

# A HISTORY OF ANCIENT TENURES OF LAND IN NORTH WALES AND THE MARCHES

Containing Notes on the Common and Demesne Lands of the  
Lordship of Bromfield, and of the parts of Denbighshire  
and Flintshire adjoining; and Suggestions for the  
Identification of such Lands elsewhere: to-  
gether with an Account of the rise of the  
Manorial System in the same Districts

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SECOND EDITION

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHORS

1910

## Preface

OVER a quarter of a century has elapsed since the publication of the first edition of the present work, and the favourable reception which it has always met with from the select class to which it was addressed, has given rise to the hope that a new and enlarged edition will receive equal approbation.

Although the illustrations of the working of the Welsh system of land tenure are drawn from a somewhat wider area than that covered by the earlier edition, the present work remains essentially a history of that system as it manifested itself in the great lordship of Bromfield and Yale. The present authors are quite conscious of the danger of yielding to the seductive tendencies towards broad generalizations from either very minute or narrowly localized facts, but great as has been the advance in the study of the social and economic phenomena of land tenure in the past quarter-century, they are of opinion that the expressions employed in the preface to the former edition are still applicable to the Welsh phenomena. It was then said—

The complaint of such readers as are not specially interested in the district treated is likely to be that a

great subject is discussed from a purely local standpoint. This is, however, the only way in which a subject so great can, at the present stage of it, be treated. The enunciation of general principles is less needed than the accumulation and marshalling of pertinent facts. And these facts, which the historian seeks, can only be obtained as the result of a minute and careful investigation of particular districts conducted by men who live within those districts, and who are well acquainted with their present condition and past history. This is a task which has been attempted for a portion of the counties of Denbigh and Flint, and especially for the lordship of Bromfield—a district in which Englishmen and Welshmen contended for the mastery, and in which the systems of land tenure of England and of Wales are instructively commingled.

But the constant accretion of fresh material, and the close and friendly intimacy of fellow-students, has resulted in a different presentation of much of the evidence, and an alteration in the point of view from which that evidence has been regarded. The partnership has also admitted of a broader consideration of the difficult problems involved in the inquiry, and a wider outlook for similar problems elsewhere in North Wales.

Whilst, therefore, the general scheme of the first edition has been preserved, there is not a single paragraph that has not been re-considered, and much of the work has been entirely re-written.

The chief fresh authorities which have contributed to the present edition are :—

- (1) A valuable extent of the entire lordship of Bromfield and Yale, made in the year 1507.
- (2) A fine survey of the lordship, of the latter end of the reign of Henry VIII.
- (3) A very complete extent of the same area, taken in the year 1562.

The importance of the first of these arises from the circumstance that it was taken whilst the Welsh system of land-holding was still in active operation over a large portion of the lordship. By the year 1562 every vestige of Welsh tenure by gwely or gafaél, and descent of lands by gavelkind had vanished from the records. The intermediate survey, taken only a few years after the legislative incorporation of Wales into England, marks the opening of a new social epoch.

Numerous subsidiary official documents, such as the yearly accounts of various manorial officers, deeds and other small sources, have contributed to the picture which is here presented.\*

\* It has been known for some time that a survey or extent of the lordship of Bromfield and Yale was taken in the 15th year of Richard II (1391), but as diligent and oft-repeated searches at the Public Record Office failed to discover it, it was feared that it was no longer in existence. Since this book was written, however, it has been found. And not only so, but portions of a still earlier extent of the reign of Edward III have come to light. The present writers hope to issue both at an early date.

Owing to the unexpected death of the intended publisher, this book is issued by the authors, whose addresses are appended.

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CHAPTER I

THE COMMON FIELDS

THE ancient arable area of the township of Wrexham Regis, or a great part of it, is called in old deeds and surveys "The Town Fields," or "The Common Fields." Nearly all the closes lying within this area were formerly divided into separate strips, composed of single butts or groups of butts, lying parallel each to each, and held by different persons. These strips, now commonly called "quilletts," were, in later times at any rate, not divided from each other by balks <sup>1</sup> or strips of unploughed land, but their extent was marked at the four corners by what were called "mearstones." <sup>2</sup>

Various scattered quilletts are still found within the ancient arable areas of other townships in the same district. Fields also frequently occur which are wholly divided into many quilletts of nearly equal size. In the latter case the field, or one of the fields, so divided, is generally known

<sup>1</sup> But see p. 30 and p. 42, and notes.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller description of the common fields of Wrexham Regis, see Palmer's *History of the Town of Wrexham*, etc., pp. 100-104. See also pp. 182-185 of the same book for an account of the common fields of Wrexham Fechan.

as "Maes y dre," or as "The town field"—the English equivalent of the Welsh name, or simply as "Y maes" (the field), as though it were "The Field" in a sense quite special and peculiar; or again, it is called by a name containing a reference to the township in which it lies, as "Maes Hope Owen" (Hope Owen field) in Hope Owen, and "Maes Sesswick" (known to have formerly contained quilletts) in Sesswick.<sup>1</sup> Many small closes, much longer than broad, each known as "Yr henfaes" (the old field) are included within an area in Overton Madoc over which various quilletts are scattered. Three of the quilletted closes of Erbistock are called "The village fields." Now, these names are all very significant, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the fields to which they belong are remnants of the old "cyfardir" or common ploughland of the townships in which they occur, while the quilletts they contain represent the intermixed strips which, under the "common field" system, pertained formerly to the several householders of the old village communities.

"Cyfai," or joint field, is another name which should receive attention. In old deeds it is generally spelled "Kyvie" or "Covey"—

<sup>1</sup> The following other examples may be noted: "Maes Burton" in Burton, "Maes Gwersyllt" in Gwersyllt, "Maes Gresford" in Gresford (note 1, p. 29), "Maes Trefalyn" in Trefalyn or Allington, and "Darland Town-field" in Darland, a district of Allington (note 2, p. 29). Some of these quilletted areas will be discussed hereafter.

"Kyvie mawr," "Kyvie bach," "Bryn y covey," etc.; and many of the closes so designated are described as containing "the purpart of so-and-so."

It should be understood that the closes into which the common fields of north-east Wales were divided were, in most cases, small, and seldom contained more than six or eight quilletts, thus presenting a striking contrast to the common fields of England.

In that district quilletts are, or were formerly, called "drylliau" (*pieces*), "clytiau" (*patches*), "darnau" (*portions*), "rhanau" (*shares*), "cefnau" (*butts*), and even "gerddi" (*gardens*), though this last name is rare. They were also apparently known as "ysgythrau" (*cuttings*), "lleiniau" (*pieces*), and "dadau,"<sup>1</sup> which last seems to mean *patches* or *pieces*. And these names, and the forms in the singular number corresponding to them ("dryll," "clwt," "darn," "rhan," "cefn," "gardd," "llain," "ysgwthr," and "dad") are in fact very common in those tracts in which quilletts once existed. But they are not peculiar to those tracts, and when occurring as names of fields, before they can be accepted as proving the former existence of quilletts therein, note must be taken of the shape of the fields so

<sup>1</sup> Many long narrow fields called "dadau," which look like enclosed quilletts, surround a farmhouse in Treuddyn (co. Flint) known as "Tyddyn Dadau," and the name "dad" occurs rather commonly in the ancient quilletted areas of other townships.

designated. Closes which once were quilletts are no other than enclosed butts, as will hereafter be shown, and are always, therefore, very much longer than broad, and generally lie parallel each to each. Quilletts are often known by the English names "slang" and "loon."<sup>1</sup>

The earliest instance hitherto found of the use in the district now under review of the word "quillet," with the meaning herein given to it, is in a deposition of the year 1602 relating to certain lands in Maelor Saesneg.<sup>2</sup>

Another class of names must also be mentioned, though their significance at this stage of the inquiry cannot be fully estimated. When no quilletted fields are actually found, their former existence is often indicated by such names as "Y Cefnau" (The butts), "Yr wyth cwysiad" (The eight plits or plough strips), "The five pikes," "The Pikey" ("Peiciau" or "Peicè" = The Pikes), and "Pum talar" (The five headlands). These are all actual field names, and others might be given. Butts are the parallel ridges of land in a ploughed field that lie between

<sup>1</sup> A quillet in Stansty is called a "lawnd of land" in a deed bearing date December, 1435. At Llanymynech, in Shropshire, quilletts were called "furlongs," while in Cheshire they were known as "lands," "loons," and "lownts." But it would seem that while "lands" were arable quilletts, "loons" and "lawnds" (or "lownts") were quilletts of meadow. For example, a quillet in a meadow called "The Helt" is described on the tithe map of Overton Madoc (Flintshire) as "a loon in the helt."

<sup>2</sup> P.R.O., *Chancery Depositions*, 44 Eliz., No. 19.

the "gutters" or "reens"; they are the "seliones" of the Latin deeds, the "riggs" of the north, the "lands" of the south. Pikes or cuttings, called in some parts of England "gores," are the short butts that do not run the whole length of the fields. Headlands are the strips at the two ends of the field on which the plough teams are turned; they are generally held with the quilletts on which they abut, and then are frequently used in common as cartways, but they sometimes constitute distinct quilletts at right angles to the rest. The quilletts of the lordship of Bromfield are formed of single butts or groups of butts, sometimes combined with single pikes or groups of pikes, or with one of the two main headlands. These quilletts are intermixed in the same field with other quilletts belonging to various persons; and fields, the butts, pikes and headlands of which are separately owned, often acquire names such as the above, and are liable to retain them after all the quilletts therein have been absorbed. Names of this class, therefore, seem generally to imply that curious division of ownership which is characteristic of the common-field system.

Formerly many of the arable quilletts bore specific names, which names frequently contained the word "erw." Thus we have "Erw'r ardd," "Erw fechan," "Erw glai," "Erwau'r ysgubor," and many others. This fact might lead us to suspect that in Bromfield quilletts had at one time been called "erwau" (plural of "erw"); which

turns out to have been actually the case. The usual phrase applied to quilletts in the town fields of Wrexham in legal documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is "errowes or parcels of land"—in Latin, "erua" or "erwa"; and this phrase is applied to them without regard to their area, which varied a great deal. The word "erw" is still in common use in Bromfield for any small strip of land; it is in fact the exact equivalent for the English "slang." But it may be safely asserted that throughout the whole of Wales the term "erw" once denoted a piece of land having a *definite* area; and it is reasonable to suppose that if in Wrexham quilletts were once commonly called "errowes," this was because an erw was assumed to be the normal area of each. More will be said later as to the original local signification of the word "erw." Meanwhile, the remarks just made will serve to introduce the general question of the area of quilletts in the district of east Denbighshire.

It has been stated that the quilletts which exist in that part of the principality vary considerably in size. In the endeavour to arrive at a probable conclusion as to their normal area, those quilletts that have obviously been pikes or headlands must, of course, be excluded from consideration. So, too, must those which have plainly been formed by the consolidation of two or more quilletts that once adjoined in the same field. Such quilletts as appear to have been due to the opera-

tion of the custom of gavelkind are also for the present excluded from notice. Confining our attention to those quilletts which remain, we find that most of them equal, or slightly exceed, half a statute acre. Put according to the Welsh way, we may assert that they each contain about a "cyfar." Now, the cyfar of 2,560 square yards was the old customary acre of the north-eastern part of the principality, and, though not now in common use there, it is not forgotten by the older farmers, and its area is always carefully distinguished from that of the statute acre. No field names in Hopedale or Moldsdale are more common than such as give the area of the fields designated in terms of the ancient cyfar.

It is, however, an interesting if somewhat inexplicable circumstance, that the use of the word "cyfar" is almost if not quite unknown in the great lordship of Bromfield, nor does it enter into the composition of any names of fields known at the present time in the lordship.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The lordship of Bromfield, or Maelor Gymraeg (Welsh Maelor), in Denbighshire, is a border district of Wales, the position of which is perhaps sufficiently indicated by the statement that it contains the ancient parishes of Wrexham, Gresford, Ruabon, Marchwiel, Erbistock, the chapelry of Holt, and that portion of the parish of Bangor is y coed which lies on the left side of the Dee. Bromfield was formerly made up of the two commots or rhaglotries of Wrexham and Merford (now Marford). Allington is a township in the northern half of the commot of Merford, and in a survey of 23rd Henry VII, the only mention of "kevers" in Bromfield which

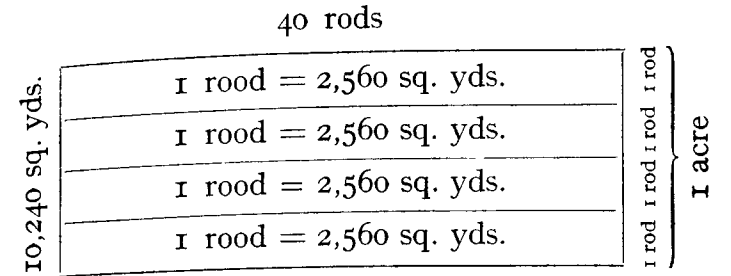


But it is pretty certain that the thing itself once flourished in the district, though under another name—that of “erw.”

We first note that a division of the customary acre of Bromfield—the rood, or “quarter”—is identical with the cyfar of Flintshire. The references to it in John Norden’s survey of 1620 enable us to give an accurate account of its area if not of its shape. Norden states that the acre in which he has expressed his areas is the “olde and accustomed acre in theis partes and in most countries next adjoyninge,” which acre contained “a hundred and three score perches to the acre and fowere and twenty foote to the pearche or pole.” That is, it contained 10,240 square yards and was thus more than twice as large as the statute acre.<sup>1</sup> It corresponded in fact to the area of the customary acre of Cheshire and south Lancashire. This acre of Bromfield Norden divides into four “roods,” each exactly equalling in area the Flintshire cyfar. Nothing, however, is told us of the *shape* of this acre, with its four “roods” and 160 perches. If it conformed to the usual shape of the acres of England it would be plotted out somewhat thus (the figures are not to scale) :—

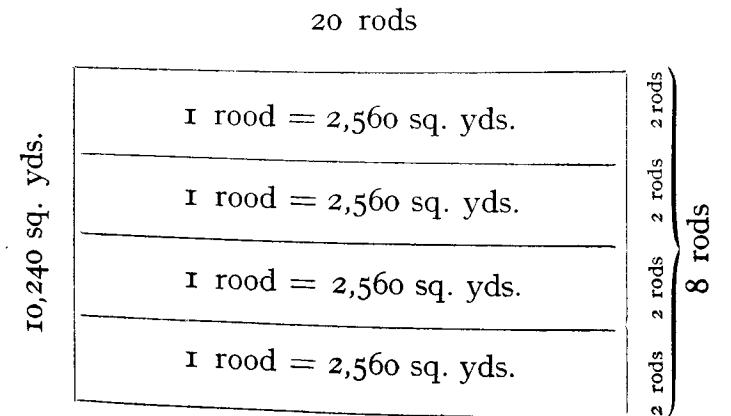
has been met with occurs therein. John Almer had then fifteen “kevers” (*cyfeiriau* or *cyfars*) for the stipend of his office as King’s attorney.

<sup>1</sup> To convert numbers stated in terms of this customary acre into statute acres, multiply by 2.115; that is, 100 customary acres are equal to 211.5 statute acres.



or  $\frac{(24 \times 40) \times (24 \times 1)}{9} = 2,560$ , and  $2,560 \times 4 = 10,240$ .

In other words, according to this scheme, the acre would be ten times and the rood forty times longer than broad. On the other hand, if the area were plotted according to the scheme of the Welsh *ystang* (colloquially called *stang*), where the rood is treated acre-wise, we should get an acre where the rood was only ten, not forty, times longer than broad.



or  $\frac{(24 \times (20) \times 24 \times 2)}{9} = 2,560$ , and  $2,560 \times 4 = 10,240$ .

In this latter case both the acre and the rood are half the length and double the breadth of the former; but the important point to note is that whatever may have been the *shape* of the acre, the area of the rood, in any case, was that of the Flintshire cyfar.

Still, the question of the shape of the acre has its importance. It raises the further inquiry whether the old customary acre of Bromfield and Yale (for the same acre belonged also to the adjoining and sister lordship of Yale) was of Welsh origin, or derived from Cheshire. To which it may be replied that few, if any, of the one-cyfar quilletts known in Bromfield are in length forty times their breadth. And it would be natural to expect that the local acre of this district would follow the Welsh pattern rather than the English. So that the balance of probability would be in favour of the belief that Bromfield once had an acre exactly like the Flintshire cyfar, but that it was called an *erw*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Archæologia Cambrensis* for January, 1896, contains a tolerably full account of the contents and origin of Welsh measures of land, to which we must refer the reader for further information on the question; and attention may be drawn to the records in the Public Record Office of a suit heard in the 9th Elizabeth (1567) to determine the area of the Welsh acre in the manor of Skenfrith (Co. Monmouth). There is, of course, no reason to suppose that the early *erwau*, *cyfeiriau*, etc., had the precision which was ascribed to them in later times. The late Prof. Maitland, in his *Domesday Book and Beyond*, has well pointed out that the notion of superficial area hardly

However this may be, it is certainly a fact that before the seventeenth century the Cheshire acre had well rooted itself in agricultural custom both in Bromfield and Yale. The very name was taken over. "Acr," which once denoted the customary acre (of 10,240 square yards), is obviously only the Welsh form of the English word "acre"; the "rood" became the "rhwd" or "cwarter." The 160th part (64 yards square) of this customary acre, curiously called in Cheshire "a square rood," appears here under the un-Welsh guise of "y rhwd sgwâr," which last-mentioned name, however, must be comparatively late. But the "acr" (with its plural "acrau," colloquially "acrè" or "acrey") was already well established in Bromfield and Yale by the year 1620, and, as already shown, not the name only, but the thing itself. And the acre in question, both in its area and divisions, but not perhaps in its general plan, was identical with the acre of Cheshire and south Lancashire.

The explanation of much of this approximation and divergence must be sought in the political history of the district. At the time of the Domesday Survey (A.D. 1086) the eastern part of Bromfield was included in Cheshire, and the acre of that county was probably then used in the part named. Soon after, it passed under the sway

entered into the conceptions of early tillers of the soil. Given the rod, it was the breadth only of the furlong which they measured; the length varied according to circumstances.

of the Welsh princes of Powys Fadog. It seems likely that when, still later—in A.D. 1282—not only all Bromfield, but Yale also,<sup>1</sup> became English lordships, the new lords imposed the Cheshire rod<sup>2</sup> and acre throughout the two lordships; just as Henry de Lacy, earl of Lincoln, is known to have introduced into the lordship of Denbigh a new rod of his own, and consequently a new acre.<sup>3</sup> The adoption of the Cheshire acre was doubtless considerably facilitated by the fact that the area of the old “erw” and the area of the new quarter acre were the same.

The “square rood” above referred to was probably a still later introduction, as indeed its name testifies, and spread with the extension of Cheshire methods of agriculture through Flintshire and Denbighshire into Carnarvonshire and Anglesey, and so back through Cardiganshire, Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire into southern Shropshire and Herefordshire, acquiring in the course of its journey the name of “the Welsh rood.” The customary acre of Bromfield and Yale has long since been displaced in those lordships by the statute acre, but the 160th part of it, the square rood just named, is still employed in connexion with potato-growing and

<sup>1</sup> All Bromfield and Yale, except the ecclesiastical manors of Llandegla and Valle Crucis, and the parts attached to Maelor Saesneg.

<sup>2</sup> The lineal rod of 24 feet or 8 yards, called in Cheshire “a rood.”

<sup>3</sup> British Museum, *Harley MS.* 3632, fo. 1.

sod-paring. The old lineal rod of 24 feet is also often used for hedging, ditching, draining, walling, etc., and was in common use within the memory of persons lately living.<sup>1</sup>

When the old customary acre was displaced by the statute acre, the name “acr” was transferred from one to the other, while the name “erw” ceased to designate any exact area, and came to mean a quillet in a common field.

We have thus seen that lying open in various “common” fields are many separately-owned strips of land; that the area of these strips cannot be expressed precisely in the terms of the statute acre; that the area of the greater number

<sup>1</sup> In a lecture delivered at Chester in February, 1883, by Mr. Robert Holland, of Frodsham, an admirable example of the rare combination of agriculturist and antiquary, the following sentences occur, and may here be quoted: “The rood, as it is called (*i.e.* rod), of eight lineal yards, is the foundation of all measurement in Cheshire. Such piece-work as hedging and ditching, draining, putting up rails, etc., is done at so much per rood. Square or land measure is as follows: 64 square yards, that is 8 by 8, 1 square rood; 40 square roods, or 2,560 square yards, 1 quarter; 4 quarters, or 10,240 (square) yards, 1 acre. This Cheshire acre is in constant use throughout the county, and also in south Lancashire. Farmers cannot understand statute acres at all, but always reckon their fields by the Cheshire acre. Mowing, reaping, spreading manure, etc., are always ‘set,’ that is, let, at so much per Cheshire acre. I feel very sure that a good many mistakes are made every year in filling up the agricultural returns by farmers putting down Cheshire instead of statute acres. Practically, the Cheshire acre is very convenient, and labourers can reckon their work to a nicety, for 101 yards stridden each way is quite near enough to an acre for the payment of piece-work” (101 × 101 = 10,201).

of them is nearly equal to that of the old quarter-acre of Cheshire; and that this quarter-acre is identical in area, if not in form, with the cyfar of the adjoining parts of Flintshire.

Now, the Flintshire cyfar was a strip representing a day's ploughing, in size ten times longer than broad, and containing 2,560 square yards; which account would also be a fairly accurate description of the quilletts that measure a cyfar each. If, therefore, we had to speak of a field containing, say, half a dozen such quilletts, we should, in stating the area of the whole field in terms of the cyfar, also indicate the number of quilletts which the field included. And, seeing that etymologically a "cyfar" is a joint-ploughing, the inference follows that the cyfar came to be used as the unit of superficial measure because it was the area of what we now call the quilletts in the common fields, that is to say of the strips ploughed in those fields in a day by the plough-team.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> From the Welsh Laws we learn that a day's ploughing was taken to end at noon, and was done in a single yoking. The cyfar was, therefore, ploughed at a single yoking. Now, within Moldsdale and Hopedale there are many fields bearing such names as "The two yokings," "The three yokings," "The five yokings," and the like. From the fact that these names are English, it follows that they are of comparatively recent origin. They also show that not very long ago farmers were still accustomed to express the area of their fields by a statement of the number of "yokings" it was necessary to make in order to plough them. It appears from a survey made in 1757 of one of the largest estates in the lordship of Mold that field-names such as those quoted were very common about the middle of the eighteenth century. Since in the

facts presented point, however, to a still more instructive form of the statement to which we have been tending. If we could say that each quillet was at first a single butt or ridge of land in the common fields, a very interesting form would be given to this statement. And there is some ground for the suggestion that in the case of many of the quilletts this was really so.<sup>1</sup> But there is much in the evidence that does not seem to be in accord with this conclusion; and it must be admitted that if a normal quillet was at first no more than a single butt of land, there must have been, in a great many cases and at an early date, a rearrangement of the quilletts of such a kind that the latter (which before were identical with the butts of the common

survey the area of every field is given, it becomes easy to ascertain that a yoking was as nearly as possible equal to a Flintshire cyfar. It would seem indeed as though in the lordships of Hope and Mold a "yoking" was formerly the common English name for that which the Welsh-speaking inhabitants called a "cyfar." But, while the Welsh name of this latter recalls for us the fact that the cyfar was at first ploughed *in concert*, the English reminds us that it represents the quantity of land ploughed *at one yoking* by the cattle of the plough-team.

<sup>1</sup> The identification of the land ploughed in a day by the common plough-team with a single butt in the common fields is due to Dr. Frederic Seebohm, whose important work on *The English Village Community* appeared in 1883, while the first edition of this book was being written. The authors are glad to recognize other obligations to Dr. Seebohm, the chief of these being the recognition of the operation of the common plough, and a certain shifting of the point of view from which common arable lands were regarded. Common lands, other than arable, Dr. Seebohm has scarcely touched upon.

fields) came to contain two or more butts, while still preserving, by estimation, their original area. Such a result would happen if, for example, the quillets which at first lay along the length of the field, came afterwards to be arranged across its breadth. The quillets which remained in the Allington town field about sixty years ago, measuring only about half a cyfar apiece, stretched in this way across its breadth, and are accordingly described as consisting of three butts each. It is doubtful whether this explanation will cover all the cases observed of quillets of normal area which contain more than one butt, though it is not unlikely that further researches will result in the formulation of a theory based upon the suggestion above offered, and applicable to most of the cases here referred to.

If, on the other hand, it be contended that the cyfar was never used in Bromfield, and that the area of the quillets is expressed properly in terms of the Cheshire acre, we shall have to seek in Cheshire for the explanation of them.

Now, the tithe map of Mobberley, in Cheshire, and also an old map of a portion of the same parish dating from the early part of the seventeenth century, mark the "Town field"; and in this field and in two or three adjoining closes, stretching between the inhabited village and the parish bounds, are shown the "lands" or "holdings" which in Bromfield are called "quillets." The maps show a common-field area exhibiting more the phenomena with which we are familiar in

Bromfield than those phenomena in the common fields of England generally which Dr. Seebohm has so well illustrated. He has shown that through the greater part of England the intermixed and separately-held strips in common fields represent the land ploughed in a day by the common plough-team, by eight oxen in general; that those strips were by custom 40 rods long and 4 broad; that they were called "acres"<sup>1</sup>; and that the statute acre represents, broadly speaking, their area.

The main difficulty that presents itself in applying these results to the past conditions of agriculture in Cheshire arises from the inordinate size of the Cheshire acre (10,240 square yards). If, elsewhere in England, a statute acre was considered to be the normal area ploughed by a full team of oxen in a legal day, it is obvious that such a team in Cheshire could not plough more than twice that area in the same time. The probable explanation is that the ancient Cheshire unit of gross superficial measure was not the "acre," but the "quarter," which is identical with the cyfar of the adjoining parts of Wales; and if these "quarters" were always grouped in bunches of four, so as to make a compound unit (the Cheshire acre), this was because a group

<sup>1</sup> It appears from an extract of a thirteenth century deed relating to Weston near Oswestry, in the adjoining county of Salop, as though what in Bromfield are called "quillets" were there formerly known as "acres" (*Arch. Camb.*, 2nd Series, iii, 37).

of four scattered "lands," measuring a Flintshire cyfar each, was the smallest holding taken account of under the land system of ancient Cheshire, and because all larger holdings there included a number of "lands" which was some multiple of four. And this explanation enables us to offer the same account of the quilletts under discussion, upon the supposition that they are quarter acres of Cheshire, as we gave of them upon the supposition that they were cyfars of Flintshire.

The majority of the quilletts in the Bromfield district contain, or seem to have contained, about a cyfar each.<sup>1</sup> But the quilletts in certain fields were of about twice this area. In Dininlle Ucha in 1620 many of the quilletts which bore names containing the word "erw" were half a local acre.<sup>2</sup> A few quilletts of the same size in other

<sup>1</sup> The area of sixty-four only of the Wrexham quilletts described in 1620 by Norden, is given, but most of these contained half a Cheshire acre, by estimation, or two Flintshire cyfars apiece. The quilletts that remained until recently in "Gresford town field" contained almost exactly three cyfars each; but quilletts having this area are exceptional, and we know that in the case just named there was some alteration effected in them upon the construction of the new road to Chester at the end of the eighteenth century; in other words, the shape and area of these quilletts, as shown in the title map of 1843, cannot represent their shape and area seventy or eighty years before, when the new road was made across the Gresford town field, a work which must have involved exchange and consolidation of the strips.

<sup>2</sup> Here is Norden's account of two of the Dininlle quilletts, the first-named lying open in the field, the second an enclosed

manors of Bromfield had also at that date names composed of this same word. These facts may suggest that half a local (Cheshire) acre (containing 280 square yards more than the statute acre) constituted formerly in Bromfield the local "erw," and was known by that name. Such an erw would then be equal to two Flintshire cyfars. But if we could have seen these two-cyfar quilletts, it is very likely that we should have found them to have been formed by the consolidation of two adjoining one-cyfar strips. The joining of quillet to quillet was a process that in 1620 was already in full operation. And if in Dininlle Ucha most of the quilletts to which the name "erw" was applied were twice the area of the cyfar, others were of the same area, and others again more than twice that area. The truth is that by the beginning of the seventeenth century the word "erw" had ceased to designate a fixed area, and had become a generic term for all the strips of land in the common fields, whatever their size might be. In deeds of that century the Wrexham quilletts were all called "errowes," although they then varied in area. But if the strips of land that are now known as quilletts were in the seventeenth century known as "erwau" (plural of "erw") or "errowes," this must have

quillet: "(Idem Will'mus tenet) un' pec' in parcell' terr' vocat' kae dan y ty p' estimac'on' 2r"; "(Ricardus ap David tenet) un' claus' vocat' Erw yn kae yn y wern p' estimac' 2r." These are half-acres of customary, not of statute, measure

been because an erw was, at a still earlier date, taken to be the normal area of each.

What, then, was the original erw of Bromfield? This question cannot be answered with absolute certainty, but the most probable conclusion is that the "erw" and the "cyfar" were at first identical, or, rather, that the strip of ploughed land which in Flintshire was called a "cyfar," was in Bromfield called an "erw"; and this strip may henceforth be called the "erw, or cyfar, of northern Powys." When, through the discontinuance of the system of joint ploughing, the arrangement of land in scattered strips, containing an erw each, became inconvenient, holders endeavoured to enlarge their quillets; but the enlarged quillets were still called "errowes," and the word "erw" ceased to stand for a definite measure of land. A new word for the old unit of gross superficial area had therefore to be introduced, and the quarter-acre of Cheshire, which was precisely identical with the old erw of Bromfield, was, under the name "cwarter acr," adopted instead. In other parts of Wales one or other of the words "cyfar" or "erw" was until recently applied to the local "acres," which, though they varied in their superficial contents, were not, except in some cases, widely different in this respect from the cyfar of Flintshire. During the last century or more, however, these customary measures have been falling into disuse, and the names "cyfar" and "erw" are now transferred, generally speaking, to the statute acre.

Having thus put forward the conclusions derived from purely local researches, let us now glance at the Welsh Laws, and examine the erw described therein. This is not the customary acre, erw, or cyfar to which we have been referring, but a miniature rood, using the word "rood" in its usual sense of a quarter of an acre's length. The erw of the Demetian code was eight times longer than broad, the erw of Gwent nine times longer than broad, and the erw of Gwynedd ten times longer than its breadth. The rod upon which the erw of Gwynedd was based contained 16 feet of 9 inches, or 12 feet of 12 inches, and this rod continued in use to a recent date. It was the "long yoke" of the Laws, and a "rod equal in length to that long yoke in the hand of the driver,<sup>1</sup> with the middle spike of that long yoke in the other hand of the driver, and as far as he can reach with that rod, stretching out his arm, are the two borders (*deu eiryonyn*), that is to say the breadth of the legal erw; and thirty of that is the length of the erw."<sup>2</sup> If the ploughman put his hand on the middle pin or spike of the long yoke and stretched his arm in one direction with the 12 feet rod, his arms would extend over about 2 yards, or 6 feet, and the rod would then measure 12 feet more, or 18 feet in one direction. The same process would next be repeated in the other direction, and so 18 feet more would be

<sup>1</sup> "Geilwad," strictly speaking "caller," the ploughman going before the plough.

<sup>2</sup> Venedotian Code, Book II, ch. xvii, sec. 6.















































































































































































































































































