

WASTE LAND RECLAMATION IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES: THE CASE OF SOUTH-EASTERN BOWLAND, 1550–1630

John Porter, B.A., Ph.D.

THE reclamation and settlement of waste land in England and Wales by parliamentary enclosure is well documented. Several hundreds of Enclosure Acts and Awards survive, providing the material for a thorough assessment of its importance and character.¹ But for the three centuries preceding the parliamentary enclosure period, detailed evidence of waste land reclamation is far less abundant. Because of the absence of a body of evidence directly derived from enclosure and of place-names distinctive of colonisation at this earlier period, Tudor and Stuart waste colonisation has been relatively neglected. Instead, the attention of historical geographers and agricultural historians has focused on changes in the existing agricultural landscape, especially common field enclosure and the pioneering of new agricultural techniques.² In many villages of the Lowland Zone, already closely settled for a millennium, these developments were undoubtedly the most important and waste enclosure was a minor aspect of change. But in the colonisation of forest areas and much of the Highland Zone this period was formative.³

Contemporaries were not unaware of the growing populousness of these areas. The Jacobean traveller John Norden noted the growth of new communities in many formerly unsettled areas, particularly forests. Wherever he crossed 'great and spacious wastes, mountains, and heaths' he found a proliferation of new dwellings, for example in Gloucestershire where he observed 'very many cottages raised upon the forests'. Surveyors of James I found that forest populations had so expanded that the inhabitants were becoming short of space for houses and land. In Nottinghamshire many cottages had been erected on wastes, the

cottagers being 'hardly able to live one by another'. This colonisation was often characterised by piecemeal nibbling of wastes by poor men trying to wrest a living from a few acres of heath or moor. They erected hovels and cottages wherever they found unappropriated land or where they were 'destitute of houses, and had seen other cottages upon the same waste, built by other poor men'.⁴

What follows is a study of Tudor and Jacobean colonisation in a district of the Lancashire, formerly Yorkshire, Pennines. The area is not untypical in physical character of many parts of the dales of Lancashire and North Yorkshire and exhibits settlement patterns representative of much of the Pennines at this period. These include not only patterns deriving from the small piecemeal enclosures observed by contemporary travellers such as Norden, but more importantly, from the planned partition of larger tracts by entire communities. Such planned enclosures were not unique to the study area, and similar examples can be found elsewhere. In many respects their form and manner of creation closely anticipates those of later Parliamentary enclosures.

BOWLAND IN 1550

Bowland as a physical unit comprises the prominent outlier of the Pennines which extends westwards to within a few kilometres of the Fylde coast of Lancashire. For the present purposes however the term is restricted to the south-eastern portion of this region as defined in Figure 1. This represents the limits of jurisdiction of the courts of the manor of Slaidburn, on the records of which this study is largely based. The manor included not only the village of the same name but also several other villages, hamlets, and scattered farms, embracing an area of some 120 km².⁵

Bowland shows striking contrasts of physical landscape. The northern half is crossed by the river Hodder, which to one commentator uninspired by the region's picturesque character, 'forms by its deep and fringed banks the only ornamental scenery of a tract otherwise bleak and barren'.⁶ This river, and the larger Ribble which forms the south-eastern boundary of Bowland, are flanked by Boulder Clay covered hillocks and vales. Their subdued relief contrasts with the bolder outlines of the harder gritstones which form upland plateaux north-west of the Hodder (highest point 535 m) and between the Hodder and Ribble (390 m).

In the early sixteenth century much of Bowland was sparsely peopled, only 378 able-bodied men being recorded in 1539.⁷ Most of the population was concentrated in the small villages of

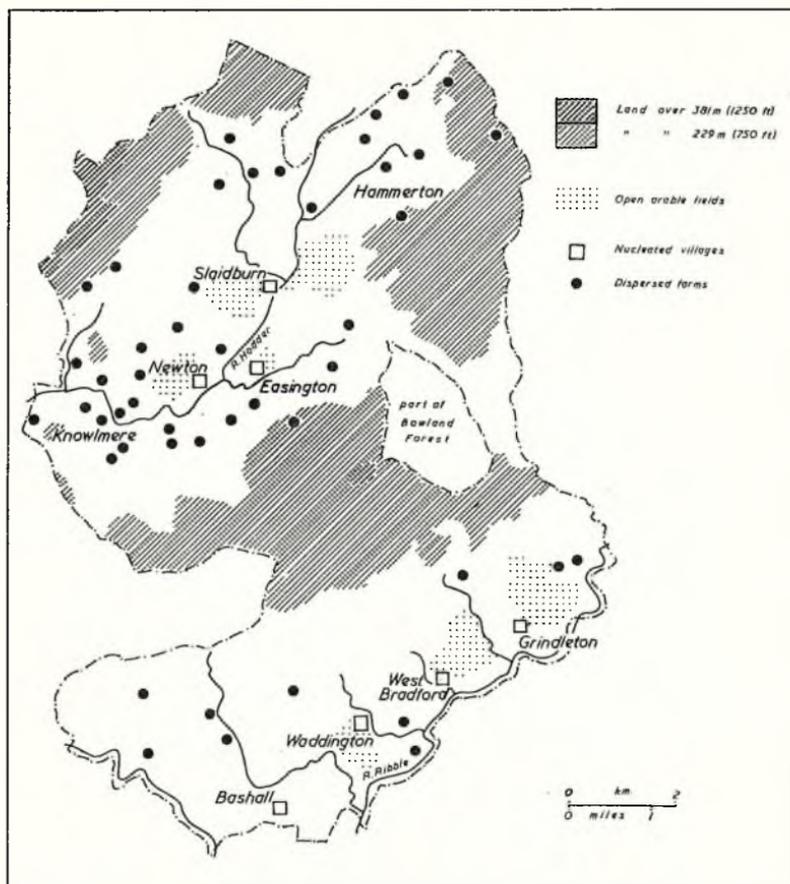


Figure 1 BOWLAND IN 1500. Showing the jurisdiction of the manor courts of Slaidburn

the Hodder and Ribble valleys, of which the largest were Slaidburn and Grindleton. Each village had a small common field system which, combined with the use of common pasturage, provided the livelihood of its inhabitants. Around and between the villages lay dispersed farms and enclosed pastures representing the progress of medieval assarting. Everywhere farms were small. Of thirteen tenant farms in Hammerton in 1537, only three were larger than 15 customary acres (about 10 ha).⁸

Farming was mainly pastoral. In Hammerton 80 per cent of land was meadow and pasture and only 12 per cent arable. Knowlmere manor in 1537 had only 18 per cent of its land under crops and most of the rest under meadow and pasture. Even at Bashall, on lower, drier ground in the Ribble valley, the same

percentage of arable obtained as at Knowlmere. Of 26 arable customary acres on the demesne of Bashall Hall, 20 were under oats, the only cereal which could be grown in any quantity in the damp climate.⁹ The pastures cited above were enclosed pastures which were further augmented by common pasturage on the extensive wastes beyond and between the farms and villages. The woodland wastes of the vales thinned out to heath on the higher slopes and eventually to rough grass and peat bog on the summits. Pasturage on these wastes was carefully regulated by manor courts, stinting arrangements being widespread.

Although it is difficult to cite population growth rates with precision, there is evidence that by the first half of the sixteenth century the rate of growth was beginning to quicken. Between the 1530s and 1620s the number of surnames recorded in the Slaidburn manor court rolls doubled, even allowing generously for variations in spelling of the same name, suggesting that an influx of new families from outside the manor took place. Bashall township, where 33 tenements were recorded in 1537, had 50 tenements in 1590 and 53 in 1664. The registers of the nearby parishes of Gisburn and Bolton-by-Bowland show a consistent excess of births over deaths for the period 1560 to 1630.¹⁰ Population growth meant that there were more mouths to feed and that the land had somehow to be made more productive. It is not therefore surprising that during this period the reclamation of waste should have become a fundamental economic issue.

SOURCES

Until the adoption of the practice of enclosure by Act of Parliament, reclamation and settlement of any waste was a matter for negotiation and agreement between lord and tenants. The nature and survival of a record of any given enclosure were therefore dependent on conditions of tenure and on the terms of enclosure. Where, for example, the lord sold or leased a portion of waste to a freeholder, a record of the transaction will survive only if the muniments of the family of either party are extant. But where the lord demised land to a copyholder the transaction had to be carried out within the manor court and the details recorded on the court roll, thus forming a permanent record of the copyholder's title to his land. The tracing of enclosures by copyholders is thus dependent on the survival of the rolls of the manor court.

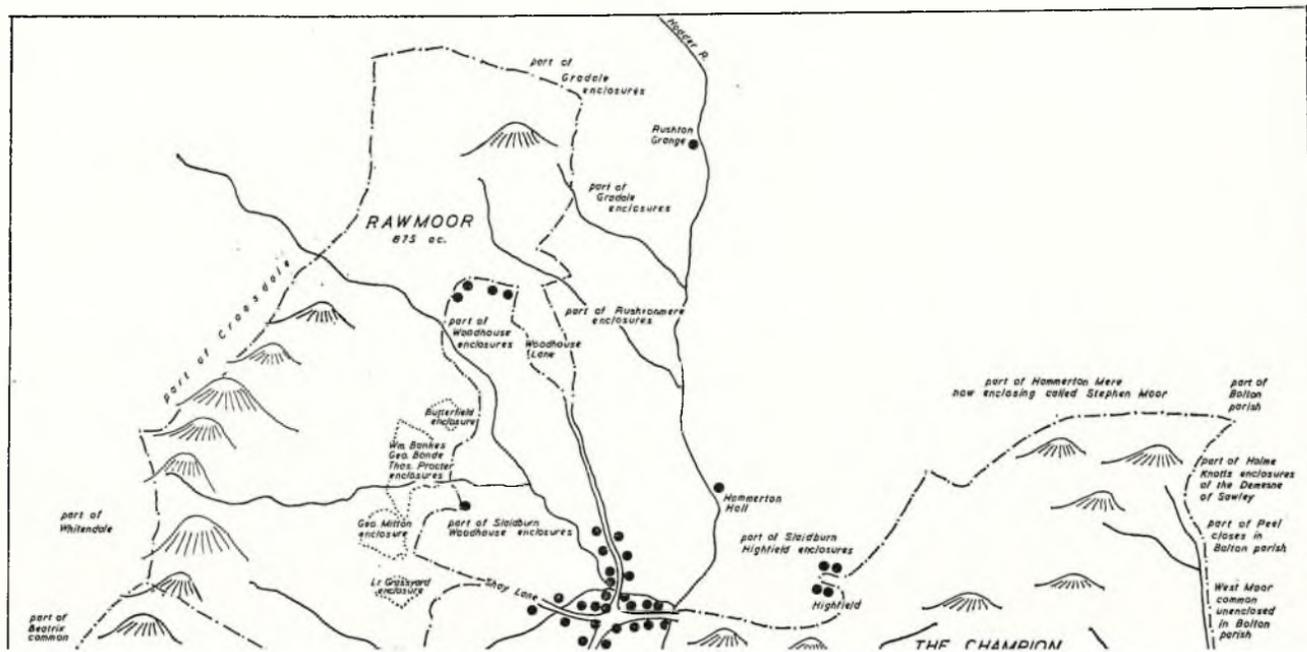
In the manor of Slaidburn most enclosures at this period were made by copyholders. These constituted the bulk of the manor's tenants. Their titles to enclosures were recorded on the rolls of the

manor's *curia capitalis*, a combination of leet and baron courts which sat twice-yearly at Slaidburn. The rolls of these courts survive virtually complete from 1519¹¹ and provide a detailed picture of the progress of the enclosure and settlement of the manor's wastes. Unfortunately however their evidence is not complete in spatial terms since during medieval times a number of smaller townships (Hammerton, Knowlmere, Waddington, Easington, and Bashall) were subinfeudated to mesne lords. Although the writ of the manor appeared to continue to run in these townships in some respects, their enclosures were not recorded on the court rolls. Nevertheless evidence of the general progress of enclosure in subinfeudated townships can often be recovered from references in other documents.

Slaidburn was a manor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Crown, as Duke of Lancaster, was a conscientious landowner and maintained orderly records, the bulk of which are extant. These include general surveys of Duchy manors, records of land disputes between tenants, sales or leases of land to tenants and others, and negotiations for the division of common land between interested parties. Many records relating to Bowland derived from the problems which arose from attempts to partition the wastes. The Duchy records thus complement the local detail of the manor court rolls with evidence of the broader attitudes and policies of the landowner.

Further evidence survives in the form of manuscript maps, several of which were drawn up in connection with a commons' ownership dispute in the district north of Grindleton about 1590.¹² Although these were only sketch maps resigned to demarcate the area in dispute, they nevertheless depict the landscape with sufficient accuracy to enable commons' boundaries, and also some field boundaries and farms, to be identified from modern maps. Even more useful is a map drawn to illustrate a manorial survey of the Slaidburn district in 1592, with particular reference to the boundaries and extent of its wastes (Fig. 2).¹³ Unlike the above maps, this clearly derived from detailed field surveying, probably involving the relatively new technique of triangulation. As a result hills, rivers, commons and field boundaries, farms and villages, are depicted with a high degree of accuracy and are instantly identifiable from the modern map. The 1592 map is inaccurate only in the sizes of the common wastes it depicts. Accurate measurement of area seems to have been a general problem in surveys concerned with the Bowland enclosures.

The evidence reveals two contrasting types of colonisation, each with distinctive spatial characteristics and involving reclamation at a different scale. Encroachment, which took place up to



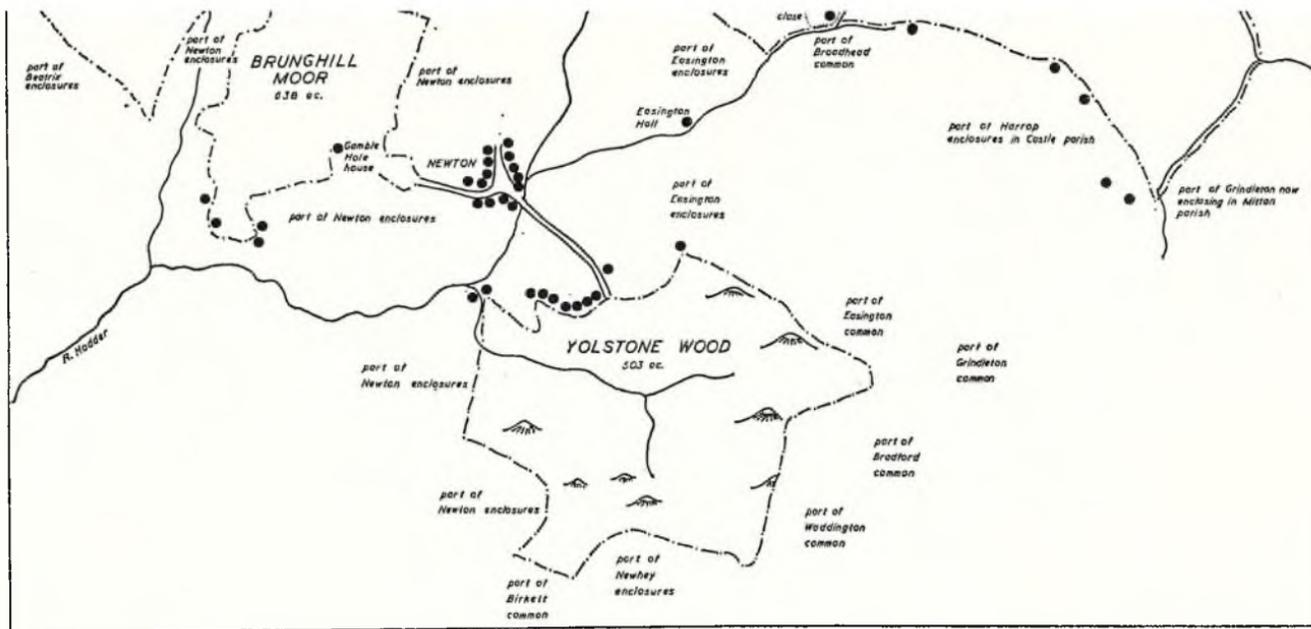


Figure 2 PART OF THE MANOR OF SLAIDBURN, 1592. Redrawn from an original in the Public Record Office (DL44 468) with certain minor detail omitted.

about 1620, involved little waste enclosure but the proliferation of cottages and small farms. But during the periods 1587-1600 and 1621-30 extensive tracts of upland waste were divided and enclosed, not piece by piece, but in several planned acts of partition.

ENCROACHMENT

Encroachment involved the illegal appropriation of small plots of waste for building and cultivation. At the twice-yearly court baron all persons found to have enclosed waste land or erected cottages on wastes were presented by the steward of the manor and compelled to pay a fine, whereupon the land was granted to them in copyhold at an appropriate rent. This procedure was intended not to deter potential encroachers but to ensure that the land remained in the possession of the Crown. Indeed, the Crown encouraged colonisation of its wastes in order to secure the increased rents and new fines which could thereby be levied. But it was essential for the Crown to reveal as many encroachments as possible, for if one should pass undetected, then in course of time the encroacher or his heir could claim it to be freehold and the right of the Crown to rent or manorial dues would lapse.

The presentments were recorded on the court rolls, the earliest recorded encroachments being for 1522 and the last for 1624, when many of the wastes of the manor were divided and enclosed. Between these dates some 240 instances of encroachment have been traced, although some encroachments are identical in detail and may simply represent repeated presentment of the same encroachment. Recording of the encroachments is very irregular, few or none being recorded in some years and many in others, particularly 1562 (49 enclosures), 1577 (76), and 1607 (12), when the steward evidently carried out a thorough investigation into concealed lands, probably under pressure from Duchy of Lancaster authorities. Each enquiry was preceded by years of relatively heavy encroachment, suggesting that the enquiries were conducted at peak periods of new settlement to discover squatters who had neglected to present their encroachments.

Besides the encroachments presented to the manor court, others were discovered by the Duchy of Lancaster's own commissions of enquiry. These investigations, conducted in 1554, 1562, 1586, 1592, and 1606, were clearly intended to augment the findings of the steward by subjecting the titles of the tenants to an impartial eye.¹⁴ A total of 75 encroachments have been traced in commissioners' returns, but of these 24 are identical with presentments in the court rolls, leaving 51 additional instances. Further encroachments may have been missed by both the steward and Duchy officials and went unrecorded.

To judge from the surnames of the encroachers, many were existing inhabitants of the manor. Others, with less familiar names, were probably new settlers. Some encroachments also resulted from speculative building by individuals who paid the appropriate fine in the manor court and let or sold the encroachment to others. For example, in 1583 one William Swyndlehurst or Swinlehurst paid fines for a number of cottages and small parcels of ground in Slaidburn and Newton which he then let. In 1585 and 1587 he alienated certain of these to their tenants, a survey of 1592 recording him as then being still in possession of the remainder.¹⁵

Most encroachments consisted of buildings, or of small plots probably intended for building (Table 1). The largest single parcel enclosed was 8.5 customary acres (about 5.7 ha), but most enclosures were less than a customary acre, often less than a rood (about 0.17 ha). Many buildings designated cottages, chambers, or firehouses (i.e. houses with hearths) were clearly dwellings, but turfhouses, limekilns, and barns were also erected, while the function of other buildings simply termed houses is unknown since the term was commonly applied to any kind of building. Some buildings were divided into several tenements, indicated by presentment of a tenant for erecting a part or 'piece' of a house. The persistent erection of new houses was of great concern to the manor officials, for in 1578 the Slaidburn court baron ordered (to no avail) that no copyholders or freeholders should erect cottages in Slaidburn or sell or lease land to others to build cottages.¹⁶

Most references to encroachments do not state their precise location, only the township or district concerned. Nevertheless some general conclusions about their distribution can be drawn

TABLE I

Recorded encroachments (1522-1624) by type and distribution

	<i>Slaidburn</i>	<i>Newton</i>	<i>Grindle- ton</i>	<i>West Bradford</i>	<i>Champion common</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of:						
dwelling houses	39	17	1	4	3	64
outhouses	24	18	2	13	9	66
buildings of unspecified use	37	20	3	6	2	68
other encroach- ments	16	13	1	16	8	54
Area enclosed (ha)	14.6	1.1	0.1	9.4	10.4	35.6

SOURCES: Slaidburn manor court rolls; P.R.O. DL3 73 R9, DL42 97 fol. 56, DL41 29/20, DL44 468, DL44 732.

from identification of the few locations which are precisely stated and from the evidence of the contemporary maps already cited.

Three types of encroachment location can be distinguished. The village nuclei remained a focus of attraction for the growing population, encroachment taking place around and between existing dwellings and along waysides leading from the villages. In Slaidburn for example, encroachment was recorded around the village courthouse and along the waysides of the Skaithe and Shay Lane.¹⁷

Overpopulation and congestion in the villages produced a second, contrasting, development, namely settlement in less populous localities away from the village centres, especially along boundaries between the farmland and common wastes. Here a number of squatter colonies developed. In Newton a colony of cottages called Slanymere Row or Slim Row grew up along the boundary of the waste of Yolstone Wood (Fig. 2). In West Bradford the colony of Bradford Eaves appeared along the edge of the wastes north of the village. Encroachment in Slaidburn took place around a strip of waste called Highfield Green at the far end of the eastern common field or townfield, and at Woodhouse, a wooded area north of the village (Fig. 2). This district became so populous that manor records began to distinguish between inhabitants of Woodhouse and those of Slaidburn village. By 1592 Woodhouse had grown to 39 tenements compared with the mother settlement's 42.¹⁸

Thirdly, the open wastes attracted a small amount of settlement and enclosure. At Oxengill on Champion common one Robert Banester in 1580 entered and occupied a firehouse, barn, turfhouse, and 2.5 customary perches of waste (about 100 m²) 'adjoining to the west end of the aforesaid firehouse and so towards the south the walls adjoining upon both sides of the west end of the foresaid turfhouse'. He also occupied another parcel 'from the west side of the garden' and 'another two falls [perches] of Her Majesty's land lying towards the north up after the wall at the west end of the foresaid close'.¹⁹ But such enclosures on the open commons were few, and widespread colonisation had to await their systematic partition.

THE DIVISION OF THE COMMONS

Background to the division

The common wastes of Bowland occupied some 6,500 ha, comprising mainly upland above 200 m. Woodland on the lower slopes gave way to rough grass on the higher ground and to peat moss around the summits. The general extent of each township's

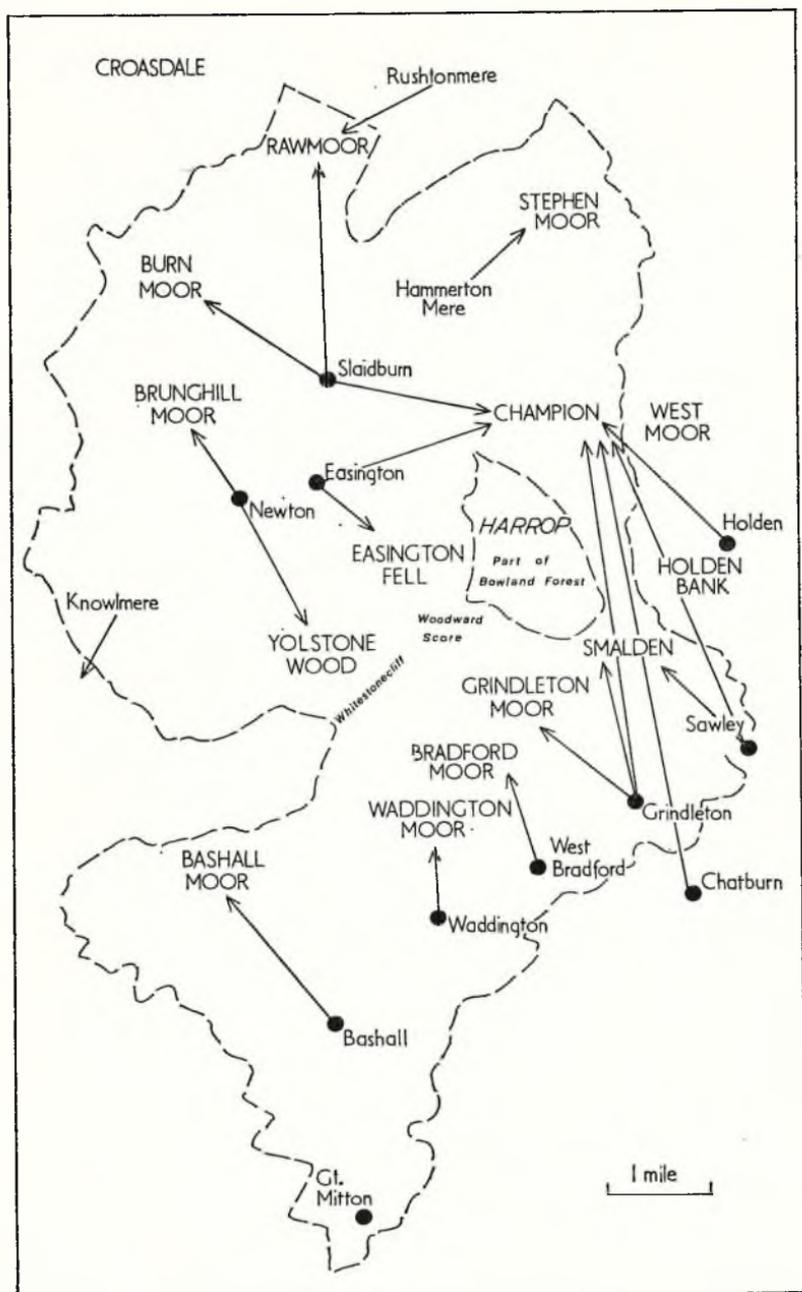


Figure 3 BOWLAND TOWNSHIPS AND THEIR COMMON LANDS IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

waste was understood mainly by custom, and apart from occasional merestones (boundary stones) the only boundaries were natural features such as streams and watersheds. Certain tracts were intercommoned by several communities, particularly the common of Champion, shared by three townships in Bowland and a further three outside (Fig. 3). Possession of these commons was vested by the Statutes of Merton (1235) and Westminster II (1285) in the lord of the manor, the rights of tenants being those of users of the ground.²⁰ The most important right was pasturage, regulated by the *levant et couchant* rule, by which a tenant could only summer on the wastes as many beasts as he could winter in his common field units or enclosures. He was also entitled to take certain commodities from the commons, particularly stone, ling, and peat.

From the mid-sixteenth century there was a growing demand from the commoners for partition of these wastes. As the village populations increased, tenements became too small to support a family. Thus in 1586 the tenants of Grindleton petitioned the Duchy authorities that

... the said town of Grindleton is of late greatly increased in buildings and dwelling houses and thereby much more populated than heretofore it hath been, by reason whereof the ancient grounds used and employed to pasture, meadow, and tillage, are in no sort able or sufficient to maintain the said freeholders and copyholders whereby much poverty doth daily increase amongst them and is more and more like to do if some good provision be not had and foreseen in time...

and that this situation could only be alleviated if

... some reasonable part and portion of the best and most fruitful part of the said commons might... be enclosed and fenced in and in some reasonable manner apportioned and divided amongst our freeholders and copyholders.²¹

Undoubtedly some tenants foresaw that acquisition and enclosure of a portion of the waste would not only enable a tenant to increase the size of his holding but also to improve the quality of the pasture by addition of lime and controlled application of manure from his own animals. The enclosed land would therefore support more stock and the tenant would benefit by his own enterprise. Moreover enclosure would permit him, by sale or exchange of ancient holdings or new allotments, to build up a consolidated holding instead of having dispersed parcels in different parts of the township. But many poorer commoners did not favour enclosure since they stood to receive only small allotments which would not compensate for their loss of common. Furthermore the cost of enclosure would be beyond their means, and they would be forced

to sell or mortgage part or all of their land to a wealthier neighbour. Under-tenants, who were not entitled to receive a portion of waste in their own right, feared that their copyhold landlords would retain the allotments entirely in their own hands and not sublet a portion to them.

The Crown also favoured partition. The only benefit of the open commons to the Crown was provision of pasture for deer which still ranged across them from breeding grounds in Bowland Forest a few kilometres to the west. But since monarchs rarely hunted in Bowland, this function was now unimportant and the Crown encouraged the commoners to take these lands into severalty as a means of augmenting its income from fines and new rents.

Much enclosure was brought about as a result of James I's policy towards his copyholders. Short of money, the king attacked the titles of many copyholders in Bowland and elsewhere on the grounds that the fines originally paid for the copyholds by their forbears were uncertain, meaning that they had been assessed at a discretionary instead of a fixed customary rate. The copyholders were then invited to make their fines certain, and hence their titles unchallengeable, by payment of a composition. In the case of Bowland the composition was fixed at forty years' rent of each copyhold, an added perquisite being that the tenants could divide and enclose their common wastes, holding the new enclosures on the same terms and with the same security of tenure as the ancient copyholds. These terms, agreed with the copyholders and authorised by royal decree in 1619, led to the division of many wastes during the early 1620s.²²

The sequence and form of enclosure

Division of the commons was a protracted process, initiated in the 1550s but not completed until after 1630. The progress of enclosure was punctuated by wrangles between the townships over the validity and extent of their common rights and the amount of waste to which each was entitled. These disputes generated litigation, which in turn generated further disputes about which communities or individuals were to bear its costs. Other disputes concerned rights of individual commoners and the size of allotments to be made by copyholders to their under-tenants on enclosure.

The first attempts at enclosure, concerning a division of Champion in 1553 and 1567, were unsuccessful because of disagreements about the amounts of land to be apportioned to each village.²³ Then around 1570 inhabitants of Holden, a village just outside Bowland, enclosed large parts of their commons of West

Moor and Holden Bank (Figs. 2 and 3), but still continued to turn their stock on to adjacent pastures of Grindleton called Smalden on which they claimed rights of pasture. In order to save Smalden from the Holden commoners the Grindleton tenants enclosed it in 1587, about 240 ha. being divided. But this led to a dispute between Grindleton and Sawley, another village outside Bowland which also claimed rights on Smalden, and until 1602, when this case was resolved, or perhaps lapsed, the future of the Smalden enclosure was in doubt.²⁴ During the late 1580s other commons were divided by the inhabitants of Bashall, West Bradford, Waddington, Easington, and Hammerton, some 750 ha. being taken into severalty.²⁵ Despite other attempts to divide wastes, disagreement between townships prevented further enclosure until the copyhold dispute with the Crown revived the issue. As a result of this dispute no less than 3,100 ha. were enclosed from the wastes of Slaidburn, Newton, West Bradford, Grindleton, and Champion soon after 1620 (Fig. 4).

Partition of the wastes was accomplished by commissions appointed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Each commission consisted of a number of local gentry, sometimes assisted by a professional surveyor. The waste was first surveyed to determine its size, whereupon the commission listened to the cases of the various claimants to it. At this stage a map was sometimes prepared to show the location and extent of the waste and the villages concerned. The commission then decided the amount of waste to be enclosed and its apportionment among the various parties. Table 2 shows the division of Champion, from which it

TABLE 2 *Division of Champion common, 1621*

<i>Township or other customary user</i>	<i>Allotment (ha)*</i>
Slaidburn (in severalty)	329.8
Slaidburn (poor lands)	40.5
Grindleton (in severalty)	238.8
Grindleton (poor lands)	8.1
Easington	52.6
Holden	52.6
Chatburn	132.3
Sawley	33.6
Rushton Grange	31.6
Deputy steward of manor	12.1
Remainder:	
public roads	13.4
unenclosed	6.9
Total	952.3

* Converted from customary acres.

SOURCES: P.R.O. DL44 1035; L.R.O., DDX19 244.



Figure 4 COMMON PASTURES DIVIDED BY THE ENCLOSURES OF 1587-1621

will be seen that land was also set aside for public roads and the common use of poor people who were not entitled to an individual allotment.

The award of an allotment to an individual depended upon his possessing land for which he could claim a right of common, namely copyhold or freehold land, no allotments being made to squatters who had not paid fines for their encroachments. Where a tenant had rights upon more than one common, he was normally awarded an allotment on each. Copyholders with under-tenants were each allotted a portion on behalf of the under-tenant which the copyholder then leased to him on the same terms as his existing land. At the division of the West Bradford commons in 1590 many poor tenants prepared a petition complaining about the small size of the portions granted by their landlords. As a result, their shares were increased in size, and the enclosure commissioners were instructed to ensure that these allotments were not 'in the highest part nor in the moss pot and worst soil, but of the middle sort near the town'.²⁶

Each tenant received his allotment in the manor court after payment of the appropriate fine, and the names of the tenants, together with the sizes of their allotments and the name of the waste from which they were taken, were recorded in the manor court rolls. The surviving record of apportionment however is not complete, no apportionment being recorded for West Bradford (1590) and only partly for the commons of Newton and Slaidburn (1621), while some of the Grindleton apportionment (1621) may also be missing. The years following the apportionment witnessed a vigorous trade in the new copyholds as some holders sold or exchanged their allotments to other tenants or outsiders.

The colonisation of the commons

Enclosure was, in most instances, achieved soon after apportionment. Tenants of Grindleton enclosed parts of Smalden in the years following its division, and in Waddington enclosure also took place early, for in 1604 one John Banastre leased to Thomas Colthurst of Bashall Eaves 14.5 customary acres 'newly improved' from Waddington Moor. In 1628 Robert Parker surrendered to his tenant Henry Tompson in the Slaidburn court 10 customary acres of the new improvement on Bradford Moor 'now enclosed'. But some allotments remained long unenclosed, for in 1652 Anthony Clapham of Grindleton surrendered various lands including 'three rods of the common or moor not improved' and even in the early nineteenth century a portion of Bradford Moor granted in 1621 had not been enclosed since it was not considered worthwhile.²⁷

The second stage of colonisation, the establishment of new farms, was accomplished more slowly. This depended on the acquisition of sufficient adjacent allotments to form a viable holding, which in turn depended on the sale or exchange of land by tenants as their mutual interests demanded. Building up such a holding could take years or a generation. The tithe maps and apportionments of the mid-nineteenth century show that many allotments never became organised into consolidated farms but remained as detached portions of older farms. Others were acquired by adjacent farms standing on or near the edge of the ancient farmlands, thereby merely enlarging an already consolidated holding.

Nevertheless much of the former commons was ultimately colonised by new farmsteads, although the evidence of their establishment is incomplete. Surrenders and admittances in the Slaidburn manor court rolls often mention farmsteads 'newly built' upon the former commons but rarely state their precise location. Parish registers provide the earliest recorded dates of several farmsteads, but in other cases farms named in parish registers cannot be identified because their names were subsequently changed. The farm buildings themselves provide little help, for they invariably date from after 1650 and represent the rebuilding of earlier dwellings. No map on a scale large enough to show individual tenements was produced until Jefferys' map of Yorkshire of 1771, but even this omits certain farms whose existence at that date, and sometimes long before, is recorded elsewhere.

Certain examples of new settlement relate to Champion. The tithe maps show that twenty-three farms were eventually established, several of which must have appeared soon after its division, for the Slaidburn parish register recorded nine different families on Champion during the period 1631-40. In 1652 one John Nowell surrendered in the Slaidburn court 'one firehouse with seven acres of land of the new improvement of Champion lying and being in a place adjoining to Stephen Moor', and in 1656 a certain Ellen Dugdell surrendered 14 customary acres and three roods of the 'new improvement' there and a further ten such acres with a firehouse and barn adjoining Silly Grain. At the end of the century tenements were recorded at Lane Ends, at the southern end of the former common.²⁸

THE NEW LANDSCAPE

Land use

The basic change was the conversion of moorland and woodland waste to meadow and permanent pasture. Over 4,000 ha

were reclaimed, representing a third of the study area. Most land previously enclosed had been confined to the woodland belt of the vales and lower slopes of the uplands; the new enclosures completed the settlement of these tracts and represented the first attempt to occupy parts of the less fertile rough grassland beyond. A sample of the upper limit of enclosed ground prior to enclosure showed that this limit occurred most frequently between 150 and 175 m, but as a result of enclosure the modal class was increased to 250–275 m. The highest limit (345 m) was attained on Rawmoor. The lands remaining unenclosed were the highest and most exposed uplands, of little or no agricultural value. No attempt was made to enclose these until the early nineteenth century when enclosure proved generally unsuccessful, for many enclosures made on Grindleton and Bradford Fells in 1819 were recorded as heath or plantations in the 1848 Tithe Awards.²⁹ The Tudor and early Stuart enclosures thus established the final limits of reclamation.

Agriculture remained predominantly pastoral. Board of Agriculture surveyors recorded (1799) that only 850 acres in Slaidburn parish were arable compared with 10,100 acres of grass. At nearby Bolton-by-Bowland the corresponding figures were 450 and 3,950 acres respectively.³⁰ All grassland was natural growth, leys being unknown until the early nineteenth century. Income was derived from the sale of butter, eggs, cheese, and wool, and from rearing black longhorn and Craven cattle for sale to lowland dealers.

Fields

Although some common field still persisted around the villages, the cultivated landscape henceforth consisted mainly of enclosed pastures. Comparison of the size distribution of known allotments awarded on Champion common in 1621–22 with those of enclosures on Champion shown on Tithe maps of 1844–48 suggests that the majority of the larger allotments awarded at the time of apportionment were subsequently divided into smaller portions to produce a distribution dominated by enclosures of size 1 to 4 ha.³¹

The shape of enclosures depended on their mode of origin. Encroachments, which derived from gradual piece by piece reclamation by individual farmers, were irregular in shape with curved boundaries and few right-angled junctions. But the enclosures resulting from the systematic division of the commons were markedly more regular. Although their boundaries did not achieve the straightness of early nineteenth-century enclosures, the influence of the professional surveyor and a progression towards straight-line fencing can be recognised. At their most regular,

these boundaries divide the hillsides into long strips running the length of the slope, between 70 and 100 m wide, subdivided by further boundaries across the slope into allotments of 1 to 8 ha, a pattern well developed north-west of Slaidburn. On Champion many boundaries have a strict north-south alignment. But throughout the former commons there were many irregularities caused by deeply-entrenched watercourses, the uneven clay surface, and considerations of land tenure. Consequently triangular and other oddly-shaped fields are common.

Most field boundaries consisted of an earthen bank about half a metre above the level of the field with ditches on either side. The quickset hedges surmounting the banks however attained little growth because of exposure and poor soil, and are now usually reinforced by wooden or wire fences. Dry stone walling was less common than ditching, possibly because many enclosures stood on several feet of clay, making quarrying difficult. Stone walls are most common in the north and west where the bedrock reaches the surface and walling affords the only means of protecting sheep from the wet, windy weather.

Farms

A basic change occurred not only in the limits but also the pattern of settlement. In medieval times, despite the existence of scattered farms working consolidated assarts, most farmers lived in the villages and worked the common fields. But with the spread of encroachments around the village peripheries and enclosure and colonisation of the commons, the dispersed farmstead became the predominant farming unit, while the function of the village as a unit of agricultural settlement declined. Slaidburn in 1844 had 13 occupiers of land living in the village and 44 on dispersed farms. The village farms occupied only 114 ha, compared with 2,199 occupied by the dispersed farms. Newton at the same date had 12 village and 41 dispersed farms, occupying 105 and 2,517 ha respectively.³²

The impact of enclosure and colonisation on farm size is difficult to assess since there is little evidence of farm size in the immediate post-enclosure period. It appears however that a general increase took place. A survey of Slaidburn and Grindleton in 1592 showed that most farms were less than 8 ha. But an analysis of 67 advertisements in a local weekly newspaper describing farms for sale in Bowland and its neighbouring districts over the period 1793 to 1803 showed that the majority of farms were then over 20 ha, almost a third being greater than 40 ha.³³

Buildings

Farm buildings were at first little different from their medieval antecedents. The firehouses of encroaching squatters were wood, clay, and thatch structures supported by a pair of crucks at either end and with a hole in the roof to release the smoke. Mid-seventeenth century court rolls refer to the erection of firehouses on the new commons' enclosures, showing that the mode of construction persisted until at least this period.

Rebuilding in stone began after 1660, and it is from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that the oldest buildings on the new enclosures, and indeed elsewhere in Bowland, can be dated. From this time the firehouses were replaced by two-storey structures with thick stone walls, stone roofs, and often with a barn and byre directly attached to the dwelling quarters. The rebuilding reflected a new stability in the landscape and the desire by the community to consolidate its landed gains rather than further augment them.

CONCLUSION

The enclosures of the period 1550 to 1630 had a profound effect on the Bowland landscape. Almost as much waste land was taken into severalty and enclosed as in the preceding seven centuries, and the scale of enclosure was matched by a similar rate of population growth. The period saw a real rise in the prosperity of the copyhold farmer as a result of enclosure and a strengthening in his tenurial position as a consequence of the copyhold dispute. A class of petty landowners emerged, each with a small estate of which he had real possession. Moreover enclosure reduced the farmer's dependence on communal pasturage, thus hastening the end of manorial control over agriculture.

A similar transformation of landscape and society occurred at the same time elsewhere in the hill country of Lancashire and Yorkshire. In Bowland Forest, just west of the Slaidburn area, the population more than doubled between 1527 and 1664 as a consequence of gradual encroachment on the forest wastes involving the felling of timber and turning of the land to pasturage.³⁴ Across the Ribble in Pendle, the Calder valley, Rossendale, and Trawden, we find the same story of rapid population growth, encroachment, and the division of large tracts of common between neighbouring communities.³⁵ Nor was colonisation confined to the western side of the Pennines. Similar developments occurred along the valley of the Yorkshire Calder in the district around Halifax, where during the sixteenth century references to enclosure were so common in manorial records that 'one cannot help

but wonder that there was any unenclosed land left'.³⁶ This new settlement had a partly industrial basis, farming often being combined with cloth working or lead mining. In Bowland the cloth industry reached its peak in the early nineteenth century, thereafter declining as hand weaving became extinct. But where, as in other Pennine districts, a locality was favoured with packhorse or turnpike roads, and with coal seams, the stage was set for the domestic cloth industry to provide the springboard for the Industrial Revolution.

These developments derived from the need of a vigorously expanding population for additional food and living space. They may also have had a basis in the social consequences of improvements in agricultural practice. Common field enclosure, the most widespread change in agrarian organisation, often produced numbers of dispossessed poor farmers whose response to landlessness was to seek out unused heaths and commons, or areas subjected to little or no manorial control, and there erect a new homestead, clear a small piece of the surrounding waste, and thus eke a modest living. Such may have been the origins of the influx of new families into Bowland. Over a period of time these squatters acquired the right to use the common pastures, thus swelling the agitation for their division and enclosure.

The persistent encroachment of landless farmers on waste land could not have come about without the acquiescence of owners of the wastes. Here the role of the Crown, the largest owner of waste in Tudor England, is important. Persistently short of cash in the later years of the sixteenth century, and especially so in the early years of the seventeenth, the Crown regularly leased some wastes for terms of years and demised others to encroachers in copyhold for small fines.³⁷ The dispute between James I and his copyhold tenants over the certainty of their fines, which had such profound consequences for Bowland and other parts of east Lancashire, represented a particularly ingenious method of disposing of land to increase revenue.

The transformation of Bowland in Tudor and early Stuart times presents a microcosm of more widespread changes elsewhere in upland England. Until this period, colonisation resulted largely from piecemeal nibbling along the edges of wastes; but the introduction of improved surveying techniques at this time made possible the systematic partitioning of upland tracts on a wider scale. It is perhaps, therefore, in the work of the Duchy of Lancaster's Elizabethan surveyors, that we find the origins of the mode of Parliamentary enclosures two centuries later.

NOTES

- 1 M. Williams, 'The enclosure and reclamation of waste land in England and Wales in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 51 (1970), pp. 58-69 is a general survey. A more specific study is (same author) 'The enclosure and reclamation of the Mendip Hills, 1770-1870', *Agricultural History Review* 19 (1971), pp. 65-81.
- 2 J. Thirsk, *Tudor enclosures* (1959); E. Kerridge, *The agricultural revolution* (1967).
- 3 e.g. P. A. J. Pettit, The royal forests of Northamptonshire; a study in their economy, 1558-1714, *Northamptonshire Record Society* 23 (1968).
- 4 A. Everitt, 'Farm labourers', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1650* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 408-12.
- 5 The village of Great Mitton, on the southern edge, has been omitted from the study since no enclosure occurred during the period.
- 6 T. D. Whitaker, *History of the original parish of Whalley and Honour of Clitheroe*, revised and enlarged J. G. Nichols, P. A. Lyons (1872), I, p. 333.
- 7 *Calendar of state papers, foreign and domestic, Henry VIII*, 14, i, 318.
- 8 Public Record Office (P.R.O.) SC6 Hen. VIII 4356.
- 9 *Ibid*; P.R.O. LR2 254 fol. 247-55.
- 10 P.R.O. LR2 254 fol. 247-55; E179 210/393; S. Simpson and J. Charlesworth (eds.), The parish register of Gisburne, Yorkshire, Part 1, 1558-1745, *Yorkshire Parish Register Society* 114 (1943); W. J. Stewart (ed.), The parish register of Bolton-by-Bowland, Yorkshire, *Yorkshire Parish Register Society* 19 (1904).
- 11 Lancashire Record Office (L.R.O.), Preston.
- 12 P.R.O. E178 2747.
- 13 P.R.O. DL44 468.
- 14 P.R.O. DL3 73 R9; DL42 97 fol. 56; DL41 29/20; DL44 468; DL44 732.
- 15 L.R.O. Slaidburn court roll (S.C.R.) 61, 4.10.1585; 62, 2.5.1587; P.R.O. DL41 29/20; DL44 468.
- 16 L.R.O. S.C.R. 56, 13.10.1578.
- 17 P.R.O. DL41 29/20.
- 18 P.R.O. DL44 468.
- 19 L.R.O. S.C.R. 57, 12.10.1580.
- 20 W. E. Tate, *The English village community and the enclosure movement* (1967), p. 60.
- 21 P.R.O. DL17 12.
- 22 Sir R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster* (1953, 1970), I, p. 306; II, pp. 16-20. P.R.O. SP14 37 fol. 102; SP14 43 fol. 113; SP14 61 fol. 67-85; L.R.O. DDX 19 244.
- 23 P.R.O. DL44 60; DL44 158.
- 24 J. Porter, The reclamation and settlement of Bowland, with special reference to the period 1500-1650, Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1973, pp. 93-7.
- 25 *Ibid*. 98-100.
- 26 P.R.O. DL44 440; DL44 457.
- 27 L.R.O. DDX118 149/3, DDX 118 145/22; S.C.R. 129, 9.5.1628, 2.4.1652.
- 28 L.R.O. S.C.R. 2.4.1652, 9.10.1656.

- 29 Porter, *op. cit.* pp. 182-91.
- 30 G. B. Rennie, W. Broun, and J. Shirreff, *A general view of the agriculture of the county of York, West Riding* (Edinburgh, 1799), appendix 10.
- 31 P.R.O. IR 30 43/183; IR 30 43/363.
- 32 P.R.O. IR 29 43/363; IR 29 43/300.
- 33 P.R.O. DL44 468; *Blackburn Mail*.
- 34 J. Porter, 'A forest in transition: Bowland, 1500-1650', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancaster and Cheshire* 125 (1975), pp. 40-60.
- 35 G. H. Tupling, *The economic history of Rossendale* (Manchester, 1927), *passim*.
- 36 M. Ellis, A study of the manorial history of Halifax parish in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 40 (1959-62), pp. 424-6.
- 37 Sir R. Somerville, *op. cit.* *passim*.

