ART. XI – *Five Westmorland Settlements: A Comparative Study*

By BRIAN K. ROBERTS

THE five plans forming the substance of this note were mapped as part of a wider project on the development of settlement in the Eden Valley of Cumberland and Westmorland.[1] The drawings are based upon late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey twenty-five inch to the mile maps, to which earthwork remains have been added. This can be done with considerable accuracy using other mapped features as guidelines,[2] and the work was done during the winter anticyclone of January and February 1992, when conditions for ground observation were excellent. There has been no attempt to produce a full record of the site occupied by each settlement,[3] neither have air photographs been used at this stage – indeed, these are not readily available. While recording extends into the cultural fabric, the description of property boundaries has been selective and the buildings have not been considered except to note them as presences in the landscape. Each plan represents observations made, and will be described briefly. Summary historical details are included, but each plan is placed into an appropriate landscape context and its broader significance is outlined.

Melkinthorpe

Melkinthorpe (Figure 1) is located some five kilometres south-east of Penrith in the rolling Triassic drift country between the rivers Lowther and Eden at a point where the whale-backed drumlin ridges of the upper valley become lower, flatter and more subdued and where seasonally waterlogged loamy soils on reddish glacial till are now down to grassland but in earlier centuries carried subsistence cereals.[4] Set at about 125 m above sea level on a terrace of the River Leith, "Melcan's hamlet" is first mentioned in 1150 in the Lowther archive.[5] By 1291–2 Melkinthorpe appears under the blanch farm rents of the Barony of Westmorland and although held by the same family in 1309–10,[6] tenure by drengage is recorded in 1314–15.[7] The present village is so strongly regular as almost to constitute a model.[8] The north-west to south-east axis of the main street is paralleled about 70 m to the north-east by a back-lane, and slight earthworks suggest that the rectangular compartment so defined once extended further to the north-west, towards former common grazing lands. In fact, the present village street formed an outgang or drift, a route for cattle between village and commons. The terms used here, and others, are defined in the version of the map used in Figure 2 (lower). Behind the village, to the north-east, is a rectangular furlong, comprising strips about 275 m in length whose lateral boundaries bear clear traces of reversed-S aratral curves. It can be seen that a proportion of the surviving boundaries in the furlong are continuations of property boundaries within the village compartment, a situation which may reflect an older arrangement.[9]

On the south-west side of the village street is a well-marked but serrated and

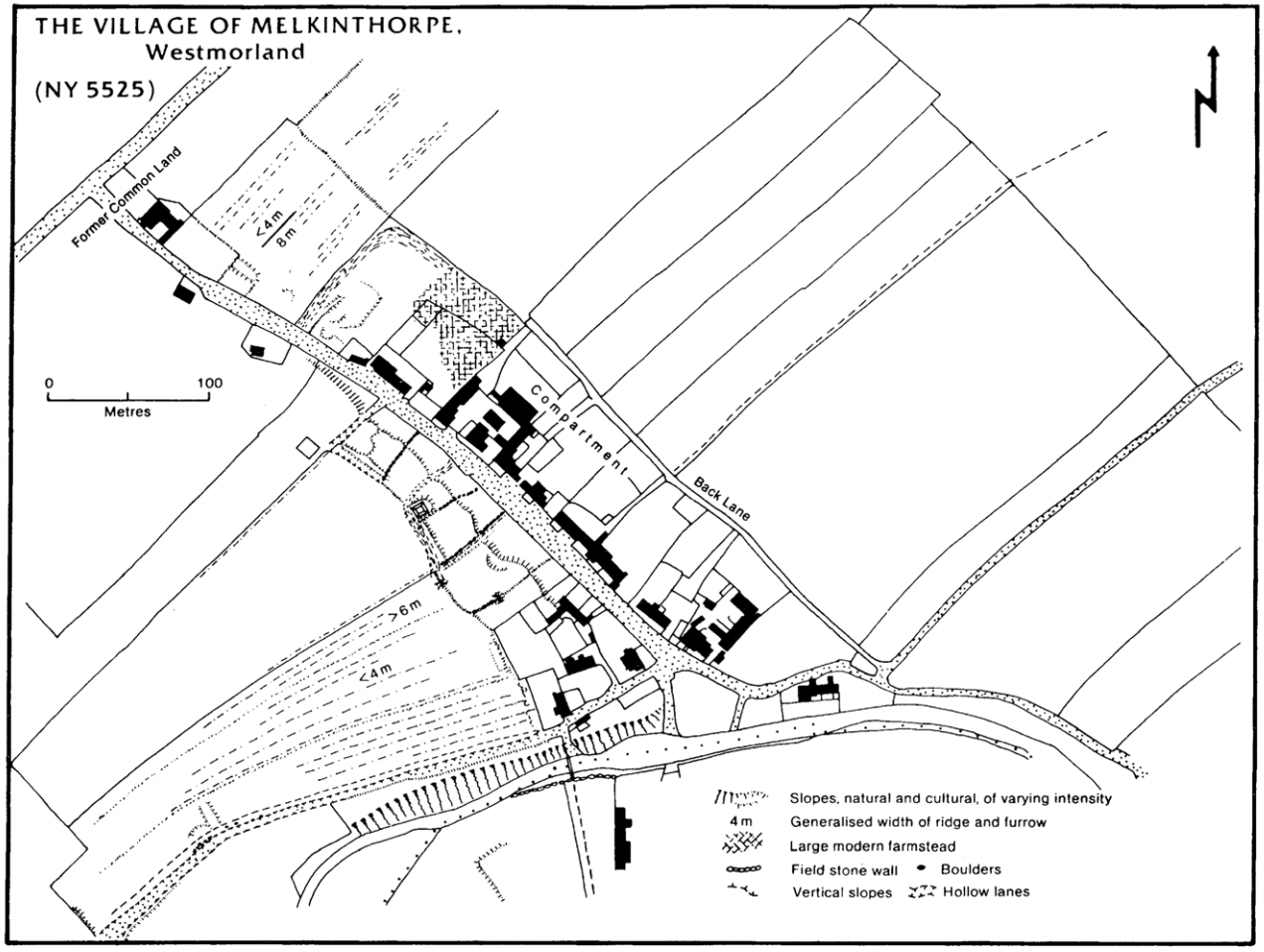

FIG. 1. Melkinthorpe

eroded break of slope, parallel to the present street edge but set back some 12 to 25 metres. If the garden encroachments, the street width and this strip are added together it is evident that Melkinthorpe once possessed a narrow green between 25 and 40 metres in width. This second compartment was narrower and less regular than that to the north-east and once possessed a narrow back lane, now only detectable in the centre of the village. Behind this lay another great furlong, with strips 270 m and more in length, and slightly triangular shape.

This brief account raises questions; is an element of deliberate planning involved; was the village once a single-row plan to which a second row was added; which was the "original" row; how old are the plan-elements which can be identified? Melkinthorpe is characteristic of many of the village plans found throughout the Eden Valley and Solway Plain. The type is seen on early seventeenth century plans,[10] and while much-altered, indeed *used*, through many centuries, the underlying structural frames may be very old indeed, possibly as old as the twelfth century, when Melkinthorpe first appears in the record. Regularity is a recurrent feature of the region's nucleated settlements, and essentially the same plan appears again and again as the "model" was adapted to particular local circumstances. However, it would probably be wrong to see this family of plans, involving both main and collateral branches, as the product of a single phase of development; rather we are seeing an idea, used, adapted, reiterated, reassessed and reinforced through a long period of time.

Waitby

Figure 2 includes two maps of Waitby; this small settlement lies on the southern side of the upper Eden valley, at precisely the point where, in the deeper incisions of the post-glacial gills, the Carboniferous limestone begins to appear from beneath the red drift of the drumlin country of the main valley floor. The village is sited at an important boundary between the well-drained coarse loams and sands of the deep drift, potential arable, and the red loams of the wold pastures on these drift-veneered low limestone uplands. The smaller scale map of Figure 2 (upper) is directly scale-comparable with the map of Melkinthorpe seen below, while the larger is scale-comparable with Figure 1. In effect, Waitby is another type of two row plan, smaller, less regular, yet preserving clear evidence of a twin back-lane system. Most of the major standing buildings bear lintels of seventeenth or early eighteenth century date, and the present enclosure walls, those shown on the Tithe Map, are constructed of water-rounded boulders and cobbles taken from the land during arable cultivation.[11] Only on the south side do quarry stone walls appear, on land enclosed in the middle years of the nineteenth century.[12]

It is likely that the two toft-compartments are ancient, perhaps medieval. Careful examination suggests that the northern row contains clear traces of even older embankments and earthworks, not wholly in accord with the fieldstone walls, preserving traces of two – possibly three – toft vennels (see Figure 2, bottom) plus conceivably even older plan-elements. In addition to the pond, now much-silted, the back lane of this northern compartment contains two old wells, and this water-supply must have been an important attraction of this site. In contrast, the southern

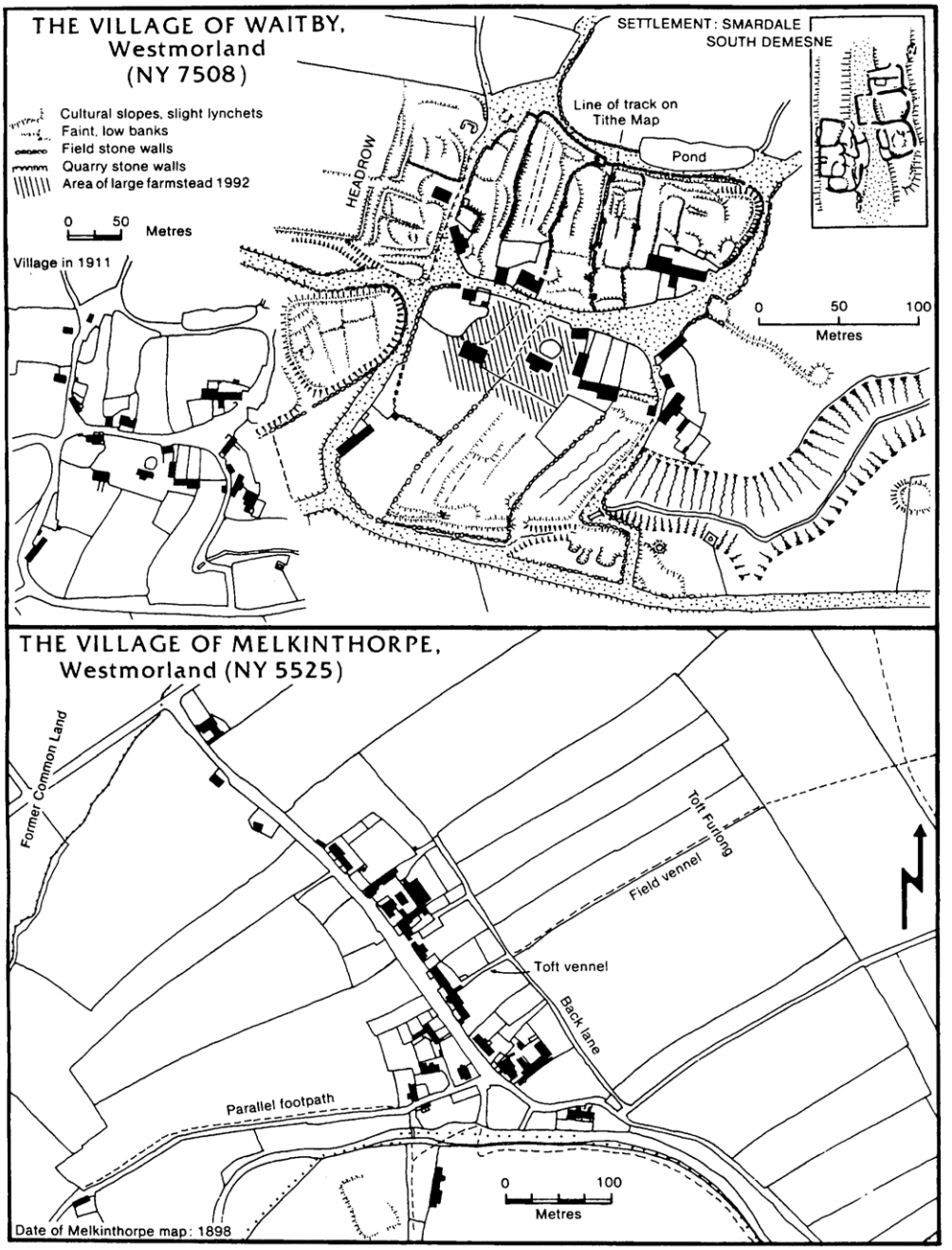

FIG. 2. Waitby and Melkinthorpe

compartment, on land which slopes gently southwards, appears to preserve in its layout, traces of rather short reversed-S plough curves, suggesting that it was laid out over a former small arable furlong. To the west there are the earthworks of a small headrow climbing the hillslope, separated by a back lane from the great lyncheted field-strips extending westwards. To the south of this is an ovoid enclosure subdivided into rather rectangular small units – it is tempting to see these as "allotments", for they appear to contain no definite house-foundations. They and their enclosure overlie the ends of lynchets running westwards from this point.

The contrast between Waitby and Melkinthorpe illustrates an important point: while they differ, in size and degree of regularity and are cousins rather than siblings, the same *plan-elements* are present, and like Melkinthorpe, Waitby possesses an underlying formality of layout to which the term "planning" must surely be applied? It is likely that the building-line of the south row, set well back from the central street, represents a former green-edge. There have also been forward encroachments from the northern compartment, and in this it may be significant that the building intruding into the roadway at the west end of the street, and showing the structural features of a late seventeenth century long-house, is identified by local custom as a former public-house.

Kaber

Kaber (Figure 3) is situated at the head of the upper Eden Valley, on a rolling bench, set above the drumlin lands at the point where the Carboniferous Yoredale facies emerge from under the Triassic dune bedded sandstones, all overlain by a veneer of red drift. In this map a scale change has been necessary. This departure from the author's normal practice of rigid scale compatibility is necessary because of the demands of field recording, but has dangers, for it insists that the reader retain an awareness of the varied scales.

To this day Kaber retains a large, rather irregular green. The departure from the "Melkinthorpe ideal" appears to be marked; nevertheless the north compartment, with its irregular placing of standing buildings, seems to retain traces of an older arrangement consisting of toft or house-plot, back lane – now fragmentary and disused – plus rather short crofts bearing traces of arable cultivation. That the village was once very much bigger is shown by the remains of a series of larger plots forming a south-eastern compartment, here lacking any convincing traces of a back-lane. More irregular structures, some of which may be very recent, appear at the eastern end of the green, while to the west, around Kaber Fold Farm, are building remains and traces of what may have been a mill site, with a leat bringing water from a shallow valley to the west.

Some of the earthworks have been over-ploughed, so that it is impossible to attempt to count house sites, but the remains suggest that while always tending to be a rather sprawling settlement, Kaber was once much larger; it is also likely that the green once extended further to the west and south-west, perhaps being delimited by the watercourse to the east of Kaber Folds. One clear conclusion does emerge: even within this apparent irregularity elements of planning are present. It is tempting to postulate a development sequence involving (i) settlement at Kaber Folds, tucked

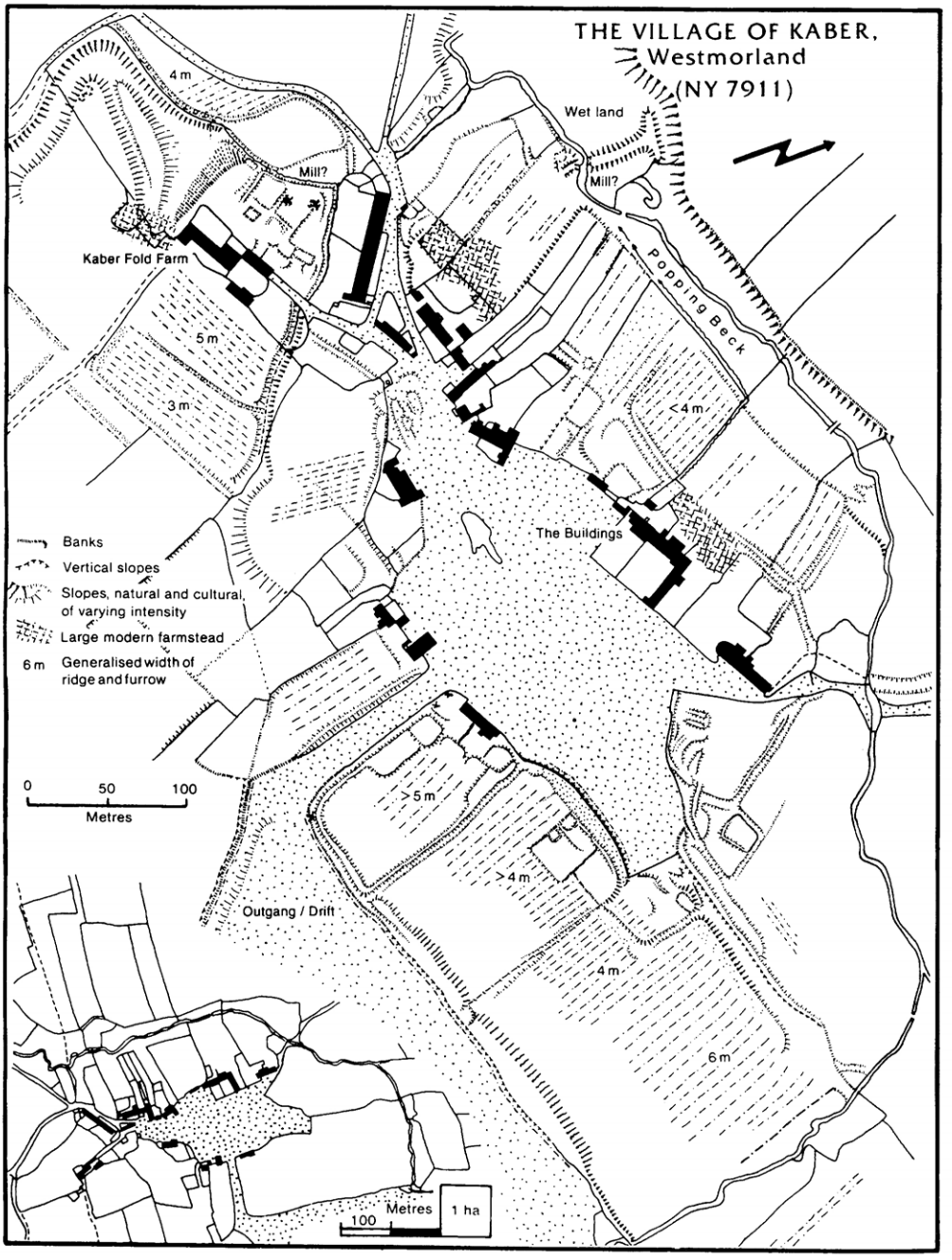
THE VILLAGE OF KABER,
Westmorland
(NY 7911)
Wet land
Mill?
Mill?
Kaber Fold Farm
Popping Beck
4 m
5 m
3 m
< 4 m
The Buildings
Banks
Vertical slopes
Slopes, natural and cultural, of varying intensity
Large modern farmstead
6 m Generalised width of ridge and furrow
0 50 100
Metres
> 5 m
> 4 m
4 m
6 m
Outgang / Drift
Metres
100
1 ha

FIG. 3. Kaber

down on a more sheltered site, (ii) the planned northern compartment and (iii) the planned south-eastern compartment. If this interpretation seems unwarranted, it should be noted that this is in effect a succession, carrying the settlement eastwards and upwards into the former open fell, with new tofts and crofts being placed upon *sloping* land, avoiding the ill-drained flat area in the middle of the green. A member of the Barony of Westmorland, Kaber was first mentioned in the twelfth century[13] but by 1291–2 was recorded as a knight's fee, held by Adam de Caberg for cornage and rated at three carucates.[14]

Rookby

Rookby (Figure 4) lies above Kaber, on the rising land of the Carboniferous limestone escarpment, still drift-covered, and when examined – a day after a snowfall followed by a rapid melt – the land was remarkably wet. Rookby is a hamlet, and its location is succinctly described by the fact that the next settlement up the escarpment is Heggerscales, whose name, incorporating the element *scales*, bears witness to its origin as a shieling or summer pasture.[15] It comprises of a few buildings tucked into the fold of a small valley; a stream, now in a culvert, once ran down the street; indeed in times of flood the street *was* the stream bed! The dominant pattern visible on the map is one of enclosed strip fields, generally between 300 m and 400 m in length, and the three farmsteads forming the core of the settlement may have once occupied a short compartment which possessed a delimiting back lane. A fourth building, to the west, isolated from the others, is a former farmstead, and appears to occupy a small compartment of its own, a raised block of land fronted by a steep drop to the street and with former lanes, or field access ways, folding around each end. There is absolutely no indication that these lanes ever enclosed the whole block, and the arrangement is peculiar. There must be a strong presumption that the land on the opposite side of the stream to the central three-farmstead row remained as open fell until a late stage in the settlement's history. The place-name Rookby, meaning either "rook haunted farmstead" or "Hroca's farmstead", is first documented in 1178,[16] and in 1291–2 rendered merely a cash "blanch rent" to the lord of the Barony of Westmorland.[17]

We have to ask what the plan morphology can tell us about the settlement's history. There is a presumption that the three farmsteads of the "row" were placed at the head of earlier arable strips running north–south across a low ridge, and are to be linked with a phase of expansion. This, if correct, is an interesting conclusion, suggesting that when we are examining "regular" settlement plans, while a proportion may indeed be "planned", i.e. deliberately laid out in a conceptualised form, in other cases the observable "regularity" derives, quite accidentally, from using the frame provided by antecedent structures. In the case of Rookby, this comprised perfectly ordinary ploughed strips which may originally have supported either a single farmstead or small kinship hamlet. The question relating to the strange small compartment at the west end of the settlement remains; does this represent the original steading to which the name Rookby appended? To complicate matters, to the south-west of this, on the other side of the lane, is a slight feature which may once have possessed an oval shape; does one make much of this, or

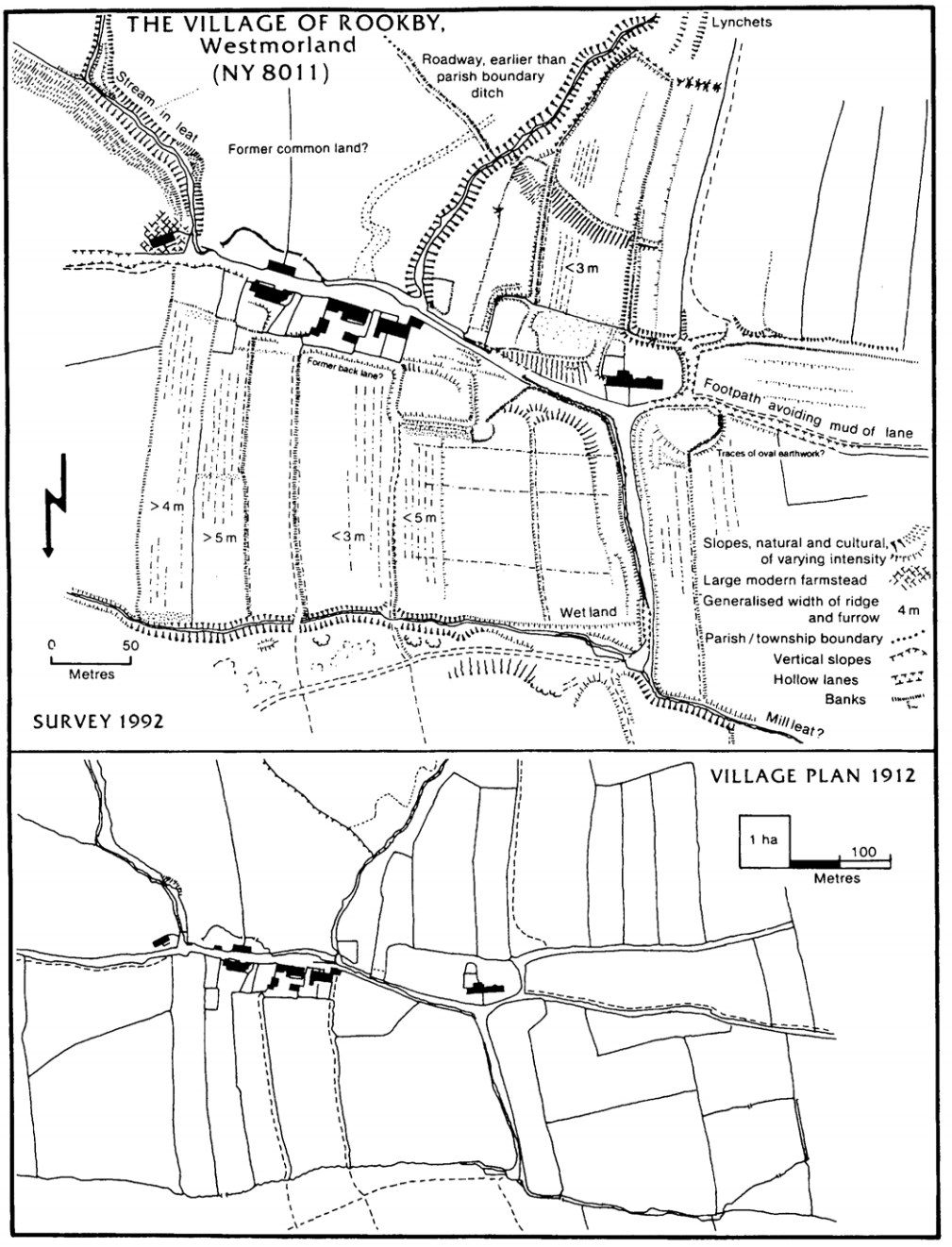
THE VILLAGE OF ROOKBY,
Westmorland
(NY 8011)
Roadway, earlier than parish boundary ditch
Lynchets
Stream in leat
Former common land?
<3 m
Former back lane?
Footpath avoiding mud of lane
Traces of oval earthwork?
>4 m
>5 m
<3 m
<5 m
Wet land
0 50
Metres
SURVEY 1992
Slopes, natural and cultural, of varying intensity
Large modern farmstead
Generalised width of ridge and furrow
4 m
Parish / township boundary
Vertical slopes
Hollow lanes
Banks
Mill leat?
VILLAGE PLAN 1912
1 ha
100
Metres

FIG. 4. Rookby

merely dismiss it as a former rather large pinfold? Clearly these questions are as yet unanswerable, but one essential point emerges; this hillslope hamlet, marginal to a region dominated by village settlements, provides a glimpse of the structures which may underlie larger, more complex and more developed villages such as Winton, a little to the south-west.

A comparison of Rookby and Kaber shows the extent to which the same elements – small house plots (tofts), larger plots, once ploughed (crofts), rectangular compartments, back-lanes and areas of common green, are used to build each plan, and in the chain of argument extending from Melkinthorpe to Rookby we perhaps glimpse two important genetic strands which underlie village and hamlet plans throughout the north of England: on one hand there has been organic growth from a single farmstead and kinship hamlet, as sons matured and married, population rose necessitating additional farmsteads, which were (for instance in Rookby's constricted valley) placed at the head of arable strips; on the other hand there is the more rigid geometric regularity of some plans, with a formal and ordered structuring of tofts, toft compartment and adjacent field-lands. This is surely associated with a deliberate plantation, imposing upon the landscape a layout which had been conceptualised before development. This simple conclusion is important, for it is a key to unravelling the genetic cycles which gave rise to the wealth of subtly varied northern village plans.

Hardendale

The hamlet of Hardendale lies at over 320 metres above sea level on the Carboniferous limestone ridge near Shap, in a landscape of shallow soils and bare rock outcrops, still littered with boulders, some of limestone, most of Shap granite. The place-name is not mentioned until 1235,[18] and appears to mean "Harding's valley", presumably referring to the shallow depression running northwards from the settlement. As is usual for all the settlements discussed here, the hamlet is itself placed at the break point between land suitable for arable cultivation and meadow and poorer quality land suitable for grazing. Hardendale is chaotic, but what initially attracted attention were the parallel lanes defining the lateral limits of the plan, in sharp contrast to the disorder within. It has to be admitted that detailed mapping hardly clarifies matters, but it does confirm the picture; if it is allowed that some quarrying and the recent expansion of one farmstead add to the confusion, then two essential points appear; first, the intricacy of the whole site appears to contrast with normal upland farmsteads or two-farm hamlets; second, it is possible that there was once a formal compartment set on the west side of the hamlet, opposing a higher status structure, now the hall, lying to the east. The size and complexity of this upland site begs questions; as late as 1829 eight farmers are listed;[19] are we seeing here the remains of a former shieling complex, arising from an irregular grouping of booths set within a driftway lying between enclosed grazing lands eventually converted to arable, at which stage some elements of the settlement plan were formalised? Or, as seems more likely, are these the remains of a specialist seigniorial enterprise, such as vaccary (cattle farm) or bercary (sheep farm)? The fact that it once belonged to Byland Abbey, Yorkshire, before falling into lay hands after the

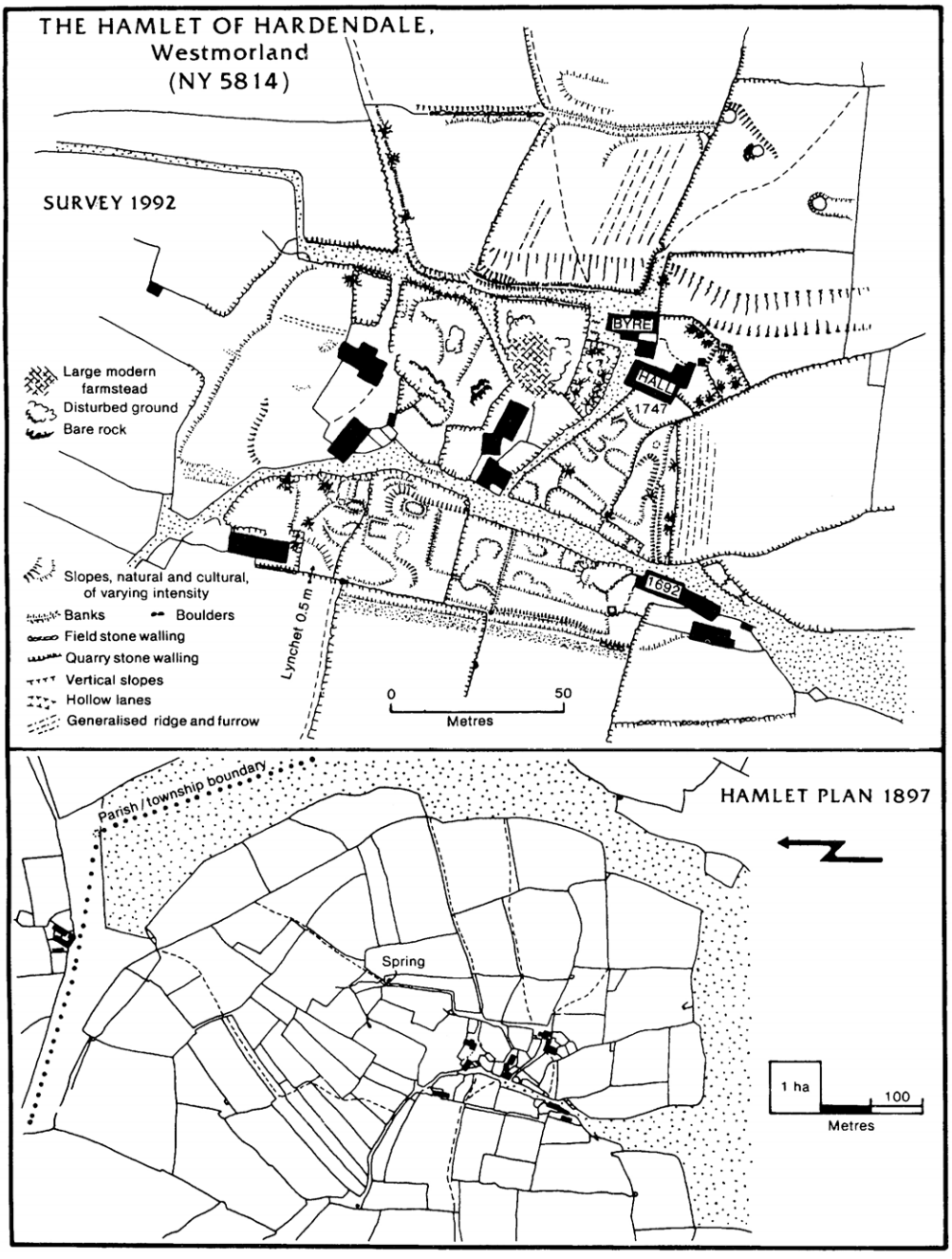

FIG. 5. Hardendale

dissolution provides some support for the latter sequence of events.[20] In fact, its history may have been more complex than its apparent isolation might suggest, for while it lies above Shap village and abbey and the main route to the Kent Valley, it is skirted by routes to Tebay, the Lune Gorge and north Lancashire by way of Birk Beck, and its grazing stock and hearth-fires must have easily attracted the attention of both travellers or raiders using this latter route.

General Discussion

These earthwork surveys, one interpretation of the landscape, are worth publishing as a record; they need verifying and developing. Even within a single day changing light conditions radically affect what can be seen and mapped – thus the ridge-and-furrow appears discontinuous because only that which could be seen with certainty was included – while the cycles of weather and climate, seasonal changes, snowfall, flood and drought will, through time, gradually reveal more of the surface complexity. The investment of more time in observation, season by season would reveal more, a precious record of each settlement's history. Of course, the sub-surface archaeology is quite another matter, but excavation of any of these sites is unlikely.

In order to manage the past, to help landowners and farmers to take sensible decisions in the light of an increasing range of government sponsored schemes and assist other interested parties to offer sound advice, it is essential to create simple records of what is there and what may be there. Within the upper Eden valley there is a richness of village earthworks still undamaged by the process of "pecuniation", i.e. infilling with bungalows and recent dwelling houses. In terms of landscape archaeology it is necessary that this evidence for past conditions be noted and recorded before any further development takes place.

Inevitably, these observations raise more questions than they can answer. To select only three: first, on Figure 3 there may be at least two mill sites, one near Kaber Folds, the other straddling the rushy valley of the Popping Beck, while in Rookby (Figure 4) a stream seems to have been diverted into a remarkably large and deep channel, cut across a hillside, to enter the hamlet at its east end. Of course, dams, ponds and leats were not only associated with corn mills, for fishponds, fulling mills, flax retting ponds, sites of the preparation of hides and skins, together with meadow-watering arrangements were also present in earlier landscapes. In short, such waterworks are themselves worthy of closer study, indeed many of the region's streams no longer occupy wholly natural courses, but have been adjusted and diverted by centuries of improvement and use.

Second, in Figure 2 the terms *toft vennel* and *field vennel* are attached to passage ways and footpaths between tofts and tracks across the core furlongs behind. In Milburn, Westmorland, existing passage-ways between the individual tofts are still referred to as *throughgangs*. In order to create an alternative and general technical term, the expression *toft vennel* has been adopted, using the Latin *venella*, "a lane"; today, these may appear as surfaced roads, rough tracks, legal footpaths or merely as private access ways to farmyards. It is possible that they were once a usual part of the planning of settlements. In Sweden they appear on fine early seventeenth

century maps which show that each farmstead toft could be separated from the next by a narrow strip of communal space, a path, roadway or green, while at one site in the Netherlands excavation has shown the presence of such features as early as the tenth century. Their presence as a generic type in the north of England has not been noted before, yet they may flag the survival of an ancient plan-element. Those that do survive as public roadways allow mid-village access to the back lanes and the fields, whence field vennels, sometimes present as rights of way, sometimes private, give access to the arable lands.

Finally, the distinction between the village street and a village green is a fine one; centuries of encroachment, the movement forward of both enclosures and buildings is a very common feature, indeed so common is this process that one must reverse the argument and ask, why do some village greens survive? An element of conservatism is clearly involved, and it may be that the character of the local landownership is crucial. The concentration of population within a village or hamlet, with precious beasts normally housed in byres, meant that for much of the year they were either taken for several months to remote upland shielings, or regularly walked out of the settlement to graze upon adjacent common pastures. The driftway, outgang or cattle track, often beginning in the green and opening outwards as a great enclosed funnel, is an important morphological feature of many northern villages. It could be narrow or wide, and in both cases if the villages expanded there was a tendency to place newer steadings either on the arable adjacent to the drift or actually within the drift itself.

The five villages described here represent no more than a sample of the archaeological potential of the region, which must rank as important on both a national and a European scale. There is no doubt that they are difficult to record and to interpret, but the landscape evidence they contain is wholly irreplaceable; concealed within the palimpsest of the landscape is a record of the cultural achievements by many generations of Cumbrian farmers, "our fore-elders", as one lady put it with grace and economy.

Acknowledgements

Finally, this is a chance to thank those landowners and tenant farmers – too numerous to name individually – who gave me such free access to their properties during my fieldwork: without their co-operation this report would have been impossible. Their kindness and generosity is yet another characteristic of the Cumbrian countryside.

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[18] A.H. Smith, *op.cit.*, 168.
[19] Parson and White, *Directory* (1829), 604.
[20] *Ibid.*, 602.