

OPEN FIELD AGRICULTURE IN THE PEAK DISTRICT

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IT has for too long been assumed that in the Middle Ages the villages of the northern part of Derbyshire were not the traditional type of nucleated villages that were typical of the Midlands and of the Vale of York, but "scattered hamlets grouped into parishes for the purposes of administrative convenience", as for example in western Somerset or in Devonshire.¹ This is based largely on two assumptions, one that the highland zone of England did not in general have nucleated villages, and the other that the Domesday entries for the upland parts of the county appear in the form of several important main manors each with a large number of smaller subordinate berewicks attached. The first of these two arguments is itself an assumption which needs testing, especially as it has already been suggested that "the pastoral villages of the western hills, the Peak District, the Pennines, or the Lake District knew some arable fields — even open fields".² The Domesday evidence, too, is not in the least conclusive. The terms "manor" and "berewick" were frequently applied quite arbitrarily by the clerks. The appearance of a village as a subordinate berewick means no more (and no less) than that it was attached administratively to the main manor, and it does not necessarily mean that it was just a hamlet. The berewicks of such enormous Domesday manors as the royal estate of Leominster in Herefordshire, the archbishop of York's manor of Sherburn in the Vale of York, and Ilbert de Lacy's manor of Kippax, to the east of Leeds, were all, or nearly all, nucleated villages in their own right. There is nothing whatever to suggest that the same is not true of the large estates in the Peak District, those with their centres at Darley, Matlock Bridge, Wirksworth, Ashbourne, Parwich, Bakewell, Ashford, Hope, Longendale and Hathersage. Indeed, since the whole of this part of the county was shared by only four people in 1086 (the king himself, Henry de Ferrers, William Peveril and Ralph fitz Hubert), it would have been most surprising if the estates had not been in some way grouped together for the sake of more efficient administration.

The object of this article, then, is to examine such evidence as there is, and to see whether in fact open field agricultural methods, as opposed to the cultivation of small separate enclosed fields, were in use here during the medieval period. One of the main sources of information has been the traces

¹ F. M. Stenton, *V.C.H., Derby*, I, 312.

² M. W. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, 40.

which survive on the ground of "ridge and furrow", demonstrated by Beresford to be an indication of the existence of medieval strip cultivation. The other main source has been those surviving surveys which do show open fields and strip systems in this area. These two have been reinforced by reference to Tate's list of enclosures in the county which included open field arable.³ It must be emphasized, however, that the absence of any noticeable ridge and furrow is no proof that it did not exist: it may have been ploughed out subsequently, or have disappeared naturally on sloping hillsides through the phenomenon known as "mass wastage". Similarly, the existence of a 17th century survey showing only enclosed fields is no proof that those fields had not been open a century or more earlier. Finally, the examples quoted below cannot pretend to be a comprehensive and definitive list of all the areas where ridge and furrow may be found in the upland areas of Wirksworth and High Peak wapentakes, although there will be enough instances to show that its occurrence is by no means infrequent. Whilst some cases of ridge and furrow are obvious to the most casual observer, there are many more where it has been obscured, either by some comparatively high crop or by subsequent but not necessarily intensive ploughing. The discovery of these can often only be a matter of luck — an aerial photograph taken in the right conditions of light and shadow, a crop pattern showing the outlines of the system, or even a chance undulation on a skyline.

In the same way that the Anglo-Saxon invaders advanced up the river valleys bringing their system of land usage with them, the modern observer must, if he is to make sense of the evidence, follow the lines of the rivers penetrating into the highland areas. He must also treat the zone as a whole, and not stop at any artificial county boundary. The starting point for the western part of the area must therefore be Ashbourne, where the various streams which drain the highlands join the Dove as it enters the lowland plain. As might be expected with a town lying at between 400 and 500 ft. above sea level, Ashbourne shows clear evidence of strip cultivation.⁴ The same can be said of the villages in the valley of the Henmore Brook on the east side of the town. The open fields of the lost villages of Offcote and Underwood are clearly visible, as are those of Atlow, where, as so often, one group of strips can be seen running at a sharp angle to another.⁵ The village of Callow, almost deserted but not quite, also has its strips visible.⁶ Slightly further north, the road from Ashbourne to Wirksworth provides a classic example of strip systems. Beyond the open fields of Underwood there lie

³ W. E. Tate, "Enclosure Acts and Awards relating to Derbyshire", *D.A.J.*, LXV (1944-5), 32-48. Tate suggested, but apart from compiling this list made no effort to prove, that there had been a considerable amount of open field working in the north of the county.

⁴ Ordnance Survey, 7th ed., Grid References 189477, 175468. There is a large quantity at this latter point, but only one reference will be given for any one stretch. The existence of ridge and furrow about 1547 is also shown by E. M. Yates, "Map of Ashbourne", *D.A.J.*, LXXX (1960), 124-8.

⁵ Atlow, 232485, 228489; Offcote, 214476, 208482; Underwood, 194487. Offcote in 1086 was a berewick of Ashbourne, and had at some time earlier been sufficiently prosperous to be assessed at two carucates (*D.B.*, I, fo. 272v.), though it was not taxed separately in the 14th century (e.g. 1334-5, P.R.O. E 179/91/7). Underwood appears in the reign of Edward I (*Rotuli Hundredorum*, I, 58), although judging by its tax assessment of 7s. 4d. it was the smallest village in Wirksworth wapentake to be taxed on its own in 1334-5. It was still in existence in 1577 when the Saxton map of Derbyshire was compiled (C. Saxton, *Atlas of England*, 1576-9).

⁶ 258516, 258512, and possibly 267518.

those of Kniveton, where again there is clear evidence of their existence.⁷ Hognaston, the next village, lies slightly off the road, though its fields nevertheless straddled it.⁸ From the position of the parish boundaries it would seem that in all probability the open fields of Hognaston, Brassington and Carsington were continuous at this latter point. Certainly, from the point where Carsington parish is entered,⁹ ridge and furrow is continuous on the north side of the road not only into Carsington village but on through Hopton to the Wirksworth parish boundary, whilst on the south side there is evidence of its existence at least as far as Carsington. From Hopton onwards on the south side of the road ridge and furrow once again appears as far as the Wirksworth boundary. Here there is proof of the validity of crop patterns as evidence.¹⁰ One field, to all intents and purposes completely flat, had nevertheless a well defined pattern in the grass, with a darker colour in what seemed to have been the furrows. In the next field there were the usual well marked undulations, which continued exactly the pattern of the first field. The whole of this road, in fact, has the air of having been at one time a track through the open fields of the parishes along the balks, and follows the strip pattern to a surprising extent.

Westwards, in the valleys of the other streams draining down into Ashbourne, the layout of strip systems is very similar. Brassington was surrounded by a large quantity of open field arable, which at one time adjoined that of Carsington, Bradbourne, and perhaps Ballidon. At the time of the enclosure act of 1803 there were still 4,000 acres, including open field arable, waiting to be enclosed.¹¹ These Ballidon fields, again, join or come very close to the open fields surrounding Parwich. Evidence of these begins on the hills to the south, and continues westwards almost as far as Parwich Lees.¹² On the north side of the road from Parwich to Parwich Lees the end of the open fields can be clearly seen where the ridges and furrows end at the ditch which once enclosed the village arable. It would be interesting to know whether the hedge which is now associated with the ditch dates from the enclosure act of 1788, when roughly 1,000 acres were still left to be enclosed, or whether it is older. Enclosure of arable had been taking place here long before, in the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth I, and again in the reign of Charles I when in 1639 Thomas Leving in his will admitted to following his neighbours' example in enclosing land out of the common fields.¹³ Ridge and furrow is also visible on the east side of the village.¹⁴

To the south of the village it has not yet been established whether the open fields of Parwich actually joined those of Tissington and of the deserted village of Lea by Bradbourne (whose fields themselves may have joined Bradbourne's). What is certain is that there is no gap between the fields of

⁷ 212489, and from 213506 to the parish boundary at 219508.

⁸ 231515—233524, as well as at 236511.

⁹ 233524.

¹⁰ 268536.

¹¹ Brassington (a typical nucleated vill), 234541, 230533, 222540, 232522; Bradbourne, 213528, 211529, 208531, 204546, 202537; Ballidon, 205544, 199545, 201541.

¹² 192535, 172548, 173546.

¹³ *V.C.H., Derby*, II, 172-3.

¹⁴ 193543.

Lea, Tissington, Fenny Bentley and Thorpe, and that there was probably none between Fenny Bentley and Mapleton, whilst only the river separated those of Mapleton from those of the lost Staffordshire village of Okeover. Anyone not familiar with the appearance of ridge and furrow could not do better than to walk along the road past Lea Hall, through Tissington and across the valley of the Wash Brook towards Thorpe.¹⁵ Thus on the southern edge of the highland area, lying on the whole below 800 ft., this survey of the incidence of ridge and furrow gives the result that might be expected. There was during the medieval period at some time highly intensive open field arable cultivation, in areas which are now primarily pastoral or dairy farming. The only exceptions to this are where hillsides sloped too abruptly for the use of the plough to be practicable, as for example on the steeply sloping sides of the valley of the Bradbourne Brook between Fenny Bentley and Bradbourne, or the hillside above Mapleton dropping down sharply to the plain of the Dove.

Further north in the Dove valley, the steep limestone gorges and the quantity of high moorland make it less likely that there will be the same intensive traces of arable cultivation. This is true, but the real difference is that there are fewer villages in all in a given area, and not that arable cultivation disappears. On the contrary, it will be seen that each village, even in this upland area, had its open fields, which at one time probably covered a very wide area. North and west of the area just described, for example, there is the village of Alsop, lying, as its name implies, in the Dale. This dale is far too steep-sided for the heavy medieval plough (or even the modern one) to be a practical farming proposition. Nevertheless Alsop had its open fields above the village where the hillside flattened, and beyond where the valley widened,¹⁶ which incidentally involved cultivation at a height of over 900 ft. This also explains why the open fields of Parwich and Alsop do not meet: the valley beyond Parwich Lees was too narrow and steep-sided for cultivation by the men of Parwich lower down, although the "Lees" or clearing to which they gave their name would seem to show that they did their best! Further north, beyond the eastern arm of the Dove gorge, traces of ridge and furrow are still visible near the two farms which are all that is left of the village of Cold Eaton.¹⁷ The Dove gorge itself is the outstanding example of a river valley in which it is not practicable to wield a plough, from its confluence with the Manifold between Thorpe and Ilam to the village

¹⁵ Lea by Bradbourne, enclosed and abandoned after 1517 (Beresford, 346), has a vast quantity of ridge and furrow, stretching in all directions from 195202, and going at least as far north as 196526. South of the road at 186520 a ditch separates the north-south furrows on the Lea side from the east-west furrows on the Tissington side, and may mark the point where the fields of the two villages once met. Equally there is so much ridge and furrow in all directions from Tissington, particularly to the west and south, that there is no point in giving references to it all. It runs south beyond Fenny Bentley to 173498 and 179495. On the west it goes on into the open fields of Thorpe, at least as far as 160512. In the valley of the Wash Brook it extends at least as far north as the line 164529—170529. At 160512 it comes to an end on the north side on the 800 ft. contour line, with open moorland behind — clearly the stone wall here is an old one marking the edge of the open fields. Thorpe equally is well surrounded on the east side, and there are traces on the west at 152503. Mapleton, 172470, thence to and beyond the village: Okeover, 161481.

¹⁶ 152555, 157554.

¹⁷ 148566, 152567: for the village see Beresford, 346. This village disappeared comparatively late, since it was still marked on the Saxton map in 1577.

of Hartington, where traces of the old open fields may again be seen.¹⁸ The enclosure act in 1798 here also included arable in the 12,000 acres that were enclosed, though again it is clear from older evidence that enclosure had been in progress in 1543, if not before.¹⁹ It should here be emphasized that the act included land in other townships in this vast parish, even though proof of ridge and furrow has only so far come to light in two of them. At Pilsbury, for example, another instance of a shrunken village, there is clear evidence both above and below the earthworks of the castle which once dominated a larger township of open fields along the flatter part of the valley floor.²⁰ The strips of the next village of Crowdecote are also clearly visible, and there is little space, if any, between them and the fields of Longnor.²¹ It would obviously be ridiculous to consider one side of the Dove without the other, so that the existence of open fields round the villages of Sheen and Alstonfield must also be noted.²²

Since the Anglo-Saxon invaders who brought with them this system of cultivation as they moved up the rivers would be unlikely to make much distinction between the Dove and Manifold valleys — except that the Manifold valley would be perhaps less forbidding at the confluence — the historian looking for evidence of their agricultural systems must follow them up both rivers without regard for the limitations of later county boundaries. Since the geological structure of the two valleys is much the same, open field evidence is again to be expected outside the steep-sided valleys. The open fields of the lost village of Blore are obvious, and continue to the scarp of the Manifold valley itself.²³ Round Ilam there is some evidence, both in the river valley and on the spur between it and the Dove.²⁴ At Grindon, Butterton and Warslow there are also indications of strip systems.²⁵

So much for the Dove and Manifold valleys in the highland area. The lower end of the Derwent valley, where it flows out of the highlands past Darley, Matlock and Cromford, presents its own problems. In this area (with which must be coupled Wirksworth itself, although that lies at the head of the system of streams which culminates in the river Ecclesbourne), industrialization over the last two centuries, and the consequent growth of urban development, have successfully hidden any traces there may have been of open field systems. If, however, it can be shown that in all the surrounding countryside open field systems existed, as well as further up the rivers Wye and Derwent, it will be quite likely that such systems existed here in places where the terrain was suitable. The gorges through Matlock itself and up the Griffé Grange valley were too steep-sided, for example, to have been fit for ploughing.

It has already been seen that there were open fields in Hopton and Callow, the villages immediately adjacent to Wirksworth on the west and south-west.

¹⁸ 126601, 128601, 128598.

¹⁹ *V.C.H., Derby*, II, 172.

²⁰ 110639, 115634.

²¹ 090657, 096656, and from 092646 and 094655 to 100649 and 102647.

²² Sheen, 112614, 109608: Alstonfield, 133558, 129555.

²³ 138495, 133503, see Beresford, 386.

²⁴ 136508, 135517, 134521.

²⁵ 092539, 070569, 083585 (this last reference is very approximate).

On the other side of the Derwent, opposite Wirksworth and Cromford, ridge and furrow appears at Holloway and Lea, as well as further north at Tansley, east of Matlock.²⁶ This is not surprising, for neither here, nor even at Wirksworth, does the land round the township rise above 750 ft. On the west, too, ridge and furrow is visible round villages on streams draining down into the Derwent, and at far higher altitudes than Matlock or Cromford. It appears, for instance, both at Wensley, and at Snitterton, as also in the next group of villages, at Winster and Elton, where the open fields of the two villages cannot have been far apart. More occurs south of here, at Grangemill (Ivonbrook Grange) and Aldwark, where similarly the fields came as close to each other as the terrain would permit, though there is a gap to the south-west, between Aldwark and Parwich.²⁷ At Aldwark, as earlier at Alstonfield and Cold Eaton, the open fields lay at a height of well over 1,000 ft. An act of 1809 enclosed the last remaining open field arable at Elton and Winster. North of Wensley and Snitterton, in the Derwent valley, there are no traces of ridge and furrow round Darley, for the same reasons as at Matlock. As soon as the valley widens out, however, at the confluence of the rivers Wye and Derwent, a good deal of evidence is to be seen at Rowsley, between the railway and A.6 to the west of the town, and to the south-west, where the strips climbed up the hillside until it became too steep for the medieval plough, and they ended at a bank which is still clearly visible.²⁸

A mile west of Rowsley, the rivers Bradford and Lathkill join the Wye, and the basins of these two and their tributaries provide clear indications of open field systems. Even Stanton-in-Peak and Birchover, perched on or below the high ground of Stanton Moor, had their open fields.²⁹ On the opposite side of the steep narrow valley were the open fields of Alport, where Millfield Farm still stands in the middle of one of them, and of the lost village of Harthill, though there is a clear gap (Harthill Moor) between their fields and those of Elton and Gratton to the south.³⁰ Beyond Alport the strips of Youlgreave are still clearly visible on the flat valley floor below the village, and in places above it as well.³¹ The next hamlet, Middleton, had the last remains of its open fields enclosed at the same time as those of Youlgreave, in 1815.³² The total amount of open field arable by then extant in the two villages was a mere 32 acres, which when compared with the traces remaining on the ground to this day, let alone with the amount which has left no trace, shows to what an extent enclosure by agreement had already pro-

²⁶ 330565, 318578, 423597.

²⁷ Wensley, 260611; Snitterton, 276607; Winster, 235606; Elton, 227617, 217612, 220611; Ivonbrook, 242578, 237584; Aldwark, 232572.

²⁸ 254659, 253650.

²⁹ 242641, 242644, 239620.

³⁰ Alport, 228647, 222643; Harthill, 226639, 224630. In 1086 there was a small manor here belonging to Henry de Ferrers (*D.B.*, I, fo. 275 v.), though it was apparently uncultivated at the time. It later recovered somewhat, for in the 14th century tax lists it was assessed with Winster, and therefore still existed (e.g. 1334-5, P.R.O. E 179/91/7). By 1577 it had disappeared, as a village, since the Saxton atlas marks only Harthill Hall on the site, complete with a park round it — a classic example, it would seem, of the disappearance through imparking of a small village some time during the two preceding centuries.

³¹ 213638, 211638, 217647.

³² 198641, 194625.

ceeded. Further up the valley, at the next point where there is sufficient reasonably level ground, the strips of the "lost" village of Gratton are still to be seen.³³ Here Lowfield Farm stands in the middle of the strips of what was once an open field. The short gap between Gratton and Elton would have been very difficult for arable cultivation.

The precipitously sided Lathkill valley leads the historian to further complications, since the only land available for cultivation lies above the valley, at a considerable height, approaching or above the 1,000 ft. mark. At these heights on the limestone, although the majority of farms are primarily dairy or pastoral, the land is regularly ploughed and resown with grass and clover, "to keep the moor back", as one farmer put it. In theory, it would therefore seem unlikely that any traces of ridge and furrow would survive this regular ploughing as well as weathering and the usual processes of "mass wastage". In practice, there is a surprising quantity of evidence of one kind or another. The remaining open field arable of Over Haddon was enclosed in 1806, and ridge and furrow formation survives east of the village.³⁴ At One Ash, behind the grange, there are what seem to be faint traces.³⁵ Monyash had an enclosure act, this time in 1771, which seems to have included open field arable, and there is evidence of this arable both east and west of the village.³⁶

Beyond Monyash, at Chelmorton and Flagg, a fresh type of evidence comes into play. There is at Chelmorton only one faint suggestion of ridge and furrow, which is not sufficiently well marked to be accepted as evidence by itself,³⁷ whilst at Flagg, as at others of these high limestone villages such as Litton, five miles to the north-east, none has so far appeared. Yet open field arable at Chelmorton and Flagg was enclosed by act of parliament in 1805, and at Litton as early as 1762, so that the non-existence of ridge and furrow proves nothing. These high limestone villages, however, share one peculiarity. Most of them have a considerable amount of their land divided into long narrow fields, many of them in the region of 220 yards by 22 yds., lying parallel to each other, often with fresh groups of them lying at right angles to the others. On the large scale Ordnance Survey maps they look for all the world like groups of arable strips, although they are of course enclosed by stone walls. If it can be shown that these peculiar groups of fields were at one time strips or groups of strips, it may very well be that they are examples of early enclosure by agreement and exchange of strips, which would not result in the wholesale redistribution and reallocation of holdings which was done by the commissioners appointed under enclosure acts. The absence of any remains of ridge and furrow within these long narrow fields

³³ 203620, 210614. Beresford (346) suggested this as a possible lost village: the Domesday entry (*D.B.*, I, fo. 275 v.), the Saxton map, and the positioning of the open fields show that he was right, though it should be added that the village is only "lost" in the sense that it seems to have moved to the modern site at Dale End, less than half a mile away. A shift of population of this type would pass unremarked in a larger village like Youlgreave, where there is some evidence to suggest that the original village lay in the valley below the church, that it expanded up the hillside, and that the lower portion was then abandoned for the time being. In no sense was the village of Gratton depopulated.

³⁴ 213661, 216666.

³⁵ 166654. This seems to be another case of a lost hamlet, if not a village. It was a berewick of the royal manor of Bakewell in 1086, but by the end of the Middle Ages was no more than a monastic grange, where now only one farm survives.

³⁶ 147655, 158662.

³⁷ 114695.

would prove nothing. Since they would be the result of enclosure by agreement before any enclosure act for the village, the probability would be that the majority of the fields are over two hundred years old, and in many cases a great deal older. "Mass wastage" and the regular ploughing that most of these high limestone fields receive have thus had plenty of time to obliterate traces of older systems of cultivation.

That this is true for some places can be shown beyond all manner of doubt. There is extant Senior's survey of the three open fields of Buxton, dating from 1631.³⁸ By that time half the open fields there had been enclosed by agreement, or by some other non-parliamentary means, and the survey shows quite clearly this pattern of long narrow fields appearing in places.³⁹ At the two villages of Taddington and Priestcliffe, the villages immediately north of Chelmorton and Flagg, this same pattern appears on the modern map. It also appears on two 18th century surveys, one of which at least is pre-enclosure, and marks the boundaries of open field strips where walls are now to be found.⁴⁰ One of the surveys is dated 1773, twenty years before the act enclosing the arable fields. At Abney, on the high land north of Eyam and west of Hathersage, a survey made well on in the 19th century shows that north-west of the village there were still nine unenclosed strips of roughly one acre (220 by 22 yds.), which now have stone walls running where formerly the strip boundaries went. These nine open strips lay in the middle of a typical pattern of long narrow fields.⁴¹ At the western end of this pattern there is one large field, the furthest from the village, where ridge and furrow makes its appearance at long last.⁴² Two things are clear from this. Firstly, since the ridges and furrows fit in with the pattern of the long narrow enclosed fields, these latter were enclosed out of the open field arable — they lie between the ridge and furrow and the village, at a decreasing height. Secondly, the wall outside the large field containing the ridge and furrow was the wall surrounding the open fields, dividing them from the moor (as was the case at Thorpe, above, p. 114). All that is now needed is to produce evidence of ridge and furrow actually inside a long narrow field of this type. This is to be found at Ible, a village also surrounded by this type of enclosure, where one field shows quite clearly in its surface evidence that it was created by amalgamating and enclosing four separate strips.⁴³ Thus it can safely be concluded that where this pattern of long narrow fields in interlocking blocks exists (if it is not just a system of long parallel crofts stretching out behind

³⁸ Sheffield City Library, Bagshawe Collection, C.280.

³⁹ Similar pre-enclosure surveys in other parts of the country show similar patterns of enclosure by agreement where this had taken place. At least one such survey, that of Clayworth, Notts., sometimes marks the original strips inside these long narrow enclosures, thus showing that such a field, 220 by 22 yds., would often consist of two strips enclosed together. (W. E. Tate, "The Clayworth Manorial Map", *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, XLIV (1940), 108. This article includes a photograph of the map.)

⁴⁰ Sheffield City Library, Fairbank Collection, Bak 5L: Bagshawe Collection, C.280.

⁴¹ Fairbank Hop 4S shows the open strips, with the unenclosed lane running through them. Hop 5L, of 1849, shows not only that the strips had by then been enclosed, but that the lane which ran diagonally across them had also been enclosed separately, making these small fields even smaller. The enclosure of the lane must by now have been very necessary, since it had sunk several feet below the surrounding ground level.

⁴² 189801.

⁴³ 255570.

the houses on the village street), there is a very strong presumption of fairly early enclosure of open field arable, whose existence may be regarded as certain if there is any other supporting evidence.

Armed with this conclusion, it is now possible to examine the rest of the high limestone region of the Wye basin, aided and abetted by the surveys that exist for this area, as well as by the Fairbank Field Books, in which rough sketches of the property of individuals often reveal the fact that the land they held was in unenclosed strips. One of these books, for example, shows that at Tideswell and Wheston, in 1774, thirty-three years before the enclosure act for these two villages, Thomas Eyre's land was scattered in strips round the open fields.⁴⁴ This underlines the suggestion of the "long narrow field" pattern on the modern map, on the south-east of Tideswell and to the south of Wheston. Another field book gives clear evidence for strip cultivation in Wormhill,⁴⁵ whilst the fifth of this group of villages, Wardlow, can show a "long narrow field" pattern to the east, west and north-west, just where one would expect to find open fields. Further west, at the top of the scarp of the Wye gorge three miles east of Buxton, the village of Kingsterndale still had just four open strips left by the early 19th century, while at Harpurhill to the south of Buxton in 1773 the land of G. and W. Lomas was scattered in seven strips, in addition to their enclosed land.⁴⁶

Further east, there remain the villages of the lower part of the Wye. As would be expected, these too show considerable evidence of open field cultivation. Great and Little Longstone, for example, had their remaining open field arable enclosed by the same act as Wardlow, in 1810, and ridge and furrow is still to be seen at Great Longstone.⁴⁷ At Ashford, the court rolls show enclosure by agreement in progress in 1608, by the exchange of half-acre strips. Enclosure here came to an end with the act enclosing the arable of both Ashford and Sheldon in 1765, but the open fields of Ashford are still visible.⁴⁸ On the west side of Bakewell there is a large quantity of ridge and furrow, showing that the open fields at one time went as far as they could towards those of Over and Nether Haddon before they met natural obstacles, in one place a steep hill above the plateau on which the open fields lay, in another a steep-sided valley.⁴⁹ Further down the river, there are the open fields of Nether Haddon, the village destroyed to make way for Haddon Hall.⁵⁰

Upstream from Rowsley, the Derwent valley shows much the same pattern as that of the Wye. There are traces of ridge and furrow, though not very

⁴⁴ Fairbank, Tid. 7L, 10L, F.B. 46, 2-9.

⁴⁵ Fairbank, F.B. 43, 5-6.

⁴⁶ Fairbank, Hop 18S, Har 2S.

⁴⁷ 201723.

⁴⁸ 196702, 194704, 191700: *V.C.H., Derby*, II, 172.

⁴⁹ 205681 and 211675, below the hillside: 215675, above the stream, and a vast quantity between these three points.

⁵⁰ They go up the hillside as far as 215647, where there seems to have been a short interval before those of Over Haddon began. There were two villages of Haddon in 1086, both attached administratively to the royal manor of Bakewell (*D.B.*, I, fo. 272 v.). In the 14th century Nether Haddon was much the larger, since its tax quota in 1334-5 was 46s. 2d., as compared with Over Haddon's 18s. 2d. By 1431, Richard Vernon had become the sole tenant of the village (*Feudal Aids*, I, 280), and by the time of the Saxton map, in 1577, it had disappeared, leaving only the Hall and its park.

well marked, at Beeley, supported by an act of 1811 enclosing open field arable.⁵¹ The house and park at Chatsworth correspond to those of Nether Haddon, and similarly a village was destroyed to make way for them. Traces of the open fields of the original village of Edensor can still be seen in the park at Chatsworth.⁵² Equally, the adjacent group of villages to the north before the sides of the valley become too steep had their open fields, at Pilsley, at Curbar and at Calver.⁵³ Not far to the west the strip systems at Hassop are still visible, as well as at a point over a mile further south which suggests that they may have belonged to the lost village of Birchill.⁵⁴

Further north, in the Hope and Derwent valleys, the evidence on the ground is less obvious. This is not in the least surprising, however, when one remembers the phenomenon of mass wastage once again, and the intensive cultivation which the flatter parts of the valley floors have undergone in modern times, and adds to that the fact that the only suitably flat land in the upper part of the Derwent valley is now permanently under water. Nevertheless, there is still sufficient evidence of one kind or another to demonstrate the existence of open field systems here, both in the main valley itself and also in places where opportunity offered in and on the surrounding hills. The enclosure act of 1808 for Hathersage, for example, covered the villages of Hathersage itself, Bamford and Derwent, and included open field arable. No ridge and furrow has yet appeared in any of these three villages, though there are some long narrow strip type fields to be seen on the enclosure map of 1830 both north and south of Hathersage itself.⁵⁵ There is enough ridge and furrow round Highlow Hall, however, not only to prove the existence of open fields, but to suggest that Highlow was once a village.⁵⁶ A mile further up the Derwent valley, and also on the west side of it, the hamlet of Offerton shows marked traces of its old field system. This evidence is reinforced by an indenture of 1715, preserved in the parish chest at Hathersage, by which John Paramour, the owner of Offerton Hall, leased to James Swain his land there. That included not only enclosed land, but arable in various flats in two big open fields, the Upper Town Field and the Nether Field. It would be tempting to describe Offerton also as a lost village, were it not for the fact that three dwellings still exist there.⁵⁷ Field boundaries here have changed

⁵¹ 272677, 269680.

⁵² The transfer of Edensor to its present site to make way for the park at Chatsworth is well known. What is not so well known is that the village of Chatsworth also disappeared. It was listed in the same Domesday entry as the other lost village of Langley (*D.B.*, I, fo. 273): there were still free tenements in the village in 1431 (*Feudal Aids*, I, 281), while as well as marking the park, the Saxton map of 1577 shows Chatsworth as a village on the eastern bank of the Derwent. Ridge and furrow for Edensor can be seen in the park, at 250695, 254701, and 254693. At the latter point the size and age of oak trees which can be seen growing out of the middle of one of the old selions indicate that imparking or enclosing must have taken place here not later than the early part of the 18th century.

⁵³ 249717, 251738, 243744.

⁵⁴ Hassop, 225726: Birchall (?), 216707. Birchall appeared as a berewick of Ashford in 1086 (*D.B.*, I, fo. 272 v.), and was still marked as a village on the Saxton map, though it is now represented only by Birchill Farm.

⁵⁵ Enclosure Award, Hathersage parish chest, Map 1.

⁵⁶ 218802, 219800. The place did not appear in Domesday, but had become a small village by the time of Saxton.

⁵⁷ 217816, 212812, where the end of the open field can still be traced. In 1086 it was large enough to be shared as two berewicks between the royal manor of Hope and Ralph fitz Hubert's manor of Hathersage (*D.B.*, I, fos. 272 v., 277). In the reign of Edward I it was still divided into Upper and

a good deal in the last century, but a survey of 1848 shows a very large number of long narrow fields with an area of between a half and two acres, and an earlier survey of 1764 shows that six strips were still unenclosed at that date.⁵⁸ It would seem that a good deal of enclosure by agreement had gone on between 1715 and 1764. The next village, Shatton, also has traces of strips on its east side, with the bank which enclosed them still visible.⁵⁹ The name "Westfield" which occurs south of the village may be significant. Further on up the valley, at Hope, Aston, Thornhill and Bradwell, open field arable was enclosed by the act of 1806. There are faint traces of ridge and furrow at Aston, Brough, Bradwell, and Smalldale above Bradwell.⁶⁰ The traces at Aston are so faint that they could not be called evidence at all, were it not that a description in Hathersage parish chest dated 10 December 1716 of the lands granted to Aston Hospital gives details of open field arable in the High Field of that village, and also in Hardin Flat in another open field whose name is not specified. In the early 19th century both Bradwell and Smalldale were surrounded by interlocking blocks of long narrow strip type fields,⁶¹ and so was Hope in 1813.⁶² At Hazlebadge, to the south of Bradwell, too little has survived, even of interlocking blocks of long narrow fields, for any identification of the fields of the old village to be certain.⁶³ Back in the main valley, the strips of Castleton can still be seen in places as little more than a crop pattern.⁶⁴

For several of the villages on the limestone plateau south and west of those which have just been considered, there is the best evidence of all for the existence of open fields — actual surveys. Abney has already been discussed. Great Hucklow and Grindlow have very faint crop patterns in two places, which would not be admissible as evidence but for the fact that a survey of 1631 shows clearly that there were then strips there.⁶⁵ At that date the state of enclosure was very similar to that at Buxton: some enclosure by agreement and exchange had already taken place, but the open fields were still very much in evidence. More than half of the fields at Great Hucklow had been enclosed, but very little of Grindlow. At the same time, it looks as if some of the closes to the north of Grindlow had never formed part of the open fields, but had been assarted from the waste at some time subsequent to the original settlement and partition of the main arable land of the village. The survey also suggests that the open fields had originally

Nether Offerton (K. Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, I, 155), but by Elizabeth's reign the Hall had been built, and the village finds no place in the Saxton atlas, though it is clear from the indenture of 1715 that other men still held land in these two open fields.

⁵⁸ Fairbank Hop 22S, Hath 44L.

⁵⁹ 205820.

⁶⁰ Aston, 188828, 183833: Brough, 185827, 184825: Bradwell, 180819: Smalldale, 167813.

⁶¹ Fairbank Hop 7L, 8L, and the scattered pattern of the strips belonging to one individual on Hop 7L looks just like the scatter of holdings in an open field enclosed by agreement and exchange of strips.

⁶² Bagshawe, C.281, C.281 B.

⁶³ In 1086 William Peveril held the manor here (*D.B.*, I, fo. 276). It was quite heavily taxed in the 14th century (e.g. in 1334-5, P.R.O. E 179/91/7, when it was assessed at 44s. 2d.), but by Saxton's time the centre of the dale had moved northwards down it almost into Bradwell. Ridge and furrow for Hazlebadge is still just visible at 176792, as a crop pattern within the much larger "waves" of the drainage down the hillside.

⁶⁴ 134839, 143836, 154833.

⁶⁵ 188777, 185782: Bagshawe, C.288.

been arranged on a three field system. The open field arable of Great Hucklow was enclosed in 1803, and it is typical of enclosure by commissioners under an act that the present field boundaries show no trace of the long narrow fields so much in evidence elsewhere. Nor do they bear any relation to the open field strips of 1631, although it is true that the closes made prior to that year can still be traced in an early 19th century post-enclosure survey.⁶⁶ Open field arable at Little Hucklow was enclosed a year later, in 1804. Originally there had been a survey here, too, in 1631, since that of the other two villages not only refers to it, but totals the land for all three villages together. At Eyam, the act of 1803 enclosed no arable specifically. However, an 18th century survey of Eyam and Foolow not only shows far more long narrow enclosed fields in interlocking blocks than exist today: it shows that there were still unenclosed strips both at Eyam and at Foolow.⁶⁷

What is perhaps most surprising is not that there was open field cultivation on the high limestone, but that there was so much of it. There was no gap of uncultivated waste between Eyam and Foolow. The open fields of Litton, Tideswell and Wheston were equally contiguous, and were separated from those of Wardlow on the east and Wormhill on the west only by the two gorges. It is not easy even on the 1631 survey to separate the open fields of Grindlow and Great Hucklow, and there can have been little rough pasture, if any, between these two and Foolow, or between Great and Little Hucklow. Taddington and Priestcliffe, again, had no space between their fields, and whilst some rough moorland pasture did exist between these two and Chelmorton and Flag, it is probable that only the steep sides of Deepdale separated the easternmost field of Taddington from that to the north of Sheldon. The lowland arable plains of Nottinghamshire, where for example the open fields of East Markham were divided from those of West Markham and of Tuxford by nothing more than a balk, were cultivated no more intensively.⁶⁸ The only difference is that the grass balk of the lowland tended to become the stone wall of north Derbyshire.

Evidence of the number of open fields in any village in this area is unsatisfactory. Ridge and furrow by itself gives no indication of the number of open fields into which the arable was divided. Surveys, unless they specifically name the fields, all too often are ambiguous. All that can safely be said is that at Buxton, for example, the survey of 1631 suggests very strongly that there were three open fields, whereas at Offerton, since the owner of the Hall himself had land in only two fields, it would be unlikely that there would have been more than two. The point is not important, in any case. Short of the appearance of a list of the customs of any one village, there is no means of knowing for certain whether its fields were worked on a two, three, or four field rotation. An apparently two field village could easily be worked on a four field rotation by dividing each field into two, whilst in the 18th century there are occasionally agreements by which a three field village was

⁶⁶ Bagshawe, C.280.

⁶⁷ Fairbank Eya 1L shows the open strips which had been enclosed by the time of Eya 2L. There is also a trace of ridge and furrow at 201760.

⁶⁸ Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, MS. R III S 1 (West Markham), R III S 2 (Tuxford).

converted to the Norfolk four crop rotation, without any change taking place which would be apparent in a survey or in the pattern of ridge and furrow.⁶⁹ What matters is not whether there were two fields or three — and in north Derbyshire the number of fields would depend on the topographical layout of the land available. The important feature is whether or not open field arable cultivation existed at all, and this has by now been adequately proved.

Since this investigation is concerned primarily with the evidence left by the settlers advancing up the lines of the Manifold, the Dove, the Wye and the Derwent, the extreme north-west of the country, draining into the Irish Sea via the rivers Goyt and Etherow, is really rather irrelevant, since it was not settled by the protagonists of the open field system in the same way as the rest of the county. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth noting that despite mass wastage on the hillsides, and despite the vast changes and destruction of evidence wrought by the industrial revolution, faint traces of open field systems survive in some of the villages which were once berewicks of Longdendale and Thornsett, at Chisworth, Charlesworth, and Charlestown.⁷⁰ Further south, there is also some tenuous evidence at Chapel-en-le-Frith.⁷¹

As a general conclusion, it would thus appear that there are areas in the wapentakes of Wirksworth and High Peak where there were no open field systems, though at the same time these areas are not nearly so extensive as was once thought. There were none on the highest moorland of all, and the critical level seems to be just below the 1,300 ft. contour, at any rate on the limestone. The extreme north of the county, the region of Kinder Scout and the Upper Derwent with its tributaries above Ladybower, all lies too high for settlement and arable cultivation. The same criteria apply west and immediately north of Buxton, and in the highest parts of Staffordshire to the south of it. The vale of Edale, too, has so far produced no real evidence of open fields, though it is conceivable that this is due to its disappearance. It is not possible here to argue safely either way from the absence of evidence, since there is just a faint suggestion of ridge and furrow near Nether Booth.⁷² This by itself is not strong enough to be a proof of anything: it merely insists that in this valley the question be left open. On the high moorland round Peak Forest, too, there are few traces, though since by no means all of this lies above 1,300 ft. there may be another reason for this, as will shortly be seen.⁷³

The last blank area is at first sight the most surprising. South-east of Buxton, in a direct straight line as far as Brassington, there are no traces of open field cultivation on the top of the ridge or for a mile or so on either side. If this really means that there were no open fields here, it is all the more unusual, since on both sides of the line open field cultivation was fairly intensive at some time or other on all the possible land. There was little waste land, if any, between the open fields of such adjacent villages as Parwich and Ballidon, or Winster and Elton. It would be no answer to say that on

⁶⁹ W. E. Tate, "The Clayworth Manorial Map", *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, XLIV (1940), 108, produced an example of this from the village of Sutton-cum-Lound in Nottinghamshire.

⁷⁰ 996923, 007933, 037927.

⁷¹ 047818.

⁷² 139855.

⁷³ Peak Forest itself had some open field arable, however, at 117793.

the whole this ridge runs along the highest land in the area: it does, but only for less than a quarter of a mile does it reach 1,300 ft. It is even more curious that it is precisely at this point that open fields came nearest to this line. These were the fields of Chelmorton, which themselves reached nearly 1,300 ft. The clue may be found in the fact that the Roman road through Buxton ran along this line. It has long been known that the original Anglo-Saxon settlers avoided placing their villages on or near the lines along which raiding bands might come. Thus river lines and Roman roads were avoided, so that frequently, as here, the boundary between the territory of two adjacent villages ran along the road, and can be seen marked on the map as a parish boundary to this day. In this case the villages were set so far back that their open fields never expanded on to the ridge itself. The existence of the old road may thus be responsible at least as much as the altitude for the apparent absence of open fields — for the ridge is very little higher, if at all, than the surrounding plateau. Similarly, the Roman road from Buxton to Brough and Doncaster ran very close to Peak Forest, if not actually through it, so that much the same conditions applied here. It must be emphasized, however, that this is merely a suggestion to account for a lack of evidence at present. There is no reason why at a later stage of settlement villages should not have appeared along the line of the road and cultivated its open fields, as at Peak Forest itself. All that can safely be said is that should any evidence come to light, the list of lost Derbyshire villages will probably increase!

These few highland areas have been shown to be true to type, as areas of high rough moorland pasture. The district round Ashbourne, the lowland below 800 ft., has also run true to type, as might have been expected, in being a region of concentrated and intensive open field arable cultivation before the great change to sheep towards the end of the Middle Ages. It is the area in between Ilam, Tissington, Parwich and Wirksworth in the south, and the Hope valley in the north, that has produced the unexpected. Here, despite the height, there is strong evidence that as much land as possible came under the plough at some time between the Domesday Survey and the enclosure and imparking movement in the 15th century, and that every village of any size at all had its open fields, three where possible, on which it grew its corn. Only the unploughable or the virtually worthless seems to have been left entirely alone during the period of "high farming". Again, this is not altogether unexpected. Derbyshire was not a poor county in the Middle Ages, nor did it lack population. The later Middle Ages were the hey-day of the lead mining industry, and there is no reason why the land should not have been cultivated to feed the miners. The tax returns for the 14th century also give a picture of prosperity. High Peak wapentake in 1334-5 was assessed at a total of £89. 16s. od. for the tenth and fifteenth, which was not a small sum for a wapentake of this size.⁷⁴ On the other hand, as with the other areas of the country which were intensively farmed under open field systems, there has been a retreat of cultivation since the 14th century, leaving in its wake the usual trail of deserted or shrunken villages, abandoned for reasons which

⁷⁴ P.R.O. E 179/91/7.

are too well known to need detailing here. Additional evidence has appeared to confirm the disappearance of Lea by Bradbourne and Cold Eaton, already well enough known. Gratton seems to have moved a short distance rather than to have vanished. One Ash, Harthill, Nether Haddon, Chatsworth, Highlow, Offcote, Underwood, and possibly Birchill and Hazlebadge, have all joined the ranks of the lost villages, whilst Pilsbury, Callow and Offerton have shrunk almost to the point of extinction. There are certainly more to be found. Even in this respect High Peak and Wirksworth wapentakes exhibit the same characteristics as lowland arable areas. Derbyshire must at last take its place firmly amongst the counties where in the Middle Ages one of the main features of agriculture was the great open arable field outside the nucleated village.