

FIELD NAMES AND FIELD SHAPES IN NW ENGLAND.

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(From a lecture given in Lancaster, Feb 28th
1995.)

In the medieval period a township would be largely self-sufficient, and within its boundaries would have arable land for human food, meadow (for hay to provide for winter fodder), pasture (for grazing stock) and woodland (for fuel, tools and housing). In working on the Croston Tithe Award map and schedule of 1837¹ I realised that the field-names together with the field-shapes, and their distribution farm by farm, provided evidence from which one could construct a map of medieval land use in the township. Medieval and later records, though not abundant, were sufficient to provide confirmation of this map (Map 1a).

One of the principal areas of common arable on Croston township was that called *Hill (or High) Field*, which was probably laid out to a regular plan with strips with strips about 15 feet wide, sometime in the Middle Ages. By 1837 Hill Field was divided into long, narrow fields, all aligned north to south, and each with a distinctive curve. This curve (**aratral curve**) sometimes occurs as a reversed S and sometimes, as here, as a single bow. It is thought to have developed as a consequence of the medieval ploughman beginning the turning of his cumbrous plough team before he reached the headland and the end of the field. Ridge and furrow, in which the ridge of each individual medieval strip was separated from the next by a furrow on either side, was visible (for a day) in buttercups which were the open on the ridge, but still in bud in the furrows.²

These long, narrow, curving enclosures in the *Hill Field* of 1837 were clearly formed by the amalgamation of three or four medieval arable strips. They result from piecemeal exchanges, probably over many generations, agreed between one farmer and another.³ But it was evident in Croston in 1837 that the resultant fields of any one farm were still widely scattered and intermixed. The Glebe, land held by the church and therefore likely to have remained over a

long time relatively unchanged, has been shaded on the map as an example of such a holding. As farmers acquired their enclosed bundles of strips field-names like *Wiggins Hill Field*, *George Hey*, *Hey o'th Hill*, *Gib Hey* are the sort of field-names which arose when farmers managed to gather their bundles of strips together and enclose them. Similarly-shaped enclosures in other parts of the township, with names like **butts**, **lands**, **acre**, as in *Pack Butts*, *Little Acre*, and *Fairlands*,⁴ were amalgamations of strips in some of the other common arable fields of Croston: *Old Field*, *Little Field*, and *Drinkhouse Field*. These two were subdivided into many narrow curving plots.

In many other townships of North West England similar examples of Field-names and Field-shapes bear witness to ancient medieval arable strips. In Longton there are also early records of strips in the common arable fields: "2 acres on *Tunsteads*" in the 13th century, and "10 ridges in the *Strinds*" in 1331.⁵ *Tunsteads* and *Strinds* were still field-names in the 19th century, as was *Turneracres*, probably the *Tormerehakir* of the 13th century. In Halton-on-Lune curving field patterns and the recurrent field-names *Arrows* indicate what was clearly a medieval arable field, and similar patterns can be seen in Warton, near Carnforth, Heslington near Kendal, and in many townships in Cumberland such as *Blindcrake*.

In 1837 there was an area lying south of the Hill Field in Croston and the north of Croston Hall which was clearly from another area of enclosed arable strips. These enclosures however were very different from those in the Hill Field. They were markedly **not** parallel, and but were shorter, irregularly shaped and interdigitated one with another. The field-names **butts** and **acres**, were still evident, but the descriptive names attached to the element suggested an earlier period of naming - Piper's Hey, Grimmer's acre, Farrier's field. By 1837 only two of the fields here were held by tenants; all the rest had reverted to one of the (two) Lords of the Manor. By the date of the First Edition 6" O.S. map some ten years later, the whole area had become the North Park belonging to the Hall, and it was a wide expanse with no field boundaries in it at all. The Tithe Award Survey of 1837 had caught the ancient pattern just in time.

Croston, Longton, Warton and Halton are in lowland areas, but it is possible to identify medieval arable fields of similar long, narrow shape in upland areas of the North-west. At the date of the Tithe Commutation (in 1836) in the huge ancient ecclesiastical parish of Kendal, several townships still had unenclosed individual arable strips where one man's holding was intermixed with those of other farms. One such was Kentmere⁶ where small strip fields called **dales** (meaning 'a share' as in **dole**) and **dalts** were still shown as unenclosed. Today they form a part of larger fields, but they are still visible as lynchets (terraces) along the valley side. The terrain did not allow for long strips except on the valley floor where at least some of the strips (**ing, fit/feet** are distinguishing field names) were meadow doles; others may have been convertible at will from meadow to arable. The large area of potential meadow underlies the greater significance in upland areas of stock farming. Also on the valley floor were areas of peat moss, in which the tenants of the township had turbary rights.

There were four hamlets in Kentmere known as Quarters, each with its own enormous Quarter Pasture. These were evidently already enclosed in 1372 when a deed recorded "*tenants at will who hold the herbage and several pastures of the dale for 40 marks yearly rent*".⁷ By the 17th century the settlement in Wrea Quarter Pasture was slowly being depopulated, and its lands and rights in Wrea Quarter Pasture were absorbed into the demesne of Kentmere Hall, becoming known as Kentmere Park. An enquiry in 1760⁸ gives a detailed account of the management of the Quarter Pastures. There were 15 "*ancient tenements*" in each Quarter, and each "*ancient tenement*" held 10 "*catells*" (10 cattle) in its own Quarter Pasture and the right to put 80 sheep on the unenclosed fells (Fell Head and the Pike). In *toto* this allowed for 600 cattle and 4,800 sheep in the whole township.

This rationing of the number of animals which each farm could graze is known as stinting, and was designed to prevent over-grazing. By 1836 Hallowbank Quarter Pasture had been subdivided into "Grassings" assigned to each farm in the Quarter. Today both the Green and Cragg Quarter Pastures have also been shared out

between the farms which had grazing rights there, and are subdivided into great straight-walled pastures.

Croston was not without pasturage and meadow. Along the river Lostock lay the Town Meadow, still held in unenclosed strips in 1837, and there were more along the river Yarrow at the western end of the township. Enclosed meadows (with an aratral curve shape, which may have derived from the use of a plough to lay them out) lay further south between Meadow Lane and the Meadow Ditch, and these had names like *Miller's Meadow, Oliver Meadow, Almond's Meadow, and Croston Meadow*. There were also some relatively small, enclosed common pastures like *Westhead Pasture, and Cow Heads or Cow Aids* (this last form may simply be the result of a dropped h!). The whole of the south west area of the township appears to have been *Croston Finney*(fen). This was originally a very extensive area of unenclosed but stinted rough pasture on land lying only a few feet above sea level, and grazing was probably only available in summer. It was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1725-6 as part of a major drainage scheme.⁹ To the east of the Finney was an area called *Croston Moss or Turf Lands*. These were areas of peat which was cut for fuel.

There was more potential grazing at the north end of the township on Barbers or Barbill Moor, still unenclosed in 1580.¹⁰ Barbers Moor was evidently inter-commoned between the township of Croston and that of Ulnes Walton to the north and Eccleston to the east, and it was this particular Moor which led me to decide that one of the definitions in the Concise Scots Dictionary¹¹:- "**muir, moor** - a tract of unenclosed uncultivated land held by a proprietor or (chiefly) a community; the common" was better than that of the English Place Name Society:- "**mor** - a moor, originally barren waste-land"; this definition, they suggested, came to mean "marshland" in the South, Midlands and West, but implied higher ground in the north.¹² Dr Margaret Gelling's more recent definition¹³ leans yet more firmly to a "marshy" definition, and both leave out the element of "unenclosed community-held land". "Barren" is also a term with which I would quarrel: one of the most valuable attributes of a moor is that it provides an area of (usually)

seasonal grazing for stock which permits pastures used over the winter to be closed to allow grass to grow for the vital hay crop, the size of which determined the number of animals which could be fed through the following winter. I believe also that the term **moor** originally implied **inter-commoned**; that is, it was land which was shared and used by the several communities which lay around it.

In working on field patterns in the nearby township of Wrightington, I found a pattern in an area associated with North and South Tunley Halls, which I eventually called a "**double-oval**" pattern.¹⁴ This was characterised by two huge, adjacent oval enclosures, each of a half-mile or more across. Long sections of the boundaries of the double-oval followed a marked break of slope with a substantial ditch beyond. There were often footpaths or lanes running round the boundaries of the double-oval. Field boundaries both within and without the ovals stopped short on the boundary of the double-oval, so that it was apparent that the double-oval was a primary feature in the landscape.

The larger, southern, oval was shared in 1841 by two major farms, but its internal pattern would be best explained by a division of the whole oval into two moieties, possibly in the 15th century when a lease naming the fields of one of the farms described them as being "*part of Tunley demesne*".¹⁵ This oval had evidently been one single undivided area, and from its association with stock funnels leading from it on to the Hill of Wrightington, interpreted it as having once been a huge demesne pasture, controlled or managed by the single predecessor of the two farms of 1841, South Tunley Hall. The smaller oval was held in 1841 by three farms, one of which was North Tunley Hall which stood near the perimeter of that oval. Their fields were small, and aratral curves and butt-ends of strips showing the field boundaries ran both east-west and north-south, suggesting an interlocking pattern of arable strips of rather short length. This oval therefore appeared to be primarily an arable oval. Since no farm from outside the double-oval held any land within it, it was evident that the whole had been a self-contained unit and had its own name, Tunley.

The tiny hamlet of Sill Field in Preston Patrick in Westmorland fits very well my description of a double-oval unit. (Map 2). It was surveyed and mapped in 1770.¹⁶ At that time the arable oval was still largely unenclosed and its strips and lynchets (still visible today) were held by the four farms of the hamlet. Beyond lay the huge, roughly oval Sill Field Great Pasture which was held in common by the same four farms. Beyond the pasture oval on the rising land were five fields, four called flatt, meaning 'a division of the common field', were held in severalty and one of them still held in strips. The double-oval unit stood isolated, being entirely surrounded by the still-unenclosed Preston Patrick Fell.

Identification of this double-oval pattern led me to look again at the North Park area of Croston described above, together with the area of Hill Field. (Map 1b) These two units could conceivably have constituted a double-oval, the erstwhile pasture oval of the Hill Field being divided into a planned layout of strips and brought into cultivation at a period of population increase. Such an increase could well occur when Croston gained borough status at some date before 1295 when a burgage was recorded.¹⁷

There was one type of medieval farm which could provide an explanation of such a large-sized unit with these characteristics. Vaccaries, normally found in Royal Forests or chases, were large cattle farms held in demesne by the King of his greater lords. Such vaccaries in Pendle and Rossendale Forest are described in some detail in the records of the de Lacy family about 1300.¹⁸ Each vaccary contained some 60 cattle and was under the control of the vaccary-keeper who would hold the main dwelling. He was helped by herdsmen who lived in a smaller hamlet called a booth. I was already familiar with such a settlement in Pendle, Sabden Fold, which closely resembled the pattern of the (northern) arable oval at Tunley. The Tunley southern oval could readily be envisaged as having once been the holding of the vaccary keeper, responsible for the management of the whole unit. As the Crown's systematic exploitation of forests and their vaccaries declined during the Middle Ages, these self-contained units were readily adapted for use by the King as gifts to the Church or as land

holdings to greater lords in return for service and gradually a process of fragmentation coupled with steady enclosure of the surrounding wastes embedded and disguised the double-ovals within a variety of other field-patterns and ownerships.

A study of an upland settlement by Hodges and Wildgoose¹⁹ suggested that such a pattern might have an origin earlier than establishment as a medieval vaccary. Royston Grange in Derbyshire comprised two relatively small oval areas set in an area of unenclosed upland, but archaeological evidence indicated that it was in existence in the Romano-British period. Its oval enclosures were explained as being the two basic units of land use - a pasture one and an arable one - which a primary settlement within the waste would need. It is of course perfectly possible that such an enclosure might at a later date become enlarged and used as a vaccary.

Thus Croston in 1837 evinced the expected characteristics of a nucleated village with traces of medieval common arable fields and common pasture, but underlying this pattern was another of oval enclosures which may have greater antiquity. These enclosures seem to have been adapted, perhaps from use as a vaccary, to make provision for population growth consequent on the establishment of the medieval boroughs; then in Tudor and Stuart periods for farming in severalty; and in the 19th century for a pleasure park for Croston Hall. But the field-names and patterns of Croston township can still raise some further questions: lying separately a short distance away to the west, was a hamlet called Drinkhouses. In 1836 it contained almost a dozen farms mostly fronting on the track leading to the Finney. The earliest reference I have found is in 1348 to "*John son of Robert of the Drinkhouses*", and in 1461 permission was given to build a house on a parcel of land in "*Cowhey in Drinkhouse*", along with a grant of "*two parcels of arable, one in the Longwesteades and the other in Drynkehowse Field*", and pasture and turbury rights in the *Finney and Finney Moss*.²⁰ This implies that Drinkhouses was not only a settlement, but that it also had its own arable field. The distribution of fields held by Drinkhouse farms in 1837 confirms this, for they held between them only seven fields outside the area of Drinkhouse Field, the adjoining meadow, and the Finney. It

appears, therefore, that during much of the Middle Ages there were two settlements in the township of Croston, the hamlet, Drinkhouses bearing a name interestingly similar to 'drenghs', a group of people mentioned in the Lancashire Domesday and having a status higher than a bondman, but less than a thane, who may have had some kind of lesser administrative responsibility within the township or the parish.²¹ Not dissimilar secondary settlements are associated with two nucleated villages mentioned earlier, Halton-on-Lune and Warton. These were called respectively, Boor Town (field-names) or Boon Town (farm and field-names). Both names may derive from 'bondman' who were tenant farmers, tied to the land, but not landless, nor without rights and status. There may have been some significance in the character and function of the principal settlements: all three, Croston, Halton and Warton were important centres with important, and probably early churches:- Halton, with a motte and bailey castle, was the central place for Lonsdale in Domesday Book; Warton was the capital manor of the de Lancaster family, lords of Kendal barony in the post-Conquest period. The significance of these three hamlets and their relationship to the main centres is unclear. Here "happily" is food for thought.

1. Croston Tithe Commutation Award, map and schedule. 1837. Lancashire Record Office, PR 681.

2. Ridge and furrow may also show clearly under conditions of light snowfall, or with low light across them. If you find on looking along the ridge and furrow that you can also see signs of the aratral curve you are probably looking at medieval strips; if they are straight, they are the result of drainage or later cultivation.

3. In 1483 there was an exchange of "3 acres in Mosseriddyng abutting on Mabheld for a burgage in Cannocklake and 3 roods in the Meadow Plekk." LRO DDHe 11/36.

4. "1 acre...lying in the Lunte Acres"; (LRO DDHe 11/10.c.1348.)

5. VCH Lancs, vi. 72f. (13th c.). Ibid, vi. 72f. C. 1331.

6. Cumbria Record Office- CRO(K) WQR/C9 Kendal Corn Rent map and schedule for the township of Kentnere.

7. Farrer, W. (Ed. Curwen), Records Relating to the Barony of Kendale, (1923) I.309.

1. Curwen, J.F. Records relating to the Barony of Kendale. (1926) III 153-4.

2. Croston Finney Enclosure Map and Proceedings ~~ward~~ 1725-6. LRO PR 737, PR/734 and PR 736.

10. "...The waste and common land called Barbill Mare..." LRO DDHe/11. 87. 1580.

11. Robinson, Mairi. (editor-in-chief), The Concise Scots Dictionary. (1987) 428. Aberdeen University Press.

12. Smith, A.H. English Place-name Elements. (1956) ii. 42-3. Cambridge University Press.

13. Gelling, M. Place-names in the Landscape. 54-6. 1984 London.

14. Wrightington Tithe Commutation Award and Survey, map and schedule. LRO DRB 1/215. Atkin, M.A. "Some settlement patterns in Lancashire" in Hooke, D. (Ed.) Medieval Villages. Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph No5. 170-185.

15. LRO DDSc 63/39.

16. CRO (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 Honourable Francis Charteris 1771; and its schedule, CRO (K) WD/AG PU: "A survey of all the customary estates within the manor of Preston Patrick held by the Honourable Francis Charteris". Atkin, M.A., "Sill Fields in Preston Patrick; a double-oval type field pattern." In Trans CWAAS, N.S xciii. 145-53, 1993.

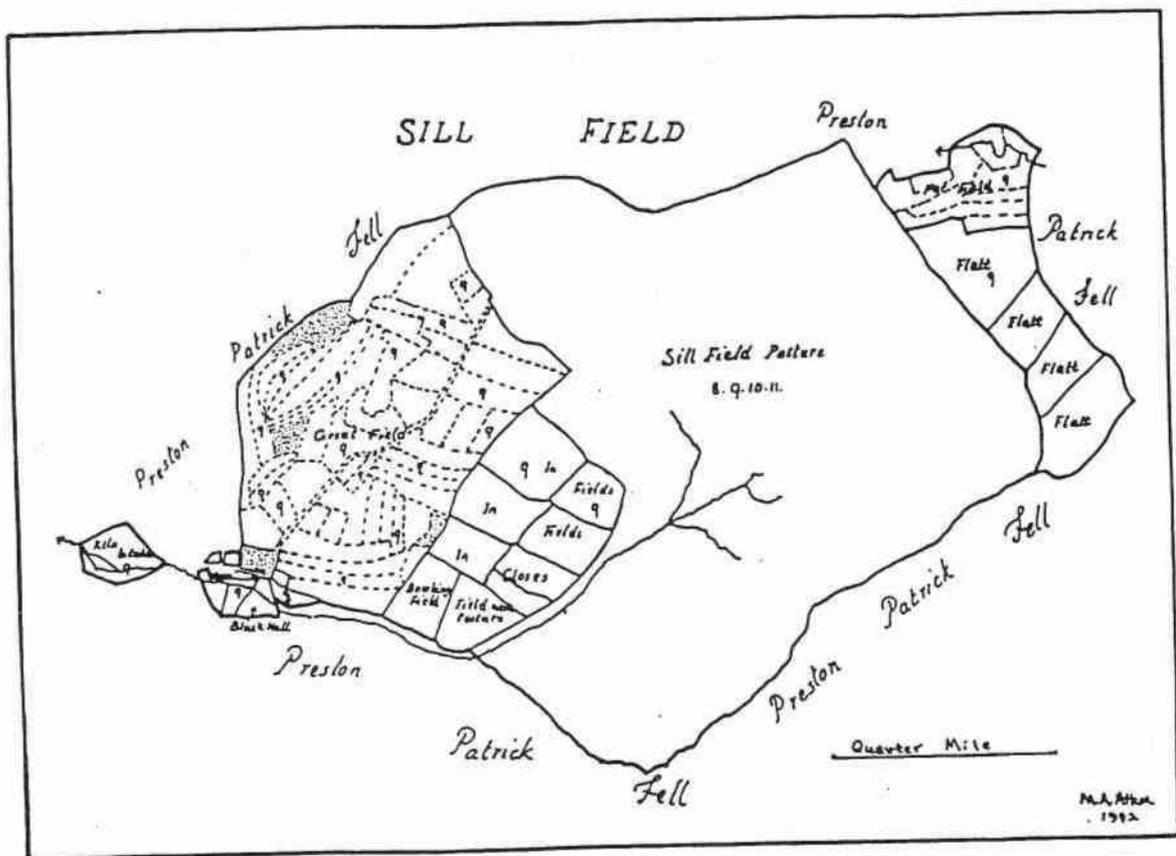
17. LRO DDHe 11/2. 1295.

18. Lyons, P.A., "De Lacy Compoti", Chetham Society, O.S. 112. 1884. Tupling, G.H., The Economic History of Rossendale, Chetham Society, N.S. 86, 1927. Atkin, M.A., "Land use and management in the upland demesne of the de Lacy estate of Blackburnshire, c.1300." Agricultural History Review, Vol. 42 part 1, 1-19, (1994).

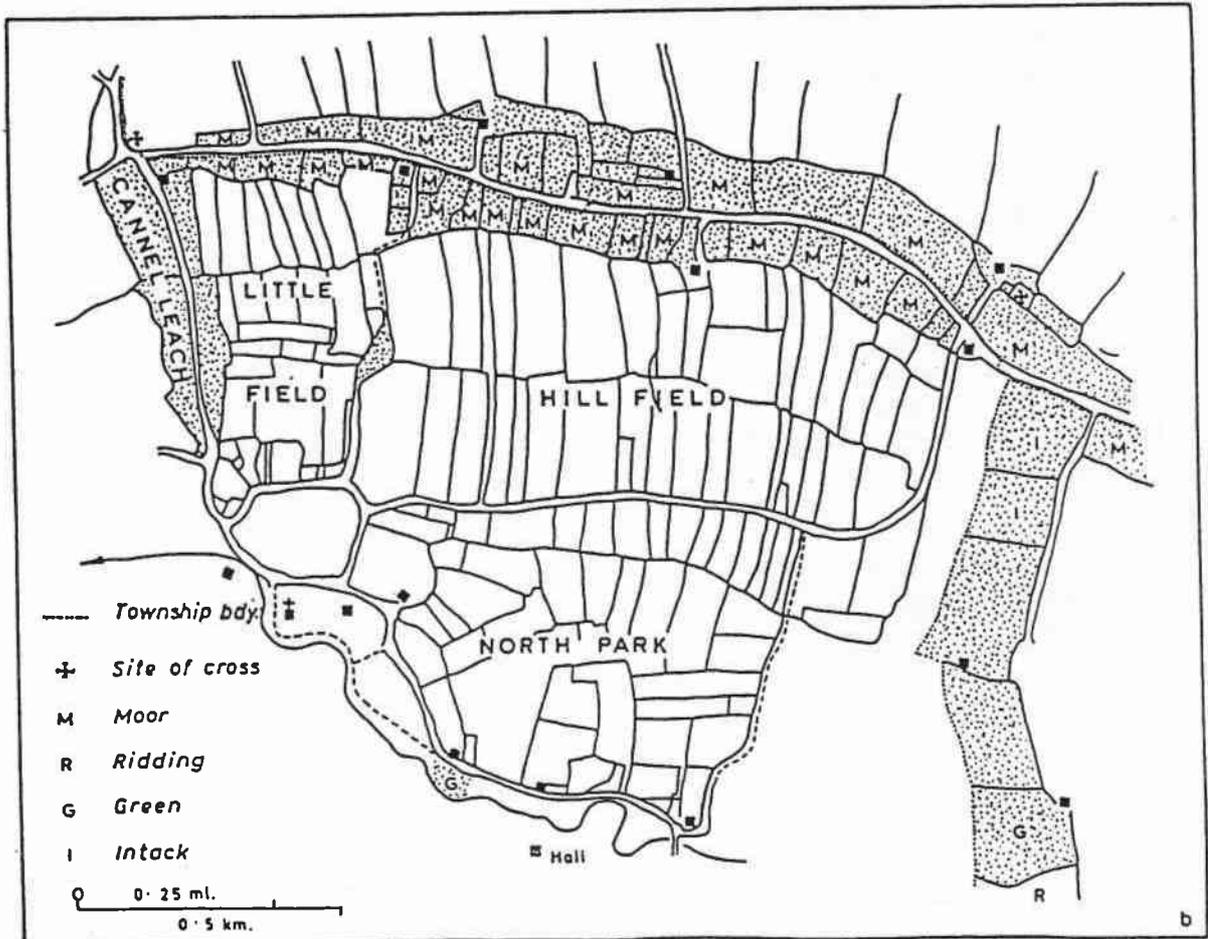
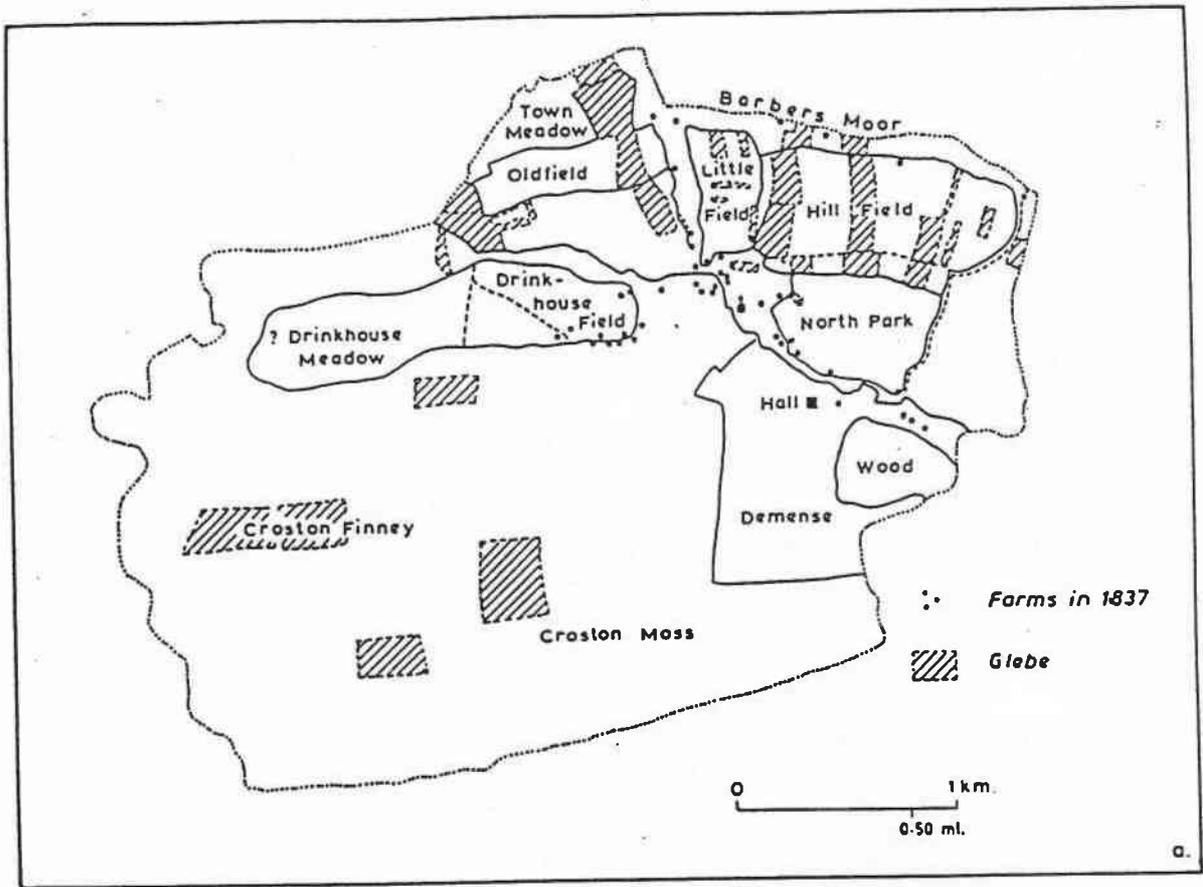
19. Hodges, R and Wildgoose, M., Roman or Native in the White Peak, in Brannigan, K. (ed.) 1980. 48-53.

20. LRO DDHe 11/11; 1361. DDHe 11/28; 1461.

21. Atkin, M.A., "Tenure by drengage in Lancashire, 1212-1348," in Trans Hist. Soc. Lancs & Ches. Vol.142. 207-210. 1992.



MAP 2: DRAWN FROM A MAP OF 1771 SHOWING CUSTOMARY LANDS IN PRESTON PATRICK



MAP 1: CROSTON TOWNSHIP:

A) SETTLEMENT AND FIELD PATTERNS

B) FIELD PATTERNS IN THE NORTH PARK, HILL FIELD, CANNEL LEACH AND BARBER'S MOOR; AND RELEVANT FARMS