

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: UOA29
Title of case study: Place-names and the public: letting the landscape speak
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research undertaken by Dr John Baker at the University's Institute for Name-Studies (INS) through the Leverhulme-funded Landscapes of Governance project has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actively engaged community groups and individuals in academic research as volunteers: fifty of the project's 350 early medieval assembly sites were recorded by volunteer groups and individuals, a number of whom were inspired to undertake further related research of their own; • enhanced public awareness and understanding about assembly sites through public engagement events, media coverage, 'popular' publications (with local and national audiences totalling over 2 million) and freely available web resources, particularly the Key to English Place-Names (accessed by 18,913 individuals between January 2012 and July 2013); • informed practice at the BBC through the provision of expert advice on a range of onomastic matters.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research was undertaken by Dr John Baker (Nottingham 2005-), Senior Research Fellow in the INS, as part of the Leverhulme-funded project, 'Landscapes of Governance: assembly sites in England, 5th to 11th centuries' (UCL and Nottingham, 2009–12). Baker and his UCL counterpart, Stuart Brookes, worked full-time on the project and each contributed 50% to the research and its resulting outputs. Baker's specialism is place-names.</p> <p>Baker has developed an innovative methodology, established in the Leverhulme-project 'Beyond the Burghal Hidage' (2005–2008) whose main output (3.1) uses place-names as a core part of a thoroughly interdisciplinary approach to issues fundamental to an understanding of the early medieval period. Public assembly, and its role in the government of Anglo-Saxon England, is one such subject. Where previous work in the area has focused primarily on documentary accounts or laws, or has attempted to understand the nature of the sites and their evolution from the basis of a single discipline, Baker, together with landscape archaeologist Brookes, has harnessed the evidence from place-names, archaeology, documentary history, topographical studies, and site visits, and has brought it together on an equal footing, using GIS. The application of this interdisciplinary methodology to Anglo-Saxon assemblies is explored in 3.6 and 3.7. The importance of the place-name evidence and the site visits, alongside archaeological evidence, is clear from the nuanced results seen in 3.2, which treats a specific 'class' of assembly-place, the so-called 'hanging promontory' sites. Their main characteristics, geographical distribution, datings and functions are explored, alongside comparisons with other forms of open-air assembly sites which throw light on a possible hierarchy of early medieval England's administrative territories. 3.3, on the other hand, applies the methodology to particular parts of England – the Scandinavian-settled areas – and demonstrates how it can illuminate a complex reality of administrative and territorial organisation, with considerable variations in scale, structure, and terminology from region to region. 3.4 shows how research on assembly-sites can be brought to bear upon other episodes in history, in this case the landing of a Viking force at Fulham in 878.</p> <p>Both 3.2 and 3.3 demonstrate that detailed analysis of individual sites makes possible a clearer differentiation between judicial assemblies that formed the focus of hundredal units, and other types of assembly site (e.g. those belonging to a different level within an administrative hierarchy, or servicing a different specific communal requirement). This is significant in understanding how the hundredal organisation of the tenth and eleventh centuries fitted into the wider landscape of public assembly, how it evolved from or within systems established earlier on, and how the purpose of these gatherings changed. In this regard, the functionality of sites indicated toponymically is especially important.</p> <p>3.5 shows how the methodology can be applied to a particular site within the context of community archaeology; this is explored further in section 4.</p> <p>Altogether, the research forms the basis for retrogressive analysis of the evolution of public assembly and administrative geography, enhancing our knowledge of early medieval government and its origins. They allow us to track the changing dynamics of public and private power as</p>

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expressed through administrative geography, adding considerably to our understanding of the growth of state institutions, and the organisation of the early medieval landscape.

3. References to the research

The project, 'Landscapes of Governance: assembly sites in England, 5th to 11th centuries', was funded by The Leverhulme Trust (ref. F/07 134/CS; £260K of which £119K came to Nottingham) for the period 19/10/09–18/10/12. The interdisciplinary methodology was established in 'Beyond the Burghal Hidage: Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age', funded by The Leverhulme Trust (ref. F/07 134/AY AWEQ; £204K of which £90K came to Nottingham) for the period 1/10/05–30/9/08.

- 3.1. J. Baker and S. Brookes (2013a), *Beyond the Burghal Hidage: Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age* (Leiden: Brill). (Listed in REF2)
- 3.2. J. Baker and S. Brookes (2013b) 'Monumentalising the Political Landscape: a special class of Anglo-Saxon assembly-sites', *The Antiquaries Journal* 93, 147–62. (DOI:10.1017/S0003581512001333)
- 3.3. J. Baker, and S. Brookes (2013c forthcoming), 'Governance at the Anglo-Scandinavian Interface: hundredal organisation in the Danelaw', *Journal of the North Atlantic*. (available on request)
- 3.4. J. Baker, and S. Brookes (2012a), 'Fulham 878–79: a new consideration of Viking manoeuvres', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 8, 23–52. (DOI: 10.1484/J.VMS.1.103193)
- 3.5. J. Baker, S. Brookes, A. Gaunt, L. Mallet and S. Reddish (2012b), 'Community archaeology at Thynghowe, Birklands, Sherwood Forest', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* 116, 53–71. (available on request)
- 3.6. J. Baker, S. Brookes, A. Reynolds (2011a), 'The Law of the Land: finding early medieval assembly sites', *British Archaeology* 120, 46-49. (<www.archaeologyuk.org/ba/ba120/feat6.shtml>)
- 3.7. J. Baker, S. Brookes and A. Reynolds (2011b), 'Landscapes of Governance. Assembly sites in England 5th–11th centuries', *Post Classical Archaeologies* 1, 499-502. (<www.postclassical.it/Vol.1_files/PCA1%20BakerBrookesReynolds.pdf>)

3.1 won the 2013 Verbruggen prize for medieval military history. 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.7 are in peer-reviewed journals. 3.5 and 3.6 have dual status as research outputs (see 2, above) and as elements of the impact narrative (see 4, below).

4. Details of the impact

New knowledge and capacity for amateur local historians, archaeologists and onomasts

The adoption of the standard reporting proforma designed by Baker (and underpinned by his research) by local historians, archaeologists and onomasts demonstrates the significance of the research to a range of specialist user communities. The proforma (available along with precise instructions for amateur participants through the project website) facilitated a new approach to recording all putative early medieval assembly sites in a systematic and detailed way (5.1). Certain groups en masse (including the Community Landscape and Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP), the Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Society Archaeology Field Group (AFG), The Sussex Archaeological Society, the Odsey study group), and a number of individual enthusiasts have been directly involved with data collection using the proforma. The results of this data collection have:

- fed back into the project (research and surveys carried out by volunteers accounted for 50 of a total of 300 surveys);
- formed the basis for further Society work (5.2). The following are examples:
 - CLASP became involved in 2010 after Baker's talk in Paulerspury, undertaking a range of fieldwork in Northants; Baker made site visits in 2011, and CLASP presented their results as a poster at the project conference, UCL, November 2011.
 - The Odsey group was brought together by a Hertfordshire enthusiast, after she attended the project conference. The group includes amateur researchers but also local authority personnel (e.g. Historic Environment Record officers, English Heritage employees, county archaeologists). It has met three times to discuss Odsey as a meeting-place, and Baker has attended all three meetings as an advisor and contributor.

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- The AFG undertook fieldwork at the meeting-places of the Wiltshire Domesday hundreds. Brief progress reports are to be found in *Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Magazine* 105 (p. 245) and 106 (p. 278).
- resulted in further work by independent scholars; resulting independent publications are beginning to appear (such as that by a former archivist in *Gloucestershire History* 25 (2011), and that in *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine* 107 (2014); work on Odsey is to appear in *Hertfordshire Past and Present*) (5.3);
- been integrated into a broad range of education initiatives, e.g. courses at the Institute of Continuing Education, Madingley Hall, Cambridge (6/12/10, 10/4/11, 2–4/12/11), at the Institute of Continuing Education, Rewley House, Oxford (26/3/2011), and for Wuffing Education, Woodbridge (10/12/11, 20/4/13) (5.4).

Informing and supporting follow-on projects initiated by community groups

Relationships developed over the course of this project indicate a high degree of sustainability through the embedding of the research outcomes in additional, independent projects. For example, data was provided to the project by the Friends of Thynghowe, a local Nottinghamshire society which rediscovered the Thynghowe ('assembly mound') in Sherwood Forest and which promotes knowledge about it within the local community. The Friends became involved in the project in 2009. Baker assisted them in examining the site (including a Geophysical Survey), and co-authored a discussion of the site for publication in *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* (3.5). Baker contributed to the Friends' successful application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant (£50K). The grant's authors acknowledged the key role that Baker's research had played in the success of the grant (5.5). This HLF project funded a LiDAR Survey and a range of events for the public, including Volunteer Workshops (Nov 2012 and March 2013), Ground Truthing (Nov 2012 to March 2013) the Annual Perambulation Walk (20/4/2013) and the Viking Spring Thing (18/5/2013–19/5/2013), thereby extending the reach of Baker's original research.

Enhancing public awareness and understanding about early medieval assembly sites

The interest of Baker's research for the 'Time Team'-type audience is evidenced by 2011a – *British Archaeology* magazine has a circulation of 16,000. Its reach is evidenced by dissemination at public engagement events to local archaeological and historical societies (e.g. Kent Archaeological Society, Leicestershire Museums Archaeology Fieldwork Group), and through day-schools and other Continuing Education initiatives (see above) (5.4). More than 500 individuals attended these events, which took place in Bedford (21/9/09–23/11/09), Paulerspury (15/9/10), Rochester (6/11/10), Northampton (9/4/11), Leicester (19/1/12), Leicester (28/4/12), Welwyn (14/7/12), St Neots (1/3/13), Norton (13/3/13) (5.6). All of these talks included discussion of the project's methodology, and discussion of variation in types of meeting place (e.g. 'hanging promontory' and 'extra potentiary' types), and in function (e.g. mustering or leisure alongside governance) and therefore drew on aspects of research from all of the publications listed in 3, although the function shifted depending upon the event's location and theme. For example, at the Landscapes of Violence study day (Woodbridge, 20/4/13) 3.4 was foregrounded, while in St Neots (1/3/13), 3.3 was of particular interest.

Significant media coverage has in turn prompted increased public interest in the research evidenced by the increase in web traffic to the project website: the INS website and, in particular, the Key to English Place-Names (see further below) experienced spikes in hits after the following radio interviews about assembly sites: BBC Radio 4's 'Open Country' (9/4/11; audience approx. 2 million) and BBC Radio Nottingham, 'The Mark Dennison Show' (14/4/11; audience approx. 50,000). The success of these interviews is reflected in the continuing requests for INS speakers (Mark Dennison Show, 23/5/12; BBC Radio Leicester, Down to Earth, 8/7/12). Project fieldwork at Thynghowe gained the attention of The Guardian in April 2012 (<www.guardian.co.uk/uk/the-northerner/2011/apr/12/boulby-polyhalite-cleveland-potash-krebs-dark-matter-otley-kate-middleton-thynghowe>). Baker was subsequently asked by the BBC to contribute to one in a series of events accompanying the BBC2 series, The Great British Story (Michael Wood, broadcast 25/5/12–10/8/12) to engage the general public in local history. Baker's event in Appleby Magna, Leicestershire (8/7/12) attracted 470 individuals (despite atrocious weather and unforeseen competition from Andy Murray in the Wimbledon final!). Baker gave a talk on the day focused upon the site of Spellow ('speech-hillspur'), less than a mile away, around which he had devised a place-

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names walk. The project's findings about the wider administrative context of meeting places fed into the talk, and around 280 leaflets giving details of the walk and its names were distributed (a copy was also made available on the INS website).

The freely-available AHRC-funded Key to English Place-Names web resource (5.7), re-launched in January 2012 with a Google-maps interface, offers clear explanations of England's town- and village-names for the general public through a clickable map. The Key contains project information relating to the hundred-names. Results not just from Landscapes of Governance but from all externally-funded INS projects (The Survey of English Place-Names (AHRC, British Academy); The Vocabulary of English Place-Names (AHRC); Beyond the Burghal Hidage (Leverhulme); Anglo-Saxon Mint-Names (AHRC)) are being fed into this resource. Since its relaunch in 2012, we have information about site hits: 18,913 visitors made 23,999 visits to the site, with a total of 132,569 page views. While most visitors were from the UK, some 20% were international (5.8). As of August 2012, the Key has been available as an iPhone app, freely available in the iTunes store (between its launch and 31/7/13, there were 511 downloads). Thus, we seek to present the cultural and linguistic heritage accessible through place-names to the widest possible audience.

Enhancing factual accuracy of programme content for the BBC

The INS has an ongoing and fruitful relationship with the various arms of the BBC, and is regularly contacted to offer advice and expertise on onomastic matters, thus enhancing the factual accuracy of programme content. Baker contributed in various project-related ways to BBC Education's support for the TV series, *The Great British Story* (see above). He co-hosted an information day (20/10/11) for BBC Learning, Salford and BBC Lab UK, London, in order to help the team plan the nationwide events accompanying the series. Baker presented ideas for place-name walks which included assembly sites for the events, and which therefore drew explicitly on project material. Ultimately, the locations nationwide were chosen 'drawing in no small part' (5.9) on this information day, and in part the results of this consultancy work can be seen in the account of the Appleby event described above. To help with preparation for Appleby, Baker provided the BBC Learning Manager for the East Midlands with information and suggestions via email between February and July 2012. (5.9)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1: Project website www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/assembly

5.2: Documentation relating to society activities (available on request)

5.3: Articles in *Gloucestershire History* (2011) and *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine* (forthcoming 2014): <http://www.gloshistory.org.uk/publications.php>
<http://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/shop/index.php?Action=2&pID=27>

(available on request).

5.4: Feedback from education initiatives and talks to local historical societies, etc. (available on request).

5.5: Documents relating to the Thynghowe HLF application and activities (available on request).

See also the Friends of Thynghowe website, www.thynghowe.org.uk

5.6: Full details of Baker's outreach and impact activities can be found at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/people/john.baker> (under Impact and Outreach).

5.7: The Key to English Place-Names <http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/>

5.8: Google analytics documents relating to access to The Key (available on request).

5.9: Emails relating to activities with BBC Learning (Salford, London, East Midlands (available on request).