

ART. XII – *Sillfield, Preston Patrick: A double-oval type of field pattern*

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**I**N 1771, Sir Francis Charteris, the lord of the manor of Preston Patrick in Westmorland decided to enfranchise his tenants, thereby releasing them for ever from “customary tenure” in return for substantial payments from each tenant. In order to calculate the cost of enfranchisement for each tenant a map<sup>1</sup> was made of the fields of each farm or small-holding. Each field was named on the map and a number was assigned to it indicating to which tenant-farm it was attached, and its valuation, presumably in terms of its fertility and usage, was shown by a colour coding. This map includes Sillfield, a hamlet of four farms, one of whose holdings (marked “9”) is shown on Figure 1. This Sillfield unit was isolated from the rest of the township by being wholly surrounded by the unenclosed common of Preston Patrick Fell. In its field pattern and the way that the fields are distributed, Sillfield resembles a number of similar units in Lancashire for which I coined the term “double-oval”.<sup>2</sup> There are other examples in the Kendal area which appear to be of the same type; in Skelsmergh, New Hutton, Lambrigg, and one in the area once called the Hay, off Paddy Lane on the east side of Kendal (Fig. 2).

### **Double-oval characteristics**

The features of this double-oval pattern in Lancashire were those recorded in nineteenth century tithe maps, but earlier records suggested that the pattern was certainly in existence in the medieval period. The typical double-oval unit consisted of two huge, roughly oval enclosures, each a quarter to half a mile (400–800 m) across. The boundaries usually comprise a large bank, often following a natural feature, topped by an ancient hedge or wall, with a ditch and with a small (possibly diverted) stream on the outside of the oval. Tracks and paths frequently follow the boundary of the ovals, usually on the outside.

The smaller oval was held by three or four farms which often shared the same name. In some examples they were sited round the perimeter of the oval; in others they were grouped as a small hamlet. The lands of these small farms were intermixed within the oval, and some fields showed evidence of the narrow, curved shape which results from piecemeal enclosure of medieval arable strips. The larger oval was normally held by one substantial farm or Hall, and medieval references indicated that this oval was sometimes held in demesne. Field patterns suggest that this oval had originally been one enormous pasture from which tracks led out through widening funnels to once-unenclosed common grazings beyond. This characteristic association of a hall with the (primarily) “pasture” oval, and a hamlet with the (primarily) “arable” oval, tempted me, when I originally searched for a phrase descriptive of the double-oval to call it a “hall-and-hamlet” pattern.

Since field patterns within and without them terminate on their boundaries, these double-ovals appear to be primary units, that is, they were the first enclosures to be

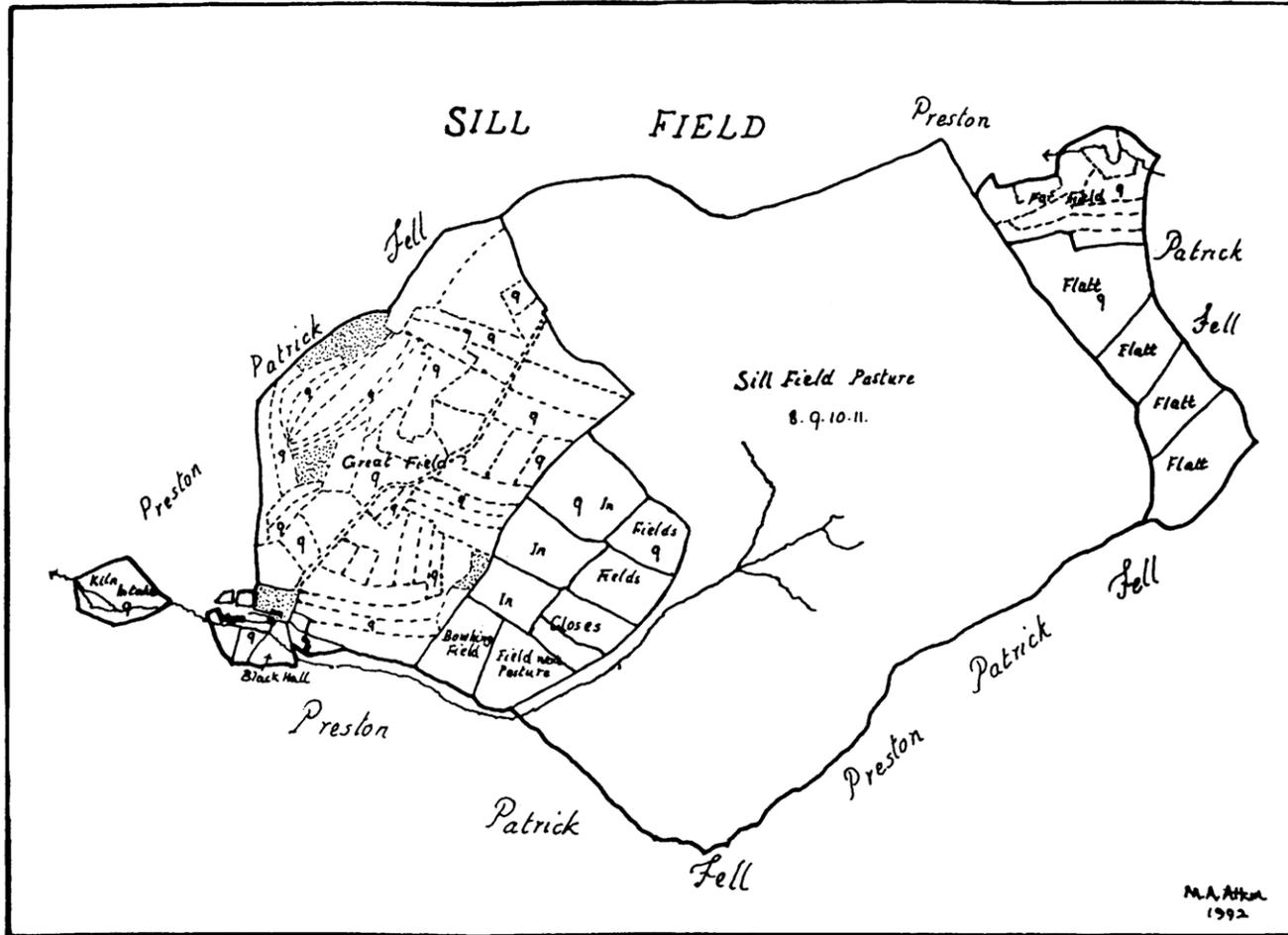


FIG. 1. Drawn from a map of 1771 showing customary lands in Preston Patrick

made in the area.<sup>3</sup> I suggested furthermore that the two units together might have been what in the Middle Ages were known as vaccaries, large demesnal stock farms established in one-time hunting forests or chases. Each could be envisaged as a pastoral unit of perhaps three-score animals<sup>4</sup> managed by a vaccary keeper and his herdsmen. The large single farm within the pasture oval would have been held by the vaccary keeper and the small farms of the hamlet by the herdsmen; each having a small amount of shared arable land for subsistence, and grazing rights for their own stock within the complex.

### **The Sillfield double-oval**

The map of Sillfield as it was in 1771 admirably portrays such a unit. At that time the area called Great Field, apart from small patches (dotted areas on Fig. 1) held in common, was held in unenclosed strips by the four farms. These small strips are still visible today as lynchets. On the eastern side of the Great Field is an area of small enclosures, all but two called In Fields, which were probably once part of Great Field. They were held in severalty by the same four farms. The eastern boundary of the In Fields drops sharply below the enclosing hedge into a rough, "watery lane", down which the stream (shown on the 1771 map) makes its way. Such a hedge-topped barrier would be effective in preventing stock in the pasture (or deer) from getting into the arable, and is a common feature of other double-ovals I have examined. The second oval was Sill Field Pasture, over half a mile across and, in 1771, still without internal sub-division, where each of the farms had grazing rights. Beyond Sill Field Pasture, and post-dating the two ovals, although still probably of medieval date, are five small enclosures. One, named Far Field, was also held in strips in 1771 by the four farms. The other four enclosures, named Flatt, were held individually in 1771, but the place-name element *flat* implies that they were originally brought into cultivation as common field.<sup>5</sup>

The entries relevant to Sillfield in the survey which accompanied the map, are shown in Table 1. For each field unit there are three sets of figures: the area (in acres, roods and perches); a value per acre in shillings; and a valuation (in pounds, shillings and pence). From the total for each holding the purchase price of enfranchisement would be calculated. Sheep Heath was apparently not assigned a value, presumably because it was the common land of Preston Patrick Fell. In area the Sillfield holdings range from 39 to 49 acres. Of this figure the acreage for each 1/4 share of Sill Field Pasture was just over 25 acres. These figures are measured in customary acres of "6½ yards to (a) perch". This was 1½ times the size of statute acres, so each holding was approximately 70 acres (c. 35 hectares).

### **Dating the Sillfield ovals**

Although it is clear that the settlement and its field pattern must date back at least to the Middle Ages, the place-name Sillfield does not seem to occur in early records. Smith suggests that its name derives from a family called Sill, and records the place name no earlier than 1692.<sup>6</sup> There are, however, earlier records of a Sill family in the area: William de le Syle in Preston Richard, the neighbouring township, paid

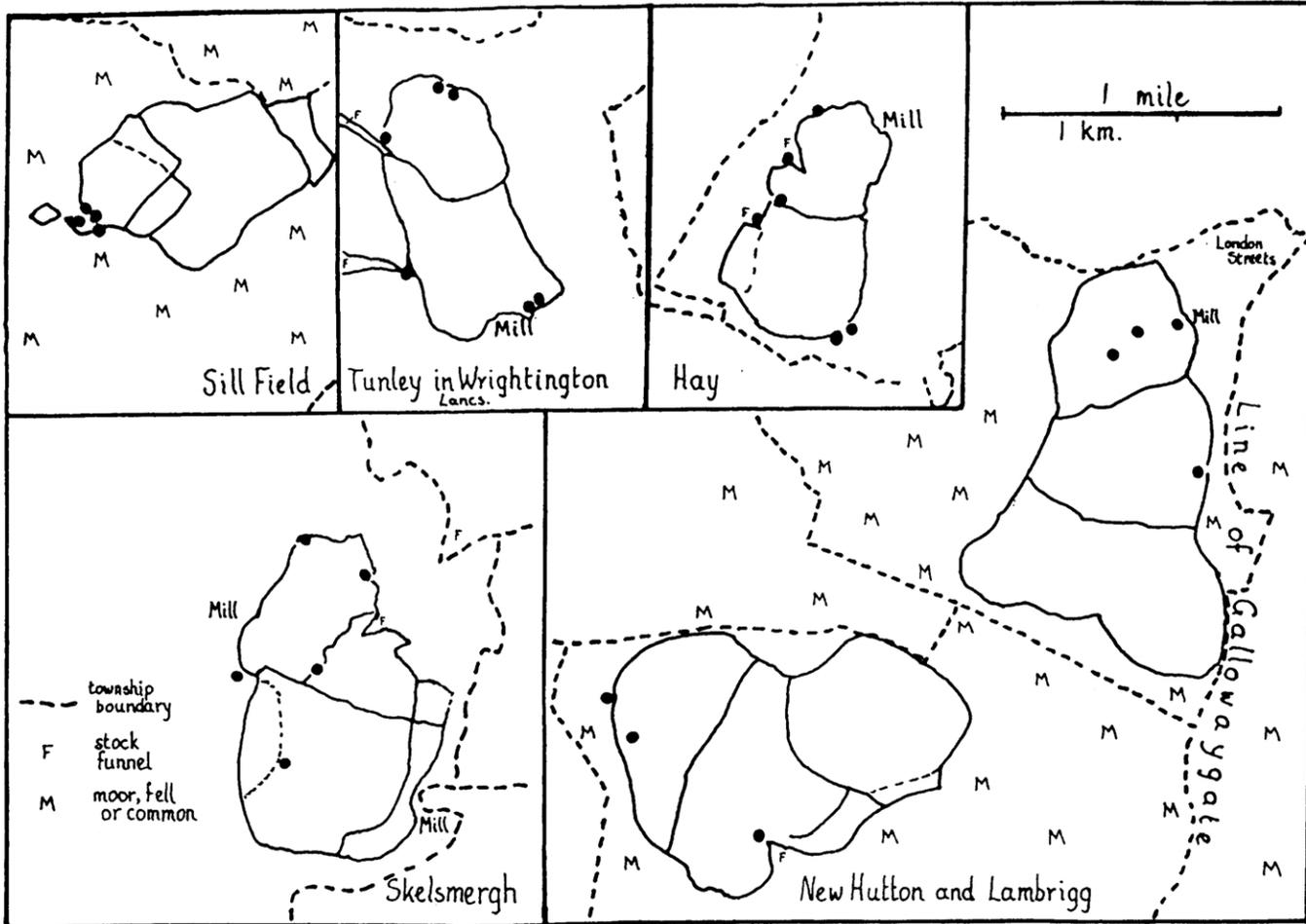


FIG. 2. Examples of double-ovals

15s. to the Lay Subsidy of 1332,<sup>7</sup> and records from the end of the fifteenth century show that members of the Sill family were tenants of the Stricklands of Sizergh in the nearby townships of Natland, Stainton, Sedgwick and Hincaster.

Pertinent to the probable antiquity of the Sillfield double-oval is the fact that it was one of the customary lands of the manor until 1771. It is likely that modification of ancient custom was relatively slight and long-drawn out because both the ownership and tenancy of the manor remained very stable over many generations. The Curwen family were the overlords of the manor from the end of the twelfth century down to at least 1577, and their principal tenants, the immediate lords, were the Prestons who took their name from the township. They were first recorded in 1184/95, and held the lordship until 1717, when it was conveyed to Colonel Francis Charteris, whose grandson determined to enfranchise the customary-held tenements.<sup>8</sup>

### Customary tenure

What “customary tenure” implied in Preston Patrick in 1771 is unclear, and may not even have been known to either the tenants or the lord’s bailiff. In the long-distant past a peasant’s tenement and his share of the arable and meadow of the vill, his right to pasture on the common land, and his (limited) right to take wood for housing, tools or fuel, were once paid for by providing food for his lord from his crops or his animals. He also performed labour services (sometimes called *boon works*) such as ploughing or harvesting work on his lord’s land; and on inheriting his tenure he paid a heriot, perhaps originally his best beast.<sup>9</sup> However, even by the early Middle Ages the provision of food for his lord had usually been commuted to a money payment, and by the late medieval period the labour services also had been commuted. Although the nature of the original services was often forgotten, these payments, and especially the heriot payment, often lasted for centuries, and were only eclipsed by the tenants purchasing their enfranchisement, usually by a sum totalling several times the annual rent of their holding.

A few “services” are recorded in the medieval period for Preston Patrick. Before c. 1180 the lord of Preston Patrick made a payment of 43s. for cornage to the King or to the Lord of the barony of Kendal.<sup>10</sup> This was probably a payment which he made on behalf of the men of the vill for pasture rights in the surrounding waste,<sup>11</sup> and would be levied on his bond tenants in the vill. Similarly the obligation to find food (*puture*) for two foresters of the Lord of Kendal Barony, as well as to find witnessmen for the foresters, would rest ultimately on the bond tenants of Preston Patrick. There is a late record<sup>12</sup> in 1808 to a payment of “eleven pence or one *boon* hen” for a bracken dale (a share of Preston Fell from which the tenant could cut bracken). What other services were required of the bond tenants is apparently not recorded for Preston Patrick, but some services are recorded for neighbouring townships.<sup>13</sup>

### Other double-ovals in the Kendal area

There are other sites in the Kendal area which, in 1834, appear to have been of “double-oval” type.<sup>14</sup> Figure 2 shows these individually, and drawn to the same

scale, with Sillfield and a Lancashire example, Tunley in Wrightington, for comparison. The Skelsmergh double-oval includes Skelsmergh Hall, which held all the land in the southern “pasture” oval, and to the north the loosely-grouped hamlet of Tarn Bank, Edge Bank, Otter (originally Outer) Bank, Stocks Mill and Burton House. This oval includes a group of fields of long, narrow curved shape which share the name Common High Field, and there are several called – Bank(s), a field name which, in the Kendal area, appears to be associated with one-time arable cultivation. The Skelsmergh double-oval lies at a lower elevation than Sillfield, and by the time the area first appeared on a map the land outside the oval had long been enclosed and farmed.<sup>15</sup> Consequently a feature of the pattern is apparent, which was conspicuous in Lancashire examples – the tendency of roads and tracks, originally occupying a wider swathe of land than they do today, to follow the outside edge of the ovals. Skelsmergh also exhibits another feature characteristic of the pattern, the presence of a mill, originally a corn mill, and usually found associated with the Hall oval.<sup>16</sup> Skelsmergh was held by the Leyburne family from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and their lordship was presumably centred on the Hall.<sup>17</sup>

There is a double-oval lying just east of the ancient trackway called Paddy Lane on the eastern side of Kendal. (150–190 m) It evidently formed part of the Hay of Kendal<sup>18</sup> recorded as part of the demesne of the lords of Kendal in the Middle Ages. The southern oval, with field names like Hazelriggs (which contains traces of lynchets), Half Acres, Flats, and Warrener Bank,<sup>19</sup> may be identified as the arable oval, and associated with the farms, Hayclose, Hollins in the Hay, and two farms called Garths.<sup>20</sup> The higher, northern oval was held in 1834 by Hayfellside, and Windy Harbour, the latter on the crest of the hill at a height of 190 m.<sup>21</sup> Field names here like Gib Ridding, Stony Acre, Low and High Broom, Tom Knotts and Summer Croft, and Mire imply relatively poor-quality land, more suitable for pasture than arable.

Further north-east are the double-ovals of Lambrigg and New Hutton Park. They stand at a higher altitude than those previously discussed and this probably contributes to the greater size of their “pasture” ovals. That of Lambrigg Park rises to over 1000 feet (330 m), but in the valley below a smaller oval was shared by three farms. The “arable” oval of Hutton Park was evidently associated with the two peripheral farms of Birks and Low House, while Hutton Park farm dominated the “pasture” oval.

At both these sites the large pasture half is itself subdivided, that nearest the halls being split into about ten large fields whose straight boundaries indicate relatively late subdivision. The outer section of the “pasture” ovals, lying at the highest elevation, was undivided and contained pasture of low quality. These had evidently been enclosed from the Fell at a relatively recent date. The impetus to provide this larger area of enclosed pasture was probably the proximity of the very ancient routeway called Gallowaygate, a major drove road for Scottish cattle until the Railway Age.<sup>22</sup> Lambrigg Park was certainly one of the major stopping places on the route,<sup>23</sup> and this was probably the reason why the Earl of Lonsdale was holding both Lambrigg Park and its Inn in hand.

The nature of both the climate and the terrain in the Kendal area, must always have been more conducive to stock- than to arable-farming, and these large primary enclosures, still evident in the landscape, provide us with some evidence of how our ancestors exploited the land in the past.

## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> C.R.O. (K) WD/AG 177: "A map of all the customary lands within the manor of Preston Patrick in the County of Westmorland, held under the Honorable Francis Charteris, 1771." and its schedule, C.R.O. (K) WD/AG PU: "A survey of all the customary estates within the manor of preston Patrick held of the Honourable Francis Charteris".
- <sup>2</sup> M.A. Atkin, "Some settlement patterns in Lancashire" in D. Hooke (ed.), *Medieval Villages* Monograph No. 5. (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1985), 173–9.
- <sup>3</sup> In wooded areas they may have originated as enclosed wood-pasture (enclosed areas of woodland which over several generations lost their trees through stock grazing-off the seedlings. See M. Gelling, *Place Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984), 199–207, for a discussion on the shift, through time, in the meaning of the place name element *leah* from "woodland" to "glade", to "clearing" to "pasture or meadow".
- <sup>4</sup> The Michaelmas audit of the de Lacy estate in N.E. Lancashire c. 1300 show that most of the vaccaries there contained about 60 animals of various ages. P.A. Lyons, *Two compoti of the Lancashire and Cheshire estates of Henry de Laci, Earl of Lincoln* Chetham Society (1884), 102; 129–38 (1295/6) and 156–65 (1304/5).
- <sup>5</sup> The field name "flat" derives from Old Norse *flat*. Its meaning survives in North Country dialect as "a division of the common field", A.H. Smith, *The Place names of Westmorland* English Place-name Society XLIII (Cambridge, 1967), II, 250.
- <sup>6</sup> A.H. Smith, *op.cit.*, I, 63. In fact it is listed as a place name in parish registers from 1667.
- <sup>7</sup> W. Farrer, (edited by J.F. Curwen) *Records of the Barony of Kendal* (1924), II, 204. "The Syle" sounds as if it could be the name of the place from which William came, and it is tempting to speculate that it was the later Sillfield, but in the absence of early forms of the name nothing can be proved. "The Syle" derives from Old English *syle* or *sylu*, meaning a bog, an area of marshland A.H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements* English Place-name Society XXVI (Cambridge, 1956), II, 173.
- <sup>8</sup> W. Farrer (edited by J.F. Curwen), *op.cit.*, II, 297 and 292.
- <sup>9</sup> In Northern England periodic seasonal work at busy times was required by the lord from each household in the vill. See J.E.A. Jolliffe, "Northumbrian Institutions" in *English Historical Review* (1926), XLI, 6–12. The term a "boon day" is still used in Westmorland to describe an extra, often voluntary, day of work for a special job, but it has wholly lost the compulsory and servile connotation that it originally had.
- <sup>10</sup> W. Farrer, (ed. J.F. Curwen), *op.cit.*, II, 297–304.
- <sup>11</sup> C.M.L. Bouch and G.P. Jones, *The Lake Counties* (1961), 7, 11–12, 14. Cornage seems to have originated as a due paid in cattle, or for cattle (pasturage).
- <sup>12</sup> C.R.O. (K) D/P bundle 8.
- <sup>13</sup> In nearby Heversham as late as 1571 the lord owned "the works of the tenants of the said manor called bond days". W. Farrer, ed. J.F. Curwen, *op.cit.*, II, 153–4. These probably required them to help on the lord's arable at times of ploughing and harvest, and in getting in his hay. A common payment by tenants was multure, a payment to escape having to grind their corn at their lord's mill. In Natland in 1597 the tenants paid one hen for "hauling silver" and the tenant of Crowpark paid "a gressom, and for rent, ten hens, four shearings (probably an obligation to do four days work in the lord's harvest field) and one barrow". This last, like "hauling silver", was probably an obligation to cart goods for their lord, W. Farrer, *Records of the Barony of Kendal* (1923), I, 174–5.
- <sup>14</sup> The Kendal Corn Rent maps and schedules surveyed in 1834, for Skelsmergh; Scalthwaite Rigg, Hay and Hutton in the Hay; Lambrigg, and New Hutton are respectively:- C.R.O. (K) WQR/C 19; 18; 10; and 14.
- <sup>15</sup> Successive positions of the earlier access to the moor are indicated by the two funnels (F) shown in Figure 2.
- <sup>16</sup> Beck Mill, at the south-east corner of the Hall oval, is more likely to have been the ancient corn mill than Stocks Mill (on the north-west boundary) whose name suggests that it was a fulling mill.
- <sup>17</sup> The present buildings at Skelsmergh Hall incorporate a peel tower dated to the fifteenth century. *Historical Monuments in Westmorland* Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (London, 1936), 212.
- <sup>18</sup> W. Farrer (1923), *op.cit.*, I, 176–86.
- <sup>19</sup> Unless this is a late personal name, this area might be the share of cultivable land assigned to the Warrener, the man who in the Middle Ages was responsible for looking after the demesne rabbit warren.
- <sup>20</sup> It is tempting to speculate on the personal name Adam de Garethwayte of 1332, as referring to Garths. W. Farrer (1923), *op.cit.*, 179.

- <sup>21</sup> Somewhere on this ridge is likely to have been the site which in 1274 was known as "Schoureshale" and was associated with Oxinholme (sic). Smith thought the name might mean "the scale (summer settlement) of the watchman" A.H. Smith, *The Place names of Westmorland I* (1967), 48 and 126.
- <sup>22</sup> The ancient routeway of "Galwaithgate" was first recorded in a deed dated between 1186 and 1201. It is also known as (Old) Scotch Lane. W. Farrer, (ed. J.F. Curwen), *Records of the Barony of Kendal II* (1924), 417.
- <sup>23</sup> The field called London Streets in the north-eastern corner of Lambrigg was probably another such stopping place for drovers. In Wales the name Little London is commonly found along droving routes. F. Godwin and S. Toulson, *The Drovers' roads of Wales* (London, 1977), 144. Little London was an alternative name for Stockdale (Longsledale) in 1834. C.R.O. (K) WQR/C 11.

TABLE 1

*Holding No. 8*

James (underlined, implying deleted, and Thomas written above)  
 Jackson, Sill Field. Cust(omary tenant). Dead.

| 11.9                            | A. | R. | P. | Value<br>per acre<br>(shillings) | L. | S. | D.     |
|---------------------------------|----|----|----|----------------------------------|----|----|--------|
| Message outbuild(ings) Gard(en) |    |    |    |                                  |    |    |        |
| Croft and 1/4 part of the Waste | —  | 1  | 2  | 20                               | 1  | 15 | 0      |
| 11 Pieces in Great Field        | —  | 9  | 3  | 8                                | 5  | 12 | 0      |
| Bowking Field                   | —  | 1  | 2  | 37}                              |    |    |        |
| Field next Pasture              | —  | 1  | 3  | 4}                               | 20 | 3  | 10 1/2 |
| 1/4 part of Sill Field Pas.     | —  | 25 | 2  | 05                               | 4  | 5  | 2 1/2  |
| 3 Pieces in Far Field           | —  | 1  | —  | 18                               | 12 | 0  | 13 4   |
| Shep Heath                      |    |    |    |                                  |    |    |        |
| (TOTAL)                         | —  | 40 | 2  | 7                                |    | 16 | 12 7   |

*Holding No. 9*

Thomas Moorhouse. Sill F(iel)d. Bought Free.

| Free   | A. | R. | P. | Value<br>per acre<br>(shillings) | L. | S. | D.       |
|--|----|----|----|----------------------------------|----|----|----------|
| Message, Outbuild(in)g, G(arde)n                             |    |    |    |                                  |    |    |          |
| Croft and 1/4 part of waste                                  | —  | —  | 2  | 13                               |    | 1  | 15 0     |
| Kiln Intack  | —  | 1  | 2  | 18                               | 26 | 2  | 1 11     |
| 15 Pieces in Great Field                                     | —  | 8  | 3  | 19                               |    | 5  | 12 0     |
| In Field}  | —  | 2  | —  | 7}                               |    |    |          |
| In Field}  | —  | 1  | 1  | 12}                              | 20 | 3  | 7 4 1/2  |
| 1/4 part of Sill Field Pas(ture)                             | —  | 25 | 2  | 5                                | 4  | 5  | 2 1 1/2  |
| 1 Piece in Far Field   | —  | —  | 3  | 8}                               |    |    |          |
| Flat   | —  | 4  | —  | 22}                              | 12 | 2  | 19 3     |
| Low parrock in Goose Green (elsewhere<br>in Preston Patrick} | —  | 1  | 2  | 11                               | 24 | 1  | 17 7 3/4 |
| Intack}  | —  | 1  | 1  | 34}                              |    |    |          |
| Intack}  | —  | 1  | 2  | 39}                              | 14 | 2  | 4 10 1/2 |
| Sheep Heath  |    |    |    |                                  |    |    |          |
| (TOTAL)  | —  | 49 | 2  | 28                               |    | 25 | — 2 1/4  |

*Holding No. 10*

Agnes (underlined, and John inserted above) Atkinson. Cust(omary).  
Also inserted:-now John Moorhouse – and not purch(ase)d free.

Messuage, Outbuild(in)g, G(arde)n.

|                                  |   |    |   |     |    |    |    |                   |
|----------------------------------|---|----|---|-----|----|----|----|-------------------|
| Croft and 1/4 part of Waste      | – | –  | – | 30  | –  | –  | 15 | 0                 |
| 11 Pieces in Great Field         | – | 8  | – | 8   |    | 5  | 12 | 0                 |
| Inn Close                        | – | 1  | 2 | 8}  |    |    |    |                   |
| Inn Close                        | – | –  | 3 | 34} | 20 | 3  | 0  | 10 <sup>1/2</sup> |
| Inn Close                        | – | –  | 2 | 5}  |    |    |    |                   |
| 1/4 part of Sill Field Pas(ture) | – | 25 | 2 | 5   | 4  | 5  | 2  | 1 <sup>1/2</sup>  |
| 3 Pieces in Far Field            | – | 1  | – | 5   | 12 | –  | 12 | 4 <sup>1/2</sup>  |
| Flat                             | – | 1  | 3 | 20  | 18 | 1  | 13 | 9                 |
| (TOTAL)                          | – | 39 | 2 | 35  |    | 16 | 16 | 1 <sup>1/2</sup>  |

 *Holding No. 11*

Thomas Jackson. Sill F(iel)d. Cust(omary). Dead.

?Cash (partially hidden by blot) 11.2

Messuage, Outbuild(in)g, G(arde)n.

|                                  |   |    |   |     |    |            |    |                   |
|----------------------------------|---|----|---|-----|----|------------|----|-------------------|
| Croft and 1/4 part of Waste      | – | –  | 1 | 27  |    | 1          | 10 | 0                 |
| 11 Pieces in Great Field         | – | 8  | 2 | 11  |    | 5          | 12 | 0                 |
| In Field                         | – | 1  | 3 | 32} |    |            |    |                   |
| Inn Field                        | – | 1  | 2 | 30} | 20 | 3          | 12 | 9                 |
| 1/4 part of Sill Field Pas(ture) | – | 25 | 2 | 5   | 4  | 5          | 2  | 1 <sup>1/2</sup>  |
| 3 Pieces in Far Field            | – | 1  | 1 | 9   | 12 | –          | 15 | 8                 |
| Flatt                            | – | 1  | 3 | 4   | 18 | 1          | 11 | 11 <sup>1/4</sup> |
| (TOTAL)                          | – | 41 | 0 | 38  |    | NONE GIVEN |    |                   |

This holding included land elsewhere in Preston Patrick. A separate acreage total was recorded for the Sillfield part but not a valuation. By calculation it would have been £18 4s. 5<sup>3/4</sup>d.

In addition there were three tiny holdings:

No. 12. Margaret Atkinson (dead) who held Black Hall (one of the houses in Sillfield hamlet).

No. 13. Israel Evening (Free) who held one piece in Far Field.

No. 14. Thomas Ward (2nd. Ins(?almen)t, now John Hutchinson) who held Flat.

