Victor Watts, 'Place-Name Evidence for the Allocation of Land by Lot', Leeds Studies in English, n.s. 18 (1987), 247-63

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The holdings of shareholders in the communal lands of a medieval manor are generally held to have been subject to allotment and re-allotment at various times. This was particularly so of the scarcest land of all, the meadowland, where occupation was often strictly regulated on a temporary basis either by lot or rotation. The classic example of this is the village of Yarnton (O) where the annual allocation of meadowland was carried out up to the nineteenth century by balloting with cherrywood balls, and a similar system was used at Bampton in the same county. Arable land too was liable to the same principles of rotation and assignment by lot, especially, but not exclusively, the fields of urban settlements where, again, arable land had become an exceptional and valuable commodity. The frequency with which the arable was re-allotted is uncertain. Some authorities have believed that it took place annually, others that re-division occurred more sporadically to take account of encroachments, disputes, changing economic conditions and patterns of cultivation. Sometimes, although rarely, it does seem to have taken place by casting lots on an annual basis. Freshly cleared land and fenland reclamations would also have been subject to a process of allocation.

In Scotland, however, land was frequently re-allotted, either annually or on a three-yearly basis. Much quoted is Robertson's description of the practice in Perth, which also obtained in Nairn and Moray:

The first deviation from run-rig was by dividing the farms into kavels [Footnote: This name is significant of the manner in which these divisions were made. Either the tenants of the farm or a neutral person, marked off the several portions of land; and the possessors cast lots (or kavels in the Scottish dialect) for their particular share. Kench signifies a larger portion of land than a ridge.] or kenches, by which every field of the same quality was split into as many lots as there were tenants in the farm. This was a real improvement, so far as it went; every farmer had his own lot in each field . . . reaping full benefit of his industry, which by the run-rig husbandry, he could not enjoy, owing to the exchange of ridges every year, or the smallness of the different portions. Kavels still exist in the Stormont, and in
The reform here described seems to imply movement away from an earlier practice of annual re-allocation, which may also have been by lot, to a more permanent possession.

In what follows the incidence in place-names of two terms reflecting allocation by lot, ME *cavil*, *kevelle* and OE *hiot*, is investigated.

(a) ME *cavil*, *kevelle*

In his chapter on "Rural Settlement" in *Durham County and City with Teesside*, Dr Brian Roberts, commenting on multiple-row settlements, cites the case of the complex village plan of Wolviston with its *Northraw, Southraw* and *Westraw* together with a *Westkevyle*, a *Northkevyle* and a *Southkevyle*. He regards complexity of this kind as a reflection of such villages' enhanced function as administrative centres, elevating them above their neighbours. The *kevyles* he takes to be small lanes (p.245). Similarly, in his chapter on "Planned villages from Medieval England" in *Man Made the Land*, he writes of "lanes or kevyles radiating from the core" of Wolviston, and already built-up in the early thirteenth century. A.H. Smith knows nothing of a place-name element of this kind: the only formal parallel seems to be late ME *kevelle, cavil* with the sense "an allotment of land, share of property made by lot" cited in the etymology of the lost p.n. *Mid Keavels* (YW vi.74), ultimately from ON *kefli* "a stick, a piece of wood", *kafli* "a piece cut off". This duality of form links *kevelle* with the ME *cauel, cavel* cited in the explanations of Middle Cale (New Mills Db 150) and a handful of Cale names in Cheshire.

I next present the p.n. evidence for this somewhat fugitive element so far as I can presently discover it and then proceed to a discussion of its etymology and significance.

Cheshire

CALE GREEN 1831, Kale Green 1844 (Che i.297, Stockport).
MIDDLECALE PIT and WOOD, Cale Wood, Middle Cale 1831 (Che i.200, Lyme Handley).
Cale Fd 1845, a f.n. in the tp of Kingsley (Che iii.243).
Cale Green otherwise Earls Green 1780, a f.n. in the tp of Crowton (Che iii.197).
Middle Cale 1848, a f.n. in the tp of Adlington (Che i.186).

Cumberland

CAVEL GILL, *rivulum de Kaulegile* 1227; Caluegille,
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Caegile c.1227; Cavel Gill 1550 (Cu 8, a tributary of Lostrigg Beck).

Derbyshire

MIDDLE CALE (now NEW MILLS), Midelcauel in villa de Boudon 1306; Middelcavil 1362; Middle Cale 1587 to 1743 with variant sp. Midle- (Db 150).

Durham

cavell prope le Coleway, balk in, 1613 MAN, a lost name in the North field of Wolviston (Billingham).

Cavels 1838 TA, a f.n. in Cowpen Bewley (Billingham) associated with the f.n. Old Town.

North and South Long Cavels 1838 TA, a f.n. in Harton (South Shields).8

Cavil field 1846 TA (Kyo, Lanchester).

Foginflat Cavell 1722 HCB, a lost f.n. in Norton.

Keueldale 1189-1212 MC 6487, early 13c 3.9.Spec.3, the lost name of a share of meadow in Wolviston (Billingham).

Keveolfeld c.1280 4.9.Spec.71; le Keuvylfeld de Wluiston 1315 3.9.Spec.95; le Keuilefeld 1316 MC 6494, 1323 MC 6497; le Keuylfeld 1325 4.9.Spec.60, 1333 1.10.Spec.84; le Keuelfelde 1351 MC 6513, probably identifiable with the Kellfelde 1614 MAN. The lost name of one of the open fields of Wolviston (Billingham).

Southkevile 1424 Gilly; Suthkeuil(e), -kevyll 1430 FPD, the locations of various tofts, cottages and messuages in Wolviston (Billingham).

Leicestershire

Kevelfild, -feld 1506 Cl, an enclosed pasture in Knaptoft tp.

Staffordshire

Cavelles felde 1570 (Cannock, St 64. The editor of St, however, explains it as from the surn. Cavell).

Kaulhul' meirs, Kaulhull sige early 13c (Penkridge, St 99, the first el. tentatively identified by the editor with ME cauel).
West Riding of Yorkshire

MID KEAVELS, Midel-, Mydelkevel, -kenel 1200-26; Midkeavells als. Mowsey flatts 1673; Midkawells 1743; a lost name in East Staincliffe (Skipton), now Massa Flats (YW vi.74).

Dumfriesshire

MIDDLEGILL, Midlkeuille 1315 RGS; Middelgill 1581 Dum. A constituent element of the estate at Erickstane granted to Sir David de Lyndesay by Robert I.

Fife

KEAVIL, Cavul 1645 Map. An estate SW of Dunfermline.

The late Professor Bruce Dickins seems to have been the first, in Professor Cameron's Place-Names of Derbyshire (Cambridge, 1959) p.150, to have identified the element with ModE cavel "a division or share of property made by lot, an allotment of land", first recorded in this sense in Iosias Arelebout's map of 1639 of Every Particular Cauell or Closs in the Seueral Counties of Yorke, Lincoln and Nottingham in the levell of Hattefeld Chass with reference to lands reclaimed from Hatfield Moor on the border between Doncaster deanery and the Isle of Axholme, by drainage by Vermuyden and his partners or participants. These lands were "cavelled out, and allotted to every Participant, by six capital divisions, in every part of the said Levells" so that there were six cavells in each of the twelve locations in question. The original sense of cavel was "a lot, a small piece of wood used in the casting of lots", being recorded in this sense before 1300. According to the Acts of the Apostles (i.26), after the death of Judas two names were put forward as candidates for his place among the twelve apostles: Joseph, known as Barsabbas, and Matthias. A prayer was said and lots were then drawn to find which was the Lord's choice (Vulgate: dederunt sortes eis et cecidit sors super Matthiam). In the Cotton MS of Cursor Mundi this is rendered:

Dan kest bai cauel þam emell,
Bot son a-pon mathie it fell (18907-8)

with variant caueles in the Göttingen MS; and again:

Mathias to þe tuelue was chosen
Als þe cauel on him fell. (21156-7)

Already, however, the northern word cauel is replaced in two MSS by the commoner lot, even to the detriment of metrical regularity in the second instance (Fairfax 18907 lottis; Trinity 18907 lottes, 21157 lot). Again, as OED records, in the romance Sir Percyvell of Gales (mid 14th century) four knights cast lots to decide who shall
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do single combat with the hero:

They fore forthward right faste
And some kevells did pay caste,
And evyr fell it to frayste
Un-till sir Wawayne. (1425-8)

It is clear that the phrase "to cast cavils" was a set collocation. It occurs several times in the ballads. Seven sisters choose by lot which is to go to the greenwood for recreation:

We keist the cavils us amang
to see which shoud to the greenwood gang.
(Gil Brenton, Child 5A, stanza 46, with variant reading lotties in 5C)

Men imperilled at sea cast lots to find which is the jinx among them:

We'll cast kevels us amang,
See wha the unhappy man may be.
(Brown Robyn's Confession, Child 57, st.2:1-2)

Rebels cast lots to see who shall kill the king:

And thay cast kaivles them amang,
And kaivles them between,
And thay cast kaivles them amang
Wha shoud gae kill the king.
(Pause Foodrage, Child 89A, st.3; cf. st.19)

Brothers cast lots to choose which is to take up piracy:

And they cuist kevels themsells amang,
Wha sould gae rob upon the salt sea.
(Henry Martyn, Child 250C, st.1:3-4 recorded in Ayrshire, while 250A recorded in Devon substitutes lots)

The oldest reference to activity of this kind in which the will of fate is invoked is the famous Chapter 10 in Tacitus's Germania:

auspicia sortesque ut qui maxime observant. sortium consuetudo simplex. vergam frugiferae arbori decisam in surculos amputant eosque notis quibusdam discretos super candidam vestem temere ac fortuito spargunt. mox, si publice consultur, sacerdos civitatis, sin privatim, ipse pater familiae, precatus deos caelumque suspiciens ter singulos tollit, sublatos secundum impressam ante notam interpretatur.
(For omens and the casting of lots they have the highest regard. Their procedure in casting lots is always the same. They cut off a branch of a nut-bearing nut-bearing...
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tree and slice it into strips; these they mark with different signs and throw them completely at random onto a white cloth. Then the priest of the state, if the consultation is a public one, or the father of the family if it is private, offers a prayer to the gods, and looking up at the sky picks up three strips, one at a time, and reads their meaning from the signs previously scored on them.\(^\text{14}\)

More apposite to the present context, however, is another Scots literary usage. In *Aeneid*, Book 5, Vergil describes how Aeneas founded a city in Sicily for those of his band of exiled Trojans who were unable to follow him further to the promised land:

interea Aeneas urbem designat aratro sortiturque domos, hoc Ilium, et haec loca Trojam esse iubet. \((755-7)\)

In Gavin Douglas's version of 1513 this becomes:

In the meyn tyme, Eneas with a pleuch The cite circulit, and merkit be a seuch: By cavillys syne the tenementis dyd depart; Heir ordanys Ilion, and, in jondir art, Of Troy commandis beld othir memorialis. \((V.xii.167-71)\)\(^\text{15}\)

Here we find the use of *cavils* specifically associated with the allocation of lands and tenements. Most of the evidence for this practice in real life as opposed to literary artifice in fact comes from Scottish sources though they are comparatively late. The earliest instance known to me, however, comes from a dubious reading in the Curia Regis rolls for 1201 (Cur.R.II,31) concerning lands of Hugh son of Robert in Upton, Floore and Northampton which were said to have been divided into three portions *per ruvuliam*. For this nonsense word R.E. Latham\(^\text{16}\) would read *kuvillam* which he takes to be a form of MedLat *cavilla*. A second early instance cited by Latham also involves emendation. It concerns an estate in Badbury Hundred in Dorset *partitus per duas conillas*, now emended to *covillas*. It is clear that this was a recognised legal procedure in which the interested parties appoint fortune the judge "ut quilibet habeat partem illam que per sortem illi acciderit".\(^\text{17}\) And in a third thirteenth-century occurrence *cavil* is specifically linked with lot:

stallangiator ("a stall-holder") nullo tempore potest habere loth, cut neque cavyl de aliquo mercimonio cum burgense nisi infra nundinas quando quilibet potest habere loth et cavyl. \((Acts of Parliament of Scotland I, 31, 1)\)

The main evidence from Scotland, though later, is more prolific. In 1459 Jhon the Lelman was ordered to

tak Ectour of Meldrum kawyl as he is oblyst and sworn
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to do . . . has it war is awyn, . . . becaus thar was na nothyr that wald resaff is kawyl and he was absent in the tym hym self.


In 1488 a dispute between the prioress and convent of Elcho, Perth, and one Henry Livingston over their shares in lands in braidlaw called middill bynning was ordered to be settled by casting of caivillis. In 1506 five marks worth of land of the Hagthornehil of auld extent in the lordship of Cathcart, Renfrewshire, were to be divided "be castine of cavillis (in) equale porcions and diuisione". In 1522 Janat Drumond, widow, was entered upon her third part share of her late husband's lands in kynnere, owyre and nether caithlok, kyttady and cragsunqhhar to which she was befalline be cavillis cassine. In 1551 there is mention of:

twa merk land . . . that he aucht and suld be kennit tharto as vse is be diuisioun of cavillis to be cassin thairvpone. (Cited by DOST s.v. cavill, cavell)

Similarly in 1555 Iohn Allan "drew cavillis for his fourt pairt of a tenement of land". In 1570 the town moor of Lanark was to be divided into cavils:

The bailleis gart thair offeceris warne the cunsall and commonatie of the brught of Lanark to compeir in the kirk of Sanct Nicolas . . . for to haf ilk persone thair kavie [sic] of certein of the muir quhilkis the provest, balleis, and cunsall, and commonatie hes sechtet and bundet.

An Edinburgh will of 1582 bequeathes:

my oyis till haif the ane half of the forsaid merkland as sall fall to tham at the ane end be thair cut or cavill. (Edinb.Test.X.325, MS cited in DOST)

In 1607 at the Baillie Court of the regality of Melrose there was a case of complaint between two tenants holding adjacent rigs of equal length and breadth on the same cavell, one of whom

mast malitiouslie and wrangouslie hes layit the (other's) teilling doug agane and deteins mair nor his cavell extendis to and will on na wayis to suffer the compliner to possess his pairt and cavell be just measour and met.

In 1698 Abraham de La Pryme knew cavel as a division of land which might bear a name on his proposed map of the parish of Hatfield YW, and cavil is also used of a division of land in Whickham Du and Chester-le-Street Du ("one Cavill of land . . . the 12 Cavills of land").
Cavil is derived from ON kafli "a circular stick, a staff" and corresponds to ModIcel kafli, Faroese kalvur, ModNorw dial. kavl(e), ModSwed kavle "a circular piece of wood, a cylinder", Shetl.Norn kavl-, kavel-, kavlin-tree "a cylindrical piece of wood put into the mouth of a fish to extract the hook". It is cognate with MLG, MDu kavelle "a piece of wood used in casting lots, a lot, a little stick inscribed with runes for casting lots", ModDu kavelen "to cast lots". The variant form kavelle is derived from ON kefli "a peg, a cylindrical piece of wood, a bit", ModIcel kefli, ModNorw kj Evel, ModSw dial. käve, Shetl.Norn kev(e)l "a bit, a short billet of wood put into a lamb's mouth to prevent it sucking the ewe". In literary use it occurs in Havelok the Dane (547), "a keuel of clutes", for a gag shoved in the mouth of the hapless child victim. Both forms are ultimately derived from IE *gebh- "bough, branch, piece of wood".

Tacitus's account of the manufacture of wooden lots has already been cited (above p.251). In the Lex Frisiorum they are called tenos which must represent Gmc *tainaz, Go tains, ON teinn, OE tân "a twig, a stick". The word occurs in a context dealing with divination in Hymiskvida:

Ár valtívar . . .
. . . .
hrístu teina ok á hlaut sóu. (1-3)

Elsewhere the words used in ON are spán "a chip, a shaving, a divining chip" and its compound biôtspán, and hlutr. Kefli does not seem to be used in this way. There are instances of the carving of runes on a kefli in the sagas. In Gisla saga Gisli, now an outlaw, visits his brother Thorkell who does not answer his knock at the door until Gisli takes up a stick (kefli), cuts runes on it (rîstr á rûnara) and throws it inside (what the runes said we are not told). Again when he leaves home for the last time he is carrying a kefli and cutting runes on it (reist á rûnara). The chips that fall on the ground as he goes lead Eyjolf to his hiding place and to Gisli's eventual death. In Egils saga, on hearing news of the death of his son Bodvarr, Egil shuts himself away in his bed-closet to fast to death. His daughter Thorgerd suggests he relieve his feelings by composing a dirge which she will carve in runes on a kefli (rist a kefli). After his adventure under the waterfall Grettir left a runakefli in the church porch at Eyjardalriver on which two verses were beautifully carved in runes. It is not necessary to believe, however, that the marks cut on a kefli when casting lots were themselves runes. Any identifying mark would have served.

It seems clear that as a p.n. el. cavil hovered between the status of descriptive term and name element proper. It is most frequently compounded with the adj. middle or another descriptive term. Otherwise it mainly stands alone or qualifies field as a prototheme. It must also be admitted that some of the instances cited are uncertain. The Che Cale names are included on the analogy of Middle Cale (Db) and might in some cases rather contain OE cawel "kale". Cavel Gill (Cu) may contain cavil in the sense "pillar".

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In Durham in Wolviston tofts and cottages are specifically said to stand on the kevylles. This may reflect a situation in which both the tofts and their associated land holdings were subject to allocation by lot. Roberts has drawn attention to the existence of the practice of solskifte or sun-division in some Du townships, whereby the tofts in the principal street of the village and their associated strips were numbered off in the order that the sun moved over them, a practice that may date back to a period of re-organisation after the eleventh-century harrying of the north. It would seem that the actual allocation was done by lot (cf. especially the occurrence of the form keveldale "lot portion"), and in this connection it is interesting to note that casting of cavils is specifically said to have been to the sun and to the shadow in an adjudication in 1428 by Patrick of Dunbar between the Abbot of Melrose and Lord Walter of Haliburton over the partition of two plough-lands at Hassington near Eccles in Berwickshire:

De said Abbote & be said lorde of Haliburton' tuke twa kabillis and brocht me þaim & I kest þaim, þe tane to þe son'. þe topir to þe schadow & thus it (sc. the land) was departit. 38

Unfortunately no direct connection with annual or sporadic re-allocation of the common arable can be argued here since the adjudication of 1428 seems to be an instance of a well known procedure in Scottish law. Thus, Erskine describes how the widow's terce, or liferent in the third of her husband's heritable subjects, is allotted or "kennit" to her:

the sheriff divides the land between her and the heir. In this division, after determining by lot or kavil, whether to begin by the sun or the shade (i.e. by the east or the west), the sheriff sets off the two acres for the heir, and the third for the widow. 39

(b) OE hlot, hlet.

I now proceed to the p.n. evidence for OE hlot (ModE lot) together with a few possible instances of its i-mutation ablaut side form hlöt. ModE lot is of very frequent occurrence in the Tithe Awards of some counties and 19th century instances are only summarily noticed here.

Bedfordshire

WHITSUNDOLES FARM. This land was Lott Meades 1595, marked as "x lottes" or "x doles" and seems to have been allotted annually at Whitsun (Bd 131).
Berkshire

Le Lotte Acre 1549 (Sandhurst, Brk 132)
Lotemede 15c (Earley, Brk 95)
Lotmede 1543 (Englefield, Brk 213)

In addition the following 19th century instances are noted: Lot Farm (Hurley, 63), Lotmead Lane, Lot Meadow (Milton, 416), Lot Meadow (Shellingford, 398), Lot Moor (Tilehurst, 196), Four Mains Lot (Draycott Moor, 405), Peaked Lot (Hungerford, 305).

Cambridgeshire

les Fenlotes 1402 (Whittlesey, Ca 150)
lez lotes 1446 (Elm, ibid.)
THE LOTS, The Lotts 1604 (Cottenham, ibid.)
THE LOTS, fenground called Common Lots 1658 (Soham, ibid. 202).

Lotts in Gallifenn early 17c (Haddenham, ibid. 150).

the Lott Landes of Edward Love 1678 (Sutton, ibid.).

the lote or dole of John Belward 1637 (Witcham, ibid.).

In addition one 19th century instance is noted, HOBB'S LOTS (Wisbech St Peter, 297).

Cheshire

All the instances are 19th century, COMMON FARM (Common Croft, Field & Lot, Marton, iii.183), COMMON FARM (Common Land & Lot, Bulkeley, iv.18), COMMON SIDE (Common Field, Land & Lot, Alvanley, iii.220), COMMINSIDE (Common Brow & Lot, Kingsley, iii.242), Handley Lot (Helsby, iii.238), Helsby Lot (v.228), Long Lot (Kingsley, iii.244), Lot(e) (v.228), MARSH LANE (Marsh Field, Lot & Meadow, Crowton, iii.197), New Lot (Helsby, iii.238), ROYALTY COVERT (Royal Lot, Crowton, iii.197), and two possible instances of hlēt, both 19th century, Blakelett (Butley, i.196), Thern Lett (with OE byrne "a thorn-tree", Bollington, i.192).

Derbyshire

Only one early example is noted in this county which may, in any case, be a lead-mining lot.

le Loth 1295 (Youlgreave, Db 185)
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Gloucestershire

Lottes 1543 (Gl iv.140)
the Lotts 1639 (ibid.)
Lott ground 1668 (ibid.)
Lott mead (Smartes Lott meade 1639, Ampney St Peter, ibid. i.55)
Lott Meadowe 1621 (ibid. iv.140)
Lot Medowe 1535 (ibid.)
19th century examples include Barblotts, Picked Lotts and other examples of Lot(t) mead(ow) (ibid.).

Lincolnshire

Fodder Lots 1846 (Lincoln, L i.176)

Middlesex

LOTS ROAD (crosses land called lez lotte, le lottes 1544, Chelsea, Mx 87)

Oxfordshire

Lotewood 1487 (Aston Rowant, 0 104)
Lottreden 1278, Lottresden c.1233 (Enstone ibid. 351, said to contain OE loddere "beggar", might equally well be an instance of *hlotere "lot caster, allotter")
17th century instances include Lotts (Aston Rowant ibid. 104), Lotte meadow ground (Rollright 373), Lot Mead (Northmoor 367), Lot Furlong and meadowe (Eynsham 263), the Lott meade (South Leigh 276), Lott mead (Tackley 287), le common lott meadow vocatur le High meade (Burford 311), Normoore lotte meadowe, Southe Moore lotte meadowe (Marston 182).
18th and 19th century examples include Big Lott (Holton 177), Catstail Lot (Milton under Wychwood 364), The Lots (Kiddington 359, Bix 68), Lot Mead (Hampton 214), Lot Meadows (Yarnton 297, see above p.247), Lot Meadow (Broadwell 309, Denton 169, Holton 177, Finmere 209, Ipsden 58, Kingham 361, South Weston 99), Lottacre (Shiplake 83), Lotts (Lewknor 114)
Longleigh 1650 (le Longelete 1363, Eynsham 263, might possibly be an example of hlēt)
In Churchill (0 345) it is reported that the village had four Lot Meads, divided yearly by the drawing of lots.

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Sussex

LOATS LANE (le Widelote, Suthlote 1482, Bersted, Sx 91)
Westloats Lane (Bognor, ibid.)
Whitelote 1377 (Portslade, ibid.)

Westmorland

Late examples include Lord's, Moss, Tup and Whinny Lot
(We ii.262)

Wiltshire

Littlelott 1570 (W 436)
le Lott 1540 (ibid.)
les Lottes 1637 (ibid.)
Lott meade 16c (ibid.)

Other instances of this compound occur in Wanborough
1649 (W 285), Malmesbury 1669 (460), Brinkworth (464),
Sherston (472, Le Lot 1670), and Staverton (477), North
Bradley (478), Bratton (479), and Monkton Deverill
(483), all 19th century.

LOTMOOR, Lotmore 1709 (Great Wishford 231).

Lot is derived from OE hlot, ME lote "a lot, a share", cognate
with OE hlyte "a lot", OFris hlöt, OHG (h)luz, ON hlutr and, with a
different grade of ablaut, OE hlīt "lot, luck", OHG (h)lōz, OSax
hlōt, ON hlaút, Go hlaut and the verbs OE hlēotan "cast lots",
OSax hiotan, ON hljōta, OHG hiōzzan, liozan, MHG liezen. The
ultimate origins of this Gmc word are uncertain, connections
having been sought with Lat clavis, clavus, clau-do (IE kleu-/klau-
cf. Doric κλῆς, and kleud- from the root kel "hide, conceal") or
with Gk κλᾶδος "twig", κλῆρος "share, lot", originally "piece of
wood for casting lots". In the latter case, which is attractive in
the present context, hlot would be cognate with OE holt "a wood,
thicket, holt". Especially interesting is the semantic development
of Gk κλῆρος to mean "allotment of land, piece of land, farm,
estate" and in Macedonia "estate granted by the king".60 We may
also note the OE compounds tānhlyta and tānhlytere, "one who divines
by casting lots", found unfortunately only in glosses.

Many of the lot names appear only in very late sources such as
the Tithe Awards and must be of post enclosure origin. Indeed, as
with cavil, lot seems to hover in status between appellative and
element proper. There are, however, sufficient instances of its
early use in names, especially in Ca where land newly reclaimed from
the fens seems to have been apportioned by lot (cf. les Penlotes
supra, p.256), to provide, again, firm evidence of the allocation of
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land by the casting or drawing of lots. This was particularly so of meadowland, as we have already noted, and as the regular occurrence of the compounds Lot Mead, Lot Meadow testifies. As terms connected with land apportionment and land holding, however, hlōt and hlēt were already in use in pre-Conquest times. The interlinear gloss in the Vespasian Psalter, for instance, translating Psalm lxxvii.55, elecit a facie eorum gentes et sorte diuisit eis terram, reads: "awearp fro onsiene heara ðeode 7 hlēte todælde him eordan".41 In a grant of land by King Eadwig in 956 we find:

on Fearnes felda [Farnsfield Nt] gebyrað twega manna hlōt landes . . . and þreora manna hlōt on Normantune [Normanton Nt] (Sawyer 659 = BCS 1029, printed in EYCh, no.2).

A manslot seems to have been a technical term for "the amount of land allotted to the head of a family when the hundred was divided up" (BT s.v.). Napier prints from a manuscript dealing with landholdings of the Abbey of Bury St Edmund in various Nf hundreds which includes the following statements:

On Elsingtun hundred ah Sancte Eadmund xxvii manslot. On Spelhoge hundred xlv manslot etc.42

He believed the compound to have been of Scandinavian origin.

However, the p.n. evidence for both these elements is scanty, and one is led to enquire why. In the first place, although their occurrence offers clear evidence for the practice of casting lots for land, this was probably a comparatively rare event except where meadow was concerned. Then, other terms for shares in the common fields and pastures which do not specifically allude to the method of allocation, e.g. OE ðæl and its compounds ðæl-mæd, ðæl-land, ME shote etc., may obscure the evidence. There is also some evidence of the use of other terms for allotted land: cut from ME cut(te) "a lot", of obscure origin but in use from at least the late twelfth century, seems to have had some currency as a p.n. el. although not recognised by EPN. Unfortunately it is difficult to distinguish it from ME cut(te) "a cut, a water-channel" and in some counties from dial. forms of cot and even croft (Hrt 262). However, it has been recognised as a term for a piece of land in f.ns. such as Longcut(t), Broadcult(t) etc., in O, although the forms are all modern (O 438). In one particular O parish where there is independent evidence of the yearly drawing of lots for meadow another word, set, seems to have been used for a block of land so allocated.43

In Y, and occasionally too in Cu, Nt and Nth, the term used is ME wandale "a share of the common arable land of the tp.", commonly derived from ON vǫndr "a wand, a measuring stick" and deill. This term is understood either to mean a strip fenced off with wands or stakes (YN 59, YE 107) or a strip measured off with a wand (Nt 293, Cu 497). Perhaps in the light of the evidence collected here the possibility that vǫndr might have been used in the same way as keflī and hlōt should not be entirely dismissed.
NOTES


4 James Robertson, General View of Agriculture in the County of Perth (2nd ed., Perth, 1813) pp.91-2; W. Leslie, General View of Agriculture in the Counties of Nairn and Moray (1813) p.459, where keavle is defined as "the part of a field which falls to one on a division by lots". Kench, or kinch, "an unexpected advantage or opportunity; a division of land for which lots are cast" apparently represents ONFr canche, keanche "a throw at dice, luck, fortune" (Scottish National Dictionary, s.v. kinch) and is thus cognate with ModE chance < OFr ch(e)ance, from cheoir "to fail". Robertson's interest in names is further illustrated by his footnote (op.cit., p.92): "In some parts of Monteath, the names of places are expressive of this ancient mode of the division of land, viz. Arn-prior, the Prior's portion, Arn-tommy, Arn-finlay, Arn-more etc." where he clearly assumes that these names are compounded with Gael. earran "a share, portion of land, division".

5 Ed. J.C. Dewdney (Durham, 1970).

7 English Place-Name Elements, English Place-Name Society 25-6, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1956).

8 I owe this example to Mr Thomas Pyke's undergraduate dissertation on the place-names of South Shields, submitted as part of the examination for the degree of BA in English Language and Medieval Literature at Durham, June 1985.

9 The full text of the charter as given in RGS is: Robertus etc. Sciatis nos dedisse concessisse et hac presenti carta nostra confirmasse Dauid de Lyndesay . . . omnes terras de Le Revwaus, Meshope, Midilkeuille, Blaclau, Grenhilcotis, Ayrikstan et de Mikylholmesyde. No identifications are offered in the source. However, six of these names may safely be identified with Rivox, Mosshope, Blacklaw, Greenhill, Eriskstane and Meikleholmside, northwest of Moffat, Dumfriesshire. Middlegill lies between Mosshope and Blacklaw on the ground and is here therefore identified with Midilkeuille as it is in Dum 99.

10 Reproduced in W.B. Stonehouse, The History and Topography of the Isle of Axholme (London, 1839). This antedates the first reference recorded in OED which is in any case wrong: see note following.

11 List of Participants' lands lying in the Isle of Axholme, 1642 (not 1652 as in OED): Stonehouse, History and Topography, pp.90ff. The use of cavel here raises the question of whether the Hatfield minor name Calls (YW i.9 1842 TA) is not a contraction of this element rather than a representative of dial, call "a place where cattle are driven, a cow-gang", or caul "a weir" (YW, ibid.). The same consideration may arise with some of the other Y call names, viz. Cowgill vii.255, Callgill 1592, Cawgill 1660; Callis iii.171, Adam de Calys 1375, my placecs called Calys 1551; The Calls iv.125, Le Calls 1668; Kitsycall vii.179, Kitty Caw 1848; Callbank iv.5, 1729; Cawcroft iii.233, Call(e)croft(e) 16; Callehirst 111.253, 1342; the Calling iii.136, 1766).

12 Ed. R. Morris, EETS OS, 62 (1876; repr. 1966): examples from OED.


17 Bracton, De Legibus ii.34, cited by Latham, "Some Minor Enigmas", loc.cit..


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The Stirling Antiquary, ed. W.B. Cook (Stirling, 1893-) IV, p.219.


The Diary of Abraham de La Pryme, [ed. C. Jackson], Surtees Society, 54 (Durham etc., 1870).

The Diary of Abraham de La Pryme, [ed. C. Jackson], Surtees Society, 54 (Durham etc., 1870).


They got about 40 chalders of victuals and silver rent (sc. for the supply of troops) out of the bishop's cavil, consisting of three cobles on the water of Don, and other rents out of the samen water and State. Leslie of Powys 17 (cited in DOST):

The Town and Bishop feued out the fishing in shares, six of them called the King's cavil, and the other six the Bishop's cavil.

J. Jakobsen, An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland (repr. Lerwick, 1985) s.v..

J. Franck, Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal ('s-Gravenhage, 1884-92; 1912) s.v..


Ibid., Ch.34, pp.109-10.

Egils saga, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík, 1933) Ch.78, p.245.


As a mining term it continued in living use throughout the nineteenth
century and was still familiar in Durham in 1982; cf. the letter by R.O. Heslop of 1887 quoted in OED s.v.: "Each collier draws his cavel, and the number on his ticket is the number of the 'bord' at which he must hew for a stated period until another cavilling takes place".


38 Liber Sancte Marie de Melros, [ed. C. Innes], Bannatyne Club, 56 (Edinburgh, 1837) p.521.


41 Ed. Sherman M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor, 1965).
