

ISLE OF WIGHT FIELD NAMES 1835–1848

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The field-names in this survey were taken from the records of the Tithe Commutation Commission, made when church tithes were changed from tithes in kind (i.e. corn, milk, wool, lamb, etc.) to money rents paid for land. For this purpose every field in every parish in the Isle of Wight (as elsewhere) was numbered and recorded, together with its owner's and/or tenant's name, the name of the field (if any), its use, area and value for rent. The Island list covered 27 parishes, and totalled 11,914 entries, including woods and plantations; besides these, homesteads and other buildings were recorded and the work was carried out between 1835 and 1848. In the following necessarily brief observations on the field-names, neither homesteads nor land used only for buildings, yards, or gardens have been included.

A little difficulty was experienced in reading one or two of the various handwritings in the Schedules; some clerks not only seemed to enjoy writing highly ornamental capital letters, but complicated matters by using more than one type for the same letter. Fortunately, however, in the main the Schedules were very clearly written. The greatest difficulty in interpreting some of the field-names stemmed from the fact that most of the information must have been given to the Surveyors by word of mouth, and where the name was strange to them they simply wrote down a phonetic version of what they heard, with some odd results. A classic example of this was the name *majanders* in the Niton Tithe Schedule; this was unknown in the village, and no one could offer any explanation of it. However, in a Court Roll of 1595 that particular field was shown as in the possession of *Madge Andrews*, which proved to be the name still being used for it in the village – after nearly 400 years! *St. Foyne*, far from commemorating some minor saint, was the name written in the Schedule for a Carisbrooke field in which sainfoin was grown; and *scotch hills* must have been a mis-hearing of *Scotchells* (Brading). Spelling was uncertain, the same word or name often appearing in several different forms.

A number of fields were recorded simply as *arable*, *field*, *pasture*, *meadow* or *mead*, but the majority were named. Since fields were named for the purpose of simple identification for working them, it follows that the most obvious names occur in many parishes – e.g. *barn field* which naturally was recorded on almost every farm; likewise *dog kennel field*.

The different types of field were indicated by denominatives such as *mead*, *close*, *land*, *paddock*, *meadow*, *cowleaze*, *pasture*, *butt*, *ground*, *croft*, *moor*, *down*, *furze brake*, *withy bed*, etc., etc. Small fields were called *plat* or *plot*, *slip*, *pightle*, *butt*, *nook*, *stitch*; there was one *moiety of a slip of wood* (Freshwater) under two roods in size.

The denominative *piece* was frequently used of a section of a field, but mostly when the land concerned had been a *strip*, once part of a *common field* – *piece in common field* (Whitwell and others); a number of common fields still remained in the Island, particularly in Niton, Whitwell and Freshwater. The original *great fields* had been divided into *furlongs* then split into strips which were not named but known for convenience by the name of the men who currently owned them. In a variety of spellings,

furlong was still an existing field-name (Arreton, Newchurch, Brook, etc.). The strips were sometimes numbered and then recorded as 'in' a certain field – e.g. 325 *in Kempsons* (Niton) – or marked on the map with a single letter, which represented the farm responsible for that strip. A *gore* (somewhat three-sided in shape) was what remained after the furlongs had been laid out, and a *headland* was the land at either end of a field where the plough was turned. A *hoe* was an open-field division, probably on or near a ridge – *upper*, *lower* and *peaked hoe* (Brading) – and *several* (Whitwell) was an area of privately owned land, especially enclosed pasture. In the Island a wood was generally called a *row* or *rue*, but in one or two parishes – notably Arreton – the word *shaw* was also used.

Where one or more fields bore the same basic name they were differentiated by 'qualifiers' such as *long*, *short*, *yonder*, *hither*, *upper*, *lower*, *new*, *old*, and so on, or by numbers, compass points or any other descriptive word. In the following analysis an effort has been made to clarify a great quantity of material by putting the names into groups, such as acreage, shape, situation, endowments, colours, etc.; and a few possible derivations are given, as they emphasize the fact that many of the names have been in use, in one form or another, over a long period, often from mediaeval times. It should be born in mind that in this analysis only a very small proportion of examples can be given.

Acreage

Very many fields were named by acreage – *4 acre field*, *the 20 acre*, *West Noads 9 acre* and so on. With regard to the areas of the fields it is of interest to compare the stated figure with the measurements taken by the Tithe Commissioners' Surveyors, remembering the old system of 40 perches = 1 rood, 4 roods = 1 acre (see Table 1). In the table 'accurate' means within $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre +/- a few perches. It should be remembered, also, that some parishes were not the same as they are today – Brading included Bembridge and St. Helens, and Newchurch stretched from Ryde to Ventnor. In Bonchurch and Binstead many fields were in the possession of Quarr Abbey and so paid no tithe and were not listed. Yarmouth had no field names as such, only *common*, *meadow*, or *pasture*.

In all parishes there were many trifling discrepancies between the old and the new measurements, but there were also some very large differences, of which a few examples are given below.

Parish	Total Fields	Acre Names	Accurate	Over Estimate	Under Estimate
Arreton	964	132	85	27	20
Binstead	32	3	2	1	0
Bonchurch	22	2	1	1	0
Brading	1222	126	63	22	41
Brighstone	470	44	21	17	6
Brook	86	8	6	1	1
Calbourne	453	99	61	21	17
Carisbrooke	999	117	50	38	29
Chale	418	46	25	12	9
Freshwater	871	28	15	5	8
Gatcombe	182	7	6	1	0
Godshill	903	145	92	32	21
Kingston	83	5	2	2	1
St. Lawrence	131	6	3	2	1
Mottistone	152	18	12	3	3

Parish	Total Fields	Acre Names	Accurate	Over Estimate	Under Estimate
Newchurch	1126	141	58	56	27
Niton	411	5	4	0	1
Northwood	736	86	46	16	24
Shalfleet	850	118	79	14	25
Shanklin	54	1	1	0	0
Shorwell	585	42	22	11	9
Thorley	172	20	12	7	1
Whippingham	637	94	64	10	20
Whitwell	172	45	23	16	6
Wootton	55	3	2	1	0
Yarmouth	27	0	0	0	0
Yaverland	101	2	0	0	2

Table 1. Comparison of areas of fields given in field names with measurements taken by Tithe Commissioners' Surveyors.

In Arreton a '*13 acre*' field actually measured only just over 2 acres, which seems such an improbably large error that one wonders if the figure '*1*' was entered by mistake and the field should have been recorded as a *3 acre*; there are a number of similar problematical measurements in various parishes. In Newchurch a field named *the 15 acres* had an area of only 4 acres +, and one stated as 11 acres was only 5 acres +, whereas one recorded as a 10 acre field actually measured 19 acres. In Brighstone the *further 10 acres* measured just over 6 acres, a 14 acre field only 3 acres +, and *upper 5 acres* only just over 1 acre, while in Carisbrooke a stated 14 acre field covered over 22 acres, and a 20 acre exceeded 31 acres.

A number of fields and/or woods were named *hundred acre*, but in every case this was apparently a joking reference to a very small piece of land. The largest *hundred acre* was in Shalfleet (27 out); in Calbourne these were *hundred acres field* (1 acre 12 perches) and *lower 11 acre field* (3 acres 32 perches). In Chale *100 acre* occupied less than 2 acres, in Newchurch *100 acre orchard* was just over 1 acre, and all the other *100 acre* fields were actually less than one acre – Carisbrooke 1 rood 32 perches, and *100 acre copse* 1 rood 16 perches; Brading (two fields) 1 rood 19 perches and 2 roods 28 perches; Shorwell 1 rood 5 perches; Shanklin 2 roods 17 perches; Freshwater 1 rood 30 perches; Mottistone 1 rood 2 perches; and the smallest 100 acre of all, also in Freshwater, 34 perches – less than a quarter of an acre.

In Freshwater, a 40 acre field (stated) had been divided into two which together only totalled 34 acres, and in Kingston three fields named the *south*, *east* and *west 40 acres* only covered 35 acres in all. In Calbourne a group of three fields had apparently been made into one, as the divisions had been crossed out on the map, and so they had presumably lost their old names of *little witch*, *great little witch* and *pretty little man*.

In Arreton the measurements of some of the hedge rows were recorded, as well as those of the fields.

Situation

This was a means of identifying many fields, with names such as *upper*, *lower*, *middle*, *nether* (*neither field* in Chale must surely have been a spelling error!), *hither*, *yonder*,

further, near, far, beyond, inner and outer. A complicated name was *further lower house ground* in Kingston; this could have meant that there was a group of three fields, the first one being called simply *house ground*, the one below it *lower house ground*, and the one beyond that *further lower house ground*; however, fields with similar names do not always appear in such tidy groups, and may not even adjoin each other.

Hanging. A good descriptive word for fields or woods on a slope or hillside.

Hanging piece and *hanging wood* (Brading), *hanging 10 acre* (Northwood).

Sidelong, sidelands (many), *sidling* (Arreton and others), *siddles* (Brading etc.) = land alongside a lane or other feature. This is possibly derived from the OE word *sidling* = land alongside.

Home. Usually close to the farm or manor, and so were possibly demesne fields in early days. Many 'home' names in all parishes.

Townsend. A name usually found on the outskirts of a village (Niton).

New barn outs was on the border of the parish.

In the Island distant fields were often given far-away geographical names, such as: *North Britain, little Israel, Birmingham*, all in Arreton; *Winchester* and *Colchester* in Calbourne; *Mount Ararat* and *America* in Shorwell. There were several called *Newfoundland*, one on the extreme edge of Freshwater parish at the back of High Down.

Scotland (Godshill and Newchurch) probably meant a field subject to a tax or scot.

Many fields have self-explanatory situation names, as in *front piece* (in front of the house) and *top piece*.

Butt before the door (Northwood).

By the potato butt (Shorwell).

In the common (numerous)

Behind the stable (Shorwell).

Field below (Northwood).

Right hand butt (Northwood).

Eastover (Whitwell) and *westover* (Calbourne) may have the meaning of land beyond, or across, other land.

Noke = a ME word meaning land in a secluded corner; e.g. *noke corner ground* (Northwood). It may also be a surname.

Coal or *cold harbour* = shelter in an open place. *Harbours land* (Arreton) was probably owned by a person of that name, which is recorded in 1834.

Boundary ground (Newchurch); important if it marks the limit of a parish or estate.

Ham = OE, land beside a river, enclosure (*great ham*, Thorley).

Brow = land on a cliff-edge (Freshwater, Shalfleet).

Shape

This was an obvious means of identifying a field, but not always accurately used.

Round. There were several 'round fields' but only one was really circular – the *round o*, a circular embanked field still existing at Downton Farm (Brook), which may have been used in early times for breaking-in horses.

Round coppice (Godshill) was triangular.

Crooked. This name applied to very angular fields, and there was a great variety of similar names, a few of which were *crockets* and *criss-cross* (Chale); *crooked acre butt* (Whitwell) which had a surprising number of angles; and *angels butt* (probably a mis-spelling of *angles*) in Brading which consisted of two very angular fields.

Square. Fields so named tended rather to be rectangular; the three most accurately named were *square butt* (Brook), *square close* (Newchurch) and *square field* (Whippingham).

Triangular. Fields so shaped included the very small *ketches corner* (Yaverland); *pro*

and *corners mead* (Newchurch); *3 corner field* (Northwood); and *3 cornered woods* (Arreton). There were many other examples.

Octagon (Godshill); an irregular, badly-named field.

Peaked, picked, picking, etc. Fields so named were always pointed, of whatever size, but *peck* means a very small field like *little peck* (Newchurch). There were many '*peaked*' names.

Hatchet. Frequently used as a field name, and often reasonably recognisable in shape. The best was *hatchett ground* (Freshwater) which really looked like a hatchet, complete with a long handle.

Dogtail. Two long, very twisted fields, one in Arreton, the other in Wootton.

Hookem (Carisbrooke) and *hooks* (Arreton) were crescent-shaped.

Half moon copse (Shanklin) was a long shallow crescent.

Diamond butt (Shalfleet); the field butted up against a perfectly diamond-shaped wood.

T-piece. T-shaped but slightly lop-sided (Brighstone).

L-ground or *ell*; so shaped, but it could sometimes be *hell ground*, a name for a poor field.

Coffin. *Coffin coppice* (Northwood) and *coffin land* (Brighstone) both bore some resemblance to this depressing shape.

Wrongs (Whitwell, St Lawrence, Arreton). This name comes from ON word '*vrangr*' and/or OE '*wrang*', meaning a crooked piece of land.

Outlet. A funnel-shaped piece of ground on a boundary (Calbourne).

Ambrose's throat of bones. This field is also funnel-shaped, of a type often called a 'throat', presumably Ambrose was the owner. The *bones* could have been one of the Frenchmen killed in the raid of 1377, as the field lies on the edge of Carisbrooke.

Harp and lute (Shorwell). This field was definitely shaped like a harp, but so far there seems to be no explanation of *lute*.

Trowsers (Gatcombe). Given in John Fields' *English Field Names* as showing 'a fanciful resemblance to a pair of trousers'.

Trowsers and jacket. There were adjoining fields (Godshill), but with no resemblance in shape to either garment – possibly the rent or the produce of the two fields paid for a new suit?

Breeches (Carisbrooke) usually referred to newly broken-up ground.

Milkpan. A fancied resemblance to the shape of this utensil (Godshill, Arreton, Shalfleet)

Sling three and six acres (Northwood) might have been so called from part of its shape; *sling* was generally used of a small piece of land and could refer to the pouch-like shape of one end of this field.

The great A (Gatcombe) was composed of two fields, together having a rough resemblance to a rather bent capital A.

Size

Many fields were identified by their comparative sizes (not acreage), words such as *broad, narrow, great, little, short* and *long* being added to their basic names. These were in general pretty accurate although it was not always clear which fields were being compared. There was an unusual number of '*long*' names in Brighstone, almost all well described. *Pigtail* (Shalfleet) was probably a mis-spelling of '*pightle*', a word meaning a small field.

Seasonal use

A few names described fields which were best used at particular seasons, as in

winterlands (Brighstone), *winter close* (Calbourne) and *summer field* (Chale and Shalfleet). *Summerlea* was the large field close to St Catherine's Lighthouse, too exposed for winter use.

Compass points

The cardinal points were not infrequently used as 'qualifiers' and included *north prospect* and *south prospect* (Arreton) correctly orientated.

Surnames

In most parishes a very considerable number of fields were called by the names of one-time owners or tenants, and these may have continued in use over a long period.

Talbot (Thorley); this family was certainly in the parish in 1706, and gave their name to several fields. There were Talbots in Mottistone from an earlier date.

Coomers mead (Brading) was owned by one Sarah Coomer.

Jones/White (Niton); a field rented in partnership by two men.

Rice field (Carisbrooke) was held by James Rice, not used as a paddy field!

Garston (Gatcombe). This name also appears in other parishes, and with so many examples it is possible that some of them may derive from the OE word *gaerstun*, a grass enclosure or paddock. There were also *gassons* and *glassgons* (Freshwater) with the same possible meaning.

Christian names

Infrequent and may be misleading as some like *Paul*, *Walter*, *Charles*, *Jacob* and others could also be surnames. An interesting field name was *Christians* (Shalfleet) which must have belonged to someone of that name; there was a Christian Talbot in Mottistone in 1569, but also a George Christian in Shalfleet in 1664, so it may have been a surname. Other possible first names came in *Fanny's lee* (Shalfleet), *Johnny's ground* and *William butt* (Newchurch), *Paul's moor* (Arreton), *James's butt* (Carisbrooke), *Lydia croft* (Brighstone) and *Joe's butt* (Brading). *Rosemary copse* (Newchurch) could have referred to the plant, or the girl's name. *Timothy* was the name used for cat's-tail grass (grown for fodder) which was introduced into the USA by one Timothy Hanson. *Jack* or *Jacky* names (Newchurch, Calbourne, Mottistone) might have come from a dialect word meaning vacant, unused land.

Endowments

The profits or rents of various fields were often made over to charities, or given for the upkeep of churches, chapels or other religious foundations; *church acre* (Shorwell), *charity moor* (Brading), *nun's croft* (Brading), *chapel mead* (Newchurch) and *lady acre* (Niton) could have been used in this way; local priories owned land or were the beneficiaries. *Prior's butt and paddock* (Brading) and *prior's land* (Gatcombe) are two possibilities. *Granfers paddock* (Brighstone), *grandfathers butt* (Godshill), *grammers common* (Mottistone) and *grammers ground* (Yaverland) were possibly dower lands, or allocated for the benefit of elderly dependants. Glebe lands were assigned to the parish priest as part of his benefice, there were *parsonage fields* in several parishes, *vicarage butt* in Thorley, and *vicar's acre* (Shalfleet) – a mere scrap of land. The local doctor was also provided for with *doctors meadow* and *row* (Calbourne), *doctor's ground* and *mead* (Carisbrooke) and *upper* and *lower doctor's bull* (Brading). *Proxy* (Shorwell and Whippingham) was a name given to fields which provided the incumbent with money to pay for the accommodation of a visiting bishop, instead of entertaining him at the Rectory.

Colours

There were quite a number of fields with 'colour' names, but it does not seem a very secure means of identification.

Brown appeared in various places – *little brown's down* (Niton and Shorwell), *brown's mead* (Carisbrooke), etc.

White was very common – a few names were *white's ground* (Godshill), *white field* (Whippingham), *white pit* (numerous), *whitcombe* and *white house ground* (Carisbrooke).

Green is frequent, as in *green field* (Brighstone), *green close* (Calbourne), *the green pasture* (Northwood) and *green down* (Carisbrooke).

Black. There were several *blacklands* (Shalfleet and others) which may refer to dark soil; also *blackrock moor* (Newchurch), *blackmans* (Carisbrooke) and other names.

All the above 'colours' may have been surnames.

Red possibly referred to the colour of the soil – *red lands* (Northwood) – but in *red lake withy bed* (Freshwater) is more likely to be a contraction of *reed*.

Newchurch, Arreton and Godshill all had fields called *changeable*, supposed to refer to differences in the colour of the soil.

Numbers

There were a considerable number of 'triple' names, such as: *3 meads* (Shorwell); *3 grounds* (Brighstone); *3 gates* (Arreton and Northwood); *3 crop butt* (Newchurch); and *3 halves* (Whitwell and Yaverland) which meant three units of equal size.

Moor the first, first, second and third moors (Arreton).

Second, third and fourth fields (Arreton).

Yonder six – which happened to be a 5 acre field (Arreton).

1st and 2nd mullions (Brading) – probably millions, a known ironical name for small areas.

1st steps marsh, 2nd steps marsh, 1st and 2nd Norton field, and nine gates moor (all Brading).

1st, 2nd and 3rd moors (Carisbrooke).

1st, 2nd and 3rd ground (Calbourne).

1st close (Mottistone and Carisbrooke).

1st meadow (Carisbrooke and Calbourne).

Four paddocks (Calbourne).

Values

Sadly, there were only three fields named by value (possibly the rent they brought in, or had to pay): *upper shillings* and *lower shillings* in Calbourne, and *twelve-and-six* in Arreton.

Qualities

It was quite common to name a field for its good or bad qualities, and it is a depressing fact that there were many more 'bad' names than 'good' ones! Taking the 'good' first, one naturally starts with *Paradise* (Chale, Carisbrooke, Whitwell, Yaverland). Alas! It may actually be ironical in some cases.

Upper and lower allweathers (Carisbrooke).

Fortune butt (Brighstone).

Profits (Newchurch).

Joy lands (Freshwater).

Sweetland (Gatcombe).

Clean lands (Freshwater).

Pleasure field (Arreton).

Greetings (Shalfleet and Whitwell).

Butter butt (Godshill); *butter* refers to a good rich soil.

The bad qualities were so frequent that it is a puzzle that some of the fields continued in use, and certain parishes seem to have had more than their fair share.

Bare bones (Carisbrooke 4, Calbourne 3, Arreton 1).

Pickpockets (Calbourne).

Galled heels (Calbourne).

Little poverty (Calbourne)

Poverty close (Arreton 4, Brading 1).

Small gains (Arreton, Gatcombe, Carisbrooke, Whitwell, Shalfleet 2).

Hungry/Hunger – ground, acres, hill, etc.; very many examples. Sometimes confused with *angers* (Chale) or *underhill*.

Poor or *poors* (Godshill and others). May also have been fields given for the benefit of the poor of the parish.

Hard acres (Niton).

Lazy butt (Arreton).

Couthey (Calbourne, Shorwell, Godshill and others); swampy ground which produced disease in sheep.

Little bargains; this may not have been derogatory, as farms were sometimes called *bargains*.

Troublesome (Whitwell).

Foul piece (Freshwater); boggy or contaminated ground.

Raw bones (Freshwater).

Leather acre (Arreton); stubborn ground.

Weary bottom (Calbourne, Shorwell).

Sour mead (Northwood).

Starve ground mead (Northwood).

Long Friday (Whippingham); considered unlucky ground; may refer to Good Friday.

Bad meadow (Northwood).

Lean field (Freshwater).

Bare field (Freshwater).

Vain ground (Mottistone).

Hell bottom (Newchurch).

Hell ground (Shorwell).

Soil

The kind of soil was another means of identifying a particular field. *Gravel*, *gritten*, *grithens*, *gritton*; such names come always on sand or gravel (gritty) (Freshwater, Brighstone, Shorwell, Gatcombe, Arreton, Wootton, Newchurch and Whitwell).

Peat (Newchurch, Brading, Arreton and Godshill).

Mud land (Thorley) on a river or estuary.

Clay. This gave such obvious names as *claylands* (Shorwell); *clay close* (Whippingham) possibly produced material for pipes as it lay between two fields called *upper* and *lower tobacco pipes*.

Wet land. *Gallants* (Carisbrooke), *gallonds* (Whitwell) and *gall close* (Carisbrooke) possibly derive from OE *galla* = barren, wet land.

Slinks, of which there are examples all over the Island, referred to deep and often gloomy areas.

Types

The different appearances of fields produced some picturesque names.

Humps or rocky outcrops. *Mountains* (Godshill), *humpittes* or *humpets* (Niton and others) and *clouds* or *floats* (Newchurch).

Drunken ground = marshy or shaky or just uneven (Chale).

Plain = flat ground (Kingston, Godshill).

Lawn = usually a large meadow (Whippingham, 18 acres).

Crumps. The name of two groups of fields in the Wellow/Thorley area. This ME word meaning compressed strata – crumpled – goes back to at least 1300, and these fields have literally been compressed into inverted bowl-shapes. The clerk wrote the word as *qumps* in the Schedule, but the local pronunciation is *crumps*.

Plaish, plash (Carisbrooke and others) = wet, marshy; ME *plasket*.

Dead ridges (Shalfleet); field no longer ploughed, but showing the outlines of old ridge and furrow.

Rushy piece = wet or muddy, with rushes.

Clappers = field with rabbit burrows; Latin *clapere* = rabbits.

Stroud = possibly from OE *strod* = boggy land overgrown with brushwood (Newchurch and numerous others).

Stocks = possibly tree-stumps left in the ground; also *jacket stocks* = unused ground with stumps (Godshill).

Rowen. Rough ground. Sometimes spelt *rowin*, and confused with *row* (a wood) in a field – e.g. *rowin barn close*, a wood or copse in barn close; *rowin knods*, (Chale).

Rough borough = Rough hill (Freshwater).

Hayes or *hays*. Land enclosed by hedges. *White hays* may refer to hawthorn hedges, very common after the Parliamentary enclosures. *Long hays*, a very long, narrow enclosed field (Freshwater); also probably a continuous hedge bordering more than one field.

Use

A very large number of names described the use to which the land was put, or referred to some feature such as a *quarry* or *kiln*, in or near the field in question; such names occurred over and over again in many parishes, because they referred to the kind of activity found on every farm as part of its normal working. These names may be conveniently divided into ‘industrial’, ‘farm or domestic’ and ‘general’ use.

Industrial. *Blacksmiths*, *Bakers* (and *Bakehouse*), *Butchers*, *Coopers*, *Crockers* (the potters), *Millers*, *Draper*; occupational surnames, which may be possessive – e.g. a field owned or used by the village blacksmith, baker, potter, or whatever.

Tinkers acre. A piece of ground which the tinkers were allowed to use during their visit to the parish or village.

Brew house, *malt house*.

Salt pit, *salting ground*, *lime pit*, *chalk pit*, *sand pit*, *clay pit*, *saw pit*, *quarry*, *marl pit*, *malm pit* (*malm* or *mawm*, a ME word for a light loamy soil often incorporated with heavy clay to improve the texture).

Tan yard, *timber yard*.

Rabbit warren. A considerable source of food from early mediaeval times.

Part of paper mills. A short lived industry in Carisbrooke.

Farm or domestic. *House*, *barn* (many), *dog kennel* (many).

Brook, *spring*, *pond*, *well*, *cistern*, *pump*.

Mill, *windmill*.

Shearing butt, *sheep wash*.

Cow-keeping house, *cow shed*, *calving close*, *cart house*, *stable*, *stock*.

Close, *pen*, *pound*, *stockbridge*.

Muck or dung mead.

Fodderhouse, hay pound.

Rick yard, rick place.

Fatting ground, winnowing bank, plough ground.

Sheperds

Laundry field, drying field.

Garden, orchard.

Vineyards (Newchurch, Godshill, Freshwater).

All the above were frequently used as field-names.

Cowleaze, ox leaze, ewe leaze, lambs leaze were grass fields where the animals were grazed. In the Freshwater Schedule the field-name *yew leys* has been corrected to *ewe leaze*, which seems more likely to be correct.

Hackleaze (Brading, etc.) may have some connection with trees.

Cutleaze (Binstead) was probably deeply drained land.

General. *Tollgate, tollhouse mead* (Whippingham), *tollgate butt* (Newchurch).

Watch house and *beacon fields* adjoined each other in Northwood, for defence purposes.

Direction post field (Arreton).

Haunt ground, haunt butt, haunt down (Carisbrooke) – no ghosts, but places where deer came to be fed during the winter.

Wild animals.

Some fields took their names from animals, both wild and domesticated.

Badger/brock. Brock-holes = badger setts, and several other badger names for fields show that this creature was an old inhabitant.

Fox, wolves, stag, rat.

Rabbit or *coney* (originally *rabbit* referred only to the young).

Frog, toad, snake.

Snail, leech (*little leech moor*, Godshill).

Monkey is a dialect word meaning 'young hare', which appears in *great monkey lands* (Whitwell) = the land where the young hares are seen – local people have often watched them playing in this field.

Lions (Godshill), *lyons* (Freshwater) and *lion butt* (Arreton) were unlikely to record the wild beast, but may be derived from Latin *linum* (flax), which was grown in some quantity up to the beginning of the 19th century.

Leopards. Again unlikely as an animal name, but possibly a mis-hearing of the surname *Leaper*, and not an animal at all.

Domestic animals.

Every possible farm animal seems to have given its name to some piece of land, usually to the field in which such an animal was kept.

Ox, bull, cow, calf.

Ram, ewe, sheep, lamb.

Horse, mare, colt, foal.

Pig, hog.

Dog, cat (cat is very uncommon).

Wild birds.

Eagle, kite.

Stork, heron.

Swan (numerous), *duck*.

Peewits, wheatear, pheasant, curlew.

Pigeons, known as *culvers* from the OE word *culfre* (Culver Hill, Godshill, and others).

Woodcock, a breeding bird in the Island; its curious habit of 'roding' its territory may be responsible for field-names such as *cock-roads* and *cock crows* (Whippingham), *cocklands* and others.

Domestic birds.

Pigeon, which was a source of meat in mediaeval times, when every manor and most farms had a pigeon/dove house or cote.

Goose, gander, gosling, duck.

Chickens. *Fowl* which may often have been confused with *foul* in field-names.

Insects.

Comparatively few fields were named after insects, but it is interesting to find three mentions of *stouts* (the Island name for horseflies) in *west stouts mead* (Brading), *stouts mead* and *stouts close* (Brighthstone).

Nit ditch (Shalfleet) could be an insect name.

Ants. *Antils* (Arreton) and *emmetts hill ground* (Kingstone).

Wasps (*wops*). *Wop acre* (Newchurch).

Moth butt (Godshill); *Moth* is also a surname.

Fish.

There are hardly any references to fish which is curious considering the amount of fishing which was done around the Island.

Mackerel mead (Arreton).

Fishes close (Shorwell).

Whale chine (Brighthstone); a whale is not a fish but seems to belong in this small group.

Trees.

An easy means of identifying fields, and about two-thirds of the species present in the Island were so used.

Oak, ash, elm, alder, beech, poplar.

Walnut, birch, fir, thorn, privet, hazel.

Crabtree, peartree, yew.

Willow or *ozier beds*, recorded in many places produced the withies for baskets and lobster-pots.

Cherry. *Cherry pits* is recorded four times in Carisbrooke, and seems to refer to disused pits in which cherry trees grew in the disturbed ground in profusion, as they do on St. George's Down and in Marvel Copse today.

Lower merry orchard and *upper merry heath* (Brading). In these names *merry* is derived from the French word *merise*, which means 'cherry'.

Crops.

The practice of naming fields by the crops grown in them seems to imply a lack of rotation if the field-name was to remain unchanged.

Barley. The names *berrill*, *berelay*, and *barrack* are all derived from the OE *berewic* = barley farm; confusion was possible with *barrack*, as many troops had been quartered on the Island from time to time and so naturally there were a number of military barracks.

Lucerne, sainfoin, clover, vetch and *timothy* (cat's-tail grass) were grown for fodder; the herb *fennel*, mostly used as flavouring with fish.

Peas (often spelt *piss*), *beans, potatoes*.

Rye, wheat, and oats all named the fields in which they were grown.

Hop garden is recorded in Northwood.

Woodwax, the name of a field at Providence Farm, Ningwood, was evidently a crop of some kind. Reference to Bromfield's *Flora Vectensis* produced the information that it was dyers greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*) very largely grown on the Island during the 19th century for its yellow dye, especially in West Wight where it was called *woadwaxen*. By about 1884 the name had become altered (purely locally) to *woodwax*. Some faint recollection remains in Ningwood, possibly because it seems to have been unusually hard to eradicate! Another crop was woad (*Isatis tinctoria*), grown for its blue dye. It was often called *wad* and, like flax, was cut and put to ferment in sheds in the fields. *Wad* or *watch houses* were woad sheds and on the Island many will have been confused with *watch houses* for look-outs. One of the Niton 'great fields' was divided into three parts, all called *watch houses*, one of which must have referred to the watch which was undoubtedly kept on top of the cliff looking out to sea. There are a number of *watch house* field-names in the Island, some of which are in places unsuitable for look-outs and these could have been woad fields.

Carrot field was recorded in Calbourne and *carrotts butt* in Chale.

Cinquefoin. This was the result of a clerk confusing sainfoin and cinquefoil; the former was probably the correct name as cinquefoil had no value as a crop.

Weeds

Where crops were grown there must inevitably have been weeds, and some fields were apparently so infested that they were named after them.

Bennetts (bent grass).

Thistle, bramble, furze.

Heath, hemlock, horsemint.

Fern, rush.

Cliders or *clidders* = goosegrass.

Scutts and *witch* or *twitch* names could have referred to scutch or couch grass.

Upper and *lower thistle piece* belonged to the appropriately named Mount Misery Homestead in Whippingham.

Thistle fat (Calbourne) seems a contradictory name, as *fat* refers to rich, good soil, which nevertheless produced thistles.

Tracks and lanes

Fields were also named conveniently by tracks and lanes which passed alongside or across them; *quarry lane* (Calbourne), *clay lane* (Freshwater) and others.

Drove lane moor (Arreton), *drove lane* (Shorwell), *Dotten's drove* (Northwood) and *drift road* (Godshill) were a few of the 'ways' along which cattle were moved.

Packway (Northwood and others) may refer to a bridle-way or pack-horse trail, often almost the only means of carrying goods to outlying farms or villages.

Redgun, the name of a field in Whitwell – *piece under redgun* – had an interesting meaning. *Redgond* or *redgun* was the name of a bridle-path up the face of the cliff, one of the very few communications with the Undercliff. This name has nothing to do with St. Rhadegund, one of the patron saints of Whitwell church, but was recorded in 1283 as *radegang*, an OE word meaning a bridle or riding path. This ancient track was

unfortunately truncated by the railway, but its probable course remains via a lane once known as the Gipsys' Path down to the lower part of St. Lawrence.

Footpath meadow (Arreton) could have had a right-of-way across it.

Path acre was a long narrow field resembling a footpath.

The old road to Newport (Whippingham). This disused track had become a pasture.

Local legend

Cream pots castle (Newchurch). The local inhabitants are said to have built a fort in a field on Ashley Down constructed entirely of milk-cans – for what reason is unfortunately not known!

Unknown

All field-names were given for a good reason and had definite meanings, some of which have unfortunately become obscure in the course of time. There are only too many of these in the Island and a short list is appended in the hope that they may one day 'ring a bell' and be elucidated:

big germs and *little germs* (Arreton)

copperals (Newchurch)

crocumbs (Freshwater)

dirty hurdles (Newchurch)

favours (Godshill)

fetch burthen (Brighstone)

glaziers box (Chale)

good robins (Shorwell and Brighstone)

governess (Calbourne)

great holy bars (Calbourne)

great and little killy cow (Shorwell)

little dears green (Newchurch)

little mippets (Calbourne)

little quod (Brading)

mortal pits (Newchurch)

mortar earth (Shalfleet)

mott wallop (Freshwater)

setmell (Niton)

sharmony (Arreton)

sheepskins (Godshill)

spring latch (Brading)

stark knatt (Freshwater)

stone heavers (Shalfleet)

succours (Carisbrooke)

upper and lower dutchman (Chale)

Abbreviations

OE = Old English.

ME = Middle English.

ON = Old Norse.

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