

Morcote in Hartpurpy and the Domesday Geography of Longbridge Hundred

By SIMON DRAPER

During research for the Victoria County History of Gloucestershire in Minsterworth and Lassington parishes¹ new evidence has come to light that appears to challenge two long-held beliefs concerning the early history of the area: firstly, that the Domesday estate of Morcote in Longbridge hundred is identifiable with Murcott in Minsterworth and, secondly, that the eponymous ‘long bridge’ of the hundred, presumably representing its traditional meeting-place, was the Over Causeway outside Gloucester. In this article I will suggest not only that Domesday Morcote was located in the south of Hartpurpy parish, where documentary evidence indicates the presence of a medieval estate bearing that name, but also that the meeting-place of Longbridge hundred was a crossing of the river Leadon north of Lassington.

Gloucester Abbey’s Possessions at Morcote

The earliest evidence for the existence of a medieval place called Morcote within Hartpurpy parish comes from two charters preserved in the cartulary of Gloucester abbey. Both, which have hitherto been thought to relate to Murcott in Minsterworth,² are headed ‘Morcote’ and record gifts to the monastery of meadow and pasture by a certain William of Morcote.³ The charter dated between 1263 and 1284 is a grant of a meadow in Morcote called ‘Radeham’ and it includes a description of the meadow’s location: ‘in length from Henry of Morwent’s meadow called Depeneye to the pasture called Sumerham, and in width between Radefelde and the water called Ledene’.⁴ The mention of the river Leadon immediately locates it outside Minsterworth parish, whilst the reference to Henry of Morwent suggests it was situated in Hartpurpy. ‘Merewent’ and ‘Merwen’ were two Domesday estates,⁵ both apparently in Hartpurpy parish, ‘Merwen’ perhaps in the vicinity of Murrell’s End (formerly known as Morwent’s End).⁶ Members of the Morwent

1. See <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Gloucestershire>.
2. e.g. *Original Acta of St Peter’s Abbey, Glouc. c.1122–1263*, ed. R.B. Patterson (Glos. Rec. Series 11, BGAS 1998), pp. 155–6. The abbey also had lands in Murcott: *ibid.* p. 181; below.
3. *Hist. & Cart. Mon. Glouc.* ed. W.H. Hart (Rolls Ser.), 2, pp. 260–1. The same William or his namesake quitclaimed common pasture rights in Ashleworth to St Augustine’s abbey, Bristol, c.1240: *Cart. of St Augustine’s Abbey, Bristol*, ed. D. Walker (Glos. Rec. Series 10, BGAS 1998), p. 236.
4. *Hist. & Cart. Mon. Glouc.* 2, p. 260: ‘quod quidem pratum extendit se in longitudine a prato Henrici de Marewent quod vocatur Depeneye usque ad pasturam quae vocatur Sumerham, et in latitudine inter Radefelde et aquam quae vocatur Ledene’.
5. *Domesday Book* (Rec. Com.), 1, ff. 162v., 165v.
6. J.S. Moore, ‘The Glos. Section of Domesday Book: Geographical Problems of the Text, Part 1’, *Trans. BGAS*, 105 (1987), pp. 125–6; below.

family, documented in Hartpury from the 13th century,⁷ retained a messuage and a yardland at 'Mawentesende' in the parish held from the abbot of Gloucester in the early 16th century.⁸

An inquisition of 1633 lists a 9-acre meadow called 'Moocott Redyham' as part of the Hartpury manor estate⁹ and the location of that parcel of land (presumably the same as the 13th-century 'Radeham') can be determined with the aid of a Hartpury estate map dated 1700. Although the map is faded, 'Radham Meadow' is clearly shown as the name of a meadow beside the river Leadon south-east of Murrell's End, and land called 'Radium Pleck' lay immediately to its north. 'Rodfeild', presumably the 'Radefelde' referred to in the 13th century, was located a short distance to the west¹⁰ and was an open field.¹¹ In the Hartpury title award of 1839 'Radham Meadow' was known simply as 'The Meadow', 'Radium Pleck' was described as 'Ground' and 'Rodfeild' was 'Rud Field' (Fig. 1).¹²

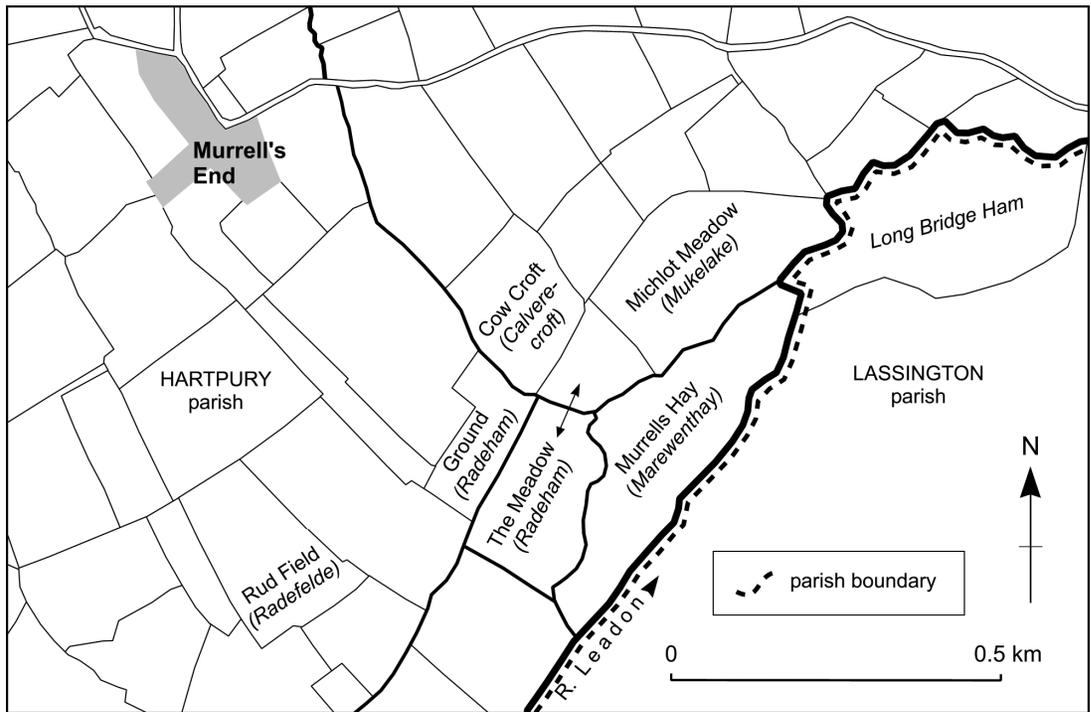


Fig.1. The location of lands in Morcote (Hartpury) given to Gloucester abbey in the 13th century and Long Bridge Ham in Lassington.

William of Morcote's other (undated) grant to Gloucester abbey in Morcote was of common pasture in his marsh between 'Mukelake' and 'Radeham' and between 'Marewenthay' and

7. *Hist. & Cart. Mon. Glouc.* 3, pp. 77–89.

8. Glouc. Cath. Libr., Reg. of Abbot Braunche, f. 98 and v.

9. T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], E 178/5817.

10. G[loucestershire] A[rchives], D 1008.

11. GA, D 199/1, p. 23.

12. Glouc. Dioc. Rec. (GDR: in GA), T 1/95, nos. 4, 22, 57.

‘Calvercroft’.¹³ Turning again to the Hartpury tithe award, it is striking that the parcel of meadow above identified as ‘Radeham’ is bounded by fields bearing similar names to those given in William’s undated grant (Fig. 1).¹⁴ ‘Calvercroft’, meaning ‘the calves’ croft’, may be ‘Cow Croft’ to the north, whilst ‘Marewenthay’ is possibly ‘Murrells Hay’ to the south. The name ‘Mukelake’, meaning ‘the dirty stream’, may have altered over time to become ‘Michlot meadow’ to the east.¹⁵

In addition to William of Morcote’s gifts, Gloucester abbey received property in Hartpury, Maisemore and Morcote from Richard Vyel in 1342¹⁶ and it is likely that it retained its Morcote possessions until the Dissolution as part of its major landholding in Hartpury.¹⁷ The abbey owned all the corn and hay tithes of Morcote in the early 16th century. They were included in two leases of Hartpury tithes made by the abbot in 1501 and 1535¹⁸ and also in a settlement of the Hartpury rectory estate in 1598.¹⁹

The Medieval Manor of Morcote

An estate called the manor of Morcote in the late 15th and early 16th centuries²⁰ originated in a holding of members of the Berkeley family, which in 1417 was held of the royal castle of St Briavels by 5s. annual rent.²¹ Comprising a messuage and a ploughland, it was generally described as lying ‘in Morcote and Hartpury’, but three 14th-century charters are more specific, stating its location as ‘in Morcote in (the parish of) Hartpury’.²²

The estate is first recorded in 1313, when Thomas, Lord Berkeley, acquired it from Richard of Bisley in return for maintaining Richard’s son Hugh as one of his squires.²³ In 1314 Thomas’s second son Thomas was dealing with the estate²⁴ and in 1318 the elder Thomas settled it on the younger Thomas’s second marriage to Isabel, daughter of Sir John Hamelyn of Wymondham (Leics.). The first of a cadet branch of the Berkeley family seated at Wymondham, the younger Thomas died in 1346, when the estate evidently passed to his son John.²⁵ John, who was dead by 1356, left as his son and heir John,²⁶ during whose minority custody of the estate was granted by

13. *Hist. & Cart. Mon. Glouc.* 2, 260: ‘*communam pasturam in mora mea quae est inter Mukelake et Radeham, et inter Marewenthay et Calvercroft*’.

14. GDR, T 1/95, no. 21, owned by ‘the poor of Murrell’s End’.

15. *ibid.*, nos. 5, 6, 7, 10; A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Glos.* (Engl. Place-Name Soc. 1964), 3, pp. 164–5. ‘Murrells Hay’ was ‘Morends Hay’ in 1700: GA, D 1008. ‘Michlot meadow’ was ‘Micklett meadow’ in 1677: GDR, V5/151T 1.

16. TNA, C 143/261/19; Glouc. Cath. Libr., Reg. of Abbot Froucester A, f. 30v. See also GA, D 1609/IX/21.

17. *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Rec. Com.), 2, p. 414. See J.R. Chapman, *The Manors of Hartpury* (Newent, 2003), pp. 7–19.

18. Glouc. Cath. Libr., Reg. of Abbot Braunche, f. 6v.; Reg. of Abbot Malvern, 2, f. 98 and v.

19. GA, D 309/T 3.

20. *Cal. Inq. post mortem Hen. VII* 1, 367; 2, 70.

21. *Cal. Inq. post mortem* 20, 255. Thomas, Lord Berkeley’s, acquisition of the estate in 1313 followed an action in the court of St Briavels: *Cat. of the Medieval Mun. at Berkeley Castle*, ed. B. Wells-Furby (Glos. Rec. Series 17–18, BGAS 2004–5), 1, p. 475; below.

22. *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, 93, 475–6. The bracketed text appears only in the two 1374 charters on p. 93.

23. *ibid.*, 1, 475; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* 2, 181–2. For the Bisleys, see *Victoria County Hist. (VCH) Glos.* 11, 12. Richard’s fee in 1304 included a tenement in ‘Hartpury Marewent’: ‘Cal. of the Earlier Hereford Cath. Mun.’ (TS in Nat. Libr. of Wales, 1955), pp. 684–5.

24. *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, 475 and pedigree on p. lv.

25. *ibid.*, xxxv; *The Lives of the Berkeleys ... by John Smyth of Nibley*, ed. Sir John Maclean (BGAS, 1883), 1, pp. 210–11.

26. T. Turville-Petre, ‘The Lament for Sir John Berkeley’, *Speculum* 57(2) (1982), p. 332.

his cousin Thomas, Lord Berkeley, to Adam Thynchul and Philip Holbrow, vicar of Hartpury.²⁷ John had attained his majority by 1374, when he with his wife Elizabeth received a grant of the estate from Geoffrey de Segrave and William Turner of Wymondham. That grant was confirmed by Thomas, Lord Berkeley,²⁸ who died in 1417 holding Morcote in demesne.²⁹

Thomas, Lord Berkeley's, Morcote estate passed to his daughter Elizabeth, whose husband Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, died holding it in 1439.³⁰ His coheirs were his three daughters: Margaret, wife of John Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, Eleanor, who was married three times, secondly to Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, and Elizabeth, wife of George Neville, Lord Latimer.³¹ At their deaths in 1467 both Margaret and Eleanor owned rents from Morcote.³² The estate is next recorded in the possession of Edward Grey, Viscount Lisle, who had married Margaret's granddaughter Elizabeth, the daughter of John Talbot, Lord Lisle (d. 1453). Elizabeth died before her husband and at his death in 1492 it descended to their son John Grey, Viscount Lisle,³³ who died holding the estate, worth £3 annually, in 1504.³⁴ No later record of its ownership has so far been located, although it presumably passed in 1504 to John's daughter and sole heir Elizabeth, who died without issue aged about 14 in 1519.³⁵

Domesday Morcote

Having presented evidence for the existence of both a place and a medieval estate in Hartpury parish called Morcote, it is now necessary to consider the location of the Gloucestershire Domesday estate bearing that name:

Land of William Fitz Norman: in Longbridge hundred: William Fitz Norman holds Morcote. Wulfheah held it in the time of King Edward. There is 1 hide. There is 1 plough in demesne with 2 bordars. Its value was 8s. but is now 10s. This land does not pay geld.³⁶

From Sir Robert Atkyns writing in the early 18th century to the editors of the recent Alecto edition of Domesday Book, historians have generally located this estate in Minsterworth, where a hamlet known as Murcott or Moorcroft is situated in the east of the parish.³⁷ The identification appears to be based on the place-name itself³⁸ and the existence of a medieval manor of Murcott in Minsterworth, first recorded in 1241.³⁹ That manor descended in the de la Mare family until at

27. *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, p. 476.

28. *ibid.*, p. 93.

29. *Cal. Inq. post mortem* 20, 255.

30. *Cal. Inq. post mortem* (Rec. Com.) 4, 192; *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, pedigree on p. lvi.

31. *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, p. lvi; *The Complete Peerage*, ed. G.E. Cockayne *et al.* (2nd edn, 1910–59), 2, p. 131.

32. *Cal. Inq. post mortem* (Rec. Com.) 4, 339, 341; *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, p. lvi.

33. *Cal. Inq. post mortem Hen. VII* 1, 367; *Complete Peerage*, 8, pp. 55–62.

34. *Cal. Inq. post mortem Hen. VII* 2, 70.

35. *Complete Peerage*, 8, p. 62; *Cat. Berkeley Castle Mun.* 1, p. lvi.

36. *Domesday Book* (Rec. Com.), 1, f. 167v. Translation based on *The Glos. Domesday*, eds. A. Williams and R.W.H. Erskine (London, 1989), f. 167v.

37. Sir R. Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Glos.* (London, 1712), p. 558; *Glos. Domesday*, f. 167v. See also C.S. Taylor, *An Analysis of the Domesday Survey of Glos.* (BGAS, 1889), p. 205; *Domesday Book 15: Glos.*, ed. J.S. Moore (Chichester, 1982), 167 c.

38. Only two such names, meaning 'cottage(s) on the marsh', are noted by Smith, *Place-Names of Glos.* 2, 6; 3, 163: Murcott in Minsterworth and Murcot in Childswickham.

39. *Glos. Feet of Fines 1199–1299*, ed. C.R. Elrington (BGAS, 2003), p. 77. See T. Moore-Scott, 'The Medieval Manor of Minsterworth', *Glevensis*, 40 (2007), p. 17.

least 1384⁴⁰ and was clearly distinct from the Morcote estate discussed above.

There are, however, reasons to question the above interpretation, not least the record that in 1220 and 1327 Murcott lay in Westbury hundred.⁴¹ Whilst it is not inconceivable that Murcott changed hundreds between 1086 and 1220, it is perhaps unlikely given that the rest of Longbridge hundred was absorbed into Dudstone hundred by the early 14th century.⁴² Frank Thorn has suggested that Longbridge may have originated as an ecclesiastical hundred held mainly by Gloucester abbey⁴³ and an identification of Domesday Morcote with Morcote in Hartpury might make sense in light of Hartpury's strong links with that abbey and the parish's inclusion in Dudstone hundred by 1327.⁴⁴

Furthermore, there is good evidence for early territorial and ecclesiastical links between Westbury-on-Severn and Minsterworth. Minsterworth's church originated as a dependent chapel of Westbury church⁴⁵ and Minsterworth's 12th-century status as ancient Crown demesne⁴⁶ hints at its inclusion within the pre-Conquest royal estate centred on Westbury.⁴⁷ Murcott's inclusion within Westbury hundred in 1220 may suggest that it too formed part of that estate, and there is some historical evidence which may lend weight to this view. Although from 1200 the manor of Minsterworth belonged to the Crown,⁴⁸ its 12th-century overlords were the earls of Hereford, whose interest in the Minsterworth estate can be traced back to Durand of Gloucester, its Domesday tenant.⁴⁹ The earls were also overlords of Murcott, as the confirmation of William de la Mare's gift of land in Murcott to Gloucester abbey by Margaret de Bohun (d. 1187), sister and heir of Roger, earl of Hereford (d. 1155), shows.⁵⁰ If Murcott did indeed form part of Westbury hundred in 1086 and is not represented by Domesday Morcote, it is possible to envisage that it emerged after 1086 as a discrete landholding out of the earl of Hereford's Minsterworth manor, thus accounting for its absence from Domesday Book.

Assuming that Domesday Morcote lay in Hartpury, it is perhaps not unrealistic to suggest that the estate acquired by Thomas, Lord Berkeley, in 1313 was the successor to that of 1 hide recorded in 1086. A small, but perhaps significant, detail is the correspondence in size between the two holdings: the Anglo-Saxon hide is generally thought to be equivalent to the ploughland, in Hartpury perhaps 192 acres.⁵¹ Accepting John Moore's identification of the two Domesday estates named 'Merewent' and 'Merwen' with Hartpury and Murrell's End respectively,⁵² it may appear that there is little room for a third estate in the parish. However, 'Merwen' was a small

40. e.g. *Cal. Inq. post mortem* 13, 141; TNA, DL 10/419; DL 25/938.

41. *Book of Fees* (HMSO), 1, 306; *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327* (privately printed by Sir Thomas Phillipps, n.d. ?1856), p. 43.

42. F.R. Thorn, 'Hundreds and Wapentakes', in *Glos. Domesday*, p. 48.

43. *ibid.*, p. 44.

44. e.g. *Glos. Subsidy Roll, 1327*, pp. 32–3.

45. *VCH Glos.* 10, p. 98.

46. *Pipe Roll* 1186–7, 142.

47. See *VCH Glos.* 10, p. 85.

48. *Rotuli Chart.* (Rec. Com.), 53.

49. GA, D 2783/1; D. Walker, 'Miles of Gloucester, Earl of Hereford', *Trans. BGAS*, 77 (1958), p. 67; J.S. Moore, 'The Glos. Section of Domesday Book: Geographical Problems of the Text, Part 2', *Trans. BGAS*, 106 (1988), pp. 100–1.

50. *Original Acta*, 181; D. Walker, 'Charters of the Earldom of Hereford, 1095–1201', in *Camden Misc.* 22 (1964), p. 72.

51. P. Grierson, 'Weights and Measures', in *Domesday Book Studies*, eds. A. Williams and R.W.H. Erskine (London, 1987), p. 81. Around 1270 a yardland in Hartpury contained 48 acres: *Hist. & Cart. Mon. Glouc.* 3, 77. Four yardlands made a ploughland.

52. Moore, 'Glos. Section of Domesday: Part 1', p. 125.

estate of only three yardlands⁵³ and it may be that much of the rest of the land around Murrell's End constituted the Domesday and later medieval manor of Morcote. At least five yardlands of copyhold land on the Hartpury manor estate were stated in 1700 to lie 'in Morwent's End' (Murrell's End).⁵⁴

The Composition of Longbridge Hundred and Location of its Meeting-Place

A further reason for locating Morcote at Murrell's End is its proximity not only to Gloucester abbey's lands evidently in Morcote discussed above, but also to two of the remaining three constituents of Longbridge hundred in 1086; namely 'Hamme' (identified by historians as Highnam) and 'Lessendune' (Lassington, now in Highnam) (Fig. 2). Preston (now in Dymock), the fourth member of Domesday Longbridge hundred, is detached from the main body of the hundred, lying 19 km north-west of Highnam. It almost certainly owes its membership to ownership from an early date by Gloucester abbey.⁵⁵

The hundred meeting-place, presumably the eponymous 'long bridge',⁵⁶ has hitherto been identified with the Over Causeway across the west channel of the Severn between Highnam and Gloucester (Fig. 2): Samuel Rudder suggested so in the 18th century⁵⁷ and others have since followed.⁵⁸ However, there appears to be no record of the Over Causeway having been called 'long bridge': it was instead known as 'Gloucester bridge' in the early 13th century.⁵⁹ An alternative candidate for the hundred meeting-place is on or next to a meadow called 'Long Bridge Ham' in Lassington. Identifiable from the 1840 Lassington tithe award, it was located to the north of Lassington village on the south bank of the river Leadon, directly opposite Gloucester abbey's lands in Hartpury parish previously discussed (Figs. 1 & 2).⁶⁰ There is a dearth of medieval records of field-names in Lassington, but one of the earliest surviving deeds relating to the manor estate dated 1608 records 'Longbridge' as one of two several meadows in the parish, the other being 'Brincham'⁶¹ (Brimsome in 1840), perhaps in origin 'bridge ham', adjacent to the east.⁶²

Today, both meadows lie well away from through-routes and Lassington itself is only reached by a dead-end lane from neighbouring Highnam. However, there are signs that that this was not always the case. Ivan Margary has suggested that a Roman road leading from the Over Causeway through Dymock to Stretton Grandison (Herefs.), his route 610, may have crossed the Leadon to pass through Murrell's End in Hartpury, where a deep sunken lane has long been recognised.⁶³ If that was so, the 'long bridge' north of Lassington may mark its river crossing. A track connecting

53. *Domesday Book* (Rec. Com.), 1, f. 162v.

54. Moore, 'Glos. Section of Domesday: Part 1', pp. 125–6, 132.

55. *Domesday Book* (Rec. Com.), 1, ff. 164v., 165v.; *VCH Glos.* 10, p. 17; 12, pp. 301–2.

56. Several of the Gloucestershire hundreds are named from their meeting-places, including Holford from a ford, Bledisloe, Botloe and Brightwells Barrow from earthen mounds, and Bagstone, Dudstone, Tibblestone and Whitstone from stones: Thorn, 'Hundreds and Wapentakes', p. 48.

57. S. Rudder, *A New Hist. of Glos.* (Cirencester, 1779), p. 551.

58. Thorn, 'Hundreds and Wapentakes', 48; J. Rhodes, 'The Severn Flood-Plain at Gloucester in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods', *Trans. BGAS*, 124 (2006), p. 31.

59. *VCH Glos.* 4, pp. 242–3; Rhodes, 'Severn Flood-Plain', p. 31. See Smith, *Place-Names of Glos.* 3, p. 155. The name 'long bridge' was used of causeways at Berkeley, Tewkesbury and Dymock: *VCH Glos.* 2, p. 123; 8, p. 114; 12, p. 125.

60. GDR, T 1/111, no. 24.

61. GA, D 326/T 124.

62. GDR, T 1/111, no. 28.

63. I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (London, 1957), pp. 2, 60–1.

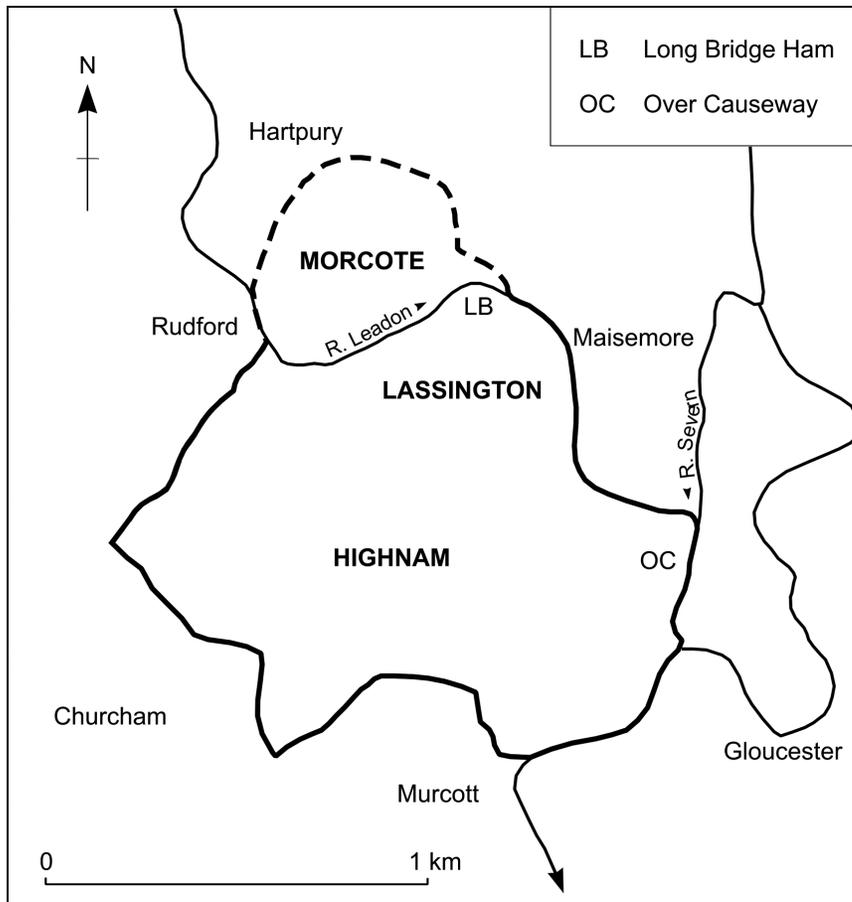


Fig. 2. The proposed composition of Longbridge hundred in 1086 (Preston is not shown).

Long Bridge Ham to Lassington village is shown on a 1757 estate map and an old road certainly led south-east from Lassington around Lassington Hill towards Over and Gloucester, the significance of the route being indicated by a number of ‘portway’ field-names in the south-east of Lassington parish.⁶⁴ Further research is needed in order to fully reveal the significance of the Lassington ‘long bridge’ for local communications, but, in a Domesday hundred comprising the three core estates of Highnam, Lassington and Morcote in Hartpurly, it would undoubtedly have represented a convenient focal point at the river crossing linking all three places.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Dr John Juřica for reading and commenting on the text and Mr Terry Moore-Scott for several informative conversations regarding Minsterworth’s history.

64. GA, D 326/E 2, nos. 214–18; D 2426/P 1; GDR, T 1/111, nos. 65–7, 79. See Smith, *Place-Names of Glos.* 1, p. 18.