

## The place-names of Somerset

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### Abbreviations

OE – Old English  
OFr – Old French  
ME – Middle English  
ON – Old Norse

### Introduction

The corpus of forty names explored in this essay is taken from the areas of the Mendip Hills and Somerset Levels, where there is rich and varying landscape. This is reflected in these place-names, along with other elements of linguistic and cultural history, from agriculture to the importance of roads such as the Fosse Way throughout the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. The information held within these place-names would have been useful in a variety of ways to the people who coined them, but there is potential for them to be equally useful to us today as a way to reconnect with and understand the landscape in a manner which we have lost over the centuries.

### Language

As expected for the county of Somerset, this corpus does not contain great linguistic variety. OE is the best represented, with 87.5% of elements coming from this language. The next largest is Celtic (Brittonic), which stands at 17.5% (including river-names). OFr, ME and potential pre-Celtic elements are also present in small numbers. ON influence is absent here as Somerset, situated in the south-west, was not in a part of England significantly impacted by Scandinavian settlers.

Conversely, the amount of Celtic in this corpus is higher than usual in England. In the south-eastern counties, on average there are about six Celtic names per county, while in this corpus of forty names alone, there are seven examples.<sup>1</sup> Somerset is in the group of western counties with the highest density of Brittonic



Figure 1. Kenneth Jackson's map of Brittonic river-names

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Padel, 'Brittonic place-names in England', in Jayne Carroll and David N. Parsons, eds., *Perceptions of Place: Twenty-First-Century Interpretations of English Place-Name Studies* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2013), pp.1-41, p.10.

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names, though this is still not a large proportion overall, especially when compared to counties situated on the Welsh border.<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Jackson's famous map showing the prevalence of surviving Celtic river-names (Figure 1) places Somerset in Area 3, with a high number of surviving Celtic river-names including minor rivers and streams.<sup>3</sup> The Celtic River Chew is clearly present in the name of Chewton Mendip, but the River Cary of Castle Cary is more ambiguous, being of either Celtic or pre-Celtic origin. Furthermore, the name Croscombe appears to reference a river or stream called Cori that is of uncertain linguistic origin but speculated by Mills to be pre-English.<sup>4</sup> What this map does demonstrate, however, is how the Anglo-Saxon invasion in the fifth century from the east meant that place-names in the west underwent a more gradual change, with a greater proportion of older names being adopted into OE usage.

Another potential symptom of this gradual change is the lack of hybrid names, particularly tautological hybrids. The only definite hybrid name is Glastonbury, from a Celtic name of **Glaston** with OE elements **-inga-** and **-burh** (in the dative form). This suggests a sense of cooperation between the languages, with Anglo-Saxon settlers adopting Celtic names of settlements rather than attempting to rename them.

Further suggestion that the two languages co-existed for a time is provided by a charter from Somerset, supposedly from the seventh century (but existing only in a sixteenth-century copy), which distinguishes between Celtic and OE names for the same place.<sup>5</sup> While this does not prove that Brittonic language was still alive in Somerset at that time, as Oliver Padel states, 'it does suggest that it had been so fairly recently, within the previous two or three generations'.<sup>6</sup> This longevity of, at the very least, awareness of the Celtic language in Somerset may provide explanation for the high proportion of Brittonic elements in its place-names.

While these place-names appear apparently unaffected by the arrival of Scandinavians in England, the same is not true of the Norman invasion of the eleventh century. Though the OFr language itself is not represented within the corpus, three examples of manorial affixes from Norman family names are present: Shepton Mallet, Rodney Stoke and Farrington Gurney. These family names are common in the southwest of England, which Kenneth Cameron attributes to the great amount of hamlets that needed to be distinguished from one another.<sup>7</sup> Somerset has one of the highest proportions of manorial affixes in England, so a greater number of these names may have been expected.<sup>8</sup> However, Richard Jones calls manorial affixes 'notoriously unstable place name forms, prone to loss or replacement', making it possible that there were more in use at the time that have been lost over the centuries.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Padel, 'Brittonic place-names', p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Map from Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), p. 91., originally from Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953).

<sup>4</sup> For full etymologies of place-names mentioned, see Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> Padel, 'Brittonic place-names', p.30.

<sup>6</sup> Padel, 'Brittonic place-names', p.30.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Cameron, *English Place Names* (Trowbridge: Redwood Books, 1996), p.110.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Jones, 'Thinking Through the Manorial Affix: People and Place in Medieval England', in Sam Turner and Bob Silvester, eds., *Life in medieval landscapes: people and places in the Middle Ages: papers in memory of H. S. A. Fox* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2012), pp.255-271, p.258.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, 'Thinking Through', p.258.

Similarly, to the interaction of Brittonic and OE, the lack of replacement, artificial or transferred names within the corpus appears significant. This may suggest that the Norman settlers acted exclusively as a ruling class in this area, altering names purely for administrative purposes, rather than living in and adapting the county themselves. Jones states that this view in general is appealing, due to the co-occurrence of many manorial affixes and the great expansion in record keeping 'that was so symptomatic of the centralization of government in the thirteenth century'.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Shepton Mallet's affix is first attested in 1228, within this period when many of these names began to appear.<sup>11</sup> While it is unclear when the family names became attached to the other two names, it suggests Jones' hypothesis applies here.

The final language that there appears to be traces of in the corpus is Latin, in the form of loan-words. Ashwick contains the OE element **wīc**, which comes from Latin **vicus**, a term which was used in the early Roman period for the smallest settlements with an amount of self-government, but later lost this administrative meaning and came instead to mean simply 'village' and could even be used for specific meanings such as 'dairy-farm'.<sup>12</sup> According to Margaret Gelling, the term may have originally been used by English speakers to refer to Roman settlements.<sup>13</sup>

## Landscape

Within this corpus, there are only five definite references to hills; lower than expected considering that a number of these place-names are within the district of the Mendip Hills. Only two different OE hill-types are present, in Emborough (**beorg**) and Compton Dundon (**dūn**), which is also less variety than expected for a hilly area. The name Mendip itself (found as an affix in Chewton Mendip) is potentially a hybrid of Celtic and OE, from Celtic **\*mōneth** 'mountain, hill' and an uncertain second element that is potentially OE **yppe** 'upland, plateau'. This appears possibly contradictory, as the Celtic word gives a sense of sharp, mountainous hills while the OE portrays a more flattened landscape. Perhaps this portrays which parts of the topography were of most importance to the two language communities. It is also impossible to know, as Padel states, if hybridised names such as these were coined as a whole or in two phases, and whether the OE addition was given with full understanding of the pre-existing Celtic term.<sup>14</sup> However, the fact that even the district name of this area contains Brittonic elements demonstrates the extent to which the language has been retained.

Another example of Celtic hill elements occurs in Dinder, an entirely Brittonic name from **\*din** and **\*brez** and meaning 'hill with a fort'. Nowadays, the village sits on a flat area near to two hills and there is no trace of the old fort, so it is possible that either of the hills were the original referent. Alternatively, the settlement may have been placed closer to or on top of one of the hills when it was named, as the Anglo-Saxon landscape was, in Alexander R. Rumble's words, 'a dynamic entity, not a static one' and ever-changing.<sup>15</sup> Ann

<sup>10</sup> Jones, 'Thinking Through', p.263.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron, *English Place Names*, p.111.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Gelling, 'Latin loan-words in Old English place-names', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 6 (1977), 1-13, p.3; Gelling, *Signposts*, p.69.

<sup>13</sup> Gelling, *Signposts*, p.69.

<sup>14</sup> Padel, 'Brittonic place-names', p.9.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander R. Rumble, 'The Landscape of Place-Name Studies', in N. Higham & M. Ryan, eds., *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape* (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp.23-49, p.26.

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Cole also states that settlements which referenced large features like hills could move and take their names with them, which may be what happened here.<sup>16</sup>

East and West Pennard are another example of Celtic topographical names that potentially reference hills, coming from **penn** and either **\*garth** 'ridge' or **\*arth** 'height'. **Penn** is an element which causes some debate amongst place-name scholars, but is generally taken to mean 'hill', 'high ground' or 'ridge'.<sup>17</sup> If the element is defined as 'ridge', it may argue in favour of **\*arth** as the second element of Pennard, as to use **\*garth** would create a tautology. When looking on an Ordnance Survey (OS) map, the ridge is clear, with each settlement sitting on an edge (Figure 2).<sup>18</sup> However, the ambiguity of both elements remains, as the height and steep rise of the hill could fulfill multiple interpretations.



Figure 2. OS map showing East Pennard and West Pennard.

One name which clearly references its topography is Compton Dundon. Dundon is a separate village, affixed to Compton in 1289 as *Cumpton by Dunden*. The name comes from OE elements **dūn** and **denu**, indicating a valley by a hill, both of which are clear when looking at the village on a topographical map (Figure 3).<sup>19</sup> Compton also contains reference to a valley: an OE **cumb**. This feature, a three-sided valley, is much harder to locate on the map, especially as the village sits slightly away from the hills. As with Dinder, it is possible that the settlement has moved over time; perhaps the **cumb** referenced was originally one of the indents into the hills shown on the map, but this is not clear.

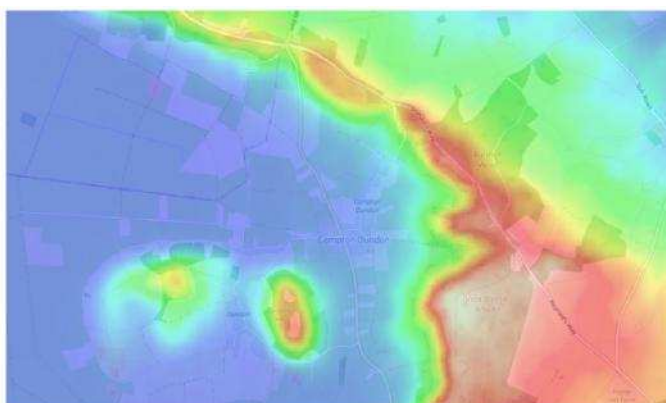


Figure 3. Topographical map showing Dundon and Compton Dundon.

Alternatively, Cameron suggests that, as **cumb** is common in major names of the south-west, 'it seems to have been the "standard" word used for a valley', so it is possible that both Compton Dundon and Croscombe (another example of **cumb**) make use of the term as a more general word for 'valley', rather than the conventional, three-sided **cumb**.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ann Cole, 'Place-Names as Travellers' Landmarks', in N. Higham & M. Ryan, eds., *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape* (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp.51-67, p.52.

<sup>17</sup> Padel, 'Brittonic place-names', p.32.

<sup>18</sup> All OS maps from 'OS Roam', *Digimap*, <<https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/os>> [Accessed 1 January 2022].

<sup>19</sup> All topographical maps from 'England', *topographic-map.com*, <<https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/maps/b9/England/>> [Accessed 1 January 2022].

<sup>20</sup> Cameron, *English Place Names*, p.192.



This may be further supported by the lack of other ‘valley’ terms within the corpus, though ‘slope’ words do occur in Litton (potentially OE *\*hlid*) and Paulton (OE *\*peal*).

As may be expected due to the positioning of many of these names on the Somerset Levels, there are twelve references to water in the corpus. Jones has put forward the idea that English place-names can be used to aid management of modern environmental issues such as flooding, which is a major issue for the Levels, through offering insight into environmental events of the Medieval period.<sup>21</sup> According to Jones, the period of climate change and global warming that we are currently experiencing is most closely matched in our history by the early Middle Ages.<sup>22</sup> In this time, there was a greater amount of precipitation and floodplains were ‘more intense and more extensive’, creating what Jones calls a period that was ‘one of the wettest and most unstable on record’.<sup>23</sup> One example of how this approach could be applicable in Somerset is Doulting, which contains an old river name for the River Sheppey: probably the Celtic *\*dōlad*, meaning ‘flood’. The source of the Sheppey is next to Doulting (Figure 4), and it is easy to see how on the flat land those pools could flood. Though the name of the settlement itself cannot offer insight into any management techniques that may have been used at the time, it is possible that analysis of field-names or other local settlements may prove enlightening in this way.



Figure 4. OS map showing the source of the R. Sheppey.

The possibility that much more of Somerset was covered by water in the Medieval period is supported by the presence of two names containing OE *ēg* ‘island’ or ‘well-watered land’. The first, Godney, does not appear to be elevated out of the plains of the Levels, so

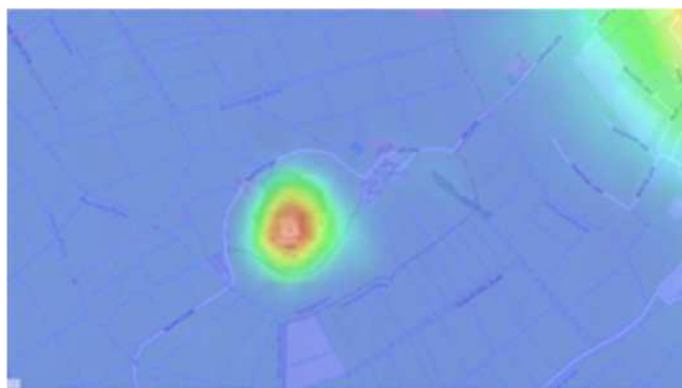


Figure 5. Topographical map showing Nyland.

may convey more of the sense of *ēg* as ‘dry ground in a marsh’, as it can be seen on geology maps to sit close to a band of bedrock amidst the marshland.<sup>24</sup> However, Nyland is first attested as *Ederedeseie* in 725, ‘*Ēadrēd*’s island’. Though Ekwall does not give the etymology of this name, it appears to have originated from OE *ēg*, particularly as this element was a popular term before the year 730.<sup>25</sup> The modern name appears to be a

<sup>21</sup> Richard L. C. Jones, ‘Responding to Modern Flooding: Old English Place-Names as a Repository of Traditional Ecological Knowledge’, *Journal of Ecological Anthropology*, 18.1 (2016), p.20.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, ‘Responding to Modern Flooding’, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Jones, ‘Responding to Modern Flooding’, p.10.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Geology of Britain viewer’, *British Geological Survey*. <<https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?ga=2.125160202.1406481403.1637843840-659966275.1637843840>> [Accessed 1 January 2022].

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Gelling, ‘Towards a Chronology for English Place-Names’, in Della Hooke, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.59-76, p.71.

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product of misdivision, perhaps from ‘an island’. On a topographical map, Nyland rises out of the marshland of the Levels quite dramatically, seemingly suiting its name (Figure 5). Geologically, it is also an area of limestone in the midst of the muddy bedrock.<sup>26</sup> King Alfred’s biographer, Asser, described the Levels in 878 as ‘swampy, impassable and extensive marshland and groundwater on every side’, which would have made these names more appropriate.<sup>27</sup>

A final interesting topographical name in this corpus is Priddy, from the Celtic **\*prith** and **\*ti3**. Mills gives this etymology as the ambiguous ‘earth house’, potentially giving the impression of a variety of topographical features. Priddy Pool at the north of the village is an entrance to St Cuthbert’s Swallet, which is part of a cave system located at Priddy (Figure 6). Perhaps the ‘earth house’ referenced here is a cave, which could have provided a place of safety or refuge to people of the time, or maybe had some other significance. On the other hand, Padel is sceptical of this etymology, instead suggesting that if Priddy is Brittonic, which is questionable, the full place-name is a derivative of **\*prith**, defining this element as ‘clay’ rather than ‘earth’.<sup>28</sup> Priddy sits on a band of superficial deposits, including clay, surrounded by limestone, so it may be that this is the case, especially as Celtic settlement-names tend to be topographical rather than habitative.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 6. OS map showing Priddy.

## History

### Trade and Agriculture

There are several place-names within this corpus which could be suggested to have some connection with agriculture or cultivation: Shepton Mallet, Ashwick, Somerton, West Bradley, Butleigh and North Wootton. While Shepton is clearly connected with livestock as ‘sheep farm’, the others are more opaque. Rumble suggests that when compounded with **wīc**, elements denoting livestock and trees, such as **3/4sc** in Ashwick, ‘relate more to controlled human industry than to the chance presence’ of the element.<sup>30</sup> Ash was a valuable tree in the Medieval period as it was one of the most nutritious types of leaf fodder for domestic animals and could cope well with grazing.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, knowing where there was a, potentially managed, crop of ash trees would have been useful information. Access to woodland that was useful in these ways was also possibly marked by OE **lēah**, as in Butleigh and West

<sup>26</sup> ‘Geology of Britain viewer’, *British Geological Survey*.

<sup>27</sup> S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (trans.), *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 103; quoted in David N. Parsons, ‘Churls and athelings, kings and reeves: some reflections on place-names and early English society’, in Jayne Carroll and David N. Parsons, eds., *Perceptions of Place: Twenty-First-Century Interpretations of English Place-Name Studies* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2013), pp.43-72, p.57.

<sup>28</sup> Padel, ‘Brittonic place-names’, p.16.

<sup>29</sup> Gelling, *Signposts*, p.125.

<sup>30</sup> Rumble, ‘The Landscape’, p.48-9

<sup>31</sup> Della Hooke, ‘The Woodland Landscape of Early Medieval England’, in N. Higham & M. Ryan, eds., *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape* (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp.143-174, p.161; p.171.

Bradley. Della Hooke argues that the term, usually translated simply as ‘wood’ or ‘clearing’ may be more akin to ‘wood pasture’ necessary for activities such as seasonal grazing (evidence of which is also present in Somerton, OE **sumor** and **tūn**).<sup>32</sup> Hooke also links **lēah** woods to the collection of timber and coppicing for charcoal production.<sup>33</sup>

### **Leisure**

According to Hooke, by the seventh century recreational hunting was occurring in Europe and, as Anglo-Saxon kings kept contact with those on the continent, ‘it is unlikely that they would have been slow to copy their practices’.<sup>34</sup> Wedmore can be defined as ‘marsh used for hunting’ and, as it is first attested in the late ninth century, it is possible that this was recreational hunting. Similarly, Wookey means ‘(place at) the trap or snare for animals’, most likely in reference to Wookey Hole, the nearby caves. This leads to a question of whether people were intentionally laying traps or snares here to catch animals (potentially again for hunting) or whether the animals were perhaps getting trapped in the caves. Either way, the name informs of a potential food source, which would have been useful to people of the time.

### **Routeways**

While discussing place-names and routeways, Cole states that place-names, particularly topographical ones, could be essential to the Medieval traveller ‘since most people were illiterate’.<sup>35</sup> There are three explicit references to roads within the corpus: Radstock, Street and East and West Harptree. Both Radstock and Street lie on the Fosse Way, the old Roman road which runs from south of Ilchester to High Cross.<sup>36</sup> Street itself comes from OE **stræt**, which is used to mean ‘Roman road or other paved highway’, though Cole states that most paved roads at the time were Roman roads.<sup>37</sup> Harptree, meanwhile, contains the element OE **here-þ3/4th**, a ‘main road’ or ‘military road’ usually part of a long-distance routeway.<sup>38</sup>

Place-names could also provide information about river-crossings for travellers. West Lydford can be defined as ‘ford over the noisy stream’, containing OE **ford**, a common



Figure 7. OS map showing West Lydford.

element which, according to Cole can denote a variety of crossings ‘from causeways across wet ground to crossings of tiny streams’.<sup>39</sup> The ‘noisy’ characteristic of this name suggests that the stream may be fast-flowing and thus difficult to cross, making the advertisement of a ford all the more important. Cole also states that names such as these which describe the nature of the crossing ‘were the most helpful to travellers’.<sup>40</sup> As can be seen on the OS map

<sup>32</sup> Hooke, ‘The Woodland Landscape’, p.150.

<sup>33</sup> Hooke, ‘The Woodland Landscape’, p.157; p.159.

<sup>34</sup> Hooke, ‘The Woodland Landscape’, p.163.

<sup>35</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’, p.51.

<sup>36</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’, p.58.

<sup>37</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’, p.52.

<sup>38</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’, p.53.; Rumble, ‘The Landscape’, p.47.

<sup>39</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’, p.55.

<sup>40</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’, p.55.

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(Figure 7), the Fosse Way still crosses the River Brue here, which may be why the ford was important enough to be marked by the settlement-name.

Pylle also lies on the Fosse way. Its name, meaning ‘the tidal creek’, could have been an aid to travellers as it may only have been possible to cross at certain points or times of day. However, it could also have been intended merely as a signifier of a water-source to travellers, which was highly important.<sup>41</sup> Other names which could have performed this function are Wells (OE **wella**), Pilton (OE **pyll**) and East Cranmore (OE **mere**). Furthermore, names such as Cheddar (‘ravine’), Ditcheat (‘gap in the dyke or earthwork’) and Ston Easton (OE **stānig** potentially referring to the ground or road quality) may have been useful for navigation through the area, providing insight into the landscape at each place.

#### Groups

There are two examples of folk names within this corpus: Chilcompton and Glastonbury. Glastonbury, meaning ‘stronghold of the people living at **Glaston**’, contains the OE connective **-inga-**, signifying a group. According to Gelling, these **-inga-** or **-ingas** names occurred frequently before 730, a time period which this place-name fits within as its first attestation appears 725.<sup>42</sup> **Glaston** is originally a Celtic name possibly meaning ‘woad place’, which could elicit multiple interpretations. Due to the hybridisation of the name through combination with OE elements, it is possible that the name functioned in some part to distinguish Brittonic people from their Anglo-Saxon neighbours, as a kind of ethnonym. Alternatively, woad (or **glastum**) is a plant which can be used to make dyes, so may imply that the local people of this area had some trade or skill in dying.

Glastonbury’s final element of OE **burh** (in the dative **byrig**) is also significant and occurs in the same form in Westbury. This element was used by the Anglo-Saxons for a range of fortified sites created in previous eras as well as their own.<sup>43</sup> The **burhs** (or boroughs) formed during the reign of King Alfred were not only fortified sites but, in the words of Dorn Van Dommelen, ‘played an integral role in a general transformation of society’, establishing communities and a society in which ‘[a]ll of the individuals living within the administrative area were now deemed as if one, collective individual’.<sup>44</sup> Through these names, an important part of Anglo-Saxon history can be seen.

Another part of Anglo-Saxon society captured in place-names is religion, which appears only in small ways within this corpus. The aforementioned Pennard is first attested in 681 as **Pengerd**, but then appears in the Domesday Book as **Pennarminstre**. Here, the OE element **mynster** has been added, a ‘large church’. It is intriguing that this element has been added to an entirely Celtic name and that sometime between 1086 and the modern form the element has been lost again, suggesting it was largely unused by local people. Perhaps, therefore, there is some history here in the uptake of religion in a previously Celtic area. The other, clearer instance of religion is in the affix of Midsommer Norton, which comes from the festival of St John the Baptist, which occurs on Midsummer’s Day.

<sup>41</sup> Cole, ‘Travellers’ Landmarks’

<sup>42</sup> Gelling, ‘Towards a Chronology’, p.72.

<sup>43</sup> Rumble, ‘The Landscape’, p.41.

<sup>44</sup> Dorn Van Dommelen, ‘Boroughs and Socio-Political Reconstruction in Late Anglo-Saxon England’, in N. Higham & M. Ryan, eds., *Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape* (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp.225-240, pp.230-1.



### **Personal Names**

Five examples of personal names occur in this corpus in Baltonsborough, Binegar, Butleigh, Godney and the old name of Nyland, *Ederedeseie*. Binegar is particularly significant as **Bēage** is a female personal name, combined with OE **hangra**, 'wooded slope'. There is an ambiguity here in that the first element could also be **\*begen** 'growing with berries' but according to Carole Hough this is not unusual, as '[r]eferences to women are often difficult to differentiate from other types of place-name element'.<sup>45</sup>

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, much information about a variety of topics from topography to trade can be gleaned from the place-names of Somerset, even just from the forty names within this corpus. Analysis of this information can provide us with greater historical and linguistic knowledge as well as potential tools for the future as our climate and environment changes. Somerset is a county of rich history and diverse environments, making the content within its place-names intriguing and potentially offering much more knowledge that is yet to be discovered.

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<sup>45</sup> Carole Hough, 'Women in place-names', in Jayne Carroll and David N. Parsons, eds., *Perceptions of Place: Twenty-First-Century Interpretations of English Place-Name Studies* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2013), pp.251-281, p.253.

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## Appendices

NB: Unless otherwise stated, all information is from Mills' *A Dictionary of British Place Names*.<sup>46</sup>

### Ashwick

So. *Escewiche* 1086 (DB). 'Dwelling or farmstead where ash-trees grow'. OE **3/4sc** + **wīc**.

### Baltonsborough

So. *Balteresberghe* 744, *Baltunesberge* 1086 (DB). 'Hill or mound of a man called Bealdhūn'. OE pers. name + **beorg**.

### Binegar

So. *Begenhangra* 1065. Probably 'wooded slope of a woman called Bēage'. OE pers. name (genitive *-n*) + **hangra**. Alternatively the first element may be OE

**\*begen** 'growing with berries'.

### Bradley, West

Bradley a common name, usually 'broad wood or clearing'. OE **brād** + **lēah**. Ekwall:<sup>47</sup> West Bradley, So. *Bradelega* 1196.

### Butleigh

So. *Budecalech* 725, *Boduchelei* 1086 (DB). 'Woodland clearing of a man called \*Budeca'. OE pers. name + **lēah**.

### Castle Cary

So. *Cari* 1086 (DB), *Castelkary* 1237. Named from the River Cary, an ancient Celtic or pre-Celtic river-name. ME **castel** added later to distinguish from Cary Fitzpaine, referencing the Norman castle.

### Cheddar

So. *Ceodre* c.880, *Cedre* 1086 (DB). Probably OE **\*cēodor** 'ravine', with reference to Cheddar Gorge.

### Chewton Mendip

So. *Ciwton* c.880, *Ciwetune* 1086 (DB), *Cheuton by Menedep* 1313. 'Estate on the River Chew'. Celtic river-name + OE **tūn** + affix from the Mendip Hills. Mendip Hills

*Menedepe* 1185. Probably Celtic **\*mōn•th** 'mountain, hill' with an uncertain second element, perhaps OE **yppe** in the sense 'upland, plateau'.

<sup>46</sup> A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place Names* (Oxford University Press, 2011). <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199609086.001.0001/acref-9780199609086>> [Accessed 1 January 2022].

<sup>47</sup> Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974). All additions labelled 'Ekwall' are from this edition.



Chilcompton

So. *Comtuna* 1086 (DB), *Childecumpton* 1227. 'Valley farmstead (or village) of the young (noble)men'. OE **cild** + **cumb** + **tūn**.

Compton Dundon

Compton A common place name, 'farmstead or village in a valley',

from OE **cumb** + **tūn**;

Dundon So. *Dondeme* [sic] 1086 (DB), *Dunden* 1236. 'Valley by the hill'. OE **dūn** + **denu**.

Ekwall: Compton Dundon So. *Contone* (DB), *Cumpton by Dunden* 1289.

Cranmore, East

So. *Cranemere* 10th cent., *Crenemelle* [sic] 1086 (DB). 'Pool frequented by cranes or herons'. OE **cran** + **mere**. With affix to distinguish.

Croscombe

So. *Correges cumb* 705, *Coriscoma* 1086 (DB). Identical in origin with Corscombe Dorset. 'Valley of a stream called *Cori*'. Old pre-English river-name of uncertain origin and meaning (for the stream rising south of the village) + OE **cumb**.

Dinder

So. *Dinre* 1174. Probably 'hill with a fort'. Celtic **\*din** + **\*brez**.

Ditcheat

So. *Dichesgate* 842, *Dicesget* 1086 (DB). 'Gap in the dyke or earthwork'. OE **dīc** + **geat**.

Doulting

So. *Dulting* 725, *Doltin* 1086 (DB). Originally the old name of the River Sheppey on which Doulting stands, probably Celtic **\*dōlad** 'flood' + OE suffix **-ing**.

Emborrow

In Mills as modern name Emborough So. *Amelberge* [sic] 1086 (DB), *Emeneberge* 1200. 'Flat-topped mound or hill'. OE **emn** + **beorg**.

Farrington Curney

In Mills as modern name Farrington Gurney B. & NE. So. *Ferentone* 1086 (DB). 'Farmstead where ferns grow'. OE **fearn** + **tūn**. Manorial affix from the **de Gurnay** family, here in the 13th cent.

Glastonbury

### The place-names of Somerset

So. *Glastingburi* 725, *Gl3/4stingeberia* 1086 (DB). 'Stronghold of the people living at *Glaston*'. Celtic name (possibly meaning 'woad place') + OE -

**inga- + burh** (dative **byrig**).

#### Godney

So. *Godeneia* 10th cent. 'Island or well-watered land of a man called Gōda'. OE pers. name (genitive *-n*) + **ēg**.

#### Harptree, (East & West)

B. & NE. So. *Harpetreu* 1086 (DB). Probably 'tree by a highway or main road'. OE **here-p3/4th + trēow**.

#### Litton

So. *Hlytton* c.1060, *Litune* 1086 (DB). Possibly 'farmstead at a gate or by a slope'. OE **hlid** or **\*hlid + tūn**.

#### Lydford, West

So. *Lideford* 1086 (DB). 'Ford over the noisy stream'. OE **\*hlȳde + ford**. With affix.

#### Midsomer Norton

Norton A very common name, 'north farmstead or village', i.e. one to the north of another settlement. OE **north + tūn**; Norton, Midsomer B. & NE. So.

*Midsomeres Norton* 1248. Affix from the festival of St John the Baptist, patron saint of the church, on Midsummer Day.

#### Nyland

Ekwall: So. *Ederedeseie* 725, (insula de) *Adredesia* 1344. The old name means '**Ēadrēd's** island'.

#### Paulton

B. & NE. So. *Palton* 1171. 'Farmstead on a ledge or hill-slope'. OE **\*peall + tūn**.

#### Pennard, (East & West)

So. *Pengerd* 681, *Pennarminstre* 1086 (DB). Celtic **\*penn** 'head, end' with either **\*garth** 'ridge' or **\*arth** 'height'. The Domesday form contains OE **mynster** 'large church'.

#### Pilton

So. *Piltune* 725, *Piltone* 1086 (DB). Probably 'farmstead by a stream'. OE **pyll + tūn**.

#### Priddy

So. *Pridia* 1182. Probably 'earth house'. Celtic **\*prith + \*tiz**.

#### Pylle

So. *Pil* 705, *Pille* 1086 (DB). 'The tidal creek'. OE **pyll**.

#### Radstock

B. & NE. So. *Stoche* 1086 (DB), *Radestok* 1221. 'Outlying farmstead by the road' (here the Fosse Way). OE **rād** + **stoc**.

#### Rodney Stoke

Stoke A very common name, from OE **stoc** 'outlying farmstead or hamlet, secondary settlement';

Stoke, Rodney So. *Stoches* 1086 (DB). Manorial affix from the **de Rodeney** family, here in the early 14th cent.

#### Shepton Mallet

Shepton 'sheep farm'. OE **sceap** + **tūn**;

Shepton Mallet So. *Sepetone* 1086 (DB), *Scheopton Malet* 1228. Manorial affix from the **Malet** family, here in the 12th cent.

#### Somerton

So. *Sumortun* 901–24, *Summertone* 1086 (DB). 'farmstead used in summer'. OE **sumor** + **tūn**.

#### Stone Easton

Easton A very common place name, usually 'east farmstead or village', i.e. one to the east of another settlement. OE **east** + **tūn**;

In Mills as modern name Easton, Ston So. *Estone* 1086 (DB), *Stonieston* 1230. Affix from OE **stānig** 'stony' referring to stony ground.

#### Street

So. *Stret* 725. '(place on or near) a Roman road or other paved highway'. OE **stræt**.

#### Wedmore

So. *Wethmor* late 9th cent., *Wedmore* 1086 (DB). Possibly 'marsh used for hunting'. OE **\*wæthe** + **mör**.

#### Wells

So. *Willan* c.1050, *Welle* 1086 (DB). 'the springs'. OE **wella** in a plural form.

#### Westbury

Westbury 'westerly stronghold or fortified place'. OE **west** + **burh** (dative **byrig**). Ekwall: Westbury So. *Westbyrig* 1065, *-berie* (DB).

#### Wookey

So. *Woky* 1065. '(Place at) the trap or snare for animals'. OE **wōcig**, probably originally with reference to Wookey Hole (*Wokyhole* 1065, with OE **hol** 'ravine').

#### Wootton, North

Wootton A common name, 'farmstead in or near a wood'. OE **wudu** + **tūn**. Ekwall: Wootton, North So. *Wodetone* 946, *Utone* 1086 (DB)