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Stock tracks along township boundaries

Mary A. Atkin (pp. 24–32)

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ABBREVIATIONS OF COUNTIES AND EPNS COUNTY SURVEYS

Co	Cornwall
Ha	Hampshire
He	Herefordshire
K	Kent
La	Lancashire
Nb	Northumberland
Sf	Suffolk
So	Somerset
Wt	Isle of Wight
CPNE	<i>Cornish Place-Name Elements.</i>
EPNE	<i>English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN BdHu	<i>The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.</i>
PN Brk	<i>The Place-Names of Berkshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Bu	<i>The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire.</i>
PN Ca	<i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i>
PN Ch	<i>The Place-Names of Cheshire, Parts 1–5.</i>
PN Cu	<i>The Place-Names of Cumberland, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN D	<i>The Place-Names of Devon, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Db	<i>The Place-Names of Derbyshire, Parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>
PN Do	<i>The Place-Names of Dorset, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Du	<i>The Place-Names of County Durham, Part 1.</i>
PN Ess	<i>The Place-Names of Essex.</i>
PN ERY	<i>The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York.</i>
PN Gl	<i>The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Parts 1–4.</i>
PN Hrt	<i>The Place-Names of Hertfordshire.</i>
PN Le	<i>The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Li	<i>The Place-Names of Lincolnshire, Parts 1–7.</i>
PN Mx	<i>The Place-Names of Middlesex (apart from the City of London).</i>
PN Nf	<i>The Place-Names of Norfolk, Parts 1–3.</i>
PN Nt	<i>The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire.</i>
PN NRY	<i>The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire.</i>
PN Nth	<i>The Place-Names of Northamptonshire.</i>
PN O	<i>The Place-Names of Oxfordshire, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN R	<i>The Place-Names of Rutland.</i>
PN Sa	<i>The Place-Names of Shropshire, Parts 1–9.</i>
PN Sr	<i>The Place-Names of Surrey.</i>
PN St	<i>The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Part 1.</i>
PN Sx	<i>The Place-Names of Sussex, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN W	<i>The Place-Names of Wiltshire.</i>
PN Wa	<i>The Place-Names of Warwickshire.</i>
PN We	<i>The Place-Names of Westmorland, Parts 1 and 2.</i>
PN Wo	<i>The Place-Names of Worcestershire.</i>
PN WRY	<i>The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.</i>

STOCK TRACKS ALONG TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES

One of the largest parishes of Leyland hundred in Lancashire is that of Croston which until the seventeenth century comprised eleven townships. This included the large detached township of Chorley which lies six miles to the east of the mother church in the foothills of the Rossendale Upland. The other townships of Croston parish form a coherent block in the western part of the hundred, much of which is close to sea level. Settlements here are sited on low hills above the wide alluvial valleys of the river Douglas and its tributaries. This type of ecclesiastical association between a core of lowland townships and a detached outlier is not uncommon in Lancashire, and occurs in other hundreds, and probably had its origins in some very early economic association between lowland and upland which was reflected in lordship and ecclesiastical administrative units. The most likely economic link between upland and lowland was that of seasonal stock grazing, probably combined with exploitation of woodland resources as well. In the course of research on medieval patterns of settlements, fields and field-names in the hundred of Leyland it became evident that along the township boundaries there were 100-400 yard-wide swathes of land which might be interpreted as stock routes by which animals could have been moved from lowland villages of Croston parish to the hill grazings which would have been available in the large township of Chorley. (Fig. 1) These swathes of land form a network, followed today by A and B roads, lanes and tracks, which not only linked Croston and Chorley, but also extended to the neighbouring parish of Ecclestone which included the upland townships of Wrightington and Parbold where many of the tracks terminate. These stock routes have only been examined in detail within Leyland hundred, but others occur in the northern hundreds of Lancashire¹, and it is possible that they form part of much longer transhumance links like those described by Kerridge between the Craven Uplands of Yorkshire and the West Lancashire lowlands², or by Hoskins between the Midlands and London³. Associated with the network of tracks is a series of large oval, sometimes double-oval enclosures, which appear to be integrated with the system.

On the First Edition O.S. 6" maps of Leyland hundred (1844-7) these tracks are recognisable as a wide band of fields, occasionally narrowing to road width, whose outer edges terminate in a more or less continuous pair of parallel hedgerows. (Fig. 2) These parallel hedges mark two lines of discontinuity on which hedges both within and without the track terminate, and along which farmsteads occur, usually just beyond the edge of the track. The modern road or track which today follows the track may be found in the centre or to one side of the wider swathe of land, and this is true also of the township boundary. Enclosure of the track, as roadside waste, or common moor or green, has resulted in a pattern of small

fields often contrasting with larger ones beyond the track boundary. Squatter settlement may have occurred within the wide band of the tracks for small holdings and cottages are characteristic here. Occasionally the tracks diverge from the township boundaries, especially where the boundary follows a narrow river valley.

The antiquity of these stock tracks is suggested by their association with stone crosses, presumably of pre-Reformation origin. "Pedestal of Stone Cross" is marked on the O.S. maps in several places along these routes, and some cross bases are still in situ. They are big socketed stones, the hollow in the top giving rise in some localities to a belief that alms for plague-stricken communities were placed here. Occasionally the existence of a cross has given rise to place- or field-names, indeed this is sometimes the only evidence that a cross once stood there. Rarely the cross has a particular name, now incorporated in the body of local place names, such as Dob Cross in Croston. They seem to mark the routes rather than the boundaries, for several occur at places on the stock routes which are not on boundaries (Cross Houses at Bolton Green in Charnock Richard, a cross by Dwerry House in Wrightington). The First Edition O.S. map shows many wells along these routes, not only along roads and lanes, but also where the tracks pass through fields. Sometimes, as "Robin Hood's Well", these wells are named. Where the tracks cross streams there are fords, many of which are paved, some with huge slabs of stone, others with large setts. Footbridges exist at most of these fords today, and one ford evidently had a bridge wide enough for "cart and carriage" in 1656⁴ although it was then in disrepair, and living memory could not recall who was responsible for it. Counts of the hardwood species⁵ in the hedges along the tracks also point to the antiquity of the routes, some sections having six to eight species. Many of these flanking hedges grow on a bank of considerable size, and the lanes which follow and occupy part of the tracks often run in a hollow way, the consequence of long years of wear. These tracks run across a landscape which admirably fits Rackham's description of an "Ancient Countryside"⁶. "A land of hamlets, of medieval farms in the hollows of the hills, of lonely moats in the claylands, of immense mileages of quiet minor roads, hollow-ways and intricate footpaths; of irregularly shaped groves and thick hedges..." There has been in Lancashire a high degree of continuity of land holding. Many of the larger estates "have remained in the same families for six, seven or even eight hundred years"⁷. Family tenancies though less well documented, field names and the fields themselves also seem to have been established with little change over long periods. The stock routes therefore form part of a countryside in which many features have been fixed for a very long time, and their association with the township boundaries underlines their probable antiquity.

Place names associated with the stock tracks include enclosing terms like Intack, Close and Ridding usually for individual fields within the swathe, and Waste is used sometimes for very small

pieces. Longer stretches of the track are sometimes called Moor, often with a special name, such as Barber's Moor and Row Moor, on the Croston, Ulnes Walton, Ecclestone boundaries. These narrow bands of Moor are quite different from the more extensive and usually upland moors like the High Moor and Appley Moor in Wrightington, Coppull Moor and Chorley Moor, parts of which were only finally enclosed in the nineteenth century. Barber's Moor was recorded as still unenclosed in 1580, and in 1602 there was an enquiry into rights of way through various enclosures in Ecclestone to reach Barber's Moor⁸.

Green is frequently used for sections of the stock tracks, and almost always is associated with a small hamlet (Shaw Green, Old Shaw Green, Bolton Green, Heskin Green, Whittle Green in Welsh Whittle, and Three Post Green in Mawdesley, Hartwood Green in Chorley, and Grimshaw and Bisham Greens). These stock route greens are of the type which Thorpe noted as having the word Green as part of the place name, which he said "does not necessarily indicate a true nucleated settlement around a central green". Many of these he regarded as "squatting settlements of fairly recent date", where "green appears to be used in the same sense as heath". These are not the village greens of settlements which are townships, such as the green villages of County Durham and the Midlands⁹. Only the unusually large Ecclestone Green appears to be of "village green" type, and this will be discussed later.

At each green the stock route widens along the line of the track. Most were enclosed by the middle of the nineteenth century, field names indicating its former extent (Green field/hey/close/-ridding). While many include cottages of relatively late date (18th and 19th centuries) which may have originated from squatting, several greens include at least one important farm of considerable age, and usually with a substantial land-holding at the time of the Tithe Award. The principal farm building at Bolton Green is of seventeenth-century date; its old barn is very substantial¹⁰, and its lands are extensive. Green as a place-name does not occur often in documents of high medieval date, which lends support to Thorpe's contention that where the word green is incorporated in a place-name the settlement is usually late. This does not however mean that the stock route is also late. Perhaps these wider sections called Green were enclosable portions of the route where stock in transit could be penned for grazing. If some financial dues were demanded of the drovers for their passage from township to township the greens would make suitable tally points where stock could be counted. This would explain the presence of a substantial farm for an official charged with checking the passage of animals and exacting toll.

Leach (earlier lake and lache) occurs as a field name associated with the stock routes. The term, which means a stream, a bog, occurs frequently in descriptions of boundaries in the hundred of Leyland in the 13th and 14th centuries. Examples still in use in

the area shown on the map include Cannel Leach in Croston, earlier Caynock lache 1325; Canoklache 1483; Conock lache dyche 1580¹¹. In 1483 there were burgages in Cannel Leach as Croston was at this period a borough, and had been since at least 1295¹². In Wrightington, Stone Lake occurs as a farm name, and Stone Leach as a field name. Dig Leach, meaning leach with a dyke, occurs in Wrightington and Eccleston, and several occur in medieval deeds but are now lost names. These fields are characteristically funnel-shaped and occur where a fenced lane or track¹³ from a settlement widens out steadily until it debouches on the open common. These stock funnels facilitate the ingathering of animals from the open moor, for the stock can be easily guided into the open mouth of the funnel; and then the narrowing walls or hedges as they descend herd them into an easily-managed group. Presumably leach, meaning a bog, refers to the muddy, trampled nature of the ground in the stock funnel, especially where the funnel includes a well or stream for watering the animals.

Many of the funnels no longer lead to the open moor because the latter has been enclosed, but they are valuable in identifying the earlier edge of the waste, and a succession of funnels will mark stages in the reclamation of the common. The northern track from the South Tunley oval includes two such funnels, the first a small nameless one between the two oval enclosures of North and South Tunley, and the second called Lord's Gate which led out on to the Hill of Wrightington. The two funnels are linked by a line of narrow fields. A southern track via Stone Leach also leads on to The Hill. The field name *tang* meaning a tongue of land is sometimes used for a stock funnel in the hundred, and rake, perhaps from *hraca* a throat, occurs in other parts of the county¹⁴.

Apparently integrated with the stock tracks are several oval enclosures, half a mile or more in diameter and subdivided within into smaller fields. Many of these enclosures, as at Tunley in Wrightington¹⁵ occur in pairs, the two ovals being interlocked (Fig. 3). They are defined by lanes and footpaths, sometimes by township boundaries, by discontinuity of field patterns on the boundaries of the oval enclosures, and in several cases by the existence on the perimeter of the ovals of huge hedge banks with a high count of hardwood species. As at Tunley the two ovals have different settlement and field patterns. One oval is associated with several farms which are sited near the perimeter, and they share the land within the oval. Field names common to several farms suggest that some of the land within the oval was cultivated in common. Typically the fields are small and show signs of aratral curves, but these arable strips were evidently short in length. Thus in the northern oval at Tunley three farms shared the land within the oval in 1847, the name High Field being common to two of them. Each farm held some land outside the oval as well. The pattern of fields and holdings here is reminiscent of that described as 'girdle pattern settlement' by Jones¹⁶. The South Tunley oval is shared by two farms, one of

them being South Tunley Hall, which stand together at the south end of this larger oval. The field pattern here is more regular, and runs from north to south. The holdings of the two farms interdigitate, and the internal pattern would best be explained by a division of the whole oval into two moieties. A deed in 1487 names some of the fields in this oval and describes them as being part of 'Tonley demesne'¹⁷. This oval was evidently once a single undivided area, and from the evidence of the stock funnel leading out of it at its northern end, this oval may be interpreted as a huge demesne pasture, controlled by or belonging to the single predecessor of the two South Tunley farms.

Similar double-oval enclosures occur in other parts of the hundred, as in Charnock Richard and, less clearly demarcated, in Mawdesley. There are further examples in other parts of the county, at Tunstall in Lonsdale; Tunstead in Barton, Amounderness; White Lee in Goosnargh¹⁸, Amounderness; and Tunsteads in Rossendale (Fig. 4). In a wet climate such as that of Lancashire, low hills of naturally well-drained soil offered advantages to both agriculturalists and pastoralists in the past, and the oval enclosures often include land of this type. Small streams often form part of the outer boundaries and not infrequently the pasture oval is crossed by a stream, presumably for watering the stock.

A much larger example is found at Bradley Hall in Eccleston, a medieval moated site with a park and warren¹⁹. Here one of the stock tracks opens into a large oval through a funnel described as Waste in the Tithe schedule²⁰. This suggests that this huge area was a large enclosed pasture. Its boundaries are marked by lanes, those on the south and west being coincident with township boundaries. The oval is divided by a very straight road to the north of which are rectangular fields, many of them called Green, and the area is shared by the farms which face on to it. It seems that the villagers had some rights of pasture here which were recognised by the addition of part of the oval to the less regular area of Eccleston Green which fringed the oval on the western side. In return the lord of Bradley Hall was permitted to appropriate the rest of the oval. Since it is clearly a very early enclosure the suspicion must arise that this was the original Bradley, the broad ley. To the north is an arable oval held by the farms of Eccleston village. Their individual lands run back from behind the farmsteads in intermixed and irregularly shaped north-to-south blocks.

Similar very large double oval enclosures are found at Penwortham²¹ in Leyland hundred, and Standen in Pendleton in Blackburn hundred. Both these villis were royal holdings in 1066. In the high medieval period the latter became one of the capital manors of the great de Lacy estate; and the former, as head of the Barony of Penwortham, usurped the functions of the erstwhile hundredal caput of Leyland. Bradley Hall in Eccleston was also at that time a place of significance, for it was held by the hereditary Chief Forester of Lancaster. It seems likely therefore that the large size of

this group of double oval enclosures may be related to their importance as centres (Fig 5).

Since field patterns in the area beyond the two ovals terminate against their boundaries, it is clear that these are primary field enclosures, and that an early date may be assigned to their original enclosure from the waste. They bear a striking resemblance to two major enclosures, one arable, the other pasture, at Roystone Grange in Derbyshire, assigned to the Roman-British period²². Accounts of the way in which medieval vaccaries in the Forest of Pendle, Lancashire, were run, each with its breeding herd of about sixty cows²³, provides a farming organisation which would adequately explain the field and settlement patterns. Such a farming organisation need not however have had its origin in the middle ages. Higham has suggested that *daer* stock obligations described in early Welsh and Irish accounts, which she related to settlements whose names end in *erg*, may have given rise to an early form of demesne stock farming not unlike that found in the medieval vaccary organisation²⁴.

In Chorley there is a series of large enclosures into which the stock tracks evidently lead. The track from Bolton Green through German Lane to the ford across the river Yarrow leads by way of Common Bank to the gate of Astley, now an ornamental park. A second track from the ford leads to the area occupied in the nineteenth century by Higher and Lower Kingsley farms, called Kingsley in the middle ages. A side branch from the ford diverges into the lands of Gillibrand Hall, which was originally Chorley Hall²⁴. A stock track further north (another German Lane) skirts the northern boundary of the township before turning south to give access to Healey Park, a medieval deer park, by way of Bagganley Hall. Some of these areas were undoubtedly oval enclosures, and the combined unit of Gillibrand Hall and an arable oval attached to the village of Chorley was probably a double oval unit, but the urban development of Chorley from a medieval borough makes it impossible to be sure that this was so. The existence of so many -ley names in Chorley township underlines its importance as an upland grazing area for the lowland townships of Croston parish. The name Astley, the east ley, makes no sense within Chorley township for Astley lies on the west side of the township, but from Croston, Astley does indeed lie to the east. The king's cattle and the churls' cattle were provided for in Kingsley and Chorley (*ceorla leah*)²⁵; and Healey is truly 'the high ley' on land rising to 700 feet. Knowley and Bagganley occur too. The former is apparently not a -ley name²⁶. Bagganley lies at the north west entry to Healey Park, and was the medieval home of the Parker.

The stock tracks also lead to the upland townships of Wrightington and Parbold. The double oval of Tunley has already been discussed. There appears to be an oval enclosure associated with the farms of Appley in Wrightington. This may form a double oval with the neighbouring land of Wrightington Hall. The Hill of

Wrightington was enclosed relatively early, but the High Moor remained open until the 19th century.

Traditionally the *ley* place-name element has been regarded as indicative of relatively late land clearance and settlement, but it is here noticeably applied to the settlements associated with these primary enclosures. It is applied to the single farm or hall associated with the pasture oval at Astley, Bradley and at White Lee in Goosnargh, but at Tunley, Mawdesley and Chorley, the name is common to both enclosures. It is tempting to speculate on the association of *Tun-stead* and *Tun-stall* with the arable oval and of *Tun-ley* with the pasture oval, but the evidence is insufficient and even conflicting. It must be remembered that this is a very small sample of both place-names and field patterns. Several of the place-names have township status, for example, Mawdesley, Chorley and Tunstall in Lonsdale. In two other examples, Standen in Pendleton and Tunsteads in Rossendale, their status as extra-parochial units caused their boundaries to be recorded on the First Edition O.S. 6" maps.

Some of the Green settlements take their name from the parent township as Ecclestone, Heskin and (Welsh) Whittle Greens. Others like Shaw Green, Hurst Green, Hartwood Green, Eaves Green, and Grimshaw Green are associated with topographic elements, which in their reference to woodland no doubt reflect their situation in the no-man's-land of the township edges. The settlements on the Moors are very similar to those of the Greens. Indeed it is difficult to see why these very similar types of land have different names. A possible explanation may be that the Moor grazings were intercommoned by several townships, while those of the Greens were restricted to the beasts of the township or to those in transit which paid a fee. Barber's Moor and Row Moor lie athwart the township boundaries, but the Greens have names which are specific to a single township. Chorley and Wrightington Moors appear anomalous in being central to the townships, but if these townships were indeed the upland grazings for several lowland townships these Moors might well have been intercommoned. The *ley* grazings would by contrast have been restricted to the stock of specific groups of people. In Wrightington and Chorley, the King's or lord's demesne pasture, the churls' pasture and the *tun's* pasture might well need to be set aside for the local people if cattle from neighbouring townships had also grazing rights within those townships.

It is evident from the Domesday account that Leyland was a hundredal estate held by King Edward the Confessor. This network of tracks linking open moors, enclosed pastures and arable areas almost certainly dates back to that period and may well have been in existence long before.

Mary A. Atkin

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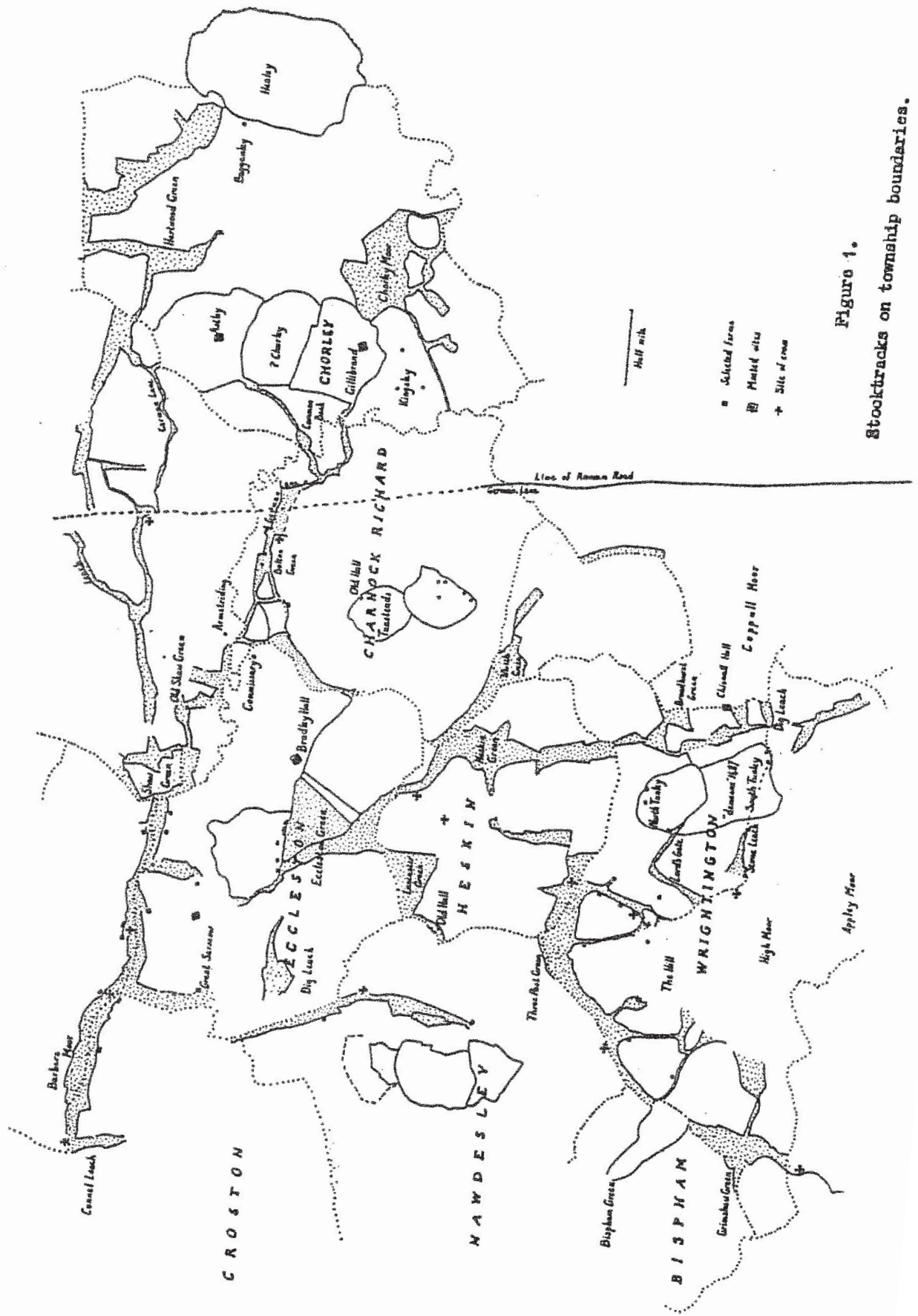


Figure 1.

Stocktracks on township boundaries.

Tunley in WRIGHTINGTON



Figure 3. The "double-oval" enclosures in Tunley.

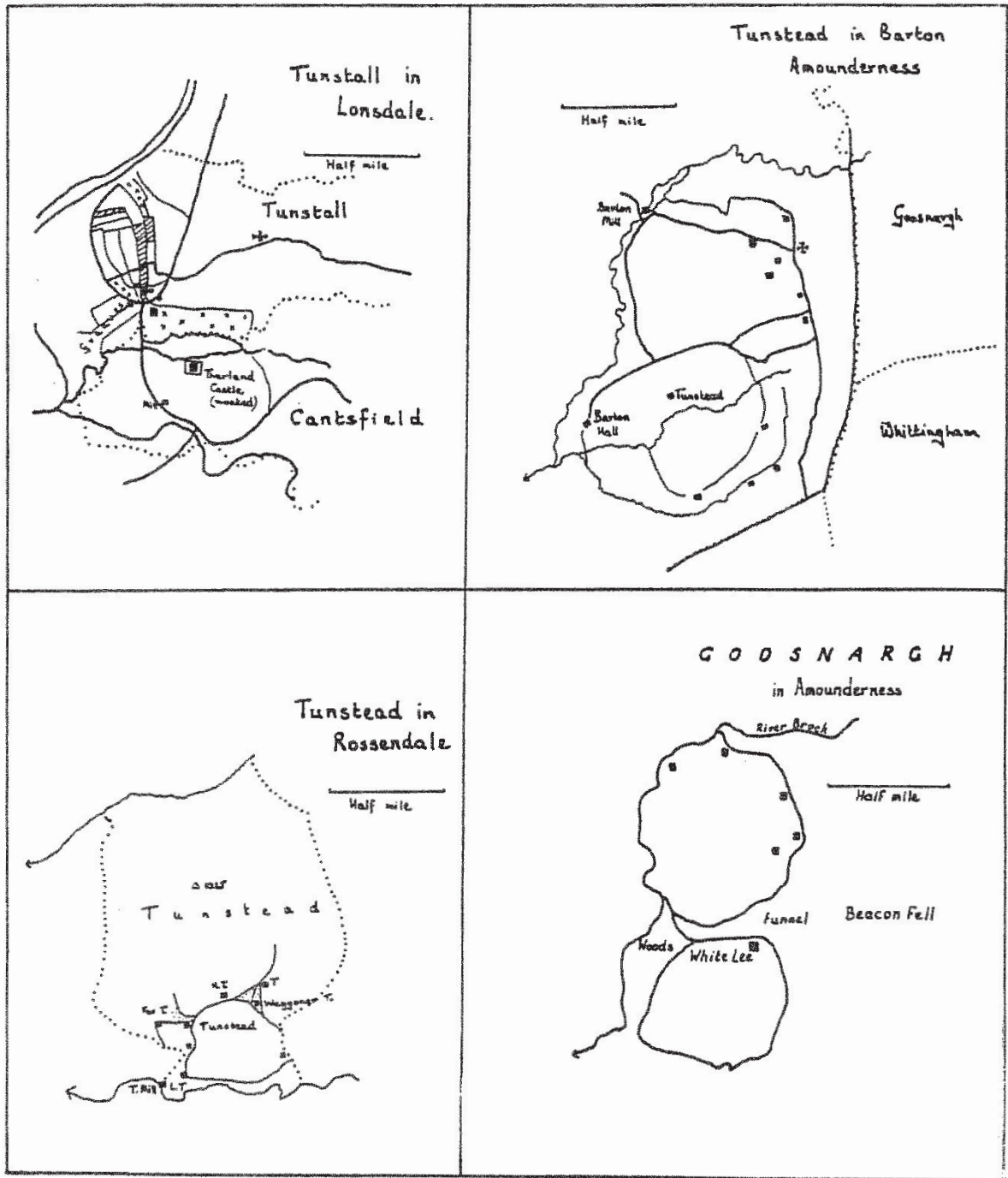


Figure 4. "Double-oval" enclosures in other parts of Lancashire.

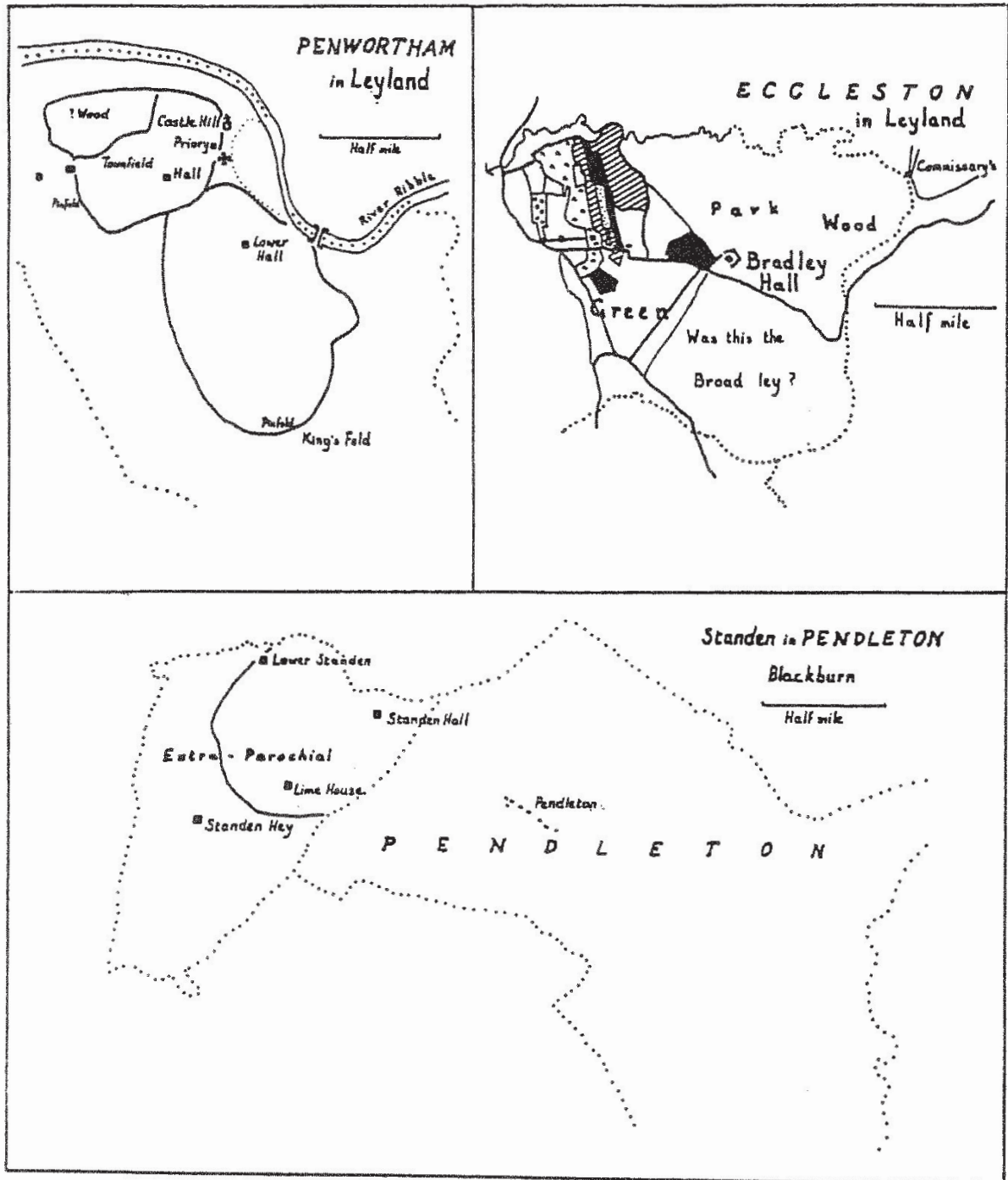


Figure 5. Some examples of larger "double-oval" enclosures.