

ART. XX.—*The Common Fields of Hayton.* By T. H. B. GRAHAM.

Communicated at Carlisle, September 12th, 1907.

I have taken some pains to trace the site of the old common fields, or to use a synonymous term, town-fields of the parish of Hayton. Each township of the parish appears to have possessed at least one such field, composed of contiguous plots of customary freehold tenure, subject to the payment of very small ancient rents to the lord of the particular manor in which it lay. At the close of the eighteenth century there were many relics of these fields in existence, but, unfortunately, at that period it is rare to find plans delineated upon the title deeds, and the mere verbal description of the property sold or exchanged is, at this distance of time, extremely vague. In the following century, however, the deeds frequently bear plans, which show at a glance the shape and surroundings of the land conveyed, and by comparing those plans with my estate map, I have been able to identify the position of some fragments of those townfields which are expressly referred to. A few of them still continued in their original uninclosed state; others had been merely surrounded by a hedge, while the majority had, for the purpose of improved cultivation, been bought up and laid together, so as to form modern inclosures, and thus their pristine shape and features had been effaced for ever.

These fragments may be compared to the few bones which a geologist sometimes adduces as the datum from which the complete skeleton of an extinct organism may be reconstructed, but in the present case the hope that we shall ever ascertain the size and form of the local

townfields seems a forlorn one, for we only make their acquaintance at a late period when they had become degenerate and obsolete.

The typical English common field was, as Mr. Seeböhm tells us,* divided into a great number of small strips, separated from one another by margins of unploughed turf, and containing an acre or half an acre apiece, or to be more precise, containing what was, at the period when they were laid out, locally reputed an acre or half an acre, for these strips usually consisted of as much land as the old-fashioned plough could conveniently traverse in a working day.

In Germany, where a similar system of cultivation prevailed, the word *morgen*, literally "morning," was used to denote a strip in the common field, while in France *journal*, meaning a day's work, had a similar meaning.

When we speak of an acre nowadays we mean any area of ground which contains the exact quantity of 4840 square yards, but it would surprise many people to learn that the acre of former times had a conventional shape. Such nevertheless appears to have been the case, for Du Cange tells us that the English acre mentioned in the History of Battle Abbey was forty perches in length and four in breadth, and even Dr. Johnson defines it as "a quantity of land containing in length forty perches and four in breadth."

Now forty perches make a furlong, and a furlong, as Spelman informs us, means a furrow-long or the length of a furrow in a ploughed field. It is very inconvenient, when ploughing a small piece of land, to be continually turning the plough, and it seems to have been the custom, from time immemorial, to lay out the strips so that the furrows might be as long as possible, and so that the plough might travel forty perches (or one-eighth of a mile) without a turn. That is the reason why the length of

* The English Village Community, Chapter I.

the strips in the common fields frequently seems out of all proportion to their breadth, for if they contained an acre apiece, their length was forty perches or rods and their breadth four rods. If they contained half an acre apiece, their length was one furlong and their breadth two rods, while if they consisted of a quarter of an acre only, their length was still forty rods and their breadth but one rod. This unit of forty by four rods or perches, which was made or recognised as the standard measure by the Statute 33, Edw. I., is what Prof. Maitland has called "the ideal acre."* For a variety of reasons,—it may have been the laziness of the ploughmen, the feebleness of the oxen or horses, the stubbornness of the soil, or especially the conformation of the ground, the actual acre of the common fields often fell short of the ideal both as regards size and symmetry, but for all that it was locally reputed to be and was called an acre. As a general rule every commoner possessed several, sometimes a very great number of strips in the common field and these did not lie together in one block, but were widely scattered over the open field, in order that he might obtain his due share of the better as well as of the poorer soil. When all the crop had been carried, it was customary in some places for the commoners to turn out cattle or sheep, to graze upon the entire area of the open field, or to allow parts of it to lie fallow in rotation, so that the land might recover its power of fertilisation. But I cannot supply any evidence of such customs at Hayton.

The strips of the common field were, as I have already mentioned, generally called "acres," a term which did not originally imply anything with regard to their actual admeasurement. In Cumberland they were more frequently called "dales" or "riggs." The grass border which separated the strips one from another was in general termed a "balk," which meant a strip of turf left

* *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 379.

unturmed by a careless ploughman between two parallel furrows, and hence the margin of grass intentionally left to prevent one neighbour from encroaching upon the strip of another in the open field. The Cumbrians called this grass margin a "reean." The modern Germans use the words *balken*, *rain*, and *rain-balken*, to denote the same thing. A block or group of parallel strips was in some parts of England termed a "furlong,"* from the fact of its being a furrow in length, and every such furlong was bordered by a balk much broader than that which separated its constituent strips, where the hare sat in her form, and the wild vegetation flourished undisturbed by the plough. I do not think that the Cumberland people used any specific term to denote such a group of dales or riggs. The balk which lay at the head of the furlong, where the ploughs turned when they had traversed a strip, was distinguished by the name of the "head-land" or "head-rigg." Very often the lie of the ground necessitated one furlong being laid out cross-wise, or at right angles to another, so that the head-rigg of the former abutted on the side of the latter. These transverse strips were then termed "butts" or "butt-riggs."

Such was the "fair field *full of folk*," which the fourteenth-century poet William Langland saw in his vision concerning Piers the ploughman, "where all manner of men, the mean and the rich, in ering and sowing, swonken full hard." Piers told the pilgrims that he had a *half-acre* to erie, so he and the pilgrims set about ploughing the half-acre, while "diggers and delvers digged up the *balks*," and the old reprobate, "Sloth," remarked that, though he had been priest and parson for more than thirty winters, he could neither "sol-fa, nor sing, nor Saints' lives read," but he knew how to find a hare in a *furlong*.

Inclosure and plough have long since obliterated the common fields of Hayton parish, but I have discovered

* The term used in this sense is not a unit of measure. "Shot" was elsewhere a synonymous expression.

the following clues which tend to show the position of what remained of them three generations ago.

THE NOOK TOWNFIELD.

The accompanying plan, of land lying westward of Hayton village, appears from internal evidence to have been made between the years 1816-1826. A comparison with the map of the manor* shows that the lane leading from Byegill to a now forgotten building called "Lonnin Foot," formed the boundary of the ancient land. The long narrow shape of the inclosures, and the alternating names of their owners, imply that the tract had formed part of a common field. Half way along the "Briar Lonning," leading from Hayton Lodge to Hayton Town-foot, is a group of three dales, one of which is thus described in a conveyance by John Threlkeld in 1827:—

A customary close called Gully Flatts dale containing by estimation 2 acres (the Statute measure was only 1a. 1r. 29p.) *in the Townfield called the Nook* within the territories or precincts of Hayton, by payment of the customary rent of 4d., bounded by the lands of Abraham Bird on the East, and of William Blenkinsop on the West.

The two dales belonging to William Blenkinsop and Abraham Bird, which lay west of it, were then uninclosed, while another dale still further to the westward, belonging to William Hall, extended to "Briar Lonning" and contained one acre and one rood.

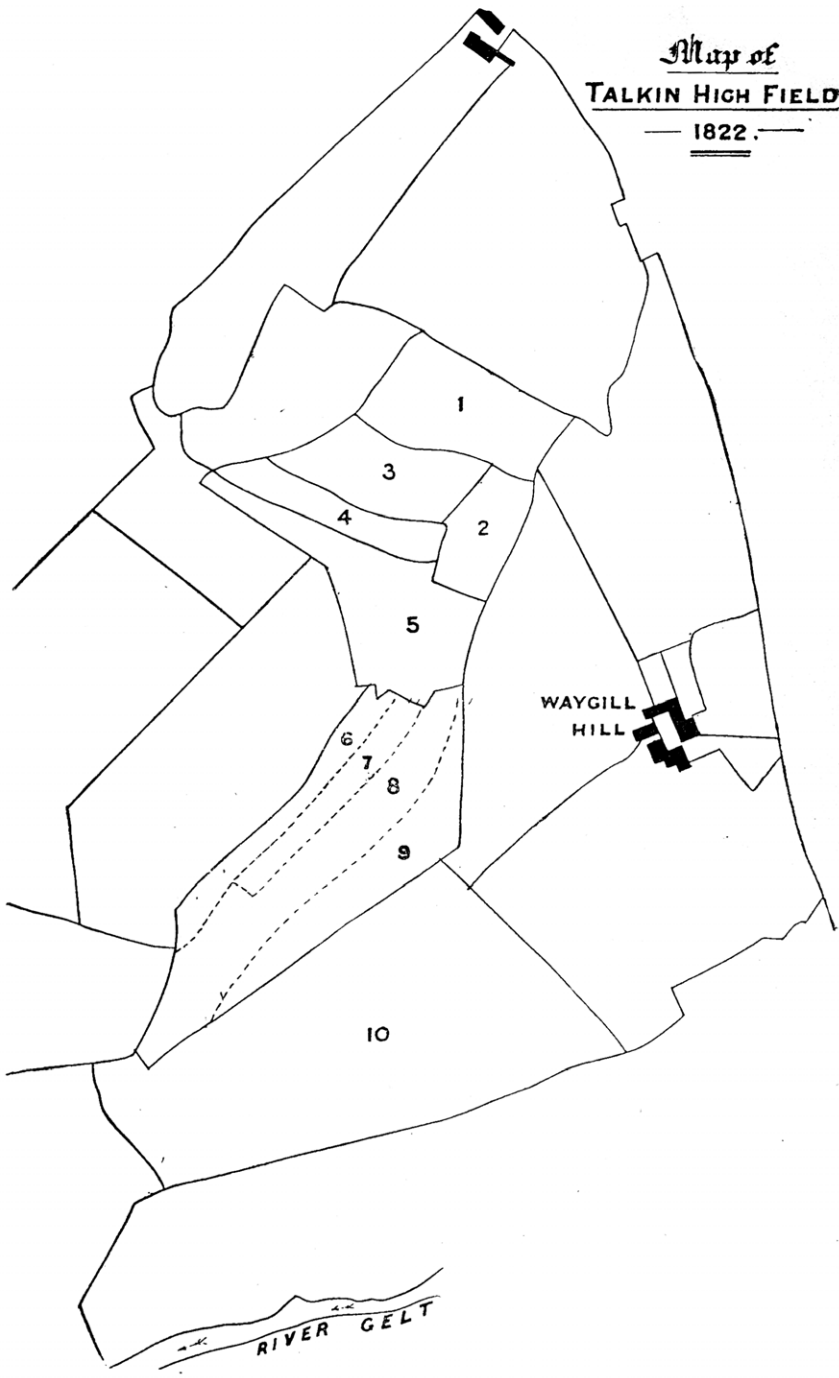
I have selected these examples as typical of what were perhaps original dales containing a reputed acre apiece. The inclosure of the common pasture in 1704 had taught the parishioners the advantage of larger fields, held not in "rigg and reean," but in severalty, and protected by hedges, and so the same system of inclosure was applied

* These *Transactions* vol. vii., N.S., p. 43.

The map illustrates the layout of The Nook Townfield, bounded by Edmond Castle Lands to the north and Hayton Lodge to the east. Roads lead towards Warwick, Brampton, and Hayton. Numerous land parcels are delineated and labeled with owner names, including J. Brown, T.H. Graham Esq., Wm. Robinson, R. Brown, Jno. Bell, A. Bird, Wm. Blenkinsop, Wm. Hall, Thos. Westgarth, Jno. Gill, Jno. Newton, R. Brown, Thos. Graham, Jno. Bell, Wm. Robinson, T.H. Graham, Wm. Hall, Revd Rice, and others. Specific features like 'BYEGILL' and 'LONNIN FOOT' are also noted.

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Map of
TALKIN HIGH FIELD
1822.



to the arable townfields. The apparent inequality in the size of the holdings at this date is partly accounted for by the fact that the owner of an original dale frequently acquired by exchange those which adjoined his own on either side, and included the whole within his new hedge.

TALKIN HIGH FIELD.

The sketch plan is copied from the Edmond Castle estate map of 1822. The dotted lines indicate that the dales numbered 6, 7, 8 and 9 were still uninclosed. The following is a detailed description of the numbered plots of land and the dates of their conveyance:—

- 1 & 2. Thomas Wharton's two closes, formerly parcels of uninclosed land, in Talkin Highfields, containing 3 acres. (1831.) (According to statute measure these closes contained respectively 2a. 1r. 6p. and 0a. 3r. 36p.)
3. John Sproat's "Highfield dale" containing 0a. 3r. 16p., customary rent 5d., and "Lambfield dale" containing 3 roods, customary rent 2d., both forming one close called "Highfield." (1854.) Statute measure 1a. 2r. 16p.
4. Sarah Hodgson's "Highfield dale" containing an acre, customary rent 5d. (1851.) According to statute measure it contained 1a. or. 20p.
5. Robert Tinniswood's "Highfield meadow" containing 3 acres, customary rent 4d. (1843.)
6. Thomas Davis's "Highfield dale" containing 1a. or. 2p. (1852.)
7. John Bushby's "Highdale," situate in the High Fields at Talkin, containing 0a. 3r. 38p., customary rent 3d., together with the rights of common upon Talkin Fell appurtenant thereto. (1840.)
8. Richard Watson's "Highfield dale" containing 2a. 3r. 5p., customary rent 1d., in exchange for a field called "Low Dark" * containing 1a. or. 38p. (1843.)
9. John Rutherford's "Highfield dale" containing 2a. or. 14p., customary rent 6d. (1843.)
10. A modern inclosure containing 11a. 2r. 4p. which still retained in 1840 the name of "Highfield."

* Evidently a contraction of "day-work" an expression which occurs several times in Bishop Nicolson's "Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese." Compare the German term *Tagwerk* mentioned by Maitland, *op. cit.* p. 377.

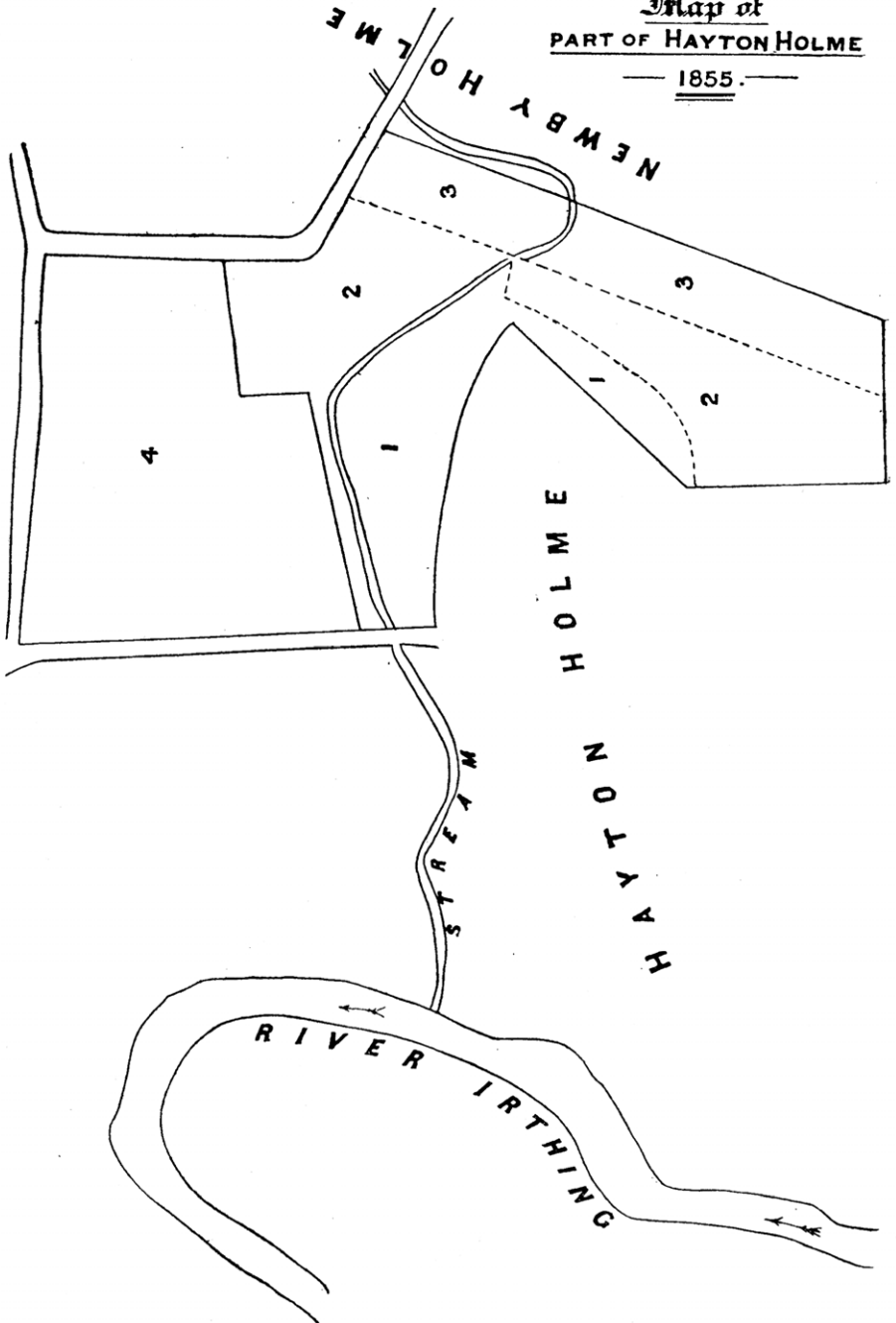
In 1839 a piece of land is expressly described as bounded on the south by the *townfield* called *Highfields*, and it was not until fifteen years later that the last remaining dale was absorbed by Waygill Hill Farm.

HAYTON HOLME.

This low-lying tract, consisting at the present day of open pasture land, is constantly liable to floods, and is deeply seamed with the marks of old river channels. The Ordnance Survey (sheet xvii., S.E., six inch scale) marks the parish boundary—an apparently arbitrary zigzag line, which followed the sides or headlands of the ancient dales in this common field. In a former paper I have exhibited a plan showing the position of some of the dales of the common field, which was included between the parish boundary and the river Irthing, and have given from the title deeds a description of other dales which occupied the same area. I now produce another plan, dated 1855, which it will be observed fits into the one first mentioned, and shows that Hayton Holme at that point abutted upon Newby Holme within an irregularly-shaped inclosure of meadowland lying in two parishes and three manors. The portion of that inclosure numbered 1 was customary of the manor of Hayton, and formed the boundary of Hayton parish, Hayton manor, and Hayton common field. The portion numbered 2 was freehold, and parcel of the manor of Newby and parish of Irthington, while the portion numbered 3 containing 1a. 3r. 19p. was also in Irthington parish, but was customary of the manor of Wetheral and held under the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle.

There are at the present day at least two other customary tenements of the manor of Wetheral situate in Newby Holme, one of them near Bankhead and the others in the meadow called the Pickle, on the opposite side of the Irthing. It is difficult to understand how the Dean and Chapter became possessed of those detached plots of land in Irthington parish, and equally difficult to account for

Map of
PART OF HAYTON HOLME
1855.



the existence of a similar customary holding, belonging to the manor of Wetheral, and situate at Million House in Hayton village. The lower portion of the inclosure numbered 4 was formerly known as "Armsyke." The value of field-names is here illustrated, for it is obvious that "Armsyke" must have been the term applied to the syke or stream which from here to the river forms the parish boundary. It is clearly identical with the "Arne-home sike" of the Elizabethan Survey.

LITTLE CORBY FIELD.

An enfranchisement deed dated the 25th March, 1755, describes a "tenement" at Little Corby consisting of a messuage, a close called "Scarvake," two acres *in a common field called "Mill riggs"* and 12 acres *in a common field called "Little Corby field"* together with common of pasture and turbary in the wastes of the manors of Great Corby and Little Corby.

"Mill riggs" was, as its name implies, situate near the corn mill at Warwick Bridge, and "Little Corby Field" lay in the holme at the junction of the rivers Irthing and Eden.

FENTON AND FAUGH.

I have not any doubt that a common field was assigned to this township, but, as I do not possess any deeds which throw light on the subject, I am unable to apply that test to ascertain its precise locality.

In conclusion I must apologise for having given such a slight and incomplete sketch of the common fields of Hayton, but it is drawn from a source which is especially difficult of access, namely, from muniments of title which rarely see the light of day. Other landowners may possibly be able to supply further evidence from their own private documents, but even in that case the subject must as far as regards details always remain, as it is at present, abstruse and obscure.