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Burial features in West Midlands charters

Della Hooke (pp. 1–40)

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ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	*Cornish Place-Name Elements*.
EPNE	*English Place-Name Elements*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN BdHu	*The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire*.
PN Brk	*The Place-Names of Berkshire*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**.
PN Bu	*The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.*
PN Ca	*The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*.
PN Ch	*The Place-Names of Cheshire*, Parts **1**–**5**.
PN Cu	*The Place-Names of Cumberland*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**.
PN D	*The Place-Names of Devon*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN Db	*The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, Parts **1**, **2** and **3**.
PN Do	*The Place-Names of Dorset*, Parts **1–4**.
PN Du	*The Place-Names of County Durham*, Part **1**.
PN Ess	*The Place-Names of Essex*.
PN ERY	*The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.*
PN Gl	*The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, Parts **1**–**4**.
PN Hrt	*The Place-Names of Hertfordshire*.
PN Le	*The Place-Names of Leicestershire*, Parts **1–7**.
PN Li	*The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*, Parts **1**–**7**.
PN Mx	*The Place-Names of Middlesex* (apart from the *City of London*).
PN Nf	*The Place-Names of Norfolk*, Parts **1**–**3**.
PN Nt	*The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.*
PN NRY	*The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.*
PN Nth	*The Place-Names of Northamptonshire*.
PN O	*The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN R	*The Place-Names of Rutland*.
PN Sa	*The Place-Names of Shropshire*, Parts **1–9**.
PN Sr	*The Place-Names of Surrey*.
PN St	*The Place-Names of Staffordshire*, Part **1**.
PN Sx	*The Place-Names of Sussex*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN W	*The Place-Names of Wiltshire*.
PN Wa	*The Place-Names of Warwickshire*.
PN We	*The Place-Names of Westmorland*, Parts **1** and **2**.
PN Wo	*The Place-Names of Worcestershire*.
PN WRY	*The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Parts **1**–**8**.

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Burial Features in West Midland Charters[1]

Evidence of archaeological interest is frequently to be found in early documentary sources. Among the latter, pre-Conquest charters and their associated boundary clauses must be considered especially valuable since they contain details of landscape features which can be located on the ground and therefore studied in conjunction with place-names, archaeological data and surviving surface evidence. Although many of these features are of Anglo-Saxon origin, others represent relict landscape features from earlier periods. However, a careful investigation of the linguistic terms is necessary before it can be accepted that these convey any information about the specific date of origin of any feature. Among those terms of particular interest to archaeologists are ones referring to fortifications, routeways and burial features, and it is this third group which forms the subject of the present discussion, which describes the evidence available in the former West Midland counties of Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire.

Terms used to describe burial features include the Old English *beorg* and *hlǣw* or *hlāw*, and Primitive Welsh *crūg*, all of which may have indicated tumuli but also appear to have been used to describe natural hills. No such ambiguity surrounds the OE terms *byrgels* and *byrgen*, both meaning 'burial', although

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the nature of the latter is by no means fully understood. The word *cist* 'a chest, a coffin', may also have referred to the remains of a burial feature. Some of these features may already have become known as local landmarks before the clauses were drawn up. The absence of the definite article is perhaps suggestive of such a usage, implying that the features described by name were already known in the locality, rather than merely described in passing.

Literary evidence

Literary evidence confirms that the term *beorg* could be used to describe a natural hill or mountain, for the Alps, Mount Sion and Mount Atlas figure amongst mountains to which this term applied.[2] Yet the more specialized meaning of barrow, indicating a natural burial mound, is also apparent, as in references to the tumulus of Beowulf erected upon the headland of Hronesness, which was to be known by passing seamen as *Bīowulfes biorh*, 'Beowulf's barrow'.[3] The term *beorg* is also used on numerous occasions in the same poem to describe the tumulus in which the dragon guards his age-old treasure. The term *hlǣw* is grouped with both natural and man-made features in the Codex Exoniensis: *beorges þær ne muntas. steape ne stondaþ. ne stānclifu. heah hlifiaþ. swa her mid us . ne dene ne dalu. ne dunscrafu. hlæwas ne hlincas:* 'nor hills nor mountains there stand deep, nor stony cliffs tower high, as here with us; nor dells nor dales, nor mountain-caves, rising nor hilly chains', as a rendering from the Latin

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nec tumulus crescit, nec cava vallis hiat[4] but has been noted by the present writer to be used much more frequently to describe a burial feature. Usually the reference is to the barrow mound and Beowulf's barrow was to tower, as a *heaðo-mære hlǣw* 'a renowned tumulus', over *Hrones-næs*, but there are also associations with the burial chamber itself and the treasure of the dragon lay inside a *eorð-sele hlǣw under hrūsan* a 'burial chamber below the ground'.[5] There is an obvious and frequent association between the term *hlǣw* and burial and, again, in the Anglo-Saxon version of the Life of St. Guthlac, Hermit of Crowland, *hlǣw* describes a mound broken open for treasure, the latter presumably the grave-goods of a pagan burial.[6] To return to the poem of Beowulf, there are few such explicit descriptions in literature of such a burial, for after the funeral fire the body of the dead hero is carried into the tumulus and, with the treasure, left 'to the keeping of the earth'.[7] Thus the *hlǣw* mounds become entangled in pagan folk lore, to be associated with the spirits in an Anglo-Saxon charm: *hlude wæran hỳ la hlude ða hỳ ofer þone hlǣw ridan*[8] 'loud they were, lo loud, when they rode over the mound'.

Place-name and charter evidence

Place-name scholars have been careful to avoid too rigid an interpretation of the terms *beorg*, *hlǣw* and *crūg*, regarding 'natural hill' as the most likely meaning unless there is direct archaeological

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evidence of a funerary connection.[9] Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that the second possible meaning should always be borne in mind when examining such a feature. As prominent features visible in the landscape both natural and man-made mounds would be likely to attract attention as local landmarks and, as small but obvious features, barrows would have been particularly useful to boundary surveyors attempting to describe a boundary line with as much precision as possible. These terms occur with considerable frequency in the boundary clauses, with *beorg* usually more common than *hlāw*. *Cruc*, as a British word, usually only occurs when it has become incorporated into a place-name. In the three West Midland counties *beorg* has been noted in charters on 73 occasions, apparently referring to 64 separate features or groups of features and *hlāw* on 33 occasions, referring to 27 separate features or groups of features, while *crūg* probably occurs only 3 times.

A number of writers have investigated the meaning of the terms with special reference to the charters and tend to find the connection with burial more prominent than in place-name evidence. Kemble[10], writing in the mid-nineteenth century concludes: 'nothing was more common than solitary burial under a mound or tumulus upon the uncultivated ground which separated the posessions of different communities or even individual settlers, and consequently nothing is more common than to find such funeral tumuli referred

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to as memorable marks in the boundaries of Anglo-Saxon estates'. He recognised that both the terms *beorg* and *hlāw* might also be applied to natural hills but stressed a more usual sepulchral purpose, especially for the term *hlāw*: 'although the word *hlāw* (m), still called *low* in some parts of England, may have a more general sense of *hill*, or a slight rise in the surface of the soil, yet its usual and proper meaning is also that of a barrow for sepulchral purposes'. Grundy[11] was less hesitant, and while agreeing that *beorg* might have several meanings in other documents, found that in the charters of Hampshire 'in no single case is there any real reason to suppose that it means anything but a barrow. The evidence of the Berkshire and Wiltshire charters tends more definitely to the same conclusion.' Similarly with the term *hlāw* 'in the charters it is, as far as I have been able to trace its denotation, always used of a tumulus'.

Beorg: Archaeological and field evidence

In view of these comments it is obviously necessary to subject the meaning of these terms to careful analysis, especially as the views of Kemble and Grundy were presented at a time when archaeological data was still somewhat sparse. Although both writers were actively concerned with field work in examining boundaries they do not appear to have located any actual burial features, nor did they attempt to correlate the existing archaeological data with the charter evidence. Such work has been undertaken by

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Grinsell in Berkshire and Dorset[12] and by Grinsell and O'Neil in Gloucestershire.[13] In Berkshire Grinsell noted that 11 of the 28 *beorg* sites in the charters could be identified as surviving round barrows and that in Dorset 23 of the 33 *beorg* sites could be identified as round barrows or groups of round barrows, 2 as long barrows and 1 as a 'shapeless mound'. Extending this work with O'Neil into Gloucestershire he was able to correlate 16 of the 35 charter *beorg* sites with surviving tumuli, 14 of them Bronze Age round barrows and a further 3 Neolithic long barrows, one of the latter within a group of round barrows. The Gloucestershire study was not confined to *beorg* sites noted in charters and a further 13 tumuli were noted at sites suggested by place-names, 8 of them round barrows, 5 probable long barrows. Since this study a number of additional Gloucestershire charters have been transcribed which contain a further four *beorg* features, none of which, however, has been found to be a known tumulus. The identification of these features is dependent upon correct solutions of the boundary clauses and a re-assessment of the solution suggested by Grundy for a clause of land in Bibury (S 1254)[14] casts doubt upon the identification of the *rawan berh* as either the round barrow Bibury 1 or 2, and points to a location for this feature elsewhere on the northern boundary at a site where field names also suggest the existence of a former barrow but where none survives.

On a number of occasions Grinsell and O'Neil

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noted prominent natural hills carrying the *beorg* term, among them Nibley Knoll in Wotton-under-Edge and Rodborough Hill in Rodborough, but after an examination of the Gloucestershire evidence felt able to interpret the term *beorg* more rigidly than in earlier papers, concluding that this term was used 'generally for barrows but sometimes for natural hills', with a much greater emphasis upon the former meaning than had been suggested by place-name scholars. The fact that *beorg* features could be described as 'broken', implying looting for grave-goods, was suggested by Grinsell as further confirmation of such a meaning[15] and Kemble notes one reference in a charter of Worthy, Hants, where the bounds run *to be westan ðām beorge ðe ādolfen wæs* 'to the west of the barrow that was dug into'[16]. It seems possible that visual appearance, rather than an awareness of function, may sometimes have influenced the use of this term, or that natural features may have been occasionally confused with burial mounds. A small natural hill on the bounds of Evenlode seems to have been the *lytlan beorhe* (S 1325) and a low stony mound of natural origin on the boundary of Hawling as another *lytlan beorge* (S 179). Nevertheless, of the *beorg* features noted in the charters of Gloucestershire 20% have so far been identified as surviving tumuli.

In Worcestershire and Warwickshire few barrows survive and the archaeological evidence is unfortunately unlikely to cast much light upon the true

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interpretation of this term. Many of the place-name locations bearing a *beorg* name are hills, amongst them such prominent hills as Allesborough Hill in Pershore Holy Cross and Barrow Hill in Feckenham. Only one place-name site, Barrow Hill in Chaddesley Corbett, has been identified as a surviving tumulus, a round barrow of unusual large size. It has to be remembered, however, that hills and watershed ridges were often chosen as sites for barrow construction and had not actual tumuli been noted at a number of Gloucestershire sites the reference might otherwise have been considered to be to the hills themselves. Of the Gloucestershire place-name sites, Jack Barrow in Duntisbourne Abbot, for instance, lay upon a hill-top but was identified as the Bronze Age round barrow Duntisbourne Abbot I.

There are other reasons, too, for often suggesting that the term should be translated as 'barrow' rather than 'hill'. The boundary clauses were referring to landmarks which needed to be located with great precision if they were to fulfil the function of narrowly delimiting a particular boundary line and in these circumstances the features named tended to be small, prominent mounds rather than vague areas of hilly terrain. The *beorg* features in the charters seem to be very accurately located in the clauses and their position at specific points frequently suggests that the *beorg* name did not refer to whole hills. Thus the boundary of Seckley in Wolverley (S 212, S 211),

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running to *heasecan berh* 'the barrow of the hassock-grass', crosses the south-eastern spur of Axborough Hill rather than the actual summit and that of Broadway (S 786) runs across another such spur at the *wad beorhe* or 'woad barrow'. Barrows were often placed at such a location on the brow rather than the summit of a hill, perhaps in order to be seen more clearly from afar. Furthermore, some charter *beorg* sites do not occupy hilly sites at all, the *lauergeboerge* or 'lark barrow', of Bretforton (S 80), apparently located upon a featureless, plateau-like terrain.

Detailed local field work can often suggest more accurate solutions of individual charters and may even lead to the identification of actual features. Following a more accurate solution of the Pendock, Wo, charter (S 1314) by the present writer the *stan beorgan* has now been located in the field and identified as the remains of a Bronze Age round barrow (Fig. 1). A study of the nineteenth-century map accompanying the tithe award schedule shows that the boundary of the eastern portion of the parish deviated from its straight course along the western boundary of this unit to omit a field called 'Crookberrow' in which the remains of a barrow are still visible. Detailed investigations have similarly located the site of the two *stanbeorge* features of Oldberrow in Warwickshire (S 79). These were situated on the watershed ridge followed by the western boundary of the parish where the name 'Great Stanberry' was given to an adjacent

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field in the parish of Morton Bagot and 'Near Hanbury' to its neighbour in Oldberrow. The latter name is derived from 'Famburrows', recorded in the seventeenth century[17], a direct corruption of the charter name. Although no tumulus survives at this spot today, a circular mound of gravelly soil some eighteen metres across, situated upon a hill-top a little further to the north, may represent the remains of the second *stanbeorge* or 'stone barrow'. It is noteworthy that the stone barrows of these two charters seem to have led to a *beorg* parish name in the vicinity, an indication, perhaps, that *beorg* estate names should be suspected of an archaeological significance. These stone barrows lay upon the boundaries of Oldberrow in Warwickshire and Berrow in Worcestershire, although the modern settlements bearing these names lie a considerable distance from the recorded barrows. It will be many years before all *beorg* sites noted in field and place-names in these two counties have been investigated in the field but at Wasperton, Wa, the ring-ditch of a possible barrow has been revealed by aerial photography in a field known as 'Great Highberry', here a lowland site where the *beorg* name cannot have described a natural hill (Fig. 2) and undoubtedly many similar associations between place-name and archaeological evidence will be revealed by further investigation.

With the possibility of the *beorg* term in place-names and charters indicating burial tumuli, the

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distribution patterns of this term deserve close analysis. There are a number of difficulties in the interpretation of distribution patterns of place-name elements. Many of the place-names are not recorded until the medieval or later periods when the terms may have been used much more loosely and perhaps more significance should be placed on those names recorded by the time of the Conquest. Names used in pre-Conquest charters are particularly valuable in that there is a possibility that the terms are used with much greater precision at this early date. Charter evidence does not, however, exist for the whole area and the distribution patterns must be interpreted against a background of known charter survival[18]. Nevertheless, interesting comparisons may be made between the place-name and archaeological evidence (Figs. 3 &4). Generally place-names containing the term are found over a wide area in the West Midlands but concentrations of *beorg* features remain marked in those areas of known tumuli.

Distribution of beorg features

The combined evidence of place-names and charters in Gloucestershire shows the *beorg* term to be particularly frequent over the area of the Oolitic limestone escarpment of the Cotswolds, an area known to have been settled intensively in prehistoric times. A concentration of *beorg* features in the north-east Cotswolds may be noted, an area in which 11 of the 16 charter *beorg* features have been identified as

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Bronze Age round barrows. Given the low survival rate of barrows in Worcestershire it is difficult to judge the significance of the place-name and charter evidence. Both sources of evidence suggest that barrows were much more widespread in the north and east of the county than the survival of field monuments would seem to imply and the distribution of charter *beorg* sites indicates possible barrows on the Triassic Sandstone hills of North Worcestershire and on the broken terrain of sandstone outcrops in the Keuper Marls of mid-Worcestershire. A belt of such features along the eastern margins of the Severn valley suggests a wider area of barrow burial than that known from the cropmarks of ring ditches, many of which must have been round barrows, as revealed by aerial photography over the river gravels of the Severn valley. In the south-east of the county, in those areas of the Vale of Evesham lying at the foot of the Cotswold escarpment, *beorg* sites again suggest an area of barrow burial more extensive than that known from cropmarks. In Warwickshire the correlation between the place-name and archaeological evidence is pronounced, with *beorg* features appearing most frequently in the southern and eastern sections of the county. Charter evidence is very limited in this county but a number of *beorg* features in the south of the area, on the boundaries of Tredington and Alderminster, continue the above trend. A second group lie in the north-west of the county and suggest that barrows may also have been a feature of the higher land on the Warwickshire/

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Worcestershire border. The *cruc* names do not alter the above-noted patterns and although fewer in number, do not appear to be restricted to western areas. However, the *crūg* term is often difficult to distinguish from *cirice*, meaning 'a church', and although there are many occurrences of the term when it is unlikely to have had the latter meaning, it must be interpreted with some care.

Beorg names

The references to 'broken' barrows have been noted as suggestive of tumuli known to have been broken open in search of the grave-goods contained within. A number of these occur in the area and include the *Brocnanbyrh* of Tredington, Wa, (S 55), and the *brocenan beorge* of Evenlode, Gl, (S 1325), the former perhaps a Neolithic long barrow lying to the north-east of Berryfield Farm in the neighbouring parish of Ilmington.[19] Place-names, too, record several barrows described as *holh* or 'hollow', perhaps again suggesting an opened tumulus. In Worcestershire, Hobro Farm in Wolverley and Holberrow Green in Inkberrow may be of this type and Gloucestershire examples add Bauble's Barrow in Farmington, recorded as *Hollowbarrowe* in 1621, while, also in Gloucestershire, Idel Barrow in Upton St. Leonards may be the *īdel* or 'empty' barrow, one which had been looted for its treasure.[20]

Most of the names used to describe *beorg* features are of a descriptive nature, usually reflecting the

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visual characteristics of the individual mounds or their location. They refer to barrows by number, size and shape, the *longam beorge* 'the long *beorg*', of Swell, Gl, (S 1026), identified, for instance, with the Neolithic long barrow Swell IV. The name of the *stret beorge* 'the road barrow', upon the boundary of the same estate, betrays its location beside the *strǣt*, the Roman Ryknield Street. A number of names may give some insight into the nature of the surrounding countryside in the Anglo-Saxon or early medieval period. The *wudan bergas* of Shottery, Wa, (S 64), probably on the boundary of Ruin Clifford, indicate nearby woodland in the early eighth century, and the presence of hawks, which gave their name to the *hafoc beorge* 'hawk barrow', of Deerhurst holdings (S 1551), suggests extensive woodlands along the eastern margins of the Severn valley in Gloucestershire. In contrast, more open country is indicated by the reference to *brōm* 'broom', in the name of Bromsberrow, Gl, and to *hǣð* 'heath', in the name of the *hæð beorh* 'heath barrow', of Cofton Hackett, Wo, (S 1272). Again, the larks which seem to have been abundant over the *lauergeberge* of Bretforton, Wo, (S 80), the *lafercan beorh* of Cutsdean, Gl, (S 1335, S 1353) and the *lafercan beorh* of Evenlode, Gl, (S 1325), may indicate open, cleared land in the intensively cultivated areas of the Windrush and Evenlode valleys of Gloucestershire and the Vale of Evesham in Worcestershire.[21] Sometimes the names indicate no more than local conditions but the name of Harborough, Wa,

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recorded by 1086 and meaning 'the hill or barrow of the *heord* or flock', suggests open grazing land at this date on the rolling country of south-east Warwickshire and the same name occurs in the thirteenth century on the Clent Hills of north Worcestershire in Harborough Hill in Hagley.

Hlāw: the archaeological and field evidence

In his studies in the south-west of England Grinsell noted the restricted distribution of the *hlāw* term in charters, for although the *beorg* term was represented in each of the counties of Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire the term *hlāw* was most frequent in Berkshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire and entirely absent from Dorset and Somerset. On this somewhat negative evidence Grinsell was prepared to suggest that 'the term *hlāw* might have been used for Saxon barrows in contrast with the term *beorh* for prehistoric and perhaps also Roman barrows. Such an explanation would at least be consistent with the apparent absence of the term *hlāw* in Dorset and Somerset where pagan Saxon barrows are very unusual for the same reason that pagan Saxon cemeteries are very unusual, although both occasionally occur'.[22] Confirmatory evidence was seen in the description of barrows as 'broken' or looted being restricted to *beorg* rather than *hlāw* features, and to only *beorg* sites being described as *rūh* or 'overgrown'.

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In the search for further evidence Grinsell found mounds at 3 of the 12 *hlāw* sites noted in Berkshire charters, while the *stanhlæwe* of the Ashbury, Uffington and Kingston charters may have described a chambered long barrow. Of the five Gloucestershire sites examined with O'Neil, surface features were noted at only one site, a Neolithic long barrow, Swell V, with evidence of secondary Saxon internment. The association of this barrow, noted in the charter as *hættes lawe*, possibly 'the *hlāw* of Hætt', with Saxon burial, would seem to be strong argument for a precise meaning of the *hlāw* term were it not for the fact that intrusive pagan Saxon burials are also recorded in a neighbouring barrow Swell IV, described in the same charter as *þam longan beorge*. There seems to be a possibility of confusion in the nineteenth-century reports but the evidence, therefore, cannot be taken as conclusive.[23] Nevertheless, evidence continues to accumulate. Of the 12 *hlāw* sites in Wiltshire charters, Bonney[24] notes that the only one to have been excavated, *posses hlæwe* on the boundary of Swallowcliffe, yielded evidence of 'a richly furnished late Saxon grave, but one which appears to have been inserted into a Bronze Age barrow. This perhaps provides some sort of answer to the question raised by Grinsell as to which term would have been used to describe a prehistoric barrow with intrusive pagan Saxon internments'. However, the remarkably rich Saxon burial found in the barrow of Taplow in Buckinghamshire, which appears to have been the

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burial of a chieftan called Tæppa, was a primary burial,[25] still connected with the term *hlāw*. In Derbyshire, too, 'where the pagan Anglo-Saxons were particularly fond of barrow burial, barrows are still invariably called lows'.[26] At least 30 of the 70 names incorporating *low* in this county can be identified as burial-mounds and 17 of these have yielded evidence of Anglo-Saxon burial.[27] Although many of these are secondary internments within barrows a number appear to have been primary burials, including ones near Kenslow Knoll in Middleton, at Stand Low in Newton Grange and White Low in Elton. Again, burial of unspecified date was confirmed within the large barrow which gave rise to the name of Ludlow in Herefordshire.[28] Within recent years a tumulus known as 'Wardlow' on Wredon Hill, Ramshorn, in Staffordshire was excavated in advance of quarrying and found to contain at least four Saxon inhumation burials.[29]

Although evidence linking the *hlāw* term with Anglo-Saxon burial seems to be increasing, Gelling has noted the frequency with which the term is used in place-names to describe hilly ground, especially in the north of England,[30] and the evidence obviously requires a detailed appraisal in many different regions. Pagan burials frequently occupied hill-top positions, partly perhaps to be prominent memorials, but possibly because there was a greater chance of barrow survival on uncultivated ground. In the West Midlands 35% of charter and 19% of place-name *hlāw* sites appear

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to have been prominent hill-tops, with the highest percentage of such locations being noted in Worcestershire. Yet field investigations by the present writer suggest that the *hlāw* term was not used in charters or place-names indiscriminately and that it seldom referred to a natural hill. In Gloucestershire no charter *hlāw* site corresponds to a prominent hill-top, although the majority lie upon rising ground. Several, indeed, occupy lowland sites, such as the *hleowede hlawe* of the Bishop's Cleeve charter (S 141) which field names suggest was situated beside the River Swilgate. In Worcestershire 35% of charter sites are located upon hill summits but only 19% of place-name sites, and the *æst merelowe* of Wickhamford of the Evesham charter (S 80) lay upon featureless rolling terrain. Two separate landmarks noted as *hlāw* features on the boundary of *Wican* in Worcestershire were translated as *monticulos* or 'mounds' in a separate Latin survey and again many of the other landmarks appear to have been too localised to have been topographical features. The *hlæwe* of Great Comberton, referred to in a boundary clause of Pershore holdings (S 786), could hardly have been the great mass of Bredon Hill, while a cluster of such features noted as the *þreo hlâwas* on Low Hill in Hartlebury, Wo, (S 1351), seem to have been individual barrows like the *twam beorgum* and *ðreo beorgas* of Swell, Gl, (S 1026), all known to have been actual tumuli. The choice of *hlāw* sites as the meeting-places of several Domesday

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hundreds in Gloucestershire again suggests that some prominent and distinctive mound was a visible feature in the locality.

Neither can name evidence be dismissed. Although there are references to 'broken' barrows no *hlǣw* site appears to have been opened, but a mythological connection with treasure, a not uncommon tradition connected with the inclusion of grave-goods with a pagan burial, is indicated in the name of Drakelow in Wolverley, Wo, a thirteenth-century name referring to a *draca* or 'dragon' who was believed to guard buried treasure. At the south-eastern corner of Cleeve Prior a *turf hlawan/Turfhleôwun/turf leo* (S 222, S 1591a, S 751) was situated at a spot known in the 19th century as Harrow Hill, a name possibly derived from *hearg* indicating a pagan site.

The most convincing evidence, however, comes from archaeological investigations (Figs 5 and 6). Within recent years an Anglo-Saxon burial has been discovered less than half a mile away from the *hleowede hlawe* of the Bishops Cleeve, Gl, (S 141) charter, confirming the presence of Anglo-Saxon pagan burial sites in the area, although *hættes lawe* (S 1026) remains the only Gloucestershire charter or place-name *hlǣw* site known to have a direct link with Anglo-Saxon burial. 11 separate *hlǣw* features have been noted in the charters of Worcestershire, in 13 references, with a further 8 in place-names. Another 11 have been noted

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in Warwickshire charters, although the number of surviving charters is much less than in Worcestershire, and the term occurs in three early place-names and 17 later ones. Warwickshire is known to have been an area of pagan Anglo-Saxon settlement and it is here that the archaeological evidence of pagan burial is most strongly associated with the *hlāw* term.

Firstly, there is evidence that barrow mounds were present at a number of *hlāw* sites in the past, although they have failed to survive. *Ðone hlâw* of Alveston, in the central Avon valley (S 1350), seems in later times to have been known as Oldborough 'the old barrow' and *eamnes hlewe* on the boundary of Wormleighton and Stoneton (S 1574) gave rise to the name of Berryhill Farm. Of other place-name sites, Dugdale records 'a tumulus, or heap of earth situate in a Lane on top of an Hill' at Pathlow, to the north of the River Avon on the boundary of Aston Cantlow.[31] The cross at Knightlow, 'the *hlāw* of the *cnihts* or young warriors', stands on a mound which may be a barrow.[32] On the boundary of Churchover parish, in the north-east of the county, a large tumulus near Gibbet Hill was known as the *Pelgrimslowe* in the fourteenth century and Dugdale reports that it was of such 'magnitude that it puts passengers beside the usual road'.[33] A large mound may also have existed at Brinklow in north-east Warwickshire before the construction of the Norman motte, for the Roman

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Fosse Way seems to have been aligned upon it.

Significantly, two of the above sites seem to have been associated with Anglo-Saxon burial, for an Anglo-Saxon urn was discovered at Brinklow 'on glebe land' c.1838 and Anglo-Saxon graves have been recorded in Churchover near Gibbet Hill from 1823 onwards, lying beside and on the Roman Watling Street.[34] Records are not clear but some of these may well have been within the tumulus described by Dugdale. If Moot Hill in Lighthorne has been correctly identified as the *Tremelau* of the Tremelau Hundred meeting-place, this *hlāw* site has also yielded evidence of Anglo-Saxon burial, for before 1846 hanging bowl escutcheons were found on the brow of the hill and skeletons in the same vicinity.[35] Near Rowley House in Stratford, *Rowlowe* in 1322, 'the rough *hlāw*', a burial was accompanied by a fifth-century pennanular brooch.[36] Reliable evidence also comes from the parish of Leek Wootton where recent excavations in advance of road construction uncovered a number of Anglo-Saxon burials on a site known as Blacklow Hill, 'the black *hlāw*', or 'the *hlāw* of Blæca', one grave containing a male skeleton buried with a scramaseax.[37]

Two of the Warwickshire charter *hlāw* sites appear to be linked with Anglo-Saxon burial. When the bounds of Long Itchington (S 898) are plotted, bounds which contain references to a *sic hlawe* and a *lytlan*

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hlawe, it is found that the latter must have occupied a position very similar to that in which Anglo-Saxon graves were uncovered in 1876 during gravel-digging.

One of the skeletons had a spearhead driven vertically through the body and would seem to be that of a warrior slain in battle (Fig. 7).[38] An early eleventh-century charter of Myton in the parish of Warwick St. Nicholas (S 967), records in its boundary clause *doddan lǣw* 'the *hlæw* of Dodda', this landmark immediately following that of the *leomenan* or River Leam (Fig. 8). Here Anglo-Saxon graves were discovered in 1851 and 1923 and although again early recordings are vague concerning exact location these correlations seem reliable.[39]

A further link also exists between *hlæw* sites and Anglo-Saxon burial. Several recent studies have examined the location of Anglo-Saxon burials and factors influencing their location. These seem to have included proximity to Roman roads and ancient routeways, a factor which also influenced the choice of hundred meeting-places. Many burials were also situated on rising ground such as on the brow of a hill, in clearly visible locations. Sometimes such sites overlook a settlement but often they were distant from any known settlement. The choice of remote locations is interesting and might arise from a number of factors. The burials may have been made on land not used for agriculture, either with a desire to preserve the latter or to ensure the survival of

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the grave. Charles-Edwards[40] has remarked upon a pagan belief prevelant in early times in Ireland that a dead ancestor could maintain an interest in the possession of the territory of his descendents, and future claimants were consequently instructed to enter their lands over the burial mounds of the dead who lay upon the boundaries. Alternatively, the graves may have been those of an Anglo-Saxon minority not readily accepted within the village community, some of them perhaps warriors slain in battle, as the Warwickshire example of Offchurch would suggest. Whatever the reasons influencing such a choice of a boundary location, this remains a characteristic location in many areas. In Wiltshire 29% of pagan Anglo-Saxon burial sites lie on boundaries and a further 13% within 1/10 mile of them, a total of 42% on or near boundaries.[41] In the West Midland counties of Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Worcestshire the proportion is only slightly smaller, with 41% on or near boundaries.[42]

Owing to the nature of the evidence all *hlǣw* sites noted in charters occupy boundary locations, whether these are the boundaries of parishes or smaller units, but the occurrence of *hlǣw* in place-names need not be expected to show any bias towards a boundary location. Yet not only do the majority of West Midland place-name sites lie distant from present settlement, but one third of them lie near to present-day boundaries. Of the Gloucestershire

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sites no fewer than five occupied boundary positions, the exceptions being within the large parish of Awre. In Worcestershire four of the five sites are similarly located, the exception being within the large parish of Wolverley, a parish known to contain internal divisions in the Anglo-Saxon period. In Warwickshire, of seventeen sites, only four were not near to parish boundaries. This location of the *hlǣw* features on or near to the boundaries of parishes takes on a new significance in the light of the known tendency for Anglo-Saxon burials to occupy boundary sites and may be presented as evidence for a connection between the two.

Hlǣw names

The names given to *hlǣw* features are often of a similar nature to those given to *beorg* features, with descriptive names showing individual *hlǣw* features to have been 'little', 'turf-covered', or associated with birds. Location gave rise to the name of the *hleowede hlawe* 'the sheltered *hlǣw*', of Stoke Orchard, Gl, (S 141), a feature shown by surviving field names to have occupied a low-lying position beside the River Swilgate. Similarly, the *æst merelowe* 'the east? boundary *hlǣw*', of the Evesham charter (S 80) was obviously situated upon an estate boundary. Although the *brer hlæw* indicates the presence of thorns growing near the boundary of Broadway, Wo, (S 786), *hlǣw* names tend to be generally less illustrative of conditions in

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the local countryside and more *hlāw* than *beorg* features are associated with personal names. Although Grinsell notes the 'very occasionally personal names do indicate the person buried in the barrow' they can also indicate individuals with associations in the locality.[43] In Worcestershire *Oswaldeslaw* on the boundary of Stoulton seems to have acquired its name after AD 964 when Low Hill, a prominent hill on a major routeway between Droitwich and the Avon valley, was said to have been chosen as the meeting-place of the new triple hundred of Oswaldslow, its name chosen to honour Bishop Oswald. Yet it may not be entirely coincidental that of the six *hlāw* sites associated with known Anglo-Saxon burial in the area five of them may be associated with personal names.

Hlāw Distribution

The argument for a rigid interpretation of the term *hlāw* in the West Midlands is a very strong one which should not be too lightly dismissed. If this argument carries any weight then the distribution of the term in place-names and charters should obviously warrant careful scrutiny. At present known Anglo-Saxon burial sites are almost entirely restricted to the eastern portions of Worcestershire and Gloucestershire but are more widely distributed over Warwickshire. This concentration is too much in evidence to be ignored but it must be remembered that a great number of these burials have come to

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light during gravel-working and most of them in chance discoveries. *Beorg* is a term found distributed widely wherever barrow burial was carried out, *hlāw* in this area remains frequent only in the areas of known Anglo-Saxon penetration. The relative frequency of the term *hlāw* in the place-names of Warwickshire has already been noted and the term also occurs eleven times in only a handful of charters. The charter *hlāw* features are found in the known area of Anglo-Saxon pagan burial, with a concentration in the Avon Valley and the Feldon of the south. The high incidence of the term appears to reflect the fact that this area was one of the earliest in the West Midlands to fall under Anglo-Saxon domination.[44] Place-names show the same concentration with an outlier further north in Cowley Wood, Bedworth. This does not stand alone for an Anglo-Saxon burial has been recorded at Oldbury. Less explicable outliers are noted in later place-names in the north-west of the county in Hawksley Hall, Kings Norton and Hockley Heath, Tanworth. The Gloucestershire *hlāw* features of the charters are confined to the Oolitic escarpment or its immediate vicinity, several of them reappearing in place-names. This area is also known to have been settled by the pagan Anglo-Saxons at a relatively early date, apparently as a secondary development from the Central Avon Valley.[45] But place-names also show a number of *hlāw* features further west in the valley of the Severn and in particular three early

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recordings have been noted to the west of the Severn in the parish of Awre. This concentration of names would be of considerable interest if the connection between such names and Anglo-Saxon burials could be verified. Bledisloe 'the *hlāw* of *Bliþ*'. was indeed an ancient earthwork which may have incorporated an earlier barrow and it was to serve as the meeting-place of Bledisloe Hundred, while Etloe 'the *hlāw* of *Eata*' and Hagloe 'the *hlāw* of *Hæcga*', lie not far distant. Romano-British power was strong here long after recessions were being experienced further east but Anglo-Saxon incursions may not have been entirely absent. The location of the sites beside the tidal estuary of the Severn, a known entry point for invasion, may not be conicidental, and it is not improbable that a Romano-British population may have felt the need for mercenary aid, a role which seems to have been played in other areas by Anglo-Saxon troops.[46] In Worcestershire charter *hlāw* features have been noted further west than any recorded Anglo-Saxon burial. They occur in the parish of Hartlebury to the east of the Severn and on the bounds of the *Wican* estate to the west. They are, however, most frequent in the south-east of the county in the known area of Anglo-Saxon penetration, an area where five charter occurrences have been noted. Place-name evidence, too, would add a number of sites in the north-west of the county as far afield as Lindridge and Wolverley. These are not, however, names recorded in an early context.

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Again the association with the main riverine corridors of the Severn, the Teme and the Avon calls for comment, areas which seem to have been core areas of estate development. With the remarkable correlation between the *hlāw* term in charters and place-names with known Anglo-Saxon burials in Warwickshire the unexplained distribution of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire become more interesting. The archaeological record for these counties is by no means complete and this is all the more reason for keeping an open mind towards the evidence available for these areas in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Byrgels: byrgen

It is unfortunate that in Worcestershire and Warwickshire there is no archaeological evidence available to reveal information about the terms *byrgels* or *byrgen*. Grinsell noted some correlation with Bronze Age barrows in Berkshire and Gloucestershire, the *hæþenan byrigelsas* of Cold Ashton, Gl, (S 414) apparently in the same location as the charter barrow *Fearn beorhg* (S 553) and Finberg[47] noted that the *hæðenan byrigelse* of Hawling (S 179) seemed to be the round barrows Hawling 5-10. Yet the limited distribution of these features is of interest, and the frequent association with a personal name. Kemble shows that Anglo-Saxons could be buried on the boundaries of estates outside recognised burial areas

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when he quotes[48] a clause of Bentley, Hants., in which the boundary runs *ðonan west on ða mearce ðær Ælfstān lið on hæðenan byrgels* 'thence westwards to the boundary mark (?) where Ælfstan lieth on? the heathen burial-place'. Burials associated with named individuals in the West Midlands are *Ælfstānes byriels* or *Eallistānes byrigels* on the southern slopes of Sheen Hill in South Littleton, Wo, (S 1599, S 1591a) and *ealhmundes byrigenne* on the bounds of Tardebigge, also in Worcestershire (S 1598). No archaeological evidence is available for either place and enlightenment upon the meaning and significance of this term must await similar studies elsewhere.

Conclusions

Recent studies seem to indicate that Old English terms were used with a much greater degree of precision than has previously been thought. Although a number of terms such as *beorg*, *crūg* and *hlāw* have been used to refer to natural hills they appear to have been used much more often than formerly realised to refer to specific burial features. The link is a visual one, in that the terms obviously referred initially to a distinctive mound or tumulus. In certain types of evidence, such as charter boundary clauses, the connection may be so direct as to be of considerable archaeological significance, and it is obvious that both place-name and charter evidence can provide a great deal of valuable

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information about archaeological features. Above all, these sources of information confirm the present inadequacy of the archaeological record. Any hypotheses of territorial organisation, and especially of the role of the pagan Anglo-Saxons in the West Midland area, must take into account the limited nature of the data at present available. Additional archaeological evidence may not be readily obtained but the charters and place-names of the area contain essential clues as to where it may be sought and provide a reference for estimating the likely original density of archaeological features where little surface evidence remains.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

1 Pendock, Worcs.

2 Wasperton, Warks.

3 *Beorg* features in place-names and charters

4 Barrows: the archaeological evidence

5 Hlāw, *hlǣw* in place-names and charters

6 Anglo-Saxon pagan burial sites in the West Midlands

7 Long Itchington, Warks.

8 Myton, Warks.

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Incidence of features

(place-name dates adjusted after Sawyer)

BEORG

Charter references, Worcestershire

Bengeworth	S 1590, K. 1358	on hæðene beorge
Bengeworth	S 1664, K. 1299	ðæt on hæðen beorgas
Broadway	S 786, B. 1282	on þa ealdan dic æt wad beorhe
Cofton Hackett	S 1272, B. 455 (1)	in hæð beorh midde weardne
Evesham	S 80, B. 125	in lauergeboerge usque ad boerges in wadberegwe in hallesborge
Evesham	S 1599, K. 1368	on Baggenbeorge west tô ðe beorges on ðone lytle grêne bearh on Ellesbeorh
Hampton	S 873, K. 662	ðæt on ælles beorh
Overbury & Conderton	S 216, B. 541	in swalawa bærh
Pendock	S 1314, B 542	be suþan stan beorgan
Pershore	S 786, B. 1282	on wad beorgas
Sedgeberrow	S 113, B. 223	stanbergas ruanberg
Shurnock, Feckenham	S 1227, B. 1006	to ipples berhge
Smite, Hindlip	S 1339, K. 618	tô babeles beorgen tô berge
Whittington	S 1361, K. 670	wiȝ westan ðone beorh
Wican	S 142, B. 219	(ad tumulum vocitatum kett) (innon kett)
Wolverley	S 211, B. 514	on heasecan berh
Wolverley	S 212, B. 513	on heasecan berh
Wolverley	S 726, B. 1134	on heasecan beorh

Early place-names, Worcestershire

Ashborough, Bromsgrove	Asseberga 1086
Axborough Hill, Wolverley	heasecan berh 866 *(as above)
'Fishborough' Hundred	Fisseberga 1086
Inkberrow	Intanbeorgas 789
Ipplesborough Hill, Feckenham	ipples berhge 11th *
Larkborough, Bretforton	lauergeboerge 709? (12th)*
Wadborough, Pershore-Holy-Cross	ad beorgas 972?*

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Charter references, Warwickshire

Alderminster	S 786, B. 1282	on rum beorgas
Oldberrow	S 79, B. 124	on stanbeorge
		on stanbeorge
Shottery	S 64, B. 123	wudan bergas
Teodeces leage	S 1307, B. 1111	to ulan bearhe
Tredington	S 55, B. 183	on Brocnanbyrh
		on Þadbeorgas

Early place-names, Warwickshire

Farnborough	Feornebeorh	c.1015
Grandborough	Greneburgan	1043
Harborough	Herdeberge	1086
Mappleborough Green, Studley	Mepelesbarwe	840 for 840x852
Shuckborough	Socheberge	1086

Charter references, Gloucestershire

Bibury	S 1254, B. 166	on rawan berh
Bourton-on-the-water	S 114, B. 230	inwinesburg
Bishops Cleeve	S 141, B. 246	to imman beorge
		on herrihtes beorh
Calmsden, N. Cerney	S 202, B. 466	on swiftan beorh
Cutsdean	S 1335, B. 1299	on wad beorh
		on lafercan beorh
Cutsdean	S 1353, K. 660	on wâdbeorh
		on lafercan beorh
Daylesford	S 84, B. 139	on nunnena beorgas
Daylesford	S 1340, K. 623	eâst tô Nunnena beorge
		west tô Babban beorge
Deerhurst	S 1551, F. no.187	on hafoc beorge
		on beorgwillan
		on beorg lægen
Donnington	S 115, B. 229	innon grene beorhes sice
		in twisebeorge
Dyrham	S 786, B. 1282	on mus beorh
		on fearn beorh
Evenlode	S 1325, B. 1238	on gild beorh
		to lafercan beorh
		to þan lytlan beorhe
		to þan 'to' brocenan beorge
Ewen, Kemble	S 1552, B. 673	usque Lytle Berwe
Hawkesbury	S 786, B 1282	on mæd beorh

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Hawling	S 179, B. 356	to þam lytlan beorge
Maugersbury	S 550, B. 882	to þam beorgan
		on þorn beorh
Naunton	S 1304, B. 1105	on þone litlan beorh
Notgrove	S 99, B. 165	to Balesbeorge
Pucklechurch	S 553, B. 887	on Fearn beorhg
Swell	S 1026, F.no.171	be suðan þam longam beorge
		to stret beorge
		into twam beorgum
		innon ðene litle beorh
		in ðone twiselede beorh
		innon þa ðreo beorgas
Woodchester	S 103, B. 164	roddan beorg
		hæslburg
Woodchester	S 1441, B 574	on Roddanbeorg sylfne
Wotton-under-Edge	S 467, B. 764	ofer nybban beorh easte weardne

Early place-names, Gloucestershire

Berrow Farm, Ashleworth	beorgwillan	11th*
Brightwells Barrow Hundred	Brictvoldesberg h'd	1086
Bromsberrow	Brvnmeberge	1086
'Ildeberg', Evenlode	Gildbeorh	969*
Lasborough, Weston Birt	Lesseberge	1086
'Letberg' Hundred	Letberg(e) h'd	1086
Longborough	Langeberge	1086
Ganborough, Little Barrow, Donnington	grenebeorhas	sice 779*
Rodborough	Roddan beorg	716-43 (11th)*

HLĀW, HLǢW

Charter references, Worcestershire

Broadway	S 786, B. 1282	on fugel hlæw
		on brer hlæw
Cleeve Prior	S 222, B. 537	on þone lytlan hlauw
		in turf hlawen
Evesham	S 80, B. 125	in æst merelowe
Evesham	S 1599, K. 1368	on Weremundes lâwe/ Weremôdes lâwe
Evesham	S 1591a, K. iii 395-6	on turfhleôwun
Hartlebury	S 1351, K. 653	on þreô hlâwas
Pershore	S 786, B. 1282	to þam hlæwe
Stoulton	S 1601, K. iii 160	tô Oswaldes hlawe

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Suthtune (Ullington)	S 751, B. 1201	on turf leo/ of turfhléo
Wican	S 142, B. 219	in þa hlawas(ad monticulos) innon þa hlawas (ad alios monticulos)

Early place-names, Worcestershire

'Cresselau' Hundred	Cresselau 1086
Low Hill, White Ladies Aston	Oswaldes hlawe 11th*
Oswaldslow Hundred	Oswaldeslaw 1086

Charter references, Warwickshire

Alderminster	S 786, B. 1282	to pos hliwan
Alveston	S 1350, K. 651	on ðone hlâw
Kineton	S 773, B. 1234	in morþhlau
Ladbroke & Radbourne	S 892, N & S. 19-22	to þā hlawe on yppescelfe
		of þá hlawe
Long Itchington	S 898, K. 705	to sic hlawe
		to þæm lytlan hlawe
Myton, Warwick	S 967, E. 393-44	on doddan læw
Southam	S 892, N & S. 19-22	to beornwældes hlawe
Wormleighton	S 588, B. 946	to ðan hlæwe
Wormleighton	S 1574, B. 947	on earnes hlewe

Early place-names, Warwickshire

'Bomelau' Hundred	Bomelau 1086
Pathlow Hundred	Patelau 1086
'Tremelau' Hundred	Tremelau 1086

Charter references, Gloucestershire

Adlestrop	S 550, B. 882	on mules hlæw
Adlestrop	S 1238, K. 963	on mûlæs lâw
Bibury	S 1254, B. 166	on east hleopan (hleoᵂan?)
Bishops Cleeve	S 141, B. 246	on þone ford æt hleowede hlawe
		to Antan hlawe
Bishops Cleeve	S 1549, H. 245	on honta hlaw
Evenlode	S 109, B. 210	heortuuelle æt mûles hlæwe
Evenlode	S 1325, B. 1238	to mules hlawe
Swell	S 1026, F.no.171	be suðan hættes lawe

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Early place-names, Gloucestershire

'Blakelow' Hundred	Blacelew hd'	1086
Bledisloe, Awre	Bliteslau	1086
Bledislow Hundred	Bliteslav hd'	1086
Botloe Hundred	Botelav hd'	1086
Etloe, Awre	Eteslav	1086
Lowdilow Brake, Stoke Orchard	hleowede hlawe	768-779*
Wontley Farm, Southam & Brockhampton	to Antan hlawe	768-779*

CRUC (from *CRŪG*)

Charter references, Worcestershire

Cotheridge	S 1303, B. 110	on cyrces pull?
Pensax	S 1595, H. 246	into Cricce lades bróc?

Early place-names, Worcestershire

Churchill (Oswaldslow)	Circehille	1086	?
Churchill (Clent)	Cercehalle	1086	?

Charter references, Warwickshire

Shipston-on-Stour	S 1573, H. 347	up on cyric hyll

Early place-names, Warwickshire

Dunchurch	Donecerce	1086	?

Charter references, Gloucestershire

Early place-names, Gloucestershire

Churchdown	Circesdvne	1086	?

BYRGELS, BYRGEN

Charter references, Worcestershire

Bengeworth	S 1664, K. 1299	on ða hêðenan byrgena
Evesham	S 1599, K. 1368	westward on Ælfstânes byriels on ða æðenan byrielse
Evesham	S 159la, K iii 395-96	on Eallistânes byrigels
Tardebigge	S 1598, H. 362	on ealhmundes byrigenne

Early place-names, Worcestershire

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Charter references, Warwickshire

Shipston-on-Stour S 1573, H. 347 to þam hæðenan byŕiggelse

Early place-names, Warwickshire

Charter references, Gloucestershire

Cold Ashton	S 414, B. 670 on þa hæþenan byrigelsas
Hawling	S 179, B. 356 to þam hæðenan byrigelse

Early place-names, Gloucestershire

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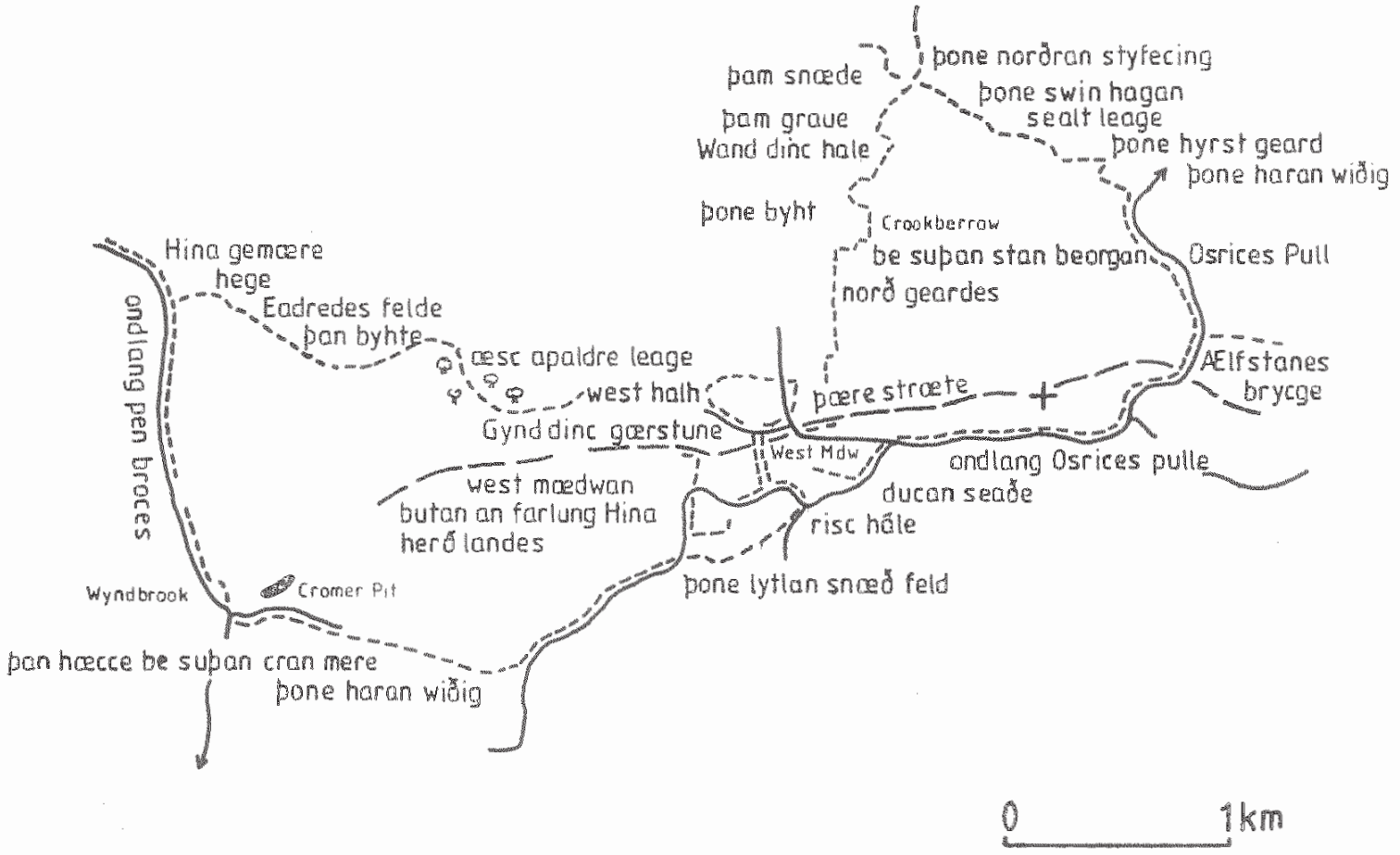

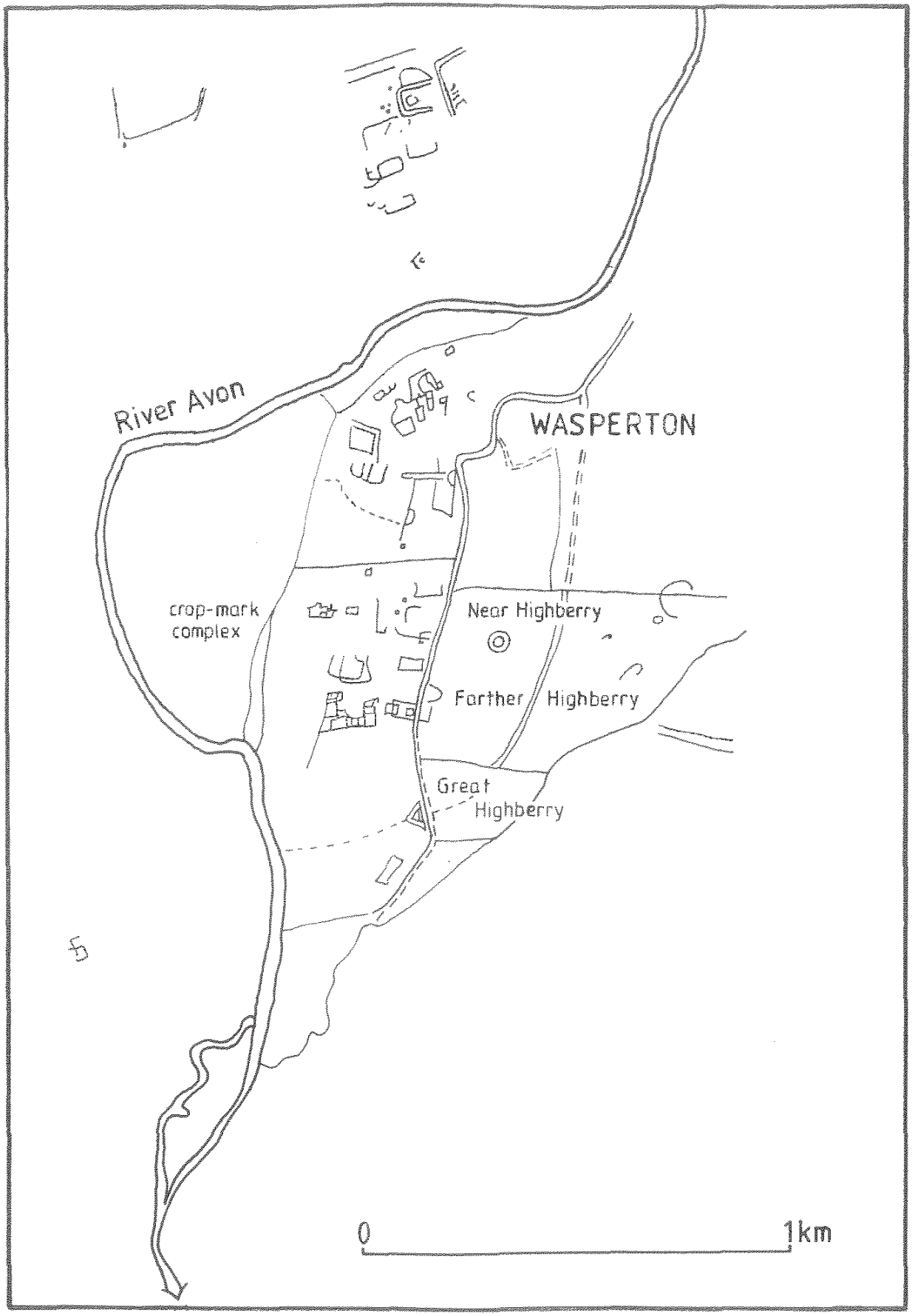

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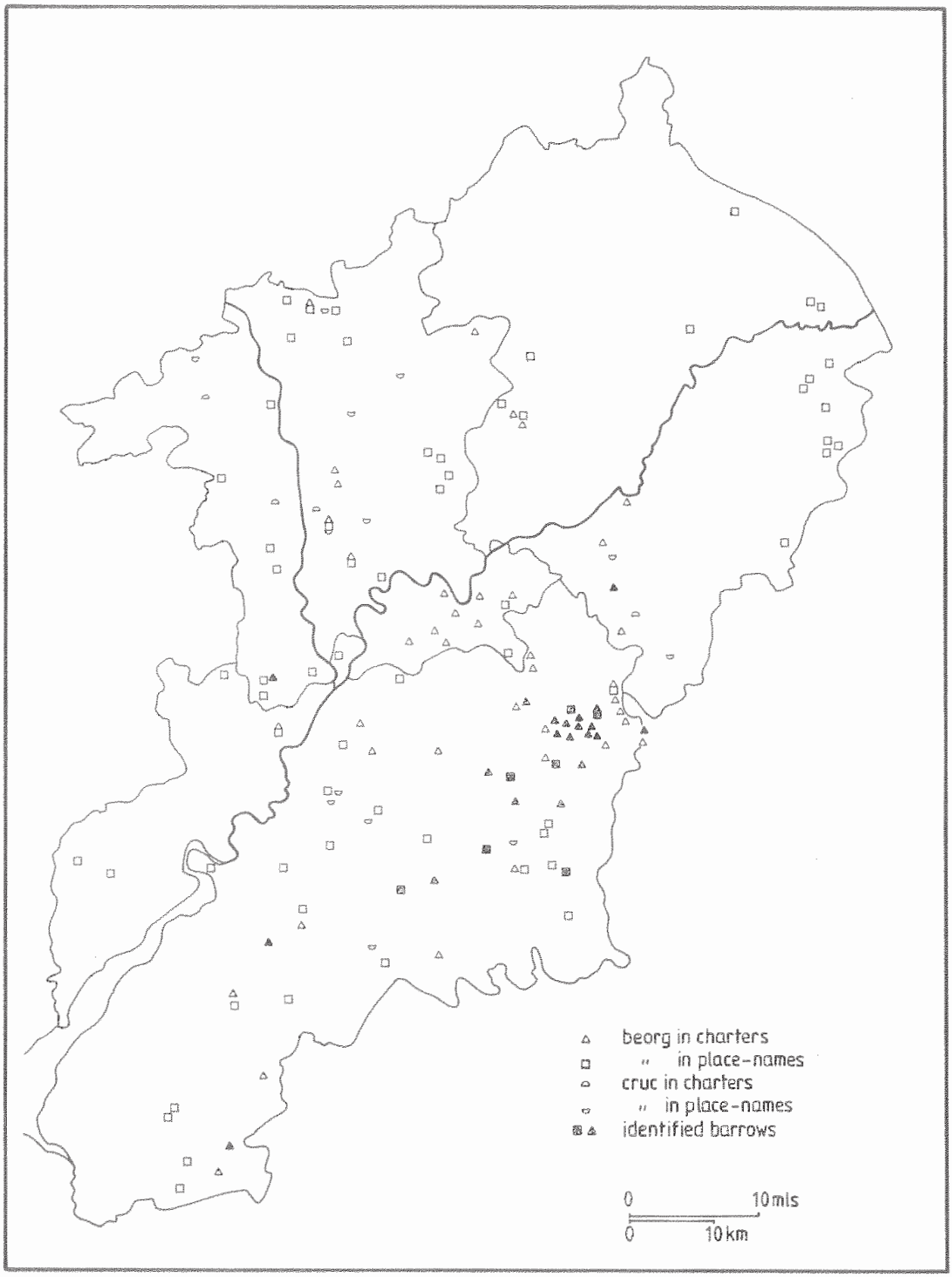

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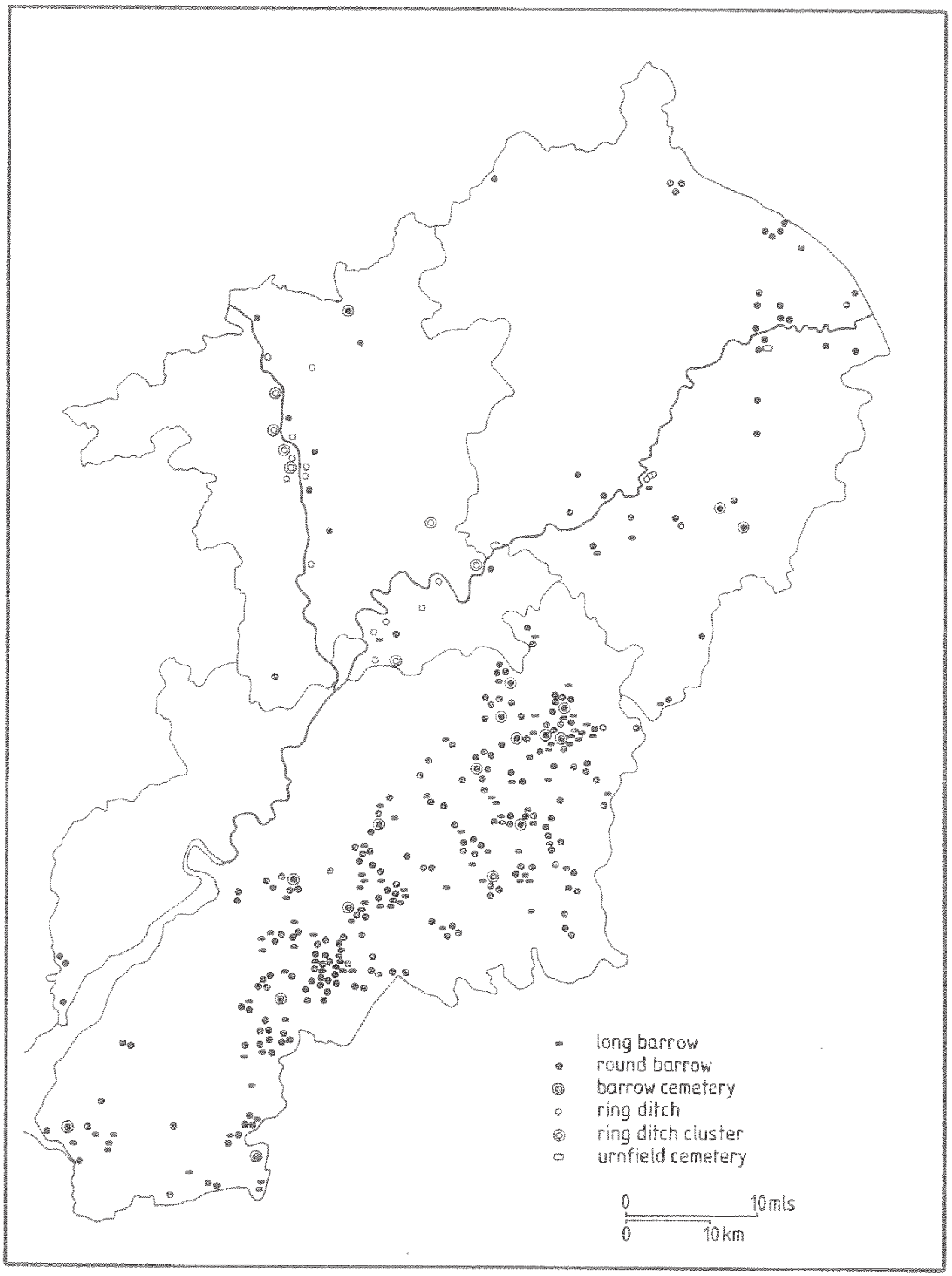

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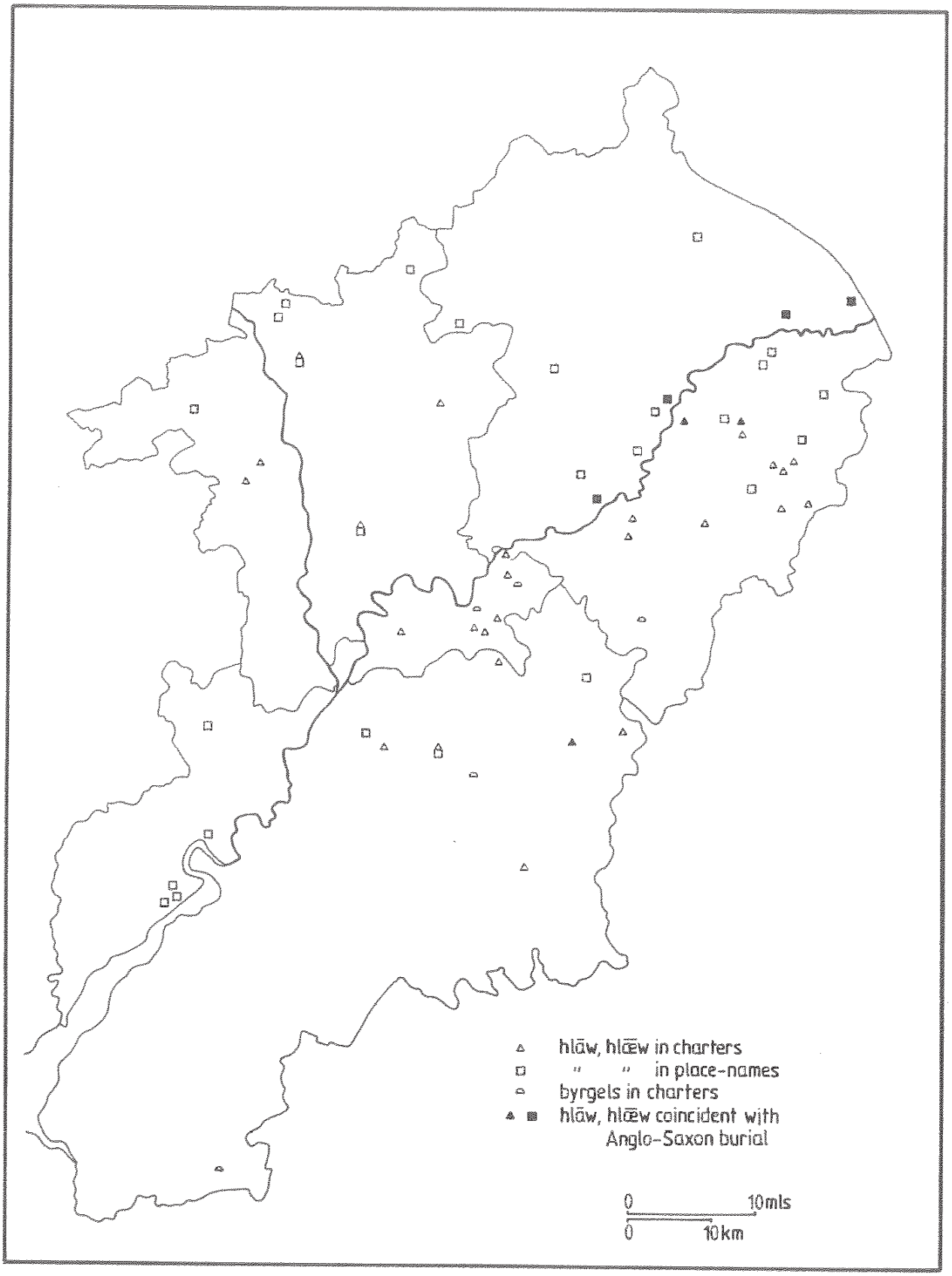

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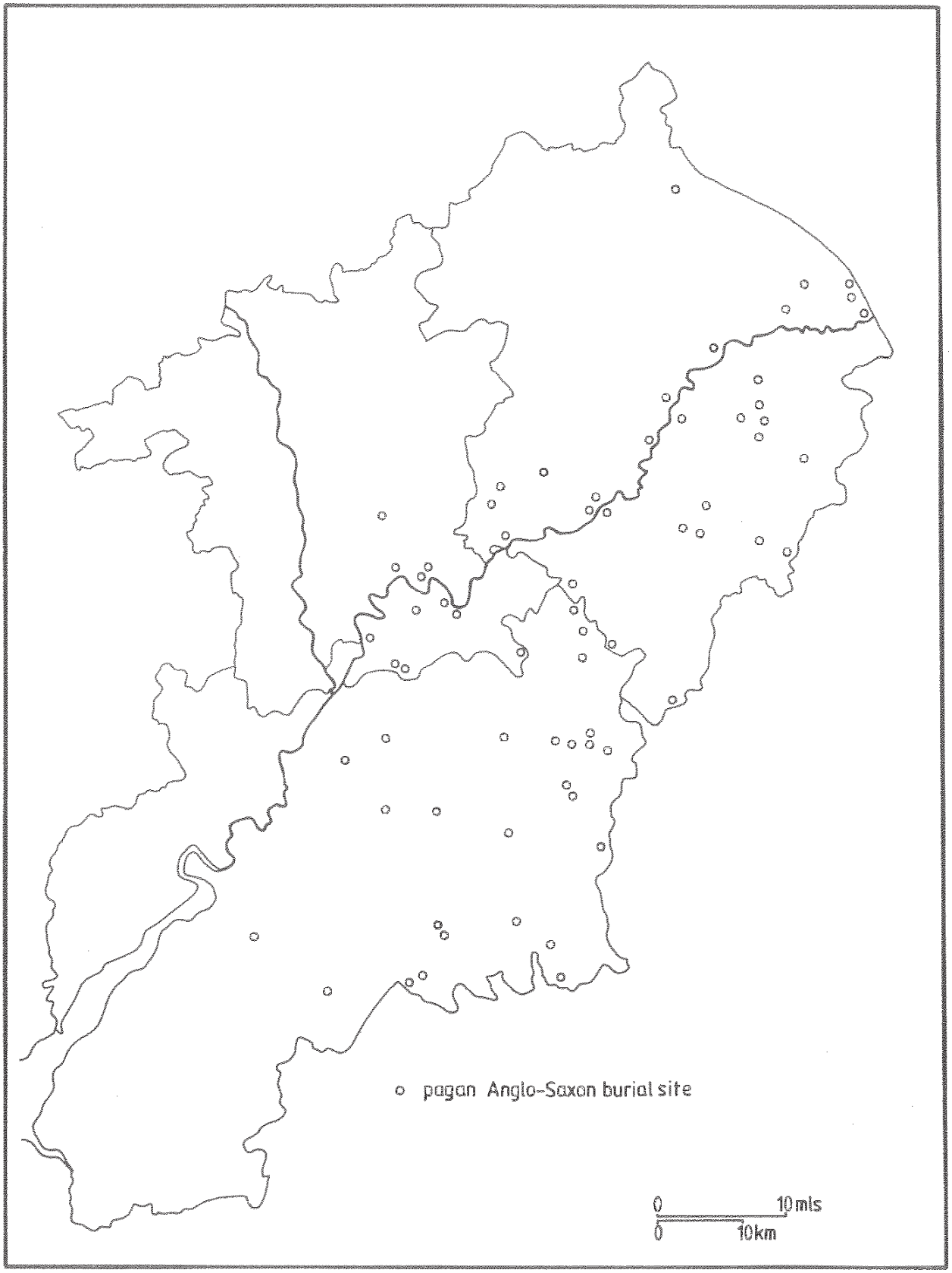

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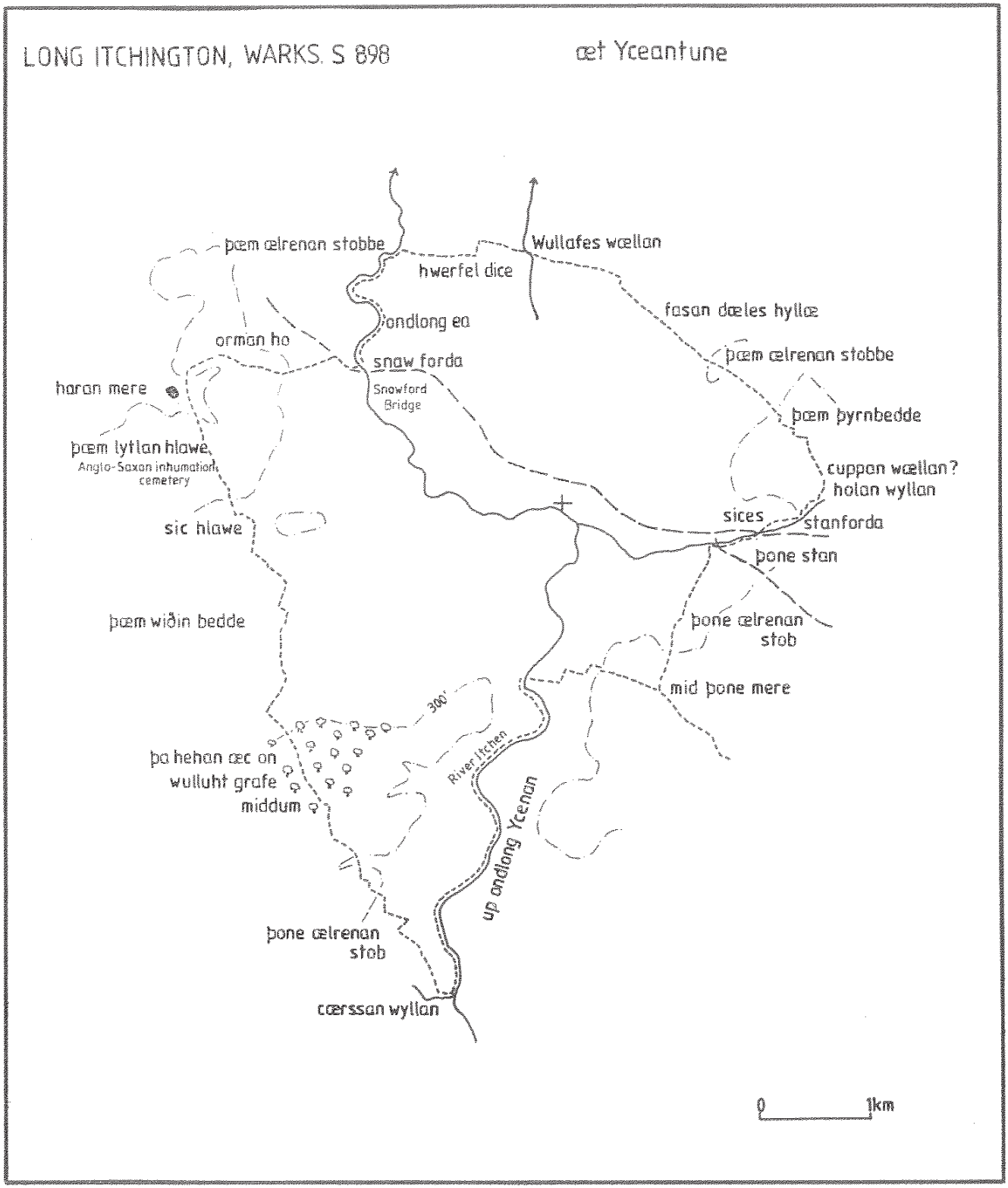

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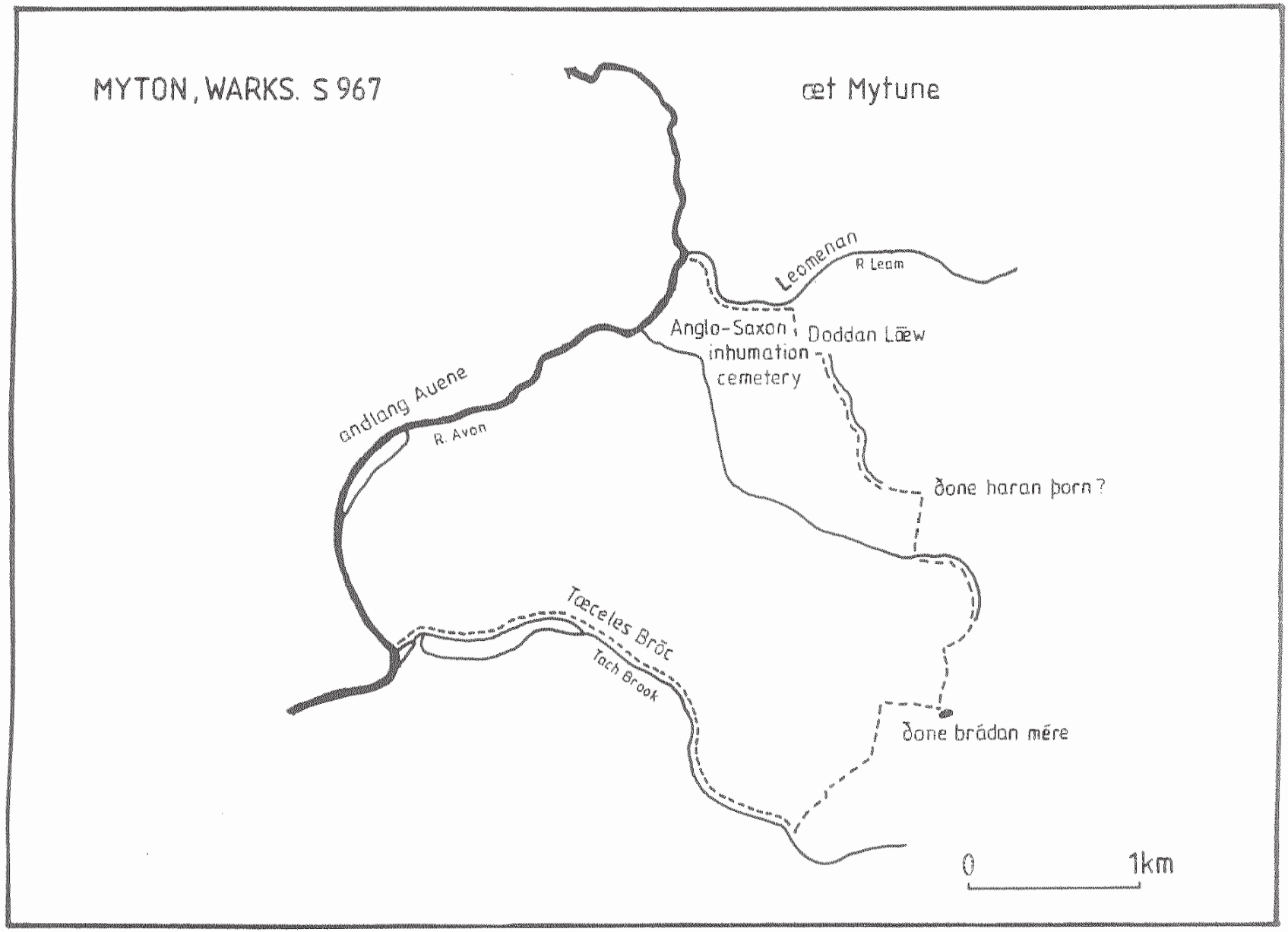
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