INTRODUCTION

The complexity of medieval and modern pre-metric weights and measures throughout the British Isles has long presented an obstacle to scholarly research on western European economic history. The problem is really two-fold: first, the approximate dimensions of many nonstandardized measuring units, used by both the Crown and the regional and local markets, varied from time to time and from place to place; second, the specific dimensions even of standard weights and measures used in any given period are often poorly understood. Too many times the researcher, investigating certain facets of economic and social development, has not taken these ambiguities into consideration, or has not even been aware of them, and has automatically assumed that a particular measuring unit contained or equaled a fixed amount. Such assumptions have led to inaccuracies in many textbooks and monographs. Hence, this book is directed toward clarifying some of the confusion and bringing a new focus to the field of metrology in general and a new understanding of the units in particular.

The tables which follow will aid the reader in using the dictionary. Since it would be impractical to give the year and reign for every citation (e.g., 25 Edward III), I have, in most instances, provided only the year in which a manuscript or law was written. Table 1 has been compiled for rapid identification of the ruling English, Scottish, Irish, or Welsh sovereign for any given year in the dictionary. Table 2 contains all of the abbreviations used throughout the dictionary; they are alphabetically arranged for quick reference. Tables 3 and 4 list the current English Imperial, American Customary, and metric units; Table 5 contains the basic

equivalents for these weights and measures. The latter table will enable the reader to make further correlations between metric and nonmetric units that are beyond the scope of this book. Table 6 provides definitions for the terms used to describe the weights and measures in the entries.

The dictionary uses a number of textual devices to help the reader gain rapid and accurate access to the material. All entry headings are printed in boldface, and a dash separates them from their variant spellings (e.g., **acre**—1 aecer (OED), æcyr (OED); 1-2...). The variants are arranged according to the centuries in which they were most commonly used; the numbers preceding them identify the centuries:

1 = pre-12th century	6 = 16th century
2 = 12th century	7 = 17th century
3 = 13th century	8 = 18th century
4 = 14th century	9 = 19th and 20th centuries
5 = 15th century	? = no century given in source

If there is no citation for a certain variant spelling within an entry, its source reference is indicated in parentheses (e.g., 1 æcer (OED)...1-2 acr). The abbreviation L preceding a variant indicates that that variant was a Latin form used in scholarly treatises in England.

The etymologies, always in square brackets, immediately follow the variant spellings. Generally when an etymology is well known and can be found easily in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) or Webster's New International Dictionary, 3rd edition (WNID3), only a shortened form is given in the entry, and the reader should refer to one of these standard

etymological dictionaries for further information (e.g., **acre**—1 æcer (OED)...6-7 aiker [ME aker fr OE æcer; see WNID3]). If no etymology is given, an asterisk (*) indicates that the derivation of the word is unknown.

Following the etymological comments either a general explanation for the unit is given or, if there are variations within the unit, each major variation or group of variations is discussed in a separate paragraph or subsection. Every time the name of a unit other than the entry unit appears in the explanation it will be found in capital letters the first time it is used, and readers may refer to entries for these other units to gather additional information. In addition, wherever possible, metric equivalents are included in parentheses; the equivalents have been carried out to two decimal places for the approximate units and usually to three decimal places for the exact. But, if the unit's measurement or description is identical to that of another more commonly known unit, the words "equivalent to" follow the etymological comments. If the unit were different by definition from another unit, but commonly associated with it due to identical physical properties or dimensions, the terms "synonymous with" or "used interchangeably with" are employed.

After each major metrological variation or group of variations there are citations from medieval and modern sources:

The date in boldface type at the beginning of these citations always represents the year in which the manuscript or book was written and never

the publication date.

The code name and numbers after the date identify the source (e.g., **1198** Feet 3.8: De vij...Ridon´).

The code name always refers to a corresponding title in the bibliography.

A Roman numeral following the code name, but preceding the period before the page number, supplies the volume (e.g., **1443** Brokage II.7).

An Arabic number in such a position refers to one of several books listed under that particular code name in the bibliography (e.g., Feet 3.8 refers to the third book under the code name Feet).

The number after the period is always the page number. If there is no volume number and the bibliographical code name has only one title listed under it, the page number immediately follows the source reference (e.g., Caernarvon 242).

Whenever a measuring unit has several variations which do not fit into any of the other major sections, or for which there is no explanation in the documents as to their relative value, they are placed at the end of the entry in a separate paragraph.

It should be noted that in the illustrative quotations all manuscript abbreviations have been expanded and underlined (e.g., "Et xl ptice" is changed to "Et xl pertice"). Also, letters superscripted in the source have been placed on the same line as the rest of the word, with brackets indicating the change (e.g., gr^{a}na is amended to gr[a]na). Similarly, whenever Roman numerals in manuscripts were elevated to the right of some

number (e.g., V^{xx}), they have been placed on the text line, with brackets again indicating the change. If multiplication or addition is involved, the appropriate arithmetical sign has been placed between the numbers (e.g., $V^{xx}XII = 112$ is changed to V [X] xx [+] XII = 112). Other abbreviations, such as l., li., and lib. for liber, libra (pound) and the apothecary symbols ℈ for scruple, ʒ for dram, ℥ for ounce, and ℔ for apothecary pound, have been retained as in the original source.

The bibliography includes only those sources which provide information on individual weights and measures and which discuss some of the problems characteristic of metrology in general. No fictional sources were used in the data compilation and illustrative quotations. Works on the metric system generally are omitted except for those which discuss various aspects of the pre-metric systems. Finally, the bibliography includes the names of several reference books on weights and measures in which the interested reader may find leads to literature on other decimal and duodecimal systems.