PEAK DISTRICT ROADS PRIOR TO THE TURNPIKE ERA

By JEFFREY RADLEY

IN the last forty years a considerable interest has been shown in the development of Derbyshire roads. Cockerton's well documented reconstruction of specific lost roads[1] and Ward's mass of field observations[2] have laid the foundation for work on this subject. This present paper considers the nature of the pre-turnpike roads of North Derbyshire, some of which were used continuously at least since Anglo-Saxon times. With very limited evidence of evolution it is possible only to *describe* the vestiges of the abandoned roads, which are true "fossil" roads, and show the types of traffic and trade which produced these roads.

To call them roads is not to imagine them as 20th century roads. Since Norman times, three types of road have existed which overlap chronologically. The packhorse way was the basis of the early network of roads. Its origin is lost but it survived longer in North Derbyshire than in most parts of England and may be said to terminate about 1800, although packhorses were still seen around Sheffield as late as 1870. The packhorse was replaced by various wheeled vehicles; the earliest carriages are found in North Derbyshire about 1570, when Mary, Queen of Scots, is supposed to have arrived in the first coach seen in the Peak. Probably few carriage roads were constructed before 1750 and the bulk of them were laid out in enclosure awards up to 1830. Finally, the turnpike network on which our present road system is based flourished in North Derbyshire from 1735 to about 1880 when the last toll-bar was removed.

The king's highway recorded in the Middle Ages can be any road under royal protection, whilst the by-way or lane is any lesser road. It is necessary to make use of other terms, however, to define the different types of road. The old roads which can be seen on the moors are best described as *packhorse tracks* or *packways,* parts of which may be called *trenchways* (after Ward) or *hollow-ways*; other paved parts used to be called *horse causeways*. All these terms refer to roads which were usually less than 6 ft. wide and were primarily for packhorses. Obviously carriages and carts would have to use the same narrow ways until such a time as proper *carriage ways* and *cart-*

[1] Cockerton, R. W. P., "The Portway", *Derbyshire Countryside*, vol. 2, no. 5, 6-7. January 1932, *et seq.*
[2] Ward, G. H. B., *Sheffield Clarion Ramblers' Handbook*, 1920-1958; also Radley, J., *S.C.R. Handbook*, 1959-62.

tracks were made. *Footpath* and *bridleway* are 16th century terms which were not commonly used until the period of parliamentary enclosures when it became necessary to define the particular use of some rights of way. These latter names have recent connotations and are here used as such. Finally, the term main road implies a modern traffic concept and must only be used with care in referring to the more important packways.
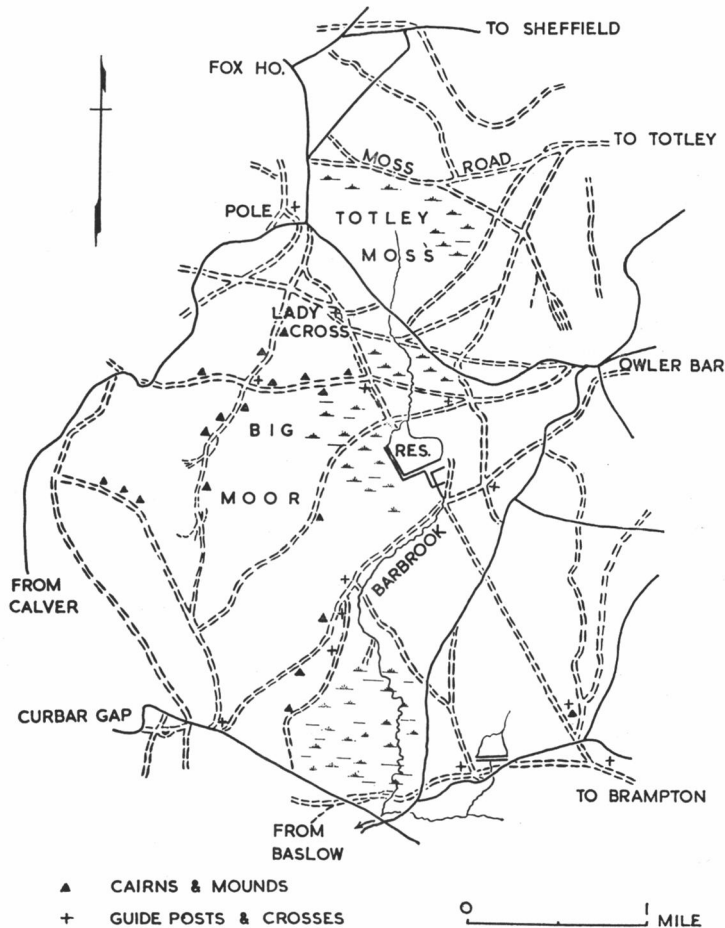

FIG. 9. Packways in the Big Moor area.
Packways are marked by broken lines, modern roads by continuous lines.

In the Peak District and its adjacent areas, the absence of extensive cultivation on the hills has led to the survival of unused tracks, which have been lost in more fully-developed agricultural areas; the gritstone moors are particularly rich in such fossil tracks. The steep-sided valleys, vertical edges, and flat peaty moors imposed limitations on the type of traffic and routes

used in the Peak, and so innovations came late into the area. The retention of the packhorse system into the period when travellers wrote diaries and books has produced a slight literature on packways.[3]

The Packways.

On the land there is preserved an extensive web of narrow pre-enclosure tracks, which can be traced over the moors and often through fields, for example, on Big Moor (Fig. 9). They are the product of several centuries, ranging from local paths between village and farm to long-distance tracks winding over the heather from one side of the Peak to the other. The tracks were used mainly by teams of packhorses and mules. Each animal had a type of saddle called a Devonshire crook, which supported two large panniers. A series of bells, mounted on the collar of one or more of the team, acted as a warning device; one can be seen in the Pack Horse Inn, Crowdecote.[4]

The wear and tear of the unpaved packhorse way produced a natural hollow, sometimes with a single track, sometimes with several (Fig. 10). This entrenching can be seen on Win Hill,[5] above Hope on the old Edale Road, or better still on the moors above Hathersage or Baslow. Here the peat has either oxidised or has been washed away, leaving an indelible record on the land. Some moors, such as Offerton Moor and Big Moor, are rich in packways, but others such as Bleaklow and Kinder have almost none. The effect of these latter upland blocks was to funnel packhorse movement into a series of east-west routes which utilized low points in the Pennines, for example through Longdendale, Lady Clough, the Hope Valley, and the Derwent and Wye valleys.

Hollow-ways or packways are rarely found on flat land and are best developed on steep slopes and sharp hill crests. The Hollow-way and Dore Road across Burbage Brook are excellent examples. The Hope to Chesterfield packway over Big Moor[6] illustrates some of the finer points involved in using the old system. There is little to see of an old packway from Hope to Hathersage, but it can be traced over Millstone Edge, across the A625 and as the Hollow-way down to the ford over Burbage Brook. The entrenched way passes through the Longshaw Estate to Froggatt Pole, sometimes as a single trench, sometimes as several parallel trenches. It can then be traced over Big Moor southwards or eastwards where it is marked by cairns. Eastwards it goes by Lady's Cross, either to Owler Bar or Greaves's Piece and the Cordwell Valley. Coming from the east no track can be seen in the heather, but following the entrenched way the traveller arrives at the stone guide post and slab bridge over Barbrook. Lady's Cross can be seen on the skyline, and it is placed there clearly as a guide, for it stands uphill from the important intersecting road which comes from Sheffield and goes to Baslow and Tideswell.

[3] E.g. Leader, R. E., "Our Old Roads", *Trans. Hunter Arch. Soc.*, II (1920), 7-29.
[4] The role of inns, with their often instructive names, has yet to be examined.
[5] Ward, G. H. B., *S.C.R. Handbook* (1923-4), 118-30.
[6] Ward, G. H. B., *S.C.R. Handbook*, 1927, 1929, *et seq.*

A. The trenchway.

Statute labour was introduced in 1555, replacing manorial boon work, and it seems that much improvement and maintenance was carried out over the centuries. For example, some sections of the larger trenchways are unmistakably improved ways and not entirely the product of wear and tear. They
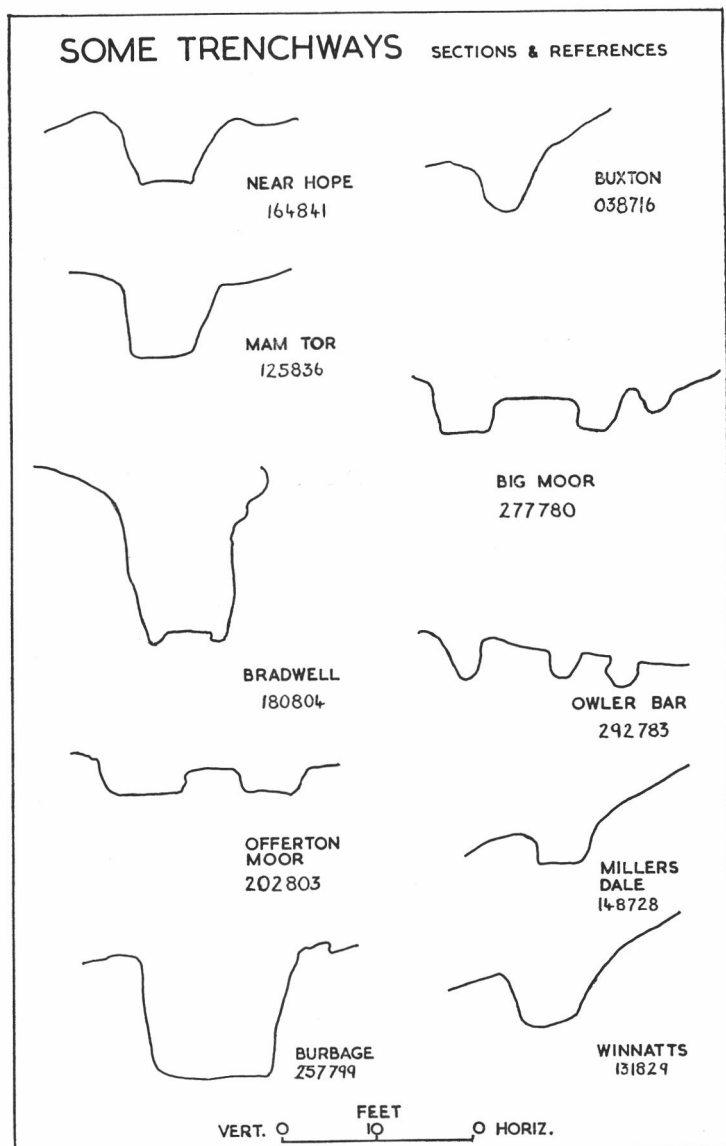

FIG. 10. Examples of entrenched sections of packways.
Sections surveyed with tape and Abney level.

are rock-free, with a flat sandy floor, symmetrical sides and may exceed 6 ft. in depth. The old way from Robin Hood's Cross, over Bradwell Edge, to Bradwell is more than 10 ft. deep in places and descends the steep hill in symmetrical zigzags. Other improved trenches can be seen on Big Moor between Lady's Cross and Little Barbrook Reservoir. In 1609, Lady Arabella Stuart's accounts note:

"Given to certen laborers mended the wayes that day on the mores 5s. od."[7]

More commonly, it seems that big rocks and perhaps mud were removed from the minor packways and placed along the sides. This produced the common trenchway seen as one, two, or three trenches on many moors. The duplication of trenches is a common feature, perhaps a result of the main one becoming impassable as for example behind the Peacock Inn, Owler Bar, on Gibbet Moor and Longstone Edge, alongside the Ringinglow to Hathersage Booth road, by Edale Cross, around Moscar Cross, east of Winnats Head Farm, and by Ball Cross, Bakewell. There are so many that it is unlikely that they can ever be fully described or mapped.

B. Valley roads.

The narrow lanes, confined between field boundaries, are often sunk below field level. This results from the removal of loose material, mud and refuse from the roads by generations of farmers prior to the macadamising of their surfaces. In villages especially the footpath may be considerably higher than the road. Traces of packhorse roads are often retained in the narrow bridges. The roads have been fixed in their present positions by the long history of land tenure in the cultivated areas, but beyond the limit of cultivation the story is different.

C. The predominance of packways on the hills.

Eyre[8] has shown that the upper level of cultivation has been fairly stable on East Moor since the 13th century, and this is probably true of the upper levels around other gritstone moors. When the valley roads reached the moors there were no confining walls prior to the enclosure movement and so the narrow packways usually radiated in all directions, taking the most convenient route over the moors for example at Curbar Fields, outliers from the main lowland fields. In the townships of Abney and Offerton the roads radiate over the moors from Highlow Hall, Offerton Hall and Stoke Ford, and also follow the upper edge of the fields in many places. The road from Eyam to Eyam Moor is straight but at the end of the fields several major and minor tracks spread out across the moor. On the bigger moors the packways are long and sinuous, winding around minor hills or bogs, and crossing the flat ground as swiftly as possible. Dore Gate from Dore to Hathersage by Burbage demonstrates this.

7 "Lady Arabella's Progress", Longleat Papers, no. 5. *The Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, LVI (December 1880).
8 Eyre, S. R., "The upland east of the Derbyshire Derwent". Ph.D. Thesis, Univ. of Sheffield, 1954.

The limestone has its share of packways. In general, the soils are shallow on limestone so that old tracks are rarely entrenched and are more often seen as bright green ribbons winding over a duller green moor, as on Bradwell Moor for example. Some entrenched ways can be seen around Slithertord, Miller's Dale, on Old Moor, Castleton, at the head of the Winnats, on Calver Peak and east of Dove Holes.

In the search for old packhorse roads, the hills provide the most fruitful areas. Wherever there is an important gap in a gritstone edge or a major ford there is a concentration of packhorse roads. At Curbar Gap, Hollins Cross, Edale Cross, and on Longstone Edge there are typical focal points.

D. The paving of packhorse tracks.

On Big Moor there are several long paved tracks. On Hallam Gate, north of Hathersage, on Doctor's Gate summit, below Ball Cross, Bakewell, and at Stanage Pole there are other sections. Often the paving is overgrown but it is usually well preserved being made up normally of thick gritstone slabs about 2 ft. square. The paving is found over wet patches, as on Big Moor, or on heavily used stretches, as on the Stanage Pole route where the paving in parts forms a double track. This might have been for carriage traffic, or to help the movement of millstones from Stanage Edge to Sheffield. Limestone flags were used on the limestone areas, especially on some wet patches around Monyash. In the Fairfield Enclosure Award the paving was called a "horse-causeway".[9]

The paving seems to be a relatively late improvement, probably in the 17th and 18th centuries, and there is nothing to tell us why it was not used earlier or who introduced it. It is noticeable that trenchways are rarely paved, and the paved areas are usually in open locations. Where paving may have been expensive some of the limestone tracks were given a gravel base, on Bradwell Moor for example. Many tracks were never worn sufficiently to need repair, which may mean that some packways were used for only a brief period and then abandoned. Some staircases were occasionally built over steep edges, for example south-west of Stanage Pole.

E. Guide-posts.

One of the most important problems seems to have been the provision of guide-posts in areas where landmarks are infrequent — the large rounded hills, the flat peat-covered expanses of the high moors, and the absence of trees made the moors difficult to cross in wet or foggy weather. Even in the turnpike period it was common for a visitor to hire a guide from village to village.

Natural stone tors were obvious points to head for — perhaps the Eagle Stone above Baslow is the most famous. The Three Ships, Birchen Edge, Higgar Tor, and the Head Stone in the Rivelin Valley are others. Conspicuous

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[9] A useful term used by Enclosure Commissioners. Fairfield Enclosure Award. Map. 1772. Derbyshire Record Office.

barrows were also used, such as Hob Hurst House near Chatsworth and Lord's Seat on Rushup Edge.

Wooden poles were erected as the first artificial guide-posts. Stanage Pole, the now vanished pole on Dobb Edge, Froggatt Pole, and one on Ronksley Moor are the most notable. Stone cairns were erected, sometimes only 2 to 3 ft. high at intervals across large flat heaths such as Big Moor, or as large as cairns like The Three Men on Gardom's Edge, which were restored by Ward in 1932.[10]

Only in 1702 and 1709 were laws enacted to provide guide-posts at each "cross-roads". Wooden finger-posts were usual, but stone was favoured in North Derbyshire and many are still to be found on the moors. Tudor[11] and Munslow[12] have recorded over forty, dating from 1705-1743. These posts, often incorrectly called crosses, are invaluable in reconstructing the pack-horse network, because where the remains of tracks on the land are usually incomplete the destinations of the market towns recorded on the guide-posts are conclusive evidence of the length of a particular packhorse way and permit the historian to infer the lost sections of the road. The guide-posts also provide proof of the elaborate character of the road network before turn-pike times, and show how it was usually completely separate from the modern road system.

Packhorse Bridges.

The narrow, humped packhorse bridge is not uncommon in North Derbyshire. Disused examples occur in the Goyt and Burbage Valleys; bridges still in use can be seen in Baslow and near Edale Head House, while small simple slab bridges can be seen over Barbrook, one made of a single slab of gritstone, and the other of two slabs. There are many widened, imitation packhorse bridges of a later date than the narrow ones which are important because their architectural style can be dated. They represent useful evidence for the age of the packhorse system, often dating to the 13th and 14th centuries.

The Packway System of Communication.

It would be difficult to map the numerous packways. From Beeley Moor to Stanage Pole there are over sixty packways and branch tracks which cross the moors from east to west. There are over forty packways between Stanage and Kinder Scout, generally aligned north or north-west to south or south-east. On the limestone, there are many long packways coming from the south-east which cross the limestone plateau to Lancashire in the north-west. About fifteen smaller tracks go from east to west from the Hope Valley to Chapel-en-le-Frith, Buxton and Dovedale. Traces of numerous tracks from the villages in the Derwent Valley pass through Tideswell, Bakewell, and Winster to Taddington, Monyash, Hartington, and Parwich, westwards to

[10] *S.C.R. Handbook* (1933-4), 146-7.
[11] Tudor, T. L., *D.A.J.*, LV (1934), 67-76: LVI (1935), 80-7.
[12] Munslow, F. W., personal communication.

Staffordshire. On a parochial scale, tiny tracks can be found from almost every village to its public quarry, its ancient common, or its water-mill.

In comparison with a modern map there appears to have been a denser network of routes before the turnpike era, especially on the gritstone moorlands where the elaborate packhorse system was replaced by a few costly turnpike roads. The limestone area, however, retained many ancient ways because at the time of the enclosure the lead miners were still active. Their Barmote Court made its own valuable contribution to establishing rights of way by setting out straight access roads to lead workings. Some of these short straight lanes have been incorporated in modern secondary roads, while many are grassy access roads to fields. This is very apparent around Taddington.

The End of the Packway System.

The enclosure of common land caused the many packways and packhorse meeting-points such as Hollins Cross, above Hope, where seven packways met, and the cross at the head of Millstone Sitch, Beeley Moor, where five ways met, to fall into disuse.

It was easier to lay out enclosure access roads and new turnpikes on the open moor rather than attempt to convert the meandering or entrenched packways into roads fit for the use of wheeled vehicles. In general the main roads on the high moors are more recent than 1725. Houndkirk Road, for example, between Fox House and Ringinglow is a good early turnpike section; the abandoned packways can be seen alongside the turnpike near Badger House and elsewhere.

Many trenchways which crossed edges and steep hills have been replaced by valley roads with better grades. Old Edale Road from Hope went by Hollins Cross or alternatively over Lose Hill, but today the main road follows the river Noe. Many packways zigzag steeply up the gritstone edges, like those from Grindleford to Bretton and Froggatt Edge, Curbar to Curbar Gap, Baslow to Eagle Stone and Gibbet Moor. Others utilized Roman streets such as Bathamgate between Buxton and Bradwell. The grade was often too steep for carriage ways and so the new road had to abandon the old route; such modern main roads have few packways near them.

It is important to visualize the pre-turnpike roads as a communications network radically different from the present system. Almost without exception, the present main roads were built as turnpike roads, save on short stretches where packway and turnpike used the same gap or bridge. As stated earlier, old packways which were confined between cultivated patches were incorporated into later road systems and were so enlarged and transformed as to be unrecognizable as packways. On the hills a few packways are still in use as footpaths. That many old roads have deteriorated into footpaths is not commonly recognized, but the map of roads around Hope in 1819[13] shows how the process worked (Fig. 11). The roads are individually named, and they are still fully preserved today as a pattern of footpaths. The enclosure

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[13] Sheffield City Library, Fairbank Collection, "Hope Roads", Hop. 1 L. Some new carriage ways made by enclosure are recorded in Hathersage Enc. Road Books, M.B. 246, 247.

of Hope provided new roads which are shaded with dots on the map. The enclosure commissioners created several bridle-roads, footpaths, and private roads out of the old roads, but the old pattern declined into a series of rights of way for foot traffic after a few years. Today the old roads, especially those in the north-west quadrant of the map, are footpaths.

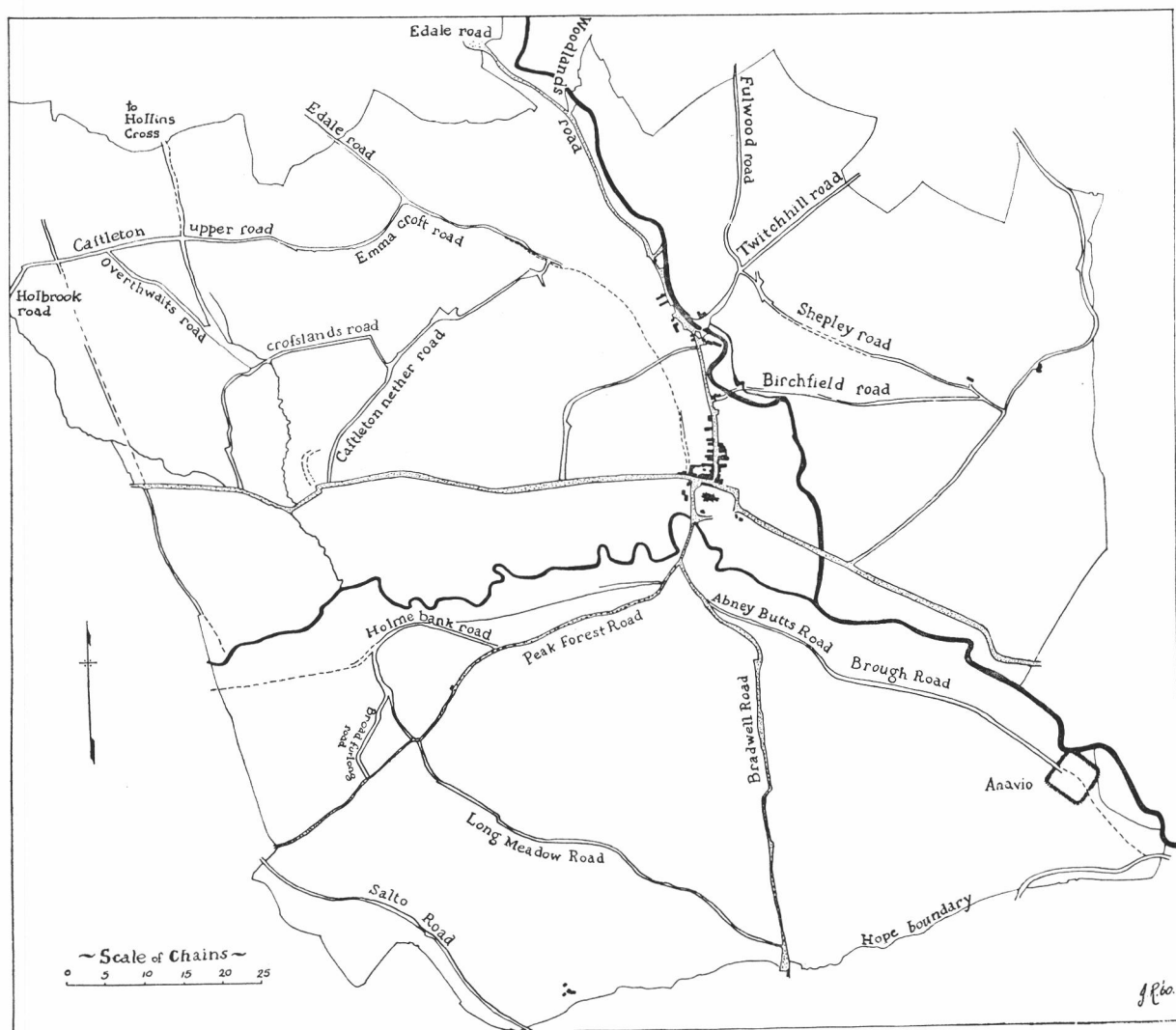Much attention has been paid to the moors between Baslow and Kinder

FIG. 11. Roads on the Hope enclosure map.
The earlier network (blank roads) was reduced to a small number of carriage ways (dotted roads).

because they yield the most abundant road remains in the field. Every few hundred yards a trenchway, a cross, or cairn can be found, but not so on the limestone, where less impression has been made on the land. Other prolific areas are the Goyt's Moss-Axe Edge Moor areas, which have interesting packways extending from Buxton and Harpurhill west to Macclesfield and Congleton, and the moors flanking Morridge.

Trade routes in the Peak.

The important trade routes of the past can be traced with some considerable accuracy, and although it is not the purpose of this paper to enter into the problems of the Peak's economic life, some through routes may be described to illustrate the type of traffic to be found on the packway and early carriage way.

Cockerton has described the Portway[14] which carried traffic from Derby over Harthill Moor to Ashford, Wardlow and Edale or Chapel. Scattered place-names give the general route, but the destination is only inferred. Doctor's Gate Road is another excellently documented road which can be clearly seen on the land especially north of Hope by Hope Cross, up the Ashop Valley and over Featherbed Moss to Glossop.[15] Many packways join, branch from or cross these two routes. Important east-west packways joining or crossing them were the routes from Sheffield to Manchester which went through Stannington, Moscar, and Lockerbrook to Doctor's Gate; also by Ringinglow or Stanage to Hathersage and then by Sparrowpit or Edale to Chapel. This latter route by Sparrowpit or Chapel Gate was later replaced by the 1811 Rushup Edge turnpike section. From Chesterfield, it appears that the principal packways went by Old Brampton to the vicinity of Stone Low, where tracks branched to Baslow and Bakewell, and to Curbar, Wardlow Mires and Peak Forest. The western exit from the Peak was either down the Goyt Valley from Whaley Bridge and Chapel or over Axe Edge. Several packways follow two principal routes northwards: from Edale by Hayfield to Glossop and from Hathersage, above and below Crow Chin and over Cut Gate to Langsett and Halifax.

On an entirely different scale, there are many local tracks — for millstone workers on Burbage Moor, for peat cutters on Grindslow and The Nab above Edale, and for the lead miners along the many rakes. These latter have survived, as wide green lanes, owing to the practice of setting out wide access roads to lead mines, although the actual track was usually a horse causeway. Many examples of these branch at right angles from the through roads on the high limestone, especially between Little Hucklow and Wheston, and Peak Forest and Fairfield. Farey recorded that ore "in common with every article" used to go by packhorse.[16]

In 1850, teams of fifty and more horses were still common in Sheffield, and as late as 1870 milk was leaving the dales by packhorse.[17] The teams

[14] *Derbyshire Countryside*, vol. 2, no. 5.
[15] Cockerton, R. W. P., "Doctor's Gate", *Derbyshire Countryside*, no. 9 (January 1933), 19-20.
[16] Farey, J., *A General View of the Agriculture of Derbyshire*, III, 1811, 38, 274.
[17] Leader, D., *Sheffield in the 18th Century*, 1905, 90.

or jags driven by jaggers have memorials in Jaggers Clough on Kinder, Jaggers Lane, Darley, and Jaggers Lane, Hathersage.

Packhorse trade in special commodities.

Defoe writes that there is "no very great trade . . . but what relates to lead".[18] Monyash, Wirksworth, Matlock, Hartington and Eyam mines sent packhorse trains of lead pigs to Nottingham and Bawtry,[19] prior to the opening of the Tinsley Canal in 1732 and the Chesterfield Canal in 1777. In 1607 gangs of carriers (jaggers) brought wood to the smelters and carried 4,006 fodders of lead eastwards.[20] Holland describes the same scene 200 years later:

"Great numbers (of carriers) used to arrive with lead . . . from Derbyshire, and parts adjacent, and return with malt. The lead pigs were deposited at the 'Lead-Hills' (in Worksop)"

and the blocks of metal used to be laid

"all along the roadside from the Sandhills to Steetley Bar".[21]

Lionel Tylney's accounts show that he sent lead from "a place called Crunforde Moor" to Bawtry in 1653[22]:

"Nov. 8	paid for my charges to Thribor		00:02:06
	paid for ale to Chesterfield		00:00:10
Jan. 18	paid to porters at Bawtry		02:00:00
21	paid Ed. Gibbin for 30 fo. of lead carrying at 18/- p. fo. to Bawtry from Mr. Bower's Mill		27:00:00"

Malt made by Derby's "cowkified" coal, which provided 300 loads to Cheshire and Lancashire each week in 1692, went over the ford at Ashford on the Portway.[23] In the 18th century, coal was carried from Sheffield to Tideswell, and lime on the return journey.[24] Local bell-pits were worked for coal on Eyam Moor, Big Moor, at Ringinglow, Crow Chin and Baslow, but there are no known records of the carriage of this coal. "Pit-coles, peat and turf" were the main local fuel on the high moors, probably because wood and charcoal were in such demand by the lead smelters. The peat was taken to the valleys by packhorse, sledge, and cart.

Saltways can be picked out by the mapping of place-names. There is, for example, Salters Bridge in the Goyt Valley, Salter Barn at Castleton, and Saltergate at Bamford and Chesterfield.[25] Other such names occur at Tideswell, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Owler Bar, showing perhaps two main routes from the Cheshire "wiches" eastward, one from Macclesfield through Sparrowpit, Castleton and Stanage Pole to Sheffield, and the other through Buxton, Stoney Middleton and over Beeley Moor to Chesterfield.

[18] Defoe, D., *A tour through all of Britain*, 1929 ed., II, 565.
[19] *D.A.J.*, LVII (1936), map facing p. 52. Radley, J., "The transport of lead", *Peak District Mines Hist. Soc.*, II (1963), 1-8.
[20] *V.C.H. Derby*, II, 347.
[21] Holland, J., *History of Worksop*, 1826, 8.
[22] *D.A.J.*, LII (1931), 1-26. "Crunforde Moor" is presumably Cromford Moor near Wirksworth.
[23] Houghton, J., *Weekly Newsletter*, November 1692; *D.A.J.*, LIV (1933), 17.
[24] Bray, W., *Sketch of a tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire*, 1795, 175.
[25] Crump, W. B., *Saltways from the Cheshire Wiches*, 1951.

Wool has rarely been recorded as a commodity in North Derbyshire, though sheep are frequently noted. A packway from Hathersage northwards was called Halifax Gate, and in the 16th century Halifax wool merchants gave £10 to help repair Leadmill Bridge, thus showing at least one trade connection.[26]

Early carriage ways.

There were carriage ways in North Derbyshire before the enclosure commissioners and turnpike trustees set out those roads which have become the present road system. There are several private drives built across Burbage Moor, Totley Moss, and Brampton East Moor, with many other less notable examples which may or may not precede the enclosure award in each area.[27]

The carriage ways overlap with the packways as a type of road, but their construction is unrecorded. There are many oblique references to carriage ways in guide-books such as Cary's *Itinerary*, which map side-roads entering new turnpike roads, but there is considerable doubt as to the status of many of these branch roads. It is probable that when fulfilling statute labour requirements some of the roads were expanded into routes capable of carrying wheeled traffic. Parts of the carriage road by Stanage Pole, the only road across the eastern moors not to be turnpiked, may have such an origin; the green road from Mam Nick to Dirtlow Rake and the green track which ascends Stony Ridge from Fox House are good examples. Perhaps the tracks by Edale Cross and Chapel Gate, from Barber Booth to Slack Hall, are also pre-enclosure in origin.

These few carriage ways were clearly inadequate for the increased coach and wagon traffic from the 17th century. The pressure for an improved road system gradually led to the promotion of the numerous turnpike trusts. The roads that were not turnpiked and remained in use became fewer as the packhorse ways were enclosed into private moorland grouse preserves. The coal carters caused some trouble when they were forced off the free roads and on to the toll-roads, but in general it was a peaceful change, creating the series of well-graded turnpikes on which north Derbyshire's present road system is based.

[26] *S.C.R. Handbook*, 1925-6, 142.
[27] *S.C.R. Handbook*, 1924-5, 130-48.