there are 782 *berg*-names, 5 *crug*-names and 606 *dūn*-names. Their precise location within the landscape is lost. They have fallen out of memory and from modern mapping.[6] Nevertheless, the historic name-forms attesting the name are all derived from documents relating to particular settlements, townships or parishes (administrative divisions within England). These 'lost' names can therefore be mapped with a certain degree of precision to that particular settlement, township or parish from which the records of their existence are derived. The whole database for the corpus has been inserted into GIS software, so that all the place-names can be mapped to their location with as much precision as

[6] It is always possible to carry out research to attempt to locate a 'lost' name. With sufficient local knowledge, a name that is not located by a survey editor may be pinpointed with greater precision and certainty.

possible (see Figure 1).[7] Static snapshots from this database are included in this article, but the power of this tool, as explained in the next section, is in its dynamic interactivity.

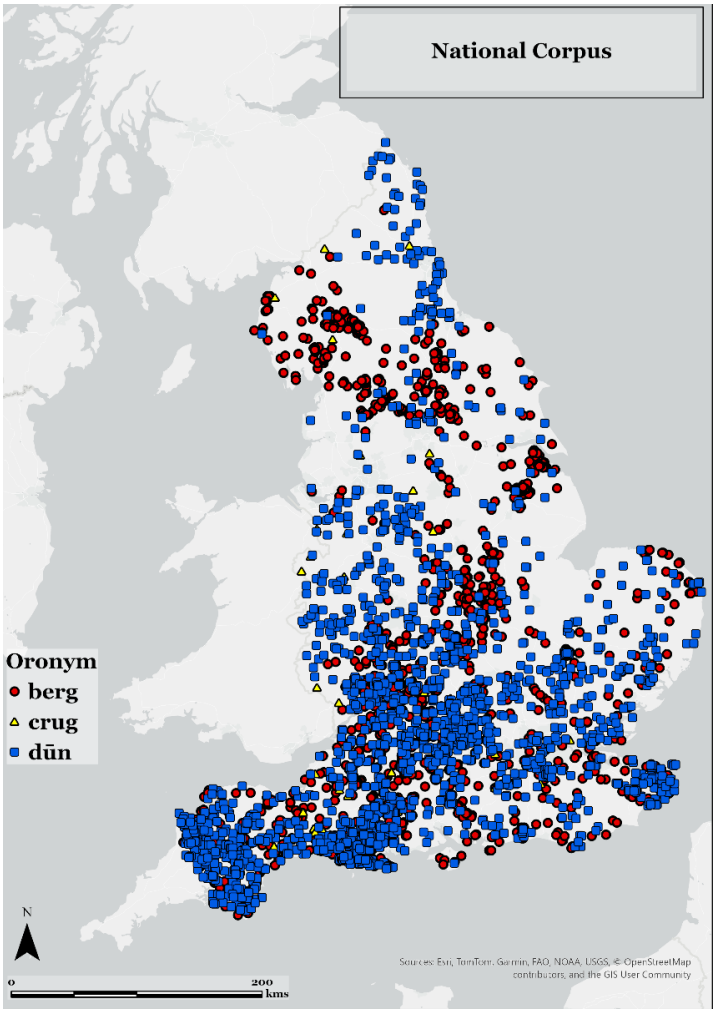


Figure 1. *The distribution of the national corpus on which this article is based.*

[7] No attempt is made to give a place-name a spatial extent in GIS by drawing a polygon. Such a spatial extent is incredibly difficult to draw with anything approaching consensus. Moreover, it will have fluctuated diachronically as the place-name's association with a particular place shifted, grew or contracted. Often the further back one goes in time, the less evidence there is available from which to delimit the 'extent' of a place-name. It is critical not to give a false sense of certainty in the use of GIS. The use of point features, rather than polygons, makes clear that there is no claim to delimit the spatial boundaries of a place-name.

3. Developing a publicly available, powerfully visual and mobile research tool

Within the GIS database, place-names are stored with all their attribute data, including linguistic analysis, historical and archaeological details and administrative relationships. The database is relational and linked to other tables providing runs of historic name-forms for a particular place-name, together with details of the source and date of attestation for each name-form. There are glossaries giving references for sources and definitions for place-name element headforms. All of this can be accessed by a user clicking on a place-name of interest such that the relevant data 'pops up', as well as by searching the attribute tables directly. More helpful still is the fact that the database can be queried. All of the items of attribute data can be filtered, creating instant distribution maps of place-names which satisfy given search criteria. Used iteratively and heuristically, this is a powerful research tool swiftly highlighting areas of interest, clusters and patterning in the names, as well as intriguing gaps and absence.

Another great strength of GIS is the layering of datasets alongside one another. GIS software has particular value in bringing together datasets which have hitherto been examined in isolation, as discussed in LLOYD (2020). The correlation of data in that instance, from a place-name on an early seventeenth-century map, aerial photography, parch/crop marks, field walking and other geological, topographic, historical and archaeological mapping, produced exciting new insight into possible Romano-British settlement in the north Oxfordshire landscape.

Within the GIS project for the research underlying this article the following layers are combined: historic OS mapping at various scales from the late nineteenth century (NLS 2025); LIDAR from the Environment Agency, at 1m resolution, modelled with multidirectional hill-shading to give a digital terrain model (EA 2023) (see Figure 2); and geological mapping at 1:625,000 and 1:50,000 (BGS 2024) (see Figure 3).

Other mapping such as tithe maps can be brought into the project, and combined with current satellite mapping to demonstrate the extent of field boundary change and to locate 'lost' field-names (see Figure 4). GIS software enables all images to be viewed at varying levels of transparencies so that the precise correlation between data can be pinpointed. Side-by-side viewing using a slider to switch from one map or dataset to another is also possible.

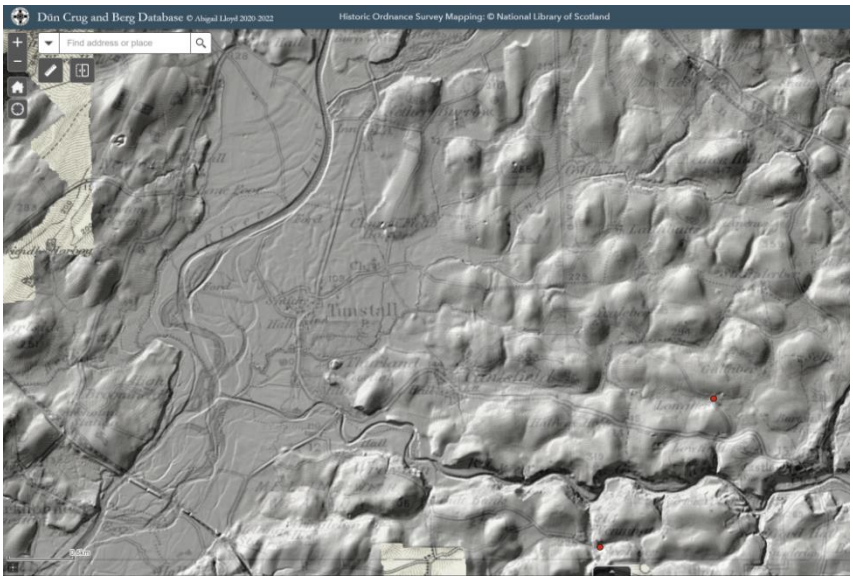


Figure 2. *EA LIDAR overlying historic OS mapping (NLS) showing a glacial drumlin field in the north-west of England, bordering the Lune and in the Craven area. Still image derived from the online GIS project developed by A. Lloyd.*

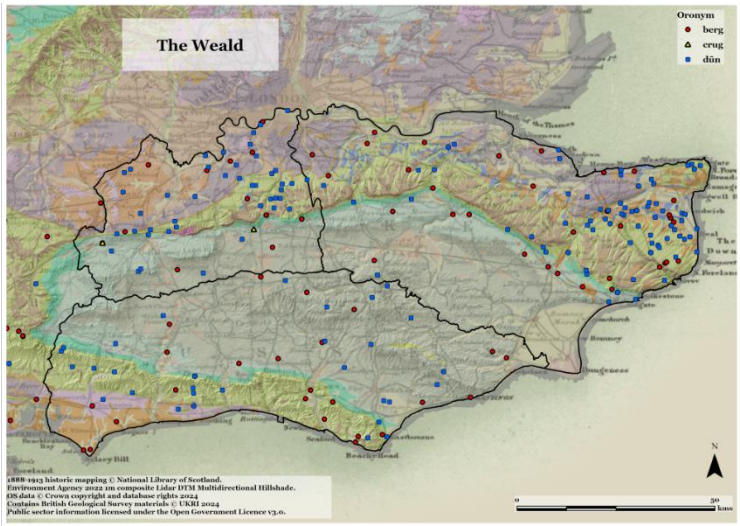


Figure 3. *The south-east of England (the Weald spanning Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire) showing BGS bedrock and superficial geology mapping at 1:625,000, overlying EA LIDAR and NLS OS historic mapping. Still image derived from the GIS project developed by A. Lloyd.*

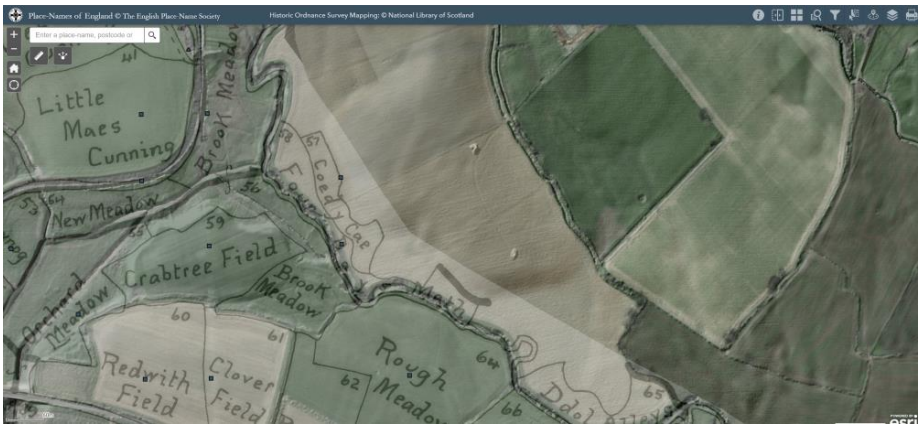


Figure 4. *Satellite mapping (ESRI) combined with the Morton township (Shropshire) map after Foxall © Shropshire Archives. Still image derived from the pilot online GIS project developed by A. Lloyd for the EPNS.*

Gelling was a keen advocate of fieldwork, arguing that those coining names in the early medieval period "had a vast and subtle topographical vocabulary which can be decoded by field-work" (GELLING 1998: 76). It is undeniable that, in order to understand place-names and naming practice, one must go out into the landscape to experience these places as closely as possible as they might have been experienced by those creating these names. Inevitably, it is never going to be possible to replicate the early medieval landscape nor the experience of a medieval inhabitant. Nevertheless, in terms of vantage points and perspectives, moving through the landscape on foot (or on horseback) is more proximate to historical experience, particularly when compared to driving through in a car, on a train or flying over in a plane. Although able to use new digital technology, researchers must not rely solely on Cartesian mapping (giving vantage points never seen by those coining the place-names), digital terrain modelling and computational desk-based assessments, without going out to test matters on the ground. To that end, all of this new digital data and technology is used as a tool, prompting research questions that need to be answered, and enabling investigation out on site. The online project is accessible on a smart phone or other portable device wherever there is internet connection, meaning that the project is truly mobile and can be taken out into the physical landscape, allowing better verification and fact-checking *in situ*.

For the project focussing on *berg-, crug-* and *dūn*-names, 558 site visits have been carried out, as well as visiting many other areas where there are densities of 'lost' names in the vicinity. This is the most concentrated number of visits to the location of such place-names known to have been carried out to date.

More important still is the fact that this is a tool that can be made publicly available. It enables the public to explore their local area or particular interests. It is of use for researchers and academics in other disciplines such as local history, historical geography or archaeology. It enhances the visibility of the historic landscape, and, in so doing, it enriches and sustains our connection to place.

4. Looking at universality and finding particularity

As a result of the fieldwork and desk-based assessment using this methodology, it does not appear that the kind of universal profile for *berg* and *dūn* outlined by Gelling and Cole, discussed above, existed throughout the country. Nor is it likely that the profiles of features bearing *berg-, crug-* and *dūn*-names were sufficiently distinctive, consistent and visible to be used as navigational markers (cf. GELLING–COLE 2014 [2000]: xv–xvi). It is not the purpose of this article to report on those findings in detail, nor is there the space to do so. The methodology for investigating visibility in the landscape was discussed in LLOYD (2021). The substantive findings are the subject of an article LLOYD (forthcoming-a) and a full write-up in LLOYD (forthcoming-b).

Nevertheless, there remains rich nuance evident in the corpus which requires explanation. These names were not simply functioning as synonyms. Nor were they used indiscriminately throughout the country. The patterning, actually made all the clearer by the use of GIS, demonstrates underlying phenomena that warrant further investigation. CULLEN (2013: 178) has already cautioned that "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." Given that the full nuance of *berg-, crug-* and *dūn*-names was not revealed solely at the level of physical surface geography, this study returned to considering the names themselves. An example of one particular pattern discovered in the process now follows.

5. Identifying OScan *berg*-names

OScan *berg* is linguistically formally indistinguishable from OE *berg.* The West Saxon form *beorg* was mentioned above. However, in Anglian areas this form is not likely to be much in evidence. There was also an OScan broken form *bjarg.* On the other hand, COATES (2006: 52) argued that OScan influence arrived in England prior to the breaking (*a*-umlaut of /e/) of *berg* to *bjarg,* and, therefore, what was imported into Britain was OScan *berg* not *bjarg.* Furthermore, 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. As RYE (2016: 53, 63) explained, 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 in any event disappear (see, too, SANDAHL 1964: 274). In essence, without diagnostic *beorg* or *bjarg* forms, OE and OScan *berg* appear to be inseparable.

Compound place-name analysis can be of some assistance here. English place-names are often compound, that is, comprised of a generic element and a qualifying element. Two of the elements studied here—*berg* and *dūn*—typically occupy the generic position. Examining the nouns and adjectives that qualify these generics reveals much extra, useful information. For instance, the qualifiers can shed light on possible OScan influence.[8]

5.1. Unambiguous OScan influence

On the banks of the Humber, in north-east Lincolnshire, there are forty *berg*-names in an area roughly 20km^2 in size. The density of this distribution is considerable compared to the normal density of *berg*-names elsewhere (see Figure 5). The landscape is flat and not at all hilly. All bar one of the names are minor names associated with places without administrative status; they are field-names and names of landscape features. Many of these names display clear OScan influence in their qualifiers.[9]

There are plenty more of the names in this area which might contain OScan influence but, on formal linguistic grounds, it cannot be asserted with certainty. The research on which this article is based has suggested ways in which OScan influence can be distinguished in such a situation. This will be discussed further below. First, it is worth noting what the presence of OScan influence in minor names might be telling us. Such names are not names of central administrative

[8] The word 'influence' is used advisedly. It is impossible to be certain that a name was coined in OScan just because by the time of its first attestation it appears in an OScan-influenced form. In some instances, it may have been coined in OE and latterly influenced by OScan. All that is entailed by the label 'OScan influence' is that the name clearly has been at some point influenced by OScan speech.

[9] All these names are attested in the reign of Henry III unless otherwise indicated. They include *Arneberg* attested in 1260 (OScan personal name *Arni*), Rosper Road attested in a personal name as *Rosseberghe* (OScan *hross* 'horse'), *Cracheberg* (OScan *kráka* 'crow'), *braydberhg'* (OScan *breiðr* 'broad') and *engeberyg* (OScan *eng* 'meadow') both attested in the middle of the thirteenth century, *Nabberg'* (OScan *nabbi* 'peak'), *Staynbergdayl* (OScan *steinn* 'stone' and *deill* 'share'), *Snaudberg* (OScan *snauðr* 'poor' possibly used as a byname), *Waithberg* (OScan *hveiti* 'wheat'), *Stainberg* attested approximately 1167 (OScan *steinn* 'stone'), *Holmberg* attested *c.*1200 (OScan *holmr* 'island'), *Layreberg* attested approximately in 1300 (OScan *leirr* 'clay'), *Slenggesberg* attested *c.*1200 (OScan byname **Slengr*), *Methelberg'* (OScan *meðal* 'middle') and *Crosseberg* attested between 1230 and 1253 (OScan *kross* 'cross') (CAMERON 1985–2010: 2:155, 198, 205–206, 209, 211–212, 231, 251, 6:13, 108, 134; FELLOWS-JENSEN 1968: 255).

importance. They are unlikely to be being coined in a top-down manner. Rather, these are names of importance to those working, farming and dwelling in the land. Minor features and places carry import to local inhabitants where they would be overlooked by administrators. Therefore, if OScan influence is detected in these kinds of names, this suggests that the language spoken by local occupants of the land was itself influenced to some degree by OScan. TOWNEND (2002: 47) commented that "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." He further observed that "such a profound effect on microtoponymy is… wholly absent from the Norman influence on English nomenclature."

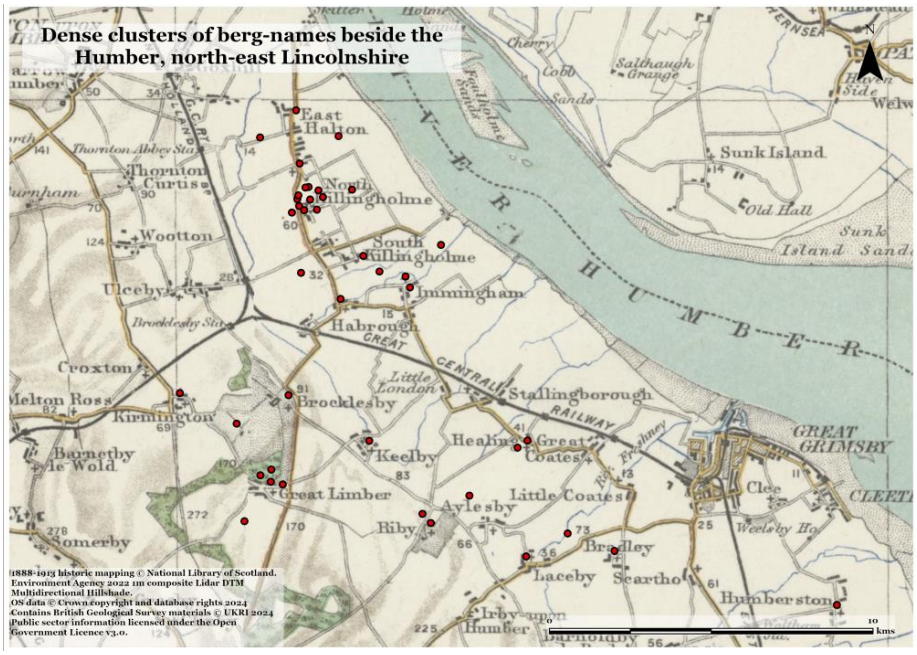


Figure 5. *Density of berg-names in a small area on the banks of the River Humber on the north-east coast of Lincolnshire.*

There is a growing body of scholarship looking at the extent of OScan influence in English place-names. Attempts have been made to quantify this influence in different corpora relating to various regions within England. In order for previous studies to be compared and contrasted, there has to be a quantitative element to the study. It cannot be merely a qualitative impression. Various studies have taken a quantitative approach including the work of HALD (1948) on late twelfth-century field-names in Benniworth (Lincolnshire), CAMERON (1973) on the same corpus for Dunholme (Lincolnshire), COX (1990) on field-

name material from the EPNS survey of Rutland, WATTS (2002) on field-names within two townships from the EPNS survey of Durham, PARSONS (2006) on names from the EPNS survey in Norfolk first attested between 1100 and 1400 CE and RYE (2016) looking at minor names in the Wirral (Cheshire) and the West Ward of the Barony of Westmorland.[10] These have all been standardised, synthesised and compared in RYE (2022). Broadly, the methodology employed requires being rigorous about whether it is possible to distinguish on formal linguistic grounds OE and OScan elements, or not. If not, such elements are placed into a category of OE/OScan and set aside. Only place-names that display unambiguous OScan influence, or its definite absence, are counted and compared. The proportion of OScan-influenced names compared to the total of these two categories gives an indication of the extent of OScan influence relative to OE.

The results of the research underlying this article followed the same methodology (assessing the qualifiers collocating with *berg, crug* or *dūn*) in order that comparison could be made with the earlier research. Results can be represented graphically in GIS, as shown in Figure 6, in which the larger the size of red circle, the more OScan influence there is in the corpus examined in that particular area. The results from these studies show greatest OScan influence in the north-west—Westmorland and Cumberland—sweeping down through parts of Yorkshire into northern Lincolnshire. This swathe of the country has been described as the 'Great Scandinavian Belt' (SAMUELS 1985) on account of Scandinavian influence detectable in language in general. The results from Cumberland, Westmorland, West Riding of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (only the north of the county has been published to date by the EPNS) from this corpus all fit with this pattern and are depicted on Figure 6 alongside the previous studies. Interestingly, other areas, such as the Wirral and Leicestershire appear initially to have much less OScan influence using this metric, as found by RYE (2016; 2022). The results from this study's corpus in Leicestershire also fit into the pattern. This patterning is perhaps unexpected, given the prominence of places like Leicester and the Wirral in historical accounts, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* detailing conflict between Wessex and the *here* 'army' (or armies) that had arrived from Scandinavia in the ninth and tenth centuries (BATELY 1986: 65; O'BRIEN O'KEEFFE 2001: 68–69). It is worth looking again at the nature of possible OScan influence in these

[10] The dates of many of the names in these corpora indicate how long-lasting OScan influence was on English place-names. It is not at all the case that an OScan-influenced name has to be linked to the early years of OScan impact in England in the ninth and tenth centuries. Many are first attested in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

areas, where the red circles in Figure 6 are smaller than might have been anticipated.

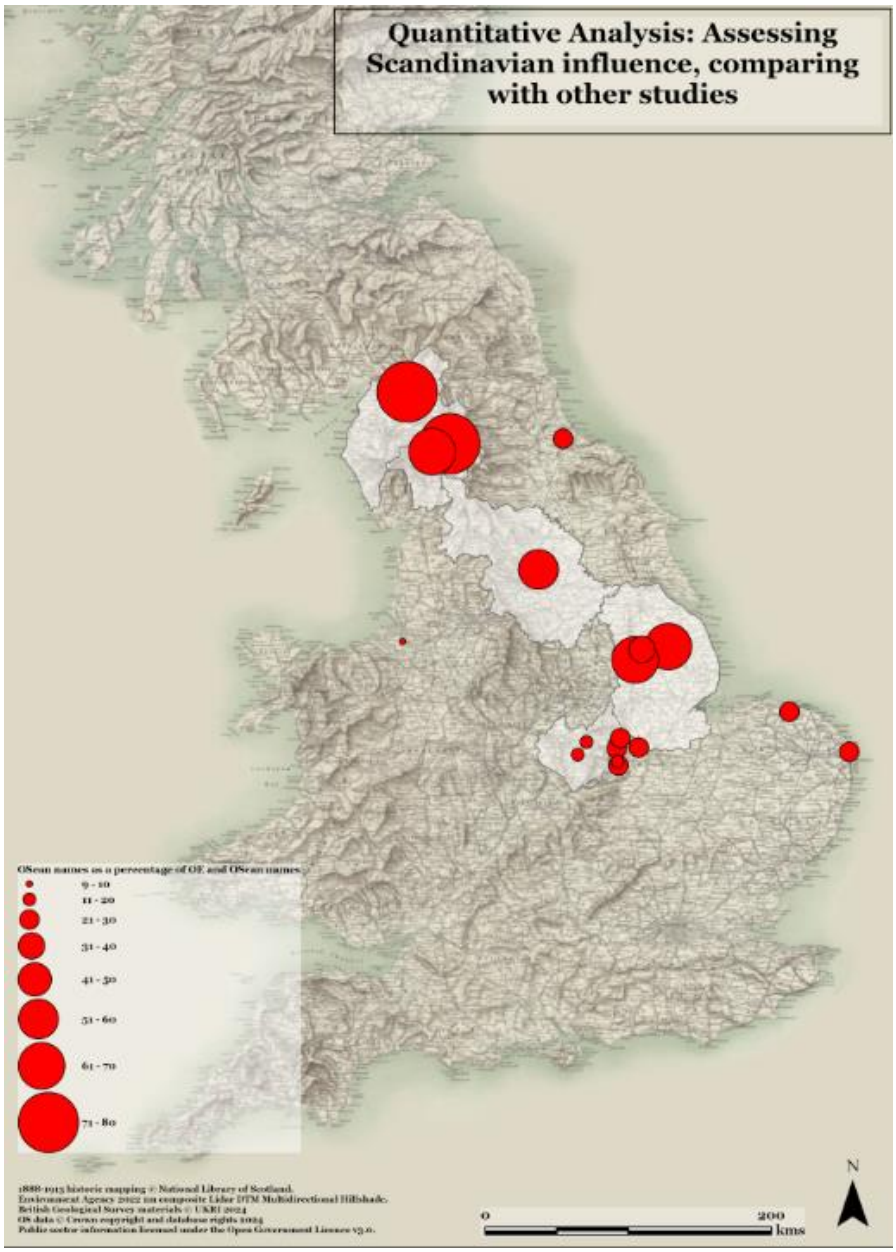
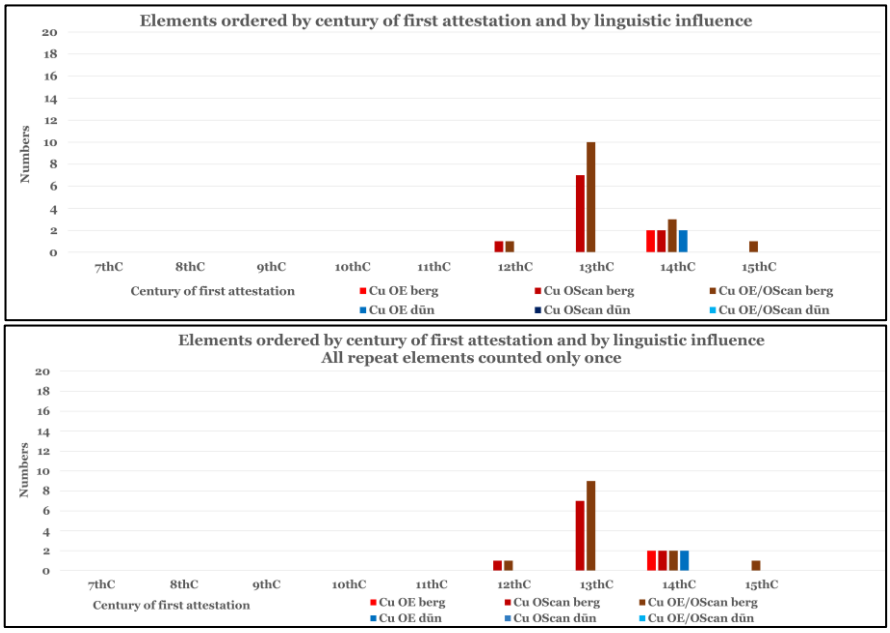


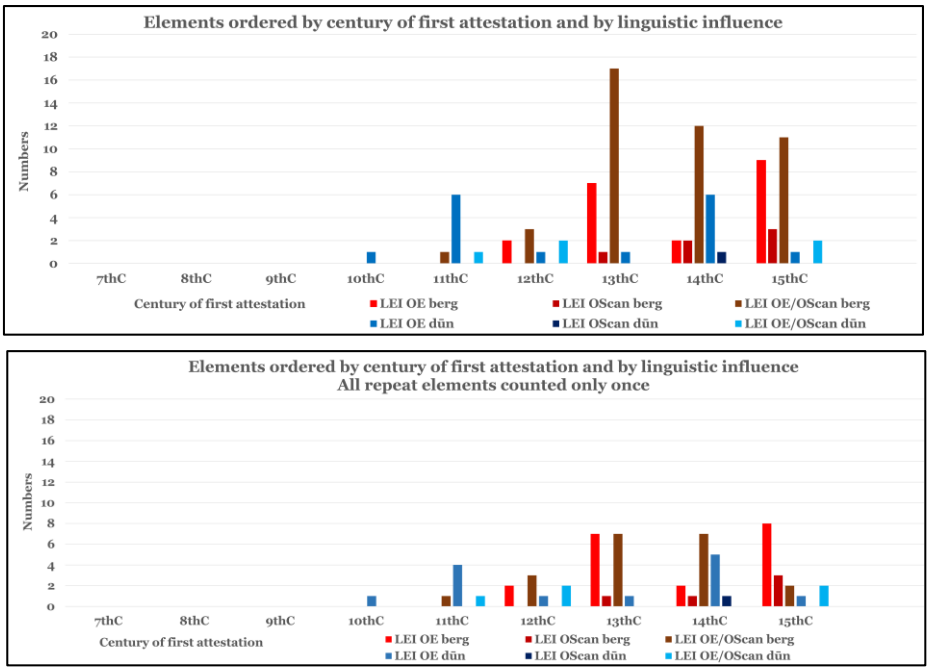
Figure 6. *Symbolising the proportion of OScan-influenced names compared to the total of names showing either definite presence or absence of OScan influence in the same corpus.*

5.2. Distinguishing between variety and repetition

It is important to assess whether OScan influence is driven by a small number of compounds used frequently and repetitively, or whether there is variety and non-recurrency in the compounds displaying OScan influence. In the former scenario, a possible interpretation might be that a single compound name had been adopted by a population and used almost as a 'ready-made' name, without it necessarily being indicative of the underlying language spoken by those using the name. In contrast in the latter scenario, where a great deal of originality and variation survives in the OScan-influenced name stock, it seems more likely that these names represent fresh coinings, rather than an imported pre-existing name type. If so, they are potentially more reliable as an indicator of the kind of language spoken by those coining the names. One way of assessing this is by separating out the names by *berg* or *dūn*, century of first attestation and category of linguistic influence (OE, OScan or OE/OScan). The results can be graphed counting all the names, and also graphed removing all the repeat compounds, counting the first-attested example only. In the bar charts shown in Figures 7 and 8, the decrease in the height of the bar charts between the first and second graphs indicates whether or not there is a lot of recurrency.



Figures 7a and 7b. *Bar charts showing corpus place-names in Cumberland, separated by berg or dūn, century of first attestation and linguistic influence. The first graph contains all names; the second only contains the earliest instance of any recurrent compounds.*



Figures 8a and 8b. *Bar charts showing corpus place-names in Leicestershire, separated by berg or dūn, century of first attestation and linguistic influence. The first graph contains all names; the second only contains the earliest instance of any recurrent compounds.*

A county like Cumberland has very little recurrency, whereas Leicestershire displays a great deal of recurrency in this corpus.[11]

5.3. Making use of contextual evidence

Since the corpus underlying this study was not initially assembled to quantify OScan influence in naming, but to examine the suggestion that there were universally applicable topographic profiles for *berg, crug* and *dūn,* it contains much information from areas in the south and south-west of the country, where OE speech was more dominant. This actually aids in distinguishing between OE-influenced *berg*-names and their OScan-influenced counterparts. There are clear differences between the two, based on the themes that are picked out in the collocations and the ways in which *berg* is or is not collocating thematically

[11] There are interesting questions to be explored about the nature of language contact in counties such as Leicestershire that use greater numbers of recurrent compounds which are linguistically indistinguishable or mutually intelligible between OE and OScan: see LLOYD (forthcoming-b).

in the respective zones of linguistic influence. This became very apparent when using the GIS online project and filtering the database based on a particular theme of collocation. For instance, if crop collocations are selected as the topic of interest, an almost perfectly binary split emerges in the corpus between the north and south of the country (see Figure 9).

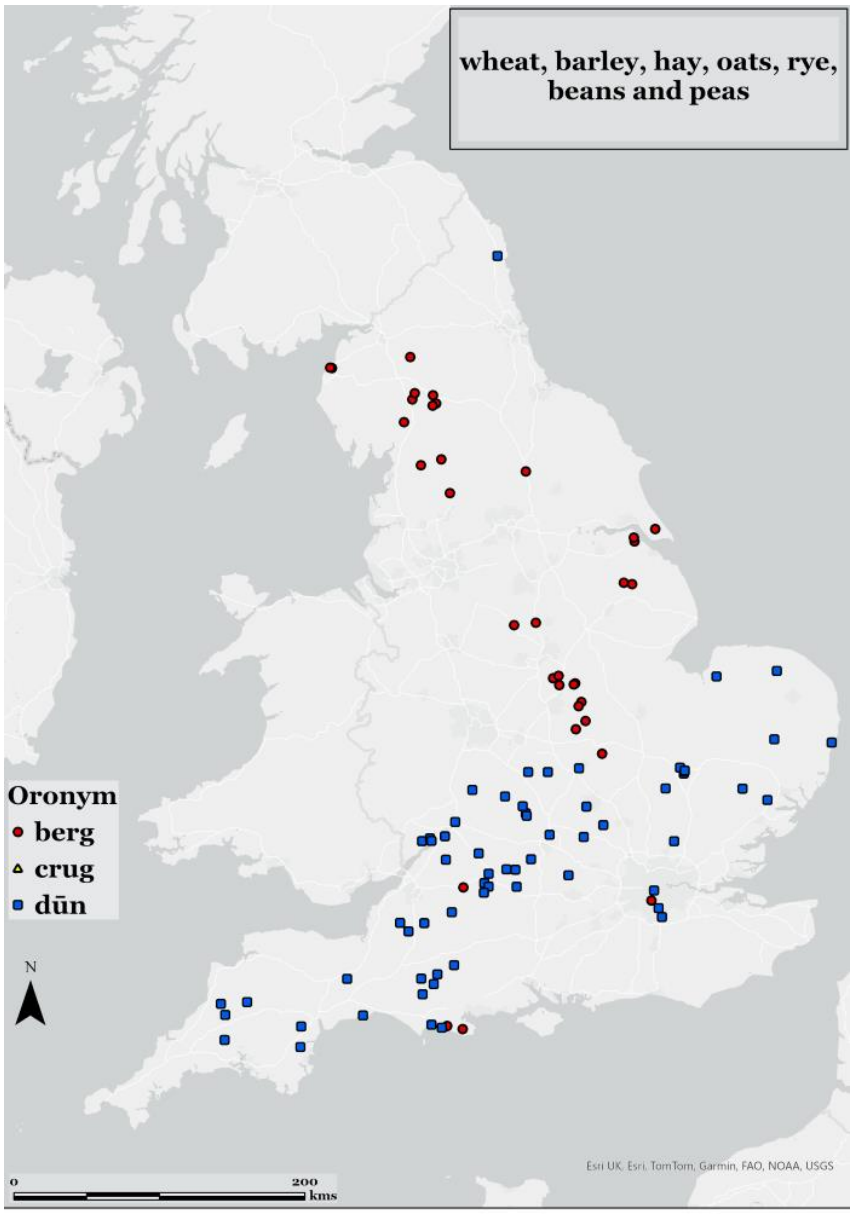


Figure 9. *Place-name collocations that reference various crops.*

Strikingly, the crop collocations are nearly always with *dūn* in the south, but with *berg* in the more northern or OScan-influenced areas.[12] COATES (2012: 216) has already observed that "it is striking how many, and how often, 'grain-crop' words collocate with words for hills, especially *dūn.*" He did not pursue the idea further in that article. The observation is indeed borne out in the south by this study's corpus. However, in the more northern areas, it is *berg* that pairs with elements signifying crops. Yet, OE *berg* in the south rarely, if ever, collocates with crops, or even with any other elements that might suggest farming. Very different themes, more redolent of places further afield from settlement and on the boundaries of settled land, emerge amongst OE *berg*-names in the south. There is not the space here to expand upon and detail this in terms of the underlying evidence. What is key to notice is that the collocation patterns in OE-dominated areas stand out so strongly compared to very different patterns in areas that have OScan influence, that this difference acts as important contextual evidence. It helps to support the suggestion that names, which might otherwise lack certainty on purely formal linguistic grounds in terms of whether they exhibit OScan influence, are more likely than not to be part of OScan-influenced naming, given how different OE *berg*-names are in their collocations.

In addition, there is much that can be said about why crops might collocate either with *dūn* in the south or OScan *berg* in the more northern areas. Crops are not usually planted on high and craggy spots. They need protection from exposure. People need to be able to access them relatively easily during cultivation. They also need good water management, neither being so far above the spring line that they struggle to be well-watered, nor being so stuck in mire that they are waterlogged. One can see how gentle slopes might provide good drainage on a site, making it advantageous for the cultivation of crops, particularly in the wetter winter months. In other words, the vital information on land use provided by looking closely at the collocations making up these place-names, and the themes they embody, sheds further light on the nature of the sites associated with these names. There are other themes within the corpus,

[12] Some of the apparent outliers—those not conforming to the binary split—are questionable. 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* 'hay'; *Ay*- and *Hay*- spellings alternate (EKWALL 1960: 20). Three of the southern examples collocating with *berg* are lost names and may involve OE *ge(hæg)* 'enclosure': *on þe hegeberges* in Wiltshire is a solitary name-form from a charter purporting to be from 940CE (eSawyer 2025: S466). 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* attested in 1435 and Barrow Hayes attested in 1461 as *le Barryhey(e)s* (MILLS 1977–2020: 1:35, 127). If these questionable outliers are discounted, the north-south divide appears stronger still.

not discussed here, that further contribute to the rich and nuanced picture of what *berg* and *dūn* meant in different areas of the country at different points in time.

6. Conclusion

Although there has only been space in this article to give a brief overview of one case study from the underlying corpus, it is clear that the richness and nuance in English place-naming lies not in a single, uniform, codified system stretching throughout the country; rather, there are many intriguing patterns present. The place-name distributions, representing definite phenomena, can be used to chart how people perceived the land and made use of it, as well as how those perceptions and uses shifted through time.[13] Where these patterns are mainly present in microtoponymy, there is a clear insight into local perception and use of the land, rather than something that was imposed top-down centrally.

It is not just the methodologies and digital tools outlined in the first half of the article that help to render the historical landscape visible and to enrich and sustain our connections to place; it is also the tracing of specific detail—rooted and anchored in particular places (rather than a one-size-fits-all system)—that helps to enrich and sustain connection. Paying close attention to the nuanced differences observed throughout the country, and trying to make sense of what is observed, truly brings a historical perception of the landscape alive.

Abbreviations

BGS	British Geological Survey
EA	Environment Agency
EPNS	English Place-Name Society
GIS	Geographic Information System
ME	Middle English
ModE	Modern English
NLS	National Library of Scotland
OE	Old English
OS	Ordnance Survey
OScan	Old Scandinavian
VEPN	*The Vocabulary of English Place-Names*

[13] Although not discussed here, another topic tackled by the research into this article's underlying corpus is the shifting meaning in OE *dūn* as it moves through ME *doun(e)* into ModE *down*.

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Abstract

Place-names involving landscape terminology have rightly captured the imagination of many English place-name scholars, as well as researchers from other disciplines. For over half a century, research has focussed on understanding nuance in these names through fieldwork and map-based assessment. The aim has been to shed light on how people viewed their landscape and how that motivated their naming practice.

In recent years, new GIS-based technology has revolutionised the visual presentation of mapped data, enabling the combination of onomastic evidence with other historical, topographical and geological mapping. This article presents a new online GIS project, showcasing its power as a portable research tool. At the same time, it argues that such a tool needs to be used hand in hand with site work, iteratively and heuristically.

In the second half of the article, a specific case study is presented from the underlying corpus. It demonstrates how there is great particularity in the patterns shown in these place-names. The influence of Old Scandinavian in naming is discerned in the use of the element *berg*, and contrasted with the use of the same element in Old English-dominated areas. The digital tool proves no less effective in assisting linguistic analysis of the names than it is in assessing the topographic nature of the features associated with the names.

Keywords: toponyms, GIS, landscape, topography, Old Scandinavian influence