

names. The Old English dithematic names fell into disuse, and phonological changes took place which helped these names to become more and more obscure. Therefore, the "demands" of unfamiliarity and unintelligibility which bring about secondary motivation were met.

The cases of secondary motivation in English family names demonstrate very clearly that this linguistic phenomenon is caused by the speaker's desire to create more clarity on the appellative level. This is emphasised by the fact that in nearly all cases where regular phonological development would lead to a name consisting of a single morpheme, the development is interrupted by secondary motivation and the outcome is again formally a compound. It is not necessarily a meaningful compound, e.g. Portwine; it is sufficient for the parts of the compound to be supported by English appellatives.

A thorough evaluation cannot be undertaken at this point. The material in this dissertation, however, will surely provide a basis for a better understanding of the origins and development of secondary motivated English family names.

## NOTE

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COMMON GAELIC ÁIRGE, OLD SCANDINAVIAN ÆRGI OR ERG?\*

In an important article published in Danish in 1956 Christian Matras drew attention to the fact that the form erg, which English toponymists use for a so-called Norse loan-word in English, does not occur in any Old Scandinavian sources.<sup>1</sup> Since this article appeared too late for the information to be included by Hugh Smith in English Place-Name Elements (1956), scholars outside Scandinavia have continued to use the form erg for this element. It has therefore seemed opportune to bring the question of the origin and significance of the word to the attention of the members of the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland.

The relevant entry in Smith's book<sup>2</sup> begins as follows: 'erg ON, 'a shieling, a hill-pasture' (found in ON only in Orkneyinga saga) was current among Norw settlers in the NW and had been introduced by them from OIr or Gael (cf. MIr airge, Ir airghe, Gael airigh).' An examination of the files of the Arnamagnaen Dictionary of Old Norse in Copenhagen has confirmed that the only early West Scandinavian source to contain the word is the Icelandic Orkneyinga saga. This saga was originally compiled in the late twelfth century and two versions of it are known to have existed.<sup>3</sup> One survives in a late fourteenth-century transcript in the famous codex Flateyjarbók. There is no complete Icelandic text of the second version of the saga but a translation was made of it into Danish about 1570 in Norway and this translation survives almost intact in a paper MS from 1615 in the Royal Library Stockholm (Cod. Isl. Papp. 39 fol.). Near the beginning of chapter 103 of the saga the Flateyjarbók version says: 'ok toku þar nockur gisting' (and took shelter for the night there), while the Danish translation reads (f. 92r): 'der som vaar noget erg det kalle wi setter, der bleffue de offuer om natten' (they spent the night at a place where there was an erg, which we call a shieling). There is no way of knowing whether this explanatory gloss was in the original Icelandic text of the second version of the saga or whether it was added by the translator. Towards the end of the same chapter the word reappears as an element in a place-name in the Caithness area, which has been tentatively identified by A. B. Taylor with Assery between Forsie and Loch Calder (Grid reference ND 0562).<sup>4</sup> The Flateyjarbók text reads: 'til audnaselia nockurra þeirra er heita Asgrims ærgin' (to some deserted huts which are called Asgrims ærgin), while the Danish translation reads (f. 94r): 'til nogen eydesetter de som kaldis Asgrims erg'. These are the only occurrences of the word in Old Scandinavian sources. It will be noted that the form erg only occurs in the Danish translation of Orkneyinga saga and not in the surviving Icelandic text. This means that it is to be attributed to the sixteenth-century translator. An examination of the files of the Dictionary of Old Danish by its editor Allan Karker has revealed no other instance of the word in any spelling in Danish sources from between 1100 and 1515 and it is not recorded in Otto Kalkar's Ordbog Til Det Ældre Danske Sprog (1300-1700) (1881-1918) or Ordbog over det danske sprog (1919-56), which covers material from 1700 to the present day. There is also a Danish translation of the Flateyjarbók version of the saga. This was made by the Icelander Torfæus in 1661 and it survives in three paper MSS, two of which are probably copies of the first. Torfæus makes no use of the word erg. The first occurrence in chapter 103 is omitted altogether, while the place-name is omitted from the second occurrence. Torfæus also made a Latin translation of the saga, which was published in Copenhagen in 1697. In this abridged translation Torfæus deals with the second context by saying that the men came to æstiva, that is 'a summer camp, summer pastures for cattle' and then glosses this word as '(tuguria in montibus pascendis pecoribus, lactisque; cibus per æstivam conficiendis exstructa) id temporis vacua, Asgrimsægrin vocata'. This definition would seem to be directed at the expression audnaselia in the Flateyjarbók text rather than at the place-name element ærgin.<sup>5</sup>

There is no evidence, then, that the word had an independent existence in Danish or Icelandic and the Danish-Norwegian translator of *Orkneyinga saga* was probably faced with a completely unfamiliar word in the Icelandic text. The context would have made the meaning clear to him but instead of simply replacing the word by a Danish synonym such as *setter*, he chose to naturalise the word he found in his Icelandic source. From the way he represents it in his translation he would seem to have taken it to be a neuter word *erg*, unchanged in the nominative plural. The normal representation of long *æ* in sixteenth-century Danish sources is the ligature *æ* but spellings with *e* do occur and they are particularly frequent in Norwegian-Danish sources. The spelling with *e* thus presents no problem. There is some doubt, however, about the ending of the word. The Danish translator has apparently taken the *in* of *ærgin* to be the suffixed neuter plural definite article. It could equally well represent the *i* of the ending of a two-syllabled *ærgi* with a suffixed *-n* of the definite article, the initial vowel of the article having been elided with the final short vowel of the noun.

Scandinavian lexicographers and etymologists have not been able to agree on the correct form for this rare Icelandic word. A summary of the suggestions that have been made was provided by Christian Matras.<sup>6</sup> Cleasby-Vigfússon (1874) has *erg* n., Sophus Bugge (1875), J. Fritzner (corrected edition 1896), Leiv Heggstad (1931) and F. Holthausen (1948) all have *ærgin* pl. (Holthausen indicates that the *æ* is long), and Alexander Jóhannesson (1956) has *ergin* n. Sophus Bugge suggested that the form *ærgin* represented the Scottish Gaelic plural *airidhean* of *airidh* and his suggestion was accepted by Fritzner, and seemingly also by Heggstad and Holthausen. Matras draws attention, however, to the fact that W.J. Watson has shown that this Gaelic plural is young and cannot lie behind the form in the saga.<sup>7</sup> The old Irish plural was *áirgi*. This leads Matras to suggest that the form *ærgin* is a Scandinavian neuter plural form *ærgi* with suffixed definite article. In normal Icelandic and Faroese the suffixed definite article would not appear in a compound place-name whose specific was a personal name in the genitive case but Matras suggests tentatively that the grammatical rules current for the Scandinavian language in use in the Caithness area might well have differed from those in use in Iceland and the Faroes. There is some doubt, then, as to the correct form of the ending of the word but that *Flateyjarbók* is correct in spelling it with initial *æ* rather than *e* is suggested by the fact (noted by Matras) that the Scandinavian word *þráll* 'thrall, slave', with long *æ*, was borrowed into Irish as *tráill*, with long *á* followed by a palatalised consonant. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that Gaelic long *á* before a palatalised consonant would be represented in Scandinavian as long *æ*.

There are several place-names in the Faroe Islands which can best be explained as deriving from a word *\*ærgi* n., with an irregular but not unprecedented nominative plural *\*ærgir* (instead of *\*ærgi*) and regular genitive singular and plural *\*ærgis*, *\*ærgja* and dative plural *\*ærgjum*. In the opinion of Matras, this word must have been brought north to the Faroes by Viking settlers who had become acquainted with it in some Gaelic-speaking area.

There is a Common Gaelic word *áirge*, of disputed etymology. It appears in this form in early Irish sources with the senses a) 'place for milking cows, byre, cowshed', b) 'herd of cattle', and c) 'troop, band'.<sup>8</sup> From the first of these meanings there would seem to have developed the specialised meaning 'summer milking-place in the mountains', although in Old Irish the normal word for this concept would seem to have been *búale*, *búaille*. As late as the early part of the present century cattle taken to the Irish mountains for the summer were said to be *ar buailidh* and the practice of a *seter*-economy, which was very common in ancient and medieval Irish society, was known as *buailteachas*, anglicised as *booleying*.<sup>9</sup> Although there are a few possible occurrences of

the element *áirge* in place-names in Kerry, it seems hardly likely that the Vikings adopted the generic in the sense 'summer milking-place' in Ireland. The Viking settlements in that country were small and rather urbanised and practically restricted to the areas surrounding Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Limerick.

The Scandinavian settlement in the Isle of Man was more considerable. The date of the introduction of the Manx language to the island is uncertain but Kenneth Jackson has argued that it was probably in or about the fourth century.<sup>10</sup> This means that the Vikings may have found the word *áirge* in use on the island on their arrival. This is not certain, however. Margaret Gelling has argued that all the Manx place-names in *eary* are post-Norse Gaelic formations, none of them earlier than the thirteenth century. She has suggested that many of these may have replaced earlier Norse names, incorporating generics such as *sætr* and *skáli*, neither of which has been noted with certainty in Manx place-names. One of Margaret Gelling's reasons for arguing for a post-Norse origin for the *eary*-names was that most of them are formed in the later Celtic manner, with the specific following the generic. She considered that such so-called inversion compounds did not begin to be coined in the Isle of Man until after the period of Norse rule but Basil Megaw has recently argued that Gaelic must have held its own in Man during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and if this is so, the *eary*-names may be much older.<sup>11</sup> In an earlier treatment of the Manx names Peter Gelling had argued that the word probably came to the island from Gaelic, as part of the Manx language, although he did not state whether this was before or after the period of the Viking settlement.<sup>12</sup> As a result of his excavations of deserted shieling-sites, Peter Gelling argued that transhumance may well have owed its main development in Man to Norse settlers, that the practice flourished during the Norse period, and that it declined as Norse traditions died out in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Eleanor Megaw has drawn attention to the marked contrast between the long-abandoned shieling-sites at about 1000 feet that were examined by Peter Gelling and the sites of Manx places with names containing *eary*.<sup>13</sup> Most of these latter places are indeed situated on fairly high land, generally above 500 feet, but most of them are now on enclosed farm or pasture land and there must have been less pressure on land when they were established than at the period when Viking settlers were trying to cope with the poorer moorland sites. It seems reasonable to assume that the *earys* antedate the shieling-mound sites. This means that the *earys* were probably in existence in the Viking period but there is no means of knowing by what names they were known at that time. Eleanor Megaw has also noted that the places with names containing *áirigh* in Galloway are found in an area into which Gaelic names were introduced in the pre-Norse period<sup>14</sup> and she suggests that Gaelic speakers may have come to Man from the north-west either in company with, or in flight from, the Vikings. The Scandinavians may conceivably have become acquainted with the generic on Man but they do not seem to have made any use of it themselves when forming Manx names and it seems more likely that they first came upon the word in Scotland or the islands.

Independently in Scottish Gaelic sources, all of which are much younger than the Viking period, the word *áirigh* appears with the meaning 'summer residence for herdsmen and cattle, hill pasture, level green among the hills'.<sup>15</sup>

Several parts of Scotland received large numbers of Scandinavian settlers in the Viking period and Norse dialects continued to be spoken in some areas probably into the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. It is the distribution of Scandinavian place-names, however, that provides the best information about the density of the Norse population in the various parts of the country. No systematic examination has yet been made of the material for the whole of Scotland but it has been shown that the highest concentration of Scandinavian

names is found in the Outer Hebrides, particularly in Lewis. There are also many names in Skye and most of the other islands and along the coast of the Mainland, particularly in the north, while in most inland districts there are few or none.<sup>16</sup> In all districts where Scandinavian place-names are common, place-names containing áirigh occur. The question is whether the names are Scandinavian formations or Gaelic ones and, in the latter case, whether they are pre-Norse or post-Norse Gaelic formations.

The first Norse settlers probably came to the Orkneys and Shetlands early in the ninth century and there would seem to have been a wholesale Viking invasion between about 860 and 870. Jakob Jakobsen considered that áirigh was found in Shetland place-names both in the Gaelic form and in a Scandinavian form erg, which he derived from the Danish translation of Orkneyinga saga.<sup>17</sup> Christian Matras has pointed out that one of the names cited by Jakobsen as of Gaelic origin, Arisdal/Erisdal, could well originally have been a Scandinavian \*Ergisdalr, while it would be difficult to explain the specific as a form of the Gaelic word, since that has genitive áirighe.<sup>18</sup> In a more recent study of Shetland place-names John Stewart seems to consider that there are only three names containing Scandinavian ergi, namely Arg, Aria and Benisergj.<sup>19</sup> Hugh Marwick considered that the element in Orkney place-names was almost certainly a pre-Norse Gaelic survival that was adopted by the Vikings and occasionally inflected by them as though it were a Norse word.<sup>20</sup>

The element is very common in place-names in the Hebrides. Donald Macauley has shown that there are numerous names containing áirigh on the small island of Bernera, which lies in the bay called Loch Roag on the west coast of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides.<sup>21</sup> They seem to be borne by shielings to which cattle were taken after the summer season on the 'mainland' and where they spent the month of August before being taken to the village pastures for the winter and spring. The majority of the Hebridean place-names containing áirigh have it preceding the specific and would thus seem to be Gaelic formations. There are some instances in the Hebrides where áirigh follows the specific, however, and in some few names in Scotland áirigh would seem to be compounded with a Scandinavian specific such as kjarni 'kernel', perhaps in Kernsary, and smjör 'butter', perhaps in Smirsary.<sup>22</sup>

In summary it can be said that the distribution of place-names containing áirigh in Scotland is such that the Viking settlers could well have contributed a good deal to the spread of the word as a place-name generic. In the Highlands and Hebrides, for example, where shielings are commonest, they are known as áirigh in the west, and as ruigh in the centre and east.<sup>23</sup>

On the basis of this evidence, I would argue that the Vikings probably found the generic in use in their island colonies, that they adopted it and adapted its form and then used it when coining names in the other areas in which they settled. After the Norse period, the element in its original Gaelic form would have continued to be used to form place-names. Although the possibility that some of the purely Gaelic place-names containing it may be survivals from the pre-Norse period cannot be excluded, it may well be that it was the Scandinavian settlers who contributed most to the establishment of the word as a comparatively common place-name generic in northern Britain.

Whereas in the Gaelic-speaking areas there is always the possibility that place-names containing the generic might be native Gaelic formations, where the element appears in English place-names, it must have been imported from an alien source. Since the place-names containing the word all occur in areas where there was considerable Scandinavian settlement, it seems likely that the element was introduced by the Vikings. This assumption receives

support from the fact that the majority of the specifics with which the word is compounded in English place-names are of Scandinavian origin.<sup>24</sup>

It is not easy to explain why the Vikings in the British Isles should have felt the need to borrow the word ærgi from Gaelic instead of employing one of their own native words for the shieling concept. The exact significance of the element in place-names is also uncertain. One reason that might be suggested for the borrowing is that the Scandinavians had not been familiar with the practice of a seter-economy in their homelands before the Viking period. It would certainly seem that it was in the course of the Viking period itself that the seasonal movement of animals became common in Scandinavia. R.I. Page has drawn attention to the fact that King Alfred's informant Othhere would not seem to have been aware of the exploitation of upland pastures in Norway in the late ninth century, since he states that 'all the land that can be grazed or ploughed lies by the sea'.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand there is a little archaeological evidence for burials in settlements in some mountain areas of Norway as early as the Migration period so it is unlikely that the seter was completely unknown in Norway at the beginning of the Viking period. The Vikings probably found a similar economy functioning in the western colonies on their arrival. Peter Gelling's excavations of shieling-sites on the Isle of Man did not produce any conclusive dating evidence earlier than the twelfth century but, as pointed out by Eleanor Megaw, the places bearing earry-names were probably established before the moorland shielings excavated by Gelling and the earys may well antedate the arrival of the Vikings. I am not aware whether or not any dating evidence has been produced for the shieling-sites in the Scottish islands. In England there is literary evidence for the existence of shielings and for the seasonal migration of animals at least as early as the seventh century and the custom must have been much older than that.<sup>26</sup>

A suggestion made by Eric Cregeen is that the Scandinavians would have adopted the Gaelic term for shieling because shieling-work was performed by women and, for the earliest Scandinavian settlers at least, that meant essentially native Gaelic-speaking women, who would continue to use their own word for shieling.<sup>27</sup> This is a very reasonable explanation for the original borrowing of the Gaelic term but it hardly explains why the Vikings should then have taken the term with them to non-Gaelic-speaking areas such as Lancashire and Yorkshire, together with their own Scandinavian words for shieling.

It seems most likely that there was something characteristic about the location or the function of the ærgi in the British Isles that caused the Viking settlers to refer to it by the Gaelic term rather than by a Scandinavian word such as setr or sel.<sup>28</sup> The Vikings may have adopted the Gaelic word together with the Gaelic concept and taken both word and concept with them to the Faroe Islands and England. The exact nature of the ærgi cannot be deduced from the linguistic evidence and it may well have differed from colony to colony. In both England and Man the sites of the ærgis are generally lower, less remote and more fertile than those of other known shielings. In the small island of Bernera the Gaelic term áirigh is used of the 'half-way house' shielings, where the cattle were kept on their return from the summer pastures in the Uig hills and before transference to the village pastures for the winter.<sup>29</sup> The summer-shielings on the 'mainland' of Lewis frequently have names containing the Scandinavian generic setr but there are only three such names in Bernera itself and none at all in the other small islands in Loch Roag. This suggests that the Vikings may have used the word áirigh to denote what is now referred to in Norway as a heimseter - a shieling close to the home-farm that was 'used for short grazing periods as soon as the pasture allowed it in the spring and on the way home from the mountain or summer seter

in the autumn'.<sup>30</sup> That this specialised use was preserved through the centuries in all the areas to which the term *ærgi* was disseminated by the Vikings seems unlikely but it is very possible that there was a tendency for lower-lying shielings or home-shielings to receive a name in *ærgi* rather than one in *sátr*. It would be just such shielings that would be most likely to be turned into arable farms, as the pressure on land increased, and this would account for the fact that so many of the places with names in *ærgi* in England and the Isle of Man have developed into fairly prosperous settlement sites. Only further examination of the sites of places with names in *ærgi* and *sátr* by archaeologists, ethnographers and geographers can substantiate or refute this suggestion.

## NOTES

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It should be noted that footnote references in articles in Journal of the English Place-Name Society 10, 18-25, and Man and Environment in the Isle of Man, BAR British Series 54 (1978), 315-18, to an article to appear in Dinnseanchas VII are to the present paper.

1. 'Gammelfærøsk ærgi, n., og dermed beslægtede ord', Namn og Bygd (1956), 51-67.
2. op.cit. I. 157.
3. Cf. the edition by Sigurður Nordal (Copenhagen, 1913-16), and Finnogi Guðmundsson's discussion in Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder s.n. Orkneyinga saga.
4. In The Orkneyinga Saga. A New Translation with Introduction and Notes (Edinburgh, 1938).
5. For information about the translations by Torfæus I am indebted to Professor Chr. Westergård-Nielsen.
6. op.cit. 59.
7. In Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland IX (1922-23), 255.
8. Cf. Kuno Meyer, Contributions to Irish Lexicography (1906), 57; J. Vendryes, Lexique étymologique de l'Irlandais ancien. A. (Dublin and Paris, 1959), 45; C. Marstrander in a review of Vendryes in Lochlann II (1962), 210; and Royal Irish Academy, Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language. A (1964), 208.
9. Cf. Pádraig Ó Moghráin, 'Some Mayo Traditions of the Buaile', Béaloides XIII (1943), 161-71; Anthony T. Lucas, 'Cattle in Ancient and Medieval Irish Society', O Connell School Union Record (1937-1958).
10. In '"Common Gaelic". The Evolution of the Goedelic Languages', Proceedings of the British Academy XXXVII (1951), 78.

11. Cf. M. Gelling, 'The Place-Names of the Isle of Man', The Journal of the Manx Museum VII (1970-71) no.86, 130-39 and no.87, 168-75, and B. Megaw, 'Norseman and Native in the Kingdom of the Isles', Scottish Studies 20 (1976), 1-44, reprinted with revisions in Man and Environment in the Isle of Man, ed. P. Davey, BAR British Series 54 (1978), 265-314.
12. In 'Medieval Shielings in the Isle of Man', Medieval Archaeology VI-VII (1962-63), 156-72.
13. In 'The Manx "Eary" and Its Significance', Man and Environment in the Isle of Man (1978), 327-45.
14. For the introduction of the Gaelic language and Gaelic place-names to Galloway see W.F.H. Nicolaisen, Scottish Place-Names (1976), 124, 130.
15. Cf. Alex MacBain, An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language (Stirling, 1911), 10; C. Marstrander in Lochlann II (1962), 210; Dwelly, Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary (Glasgow, 1949), 20.
16. Cf. C.H. Borgstrøm, 'On the influence of Norse on Scottish Gaelic', Lochlann VI (1974), 91-103. For the distribution of Scandinavian place-names see the maps in W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'Norse settlement in the Northern and Western Isles', Scottish Historical Review (1969), 6-21 and Scottish Place-Names (1976), 88-106.
17. In 'Shetlandsøernes Stednavne', Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie (1901), 225-27, and The Place-Names of Shetland (London, 1936), 181-83.
18. op.cit. in n.1, 66.
19. In 'Shetland Farm Names', The Fourth Viking Congress, ed. Alan Small (Edinburgh, 1965), 247-66, particularly 255.
20. In The Place-Names of Birsay, ed. and introduced by W.F.H. Nicolaisen (Aberdeen, 1970), 80. Cf. also Orkney Farm-Names (Kirkwall, 1952), 165.
21. In 'Studying the Place Names of Bernera', Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness 47 (1971-72), 313-37.
22. Cf. W.J. Watson, The Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty (Inverness, 1904), 233-34.
23. Cf. Ronald Miller, 'Land use by summer shielings', Scottish Studies 11 (1967), 193-221.
24. For discussions of the significance of the generic in English place-names and the form it takes in them see two papers by Mary C. Higham and Gillian Fellows Jensen in Journal of the English Place-Name Society 10 (1977-1978) 7-25.
25. In Medium Ævum XLI (1972), 93.
26. Cf. Two Lives of Cuthbert, ed. Bertram Colgrave (1940), 70 and 170, and G.R.J. Jones, 'Early Territorial Organization in Northern England and its Bearing on the Scandinavian Settlement', The Fourth Viking Congress, ed. A. Small (1965), 67-84, particularly 72-73.
27. Reported in the article cited in n. 13.

28. Cf. Peter Foote and David Wilson, The Viking Achievement (London, 1970), 148.
29. Cf. the article referred to in n.21, 320-21.
30. Cf. Anne-Berit Ø. Borchgrevink, 'The "Seter"-Areas of Rural Norway, - a Traditional Multipurpose Resource', Northern Studies 9 (1977), 3-24.

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MIDDLE ENGLISH 'LETEWORTH':  
AN UNNOTICED TENEMENT-DESCRIPTOR

A year or two ago, Dr. Wilson drew attention to the occurrence of the puzzling name 'Lydworthy', found in certain eighteenth-century Sidmouth, Devonshire, deeds.<sup>1</sup> Further enquiry reveals the existence of a hitherto unnoticed term employed to identify a particular type of land-holding in the south-west, probably of purely regional significance and perhaps confined to a small part of south-east Devonshire. While the earliest references are found only in the fifteenth century, the form is relatively well documented thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

A 1425 rental of Walter Chenale, town reeve of Sidmouth, lists leteworthies (pl.) together with, albeit distinct in some way from, Botelond, and i leteworthi vocatur Cothey . . .. These entries were repeated with slight modifications the following year in the 1426 rental of Chenale's successor, John Tanner: lyte-worthies (pl.) as distinct from Botelondys . . . unique ledeworthi vocatur Cotehay, and (twice) i ledeworthi rented to others.

A century and a half later the term was already apparently unusual, perhaps a local technicality, as suggested by the use of the vernacular in 1581 court records of a dispute concerning rights over a tenement vocatur A lidworthie et unique cotagii . . .. Thereafter it seems to have become recognised as having a precise usage, albeit only tantalizingly described. The first manorial court held by Christopher Maynwarynge, temp. James I, attempting to establish something of a manorial custom, began with the following entry:

by ther custome of the manner of Sydmouth there may be att one tyme sixe names upon anye tenement lydworthey or other tenure wherof three by copie in possession and three in revercion . . .

going on to describe how such tenancies may be transferred, bequeathed, etc. Its application seems quite specific, for:

To the fyfte artyckell they saye that the newe bildinges are not called lydwortheys nether do they knowe anye other name or natwre opertyninge to them . . .

Subsequently the term occurs in this form in Sidmouth manorial deeds repeatedly throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the more detailed, a 1670 lease by Sir Peter Prideaux to Nicholas Wood of Sidmouth, mariner, makes it clear that the term may embrace more than one parcel of land simultaneously - perhaps referring merely to a conglomerate of holdings:

Tenement called or commonly known by the name of A lidworthy. Containing 2½ acres. i.e. dwelling house and garden, one yeard of ground, one close or parcel of land called Brasses Mead, est. 1 ac., one piece of land lying near the pound in Blackmoore field, est. three yeards of ground, one piece or parcel more in the said field est. ½ ac., and parcel or piece more called the Lodge, est. 1 yard of ground.