

OFFA'S AND WAT'S DYKES.*

BY ALFRED NEOBAED PALMER.

THE following notes relate to those portions only of Offa's and Wat's Dykes which traverse the hundred of Bromfield and the parishes of Chirk, Hope, and Mold.

I do not propose to treat of those points relating to the dykes which have already been handled by other writers, and are matters of common knowledge. Those who desire to become acquainted with what has been said of those portions of the dykes not here dealt with are referred to the articles of the late Rev. H. Longueville Jones in the 1856 volume of *Archæologia Cambrensis*,¹ to the article by Professor Earle in the 1857 volume,² and to that by Dr.

¹ "Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke," *Arch. Camb.* for 1856 (3rd Series, vol. ii.), pp. 1-23, and "Offa's Dyke," No. ii., in the same volume, pp. 151-4. See, too, in the immediately following pp. 155-8, the remarks on "Offa's Dyke," by the Rev. Jonathan Williams, forming part of his *History of Radnorshire*.—E. P.

² "Offa's Dyke in the neighbourhood of Knighton," by Professor John Earle, *Arch. Camb.* for 1857 (3rd series, vol. iii.), pp. 196-209. See also the note by the Editor (Mr. Longueville Jones), pp. 209-10, and that by Mr. Thomas Wright, pp. 311-2 of the same volume. A letter by "E. B. C. G." on the remains of Offa's Dyke on and about Titley, Herefordshire, will be found in *Cambrian Quarterly Magazine* for 1833 (vol. v.), p. 421.—E. P.

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Edwin Guest in the 1858 volume of the same serial.¹ What I aim to do is to put on record the materials I have myself collected relating to the dykes, scanty as those materials are.

It may be desirable, however, first of all, to subject to a brief but careful examination those documents, already known and available, which contain the earliest references to the two dykes, or to one of them, and to inquire how far those documents and references are trustworthy, so as to learn whatever is possible from those sources, concerning the origin and purpose of these wonderful works with which in this paper I propose to deal.

As to Offa's Dyke, its construction by Offa, King of Mercia, as a boundary between his own territory and that of the Welsh is well attested. Thus, there is its name, which, both in its Welsh and English form, attributes it to him. The oldest reference to the dyke is by Asser, who, it must be remembered, was a Welshman from *Mynyw* or St. Davids (*Asser Menevensis*), and who wrote only about a hundred years after Offa's death. This is what Asser says: "There was of late in Mercia a certain strenuous king, and a formidable one among all the kings about him and the neighbouring countries, Offa by name, who ordered to be made, between Britain and Mercia, the great dyke from sea to sea."² There was a very early MS. (the ancient "Otho, A. xii.") of Asser, which was destroyed in

¹ "On the Northern termination of Offa's Dyke," by Dr. Edwin Guest, *Arch. Camb.* for 1858 (3rd series, vol. iii.), pp. 335-342.

² The following are Asser's actual words: "Fuit in Mercia moderno tempore quidam strenuus, atque universis circa se regibus et regionibus finitimis, formidolosus rex, nomine Offa, qui vallum magnum, inter Britanniam atque Merciam de mari usque ad mare facere imperavit." *Annales Rerum Gestarum Ælfredi ab. An. DCCCXLIX. ad An. DCCCLXXXVII.*, Auctore Asserio Menevensi, as printed in *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, vol. i. p. 471. The passage will be found at p. 10 of Wise's edition.

the Cottonian fire in 1732, but which had been printed by Wise at Oxford ten years before. Knowing that one of the printed editions of Asser¹ contains many interpolations, I was once doubtful as to the genuineness of the passage quoted relating to Offa's Dyke, but Mr. Egerton Phillimore kindly undertook to look into the matter, and wrote to me thus: "In the edition of Asser given in the *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, all the passages which can be shown by a comparison of the different MSS. and editions not to have been in the old Cottonian MS. are placed in brackets, but the passage about Offa is not among them, therefore it evidently *is* the genuine work of Asser."

Mr. Phillimore has also called my attention to a passage in *The Life of St. Oswald*, written in the year 1162, and printed in *The Works of Simeon of Durham*.² The following is a translation of the passage: "This place [Maserfeld] is distant from the dyke of King Offa, which divides England and North Wales, scarcely half a mile, from Shrewsbury quite seven miles, and from Wenlock Abbey, towards the south, about sixteen miles. The aforesaid dyke King Offa formerly constructed, entrenched within the defence of which he abode the more securely from his Welsh enemies. For, in his time, continual strife existed between him and the Welsh, so that he could by no means get the upper hand of their assaults or ambushes, except with this protection. From sea to sea, therefore, it hemmed in almost all his land towards Wales, and he fixed that dyke to be the boundary of the land of either."³

¹ The edition (1574) of *Asser's Life of Alfred*, by Archbishop Parker, with interpolations from some *Annals*, falsely ascribed to Asser—*The Pseudo Asser*.

² Rolls edition, 1882. This *Life* is attributed by Thomas Arnold, the editor of the Rolls edition, to Reginald of Durham. Introduction, p. xli.—E. P.

³ "Distatque locus iste a fossa regis Offæ, quæ Angliam et

In the foregoing passage, it will have been observed, Offa's Dyke is said to divide *North Wales* from England, and yet to run from sea to sea.¹ Mr. Phillimore, therefore, suggested to me that perhaps by "North Wales," what we know now as Wales, as distinguished from "West Wales" (Cornwall, and parts of Devon), was intended by the writer. It will be remembered that from about the seventh to the tenth century the whole, roughly speaking, of what is now known as "Wales," was called by the English "*North Wales*," while they gave to Cornwall and a large part of Devon the name of "*West Wales*." But when the *Life of St. Oswald* was written these appellations had lost their original meaning, and I have sometimes wondered whether, while borrowing from Asser the statement that Offa constructed a dyke from sea to sea, the author of *The Life* was not in possession of other information relating to *Wat's Dyke*, which exists in North Wales only, and attributed this to Offa also. In that case he would, of course, confound the two dykes, but he would also be an early witness to the existence of *Wat's Dyke*, and to the tradition which ascribed it, as well as the other dyke, to King

Walam borealem dividit, miliario non ferme dimidio, et Scropesbyri miliario integre septimo, ab abbatia vero Waneloc versus plagam meridianam miliario circiter sextodecimo. Fossam prædictam rex quondam Offa effecerat, cujus munimine vallatus securius ab hostibus suis Walensibus commanebat. Nam suo tempore jure certamen inter illum et Walenses extitit, quod nullatenus eorum impetus vel insidias nisi hac protectione devitare prævaluit. A mare ergo usque ad mare, pœne totam terram suam versus Walam præcinxit, et fossam illam utriusque terræ terminum fore constituit." *Vita S. Oswaldi*, cap. xiv., printed in Simeon's *Works*, Rolls edition, i. 353.

¹ Really at present to a point on the Wye opposite Bridge Sollers. From this point to Chepstow, it is probable, the Wye formed the frontier of Offa's dominion. But I do not speak with any authority as to the dyke in South Wales.

Offa. In any case, we have in the *Life of St. Oswald* a twelfth century reference to the great dyke between England and Wales, and to its being named after King Offa, whichever dyke he meant.

Simeon of Durham himself also speaks of Offa's Dyke thus: "Beorhtric, King of the West Saxons, took to himself in marriage Eadburh, a daughter of a king of the Mercians, Offa by name, *who ordered to be made between Britain and Mercia the great dyke, that is, from sea to sea.*"¹ The words which I have italicized are a *verbatim* quotation from the true Asser (see the quotation in note 2 on p. 66 before), and Mr. Phillimore tells me are printed as such in small type in the Rolls edition of Simeon's works.

Although in the *Annales Cambriæ*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the oldest or Strata Florida edition of the *Brut y Tywysogion* many particulars are given of the devastations of Wales by Offa, no mention is made in any of these works of the construction of the dyke which has for so long borne his name and which he beyond question ordered to be made.²

The poet Churchyard's statement in his *Worthiness of Wales* (A.D. 1587) that the space between the two dykes was "free ground," wherein the Danes and Britons met and made "trafficke," is, so far as I know, quite unattested, and is, therefore, until such attestation be forthcoming, wholly unworthy of attention. Even the sixteenth century

¹ "Rex autem Bichtric occidentalium Saxonum accepit sibi in conjugium Eadbergam quæ filia regis Merciorum, nomine Offa, *qui vallum magnum inter Britanniam atque Merciam, id est, de mari usque ad mare facere imperavit.*" Simeon Monachus Dunelmensis—*Historia Regum*. Works, ii. p. 66, Rolls edition, 1882.

² It is worth while noting the local names for Offa's Dyke recorded by Professor Earle in *Arch. Camb.* for 1857 (vol. iii. p. 197) as existing in English Radnorshire between Knighton and Presteign, viz. *Heyve Deytch*, *Have Deytch*, and *Hof Deytch*.—E. P.

Book of Aberpergwm knows nothing of this "neutral ground" theory, on which subsequent writers have been so eloquent.

It has been suggested that the dyke now called "Clawdd Offa" was already in existence before Offa's time, and was merely utilized by him as a boundary. But we must remember that the dykes have undergone the wearing influences—what the geologists would call the "degradation"—of more than a thousand years. When first constructed, therefore, their embankments must have been very much higher, and their ditches deeper than they are now. In particular, the larger of these two dykes, if it existed before Offa's days, must have been so stupendous, that it is inconceivable it should not have had already a distinctive name, or that it should have been attributed, both by Welsh and English, to King Offa. The first English period was, in fact, the time when it was by no means unusual to construct boundary dykes such as these. Cases in point are: *Wansdyke*, with its dyke on the north side, which was probably constructed by the West Saxons,¹ and *The Devil's Dyke*, with its ditch on the western side, which certainly formed one of the defences of the East Angles against the Mercians. It is true that when Offa's Dyke passes a Roman station (as at Caergwrle), or actually traverses a Roman settlement (as at the Ffrith), it has been found to contain Roman coins, fibulæ, inscribed altars, brooches, pins, rings of gold, silver, and copper, part of an inscribed lamp, &c., or even to cover a hypocaust,² but all

¹ That Wansdyke is post-Roman is manifest since it covers Roman remains.

² See Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, edition 1850, article "Hope." I once examined very hurriedly part of the board described by Lewis, which is now preserved at Nant y frith, and can vouch for the presence in it of coins of Domitian, Marcus

this only shows that the dyke has been constructed since the Romans left the country.

We have seen that the evidence is incontestable which points to Offa having constructed the dyke called by his name as a boundary between his own territory and that of the Welsh. That Wat's Dyke was also intended to mark the boundary between the Welsh and Mercians, and that it was constructed by the latter, seems certain from its resemblance to Offa's Dyke, the ditch in both cases being on the western and not on the eastern side of the vallum. The facts now to be named are also interesting as pointing to these conclusions. In the township of Bistre, in the parish of Mold, through which Wat's Dyke runs, there is a field on the east side of the dyke called "English field," while adjoining it, but on the west side of the same dyke, and in the township of Hartsheath, are two fields named in the Tithe Survey of 1837 *Coitia Bruton*.¹ These names show that more than fifty years ago Wat's Dyke was traditionally regarded as a national boundary, although it had for centuries run within Welsh territory, and had a Welsh-speaking population east of it. I ought to say that in the parishes of Hope and Mold, and especially in the latter, *coitia*, *coetia*, or *coitié* is one of the commonest of

Antoninus, and Trajan. Mr. R. V. Kyrke tells me that his uncle, in cutting a road through Offa's Dyke at the Ffrith, found an inscribed Roman altar which has since somehow disappeared. Mr. R. V. Kyrke himself, when excavations were made close to the same spot in 1874, saw a hypocaust, flue-tiles, &c., and added he, "there are plenty yet *in situ* there if any one would excavate." There was evidently a Roman settlement at the Ffrith, and when Offa's Dyke was carried through it, the various objects found during the present century were either covered by the dyke, or thrown up with the earth which was used to make it.

¹ This supposes *Bruton* to be a corruption of the Welsh *Brython*, perhaps influenced by the English *Briton*.—E. P. Compare "Bryn Bruton," near Beaumaris.—A. N. P.

field-names,¹ and although *perhaps* containing the word *coed*, 'trees,' at the present time means nothing more than 'field.' *Bruton* is doubtless (if accurately spelled in the Survey) a loan-word from the English, and this shows that the name *Coitia Bruton*, in its present form, is comparatively modern and corrupt. Nevertheless, these field-names appear to me to embody a tradition, and to be worth recording. It is true that field-names into which the word *Saeson* ('The English') enters are not confined to the east of Wat's Dyke, but it is curious that nearly all the fields so named (*that are known to me*) lie a little west of *Offa's Dyke*, which was undoubtedly a national boundary, so that if such names should be found a little west of Wat's Dyke also, this fact will not invalidate the conclusion that *Wat's Dyke* was a national boundary as well. *Cae'r Saeson* in Treuddyn and *Gwerglodd y Saeson* in Brymbo were perhaps the sites of early struggles between the Welsh and the English.

I think it extremely probable that when these dykes were actually national boundaries they were defended on the western edge by strong palisades of wood, and also that along the top of each ran a broad, fairly level road,² so that thereby forces could easily be forwarded from the permanent stations or forts to any point which was threatened. Along these roads also messengers could run without any impediment. The tops of the dykes being flat and raised above the surrounding country, and also remaining for a long time comparatively bare of trees, we can understand why it is that so many ancient mansions and farmhouses were built either actually upon the *valla*, or a few yards to

¹ This name is, in fact, fairly common throughout the main body of the county of Flint.

² Between the Ffrith and Treuddyn the high road runs still for more than a mile along the top of Offa's Dyke.

the east of them, for it must be remembered that, on the eastern side, the ground very gradually rises to the level of the top of the dykes.

In the parish of Ruabon there are two townships called *Moreton*, one on the west, and the other on the east of Offa's Dyke. The former of these is indifferently called *Moreton Wallicorum* ('Moreton of the Welsh'), and *Moreton uwch y Clawdd* ('Moreton above the Dyke'), and the latter *Moreton is y Clawdd* ('Moreton below the Dyke'), of which a portion, east of *Wat's* Dyke, is called *Moreton Anglicorum* ('Moreton of the English').¹ Here we seem again to have *Wat's*, as well as Offa's Dyke, appearing as a national boundary. Now these names are very old, and when we remember that in 1620, and for centuries before, nearly all the field-names of the townships in question were Welsh, and most of the inhabitants Welsh-speaking, I think we must conclude that the tradition was very ancient which regarded *Wat's* Dyke, like Offa's, as a national boundary. It must be borne in mind that the Mercians, as I have shown in another paper, had conquered and settled, about the time of King Offa, the country, or greater part of the country, as far west as Offa's Dyke, and remained there for some centuries, but that, about the eleventh century, the Welsh drove them out, or assimilated them, so that ever since the land directly east of the dykes has been occupied by a population which still speaks Welsh, or (I hope this reservation will not be forgotten) whose ancestors spoke it until nearly two centuries ago.

¹ I cannot discover whether *Moreton Anglicorum* was a hamlet of *Moreton is y Clawdd*, or a distinct township. The tithe survey of Ruabon parish makes it a separate township, a result still more favourable to the opinion above expressed, though it should be said that while *Moreton Anglicorum* lies only a little east of *Wat's* Dyke, the latter does not in any way form its boundary. They are mistaken who make *Moreton Anglicorum* and *Moreton is y Clawdd* different names for the same township.

Of course no dependence can be placed on *The Book of Aberpergwm* or *Gwentian Brut* (not earlier in date than 1550), which states that after Offa had, in the year 765, constructed the dyke which is associated with his name, he afterwards, in the year 784, laid out another dyke, nearer to England. The writer, in speaking of the second dyke, has evidently Wat's Dyke in his mind, but, as he wrote so many centuries after the act he describes, is of little value as an authority. Nevertheless, I have little doubt as to Wat's Dyke being the work, if not of Offa himself, of one of the early Mercian kings, or of one of their warriors.

The name itself of the Dyke suggests for it an English origin. I will not put forth its English name as evidence of this origin, though that name is not to be disregarded, but will rather take its Welsh name. I am not sure that this latter has ever been recorded in any article dealing specifically with the dyke, and at the present time is no longer known even by the Welsh-speaking people who live along the line of it. But I have been fortunate enough to meet with three documents in which its old Welsh name occurs. In a deed of the year 1431 it is spelled *Clawdd Wade*, in another of the year 1433 *Claud wode*, and in Norden's Survey of 1620 *Clawdd Wad*. I think it probable that *Wad* is an English personal name, and that it had originally in English some such form as *Wada* (a name well-attested), a name which got gradually degraded into *Wad* and *Wat*, and ultimately pronounced as *Wod* and *Wot*. That the form *Wad* existed we know, because we have such village-names as *Wadsley* ('Wad's lea'), *Wadsworth* ('Wad's holding'), and *Waddington*, which last, if it does not mean 'Town of the children of Wad,' must be a corruption of *Wadan tun*, that is, 'Wada's town,' *Wadan* being the genitive of *Wada* as *Wades* is of *Wad*. We have

also Wadham. We see how *Wad* passed into *Wat* by considering *Wadetuna*, the form under which the name of Watton in Norfolk appears in Domesday Book, while two other Wattons are called in that book respectively *Wattune* and *Watane*. It thus looks as though in the Welsh and English names of Wat's Dyke we have preserved two forms, both current, of the same name, probably *Wada*, the name perhaps of the Mercian who, about the time of King Offa, constructed the dyke. Whether these conclusions be correct or not, I have given all the facts relating to the problem, as far as they are known to me. Perhaps it may be of interest to add that when, at the end of last century, Acton Park was laid out, a field in Wrexham Regis was enclosed within it which was called Cae Wad ('Wad's field'). I find this field so named in the year 1620. It was about a quarter of a mile east of Wat's Dyke.

Pennant is undoubtedly right in saying that Wat's Dyke has been often confounded with Offa's, but in the parishes of Hope and Mold, where they are both well known and recognized as distinct, it would be more correct to say that *each is called by the same name*. That is to say, the two dykes are not confounded but both are attributed to the same king. And this attribution is of no recent date. Now here we have revealed an important fact, and one which tends to confirm my impression that both dykes had their origin about the time of Offa. While south of the parishes of Hope and Mold, in fact, Wat's Dyke is called by a distinctive name, in the aforesaid parishes it is called by the same name as the dyke which runs nearly parallel with it. Thus in Hope Owen, township of Hope parish,¹ there is a farmhouse on Wat's Dyke which is called

¹ One group of townships in Hope parish is called *Hope Medachiad*. What is the origin of *Medachiad*?—E. P. In 1617, I find the name appearing under the form "Hope y Mudachid."—A. N. P.

Clawdd Offa—'Offa's Dyke.' Also in Soughton, a township in Mold parish, is another farmhouse on the same dyke called *Bryn Offa*—'Offa's Hill,' and a little east of it one known as *Llwyn Offa*—'Offa's Grove.'

I do not wish to lay greater stress upon this attribution of both dykes to King Offa than the evidence will fairly bear, but that evidence, it appears to me, is at least worthy of consideration.

That the two dykes have, however, actually been confounded is not to be denied. Ralph Higden, for example, does this in his *Polychronicon* (fourteenth century), for he says that Offa's Dyke "stretches to the mouth of the River Dee, beyond Chester, close to Flint Castle, between Coleshill and Basingwerk monastery."¹ Now, it is quite certain that it was Wat's Dyke, and not Offa's, which was visible near Coleshill. Gutyn Owen, in his *Book of Basingwerk* (fifteenth century), committed the same blunder, making Offa's Dyke end between Mynydd y Glo (that is Coleshill) and Basingwerk.² Pennant says that Wat's Dyke terminated below the Abbey of Basingwerk, and the late Rev. H. Longueville Jones in the 1856 volume of *Archæologia Cambrensis* says that Wat's Dyke, taking here "the form of a ditch rather than of a dyke," may be traced northwards "as far as the factory just above Basingwerk Abbey." But though the dyke points in the direction of Basingwerk, I have during the last ten years, searched again and again the immediate neighbourhood of the abbey, without seeing any traces of it. Mr. Jones in the

¹ ". . . Usque ad ostium fluminis Deæ, ultra Cestriam, juxta castrum de Flint, inter collem Carbonum et monasterium de Basingwerk se protendit."

² "Ac ef [sef Clawdd Offa] sydd yn estynv or mor yr llall nid amgen or dehev yn emyl Bristo tv ar gogledd gorvweh y Fflint y rwng mynachlog ddinas Basing a mynydd y Glo." *Rolls Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 8.

same article states that Wat's Dyke enters Wynnstay Park from the north, and "passes straight through it along the lawn a few feet in front of the house, and so by Pen y Nant to Nant y belan tower, which is built just above it to the eastward." But though Wynnstay House stands on the line which Wat's Dyke would occupy, if it were continued southward in a straight line, the truth is that the dyke does not enter the park at all, but stops short a few feet north of it, and is not found again to the south until we pass altogether out of Ruabon parish. Even in Chirk parish I could not find it, though perhaps a more careful search might reveal traces of it.¹

It will be remembered that "Watstay" is the older name of the estate now known as "Wynnstay,"² and it is generally understood that the name "Watstay" indicates an interruption or *stay* of the dyke, where the house so named stood. It is probable the gap in the dyke at Watstay has been very much enlarged since the house so called got its name. When Sir John Wynn laid out Wynnstay Park it is to be feared that if any portions of the dyke remained within the limits of the park wall, they would be speedily cleared away. Once, some years ago, being at Ruabon, in view of Mr. Longueville Jones' statement quoted

¹ Mr. H. Longueville Jones in the article above quoted says that from Nant y Belan tower "it may be supposed to follow the escarpment of the valley above the river Dee as far as the point where that river turns to the northward, and then, crossing the river, to follow the escarpment on the eastern side of the valley of the Ceiriog to Pen y bank, where it is again found." If his supposition be correct it is easy to understand how it came to pass that I saw no traces of the dyke in Chirk parish, for I did not look in the right place.

² I have not had the opportunity of examining the Wynnstay deeds, but my impression is that the name "Watstay" itself is not much older than 1620, the year in which I first find it named. It was Sir John Wynn (died January, 1713) who changed the name from "Watstay" to "Wynnstay."

above, I asked an aged labourer whom I encountered, whether he remembered any portions of the dyke within Wynnstay Park, to which he replied that he never did, and I ultimately extracted from him a bit of folk-lore and popular etymology which it may be worth while to give. First of all, he said that Wat's Dyke was really made by the devil, in itself an interesting statement, inasmuch as other great boundary dykes are attributed to the same personage. He then went on to say that when the devil in making the dyke came to the property afterwards belonging to the Williams-Wynns at Ruabon, some one, I suppose the owner of the estate, held up his hands in horror, and cried out, "What! Stay." The devil then, awed by the importance of the family, did not resume his operations until he had passed beyond the owner's property, and the estate thenceforth became known as "Watstay"! And my informant appeared really to believe the story he told me, and to regard it as reasonable.¹

I should now like to say something as to the northward interruption of Offa's Dyke in the township of Treuddyn. Pennant says that in his time the dyke stopped in its northward course at "*Cae Deon*, a farm near Treyddin chapel in the parish of Mold." This is the name given in the edition of 1778, but in later editions, or at any rate in the edition

¹ Since the above was written, I have seen in *Byegones* (August 12th 1874) a somewhat different version of the legend: "That two devils were the makers of the dyke. That, by some reason or other, the work was to have been completed from sea to sea before the sun rose. Having worked hard and fast with that intention, they had successfully carried out their operations until they came to Rhuabon, when to their dismay the sun rose! Whereupon one devil said to the other: 'We'n stay,' and the work has ever since remained in an [sic! read *the*] unfinished state in which it was left by its beginners. And the spot where they left [off] has ever since been called 'Wynnstay.'" The narrator of the story in this form was one David Hughes, who in 1862 was in the eighty-first year of his age.

of 1810, *Caer deon* is changed to *Cae dwn*. There is no farm bearing either of these names at the present time, and immediately north of the present termination of Offa's Dyke on the road between Llaufynydd and Treuddyn is an extensive moor—Coed Talwrn—covered with the remains of mining operations which have been carried on during the last hundred years. It is therefore probable that during the past century the dyke at Coed Talwrn has suffered very much, and that the point at which it ended in Pennant's time was more to the north than now it is, and I found on referring to the tithe maps of Treuddyn, made in 1838, that rather more than a mile north of the present termination of Offa's Dyke was a field called in the map-schedule "Cae twnth ffordd." It is on the Leeswood border, and a little west of Ty isaf, near Pont Bleiddyn. Traversing the space between the present end of the dyke and the field just named, it would pass another field called *Maes y gareg wen* ('Field of the white stone'). It is quite possible that the field corruptly called¹ "Cae twnth ffordd" in the tithe map schedule is a reminiscence of the "Caer Deon," "Cae Dwn," or "Cae twn" of Pennant.

It is evident that Offa's Dyke terminated formerly northwards near the coast west of Prestatyn, for in the sixth year of Edward I., Robert Banastre petitioned the king; and, after reciting that, in the time of King Richard, his ancestor, also called Robert Banastre, was driven out of Prestatyn Castle by the Welsh, goes on to say, "And Robert le fiz Robert Banastre lost all his land in Wales at

¹ *Cae twnth ffordd* looks suspiciously like a corruption of *Cae tu hwnt i'r ffordd*—"the field beyond the road." It is difficult, however, to assign limits to the alteration in Welsh place-names of which Pennant (or his Welsh informants) were capable. See *Y Cymmrodor*, xi. 59.—E. P.

that time, and led all his people (*tut sa gent*) from 'Pr' statun *within the Dyke* into the county of Lancaster."¹

For some distance south of the river Ceiriog, Offa's Dyke is treated even now as the boundary between Denbighshire and Shropshire, between Wales and England, but in the whole of the district above indicated, in which I have closely examined the dykes, they run through a tract which for centuries has been in Wales. It is therefore not surprising that these wonderful works should have appealed to the imagination of the Welsh, and should have been utilized by them, nor that they should have set stones and erected forts along them, and made them, *in some cases*, the boundaries between hamlets, townships, and parishes.

The name *Careg lwyd* occurs twice along Wat's Dyke in the district which I have especially examined. Thus in Hope Owen, on the west side of the dyke, is a field called *Erw'r gareg lwyd* ('Acre of the hoar stone'), and a farmhouse on the same dyke in the township of Bistre bears the name of *Y Gareg Lwyd*. The stone from which this farmhouse is named still stands a little west of the dyke and can be seen from Padeswood Station, while within a few feet of it is another stone, prostrate and partly embedded in the ground. South-west of *Y Gareg lwyd* and within a short distance of it, but on the other side of the railway line, is a mound covered with trees called *Bryn y castell* ('Hill of the castle'). I am tempted to describe another *Careg lwyd* though outside of my district. It is a few hundred yards to the south of the town of Oswestry on the western edge of the ditch of Wat's Dyke, about 7 feet high and from 16 to 20 feet circumference near the base. The house near it is also called *Careg lwyd*, and the stone is believed to have the peculiar property of turning round once in twenty-

¹ Translation from the original petition in Norman French in *Rolls of Parliament*, Anno sexto Edwardi I. See also *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. i. series i. pp. 334-346.

four hours at midnight! I have already mentioned *Maes y gareg wen* along the presumed course of Offa's Dyke. I have seen also a farmhouse called *Careg y big*, along the course of the same dyke, in the township of Upper Porkington and parish of Selattyn, so named, as I was informed, from a stone, bearing the same name, which formerly stood about ten yards west of the dyke. I do not know whether it is to be regarded as altogether accidental that these stones occur along the dykes; anyhow, I think that their existence in this connection should be chronicled. I should like also to call attention to the fact that the word *gorsedd* is often found as a place-name on or near the course of the dykes, a name which I think we must in these cases frequently have to translate *mound*, *tumulus*, or *judgment-seat*. *Yr Orsedd Wen* ('The white gorsedd') is the name of a farmstead on the west side of Offa's Dyke in the township of Crogen Iddon in the old parish of Llangollen. Near it, but a little further from the dyke, is a large *carneidd*, opened about the year 1850, and described in *Archæologia Cambrensis* (Vol. II., 2nd series, pp. 9-19) by Mr. W. Wynne Foulkes.¹ On the other side of the dyke, on the top of Selattyn Hill, was another huge *carneidd*, on the site and out of the materials of which Mr. Gerald Carew of Pentre Pant built in 1847 a hunting lodge. During this operation two *cistfeini* and three or four burial urns were discovered.² Still nearer *Yr Orsedd Wen*, and on the west

¹ This is fancied to be the *carneidd* from which the house takes its name. A skeleton was found in it by Mr. Foulkes, who supposed it to be that of *Gwên*, one of the sons of *Llywarch Hen*. It is, however, called not *Gorsedd Gwên*, or even *Gorsedd Wên*, but *Gorsedd Wen*. Nor does it appear to have been ever known as *Gorsedd Gorwynion*, as suggested.

² On this tower was placed the following inscription:—

Gorsedd Orwynion
Oedd gwr vy mab oedd ddysgywen hawl [P haul]
Ar ryd Vorlas y llas Gwen.

side of the dyke are the remains of what was evidently another *carnedd*. It ought to be said that while Welsh people call this farmstead *Yr Orsedd Wen*, many English people call it *The Rossett*. And this leads me to say that on the western side of Offa's Dyke, in the township of Esclusham uwch y Clawdd, in front of Pentre Bychan Hall, is a meadow now called *Rossett Park*, but which I find from the Pentre Bychan deeds was always formerly known as *Yr Orsedd*.¹ If ever there was any mound in Rossett Park, it may well have been cleared away when, many years ago, the meadow was included in "the grounds" of Pentre Bychan Hall. However, not far from the Pentre Bychan

¹ I know two other places called *The Rossett* in the neighbourhood of Wrexham, formerly known as *Yr Orsedd*. One is a field in the township of Pickhill, and the other the well-known hamlet on the Great Western Railway between Gresford and Saltney. The older name for the latter was *Yr Orsedd Goch* ("The Red Gorsedd"). In Norden's Survey (A.D. 1620) it is in one passage called *Yr orseth goch*, and in another *Rosset goz*, so that it is evident, as I have elsewhere said (*Ancient Tenures of Land in the Marches of North Wales*, p. 64, note 1, and p. 65, note 2), "that *The Rossett* is the regular form into which, in this district, the name *Yr Orsedd* passes in being converted into an English word." Norden describes some of the lands at *Yr Orsedd Goch* as being of the nature of demesne, and there were at that place not merely "The Boardland [or Lord's] Chapel," still existing at the beginning of last century, but also the gallows for the rhaiglotry of Marford, used until about a hundred years ago. Thus, in the case of *Yr Orsedd Goch*, at least, I think I am right in translating *gorsedd* as "judgment-seat." There is here now no mound, unless we regard the notable mound at Marford, now called simply *The Roft*, but formerly *Groft y castell*, as the original *gorsedd*. This mound was undoubtedly the head of the rhaiglotry of Marford, and the lands at *Yr Orsedd Goch* were appurtenant to it as "Tir y bwrdd" or "boardland." Since the foregoing was written I have come across a note (dated 1814) of the names of all the fields in the Upper and Middle Berse estates in the township of Bersham. Among these names occur the following: "Bryn rosset (or 'r orsedd) mawr and Bryn rosset vechan, now in one." The equation of *Yr Orsedd* and *Rossett* is thus indubitably established.

Gorsedd, but on the east side of the dyke, adjoining Plas Cadwgan, is a huge tumulus which rises directly from the rampart. It may be worth while to say that close to it is a field called *Cae'r Saeson*. This tumulus was opened in the year 1797, when four suits of armour and the skeleton of a horse¹ were discovered in it. The authority for this statement is *The Monthly Magazine* published at Shrewsbury in the year named. The armour is said to have been taken to Chirk Castle, where it cannot now be found, but the description of it in *The Monthly Magazine* makes one certain that it must have been late mediæval in its character. "The armour was complete in helmets, gorgets or safeguards for the neck, an iron apron in front with a cuirass for the back annexed to the aprons by hinges."

It is very difficult to decide as to whether the many forts that lie along or close to the course of the dykes are of Welsh origin, but I think the camp called *Hen Ddinas*² near Oswestry on Wat's Dyke, and the remarkable but unnamed camp in the township of Llai just above Gwersyllt Mill on the same dyke must be contemporaneous with the construction of the latter. I am not so sure as to the origin of the big mound with a flat top called *Y Castell* a few feet distant from Wat's Dyke in Erddig woods. Mr. W. M. Myddelton has communicated to me the following note from the Harleian MSS. relating to this mound by a traveller from Chester in the year 1574 :—"By Wrexham

¹ Horses' bones have elsewhere been discovered in Offa's Dyke. Thus according to Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (A.D. 1833) when the dyke was levelled near Brymbo Hall for the formation of railroads in connection with the railroads and collieries, "a great quantity of the bones of horses in a state of excellent preservation, and horse shoes of rude workmanship were found."

² I cannot learn the authority on which this camp has ascribed to it the names *Caer Ogyrfan* (or *Caer Ogyrfen*) and *Old Oswestry*.

wthin a quarter of a myle toward Ruabon in park glyn¹ standeth the ruyns of a Castell great which sometymes was the chief house of the Prince of Bromfield." However we may interpret this statement we may gather from it that the people who lived in the sixteenth century near the Erddig "Castell" regarded it as having been a place of considerable importance.

The passages through the dykes were often so striking and important as to acquire distinctive names. Thus *Adwy'r clawdd* ('Gap of the Dyke') is a very ancient name for the point at which Offa's Dyke is traversed in the township of Bersham from Wrexham to Ruthin. If at *Adwy'r clawdd* we walk along the dyke in a northerly direction until we have passed the Wesleyan Chapel a few yards we may pause. For here many years ago were dug up, immediately west of the dyke, a large number of very friable urns containing burnt bones, all of which were broken and scattered. I had this information from the grandson of the man who disinterred the urns, and who often spoke of his discovery. He said there was "quite a cemetery" there. Oh, that some of these urns had been preserved, so as to give us an opportunity of knowing to what period and to what race they belonged! A little further northward, in the same township, a road crosses Offa's Dyke at right angles, at a place now called *Llidiart Ffanny* ('Fanny's Gate'), but which, as I find from the old parish registers, was always formerly called *Llidiart vani*, or *Llidiart vaney*. What the second word of this place-name means, I cannot be sure,² but it seems worth while to put it on record. An

¹ Parc Glyn Clywedoc (demesne land of the Lord of Bromfield) included a great part of the present Erddig Park, as well as the mound in question.

² Perhaps it is *fanè* for *fanau*. *Llidiart* in the hundred of Bromfield is always treated as feminine, so that it modifies the initial letter of any word, treated adjectively, that follows it.

ancient farmhouse, having the same name, adjoins the gap.

Wat's Dyke divides Wrexham from Bersham, the township of Acton from that of Stansty, and the township of Bistre from that of Hartsheath. It divides, also, in part the hamlet of Hafod (formerly called *Hafod y gallor*) from the hamlet of Belan in the same township (of Ruabon). In most cases, however, it is not utilized in this way, but runs across hamlets, townships and parishes without reference to their boundaries. So, Offa's Dyke divides the township of Esclusham uwch y Clawdd from that of Esclusham is y Clawdd, and the township of Moreton uwch y Clawdd from that of Moreton is y Clawdd. Within the township of Ruabon also, it separates, in part, the hamlet of Rhuddallt from that of Bodylltyn (in which latter stands the British camp called *Y Gardden*), but here again the bounds of most townships and parishes along the dyke are determined without reference to the latter. It seems important to point out this fact, though it is difficult to say what precisely is the inference to be drawn from it.

And now I must apologize for the incompleteness and ill-arrangement of the materials I have presented to you to-night. The fact is that most of those materials were got together many years ago, and I have had but little leisure since to pursue my investigations into the history and condition of the dykes within the area dealt with. Moreover, since I undertook to write this paper, I have been so beset with ill-health and calls on my time, that I have felt myself incompetent to the work of arraying the facts I have to offer in their most seemly garments, or of arranging them in the best order. Let my statement of them therefore stand to lighten the labour of some one else who may hereafter address himself to the same task. In conclusion, I wish to express my obligations to Mr.

Egerton G. B. Phillimore, who has gone to the trouble of verifying my references, and made many suggestions of which I have availed myself. All the notes which are signed "E. P." were written by him.