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THE 9TH CENTURY BATTLE OF BUTTINGTON

An analysis of the evidence for the battle location

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER

HI6000: 8533 Words

2017-18

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Contents:

List of Figures.

Acknowledgements:

With special thanks to the following for their help with this dissertation.

Louise Terry, Amy Gray Jones, Tom Pickles, Howard Williams, Pauline Clarke, Eva Bergsdorf and Powysland Museum, the History and Archaeological Department at the University of Chester and the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust.

An introduction to the Battle of Buttington:

The 'Battle of Buttington', which is reported to have taken place in AD 893 between an invading Viking army and a combination of the armies of Wessex and of the Welsh Princes, has been long attributed to the settlement of Buttington near the River Severn in Montgomeryshire. This location has been preferred over its southern namesake, Buttington Tump, Gloucestershire, for what is believed to be one of the largest Viking battles to take place on British soil, due to the discovery of human remains in 1837. However recent radio-carbon dating of the two crania available has shown that they do not date to the first millennia AD as thought, which obviously weakens the argument for a northern location. To provide an answer to the Buttington battlesite question a reassessment of the historical sources, including secondary antiquarian narratives, will be undertaken to understand how the Mid Wales location was adjudged as the prime setting. Furthermore, the reason as to why evidence was attributed to the battle, without secure provenance, will be considered.

This dissertation aims to challenge the, currently accepted, Mid Walian location using historical document assessment, topographic and geographical studies and modern archaeological techniques. Alongside this, an investigation of other battlesites and their attributed location, which although have greater textual and source evidence, can prove equally as difficult to determine. This research will provide evidence to support an alternative location for the battle to be further south, in Gloucestershire, and the concluding chapter will also outline how further archaeological work, including evaluation and survey, could be performed to determine a more conclusive location.

1. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle excerpt:

The following excerpts from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC)* are the primary source material for selecting Buttington, Montgomeryshire, Mid Wales, over the alternative location Buttington Tump, Gloucestershire, on the Severn Estuary near Chepstow. The *ASC* was compiled by a series of scribes under the orders of King Alfred the Great, believed to have been started in AD 890, and is unquestionably a valuable manuscript in all of its forms (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 50-52). It describes the movement of Hæsten's Viking army as they, "*went up along the Thames until they reached the Severn, then up along the Severn"* (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 55-56), where they were surrounded and a siege began. The historical basis on the location is founded on the word 'up' in the last line of the first passage (Keynes & Lapidge, 2004, p. 287). Removal of that one small word from the account would dramatically alter the potential location of the battle. The source provides the battle location of Buttington, and incorporates the rivers Thames, Parrett and Severn and two other named places in Shoebury and Selwood, in Essex and Eastern Somerset respectively (Whitelock D. , 1961, pp. 55-56). From these named geographic points the suggested battle site, according to a majority of historians, is Buttington in Montgomeryshire, (Smollett, 1757; Boyd-Dawkins, 1873; Hackett, 2016; The Royal Commission, 1911). However the preference for a Mid Walian location for the battle only gathers momentum *after* the 1837 discovery of human remains during the construction of a schoolhouse at the eastern end of Buttington churchyard (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, pp. 141-143). Archaeological and geographic analysis, however, would suggest that the lack of archaeological evidence, in addition to simple logistics, would provide the southern location as the more likely battlesite.

The *ASC* cites Buttington, however which of the two Buttington settlements it refers to is left open to scrutiny (Williams, 2016, pp. 35-36). Keynes and Lapidge add to the dilemma in suggesting that battles may not have even occurred, or that the place named was not indeed the location of the battle (Williams, 2016, pp. 36-37). Historic secondary sources tend to write about the battle and exaggerate the narrative extensively, as if they had access to full, first-hand knowledge of the event.

Thomas Morgan-Owen, writes about 'The Battle of Buttington' after the discovery of the skeletal remains, and describes the battle vividly as a "death grapple" between Alfred and 'Hastings'. His battle takes place near "Welshpool and the castle of the earl who bears the title of the ancient princes of Powys", and he describes the Vyrnwy and Severn rivers acting as a "huge brilliant mirror" (Morgan-Owen, 1874, pp. 251-274). Morgan, and more contemporary historians, have expanded on the brief excerpt in the *ASC* to produce an enhanced narrative, having been beguiled by the skeletal remains excavated in the 1830's.

> *"… and the (other) two Danish armies were assembled at Shoebury in Essex, and had made a fortress there, they went both together up along the Thames, and a great reinforcement came to them both from the East Angles and the Northumbrians. (They then went up along the Thames until they reached the Severn, then up along the Severn.)* (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 55-56)

> *"…the king's thegns who were then at home with the fortresses assembled from every borough east of the Parret, and both west and east of Selwood, and also north of the Thames and west of the Severn, and also some portion of the Welsh people. When they were all assembled, they overtook the Danish army at Buttington on the bank of the Severn, and besieged it on every side in a fortress."* (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 55-56)

The battle being identified as taking place in Montgomeryshire appears to be resurrected by the discovery of bones in the cemetery of Buttington Church in 1837 and is reported by *The Standard* in October of the same year (The London Standard, 1837). The

account describes the discovery of “immense quantities of human bone” uncovered whilst digging the foundations for the schoolhouse, enough to fill several cartloads. There is no mention of damage consistent with violent death, but instead reports that the bones were “huddled together in holes” with “good teeth” belonging to men in the “prime of their lives” (The London Standard, 1837). This article does give a near primary account of the excavation of the bones which appears to ignite the Mid Wales claim on the battle, by creating a link between the two events, although lacking in any conclusive evidence.

This event in the 1830’s does appear to be the *Terminus Post Quem* for Buttington, with the more northerly location becoming favoured due to the discovery of the bone filled pits from this point onwards. However, Buttington, Montgomeryshire, was preferred by some antiquarians prior to the discovery of the bones, for example Tobias Smollett, and these opinions must not be avoided in the discussion (Smollett, 1757, pp. 146-147). Further developments, and reconsidering the archaeological and scientific facts, will suggest a review on the siting and this shall be discussed later in the thesis.

2. The evidence from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

The narrative for the Battle-of-Buttington begins with the *ASC* entry for AD 893 (894 in manuscripts 'C' and 'D') and is the starting point for this study's re-examination of the case for determining the location of the battlesite. It describes events in a chronological, although slightly retrospective, manner and was used by other writers, such as Asser in his *Life of Alfred the Great* (Stephenson, 1904, pp. 82-85). Written by English monks (Bartlett, 2000, pp. 616-620) with justification dependent on the individual manuscript and its audience, caution must be used with regard to its 'factual' content (Williams, 2016, pp. 37-38). There are seven complete manuscripts available, each with their own agenda and locational bias, which distort the events, and dates of those events, to suit their own purposes in promoting their own region within the document (Shippey, 1997, p. 19). This allows Thomas Williams to suggest it is "rife with flagrant invention" regarding battle location (Williams T. J., 2016, p. 37). The events of 893 are mentioned in four of the *ASC* manuscripts, and in this thesis, we shall use the dating attributed to manuscripts 'A' and 'B'.

The *ASC* is not one consistent source, as whilst the various manuscripts share the same base, they offer different versions of the same events. (Baxter, 2007, pp. 1190-1191). Although the *ASC* entry for AD 893, below, does name Buttington as the site of the battle, there has been no archaeological, or geographical evidence to corroborate this is as yet (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 54-56).

> "*When they were all assembled, they overtook the Danish army at Buttington on the bank of the Severn, and besieged it on every side in a fortress.*"
>
> (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 55-56)

The *ASC* does appear to offer a possible glimpse of the army which meets its demise at Buttington when an entry mentions a fleet of a hundred vessels sailing south from Northumbria and around the coast to attack Exeter. Part of this group breaks away and sails north, after rounding Land's End, and up the Bristol Channel towards the Severn (Gore, 2016, pp. 63-64). This event followed the death of Guthrum, Alfred's godson, in AD 890 (891 'C'). The aftermath saw Wessex face a new threat in a veteran Danish army which had been present in Francia for a number of years (Gore, 2016, pp. 63-64). This band was thought to be led by Hæsten, who was proficient in raiding techniques, and who Smollett suggests had a measure of "good fortune" which attracted East Anglian Danes looking for their own share of the loot (Smollett, 1757, p. 146). This is corroborated by A. P. Smyth (Smyth, 1975, p. 32), who suggests the East Anglian *and* Northumbrian Vikings joined Hæsten to complete a large seaborne army consisting of in excess of a hundred vessels (Gore, 2016, pp. 64-65). Manuscript 'A' documents the army dividing at the mouth of the River Ex and, whilst a large group move up river to besiege Exeter, the smaller party sail onwards to The Bristol Channel (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 54-56). This forty-vessel group could be the Danish army that is trapped at Buttington. However, of the two locations, the southern one would be the more likely due to geography and logistics (Figure 1.). Hæsten's fleet would have had to navigate the River Severn for over 130 miles to reach Buttington, Montgomeryshire, and in doing so would have had to avoid defended settlements and Alfred's Burghal Hidage fortification at Worcester (Baker & Brookes, 2013, pp. 154-155).

This inclusion in the *ASC* has been omitted from all the manuscripts apart from the earliest known, version 'A' (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 54-55). Unfortunately, this manuscript places Hæsten in Benfleet, which means he cannot have been present amongst the forty ships heading up the Severn Estuary. If this was the case, either the forty-boat fleet is not the party

besieged at Buttington, or Hæsten was not in Essex (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 54-55). A major issue that archaeologists, and historians, find with the *ASC* are interpreting an author's justification in writing an excerpt (Shippey, 1997, p. 17; Williams, 2016, pp. 37-39). James Campbell provides an example which emphasises this, where contemporary writer *Asser* mentions many aspects of the internal dynamics of Wessex during Alfred's reign, but avoids any failures within the kingdom (Campbell J., 2000, pp. 129-135). This raises the question of whether the author is providing a version of events in which the Viking army only sails around the borders of Wessex until the Ex, perhaps suggesting that Alfred's defences were too strong. Alternatively the Vikings sailed up the Thames until they were prevented from travelling further upstream, and then were pursued on horseback through Mercia to the northern battle site, as suggested by Martin Hackett (Hackett, 2016, p. 148). Baker and Brookes refute this and suggest the Burghal Hidage system of defences would not block passage along rivers, but would guard crossing points which may have allowed Hæsten's journey in AD 893 (Baker & Brookes, 2013, pp. 306-307).

The account in the *ASC* implies that the Vikings crossed from the Thames to the Severn, a difficult portage, consisting of an overland journey between the two rivers of no less than 30 miles including a climb of over 600 feet. These figures are based on allowing travel from the last navigable point on the Thames, at Lechlade, to the Severn Estuary (British Marine Federation, 2013, p. 15). However, the hounding of the accumulated armies mentioned in the *ASC* and, if as suggested by Laurence, an army could travel 20 miles in a day *without* having to carry their boats, the probability of this being the route taken is unlikely (Laurence, 1999, p. 82). The fact that the various accounts in the *ASC* do not describe the

battle location in detail allows later narratives a blank canvas to fit the battle to their desired landscape.

3. Discussion of the battle in other historical sources:

Other historical documents provide an interesting debate on the location of the Battle-of-Buttington. In this section these texts and maps will be discussed in order to present an argument for whether Montgomeryshire, or Gloucestershire, would be the more likely location for the battle. The southern site at Buttington Tump, Gloucestershire, is situated on a finger of land between the Severn and the Wye. The northern site, at Buttington, Montgomeryshire, is located on the floodplain of the South bank of the river, over a hundred miles further upstream (Figure 1). Early historical writers disagree on the northern setting, and Sir John Spelman notes in his 18th century account of the *Life of Alfred the Great* that his work has been challenged on the location by other historians, however, without "some Tokens of Fortification yet to be seen there" (Spelman, 1709, pp. 79-80). Spelman adds, that he believes the battle to have taken place in Montgomeryshire, however, "Boddington in Tewksbury hundred… and Bodendon in Cheltenham hundred" should not be ignored as potential locations (Spelman, 1709, p. 85). The southern preference is promoted by the Reverend James Gordon, who writes of the trapped Vikings, "Thus, besieged at Boddington in the county of Glocester (sic), till many died by famine" (Gordon, 1815, pp. 108-109). Place-name variations such as these are common within historic texts and toponymical studies, and suggest oral transfer of place-names can be a cause of discrepancies in spelling through misunderstanding of local accents (Cacciafoco, 2014, pp. 58-59). The dating of Gordon's extract is only twenty years before the discovery of the bones at Buttington, Montgomeryshire in 1837, upon which later historians base their preferences.

Figure 1 Map of late 9th Century England and Wales, indicating the position of the two Buttington's. (Shepherd, 1911, p. 60)

In attributing the battle to its northern location, the 15th century route map (Figure 2) illustrates the village of Buttington, including the church and, interestingly, depicts an island between the two streams of the River Severn. This historical route map suggests the River Severn divided at Buttington and the island formed would have aided blockading the Viking band on all sides (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 55-56). Mark Redknap, Head of Collections and Research at the National Museum of Wales, believes this to be the battlesite. This area, as seen in photographs within this work, is susceptible to flooding, which could indicate the

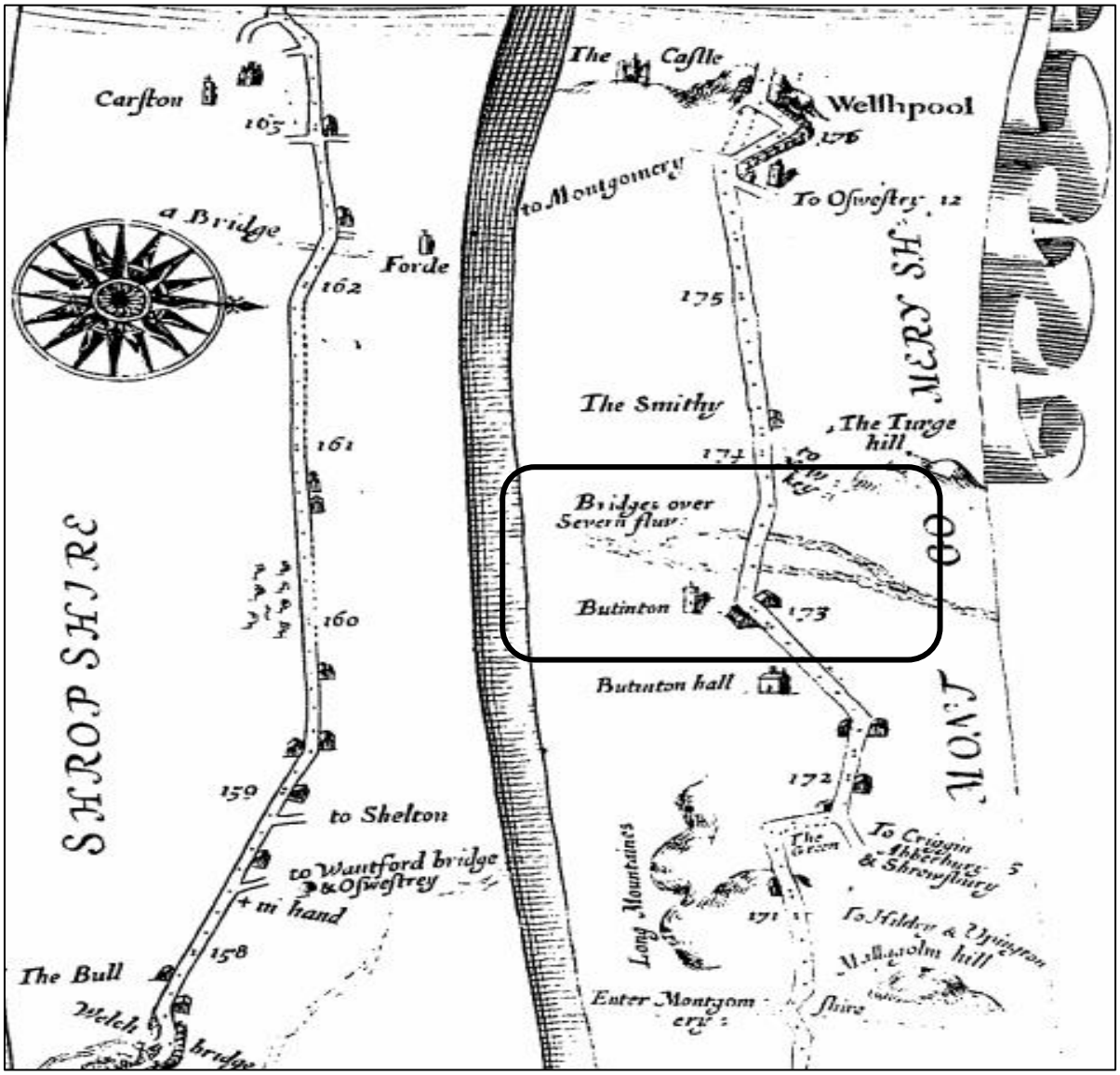

Figure 2 Illustration of route map dated 1675, showing no mention of a 'Battle' at Buttington. (Ogilvy, 1675, pp. 98-99)

island did once exist. Reference to flooding is also stated in later historians' narratives of the event, but not in the *ASC* (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 55-56).

The following passage is taken from a Latin text, edited by Henry Richards in 1872, from an original manuscript attributed to Matthæi Parisiensis, a monk of St. Albans, and was published in 1259.[1]

> *…arrepto igitur clam itinere per provinciam ad villam quandam super flumen sabrinae sitam, Buttingetune appellatam, pervenerunt, ubi a confratribus suis reverenter sunt recepti, atque in oppidum, quod ibidem construxerant, introducti…*
>
> *…took a journey through the province, to a certain estate, then, a secret place, situated on the river bank of the Severn, Buttingetune that she was called, they arrived, where they were received with reverence by the brethren into their own, and place into the city, which he had constructed in the same place, being introduced…*
>
> (Stephenson, 1904, p. 141)

The text infers that Hæsten's men were received with reverence at Buttington, a secret place. This account implies that Buttington was a fugitive's sanctuary and that the Vikings were known by the people of the estate, and the translation of an open welcome questions whether there was ever a battle. This brings us to the ethnicity of Britain at the time and queries if it was, as is presumed, an Anglo-Saxon kingdom where Danes and the Norse were treated as immigrants and forced into enclaves. Alternatively, was integration and co-operation present between the various groups to allow Alfred to control and strengthen his position, as suggested by Roffey and Lavelle (Roffey & Lavelle, 2016, pp. 15-18). Baker and Brookes provide a different view regarding the 9th century and suggest that Anglo-Saxons are undeniably warmaking people (Baker & Brookes, 2013, p. 3). They provide evidence in the form of adult men recovered from pagan cemeteries, of which over half are buried with

[1] The translation was completed by myself and errors may have occurred, however more experienced scholars may translate it differently, and intricacies may be 'lost in translation'.

warrior identities (Baker & Brookes, 2013, p. 3), suggesting that cultural differences were an issue.

In the following quote, a translation by Coxe of an original text of Rogeri de Wendover, tells of a Buttington which has waves on all sides. This does not represent the battlesite in Mid Wales, unless the original settlement was on the island area, shown earlier in Figure 2. The river would have been a constant threat to any dwelling on such a piece of land, with the Severn, even now managed by the dam upriver, well-known for flooding in this area. The passage relays that the pagans were encompassed by the river, however the mention of a town suggests that the more probable location would be a settlement of larger proportions than Buttington.

> *Cumque haec regi Alfredo nuntiata fuissent, congregavit exercitum quasi invincibilem et veniens ad oppidum praefatum, quod Sabrinae fluctibus erat undique perfusum, paganos tam navali quam terrestri exercitu circumcinxit.*
>
> *Now when all this was reported to the king, Alfred had been, as it were, is invincible, and gathered together an army he came to the town, already mentioned, the bank of the Severn, bathed by the waves, on all sides, because it encompassed the army of the pagans with both fleet as of earth.*
>
> (Coxe, 1841, p. 361)

These historical texts are all written hundreds of years after the battle, and therefore must be classed as secondary sources. However the original authors, from which Coxe and Luard copied their works, can be seen as near contemporary to the battle, and considered to be more chronologically sound in their opinion. It has previously been said that historical authors (Higham, 1993, pp. 8-9), particularly those writing about events which took place a significant time before their lives, can be suggested to have an agenda, such as an association with a particular area or for their name to be related to a major battle. In this instance both

writers are inconclusive about the location of the battle and Coxe, writing in 1841, only three years after the excavation of the bones, queries the setting in his page notes regardless.

Asser's *Life of Alfred* is thought to have been written in the same year as Hæsten's attack, although this has not been confirmed (Stephenson, 1904, p. vii). Asser's work, according to Stephenson, aligns with the *ASC* in many aspects including the mention of Buttington, yet Asser's excerpt's Latin copy suggests that they, "most strongly fortified the town" (Stephenson, 1904, p. 141). This proposes a larger settlement than the sparsely populated village of Mid Wales, which although covers a wide area, the nucleus, around the church, has no remaining evidence of any fortification.

> *…depraedantes quousque pervenerunt ad ripam Sabrinae fluminis, et ibi apud Buttingatunam munitissimum oppidum fecerunt, sed mox Adheredus, comes Merciorum, cum comitibus Eathelmo et Eathelmnotho (sic), necnon et 5 cum aliis fidelibus regis, obsedit oppidum ex omni parte, quousque paganis defecit omnis victus, sic ut carnes equorum suorum comederent, ac demum fame coacti procedunt ad bellum contra eos, qui ex orientali parte obsidionis erant. Ceciderunt ibidem multi ex utraque 10 parte, tamen, Deo auxiliante, Christiani victoria sunt potiti, Dani vero in fugam sunt versi. Item ad East Seaxum redierunt, unde venerunt (ex eisdem).*
>
> *Anno dcccxciv praefatus exercitus paganoru…*
>
> (Stephenson, 1904, p. 141)

Focussing on the place names within the text above, the additional line on page 140 *"supra* Sceobyrig *scripsit alia manus* id est Sudbiri" translates as "on the other hand it is written Sceobyrig Sudbury". This suggests the town is not Shoebury, but Sudbury, although further misinterpretation of this could lead to Shrewsbury, a town through which the River Severn also flows, and situated only 11 miles from Buttington, Montgomeryshire (Stephenson, 1904, p. 141). The place name evidence in Asser's text is, at best, suggesting the northern site for the battle, yet there are no descriptive elements within the manuscript and

the towns mentioned struggle to support a definite location, as is similar in all the texts referred to.

4. The discovery of human remains and their role in locating the Battle of Buttington:

In October 1837, whilst excavating the foundations of a new schoolhouse at All Saint's Church, Buttington, Montgomeryshire, workmen uncovered three pits containing "some 400 human crania, carefully placed in the centre of the pit" (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, pp. 141-143). This one event appeared to prove, for many, without question, that the Viking army was defeated on the banks of the Severn in Mid Wales. As a result renewed interest increased and writers and historians offered their interpretations of how the battle played out. The crania were only dated by association, and until recently had not been subject to detailed analysis.

Buttington Church (Figure 3) is currently within the diocese of St. Asaph, however this was not always the case. Throughout the 13th century there were quarrels concerning the limits of the diocese of Hereford and Pole, which conceded the title of the Mother Church

Figure 3 Aerial photograph taken in 2014. This photograph displays the slight rise in the land around the churchyard, however, the flooded River Severn does not show the island which Ogilvy illustrated in his map of 1675. © Daily Mail Online.

(Thomas, 1913, pp. 726-728). The churchyard is approximately 1700m² and has two linear boundaries to the east and south. Between these boundaries a curved edge runs from the south western corner around to the northern boundary, which was cut by work on the A458 trunk road during the 1960's. (Figure 4) The church is aligned in a south-west/north-east direction, rendered white and its slightly raised position can be seen in figure 3, a photograph taken in December 2014 with floods surrounding the building.

An inspection of the existing memorials in the churchyard, completed in February 2018, revealed that the oldest monument dates to the late 18th century, however this stone has been relocated to the western boundary of the churchyard. This dating information suggests that a graveyard clearance may have taken place in the mid-18th century, and again in 1882 when a new cemetery was consecrated to the east of the church (Historic

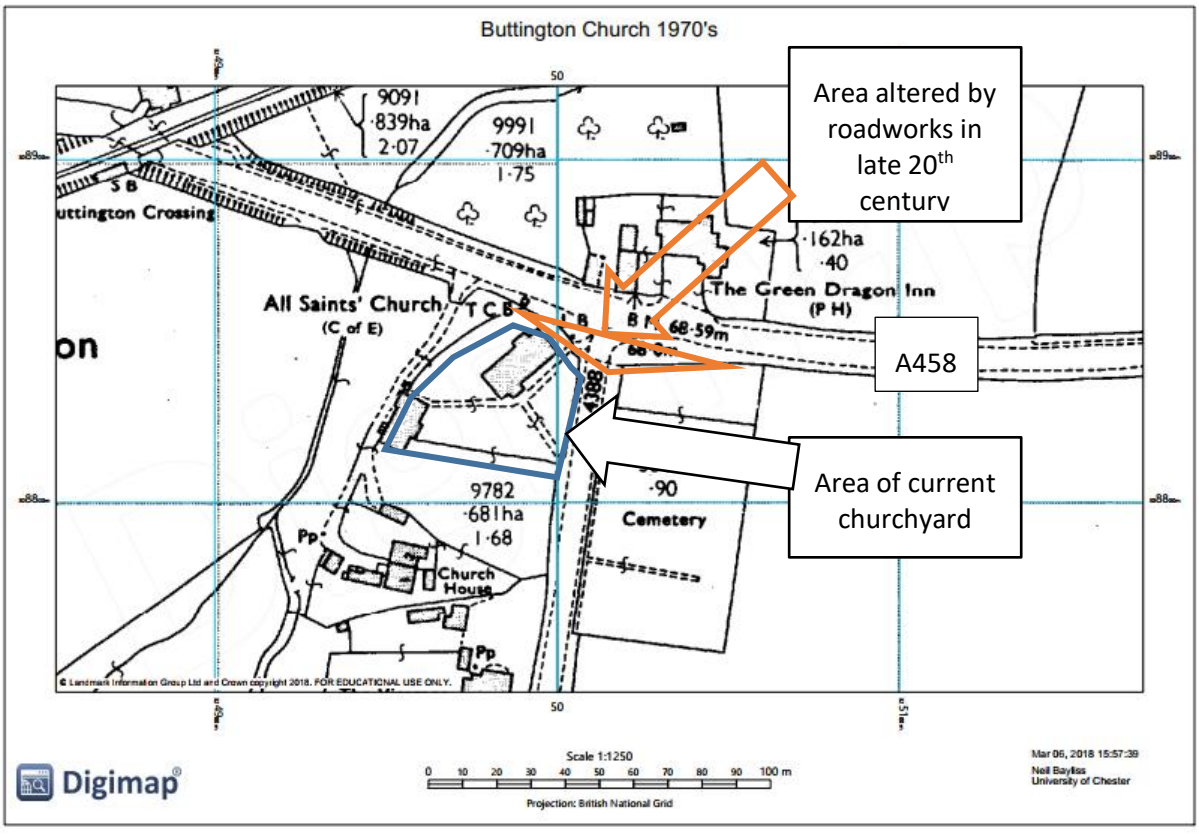

Figure 4 Map of area immediately surrounding Buttington Church with the churchyard area marked out and alterations to the A458 made in the late 20th century.

Environment Record (5478), 2007). Graveyard clearances would extract a large quantity of skeletal remains, which could be interpreted as a mass grave, and therefore be the remains found in 1837.

The passage below includes a description of how the bones were laid out within the pits, and records a painstaking reburial ritual, with the skulls all facing east (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, p. 141), suggesting the incumbents were buried in a Christian manner. Boyd-Dawkins goes on to record that the skulls were all in a similar state of decomposition and that the other two pits were roughly the same depth, although there appeared to be less structure to the deposition and only "about one hundred skulls" in each (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, p. 141).

> *A workman having been employed in the churchyard of Buttington, Montgomeryshire, to dig the foundation for a new school-room, was interrupted in his labour by a very extraordinary discovery of immense quantities of human skulls, and several cart loads of human bones. In one circular hole, three feet and a half in diameter and three feet and a half deep, were found one hundred skulls, all arranged in mechanical order, facing the east, and covered with a single range of thigh and leg bones, belonging respectively to each other.*
>
> (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, p. 141)

After their excavation the skulls were put on display in the church, "for the inspection of visitors", and the remains received a great deal of interest (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, p. 141). There was undoubtedly a discovery of human remains at Buttington, and the crania, formerly displayed in Powysland Museum, provide physical evidence of this. However in ascribing these remains to the battle, Boyd-Dawkins and the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* report, reprinted in *The Times* in the week following the discovery, have proved misleading. This is something that should now be corrected after the revised dating of the crania. More information on the Buttington skulls can be found in Appendix 1 on page 44.

Incidentally, whilst studying the crania, the label was seen to have an excavation date of 1875. This is either an antiquarian labelling error, or that particular cranium is not one of the 400 excavated in 1837. The issue regarding the labelling on the crania, which were radiocarbon dated, should remove them as evidence for, or against, the battlefield location as their provenance renders them as unreliable. However, it could prove valuable in confirming that the remains discovered in 1837 were evidence of a graveyard clearance.

5. The rival locations and their claims on the battle:

The geographical location of the two Buttington's is critical in the decision on where the battle took place, with both sites equally associated to the River Severn through proximity. With both sites within 200 metres of the River, the distances between both Montgomeryshire and Gloucestershire, along with other places named in the *ASC* excerpt are shown in Figure 5. It is clear from this that the Gloucestershire site is considerably closer to all the places named in the text, although this alone cannot determine the correct location. The following chapter considers the two sites and compares their historical, and archaeological links to the battle, bringing in new evidence in the form of LiDAR images, to assess the claims of the possible locations.

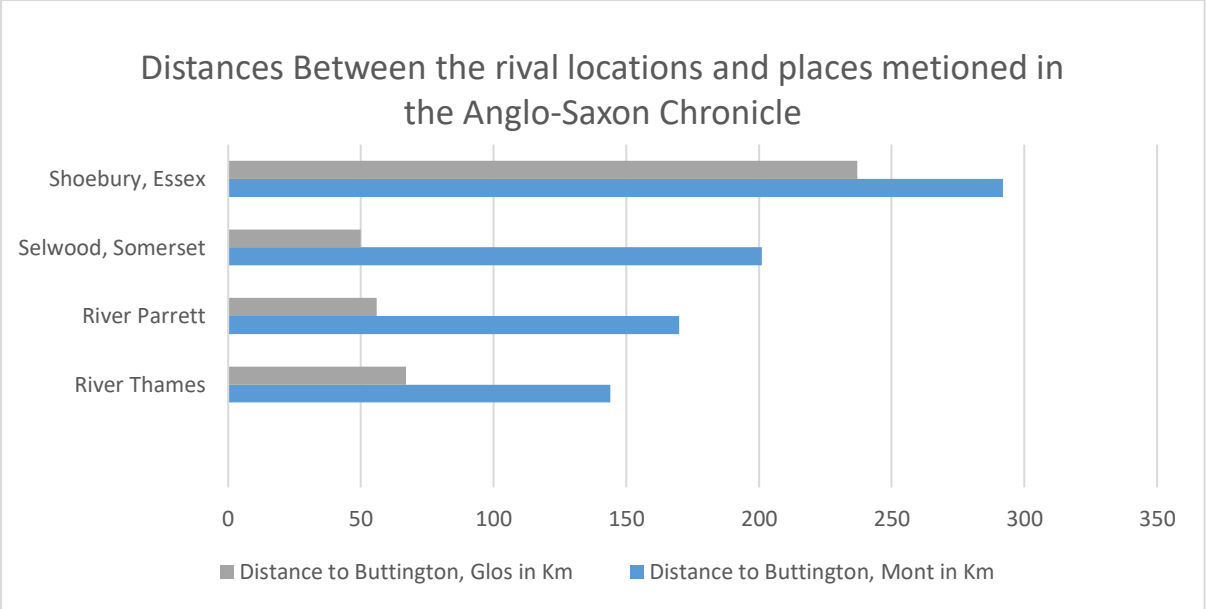

Figure 5. Chart illustrating distances between the paces named in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the two possible battle locations.

Both sites have a relationship with Offa's Dyke, the earthwork attributed to King Offa of Mercia (d. 796) and constructed, primarily, to control movement between Mercia and Wales (Baker & Brookes, 2013, pp. 46-47). The dyke runs for 150 miles from Prestatyn, on the North Wales coast, passing Buttington, Montgomeryshire, before ending at Buttington Tump,

Gloucestershire (Campbell J., 1991, pp. 120-121). A comparison of the two locations shall now be made, which give an overview of their possible claim to be the site of the Battle-of-Buttington.

Buttington, Montgomeryshire, has for many years been the location favoured by historians, with a leading figure in Welsh academia, Dr Mark Redknap believing that the battle took place in the vicinity of All Saint's Church (Figure 6). He originally believed the human remains discovered there in the 1830's were the remains of the Viking army which were defeated, (Redknap, 2000, pp. 32-34), a stance which he has altered since the radiocarbon dating of the crania. Martin Hackett, a local historian and author, is also convinced the battle took place there, although his theory is that it happened on the other side of the A458, and

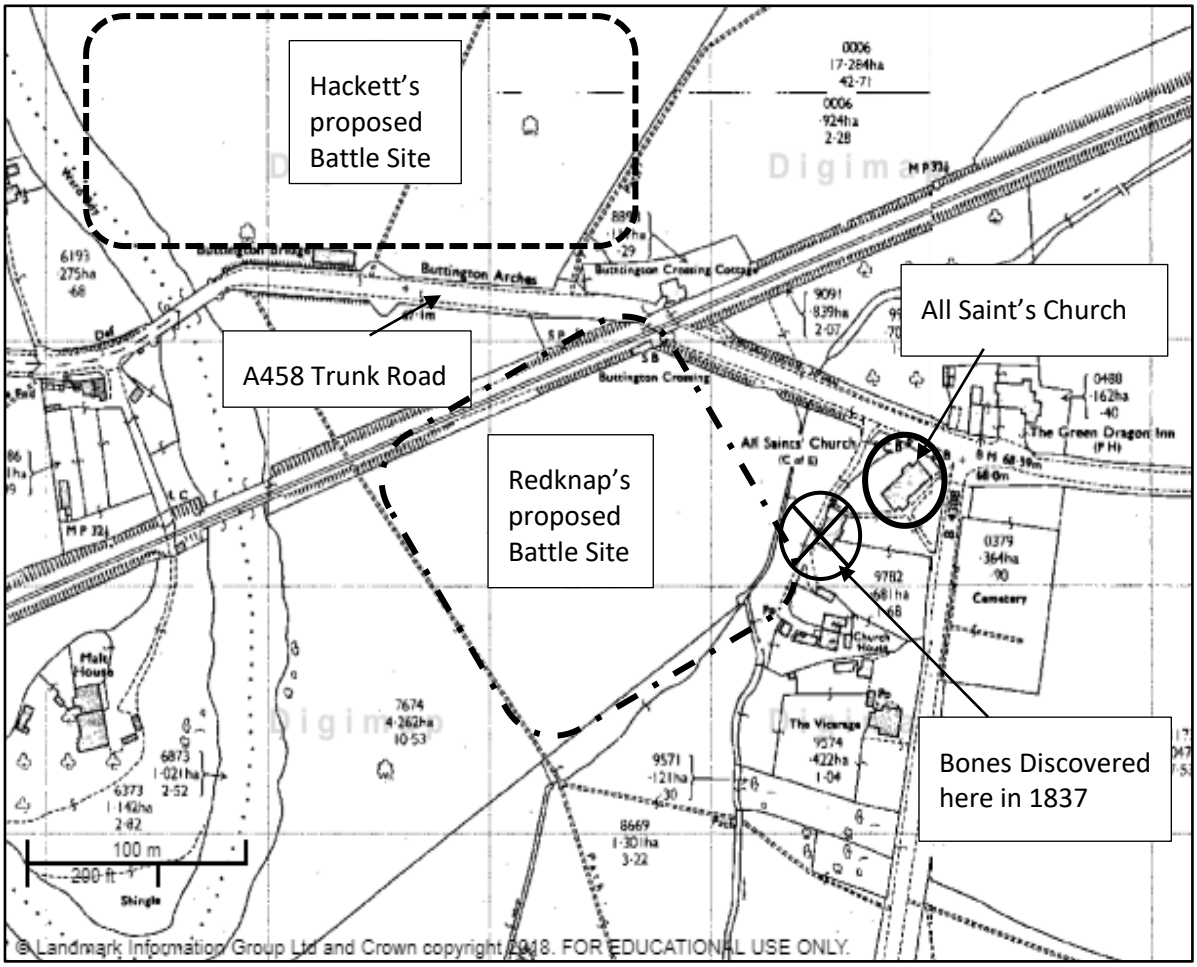

Figure 6 1970 Map of the areas considered for the battle by Redknap and Hackett.

nearer the River Severn's current course (Hackett, 2013, pp. 147-148). Hackett states that "archaeological and historical written evidence match", however that claim is difficult to support, with no archaeological evidence to validate the site presented in modern times (Historic Environment Record (5478)).

From the chart presented earlier, the case for Buttington Tump is potentially a sound proposition for the location of the Battle-of-Buttington, with good access to the River Severn and no treacherous navigation of the upper course of the river necessary. Sited on the West bank of the river, its situation between the two rivers, Severn and Wye, would allow for it to be surrounded, as stated in the *ASC* (Whitelock, 1961, pp. 54-55). Buttington Tump (starred on Figure 7) does have possible earthworks (circled) which are believed to be Roman (Omerod, 1860, pp. 189-190), or even Iron Age in date (Mellett, 2018, p. 2), following excavations by the Local Authority. These earthworks may be the 'fortress' utilised by Hæsten as mentioned in the *ASC,* a feature which was said to have been seen by antiquarians at

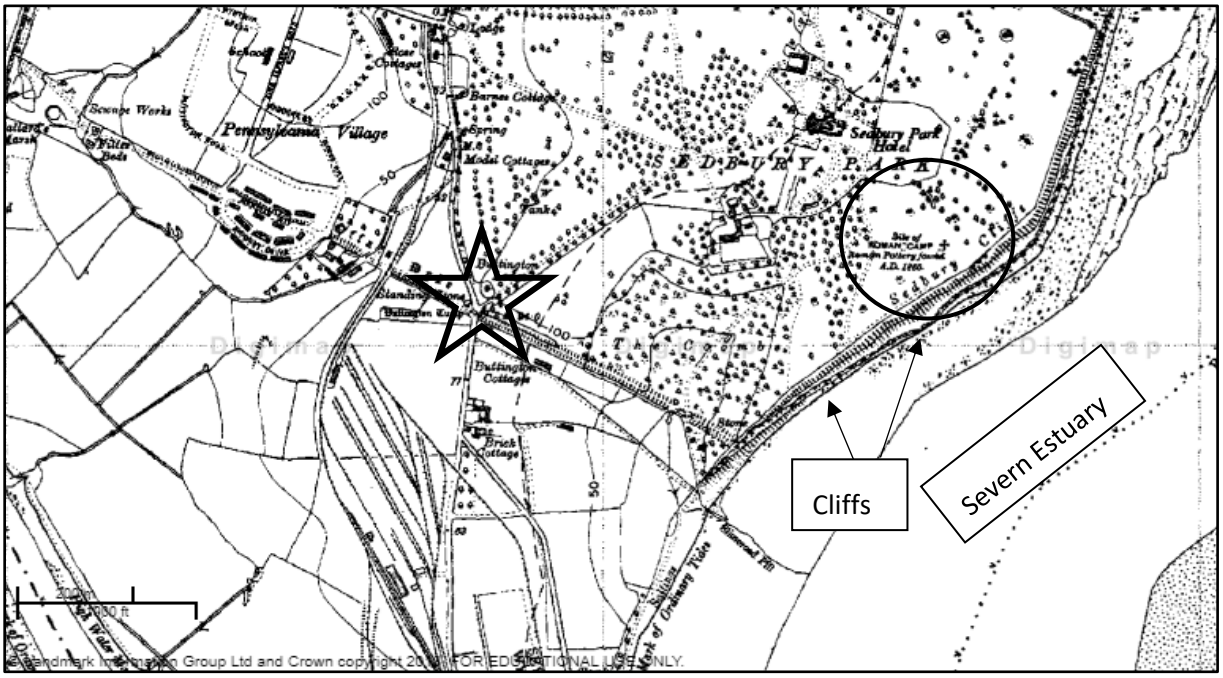

Figure 7 1930's map of the area around Buttington Tump, including Buttington Terrace, (marked with a star) and the Roman earthworks. (Circled)

Buttington, Montgomeryshire, but has since been lost (Historic Environment Record (5478), 2007).

The personalities involved in the battle on the Anglo-Saxon side, would have had better connections to the southern location, than with Montgomeryshire, as the East bank of the estuary would fall within Alfred's Wessex. Associations between Alfred and the Welsh Princes would have given him partial jurisdiction over the area around Buttington Tump (Baker & Brookes, 2013, pp. 15-30).

Omerod's map of Buttington Tump (Omerod, 1860, p. 16), (see figure 8) shows a linear earthwork which travels in a south-west to north-east direction, sectioning off a lozenge

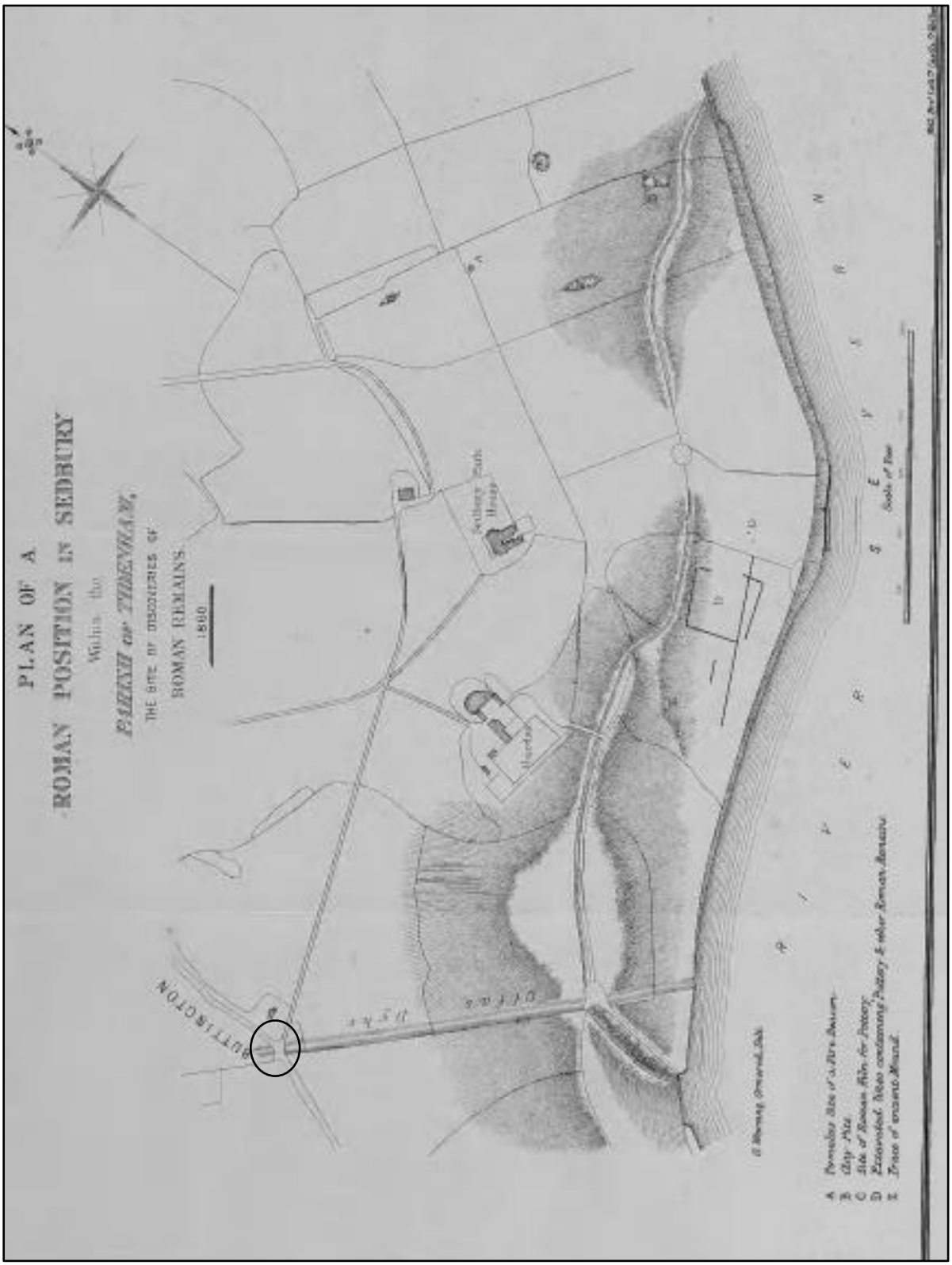

Figure 8 Omerod's map of the Roman Position in Sedbury, showing Offa's Dyke, Buttington Tump (Circled) and the location of his excavations. (Omerod, 1860, P. 16)

shaped section of land approximately 900 metres in length and 15 metres at its widest point. This would provide a section of land which could have been defended by a military force, as mentioned in the *ASC,* with their east and south-east flanks protected by the Sedbury Cliffs. Unfortunately, modern survey data available for the area no longer shows this feature. LiDAR, which uses satellites to accurately record the Earth's surface with pulsing lasers, can provide high quality images of land as seen in figure 9, where details in the surrounding landscape suggest heavy ploughing. This agricultural, or possibly deliberate, destruction has obliterated the earthwork during the course of the last hundred and fifty years. The lost earthwork can also be followed on figure 9, as a series of hashed lines, perhaps indicative of a pathway, which follow the line of a culverted stream along the change of slope.

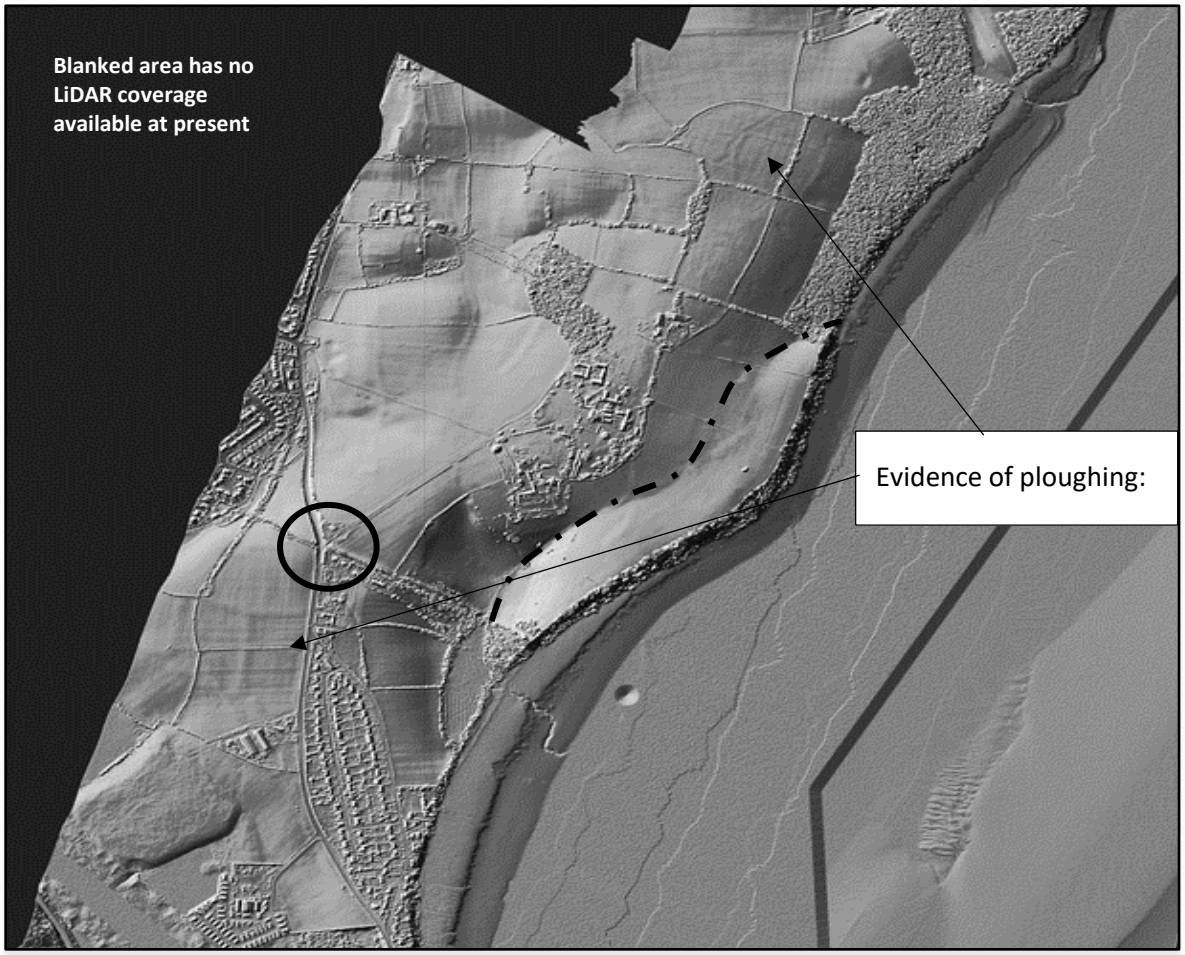

Figure 9 Lidar image of the area around Buttington Tump. (Circled) data at .5m resolution. © Environment Agency & Natural Resources Wales 2018. http://environment.data.gov.uk/ds/survey/#/survey?grid=ST59

Having access to the LiDAR for Buttington Tump allows the archaeologist to study, in detail, an area which previously would have been inaccessible through undergrowth, trees and other vegetation. Unfortunately, high quality LiDAR images are unavailable for the zone around Buttington, Mid Wales, however a 2 metre resolution image has been reproduced in figure 10 of the Montgomeryshire site to provide a comparison to figure 9. The difference in clarity between the two images is clear and should better quality LiDAR become available for Buttington, Montgomeryshire, the earthworks mentioned by 19th century antiquarians may be visible again.

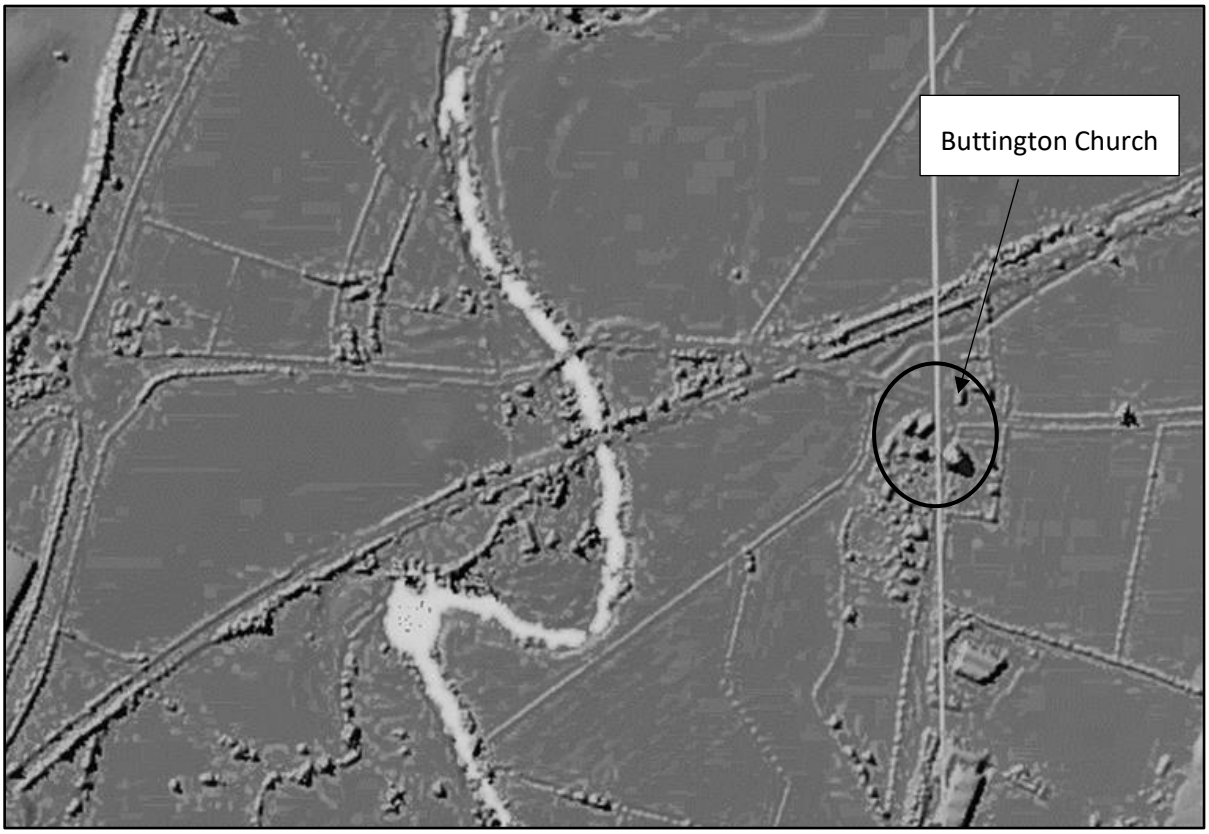

Figure 10. 2m LiDAR image of Buttington, Mid Wales. Note the limited quality as opposed to figure 3. Contains Natural Resources Wales information © Natural Resources Wales and database right, © Crown Copyright and database right 2016. Ordnance Survey 1000218

Figure 11 shows the paleochannels at Buttington, Montgomeryshire, dividing and forming a raised land level and, although not excessive, this can be associated with the 'island' visible in Ogilvy's 17th century illustration. The channel division takes place to the south west of the church, which on the more elevated ground, would hold a strong strategic position over

the besieged army, therefore agreeing in principle to Redknap's proposed battlefield location (Redknap, 2000, pp. 32-34).

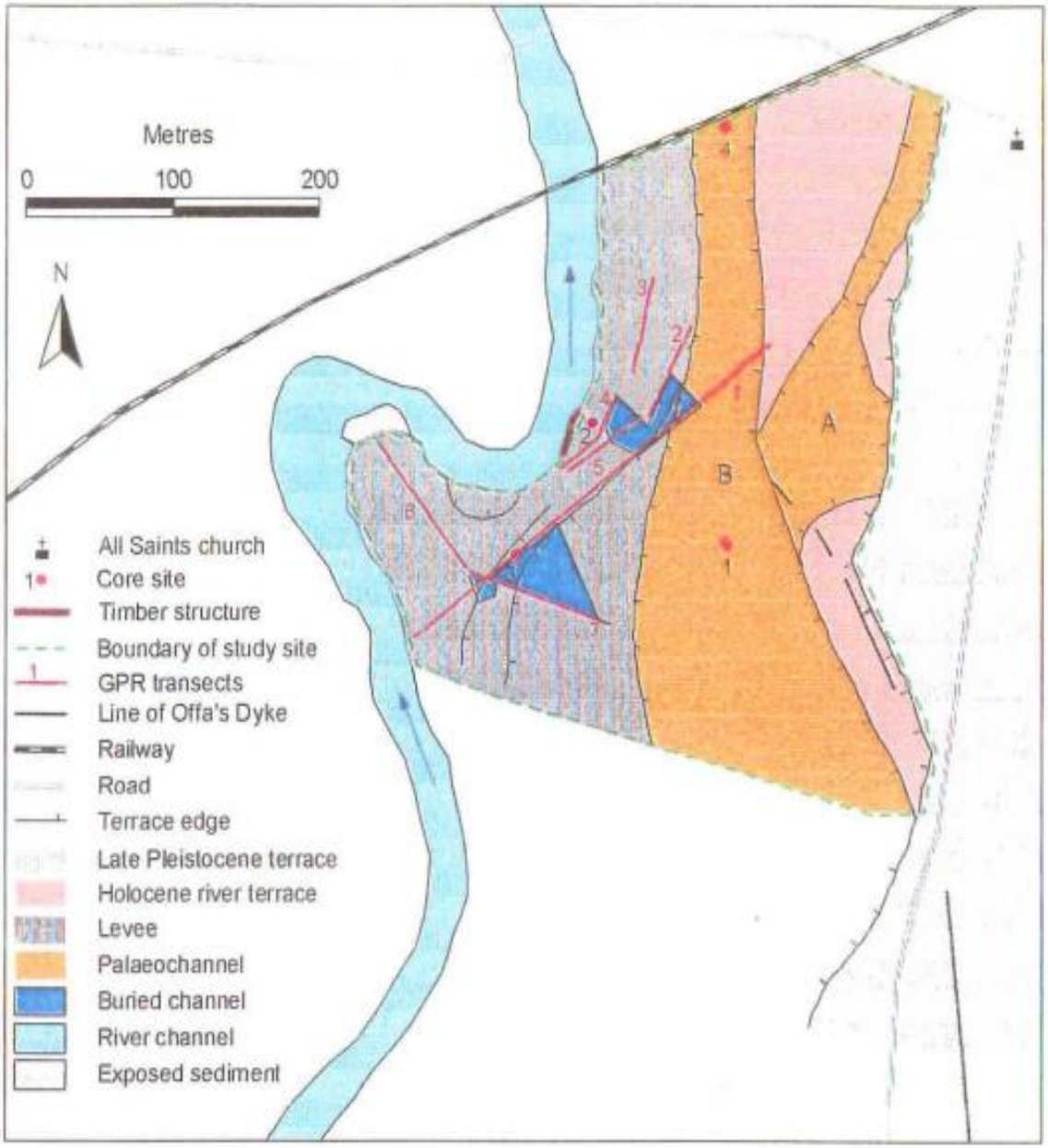

Figure 11 A geomorphological map of the area of Buttington. Supplied by Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust

6. Introducing modern archaeological methods to battlefield archaeology:

Modern battlefield archaeology is thought to have been pioneered in the 1980's with the investigation of the Little Bighorn site in Montana, where the use of historical and archaeological sources was first undertaken (Williams, 2016, p. 331). However, this neglects the work done in the 1970's by Peter Newman at Marston Moor, where his evaluation of the amount of lead shot in the east of the battlefield changed the battle chronology (English Heritage, 1995, p. 5). Newman's use of archaeological evidence, in conjunction with the historical sources available, transferred the battlesite from a series of sources recalling an event, to evidence which supported the action, and even narrowed certain events to specific locations within the battlefield. The investigation of Little Bighorn did expand battlefield archaeology beyond Newman's work on map regression, and utilised the use of metal detection, under supervision, into modern archaeological surveying (Williams T. J., 2016, p. 331).

Sutherland and Schmidt write that settlements usually leave a significant archaeological footprint, however battlefields, especially those without significant metal projectile evidence, leave very little (Sutherland & Schmidt, 2003, pp. 18-21). The single common feature of any battlefield, the dead, should aid the accurate location of any conflict event (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 63). There have been only three significant discoveries which have proved invaluable in confirming battlefield location, all providing archaeological evidence to complement existing documentary accounts. Firstly, in Wisby on the Swedish island of Gotland, where textual evidence of the 1361 battle was supplemented by the discovery, and excavation, of a mass grave (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 63). Secondly the ossuary pit discovery in Aljubarrota, Portugal, in 1958 (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 63). Thirdly the

discovery of 37, or 38 individuals, in July 1996 at Towton, where the largest battle on English soil is reputed to have taken place. However, the number of burials associated with the battle, is nowhere near the reported death toll, and with no significant amount of graves, or evidence of mass burials, a definitive location for this battlefield is, again, hard to provide (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 63). The third instance is an excellent example of modern battlefield archaeology, and a more detailed study illustrates the problems that are associated with a field of conflict and its archaeological remains.

The battle of Marsden Moor took place in North Yorkshire in 1644, 20km south-west of York, during the War of the Roses, and is chronicled as leaving in excess of 28,000 dead. This would leave a vast number of corpses that would inevitably need to be dealt with (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 63). Battlefield etiquette is known to have allowed the removal of bodies, with aristocratic remains sometimes repatriated to their own land, or even country, as suggested by Douët-d'Arcq (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 72). Even with the removal of the high ranked and the holy, and depending on whether the dead of the victorious were dealt with in a way which differed from the defeated, this would still leave a significant amount of corpses to be dealt with (Curry & Foard, 2016, p. 64). Sutherland and Schmidt report that only the tomb of Lord Dacre, a prominent Lancastrian nobleman buried at Saxton Church, is the remaining trace of the battle today (Sutherland & Schmidt, 2003, pp. 1-2). A grave, containing 50 individuals was discovered near Towton Hall, as well as other single burials which can be attributed to the battle dead (Sutherland & Schmidt, 2003, pp. 2-3). This leaves a large discrepancy between the reported figure of losses, and the skeletal remains discovered. L. T. Smith's 1907 itinerary of John Leland suggests that the remains were removed from battlefield graves and reburied during the 15th century under the orders of King Richard III (Sutherland & Schmidt, 2003, pp. 3-4). The removal of corpses from a battlefield to be

reburied at another location could be suggested for the Battle-of-Buttington. However, there has been no mention of any reburial in the historical sources, only of the reinternment of the skeletal remains discovered in 1837 to the north of All Saint's Church, Buttington.

The investigation of Little Bighorn in the 1980's has been cited as a defining moment in the archaeological study of battlefields. Following those excavations more work was completed on other battle sites in North America, such as the frontier battle between Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho warriors and a force of U.S. Army soldiers at Mud Springs, Nebraska, which follows a similar story to the Battle-of-Buttington. The U.S. troops had taken a strong defensive position against the native forces who used local knowledge of the terrain to repeatedly attack over three days (Bleed & Scott, 2009, pp. 13-14). This resembles the action at the Battle-of-Buttington, or so we are led to believe, where Hæsten's veteran band of Vikings were trapped in a siege position against a well-armed enemy, with good local knowledge. In the archaeological study of Mud Springs the team used metal detection, and terrain analysis, to locate potential redoubts, and firearms identification to successfully locate specific sites mentioned in the historic sources. Two of these methods, ground survey and the use of metal detection, could be used in the investigation of the Battle-of-Buttington. Topographical studies are unlikely to aid a great deal around the site at Buttington, Montgomeryshire, due to the regular historic flooding of the Severn in the area. There has been a survey of the area less susceptible to flooding in an attempt to find the earthworks mentioned by Boyd-Dawkins (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, p. 145), however there are no traces remaining (Historic Environment Record (5478)). Terrain analysis could still be useful at Buttington Tump to reassess the earthworks for any evidence of Viking age reuse of the Roman era fortifications of the site. The use of metal detection would benefit archaeological studies at both sites associated with the battle, however historic flooding would limit the

range of finds at Buttington, Montgomeryshire, with ferrous finds unlikely to survive the waterlogging of the area, yet silver does have the capacity to survive these kinds of conditions, as seen at Torksey (Raffield, 2016, p. 313).

Metal detectorists have been observed by this author, whilst on a magnetic survey of a Roman tile works, to follow the archaeological survey team and proceed to use grid markers as targets for their own 'survey' of the location. Unfortunately this can place a barrier between the archaeologist and one of the best methods of locating previously unknown metallic archaeological evidence. Middle Harling's 8th century coin find, from an area with no topographically distinguishing features, presents a prime example of the benefits metal detecting can offer (Hall, 2000, p. 153). Hall goes on to say that metal detectorists have provided significant additions to early medieval knowledge, with coin finds indicating Mercian trading centres around the period of Offa, and extensive Scandinavian artefacts in Cottam which include pre-Viking coins and a 'Jelling' style brooch (Hall, 2000, pp. 154-156). However, there are obvious issues relating to individual coin finds, where context and exact location are lost through amateur retrieval of the items, or by giving deliberately misleading location co-ordinates to prevent a site being targeted by other metal detectorists. Recommendations have been made to add to the knowledge of Repton using this form of survey, which could improve the understanding of the overwintering site of the Viking Great Army. Although the site is known as a prototype for Viking encampments, Hadley and Richards propose that landscape and metal detecting surveys would add detail to what is already known about the site (Hadley & Richards, 2016, pp. 26-28). At the Torksey overwintering camp of the Viking Great Army, a study intends to utilise metal detection in enhancing the knowledge of the site and will promote its use alongside field-walking with geo-referencing to assist in discovering an overall plan of the camp (Hadley & Richards, 2016, pp. 30-31).

Discoveries at sites such as Towton suggest that reburial could be a significant factor at battlefield locations, and applying these approaches to the Battle-of-Buttington could provide more evidence as to the location. Wherever the battle took place, there should be an amount of skeletal remains, and locating these bones would assist in confirming the battlefield. A re-evaluation of the Buttington site, using both the historic records and modern scientific archaeological methods, could alter the perception that the discovery of the bones in 1837 seemingly settled the question on the proposed battlesite. The presence of skeletal remains at Buttington, Montgomeryshire, supported by similar findings (or the expectation of them) at other battlefield sites, such as Towton, has always made Buttington, Montgomeryshire, the preferred location of the battle. With the crania being removed as evidence for the Montgomeryshire site, the discovery of a mass-grave, with remains of the correct date, near either of the proposed places would surely signify a definite location for the clash.

Metal detectors could also be useful in locating any possible graves, with bodies in a mass grave at Repton associated with an iron axe head and fragments of a double edged sword, indicating a warrior grave (Biddle & Kjolbye-Biddle, 1992, pp. 44-45). In 1995 Foard used a mixed assemblage of missiles, metal weapons and armour discovered by metal detectorists at Naseby to confirm the site of that battle (Sutherland & Holst, 2004, p. 13). This shows that under the right conditions, the use of metal detectors can prove invaluable. However, Sutherland cautions against the use of metal detectors without supervision, after a metal detecting rally was held on a newly recognised area of the Marston Moor battle, which resulted in significant amounts of damage to the archaeology (Sutherland & Holst, 2004, p. 17). A plan for the use of metal detection at both sites is proposed in the recommendations

chapter, along with the issues it may face and which areas would be suitable for the equipment.

7. The difficulties in locating historic battlefield sites:

Many Medieval battlefields are known from historical sources, however archaeologists cannot always rely on these for locating sites precisely, and evidence for the location of battles can be difficult to find. Glenn Foard and Richard Morris, in their study of the archaeology of English battlefields, evaluate over 1102 battlefield locations, and describe only 37 as spurious through corroborating archaeological evidence (Foard & Morris, 2012, p. 37). They also add another 39 sites which have one or more possible locations, such as Buttington (Foard & Morris, 2012, p. 37). An investigation of their data shows a direct relationship between securely known sites and chronology, with the sites of later battles, or skirmishes easier to locate than earlier ones. This is primarily due to better historical recording of the site, and the increased use of metal projectiles which can be employed to determine battlefield layout as well as location. Therefore, to precisely locate an ancient battlefield, projectile dispersal, fortification evidence and historical sources must be studied. However, by using modern archaeological methods, experts are able to reassess presumed battlefield locations and the chronology of those confrontations.

Tim Sutherland, a leading authority on battlefield archaeology, suggests historians have difficulty in attributing archaeological evidence to battlefield chronology and the timescales involved in medieval battles (Sutherland, 2009, pp. 1-3). Sutherland's studies of later medieval battlefields reassess historical texts and provide alternatives to the existing historical narrative. His work on adjusting the chronology of the 1461 battle of Towton was used to evaluate the physical remains at Agincourt in 2002, and his suggestions on the length of the battle and its chronology thereby altered the perception of the battle narrative (Sutherland, 2009, pp. 11-12). Tony Pollard and Ian Banks have raised the importance of

battlefields, and their work promotes the location of sites in Scotland in order to protect and manage them (Pollard, 2010, pp. 2-4). The authors provide the example of the battle of Bannockburn, an encounter of much repute, which has no less than five conceivable sites (Pollard, 2010, pp. 13-14). As part of this project, Pollard, in collaboration with Neil Oliver, conducted a metal detector survey in 2002 of the most likely site of the Battle of Bannockburn, the results of which did not successfully determine a specific location. The studies by Sutherland and Pollard show the difficulties in securely locating battlefields, but even with good archaeological evidence, it is difficult to alter an historian's mind-set.

Regarding an encounter which took place closer, chronologically and geographically, to at least one of the Buttington sites, Nick Arnold assesses the defeat of two of the usurper Harold's sons in Devon in the 1060's AD (Arnold, 2017, pp. 16-17). Arnold has scrutinised the sources which provide the narrative to this particular battle, and finds "glaring contradictions" between the *ASC* and Orderic Vitalis account in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Arnold, 2017, pp. 16-17). Arnold's sources are of a similar date to those which have been used to provide the location for the Battle-of-Buttington, and again, although near contemporary, they do not sufficiently fix a site to the event in question. The disputed location Arnold investigates could, with the information now available, alter the opinion of Harold's sons, from ineffective, to merely lacking in reconnaissance (Arnold, 2017, p. 17). In the case of the Battle-of-Buttington the suggestion of Hæsten lacking in military knowledge, as suggested by the *ASC,* when he is besieged on the bank of the Severn (Whitelock, 1961, p. 56), is extremely unlikely, with evidence of his military knowledge in Francia bearing witness to this aspect (Baker & Brookes, 2013, pp. 335-337).

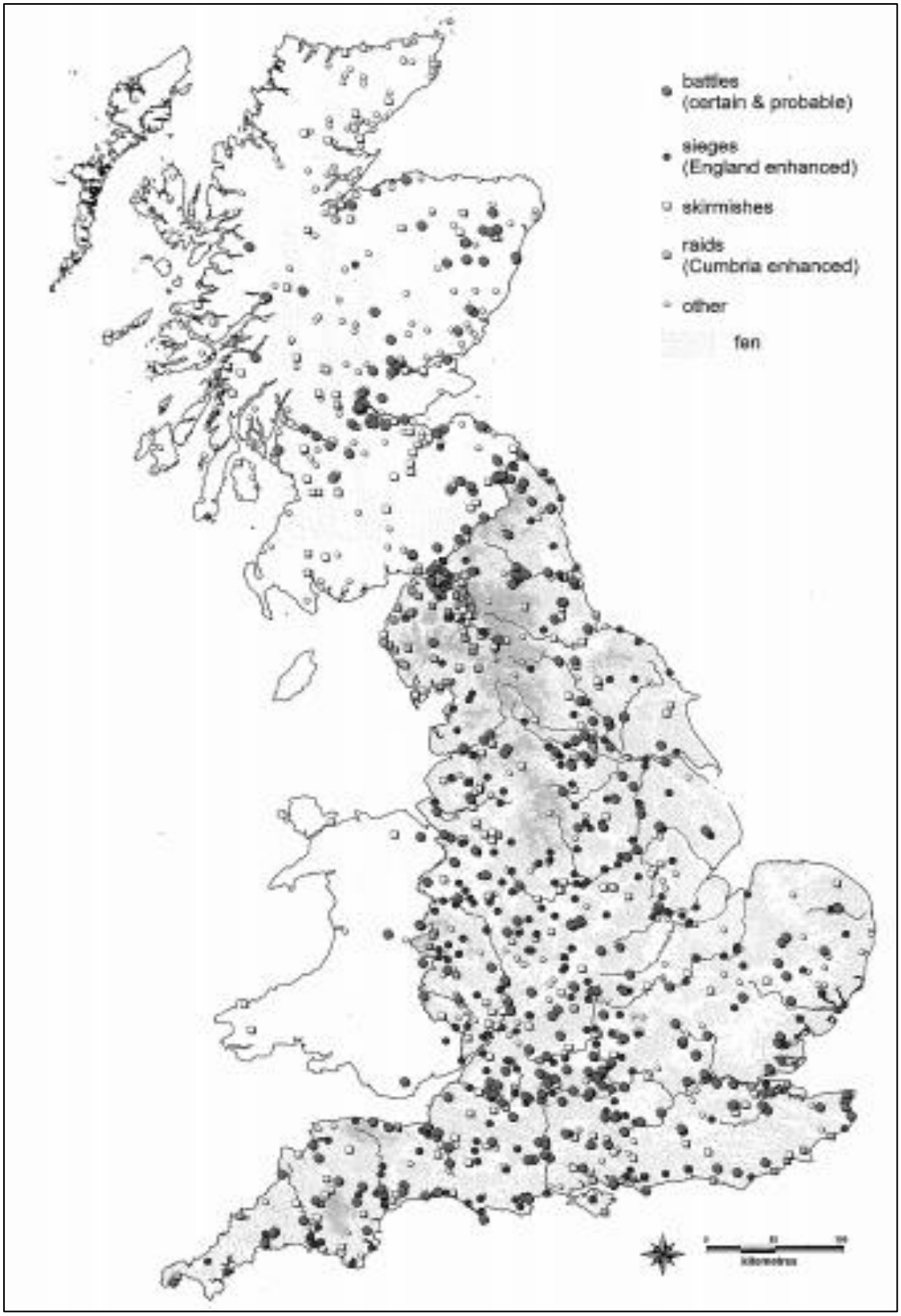

Figure 12 Map of all the fields of conflict on the database for England and Scotland. (Information for Wales is incomplete) From (Foard & Morris, 2012, p. 39)

The Battle of Brunanburh in AD 937 provides an example of another important battlesite which has yet to be successfully located. The battle between the forces of brothers, King Athelstan and Edmund, and a combined force of Briton's, Scots and Norse, has very little other corroborated evidence on its location. This battle's importance is reported to have reinforced English national identity under Athelstan (Historic Scotland, 2017, p. 1). The limited knowledge of the site location again comes under scrutiny, with southern Scotland, the Wirral and Cambridgeshire all vying for contention (Cavill, 2014, pp. 95-96). Cavill's own opinions on the location of the battle have been rebuffed by Campbell (Campbell A., 1938, pp. 58-59), and support for other locations upheld, however he counteracts these doubts with the claim that the name itself is enough to promote Bromborough as the battle location (Cavill, 2014, pp. 95-96). This belief that place-names can be important in locating battlefields is relevant in the study of the Battle-of-Buttington, however in the case of the AD 893 event, the places involved share the same name. What must be noted here are the other locations mentioned in the *ASC* excerpt, such as the River Parrett, located across the Severn Estuary from Buttington Tump, and Selwood, in Somerset, again closer to Buttington Tump, which are illustrated in Figure 5.

> *"The battle of Brunanburh was fought by the West Saxon king Athelstan and his brother Edmund against a coalition of Scots, Strathclyde Britons, and Dublin Norsemen in the year 937, and the English won. That summary lists almost all the points of consensus that have so far been reached about the battle."* (Cavill, 2014, p. 95)

The Battle of Maldon, Essex in AD 991 is the oldest registered battlefield in Britain to have been located with some confidence (Heritage Gateway 7824), which is attributed to a poem written to commemorate the event. (Foard, 2003, p. 18) Having a poem as conclusive evidence of the location of a battle is unusual. Nonetheless, the topographical elements in

the verse match the area where the Viking fleet is said to have landed and therefore its location is secured (Foard, 2003, p. 9). There is only one piece of archaeological evidence associated with the battle, a headless corpse, with a ball of wax replacing the skull, which was excavated in Ely Cathedral in 1769. (Foard, 2003, p. 20) This is indicative of either a complete clearance of the area relating to the battle, be it as a result of nature or as a post-battle clean-up, or that the site may not be correctly located, as with the Battle-of-Buttington.

Figure 13 shows the battlefields in England, drawn up by the Battlefield Trust, with the sites most accurately located marked in blue. The battles marked with the red symbol are those which have been given increased exposure by the Battlefield Trust. Comparing this with the earlier map showing all the known fields of conflict (Figure 12), it is noticeable that the difference in the battlesites that are accurately located differs vastly from those reported to have taken place. This can be explained by battles, such as Towton, being assigned more than one attributed site, and battles mentioned in texts that are given place-name locations without any corroborative evidence (Foard & Morris, 2012, p. 37). As mentioned earlier, the difficulty in successfully siting the field of conflict is dependent on reliable source material, which can be tainted by prejudice. The battles mentioned in this chapter were all reported in sources that are near contemporary to the date of the battle, yet only one can be said to be accurately located, and even that is contested (Foard, 2003, p. 18).

Figure 13 Map of English Battlefields. From (Foard & Britnell, 2004); MapInfo output; 28/07/2004; Battlefield data after Rayner 2004; Contours & rivers from 1:625,000 Ordnance

The issues of locating historic battlefields are numerous; the original sources which name the battle locations have their own justification in naming that specific location as opposed to a site at which the battle actually took place; the places named may not be unique, as with Buttington; the battlefield named may have been destroyed by agricultural, or natural, events; or the battle may not have even taken place. To effectively locate a battlefield,

modern archaeological methods should be used in conjunction with historical records, and in that way a battlefield may be successfully located.

8. Conclusion and recommendations for further study:

In this final section the work undertaken on the historical sources shall be summed up and, alongside the known archaeological evidence, a recommendation for further study shall be produced. It has been proven that the archaeological evidence does not match the historical sources as claimed by Hackett (Hackett, 2016, pp. 154-155) regarding the location of the Battle-of-Buttington. The fact that there has been no physical evidence of the battle recovered from Buttington, Montgomeryshire, puts a question mark over that site. Historical texts and antiquarian narratives attributing the location of the battle to Buttington in Montgomeryshire, struggle to provide a clear account of how Hæsten and his army travelled to that area. Regarding battlefields, Rumsfeld states that there are "known, knowns", for example Hastings, and "known, unknowns", such as Brunanburh (Roffey & Lavelle, 2016, p. 80). Applying this method to Buttington would categorise it as an "unknown, unknown", due to its location, and whether the battle actually took place at all, being suspect.

Based on this research and the lack of archaeological evidence recovered at either site to link them to the Battle-of-Buttington, a re-evaluation of both sites would be imperative. This may successfully locate the correct site, or discount both. Firstly a review of the historical sources can unearth ambiguities within the texts, which should be investigated before any archaeological assessments of the areas take place. Following this, a desktop analysis of the locations concerned may lead to more details of the sites emerging, and from this, areas for further investigation may be suggested. Fieldwalking may be useful at the Montgomeryshire site, where the land is ploughed every year or so. This is a simple and relatively inexpensive study, which can involve local historical groups as volunteers and also offers valuable interaction with the community (Hadley & Richards, 2016, p. 30). This can also be performed

in conjunction with metal detection, where under supervision, this can work very well in locating medieval, and in particular metallic Viking archaeology (Sutherland & Holst, 2004, p. 21). Importantly, with the availability of Global Positioning Software (GPS) the location of any finds can be accurately recorded and logged into the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). (Connolly, 2008, pp. 1-8).

Geophysical surveys in the Severn Valley are also unlikely to prove successful in locating any surviving Viking age evidence, as post-holes, and shallow features usually attributed to Viking sites are unlikely to be visible (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2008, pp. 4-5). Also, alluvial deposits and waterlogging in the area would distort the readings of both magnetometer and resistance surveys (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2008, pp. 4-5). The low lying alluvial flood plain of the Upper Severn Valley, covering an area 6.5 km in length and up to 2 km wide, may contain deposits of up to 4 metres of sedimentation accumulated since the 17th century (Taylor & Lewin, 1996, pp. 77-91), which would eliminate, or conceal any early medieval evidence (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2008, pp. 3-6).

In proposing a programme of non-intrusive survey, Buttington Tump, Gloucestershire, may provide far better results than its Montgomeryshire rival, as its raised position lessens alluvial deposits and waterlogging which should allow any ditches to be seen. However post-holes, due to size (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2008, pp. 4-5), and graves, which are often backfilled with the same material as they were dug from (Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, 2008, pp. 4-5), are still unlikely to be seen. Any larger wooden structures, or metallic objects would be visible on the data and therefore this type of non-intrusive survey, should be concentrated on in the Gloucestershire location.

Aerial photography on both locations has been studied, although they do not show any slight earthworks due to the angle at which the photographs were taken. Ideally an early morning, or late afternoon photograph, taken from an oblique angle would show earthworks as shadows and therefore may become visible at both locations.

Following the non-intrusive element of the investigation, an invasive examination would be recommended on areas which have been highlighted by the desktop survey, aerial photography or geophysical surveys. However in the case of Buttington, Montgomeryshire, the evidence from any of these methods is unlikely to be successful in locating a target. Therefore in this case, test-pitting the area north of All Saint's Church, where the bones discovered in 1837 were said to be reinterred (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, pp. 142-143), to attempt to locate the reburied skeletal material would be recommended. The excavation, within the churchyard, would have to follow industry guidelines. However with the Burial Act of 1847 coming into place after the supposed reinternment, the remains may be very close to the surface. Previous to the Act, burials could be less than 30 inches from the surface (OSSA Freelance, 2005, pp. 1-3). Should any remains be discovered, a selection would be sent for Carbon dating, and if no early medieval dates were produced, the reburied bones would definitely be ruled out as evidence for the Battle-of-Buttington.

At Buttington Tump, Gloucestershire, the results of the various methods of survey may suggest a group of areas to investigate in more detail. This could allow for an open area survey, which involves stripping the topsoil off an expanse of land and mapping any features that are revealed. This type of survey improves the chances of projectile finds of a non-ferrous type that cannot be located with metal detectors. This could provide typological evidence, and in turn, the targets these missiles were aimed upon (Bleed & Scott, 2009, pp. 17-18),

however this would be restricted by high costs for labour and the machinery involved. Test-pitting, or small excavations on carefully selected locations may provide the answer to our question on the battlefield location, should funds be limited for a more expansive survey.

In answering the question for the location of the Battle-of-Buttington this study has provided evidence to prove that the current thesis on its siting is, at best, misconceived, now that the primary evidence in the form of the crania has been discounted. Until the resources are available to excavate the area to the north of All Saint's Church, this evidence should be disregarded. In proving that the link between the crania available and the battle was factually incorrect, the narrative in the historical source material reverts to being the only evidence of the event taking place. From logistical and geographical information provided by the information available, Buttington Tump in Gloucestershire becomes, in the opinion of the author, the preferred choice for the Battle of Buttington.

8533 words

Appendix 1.

The 'Viking Skulls' Examination and Radiocarbon Dating

Two of the remaining Buttington crania, which had until recently been on display as 'Viking Skulls' at Powysland Museum, Welshpool, have been radiocarbon dated and the results confirm that they date from sometime between the 16th and 19th centuries, which does not correspond with them being the remains of the Viking army which was defeated in AD 893.

The dates for the two crania are as follows:

Radiocarbon Date (uncalibrated BP)	**Calibrated date (2 sigma or 95.4% accuracy)**	**Laboratory Code**
160+/- 50 BP	AD 1530-1560 – Present	Beta 200151
200+/- 40 BP	AD 1520-1580 – Present	Beta 200152

Based on these results Dr Mark Redknap, head of collections and research at the National Museum of Wales, states that, "These dates suggest a post-medieval charnel pit associated with graveyard clearance" (Redknap, personal communication), thereby removing their association with the 9th century battle and consequently their use as corroborating evidence for the location of the battlefield. However, this new dating evidence derives from only two of the reported 400 skulls recovered from the pits, which also included human long bones as well as skeletal remains identified as horse by Boyd-Dawkins (Hackett, 2014, pp.

148-150). The rest of the bones were returned to the ground on the north side of the churchyard, apart from some exceptions, which included teeth that were sold at a shilling and sixpence as a remedy for toothache, and a skull which was given to a 'Mr. Blackmore' to be deposited in his museum near Salisbury (Boyd-Dawkins, 1873, pp. 142-143). Allowing for local knowledge of the churchyard, and the presumption that residents of Buttington would remember a re-location of a large amount of skeletal remains, the bones would be expected to have been buried between the mid-16th century and the late 18th century, in an unrecorded graveyard clearance.

The crania have also been studied by third year archaeology students at the University of Chester in March 2018 and the group suggested that the two crania were of an older male, due to the presence of pronounced brow ridges (a male trait) and the degree of closure of the cranial sutures (Meindl & Lovejoy, 1985, p. 57) and a younger female, aged in her late teens or early twenties, again due to the lack of pronounced male cranial features and the openness of the cranial sutures. Whilst estimating age from the closure of the cranial sutures is not as reliable as other aging methods, it was the only method available in this instance, due to the absence of the teeth.

Full information on the examination follows:

A Study of the Buttington skulls completed by Pauline Clarke

The two referred to as the Buttington skulls, were presented to the third year bachelor's degree students studying the 'Archaeology of Human Remain's module at the University of Chester, in March 2018. A photograph of the crania on display at Powysland Museum, Welshpool, in July 2017, as part of the 'Vikings in Wales' exhibition is Figure 14; cranium 1 is on the left of the photograph.

Figure 14. The Buttington 'skulls' on display, number 1 on the left. (Photograph P M Clarke)

The students determined the sex of the crania, and age. Sex was determined using the cranial features, after Buikstra and Uberlaker (White and Folkens, 2005, p. 390). Age at death was estimated from allocating scores to the closure of seventeen elements of the cranial sutures, following Mendl and Lovejoy's method (White and Folkens, 2005, p.371).

Results

Estimation of sex:

The scores shown in Table 1 indicate that cranium 1 is probably female, and that cranium 2 is probably male.

Element	Score cranium 1	Score cranium 2
Nuchal crest	2	4
Mastoid process	2	3
Supraorbital margin	1	3
Prominence of glabella	2	4
Mental eminence	0	0
Average score and sex	2 (Probably Female)	3-4 (ambiguous, probably male

Table 1: Scores for cranial features following Buikstra and Uberlakers (1994) method.

Estimation of age:

Cranial suture location	Cranium 1	Cranium 2
Midlambdoid	1	3
Lambda	1	3
Obelion	2	3
Anterior Sagittal	2	3
Bregma	2	3
Overall score for vault suture closure	8	15
Mid coronal	1	3
Pterion	1	3
Sphenofrontal	1	3
Inferior sphenotemporal	1	3
Superior sphenotemporal	1	3
Overall score for lateral/anterior suture closure	5	15
Incisive suture	Not present	Not present
Anterior median palatine	1	Not present
Posterior median palatine	Not present	Not present
Transverse palatine	Not present	Not present
Saggital	2	3
Left lambdoidal	1	3
Left coronal	1	3

Table 2. Scores recording the degree of cranial suture closure following Meindl and Lovejoy's (1985) method.

A summary of the ages indicated by the scores is shown in Table 3, below. This indicates an age range of 30.3 – 51.1 years for cranium 1. The score is low in the given range for vault sutures but high for lateral/anterior, which would suggest that age at death was nearer to the top of this range, and would be classified as a mature adult. Scores for skull 2 for the vault sutures are at the top of the range, again suggesting a maximum age, and also a mature adult, possibly older than skull 1.

	Score	Mean age (years)	Standard deviation
Cranium 1			
Vault	8	39.4	9.1
Lateral/anterior	5	41.1	10.0
Cranium 2			
Vault	15	45.2	12.6
Lateral/anterior	15	No calculation	No calculation

Table 3. Summary of cranial suture closure scores.

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