

Ingleborough Archaeology Group

A survey of the north-west flanks of Ingleborough 2007 -2011

Farming and land management – medieval and post-medieval

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Introduction

Nowadays one could be forgiven for believing that the slopes and terraces of Ingleborough are only used for low density sheep farming and that the real interest and value of the mountain are to the thousands of walkers bent on reaching its summit. In the past it was very different and a surprising variety of economic activities and land management procedures can be recognised from documentary sources and from ground evidence. This essay will examine how farming and allied land uses on the western side of the mountain have changed through the centuries since the medieval era.

The medieval period

Much of the area between Ingleton and Gearstones, between Whernside and Ingleborough, was held by the Cistercian Furness Abbey which managed its vast estates in the Dales from a main *grange* at Newby near Clapham. The estate was managed in a hierarchical manner with a series of *lodges* or farmsteads scattered across the area, many of which still exist today as working or redundant farms. Colt Park was a lodge that was almost certainly a stud farm, while Lodge Hall, Nether Lodge and Thorns were other lodges. Below this level in the hierarchy were smaller individual farmsteads, in existence before land was ever granted to the abbey, worked by its tenants who paid rent for the holdings but also received income for managing the abbey's sheep flock. At a lower level still were ordinary 'peasant' farmers who followed a basically subsistence way of life much as their forebears had done for centuries.

Nestling in a natural sheltered basin above Chapel le Dale, on the lower terraces of Ingleborough at Southerscales, are the remains of one such settlement (Fig.1).



Fig.1 Southerscales Deserted Medieval Village

In archaeological jargon this would be called a Deserted Medieval Village (DMV), though its small size rules it out as a village, and there is no convincing archaeological evidence that it is of medieval date. The earthwork footprints of its buildings are still there on the ground, as clear as anything when the grass is short, even though it was abandoned centuries ago. It is first recorded in 1203 as Souterscales, one of three *vaccaries* or cow farms in the dale, and again in 1250 when it, along with extensive lands, was granted to the abbey by Alice de Staveley. She was the daughter of Adam de Staveley, a chancery clerk to King John, who held the whole of Ewecross Wapentake, the then

administrative unit covering Craven. When he died in 1218 Alice became the beneficiary until 1251 when it passed to the great baron Roger de Mowbray. Alice's son and heir, Sir Henry

Fitz Ranulf, then became lord of Sedbergh, Garsdale, Dent, Bentham and Ingleton with rights of *free warren* across all these townships (Farrer 1898, 949). In a valuation, dated 1292, *Sowterchale* was listed with *Wynterschale* (now Winterscales near Ribbleshead) as *duas vaccarias*, or two cow farms (Atkinson 1886, 635). Together with profits from stock held there (*de fructibus gregium*), the two vaccaries were jointly valued at 30s. However, the Southerscales vaccary encompassed much of the valley between the church and Brunscar farm; if one assumes the so-called DMV is medieval, it was emphatically not the entirety of the vaccary but merely one element of it.

Six discrete farmsteads can be made out on the ground, with a 'street' running through them, each consisting of at least two buildings – a house and an outbuilding. After Furness Abbey was brought to an abrupt end as part of Henry VIII's Dissolution of the monasteries, a full valuation and rental survey were undertaken across the entire estate, and Sowterscales (as it was by then) is listed. It consisted of six tenements and the details in the rental make interesting reading.

Four tenements within the Southerscales vaccary had a land holding listed as '10 acres' (about 4.5 hectares) valued at 32s. 11d. while the other two had '20 acres' (about 9 hectares) valued at 67s. 6d. At today's values these translate to about £450 and £900. One of the larger tenements was held by Leonard Falscroft, the other by the widow of Leonard Proctour. The six smaller units were held by the widow of Edmund Wedderhyrde, and Henry Wetherherd (her son perhaps); the widow of Richard Proctour; the widow of Mathew Wedderhyrde; and the widow of Anthony Falscrofte.

Thus five of the six tenements were held by a widow. What had happened to their husbands? In 1536 there was a major rebellion across the North against the Dissolution. Several of the monks at Furness were implicated in this Pilgrimage of Grace and many more people in Craven were involved. Henry ordered vengeance to be wreaked against those involved: perhaps these five men lost their lives as a result of the rebellion.

Procter is still a common surname in Craven. The Wedderhyrdes had taken their family name from the work they did, probably for several generations under monastic overlordship: wethers are castrated male sheep, so they were shepherds. It is also interesting to see how English was becoming simplified with the change from Mathew's and Edmund's Wedder (a Germanic root) to Henry's Wether (more recognisably modern English), and from 'hyrde' (the Old English form) to the modern 'herd'.

Harry Hallam's Fold

Sandwiched between two expanses of limestone pavement on the northern edge of Harry Hallam's Moss is a large sub-rectangular stone-built enclosure known as Harry Hallam's Fold (ING 22) (Fig.2).

It measures 21m by about 20m internally and is now partly ruinous, though part of the wall still stands to its original full height on the north-eastern side (Fig.3).



Fig.2 Harry Hallam's Fold

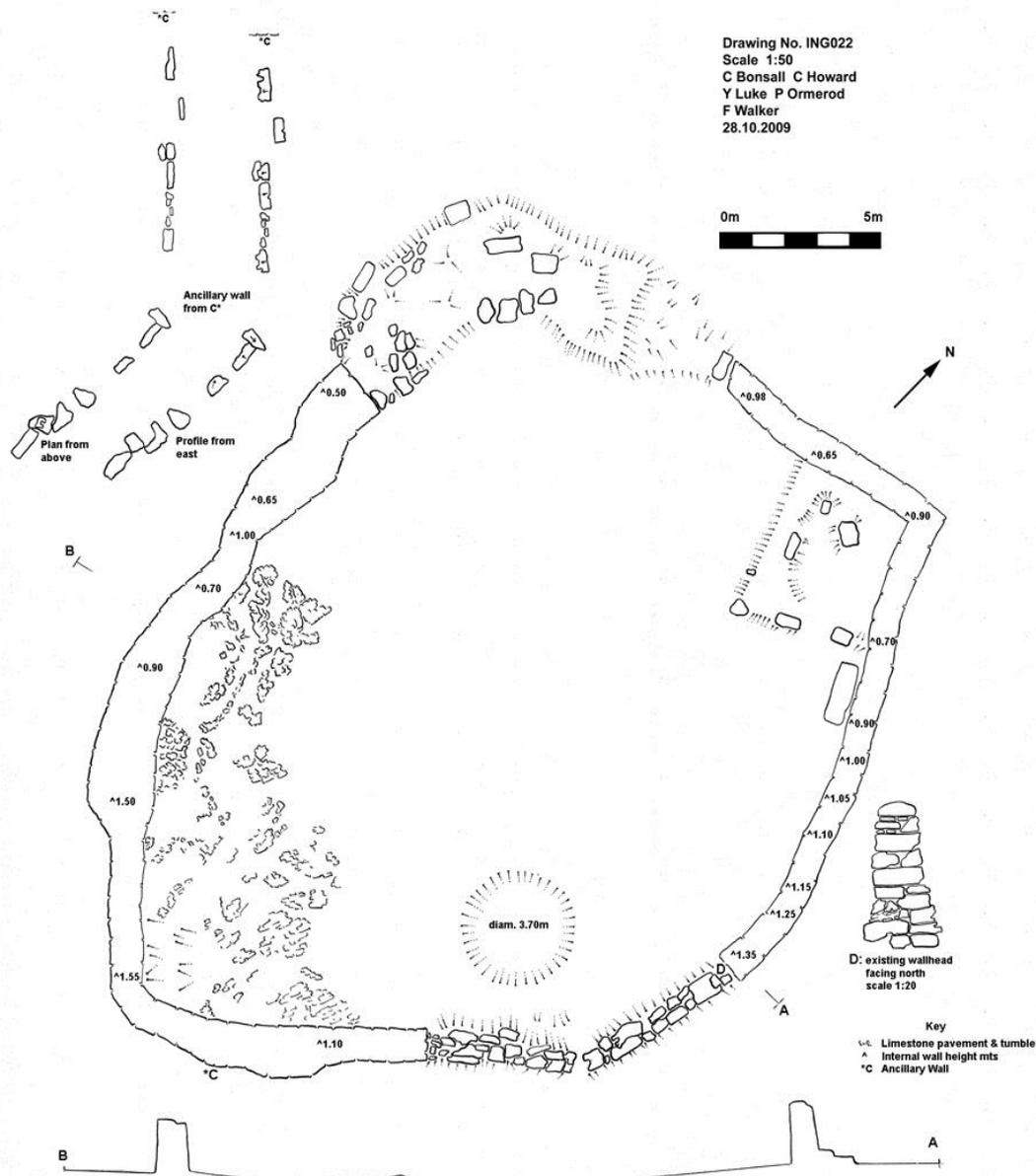


Fig.3 Plan of Harry Hallam's Fold

The word 'fold' is normally associated with an enclosure where sheep were penned after having been gathered in for washing (in a washfold), clipping or *spaining*. There are several sheepfolds on this side of the mountain: for example, a washfold at the entrance to Middle Washfold Cave (ING 33) where the stream was dammed with wood and stone so that the sheep could be pushed in and scrubbed by shepherds standing in the waste-deep water; a fold complex on High Lot next to the summit path (ING 21); a small circular fold below Falls Foot (ING 117) (Fig.4); and a set of folds near Great Douk Cave associated with a double *set pot* (ING 100). The set pots are made of copper – they used to be called 'coppers' – built into a concrete and brick base (Fig.5). A fire was lit under the pots to boil and soften paste dip, or

salve, that was then rubbed on the fleeces to kill parasites in the days before chemical treatments and in localities where sheep could not be dipped.



Fig.4 Sheepfold below Falls Foot



Fig.5 Set pots at Great Douk, now ruinous



Fig.6 Massive limestone blocks at Harry Hallam's Fold

In all of these folds the walls are very similar in height and width, and in style of construction, with through stones and walls that decrease in width from bottom to top. Harry Hallam's is quite different. It is massively built with walls that once reached 1.8m in height and are parallel-sided with huge over-hanging topstones. Some of the stones used to build the wall are up to 1m in length and must weigh half a tonne each (Fig.6).

It is inconceivable that a structure as solid and substantial as this was built to just temporarily pen sheep at specific times of the year. It also hides an enigmatic secret: in the north-west corner there are the remains of a small cell about 4m square. Part of its wall is composed of one huge block of limestone, set vertically as an orthostat (Fig.7). This was probably a herdsman's hut.



Fig.7 Possible shepherd's hut in Harry Hallam's Fold

The fold was built where a trackway, originating near Spice Gill, provides easy and rare access from the open fell through the limestone terraces to Southerscales and the valley bottom. Stock being driven on to the fell or taken off it could be conveniently gathered here for sorting. Running from the south-eastern corner of the fold are the remains of a linear wall about 15m long that survives as a discontinuous line of upright stones. It may or may not be contemporary with the fold: if it was, it may have served as a 'driving wall' designed to steer animals into the entrance to the fold or to deflect them down its eastern side.

Judging by the style of construction, this fold can be dated to the medieval period when sheep roamed the fells for days on end during the warmer months under the watchful eye of a shepherd or shepherd boys. At night they were gathered in the fold and the men and boys slept with them. The walls were not built this big just to keep the sheep in. Medieval sheep were smaller than modern breeds and not as agile so massive walls were not necessary. No, these walls were designed to keep something out at night – wolves or other predators – or to corral stock significantly larger than sheep. It was probably a multi-purpose stock management structure.

Medieval horse breeding

Perhaps Harry Hallam's Fold was primarily built for horse management. There is ample documentary evidence of such practices in the Dales and surrounding areas such as the Wenning valley, to the east of Ingleborough, and in the Forest of Bowland beyond that. For example, Kirkstall Abbey in Leeds held extensive properties in Bowland and, in the 14th century, held an *equicium* (stud farm) for breeding and breaking in horses, a *faldica equorum* (horse fold) with 160 horses, and a horse-close, all suggesting that horse breeding was a significant element of the abbey's economic activities.

Jervaulx Abbey, in lower Wensleydale, maintained a grange at Studfold, between Horton in Ribblesdale and Helwith Bridge, where horse management was clearly a key element and Furness Abbey held property around Ribblehead which included Colt Park where one can assume that foals were bred. Above Colt Park there is a large enclosure, rising to the summit of Park Fell, bounded on the southern side by a massive ditch and bank feature. It is more than likely that this enclosure was where the mares and foals were allowed to run freely.

A charter, dated 1204, granted Adam de Staveley, the major 13th-century landowner on and around Ingleborough, and his men the right to keep '20 mares with their foals up to two years old' within the Forest of Mewith (Higham 2003). They could fold them as and when they wished and let them freely roam within the bounds of the *forest*. Foals were to be rounded up and taken off the forest once each year.

Much of the land around Chapel-le-Dale was later granted to Furness Abbey, including the long-deserted settlement of Southerscales. Adam's widow, Alice, was granted leave by charter to let her unbroken horses 'run loose over large areas of pasture' on Furness lands on Scales Moor and Ingleborough (Higham 2007). This may well have included the lands around Harry Hallam's Fold.

A charter, dated 1250, again concerning Furness and Alice, made clear that if any unbroken horses belonging to Furness Abbey above Southerscales happened to stray across the set boundary (presumably Meregill and presumably not marked by a fence or wall), they were to be returned peaceably by her men, as long as they had caused 'no damage or disturbance' (Brownbill 1916, 326, quoted in Higham 1997). This was to be reciprocated if any of her or her men's horses strayed the other way.

According to the eminent historian, RHC Davis (1989, 80), the optimum grazing for young horses was limestone pasture. On the one hand, grass species that develop on limestone are rich in calcium; on the other, it can reduce the likelihood of horses developing laminitis. This is a painful swelling of the sensitive parts of the hoof, making the animal lame and susceptible to other diseases and it is nowadays the second most common cause of death in horses and

ponies (www.farriervet.com, accessed 2 February 2011). One of the primary causes of laminitis is when horses over-indulge on lush, nitrogen-rich pastures in valley bottoms or lowlands. Keeping them on upland pastures removes this danger.

Harry Hallam's Fold revisited

The hypothesis suggested here is that the fold was indeed a multi-purpose structure. At certain times of the year sheep may have been gathered here – for clipping, for weaning and for spaining – while once a year foals were corralled here and separated from their mares before being driven off the fell for breaking in or for direct sale. The height of the walls, and the overhanging topstones, would have kept predators out and would have kept unbroken and skittish horses in. Perhaps it was also used as a holding pen for horses that had strayed from Furness lands.



Fig.8 ING 143 Bield wall on Keld Bank

There are possible parallels to the north. On Keld Bank (ING 143) and on Sleights Pasture there are lengths of wall, in both cases early and substantial walls, linear in form (Fig.8): they do not enclose anything but are open on one side. They were not for keeping any animals penned in and such *bield* walls have generally been assumed to have provided shelter for sheep. Many bields undoubtedly were for that purpose, and sheep still use them in foul weather, but these two are more substantial than they would need to be just to provide a windbreak. Perhaps their function

was as a block against which horses and foals could be driven and gathered together.

Stinting and common land

Farming practices started to change in the late medieval period, after the Dissolution when monastic lands were sold off to private ownership, and this is when we can first recognise a method called *stinting*. Stinting controlled the number of sheep (or cattle or horses) that any one farmer could graze on open pastures to avoid overgrazing. The date by which sheep had to be taken off the fells in autumn was determined by the local manor court, and they were not allowed back on again in spring until the court said so. If they kept too many or left them on too long, or dug too much peat, or dug it at the wrong time, or transgressed in any other way, they were hauled up before the court and fined.

The path from the Hill Inn to the summit crosses a field called Philpin Sleights and there are several fields between Ribblesdale and here with Sleights in their name. It means level field. Sleights was one of these ancient stinted pastures which spread on both sides of the road, though it was later divided up into the smaller fields we see today. It appears in the manor court records for a sitting held in 1543 as 'le sleyghtes' and the case in question concerned stinting matters and involved tenants from Southerscales and Inmanloge (now Lodge Hall in Ribblesdale). The tenants were accused of not keeping 'le stynt' – they had broken the rules though the records do not say in what way. Later that century they were in trouble again for

'le overstinte' and for pasturing stock 'supra le stand' (a nice mix of three languages!). In this case they had clearly disregarded the court rulings by pasturing more animals on Sleights than they were entitled to.

Across the valley Scales Moor (or Twistleton Fell as it used to be) was converted into a stinted pasture in 1810 and Twistleton Pasture, between the Scales Moor boundary wall and the valley bottom, was another stinted pasture stretching from Twistleton Scar End to Chapel-le-Dale village. In 1755 it was still a stinted pasture but at some point after that it was internally sub-divided by building the various straight walls that plunge down from Scales Moor.

Before they were converted to stinted pastures Twistleton Fell and Ingleborough Fell were open common pastures, legally known as *commons*, on which commoners (those who lived in the relevant townships) could freely let their stock wander with minimal or no external control. They had the freedom to keep sheep or cattle 'sans nombre' (based on how many stock they could over-winter at the farmstead). Both are now stinted commons. The open area of Ingleborough, stretching all the way round the mountain from the wall at Meregill to the next wall above Clapdale, is stinted common land, divided by an invisible boundary into two separate commons – Ingleborough Common (or Fell, as it used to be) on the western side and Clapham Bents, Newby Moss and Simon Fell on the southern and eastern flanks. Storrs Common, as the name suggests, is also a stinted common. The fundamental reason why uncontrolled commons were converted to stinted commons was to limit the number of stock to avoid the over-stocking that was leading to the degradation of natural habitats and grazing grounds. It is possible that the smaller sheepfolds dotted around the mountain were built when it became a stinted common when there was a greater formal need to gather and manage stock.

Post-medieval enclosure

Large areas of common land and stinted pastures across the Dales were subjected to a formal process of enclosure, either by private agreement between existing graziers or by Act of Parliament. In the Dales this process mainly occurred between 1760 and 1860. In some cases huge swathes of land were carved up and separated by dry stone walls, essentially privatising the land and giving farmers complete control of their own allocation. Ingleborough, however, did not undergo this process, except around Clapham.

Much of the western side of the mountain was left unenclosed, as stinted pasture, or had long since been carved up in a piecemeal fashion creating what later maps referred to as 'ancient enclosures'. These had probably first been created during the Tudor period – and possibly earlier – with further enclosures being created as the centuries passed. If the field boundaries are ruler-straight, as between Highwood Pasture and White Scar Cave, they will be of a later date than those which are irregular in size and shape like the series of small medieval enclosures across the valley above Chapel-le-Dale and Weathercote.

Farming today

The huge expanse of land that stretches from Black Shiver Moss and Humphrey Bottom in the north to White Scars and Grey Scars in the south – Ingleborough Common – remains unenclosed and it is easy to understand why even on a casual walk across it. On the one hand it was deemed incapable of improvement and the rationale for most enclosure was to improve the productive capacity of the land. Here, though, the veneer of glacial deposits makes the

surface damp at the best of times giving rise to acidic soils and vegetation species that may be botanically quite rare but have little nutritional value for sheep or cattle. To improve such ground would have been expensive beyond belief and economic madness. Then there is the almost unbroken limestone pavement running from Sleights Pasture in the north to Crina Bottom in the south with its equally limited stocking potential.

Such types of land can only support very low stocking densities, thinking not in terms of sheep per hectare but hectares per sheep. On the terraces and below Raven Scar, on the other hand, a combination of limestone bedrock and a more sheltered situation produces higher quality pasture able to support much greater densities. The soils are well drained and less acidic thereby producing a range of grasses and other flowering species with infinitely more of value to sheep and cattle alike. These richer pastures are used to rear and fatten cattle and to support sheep before and after lambing time.

Field sports

There is also a very different reason why Ingleborough Common was never enclosed. The owners and managers of the Ingleborough Estate, based at Clapham, were intent on developing its potential as a sporting estate largely based on grouse shooting, a pastime that became increasingly important to those with the wherewithal to afford it from the late 18th century onwards. Through the following century many landed estates viewed moorland as the exclusive preserve of the red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) and to ensure this it was necessary to promote the growth of heather and this necessitated strict control of sheep numbers. Uncontrolled heather burning was stopped and sheep were removed. Much of the southern side of the mountain, and around Ribblehead, were managed as grouse moors but the western side was not developed to the same degree. There are crumbling shooting butts above Crina Bottom and a large prehistoric burial cairn on Harry Hallam's Moss looks as though it has been re-figured into a butt. Grouse are now very rarely seen on this side of the mountain – indeed have been scarce for decades – and organised shoots on the mountain long since came to an end.

Stewardship

Much of Ingleborough was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in recognition of the importance of its wide range of threatened upland habitats, and 1014 hectares now make up the Ingleborough National Nature Reserve, managed by Natural England from its base at Colt Park. This designation gives the environment wide protection and allows re-wilding and habitat restoration to be undertaken: on High Lot heather regeneration is underway and is already attracting back red grouse. Souterscales and Scar Close Moss are being allowed to re-wild by keeping stock out under the management of Natural England and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

In time, much of the western side of the mountain will revert to a state that Souterscales' medieval herders would recognise and feel at home in.

Glossary

<i>Bield</i>	a short length of wall, linear in form, often L-shaped or cross-shaped, designed to provide shelter for stock against severe weather. Derivation: <i>beldo</i> (Old English) or <i>bieldo</i> (Old West Scandinavian).
<i>Co-axial</i>	a field system with long parallel boundaries and shorter cross-walls creating individual enclosures.
<i>Commons/common land</i>	land owned by one person or organisation on which others have legal rights, such as for pasturing, collecting turf or stone.
<i>Forest</i>	a tract of land used for hunting game protected by a complex set of laws. Hunting forests or chases were rarely tree-covered but consisted of more open or lightly-wooded ground. Derivation: <i>foris</i> meaning 'out of doors'.
<i>Free warren</i>	the right to hunt animals of the forest, granted by the king.
<i>Grange</i>	an outlying farm complex or estate under monastic control.
<i>Lodge</i>	an individual farmstead under monastic control.
<i>Pilgrimage of Grace</i>	a widespread uprising in the North against the government's religious policies compounded by disaffection over enclosure of common land and the imposition of higher rents and taxes.
<i>Orthostat</i>	a large upstanding stone set into the base or lower part of a dry stone wall.
<i>Palynology</i>	The study of pollen grains recovered from soil to identify plant species.
<i>Salving</i>	rubbing grease into a sheep's fleece before dipping was introduced.
<i>Set pot</i>	a cauldron made of copper used for boiling water or other liquids.
<i>Spaining</i>	separating lambs from ewes in autumn.
<i>Stinting</i>	the process by which individual farmers are granted the right to graze a specific number of beasts (cattle) or sheep.
<i>Transhumance</i>	a system of farming whereby stock are moved seasonally from valley bottom pastures to spend the summer months at higher altitudes.
<i>Vaccary</i>	a cow house or cow farm, in either monastic or secular control, consisting of a complex of buildings and enclosures.

Further reading

Ingleborough. Landscape and History, by D Johnson, Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, pp 21-25, 119-23 and 169-72, provides a synopsis of farming and grouse shooting on the mountain through the ages. For a detailed survey of commons and stinting see Winchester, AJL and Straughton, EA 2010 'Stints and sustainability: managing stock levels on common land in England, c. 1600 – 2006' *Agricultural History Review* 58 (1), pp. 30-48. See also Rodgers, CP, Straughton, EA, Winchester, AJL and Pieraccini, M 2010 *Contested common land* London: Earthscan, for a detailed examination of common rights issues and conflicts across the country.

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