

QUANTIFYING QUALIFIERS  
IN ANGLO-SAXON CHARTER BOUNDARIES

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The linguistic content of Anglo-Saxon charter boundaries has the great advantage as a field of research that to an extent unusual in name studies it is a statistically controllable corpus. That is especially true of the substantive elements of local names, where there is precisely one per name and where cross-checking numbers of names of different types against numbers of boundary features guarantees (within the limits of the definitions) total accuracy. An exposition of this was presented at the Council for Name Studies conference at Aberdeen in 1984, the material of which will be published as chapter VI of Kitson, forthcoming (c). The corpus is nearly enough uniform across space and time for those aspects of it which are not uniform to stand out conspicuously and furnish the wherewithal to study Old English dialects with an order of magnitude more accuracy than hitherto (Kitson 1990, 1992, and forthcoming (a, b)). Qualifying elements do not lend themselves so well to tidy cross-checking, in that not all boundary features are referred to by a name containing a qualifier, and some which are have more than one. It is thus appropriate to echo Padel (1985: 81): "All these figures should be considered approximate: they would probably come out slightly differently if I were to repeat the exercise." They may well involve some mistakes of addition, since my retrieval-systems are not computerized. Carrying out investigations of this kind at all in a finite time necessitates a lot of snap decisions on particular items, which cannot all be individually checked before a publication like the present, some of which are sure to seem wrong on mature reflection. Nevertheless the input is more accurate than that of those computerized systems such as the Toronto *Microfiche Concordance*; I think the figures given are very nearly accurate within their definitions, and a substantial advance on any yet published. I aim to show in this paper that there are patterns in the distribution of qualifiers of local names in charter boundaries that are significant both in themselves and in their implications for the interpretation of English place-names formed in the Anglo-Saxon period but not recorded then.