

## THE NINE GUARDIANS RITUAL BURIALS IN OWBERRY FIELD

By Peter Hinman (2000)

While quarrying for building stone in 1847, local men made a gruesome discovery in Owberry field. The skeletons of nine men were found buried in a most unusual way. They had obviously been buried carefully and deliberately, perhaps while still alive, placed in a straight line along the edge of the hill. The strangest feature of the burial was that they had been buried sitting upright on their haunches, facing across the low ground towards the north-west.



Such burials are very unusual in England and it is a pity that the discovery was not made in more recent times to allow dating and reconstruction. Some tribal cultures marked their territorial borders in this way, creating a 'ghost fence' of spiritual 'watchers' to protect the boundary. If you stand in Owberry Field where the skeletons were found, you can see clearly as far as Newbold Comyn, which supports the theory that this was the purpose of the burial. In the words of Mr Robert Hutchins, who lived in Rosemary Cottage, "There was not a button found with them". This indicates that unlike the Anglian and Neolithic finds in the village, there was no treasure to go round.

The name 'Owberry Field' is also a clue to the location of the burials. Before the nineteenth century this field was called 'Old Borough Field'. This could come from 'burghsaeten' meaning a burial place, or could mean 'the field belonging to the old town' or 'the field where the old town was'. Another theory which supports 'burial place' is the earliest explanation of the name 'Lighthorne'. In the seventeenth century the Warwickshire historian Dugdale interpreted Lighthorne as from Anglian Lic-hyrne, pronounced Lich-herne, meaning the valley of the dead. Until some further discovery is made we can only speculate on whether or not we live in Death Valley.